

Editorial for the Special ECIME Edition of EJISE – Volume 5 Issue 1

The 12th European Conference on Information Management and Evaluation has been hosted in Como (Italy) by the Department of Informatics and Communication of the University of Insubria. At the Conference 74 papers were presented which, as usual with the Conferences of this series, were all high level papers describing multiple aspects of information management and evaluation. Out of these papers we selected twelve to be included in this special issue of the Electronic Journal of Information Systems Evaluation.

Besides the obvious criteria related to the quality of the papers, in the choice of the papers to be included within this special issue we tried to give an overview of the main topics covered by the Conference and of those we believe are the more relevant under the current global crisis.

Actually, today even more than in the past, ICTs are expected to contribute positively to help people (especially people that are at risk of exclusion) and enterprises (especially small and medium enterprises, that are more vulnerable in times of crisis) to better deal with the current adverse conditions and to be an active part in the efforts for the recovery. However, this could require a re-definition of the information systems architectures, the adoption of new organizational models and new approaches to information management, as well as new approaches to the design and implementation of innovative and inclusive ICT-based services.

One of the topics that, directly or indirectly, is addressed by many of the papers included within this special issue concerns Small and Medium Enterprises (SME). Indeed, both Begg and Caira's paper and Devos, Van Landeghem and Deschoolmeester's explicitly refer to SMEs. Begg and Caira presents the results of a research conducted on a set of typical SMEs with the aim of considering how they deal with data governance. The main results of the research are a limited awareness of SMEs concerning data governance and a scarce interest in the data governance community as well as in the industry towards solving the specific needs of SMEs. This is a serious problem that need to be addressed both because information is increasingly a critical strategic asset and because current technological developments such as cloud computing are likely to encourage SMEs to store and process even greater amounts of data.

SMEs often suffer from a lack of IT proficiency and therefore depend heavily on external IT expertise. As a result of this lack of internal competences, SMEs are not likely to adopt high quality software applications. This is a serious problem since, as discussed by Devos, Van Landeghem and Deschoolmeester, a market with unbalanced information or information asymmetry, can eventually completely disappear or can offer products with poor quality which wipe out the good ones (the lemon market effect). The research described in the paper shows that the software market for SMEs really reveals elements of a lemon market. This is partly due to the SMEs themselves that enter the market with insufficient managerial and technical IT/IS capabilities, and partly due to the vendors that indirectly encourage SMEs to withdraw from the finalization of the software acquisition process due to their inadequate or inferior IT/IS capabilities.

Among the most strategic IT-related services today are those related to e-commerce. The paper by Carton et al presents an evaluation framework for this kind of service, with a particular focus on mobile payment. The framework is based on two main dimensions of value and integration, which are thoroughly discussed in the paper. A case study showing a concrete application of the framework is also presented.

IS outsourcing relationships is the object of Johansson and Bergkvist's paper, which claims that a boundary spanning perspective can be useful in identifying what management practices are more likely to lead to the IS outsourcing success. The authors argue that boundary spanning roles are crucial for the management of IS outsourcing relationships. Based on the discussion of two case studies, a set of propositions is presented that can be used as a guiding tool for how to further develop boundary spanning roles in outsourcing relationships. A particularly interesting point in this paper is the discussion of a case in which the supplier resorts to off-shore insourcing, thus extending the outsourcing relationship to include three parties, the client, the supplier's onshore site and the supplier's offshore site. In a globalized world, this extended relationship will be more and more common in IS outsourcing.

The widespread ability of managing and processing geo-localized information has opened the path to many advanced applications that can benefit from mining and extracting knowledge from geographical data, as well as to linking them to conventional data. In the paper by Ferreira, João and Martins it is shown how knowledge extraction can be performed by correlating crime data with geo-spatial information. Moreover, more sophisticated analysis can be performed by complementing spatial analysis with other background knowledge, such as the historical and cultural components of a given territory. Such correlations will help in defining new models for crime analysis and prediction, as well as drive policy makers in taking more conscious and informed decisions.

The paper by Kbar and AlDusari addresses the issue of knowledge management from the perspective or a more general framework of a knowledge-based economy, where effective and efficient knowledge management and sharing is one of the key success factors. The paper proposes a conceptual analytical tool to help managers to evaluate the performance of a knowledge-based economy in a variety of scenarios and reasoning as to how to improve the organization. The tool is based on a set of performance indicators that span across several dimensions, such as the availability of knowledge, the knowledge investment, and business project continuity. A comparison between developed and developing countries is also presented, as well as a case study taking into accounts a set of Saudi Arabia projects.

Due to the ongoing change in demographics, older people are becoming the majority in Europe; this makes relevant the design and implementation of ICT tools and services specifically tailored on the needs of older people in order to support independent living. This is the problem addressed in the Isomursu and Harjuma paper, which considers how ICT services for older people should be implemented. In particular, the paper shows the relevance of the evaluation of the user experience in order to make these services really usable. This can be achieved by directly involving users in the design phase and by basing the development of the services on the feedback from the users. By referring to the direct experiences of the researchers, the paper describes how to design and conduct field trials, and how to improve data analysis with the aim of implementing better ICT-based services for older users.

Nor and Nordin in their paper address a different aspect of inclusion through ICTs, which is the use of ICTs to enforce indigenous microenterprises producing objects with a strong cultural identity, such as the batik production in Malaysia. In the paper it is argued that the facilitation of batik microenterprises, ICT adoption can happen by developing an ICT-based information system that emphasizes the cultural context and the ecological aspect of batik production, which are equally imperative for business productivity. The approach described in the paper gives an interesting perspective on how ICT-based information systems for indigenous or cultural influenced businesses should be designed, implemented and deployed.

In the globalized economy, agility is one of the main requirements for successful enterprises that should be able to rapidly change the business strategy and business operations to dynamically adapt to the continuously changing environmental conditions. In their paper van Putten and Schief discuss the relation between Business Model (BM) and Business Case (BC) and claim that BM and BC together provide the way to fill the gap between strategy and operations hampering companies' agility. Using the case of mergers and acquisitions as an example the authors show how changes in the BM can influence the BC and vice versa, and how enterprises' agility strictly depends on their capability of keeping BM and BC aligned.

The need to rapidly adapt to new requirements and business changes is also addressed by the papers by Serova, and Magoulas et al. The paper by Elena Serova analyzes the information system solutions that can better fit in today's rapidly changing business environments, where only flexible and dynamically developing companies will be able to meet competition. It proposes a shift from traditional ERP systems to the new concept of EISs (Enterprise Information Systems). The main characteristic of EISs is their openness to all business partners, which share a common business interest. The paper also presents an analysis of the Russian ERP and EIS market.

The paper by Magoulas et al claims that one of the most relevant ways to cope with the increasing complexity and dynamicity of today business environments is to turn to Enterprise Architecture. Unfortunately, there is still the lack of a conceptual model for the evaluation of the various solutions and options. This paper takes a step in this direction by investigating one of the main drawbacks of current proposals, which is the lack of architectural alignment among the component of the developed models. The paper also provides a comparative analysis of some of the existing proposals.

Finally, the paper by Van Bussel addresses the problem of accountability, which is today a widespread need for a variety of scenarios, e.g, privacy protection, process re-engineering and, more generally, decision making. Clearly, the most important requirement is ensuring the trustworthiness of the managed information. The paper, besides reviewing the state of the art, discusses the main building blocks of any system for accountability management, namely enterprise records management, organizational memory and records auditing.

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