The influence of the concept of socio-materiality on my life

Life

Upon carefully analyzing, synthesizing and comprehending the literature, I have come to the opinion that the concept of socio-materiality has had a great influence on my day to day routines, practices and many other aspects of my life. Upon careful reflection of the theory, I have got to know that there are many aspects of social and material factors that shape our experiences with technology. The conventional wisdom that social and material are separate is challenged by this theory. We tend to see the materiality of the technology and sociality of human interaction as distinct & separate, thus taking for granted the material technologies that constitute the daily part of our lives and treat the materiality of technology as a separate case. In the above-mentioned scenario, technology just becomes a tool we use in our daily lives, but in fact by socio-materiality I have come to know that technology uses us in a same way as we use technology. Though social and material may have a separate theoretical existence, but it is impossible to practically experience them as separate entities. According to Orlikowski & Scott (2008), google search algorithm (PageRank) dynamically creates the reality we are searching for. A normal google search is the combination of dynamic social process that reflect choices people make and all the imperfections and biases and hidden motivation. It also takes into consideration our physical location by the I. P address and our previous searches, therefore different people within the country gets different search results even if they are searching the same content. The social aspects discussed above entangles with the material aspects (Internet technology, Algorithms) to form a socio-material aspect.

Another common example which comes into my mind is that of a smartphone which has inextricable linkages of social and material in our everyday practice. Smartphones are designed with specific capabilities which impose themselves back upon us to restructure our everyday lives shaping how we behave, enable and constrain our actions and what we should expect from the device, which then influence our day to day activities and also influences the design of the next generation of mobile devices. One practical scenario which can be thought is that of a mobile alarm. Once we set a mobile alarm and keep it aside, though it looks like we have separated from the mobile device, but actually in our mind there is always a notion that the device will alert us the next day in the morning and this thought is always there in our minds even if we sleep. The other scenario is that when we are expecting an email from a company or text from a friend. In this case even if we are currently not engaged with the device, but we are always waiting for that email or text in our mind, thus a virtual network is always established.

I can relate the theory of socio-materiality effectively with my office desk environment as my desk environment during software development was constitutively entangled with the technological tools (JBOSS, SQL Profiler, IntelliJ Idea, Eclipse, Email, Servers and Database) and I was in a continuous relationship and reconfigurations with them, even when I was not directly in contact with these technological tools. This shows how my office work was inextricably tied up with social and material.

Socio-materiality has major implications in technology sector and influences skill sets and roles of people working in the technology sector. Several empirical researches have been carried out to highlight the impact of socio-materiality on organizational routines when traditional IT email systems are migrated to a Software as a service (Saas) model such as IBM LotusNotes and Microsoft Office 365. The theory helps to explain how organizations were affected by the new social structure created by the cloud computing based (Saas) business model. The key point to note here is that the influences of socio-material practices varies depending upon the individual skills, roles and capabilities. The degree of entanglement between human and material agencies depend upon the skill set of an individual, which produce different social outcomes. My experience of socio-materiality during the technological change process has been when the company decided to migrate to a new knowledge management platform (ITIL) and its social outcomes varied depending upon the skill set of individuals.