



From the Editors

Before introducing the current issue of *ITID*, we would like to welcome two new associate editors to the journal, Araba Sey and Bill Thies.

Dr. Araba Sey is a research assistant professor at the University of Washington's Information School. Her areas of interest include industry and user appropriation of mobile phones in low- and middle-income countries, microentrepreneurship in the mobile phone industry, ICTs and disability, and recreational uses of ICTs. She was the research lead for the Global Impact Study, a five-year project (2007–2012) to generate evidence about the scale, character, and impacts of public access to information and communication technologies. Originally from Ghana, she maintains strong ties with that country where she regularly leads research and teaching trips for UW students.

Dr. Bill Thies is a senior researcher at Microsoft Research India, where he has worked since 2008. He does ICT-for-development research, focusing on mHealth, human-computer interaction, online education, crowdsourcing, and other areas. His projects include a biometric system for tracking medication compliance among tuberculosis patients and CGNet Swara, a phone-based citizen-journalism platform for India's Gondwana region. Bill received his degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he worked on programming languages for multicore processors as well as microfluidic chips. His dissertation was the recipient of the ACM SIGPLAN Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award.

In this latest issue of *ITID*, we bring you three research articles and a review of William Easterly's latest book, *The Tyranny of Experts*. The articles offer perspectives from three continents: Africa, Asia, and South America. They explore varied development mechanisms, ranging from migration to harnessing popular culture, and context adaptation for technology use. All three articles, however, share a common thread: They view the individuals meant to benefit from the development process as central agents of change. As such, these three studies provide powerful examples supporting the central thesis of *The Tyranny of Experts*, which argues that development should empower individuals rather than only the outside experts.

Seyram Avle explores how Ghanaians who migrated abroad to acquire ICT skills contribute to their country's development upon their return. Through detailed interviews of skilled Ghanaian returnees, Avle studies their motivations for returning and the corresponding professional practices in an effort to understand their impact on their home country. She finds them driven to return to Ghana by a desire to contribute to their country's socioeconomic development rather than merely for financial reasons. To do so, they pursue entrepreneurial opportunities in the ICT sector, but also seek to fill gaps in local businesses and institutions. Avle found that skilled returnees articulate a detailed understanding of where the social and economic needs lie, as well as deliberate individual strategies to meet those needs in an effort to do their part and help their home country. A key policy recommendation coming out of this study is for government development policies to better leverage these individual motivations and practices.

Brij Kothari and Tathagata Bandyopadhyay examine a remarkably simple, yet powerful tool to harness

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popular culture for greater literacy in India: adding same language subtitles (SLS) to Bollywood film songs on television. The authors show that over the course of five years, the addition of Hindi subtitles to popular Hindi songs on public broadcast yielded substantial improvements in literacy skills for school children, youth, and adults. The authors note that the greatest challenge they faced in this study was significant resistance on the part of broadcasters to implement the SLS program, for fear that subtitles would hurt the programs' ratings. Ironically, the reverse turned out to be true. Broadcasters who partnered in the subtitling study saw the ratings of their song-based broadcasts go up. The very low cost of subtitling, combined with the broad reach of the popular film song programs, make this an exceptionally cost-effective approach to increasing literacy.

Eduardo Diniz, Diane Bailey, and Dan Sholler study the deployment of a "correspondent" network by Brazilian banks, which uses ICTs to empower local grocery store, post office, and lottery shop clerks/owners to provide selected financial services in rural areas where bank branches are scarce. When such projects fail, analysis often blames a mismatch between designers' and users' understandings of the context of technology use. As the authors note, however, the standard recommendation is to change the technology, usually through various forms of participatory design, so it matches the use context more closely. This often proves difficult because it is hard for users to meaningfully adapt technology. What if instead we focused on changing the context of use so it better matches the technology? the authors ask. Their study of the Brazilian banking correspondent network shows that the small correspondent shops were successful in adapting the context within which they used the banking terminals, resulting in a much better fit and greater program success.

Finally, Kentaro Toyama reviews William Easterly's new book, *The Tyranny of Experts*. Toyama situates the book within the trajectory established by Easterly's earlier works, showing how the author's analysis leads him to urge that development approaches focus on individuals rather than governments. As the review notes, Easterly's incisive and carefully constructed critique opens up fundamental questions about representation within the development process.

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