

# **Social Collaboration: Joining Forces on the Digital Frontier**

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## Introduction

What is social collaboration? How did it emerge? And why now? The purpose of this paper is to explore the past and present, but also to look into the future of the growing phenomenon that we refer to here as social collaboration. With its roots in the open source movement, social collaboration has now expanded well beyond the boundaries of the open source community, and within the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has the potential to impact on numerous and unexpected facets of society. As with many new trends, there are a lot of terms floating about trying to describe the phenomenon. We will also therefore explore the limitations of these terms in justifying why we have employed the term ‘social collaboration’ first introduced to us by Amazee<sup>1</sup>. We use this as an umbrella term to cover the whole area of activity, but recognise and examine the diversity that exists within it.

The impact of social networks such as MySpace and Facebook is already evident in the world around us every day as people connect with friends and colleges and keep them updated, organise events and meet ups and share ideas. These kinds of activity have of course always happened. However, networks such as Facebook make this process more open and fluid in a globalised world and, at the same time, affect the way people interact more broadly.

The driving social behaviour now though is collaboration. The networks are established and have become part of the scenery. As people become confident social agents in online networks they begin to act, to organise, to create. Names like Wikipedia and Linux have grown into international brands; activists are organising on a large scale using digital technologies that are difficult to police; artists are finding ways to work together creatively across borders and continents.

An example which illustrates well the intercultural potential of this digitally enabled social collaboration is *World Wide Simultaneous Dance* in which sixty people danced simultaneously across twelve countries. The dancers were asked to dance ‘in locations that were meaningful in their own cultures or to dance movement that carried cultural meaning for them’.<sup>2</sup> Participants were linked up using Ivisit Video Conferencing and this software functioned as an online performance venue where the audience could interact with the event.

*Gus Garmel danced in his office at 4 am at the Stanford Medical Center at the same time that Siri Rama, the only dancer who brought all her own equipment to the project, danced the classical Indian dance style Kuchipudi in Hong Kong and Andrea Baker Domenici danced in her kitchen in Rome.*<sup>3</sup>

This goal of this international collaboration was a performance which connected people and cultures in an artistic moment and presented this to wider online audience. In 1998, the participants in this project had to meet the challenges of dial up connections and were limited in terms of the free software available that would

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<sup>1</sup> Amazee is a social collaboration platform which provides tools to enable networked collaboration online.

<sup>2</sup> Knott, L. (2001) *World Wide Simultaneous Dance: Dancing the Connection Between “cyberplace” and Global Landscape*. Leonardo, vol. 31. 2, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Knott, L. (2001) *World Wide Simultaneous Dance: Dancing the Connection Between “cyberplace” and Global Landscape*. Leonardo, vol. 31. 2, p. 12.

provide peer to peer connection outside the server<sup>4</sup>. However today, with broadband and the wide range of open source software, this kind of collaboration would be possible for a group of friends with little organisation or cost.

Of course, people have always connected and used their existing as well as emerging networks to collaborate on projects. However, we suggest that while collaboration is in one sense simply extended by the impact of each new technology, the impact of the web and the social functions growing with it expand collaboration to such an extent that arguably we find a new kind of collaboration which is manifestly different from what has gone before. This process of technological and social change is of course a fluid one with reciprocal influence between people, culture and technology. The technology develops as social behaviour drives it as much as vice versa. Yet, without the networks and technology connecting them, the volume or velocity of social collaboration cannot be reached and this is typified by the hundreds of thousands of contributors involved in projects such as Linux or Wikipedia mentioned above.

*Social collaboration is digitally enhanced collaboration expanding networked human activity in the social sphere across the retracted time and space of the globalized 21<sup>st</sup> century. And as social collaboration moves into the mainstream and flourishes over the coming years, we can expect to see a growing impact upon the way we work together in every sphere.*

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<sup>4</sup> Knott, L. (2001) World Wide Simultaneous Dance: Dancing the Connection Between “cyberplace” and Global Landscape. Leonardo, vol. 31. 2, p. 13.

## Literature and Terminology

As mentioned in the introduction, what we term social collaboration has been described under a variety of terms, including ‘mass collaboration’<sup>5</sup>, ‘collaborative production’ and ‘Collective Action’<sup>6</sup>, ‘cooperation’, ‘co-ordination’<sup>7</sup>, ‘crowdsourcing, and open innovation’. These categories, which are constructed around different aspects of collaboration online, are useful to understanding the phenomenon that we term social collaboration. We unpick each in turn in this section in order to illustrate the diversity of collaborative processes, and also we outline the discourses emerging in key literature.

It is the authors mentioned below that have had the most significant sustained influence on the writing of this paper in addition to research online, becoming familiar with the various platforms available. However, there are other sources that have indirectly influenced the trajectory of the paper: our own participation in networks and collaborative projects, our interest in digital theatre and dance performance and the performances we have seen and participated in. We hope our own interest in arts and activism generates a kind of equilibrium in the face of the dominant emphasis on business applications and the corporate world in some of the literature currently available.

To clarify what we mean here by social collaboration, we outline several of its key characteristics and this frames the subsequent discussion. Firstly, social collaboration here refers to an extension of human collaborative activity beyond face to face interaction and beyond geographical community. Therefore, while face to face collaboration, such as organising a school fete, is indeed collaboration, it is not the social collaboration to which we refer here.

Social collaboration is also networked; it has multiple reciprocal communications at its base. However, as we suggest in the introduction, social collaboration moves beyond the social networking activities that have become the calling card of web 2.0. While networking is an active process with geographically dispersed contributors, social collaboration makes the transition to collaborative activity aimed towards a specific goal beyond maintaining or building a social network for its own sake. While this line between social networking and social collaboration may be blurred across a lot of projects, we are addressing here only projects that have some kind of goal whether that be creating something or organising an event, or taking action of some kind.

