Digital Commons and the Politics of Technology

Giannis Perperidis
(Ph.D. Department of Philosophy, University of Ioannina)

Postdoctoral researcher, Department of Political Science and History, Panteion University, Athens

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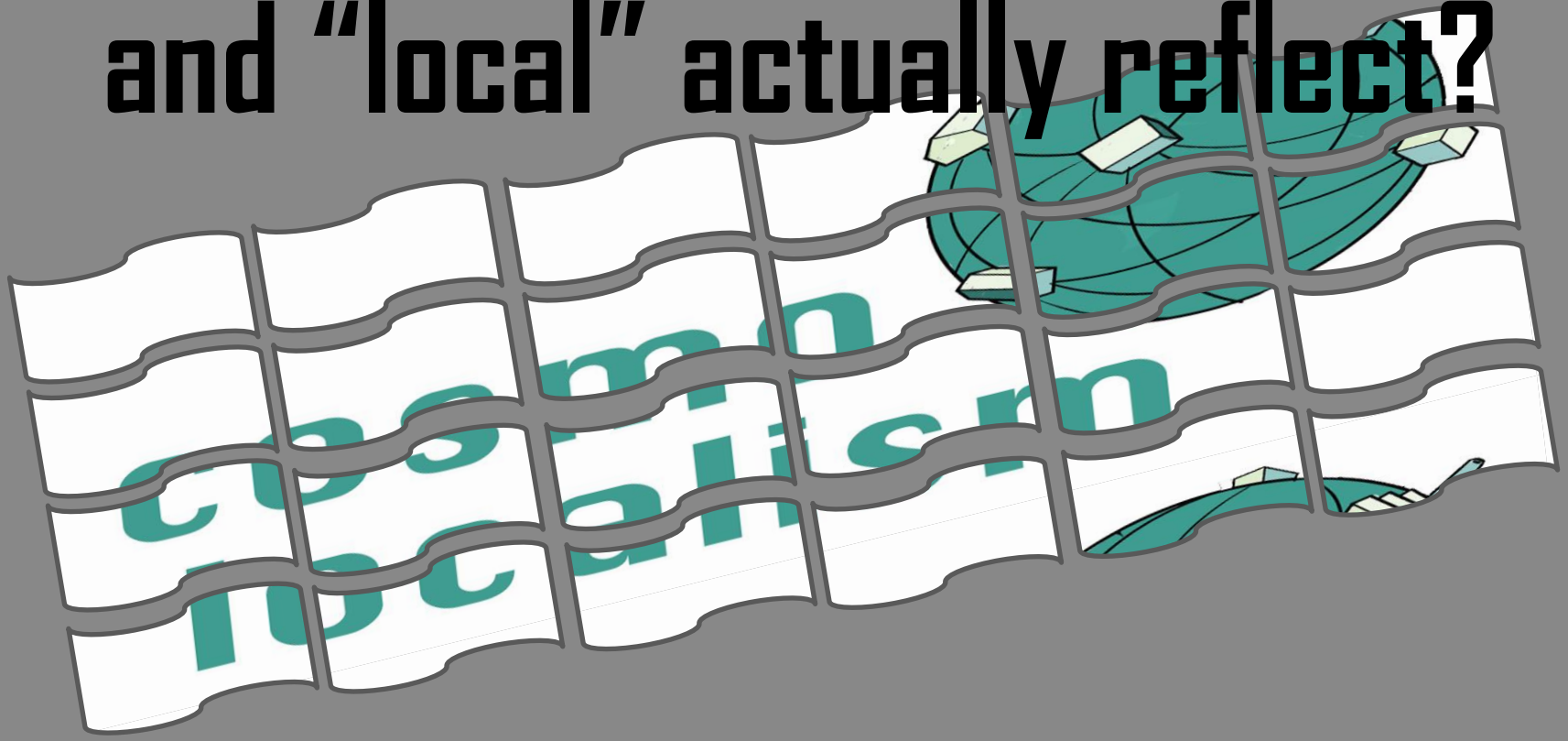
Structure of Presentation

- Defining "Cosmolocalism"
- Analyzing makerspaces and their digital foundations
- Evaluating their political character by referring to Andrew Feenberg's critical theory of technology

I. Cosmolocalism

What is it and what do "cosmo" and "local" actually reflect?

