

On Sociomateriality of Information Systems and Organizing

Guest Editors

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Rationale for the Special Issue

The purpose of the special issue is to explore new ways of seeing and theorizing Information Systems in organizations and society, inspired and enabled by an emerging sociomaterial world view. The notion of sociomateriality—proposed and debated in fields as diverse as theoretical physics, organization studies, sociology of science and technology, and feminist studies—implies that things, technologies, people, and organizations do not have inherently determinate meanings, boundaries, or properties (Barad 2007). Technologies, people, and organizations are not seen *a priori* as self-contained entities that influence each other through impacts or interaction (Orlikowski and Scott 2008). Instead, technologies, people, and organizations are seen as constitutively entangled, implying that we can separate them only analytically. We need to focus on their entanglement to understand how their temporal meanings, boundaries, and properties are continually (re)produced (Pickering 1995; Pickering and Guzik 2008).

The emerging debates around a sociomaterial world view invite IS researchers to question and rethink the supposed ontological separation among the social and the technological; the subject and the object; the world of persons, and the world of things (Barad 2007). A sociomaterial view is also relevant for our ways of knowing as it challenges the conventional modernist binaries between idealism and materialism, and subjectivism and objectivism (realism), while facilitating new bridges between them (Law 2004; Leonardi and Barley 2010). These debates, in many ways, deal with some of the key problems of IS in organizations and society. They resonate with the early formative ideas of those of the sociotechnical school (for a review, see Mumford 2006), and the issues raised in Orlikowski and Iacono (2001) and in King and Lyytinen (2006) concerning the IT artifact. Thus, in addition to, and by way of, exploring new means of theorizing IS, this special issue will invigorate and expand on these debates by advancing a sociomaterial research agenda in the IS discipline.

Since its infancy, IS research has struggled to reconcile the technological and the human/social nature of information systems, and to investigate them in a comprehensive and coherent way. Most IS research assumes a conventional duality between the technological (material) and the social/human. This is reflected in both the technology- focused perspectives (e.g., Benbasat and Zmud 2003) and the social/organizational perspectives on IS (e.g., Mingers and Willcocks 2004). This duality presents a conceptual difficulty when faced with the materiality of everyday IS-mediated work (Leonardi and Barley 2008), and the ways the technological and social are inextricably entangled in sociomaterial practices of IS adoption and adaptation (e.g., Wagner et al. 2010). The key challenge for IS researchers has been to understand the composite nature of IS-organization reality and “the recursive intertwining of humans and technology in practice” (Orlikowski 2007; Orlikowski and Scott 2008); what Sassen and others refer to as “imbrications” (e.g., Latham and Sassen 2005). As we understand the intimate tangle of IS and organizations, their co-emergence, co-production, and mediation, it becomes more urgent for the “conceptual bubble” of the social/material duality to be burst (Woolgar 2002).

Call for Submissions

We invite papers that offer fresh thinking and an innovative approach to the intertwining of the social/human and material/technological of IS and organizing and the ways to research, understand, and conceptualize IS-organizing sociomateriality. Whether submitting empirical or theoretical/conceptual papers, we encourage authors to question the accepted separation of the technical and the social and other taken-for-granted assumptions about IS and organizations. We also encourage authors to explore novel research methodologies that are not based on conventional dichotomies between idealism and materialism, subjectivism and objectivism. We seek intellectually and conceptually challenging, as well as practically relevant and inspiring papers that contribute to debates and stimulate advancement of knowledge in our and related fields.

Papers that develop sociomaterial theories of IS and organizing, papers that present rich field studies of practice that go beyond illustration to demonstrate and build sociomaterial theory, and papers that explore the epistemological and methodological implications of sociomateriality are particularly welcome. Specific themes, questions, and phenomena include:

- Sociomaterial assemblages: the *stuff* that IS, work practices, and organizations are made of; exploration of humans and technology entanglement, co-constitution and co-performance as work and the world (organization) making.
- Intentionality and agency of IS as an effect of sociomaterial performativity.
- The genealogy of sociomaterial ideas: sociotechnical approaches, sociology of science and technology, philosophy of science, quantum physics, feminist studies, social anthropology, cultural and post-colonial studies, and others—and their significance for IS and organizing.
- Philosophical, epistemological, and methodological issues in studying the recursive intertwining of the social and technological, and the constitutive entanglement of IS and organizing.
- Approaches to sociomaterial understanding of IS and organizational co-evolution, co-performance, and co-production.
- The ontological politics of IS development, deployment, and use in organizations and society.
- The coming into being of an IS and organizing in specific contexts: IS development and implementation as sociomaterial practices, and linguistic/discursive and material/technical co-productions.
- Case studies of IS-organizing entanglement and performativity in the domain of inter- and intra-organizational IS that investigate phenomena such as ERP and CRM implementations, business intelligence, supply chain management, and e-business.
- Exploration of sociomaterial assemblages of, for example, social media/Web 2.0, e-democracy, public sphere, virtual worlds, and peer production.
- A sociomaterial understanding and reframing of traditional areas of concern for practitioners and researchers, for example, IS strategy, strategic alignment, IT investment appraisal, IT security, IS development methodologies, and IS implementation approaches.
- Methodological questions in adopting a sociomaterial approach to explore the practices of IS-embedding in organizations and society as sites of sociotechnical entanglement and co-production.

Review Process and Deadlines

Submissions to the special issue will be screened by the guest editors and only those manuscripts that have a good chance of acceptance after the two rounds of accelerated reviews will enter the review process. Authors will be informed about the outcome of this initial screening within a week of submission. In order to speed up the review process, reviewers and authors need to adhere to the specified deadlines. If revisions of a paper are not completed by a deadline, it will be rejected. If a paper is not accepted after the second round of reviews, it will be rejected. Papers accepted after the second review may be sent for additional minor and straightforward revisions.

The schedule for submission, reviews, and revisions follows:

Paper submission deadline	September 1, 2011
Review round 1 decisions	December 1, 2011
Revisions due by	February 1, 2012
Review round 2 decisions	April 1, 2012
Revisions due by	June 1, 2012
Final editorial decision by	August 10, 2012

Early submission of papers is welcomed. Papers submitted in advance of the deadline will be put into the review process as soon as received.

All submissions must adhere to the formatting guidelines for *MIS Quarterly*. Submissions must be made electronically to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/misq>.

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