

Sociotechnical Change: a Dialectic Among Individuals, Technologies and Social Contexts

Description of the Track

The theme of this Conference highlights how IS professionals and researchers are constantly required to engage with an agenda to facilitate change in organized human activities. In the 21st Century, digital technologies have enabled fundamental changes to be wrought throughout society, affecting us all. When contemplating these changes, it is important that we remember that technologies change nothing in isolation from the endeavours of people, generating creative ideas and harnessing technological developments in design of purposeful systems (Vickers, 1965; Alvesson and Spicer, 2012).

A sociotechnical approach in research ensures that such a perspective is maintained (Mumford and Weir, 1979; Baxter and Sommerville, 2011). Mohr and van Amelsvoort (2016, p.2) have defined a modern, sociotechnical approach to comprise: “*The participative, multidisciplinary study and improvement of how jobs, single organizations, networks, and ecosystems function internally and in relation to their environmental context, with a special focus on the mutual interactions of the entity’s ... value-creation processes*”. Interest in sociotechnical systems theory and practice has been firmly established within the ECIS community in recent years. Specifically, successful tracks have run over the last three conferences:

	Submissions	Research Papers	Research-in-Progress Papers
2015	28	18 (5 accepted – 30%)	10 (3 accepted – 30%)
2016	11	7 (2 accepted – 29%)	4 (1 accepted – 25%)
2017	33	27 (8 accepted – 30%)	6 (3 accepted – 50%)

Designers inquire into potential *use* of Informing Systems –what do ‘users’ need to be informed about? They also commonly engage with *usability* factors – what performance criteria must a system satisfy? However, insufficient attention is sometimes paid to *usefulness* for particular people in context – why do they wish to interact with a system, and how can it *afford* them meaningful action within a mesh of intentional activities they engage in within their working lives (Cabiza and Simone, 2012)? Developers need scope and methods to help them support people to participate in design of their own systems (Eason, 2008). By surfacing their unique experience of work context, people can embark on a process of co-creation that will support design of useful systems – those which afford the best support for meaningful work (Ciborra, 2004). They can also achieve a greater awareness of mutual dependencies among people interacting with technologies in their collective work activities.

Few people define their work roles as ‘users of IS’, but rather as architects, accountants, social workers, buyers, tour guides, teachers, etc. (Nissen, 2002). Everybody who will engage with an Information System can contribute to good design through opportunities to participate in shaping it for meaningful use in their

own professional context (Bednar and Welch, 2009). We can discern a symbiotic relationship between meaningful use and reflection-upon-use by individuals and groups in context (Bednar and Welch, 2007), forming productive learning spirals for purposeful, sociotechnical change. Contributions are invited that illuminate this relationship. These could be drawn from any aspect of IS use or inquiry, e.g. design research (Duffy, 2005); health and medicine (Carayon, 2012); effective and ethical use of AI (Stahl, et al, 2014); software engineering (Sommerville, 2011); sustainable systems (Dwyer, 2011).

Invited contributions: full research papers and research in progress papers.

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Possible topics include, but are not restricted to:

- Critically-informed sociotechnical approaches to organizational change
- Relationships between Lean and sociotechnical approaches
- Dynamics of work groups and their impact on system design
- Leadership and organizational learning
- Participatory design
- Systems theory in design
- Organizational anthropology
- Appreciative systems and *Weltanschauungen*
- The socialised enterprise
- Inter-organizational communication and culture
- Sociotechnical approaches to IS access and security
- Sociotechnical perspectives on Systems Failure
- Interconnected Human Activity Systems and Organizational Learning
- Soft Systems Thinking
- Contemporary Sociotechnical theory and practice
- Sustainable organizational change and routinization of habits
- Continuous re-design of interconnected human activity systems
- Contextually dependent IS diversity
- Sociotechnical practices and thinking in industrial and public sectors
- How IS *affords* meaningful action in relation to goal-oriented activities

Publishing Opportunities in Leading Journals

One possibility is *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems* where the editor in chief Bob Galliers is sympathetic to sociotechnical ideas and methods, and there is a potential for a special issue in this area. There is a potential to get published in the *Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)* journal and we believe that having papers published in this Journal would be possible if they bring a critical and constructive perspective on ST and their quality is good.

A further potential to get published is in the form of a special issue of the *International Journal of Systems and Society (IJSS)* where the editor Frank Stowell has expressed support for the idea of a potential special issue with good quality papers. *IT & People* is also a potential opportunity as it is a journal which has previously had special issues with a focus on Socio-Technical Approaches.

