



ISM SEMINAR

Summer 2012

Speaker: Professor Natalia Levina, Stern Business School (NYU)

Title: Distinction and Status in User- Generated Content Platforms (Arriaga & Levina)

Date: Friday 25 May 2012

Venue: E2.02, Warwick Business School, Social Studies

Time: 13.30 – 15.00

Abstract: This work proposes a theoretical lens for studying status dynamics across a wide variety of User-Generated Content (UGC) platforms. We observe that UGC platforms offer a multitude of opportunities for content contributors to distinguish themselves by contributing content that others hold in high regard for one or another reason. Moreover, contributors can gain status by attaining a high position in social networks that are often enabled by these platforms. We propose that understanding how platform contributors pursue status through their online behaviours can shed important light into the social dynamics and content contribution patterns on such sites. We demonstrate that prior literature on online reputation and status in social networks tends to focus on one type of status while ignoring others. Moreover, most popular theories of status in organizational literature tend to focus on small groups and are also inadequate in this context. We introduce Bourdieu's practice theory as a sociological theory of distinction and power that is able to account for multiple dimensions of status in large collectives of agents who do not necessarily interact with each other directly, as is often the case with UGC. Bourdieu's notions of field and capital are used to operationalize status across a variety of UGC platforms. We demonstrate how the theory works using several examples of prominent UGC platforms and articulate what kind of research questions can be addressed with the new lens. To conclude, we offer practical implications focused on platform design, evolution, and use.

Biography: Natalia Levina is an Associate Professor in the Information, Operations, and Management Sciences department at the Stern School of Business, New York University. Professor Levina uses organizational theories to understand strategic and operational complexities involved in managing multi-party collaborative relationships. She investigates how diverse professional, organizational, and cultural backgrounds of project participants influence collaboration effectiveness and innovation on projects. Her current research focuses on open innovation, global sourcing, and crowdsourcing. Professor Levina's work has been published in numerous academic journal and conferences and received a number of awards from academic societies. She serves as a senior editor at Information Systems Research journal and is an editorial board member at Organization Science. She has been awarded NSF grant for studying open innovation and crowd-sourcing and Alfred P. Sloan Industry Studies Fellowship as well as IBM faculty award for studying innovation management practices in global sourcing. Professor Levina's teaching portfolio includes such courses as Global Sourcing and Open Innovation, IT in Business and Society (undergraduate), and IT in Organizations (PhD seminar). She has received her BA in Computer Science and Mathematics from Boston University, MA in Mathematics from Boston University, and PhD in Information Technologies from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Sloan School of Management.

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