Performative Ethnographic Studies of Management Practices in Organizations

Faculty: Professor Chris Steyaert, University of St. Gallen, Associate Professor Dorthe Staunæs, University of Aarhus, Associate Professor Pia Bramming, University of Aarhus

When: May 22nd – May 26th 2011

Where: Kavos Bay Hotel, Aegina, Greece

Deadline for registration (and payment?):
Deadline for submitting course requirements: 1st May 2011

Purpose

The purpose of the course is to provide a critical, yet hands-on approach to Ethnographic studies of management practices in organizations in order to enhance, reflect upon and perform differently, the quality of design, data, analysis and results.

The course will move one step further than theoretical reflections on the subject area of ethnography and will demand a firm practical grounding of critical reflections and analysis in the performance of actual ethnographic work of the PhD Students.

Introduction to the course content

In management and organisation studies, the object of research has turned today to the social (Latour, 2005; Lazzarato, 1996; Jones & Munro, 2005): how it is assembled, immaterialized, affectively organized. During at least the last tri-cade, management and organisation studies have experimented
with different methodological and conceptual positions with differing results; however, in the wake of
the qualitative turn, concepts such as power, difference, practice, organisation, productivity, and
learning are increasingly attributed to the specific characteristics of being human; of being social
(Lazzarato, 1996, 2004; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Virno, 2004). Within this range of methodological
possibilities, (organizational) ethnography takes increasingly a prominent place (Cunliffe, 2010;
Neyland, 2007; Ybema, Yanow, Wels, Kamsteeg, 2009; Van Maanen, 2010) and is a well known way of
studying the social, as it emphasizes that a researcher gets a skin-tight feel for the social on the one
hand, while on the other hand being able to produce enough distance to analyse and pour back
energy into the studied. Converting (or corrupting perhaps) ethnography into organisational studies
is a task many PhD students find challenging and rewarding. PRES will offer a play- and work
ground to enhance the quality of your research if you are working with ethnographic methods in
organisation and management studies.

Program

PRES is a 5 day course introducing highly motivated and innovative faculty members and a
pedagogical set-up which intensifies the learning processes of the participating PhD students. The
course is held in May 2011 on the Greek island of Aegina at a modest, family driven hotel with the
most stimulating atmosphere, offering perfect surroundings to facilitate learning. Mind and body lean
together, producing a different experiences as one is taking part in all the movements, intensities and
elements that criss-cross an island.

The following sessions (symposiums) will be offered

1) Ethnographic research of organisational practices:
   a. Introduction to ethnographic research of organizational and management studies
   b. Ontological and epistemological foundations of ethnographic research
   c. Aims and practices of ethnography as a methodological tool in the study of
      organizations.
2) How is ethnography informed by theory
   a. How does theory and ethnography combine?
   b. Which forms of theorizing can ethnography be related to in the organisation/management landscape?
   c. How to organize the collection of data for analysis, making sense of data, conducting analysis using theoretical frameworks?
   d. How to analyze and interpret results to establish and communicate theoretical and empirical contributions or a mixture of both?

3) Writing Etnography
   a. How to interpret fieldwork data in the writing up of fieldwork as ethnography?
   b. Which genres, formats and styles of writing are important to consider in “writing up” fieldwork?
   c. How to write (for yourself and others) convincing and impactful texts?

Preparations/Requirements

In order to participate in the course, each PhD student is asked to send in a one-page description of the PhD project. Furthermore, a position paper has to be send in where each researcher positions him/herself within/vis-à-vis/against the literature around which the sessions are built up. The position paper situates the ethnographical project “methodologically” with regard to the three symposia, drawing upon the relevant texts and articulates first questions and reflections in relation to the emerging version of organizational ethnography the student’s project is taking. The position paper is between 2,5 and 3 pages. Thirdly, we ask you send in a short ethnographical text where the PhD student has experimented with writing up (a part of) his/her empirical material ethnographically (in accordance with his/her positioning). This illustrative writing is max 2,5 pages. Finally, we ask each student to bring along empirical “materials” (transcripts, pictures, sketches, papers,...) to work with during the exercises.
On the basis of the different materials we receive, reflective peer-teams will be created. The reflective peer-teams will be supported and coached by course faculty throughout the course.

Form

Below the course pedagogic is visualized. The course is centred on 3 Symposiums. Each Symposium contains an conceptual, a reflective and an instrumental/practical session.

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The Conceptual Sessions:
The faculty will provide short and provocative "keynotes" with the aim to respond to the questions the different literatures have raised and to deepen out the conceptual understandings and their possibilities for applying and performing them.

The Reflective Sessions:
Before the conceptual sessions, students will meet in reflective peer-teams and prepare for the learning experience by constructing questions for the conceptual sessions. Student will be regularly invited to note down or bring in their reflections. At the end of the day, we also will organize plenary session where we try to bring "home" the learnings of the days.

Prior to the course, PhD Students will have prepared themselves by studying thoroughly the selected readings for each symposium, thereby creating a common point of departure for the ongoing reflections taking place at the reflective sessions and for the discussions during the conceptual sessions.

The Instrumental/Practical Sessions:
The Instrumental sessions will be organized between the symposia and consists mostly of individual or group exercises and well as individual or group project presentations. In this part, students can try some of the conceptual discussions in concrete exercises and/or reflect upon the implications for their own ethnography project: what do I take with me for the work with my dissertation? An important element in the course is to create a learning process that is relevant and applicable for students' work on their own project.

The Course literature:

1. Ethnographical research of organizational practices
Classics


New developments


Illustrations


2. How is ethnography informed by theory


Further literature


3. Writing Ethnography (show don’t tell)

Classics

• Geertz, C. “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”. The Interpretation of Cultures


• Illustrations


Reflections


Further reading

References:


