Nerd Play: Puzzle Hunting as Participatory
Knowledge Creation

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Abstract: In a world of ever-evolving networks, both social and digital, there is an overwhelming amount of information regarding networked space and the construction of knowledge within that space. In studying the utilization of technology in these collaborative environments what remains interesting is not necessarily the technology itself but the way that individuals and organizations utilize technology, and how the technology transforms the individuals and organizations. Until recently, hierarchical structures were necessary for organizations to communicate and to perform tasks and achieve goals with relative ease. Now, through the utilization of specific technologies, organizations cannot only decide on different organizational dynamics, but the entire organization itself can be dispersed rather than within close proximity as was the obvious case. Decentralization of power within a team, while not unheard of, was, as we all know, an uncommon occurrence until recent years. Pierre Lévy's Collective Intelligence elucidates the goal of this type of team is not just to "win" at their game, but additionally it is the re-invention of team dynamic for better collaboration. This paper investigates Team Codex's organization in competing at the MIT Mystery hunt to better understand Knowledge Communities and how a team in a decentralized environment has excelled at a game with ever-changing rules.

Keywords: Game Theory, Organization, Decentralization, Knowledge Community

I N A WORLD of ever-evolving social and digital networks, there is an overwhelming amount of information regarding networked space and the construction of knowledge within that space. We collaborate in classrooms or businesses all the time in many different ways, utilizing a myriad of tools of varying technological levels, from blackboards to wikis, and everything in between.

In studying the utilization of technology in these collaborative environments what remains interesting is not necessarily the technology itself, but the way individuals and organizations utilize technology, and how the technology becomes a catalyst to transform both the individuals and organizations in which they participate. Until recently, hierarchical structures were necessary for organizations to communicate and to perform tasks and achieve goals with relative ease. Now, through the utilization of specific technologies, organizations cannot only use different organizational dynamics, but the entire organization can be dispersed rather than function within close proximity. Of course, technology has advanced far more than the simplistic understanding of bridging distances between distant locations. In recent years, decentralization of power within an organization, has taken on new meaning. Newer technologies allow new avenues for agency while still allowing for the rapid decision making that is necessary in a fast-paced environment.

It is important to note that new technologies, although they allow certain possibilities to arise that otherwise might not have been feasible, only amplify the range of possibilities

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available in the first place.[1] What is unique about this phenomenon is not, as some have suggested, the creation of new possibilities, but the act of discovering and utilizing new possibilities by those who might never have uncovered those possibilities.

Pierre Lévy's *Collective Intelligence*, albeit rather utopian, laid out a particular set of encounters toward the emergence of these types of communities that include: "listening, expression, decision-making, evaluation, organization, connection," creating a "fully transparent market for ideas, arguments, projects, initiatives, expertise, and resources, one which pertinent connections are established as quickly as possible."[2]

This investigation into the workings of knowledge communities remains indebted to Lévy's work, focusing on the intention of the human community. Technology, utilized in the way I will elucidate, does not function as an extra-human force, but merely as an emergence of human possibility, redefining our interactions, rather than seeing technology as something we internalize, to realize something within ourselves rather than expressed through external augmentation.

Through an investigation of a community focused on the creation of the production of ideas, where "pertinent connections are established as quickly as possible," I will attempt to interpret Lévy's work as practical, applied theory. Rather than a utopian no-place, Levy's theory will find a place in exemplifying the inner workings of a team of puzzle solving volunteers, focused on improving collaboration for knowledge production.

Puzzle Solving and Puzzle Hunting

It may be fair to say that a majority of human effort deals in one way or another with problem solving. Whether a large problem such as an economic crisis or a small problem such as finding what to eat for dinner, a majority of our time is spent in pursuit of solutions to our current situation. The Author of *The Electronic Eye*, David Lyon, points out "modern societies are almost by definition preoccupied with problem-solving."[3] The race for better, faster, and cheaper means of production of knowledge is rooted in the notion of the solution. The answer to a problem that arises, specifically a singular answer, serves as the focus of the majority of human mind labor. (This isn't to say that multiple solutions aren't put into play, but simply to maintain that the way in which we problem solve is by singularizing a particular answer to a particular problem).

A particularly interesting problem solving phenomena takes place yearly at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, known as the MIT Puzzle Hunt. Over 1000 people swarm the campus annually for a 72-hour straight puzzle-solving competition. Some of the teams include over 50 people, including the team that I will describe, Team Codex.

