Research Methods and Approaches in Organizational Systems Research
Introduction to the minitrack

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Research methods and approaches in organizational systems research are important when the challenge is to implement information technology effectively to support organizational systems. An understanding of organizational systems may be achieved through the use of research methods that 1) use theories to describe organizational systems, 2) provide sets of tools to enable real world problems to be addressed, and 3) enable the researcher to interact with the organizational systems that they study. At the same time it is also important to be able to isolate those key factors that affect the success of organizational systems. This mini-track presents four unique papers that address salient aspects of research in organizational systems and technology. They cover the spectrum from qualitative research methods that describe and explore organizational systems to quantitative research methods that enable theory to be tested and operationalized into measurable constructs.

The first paper, The Meaning and Measurement of User Satisfaction Across Population Subgroups: A Multi-group Invariance Analysis, by Doll and Raghunathan provides a clear and insightful discussion of how a questionnaire instrument should be tested for robustness across sampling populations. The authors take one of the most often researched constructs in MIS research, end user satisfaction, as an example to illustrate in detail how various statistical techniques can be used to test a questionnaire across population subgroups.

The second paper, by Croteau, Solomon, Raymond, and Bergeron, Organizational and Technological Infrastructures Alignment, also addresses an investigation in which a questionnaire instrument is used to shed light on a popular research topic. The authors study infrastructure alignment using structural equation modeling with the EQS approach. As this approach is rarely used in IS research, this paper serves as an example for researchers interested in structural equation modeling techniques.

Conducting research in organizational systems often means that researchers are faced with environments in which a multitude of data become available. This may mean that researchers have an opportunity to combine qualitative and quantitative data to shed light on the topic under investigation. In the third paper of this minitrack, New Methods for Studying Global Virtual Teams: Towards a Multi-Faceted Approach, Steinfield, Huysman, David, Jang, Poot, Huis in ’t Veld, Mulder, Goodman, Lloyd, Hinds, Andriessen, Jarvis, Van der Werff, and Cabrera use triangulation techniques across a plethora of data sources. They clearly illustrate how quantitative and qualitative data offer distinct but complimentary insights into global virtual communication processes.

The last paper in this mini-track is by Vogel, Davison, Shroff, and Qureshi and is entitled: Methodological Issues in Assessing Sociocultural Learning. This paper tackles an illusive and challenging issue in current organizational systems research: how do we study learning in distributed learning environments in which students from various cultural backgrounds meaningfully interact? The authors present examples of how positivist and interpretivist techniques shed different types of insight on sociocultural learning and introduce a number of promising methodological avenues to study virtual learning.

The papers in this minitrack provide new insight into various research methods and approaches. Both theoretical background and case evidence used with the research methods are presented. We commend the papers to you. They promise to stimulate animated discussion at the conference and inspire future research efforts.