Communities & Culture Network+

CCN+ Newsletter, August 2014

Upcoming Events

Collaborative Futures: CCN+ Annual Event
11ᵗʰ-12ᵗʰ Dec 2014, University of Leeds

Our annual event will be held on December 11-12, 2014 at the University of Leeds. The theme is Collaborative Futures and in response to the recommendations of the Impact Report we will be facilitating dialogue between connected projects and seeking ways for projects to move forward in a connected, collaborative and supported way.

We will require a one page slide detailing the key findings of the project accompanied by a 250-300 word abstract by 4pm on the 21st November that details the key issues that you consider important to take forward for the future.

Please let the network coordinator, Craig Robertson (c.robertson@leeds.ac.uk), know if you are able to attend and who will be attending by **Oct 3, 2014**.

Event start: 10.00 December 11

Event end: 13.00 December 12

Based on the outcomes of the event, the Steering Committee will authorise support for future interconnected and collaborative projects.

Further details can be found here.

Who we are

The Digital Economy 'Communities and Culture' Network+ engages with digital transformations, bringing them together with a wider public through direct engagements, innovative methods and digital resources.

Funding

Open call for funding

Funding for seed projects of £1-4k per project, to fund small discrete projects within the remit of the CCN+.

Pilot Project deadline: 31ˢᵗ Oct 2014

We are particularly keen to receive project proposals that look forward into a particular aspect of digital, creative, media, or civic life and ask questions/design for the future.

Seed Project deadline: 27ᵗʰ Nov 2014

Projects for the last deadline must start by Jan 2015 and have a duration not exceeding three months.

Details for both calls will be posted on the website Funding page and circulated to network members.

Research

New Pilot Project and a Follow-On Project

After the completion of the successful pilot project, Reaching Out Online: Digital Literacy and the Uses of Social Media in Health Promotion (ROO), we are pleased to announce that a follow-up project has been approved to use the findings of ROO as a starting point for a series of themed in-depth workshops with stakeholders working with the above-named communities. The project continues to be led by Dr. Sharif Mowlabocus, a senior lecturer in digital media at the University of Sussex. Details of the new project can be found here.

Heat or Eat: food and austerity in Rural England is a new pilot project led by Hannah Lambie-Mumford from the University of Sheffield. The project explores the theme of food and austerity through the lens of one of the most high profile, yet under-evidenced, phenomena in the current era of austerity: the decision to 'heat or eat'. With support from National Energy Action and the Trussell Trust foodbank Network this project will scrutinise the 'heat or eat' dilemma in a rural context, investigating the legitimacy and complexity of such claims, and critically assessing existing and potential policy responses.

Reports

The final report for the CCN+ seed project 'Big Talk about Big Data: Discourses of 'Evidence' and Data in British Civil Society' is now available to read on the CCN+ website, as part of our *Working Papers* series. The study identified how British civil society and voluntary organisations perceive big data and evidence as relevant to their overall mission. **Read the report.**

From the Network

New Network Coordinator

Just a reminder that Craig Robertson is now the network coordinator so please direct all queries to him (c.robertson@leeds.ac.uk) rather than to Rosie Wilkinson, who is on maternity leave.

New Collaboration with the Digital Society Network

CCN+ has begun to collaborate with the Digital Society Network, sponsored by the World University Network (WUN). The two networks will work together and support each other to investigate shared concerns regarding global and local digital communities, the digitisation of local everyday culture and the potential of global communication to break down national and cultural barriers.

Since the advent of the World Wide Web, there has been speculation about its potential to breakdown national cultural barriers. In the early years of largely western dominance, proclamations about the emancipatory nature of cyberspace were only matched by charges of cultural colonisation by consumer brands. In more recent times however this suggestion of the emergence of a homogenous online digital culture has been significantly challenged. Today at least 40% of Internet users are Chinese and many more languages and cultures are now online. We have also witnessed a resurgence of national, ethnic and identity cultures flourishing on the Internet. Facilitated by social media platforms these new media technologies have given rise to a much more complex picture of cultural diversity and multiplicity. What is clear is that the new media ecology is likely to have a significant influence upon the maintenance, threats, opportunities and emergence of cultural forms.

Creative Citizen Conference (18-19 Sep, 2014)

Helen Thornham and Ysabel Gerrard recently attended and presented at the Creative Citizen conference at the Royal College of Art in London. This is their reflection:

The Creative Citizen conference (18th-19th Sept 2014) indicated the culmination of a major AHRC Connected Communities funded project that investigated moments of, claims about, and implications of, creative citizenship. For the Communities and Culture Network+ (CCN+), the relational tension of these two terms 'creativity' and 'citizenship', also speak to the issues arising from the axes we investigate around communities, cultures and the digital. We spoke at the conference about the particular project '[in]visible communities', but many other projects funded by the CCN+ were also there: Growing Cultures (Farida and Erinma) Foodbanks (Karen & Marialena) and hyperlocal (Dave Harte). Keri Facer, who sits on our steering committee, was also there in her capacity as AHRC Research Fellow for the Connected Communities theme. Over the past few years, the CCN+ has explored how the discourses of 'digital', 'youth', 'creativity', 'expertise' and 'community resilience' each frame community and culture in different ways (eg. Thornham 2014: 536-552). This also seems the case with the term 'creative citizen' – the term central to the conference- which continues carry the 'warmly persuasive' (to use Raymond Williams 1976:76 term) connotations of playful activism (for example) despite critical investigation during the conference.

Design For Sharing - as New Economy or Age-old Sustainable Practice?

What do we do when we share? And how do we support the best of these practices with the design of social and technical systems?

We have convened a day of talks and discussion to seek answers.

The recent buzz about the 'Sharing Economy' has turned attention on sharing in a way that is unprecedented. Societies have always sought to make good use of limited resources such as time, space, enthusiasm, and surplus goods and produce. Now digital tools are being drafted in to make these navigations more effective.

But, as the richly textured weave of neighbourhood exchange is simplified across a range of digital interfaces, do we need a corrective to the emphasis on commercial models in the collaborative economy? Is there more to sharing than turning empty bedrooms and vacant car seats into cash? How far have these worlds met and what can we learn in terms of designing for positive sustainable practices as well as resource management?

This day reviews sharing as a social, economic and environmental good, discussing how social cohesion as well as resource exploitation might be fostered and presenting examples of the nuanced work of local initiatives based in London and beyond.

We bring together experts from community, policy, academia and media to discuss how we can design to support sustainability through sharing and what the sharing economy might contribute. The opening talk will be delivered by Prof Russell Belk, who has researched sharing in its many forms for more than 25 years and is a world authority.

This event also launches the report 'Design for Sharing' by Ann Light and Clodagh Miskelly, published by Northumbria University and supported by the Sustainable Society Network+. If you are unable attend and would like to see a copy, please email the organisers through the Eventbrite page.

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/design-for-sharing-as-new-economy-or-age-old-sustainable-practice-tickets-13001621199

Horizon Scanning

Communities & Culture Network+ internationalization

As part of the internationalization and horizon scanning activities, the <u>Communities and Culture Network+</u> (CCN+) organized a research and collaborative exchange trip to the RMIT in Melbourne in the first week of September. The visit consisted of a number of creative and productive workshops, networking and future planning with colleagues in Melbourne.

One of the workshops about Digital Ethnography was organized with the <u>Digital Ethnography Research Center</u> (DERC) at RMIT University in Melbourne: Yoko Akama, Marsha Berry, Ian Ewart, Edgar Gómez Cruz, Larissa Hjorth, Heather Horst, Sarah Martindale, Sarah Pink, John Postill, Helen Thornham and Emma Witkowski spent two days discussing (and playing) with what digital ethnography means and what it could/should be in the future.

The workshop began with the creation of a "crowd-sourced" map that summarized and clustered keywords describing everyone's work. This map triggered the discussion:

The way we conceptualize the 'digital' (and 'ethnography' itself) clearly has consequences for how we think about certain things and the tools of analysis, but it is conspicuous in its absence as a defining concept in the map above. It may not always be overtly at the center of what we do as ethnographers, but it is clearly there, albeit in conflicting and ambivalent ways. On the other hand, the term 'digital' also *does* certain things: by framing a practice, platform or object as 'digital', it enables us to ask questions about what is (or is not) changing. An outcome of this discussion will be a collective article that was started as part of a collective creative writing exercise about our tasks, and identities, as digital ethnographers.

The second workshop started with an exercise asking us to position ourselves according to how "digital" we thought we were. This revealed the multiple ways we each conceive the digital, as objects, as tools, as embodied, as routine, as novel, as compulsive. But it also demonstrated that our perceptions of ourselves as digital 'experts' is bound up in other identity signifiers so that even when we may be perceived as highly digital by our colleagues and in relation to how we conceive the digital, our *own* perception may be very different. We are discussing issues relating to this in a forthcoming special edition of **Convergence** in 2015.

In the third workshop, we all participated in a collective writing exercise to set the base for the article. At the same time, Yoko Akama and Ian Ewart prepared a creative map to summarize all the discussions.

The CCN+ members also presented their work with colleagues of the Design + Ethnography + Futures *program and had personal meetings with different academics in Melbourne to informally discuss their own projects.*

Overall, the research trip allowed the CCN+ to consolidate its partnership with the DERC and the RMIT (already started with the participation of two scholars, Larissa Hjorth and Sarah Pink, in events organized by the Network in the UK). More than this, however, was the fact that the event produced some deep, reflective and critical work around digital ethnography, creativity and future methods. We will be talking about these issues through a number of joint panel presentations planned in 2015.