

The Weaver Birds

Jaromil's Journal of Musings

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0.1 Hackers spinning the Dharma wheel

You are welcome to join the new wheel spin of our history.

This document is an open, collective and still in fieri expression of a large network of hackers and the beliefs motivating their actions. We aim to compile a programmatic, visionary and inclusive document to reclaim space in societies for the GNU generations, proposing a plan to be shared and that already is being shared by many.

The dyne.org hackers network has become 8 years old this year. Of course, this text doesn't just talk about "us". Being an open network, we are including multiple contexts around the world, with which we share mutual help; as with our free software development activity and the sharing of on-line and on-site spaces. This document talks about our dreams, as they slowly but steadily are becoming reality.

For all this we are infinitely grateful to the GNU project¹, that let us discover how to get hold of knowledge, take control of the architecture we live in and start building a new planet :)

0.2 Dharma youth

The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn, like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars. (Jack Kerouac, Dharma Bums)

¹<http://www.gnu.org>

First let's declare who we are: after 8 years we are able to trace a common denominator among the people active in our network, interconnected by a nomadic approach to development and life.

We are young dreamers, as we often like to stir limitations and invent different models to learn, communicate, share and live than those proposed by the societies where we are caged.

We have in common that we survived out of the commonplaces, we cultivated our thoughts and sharing methods, knowledge and tools, keeping them out of any box.

This is the time in our history in which we'll speak with young voices, when we are moving some crucial steps on which we'll base our architectures, hopefully mixing the inner with the outer, the Ying with the Yang.

Some of us are nomads, some settle in different places time to time, some live in the same marginal neighbourhoods of the world where they were born, some are working for multinational IT companies, some are riding bicycles all around the world, some are lecturing in schools, some are exhibiting in art galleries and some are squatting houses. And yes, probably you are one of those, or you have been in contact with us, at least once.

What we are proposing here is a new model and we finally acquired a practical vision to develop it in harmony with our different environments. Please continue reading if you like to discover why and how.

0.3 Freedom of Creativity

The growth of the network rendered the non-proprietary alternative even more practical. What scholarly and popular writing alike denominate as a thing ("the Internet") is actually the name of a social condition: the fact that everyone in the network society is connected directly, without intermediation, to everyone else. The global interconnection of networks eliminated the bottleneck that had required a centralized software manufacturer to rationalize and distribute the outcome of individual innovation in the era of the mainframe. (Eben Moglen)

Free software (as in "Libre" and Free and Open Source, referred as FOSS) is a set of principles endorsed by the Free Software Foundation² (FSF), envisioning a new model for distribution, development and marketing of immaterial goods. While recommending you to have a look at the philosophy pages published by the FSF, we'll highlight some implications which are most important for us by making our activities possible and motivating them.

FOSS implies an economic model based on collaboration instead of competition, fitting in the fields of academic research where sharing of knowledge is fundamental, and development where the joint efforts of different developers can be better sustained when distributed across various nodes. In this regard we like to quote John Nash (Mathematics Nobel in 1994) saying that "the best result will come from everybody in the group doing what's best for himself, and the group".

Imagine then that all creations re-produced in this way can also be sold freely by anyone in each context: this opens up an horizon of new business models that are local, avoiding globalized exploitation, still sharing a global pool of knowledge useful to everyone.

Furthermore, in the fields of education we believe that the inherent independence of FOSS from commercial influences is crucial in order to empower students with a knowledge that they really own, not making them dependent from merchants owning their creations by imposing licenses on the tools they've learned.

And lastly just consider, and feel free to invent more on these tracks, the impact of Free and Open Source models in fields such as communication, social networking, games, media and... evolution.

To elaborate more reflections on these issues up to the formulation of "policy recommendations" for those that are currently in power, a good starting point is offered by a recent collective effort we joined: the Free Culture Forum³.

Here is where the difference between free software and open source starts to matter. Open source focuses on new model for development. Free software is not interested in how the program is developed. We are interested in the ethics of how the program is distributed. (Richard M. Stallman)

²see <http://www.fsf.org>

³<http://www.fcforum.org>

Now we want to liberate our minds and those of the ones who will come.

0.4 No nationhood

Per far che i secoli tacciano di quel Trattato⁴ che trafficò la mia patria, insospettì le nazioni e scemò dignità al tuo nome. (A Bonaparte liberatore, Ugo Foscolo, 1778–1827)

One Planet, One Nation (Public Enemy)

Our homelands are displaced and sometimes very different, difficult to be put in contact with the boundaries given by nations. In fact we think that nation states should come to an end, for the borders they impose aren't matching with our aspirations and current ability to relate with each other.

During the few years of our lives we have been taught to interact and describe ourselves within national schemes, but the only real boundaries were the differences between our languages, while we have learned to cross them.

