

ABSTRACT

Recently a series of contributions, that studies the relationship between organization and technology, have highlighted the need for (re)discover the materiality and its relationship with the social aspects of organizations. For instance, Engeström e Blackler (2005) have stated that structuralism, post-structuralism, semiotics, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics share the assumption that artefacts exist principally 'as envelopes of meaning' and acquiring a social role 'as the result of processes of linguistic coding and discursive interpretation' (Pels et al., 2002). All these thoughts have ignored the material aspects of social life because artefacts are considered as given things (Engeström e Blackler , 2005). Many recently works have revitalized the interest toward materiality on social science, technologies and organization studies for example, Knorr-Cetina (1997) with "object-centred sociality" approach (Goodwin, 1997; Heath and Hindmarsh, 2000; Middleton and Brown, 2002), the role of artefacts on conversation and discourse analysis and activity theory (Engeström, 1990). Most of them have provided several insights that deal with the relationship between organization and technologies. Among others, Orlikowski has considered technology as the results of an "entanglement" between organizational practices and organizational material (technology in particular). In this sense, technology is seen as the materiality of organizational practices and its use is seen as the consequence of an "enacting process" of social and material contingencies (Orlikowski 2007; Pinch and Swedberg, 2008).

Adopting this perspective, authors analyze a case study in order to understand whether and to what extent the introduction of a technology (in the specific case a health care information system) can affect employee behaviors and routines in a non deterministic way. The analysis conducted by the authors refers to the adoption of an information system called SISPEs in a residence for elderly¹. It is a web-based system, which manages most of the information flows among socio-assistance, sanitary, entertainment, and administrative units. It is composed by an enterprise knowledge portal, which provides the unique access point to corporate knowledge. The main characteristic of SISPEs is that it is focused on the residence's guests and all the information is managed according to this perspective. Thus, all information, autonomously managed by each single unit, is not shaped according to the theme or the topic of interest of the group, but rather according to the guest's needs. Therefore, doctors, nurses, animators, and administrative offices collectively contribute to the management of guests' information, according to some predefined channels of communication. Each contributor accedes to the IS

¹ The analysis is part of a wider project, in collaboration with Spes Trento and and the department of computer and management sciences of the University of Trento. In the 2002, established the centrality of the guest and service innovation, Spes Trento Cooperativa Sociale has initiated a project to develop an electronic folder for social and health welfare for the benefit of their guests.

through an authentication process, sees the most relevant links to document management systems related to her/his activity, and can add information which she/he is responsible for.

Authors have analyzed the introduction of an electronic folder which keep track of services for both social and health welfare in the residence for elderly “Casa di Riposo Redenta Floriani” in Trentino (in the north of Italy). The residence is one of the 46 public institutions of assistance and charity in Trentino. Currently, the residence guarantees some core services such as sanitary attendance, nursing, medical, physiotherapeutic, entertainment, and often religious services to around 95 guests. The labor force is of approximately 50 employees, plus a variable number of volunteers.

The professional roles are divided in five units: the administrative office, the assistance and sanitary unit, the entertainment unit, and the technical services division.

In the first phase of the analysis has been made only few months after the first implementation of SISPEs. Authors interviewed 16 key employees to understand how and to what extent licensed practical nurses (LPNs), physiotherapists, social assistants and sanitary assistants have understood the technology, adopted it, and used in the most effective way. Workers, also, spent from 40 to 60 minutes, discussing the effects of SISPEs on the communication and coordination processes and on attitude to share knowledge among colleagues. After one year, the second phase analysis has been conducted. Authors have made few direct observations and shadowing, in order to deeply examine how communication and coordination processes have evolved in the organization.

The results of the work focus on how SISPEs enables practices emerging, the creation of unexpected innovation, higher effectiveness and quality of products and services. Authors also explain how the system might legitimate and maintain trust and good faith, catalyze the tensions between stability and changes, legitimate the work employees do protecting them from negligence accuses.

Finally authors demonstrate that these changes cannot be easily explained with traditional frameworks of analysis, which consider the organization as the result of rational players who (coherently with their motivations and incentives schemes) pursue their goals (Powell and DiMaggio 2000, Scott, 2001).

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