AGENTS OF ALTERNATIVES
Re-designing Our Realities

Edited by:
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Agents of Alternatives (AoA), Berlin, Germany
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INTRODUCTION

You hold in your hands a book which is really a manifestation of an evolving vision to link designing with everyday ‘active-ism’ which helps materialise plausible ‘alternatives’ to the global economy and neo-liberal capitalist practices. This was driven by an underlying belief that we need to ‘re-design our realities’ to better reflect and respond to our pressing contingent challenges about our social, ecological and financial condition.

Exploring ‘agents of alternatives’ demands a multidisciplinary dialogue within and between citizens, practitioners and academics who make things happen. So, you will find contributors from diverse fields: design, the arts, architecture, education, politics, economics, urban planning and city administration, social enterprise and the informal sector, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), experts on the commons, and others. We encouraged activists, researchers, educationalists, strategists and facilitators to share their views. In this book we mix the voices of well-known contributors alongside lesser-known active local agents. We look for emergent ways of learning-by-doing, of designing, of manifesting things differently and catalysing positive change, and we present these ways of thinking and practicing so that others might fruitfully experiment with, explore and generate alternatives for themselves.

Agency

Our position is that everyone and everything has agency, that is, the capacity to change what happens next. A position reinforced by certain philosophers – for example, Bruno Latour’s human and non-human ‘actants’, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s ‘social material assemblages’, and Jane Bennett’s ‘vibrant matter’. We, and our contributors, also adopt more accepted sociological and anthropological views of agency involving the social structures, systems and rules which bind or break them. Those with agency are actors, stakeholders, shareholders, institutions, organisations, diverse communities and other social groups. We would also invoke ‘political agency’ as a healthy form of disagreement and discourse as part of our civic and human condition, not confined within formalised institutionalised practices of ‘politics’. In this sense we see the political agency of this book and its contributors as a means to re-examine and explore our social relations and our relations with the wider world so that we might, individually and collectively posit or construct alternatives.

The agents

Who are these agents of alternatives? They exhibit some common features: they are independently minded, but share a critical awareness of our social, ecological and economic condition; they have a vision but it is adaptive to changing circumstances; they are open and transparent, showing their processes and sharing their expertise; they start their journey with the (often meagre) resources at their disposal and show perseverance; they believe their voice counts and encourage others to add their voices too; they turn rhetoric into action; and they reveal opportunities and possibilities. Most importantly, all our contributors here are ‘making things happen’, they are active not passive, caring not distant, and different not conformist. Read their voices in the essays, interviews and case studies.

Alternatives

Anyone, or anything, contesting the status quo, societal ‘norms’ or contemporary paradigmatic forces, is, potentially, an ‘alternativ-ist’. To be an alternativ-ist is not a new position but has an illustrious history which embraces daring individuals, collective movements, specialised groups and minorities. Here we define our alternatives through a series of imagined worlds -Thinking, Learning, Sharing, Making, Intervening, Working, and Living – worlds which evolved as the content for the book grew (see p.18-19). We see these worlds intertwined, joined by a series of emergent practices (p.462) and expressed through an evolving lexicon (p.22-37). These alternatives are still young, yet they are potentially catalytic and, if scaled-up, can encourage a transition towards more sustainable, equitable and adaptable futures. We found professionally organised alternatives that try to bridge policy-making and grassroots activism as well as small initiatives that have spread all around the world, because their underlying ideas are so simple, accessible and welcoming to a wide range of people. There are different ways of changing society, and this book tries to have a closer look at the potential of the informal and formal worlds of change makers.

Re-designing

Our shared vision for this book was also underpinned with a belief that the field of design is diffusing out into wider society and is no longer just the primary concern of professionally trained designers, but is actually being practiced by other profes-

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sionals, professional amateurs and citizen designers. We share and update Victor Papanek’s view that ‘all people are designers,’3 and Joseph Beuys’ political position making all citizens ‘artists’ that shape the ‘social sculpture’ of our society.4 And, we believe that a sustainable way of designing is to work with what is existent in a ‘locale’ – a diverse array of human, social, public, commercial and natural capitals. In this sense ‘re-designing’ makes more sense than ‘designing,’ because it involves re-configuring the potential of what already exists. This might, of course, involve bringing in new ingredients and smartly combining them to create fresh potentialities. The initiatives, projects and ideas collated in this book are representative for a growing global ‘zeitgeist’ (spirit of the time) around openness and sharing. This means making ideas accessible to everyone so that they can be adapted to diverse local conditions. Most of them are open source so individual authorship becomes less important and the positive impacts and potentialities of sharing are emphasised. They bring different communities and places around the world together in a dynamic self-organised and, often, surprising way.

To summarise, it is our hope that this book will stimulate you, the reader, to become an agent of alternatives too…

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5 ’Locale’ has an etymological root in ‘locus’, Latin for place, and is a French word defining local. More importantly, locale is a combination of unique ingredients or characteristics which differentiate what it means to be local. Locale is a scalable phenomenon that, like the famous Charles and Ray Eames’ film Powers of Ten, can be felt at many scales from one square metre to a hectare or more. It is also a meeting place of various communities, it is the location of specific human ecologies. So each locale has a unique combination of communities of place, communities of practice, communities of interest and communities of circumstance and other types of communities. Source: Fuad-Luke, A., 2012. Locale. Window874, available at http://window874.com/2012/05/29/locale

Editors’ notes: We added editors’ footnotes to interview and case study texts where we thought it would assist the reader. In the essays these are marked as such, to distinguish them from the original contributor’s footnotes.
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The founding principle of this book is that the diverse content provided by the contributors would drive an emergent structure.

We came together in November 2013 in Helsinki to analyse the content we’d already received and to develop the language for the book (Figure 1). We believed, and still believe, that genuine empowerment happens by locating ourselves within an alternative framework, by seeing positive disruptions to the status quo, by re-positioning what designing can do, and by focusing on Our Commons (we use ‘our’ not ‘the’ to emphasise that the default ownership is ‘us’ and ‘we’, not ‘them’) and how we can share in better ways for the common good.

In February 2014 the editors came together in Berlin to further explore and understand the content we had already received and do an initial mapping of its relations (Figure 2). These two meetings led us to create an active vocabulary and initiated a conversation about whether we could analyse and synthesise the content into a more constructive and practical arrangement that would inspire. We understood that people were acting and taking action around different focal areas — we called these areas ‘alternative worlds’ (see next page). They are/were developing [design] practices that help encourage a transition from the existing situation to a preferred situation (to borrow from the words of Herbert Simon1). We analysed these practices and have presented them as ‘Stuff that works’ (p.462). These practices range from those based upon eminent common sense to ingenious ways of encouraging transformation. We hope you will recognise some, and add your own. We also observed that people were talking and writing about their ‘worlds’ and ‘practices’ with new language, so we created an ‘evolving lexicon’ (pp.22-37). We hope that these collated ‘insights’, ‘practices’, ‘emergent words’ and, of course, the detailed content from our contributors, will stimulate you, the reader, to reflect and re-think your own position. We hope that flipping between this synthesis of the content and the actual content will provide its own stimulus. In short, we hope that this extra joining of information at a ‘meta’ level, might provide some magic ingredients to generate, nourish and sustain alternatives.

Map of contributions

Each contribution in this book was assigned to a ‘primary’ world with other worlds as ‘secondary’ influences to see how the different projects, initiatives and philosophies interweave and cluster. The outcome is a ‘map of contributions’ (pp.20-21) which allows a different way of navigating through the book and making sense of its contents. It serves as an addition to the traditional list of contents and invites you, the reader, to experience the book in many different ways: non-linearly, according to chapter, interest, theme, format and so on. Enjoy the journey.

Figure 1. Some emergent keywords from the editors’ conversation in November 2013. © AoA.

Figure 2. The editors having a ‘eureka’ moment with Cathérine Kuebel in Berlin, February 2014. © AoA.

Thinking – the diverse acts and practices of discursive activities, free association, ideation, inquiring, intuiting, philosophising, reasoning, reflecting, ruminating and synthesising individually and/or collectively as a means to nourish our human, social and other capitals.

Learning – the activities of acquiring, giving and exchanging skills, knowledge and experiences by teaching oneself and others, and learning from each other to encourage healthy social discussion, evolution of new wisdoms and activation of hidden capabilities.

Sharing – acts, actions or reciprocal relations between individuals, groups and communities to enjoy and enrich something together (time, objects, experiences, etc.) based on respectful mutuality, interdependency, openness and generosity.

We believe that alternatives are best created and designed together by thinking differently and making those thoughts tangible by taking action. The diversity of contributions in this book highlights that there are many intertwined worlds with which we can engage. We offer working definitions of these worlds, without asserting them to be either final or complete, hoping that you will add your own. We believe that by combining these worlds in different ways, we can ‘re-design our realities’.

Making – the act of bringing a form, process, service or experience to life, while realising individual and/or collective creative human potential and capital.

Intervening – introducing activities and/or artefacts to engage, by consensus or disruption, to stimulate dialogue and actions towards a common purpose as a means to better our world.

Working – modes of being active, of acting, operating, functioning, organising and practicing to achieve something, to earn or make a livelihood, to be a valued contributor to society, its individual members and to oneself.

Living – human activities of alive-ness, being-ness, existences, livelihoods and other ways of being that affect our individual and collective condition, our thriving and flourishing, and our natural, spatial, physical, mental, spiritual and other dimensions of being in the world.
MAP OF CONTRIBUTIONS

The initials represent the contributors listed in the contents on p.8 with their respective page numbers.
SHARING

Acts, actions or reciprocal relations between individuals, groups and communities to enjoy and enrich something together (time, objects, experiences, etc.) based on respectful mutuality, interdependency, openness and generosity.
Editors’ note: Reproduced by kind permission from New Society Publishers as an extract from Think Like A Commoner: A Short Introduction to the Life of the Commons. (NSP, 2014)

To Andreas Weber, a theoretical biologist in Germany, the commons is not simply a matter of public policy or economics. It is an existential condition of life in all its forms, from cellular matter to human beings. “The idea of the commons provides a unifying principle that dissolves the supposed opposition between nature and society/culture,” he writes. “It cancels the separation of the ecological and the social.”

According to Weber, the commons provides us with the means to re-imagine the universe and our role in it.

If we are to truly transform our economic and political systems, Weber argues, then we must also address some unquestioned, deeply embedded premises of those systems. In effect we must reassess the nature of reality itself. As creatures immersed in the liberal political paradigm and the principles of Darwinian evolution, most of us implicitly see life as a fierce, competitive struggle and the economy as a kind of machine in which countless individuals strive to maximize their personal wealth and advantage. Competitive triumph is all. We also see, implicitly, a Newtonian universe in which large abstract forces buffet the inanimate particles of nature. In this view, human consciousness and meaning are insignificant if not moot in the cosmic scheme of things.

Our tacit metaphysical commitments, argues Weber, are the very basis for our “free market” economic and political structures. What’s so intriguing is that many scientists are starting to see the natural world and evolution through a different metaphysical prism, one that sees life as a system of cooperative agents constantly...
striving to build meaningful relationships and exchange “gifts.” Competition still exists, of course, but it is interwoven with deep, stabilizing forms of cooperation.

In this new theoretical scheme, the subjective experiences of an organism matter. That’s because, in the emerging scheme of biological thought, all organisms are “meaning-making” living systems. Life is seen as an evolutionary process in which embodied subjects interact with their environment and other living organisms to create meaningful relationships. Subjectivity is not an illusion or an inconsequential side-story, as our existing metaphysics claims; it is not a mere bubble of ephemeral, trivial feelings in an empty universe. Rather, subjectivity is the center-piece of a new “existential ecology” whose primary concern is subjects, not objects alone. Human beings are not isolated atoms adrift in a vast indifferent universe. Our human subjectivity is not separate from a nature that exists as an alien, unfathomable “other.” The subjective and the objective, the individual and the collective, blur into each other—just as in a commons!

Weber, speaking as a scientist, calls his new evidence-based theory “biopoetics.” It is both a metaphysics and a biological theory that can explain “the deep relationship between felt experience and biological principles.” Weber argues that the “science of life” as traditionally studied is no longer an adequate methodology for understanding living things. Conventional science fails to address the realities of consciousness and subjectivity in living organisms; indeed, these topics have been more or less banished from the field of study. But, as Weber writes, “only if we understand organisms as feeling, emotional, sentient systems that interpret their environments and do not slavishly obey stimuli, can we ever expect answers to the great enigmas of life.” For him, biopoetics has the potential to provide “a new holistic account of biology as the interaction of subjects producing and providing meaning and hence laying the ground for understanding the meaningful cosmos of human imagination.”

The commons is central to this vision. Only through commoning do we start to reintegrate ourselves with nature and with each other. Our challenge, Weber contends, is to bring about a new “Enlivenment”—a new type of rebirth to succeed the three-hundred-year-old Enlightenment. Our calling is to enact a vision of the universe that honours our subjective identities and need for meaning as biological necessities. We can do this by engaging in “the rituals and idiosyncrasies of mediating, co-operating, sanctioning, negotiating and agreeing, to the burdens and the joy of experienced reality,” says Weber. “It is here where

the practice of the commons reveals itself as nothing less than the practice of life.”

While Weber’s biological theories, like the commons, remain outside of the mainstream, to me they help explain the deep visceral appeal of the commons paradigm. They confirm that the commons is no PR gambit or “messaging” strategy, but rather a prism for seeing the world anew, and more profoundly; in its totality. In all its diversity. With a realistic understanding of humanity as it works on the ground. Weber’s analysis situates the individual as a conscious, subjective agent in the world. It recognizes the role of actual history, local circumstances, culture and individuals in shaping human evolution and in creating commons.

To see the commons—to really see the commons—we need to escape the highly reductionist mindset of market-based economics and culture. We have to learn to see that a cooperative logic can animate human institutions, and that, with the right social structures and norms, this humanistic ethic actually works. Market culture has insidiously narrowed our imaginations. By privileging the interests of private property, capital and markets as governing priorities, our very language marginalizes the idea of working together toward common goals. In this essay, I want to touch on some of the ways in which the commons cuts deeply into our received notions of “reality” and invites us to reorient our thinking. The commons helps bring to the fore new perceptions and perspectives, and opens up new solution sets for vexing problems. To be sure, it is perfectly possible to talk about the commons in conventional terms and not raise any bothersome questions about the prevailing frameworks of knowledge or worldview. Economists do it all the time. They confute the commons with “public goods,” treating them as things and ignoring the social practices and relationships that animate those things. NATO talks about outer space and oceans as “global commons”—meaning, collections of mute resources—failing to appreciate that it is really talking about free-for-all, open-access regimes, not commons.

Taking the commons seriously, however, means changing some of the ways that we see the world. Our choices are not confined to being employees, consumers, entrepreneurs or investors seeking to maximize our personal economic well-being. We can begin to imagine ourselves as commoners. We can begin to become protagonists in our lives, applying our own considerable talents, aspirations and responsibilities to real-life problems. We can begin to act as if we have inalienable stakes in the world into which we were born. We can assert the human right and capacity to participate in managing resources critical to our lives.

The Metaphysics of the Commons

It is impossible in this short essay to deal with all the complex metaphysical and epistemological issues raised by the commons. And in truth, these issues remain

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4 ibid., p. 13-22.

6 ibid., p. 41.

somewhat shrouded in mystery, at least to those of us immured within the Western modern, scientific worldview. Our culture and language do not equip us to see the humanistic and spiritual roots of the commons. It is nonetheless possible to glimpse some very different ways of seeing, acting and being in the world.

Proposing a new metaphysics of the commons, and new epistemological categories of knowledge, raises some disruptive questions about the basic assumptions of market economics and liberal democracy. Are human beings really capable of behaving rationally, independently and with informed consent in the marketplace and political sphere? Is it possible for human beings to be utterly autonomous and self-made, and to live in some zone outside of history and social particulars, as liberal universalism implies?

The commons challenges some of the myths that lie at the heart of liberal universalism, market economics and modernity. It rejects the idea that technological innovation, economic growth and consumerism will inexorably improve our lives if only we try harder and give ourselves more time. As noted earlier, normal economic activity arguably generates as much ill health as it does wealth. In this sense, the commons dares to challenge the commodity logic that enshrines price as the supreme arbiter of value and material progress as the linchpin of all progress.

Commons scholar James Quilligan helps us understand this when he writes: “The notion of ‘goods and services’ in traditional economics is a reduction of the social relations among individuals—and of the individuals themselves—into commodifiable and fungible things. But a commons-based economics raises the possibility of experiencing value through the practical relationships that arise among individuals, the resources of the world, and that which exists between people and the world” (emphasis in original).

To talk of the commons is to validate this social coproduction as a constructive, satisfying activity. It also questions the social order and relationships implied by private property rights. “Commoning must be entered into,” writes the historian Peter Linebaugh. “Whether on high pastures for the flock or the light of the computer screen for the data, the wealth of knowledge, or the real good of head and brain, requires the posture and attitude and working alongside, shoulder to shoulder. That is why we speak neither of rights nor obligations separately.”

The power of a commons comes from the actual social practices that animate it. But these practices—the complex rules and methods for how a forest may be used; for how Wikipedia entries are accepted and revised; for how irrigation waters are maintained and allocated in New Mexico—are highly specific, local and contextual. Norms cannot be easily generalized or made universal. This is precisely why it is so difficult to commodify the fruits of the commons without destroying the commons; its value is socially embedded and not readily converted into cash. Monetizing resources in a commons threatens to corrode the social relationships that hold a commons together.

Indigenous peoples tend to have very different attitudes toward property. When a multinational corporation attempts to patent traditional knowledge or genetic material, they consider such proprertization both fatuous and outrageous. No individual can claim to be the sole “author” of collective resources (as copyrights and patents imply) because these resources required generations of stewardship, inherited innovation and culture to develop and refine. No one can appropriate and sell for private gain something entrusted to a commons as a sacred trust. Hence the term “biopiracy.”

It is important to note that indigenous communities can be as vulnerable to the seductions of money and power as anyone else. Some indigenous leaders have sold their traditional knowledge or resources for a pittance or entered into “benefit sharing” arrangements with Western pharmaceutical interests that end up betraying or greatly weakening their cultures. The San people of the Kalahari Desert in Africa agreed to 8 percent of the profits in a new diet drug made from Hoodia gordoni, a cactus the San have traditionally used as a natural appetite suppressant. Many have criticized this deal as a case of biopiracy that has injected market norms and large sums of cash into a traditional culture, with troubling effects.11

Indigenous peoples generally see individuals as nestled within a larger network of people: the very idea of the “self-made” person is somewhat ridiculous or even delusional. Not surprisingly, the idea of private property tends to be nonsensical for them because property is not so much a description of a thing as it is a description of social relationships with others. The idea of “sole and despotic dominion” over a resource, as Western law has come to think of property, denies our inescapable dependence on nature and our interdependence on each other.

Indigenous people tend to see their resources and knowledge as embedded in a community of reciprocal care and group stewardship. Modern industrial societies

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7 Editor’s note: “Liberal universalism” guarantees either freedom or equality to all the citizens from whatever background they came. Source: www.answers.com.

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10 Editor’s note: Biopiracy is a situation where indigenous knowledge of nature, originating with indigenous peoples, is used by others for profit, without permission from and with little or no compensation or recognition to the indigenous people themselves. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biopiracy#Biopiracy.
11 Munoz Tellez, V. date unknown. Recognising the Traditional Knowledge of the San People: The Hoodia Case of Benefit-Sharing, Available at www.ipngos.org/NGO%20Briefings/Hoodia%20case%20of%20benefit%20sharing.pdf.
presume (incorrectly) that such arrangements are archaic and unnecessary, and that markets can provide what we need. “Monetize the resource and split the income. What could be fairer?” The arrival of climate change, Peak Oil and countless other environmental crises suggests the actual limits of this type of thinking and its ontological assumptions about our place in the world.

