Conference and Panel around the topic of

# Theory Building in Management Research:
# Demystification, New Methods and Challenges

**Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Lausanne**

**Thursday, June 1st 2023**
**5:15 pm – 7:15 pm**
**HEC Internef**

Presentation by Prof. Suzanne Rivard (HEC Montreal),
Panel with Prof. Yash Raj Shreshta, Prof. Patrick Haak, and Prof. Virginie Lurkin (HEC Lausanne)
Moderator: Stéphanie Missonier (HEC Lausanne)

This conference focuses on the importance (or lack thereof) of theory building and on the specificities of theorizing in Management research. Researchers from different sub-disciplines will share their perspectives and discuss : How do we theorize today? How do changes in our current environment – with the explosion of data and advances in AI – impact theory building? What is the role of theorizing today to face Grand Challenges and the need for Sustainability?

**Programme:**

17h15 – 17h25 :   Welcome from the Dean Office (Prof. Rafael Lalive)

17h25 – 17h30 :   Programme announcement and presentation of Prof. Suzanne Rivard (Prof. Stéphanie Missonier)

**17h30 – 18h15:   Part 1 : Presentation of Prof. Suzanne Rivard (from HEC Montreal) around her vision on theory building in Management.** (45 mn – presentation and Q&A)

**"Demystifying theory building in management research"**
Abstract: Researchers often hold a romantic view of theory, which they feel should be a complete, detailed, flawless, deep, and exhaustive explanation of a phenomenon. They also often hold a romantic view of theory building, which they envision either as emerging from trancelike periods of writing or as the product of a rigorous, detailed, structured deductive process. The perspective I offer here is both more realistic and pragmatic. I espouse Weick's[1] view that the outcomes of a researcher's theorizing efforts are seldom full-blown theories. Often, they are "approximations" that, if given a chance, may develop into rich theories. Here, I offer a view of theory building as a

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[1] Weick, K. E. 1995. "What Theory Is Not, Theorizing Is," Administrative Science Quarterly (40:3), pp.385-390.

craft, which calls for exerting care and ingenuity, and requires patience and perseverance. I describe a theory-building process anchored in this view, along with a few design principles that can contribute to the quality of the product of the theorizing process.

Related article: Rivard, S. 2021 "Theory Building is neither an Art nor a Science. It is a Craft," *Journal of Information Technology*, (36: 3), pp. 316-328.


**18h15 – 19h15 : Part 2 : Panel: The role of theories and theory building in different management disciplines**
Each panelist will present in 10 minutes their own approach and vision of the construction of theory: Why theorise today? Is our way of theorising changing? How to theorise today to face the grand challenges and needs for sustainability?

- **Prof. Yash Raj Shrestha (Department of Information Systems)**:
**"Algorithm Supported Induction for Building Theory: How Can We Use Prediction Models to Theorize?"**
Abstract : Across many fields of social science, machine learning (ML) algorithms are rapidly advancing research as tools to support traditional hypothesis testing research (e.g., through data reduction and automation of data coding or for improving matching on observable features of a phenomenon or constructing instrumental variables). We argue that ML techniques can be very useful in theory construction during a key step of inductive theorizing—pattern detection. ML can facilitate *algorithm supported induction*, yielding conclusions about patterns in data that are likely to be robustly replicable by other analysts and in other samples from the same population. These patterns can then be used as inputs to abductive reasoning for building or developing theories that explain them.

- **Prof. Patrick Haack (Department of Management):**
**"Grand Theory for Grand Challenges"**
Abstract (*forthcoming*)

- **Prof. Virginie Lurkin (Department of Operation)**
**"Recent Trends in Operations Research Models and Methods for Transportation"**

Operations Research (OR) is a field of study that uses mathematical and quantitative methods to analyze complex systems and improve decision-making. It uses advanced techniques such as optimization, simulation, and statistical analysis to model and solve real-world problems in various domains, including transportation. In this talk, we explain that to find practical and efficient solutions to complex problems, OR uses models and methods that are based on empirical observations and data, rather than on generalizable principles or theories. We will also briefly discuss recent trends and advancements in these models and methods, such as the incorporation of sustainable objectives in the models and the use of data-driven methods.

The presentations will followed by discussions and questions from the audience.

**19h15 – 20h30 : Aperitif**