



A spiral of openness

OpenDoTT
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Open / Commons 101

Some references I was collecting after a call with a colleague. I figure there's no way to work "open" without a broader understanding of (multi-stakeholder) "commons".

I was already familiar with some of the references below, and am finding interesting to return after some years of having had my first contact with them.

- [What is Creative Commons?](#)
 - [Re-examining the Remix](#) - Lawrence Lessig TEDxNYED
- [Everything is a Remix Remastered.](#)
- [Free software, free society](#) - Richard Stallman TEDxGeneva 2014.
- "A Letter to the Commons", in [In the Shade of the Commons](#) (PDF) - pp. 19-21 (as well as other texts in this publication).
- "Ways of science: public, open, and commons", Estalella and Lafuente, in [Open Science, open issues](#) (PDF) - pp. 27-56.
- [Pirate Utopias: Moorish Corsairs & European Renegadoes](#), Peter Lamborn Wilson (on "pirate flags").

And some I've been myself involved with:

- [Beyond the Dichotomy between Natural and Knowledge Commons: Reflections on the IAD Framework from the Ubatuba Open Science Project](#)
- [Open Science and Social Change: A Case Study in Brazil](#) (excerpts [here](#)).

— *After reading and discussing the contents of the Internet Health training, I started filling the templates offered. First, the [vision](#) for my project:*

I am working with people, groups and organisations interested in transforming second-hand materials to create structures for the collective stewardship of physical goods to citizens, nonprofits and businesses so that they can prevent the generation of waste.

I must add that I'm not at all comfortable with these predefined formats and intend to write more extensively on why that is, but decided to play the game nonetheless.

Open Canvas

Then to the open canvas. While I do like the canvas format as it allows one to start from any point and go about building the rest, I always find it insufficient to understand scenarios in depth. Some years ago I attended an online course on *systems thinking* (offered by [Acumen Academy](#)) that helped me understand the sort of approach in which each part can potentially influence all the others. But still... not that easy. I intend to write more about it futurely.

I eventually managed to [work on the top part of the canvas](#) - thus excluding anything related to its execution (and skipping the project name, for the time being). It was a little hard to decide on a single "product", so I went for an overall approach that will hopefully trickle down to specific parts or sub-projects. I decided also to replace the fields "user profiles" and "user channels" with "stakeholder" profiles and channels, respectively.

From my log on GitHub:

"The (main) problem is that start culture is inherently linear: you start with a (disruptive?) idea, lay it out, engage people, build up momentum and only then start getting sort of 'circular' (the lean startup way, that is). Even then, you're only building up critical mass to the magical moment of reaching startup nirvana (also called exit strategy, hopefully with an IPO that will turn the founders into magnates). That's hardly circular, and arguably unsustainable. Bootstrapping could be thought in other terms, I think (or hope). Changing the goal from coming up with radical solutions to engaging people who can enact systemic change."

Problem

MATERIALS THAT COULD
BE REUSED ARE
CURRENTLY DISCARDED
AND END UP INCINERATED,
RECYCLED (DOWNCYCLED)
OR IN LANDFILLS (OR WASTE)

Major not required

So what

System for the
collective stewardship
of materials

Metrics

Higher
proportion
reuse/waste

UVP

- REWARD PEOPLE/ORGs who
reuse materials
- SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
-

STAKEHOLDERS
~~USER~~ Profits

- CITIZENSHIP/
HOWEVER
- PRO REPAIR
- COMMUNITY REPAIR
- WASTE AUTHORITY

Contributor Profits

STAKEHOLDERS
~~USER~~ (Channel)

- CIRCULAR Economy
communities
 - ENVIRONMENTAL
communities
 - PRESS
 - CONTRACTORS
- CITY
- WATER
- ECO

Consumer Channel

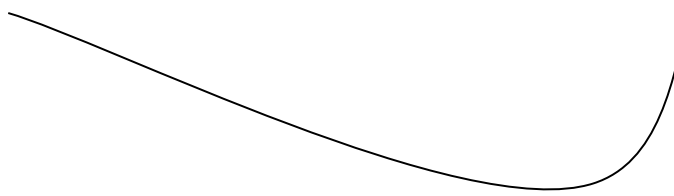
It was not only the templates heavily charged with startup vocabulary, though. There was something else. I realised that I see the rhetoric of the hacker genius/hero taking on the world under a different perspective nowadays.
Can we think of...

... non-W.E.I.R.D.*
(and decolonial)
openness?

(*) W.E.I.R.D.:

Western/white/northern and male;
Educated, or rather “taught” a biased worldview;
Industrialized, often seizing on externalities;
Rich - based on structural unbalance or war;
Democratic, or so they say... and believe.

