

# Scandinavian Journal of Management

Call for Papers for Special Issue on

## The Study of Inter-Organizational Encounters – Initiating a Research Methodological Debate

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This special issue aims to initiate a debate on the study of inter-organizational encounters from a research methodological perspective, with a focus on qualitative research methods. This special issue builds on a symposium presented at the Academy of Management (Cartwright et al., 2009) with a focus on qualitative research methods in the study of mergers and acquisitions.

Inter-organizational encounters, in their various forms – including mergers, acquisitions, alliances, joint ventures, partnerships and contracting arrangements – have been ongoing for the last century at an increasing pace. Although the term ‘hybrid’ was launched in 1989 to denote these various forms of inter-organizational encounters (Borys and Jemison, 1989) paralleled with a call for more cross-fertilization of work across these hitherto separate fields of study, it remains startling that twenty years later, in 2009, the situation has not changed much. These fields of research remain surprisingly isolated from one another despite the relative similarity of the phenomena studied (Yan and Zeng, 1999; Beamish and Killing, 1996; Teerikangas, 2007). In parallel, researchers keep lamenting the lack of knowledge and theoretical insights in our understanding of these phenomena (Trautwein, 1990; King, 2004). What is at stake? How to explain this seeming contradiction and paradoxical state of affairs?

A starting point is to acknowledge the sheer complexity of the topic under study – the encounter of two organizations, whether studied from a financial, strategic, managerial or human perspective. Faced with this fundamental puzzle, researchers need to make choices as regards their research methodological approaches and designs. In so doing, any research piece has inherent weaknesses, and is able to capture only part and parcel of the studied phenomenon. This is understandable, given the challenging, moving target under study that is to be scientifically grasped: a merger, an acquisition, a joint venture, an alliance, a partnership or a contracting agreement.

The seeming young age and size of research on inter-organizational encounters is likely to explain the fact that to date, there has been little discussion amongst researchers as to the methods available in studying these forms of inter-organizational encounters. This special issue aims to start addressing this gap, and in so doing, hopes to initiate a long-term, ongoing dialogue amongst researchers as regards research methods and their suitability in the study of inter-organizational encounters. The aim is to explore, discuss, compare and debate the study of inter-organizational encounters from a research methodological perspective.

The special issue *focuses on qualitative research approaches* to the study of inter-organizational encounters. This choice stems from their relatively smaller publications numbers as well as recent debates (AMJ editorial notes, e.g. Gephart, 2004; Suddaby, 2006) regarding lacking and erroneous

understandings on qualitative research methods. In so doing, the special issue not only contributes to extending knowledge on qualitative research methods in the study of inter-organizational encounters, but by and large, addresses the existing misperceptions and assumptions related to qualitative research in organizational research. The special issue aims to undertake a thorough look at the most used qualitative research approaches, including but not limited to ethnographic research, theory-building using case studies and grounded theory, critical discourse analysis, mixed methods, longitudinal research, and action research. We hope that submitted papers would:

- highlight the use of one or more qualitative research methods in the study of a particular kind of an inter organizational encounter, e.g. an alliance or mergers and acquisitions;
- compare the suitability of one or more qualitative research method across the span of inter-organizational encounters available;
- per method, ensure to present the research method itself, its ontological and epistemological foundations, its location within and as part of a research process;
- assess how, when and why the presented method(s) can be used in the study of inter-organizational encounters, what do the method(s) presented have to offer;
- provide examples of research conducted using the presented methods, either from the researcher's own experience or providing an overview of existing research;
- per method, discuss its pros, cons and suitability in the study of inter-organizational encounters, *and/or*
- assess the comparative use of differing qualitative methods in the study of inter-organizational encounters.

The aim of the special issue is to initiate a dialogue about qualitative research methods in the study of inter-organizational encounters, and in so doing, contribute to furthering the cross-fertilization of findings, methods, and approaches across the study of mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures, alliances, partnerships and contracting agreements.

#### **Submission Guidelines and Important Dates:**

The deadline for submissions is **30 September 2010** and should be submitted via the journal's online submission system available through the journal homepage <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/scaman> or directly via <http://ees.elsevier.com/sjm/> - choosing "Special Issue: Research Method Debate" as the paper type.

Before submission, please consult the journal guidelines for authors at:

[http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws\\_home/872/authorinstructions](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/872/authorinstructions)

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