

Special Research Symposium

**BEYOND ADAPTATION VS. SELECTION RESEARCH:
ORGANIZING SELF-RENEWAL IN CO-EVOLVING
ENVIRONMENTS**

Guest Editors

Arie Y. Lewin and Henk W. Volberda

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Preface

Beyond Adaptation vs. Selection Research: Organizing Self-Renewal in Co-evolving Environments

The central concern of this *JMS* special research symposium is the dynamics of organization adaptation and mutation in times of bewildering rapid rates of environmental change and accompanying accelerating selection rates. The adaptation–selection literature is very extensive and spans diverse theoretical perspectives. However, it is inconclusive on the role of managerial intentionality in organizational adaptation. The voluminous literature has more to say about selection and sources and causes of structural inertia than about self-renewing organizations that might counteract such inertia. Moreover, the dominant discourse on adaptation–selection still takes place within single theme theoretical silos.

We believe that single theme explanations of the adaptation–selection phenomenon have reached their limit and that the time is right to abandon naïve selection or naïve adaptation research in favour of research that considers joint outcomes of intentional adaptation and environmental selection pressures. With a few exceptions researchers have tended not to address the interrelationship between firm-level adaptation and population-level selection. Co-evolutionary models incorporate the premise that adaptation and selection are not orthogonal forces but are fundamentally interrelated. In other words, change is not an outcome of managerial adaptation or environmental selection but rather the joint outcome of intentionality and environmental effects.

Our purpose in editing this *JMS* special research symposium was to attract and publish papers that share the theme of self-renewing organizational forms but recognize that organizations are embedded within and co-evolve with their environments. In addition it was our hope that the papers ultimately published in this special research symposium would lead the way in crossing the chasm of the single theme theoretical silos by formulating conceptual frameworks and empirical investigations which combine and build on the complementary aspects of these theories.

We felt that our goal was very ambitious. Therefore, with the encouragement of Karen Legge and Robin Wensley who were the editors of *JMS* when this project was launched, the submission deadline of 31 August 2001 was designed to allow almost a full year for authors to submit their papers. In reality we continued to accept papers in the autumn of 2001.

In total 29 manuscripts were submitted. In the very selective review process, ultimately three strongly empirical articles and one measure development article survived. Each of the accepted papers required two significant revisions and a final revision. Due to space limitations, it was decided to publish the measurement scale development paper in a regular issue. Some time during this process we came to the conclusion that our introductory essay would have to define what constitutes empirical co-evolution research. The resulting essay we trust, provides a comprehensive review of co-evolution research with a special emphasis on empirical research and discussion of the minimal requirements that empirical co-evolution research needs to satisfy.

This *JMS* special research symposium has many heroes and supporting cast who collectively made it possible to see the project to its conclusion. First and foremost we wish to acknowledge and thank Karen Legge and Robyn Wensley for encouraging this Special Research Symposium and giving us the opportunity. We also wish to thank Timothy Clark and Mike Wright, the new editors of *JMS* who inherited the responsibility for the final phase and for driving the ultimate publication. The reviewing process for this special theme involved 80 reviewers to whom we are especially grateful. We acknowledge our gratitude to these reviewers by formally noting their contribution at the beginning of the special theme. Finally, we wish to express our thanks to Ms Birgitte Breemerkamp from Erasmus University and Ms Danielle Trojan from Duke University who collectively coordinated the administrative and reviewing processes for this special research symposium.

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