THEORETICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND APPLIED PRACTICE

Opportunities and Challenges of Working in the In-between

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Introduction

This book – *Theoretical Scholarship and Applied Practice* – addresses our contemporary context where applied research is increasingly taking centre stage as a core element of the work of academics. This advance of applied practice, however, does not mean that theoretical scholarship is receding. Instead, it signifies that many of us are now participating in a new research environment, where theoretical scholarship and applied practice need to be understood as evolving in relation to each other, not as distant and different fields of research activity. This, we argue, offers a series of opportunities and challenges that we need to address as academics in order to carve out a beneficial and ethical agenda for applied-theoretical research, which is driven by shared concerns of academics and those whom we encounter when we work across different settings and with diverse stakeholders. The particular focus of this book is to respond to this issue through a consideration of how theoretical scholarship and applied practice need to come together in order to develop this agenda as a viable future form of scholarship and practice, and as a way to *be* as an academic.

The bringing together of applied practice and theoretical scholarship might seem to some like an obvious way of working in a world where a range of organizations across corporate, policy and other sectors are already

closely engaged with academics. Yet for others this very idea is challenging, and there remains a gulf between the theoretical and the applied. Indeed, some of the scholars whom we contacted during the conceptual stages of putting together a book proposal for this volume congratulated us on taking this initiative, and readily acknowledged the importance of it, but even took pause and wondered if we weren't biting off more than we could chew. Having worked for years in both applied and academic contexts, they were acutely aware of the manner in which these two contexts could (and quite often did) inform one another, but they also pointed out that the positions of applied researchers and their more theoretically oriented peers could be read as a battlefield map with more than its fair share of well-staked-out minefields and entrenched points of tension.

This, however, was not always the case; indeed, much academic research in anthropology, including that led by the academic stars of the history of the discipline – like Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson (see Pink 2005, 2007 for discussions of this) – had an applied focus. Yet during the course of history since then, as the previous century progressed, a thought that remains disturbingly familiar in contemporary academia was hosted. Its proponents imagined a division between applied and theoretical forms of cultural and social research. It did not take long before this thought was transformed into something akin to conventional wisdom across some national academic cultures, and a morally charged landscape filled with villains, heroes, gatekeepers and heretics came into view. One of the prevalent vantage points from which we, as the editors to this volume, surveyed this landscape – first as students and later as professionals – was that of anthropology. Yet, however ingrained it has become, this view is now not sustainable and neither is it played out in our academic practice. As scholars and researchers whose careers have grown through routes that have included undertaking applied, critical and interventional research, we have never wanted or needed to separate theoretical scholarship and applied practice in our work. Indeed, it is unlikely that it would have occurred to us that these might be separated out, had academics of previous generations not sought to distinguish their ivory towers from what was imagined to be the less intellectual task of applied practice (see for example Mills 2005, Wright 2005).

We are not the only academics who take this view: there are many anthropologists across the globe who are actively practising applied-theoretical anthropology (e.g. see Cefkin 2009; Beck and Maida 2015; Malefyt and Morais 2012; Sunderland and Denny 2009, 2015). Never-theless, we have found it difficult to find any existing open articulation of how an ethnographic-theoretical dialogue might be played out in applied anthropology: open a textbook on applied anthropology and the reader

enters a world of issues that have been identified as highly relevant by scholars who identify themselves as applied anthropologists. These include: the general historical context of the development of applied anthropology, its methods, settings and roles of use, ethical considerations, and attempts to delineate its domains of engagement (e.g. Ervin 2004; Kedia and van Willigen 2005; Willigen 2002). Obviously, these are all issues that are of the utmost importance for the delineation of any academic field of study. Nonetheless, what is glaringly lacking is a larger and extensive discussion of how forms of applied, public and practised scholarship contribute to the development of cultural and social theory, and vice versa: how abstract theoretical insights can provide concrete proposals, insights or solutions and understandings in concrete contexts of daily life and work.

One explanation for this lacuna is the historical context we have referred to above. Another is simply that these are difficult questions to write about, and more so at an abstract level, since the dialogue between ethnography and theory inevitably, in anthropology at least, always emerges in practice. Likewise, in the wider literature about ethnographic methodology, methods and practice, there is a remarkable lack of advice about how to undertake an ethnographic 'analysis' (see for example texts ranging from Clifford and Marcus 1986; Harris 2007; Mitchell, Melhuus and Wulff 2009; Ingold 2008; O'Reilly 2005; Pink 2013, 2015). While reflexive accounts of ethnographic fieldwork experiences flow easily from the fingertips of many ethnographers, the stories of how they lived between theory and research materials during that time and the subsequent months are little exposed. It seems that it is simply not very conventional for most social and cultural researchers to describe these elements of their craft – or at least it is not something that is part of our training to do (see also O'Dell and Willim 2013; Leder Mackley and Pink 2013). This gap in the existing literature is one of the issues that this book, and the interdisciplinary group of scholars and researchers who have contributed to it, respond to.

Theoretical Scholarship and Applied Practice therefore approaches the relationship between applied and theoretical research from a fresh perspective. We argue for the carving out of a new route forward for applied social and cultural research, and for the ways in which students are educated in this field of research: one that both builds on the ethnographic-theoretical dialogue that lies at the centre of the ability of social anthropology to draw unexpected and fundamental insights about everyday worlds as they are lived *and* that acknowledges the interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder environments in which applied social and cultural research are played out. Indeed, we propose that unless anthropologists are prepared to build bridges with other disciplines and

practices, rather than critically separating and isolating their discipline from others, anthropology is unlikely to flourish as an active and influential discipline. We argue for an applied anthropology that moves forward into a world of diverse stakeholders, shared with designers, psychologists, sociologists and researchers from other cognate disciplines. This need not be an uncritical anthropology, but for it to emerge as an applied discipline that is active in the world does, we argue, require an acceptance of the value of other approaches that are effective in making critical and change-making interventions.

