

The Networked Society

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This issue of Business and Information Systems Engineering (BISE) presents a selection of the best papers presented at the 23rd European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS) in Münster, Germany. The conference received 913 submissions to 31 tracks from 691 authors representing 59 countries. The widespread origins of the papers reflected the theme of the conference, ‘The networked society’.

The term ‘networked society’, as characterized by the ECIS 2015 organizers, has gained common currency in both academic and popular discourse. The concept depicts and promotes a vision of a society that is thoroughly interwoven with information and communication infrastructures, which (re-)shape the practices and structures that constitute all facets of social life. The emphasis of research on the networked society, then, is that on the emergence of new modes of ‘connectedness’ and associated economic, political, and social/cultural transformations (Castells and Cardoso 2005; Castells 2004). A notable feature of much of the ‘networked society’

discourse is the predominance of benign – even utopian – visions of the future. For example, technology companies and social commentators have enthusiastically embraced the concept as a way to emphasize the rich opportunities for all in a connected world. In short, the assumption is that ‘connections will engender opportunities’, with implicit promises of a progressive march toward the digital ‘good life’ of a more prosperous, stimulating, and benevolent society. This socio-technical development has changed how organizations and individuals innovate with technology (Yoo et al. 2012; Tumbas et al. 2015). The term ‘digital innovation’ emphasizes that information technology is used to innovate organizations’ products, services, and business models, and the term ‘digital transformation’ characterizes the disruptive changes in all areas of our social and economic life.

The papers presented at ECIS 2015 addressed many aspects of the networked society, and all track chairs were asked to nominate their best papers for inclusion in this special issue. After a competitive review process, four papers were selected.

“Understanding Socio-Technical Impacts Arising from Software-as-a-Service Usage in Companies: A Mixed Method Analysis on Individual Level Data” by Andreas Jede and Frank Teuteberg, Accounting and Information Systems, University of Osnabrück, examines the effects of Software as a Service (SaaS) on the perceptions of IT professionals in internal IT departments. The authors design and test a quantitative research model and apply it to investigate four SaaS cases from the perspectives of internal IT professionals and end users. They deduce that, with increasing SaaS usage, instability emerges in IT professionals’ perceptions of their individual job outcomes, and they provide support for management to help IT

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professionals understand the necessity of balancing the willingness to adopt SaaS with socio-technical consequences.

“Platform Provider by Accident: A Case Study of Digital Platform Coring” by Ted Saarikko from the Department of Informatics at the Umeå University in Sweden, presents a single-case study of a digital platform for business-to-business services. The paper’s results suggest that the core of a digital platform may be described as an ability to harness the potential of digital technology, rather than as a specific platform element. The results also suggest that platform coring may be aided by adopting value propositions to conceptualize the process of negotiating mutual benefit among platform stakeholders.

“IT Consultants in Acquisition IT Integration: A Resource-Based View” by Stefan Henningsson of the Department of IT Management, Copenhagen Business School in Denmark, and Christian Øhrgaard of Semmler Limited, Oxford in the United Kingdom, investigates the employment of consultants in acquisition IT integration projects. Through a comparative case study of four acquirers that is theoretically grounded in the resource-based view of the firm, the paper addresses how buyers use external consultants to realize the integration of IT acquisitions. The authors identify two complementary and two supplementary roles consultants assume in these projects and three characteristics of the acquisition IT integration strategy that influence how the acquirers assign these roles to IT consultants.

“The Role of Gender in Business Process Management Competence Supply” by Elena Gorbacheva and Armin Stein of the European Research Center for Information Systems (ERCIS) at the University of Münster in Germany and Theresa Schmiedel and Oliver Müller of the Institute for Information Systems at the University of Liechtenstein, sets out to clarify the role of gender in the scarce supply of BPM competencies. The authors analyze 10,405 LinkedIn

profiles of BPM professionals using Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA), a text-mining technique. They identify twelve categories of BPM competencies, investigate whether there are gender biases among BPM professionals, discuss the nature of BPM-related competencies and the differences in their presentation by male and female professionals, and outline how the apparent under-representation of women among BPM professionals can be addressed to close the competency gap in the field.

In addition to these four research papers, this issue contains an interview with Dr. Martin Petry, CIO at the Hilti Corporation, which presents a thought leader’s view of digital innovation in the networked society. Dr. Petry provides valuable examples of digital innovation and shares his long experience with enablers of and barriers to solutions for the networked society that are used daily by 18,000 Hilti employees in more than fifty countries.

We extend our sincere thanks to all reviewers who were involved in the ECIS 2015 editorial processes and in the intense process of extending and revising the papers presented in this special issue. We hope our readers will find the articles inspiring for their own research as well as for their work and lives as citizens of the networked society.

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