Track Co-Chairs

Track Co-Chairs		
1	Name Surname (primary contact)	Christine Welch
	Title	Visiting Fellow
	E-mail	christine.welch@port.ac.uk
	Affiliation	Portsmouth Business School, University of Portsmouth, UK
	URL	http://www.port.ac.uk/operations-and-systems-management/staff/christine-welch.html
	Short Biography	Based in Portsmouth Business School, Christine holds a doctorate in Systems Analysis and has research interests in the fields of IS, knowledge management and Systems thinking, in which she has published many articles, conference papers and book chapters. She is a director of Systems Practice for Managing Complexity (spmc) – a company that promotes understanding of Systems methods, and a former director and president of the UK Systems Society. She was a co-Track Chair in Sociotechnical Approaches at the European Conference on Information Systems 2015. Christine is a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science, and of the Editorial Review Boards of the International Journal of Systems & Society, Informing Science: Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline and the Interdisciplinary Journal of E-skills and Lifelong Learning. She has also reviewed for the International Journal of Sociotechnology and Knowledge Development, Kybernetes and Systems Practice & Action Research.
2	Name Surname	Federico Cabitza
	Title	University Teacher, Lecturer, and Socio-technical ICT Consultant
	E-mail	cabitza@disco.unimib.it
	Affiliation	University of Milano-Bicocca, Milano, Italy Orthopedics Institute Galeazzi, Milano, Italy
	URL	https://about.me/FedericoCabitza
	Short Biography	Federico Cabitza received his Master in IT Engineering at the Politecnico of Milan in 2001. Since then, he has worked as a Requirement Engineer in the private sector, specializing in Health Informatics. In 2007, he received his PhD in Informatics, with a thesis on Electronic Patient Record and coordination in hospital settings. Currently, he is an Assistant Professor (since 2011) at the University of Milano-Bicocca (Milan, Italy) where he teaches human-computer interaction and data visualization. Since 2016 he has also had an official research appointment with the Orthopaedics Institute IRCCS Galeazzi in Milano (Italy). His current research interests regard requirement analysis, IT impact assessment, and

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		<p>the design of interactive systems in the Healthcare setting. He has co-chaired International workshops (on Data Visualization in Healthcare and knowledge IT artifacts), conference tracks (on Socio-technical design), conference programs (for the the Italian Chapter of AIS) and special issues on impacted Journals (i.e., the CSCW journal and Program). He is stable PC member of several international conferences and associate editor of the International Journal of Medical Informatics. He is author of more than 120 research publications to date, in international conference proceedings, edited books and scientific journals, including the CSCW Journal, Computers in Biology and Medicine, Behaviour and Information Technology, International Journal of Human Computer Studies, Computers in Human Behavior, International Journal of Approximate Reasoning, and the Journal of Visual Languages and Computing.</p>
3	Name - Surname	Carla Simone
	Title	Senior Researcher
	E-mail	simone@disco.unimib.it
	Affiliation	University of Siegen, Germany
	URL	http://www.uni-siegen.de
	Short Biography	<p>Carla Simone is currently Senior Researcher at the University of Siegen, Germany, previously she was Professor of Computer Science at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy. She is currently member of the CSCW Foundation that steers the European Conferences on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and a founding member of the European Association for Socially Embedded Technologies that aims to collect researchers interested in the interplay between the computing technology and the social environments where it is constructed and used.</p>

Track Associate Editors

1	Name-Surname	Lars Taxen
	Title	Associate Professor
	E-mail	lars.taxen@gmail.com
	Affiliation	Linköping University, Sweden
2	Name-Surname	John Paul Kawalek
	Title	Dr
	E-mail	j.kawalek@sheffield.ac.uk
	Affiliation	Sheffield Business School, Sheffield, UK
3	Name-Surname	Iliia Bider
	Title	Professor
	E-mail	ilia@ibissoft.se
	Affiliation	Stockholm University, Sweden
4	Name-Surname	Aurelio Ravarini
	Title	Assistant Professor
	E-mail	aravarini@liuc.it
	Affiliation	Università C. Cattaneo – LIUC, Castellanza, Italy
5	Name-Surname	Paolo Spagnoletti
	Title	Professor
	E-mail	pspagnoletti@luiss.it
	Affiliation	LUISS Guido Carli University, Rome, Italy
6	Name-Surname	Umberto Fiaccadori
	Title	Lecturer
	E-mail	umberto.fiaccadori@ics.lu.se
	Affiliation	Lund University, Sweden
7	Name-Surname	Eli Berniker
	Title	Professor
	E-mail	berniker@gmail.com
	Affiliation	Council for International Exchange of Scholars, USA
8	Name-Surname	Andrea Resca
	Title	Associate Professor
	E-mail	aresca@luiss.it
	Affiliation	LUISS Guido Carli University, Rome, Italy
9	Name-Surname	Alessio Maria Braccini

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	Title	Associate Professor
	E-mail	abraccini@unitus.it
	Affiliation	University of Tuscia, Viterbo, Italy
10	Name-Surname	Alexander Nolte
	Title	Dr
	E-mail	nolte@iaw.ruhr-uni-bochum.de
	Affiliation	Ruhr-University of Bochum, Germany
11	Name-Surname	Donna Champion
	Title	Reader
	E-mail	donna.champion@cranfield.ac.uk
	Affiliation	Cranfield School of Management, UK
12	Name-Surname	Sandi Kirkham
	Title	Associate Dean
	E-mail	Sandi.Kirkham@staffs.ac.uk
	Affiliation	Staffordshire University, UK
13	Name-Surname	Adrian Benfell
	Title	Senior Lecturer
	E-mail	adrian.benfell@port.ac.uk
	Affiliation	University of Portsmouth, UK
14	Name-Surname	Laura Tarantino
	Title	Professor
	E-mail	laura.tarantino@univaq.it
	Affiliation	University of L'Aquila, Italy
15	Name-Surname	
	Title	
	E-mail	
	Affiliation	