

About our software

This work consists of a twitter bot named “The Great Leader”. The Great Leader represents the leader of a fictional government, and posts statements about world affairs via twitter. The followers represents the citizens of the government, and people who comment with a predefined hashtag represents its voters.

Vision: Our goal is to explore the possible dangers of running information through a centralised interface and the importance of understanding the production mechanisms behind it.

How it works

The program gathers data considered negative, for example war and pollution statistics, through several API's. The data is then run through a “filter”, mimicking the production process of a spin doctor, and made into a mock-political statement, later to be posted by “the Great Leader” twitter bot as ‘true facts’; however if people comment on the tweets with a specific hashtag, the bot will send them a private message which reveals the true source of the statements (the raw API data used). The hashtag is discreetly written into the statements, indicating to the reader how to access the source. If the majority of the twitter followers use this function, the statements posted will become unfiltered data from the program, giving everyone a more truthful insight.

How it expresses the aesthetic of code/computational structure/computational culture

Text: Nathaniel Tkacz - From Open Source to Open Government

Our program is mainly inspired by Nathaniel Tkacz's text “From Open Source to Open Government”. The article explores the rhetoric surrounding the abstract notions of ‘open’ and ‘closed’ with a software and governmental perspective.

With the program we explore openness as a concept as it gets explored throughout the text. Our project focuses on Nathaniel Tkacz's allegory on how the power is unevenly distributed within the concepts of the 'Cathedral' and the 'Bazaar.' Additionally it focuses on the lack of transparency within modern governments.

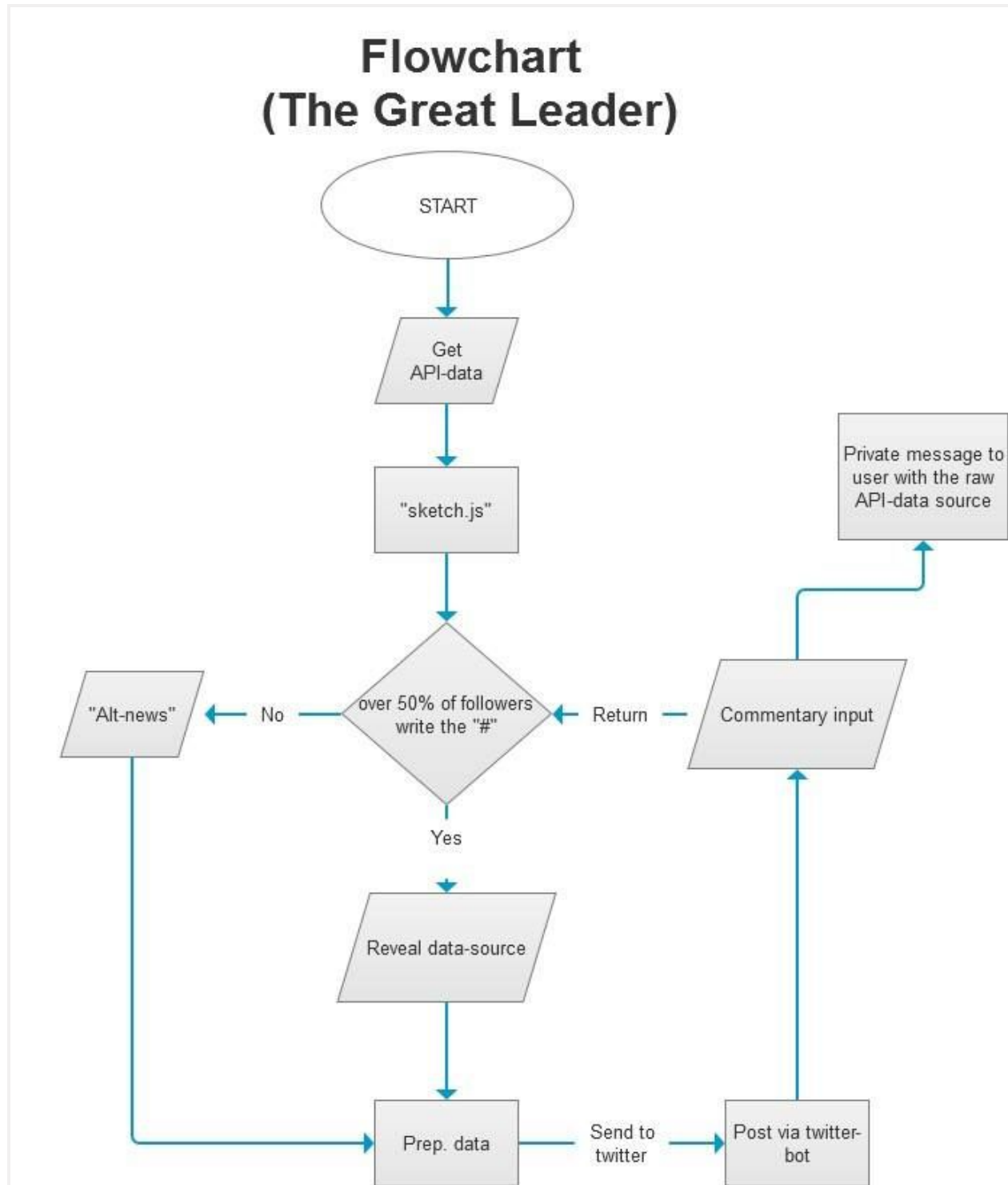
We discuss openness as a general topic through a parody of a powerful leader of a fictional government. This is accomplished through selectively choosing which information to publish through "The Great Leader" twitter bot to exemplify what possibly happens when "big data" gets mediated through a centralised interface. The work also contemplates on the writings of Walter Benjamin, the writer as producer(?) and sheds light on the critique of the interface of modern day client-server based internet. Finally the work also raises questions about the riparian culture in relation to David Berrys "Real Time Streams".

How the work is critical

This project explores openness and exhibits a critique of the centralized interface as well as the apparent lack of transparency in the infrastructural setup of the client-server based web 2.0. We raise questions as to how we interact on the internet, and how this interaction (or lack thereof) reflects on the notion of open-government and open-source sharing of knowledge and infrastructure as well as source-criticism.

The twitterbot is in itself a parody of a great leader and the apparent totalitarian system in which he rules. The fictional character works as a commentary on Nathaniel Tkacz concept of the 'Bazaar' as a cooperative method of work.

Flowchart



Reference

Tkacz, Nathaniel. (2012) "From open source to open government : a critique of open politics. Ephemera" Theory and Politics in Organization, Vol.12 (No.4). pp. 386-405. ISSN 1473-2866

Walter Benjamin. (1998 [1934]) "Skribenten som producent", in Peter Madsen (ed.) Kulturkritiske essays. Samlerens Bogklub

David Berry. "Real-time streams, s. 142 - 171", The Philosophy of Software Code and Mediation in the Digital Age, First published 2011 by Palgrave Macmillan