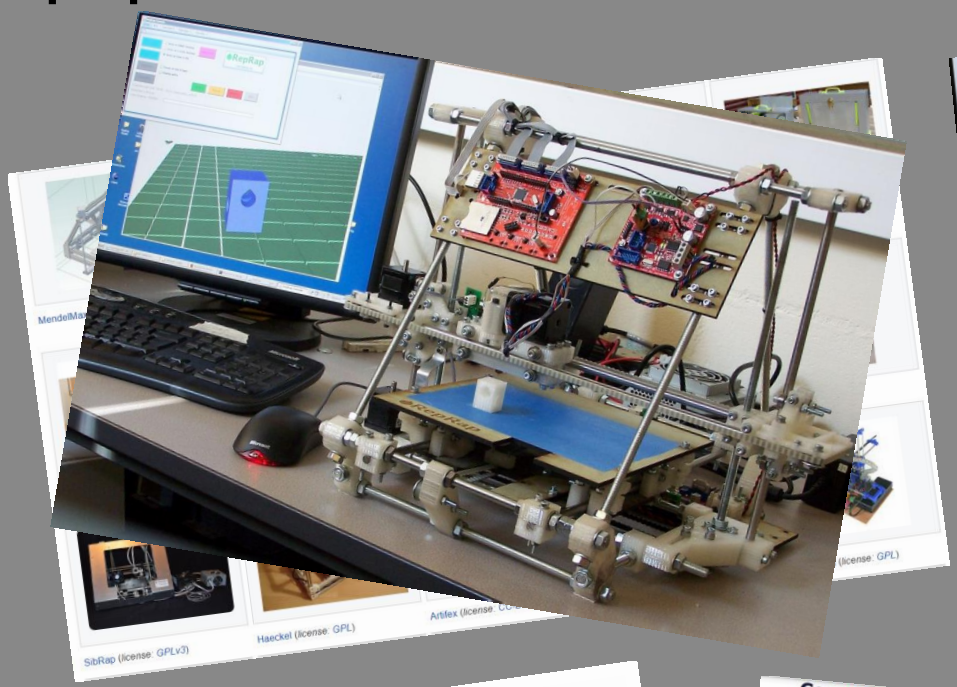


Cosmolocalism

- Methods to bridge local communities in networks of shared resources and products
- Redefines the communal in terms of place via resilient infrastructures for sharing knowledge
- Offers the framework for localising collaborative forms of production whilst sharing resources in the form of digital commons globally

