

EGOS 2012

Sub-theme proposal: “New forms of organizational ethnography”

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Call for papers:

In these modern times, organizations are in a constant state of flux, they take shape then mutate over time (Czarniawska, 2008). Organizations evolve within an environment characterized by greater unpredictability and risk. Organizational activities have today become increasingly complex, fragmented and dispersed throughout both the temporal and spatial spectrum. The actors involved in these activities often move quickly from one geographic spot to another. In this context, research design, particularly when it relates to longitudinal research with reliance on ethnographic approaches (Rasche and Chia, 2009; Van Maanen, 2011; Yanow, 2009; Czarniawska, 2007), has to be reconsidered. How can action be effectively observed when it gets dispersed in time and space, and if it arises unexpectedly? How is it possible to reconcile the need to "be there", for a period long enough to assess the practices, norms and values of a community (Watson, 2011), with the practical difficulties encountered when collecting data in these new settings? Moreover, how can multiple levels of mediated artefacts be used to explore over time the multiple ways of organizing in a contemporary economy?

A considerable body of ethnography-based research has until now been conducted within large corporate settings (Van Maanen, 1986). This traditional tendency in the field of organizational ethnography (OE) has been associated with extended immersion in a single bound community, face-to-face interactions and interviews (Yanow, 2009). While such efforts have produced a substantial amount of organizational knowledge, we can actually identify a preference for renewing the design of such methodological approaches. As the contemporary environment becomes more fragmented, complex and uncertain, the field of ethnography proves to be less confined to bound, single-site studies, as new settings, methods and techniques are gaining prominence (Van Maanen, 2011).

Some ethnographers tend to work with settings beyond the scope of standard organizations, for the purpose of investigating new organizational phenomena or showcasing classical phenomena. For example, Benoit-Barné and Cooren (2009) followed a "*Médecins Sans Frontières*" (Doctors without Borders) team in the Congo in 2005, while Rix and Lièvre (2010) conducted studies during a series of polar expeditions. Other researchers have focused on complex phenomena and pursued "multi-site" evaluations (Marcus, 1998; Nippert-Eng, 1995). Whether the object is a jazz orchestra, artists' "squats", a sports team or the boundaries existing between home and work, researchers are required to develop innovative methods and techniques in order to practice ethnography and, in so doing, some have gone on to propose new forms of organizational ethnography (Van Maanen, 2006).

This sub-theme will explore a number of these new forms of OE. More specifically, we are interested in ethnographic experiences in unusual settings and pluralistic contexts, such as artistic scenes, non-profit organizations, virtual communities and sports teams. We are also intent on examining new ways of collecting and analyzing ethnographic data. Some ethnographic researchers have suggested updating their research methodology through the use of photographs, films and even the latest social media, like Skype and e-mail exchanges; still others have proposed developing multi-sited ethnography in claiming that ethnography is not restricted to case studies. New forms of organizational ethnography must also reassess the myriad ways of presenting and disseminating research results in academia and/or various forums.

As part of this sub-theme, we are interested in exploring such new forms of OE and invite contributions on the following topics, which by no means are meant to be exhaustive:

- New forms of OE
 - o New settings, new actors, new topics (objects, tools, bodies, texts, etc.)
 - o New design, data collection and analysis
 - o Implications for the research process
- Contributions
 - o How can new forms of ethnography contribute to contemporary organizational studies?
 - o What are the interests and limitations of these new forms of ethnography?
- Challenges
 - o Redesign of access to this field
 - o Roles of emotion and power in OT
 - o New ways of presenting and disseminating results
 - o Ethical decisions
 - o Self-reflexivity of researchers

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Mark de Rond is Reader (Associate Professor) in Strategy and Organization at Judge Business School, Cambridge University. His book "*Strategic Alliances as Social Facts: Business, Biotechnology & Intellectual History*" received the 2005 George R Terry Book Award from the Academy of Management. His ethnographic account of the Cambridge University Boat Club (*The Last Amateurs*) was selected by the Financial Times as one of 12 Best Business Books of 2008, and by BBC Sport as one of 10 Best Sporting Reads of 2008. It was also included in JP Morgan's 10th Summer Reading list (as one of 10 books out of 500 submissions), and was the basis for the 2009 Imagination Lab Award. Mark is currently involved in an ethnographic study of military surgeons deployed at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan.

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