

Qual+ Newsletter

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Welcome to the Qual+ Newsletter!

Development of methodological skills is necessary for embracing the complex managerial climate. Such skills also enable to creatively challenge conventional mind-sets about organizational life. This calls for intellectual curiosity and reflection. To highlight the importance of learning and reflection from the doctoral students' perspective, this third Qual+ Newsletter gives voice to those doctoral students and early career researchers who have participated in methodological training. Qual+ is strongly geared towards advancing junior scholars' careers through Qual+ powered symposia, mentoring, professional development workshops, paper development workshops, and courses.

In this newsletter, we have invited doctoral students from the Department of Management Aalto University School of Business to share their reflections on recent Qual+ events. Their accounts provide new ways of appreciating methods within management studies. First, the doctoral students share their reflections about a symposium entitled "We all do it, but could we do it better? The art of interviewing in changing organizational contexts" that they organized as part of the "Moving Forward" course at Aalto University. Second, Anna-Riikka Smolander writes about the course "Learning to see: A course in ethnography and discourse analysis, taught by Distinguished Visiting **Professor Jo Angouri** (University of Warwick). Third, Thomas Hoeger shares his reflections about the workshop on Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) taught by **Professor Peer Fiss** (University of Southern California).

In the upcoming academic season, we invite all those curious minds at Aalto and other universities in Finland and abroad who are interested in seeking to expand their knowledge of methodological innovations to join us in our upcoming Qual+ events. To inspire continuous methodological innovation, open-mindedness and learning, Qual+ brings together scholars in symposia, workshops, courses, and community-building events. Moreover, we are delighted to recommend other interesting events, courses, calls, and readings.

During the past months all Qual+ powered events have attracted doctoral students, junior and senior scholars from various Aalto Schools, departments, and disciplines and sparked vivid discussions. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all co-organizers, speakers, and participants who have contributed or attended these Qual+ events and Courses. We would also like to express our gratitude to the doctoral students of the Department of Management Studies for sharing their views on attending Qual+ events and courses.

Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Symposium and Course Spotlights

Qual+ powered Symposium: We All Do It, but Could We Do It Better? The Art of Interviewing in Changing Organizational Contexts

By Doctoral students from the Department of Management Studies

Doctoral students from the Department of Management Studies organized a symposium on May 21, 2024, titled "We all do it, but could we do it better? The art of interviewing in changing organizational contexts," as part of the "Moving Forward" course at Aalto University. The course was taught by **Professors Henri Schildt** and **Ewald Kibler**. The event focused on interview methodology in qualitative research, exploring various approaches and providing guidance for selecting and implementing techniques across different contexts.



Photo: Aalto University/Doctoral students using AI image creator

The keynote speaker, **Tiina Lundell**, a journalist at MOT known for her investigative work on societal issues such as corruption and unlawful actions in organizations, shared her experiences with compassionate interviews in multinational investigations. She discussed the case of 'bloodberries,' highlighting the lives of Thai workers in Finland during the summer. Lundell emphasized developing empathetic understandings and the importance of putting oneself in others' shoes for research purposes.

Following Lundell's presentation, a panel discussion featured **Timo Vuori**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management; **Tiina Ritvala**, Associate Professor of International Business at Aalto University; and **Minna Halme**, Professor of Sustainability Management at Aalto University School of Business. They shared insights from their interview-based case studies, focusing on enhancing interview effectiveness by considering structural, ethical, and environmental aspects. The session sparked thoughtful conversations and inspired new ideas among the audience.



Minna Halme, Tiina Lundell, Tiina Ritvala, Timo Vuori and Milja Von Lerber. Photo: Aalto University, Marzieh Soleimani

Organizing the symposium was a rewarding experience for the first-year doctoral students. The highlight of academia is undoubtedly the people, with their diverse viewpoints, nuanced arguments, and rich experiences. The symposium concluded with positive feedback from participants, who found the panel discussion enlightening and impactful. The organizers express their gratitude to everyone who contributed to and attended the symposium, making it a successful and memorable event.

Qual+ Qualitative Course: Learning to See: A Course in Ethnography and Discourse Analysis

By Anna Smolander

In May, doctoral students at Aalto University were given the opportunity to dive into ethnography and discourse approaches through a course led by **Jo Angouri**, an inspiring and charismatic professor at the University of Warwick (Great Britain). For me, the most valuable aspect of this course was its design, which seamlessly bridged the gap between linguistic and management studies. It provided us with a rich and enjoyable environment for learning and discussion, both inside and outside the classroom. The course week included plenty of socializing, which created an inviting atmosphere and made intensive learning fun as well.

