Free/Open sourced politics, starting points & proposals

by Jaume Nualart (bcn-ljubljana, set07')[1]
jaume@nualart.com

“Every human being, every man, woman and child, has the inalienable right to access information, communication and commerce. To this end the Internet has evolved to serve mankind … The Internet is the nervous system of this planet. We are all connected via this system. Any restrictions on the free flow of energy through this system must be viewed as an impediment to the overall health of the system and must be remedied. The Internet is an evolutionary force that must be accommodated. It will continue to revolutionize the way we communicate, do business and learn. For too long, the primitive systems of governments have sought to retain power by controlling just these same functions. Those systems are now obsolete! The Internet is Democracy in its most pure form, without awkward political processes. The power of the Internet is unlimited.” HIP INC., http://www.hippy.com, “The Internet Manifesto”

This article contains emerging ideas and tries to open up or show possible ways to take advantage of living within highly-connected networks available in rich countries for the last 10 years.

1. Introduction

10 years of connected societies

Rich countries are becoming increasingly connected to the Internet. In addition, most people living in these countries have small devices that allow them to call (voice and/or video) anyone almost anywhere in the world. This has been happening for ten years.

I assume that this is the historical fact that is dramatically changing 20% of people's daily lives. Ten years is not a long time and apart from the economic digital divide[3], we must also talk about a generational digital divide. Some people, older than 35, are reluctant to undertake further steps to advance in an information society. We can expect a number of people who are technically illiterate within the coming years.

I can also see a self-exclusion when some people distance themselves from any kind of digital technology. The majority of people driving cars are not specialists in automotive technology, however, they extensively use cars, motorcycles, trucks, and so on. When we encounter something new in communication technology that we don't understand, we think we are stupid. Is this intellectual damnation of self some sort of mysterious human behavior or is it just fear of the unknown? Young people catch on quickly to new ideas and concepts; older people on the

---

2 From General Public License text (GPL) - http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html

3. The digital divide is the gap between those with regular, effective access to digital technologies and those without.

other hand, find it difficult to change their habits.

How networked groups and collectives can use tools for logical self-organization

When a tool is well-designed, people don't need to spend too much time learning how to use it. At the same time, when people are already using a tool, they easily accept small modifications in said tool. Now is the time for users to demand friendly interfaces and worthy software processes for publishing, editing or other basic functions. Everyday, more tools are becoming standardized. Today, an information user must be familiar with concepts such as wiki, blog, rss, podcast, audio-video stream and of course, the *older* ones such as mailing list, newsletter, chat, messengers.

Who makes optimal use of the networks?

Free software communities are a type of organization that primarily uses networks to communicate, coordinate and distribute their work. In the top of that these communities creatres, as C. Formenti says, 'a sphere of social relationships integrated with economic, political and cultural relationships to the point that they become one body'. These communities are born and growed up in the Internet, but consolidated outside of internet When an open/free project is consolidated, it starts to manifest in the form of events, conferences and presentations.

The idea is to extract several *secrets* from internet-based communities and add them to the networked politics field. From ten years a go, after Castells theories, we can talk about networked states as a non clear institution as it was the simple state-nations before. States are loosing sovereignity about themselfs because of the global economical conditions and equilibria. In my opinion, political organizations must afrontate the challenges to be in the head front using networked tools, in order to create referencies for a better future organizations of the society.

What you have to learn and why. Be courageous!

In this times of post information revolution, already we all are trying to understand till where will arrive all these changes in this parcially networked society. Meanwhile the chips are everyday smaller and we cannot be victims of it.

First of all, I would like to say that a person using communication technologies needs a good memory to remember how a device or software works. We don't necessarily need to understand everything about it.

I'm sure most of you reading this article right now are saying "of course, that's obvious!". If you agree with that, we are ready to proceed to the next step.

An information user is not a mathematician, they're just someone with a good memory. That's why pre-teenagers are able to understand everything related to computers or mobile phones faster than older people. This is called the net-generation effect[4].

4 Growing Up Digital The Rise of the Net Generation, by Don Tapscott: http://www.interneteconomybooks.com/Internet-Economy-Books/Growing-Up-Digital.htm

2. Technology mediates?

What do we understand by mediate? Communication technologies just simplify and above all, multiply the ways to communicate, resulting in increased potential communication. Hopefully, more communication, well-managed and coordinated, can accelerate and improve human organizations.

