Organising for 'social good' in Calculative Collective Markets: The case of digital social innovations in Europe

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What is digital social innovation?

- Digital social innovations are special algorithms* designed to:

  – *enable people to exchange, access and provide data, information, opinions and views, resources, skills;*
  – *to find similar others;*
  – *participate in the governance of their communities;*
  – *communicate with other stakeholders;*

  in addressing problems related with the social, environmental problems faced in their living environments.

*An algorithm is a set of computational steps that transform the input to the output" (Cormen et al., 2009: 5).

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Voll Rollstuhlgerecht Teilweise rollstuhlgerecht Nicht Rollstuhlgerecht Status unbekannt

1-boycott.org

Marineland : Ensemble, libérons les orques !

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Research Aim

- Construct a typology of DSI that will :
  - Enable us to understand their contribution to solve societal problems, in comparison with other innovation systems
  - Provide a theoretical starting point for evaluating the contingencies at work in their effectiveness

Research

- March 2017-in progress

- Problem-led search of DSIs

- 360 DSI cases in Europe (by non profits, for profits, public sector, movements, alliances, individuals)

- Interviews with actors, participation in and organisation of events

Table 1.

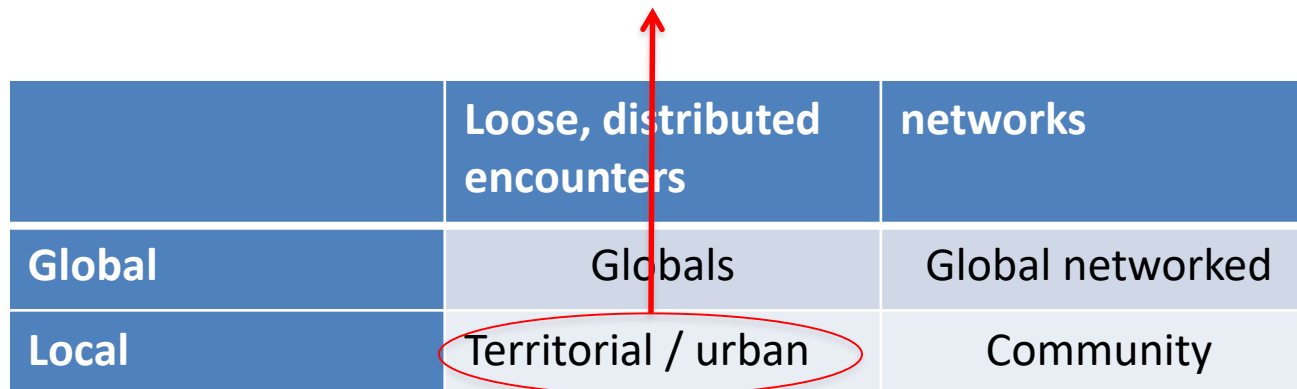| Problem area	Explanation	Examples
Civic engagement (city, political, volunteering, petition)	Participatory systems that incentivise citizens to engage in decision making processes (popularly known as Civic-tech)	Better Reyjkavik, Decide Madrid, Liquid democracy, Writetothem, Fragdenstaat
Data and transparency	Participatory open data systems	Open Corporates, Wheelmap
Education	Peer-to-peer open online education tools	Eliademy, Culture Go Go
Finance (civic crowdfunding, genre-specific crowdfunding)	Crowdfunding for community projects or for projects that focus on a particular excluded group (like micro finance)	Co-city (FR), Goteo (ES), Buonacausa (IT), Spacehive (UK)
Sharing (swap, recycle)	Free swap, recycling, services, online time banks	Freegle, Olio, Peerby, No Lo Tiro, Graines de troc
Science	Participatory open science involving citizens (like citizen science)	Artportalen, Sauvages de ma rue
Health	Researcher-patient platforms that run on a voluntary basis to collect data for research	Seintinelles, Carenity
Social inclusion (homeless, immigrants, women, youth, disability, aged population)	Platforms that aim to empower a certain group of society	Ruuti, Calm by Singa, Streetlink

Results

1. Typology
2. Theoretical framework

Typology

Examples: Open corporates, FranceBarter, Wheelmap, Fluicity, etc.

	Loose, distributed encounters	networks
Global	Globals	Global networked
Local	Territorial / urban	Community

Usually launched by public organisations (governance participation)
Examples: decide madrid, decidim barcelona, better reyjkavik, je m'engage paris, etc.