Interestingly, an emerging universe of digital commons is also revealing the inadequacies of the “monoculture of knowledge of the 20th Century,” as anthropologist Marianne Maeckelburgh has put it.12 The knowledge generated by large centralized institutions and disciplines is too brittle, monochromatic and remote from the diverse lived realities of real people. The dominant systems of thought in our time, especially those of bureaucracies, conventional economics and scientific inquiry, have delegitimized vernacular culture—the practice-based ways of knowing and being. We need to understand ourselves as corporeal, situated human beings if we are to surmount our many ecological and social challenges.

The loss of diverse languages around the world represents a major setback in humanity’s quest to come to terms with the more-than-human world. Most of Australia’s two hundred and fifty aboriginal languages have disappeared, as have one hundred native languages in the area now known as California. As Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine point out, “the extinction of languages is part of the larger picture of near-total collapse of the worldwide ecosystem.” Native languages represent invaluable storehouses of particularised knowledge, especially about specific ecological systems. “Every language is an old-growth forest of the mind,” as ethnobotanist Wade Davis memorably puts it.14

The commons, taken seriously, is about honouring the new and diverse types of knowledge that are collectively constructed by commoners themselves, in their own specific circumstances. This knowledge could be about the seasonal habits of wildlife, the folkways of open source software communities or the community traditions that reward blood donations. Maeckelburgh has studied a range of activist and networked communities to identify the “alternative ways of knowing” that self-organized communities are developing. This “knowledge is collectively constructed,” she notes. It is “context-specific, partial and pro-visional.” And it makes a distinction “between knowing something and knowing better.”15 At the heart of the struggle for self-determination, then, is what anthropologist Arturo Escobar calls “micro-politics for the production of local knowledge... This micro-politics consists of practices of mixing, re-using, and re-combining of knowledge and information.”16 Commoners rarely presume that there is a fixed body of canonical knowledge whose authority must be respected. They create their own (situational) types of knowledge through engagement with each other and their common resources. Why should some abstract, self-serving bureaucratic or economic framework automatically prevail when local expertise and experience-rich traditions may be more trustworthy, responsive and practical?

The Commons as a Crucible for Localism

This is, in fact, a great appeal of the commons—its promise of local self-determination. People are gravitating to the commons because they see it as a way to celebrate and protect their particular local circumstances. A community’s identity is inevitably entangled in its geography and its buildings, its history and its leaders. It is the place where people learn and develop a fuller sense of humanity and ecological responsibility. Wendell Berry, the poet and ecologist, has put it this way: “Only the purpose of a coherent community, fully alive both in the world and in the minds of its members, can carry us beyond fragmentation, contradiction, and negativity, teaching us to preserve, not in opposition but in affirmation and affection, all things needful to make us glad to live.”17 Or as Berry said on another occasion, quoting Alexander Pope, “Consult the genius of the place in all.”18

This approach resonates so deeply with commoners because global commerce has diminished so much that was once distinctive and fecund about individual places. A shopping mall in Bangkok is now the same as ones in Qatar, Germany and the US. Millions of people have become so accustomed to getting food from supermarkets, which are supplied by huge corporations with heavily advertised, brand-name foods, that it is sometimes hard to imagine that food was once filled with rich, homegrown, local variety. If you went to Nebraska, you once got Nebraska baked beans. If you went to Georgia, you might get possum and taters. Alabama kitchens would serve up oyster roasts, and Montanans considered fried beaver tail a delicacy. In the West, our relationship to the biological origins of food has been nearly lost.

The Slow Food movement19 is an attempt to recover some measure of local control over food production and distribution—and in so doing, to recover some of the


15 Ibid.


18 Editors’ note: Slow Food movement is an international movement founded by Carlo Petrini in 1986. Promoted as an alternative to fast food, it strives to preserve traditional and regional cuisine and encourages farming of plants, seeds and livestock characteristic of the local ecosystem. It was the first established part of the broader Slow Movement. It has since expanded globally to over 100,000 members in 150 countries. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slow_Food.
social satisfactions and stability of living locally. The commons is often invoked in these conversations as a way to help reassert and reconstitute everyday community. The same impulse drives the so-called **Slow Money** movement, which seeks to make flows of finance more responsive to long-term community needs. The **Transition Town** movement, which aims to anticipate possible catastrophes stemming from **Peak oil** and global warming, also seeks to mobilize local cooperation and citizen innovation to take steps that neither markets nor states seem capable of doing. Fortifying the local has far-reaching political implications. Again, Wendell Berry said it well: “The great enemy of freedom is the alignment of political power with wealth. This alignment destroys the commons—that is, the natural wealth of localities and the local economies of household, neighbourhood, and community—and so destroys democracy, of which the commons is the foundation and practical means.”

We should not romanticize the local as an easy or automatic solution to the problems caused by global markets, however. The need for responsive “top-down” structures remains. Some collective-action problems can only be solved with appropriate high-level policies or infrastructures. Centralized bodies are often needed to assure a rough equality of opportunity and resources, or to oversee redistributions of wealth. It doesn’t make sense for every community to replicate functions that might be performed effectively (and without harmful externalities) at a state or national level, or even by larger markets. On the other hand, a certain redundancy and inefficiency are essential to a system’s long-term resilience.

For the time being, however, we don’t really have a rich typology of larger-scale commons infrastructures. We don’t really know how to design or build them. Such functions are usually considered the province of government. But I think it is time for commoners themselves to imagine how infrastructures and large governing protocols should be engineered. This could be politically difficult. Governments are jealous of their sovereignty and are not generally predisposed to understand and support commons. The idea of letting **bottom-up**, network-driven decisions emerge and prevail is threatening to traditional institutions of control. Yet that may be the only way that the energy, imagination and social legitimacy of commoners will be available to solve our myriad problems. We’ve already seen in countless ecological and social crises that the state and market, as constituted, are not up to the job. Let’s begin to acknowledge this simple fact.

### The Commons as a New Vision of Development

The capacity to honor the local through commoning suggests that there are better ways to achieve “development” than through economic growth. In this sense, the commons constitutes a new vision of human development. It begins to recognize the failures of conventional economic development strategies, and it takes seriously the idea that people can use commons-based systems to advance their long-term interests. There is currently a great deal of innovation and intellectual ferment surrounding the commons as a new development paradigm.

I mentioned earlier the role of **seed-sharing** in helping emancipate traditional farmers from the clutches of volatile global markets. The System for Rice Intensification—an international community of farmers who advise each other on improving yields from organic non-GMO varieties of rice—is another example. The Potato Park in Peru is also noteworthy. So is the Oaxaca Commune in Mexico, which is forging new ways of communally managing land and other resources in the city of 600,000 people, and the Zapatistas’ innovations in self-government in Chiapas, Mexico.

The Guassa Community-Based Conservation Area in Ethiopia, managed by the Menz indigenous people, has served as a grazing commons for more than four hundred years. The Menz still collect grass for thatching and wood for cookstoves there. Even though the region does not have any formal protection status, the Menz community has successfully combined its subsistence needs with a respectful coexistence with wildlife, including the most endangered carnivore in the world, the Ethiopian wolf.

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21 Editors’ note: A transition town is a grassroots community project that seeks to build resilience in response to peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability. Local projects are usually based on the model’s initial 12 “ingredients” and later “revisited ingredients.” The first initiative to use the name was Transition Town Totnes, founded in 2006. The socio-economic movement is an example of fiscal localization. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transition_Town_network

22 Editors’ note: Peak oil, an event based on M. King Hubbert’s theory, is the point in time when the maximum rate of extraction of petroleum is reached, after which the rate of production is expected to enter terminal decline. Peak oil theory is based on the observed rise, peak, sometimes rapid fall, and depletion of aggregate production rate in oil fields over time. Mostly due to the development of new production techniques and the exploitation of unconventional supplies, Hubbert’s original predictions for world production proved premature. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak_oil


24 Editors’ note: Fixed swaps are events where gardeners meet to exchange seeds. Swapping can be arranged online or by mail, especially when participants are spread out geographically. Swap meet events, where growers meet and exchange their excess seeds in person, are also growing in popularity. In part this is due to increased interest in organic gardening and heritage or heirloom plant varieties. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seed_swap.


26 Editors’ note: The Oaxaca uprising of the Spring of 2006 was an urban insurrection in one city, with important resonances elsewhere in the state of Oaxaca. It developed novel and participatory forms of organization, struggle, and self-governance. The Oaxaca rebellion developed “assemble” forms of direct democracy in the Spring of 2006 in order to organize itself democratically, as the people of Paris did in 1870-1871, and Russian workers did in 1905 and 1917. Source: www.socialitaproject.ca/documents/OaxacaCommunes.html.

27 Editors’ note: The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN) is an armed group that formed in Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico. Since their 1994 uprising was countered by the Mexican army, the EZLN has abstained from using weapons and adopted a new strategy that attempts to garner Mexican and international support. The Zapatistas have achieved documented improvements in Chiapas in the areas of gender equality and public health. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zapatista_Army_of_National_Liberation.
These and many other innovations show that the commons can provide a “scaffolding” for exploring realistic alternatives to the (failed) neo-liberal vision of development. Commons-based models are not just “policy mechanisms” that are inserted into a situation to “solve” a problem; they generally embody a very different vision of life than that of Western industrialization and consumerism. In Ecuador and Bolivia, *buen vivir*—“good living”—is a discourse that attempts to name a different development vision and way of being in the world. Buen vivir honours the ideas of community autonomy, social reciprocity, respect for natural ecosystems and a cosmic morality. In various ways, indigenous peoples, traditional cultures and commoners caught up in market systems are trying to express a worldview beyond the rational instrumentalism and economic mentality of market capitalism. In this sense, the commons is not just about managing resources; it’s an ethic and inner sensibility.

This inner conviction ultimately empowers people to take responsibility for the Earth’s resources and to nourish their own sense of stewardship. People discover that it is not only personally enlivening and culturally wholesome to participate in markets. Commoning provides a credible alternative to the growth- and consumer-based visions of development peddled by the World Bank. It provides a path for reducing inequality and insecurity in marginalized nations while highlighting the vital role of local ecosystems and commons-based governance.

**Finding a Rapprochement between the State and Commons**

The idea of commons-based development strategies naturally raises the question, what then should be the proper role of the State with respect to the commons? This, too, is a complicated question that deserves much further investigation.

Historically, the State has had very little to do with commons except to indulge their existence or work with market players (corporations, investors, industries) to enclose them. The basic problem is that the state has strong incentives to ally itself with market forces in order to advance the privatization and commodification of public resources. Enclosures + economic growth = power and tax revenues. To disrupt this logic, we must reconceptualize the role of the State so that it acts to authorize and support commons-based provisioning.

As Professor Burns Weston and I explain in our book *Green Governance*, political pressure must be brought to bear on states to recognize a number of “macro-principles and policies” to support the commons. These include recognition of:

- commons- and rights-based ecological governance as a practical alternative to the state and market;
- the principle that the Earth belongs to all;
- a state duty to prevent enclosures of commons resources;
- state trustee commons as a way to protect large-scale common-pool resources;
- state chartering of commons;
- legal limitations on private property as needed to ensure the long-term viability of ecological systems; and
- the human right to establish and maintain ecological commons.

Michel Bauwens’ idea of a “triarchy” that realigns authority among the State, Market and commons is bound to be controversial and perhaps confounding. In many nations, the idea of the collective good is so fused with government that it is difficult to imagine an independent, non-governmental sector (the commons) serving that purpose. The commons, to the extent it is considered at all, is often equated with “the citizenry” or “the public” and not with distinct communities of commoners. It may take some cultural imagination, therefore, to entertain the idea of the commons as an independent sector separate from the State, with its own moral compass and political identity.

There are legitimate policy questions about how national and provincial governments can formally recognize the commons in law. It is not self-evident how the State could assure that local commons, absent intervention, would not abuse their authority or the environment, or discriminate unfairly against some people. These are serious questions, but I do not consider them insurmountable. After all, the State has delegated considerable authority to corporations to perform certain functions while retaining ongoing oversight. If the State can charter corporations as a vehicle for serving the public good, in principle it ought to be able to delegate similar authority to commons. Diverse sorts of commons demonstrably serve the public good every bit as much as State-chartered corporations do (and at far less cost to the environment and public resources). And properly structured commons are generally more responsive than legislatures and State bureaucracies, which tend to be geographically remote, inaccessible to the layperson and heavily influenced by monied special interests.

The more fundamental problem may be the deep philosophical tension between the liberal polity and the commons.

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29 Editors’ note: See Michel Bauwen’s essay pp.158-177.

30 Michel Bauwens elaborates on his idea of a Market/State/Commons triarchy and “Partner State”. Available at: http://p2pfoundation.net/Partner_State.
citizens. The liberal polity generally makes few provisions for collective rights that exist beyond the individual. To be sure, various United Nations treaties and programs have a commitment to social, economic and cultural human rights, which in practice can act as a hybrid legal shelter for collective interests. But these are not collective rights as such, nor do they necessarily protect the commons. Indigenous peoples around the world have discovered this time and again: the juridical categories for protecting collective interests have scant legal and philosophical standing in the liberal worldview. The commons is thus frequently inscrutable to conventional policy-making, if not wholly incompatible.

To date, the few existing commons-based innovations that have sought the protection of formal state law—the Creative Commons licenses, the General Public License, community land trusts, protections for indigenous peoples—have had to resort to “legal hacks” around the law. The State could and should do more to recognize the authority of commons as vehicles for serving the public interest. But calibrating the level of State involvement is tricky. It is important that the State not become too involved in overseeing the commons lest it overwhelm the will of commoners to manage things themselves, which is the very point. Yet the State should not simply use the existence of commons to shirk its own responsibilities by withdrawing legal, administrative or financial support for them. This is a criticism made of UK Prime Minister David Cameron’s “Big Society” policy gambit, which has celebrated community control while cutting public funding to assist it.31

As I see it, the proper model for State support of commons should be “State policies in the service of commons formation and stewardship.” The State should openly recognize that self-organized commons can perform certain functions more effectively than the State or Market, and with greater perceived legitimacy, fairness and participation. This is complicated terrain because the devil is in the details, and the details vary immensely from one commons to another. But it is abundantly clear that commoners using digital networks can now amass, organize and deploy knowledge more rapidly and reliably than large centralized bureaucracies (examples abound in the use of wikis, crisis-relief coordination, reporting via social networks and crowdsourcing of research). The real challenge may be how to find new ways for bureaucratic institutions and digital commons to collaborate. Ecosystem resources, too, are often more effectively and responsively managed by local commoners with the direct authority and responsibility to supervise their own forests, fisheries or water systems without outside interference.

Not all commons are necessarily equitable and benign, so the state may have an important role in setting minimal ground rules and performance parameters for them—and then letting the “distributed creativity” of commoners evolve the most appropriate local solutions. This model has worked famously on the Internet, as demonstrated by the TCP/IP protocols that lie at the heart of that infrastructure.

The tech architects of the Internet did not seek to control or direct how people must behave on the Internet; they simply established minimal common standards (TCP/IP) for how communications should be formatted, addressed, transmitted, routed and received. This gave people enormous freedom to innovate as they saw fit within those basic parameters—a freedom that ultimately allowed something entirely unimaginable to emerge: the technical protocols for the World Wide Web.32

Of course, autonomous commons in non-digital spaces are not going to simply spring up out of the blue because we stipulate a few basic parameters. Budgets and resources are needed. The state may need to help this process legally and financially, or at least provide support for self-organized, self-funded commons to establish themselves. Let’s remember that most governments have created elaborate bureaucracies, legal privileges and subsidies to help businesses form and flourish. Why not similar support for commons?

Such a change would require close political oversight, how-ever, because many governments would welcome the “offloading” of financial and programmatic responsibilities—“Just let the commons do it!”—without shouldering the burden of helping new commons succeed. Indeed, most states remain yoked to the twentieth-century mindset of centralized bureaucratic control, and so would have trouble recognizing the value of self-organized commons based on minimalist design principles. This, truly, is one of the big tensions that nation-states are now grappling with as crowdsourced Internet innovation explodes. They can’t understand how distributed authority, participatory innovation and self-organized governance (outside of government) can yield effective, trustworthy results.

The problem to be overcome here comes down to how we perceive ourselves in the world, and thus how we perceive governance ought to be structured. Italian commons theorist and activist Ugo Mattei argues that if we are to understand the commons, we must move beyond the reductionist opposition of “subject-object,” which produces the commodification of both. It helps us understand that, unlike private and public goods, commons are not commodities and cannot be reduced to the language of ownership. They express a qualitative relation. It would be reductive to say that we have a common good. We should rather see to what extent we are the commons, in as much as we are part of an environment, an urban or rural ecosystem. Here, the subject is part of the object. For this reason, commons are

COMMENTS ARE INSEPARABLY RELATED AND LINK INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES AND THE ECOSYSTEM ITSELF


inseparably related and link individuals, communities and the ecosystem itself.\(^\text{33}\)

If Mattei’s analysis is accurate—and I believe it is—then it holds rather profound implications for the future of governance and the modern liberal state. It is no secret that state power is increasingly seen as illegitimate and ineffective. The authority and efficacy of “classical-modernist political institutions,” writes Dutch scholar Maarten Hajer, are waning. The idea that politics can be separated from bureaucratic implementation, and that neutral scientific expertise and centralized systems can manage complexity, is no longer credible.

Hajer argues that we are now living in an “institutional void” in which “there are no clear rules and norms according to which politics is to be conducted and policy measures are to be agreed upon. To be more precise, there are no generally accepted rules and norms according to which policymaking and politics are to be conducted” (original emphasis).\(^\text{34}\) Of course, proponents of neoliberal governance believe that the rules and norms for governance are entirely clear and generally effective. Their mantra generally focuses on trying harder to appoint the “right people” or reliable science to enact “reforms” that will finally prevent antisocial behaviors and “solve” unacceptable problems.

But the proliferation of political alienation and insurgency movements around the world calls into question the blind faith of neoliberal elites—or more to the point, the deep structural deficiencies of neoliberal institutions. Many citizens around the world no longer have confidence that conventional governments can provide solutions. They don’t trust government to act as a fair-minded host of democratic deliberation and broker of political interests. Many disillusioned citizens are shifting their political imaginations and energies toward their own DIY alternatives, interacting with the State only as necessary.

In the wake of the Internet, civil society has become too robust and transnational for governments to assert the kind of territorial sovereignty they once took for granted. There are now too many transnational networks of commoners and too many huge flows of information and communication beyond the control of governments. Enormous wells of innovation are emerging from the bottom up, on open networks, while the State struggles mightily to keep up. As a practical matter, insurgent commons may not pose an imminent political or economic threat. Global financial capital and market forces remain extremely potent, seemingly invincible forces. Yet the pervasive erosion of legitimacy, efficacy and credibility afflicting states around the world (and the neoliberal paradigm more generally) cannot continue indefinitely. At some point, a reckoning is inevitable.

Which makes me wonder: Can the old citizen/state dyad continue to function without significant shifts of authority and governance? Can the state solve our myriad social and ecological challenges, most notably arresting climate change, without reconfiguring itself? I doubt it.

As this analysis suggests, the challenge we face is to devise new forms of governance that will necessarily transform the nature of state sovereignty. This is uncharted territory for which the old rules and assumptions will have limited relevance. It seems clear to me that the commons—a highly versatile system of governance, resource-management and sense-making that can meet people’s needs in ways that are experienced as both legitimate and effective—will likely be part of the new order.\(^\text{35}\)


\[^{*}\text{Footnotes 1-6, 14 and 30 by David Bollier are updated from his original essay for the book Think Like A Commoner.}\]
Michel Bauwens is the founder and director of the P2P Foundation and works in collaboration with a global group of researchers in the exploration of peer production, governance, and property.

He is a founding member of the Commons Strategies Group, with Silke Helfrich and David Bollier, who have organised major global conferences on the commons and economics. http://commonsandeconomics.org.

