Human Aspects of Software Engineering, Fall Semester 2013

Response Paper 04

While reading the paper on information needs in collocated development teams I was skeptical early on about whether or not the observations hold any deeper significance with regard to developer productivity and in particular, development team productivity. Hence I was pleased to see that the authors explicitly mention that they did not try to measure productivity, since this would have been an impossible feat. After all, I think it's important to keep in mind that not all people prefer to work in the same fashion and different people may reach peak productivity in entirely different ways with regard to task switching frequency, amount of communication and overall work methodology. I also think that the results of the study heavily depend on the organization it was conducted in. Availability and quality of existing documentation as well as facilitation and ease of communication depend heavily on the structures the company has in place. For example, it seems like determining which things are part of a particular change submission was a hot topic for some of the developers, although this should be largely obvious given the right tool support, which I assume was lacking in this particular development environment. The discussion section the paper is somewhat bloated with speculation. For example, suggesting "tracing tools that record the failure" for people reporting a bug is somewhat of a pipe dream. I'm also not sure why the authors were satisfied with just 17 observations. They explicitly claim that the observers had seen enough redundancy, but looking at Figure 2, I can't say I see that much similarity between the different people, plus I didn't find any empirical claim of said redundancy. Nonetheless, this paper was a pleasant read since the results are very well presented.

The paper by Parnin et al. contains a few tidbits ofi nteresting information. Given it's a very short paper, I particularly find the list of questions at the end quit well chosen, and all of them seem worthy of pursuit.

With regard to the last paper, by Treude et al. I found it typical that "default dashboards have practically no value beyond indicating team membership". It would be an interesting topic to investigate, whether a default configuration is even possible - to match all possible users - or if a

wizard, helping the user on viewing the dashboard on the first run, wouldn't be the smarter choice in general.