

RE-PLACING INTERACTION? HOW ICT INFLUENCES KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND LEADERSHIP IN PHYSICALLY DISPERSED PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

Background

Face-to-face interaction is central to organizational coordination and performance and has been shown to support knowledge sharing, which in turn affects performance. However, the literature has not studied the effects of information and communication technology (ICT) on knowledge sharing and leadership in public organizations. What are the consequences of replacing face-to-face interactions with ICT for knowledge sharing and leadership in public organizations? This is important knowledge for leaders who do not spend all days in the same location as all their employees.

Objective and methods in the project

The research question is: How does ICT enable and constrain knowledge sharing and leadership practices in physically dispersed public organizations? By addressing this prominent gap in our scholarly knowledge, we aim to advance our theoretical and empirical understanding of the role of place and



ICT in public administration research. Further, we aim to generate empirical insights that can inform the development of guidelines for public-sector managers and employees who use these tools on a daily basis, and hopefully qualify their use of ICT as they increasingly need to organize across distance.

To study technologies-in-use and arrive at a deeper understanding of the multiple ways in which ICT shape organizational realities, we need to apply situated context-sensitive research methods. The project is therefore conducted as a comparative multi-sited case study to generate relevant empirical findings and develop new theory regarding how ICT mediates informal interaction, knowledge sharing and leadership practices in physically dispersed public organizations. To enable comparison within and across different types of organizations and different areas of public service, the cases are selected to achieve maximum variation. The table shows how the project will select two organizations in three different areas: one that is physically dispersed and one that is not, i.e., six organizations in total.

	Physically dispersed organizations	Non-dispersed organizations
Government agencies	Relocated agency	Non-relocated agency
Day care	Cluster management	No use of cluster management
Elder care services	Home care services	Nursing home

The empirical investigation consists of three week-long field visits in each organization to generate three types of data: observations (3x6 organizations x 5 days ~ 90 days of observations), semi-structured interviews (2 managers and 2x5 employees in 6 organizations ~ 12 individual and 12 group interviews), and documentary material, including quantitative material from the case organizations (e.g. APVs).

Further information about the project

Associate Professor Caroline Grøn is project leader, and Anne Mette Møller is postdoc on the project. We have also recruited a PhD student, Mathilde Winsløw, to the project.