Organizational Communication and Sustainable Development: ICTs for Mobility

Anette Hallin  
*Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden*

Tina Karrbom Gustavsson  
*Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden*
Chapter 1
ICTs for Business Enterprise Mobility: Mobile Communications, Mobility and the Creation of Sustainable Value

Per Andersson, Centre for Information and Communication Research (CIC), Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden
Susanne Sweet, Centre for Information and Communication Research (CIC), Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden
Christopher Rosenqvist, Centre for Information and Communication Research (CIC), Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden

This chapter puts focus on and relates to three central concepts "sustainability", "mobility", and "customer value". The results from two long-term lines of research and two research programs are combined in the chapter. The first focuses on the effects of the use of new wireless communication and information on organizations in terms of changed "mobility" of people and artifacts within and between organizations. The second research area addressed is that of social and environmental enterprise and business. The chapter has the aim and ambition to contribute to a conceptual discussion on sustainability, mobility, and value. Based on the discussion, the chapter presents a set of propositions to help advance research in this relatively new research field. Short empirical examples are presented, followed by a concluding discussion and a set of propositions for further research.

Chapter 2
ICT Instruments as Possible Support for the Equal Distribution of Population

Aleksandra Djukic, Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, Serbia
Vesna Tomic, Ski resorts of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia
Unequal city development, namely the faster development of large centers and concentration of power, globalization and local specificities in certain locations, have caused a lack of balance between large city centers and smaller settlements and villages. In Serbia, there are major differences in the level of development, as well as in cultural features of settlements. There are significant economic differences between settlements in the north, the east, and the south of the country, since settlements developed in valleys and hence had better traffic communication, and could therefore be competitive and stay abreast of transformations. Smaller settlements and villages (especially those along the borders, in National parks and in difficult to access rural regions), are marginalized, and face many problems, most often caused by lack of infrastructure, decrease of the number of inhabitants, the dissolution of the secondary and tertiary sector. Today, a quarter of the total population lives in the capital city of Belgrade, while a considerable number of settlements are completely shutting down. These settlements once had their identity and a harmonious balance of all elements constituting the life of the community and the individual. A distinctive social aspect contributed to a rich cultural heritage, but over time this was gradually lost and begins to disappear. The question is if any of the processes (globalization, technological revolution), which contribute to the demographic and economic decline of rural regions, could form a basis for renewal. A classical planner’s approach would imply the networking of settlements and providing equal population distribution by investing in infrastructure and providing conditions for settlements through the development of central functions, requiring considerable investments. The other possibility relies on the development of information and communication technologies (ICT), which could provide for many necessities: access to and exchange of information, paying bills and ordering products from a distance, working from home, meetings via internet conferences, etc. The use of internet technologies in order to develop settlements, by converting traditional into “net” technologies, can make up for disadvantages of life in smaller settlements and enable their revitalization, by networking them into a global net of settlements, without geographical borders and limits.

Chapter 3
Green Urban Planning and Design for Smarter Communities

Ozge Yalciner Ercoskun, Gazi University, Turkey

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) changes the concept of place and social life. Researchers should find some solutions about how to combine ICT with sustainable construction to revitalize an existing neighborhood and to create a new model for growing areas especially in small cities. The objectives of this study are to search for new ways to create sustainable communities with the sustainable use of ICTs, to discuss the advantages and disadvantages and the use of ICTs in cities, to put a new approach as ‘eco-tech’ city, and to explore the potential ways of creating sustainability in practice. The study summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of the use of ICTs in cities and describes smart city and eco-tech city concepts. The following part, which is consisted of a discussion of urban planning and design, incorporating ICT for the construction of sustainable communities, explores the prospect that dehumanized communication can be ameliorated through progressive, innovative and green urban planning and design strategies.
Chapter 4
ECORadar-Shakti: An Interactive Knowledge Base Contributing to the Greening of an Indian Megacity

Martin Kreeb, Potsdam University of Management and Communication, Germany
Georg Dold, Potsdam University of Management and Communication, Germany
Hans-Dietrich Haasis, Bremen University, Institute for Production and Logistics, ISL, Germany

This chapter describes concept, design and future implementation of a knowledge-based Internet portal - ECORadar Shakti India - aimed at small and medium sized enterprises of the Indian megacity Hyderabad. The portal sets out to use the simplest and most persuasive means to motivate and enable sustainability management in those enterprises that have so far taken little or no interest in this aspect of management. Hyderabad, a prime example of an emerging mega city, is a laboratory where the goal of becoming a sustainable mega city faces of difficult challenges. The intention to work towards a sustainable future will be difficult to achieve without adequate data, tools and implementation strategies. The research idea of this approach in Hyderabad was set up in a research program funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

Section 2
Communicating Sustainability

Chapter 5
Philanthropy, CSR and Sustainability

Arun Sahay, Strategic Management, Management Development Institute, Gurgaon, India

Despite business’s business being business, the business owners have been doing acts of benevolence depending upon the owner’s religion, faith, values and beliefs. Establishment of temples, mosques, churches, schools, hospitals etc. has been usual practice through which firms have shown their concern about the society and made contribution to the social cause. However, of late, it is observed that progressive businesses, after understanding the nuances of sustainable development and its reporting, have moved from philanthropic mode of contributing to society to the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Some of them have gone beyond CSR and have entered the domain of Strategic CSR. In the process, a new concept of Corporate Sustainability, which is based on Triple Bottom-line concept, has emerged in strategic management literature. Thus, today CSR activities are being aligned with the business strategy of the firm. In the developed countries, firms are increasingly integrating CSR with the core business activities e.g. innovation, marketing, finance etc. This article attempts to look into firm’s CSR and corporate sustainability with special reference to a developing country - India.