In the first semester of 2014, Michel Bauwens was research director of the floksociety.org research group, which produced the first integrated Commons Transition Plan for the government of Ecuador, in order to create policies for a ‘social knowledge economy’. In January 2015 CommonsTransition.org was launched. Commons Transition builds on the work of the FLOK Society and features newly revised and updated, non-region specific versions of these policy documents. Commons Transition aims toward a society of the Commons that would enable a more egalitarian, just, and environmentally stable world.

Essay

ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES BEYOND THE MARKET?

by Michel Bauwens

Introduction

From January to June 2014, the author of this essay was the Research Director, at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (IAEN), a public university of Quito. He directed an innovative commons-oriented transition experiment that is the potential creation of a social knowledge economy, an economy based on the sharing of knowledge in open commons, for a number of Ecuadorian public institutions.

The FLOK Society1 was a joint research effort by the Coordinating Ministry of Knowledge and Human Talent (with Minister Guillaume Long), the National Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENSCYT with Minister René Ramírez) and the IAEN (with Rector Carlos Prieto) to develop transition and policy proposals to achieve an open commons-based knowledge society.

FLOK refers to:

Free, meaning freedom to use, distribute and modify knowledge in universally available common pools;

Libre stresses that it concerns free as in freedom, not as in gratis;

Open refers to the ability of all citizens to access, contribute to and use this common resource;

Knowledge.

A free, libre and open knowledge society therefore essentially means organizing every sector of society, to the maximum degree possible, into open knowledge commons. This implies the availability of common pools of knowledge, code and design that are accessible to all citizens and market entities, to create dynamic and innovative societies and economies, where knowledge is available without discrimination to all who need it to develop their civic and economic activities.

The aim of the Commons Transition Plan was to combine the best advice from the global commons and Ecuadorian civil society, in order to propose an integrated transition plan and the associated policy framework and proposals.

In this particular context, the project looked also beyond the state-market dichotomy, and inquired into non-market alternatives.

The following concerns a proposal to create ethical entrepreneurial coalitions that start to apply internal mutual coordination based on sharing their logistical and accounting information.

The Key Proposal: Introducing a new reciprocity-based licensing model

The labour, peer-to-peer (p2p), commons and other social change movements today are faced with a paradox.

On the one hand, especially after the global financial meltdown of 2008, we have a re-emergence of the cooperative movement and worker-owned enterprises, but they suffer from structural weaknesses. Cooperative entities work for their own members. They are often reluctant to accept new co-operators that would share existing profits and benefits, and are practitioners of the same proprietary knowledge and artificial scarcities as their capitalist counterparts. Even though they are internally democratic, they often participate in the same dynamics of capitalist competition, which undermines their own cooperative values.

On the other hand, we have an emergent field of open and commons-oriented peer production in fields such as free software, open design and open hardware, which do create common pools of knowledge for the whole of humanity, but at the same time, are dominated by both start-ups and large multinational enterprises using the same digital/immaterial commons.3

Thus, we need a new convergence or synthesis, an ‘open cooperativism’, that combines both commons-oriented open peer production models, with common ownership and governance models such as those of the cooperatives and the solidarity economic models.

What follows is a more detailed argument on how such a transition could be achieved.

Today we have a paradox. Part of that paradox is that the more communist4 the sharing license we use in the peer production of free software or open hardware, the more capitalist the practice, for example, the Linux commons becoming a corporate commons enriching IBM and the like. It works in a certain way and it seems acceptable to most free software developers, but is it the only way? 5

Indeed, the General Public License and its variants allow anyone to use and modify the software code (or design), as long as the changes are also put back in the common pool under the same conditions for further users. This is in fact technically ‘communism’ as popularised by Marx: ‘From each according to his abilities, to all according to their need’.6

But which then paradoxically allows multinationals to use the free software code for profit and capital accumulation. The result is that we do have an accumulation of immaterial commons, based on open input, participatory process, and commons-oriented output, but that it is subsumed to capital accumulation. It is at present not possible, or not easy, to have social reproduction (i.e. livelihoods) within the sphere of the commons. Hence the free software and culture movements are also ’liberal’ in essence, yet they are important as new social forces and an expression of new social demands. This is not only acknowledged by its leaders such as Richard Stallman, but also by anthropological studies like those of Gabriela Coleman.7 Not so tongue-in-cheek we could say they are liberal-communist and communist-liberal movements, which create a ‘communism of capital’. Is there an alternative? We believe there is, and this would be to replace non-reciprocal licenses that do not demand a direct reciprocity from its users, with licenses based on reciprocity. Call it a switch from ‘communist’, to ‘socialist’ licenses.

This is the choice of the Peer Production License9 as designed and proposed by Dmytry Kleiner; not to be confused with the Creative Commons Non Commercial license (CC-NC), as the logic is different.

The logic of the CC-NC is to offer protection to individuals reluctant to share, as they do not wish a commercialisation of their work that would not reward them for their labour. Thus the Creative Commons ‘Non-Commercial’ license stops further

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3 I am talking about actual commons, not internet infrastructure, which is not a commons: these real commons of knowledge, rules and design, can be used by capital, but they are still commons (available to all, open to contribution to all).
4 I refer specifically to the classic definition of communism from the 19th century: from each according to their contribution, to all according to their need. In this case, it is neither communal nor communist.
5 The GNU General Public License (GNU GPL or GPL) is the most widely used free software license, which guarantees end users (individuals, organizations, companies) the freedoms to use, study, share (copy), and modify the software. Software that allows these rights is called free software and, if the software is copyrighted, then it also requires that this be retained. The GPL demands both, More information at: Wikipedia 2014, GNU General Public License. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GNU_General_Public_License.
6 Richard Matthew Stallman is a software freedom activist and computer programmer. He campaigns for software to be distributed in a manner such that a user receiving it receives with it the freedom to use, study, distribute and modify that software. […] He is best known for launching the GNU Project, founding the Free Software Foundation, developing the GNU Compiler Collection and GNU Emacs, and writing the GNU General Public License. More information at: Wikipedia 2014, Richard Stallman. Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Stallman
8 Enid Gabriella Coleman (usually known as Gabriela Coleman or ‘Biella’) is an anthropologist, academic and author whose work focuses on hacker culture and online activism, particularly Anonymous. She currently holds the Wolfe Chair in Scientific & Technological Literacy at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. More information at: Wikipedia 2014, Gabriela Coleman. Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriela_Coleman
9 In general, the commons require ‘general reciprocity’ between the user and the commons, but no ‘direct’ reciprocity between individuals. This is the distinction between the commons and the gift economy; in the latter, direct reciprocity is required. More information at: P2P Foundation, 2014. Peer Production License. http://p2pfoundation.net/Peer_Production_License
economic development based on this open and shared knowledge, and keeps it entirely in the not-for-profit sphere.

The logic of the PPL is to allow commercialisation, but on the basis of a demand for reciprocity. It is designed to enable and empower a counter-hegemonic reciprocal economy that combines commons that are open to all that contribute, while charging a license fee for the for-profit companies who want to use without contributing. Not that much changes for the multinationals in practice, they can still use the code if they contribute, as IBM does with Linux, and those who don’t would pay a license fee, a commercial practice they are used to. This would direct a stream of income from capitalist organisations to the commons, but its main effect would be axiological or if you like, value-driven.

The entrepreneurial coalitions that are linked around a PPL commons would be explicitly oriented towards their contributions to the commons and the alternative value system that it represents. From the point of view of the peer producers or commoners, i.e. the communities of contributors to the common pool resources, it would allow them to create their own cooperative entities, in which profit would be subsumed to the social goal of sustaining the commons and the commoners. Even the participating for-profit companies would consciously contribute under a new logic. It links the commons to an entrepreneurial coalition of ethical market entities (cooperatives and other models), and it keeps the surplus value entirely within the sphere of commoners/co-operators instead of leaking out to the multinationals. In other words, through this convergence or rather combination of a commons model for abundant immaterial resources, and a reciprocity-based model for ‘scarce’ material resources, the issue of livelihoods and social reproduction would be solved, and surplus value is kept inside the commons sphere itself. It is the cooperatives that would, through their cooperative accumulation, fund the production of immaterial commons, because they would pay and reward the peer producers associated with them. In this way, peer production would move from a proto-mode of production, unable to perpetuate itself on its own outside capitalism, to an autonomous and real mode of production. It creates a counter-economy that can be the basis for reconstituting a ‘counter-hegemony’ with a for-benefit circulation of value, which allied to pro-commons social movements, could be the basis of the political and social transformation of the political economy. Hence we move from a situation in which the communism of capital is dominant, to a situation in which we have financial10 ‘capital for the commons’, increasingly insuring the self-reproduction of the peer production mode.

The PPL is used experimentally by Guerrilla Translation11 and it is being discussed in various places, such as France, in the open agricultural machining and design communities.

There is also a specific potential inside the commons-oriented ethical economy, such as the application of open book accounting and open supply chains that would allow a different value circulation, whereby the stigmergic12 mutual coordination that already works at a scale for immaterial cooperation and production would move to the coordination of physical production, creating post-market dynamics of allocation in the physical sphere. Replacing the market allocation through the price signal, and through central planning, this new system of material production would allow for massive mutual coordination instead, enabling a new form of ‘resource-based economics’.

Finally, this whole system can be strengthened by creating commons-based venture funding, so as to create material commons, as originally proposed by Dmytry Kleiner and elaborated by Bauwens and Restakis.13 In this way, the machine park itself is taken out of the sphere of capital accumulation. In this proposed system, cooperatives needing capital for machinery would post a bond, and the other cooperatives in the system would fund the bond and buy the machine for a commons in which both funders and users would be members. The interest paid on these loans would create a fund that would gradually be able to pay an increasing income to their members, constituting a new kind of basic income.

The new open cooperativism is substantially different from the older form. In the older form, internal economic democracy is accompanied by participation in market dynamics on behalf of the members, using capitalist competition, hence an unwillingness to share profits and benefits with outsiders. There is no creation of the commons. We need a different model in which the cooperatives produce commons, and are statutorily oriented towards the creation of the common good, with multi-stakeholders’ forms of governance which include workers, users-consumers, investors and the concerned communities.

Today there is a paradox, open communities of peer producers are oriented towards the start-up model and are subsumed to the profit model, while the cooperatives remain closed, use Intellectual Property (IP), and do not create commons. In the new model of open cooperativism, a merger should take place between the open peer production of commons and the cooperative production of value. The new open cooperativism integrates externalities, practices economic democracy, but international set of trivia readers, content curators and social/environmental issue-focused people who love to translate and love to share. We are not volunteers, but rather are building our own innovative cooperative business model which “walks the talk” of much contemporary writing on the new economy and its power to change. Source: Guerrilla Translation, http://guerrillatranslation.com/about-2

10 I am talking about financial capital, because in the contemporary commons, the social capital is being transmitted and accumulated within the commons (use value vs exchange value distinction); that is not to say this could be improved, but survival and reproduction is the key issue here.

11 Guerrilla Translation is a P2P translation collective and cooperative founded in Spain. Our group is a small

12 Stigmergy is a mechanism of indirect coordination between agents or actions. The principle is that the trace left in the environment by an action stimulates the performance of a next action, by the same or a different agent. In that way, subsequent actions tend to reinforce and build on each other, leading to the spontaneous emergence of coherent, apparently systematic activity. More information at: Wikipedia, 2014. Stigmergy. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stigmergy

produces commons for the common good, and socialises its knowledge. The circulation of the commons is combined with the process of cooperative accumulation, on behalf of the commons and its contributors. In the beginning, the immaterial commons field, following the logic of free contributions and universal use for everyone who needs it, would co-exist with a cooperative model for physical production based on reciprocity. But as the cooperative model becomes more and more hyper-productive and is able to create sustainable abundance in material goods, the two logics would merge.

**Mutual coordination mechanisms in the new 'ethical' entrepreneurial coalitions: Cybersyn redux**

Traditional economic debates are often between the options of state-initiated planning on one hand, and the allocation through market pricing signals on the other hand. But the social knowledge economy shows the increasingly likely path of a third method of allocation, that of transparent mutual coordination. The first attempt to create such a type of resource-based economy took place in the Soviet Union of the 1960s, when the construction of a proto-internet was initiated. It is well documented in *Red Plenty,* the book by Francis Spufford. The effort failed because of the opposition of the bureaucratic forces in the state apparatus. The second attempt at a resource-based economy based on democratic and mutual coordination took place in Allende’s Chile in the early 1970s, under the advice and leadership of complexity thinker Stafford Beer. It was successfully used on a smaller scale to overcome a crippling strike of the transportation industry, where the strike was overcome with 25% of the fleet and by using telexes for coordination. Thus the project Cybersyn was born, a project to mutually and democratically coordinate Chilean industry. The project was unfortunately destroyed through the military coup, and the effective bombing of its headquarters.

Nevertheless, under the impulse of the social knowledge communities, mutual coordination of complex activities is making a very strong appearance, even if it is limited, at present, to the production of ‘immaterial’ value, i.e. knowledge products. This emergence has implications for a transition to a new type of economic coordination that will co-exist with both state planning and traditional market pricing mechanisms. Indeed, the real and existing social knowledge economy of commons-oriented peer production of free software, open design and hardware, is known to function according to the principle of mutual coordination, or ‘stigmergy.’ The open design communities that already exist construct and coordinate their construction of common pools of knowledge, code, and design, through mutual signalling systems because their infrastructures of cooperation are fully open and transparent.

In the world of physical production, we can see an emergence of open supply chains and open book accounting on a much smaller scale such as the Curto Café Project in Rio de Janeiro. Nevertheless, there is a historical opportunity for an emergence of mutual coordination of physical production if the ‘ethical entrepreneurial coalitions,’ which may emerge around the social knowledge economy, decide to share their accounting and logistical information streams within those coalitions. In this scenario, which is hypothetical at present — but could be an integral part of a mature p2p/commons oriented social knowledge economy — we would see the gradual emergence of an alternative third way for the coordinated allocation of resources for economic production.

The historical and present importance of mutualisation in times of increasing resource scarcity. Discussion: The issue of eco-system sustainability

Faced with a grave ecological crisis, such as climate change and species extinction, but also in terms of impending resource crises, it is important to keep the historical perspective in mind of how humankind has faced such systemic crises in the past.

One of the paradoxes of globalised capitalism is indeed its reliance on economies of scale, which are in contradiction with the needs of the balance of the eco-system. In short, economies of scale create competitiveness through the production of more units at a lower cost, which necessitates more energy and uses more resources to be competitive.

What is needed in times of resource scarcity is the opposite approach: economies of scope, or in other words, ‘doing more with the same.’ This is exactly how past civilisation crises were solved. Faced with the crisis of the Roman Empire, which was also a globalised system faced with a resource crisis, medieval Europe responded with a re-localisation of production through the feudal domains, with the mutualisation of livelihoods and production through the monastic orders, and a Europe-wide open design community, represented by the unified culture of the Catholic Church and the exchange and distribution of technical knowledge through the monastic orders. Very similar responses, in terms of localisation through land domains and monastic orders, can be seen in Japan and China.

14 Editors’ note: Redux is a way of presenting something in a new way or bringing it back into circulation.


16 Cybersyn was a democratic planning / mutual coordination project for Chilean industry, undertaken by Stafford Beer for the government of Salvador Allende; you can find details here at http://p2pfoundation.net/Cybersyn

17 For example and development, see source: http://www.diigo.com/user/mbauwens/P2P-Supply-Chains
Today, the response of the sectors of society that are most sensitive to the combined crises are very similar. There is a mutualisation of knowledge through the open source movements, and the mutualisation of physical goods and infrastructures through the ‘sharing economy’. Thus the shift to the social knowledge economy is also the vital and appropriate response to the crises of the ecosystems.

**Why innovation should be located in open design communities**

There are several reasons why it is crucial to move towards a system of open innovation that is located in common pools of knowledge, code, and design, especially as it relates to the issue of sustainability.

The first and general reason is that patenting technology results in unacceptably large delays for invention and diffusion, as shown by the studies cited by George Dafermos. In times of climate change, extinction of species and other biospheric dangers, it would be highly damaging to keep the development and diffusion of such innovations under the control of private monopolies, if not to allow patented technologies to be shelved altogether for reasons like the protection of legacy systems or market share.

The second reason is equally structural and systemic. When innovation is located in corporate Research and Development (R&D) departments, the design is always influenced by market and artificial scarcity considerations. In private R&D, planned obsolescence is not a bug but a feature, a generalised and systematised process.

By contrast, open design, open hardware, open technology communities are naturally aligned to the sustainability which is inherent in the open design process.

Thus, open design communities have a much greater potential to design inherently for re-use, recycling, upcycling, circular economy processes, biodegradable material, interoperability, modularity, and other aspects that have direct effects on sustainability. Each innovation in this area is instantly available for global humanity through open access to the shared open pools of knowledge. Corporations and market entities which produce and sell on the basis of such designs are naturally aligned to the sustainability which is inherent in the open design processes.

Open design pools can be strategically allied to sustainable practices that increase this potential, for example by allying themselves with the ‘sharing economy’ practices of shared consumption.

Open distributed manufacturing of open hardware comes with enormous cost savings; it is estimated that open hardware is generally produced at one eighth of the cost of proprietary hardware. For countries embarking on this road, this has important implications for the balance of payment, the neo-colonial dependency on the globalised neoliberal system. The cost-savings free substantial resources that can be invested in other areas of development to increase the diffusion of a particular good or service, and so on.

Finally, in terms of production, the combination of open design with distributed machinery can or will have a tremendous effect on the geography of production, by allowing a re-localisation of production in micro-factories. Currently, studies show that the transportation of goods is three-quarters of the real ecological cost of production. Many of these transportation costs can be eliminated by the stimulation of local and domestic industries that combine the generalisation of the micro-factory system with global engineering by open design communities, under the general motto: ‘What’s heavy is local, what’s light is global’.

The role of ‘idle-sourcing’ and the sharing economy

The emergence of the social knowledge economy, as a process of mutualisation of immaterial resources, is also accompanied by the emergence of a ‘sharing economy’, i.e. a process of mutualisation of material resources.

This sharing economy is emerging partly as a crisis-driven response to the global economic crisis, and partly because current network technologies drastically diminish the coordination and transaction costs necessary to manage such mutualisation. In Rachel Botsman’s *Rise of Collaborative Consumption,* one of the earlier book treatments on this emergence, the author distinguishes three major categories of sharing:

- **Product Service Systems** like Bikesharing and Carsharing, based on a ‘usage mindset’ whereby you pay for the benefit of a product – what it does for you – without needing to own the product outright.

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18 George Dafermos is an internet researcher and copyleft activist affiliated with the P2P Foundation. He holds a PhD in Technology Policy and Management from Delft University of Technology and is an internationally recognised expert on issues related to the digital commons, peer production, open user innovation, online communities and new organisational structures enabled by the Internet. More information at: P2P Foundation. 2014. George Dafermos. Available at http://p2pfoundation.net/George_Dafermos

The sharing economy is an important response to resource and energy scarcity challenges, and in particular to the enormous waste in material resources that is the result of a profit-driven consumptive economy. The sharing economy allows massive idle-sourcing that is the re-use of little-used material possessions. Mutualising certain products in new networks, like car-sharing for example, allows for substantial savings in the use of energy and material resources necessary to fulfil certain functions like transportation.

The sharing economy is ideally supported and enabled by a social knowledge economy, which allows open information about idle resources to be shared across user communities.

It is important however, to look at the ownership and governance issues underpinning this emergence. One part of the sharing economy is driven by privately owned platforms that monetise such idle resources; and another part consists of social and non-profit initiatives that aim for non-monetary sharing of such resources.

The part of the sharing economy that is clearly driven by privately-owned, profit-driven platforms acting as intermediaries between users can clearly derail some of the advantages. For example, the use of dis-aggregated distributed labour, where isolated freelance workers are facing a demand side that is clearly empowered by the platform design, can exert a downward trend on wages.

A social knowledge policy should ensure that ownership and governance forms do not derail the free sharing of knowledge amongst all users, and that private ownership of platforms does not endanger such possibilities.