Among anthropologists' debates about the relationship between applied and theoretical research (Pink 2005; Roberts 2005), complaints about the inability of anthropologists to succeed as public intellectuals (unlike, for example, psychologists), particularly in some national contexts (Eriksen 2006) have been especially prevalent. For example, in the United Kingdom, proclamations that anthropology could not be a practical problem-solving discipline guided the discipline in the 1950s (see Mills 2005) and contributed to the rise of applied anthropology as a contested field in subsequent decades (Wright 2005), with distinctions between applied and theoretical anthropology as being respectively 'impure' and 'pure' still abounding in the early twenty-first century (Roberts 2005). As applied anthropology has become increasingly popular, over the last years much has been written about its history, sometimes seeking to explain how such a context has emerged (see for example Kedia and van Willigen 2005; O'Dell 2009; Partridge and Eddy 1987; Pink 2005; Wright 2005; Mills 2005). We do not repeat or rewrite that history here; instead we examine how the contemporary context constitutes a turn in its trajectory, and the possibilities and challenges that this might open up for the future. Indeed, some initiatives have sought to evade or go beyond the impasse created by the applied/theoretical distinction (Field and Fox 2007; Cefkin 2009; Beck and Maida 2015; Pink and Abram 2015). In fact, the Berghahn book series 'Studies in Public and Applied Anthropology', in which this book is published was established in 2003 specifically for the purpose of bringing applied research into an academic publishing context as a valid contribution to the theoretical and critical work of the discipline. The more recent 'turn' to applied research that we refer to advances this further. It is one in which, across various national contexts and for multiple reasons, academics from the social sciences and humanities are becoming increasingly involved in research that is implicated in catalysing processes of change, intervention or 'impact' in the world, or in evaluating these. This, we suggest, creates an opportunity that calls for a response that will both expand the scope of anthropology and its relationship to its cognate disciplines and demand that it casts off some of its prejudices.

In the remainder of this introduction we outline the contexts through which this exercise takes us, to reflect on interdisciplinary, institutional, national and pedagogical environments, and the opportunities and challenges these raise. We then consider the implications of this for the making of an ethical, responsible and open approach to interdisciplinary applied practice. Finally, we outline the book and its contents.

The Interdisciplinary Context

There has long since been an emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of the settings that applied anthropologists might find themselves working in, and of their collaborations, for instance with agriculture, development, education, marketing, medical researchers and clinicians (e.g. Chalfen 2007; Kedia and van Willigen 2005; Lammer 2012; Malefyt and Morais 2012). Likewise, there is a history of discussion of the ways in which applied anthropologists work in collaboration (or conflict) with experts and professionals, particularly in international development and policy contexts (e.g. Green 2005; Sillitoe 2007). Indeed, this is demonstrated in several of the chapters of this book, where we see anthropologists working alongside academics from disciplines ranging from the arts and business administration (O'Dell and Willim) to designers and engineers (Leder Mackley and Pink), media studies and education studies (Horst) and organization studies (Pink, Dainty and Morgan).

In *Theoretical Scholarship and Applied Practice* we push this issue further. We go beyond the convention of showing how applied anthropology might get played out in interdisciplinary settings, to instead bringing examples of how applied theoretical-practical scholarship from other disciplines enters into a shared context with anthropology. Some of the most inspiring applied scholars we have encountered in considering how theoretical scholarship and applied practice are being brought together in effective ways are from beyond anthropology; their work has clearly demonstrable impact (a concept we explore below) in the world, and their ways of engaging beyond academia provide excellent examples for anthropology – a discipline which, as we have noted above, has so often bemoaned its inability to become such a sought-after public and applied discipline as, for instance, social psychology. Therefore, rather than simply repeating the tendency to voice anthropology's frustrated sense of entitlement against those disciplines that have traditionally dominated the space of applied and public research, we have invited leading scholars from those fields to contribute to this book. In doing so our intention is twofold: first, to demonstrate how applied anthropology is developing in

the context of an ecology of related applied approaches in social science and humanities disciplines; and second, to examine some of the common elements that seem to contribute to the development of successful applied-theoretical combinations across disciplines.

For example, the U.K.-based social psychologist Elizabeth Stokoe has recently been spectacularly successful through her applications of conversation analysis to conflict resolution, through the CARM methodology discussed in Chapter 3. This has led Stokoe to a series of honours including a Ted Talk, a *Wired* magazine innovation fellowship, a Royal Institution talk and industry sponsorship, not to mention that she has also been honoured in the context of her own discipline. Stokoe's strategy of developing a theoretically informed practical method for understanding processes of conflict indeed mirrors some of the ways in which anthropology can be more successfully engaged as an applied methodology. That is, by developing a clearly defined approach that can be applied across a range of settings, in ways that are variable and flexible in terms of context. As Stokoe's work demonstrates this is a very effective way to establish the utility and relevance of an applied methodology. Other examples of successful academic branding of methods that can translate out of academia include Rob Kozinets' *Netnography* (2010), the technique described therein being one that does not necessarily need to be used in an academic context to be effective. As a much earlier example, Etienne Wenger's notion of *Communities of Practice* (1998) has likewise become an important and accessible theoretical concept both in academic research and in research that is able to cross applied-theoretical contexts.

