

Track no. 16: Writing novelty, novelty in writing: Reflecting and performing new ways of writing research

Track proposal for NFF 2013, Reykjavik

Conveners

Benedikte Borgström, Chalmers University of Technology and Jönköping International Business School (benbor@chalmers.se).

Jenny Helin, Jönköping International Business School, and Gotland University, (jenny.helin@ihh.hj.se).

Maria Norbäck, Gothenburg Research Institute, the School of Business, Economics, and Law, Gothenburg University (maria.norback@gri.gu.se).

Elena Raviola, Gothenburg Research Institute, the School of Business, Economics, and Law, Gothenburg University (elena.raviola@gri.gu.se).

Call for papers



Figure 1. Trattgubbar (Geezers with funnel-shaped mouths) by Peter Tillberg, Ängelsberg Sculpture Park, Sweden. Photo: Bengt Oberger, 2010.

Peter Tillberg's 'Geezers with funnel-shaped mouths' could represent researchers shouting out loud without anybody else – not even themselves – listening. Worried about the establishment of one dominant form of scientific writing and the risk of becoming Geezers with funnel-shaped mouths in following the institutionalized model for doing and evaluating research, this track aims to explore how different ways of writing shape our ways of doing research.

The tradition in the Nordic countries to creatively work with qualitative studies, to be bold in regards to re-think 'grand theories' and to focus on everyday social practices have created a special place in the international research community for the Nordic way of conducting research (Czarniawska &

Sevon, 2003). This track builds on this tradition; however it will do so in a special sphere of academic work – in writing and communicating research.

Ever since the crisis of representation hit studies of organizations in the early 1990s (Hatch, 1996), people studying organizations have struggled with how to ‘write up’ and communicate their studies to reflect the increased awareness of the failures of ‘scientific’ and ‘objective’ texts. Since then, many excellent reflections on how to deal with this problem have been written, such as Van Maanen (1988), Locke (1992) and Richardson (1997). In this track we would like to take this discussion one step further, in engaging and sharing practices of writing and communicating research together.

We have found that, while as business administration scholars we are occupied with advancing theoretical perspectives by collecting, measuring and narrating the lives of others, we are often less engaged by the very artifacts we produce – such as academic texts. Far from being our sole product, texts are one of the most important ‘products’ of our researching for at least three reasons. It is a basis to measure our performance as researchers. It is *the* conversations that we engage in over time and space. It is in, and through, texts that we are becoming researchers, and through which we belong to our research identity. In texts we are communicating with ourselves as well as with others.

The academic writing process is highly institutionalized and there seems to be an unfortunate taken-for-grantedness in how we write and what constitutes a ‘good’ text. The race for article publishing and the related measurement of research quality and productivity seem to have exasperated this trend, and have imposed a dominant format which excludes plural possibilities in form, content, and length. This is utterly unfortunate since how we are expected to write affects what we can write and what we claim to be knowledge. Taking into consideration that no writing is innocent, and that all writing creates a particular view of reality, these are essentially ethical questions (Richardson, 1997).

Against this background we invite scholars to explore issues such as (and not limited to):

- If we believe writing can be a creative process of developing knowledge how can we engage in different practices of writing? In other words, what are the implications of thinking about writing as a method?
- Considering that we ourselves are inscribed in what we write, how can we allow ourselves to be expressed in writing?
- How can we write about the lived experience of others?
- Can we find other forms for expressing ourselves and writing our texts, which do not make our readers – and probably writers included – bored to death? How can we write texts that are engaging for the reader and the author?
- How can we explore different forms for expressing ourselves and writing our texts that allows for multiplicity, ambiguity and fragmentation? And do we need to simply write? Could we not also

paint a painting, sing a song, dance a dance, play a play to perform and communicate our research? What are the potentials in academic expressions?

- How can we make use of playfulness, art, and aesthetics, in order to give force to and develop our research (Wetterström, 2003)?

Joining the work of others who have explored different forms of writing such as writing as a relationship (Gergen, 2009), feminine writing (Höpfl, 2000) and writing as a method (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and anchoring ourselves in the Nordic tradition that allows for freedom of expression (see for example the work of Friberg and Strannegård (2001), Garvi's (2007) dissertation as a theatre play, and Crevani's (2011) dissertation comics) we envision a plurality of explorations around how we as academics write and share our work with others.

According to the participants' suggestion and to the possibility in situ, we will organize a range of different activities. We will have traditional paper sessions as well as more workshop-like sessions where we do close readings of our own texts, and where we explore and experiment how we can shape our empirical material. We therefore invite both 'almost finished' texts as well as texts in the making. We also encourage you to interpret 'texts' in the widest sense to include images, photos, video, and other possible forms of expression.

We would like your contribution (not exceeding 1500 words), either as a more traditional abstract, or an outline of your ideas about what you would like to discuss and share with the participants in the track, to be sent in by January 31st. Full papers' deadline June 10.

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About the conveners

Benedikte Borgström is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Industrial Marketing division, Department of Technology Management and Economics, Chalmers University of Technology and at the Centre of Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Jönköping International Business School. Her PhD thesis explains principles and practice of a customer-oriented strategy in the supply chain system. In her post doc study, she is exploring the making of “solution” sales in Sweden, Poland, Taiwan and Mainland China together with Scania and within a research group.

Jenny Helin has a post doc position at Jönköping International Business School. Her research departs from a relational stance where she works collaborative with organizational members, mainly in family owned businesses. Her main research interests lie at the intersection of process philosophy and dialogue, exploring generative meeting practices in organizational contexts.

Maria Norbäck is a post doc researcher at Gothenburg Research Institute at the School of Business, Economics, and Law, Gothenburg University. For her PhD study she investigated how the institution of Public service Television was enacted in the practices of the people making TV programmes for the Swedish public service TV broadcaster. She is interested in work practices in the creative industries and is inspired by interpretative and practice streams within institutional theory.

Elena Raviola, PhD, is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Gothenburg Research Institute, School of Business, Economics, and Law, Gothenburg University. Her PhD thesis and her current postdoc project explore the changing newswork practices between newspapers and web through organizational ethnographies in France, Italy, and Sweden. Her research focuses on objects, language, and practices in the enactment of institutions and on the encounters between new and old technologies as well as between different logics.