OEkoNux

Project Oekonux 7 May 2007

Contents

***O**ekonux **E**inführungs**kl**adde **o**hne **Nu**tzungse**x**klusion*

Translation: Oekonux introductory blotter without use exclusion

This is a translation of the original German version

URL: http://www.oekonux.org/introduction/blotter/

1 "Oekonux" - what does that mean?

1.1 The project

- Discussion process about Free Software and society
  - Wide range of opinions

    Introduction is neither own opinion nor a simple presentation

    Something in between

    Common interest in emancipation
- Mainly virtual
  - Mailing lists $listeAToekonux.de, list - enAToekonux.org]Websiteshttp://www.oekonux.de/$, *http://www.oekonux.org/*]
  - Wiki $http://en.wiki.oekonux.org/]OpenTheoryhttp://www.opentheory.org/oekonux/]$
- Sometimes less virtual also (conference, talks)

***Third Oekonux conference*: 20.-23.5.2004, Vienna**

2 "Free Software" - what does that mean?

Aspects, which are important for the Oekonux discussion

2.1 Characteristics of Free Software

- Any software can be Free
  - GNU/Linux, Apache, Gcc, Perl

    Examples for system related software

    KDE, OpenOffice.org, Gimp

    Examples for applications

    Software for router, mobile phones, ...

    Examples for embedded system

    Shows how deep software is integrated in our every day life

- The actual product is gratis

  However: Price plays a role, but is not crucial

- Source code is available

  Important for the most of the following four rights, which every user of Free Software has

  - Software may be used for any purpose
  - The sources may be studied and changed
  - The software may be distributed arbitrarily
  - Changed versions may be distributed arbitrarily

Free in the sense of freedom

2.2 Keyword: Free Software Licences

- Licenses are contracts
  - Govern under which conditions someone may do something with the software

    Proprietary software also uses licenses

    Especially: Use, modify, distribute

    Software licenses are based on copyright

    Copyright is based on state power

- The genius hack: Use the copyright system against itself
  - Copyright creates scarcity by denying rights

  - Copyleft creates abundance by granting rights

- Two main license types: GPL and BSD

  - Though many licenses exist

    Since a license is a contract it's easy to invent a new license

    But it's rarely useful

    Lists of Free Software licenses by FSF and OSI

- Main difference: May a licensee close sources again or not?

  - BSD: Software may be distributed without sources
  - GPL: Sources must be kept open
  - More than 50% of Free Software projects use the GPL

Fundamental facility to embed Free Software in the law system

Inherits the security from the law system

Inherits the power of the law system

2.3 Mode of production of Free Software

This is a very important characteristic

- Without money

Developers finance themselves by other means

Similar to other hobbies

- Effort ist taken on a voluntary basis

  - Necessity of concrete solutions to problems
  - Selbstentfaltung of the developers

    Programming is fun (for some people)

    Other activities may serve the Selbstentfaltung also

- Manifold self-organized in small, independent groups
- International in the Internet

Often a high quality results

Quality is a direct result of the mode of production

2.4 Keyword: Selbstentfaltung

The notion plays an central role in Oekonux

- More than self-realization

  Self-realization focuses too much on the isolated individual

  Selbstentfaltung understands humans as formed by their relations

- Responsibility is part of Selbstentfaltung

  Taking necessities into account belongs to responsibility

  Responsibility needs to be recognized individually

  Responsibility is learned and therefore coupled with the norms of the society

- Selbstentfaltung is "autonomy-in-interdependence"
  - Dependency is not reduction but extension of own possibilities

    Because others from whom I depend create possibilities by their actions I would not have if only by myself

- Selbstentfaltung of the single person is direct precondition for the Selbstentfaltung of all
  - And vice-versa
- Potential for Selbstentfaltung is essential feature of humans

  See critical psychology (Holzkamp)

  - Content is different for every individual
  - *Particularly it's not necessarily political correct*

