

Computer Sciences are Social Sciences!

Tommi

DWeb Camp

June 23, 2023

About this weirdo

- ▶ Philosophy, International Studies and Economics (almost) graduate
- ▶ *Scambi Festival* director
- ▶ either sleepy or overenthusiastic
- ▶ quit centralized social media in 2020
- ▶ terrible guitar player
- ▶ great clumsy troublemaker. . .
- ▶ . . . compensating with powerful problem-solving skills



Figure 1: Tommi speaking

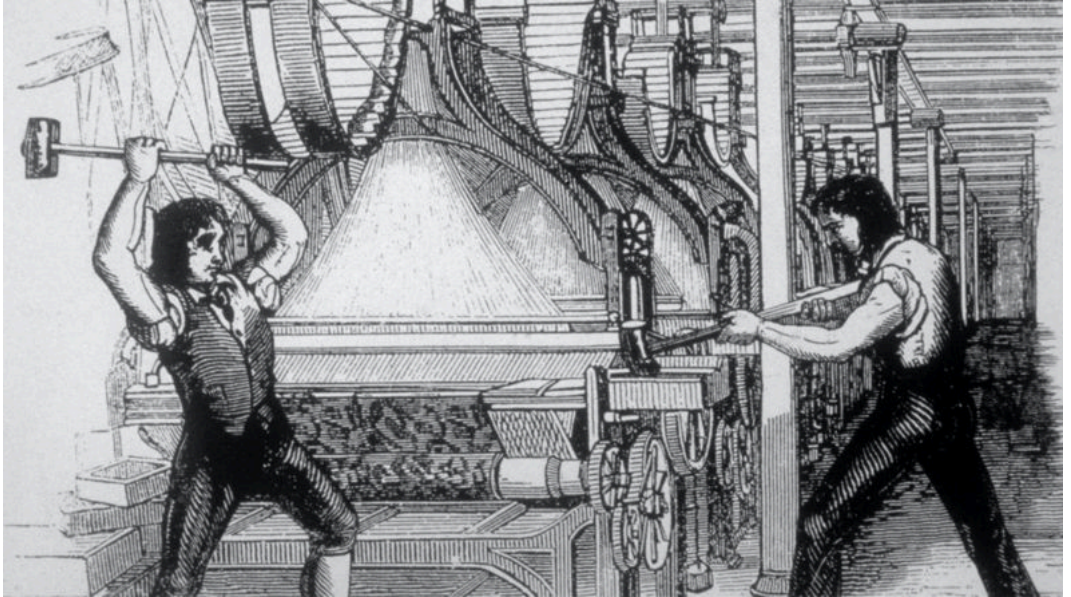
A few premises

- ▶ I am Still learning. . .
- ▶ Months of work squeezed into a presentation in a few hours
 - ▶ this is ugly
 - ▶ let's chat to dive deeper!

A chronological journey

1. The birth of the Internet
2. The current Internet and its flows
3. Developing digital futures starting from a socio-philosophical approach

Let's start with a story

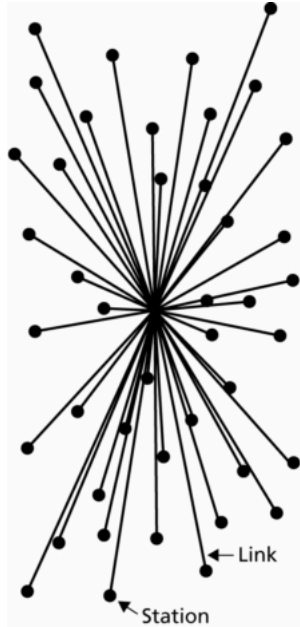


Flash-forward to today

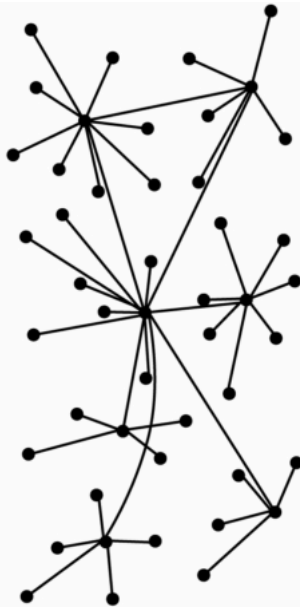
Don't hunt the puppet, but rather hunt the puppet masters

The birth of the Internet

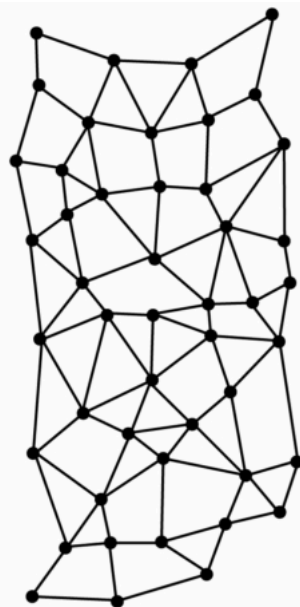
*Baran's concept had the same **centrifugal** character that defines the Internet today. At its most basic, . . . the "centrifugal" approach is to flatten established hierarchies and put power and responsibility at the nodal level so that each node is equal. Baran's network focused on what he called user to user rather than . . . centre-to-centre operation.*



Centralized (A)



Decentralized (B)



Distributed (C)

Collaboration, that stranger

At the core of Licklider's thinking was an emphasis on collaboration. Licklider posited a future scenario in which a researcher at one research centre could find a useful computer resource over the network from a research centre elsewhere. This, in a world of incompatible machines and jealously guarded computing resources, was far-sighted talk indeed.

