

Institutional Ethnography

Newsletter of the International Sociological Association Thematic Group 06

Greetings from President Alison Griffith



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Our trip to Buenos Aires and the inaugural sessions of the Institutional Ethnography Thematic Group are only two months away. What an exciting time for all of us. For many, Buenos Aires is an exotic place where the residents spend all of their time doing tango. I understand that tango is an excellent way to manage stress as well as to learn to work collaboratively. I suggest we all do some when we are in BA.

But of course, BA is not only about tango. The city and the nation have a history of tragic politics, both left and right. I was there a few years ago when people were getting ready for the “Never Again” action day during which a million people gathered downtown to celebrate the end of the rule of the army. I’m afraid my little Canadian heart was a tad overwhelmed and amazed by the passion expressed by the students I met.

And the food and wine! BA is a sophisticated city with sidewalk cafes, excellent restaurants, and wonderful wines. But, of course, we’re not simply going to eat, drink, and tango the night away.

This will be the first time that Institutional Ethnographers will meet as a Thematic Group at the ISA. Thanks to the excellent and persistent work of Paul Luken, IE is now a part of the international sociology landscape. For BA, Paul is the Program Coordinator and has organized five sessions as well as a business meeting. Participants come from Austria, Australia, Argentina, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, and the United States. It is an exciting program that I’m sure you will enjoy.

As is usual in events such as this, we will be holding a business meeting. As is also usual in IE business meetings, this is your opportunity to speak to the issues that support the development of the IE Thematic Group, see all the people you know, meet new ones, and participate in a planning session with innovative and interesting people. Our business will include discussions of the BA conference and planning for the World Congress in Yokohama in 2014. Suzanne Vaughan (US) will give us the latest on membership and money. Barbara Comber (Australia) will be on hand to talk about IE in the larger international context. And finally, we will figure out how to get together for wine and food in one of those restaurants BA is so famous for.

Finally, a reminder about the weather. Please check before you leave for average temperatures and bring something warm – it will be Winter in BA. As I understand it, we will need to rig for rain. Especially if we are planning to sit outside in sidewalk cafes. See you then. I’ll be the one under the umbrella.

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Institutional Ethnography Sessions at the Forum of Sociology

Wednesday, August 1, 2012: 9:00 AM-10:30 AM

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Chair: *Suzanne Vaughan*

[Questioning our own textual practices in the service of social justice](#)

Lois Andre-Bechely, California State University Los Angeles

[Unwelcome, unwanted, and persistent: Institutional responses to bullying and gendered violence in Ontario schools](#)

Alison Fisher, York University

[Intentionality within organizations: Reflectivity and the human rights agenda](#)

Elizabeth Gill, Randolph-Macon College

[Achievements, challenges, and prospects in the application of institutional ethnography research](#)

Paul Luken, University of West Georgia

Wednesday, August 1, 2012: 10:45 AM-12:15 PM

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE I

Chair: *Liza McCoy*

[A good employee is a learning employee: The textual construction of 'employees of choice'](#)

Cheryl Zurawski, University of Regina

[Mandated assessment policy and teachers' work: Representing and enacting teaching and learning in an age of market reforms](#)

Phillip Cormack, University of South Australia; Barbara Comber, Queensland University of Technology

[Social practices of establishing certainty in child welfare case work: A single-case study](#)

Pernille Stornaess Skotte, Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences

[The role of inscription in organizational life](#)

Lindsay Prior, Queen's University, Belfast

Wednesday, August 1, 2012: 2:30 PM-4:00 PM

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE II

Chair: *Paul Luken*

[Características del saber compartido que hay que observar en una oficina universitaria](#)

Mariano Bargeró, Universidad Nacional Arturo Jauretche y Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora

[Institutional ethnography and people with schizophrenia](#)

Kjeld Hoegsbro, Aalborg University

[Organizing knowledge in an asylum office](#)

Julia Dahlvik, University of Vienna

[Moral discourse and institutional work processes in the settlement sector in Canada](#)