Social collaboration is not, of course, introducing a new kind of social behaviour; it is shifting the role of particular social behaviours and their impact in society. Collaboration is facilitated in a new way and thus impacts upon other aspects of the social sphere. Social collaboration, could have wider significance for work patterns, or experiences of civic participation for example, not merely the size and geographical dispersion of collaborative networks. Finally, social collaboration includes collaborative practices across a wide variety of public and private spheres:

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<sup>5</sup> Tapscott, D. and A. D. Williams (2006) *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

<sup>6</sup> Shirky, Clay (2008) *Here Comes Every-Body: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

<sup>7</sup> Surowiecki, J. (2005) *The Wisdom of the Crowds*. London: Abacus.

activism, working towards business objectives, campaigning, participation in social causes, artistic projects and personal goals. The term 'Social collaboration' must be allowed to be broad enough to encompass this variety of disparate practices and its potential to be inclusive is the main reason for choosing it.

The word *collaboration* reminds us of the fundamental human behaviours that underpin the shifts in social practices we are now seeing. The word *social* places this activity firmly within the public sphere and differentiates this from the harnessing of the unique abilities of the crowd solely for capitalisation by corporations. While we see evidence of corporate organisations taking on structures and practices of social collaboration, there is a wider cultural shift directed toward collaboration taking place. It is our hope that we can use this more inclusive concept to open up a sense of the diversity within this broader movement.

Thus, the term social collaboration is applied in the context of digital networks of people working together towards a common goal across a wide range of different areas. However in each of these areas the structures of cooperation, the philosophy behind that collaboration and the experience of being part of a network of collaborators is very different. The first question then is what is there in common across social collaboration in these very different environments? Is there a sense of a developing movement and set of associated practices in common or are the practices of collaboration across time and space different for the business and the activist?

The key to a project's definition as social collaboration is the decentralisation of organisation; to be collaboration, the individual has to have autonomy over their participation. What we mean by a centralised system is a hierarchical system of management which controls when, how and what people do within a project. Decentralised organisation means that while there are still people with ultimate decision making over the project, contributors have control over how, what and when they contribute. There is no hierarchical system of *managing* people<sup>8</sup> or as Shirky terms it, it is a system with a 'spontaneous division of labour'<sup>9</sup>. Whether we are talking about a corporation like Google or a group of activists, if these are using social collaboration as a approach to achieving goals, they are necessarily shifting away from a hierarchical system of organisation towards a self-regulating system of collaboration.

This is very much rooted in the open source movement which Eric Raymond defined in contrast to the corporation using the metaphor of the 'cathedral and the bazaar'.<sup>10</sup> In *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, Raymond aligns open source software with the bazaar and this analogy has been carried across to more general examples of social collaboration. He refers to the normal mode of working as the cathedral model, which has centralised power, careful planning, hierarchical structure, bureaucracy and risk management. The open source or collaborative mode of work uses the Bazaar model, which largely undermines hierarchy, coordination and centralisation by allowing a

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<sup>8</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) *We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production*. London: Profile.

<sup>9</sup> Shirky, C. (2008) *Here Comes Every-Body: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, p.118.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond, E. (2001) *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*. London: O'Reilly.

globally dispersed set of thousands of anonymous flexi time volunteers develop a project through the internet.<sup>11</sup>

This theme of decentralisation runs through all the emerging literature on the movement and is a key distinguishing feature of social collaboration. This decentralisation is also related to the roots of social collaboration in the ‘Network Society’<sup>12</sup> According to this view the systems of collaboration emerge from the ‘cultural logic of networking’<sup>13</sup>, that of horizontal connections leading to ‘collaboration through decentralized coordination and directly democratic decision making’<sup>14</sup>. Information is freely accessible and networking is self directed modelled on the ethos of open source movement. While the literature surrounding social collaboration does not necessarily draw directly on the notion of the ‘Network Society’<sup>15</sup>, it is these attributes that appear to be common to its ethos. We use this model which grounds collaboration in the network over the Raymond’s analogy in this case, because of the wide range of different collaborative approach we explore, where often some hierarchical structure is retained.

*Wikinomics* by Dan Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams focuses on the economic impact of this shift towards collaboration and the way that it is developing in the business environment. As such the emphasis is upon ‘*mass* collaboration’ [emphasis added] and they suggest that it is the scale of Web 2.0 communications that makes this development distinguishable as a new kind of collaboration<sup>16</sup>. Rather, we suggest it is the ‘any to any’ function of Web 2.0 that makes social collaboration distinguishable as a new system of social behaviour. Reflecting their focus on the scale of collaboration, *Wikinomics* tends to use examples of large scale collaborations such as Wikipedia, or the Goldcorp mining explorations and relate these to the potential for economic development.

This tendency towards emphasis on large scale projects is evident in much of the published literature about the phenomenon. Charles Leadbeater’s *We Think: Mass Innovation not Mass Production* has a similar tendency. Again focusing on the potential for business through mass innovation, the majority of the book addresses the impact of social collaboration on innovation, consumers, work patterns, leadership and ownership<sup>17</sup>. It also places emphasis on the process of innovation at the expense somewhat of collaborative creation or action, perhaps because it is in the area of innovation and thinking that mass participation and thus large scale benefits to businesses are possible.

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<sup>11</sup> Raymond, E. (2001) *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*. London: O’Reilly, p.20.

<sup>12</sup> Castells M. (ed.) (2004) *The Network Society: A Cross Cultural Perspective*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.

<sup>13</sup> Juris, J. S. (2004) *Networked Social Movements: Global movements for Global Justice*. In: M. Castells (ed.) *The Network Society: A Cross Cultural Perspective*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, p. 342.

<sup>14</sup> Juris, J. S. (2004) *Networked Social Movements: Global movements for Global Justice*. In: M. Castells (ed.) *The Network Society: A Cross Cultural Perspective*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, p. 342.

<sup>15</sup> Castells M. (ed.) (2004) *The Network Society: A Cross Cultural Perspective*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.

<sup>16</sup> Tapscott D. and A.. D. Williams (2006) *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

<sup>17</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) *We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production*. London: Profile.

