Abstract

This paper adopts a semiotic and pragmatist approach to processes (Peirce, 1998; Simpson, 2009; Lorino, Tricard, & Clot, 2011) and the emergence of organizational novelty. It assumes that organizational novelty stems from a change in the way habits mediate our interpretation of a given organizational situation. It draws a distinction between situated sensemaking and meaningmaking (Weick, 1995)—considered as a set of habits—and shows how novelty emerges from the assignment of new time-space boundaries, and new expected outcomes to processes. The emergence of novelty is approached as a process in which habits are confronted by the need to make sense of disruptive situations, while achieving collectively acceptable outcomes. This perspective foregrounds the pragmatist Theory of Inquiry (Dewey, 1938/1993) as an important contribution to understanding the process leading to organizational novelty. In particular, the paper studies the active commerce between habits and the flow of processes through time and space. Data from a field study about changes in the management of safety in a construction firm provide a concrete illustration of the logics from which both novelty and organizing co-emerge as "organizational becoming" (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) in specific meaning-challenger inquiries.
References of the full text paper


