PDW Qualitative papers

The Art of Reviewing

Prof. Nina Granqvist

Aalto University

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Aalto University
School of Business

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Meetings

Fri 15.1. at 9-12:   Introductions, and characteristics of qualitative empirical research

Fri 12.2. at 9-16:   Presenting empirical analyses and considering "what is this a case of"?

Fri 9.4. at 9-16:   Theorizing from the empirical data

Fri 21.5. at 9-16:   Presenting and discussing your full papers

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Programme of the day

09.15 – 10.15   Nina Granqvist: *The art of reviewing*

10.15 – 10.30   Break

10.30 – 12.00   Paper session I & II

      Session I: Ewald Kibler   Session II: Nina Granqvist

      Arrieta, Leinonen, Padhaiskaya   *Ginting-Szczesny, Mazurova, Seittu*

12.00-13.00   Lunch break

13.00-14.30   Paper sessions III & IV

      Session III: Jo Angouri   Session IV: Samuli Patala

      Ginting-Carlström, Parikka, Soini   *Auvinen, Villo, Xu*

14.30-14.45   Break

14.45-15.30   Jo Angouri: *How to attract and retain your reader's attention: Openings/closings and matters of coherence*

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Visiting commentators

Ewald Kibler
Associate Professor
Entrepreneurship
Aalto U.
New venture legitimation, social and sustainable entrepreneurship, organizing and collective emotions, institutional work and wellbeing

Samuli Patala
Assistant Professor
Organization and management
Aalto U.
Organizational perspectives to sustainability, e. g. new types of inter-organizational partnerships, institutions and governance structures; circular economy and renewable energy production

Jo Angouri
Professor
University of Warwick
Visiting Distinguished
Professor at Aalto U.
Workplace interaction (corporate/health); multilingualism, diversity and migration and language and politics

Next time

Submission, presentation and commenting the final papers

- Write a paper with all sections

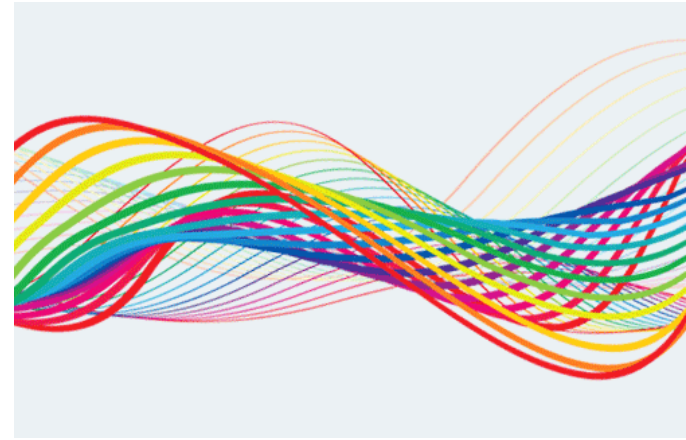**After the last session writing a full review of one other paper**

- Make sure you have page numbers in your own paper for referencing!

More detailed instructions follow

The Art of Reviewing

The flow of the talk

- Purpose of the review process

- The review process

- How to write a good review and make a decision

- Reviewer's career path

- Why to do reviewing?

- Resources

My roles as an editor and a reviewer

<u>Senior Editor:</u> Organization Studies

<u>Editorial Board Member:</u> Academy of Management Journal, Organization Theory, Research in Sociology of Organizations, previously Organization Studies

<u>Reviewing:</u> Administrative Science Quarterly, Academy of Management Review, Organization Science, Strategic Management Journal, Journal of Management Inquiry, Strategic Organization, Journal of Management Studies, …

Purpose of the review process

- <u>Verification of the academic quality</u> of the work (methods, data, rigor, relevance)

- <u>Connecting</u> it to the existing conversations

- Making <u>contributions</u> (what counts as a contribution)

- <u>Gatekeeping</u> on what gets published in academic papers: topics, issues, conversations

- <u>Supporting</u> the writer to develop and clarify their argumentation ("collective reflection")

How does a review process usually proceed in a journal?

Submission of a paper

Comes to the Editor-in-Chief, decides to which editor to send it

Lands to an Senior Editor's desk – immediate decision: desk reject or into the review process

Senior Editor selects 2-3 reviewers that "fit" in one way or another

Reviewer: Time for review usually about a month

Senior editor compiles the reviews and makes an overall assessment and a decision

How to write a good review? (1)

- **Developmental and <u>constructive</u> tone, respect, polite!**

- **Not just a list of deficiencies; why something is problematic – offer ideas <u>how to address the problem</u>, provides focus for revision**

- **Try to see the <u>potential</u> in the work – what did you like, how can the paper develop, and how to reach that potential?**
  - Room for development often hinges on the data

- **<u>Do not reveal the recommendation</u> as the editor may take a different decision**
  - Don't be **two-faced**: overly positive to the author and then very critical to the editor
  - Your overall tone should be in line with the decision

TiME FOR REViEW

How to write a good review? (2)

- Consider: Non-English native // native authors

- **Structure** your argument! What are the key points, and what are the additional things to consider.

- Edit your text – be **concise**

- **Support the editor** in decision-making

- Be on time!

Issues to consider

- **Introduction.** How is the study set up? Motivation for the study? Interesting, novel, inspiring? Focused research question?

- **Data.** What kind of claims can the authors do with the data? Is the data analyzed well and shown? Is it possible to collect more data?

- **Theoretical framing.** Do the authors address the relevant literatures? Is it focused enough (e. g. the number of constructs used)? Is there coherence and fit between the theory and the analysis (e. g. ontology, different schools of thought)?

- **Contribution.** Can the authors make a meaningful contribution (with this data and setting, and analyses they present)

Example of a review

Review

1. I very much enjoyed reading this well-crafted and well-written paper. It develops an empirically founded framework on XX that is valuable, interesting and probably also generalizable to different settings. Below I outline my suggestions for revisions – I have most concerns about the theoretical framing of the study while I consider the empirical analyses well-executed.

2. Introduction and theoretical framing

2.1 **Your theoretical frontend needs refining.** You **start from very far** and circle around by providing explications of ontologies of time. You frame as your gap that previous studies have left unexplored XX. **This is too vague and broad as a gap, and also** one can argue that [the gap is not valid]. **Start your introduction from the core phenomenon more directly.**

2.2 My suggestion is to place XX in the front and center in your framing. You could articulate that we observe XX, but we do not yet fully understand how such [outcome] comes about. This is the understanding that you provide. You can also better justify your setting as such XX firms are a great case to study and show the role of XX. You do this to an extent in the discussion but there it is too late – address the key aspects of motivating your framing and both case in the introduction.

2.3 Consider the weight that you give to Emirbayer and Mische's notion of agency. I would reduce its role significantly in your framing and elaborate in much further detail what a number of relevant studies addressing temporality and agency tell about XX. Then derive from this more focused analysis of the previous literature, what we actually know and do not know about what you label "XX".

3. Methods

3.1 Overall, your methods section is well crafted. The main question I have relate to the way you frame your data as consisting of several cases, and then referring to Yin. This is not a case study, and as a multiple case study this would not be very robust either as you have very little information per each case, and you do not elaborate the cases individually, or provide contrasts between them. Rather, I would recommend you to frame this as an empirical setting where you simply accessed managers and employees of several XX firms from three different industry, and through the analytical steps you came to ultimately trace their constructions of XX in their narratives about the firms and their actions. There is sufficient homogeneity to this data as per what the aim of your study is as these are people in similar roles in similar age companies. Again, you discuss some of these aspects in the discussion where you elaborate limitations and future research. Make sure to develop these points in the methods section, first and foremost.

3.2 Also, you do not use the new firms in your analysis section in a convincing way. **I do not think you need this data at all.** I would remove references to that dataset as I do not see that it provides much value to your argument. If you would like to keep this data in the paper, you need to make more use of it. But my point is that the paper is better without it.

3.3 Finally, I wonder if you would need a section addressing the **research context**. I believe the role of tradition and valuing history might be a particularly strong aspect of the XX culture. Also, is there something more to tell about the history and eras? In the paper and quotes, there are references to the different eras in the XX – and I wonder if it would provide more information to locate the firm establishments in the timeline that also exhibit these eras? Not sure about this as this point refers more to my own curiosity. In any case, consider what more you can or should tell about the particular research context of your study.

4. Findings

4.1 Overall, I like your findings section very much. It has **a very nice structure, it offers plenty of evidence, and it is very well written.** I do not have many comments for this section at all. In some places you would consider the sharpness of your categories in the way you present in the text – this is especially so in the last section, XX, where the two sub-sections have some overlap e.g. in terms of the discussion on innovation and change.

4.2 Another point is that the section on narratives is somewhat **disconnected** from the rest of the findings section. In the later sections you could more explicitly refer to how XX were invoked.

5. Discussion

5.1 I like your model very much as is. It is a faithful   reproduction of your coding structure into a process model of how historicized agency is produced. I find it both very well empirically grounded and generalizable in a sense that it would likely apply to other settings of "XX". However, present it separately from your discussion and give it a focused presentation in the paper. So, develop an independent section for the model, and then discuss your contributions separately thereafter.

5.2 Regarding the contributions, again think carefully **what this paper is about.** Does this paper need to be about strategy making? Why not frame it as a framework of and contribution to understanding XX in more general terms? To me, **your main contribution is to develop the notion of XX, and that can be applicable in a multitude of situations** – and not just strategy making. Again, for this theoretical framing you would need to elaborate what previous studies say about "XX", and then more particularly, the role of the past. And then your paper develops a much more fine-grained understanding of how XX. **I think your current framing is just restraining you on making a more broadly valid argument, which I think you can do** – in the end, you did not limit your data collection to strategy making situations. In fact, one could argue that your paper is not that strong on "strategy making" – but rather, it is about how the informants narrate the balance between XX in their work. Based on the several accounts then you developed the framework on XX.

5.3 In their current form, **the contributions are quite hard to decipher. What exactly are the main contributions of your study?** Again, if one would take the XX as the main contribution, **what in relation to (which) prior literature do you provide more elaborate and fine-grained contributions**? One domain can indeed be the strategy literature, even though this would not be the core framing of your study at the outset.

5.4 In sum, for me **the next steps is to focus on considering what is this a case of, and develop the theoretical front-end of the paper to a focused, powerful and well-motivated framing. After this, returning to the contributions to develop the focused key arguments there.** Other points that I make are fairly minor edits to the methods and findings, making them more coherent. Thanks for writing this paper, I really enjoyed reading it and I see it has much potential for a unique and interesting contributions! I hope you find my comments helpful in your further work on this paper.

Decision

- **Reject**

- **Revise and resubmit**
  - Likely to lead to a publication
  - High risk – difficult to see whether a revision will lead to a publication

- **Conditional acceptance**

- **Accept as is**

Example of an editorial decision based on (three) reviews

Dear authors,

Thank you for submitting your paper, *"XX"* for Organization Studies. Your paper was sent to the three reviewers who provided feedback, and I completed my own independent reading of your manuscript.

The reviewers and I reacted positively to several aspects of your work. Reviewer 2 writes "This is a lovely empirical story, and your material is fascinating" and applauds you of well-presented methods, and nice introduction to the context of the inquiry. R1 says that your paper "provides an interesting perspective/model on how an institution could be maintained through XX." I concur with these evaluations.

While the reviewers somewhat diverge in the overall evaluation of your paper they are very consistent in pointing out the key issues in revising the paper. Therefore, I ask you to revise and resubmit the paper. There is a lot of work ahead, however, and due to the magnitude of the revisions this is **a high risk R&R**.

In the following, I highlight the reviewers' concerns and provide some suggestions. Addressing these concerns is crucial for developing a significantly improved version of your paper.

Theoretical framing

While overall your choice of the institutional work framing fits well with the paper, it is unclear what is the institution in question. … You need to elaborate this more explicitly, which would both clarify and strengthen the power and impact of your argument.

As your gap statement and main framing of the paper, seeking to understand the interplays between different types of institutional work does not fare well. First, the use of "interplay" is problematic as identified Reviewers 2 and 3. R2 writes, "it is not fair to talk about literature on interplays". R3 concurs, "Although your meaning becomes clearer as you read through the text, it takes a while for the reader to get there. Perhaps including a **definition** earlier in the introduction would be a helpful guidepost." Related, Reviewer 1 asks you **to better motivate** your study. The interplay itself is not that interesting as a motivation. I suggest considering more broadly what exactly does your paper offer, and whether you need the construct of interplay at all.

I wonder whether it is interesting to separate between XX as different types – rather, should you explore XX. **Then, if this is the case, what is the gap in the literature and what new understanding does this paper develop?** R3 elaborates this very well. S/he writes: "We already know that XXX. I believe that by conducting a deeper review of the extant literature and identifying a narrower gap that goes beyond a lack of attention to XX you might be able to discover what is truly unique about your case and use that distinctiveness to advance theory." I fully concur with this statement. R3 further asks, what exactly do we learn from the literature on XX?

In sum, your research mobilizes many literatures with multiple existing explanations to similar processes that you observe in this paper. **What exactly is this a case of?** Suggestion.

Then you would need to consider a wider motivation for your paper. … **But rather begin the entire motivation of the paper, by elaborating what your study is a case of, on what it provides further understanding, and why this is important to advance our knowledge on XX**, or something else. Then your framing should discuss what the previous studies have found and what new understanding or explanation your paper provides. **No matter how you resolve the above issues, there is an extensive work of reframing and reanalysis ahead.**

Methods

Overall, your description of the methods is on a good level, but more transparency is called for. R1 would like to see a complete data structure. If you do this in a Gioia style (as suggested by R1 and R3) or not is up to you – in any case, make sure your process of analysis and coding is transparent also in the figures that you provide. Do show how you identified and coded for the activities, and how they produced the types of work and outcomes that you identify.

R2 asks you to make sure the language you use when referring to your empirical materials and analyses is in line with the **research ontology** that you adopt. Moreover, R3 is doubtful about whether you have **enough data**, and also questions **your use of secondary data sources** and asks **whether this type of data forms a suitable basis for historical analyses** (see the point C.a.) S/he also questions the way you present the data in the appendix. While I appreciate the listing of the secondary data sources, for the next round of revision you should collect and show more of the primary data (e.g. meeting minutes, newspaper stories from the time) to found your empirical interpretations to the historical, contemporary sources, and less what others have written about these occurrences after the fact. **While you say you have such data already, it is unclear what it is and it is very sparsely used in the paper.** I recommend you to explicate what the primary historical data this in a more detailed form, and use it more extensively. I would like to know more about the type and nature of the data that you analyzed from X source. What periodicals did you study, and how extensively? What about meeting minutes, how many and how much they addressed [phenomenon] and related topics.

Findings

The period of your empirical analyses is very long – reaching from 1900-2000. You have divided this into three stages with, again, very broad time periods. Consider once again, what is it exactly that you study throughout this period? In some ways the empirical story reads like snapshot from here and there, without a full and coherent understanding of the development. It is not necessarily an issue of the long time period per se – but rather, a lack of clarity and focus in your empirical analysis. Related to this, **R1 states that you use many different concepts in the paper that do not appear in your data structure**. S/he asks you to **reduce the number of constructs and simplify the argument.** Resulting from a certain lack of focus the empirical section is still quite hard to follow.

Also, regarding the model R3 asks you to further elaborate your model: "Speaking of process models, the three models you display don't seem to generalize well beyond your data and are

only minimally elaborated on in the text. I couldn't understand how the lines connecting XXX actually impinge upon other parts of the model. Consider answering the question: what is this a process of? And how does it play out in other contexts?"

Due to the issues with the framing and analyses, the contribution of the paper is still unclear. I believe the above comments provide ideas on how to move forward with the paper. Moreover, the reviewers raise some more issues than those that I have picked up here and which may nevertheless be extremely helpful for your revision.

I appreciate the opportunity to work with you and truly look forward to receiving the next revision of your paper.

Best regards,
Nina Granqvist
Senior Editor
Organization Studies

Reject

Desk reject: The paper is not ready for review; lack of fit with journal

Reasons for reject:

- **No sufficient data; lack of fit between framing and data; inadequate framing, methodology or analyses; no potential for contribution**
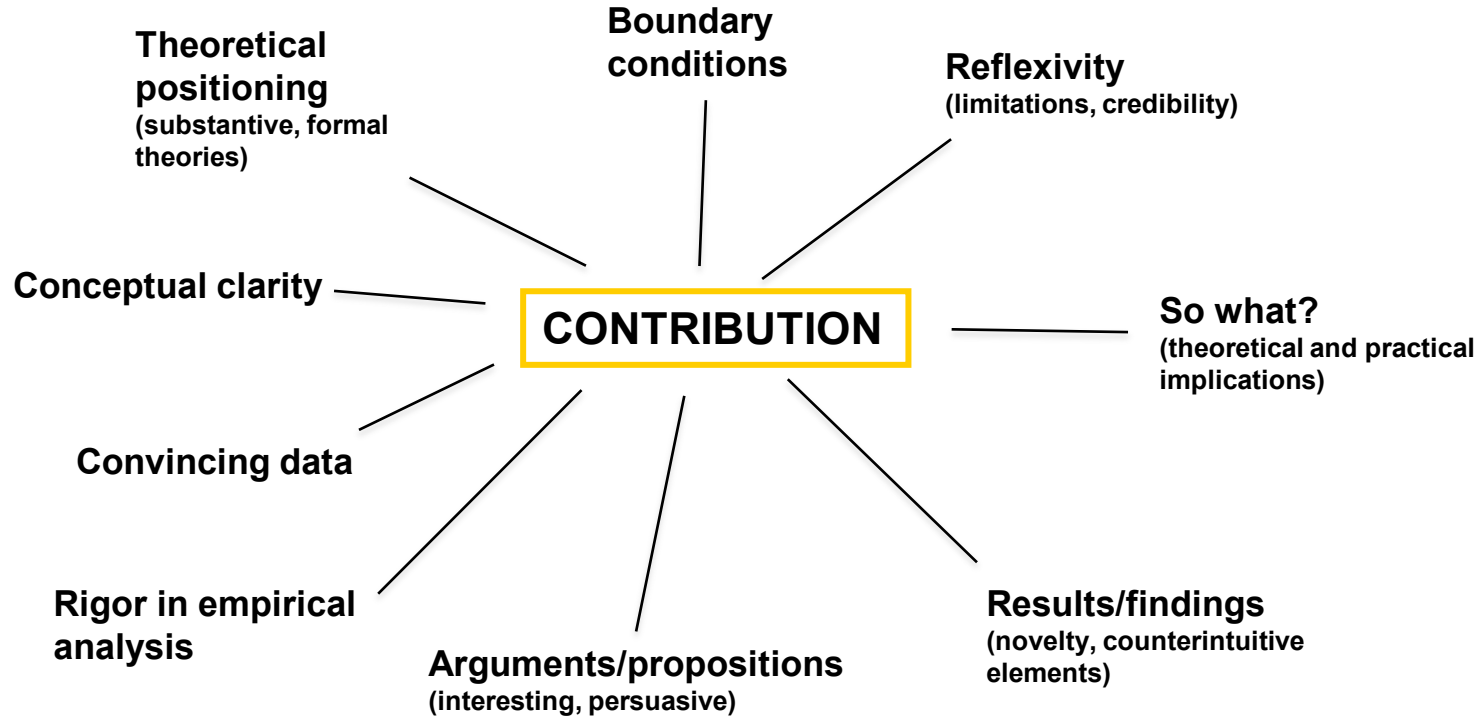
Revise and resubmit

When are you likely to get an R&R?

- ”great” data though analyses can be lacking; something interesting going on – ”potential”; cabability to develop theoretical framing and conduct analyses

Second R&R: Coherence throughout the paper but work needed on some aspects, articulated potential for contribution

(Conditional) acceptance: Full coherence, fine tune contribution – work on the 'surface' level

Contribution?

Theoretical positioning
(substantive, formal theories)

Boundary conditions

Reflexivity
(limitations, credibility)

Conceptual clarity

CONTRIBUTION

So what?
(theoretical and practical implications)

Convincing data

Rigor in empirical analysis

Arguments/propositions
(interesting, persuasive)

Results/findings
(novelty, counterintuitive elements)

"Career path" as a reviewer

–   **<u>Friendly reviews</u> of other students' and colleagues' work**

–   **Review for <u>conferences</u>, e.g. Academy of Management Conference**

–   **<u>Ad hoc reviews</u> for journals ("testing of reviewers")**

–   **Member of the <u>editorial board</u> of a journal ("staff reviewer")**

–   **<u>Senior Editor</u> of a journal**
    –   Desk decisions, selecting the reviewers, summarizing the reviews and making decisions on publications

–   **<u>Editor-in-Chief</u>: Overall responsibility of the journal and its line of publication, performance, work of editors, etc.**

Why engage in reviewing?

- **Duty:** A key academic practice to which we contribute as the members of the academic profession

- **Community.** This is what we do for our colleagues and community

- **Power/ influence:** What kind of papers and conversations we should have – each reviewer influences such decisions, or has an opportunity to do so

- **Learning:** Understanding different research settings, methodologies, learning about literatures and on-going conversations, random insights!

- **Privilege:** You have been asked to do so – inclusion and a sense of being necessary and valuable

Resources

AMJ guidelines for reviewers:

http://aom.org/Publications/AMJ/AMJ-Reviewer-Resources.aspx

Academy of Management annual meeting reviewer resources

- **https://aom.org/events/annual-meeting/reviewing/annual-meeting-reviewer-resources**

- **See the paper by Romanelli (1996): Becoming a Reviewer**