

SPECIAL ISSUE
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**Communities and Networks of Practice: Innovative Organizations
and Knowledge Globalization**

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Communities of Practice “are defined as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 1998, Wenger et al. 2002, Amin, Roberts, 2008). Communities of practice (CoP) are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning (Jacob et al. 2009). CoP have been identified as effective vehicles to support practice-based knowledge sharing in overlapping geographical, cultural or organizational boundaries. Several scholars and practitioners have actually discussed the communities’ concept to explain learning and knowledge sharing across a variety of work as insurance claim processing, photocopy machine repair, corporate research, healthcare, public policy (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2002; Orr 1996; Brown and Duguid, 1991, Bate and Robert, 2002; Creplet et al. 2001; Lindkvist 2005; Schiavonne et al. 2015).

Communities of practice emerge and are cultivated in international organizations (Cohendet et al. 2010). In this type of CoP, social interactions develop between members. The story develop in Community of Practice. The Community is the physical body of the practice.

From a social perspective, Etienne Wenger-Trayner et al. (2014) define the « body of knowledge » as a community of people who contributes to the evolution and continued application of the practice. From professional perspective, the social body of knowledge is not a single community of practice, it’s a « landscape of practice » consisting of a complex system of communities of practice and the boundaries between them. Members are acknowledged by the CoP for their competences. In this complex system, actors can’t be competent in all the

practices in a landscape but they can be knowledgeable about them and about their interest for their local practices.

Some of members play also the catalyst and federative broker role to consolidate trust and facilitate knowledge sharing in the CoP and between CoP (Goglio-Primard and Crespín-Mazet, 2011) belonging to different organizations. Open Innovation (Chesbrough, 2003) is favored by the preexistence of Communities of Practice in partner firms as well as collective brokering relations (boundary objects, brokers. two types of brokers can be distinguished: knowledge brokers and qualification brokers whose role is conditioned by their network legitimacy (Goglio-Primard and Crespín-Mazet, 2015). This dynamic approach of innovation is based on the capability of firms to innovate with partnerships networks. In this way, inter-organizations' communities or networks of people are created. The development of more interactive internet tools enables the creation of CoP outside of an organization. These phenomena are characteristic of the innovation by users (von Hippel, 2005) and more recently of Crowdsourcing (Pénin and Burger-Helmchen, 2012 ; Schenk and Guittard, 2012 ; Boudreau and Lakhani, 2013).

Wenger et al. (2011, 10-14) present community and network as two aspects of the social fabric of learning. The network refers to the relationships, connections and personal interactions among participants who have reasons to connect to solve problems and create knowledge together. The community refers to the development of a shared identity around a topic and a collective intention.

As noted by Wenger et al. (2011, 10-14), these two aspects can be combined. They develop together. A community involves a network of relationships and networks exist because members are committed to joint enterprise.

When a network lacks to achieve a level of collective intentionality, members consolidate their shared identity through community-building processes. In the same way, When a community has become closed with a boundary which become an obstacle to outsiders, new learning and innovation, network-building processes can be a solution to overlap the boundaries CoP.

The concept of network of practice (NoPs) is often analyzed to overlap CoP boundaries and consolidate interactions and effective knowledge sharing around local and national practices (Agterberg et al. 2010).

In a globalization context, knowledge is often dispersed across different locations (Doz and Wilson, 2012). Organizations are therefore facing the challenge of how to organize knowledge sharing between business units (Becker, 2001). According to these authors, three levels of embeddedness seem required for the effective sharing of knowledge between geographically dispersed communities:

1. Embeddedness of NoPs in local practice: the more knowledge shared in networks is perceived as relevant by the members for their local practice, the more network members are motivated to share knowledge.
2. Social embeddedness of NoPs by strong social ties, whose the emergence or the stabilization are facilitated by tools (database, discussion forums, guide ...). These tools enable to identify who knows what in the network and their localization.
3. Organizational embeddedness of NoPs in giving a legitimacy to the NoPs' actors. The involvement of organizations in the network enables to learn from what is being shared and guarantee the quality of knowledge which are posted in the network.

The positive action of these CoP and NoPs don't confine to multinationals firms. It's very interesting to overlap organizations and to analyze the role of CoP and NoPs in multi-cultural geographical areas with different social embeddedness and local practices established (known): the cities.

In 2030, two inhabitants on three will live in the city. This concentration of people in the city creates at the same time opportunities and problems in the urban life (urban management). Divay and Charbonneau (2014), note that the development of Smart Cities requires the use of social networks and networks of practice.

Indeed, information and communications technologies (ICT) have revealed several urban management projects with users (citizens) who played an important role in these actions. The development of these projects seeks to improve and to simplify the life of citizens. Therefore, to become smart communities, the current municipalities must develop efficient new services in all the areas: energy saving,

transport and smart mobility, smart home, infrastructure networks (Cohendet et al. 2011). Attour and Burger-Helmchen (2015) present cities as specific ecosystems which influence firms' business models located inside.

Intelligence is the ability to develop new services throughout the collaboration of different actors. The municipalities are working more and more like smart communities even like NoPs linking geographically dispersed actors. In the creation of these smart cities, the city is a social interactions place between some actors (institutions, energy networks operators, transport networks operators, architects, IT services companies....). Scholars have explored the potential of CoP to develop integrated models of e-government (eGov) services (Curwell, et.al, 2005; Lombardi and Curwell, 2005).

Organizations, cities and countries must mutualize their efforts to identify opportunities and to develop Open Innovation processes (Penin et al. 2013). Learning and innovation needs beyond organizations', cities' and countries' boundaries develop: inter-organizational partnership, inter-cities partnership, inter-countries partnership. The impact of Community Approaches increased the size and the variety of people who belong to CoP and NoP.

We invite authors to study the questions of development and working of CoP and NoP necessarily in connection with i) the development of an innovation or the creation of a new practice ;ii) dispersed knowledge in a global firm or in the limits of a particular organization (cluster, city,...).

Contributions can have a theoretical and/or empirical foundation. Manuscripts should be sent by e-mail to karine.goglio@kedgebs.com no later than **december 20 2015** for any publication in this special issue. Presented papers must follow the standards set out in the editorial policy of International Management (<http://www.managementinternational.ca/section-des-auteurs/soumettre-un-article/>).

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