

Chapter 4

The Role of Mediators in Informing Process

ABSTRACT

Chapter four addresses problems caused by informing via mediators and introduces information mediators as another risky factor for misinforming. In the cascade, two-sided asymmetry by adding mediators' subjective assumptions in a multi-steps process from the original data source toward the end-user's problem solving, are elaborated in a way to highlight the factors and circumstances associated with misinforming risks. The role of the human mediators – information brokers – is discussed in the context of misinforming hazards. The issue of technology mediated informing is also addressed by emphasizing different categories of nowadays technologies. This chapter also presents and explores different topologies of communication processes according to their potential to mislead receivers. Topologies are contrasted according to their cardinality and feed-back availability.

INTRODUCTION

The components of an informing process in highly simple settings were presented in the previous chapter. They are discussed from point of view of competence' and information asymmetry of the two parties and how the asymmetry may result in misinforming. In this chapter the informing process is considered by discussing the influence made by involvement of other parties in the process – mediators.

Nowadays many ways and forms to acquire information exist. Acting is based on tacit knowledge, which is a result of:

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- Combined information, acquired from different channels, interpreted and adopted according to attitude of receiver toward sources – how trustful are senders?
- The content and form of presentation – how well the received information correlates with existing knowledge and receiver expectations?
- The possibility to trace the path of acquiring, manipulating, changing, and updating the facts and data? And finally,
- How does newly received information correspond with the receiver background knowledge and assessment of the problem?

The first section of the chapter briefly comments different forms of delivery of information by considering two parameters – cardinality and existence of feedback – these two parameters allow to define several categories of the informing process topologies. Any of those informing forms is exposed to the risk of misinforming but in a different way. A general assumption is that existence of the feedback allows to reduce misunderstanding. Every one of the discussed topologies tries to meet the objectives to inform correctly, and this has an impact on the way information is provided to reach the end-user.

In general, it is very rare nowadays for the receiver to directly acquire information from its original source. Information mediators are playing a more and more significant role. Either human or robots may serve as mediator. The role of mediators in the informing process is associated with selecting, processing, and presenting information. Mediators serve as information brokers and the role information brokers play in creating an informing environment nowadays is discussed as well in the context of misinforming likelihood and impact. The second section is dedicated to the role of information brokers.

Nowadays we may observe two cases of mediating informing: informing via human mediators – infobrokers; and informing via technology – machinery delivered information. The later includes both observing reality via machinery tools as microscopes or telescopes with corresponding imprecisions and obtaining information via data processing by sophisticated computer software without clear understanding about executed transformations on raw data. The following section is dedicated to these two kinds of mediators: professional human mediators – information brokers; and technology mediated informing, including discussion on intelligent computer applications as artificial intelligence, machine learning and data processors, and tools used to observe reality.

The competences needed to become successfully informed, as described in the previous chapter, are extremely demanding. It is common nowadays that the end-user often does not directly access the original, raw data. Using competent mediators, who

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