



Introduction

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Introduction

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Media technologies play a central role in workplace communication and organisational practices. They are essential to the individual employee's work, the relationship between employees and managers, and the organisation's communication with outside clients, customers, partners or citizens. In today's organisations, managers and employees are approaching a technological communication frontier with a panorama of technologies at their disposal. Employees engage in polychronic communication (Cameron & Webster, 2005) via e-mail, blogging, chat, virtual worlds, etc., which reconfigure the links between different workplace activities on different timescales (Lemke, 2000). New digital workplace practices have emerged, and at the same time, video and television, traditionally associated with public journalism, have found their way into internal 'publics' in larger organisations (Horsbøl, 2008; Aggerholm et al., 2009). Media used in working environments encompass forms of communication that allow for mass transmission as well as mutual interaction between a few parties. They also involve both interactional processes and (multimodal) semiotic artefacts – and various forms of resemiotizations between them (Iedema, 2001). This raises questions about how exactly new media are put to work in organisational practices, and what difference this makes for the employers, managers, users, customers or citizens who take part in shaping the new mediated practices. This issue of *MedieKultur* sets out to deal with these questions through studies of workplaces that use different media and operate within different social fields, including education, administration, business, and journalism.

This special themed issue addresses the ways in which the introduction and use of new media technology contributes to changing organisational practices. Without implying technological determinism, the issue focuses on the interplay between new media and workplace practices by investigating how the media give rise to new organisational practices. We also look at how members of organisations appropriate and domesticate the media in their everyday workplace communication, internally and externally, and in the public and commercial domains. Readers can learn how media is used among sports journalists in an editorial environment, by students at a university, in discussions in the online forum of a non-governmental organisation, in a chat service for members of a trade union, and in five companies' use of virtual environments as professional communication media. These articles do not of course exhaust the field, but represent a broad range of case studies based on different qualitative approaches to the issue's theme, such as discourse analysis, conversation analysis, actor-network theory, structurational theories of technologies in organisations, and media sociology.

The use of so-called social media has mostly been studied in private contexts, e.g. from the perspective of genre (*MedieKultur 51*), or in the context of their role in public communication and perception (recently for instance during the 'Arab Spring'), rather than in workplace settings. However, the use of social media in workplaces seems to be a growing field of research; in the Danish context, see for instance Grønning (2006) on the use of e-mail or Juul Christiansen (2010) on corporate blogging. Studies of the use of new computer-based forms of communication in commercial, private or political contexts have highlighted their interactive and user-involving potential. Whether this can also be applied to workplace settings is an open question which we hope to shed light on in this issue. More broadly speaking, this issue explores how the use of computer-based forms of communication – in interplay with 'older' media and interpersonal communication – affects key organisational activities and workplace functions such as coordination and planning, negotiation and conflict resolution, and servicing and case management. We leave the question of whether these effects add up to a pervasive 'mediatization' (Krotz, 2007; Hjarvard, 2008) of the workplace to the contributors of *MedieKultur 55*, whose theme will be 'Mediatization and Cultural Change'.

When it comes to media and organisational communication, media studies have mainly focused on the external communication of organisations, particularly in the form of marketing, public relations and branding. The 2004 issue of *MedieKultur* on "Mediated market communication", edited by Christian Jantzen and Tove Arendt Rasmussen, focused on external communication aimed at promotion. It was emphasised that this form of communication is multivalent and that the market-communication concepts develop in pace with and as a response to changes in media technologies and their social use. Moving on from the purely external focus in that issue, the current issue covers both internal and external mediated workplace communication. Organisational communication and workplace studies cover a very wide field; the current issue focuses on how new media and mediation affect communication practices in the workplace, and in particular on the remediation of communication that take place when new digital media are combined with existing media.

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This issue of *MedieKultur* presents five articles exploring different aspects of the overall theme. They are summarised below.

Kirsten Frandsen's article, "Sports broadcasting, journalism and the challenge of new media", explores the challenges faced by established media organisations in integrating digital media into their production. The article is based on a case study of the use of blogs in a Danish broadcasting organisation and shows how sports journalists' distinctive engagement with their topic and interaction with their audiences are affected by the introduction of the blog.

The way in which organisational perspectives and technological developments shape the way communication technologies are integrated into organisational structures and practices is also the theme of Anne Mette Thorhauge's article "Communication technologies in the study environment: Institutional and personal media as reflections of organisational structure". The article investigates students' use of personal media and course-management practices in a Danish university campus. It is argued that the ways the technologies are used reflect two different perspectives on the interplay between communication technology and organisational structure.

Astrid Jensen and Annette Grindsted focus on the opportunities for citizens to interact with public organisations in the processing of individual cases, and on how this interaction is facilitated by the internet. In the article "'Hello! My name is Martin and I'm a Danish citizen'. Problem-solving, knowledge-sharing and trust in online interaction: The case of family reunification", Jensen and Grindsted analyse a series of messages on the online forum of the non-governmental organisation Marriage without Borders. One of the central themes here is that expertise is not only allocated to the authorities but relies on trust between the members of the community.

Another way for citizens to interact with an organisation is analysed in Anette Grønning's article "Structure, complexity and cooperation in parallel external chat interactions", about chat interactions between an employee and members of a large Danish trade union. The interactions deal with the issue of rights in connection with being given notice while on maternity leave, questions relating to unemployment benefit, early retirement pension, travel expenses for jobseekers, problems with payments from the trade union, etc. The article is a study of how parallel chat interactions are carried out in a work-related context, with the employee taking part in several chat interactions at the same time.

Another aspect of virtual space is considered by Emil Husted and Ursula Plesner in their article "Spontaneous strategies in innovation networks: The importance of materiality in stabilising virtual worlds as professional communication media". This article explores how actors in an innovation process attempt to establish virtual worlds as platforms for professional communication. The article analyses reports from five Danish companies seeking to create innovation by using virtual worlds as communication media, and shows how the companies use physical places and objects as strategic resources in the innovation process.

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The open section contains two articles. In the article “Making sense of the German Wikipedia community”, Rikke Frank Jørgensen investigates the German Wikipedia community, focusing on its norms, collaborative practices and means of regulation. Based on qualitative interviews, the article offers insight into Wikipedia’s motivational drivers for participation and the ways in which the Wikipedians assess the importance of the encyclopaedia’s articles in comparison with the wiki-process as such.

Sarah Malou Strandvad’s article, “Organising for the auteur: A dual case study of debut filmmaking”, expands the concept of the auteur to include the practical organisation of the film-production process. Though the term has its origins in film criticism, it can also be seen as a belief shared by the production team that produces roles and practices that are not necessarily beneficial to the overall product.

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