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Community, joining, and specialization in open source software innovation: a case study

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Abstract

This paper develops an inductive theory of the open source software (OSS) innovation process by focussing on the creation of Freenet, a project aimed at developing a decentralized and anonymous peer-to-peer electronic file sharing network. We are particularly interested in the strategies and processes by which new people join the existing community of software developers, and how they initially contribute code. Analyzing data from multiple sources on the Freenet software development process, we generate the constructs of ‘‘joining script’’, ‘‘specialization’’, ‘‘contribution barriers’’, and ‘‘feature gifts’’, and propose relationships among these. Implications for theory and research are discussed.





Keywords

Open source software; Innovation; Community; Collective action; Virtual teams

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