

https://dspace.org/

Book Review: Tapscott, D., and Williams, A.D. (2010). Macro Wikinomics: Rebooting Business and the World

Hanna, Nagy

2011-02-15
LINK Centre, University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Johannesburg
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/19765
Hanna, N. (2011). Book review: Tapscott, D., and Williams, A.D. (2010). Macro Wikinomics: Rebooting Business and the World. The African Journal of Information and Communication (AJIC), 11, 83-84. https://doi.org/10.23962/10539/19765

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

TAPSCOTT, DON AND WILLIAMS, ANTHONY D. (2010). MACRO WIKINOMICS: REBOOTING BUSINESS AND THE WORLD. PORTFOLIO/PENGUIN, NEW YORK, NY.

Reviewed by Nagy K. Hanna

In this new book Tapscott and Williams argue that a powerful new model of innovation, involving open source and mass collaboration, is sweeping across all sectors, where people with drive and expertise take advantage of new web-based tools to reshape established institutions and the world. The argument builds on their earlier book Wikinomics: How mass collaboration changes everything (Tapscott & Williams, 2006), which focused on a new era of collaboration in business, and extends their analysis and examples to show how business, government, civil society and individuals can leverage collaborative technologies to work in new ways to solve the greatest problems of our time. They argue that collaborative innovation can revolutionise work, as well as how we live, learn, create, and govern. With many vivid examples from more than a dozen fields, the book makes for inspiring reading.

The authors describe a new environment fostered by the Internet, the rise of networked intelligence, and suggest that organisations can succeed in this environment by embracing the five principles of Wikinomics: collaboration, openness, sharing, integrity and interdependence. The common thread is the growing realisation that the collective knowledge, capability, and resources, embodied within broad horizontal networks of participants, can accomplish more than one organisation or individual can acting alone.

Twitter, Facebook and Wikipedia have captured the popular imagination about collaborative innovation and content creation, but the authors share many other examples of companies and communities that apply these principles, with great impact. Examples of platforms that radically drop collaboration costs and enable access to the global marketplace for ideas, innovations and talent, include Linux, InnoCentive, NineSigma, iPhone, Open Source, P&G's open innovation called "Connect and Develop", and GE's "virtual collaboratory" – all developing Internet-based global platforms for collaboration and innovation.

The book covers the use of Wikinomics for re-industrialising, building green energy and intelligent transportation, promoting collaborative learning, collaborative science, and collaborative heath care. It shows how consumers are turning into prosumers and content creators, and how Wikinomics is turning the media inside out. The book also shows how governments are becoming platforms for creating public value, and how citizens are using Wikinomics to monitor and enforce regulation, fight for justice and address global problems.

Again, the book is rich with examples from each of these fields. In transportation, for example, some applications could facilitate carpooling and ridesharing, ease congestion and select optimal routes. Foundations are organising large-scale innovation contests as a way to generate

ideas and turn them into radical breakthroughs that will benefit humanity, in areas like fighting climate change and creating a green energy economy. In the realm of education, Wikinomics can transform pedagogy through collaborative learning, interactive computer-based courseware, just-in-time teaching, course content exchange (OpenCourseWare), course content co-innovation, and even customised student-centered collective syllabi of the world. Emerging applications in the public sector are no less inspiring: Apps for Democracy, open sourcing government (web-enabled collaboration with citizens, civil society, and the private sector for public services), participatory budgeting, Data.gov (an open hub for federal data) to help co-create information-based services, and the use of social networks to reinvent government from the bottom up.

The authors celebrate the power of collaborative technologies, drawing primarily on practices and applications from advanced countries. They acknowledge the vested interests involved in maintaining closed systems, as in health systems and authoritarian governments, and the dangers of killing privacy and empowering dictators. They suggest ways to overcoming such barriers and managing the dark side.

The authors do, however, tend to underestimate the barriers of adopting, spreading and scaling up Wikinomics in the context of the digital divide and institutional rigidities that prevail in developing countries. It would have been useful to have extended their analysis to address these barriers and the role of new leaders, public policies and national strategies in making Wikinomics a mass movement in developing countries and in addressing the challenge of global poverty. But that may be the challenge for a follow-up book.

The book provides a comprehensive overview of the promise of Web 2.0 in all kinds of economic activities, a useful overview for policy-makers, information technology specialists and development professionals. For academics, it should stimulate much needed research and evaluation to assess the actual impact of promising pilots and emerging practices using collaborative technologies, and define the framework conditions necessary to spread these practices to developing countries where they are most needed.

REFERENCES

Tapscott, D. & Williams, A. (2006) *Wikinomics: how mass collaboration changes everything*, Portfolio, New York, NY.