Life at the Code Face: Collaborative Work Practices in Global Software Development

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Research Area | GSD4
Project Title | Social, Organisational and Cultural Aspects of Global Software Development (socGSD)

Standpoint
- Software engineering as human, social and organizational activity as well as a technical activity
- Looking at the global from a local perspective

Approach
- Differs from studies undertaken from a macro-economic or strategic perspective by looking at participants in real workplaces in various global software development settings.
- Complements existing quantitative studies with rich descriptions based on detailed observations of participants in real workplaces

Aim
- To provide a bridge – from making work practices visible to developing effective work support (socio-technical)

Strands of work
- Knowledge Management practices in distributed work settings;
- Situated learning/mentoring;
- Coordination challenges in Global Software Development;
- Tools supporting collaboration, with a particular focus on defect tracking systems and the local cultures built around them;
- Cross-cultural issues in outsourcing.

Contribution
- Identifying and analysing current practices in Global Software Development and the perceived challenges “at the code face”;
- Our contributions to the field are directed toward:
  - Reflecting our understanding of practice back to the practitioners so that they can learn from it;
  - Informing design, contributing to the methods for studying Software Engineering, and supporting policy making;
  - Emphasizing the need for flexibility, socialization, informal communication.

Selected Publications

Interdisciplinary background
Software Engineering & Global Software Development
- Strategic, cultural, and technical issues; knowledge, project and process management; inadequate communication (Herbsleb & Moitra)
- Software engineering seen as: knowledge work (Rus & Lindvall), “the work of producing and reproducing the knowledge” (Schultze)

Computer-Supported Cooperative Work
- CSCW studies on: articulation and coordination work, Common Information Spaces, organizational memory, knowledge management practices (Bannon, Schmidt, Bodker)
- Software cultures (Wagner)

Work Practice Studies
- Focusing on “what people do, i.e. their work practices, rather than on what they know” (Blackler)
- Working and learning in Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, Brown & Duguid); the importance of “knowing in practice”
- Studies of work practices in software engineering (Singer, Lethbridge, Robinson, Sharp, Segal)

Organizational Studies & Management Science
- Coordination Theory (Crowston)