Liza McCoy, University of Calgary

Thursday, August 2, 2012: 10:45 AM-12:15 PM

PUZZLES AND CHALLENGES IN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY RESEARCH

Chairs: Alison Griffith and Barbara Comber

[Socially responsible mathematics and science teacher education: Institutional ethnography as process, product, and critique](#)

Helen Kress, D'Youville College

[Thinking juvenile citizenship: Two ethnographical examples from Switzerland](#)

Laurence Ossipow Wuest, Haute Ecole de Travail Social, Genève, Switzerland

[Mothering experiences and public health institutions. an attempt of application of institutional ethnography in mendoza, Argentina](#)

Sabrina Soledad Yañez, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras - Universidad de Buenos Aires

[Making the work of people visible in housing](#)

Suzanne Vaughan, Arizona State University

Thursday, August 2, 2012: 2:30 PM-4:00 PM

TRANSNATIONAL RULING RELATIONS

Chair: Lois Andre-Bechely

[Coproducting life histories: The ethnographic challenges of producing knowledge with the segregated urban communities](#)

Alberto L. Bialakowsky, Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires; Roxana Crudi, Investigadora; Delia Franco, Instituto Gino Germani, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires.; Pilar Fiuza, Instituto Gino Germani, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires; Juan Ferenaz, Investigador

[New forms of governance: Parental involvement in schools](#)

Alison Griffith, York University

[Uudle-izing higher education: Constructing a global accountability relation](#)

Mandy Frake-Mistak, York University

[Dime como defines cultura y te diré que relevas](#)

Laura Ferreño, Universidad Nacional de Avellaneda UNDAV; Ana Lucía Olmos Alvarez, Universidad Nacional de Avellaneda UNDAV

Thursday, August 2, 2012: 4:15 PM-5:45 PM

TG06 BUSINESS MEETING

All sessions will be held at the Faculty of Economics. The rooms have yet to be determined.

All of the presentations will be oral and in English.

PowerPoint is encouraged.

If you CTRL + click on the blue presentation titles, you may be led to the abstracts.

Institutional Ethnography Developments in Nordic Countries

Karin Widerberg, a member of the Board of the Thematic Group on Institutional Ethnography, is the leading figure in institutional ethnography in Scandinavia. She has been actively engaged in IE research since the 1990's. She is the former head of research at the Center for Women's Research at the University of Oslo and, more recently, the past head of the university's Department of Sociology and Human Geography, a large department with over 1200 students and 70 faculty members. I had the opportunity to interview Karin about the development of IE in her region and her latest project, the Institutional Ethnography in Nordic countries network (IEN) on May 10, 2012, via Skype.
—PL

Karin Widerberg: Actually my interest started with the book, Dorothy's first book, *The Everyday World As Problematic*. I guess that came out in 1987. I was starting the new Center for Gender Research. It was called the Center for Women's Research at that time in Oslo. It was '88 or '89, I believe, around that time. Somebody brought the book and put it in my hands. One of those younger scholars came and said, "You have to read this book." I had heard about Dorothy before, but I'm not sure what I had read. But anyway I read the book, and immediately it struck me as highly relevant for the way I was thinking. It was suggesting ways to do sociology and feminist research. I found it would also be of special interest in Norway. Since I was the head of research at the Center for Women's Research in Oslo, I immediately started having groups where we read the book and started discussing it. I invited Dorothy – I can't remember when, it must have been in the beginning of the 90s – to give a research course together with me at the Department of Sociology.

I like to say that feminist research, especially before in the '80s and '90s, was quite different in the Scandinavian countries. They were very different theoretical or epistemological traditions within these countries. You could say that Sweden was much more dogmatic, Marxist dogmatic oriented. Likewise in Denmark, although they had a very different tradition within Marxism, but anyway, traditions with a heavy stress on theory. It was theory oriented social science research. Start off with the theory and do your empirical research to illustrate the relevance of the theory.