Within the hunt, each of the participating teams occupies a separate space with Internet access, with instructions passed onto the teams from "HQ" (the team running the hunt). These instructions arrive in various forms: paper, board games, Internet-based puzzles, or any other array of puzzles. The entire hunt is organized in a grand theme or narrative (some

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[1] David Lyon, *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1994)

[2] Pierre Lévy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*. Translated by Robert Bononno, (Cambridge: Perseus Books, 1999), 75

[3] David Lyon, *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 162

recent hunts have been a whodunit murder mystery, escapades through hell, and escape from a fictional universe) and the goal of the puzzle hunt is always to find a hidden coin.

The basic structure of the hunt is that teams solve puzzles, which then link into meta-puzzles, and those meta-puzzles link into a meta-meta, which then leads to a run-around puzzle and then, to the coin. There are usually no instructions (or if there are, they are meant to mislead or deceive) on either how to solve the puzzles or how to order and arrange the meta puzzles. There are often over 100 puzzles in the recent Mystery Hunts, and each puzzle takes many person-hours to solve. Suffice to say, the Mystery Hunt is an incredibly complex event that takes an amazing amount of effort to complete (or in which to compete).

The teams that compete in the puzzle hunt come together because the hunt is impossible without an immense contribution of brainpower, as these puzzles are designed for collaboration (due to the extreme complexity and amount of data collection involved) However, team members are volunteers – friends and strangers alike, collaborating to solve puzzles in an efficient manner. These communities of puzzle solving individuals must quickly form around particular objectives, working out organizational issues on the fly, as there is little time to debate technique or protocol.

Types of Communities

In organized communities, there are a myriad of options that define roles and responsibilities of the community members in regard to agency. The types of structure these communities can take are dictatorial / hierarchical, consensus, democratic / parliamentary, wiki-ocracy, and open-source.[4] These structural formations of community offer specific advantages and disadvantages to knowledge communities. Although the first three types of communities are common sense, the latter two types of communities are often misunderstood.

The dictatorial / hierarchical community is advantageous above all the others for decision-making speed. Although this community doesn't foster as much of an inclusive spirit as the others, leaving many members completely left out of the decision-making processes, the lack of organizational issues and the speed at which decisions regarding direction is far greater than all the others.

Consensus-style communities are advantageous for their inclusive dialogic technique of decision-making. Although majority may rule, every member has veto power, potentially slowing all decision-making to a standstill until a solution can be made. This style of community, although rich in participation, could potentially be slower than all others as far as mobility of the community in the face of dilemmas.

Democratic / Parliamentary style communities balance out the potentially hazardous decision-making deadlock of the consensus model. However, democratic communities are still slow moving in comparison to a dictatorial style community, although they foster a far greater input and decision-making transparency.

Contrary to popular belief, a wiki is not a democrocratic entity. A wiki works through a technology that allows changes to be made to the information by any member of the community. Although many wiki pages are ripe with discussion on potential changes, the changes

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[4] These distinctions are taken from a short-session at Barcamp Boston 4, an un-conference dedicated to technology (more information at http://www.barcampboston.org). The discussion oriented around a pragmatic approach toward community building in an online environment.

made may or may not represent a majority of the community members. Therefore, a wiki-ocracy, or wiki-style community, is a de facto consensus community, assuming consensus of the community if any change isn't made. This type of community is flexible for quick-decision making and long term debate, allowing for decisions to be made in a moment's notice when necessary. This type of community also allows for a great number of voices to be heard, if participants wish to be heard. However, the community will presuppose consensus by the members that do not raise voice in objection to decisions made (a study on Wikipedia found that 73.4 percent of all edits were made by two percent of the users).[5] Effectively, the wiki-based community is a consensus community that does not need to wait for the rest of the community to collaborate, and moves forward with decisions when decisions are needed. However, if challenged effectively, there is still a possibility of some decisions being held up indefinitely (just search Wikipedia for any charged topic and visit the discussion page).

Finally, the open-source community is probably the most misunderstood type of community (outside actual open-source communities, that is). The open-source community offers a high level of community participation while retaining the speed of a dictatorial community's decision making by employing a gatekeeper as the decision maker. The key difference between an open-source community is that the gatekeeper remains, for lack of a better word, 'in power' through the will of the community. If upset with the gatekeeper, the community may depose the gatekeeper at any time, either reformulating the community or simply electing another gatekeeper.

