

Communication Constitutes Organization: The Practical and Social Relevance of Communication-Centered Organizational Research

Academia-Meets-Practice Development Workshop, Copenhagen Business School, 5 July 2017

Hosted by the Standing Working Group “Organization as Communication” of the European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS) and sponsored by the “Governing Responsible Business” (GRB) Research Cluster at Copenhagen Business School

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Practitioners and academics, especially those in the early career stage and graduate students, are invited to submit 800 to 1000-word abstracts of a presentation or case studies by 2017.4.15

The study of organization from a discursive or communication-centered lens, and more specifically the idea that communication constitutes organizations (CCO), is increasingly becoming commonplace in organization and management studies. Scholars in this tradition “are unified by the idea that organizations are invoked and maintained in and through communicative practices” (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 286). Since its initial formulations nearly twenty years ago centering on structuration theory and interaction analysis (Cooren, 2000; McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Taylor & Van Every, 2000), it has integrated scholarship in systems theory (Blaschke, 2015; Schoeneborn, 2011; Seidl & Becker, 2006). Insights from communication-centered perspectives, and CCO in particular, are now used to account for a variety of organizational phenomena, including creativity (Martine & Cooren, 2016), attitudes and emotions (van Vuuren & Cooren, 2010), diversity management (Trittin & Schoeneborn, 2015), leadership (Blaschke, Frost, & Hattke, 2014), membership (Bencherki & Snack, 2016), or strategy making (Cooren, Bencherki, Chaput, & Vásquez, 2015).

Part of their acclaim may come from the fact that CCO and related research traditions are based on empirical research, often in the form of extended ethnographies or action research, during which researchers become intimately acquainted with the reality of the organizations they are studying. Yet, communicative approaches to organizations appear to be lagging in comparison to other research perspectives when it comes to transferring their insights to practitioners and consultants, and indeed to students (Kuhn & Schoeneborn, 2015). It still must demonstrate its relevance to them and for the problems they face, or will face in their future careers. In other words, we wish to tackle the problem posed by Kuhn and Schoeneborn (2015, p. 300) and explore the ways in which we can “open up fruitful pathways for a stronger collaboration between CCO scholars and practitioners.”

Prior to the conference of the European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS) in Rotterdam in 2014, a group of researchers and consultants gathered for a two-day event to encourage the cross-breeding of ideas and concerns. This year, we wish to expand the scope of practitioners for whom communication-centered perspectives may be relevant. Indeed, besides management consultants, we invite

representatives of community-based groups, social movements, cooperatives, public agencies, schools, and other forms of collectives, to join academics in a one-day event to discuss the way communication may help drive the creation, continuation, and change of their organizations and their joint action.

The workshop will be divided in two parts. The first portion of the day will be dedicated to roundtable discussions concerning the academic papers, while the second will take the form of breakout sessions during which case studies presented by practitioners will be discussed in smaller groups.

To contribute to this workshop, graduate students, early career academics, but also more experienced scholars, are invited to submit papers that offer original perspectives on the practical and social relevance of CCO and communication-centered perspectives. Without being limited to these example, those contributions could take the form of original methodologies to better involve non-academic partners, theoretical reflections on the social role of CCO research, or empirical studies on the transfer of organizational communication knowledge from academia to practice.

Practitioners, for their part, are invited to submit case studies that address challenges to the creation, maintenance, or change of their organization. These case studies can either propose potential solutions based on communication perspectives, or leave the question open for discussion during the workshop.

An opening presentation will contrast perspectives on communication-centered research and practice. The dual presentation will bring together the ideas of Mark Van Vuuren, associate professor at the University of Twente, and Peter Knoers, from HVR consulting group in The Hague (The Netherlands).

The pre-conference will take place 5 July 2017 at the Copenhagen Business School (room to be announced), as follows:

9:00 – 9:30	Opening presentation by Mark Van Vuuren and Peter Knoers
9:30 – 10:50	Roundtable discussion 1
10:50 – 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 – 12:35	Roundtable discussion 2
12:35 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:30	Breakout sessions: discussion of empirical cases by practitioners
15:30 – 16:00	Closing statements: emerging themes

To participate in the workshop, please **submit an extended abstract of your presentation or a case study** (between 800 and 1,000 words, including text, references, figures, and tables) to Nicolas Bencherki (nbencherki@albany.edu). Please also include a brief biographical statement for all authors and background information about your organization (in the case of practitioners). The deadline for submission of abstracts is **2017.4.15**. Notice of acceptance to the workshop will be sent out by 2017.5.1. Meanwhile if you have any questions, please contact Nicolas Bencherki (nbencherki@albany.edu), Steffen Blaschke (sbl.msc@cbs.dk) or Mark Van Vuuren (h.a.vanvuuren@utwente.nl).

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