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HOSPITALITY ANALYSIS OF IS INNOVATION

Analyse de l'hospitalité des innovations technologiques

Research-in-Progress

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Abstract

The problematic nature of popular structured methodologies and methodological frames that 'straightjacket' the complex social and organizational processes encompassing system development have been widely reported but few theoretically informed analyses or remedies have been proposed. We draw upon Ciborra's insightful concept of Xenia (i.e. hospitality) to reveal the intrinsic and heterogeneous nature of the socio-technical interplay underlying processes of organizational innovation mediated through technologies. Social processes of development and implementation are illuminated through the notion of hospitality which offers interesting insights into 'messy' socio-technical dynamics, often invisible and ignored by structured methodologies.

Keywords: Hospitality, host guest relations, technological innovation, implementation

Résumé

Cette communication développe le concept Xénia de Ciborra pour révéler la composante culturelle des interactions socio-techniques sous-jacentes à l'innovation organisationnelle basée sur la technologie. La notion d'hospitalité offre d'intéressantes idées aidant à clarifier les dynamiques socio-techniques qui sont plutôt confuses. Ces idées sont souvent invisibles et ignorées par les méthodologies structurées.

Резюме

Тази статия развива теоретичната конструкция на Ciborra – Xenia (т.е. гостоприемство) за да разкрие културната сложност на социално-техническото взаимодействие, което е в основата на организационната иновация чрез ИТ. Понятието за гостоприемство хвърля светлина върху хаотичната социнло-техническа динамика, която често остава невидима или пренебрегната от структурните методологии за разработване на информационни системи.

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Artikel verwenden wir Ciborras „Xenia" Konzept zur Entbergung der verschiedenartigen sozio-technischen Faktoren, die technologieinduzierten organisatorischen Innovationsprozessen zugrunde liegen. Die Entwicklungs- und Implementierungsprozesse werden erklärt durch den Begriff ‚Gastfreundschaft', welcher interessante Einsichten in die komplexen aber häufig ignorierten sozio-technischen Abläufe ermöglicht.

Introduction

This paper looks at the role of 'hospitality' in culture and explores its potential as an ethical framework of values and principles for social actors to draw on when encountering difference or the Other manifest in technology. The literature indicates that hospitality is an ancient cultural concept but one which remains nascent to some degree across the spectrum of groups, society and organisations. Our concern is to understand social processes of technology implementation and adoption in groups and organisations, by employing a phenomenological ontology proposed by Claudio Ciborra and others (Brigham et al. 2006; Ciborra 2002; Ciborra 1998; Saccol et al. 2006). It is proposed that hospitality is drawn on by actors as a metaphorical lens for interpreting and informing behaviour in situations of encounter, a framework of values from which they act decisively and make principled choices informing their proper conduct when encountering, meeting (or making) new technology in the form of information systems (Hirschheim et al. 1991; Lakoff et al. 1980).

The cultural ground of hospitality

Encounters between people – between the stranger and society – imply a basic right for all, "the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another" (Kant 1972 [1795]). It arises from our common right to breathe the same air, to move through the world; it is implied by our very existence. Kant speculated that the logic of these fundamental rights implied a nascent universal law of hospitality from which respectful intercourse between cultures, coexistence and (ultimately) world peace could be established. He identified the right to attempt discourse to be the necessary precondition for the foreigner to further advance into guest-hood. Hospitality thus developed becomes a universal obligation for the stranger to be treated as if a citizen, a member of the host's community for the time of their sojourn with the host. From antiquity 'encounter' has been understood through rituals of hospitality – culture's rules and exceptions for interaction – from which people judged and acted in situations of encounter.

The lectures "Foreigner Question" and "Step of Hospitality/No Hospitality" (Derrida et al. 2000) uncover ethical dilemmas when offering or accepting of hospitality. True hospitality requires us to suspend the letter of the law, to put local morality and ethics of community in abeyance during encounter with the foreigner. When meeting Xénos (étranger, the stranger, strangeness) local laws of accommodation "effective, concrete, determined" (Derrida et al. 2000), run counter to the *practice* of hospitality: unconditional, above the law. Derrida's analysis of mythical

accounts of hospitality in narrative portrays it as cultural rule *and* exception, the tactful and potentially tragic formalities of society anticipating circumstances and exigencies surrounding encounter.

In 'Robert ce soir,' Klossowski's character, Uncle Octave, has framed and hung his own hand-written missive 'The Rule of Hospitality' on the wall of the guest room.

