

# EDITORIAL

## Issue Editor

*Bo Dahlbom*

---

The debate forum takes up so much space in this issue, that there is only room for two papers. This is fine, since we don't really have that big a backlog of accepted papers. Now is a good time to submit papers to the journal.

Both papers in this issue have that in common that they discuss the identity of our discipline. But except for this they are very different.

Now, that the social sciences have begun to see that there is an information technology revolution going on out there in society, that the industrial era is coming to a close, they are finally beginning to turn their attention to information technology use. The social sciences were born by industrialization and until recently they have had that phenomenon as their fundamental research topic.

When the social sciences begin to compete with us for research money, we not only gain collaborators in our projects, we also have to defend the autonomy and identity of our discipline. Is there really a need for a specific discipline called information systems (or informatics or organizational informatics) doing research on information technology use in administration, in management, in education, in media, in medicine? Would it not be better if that research was "decentralized" into the relevant domain disciplines? What is, after all, the difference between organizational informatics research and organizational research?

The difference is in knowledge interest, Steinar Kristoffersen and Fredrik Ljungberg, claim, even if they are not using Habermas's expression. In organizational informatics we study informa-

tion technology use in order to come up with ideas for better use, with ideas for design of new technology as well as new ways of using existing technology. It is this design interest that is the distinguishing trait of our discipline and Kristoffersen and Ljungberg illustrate this in their prototypical application for cooperation in an informally organized, mobile IT-support group.

Since Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* travelled around the world in the late 1960s, discussions of disciplinary identity have often taken the form of paradigm discussions. In information systems the taxonomy introduced by Burrell and Morgan, as developed by Hirscheim, Klein, and Lyytinen, has been particularly influential as a platform for such paradigm discussion. Here, Markku Nurminen questions the usefulness of this taxonomy, criticizing the use made of it, suggesting alternative interpretations and classifications.