Technology only manages the participation of many people. It can manage decision processes and large amounts of mailing lists. The latest technologies can also filter contents for you with incredibly high precision. In my own idea of technology, it doesn't mediate at all; I am in favor of transparent technology, transparent mediation and transparent representation where technology has to turn to an intimate tool.

The development of technology and how we use it, is always limited by human boundaries. Consider a tool, a hammer for example; it makes no sense if it is lost in the middle of a forest. No humans, no tools.

Good tools must mediate between humans and data to produce good representations.

Mediation, is a term defined in a positive way(*) . In despite of it, when we talk about technologies we interpret mediation in a negative way, as a sinonimous of an uncontroled filter, a kind of censure of the reality, a non transparent medium that we are forced to cross, a non save environment. In the most negative points of view, some people uses mediation technologies as a black box with all kinds of monsters inside.
In my opinion it occurs because of two main reasons: in one hand, generation tv people, we are afraid and/or disappointed with the use of massive corporative media last years. So, we have a tendency to relate communication monopolies with communication technologies. Generation TV, we are not trusting anymore screens.

In the other hand, mediation implies a way to influence the results, a false short cut to the expected results and not direct contact between reality and results.

I use here mediation in the positive sense. Mediation as a way to make easy the relation and the use of data (digital data) by humans. And also mediation as an added way where communication flows, a way not avaliable without any phisical device, just a one more way.

I don't like to use mediation of tools as a sustituation of the human mediation Computers only are able to do a part of the job. Human mediation in open communities has the same role that it had during the history.

Talking about humans I'm avoiding, specially, the word *users*, instead of it I'm using *humans*, so it is a wider concept and allows expect any kind of reaction in front of a new tool. The technology is becoming more and more transparent, so let's speak about humans, people, person.

Representation & Representation Tools

'The ability to communicate ideas, visions or arguments all depend on the ability to represent these abstract notions in a concrete and recognizable'(*).

Read a map is not an easy process: read a geographical map, for example, requires a previous abstraction by the user about the territory represented on it. It is also really usefull if the user

has some previous experience using representations. For mathematical or conceptual representations, the user needs still more previous experience and knowlodge about representations tools.

When we talk about representation -based on real data, not only as an art creation-, we are including maps, 2 and 3-axis representations, timelines and a big sort of draws that represents data. Most of the good tools that I'm talking during this article, are post-APIs tools, that's: most of third part applications are just filters or new representations of the data it self.

One source of data allows infinite points of view of this data. In the middle: a representation tool. When we want easy representation tools, what we really want? What we can desire? Of course, humans, we where representing since the beginning of the times, that's clear. But in the digital era we can access to amounts of data never realized before. That makes more and more complex and interesting the study of representations.

In my opinion, for a non standard representation -that's a non geographical one, or non simple maths-based one- we need to start from a very very first stage. If we want a self-explained way of representing, we are limited to represent simple ideas, simple concepts.

A representation is made with a language and an amount of data. The language of the representantion is a list of codes, colors and/or shapes. And the dictionary is the so-called legend of the map. The limitations of the map and the legend makes us to use well known criteria on the use of symbols and easthetic components, and represent data in order to comunicate, or explain specifics messages.

(...) And this, essentially is what maps give us, reality, a reality that exceeds our vision, our reach, the span of our days, a reality we achieve no other way. We are allways mapping the invisible or the unattainable or the erasable, the future or the past, the what-ever-is-not-the-represent-to-our-senses-now and, through the gift that the map gives us, transmuting it, into everythiyg it is not. (...) (*)

3. Complex systems - no panic, no fear

The size of the cellules of a mouse is the same size as those of a blue whale. The neurons of a mouse are the same as the neurons of a human, the primary difference being the number of them and consequently, the number of connections.

We live in complex systems. Nature is extremely complex and we are just starting to understand how it works. Mutations and chemical reactions that occur every millisecond seem magic and on top of that, they work. But allow me to add something about complexity: when we cannot understand something, we usually say "this is too complex". When we are not trying to understand the process but are just users, the process seems simple and useful. It's not the same to drive a bus than to be a passenger on a bus. If you want to drive a bus, you will need some knowledge of basic mechanics and driving experience.