Meanwhile in Sweden, the ethnologist Tom O'Dell has been undertaking an innovative form of applied and public scholarship, collaborating with organizations to develop projects focusing on spas, place marketing, urban planning and an array of destination and community development projects, while simultaneously playing a role as public scholar in the Swedish media. O'Dell has also, for the better part of the past decade, been educating a new generation of applied researchers through a master's programme in applied cultural analysis (MACA) run between Lund University, Sweden, where O'Dell is based, and the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. Such an education enables students to develop particular forms of expertise. Upon the completion of their degrees, MACA students have taken a wide variety of career paths. While some have chosen to work in the private sector for such corporations as Heinz, Capitol Impact, ReD Associates, the Healthy Marketing Team and Deutsche Bahn, others have moved into the public sector, working, for

example, in positions that range from the Ontario Ministry of Government and Consumer Services (Toronto), Western Australian Museum (Perth) and the Department of Transportation in California (United States), to positions that give them the opportunity to help refugees in Vermont, or the unemployed in Sweden. The breadth of jobs that these students have been moving into reflects the diversity of the field of employment available to applied cultural analysts, but it also reflects the interdisciplinary approach that has been integrated into the MACA programme. This is a context in which students originating from widely different academic backgrounds are able to pursue and develop their own educational objectives as they come into contact with scholars and professionals from fields such as ethnology, anthropology, design and business administration.

In order to do this, however, students (as well as their teachers) have to navigate between a series of very different academic backgrounds and disciplines as well as occupational fields while simultaneously moving the cultural and social theories that they work with in highly diverse directions, deploying them in both public and private sector contexts. This forces them to perform a double analysis of the cultural phenomenon they are studying, on the one hand, and the manner in which they can communicate their findings to their clients, on the other. Traditionally much of this type of work has been left to students to figure out on their own, as a form of silent knowledge. The important point made by the experiences of MACA, and which is reiterated throughout this book, is the need to more explicitly explain the manner in which the relationship between ethnographic research practice and theory plays out for scholars coming from very different academic backgrounds.

Applied ethnographic research moves, in other words, betwixt and between academic fields, and the manner in which it does so is exemplified here by the work of non-anthropologist contributors presented and discussed in this volume. For instance, sociologist and STS (Science and Technology Studies) scholar Yolande Strengers in Australia has created – together with her Beyond Behaviour Change research group at RMIT University – an applied social practice theory approach. Working with this approach, she and her colleagues engage an agenda for understanding people's relationships to technologies, often in the context of environmental sustainability agendas. Significantly, Strenger's group's work responds critically and theoretically to the popular idea that 'Behaviour Change' programmes can be brought about in order to solve a range of the world's problems. Likewise, in the United Kingdom, Susan Hogan's work brings together art therapy practice and theory with social science methods and documentary practice, to create a novel configuration

of applied, creative and academic disciplines that together are effective in revealing and addressing issues in both individual lives and in society. Art therapy is already an established practice outside academic contexts, and likewise art therapy research is an academic activity. Bringing art therapy together with other disciplines and approaches in an applied research domain creates an arena for change making through a theory-practice dialogue.

As is by now clear, we are not interested solely in the question of how anthropology can become more attractive to external research partners and wider publics. Rather, our agenda is to acknowledge the multiplicity of approaches that are emerging across disciplines (as well as in highly diverse occupational categories), and thus to argue for a situated anthropology that accounts for and could also learn from the strategies and approaches of its cognate disciplines of ethnology, social psychology and sociology. However, by no means do we wish to smooth over the differences between the cognate disciplines discussed in this book; it is often between closely aligned disciplines' interests and research practices that the most ferocious disagreements can come about. With this in mind, given that our focus in this book is on the relationship between theoretical scholarship and applied practice, a key difference between disciplines, and between different practitioners in the same discipline, is sometimes how and where theory becomes situated in the practices of research design, fieldwork, analysis and writing. For example, as we have noted above, in anthropology the ethnographic-theoretical dialogue is nearly always considered to be at the core of how anthropological knowledge, debate and critique is generated. Anthropologists have a habit of chipping away at the grand theories proposed by sociologists and others (as well as those of the few anthropologists who also produce grand theories). Indeed, it would be difficult to produce a general theory of society that could not be refuted by the ethnographic work of anthropologists from across the globe on a number of counts. This seems to us to be one of the reasons why so few anthropologists attempt to develop general or universal theories. Exceptions include anthropologists such as Tim Ingold, whose work has been remarkably influential across academic disciplines, yet nevertheless still criticized by some anthropologists (although not by us) precisely for working towards a general theory (see for example Ingold 2011). This tendency towards the specific is both one of the strengths and weaknesses of conventional anthropology. It enables anthropologists to explain difference and detail through an emphasis on in-depth investigations into how particular lives are lived and experienced in particular places. Yet it stands in the way of making more general 'branded' theoretical-methodological propositions, such as those discussed in the following

sections. Some would of course be critical even of the idea that such a branding exercise would be a sensible thing for anthropologists to do. Yet the point is that translation of scholarship into applied research worlds tends to thrive on such forms of presentation. The trick then is to be able to achieve this without compromising one's disciplinary, theoretical or methodological principles.

Examples from this book demonstrate how researchers who develop rather different relationships to theory and research findings have been able to work across these boundaries. They show that it is possible to develop theoretically informed work, and indeed to continue to make contributions to academic scholarship, while nevertheless developing approaches that can be translated as externally relevant to industry and public sector partners. For instance, in Chapter 3 Stokoe and Sikveland discuss how they work up the categories they use in their analysis from their data, rather than using existing categories – such as gender or ethnicity – to guide the analysis. However, they also point out that their method is informed by a theory of language, which does guide their technique. Branded as CARM, this technique is translated into a message that can be understood by non-academics. Likewise, in Chapter 5, Leder Mackley and Pink write about research that was not theory-led, from the perspective that their ethnographic analysis was guided by particular categories, but they also sought to derive the categories they used from their research findings. As discussed elsewhere, the categories that emerged – of, for instance, movement, 'feeling right' and improvisation – were not predetermined (see www.energyanddigitalliving.com). Yet in this case, theoretical framings did form a key element of the research design in that the ethnographic practice was informed by a particular theory of the world as a processual and relational world, and on the imperative to learn about the unspoken and experiential elements of the everyday. This method is also presented as a technique that can be used in applied research projects, and is translated into an adaptable process on the website. In contrast, in Chapter 7 Strengers et al. write about research that is more explicitly theory-led, in that they discuss how they have engaged theories of social practice as a means through which to counter the 'positivist behavioural theories' that dominate the fields in which they undertake applied research, such as energy, housing and planning research. They are interested in the question of 'how to *gain traction* with any theoretical orientation that challenges accepted, dominant and inherently more highly valued ways of knowing' (Strengers et al., this volume). Thus in this example showing how theoretical debates can also be played out in the context of applied research agendas, and indeed that it is actually often important to do so precisely because some theoretical