Other terms commonly used in relation to corporate appropriations of social collaboration include 'crowdsourcing' and 'open' innovation. Crowdsourcing, a phrase first coined by Jeff Howe<sup>18</sup> in 2006, is defined as 'the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call'.<sup>19</sup>

However it functions as an alternative to what we usually call outsourcing as a company does not pay a separate company to perform a function; instead they open it up to lay people, to the crowd. Although this approach can be used in smaller scale or non-corporate projects, Jeff Howe uses the term to refer to corporate sourcing of knowledge or ideas<sup>20</sup> and we follow his lead. Crowdsourcing in the corporate context retains the hierarchical organizational model and a closed system of ownership. Contributors to the project may be paid for their contribution, but the result is then owned by the company and the profits are theirs. Contributors are not equal participants in the project and do not have equal access as a result.

Open innovation or mass innovation, as it is termed by Leadbeater, moves further towards social collaboration, allowing a more open exchange of research and knowledge to facilitate innovation inside and outside the company. However, the accessibility of research is often limited with companies releasing some but not all of their resources and relying on moving forward from innovation to patented products. While they are often referred to as mass collaboration, neither of these forms have at their roots the logic of the network that underpins social collaboration in its fullest form. They are primarily business models that pick and choose elements that allow the greatest capacity for growth in complex and competitive market. They understand that sharing intellectual resources cannot deplete them, only accelerate their growth and they capitalize on the crowd, understanding that the many out-perform the few<sup>21</sup>.

Having said this, the Halo white paper advertising the Halo Collaboration Studio goes further, drawing on the importance of social networks to business to promote its product. It tells us 'Social research studies of business performance improvement have repeatedly shown collaborative social networks to be at the heart of the business'<sup>22</sup> and also points to the benefits of horizontal as well as vertical connections in the network. This paper in fact uses the term social collaboration in relation to collaborative social networks recognising the value of reciprocal 'many to many' communications. While this is only one example of a particular platform, the desire to promote a product on these terms and the paper's foundation in research into network theory suggests that horizontal collaborative networks are set to become more significant in business practice. Of course this corporate use of collaboration should be distinguished from what we term social collaboration, where the emphasis on the *social* is important in locating the phenomena in the social sphere.

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<sup>18</sup> Howe. J.(2006). 'The Rise of Crowdsourcing', Wired  
<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/crowds.html> [accessed 27/09/2008].

<sup>19</sup> Howe. J.(2006). 'Crowdsourcing: A Definition', Wired  
[http://crowdsourcing.typepad.com/cs/2006/06/crowdsourcing\\_a.html](http://crowdsourcing.typepad.com/cs/2006/06/crowdsourcing_a.html) [accessed 27/09/2008].

<sup>20</sup> Howe. J.(2006). 'Crowdsourcing: A Definition', Wired [Online] [http://crowdsourcing.typepad.com/cs/2006/06/crowdsourcing\\_a.html](http://crowdsourcing.typepad.com/cs/2006/06/crowdsourcing_a.html) [accessed 27/09/2008].

<sup>21</sup> Surowiecki, J. (2005) *The Wisdom of the Crowds: Why the Many are Smarter than the Few*. London: Abacus.

<sup>22</sup> Hewlett Packard (2005) Halo Collaboration White Paper. [online]  
[http://www.hp.com/halo/pdf/Halo\\_Collaboration\\_White\\_Paper\\_3\\_21\\_06.pdf](http://www.hp.com/halo/pdf/Halo_Collaboration_White_Paper_3_21_06.pdf). Accessed 21/11/2008.

Perhaps more useful in defining some of the characteristics of social collaboration outside corporate models is Clay Shirky's discussion of collaborative production and collective action in *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. He considers a wider range of different kinds of projects including more social/personal sharing platforms like Flickr, collaborative creations like Wikipedia or open source software as well as organisational shifts. What is interesting in this perspective is the account of the workings of groups and the challenges to particular kinds of collaboration.

He distinguishes, for example, collaborative production and collective action, outlining the different successes and obstacles for these different kinds of collaboration. Collaborative production relies on the initial gift of a draft or idea; on people's motivation to contribute, and on having a core group that are able to organise and integrate contributions. Collective action, in addition to this, requires that participants act to change society in some way, often coming up against institutional or state resistance.<sup>23</sup> This distinction is a useful one in attempting as Shirky does, to provide a close analysis of the way these networks function. However, it is worth bearing in mind that while many projects may fit neatly into one or other of these categories, some will involve integrated production and action to achieve their goals.

Looking at collective action in the form of online philanthropy, Tom Watson's new book *Causewired* charts the dramatic shift occurring in campaigning, fundraising and activism. He provides an excellent account of the rise of everyday participation in political and social causes and examines the growth of specific causes in some detail: the campaign against genocide in response to atrocities in Darfur; Kiva, an 'online micro-lending service' and the Obama campaign for example.<sup>24</sup> Watson's focus is very much upon the causes themselves, documenting their growth and the impact of online and offline action, and this allows some interesting points to emerge surrounding the key requirements for success: 'awareness, engagement, activism and recurrence'<sup>25</sup> allowing deep engagement with a cause to sustain interest.

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<sup>23</sup> Shirky, C. (2008) *Here Comes Every-Body: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

<sup>24</sup> Watson, T. (2008) *Causewired*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

<sup>25</sup> Watson, T. (2008) *Causewired*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

## Social Collaboration: Best Practice

Looking more broadly at best practice, if we look at the model for research and intellectual collaboration, Leadbeater in *We-Think* picks out five key principles necessary for collaboration to work successfully. There must be a core contribution, an initial ‘gift of knowledge’ around which a community can develop; a diverse community of contributors, including a core group and a wider community; a way for contributions to be integrated; a rich collaborative system where a core group make decisions and do so openly; and finally autonomy for participants to organise their own creative process<sup>26</sup>

Using Leadbeater’s analysis as a starting point, the notion of the initial gift is absolutely key to any creative collaboration where an individual or core group present online a draft, an idea or initial research from which a wider community can work. This does not necessarily only apply to large scale collaboration. Even where perhaps a small group of people get together to work on an artistic project or start a company, there is often an initial starting point that someone brings to the group. This is generally the case whether collaboration is online or offline, however, where collaboration is open and that idea is made freely available, the initial gift has more significance and it is this that initiates the culture of sharing that allows a project to grow.

