

Exploring identity and ethics in collaborative contexts

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Project description:

Many organisations form collaborations both within their own organisation and with outside partners in order to respond to a demanding and unstable environment, achieve their aims, innovate, expand and become competitive. However, despite their importance, many collaborations either fail or underperform. There are many aspects that can affect collaborative success, such as, decision making processes, power distribution, information and knowledge sharing, cultural diversity, goal setting; trust building etc. (e.g. Hibbert et al., 2008; Olson, 2012; Vangen, 2017). A small part of this research analyses the role of identities in collaborative work and suggests that, in order to accomplish 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). However, ethics could affect the process of identity development (Appiah, 2007). More particularly, ethics could affect the identity that the members may bring forward while engaging in collaborative work, and therefore the outcome of collaboration.

This PhD research project aims to explore the relationship between ethics and identity in collaborative IOC contexts, and how this relationship may affect collaborative work. This may include a consideration of how collaborative ethics may affect the identities that IOC partners bring forward when working together or how multiple identities affect collaborative ethics and partners' engagement with collaborative work.

The successful candidate will demonstrate a good understanding of the relevance of the context(s) of their proposed research such as, but not limited to, industry sectors (e.g. healthcare, hospitality and tourism, housing, education), geographic focus (e.g. developed or developing country) and international perspectives (e.g. international agencies collaborating with national/local organisations). We encourage either or both intra and inter-organisational collaborative work contexts,

Proposed Theory and Methodology

We encourage a processual approach that perceives collaborations as temporary evolving forums (Hibbert et al., 2008) and highlights the role of actors in shaping the collaboration (Hibbert and Huxham, 2010). We also encourage the processual perspective of identity exploration (Ashforth et al., 2011) which stresses its fluidity (Gioia et al., 2000) and the interactions between multiple identities (Ellis & Ybema, 2010).

Regarding the exploration of ethics in collaborations proposals should state their preferred theoretical approach or approaches; we particularly encourage applications that explore dialogic (Habermas, 1990, 1993; Fryer, 2012), agonistic (Mouffe, 2013), embodied (Kenny and Fotaki, 2015; Pullen and Rhodes, 2014) and/or posthuman (Braidotti, 2006; Bennett, 2001, 2010) approaches to ethics.

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

About the supervisors:

Isidora's current research focuses on organisational and inter-organisational settings and follows a practice-based perspective to explore issues, such as identity development, traditional and emergent working designs, working spaces and knowledge creation; and examines their theoretical and practical implications for the management of organisations and collaborative work.

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.

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