Overall, Jo's straightforward style encouraged us to have open communication in the classroom. I liked the way she imparted knowledge and skills. Especially for those of us with a linguistic background, transitioning to understanding and dealing with linguistic concepts specifically in management studies can sometimes be challenging. This course brought these currents together and showed in a positive way that there are no barriers to interaction between fields, but opportunities. Jo encouraged and valued innovative thinking.

A distinctive feature of the course was practical group work. The methodology, with apparent roots in higher education pedagogy, drove cooperation and the practical application of theories with a mini-task over the weekend. While working with colleagues and being actively guided by Jo, I gained new perspectives and techniques, which I can later use in my own research methods. In addition, this course brought me new friends. For those looking to expand their academic horizons, this course and the accompanying reading circle offer a wonderful opportunity. I highly recommend it to graduate students who want to deepen their understanding and expand their research from the perspective of language and communication. Many thanks to Jo Angouri for an unforgettable learning experience!

Anna Smolander is a first-year doctoral student in Department of Management Studies, Aalto University School of Business. Her research interests are decision making, startup founders, and innovation ecosystems.

Qual+ Methods Workshop: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) Workshop

By Thomas Hoeger

While browsing the website of the Qual+ Aalto Center for Qualitative Management Research some weeks ago, the workshop about Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) caught my attention. So far, I came along some research papers that use this method, and the underlying approach fascinated me. QCA, a research approach that

uses mathematical logic within social science, would be a great additional tool for me as a qualitative researcher. This method makes it possible to translate qualitative observations into numerical values, so it becomes possible to compare them and draw non-generalizable conclusions about existing relationships. These relationships are expressed in the form of recipes, where combinations of different characteristics or observations are tested if and to what extent they account for the occurrence of a desired outcome.



Photo: Aalto University/Pyry Pietikäinen

The introductory workshop on QCA and fuzzy sets was therefore a good start to familiarize myself with the topic. Within the 3-day workshop, **Professor Peer C. Fiss** from the University of Southern Carolina was able to explain the complicated material in an easy and understandable way. Especially by using practical, real-world examples, the theoretical principles became very clear. Throughout the workshop, we were learning about crisp sets, where characteristics can either be present or non-present, as well as fuzzy sets, which enable the researcher to elaborate on phenomena in a more nuanced manner.

During the workshop, we were able to ask Professor Fiss also questions connected to our own research, and he helped us to find promising ways to apply QCA for our specific projects. This hands-on approach enabled us to develop our research ideas further and apply QCA to our practical needs.



Photo: Aalto University/Pyry Pietikäinen

Summing up, QCA is a valuable addition to my research method toolbox, and I already have plenty of ideas to analyze my current qualitative data with it. This will help me understand the relationships between my different observations and see patterns that I can analyze with the help of theories within my academic field.

Thomas Hoeger is a first-year doctoral student in Department of Management Studies, Aalto University School of Business. His research interests are start-up ecosystems, business incubators, and the psychological processes underlying entrepreneurial actions.

Upcoming Events

September 2024, [Capri Summer School – X Edition](#)

Fall 2024, A series of Qual+ Events/Reading circles focusing on posthumanism with Saku Mantere and Astrid Huopalaainen (More information TBA)

November 2024, Qual+ Workshop on cross-language research with Kaisa Koskinen and Juho Suokas (More information TBA)

December 2024, [Post-Conference Workshops - EIBA 2024](#)

Qual+ Courses

[September 2-6, 2024, Eden Advanced Doctoral Seminar on Case Studies in Business and Management Research \(6 ECTS cr\)](#)

Videos

[Professor Gerlinde Mautner on Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies \(CADs\)](#)

[Data Agents and Open Research Network: Training in Research Data Management and Open Science](#)

New Books

[Handbook of Feminist Research Methodologies in Management and Organization Studies \(e-elgar.com\)](#) (Katila, Meriläinen and Bell, 2023)

This title contains Open Access chapters.

For more books see [Qual+ book recommendations](#)

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Qual+ newsletter is published quarterly. If you have an idea for innovative collaboration, or an event related to qualitative (and qualitative-plus) methods (e.g., mixed, blended), let's bring your ideas to life together. Please be in touch if you have any events, courses, calls or new books that we could include in future issues. Contact [Kirsi Snellman](#), Qual+ coordinator.

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