orientations tend to support particular political or policy agendas. Indeed, the work of Strengers and her colleagues in their Beyond Behaviour Change research group could be seen as a branding of their approach, and specifically employs social practice theory as a way to reframe research questions and problems as an alternative to existing paradigms that seek to develop 'behaviour change' initiatives.

As we have demonstrated in this section, the ways in which applied research and theoretical scholarship are combined can take a range of different forms, and similarly these can influence the ways in which such work can have impact within academic disciplines, in policy debate and in applied fields such as design and engineering.

Institutional and National Contexts

The work presented in this book, the book itself and the changes that have motivated us to develop it cannot be extricated from a wider set of institutional and national research contexts. As we have noted above, in a contemporary context academics across the globe are being urged by universities and research councils to do research that has impact in the world beyond academia. Because this urge towards applied research is an institutional agenda, it means that it is produced through institutional frameworks, which in turn constitute a whole new world for us to navigate, to seek careers in relation to and to endeavour to do good research within. While such agendas are developed differently in different countries, the national contexts that we have experience of – the United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia and the United States – and that we account for through the work of contributors, have in common an interest in academics undertaking applied research in collaboration with non-academic organizations, which is represented through funding initiatives that have supported the work discussed here.

This context is double-edged. On the one hand it is very welcome in that it supports and encourages scholars in the cultural and social sciences to do applied research, and as such it creates new possibilities, opportunities and forms of recognition for such endeavours. For example, Swedish sociologist Martin Berg (who has co-authored Chapter 2) has investigated the interface between academic research and consultancy in the creative industries as part of the large-scale project Flexit, funded by the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences. The Flexit programme is specifically designed to build bridges between research in social sciences/ humanities and stakeholders outside of academia by offering research positions within industry and other organizations. Through his

participation in this programme, Berg had the opportunity to work within the creative industries for three years and to develop an approach that harnessed both academic sociological research on web-based social interaction and applied practice. This is part of a wider agenda. In Scandinavia, research councils now require applicants to clearly explain and legitimate the social and cultural impact of their work, and in a broader European context this is a basic prerequisite demanded of all research funding in the humanities and social sciences that is sponsored by EU research frameworks and programmes. There is also a growing body of government-funded research grants to apply for that demand clearly stated collaborations between academic scholars and industry partners from their applicants.

However, on the other hand this agenda can simultaneously create frameworks for impact that reproduce the very audit cultures that have been critiqued through the application of theoretical analysis to the structures that frame contemporary higher education institutions (see Strathern 2000; Shore and Wright 2015). A good example of this has been discussed through scholarship in the United Kingdom context. Here, as the anthropologist Jon Mitchell describes it:

> … in the social sciences – among them anthropology – researchers are now to plan for economic and social impact. Scholars applying to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC – the member of RCUK that oversees social science funding) are required to develop a 'pathways to impact' statement that outlines their strategies for maximising potential impact. This might include public events, a website or weblog, policy briefing, publication of non-academic outputs (films, novels, comic strip etc.), liaison with governmental or non-governmental organisations etc. (2014: 276–7).

This on the surface would not appear to be a bad idea; yet when we look more deeply at what is required, as Mitchell points out there are mismatches between the RCUK conceptualization of impact and anthropological research. Just as for the 'audit culture' (Strathern 2000) of research ethics, discussed in Chapter 1 'The notion of planned impact poses a particular problem for anthropological research, which is normally based on ethnographic fieldwork that is by definition volatile, unpredictable and difficult to plan' (Mitchell 2014: 278). That is, if planned impact requires us to know in advance what our work will produce, it becomes difficult to reconcile with an understanding of knowing through research as being emergent from the encounter between researcher, participants and theoretical analysis. The conundrum of this situation has been eloquently summarized by anthropologists Daniel Miller and Jolynna Sinanan, who remind us that when it comes to the art of ethnography:

the expertise lies not with the academic, but with the people they study. It is their creativity and inventiveness, their interpretations and accommodations, their insights and frustrations that we most share, and from them build a picture, a generalized image of what seems to be happening in their world (2014: 1f.)

If we use this insight as a point of departure for ethnographic research (and we in this volume do, as do most ethnographers) then defining the impact of one's work before conducting the research is the equivalent of placing the cart before the horse. Explaining that this order of developing knowledge (from the ground up and not vice versa) is the modus operandi for ethnographic work may be of little reassurance to research funders who want to hear promises of guaranteed results; and this is not helped by the fact that, as Orin Starn points out, 'fieldwork is always caught somewhere between all too predictable discoveries and moments of something like genuine learning and sometimes even revelation' (2015: 6f.). However, the strength of ethnography lies in an awareness that if everyday life looks mundane, it is far from simple. Finding answers to problems anchored in people's behaviours, values, routines and norms requires an appreciation of the complexity of the effort people expend to create a sense of order in their lives. Indeed, in the context of applied research, denying this complexity is even more problematic, since the research field is also likely to be inhabited by other stakeholders in the project who will likewise somehow shape the findings that emerge from a project and what might be done with them.

