PhD course on developing theory

The course gives an overview of various meanings and debates theory, discusses its possible significance and risks of overestimating the role and emphasis on theory and show alternative ways of developing ideas and generating novel theories in management studies. Also the extensive critique of shortage of novel theories and dominating of problematic theories are addressed. Participants will be asked to work with developing theories and write first draft of theory papers.

Content:

The meanings and controversies of theory: What is (not) a theory?

The problems of 'bad' theories: tautologies, ideologies, pretentious common sense and other unfortunate elements in theory building

Why are there (almost) no novel theories?

Reflexivity and theory: breaking out of academic and cognitive boxes

Modes of theory development

Generating ideas I: identifying and challenging implicit assumptions

Generating ideas II: creating and solving a mystery

Elements of a theory: concepts, links, logics, domain issues

Examples of theory development

Practical work with theory: participants working with theory development

Examination: Obligatory participation, presentation and discussion of texts and writing of exam paper demonstrating theory development and/or critical analysis of theory

Literature:

Abend, G. (2008). 'The meaning of "theory"'. *Sociological Theory*, **26**, 173–99.

Alvesson, M & Kärreman, D (2007): 'Creating mystery: empirical matters in theory development'. *Academy of Management Review* 32, 4, 1265-1281

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Alvesson, M. and Spicer, A. (2012). 'A stupidity-based theory of the organization'. *Journal of Management Studies*, **49**, 1194–220.

Bacharach, S. B. (1989). 'Organizational theories: Some criteria for evaluation'. *Academy of Management Review*, **14**, 496–515.

Campbell, J. P. and Wilmot, M. P. (2017). 'The functioning of theory in industrial, work, and organizational psychology'. In Anderson, N. R., Ones, D. S., Sinangil, H. K. and Viswesvaran, C. (Eds), *Handbook of Industrial, Work and Organizational Psychology*, 2nd edition, Vol. 1. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 3-38.

Cornelissen, J. P. and Durand, R. (2014). 'Moving forward: Developing theoretical contributions in management studies'. *Journal of Management Studies*, **51**, 995–1022

Delbridge, R. and Fiss, P. C. (2013). 'Editors' comments: Styles of theorizing and social organization of knowledge'. *Academy of Management Review*, **38**, 325–31.

Sandberg, J & Alvesson, M (2020) Meanings of theory: clarifying theory through typification. *Journal of Management Studies, in press*

Shepherd, D. A. and Suddaby, R. (2017). 'Theory building: A review and integration'. *Journal of Management*, **43**, 59–86.

Sutton, R. and Staw, B. (1995). 'What theory is not'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **40**, 371–84.

Weick, K. E. (1995). 'What theory is not, theorizing is'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **40**, 385–90.

Whetten, D. A. (1989). 'What constitutes a theoretical contribution?' *Academy of Management Review*, **14**, 490–5.