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Being Accountable in Distributed Innovation Work

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BEING ACCOUNTABLE IN DISTRIBUTED INNOVATION WORK

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Abstract

As a result of various driving forces, R&D and innovation processes are increasingly opened up for external influences and resources. This has led to a changing nature of innovation work to become more distributed, networked and fragmented. In companies, a consequence of this is that hierarchically defined directives are transformed to lateral agreements. For the employee, a consequence of this is that they are increasingly expected to justify the value of distributed innovation practices in relation to both their firm and external contributors of innovation, and by doing so they involve themselves in a process where accountability is horizontally redistributed. In order to analyze this process, we use a case of open source software development, where developers from eleven firms, using open source in their professional practice, are interviewed. We show how distributed innovation processes leave the professional developer with the responsibility to select and assure that external resources becomes advantageous to their work, and how they use different types of justification to account for the value of this appropriation. We identify how accountability is formed by multiple logics, potentially leading to tensions between different logic of worth.

Keywords: distributed innovation, open source, logic of justification, accountability

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