The drive for impact is therefore of course controversial, because it is part of the very neoliberal form of auditing (O'Dell and Willim 2013, 2015b; Strathern 2000; Shore and Wright 2015) and regulating good applied anthropology reveals itself as problematic. As the sociologists Caroline Knowles and Roger Burrows put it, in the United Kingdom context:

In sociology and anthropology, research impact should not be problematic: the production and logics of social fabrics are our core business and it would be strange if we were not concerned with influencing them. It is hard to imagine a social issue or a set of circumstances that would not in some way benefit from the influence of sociological or anthropological investigation and analysis. But HEFCE's [the Higher Education Funding Council for England] impact agenda does not in any way embrace this intuitive version of impact (2014: 243).

Critique of such impact systems, what they stand for and awareness of how they frame our research agendas and the implications they have for our research practice are important. However, they should not diminish

our enthusiasm for doing good applied-theoretical research, or our will to have a demonstrable impact on the world. What we believe they should do is to feed our awareness of the need to strive for effective applied research agendas across social sciences and humanities research. The chapters in this book offer something to build on in terms of examples of how such research can bring impact to both academic and societal contexts, without necessarily agreeing fully with the political and metric-based agenda that they have become entangled with.

The drive towards applied research, perhaps not funded by research councils but through collaborations with non-academic organizations, also brings a series of other complications and contradictions. These are not unsolvable – and perhaps part of the role of a growing generation of applied-theoretical researchers should be to work on such issues as members of institutions and in the context of actually doing research. We suggest this because some of the challenges faced are related to the ingrained division between applied and theoretical research, where theoretical scholarship in academia has been valued over applied practice. We need to shape a context in academia where the division between these two fields becomes redundant, and where the different configurations that are involved in each type of practice become context for reflection, rather than elements that define merit and prestige. If applied and theoretical research were to be considered and understood as part of the same research process, whereby each supports and informs the other, then the mapping of careers through applied scholarship would be more straightforward.

That said, many of the contemporary crossovers between academic and corporate anthropology are beginning to make the value of these connections evident. Some anthropologists working in corporate settings – especially in technology industries – are gaining increasing recognition as the stars of their fields.

Making Connections

Working as academic scholars in applied contexts also raises pedagogical questions surrounding how to approach external stakeholders, how to communicate both research questions and findings, and how to develop practices where the agendas of different partner organizations and researchers are shared and mutually constructive. Many universities, industries and public organizations today work with 'brokers' and 'facilitators' who are assigned to make contacts and create points of interaction in order to create opportunities for shared projects and the

exchange of ideas. Even though this emerging group of professionals has a growing body of literature on methods for creativity and innovation to rely on (see for example Ries 2011; Thiel and Masters 2014), the understandings of the outcomes of these activities, the pedagogies that are generated through them and the reasons why they succeed or fail are scarcely found in academic literature.

Given the current expansion in the field of applied-theoretical research across the social sciences and humanities, there is a corresponding need for some degree of reflexivity regarding how these new configurations of roles and responsibilities are generative of particular outcomes. On a more practical level, there is also a need for an understanding of which models work well. Given that we are dealing here with questions about the human relationships and interactions that underpin the forming of research partnerships, it makes sense that social scientists should have some role in defining this. This lack of understanding leaves the very nexus, the social encounters, of collaborations between different stakeholders unproblematized and undertheorized. In Chapter 2, Martin Berg and Vaike Fors discuss what this entails through their interrogation of a workshop held in Sweden, designed precisely to bring together academics and industry representatives. They argue that in order to rethink applied research practice beyond dichotomies between the applied and theoretical, we need to use pedagogical frameworks to make the encounters between different practices (whether they be across or within the same groups of stakeholders) in applied research practice explicit, and to enable us to reflect upon and, where necessary, subsequently change the ways in which these processes are formulated. Chapter 2 therefore offers an example of a starting point for considering the issues that creating the relationships needed for applied research involves. Indeed, by providing an example of where academics felt there were obstacles to their ability to connect with industry representatives, this example brings to the fore and invites us to consider some of the key elements that should be part of the process through which academics assert their expertise as applied-theoretical researchers. All of the scholars contributing to this volume have experienced different processes of engagement with industrial and other external partners, as well as with research partners based in disciplinary fields other than their own, which have led to very productive and sometimes enduring research relationships. In some cases, these have been brokered by professionals whose role is specifically to create such contacts; in others, they have been made through professional networks, or as a result of public talks we have given. There is thus a growing field of expertise in this area, and as many of the contributions to this volume illuminate, there is a need among academics to further reflect upon where

different models for encounters with industry and other external stakeholders might work best.

Through the different parts of the book there is a line of thinking about how to undertake applied research practice that moves beyond more easily accessed facilitators' method handbooks. The chapters of this book all offer different perspectives on how and what collaborators in applied research contexts can learn from working together in different stages of the process. By investigating and elaborating on these learning experiences, readers are invited to discuss and explore how to create engaging collaborative research practices.

The Ethics of Intervention

To conclude this introduction we fold back the discussion to a question that has been latently accumulating throughout the above: to reflect on the ethics and scales of intervention and impact in the world. These issues first emerged in the context of us discussing research that intervenes in the world at all – our very participation in applied research, and our use of theoretical scholarship for that purpose implies a certain sense of moral responsibility towards using our training and skills to play a role in social, economic or cultural change making. The discussion of the impact agenda, as it has been interpreted by scholars in the United Kingdom, also raises questions about *how* we might participate in political and metric-based agendas that both support and exist in tension with the very ways in which knowledge about society can be made and applied through the social sciences. What are the ethics of such participation? These questions are separate from the question of how to deal with the audit cultures of ethical conduct within applied research practice, which are discussed more fully by Sarah Pink in Chapter 1.

