

**Call for Papers**

**Research & PhD Workshop:**  
**Towards a social practice approach in**  
**entrepreneurship**

**February 17 – 19<sup>th</sup> 2016, VU University Amsterdam,**  
**The Netherlands**

[http://www.abri.vu.nl/en/news-agenda/agenda/2014-2015/workshop\\_entrepreneurship.asp](http://www.abri.vu.nl/en/news-agenda/agenda/2014-2015/workshop_entrepreneurship.asp)

**Conveners**

William B. Gartner, Copenhagen Business School

Neil Thompson, VU University Amsterdam

Eveline Stam, VU University Amsterdam

Karen Verduijn, VU University Amsterdam

**Confirmed keynote speakers**

Prof. Davide Nicolini, Co-Director of IKON, Warwick University

Prof. Susi Geiger, UC Berkeley / University College Dublin

**About the Workshop**

This 3-day workshop is aimed at scholars and PhD students who are using or interested in using a practice theory-led approach to entrepreneurship. PhD students looking for course work on practice theory and entrepreneurship as well as connections and feedback from top international scholars will find the workshop highly valuable. Sponsored by the European Studies Network, Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE); and Society for the Advancement of Management Studies (SAMS)

## Introduction

This workshop recognizes the ‘practice turn’ taking place across the social sciences (Nicolini, 2009, 2012) and aims to forge connections with entrepreneurship scholarship. This new line of thinking addresses the everyday unfolding of entrepreneuring (Johannisson, 2011; Steyaert, 2007), where ‘even the seemingly trivial activities of everyday life have great capacity to move us in new and unexpected directions’ (Boutaiba, 2004, p. 24). Practice theory relies on the general principle of consequentiality: the relationship between situated action and the social structure in which the action takes place (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). Practices can be seen as bundled activity patterns that constitute daily life, thus they are non-individualistic phenomena since ‘the organization of a practice is not a collection of properties of individual people [but] is a feature of the practice, expressed in the open-ended set of actions that compose the practice’ (Schatzki et al., 2001). While classic “theorists of practice” (e.g. Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1976) have emphasized the habitual, repetitive and taken for granted role of human practices, practice researchers today focus on the coordination of actions that reflect people’s understandings of “how to get things done” in complex settings (Nicolini, 2011; Orlikowski, 2002). Taking a practice approach makes it possible to conceive of the entrepreneurial process ‘as a culturally shaped achievement, the result of engaging with and transforming social practices of doing and living’ (Steyaert, 2007). A small but growing number of entrepreneurship researchers have begun to highlight the significance of a practice perspective (Watson, 2013), including new developments in opportunity research (Chiasson & Saunders, 2005; Sarason et al. 2006), internationalization (Terjesen & Elam, 2009), networking (Anderson et al., (2010), resourcing (Keating et al., 2013) and legitimacy (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009). Despite the promising application of practice theory (Johannisson, 2011; Steyaert, 2007), entrepreneuring practices have still received relatively little attention from entrepreneurship scholars.

We see practice theory as a way to advance entrepreneurship research in several respects. First, we continue the tradition that shifts focus away from ‘who’ an entrepreneur is towards the importance of activity, performance, and work in the creation and perpetuation of entrepreneurial practice. Second, practice theory focuses us on the critical role of the body and material objects in organizing entrepreneurship. Third, we break with dominant conceptualizations of entrepreneurial agency as either (semi) rational decision making or norm following, role-performing activities. Instead, agents are seen as conceivers as well as carriers of practices, a body/mind who ‘carries’, but also ‘carries out’ social practices. Fourth, practice theory radically transforms the view of knowledge, meaning, and discourse in understanding and analyzing entrepreneurship. Fifth, this approach foregrounds the centrality of interest in entrepreneurship and therefore puts emphasis on the importance of power, conflict, and politics as constitutive elements of entrepreneurial reality. Lastly, emphasizing the socially situated practices of entrepreneurs comes with considerable theoretical and

methodological implications. We argue it is time to explicitly engage with these implications in the context of entrepreneurship.

