Image building in the information governance discourse: Steps to economies of meaning

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GOVERNANCE IN THE GLOBAL INFORMATION ORDER

‘Information growth is a major contemporary development whose far-reaching organizational, social and economic implications are just beginning to be felt. It exhibits strong self-propelling qualities that are associated with the production of information out of available information, a process that is inherently unstable and unpredictable. Growing this way, information is no longer a resource but a pervading element of socioeconomic life involved in the redefinition of a variety of practices and modes of involvement (Kallinikos, 2006, pp. 5-6)’
Introduction

Allegedly, the rapid and sometimes exponential growth of information is accelerating since the advance of the Internet. ‘Information growth is a major contemporary development, whose far-reaching organizational, social, and economic implications are just beginning to be felt (Kallinikos, 2006, p. 5).’ We can rightly speak of, what Castells (2000) has called, the information age, in his eponymous trilogy The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture.

The idea of the information society has been widely accepted in sociology and other disciplines to reflect the post-industrial era. The information society is a major frame of reference to study informational developments and its associated technological innovations in the social context. Social sciences use it to elucidate the occupational evolution from traditional workshop labor to informational labor in creating surplus-value. More specifically, the people that presently work in the service economy, where the major feature of service work is information in jobs such as teaching, counseling, finance, and management. ‘In the past, work was a matter of engaging with the elements and/or working with machinery of one sort or another, but today it is a matter of relating to other people in terms of information (Webster, 2005, p. 442).’ Besides this occupational perspective, the idea of the information society also serves as an anchor for inquiry how informational developments affect our physical world in relation to the social. For example, Sassen (2001) questioned whether information-intensive enterprises have a need for other state-of-the-art, non-technical resources, such as infrastructure and real estate, in order to maximize business benefits.

From a more economical and business perspective, the information society is a society where firms use information technology (IT) and software for competitive businesses to include geographical range and reach, in order to become truly transnational enterprises (Keen, 1991). It is a society about the Marxian capitalization, in which the form of accumulated means of production becomes the technology and software, instead of industrial machinery (Lash, 2002). Lash (2002) refers to this as the global information order. In this order intellectual capital is becoming a merchandize and the type of business is producing and reproducing information and knowledge.

Dominant in the earlier narratives is that the becoming of the information society is the result of the shift in modes of communication and societal interaction. A different view came from Kallinikos (2006), who has argued in The Consequences of Information that information is more of a natural environment or habitat for organizations, with its own self-referential logic of growth. Kallinikos depicted the informational developments in the information society as ‘dynamic, self-propelling, “runaway information processes” that cause far-reaching dissolutions of structures and realities that once were solid, tangible, hierarchical, and bounded (Wade, 2009, p. 121.’ He recognized information as the fabric that penetrates organizations and institutions, the immanent plane that deeply alters their existential being. There are
two major developments, Kallinikos (ibid.) argued, that relate to the technological and institutional change as we see it in the information society.

First, there is the exponential growth of information. Information has self-propelling and dynamic qualities because all available information enables the production of new information, which is a process that is uncontrollable and unpredictable by nature (Kallinikos, 2006). ‘Growing this way, information is no longer a resource, but a permeating element of socioeconomic life involved in the redefinition of a variety of practices and modes of involvement (Kallinikos, 2006, p. 6).’

For example, Sassen (2001) contradicted the widespread believe that in the information age physical space and physical social interaction are no longer of interest. In Sassen’s account of global cities, even though industry sectors are highly digitized, the concept of the city remains important in the information age, ‘because the digital […] is never only technological (Kraus & Petro, 2003, p. 3).’ As an example, Sassen (2001) showed how electronic financial markets have a topography that intertwines physical space and digital space. Despite their dematerialized and globalized activities, financial markets require an enormous amount of material and people; ‘what takes place in finance is deeply inflected by culture, material practices, and imaginaries that exist alongside cyberspace (ibid., p. 3).’ Although the global city is a melting pot of informatized people and activities, at the same time it also brings a potential discrimination for those who are disadvantaged and have no access to this space. Lash (2002) described this phenomenon as a disembeddedness from the traditional: new elites are emerging that connect with their global networks. The information society is a society of exclusion that leads to different classes in society. ‘To self-include and self-identify in the context of the global information and communication flows is to self-exclude and dis-identify from the national flows [emphasis in original] (ibid., p. 5).’ The foregoing shows that that the exponential growth of information has a broad and fundamental impact on society.

