



The European Journal of Information Systems

Call for Papers

Special Issue on Advancing the Development of Contextually Relevant ICT4D Theories: From Explanation to Design

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Guest Editors

Kindly direct any questions regarding this special issue to the guest editors:

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Overview of Special Issue:

There has been a substantive body of published research on ICT4D and its related topical area of IS in developing countries over the past two or so decades. We have also experienced the emergence and maturation of several journals dedicated to ICT4D, examples of which include ITID, ITD, and EJISDC. However, the question that Walsham (2012), in reflecting on the future IS research agenda, poses – i.e. *“Are we making a better world through ICTs?”* – remains relevant and significant even as we ponder on the contributions that ICT4D research has made to the broader discipline of IS. So too do the questions that Sahay (2014) asks:

- Who are “We”? – Who constitutes ICT4D?
- Better for whom? - Who is ICT4D and ICT4D-research benefiting, why?
- What do we mean by “better”? - Does ICT always lead to a better world?

These questions are also reflected in the call by Davison & Martinsons (2016) for greater consideration of local context in IS research, so as to advance the discipline, and learn from developing world contexts. However, even the very definition of whom the “developing world is”, remains at play. Some would argue that the developing world includes the global south with the exclusion of the advanced economies in that hemisphere. Others however, see it as including “migrant, marginalized, and under-served communities in ‘developed’ countries”. For purposes of this call-for-papers, we adopt the broader scope and include “migrant, marginalized, and under-served communities in ‘developed’ countries” into the definition.

To the questions raised above, we add: What have been the core contributions of ICT4D research to the core body of IS knowledge? What theories presently applicable to the broader IS discourse can claim origin in ICT4D research? How has ICT4D research ‘matured’ over the last few decades, and; What are, or should be, the new frontiers of research in ICT4D?

Walsham, Robey and Sahay (2007) challenged the IS community to expand the research on IS in developing countries in various ways:

- expand the geographical spread of both the research sites as well as the authors represented in IS in developing countries research. A recent study by Bai (2018) indicates that this is not happening fast enough, or broadly enough, and that there are still geographical areas/regions/countries and/or people-groups “left behind”;
- expand the types of organizations being studied and the contexts in which those organizations are studied;
- expand the levels of analysis employed in research studies in this area – particularly to include communities as a level of analysis;

- expand the variety and significance of topics examined under the aegis of IS in developing countries, and;
- increase the theoretical diversity of research classified as belonging to this area of study. Gregor (2006) suggests that there are five categories of theories: analysis, explanation, prediction, explanation & prediction, and design & action. Similar to general IS research, ICT4D research is dominated by the explanation category. Further much of the ICT4D research in the explanation category is of a quantitative, confirmatory nature which requires that the researcher develop a set of hypotheses typically based on review and analysis of the extant literature.

Davison and Martinsons (2016) note that all "*research models and theories are implicitly or explicitly bounded with respect to their contextual applicability*" and that the dominant approaches to theory testing "*tends to ignore indigenous constructs that may influence behaviour*". These statements apply to all five theory categories, including the category that involves design of artifacts. However, typically studies on 'developing' countries by European and North American researchers do not adequately include local contexts and the perspectives of the indigenous population (e.g. Mama, 2007). Further, researchers located in the 'developing' world are typically not included as authors of papers, e.g. the recent ICT4D special issue of the Journal of the Association for Information Systems. This situation is neither sustainable nor advantageous for the discipline. For as noted by Davison and Martinsons (2016) "*intellectual ... hegemony of 'The West' will not be universally acceptable in a polycentric world*".

Davison and Martinsons (2016) further raise the questions: "*Do we need non-Western theories? Further, if we do need them, how could we develop them?*" The answer to the first question is Yes, and for the second question the answer would have to involve the inclusion of ICT4D researchers who are physically located in 'developing' world and thus more likely to be intimately knowledgeable about local contexts and indigenous constructs that may be relevant to multiple countries of the developing world. This special issue thus aims to contribute to the development of non-Western theories in the five theory categories, and to contribute to the development of the research capabilities and visibility of 'developing' world.

Therefore, for this special issue, we are interested in studies that provide a synthesis of ICT4D research to show what progress has been made in this field, and/or, advance ICT4D research in ways that propel this area of study towards the mainstream of IS scholarship. We are interested in submissions in all five categories of theories as stipulated by Gregor (2006), and in all genres by Te'eni et al. (2015), among others, ethnographies and narrative research as well as knowledge discovery based research methodologies. We encourage submissions from scholars situated in developing countries (though not exclusively) whose voices are not often heard, even in published research situated empirically in their home countries. We are open to the diversity of topics deemed relevant to the 'developing' countries, as well as topics concerned with ICTs for Development, regardless of geographic locale.