So what's happening? Sometimes we simply don't notice the complexity of the systems and tools we are using and sometimes it's too difficult to understand them. We have to use appropriate tools for each task or process.

Don't be afraid if I mention complexity - just imagine a tool that interfaces complexity, minimizing it and simplifying it according to your knowledge and needs.

From visible structures to natural complexity

From a Before-the-Net point of view, we understood the networks we were living in. In this context, visible meant simple. When we cannot access all the data in our networks, we feel a bit lost and we start to sense the chaos around us. Not enough time to process all the information equals informational stress. In my opinion, this is the right moment to take a step forward and begin to use appropriated tools, efficient ones that solve the problem.

4. Networks of... data, that's the question!

Network is the most widely used word in the network, especially when people try to describe chaotic or comprehensible relationships between entities. We know what a network is[5] , we have been defining it for years. We also represent these relationships in 2- or 3D graphs in the hope of producing a magic image that will reveal a lot about this highly-connected, multiple reality.

In rich countries, in the context of *networkization* of life, data can be interpreted in many ways. Data means time storage, past logs and dictionaries/encyclopedias. Data also means communication. This data communication is the real medium for social organizations of people.

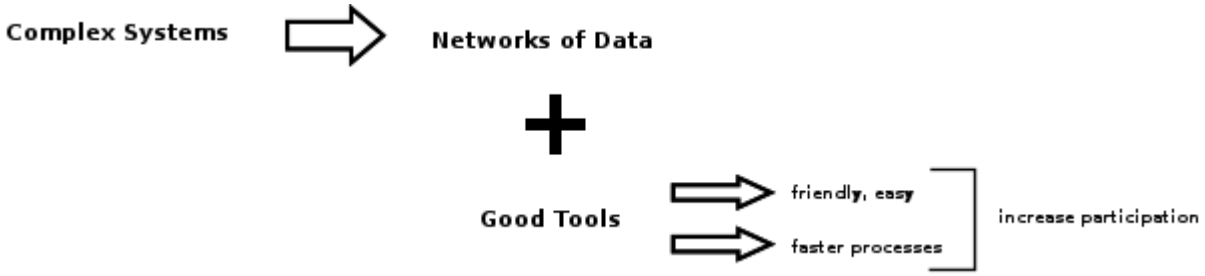
Under people and collective relationships there are networks of data -more commonly, flows of data. The tools we need to interface this amount of data must be complex in their core but at the same time they must be simple for humans. Most standard protocols for metadata date back to 1999 and 2000. Good tools can understand our needs using these protocols and can deliver it to us in nice, effective, easy ways of visualization.

A node in a data network is an important amount of data that's really well indexed, semantically linked to others nodes and easily accessible from the Internet.

Data must be indexed as efficiently as possible. The more sensible data we have, the more a tool will satisfy us and our needs.

Quality of data is the limiting step for the rest of the process.

Fig 1. Good tools



5. Bo Grönlund, 'The Urban Question' and 'The Rise of the Network Society' (1999) http://hjem.get2net.dk/gronlund/Castells.html#anchor350760

We can find two data tendencies that our tools have to manage.

Data from crossing data

To avoid a non-accessible amount of data we need to cross, compare and filter data from several sources. With appropriate filters and managers, we can get an essence of all the available data.

Data about user behaviors

The tool records all our actions while using it. With this information, the tool can adapt itself to you; making their use easy and more effective. Imagine the application of this data in commercial or governmental uses, its terrible! Nevertheless, they have been using it for some time and its use is increasing everyday. Now is the time to start using these types of techniques to our benefit.

You are the node: data point of view

Imagine a room. Imagine two people sitting opposite one another in the room. If each person draws an image of their perception of the room, the two images will be completely different. This physical example demonstrates how your point of view can vary with respect to other people's, particularly when we are not only talking in physical terms, but also ideological, cultural and political terms.

When we talk about network visualization, we try to choose between several visualization tools. In my opinion, the most important thing we must decide is which point of view we want to communicate. I'm talking about Self-centered Networks visualization. The customization of the point of view is the first parameter to be considered when we want to represent relationships between nodes, that's networks.