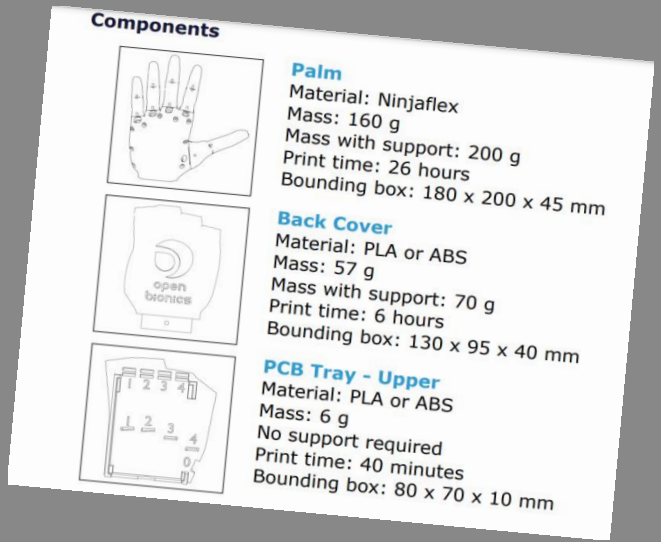
Technology Initiatives

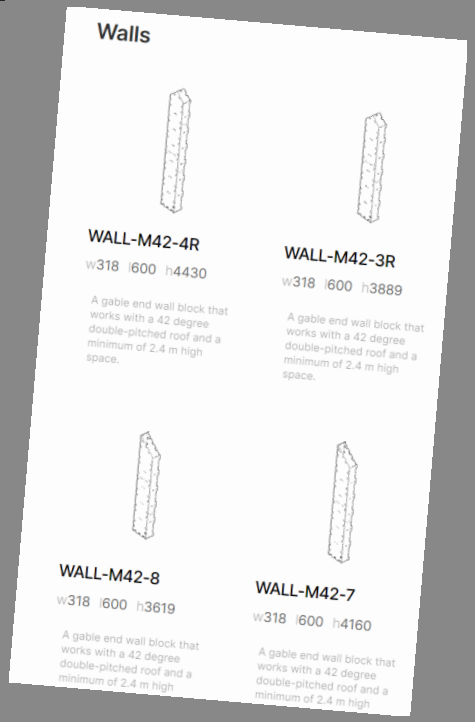
RepRap



Wikihouse

OpenBionics



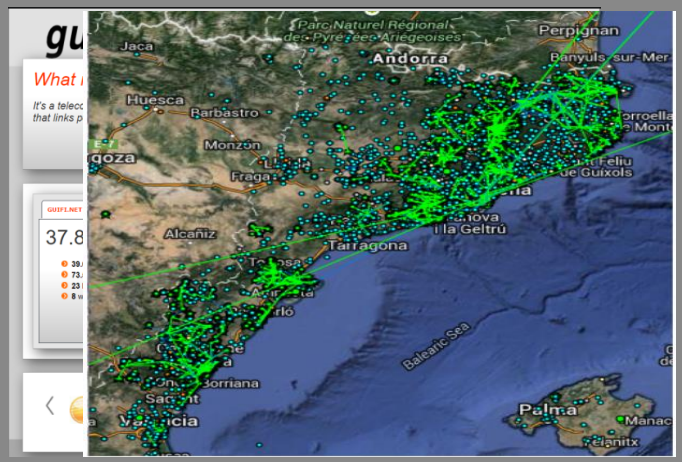


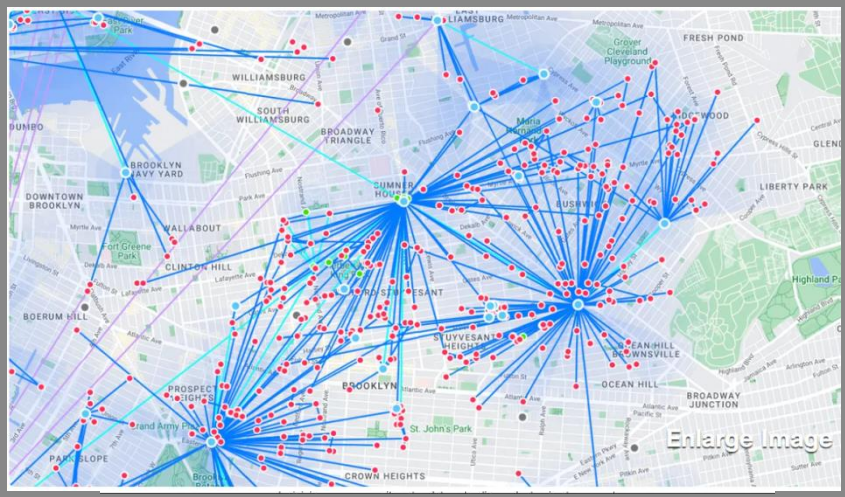
Cosmolocalism

- Values of reciprocity and self-organization

Essence of the digital commons: the global community that is being shaped around information, practices and methods which have been generated from local experiences of actual persons and then shared online for everyone.

Free Internet initiatives:





II. What is a makerspace and how it operates.

Makerspaces

- A makerspace is a community-run physical place where people can utilize local manufacturing technologies.
- Exercise community-based forms of governance; and second, to utilize local manufacturing technologies.
- They acquire their tools by joint contributions from their community, provide access to their machinery and resources and use inclusive forms of decision-making to manage their shared assets.

In all, makerspaces should not be viewed merely as experimentation sites with local manufacturing technologies but as places where people are experimenting with new ideas about the relationships amongst corporations, designers, and consumers. They are places where the distinction between designers and users is bridged. In makerspaces, everyone becomes a stakeholder, a user and a designer of technologies.

III. Digital Commons and the Political

The political character of digital commons

I approach the political essence of the digital commons through the politics of technology developed by Andrew Feenberg.

The political character of digital commons

- The commons create different social values and meaning.
- Such values can culminate in changing the technical code and be translated into technical specifications.

The political character of digital commons

Feenberg's theory aims at opening up the design process of technologies to include a variety of interests by translating participants' values within the technical code in a manner that is not biased towards only the interests of companies and the capital. In other words, he aims at democratizing technology and bringing about an alternative modernity through alternative technological infrastructures designed by more stakeholders.

Digital commons reflect Feenberg's aim of democratizing technology, since they can generate values, meanings and innovative technologies that reflect the interests and values of commoners.

Conclusion

- In Makerspaces, digital commons artifacts can be produced based on the cosmolocal community model.
- Such spaces can be rendered the center of the technological subversion and democratization Feenberg calls for.
- There, not only technology is subverted and democratized once, but moreover such processes acquire duration and continuity. The important is not the mere subversion of technology, that might happen only once in a while, but the potential for continuity through the shaping of a community around the commons technologies.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION