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Title of presentation

Crowd-sourcing, Social Capital and Human Capital: Opportunities for Sustainable Exchange of Knowledge?

Team

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Abstract

The article presented is of two parts: theoretical and empirical. The former briefly elaborates the genesis of the concept and the usage of crowd-sourcing so that later on we are able to focus on the currently often stressed linkage between crowd-sourcing, social capital and learning. The spread of the concept and practices of crowd-sourcing (CS) from the pioneering business model (Howe 2006, 2009) through nonprofit models and spheres of health, social and environmental justice as well as civil society and NGOs (Brabham, 2008) to the experimental models of political and legislative reforms (Aitamurto and Landemore, 2015) has been accompanied by all the more frequent critical over-sights on the primary business model. That is due to its limited profitable out-comes, related underestimation of participating crowds and even user exploitation as some authors intensely argue (Peng and Zhang, 2010). Within the article we rely on the non-profit, sustainable and democratic models and/or practices of CS which in the process of transmitting knowledge have the advantage over the singular, profitable and selective usage. Although at the moment still rare explicit connections between crowd-sourcing and social capital exist (Sherry, 2011; Peng in Zhang, 2010) we try to contribute an added value by conceptualizing the linking points between crowd-sourcing, social capital and human capital. While the subjects of CS are usually limited to companies (Liu, 2014), national governments and legislation (Faria, 2013); deliberative (Estlund, 2008) and participative democrats (Fung and



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Wright, 2001) and of course the crowds, we likewise add academia, researchers, students and other (non)formal holders of knowledge and innovative ideas. The motto of the article can be summed-up by Levy's findings from over two decades ago:

It has become impossible to restrict knowledge and its movement to castes of specialists /.../ Our living knowledge, skills, and abilities are in the process of being recognized as the primary source of all other wealth. What then will our new communication tools be used for? (Lévy, 1997: 9)

Lévy build up this statement on the assumption of the so called collective intelligence as a capability of the crowds to effectively coordinate their existing skills and knowledge at the appropriate time and in adequate manners. He emphasizes: "no one knows everything, everyone knows something, [and] all knowledge resides in humanity". Knowledge in its widest sense (as human capital) is the underlying basis of creative and innovative ways of problem solving which are thus not left solely to the activity of an individual genius or professionals and other formal carriers of knowledge but gains in the wide-spread dimensions and incorporates traits of the democratic movement that reaches far beyond the limits of professionalism (Mao and Leonard, 2004). In that sense we understand the concept of human capital not as a liberal paradigm for higher professional positions by means of prestigious diplomas but as a cluster of individually acquired and creatively generated (non)formal experiences that in specific situations synergistically correspond to creative problem solving (Ivančič, Podmenik, Hafner, 2014). Additionally, the method and technology of CS can prove to be an encouraging and enabling factor of this process.

The second part of the article is a case study of the on-line crowd-sourcing platform named Challenge Academy (<http://challengeacademy.eu/>) created within the EU project UC-Crowd (<http://uc-crowd.iscte-iul.pt/>) partnering Slovenia, Portugal, England, Poland, Bulgaria, Belgium, Italy and Spain. Its main goals are: exchange of challenges, solving common problems,



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dissemination of innovative ideas and enabling the fluctuation of knowledge among these interest groups: companies of the international market, academia (higher education professors and researchers), students, NGOs and/or civil society. The platform with its common interest groups, goals and results is an appropriate example for testing the hypothesis on the linkage between crowd-sourcing, social and human capital. Our first presumption is that among different nations the recognition and understanding of crowd-sourcing and the utilization of the platform differs and that the social networking and fluctuation of the human capital will thus vary by form and in scale. To confirm the hypothesis we conducted a survey research within the previously mentioned project in the spring of 2014. The second hypothesis encompasses more precise connections between social and human capital depending on a particular country involved and on specific target groups or institutions participating on the platform. We presuppose that those institutions, organizations, groups and even individuals who possess larger amounts of human capital likewise create wider, more numerous and demanding connection over the on-line platform. This hypothesis will be validated by two research techniques: the analysis of the platform connections in the past year as well as the analysis of the evaluation questionnaires the users of the platform filled out.

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