

Speaker: Professor Trish Reay, Vice-Dean & TELUS Chair in Management, University of Alberta School of Business and Distinguished Research Environment Professor, Warwick Business School

Time and Location: 14:00-15:00, Mon 8 Dec 2025; in-person at WBS in Room 1.003

Register: Email cohcr@wbs.ac.uk to book your place

Living in the North: How place and place attachment matter in a large scale healthcare change process

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Professor Trish Reay is Vice-Dean and holds the TELUS Chair in Management at the **University of Alberta School of Business** in Edmonton, Alberta. She also holds a partial appointment at Warwick Business School as Distinguished Research Environment Professor. Her primary research interests include institutional and organizational change, professional identity, and identity work. She has investigated these topics primarily in the context of health care organizations and family business. Her research articles have been published in journals such as: *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization Studies*, and *Human Relations*. She is Past Editor-in-Chief at *Organization Studies*, and Past Section Editor at the *Journal of Management Studies*. She is also a member of the Editorial Review Boards for: *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Organization Science*, *Journal of Management Studies*, and *Organization Theory*. Email: trish.reay@ualberta.ca

Abstract

We investigate how a sense of place and place attachment can matter within a process of institutional change. Our research context is a relatively sparsely populated region in northern Canada where key actors engaged in the development and implementation of a large scale change initiative designed to alter key aspects of providing primary healthcare. The goal was to improve the overall healthiness of the population by re-arranging service delivery to bring together healthcare services with community services. Our data consists of interview, observation and document data collected over 11 years where participants' sense of attachment to their local places and regional place was critical. Our analyses reveal how people's attachment to their place was core to the process of change over time. The key objective was to develop new sustainable ways of delivering comprehensive health services throughout the region that focused on keeping people healthy. After the initiative launched, and over the time of our study, we identified how people's attachment to place was first used to generate enthusiasm for local experiments that generated excitement for potential advancement. However, in phase two, these experiments were suddenly put on hold when the regional leadership attempted to achieve uniformity throughout the larger area. Then, in phase three, we identify how local place attachment became seen as an important mechanism for developing sustainable advances. Overall, we contribute to institutional theory by revealing how interpretations of place attachment were altered over time, and how the resiliency of place attachment can be critical to actor interactions within an organizational field.