P2P-F TSE CONSORTIUM

DRAFT PROPOSALS STARTS HERE

Steps towards improving the conditions of crowdsourced labour in the sharing economy

Description of the problematique

We see the sharing economy as exemplified in two major forms.

In one form, commons-oriented peer production as defined by Yochai Benkler in The Wealth of Networks, contributors, paid and unpaid, contribute to common pools of knowledge, code and design, that inform the production of open source and free software, open design, and open hardware and many other economic sectors (geo-location based services for example). This open knowledge or 'fair use' economy is estimated at one sixth of GDP. This form of production is based on 'aggregated labor', i.e. labour that is substantially networked, creates its own norms, and often creates independent institutions such as the FLOSS Foundations. The special problematique of this form of labour has been discussed first by Tiziana Terranova's work on the emergence of 'free labour'. However, because of the networked aggregation form of such labour, at least some expressions of peer production function as a 'labour aristocracy' due to the high demand for complex technical skills.

The second form is the creation of proprietary marketplaces that bring together supply and demand for labor, skills, and different kinds of material resources ('idle-sourcing'), often also called the sharing economy or defined as 'crowdsourcing'. This form of labour is most often 'disaggregated' as workers compete for clients and do not exist as a community organized in networks around the production of common objects. In a to be published book on the conditions of such 'digital labour', Trebor Scholz has documented the serious deterioration of salary conditions and social solidarity mechanisms under this form of labour.

The aim of the research is to document the social condition of the two forms of labor, and to inquire into possible solutions. In particular, the research will be focused on creating 'aggregation' into the forms of disaggregated labor.

Description of the Research Proposal

The first phase of the research is focused on documenting the labour condition in the two forms of the collaborative economy:

* Phase 1: The social condition of labor under commons-based peer production

In this phase of the research we will use both surveys (see: Statistical Survey of Peer Production) and sample qualitative research with workers involved in free software, and open design/ hardware projects. This will be complemented and preceded by a review of the existing literature.

* Phase 2: The social condition of labor in the crowdsourced sharing economy

In this phase of the research we will use both surveys and sample qualitative research with workers involved and participating in sharing economy platforms. This will be complemented and preceded by a review of the existing literature.

* Phase 3: New forms of labor organisation in the sharing economy

In this phase we will look at labour resistance and organizing in the new peer production and sharing economy platforms. In particular, we will look at the organizing efforts, and the emergence of new security and solidarity practices and services, of the Freelancers Union, whose membership combines workers in the various subsectors of the sharing economy.

* Phase 4: The emergence of alternative economic formats in the sharing economy

This section will look at autonomous efforts by this new type of labor to self-organize through new economic entities that are independent of proprietary platforms. In particular, we will look at:

* innovations in governance and ownership models (see Majorie Kelly's, The Ownership Revolution)

* new value conceptions and practices, for example, the emergence of 'contributory open value accounting' of the Sensorica open sensor network

* innovations in legal frameworks: what is the legal position of labour, both inside the proprietary economy, and in the emerging alternative formats

* new forms of solidarity and security: what are the new solidarity practices that are emerging in the new form of labor, to compensate the unequal power relationship affecting disaggrated labor platforms

Description of the Research Network

The project lead is Michel Bauwens of the P2P Foundation; the institutional lead is the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne (contact: Angela Davy)

The P2P Foundation is a global network of academic and activist researchers that has been focusing it's work on the new forms of peer production, peer governance, and ownership, including the emerging sharing and collaborative economy. Amongst its previous scientific projects is the production of a 'Synthetic Overview of the Collaborative Economy', for Orange Research; participation in a EUR $3m P2PValue research project which examines the new value practices in contribution-based peer production; and an ambitious policy research effort towards generalization a 'social knowledge economy' in Ecuador, involving a team of 6 research under the leadership of Michel Bauwens.

Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia have been looking at practices of sharing and some of the legal barriers/hindrances to doing so, particularly in the context of the 3D printing community.