Second, there is, what Kallinikos (2006) called, the computational rendition of reality. With computer-generated information, to which Kallinikos referred as technological information, we are able to project new realities onto the real world we live in. On this subject, Kallinikos leaned much on the philosophy of Flusser, regarding his portray of a synthesized world by means of calculation, and a descriptive (real) world by means of writing. However, according to Flusser (1999), because the actual world too is computed – synthesized – by means of the human nervous system, both the projected world and the actual world are as much as actual or fictional; ‘we are going from being the subject of a single world to becoming the projections of many worlds (Flusser, 1999, p. 65).’ Technological information meticulously reconstructs reality as huge amounts of automated operations. ‘[I]t exposes (or projects) a new, non-observable realm of reality that can be reconstructed, manipulated and acted upon through software-based representations (Kallinikos, 2006, p. 6).’
Kallinikos argued that the ‘explosive information growth by necessity leads to
the informatized rendition of reality on a massive scale,’ with significant
consequences. It will re-order our existing frames and a great deal of institutional
processes will depend on it. ‘Information becomes the generalized currency, as it
were, of most institutional and social life (Kallinikos, 2006, p. 19).’ As a result, we
potentially end up with new images of reality when using technological information
to view and control our real world; it will put our image of truth under pressure (ibid.,
p. 60).

These two aforementioned major developments, the unstable processes of
information growth and the computational rendition of reality, might give the
impression of a futuristic reality of some sort. We cannot deny, however, that the
aspects of the information society deeply enter the veins of recognizable functions,
institutions, and organizational structures. Lash (2002) illustrated through the
concept of disorganizations, that the information society gives rise of certain forms
of sociation that are non-organizational and often non-institutional; hence more
individual. Traditionally, norms are the driving forces for organizations to shape
themselves, dominantly resulting in hierarchical structures with appropriate
channels of command and the division of labor. Disorganizations, Lash explained,
‘are not the absent of organizations, but the decline of organizations. They entail a
rise in particular forms of sociation, not the absence of sociation. They are not chaos,
not chaotic organizations, they are neither formal nor informal; they are something
else (Lash, 2002, p. 40).’ Lash illustrated the difference between an organization and
disorganization by comparing a church with a sect: the hierarchy, the set of norms,
and legitimized power in a church versus the shared beliefs, convictions, or visions
exemplified by a charismatic leader in a sect. Compared to informal organizations,
disorganizations are more global than local, less fixed, and constantly changing.
Disorganizations presume a singular mode of individualization while at the same
time being collective. Organizations and institutions tend to make rational choices
that have unintended side effects; ‘disorganizations operate from a different logic.
They often are the side effects, are the unintended consequences of the rational
choices of organizations [emphasis in original] (ibid., p. 40).’ A contemporary
example is the development of free software such as the Linux operating system. It
happens in a widely distributed and non-institutional manner in a global community
existing of volunteers that cooperate mainly through the Internet realizing the vision
of a leader.

The non-organizational and non-institutional forms of sociation that Lash has
referred to, is entering the business realm of organizations today. The information
society is ‘out-there,’ and becomes the natural environment in which organizations
operate. The new forms of sociation use large-scale infrastructures as well as small,
personalized and networked devices to make use of information abundantly
available from numerous uncontrollable sources. Instead of anxiously wanting to
control this according to established management paradigms, organizations must
learn to live with the abundantly available information; they should show hospitality
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toward it as well as toward its associated technology (Ciborra, 1999, 2002). Knowledge workers will use these uncontrollable information sources and information-based relationships no matter what. This information revolution has profound managerial consequences: the traditional management model, rooted in the industrialization of the late 19th century, no longer corresponds to an era where information and knowledge make the difference (Hamel, 2009). The essence of management is no longer the optimization of scarce resources, but making responsible choices in response to the information society.