The latter two community models are most appropriate for an investigation of the puzzle hunt, and Team Codex. The utilization of the de facto consensus, wiki-based community, linked with supervised mass participatory culture open-source model in Team Codex creates a unique environment for problem-solving on a massive scale. Furthermore, this particular intersection of structures allows for incredible transparency, allowing input at every step of the way.

Knowledge Communities and Collective Intelligence

Pierre Lévy's *Collective Intelligence* outlines the notion of knowledge creation in a collaborative environment. Published in 1999, two years before the launch of Wikipedia, Lévy's work seems to predict some of the technologies and usages of technologies in the creation of knowledge in the coming years.

Rather than what is typically seen in a knowledge community, a directed and monitored engagement, Lévy's notion of Collective Intelligence (CI) focused on a more organic alliance of mindwork, opening up possibility for new ways of thinking and collaboration.

> Collective intelligence is less concerned with self-control of human communities than with a fundamental letting-go that is capable of altering our very notion of identity and the mechanisms of domination and conflict, lifting restrictions on heretofore banned communications, and effecting the mutual liberation of isolated thoughts.[6]

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[5] Lawrence Lessig. *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 158

[6] Pierre Lévy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*. Translated by Robert Bononno, (Cambridge: Perseus Books, 1999), xxviii

Obviously, Lévy is concerned with the characteristics of possibility and potential in regards to communication and knowledge creation, and not on restrictive tendencies of guided processes. Lévy clarifies this concept of opening towards potential further: "The basis and goal of collective intelligence is the mutual recognition and enrichment of individuals rather than the cult of fetishized or hypostatized communities."[7]

Lévy's notion of community describes the community that is in flux, positing directional modes as increasingly "better" but not inferring static understanding. In essence, a community that is constantly engaged in a hermeneutic inquiry towards understanding *itself*, is pure engagement with questioning, a perpetual openness to new understanding. Of course, community self-understanding is not the overt goal of knowledge communities, but it is a by-product or necessary component in the continual struggle for the community itself. What Lévy sets up is a model that looks not at form, but of *intention*, a community with directive that, as he puts it:

> …responds to an ethics of the best rather than a morality of the good. Static, definitive, decontextualized, the good is imposed *a priori*, on top of any existing situation, whereas the best (the best possible) is situated, relative, dynamic and provisional. The good doesn't change; the best is different wherever it is found. The good is opposed to evil; it is exclusionary.[8]

Lévy's community-model reverses the notion of community structure, formulating structure in response to the needs of the community.

Although *Collective Intelligence* leans heavily toward an impossible utopian vision, Lévy states an important caveat: "[this] does not imply a sovereign people, one that is reified, fetishized, attached to a territory, identified by soil or blood, but a strong people, one perpetually engaged in a process of self-knowing and self-creation, a people in labor, a people yet to come."[9] Lévy's comment, *to come,* points us in the appropriate direction for exploring *what this community might look like*, rather than thinking of this as a static community that is fixated on a goal, but rather, a community continually occupied in improving, testing, and reformulating their interactions to better itself.

Team Codex

Team Codex is one of the numerous teams that participate yearly in the MIT Mystery Hunt. A volunteer group of over 50 on-site individuals, with many remote, off-site members that collaborate through digital-space only, the Team spends roughly 72 hours a year together solving some of the most complex puzzles in the world. The sheer magnitude of the team's efforts along with the incredible efficiency of organizing what is sometimes merely a set of strangers with a common purpose, makes this team an interesting example of a Knowledge Community.

Team Codex is organized roughly as a wiki-based community, with some aspects of open-source. There are a few "leaders" that, to the average member, are indistinguishable from rest of the membership, other than those people who end up performing a majority of the

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[7] Ibid, 13
[8] Ibid 250
[9] Ibid 89

necessary 'work' to maintain the team's operation. These are the open-source community 'gatekeepers,' the maintainers of process, and the instigators of change that take the long-view for the community.

Every process of the group is designed to be fully transparent, opening up the group dynamics to input from all sides via the wiki. This organizational technique allows for deliberation and discussion for months before the actual event, when people are often too busy to pay attention to larger organizational issues.