But in Norway there was a very different tradition. Sociology came about in the '50s in Norway – and that was due to a couple of persons who started to put down a way of doing sociology, not only sociology but social sciences in general, that was much more empirically grounded. And they called this problem oriented empiricism. That was the term; that was the label. Problem oriented empiricism was very different from positivistic empiricism. You would do research from low, from the grassroots, and from the inside, not starting out with the theory. And this was different,



very different from the traditions of other Scandinavian countries and from Europe as a whole. It was special because a couple of well-established researchers, and one of them was a woman, Harriet Holter, the founding mother of Scandinavian women's research and the most well known feminist researcher in Scandinavia, laid the foundation of this orientation.

And within Norway they called this whole age of the '50s, '60s, and '70s the golden age of sociology. Because these people produced such good research,

fantastic stuff, really, about many things. They started from inside and low, not from outside and above. And this was the situation in Norway, and it was one of the reasons why I moved to Norway from Sweden. It was because of this orientation within social sciences in general and sociology and feminist research in particular. Whenever I opened social science books and even feminist books in Sweden and Denmark, I knew from the start what they would find out. But in Norway it was not like that. We never knew what would come out because it was not stated from the beginning – this is the theory, these are the concepts, and now I'm going to prove that they are valid empirically. This is important, this is the reason I would think that institutional ethnography – but at that time the concept wasn't used – Smith's work would fit in with this tradition in Norwegian sociology. The reason I went to Norway was because of this tradition. I took Dorothy's approach to my heart and worked heavily with it.

The interesting thing is that most people that have read Dorothy's work thought that it's just the way it's always been done in Norway. They couldn't see the difference. To me you have to work with her stuff to understand it. But most people in Norway see it as problem oriented empiricism again. There is nothing new in it. But it is very different in many fundamental ways. But most people didn't go into working with it. So that was a bit of a disappointment to me; so many of my colleagues and friends couldn't bother to work properly with it. So that was a bit of a disappointment at the beginning. So I was in a position where I had to explain over and over again what was the difference between problem oriented empiricism and Dorothy's work. The main difference is that institutional ethnography always has this linking of the extra-local and the local levels. With problem oriented empiricism you find something how, but the linking to extra-local relations is not done systematically.

Paul Luken: Probably some of the problem oriented empiricists might begin in the everyday world, but they shift to a conceptual explanation rather than continuing research to find what else is going on elsewhere creating this.

KW: That is true, but at the same time it is not like grounded theory. They don't necessarily try to link these concepts to theoretical systems. It's a bit in between. There is still the ambition to find concepts, I

would say. You are quite right. They want concepts that will give them meaning instead of having to find the connections that you're talking about. I would agree with you, but there is a difference, I would say between grounded theory and problem oriented empiricism.

PL: So you said that initially people couldn't see how Dorothy's work was really different. How have things changed since then?

KW: I would say that many people still have this problem, especially the older generation because they are still caught up in this. It's much, much easier with the newer generation, because they have not just been trained in the problem oriented empiricism. They have become much more open-minded. But another reason that I think is just as important, and even more important, is that through the name of institutional ethnography, not just talking about it as feminist research, but talking about it as an approach within sociology. By institutional ethnography presenting this approach not immediately connected with feminist research, even though it has its foundation there, it makes it so much easier to get through to the younger generation, both men and women. When you get a chance to explain institutional ethnography to the younger generation, they see the point. More and more PhD students use it. I review research applications for a huge research council in Sweden, and I can see that the approach is being used also in Sweden and elsewhere. It has actually changed for the better. But still people hear "institution." They don't hear institutional; they hear institution. And they hear "ethnography." There are those who are closing their doors because it is either institutions or ethnography. This is the thing with the name. So then I have to explain over again what is institutional not institution, and what is an ethnographic approach. We are not doing traditional ethnography. This is a problem that I confront today.

PL: So there has been a lot of interest in institutional ethnography. More people are understanding it and finding a value in. How do you explain that? What do you think it is?