From our national histories we mostly inherited fears and anger, but with this network we have learned how to bury them, as they don't belong to us anymore. What's left is a just a problem that can be solved: we will stop representing us as part of different nations. Even if we could, we don't intend to build our own nation, nor to propose to you a new social contract, but to cross all of these borders as a unique networked planet, to start a new cartography.

We have a planet! and it is young enough to heal the scars left by the last centuries of war, imperialism, colonisation and prevarication that left most people around us cultivating differences and fake identities represented by flags and nationalist propaganda.

We aren't claiming to open the borders to the speculation of multinationals, since we are well aware this can be a rhetoric used by "neo-liberalist" interests to tramp over the autonomy of developing countries. The Contextual integrity⁵ of different social ecosystems needs to be respected, but still as of today the national borders haven't succeeded in preserving it.

With some exceptions, most of the national programs and cultural funds we agreed to work with were intending each of us would dress a flag, as we were recruited in a decadent game of national pride and competition, with an agenda of cultural, economical and physical domination, tracing all our movements, assimilating them to leviathans that are playing their last violent moves in a chess game for which we are just seamless pieces.

This doesn't make sense anymore to our generation, we refuse to identify with the governments holding our passports, while we look forward to relating with each other on the basis of dialogue and exchange, approaches and architectures that can be imagined globally and developed locally, in an open way the channels that let us speak to you right now.

Therefore we declare **the end of nations**, as our generation is connected by a way more complicated intersection of wills, destinies and, most importantly, problems to be solved.

0.5 Networked cities

Creo que con el tiempo mereceremos no tener gobiernos. (Jorge Luis Borges, 1899–1986)

Naturally our cartography draws connections among nodes, hubs of intelligence that are closer in cyber space than in the physical one. In the last century we have learned how we can share music, lyrics, stories and images, since for a few decades we are able to copy them with marginal costs across the whole world.

This let us relate to each other with an outreach that is amplified by the density of our living environments, the urban spaces that somehow offered enough gaps for our agency. Those who pretend to govern our living are now busy in controlling those voids, as every tree in a public square represents an obstacle for their cameras, omnipresent eyes patronising our evolution.

We found shelter in the ancestral practices of trance⁶, opening the doors of our perception to the unknown, resonating our own bones, enhancing the agility of our tongues to follow the hip hop flow of

⁴Trattato di Campoformio

⁵see Nissenbaum, H, (2007) Contextual Integrity - <http://crypto.stanford.edu/portia/papers/RevnissenbaumDTP31.pdf>

⁶Lapassade, G. (1976) Essai sur la transe, Éditions universitaires

radical thoughts, skating over the universe we are constrained, painting fantasy over the imposed walls of our cities, jumping higher to join the loose ends of our parkours.

These practices are now among all of our cities⁷, seeded by our own need to evolve, to influence a governance that doesn't listen to us. Some kids turn into a dark army of vengeance, some lose faith in the future, some fall in the virtual loopholes offered by the magnetic startups of the dot.com boom. We need to offer ourselves an alternative to this hopeless conflict and the first step is to build a narrative that respects all choices, that doesn't neglect suffering.

All this creativity and despair is shared among our cities, stuffed by unnecessary needs and mirages of success of the "creative industries", while we already elaborate a concentric vision that is linked to the density of our lives and the cultural flow of our errant knowledge.

Therefore we declare the birth of a **planet of networked cities**⁸, spiral architectures of living swirling above our heads and across our fingers, as they evolve in a common practice of displacement and re-conjunction, joining the loose ends of our future.

Our plan is simple and our project is already in motion. In fact, if you look around yourself, you will already find *us* close. While the current economical and political systems face the difficulty of hiding their own incoherence, we are able to implement their principles better and, most importantly, we are elaborating new ones.

We are reclaiming the infrastructure, the liberty to adapt them to our needs, our right to property without strings attached, the freedom to confront ideas without any manipulative mediation, peer to peer, face to face, city to city, human to human.

The possibility to grow local communities and economies, eliminating globalised monopolies and living up from our own creations, is there. We are filling the empty spaces left in our own cities, we are setting our own desires and we are collectively able to satisfy them.

Furthermore, some of us are seeking contacts with the lower strata of societies, to share a growing autonomy: as much they are excluded by the society they serve, that much they are close to freedom, while it is clear that autonomy is the solution to present crisis.

These marginal communities were the villagers who, mostly because of rural poverty, could no longer survive on agriculture, as well as the migrants and refugees who had to escape their birth places, or never had a homeland. They came to the city and they found neither work nor shelter. They created their own jobs out of the cynical logics of capitalism, mostly in refuse recycling. They look ugly to the minorities in power, while most architects and urban planners unjustly call their shelter "illegal settlements". Some of them organise themselves to gain power with solidarity, and those are the squatters.

