



Seminar series “Culture & Technology”

Seminar III

Co-construction of knowledge, new technologies and community building: three interlinked fields

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Recent evolutions in knowledge development, communication technologies and communities of learners and practitioners create opportunities to create new forms of synergy. In order to better understand these challenges, first a successive overview is given of the main evolutions in knowledge management, communication tools and community building. This overview results in a proposal for synergy between the three components and in the description of necessary conditions to reach that synergy.

Firstly, knowledge management is approached from different angles, though the main focus is on the precise analysis of what knowledge means and how co-construction of knowledge can be conceived of. Different kinds of knowledge (declarative, procedural, conditional as well as tacit, overt knowledge) are shortly described in order to reach insight in the many and complex aspects of knowledge development, and sharing. The qualities of co-operative construction of knowledge are reviewed in order to clarify the important distinction between information management and knowledge management. Conceptions of ‘management’ seem important for decision-making on knowledge-construction strategies.

Secondly, some interesting evolutions in communication technologies are tackled since the characteristics of ICT define to a high degree the possibilities for co-construction of knowledge. Starting from rather isolated or fixed communication technologies, more flexible tools allow for knowledge sharing in flexible spaces and places. In addition, these characteristics are embedded in very open environments with important degrees of freedom for communication.

Thirdly, communities of learners or practitioners are relevant paths to the organisation of knowledge building and sharing. In contrast with small group work in traditional settings, communities share new strategies in building co-operative spaces. Moreover, knowledge exchange and learning are multi-faceted and intrinsic aspects of community building, taking not only cognitive aspects into account, but social, cultural, emotional, ethical and aesthetic aspects as well.

If the evolutions within each component are brought together, they seem to result in brand new forms of knowledge generating and sharing and in learning as well. However, environmental characteristics are not functional if they are not actively linked to user or learner characteristics. This brings us to a reflection upon necessary conditions in human actors to enable maximal use of the potential of hybrid open environments. Behaviour remains a function of the interaction between environment and human characteristics and functioning.

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