TELEWORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

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This minitrack enters its second year with a set of papers that reflects the increased importance of telework in an information age. Despite the fact that research in telework could be traced back to at least two decades ago, researchers in this field are still looking for a consistent framework for understanding the nature of telework, especially with regard to technology and organizational connectivity, and its impacts on the organization and its members. The papers selected for this minitrack attempt to provide building blocks for establishing a robust framework for telework research and the role of information technology to support it.

Hardwick and Salaff begin with an investigation on how full time teleworking managers in the telecommunications industry would blend their corporate and family work. Ellis and Webster conducted a survey to gather Information Systems managers’ perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of telecommuting. Their findings seem to confirm the framework proposed by Bui et al. (1996) in the 1996 HICSS Proceedings. There is no universal solution to telework. Rather, a comprehensive understanding of the nature of work to be assigned to teleworkers is the key to a successful implementation. Also dealing urban issues, Hamsa et al. provide a comprehensive overview of teleworking in Malaysia. Their analysis exemplifies the alarming growth of urban centers in the Asia-Pacific region and underscores the need of using information technology to promote telecommuting.

Shin, Higa and Sheng offer an innovative approach for telework research. They suggest the adoption of a paradigm shift in looking at telework as an opportunity to enhance organizational effectiveness and to promote workers’ ability to adapt. Based on this new approach, they propose a four-tier model for telework adoption and diffusion. The last paper is prepared by Bui and Sankaran. By far the most technology-driven paper of this year’s minitrack, they use telemedicine as an upcoming form of workplace to embed non-human teleworkers in a distributed and flexible organization.

As research in telework and organizational connectivity is still in its early phase, brainstorming on relevant research issues is crucial to define future research directions. A panel of international experts from four different countries will lead the quest for new research issues: Tung Bui (USA), Kunihiko Higa (Japan), Luukinen (Finland), and Salaff (Canada).