**Discourse in governance**

This dissertation concerns the new essence of management: making responsible choices among the abundant informational opportunities offered by new technologies that the information society brings along. The information society ‘out-there’ communicates and plays with technology; meanwhile organizations are still struggling to adapt to technological developments as a natural forthcoming from the proliferation of information. Chief Information Officers (CIOs) are facing new challenges to turn these developments into beneficial instruments for the organization. Just two examples:

- The information society is increasingly engaging in a networked manner judged by the considerable amount of online communities built around blogs, forums, or social networking services such as LinkedIn and Twitter.
- The ‘infrastructuration’ of technology platforms into services, as shown by the technology developments such as Cloud, Software as a Service (SaaS), and Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS).

In their pursuit of control with the old ICT, organizations caught themselves in complex technology issues that focus on traditional standardization, local interconnectivity, or large-scale information system deployments such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) or Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Meanwhile there is an increasing level of complexity of a different order when organizations become, sometimes unwittingly, involved with alien information infrastructures. It affects the technical, social, as well as the organizational domain and ‘challenge[s] some of the basic premises of traditional forms of technological control and by extension, the organizational practices by which these last have been accommodated is rarely known [emphasis added] (Kallinikos, 2005, p. 188).’

IT governance is the discipline that provides a structure for boards, management, and other stakeholders to determine objectives that concern information technology and more specifically, its performance and risks (van Grembergen & de Haes, 2007; Weill & Ross, 2004). The expanding interest in IT governance is due to the rising awareness that IT projects easily get out of control and severely affect the performance of an organization, and, more specifically and timely, to adopt compliance initiatives such as Sarbanes-Oxley (in the USA) and Basel
II & III (in Europe). Because organizations increasingly interconnect information systems for financial and accounting purposes with operational systems, ‘whatever impacts the operational systems and processes is likely to cause an exposure to financial transactions as well (Raval, 2004, p. 15),’ which makes the totality of the installed business information systems and the underlying IT infrastructure, from a compliance perspective, subject to IT governance. IT Governance, in its current form, is the instrument par excellence for the ‘old’ world in trying to survive the issues imposed by the risk and performance paradigms. The more economics and business become uncertain, the more the term governance becomes synonymous with good management, and becomes caught in its search for increasingly detailed operational frameworks such as COBIT and ITIL (Simonsson & Johnson, 2006; Kooper, Maes & Roos Lindgreen, 2009). Moreover, it fundamentally fails to include the informational developments that the emerging information society brings with it.

Provided, that the discourse – the frames of thought and vocabulary – in governance opens up to include the contemporary informational developments such that responsible choices can be made, governance can become an important concept for organizations to beneficially explore the possibilities of the information society. Discourse is something that happens when we search for language to distinct lived events in reality; it is the intangible area between the words and the things. For example, with the arrival of Twitter, it was hard to imagine, let alone having a dialogue on, what the effects are of this social medium on political developments; we simply lacked the discourse.¹

Information governance is the emerging discipline that aims to provide structure for organizations to support the contemporary informational developments that they face in the information society. Information governance arose from the idea that:

- information is of paramount importance to the business and must be governed separately from the underlying technology;
- governing information should be set free from the constraints imposed by compliance and control;
- information, or interpreted data, as a concept implies that its governance must consider, besides a technology perspective, also intangibles such as interpretation and meaning.

