Social enterprise, as a field of study, has provoked scholarly engagement ranging from spontaneous celebration to critical engagement. However we lack a deep understanding of how the optimistic and politically powerful, yet ambiguous and elusive ideal is lived in social practice. Ethnography, ethnomethodology and workplace studies offer the methodological potential to carve out local experimental practices of social-problem solving, and to capture the ways managers, staff and/or target groups reflect on their engagement in entrepreneurial activities. Such insights are essential for (1) developing multilayered, contextualised views on social enterprise (2) understanding the temporal, spatial and cultural dynamics of social entrepreneurship, and (3) taking sufficient account of the effects of social entrepreneurial policies on vulnerable target groups.

Ethnography also offers the potential to move the debate around social enterprise beyond idealized concepts and managerial views. Since emerging from the field of Anthropology, ethnography has been employed to study, in particular, the social realms of colonized, deprived, and marginalized groups of people. It has proven analytical strength in unraveling the contradictory, paradoxical aspects of human practice and the subtle workings of power. Social enterprise – as an organizational form comprising competing logics of social inclusion and management practice – demands an appropriate set of methods that makes room for complexity and counter-discourse, that considers social enterprise within its wider (political) context, and that attends to the longitudinal and spatial dimensions of organizational behavior which, to date, have been neglected in much of the academic literature. Potential questions which might be studied from an ethnographic perspective include: What are the long-term effects of social entrepreneurial practices? How do organizational actors sustain their social values in times of economic pressure? Which hopes and expectations motivate clients to participate in social entrepreneurial projects and how do they experience "personal improvement"? Under what circumstances do these initiatives fail or succeed?

In the second annual workshop to explore the use of ethnographic methods within social enterprise research we are interested in methodological and empirical work pursuing an ethnographic approach to social enterprise. We welcome methodological reflections and empirical contributions in the form of a single case study, a multi-sited ethnographic framework, or an auto-ethnography of being a social enterprise practitioner. Of particular interest, and stemming from discussion in the initial workshop, is work that seeks to explore the ways that the current political discourse of social enterprise is used and interpreted, challenged or supported by actors within the sector.

Abstracts: Send abstracts of no more than 800 words to the email address below by 5pm on Friday 18th March

Venue: Centre for Executive Education (CEE) room 6, Glasgow Caledonian University, Cowcaddens Road, G4 0BA
http://www.gcu.ac.uk/theuniversity/howtofindus/campusmap/
Contact: clementine.hilloconnor@gcu.ac.uk 0141 331 8478