THE RULE OF HOSPITALITY

The master of this house, having no greater nor more pressing concern than to shed the warmth of his joy at evening upon whomever comes to dine at his table and to rest under his roof from a day's wearing travel, awaits anxiously at the gate for the stranger he will see appear like a liberator upon the horizon. And catching a first glimpse of him in the distance, though he be still far off, the master will call out to him, "Come in quickly, my happiness is at stake." This is why the master will be grateful in advance to anybody who, rather than considering hospitality as an accident in the souls of him and her who offer it, shall take it as the very essence of the host and hostess, the stranger in his guest's capacity partaking of this essence. (Klossowski 1982 [1953 and 1959])

Derrida (Derrida et al. 2000), employs this passage to reflect on the motives and moves of a host, providing a playful re-reading of nearly every aspect of hospitality, of its transpositions and inversions between host and guest, for different perspectives on all. Derrida relates historical and contemporary modes of hospitality, its cultural variations in language, with multiple (at times contradictory) meanings in an exercise to deepen our knowledge of hospitality. He explores situations when hospitality is imbued with human ethical concerns, where hospitality precedes conventional morality and law because unconditional hospitality has its own logic and rationale which plays itself out in a particular situation. The idea of unconditional hospitality cannot therefore be bound to singular laws or legal systems because it is entwined with the human condition; relating the individual to community and how each both makes and challenges the other.

Encountering the Other

Community making involves boundary setting (Introna et al. 2007), it delineates who is considered inside or outside, presents a border, a step between 'us' and 'the stranger.' The encounter between individual and community, whether face to face or mediated virtually through IT, carries with it the possibility of challenging both, to include, exclude or remove. Figure 1 depicts two asymmetries; a member's existence with respect to their own community or society; and community's definition with respect to the stranger. Community constitutes shared identity through the bonds of language or situation or proximity, but even a member of long standing is an individual ego who encounters community in their person. Encounter can become a disturbing moment for identity, whether in the context of being a member of community or the stranger, it has the potential to point out the 'at times seeming strangeness' of community itself and its horizons of significance (Taylor 1991). Identification can be thought of as an on-going labour of monitoring and adjusting between insider or outsider interactions. It may even be unclear if members of long standing can always remain insiders as the border is constantly redrawn by events and circumstances.

egocentric **:** community

community **:** stranger

Figure 1. Interactions: individual, community, stranger
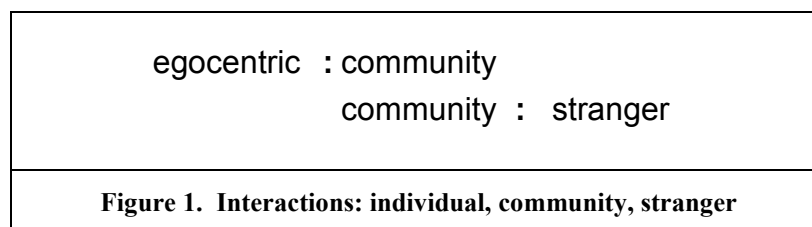
In both cases interaction is mutual, active, symbolic and co-constitutive (Garfinkel 1967). In this way the borders of community (society) are revealed through interaction with the Other, when we encounter community (in xenia to be foreign, the stranger, étranger) it challenges and reveals what it means to be welcomed. Introna and Brigham (2007) refer to this as the 'ethical proximity' of foreigner and host and show how tensions created in situations of encounter and interaction may be overcome by adopting cultural modes of hospitality, but difference is not always resolved as hospitality contains within the possibility of hostility, of being both hostage and host (Ciborra 2002; Derrida et al. 2000). The encounter with the stranger, of seeing oneself through the eyes of the other, always brings with it these tensions. Encounter may engender insecurity in those involved by juxtaposing their different values, different concerns, different morals; these reveal ethical choices which constitute (in part) the identity and symbols of community. Encounters with the 'new' may bring in "xenophobia – fear of the strange(er)" – but the stranger is also

able to "see things insiders cannot because they are free of commitments and distant to local concerns" (Introna et al. 2007). Such revealing may lead us to fear the other or even ourselves, but it can also excite, delight, present novelty and newness as in Klossowski's master of the house who "awaits anxiously at the gate for the stranger he will see appear like a liberator upon the horizon" (Klossowski 1982 [1953 and 1959]). Revealing contrasts, in turn, who is inside and outside and in so doing demonstrates how the work of being 'in' is constantly remade, it reveals the arbitrariness of local rules, morality, and values; it points out what holds communities together but in so doing suggests how they may also break apart, indexing "the tension between ethics and politics" (Introna et al. 2007).

