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Studying innovation in organizations: a dialectic perspective—introduction to the special issue

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Recent research on innovation, creativity, and other change- and innovation-related constructs has increased exponentially. Despite this growth, the current state of the science is far from congruent. Recent reviews on innovation (Anderson, Potocnik, & Zhou, 2014) and creativity (Zhou & Hoever, 2014) have acknowledged the considerable progress made in this field, but at the same time, have outlined several challenges for present and future research. Nevertheless, certain characteristics prevail in most studies, like the primacy of studies considering the positive (and almost universal) effects of innovation, the predominance of individual-level studies, and some degree of confusion and divergence among two subfields in the topic, creativity and innovation.

Zhou and Hoever (2014, p. 354) summarized the challenges as eight main lines of research: conducting research on the impact of negative factors from actors and context on creativity and ways to overcome these impacts; discovering new key factors from actors and contexts that could have different effects on different types of creativity; examining the contextual effects on collective creative outcomes; conducting research at different levels of analysis for testing if the relationship between creativity and its antecedents is homologous at individual, team, and organization levels; conducting systematic empirical and theoretical research for analysing the interplay between positive and negative actor characteristics and positive and negative contexts for innovation; studying the way through which the different actor–context interactions affect creativity; studying the systematic different effects that characteristics of broader contexts (as industries or cultures) could have on actor and specific context variables; and facilitate the integration of research through meta-analysis and reviews, explaining the effects of hidden actor or contextual factors that are not part of research models. In sum, the authors call for a more systematic understanding of the different ways and mechanisms in which actors and context interact to affect creativity and innovation. This approach supports one of

the tenets that Bledow, Frese, Anderson, Erez, and Farr (2009) attributed to the dialectic approach to studying innovations: how multiple pathways can lead to idea generation and innovation.

In a similar vein, Anderson, Potočnik, and Zhou (2014) identified 11 focal themes that will focus researchers' attention in the near future. Some of them rely on theoretical aspects, like the need for integration of idea generation and idea implementation subfields, or the requirements for theory-driven studies allowing to provide a unified framework for different streams of research. Others address the relevance of new insights and different approaches for studying innovation, such as the necessity to carry out research on the process of innovation, beyond the traditional distinction between phases, to redress the “innovation maximization fallacy”, or to analyse the “dark side” of innovation, and not only its positive effects. Another cluster of challenges focus on new topics or potential subfields for future research, including considering organizational cultures and specific facet climates for creativity, the interest for senior management teams and interventions, the role of customers, or the role of Internet and social media in creativity and innovation. Finally, the authors claim for more sophisticated research designs through meta-analysis as well as cross-level and multilevel studies.

In an attempt to stimulate advances in some of these vital directions, an EAWOP Small Group Meeting on Innovation at organizations was held at University of Valencia (September 21–23, 2013), with the attendance of around 30 researchers from around the world. This forum was the origin for this Special Issue, and both share a common appeal for a dialectic perspective in the study of creativity and innovation in organizations. Bledow et al.'s (2009) “dialectic approach” highlighted the need for integration in different senses: the need for integrating science and practice for innovation management; the integration of competing processes not only along the different steps of innovation, but into every

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phase of innovation that is considered an integrated process and not simply a sequence of discrete steps; and the integration along the innovation process of different activities and abilities for managing conflicting demands at multiple organizational levels (ambidexterity). In sum, multiple pathways can lead to idea generation and innovation.

In search of this dialectic perspective, the present special issue addresses some of the challenges for future research, taking as a starting point the outstanding paper from Bledow et al. (2009). First, the focus is on the integration of idea generation and idea implementation. Innovation at organizations is considered a dynamic process, despite some of the studies included in this issue could address only one facet, step, or dimension of such process. Second, emphasis has been placed intentionally upon studies adopting higher levels of analysis (team, organization), as well as cross- and multi-level analyses. Third, dialectic approach also means to critically discuss the maximization fallacy about innovations, which states that effects of innovation at organizations are positive in nature and the convenience of stimulating innovations ever and everywhere, despite the external conditions, the people, and the organizational goals. Fourth, as a consequence, more research is needed regarding the consequences of innovations, instead the prevalence of studies on their antecedents. Moreover, whereas studies of positive effects of innovation prevailed, research should pay more interest on the (potential) negative outcomes of innovation. In addition, interplays of contextual and personal (actor) variables are studied, mainly through the study of moderated relationships. Most studies in this issue addressed complex models attempting to disentangle the mechanisms that underlie the main effects of innovation antecedents that present different results depending on contextual variables or actor's psychological states.

In the following paragraphs, we present a short overview of the papers included in this Special Issue, before presenting a synthesis of main contributions made regarding the aforementioned challenges, and then concluding by acknowledging the team of reviewers who contributed so diligently in the editorial process.

First, Potočnik and Anderson (2016) examine the nomological network of innovation- and change-related constructs, including innovation, creativity, extra-role behaviours, and voice, along with personal initiative, proactive behaviours, job crafting, taking charge, or submitting suggestion. After defining each of these constructs and differentiating them along different criteria (level of analysis, compulsory or discretionary focus, and in-role vs. extra-role scope), the authors highlight how a growing lack of clarity within this nomological network can produce dysfunctional effects such as construct confusion, construct drift, and construct contamination. Suggestions

for theoretical and methodological advances are made to deal with and overcome these dysfunctions.

Harari, Reaves, and Viswesvaran (2016) present the results of a meta-analysis on creative and innovative performance, focused on its relationships with task job performance, citizenship behaviours, and counterproductive work behaviours, analysing discrimination and potential overlap between innovative performance and other classic dimensions of work performance at individual level. Results indicate positive relationships of innovative performance with task performance and citizenship behaviours, and negative with counterproductive work behaviours. However, magnitude of such relationships is not large and suggests empirical distinction among constructs, contributing to our understanding of innovative performance.

Three studies focused on the individual level of analysis, including different aspects of innovation-related behaviours. They adopt different methodological strategies, although all of them rely on motivational mechanism linked to innovation. Feys, Devloo, Anseel, and de Beuckelaer (2016) analyse through longitudinal diary studies the dynamics of innovation behaviours in the short term (day-to-day) and their effects on (positive or negative) motivational outcomes. Their results showed that innovative behaviours had an effect on basic need satisfaction one day later, mediated by perceived success of innovations and perceived support. Far from the assumption that innovations have (only) positive effects, their work provide suggestion for maintaining the optimal motivation of individuals when they receive innovation demands. Tavares (2016) carried out a dyadic study and a two-wave survey to analyse the relationships of individual creativity with affection at work. Using a measure of innovative voice, she found that more creative employees (rated by supervisors) showed more optimism, and that more creative teachers showed more positive affection three months later. This relationship appears mediated by meaningfulness at work. Urbach, Fay, and Lauche (2016) analyse through experimental designs the evaluation of innovations made by peers of innovating employees. They measured idea support and probability of approval for suggestions, whose were higher for evaluators who perceive idea consequences congruent with their achievement motive. This relationship is moderated by affection, resulting from fear of failure. In addition, in their second study, the authors included the attribution of presenter's motives. Their results provide further support for the hypothesis that incongruence of evaluators' achievement motive, in particular fear of failure, and the idea's consequences enhance the probability that an idea is approved by peer evaluators.

Next, two studies analysed team-level innovation through longitudinal studies. Sjöberg, Lantz, and Friedrich (2016) collected data about team proactivity and team learning processes, eight months later, of a detailed workflow and task analysis in teams involved.

Whereas main work tasks and supplementary tasks gave no input to team's learning process, the authors found that little time-consuming additional tasks have an impact on team proactivity through team learning. The interplay between contextual factors (some of the additional tasks) and actor's characteristics (team learning processes) seems to have an effect on innovative-related constructs like team proactivity along Lean Production Systems. Hernández and González-Romá (2016) collected team measures at three time points to analyse relationships among the number of innovations implemented in bank offices with team conflict, team negative mood, team satisfaction, as well as team performance. The authors found a positive effect of implemented innovation on team performance, in addition to a negative effect on aggregate team satisfaction and team performance via negative team mood. Thus, innovation are not always positive in its impact, and could be detrimental to performance under certain conditions, providing some evidence against the innovation maximization fallacy, and unveiling some of the "dark side" effects of innovation.

