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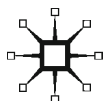
*Chrisanthi Avgerou, Giovan Francesco Lanzara and Leslie P. Willcocks*

# Bricolage, Care and Information

**Claudio Ciborra's Legacy in  
Information Systems Research**

*Chrisanthi Avgerou, Giovan Francesco Lanzara and  
Leslie P. Willcocks*

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2009 978-0-230-22073-7

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First published 2009 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

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Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN 978-1-349-30620-6 ISBN 978-0-230-25061-1 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1057/9780230250611

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09

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# Preface

Claudio Ciborra was one of the most innovative thinkers in the field of information systems. He was one of the first scholars who introduced institutional economics in the study of IS; he elaborated new concepts, such as ‘the platform organization’; and he contributed to the development of a new perspective altogether to the study of information systems through Heideggerian phenomenology. His untimely death left this work scattered in journals, edited books, conference proceedings, and some still unpublished.

This book contains some of the most seminal work of Claudio Ciborra and work of other authors who were inspired by this work and built on it. It is composed of three parts:

The introduction, by Giovan Francesco Lanzara, takes the reader through the unfolding of Ciborra’s thought and elaborates on the main themes of his work, namely socio-technical systems, institutional economics of information systems, IT and organizational learning, and finally his phenomenological analyses of information systems.

The first part of the book contains 11 of Claudio Ciborra’s publications, selected by the editors to convey best the development of his work; it includes articles on all the thematic categories identified at the introduction, though the largest category is on his phenomenological work, which, we believe, was his most significant contribution.

The second part contains eight articles by other authors whose research was founded on Ciborra’s ideas<sup>1</sup>:

In *Knowledge: Climbing the Learning Ladder TO A ‘Phenomenological’ View* Andrea Resca points out that questions of epistemology have been a constant preoccupation in Ciborra’s work, from his writings on transaction costs to his phenomenological analyses. He thus traces the thread that connects his analyses of knowledge and rationality in economic and administrative behaviour, of knowledge, learning and organizational strategy, and of improvisation and situated action.

In *Hospitality, Improvisation and Gestell: A Phenomenology of Mobile Information*, Martin Brigham and Lucas Introna provide a clear presentation of these three concepts and demonstrate the way they can enhance our understanding of IS and organizational change by using them to examine changes that occurred in the practice of a fire brigade in the UK when they started using mobile data systems.

In *The Hospitality Metaphor AS A Theoretical Lens to Understand the Process of ICT Adoption* Saccol and Reinhard discuss ‘hospitality’ as a new approach for ICT adoption that departs from positivist models. They trace the philosophical origins of this metaphor and its emergence in the IS field mainly through Ciborra’s work and they apply it to gain insights on a case study of a Brazilian Bank that equipped its employees with mobile technology.



Amany Elbanna's paper *The Validity of the Improvisation Argument in the Implementation of Rigid Technology: The Case of ERP Systems* draws on Ciborra's work on improvisation and drift. She examines whether these concepts are relevant and valid for ERP projects, which are generally understood as rigid and therefore in need of careful planning. She combines Ciborra's ideas with an Actor Network Theory (ANT) analysis to argue that improvisation, bricolage and drift are constituent processes of highly structured projects of rigid technology.

Edgar Whitley and Mary Darking, in *Object Lessons and Invisible Technologies* examine the nature of technology artefacts – a longstanding theme in IS research – by contrasting ideas stemming from recent research in the ANT perspective and Ciborra's phenomenology. They use a European Union project that aims at developing a new technological infrastructure to demonstrate the explanatory capacity of these perspectives and emphasize the significance of the concept of *Gestell* that Ciborra drew from Heidegger.

Petter Nielsen and Margunn Aanestad in *Control Devolution as Information Infrastructure Design Strategy: A Case Study of a Content Service Platform for Mobile Phones in Norway* draw on Ciborra's critical writings on control in IS development and the development of ICT infrastructures. They focus on the control versus autonomy choices made in the process of the development of an infrastructure for mobile content by two Norwegian operators. They argue for 'control devolution' as a successful strategy that should be followed by the industry in order to address risks in infrastructure projects and maintain innovative capacity.

Antonio Cordella's article *Transaction Costs and Information Systems: Does it Add Up?* builds on Ciborra's work on transaction costs economics, which was among the earliest efforts to sensitize the IS field on the way ICT affects information aspects of economic exchange. Following this path of thought Cordella discusses the effects of ICT in terms of the interdependences of the factors contributing to transaction costs.

Finally, Ian Angell and Fernando Ilharco, in Chapter 19, *Dispositioning it All: Towards a Theory for Thriving without Models*, builds on Heidegger's ideas in *Being and Time* and Clausewitz's *On War*, and introduces the notion of disposition as an appropriate notion for understanding and coping in a world entangled in information and communication technologies.

## Note

1. Chapters 12–18, as well as their description in this Preface, were first published in the *Journal of Information Technology*, 21(3), 2006, in a special issue: 'Claudio Ciborra and the IS field: legacy and development', edited by Chrisanthi Avgerou, Ole Hanseth and Leslie Willcocks. We are grateful to Palgrave Macmillan for giving us permission to reproduce these articles, some with minor modifications, in this book.

# Acknowledgements of Permission to Reprint

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following sources for permission to reprint material in this book:

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Transaction Costs and Information Systems: Does IT Add Up? – Antonio Cordella (2006) *Journal of Information Technology* 21(3): 195–202.

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