Collaborative Economies: From Sharing to Caring

Gabriela Avram
University of Limerick
Limerick, Ireland
Gabriela.Avram@ul.ie

Jaz Hee-jeong Choi
Queensland University of Technology
Australia
h.choi@qut.edu.au

Stefano De Paoli
Abertay University
United Kingdom
s.depaoli@abertay.ac.uk

Ann Light
University of Sussex
United Kingdom
ann.light@sussex.ac.uk

Peter Lyle
Madeira Interactive
Technologies Institute
Portugal
peter.lyle@m-iti.org

Maurizio Teli
Madeira Interactive
Technologies Institute
Portugal
maurizio.teli@m-iti.org

ABSTRACT

Digital platforms, often labeled as part of the "sharing economy", are becoming increasingly relevant to both the daily lives of private individuals and to researchers. As these tools are transforming various communities (of interest, place, practice and circumstance) to establish new forms of connection, welfare, labour and service, there emerge fundamental questions around the perils of creation and use. In response to this disruptive trend, this workshop brings together perspectives and cases from researchers and practitioners across various disciplines to interrogate how different forms of collaborative economy might be imagined and created based on the ethics and logic of care.

CCS CONCEPTS

•**Human-centered computing** →**Collaborative and social computing;**

KEYWORDS

Collaborative economy, digital platforms

1 SHARING, COLLABORATING AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF EVERYTHING

The labels "Sharing Economy" and "Collaborative Economy" have been widely used in recent years to refer to a variety of initiatives, business models, and forms of work, from commercial platforms to makerspaces and urban gardens. Botsman [2], one of the first researchers to address this phenomenon, described the "sharing economy" as an "economic model based on sharing, swapping, trading, or renting products and services, enabling access over ownership".

Two different narratives on the collaborative economy tend to dominate the current discourse. One group of narratives focuses on social innovation, creating more sustainable economic and environmental models in which sharing access to goods and services allows for a more efficient and sustainable utilisation of resources. "Early proponents of the collaborative economy maintained that peer-to-peer exchange has the capacity to fundamentally change the way people relate to one another and the environment" [1]. The second group centres on the idea of market-focused digital innovation able to disrupt existing business models and generate economic activity. Social and environmental benefits are presented as the main incentive.

The stark contrast between the rhetoric of socially-driven initiatives and the business exploitation of digital networks is captured in Troncoso's [13] term sharewashing, which highlights examples of renting, work, and surveillance rebranded as 'sharing'. Many sharing economy enterprises have been widely criticised for exploiting legislation loopholes and undermining labour rights[1]. Light [6] comments that "despite enthusiasm for the idea of efficient resource use, many people remain unhappy that digital services from the free Couchsurfing to the paid-for AirBnB; from online investing platforms to help for refugees are being lumped together". Indeed, critical observers of contemporary platform capitalism (e.g. [12]) and activists in the field of platform cooperativism (e.g. [11]), have clarified how many of the contemporary digital platforms operate extracting wealth from social collaboration [14]. As with much social media, users' activity through a digital platform creates wealth for a small minority.

This workshop acknowledges such controversy and recognizes that many digital platforms, in their current form, are part of the neoliberal processes shaping our societies [5]. Interested in the relationship between communities and technologies, we ask the following fundamental questions in order to go beyond neoliberal understanding of digital platforms:

What are the opportunities in collaborative economy practices to leverage new digital platforms and emerging networks? How might these lead to new social imaginaries and economic endeavours that co-create more just and livable futures?

[1]E.g. Network of European and North American labour unions and worker organizationsfi calls for transnational multi-stakeholder cooperation to ensure fair working conditions on digital platforms (crowdwork-igmetall.de)

We are convinced that one way to answer these questions is to think beyond the current dominant narratives of sharing and move towards "care" as a notion and a social practice.

2 THE ETHICS AND LOGIC OF CARE

Care is understood in contrasting and complementary ways. Care can be the product of an intervention, but can be interwoven into the sharing itself as a means of dialogic interaction and tinkering [9]. We see care as fundamental to co-existence. Drawing on Puig de la Bellacasa's insight that 'interdependency is not a contract but a condition; even a precondition' [3, p.198] of life, we note that. '[T]o care about something, or for somebody, is inevitably to create relation' (ibid). Care is 'not something forced upon living beings by a moral order; yet it obliges in that for life to be liveable it needs being fostered. This means that care is somehow unavoidable' (ibid). This relationship can be called the 'care ethic,' and one aspect of the workshop will be to better understand how such a perspective can shed light on structuring future social relations [7]. We explore the 'logic of care' as embodied in a 'mode, a style, a way of working' [9] to interrogate possibilities of new values, practices, and processes across how we might work, play, and live.

It is by doing so that we refocus the understanding of collaborative economies. The relationship between care and the current digital economy is checkered at best. By connecting the concept of caring to all aspects of platform capitalism, we move closer to Light and Miskelly's definition of a "sharing culture" [8] and the "thick networks" [10] of local communities putting collaboration at the core. These are "projects that proliferate, spawning further ventures and ideas that weren't envisaged when they started. They then begin to develop a dense, participatory culture that becomes attractive and relevant to everyone rather than mostly to socially active people with time on their hands" [10].

