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ABSTRACT

The IT Artifact (ITA) has largely been implicitly conceptualized in IS research (Orlikowski and Iacono 2001). This paper proposes a theoretical conceptualization from a Critical Realist standpoint. First, it reviews the extant literature and identifies gaps. The, it defines the IT artifact as *an assemblage of IT hardware, software and networking equipment designed to extend human capabilities in processing symbols situated in a particular work system*. Further, it proposes that the IT artifact be considered as a real technological entity with limited malleability and interpretive flexibility. Furthermore, it proposes that the ITA is a non-reflexive actor which can act as a tool, proxy or novelty (Collins and Kusch 1998) in relationship to people. Additional work needs to be performed develop a theory of how this social integration is achieved. Additional implications are drawn for research and practice.

Keywords

IT Artifact, Critical Realism, Artifact as an actor,