Considerations about CS and FOSS
A personal early vision about a perfect CS

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Outline

Problems with current CS

- CS is a profit organization (prove the opposite, see wikipedia)
- community is dependent on few decision makers in company
- further development of web page is slow
  - still web 2.0
  - no web page for mobile access
  - no apps for android and other phones
  - web page is still only partly translated in non-english languages
- in principle, you cannot trust CS, because it's in the cloud[1]
  - there is no guarantee in a continuing service
  - there is no chance to track the processing of my own data
  - keyword: "security by obscurity"
    (CS knows your phone number, your address,
    if your are absent from home . . .)

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[1]http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/who-does-that-server-really-serve.html

Statements

About profit

Just telling me, to be not for-profit, doesn't convince me.
Prove it!

About trust

I don't want to rely on just trusting CouchSurfing concerning
privacy data.
Let us check/keep it ourself!

Short explanation of FOSS

cited from Widipedia[2]

Free and open-source software (F/OSS, FOSS) [. . .] is liberally licensed to grant the right of users to use, study, change, and improve its design through the availability of its source code. This approach has gained both momentum and acceptance as the potential benefits have been increasingly recognized by both individuals and corporations.

In the context of free and open-source software, free refers to the freedom to copy and re-use the software, rather than to the price of the software. The Free Software Foundation, an organization that advocates the free software model, suggests that, to understand the concept, one should "think of free as in free speech, not as in free beer".

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[2]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FOSS

Idea of FOSS Communities

FOSS is not only a license.

FOSS is not just about the product or license. It's an idea. It is about a community sharing its work or working directly together to reach a common goal available for everyone.

Well known FOSS communities:

- Mozilla Foundation (creator of Firefox)
- VideoLAN-Team (creator of VLC)
- The Document Foundation (creator of LibreOffice, successor of OpenOffice.org)
- Wikimedia Foundation (creator of Wikipedia)

Advantages of FOSS products from users perspective

- delivered without any costs
- transparent in matters of data processing
- more interest leads to faster development (more features)
- often improvements in reliability and stability
- improved guarantee of continuing service

Similarities between CS and FOSS Communities

- idea of creating a better world
- idea of doing something together to create something unique
- learn from other people and teach other people
- having a common mission

Big question

So why is CouchSurfing no FOSS-Community?

CS as a FOSS project - history rewritten I

- 1999: Casey explains his vision in a very famous mail in usenet `rec.travel.budget.backpack` and different web forums.

- 2000: A group of volunteers are creating the CouchSurfing Foundation, which holds the trademark and the web domain.

- 2002: CouchSurfing.org goes online (one year earlier). It's not perfect, but userbase and active developers are growing exponentially

- 2003: Couchsurfing Foundation gets registered as a non-profit organization in Germany (like KDE)

- 2005: Starting to be annual participant of Google Summer of Code

- 2006: Starting of annual donation sprints (like the ones for wikipedia)

CS as a FOSS project - history rewritten II

- 2007: Availability of different mobile phone applications after lunch of iPhone. Surprisingly this helps to attract a lot of more users, because the app is free and got different times the featured application.

- 2009: Cooperation with universities helps to attract a lot of computer science students.

- 2008: Introduction of OpenGovernment principles, first elections of community board members

- 2011: Together with these guys from Diaspora[3] the platform is again developed from scratch as a plug-in of a decentralised, privacy-aware, social network. This was the only solution to handle these milions of people trying to access the webpage.

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[3]http://diasporafoundation.org/

Open Questions

But where comes all the money from? As a FOSS project, CS only needs less paid stuff and therefore less money. Users can enable an Amazon Travel store, a near-hostel booking page and paid recommendations for next CS meetings by local tourism industry to support CS. There is a sponsoring membership for people, who want to support, but are no programmers (see KDE).

How can we achieve this all from the current perspective? Considering, that `Benchmark Capital` just invested $7.6 Mio, I really don't know.

Possibilities in near future

- try to make the source code publicly available as soon as possible
- introduce community board which needs to be consulted before major changes in CS structure.
- pay back the money to `Benchmark Capital`
- try to attract as much volunteers as possible, accept students doing a civilian service
- convert CS into a Foundation and assign trademark, rights and domain names to it.
- integrate GPG and CaCert.org for verification
- setup infrastructure to discuss further development of CS:
  - planetcouchsurfing.org (like planetkde.org)
  - mailing list
  - bugzilla to report bugs and features
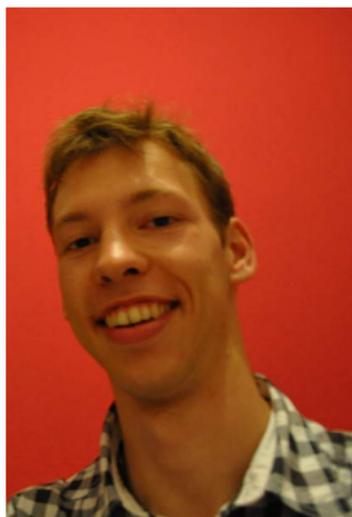 - wiki to document current status of (re)organization

Links

- http://www.opencouchsurfing.org
- http://www.couchsurfing.org
- http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html
- Privacy-aware Facebook buttons:
  http://www.zdnet.com/blog/facebook/german-website-
  creates-two-click-like-button-facebook-not-amused/3247
- http://diasporafoundation.org

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- LATEX-Source: open_couchsurfing.zip
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