

PUBLIC INTEREST TECH

**= who gets to build critical digital infrastructures
where, with which resources, to whose benefit, at
what expense?**

WHY AM I HERE?

Mostly:

<https://medium.com/@katharina.meyer/von-moonshots-und-prototypen-oder-public-interest-tech-what-goes-up-must-trickle-down-b1c6bbfeda77>

Von Moonshots und Prototypen, oder:
“Public Interest Tech”– What goes up
must trickle down.

Ein Longread.



tldr; “Wir fördern Public Interest Tech” steht auf der Website des Prototype Funds. Was das Weltall mit dem Internet und das Apollo 11 Programm mit dem Prototype Fund zu tun hat. Und warum Innovation kein Wert an sich ist.



Nicht von ungefähr ähneln sich die Umlaufbahn des Sputnik und das Icon des Internet-Explorers.

VERY BRIEF SUMMARY IN KEYWORDS

- 50 years of moonshot only possible bc **of heavy public investment** in space exploration, accompanying innovations and trickle-down effects, as well as PR.
- It's nice that we have all of these fancy technologies like gore-tex jackets and Soylent. At this point in time, what could be the technologies that we need most urgently, are these always achieved through disruption or incremental innovation, who gets to innovate for what purposes and at whose expense, and how could the existing narrative be problematic for society as a whole?

"INNOVATION"

- First of all, meaning of the word is in flux.
- As we know it, it overemphasizes the value of “new things” over maintenance, it is closely connected with intellectual property and the practice of clearing the market and handing over former state responsibilities to the private sector.
- Don't want to preach the Gospel of FOSS too much (since it has its problematic sides, but): innovation culture based on a system of strange&ridiculous patents, “claims matter above everything else” = patents can be weapons&signals.

IMPORTANT TAKE-AWAYS

- What does public interest mean and how do we measure it in regards to impact of an innovation and how much public resources we want to spend on these?
- Also: do you all know Marianna Mazzucato, the Institute for innovation and public purpose and her book “The Entrepreneurial State”? And why does the reporting on current technologies (in opposite to the history of the Internet and DARPA-Net) focus on “geniuses” that don’t pay their taxes and lack real academic oversight and accountability mechanisms in their endeavours instead on people who build f.i. community-networks?

What Makes the iPhone so Smart?

