

Chapter 12

TEN YEARS ON: REFLECTIONS ON THE PAST AND FUTURE OF 8.6

PANEL 1

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This year, IFIP WG 8.6 with its interest in the “diffusion and adoption” of information systems and technologies, celebrates its **10th** anniversary. It is perhaps fitting that the occasion is formally marked by reflecting upon the group’s achievements to date (its accomplishments as well as its shortcomings), and by speculating on new directions and opportunities that the next decade may offer both for the continued study of diffusion (in general), and for the development of the group (in particular). Issues related to IFIP 8.6 (and its domains of concern) are reflected in questions such as:

- What has the group so far achieved?
- Is there any evidence that for example a coherent ‘body of knowledge’ has resulted from the group’s activities? (...or do we simply keep ‘reinventing the wheel’?)
- How will new and emerging management and social theories (‘managerial fashion’, ‘mindfulness’ and ‘Actor-Network Theory’ for example) affect the study of diffusion and adoption if at all?

- Does the group tend too much towards a ‘critical / interpretive’ approach at the expense of the ‘positivist / rationalistic’ one? (if so, is this because it might be too ‘Eurocentric’?)
- How can the group evolve to accommodate new ways of thinking? What ‘new’ activities should or could it engage in to stimulate and attract greater interest and membership?

These are just some examples of the sorts of questions of past and of future that IFIP WG 8.6 arguably might benefit from by addressing them in the ‘formal’ sense that a public discussion panel might offer. At the very least, such a panel should stimulate discussion and debate among those present at the event. It would be possible to continue such discussion and debate beyond the confines of the time / location by including a recorded synopsis in the conference proceedings.

The Copenhagen Working Conference offers an opportunity for invited panelists to present statements on some of these issues from their own perspectives in order to provoke discussion and debate among the members of the group present at the occasion, and for others later via a published synopsis of the panel event.

PANEL MEMBERS

The panel will be composed of two ‘practitioners’ – a long-standing member and an ‘outsider’, and two academics (ditto), and will be chaired by Tom McMaster, a founding member of 8.6.

PANEL CHAIR

Tom McMaster is a lecturer (Associate Professor) at the Information Systems Institute, University of Salford in the UK, and a founding member of IFIP WG8.6. His interest in technology transfer includes alternative explanations that draw on Actor-Network Theory, and he has an interest in the evolution of diffusion theory from a historical and philosophical perspective.

PANEL

Karlheinz Kautz is Professor of Systems Development & Software Engineering at the Department of Informatics, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark and Director of Studies for the course program on Computer Science and Business Administration. Previously he was employed as a senior researcher at the Norwegian Computing Center and as a lecturer at universities in Germany, Norway, England and Denmark. He is the chair of the IFIP TC8 WG 8.6 on Diffusion, Transfer, and Implementation of Information Technology. His research interests are in evolutionary systems development and system development methodologies for advanced application areas, the diffusion and adoption of information technology innovations, the organizational impact of IT, knowledge management and software quality and process improvement. He has published in these areas in journals like *Information and Software Technology*, *Information, Technology & People*, the *Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems*, *Software Process: Improvement and Practice*, *IEEE Software*, *Journal of Knowledge Management* and is a member of ACM and IEEE.

Rob Fichman is an Associate Professor of IT in the Department of Operations and Strategic Management at Boston College. His current research interests include IT innovation adoption and diffusion, management of innovation, emerging software development process technologies and real options. He has published broadly on these subjects in such outlets as *IEEE Computer*, *Information Systems Research*, *Management Science*, *MIS Quarterly*, and *Sloan Management Review*. Dr. Fichman holds BS and MS degrees in Industrial Engineering from the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in Management from the MIT Sloan School of Management. Prior to getting his PhD, Dr. Fichman worked for several years as an IT applications development manager for a leading telecommunications company, and as an IT industry consultant.

Eleanor Wynn was the original “workplace anthropologist”, starting at Xerox PARC in 1976. Her 1979 dissertation *Office Conversation* as an Information Medium introduced a host of social science studies of work practice and supported principles of user-centered design being practiced by students of Kristin Nygard at Oslo University and Aarhus. She has worked in industry at Xerox and Nortel, as a consultant to Apple, Bellcore, Citicorp and Intel, and as a visiting instructor at five different universities. She has published papers on organizational requirements for new technologies, phenomenology of Internet identities, Linux user groups as self-organizing networks and other topics. Dr. Wynn has been the editor-in-chief of *Information Technology & People* since 1986 and brought the journal from

obscurity into a leading Information Systems publication. Edgar Whitley of LSE is co-editor. She currently works at the Intel Corporation.

Richard Veryard is a founder member of IFIP WG8.6 and Deputy Chair of the group. Richard works as an independent consultant and industry analyst. His background is in the software industry, advising technology vendors and users on the business deployment and management of new technologies. He writes regularly for the CBDI Forum, and has taught occasional courses at Copenhagen Business School, City University and Brunel University.