Instead, the question becomes one of how we might pursue an ethical research agenda that is informed by and also informs theoretical scholarship and theory building in the social sciences. The contributors to the different chapters of this book respond to this question implicitly in a number of ways. For instance, Strengers et al., associating their work with a theoretical approach that has already been pitched as an argument against a neoliberal behaviour change agenda, are able to show how by using a social practice theory approach they are supporting and furthering an argument against placing responsibility for individuals in, for instance the mitigation of climate change, through shifts in their own micro practices (see for example Shove 2010; Strengers 2013). Pink, Dainty and Morgan likewise attach an agenda to their work which seeks to bring new

understandings to questions of how to acknowledge and encourage safety and health at work. In this example, claims about the high level of deaths resulting from accidents at work, for instance, in the construction industry (e.g. Pink et al. 2014) are meant to ensure that readers are aware that there is actually a life or death issue that such research seeks to address, or at least to contribute to if not to definitively solve. Like Strengers and her colleagues, Pink, Dainty and Morgan are also effectively arguing for attention to what people *do* and, in this case, how they already successfully stay safe, and arguing *against* a compliance model that seeks to change the 'bad' behaviour of workers who do not follow regulations. Both of these chapters offer responses to the points made by Mitchell, whose work invites us to contemplate 'the relationship between contemporary research agendas and the ethical programme of neoliberalism' (Mitchell 2014: 294). While Mitchell frames this relationship as problematic within the context of how impact planning 'requires researchers to recast the past and anticipate the future as points on a purposive and successful linear teleology' (2014: 294), when we combine this with the points made by Shove (2010) about the focus on the individual that is embedded in neoliberal approaches, then the point is reinforced. It invites us to ask what the ethics are of not participating, and the extent to which we should moralize about the implications of researchers *not* bringing the capability of their theoretical and applied research skills together to seek to offer alternative solutions to the perennial problems that endure in our cultures and societies.

Ultimately, however, it is not the purpose of this book to moralize about what researchers should or should not do, with whom they should collaborate or what kinds of impact they should seek to have. The work presented here is intended to provoke, to inspire and to suggest and demonstrate possible ways forward. It is not a set template for working between applied practice and theoretical scholarship, but an invitation to researchers at all stages of their careers, to engage in the practice, the theory and the debate, as participants in this emergent field as it develops.

The Chapters

Each chapter addresses a series of common key themes (outlined below) that are brought to life through the discussion of a central example of actual empirical applied-theoretical research, through which the themes will be developed. In addition to this, all the contributors to this volume have been invited to contribute because they are involved in developing significant projects that combine theoretical and applied research, and

include world leaders in their fields, who are equally widely known for their methodological work and achievements as well as their success in applied research in different but related disciplines. For example, Sarah Pink and Heather Horst's interdisciplinary applied work is rooted in anthropology, and Tom O'Dell's work is likewise interdisciplinary but rooted in ethnology, with close links to anthropology. However, many of the scholars participating in this volume have backgrounds in subjects other than anthropology. Elizabeth Stokoe, for example, engages the realm between applied and theoretical from her position as a professor in social interaction with a background in social psychology and an ongoing methodological specialization in conversation analysis. Vaike Fors's academic background is in pedagogy, but her applied work is heavily informed by the fields of anthropology and cultural sociology with a methodological emphasis on sensory ethnography, and Susan Hogan works at the intersection of art therapy and visual anthropology methods. Yolande Strengers, Cecily Maller and Larissa Nicholls work mainly in the discipline of sociology, as does that of Martin Berg. The issues that they describe encountering and facing appear rather similar, even if the precise ways in which they bring together the applied and the theoretical differ to some extent, as outlined above. Thus, while anthropology constitutes the predominant base from which this book views the applied/theoretical nexus, often the individual chapters included in this volume work to widen the scope of our understanding of how practice and theory can be understood to not only inform one another, but to be tightly integrated.

This book is divided into five parts. The first part is shared by this introduction and, in Chapter 1, Sarah Pink's discussion of ethics in a contemporary field of applied-theoretical research. Here, following on from some of the core themes identified in the introduction, Pink puts at the core of her discussion what she refers to as a 'deep irony', although not one that leaves us without hope. This, she argues, suggests that we need to rethink ethics in the context of a new demand for research that has interventional and change-making consequences in the world. Building on the discussion of how applied research has been co-opted by initiatives such as the U.K. impact agenda, which we have referred to in this introduction, in Chapter 1 Pink shows how doing ethics for applied research is framed by similar institutional initiatives. These, by seeking to constitute ethics in advance of the uncertain research and intervention scenarios in which ethical conduct will actually play out, leave little scope for the dialogues between practice and theory through which research emerges. Here, she suggests the possibility that 'the institutional governance of research ethics has the (perhaps unintended) consequence of limiting the potential of research, design and intervention to enter into

the improvisatory open-ended collaborations that enable successful, participatory and ethical change making'. She argues that ethics need to be thought out in ways that account for the processual nature of applied-theoretical research and intervention, to account for change making and to welcome generative forms of uncertainty.

Having framed as such the issues and debates in which a contemporary turn towards applied-theoretical dialogue is emerging, Part II of this book – Making Contact and Making Sense – focuses on the role of applied-theoretical research in 'making contact' and 'making sense'. That is, it looks at questions around understanding, and making communication between different groups of people work in new ways. The role of the applied anthropologist has often been referred to as that of 'cultural broker'. This part of the book shows how this conceptualization is actually common across other applied-theoretical disciplines and approaches, in that it draws on examples developed by researchers in social psychology, sociology, education studies and anthropology. It examines and establishes the potential of research that develops a strong applied-theoretical relationship in contexts of mediation, communication and regulatory frameworks. It also engages with different methods (which are of relevance to researchers across disciplines), workshops (which are becoming an increasingly important part of the way that social researchers and non-academic stakeholders engage with each other), ethnography (used across anthropology, sociology and human geography) and conversation analysis (used across social psychology, sociology and some parts of human geography).

