



University of St.Gallen

Institute of Business Education
and Educational Management

The Situatedness of Knowledge and the Design of Knowledge Management in the Event of Employee Departures.

A Practice-Theoretical Account.

Graz, August 23, 2025

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From insight to impact.

The Big Picture

Knowledge management in the case of employee departures

Dissertation:

- Untangling the texture
- Understanding its effects on related work practices

JURE Contribution:

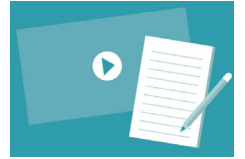
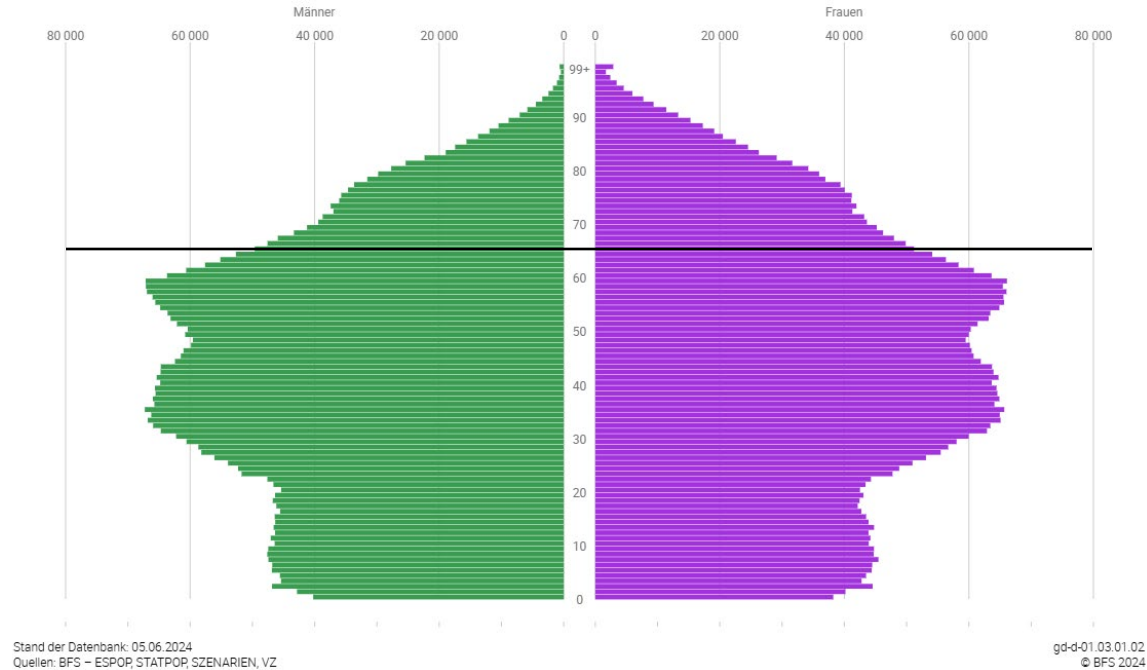
- Understanding the effects of related work practices



