Socio-Technical perspectives for a sustainable future of work and society

Contemporary Socio-Technical perspectives can be seen as a cornerstone in discussions about the human agency in the pursuit of organizational excellence. Now, the so-called "future of work" (OECD 2018, WEF 2019) will be characterized by economical and societal discontinuities implied by the spread of the adoption of digital technology (such as AI, IoT and 5G). In such a context, sociotechnical phenomena such as collaborative robots (cobots), where pro-active support for human use and engagement with big data, everyday interactions with Internet of Things, Social Networking as intertwined aspect of mainstream cultural behavior, will allow and interfere with major changes in organizations and in society. These changes, however, must be designed - if not by focusing on individuals, according to the philosophy of human centered design (Shin, 2014) – by taking into account the systemic effects between people and technology. The agenda moves from technology developed to replace human activities, or to be used by human agent – towards sociotechnical agendas ***where technology supports human activities as technical partners and collaborative agents*** – not simply as tools (Bednar and Welch 2019). Flexible working practices need flexible technological solutions Leonardi 2011).

Since technical systems have been recognized to be intrinsically if not intentionally incomplete and perpetually in the making (Kallinikos, Aaltonen, & Marton, 2013), the design and re-design of socio-technical systems should be conceived as a continuous process involving innovators and recipients dealing with complex and evolving artifacts (Trist 1981, Mumford, 2006) which cannot be decoupled from the soft, social, cultural and even psychological components (Silver & Markus, 2013). This in turn requires attention to be put on the intentionally pursued revision of contextually relevant action of the social environment (Bednar, 2016). Designing as part of the digital economy, digital enterprises, digital services and products, implies therefore a multidisciplinary effort (Barrett et al. 2015, Lyytinen et al. 2016), that is embedded into the sociotechnical system perspective/model (King et al. 1999, Luna-Reyes et al. 2005).

In this track, we are interested in Sustainability from a sociotechnical perspective (for example the triple bottom line, the quadruple bottom line and systemic sustainability). Another growing contemporary sociotechnical issue is industrial espionage as a threat to all kind of organizations (i.e. Sadok, Welch and Bednar, 2019). Of course we invite any other contemporary sociotechnical practices. This includes Knowledge management as sociotechnical practice, interaction and communicative action in organizational settings etc. We welcome research discussing - through the lens of the socio-technical approach - initiatives based on AI or Machine Learning. Smart working, industry 5.0, society 6.0 are also relevant and future oriented contemporary sociotechnical agendas and topics (i.e. Bednar and Welch, 2019).

All kind of methods, approaches, philosophies etc. are welcome to be discussed in papers if related to the sociotechnical agenda. This would include data ethnography field studies and IS oriented discussions on innovation and purposeful problem solving, characterized by the design and implementation of digital artifacts, with a particular attention to individual and / or organizational contexts (Bednar, 2000, 2016).

Type of contributions invited:

We invite full research papers, research-in-progress papers, experience-in-the-field reports and case reports. Both empirically and/or theoretically grounded.

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