EDITORIAL

The Quadrangular Conference between Tradition and Innovation

It was a huge honour and pleasure for us, PhD students and junior research staff at the LSE Department of Management, to host the 7th edition of the Quadrangular Conference on Technology, Organizations and Society on 25th-26th September 2014. This edition has constituted, on the one hand, the continuation of a well-established tradition, which sees the Quadrangular Conference being hosted in turn by its four founding institutions – Lancaster University, University College Dublin, University of Cambridge, and LSE. In continuity with the past editions, the Conference has constituted a forum for research-in-progress which has provided, for the selected candidates, the opportunity to present their work in an informal environment, having the opportunity to receive very extended feedback from a wide group of fellow students and faculty. Research-in-progress is indeed the focus that marks the identity of the Quadrangular, making it a forum to share ongoing research problems as well as potential frameworks, ideas and preliminary findings.

Along with continuities, this year's Quadrangular has seen two major innovations, on which we are looking to build as the upcoming editions of the forum are organized. Firstly the Conference has seen, this year for the first time, the organization of a Post-Doc and Faculty Track, which has hosted five presentations by research fellows and young faculty – all sharing insights from their ongoing work. The organization of this track has enriched the Conference, broadening its focus from PhD students to one inclusive of a broader range of academic positions, now involved as speakers and contributors rather than just as a source of feedback. Secondly, while the organizational role has been covered by the four founding universities, participation has seen students and staff from more institutions including the University of Warwick, University of East Anglia, and Brunel University in the United Kingdom – plus international guests from Copenhagen Business School and Hanken School of Economics. This has contributed to an extremely interactive symposium, and

we are looking forward to seeing a similarly heterogeneous participation in the next editions.

A third innovation, and somehow an experiment for us at iSCHANNEL, is constituted by the current Special Issue, which groups four papers from the research-in-progress contributions that the Conference has seen over its two days. A theme as that of Knowledge Practices in the Contemporary World, which has informed the symposium, lends itself to a plethora of interpretations, of which the variety in the themes of the contributions presented here is indeed representative. But the theme is, at the same time, focused enough to reflect a field like that of information systems and organizations, revealing its common denominator in a focus on how knowledge is generated, absorbed and utilized, without losing sight of the opportunities and challenges presented by an increasingly interconnected global context. It is the presence of common denominators in research foci, methods and epistemologies that defines us as a community, highly benefiting from its internal variety.

The first paper in this Special Issue, "Towards Interaction Machines", focuses on Antti Lyyra's PhD research. The paper constitutes an epistemological narration of the phenomenon of task transitions from humans to machines, observing the consequences on this phenomenon on the parallel domains of automated and autonomous artefacts. In the paper, the core differences between these two domains are brought forward, and paramount implications to the design of autonomous machines and artefacts are discussed. Antti's work provides an exceptional example of progress achieved in a first-year PhD work, moving fast from the stage of sense-making to those of analysis and independent theorization.

In "Rational, Interpretivist, and Practical Approaches to Organizational Memory", Dmitrijs Kravcenko provides a structured reflection on the domain of organizational memory, and the polymorphous nature

that characterizes it. As he reviews different theoretical approaches to the subject, he presents an overview of the mnemonic phenomenon that aims to integrate them in a holistic approach, thereby providing a composite view of this complex domain. The author's contribution goes beyond a powerful synopsis, and is substantiated in a proposed distinction between short- and long-term manifestations of practice memory, as well as in the role of organizational memory in consolidating organizational knowledge practices. Dmitrijs' work, while still constituting research-in-progress, already presents clear signs of a sophisticated theoretical contribution, central to the field of knowledge practices carried out at the organizational level.

In "Mobile Banking as Enabling and Constraining Financial Inclusion in Pakistan: A Theoretical Perspective", Atika Kemal presents a theoretical framework for exploring the role of mobile technologies in reaching the unbanked. Inscribed in the domain of ICTs for Development (ICT4D), Atika's work relies on Orlikowski's duality of technology to make sense of the social construction of mobile banking networks: she then applies her theoretical framework to Pakistan, a country in which the adoption of mobile banking is increasing rapidly. By doing so, the author makes a conceptual contribution to a field whose pragmatic orientation is helpfully corroborated by theory, and by frameworks which have the structure and properties of technology at their core. Furthermore, by adopting an IS framework to conduct ICT4D research, Atika fosters the cross-fertilization between two domains of knowledge that benefit greatly from mutual learning, and whose interaction generates positive implications for the integration of technology in development practice.

Finally, a paper by myself and my esteemed co-author Amit Prakash provides a commentary on our ongoing work towards a theory of ICTs in poverty reduction. As social safety nets around the world are increasingly pervaded with computerization, we attempt at making sense of the intertwining between technology and the political agendas that inform it in an anti-poverty setting. To do so, we have recently initiated fieldwork in the state of Karnataka, southern India, where the main national food security programme (the Public Distribution System – PDS) has been computerized, reshaping the interactions between users and providers in a key social safety system. Our commentary provides an early examination of the links between the artefact and a set of policy assumptions, embodied in its construction and reflected on the ways it mediates between the programme and its beneficiaries.

The current Special Issue – named so after the Conference that we have been honoured to host – also constituted a "special" one for this Editor-In-Chief, as I am now bound to leave my position after two wonderful, extremely enriching years at iSCHANNEL. As I thank, from the bottom of my heart, all those that made it possible for us to continuously publish truly excellent research, I am proud to leave the Journal to the new Editor-In-Chief, Gizdem Akdur, whose relentless commitment has been irreplaceable for the whole Editorial Board. It is with happiness, and with the passion that has always animated our great team work, that I leave the Journal to her expert guidance. Things done out of love always turn out to be great, and to leave unforgettable signs in their makers.

Silvia Masiero

Editor-in-Chief