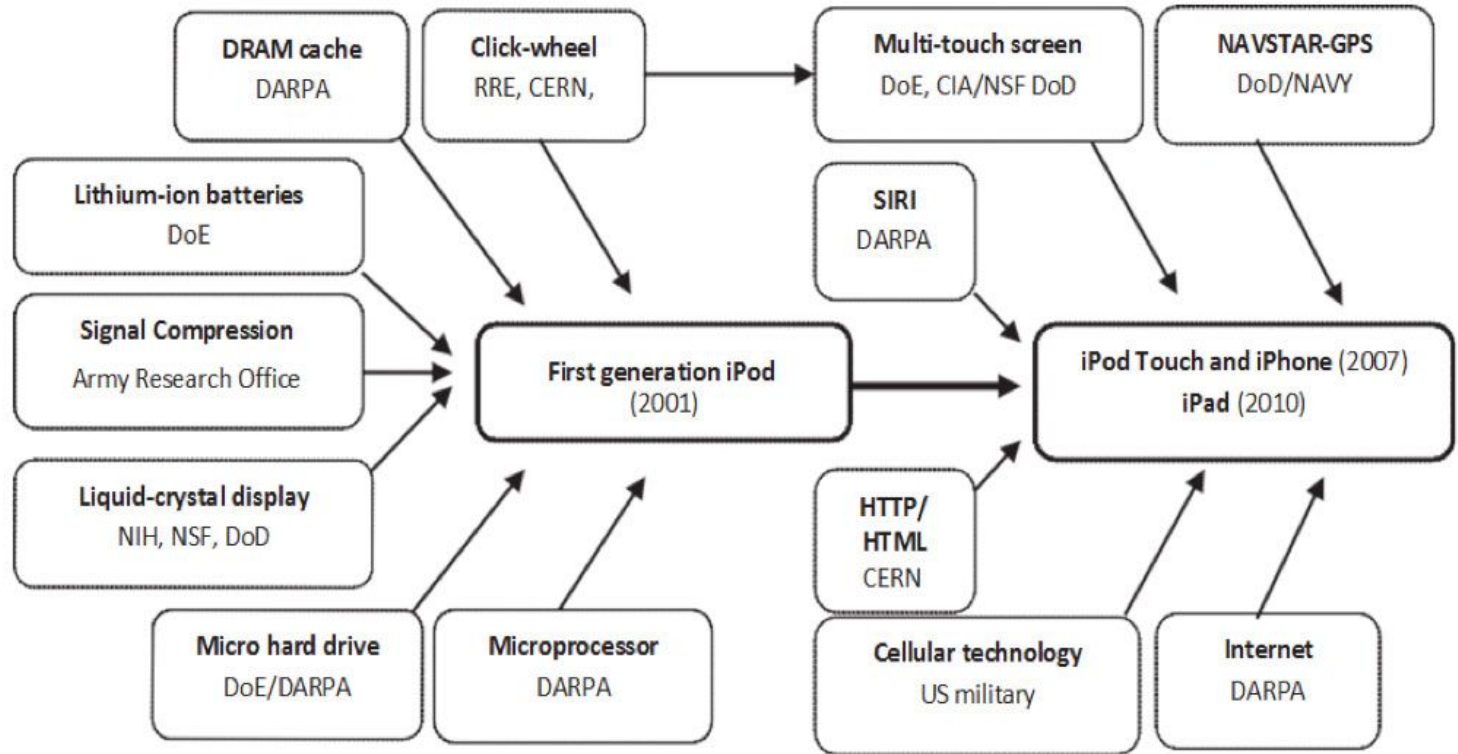


Figure 13 from *The Entrepreneurial State: debunking public vs. private sector myths* (2015, p. 116)

PUBLIC INTEREST TECHNOLOGIES & THEIR COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP WITH INNOVATION

Innovation: who dis?

- Do innovations have to be technology? (Hint: No!)
- Innovation vs. Maintenance
- Peer-production vs. intellectual property
- The concept of affordances: Public Interest/Good vs. “Opportunities for revenue”
- The one vs. the many: what& why is an innovator / entrepreneur / engineer?

WHY AM I INTERESTED IN THIS?

1) Dayjob: Head of Research, Prototype Fund
(prototypefund.de)

- Public funding programme for

FLOSS-Software projects that have a benefit
for society, run by Open Knowledge

Foundation Germany. Was born also because

We identified serious lack of resources

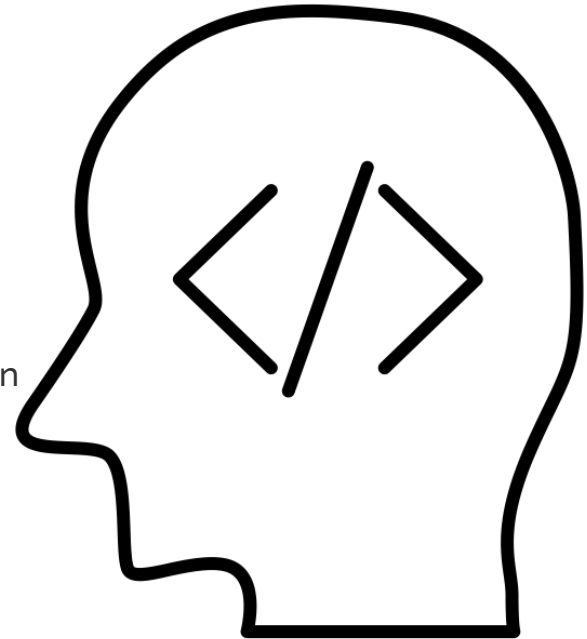
For people offering services that even the state relies on.



Prototype
Fund

2) Project: Implicit Development Environments – project; Ford Foundation (implicit-development.org) (with Elisa Lindinger & Julia Kloiber)

We research the Implicit Development Environments
of digital “open infrastructure” & its maintainers,
especially
Motivations, values, decision-making, inclusion & exclusion
mechanisms and the impact of technical standards.



3) I´VE STUDIED STS, SO I SHOULD BE.

...and you should, too.

Hypothesis 1: The many unintended/negative consequences of technology that we get to witness on a daily basis are also a byproduct of the age of privatization of development&maintenance of innovation and tech infrastructure. R&D situated with companies is bound to initiate other affordances that come with innovations than f.i. Uni labs of community tech, bc.: need to achieve different design goals.

