

Changing the Basics of Social Informatics:

Results of my internship at the University of Ljubljana
(Centre for Social Informatics)

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Shortly about my internship

- Location: **Centre for Social Informatics (Slovenia)**
- Mentor: **Prof. Vasja Vehovar (Director of the center)**
- Duration: **6 months + 6 months of return phase**
- Funds: **Operational Programme Research, Development and Education (EU)**

You could choose any institution in the world and all costs have been paid from the project.

Together with my mentor, we identified 3 big problem of social informatics as a field of study and research:

1. The existence of **7 (separated) geographical** concepts in the world. In some countries, they have actually two concepts.
2. There is a problem **how to classify social informatics research** (what is the major thematic focus?).
3. There is a problem **different methodological basis of social informatics research**.

We also identified and discussed problems of social informatics community in the world

Examples of our conclusions:

- Eastern and Western scientific communities do not know about each other.
- Each geographical community uses different scientific databases (e.g. WoS x eLibrary x J-Stage).
- Scholars from the USA and Russia think that their approach to social informatics is the best one.

The aim of our further discussion was to find the answer **how to unify different views on social informatics.**

Which perspectives are important for the development of this field of study and research?

We identified 3 perspectives through which we can unite views of social informatics:

1. **geographical**
2. **methodological**
3. **thematic**



We can introduce a **basic framework** for SI research and for the field of study that includes different regional concepts.

The following framework is based on extensive literature review:



	Default perspective	Methodological basis	Current general thematic focus	Current research areas (see Section 3)
German concept A (Sozialinformatik)	Social work	Behavioral and social research	The use of ICT in social work and social economy.	1a,b 2b,c 3c
German concept B (Sozioinformatik)	Informatics with an interdisciplinary intersection with sociology, economics and psychology.	Behavioral and social research, Design research	The study of social impact of interactions between humans and ICT with references to US concept.	1a,b,c 2a,b,c
Japanese concept	Information science (it means Japanese technically oriented area), media and communication studies	A teleological approach based on the area of research.	Study of social information; Communication and information processes in the information society	1b,c 2a,b,c Research areas are fuzzier.
Norwegian concept	Originally sociology, psychology, sociotechnical research and later social work	Social research, Design research	Design, deployment and evaluation of information and knowledge systems in the social sector.	1a,b 2b
Russian concept	Originally library science, bibliography, communication studies; Currently informatics, sustainable development, philosophy of information, education, knowledge management	Systems approach and holistic view	Interaction between society and ICT with emphasis on global sustainable development. The concept has a strong educational and philosophical overlaps.	1a,b,c 2a,b
Slovenian concept	Sociology, statistics, informatics	Social science methodology and data analytics	Usage of ICT to study interaction of ICT with modern societies.	1b,c 3a,b
UK concept	Sociology, information science	Behavioral and social research	Transdisciplinary study of sociotechnical interaction.	1b,c 2a,b 3a,b,c
US concept	Information science, information systems, sociology, computer science	Behavioral and social research, Design research	Study of the design, uses and consequences of information technologies in institutional and cultural contexts.	1a,b,c 2a,b

Conclusion

- We understand social informatics as a **postmodern scientific discipline** (we reject the dominance of one concept over others - it means modern concept of science)
- While modern science is built on a homology of experts and universalism, postmodern science builds on a paralogy of researchers and pluralism of opinions.

Conclusion

We prepared new unifying definition of social informatics according to our current knowledge about different concepts:

- SI focuses on the study and research of sociotechnical interaction at different levels in connection with the development of the information society, including social aspects of computerization and informatization; the research can be divided into three main areas: interaction between ICT and humans; applications of ICT in social sciences; and using ICT as a social research tool.

Conclusion

We prepared article with the title:

"Social Informatics Research: Geographical, Methodological and Thematic Conceptualization"

that was submitted to the *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* (Q1 journal in LIS and CS). It is the main journal platform for social informatics scholars.



Thank you for your attention.