

Collaborative Infrastructure

In my understanding, a collaborative infrastructure would be any material or conceptual infrastructure that enables sharing and is inclusive. A collaborative infrastructure is built through collaboration among individual citizens and are bottom-up, rather than top-down in that sense. A collaborative infrastructure is also located such that it is easily accessible to the potential collaborators and is not exclusive to a certain group.

One example of a collaborative infrastructure that quickly comes to my mind is Fab Lab. One such Fab Lab is located in [Vigyan Ashram](#) near Pune in Maharashtra, India. The Fab Labs are small technological labs that allow tinkering with the tools available in the lab to create new technological artefacts. These labs, first created through an MIT, Massachusetts education outreach programme have spread across the world now and they run on a certain membership fee, paying which anyone can enter and work on the available tools and instruments to innovate something on one's own. The membership fee is generally used to maintain the lab infrastructure. Even the educators can come such labs with their students to impart the knowledge of certain innovations that are possible there.

Another example of a collaborative infrastructure that I am able to think about now is that of a [People's Biodiversity Registers \(PBR\)](#) in India. PBRs aim to document the knowledge of local populations about the available floral and faunal biodiversity in their vicinity. This started as an academic exercise and later as an NGO (Non-governmental Organisation) driven activity in the 1990s. Now it has also been mandated under The Biological Diversity Act of 2002 throughout India. PBRs present a unique opportunity to bring the local citizens into a space of collaboration with the scientists, conservationists, decision-makers and implementers who are concerned with the biodiversity in an area. PBRs being the documents supposed to prepared on paper by local citizens through a consultation with the local citizens are, thus, inherently inclusive and they provide an opportunity for the decision-makers to make biodiversity conservation a collaborative activity.

However, there are also gaps in the implementation of collaborative infrastructures which render them less inclusive than what they are supposed to be. For instance, PBR documents which should be consulted while planning for biodiversity conservation activities are either not prepared as a collaborative exercise or they lie idle in the shelves of decision-makers' offices without being used in the decision-making process. Therefore, I think that along with thinking about the definitions of the collaborative infrastructures we also need to deliberate upon what are the differences in the theory and practice of infrastructures and what causes these differences.

My attempts to collaboration with other STS scholars have been very limited and passive. I am a part of the google groups stsgard and transasiasts, and try to participate in the events/webinars that I find relevant. Other than that, I have also attempted to share about my research with the fellow STS scholars through the 4S Backchannels blog. I have also assisted in the stglobal conference of 2021. All these platforms are in themselves collaborative infrastructures in my opinion. However, my research collaboration with STS scholars has been limited to my PhD research supervisor. I look forward to jointly work on research with other STS research scholars also.