Antinomy of Technology

We see now how hospitality may be both a metaphor and an ethical origin from which human actors extrapolate their thoughts, decisions and actions in situations where they encounter difference or the other, but is it reasonable to extend into this field of the rights and obligations of humans, the intentions or reactions of technologies and objects? Derrida reflects on the propensity for "techno-scientific possibilities" (Derrida et al. 2000) to breach the integrity of the self and the community, the interiority of the home. Because technologies infiltrate what we take to be our home, our community, they have the potential to restructure the boundaries of public and private and therefore reconfigure what comes into play as inside or outside and by extension what might be considered to require 'hosting'. Metaphorically both technology and user undergo reversals, inversions in the roles of guest or host, in the home or at work, each becoming in turn hostage to the other. The connotations of hospitality, in law or through social conventions (always conditional), expand into new spaces revealed by technology, but the object of technology may become that most unwelcome of guests, a freeloader refusing to be budged, availing of laws or regulations which mandate technology's features. For Derrida techno-scientific architectures become enmeshed with community, blurring the distinction between public and private, between what is recognizable as local or foreign.

> "This absolute porosity, this limitless accessibility of technical devices meant for keeping secrets, for encoding and ensuring secrecy, is the law, the law of the law: the more you encode and record in figures, the more you produce of this operational iterability which makes accessible the secret to be protected." (Derrida et al. 2000)

Proper host-guest relations can become hostile at the stroke of a pen when law overrules society's conventions and what once appeared hospitable when it was invited into the home, technology's outward obedience (approximating good behaviour), can be made to contradict its welcome and inclusion within, to become instead a traitor to its host. Derrida describes this as 'antinomy', a self contradictory edifice, in which technology approximates the good guest while at the same time changing the field of hospitality, redefining what is inside (private) and outside (public).

Hospitality Analysis

Analysis of the hospitality concept in the IS field has been informed by philosophical concepts originating in phenomenology, in particular the work of Edmund Husserl and his student Martin Heidegger. Claudio Ciborra developed the insightful concept of Xenia (i.e. hospitality) to reveal the intrinsic heterogeneous nature of socio-technical interplay underlying processes of organizational innovation mediated through technologies (Ciborra 2002; Ciborra 1998). Other authors (Brigham et al. 2006; Introna et al. 2007; Saccol et al. 2006) have explored this avenue in an attempt to better understand processes where actors and information technology interact and co-constitute social and workplace performances. They posit hospitality analysis as a conceptual framework from which insightful theorisation of the phenomena of subject/object relationships may be made. In these cases, rather than treating technology adoption as a rational process of decision making and conformity, technology-in-use arises through processes of social adaptation, and may be theorised through the metaphor of hospitality[1]. These authors argue for an entirely different ontology, a new language with which to speak about the 'problem' of information technology and our propensity to (mis)use it.

Ciborra (2002) highlights the fluidity of social organization and the situated contingencies of ISD initiatives and in so doing advocates loosening our grip on the methodological frame to open up other ways of thinking and

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[1] Allied approaches from the phenomenological tradition – improvisation and Gestell – are also employed by these authors to theorise material interaction and infrastructural en-framing experienced in situations of technology-in-use.

conceptualising system development. The problematic nature of popular structured methodologies and methodological frames that 'straightjacket' complex social and organizational processes encompassing system development has been widely reported. Structured models and methodologies, and their assumptions about stable and predictable technology do not capture the uncertainty or emotional fragility of user encountering technology, of their continuous strife (and striving) for symmetrical acceptance, for respect. In an attempt to address this imbalance Ciborra proposes a new way of making sense of user/software/developer interactions, to sensitize us to the socio-technical dynamics in ISD (Ciborra 2002; Ciborra 1998). Ciborra's 'xenia' concept, 'hospitality,' is used as a grounding metaphor to explore and interpret the complexities of how we go about designing, developing and implementing technologies for organizations or social groups. The idea of host-guest relations opens possibilities for a "new constellation of issues, words, and understanding, referring in particular to existential dimensions, such as life world, identity, and commitment" (Ciborra 2002). The notion of hospitality points to the extra effort involved in coping, accepting, and embedding new technologies into lived practice. This kind of activity cannot be represented geometrically:

> "…it is made of absorbed coping, care, being there amidst ambiguity, intimacy, sporting hospitality as well as tamed hostility towards what the new and unknown is unveiling" (Ciborra 1998).