During the past decades we have learnt to enhance our own autonomy in the urban contexts⁹, diving across the different contexts composing the cities, disclosing the inner structure of their closed networks, developing a different texture made of relationships that no company can buy.

We are the **Weaver Birds**, Burung-Burung Manyar¹⁰, we share our nests in a network, we flow as the river of the spontaneous settlement of Code in Yogyakarta¹¹, the gypsy neighbourhood of Sulukule in Istanbul, the Chaos Computer Club, all the hacklabs across the world, the self-organised squatters in Amsterdam Berlin Barcelona and more, the hideouts of 2600 and all the other temporary hacker spaces where our future, and your future, is being homebrewed.

This document is just the start for a new course, outlining an analysis that is shared among a growing number of young hackers and artists, nourished by their autonomy and knowledge. Our hacker spaces are quickly proliferating as we don't need to build more space rather than penetrate existing empty space, we are highly adaptive and we aim at connecting rather than separating, at being inclusive rather than exclusive, at being effective rather than acquiring status.

To those who feel threatened we ask: do not resist us, for we will last longer than you; and leave us space, for you don't use it while we do. Do it for the good of all of us, because we are your own kids.

⁷De Jong, A, Schuilenburg, M. (2006) Mediapolis. Popular culture and the city, Rotterdam: 010-Publishers

⁸Batten, D.F. (1995), Network Cities: Creative Urban Agglomerations for the 21st Century, SAGE

⁹Lapassade, G. (1971), L'Autogestion pédagogique, Gauthiers-Villars

¹⁰Burung-Burung Manyar means "Weaver Birds" in bahasa indonesia, is a book by Romo Mengun published in 1992 by Gramedia (Jakarta)

¹¹the Code riverbank was considered an "illegal settlement" of squatters, while Romo Mengun has been active between 1981 and 1986, gathering the sympathy of intellectuals believing that these poor members of society should be accepted and helped to improve their living conditions. The government of Indonesia planned its forced removal in 1983, but as protests followed the plans were cancelled. Nine years later in 1992 Kampung Code was selected as the winner of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. The Code riverside settlement continues to exist until this day, as a remarkable example of urban architecture.

0.6 Horizontal media

Whoever controls the media -the images- controls the culture. (Allen Ginsberg, 1926–1997)

Our concern about freedom in media is serious, the current urgency justifies all our acts of rebellion, as they become necessary. One of our main activities is patiently weaving the threads for open networks that put us all in contact. But greedy national regimes and criminal organisations threaten us as if they can avoid their fascist nature to be known, while opportunist provokers use our open grounds to have granted the right to offend and generate more wars.

About media we certainly accumulated enough knowledge to trace a clear path for our development, as we have been doing since the early days of our existence: we are active in implementing the liberties that the digital age grants us. This intellectual freedom is very important for the development of humanity, for its capacity to analyse its own actions, to weave its faith in harmony.

Our plan is to keep on developing more on-site and on-line public space for discussion, following a **decentralised pattern** that grants access to most people on our planet. We created tools for independent media, to multiply the voices in protection of common visions, to avoid that a few media tycoons take over democracies, as is happening in many different places of this world.

We are aware of the limits of the present implementation of democracy: while they are busy celebrating their own success over archaic regimes, these systems stopped updating their own architecture and have fallen in control of new enemies which they cannot even recognise anymore.

The solution we propose is simple: maximise the possibilities to recycle existing media infrastructures, open as many channels as possible, free the airwaves, let communication flow in its multiplicity, avoid any mono-directional use of it, give everyone the possibility to run a radio or TV station for its own digital and physical neighbours, following an organic pattern that will modularise the sharing of sense and let ideas propagate in a horizontal, non hierarchical way.

If these media architectures will be linked with education models that foster tolerance we have hope to accelerate the evolution of our planet and grant protection to the minorities that are populating it.

0.7 Freedom of identity

If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger my child: this whole World is your own! (Sarada Devi, Gahanananda, 1920)

We believe that current governmental efforts of biometric control by governments, private data mining operated by companies and public schools watching over students activity, profiling programs that are targeting people worldwide are a crime against humanity.

Each of those efforts are not taking into careful consideration what can be done when dictatorial regimes take control of such systems. In fact, this already happened as half a century ago when the first action of the Nazi was numbering people and labelling them with a symbol marking their biological ethnicities (as biometry can nowadays).

Conscious of the lack of responsibility of current governments worldwide, we will oppose with all means necessary their efforts to number and control all people in the name of a safe and unreachable security that, as we hackers can demonstrate, cannot be enforced by such means.