For example, some potential topics and/or areas of interest might include:

- How should we define and use practice theory and its related concepts in the context of entrepreneurship?
- How can we apply various strains of practice theory (situated learning theory, cultural and historical activity theory (CHAT), praxeology, and ethno-methodology) to study entrepreneurship phenomenon, whilst still keeping conceptual coherence?
- What role does the human body and objects play in entrepreneurial activity? Why does this matter?
- How does a practice approach refocus the 'outcomes' of entrepreneurial action?
- How is a practice perspective related to but different from entrepreneurial effectuation?
- How can a practice approach link, or go beyond, micro and macro perspectives in entrepreneurship?
- What implications does practice theory have for entrepreneurial creativity?
- What methodological considerations come with a non-individualist notion of entrepreneurship?

### Research Workshop

International scholars wishing to present during the workshop must submit an abstract to Dr. Neil Thompson ([n.a.thompson@vu.nl](mailto:n.a.thompson@vu.nl)) by **December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015**. The abstract should not exceed more than 1,000 words. Authors will be notified of acceptance or otherwise by **December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015**. Full papers should be submitted by **February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016**. Accepted scholars will be matched with PhDs to stimulate senior-junior knowledge exchange and develop and share new ideas. There is a workshop fee of 150 euros. The Workshop will take place from noon 17<sup>th</sup> until 15.00 on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2016 at the VU University Amsterdam.

### PhD Workshop

The PhD workshop is a vital component of this research workshop. The course is organized by the conveners and the ABRI, the Amsterdam Business Research Institute (3 ETCS available). Interested PhD students should submit an abstract of a working paper by **December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015** to Dr. Neil Thompson ([n.a.thompson@vu.nl](mailto:n.a.thompson@vu.nl)). Full working papers for accepted students will be due on **February 8, 2016**. The course fee is 300 euros. PhD students will be required to complete a mandatory reading list, secure a senior mentor during the research workshop, present their papers, and, in turn, will receive valuable insight and connections to international scholars. The Workshop will take place from noon on 17<sup>th</sup> until 15.00 on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2016 at the VU University Amsterdam.

## About the keynote speakers

### Prof Davide Nicolini



Prof Nicolini is the co-director of Innovation, Knowledge & Organisational Networks Research Unit, Organisation & HRM, and Organising Healthcare Research Network at the University of Warwick. He is the author of highly cited academic articles using practice theory in management and organization studies (such as *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *Organization Science*, and *Journal of Organizational Change Management*) and medical studies (such as *BMJ Open*, *Social Science And Medicine*, *Journal Of Health Services Research and Policy*, and *Journal of Health Organisation and Management*). He has also co-written a number of books detailing practice theory, such as 'How Matter Matters: Objects, Artifacts and Materiality in Organization Studies' (Oxford, 2013) and 'Practice Theory, Work and Organization. An Introduction' (Oxford, 2012). Prof Nicolini previously worked at the University of Trento (Italy) and held a senior social scientist position at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London. He also has experience in design and management of action-learning programs and action-research based interventions. His current research interests are practice-based approaches to the study of knowing, learning, and change in organizations; innovation process in healthcare and other complex environments; advancement of action-based approaches to learning and change; study and promotion of safety.

### Prof Susi Geiger



Prof Geiger's research focuses on how business firms and other stakeholders such as regulators interact in often highly complex networks and how moves by specific players in a market shape those of others. She is the author of many highly cited academic articles in this area (for instance in *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *Industrial Marketing Management* and *European Journal of Marketing*) and has co-authored two books: 'Sales Management: A Multinational Perspective' (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and 'Concerned Markets' (Edward Elgar, 2014). She is currently on a EU Marie Skłodowska Curie Global Fellowship to carry out research on Silicon Valley's health technology markets, in association with the University of California Berkeley. Since 2013, she has been a Principal Investigator in ARCH, an Enterprise Ireland and IDA sponsored five-year research programme on connected health, leading the social science (revenue models and change management) work packages on this programme. Her current research interests include: Health care

and technology marketing. Sales management, especially entrepreneurial sales. Market interactions in business-to-business markets, buyer-seller interactions and customer relationship management. Sociology of Markets. Interdisciplinary approaches to markets. Social Practice approaches. Pragmatist approaches. Actor Network Theory.

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