

# Connections in Action: Keeping Track of Large Social Phenomena using Relational and ‘Micro-sociological’ approaches

University of Warwick, Coventry, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016



Joint Speculative Workshop of the University of Warwick and the University of Zurich

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With the support of the Society for the Advancement of Management Studies (SAMS)



University of Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

## Theme of the Workshop

One of the challenges that process, practice and organizational routine studies share with other micro-sociological approaches (Collins, 1981) is how to deal with some of the **‘big issues’** or ‘grand challenges’ of our times. Examples of such issues include the nature and functioning of financial markets, the rise and fall of large institutional arrangements, the global travel of idea and ideologies, inequality, the bureaucracy and its failures, climate change and the future of the planet.

While work in this direction starts to emerge (see for example work on financial markets by Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, & Spee, 2015; on climate change by Howard-Grenville, Buckle, Hoskins, & George, 2014; Wittneben, Okereke, Banerjee, & Levy, 2012; on globalization by Drori, Höllerer, & Walgenbach, 2014; and on big data by George, Haas, & Pentland, 2014), current theoretical and methodological approaches appear to be generally ill-equipped to **grasp social phenomena that are increasingly “complex, dynamic, distributed, mobile, transient, and unprecedented”** (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011: 1240). As a consequence studies primarily concerned with understanding local situated action have been accused of ‘micro-isolationism’ (Seidl & Whittington, 2014) and therefore of little relevance outside academic circles. In contrast, studies describing large phenomena by focusing on macro-level dynamics and processes are accused of lacking practice relevance as practitioners struggle to grasp the relevance of these abstract ideas to their local practices and everyday work. Thus, scholarly attempts of grasping large social phenomena through their local enactments are also closely related to what can be done about them.

## Aims

In this international workshop we aim to bring together scholars who explore how we can account for and keep track of large phenomena utilising existing and new ‘micro-sociological’ and relational approaches in organisation studies. Our aim is to (1) **advance theorizing** about large social phenomena, (2) **re-imagine our methods of inquiry** in a way that they are more productive in dealing with the complexity of contemporary organizing, (3) **exchange about the challenges** in doing this kind of research and (4) **develop exemplary studies** that pave the way for a new stream of research. The workshop will be speculative in character with the intent to learn from each other and generate new ideas through dialogue and listening.

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## Who should attend?

We are interested in particular in **empirically grounded work** that acknowledges that increasingly organizational phenomena are distributed across distanced time and space and cannot be understood by solely studying local scenes of action in isolation. We expect contributors to come from a variety of research traditions such as **routines and practice-based studies, strategy-as-practice, actor network theory, assemblage theory, discourse and communication theory, symbolic interactionism, configuration theory, and many others.**

Contributions should build upon, expand and converse with existing work that tries to capture the connections between situated performances that take place in dispersed places and time zones, such as nested relationality (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015), trans-localization (Czarniawska, 2014), small worlds (Strauss, 1978; Watts, 1999), trans-situatedness (Nicolini, Davide, & Monteiro, 2016), complex global micro-structures (Cetina, 2005), fractionality (Law, 1999; Strathern, 2004) or interaction ritual chains (Collins, 2004). We also encourage studies that utilise existing empirical approaches such as 'zooming in' and 'zooming out' (Nicolini, 2009), tracing associations (Latour, 2005) or 'scaling up' (Taylor & van Every, 2000), and those that propose new ways of addressing these issues.

## Location, application and fee

The residential workshop will take place in one of the high quality conference facilities at the University of Warwick. It will start on **Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup> at 2pm** and finish on **Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at 4pm** and will include a post dinner session.

Participation is strictly limited to 30 places so early application is encouraged. To apply as a contributor, please send an extended abstract of max 3000 words by **September 15<sup>th</sup>** to [Dawn.Coton@wbs.ac.uk](mailto:Dawn.Coton@wbs.ac.uk) Applications will be selected based on demonstrable alignment of their project with the theme of the workshop. Applicants will be notified of acceptance by October 15<sup>th</sup>.

A few auditor places will be made available. If you are interested in attending without contributing your own project please contact [Dawn.Coton@wbs.ac.uk](mailto:Dawn.Coton@wbs.ac.uk) by **September 15<sup>th</sup>**.

The **fee for the event is £100** (without accommodation) and **£175** (including accommodation and breakfast). The fee includes refreshments, lunch and dinner. A limited number of PhD scholarships will be available. If you are interested in the scholarship, please note it in your application.

Registrations (which requires paying the fee in full) will close by **November 15<sup>th</sup>**.

For more information on the workshop please contact [katharina.dittrich@uzh.ch](mailto:katharina.dittrich@uzh.ch) or [Dawn.Coton@wbs.ac.uk](mailto:Dawn.Coton@wbs.ac.uk)