Maybe there is only one database but there is more than one possible representation of the data it contains. Tools for browsing data have to allow users to specify some parameters about how and from where they want to see the data.

Fig 2. Rules

5. Too much information - this is the goal!

When you arrive at the point where you receive more information than you can process, this is the critical moment when the good tools start to prove themselves useful, necessary and more

effective. In other words: when you manage a large-enough amount of information to make you feel stressed and irritable, you have to seriously think about the help of technology of information.

Web 2.0[6] is a slightly fashionable term and I'm only using it because it seems its meaning has really extended to everyday applications. I will also use the term 2.0 to discuss tools. When I am talking about tools, I'm usually referring to them as software but also as combinations between software and hardware (servers).

I use the term tools 2.0 as the interface between users and networks of sensitive data.

A good information tool or a 2.0 tool has to be able to get good data (as sensitive as possible) from dynamic online databases. This is possible because really good data has good APIs[7] to make it accessible. Most of the important data tanks -like google[8], wikipedia[9], yahoo[10],... publicly offer their APIs to remotely access the data and open the process for their data representations.

One of the latest examples of this type of tool in free software is Amarok[11] , a music manager and jukebox. Amarok crosses data from wikipedia, music related to music databases, lyrics databases, covers databases, etc. Amarok also learns from your listening habits, so Amarok can satisfy you more everyday.

The emerging technologies I am discussing are more complex than mass sms hurricanes or some other "new" tactics that political parties and governments are beginning to try. Most of these offline groups are just using simple and sometimes useless methods. They are using 1.0 methods.

Tools 2.0 have to be sincere with us. They have to translate effectively to be a user-friendly, simple interface for fashion and gift searches and queries for desires etc.

A tool 2.0 is a complex tool. It is a kind of configurable parser for human networks.

Usually these growing models of tools follow the same structure. Let's take the example of wikipedia. Everything initially starts with an application that allows you to store data in a sensitive way. The wikipedia project wrote a second generation wiki called mediawiki[12] . This platform was the starting point. Subsequently[13], people started to use wikipedia and the number

---

6. Web 2.0 (from wikipedia): refers to a second generation of services available on the World Wide Web that lets people collaborate and share information online. In contrast to the first generation, Web 2.0 gives users an experience closer to desktop applications than the traditional static Web pages. Web 2.0 applications often use a combination of techniques devised in the late 1990s, including public web service APIs (dating from 1998), Ajax (1998), and web syndication (1997).
7. An application programming interface (API) (from wikipedia) is the interface that a computer system, library or application provides in order to allow requests for services to be made of it by other computer programs, and/or to allow data to be exchanged between them.
8. Google APIs: http://www.google.com/apis/
9. Wikipedia, and its software, mediawiki, have a lot of APIs to make queries using a lot of software languages.
10. Yahoo! Developer Network: http://developer.yahoo.com/
11. Amarok, Rediscover Your Music! Amarok is a music player for Linux and Unix with an intuitive interface. Amarok makes playing the music you love easier than ever before - and looks good doing it. http://amarok.kde.org/
12. MediaWiki is a free software wiki package originally written for Wikipedia. It is now used by several other projects of the non-profit Wikimedia Foundation and by many other wikis, including this very website, the home of MediaWiki. http://www.mediawiki.org/
13. History of wikipedia: http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/History_of_Wikipedia.

of articles has quickly multiplied since 2001. The Wikipedia process had to add and assume its size several times at least. Wikipedia became a community and it had to organize and coordinate the project, choosing the best rules and decision systems.

Today, wikipedia is also a big container of good data and there are many APIs to easily access this data from other tools.

6. Hierarchy, Leadership and horizontality

Warning! The following paragraphs contains forbidden words.

Can hierarchy or leadership be compatible with horizontality in free sourced communities?

I'm talking about communities, as groups of people with a sosteinable size accordint to the goal and the work of each community. Hierarchy, Leadership and horizontality systems depends a lot on the size of the communities whom decide to use and redefine those options for organization, coordinatination and advance of their project.

I will use also the Castells[14] suffix *networked-* to refer to the complex and consistent network of data around us.

