

« Information Ecosystems »

24th Colloquium in the History of Management and Organizations
March 27th-29th 2019 in Nice

Organised by the French Association for the History of Management and Organizations (AHMO) and Université Côte d'Azur - EDHEC Business School, GREDEG (UMR 7321) and MSHS Sud-Est (USR 3566)

« Like pipes in a wall crucial to having running water in a home, the **informational infrastructure** was nearly **invisible**. Use of information proved so **routine**, indeed mundane, that like using a faucet or bathroom fixtures, people did not think about it, because it was **always present**. It is information's pervasive, **embedded** nature that perhaps accounts for why we [...] have not paid much attention to it. But now we should, because as happens, once a phenomenon is named or is made obvious, it becomes easier to **optimize its use**. »¹

In his book on the history of information in the United-States, James W. Cortada argue for the need to understand evolving characteristics of information ecosystems. Cortada defines these ecosystems as facilitators of three activities of our contemporary societies: “appreciating what needs to be understood, seeing how this understanding should be developed, and seeing how it could be used”².

Since WWII, the amount of information stored and processed in organizations keep growing exponentially, giving rise to a new category of “knowledge workers” performing in horizontal information structures³. Based on the assumption that each firm and each industry develops idiosyncratic knowledge, 1970s organization and strategy scholars introduce information as a fourth factor of production. Then, in the 1980s, the information “revolution” shakes up traditional industrial structures with changes in competitive rules and the introduction of new forms of competitive advantage⁴.

Since then, the use of information regarding accounting, finance, personnel, prices, logistics or customers significantly expanded, especially with the increasing computerization that helped people to better store it, process it and share it to improve strategic decisions⁵. These

¹ Cortada J.W. (2016). *All the Facts – A History of Information in the United-States since 1870*, Oxford University Press.

² *Ibid*, p. 303.

³ Regarding this, cf. pioneering work conducted by M. Aoki on Japanese (*versus* American) firms and their information structures in the 1980s – Aoki M. (1986). « Horizontal versus Vertical Information Structure of the Firm », *American Economic Review*, Vol. 76, N°5, pp. 971-983.

⁴ Porter M.E. & Millar V.E. (1985). « How Information Gives You Competitive Advantage », *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 63 N°4, pp. 149-160.

⁵ The use of information in decision-making was discussed much earlier in 1960s by Simon H. A. (1960). *The New Science of Management Decision*, Harper & Row.

recent changes led to new forms of science that became necessary in assisting professional managers' decisions and to develop new knowledge-based approaches.

The 24th Colloquium in the History of Management and Organizations aims to generate a historical perspective to our understanding of the use of these different forms of information for organizations. Papers in line with four sub-themes are particularly welcomed:

- **The evolution of the use of information for organizations:** While accounting information is often considered as one of the first languages in organisations, other accounts (relative to finance, personnel, price, logistics and customers) appeared relevant to store with the aim to assist decisions and strategic choices made by firms. What have these evolutions been? For which types of information? And for what aim ?
- **The history of scientific knowledge and its diffusion in management and organisation studies:** The rise of information in organisations coincide with the professionalization of managers who express the need to formalise and transfer their managerial knowledge. The diffusion of knowledge in accounting⁶, finance⁷, marketing⁸, human resources management⁹, logistics¹⁰ or strategy¹¹ attracted scholars' attention. What trajectories have taken these diffusions ? For which type of knowledge ? In which institutional contexts ?
- **The account of information as an intangible asset in organisations :** given the immaterial nature of information and tacit knowledge, the challenge to transform this asset in value creation has long questioned scholars. Currently, the idea to re-materialise or to make more visible these information infrastructures lead to new issues and to new research avenues aligned with sociological oriented approaches dealing with materiality in organisations. Concerns related to security and standardization could also be considered¹².
- **Digital transformation and new forms of value for information :** Considered by some scholars as a fourth industrial revolution, current digital transformation is seen as a phenomenon based on unprecedented technological changes such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality and Internet of Things. The consequences of these technological innovations, despite being very uncertain regarding their social impacts, put the user at the heart of innovation processes providing value to his personal data and shaking traditional business models. To what extent are these current

⁶ Lamendour E. & Lemarchand Y. (2015). « La magie du chiffre », *Entreprises et Histoire*, N°79.

⁷ Hautcoeur P.-C. & Riva A. (2012). « The Paris Financial Market in the Nineteenth Century : Complementarities and competition in microstructures », *Economic History Review*, Vol. 65, N°4, pp. 1326-1353.

⁸ Cochoy F. (1999). *Une histoire du marketing – discipliner l'économie de marché*, La Découverte.

⁹ Collings D.G. & Wood G. (2009). *Human Resource Management : A Critical Approach*, Routledge : London.

¹⁰ Van Creveld M. (1977). *Supplying War – Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton*, Cambridge University Press.

¹¹ Cailluet L. (2008). « La fabrique de la stratégie : Regards croisés sur la France et les États-Unis », *Revue Française de Gestion*, pp. 143-159.

¹² Murphy C.N. & Yates J. (2009). *The International Organization for Standardization (ISO): Global Governance through Voluntary Consensus*, Routledge.

transformations part of a longer history of computer science and of management information systems ¹³?

These sub-themes are non-exhaustive and given the main theme of the colloquium, pluridisciplinary research is particularly encouraged (within management studies or with other sciences such as computer science, law, sociology, economics, psychology, etc.).

Doctoral workshop

The Colloquium will start with a doctoral workshop organized on March 27th at EDHEC Business School. Ph.D. students who seek to present their work should send a ten pages document presenting research area (theme, research questions), theoretical framework, methodology, first results and main bibliographical references.

1st or 2nd year Ph.D. students or Ph.D. students involving a historical dimension in their dissertation in management are strongly encouraged to apply.

Comité scientifique

Lise Arena, Université Côte d'Azur
Régis Boulat, Université de Haute-Alsace
Ludovic Cailluet, EDHEC Business School
Mathieu Floquet, Université de Lorraine
Patrick Fridenson, EHES
Gérald Gaglio, Université Côte d'Azur
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Important deadlines

- Submission of Papers: Short papers (3.000 words) written either in English or French should be submitted no later than **December 14th, 2018**. Full texts will be accepted.
- Notification of Acceptance: Notification of papers accepted for inclusion in the conference program will be made by **January 25th, 2019**.
- Definitive version of papers (30.000 in 50.000 signs): **February 22nd, 2019**. Definitive papers should be written either in English or French with summaries in French and English.

Proposals should include :

- A research question
- A fieldwork / primary sources or a corpus

Proposals should be sent to: jhmo2019@gmail.com

¹³ Bounfour A. (coord.) (2010). « De l'informatique aux systèmes d'information dans les entreprises », *Entreprises et Histoire*, N°60.