The Internet of the '90s

- ▶ a widespread *diffidence* by non-experts towards digital telecommunications, because of its subversive *complexity*, but also because of. . .
- ▶ . . . a fundamental *counter-intuitiveness* of the infrastructure, based on. . .
- ▶ . . . a heavily *decentralized* system, where no main node exists, and whose effectiveness is based on the *distribution* and *redundancy* of information and computing resources;
- ▶ a focus on *collaboration*, on *sharing ideas* and resources, on commonly defined standards allowing *interoperability*;
- ▶ both a strive and a drive for *interconnecting* concepts, users, and devices;
- ▶ a diffused feeling of liberty and *curiosity*, fostered by a great *informality* coupled with a cozy and friendly community;
- ▶ lack of interest from the financial world.

The Internet's Original Sin

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Spoiler: long story short, the problem of the Internet, the whole problem, is Capitalism

The Internet of the 2020s

- ▶ a widespread *blind reliance* on digital telecommunication tools by non-experts;
- ▶ ... that compose appealing and *intuitive* platforms, nicely and masterfully simplified by exploiting...
- ▶ ... a strong and almost unavoidable *centralization* carried out by monopolistic *profit-driven* companies;
- ▶ an inescapable *competition*-driven business, inherited by the deeply capitalist culture the dot com bubble represented;
- ▶ as with anything inscribed within a capitalist economic system, technological innovation is carried out in parallel by the isolated silos that are the different companies potentially working on the same project, and **competing** to overcome the others rather than join forces with the common purpose of providing the best service possible;
- ▶ interconnection opportunity is functional and **subordinate to the monetization** and the general profitability of digital devices;
- ▶ Computer Sciences and the Internet are not merely strongly tied with finance, but they are directly **dominated by the market**, and their principles are more financial ones rather than technological and human ones.

Philosophy *in* Science

[Philosophy in Science] is dedicated to fostering the pursuit of a philosophy of science that considers theory, practice and the world simultaneously, and never in isolation from each other.

Digital Humanities are bullshit

Subverting and revolutionizing the relation between humanities and tech: the point is not about moving humanistic heritage to the digital domain, but rather using sociopolitical, philosophical and anthropological tools to question digital technical infrastructures.

The essence of technology

Technology is not equivalent to the essence of technology. When we are seeking the essence of "tree," we have to become aware that that which pervades every tree, as tree, is not itself a tree that can be encountered among all the other trees.

Likewise, the essence of technology is by no means anything technological. Thus we shall never experience our relationship to the essence of technology so long as we merely conceive and push forward the technological, put up with it, or evade it. Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology.

But this much remains correct: modern technology too is a means to an end. That is why the instrumental conception of technology conditions every attempt to bring man into the right relation to technology. Everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means. We will, as we say, “get” technology “spiritually in hand.” We will master it. The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control.

The fact that what is called the technological development of modern times has been so largely oriented economically to profit-making is one of the fundamental facts of the history of technology. [...] the main emphasis at all times, and especially the present, has lain in the economic determination of technological development. Had not rational calculation formed the basis of economic activity, had there not been certain very particular conditions in its economic background, rational technology could never have come into existence.

Surveillance Capitalism is not Technology

Surveillance capitalism is not technology; it is a logic that imbues technology and commands it into action. Surveillance capitalism is a market form that is unimaginable outside the digital milieu, but it is not the same as the “digital”. [...] surveillance capitalists want us to think that their practices are inevitable expressions of the technologies they employ.

Karl Marx

*The bourgeoisie cannot exist without **constantly revolutionising the instruments of production**, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones.*

Hannah Arendt

In *The Human Condition* Hannah Arendt explains that the private is the domain of the necessity, within which the individual is constrained by and to the economical and physical imperatives that essentially ensure the maintenance of life. On the other hand, the public sphere is the space within which a person is freed from their necessities, thus free to engage in public debates for the common good. Because of its rigidly hierarchical nature, the private domain must be attentively guarded from invading the public. Arendt sustains that modernity fosters the expansion of a social sphere, sitting between the private and the public one, that allows a worrisome contamination of the latter by the former.

A room (a world) on fire

Thinking philosophically means slowing things down. It means waiting to see the results, it means diving into the exhausting process of **questioning anything and everything**.

Political code!

Let us fight the battle Aaron Swartz fought. Let's not just look for the solution *within* code, but using it to empower political action.

