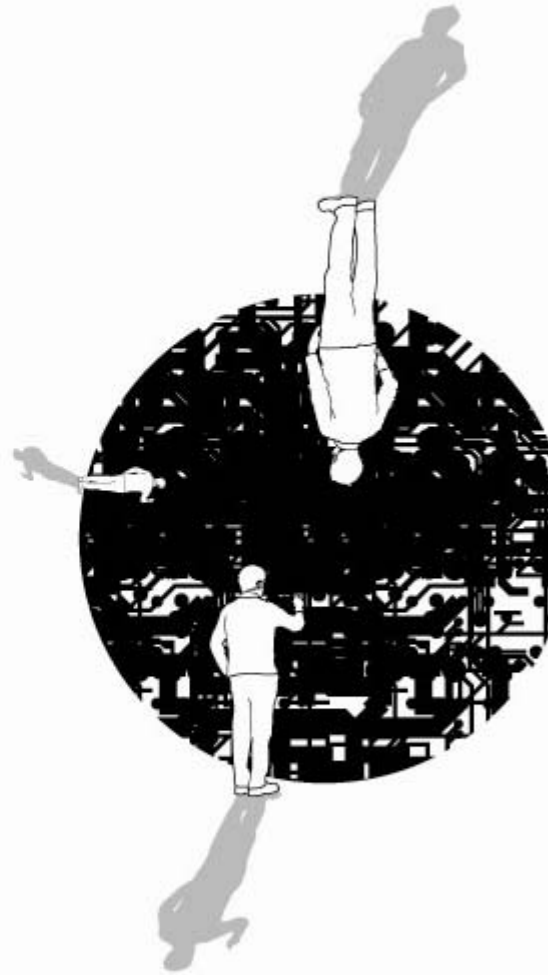


Communities and Technologies 2005

Peter van den Besselaar, Giorgio De Michelis, Jenny Preece and Carla Simone



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From the Conference Chairs

This volume consists of the papers presented at the second international conference on Communities and Technologies (C&T 2005). After a very successful first conference in 2003 in Amsterdam, the second one attracted about the same number of submissions and workshop proposals. This suggests that the scholarly interest in the relationships between communities and technologies is lasting, and that the C&T conference has become a major international forum for presenting and discussing this work.

Researchers have a growing interest in the effects information and communication technologies have on communities, because communities are increasingly recognized as one of the basic forms of social organization and coordination. The needs, interests, and practices of community members and the locality of the community influence how communities evolve and function. Communities provide the foundation for social practices, experience and social integration in the following ways.

Firstly, within a globalizing society, communities play a crucial role. Problems such as new forms of political participation and civic engagement, maintenance of cultural identities, or the integration of various social groups need to be tackled at the community level. Secondly, communities also reshape how we learn and share knowledge, both as individuals and in and between organizations. While earlier research and development focused on storing, classifying and retrieving explicit knowledge represented in documents and data bases, it is now generally accepted that communities are an important forum for sharing implicit (tacit) situated knowledge. Thirdly, knowledge sharing between communities is a prerequisite for innovation and social change. And finally, new types of communities, e.g., on-line communities, change relationships between producers and consumers, doctors and patients, teachers and students, and between citizens and politicians.

Advances in electronic networking technologies embody promise to enable and stimulate inter-community and inter-organizational cooperation and communication if managed appropriately. However, many of the ICT infrastructures and systems that are intended to do this fail because of lack of adequate understanding about the social dynamics of communities. In practice, information technologies may support or hinder community formation, or change the dynamics of existing communities for better or worse depending on how they are employed. A considerable research agenda needs to be addressed if society is to reap the benefits of social information technologies.

Understanding the relationships between communities and technologies requires multidisciplinary research efforts involving researchers from different fields of applied computer science and information science (Computer Supported

Cooperative Work, Computer Supported Collaborative Learning, Artificial Intelligence, Information Retrieval, Human Computer Interaction, Information Systems, Social Informatics) and social sciences (Anthropology, Communication Studies, Economics, Innovation Studies, Management and Organization Science, Psychology, Political Science, Sociology).

In this volume we are pleased to present research papers from a range of disciplines covering a variety of topics. These papers result from a selective reviewing process. We received more than 100 full paper submissions. We undertook an intensive peer review process in which each paper was assessed by at least three reviewers. This resulted in the selection of 23 papers that are included in this volume. Both the number of submissions, and the quality and diversity of accepted papers indicate the development of the research field and we are sure that you will enjoy reading them. The 23 papers have been written by some 60 authors, with an average of almost three authors per paper. And, in five cases the co-authors have different nationalities. This indicates that the C&T research field itself is also a connected community.

The research papers in this volume are only one aspect of the C&T 2005 conference. In addition to the paper sessions, the conference offered thirteen challenging workshops, a panel, a highly demanded tutorial by Larry Prusak (IBM Consulting Group, Boston, USA), and stimulating keynote lectures by Marco Susani (Advanced Concept Group, Motorola, Cambridge, USA) and Noshir Contractor (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA).

A conference like this one cannot take place without considerable enthusiasm, support and encouragement as well as hard work. In particular, we gratefully thank:

- All those who submitted a paper or workshop proposal to the conference. The standard was very high, which reflects well on the state of art in the field.
- All of those who contributed to the conference through organizing workshops, and through paper presentations.
- All of those who contributed to the organization of the conference. Setting up a major international conference is a complex endeavor and the efforts of many are needed to make it a success. Special thanks go to the workshops chair Fiorella De Cindio, the local organizing chairs Alessandra Agostini and Marcello Sarini, and to Silvia Calegari who worked hard to develop and maintain the conference www-site. Thanks for that!
- The members Program Committee and the other reviewers who worked diligently to ensure that the conference was of high technical quality.
- The sponsors of C&T 2005 for their contributions to the conference.

Many of these individuals to whom we owe thanks are listed elsewhere in this volume.

These proceedings are a contribution to the academic discourse on communities and technologies. Keep up the good work!

Peter Van den Besselaar

Jenny Preece

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