



CALL FOR PAPERS

OXFORD SAÏD ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON PROFESSIONAL SERVICE FIRMS

5-7 July, 2020

Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Crafting the Futures of Professional Services:

Personal Transformations, Political Processes and Professional Projects

Recent years have been replete with predictions and descriptions of the “future of the professions” (Susskind & Susskind, 2015) and the shape of things to come (Smets, Morris, von Nordenflycht, & Brock, 2017). Traditional archetypes have come under pressure and novel phenomena have emerged at every level: individual, practice, firm, and the system of professions overall. We have witnessed the emergence of new, “hybrid” professionals (Blomgren & Waks, 2015), new business models (Armour & Sako, 2020), and career paths (Noury, Gand, & Sardas, 2017), to name but a few.

Yet, among the excitement with these novelties, we have paid less attention to the processes through which they are crafted – and the variety that results. In short, we need to shift focus from ‘*what?*’ to ‘*how?*’, from outcome to process and from plan to execution. We therefore invite contributions – both empirical and theoretical – which examine **the personal transformations, political processes and professional projects that craft professional services of the future.**

Indicative topics may include, but are not limited to:

Professionals: With new professional roles and responsibilities emerging, how do individuals craft their identities (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010)? Who will occupy the boundary of technologism and professionalism and how do they claim this interstitial space? Will the ‘professional’ identity of the future necessarily be a hybrid one? How do professionals avoid getting stuck “betwixt and between” (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). The latter is particularly relevant where new roles cut across previously separate domains with competing expectations (e.g., Ahuja, Nikolova, & Clegg, 2017; Bevort & Suddaby, 2016)? How do individuals navigate new roles and responsibilities, as well as work-life preferences as they craft novel career paths and patterns?

Professional practice: Given the archetypical autonomy professionals enjoy, we should pay particular attention to changes at the task level which may end up transforming broader professional norms and traditions. As technology is playing a greater role in the delivery of professional services and the internal organization of PSFs, how do professionals leverage it in practice? How do they integrate new structures and practices into existing legacy systems (Fu, Flood, & Morris, 2016; Kvålshaugen, Hydle, & Brehmer, 2015)? Or, what are the mechanisms of displacement, ‘settlement’ (Rao & Kenney, 2008), or ‘sedimentation’ (Cooper, Hinings, Greenwood, & Brown, 1996)?

Professional firms: Socio-technical disruptions transform both the external shape as well as the internal architecture of PSFs. While the archetypical ‘pyramid’ shape of professional service firms has been under pressure for some time (Malhotra, Morris, & Smets, 2010), what is the shape of things to come, for instance in light of new AI-enabled business models (Armour & Sako, 2020) and global networks (Salvoldi & Brock, 2019)? How can innovation and technology be harnessed in these institutionalized settings to allow professionals to remain competitive in the future (Hinings, Gegenhuber, & Greenwood, 2018; Semadeni & Anderson, 2010)? How ‘professionalized’ is the workforce of the future? How are different norms of professionalism accommodated?

The system of professions: As firms transform their internal organization and delivery of professional services, how do changes in everyday practice escalate to the field and drive broader institutional changes at the level of the profession (Smets, Morris, & Greenwood, 2012)? What are the contested terrains over which new professions fight their jurisdictional battles (Heusinkveld, Gabbioneta, Werr, & Sturdy, 2018; Kipping, Bühlmann, & David, 2019).

Submissions

Please send an abstract of no more than 1000 words to PSFconference@sbs.ox.ac.uk by 12 April, 2020. Abstracts will be reviewed and decisions made by 30 April 2020.

Timing and Venue

The conference will be held on July 5-7 2020 at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford. It starts with an informal dinner on Sunday, July 5 and ends with lunch on Tuesday, July 7.

The Journal of Professions and Organization

The conference will once again partner with the Journal of Professions and Organization (JPO), launched in 2013 by Oxford University Press to further research on professionals and their organizations. As in past years, the PSF Hub at Oxford is sponsoring JPO's Best Paper Award, and the winners will be recognized during a short ceremony at the Conference.

Additional Information

There is no fee for conference attendance or catering, but all delegates are expected to cover their own travel and accommodation costs. We will arrange for accommodation at a discounted rate in one of Oxford's historic colleges and offer small travel bursaries to those attendees selected to present their paper. Further information will be made available to participants via the conference website in spring 2020 once decisions on papers have been made.

In the first instance, please send an abstract of up to 1000 words to PSFconference@sbs.ox.ac.uk.

Deadline for submissions is 12 April 2020.

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