

Track 69: Exploration, Exploitation & Ambidexterity

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Abstract:

How do firms reconcile the conflicting forces for change and stability? How do they promote order and control among their different units, while having to respond and learn? Expanding world-wide competition, fragmenting markets, and emerging technologies force established firms to create new sources of wealth through new combinations of resources. On the other hand, these pressures for change are countered by short-term competitive forces that require organizations to maximally exploit the capabilities of existing units.

Those tensions have been variously described in the organization literature as change versus preservation, adaptation versus selection, adaptability versus alignment and more generally *exploration versus exploitation*. They require fundamentally different and inconsistent architectures and competencies that create paradoxical challenges. Whereas exploration has been associated with flexibility, decentralization, and loose cultures, exploitation has been related to efficiency, centralization, and tight cultures. Moreover, in solving these tensions many scholars

have focused on discrete states in terms of *ambidextrous organizations* that somehow internalize the friction between innovation and efficiency.

Whereas most studies have focused on the competitive benefits of ambidextrous organizations, far less attention has been given to uncovering how firms may achieve ambidexterity. And though the line of thought of ambidexterity has emerged as one of the more dominant ones of the past decade, many questions still remain. This sub-track will provide a platform for state-of-the-heart dialogue on some key remaining questions in our understanding, including, but not limited to:

- *What are the new organizational structures, coordinating mechanisms, and (de)integration strategies for balancing exploration and exploitation?*
- *Which (dynamic) capabilities do firms need in order to manage the transition between exploration and exploitation over time?*
- *How can complex multi-unit firms integrate different types of ambidexterity, and how do the task and institutional environment influence this?*
- *How does ambidexterity play a role at the individual level and how do managerial activities differ throughout the hierarchy?*
- *How can firms manage inter-organizational ambidexterity and what is the role of the environment in this?*
- *What is the role of managerial cognition, mental models, and attention in influencing different modes of balancing exploration and exploitation?*
- *What's the role of boundary-spanning units and corporate elites in driving organizational ambidexterity?*
- *How can top management teams and boards institutionalize an ambidextrous orientation?*

Empirical, conceptual, and practitioner-oriented papers from a plurality of theoretical perspectives, units of analyses, contexts, and research designs are welcome, with particular encouragement for this integrating multiple theoretical lenses and/or methodological approaches. All submitted papers to our SIG will be reviewed on a double-blind basis by two reviewers. Specific questions relating to this sub-track can be directed to Kevin Heij at kheij@rsm.nl.