TECHNOLOGY GOVERNANCE

# Digital Economy and the Rise of Open Cooperativism: The Case of the Enspiral Network

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**Abstract**

This paper explores how autonomous workers/contributors, involved in peer-to-peer relations, can organize their productive efforts so that they manage to have sustainable livings. The discussion is guided by the concept of 'open cooperativism' which argues for a synergy between the commons-based peer production movement on the one hand, and elements of the co-operative and solidarity economy movements on the other. To this end, we review the case of Enspiral, a network of professionals and companies that empowers and supports social entrepreneurship. Through the exploration of its values, operation and governance as well as the chosen strategies for autonomy and sustainability, Enspiral is presented a working case of an open cooperative.

**Keywords:** open cooperativism, peer production, cooperative movement, social entrepreneurship, Enspiral

## 1. Introduction[1]

'This is not capitalism, this is something worse' (Wark, 2015). This statement eloquently summarizes the criticism on profit-maximizing business models within the so-called 'collaborative' or 'sharing' digital economy. Such models have given rise to a new form of neoliberalism which resembles modern feudalist practices. If feudalism was based on the ownership of land by an elite, the minority controlled resource now is networked data. While in classic neoliberalism labor income stagnates, in feudal neoliberalism society is deproletarized, that is, wage labor is increasingly replaced by isolated and in most cases precarious freelancers (Kostakis & Bauwens, 2014; Bauwens, 2013). In other words, the salaried status of laborers is being lost.

Prominent 'sharing economy' platforms, like Facebook, Flickr and Youtube, forsake direct production and instead create and maintain platforms which allow people to produce. Users produce content (videos, photos, texts etc), but their attention is what creates a marketplace for the owners of the platforms. The content creators go often unrewarded in terms of monetary value, which is mainly realized by the proprietary platforms. The latter allow peer-to-peer (P2P) communication while controlling its potential monetization through their ownership of the platforms for such communication.

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[1] The introduction is based on Kostakis, V. & Bauwens, M. (2014) *Network Society and Future Scenarios for a Collaborative Economy* (pp. 22-29). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan and Bauwens, M. & Kostakis, V. (2016, forthcoming) Why Platform Co-ops Should Be Open Co-ops. In T. Scholz, & N. Schneider (Eds) *The Rise of Platform Cooperativism*. New York, NY: OR Books.

Typically, the front-end of the technological infrastructure is P2P, in that it allows P2P sociality, but the back-end is something else entirely. The design is in the hands of the owners, as are the private data of the users, and it is the attention of the user-base that is marketed through advertising. The financialization of cooperation is still the name of the game. The back-end of these platforms, which serve as attention pools, is generally a centralized system where personal data is privatized. The monetization of the surplus value produced is exclusionary, keeping the users/producers out of that process. Nearly everything is controlled by the owners of the platforms and there is a clear power discrepancy between owners and users.

The same applies in other proprietary platforms, like for instance Airbnb, a platform that helps people rent out lodging, including private rooms, entire apartments, boats, and other properties or in the case of Uber, a platform which enables users to submit a trip request which is then routed to users who use their own cars. In other words, they both commodify things, that is, idle resources (rooms or cars), which were not previously up for sale. If one looks carefully at the back-end of Airbnb's or Uber's productive structure, she would realize that there is neither collaborative production nor governance, and the control rests with the owners of the platform.

In essence, platform owners, who are crucially dependent on the trust of user communities, exploit the aggregated attention and input of the networks in different ways, even as they enable it. In addition, such platforms are dangerous as trustees of any common value that might be created, due to their speculative nature and the opaque architecture (closed source) of their platforms (Kostakis, 2012). The parasitic nature of this neo-feudal mode becomes evident by the fact that an empty networking platform is arguably a platform of much less value. In addition to this, search engines and social networks limit the diversity of information sources so as to please their advertising customers, potentially minimizing the development of critically-thinking citizens (Pariser, 2011). Thus, since we are indeed talking about something worse than capitalism, then any proposed alternative should be quite ambitious in both scope and methods. This article points to the emergence of an alternative form of socio-economic organization which builds on the conjunction of two collaborative movements/phenomena.

On the one hand, commons-based peer production is a term coined by Benkler (2006) to describe a new logic of collaboration between networks of people who freely organize around a common goal using shared resources, and market-oriented entities that add value on top of or alongside them. Prominent cases of commons-based peer production (CBPP),

such as the free and open-source software and Wikipedia, inaugurate a new model of value creation, different from both markets and firms. The creative energy of autonomous individuals, organized in distributed networks, produces meaningful projects, largely without traditional hierarchical organization or, quite often, financial compensation. Moreover, through global open design communities, digital commons are linked to distributed/localized manufacturing, as is the case with the Wikispeed open source car, or with the Wikihouse open platform for sustainable building and construction (Kostakis et al., 2016).

On the other, the cooperative form of organization with its several different types has been a widely adopted alternative to the dominant capitalist firm since the 19th century. According to Cooperatives Europe (2016), more than 17% of the European population and about 1 out of 5 people in the EU are currently members of cooperatives. Cooperative enterprises in Europe have a total annual turnover of more than €1 trillion with nearly 180.000 cooperative enterprises providing employment for about 4.5 million. However, the traditional models of cooperativism possibly need to be updated with the current information and communication technology-driven techno-economic paradigm (Perez, 2002), and utilize the potentialities as well as the lessons drawn from collaborative forms of common value creation. Cooperatives that work within the capitalist marketplace tend to gradually take over competitive mentalities, and even if they would not, they are working for the benefit of their own members. In general, they are not creating, protecting or producing commons, and they usually function under the patent and copyright system. Further, they may tend to self-enclose around their local or national membership. As a result, the global arena is left open to be dominated by large corporations. Arguably these characteristics have to be changed, and they can be changed today.

There is an emerging counter-hegemonic movement which seeks to create a new type of vehicles in which workers are self-organizing in order to realize the surplus value themselves, so as to be able to re-invest it in their social reproduction as well as in the expansion of these new, commons-oriented economic circuits. Conaty and Bollier (2014, p. 2) have called for 'a new sort of synthesis or synergy between the emerging peer production and commons movement on the one hand, and growing, innovative elements of the co-operative and solidarity economy movements on the other.' To a greater degree than traditional cooperatives, open cooperatives are statutorily oriented towards the common good. This could be understood as extending, not replacing, the seventh cooperative principle of concern for community. For instance, open cooperatives internalize negative externalities; adopt multi-stakeholder governance models; contribute to the creation of immaterial and material commons; and are

socially and politically organized around global concerns, even if they produce locally (Bauwens and Kostakis, 2014).

Hence, the question this article attempts to address is if and how autonomous workers/contributors, involved in CBPP, can organize their productive efforts so that they manage to have sustainable livings. To this end, we review the Enspiral Network, originally from New Zealand, which is considered an intrinsic and exploratory case study of these emerging 'ethical' entrepreneurial coalitions. We discuss its chosen strategies for autonomy and argue that Enspiral is illustrative and emblematic of new transitional post-corporate forms, labelled as 'open cooperativism', for autonomous workers/contributors involved in CBPP.

## 2. Enspiral Network: A case study

The case of the Enspiral Network is explored, in an attempt to provide a primary body of empirical evidence which illustrate the main concepts of open cooperativism. The main method used is that of the exploratory case study, using data from the various sources providing information on Enspiral. The analysis is focused on the network's core values, its operation and governance, as well as the chosen strategies for autonomy and sustainability.

The case study method has been chosen due to a number of reasons. First of all, following Yin (2003), a case study is suitable in the investigation of distinct, under-researched phenomena where the researcher has limited or no control over the objects. Furthermore, there is currently a general lack of academic literature, both on the main concepts concerned, as well as on an adequate number of cases covered. Finally, the selected topic represents a contemporary phenomenon, which can only be approached within its real-life context, whereas it is difficult to differentiate the phenomenon from the context (Yin, 1981).

