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Chair of Organization and Management

Distinguished Scholars Seminar Series
Spring Term 2024

Current Topics in Organization Theory and Strategy: Practice Theory

«How a practice-theoretical perspective makes a difference»

Davide Nicolini
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Warwick Business School

Course Code:	DOEC1165
Lecturer:	Prof. Davide Nicolini, PhD
Dates:	May 27 (Monday) **13:30** – 16:30
	May 28 (Tuesday) 9:30 – 16:30
	May 29 (Wednesday) 9:30 – 16:30
	May 30 (Thursday) 9:30 – **12:30**
Location:	Seminar room KOL-N-1 (map; access; info)
	UZH Zentrum, Rämistrasse 71, 8006 Zürich
Language:	English
Contact person:	Benjamin Grossmann-Hensel (mail)

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

In this interactive workshop, we will use written texts, videos, and expert interviews to examine in depth the origin, characteristics, and distinctive theoretical and methodological affordances of the practice-theoretical perspective. The term practice-theoretical perspective refers to a family of approaches in which social practices form the fundamental theoretical category and unit of analysis. During the workshop, we will distinguish between different generations of practice scholars and reflect on the similarities and differences between emerging practice-theoretical perspectives and traditions. We will also examine how adopting a practice-theoretical perspective makes a difference vis a vis cognate approaches and explore some of the practical differences deriving from applying a practice-based sensitivity to a variety of research topics.

ABOUT THE LECTURER

Davide Nicolini is Professor of Organization Studies at Warwick Business School where he co-directs the IKON Research Centre and co-ordinates the Practice, Process and Institution Research Programme and the KIN network. In the past he has held positions and visiting appointments at the University of Oslo, The Tavistock Institute in London, ESADE in Barcelona, the Universities of Trento and Bergamo in Italy. His current research focuses on the development of the practice-based approach and its application to phenomena such as expertise, managerial knowing and attention, collaboration, safety and technological innovation in organizations. He is also interested in the refinement and promotion of processual, relational and materialist research methods. He has used these approaches to study healthcare organizations, managerial work, construction sites, factories, public organizations, cybersecurity, pharmacies & scientific labs.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

DAY 1 (Monday, May 27, 2024)

SESSION 1

13.30-16.30

The historical roots and variety of the practice-theoretical perspective

Preliminary readings for session 1

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Richard Nice (tr). Stanford: Stanford University Press. Book I, 'Critique of Theoretical Reason', 25-29, 52-97, 112-22.

Giddens, A. (1979). *Central Problems in Social Theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapters 2-3, 'Agency, Structure' and 'Institutions, Reproduction, Socialisation', 49-130.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (2001). Legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice. In *Supporting lifelong learning*. London: Routledge, 121-136.

Reckwitz A. (2002). 'Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing.' *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2), 243-263.

Schatzki T. (2002). *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press. Chapter 2, 'Practices', 59-122.

Nicolini, D., Seidl, D. & Splitter, V. (2024) Schatzki's Practice Theory and Strategy as Practice. In D.Golsorkhi, L. Rouleau, D. Seidl & E. Vaara (eds.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<u>DAY 2 (Tuesday, May 28, 2024)</u>

<u>SESSION 2</u>

9.30-12.30

**Working with theories of practice: how a practice-
theoretical perspective makes a difference**

<u>Preliminary readings for session 2</u>

Emirbayer, M., & Johnson, V. (2008). Bourdieu and organizational analysis. *Theory and society*, 37, 1-44.

Rouse, J. (2023). *Social practices as biological niche construction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shove, E. (2022). *Connecting practices: Large topics in society and social theory*. London: Routledge.

Shove, E., & Pantzar, M. (2005). Consumers, producers and practices: Understanding the invention and reinvention of Nordic walking. *Journal of consumer culture* 5(1), 43-64.

Watson, M., & Shove, E. (2023). How infrastructures and practices shape each other: Aggregation, integration and the introduction of gas central heating. *Sociological Research Online* 28(2), 373-388.

<u>SESSION 3</u>

13.30-16.30

**The methodological implications of the practice-theoretical
perspective for the study of management and organizational phenomena**

<u>Preliminary readings for session 3</u>

Feldman, M. S., & Orlikowski, W. J. (2011). Theorizing practice and practicing theory. *Organization Science* 22(5), 1240-1253.