In contrast to the assumption of cause/effect, command and control assumptions of structured methodologies, developers as xenoi – animators of technology – might create an "open-ended process", a host may show hospitality and "serve the guest" but the 'guest' will also begin to "align the host to certain needs and constraints" (Ciborra 2002). Xenia encourages turning a critical eye to the process of acceptance and embeddedness of technology in the flow of its everyday practice in use. It suggests we should be more attentive to how technologies become invited in and coped with, welcomed (or not), accommodate or are accommodated, until becoming folded into our taken-for-granted beliefs. The ambiguous and interchangeable roles of 'host and guest' reveal a dynamic dance of interaction, experience, practice (with technology-in-use). The way things go will not therefore be determined by the properties of people, societies, workplaces or technology; it emerges from the meeting, before and after.

Research Implications

Inspired in part by Ciborra's work Brigham and Introna (2006) remain critical of instrumental approaches to understanding the development and use of information technology. They state that "the horizon of effects associated with the [technology] cannot be controlled over time and space" (Brigham et al. 2006) and suggest that conventional approaches to technological control (and control of technology) are in fact "rooted in our everyday institutions in which the subject/object dualism is taken for granted, that is, in a form of naive realism (or the 'natural attitude' in Husserl's terminology)" (Brigham et al. 2006). They assert that the meaning of technology is never isolable from its use; that "we and our technology are an indivisible unity from the start" (Brigham et al. 2006). Their line of reasoning is that the practices surrounding technology (practices which co-constitute technology so that it becomes technology-in-use) must draw on organisational practices which are prior to, already present, already familiar in the world in which technology is introduced. But while practice implies stability and sameness over time, practice is also always remade, actively, not passively as if following a script, but remade in action as an actor draws on the technology to attain an intention or goal. The alternative they propose to conventional (and fragile) modes of realist understanding is to posit and develop a "phenomenological ontology for conceptualising the co-constitutive relation between organisational practices and information technology mediated practices" (Brigham et al. 2006)1, an approach echoed by Saccol and Reinhard (2006). Saccol and Reinhard (2006) developed Ciborra's hospitality metaphor as a lens for analysis and understanding processes of introduction, bringing in, and introducing change in organisations. Saccol and Reinhard (2006) discuss these processes and the theoretical implications for a 'hospitality analysis of interaction' between human and technological actors (Table 1). Research implications for hospitality analysis are developed from Saccol and Reinhard's theoretical conclusions and summarised in this table.

Table 1. Implications of hospitality analysis & research[2]

Theoretical implications	Research implications
By hosting a new technology, we reinterpret our	Individuals relate, recall and reflect on themselves and

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[2] Developed from Saccol and Reinhard (2006)

identities.	others (including technology); their reputation, identities, how they change.
Hosting the new technology will involve learning by doing and improvisation.	Meeting, interaction, is the crucial event. Observe or recall moments of play, breakdown or problem solving. Note lingo, old/new language or terms.
During the hosting process, technology can drift.	Does 'meaning' shift? Record or recall understandings and practices over the entire process.
Hospitality involves moods and emotions.	Observe or recall mood, feeling, expressions, passions, affective language. Is culture present, repressed, visible, impinged? Is technology implicated in this?
Hospitality is about appropriation and care.	Technology-in-use; Observe mundane activity, what is taken for granted, routine? How shallow or deep is it taken in?
Hospitality involves cultivation	Processes of interaction and change along the life of the innovation. Developer's or engineer's actions; technology fixed or in flux? How is change negotiated (or not), processes of development.
We cannot forget the dubious character of technology: technology can become an enemy.	Record contradictions and the unexpected, redrawn boundaries, successes/failures, enhancement/incursions, benefit/loss, injury, empowerment.