However, many of the activist forces in the sharing economy are working for socially progressive policies. This, for example, is the case for the eBook Guide: Policies for Shareable Cities, co-produced by Shareable magazine20 and the Sustainable Economies Law Center.21 Other policy productions, like for example the campaigns of Peers.org22 in the United States, are the product of an organisation that blurs the social contradictions between the users and the owners of the sharing infrastructures.

However, it remains a priority for the transition towards a social knowledge economy to systematically enable and empower the mutualisation of infrastructures that the emergent sharing economy represents, while matching it to ownership and governance forms that include the user communities.

A historical opportunity: The Convergence of Material/Technical P2P Infrastructures, Digital/Immaterial Commons, and Commons-Oriented Governance and Ownership Models

Today the transition towards a social knowledge economy is favoured by a strong convergence of social and technological trends and affordances, i.e. the technological possibilities that can be embraced by emancipatory political and social forces.

The first is of course the peer-to-peer logic of open technical infrastructures like the internet, which allow for permission-less self-organisation and value creation by productive communities that can operate both on a local and global scale. The Internet is, in effect, not just a communication medium, but more properly a production medium.

The second is the distribution of the means of production through three-dimensional (3D) printing and other trends in the miniaturisation of machinery. This allows much lower entry barriers for the self-organisation of a civic and cooperative economy. This is the ‘Internet of Manufacturing’. The so-called Sharing Economy23 allows for the mutualisation of critical infrastructures and the ‘idle-sourcing’ of isolated and scattered resources. The ‘Internet of Things’ allows for a more fine-grained control and the autonomy and interconnection of objects.

The third is the distribution of financial capital through crowdfunding, social lending and other possibilities, which allow a more fine-grained allocation of investments by citizens themselves. This is the ‘Internet of Ethical Financial Capital’.

The fourth is the development of renewable distributed energy, which allows for an ‘Internet of Energy’, and energetic autonomy at more local levels, such as villages, neighbourhoods and even households.

Free software, open knowledge, and open design show the possibilities for increasing the networking and mutualisation of immaterial resources. The three other forms of distribution point to a potential for the networking and mutualisation of physical resources. In other words, we have a great potential to engineer a convergence of both the immaterial and material commons.

Thus, we can envisage the social knowledge economy as enabling a vast series of interconnected knowledge commons for every field of human activity which is enabled both by material conditions (the internet of manufacturing and energy) and immaterial conditions (metrics, legal frameworks, and so on).

20 Shareable is an award-winning non-profit news, action and connection hub for the sharing transformation. Source: http://www.shareable.net/
21 Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELC) cultivates a new legal landscape that supports community resilience and grassroots economic empowerment. We provide essential legal tools so communities everywhere can develop their own sustainable sources of food, housing, energy, jobs, and other vital aspects of a thriving community. Source: http://www.scle.org/
22 Peers is a member-driven organisation that supports the sharing economy movement. We believe that by sharing what we already have – idle cars, homes, skills and time – everyone benefits in the process. The sharing economy is helping us pay the bills, work flexible hours, meet new people or spend more time with our families. We think it’s how the 21st century economy should work, so we’re coming together to grow, mainstream and protect the sharing economy. Source: http://www.peers.org/
23 I refer to it as ‘so-called’ because most of it is not sharing, but just renting and such, and because the sharing platforms are subjected to extractive governance and property modalities.
However, as we have shown in our introduction about the regimes of value, such commons can still be the subject of an extractivism of knowledge which benefits privileged elite players. And as we have shown in our distinctions regarding technology regimes, the p2p technical affordances can be embedded in value-sensitive design that privileges certain players, like the owners of the platforms. The great danger is therefore that what we dis-intermediate and decentralise with one hand can be re-intermediated by new dominant players through the other hand.

The promise of the social knowledge economy will therefore not be realised without profound changes in the regimes of property and governance.

This is why we must insist that the social knowledge economy, i.e. commons-oriented peer production by autonomous productive communities, goes hand in hand with both peer property and peer governance.

Today, social media like Facebook, search engines like Google, are in the hands of a new type of ‘netarchical’ oligopolies. Many enabling platforms, such as those for crowdfunding and social lending, are merely forms of distributed capitalism, functioning like reverse market mechanisms (such as the Kickstarter crowdfunding platform) that do not create and sustain commons.

Hence, the distribution of the means of knowledge creation and diffusion, of production machinery and financial capital, of distributed energy and of the vital land resources, needs to be matched by distributed and common ownership and common land. Without the latter, distributed infrastructures and practices are subject to extractive accumulation of capital and rent extraction, to the detriment of the autonomy of the participating individuals and communities.

While the inmaterial commons of non-rival and shareable goods can be protected by open licenses, the material production resulting from them should take place through ethical entities that are the property of the value producers themselves. Today there is an emergence of a wide range of dynamic governance and property regimes that can guarantee distribution and democratisation of decision-making power. Governance innovations such as the Viable Systems Model, sociocracy and holocracy, have been developed to allow for democratic decision-making in productive communities; Dynamic property regimes as the FairShares Model of Enterprise, Solidarity Coops, Community Land Trusts, and many others, have been developed to ‘common’-ise and distribute property. The legal and regulatory frameworks of the social knowledge economy should facilitate the development and choice of such modalities. The key is to enable a pluralistic Commonwealth richness of choices that have, as key requirements, both productive democracy and the integration of environmental and social externalities.

As we have seen above in the introduction, distinct socio-technical regimes are in tension to deliver genuine common pool resources and ideas of a sharing economy. P2p infrastructures and practices can be embedded in netarchical models (hierarchical control, ownership and governance of the enabled p2p social logic) and concepts of distributed capitalism (monetising of idle and shareable resources), but these are also delivered through local community and global commons-oriented property and governance regimes.

How do we proceed to resolve this tension? My recommendation is for the creation of three institutions (or three in one) that can insure democratic ownership and governance within the sphere of the immaterial and material commons:

The Institute for the Commons
This generic Institute creates the general conditions and civic infrastructures that are necessary for the commons and autonomous social production to exist. An example would be to create an active literacy for commons-oriented peer production, for example to create a general awareness of licensing issues, funding mechanisms, the mutualisation of the workplace and productive resources.

The Institute for Pluralistic Ownership
This institute, in cooperation with the Institute for the Commons presented above, assists individuals and communities and actors of the social knowledge economy to know the ownership alternatives that are available, facilitates access to that knowledge, to legal enablement, and so on. It can be modelled on successful civic initiatives like the Sustainable Economics Law Center in San Francisco, under the leadership of Janelle Orsi; and of the ShareLex movement in Europe.

The Institute for Pluralistic Governance
This institute, in cooperation with the Institute for the Commons presented above, assists individuals, communities and actors of the social knowledge economy to know the governance alternatives that are available, facilitates access to that knowledge, to legal enablement, and so on. It helps find training in the human capabilities that favour multi-stakeholder, democratic, open and transparent forms of governance.

In the context of a to be constructed Partner-State model, which creates the civic infrastructures necessary to enable and empower autonomous social production, such a set of institutions would go a long way in creating the conditions for a p2p-based, commons-oriented, phase transition. A successful approach would set out to simultaneously change civil society, the market, and the state function. Such a society would internalise negative social and environmental costs, create network-based positive externalities, and would be based on an inclusive democracy of production.

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24 Source: https://www.kickstarter.com/
26 The viable system model (VSM) is a model of the organisational structure of any viable or autonomous system. A viable system is any system organised in such a way as to meet the demands of surviving in the changing environment. One of the prime features of systems that survive is that they are adaptable. More information at: Wikipedia, 2014. Viable system model. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viable_system_model
27 Editors’ note: Source: Sustainable Economies Law Center, http://www.theoelc.org
SHARING

Acts, actions or reciprocal relations between individuals, groups and communities to enjoy and enrich something together (time, objects, experiences, etc.) based on respectful mutuality, interdependency, openness and generosity.
Maya Indira Ganesh started at Tactical Tech in 2009 as a consultant determining how documentation of violations against sex workers in India and Cambodia could be used in advocacy. This was a natural progression from her work as a researcher, activist and writer with women’s rights organisations in India and internationally. Now she is the Director of Applied Research, a new team that reflects Tactical Tech’s focus on creative and ‘field-building’ research. She has Masters degrees from Delhi University, India, and the University of Sussex, UK.

Gabi Sobliye worked, prior to joining the team of Tactical Tech, at Transparency International, contributing to data projects such as the Global Corruption Barometer, and for The Guardian newspaper in London. Gabi holds a Masters in Human Rights from University College London. At Tactical Tech she works on visual persuasion areas central to our book Visualising Information for Advocacy.

Interviewed by ALH.
it introduces different ways of using technology in NGO work, publishing and infrastructure.

Then we had some more in-a-box series, there was Message and Mobiles in a box, done around 2008. These are basically tools for creating and amplifying your message, in the digital world. Message in a Box was online and available offline, it visually includes everything which was relevant in 2008 from audio to print to introduce it on a global level to NGOs and activism groups. This is always a focus for us to translate materials globally, to open up the processes, share them and say Hi, make your own version of it, or Can you build on this?

We made this website which contains the updated content of: Message and Mobile in a box in a new format, now named: Info Activism How to Guide.3

We built up a women’s rights version of this how-to website, as a campaigning info-activism toolkit. For this, we had a partnership with an NGO in India. So we customised it to the context of their NGO, working in conflict regions of south-east Asia, east Africa and the Arab region. The website is quite similar, but it is better organised. That’s the evolution of the in-a-box toolkits. The focus was on how you use digital campaign. What is right for your processes? What are the strategies and tools to organise your campaign? Workshops often help with the implementation, but how can they use it by themselves?

This was what I was going to ask you, how does your ‘target’ group/audience implement the information and tools?

MIG: For example, with the women’s rights page, we suggest ways in which they can use the tools, resources online and offline. It has been translated into four other languages — Kiswahili, Hindi, Bengali and Arabic.

The reason why I mentioned that is because we like to look at things, and see how they can be reinvented and improved. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t. We have some groups who look at older material and want to build something new from it, which was how the women’s rights toolkits I just mentioned happened. Now, we may have moved on already but looking at legacy and sustainability is an issue for an organisation that has been around for ten years. Sustainability is about sharing, saying you can use it, repurpose it, translate it, and remix it.

Now I move on to talk about another very big project we did in 2009. 10 tactics. 10 tactics is based on an event: the Info-activism camp in 2009, we did another one last year in June. One output was a film: 10 tactics for turning information into action.4 It’s an educational documentary on activists around the world, showcasing how they use digital tools and activism to leverage their advocacy. Along with the film came this very beautiful pack, the 10 tactics pack, with 10 cards and a DVD. Basically, it is repurposing the ideas of Message in a Box. It has 10 basics and 10 tactics card. So we also had people doing screenings around the world for a year and a half.

That’s how we build and sustain contacts and networks. It got translated into more than eighteen languages, we used something called dotsub5 to allow people to translate/subtitle in many languages, it’s a free open source tool.

That’s the other thing that is really important to us, that things are open source, freely available, not proprietary, and accessible in different languages. We had a network of volunteers translating it into many different languages. Through that process, it became something of their own. You see, it needs a lot of infrastructure to make things happen.

Our projects all get developed into different areas and we try to constantly keep up-to-date with our online materials, so there is another website besides the main information activism site, called unstitched.6 Unstitched contains all of the old case studies that were in 10 tactics with a lot of new ones. And we even have an Arabic version that takes the 10 tactics cards and puts them into a different format.

For the Arabic version, we also had a small grant to translate it. However, the grant unfortunately — or fortunately — came when the revolution started in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, so this really made us think: ‘What are we trying to do here? Do we want to tell them what to do, because they were in the middle of a revolution and organising their own stuff. So what we made was a suite of new, locally contextualised self-learning materials on digital activism in Arabic, campaigning and working with data and evidence in advocacy together with different partners.

We went to well-known NGOs in the Arab area to do some workshops with them, let them choose and work with our toolkits, ask for feedback and allow them to do upgrades.

One of our most popular product also made in 2009, is Security in-a-box.7 This is all the other work that we do around digital security and privacy, and training people to be able to be safer and smarter in their use in technology. Security in-a-Box

SUSTAINABILITY IS ABOUT SHARING, SAYING YOU CAN USE IT, REPURPOSE IT, TRANSLATE IT, AND REMIX IT

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3 Mobiles in-a-box from the Tactical Technology Collective is a collection of tools, tactics, how-to guides and case studies designed to help advocacy and activist organisations use mobile technology in their work. Mobiles in-a-box is designed to inspire you, to present possibilities for the use of mobile telephony in your work and to introduce you to some tools which may help you.


5 https://women'srights.informationactivism.org

6 https://archive2013.tacticaltech.org/set/project/10-tactics-turning-information-into-action

7 https://camp2013.tacticaltech.org

8 If you check www.informationactivism.org you will see the original 10 tactics project.

9 Dotsub is a browser-based, one-stop, self-contained system for creating and viewing subtitles for videos in multiple languages across all platforms, including web-based, mobile devices, and transcription and video editing systems. It’s easy to use, nothing to buy or download, and it’s fun. More info: www.dotsub.com

10 https://informationactivism.org/en/unstitched

11 Security in-a-box is a collaborative effort of the Tactical Technology Collective and Front Line. It was created to meet the digital security and privacy needs of advocates and human rights defenders. Security in-a-Box includes a How-to Booklet, which addresses a number of important digital security issues. Further info: https://securityinabox.org
now gets nearly two million views a year. All the positive things you can do with digital advocacy also always bring certain risks. Security in-a-box is an online and offline resource available in fourteen languages. We also customise it and create contextual versions for different organisations, such as for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities in the Arab region,12 women’s human rights defenders, environmental activists and other marginalised communities who are at risk and under certain threat online.

So you encourage organisations to make their own versions and connect it with you, and let the material grow beyond your resources? MIG: Yes absolutely, we encourage that.

So besides that, what was happening at that time was that we grew stronger into the area of visualisation, how it works in advocacy and activism. We started looking at visualisation tools for large amounts of information as a way to get through, what we call, the ‘60-page-syndrome.’ NGOs have the tendency to write and publish vast reports, which then nobody reads. But for advocacy, you need to get the message out in a clear and easily digestible way to your audiences who will most likely not read such long reports. So, we wanted to enable them to present that information in a nicer way.

For those issues, it became very popular to use visualisation tools. Therefore, we continued sharing and demystifying digital tools for advocacy, and collected them on the website Drawing by Numbers.13 And then we started the book Visualising Information for Advocacy Guide.14 The book started as data and design notes,15 which people are still using for practicing and training. Though most of the content is now subsumed within the book, the online chapters are still being used by people for training workshops. You sometimes never know how things are used by your audience.

This was also one question I had, do you think, as you have a great mix of media, that you reach a broader audience and are successful in engaging people with your tools and products?

MIG: Yes, this works in different ways, and we are not always sure how it works in different places for different kinds of products we create. So in some places, people only want to read online or have iPad versions, as we saw for the Visualising Advocacy book. and they want a print copy. Actually, a lot of people like the print copy because it is a book about visuals. In some cases, I think people just want to get free stuff. If we set up a stall at a conference or workshop and give out our materials, people just pick them up because they look pretty and because they’re free. That is not to be cynical, it’s more to say that we don’t always know how multi-media engagement and outreach works. In fact, this is something we are going to be working on expressly now, to find out more about what works and what doesn’t.

How much feedback and knowledge do you have about the implementation of your tools?

MIG: Part of our monitoring and evaluation is also asking people and organisations how they use the material, and this feeds into how we rework it. For example when we are working with organisations in workshops, we gather feedback or give them advice on how to use our material, and we let them give us feedback later on what could be changed and done differently. Feedback is very critical, but we try to get it while we are working with people. Afterwards it’s really hard to get.

How many people actually work for Tactical Tech?

MIG: Now we are about thirty people. But we have only been that many for the last few years. The numbers have been steadily increasing...!

How are you sustained financially?

MIG: We have project, program and organisational funding, and there is a list of our

12 https://securityinabox.org/en/communities/01
13 https://drawingbynumbers.org
14 Visualising Information for Advocacy is a book about how advocates and activists use visual elements in their campaigns. This 170 page guide features over 60 case studies from around the world to provide an introduction to understanding visual information and a framework for using images for influence. More info: https://visualising-advocacy.org
15 http://drawingbynumbers.org/notes
How do you get your audience involved, what is the best way for you to engage with them using your tools? Do you have a main audience you target at? If so, what do you think is your impact on the target group? Do you think that with the actions and projects you mentioned you are able to empower and activate people to more actions and advocacy work?

GS: One thing is the network itself, created by sharing all the materials online, another thing is doing a lot of offline events and workshops. With Security in-a-box (SiaB), for example, we do security trainings on the ground with different organisations. SiaB is the main resource that supports trainees after the event, as a sort of reference guide. Or we do very big events, such as the info-activism camp mentioned before. So this is very important for us as we bring together our networks and new people working in that field, which is very interesting for us, also to find new work.

Our audience is very broad, consisting of activists, political activists, advocates and journalists around the world, and it’s different for different projects. Sometimes they invite us to do a workshop for example.

How important do you see the role of open design in your work, and have you dealt with reluctant designers when they hear you will offer these open source tools?

GS: When the concept of Tactical Technology Collective was first established eleven years ago a founding principle was for the organisation to use and promote open source tools and to release all of our material under a Creative Commons licence. This means that there were a lot of adaptations, customisations and translations of our work.

For example the project 10 tactics, is a good way to see how our initial concept was transformed into something different: 10 tactics is a short film and a series of cards for creative campaigning that was translated into twenty-three languages. We managed the translations ourselves with volunteers and reviewers. 10 tactics was then adapted into the how-to.informationactivism.org website. We then worked with a women’s rights organisation in India, CREA, to adapt the website for women’s rights groups in three regions together with seven partners – ranging from Kenya to Sudan. We produced a women’s rights campaigning toolkit, which was based on the feedback from these organisations. The Guide has been translated into four languages and has been printed and distributed by these partner organisations, as the communities are often remote and have no access to the internet.

Or, for example, our Visualising Information for Advocacy book is now being translated into Georgian by volunteers at the Georgian organisation Jump Start Georgia, which is great for us as we rarely have the funding for all the translations, but it’s very important for outreach.

Regarding the designers and programmers we work with, we usually have it written into our contracts with them that the code will be open source and the designs will be published under a Creative Commons licence. There is a group of programmers in Berlin whom we work with a lot. They only do work for social issues, they are called Sinnwerkstatt.

Another project that highlights our translation and customisation work was when we met up with five organisations in Beirut to brainstorm ways in which our range of info-activism resources could be adapted for use by activists in the Arab region. Our partners on this project were Dawlaty, SMEX and AlCity all based in Lebanon, 7iber in Jordan and the Development House in Yemen. We wanted to go beyond straight-up translations because we felt that these partners had a lot to contribute in terms of their own ideas and experiences, so we suggested that they either translate, customise or ‘remix’ our materials in a way that they thought would be useful to their communities and their own interests.

So this was a workshop in a different location?

GS: Yes, this was a workshop in Beirut. Our partners chose four resources we offered. They customised our resources in the way it felt useful to them and translated it into different languages. One such customisation was by a Syrian organisation, customising 10 tactics on the subject of the Syrian revolution. They highlighted 51 case studies and tactics in the Syrian revolution.

This refers also to the technical side, to copy and use it for their issues?

GS: Yes, exactly. This also relates to where we are aiming to go in the future. What we are trying to become much better at is researching and writing on the go. Usually, we have our in-house teams working on things. So once we finish, we release it. But sometimes that means we are silent for quite some time and people are less aware of what we are working on. So we are trying to do this live research more actively and tell people what we are working with at the moment, where we are struggling and challenges we have overcome.