Langley, A. (1999). Strategies for theorizing from process data. *Academy of Management Review* 24(4), 691-710.

Gherardi, S. (2019). Theorizing affective ethnography for organization studies. *Organization* 26(6), 741-760.

Nicolini, D. (2009). Zooming in and zooming out: a package of method and theory to study work practices. In S. Ybema, D. Yanow, H. Wels, F. Kamsteeg (eds.) *Organizational Ethnography. Studying the complexity of Everyday Life*. London: Sage, 120-138.

Nicolini, D., & Giustini, D. (2024). How to use practice theory in ethnographic work. In: J. Budde, G. Rissler, M. Sternberg and A. Wischmann (eds.) *What's New? New perspectives in ethnographic education*. Leverkusen: Barbara Budrich Verlag, 15-35.

DAY 3 (Wednesday, May 29, 2024)

SESSION 4

9.30-12.30

Positioning practice-based studies: similarities and differences between practice, process and routines studies of management and organizations

Preliminary readings for session 4

Feldman, M. S., & Pentland, B. T. (2003). Reconceptualizing organizational routines as a source of flexibility and change. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 48(1), 94-118.

Langley, A. (2009). Studying processes in and around organizations. *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Research Methods* 409, 429.

Langley, A., Smallman, C., Tsoukas, H., & Van de Ven, A. (2013). Process studies of change in organization and management: Unveiling temporality, activity, and flow. *Academy of Management Journal* 56(1), 1-13.

SESSION 5

13.30-15.00

Applications: strategy and entrepreneurship from a practice-theoretical perspective

Preliminary readings for session 5a

Whittington, R. (2006). Completing the practice turn in strategy research. *Organization Studies* 27(5), 613-634.

Thompson, N., Verduijn, K. & Gartner, W. (2020). Entrepreneurship-as-practice: grounding contemporary theories of practice into entrepreneurship Studies. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 32(3-4), 247-256.

Jarzabkowski, P., Kavas, M., & Krull, E. (2021). It's practice. But is it strategy? Reinvigorating strategy-as-practice by rethinking consequentiality. *Organization Theory* 2(3).

15.00-16.30
Applications: understanding technology and materiality from a practice-theoretical perspective

Preliminary readings for session 5b

Orlikowski, W. J. (1992). The duality of technology: Rethinking the concept of technology in organizations. *Organization Science* 3(3), 398-427.

Orlikowski, W. J. (2007). Sociomaterial practices: Exploring technology at work. *Organization Studies* 28(9), 1435-1448.

Schatzki T. (2010). Materiality and Social Life. *Nature and Culture* 5 (2), 123-149.

DAY 4 (Thursday, May 30, 2024)

SESSION 6

9.30-12.30

Applications: studying organizational knowledge, learning and attention from a practice-theoretical perspective

Preliminary readings for session 6

Beane, M. (2019). Shadow learning: Building robotic surgical skill when approved means fail. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 64(1), 87-123.

Lave, J., & E. Wenger (1991). *Situated Learning: legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nicolini, D., & Mengis, J. (2023). Towards a view of organizational attention as practice. *Strategic Organization* 22 (1), 211-234

Nicolini, D., & Korica, M. (2021). Attentional engagement as practice: A study of the attentional infrastructure of healthcare chief executive officers. *Organization Science* 32(5), 1273-1299.

Nicolini, D., Gherardi, S., & Yanow, D. (2016). Introduction: Toward a practice-based view of knowing and learning in organizations. In *Knowing in organizations: A practice-based approach,* 3-31. London: Routledge.

Nicolini, D., Pyrko, I. Omidvar, O., & Spanellis, A. (2022). Understanding Communities of Practice: Taking Stock and Moving Forward. *Academy of Management Annals* 16(2), 680–718.

Orlikowski, W. J. (2002). Knowing in practice: Enacting a collective capability in distributed organizing. *Organization science* 13(3), 249-273.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ECTS POINTS

If you require ECTS for this seminar, we ask you to submit either (1) a synthesis of the course content or (2) an updated narrative of your current stage of theorizing and writing, including a reflection on how the content discussed in class help advance your own research project (minimum 5 pages, 1.5 line spacing, Times New Roman). Please send your submission as a PDF file to om@business.uzh.ch.

Deadline for submission: **June 30, 2024**.