The concerns of those involved in innovation projects might also be charted against their context, history and the events of host-guest interactions. The language of hospitality brackets the whole field of introduction, not just the meeting point itself but also anticipation of meeting and its aftermath, of care and co-habitation, of technology and users together (technology-in-use). The meeting point punctuates processes of introduction which presage encounter or introduction where actors become aware of each other; initially exchanging, changing and accommodating to each other's anticipations. Technology's engineers may be behind-the-scenes actively involved in accommodating the host in the situation of meeting technology, discovering and engineering the affordances or limitations of technology's material form (Callon 1987).
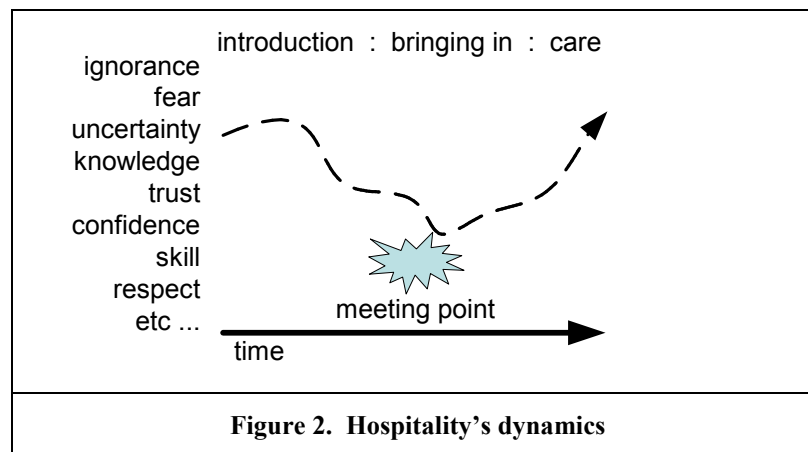

Figure 2. Hospitality's dynamics

Figure 2 attempts to illustrate how Ciborra's Xenia, the hospitality concept, may be used to chart situations of encounter, depicting features of a situation, for example: an actor's knowledge, ignorance, their fear of the unknown, trust, skill, happiness, feeling of security or uncertainty. The dynamics of a hospitality analysis implies changes in the perceptions and attitudes of actors over time. Events and technology may be thought to alter (or not) the character of these facets; contrasts the present with the past, older technology infrastructures (the previous guest?), old and new ways of acting or working, improving or deteriorating the situation however this is understood.

We conclude that employing the language of host guest relations and delving into the cultural stance and history of actors facilitates a rich and nuanced description of the situation and its exigencies. It suggests both suitable research approaches (interpretive, narrative, ethnographic, documentary, interview, observation, participation,) and the data of interest (reflection, affective, mood, shape, change, and artefact). Hospitality analysis may therefore allow a better

understanding of technologically mediated innovation in groups or communities. We may perhaps claim (in time) that hospitality analysis presents a useful theoretically informed approach to understanding cases of technologically mediated change and innovation. By focusing on social processes, situations, and the objects produced – for example key episodes in the activities of introduction (cultivation), bringing in (meeting), and after (care) – we may establish another alternative to the Sisyphean attempt to control.

A research design for Hospitality analysis

We now sketch an on-going case study into the 'big bang' introduction of new technological infrastructure for a financial services firm where the research design is informed by our readings of hospitality analysis. The goal of this study is to develop a theoretically informed understanding of an episode of radical infrastructural IS innovation. The research focuses on the events surrounding the integration of a national organisation's IS infrastructure with its international parent firm.

The case documents the occasion of infrastructural service innovation within State Bank (SB), a newly acquired subsidiary of International European Bank (IEB[3]), an international banking firm. IEB's seemingly smooth integration of newly acquired subsidiaries has been a defining characteristic of its continuing success as a leading financial services company both in Europe and abroad. The acquisition of SB initiated a substantial technology investment into SB's operations by IEB. The project to align the two organizations' IS infrastructures began in earnest once the acquisition was completed. IEB's approach to integration required the complete replacement of SB's existing infrastructure and the adoption of new technology and work practices by the national workforce. However, rather than conforming to the conventional wisdom for deploying large scale IS implementations[4] IEB employed a 'big bang' approach to the project. The 'big bang' event happened over a single long weekend one year after the acquisition. At this time they also shut down and decommissioned all previously used systems; these were removed permanently from operation over the same weekend. Two years after the 'big bang' event IEB proceeded to reproduce the experience after acquiring another firm. The subsequent project has undergone a similar acquisition, assimilation and 'big bang' integration exercise, this time also involving members of SB.

The field study phase for this case study is on-going and consists of semi-structured interviews with a number of key informants who were introduced in a snowball approach (Miles et al. 1994). Data gathering has thus far consisted of carrying out interviews and reviewing documentary evidence. Interviews commenced 6 months after the 'big bang' event had taken place. Interviews were out at the international group headquarters, the national head office and national branch offices. Interviewees include; the VP for technology, VP treasury, capital/regional manager, regional head of HR, head of training, and line staff involved in the development, configuration and use of relevant sub-systems. Interviews provided the principle form of data gathering and were validated by being transcribed and presented to interviewees for separate review. Furthermore the researchers read and review all notes, transcripts and additional documentary evidence (press releases, corporate documentation etc), to carry out joint analysis and reflection. The process of analysis has involved repeated discussions among the researchers, to debrief, analyse, code and interpret the field data as research was being written up and initial results have been published (Higgins et al. 2008).

