

# Vaughn TAN

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UCL School of Management  
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## APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Professor of Strategy and Entrepreneurship (2013-present)  
University College London, School of Management; London, United Kingdom.  
Visiting researcher (January–May 2018)  
University of Southern California, Marshall School of Management; Los Angeles, CA.

## RESEARCH

My research explores how open-ended structures and processes generate adaptability and innovation, at a range of scales of organization and especially in the context of uncertainty and ambiguity.  
*Research areas:* Innovation, organization design, R&D, design, adaptability, uncertainty.

## 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.

## PUBLICATIONS

“Using negotiated joining to construct and fill open-ended roles in elite culinary groups,” on how groups acquire new members whose roles are not defined in advance. *Administrative Science Quarterly* (2015), 60(1), p103-132.  
*The Uncertainty Mindset—Innovation Insights from the Frontiers of Food*, on organizational practices and processes that support innovation in uncertain environments. Forthcoming in May 2020 from Columbia University Press.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

“Desperation by design,” on designing projects that stimulate organizational learning and adaptation.  
“Configurational meta-knowledge,” on designing processes that support organizational learning of strategic tacit knowledge.  
*Designing the Innovation City*, on structural characteristics that support innovation in urban environments. Proposal stage by invitation from Columbia University Press.  
*Productive Discomfort*, on organizational design principles for generating discomfort that stimulates innovativeness and adaptability. Proposal stage by invitation from Harvard Business Review Press.

## TALKS AND LECTURES

2019 “Models for innovation in regenerative agriculture.” Conference on Regenerative Agriculture.  
2018 “Linking intentional goal uncertainty and innovation performance.” University of Southern California.  
2017 “Structural characteristics of innovative cities.” University of Southern California.  
2015 “Types of organizational preference uncertainty.” Ludwig Maximilian University.  
“Transferring artisanal knowledge.” H-Farm.  
2014 “Design for adaptation.” Zappos/Downtown Project.  
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.

#### CONFERENCES

- 2020 Davis Conf. on Qualitative Research: “How intermediaries influence tastes for low-intervention wine.”  
 2019 Conference on Regenerative Agriculture (Cornwall): Program advisor.  
 2019 DRUID (Copenhagen): “Intentional goal uncertainty and innovation performance.”  
 2018 Acad. of Mgmt meeting (Chicago): “Tacit knowledge transfer through work routines in innovation teams.”  
 2018 DRUID (Copenhagen): “Using open-ended goals for search and coordination in innovation teams.”  
 2016 MAD5 (Copenhagen): Tomorrow’s Kitchen (co-organizer).  
 2015 Acad. of Mgmt meeting (Vancouver): Research in unusual settings (co-organizer).  
 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.”

#### TEACHING

- MSIN0020: Strategy by design (lecture course). UCL School of Management; 2015–present.  
 MSIN0134: Strategy and design (PhD seminar). UCL School of Management; 2014–present.  
 IM3: Managing uncertain portfolios (Executive education). Singapore Management University; 2017.  
 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.

#### 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

- 2011-16 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 2<sup>nd</sup> sergeant.

#### ADVISORY

- Wellcome Collection (2019–; diversity and inclusion advisor);  
 Rethink Food NYC (2019–; executive board member and strategy advisor);  
 Dredge Partners (2019–; technology and strategy advisor);  
 Oyster Sunday (2019–; strategy advisor);  
 Boston World Partnerships (2012-2013; strategy advisor);  
 Guanacaste Dry Forest Conservation Fund (2009–; technology advisor);  
 E. O. Wilson Foundation (2007-2009; technology advisor).