

Posing Problems to Ethnography: New Objects and Matters of Concern in Management and Organization

Tuesday 28 April 2015, 9.00 - 5.30pm

Room 10.05, Harold Hankins, Manchester Business School

Ethnography is widely regarded as one of the most important methods for studying business and management, and in recent years has been identified as the fastest growing method in organization studies (Czarniawska, 2012). Both compelling and potentially transformative, ethnography offers a unique set of resources for those interested in theoretical innovation informed by the day-to-day practical and lived experiences of those working in management. However, ethnography in business and management studies risks becoming intellectually moribund and anachronistic unless it can respond to the ontological challenge posed by the emergence of an unprecedented range of 'objects' and 'subjects' of concern to management: i.e. digital code, virtual realities, affect, space, big data, new 'money', performative models of economy, etc. This is particularly worrying when the predominant mode of ethnography in business and management studies remains conceptually derivative and unreflexively 'realist' in its descriptive and analytical work. Where colleagues in sociology and anthropology have shown greater confidence and innovation in ethnographic study, those in management still tend towards the well-worn tropes of 'tales from the field'.

We present 6 new papers in this symposium from scholars that address these issues from a range of disciplinary traditions, some based in business schools and others working in the humanities and social sciences.

For further information and to reserve a place please email damian.odoherty@mbs.ac.uk

Dr Mark Egan – Engineering Affect: An Ethnography of Vibrational Science.

Professor Penny Harvey – Collaborative Research - tales from an ethnographic project on the Peruvian regional state.

Dr Chris Mclean - The Trials and Tribulations of Participative Observation: 'Knowing Your School' & the role of data dashboards

Dr Helene Ratner – Mind the gap: Learning sociology from headmasters

Dr Madeleine Reeves - Reverberation and/as ethnography: on the afterlives of 'inter-communal violence

Professor Theo Vurdubakis – Spatial Effects: Data Practices, Transparency Regimes and Environmental Law Enforcement in the Brazilian Amazon

Professor Albena Yaneva – Blinded by the Sun: Cosmopolitical Experiments with Glare