Questions put to interviewees have ranged over the areas suggested by our readings of hospitality analysis. By attending to moments of interaction, mood, feeling, identity, culture, history and their dynamics; we look at whether IEB put effort into addressing what might be understood as hospitality – activities which alleviate the meeting between the 'host and the guest'. For example: How did IEB go about changing attitudes to engender new 'hospitable' and 'friendly' attitudes towards a new 'guest'? Where "hospitality is about crossing a boundary and reaching out to the Other, stranger" (Ciborra 2002), were boundary spanners present and active in the organisation in the 'approach', at the 'meeting' and later in the 'hosting' of the new systems? Were boundary spanners involved in establishing and sustaining the host's confidence and trust, presumably reducing the host's (organisational) anxiety

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[3] State Bank (SB) and International European Bank (IEB) are pseudonyms.

[4] Conventional deployment policies range over phased introductions (introducing greater functionality in stages) through to staged roll-out (switching or 'upgrading' sites separately). Big bang IS transitions are rarely recommended, particularly where a firm's entire operational and production capacity is actualised through software and IS.

at a future meeting with the 'ambiguous stranger'? Did the presence of experts that had already dealt with the 'guest' improve the emotional atmosphere in the host's house (the national organisation, SB)? At the 'meeting', the "moment of truth" or "catastrophe point" how did the host accept the guest's intrinsic ambiguity and mystery? What forms of care were resorted to at the unpredictable circumstances in the unfolding of hospitality when the guest and host finally met?

Conclusions

This research-in-progress paper offers a review of recent literature developing the hospitality metaphor for IS and ICT innovation studies. These discussions take technology and practice to be part of an on-going process, a co-constitutive relationship in which the technology exists, is taken into our private lives or our work, hosted within other equipment and but also taken into ourselves, remaking our knowledge of self, community and identity. But how might a hospitality analysis and culturally distinctive understandings of hospitality inform a radical phenomenological ontology? What do we anticipate in such a language and understanding? Might it be useful and used by both researchers and practitioners? Is there a risk that culturally informed analyses degenerate into chaotic complexity if they are tuned to each situation and context, unfolding variously according to the situations of those concerned?

The research design presented here is being used to develop a rich empirical case study to test and answer some of these questions and to further develop the theoretical framework. The case presents us with an unusual situation; a very successful but radical technological and organisational innovation which posed (apparently) minimal disruption to customers, services, employee performance, corporate operations and inter-bank operations. The outcome of this case is contraindicated in terms of conventional ISD theories or lends itself to trite and obvious appeals to success determinants, for example: that systems generally work as designed (technologically determined), or, deciding between introducing a system in a big bang or in stages depends on certain factors (contextual idiosyncrasy). Such analyses offer canned histories but may be poor indicators for practice. The goal for this research is to address these issues, to employ an approach from which theoretically informed analysis can be developed for success, failure and in-between, *and* to usefully inform practice; the practice of actors in the field, developers, users, customers etc. Interpreting the case through the lens of xenia offers a potentially rich palette of theoretical and descriptive tools; tools which may illuminate both what happened *and* inform how actors might engage in future.

A hospitality analysis implies changed technology, but also changed users; it opens the possibility of larger narratives, accounts which spotlight emotions, identities, power, interests and action implicit in the sociality of 'introduction'. The dynamics of innovation may be better understood as a process of Xenia where practices shift, technology is fluid and users approve or are offended; but the performance goes on as the guest and host explore each others' stances to explore a fit. Ciborra argues for acceptance of the guest's intrinsic ambiguity and mystery, he encourages its acceptance as a practical way of coping with technology: "To be sure, an effective host must be able to exercise various forms of care depending upon the unpredictable circumstances in the unfolding of hospitality" (Ciborra 2002). In this way we might understand the need for technology's drifting and shifting form, its changing service or affordance through developers' frequent tinkering and improvisations – intrinsic to system development and system use – as manifestations of the encounter between the guest and the host and their continuous learning about each other; the adjustment of their identities and cultures.

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