Case studies for Design Informatics 1
Tutorial 4: Responsible Innovation 2

In this tutorial, we will use the analytic tools of Responsible Innovation (RI) to explore the crowdfunding platform, Patreon, which will also help you critically approach your chosen technology for CW1.2. For this tutorial, you will mostly be working in a small group of 3-4 students through a number of structured activities.

As always, the session will start by taking attendance. The Tutor will add a discussion thread to the TEAMS chat for your group, where you can answer a simple question: Have you ever crowdfunded anything before – and if so, what's the best, worst, or most unusual thing you've crowdfunded?

https://miro.com/welcomeonboard/Y2Uzc2MxakpjSElHcFpCaTBYQ1Y5Y3RPQ1BXb0p0bXRuVW0zWWtRZGh2RTJHOTR3eEprbGtyZ3k0MGRRjeG11dHwzNDU4NzY0NTY2NDU5NjM4NTk1fDI=?share_link_id=720186943968

Again, we will make use of the Responsible Innovation prompt cards, on the Miro board linked above. In the tutorial, you'll be asked in your groups to do some searches and find out about Patreon – what it's main innovations and selling points are

As a reminder, the cards give prompts about the potential uses, misuses, benefits, and harms of innovation and research based on four key activities (*AREA: Anticipate*, *Reflect*, *Engage*, and *Act*), each with four focuses (*4 P's: Purpose*, *Product*, *People*, and *Processes*). We took some time to get familiar with the cards last week, but if you were absent, please ask your group-mates to fill you in.

Activity 1: Patreon (15 minutes)

The first task for this tutorial is to do a little research in your groups into Patreon. If you are a regular user of the site these starting questions may be things you already know – in which case, bring your group-mates up to speed, or come up with your own follow-up questions:

- What is crowdfunding? What was innovative about the crowdfunding model, and what had precedent?
- Why was Patreon founded? What, if anything, did it do that was innovative?

Place RI cards that you think are relevant in the Miro board quadrant for this task, along with stickies with your thoughts and links. Some examples of questions from the cards

- **Intention** – what was the intention behind Patreon? Who started it, and why? What value does it create
- **People Affected –** Who are the key stakeholders?
- **Potential conflicts -** Where might they come into conflict?

Feel free to expand on these.

Activity 2: Patreon Creators (15 minutes)

Obviously, two of the key stakeholder groups are the creators and subscribers on Patreon. Go on Patreon and search for a creator you think is doing something unique and interesting – post links and discuss in the quadrant.

- Are they doing anything that strikes you as novel or innovative?
- Based on the information they provide, how significant an income stream do you think Patreon is for them?
- Would they be able to do what their do without Patreon

Activity 3: Patreon's Investors and Platform Decay (20 minutes)

Patreon itself, however, is not crowdfunded! So, where did *they* get their funding? Search for news sources or press releases discussing this, and put them with discussions, comments, and relevant cards in the quadrant for this activity.

- **People affected** (again) The investors represent another stakeholder group Patreon. How are they different from the other stakeholders?
- **Stakeholder Involvement** Though the card doesn't really acknowledge imbalances and conflicts between stakeholders

Over the last few years, Patreon have changed their fee-structure and some of their offerings … and a lot of people are mad about this

- How do different stakeholder groups communicate with Patreon's decision makers? In case of conflict, does one group always get its way?
- Some key concepts to define: use academic and internet sources to find definitions and examples (besides Patreon) of these things
  - Monopoly
  - Platforms / the platform economy
  - Lock-in
  - Platform decay

Post what you find, with notes and relevant cards, in the quadrant. What sorts of dynamic gives rise to this? Why are they problems? And…

Activity 4a: Doing better (20 minutes)

What are the solutions? How can this be made better?

Think about what might be done by various actors to solve these problems:

- The Patreon decision makers
- Patreon employees
- Creators
- Users
- Regulators

(Cards that might be relevant: **Shaping the Future**, **Openness**, **Continuous Improvement**)

Activity 4b: Class discussion (10 minutes)

Finally, bring your ideas together with the rest of the class

Wrapping up

Throughout these activities, your tutor will be there to help prompt you as you get stuck. If there is time, at the end of each activity they will quickly review what your group has produced, and share different ideas between groups.