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Theories of Communication Networks

Peter R. Monge, Noshir Contractor

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To date, most network research contains one or more of five major problems. First, it tends to be atheoretical, ignoring the various social theories that contain network implications. Second, it explores single levels of analysis rather than the multiple levels out of which most networks are comprised. Third, network analysis has employed very little the insights from contemporary complex systems analysis and computer simulations. Foruth, it typically uses descriptive rather than inferential statistics, thus robbing it of the ability to make claims about the larger universe of networks. Finally, almost all the research is static and cross-sectional rather than dynamic.
Theories of Communication Networks presents solutions to all five problems. The authors develop a multitheoretical model that relates different social science theories with different network properties. This model is multilevel, providing a network decomposition that applies the various social theories to all network levels: individuals, dyads, triples, groups, and the entire network. The book then establishes a model from the perspective of complex adaptive systems and demonstrates how to use Blanche, an agent-based network computer simulation environment, to generate and test network theories and hypotheses. It presents recent developments in network statistical analysis, the p* family, which provides a basis for valid multilevel statistical inferences regarding networks. Finally, it shows how to relate communication networks to other networks, thus providing the basis in conjunction with computer simulations to study the emergence of dynamic organizational networks.

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