A couple months before the hunt, the team starts to get prepared for the event, sending out notices to the listserv (group email), informing members to sign up for the hunt and various other necessary messages. Donations for, and of food, are organized; ride-shares are established, and various arrangements are made. If "HQ" releases a missive regarding necessary preparations, they are incorporated into the "to-do list" for the hunt.

The 'gatekeepers' ensure the technology is working 'properly' as they know the entire hunt rests on their ability to run smoothly. Out of the 1000+ people involved in each year's Mystery Hunt, Team Codex has come within hours of winning the hunt on more than one occasion. Every moment counts, and start-up time can easily hurt such a large team, wasting hundreds of person-hours.

Technology Based Collaboration

> What we've found is that simple is best. If it requires instructions, it's probably not going to work. Google spreadsheets became popular because it's easier than editing a wiki. I've posted instructions on how to setup new chat rooms (no chat logging by default on new rooms), [but] it's never been done. We use a simple mailing list for early collaboration, as the hunt gets near we'll get together in a chat room. (Wiki Response by Jeff Jakubowski)

Due to the size of the team (as well as the number of remote participants), an effort on this scale would be virtually impossible without an intricate system to coordinate teams. To assist in coordinating people in real-time, Team Codex implements various technologies.

In a group populated by members with high levels of technical competency, it might seem natural to implement powerful, complex instruments for interaction. Many of the members are not only technophiles, but also programmers, and quite literally speak multiple languages to interact with various technologies. Many types of technologies used in the past have had various degrees of success, but were all replaced by simpler technologies when they became available, as the more complex technologies tended to hinder rather than help the team members and therefore the team itself. Martin Heidegger explains this phenomenon in a way that is helpful to understanding the general consensus of the usage of technology through the concepts of ready-to-hand (something "works" for the task we wish to use it for without problem) and present-at-hand (something is "there" but it is "broken" to us, unusable for our intended task):

> When we notice what is un-ready-to-hand, that which is ready-to-hand enters the mode of *obtrusiveness*. The more urgently we need what is missing, and the more authentically it is encountered in its un-readiness-to-hand, all the more obtrusive does that which is ready-to-hand become -- so much so, indeed, that it seems to lose its character of

readiness-to-hand. It reveals itself as something just present-at-hand and no more, which cannot be budged without the thing that is missing. The helpless way in which we stand before it is a deficient mode of concern, and as such it uncovers the Being-just-present-at-hand-and-no-more of something ready-to-hand.[10]

Although his writing is not known for being ready-to-hand itself, Heidegger makes an important point in that not only does the tool lose the properties of tool-ness, but it becomes 'obtrusive' to us, merely junk that gets in the way of our intended task. The tool, when recognized as junk by the member of the community, becomes obstructive to the goal of the member, impeding the community by impeding the member(s).

Team Codex's technological implementations have not always gone smoothly. Previous years have used member edited wiki pages, which are now set up beforehand to be auto-populated by other more transparent technologies (such as Google Spreadsheets and 'bots' within Jabber Chat). With little time for learning curve, the members gather and must be ready to start 'working' within a few hours of arrival (and sometimes they expect to start working within a few minutes). Aside from the necessary security measures of entering the access codes for the wireless network, accessing the wiki, signing up and in to the chat room, and signing into Google, there is now, little that the average member needs to do to begin puzzling. For the average member on Team Codex, these are simple tasks, designed to be as easy as using a key to unlock a door. These technologies are transparent; one types into a box, and words appear. Other than the occasional mathematical code in Google Spreadsheets (which is similar to utilizing Microsoft Excel), there is little outside the average computer user's experience of point-and-click, to begin collaboration.

There are three main technologies that Team Codex utilizes to assist collaboration (aside from the obvious networked computers and cell phones). First, the team utilizes a wiki to coordinate major events and create a hub of information for the entire hunt. This wiki is populated beforehand by the 'gatekeeper', with little collaboration other than to sign up for various activities (signing up for the hunt itself or voting on types of pizza for dinner during the hunt). The wiki acts as a central repository of information, announcing specific events, displaying chat transcripts, and providing links to Google Spreadsheets.

The second technology that Team Codex uses is the Jabber Chat client, a set of chat rooms for discussion with others on various puzzles. Each puzzle has a chat room, and there is a main room for larger announcements and bigger-picture discussions. The chat client employs a 'bot' that populates certain parts of the wiki when prompted, and stores the chat log so that each member can go through and re-read all of the chat log rather than asking obvious questions and hindering other members when trying to catch up.