	Loose, distributed encounters	networks
Global	Globals	Global networked
Local	Territorial / urban	Community

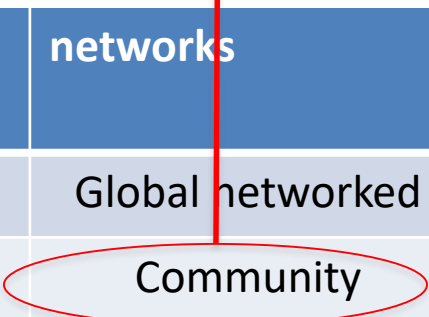Examples: Grains de troc, Smiile, Discosoupe, Tousbenevoles, etc

	Loose, distributed encounters	**networks**
Global	Globals	Global networked
Local	Territorial / urban	Community

Usually accompanied by embedded, offline networks between participants
Problem is participation and digital skills, sustaining resources

	Loose, distributed encounters	networks
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DSI scaling trade-off

- One of the issues in SI effectiveness is replication and scaling (Dees et al. 2004, Bradach, 2003)

- Algorithms make replication easier, thanks to advantages of speed and scale through ICTs, but…

- The same processes that make algorithms "efficient" for scaling can pose a problem for DSI effectiveness

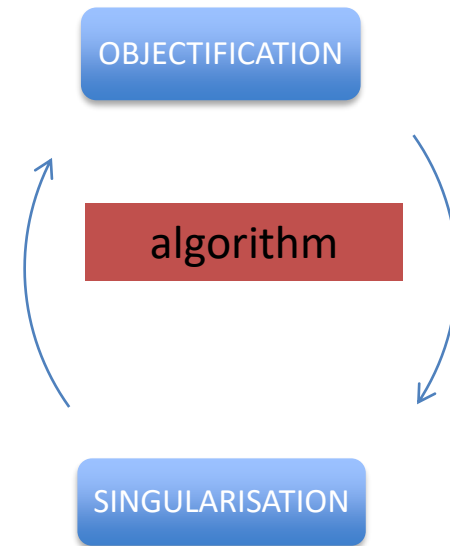- By reducing the extent to which algorithms can be adapted to local context

Theoretical frame

- Callon and Muniesa (2005) "Markets as calculative collective devices"

- Objectification – singularisation

Objectification and Singularisation

Objectification: Detachment of the good from the users' world, by identifying its properties in such a way as to extract maximum value (example: marketing activities) (Cochoy, 2004)

Singularisation: incorporation of the good into the world of audiences, attachment in users' context.

OBJECTIFICATION

algorithm

SINGULARISATION

Example: objectification (GoFundMe medical texts)

Source: Paulus, T.M. and Roberts, K.R. (2017) Crowdfunding a 'Real-life Superhero': The construction of worthy bodies in medical campaign narratives, *Discourse, Context & Media*.

Asymmetry in calculative agency
Who calculates?

- **The gap between objectification and singularisation is a source of asymmetry in calculative agencies.**

- **Asymmetry in calculative agencies:** consumer's calculative agency always remains weak compared to the calculative power of supply. (C&M)

- If algorithms can help scale-up, they can also augment this asymmetry

- which causes difficulties of adaptation to local contexts

Critical Approaches to Algorithms

- Algorithm developers (&DSI developers):