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16 https://www.tacticsofresistance.org/about
17 https://tactico2013.tacticsofresistance.org
18 www.creativecommons.org
19 https://howto.informationactivism.org
20 http://www.creaworld.org
21 https://womensrights.informationactivism.org
22 http://sinnwerkstatt.com
23 http://jumpstart.geis_chapter1.pdf
24 https://dawlaty.org
25 www.smex.org
26 www.altcity.me
27 www.7iber.me
28 www.thedh.org
So the whole process shall become more transparent, so that people can pick up information in the middle and start working with it already?

GS: Yes, exactly. As I mentioned we are trying to work on being more open about the processes and challenges we face in order to add to the conversation and provide resources for others working in this area. For example, in the coming months we will feature two blog posts on the Visualising Advocacy29 website that detail the process of making data visualisations from start to finish. Often viewers only see the slick result at the end and the creation of it is often mysterious and inaccessible. Our aim is to open up about our process and ask other visualisation artists to also contribute to the blog, thus adding much needed information on the realities of creating these projects.

What do you think are the most powerful tools, methods and platforms to reach your audience through the ‘noise’ of daily life? How do you get people engaged?

MIG: We spend a long time trying to define audiences. If we are working with a group, then we would work together to identify their audience, i.e. who are the people that would help them achieve the change they are trying to achieve and how to get people to care. Meaning that people care for things that are close to them, such as their family, loved ones and their community, and we are trying to extend this care to other people. We ask questions about what would make them widen their care. For this, we use the line of influence30 which identifies five positions. First, you have ‘active allies’ on one side, willing to get active for your cause, the next ones are ‘allies’ — less likely to do an action but still on your side. Then you have ‘neutral’, an audience you’d attempt to convince and pull on your side, and then the ‘opponents’ and ‘active opponents’, which you can only change by force, such as a change of law. We work with organisations on identifying who their audience is and how to reach them, and then on creating a detailed profile of their target audience.

Regarding the ‘noise’ question, we are aware that it’s hard to cut through, but it depends on the audience, the information, and how it is presented.

What I think is powerful is something unusual and creative, which does not always require money and capacity. For example, I, along with Rahul Bhargava from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) who is also on the board of Tactical Tech, recently held a workshop at the Open Knowledge Festival here in Berlin on low-tech data visualisation. The idea being that most of the world is offline, so if you want to reach communities that are offline or illiterate or if you have limited resources such as a small budget or low tech capacities, then an answer could be low-tech data visualisations in order to communicate information. One way is by exploring creative but easy-to-make graphs and charts, and thinking of them in an unusual way. I think creativity is key, though that’s a hard thing to say to people since they often get scared of that term.

Regarding social media, it’s a great tool as well, but you have to really look into your area of reach, as some countries use Twitter and others Facebook, it really depends.

How do you see your work or similar projects repositioning the consciousness and actions of design, designers and designing?

GS: After launching the book, we have had some interest from design schools, universities and lecturers, who are interested on behalf of their students in this area of ‘designing for good’. Our book is one of few written in the area of information design and activism. A portion of our work is conducting workshops and training for organisations and activists, most of whom are not designers. So we are interested in talking to designers about advocacy and the way they think about messaging and the new ways of designing for advocacy purposes, but it’s difficult to get funding for that. What we would hope for, of course, is to motivate future students to go and work in that area. As we are a multidisciplinary organisation that brings together design, technology and activism I see our work contributing to how young designers could work in the future, and from what I have seen there seems to be a lot of interest in this.

The book Agents of Alternatives strongly deals with the topic of agency and agents. What is your definition and position towards these terms, what does it mean to you?

MIG: How I would frame it is the work we have done with technology. It’s about enabling people who are already agents, who see themselves already as ‘agents of change’ and just give them greater fluency with technology. So it’s about how to support other people who are already active and influential where they are (here, I mean specifically political activists, advocacy groups etc.), how to make them more efficient in their work, conscious, strategic and smart with technology. Technology and information are kind of the lifeblood of activism today, so it is about enhancing the agency of people. And through things like translations or creative commons licensing, these things allow agency in terms of ownership as well. We don’t want to be only an international organisation that produces things for others to consume, but we want to give people a kind of agency through ownership in customising, remixing, learning and translation. That’s how we foster their agency, through ownership.

I also hope that by doing the hands-on events, everyone has something to teach and learn, experience skill-share lessons etc. You come not only as a participant, but also as a facilitator. I would say that we do not only foster agency in our philosophy, but also in our practice. For us, giving agency to people is very fundamental. This is how the network expands and grows, too.

Thank you Maya and Gabi, a very inspiring conversation!
Credits
Please see the credit and copyright information alongside each image or illustration used in this book. Where original diagrams or illustrations are not credited individually, they were provided by the contributor. Every effort has been made by the editors to contact all the copyright holders. However, if visual materials have been used here without appropriate credit and copyright, please contact the editors and we shall take steps to ensure that a formal acknowledgement is made in any future edition.

Websites and online sources
Contributions were received for this book through 2013 and 2014 and, at the time of receipt, website addresses and sources of online materials were checked regarding their accuracy and availability. Due to page layout restrictions we could not include the date of access for the web or online materials. During the production process to prepare this publication we noted that some web links had expired. However, we hope that there will be sufficient contextual information for the reader to be able to research these references and sources further.

Workshop Berlin: Preparing the crowdfunding video for the book. © AoA.
Agents of Alternatives explores the visions, actions, tools and impacts of ‘alternativ-ists’ who are applying creative practices to forge plausible, alternative ways of working and living. It presents an integrated framework for navigating a collection of essays, interviews and case studies from well-known international contributors and local activists. These originate from diverse fields, including design, the arts, architecture, education, politics, economics, urban planning and city administration, social enterprises, non-governmental organisations, and experts on the Commons. They show how to engage with the locale, communities and distributed diasporas. Through their voices and actions they enable professionals, amateurs and citizens to understand the rich possibilities of creating and designing together in open, participatory and imaginative ways.

This book is an essential reference for anyone who wishes to become part of positive societal change. We hope it inspires teachers, students, activists, alternative life-stylers, and citizens who wish to re-design our realities.

Featuring the following projects and organisations in interviews and case studies:

With essays by: Cindy Kohtala, David Bollier, Frigga Haug, Michel Bauwens, Martin Parker, Otto von Busch, University of the Neighbourhoods, Valerie A. Brown & John A. Harris and the editors.

Editors: Alastair Fuad-Luke is a sustainable design facilitator, educator, writer and activist and currently Professor of Emerging Design Practices, Aalto ARTS, Aalto University, Finland. Anja-Lisa Hirscher MA is a graphic designer, researcher and activist for open and participatory fashion and clothing design, working in Germany and Finland. Katharina Moebus MA is an interdisciplinary designer, organizer, researcher and activist with a focus on socio-political issues, based in Berlin.

Agents of Alternatives, Berlin, Germany.
www.agentsofalternatives.com

ISBN: 978-3-00-049379-9 paperback
Cecilia Palmer is a Berlin-based designer and activist who’s work links ethics, aesthetics with fashion design and web-coding. She is the founder of the green, open source fashion label Pamoyo and the upcycling and redesign event Fashion Reloaded. Both initiatives aim to engage consumer and producers with open source and upcycling ideas. Cecilia has a mixed background within social and environmental projects as well as clothes making and coding. This multi-faceted experience allows her to combine tangible handicrafts work with the intangible world of coding, and thus, interconnect these and find links and methods to benefit each other.

Interviewed by ALH.

Cecilia Palmer at a joint workshop of Fashion Reloaded & Make(able), WärkFest 2013 © Harri Hemi.

OPEN FASHION & CODE

with Cecilia Palmer

Hello Cecilia, can you tell us about your personal background and your recent projects related to the open design movement, Fashion & Code, workshops, etc.?

Yes, I have a mixed background both in fashion and software coding and as well as working in social and environmental projects which have been coming and going in different proportions. For the last six years I have been running a label called Pamoyo, in the fashion area of my work, which functions according to open source principles as much as possible. I was trying to integrate different elements of a more sustainable fashion production such as upcycling, organic materials, local production and trying out other models than the conventional ones.

Next to that, I do a lot of workshops and participatory events, integrating upcycling and Open Design by just letting people come together and finding new ways of creating what they wear, and finding paths away from the consumerism, through do-it-yourself and do-it-together (DIY/DIT) workshops, learning and exchanging skills, trying different ways of upcycling and making together. But on the periphery of these things I have always worked with the internet, building websites mostly. These two things have been feeding into each other a lot. That’s why I started thinking about open source also related to fashion design. So I started releasing patterns under open source licenses.

Fashion & Code, how do they work together or how you think they benefit each other? How did you come up with this idea of combining/linking them?

They benefit each other in a way that Fashion is a lot about tangible handicraft, whereas a code is something intangible. So they complement each other. I was always making stuff, for as long as I can remember, and mostly I taught myself. I was making stuff for myself, friends and then I started selling things, so I kind of grew into this. A few years back, when I was working for this organisation called Loesje I was doing a lot of work on the computer, and I was missing working with my hands. I was researching for examples of merchandising items in 2006, but
there were so few examples. American Apparel were selling themselves as a social
company, but there was a general awareness that things weren’t so good, and it was
still really hard to get hold of sustainable, eco and ethical ‘ok’ T-shirts, at a reason-
able price. Somewhere there I started thinking why not doing something myself
about this, so I left this work and started my own label full-time.

So basically you discovered yourself the need for something that was not available
on the market, and you decided to do something about this?

Exactly, I was suffering — I needed something that wasn’t there. That’s what I think made many people start in this
pioneering area. For example, in the sustainable fashion
business, if there aren’t any factories producing local and fair, we have to build one.

Related to your experience, how important do you see experimentation or the will-
ingness to experiment in the design process or for a project? Basically leaving the
path which what you have been taught, or what is currently the ‘norm’, to follow
your own idea/vision?

Yes, I think that is very important. That’s also why I think it is important to work
across disciplines, because as you say if you are taught that things are to be done a
certain way, it can be quite difficult to change them. As Albert Einstein observed,
the world will not evolve past its current state of crisis by using the same thinking
that created the situation. I think that is very correct; it is
hard to take distance from something you are embedded in,
to do it really differently. That’s what I see in sustainable
fashion, there is a lot happening, but on the other hand
I see a lot that is just the same thing in green, and in the end it is just based on the same consumer patterns. Maybe
buy a little less for more money, but it’s not changing the core of the problem. For
example cotton isn’t a sustainable material, it takes a lot of resources to grow it. If
it’s organic it’s a little better but it’s still not a sustainable material. Just removing
pesticides doesn’t change the problem.

And then I think it is easier for people who come from mixed backgrounds, to
imagine things outside the box. For example from my network, half of the people
working with fashion have studied and the other half is self-taught.

This brings me to the next question: Do you think, that the problems facing fashion
designers in their future is addressed appropriately in design education, or are they
caught in the same thinking and making patterns?

What I noticed from people coming out of design school, studying fashion, is that
they are very much afraid of doing anything else and breaking out from what they
have been taught. I can understand, because in this industry it is very hard to start
your own business, therefore many people who do start a business and do things
differently have not studied fashion, and therefore don’t know how hard it will be.

So in a sense it is good that they do. And young fashion designers can work and
learn from designers who have already established their business and then find
their own way. But if you go and work for a bigger company as a designer, you
won’t be able to change anything. There are only a few people who dare to think
very revolutionary, who will go and do it their way.

This requires real braveness and a radical way of doing things.

Yes, and I cannot say this for all the design education, but quite a few institutions
teach in a didactic way, telling their students: ‘That’s the way we do it, and you
should not do it in any other way’.

You have worked for a while in the area of Open Fashion Design, how do you
see this growing in the future? Can you tell me something about your experience
regarding the benefits and the feedback you gained opening up your designs? For
example, at Panoyo you had downloadable patterns, whereas fashion designers
seem to be scared to give out their source code and secrets to everyone. Maybe you
can name some benefits for designers in general?

First of all, it is an irrational fear. I mean designers get copied all the time from
bigger companies, they don’t even need their patterns to do this. That is really
annoying, but they will do it anyway. Therefore I don’t understand what there is
to be feared if we let customers/wearers experiment with our designs. Ok, maybe
tings don’t come out exactly as you (the designer) planned, but the person who
will take this pattern and do something with it, will create a much more personal
relationship with it. I have actually never heard of other fashion designers taking
the patterns, there are mostly customers making things for themselves, at least
from the positive feedback I have received. They give you feedback on things, how
to improve it, and you also get to know people in a different way (e.g. via email).
That is very interesting, because when you design and produce things and send
them to a shop to sell, and then they hang there, you
have no idea who will wear them. You let them go and
it creates a distance. When opening the designs you do
not offer the ready-made items, thereby you can get
much closer to the wearer if they ask you for advice
or give you feedback. Because the pattern is only an
idea, a concept, it only becomes a product when someone
actually makes it. Ok, maybe
it’s only a collaborative process. People also took me very seriously on the promise that I
would put my whole collection online, which unfortunately I was not able to do, as
during the process I realised that it is so much work. The designer-maker-wearer
dynamic was very interesting.

So people are very eager to get this opportunity, but do you think they would also
be willing to invest in something like this?

Yes, you could say it is a different shopping experience. I know people already do

THE PATTERN IS ONLY AN IDEA, A CONCEPT, IT ONLY BECOMES A PRODUCT WHEN SOMEONE ACTUALLY MAKES IT
this, and it's growing a lot. But the moment you sell things, you need to create it as a product. In my case, I was still mostly focusing on the actual garment design. I was uploading patterns I could work with, not specifically made for downloading or DIY. I think it is difficult to do both, if you are only a one-person company because the patterns and DIY instructions are very time consuming as well.

What do you think of the development in this area globally? Do you know similar approaches happening elsewhere?
Yes, it's great, there are more and more things happening. For example, there are different business ideas emerging around patterns and non-finished products. I think it is moving away from searching for our happiness in material goods towards experiences. Experiences already seem to gain a higher status than owning things. This goes hand in hand with making your own things. People also want to buy objects which have a story, slowly moving away from mass-produced goods. I'm curious as to where it will go and to what scale. I think it's very important that people dare to try new things and different business models. In terms of business model, they just need to be aware that it's not going to be the thing that makes you rich, but it is so important that they do it. And they might not get rich but they can get happier. It is driven by people who have passion and it needs someone to start, so more people will follow and it can become mainstream. I think that open design, and products, which are unfinished are now about to become this kind of trend.

Where do you locate yourself in the fashion system?
I see my role mainly as a provocateur. To poke around and question the things and places that have always been done the same way. To break rules, do things you are not allowed to do.

How do you see your work or similar projects repositioning the consciousness and actions of design, designers and designing?
Wow that’s so difficult, it’s so hard to describe a position when you are right in it. I think, at the moment, people who try to change things feel that it’s not going to be the thing that makes you rich, but it is so important that they do it. And they might not get rich but they can get happier. It is driven by people who have passion and it needs someone to start, so more people will follow and it can become mainstream. I think that open design, and products, which are unfinished are now about to become this kind of trend.

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The book Agents of Alternatives strongly deals with the topic of agency and agents. What is your definition and position towards these terms, what does it mean to you?
I think it is to dare to put yourself out there. Be a voice for things that don’t have a voice yet. Filling in the gap where you see there is a gap, and you see something needs to happen, then push these developments.

Do you think that with the actions and projects you mentioned you are able to empower people for a transition towards more alternative and sustainable behaviour?
I hope so. I don’t know if what I do empowers people. But I hope to open a little bit the door to a planet elsewhere where we don’t only go shopping.

But you got very positive feedback from the people you worked with in workshops?
It's a positive exchange. I also get feedback from people who do things at home, or want to start designing their clothes... But, I don’t know if it really happens. However, the joint making process creates a momentum of very positive impact, and I hope that impact is sustained to change their consumption behaviour, because that’s why I am doing it.

What do you think of the development in this area globally? Do you know similar approaches happening elsewhere?
Yes, it’s great, there are more and more things happening. For example, there are different business ideas emerging around patterns and non-finished products. I think it is moving away from searching for our happiness in material goods towards experiences. Experiences already seem to gain a higher status than owning things. This goes hand in hand with making your own things. People also want to buy objects which have a story, slowly moving away from mass-produced goods. I'm curious as to where it will go and to what scale. I think it's very important that people dare to try new things and different business models. In terms of business model, they just need to be aware that it's not going to be the thing that makes you rich, but it is so important that they do it. And they might not get rich but they can get happier. It is driven by people who have passion and it needs someone to start, so more people will follow and it can become mainstream. I think that open design, and products, which are unfinished are now about to become this kind of trend.

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DESIGN CAN QUESTION OUR HABITS, QUESTION WHAT WE DO, HOW WE CONSUME, HOW WE INTERACT
Open Green Map is a social mapping platform that shares information about sustainability in the community using lively, globally recognized icons to chart and help people connect with nature, culture, green living and social justice resources.

Wendy E. Brawer started her design career when planned obsolescence was still considered design excellence. Realizing that this mindset was driving us toward extinction, she developed Green Map System, a capacity-building product service system that’s an effective public relation (PR) service for the hometown environment. Wendy has been appointed Designer in Residence at Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, an Utne Visionary and a Woman of Earth, as seen at her website EcoCultural.info.

Samantha Riccio is currently finishing her degree in Environmental Science and Policy at Marist College, Ploughkeepsie, New York state. She hopes to find a career which suits her drive to make the world a more sustainable place.

Open Green Map

**Purpose/aim of the project:** Think Global, Map Local! Locally-made in 40 countries, each Open Green Map is open to group development, public contextualisation and site suggestions. Flexibly - Open Green Maps can be embedded, exported, and explored on mobile devices.

**Names of people involved:** Project Management; Wendy Brawer and Carlos A. Rubio Martinez. Technology; Thomas Turnbull, Lead; ongoing development Openflows; and Ciprian Samoila, Miikka Lammela, Gottfried Haider, Bogdan Szabo, Walter Perry and Hanne Paine. Design Team; Akiko Rokube, Andrew Sass, Risha Ishikawa, Taylor Baybutt and Yoko Ishibashi.

**Key stakeholders:** Communities and individuals worldwide. Made by cities, schools, groups and companies, the Green Mapmakers are usually people in the know about sustainability and the local environment, while the map users are often new to this way of understanding a place and its potential.

**Target audience:** The interactive mapping platform, Open Green Map, is an optional resource for registered Green Mapmakers worldwide. They define the local audience, such as residents or visitors, youth or adults, for each Green Map, along with its area and theme. However, these maps, with their universal icons, are used everywhere!

**Geographic Location:** Built in New York City for Global & Local Mapmakers.

**Supported by:** The initial budget for Open Green Map was US $200000, of which approximately fifty percent more was donated by volunteers, or delivered at rock-bottom non-profit rates by web developers and designers. Green Mapmakers provided services such as translation and testing, etc.

**Start date/Finish date:** Summer 2007 / launched 5th June 2009 – with on-going development of new features.

**Website or other online resource:** www.greenmap.org
BEGINNING

What triggered the project?

When the global Green Map movement got rolling in 1995, we knew a mapping platform would be a boon to local Green Map projects. However, being human-centric rather than tech-centred, this project had to wait while we developed our network, community engagement and capacity building resources. While scores of locally designed printed Green Maps rolled off the presses, a few developed early online and Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping tools. The results, however, were often less than desired in terms of accessibility and expressiveness. We decided to wait for the public to become familiar with online maps, mapmaker demand to grow, and for our staff, funding and focus to evolve.

Once development got underway in 2007, we selected the Google Map Application Programming Interface (API) and Drupal1 open source content management for the Open Green Map platform – both are free resources that we paired with the Green Map Icons and local knowledge to fulfill this need. Most important was including features that widen participation.

What was your motivation?

We were frustrated by the number of Green Mapmakers who had difficulty raising money, designing, publishing and distributing their print editions even with a style guide, no-cost publishing options and basic funding request in our Tool Centre2-data was getting lost, opportunities were being missed. We knew if we could create an interactive platform that local Green Map teams could use — sometimes in parallel with, sometimes instead of — a print map, we could expedite communication and progress across the board.