KW: One of the reasons is that I myself have used it, and I've written several books and done research where it has been illustrated and discussed. Not that I want to make my role so important, but it's always

like that. In small countries people are important. I have been lecturing and giving talks about IE, also several PhD courses, by myself and with Dorothy a couple of times. And I supervise PhD and Masters students. I have persuaded them to use IE, and they have done it. And on the thesis and dissertation committees other people see this and they say, "Wow. This came out very well." So other professors, through examinations, through reading theses and dissertations, have learned about it. In the small, small ways, people are more familiar with it now. And I am not the only one now, fortunately, but for a very long time I was, at least with a position. Now through all these theses, through all this research activity, people see the results in the knowledge that is being produced. That is my understanding. That's the explanation I have.

In my department, which is the biggest sociology department in Scandinavia, I have had a lecture on institutional ethnography for entering MA-students for years and years. I have always given these lectures, even if I have been on sabbatical or whatever, because to me this is political. And then I give a chance for students to contact me if they want to write about it. To me these lectures are very political, in the sense that it is a chance for me to present this approach. The last time I did this, in autumn 2011, I said that those who were interested could come and do a one-day workshop together with me and Dorothy. And lots of students came and this was a fantastic opportunity for them. This is a way of doing political work in small, small ways. But once the PhD students get their work done, they contribute to the continuation of the IE tradition.

PL: So you've watched this really mushroom.

KW: I shouldn't say it's a big mushroom. It's a small one. Finally it will survive without me. That's an important thing because I don't want it to be dependent of me. I don't want it to be personified, or whatever you call it. That's not the purpose at all. I can say now, this will go on without me. I don't have to push it now. I have to be in the background still, but now other ones are pushing it.

PL: Obviously you have enough people now and you have a formal network that you created. It's no longer just a couple of people who know one another. Could you describe what your network is and what you're doing there?

KW: Sure. I'm getting older. I'm 62. I'm going to retire in a couple of years. I have to get these things sort of formalized before I quit. And when I knew that Dorothy was coming and was going to stay a couple weeks with my department – I invited her and we are giving this PhD course and workshops and supervision and stuff like that – I thought this will be the occasion for starting the network because lots of people would come also from the other Scandinavian countries to the PhD course and the lectures. I have a young researcher to help me do much of the practicalities all around. I paid her to do the technical things, with starting up the homepage and things like that. We have started the network, but our ambitions are very moderate. Through the network people are just getting to know one another's work and we will post important news. People can use it to spread information, like for example a dissertation coming up. And we have two conferences a year. They're not huge conferences. Let's call them workshops or meetings. One will be at the regular Norwegian Sociological Association meeting, which is every winter semester. Lots of people go. There's good skiing in the mountains... So we had the first session actually this January, which was nice. People came, and we presented the ideas of the network and IE. And then we plan to have one meeting each autumn which will be a one-day workshop where we will have different themes. We'll probably have one in September or October. It's very modest to start out with, but if people want to do more, then they can make use of the network. You have to start small when you don't have much administration or organization to rely upon.

PL: That's interesting because I think that quite often when people are doing institutional ethnography they might feel sort of isolated because their colleagues down the hall are not doing it. Meetings and networks are vital for people so that they can come together, share what they're doing, see how the whole project is advancing, and so forth.

KW: Now we have 60 persons, which is not bad since we have small countries here. It's just starting up, so I think it's quite good that we have 60 interested souls. And there are others who are interested in the network, so that's not bad.

PL: I think that's very good, especially since the people are not terribly far from one another.

KW: It will be interesting to see how it works, the organized meeting this autumn.

PL: You say that you don't have any particular plans for this network at this time. You'll mostly see what emerges as the people come together.

KW: I think we have to see who the people are who are in it and what their interests are. What are their needs? How should the network function? So that will be something we will find out this autumn. So we'll see. But I think actually one of the needs is to be hooked up with the bigger networks, the international network, so we get information on what is going on. So that will be one of the tasks for us, of course.

PL: I know that there are some people coming to the meeting in Buenos Aires from Scandinavian countries.

KW: I know because we have sent out that information. I know a couple who will be going, not me unfortunately.

PL: Maybe next time, two years later in Yokohama.