Chapter 6
Tools for Corporate Assessment of Sustainable Development

Cecilia Mark-Herbert, Department of Economics, The Swedish University of Agriculture Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden
Jonas Rorarius, Department of Economics, The Swedish University of Agriculture Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden
Corporate needs to assess, evaluate and communicate sustainability efforts are evident in the increasing use of management tools. A selected set of commonly used sustainability management tools are compared in this study with a key question in mind: how well does each of them provide grounds for assessing and communicating corporate sustainability ambitions? Each of the tools reflects different aspects of responsible conduct; expressed in economic, environmental, social and temporal & spatial terms. They represent a partial foundation for ex ante assessment and ex post evaluation and, as such, grounds for providing information and communicating. Selecting suitable tools for making sustainability management assessments presupposes an awareness of a need to integrate the perspectives on sustainability as well as finding a suitable marketing tool mix.

Chapter 7
Communicating Environmental Information on a Company and Inter-Organizational Level .......... 115

Elke Perl-Vorbach, Institute of Systems Sciences, Innovation and Sustainability Research Karl Franzens University Graz, Austria

The collection, managing and communication of environmental information are nowadays seen as an essential prerequisite for sustainable development. However, ways of generating and exchanging environmental information differ within and between companies. Moreover, the use of highly sophisticated environmental information systems can still be seen at in its infancy. The aim of this chapter is thus to assess ways of the application of environmental information systems for sustainable development, both within and between organizations, can be supported. An empirical analysis of those barriers and obstacles, which inhibit the implementation of environmental information systems, is also carried out. Additionally, we also pay attention to forms of industry wide environmental protection, and take existing cooperation and relationships, sustainable supply chains, and recycling networks into account. For this purpose, basic conditions for the inter-organizational exchange of environmental information are investigated. This provides the basis for identifying means to strengthen the position of environmental protection in connection with inter-organizational exchange of environmental information. Improved methods of implementing environmental information systems within and between companies are developed, thus promoting greater cooperation for sustainable development.

Section 3
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Communicating in Multicultural Firms: Boundary Creation, Fragmentation and the Social Use of ICT ................................................................. 135

Jakob Lauring, Department of Management, Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University, Denmark

Anders Klitmøller, Department of Management, Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University, Denmark
Based on a qualitative study of 14 knowledge intensive companies, this chapter suggests that multicultural and multilingual firms are faced with certain challenges in the attempt to fruitfully utilize the diverse background of their workforce. Firstly, through informal settings, the employees to create social boundaries within the firm use native languages strategically. Secondly, even though the introduction of English as cooperate language might solve some communication issues, it tends to render the communication less nuanced, thereby reducing the use of human resources within the firm. Thirdly, ICT does not necessarily solve communication problems within a given company. It can even be used as a social ‘tool’ to uphold social boundaries or social fragmentation. It is suggested that in order to address these challenges, the management should seek to reward not only individual employees, but also expand the notion of performance to include the collectivity of the workplace.

Chapter 9
Communication in Global Development Projects: Objectives, Mechanisms and Interpretations...... 153

Maria Adenfelt, Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden
Katarina Lagerström, Department of Business Administration, School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg Sweden

Globalization trends make the task of revisiting the nature of the organization of global development projects (GDPs) within MNCs imperative. In this study, GDPs are viewed as contemporary ventures that seek scale economies in response to opportunities and threats posed by globalization trends. Our focus is to obtain a better understanding of how communication is managed and organized in GDPs. The study is of a GDP with the aim of developing a common global product to be used by all subsidiaries in an MNC, but with openings for local market adaptations. The empirical findings show that: (1) the management had two goals with the project, which were conveyed and understood differently depending on organizational level and organizational belonging, (2) the administrative heritage of the MNC influenced the use of information communication technology for sharing information and knowledge, and (3) the impact of frequency and structure of communication for information processing.

