

## EDITORIAL – The Transformative Character of Information

Over the last decades, at a rapidly increasing pace, information has pervaded the inner structure of society, and become integral part of its functioning as we know it. Kallinikos (2011) makes the point that information can no longer be seen as incidentally traversing human existence: over time, it has acquired a character that pervades, structures, and ultimately governs the construction of socio-economic life. As we witness this process, studies of Information Systems can hardly be conceptualized as intrinsically abstract, or detached from the everyday workings of human existence. Their core subject matter becomes, on the contrary, increasingly embedded in the social, economic, and political domains in which our lives are inscribed.

The six articles, included in this Volume 9 of iSCHANNEL, are diverse in their subjects and theoretical stances: however, they all focus on technologies embedded in society, which contribute to shape it in the form in which we currently experience it. These are technologies that utilize, manipulate, transfer information: their common matrix lies in how, through their functioning, they build and rebuild society's workings, and become, by doing so, an integral part of the contemporary world. Furthermore, in their articles, authors go beyond a neutral vision, which steers away from facing the implications of information beyond the technical domain. On the contrary, in their reasonings, they openly undertake discussion of how technologies - with information at their core - shape the society to which we belong.

In "The Increasing Importance of Social Capital on Virtual Social Networking Platforms", Christian Huhnt discusses multiple ways in which social capital is transferred, and ultimately reconstructed, by the means of social networking devices. Through a discussion of the shapes taken by collective action in the sphere of social networks, the author envisions a process that sees platform architecture as influencing the nature and dynamics of social capital exchanges. As a result, social networking platforms arise as a means through which exchanged information acquires a different, newly constructed value in the view of users. In his analysis of this process, the author looks at its consequences on the evolution of users' self-perception through the mediation of platforms.

In "Privacy, Social Network Theory and Patterns of Information Revelation on LinkedIn", Marta Stelmaszak examines privacy aspects on LinkedIn, especially in relation to risks coming from exposure to other users. Through the analysis of a set of LinkedIn profiles, with a focus on the information that these reveal to different degrees of connections,

the author finds a number of potential risks related to identifiability, information sharing, and weakness of users' control on the diffusion of information. The vision of LinkedIn, emerging from this article, is that of a platform that rebuilds the domain of professional networking, exposing users, among many benefits, to a set of newly-created risks to be aware of. Effects of these risks on privacy and information disclosure are at the core of the author's discussion.

In "Reshaping the Organizing Vision of Cloud Computing: How the Snowden Revelations Affected Stakeholder Action", Andrea Acs looks at how Snowden's revelations about US government surveillance affected perceptions of privacy, and consequently stakeholders' behaviour, in the cloud business. In doing so, the author details how an established theoretical paradigm, namely the organizing vision of cloud computing, may be reinterpreted and re-examined in relation to this phenomenon. In this piece, information disclosure is constructed as a force that reshapes actors' behaviour, to the point that theoretical understandings - through which the cloud business has been observed so far - are also to be revised as a result. The article is deeply illustrative of the power of an information-related event on the functioning of business, and on the roots of actors' behaviour.

In "Path to Sustainability for Health Information Exchanges in the US: A Case Study of Indiana through Alignment and Enactment Frameworks", Patricia Morizio studies Health Information Exchanges (HIEs) as a technical and organizational innovation, developed to overcome the fragmentation of the US healthcare system. Working through a lens resulting by the combination of alignment and enactment frameworks, the author looks at the Indiana experience as one in which HIEs, through new means to information sharing, seek sustainability by providing a potentially long-term fix to fragmentation. System design, as it emerges from the paper, is key to reconstructing the functioning of large-scale systems such as US healthcare: design needs, therefore, to be capable of embodying a clear agenda on how reform is to be led. For change to happen, system implementation needs to be coherent with the principles of this agenda.

In "Fostering the Success of E-Government Initiatives by Improving User Take-Up", François Dupré looks at e-government as a means through which public services, and citizens' ways of accessing them, are reformed with respect to their original forms of delivery. Exploring the implications of this reform in users' view, the paper focuses on vicarious learning as a potential means to increase citizens' trust in

ICT-based service provision. By doing so, the author examines vicarious learning as a novel route to user uptake, whose potential is that of strengthening the link between new forms of service provision and the communities to which these are aimed. The author looks at implications of this route for users' perception of public services as mediated by ICTs.

In "Assessing the Disruptive Potential of Massive Open Online Courses", Shahriar Parvarandeh studies Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) with respect to their capability of generating disruptive innovation in the higher education industry. Drawing on the notion of radical innovation, the author assesses the MOOC phenomenon with respect to its capability of reshaping educational programmes, and using platforms to increase and reconfigure their accessibility to the target market. In doing so the author observes, as well, the limitations to the disruptive potential of MOOCs, resulting from incumbents' usage of these programmes as ways to sustain existing programmes, rather than as means to explore new forms of content delivery. Technology is examined, throughout the paper, through the lens of its potential to reconstruct education, and make it accessible to wider communities by the means of online distribution.

By studying technologies that are deeply embedded in society, and discussing them with direct reference to their contexts of operation, these six articles convey a unitary message: together, they illustrate the transformative character of information, as a force reshaping the nature and functioning of the society we live in. In doing so, they choose to engage explicitly with the implications of these processes, which have direct and profound effects on people's lives in the contemporary world. Recognizing the Gramscian notion (1935) of the value of intellectual engagement for society, we present our Volume 9 contributions as paradigmatic of this value: in their discussions, authors deal openly with the consequences of information, as they affect the spheres of economics, politics, and societal workings at large. The choice of intellectual engagement, embodied by these articles, significantly contributes to enhancing their value in contemporary Information Systems scholarship.

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## References

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