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Foreword IRIS43: Digitalization in times of transition

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SELECTED PAPERS OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS RE-SEARCH SEMINAR IN SCANDINAVIA (IRIS)

IRIS43: Digitalization in Times of Transition

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Foreword

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1 About issue 11 (2020)

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2 Foreword

'Digitalization in times of transition' was the overarching theme for the 43rd Information Systems Research Seminar (IRIS), hosted online by Mid Sweden University, 10-12 August 2020. Though announced long before the Covid-19 pandemic, the conference theme could not have been more fitting once it became clear that this year's conference could not be in person. Swiftly, the organizers managed to preserve the IRIS spirit and transform the event into an entirely virtual setup for the first time since the first conference in 1978. Among many other concerns, participants discussed how digitalization entails promises of bridging and sometimes even dissolving geographical distances while at the same time also enforce fragmentation and tensions between center and periphery, reproduce and maybe even design exclusionary practices, and create new technological dependencies for a robust infrastructure to ensure the opportunities for digitalization for all.

The four papers published in this 11th issue of the IRIS Selected Papers contribute new insights to these important aspects of digitalization. The group leaders at IRIS43 nominated the papers. Before being

nominated, the papers have carefully been peer-reviewed in a double-blind process and further discussed in group sessions during the seminar. Based on these assessments, the papers were revised and resubmitted by the authors for publication. With 20 papers submitted to IRIS43, this issue has an acceptance rate of 20%.

3 Selected papers

This issue includes three empirical research papers developing new conceptual contributions and an extensive systematic literature review synthesizing current IS knowledge. The papers address risks and opportunities of digitalization in times of transition at multiple organizational levels.

In the first paper, *Accelerated Digital Transformation: The Case of the Online University Caused by Covid-19*, Madsen, Haslam, and Nielsen analyze how the pandemic caused organizations to undertake rapid transformation to cope with the extraordinary situation. By proposing the concept of accelerated digital transformation, the authors focus on how digitalization in times of transitions can be accelerated by leveraging existing resources, encouraging informal knowledge sharing, and re-organization of core activities through experimentation rather than based on strategic plans. The authors note that despite being accelerated due to an exogenous shock, it is unlikely that the organization will return to how it was before the pandemic.

Indeed, digitalization continues to play an increasingly important role in organizations. However, as digitalization initiatives evolve and become ubiquitous in the organization, aligning IT with business strategies, goals, and needs becomes ever more challenging and dynamic. In the second paper, *Assessing Business-IT Alignment Maturity on Multiple Organizational Levels*, Tordrup, Jensen, and Træholt create and evaluate a multi-level framework for assessing business-IT alignment. While previous research predominantly assesses alignment as a concern to be addressed at the strategic level, this framework incorporates organizations' tactical and operational levels in the assessment. The framework's usefulness for assessing and visualizing alignment maturity is demonstrated in an empirical case. Results emphasize the increasing complexity of alignment and stress the importance of considering a more systemic view on digitalization.

As digitalization amplifies interdependence and interconnectedness between organizations, the notion of ecosystems has amassed growing attention among Information Systems researchers. In the third paper, *Governing Innovation in E-Health Platform Ecosystems – Key Concepts and Future Directions,* Paparova and Aanestad systematically review the current literature on platform ecosystems and innovation governance within eHealth. The paper identifies three main concepts and competing concerns on governing platform innovation (such as openness vs. control of boundary resources in the ecosystem) and provides new directions for future research.

While the above papers investigate how organizations can reap potential benefits of digitalization in times of transitions, the final paper, *People on the Other Side Are Waiting: Work Obligations and Shame in ICT-Related Technostress*, zooms in on a potential dark side lurking at the individual level. In this paper, Stana, and Nicolajsen study the negative effects of digitalization on employee's health through the concept of technostress. Informed by the sociological lens of obligation and based on in-depth interviews with employees in a private company, the paper explores how technostress arises in organizations. The findings suggest that as employees embrace the premise of digitalization being functional and seamless, they feel it is their obligation to ensure the technology will perform. When technology fails to meet expectations, employees experience feelings of shame, leading to technostress.

In summary, the selected papers contribute to the understanding of digitalization in times of transition. The papers highlight the importance of a strong Scandinavian IS research tradition to continue to deliver answers to the opportunities and challenges that arise as digitalization becomes ever more pervasive in our lives. We are delighted to have had the opportunity to closely read and summarize all the exciting work of the IRIS Selected Papers 2020. We wish all the authors the best with their future research endeavors.