EURAM 2013

Organisational Behaviour General Track

SUB-track:
Performance and control in Information systems

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Sub-track description

Information systems have an unprecedented potential for surveillance and control. Information systems have been described as a panopticon - a mechanism of surveillance that exposes the most minute details of people's actions and achievements at work. People are said to react to such a level of surveillance through anticipatory conformity, whereby "the behavioural expectations of [managers] can be so keenly anticipated by [employees] that the foreknowledge of visibility is enough to induce conformity to […] normative standards"{Zuboff, 1988 #209: 345}.

In many cases this is an all too accurate description of the challenges of working in jobs where information systems are at the same time the means that people use to work and the means that managers use to monitor that work. However, the theories that have been used to specify the role of information systems as mechanisms of control has emphasized the agency of employees in reproducing the conditions necessary to make their work visible. Foucault wrote that, "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribed in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection." Giddens argued that "all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors" {Giddens, 1989: 16}.

Introducing technology between controller and controlled occasions the emergence of behaviours for the different stakeholders that go beyond our normal understanding of and expectations for the role of managers and employees. Research has emphasized the extent to which people are capable of improvising with and around information systems. However, there are still few explorations and explanations of the implications for surveillance and control of people's disposition and ability to adapt technology to suit their own interests.

This track invites papers that theorize and research control mediated by IT by taking into account the active role that employees, managers and stakeholders in general, play in this process. We invite papers that focus on topics such as:

1. How does improvisation with and around information technology affect computer-mediated control?
2. How does computer-mediated control affect people's ability and willingness to adapt IT to their everyday challenges?
3. What distinguishes effective and ineffective attempts to limit computer-mediated control over work?
4. What are the organizational consequences of employees' attempts to limit computer-mediated control over their own work?
5. How do managers cope with the effect on control of employees' adaptation of IT?
6. How do external and internal stakeholders design organizational computer-mediated control