Acknowledgment

This book is the product of a decade of thinking, conferring, and writing on the topic of information infrastructures. Thus, although this is a single-authored book, many of the ideas draw on collaborative research, as well as discussions and written feedback from other researchers interested in this field.

My interest in the field begun in early 2002 out of discussions with my then Ph.D. supervisor, Michael Barrett, while a Ph.D. student at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge. Our discussions were motivated by a funded project from the Cambridge-MIT Institute and a joint interest to examine the ways by which information infrastructures supported and enabled the management of critical events in the healthcare value chain. This interest was also motivated by discussions we had with Geoff Walsham, Matthew Jones, Ole Hanseth, Eric Monteiro, Sundeep Sahay, and others who participated in the 2002 Oslo-Cambridge IS workshop on information infrastructures at Oslo University, Norway.

During that time, as serendipity would have it, through a fellow Ph.D. student, Angelina Kouroubali, I had the chance to be introduced to the then president of a research and development institute in Greece who was heading efforts to develop and implement HEALTHnet, a pilot health information infrastructure for the region of Crete. After a series of discussions, and with the help of Angelina, we were eventually given access to study the development and implementation of HEALTHnet, which was initiated in 1997 and came to an end in 2006. This case study (Chapter 4 of this book) offered great empirical material with which to explore a series of theoretical ideas around the development of information infrastructures.

Throughout the years of empirical data collection for the Crete case study, but also later on and up to today, we have presented theoretical ideas to the study of information infrastructures to various audiences, in an effort to fine tune a theoretical framework and make a strong contribution to the field. The commons perspective presented in this book is, thus, a product of collaborative effort between me and Michael Barrett.

While still working with Michael on a possible theoretical framework that would help us understand developments in the Crete case study, I became involved in another infrastructure project. Starting from 2006, the English Department of Health and the National Audit Office begun to release extensive data to the public on the English National Program for IT (NPfIT). This case study (Chapter 5 of this book) offered another possibility to apply the commons perspective, while also offering rich insights for further theoretical development. I am in debt to my ex-colleague Frank Blackler, at Lancaster University’s Management School, for his initial contribution and later encouragement for pursuing this project.
Moving beyond the two case studies of what could be called ‘conventional’ information infrastructures in Crete and the English NPfIT, I began to explore new information infrastructures from a commons perspective. I became particularly interested in the ways that Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) and mashup projects (two new information infrastructures) opened up a new era of information infrastructure development, with significant consequences being generated both for lay users and expert developers. This interest was born after a lecture on the consequences of the use of new social media such as Second Life and Facebook to a group of graduate students at Lancaster University’s Management School. This lecture was part of a series of lectures on organizational change, which was developed in partnership with ex-colleagues at the Department of Organization, Work, and Technology from 2006-2008. It was through discussions with my ex-colleagues at Lancaster that I became increasingly interested in understanding the ethical governance of new information infrastructures, which is explored in Chapter 9 of this book.

It is exactly this interest on ethics that pushed me to conclude the book with a discussion on the role of the researcher in information infrastructure research. The key ideas informing Chapter 10 of this book are drawn from a critical reflection on trends in information systems (IS) research and the need for a more pragmatic approach, which was developed in partnership with Mike Chiasson and Lucas Introna, both ex-colleagues at Lancaster University’s Management School. The discussion in Chapter 10 is adapted slightly to reflect the broader needs of research on information infrastructures.

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And last, but not least, a big thank you to my wife, Tina, and, my son, Andreas, for their unfailing love, support, and encouragement throughout the time I was writing this book. I dedicate this book to both of you.

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