    - Deciding data to be extracted,
    - Setting categories
    - Sorting, analysing
    - Deciding what is included and what is excluded, what is relevant, etc.
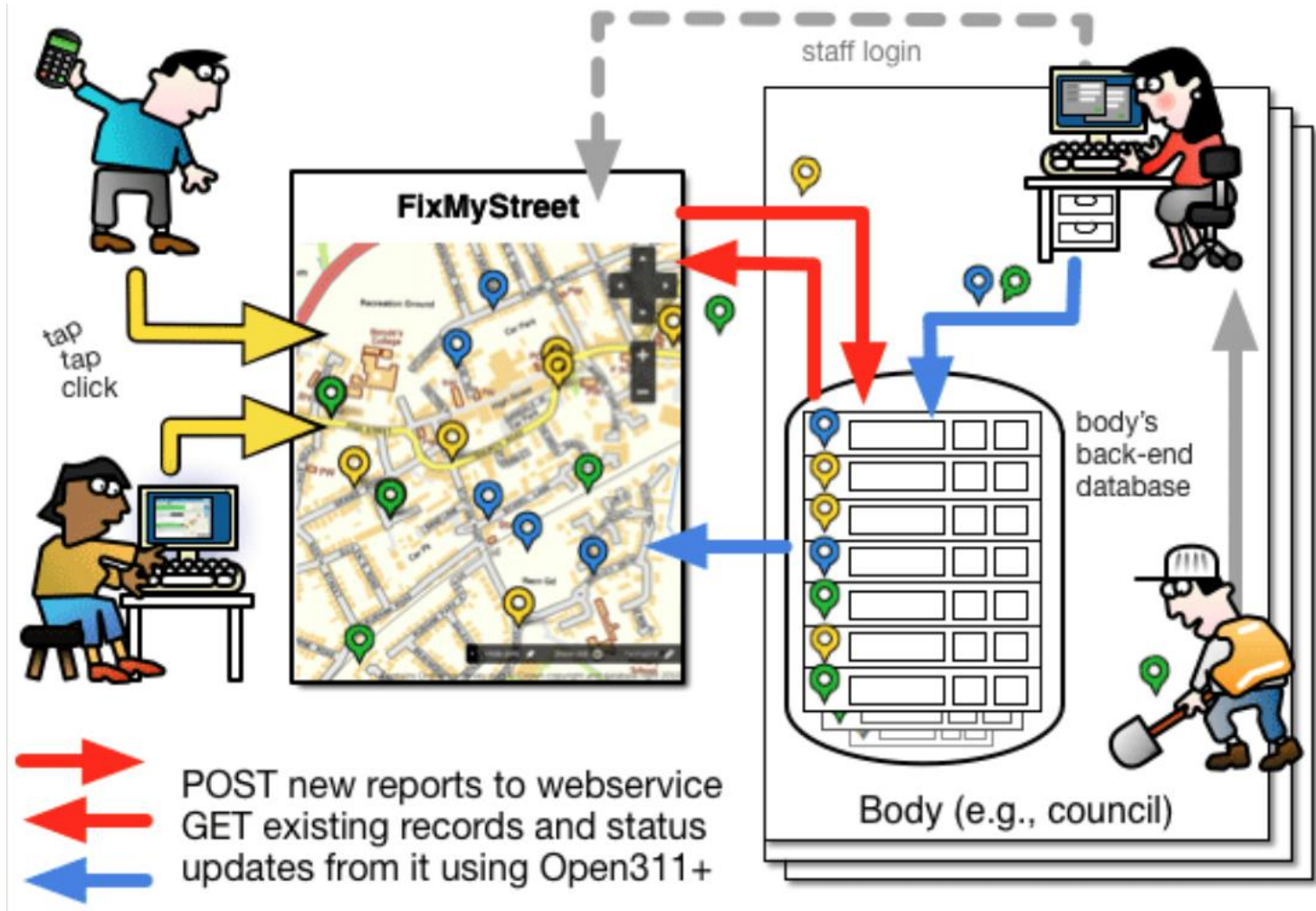   - Anticipating user characteristics, expectations
    - Keep algorithm obscure

See: Gillespie (2014), Seaver (2014), Kitchin (2017), Steiner (2013)

How can DSIs deal with asymmetry?

There are different ways DSIs can deal with this asymmetry, depending on their types.

1. Proposition 1: In **global platforms**, asymmetry is expected to be higher due to their size and heterogeneity of audiences they address

1. Proposition 2: Open source code in general can reduce this asymmetry, by incentivising users to adapt the code according to their own context. But this depends on coordination costs, and digital skills of the audience, as well as engagement levels. (i.e using wikipedia is different than editing it)

Case: Fixmystreet

staff login

FixMyStreet

body's back-end database

POST new reports to webservice
GET existing records and status updates from it using Open311+

Body (e.g., council)

tap tap click

How can DSIs deal with asymmetry?

Proposition 3: In network platforms, offline interactions with online will reduce asymmetry in calculative agency, by permitting a more refined process of singularisation by audiences

Example: (Tousbenevoles and Zy'va)

Final remarks

- Making use of digital without foregoing the specificities of the socio-cultural fabric is critical if DSIs are to bring long term and sustainable solutions
- Engagement and digital skills are obstacles, the ones who need most have the least access
- Openness limited
- "digital" bubbles disconnected from the social sector (associations, NGOs, etc)

Thank you

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Where the digital meets the social and solidarity economy

Version française ci-après

We take digital social innovations mainly in the context of digital platforms that empower crowds in a variety of ways (crowdfunding, map making, citizen science, civic tech, voting, and so on...) so as to solve pressing social and environmental problems (read more...).

A variety of **actors** are involved in their generation: civil society, private businesses, research organisations, and the public sector (some examples...).

Search / Recherche

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Posts / Infos

- Compte rendu World Café Innovation Sociale Numérique 03/12/2018
- Track DSI @ISIRC2018 (05/09/2018) 09/09/2018
- World Café ISN (04/10/2018) 22/08/2018
- CfP on DSI (2018 ISIRC confer-