¹ During the 2010 elections of the Dutch House of Representatives a great deal of socio-political interaction was done by party leaders on the social network site Twitter (www.twitter.com), emphasizing the highlights of their party program, answering questions of civilians, or even spreading their opinions on statements from competing parties. Information was leaking from politicians using mobile devices in traditionally ‘closed’ meetings where negotiations took place for a coalition agreement. All these so-called ‘Tweets’ entered the public domain and were highlighted and discussed by the media, making the overall discussion of the elections partly self-propelling.
The primary focus of information governance is to provide an answer on the questions: ‘What information is needed in the organization and its users?’, ‘How do organizations make effective use of (existing) information?’, and, ‘Who has the responsibilities to realize that?’ A logical, but slightly contorted reaction of most organizations is to focus on the risks that come with the information society, rather than exploring its opportunities. To name a few examples: information leaks, insider trading, industrial espionage, identity theft, credit card information, and spoliation charges if information is destroyed prematurely (Sundt, 2006; Hörnqvist, 2006; Phua, 2009).

The conventional notion of information governance is concentrating on a resource-based view on information. That is, organizations treat information as a strategic asset and discard the subjective wealth of its meaning to users. In tough times, information can even become a liability; therefore, organizations equalize the concept of information governance with risk management and regulatory compliance. If organizations, at all, explore opportunities, the dominant paradigm is of an economical nature. The very nature of information implies that its governance should also include immaterial elements and concepts, such as interpreting and sense making, and the often-overlooked phases of the information processing cycle such as sensing the environment (Bryant, 2007; Huizing, 2007b; Introna, 1997; Choo, 1996). The emerging discipline of information governance simply lacks the discourse that includes the informational developments of the information society, as pictured by the narratives from Lash (2002), Kallinikos (2005, 2006), and Webster (2005).

This is a dissertation that addresses the issue of discourse in information governance. It describes the research I have conducted to find a way for organizations to conceptualize and dialogue on informational developments in the dynamic, self-propelling information society. With this research I have looked at how an organization and its users can write, speak, or think about the informational experience that informatized forms of sociation have, and their effects on the basic premises of organizational practices. Put otherwise, the discourse that addresses the void in information governance needed to enable the new essence of management: making responsible choices in the abundant informational opportunities that rise with the information society.

The remainder of this chapter first discusses the theoretical context constitutional to the conducted research, followed by narrowed-down objectives of the research, resulting in research questions and associated steps.

**Theoretical context**

In the foregoing, I proverbially used the adjective informational in order to refer to the contemporary information society that raises the issue of a new essence of management and affects the discourse in information governance. Three things constitutionalize my understanding in this. They are 1) the notion that the concept
of information has fundamentally changed over time – an emancipation of information, 2) the concept of governance is more than the limited views on governance currently maintained in the IT industry and 3) the concept of discourse as a fundamental notion in frames of thought and vocabulary in governing. This section will discuss these concepts sequentially.\footnote{I have published parts of this section earlier in a working paper and a conference proceeding; see Beijer (2009) and Beijer and Kooper (2010).}

**Emancipation of information**

The characteristic of the information society is not that we frequently use and apply information; this has always been the case since humanity, for example, when raising children. The characteristic of the information society is about the notion that information systemically weaves into most, if not all, aspects of people’s lives. Technological developments have made information so abundantly available that it – information – has become the fabric of society; we assume it is always at hand. This happens to such extent that the paradoxical phenomenon occurs that the more information we have access to, or reaches us, the less meaning we assign to information (Dupuy, 1980). The overwhelming amount of information available through the Internet makes us less care to store and remember information. We trust that the Internet has the information we need, and we simply search for it with systems such as Google-search; it affects our cognition (Sparrow, Liu & Wegner, 2011). The foregoing shows that the notion of the concept of information has changed; it has emancipated and democratized.

The use of information technology (IT) in general is a source of confusion in the discourses on the concept of information. We tend to see information as a product of technology while information in essence contains subjective interpretations of objective facts; put differently, interpretation of data (Introna, 1997). This has not always been the case. In the late 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} century information only made sense when it was put into the proper context such as a form and a structure, or gave authority to a political, social, or scientific idea, which in itself had to match a clear worldview (Postman, 1999). For example, Galileo’s observation that earth was orbiting the sun escalated to such an extent that he had to renounce this model and got a lifelong house arrest. At the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the status and meaning of information changed. Information as true knowledge of reality disappeared and an interpretive view on information developed instead (Vreeken, 2005; Capurro, 2009).\footnote{The philosophical controversy about the concept of information in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century had its origin in cybernetics, because the concepts of communication and information were conceived at a higher level of abstraction and not reduced to the communication of human knowledge as expressed by Norbert Wiener’s (1961, p. 132) famous dictum: “Information is information, not matter or energy” (Capurro & Hjørland, 2003, p. 361).} No longer did we see information as something factual but as constructs of meaning and systems that produce meaning such as language.
Today we use information in the context of the human world where multiple meanings abound. Information is part of our continuous process of constructing meaning (Vreeken, 2005). Increasingly people’s lives occur around objects where they use information to construct their identities. The growing number of Internet technologies for social networking overly shows that information increasingly becomes a medium around which people organize and socialize. Information has become the center of gravity, and we see information-centered socialities emerge; platforms such as eBay, MySpace, and Twitter and online games have become an integral part of our society.

People organize around the information these platforms provide. Moreover, we see that information gets an identity and starts a life on its own. For example, phenomena such as the ‘the sales-figures of the month’ stimulate practices to emerge in commercial organizations. The shift toward information-centric thinking much more reflects to the individual, because information is the source for more personal value when people affiliate with it. A subjectivist notion regarding the concept of information would provide a better understanding how information plays a role in the contemporary information society.

According to Debons and Horne (1997), the conventional wisdom is that any attempt for (ontological) definitions of the concept of information is useless because the many discussions on the subject did not reveal any sign of concurrence. Definition or not, the discourses on the concept of information, and its management, dominantly address the objectivist aspects of information. This is remarkable because information always has been a key concept in people’s daily life; a life in which the subjectivist aspects equally matter. We seem to avoid, following Huizing (2007a, 2007b), the dualistic nature of information and its management.

According to Huizing (2007a, 2007b), the approaches to information management follow either the objectivist or the subjectivist view. These are two opposing philosophical traditions – a dualism. For example, managing information as objectified resources such as in economics, technology and accounting versus managing the human relation with information, where interpretation and interaction are the (subjective) foundation for knowledge. Comprehensive information management requires that the two traditions reinforce one and other – duality – instead of rivaling each other in their independence – dualism (Huizing, 2007b).

In general, development of IT has an increased focus on the ‘material’ character of information. The emancipation and democratization of the concept of information evolved into a codify-able and tradable commodity that culminated in the dotcom era. Considering how neoclassical economics influences information exchange, transfer and usage, and that the model of the perfect market dominates

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4 Social sciences refer to this phenomenon as object-centered sociality; objects have a broad interpretation in this discipline (e.g. Knorr-Cetina, 1997). I prefer to use the term ‘information-centered sociality’ for those cases where information is the center of gravity.
in order to realize value (Huizing, 2007a), I conclude that the subjectivist view on information has lost attention.

Following the foregoing, one can speak of an emancipation of the concept information. Starting at the late 17th and 18th century, various notions concerning the concept of information changed. Table 1 illustrates this.

Table 1: Emancipation of the concept of information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Late 17th/18th centuries</th>
<th>Yesterday</th>
<th>Tomorrow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scarcity</td>
<td>Objectification</td>
<td>Abundance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given / truth</td>
<td>Constructs</td>
<td>Choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certainties</td>
<td>Concepts &amp; models</td>
<td>Personalized values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms</td>
<td>Measure &amp; control</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unilateral meaning</td>
<td>Economics of data</td>
<td>Economics of meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Governance

The term governance is ubiquitous in business. Corporate governance is the discipline that focuses on the proper functioning of management, a process that essentially interests the board of directors, shareholders and management. The IT industry uses governance to impose structures in order to create predictable behavior in IT organizations.

Literature shows many definitions on the concept of governance. For example, Forte, Larco, and Bruckman (2009) stated that governance in general refers to a system for organizing the rules that regulate people’s behavior in a particular place. Alternatively, Burris, Drahos, and Shearing (2005) defined governance as the management of the course of events in a social system. In discussing IT governance, Weill and Ross (2004) made a distinct difference between governance and management. Governance refers to the decision-structure required to ensure effective management and use of IT while management involves making, implementing and maintaining these decisions (ibid.). Based on literature study of sixty different definitions, Simonsson and Johnson (2009) defined IT governance as IT-decision-making: ‘The preparation for, making of and implementation of decisions regarding goals, processes, people and technology on a tactical and strategic level (ibid.).’

In general these concepts of governance are too limited for the purpose of this thesis, because they do not include the interactions and dynamics of actors involved.

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5 Chapter 3 elaborates on the differences between governance and management because its fundamental difference underpins why we need governance concepts in order to enable the new essence of management: making responsible choices in the abundant informational opportunities that rise with the information society.
in the information society. I have argued earlier that organizations dominantly interpret the concept of information governance from a risk-mitigating perspective while a broader perspective is necessary in order to have a governance discourse that meaningfully reflects the contemporary information society.⁶ That limited interpretation typically covers dimensions such as compliance, performance and control. Table 2 lists some examples.

### Table 2: Examples of information governance risk-mitigating dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
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| Compliance| The focus on information not violating regulation  
Retaining information for future legal references |
| Performance| The information-driven enterprise that extensively uses information for its core business processes.  
Information used for management reporting systems |
| Control   | Defining policies how employees may provide information to the outside world such as putting company information on social websites. |

Kooiman (2003) described a comprehensive concept of governance. Noteworthy is his distinction between governing and governance, which is a direct consequence of including interactions and dynamics in the concept of governance in general. Kooiman (2003) defined the concept of governance as:

‘Governing can be considered as the totality of interactions, in which public as well as private actors participate, aimed at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities; attending to the institutions as contexts for these governing interactions; and establishing a normative foundation for all those activities.

Governance can be seen as the totality of theoretical conceptions on governing [emphasis in original](Kooiman, 2003, p. 4).’

Kooiman (2003) emphasized that governance processes take place in a dynamic world of great diversity and complexity. Against the background of these societal features, creativity and intuition are equally important as goal directedness in governance. In order to govern effectively, governing actors must make use of the richness of societal diversity by exploring its boundaries (ibid., p. 196), and reduce social complexity by developing decomposition strategies (ibid., p. 199). Societal dynamics are a critical aspect for governance because its patterns form the basis for governing – object – while the dynamical forces are the purpose of governing – subject (ibid., p. 203). With the aforementioned societal features, Kooiman (2003) concluded that interpretation of governance heavily depends on such contexts and organizational cultures.

Theory on governance recognizes three modes of governance: 1) hierarchical governance that focuses on top-down directions and controls in order to enforce

⁶ See page 6 on information governance as an emerging discipline.
regulations; 2) co-governance, in which networks of various parties pursue common
values for the benefit of all members; and 3) self-governance, where the search for
identity through values and codes of conduct is the center of gravity (ibid.). All of
these modes of governance use various governing elements that can specially relate
to subjects such as regulations, finances, knowledge, motivation, power sharing,
learning and implicit truths. Kooiman (2003) recognized three governing elements:
1) instrumentation, which can be, for example, legal, financial or knowledge-based;
2) the (inter)actions, which concerns things such as motivation and power; and 3)
images, which concerns the images that we build up during governing activities.

With imaging, Kooiman (ibid.) refers to the formation of images – governing
images. It is an unavoidable concept in governance; it does not matter what role or
authority we have when we are governing, we will always form images about what
we are governing. ‘Such images can be extensive in scope and based on thorough
analysis, but they can also be limited, and informed by personal experiences. Images
can be clear and made explicit, or they can hover implicitly in the background (ibid.,
p. 29).’

Governing images are the result of assumptions, knowledge, and learning;
without the formation of governing images, we cannot properly initiate governing
actions and apply governing instruments. Kooiman (ibid.) provided a broad
definition of governing images. They can contain a large variety of internal and
external data such as ‘visions, knowledge, facts, judgments, presuppositions,
whishes, goals, hypotheses, theories, convictions, and even metaphors or parables
(ibid., p. 29).’

According to Kooiman (2003), governing images play a key role in governing
activities because, one can only change existing knowledge systems and value
systems by repeatedly challenging them with new images. Allegedly, the concept of
governing images is the essence of governing, because it is impossible to govern
properly without them. An analysis of how societal features play a role in governing
elements subscribes the foregoing. Compared to the other governing elements,
governing images seems a difficult to grasp concept in governance; images are
interpretative with open meanings while diversity can take unlimited forms (ibid.,
pp. 204-206). Table 3 shows to what extent governing elements represent societal
features.

Table 3: Governing elements and societal features (Kooiman, 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governing elements</th>
<th>Societal features</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
<th>Dynamics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To conclude the foregoing, governance is a concept that IT uses to impose structures for good performance and mitigating risks. In general, the definitions in literature dominantly address dimensions such as compliance, performance, and control. Kooiman (2003) addressed a comprehensive concept of governance that takes notion of the dynamics, diversity, and complexity that governing actors face, it requires good image building in order to govern appropriately.

**Discourse**

In general, one uses the term discourse when referring to the way we construct meaning using language in long and thoughtful discussions. Discourse then is about how texts interrelate and connect to each other in written or spoken language; it denotes the process of reasoning and the forming of meaningful sentences (Discourse, 2012). Discourse, in the context of my interpretation of information governance, is not simply in the sense of speech or argument, but the overall Foucauldian position of truth and power, as ‘a function of what can be said, written or thought (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 33).’ Discourse, is where reality as a lived event becomes language, the intangible area between the words and the things, where we have to search for a language that makes their distinction. This was a reason for Foucault to link discourse inextricably to power, not subject-related power, as in a powerful individual or group, but all of the effects of power among the members of a society, often designated by Foucault as a discipline.

Foucault’s rethinking of the term discourse made it one of the most influential concepts of his vocabulary; it is about the conditions, or the set of rules that enable us to conceptualize something, dialoging about it, and building up a body of knowledge of it. Foucault’s notion on these rules is that ‘systems of thought and knowledge (epistemes or discursive formations, in Foucault’s terminology) are governed by rules, beyond those of grammar and logic that operate beneath the consciousness of individual subjects and define a system of conceptual possibilities that determines the boundaries of thought in a given domain and period (Gutting, 2012).’

Following Foucault, historical perspectives limit the way we can write, speak, or think about social objects or practices (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 31). For example, the discourses in disciplines such as medicine or astronomy vary distinctively in their historical perspectives. The same applies to the discourse and the frames of thought in information governance. For example, the emergence of social networks such as Twitter and LinkedIn changed it considerably; today we use different premises to dialogue and reason in information governance. In the light of Foucault’s discourse, one can speak of regimes of truth and meaning that find their justification constrained by their worldview and moment in history.

To summarize, Foucault’s interpretation of discourse essentially concerns how we can speak of things because of their historical context, without making any claims on their meanings or truths. With his interpretation, discourse emphasizes on the discursive meaning of an expression or statement, not about whether they are
semantically or syntactically right; an expression can be grammatically correct but lack any discursive meaning, and vice versa, expressions that are incorrect from a grammar perspective can be full of discursive meaning.

**Synthesis**

The foregoing introduction and theoretical context contributes to the notion that information governance goes beyond the elegant word the IT industry uses to impose structures on IT organizations for predictable behavior. The previous notions on the contemporary information society, such as the unstable information processes and computational rendition of reality (Kallinikos, 2006), the irrational side effects of disorganizations (Lash, 2002), and the uncontrollable informational resources (Ciborra, 2002), substantiate that information governance should comprehend a governance concept that goes beyond applying rules and standards for appropriate use of information. The theoretical context on information, governance, and discourse give a notion on enhancing the information governance concept in order to address governing issues in the contemporary information society.