Hypothesis 2: This is not a new problem. But if we don't fix the narratives about innovation & how we finance and organize R&D into emergent technologies; the urgent need of inclusion of expertise and needs of civil society, we waste (natural.. ect.) resources, nourish problematic technical capabilities, driven by revenue (needs) rather than actual societal challenges and reinforce images of "innovators" and diminish accountability mechanisms and access to critical infrastructure.

Hypothesis 3: **Windows of opportunity for states (& maybe third sector)**

- Budget accordingly to the real cost of technologies and their implementation, recreate narratives about what innovation is, reallocate access to knowledge and resources to include (technical) communities & education biographies outside of the box (but don't think you can "fix" that in universities, our average dev starts age 14).
- Rethink your approach to procurement & Innovation policy/ funding
- Tax and fine GAFAM (trustable tech & anti-trust policy goes well together)

EXISTING COOL INITIATIVE (BY DOTEVERYONE)

TECHTRANSFORMED

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BE A
RESPONSIBLE
INNOVATOR



TAKEAWAYS

- Against commodification of technologies, pro Commons.
- Against rockstars, pro teamwork: peer production and transparency instead of inventions that can be monopolized & sold. No alienation of innovation from communal practises.
- Against ethical frameworks, pro regulation.
- Critical digital infrastructure should be seen and financed as modern “roads&bridges” - taxes should be used to maintain them, keep them secure, open, available.
- Learn from the narrative of how microwaves gradiently became from a symbol of progress and convenience to a danger to health and vitamins.

OPEN QUESTIONS (...AT LEAST FOR ME)

- What could be the metrics of “public interest” be?
- What practices and programs, laws can help implement/safeguard this framework, who are the stakeholders?
- Where shouldn't the state be involved and how do we secure enough other R&D funds that come without ties?
- How do we get away from the “one solution that fits all”-idea and back to decentralization of services.
- Should i write a PhD about this?
- **WHAT ARE YOUR QUESTIONS ; EXPERIENCES; IDEAS?**

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST: SHAMELESS ADVERTISEMENT PLUG

APPLY!



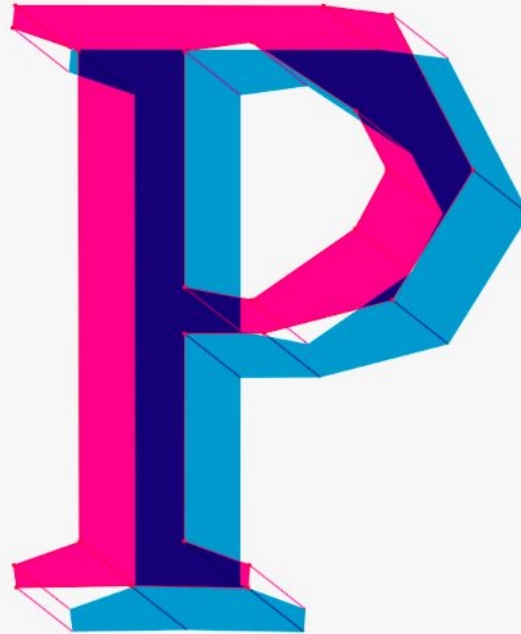
Jetzt bewerben! Runde 7,

Engineering Trust:

Vertrauen bauen

läuft bis einschliesslich **30. September 2019**.

Mehr Informationen zum Thema findet ihr unten auf der Seite, in diesem **Blogpost** und in unserem **Begleitforschungsreport**.



POSSIBLE TOPICS: OSINT, SECURITY, TRANSPARENCY-TOOLS

- *Wie sieht eine zeitgemäße digitale Entsprechung von Verbraucherschutz aus?*
- *Müssen und wollen wir uns neue Mechanismen überlegen, um die digitale Infrastruktur unserer Gesellschaft weiter für Deliberation, Information und Kommunikation nutzen zu können?*
- *In welchen Gebieten und zu welchem Preis bieten Technologien Potenziale für erweiterte gesellschaftliche Teilhabe und Transparenz?*

Wir freuen uns auf eure Bewerbungen über den Bewerbungsbutton oben rechts bis zum **30. September 2019**