I started the first year of my PhD in September 2014 with a strong motivation verging on passion regarding off-grid communities. This was partly inspired and further nourished by my existing relations with two off-grid communities in the west coast of Scotland: Isle of Eigg and Knoydart during the last year (see more details in …). As a result my original research interest was around the role of technologies in mediating/structuring/facilitating bottom-up community organization in such social spaces.

However the more I engaged with those communities the more I was disillusioned about many dimension of such “off-grid” communities. I came to realize that the idea of “community” was to be questioned because many of them are quite fragmented in terms of motives for living in this spaces and also how they perceived their role in the local collectives. Furthermore, I came to see the fiction of the idea of “off-grid”. Most of such communities had little or no understanding of the different ways each individual or the whole collective were interaction with national level and regional material, human, institutional infrastructures. So, the notion of off-grid which has been lauded and sometimes hyped in the literature and the media seems to be an ideal which unravels in practice – because of lack of understanding but also social dynamics which lead to significant fragmentations in such so called “communities”.

These encounters led to a radical shift in my core research interests. I came to realize that the questioning regarding the “grid” and “off-grid” first need much more scrutinizing at the individual level. I came to believe that to talk about the community grid or a community being grid, we need to study the human level the idea of responsibility and the boundaries of such responsibility and we have little understand of the technologies and processes that can provide the individual with information about their level of responsibility within their “complicity grids”.

In other words, I think there is analytical value in moving from the rhetoric of “off-grid” to study of the boundaries and dynamics of personal grids. In this venture, my focus is on understanding, rather than prescribing. In other words, I want to analyze how new technologies that make the individual “complicity grids” visible can influence the behaviors of the individuals and then the interactions between individuals leading to new collective behaviors. So, have to decided to focus my thesis on the below question:

*Paste your research questions.*

To achieve this, during the coming two years, I need to embark on an ambitious theoretical and empirical endeavor. In conceptual terms, I need to mobilize existing literature to better define and operationalize concepts central to my work such as grid and complicity. As for methodological approach, during the past year I have read and reflected on the use of ethnographic methods, participant observation, participative action research, and qualitative research methods that seem to be central to my study. However, now I need to think further about how to apply those methods and epistemological approached to my research setting. Last but not least, I have to expand my software development work aimed for documenting and visualizing personal grids, which I started about 4 months ago. In the below section, I will elaborate further on how I aim to address these conceptual, methodological and development challenges during the coming two years. I will then discuss the key milestones in my work during the coming two years and how I plan to conclude my thesis and the expected deliverables.

**Conceptual / Theoretical challenges**

**Complicity**

**Grid**

**Reading – Foucault – latour – Law – Moll**

**Methodological / Data Collection Challenges**

**Technological/ Development Challenges**

### Exhibition and visualisations

The interactive exhibition will consists of both physical and projection pieces.

### Back end and support data

In the first year of my PhD, I developed a pilot project, attempting to visualise my own personal grid using ethnographic techniques, for more details please see Appnedix …. As part of this project, I was curious to find out about my PhD employer: University of Edinburgh's Investment profile through its endowments. In April 2015, I made a freedom of information request and by May 2015, I received the Investment profile[[1]](#footnote-2). My next task was to visualise this information. The list had names of 122 companies and funds with the amount of money invested in each of them. The data was raw and it is difficult to understand the culture of each company that the University was investing on. In the business world, this information is developed by a report called ethical screening or negative screening. These reports however are only available to investors in general as the process of developing these reports are very time consuming and needs a lot of expertise, access to other external databases and so on. In order to resolve this challenge with ethical screening data, I have been in contact with one of the leading organisations within the UK ethical screening (ES)[[2]](#footnote-3) to develop a protocol to share a small part of this data to use within my personal grid tool, however this communication has not been successful. I am the process of contacting EIRIS foundation to develop a way of sharing information, however since this information is also a valuable asset to these organisations and their market value comes from the sellling of these reports, alternatively I am planning to use Free software knowledge development philosophy to create and open source database for this. The development of the tool will take about 4 months of my time, and I have already been in contact with University of Edinburgh's IS services to arrange for getting some server space to host this service. In terms of knowledge sharing and protocol, I've been working with one of the professers from HEC bussiness school to design the knowledge creation protocols and I have been developing the first draft of interface for this backend database system.

This approach to company's ethical screening data, will allow me to develop a decentralised solution to this exhisting gap in knowledge which currently does not exhist at all. One of the challenges here is to get enough people involved on contributing to this knowledge base which I'm hoping through the small but growing community that I'm developing through the investment project. I have already received emails and enquiries from academics and students from HEC and brighton about this project.

Design of the protocols for the fact checking and knowledge creation is the main challenge of this project which I am in the process of designing this with the growing community.

The interface will be developed using HTML5 and php web standards and technologies and the database will be stored using MySQL system. This setting is an standard development setting for similar web-based systems. I have over 10 years of IT experience on this and have already developed similar web-based systems.

**Thesis Planning and Overview of next steps**

**Overall deliverables**

1. [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/list\_of\_investment\_amounts\_throu?nocache=incoming-652838#incoming-652838](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/list_of_investment_amounts_throu?nocache=incoming-652838" \l "incoming-652838) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For more information on Ethical Screening (ES) please visit: [https://www.ethicalscreening.co.uk](https://www.ethicalscreening.co.uk/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)