

Panel:

**On constitutive
entanglement of IS and
organisations – exploring
contributions from ANT**

Panellists:

Dubravka Cecez-Kecmanovic, UNSW

Jim Underwood, UTS

Arthur Tatnall, VUT

Fouad Nagm, UNSW

Introduction - Dubravka

Exploring pre-project IS assessment - Fouad

Presentation of the case; the process - an overview, perhaps with a "journey"

Questions Inspired by ANT - by Jim

Questions Inspired by ANT – by Arthur

Questions Inspired by ANT – by Dubravka

Discussion: what is different about ANT approach in IS research and why does it matter

IS research has a problem of inherent separation of the technological and the social

- Since its infancy IS research has struggled to reconcile the technological and the human/social/ organisational nature of information systems, and to investigate them in a unified and coherent way
- Most IS research assumes a conventional separation among
 - the technological (material) and the social/human.
- This is reflected in both the technology focused perspective and the social/organisational perspective of IS studies

The technology focused research

- typically employs a functionalist and instrumental approach producing claims about e.g.
 - IS impacts on various measures of organisational performance (efficiency, productivity)
 - Factors affecting successful IS implementation
- it is underpinned by technologically deterministic and economic rationalist views
- it reifies technology and largely neglects the complex and subtle ways IS are entangled with human tasks and work practices and embedded in social, historical, cultural and political contexts

The social and organisational perspective

- often adopts an interpretive, and sometimes social constructivist and critical approach
- focuses on how humans use, engage with and make sense of IS, sensitive to their position and role within particular socio-cultural and political contexts
- reveals numerous ways how IS impact on work practices and organisations (including increasing control and managerial domination),
- it is limited by its focus on the social and human side at the expense of the technology

The technology focused perspective and the social/organisational perspective in IS studies – **each focuses on one side of the IS- organisation relationship**

- The problem with these dominant approaches to IS and organisations is the presumption of *separate existence of technology and organisation*, which consequently limits research to studying their mutual influences
- This presents a conceptual difficulty when faced with the everyday materiality of working and organising and the ways technological and social are inextricably linked
- The key challenge for IS researchers is to understand the composite nature of IS-organisation reality and “the recursive intertwining of humans and technology in practice” (Orlokowski, 2007).

We propose to discuss these challenges
in the light of

Actor Network Theory (ANT)

(including its many strands developed by
Latour, Callon, Law, Mol and others)

that enables us to transcend the conventional
ontological distinction between

- humans and non-humans,
- the social/organizational and the
technological/material,

and treat them as inseparable, intertwined and
relational phenomena

The panel aims to

- examine how ANT can be applied to study the intertwining of the social and technological in IS research based on an empirical study of a pre-project IS assessment process in a bank
- ask questions inspired by ANT
- attempt to explore constitutive entanglement of the organisational/social context (the bank) and the emerging IS (from an idea to a proposal) as socio-technological practices