The collaborative group emerging around that core in large open projects is naturally evolving as some people wish to contribute more than others. Because participation is voluntary, this inequality does not cause a problem. With no financial incentive there is no pressure to be fair, so people contribute freely.<sup>27</sup> In fact this imbalance enables an important division of labour for the large project. Contributors have autonomy over their work through a process of ‘spontaneous division of labour’<sup>28</sup> and the freedom to make small contributions.<sup>29</sup> The distinction of those who make the most significant contributions as a core group naturally presents a mechanism for ‘sifting good ideas for bad, better theories from worse’.<sup>30</sup>

Finally in relation to large groups, the balance between a system for evaluating and integrating ideas or contributions into the project and the autonomy of contributors is very important. Where over-management acts as a disincentive to participate, a lack of any collaborative system at all will often lead to the collapse of the process. The community must be neither cathedral or bazaar says Leadbeater.<sup>31</sup>

But what about where the community is not that big and in fact may not be interested in being that big. Do the same organisational principles still stand? Perhaps not all,

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<sup>26</sup> Leadbeater, Charles (2008) *We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production*. London: Profile, p.68 - 80.

<sup>27</sup> Shirky, C. (2008) *Here Comes Every-Body: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, p. 134.

<sup>28</sup> Shirky, C. (2008) *Here Comes Every-Body: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, p.118.

<sup>29</sup> Shirky, C. (2008) *Here Comes Every-Body: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, p. 121 - 122.

<sup>30</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) *We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production*. London: Profile, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) *We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production*. London: Profile, p.64. Here he makes reference to Raymond’s well known book *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* (2001), which compares the collaborative approach to open source to a bazaar.

but the issue of autonomy and combining contributions is still there. There may be a stronger democratic force in decision making in a smaller group, but retaining autonomy is important in preventing what Leadbeater describes as ‘group-think’ where ideas and work merges into conformity rather than retaining the diversity of individuals. In a large project it is in fact easier to avoid this as the logic of the large group necessitates independent work. In a smaller group the temptation may be share tasks too closely rather than allowing a natural division of labour to emerge.

While autonomy certainly encourages participation, what drives the individual to edit a page or write a piece of code for free? What is the motivation?

First, and most obviously, in most instances people contribute because they enjoy doing so and are excited by the project. The dance project discussed in the introduction gained participants because there were people passionate about dance who enjoyed their participation. People enjoy writing code, making art; they enjoy linking up with other people based on a mutual interest and trying to do something. As with offline hobbies the process is enjoyable and the prospect of creating something together is exciting. This may not always be the case of course. Social activism might ask people to do things they won’t necessarily enjoy; writing a letter or e-mailing your MP might not be enjoyable in itself but the goal is important enough to persuade someone to do it. Here the key is engagement with an issue and perhaps satisfaction of having acted to change something.

Feeling like you have made a mark on the world, feeling empowered is hugely important in the rise of social collaboration. The changes happening in politics suggest a growing desire for participation and empowerment as citizens. Perhaps also as Shirky suggests we just want to help. We want to do something good<sup>32</sup> and as it become easier to contribute, just a few clicks or a little bit of editing on Wikipedia allows you to feel like you have done something good for the world.

Most of all though people get recognition for their contributions. Leadbeater suggests that is it in fact ‘recognition for the worth of their contributions, the value of their ideas, the skills of their trade’ that people value the most.<sup>33</sup> In activism, and philanthropy that recognition is related to identity, where as in creative collaboration it is the work contributed itself that is recognised. At the same time, the fact that others can improve on their work in creative collaboration allows people to feel less pressure about their contribution. ‘A wikipedia article is a process not a product’<sup>34</sup> says Shirky and that is why people are not intimidated by the prospect of adding their knowledge.

Successful projects seem to be those which are not unrealistic about the contributions they can expect and which provide a clear framework for contributing without pressure or a loss of autonomy as a participant. A project has to excite people, it has to engage them with its goal and inspire them to act by making it easy to do so. It has to recognise people’s contributions or allow them to display their participation as we see

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<sup>32</sup> Shirky, C. (2008) *Here Comes Every-Body: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, pp.132 - 133.

<sup>33</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) *We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production*. London: Profile, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup> Watson, T. (2009) *Causewired*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Inc. Pending publication, p.119.

on Facebook with the Causes badges or on Amazee where participants can complement each other adding to people's status publicly and thus recognition for particularly good ideas or contributions<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> See [www.Amazee.com](http://www.Amazee.com) to see how this works.

## Projects and Platforms

The projects that have had the most significant influence on the social collaboration movement are those that have become household names. Wikipedia is a peer produced encyclopaedia that has been growing organically for nearly ten years and has, perhaps more than any other project, had a huge impact on popular consciousness. By March 2008 it comprised over ten million articles in 253 languages and it has been a well known consumer brand for some considerable time.<sup>36</sup>

Linux has, in a similar way, has grown from a small core of code from Linus Torvald to an international collaboration and has had a huge impact on perceptions of organised collaboration. As Eric Raymond points out the most significant feature of Linux 'was not technical but sociological. Until the Linux development, everyone believed that any software as complex as an operating system had to be developed in a carefully coordinated way by a relatively small, tightly-knit group of people.'<sup>37</sup> Many feel Linux not only disproved this myth but proved that it could outperform such traditional models. It is now having a huge practical impact across the world. In developing countries, open source software and recycled computers allow people access to software without the extortionate price of Microsoft licence fees. Open source software has also been taken up by governments including in Brazilian Lula's Worker's Party and The People's Republic of China.<sup>38</sup> By 2006, Linux accounted for 80% of software on servers worldwide.<sup>39</sup>

Having said all this, Tom Watson suggests that at times this kind of organisation 'driven entirely by a sort of digital collectivism (such as Wikipedia) creates unreasonable expectations for a kind of pure online democracy'.<sup>40</sup> This is supported by the data Shirky provides: nearly 75% of all software on SourceForge, the largest collection of open source software, is unfinished and has never been used. He suggests that 'the most popular projects, with millions of users are in fact so anomalous as to be flukes'.<sup>41</sup> It is of course only the successes we know about in the mainstream, so what does this mean for the power of social collaboration?

