Social Collaboration

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Historical Case Study

- In 2000, Philippines President Joseph Estrada was shown to be corrupt

- House called for impeachment, Senate refused to look at critical documents

- Impeachment hearings were televised, people were angry and took to the streets

- Rallies organized via email and text messaging, eventually court appointed a new President

- This example is an instance of a Smart Mob

Smart Mobs

- Large groups of people who don't know one another acting in concert with the aid of technology

- Phrase coined by Howard Rheingold

- A challenge of collective action is the high cost of communication over a large number of people

- Technology has helped lower this cost

- Lower cost means collective action will occur where it was not possible before (Philippines)

Smart Mobs and Distributed Cognition

- Intelligent processes spanned across individuals and their environment

    – Devices act as information depositories

    – Devices act as a cognitive reminder and lever

- Smart Mobs manifest Distributed Cognition across technological devices

    – Boundary of the system is much larger

    – Resulting cognitive systems are intertwined, individuals have more choice regarding participation

Collective Action

- Unless a group is small, or there is some kind of coercion or other device to make individuals act in their common interest, individuals will not act to achieve their common interests.

- Main point of friction: group interests differ from individual goals and interests

- Economic theory developed by M. Olson, 1950s

- Humans need regulation to cooperate

Social Loafing

- Similar to what social psychologists call social loafing

- Group cohesion, uniqueness of individual tasks, and evaluation leads to less social loafing

- Niche: workers that find their niche are less apt to loaf

- Feedback, workers that receive feedback do not loaf as much

- Technology can effect these variables positively

Common Pool Resources

- Collective Action can work without coercion

- Clearly defined group boundaries, rules to access collective resources, group respect of rules, self-policing communities, low-cost conflict resolution

- Ideas proposed by sociologist E. Ostrum in 1990

- Any effort to organize Collective Action must address free-riding, commitment problems and monitoring individual compliance with common rules

Tragedy of the Commons/Free-Riding

- The commons refers to medieval pasture land owned by a town

- Anyone can graze their animals, but it is no in the common interest to overgraze the commons, individual vs. group interest

- Free-riding is the temptation for an individual to use a resource (the commons) without contributing to it

- Free-riding is not always a bad thing

Gift Cultures/Social Capital

- Gift cultures are used by anthropologists to explain societies in which status is dictated by what you give away

- Seen with Open Source software, would also potentially be seen in social collaboration, where contributors are the gift givers

- Social capital is the currency of gift cultures; the connections among individuals and the trust related to those connections

- Reciprocity emerges from these social relations

Enabling Technologies

- Technology reduces the cost involved in social mobilization:

  - **Peer to peer**: amplifies interpersonal social networks

  - **Location Tracking**: GPS and radio localization lets users know who is around them

  - **Email/text messaging**: connects users via small battery powered devices

  - **Ubiquitous Internet Connectivity**: enables uses to be constantly connected, getting new information out as soon as it is available

Extreme Democracy: Background

- Putting people in charge of the entire political process

- Similar to Extreme Programming: using technological tools to aid small groups in realizing large goals

- Any individual interested in a issue will have the power to participate in a relevant discussion and debate of that issue

- Use technology to put individuals in charge of the political process, still not advocating direct democracy

Extreme Democracy: Analysis

- Primary reward of individual contributions is social capital

- Contributions to the common occur in arguments on an issue, technical or political experience, or physical materials (money, servers, bandwidth)

- Traditionally, the number of collaborations increases exponentially with the number of people in the group

- Extreme Democracy uses technology to reduce the burden of these collaborations

Dean and DeanSpace

- First campaign to use online tools in a significant and integrated manner

- "You can only control your destiny by letting your constituents control your message"

- Meetup.com – online tool for organizing physical meetings virtually

- DeanSpace – Collection of blogs, forums, donation tools, RSS feeds – open source development

Extreme Democracy and Beyond Couch Potatoes

- Getting individuals to interact with media, putting them in a design role

- Directly related to ideas in Extreme Democracy, which is designed around the concept of variable levels of participation

- It's ok to be a consumer if the area does not interest you, but you should contribute when you are interested

Closing Remarks

- We have looked at various aspects of Social Collaboration

- Distributed cognition, collective action and social loafing, smart mobs, common pool resources, free-riding, gift cultures and social capital, help understand interactions

- Extreme Democracy is one particular instance of Social Collaboration

- Technology will enable further collaborations

Questions?