

Understanding the relationship between identity and ethics in collaborative contexts

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Many organisations form collaborations in order to respond to a demanding and unstable environment, achieve their aims, innovate, expand and become competitive. However, despite their importance, many collaborations, particularly those formed between different organisations (inter-organisational collaborations-IOCs), either fail or underperform. Key themes in the studies of collaborations are the frustrations related to collaborative working and factors/practices that may increase collaboration performance (e.g. Hibbert et al., 2008; Olson, 2012; Vangen, 2017). A minor element of this research analyses the role of identities in collaborative work and suggests that in order to accomplish a successful collaboration members need to identify with it (Koschmann, 2012). Yet collaboration members have available multiple (collaborative and non-collaborative) identities which may obstruct or facilitate the development of a common collaborative identity (Kourti, 2017). The ethics of these (potentially conflicting) identities have not been explored in collaboration studies (Winchester, 2016).

This PhD research project aims to explore collaborative ethics, understood as the relationship between ethics and identity in collaborative IOC contexts. This may include a consideration of the way collaborative ethics may affect the identities that partners bring forward when working together or how multiple identities affect collaborative ethics. We are also open to proposals that explore the wider role of ethics and identities in collaborative work, and potential links to other collaborative aspects, such as power, leadership, knowledge creation, communication exchange or innovation.

The successful candidate will demonstrate a good understanding of the relevance of the context(s) of their proposed research. We particularly encourage inter-organisational collaborative contexts that could potential include, but are not limited to, industry sectors (e.g. healthcare, hospitality and tourism, housing, education), geographic focus (e.g. collaborations in developed or developing countries) and international perspectives (e.g. international agencies collaborating with national/local organisations).

Proposed Theory and Methodology

The final theoretical framework and methodology will reflect the detailed research topic, research questions and strengths of the candidate. It is most likely that a qualitative research approach will be used based on focus groups, in-depth interviews and participant observation.

About the supervisors:

Isidora's current research follows a processual and practice-based study to explore issues, such as identity tensions, boundary management, spaces of (inter)action, spatial dynamics, knowledge

sharing and transfer, intellectual capital reporting, learning processes, permanent and temporary organising and boundary strategies, in organisational and inter-organisational collaboration settings. Isidora is interested in the theoretical as well as practical implications for the management of organisations.

Nik's research interests are in business ethics, social justice and inter-organisational collaboration. He is particularly interested in the intersection between contemporary ethics theory and practice. His current works focuses on: an empirical and theoretical exploration of social justice within global labour markets (with particular reference to the maritime sector); business ethics theory and its application to inter-organisational collaboration; and, the application of discourse ethics and communicative action to business organisational practice.

References:

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