While it is exceptionally pessimistic to suggest that the success of open source is based purely on luck it appears that the model these projects use may not be appropriate across the board. Also, it seems self-evident that the best ideas and contributions of code will gain the most attention and grow exponentially taking attention away from those less attractive. Are these unsuccessful projects trying to do too much? Perhaps it means that the notion of taking a small proposition and assuming it can and will grow into mass collaboration is the wrong approach.

We may be inspired by the impact and success of projects of such significance, but most projects started small and did not assume they would grow into mass phenomena. These two examples are both what Shirky describes as 'collaborative

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<sup>36</sup> Watson, T. (2009) *Causewired*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Inc, p. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Raymond, E. (2001) *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*. London: O'Reilly, p.16.

<sup>38</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) *We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production*. London: Profile, pp. 201 - 202.

<sup>39</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) *We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production*. London: Profile, p. 66.

<sup>40</sup> Watson, T. (2009) *Causewired*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Inc, p.192.

<sup>41</sup> Shirky, C. (2008) *Here Comes Every-Body: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, p.244.

production<sup>742</sup> and have both shifted into mass collaboration. As social collaboration of this kind hits the mainstream, the expectation of mass participation is misleading. The majority of projects which have a goal focused on producing something as a collaborative group are likely to be smaller scale and function within one of the numerous platforms for collaboration now springing up.

It is the manifestation of platforms of this kind more than anything else which signals the emergence of social collaboration into every day life. Rather than attempt to summarise the workings of too broad a range of platforms, this section chooses four platforms which provide tools in different ways for their users to illustrate how collaboration is being facilitated in this way. While the ubiquitous social networks such as Facebook and Myspace provide tools for campaigning and collaboration as part of their networking tools, these are explored in some detail in Tom Watson's book *Causewired* and will not be addressed in this section.

Rather we begin by looking at an example of a networking platform which allows smaller clusters of individuals to form mini networks. Ning is a well established social networking tool that functions as a meta-network containing many different smaller networks. It allows people to create open or closed groups, themed around a point of interest or project. Individuals can join open networks of interest allowing groups to expand. This moves beyond Facebook because of the focus upon particular interests or projects, however, it is not aimed primarily at collaborative production or action and often functions as a social network tool rather than a project based platform.

In terms of platforms orientated specifically towards collaboration and project development, we distinguish between platforms aimed at established networks or organisations with dispersed members, and platforms which enable growth through presenting the project to the wider public. There are already many examples of the first kind of platform: Central Desktop, Jotspot, Grouploop, Groupvine, Zedzone, ELoops, Tuggle and so on. We introduce Central Desktop as the best established at this point and therefore a better known point of reference though other platforms have their own strengths and weaknesses as well.

Central Desktop<sup>43</sup> is a tool for online project management, providing a web based, hosted space for teams to collaborate on projects. It provides various tools for collaboration, focusing particularly on documents and data, as well as providing features for conferencing and presenting online. However, unlike many social collaboration platforms, this is not a free resource.

Central Desktop is aimed at pre-established teams, providing them with a place to store their data and collaborate effectively on it. It centralises a series of tools which are similar to those already available (often for free) online such as Skype for conferencing and IM, Google Sites for storing and collaborating on data. As Central Desktop is aimed at pre-established teams it also does not include any function to find other people to collaborate with. This type of tool is aimed at enhancing working practices but their customer base would suggest that although projects are moving

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<sup>42</sup> Shirky, C. (2008) *Here Comes Every-Body: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, p. 109.

<sup>43</sup> Central Desktop (2008) <http://www.centraldesktop.com> [accessed 03 September 2008].

toward collaboration in their execution, they are still contained within hierarchically rather than horizontally controlled organizations.

Moving on to the second category of collaboration platforms, those which enable collaboration on projects with a wider audience, some platforms within this category sell themselves on their tools for real time collaboration. One such tool is MindMeister<sup>44</sup>, an online Mind Mapping software that allows you to collaborate on Mind Maps with other users or people you already know. It has Skype integrated so you can conference call with collaborators while you all work on a Mind Map together. Unlike Central Desktop it has a freely available version. However this has a limited selection of tools compared with the version with a fee. This platform also provides a version specifically focused at education enabling real time collaboration across students and institutions.

Education is more generally one of the arenas in which this kind of platform is becoming particularly well used outside the business sphere. Platforms like Knowledge forge, EPals, Sakai and Tapped In similarly provide tools for collaboration between schools and colleges or provide platforms for online collaboration within classes and groups of students though they do not always facilitate the real time collaboration discussed above.

EPals<sup>45</sup>, for example, is an ongoing social collaboration project which is a free, collaborative teaching and learning tool for primary school level. It is managed entirely by school teachers and administrators from across the world and offers tools for teachers to connect and share ideas and resources for teaching. It also includes safe email system, blogs, and resources to connect with other classrooms.

Finally, we take a look at recent start up, Amazee<sup>46</sup> which provides a web based platform that combines the tools for collaboration within established networks, the ability to find new collaborators and also facilities to advertise and promote your project. In this sense, Amazee is unique, allowing grassroots social collaboration to develop from start to finish and promote projects within the Amazee membership as well as the wider web through the project magazine, links to Twitter, RSS, and widgets. For activism this is particularly beneficial as participants can be kept updated on the progress of a protest or campaign.

Amazee has been particularly well used for campaigns, awareness raising and for creative collaboration. One project which particular stood out had the goal of putting together an exhibition of photographs. [Erol Slowy](#)'s project<sup>47</sup> ask people to submit pictures of their shoes, using as much creativity as they wished. The result was a wealth of creative shots, expanding the artistic vision of the exhibition out from one artist to a community of members. As well as being used to form an art exhibition in Germany, resulting photographs were shared on the project's website on Amazee.

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<sup>44</sup> MindMeister (2008) <http://www.mindmeister.com/home/welcome> [accessed 20 November 2008].

<sup>45</sup> Epals (2008) <http://www.epals.com/> [accessed 9 September 2008].

