

An Open Source Perspective on Innovative Societal Applications and Policy Making (Keynote)

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ABSTRACT

This keynote address takes the perspective of open source software to look at some of the policy issues arising from the ever increasing impact of software systems on people's lives. It contends that open source can facilitate public regulation by fostering open cooperation and counter-balancing current oligopoly and vertical integration trends in the IT industry. Thirty years ago, Richard Stallman, and then the Free Software Foundation, invented free software, an efficient techno-legal construct to share code development efforts with traces of anti-monopolistic values. Thanks to new permissive licenses some 15 years later, free software was forked into open source – a business movement and outsider's strategy par excellence. And now, a third kind of open source is emerging, driving innovation as IT applications become increasingly social, diverse and complex. Developers "scratching an itch", investors copying leaders in existing market segments, and committees exploring new grounds, requirement management

are always a reflection of current industry drivers. Moreover, while dominant vertically integrated oligopolistic players with no incentive for transparency nor regulation are re-shaping the IT industry and our digital economy, open source collaborative R&D provides an alternative evolution path based on open standards and componentized software stacks. Identifying the issues at stake and implementing the mechanisms to interact with the industry, without interfering with market forces, are some of the greatest challenges facing policy makers.

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