Dividita: Past, Present, and Future

Lily talks about the project, conceptually

Past

Organizing for generative justice

Years ago I started a game engine called Hypatia Engine which gained a lot of attention on Hacker News, as well as Twitter where it was boosted by Randi Harper. I was open about being queer in these spaces and I think that's why a queer developers started flocking to the project until there was a core team of queers, including some noteworthy developers. Of course there were people of every background, but our shared experience was for once dominant in a space where it never was before. As the project grew this phenomenon became apparent and we attempted to formalize it into a nonprofit (Hypatia Software Organization).

Hypatia Software Organization went on to be funded fully, growing into a nonprofit which I spoke about at LibrePlanet. It grew so fast, too fast and I was responsible due my at-the-time poor leadership abilities (moving too fast, not incorporating other's voices, not listening, etc.). One of the problems of such was I had filled the Board of Directors with people who had not been impoverished, who were detached from the experience of our target demographic (impoverished trans women); classism indicated by a desire to strip cash assistance from perhaps the most vulnerable people in the organization. Aforementioned being the tipping point of the realization that those most vulnerable voices bust be included in the policy and vision of the organization, whereby becoming a representative was an inaccessible commitment to most of those impoverished trans women. Here are some two great articles on this subject, specifically referencing Hypatia:

- "Worker Collectives for Generative Justice": http://slimemaid.zone/blog/anarchy/worker-collectives-generative-justice/index.html
- "Here Are 4 Ways to Get Trans People Out of Poverty Now": https://everydayfeminism.com/2018/01/trans-people-out-of-poverty/

One of the hardest aspects of Hypatia for me had to do with structure, how people's voices were incorporated into both everyday policy and the vision and path-setting of the organization. This is exactly what I hope to accomplish with Dividita: an accessible non-committal system which allows every member of an organization to have equal control over the policy and vision of the organization.

Failed experiments

After I handed the organization off to Lisa Marie, who has done a wonderful job since, I began to experiment more with the concepts of a flat/decentralized organization for group

decision-making. I ran a few failed groups, Hen Coop, Slime Mom, some others, and a consistent problems were:

- Members lacked direction in these systems, vision-setting was inaccessible
- I interfered with the process too much; changed the system based on my observations, these rapid changes made the system opaque, i.e., inaccessible to the members
- Open consensus systems for handling interpersonal matters quickly devolve into witch-hunts, which is the reason I shut down the SlimeMom experiment (you can ask me more about that terrifying experiment if you want).
- Non-asynchronous systems of organizational oversight is a failure in modern online organization; member assemblies/meetings at specific times are exclusionary and demand too much of volunteers and already pressed members
- The ruels of participation were simply always too complicated; learning curve always too high to learn to begin with and hard to keep up with

Present

Why I want Dividita

I want to an accessible system for users to control an organization equally, allowing those members to thrive or at least enabling success of the organization's mission.

What I'd like to see us work on

I would like us to build out a proof-of-concept for a group decision-making system, project name "Workshop." I hope it would have two features: decision making process equally involving all members and catalog/archive of rules, that is decisions which have been made.

State Of

I figured if I roped everyone in from the concept stage people would have truer ownership and incentive in the project, and that's exactly where we are: concept stage. However, I believe we can start coding this thing as soon as we figure out the decision making process.

Future

My hopes

- Marginalized people self-organize and achieve generative justice
- Small businesses empower workers with an inclusive system
- Distinctive causation of ownership positively effecting productivity/efficiency

- Representative or *worse* systems are substituted, increasingly, with *flat* systems
- These things are totally accessible to everyone, in fact fun to use
- A sustainable business model that allows core Dividita developers to be compensated

Experiments

- Train people to integrate Dividita into their organization for free
- Use feedback in iterative process, making software as intuitive and hardened as possible

Examples

- In organizations succeeding which use Dividita is any of that success reproducible?
- Blog about success stories, how they integrated
- Blog about integrating Dividita legally
- Dividita should be the shining example of itself; Dividita should dogfood its software

Our guiding metric: leverage

Zittrain's 2006 paper, "Generative Internet," describes leverage as "the extent to which...[a system]...enable[s] valuable accomplishments that otherwise would be either impossible or not worth the effort to achieve."

A path

Toolsets for group-control, e.g., a bot that makes it so bans are controlled via vote, etc. This would integrate into the decision making process app which has integrations across different platforms (Slack, Discord, IRC).

Special thanks

Thanks to everyone for listening about the change I want to see in the world and for enabling this change by doing so, Thanks to Brian Callahan for expanding my mind continually on these subjects.