<sup>46</sup> Amazee (2008) [www.Amazee.com](http://www.Amazee.com) [accessed 23 August 2008].

<sup>47</sup> Slowy, E (2008) Worauf stehst du? Fotos verbinden, <http://www.amazee.com/worauf-stehst-du-fotos-verbinden> [accessed 6th August 2008].

Another example of small scale collaboration this time outside a dedicated collaboration platform is 'BNP Near Me?' a recent project in the UK. The British Nationalist Party (BNP) are Britain's extremist far right political party, which in November 2008 had its members list leaked. Publishing the leaked list is illegal under UK law. However, people are keen to know where BNP members are found in highest concentration, presumably to avoid those areas. It was through Social Collaboration that an innovative solution was found. BNP Near Me?<sup>48</sup> was created, carefully representing the data in a heatmap style Google Map showing the regions containing enclaves of BNP members<sup>49</sup>.

One final example of social collaboration which we believe gives a good sense of the range of the potential of the movement is the much documented Human Genome Project (HGP). This was a international project functioning on a massive scale and spanning 13 years with the ultimate aim of mapping the human genome. The power of social collaboration over ordinary projects was demonstrated when HGP raced private biotechnology company, Celera Genomics, to map the full genome in order to prevent Celera from claiming intellectual property rights and effectively owning knowledge of the human genome.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> BNP Near ME? (2008) <http://www.bnpnearme.co.uk/>, [accessed 27 November 2008].

<sup>49</sup> Highlighted on McIntosh, E. (2008) The fascists' names are leaked... crowdsourcing finds its place, Edu.Blogs.com [accessed 27 November 2008].

<sup>50</sup> Angrist, M. Cook-Deegan, R. (2006) 'Who Owns The Genome?' *The New Atlantis*, 11(4) pp. 87.

## The Roots of Social Collaboration

In this section we explore the various social factors that led to the emergence of social collaboration including uptake and manipulation of technological innovation, globalisation; extreme specialisation and the division of labour; and the rise of the knowledge economy to provide a sense of the socio-cultural backdrop for the movement.

First, we must remember that, as discussed earlier, collaboration is not new. People have always collaborated. However, the quantitative change we see in collaborative activity inevitably effects a qualitative change. While our focus is not so firmly rooted in the 'mass' collaboration, we cannot deny the importance of enabling many to many communications. The structures of hierarchical management in most workplaces prevent autonomy in the process,<sup>51</sup> and limit creativity and action to profit orientated goals. With these structures taken away, we see the incredible value of collaborative creativity in changing society, creating art, software or sharing and expanding knowledge. Projects that would never be attempted in a profit orientated organisation or could never be attempted with the limitations of geographical location are made possible through this kind of collaboration. The fact that the technology allows 'any to any' communication also means collaboration across cultural and economic divisions is made possible in a way it couldn't have been before.

In examining how social collaboration came about, however, the movement has no simple explanation or single taproot from which it emerged. Rather it has many roots fanning out across the fertile soil provided by a networked global society. Social collaboration for many is an inevitable resistance to a society obsessed with consumption and defined by individualism. It is in fact this individualistic, consumerist society in the West that is generating the desire for communality to spill out from fairly limited traditional civic participation into self organised groups working outside the state and outside work life. Indeed the loss of a close ties based on geography and local community may be motivating the shift towards a different experience of community in a globalised world.

Globalisation is in many ways key in the emergence of social collaboration. However, it is an ambiguous word where connotations shift all too easily from those of a buzzword to the neo-liberal economic agenda of free trade to the anti-globalisation movement's discourse of exploitation, global inequality and the increasing economic and digital divide. The interesting thing is that from whatever perspective you approach globalisation, the influence on social collaboration is evident. Companies are able to crowdsource to draw on international research and ideas, small businesses are able to function across continents, and activists can be kept update on minute by minute developments in a protest or collaborate on direct action internationally.

The rise of social collaboration is also rooted in the globalising political consciousness. Global media and communications expands understanding of the politics beyond national borders and brings to their consciousness a raft of temporally and spatially distant issues. This works on two levels: there are global issues such as terrorism, economic crisis or climate change but also there is the globalisation of local or national issues. Hurricane Katrina, for example, was a local and national issue but

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<sup>51</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) *We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production*. London: Profile.

rapidly became global news. To be political aware today, one has to be globally connected.

Without both this expansion of political engagement, the drive to participate in global networks, campaigning, raising awareness or participating in activism would not be the driving force it is in the rise of social collaboration. Without a global political consciousness, grass roots activism would be more geographically specific and collaboration would bubble along on a face to face basis. However, when this ceases to be possible through spatial dispersion of global citizens, people need to change the way they collaborate. And social media have enabled this. In an individualistic society, the ability to stay connected to complex issues allows people to feel empowered in a way that reading the news doesn't and thus drives a new, more accessible kind of collective action.

The way we think about our social lives, our political affinities and global events has shifted dramatically and as blogs, tweets and networking become more widespread, this is accelerating. Social collaboration is clearly a product of the internet and web 2.0. In many ways, it's to be expected: this generation of global thinkers are part of a collaboratively built system of communication which connect them all so what begins to emerge from this network is inevitably more collaboration.

In terms of the roots of social collaboration, there is still some division between that which emerges from established collaborative practices and that which emerges from social networks. On the one hand, activists and artists have strong cooperative and democratic practices of collaboration and are able to pick up the technologies as they emerge and tap into social networking as a tool for their goals. On the other, there are well established social networking practices amongst the net generation particularly where organising social events, letting people know what you're up to and chatting with friends and Facebook "friends" organically leads to collaboration<sup>52</sup>. These two routes through which collaborative projects are emerging are of course in most cases now becoming integrated and reciprocal. It's becoming a mind frame, a way of working rooted in the network.

On the business and research side of collaboration, one of the most significant motivators for social collaboration is extreme specialisation in the division of labour. Famous French sociologist Durkheim<sup>53</sup> predicted in that as work got more specialised people would become less and less connected. We see this in patterns of paid work where we have shifted from collaborative working on the land, through to fordist and post-fordist production.

