# ALESSANDRO D'ATRI MARCO DE MARCO ALESSIO MARIA BRACCINI FRANCESCA CABIDDU Editors

# Management of the Interconnected World

ItAIS: The Italian Association for Information Systems



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Alessandro D'Atri · Marco De Marco · Alessio Maria Braccini · Francesca Cabiddu Editors

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### **Foreword**

#### Joey F. George\*

I was honored to be asked to open the VI Conference of the Italian Chapter of the Association for Information Systems (ItAIS), held in Olbia, on the Costa Smeralda of Sardinia, Italy, in October 2009. Over 90 research papers were presented over two days, and over 120 people attended the conference. Each day, five parallel sessions featured papers on diverse information systems topics. themes included Information and Knowledge Management; Organizational Change and Impact of ICT; IS Quality, Metrics and Impact; E-Justice and Ethics of Information Systems; Information Systems Development and Design Methodologies; E-Services in Public and Private Sectors; Innovation Transfer of IT Research Projects; the Strategic Role of Information Systems; Accounting Management and Information Systems; Human Computer Interaction; and Emerging Issues in a Globalized and Interconnected World. The majority of attendees were from Italy, which would be expected for a meeting of the Italian Chapter of AIS. However, as much as 30% of participants came from elsewhere, from other parts of Europe to be sure, but also from as far away as Nigeria, Mexico and Australia. That the conference was so decidedly international provides support for the 2009 conference theme, "Achieving Fusion in the Interconnected World." Amid lively discussion and intellectual exchanges, professional networks were extended well beyond the Costa Smeralda and new connections and friendships were made.

The Italian Chapter of AIS has set standards to be emulated by the many other chapters and special interest groups in AIS. They have set the bar high. They have a healthy and growing membership, and yet they remain a tight-knit community. The annual ItAIS conference continues to prosper and to attract papers based on high quality research, from both inside and outside Italy. The list of session themes above attests to the breadth of research topics being pursued in the Italian IS community. While much of the work reported on at the conference contributes to scholarly IS research, much of it also contributes to practice. The papers presented at the conference also reflected a diversity of research methods and philosophies. The best of the conference's papers, which capture this mix of methods, and with the focus on both research and practice, have been collected in this volume.

Successful conferences result from the dedication and hard work of many individuals. Much of the credit for the success of the VI Conference of the Italian Chapter of AIS goes to the conference chairs, Gabriele Piccoli, Richard T. Watson, and Alessandro D'Atri. The rest of the credit goes to the organizing

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committee, chaired by Francesca Cabiddu, and to the presenters and other attendees. It was a pleasure to attend the conference and to interact with my Italian (and non-Italian) colleagues. There is much this conference, and the papers presented there, can teach us. I urge other chapters of AIS to follow the example of the Italian Chapter in establishing a viable organization and a lively, stimulating IS conference.

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## Introduction

The decision to publish 63 selected papers from the 2009 sixth Conference of the Italian Chapter of AIS shows the willingness to discuss the issues raised by the work of the contributors on a larger scale than that of a conference. In fact the general theme addressed ('Achieving fusion in the interconnected world: exploring the connection between organizations and technology') drew the attention of researchers on the interplay of 'organizations' and 'technology' within a possible and workable set of planetary connections. Even though the questions at stake have been present for quite a while in the literature, the debate is far from being concluded. The search for frameworks capable of exploring the interconnections that link, for example, e-services providers to different groups (e.g.: customers for e-commerce, users for a wide variety of Internet services, citizens for e-government) is necessary to develop more effective utilizations. Such a search, however, is becoming more and more complex because Castells' *Internet Galaxy* has grown further and at an ever increasing pace since 2001. Thus the number of variables to be considered keeps expanding and there is no single set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices able to view a reality that escapes framing because of its evolution. In fact, depending on the spreading in the production and uses of ICT-IS, the number of the relevant actors multiplies and a mass of organizations (different per size, industry, market, competences, function, entrepreneurial history, character, societal environment and so on) have become active and interacting on the rich turf of information exchange. Furthermore, different perspectives must be adopted when considering the 'individual' (be that a person or an organization) approaches to information technology versus the 'group' level ones or when examining the constraints that 'back offices applications' exert on the amount and kind of value that the institutions and enterprises would like to ensure through their 'front office application mediated' work. The dichotomies and facets developing in short periods of time make the results of IS research certainly incremental but denoted by a pro tempore slant in their validity and relevance. Moreover, the increasing amplitude of the field of inquiry reveals its heterogeneity, thus stressing the need for drawing on several contributing disciplines and highlighting the 'situated' character of investigations in a world that is experiencing the fiercest economic crisis since the years 30 of the past century.