Third and finally, Team Codex relies more than anything on Google Spreadsheets. With puzzles that often require dozens of person-hours to solve due to excessive amounts of research, it would be nearly impossible to collaborate without a spreadsheet that allowed multiple people to access all at once in real-time. Google Spreadsheets allows members to input data on the same or different, sheets, to create a repository of data that is often needed to even begin many puzzles.

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[10] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 103

Google spreadsheets are great. For puzzles that can be parallelized, it allows many people at once to work on a puzzle. It also allows everyone who's working on the puzzle to see the progress in real time. For people who come to a puzzle later, the chat logging lets them see what people were thinking. Google sheets are also better, again because they are simple. Everyone can click in a cell and edit a spreadsheet. The wiki language presents a challenge, in part I think because it's foreign to so many people, where the spreadsheet is familiar… Seeing ten people working on a spreadsheet, simultaneously filling in items is pretty cool, and not something that could be done with pencil and paper. (Wiki Response by Jeff Jakubowski and Andrew Mosalik)

What becomes increasingly obvious is that where "electronic technologies have augmented and amplified"[11] the member's endeavors, technology "works". When the technology tries to act as anything but a passive amplification, when it needs additional input from the user to provide function, the technology becomes conspicuous, obtrusive, and an obstruction in the way of achieving the intended result.

Participatory Culture

[The leaders of the group] really try not to tell people to do things. It's more along the line of suggestions. (Wiki Response by Jeff Jakubowski)

This community structure is a model to regulate interaction in a manner that expands the ability to produce knowledge. This is part of what Alexander Galloway referred to as 'protocol,' "a technique for achieving voluntary regulation within a contingent environment."[12] I refer to it here with an eye toward this volunteer organization, which functions without violent or tyrannical imposition, as it imposes its own protocological methods, regulating the interactions of its constituency self-reflexively. Galloway's notion of protocol is specific here, as it "does not produce or casually effect objects, but rather is a structuring agent that appears as the result of a set of object dispositions."[13] These "object dispositions" are of concern here, as the environment is voluntarily regulated as a *result of* the choices made or the inherent disposition of the *objects* or, as they can be called, *members* of that set. Similar to the notion of hegemony, only the reversal of power – regulation spawns not from imposition of rule, but from the intentions of the members of the organization. Take driving to work, on a road that is under construction, for example. You can either spend extra time and effort (and possibly damage your car) or you can find a different path to reach your goal. Applying this model to the social experience of puzzle solving ends up with a set of interactions that influence decision-making and possibility of choice in a given instance.

Lawrence Lessig points out that, contrary to his previous statements in *Code*, regulation is often a hindrance in these types of communities, and can even be downright detrimental

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[11] David Lyon, *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 162

[12] Alexander Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 7.

[13] Ibid, 74

to the evolution and success of community.[14] However, this is a different notion of regulation than of imposition. It is self-regulation that is implemented reflexively, a product of the social interactions and the current goals of the community. This "freedom-from-rule" is still freedom, as it releases the members and the community from a tyrannical organizational structure. However, all systems have structure, whether imposed externally or whether they arise organically within the community.

Team Codex takes a page from Wikipedia's playbook in their lack of structure, but requires a few simple rules. Additionally, like Wikipedia "its contributors are motivated not by money, but by the fun or joy in what they do," the members "find that joy because the result is something valuable"[15] for the community. "These are volunteers doing as they like. It just turns out that when you invite the world to participate, there are enough volunteers in a range of categories of work to make the whole thing function quite well."[16] Lessig's observations about participation on Wikipedia mirror that of Team Codex, that this is something that *people want to do* and all that is necessary is to *help it happen*.

There is a unique satisfaction on being part of something, whether it be cheering on the team or being part of the team. Participants in larger groups can share in the successes and feel responsible for the team.

> I think, in a sense, it's actually the 'collaborative' aspect that draws me in. I can actually work with three or four different [groups] simultaneously on different puzzles, and it's always a thrill when someone gets that "aha" moment. Too, the "aha" is almost always the result of some group brainstorming, where someone tries a particular tack, and someone *else* recognizes a pattern that the first person probably wouldn't have seen. I think the strength of Codex is that the setup allows people ("me," in this case) to fluidly move from puzzle to puzzle, often multitasking on a couple cold puzzles and a couple hot ones at the same time. (Wiki Response by Andrew Moskalik)

This participatory culture engages members to enjoy being part of something not necessarily "bigger than them" but as something that they feel responsible for and included within. From the open, protocological structuring of interactions that arise organically through member participation, to the technological assistance in creating simple collaborative environments, possibility opens for community to thrive and create within.

