

EGOS 2020 SUB-THEME: ORGANIZATIONAL PARADOX

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Modern societies are besieged with grand challenges such as climate change, poverty alleviation, migration, digital transformations, gender inequality, and societal resilience (George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016). Addressing grand challenges requires collective and collaborative action in which organizations play a crucial role. As change has been identified as a driver that renders paradoxical tensions salient (Smith & Lewis, 2011), grand challenges and societal changes spur a myriad of organizational paradoxes in that they confront organizations with contradictory, yet interdependent elements and demands that persist over time

(Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016; Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016). These paradoxes not only center around tensions between stability and change (Farjoun, 2010), but also refer to temporal tensions between the short term and the long term (Slawinski & Bansal, 2015), tensions around scale and space (Bowen, Bansal, & Slawinski, 2018) and tensions between different outcomes in economic, environmental, and social domains (Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss, & Figge, 2015).

Paradox theory and the study of paradoxical tensions can offer novel insights into the dynamics of societal transformations and organizations. A practice perspective on the tensions that stem from the changes driven by these dynamics suggests that actors construct and enact tensions as they respond to them (Jarzabkowski, Lê, & Van de Ven, 2013; Knight & Paroutis, 2017). This has repercussions for the way organizations engage in collective and collaborative efforts to address grand challenges (Ferraro, Etzion, & Gehman, 2015). Societal transformations are systemic and boundary spanning which gives rise to nested and interwoven tensions, whereby one set of tensions can inform, challenge, and create other tensions across different levels of analysis (Sheep, Fairhurst, & Khazanchi, 2017; Smith, Erez, Jarvenpaa, Lewis, & Tracey, 2017). As recent research has highlighted, paradox theory offers a fruitful lens to study the interactions and tensions of organizations with overarching social and natural systems (Schad & Bansal, in press). At the same time, change and transformations can be disruptive and threatening and result in debilitating tensions, which highlights a dark side of organizational paradox (van Bommel & Spicer, 2017).

In this subtheme, we welcome submissions that address paradoxes, tensions, dualities, and dialectics that explore contradicting, yet interdependent elements. In particular, we look for scholarly work on paradoxes and tensions at the interface between the organization and wider societal and/or natural systems and research on how organizations and organizational actors are affected by and respond to paradoxical tensions that arise from societal transformations.