The sustainability of online collaborative commons

Giacomo Poderi
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Education and Previous Works

- 2005 MA Philosophy – University of Bologna
- 2008 MA European Studies in Science and Technology – Ålborg/Maastricht
- 2013 PhD Sociology and Social Research – University of Trento
  - *Making Sense of Users Participation in Open Source Projects: The case of a Mature Video Game*

- 2013-2016 University of Trento, Dept. of Inf. Engineering and Computer Science
  - *CIVIS - Cities as driver of social change* - [http://www.civisproject.eu/](http://www.civisproject.eu/)

- 2017 University of Bergen, Centre for the Study of the Science and Humanities
  - *PARENT - Participatory Platform for Sustainable Energy Management* - [http://www.parent-project.eu/](http://www.parent-project.eu/)
  - *CANDID – Checking Assumptions and Promoting Responsibility In Smart Development Projects* - [https://candid.w.uib.no/](https://candid.w.uib.no/)
Research Interests and Profile

Co-production and co-design of/in Information Technology
- Peer-production (FOSS, Wikipedia)
- Collaborative game development
- Energy management platforms and Energy as commons

Theoretical foundations
- Science & Technology Studies
- Organization Studies
- Ethnography of Information
- Co- / Participatory Design

Constructivist epistemology and methodologies
- Ethnographic, interpretive observational research
- Intervention based research grounded on Participatory Design
Information and knowledge resources that are **collectively created and owned or shared** between or among a community and that tend to be non-exclusive [...]. Thus, they are **oriented to favor use and reuse** [...]. Additionally, the community of people building them can **intervene in the governing** of their interaction processes and of their shared resources. (Fuster Morell, 2010)
The ability of an organism or ecosystem to maintain its activity and productivity over time.

(Chengalur-Smith et al. 2010)
1. From participatory culture to ‘playbour’
   - *E.g.* Gig economy & platform capitalism; Commoning & Platform Cooperativism; Citizen Science & Engagement; EU frames: Collective Awareness Platforms, Open and Participative Innovation
   (Lund 2015, Rey 2015, Poderi and Hakken 2014)

2. Participation in online commons: temporary & unpredictable
   - Studies of participants limited to type of contributions and motivations for participating

3. Main perspectives on sustainability
   - Evolutionary (alignment between govern. and contributions)
   - Innovation & business perspective (scalability through hybridization)
   - Legal (role of licensing)
Research Question and Objectives

RQ: How is the subjective dimension of participation (e.g. fun, self-fulfilment) mediated by the participative infrastructure of online commons and how can this be adapted over time to prevent aspects such as alienation or exploitation to emerge?

Aim: To develop empirically grounded design principles that can support the sustainability of online collaborative commons, while accounting for the subjectivities of participants
Sustainability of online collaborative commons

Three cases in Free and Open Source Software:
1. Game development → Turn-based strategy video game
2. Activism → Charity NGO for promotion of Free/Open Source Software
3. …tbd

Ethnography of infrastructures through
- ‘Infrastuctural inversion’: focus on breakdowns
- Participant Observations & Interviews

(Star, 1999; Garcia et al. 2009)
Current and future activities

Empirical research work plan

Mar-Apr 2018
- Selection of the three cases
- Negotiations for field access

May 2018-Apr 2019
- Fieldwork

Feb-Sep 2019
- Sorting and analysing data
- Writing empirical insights into principles/design guidelines

Sep-Dec 2019
- ‘Validation’ with cases
Current and future activities

Research output

- “Participatory Design and Sustainability--a literature review of PDC Proceedings” – Participatory Design Conference – Short paper submitted

- “Co-design and the sustainability of online collaborative commons” – Special Issue in CoDesign – Extended abstract submitted

- “Articulating assemblages of playbour to question participation in ICT-based collaborative platforms” – EASST Conference 2018, Lancaster – Abstract submitted