Example topics include:

Digital Technology and Impacts

- Digital work and the digital economy in developing countries
- Social Media, Virtual-ness, Virtual-Reality, and Cyber-reality in developing countries: manifestations of, implications, impacts and/or challenges wrought by digital
- Fintech, blockchain, cryptocurrency, IoT, Robotics Process Automation - emerging technologies in developing countries
- Fourth Industrial Revolution – Critical analysis and developing country implications

IS Education and ICTs in Education

- E-learning, m-learning, ICT innovations in education and educational technology; MOOCs and developing countries;
- Decolonising IS education

IS Management and Development

- System development, implementation and agile approaches for digital services
- Contextual influences on IS Management and development

Privacy and Security

- Digital security; Information Security, cybersecurity, privacy in the context of developing countries; national cybersecurity policy
- Cyber-Security Infrastructure for Developing Countries;
- Cloud Computing and the Protection of Critical National Assets

Environmental Sustainability

- Sustainable IS, and ICTs for sustainable development
- Sustainability and the Global Climate / Global Warming debate within the context of ICT4D

ICTs in Organisations and Society

- Changing relationship between government, private organizations and society
- Methods and technologies leading to enhanced digital public services
- ICTs and SMEs in developing countries
- Digital entrepreneurship in developing countries
- ICTs and socio-economic development in an increasingly nationalistic socio-political landscape – cases, lessons from practice
- ICTs and Healthcare
- ICT and Agriculture

ICTs and Social Inclusion

- ICT and the value-adding reclamation of traditional resources (e.g. land).
- ICT and the Development of National Unity in the context of the long existing constituent traditional nations.

Data and Analytics

- Open Data Practices, Technologies and Applications in Government
- Impact of data-driven government and society on the technical, organizational and institutional level
- Metadata and semantic approaches
- Data value, data value chains, and data governance
- Data analytics, processing, intelligence and visualization
- Data-driven strategies and policies
- Data quality, privacy, trust and security
- Data-driven public sector innovations and applications
- Technical, semantic, organizational, managerial and legal/policy aspects of interoperability
- Co-creation using data and citizen engagement
- Reuse and data quality and ownership
- Data platforms, interoperability, information sharing and public business models
- Citizen-driven and entrepreneurial approaches based on open data
- Adoption, failure and success factors and organization of a data-driven government

Research Methodology and Theory

- Methodological approaches for studying IS in developing countries and ICT4D [Design Science, Critical Realism, Data mining, Sociomateriality etc.]
- Systems Thinking [Complex Adaptive Systems, System Dynamics, Soft Systems Methodology, Work Systems Method] about IS in developing countries and ICT4D
- Theorising the context of ICTs in developing countries; indigenous theorizing; Southern theories

Deadline and submission instructions

- **Submission Deadline - Initial: 1st Aug 2020**
- Notification of Decision: November 15, 2020
- Submission Deadline - First Revision: 1st Feb 2021
- Notification of Decision: April 15, 2021
- Submission Deadline - Second Revision: 15th June 2021
- Notification of Decision: August 15, 2021

The editors will screen all submitted manuscripts. Manuscripts that are outside of the scope of the special issue or are not sufficiently developed will be desk rejected.

Manuscripts will be reviewed according to normal criteria in the journal, articles that are not accepted after two review cycles may be considered for transfer as normal submissions to the journal.

The first round of reviews will be performed within three months of submission, revised manuscripts must be returned within three months after receiving feedback. The second review cycle will follow a two-month cycle for review and revision.

References

- Bai, Y. (2018). Has the Global South become a playground for Western scholars in information and communication technologies for development? Evidence from a three-journal analysis. *Scientometrics*, 116(3), 2139-2153.
- Davison, R. M., & Martinsons, M. G. (2016). Context is king! Considering particularism in research design and reporting. *Journal of Information Technology*, 31(3), 241-249.
- Gregor, S. (2006) The Nature of Theory in Information Systems. *MIS Quarterly* 30(3), 611- 642
- Mama, A. (2007). Is it ethical to study Africa? Preliminary thoughts on scholarship and freedom. *African Studies Review*, 50(1), 1-26.
- Sahay, S. (2016). Are we building a better world with ICTs? Empirically examining this question in the domain of public health in India. *Information Technology for Development*, 22(1), 168-176.
- Te'eni, D., Rowe, F., Ågerfalk, PJ & Lee, JS (2015). Publishing and getting published in EJIS: marshaling contributions for a diversity of genres, *European Journal of Information Systems* 24 (6), 559-568
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- Walsham, G., Robey, D. & Sahay S. (2007). Foreword: Special issue on information systems in developing countries. *MIS Quarterly* 31(2), 317-326