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INFORMATION SYSTEMS ACADEMICIANS SUPPORTING POLITICAL DECISION MAKING: TOWARDS EXPANDING IMPACT AND RELEVANCE?

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INFORMATION SYSTEMS ACADEMICIANS SUPPORTING POLITICAL DECISION MAKING: TOWARDS EXPANDING IMPACT AND RELEVANCE?

Chair: Claudia Loebbecke, University of Cologne, Germany

Panelists: Arnold Picot, University of Munich, Germany
            Marco De Marco, Catholic University Milano, Italy
            Sue Newell, Warwick University, UK & Bentley University, US
            Ann Majchrzak, University of Southern California, US & ESADE, Spain
            Ephraim McLean, Georgia State University, US
            N.N., Catalan Government / European Commission[*]

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[*] We plan to have another panelist from the European Commission or a government unit who *has* asked for input from IS academics or who will explain why IS academicians are rarely asked to contribute to political debate. His or her name will be provided later.

1 Theme and Audience

For IS academicians to provide political consultancy and to offer expertise in political decision making would seem to open enormous opportunities for 'doing good' and for reinforcing the relevance of the IS field. Throughout Europe and around the world, issues such as data privacy, online gaming, the protection of youth, net neutrality, media competency, public health ICT, ICT-based citizen services, digital divide, encryption versus transparency, and the social, competitive, and political impacts of phenomena such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter are all on the table.

However, the contributions of IS academicians to political decision making are minor compared to our colleagues in the fields of law, political science, or macroeconomics. Why is that so? Why are IS academicians rarely invited into hearings, to governmental (or oppositional) scientific advisory councils, or to law making initiatives? Are we not interested in sharing our expertise in those circles? Or – more worrisome – are political bodies not interested in inviting us to contribute our expertise? Do they feel that we have nothing to offer?

This panel will offer the personal experiences of panel members on their involvement in different political activities and in different governmental organizations, and will explore the pros and cons of senior and junior IS academicians getting involved in these activities from an individual's, a school's, and a community's perspective.

This panel does not plan to suggest that IS academicians should change jobs or move into politics; such a focus does not seem to be appropriate for an ECIS forum. However, if the audience expresses interest in this topic, the panel will share their observations from the perspective of five different countries.

This panel should be of interest to those who wish to learn about political consulting in the field of ICT, to those who have been involved in political activities or who have been invited to do so, and to those who want to discuss the role of ICT-related experience to the field of public decision making and regulation.

2 Panel Structure and Audience Involvement

Instead of introductory presentations backed by slides, the panel chair will briefly introduce the topic and the panelists and then guide through **three rounds of controversial statements and contributions by the panelists**.

- In the first round, panelists will briefly outline their rather different experiences with providing consultancy to political decision making processes and elaborate on their experience with having, or not having, pursued political advisory as part of their activity portfolio as senior IS academician.

- In the second round, panelists will draw from their own experience and discuss the different opportunities arising from providing political consultancy in different academic systems and the pros and cons of different attitudes towards 'Political Consultancy.'

- In the third round, panelists will reflect upon their own experience and comment on the other opinions and experiences presented. Further, as appropriate, they will offer guidelines and advice for getting involved in the political decision making processes.

After each round, the chair will also ask for experiences and insights from the audience and moderate an exchange of views and opinions among panelists and the audience. Hopefully, this will trigger a lively discussion that will last beyond the 90 minutes allotted to the session.

3 Panelists and Their Positions (Sorted by Position)

Arnold Picot has offered extensive political consultancy as described above in Germany and on the European level. For more than 13 years, he has chaired the scientific advisory council on regulatory issues at the German Federal Network Agency (Bundesnetzagentur) in Germany. Furthermore, he has served on several public boards and councils related to ICT-research programs and policy aspects at various ministries and agencies on the federal and state level. He was part of a parliamentary 'Enquete Commission' on the Information Society and new media in the late 90s. He favors such political advisory activity as it allows IS academicians to contribute to real-life issues and problems, but also to import real-life issues into the field of academic research and teaching. Political contributions enjoy a much larger forum for his ideas and expertise than journal or conference publications could ever achieve. In this context, he also favors providing expertise to government / political units as favorable not only for his own standing and reputation, but also for his school's quality of teaching and its reputation on the national and international playing field.

Marco De Marco is involved in university organized projects as well as his own direct university activities. The latter have contributed enormously to his standing and fame in Italy, a fame of which non-Italians are unaware. He notes that very few of his Italian IS colleagues are invited to provide expertise in political decision making processes. His insights with these government bodies leads him to assume that they would rather trust larger ICT consulting companies than individual IS academicians. Along these lines, he wonders whether the kind of expertise that IS academicians have to offer is reason for them rarely being asked to consult. Is IS 'expertise' more about developing systems and artifacts than providing individual assessments in actual decision making processes?

Sue Newell has built her successful and international academic career without getting involved in political activity. That is, she has not been asked nor given the opportunity to give evidence or provide information to a government body. However, she sees such activity as increasingly becoming a major component of relevance criteria in schools. Having looked into some of the prevalence of such type of activity, both in the UK and the US, she will speculate about whether more academicians s will begin to engage in more political consultancy in an attempt to demonstrate the impact of their research, both to government funding bodies and to students are who becoming more interested in seeing the value of their education in concrete terms.

Ann Majchrzak finds that providing political consultancy as an IS academician in a business school or an information school rarely contributes to one's personal or a school's reputation. Instead, it takes time away from what we are educated for and what we are good at – that is, providing theoretically grounded research insights to be published in outlets that are designed for such purposes, or offering consulting insights to organizations or businesses which are at the core of IS research. Not only are we better trained to share advice to companies, but partnering with companies lays the groundwork for our students being taught marketable skills and thus finding jobs in the business world.