Networked Hierarchy

When we consider hierarchy, we used to think in military terms, with striped signs. The hierarchy I'm referring to is spontaneous and temporary, based on knowledge or responsibility/engagement hierarchies.

In a society as an space of flows -as M. Castells said-, hierarchies are responsabilities, filters about flows (moviment) of the most important information related to each community process or subprocess. I use to talk about participation hierarchies, or "talks who works" systems.

In an free source commnity, most of the work is made in a volunteers way, that meants people is there because they-want-to-be-there. The decicion to join a project comes form outside of the community; the commnunity is, simply, open.

Inside the free sourced communities there are a wide rage of organizational philosophies and structures; next section shows three examples of communities as a case of study[15].

Using *networked* as a dinamic grup of entities plus the communication flows between them, -and in the way for a networked politics hipothesis- we can use networked hierarchies, as the hierarchy rules in a network of people in the time of informacion technologies.

Networked Leadership

The definition of leadership according to Debian (see next section for further information about Debian) is:

---

14. Ned Rossiter, 'Organised Networks: Transdisciplinarity and New Institutional Forms' (2006) http://info.interactivist.net/article.pl?sid=06/04/22/035228
15. The Power of Maps, Denis Wood, p5. 1992. The Gilford Press.

"*The Debian Project Leader (DPL)*[16] *is the official representative of the Debian Project. They have two main functions, one internal and one external.*

In the external function, the Project Leader represents the Debian Project to others. This involves giving talks and presentations about Debian and attending trade shows, as well as building good relationships with other organizations and companies.

Internally, the Project Leader manages the project and defines its vision. They should talk to other Debian developers, especially to the delegates, to see how they can assist their work. A main task of the Project Leader therefore involves coordination and communication."

The concept of Leadership was chanching a lot along the history. In the new digital networked society it is not different:

"*As a result, a post industrial digital age style of leadership is emerging characterized by stronger horizontal linkages among elites across different sectors and even different countries, especially government leaders, private entrepreneurs and executives, researchers and civil society leaders."*[17].

Networked Leadership makes the person who lead the project to work serving the project more that the rest. Of course, human personalities are not included in this analisis. Leader is just one place on the hierarchy, the most public and, ussualy powerfull place in the hierarchy system.

A *desirable* networked hierarchy would be based on taxonomies and on folksonomies. An example of networked hierarchy, descentralized with non-hierarchical ubiquity could be de blogsphere, where each reader has his/her own point of view and his/her intimane hierarchies in terms of trust of the information you read.

Horizontality of the network

Horizontality in terms of "you are where you want", in terms of open paths to each branch of the organizational tree is a non equalitarium term. Horizontality here is not used as an homogenazation of roles and tasks of people; on the contrary, horizontaly meants here a way to, actually, coexist lot of heterogeneities[18].

Non concentration of power and resources is another requeriment for a free source organization or project. In that sense, horizontality can refers also to that queston: horizontality of power, of resources, of opportunities.

A third use of horizontality as a homogenizaton of individual rights within the network. One people, one vote, ok, but also, one people, one voice.

Horizontality is wrong as a equalitarian tasks, knowledge or responsabilities strategy. The richest quality of the networks itself is their flexibility, their difussion, their heterogenity of indivuduals.

The way that open communities networks works, in part, is a consequence of the phisical design of the digital networks technicaly. Internet is designed to be like it is, independent from

16. Debian Project Leader: http://www.debian.org/devel/leader
17. Ernest J. Wilson III, 'LEADERSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE' ()
http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/wilson/leadership/Leadership_in_the_Digital_Age.pdf
18. J. Nualart, 'About riereta' (2004) http://riereta.net/tiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=7

the individual desires of control. Hierarquies, horizontalities and leaderchips using networked tools could be compatible. These arguments are not talking about magical formula for the abolition of conflicts; this is another field that makes no so much difference during the history.