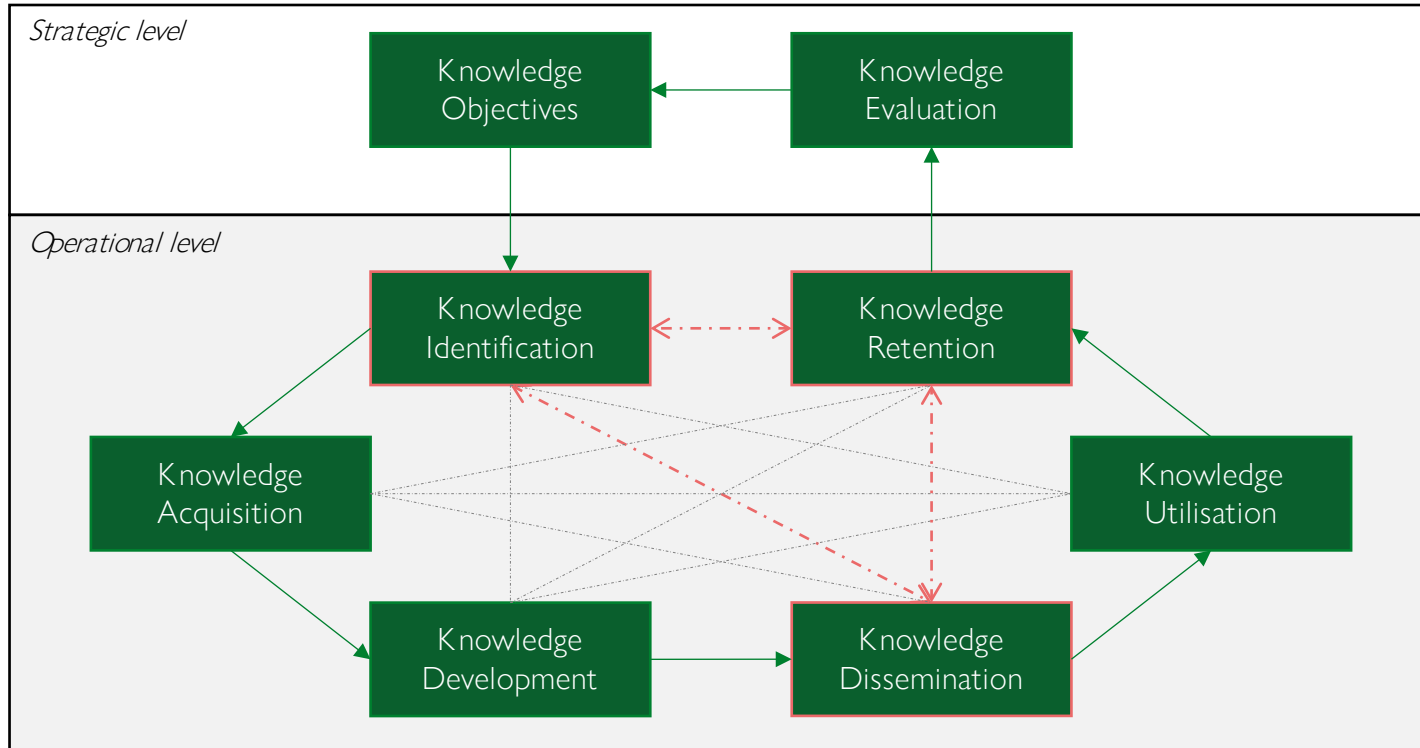
Agenda

1. Problem Statement
2. Literature
3. Research Question
4. Methods
5. Results
6. Discussion

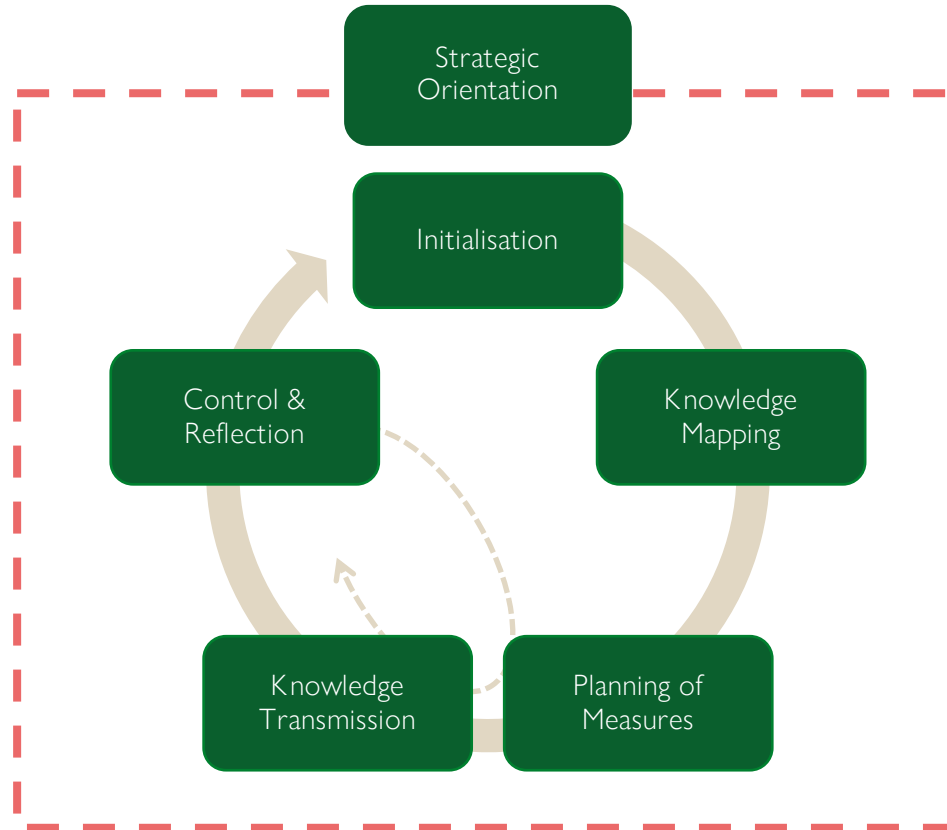