Open
vs.
(what?)



Proprietary?

Enclosed?

Linear?

Finite?



Open-ended rather than openly shared

"This one is a spiral, ok. And what about this spiral? (...) The most beautiful explanation I found was the following: it represents the beginning and the end. And that in our life we'll never be - we always say it's circular, right, represented by an ellipse - it means that whatever position we're returning to, even if things have not changed, we ourselves have changed. So it is not the same. The circle does not close in order to become an ellipse."

Prof. Germano Bruno Afonso reporting on teachings from Brazilian Pajés (Shamans) during a panel on Ethnoastronomy and Archaeoastronomy:

<https://youtu.be/Cxmm7aFqkLc?t=1478>



Does the spiral have a centre or you're only not looking close enough? Fractal spiral. Where do we start? Where does it start?

"Project" format doesn't always make sense. The world is not finite.

Some problems can not be broken in small parts. They should be addressed as dynamic systems.

Project lead > contributors

Power imbalance?

I prefer to start with a community... and change the "idea" based in conversations with them.

Idea > Plan > Community
Sometimes the community is the project, not something external to it.

"You *must* have a great idea". What I have none?
Idea as affirmation / imposition.

Intentional
Self-sabotage of Leadership

I prefer to start with an impossible question, and keep changing the answer as people engage with it.

Startup culture requires *faith*.
Is there a role for the apostate?

Ditch the recipe

Working open vs. Institutional procedures (e.g. University Ethics Committee)

I don't ever really start anew. Everything I do is a new episode of my previous accomplishments and failures.

Can we embed not only *errors* but also *doubt* in the way open projects are developed?

How many gardeners it takes to grow a forest?
How many beings with unclear roles?

User-centric?
People-centric?
Participatory?

Diversity is not the same as difference(s).

Measuring interferes with whatever is measured.
Is that always for good?

Buen vivir -centric
Ubuntu-centric
Avoid jargon
Mandar obedeciendo
Tuxaua

Culture of Openness, instead of privileged, license-based transactional "open"

"Principle of [networking](#)".

Notes

~~Project lead~~ Tuxaua

“Every village has a tuxaua, who has the power of solving internal conflicts and quarrels, summoning meetings, scheduling celebrations and rituals, defining the agricultural activities and commercial transactions, ordering the building of houses etc. The tuxaua is in charge of hosting guests, **demonstrating his generosity** and carrying out the ceremonial role of offering çapó – guaraná sticks grated in water, a beverage drunk in large quantities daily that also has ritual and religious functions.”

Povos Indígenas do Brasil, ISA

I was once in a conference about access to technology. A successful activist from an African country listened to my talk about MetaReciclagem and tried to convince me that we should incorporate, become an organisation. Only then, she said, would we be able to promote change and influence policy.

My take however was that we should not become an organisation precisely because we were already influencing government decision from the inside. There were public servants who were members of our open network, and a very interesting dynamics taking place. As activists, some of us felt the very real power to influence discussions and decisions made by the government. On the other hand, those who were inside public institutions found a timely and fast avenue to help themselves understand better the implications of government decisions, and generate ideas without the need to go the usual way - open a call, hire consultants, wait for months and finally get their hands on something that was outdated if not outright wrong.

Someone would call that “[gang power](#)”.

It's always important to tell once again the same old stories

The (messy) repository where I'm registering the ripples caused by the internet health and open leadership training module:

<https://github.com/opendott-smartcities/working-open>

It's interesting that even before arriving in Berlin the focus of my research has anchored around waste prevention. There are so many initiatives in this field around here that the more I learn about them, the more I feel humbled.

In line with the critical take I already had on the triumphalist narrative of innovation and technology, it feels as though any idea I could have would not be enough to generate real impact. And yet, that may be precisely the best way to go about it.

What if I start by just not being that guy trying to convince everyone that his project is a game changer, the ultimate solution that deserves attention, funding and faithful followers? What if I understand that I'm just another person interested in contributing to a wider conversation that involves people from very diverse fields of knowledge and life experiences?

Instead of recruiting people to participate in my (heroic/epic) research, I should then direct my work to become a participant in others' ongoing projects. My concepts would better be conversation starters - question marks instead of exclamations directed towards other people.



A close-up photograph of a person's hands playing a large, round drum. The person is wearing a colorful, patterned shirt and a black long-sleeved shirt. Their hands are positioned on the drumhead, which has some dark markings. The background is blurred, showing more of the person's clothing and the drum.

**“Drums in the jungle
were the first internet”**

Mestre TC
Casa de Cultura Tainã - Campinas