



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
DI TRENTO

Dipartimento di Informatica
e Studi Aziendali

SEMINARIO DISA

Understanding open source communities: an organizational perspective

Speaker

Ruben van Wendel de Joode

from University of Technology in Delft (The Netherlands)

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2PM, DISA Meeting Room

Faculty of Economics

Open source communities are groups of sometimes hundreds if not thousands of individuals with different interests, backgrounds and motives. Many participants are volunteers, who are not paid to take part in the communities. Furthermore, many never get to meet each other in real life. They meet virtually, on the Internet. Yet they are able to collectively develop highly complex software that has proven to work and that is viewed as a viable alternative to that developed in commercial companies. The question is 'how?' In this presentation an insight will be provided into the inner workings of open source communities. Questions are answered like: 'How are the development efforts of hundreds of people coordinated?' 'How are conflicts between programmers resolved?' 'How do the communities decide whether to include a piece of source code in a software program?' One of the major areas of focus in the presentation will be on the finding that the organization of open source communities cannot be understood based on collective institutions, like foundations and elected project leaders. Rather, the organization of open source communities must be understood based on the behavior of the individual participants in the communities. He will introduce a set of individual behavioral rules that can predict and explain the behavioral patterns in open source communities. The presentation will also be used to introduce a number of new research efforts that he is currently conducting.

Short Bio: Ruben van Wendel de Joode is an Assistant Professor in the School of Technology, Policy and Management, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands. His research focuses on open source communities on topics as diverse as conflict and conflict management, the use of standards, strategic management, innovation and general coordination processes. He published his work in scientific journals like IBM Systems Journal, Computer Standards and Interfaces, Knowledge, Technology and Policy, and Electronic Markets. His research on open source communities has been financed by two grants received from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). He is also the lead author of the book: "Protecting the Virtual Commons: Self-organizing open source and free software communities and innovative intellectual property regimes." The book was published in 2003 and internationally distributed by Cambridge University Press. In September 2005 he defended his PhD thesis on open source communities and, more specifically, their organizational structure. The question that lies at the heart of his thesis is: 'How could volunteers who are geographically distributed and who have no contractual agreements with each other possibly create sophisticated software, which is of high quality and adopted by an increasing number of organizations?'

Referente:

alessandro.rossi@unitn.it tel. 0461-882101