

Teams as complex adaptive systems: A matter of time

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Abstract

Nearly two decades ago, Arrow, McGrath and Berdahl (2000) state that teams are complex adaptive systems (CAS). Despite the general agreement that this approach is one of the most important contributions made to really understand teams, little has changed in the way in which we make research and practice. In other words, we are analyzing different angles of teams but unable to wholly understand the phenomenon. The solution was pointed out also by McGrath (1991) and is approaching to teams from Nonlinear Dynamical Systems (NDS) theory. However, its usage is still scarce. To help in incorporating complex process dynamics at the core of science of teams, we describe what is the implications of consider teams as CAS; we perform a systematic review of empirical studies on the topic; we outline the current knowledge on teams as CAS; and finally we offer an introduction to NDS to apply in team research.