

The screen as a practice architecture for academic work

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During the COVID-19-pandemic, many academics have experienced profound changes to their daily work. This is especially due to sudden and wholesale shifts to online forms of communication for teaching and studying, researching, and community/industry engagement. Working and studying from home has become the new normal, in universities as in worklife in general. This presentation draws on an ongoing empirical project designed to investigate such changes, almost from the time a pandemic was declared. In the project, entitled *Academics' Learning in the Time of Coronavirus*, we have interviewed 42 academics across four countries, Finland, Norway, Australia and Sweden, 31 of them at two points in time. Some of the interviewees (27) have also kept regular diaries of their experiences. Diaries and interview transcripts have been analysed using the *theory of practice architectures*. This has generated several insights into how academics' practices (i.e., their *sayings, doings and relatings*) have changed during the pandemic and with what consequences. It has also given insight into how these changes have been enabled and constrained by existing and evolving practice architectures (i.e. *cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements in sites of practices*).

In the presentation, we focus on a practice architecture that emerged as salient to many of the changed practices identified in our analysis: *the computer screen*. As we shall show, the computer screen has played a key role in prefiguring academic practices, particularly in synchronous online meeting forums like Zoom and Teams. The screen mediates what is/not, and can/not be, said (including e.g. through emojis and 'chat' comments, and 'live' spoken exchanges). It also mediates what is, and can be, done (including through technical hardware and software features). Finally, it mediates how people (can) relate to each other and their virtual and physical environments (e.g. through on-screen arrangements of people's images, 'host' versus 'non host' access to functions like mute buttons, or sound-image delays). This inevitably has implications for academics' capacities to create and maintain personal ties with colleagues, students, and research partners/participants, and to engage in meaningful work.

Through empirical examples, we aim to highlight how the screen has positively and negatively affected relational dimensions of academic work (especially those related to power). We also hope to provoke discussion about what our findings might mean for research, teaching and learning, and community engagement in the post-pandemic university.