



AALBORG UNIVERSITY

DENMARK

Conference

**Practice Theory – A New Research Agenda – and its
Implications**

**June 16th and 17th 2014
Aalborg University, Copenhagen
A.C. Meyers Vænge 15**

Keynote speakers

Professor Davide Nicolini

Professor Alan Warde

Professor Donald Broady

Professor Bente Elkjær

Registration before June 1st 2014

Program

June 16th

9.00 – 9.15 Opening and welcome speech by Annette Lorentsen

9.15 – 10.45 Keynote and Q&A: Davide Nicolini: On some of the affordances and risks of using practice theory as a vocabulary and method

In my presentation I will argue that much is to be gained if we conceive practice theory as an articulative ontology and practice-based studies as the pragmatic effort to respecify the study of the social in terms of networks, assemblage, nexuses, and textures of mediated practices. I call articulative those ontologies that are explicitly aimed at re-assembling and re-presenting the social in different types of texts. My main argument will be that practice theory should mainly be conceived as a theoretical orientation towards the study of the social where the methodological element remains central. In this sense focussing and trying to respond preliminary to questions such as “what is practice” is not only unnecessary but in many ways misleading and a red herring.

In arguing for the value of practice-theory as an inseparable package of theory, method and vocabulary I will articulate four strategies that can be used to carry out practice-based studies. These are: the analysis of the concerted accomplishment of orderly scenes of action; the examination how scenes of action have been historical constituted; the study of the development and disappearance of individual practices; and the inquiry into the co-evolution, conflict, interference of two or more practices. I will argue that these strategies, which build on the different traditions that go under the umbrella term of practice-based, provide different affordances and allow practice theory to present a view of the social that is richer, thicker and more convincing than that of competing paradigms. I will also, argue, however, that using practice theory is not without risks as manifest by some of its recent misuses.

I will conclude by noting that several open issues still stand in the way of the development of practice theory as a package of theory, method and vocabulary. These should constitute the topic of future research and debate.

10.45 – 11.15 Coffee break

11.15 – 12.45 Keynote and Q&A: Donald Broady: Theory of practice and its locus within Bourdieu’s research program

Very early on, already in his first works in Algeria and Béarn around 1960, Pierre Bourdieu begun to elaborate what he later called a theory of practice. Subsequently he together with a growing number of collaborators and disciples developed a many-sided comprehensive research program. The paper is an attempt to relate

his theory of practice to the full-fledged research program. Such an exercise is not only of philological and historical interest but also relevant in order to understand the reception of the contributions of Bourdieu & Co in present-day social science where elements from his theory of practice is frequently used by researchers who do not buy the whole package.

12.45 – 14.00

Lunch

14.00 – 16.30

Parallel Paper Presentations – discussants: Davide Nicolini, Donald Broady, Alan Warde, Bente Elkjær, Vibeke Andersen, Iben Jensen, Kristian Larsen & Anders Buch

June 17th

9.00 – 10.30

Keynote and Q&A: Alan Warde: Applying practice theory: some problems in empirical investigation

In this presentation Prof. Warde reflect upon the promise and the difficulties of applying recent versions of practice theory in empirical inquiries. Quite often social scientists who find theories of practice convincing at the level of theory express degrees of uncertainty when designing empirical research projects and analysing the results. I will consider some issues of method, including the definition of scientific objects, selecting appropriate sources of data, operationalising key concepts, and generating explanations. I will illustrate my talk with reference to some recent work in the sociology of consumption.


10.30 – 11.00

Coffee break

11.00 – 12.30

Keynote and Q&A: Bente Elkjær: 'What is an organization that it may learn'

I believe that we need to pay attention to open up the notions of participation and membership in practice-based theorizing in ways that include playful work with words and concepts. It is one of these often used words, *knowledge sharing*, I wish to explore in my talk. I do so looking at how knowledge sharing means different things to different people, and propose that practice-based studies may also use methods attending to the practices of language in ways that are important to understand organizational learning and knowing. I have chosen the above quotation from one of the most cited proponents of organizational learning, Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, because they are aware of the relation between defining 'organization' and learning, and because they, too, are inspired by the pragmatist notion of inquiry as a starting point for organizational learning.



12.30 – 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 15.30	Panel discussion: Practice Theory and New Research Agendas – Chair: Anders Buch. Participants: Davide Nicolini, Donald Broady, Alan Warde & Bente Elkjær
15.30 – 16.00	Closing and announcement of publication process, Anders Buch

Registration:


To register click the link: <http://www.survey-xact.dk/LinkCollector?key=3DMLWWDX363K>
Conference Fee: DKK 250,-

If you have any questions in relations to registration, please contact:

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Keynotes



Alan Warde

Alan Warde is currently Professor of Sociology in the School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester and a Professorial Fellow of the Sustainable Consumption Institute. Before coming to Manchester he was Professor of Sociology, Lancaster University. He held the Jane and Aatos Erkkö Visiting Research Professorship in Studies on Contemporary Society, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, University of Helsinki (2010-12). His research interests are wide ranging but recently he has been most engaged with the sociology of consumption and the sociology of food and eating. His contribution to the sociology of food and eating lies primarily in three empirically-based monographs, *Consumption Food and Taste*, *Eating Out* (with Lydia Martens) and *Trust in Food* (with Unni Kjaernes and Mark Harvey). In recent years he has attempted to explore the applicability of theories of practice to explanations of consumption and eating. Papers include among others 'Consumption and the theory of practice', *Journal of Consumer Culture* (2005) and 'What sort of a practice is eating?' (2013), in Elizabeth Shove and Nicola Spurling, (eds.) *Sustainable Practices: social theory and climate change*.



Davide Nicolini

Davide Nicolini is Professor of Organization Studies at Warwick Business School where he co-directs the IKON Research Centre. Prior to joining the University of Warwick he held positions at The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London and the University of Trento and Bergamo in Italy. His work has appeared in journals such as *Organisation Science*, *Organisation Studies*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Human Relations*, *Management Learning*, and *Social Science and Medicine*. From 2009 he is Associate Editor of the international journal *Management Learning*.

His recent research focuses on the development of a practice-based approach to the study of organizational phenomena and its implications for the understanding of knowing, collaboration, decision making and change in organizations. He recently completed a major Shadowing-based study of the work of CEOs in UK hospitals and is now studying the circulation of evidence and the evolution of knowledge sharing network in healthcare. Although these days most of his work is carried out in healthcare organisations, he has also studied construction sites, factories, public organizations, pharmacies, and scientific labs. His latest book *Practice Theory, Work and Organization. An Introduction* was recently published by Oxford University Press. He also recently co-edited a volume on *How Matter Matters: Objects, Artifacts and Materiality in Organization Studies* also published by Oxford University Press.



Bente Elkjaer

Bente Elkjaer holds a chair within learning theory with special focus upon learning in organizations and working life at the Department of Education, Aarhus University and member of the research program *Lifelong Learning*. She researches in the 'crossroads' between educational and organizational research and is engaged in how enterprises and people 'produce' knowledge and how knowledge can be shared through organizing of work and management as well as through learning. She is the former Head of *The Doctoral School of Organizational Learning (DOCSOL)* (2004-2010), and the Editor in Chief of *Management Learning. The Journal for Managerial and Organizational Learning* (2005-2010). Bente Elkjaer is also the former Head of Department of Learning at the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University (2008-2011). In Bente Elkjaer's research on learning in organizations and working life she is particularly inspired by American Pragmatism, especially the works of John Dewey. With a point of departure in a practice-based theory of learning she has worked on developing a 'third way' for organizational learning – overcoming the often reproduced dualisms between process and results, content and methods, mind and body, cognition and emotion as well as subject and world (individual and organization).



Donald Broady

Donald Broady is Professor emeritus at Department of Sociology, Uppsala University. From 1997-2013 he was full professor at different departments at Uppsala University. From 1988 to 2002 he also held a part-time position as research fellow at the Department of Numerical Analysis and Computing Science (Nada) at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm. Since 1992 (at present together with Mikael Börjesson and Marta Edling) he is directing the research unit Sociology of Education and Culture (SEC), see www.skeptron.uu.se/broady/sec/. His research has focused on broad variety of issues, inter alia on cultural fields, education, elites, the history of education, students' trajectories, transnational educational strategies, mark-up languages and internet applications.