Reputation and Quality Indicators to improve Community Governance

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Extended Abstract:

Commons-based peer-production (CBPP) is an alternative model of production based on collaboration and cooperation amongst peers contributing to a common output. It is found in scientific production and artistic creation, as well as in the development of free/open source software or Wikipedia. Yet, to the extent that it operates outside of the market economy, we cannot rely on traditional market mechanisms (such as pricing) to estimate the value of CBPP.

We present here a system that might resolve some of the most recurrent problems encountered within CBPP communities. Sabir aims to provide a way for both communities and contributors to express gratitude to each other by means of a "universal thanks".

The system is composed of three layers:

(1) Community value
A mechanism to understand the **social value** – as opposed to market value – **of CBPP communities**. This comprises:
  • a gratitude-based mechanism for CBPP communities to express gratitude and appreciation to one another, by establishing the relationships and dependencies that subsist amongst them: e.g. Wikipedia appreciates Creative Commons for providing Wikipedia's license.

  • a way for community participants to express gratitude to the communities that they appreciate the most.

(2) Contributors value
A **"universal thanks" mechanism** as an expression of collective gratitude, identifying the **value generated by individuals contributing to the Commons** and evaluating it through a common denominator of value. The universal thanks

is a non-transferable asset, closer to gratitude than payment, closer to barnstar/ badges/points than currency.

Contributors value involves two types of reputation:

- Contribution-based reputation: participants to a CBPP community may "thank" other participant(s) for a specific contribution or performed task, thus increasing their recognition within the community.

- Appreciation-based reputation: participants also have a reputation based on the quality of the contributions they thanked, where the quality of a contribution depends on both its author and the reputation of the participants that appreciate it.

This system allows for community participants to be appreciated both for their contributions and the quality of their thanks. Given the value of the community within the whole ecosystem (as established in layer 1) and the number of thanks distributed within that community, we may "normalize" the gratitude received by every participant in every community, thereby establishing a universal way of acknowledging each participant's contribution to the Commons.

(3) Interfacing with the market

These indicators constitute a universal indicator of value, akin to price in the market system, which acts as a common denominator amongst the CBPP ecosystem, thus market actors can easily understand it. The system establishes an **interface between the market and the CBPP ecosystem so that the two can interact** and benefit from one another, without incurring the risk of mutual contamination. It allows market (or public) entities to provide resources to commoners whose contributions are highly appreciated.

In face of the current proliferation of evaluation systems, this provides an interoperable system capable of integrating a multiplicity of customized measurement systems, without imposing a 'dominant model'. Besides, as opposed to traditional (mainstream) value indicators, Sabir focuses on qualitative evaluation based on gratitude, rather than standardized quantitative assessment. Overall, this represents a first step for a transitions towards a more Commons-based society by making it make easier and more sustainable for people to contribute to the Commons, even for those who cannot typically afford to participate, due to lack of resources.