KW: I may just add one other thing. As I mentioned I evaluate research applications for a research council in Sweden. I read 250 research applications this spring, and I found 10 that used institutional ethnography. A couple of years ago you wouldn't find one. Ten may not sound like a lot, but it is a good start. And I wrote down all the names of these people whom I intend to contact later on. So this is new. You would not have found that a couple of years ago. That is a good sign. It was also a good sign that those who used institutional ethnography explained how they were using it. They did not just drop names. It was explained.

[You can learn more about the *Institutional Ethnography in Nordic countries network* by going to these web sites:

<http://www.sv.uio.no/iss/forskning/nettverk/institusjonell-etnografi/index.html> (Norwegian)

<http://www.sv.uio.no/iss/english/research/networks/institutional-ethnography/index.html> (English)]

Recent Publications by TG06 Members

Comber, Barbara and Phil Cormack. 2011. "Education Policy Medication: Principals' Work with Mandated Literacy Assessment." *English in Australia*. 46(2):77-86.

Comber, Barbara. 2012. "Mandated Literacy Assessment and the Reorganisation of Teachers' Work: Federal Policy, Local Effects." *Critical Studies in Education*. 53(2):119-136.

Luken, Paul C. 2012. "Ethnography." *International Encyclopedia of Housing and the Home*. Elsevier. (online)

Mykhalovskiy, Eric. 2011. "The Problem of 'Significant Risk': Exploring the Public Health Impact of Criminalizing HIV Non-Disclosure." *Social Science & Medicine*. 73: 670-77.

IE at the SSSP Annual Meeting

The Institutional Ethnography Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems is sponsoring nine sessions during the SSSP annual meeting which will be held August 16-18, 2012, at the Grand Hyatt Denver Hotel, Denver, Colorado, USA. For more information on these meetings go to the following webpage: <http://www.sssp1.org/>. After the meeting there is a one-day institutional ethnography workshop. (See page 9 of this newsletter.)

Registration Grant Recipients

Alison Fisher of York University, Mandy Frake-Mistak of York University, and Sabrina Yanez of Universidad de Buenos Aires were TG06 recipients of the ISA registration grants for the Forum of Sociology. Congratulations to these students, and we look forward to seeing you in Buenos Aires.

Institutional Ethnography Workshops 2012

with Dorothy E. Smith, PhD, & Susan M. Turner, PhD

at the Centre for Women's Studies in Education (CWSE)

Institutional Ethnography is a method of social inquiry that explores how institutions are put together; starts from the standpoint of people's everyday lives and real concerns; and explores the organization of power that is outside the range of people's own knowledge.

Participants will be introduced to Institutional Ethnography and its relevance to the academy and in addressing problems of everyday life and activism. The 2012 IE Workshops and Weeklong Intensives include the most recent developments in and illustrations of the wide range of IE practice.

Weekend Workshop I with Dorothy E. Smith, June 8—10, 2012 (Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) \$425 CDN + HST

Weeklong Workshop I with Dorothy E. Smith & Susan M. Turner, June 8-15, 2012, \$750 CDN + HST, plus \$425 + HST for weekend prerequisite

Weekend Workshop II: IE mapping with Susan M. Turner, June 15—17 (Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) \$425 CDN + HST

Weeklong Workshop II: Mapping Intensive with Dorothy E. Smith & Susan Turner, June 17—24, 2012, \$750 CDN + HST, plus \$425 + HST for weekend prerequisite

Participants who want to enroll in a Weeklong Intensive must take the Weekend Workshop and then the Weeklong Intensive continuously.

To register for a workshop, email Jamie Ryckman at cwse@utoronto.ca. Limited enrollment, apply early.

Downtown Toronto location.