Problem Statement and Research Interest



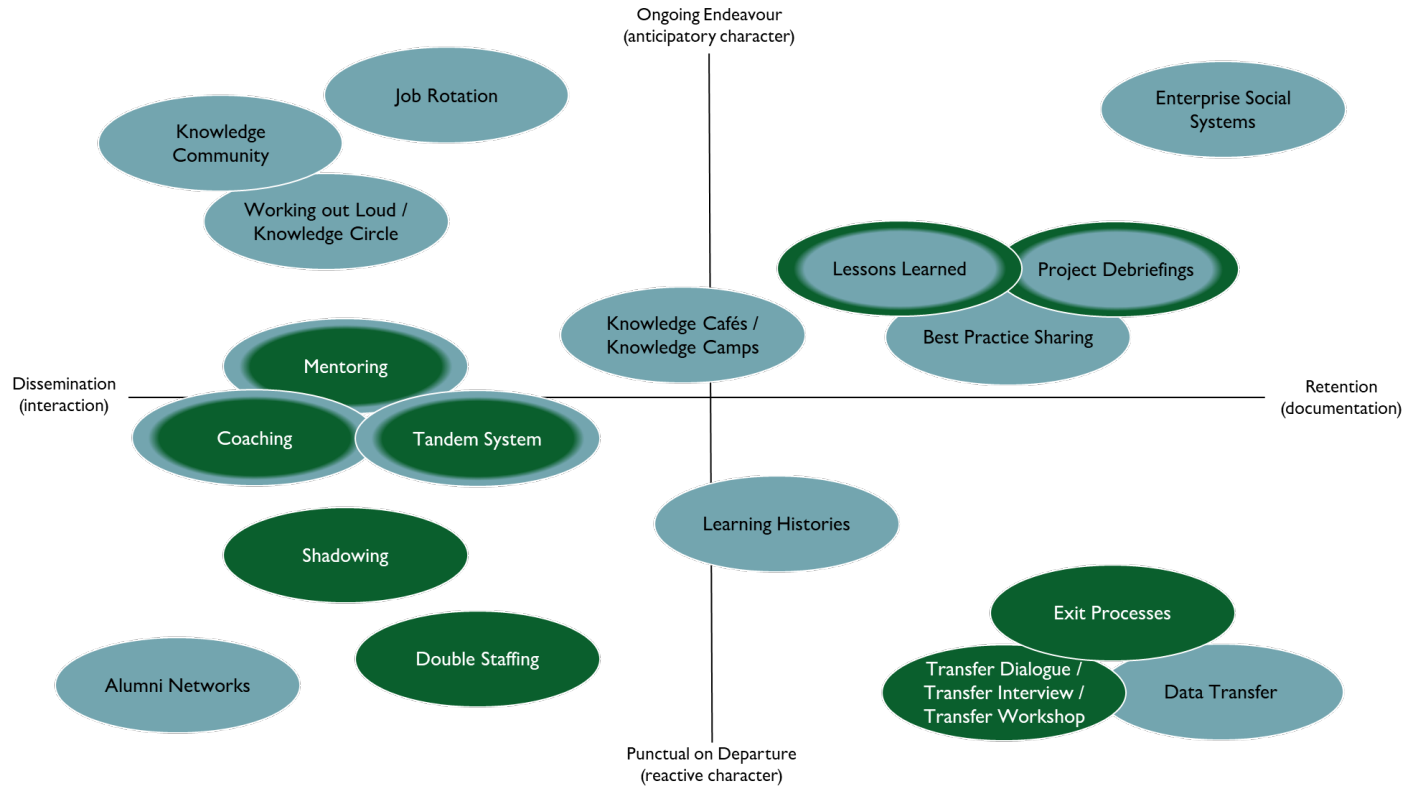
Employee Departures as a Challenge for Knowledge Management