Members of the Research Team

Project Lead: Michel Bauwens and Angela Davy

Project Coordinators: Kevin Flanagan, Daniel Araya

Lead legal research: Hans Lammerant ; assisted by Angela Davy
Literature Review: Vasilis Kostakis ;

Labor researchers: Karthik Iyer (peer production); Örsan Şenalp (labour organizing and sharing economy)

Editing/proofreading: Layne Hartsell, Daniel Araya

Scientific Support Network

Lead scientific adviser: Adam Arvidsson

Lead labor adviser: Dr. Phoebe Moore (w/ assistance of Trebor Scholz)

Lead legal adviser: Primavera de Filippi

Budget and Timeline

General Scientific Coordination:

Editorial coordination:

Executive Summary:

Timeline

Phase 1:

* quantitative survey:

* qualitative survey

* literature review:

Phase 2:

* quantitative survey:

* qualitative survey

* literature review:

Phase 3:

* case study of the Freelancers Union

* overview of other efforts

* literature review:

Phase 4:

* governance / ownership innovations

* value practices

* legal frameworks

* solidarity practices

References

DRAFT PROPOSAL ENDS HERE

http://fuse.microsoft.com/research/award

To be considered for this award, submit a **CV**, and a **project proposal** (2 pages) via email at fuselabsaward@microsoft.com with the following basic information:

- **Description and approach.** What set of questions will be addressed? How will they be addressed? What are the methodological and theoretical approaches that the researchers will utilize?
- **Related research.** Briefly summarize and explain how your proposal is going to build on previous work (references section are not counted towards the page limit).
- **Budget and timeline.** Describe how the award will be used, along with the milestones to measure the progress of the project. If the project described is part of a larger ongoing research program, estimate the time for completion of this project only.

Selection Process and Criteria

FUSE Labs reserves the right to fund winning proposals at an amount greater or lower than the amount requested, up to the stated maximum amount. We cannot provide individual feedback on proposals that are not funded.

All proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Addresses an important research question that, if answered, has the potential to have a impact on the peer economy.
- Potential for wide dissemination and use of knowledge, including specific plans for scholarly publications, public presentations, and white papers.
- Ability to complete the project including adequacy of resources available, reasonableness of timelines, and qualifications of identified contributors.
- Qualifications of principal investigator including previous history of work in the area, successful completion of previous funded projects, research or teaching awards, and publications

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Description of Project

Request for Proposals - Peer Economy Research Awards
SCHEDULE AND DEADLINES

RFP released: May 19, 2014

Two-page proposal submission deadline: June 6, 2014
Notification of results: Mid June, 2014

OVERVIEW

A number of technological platforms, often referred to as the "sharing economy," are disrupting entrenched industries by enabling ordinary people to monetize excess resources such as cars, bedrooms, and skills. For instance, Uber, Airbnb, and TaskRabbit have challenged the status-quo in the hospitality, transportation, and staffing industries.

These platforms have the potential to create extra income opportunities for people, reduce the environmental cost of ownership, and foster interactions among co-located residents. At the same time, they challenge existing business practices, some of which were originally intended to protect public safety, health, and labor rights, among others. More broadly, the term "sharing economy" is in need for examination as these platforms most often involve the monetization of transactions that otherwise could have occurred in reciprocity networks.

Despite the Peer Economy's increased visibility, size, and tensions, not much independent academic research has been done in this space. We are seeking to fund academic researchers who can investigate and problematize this phenomenon, especially in urban environments where they thrive, to answer questions such as:

System Design. What sociotechnical tools or design interventions could help address or examine existing limitations of peer economy platforms? How might reputation systems be leveraged in new ways to recruit and engage communities of practice, to increase accountability and quality of labor? How could mentorship systems be leveraged to improve providers of labor over time?

Urbanism. What are the impacts of generalized "ride sharing," space rentals, and other forms of collaborative consumption in the lives of city residents?

Economics. What are the economic impacts of different peer economy platforms across industries? What sort of industries are susceptible to disruption by peer economy platforms and in what ways? Can the peer economy be accessible to communities who may not have access to high value capital or excess resources?

Altruism. How is altruistic sharing impacted by the introduction of peer economy platforms? Is there a crowding out effect?

Regulation. What is the role of governmental and other forms of regulation in the peer economy? Infrastructure. How do peer economy platforms enhance or undermine public infrastructure? How do these platforms impact communities' resilience?

Data. What data from peer economy platforms can be leveraged to help communities? How can individuals' privacy rights, societal benefits, and the platform's own interest be reconciled?

Environment. How does the peer economy change the nature of ownership? What are the environmental effects of these changes?

Labor issues. How are labor rights undermined or redefined by these new income earning modalities? What new structures for collective action might emerge from the peer economy providers? What jobs are being displaced by peer economy platforms and what alternatives might emerge?

MONETARY AWARDS

We will offer unrestricted gift awards totaling up to $100,000 USD, made payable to the applicant's institution.

ELIGIBILITY

We are especially welcoming of proposals that are cross-disciplinary. We recognize that the knowledge necessary to address this area may come from a wide range of methodologies and disciplines as diverse as computer science, urbanism, information science, sociology, design, legal studies, and economics. We welcome proposals that involve qualitative or quantitative data collection and analysis.

