

Restless Practices as Sources of Institutional Change: the Case of Strategy Consulting

This presentation draws on work with David Seidl (Zurich) and Tanja Ohlson (Oxford) to propose the concept of 'restless practices'. Building on a Schatzkian view of institutions and practices, the concept of restlessness shifts attention towards practices with an inherent telos of change. Restless practices generate change as part of their inherent logic, so that institutional change can be proactive rather than reactive in response to problems or contradictions. In distinguishing between replicative practices and restless practices, the paper points to the roles of 'collecting', 'selecting' and 'directing' in change practices. The paper also suggests that relationships within institutions can be less about ties constraining change, more about gears augmenting change. I will illustrate restless practices, and collecting, selecting and directing, with cases from the evolution of strategy consulting over the last six decades.

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