

Abstract

The last few years have seen a growing popularity of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) amongst international and national development agencies on the one hand, and increasing instances of failures of ICT projects designed for addressing development problems on the other. While this contradiction has not escaped the attention of Information Systems (IS) researchers, most of the studies concern themselves with a technological evaluation of these failures. In this study, we shift focus to the development side of ICT projects and see how these projects incorporate alternative conceptions of development in their designs and the manner in which it shows up in use patterns.

We show that the term 'development' assumes different meanings in different social contexts and this multiplicity in interpretation influences technology choice and the role that it is called to play in societies. We empirically investigate this relationship in the context of an ICT for Development (ICT4D) implementation aimed at computerizing agricultural land records in India. We have used a case study strategy and secondary and primary sources for data collection.

Through a practice-oriented approach to studying technology, derived largely from Giddens' structuration theory, we find that the structures enacted by users in their everyday engagement with the aforesaid technological intervention reflects differences in their existing social contexts and, therefore, argue that technology and particularly ICT designs need to be sensitive to these variations if they intend to serve any significant development purpose.