

Practicing Uncertainty Workshop

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‘DMDU meets Anthropology’

Zuiderkerk, 6-7 July 2017

Organizers: Daniel Hogendoorn, Arthur Petersen, Arjen Zegwaard

Participants

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Arjen Zegwaard, University of Amsterdam

Facilitators

Steve Rayner, University of Oxford

Arthur Petersen, University College London

Aim

The aim of the Workshop is to set up a symmetrical dialogue between the field of DMDU and Anthropology. The challenge is that this dialogue takes place between two disparate fields with different frames. Since both study uncertainty in policy-settings, we expect it should produce insights of relevance. The formulation of themes for future research for both anthropology and DMDU.

Program

Day 1, Thursday July 6 (09:00-17:00)

09:00-9:45

Welcome to all participants, round of introduction, discussing aims

09:45-10:30 Round table about matters of interest

10:30-11:00 **Coffee break**

11:00-12:30 DMDU – presentation (45 min) and discussion (45 min)

12:30-13:30 **Lunch**

13:30-15:00 LOST – presentation (45 min) and discussion (45 min)

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15:00-15:30 **Coffee break**

15:30-16:00 Case from Deltas' dealings with uncertainties (DoUbT project) (15 min), discussion (15 min)

16:00-17:00 Reflection on the different perspectives and identification of topics of discussion for Day 2

(End of Day 1, head to the bar! And then dinner at 19:30)

Day 2, Friday July 7 (09:00-15:00)

09:00-10:30 Topic I

10:30-11:00 **Coffee break**

11:00-12:30 Topic II

12:30-13:30 **Lunch**

13:30-15:00 Discussion of future themes

Summary

We start the workshop with an introduction, and settle the aims of the workshop. The rest of this day consists of presentation and discussion of the field of DMDU and of anthropology (as practiced by the LOST-group). We ask the respective groups to present a general story on the aims, the methods, and the types of questions and results of the respective fields. The organizers of the workshop will share publications from the respective fields with all the participants two weeks in advance. We ask of the participants to read these publications.

Possible topics for discussion on Day 2 (not limiting or exhaustive)

- A reflection on how deep uncertainty enters organizations, in its methods and values, by researchers and in practice, from the view of anthropologists. For example:
 - What happens when 'neat' methods meet 'messy' practice of policy-making? What can the role of 'crisp' scientific advice be in messy policy-practices?
 - When can we speak of a 'psychopathology' in organizations? What is really going on when organizations and individuals search for predictions or forecasts; experience paralysis in decision; self-protection behavior by departments and teams?
 - What assumptions, from the view of anthropologists, seem to govern the DMDU methods?
 - There have been very few cases of DMDU capabilities being successfully transferred to receiving organizations. Why?

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- A reflection on effects of computer-assisted methods on social relations. In life, we see an increase of new technology to guide decisions, for individuals and organizations. Yet, such tech is poorly understood by classically trained social scientists. AI, bots, social graphs, knowledge representation, and data science, for example, are already reshaping social relations, and may be anticipated to alter the civil service, and the practices of planning and policy-making. Social scientist's illiterate of these methods (or of probability-theory and statistics) might have a hard time studying implications. Computer assisted planning under deep uncertainty, when adopted in policy-making, also reshapes social patterns.
 - The use of computer-assisted methods on policy under deep uncertainty is becoming more prevalent. Can anthropologists still make sense of governing without understanding the technologies that guide decisions under deep uncertainty? How deep should such understanding be? What should anthropologist prepare for?
 - What implications would a wider reliance on these methods for the study of deep uncertainty have on social and political relations (say, how uncertainties are used in deliberation and negotiation)?
 - What do the other mentioned examples mean for DMDU?
- A more instrumental discussion.
 - DMDU provides quantitative, methodological support to inductive as opposed to deductive reasoning. The analytical community operates within a numerate culture, focused on deductive analytical modes and seeking reduced-form solutions. The policy community is a narrative culture, focused on telling inductive stories of sufficient power to persuade, and detail-oriented. How can these two modes be reconciled?
 - How can an anthropological worldview inform the methods of studying deep uncertainty? What would its use be, if any? If not, can it be explicated why this is the case? What would complications consist of?
- The formulation of themes for future research for both anthropology and DMDU. This final part draws on the preceding day and the morning session.

Practicalities

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On Wednesday July 5th, organizers will meet with guests at **20.00** for drinks at the rooftop bar Canvas, Wibautstraat 150, 1091 GR Amsterdam

On Thursday 6th of July, we will have drinks around the Nieuwmarkt area, and then dinner in restaurant *Hemelse Modder*, Oude Waal 11, 1011 BZ Amsterdam, at **19:30**.