The data gathered consist mainly of online available information, to a large extent directly from the main persons involved, as well as data gathered from field observations during a one-week visit at the base of Enspiral in Wellington, New Zealand. Since openness is a fundamental principle in the Enspiral culture, there is indeed an abundance of primary data made widely available by its core members. This concerns various online sources, including internal working and communication documents and discussions (Google docs, wikis, etc.), shared on online repositories (GitHub, P2P Foundation, Quora, etc.). Furthermore, a significant body of information is provided at the Enspiral website and various online videos featuring interviews and conversations with the people involved in

Enspiral, while a number of online media have over time covered various stories about the project.

## 2.1. Structure and participation

Enspiral is a network of professionals and companies aiming to empower and support social entrepreneurship. It is comprised of three parts: (a) the Enspiral Foundation, a custodian of collectively owned assets representing the legal entity of the network; (b) Enspiral Services, a series of teams of professionals offering a wide range of business support under a unified umbrella and (c) the Startup Ventures, a group of independent start-ups, linked to the network through flexible revenue share agreements (Davies-Coates, 2015; Krause, 2014).

The Foundation is the 'root node' of the network (Vial, 2012a), providing support and guaranteeing its vision and social mission. The Foundation holds the intellectual property (including the Enspiral brand) and infrastructure of Enspiral and is the entity with which all companies and individuals of the network have a formal relationship. Its legal form is a Limited Liability Company (Ltd) with a charitable constitution, meaning that its purpose is non-profit and all funds are reinvested for its social mission. Even though legally an Ltd, on a practical level the Foundation functions as a cooperative, with every member owning one share, which cannot be transferred by constitution, while no dividends are distributed. Moreover, all assets held by the Foundation are managed collectively by the members.

Enspiral Services is currently the largest company (in terms of turnover) in the network. The company, also an Ltd in legal form and independent from the Foundation, houses multiple teams of professionals from various disciplines (Figure 1). Each one of the teams functions substantively as any other individual venture of the network and is able to create and present its own brand to clients (Enspiral, 2015a). The various teams provide a wide range of services, including custom development of websites and applications, project management and creative services, all specialized for projects that aim to create social value. What makes Enspiral Services a special type of venture, in relation to the other ones, which are further explained below, is the fact that the teams share a common legal structure. In practice, this serves the purpose of increasing agility and collaboration and reducing overheads and transaction costs (Enspiral, 2015b).

Startup Ventures is a group of start-ups which introduce innovative digital-based solutions that create value for the society (Enspiral, 2016a). The various ventures are independent in their operations and maintain a voluntary relationship with the Foundation. Enspiral ventures benefit from the connections, skills and expertise of the network in order to develop

new solutions for social challenges. In turn, they contribute with time and skills as shared resources to the Enspiral Foundation, as well as with monetary contributions, usually in the form of flexible revenue shares (Enspiral, 2015b; 2015c). Those contributions constitute to the Foundation's budget, which is collectively managed through collaborative funding processes, where the ventures can participate to direct what their contributions would support.

Like Enspiral Services Ltd, there are other two additional types of ventures that have a somewhat special relation with the network. Some ventures, for instance 'Enspiral Accounting', carry the brand 'Enspiral' in their name and use the Enspiral logo as part of their visual identity. For this, some additional rules apply in relation to staffing and distribution of revenue. Also, a number of companies are wholly owned by the Foundation (e.g. Enspiral Spaces) and therefore constitute to assets collectively held by the network (Vial, 2012; Enspiral, 2015b). Figure 1 illustrates a simplified representation of the three layers of the Enspiral ecosystem and their relation.
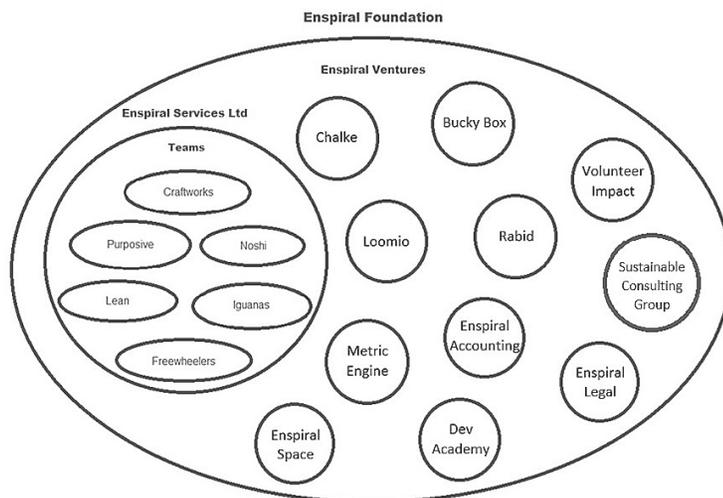