We wondered how the perspective-changing impact of the printed map would transfer to the local-colourless interactive map — would it be as effective? And with the economic crash of 2008, we were also concerned about lowering the cost of participation in the movement. Accordingly, we did not charge additional fees to create Open Green Maps, despite the continual associated costs.

Are there similar projects, did these stimulate you, and are you linked to them in any way?

The Green Map network already included 400 locally-led projects when we began developing the Open Green Map ‘social mapping’ platform. As part of the discovery process, several mapping platforms, social networking sites and their underlying content management tools were assessed, shedding light on shortcomings, design flaws and the preferences of the public. To shape assumptions and overall trajectory, we took part in events such as the NetSquared Challenge and Where 2.03 during the development of the design brief.

The review process included everything from marketing to Terms of Use utilised on popular and mission-driven websites such as the Open Architecture Network4 as well as standard-setting social media. We also reviewed Green Map platforms designed in Budapest, Cork, Tokyo and Geneva to meet local needs, although it was difficult to find other examples of mapping platforms focused on sustainability. We noted vexing problems like vandalism and spam associated with completely open websites such as Wikipedia. To avoid such issues, we opted for a semi-open model, where all sites are locally moderated according to a specific locale’s Green Map and we also made it easy for Mapmakers to work with varying contributors. All of the maps and data are also aggregated in Open Green Map’s World View Map and on our basic mobile viewer.

New mapping platforms such as Open Street Map5 were just coming into use by tech-savvy users, but were not yet ready for the less-technically minded members of the diverse Green Map network. We selected the more familiar Google Map as our base map as we aimed to reduce barriers to participation and catalyse local collaboration across cultural and geographic barriers. So much about location-based technology has changed in five years since we launched, including the map itself, which now has, for the first time, the ability to know where its user is located! How does — and how should — this ‘awareness’ impact our platform’s future?

Now Open Green Maps can be embedded in social media and their sites can share videos and images already on YouTube and Flickr. Mapmakers can export their maps’ data to be used in various ways, and have created graphs, lightboxes and other displays. Eventually, we expect that Open Green Map users will be able to choose amongst a variety of open platforms and formats to reach and engage diverse local and global audiences.

How did the idea evolve?

Think Local, Map Social! The specifics of Open Green Map took time to tease out. We carefully considered the many differing needs of the city agencies, youth and community groups, designers, nonprofits and universities involved in the Green Map network, as well as those who would join the network in the future. As a result, Open Green Map was developed as a flexible resource that increases each team’s

2 Green Map’s ToolCentre has dozens of resources for community-engaged mapmaking. The public can view them in the website’s Resources section, but currently only logged-in users can access them. We expect to open them up to everyone soon.
3 See NetSquared, www.netSquared.org. NetSquared’s vision is to make it easy, meaningful, and fun for people and organisations to get the information, visibility and support they need to maximise technology for social good. See also, Where2.0, http://where2.com, ‘Where Conferences: The Art and Business of Location, is where the grassroots and leading-edge developers building location-aware technology intersect with the businesses and entrepreneurs seeking out location apps, platforms, and hardware to gain a competitive edge’. The Open Architecture Network is an online, open-source community dedicated to improving living conditions through innovative and sustainable design. http://openarchitecturenetwork.org
4 Open Green Map was developed as a flexible resource that increases each team’s
potential to engage and garner greater participation from the public, as partners, as site proposers and map users.

Over time we have added new languages to the interface – now there are nine. We also added the ability to create lines and polygons, so resources such as bike lanes or historic areas could be charted. We created widgets and apps to view the data on other websites and mobiles. In 2013 we updated the base map and simplified the presentation of site information, and made progress towards our goal of open development.

In 2014, our partners at Harte Verde Association of Romania created a fun new responsive web app for collecting sites on the go. The Mobile Site Collector 6 can be used on devices or on the desktop. Inclusively designed by Ciprian Samoila and Bogdan Szabo, it can even be used offline. We think it will be quite popular!

Our longer term goal is to replace the whole platform with a more agile, open and extensible platform that will make co-development and data sharing easy and exciting. We look forward to partnering to openly share the next Green Map platform with new communities, and co-creating new applications and services that support a more resilient, verdant and just future for all.

As of June 2014, there are 35,000 sites on 400 Open Green Maps. Sites can be shared between maps, and all can be viewed on a world map as well as individually (with potential connection via Quick Response (QR) code to an onsite marker). Mapmakers have surprised us with new ways to involve community in the mapmaking process, and it’s been exciting to see how features have been implemented.

MAPMAKERS HAVE SURPRISED US WITH NEW WAYS TO INVOLVE COMMUNITY

What are/were key organisational aspects and organisational structures?

While we had progressed towards advancing our technology, it wasn’t until developer Thomas Turnbull joined our staff in 2007 that we could implement our plan. First, Thomas completely re-built GreenMap.org as a presentation, registration, and tool centre, ready to manage the new mapmakers attracted by Open Green Map (which turned out to be quite useful, our network doubled in size once word got out). With its new content management system (CMS), this upgrade radically reduced administrative tasks and gave our team time to develop the mapping platform. Much of the data collected in GreenMap.org’s profiles would double as metadata for the projects on Open Green Map, too.

Next, our staff and global Mapmakers finalised Green Map Icons, version 3. This living lexicon of symbols was designed to evolve with our understanding of sustainability at the community level, and we completed the five years network-wide discussion in spring 2008. As seen at GreenMap.org/icons, the set includes 170 icons. Used as an inventory tool by mapmakers, each icon is displayed and defined on Open Green Map (in the nine languages available in its interface).

After much discussion in house, with the network and with advisors, our mapping platform was designed to include:

- An Info tab alongside every map that links to the Mapmaker’s profile, website, and print map PDFs as well as site statistics and map introduction.
- Public interaction — every site is open to public comments, ratings, images and videos, with a mapmaker notification and dashboard system for easy moderation.
- A translatable interface, with default language options. Any language can be used in site descriptions and comments.
- An interactive legend that gives users the ability to toggle off Green Map Icons and related sites. Hover feature provides definitions for quick reference.
- Three levels of permissions for flexible management of Map teams.
- Tools to embed these maps and export the data for use on print maps, GIS or Google Earth.
- Education, graphics, promotion and media resources.

We soft-launched the new platform in late 2008, and watched how it met — or missed — Green Mapmakers’ needs. Bugs were caught and fixed, features were added, and before long, there were 4000 sites on fifty interactive maps and we were ready to go public.

With thirteen parties in ten countries, Green Map System launched the platform on World Environment Day 2009. Since that time, we have done extensive outreach, lots of trainings and user support, and fixed a slew of issues alongside refinements and new features. We’ve also won numerous awards and envisioned the platform’s future.

Was the organisation informal or formal?

Green Map System is a non-profit organisation, active since 1995, with official status since year 2000.

Key funding/financial aspects - Finances: Is/Was there funding involved?

The initial budget for the Open Green Map platform was US $200000. Approximately fifty percent more was donated - much was delivered at rock-bottom non-profit rates or by volunteers. Everyone involved was very generous with their time, and several new funders, crowdfunders and donors contributed to this project. We are fortunate to have ongoing support from developers including Thomas Turnbull, who is now President of our Board of Directors. Mapmakers contributed

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6. The Mobile Open Site Collector, https://m.opengreenmap.org enables anyone to put a green place or resource online.

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7. ‘World Environment Day (WED) is the United Nations’ principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment. Over the years it has grown to be a broad, global platform for public outreach that is widely celebrated by stakeholders in over 100 countries. It also serves as the “people’s day” for doing something positive for the environment, galvanizing individual actions into a collective power that generates an exponential positive impact on the planet.’ www.unep.org

about fifteen percent of the Open Green Map budget, primarily through our annual fee which is based on their own organisation’s type and their country’s average income. Mapmakers can offer a service instead, so translation, marketing, localised capacity-building, etc., are often provided.

**ACTING & DOING**

*What are or were the key activities?*
Every day, more people turn to maps and location-based tools to navigate their way through life. In support of this demand, Green Map System wanted to create a robust interactive mapping resource that would be easy for the diverse Green Map teams around the world to use, open to public contextualisation, and become a trusted resource for sustainability information. It would include map team co-development and marketing resources, a multilingual interface, provide for map sharing, and attract enough support to make continual development, a mobile website, and other extensions and collaborations possible on a continual basis.

With Open Green Map we created a global database of spatially organised sustainable sites, designed to introduce residents and visitors to local nature, culture and green living resources such as farmers markets, solar sites and bike lanes, as well as to negatives — poor labour practices, gentrification, and blight sites, all to help guide citizens toward making better everyday choices.

*What are or were the key approach & methods?*
We are frugal innovators. We sought to use low cost, open and updatable tools to make our platform. Now, some of the choices we made make it feel dated and inflexible, but this is a normal condition of technology. We did not realise how difficult it would be in terms of time, money and energy to keep Open Green Map up-to-date, nor to move to a fully open resource. Foundations seem to prefer new and novel rather than tried and true, and increasingly in the United States, domestic projects rather than global ones.

*How did you get people participating?*
We have a long track record and with our prolific network, millions of people know about Green Maps. An online mapping platform offers new challenges. We have applied much of our modest marketing budget to creating replicable graphics and tools, such as our 2013 Social Media Guide and downloads found under the Resources menu.


**What are/were the key communication channels and methods?**
Online discussion forum, in-house meetings, Skype, in person trainings and demos of the platform, locally and globally.

**Media use and efficacy?**
We have some reach with media, but maps are not as newsworthy as events that build or launch new maps. So we encourage our network to produce and promote dynamic events and involve diverse stakeholders.

**What are/were the outcomes with reference to the target audience?**
Many Green Mapmakers use Open Green Maps interchangeably with print maps. For example Cape Town Green Map utilised the radio as an outreach vehicle, and encouraged people to call in site suggestions or add them to the interactive map, which is embedded on their website, CapeTownGreenMap.co.za. Data is also exported and the city’s new print editions reach a different demographic. Now, six years in, this award-winning project has its fifth edition on press!

We are delighted that 400 new Green Maps are in use, sharing progress and connecting communities to their local resources. With Open Green Maps being made in rural Lebanon, small towns in Brazil, and in major cities from Indonesia to the Nordic countries to the United States, the impacts vary greatly. In order to demonstrate these effects, we created a book to share some of these stories. There are even Open Green Maps that look into the future. For example, Girona in Catalonia Spain has mapped hundreds of approved sustainable energy plans.

**REFLECTING & SUSTAINING**

*How is/was the project sustained?*
Every Green Mapmaker contributes annually, but this represents a small portion of Open Green Map’s full budget. We are seeking new ways to keep our finances in balance.

*What kinds of ‘capital’ did you use to sustain the project?*
We have used all kinds of resources to sustain this initiative. Although we promote green enterprises, Green Map System has always discouraged Mapmakers from levelling a charge for being listed on the map. In terms of other capitals, everything that supports the internet and specifically a web platform were used intensely, a combination of social, public and commercial infrastructure capitals, but also individual human capital and a local social network of map information providers (i.e. social capital).

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9 See www.greenmap.org/articles
10 See http://www.greenmap.org/impacts
11 See http://OpenGreenMap.org/clima
Is it self-sustaining now, or will it be in the future?
No, but as we open the project to new possibilities, it may become self-sustaining in the future.

Are you happy with the project?
It has been exciting to develop, share and plan for. It has been transformational! But the biggest challenge is the continual degradation of the environment and climate. Involving more people is critical, and Green Map’s informative, engaging tools and infrastructure are becoming more important every day.

Would you change anything?
Technology demands a yes to this question!

Was the project as you expected or did you encounter anything unexpected?
The cost of continual maintenance, changes in the underlying systems and new feature requests have become significantly higher than initially planned. Although the number of Green Map projects has grown specifically as a result of this platform, the growth in income has yet to be balanced. Foundations are not keen on funding the continual growth of existing platforms, so the non-profit is developing new collaborations, services and sponsorships for the next phases of Open Green Map development.

Is the project scalable?
Yes, it was designed to be scaled, and with 400 maps publicly available, we have met this goal. For us, it’s also exciting to look ahead at the new tools that will even more effectively engage people in addressing change at the local level.

What are your future plans?
Discover what people value most about the platform, new and better ways to increase the value, rebuild as an open source and decentralised resource with self-sustaining mechanism.

OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

What were tangible outputs of the project?
Hundreds of people have been on Green Map teams, and thousands have contributed site suggestions, images, videos, comments and ratings. Impacting both emerging and established green communities, there are more than 550 printed editions and more than 400 Open Green Maps continually evolve.

The project created a database of 35000 locally sourced site descriptions catalogued by the icon; 400 readily updated maps made in 40 countries; capacity-building in diverse settings; recognition for the movement and local participants.

What capacity did you build? How did you change people’s lives?
Green Mapmaking builds skills in communications, project management, community organising, and extends this capacity by building local networks and knowledge. Open Green Map has given many their first interactive mapping experience, and helped many reveal a part of their city that too few appreciate. Map users can experience their own communities, or the ones they visit, anew.

This year, we realised Open Green Map is one of the few platforms that invites public contextualisation of mapped sites. We have had many inquiries asking how we designed its features, for example how the legend slides open smoothly, definitions appear and icons toggle.

Did the project meet the initial purpose and intentions?
Yes

LESSONS LEARNED

What are the lessons learned?
About people: As a platform, Open Green Map has benefited from the insights and help of so many great people — it will always need many hands! It’s a tool, not a panacea.

About technology: We lack good documentation of how Open Green Map was built and refined. Made before web development tracking tools like GitHub12 were available, this gap has made itself felt many times, in some cases making our apps un-repairable.

The latest generation of online mapping tools is quite amazing and cost effective, yet without support for an on-going tech director, it’s difficult to shift forward with clarity. Durable, flexible business planning is critical.

**Minimal viable product (MVP)**13 is a good way to address technology projects now. Define the core concept, build just that, see how people use it, assess demand, and then build it up from there.

What can be given as advice for the readers?
Be iterative. Share progress with partners. Be flexible. Be resourceful! Dream big, but work together to make that dream a reality.

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12 GitHub is an open development documentation resource which can be used for Information Technology and for other types of co-development. Here’s an interesting example, https://project-open-data.cio.gov

13 Minimum viable product is ‘the product with the highest return on investment versus risk’. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minimum_viable_product
Camp Pixelache is an annual gathering and an evolving experiment in developing an open self-organising, participatory format within a relatively intimate but international cultural festival. It includes different sites, venues and ways for participants to share their work and passions.

Andrew Gryf Paterson, born 1974, is a Scottish artist-organiser, cultural producer, and independent researcher, based in Helsinki, Finland. Andrew works across the fields of media/ network/ environmental arts and activism, specialising in workshop design, participatory platforms for engagement, and facilitation. He has been involved in Pixelache activities since 2004, and from 2011-2014 has been coordinator and facilitator of Pixelache Helsinki’s outreach and educational programme.


**Case Study**

**CAMP PIXELACHE**

by Andrew Gryf Paterson

**Purpose/ aim of the project:** The idea emerged from the Pixelache office at the time to experiment with setting aside an open day (and later a weekend) in the festival, to adapt and develop open self-organising and sustainable formats within or accompanying curated cultural festivals. Camp Pixelache has evolved from Pixelache Helsinki Festival, an international festival of transdisciplinary art, design, research and activism, which began as a festival of electronic arts and subcultures in 2002.

**Name(s) of the people involved:** Camp Pixelache has evolved from Pixelache Helsinki Festival, an international festival of transdisciplinary art, design, research and activism, which began as a festival of electronic arts and subcultures in 2002. Over the years the number of Camp Pixelache participants have included hundred or more participants, involving hybrid professional artists, designers, hackers and programmers, urban activists, programmers, social scientists, as well as students from various art and design universities. Various Pixelache association members, staff and volunteers have produced and organised the event. Consistently over five years, Nathalie Aubret from Pixelache has been the main producer or event organiser, in collaboration with former artistic director Juha Huuskonen (2010, 2011). Significant facilitators in addition include Mike Bradshaw from BarCamp Helsinki (2010, 2012); Andrew Gryf Paterson from Pixelache (2012, 2013); John Fail from Pixelache (2014) and guest-host Oliver Kotcha-Kalleinen (2014).

**Key stakeholders:** Participants themselves, host organisation/institution, international partners.

**Geographic location:** The geographic location of Camp Pixelache has changed each year, and the event absorbs features of each location.

On the first year, in 2010, it took place in the Kerava Art Museum approximately thirty kilometres from Helsinki centre, using the large upper level gallery spaces that were empty in between the Art Museum’s exhibition programme. Then, in 2011 Camp Pixelache took place in various venues on Suomenlinna fortress – a heritage island near to Helsinki. Arbis Swedish Centre of Adult Education in central Helsinki served as venue for the Camp in 2012. The relationship of Camp
Pixelache with islands continued in 2013 with the use of Estonian conductor Tonu Kaljuste’s sustainability-themed concert hall, and also at the accommodation hostel on nature island Naisaar off the coast of Tallinn, Estonia. Lastly in 2014, the most recent Camp, until now, took place at a cluster of different venues on Vartiosaari, an archipelago nature island in the Eastern Helsinki suburbs under threat of urban development.

**Supported by:** The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM) and the Helsinki City Cultural Office.

**Start date/Finish date:** 2010-ongoing.

**Website or other online resources?**

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**BEGINNING**

**What triggered the project?**

The Camp model emerged in *Pixelache Helsinki Festival* due to an increasing number of people who were willing to attend (and travel internationally) the Festival between 2007-2009, and a lack of curatorial resources and physical spaces in the venues used at the time to host them.

**What was your motivation?**

I was involved in the early years as a Pixelache association member, and I was already interested in the ‘Camp’ format, participatory arts, and facilitation, and as a result I was motivated to take the role of Camp facilitator for the 2012 and 2013 editions.

**Are there similar projects, did these stimulate you and are you linked to them in any way?**

The Camp format is inspired by, and to some degree following, the Open Space Technology model, a meeting methodology,1 introduced by Harrison Owen in 1985: “each person [in the meeting] determined that they had some area of exploration they would like to pursue,”2 and then they made time and space within the event to do it, inviting others who were interested.

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1 ‘Open Space Technology is an approach to purpose-based leadership, including a way for hosting meetings, conferences, corporate-style retreats, symposiums, and community summit events, focused on a specific and important purpose or task—but beginning without any formal agenda, beyond the overall purpose or theme. More info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology


In the dynamic media, arts and technology festival context of Northern Europe, from the early 2000s onwards, emerging open-source software and participatory online platforms were not only presented and applied, but also influenced the way events were organised. While Web 2.0 promoters such as O’Reilly were describing “the architecture of participation,” as that ‘designed for user contribution,”3 media arts festivals, such as Pixelache, and specialist practitioner gatherings were exploring alternative structures for participation,4 which employ open calls for participation, and self-organisation by many of the festival/workshop attendees, who are also enthusiasts in the field.

**How did the idea evolve?**

In 2009, the first Open Forum event took place for several hours in the Pixelache Helsinki Festival programme, at the initiative of artistic director Juha Huuskonen. This later was expanded into one full day outside Helsinki, hosted at the Kerava Art Museum, and later became a two days event, evolving away from the *BarCamp model*.5 Whereas the BarCamp model focused mostly on short presentations or discussions, Camp Pixelache adopted additional participatory formats, including accompanying demos and exhibits (2010), demonstration tables and exhibits (2012-2013), participatory workshops including both digital and non-digital activities, from Do-It Yourself (DIY) electronics to print-making (2013-2014), and also guided tours and expeditions outside from the Camp venues (2013-2014).

**What are/were the key organisational aspects and organisational structures?**

The key roles were as follows:

Pixelache (association) members; producer(s), otherwise known as event organiser(s); Facilitator(s); Volunteers; Venue Host(s); camp participants were contributing at the events and helping to build the daily schedules; audience par-

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6 ‘BarCamp is an international network of user-generated conferences primarily focused around technology and the web. They are open, participatory workshop-events, the content of which is provided by participants’. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BarCamp
participants, who had not formally proposed something for the schedule but participated in the discussion.