7. Decision systems[19]

Classically, decision systems are clasify by:

* Unanimity
* Majority: requires support from more than 50% of the members of the group.
* Consensus: tries to avoid "winners" and "losers". Consensus requires that a majority approve a given course of action, but that the minority agree to go along with the course of action.
* Sub-committee: involves assigning responsibility for evaluation of a decision to a sub-set of a larger group
* Plurality: simple majority
* Dictatorship or autocracy

Let's take a look at the way that open networked communities takes decisions.
I took three examples of auto-organization and auto-management of free software communities with names like Debian, Drupal and Indymedia in mind:

Decision systems set rules or ways to assist the project to advance. There are numerous proposals to tackle this issue ranging from voting, using different rules to decision-maker hierarchies, all within the framework of the rules naturally.

In my experience, decision systems must be tailored as much as possible to each specific case. The size of the collective ~~or~~ and the networks involved in a process is the main parameter when you want to find the best way to take plural decisions.**(X5)**

It seems clear that the bigger and unlocated is a community, the more rules and resources are needed for a participative decision system. From a presential small collective,, using consensus with discussion methods, to an international one hundred people chat meeting for the discussion of the first draft of a new document about the community itself there is not so much in common. That's sure, but a part from that, it is also very important the character of the community, that's the social posicion that the community takes publicly. Same rules could be seen too burocratic for some people and too superficial for some other people.

It seems clear that every decision system needs some rules. However, rules, as the whole system, must also be temporary and adapted to requirements. I have experienced a lot of hefty bureaucratic processes for small groups of people. When people spend more time reporting their work than actually doing it, system reports are not scaled and this makes people unhappy doing their work. Of course, I am talking in terms of free software communities where most of the time dedicated to a project comes from volunteers. The system chosen must be a participator-centered service, assisting and accelerating their work. Projects coming from an offline style have less options for decision systems. They are limited to decision systems derived from presential or semi-presential meetings and voting rituals.

On the other hand, we can find a wide range of decision systems management tools but the

19. Very interesting post and discusison: mitchell“s blog: http://weblogs.mozillazine.org/mitchell/archives/2006/06/the_community_and_decisionmaki_1.html

main secret of success in the case of free software projects is that the structure of these communities is based on the goal of the project. Every task or assignment is designed to help the project advance. Concretize the goal of the project, the mission and aims of a group, makes easy clarify decisions and, by extenssion, take decisions. At the same time it contributes to feel yourself part of the community and, by extenssion, part of the project.

Debian.org[20] (born in 1996)

'The Debian Project is an association of individuals who have made common cause to create a free operating system. This operating system that we have created is called Debian GNU/Linux, or simply Debian for short.' (About Debian, http://www.debian.org/intro/about.en.html)

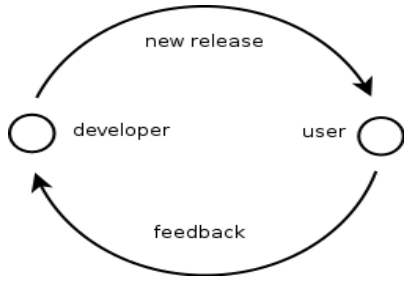
As you can see, the definition itself is the goal of the project it self.

So, Debian is the name of a linux-based operating system, that you can install for free in your computer. Linux has really advanced graphical environments, such as Gnome or KDE. Now is, at least, the moment to start using the products of our public free software market.

The Debian community is a very structured community[21] with strict rules for almost everything. I really recommend taking a look at the good debian pages where everything is explained. Debian uses several decision systems including a decision-maker according to the rules and specialized voting systems[22].

A first view to Debian rules[23] could be a bit hard because of the number of rules and their clarity and directness. An explanation of this character could be referred to the language in the world of programming. Coding, you should be very precise; a simple colon can make a program unusable. Maybe the language of the Debian rules and, may I say, constitution texts are extremely directs and univocal, they are not in the tipical legal style. They tries to find an effective and clear way to comunicate some ways of organization, some behaviours in front of certain situations. This comes from the programming code way of thinking.

Fig 3. Simplest Free Software scheme



20. About Debian GNU/Linux: (from Wikipedia) Debian, organized by the Debian Project, is a widely used distribution of free software developed through the collaboration of volunteers from around the world. Since its inception, the released system, Debian GNU/Linux, has been based on the Linux kernel, with many basic tools of the operating system from the GNU project.
21. http://www.debian.org/devel/constitution
22. The Debian Voting System: http://seehuhn.de/comp/vote
23. More Debian links: Debian decision-making: http://www.us.debian.org/devel/constitution | Debian Voting Information: http://www.us.debian.org/vote/

Drupal.org[24] (2000)

Drupal is a growing community based around the goal of building and maintaining a content management system for free use and distribution in accordance with the GPL license.