**Figure 1.** The Enspiral Network: The Enspiral Foundation encompasses the companies of the network, including Enspiral Services Ltd and multiple ventures. Adapted from What is Enspiral Services? In GitHub, retrieved 03 July 2016, from https://github.com/enspiral/services/wiki/What-is-Enspiral-Services?

Above everything, Enspiral stands for a group of people and the high-trust relationships between them. People engage in the Enspiral ecosystem in three ways: as members of the Foundation; as *contributors* and as *friends* (Vial, 2012). The Foundation members act as the caretakers and guardians of the Enspiral culture and social mission and collectively own the

Foundation as shareholders. The Foundation members are expected to participate in collective decision making and participate to various events and retreats when possible, while members' meetings are being held on a bi-monthly basis.

Any member can invite new persons to become *contributors*, who then also participate in decision making and communication channels through the shared platform of the collective and receive internal information about Enspiral. Their contribution constitutes in time and skills in the Enspiral internal gift economy. Also, an annual fee is requested for the core costs of the Foundation, whereas the possibility of exemptions is considered in cases that the costs pose barriers to entering the collective. Contributors often work for various Enspiral Ventures and they can also propose projects for collaborative funding. While they have the freedom to focus their contributions on one single project, overall contributors are expected to engage with the wider range of activities of Enspiral. Lastly, the *friends* of Enspiral are people who maintain an unofficial relationship with Enspiral, but also participate in the collective decision making and information channels.

## 2.2. History and evolution

In order to provide a comprehensive outline of how Enspiral operates, we first have to briefly present the short history of Enspiral, which has formed the core values of the Enspiral culture and have been translated into the network's core operations. Enspiral has been initiated in 2008 by Joshua Vial, a freelance computer programmer, who had some ideas that would help people do more 'meaningful work', in terms of fulfilling a social purpose. As a result, a group has been formed along with other freelancers, who shared the same interest. To this end, they collaborated in order to be able to provide themselves with the relevant resources and flexibility to do so (Krause, 2014). The idea was that if each one of them worked part time as a freelancer and contributed a part of his/her income to the group, the aggregated resources would allow them to commit the rest of their time on socially-oriented projects.

Soon, a larger and more diverse group of professionals, sharing the same vision, started to be interested. The initial success of the experiment evolved to a tentative organization and business model, where self-organized individuals and companies distribute money, information, knowledge and control in a networked environment. This organization that emerged was driven by the core values of its initial members regarding business for social purpose, entrepreneurship, excellence and empowerment. From the very beginning the vision has been pointing towards an organization that is managed in a distributed and collaborative manner, without the need of central control and hierarchies.

By 2011, the network started launching companies and the Enspiral Foundation has been established. As the contributors and the supported companies grew in numbers collaboration and internal communication processes improved. To this contributed a series of web-based tools, starting with Loomio, the network's participatory decision making platform. Initially a core group of people, called 'support crew', have been responsible for the management of the network, however, by 2013 decision-making procedures and financial management have gradually been decentralized. On 2014 the network started to develop a common vision and to collaboratively set out a broader strategy. At the time of this writing, the Foundation has over 40 members and is supported by over 250 contributors and friends on a global level (NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2016; Enspiral, 2016a).

## 2.3. Governance and Operation

As mentioned earlier, the Foundation is the formal legal entity representing Enspiral. As mandated by its constitution it is steered by a board of directors. They are the ones who hold the legal responsibility to ensure that the Foundation is solvent and can meet its obligations (NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2016; Vial, 2012b). However, the ultimate power in the Enspiral ecosystem is held by the members of the Foundation. They have control over the money and shares and decide which people and companies can join Enspiral. Furthermore, the members are the ones that hire or fire the directors and the permanent staff of the Foundation, while they can also rewrite the constitution of the Foundation itself (Enspiral, 2016b).

Regardless of the formal power structures, the Enspiral culture is successfully balancing between autonomy and collaboration (Robinson in Enspiral, 2014). The Foundation is run as a collection of autonomous units and, in practice, the members rarely have to intervene or make decisions on this level (Enspiral, 2016b). People in Enspiral work on a P2P fashion, however their formal relations and contracts are in fact very conventional. The distribution of power is achieved through a proper mix of process and technology, while a strong emphasis is being placed on culture, team building and communication (Ambrose in Enspiral, 2014).

On operational level, collaboration takes place online, through digital tools, and offline, in a shared co-working space (Enspiral Space), as well as on regular retreats (Enspiral, 2015c). Alanna Krause (2016), a core member of Enspiral and director of the Foundation, explains how it works for the people of Enspiral, providing an example from Enspiral Services Ltd, which represents in practice any other linked company. On individual level, people are doing their job as usual according to their occupation

and expertise, either they are computer programmers, legal consultants or of any other expertise. They get contracted by clients to do a job, an invoice is issued under Enspiral Services Ltd and the payments are made to a regular business bank account. In turn, this account at the back-end is virtualized to multiple small accounts on the Enspiral platform ('my. enspiral'). A proportion (by default 20%) is then automatically transferred to a common pool, which has the form of a collaborative funds account, and the rest of the amount to the personal account of the people who have done the job. They are then free to use this money independently, within or without Enspiral. The aggregated contributions at the common pool are being collectively managed through a collaborative funding process, directed to the support of new ventures.

Everyone at Enspiral, regardless of whether they have contributed funds or not, can propose a project that requires funding from the collective funds. For this they create a standardized proposal, called 'bucket', using a simplified online form available at the network's intranet (Krause, 2014). On a regular basis (e.g. monthly) the people who have contributed funds decide collaboratively to which 'bucket' they would like to invest their contributions. This process was initially being coordinated through a series of shared spreadsheets and forms, but is now facilitated by another open source application called 'Cobudget', also developed as an Enspiral solution.

New projects stem from real needs and identified challenges. A range of professionals from various sectors come together and form teams to work together around interesting ideas. Innovative solutions are being developed in the form of Minimum Viable Products, with relative agility and on a case-by-case basis (Krause, 2014). An experimental process of trial and error is being followed in order to test, iterate and improve the solutions. Once an appropriate process is identified, the solution is standardized and open-sourced, so that others can make use of it. The idea is that whatever is 'light', i.e. of cognitive or digital form, is being openly shared for everyone to benefit from it. Moreover, open-sourcing is also encouraging the engagement of the wider community, providing interactive feedback and further improvements of the developed solutions.

Perhaps the best example to demonstrate this process is the development of Loomio, one of the essential tools of Enspiral for collaborative decision making. Loomio has been initiated as an idea by a team of activists from the local Occupy movement in Wellington, New Zealand. They joined forces with Enspiral, in order to help self-organized communities to make decisions without centralized coordination (Schneider, 2016). A prototype has been developed by 2012 and immediately it was taken up by an

increasing number of early-adopters. At the same time, a social enterprise was formed within the Enspiral network and two crowdfunding campaigns contributed to its first stages, in order to ensure the necessary resources. Loomio began as an internal project to solve in-house decision-making challenges, but soon it was obvious that a wider range of users could benefit, including businesses, government agencies, community groups and political movements. Ever since it has facilitated thousands decisions on a global scale, while Enspiral continues to use it for its core decision making processes.