For more information about Institutional Ethnography and our instructors, see

http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cwse/Events/Institutional_Ethnography/index.html

Institutional Ethnography Workshop

Sunday, August 19 – 8:30am – 6:00pm
Grand Hyatt Denver Hotel,
Denver, Colorado, USA
(rooms: Mount Evans A and Mount Evans B)

Institutional Ethnography Workshop (limit 50)
\$100 for employed registrants and \$70 for unemployed/activist and student registrants

This workshop will be designed to support the thinking of IE researchers who are familiar with the method, who may be teaching IE and/or supporting graduate students to conduct IE research, and who may have encountered challenges in their own program of IE research. It is hoped that those new to IE will also gain something from the workshop design. Novice IE'ers are encouraged to register too. The workshop will be interactive. The morning is focused on doing IE analysis. How to do it. How to teach it. How it takes different forms in different projects. How does one write “analytic chunks”? How does one map for analysis? Marie Campbell is doing the core thinking for this session but it will be interactive and others have agreed to share exemplars of their analytic processes. After lunch Dorothy Smith will be talking about her new projects and current thinking. Later in the afternoon we are going to break into four streams. The focus of these streams has not been finalized and will be developed in response to participants' ideas.

To register please use the following link: <http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/483/fuseaction/ssspconf.portal>

For more information contact Janet Rankin at the University of Calgary, jmrankin@ucalgary.ca.

Institutional Ethnography Workshop Agenda

8:30am – 12:00pm

Key organizer — Marie Campbell: “Learning Analysis: Seeing the Forest

Marie Campbell has been noticing problems she has experienced in working with people as they begin the analysis of their research projects. Marie says that she finds it difficult to provide people with practical, concrete suggestions for beginning to do the analysis; she shows them, gives examples, and suggests things to read, but it is still hard for people to feel confident to figure out the institutional ethnographic use of new data. Marie's intent is to show people how to make the (variously organized) world accessible and knowable, that she thinks of as learning “how to see the world as the forest and not just the trees”.

In this session Marie is going to elaborate on her thinking and describe how she has begun to pay attention to the explicit junctures when researchers grasp an IE analytic in the data. During this session there will be 2 - 3 student-teacher dyads who will reflect (empirically) on how their analytic work has proceeded; where they started and how they moved. Other people will add their ideas and experiences. There seem to be (at least) two approaches to analysis – mapping and writing. We will consider both these approaches during the workshop identifying if and/or how are they actually different, and how each illuminates the analytic work to be done.

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Keynote Session — Dorothy Smith: Dorothy will be discussing her new work and current thinking.

2:00pm – 5:00pm

Small group sessions — Up to four small groups – topics TBA. These will be moderated sessions to focus on issues participants identify.

5:00pm – 6:00pm

Review the day. Plan for future workshops.



Newsletter of the International Sociological Association Thematic Group on Institutional Ethnography (TG06)

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You can find us on the web at

<http://www.isa-sociology.org/tg06.htm>

The Thematic Group on Institutional Ethnography was established by the ISA in May 2011, and our first year has been a very busy one. During this time the membership has been steadily increasing. For most of you this is your first Institutional Ethnography newsletter. If you wish to see the earlier newsletter or find out more about TG06, I invite you to check out our web pages. The url is on the left. You may wish to bookmark it.

An aim of this group is to promote contacts and encourage exchanges among institutional ethnographers worldwide. Our meetings, web pages and newsletters are all means by which we can achieve our goals, and I invite you to participate in the meetings and to use the newsletter and web page. Please contact me if you have any information that you would like to share or if you have other questions about TG06.

Best wishes,

Paul Luken, Newsletter Editor

Remembering Ellen Pence

We mourn the loss to Ellen Pence who passed away on January 6, 2012. Ellen, a student of Dorothy Smith, became the founding Director of Praxis International, an organization dedicated to reducing violence to women and children.

While Ellen was never a member of TG06, she was certainly an international envoy for Institutional Ethnography. She did this by demonstrating how institutional ethnography could be used in the service of social activism. She did this time and again in place after

place. Once I googled the "Duluth model," a name that was once applied to Ellen's way of using IE, and I was not only surprised to see so many URLs appear, but also to see that her approach had an international following.

At the heart of her approach was the necessity of working with people to make institutions work for people. Therefore, she was often involved in training other people to do this work and in developing training materials. Among these materials is the packet "Institutional

Analysis: Matching What Institutions Do with What Works for People." Anyone interested in these materials or wishing to learn more about Ellen Pence should go to the link below. PL



<http://www.praxisinternational.org/>