However, as research becomes more complex and thus more specialised in a predominantly knowledge based economy the effect of this division of labour is the opposite. The number of highly specialised roles required to expand research in pharmaceuticals or computing is extremely high. One organisation alone cannot grow easily beyond a certain point so collaboration between companies and institutions, crowdsourcing and open innovation become the most effective ways to facilitate large scale research. Great things can be achieved with a very small amount of work from many individuals doing what they do well.

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<sup>52</sup> Watson, T. (2009) Causewired. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

<sup>53</sup> Durkheim, E. (1964) The Division of Labour in Society. New York: The Free Press.

In addition in scientific research particularly, shared storage of data is the only way institutions can move forward at all. The US Teragrid is one example of the impact of this. It connects all the major research centres in the US using open sources software and allows access to shared data which can be tested in any centre across the country.<sup>54</sup>

The rise of the knowledge or information economy is therefore evidently another element on which the development of social collaboration is firmly founded. This phrase, knowledge economy refers to the shift from products to knowledge or information as driver of the economy.<sup>55</sup> This shift has been apparent across the whole of the Western world and is instrumental in the rise of social collaboration because of the high use-value of knowledge and thus of people as vessels of intellectual capital.

The ownership of knowledge as intellectual property has in fact been a trigger for social collaboration in the open source movement. Much of this movement had at its root an opposition to ownership of knowledge or more specifically code. By making that code freely available it became rapidly evident that research progressed much more quickly. Unlike a product based economy, where property is key, now, knowledge is key and this can be generated at no cost. People can collaborate to generate the very thing that drives the economy. Where knowledge is capital, the wisdom of the crowds<sup>56</sup> becomes much more powerful than it could ever have been before.

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<sup>54</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) *We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production*. London: Profile, p.155.

<sup>55</sup> Burton-Jones, A. (1999) *Knowledge Capitalism: Business, Work and Learning in the New Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>56</sup> Surowiecki, J. (2005) *The Wisdom of the Crowds: Why the Many are Smarter than the Few*. London: Abacus.

## Potential Growth and Social Impact

This section addresses the future of social collaboration. We ask what are the hurdles and what are the potential impacts and successes ahead? First, as we talk about a culture of participation, of sharing and collaboration, we have to ask, is our culture ready to engage fully with this kind of approach?

Writing as we are from the UK it is easy to be taken in by the discourse of passivity that pervades political commentary and perceptions of the media spectacle. It is all too easy to construct the contemporary citizen as passive and disengaged in the age of low voter numbers and apparent political apathy (The recent US election showed a very different picture which will be discussed later).

Lord Philip Gould makes use of the 'empty stadium' as an metaphor for disengagement of the citizen in the political arena in the UK showing how far this perception has extended<sup>57</sup>. Of course constructing the public sphere as an empty stadium in this way misses the point entirely. If politics is a stadium with citizens looking on and cheering or sighing as decisions go one way or another, then disengagement is inevitable. While voting numbers have been down in Europe consistently over many years and, the question should not be why don't young people participate or why are they not empowered; rather *where* do people participate and feel empowered?

In fact there is a considerable backlash against the passivity of screen media, of political disengagement and disempowerment in the postmodern age. Those of us who collaborate, who create worlds together, who act together to change society, have high expectations of what political and social participation might be. It appears likely that it is through social collaboration that some of these high expectations can be met. The most significant impacts on party politics may therefore be further disengagement where nation state politics fail to engage the active participatory citizen who wants to contribute and equally, reengagement where it does.

Evidence of this lies in the very success of the Obama campaign in the US presidential election in 2008. Focused on grass roots mobilisation through social networking, Obama built a massive following through his use of social networks to keep people updated. What made this campaign really significant for social collaboration though was the focus on engaging people actively, asking them to contribute, donate, hold an event, share their view. The question is now what will he do with this active empowered following as president? Potentially this could effect a significant shift in how supporters are mobilised outside the election campaign to lobby for policy.

Charles Leadbeater points to various people who claim social collaboration will save or significantly enhance democracy. Dick Morris, Bill Clinton's campaign manager in 1996, thought it would make democracy 'more direct' cutting out the middle men - media and political parties.<sup>58</sup> Yochai Benkler also suggests it can make democracy more thoughtful by enabling conversation and debate engaging citizens more

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<sup>57</sup> Gould, P (2003) The Empty Stadium. Progressive Politics, vol. 2.3.

<sup>58</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production. London: Profile, Books, p.174.

creatively and critically in the debates. As the Obama presidency plays out we will wait with baited breath to see how far the culture of participation and collaboration extends into government and indeed whether this has a wider impact on other Western governments.

That other powerhouse of the tradition hierarchy, the large corporation is also likely to experience shifts in its workings in the future. The significant impact already visible in the corporate context is a testament to the strength of the will to collaborate. Already companies like Google are making work patterns more flexible and workers more autonomous, following the lead of collaborative approaches<sup>59</sup>. What is even more significant is where industries outside the software industry are making this leap however. British Telecom (BT) for example, shifted to self regulation and timetabling for engineers across a large region of the UK. Their hours went down and productivity went up, as did quality<sup>60</sup>. A company like BT recognising the value of decentralising aspects of management is perhaps a sign of things to come.

Work patterns may therefore feel a trickle down effect as the net generation demand flexible working conditions and greater autonomy in the software, research and innovation areas. Whether this trickle down will affect a factory worker or farmer is another matter entirely. We suspect not to any great degree. Innovation is likely to continue becoming more open, more informed by sharing and collaboration as well as crowdsourcing though this, like work patterns, is likely to be restricted to industries reliant on knowledge capital more than in manufacturing or agriculture<sup>61</sup>

Leadbeater suggests that ‘We-Think offers a way for capitalism to recover a social - even a communal dimension that people are yearning for’ and sees a future ahead that integrates social collaboration into the economy.<sup>62</sup> Both he and Tapscott and Williams predict a continuing shift in consumer behaviour towards modifying consumer items and consumer driven innovation as we see with Dell’s Ideastorm website where consumers contribute their ideas about where Dell’s products should be going.<sup>63</sup> Finally Leadbeater sees potential shifts in leadership and ownership. However, as with wide work patterns again this is likely to impact on knowledge based industries most significantly.