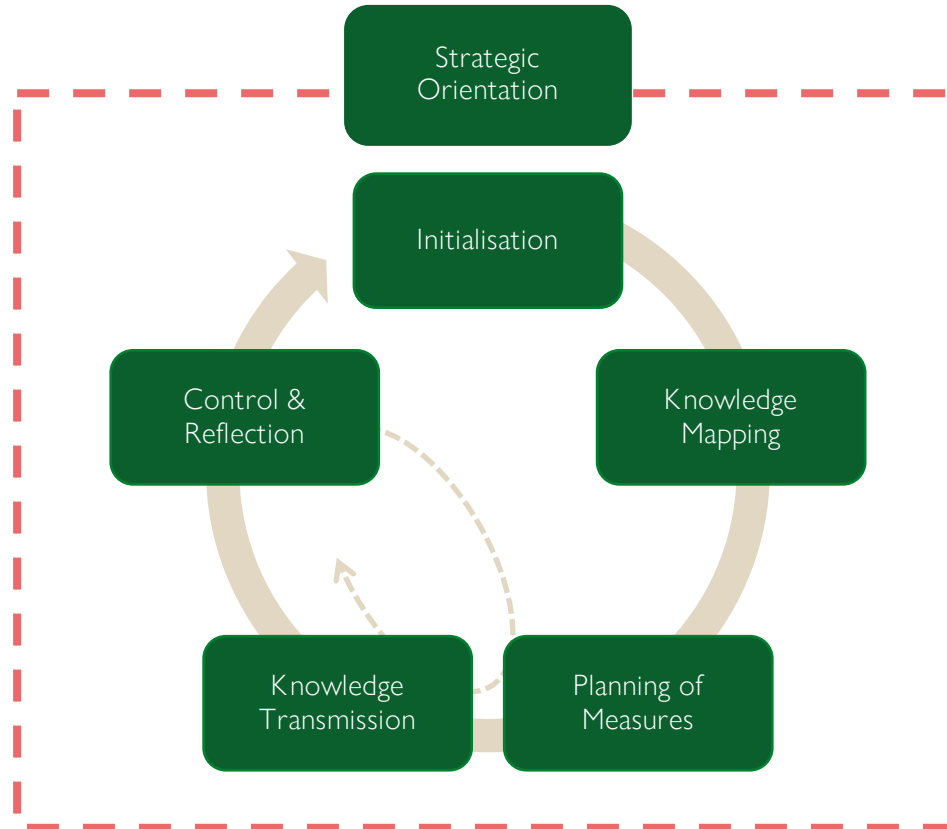
Knowledge Management Framework for Employee Departures



