

Qual+ Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 4

8.11.2024



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Welcome to the fourth Qual+ Newsletter!

Aalto Center for Qualitative Management Research (or Qual+ for short) turned 1 year this autumn and I am privileged to reflect on its first year of existence. The purpose of this “academic start-up” has been to foster collaboration and capacity-building across Aalto University and beyond, become a leading platform and shared resource on qualitative, mixed and merged methods, and respond to societal challenges through methodological innovations. We are well on the way to reach these objectives.

During the first year, we have organized many world-class workshops, seminars, and hackathons by leading experts. These events have included doctoral courses for credits as well as reading circles that may initiate long-term collaborative relationships. Participants joining our events have been united by a shared interest in research methods, theorizing, philosophy of science and research ethics rather than the topic of their research as such. I am convinced that Qual+ events have sparked several conversations across disciplinary boundaries that would have not taken place otherwise. In this way, the new research infrastructure has contributed to enhanced collaboration and capacity-building both within and beyond Aalto University.

Our newsletter is subscribed by more than 100 scholars in different parts of the world and our website provides information about exciting forthcoming events, training opportunities, new publications as well as other methodological resources for senior and junior scholars. Through our international partnerships with organizations such as the Consortium for the Advancement of Research Methods and Analysis (CARMA), Responsible Research in Business & Management (RRBM), and the Durham University, we aim to become a leading player in this area in the future.

Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation granted the Qual+ team, together with Aalto Research Services, 100.000€ for the project titled ‘Responsible use of artificial intelligence in qualitative management research: Better human-AI collaboration for a better future. In this project, we aim to critically develop, apply, and evaluate new methods for responsible use of AI in qualitative management research undertaken both by scholars and practitioners. Some of the findings will have a direct impact on policy-making, allowing Qual+ to bridge the long-standing rigour vs relevance debate. We are most grateful to the Foundation for the grant.

The vision of Qual+ is to showcase internationally bold qualitative research that addresses societal challenges of our time through methodological innovations. Societal challenges are complex, systemic, and dynamic, rendering them particularly well-suited to be addressed through qualitative research. Because Qual+ is not linked to any particular research area or topic, crossing disciplinary boundaries occurs more easily. The broad appeal of Qual+ allows scholars not only to expand their methodological toolbox but also to question the toolbox itself: what can be

learnt from design scholars, engineering researchers or computer scientists in terms the way they engage in qualitative research, paradigmatic debates, and theorizing? Qual+ also has an important message to quantitative researchers: in an era of large AI-generated datasets, it becomes increasingly important to practice source critique and evaluate the intent, origin, and underlying assumptions of these data sets. In the years to come, Qual+ wants to be the home of experience-near, high-risk and high-impact qualitative research for a better world.

The Qual+ team would like to thank the members of the Executive Board, the International Advisory Board and all the contributors and participants of our events during the past year. It has been a pleasure to collaborate with you.

We wish you a happy Christmas time and all the very best for the new year 2025!

Rebecca Piekkari, Emrehan Gülay and Kirsi Snellman



Course and Seminar Spotlights

The Advanced Doctoral Seminar on Case Studies with Professors Rebecca Piekkari and Catherine Welch

By Oumnia Abidi

The Advanced Doctoral Seminar on Case Studies offered by EIASM and the Finnish Doctoral Program in Business Studies took place the first week of September 2024. It was an enriching experience that reshaped my understanding of case study research. The dynamic teaching between the two professors, Rebecca Piekkari (Aalto University School of Business) and Catherine Welch (Trinity College Dublin, Distinguished Visiting Professor, Aalto University School of Business), was exceptional and their passion for the subject was evident in every session. They created an engaging environment and shared stories from the field and their vast experience that brought the content to life.



Photo: Oumnia Abidi

What I found particularly valuable was the way we went beyond traditional case study discussions. We explored different research designs and reflected on their philosophical underpinnings, we looked into how it is concretely possible to theorize using case studies in a myriad of ways, including testing theory, which was a complete discovery for me. This course has broadened my perspective on what's possible and gave me a solid toolbox which I can use now and in the future. The collaborative environment was another highlight. Engaging with both professors and fellow PhD students made the learning experience enjoyable and fostered the exchange of ideas, both inside and outside the classroom.

On a personal note, this seminar was the perfect start to my month-long research stay in the Department of Management Studies at Aalto University School of Business. It provided me with a profound dive into a cornerstone of qualitative research, enriching my perspective as I return to my thesis work. Overall, this course has opened up my academic horizons. I highly recommend it to anyone wishing to deepen their understanding not only of case study research methodologies, but also of qualitative research and the philosophical underpinnings of research as a whole.

Oumnia Abidi is a third-year doctoral student from the Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management track at the Toulouse School of Management Doctoral Program, France. Her research interests are non-native accents, language-sensitive research, language-based discrimination, experimental methods and qualitative research.