**Was the organisation informal or formal?**
A formally registered cultural association, Pixelache, organised the Camp Pixelache events.

**Target audience and network(s)?**
Professional artists, designers, hackers and programmers, urban activists, programmers, social scientists, as well as students from various art and design universities with interest in the above disciplines or practices.

**Key funding/financial aspects?**
Public cultural funding supported the production costs of the events, including support from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM), as well as additional festival grants from OKM and the Helsinki City Cultural Office. The events were free to participate. In the case of the 2013 event, the travel costs to Naissaar and food paid or subsidised by Pixelache. Other years, food arrangements were handled similarly.

**ACTING & DOING**

**What are or were the key activities?**
Event organiser(s): Communications in advance of the open call for participation
Facilitator(s): Facilitation of in advance expressions of interest online in collaborative Etherpad; particular communications related to on-site resources, for example in the case of workshops; facilitation of activities on the days of the Camp; assisting with the needs of and updates to the programmers.

**What are or were the key approach & methods?**
Open-mindedness, self-organisation and production sustainability in relation to local and international guest-participant’s contribution in a cultural festival.

**How did you get people participating?**
We invited people to participate in advance through open calls via our Pixelache email newsletter, regional and international email lists, and the most relevant social media (latterly Twitter & Facebook). This is done in iteration, with one or two reminders, as the event gets closer. It was also possible for participants to turn up on the day to propose some new activity for those present.

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7 Etherpad is a highly customizable Open Source online editor providing collaborative editing in really real-time; http://etherpad.org

**What is/was essential for practical matters?**
Essential for practical matters was the skillful ability to encourage and facilitate peoples’ participation in the event, at least at the beginning, but ideally also throughout the event. Shared access to the dynamic schedule information and contributions is also essential. Availability of multiple rooms and environments to gather all people together at the beginning of the Camp day, as well as at least two or three other spaces where different discussions could take place afterwards, without interfering with each other acoustically.

**What are/were the key communication channels and methods?**
Two different communication channels and methods were adopted from the Bar-Camp approach. Firstly, during the event, there was a physical, offline schedule that marked out the time schedule of the Camp day(s) into a ‘grid’ sheet which included time schedule and physical spaces for gathering, also known as the ‘grid’. In the first three years (2010–2012) the offline schedule was done with post-it notes on a foam-board. In 2013–2014, a fabric version of this scheduling grid was made and used, using Velcro and felt, dubbed the ‘felt-excel’, after the popular spreadsheet software. On the most recent occasion in 2014, a megaphone was a welcome addition updating gathered people about what would soon happen at a certain time and where. Furthermore, for advance communications online, and post-event documentations online, collaborative documents were used with the aim of allowing multiple people

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Facilitating the Grid at the festival in 2013. © Antti Ahonen.
to access and edit their information. Hence Pixelache office used a wiki platform in 2010-2011, and Etherpad in 2012-2014.

Media use and efficacy?
In practice the use of the wiki platform in 2010-2011 was mostly limited to those working in Pixelache office, rather than being accessible to a larger number of participants. When Etherpad was adopted as a collaborative space online, more of the Camp participants used this online space in advance of the event, to nominate and propose their contribution.

The use of email, newsletter and social media to encourage participants from the Pixelache Helsinki Festival audience was effective, however, knowing that we were communicating to an informed audience. Arguably in all events, it was difficult to reach beyond to a new audience who was not knowledgeable or taking part in the Festival events that year already.

What are/were the outcomes with reference to the target audience?
If acknowledging that the main aim of the Camp events was to encourage the self-organisation of the participants in creating the content of some parts of the festival, and promote dialogue and exchange of ideas, projects and demos, the outcome of the Camp events was an increasingly diverse and eclectic range of contributions.

What are/were the impacts — target audience and wider?
The Camp Pixelache events from 2010-2014 brought in a wider and diverse group of participants to Pixelache Helsinki Festival. Beyond the usual range of participants from Western Europe and Nordic countries, there was dedicated support from regional participants from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (2012-2014), north-west Russia (2012-2013) and Belarus (2013).
12.5.2012 — Third Camp Pixelache event at Arbis Swedish Centre for Adult Education, Central Helsinki

- First time with only one venue for the Festival
- Approximately 300 participants-audience (500 including pre-camp keynote, and post-camp club event)
- Camp Pixelache was one full day of the Festival’s programme (Saturday).
- Camp Pixelache event was related to larger around-the-year activities in the ‘Pixelversity’ programme
- Return to one-day format of unconference, with thematic ‘plenary’ talks interspersed in open sessions.
- One floor in the venue with four to five distinct spaces for presentations or discussion formats.
- Open call for ‘demo’ presentations on tables in the passageway.
- Programme facilitated by Mike Bradshaw and Andrew Gryf Paterson.

18-19.5.2013 — Fourth Camp Pixelache event at Naissaar island, Estonia

- Approximately 110 participants-audience (maximum number pre-registered to attend).
- First time the Festival took place as a dual city event, with half at Suvilahti-Helsinki and the other half in Tallinn-Naissaar.
- Camp Pixelache’s location was influenced by the ‘Facing North Facing South’ thematic of the Festival, ie to take place in Tallinn, Estonia, to the south of Helsinki across the Baltic.
- Camp Pixelache was related to a larger around-the-year networking activity in ‘Pixelversity’ programme.
- Open camp schedule over two days, including evening/night programme.
- Open call for workshops, confirmed in advance according to resources and venue support.
- Indoors and for first time, outdoors activities, including expeditions.
- Programme facilitated by Andrew Gryf Paterson.

7-8.6.2014 — Fifth Camp Pixelache event at Vartiosaari island, Eastern Helsinki

- Approximately 140-160 participants-audience.
- Weekend Festival programme (Saturday-Sunday), including collective travel between central Helsinki-Vartiosaari-central Helsinki.
- Camp Pixelache’s location was influenced by ‘The Commons’; the theme of the Festival due to the interpretation and potential of the island as an urban nature commons under threat of development.
- First time actual camping, with tents for sixty percent of the participants.
- Open camp schedule over two days, including informal evening/night programme.
- Open call for workshops, confirmed in advance according to resources and venue support.
- Indoors and for first time, outdoors activities, including expeditions.
- Programme facilitated by John Fail and Oliver Kotcha-Kallainen (guest-host & partner on Vartiosaari).

REFLECTING & SUSTAINING

How is/was the project sustained?
Camp Pixelache has been sustained by our organisation’s ongoing wish and need to explore new festival curating models, but also by the wish of Pixelache Festival’s community, both old and new to self-attribute and contribute to the occasion.

What kinds of capital did you use to sustain the project?
Festival participants are the core social capital of the project, and the source of human intellectual capital involved, sharing their projects, ideas, comments and activities with others.
Camp Pixelache project is also supported by human capital, through the ongoing work of paid and volunteer work of Pixelache association members and partners.
In the first years in 2010-2011, there was one part/full-time artistic director in-

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8 An unconference, also called OpenSpace conference is a participant-driven meeting. The term ‘unconference’ has been applied, or self-applied, to a wide range of gatherings that try to avoid one or more aspects of a conventional conference, such as fees, sponsored presentations, and top-down organization. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unconference
involved in facilitating the programme. One full-time coordinator/producer has been involved around the year in production on each occasion between 2010 and 2014; and between 2012 and 2013, one part-time (myself) involved in facilitating the programme. In 2014, the facilitators were involved for a month in advance. Ideas and conceptual development has been sustained by association members, board and staff.

Each location and host venue had infrastructural capital which we used, and in the case of the island Camps (Suomenlinna, Naissaar, Vartiosaari) we also used natural capital (the landscape and environment) as gathering places and for expeditions or walks.

Financial capital, via public cultural funding has also significantly supported and sustained the project. It has been important to make the financial barrier for participation as low as possible, and to make the event/Camp free to share and take part where possible.

Is it self-sustaining now or will it be in the future?
Due to the development and evolution of Camp Pixelache annually over five years, and its concept as a part or main feature of Pixelache Helsinki Festival, it is self-sustaining. The Camp Pixelache event will take place as long as Pixelache association members wish it to be an event. However, it is also based upon not necessarily self-sustaining elements which change over time — coordinating producers or facilitators, and production funding to make it happen.

Are you happy with the project?
Participants’ feedback to Pixelache’s office has regularly been largely positive, and as a professional gathering space for a series of events it has arguably been successful, making them happy endeavours. Each Camp has offered different experiences and challenges, blending the open and self-organising format of BarCamp/unconference into each cultural festival production.

Would you change anything?
Each location offered different potentials and opportunities to explore ways of gathering people and projects in those venues. However, it also meant that we did not accumulative knowledge about how to do it better in the same location. Infrastructure at the venue could have also be planned further in advance, although in practice this is not always easy to arrange.

Was the project as you expected or did you encounter anything unexpected?
What started as a way to facilitate better local and international festival participants’ ambitions to contribute to the programme, as a side event, proved laterly to be an important, indeed central feature of Pixelache Helsinki Festival. It became a tool to promote diversity and transdisciplinarity in art, cultural and social practice.

Unexpectedly, after moving from the regular venue of Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, which hosted the festival from 2003 to 2010, the Camp and the island locations proved to be strongly inter-related. The Naissaar and Vartiosaari Camps were mostly offline events, without stable access to internet. This proved to be popular and pleasant for participants who are saturated with online network connectivity.

Is the project scalable?
The project is scalable based on the venue that hosts it, and the production team are available to facilitate it. We found that the numbers of persons who might be able to interact with each other are based on these factors. As the BarCamp/unconference model has been widely copied and applied in many places within the Information Technology (IT) community, our adoption and adaptation of it into a cultural festival community could also be tried by others. There are many different interpretations of a ‘camp’, which we have explored, from conceptual to literal and real, for example, with tents. However, in practice it requires a generous, open-minded participatory-audience to accept the uncertainties that come with it (i.e. what people are going to listen to, attend, and take part in).

What are your future plans?
The format of Camp Pixelache is open and undecided, although it has been proposed that we would either repeat the occasion at the last venue, or reverse the amount of time allocated to building up rapport between participants. For example that a longer time be spent in a rural, offline location to assist people in getting to know each other, and presenting the results in a curated structured way at the end in the city.

OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

What were tangible outputs of the project?
At the time of writing, five Camp events have been produced annually since 2010, involving over 1200 participants.

What capacity did you build? How did you change people’s lives?
A key outcome and impact over the years was the evolution of a curated festival into one which included a substantial programme that was self-organised content-wise by the participants. For some, this offered a more diverse and inclusive space to participate, and promoted a diverse range of contributors from different backgrounds. On the other hand, it also made the Camp Pixelache’s events difficult to communicate in advance, and on occasions also afterwards. What was discussed and shared? Did you then have to be there to know what it was about? Did this make it an insiders’ event, more exclusive?
Did the project meet the initial purpose and intentions?
After some consideration, I think the answer’s “Yes”. It gave more space for festival participants to relate to what they wished to share with others, and this transformed the festival structure.

LESSONS LEARNED

What are the lessons learned?
There was an ongoing tension in Camp Pixelache between keeping the schedule open, and international participants wishing to confirm their attendance. For many in the cultural and academic scenes, there is an expectation and habit of ‘performing’ at festivals or conferences, either as a talk or some other format, for a certain length of time, as an advancement of personal career or profile. Leaving the details open and uncertain until the event itself is not comfortable for everyone.

Some event formats were difficult to schedule together, such as short presentations versus longer presentations: Who gets to be plenary speaker or gets more space than others? We also had to mix together pre-selected contributions such as workshops curated by Pixelache’s office, with spontaneous contributions. On the last occasion in 2014, this was a particular issue, when many advance contributions were offered with a limited amount of venue space available. There is a limit of open call and open planning in this case. The features, architecture and interactions between people of the Camp venues had a strong impact on the way the event took place, and the way in which people interacted. For example, the traditional learning classroom infrastructure of Arbis Swedish Centre for Adult Learning in 2012 increased presentation formats, rather than open discussions. Or the only warm space with fireplace on the first cold day of the Naissaar Camp gathered the most people. Venues which were spaced further apart from each other, such as the case in Suomenlinna or Vartiosaari, hindered the ability for people to switch attendance ‘with their feet’ (i.e. get up and go somewhere else) as promoted in the BarCamp model, and were harder to facilitate.

We learned with experience, that rather than one or two main facilitators, it would have been useful to have identified in advance a facilitator for each space used to gather people at the event. For example, people did not always remember to keep to the time schedule.

Furthermore, there was always the difficulty of updating the online information during or after the event itself. Documentation of the conversations was often lost as they were recorded in personal notebooks, etc. and rarely shared afterwards. Identified note-takers or scribes could be helpful to gather notes about the topics presented. An outside moderator, recapping maybe the connections between activities could also help: Story-tellers or ‘observers-in-residence’ at the Camp.

What can be given as advice for the readers?
- Do experiment with different formats that will suit your participant-audience.
- Do be flexible and allow your production team and participant-audience to think on their feet.
- Do trust that spending intensive time together has an effect.
- Don’t expect things to all work out as planned.
- Don’t expect the online and offline aspects to merge seamlessly.
Open Green Map is a social mapping platform that shares information about sustainability in the community using lively, globally recognised icons to chart and help people connect with nature, culture, green living and social justice resources.

Wendy E. Brawer started her design career when planned obsolescence was still considered design excellence. Realising that this mindset was driving us toward extinction, she developed Green Map System, a capacity-building product service system that’s an effective public relation (PR) service for the hometown environment. Wendy has been appointed Designer in Residence at Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, an Utne Visionary and a Woman of Earth, as seen at her website EcoCultural.info.

Samantha Riccio is currently finishing her degree in Environmental Science and Policy at Marist College, Ploughkeepsie, New York state. She hopes to find a career which suits her drive to make the world a more sustainable place.

Purpose/aim of the project: Think Global, Map Local! Locally-made in 40 countries, each Open Green Map is open to group development, public contextualisation and site suggestions. Flexibly - Open Green Maps can be embedded, exported, and explored on mobile devices.


Key stakeholders: Communities and individuals worldwide. Made by cities, schools, groups and companies, the Green Mapmakers are usually people in the know about sustainability and the local environment, while the map users are often new to this way of understanding a place and its potential.

Target audience: The interactive mapping platform, Open Green Map, is an optional resource for registered Green Mapmakers worldwide. They define the local audience, such as residents or visitors, youth or adults, for each Green Map, along with its area and theme. However, these maps, with their universal icons, are used everywhere!

Geographic Location: Built in New York City for Global & Local Mapmakers.

Supported by: The initial budget for Open Green Map was US $200000, of which approximately fifty percent more was donated by volunteers, or delivered at rock-bottom non-profit rates by web developers and designers. Green Mapmakers provided services such as translation and testing, etc.

Start date/Finish date: Summer 2007 / launched 5th June 2009 – with on-going development of new features.

Website or other online resource: www.greenmap.org
**BEGINNING**

**What triggered the project?**
When the global Green Map movement got rolling in 1995, we knew a mapping platform would be a boon to local Green Map projects. However, being human-centric rather than tech-centred, this project had to wait while we developed our network, community engagement and capacity building resources. While scores of locally designed printed Green Maps rolled off the presses, a few developed early online and Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping tools. The results, however, were often less than desired in terms of accessibility and expressiveness. We decided to wait for the public to become familiar with online maps, mapmaker demand to grow, and for our staff, funding and focus to evolve.

Once development got underway in 2007, we selected the Google Map Application Programming Interface (API) and Drupal1 open source content management for the Open Green Map platform – both are free resources that we paired with the Green Map Icons and local knowledge to fulfill this need. Most important was including features that widen participation.

**What was your motivation?**
We were frustrated by the number of Green Mapmakers who had difficulty raising money, designing, publishing and distributing their print editions even with a style guide, no-cost publishing options and basic funding request in our Tool Centre2-data was getting lost, opportunities were being missed. We knew if we could create an interactive platform that local Green Map teams could use — sometimes in parallel with, sometimes instead of — a print map, we could expedite communication and progress across the board.

We wondered how the perspective-changing impact of the printed map would transfer to the local-colourless interactive map — would it be as effective? And with the economic crash of 2008, we were also concerned about lowering the cost of participation in the movement. Accordingly, we did not charge additional fees to create Open Green Maps, despite the continual associated costs.

**Are there similar projects, did these stimulate you, and are you linked to them in any way?**
The Green Map network already included 400 locally-led projects when we began developing the Open Green Map 'social mapping' platform. As part of the discovery process, several mapping platforms, social networking sites and their underlying content management tools were assessed, shedding light on shortcomings, design flaws and the preferences of the public. To shape assumptions and overall trajectory, we took part in events such as the NetSquared Challenge and Where 2.03 during the development of the design brief.

The review process included everything from marketing to Terms of Use utilised on popular and mission-driven websites such as the Open Architecture Network4 as well as standard-setting social media. We also reviewed Green Map platforms designed in Budapest, Cork, Tokyo and Geneva to meet local needs, although it was difficult to find other examples of mapping platforms focused on sustainability. We noted vexing problems like vandalism and spam associated with completely open websites such as Wikipedia. To avoid such issues, we opted for a 'semi-open model', where all sites are locally moderated according to a specific locale’s Green Map and we also made it easy for Mapmakers to work with varying contributors. All of the maps and data are also aggregated in Open Green Map’s World View Map and on our basic mobile viewer.

New mapping platforms such as Open Street Map5 were just coming into use by tech-savvy users, but were not yet ready for the less-technically minded members of the diverse Green Map network. We selected the more familiar Google Map as our base map as we aimed to reduce barriers to participation and catalyse local collaboration across cultural and geographic barriers. So much about location-based technology has changed in five years since we launched, including the map itself, which now has, for the first time, the ability to know where its user is located! How does — and how should — this ‘awareness’ impact our platform’s future?

Now Open Green Maps can be embedded in social media and their sites can share videos and images already on YouTube and Flickr. Mapmakers can export their maps’ data to be used in various ways, and have created graphs, lightboxes and other displays. Eventually, we expect that Open Green Map users will be able to choose amongst a variety of open platforms and formats to reach and engage diverse local and global audiences.

**How did the idea evolve?**
Think Local, Map Social! The specifics of Open Green Map took time to tease out. We carefully considered the many differing needs of the city agencies, youth and community groups, designers, nonprofits and universities involved in the Green Map network, as well as those who would join the network in the future. As a result, Open Green Map was developed as a flexible resource that increases each team’s

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2 Green Map’s ToolCentre has dozens of resources for community-engaged mapmaking. The public can view them in the website’s Resources section, but currently only logged-in users can access them. We expect to open them up to everyone soon.
3 See NetSquared, www.netSquared.org. NetSquared’s vision is to make it easy, meaningful, and fun for people and organisations to get the information, visibility and support they need to maximise technology for social good. See also, Where2.0, http://where2.com, ‘Where Conferences: The Art and Business of Location, is where the grassroots and leading-edge developers building location-aware technology interact with the businesses and entrepreneurs seeking out location apps, platforms, and hardware to gain a competitive edge’
4 The Open Architecture Network is an online, open-source community dedicated to improving living conditions through innovative and sustainable design. http://openarchitecturenetwork.org
5 Open Street Map, www.openstreetmap.org is built by a community of mappers that contribute and maintain data about roads, trails, cafes, railway stations, and much more, all over the world.

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What are/were key organisational aspects and organisational structures?

While we had progressed towards advancing our technology, it wasn’t until developer Thomas Turnbull joined our staff in 2007 that we could implement our plan. First, Thomas completely re-built GreenMap.org as a presentation, registration, and tool centre, ready to manage the new mapmakers attracted by Open Green Map (which turned out to be quite useful, our network doubled in size once word got out!). With its new content management system (CMS), this upgrade radically reduced administrative tasks and gave our team time to develop the mapping platform. Much of the data collected in GreenMap.org’s profiles would double as metadata for the projects on Open Green Map, too.