The impact of social collaboration on education is particularly difficult to predict. Teachers already feel the effects of young people questioning attitude to authority and often their disillusionment with an education system that still lacks technologically enable interactive learning. It is to be hoped that schools take advantage of the opportunities to connect with people around the globe to increase political and social awareness that social networking provides. However, this works in conflict with a fear in schools of not being able to police what students are doing and a lack of understanding on the parts of many teachers who are not engaged with Web 2.0. There are numerous platforms for educational networking and collaboration available both for teachers and students so it does appear that the wider recognition that

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<sup>59</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production. London: Profile, p.114.

<sup>60</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production. London: Profile, p. 114.

<sup>61</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production. London: Profile, p. 132.

<sup>62</sup> Leadbeater, C. (2008) We-Think: Mass innovation not Mass Production. London: Profile, p.90.

<sup>63</sup> Dell, (2008) Ideas Storm website, accessed 25 October 2008, <http://www.ideastorm.com/>

collaborative learning is a good thing will lead the way slowly towards digitally enabled social collaboration as a part of a wide range of subjects.

Looking beyond schooling to research, more and more organisations are opening up their research, for practical reasons as well as political. Astronomers from England's esteemed Oxford University have taken on the idea of social collaboration on an ambitious scale. They have a collection, from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, of millions of classifications, a task that would not have been possible for a handful of busy academics. Galaxy Zoo required lay members of the public to look at and classify.<sup>64</sup> Participants simply viewed pictures of galaxies and classified them as spiral, elliptical or merging galaxies and then according to a collection of information in each category.

Does this suggest an opening up of the ivory tower of academic research? Certainly the rising numbers of open access journals using the creative commons licence suggests the future is in sharing for research. The scientific commons is a particularly strong sign of a shift towards openness in academia and the focus on developing international networks to move research forward across all areas suggests international collaboration is coming to define it. However, the openness of the galaxy project in inviting the public to participate is extremely unusual and particular to the nature of the project itself. While universities are seeking to engage communities and make their research relevant, participation on this level is unlikely to become a common feature of research in general.

In the arts however, we have already seen an explosion of digital performance utilising online collaboration. Where other art forms have tended to use the internet as a media for presentation the collaborative nature of performance has meant that intercultural projects have sprung up across the internet with simultaneous web streamed performance allowing both performers and live audiences to be connected across the world. As connection continues getting fast and technology advances the combination of live and streamed performance with international collaborative process is likely to become an important part of international performance projects. The digital Performance archive collected by Barry Smith and Steve Dixon in the UK is a testament to the incredible growth in this area over the past fifteen years.<sup>65</sup>

The shoe photography project mentioned earlier also suggests that as platforms which enable this kind of collaboration emerge, the difficult process of generating material from across the world and indeed organising global tours and exhibitions will be made easier allowing smaller artists and organisations accessibility and the potential to engage wider participation and audiences, where in the past logistics and funding made this difficult.

Finally in the areas of political activism, equality and justice, it is likely social collaboration will come to play a very significant part. Clay Shirky's analysis of the Flashmob protests in Minsk draws attention to the way that new technology allows the process of organising a protest to be invisible to the authorities, preventing them from reacting in advance to the event. In addition the ability to document and publicise the event on the internet as a global media stage, makes it harder for the

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<sup>64</sup> Galaxy Zoo (2007) [Http://www.galaxyzoo.org/Default.aspx](http://www.galaxyzoo.org/Default.aspx) [accessed 25/11/2008].

<sup>65</sup> Digital Performance Archive Website (2007) <http://ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/collections.htm?uri=pa-1037-1> [accessed 18/11/2008].

authorities to intervene unprovoked once the protest is in motion as the world's eyes are upon them.

Social collaboration in the realm of direct action really does change the way the world works.

The digital divide prevents social collaboration dramatically shifting inequalities across the globe however, as the benefits that poorer countries might find in collaborative approach are undermined by the lack of facilities and wealth to connect people to the world. However, as we have seen with open source the availability of free software does begin to change this and the potential for raising awareness is considerable.

Looking finally at Western society once again, we also have to question how in the current climate of economic instability, financial uncertainties will affect the will towards collaboration. Will sharing and social collaboration in this way begin to drop off the priority list, or will it instead draw people together to contribute and participate more than ever before?

Many social collaboration projects offer no financial incentive for the contributor, rather the motivation for participation is tied up in recognition, community and esteem. This would initially suggest that as we tighten our belts during the economic down turn, social collaboration will be one of the things that sinks out of focus. However, as we have seen in examples of social activism like the response to Hurricane Katrina, under difficult circumstances often the opposite happens. People draw together and are willing to help.

At the same time, the capacity for sharing ideas and developing projects, inherent in social collaboration, allows people to work towards their goals without the usual costs of a large scale project. It is largely the fact that collaboration is low cost, and low impact on time and effort that allows individuals to feel they can contribute in small ways or begin a project for which they might otherwise not have the resources. This factor suggests that social collaboration can provide a way of starting up new projects in a climate where financial instability puts people off.

In addition, the functions of social collaboration: of sharing, openness and exchange, and of community and networked support, means that people may well turn to this model. Where people do not want to take big financial risks, social collaboration allows a project to get started in spare time without large overheads. Perhaps as people share and collaborate in the face of these shifts we are moving towards a tipping point. As financial crisis looms in the backdrop to all this and platforms emerge across the net providing tools to collaborate, Tapscott and Williams suggest we also find ourselves reaching a 'demographic watershed'.<sup>66</sup> Whether they are called The Net Generation or Generation Millenium, those people born in the West in the 1980s and 90s have grown up in a digital age. As Tapscott and Williams suggest, their 'modus operandi is networking'. As this generation comes of age: becomes a new generation of activists, business men and women, or artists can expect a dramatic acceleration in social collaboration.

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<sup>66</sup> Tapscott D. and A. D. Williams (2006) *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, p.46.

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