Chapter 10
Conclusion

ABSTRACT

This chapter summarizes contributions of the Informing View of Organization (IVO) to theorizing on information systems and on organization. It also brings guidelines for using IVO in research and management. Limitations and directions for future research are outlined.

INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters discussed the conceptual framework of IVO. Seven aspects of the framework were presented—homo informaticus, group informatics, infrastructure, infoprocess, infoculture, infopolitics, and infoeconomics. A sizeable literature that helps establish a bridge between theory in the areas of IS, organization, and cognition was explored. Some literature was also deconstructed in order to provoke an IVO-inspired reading of it. Furthermore, particular IVO aspects were demonstrated in case studies. This chapter will formulate main messages of IVO for studying and managing organizations.

IVO brings more than a terminological change. Coupling of IS theory with organization and cognitive theory extends beyond simple correlating of organizational and system aspects. Specifically, in the context of groupomatics, concentrating on the cognitive characteristics of individuals and work groups clarifies the focus of IS-relevant research. IS interact directly with human mind at the individual and group level, while meaning, knowledge and wisdom are intrinsic to cognition. The cognitive focus of IVO complements behavioral dimensions of individuals and groups, which usually capture researchers’ attention (sometimes without clearly defined IS-relevant reasons).

The infoculture approach, which IVO advocates, advances understanding of the cultural binding of IS beyond correlational studies based on extending theorizing on national culture to organizations. Grounding cultural beliefs and behaviors in the domain of informing agents maps a part of organizational culture that is certainly relevant from the IS perspective. IVO also establishes the relationship between infoculture and organizational culture, introduces a categorization of infocultures, and supplies a methodology for conducting study of infoculture. These contributions scrutinize the infoculture approach over the similarly labelled inquest (e.g., information culture).

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Conclusion

The infostructure aspect of IVO illuminates the relationship between social structure and IT/IS. Analysis is deepened comparative to the inquiry focused merely on the relationship between dimensions of organizational structure and constructs of IT operationalized in proxy measures. Dimensions of infostructure (infohierarchy, infocentralization, infoformalization, infodispersion, and infofragmentation) additionally explain social structure with regard to its foundations and stability. As a new IS implies infostructural changes, these indicate a magnitude of the needed structural change.

The infopolitical inquiry is intended to sharpen the critical edge of political analysis of IS. Infopower concepts and their nascent measures are particularly useful since they slant general concepts of power to the power emanating from specific power resources—data, IT, meaning, and knowledge. This gives rise to three categories of infopower—data/IT control, meaning management, and expert power. IVO also moves political analysis to a broader ontological horizon charted by the paradigms of institution, symbol, and object. This creates room for advancing study of IS and organization from the always sensitive political perspective.

The infoprocess aspect of IVO drives the process view of organization to data aspects that mark the IS domain. In this way, one can better understand where an IS can fit in organization design, and how it can or does IS contribute to organizational performance. At the level of cognitive processes, the infoprocess approach explains relationships between data, knowledge and information, as well as how these fit into particular business infoproceses, such as problem solving.

Finally, the stance of infoeconomics inspires measurement that is closer to effects of IS than sheer correlations between IS investment and financial indicators can reveal. Ontology of informing, which is part of IVO, brings potentially interesting turns in microeconomics analysis. Understanding organizational performance as a result of influences that infoprocess and other IVO aspects exert opens up a new perspective on economics of IS. The following section details contributions of IVO to certain disciplines.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF INFORMING VIEW OF ORGANIZATION

The IVO framework is inter-disciplinary. It brings together IS theory, organization theory, and select parts from cognitive theory, theory of human communication, and semiotics. The emphasis has been on the first two academic fields. That is where intended contributions are to be salient.

In particular, IS theory should benefit from:

- Broadening the research focus by balancing the “hard” and “soft” aspects, i.e., technological and cognitive aspects;
- Enhancing the research focus by deepening ontology of the fundamental concepts in the field—data, information, and knowledge;
- Sharpening the research focus by introducing concepts that capture those facets of organizational dimensions that pertain to IS (IVO aspects). This amounts to effective grounding of IS in the organizational context.

Organization theory should benefit from:

- Differentiating between IT and other technologies;
- Differentiating between material technology and social and cognitive aspects that have traditionally been bundled with it;
- A new slant of classical organizational views (structure, culture, politics, etc.), which places informing agents at the nexus.
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