

Using Multi-theoretical Multilevel Models to Understand and Enable Communities

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Advances in Web Science invite consideration of organizing within communities as a process that is accomplished by global, flexible, adaptive, and ad hoc networks that can be created, maintained, dissolved, and reconstituted with remarkable alacrity. Increasingly these networks are multidimensional including individuals as well as digital artifacts and concepts. This session will introduce the concept of “multidimensional” social networks where nodes can be people, organizations, documents, keywords/concepts, analytic tools, etc. Next it outlines a contextually based multi-theoretical multilevel (MTML) model to investigate the dynamics for creating, maintaining, dissolving, and reconstituting social and knowledge networks in diverse communities. Using examples from his research on communities involved in research networks and virtual worlds, Contractor illustrates the potential of the MTML framework to understand and enable communities.