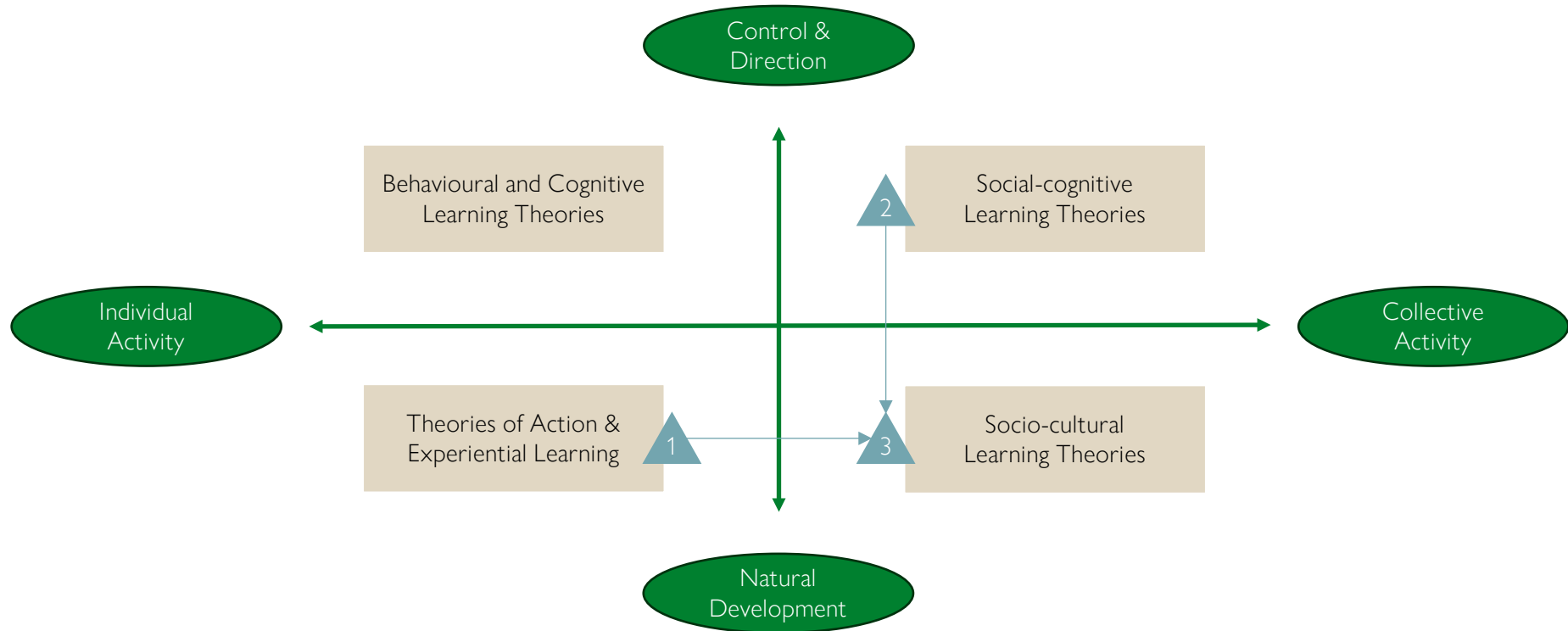
Methods of Knowledge Transmission



Knowledge Management Framework for Employee Departures



Underlying Understandings of Organisational Learning



Research Question

Adopting a practice-theoretical perspective on organising the departure of a “leaving expert”:

- How is knowledge associated with senior practitioners – in the event of their departure from a specific work practice – enacted and translated for other practitioners?

Methodological Considerations

Situatedness in a socio-material environment

Practices as ...

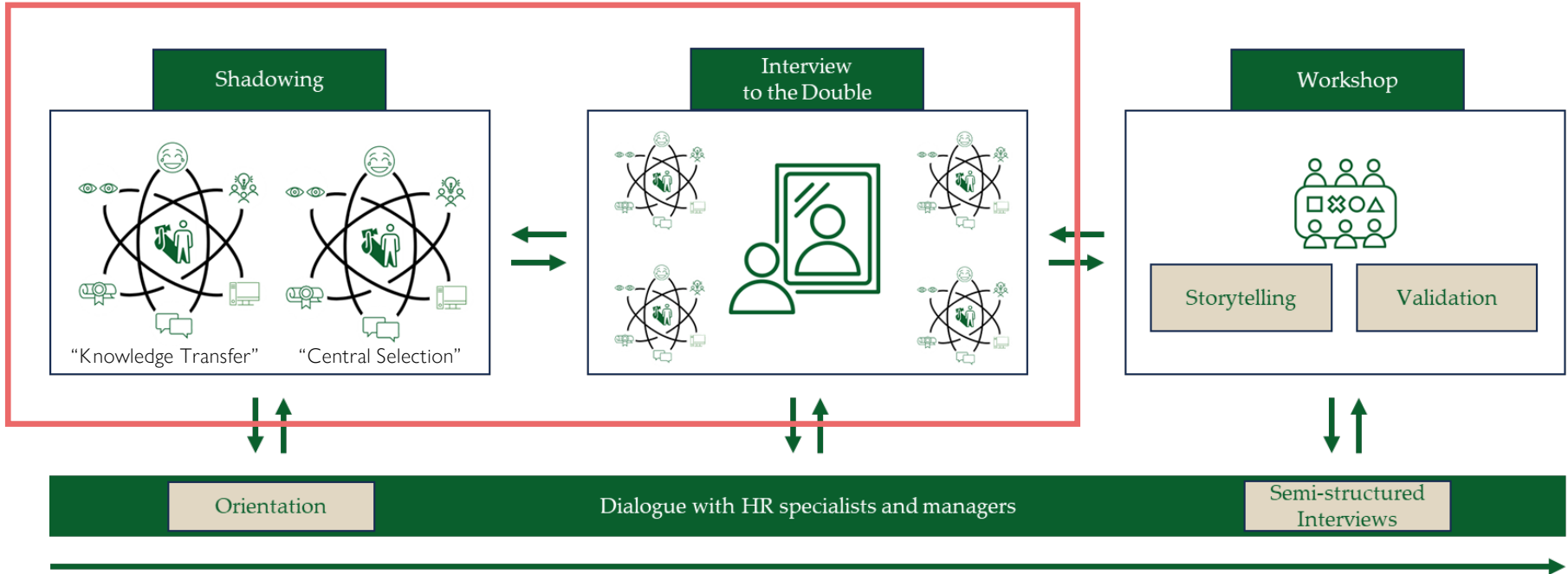
- ... situated, collective-knowing ...
- ... in a socio-material infrastructure.

Agencement and the flat ontology of practice theory

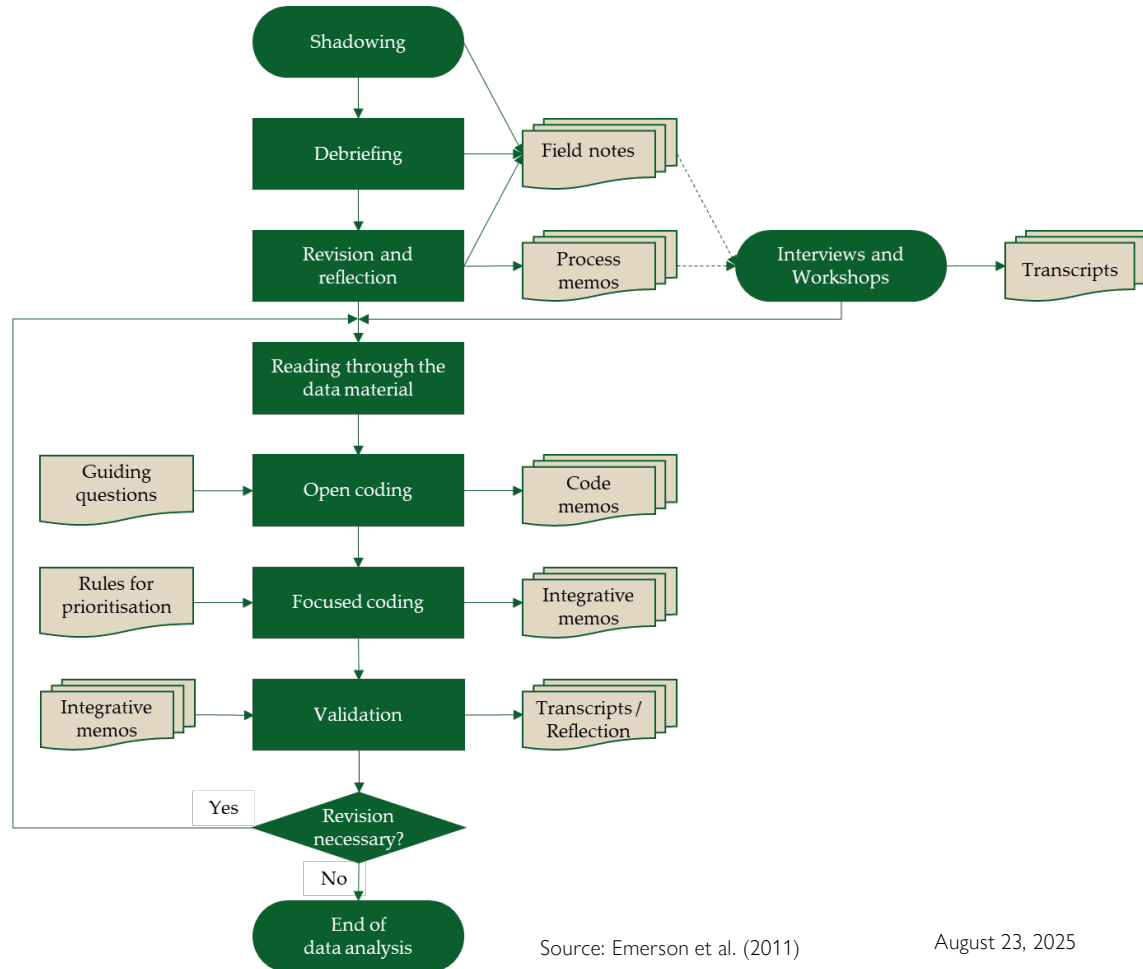
Formativity: sustaining practices



Data Collection



Data Analysis



The Practice of “Central Selection”

Administrative
Preparation

Coordination of
Staff and Participants

Debriefing and
Quality Assurance



Provision of
Infrastructure

Conducting
Assessment Exercises

Administrative
Follow-Up

Administrative Preparation



Situatedness of Knowledge

Heavy reliance on previously developed artefacts, esp. schedules and correspondences, when preparing for assessments.



Activities related to the administrative preparation of assessment centres are strongly situated in the physical context.

Practicing Knowledge Management

Bilateral handover meetings, with the leaving expert explaining his work activities with the help of prepared documents.

Explanations follow the artefacts used: The expert shows the artefacts to the newcomer, provides an overview and then elaborates on certain content.

Reproduction of the information contained in the artefacts, which in turn activates context-related meanings and implicit rules.

Provision of Infrastructure



Situatedness of Knowledge

Trained eye of the leaving practitioner, trained on sensory experience.

The given physical setting on site, activating this bodily knowing by reminding the leaving practitioner of the actions that are usually performed and the conditions that must be met for them to be performed.

Activities related to the provision of infrastructure are strongly situated in the body and the physical context.

Practicing Knowledge Management

Joint inspection, with the leaving expert preparing the rented infrastructure and describing his actions as he goes along.

