

Research on Virtual Teams: CSCW should challenge MIS

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Humans have been collaborating across geographical boundaries for thousands of years. Nevertheless, distant collaboration today remains problematic, complicated and prone to failures. Global organizations see benefits of collaboration across distance as a mean of providing focused attention to complex problems without physically relocating individuals (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000; Malhotra and Majchrzak, 2004). Also team-based structures are replacing traditional forms of organisation and management in global companies (DeSanctis and Jackson, 1994; Lipnack and Stamps, 1994). As this style of work replaces traditional management in organizations (DeSanctis and Jackson, 1994; Lipnack and Stamps, 2000), research on team-based structures and groupware technology are attracting more interest, thus they have received substantial attention in both the popular and academic literature (Townsend et al., 1998). 'Virtual teams' is the concept used to capture this way of working; as such, 'virtual' infers 'not collocated'. Some researchers reserve the concept of virtual teams for participants who *never* meet face-to-face, and suggest the concept of 'hybrid teams' for teams, who occasionally meet face-to-face (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998), while others (Chudoba et al., 2005; Majchrzak et al., 2000) refer to virtual teams as small groups of people who *rarely* meet face-to-face, thus most of their collaboration is mediated by technology. Virtual *project* teams refer to teams charged with producing a one-time output collaboration in a time-limited, non-repetitive group of geographical distributed participants (Massey et al., 2003).

Here, the concept of virtual teams to refer to virtual project teams collaborating in a hybrid work arrangement.

Unfortunately research on virtual teams seems to predominately be conducted and published within the area of organizational science and management of information systems (e.g. Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Majchrzak et al., 2000) and only few within the area of CSCW (e.g. Bjørn, 2006; Huysman et al., 2003). This is a shame since many of the issues related to research on virtual teams e.g., supporting remote or distributed collaboration, understanding the social dimensions of collaboration and technology use, building collaborative applications and environments have been key research areas for the CSCW community over the years. Thus CSCW research needs to take advances of the unique position to contribute methodological, conceptual and practical insights while challenging the leading position that MIS research has on virtual team research.

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