

January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019

Dear members of the selection committee,

I am writing to apply for a position in the OpenDOTT PhD programme, on the topic "Communities and Neighbourhoods". My background experience both as a researcher and as a practitioner is perfectly aligned with the goal of empowering local communities, engaged citizens and maker groups to reach the best possible uses of IoT in society. As described below, I have been working for some years with the idea that instead of forcing society to adapt to the ways of information technology, we should instead foster critical appropriation and enable communities to shape technologies themselves and in doing so to create inclusive, sustainable and peaceful futures.

I am very excited with the possibility of taking part on the OpenDoTT programme. I always try to pair my research work with collaborative setups and practical/experimental activities. Being on the lookout for PhD offers for a couple years I can assure it was very hard to find an offer that coupled engaged goals, critical thinking and concrete experimentation. I congratulate the persons and institutions responsible for that offer.

Even though I am relatively new to research proper (having started on that path intermittently after getting my MA in 2014), my experience with open collaborative networks dates back to 2002. I have played a central role as a founder and leader of a number of networked initiatives both in Brazil and internationally. That background offered valuable skills for my work as a researcher more recently. For instance, I had the satisfaction of dedicating two years of my life working on an action-research project about open and collaborative science in Ubatuba, southeast Brazil, where I live since 2008. I was responsible for the action axis of the project - identifying individuals, groups and institutions that contributed to generate and disseminate knowledge in the city and region, and then creating opportunities for them to exchange and work together. During the project we had the chance to experiment with a number of formats for community engagement: seminars, technical workshops, radio shows, visits, cooperative projects and even the collaborative creation of public policies. We ended up talking not in terms of open science anymore, but of common science developed among academic and non-academic peers, among experts and laymen, among communities and institutions. I want my future projects to keep moving in that direction - establishing boundary objects that make collaboration across fields of knowledge possible and relevant. I trust OpenDoTT is an amazing context where this approach can thrive.

Before completing my MA with a dissertation exploring the idea of networked experimental labs (labs as spaces whose purposes and settings are intentionally open-ended), I spent more than a decade as an activist and practitioner advocating for free/open and collaborative approaches to develop positive social change. I'll be happy to spend long afternoons in Dundee talking more about such episodes of my life, but to save all of us time I will try to keep it short in this letter. My

first step into open technology communities was in 2002, when we founded the MetaReciclagem network in Brazil. In some years, the network was managing eight community labs in different parts of Brazil dedicated to the critical appropriation of discarded IT equipment, and maintaining a very active network of almost a thousand people from all walks of life. In 2004 we became part of a very fruitful international exchange (with India and the Netherlands) via the Waag-Sarai platform that gave us a deeper understanding of what we were doing and why. MetaReciclagem was one of the most well reputed communities working with open source software in Brazil by then, and for that reason we were invited to help build the national Digital Culture strategy to be applied in the Pontos de Cultura ("cultural hotspots") project under the then Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil. The program was planned and implemented using exclusively free and open source software, in a time when many doubted of its capacities.

Cultura Digital gave us even more international projection. I was a guest speaker sharing our experience with MetaReciclagem and the Digital Culture project in many conferences.

MetaReciclagem got honorary mentions in renowned awards such as the APC Betinho Prize and Prix Ars Electronica.

From 2009 on, though, I started migrating from projects focused on the digital divide - and what I called politics of compensation - towards more critical, experimental and imaginative ones. I felt we could start changing the future instead of only making up for inequalities of the past. I was one of the first members of the IoT Council, founded by Rob Kranenburg (with whom I had already collaborated in the past when we created the Bricolabs network together with people such as Matt Ratto, Bronac Ferran and Jaromil). And my work started getting more related both with the local context of the city I live in (Ubatuba, in the southeast of Brazil) as well as with a network of experimental projects in Brazil and abroad. I since adopted a critical perspective on the dissemination of fablabs and makerspaces, precisely for the lack of engagement with local issues that they often incur into. And I kept weaving a network of interesting people with whom I could discuss such questions and experiment with solutions for them.

After co-organizing large scale events as the Digital Culture Forum in 2009 and curating the LabX arts and technology temporary lab in 2011, I decided to bring things closer to home. During the 2013 edition of the Pixelache festival in Helsinki, of which I was a co-curator together with other members of the Bricolabs network, I decided to create a festival in Ubatuba that would put together arts, science, technology and society. The Tropixel Festival has had four editions since, and is always a great place to host meaningful discussions and expand our networks. In the next years, I went deeper into diverse contexts such as those of electronic arts, arts and science collaborations, critical making, socio-ecological innovation and citizen innovation, open science hardware (just attended GOSH in Shenzhen some months ago), open source IoT, among others.

Whilst preparing for this PhD application, it was hard to decide who I would nominate as my referees. My network of former co-workers or peers on collaborative settings is very wide and diverse. I finally decided to appoint Dr. Sarita Albagli (IBICT), who was my supervisor in the Ciência Aberta Ubatuba project; and Rob van Kranenburg who has no academic position but has an important role in discussing the implications of IoT in society since his book "Internet of Things"

published in 2007 and the creation of the IOT Council. If you need to contact only two persons, these are the ones I nominate. But I have also added to my application others that have followed my work for some time: Dr Clemens Apprich of Leuphana University and Dr Henrique Zoqui Parra of the Federal University of São Paulo. Going further, I have great confidence on a wider network of people who can attest my qualifications and adherence to topics of responsible technology and communities, even if I did not ask them in advance. To name just a few: Stephen Kovats (r0g, Berlin), Francesca Bria (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona), James Wallbank (former Access Space, today Makers, Sheffield), Geert Lovink (Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam), Mike Stubbs (Fact, Liverpool), Gabriela Agustini (Olabi Makerspace, Rio de Janeiro), Janet Gunter (The Restart Project, London), Marcos Garcia (Medialab Prado, Madrid), Tapio Mäkelä (Aalto Media Lab, Helsinki), Adrian Smith (Sussex University) and many others.

Besides my work as a researcher and my experience as an activist and practitioner in projects for the public good, there is a third axis that brought me instrumental skills and a practical approach that will be useful for OpenDoTT: for a little over an year, I have been working for a private company called OptDyn, creator of an open source p2p cloud platform. Four out of six members of OptDyn's top management have decades of involvement with the Apache web server - three of them as experienced open source developers, and the other on management and marketing. I started as a project manager, and soon became the Subutai platform's user community manager. I have also been working directly in product development (such as the IoT Sandbox) and UX.

I consider myself a creative person and a quick learner, as well as a human hub of people, ideas, skills and resources. I know how to create, plan, implement and document projects, both alone and (much better) in collaboration. I am good at naming projects and have intermediate skills in graphic design, multimedia (audio, video, some music), system administration, web development, UX design, as well as recruiting, event production and reporting. I like to see gentle leadership as one of my superpowers. I am also well familiarized and comfortable in international settings, having spent three somewhat extended periods in Europe, as well as short term residencies in Europe and Asia, being a guest speaker in dozens of conferences, and working remotely in a number of initiatives over the years.

For your time and consideration I thank you in advance, and look forward (eagerly) to hearing from you, hopefully to schedule an interview.

**Felipe Schmidt Fonseca**

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