

31.1.2020 14:00-15:30. Dennis Jancsary (Vienna University of Economics and Business):
Some things are better left unsaid: The relevance of silence in theorization processes.

Abstract

In this manuscript, I explore how silence influences the theorization of novel ideas. Starting from the assessment that organization theory has so far conceived of silence in restricted and overly negative ways, I first unpack silence and discuss its different dimensions. After outlining my general approach to silence *vis-à-vis* communication, I suggest a conceptual framework classifying silence, on the one hand, according to whether it constitutes a communicative presence or absence and, on the other hand, according to whether it supports or restricts ongoing communication. I develop *invitation*, *suppression*, *acquiescence*, and *concealment* as four central communicative mechanisms enabled by silence. I then discuss the conditions under which silence is most likely to manifest each of these mechanisms and develop propositions about the ways in which each mechanism impacts theorization processes. Based on these conceptual ideas, I discuss how both research on theorization and communication-centered organization research more broadly may benefit from a more holistic and systematic integration of silence. I also outline methodological implications.

Bio

Dennis Jancsary is Assistant Professor at the Institute for Organization Studies at WU Vienna University of Economics and Business. His research draws on institutional approaches in organization theory with a current focus on the roles of verbal, visual and multimodal forms of rhetoric, narrative and symbolism. Empirically, he explores these issues mainly in the context of the institutionalization of management knowledge. He is interested in methodology that captures meaning structures from a variety of communicative traces. Dennis' work has been published, for instance, in the *Academy of Management Review*, *Organization Science*, *Organization Studies*, and the *Academy of Management Annals*.