Changing Spaces for Social Learning in the Implementation Biography of an ERP System: a Longitudinal Case Study

G.M. Campagnolo¹, S.Ducati²

Abstract  The research presented in this paper focuses on four different periods of implementation choices in the history of an Italian public sector organization as ERP software support shifts from being provided in-house to a market-based supply. The case illustrates a deeply contextual reflexivity between the varied compositions of supply and use space and the social learning leading to the technical knowledge that shapes members representations of the technical feature of the ERP system driving implementation choices. We explore the role played by the reconfiguration of actors and their interactions along the ERP system support chain across time in patterning the way project participants make sense of notions like customizations or standardization. Data on distinctive locational patterns of organizational resources concerning post-implementation enhancements of the system were gathered through interviews and observations of the system in use. Four different locational patterns of IT related expertise have been identified in the case across different time periods: the ‘implementation hum’ period (1998-2001), the ‘era of personalization’ (2002-2005), the move from the in-house software enhancement to external consultancy (2005-2008) and the more recent appointment of a different consortium of multiple consultants to implement additional software modules.

¹ Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, Via Verdi 26, I – 38100 Trento, gianmarco.campagnolo@soc.unitn.it.
² Faculty of Sociology, University of Trento, Via Verdi 26, I – 38100 Trento, samantha.ducati@studenti.unitn.it.