

Socio-Technical Perspectives to lead the change towards a sustainable 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 Robots, Cobots, AI, IoT and 5G). These changes, however, must be designed by taking into account the systemic effects between people and technology, if not even by focusing on individuals, according to a human centered perspective (Shin, 2014). The agenda moves from technology developed to replace human activities, towards sociotechnical approaches where technology supports human activities as technical partners and collaborative agents – not simply as tools (Bednar and Welch 2019). Moreover, flexible working practices need flexible technological solutions (Leonardi 2011).

The coronavirus pandemic has induced many companies in accelerating their digitalization process, but it remains unclear whether initiatives of such kind represent merely a reaction to the emergency or belong to a crisis and recovery plan, or in fact they are accelerated actions of a strategic digital transformation, designed before the pandemic (Locoro and Ravarini 2021). Moreover, it is unclear how the digitalization efforts are coherent with the increasingly urgent call to include sustainable action in the strategic plans of any organization.

In this track, we are interested in the relationships between IS and sustainability from a sociotechnical perspective (for example the triple bottom line, the quadruple bottom line and systemic sustainability). The socio-technical lens can be used in the industrial context, where the adoption of a multitude of digital technologies – in the form of robots and cobots – can alter the traditional and manual socio-technical interplay between technologies and workers (Margherita & Braccini 2021). Other growing contemporary sociotechnical issue are industrial espionage as a threat to all kind of organizations (i.e. Sadok, Welch and Bednar, 2019) as well as smartworking (Cuel et al. 2021). Of course, we invite discussions on all 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. Industry 4.0, Industry 5.0 (European Commission, 2021) and society 5.0 (Del Giudice et al. 2021) are also relevant and future oriented contemporary sociotechnical agendas and topics (i.e. Bednar and Welch, 2019).

We ask authors who submit to make it clear what are their definitions of the foundation terms: they should make it clear which are the basic assumptions underpinning the discussion in their paper. 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; Bednar and Welch, 2019).

List of Indicative Research Topics:

- Work systems, smart working and job-crafting
- Organizational change and pursuit of excellence

- Engaging with Complexity and Systems Thinking in practice
- Information, Knowledge Management and Communicative Action
- Cybersecurity and work systems
- Industrial Espionage
- Smart- and hybrid- working practices
- Human-robot interaction and heterogeneous teams in organizations
- Socio-technical model relevance in times of emergency/crisis emergence
- Human-machine engagement vs human-machine integration
- The future of automation
- Role of humans (at the organizational and at the society level) in a hyper automated firm / industry.
- Side-effects on long term performances of hyper-automated firms/ industries in highly competitive and changing economic environments
- Socio-technical approaches going beyond the limitations of digitization meant only as automation
- Industry 5.0 and Society 6.0
- Systemic sustainability issues and side-effects in a hyper-automated firm
- Sustainability as governance
- Sustainable systems and sustainable systems boundaries
- Benefit Management as part of work system and organizational change
- Complexity as difference between emergency and crisis
- Hard-systems thinking vs soft-systems thinking
- Discerning method with philosophy of method
- Relating foundations, methods and sustainability
- The problem with foundations and the nexus with approaches/techniques/models
- Adequacy of socio-technical models in times of emergency/crisis emergence

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