



ISM SEMINAR Spring Term 2016

Speaker: Professor Marleen Huysman, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

Title: Through the eyes of others: how onlookers shape the use of technology at work

Date: Wednesday 25 May 2016

Venue: M2, WBS Teaching Centre

Time: 14:00

Abstract: In this paper, we argue that the use of technology is structured not only by users, technology and their social context, but also by onlookers, i.e. actors for whom the use is visible, yet who do not use the technology features themselves. Building on the “technology-in-practice” lens and insights of an ethnographic study in operating rooms where nurses used mobile technology for various work-related and recreational purposes, we show how onlookers contribute to structuring collective patterns of technology use. We conceptualize their role as the “onlooker effect”, which means that onlookers’ inferences, judgments and reactions trigger users to reflect on consequences and adjust the use in front of others; a phenomenon which is activated by the cues unintentionally given off when using technology. By identifying the role of onlookers in technology use, this study goes beyond user-centric and feature-centric perspectives on information technology use, illustrating that it does not happen in the physical vacuum, but often draws in unintended audiences. The onlooker effect provides a more in-depth explanation for unexpected patterns of technology use emerging in the workplace.

Biography: Marleen heads the KIN research group at the VU University and is head of the department of Information systems, Logistics and Innovation (ILI). She studied Sociology at the Erasmus University Rotterdam and has a PhD in Business Economics on the topic of Organizational Learning and IT at the VU University. Marleen has been assistant professor at the department of Work and Organizational Psychology, TU Delft and associate professor Business Administration at the VU University Amsterdam. Since 2006 she holds a chair in Knowledge and Organization at the faculty of Economics and Business Administration. Marleen has been visiting scholar during her PhD at Stanford and in 2000-2001 she was a visiting scholar at the Technology and Innovation Management (TIM) group at Harvard Business School. Marleen conducts research in the following overlapping fields of research, all related to the development and use of digital innovation: new ways of working, technology in practice, knowledge sharing, - coordinating, development and integration. Her research has been published in various international journals and books and is a frequent speaker at academic and professional meeting in the field.

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