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The Relation Between ICT and Environmental Management Practice in a Construction Company ................................................................. 170

Mattias Jacobsson, Umeå School of Business, Umeå University, Sweden
Anneli Linde, Umeå School of Business, Umeå University, Sweden
Henrik Linderoth, University of Skövde, Sweden

The aim of this chapter is to draw attention to the use of ICT in the building and construction industry with a special interest in the day-to-day activities of those companies that are working to develop more environmentally friendly and sustainable production processes. The chapter is based on a comprehensive survey of ICT use and attitudes to environmental related issues in middle and large sized construction companies in Sweden and two case studies: One of ICT use in a larger Swedish building and construction company and one of communication, coordination, and decision making processes in a construction project. Based on the empirical data we argue that in order to enhance a more environmentally friendly building and construction industry there is a need for a more genuine cooperation and knowledge sharing between different actors both in crossing project boundaries as well as overriding contractual limitations.
Decisions in a construction project must be taken earlier in the process and construction companies need to focus more on those processes over which they actually do have power.

Chapter 11
The Need for Accounting in Dialects: Making the Special Competitive Culture in Family-Run Companies Sustainable

Per Forsberg, University of Borås, Sweden
Mikael Lind, University of Borås, Sweden

This chapter deals with the challenge of ensuring and sustaining cultural competitiveness in a globalised world where control and management tend to be made at a distance. The authors illustrate this by arguing that family-run businesses have a special culture that makes them good at creating and taking part in innovative networks. Today this culture is however threatened. Implementation of technologies for controlling and governing at a distance destroy this special family-run business culture. As a solution to this problem the authors suggest that new technologies of communication have the potential to strengthen the ability to create innovative networks. New technologies of communication do this when they give rise to alternative forms of communication and thus complement management based on “controlling and acting at a distance”.

Chapter 12
Workplace Location and ICTs Substituting Travel

Greger Henriksson, The Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden
Minna Räsänen, The Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden

This chapter is based on the assumption that keeping the number and length of business and commuting trips at reasonable levels could contribute to reaching targets of environmental sustainability. The authors highlight a couple of options for reducing or avoiding business trips and commuting through workplace location or improved use of communications. They present case studies concerning travel and communications, carried out by using diaries and interviews. They also present relevant literature on social practices and sustainability goals in relation to use of ICT. The aim is to shed light on variation in the use of travel and communications on an individual level in work life. The case studies illustrate that such variation is mainly due to the concrete practices involved in execution of professional duties and roles. Duties that involve a clearly defined end result or product being delivered regularly by the member of staff are correlated to clearly defined needs for communications. Less clearly defined end results of the work duties seem to make it harder for the individual to plan and perform communication and travel in a more energy saving way. The difference in professional duties can thus be expressed in terms of clarity and maturity. Another factor that affect who can replace travel with ICTs is relations of power, e.g., when a purchaser dictates the terms for a subcontractor concerning how and where to “deliver” his working time, service or product. The importance of clarity, maturity and power aspects means that professional practices need to be studied at a detailed level to find out who could substitute ICTs for travel and how this could be done.
Section 4
Critical Perspectives

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Communication, Information and Sustainability: A Geographical Perspective on Regional Communication Policies ......................................................... 227

Marco Tortora, Political Science School, University of Florence, Italy

This chapter, recognizing that the main communication concepts are deeply geographical in their inner nature, has the intent of introducing an analysis of the connection there should be between geography, communication, organization and sustainability. The author will use the geography of information as the main framework to detect these links and to present the analysis of a regional communication infrastructure to understand how the Internet can be pivotal to communication and local development strategies. The analysis will present regional communication policies, projects and practices to understand if these are positive or negative forces for a regional sustainable development.

Chapter 14
African Families Faced with NICT: Stakes and Effect on Inter-Individual and Intergenerational Relation ................................................................. 245

Honoré Mimche, IFORD-University of Yaounde II, Cameroon
Norbert Tohnain Lengha, CNE-Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, Yaounde, Cameroon

In Africa, family structures are today committed or involved in the dynamics of social transformation which jeopardize their mode of constitution their future, the sustenance of intergenerational and individual relationships as well as the traditional systems of social relationships based on direct and personal communication. This chapter is a sociological analysis of the future of the family through its relationship with NICT notably the Internet and the cellular telephone. The analyses lay emphasizes on the consequences of NICTs on the modalities for the constitution of marriage covenants, family relationships and intergenerational transfers.

Chapter 15
Gender and Technology: Mind The Gap! ................................................................. 256

Michela Cozza, Department of Sociology and Social Research, Faculty of Sociology, University of Trento, Italy

In this chapter the mutual shaping of the technology and gender is analyzed in relation to the phenomenon of gender digital divide. The discussion starts with the re-construction of the theoretical background, shedding light on different analytical approaches to technological development. The gender blind perspective of mainstream technology studies is uncovered; looking at theoretical contributes of feminist and gender studies. This positioning is aimed to consider the cultural and material aspects involved in the digital gender gap. The chapter leads to a general conclusion: it is of utmost importance that researchers, decision-makers and professionals in Information Technology field take into account that all spheres inhabited by human beings are inevitably gendered. The gender mainstreaming approach may inform
the construction of a gender-aware research agenda and the identification of the following transformative actions. The synergy among researchers, practitioners and decision-makers at political and business level is crucial for a gender-sensitive and sustainable development.

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