Theorizing a design-oriented categorization for online voluntary production communities

Abstract:
As well-known socio-technical systems that aim at accumulating and sharing content by facilitating aligned coordination and collaboration of voluntary participant, online voluntary production communities have been the focus of academic scrutiny in the last decade. Considering their popularity and the increasing theories and models for addressing their various design intricacies and governance methods, there is still no systematic categorization available based on their characteristics to make the existing descriptive or prescriptive approaches more specific or generalizable. In this paper, we address pertinent attributes of such communities and divide them into three major categories, each further divided into few distinct types. Existing theories and frameworks are drawn upon with a design-oriented approach for the sake of this categorization, so that more transparent statements can be made with regard to their design and operation. This refined contextualization helps community designers aptly select features from successful
communities only when the underlying theory and characteristic are in line with their own.

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