**BOOK REVIEW**

**Network Communities: Strategies for Digital Collaboration**

*Reviewed by Magda Hercheui, University of Westminster, UK*

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*Network Communities: Strategies for Digital Collaboration*

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The book focuses on the topic of network communities, understood as geographically localized communities which adopted digital broadband infrastructure to leverage the capabilities of their citizens, through promoting economic development, organizational performance and the quality of life. The book is aimed at mainly practitioners: community leaders and stakeholders that would like to improve collaboration within their communities. The book, however, may also be helpful for academics, as it discuss a variety of relevant issues related to the topic, bringing an interesting and updated list of references.

The book is grounded mainly in two sources: the academic literature on network communities and the lessons learnt from the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF), an organization which organizes conferences and meetings on the theme. The authors are consultants of the ICF, and want to spread experiences from the communities associated with this forum to other communities around the world. The authors elaborate best practices related to different aspects of community development to guide community leaders and stakeholders in developing their collectives.

The book has two main strengths. Firstly, it covers a broad range of issues that are relevant to the development of network communities. Secondly, it brings many examples from the literature and the empirical cases the authors have access through the Intelligent Communities: Strategies for Digital Collaboration

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Community Forum. The authors try to balance different relevant aspects, such as the role of context and regulation, the importance of technology, the importance of having strategies and supporting knowledge workers and the innovation of ideas, among other interesting topics. The authors also correctly emphasize the need of trying to measure developments in order to be sure communities advance in the direction planned by stakeholders. In addition, they have produced many summary tables of the main ideas of each chapter that may be used as a roadmap by practitioners interested in analyzing the development of their communities.

The weakest aspects of the book contradictorily also derive from the adopted strategy of covering many different topics for community development. The book does not explore the themes in depth, concentrating on an overview instead of many debates. This choice brings the big picture, but it does not help practitioners to understand how to adapt the same recommended practices to their communities. The discussion on innovation, for instance, is very important, but it is not clear how in practice innovation could be fostered by network communities, especially considering the issues related to intellectual propriety rights, as stakeholders tend to contribute as far as they believe they will keep the benefits of their contributions. Also the idea of measuring results is correct, but the book lacks a more pragmatic approach on how to do these measurements in many different contexts.

The authors have also chosen to navigate between two different debates as if they were seamless: communities from the citizen perspective and communities from the business perspective. These standpoints may be complementary in some degrees, but not always: communities are supposed to have divergence between the interests of different stakeholders. Thus the authors miss the discussion on the politics of communities, and how to cope with conflicting interests. Furthermore, the authors do not differentiate arguments from both of these perspectives. Thus the arguments are developed to follow a commonsense logic that is universal, but in practice governments, organizations and citizens are supposed to have different interests and objectives. It would be better if the authors had separated the literature that focuses on the societal perspectives from the literature that is more managerial, business oriented.

Finally, I expected but did not find, a further discussion on the appropriateness of information and communication technologies. The authors focus the debate on the choices for different technological infrastructures, which naturally is a fundamental aspect of network communities. However, from the user perspective, assuming that the infrastructure is working with a reasonable speed and stability, a more important aspect is related to how citizens utilize appropriate applications, a debate that is missed in the book. The discussion
on applications is restricted to more business and governmental perspectives (such as call centers, e-commerce and e-government), without giving enough attention to the citizen and the creation of content and social networks.

In sum, the book is a well-written, broad picture on the topic of network communities, which missed details, and major political, legal and technical issues. The book offers some tools to guide stakeholders through building better network communities, but it does not clarify processes and how to adapt generic advices to specific situations. The book is biased towards the business and governmental perspectives on network communities, giving less attention to the citizen and social perspectives. The book is thus a good introduction, especially to practitioners that are more concerned with network communities from the business and governmental perspectives. Readers will need further research to deepen their knowledge in particular topics. Positively, the book brings many interesting references, facilitating the exploration of many related topics.
BOOK REVIEW

Knowledge Creation Process:
Theory and Empirical Evidence from
Knowledge-Intensive Firms

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G. Martin de Castro, P. Lopez Saez, J. E. Navas Lopez and R. G. Dorado
Knowledge Creation Process:
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The book is a welcome addition to the current literature of Knowledge Management (KM) (Nonaka, 1994). The authors were successful in their approach to theory and practice, which I believe will make the book appealing to practitioners as well as to academics and students. The first thing to note about this book, is that, it does not contain a lot of diagrams and is written in a way that someone new to the subject should find relatively easy to understand. I found the book interesting, informative and a pleasure to read, despite the academic structure of the five chapters of the book,

The tables in chapter one, made a rich entrance of the different areas related to KM, e.g. intellectual capital (IC) and organisational learning (OL) definition. The framework of the EO-SECI model shows an interesting insight and connection between the two subject areas of (OL) and (KM), despite the simplistic image of the above framework. Figure 2.1 (page 55) shows the depth and the breadth of the thinking behind the study.

In similar contrast, the tables and diagrams in both chapters three and four made the connection more interesting. These authors care about their field in a manner that goes beyond publication and tenure.

The book is not another example of academic overspecialisation rather the

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opposite. This reality is unfortunate, because the book’s charts and tables provide fascinating ground that deserves to be integrated into a larger study. Quite a lot of the work is very interesting; but it is left to the reader to supply the sound of the missing strings.

The authors are candid in their identification of possible limitations to effective implementation of their approach, namely the book’s cross-sectional nature, the concept of knowledge creation and knowledge transfer as a flow-type dynamic phenomenon with a lack of training or knowledge, and the skills (or lack of) on the part of knowledge-intensive firms’ providers (Nonaka & Toyama, 2003). Clearly the success of this approach depends on the presence of compatible values and competencies that truly support client empowerment, and partnership. It is fortunate that at this juncture, the authors’ position, although exciting and a potential stimulus for much needed change, does have an empirical basis.

These limitations notwithstanding, the book should be of interest to practitioners, researchers, and students as well as individuals who are interested in pursuing postgraduate degrees or research in KM and OL (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). With nine pages of references, it should also help those interested to find works which will take them further into the various different aspects of the subject.

Finally, one can see and feel the triangulation process throughout the five chapters. This book is a welcome addition to the Knowledge Management subject area. This book is written by active researchers. It clearly addresses many aspects of the knowledge creation process including interesting measurement tools with clear practical application.

REFERENCES


Nonaka & Toyama. (2003). The knowledge creating theory revisited: knowledge creation as a synthesizing process. Knowledge Management Research & Practice (pp. 2-10).