

Vaughn TAN

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RESEARCH

My research explores how open-ended structures and processes generate adaptability and innovation, at a range of scales of organisation and especially in the context of uncertainty and ambiguity.

Research areas: Innovation, organization design, R&D, adaptability, uncertainty, group processes.

EDUCATION

PH.D, Organizational Behavior and Sociology. Harvard University, May 2013.

Dissertation: “**Intentional ambiguity**,” an ethnographic study of innovation and internal ambiguity.

Committee: Amy Edmondson (co-chair), Jeffrey Polzer, Christopher Winship (co-chair).

A.M, Sociology. Harvard University, 2012.

A.B, Social Studies (*summa cum laude*). Harvard University, 2005.

WRITING

Journal articles

“**Using negotiated joining to construct and fill open-ended roles in elite culinary groups**,” on how negotiated joining acquisition of new members whose roles are not defined in advance, and how such open-ended roles and negotiated joining in combination have the unintended side effect of increasing group adaptability. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2015 (available now online).

Papers in progress

“A formal model of the explore-exploit decision,” on modeling the degree to which environmental uncertainty and other factors affect outcomes to various explore-exploit decisions.

“Learning house style,” on the processes individuals and groups use to teach and learn complex styles that allow them to generate familiar yet novel output.

“Adaptation,” on how intentional ambiguity in roles and styles increases group adaptability.

“Short, wide circuits,” on configurational mechanisms that efficiently evaluate and diffuse new ideas.

LECTURES

2013 “The pains and pleasures of joining up.” University College London.

“Learning house style.” MIT Sloan School of Management.

2011 “Ambiguity and innovation.” UN Development Program, Office for Europe and the CIS.

“Time and effort in managing innovation” Danish Ministry for Economic and Business Affairs.

“A partial history of new ideas in food.” Boston University.

“Telling stories with maps.” Lake Forest College.

2010 “Morality and process in design thinking.” Brown University and RISD.

2008 “Using visualized geographic data in climate change education.” The Climate Project Conferences.

2007 “Designing systems for emergent data and schema interchange.” Encyclopedia of Life Consortium.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2013 Am. Soc. Assn. meeting (New York City): “Ambiguity and adaptation.”

Acad. of Mgmt meeting (Orlando): “Learning complex and ambiguous style.”

2011 Organizing Institutions (Boston): “An invisible college comes to ground.”

2010 Organizing Institutions (Copenhagen): “Amorphousness in organizational boundaries”

2009 Aage Sørensen Conference (Stockholm): “A theory of amorphous boundaries.”

Trans-Atlantic Conference (London): “Closure theory and organizational diffusion.”

GRANTS

2011 Research grant, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies.

2004 Research grant, Reischauer Institute for Japanese Studies.

2003 Pforzheimer Research Grant, Schlesinger Library.

HONORS

- 2011-14 Fellow, Institute for Data-driven Design.
- 2010-13 Graduate Fellow, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies.
- 2011 Center for European Studies Fellowship (declined).
- 2005 Hoopes Prize; Noma-Reischauer Prize; Clarendon Fellowship (declined); elected to Phi Beta Kappa.
- 2002 Detur Prize.
- 2001 Service commendation, cco Stagmont, Republic of Singapore Army.

EXPERIENCE

- 2005-08 Google, Inc. Mountain View, CA. Special product development (bioinformatics, structured data products); Product marketing manager (Ads, Google Earth, Google Maps).
- 2008 Anderson Ranch Art Foundation. Snowmass, CO. Marketing consultant.
- 2001 Hewlett-Packard Asia. Singapore. Design consultant on launch of DesignJet line of products.
- 1998-01 Republic of Singapore Army, Infantry. Staff signals logistician (HQ Signals Division). Service commendation. Non-commissioned officer, rank of 2nd sergeant.

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE

- 2012 Boston World Partnerships. Member, BWP Advisory Board.
- 2009 Guanacaste Dry Forest Conservation Fund. Fundraiser, technology advisor.
- 2008 Área de Conservación Guanacaste. Technology advisor.
- 2007 E. O. Wilson Foundation. Technology advisor.

TEACHING

- MSINGR06: Strategy and design. Univ. College London, Dept. of Management Science & Innovation; 2014.
- SOC97: Classical and contemporary social theory. Harvard Dept. of Sociology; 2011.
- ES147: Idea translation and innovation. Harvard Sch. of Engineering & Applied Sciences; 2010.
Award: Bok Center award for distinction in teaching.
- BIO95hfy: Agriculture, economics, and biology. Harvard Dept. of Biology; 2005.