New Developments in Translation Research

Special Issue Guest Editors:

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When considering knowledge, learning, innovation and change, much of the current management and organizational literature has come to adopt the notion of translation. In general terms, this relates to changes occurring through the apparent movement of knowledge, including the implementation of ideas into practice (Nicolini, Powell, Conville, & Martinez-Solano, 2008). However, various perspectives are evident, notably variations on actor network theory and the sociology of translation (e.g. Latour, 1986; 1987; Callon, 1986; Czarniawska & Sevón 1996; Sahlin-Andersson, 1996), but also those derived from fields such as computational linguistics, discourse analysis, technological innovation, cultural capital and resource-based views of the firm (Wittgenstein, 1958; Bourdieu, 1986; Nonaka, 1994). This diversity can create confusion and ambiguity, but also provides richness and suggests a wide recognition of the analytical value of translation. In this special issue, we are open to both challenges to, and developments of these perspectives that can create more space for novel theoretical and empirical research.

The study of translation is important across various fields of management and organization theory such as organizational change, management innovation and learning, consumption and institutional theory (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996; 2005). Importantly, it has become increasingly accepted that knowledge in the form of ‘new’ ideas, practices, scientific developments and technologies does not typically remain stable (Ansari, Fiss, & Zajac, 2010). Rather, when it ‘diffuses’ or ‘moves’, knowledge is translated to ‘fit’ the specific context (Rosvik, 2011). It is not so much ‘in context’, but made by the context (Orlikowski, 2002). As a result, we are beginning to better understand how various forms of knowledge are blended, modified, adapted or re-invented and how these processes may ultimately shape and change the nature of organizations, institutions and society.

However, despite its merits, translation research has developed over recent years without much critique, for instance on its underlying assumptions. In order to open up avenues for further research, it is necessary to assess critically and constructively current debates in the field, particularly those which locate translation in the context of contemporary organizations and/or organizing. For instance, various literatures emphasize the significance of institutional complexity and competing demands that may exert influence over processes of translation. In addition, the increased and more complex role of occupational groups in the establishment and appropriation of ‘new’ ideas has also been emphasized. Furthermore, new organizational forms such as international joint ventures, private public partnerships, mergers and acquisitions, academia-industry collaborative networks and outsourced work have been created explicitly to manage the establishment and translation of new ideas. Yet, what do we know about how these ‘new’ actors, processes and organizational forms affect our understanding of translation and its consequences? In addition, if translation is concerned with change, how do we also identify and explain continuities?
Put another way, across many sectors, new developments and discourses which emphasize change, collaboration, shifting professional boundaries and increased sharing of knowledge are taking place. We are, thus, challenged to question and/or develop further our understanding of how and to what extent new ideas, scientific developments and technologies are translated within such contexts and thereby extend management and organization studies.

To advance understanding about this significant field in the scholarly community, this special issue aims to assemble a diverse set of papers which review developments in translation theory and seek to encourage new thinking, frameworks and open up new directions in management and organization studies more generally. As such, we invite papers that critically review the state of research and theory within the specific domain of translation and set the agenda for future research across all the major disciplines in management and organization studies. We are also interested in papers that concentrate on a particular theoretical perspective, where the focus of analysis attends to significant limitations and opportunities to extend management and organization theory. This could be done, for example, by bringing translation in new ways into well-established theoretical approaches such as institutional logics (Kraatz & Block, 2008), neo-bureaucratic theory (Reed, 2011), the sociology of the professions and the possible emergence of hybrids (Noordegraaf, 2007; 2011) organizational learning and communities of practice (Brown & Duguid, 1991), boundary objects and socio-materiality (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008) with its stress on the role of technology in organizational life (this list is not exhaustive). Furthermore, other disciplines and approaches can be brought to bear, from both within and beyond the management domain such as theories of consumption or design, political and policy studies, innovation, history and the sociology of translation (Callon, 1986; Law, 1992). In so doing, we aim to continue the journal’s strategic vision by connecting research on translation with the broader and eclectic field of management and organization studies. We hope that this special issue will make a substantial theoretical and practical contribution to advancing the field of management and organization studies, and have a broad appeal that falls within the aims and scope of the journal.