Next, our staff and global Mapmakers finalised Green Map Icons, version 3. This ‘living lexicon’ of symbols was designed to evolve with our understanding of sustainability at the community level, and we completed the five years network-wide discussion in spring 2008. As seen at GreenMap.org/keywords, the set includes 170 icons. Used as an inventory tool by mapmakers, each icon is displayed and defined on Open Green Map (in the nine languages available in its interface).

After much discussion in house, with the network and with advisors, our mapping platform was designed to include:

- An Info tab alongside every map that links to the Mapmaker’s profile, website, and print map PDFs as well as site statistics and map introduction.
- Public interaction — every site is open to public comments, ratings, images and videos, with a mapmaker notification and dashboard system for easy moderation.
- A translatable interface, with default language options. Any language can be used in site descriptions and comments.
- An interactive legend that gives users the ability to toggle off Green Map Icons and related sites. Hover feature provides definitions for quick reference.
- Three levels of permissions for flexible management of Map teams.
- Tools to embed these maps and export the data for use on print maps, GIS or Google Earth.
- Education, graphics, promotion and media resources.

We soft-launched the new platform in late 2008, and watched how it met — or missed — Green Mapmakers’ needs. Bugs were caught and fixed, features were added, and before long, there were 4000 sites on fifty interactive maps and we were ready to go public.

With thirteen parties in ten countries, Green Map System launched the platform on World Environment Day’ 2009. Since that time, we have done extensive outreach, lots of trainings and user support, and fixed a slew of issues alongside refinements and new features. We’ve also won numerous awards and envisioned the platform’s future.

Was the organisation informal or formal?

Green Map System is a non-profit organisation, active since 1995, with official status since year 2000.

Key funding/financial aspects - Finances: Is/Was there funding involved?

The initial budget for the Open Green Map platform was US $200000. Approximately fifty percent more was donated - much was delivered at rock-bottom non-profit rates or by volunteers. Everyone involved was very generous with their time, and several new funders, crowdfunders and donors contributed to this project. We are fortunate to have ongoing support from developers including Thomas Turnbull, who is now President of our Board of Directors. Mapmakers contributed

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6 The Mobile Open Site Collector, https://m.opengreenmap.org enables anyone to put a green place or resource online.

7 World Environment Day (WED) is the United Nations’ principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment. Over the years it has grown to be a broad, global platform for public outreach that is widely celebrated by stakeholders in over 100 countries. It also serves as the “people’s day” for doing something positive for the environment, galvanising individual actions into a collective power that generates an exponential positive impact on the planet. www.unep.org

about fifteen percent of the Open Green Map budget, primarily through our annual fee which is based on their own organisation’s type and their country’s average income. Mapmakers can offer a service instead, so translation, marketing, localised capacity-building, etc., are often provided.

ACTING & DOING

What are or were the key activities?
Every day, more people turn to maps and location-based tools to navigate their way through life. In support of this demand, Green Map System wanted to create a robust interactive mapping resource that would be easy for the diverse Green Map teams around the world to use, open to public contextualisation, and become a trusted resource for sustainability information. It would include map team co-development and marketing resources, a multilingual interface, provide for map sharing, and attract enough support to make continual development, a mobile website, and other extensions and collaborations possible on a continual basis.

With Open Green Map we created a global database of spatially organised sustainable sites, designed to introduce residents and visitors to local nature, culture and green living resources such as farmers markets, solar sites and bike lanes, as well as to negatives — poor labour practices, gentrification, and blight sites, all to help guide citizens toward making better everyday choices.

What are or were the key approach & methods?
We are frugal innovators. We sought to use low cost, open and updatable tools to make our platform. Now, some of the choices we made make it feel dated and inflexible, but this is a normal condition of technology. We did not realise how difficult it would be in terms of time, money and energy to keep Open Green Map up-to-date, nor to move to a fully open resource. Foundations seem to prefer new and novel rather than tried and true, and increasingly in the United States, domestic projects rather than global ones.

How did you get people participating?
We have a long track record and with our prolific network, millions of people know about Green Maps. An online mapping platform offers new challenges. We have applied much of our modest marketing budget to creating replicable graphics and tools, such as our 2013 Social Media Guide and downloads found under the Resources menu.


What are/were the key communication channels and methods?
Online discussion forum, in-house meetings, Skype, in person trainings and demos of the platform, locally and globally.

Media use and efficacy?
We have some reach with media, but maps are not as newsworthy as events that build or launch new maps. So we encourage our network to produce and promote dynamic events and involve diverse stakeholders.

What are/were the outcomes with reference to the target audience?
Many Green Mapmakers use Open Green Maps interchangeably with print maps. For example Cape Town Green Map utilised the radio as an outreach vehicle, and encouraged people to call in site suggestions or add them to the interactive map, which is embedded on their website, CapeTownGreenMap.co.za. Data is also exported and the city’s new print editions reach a different demographic. Now, six years in, this award-winning project has its fifth edition on press!

We are delighted that 400 new Green Maps are in use, sharing progress and connecting communities to their local resources. With Open Green Maps being made in rural Lebanon, small towns in Brazil, and in major cities from Indonesia to the Nordic countries to the United States, the impacts vary greatly. In order to demonstrate these effects, we created a book to share some of these stories. There are even Open Green Maps that look into the future. For example, Girona in Catalonia Spain has mapped hundreds of approved sustainable energy plans.

REFLECTING & SUSTAINING

How is/was the project sustained?
Every Green Mapmaker contributes annually, but this represents a small portion of Open Green Map’s full budget. We are seeking new ways to keep our finances in balance.

What kinds of ‘capital’ did you use to sustain the project?
We have used all kinds of resources to sustain this initiative. Although we promote green enterprises, Green Map System has always discouraged Mapmakers from levelling a charge for being listed on the map. In terms of other capitals, everything that supports the internet and specifically a web platform were used intensely, a combination of social, public and commercial infrastructure capitals, but also individual human capital and a local social network of map information providers (i.e. social capital).

9 See www.greenmap.org/articles
10 See http://www.greenmap.org/impacts
11 See http://OpenGreenMap.org/clima
Is it self-sustaining now, or will it be in the future?
No, but as we open the project to new possibilities, it may become self-sustaining in the future.

Are you happy with the project?
It has been exciting to develop, share and plan for. It has been transformational! But the biggest challenge is the continual degradation of the environment and climate. Involving more people is critical, and Green Map’s informative, engaging tools and infrastructure are becoming more important every day.

Would you change anything?
Technology demands a yes to this question!

Was the project as you expected or did you encounter anything unexpected?
The cost of continual maintenance, changes in the underlying systems and new feature requests have become significantly higher than initially planned. Although the number of Green Map projects has grown specifically as a result of this platform, the growth in income has yet to be balanced. Foundations are not keen on funding the continual growth of existing platforms, so the non-profit is developing new collaborations, services and sponsorships for the next phases of Open Green Map development.

Is the project scalable?
Yes, it was designed to be scaled, and with 400 maps publicly available, we have met this goal. For us, it’s also exciting to look ahead at the new tools that will even more effectively engage people in addressing change at the local level.

What are your future plans?
Discover what people value most about the platform, new and better ways to increase the value, rebuild as an open source and decentralised resource with self-sustaining mechanism.

OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

What were tangible outputs of the project?
Hundreds of people have been on Green Map teams, and thousands have contributed site suggestions, images, videos, comments and ratings. Impacting both emerging and established green communities, there are more than 550 printed editions and more than 400 Open Green Maps continually evolve.

The project created a database of 35000 locally sourced site descriptions catalogued by the icon; 400 readily updated maps made in 40 countries; capacity-building in diverse settings; recognition for the movement and local participants.

What capacity did you build? How did you change people’s lives?
Green Mapmaking builds skills in communications, project management, community organisations, and extends this capacity by building local networks and knowledge. Open Green Map has given many their first interactive mapping experience, and helped many reveal a part of their city that too few appreciate. Map users can experience their own communities, or the ones they visit, anew.

This year, we realised Open Green Map is one of the few platforms that invites public contextualisation of mapped sites. We have had many inquiries asking how we designed its features, for example how the legend slides open smoothly, definitions appear and icons toggle.

Did the project meet the initial purpose and intentions?
Yes!

LE SSO N S LEAR NED

What are the lessons learned?
About people: As a platform, Open Green Map has benefitted from the insights and help of so many great people — it will always need many hands! It’s a tool, not a panacea.

About technology: We lack good documentation of how Open Green Map was built and refined. Made before web development tracking tools like GitHub were available, this gap has made itself felt many times, in some cases making our apps un-repairable.

The latest generation of online mapping tools is quite amazing and cost effective, yet without support for an on-going tech director, it’s difficult to shift forward with clarity. Durable, flexible business planning is critical.

Minimal viable product (MVP) is a good way to address technology projects now. Define the core concept, build just that, see how people use it, assess demand, and then build it up from there.

What can be given as advice for the readers?
Be iterative. Share progress with partners. Be flexible. Be resourceful! Dream big, but work together to make that dream a reality.

12 GitHub is an open development documentation resource which can be used for Information Technology and for other types of co-development. Here’s an interesting example, https://project-open-data.cio.gov/
13 Minimum viable product is ‘the product with the highest return on investment versus risk.’ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minimum_viable_product
Openwear collaborative clothing is a web-based platform for joint fashion creation, networking and interaction. It is an online community where values, knowledge and practice about sustainable and open fashion design are shared among the members. It promotes the collaboration between local business, educational institutes and independent fashion designers and makers to work towards a new vision of fashion, based on micro-communities and sustainability.

Zoe Romano is currently working on Digital Strategy & Wearables at Arduino. She co-founded Openwear.org and Wefab.it, an initiative for the diffusion of open design and digital fabrication in Italy. She’s been into media activism and political visual art for the past 10 years, working on precarious employment, social production, material and immaterial labour in creative and service industries.

Case Study

OPENWEAR
COLLABORATIVE CLOTHING

by Zoe Romano

Purpose/aim of the project: Openwear’s aim, in short, was to optimize the ability of small producers to compete in the marketplace through collaboration, based on common-based resources and networking.

Names of people/organisations involved: Founder of the project: Zoe Romano; Project Leader: Poper 1 with Ethical Economy, 2 Università degli Studi di Milano, 3 Copenhagen Business School 4 and University of Ljubljana. 5

Participants contributing to the first collaborative collection: Studio I-GLE, 6 David Luxembourg, 7 Serpica Naro, 8 OLoop, 9 Open Source Pants, 10 Daniela Pais, 11 Pamoyo, 12 and Jure Purgaj. 13

Key stakeholders: Anyone interested in exploring an alternative model for fashion production such as fashion designers, students, researchers, and universities.

Geographic location: European Union (EU).

Supported by: Life Long Learning Programme of the EU Commission.

Start date/Finish date: September 2009 until September 2012.

Website or other online resource: www.openwear.org

Interview of participants: http://vimeo.com/15654417

Other videos: http://vimeo.com/user4899256/videos

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1 http://www.poper.si
2 Ethical Economy has created the world’s only ethical price index. More: http://openwear.org/info/whoweare
3 http://www.unimi.it
4 http://www.cbs.dk/en
5 http://www.uni-lj.si/eng
6 http://www.i-gle.com
7 http://www.yoad.info
8 http://www.serpicanaro.org
9 http://oloopdesign.com
10 http://www.opensourcepants.net
11 http://www.danielapais.com
12 http://pamoyo.com
13 http://www.jurepurgaj.wordpress.com
What triggered the project?
We were exploring an alternative fashion system based on values like collaboration, open source, community, the commons and distributed manufacturing.

What was your motivation?
We took inspiration from projects in other sectors already working on models based on the above values and tried to bring them into fashion production. I was already in touch with Michel Bauwens, founder of the P2P Foundation and collecting a series of case studies on p2p production. We wanted to experiment something similar in another sector.

Are there similar projects and did these stimulate you and are you linked to them in any way?
Many of the ideas at the core of the project came from the experimentations I did with the Italian collectives I co-founded in 2005 called Serpica Naro.

How did the idea evolve?
The idea was conceived within Serpica Naro collective, operating since 2006. We wanted to help stimulate a conversation around the fact that millions of Italy’s young people now work for years without proper pay, and to find ways to confront the situation.

As we studied the fashion system further, we came to realize that it is characterized by an increasing polarization: on the one hand big luxury brands; on the other fast fashion. The luxury brands accumulate wealth by exploiting the creative, production, and sales segments. We wanted to develop an alternative scheme.

We began with the concept of intellectual property. Realizing that there were no examples of liberated trademarks, we worked with lawyers from Creative Commons to write a license for the use of the Serpica Naro brand. This would permit individuals, small producers, and small factories to contact us and use the brand on their clothing.

With the help of Adam Arvidsson, a sociology professor at the University of Milan, I began to develop relationships with European companies and universities. We not only wanted to see if we could build a new brand that would be economically sustainable, but also to bring the ideas that the Serpica Naro experience had engendered into a more institutional setting.

These efforts resulted in EDUfashion, a consortium of two companies and three universities: the Slovenian design studio Poper, Ethical Economy from the U.K., the University of Milan, the Copenhagen Business School, and the Department of Fashion and Textiles at University of Ljubljana. As we researched open design and peer-to-peer fashion, we began prototyping the community that was to become OpenWear in 2010.

What are/were the key organisational aspects and organizational structures?
Consortium composed by three universities and two companies: EDUfashion, Poper as Project Leader, Ethical Economy – UK, Università degli Studi di Milano – IT, Copenhagen Business School – DK and the University of Ljubljana – SI.

Target audience and network(s)?
Indie fashion, makers, tailors, pattern makers, and students.

What are or were the key activities?
Creating a collaborative collection and maintaining an online platform to share the codes of a series of collaborative collection. All the members of the community could download, manufacture, and sell garments from the collection using the Openwear brand together with their own brand.

What are or were the key approach & methods?
The general idea of the project was to support the development of a new model of fashion production based on local micro businesses with short supply chains networked with a local and international environment of complementary production hubs and educational institutions.

We tried to reconcile two social “trends: a new ethical consumer demand and the growing relevance of a self-managed workforce focused on independent, socially engaged, critical and creative production. Additionally, knowledge sharing is stimulated and dissemination of skills and best practices enhanced with the online space where interested parties can introduce their work, share opinions, use the database and explore the e-book with relevant material that defines the new model framework.

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW MODEL OF FASHION PRODUCTION BASED ON LOCAL MICRO BUSINESSES WITH SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS

14 http://p2pfoundation.net/How_Open_Source_Abundance_Destroyed_the_Scarcity_Basis_of_Capitalism

15 Taken with permission from Zoe Romano. Source: Transcript from a conference keynote at Parsons School of Design, New York, to be published in the Journal of Design Strategies.

16 http://www.edufashion.org
How did you get people participating?
Invitation, word of mouth, events, and through social networks.

What are/were essential for practical matters?
• The creation of an online public space where small producers and students can present their profiles and work activities on ethical fashion production and knowledge creation, as well as discuss best practices and find common solutions for shared problems.
• An online database for resources and e-books17 that define the new model framework: relevant materials at one place for the members who want to deepen their knowledge on new forms of work and production in fashion and creative industry.
• Collaborative clothing collection: freely downloadable, replicable, customizable, and sellable because licensed under Openwear open source brand.18 Helps people who want to sell or share their designs to brand their products without putting too much effort and budget into advertising.
• Creation of an open brand identity: this helps constructing a self-representation for our target groups (micro producers, independent fashion workers, creative industries related to ethical fashion, fashion graduates) and public recognition.

First Collaborative Collection licensed under Openwear open source brand.

Media use and efficacy?
The communication of this new model of production and dissemination of its practices is a complex issue. That’s why we decided to build an open brand, as an ethos, inscribed in the products affected. To varying degrees, the identities and social relations arise around its use. The usual goal of contemporary brand management is to ensure that this particular ethos is reproduced in consumers’ everyday interactions with and around branded products.
An open brand though, is a brand that recognizes the productive role of customer co-production, engages in strategies that aim at redistributing the value produced, and seeks organizational solutions that give co-producing consumers a say in determining the overall governance of the brand.

To start disseminating ideas and involving experts as well as an audience in a virtual conversation we opened up a blog to give visibility to the work in progress. We created a Facebook and Twitter profile to disseminate the initial content. To implement the project plan and start involving stakeholders we organized presentations and open informal debates in educational institutions but also in local creative hubs around Europe.

What are/were the outcomes reference target audience?
The full report of the Openwear project is available online.19 The EDUfashion project delivered four participant outcomes based on collaborative work (Openwear knowledge portal, Openwear brand, electronic archives, research on labour market and working conditions in fashion) and two deliverable outcomes (EDUfashion website, Openwear collaborative collection of garments, Brand manual booklet, e-book). Other outputs are research (workshops) or dissemination (publications) tools. All outputs are connected with one another.

Openwear knowledge portal had 288 subscribers at the end of the EDUfashion project’s European financial scheme. There have been 982 monthly active users on Openwear’s Facebook account, 1,076 likes (and growing).20

What are/were the impacts - target audience and wider?
With EDUfashion we managed to bring together a team of complementary partners. The process of confronting these different views, cultures and socio-economic contexts was of great value for the project and ensured that different perspectives were brought into the main tasks. Each partner was able to promote the project outcomes in its country through national channels but there were over 980 active

18 http://openwear.org/info/license
users each month. We also abroad in other European countries produced an open source manual on how to create an open brand.21

Even though the majority of the research has been based on secondary data analysis, the emergence of the implicit knowledge in daily communication and international meetings has been of a great help. This is particularly true in the understanding of the dichotomy between DIY (do it yourself), ingénue, grassroots design and institutional design. Our work has benefited of the national and international networks of the partners, with a great add value in terms of interdisciplinary and cross-pollination.

For example local network of small designers, micro entrepreneurs and crafters from Milan understood that problems and opportunities for precarious and independent workers were not a local specificity but that they could be considered and managed at a European level.22

REFLECTING & SUSTAINING

How is/was the project sustained?
The project was financed by Life Long Learning Program of EU Commission. It had a plan to become self-sustaining but two years of activity were not enough to reach sustainability.

What kinds of ‘capital’ did you use to sustain the project?
We mainly used human capital, social capital and financial capital.

Are you happy with the project? Would you change anything?
Yes and no. I’m happy we had the chance to experiment new concepts and ideas but probably we were too pioneering for the prevalent designers, the market and consumer mindset. We realised only later that we could not activate a fully collaborative process with online sharing tools for patterns and most of the professionals involved kept working on paper patterns instead of digital ones.

We realised, for example, that people with a fashion background lacked two main approaches:

• The use of digital processes in their work, because the way fashion is taught in school and university is still mostly based on analogue processes.
• The idea that collaboration and sharing is a value to be nurtured because it brings more value in the long run.

Was the project as you expected or did you encounter anything unexpected?
I realised that the fashion sector, even if it works on low levels of intellectual property protection (i.e. patterns are not copyright protected), is based on a culture of secrecy and hiding. This is the worst enemy of collaboration and openness.

Is the project scalable?
Yes. The core ideas of the project are still valuable and could be applied again in another project and with the knowledge of the difficulties encountered.

OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

What were tangible outputs of the project?
More than 400 people were involved in the community around Europe. We created a collaborative collection, an e-book exploring the concepts and some key findings.

What capacity did you build? How did you change people’s lives?
Many people were inspired by the Openwear approach and became more confident in exploring new business models for their activity of independent fashion making.

Did the project meet the initial purpose and intentions?
Yes. We wanted to experiment on some core concepts and we had the time and resources to do it and also understood what could be improved and how was the reaction of a wider audience to this new approach.

LESSONS LEARNED

What are the lessons learned?
Even if things did not go 100% as planned, doing things for real, enables experiences that are not possible otherwise. It’s totally different when you speculate on some processes and frameworks compared to when you can actually stage them on a real project like Openwear.

What can be given as advice for the readers?
Make your idea or project goal as simple as possible and engage in making it successful. Then, in a second phase, expand its aims and make it more complicated.