

Minitrack: “Online Communities in the Digital Economy”

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Some years ago, Online Communities were considered one of the most promising innovations resulting from the Internet revolution. Community building and community development were proclaimed as key success factors for the digital enterprise. As a result, Internet ventures tried to artificially build and foster Online Communities in different forms – as part of online shops, portal sites or B2B platforms, or as design, relationship or gaming communities. At the same time research was mainly related to topics such as how to build a community and how to gain critical mass and market shares as soon as possible.

Today, findings show that in many cases Online Communities did not meet the expectations of their operators. Only a few Online Communities are financially sustainable, many disappeared and in many cases companies could not get the promised gains out of their online ventures. Consequently, the most important research questions concerning Online Communities are related to the investigation of factors for success or failure (financially as well as socially) by means of longitudinal studies. A related and lately emerging research area considers new forms of Online Communities – the so called Mobile Communities.

This minitrack comprises a series of papers that study success and failure of Online Communities and their respective business models. The papers provide longitudinal studies, discussion of social aspects, case studies, and address critical aspects of community building.

The first session of the minitrack contains three papers on business and community models. The first paper by Ian MacInnes and Lili Hu is a case study that explores the issues and business models for virtual world developers and users in China. The second paper by Petra Schubert and Felix Hampe discusses possible business models for hybrid communities built on real world communities with community access through the Web and mobile devices. The final paper of this session by Mark Gaved and Paul Mulholland examines five geographically based grassroots communities developed with little external input.

The second session starts with a paper by Christoph Lattemann and Stefan Stieglitz in which they identify factors that sustain community motivation over the life cycle of an open source project. The next paper, by

Karine Barzilai-Nahon and Seev Neuman, focuses on self-regulation mechanisms exercised by virtual communities in order to maintain their autonomy while directing the behavior of their members. In the last paper of this session, Guido Boella, Joris Hulstijn and Leedert van der Torre propose a conceptual model of virtual organizations as normative multiagent systems.

The third session begins with a paper by Ran Cheng and Julita Vassileva. This paper examines user motivation and persuasion strategies for peer-to-peer communities. This is followed by a complimentary paper by Steven Tedjamulia, Douglas, Dean, David Olsen and Conan Albrecht in which they propose a model to help explain ways of motivating member contributions to online communities. The third session wraps up with Sunanda Sangwan's paper on factors motivating members to participate in a virtual community of knowledge.

The final session begins with a paper by Grace Chung and Sara Grimes, which examines datamining from the perspective of children's privacy in online entertainment sites. This is followed by Matthias Trier's paper on IT-supported tools for visualizing the structure of a knowledge community. The final paper of the minitrack by Vera Kartseva and Yao-Hua Tan introduces a typology for designing interorganizational control mechanisms for network organizations.