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Track 4: The Social Study of the Information Technology Marketplace in the Private and in the Public Sector

Track Co-Chairs

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Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that organisations today find it difficult to critically assess and evaluate large IT solutions prior to purchase. Their substantial and often business critical decisions about what may be major strategic investments (costing several millions of euros) are carried out infrequently and businesses often lack the expertise and experience needed for effective decision-making. One of the difficulties adopters face is that they are assessing not just technical properties but also intangible issues regarding the future performance of a technology vendor (will it survive?), its behaviour (will it continue to invest in the particular market in coming years?), the difference between technologies, and so on. Assessing these kinds of uncertainties is proving increasingly difficult and provokes confusion amongst adopters about how to proceed. Whereas in the past 'personal' or 'professional' networks would have offered advice, these informal avenues for knowledge no longer seem to match up to the challenge of appraising today's technologies in terms of the growing range, escalating complexity and rapid evolution of available products. Major issues: i) how adopters make decisions about (and compare between) different potential solutions; ii) how vendors sell and present their products; iii) studies of intermediaries who play a role in information system procurement both in the private and public sector; iv) studies of the decision making process for strategic IT investments in the public sector.

BIOS of track co-chairs

Neil Pollock teaches and researches in the Sociology of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) at the University of Edinburgh where he is a Senior Lecturer in the Business School and a member of the Institute for the Study of Science, Technology and Innovation (ISSTI).

Gian Marco Campagnolo teaches Organizational Informatics at the Faculty of Sociology of the University of Trento. He holds a post-doc position at the Department of Sociology and Social Research where he manages the Laboratory of Social Studies of Information Systems (L3SI). He is currently researching on IT procurement in the Italian Public Administration.