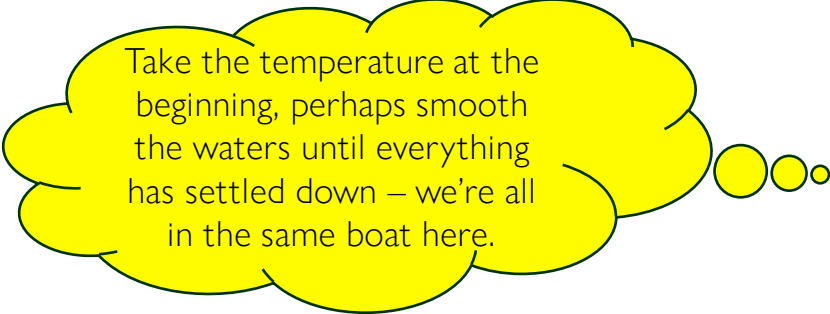


Coordination of Staff and Participants



Situatedness of Knowledge

The clarification of the problem and the determination of the further course of action primarily results out of a discussion and negotiation between the people involved.



Take the temperature at the beginning, perhaps smooth the waters until everything has settled down – we're all in the same boat here.

Activities related to the coordination of people on site are strongly situated in the dynamics of interactions...

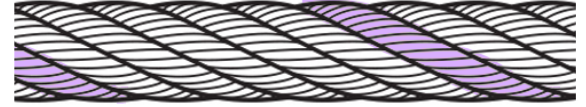
Practicing Knowledge Management

Workplace shadowing, during which the newcomer follows the leaving expert, observes his actions and thus gets to know his working environment and stakeholders.

Regular, short reviews, through which the leaving expert reflects on what has happened and tries to describe the interaction and his own action (e.g. regarding an understanding of roles and relationships).

... complemented by a situatedness in language when reflecting upon it.

Administrative Follow-Up



Situatedness of Knowledge

Heavy reliance on previously developed artefacts, esp. files for statistical recording of results and e-mails written following earlier assessments.

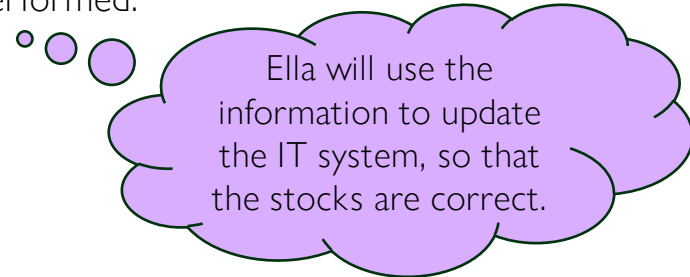
Activities related to the administrative follow-up of assessment centres are strongly situated in the physical context.

Asynchronous contact with other members of the administrative unit, revealing an artefact-mediated interactional situatedness of the activities performed.

Practicing Knowledge Management

Combination of coaching and workplace shadowing, with the leaving expert demonstrating how to perform certain tasks that the newcomer can then carry out under the supervision of the leaving expert.

Leaving expert supports in interacting with artefacts, while continuously commenting on the work activities performed.



Results Overview

Knowledge associated with a senior practitioners translated for a newcomer via...

...bilateral handover
meetings

...joint inspections

...workplace
shadowing

...coaching and
workplace
shadowing

Knowledge as situated in...

... the body

... a physical context

... the dynamics of interactions

... language

Administrative
Preparation

Provision of
Infrastructure

Coordination of
Staff and Participants

Administrative
Follow-Up

Based on:
Gherardi (2008, p. 521)

Discussion

Contribution to the literature

- Describing a work practice to which knowledge management refers to, revealing how the collective doing within these aspects is situated (in specific situations).
- Revealing linkages between knowledge management practices and associated work practices, showing how knowledge management is practiced. By choosing different methods, practitioners are able to respond to differently accentuated forms of situated knowledge.

Implications

- To research: Importance to combine the analysis of knowledge management with the analysis of other practices
- To practice: Importance of understanding the situated nature of a collective doing, based on which methods should be selected / designed

Limitations

- Thematic scope: Situatedness of knowledge is just one of several elements affecting how knowledge management is practiced, and the onboarding after the departure of the leaving expert remains under-examined.
- Transferability: High diversity of work contexts in the administrative unit, and organisation-specific conditions

Literature

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