Ephraim McLean, taking the position of the head of a very large department and having headed numerous P&T committees, advises IS academicians to be careful with getting involved in such 'side' activity as providing expertise and consultancy in political decision making processes. He argues that there is a reason why promotion and hiring decisions are based on research and teaching, not on external activities, which neither brings in substantial funds nor national / international reputation to a school or department. The fact that we know of very few colleagues who do provide political consultancy, shows that – with very few exceptions – political advisory activities get local attention at

best; therefore this should not be the ambition of a school, a department, or even an individual faculty member.

As panel chair, *Claudia Loebbecke* will introduce topic and panelists and then guide panelists and audience through the session as outlined above.

4 Bio Abstracts -- Panel Chair and Panelists

Claudia Loebbecke (claudia.loebbecke@uni-koeln.de), panel chair and moderator, holds the chair for Business Administration, Media and Technology Management at the University of Cologne. 2005-2006, she was President of the Association for Information Systems; 2001-2007 AIS Council member, and in 2009 ECIS Conference Co-Chair. With a PhD in Business Administration from the University of Cologne and an MBA from Indiana University, Bloomington, she previously held the KRAK Chair of Electronic Commerce at Copenhagen Business School. She also worked and researched at McKinsey & Co., Erasmus University, INSEAD, HKUST, UNSW, University of Paris Dauphine, Bentley University, and the LSE. She has over 100 peer-reviewed publications and has consulted for a variety of multi-national companies and public institutions. View CV at www.mtm.uni-koeln.de/team-loebbecke-home-engl.htm.

Arnold Picot (picot@lmu.de) holds the Chair of the Institute for Information, Organization and Management at the Ludwig-Maximilian-University in Munich, Germany. His research and teaching activities focus on the management of information and communication. He investigates organizational design given the scarcity of information and special information and communication systems which modify the problem of scarcity of information and thus influence organizational design. He co-founded the Center for Digital Technology and Management, a teaching and research institute operating also at the University of Munich and the Technical University Munich. He is Chairman of the 'Muenchner Kreis' – a supranational association for communications research at the interface between academia, industry and politics, and holds several board positions in private as well as public organizations. View CV at www.iom.bwl.uni-muenchen.de/personen/professoren/picot/index.html.

Marco De Marco (marco.demarco@unicatt.it) was a full professor of Organization of Information Systems at Catholic University of Milan for 31 years. Now, he is full professor at University Guglielmo Marconi in Rome and also teaches at the LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome. He was elected member of the AIS Council representing region 2 (Europe, Africa, and Middle East). His major research activities have been in systems development, performance evaluation, and organizational change. In the 1970s, he served as Parliamentary advisor to the Italian government when it developed a strategy to foster the national ICT industry. Later engagements were with public administration, state owned banks, hospital city councils, regional government mainly on systems selection, bid preparation, and systems evaluation. Now he is often involved in evaluating innovative projects applying for funds either to European bodies or local ones. In 2010, he was awarded the AIS Fellow for his contribution to the IS discipline.

Ann Majchrzak (amajchrz@marshall.usc.edu) is professor of Information Systems, Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California., and currently visiting professor at ESADE, Spain. She holds a PhD in Social Psychology from UCLA. She has conducted research on information systems support for distributed teams, knowledge-sharing and creation, wiki use, and IT support for collaborative innovation. Her publications appeared in *MIS Quarterly, Organization Science, Harvard Business Review, Sloan Management Review, Management Science, Information Systems Research*, among others. She is a Senior Editor for *MIS Quarterly* and *Organization Science* and has served on three National Academy of Sciences committees. She has partnered in research and consulting with a variety of large firms including Hewlett-Packard, Texas Instruments, General Motors, IBM, Northrop, Aerospace Corp, etc. View CV at https://msbfile03.usc.edu/digitalmeasures/majchrza/pci/vita-1.doc.

Sue Newell (snewell@bentley.edu) is a Trustee Professor in the Department of Management at Bentley University and Professor of Information Systems at Warwick Business School. She holds a PhD from Cardiff University in Wales. Her research focuses on innovation, specifically, on understanding how knowledge is transferred and innovation fostered within and across organizations. Much of her work has taken place at ikon, a research unit for innovation, knowledge and organizational networking that she co-founded at the University of Warwick in the UK. She also pursues research in the design, implementation and use of IT; ethics and social responsibility issues, including equal opportunity; and the evaluation of management development initiatives. She has published more than 55 articles in journals such as *Organization Studies, European Journal of Information Systems, Journal of Management Studies, British Journal of Management*, and *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*. View CV at www.bentley.edu/faculty/newell-susan/index.cfm.

Ephraim McLean (emclean@gsu.edu) is a Regents' Professor and Chairman of the CIS Department at Georgia State University (GSU) in Atlanta, GA. After earning his PhD at the MIT in 1970, he joined the Anderson Graduate School of Management at UCLA and then moved to GSU in 1987. He has been a visiting professor at the University of South Australia, Erasmus University, ESADE, and the Alexandria Institute of Technology in Egypt. Dr. McLean published over 150 articles in such outlets including *Harvard Business Review, Sloan Management Review, Information System Research, Management Science, MIS Quarterly, MISQ Executive, Journal of MIS*, and *European Journal of Information Systems*. In 2007, his *ISR* paper (with W. DeLone) on 'Information Systems Success' (1992) was ranked as the most-cited IS research paper in the world in the last 15 years. He served as the Executive Director of the ICIS and of the AIS for 10 years, became AIS Fellow in 1999, and was and was honored with the LEO Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007. View CV at www.cis.gsu.edu/emclean/.