In Chapter 2 Martin Berg and Vaike Fors critically review academic-industry collaborations in so-called idea-generating workshop models, and how academic scholars experience these. Instead of a more conventional critique of intellectual stagnation and loss of critical stance, the authors focus on how such workshops – described in widely used method handbooks within the creative industries – are played out, both in terms of advantages and pitfalls (see also Strengers et al., this volume). With a starting point in common descriptions of how these encounters provide 'automagical' synergies just by putting together people with different backgrounds according to workshop methods, this chapter moves beyond these black-boxed descriptions and analyses what happens in these rich social and cultural encounters between professional practices. The fieldwork presented in this chapter is done at a so-called 'innovation camp', where academic scholars and people from small companies were brought together at a workshop facilitated by workshop experts in order to bring about creativity and innovation. The analysis of the fieldwork unveils how these strict workshop protocols can in practice become

counterproductive, and in fact have the converse effect, of constraining social learning. By contrasting innovation with cultural improvisation (with reference to Hallam and Ingold 2007), the authors open up new routes for further explorations of how to both understand and develop workshop encounters as material and intellectual door-openers between different stakeholders.

In Chapter 3, Elizabeth Stokoe and Rein Sikveland provide an important but different contribution to this volume. Rather than being grounded in ethnography, as most of the chapters to this book are, their work is anchored in conversation analysis. More specifically, their chapter illustrates the manner in which a very particular form of conversation analysis, Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM), that has been developed by Stokoe, can provide invaluable insights leading to direct interventions in a wide array of occupational fields. Their chapter in this volume explains how CARM, building upon ethnomethodology, can contribute to communication training, helping to change the manner in which the individuals they work with (in this case a mediation service geared to resolve conflicts between neighbours or partners) engage and connect communicatively with the clients to whom they are trying to provide services. One of the important points about theory and practice that their chapter illuminates concerns the risks that top-down theory-driven engagements with actors in daily life social contexts present for producing egregious conclusions that can be avoided when the study of what people actually do and say is foregrounded over theory.

Next, in Chapter 4, Sarah Pink, Jennie Morgan and Andrew Dainty focus on another aspect of the making sense process, in their demonstration of what might be seen as a rather typically anthropological approach, whereby 'the ethnographic-theoretical dialogue can produce alternative ways of understanding the realities of the everyday worlds that applied research focuses on'. However, it is their aim not simply to use this technique conventionally to understand and make theoretical arguments about the findings of their research, but instead to consider its purpose for 'generating new ways of creating innovative applied interventions that advance both theory and practice for change' (Pink et al., this volume). The field they refer to, occupational safety and health (OSH), has been virtually unaccounted for by anthropologists. Yet as they point out, the statistics for accidents and fatalities at work in the industries they have researched in – particularly in the case of the construction industry – are alarming, thus making this a field which it might be considered 'urgent' for anthropologists to become involved in, in an applied capacity. They argue that by interweaving their ethnographic findings with theoretical explorations, they have been able to produce a series of applied insights

that were generated through the ethnographic-theoretical dialogue. In this way, by situating theory building as part of the generative process of applied research, they seek to move debates in this field on.

Part III of the book – Working in Interdisciplinary Teams – focuses on the nature of interdisciplinary working that forms part of how applied-theoretical scholarship is conducted. In this part contributors explore how communications work across disciplines within project teams, the ways in which people from different disciplines work together and the implications of this, and the possibilities that interdisciplinary working offers for applied research.

Chapter 5, by Kerstin Leder Mackley and Sarah Pink, considers the development of applied-theoretical sensory video ethnography research in the context of an interdisciplinary team. Ethnographic description usually focuses on the fieldwork experiences (see Pink 2015), rather than those through which materials are made sense of and shared, yet as is shown here (see also O'Dell and Willim 2013) there is much to learn from a reflection on how theoretical and ethnographic findings and ideas emerge and are communicated to research partners from other disciplines. In such interdisciplinary environments the theoretical and ethnographic principles we work with might need to be compromised so that they can connect to the work of other disciplines.

In Chapter 6, Susan Hogan pushes the discussion of the impact scholarship can have in relation to the everyday life experiences of people beyond academia by problematizing the difficulties that arise in various forms of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary work. Above all else, she focuses on the fields of tension that arise between the arts, visual methods and scholarship in the social sciences. As Hogan points out, moving between forms of artistic representation and scholarly genres of academic writing brings with it many difficulties. In her case, Hogan worked with video documentation in conjunction with 'The Birth Project'. This project aimed at helping both care providers and birthing women to better understand the ways in which experiences of compassion fatigue, stress, birth suffering and post-natal readjustments can impact upon the mental health of all those involved in the birthing process. From the very beginning, questions of authenticity had to be addressed. What did it mean to place people in front of a camera? Is this a radically different endeavour from placing people in front of an audio recording device? If so, in what way? How does the scholar handle issues of validity when moving between the genres of documentary filming and scientific scholarship? As Hogan points out, it was one thing for her as a scholar to identify key quotes in the video footage she captured, but editing such material into a coherent film sequence is a very different challenge. In

addressing these types of issues Hogan's contribution to this volume illuminates the challenges that interdisciplinary work can encounter, particularly when spanning the juncture between the realm of the arts, visual methods and scholarship in the social sciences. However, it also points to the advantages that such interdisciplinary work can have in connecting with and helping to improve the daily lives of people beyond academia – in this case, in relation to issues of mental health for birthing mothers and health care providers alike.