To be eligible, your institution and proposal must meet the following requirements.

Institutions must have access to the knowledge, resources, and skills necessary to carry out the proposed research.
The receiving institution must agree that awards are made as unrestricted gifts, and should provide the necessary tax documents shortly after being notified of the award.
Applicants may be faculty, researchers, students and affiliates of institutions that are either an accredited degree-granting university with a non-profit status or a research institution with non-profit status
Proposals that are incomplete will be excluded from the selection process.
Institutions can be located inside or outside the United States.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

FUSE Labs at Microsoft Research shall have no obligation to maintain the confidentiality of any submitted proposals. Therefore, proposals should not contain information that is confidential, restricted, or sensitive. FUSE Labs reserves the right to make the winning proposals publicly available, except those portions containing budgetary or personally identifiable information.

To be considered for this award, submit a CV, and a project proposal (2 pages) via email at fuselabsaward@microsoft.com<mailto:fuselabsaward@microsoft.com> with the following basic information:

Description and approach. What set of questions will be addressed? How will they be addressed? What are the methodological and theoretical approaches that the researchers will utilize?
Related research. Briefly summarize and explain how your proposal is going to build on previous work (references section are not counted towards the page limit).
Budget and timeline. Describe how the award will be used, along with the milestones to measure the progress of the project. If the project described is part of a larger ongoing research program, estimate the time for completion of this project only.

SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

FUSE Labs reserves the right to fund winning proposals at an amount greater or lower than the amount requested, up to the stated maximum amount. We cannot provide individual feedback on proposals that are not funded.

All proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Addresses an important research question that, if answered, has the potential to have a impact on the peer economy.
Potential for wide dissemination and use of knowledge, including specific plans for scholarly publications, public presentations, and white papers.
Ability to complete the project including adequacy of resources available, reasonableness of timelines, and qualifications of identified contributors.
Qualifications of principal investigator including previous history of work in the area, successful completion of previous funded projects, research or teaching awards, and publications.

CONDITIONS

Funded researchers must seek approval of their institution?s review board for any work that involves human subjects.

FUSE Labs makes no claims on any of the data collected as a part of this research, but we encourage the researchers to publish their work broadly. Funded researchers do not need to seek FUSE Labs' approval prior to publication.

ORGANIZERS

This RFP is being coordinated by Andr?s Monroy-Hern?ndez, researcher in FUSE Labs at Microsoft Research. For more information please email
fuselabsaward@microsoft.com<mailto:fuselabsaward@microsoft.com>

ABOUT FUSE RESEARCH AWARDS

Every year FUSE Labs helps fund university researchers doing work in areas related to social computing and design. Previous winners include faculty from departments of computer science, information science, and communications such as:

Prof. Michael Bernstein, Stanford University, Computer Science.
Prof. Sean Munson, University of Washington, Human Centered Design & Engineering.
Prof. Aaron Shaw, Northwestern University, School of Communication.
Prof. Elizabeth Liddy and Anthony Rotolo, Syracuse University, School of Information Studies.
Prof. Robert Mason, University of Washington, Information School.

Summary of P2P-F Vision of this research

MB: here is my key proposal: 1) what effect is the sharing economy having on labor and work 2) can we imagine new solidarity mechanisms to re-balance the negative effects 3) can we re-imagine a new type of economic logic that would altogether transcend the structural problems caused to labor by the for-profit sharing economy

Sub-proposal from Hans Lammerant

here some first ideas for the FUSE lab Peer Economy Research project.
Feel free to comment.

Problem description:

The sharing economy has come into legal fights, e.g. with the court decisions against Uber and AirBNB. What this specific segment of the sharing economy does is deploying digital market places through which demand for certain assets is matched with owners of such assets. It allows to make markets in these assets more liquid through shifting from bringing ownership to accessibility to the market. As such it allows a wider range of people to enter the market, which changes the business model around this asset from B2C into C2C.
Such C2C markets are not new. Older examples are house swapping for holidays, the carpooling markets offering free places on longer distance car travels, which sometimes date from before the internet (e.g. Taxistop in Belgium). But internet and now also mobile technologies enables a wider reach of such markets.
This shift from B2C into C2C can cause some 'creative destruction' of older business models. Most threatened are also business involving lower skilled people, as these services are easier to take up temporarily by non-professional peers.

