

**Panel Proposal for Organizational Communication Division**  
International Communication Association (ICA)  
2022 Conference

**Title:** The Practical Potentials of CCO: Translating Constitutive Perspectives into Practice

**Description:**

The notion that communication constitutes organization is ripe with potential to inspire and transform the practices of organizing. While attention to the constitutive qualities of communication has provided increasingly useful ways to understand the complexities of organizing, the aim of this panel is to consider the challenges and potential possibilities of translating these constitutive perspectives into practice. We aim to invite conversations focused on engaging constitutive perspectives in concrete organizing practices.

**Rationale:**

The attention to the constitutive qualities of communication among organizational communication scholars increasingly offers useful ways to understand the complexities of organizations and organizational life. Whether explicitly developing Communication as Constitutive of Organization (CCO) theories (e.g., Kuhn, Ashcraft, & Cooren, 2017), engaging in Organizational Discourse Studies (e.g., Grant, Hardy, Oswick, & Putnam, 2004), or exploring Organizational (Counter)Narratives (e.g., Bager, Lueg, & Lundholt, 2021), those directing attention to the complex ways communication creates, maintains, and changes organization has inspired novel methods for studying communication and has offered meaningful contributions to the field of organization studies. However, we believe more can be done to put these ideas into practice. As such, the aim of this panel is to consider how scholars can translate constitutive understandings of communication (and the consequences of these understandings) into everyday organizational practice.

If communication, in its myriad forms, constitutes everyday organizational realities, structures, meanings, identities, processes, bodies, and potentialities for organizational life, then it is important to discuss how constitutive understandings of communication might be translated, used, and subsequently affect the everyday practices of organizing. Finding ways to make constitutive perspectives of communication relevant for practitioners has been a recurring concern for over a decade (marked by discussions at pre-conference workshops at EGOS in Rotterdam in 2014 and Copenhagen in 2017). While these conversations have inspired this line of inquiry, we aim to bring this conversation to ICA by engendering reflexive dialogue about the implications of constitutive perspectives beyond academia. This move of bringing scholarly ideas into practice is especially important as the many "grand challenges" (i.e., climate change, diversity and inclusion, etc.) organizations face are increasingly tenuous.

Grounded in diverse research projects and interests, the participants of this panel will each contribute their perspective on how constitutive theories, tenets, or other particular conceptualizations of communication as constitutive of organizing can inform (and potentially transform) the ways organizational leaders, managers, employees, and other stakeholders engage in the practice(s) of organizing. We aim to reveal how the notion that communication constitutes organization is ripe with potential to transform organizational communication practices in inspiring ways. By discussing how to connect the rather abstract theoretical considerations of varied CCO orientations with their pragmatic potentials, we aim

to inspire the conversations necessary to translate constitutive orientations to communication in ways that can address contemporary challenges of organizing.

### Panel Discussion Approach:

We aim to make this panel an interactive discussion, and thus propose a creative format that will place the panelists in dialogue with those attending the panel. Specifically, we propose that each panelist (or lead co-panelist) below will offer a brief 5 minute “pitch” of their project, idea, or argument (35 minutes). This will be followed by breaking into a few discussion groups each facilitated by members of the panel (40 minutes). We hope this creative format will provide opportunities for scholars to connect, share ideas, and collaborate.

### List of Panelists:

<p><b>Ann Starbæk Bager</b> Associate Professor University of Southern Denmark &amp; <b>John McClellan</b> Associate Professor Aalborg University Denmark &amp; <b>Erin McClellan</b> Associate Professor Boise State University USA</p>	<p><b>Digitalizing Change: Promoting Reflexivity via Digital Platforms</b> In our presentation, we consider the complexities of using digital platforms to promote organizational change. As organizations continue to promote the use of various forms of digitalization in efforts to improve communication and innovation, we consider the challenges and opportunities available if such digitization efforts embodied salient tenets of constitutive perspectives of communication. Specifically, we will discuss the potentiality of using digital platforms as “conversational tools” promoting reflexivity. We argue that if digital tools can be used as ways to generate dialogic interactions, they can inspire the dialogue needed to promote new understandings, knowledge formation, and organizational transformation.</p>
<p><b>Frédérique Routhier,</b> Master’s Student Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada &amp; <b>Consuelo Vásquez,</b> Associate Professor Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada</p>	<p><b>Cultivating Attachment: Developing a Conversational Method to Foster Volunteer Retainment</b> Based on the empirical material of a six-month research-intervention conducted in the Canadian Cancer Society, we will present our intent to translate the concepts of <i>cultivation</i> and <i>attachment</i> into the design of a conversational method for enhancing volunteer retainment. More specifically, we will focus on three communicational properties of the focus group as a conversational space for cultivating attachment: affective language, storytelling and collective reflexivity. We will also discuss the challenges that we encountered in trying to operationalize CCO premises and concepts into intervention methods, mostly regarding the epistemological and axiological tensions between heuristic and pragmatic orientations.</p>
<p><b>Nicolas Bencherki</b> Associate Professor Université TÉLUQ Montréal, Canada</p>	<p><b>Organizing Community Organizing? CCO Interventions Among Community-based Organizations</b> Working as a CCO scholar among community-based organizations is unsettling. First, CBOs’ limited funding leads them to share resources and personnel, and to collaborate on projects, thus blurring the boundaries between organizations. This has implications on key questions traditionally associated with CCO, such as authority, membership and strategy. Second, and most importantly, CBO activists themselves have limited interest in the way their organizations are structured and managed. They are more concerned with their mission and in improving their communities. CCO researchers aiming at concrete social impact must therefore broaden their</p>

