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PANEL 14

RETHINKING MODELS OF ORGANIZATION AND INNOVATION WITHIN INFORMATION SYSTEMS STUDIES

Panel Chair: Robert J. Benson, Washington University

Panelists: Pieter Ribbers, Tilburg University
Diana Watts, De Baak Management Development Center
Leslie Willcocks, Templeton College

Conceptual approaches to organizational change are presently receiving serious reconsideration in the adjacent fields of sociology, business administration, and political science. This contrasts with the more conventional images to be found in the literature in the area of information systems development and management where the dominant image reflected continues to be that of the purposeful organization engaged in linear change processes. The purpose of this panel is to consider alternative approaches that could better serve to inform the study of technological innovation processes in a dynamic environment.

The panel will consist of three speakers, each offering a different conceptual viewpoint with the ensuing discussion to take place in the spirit of an "images of organization" best exemplified by G. Morgan. Given that the closed-system bureaucratic metaphor has been well discussed and described, only a short opening statement will be made to set the context. The discussion will then turn to current developments from opposing metaphors as a contribution to enrich the cognitive maps of IT researchers.

Diana Watts, Senior Course Director, Management Development Center, De Baak, Netherlands will take as her starting point the developments currently occurring in the area of organizational learning and chaos theory. A juxtaposition of "information-processing" with "information creation" will provide the basis for linking concepts of organization and information. Additionally, change and structure will be discussed in the context of non-linear change and self-organization. This will lead to a re-evaluation of appropriate considerations for the design of information systems.

Leslie Willcocks, Fellow in Information Management, Templeton College, Oxford, will reconsider the structure-agency debate in the context of technological change, including issues of micropolitics and organizational conservatism. In addition, recent theoretical and empirical work in Britain, including that of P. Clark, A. Giddens and M. Reed, will be presented, suggesting possible new routes forward to integrate the diverse, incomplete, and too easily accepted formulations frequently utilized in the IS field.

Pieter Ribbers, Professor of Information Systems, Tilburg University, Netherlands will contrast approaches to be found in the American and European studies in relation to business planning and information planning. A primary discussion point will be the manner in which decision making activities and technology are treated respectively and the implications this suggests for strategic change issues as well as the management of IT.

The panel will conclude with an audience participation session during which comments from the floor will be invited.