

Extreme Citizen Science blog

UCL'S INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH GROUP ON EXTREME CITIZEN SCIENCE ARTICLES, LEARNING, SOCIAL EVENTS, WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

LERU Summer School – Citizen science and public participation in the digital age

POSTED BY [SOPHEH](#) · JULY 20, 2017 · [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

When the words “Doctoral”, “summer”, and “school” are put together, there is little insight as to what someone might expect from the combination. Myself included, as in my 23 years travelling around the sun, I have never been in a summer school before. Not to mention, a doctoral one. The ad mentioned word combinations like “interdisciplinary research” and “collaborative environment”, as well as “unique professional and personal development opportunities”. Adding this year’s general subject which was “Citizen Science – Nexus between research and public engagement”, I was utterly convinced I should apply. Turns out, it was one of the best decisions I could ever do for reasons I will mention below.

LERU Summer School is an annual event, organised by different LERU members and with different general subject each year. This year the host was the University of Zurich, an amazing university filled with awesome people. By the end of the summer school we had nothing remotely critical to say about the organising of the event. The program was great, everything was punctual and apart from the amazing lectures and workshops we also got to do some hiking, enjoy some fondue with an amazing view and a “citizen science excursion” at a small “astronomy maker space” which was the most adorable and inspiring place for citizen-astronomers of all ages.

The week was split in four main parts. Firstly, we had to get to know each other. After all, we were going to spend a lot of time together for the next few days. When we finally got a vague idea of names and faces, it was time for the main part of why we were there. We used our first morning in a workshop for skill identification, which meant pitching our PhD work in less than 3 minutes to the members of our team and then getting feedback on what they believe are our strong qualities based on what we said. It was challenging to fit everything in a three minute pitch, but it turned out a very good way to get to know each others strengths and what we all do. If it’s one thing that I definitely got better during my time at the summer school, is making people understand what exactly it is that I’m doing. In the afternoon we had some very informative lectures about the history and the ethics of Citizen Science from Bruno Strasser and Effy Vayena respectively. Having so many PhD students in one place, both lectures turned into lively discussions which was very

entertaining to participate and watch. Our first day ended with presentations of various citizen-science projects and a chance to meet and talk with the people who are running them at the University of Zurich over a very nice bbq at the university campus.

Team work and slight exhaustion from TAGnosis HQ

After that, the summer school's focus turned to the "hack day", with one day full of workshops providing us the skills to think "citizen-science" in crowdfunding, improvisation, and writing. By the end of the day we had to either present our ideas for a project and lure people to join our team, or advertise our skills and allow people with ideas to ask for our "expertise". Many amazing ideas were presented, although unfortunately, only 8 projects could make it to the competition.

Trying to create a campaign for a citizen-science project with a newly formed group in less than twenty-four hours is a tricky task. It's not only finding an idea, it's also researching if it already exists, realising if it's doable or not, understanding the need to make this project a "citizen-science" one and not a traditionally "lab-based" project. It's also thinking about ways to engage the people, if you end up deciding citizen science is the way to go. And it's also conveying its' real impact, because doing "Citizen Science" just for the sake of it, is not an option.

My group and I, developed a prototype of a platform for assisting machine learning for medical imagery called "TAGnosis". The idea was that there is so much medical data sitting idle which could be used to develop easier diagnoses and maybe important medical discoveries if they could be processed by machine learning. Citizen scientists could help, by annotating images and training the system to recognise discrepancies or various stages of certain diseases in an almost gamified way. We developed an initial prototype based on kidney disease (which I had so much fun making) and we based our idea on the premise of the already existing "Zooniverse", but only for medical purposes. (We might as well have called it "MEDverse or something similar). The process was amazing, and as difficult as I can be in liking people in group projects, I can proudly admit that after almost twenty-four hours of work, I left still liking everyone. We had so many challenging discussions and the way we all collaborated to overcome the problems that appeared in the way was truly amazing for a team that had just been formed. We did not win the competition at the end, but I'm really glad I was part of this amazing group and I'm also happy for the teams that won the funding as they really deserve to be developed and distributed.

TAGnosis poster for the "Hack day" competition

Overall, LERU summer school offered me a set of amazing experiences, both personally and academically. I got to love Zurich (if anyone from the University of Zurich is reading this, and you have space for an exchange HCI PhD student, please, pick me), I got to make new friends and partners in my PhD adventure, and I got to live a week full of stimulating conversations with like-minded people who I'm grateful I had the chance to meet. Leaving Zurich, I feel more inspired and more focused in my research journey, and I am really grateful for this Citizen-Science inspired week and all the people who made it possible.

TAGnosis

Advertisements

 Online Ankauf von Handys und Tablets auf der Schweizer Ankaufsplattform

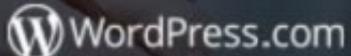
Verkaufen.ch

 MADELEINE bietet Ihnen exklusive Damenmode im Online Shop.

madeleine-mode.ch

 Cembra MoneyBank

cembra.ch

 WordPress.com

Share Your Passion

Create a professional website and start blogging today

[Get started](#)

About sopheh

PhD adventurer at @UCL_ExCiteS, HCI enthusiast, full time advocate of making the world suck less

[View all posts by sopheh »](#)

Discussion

No comments yet.

Extreme Citizen Science blog

Blog at WordPress.com.