Introduction to the Knowledge Mobilization and Enterprise Coordination Capability Track

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There are a variety of prescriptions for improving the future of knowledge management, and there are some dire predictions for a field of study that some say hasn’t yet delivered. This track’s CFP posed the question, “How do we ‘mobilize’ knowledge in a manner similar to the way the Internet has mobilized information?” Some insights relevant to the question were provided by Peter Keen in his HICSS-38 conference keynote. In addition, Quereshi’s and Keen’s paper in the proceedings of HICSS-38 offered an exemplary research framework used in a study conducted in a multinational corporation [1]. That study discussed the need for collaborative technology support to match activation effects if it is to mediate the activation of knowledge into action. Important questions remain including, “How do we more generally match the features and capabilities of collaborative technologies to organizational and individual contexts such that a classic knowledge paradox can be overcome?” That paradox reflects the inherent nature of organizations and individuals to protect knowledge that is valuable and that can produce competitive advantage while there is a concomitant need to share that knowledge to empower all individuals and to improve the collective state of affairs for individuals, for organizations and for even broader contexts including industries.

The three papers accepted for the track investigate these issues in different ways. Chechen Liao and Shu-Hui Chuang address the role of Knowledge Management Process Capability (KMPC) with respect to enhancing a firm’s innovation and performance. Their research model uniquely investigates both technical and social KM resources and whether they influence KMPC, whether KMPC enhancements impact innovation magnitude and speed, and whether the innovation variables they address impact firm performance. One of their most important findings was that their KMPC constructs have important implications to innovation speed and magnitude. This framework and the authors’ findings contribute important dimensions to both the study of knowledge mobilization and the implications of specific knowledge mobilization constructs to industries where innovation speed and magnitude are keys to sustained advantage.

In the paper titled, “Fit dependencies: Theory and tools for enabling SME collaboration,” Robert Laubacher and John Quimby address theoretical issues related to matching collaborative technology features and tools to activation effects, particularly with respect to ‘fit dependencies’ and their importance to small to medium enterprise collaboration and coordination. One interesting notion of this work is the concept of ‘coordination hub.’ Such a hub could support a repository of business processes and perhaps enable the discovery of unusual collaborative links that may not have been envisioned. This mobilization of knowledge in the area of collaboration seems extremely powerful for the SME context, and the approach taken in the paper to map from theory to toolset features is a compelling methodology for future research in this area.

Knowledge mobilization can also be studied by examining algorithmic constructs that shed light on knowledge generation, particularly specific approaches to machine learning where there are relaxed assumptions about the behavior of the agents that are engaged in the process. Aytug, Boylu and Koehler offer such an approach in their paper, “Learning in the Presence of Self-Interested Agents.” Their approach differs from others in that it attempts to preempt the types of mistakes that tend to cause faulty decisions. Such a proactive approach to mitigating knowledge mobilization inhibitors may be important in designing new toolsets that can support knowledge mobilization.