We welcome literature-based papers that offer new insights about translation research that may inform and guide future research. These can be based on a literature review format or generating conceptual frameworks from existing literature. (The journal does not publish primary research). Relevant topics for submissions include those outlined above and the following (this is not a definitive list):

- How do organizations enable, constrain and otherwise govern translation processes, and with what consequences?
- What roles do different types of actors play in translating ideas, scientific developments and technologies in everyday practice and how do they shape strategic and political practices and decisions?
- How can we understand the diversity of use of ideas and, at the same time, continuing pressures for standardisation?
- How do promising new ideas, scientific developments and technologies gain and lose legitimacy within and beyond organizations?
- How do creativity and innovation impact the translation process, and what are the implications at organizational and individual levels?
- How do the institutional order and the distribution of power relations influence translational efforts in contemporary organizations and how are they produced through such processes?
How can we better theorize shifts of power and development of resistance and alternative forms of organization and organizing from a translational perspective?

- How are professions reconstructing their roles through translational efforts, and what are the implications for organizations?
- What methods can be best utilised to understand and track translation and how, if at all, can varying theoretical traditions in translation be combined?

Submission Process and Deadline:

Manuscripts should be submitted via online submission (http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ijmr), highlighting that you wish to be considered for the Special Issue, ‘New developments in Translation Research’. The manuscript should follow the author guidelines set out by the International Journal of Management Reviews available at:

http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1468-2370/homepage/ForAuthors.html


Contributors should send a copy of their submission to Dimitrios Spyridonidis, to whom they might direct enquiries in the first instance should they wish to discuss suitability of submission for the Special Issue (d.spyridonidis@imperial.ac.uk).

Manuscripts should be submitted by December 31st 2014. The expected publication date of the Special Issue is early 2016.

The editors

Dimitrios Spyridonidis is a Research Associate in the Management department within Imperial College London, Business School. He is the primary organizational investigator of a large scale research program in the English NHS. His research interests are in the area of organizational behaviour and strategy, with a health sector emphasis. He researches strategy practice and process during the translation of clinical research into innovative clinical practice and improved patient care. His professional associations include the Academy of Management, the European Group of Organization Studies and he is the Chair of the Public Management and Governance Special Interest Group within the British Academy of Management.

Graeme Currie is a Professor of Public Management and Associate Dean at Warwick Business School. His work has been recently published in leading international journals, such as Academy of Management Journal, Organization Studies, Leadership Quarterly, Human Relations, Journal of Management Studies. Recent and current research grants, for which Graeme is principal investigator, are: the knowledge brokering role of middle level managers for patient safety within elderly care, and absorptive capacity of commissioning networks in the NHS (both funded by NIHR HS&DR). He also leads the implementation research theme and acts as deputy director for NIHR CLAHRC West Midlands, a major translational healthcare applied research initiative funded by the NIHR.

Stefan Heusinkveld is an Associate Professor in the Department of Management and Organization of the VU University Amsterdam. His research concentrates on the production and consumption of management ideas and in particular the role of management consultants and management gurus.
Stefan’s work has appeared in various academic journals such as Human Relations, Information and Management, Journal of Management Studies, Management Learning, Organization Studies, Scandinavian Journal of Management, and Technovation.

**Karoline Strauss** is an Associate Professor of Organizational Behaviour at Warwick Business School. Her research has been published in the Journal of Applied Psychology, the Journal of Management, and the British Journal of Management. Her research interests broadly focus upon proactive behaviour, which involves individuals’ self-initiated efforts to bring about a different future, either for themselves, or for their team or organization. Karoline is currently serving on the editorial boards of the Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, and the British Journal of Management.

**Andrew Sturdy** is Head of Department of Management and Chair in Management at Bristol University. His research interests focus mainly on issues of power and identity in the production and use of management ideas, especially in relation to management consultancy and organizational change. He has published widely on these topics in articles and books and led two UK government-funded research projects on management consultancy. He has a public policy interest in the use of management consultancy and in organizational innovation and is an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Management Inquiry*.

### References