Finally, two remaining studies adopt a cross-level design. Donati, Zappalá, and González-Romá (2016) applied network analysis to study managerial teams' dynamics. Friendship network density at team level affected individual innovative behaviours (distinguishing four dimensions) through density of team communication networks. These results outline the importance of social processes for stimulating innovation at teams, including particular types of units as inter-organizational managerial decision boards. To conclude, García-Buades, Peiró, and Martínez-Tur analyse the role of team climate for innovation into the relationship between team engagement and service performance. Different service performance indicators, measured from customers, appear positively related with level of engagement of teams providing the service. Moreover, this relationship is stronger as team climate for innovation increase. Thus, service performance improves when engaged teams perceive an innovative climate, showing that climate for innovations is a relevant facilitator for connecting internal (providers) and external (customers) components of organizational success.

This set of contributions provides some advancement regarding the aforementioned challenges on innovation research. Concerning levels of analysis, this special issue reflects the growth in team-focused research, and includes two cross-level studies. Additionally, methodological diversity is evident, contributing to progress with meta-analysis, experimental designs, and diary studies, as well as analysing employee-supervisor dyads, multi-source studies (customers and employees), and network analysis. Theoretical development is primarily oriented to field clarification, although unification of theoretical framework seems far from being achieved in the short term. Nevertheless, arguably, the opening studies of this

Special Issue by Potočnik and Anderson and Harari et al. make significant contributions to field clarification.

Progress is also evident regarding the integration of subfields in innovation research (creativity and innovation implementation), as well as in analysing the dynamics of innovation as a process. Potočnik and Anderson and Harari et al. analyse the overall spectrum of creativity and innovation, whereas the study from Donati et al. includes different dimensions of innovation (idea generation, suggestion making, idea promotion, and implementation), and studies from Sjöberg et al., Hernández and González-Romá and Feys et al., build on the dynamic nature of innovation process. Only the study of Tavares focuses on one of the subfields (creative voice), whereas the studies from Urbach et al. and García-Buades et al. pay attention to innovation-related specific variables (evaluation of innovations and climate for innovation, respectively).

The set of contributions included in this issue reflect the increasing number of publications that pay attention to the antecedents, but also to the outcomes of innovation. Some of them, indeed, analyse the "dark side" of innovation, including potential negative consequences of innovative behaviours, or defying the innovation maximization fallacy. Urbach et al., Hernández and González-Romá, as well as Tavares studies explicitly considered affective responses after innovation efforts. These studies, besides those of Sjöberg et al. and Feys et al., are founded over the explicit assumption that positive or negative effects rely on the way that persons and teams manage the process of innovations and the context in which they occur. Nevertheless, the focus on the positive effects of innovation for organizations continue attracting most of studies and it seems that it will be present in the research agenda for long.

Finally, several studies respond to the call of Zhou and Hoever (2014) for analysing the interplay between actor's and context variables, adopting the dialectic approach at least as considering the multiple pathways and mechanisms that could lead to innovation at organizations. Most papers in this Special Issue included the interaction of actors characteristics (from employees or teams) altogether with situational constraints from the task or the social context. These studies outline the relevance of processes like team learning (Sjöberg, Lantz Friedrich, & Friedrich, 2016), motivation variables like basic need satisfaction (Feys, Devloo, Anseel, & de Beuckelaer, 2016) and congruence of motives (Urbach, Fay, & Lauche, 2016) or meaningfulness at work (Tavares, 2016), dynamics of communication networks (Donati et al., 2016), and affective variables (Hernández & González-Romá, 2016; Tavares, 2016).

The main challenges faced by innovation research remain, but this collection of papers offers a rich picture of current research in the field. We sincerely hope that it contributes constructively towards moving forwards the dialectic perspective on creativity and innovation in the workplace.

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