For example, in the research context, approaches that serve to re-imagine and introduce caring in the context of collaborative economies include the EU-funded CAPS (Collective Awareness Platforms), such as the PIE News project. The PIE News project introduced the Commonfare.net platform (commonfare.net) involving precarious workers, the working poor, people unprotected by safety nets, and young people who are no longer in the education system and experience difficulties in finding a job (pieproject.eu). Additional research and development could be designed, in parallel, to support other crucial facets such as well-being and education of these young people, applying design as an emancipatory force, building on Ehn's [4] early thoughts. Such research will not act in a vacuum: there are diverse existing and nascent examples of activism, research, and design that reflect a general logic of care.

2.1 Topics

The workshop will serve as an open and active forum for participants of up to 20 practitioners, designers, and researchers involved in related fields. We welcome all methodological, practical, and speculative approaches that consider the relations between sharing, caring and collaborative economy.

Key topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Platform cooperativism [11]
- Environmental sustainability and ecological concerns (such as Ethnography after Human Exceptionalism[2], Hacker Farm[3] and Food Connect[4])
- Peer-to-peer learning and production (such as Mothership Hackermoms[5], Coder Dojo[6] and Free Software[7])
- Citizen science (e.g. Quantum Moves[8])
- Related social, political, cultural, and health domains and implications (including issues around rising precarity, homelessness, self-care and mutual aid)
- Initiatives calling for digital social innovation and design for change (such as CAPS projects[9], the DESIS network[10], or the Enabling the Future network[11])
- Digital currencies and finance (e.g. Freecoin[12])

3 GOALS

The workshop has the following goals:

(1) To create a space for discussion about new and ongoing work in the field, and open up debates about the direction of research and practice across diverse fields related to collaborative economy.
(2) To bring together researchers and practitioners in related fields to identify current challenges around the sharing economy and reflect critically on what could be done to resist these trends.
(3) To discuss existing cases or examples of communities, technologies, and practices directed at facilitating a sharing caring economy.
(4) To reflect critically on questions involved in the design of technologies with and for care, to build more just and livable futures.

As a follow up to the workshop, we aim to produce an edited publication (journal special issue), to which participants will be invited to submit a full paper. Discussions have begun with *CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*.

4 ACTIVITIES

Participants will be asked to bring an artifact for another workshop participant, choosing an item that is intended to enrich the life of the recipient, as an exercise in thinking about care and our common needs. The plan for the day will involve the following activities:

4.1 Morning

Session 1 Participants will introduce themselves and their position on sharing, caring and the collaborative economy,

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[2]morethanhumanlab.org/blog/2016/05/11/new-publication-critical-and-creative-ethnography-after-human-exceptionalism
[3]makery.info/en/2015/08/11/hacker-farm-bricoder-dans-le-bled
[4]foodconnect.com.au
[5]mothership.hackermoms.org
[6]coderdojo.com
[7]fsf.org
[8]scienceathome.org/games/quantum-moves/game
[9]capssi.eu/caps-projects
[10]desisnetwork.org
[11]enablingthefuture.org
[12]freecoin.ch

and engage in discussion about the artifact they brought to give or share as inspiration to develop further research and design questions.

Session 2 Participants will refine research and design questions related to caring in a collaborative economy, connecting these themes to communities and technologies and further highlighting their own position.

4.2 Afternoon

Session 3 We will build on the outcomes of the morning and brainstorm responses.

Session 4 Last, participants will pull together the insights of the day to establish the critical questions that need addressing across the domains of care, sharing, and collaborative economy at the intersection of communities and technologies.

5 SUBMISSION AND SELECTION

We will include a maximum of 20 participants. Interested participants should submit 800 word position papers to the organisers, outlining the following:

- Your current research and/or practice, including any existing work in this area, from old sharing and caring traditions to explorations of the potential futures of this domain;
- A brief biography of each contributor; and
- What you would like to gain from/bring to the workshop.

Participants will be selected to ensure overall disciplinary and geo-cultural diversity. For more information, please have a look at: collaborativeeconomiesworkshop.wordpress.com

6 ORGANISERS

Gabriela Avram is Lecturer in Digital Media and Interaction Design, and senior researcher at the Interaction Design Centre of the University of Limerick (Ireland). Building on a CSCW background, her research currently focuses on the implications of the collaborative economy on urban communities, with an emphasis on DIY, civic engagement and cultural heritage.

Jaz Hee-Jeong Choi is Director of the Urban Informatics Research Lab and co-leads Social Entrepreneurship at the QUT Design Lab, Queensland University of Technology, Australia. She is also the founder of CASE (CreAtive Social Entrepreneurship) for Women. Her current research explores three inter-related themes: of self-care and mutual aid; social entrepreneurship and co-creative urban transformation.

Stefano De Paoli is Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Security Theme Research Leader at Abertay University in Scotland. Stefano works at the intersection of social sciences and design and has interests in the areas of reputations systems, cybersecurity and digital games. He is currently involved in the H2020 projects PIE News/Commonfare and Wikirate.

Ann Light is Professor of Design and Creative Technology at the University of Sussex, working on design for change and social well-being. Her work explores the politics of participation; how design and culture interact to produce sustainable transitions in everyday life; and tools to support fulfilling, collaborative and less resource intensive practices, with a particular interest in place-shaping.

Peter Lyle is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute. His background includes a mix of human-computer interaction and interaction design with a focus on community and urban informatics. His most recent focus is on the design of a platform as part of the H2020 PIE News/Commonfare project to rethink welfare provision, using a participatory design approach.

Maurizio Teli is Assistant Professor at the Madeira Interactive Technologies Institute. His research focuses on the transformations of participatory design in relation to contemporary capitalism. His most recent research project is the H2020 PIE News/Commonfare, rethinking welfare provision as a collaborative practice.

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