The authors (from 15 countries, besides Italy, and mainly from Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Australia, and the United States) who have contributed to this collective work are well aware of the above mentioned challenges and have catalyzed their efforts around 12 themes which constitute the sections of this book. The research areas include 'macro' questions and 'organization specific' issues bridging theoretical aspects with the description of exemplary cases. Thus, for example,

ethical implications of ICT, which remain in many respects controversial, have been studied in connection with the possibility of increasing the transparency and efficiency of courts by evaluating the results of change induced by the adoption of extensive IS (Part IV). The theoretical implications stemming from the encounter of human practices with tools and learning aims have been explored by examining a case of post graduate education (Part X).

A number of researcher looked into the opportunities that are coming to the foreground when considering the interplay of globalization and connectedness. In this respect there are companies that manage to combine in-house innovation with externally acquired technologies in order to enhance new businesses (the so-called 'open innovation' and 'lead users innovation' is examined in Part IX addressed to emerging issues). Also the question of transferring innovation of IT research projects (Part XII) relates to the possibility of cooperation among private and public partners by investigating models capable of harnessing different competences and knowledge. Since such choices of engaging in partnerships involve the overall objectives pursued by organizations (together with the ways they choose to pursue them), the strategic role of information systems is growing. Thus eight writings have explored some of the manners in which IS and the Internet can contribute to acquire and to sustain a competitive advantage (Part V). Within the strategic discourse related to the governance of an organization, accounting information systems have an important role to play both in operations and reporting (Part XI). The ways through which value is created and governed is particularly critical in exploring the ways through which e-services can be designed and delivered. Emerging services and novel models have been examined in nine essays addressing both the private and public sectors (Part I). The question concerning the overall equilibrium of an organization when new 'tools' are adopted (for example, to secure a new e-service) is crucial because such 'equilibrium' has a dynamic character. It requires people to undertake change in their behaviors and the context of processes and regulations to open up to innovation. Thus, 10 papers have studied the interplay of ICT impacts and organizational change (Part II). The impacts of ICT (considered specifically as a human-computer interaction) have been studied for a long time. In this book specific attention has been paid to the involvement of the user base of business interactive systems in the issues related to HCI (Part VIII) so that a better accessibility is achieved. The problem of 'access' is certainly crucial in the information society, as the European Union policies show, so that appropriate research in the ways in which new technologies (e.g.: service oriented architectures, tools for data and service integration) facilitate networked collaboration and knowledge exchanges are of high interest: nine papers concern this subject in Part III.

Of course, all the above mentioned efforts performed by private and public bodies have to be supported by appropriate IS development and design methodologies (Part VII) so that a proper balance can be achieved between business requirements and solution development. Such balance is certainly rooted in the availability of reliable criteria and metrics in the evaluation of IS, of their impacts and costs (Part VI).

## Part I E-Services in Public and Private Sector

Marco De Marco\*

The rapid development of the Internet since the 1990s has spawned an increasingly variegated virtual landscape, in terms of both the services provided via the electronic networks – such as information, interaction, and transaction – and the user mix – firms, institutions, and individuals. The all-encompassing nature of the Internet, which is used by businesses but also society as a whole, means that the study of e-services cannot but straddle several disciplines. Thus, computer science and engineering investigate the development and provision of the e-services; economics and organization science deal with service quality and value research; and sociology examines emerging issues, such as the "digital divide" and "e-inclusion". These converging (or diverging) elements are key factors when it comes to analyzing, for ex-ample, the pros and cons of applying a private-sector perspective to the study of public-sector e-services. Defining integrated frameworks for the study of e-services in both the public and the private sectors underscores the need to shape new business models and increase the value of e-services integration by enhancing the collaboration between e-service providers and users (customers, citizens, peers). Technical advances in infrastructure integration, service-oriented architectures, and Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) overlap new revenuegenerating models, in addition to expanding the scope for service improvement and building better customer/citizen relationships.

These issues are the focus of the contributions profiled below. The studies use different perspectives and research domains and draw on a broad research background: theoretical issues and empirical evidence developed in specific service areas (e.g. healthcare and government); processes (e.g. participation and innovation); and public or private environments. Thus, one study has used surveys to highlight the newspaper industry's evolution towards an emerging "media-as-aservice" approach, based on the adoption of extensively interactive features and user-generated content via social networks or aggregation sites. Another study employs the design of a causal loop diagram and a stock-and-flow simulation model to show the interaction of citizens with the public administration, emphasizing the significance of social and psychological factors in change management. The proliferation of social players has led one of the contributions to propose adopting an institutional perspective to leverage the growing number of intermediary actors in the implementation of the multichannel strategies deployed to enhance eGovernment plans. A further paper makes its research focus the literature on the emerging – and complex – issue of ageing and the possible role of IS-ICT.

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