Elgar Introduction to Organizational Paradox Theory

Elgar Introductions to Management and Organization Theory series

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This insightful Elgar Introduction comprises the first effort to provide a succinct overview of the field of organizational paradox theory, exploring contradictions and tensions in organizational settings. By conceptually mapping the field, it offers guidance through the literature on paradox, making space for new interpretations and applications of the concept.

‘In an era in which paradox theory, research, and practice has grown exponentially, this book is a landmark contribution to the work on organizational tensions. As a highly accessible guide to the paradox terrain, it offers a number of unique features: 1) a broad historical picture of the evolution of paradox theory, 2) a succinct and insightful discussion of both the positive and negative sides of paradox, 3) a vivid expose on paradox complexity, 4) an exploration of the role of power in exercising and responding to paradox, and 5) recommendations for extending the vitality of this theory as well as avoiding practices that might reify it. The clarity of its presentation, sophistication of its ideas, and use of rich vignettes make it a “must read” for practitioners as well as academics interested in how contradictions and tensions pervade organizational experiences.’

– Linda L. Putnam, University of California, Santa Barbara, US

‘Berti, Simpson, Cunha, and Clegg’s thoughtful map of the paradox terrain offers deep insight to any traveler – whether they are just stepping into this world for the first time looking to understand the landscape or whether they are a seasoned explorer who can see old experiences with a new lens. Their focus on how features of power inform our experiences of paradox offers important ideas that allows us to grapple with tensions in new ways. I found myself delighted with the ideas, eager to read more, and energized to engage with paradox studies in new ways.’

– Wendy Smith, University of Delaware, US

‘This book is a tour de force, covering the field of paradox theory and all of the key concepts whilst also sketching out a compelling vision of how paradox theorising can both provide novel insights and also be taken to the next level in studying the grand societal challenges of our time. I strongly recommend it for new and established paradox scholars and those who are “paradox-curious”.’

– Paula Jarzabkowski, Cass Business School, City University of London, UK

‘With this book, the exciting new wave of paradox studies comes of age. It encourages and enables readers to go beyond managerial “both-anding” rhetoric and approaches. It unashamedly exhorts paradox scholars to look up and look around, at the absurdity and contradictions embedded in our lives and work in a society of organizations and the role of power and politics in framing paradoxes and our responses to them. Its stronger and bolder approach to paradox theory will speak to those who feel trapped in iron cages of contradictions, excite critical scholars who wish to deepen the treatment of paradox, and broaden student’s understanding and appreciation of the tensions, dilemmas and contradictions that bedevil life...’
inside and outside modern institutions.'
– Richard Badham, Macquarie University, Australia

‘This book is a true guide to organizational paradox theory. It offers a multifarious picture of the landscape of organizational paradox with its gently rolling hills but also its sharp cliffs and deep abysses. It does a brilliant job in offering guidance into paradox research without tracing out a path to follow. Every word of this book reflects the deep and long-lasting engagement, dedication, and passion that the authors have devoted to studying paradox. It is a great service to our burgeoning field and to those who want to join the fascinating endeavor of venturing the winding roads of researching and navigating organizational paradox.’
– Tobias Hahn, ESADE Business School, Ramon Llull University, Spain