EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
NW 19 - THE ETHNOGRAPHY NETWORK

Chairing guidelines for sessions in the ethnography network

Clemens Wieser and Gisela Unterweger, 2024

The role of a chairperson at a session is to create a supportive and motivating atmosphere for presenters and participants. The ethos of the ethnography network is to support the development of research in which presentations are grounded.

1. Preparing before the session

- Read the abstracts available via your Conftool user account. You can do this by clicking on “Information for Session Chairs and Moderators” and reading the abstracts. Possibly make some notes in the abstracts, e.g. what you find interesting and relevant to talk about.
- Prepare some ideas for short introduction, i.e. one or two sentences, both for the overall session and for the individual presentations.
- Think about one or two questions you would like to ask the presenters. When preparing questions, aim at bridging between the presentations to enable a joint conversation.
- Check that the session room has not changed by looking it up in the Conference App.

2. Arriving at the session room

- Check that the equipment (computer, projector) is in place. If there is a problem, contact one of the volunteers from the Local Organizing Committee or the EERA Desk.
- Choose a place in the front of the room that allows you to have eye contact with the presenter. If necessary, rearrange chairs and tables to make sure that there is a good setup for presenters and the audience. Take out your notes and collect the timecards, usually stored in the Session Overview Folder on the presenter’s desk. You should use timecards to indicate remaining presentation time to presenters, e.g., “5 mins left”.
- Find the presenters and introduce yourself as the session chair. Consider how to pronounce their names, and perhaps ask them directly. Introduce presenters to the time schedule, timecards, and your session plan, i.e. how many minutes they have for presentations, for questions, and for indicating remaining presentation time.
- Prepare for taking the time, with your watch or phone.
- In case some presenters do not show up at the session, suggest to presenters how you could use the extra time (e.g., finishing earlier, or giving more time for discussion). Make sure that the time given to each presentation and discussion is equally distributed.

3. Managing the session

Opening the session

- Welcome the audience and introduce yourself. Let the audience know what the session is about, and what to expect, e.g.: "This afternoon we have three speakers presenting on … . Each speaker will have … minutes to present, followed by … minutes for questions." Keep the introduction to the session short, so you do not take up presentation time.
- Ask people to turn off mobile phones. Invite the audience to make notes of the questions. Underline that the ethnography network aims at providing a supportive environment.

During a presentation

- Introduce the speaker with their full name and paper title. Introductions can be done briefly while the presenters are opening their presentations.
- Time session concisely: Show the speaker the previously agreed timecards regarding time remaining. Be firm when reminding speakers to stop.

After a presentation

- Thank the speaker and initiate a round of applause. Facilitate the discussion, managing questions. Preferably, discussion takes place after each presentation, as the conference runs parallel sessions, and some participants may want to change room.
- Leave a silence, if there are no questions first –it often takes time to think. Resist the temptation to ask the first question yourself and encourage the audience.
- Observe who of the participants wants to ask a question. Keep track of participants that want to engage in the discussion. Give word to participants. Avoid that the same participant asks questions repeatedly. In case questions or comments come in a negative tone, remember the audience that the ethnography network aims at a constructive atmosphere, and translate the question in a constructive manner where necessary.
- Keep track of time and facilitate, e.g.: "Time for two more questions", and "Last question".
- If there are no questions, ask one or two questions yourself.
- Thank the presenter and initiate a second round of applause. Announce the next speaker.

4. Wrapping up the session

- Comment on links between presentations or restate their main message.
- End on a positive note, e.g. "Enjoy your lunch" or "I hope to see many of you at …"
- Fill out the Online Session Survey, regarding participant numbers etc., available at the Session Overview Folder, usually lying on the presenter's desk in the room.
- If needed, rearrange the room back to its original layout.

Thank you for your engagement and your contribution to the ethnography network!