In general Selbstentfaltung is a desirable goal

2.5 Simply and Doubly Free Software

Important distinction of concepts

- Simply Free Software
  - Freedom for users
  - Standard rights of Free Software apply
  - Commercial Free Software

    Ordered Software

- Doubly Free Software
  - Freedom for users **and** producers
  - Producers are active no non-alienated basis

- No commercial Free Software

Special mode of production only for Doubly Free Software

Superior quality only for Doubly Free Software

There are mixed forms

2.6 Free Software and commercial influences

- Companies engaging themselves
  - Distributors and Linux-Companies (SuSE, RedHat, small ones, ...)

    Have an interest in the actual state, because they emerged from it

    Hardware and others (IBM, Sun, ...)

    Especially for hardware companies GNU/Linux is simply useful

    Because of this they have an interest in the actual state

- Licenses prevent privatization
  - Gnu General Public License (GPL)
  - Other licenses

    These partially allow re-privatization (BSD)

- Quality accrues from the absence of alienation

  Only then creativity can fully unfold

- Wage labor contradicts Selbstentfaltung

  Is alienated because it is aimed at a third goal (making money)

Free Software can develop only without money

This ultimately prevents a drastic commercialization

Otherwise Free Software is destroyed

2.7 Perspectives of Free Software

- Free Software is becoming more and more important
  - GNU/Linux on the desktop, too

    On servers GNU/Linux is already widespread

    Public administrations are early adaptors

    GNU/Linux on embedded systems

    Tempestuous development

- Dangers
  - Software patents

    In Europe: Years of struggle with many people from the Free Software scene
- More and more people are inspired by the idea
- The principles of Free Software in other fields, too

Linux World Domination ;-)

3 Special features of Free Software

Things specific for Project Oekonux start here

3.1 Free Software is not a simple hobby

- Has high societal usage
- Direct competition with commodities

  After a commodity market has been established

  With big success
- Very modern product

  With very modern means of production
- Develops international
- Mainly written by professionals

Hobby, but in a new quality

Other hobbies don't combine all of these features

3.2 Free Software is not a commodity

- Without exchange

  Nothing must be exchanged
- Exists in abundance

  There is no scarcity beyond technical limitations
- Open sources make secrets impossible
- Cooperation instead of competition

- Absolute quality claim

  Result of the use-oriented way of production

  For commodities it suffices if the buyer believes in quality relative to the competitors

- Call to contribute (inclusion model)

  With commodities only a small circle may contribute (exclusion model)

Free software is as worthless as the air to breathe

Only commodities may have an (exchange) value

The use value is independent of this

3.3 Free Software is not a gift

- A gift is based on a personal relationship

  May exist before and/or after a gift

  - For most people Free Software is anonymous as a product can be

- A gift often creates an obligation
  - Taking Free Software creates no obligations
- Producers of Free Software do not think in terms of gift

  If at all then as a gift to mankind

Calling Free Software a gift is wrong

3.4 Keyword: Scarcity

- Deposits
  - Determined by nature and unchangeable
  - Also products with respect to a certain point in time
- Limitedness
  - Portion of the deposits available to humans
  - Is changeable by technical and other means
  - May occur when need is bigger than offer
- Scarcity
  - Is determined by society and can be produced

    Mineral oil has not always been scarce

    Today for information commodities scarcity must be produced

    May occur when offer is bigger than need

    Yes, this is insane

Scarcity is not a law of nature

3.5 Keyword: Rivalness

Term to classify goods

- Rival: If consumed by one not available for a second
  - Example: Food
  - Rival goods can be limited
  - Abundance of a rival good makes rivalness less important
- Non-rival: Each consumption is independent of each other
  - Example: Information, sunlight
  - Inherently not limited
  - Scarcity must be imposed by external means
- Anti-rival: The good is more useful if it is consumed by many
  - Happens through network effects
  - Example: Telephone
- Markets of material goods are based on rival goods

Free Software is an anti-rival good

3.6 Keyword: Excludability

Term to classify goods

- Excludable: Others can be excluded from using a good
  - Matching legal concept: property
  - Can be cast onto everything
  - Can be hard to maintain though

    For instance: Information goods in Internet age

    Necessary to create scarcity
- Non-excludable: Others can not be excluded from using it
  - Anything which can not be private property?
  - Non-excludable goods are often public goods

    For instance: Roads
- Each market is based on excludable goods
- Free Software made non-excludable by the license
  - Chance of contributions rises when more people use it
  - Regardless of how many "free ride"

GPL society: Extending principles of Free Software to rival goods while dropping exclusion

3.7 Cooperation in Free Projects

- Informal

  Roles suited to the project's need rather than a fixed set of roles

  No formal qualification needed

  Self-appointment as a general tendency

  Official appointment as acknowledgment of a existing practice

  No votes on people

- Self-selected

  According to individual liking

  No appointed persons

- No fixed boundaries

  For instance: No clear division between producers and consumers

- Voluntary
- Variable over time

  People come and go

- Variable over intensity

  People start and stop contributing as they like

- Unequal

  Everyone may contribute as s/he likes

  Some have more influence than others

  Different abilities are appreciated

Cooperation is voluntary, variable and unequal

3.8 Keyword: Maintainer model

Software development is most of all a social process

Maintainer model is a frequent way to organize

Here: Doubly Free Software projects

- Voluntarism as fundamental pre-condition
  - No alienated incentives

  - Makes possible and requires personal decision

- Self-organization as fundamental pre-condition
  - Without external command or alienated goals

    Visible for instance in release dates

- Maintainer keeps the project on course
  - Makes binding decisions
  - Supervises adherence to internal project standards
  - If necessary cares for further development
  - Organizes consensus ("Nobody needs to object")

    Not: Animosity

    Can not command other participants

- Mutual dependence

  Participants need the functions of the maintainer

  Maintainer needs the participants

  - On failure: Fork

Balances conflicts in Free Projects in an optimal way

3.9 Free Software = Selbstentfaltung + digital copy

- Selbstentfaltung is the central motor for production
- Digital copy as a means of production is
  - Lossless
  - Available to all by computers
  - Possible about big distances (Internet)
  - Universal for all (digital) information goods

    The content of the information good is not relevant for the copy operation

    Analog to electric motors of the industrial era

Possibility of digital copy is a new quality

3.10 Keyword: Internet

- Digital copy on a planet-wide basis

  Inherits the features of digital copy

- Lifts space limitations of cooperation
  - No limitation in size
  - Globalized and across cultural boundaries
- Lifts time limitations of cooperation
  - No fixed time frames
  - Makes possible real time as well as asynchronous processes
- As a medium has little inherent limitations
  - Makes topic oriented coppoeration possible
  - New projects and forks are always possible
- Combines individual use with common access
  - Everyone can be active based on individual decision

    Also meaning: As producer or consumer

    Everyone has access

As a tool the Internet offers a lot new features

3.11 Free in the sense of Free Software

This freedom is indicated by the capital "F"

- Absense of alienation
  - Needs to result from the direct needs of those involved
  - Self-organization

    Not organized by principles alienated from the project

    Voluntary participation

    Including voluntary taking over of responsibility

    Enables Selbstentfaltung
- Freedom is result of the process
  - Results are Free because of the process

    Can be used by anyone who needs them

    Implies that they are available without payment

    I.e. unlimited externally

- Freedom is pre-condition of the process
  - The process doesn't work without Freedom

    Freedom enables contributions from all sides

    I.e. unlimited internally

- One's Freedom enables the Freedom of others

  Instead of limiting it like in abstract freedom

Defines several positive feedback cycles

This is where the power comes from

3.12 Keyword: Germ form

- Something structural new existing in the old

  Not the new in a small version

- Features of a contemporary emancipatory germ form
  - Global networking
  - Absence of exchange value and exchange
  - Self-organization
  - At the forefront of the development of productive forces

    Technical, but also social

    Makes Selbstentfaltung possible

    Also as part of the development of productive forces

- Germ forms can be assessed only historically

  However, one can try to recognize germ forms

Free Software has characteristics of a germ form

3.13 Keyword: Five-step

- Germ forms develop in a five-step

  Five-step is a general model for development

  - Formation of the germ form
  - Crisis of the old form
  - Germ form becomes an important dimension of development in the old form
  - Germ form becomes dominant
  - Restructuring of the over all process
  - *All phases can take a long time*

Free Software is in third step

3.14 Criticism: Germ form thesis

Exists inside and outside of the project

- Free Software is useful for capital

  Only for some sections; more important: useful for non-capital

  Points beyond capital structurally nonetheless

- Free Software is financed by the value system

  Every germ form is in the beginning embedded in the old

- Immaterial production is fundamentally different

  Yes; important is what is dominant

- Just nerds in patriarchal structures

  After all nobody can exclude women formally

  Interesting question: Why do women don't want to self-unfold in this Free Software?

- Free Software works in a meritocratic way

  There are no means of force in Free Software, so power has no substance

- Assessment of the germ form questionable

Everyone may make up his/her mind

4 Germ forms and other models and ideas

Germ forms can be distinguished from other models and ideas

4.1 Dam building vs. ship building

Picture to make clear to distinct approaches to politics

- Dam building
  - Useful to dam against rising tide
  - Goal: Defend the old
  - Conservative approach
- Ship building
  - Useful to use the rising tide
  - Goal: Journey to new shores
  - Progressive approach
- Building dams and building ships are totally different approaches
  - But they can complement each other

Free Software is ship building

5 The way to the GPL society

The possibilities are outlined

GPL society *means a formation of society, which is based on the principles of the development of Free Software*

5.1 The utopia

Until now it can be imagines only in rough outlines

- Means of production make Selbstentfaltung possible
  - Useful: Maximum number of degrees of freedom
- Useful activities are Selbstentfaltung
  - Societal and individual utility is directly intertwined

    In part for this other means of work / machines are needed

    Automation makes necessary activities superfluous
- Information and goods are Freely available
  - Free availability is precondition of the process

    So everyone can use all means to self-unfold

    Free availability is result of the process

    Becaus of openness and inclusion model

    This is what the capital "F" means
- Overcoming of the labor society
  - No labor, no commodities
  - No exchange, no money
  - No alienation
- The most important productive power is the human Selbstentfaltung

The freedom of the single becomes the precondition of the freedom of all

And vice versa

5.2 Free information goods

Which hints are there today?

- Well-known ones

  The idea to limit access to information is a historical relative new idea

  - Science?

  - *Currently there are very different and contradictory developments*
  - Free cooking recipes

- New ones

  In the Internet a number of things developed

  - Wikipedia
  - Indymedia
  - Wikis, Blogs
  - Free music
  - *This does not mean copyright violation by P2P*

The idea of Free information goods gets more and more friends

5.3 Keyword: Creative Commons

- Licenses for "Some rights reserved"

  Copyright: "All rights reserved"

- Four license building blocks

  – Attribution (BY)

    Demands attribution of the source on copies

    Noncommercial (NC)

    Denies permission of commercial usage of the work

    No Derivative works (ND)

    Denies permission to derive works

    Share Alike (SA)

    Demands keeping the license on derived works

  Copyleft equals SA+BY

- Big, international movement with good "marketing" (*http://creativecommons.org/*)

