

Interdisciplinary Research on Open Source Software

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Academy of Management PDW

My Experience as a Scholar

Disciplines/Fields I have crossed:

- Sociology
- Political Science
- Social Studies of Science
- Organizational Theory
 - Organizing processes within communities
 - Management of technology
 - Institutional theory
- Strategy?

My Experience as a Scholar

Published:

- “Guarding the Commons: How Community Managed Software Projects Protect Their work”, *Research Policy* – draws on **political science perspective** on managing public goods and common pool resources (ASA CITASA 2005 Best Paper)
- “The Role of a NonProfit Foundation in Managing Community-Firm Collaboration”, MIT Press – draws on **engineering management/management of technology literature** to explore creation of nonprofit foundations in open source projects

My Experience as a Scholar

Under Review:

- “Governance in Production Communities”, for *Academy of Management Journal* – **draws on organization theory** on the development of a shared basis of authority in community forms (with Fabrizio Ferraro)
- “Selective Synthesis of Competing Logics”, *American Journal of Sociology*, **draws on social movement and organizational theory** to show how social movement organizations can avoid inversion of goals as they formalize and selectively integrate logics of production and expression (with Katherine Chen)

My Experience as a Scholar

Under Review:

- “The Role of a Boundary Organization in Managing the Problem of Incommensurability”, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **draws on social studies of science and organizational theory** to show how the design of a boundary organization resolves incommensurability in form, means, and ends among community managed projects and firms (with Beth Bechky)
- “The Institutional Foundations of Cumulative Innovation”, *Organization Science*, **draws upon social studies of science, law, economics and institutional theory** to argue that organizational theory has a role to play in explaining the contextual factors that affect people’s ability to innovate cumulatively (with Fiona Murray)

My Experience as a Scholar

In Development:

- “The Participation Architecture of Production Communities” – **draws on strategy and organizational theory** explores why firms found open source projects and how this affects their design and growth potential (with Joel West)
- “Competing on a Common Platform”, **draws on strategy and organizational theory** to explore how over 100+ firms contribute and build upon the same application development environment (Eclipse)

My Experience as a Reviewer

- The community interested in OSSW spans many disciplines – economics, political science, computer science, information science, anthropology, organization science, strategy, and sociology
- Scholars are often confused between citing research on the phenomena and citing research on the theory to which they want to contribute
- Help your editor & reviewers - Works that get published in disciplinary journals have the theory in the foreground and the phenomena in the background

Finding Your Framing

How do you find the appropriate theoretical framing?

- Spend all your time asking - Who will care about the answer to the question you pose?
 - What problem does that solve?
 - What hole does that fill?
 - How mature are the efforts/attempts to solve that problem?
- Beware of focusing too much on either the data, tools, techniques, or setting
- Remember, open source software is not a discipline!

Risks and Rewards

Risks

- Can be hard for editors and reviewers to know how to handle your work
- Reviewers may not understand phenomena
- May feel compelled to talk to many literatures which detracts from focus
- Harder to learn the nuances of citation “rules” and formats of multiple literatures

Rewards

- Expands your learning, your interactions with others
- May connect you to new thoughts, ideas, areas of possibility
- Porting of ideas may lead to more possibility for innovation?