

## Global Applications of Collaborative Technology

Robert M. Davison  
Dept of Information Systems  
City University of Hong Kong  
Tat Chee Avenue  
Kowloon, Hong Kong  
Tel: 852-2788-7534  
Fax: 852-2788-8694  
Email: isrobert@cityu.edu.hk

Gert-Jan de Vreede  
Systems Engineering Department  
Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management  
Delft University of Technology  
The Netherlands  
Tel: +31.15.278.7170  
Fax: +31.15.278.3429  
Email: devreede@tpm.tudelft.nl

Over the course of the last decade, the role played by collaborative technology applications has become increasingly important. The range of contexts in which these applications have been used includes (inter)-organisational communication and decision making, through distributed software inspections, to virtual education initiatives. The applications themselves include various forms of groupware technology such as group (decision) support systems, electronic mail, shared calendaring applications, document management systems, video and audio conferencing, and the like.

Much of the technology has been developed within the cultural milieu of North America, and to a lesser extent Western Europe and Australasia. This is evidently important, since the technology has been imbued with the values present in these cultures, and consequently the technologies themselves may be culturally attuned to the needs and preferences of workers in these contexts. Nevertheless, the application domain is geographically and culturally much broader. Thus, not only do we see distributed groups within a single country, but also groups with members from many different countries. The application contexts thus span both time zones and cultures, involving considerable adaptation, interpretation and structuration of the technology to fit local norms and behaviours. In the future, we believe that these

distributed applications of the technology will become increasingly prevalent as the globalisation of work intensifies and receives increased attention.

We are delighted to present two papers in this minitrack which address some of the key issues in the Global Application of Collaborative Technology from a variety of perspectives. In our first paper, Suprateek Sarker and Sundeep Sahay consider IS development as conducted by US-Norwegian virtual teams. They employ an ethnographic approach to focus on the communication patterns of the individual team members and identify some critical inhibitors of successful collaboration.

In the second paper, V. Ramesh and Alan Dennis write about global software development using cases from three Indian multinational technology firms. Given the specific characteristics of the ways in which their teams developed, they suggest that these teams should be re-characterised as object oriented teams. Such teams strive to de-couple team members through the use of well-defined processes and semantically rich media. These media added meaning to the information by clarifying, extending, and constraining the information itself, and enriching it by collecting statistics, and providing the ability to filter and view the information in other forms.