Abstract

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A Soft Systems Methodology Based Analysis of the ATM System in Egypt

The study at hand reports a partial use of Soft Systems Methodology SSM in an analysis of the Automated Teller Machine (ATM) system in the Egyptian banking industry. It was suggested that the central stages of SSM – formulation of root definitions and conceptual models - can be usefully deployed as an analytic toolset in a broader investigation, without going through the preliminary immersive phase, and without necessarily offering the conceptual models as a base for an organizational change project. The study developed root definitions and conceptual models, not from immersion but from imagining how different stakeholders might see the ATM system, and by working from general knowledge, a review of the literature, and rational analysis. Conceptual models developed in this way were then used pragmatically as the research proceeded: they could be modified, merged discarded, new ones might emerge. One of the main outcomes of the research was a consolidated combined conceptual model, which brought together different perspectives on the ATM system from different stakeholders, and brought to light some of the tensions and contradictions in the development of a national ATM network. The research reported here suggests that the central stages of SSM can be used independently of the other stages in the investigation of sociotechnical change. Such use may be appropriate where the full use of SSM is for one reason another not feasible, where the researcher’s interest is primarily analytic and not tied to particular organisational change projects consultancy work.