In other words, drupal is a web site and a system to administrate this web site. And again, the goal is the definition of the project. A part from generalists goals like "make a better world", could that be possible for a political project define such goals as clearly as we see on free sourced communities?

In Drupal, you have a leader, a core team and a lot of contributors. In terms of organizational structures, Drupal is still in the early stages and at the moment you can find debates about the democratic needs for drupal's project decisions.

Drupal mainly uses publics forums for debates. There are historical threads on forums, where new modules and improvements have appeared from. The style of the discussions they use still respects the old etiquette and the final decision is made by the core team, so it doesn't seem too democratic if you forget who is who in the project. This is a participation hierarchy case. And, of course, everyone can contact the core people directly.

Drupal is interesting to study the evolution of the organization of the project itself and the management of this fast growth, that makes difficult to get any perspective about what's going on, from inside specially.

Indymedia.org Independent Media Center[25] (1999)

'Indymedia is a collective of independent media organizations and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage. Indymedia is a democratic media outlet for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of truth.' **(http://indymedia.org)**

Indymedia is one of the most important networks for independent media contents.
I decided to use Indymedia as an example for two main reasons. Firstly because I was one of the founding members of Indymedia Barcelona, which started 5 years ago. I learned a lot about how to organize an off-site team with a clear goal inside an almost global network of orher teams, forming a big free sourced community.

The second reason is more related to the topic of this article. Indymedia is a very good example of how to use the techniques of free software communities and apply them to a project whose requirements go beyond a technical level. Today, the technical aspect of Indymedia only represents a small fraction of all the work that volunteers from around the world are contributing every minute.

Decision systems in Indymedia are mainly by cosensus. The local groups can use their own way for decision-making. The global indymedia and the main indymedia site -http ://indymedia.org- run with very good defined information process, using normal tools: email lists, chat, wiki-editions...

About indymedia it is interesting to explore how local stability of groups running indymedia's editions contrinute to the whole indymedia. Resources are distributed totally: from technical

24 Drupal website: http://drupal.org
25. IMC website: http://indymedia.org

resources to video knowledge, from edit-copying volunteers work, untll translators and editors around the world. Everyone from indymedia, commonly, has a local indymedia as a reference, as a way to work, as a process of organization, as a handbook or a pandora's box how-to. 'Dont hate the media, be the media' is the main indymedia's slogan that clearly describes the goal of the project. Obviously, for an independent news project, as a social project, goal is dissambiguous and should be adapted to each news local habitat.

This autonomous-groups based-organization is a step forward in the organizations structure comparing to the other examples. In Indymedia most of local dayly text production is not gonna be reused for other editions. In Debian or Drupal, most of new good or accepted code -text-, it will be used and reused till it would be changed. In Indymedia not any local organization is critical. There is a number of local editions appearing and some others dissapearing or been inactive. In Debian or Drupal if some part of the package mainteiners stop working they will need spare people, because the project, probably, depends on their work too.

So, Indymedia looks a bit different from the other examples; different for the project goal, different for the public and social presence, different because of the use of the work it self. That's true but, at the same time, Indymedia is like Debian and Drupal in terms of freedom of knowledge, freedom of communication. In fact, in terms of freedom, they are the same.

