A proliferation of platitudes: Thinking about implementation  
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• The next two years was a period of experimentation; traditional office procedures had to be remodelled to suit automatic operation. By the end of 1953 a reliable system had been evolved, and the preparation of the pay-roll for a department comprising 1700 employees was entrusted to LEO. It is interesting to note that the success of the project was so complete and immediate that parallel work in the wages office was stopped a month later. The position at the time of writing, some four years later, is that the LEO produces weekly pay-roll for about 15,000 people, together with a detailed analysis for costing and accounting purposes. The complete job takes about six hours each week. All the pay calculations, including PAYE and other deductions, right through to the printing of the pay-slips, and carried out automatically in one operation. (Hollingdale, 1959:202)

An unequivocal view

• An important part of the systems analyst's job is to ensure that his (sic) new methods are implemented successfully.  
(Daniels and Yeates, 1971:208)
I versus D

• ..for a system that automates a well-defined procedure with few organizational interdependencies, *design* is the key issue; for a DSS, which explicitly focuses on management processes and which aims at changing procedures and concepts, *implementation* may be far more complex than the formal design process.
  (Keen and Scott Morton 1978: p189)

• Some professionals feel that implementation is largely a matter of some intuitive skill, that is the management of unanticipated consequences and all one can do is to react to problems as they arise. They feel that the best approach to implementation is to be technically competent and do one’s best. Obviously, this view – which empirically has much to support it – reinforces the traditional technically based attitudes of management science and computer science.

  (Keen and Scott-Morton 1978)
Platitudes and dubious advice

- The published product of implementation research has been a proliferation of platitudes based on user involvement, evolutionary change, information analysis, change agents, prototyping, and the like. Unfortunately, many of the postulated solutions are superficial, obvious, or both. … a motley collections of methodological alternatives.. obvious essentials for any project.. and dubious advice.

  (Hirschheim, 1985:158)

  (Friedman and Cornford, 1989)

- OK, now suppose that you have gone out and paid $100 million for custom software for a strategic information system. Someone drops off a bunch of diskettes on people’s desks with a post-it note saying, “I think you’re going to like this. Just install the system on your hard drive, reboot, and click your way through the online tutorial. Sincerely DP Jones, systems analyst jr. grade.” What do you think will happen?

  (Silver, Markus, Beath, 1995)
Implementation platitude 1
• penultimate phase of the information systems life cycle.
• the most risky stage of the information systems life cycle – failure etc.
• choices as to implementation strategies - assessment of the risk
• implementation activities include.....

Implementation platitude 2
• users resist .. but can be coerced, co-opted or captured.
• (vague) implementation is as much about sustaining organizational change as it is about establishment of any particular technological ensemble.
• implementation requires an implementation role and team.

Implementation platitude 3
• a system can be classified as a success or a failure (shortly) after implementation e.g. continued use - meets the original objectives.
• key factors identified for a strong implementation and to improve on the probability of success - top management support, user involvement.

Implementation research
(beyond Kwon and Zmud 1987)

Diffusion Models
• IT implementation is defined as an organizational effort directed towards diffusing appropriate information technology within a user community.

(Cooper and Zmud, 1990)
Diffusion/Lewinian model

• Not (just) a stage in the life cycle
• Associates technology innovation with organizational change as in routinization and infusion (but late and conservative).
• Poses implementation as a process of innovation - the development and implementation of new ideas by people who over time engage in transactions with others in an institutional context

But……

• The implied linearity cannot be accepted if we see the innovation process as mixing up technology shaping and technology use, (or even refuse to accept the distinction at all).
• Unfreeze-refreeze is doubtful; a great deal of change is incremental, particularly when it is associated with learning processes

• Omission of the ‘irrational’ aspects of innovation –the significance of situated improvisation, serendipity, etc.
• Certainty that planned patterns of use are the sole criteria against which such a process is to be judged. “Misuse or resistance to use can occur…This may arise from the adoption of an inappropriate innovation or because of faulty implementation processes” [Kwon, 1987 p. 231]

So try some new ideas

• Emergence, Drifting, Improvisation and Situated Change
• Translation and ANT
• Domestication (Silverstone)
• Hospitality (Ciborra)
Implementation as Domestication

• Taming of the the wild (Silverstone 1996)
• Domestication as ‘taking it home’ - appropriation into private cultural spaces – making acceptable and familiar;
• Rendering technology (genres) acceptable for an intimate and trusting world with few secrets
• Disturbance, other ideas and logics, unfortunate messes – and a battle for mastery won only in some compromise

• Design-domestication link; create the artifact, construct the user, catch the consumer;
• “Design is completed in domestication” p.46
• Linked through Comodification – technologies emergence in public space of exchange values;
• The domestic is private, but also on display - Recognize the symbolic role - display

Implementation as Hospitality-Technology as an ambiguous stranger

• An institutional device to merge cultures,integrate alien mindsets and costumes (Ciborra, 1999)
• Technology as a guest of the human/organizational; the human as a guest of the technology.
• A transient but formal relationship.
• Technology on the outside - people on the outside
• Suitable for the nomadic, ever changing new organization?
Bibliography