When the Technology Fades Away

There are many applications to these techniques for collaboration in a problem-solving environment, and the community membership is nearly limitless in the types of Knowledge Communities that arise in this manner. Aside from the obvious engineering, systems processes, and programming environments, the methods employed by Team Codex to instigate a fast-paced, highly participatory culture could also be helpful in emergency / crisis management. With the low learning curve, instant start-up, and online collaboration, this method of

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[14] Lawrence Lessig. *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 281
[15] Ibid, 162
[16] Ibid, 159

problem-solving could easily be implemented for volunteer-based emergency / crisis management groups, allowing a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness.

The dynamic that Team Codex employs sets up the possibility of collective consciousness, the system of the "better" in relation. Voices can be heard if they want to be, and consensus is created through swift decisions while allowing for a new "better" at any time. However, it is not the technology that creates this, it is merely a product of the interaction with the technology. Social decision-making processes, as identified earlier, are merely enhanced through the application of technology – the possibility of Google Spreadsheets was within the pen and paper, but magnified; the possibility of the wiki was within the chalk board, but magnified. What occurs through the application is the production of something else other than just the creation of knowledge, something that in turn helps to better produce that knowledge. This production is a different type of production, a different type of labor, than that of our world economy. However, it is still an economy that is in production, not only that just of knowledge, but as Lévy puts it "that which can never be fully automated, on that which is irreducible: the production of the social bond, the relational ."[17]

The production of the social bond is precisely Lévy's point in *Collective Intelligence*, the community that re-produces itself in the production of knowledge – not just a re-production, but a re-invention, with a focus on the *to come* of the future and not just the future present.[18] To put it in concrete terms for Team Codex, the community that tries to *solve puzzles* better together, when focused on the creation of *community*, will solve puzzles better *together*, and in solving puzzles better together, they will in turn create a better community, etcetera, to infinity. This is the key to the knowledge community and the notion of *community* as a site of continual growth, or what Giorgio Agamben calls a *community to come*.[19]

Agamben's notion of the community to come closely mirrors that of Derrida's *avenir* and Lévy's community of the future in that they attend to the possibility of multiple futures, rather than a singular future. The possibility of futures arise from this community: it is its direction. The rules, style of governance, or methods of organizing continuously emerge from the members in pursuit of their collective goal, and protocols arise from structure erected via participation within the community. There are multiple ways to solve puzzles, and therefore, the choices these puzzlers make to organize toward puzzle solving form the fabric of the community. With no singular way of solving puzzles, this community evolves through the very presence of community; this community evolves through its action as community. The formulation of this community (puzzle solving) *is* the action of the community (puzzle solving) that in turn re-informs the formation of the community. Rather than merely self-emergent governance, this community is not only self-emergent but also self-evolving in its pursuit of community. As Lévy explains, the economy, the management of this community's 'household', centers on the "production of the social bond," which becomes the ultimate purpose of playing in, and participating in the Mystery Hunt.

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[17] Pierre Lévy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*. Translated by Robert Bononno, (Cambridge: Perseus Books, 1999), 31

[18] I do not have the original French edition that Pierre Lévy wrote, but I suspect the word here is *avenir* rather than *futur*. The distinction is made clear in a few books, but most notably in Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* that *avenir* insinuates an openness toward possibility, rather than something expected. This distinction is similar to the notion of the messianic, as the *to come* is only an orientation, and is never truly expected to arrive.

[19] Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*. Translated by Hardt Michael. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)

About the Author

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A Doctoral Student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in the Department of Communication, Zach McDowell earned a BS and MA at Arizona State University, focusing on Advocacy, Critical Theory, and Philosophy of Communication. His current focus is in the area of advocacy, communication, and collaboration in a digital environment, especially the issues surrounding the Open Source / Free Software Movement, Digital Rights Management, Peer to Peer Sharing, and (Intellectual) Property. A self-described nerd, he uses the term with fondness amongst rising concerns over its use as a debasement.

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