

Understanding and supporting emergent and temporary collaboration across and beyond community and organizational boundaries

Workshop proposal

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ABSTRACT

The way the Computer Supported Cooperative work (CSCW) community talks about, defines and investigates ‘work’ has changed since the early workplace studies. In the current literature, work has been described as being distributed, cross-organizational and multi-actor dependent, volunteer-based, fleeting, opportunistic, in-between and community-based. Collaborative work has also been examined in the formation of Publics, as Infrastructuring or as Knotworking. Work and collaborative work is indeed something that can be unforeseen by most or all of the involved actors. It can emerge and take place temporarily at the boundaries of established entities, and be independent of existing collaboration protocols. This workshop seeks to bring together researchers and practitioners who are interested in how we study and discuss very open-ended and emergent forms of collaboration, occurring in an improvised, temporary communities of action, at the boundaries of established communities or organizations, to address issue that challenges current organization of work. The aim of the workshop is to open a space of reflection on relevant concepts, through the discussion of concrete examples and case studies.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **_Human-centered computing** → **Collaborative and social computing** ; • **Human-centered computing** ~ **Computer supported cooperative work**;

KEYWORDS

Cross boundaries; collaboration; knotworking; public;

1 WORKSHOP THEME

As work and the organization of work evolve, especially in non-workplace contexts e.g. being volunteer-based or in other unpaid [3], we see more collaboration occurring at the boundaries of organizations, existing communities of practice and self-organized groups, etc. CSCW researchers and practitioners are increasingly confronted with the challenge of designing support for people whose work practices, although intertwined, are not guided by established protocols or settings that are specifically put in place to support work and collaboration. Furthermore, the collaborative work practices may be unforeseen and depend on actors that previously have not seen any need for collaboration. How then do we 1) talk about collaboration that does not take place in or is dependent on a specific organization, community or group, and 2) design for such collaborations?

Unbound and unforeseen collaborative situations can be found in many domains, like e-learning, healthcare, and crisis management. For example, in the context of healthcare, actors coming from different organizations (e.g. hospital, municipality, general practitioners) have to coordinate their practices to enable or enhance the management of the patient situation. These actors have to *improvise* ways of coordinating their work across organizational and other boundaries. Additionally, each patient represents a new case that requires different arrangement with different actors. Many care and healthcare scenarios also depends on informal actors, such as family members and volunteers, and actors that see their business or core activity to be something very different than being a collaborative part in care work, such as taxi organizations and their drivers, and this further complicates the collaborative effort [4]. In such cross-organizational and multi-actor collaborative scenarios and contexts it can be useful to support potential collaborations between indeterminate actors. The challenge is how to design for such future collaboration that might emerge

out of a new or isolated need to solve an issue at hand and are existing terms, such as Community, Organization or Group, suitable to describe the collaborative entities in such situations? We might have to consider rethinking the way we understand collaboration, the actors and contexts involved, and the methods we use to design support in such contexts.

For this workshop, we are interested in concepts that can help researchers to identify and account for emergent, temporary, and improvised collaborative practices. These collaborations emerge at the boundary of more established collaborative work settings and practices, like informal care of an older adult referred to professionals and municipality-organized home-care work. Thus, taken the above aspects of collaboration in consideration, we need concepts that describe the dynamic arrangements between fleeting and recurrently changing actors throughout a collaborative process. Engeström and his colleagues have proposed the term “knotworking” [5] to describe a cross-boundary way of organizing work and collaboration. In knotworking, collaboration occurs in episodes depending on the requirement of the current situation. People involved in a knotworking processes create and take part in improvised collaboration groups –called knots– that gather otherwise loosely connected actors. We consider “knotworking” as a good candidate to describe how the groups emerge on the borders. However, we need more details on how collaboration actually occurs to help CSCW researchers and practitioners in designing support for the actors involved in a knotworking process [1].

There are also other candidate concepts that can help us better understand these collaborations. For example, Zacklad proposes the term “communities of action” to describe entities that form around collaboration across the boundaries of established communities [8]. Communities of action are thus “... *small groups which actively and thus to some extent rationally pursue explicit goals while relying on a tightly woven fabric of relationships to promote mutual sympathy and the mimetic learning that is assumed to characterize primary groups and communities of practice*” [6:193]. Similarly, Le Dantec and DiSalvo’s application of Dewey’s concept of Publics in their work on the formation of publics, also brings forward the emergence of groups of people around a shared issue of concern. They discuss the formation of publics as an ad-hoc way of participation where a common goal is to be achieved through Infrastructuring and Attachments [4]. In many ways, Publics may seem similar to the above description of emergent collaborations. However, we see that collaborative work can be ongoing while the involved actors may change over time compared with the formation of Publics and attachments that may be more fleeting and exists only for a brief moment of time.

There are also studies that focus on how collaboration occurs across organizational or established community boundaries through the objects/artifacts that travel across the communities/social worlds to facilitate the collaboration. This is

what Star and Griesemer identified as boundary objects [7]. More recently, we can see more work promoting for infrastructuring to support collaboration across the boundaries[6,2]. The question remains how to support emergent collaboration, if people involved were not able to develop boundaries objects neither share a basic infrastructure.

Furthermore, we are interested in the methods that integrate all the concerned actors in the design process. In other words, how we design to promote, and even enable, the initiating of new collaborations.

