Free/Open Source Software and the Digital Divide

What has Software got to do with Sustainable Development Policy?

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Overview

→ what's the digital divide all about?

→ basics on free/open source software (FOSS)

→ why is FOSS of great use to induce a more even distribution of (digital) wealth

→ Brazil's IT-policy

→ basics on intellectual property rights (IPR)

→ difficulties FOSS faces

→ background information

Multiple Divides

→ **global divide**

→ **social divide**

→ **gender divide**

→ **rural areas/cities**

→ **language divide**

→ **democratic divide**

→ **practical level**

What has Access to ICTs to do with Development?

→ **industrial age:** rich countries control material resources

→ **digital age:** rich countries control access to ICTs

Free/Open Source Software

→ **own economics, culture and values**

→ the software can be run for any purpose

→ the source code is freely accessible, can be modified and may be used for educational purposes

Free/Open Source Software

→the software can be distributed and copied without restrictions

→it can be distributed and copied in modified versions

Two Ways to Treat Code

FOSS

➔ access to source code

➔ business model based on providing service

➔ FOSS-licences allow free distribution+ modification of software

Proprietary Software

➔ no access to source code

➔ business model based on selling licences (+ support)

➔ free distribution and modification not allowed

IPR and Software

➔ **Brazil's way**

➔ **current IPR-systems reflect the interests of the developed world**

➔ **original idea behind IPR: promote innovation**

➔ **20th century: massive extension of IPR**

    ➔ barrier for development and innovation

➔ **developing world benefits from the fair IPR-conditions of FOSS**

FOSS: Sustainable Digital Development Policy

→ **skill transfer**

→ **price and total cost of ownership (TCO)**

FOSS: Sustainable Digital Development Policy

→ **technological independence**

- → **software is a process, not a product**
- → **GNU/Linux operating systems run on old computers**
- → **free standards, protocols and data formats prevent monopolistic tendencies**

FOSS: Sustainable Digital Development Policy

➜ **localization**

➜ **security**

➜ **transparency**

Why is FOSS <u>NOT</u> Mainstream?

→ **Microsoft was there first**

→ **pirated software**

→ **software as a blind spot**

Why is FOSS <u>NOT</u> Mainstream?

➔ **economical reasons**

  ➔ FOSS does not fit into classic economy

➔ **cultural reasons**

  ➔ FOSS does not fit into classic value systems

➔ **don't be afraid! FOSS is just adapted to characteristics of digital media**

Why is FOSS <u>NOT</u> Mainstream?

→ **public sector: lobbyism by proprietary companies**

→ **CSOs/NGOs: public-private-partnerships with proprietary companies**

→ **CSOs/NGOs: "why should we teach skills that the local labour market is not demanding?"**

Why is FOSS NOT Mainstream?

→ **Internal Reasons**

  → informal support challenges institutions of the public sector, companies and NGOs

  → **usability**

  → **where are the women?**

What Helps to Make FOSS Mainstream

➔ **write great software**

➔ **raise awareness**

➔ **convince the NGOs/CSOs**

➔ **convince policy makers**

➔ **integrate more women**

➔ **win FOSS-companies as sponsors for digital divide initiatives**

FOSS = Development and Growth? <u>NO!</u>

→ create and promote local structures in order to secure the use and development of FOSS

Thanks!

➔ **questions?**

➔ **comments?**

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➔ **more information: read my master's thesis: "FAIR CODE Free/Open Source Software and the Digital Divide"**

➔ **download: www.fair-code.net**