Some of these markets are traditionally heavily regulated, like the taxi or the hotel market. Rationale of these regulations is mostly consumer protection, safety, etc. Although often not the aim of these regulations, they also function as an entry barrier and limit the competition. Some of these regulations also demand heavy investments from the business involved, due to which these business feel the competition of the new C2C as being unfair. And such controlled markets make it possible to build in some legal protection of workers, which threatens to disappear when these markets become informalized into C2C markets.

When the choice is made to protect the older business models, e.g. for social reasons like protecting livelihoods of low-skilled people or to be able to still demand investments for safety, such protection has to function in a new situation. The fact that entering the market as a temporary, informal participant has become much easier, has changed anyway the impact of the old regulations. Upholding the old regulations needs a heavier control apparatus and threatens also older informal and even non-market practices (e.g. borrow your house to friends for a while, temporary renting a student room during a study abroad, …). Basic problem from a regulatory point of view is that the practices have become more fluid, making the old regulation outdated and more difficult to implement.

The micro-entrepreneurship involved in these C2C markets raise also further questions: do you tax these activities (or only the services of the platform), how does these activities relate to social security systems like unemployment protection, liability issues ...

Under these legal problematics lays a basic socio-political question: what is the place of micro-entrepreneurship?
Is it a driver for further precarization of workers? Or do we see paid work shifting to new business models around these P2P collaborations? Is it a step towards more sustainable consumption through better use of resources? Or perhaps empowering people to build livelihoods outside the market economy? How can solidarity mechanisms get shaped when this form of economic activity becomes a substantial part of our economy?

Research questions:
- what are the legal problems encountered by new sharing markets?
This implies looking at where the sharing markets enters or intrudes regulated markets and what are the triggers of those regulations. How do such regulations define the activities to which they apply? When does a participant in a sharing market becomes an employee, a commerce or a trader. In other words, when is a barter or an informal exchange of goods or services an activity which falls under the economic and commercial regulations.
- Which are the reasons and rationale behind these regulations? Which of these objectives still make sense in a sharing market? Are there new needs for regulation emerging through the sharing markets?
The first aim is to make an inventory of the objectives of these regulations. This is still a part of legal research, but also political science. The next steps are more political and can involve sociological and economic research: evaluating objectives for regulation and making an inventory of needs for protection in the sharing markets. This also involves evaluating the consequences of the 'creative destruction' and mapping the pros and cons of protecting older business models.
How I write it down here it may sound as a mostly legal research project, but I see the legal work as part of the starting point as well as something needed in the end result. The work between that needs to involve all the economic and political questions we want to address, like the ones raised by Michel. So these research questions can be further augmented and developed depending on the research interests and skills of the other partners.
- How can these objectives be implemented in new regulations? Which obstacles can be discerned which are difficult to overcome? Can the new P2P-technologies and practices also be an answer to these obstacles?
Based on the list of the objectives (like safety, consumer protection, guarantees for trust, liability, social protection, etc) made earlier, how can these get implemented in the new sharing markets. Practically this often comes down at looking how regulations can be made without a heavy burden to market participants, as such regulatory burdens would drive them out of the market. What level of informal activity is accepted or which regulatory borders can be drawn between formal economic activities and informal practices.
The question can also be turned around. Can P2P-technologies or practices help to address concerns due to the enlarged informalization of activities, can they help to establish some low burden-formalization?

Practical questions:
- I think practically we can best approach this research project through some case studies. These are best identified already in our proposal. Any ideas?
If this is not possible we can start with making some inventory of sharing practices and project where legal conflicts have emerged. Based on this we can select some cases to further develop.
But we have to take into account some practical limitations, like language. Especially for legal research language skills are important and have to be available with the partners doing the research. (I can work in English, Dutch, French and German. I understand some Spanish but not enough for legal research.

Access to legal sources concerning the case studies at hand is another issue. In our research group we have other language skills present, but this does not mean we have easy access to relevant legal sources.)

- I have now focused on a specific type of sharing economy (C2C markets), as this seems to be from where this call originates. We can widen this, but I would advise to be specific in our research objects. So not sharing economy in general, but specific types of sharing economy which we describe in the proposal.

Possible Candidates

Daly Angela

From: "Daly, Angela" <Angela.Daly@EUI.eu>
Subject: Re: [P2P-F] [berkmanfriends] looking for academics studying
    the   "Sharing Economy"
To: Primavera De Filippi <pdefilippi@gmail.com>, P2P Foundation
    mailing list   <p2p-foundation@lists.ourproject.org>
Cc: P2P-F Community Dev <communitydev@p2pfoundation.net>, Trebor
    Scholz <scholzt@newschool.edu>, james burke <lifesized@gmail.com>,
    Daniel Araya <daniel.araya@singularityu.org>
Message-ID: <1400562706813.17039@EUI.eu>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset="windows-1252"

Hello all,

Not sure if I've actually posted on this list yet (but I do already know some of you off-list and I'm editing a special edition of the Journal of Peer Production - so plenty of overlap!).

