English Abstract

Cooperation, Competition or Cooptation? Theoretical Views in Health Care Organizations
di *Americo Cicchetti, Daniele Mascia, Francesca Palotti, Alessandro Lomi*

Extant research on interorganizational relationships has generally considered the propensity of organizations to collaborate and interorganizational rivalry as antithetic behaviours. In this paper we try to reconcile apparently contentious theoretical views on the relationship between interorganizational collaboration and competition, and propose a model that predicts the existence of a non-monotonic effect of similarity in resource dependence profiles on the propensity of interdependent organizations to collaborate and exchange resources. We test our theoretical argument by using data that we have collected on 91 health care organizations serving more than five million residents in one of the largest Italian geographical regions. Controlling for firm-specific resource complementarities and for differences in organizational forms, behavioural orientations and institutional constraints, we provide empirical support to our predictions. We discuss how this result may help to improve our ability to predict the network structure of organizational communities from the observation of individual exchange relations.

Keywords: Competition, cooperation, organizational network, niche overlap.

Decision Making Process as Interaction's Rituals: Game Face and Social Interaction in Political Majority Group
di *Mariangela de Gregorio, Gerardo Patriotta*

This paper proposes a view of decision making as a social interaction process. Drawing on Goffman's face theory, it documents and interprets the micro interaction dynamics within the ruling political coalition of an Italian town council. Two main arguments are put forward. First, decision making unfolds through face games and impression management tactics where individuals are primarily concerned with attributing plausible sense to situations while maintaining a coherent image of self. Second, face-to-face behavior has structuring properties. It generates an interaction order amongst the participants that becomes progressively consolidated as the actors in-

volved strive to affirm their respective situated identities through repeated face-to-face exchanges. A number of organizational implications are drawn from the study.

Keywords: Decisional process, face game, interaction's ritual.

Simulation's Role in Sharing Tacit Knowledge
di *Federico Barnabè, Mathias M. Fische*

Managers and operators working in complex and dynamic domains usually take their decision upon incomplete information and a relevant role is played by personal expectations and beliefs, as well as by their own *mental models*. In such contexts *tacit knowledge* becomes crucial, being the basis on which individuals take decisions and carry out actions. Therefore, it becomes essential to explicit, formalize and share tacit knowledge among all the employees and within the organization. In this regard, over the past few years many methodologies and techniques have been mentioned as useful for tacit knowledge management purposes but further evidence is still needed.

Starting from these considerations, this paper suggests that *simulation models* can play a fundamental role, being instruments to support strategic thinking, group discussion and learning in teams, and providing the bases for meaningful learning experiences relying on the use of computer based management flight simulators. In more detail, the paper presents the outcomes and the main features of a group model-building project at a chemical company. The process of knowledge elicitation and knowledge sharing, the gaining of a better common understanding about the production process and the development of the different mental models of the operators are some of the goals the project aimed to pursue. Among its findings, the paper shows that the method described in this work could be used in a variety of production processes in order to sustain processes of individual and organizational learning.

Keywords: Simulation, system dynamics, tacit knowledge, learning.

Organizational Strategies and Consultation as Situated Practice of Knowledge Social Making
di *Jeanpaul Frassy, Marina Orefice, Giuseppe Scaratti*

The aim of this paper is to present the main results of a consultation understood like a situated practice dealing with the social process by which professional identity, organizational knowledge and cultures take form.

The work underlines how organizational strategies grow up from the social texture of workplace exchanges, in which the practical and daily experience of each professional becomes the main and more relevant field for a making sense process: the interactions and conversations between internal and external stakeholders and social actors shape the incarnate production of ordinary social facts.

The paper underlines the qualitative approach and the methodological devices used to achieve the production of situated knowledge concerned the context of a social firm, located in Valle d'Aosta, dealing with the challenge of brand positioning and innovation.

By means of accounts and thick descriptions the paper aims to show how making organizational strategies can be analyzed as a situated social process, as a practice which acquires progressive stability from provisional and changing patterns.

Keywords: Strategy process, practice, situated knowledge, qualitative methodological approach.

New Catholic Monasteries. The Current Organization of monastic Life
di *Stefania Palmisano*

This article aims to analyse the foundation of 'new' monastic communities that have recently emerged in Italy since the second Vatican Council. These communities differ from traditional ones. Unlike classical monastic orders they are self-sufficient, thanks to the work done by monks inside or outside the monastery; they may be mixed-sex groups of men and women, either ordained or secular, single or married, or even from different branches of Christianity. After examining the influence of the Council on the development of these organizations, I present the main findings of an empirical research on the 'new' monastic communities founded in Piemonte (Italy). The analysis focuses on three communities which I term 'widespread' because some of their members (both ordained and secular) live outside the borders of the monastery, in private houses. I analyse the differences between traditional monasteries ("total institutions", "strict", "vertical") and these newer ones ("open", "widespread", "flexible"). In the conclusion I discuss some new theoretical questions that arise in the empirical research: primarily, the problem of legitimizing the 'new' communities the institutional Church.

Keywords: Monastery, "widespread" monasteries, organizational change, legitimation, liability of newness.

The Power and Problem of Quality. Considerations from the Perspective of Economic Sociology
di *Luigi Doria*

Quality is one of the most relevant and, at the same time, ambiguous key-word of the contemporary socio-economic lexicon. The reference to quality discourses and technologies (such as those related to quality management, quality assurance, quality certification) ranges from market competition to organizational and managerial dynamics, from policy making to the new forms of governance. But, if quality constitutes itself as an eminent value for contemporary development, the treatment of the most diverse social domains (including, for example, administration, research, culture) in terms of quality is often assumed as the emblem of a disquieting trend towards control and rationalization.

This contribution deals first with the analysis of the multiple meanings of the notion, paying particular attention to sociological studies and to the relationship between quality and the dimension of calculation. The attention focuses then on the role of the concept in the field of public policy and governance and, in particular, on quality as a sort of connecting device, which promotes processes of integration among different policy fields and networking phenomena involving public and private actors. The articles briefly hints, in the last part, at the root of the peculiar normativity of quality and at the enigmatic character of its current power.

Keywords: Quality, networking, economic sociology, public policy.

Notes on the construction of artefacts: the concept of thing in design
di *Cristiano Storni*

The paper is aimed to explore the domain of design and its organization by providing a detailed account of the birth of a new piece of jewellery based on extensive

ethnography of its design and production. Taken the term artifact to mark the conclusion of the design process, the author develops the concept of thing in order to account for what is behind the actual shape of everyday objects and how and why they have acquired it. The concept of Thing is introduced as a twofold term that both refers to the gathering of elements that are drawn together in order to design something new and to the problematic question that draws those entities together. Through the case study and the mapping of the complex trajectory of the design object at focus, it is shown how the Thing as gathering and the Thing as the central issues in-process-of-definition mutually inform one another therefore questioning many of the traditional dichotomies in social science such as object and subject, social and technical or agency and structure. In this mutual information, the process is described as moving in between two opposite analytic poles through a series of logics (Thing-ing and Objectify-ing logics) that are briefly discussed and illustrated through the introduction of a conclusive metaphor.

Keywords: Artifact, design practices, thing, mutual information.