Maintaining spirit in collaborative communities:

Event atmospheres as participation architecture for affective commoning

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OUTLINE

1.

Phenomenon and research question

2.

Contribution

3.

Future work & questions

Affects in Decentralized & Distributed Organizing

- Atmospheres as affective commons in collaborative communities (e.g. open innovation platforms, peer production communities, creative hubs)

- Identify practices and qualities which influence (sustain/deplete) the "communitarian spirit"

- Focus on role played by F2F events

Multi-case qualitative approach: case studies

	Drupal	*Enspiral*	*Amara On Demand*
Amount of participants	1.4 million	150-300	Approximately 900 active linguists
Communitarian project	Commons-Based Peer Production community supporting a FLOSS platform	Entrepreneurial social impact network, open cooperative	Crowdsourcing community providing paid on-demand subtitling and captioning services
Communitarian scope	Global	Local/Global	Global
Main platform of collaboration	drupal.org	loomio.org/Slack channels	amara.org
Frequency of events	Very significant	Significant	Very low
Types of F2F events	Very diverse: hundreds of monthly local events, tens of annual national events and two international annual conferences	Diverse: daily interaction during co-working, regular meetups, and bi-annual retreats	Scarce and highly sporadic: organized by project managers when travelling

Research Question

How do atmospheres conducive to vibrant collaboration emerge and relate to each other? How do they effectuate different ways of working that maintain a flourishing affective commons?

Atmospheres and affective commons

How can we conceptualize this spirit, vibe, buzz, or feeling of something 'larger' than oneself?

- 'Affective commons' (Waters-Lynch and Duff, 2021): spirit as a pooled affective resource composed of atmospheres (spatial-aesthetic lens, humans as embodied thinking-feeling beings)
- 'Tuned spaces' (Böhme, 1993): atmospheres bring affects, bodies, spaces and ideas in vibration and resonance, altering the affective tone
- Atmospheres transform the potential of how people can sense and act together - 'action-potential' not actual agencies
- Medium between object and subject that enables perception: organization of perceptual awareness, habituation to co-subjective moods, and affective intensities

Findings: Atmospheric qualities and inherent tensions

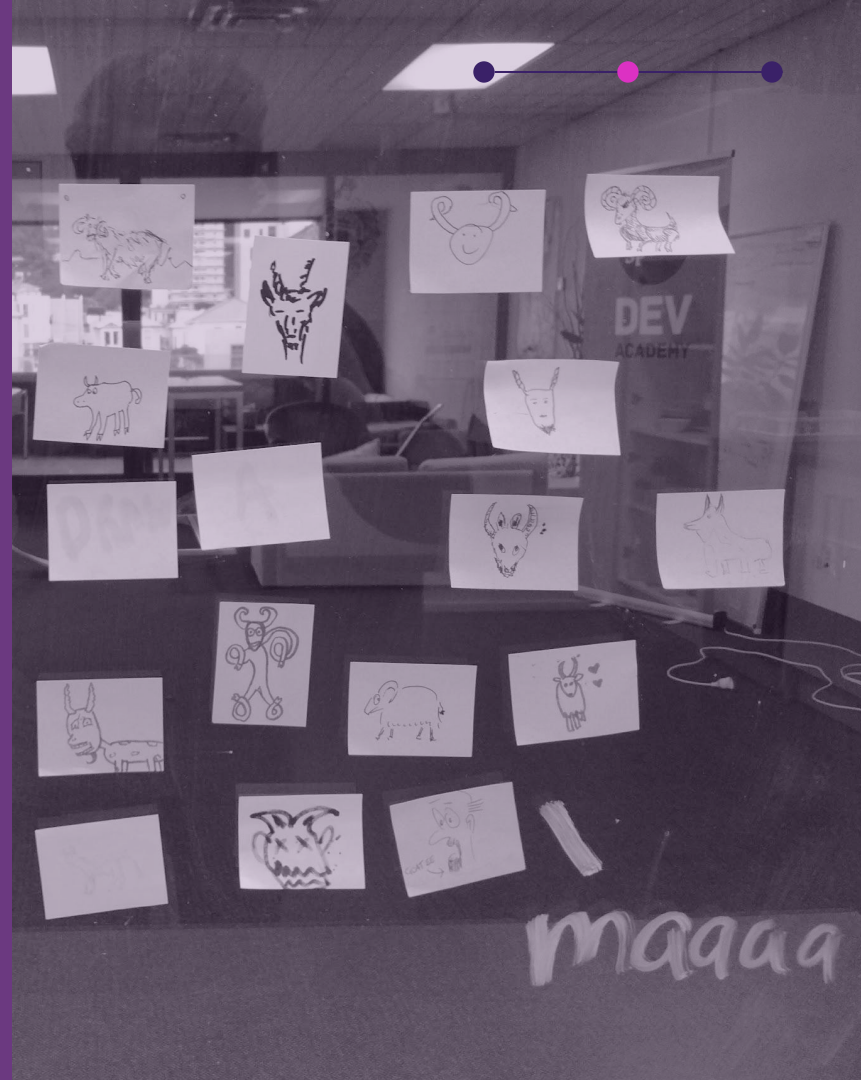| Atmosphere	Togetherness	Mutuality	Dissonance
Event activities	- Creating social intimacy - Affirming shared purpose	- Inviting diverse contribution - Fostering interdependence	- Collective reflection - Conflict transformation
Tension	Homogeneity-difference	Contribution-benefit	Confrontation-avoidance
Affirmative relational consequences	Generating trust across difference, inspiration, authenticity	Recognizing value diversity, gentle reciprocity, relationality	Facing emergent inequalities, fostering emotional competence & care
Challenging relational consequences	In-group/out-group dynamics, groupthink, tacit norms & power structures	Overwork, freeriding, people leaving	Endless meetings, ruptures, torn relationships

Contribution

1. Show how **affect** becomes communal, how it folds together with emotions and sensations to function **as a pooled resource**.

> Encounter of human and non-human bodies, objects, affects and ideas **→** atmospheric qualities **→** autonomy, belonging, passion, potentiality for something practical to happen

2. Show how an **ethics of shared corporeal concerns** can prepare a recharging climate for affective commons.

> Experience of vulnerability, purpose, participation & interdependence at events **→** atmospheric qualities **→** pathways of feeling **→** embodied ethical action

Feedback & Questions

1. Do you know any literature that gives methodological advice on how to use several ethnographic case studies in one paper?

2. Are you aware of any good empirical studies of affective atmospheres?

3. From a phenomenological point of view, how are atmospheres composed and and how do they interact with our thinking-feeling apparatus?

THANKS!