Call for papers

The concept of organizational routines continues to attract interest in the business, organization, strategy, and economics literatures. An increasing number of publications now uses the concept in analyzing a variety of organizational phenomena. 'Organizational routines' are referred to by a growing number of authors in various fields: economy, management, sociology and cognitive science. While many ambiguities have been sorted out, a gap between two different interpretations of the term persistently remains in the literature: of interpreting routines as behavioural regularities ('recurrent interaction patterns') on the one hand, and as cognitive regularities (cognitive skills, procedural memory, cognitive automatisms, …..) on the other.

For these reasons, considering more carefully the implications of different conceptions of human cognition for what we take routines to be would be useful. Different models of cognition lead naturally to different understandings of organisational routines, as well as to the adoption of different empirical methodologies for observing them.

Recent research has argued that a good starting point for tackling the question of how cognitive regularities and behaviour regularities relate to each other would be to take agency more seriously and identify precisely how agency influences the implementation of rules. We may think notably how do 'organisational routines' relate to efforts in the organisation/management literature to analyze organisational processes. Part of the problem is the way the question has been formulated, with the ‘cognitive’ and ‘political’ dimensions of routines being treated as separate, but connected aspects. Some tradition in cognitive psychology views human knowledge and reasoning processes as being necessarily grounded in social relations. Would we make more progress on this issue if we started out with the idea that the knowledge underlying routines is necessarily embedded within social relations, including relations of power and authority? This hypothesis should not contradict the fact that the co-evolution of these dimensions is a long learning process and a largely indeterminate one.

Institutions are playing a critical role by shaping organisational routines and creating some possible conditions for changing them. This point of view, notably developed in the ‘old’ evolutionary school of thought provides some opportunity to scrutinize both the mechanisms of change brought about by the individuals and the changes within the organization that
affects the individuals. Routines clearly lie between these two levels of analysis because they are enacted by individuals in a social context that can regulate the relative level of autonomy. Recent focus on the important work of Dewey reflects the renewal of interest in this field.

In short routines are generated by various interactions inside different environments (technological, physical, institutional or organisational ones) which create multiple possibilities for change and stability. An important research agenda resides in observing such stability and change. More precisely, what are the conditions triggering change or stability of organisational routines and how do we observe them? In order to advance our understanding of how the concept of organizational routines can operationalised, the accumulation of empirical studies is required. Such empirical work is complementary to work designed to strengthen the conceptual foundations of organizational routines.

In particular, the Special Issue welcomes original theoretical or empirical contributions in the following areas:

- The various models of cognition and organizational routines;
- Agency theory and/or motivational issues;
- The various sources of organizational inertia and of changes inside routines;
- Contribution to a framework for understanding the relation between institutions, mind and organizations

Submissions

To be considered for the publication, papers must be received by the editor by 30 November 2008 to the editor (Lazaric@gredeg.cnrs.fr). All papers will be blind reviewed following JOIE’s normal review process and criteria. Up to six papers will be accepted for publication to the special issue. For further information please contact Nathalie Lazaric.