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Building Trust in Global Inter-Organizational Software Development
Projects: Problems and Practices

Background

- Trust: Willingness to cooperate with others based on the belief that other is a) competent, b) open, c) concerned, d) reliable

- Trust as a promising mechanism for overcoming many difficulties in globally distributed inter-organizational (networked) software development

- Virtual and global contexts may significantly constrain the development of trust between companies and teams, traditional sources of trust may not be available

- Traditional sources of trust within organizations (collocation):

  - Personal dispositions
  - Common history
  - Mediating third parties
  - Shared category membership
  - Predictable role behavior
  - Internalized common rules

Problem and Method

- How do the traditional sources of trust operate in networked conditions? What kind of problems are encountered?
- How could traditional sources of trust be compensated for in networked conditions? What kinds of practices can be used for this?

- Interview study of 9 global inter-organizational networks on problems and practices in distributed project work
- Classification of problems related to traditional sources of trust and successful practices in trust building

Results

- Traditional sources of trust were not available in these distributed software projects
- Companies had implemented some compensating practices, but very unsystematically

Classification of problems

- Personal dispositions
- Common history
- Mediating third parties
- Shared category membership
- Predictable role behavior
- Internalized common rules

Classification of practices

- Developing familiarity
  - Kick-off, collocated reviews
- Establishing confidence
  - Clarification of terms, roles
- Maintaining trust
  - Mutual feedback, open negotiation