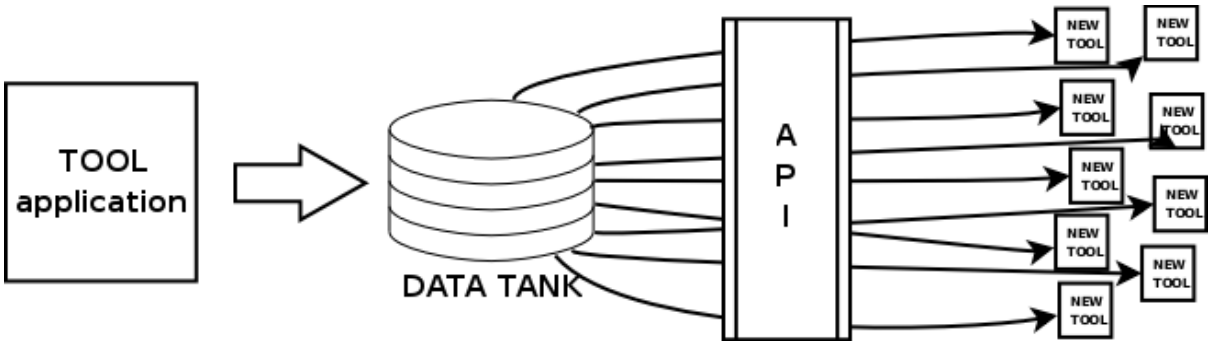


Figure 4: Main tool = data + api = lot of new tools

8. Search for a model

I would like to propose some notes for a model to start up a free sourced political project.

Political parties began in offline times. They need to do the opposite trip, learning from online organizations. On the other hand, a political party needs very clear rules for auto-organization.

The model would consist of elements of the Indymedia project, the Drupal project and the Debian project.

From indymedia

An offline organization needs to have good communication channels between teams and projects within the organization. It is also necessary to study the goal of the indymedia project. In comparison with the other examples, Indymedia's goal is to generate independent news and agendas, the other projects build software packages. Debian is a gnu/linux distribution and

Drupal is a content management software tool.

From drupal

I'd take the naturality of the project assuming they are growing and changing rapidly. It's a good example of a phase in the process. It demonstrates how rules must be temporary depending on the size of the project. I also recommend reading the Drupal mission and principles because they perfectly define what is public and what is to serve the people.

From Debian

I would take the most important ingredients: organization and coordination. This is my proposal: analyze the Debian rules-for-all and try to adapt them to a networked political party. Debian defines almost everything concerning rules, internal processes, quorum conditions, leadership and hierarchy. The Debian organization could be the equivalent of the first white book for a networked political project.

At this point, there's still a lot to be decided. Let's take a look at the differences between classical offline organizations of political parties and online free community projects. We need to find translations or ways to replace open and free habits with classical ones online.

Every emerging model has the challenge to appropriately define how to reinterpret concepts like:

Volunteer-based

Clear and open goals of the project

Open decision systems

Open process discussions

Clear leadership elections and tasks

Public access to main team members

Open way for contributions

As Castells[26] pointed in 2001, the EU fact is changing the concept of the intouchable EU states because their power of decission, their level of autonomy is also changing. Currently the final decission in EU is taked for a complex relationship network of institucions -national and supernacional ones-. The nature and role of the state changes from the nation-state in the industrial era to what Castells calls the networked state in the informational era. That indicates that is the time for networked politics?

Accepting the Castells vision[27], we can agree about the urgence to start implementing the use of networked technologies in any new political project. Social moviments, from ecologists to

26. M. Castells, 'Conversations with History', Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley (2001) http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/Castells/castells-con0.html
27. Manuel Castells' "The Rise of the Network society" (1996)

women rights groups, most of them, they were doing it from the beginning of the net.

9. Appendix

Sentences

If you think that free technology can help people on a global-level, then technology must be cherished, studied and improved for your benefit also.

The best technology is transparent technology.

Optimizing the use of technology is not easy. We need to start addressing a new problem: excess of technology. We must also think in terms of sustainable technology.

Rules can be useful, in fact, this is the point of a rule, isn't it? So, if an organization is changing, their rules must always be temporary and optimized to be as useful as possible.

All online, open decision systems share a common factor: scheduled, clear and participative phases. Time gives sense to the decision.

If the debian goal is to build and maintain GNU/Linux distribution and the Indymedia project aims to produce independent news, what's the goal of an free sourced politics project?

Folksonomy is the most democratic and easiest method of classifying things.

Web 2.0 exists but it's nothing new under the netsky.

I prefer to talk about Good Tools instead of Tools 2.0.

Please don't use complex tools for really simple tasks (i.e. don't use a calculator to tell me the result of (23 + 230)/10, for example) -

A 1-dimesional list of millions of search results where the reason for the order of this list is unknown, is just the first step in information visualization. Therefore, Google's current concept is not the future. Oops!

10.Article's context timeline