

Research Seminars - Fall 2023

Time: 13:00-15:00

Room: R1-343

Zoom link: <https://mdh-se.zoom.us/j/6740265657>

The NOMP research group aims at co-creating cross-boundary knowledge about organizing processes with the purpose of contributing to responsible organizational, managerial and working life transitions. In so doing, the group explores contemporary organizational challenges related, but not limited to, different forms of management, gender and diversity, urban sustainability, leadership, the changing nature of work, and the implementing of new technologies. Examples of such approaches include sociomaterial perspectives, practice theory, posthumanism, discourse theory and other interpretative approaches. In their work, they advance engaged scholarly practices collaboratively with actors in and outside of Academia, in close proximity to practice, and with the ambition of including a plurality of voices.

Organiser:

Michela Cozza (michela.cozza@mdu.se), Associate Professor, Department of Organisation and Management, MDU

11 September 2023 - 13:00-15:00

Britta Nordin Forsberg (Mälardalen University - Sweden)

VR for HR – A Case Study of Human Resource Development Professionals Using Virtual Reality for Social Skills Training in the Workplace

9 October 2023 - 13:00-15:00

Gisela Bäcklander (Karolinska Institute- Sweden)

Shifting perceptions of affordances enabled capabilities for new ways of working remotely during a crisis

6 November 2023 - 13:00-15:00

Cristina Ghita (Uppsala University - Sweden)

Diffraction technology use: Entanglement(s) of digital technology use and non-use

4 December 2023 - 13:00-15:00

Emma Bell (The Open University, UK and Mälardalen University, Sweden) and Michela Cozza (Mälardalen University, Sweden)

Situated knowing in Scandinavian Journal of Management

11 September 2023

Britta Nordin Forsberg (Mälardalen University - Sweden)

VR for HR – A Case Study of Human Resource Development Professionals Using Virtual Reality for Social Skills Training in the Workplace

This research is driven by an aim to inquire the Human Resource (HR) area's use of innovative technologies to develop its processes, routines and education in organization, and specifically what role digital tools such as Virtual Reality (VR) can play in developing social aspects of work. We have investigated Human Resource Development Professionals' (HRD-Ps') perception of using a VR-prototype for training of social skills in the workplace. A digital three-dimensional world was designed for the study participants, in which they interacted with agents to train social skills in the workplace. Study participants explored a VR-prototype through the usage of head-mounted devices (HMD). We collected the designer's description of the intended design element of the VR prototype and pre- and post-intervention questionnaire from the study participants and conducted a top-down thematic analysis. The three intended design elements 1) focus on the training experience, 2) learning-depth through emotional response for engagement and motivation, and 3) perspective-taking enabled by game design, were confirmed and reflected upon by the HRD-Ps'. Additionally, using VR for social skills training in the workplace was recognized as innovative, and could have the capacity to position an organization as being in the forefront of digitalization. The conclusion is that VR has a potential to create engagement and provide insights in HR matters, but further studies are needed to show the full power and potential in using VR for HR matters.

Britta Nordin Forsberg's research is focusing on the close to unexplored intersection between Virtual Reality and organizational studies. She has developed a VR-research-platform that enables the creation of science based cases in 3D-scenarios, collects data and conducts organizational studies, and she has been recognized by several awards for this innovation's importance to society. She is also sharing knowledge about VR, for example in KTH TechTalk (pod-cast). In her research, she theoretically applies a relational perspective on organization and management, focusing on social interaction, practices and power. Theories of power deals with inequalities in organizations. Britta is also running an international professional network for science and practice in the field of Virtual Reality, including both academia, as well as user organizations and suppliers of VR-solutions. Areas of research: virtual reality, human resource management, talent management, management practices, Bourdieuan studies, critical management studies, gender studies

9 October, h. 13.00-15.00

Gisela Bäcklander (Karolinska Institute – Sweden)

Shifting perceptions of affordances enabled capabilities for new ways of working remotely during a crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organizations to work wholly or partly remote through computer mediated work. Attempting to keep operating as normally as possible while adopting new, remote ways of working has meant a requirement to, as organizations, developing capabilities for remote work. In this study, we aim to 1) explore how organizations with little or no prior experience of remote work have approached working remotely, and 2) explore factors enabling the development of organizational capabilities for working remotely during the pandemic. We rely on the concept of affordances and a theory-based view of capabilities to analyse interviews from two Swedish municipalities. Our main contribution is demonstrating that a shift of perception is a key factor that can initiate a cascade of reconfiguration of assets that ultimately enables a new capability.