Innovation in Enspiral does not only concern new or improved products, but also the various processes involved. For instance, an innovative process has been developed for the creation of Cobudget, as, at the time, there were not enough resources available to cover the desired requirements. For this reason, an internal process in the form of equity in earnings (later named 'Fairy Gold') in order to finance the team that had been assigned with the relative work. Moreover, Cobudget is further integrated in order to support other budgeting operations as well, such as reporting on the project's finances, income and expenditure flows as well as project life-cycle assessment using visualized content (Krause, 2014). This could further enhance the overall effectiveness of the projects, by reducing management and coordination costs, allowing the persons involved to focus on the product scope.

## 3. Towards forms of open cooperativism

Enspiral is disrupting every organizational process one-by-one and transforming it from the old top-down hierarchical form to a collaborative one (Krause, 2014). Craig Ambrose (in Enspiral, 2014), another member of the Foundation, mentions that it is 'about changing the world through livelihood', implying that Enspiral allows people to work for a social purpose and at the same time make a sustainable living. This way, on one hand, the lines between activism and work are blurred and people are able to concentrate their efforts for the social benefit. On the other hand, they work on things in which they are personally engaged and motivated to a degree that managerial gimmicks and corporate incentive mechanisms could hardly ever achieve.

The workplace is being democratized. People participate in the decision making processes that concern both their own work, as well as the future of their organization. Their sense of commitment is enhanced on individual level, while a collective strategic vision is collaboratively formed. Every new idea that is being supported by Enspiral is backed by a group of motivated people who believe in its purpose for the society and the

environment. Simultaneously, they invest money, time and skills to make it work, thus further contributing to a better future for them, for Enspiral and for the world. Therefore, the contributors of the Enspiral ecosystem may share their resources, however they do not heed control of their contributions. They rather create a collective investment fund, with a social purpose, under democratic control and are thus reinventing economic democratization (Hyman, 2016).

At the same time, inspired by the open source mind-set, they chose to share the output of their work and the co-created value. The Enspiral culture is coalesced around creating value for people rather than for shareholders. Production shifts away from the dominant form of 'shareholder-driven command and control', which bases its perpetual growth on the commercialization of the non-commercialized parts of society and is externalizing the costs of input (Vial and Robinson in Enspiral, 2014). On the contrary, Enspiral is orienting its creative forces to the introduction of those organizational patterns that protect and enrich the commons. It is thus fulfilling the necessary condition for the 'circulation of the commons': 'connecting eco-social, labor and networked commons to reinforce and enable one another' (De Peuter & Dyer-Witheford, 2010: 45).

Krause (in Enspiral, 2014) describes Enspiral as merely an 'entrepreneurial space', which is dedicated to the creation of opportunities and necessary connections. Enspiral is not directly offering any jobs but is rather providing a fertile ground for entrepreneurship. It is thus giving people agency to create new things, while generating social and environmental benefit (Robinson in Enspiral, 2014). This is encoded in the core values of Enspiral with the notion of 'Leadership', whereas it is clarified that 'everyone should lead some of the time, no one should lead all of the time and leadership should be balanced with active followership' (Enspiral, 2016b:3). In this sense, leadership in Enspiral is not imposed by hierarchy but is rather a process or function, which has been argued to be a prerequisite for direct democracy (Barker, 2001 in Hyman, 2007:199). Coupled with engagement and collaboration, leadership unleashes the benefits that stem from the distribution of power and diversity of viewpoints. This dynamic balance and the way it is translated into a common strategic vision for Enspiral could provide valuable lessons for the discussions on the strategic capacity in trade unions (Hyman, 2007).

Finally, another useful lesson from Enspiral concerns the role of technology in disrupting organization and business practices. Enspiral is considered to be a type of 'tech-company' and indeed some of the successful practices of the Silicon Valley giants have been taken into account (Ambrose in Enspiral, 2014). This is then further supported by the early

adoption of customized innovative digital tools in its core operations, however the role of technology in this process is not the principal determinant. On recent debates on the potential of emerging P2P technologies, such as the blockchain, Krause (in P2P Foundation, 2016) is placing fierce critique on a widespread impression of people who want to 'program away' with the real issues related to power, autonomy and collective ownership. Contrary to that, the development of Enspiral has been based on a safe-net of high-trust personal relations and a strong shared sense of purpose.

Enspiral has been perceived by its core members by and large as an ongoing experiment. As such, a certain method can be identified on every level, where the design is just good enough to keep things going. Conventional legal arrangements and simplified contractual procedures have been adopted, while the real focus has been rather placed on communication and meaningful collaboration. Amidst a widespread techno-optimism, a network initiated by software engineers is refreshingly showing that genuine decentralized governance is not to be sought through trustless and immutable technologies or infallibly designed institutions. It is rather the interpersonal relations and the most human of attributes, as well as a shared commitment to common matters that is driving the Enspiral business operations and effectively enabling cooperative forms of governance.

However, some limitations have to be taken. Even though Enspiral has been demonstrating constant improvement throughout its evolution, its overall sustainability on the long term remains to be proven. It represents a niche practice that owes its very success, to a large extent, to a process of constant experimentation at the margins of the current socio-economic environment, supported by highly motivated enthusiasts with a common vision. The legal and institutional arrangements that would eventually support and sustain this governance model are yet to be identified and applied.

Also, the available information on the case of Enspiral mainly consist of representations provided by either the main persons involved or closely associated ones. Therefore, the presented views could contain a certain degree of subjective bias, over-emphasizing the overall success of the case.

Moreover, there is currently no academic literature on the concept of open cooperativism and the presented views are purely speculative. The present paper constitutes a first attempt to apply some academic rigor on the topic, while bringing it to scholarly attention. An adequate number of different cases illustrating various perspectives of the concept are necessary in order to be able to provide some initial hypotheses or the development of a more concrete theory.

## 4. Conclusions

This paper asked one question: how could autonomous workers/contributors, involved in CBPP, organize their productive efforts so that they manage to have sustainable livings? Are there any examples of such initiatives? We return to those questions here to summarize the lessons learned from the case of Enspiral.

Through this brief presentation of the Enspiral network, a story of experimentation and innovative problem solving is being unfolded. A group of people initiated a collaborative process in order to address specific challenges, both on personal level, but also with a wider view on the social context. The main motivation has been a general will to contribute to projects striving to generate social impact, or as Enspiral puts it to 'work on stuff that matters'. Consciously or not they have adopted cooperative forms of organization and collectively invested their shared resources, including money, time and skills, to create social value. They have democratized decision making procedures and empowered people to enhance their autonomy through collaboration. Moreover, inspired by the open source movement, they have been sharing the developed solutions, products and processes, to expand the range of their impact and further engage with other productive communities.

Through on-going process and technological innovation the transaction costs of organization, coordination and management have considerably been reduced. Just by sharing a small amount of their income, the members of Enspiral have not only generated enough resources to support themselves, but also have been engaging in strategic investments on meaningful startup ventures. In turn, those ventures, once successful, further support the network by contributing to the collective resources. This way, the people of Enspiral have been able to concentrate on even more meaningful work, committed to their shared vision of a 'thriving society'.

On the one hand, as a CBPP practice, Enspiral has succeeded in unlocking the virtuous effects of the core P2P dynamics. An ever growing number of highly motivated people have been mobilized to share knowledge, skills and ideas and contribute their unique creative energy to a common goal. On the other hand, as a cooperative, it has provided a sustainable livelihood for an increasing number of people, allowing them to self-organize and realize the surplus value of their work. Finally, it has adopted commons-oriented governance models, re-investing the social production towards the common good. We can thus observe how Enspiral achieves that sort of synthesis of the dynamics of peer production, with the potential of the commons and the values of cooperative organization.

From its initial form and up to its current state, Enspiral arguably exemplifies a pattern of development that resembles a fractal: starting at the core, with a group of individuals who share resources to support each other's ideas; moving on to the next layer, where ideas and operations evolve into unique business ventures, each one autonomously identifying its contribution to the collective resources; and, finally, all these integrated to a decentralized organization, a living organism finding its place in a wider global community coalesced around a networked commons. This vision of an ever-expanding virtuous spiral of ethical entrepreneurial coalitions eloquently designates the context and potential of open cooperativism.

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