Part IV explores the afterlife of applied-theoretical research. In this context research can both be published by (possibly multi-team) academics and move on as applied findings to be implemented in ways that go beyond the control of the researchers involved. These are again issues that impact on researchers across applied disciplines. The contributors to this part work in sociology, ethnology and anthropology. The chapters in this part explore the question of how to gain 'traction' – that is how to convince and have influence in the contexts where we work as applied-theoretical researchers; what meaning theory can have in such contexts; and the implications of 'letting go' of the research.

The point that Hogan emphasizes is that working at the juncture between disciplines can take many different forms, and in fact, it has to if it is to succeed in delivering concrete results to the diverse groups of people (and problems) we want to help and engage. However, this is a politically complex endeavour in which the interests of many different actors, and hierarchical relations of power, are ever in play, and the playing field is far from symmetrically ordered. It is the asymmetry of this playing field that forms the point of departure for Strengers, Maller and Nicholls's contribution in Part IV of this book. In their chapter they problematize what it means to work with an interpretive 'people perspective' in fields of work dominated by very strong positivist traditions and agendas. How can a cultural theorist make a difference here? How can one make one's voice heard? How, indeed, does one 'gain traction'? One way in which Strengers, Maller and Nicholls have chosen to do this is by assuming the role of the agitator or facilitator, 'in which', they write, 'we seek to disrupt normal practice by introducing different theoretical and methodological orientations' than their more positivist-oriented peers in the environmental and housing fields. It is a way of working that affords them a degree of manoeuvrability away from their partners' presumptions about the 'nature' of their work. But it does so, one could argue, by opening a 'third space' between the dominant positivist view of the engineers they work with, and the daily lives of the people they want to have an impact upon. That is, they use the dominant language of their peers (a language of numbers and quantification) and apply it to their own qualitative research

to provide their results with a slightly different profile than many scholars in the cultural sciences are comfortable with, but nonetheless, a profile that is recognizable and understandable to colleagues coming from more positivistic academic traditions. The choices that Strengers, Maller and Nicholls make to meet their scholarly peers on their own terms (at times), are not without problems, as the authors acknowledge, but the intention of their contribution to this volume is to call attention to the compromises that working in between can bear with it. In so doing, it helps us further to open a discussion about what is required for scholars in the cultural and social sciences to 'gain traction' for the ideas their knowledge generates in order to have an impact beyond academia.

Where Strengers, Maller and Nicholls's chapter (and to a certain extent even Hogan's chapter in Part III) work to primarily problematize the 'in-between' in interdisciplinary work and the question of how scholars with different academic backgrounds can make their voices heard, the final two chapters in this volume shift perspective: from considering what happens to ideas and concepts as they move between disciplinary fields, to the question of what happens to them when they leave academia altogether (permanently or temporarily). Central to these two final chapters is the issue that Heather Horst presents: that of 'understanding how … concepts are exchanged and revalued for different ends or purposes'.

Horst's work takes its point of departure in a large research project based in the United States that aims to understand the connection between American youths and modes of informal learning in connection with digital media and learning theory. The work that Horst was engaged with led to the identification of different (if at times overlapping) ways in which youths learn and work with digital media: Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out (or HOMAGO for short). Findings from this research project were published on an open website, written up in a report published in a White Paper, and summarized in a two-page executive summary. They gained mass media attention, not least of which was from large daily newspapers, which in turn led to the further development of the project, in which research results were given life in the reorganization of parts of the Chicago Public Library. And the proverbial carousel proceeded to turn, but it did so in ways that were increasingly beyond the control of any one scholar (or limited group of scholars). As the HOMAGO project developed, jumped fields and came to expression in ever shifting forms (from printed texts, to digital media, to refurbished public spaces) the significance attributed to the concept shifted. As it moved from theory to practice, and back again, it continuously shifted between very different regimes of value, and it did so not because HOMAGO was designed as a top-down project, but because the scholars involved were accustomed to

directing their work towards specific groups of practitioners (educators and pedagogues). The project had, in other words, a bifurcated target, leading to the production of scholarly papers, but also direct engagement with educators. In this way, Horst's work raises questions about how we as academics might be able to reframe and rethink our work as being aimed at a receiving audience of not only academic peers, but also one of practitioners and policy makers.

This is the theme that O'Dell and Willim focus upon in the concluding chapter to Part IV of this book. They argue for the development of a deeper appreciation of the academic endeavour as a multi-targeted effort, that does not simply lead to the production of a final report, journal article or monograph, but one that increasingly has to be geared to meet the expectations and goals of very different publics (from those existing in academia to those of very different groups beyond the ivory towers). As part of their argument, they strive to further diminish the strength of the theory/practice dialectic by questioning the degree to which activities beyond academia can truly be understood as 'atheoretical'. O'Dell and Willim's contribution reminds us that many scholarly concepts and theories (from notions concerning culture, identity, flow, the knowledge society and the creative class to multi-culturalism, diversity and branding) do find their way from the halls of academia and gain a new life of their own in society at large. The case is not that the people we work with lack theoretical bases for their work or understandings of the social and cultural world, but more in lines with Horst's argument in this volume, that the significance and meaning of these concepts and theories transform as they move. As a consequence of this insight, O'Dell and Willim argue for the development of new forms of multi-targeted ethnography that are not only sensitive to and engage with the theoretical predispositions of the groups we collaborate with beyond academia, but that even dare to relinquish control of our findings and entrust them (with the expectation that they will be further transformed) to those collaborators. They then go on to ask what we might learn by following the manner in which our research results change and develop in conjunction with the work of our collaborators.

Part V is composed of a short afterword from Paul Stoller (United States), a senior international scholar who has made an important contribution to this field.

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