As hackers we are well conscious of information flows and how several leaks in the digital domain are actually disclosing personal information of large amounts of people worldwide. We do believe that people shouldn't be numbered and included in databases, which probably is what still differentiates governments from operating systems merely suppressing the processes that aren't optimised for their tasks.

Our generation includes a large critical mass concerned on these issues, let it be proof the recent success of *Freedom not Fear*¹², while an entertaining and poetical description of our feelings is also depicted by the movie *Gattaca*¹³.

¹²Worldwide protests against surveillance, every 12 October - http://wiki.vorratsdatenspeicherung.de/Freedom_Not_Fear_2008

¹³1997, Directed by Andrew Niccol. With Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Gore Vidal - <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119177/>

0.8 Education

Because this New Order of ours is a military order, an authoritarian order, commando style, there is no education. There is only instruction, a mere taming experience. (Romo Mangun)

As privatisation of educational structures progresses, the academy assumes a corporate and business mindset, while we assist to a shift of the educational mission in society from *inclusive* to *exclusive*.

The semantic nucleus (Sinn) of the word “Economy” has remained almost invariant and that has permitted to extend the word to new denotations (Bedeutung). This phenomenon is somehow similar to what has happened in our days to the term *Enterprise* which, with the consensus of the majority of interested subjects, has been extended to contexts indicated by the term *University*, which originally had nothing to do with it (Agamben, 2007)

The influential play of industries has permeated most academical disciplines, in particular regarding the adoption of technologies. The choice of educators has become biased by logics of short term profit, rather than **Solid Knowledge**.

On the other hand, notions are rapidly becoming universally available. *Heuristic, maieutic* and *infrastructure* functions provided by academies are best satisfied by the global action of the free software communities’ **horizontally** sharing methods, experiences and working implementations, on distributed and versioned R&D platforms.

As components can be combined and redistributed, copied and modified¹⁴ students learn a knowledge that is durable, without restrictions on their rights to produce and redistribute creations. This situation will provide an advantage for new generations, as it does for developing countries.

Media hubs and hacker spaces constitute a great potential to activate cultural growth, fulfilling an educational role that is progressively lacking in higher schools and universities.

In 1998, during the first edition of the hackmeeting¹⁵ in Firenze, its assembly launched the idea of *independent universities of hacking*, spawning numerous hacklabs across the networked cities, with annual meetings that have been taking place until today in various places in the south of Europe. We believe the results of these initiatives have been greatly influential for our own cultural and technical development, as they hosted an errant knowledge otherwise dispersed and neglected by the academies, with the participation of people like Wau Holland, Richard Stallman, Tetsuo Kogawa, Andy Muller-Magoon, Emmanuel Goldstein and even more collectives and individuals.

With such a short but intense history behind us we are well motivated to continue developing our independent paths of knowledge, an auto-didactic literature that liberates the students from corporate interests and opens up an horizon of variety and creativity that cannot be envisioned by the most advanced, yet faulty, implementations of the so called “creative industries”.

0.9 Collaboration

Nadie es patria. Todos lo somos. (Jorge Luis Borges, 1899–1986)

Thanks for reading this far. In case we sparked some interest in you with this document and you have suggestions to expand it, please contact us¹⁶.

This document was drafted by Jaromil in eight years of extensive travels in very different contexts around and between Europe and Asia, nourished by several exchanges along the way and finally made public on the 8 august 2008. While it is impossible to enumerate all of us and our collective soul, we still like to say thanks to the following individuals for witnessing the birth of this document, after 8 years it would be too long to thank everyone involved, so let the people now remind the many others not mentioned: Richard M. Stallman, Gustaff Harriman Iskandar, Venzha Christawan, Irene Agrivina, Timbil Budiarto, Viola van Alphen and Kees de Groot, Gabriel Salsaman Finch, Elisa Manara, Julian Abraham, Nancy Mauro-Flude, Gabriele Zaverio: they witnessed¹⁷ the birth of this document under

¹⁴following the GNU project philosophy and further applying to more fields of human knowledge.

¹⁵see <http://www.hackmeeting.org> and the book *Networking Art* <http://www.networkingart.eu/english.html> (Costa & Nolan) ISBN:88-7437-047-4 ISBN:978-88-7437-047-4

¹⁶<http://dyne.org/contact>

¹⁷except for RMS who had email exchange during those days, and other who were in connection by <http://www.antersass.it/sadsmokymountains/>[climbing other volcanoes].

the Volcanoes Merapi and Etna, our minds in vibrant exchange during the Cellsbutton¹⁸ festival and Helarfest¹⁹ in Bandung and Yogyakarta.

Thanks, a thousand flowers will blossom!

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¹⁸Organised by the House of Natural Fiber, <http://www.natural-fiber.com/index.php/cellsbutton02>

¹⁹Organised by Common Room, <http://helarfest.com>