Gisela Bäcklander is finishing up a postdoc at Karolinska Institute, and starting up in the project "Automation or Augmentation?" examining effects on work changed by automation and AI technologies, headed by Inti Lammi. Her PhD from KTH was on the thesis "Autonomous, yet Aligned? Challenges of Self-Leadership in Context." Her continuing work has been on various forms of "modern knowledge work" such as activity based working environments and working from home, and its effects on employee focus, wellbeing, and collaboration.

6 November 2023

Cristina Ghita (Uppsala University - Sweden)

Diffractive technology use: Entanglement(s) of digital technology use and non-use

In this NOMP seminar, I will present a work in progress based on my doctoral dissertation. The work is a re-writing of one of the main findings of my dissertation, this time intended as a stand-alone article. The dissertation, titled *Technology in Absentia: A New Materialist Study of Digital Disengagement* is available [here](#).

With the increase diffusion of digital devices for both personal and professional use, the concept of digitalization has been used to describe a process of intense integration of digital tools in every-day life. Within this framework, the focus has been traditionally on studying this process from a use perspective. However, interest has been growing towards studying non-use, especially with a recent focus on the volitional and informed limitation and/or refusal of using devices, such as smartphones, often considered ubiquitous in digitalized countries. Against this background, a methodological problem emerges, namely that studying non-use implies studying an inherent absence of technology, a situation which is difficult to approach and with few existent methodological toolboxes built to sustain a robust study. In this paper, I argue that one possible methodological path is using the concept of diffractive reading, through which use and non-use are not treated as separate entities, but in their entanglement. Taking the case of digital disengagement practices in which users of digital devices choose to disconnect from them, a diffractive reading of the empirical material (multi-sited ethnographic material of disconnection experiences) makes visible a new type of technology engagement which I label as diffractive use. Diffractive users navigate the scene of societies where tensions between use and non-use occur, creating entanglements of connectivity and dysconnectivity which cannot exist separate from each other. As such, diffractive users do not only alternate between use and non-use but emerge in a technology engagement that combines the two at the same time. The work contributes to the emerging body of research interested in digital disconnection practices, but also methodologically by illustrating a case of diffractive reading of empirical data.

Cristina Ghita has a multidisciplinary background, comprised of a BA in English Literature, a MA in Applied Cultural Analysis with a specialization in ethnography, and a PhD in Information Systems. As a trained ethnographer, she employs a diverse range of qualitative methods to make visible, articulate, and understand the transformational role of ubiquitous technologies today. She is an alumnus of the Swedish Research School for Management and IT. In her doctoral dissertation, defended at Uppsala University in 2022, she re-positioned the traditional focus on the use of digital technologies towards, instead, the ways in which non-use of ubiquitous devices such as (but not limited to) smartphones becomes performative and productive. More specifically, the dissertation (monography) is an account of the practice of limiting technology use often labelled as "digital disconnection". Her work is ontologically positioned in the area of new materialism/STS where I am interested in the tensions found in the entanglement of the social and material in the use and the making of technology today. I also have a large interest in further developing reflexive (and reflective) qualitative methods which make visible the positionality of the researcher in the research assemblage. She is currently at the beginning of my postdoctoral position, part of the USER (Uppsala Smart Electricity Research Group) at the Department of Civil and Industrial Engineering, Uppsala University

4 December 2023

Emma Bell (The Open University, UK and Mälardalen University, Sweden) and Michela Cozza (Mälardalen University, Sweden)

Situated knowing in Scandinavian Journal of Management

To mark the 40th anniversary of the Scandinavian Journal of Management, we explore the extent of its situated becoming as a journal in a context of increasingly globalized knowledge production. Through analysis of social actors who act through the journal, we consider the mobile positioning of 'management' in the journal, reflecting on the 'voices' that are heard and the bodies that are seen. We propose the affirmative ethics of feminist new materialism as a means of disturbing the geographies of power that shape how knowledge is created, performed and transformed by expanding the range of others that 'management' represents. We trace the beginnings of this theoretical shift in this and other journals, which we argue is crucial in providing hope regarding what management can do to further transformative change in light of ecological, social and economic crises currently faced.

Emma Bell is Professor of Organisation and Leadership at The Open University, UK and Visiting Professor at Mälardalen University. Her research explores questions related to materiality, embodiment and meaning in organizations using qualitative methods of inquiry.

Michela Cozza is an Associate Professor in Business Administration at Mälardalen University. Her research interrogates the relationship between "the social" and "the technological" by drawing from organization studies, science and technology studies, and feminist new materialism, and by mobilizing qualitative methodology and postqualitative inquiry.