	<p>understanding of organizing to encompass the whole community, of which the focal organization is but a parcel. Drawing on my own work, I will try to spell out some of the conceptual shifts to CCO that working with CBOs requires us to make.</p>
<p><b>Sanne Frandsen</b> Associate Professor Lund University Sweden</p>	<p><b>Practicing Engaged Scholarship and Facilitating Change through Narrative Coaching Processes</b></p> <p>If we conduct research from the assumption that communication constitutes organization, then we must think of organizational development and change as occurring through shifts in conversations. Such a dialogical approach significantly challenges more established approaches to ‘engaged scholarship’. In this presentation, I focus specifically on the so-far unexplored potential of facilitating organizational development through narrative coaching. The presentation is based on empirical vignettes of collaborations with organizations and groups and shows how narrative coaching may be used as a way to create change through altering problematic narratives, exploration of a multi-verse of possible stories, the allowance of the organizational polyphony, and the co-existence of narratives and counter-narratives, the embracing of the emergence of new storylines - and being attentive to intertwined nature of research narratives and the living stories of the organizational members.</p>
<p><b>Déborah Horlait</b> PhD Student UCLouvain Belgium &amp; <b>François Lambotte</b> Professor UCLouvain Belgium</p>	<p><b>How to Keep/Preserve a Pluralistic Understanding of Organizational Communication in the Design and Use of a Surveying Tool on Internal Communication Satisfaction?</b></p> <p>Developing a tool to measure internal communication satisfaction that includes a pluralistic understanding of organizational communication is a challenge for both researchers and practitioners. Through this presentation, we would like to reflect on the design and implementation process of this tool. Based on an auto-ethnographic method, our objective will be to identify the moments (e.g., the negotiation of the questionnaire items by the client) when this pluralistic understanding of organizational communication has been put to test. Following a relational ontology, our objective will be to show how, through these moments of interactions among beings (researchers, business partner, clients, the survey platform), this abstract understanding of organizational communication gains or loses existence or materiality (Cooren 2015).</p>
<p><b>Peter Kastberg</b> Professor, ComOrg Aalborg University Denmark</p>	<p><b>Modelling the <i>Terra Firma</i> of Dialogical Communication from a CCO Perspective</b></p> <p>This presentation is, quite literally, a response to the panel’s call for “translating constitutive perspectives into practice”. The focal point of my presentation is an intersemiotic translation, a ‘transmutation’ (in the sense of Roman Jakobson) of formative CCO theory tenets into a visualization of the <i>terra firma</i> of dialogical communication. Within the framing of this panel, an intersemiotic translation of formative CCO tenets serves two main purposes – the latter is derived from the first: Abstractly, and in its capacity as a visualization, reductionist though it may be, the model serves as a boundary object (in the sense of Star and Griesemer) between CCO theory and (communication-centered) organizational practices. Secondly, employed as a heuristic device, it offers an alternative <i>gestalt</i> to the mainstream</p>

	“linear/functionalist perceptions of the communication-organization relationship”.
<p><b>Anna Stöber</b> PhD Student Copenhagen Business School, Denmark &amp; <b>Dennis Schoeneborn</b> Professor Copenhagen Business School, Denmark</p>	<p><b>How to Sustain Self-managing Work Modes within Hierarchical Organizations: Communicative Boundary Work via Nurturing, Exposing, and Blending in</b></p> <p>In our contribution, we focus on how self-managing teams can sustain their alternative work modes within a hierarchical organizational setting. We examine the communicative practices used to negotiate intra-organizational boundaries between the different modes of working. Drawing on a qualitative case study of a self-managing team within a (hierarchically organized) medical technology company, we show how a team uses communicative practices of nurturing, exposing and blending-in to maintain their self-managing work modes. Finally, our study yields implications on how practices of communicative boundary work can be successfully applied to defend alternative work modes and to foster bottom-up change.</p>

**Contact:**

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