

Habermasian way of understanding information systems deployment in organizations in Sri Lanka

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In Sri Lanka, information systems are deployed in the context of organizations striving for efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness in the liberalized market economy. Information system is considered as one of the most significant forces of modernization that drives a “technology push” for socio-economic development in the country. However, a recent study reveals that there have been numerous failures in developing information systems for organizations in Sri Lanka. This is mainly due to the ignorance of the social context within which information systems are developed and implemented. Information systems practitioners in Sri Lanka usually evaluate success of information systems from the standpoint of technical and economic rationality only. A narrow technical focus amongst information technology professionals have prevented them from coming together to identify and implement more relevant information systems for their organizations. This limited framework often results from the positivist thinking and knowledge stemming from western experience of modernity. In this paper, using Habermas’s critical social theory, I argue for a shift from a universalistic and a need of an approach based on socio-cultural, economic and political contexts of a country to understand information systems development and implementation practices in organizations in Sri Lanka. This is illustrated using a case study.

Key words: Information Systems, Technical focus; Sri Lanka, Social theory