Anyway, myself and colleagues at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia have been looking at practices of sharing and some of the legal barriers/hindrances to doing so, particularly in the context of the 3D printing community (one of the big barriers of course is intellectual property norms). Some of this feeds into discussions around digital labo(u)r - esp since these sharing norms have been co-opted by big corps which monetise them…

I'm also interested in how p2p disrupts legal logics as well:
http://peerproduction.net/issues/issue-3-free-software-epistemics/peer-reviewed-papers/free-software-and-the-law-out-of-the-frying-pan-and-into-the-fire-how-shaking-up-intellectual-property-suits-competition-just-fine/

Yet this is not necessarily emancipatory overall e.g. can feed into more 'libertarian' conceptions of capitalism with corresponding effects on workers' rights/ability to protect their profession and ensure a decent wage, etc.

Anyway happy to help if some of this would be useful...

PRIMAVERA DE FILIPPI

Primavera De Filippi is a legal researcher at the CERSA / CNRS / Université Paris II (Panthéon-Assas). She is currently a research fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School, where she is exploring on the legal challenges faced by Commons-based Peer Production, along with possible ways to promote and encourage value production in a commons-based ecosystem.
In addition to her academic research, Primavera acts as a legal expert for Creative Commons in France and as a coordinator for the Open Knowledge Foundation. She co-founded and currently coordinate the IGF dynamic coalition on Network Neutrality and the Communia association for the public domain.
More information at: https://cyber.law.harvard.edu/people/pdefilippi

Vasilis Kostakis

Candidate to work on the alternative proposals

Hans Lammerant

I am working at the moment at the LSTS (Law, Science, Technology and Society) research group of the Brussels University (VUB). I think this is a project in which we can contribute.
Legal discussions arise more often with these new forms of sharing platforms like Uber: when does participation in legal terms become labour, trade, ... and triggers the application of those legal frameworks. Question is then how these frameworks can be adapted in a balanced way, both to avoid it is used to evade legal protection for workers and to protect participants.

I am personally interested to participate in this project. At the moment I am working on a project concerning big data and open data, but I have also done work on labour law and privacy/data protection.

Orsan Senalp

 I was intensely busy with preparing a workshop on digital labour organizing, i think partly relevant with this call. also involved in several relevant research-network mapping activity (see networkelabour.net). the

workshop will take place this weekend in Berlin and it can be interest of people on the treat (see titanpad.com/digitallabourorganizing).

Karthik

Understanding technical and economic challenges of autonomous cryptosystems such as Bitcoin and Ethereum from a technical architecture and economic perspective (Some initial thoughts here : http://techdisruption.wordpress.com/2014/02/09/digital-currencies-and-value-determination/)

Supporting Candidates

Trebor Scholz

is writing a book on digital labor but has no time until then

Layne Hartsell

volunteers for reviewing , proofreading

Budget and Timeline

Add a spreadsheet

Total Funding Request

Coordination and Integration

Additional General Scientific Coordination: 2M (see phase 0 and 5)

Additional Editorial coordination: 2M (see phase 0 and 5)

Scientific Advisors: 3M (3 X 1M)

Expenses

10% of Total (travel, flights, lodging)

P2P Foundation Costs: 5% (servers, online documentation, admin)

Timeline

Phase 0 Preparation: **Month 1 and 2**

Detailed planning by editors and coordinators

* coordination / integration: 2M

* editorial preparation: 2M

Phase 1: Month 2-4 (Commons Economy Study)

* quantitative survey: 4M (M2 to 5)

* qualitative survey: 3M

* literature review: 2M

Phase 2: Month 2-4 (Sharing Economy Study)

* quantitative survey: 4M (M2 to 5)

* qualitative survey: 3M

* literature review: 2M

Phase 3: Month 5-7 (Labor Organizing Efforts)

* case study of the Freelancers Union: 3M

* overview of other efforts: 3M

* literature review: 2M

Phase 4: Month 8-10 (Alternative Economic Formats)

* governance / ownership innovations: 2M

* value practices: 2M

* legal frameworks: 2M

* solidarity practices: 2M

Phase 5: Month 11-12 (Synthesis)

* coordination / integration: 2M

* executive summary and synthesis (editorial): 2M

Eimhin David Shortt

proofreading