Paradoxes and Tensions in Innovation and Implementation of Complex Systems

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Paradoxes and tensions are ubiquitous to innovation and change in socio-technical systems in a wide range of contexts including but not limited to open innovation, e-health, mobile platforms, and integrated supply chains. Conflicting demands, contradictory practices, and competing views create fiction that can energize or inhibit the performance of a complex socio-technical system. There is a growing literature on paradoxes, tensions, and duality and recently paradox theory has been proposed as an alternative meta-theoretical approach to problems that have previously been addressed by contingency theory or structural theories. Paradox theory reconceptualizes opposing poles of paradoxes, not as a tradeoff but as a duality where the opposing poles of the paradox are leveraged simultaneously and considered as mutually dependent and mutually enabling. The track focuses on papers that theoretically or empirically advance our understanding of how tensions and paradoxes can be leveraged, enhanced, and honed to create new and frame-breaking opportunities, enhance their implementation and acceptance, and ensure successful co-evolution of complex systems in dynamic environments.

This minitrack provides an international platform for discussing the following issues of paradoxes and tensions in innovating and implementing change in complex systems:

1. Theoretical foundations and advancements in understanding paradoxes and tensions in socio-technical systems
2. Practical approaches to identifying and managing paradoxes and tensions that emerge in complex systems during innovation and change
3. Paradoxes and tensions at multiple levels of analysis, including groups, organizations and institutions, and in diverse industries including academia, healthcare and music.

This is the inaugural year for this minitrack. Even so, we attracted a moderate number of submissions from which four were ultimately selected for presentation at the conference. These papers are organized into two themed sessions; one paper session and one paper session/open forum.

The first session addresses the theory and practice issues of paradoxes and tensions in innovation and change in complex systems. Papers in this session focus on inter-organizational paradoxes and tensions in an environment of open, collaborative innovation; understanding digital platform complexity using insights from the music industry; and innovation in IT outsourcing decision making.

The second session is divided into two subparts: paper session and open forum. This session focuses on the health care industry as a source of insights for the overall minitrack theme. A paper presentation on identifying and managing paradoxes and tensions between patient care delivery and organizational efficiency through IT-enabled change in a hospital setting kicks off the session. An open forum follows, with introductory remarks on paradoxes in primary care by Kurt Stange, Editor of Annals of Family Medicine, and by Holly Lanham, minitrack co-chair. The open forum portion of this session will engage participants in a lively, open dialogue on the issues raised during the mini-track presentations.

We sincerely thank the authors for submitting their work to this minitrack and for their role in making it a success. We hope you enjoy the papers and their presentation at the conference.