In this workshop, we propose to open the discussion on how to research and design for the kinds of emergent, temporary collaborations across established community and organizational boundaries, and the people who participate in it. We can see this type of collaboration attempts between people that have intertwined practices. These collaborations often start in an improvised manner; at the boundaries of established communities or organizations, to address an issue that challenges current organization of work. People’s participation in these collaborations is fleeting, and opportunistic. People have a pragmatic approach to collaborating; they do not always share a common objective. We will try to address the question of whether the concepts related to communities, such as communities of action and publics, or collaborative work, such as knotworking, help us? We will discuss and reflect on these concepts as well as other promising ones brought in by the participants. In addition to concepts, we will also discuss methods that enable the understanding of intertwined collaborative practices across community and organizational boundaries, and how to design to support them.

2 WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the workshop are twofold:

Contributions to the body of knowledge: to further characterize the phenomena of collaboration across the boundaries; to identify existing collaboration practices and to reflect upon them; to discuss the potential contribution of emergent theories/concepts.

Methodological: to create and to disseminate a set of guidelines/best practices for conducting research in settings where collaboration involves diverse and heterogeneous actors (coming from different organizations, communities, etc.) that may be changing over time and that may not even see themselves as members of a community at the time of the design or when they collaborate.

In order to work towards these goals at the workshop, we invite participants and contributions that can inform a discussion on the following topics and questions:

- How to create a better understanding of collaboration across boundaries?
- What are conceptual links between existing concepts e.g. Knotworking, Publics and Communities of action; what are their similarities and differences?
- Do the notions of Knotworking, Publics and Communities of action provide sufficient tools to better understand and

ultimately design for emergent and temporary collaborations across established communities? What other concepts could be useful?

- How do we use the existing concepts mentioned above in our design work?
- How to identify potential stakeholders that might be involved in cross boundaries collaboration?
- How to design for future use, and if needed 'design-after-design'?
- What can we learn from successful and unsuccessful projects in cross boundaries settings?

3 WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

3.1 Call for Participation

The workshop's call for participation will be announced on a variety of mailing lists (e.g., from CHI and CSCW communities) and on social media. For advertising the workshop and distributing related material (program, submissions, outcomes, etc.), a website will be created and maintained on-line before, during, and after the workshop. The invitation to participate will be extended to both researchers and practitioners belonging to various backgrounds and communities. Prospective participants will be required to submit a 2–4 pages position paper or personal narratives addressing the general theme of the workshop. These may include detailed ethnographic accounts or new perspectives. **Position papers:** scholarly works, theoretical, conceptual, or empirical, which address the theme of the workshop. Authors of accepted position papers will present in the workshop sessions (presentation or poster). Submissions in this category must have a maximum length of 4 pages, including references.

Personal narratives: first-person accounts, which address the theme of the workshop in a subjective manner. Accepted personal narratives will be published on the workshop website and in archival materials, and may be drawn upon by participants during the workshop session. Authors of accepted personal narratives are welcome to participate in the workshop. Submissions in this category must have a maximum length of 2 pages.

3.2 Workshop Format

The full-day workshop will consist of five linked sessions (coffee break between sessions 2 and 3, lunch break planned between sessions 3 and 4):

Session 1 (am): organizers provide an introduction to the theme and topics of the workshop.

Session 2 (am) and Session 3 (am): position paper presentations by the participants (10–15 minutes each) with opportunity for (audience discussion/Q&A) (10 participants Max).

Session 4 (pm): This session will consist of small group (3–4 people) discussions. The participants will discuss their own-presented work (papers and posters) in the smaller groups - using a theme identified in the morning sessions. The organizers will pre-plan a set of discussion themes that will be updated to reflect emergent material from the morning sessions.

Session 5 (pm): In this session, each team will present an overview of their discussion to the whole group. The session will conclude with a reflective discussion followed by a summary of the insights that emerged during the workshop.

We require space for 10–15 participants, with re-configurable seating (to support the break-out discussions). The workshop will also require a projector, space for the participants' posters and Internet connectivity. The organizers will identify any additional requirements needed to accommodate specific participations as they emerge.

3.3 Outreach and Selection Process

Materials for the workshop will be hosted on a workshop website through which advertising, submission, distribution of reading material and organization will be handled. Archival material from the workshop will also be hosted on the website.

The workshop organizers will review the position papers and select 10-15 papers based on degree of originality and potential to stimulate discussion.

3.4 Post-Workshop Dissemination

We intend to disseminate the workshop outcomes on the workshop website. That is in addition to the possibility to publish a special issue of IRSI (International Reports of Socio-Informatics) or another HCI- or CSCW-related journal on the theme of the workshop, as well as any other possible dissemination option discussed with participants at the conclusion of the workshop.

4 ORGANIZERS

Khuloud Abou Amsha is a postdoctoral fellow at Troyes University of Technology (France). Her research focuses on designing systems to support social interactions. Her main application domain is healthcare; she was involved in several projects at the regional, and national levels.

Erik Grönvall is Associate Professor at IT University of Copenhagen. His research is within the fields of PD, healthcare technology, HCI and CSCW. Erik researches technology in everyday life and how to for example design for the capabilities and needs of diverse users.

Joanna Saad-Sulonen is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oulu (Finland). Her research interest includes participatory design of IT in contexts such as governance, urban planning, and citizen self-organisation; research infrastructures; and combined ethnographic and PD methods.

Claus Bossen is associate professor at Aarhus University (Denmark). His research interest includes analysis of work place practice, anthropological methods, project management and design, development and implementation of IT, mainly within the healthcare sector.

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