  – Adaption of license terms to national law systems

    3rd Oekonux conference: Presentation of the Austrian variant

    Many million of works under Creative Commons licenses already

Creative Commons further the transfer of the idea of Free Software

Transfers idea to arbitrary information goods

Probably no initiative which does this with more success

5.4 Free material goods

- Concrete projects

  Until now it is mainly a matter construction plans

  - Free electronic and hardware projects
  - Free car projects

- In capitalism information is an important precondition for material production already
- Material production becomes more and more an appendage of production of information

  This is analogous to the fact, that today agricultural production is a appendage of industrial production

Information society creates a fundamentally new situation

GPL society brings meaning to the notion of information society

5.5 Keyword: Fabber / Rapid Prototyping

Rapid Prototyping is the more official term

- Fabbers are universal fabrication machines
  - Materialize three-dimensional things from digital data
  - Typically by "baking" some amorphous, fine-grained material

    Allow for constructing things which are difficult to create otherwise

    Actually exist

    Today: Mostly used for building models

- Fabbers have some interesting features
  - Link digital data and material world closely

    Bringing the logic of digital data to the material world

    Universal for (parts of) material production

    Like computers for information: "One machine to rule them all"

    Allow material production for individual needs

- Industrial robots are equally interesting

Fabbers transfer important aspects of the digital world to matter

5.6 Other successful Free Projects: Wikipedia

- Web-based encyclopedia
  - Transnational, multi-lingual endeavor
  - Based on Wiki technology
- Produces useful products

  Is well-known for this reason

- Grows fast
  - Attracts "normal" people
  - Attracts knowledgeable people
- Free in the sense of (Doubly) Free Software
  - Freedom is pre-condition and result of the process
  - Voluntary participation
  - Unlimited externally and internally
- Challenge: Quality assurance
  - Difference to Free Software: No "technical truth"

    Software runs or not

    An encyclopedia article always reflects an opinion

    Actions are on their way

    Result of those actions is of general interest

Wikipedia is a very interesting Free Project

5.7 Other successful Free Projects: Open Access

- Free access to scientific information
  - Growing movement in the scientific communities

    More and more acceptance in the scientific communities

    Based on Internet technology

    Aligns well with scientific tradition of open flow of thoughts

    Based on established methods of peer review

- Produces useful products
- At the forefront of the development of productive forces

  Science is a pre-condition for production with ever increasing importance

- Free in the sense of (Doubly) Free Software

  - Freedom is pre-condition and result of the process
  - Unlimited externally and internally
- Challenge: Counter movement to lock away scientific information

  E.g. patents

Open Access is a very interesting Free Project

5.8 Keyword: Automation

- Today
  - Destroys jobs
  - Only capital is interested in automation
- GPL society
  - Extends possibilities of Selbstentfaltung

    By reduction of unpleasant activity

    By the creative process preceeding it

    By the empowerment of the users
    Everybody is interested in automation

Much more will be automated

Today automation is still impeded

5.9 Keyword: Need

- Is neither good nor bad but requires satisfaction
- Needs are determined by society

  By fashions and (structural) coercion

  So this is variable

- Way of satisfaction is determined by society

  The need for mobility does not not have to be satisfied by cars

Other societies - other needs

5.10 Criticism: GPL society

- Some necessary activities will always be done only under (structural) coercion

  Nevertheless: They need to be abolished

- How to prevent e.g. ecological unsound Selbstentfaltung?

  Don't know

Partially this can be decided only historically

6 Percpectives

6.1 The utopian toilet

- By Annette Schlemm and others
- Sketches the satisfaction of a human need ;-)

  An excerpts follows

  Seehttp : //www.oekonux.org/texts/utoklo/fortranslations]

6.2 Possible actions

About this we did not think very much until now

- Support Free Software
  - Use it yourself and recommend it to others
  - Report bugs to the developers
  - Write Free Software yourself
- Use standards

  Proprietary standards harm Free Software

- Think further together
  - Liberate yourself from the thinking categories of the labor society
  - Project Oekonux (*http://www.oekonux.org/*)
- Make available your products Freely
  - Is easy for digital products
- Start your own Free project