Information governance relies on all three modes of governance: hierarchical governance, co-governance, and self-governance, because the contemporary information society is complex while meaning, interpretation, and sense-making are key concepts in this (Maes & de Vries, 2008; Weick, 1995). The concept of governing images raises particular attention in a comprehensive approach to information governance. In image formation, governing actors are subject to the same informational experiences that they need to govern. According to Kooiman (2003), the communities and interaction are constitutional for governing actors to form, discuss, and test the images on governing issues. If the images they govern are informational by themself, what then is the governability of information in the concept of information governance? This recursive aspect of information governance emphasizes that the formation of governing images is a phenomenological concept, because it is subject to the governing actor’s own informational experience. This makes it a concept that is difficult to grasp.

The theoretical context on information contributes to the notion that information in the contemporary information society is as the fabric, immanently everywhere, and biasing or hampering the images that we build up in discussing and testing of governing issues. The notion of Foucauldian discourse contributes to this in a sense that building up governing images is subject to the constraints of our frames of thought, the way we can write, speak, or think about the products of the contemporary information society, which also involves the image-building process in information governance.

The key idea developed here is that comprehensive information governance relies on appropriate governing images; we cannot govern properly without them.
This motivates to elucidate how governing actors can obtain governing images. The following three notions solidify this idea. 1) Reverting to Table 3 how governing elements represent societal features, we see that social diversity dominates governing images. 2) Social diversity can take unlimited forms with the governance elements, specifically with governing images. 3) According to Kooiman (2003), there is existing knowledge on the other two elements, instruments and actions.

### Research objectives and steps

This research has the overall objective to contribute to enhancing the current concepts of information governance such that it can address governance issues of the contemporary information society. The issues I raised in the first part of this chapter encourage looking fundamentally different to information governance in the global information order. I have argued earlier that organizations need to find ways to conceptualize and dialogue on the informational developments represented in the dynamic, self-propelling information society while the current interpretations of information governance lack the discourse to address issues other than risk mitigation and appropriate use of information. The need for this discourse is a direct implication of enabling the new essence of management: making responsible choices in the abundant informational opportunities that rise with the information society.

Consequently, the specific objective of this research is 1) to develop an understanding on the concept of governance that confirms my overarching assumption that comprehensive information governance is required for governing in the global information order and 2) enhancing image building to include meaningfulness in the governance discourse in order to make a comprehensive concept of information governance possible.

This involves exploring the essence of how information governance conceptually relates to aspects of the global information order, and how governing actors can enhance their vocabulary and frames of thought in order to address issues that concern these aspects in the governance discourse. Therefore, I formulate the following set of research questions:

1. What key characteristics emerge from the global information order and how do they relate to the concept of governance?
2. How does the current concept of image building in information governance have to be enhanced in order to govern with these characteristics?
3. Is it possible to develop an instrument that operationalizes these enhancements of image building in information governance?

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7 See page 12.
These research questions refer to four main steps of a constructivist journey I will take in order to gain the knowledge required in fulfilling the research objective specifically. First, I will search for a deeper understanding of the global information order, the concept of governance, and their relation to each other. That serves two purposes: 1) it should substantiate my assumption on the need for comprehensive information governance; 2) it will provide the context of what is required to enhance the concept of image building. Second, I will elaborate on the notion(s) that have emerged from the first step in order to find the necessary concepts for enhancing image building in the current discourse in governance. Third, I will explore steps that are necessary to operationalize the former. The latter involves a design process – instrument development – using requirements elicited from the insights developed in the previous two steps. Fourth, I will evaluate the instrument and analyze the results of this evaluation. A discussion will conclude these four main steps of the research. Figure 1 illustrates the foregoing.

Before executing the aforementioned research steps, I will first elaborate on the research paradigm and motivate the approach adopted for this research. That is the purpose of the next chapter.