Qual+ Research Seminar: Abductive reasoning in organizational research with Professor Mikko Ketokivi

By Salehi Saijad

After grasping the concepts of deduction and induction, understanding abduction can be one of the most common challenges for management PhD students. On the last day of September 2024, we had the privilege of attending a seminar by Mikko Ketokivi, Professor of Operations Management & Organization Design at IE University in Madrid, which helped answer many of the questions we had in our minds.

The seminar opened with a mysterious photograph—an intriguing scene from a streetcorner in New York City, where one could see a couple of ambulances, a police car, and a few pedestrians. Mikko then asked us what we thought was going on in the photograph. Building on our responses, he introduced abduction by contrasting it with induction. While induction is an inference drawn from specific observations to generalize patterns, abduction, he explained, involves introducing "something of a different kind" (in philosopher Charles Peirce's words) to account for a surprising observation. This distinction was crucial in helping us differentiate the three forms of reasoning: deduction seeks logical coherence, induction seeks



patterns and generalizations, and abduction creatively suggests possible explanations for anomalies or surprises.

Mikko then showed a long list of different types of abduction (about 40 in total), revealing the variety in abduction. He emphasized that engaging with abduction can involve creating, selecting, comparing, explaining, speculating, hypothesizing, modeling, and intervening. However, he also noted that the general logical structure of abduction remains the same: we come across something surprising and wish to account for the surprise in some way to “resolve the mystery,” as Alvesson and Kärreman put it. Central to the notion of surprise is that it challenges an established way of thinking. Finally, we must justify why one specific way of novel thinking is chosen over another.

The seminar’s most humorous moment came when Mikko showed us a picture of Homer Simpson running away from a pack of angry dogs while holding sausages. When asked how we thought Homer would do next, many of us imagined him throwing the sausages to the dogs. Instead, Mikko revealed that Homer eats the sausages himself to gain more energy to outrun the dogs—a clear twist in expectations, which perfectly illustrates the surprise element central to abduction.

He continued with more examples, such as Williamson’s seminal paper on vertical integration, and the abductive spirit embedded in the Gioia methodology. He concluded the seminar with two important points. First, that in abduction, new ideas don’t come from the data itself but from our own minds (although some participants did push back here a little and argued that new ideas could also originate elsewhere; this inspired a nice discussion on the topic). As researchers, we make sense of empirical material through the lens of our unique experiences, skill sets, and professional histories. Second, it’s essential to make our abductive reasoning as transparent as possible, turning subjective insights into inter-subjective knowledge, which others can interpret and critique.

This seminar was an insightful experience, providing us not only with a clearer understanding of abduction but also with some practical insights into how to apply it in our own research. It was a reminder that research is not just about data and patterns but also about creativity, insight, and making sense of the unexpected.

Sajjad Salehi is a doctoral candidate from the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management at Aalto University School of Science. His research interests are public-private collaborations, social impact, multi-stakeholder view, corporate purpose, grand challenges, case studies, and qualitative research.

It’s not impossible – Publishing a qualitative study in a very quantitative journal with Associate Professor Vikram Bhakoo

By Jiayin Yu

Vikram Bhakoo's (Associate Professor of Supply Chain Management, University of Melbourne, Australia) seminar focused on the potential for qualitative studies to be published in quantitative journals, even though they often face critical comments based on positivist evaluation criteria. His experience in the hot and humid seafood production center in Thailand left a lasting impression on me, especially considering the challenges he faced in interviewing locals and getting authentic responses. It also resonated with me that research is often an iterative process requiring significant time and effort. During the review phase, his work transformed into an entirely new paper, and he collected multiple rounds of data from various groups of people.



His study, which included three case analyses, provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of NGOs in supply chains. We learned about the potential for future qualitative research in Operations and Supply Chain Management (OSCM) that focus on complex problems and exploring interesting contexts. We were also encouraged to go beyond traditional texts and figures by incorporating videos and photographs in our papers.

Jiayin Yu is a second-year doctoral student in Department of Management Studies, Aalto University School of Business. Her research interests are international strategic alliance management, employee identification, and institutional perspectives.

Upcoming Events

Qual+ Reading Group: Exploring Posthuman Perspectives in Organization Studies

The second meeting of the reading group on posthumanism will be held on Monday **16 December, 2024 at 9.00-14.00**, in a 2x2h session divided by lunch. The facilitators of the reading group are Jukka Rintamäki, Alice Wickström, Astrid Huopalainen and Saku Mantere. For those who would like to participate but didn't attend the first reading group session, it might be useful to take a look at Francesca Ferrando's series of mini-lectures on posthumanism on [YouTube](#). If you are interested in attending the December gathering, please contact [Jukka Rintamäki](#).

Qual+ Workshop: Cross-Language Research: Translation and Linguistic Reflexivity

Professor Kaisa Koskinen (Tampere University) & University Lecturer Juho Suokas (University of Eastern Finland) **Tuesday Jan 14, 2025 at 12:30-16:00**, Classroom 1572 Noether (Kide building)

Researchers constantly cross language borders: in incorporating previous research published in different languages, in communicating their research for different audiences, in collecting data in different locales, and in publishing their results. We will discuss what this translation between languages means, what one may wish to reflect on, what kinds of solutions are available and what they entail for the research design and execution, for the research team and for the individual researcher. We welcome researchers at all career stages to join us to discuss their experiences, to contemplate best practices together and to learn more about how to study the multilingual world we live in.

[8th European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry](#)

Workshops for Participants Registered for the EIBA Conference (except AMR workshop open to all interested)

LUT Idea Development Workshop: "Land of the Curious"

Note! The workshop takes place in Lappeenranta University of Technology on December 11, 10.00 – 13.00

DL for registration November 8

More information: [eiba2024-LUT-IDW-20241027-v10.pdf](#)

AMR Workshop on Developing and Publishing Theory Papers

The Academy of Management Review (AMR) offers an insightful workshop focusing on the development and publication of theory papers in International Business (IB) and Management Studies. Designed for scholars at all career stages, this interactive session will cover key aspects such as understanding what constitutes a significant theoretical contribution, framing research questions for general management journals, crafting compelling theory papers, and navigating the review process at AMR. Participants will receive practical advice on structuring papers and responding to reviewers' feedback from current and previous Associate Editors, successful authors and members of the Editorial Review Board. To be invited to the workshop please prepare and submit the pre-workshop tasks (see following slides) before **November 18** to <https://form.jotform.com/242525620491150>

Qual+ Workshop: Qualitative Data Analysis in the AI Era: Key Considerations for IB Researchers

Hosts: **Lecturer Duc Nguyen** Alliance Manchester Business School, UK; **Professor Eriikka Paavilainen-Mäntymäki** University of Turku, Finland, **Professor Emmanuella Plakoyiannaki** University of Vienna, Austria, **Professor Catherine Welch** Trinity College, Ireland

For more information about the workshop, please click on the following link:
[Workshop: Qualitative Research Methods in IB](#)

Qual+ Workshop: Complexity in IB Research and How to Address it Methodologically via Advanced Quantitative Method

Hosts: **Professor Bo Nielsen and colleagues**
University of Sydney, Australia

For more information about the workshop, please click on the following link:
[Workshop: Quantitative Research Methods in IB](#)

Qual+ Courses

Registration for the ethnography course organized by the Marketing Department Aalto University School of Business (**23L30511 - Ethnographic Research in Marketing- Methodological Approaches to Marketing**) is now open via Sisu, and the course has a MyCourses page with all the readings already online (<https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=45662>).

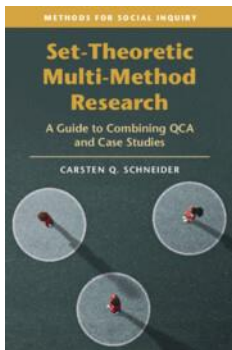
The course requires independent reading, but there will also be three interactive classroom days. The sessions will be organized as follows:

15 January (Wednesday), 10-12:00 and 13-15:00 @ Top Lounge - U523
(Undergraduate Centre)

29 January (Wednesday), 10-12:00 and 13-15:00 @ Top Lounge - U523
(Undergraduate Centre)

12 February (Wednesday), 10-12:00 and 13-15:00 @ Y115 - Y115 (Undergraduate Centre)

Interesting Reads



Book: Set-Theoretic Multi-Method Research: A Guide to Combining QCA and Case Studies - [Link](#)
Carsten Q. Schneider, Central European University, Vienna

A state-of-the-art comprehensive exposition of combining Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and case studies, this book facilitates the efficient use and independent learning of this form of SMMR (set-theoretic multi-method research) with the best available software.



Article: Challenges and Solutions in Qualitative Big Data Research: A Methodological Literature Review - [Link](#)
Sampsa Suviuuo and Virpi Kristiina Tuunainen, Aalto University School of Business

This article reviews 169 studies on qualitative big data, identifying key challenges, such as locating relevant data, handling noise, and preserving richness, and explores how researchers handle these issues despite algorithmic limitations.

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

Sign Up for Updates and Announcements

Qual+ newsletter is published quarterly. If you come across new interesting articles or books, calls for special issues or edited volumes, or are organizing an event, course related to qualitative, mixed or merged methods, please get in touch [Emreacan Gulay](#), Qual+ Coordinator. We would be happy to include this information in future issues and share it with the international Qual+ community.

You can sign up for this newsletter via the webform at the bottom of our website:

