Elevate: Open Everything?

Being an impression of the ninth Elevate
festival held in Graz, 23-27 October 2013.

By David Charles

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David Charles

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*Dedicated to all those storming the barricades
and pulling down the blinds.*

*Note: This book is not currently tracking your location
or monitoring your telephone calls.*

Elevate: Open Everything?

Glossary

I've written this book to be accessible to as many people as possible, but every debate has its own terms of reference and jargon. I've tried to keep this to a minimum, but give this glossary a quick check just to make sure we're all starting with the same vocabulary.

Anonymity	As far as we're concerned, anonymity means the ability to hide who you are from the NSA, Google and other surveillance operations.
Cryptography	As far as we're concerned, cryptography helps you to hide what you are saying from the NSA, Google and other surveillance operations.
Edward Snowden	Starting in June 2013, former US intelligence contractor Edward Snowden has been exposing secret NSA and GCHQ surveillance programmes, including PRISM, Tempora and the phone hacking of world leaders. Apparently, the worst revelations are yet to come. He is currently living in Russia under temporary asylum, wanted in the US on charges of espionage.
Elevate	Elevate is a festival of critical political discourse and a jolly good knees up that takes place every year in Graz, Austria. This year's event had the theme "Open Everything?" and took place on 23-27 October 2013.
GCHQ	The Government Communications Headquarters is the British version of the NSA. Famous for spying on foreign politicians during the 2009 G-20 London Summit and for the Tempora surveillance programme.
NSA	The National Security Agency is the main producer and manager of signals intelligence for the US. That means wire tapping. Famous for the PRISM programme and monitoring the phone conversations of at least thirty-five world leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel.
Open source	In production and development, open source promotes: universal free access to a product's design or blueprint and universal redistribution

of that design or blueprint, including subsequent improvements to it by anyone. The Internet is basically run on open source software.

Openness   A nebulous term embracing the ideals of open source code and applying them to anything you care to think of, from politics to pants. A Good Thing.

Post-privacy   A condition in which there is no longer such a thing as privacy. Given the vast amount of private data we publish on the Internet and the ease with which it can be copied and redistributed, proponents of post-privacy would argue that even the merest idea of a "Privacy Policy" is absurd.

PRISM   PRISM is a clandestine mass surveillance data mining program said to give the National Security Agency and FBI easy access to the systems of nine of the world's top Internet companies, including Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Apple, Yahoo and Skype. Operational since 2007, GCHQ have also had access to PRISM since at least June 2010.

Tempora   Tempora extracts and processes data from fibre-optic cable communications that pass through the UK. This includes recordings of telephone calls, the content of email messages, Facebook entries and the personal Internet history of users. The data are preserved for three days, while metadata are kept for thirty days. Shared with the NSA.

Tor Project   Tor is free software that enables online anonymity. Tor directs Internet traffic through a free, worldwide, volunteer network consisting of more than four thousand relays to conceal a user's location or usage from anyone conducting network surveillance or traffic analysis. Tor employs Jacob Appelbaum, Elevate 2013's opening speaker.

Research conducted via the anonymous Startpage search engine and Wikipedia, the world's favourite open Internet address. All web addresses referenced herein were accessible as of 21 November 2013.

Introduction

For those of you who don't yet know: Elevate is an international festival of music, arts and political discourse held every year in Austria. The theme of this year's political discourses was "Open Everything?". Over the course of five days in October, activists from around the world gathered in Graz to explore the arguments implied by that dangling question mark. Do we want and can we create open society, open economy, open democracy, open knowledge – open everything?

Before we begin, I should address the fundamental question for understanding the festival and therefore understanding this book: What do we mean by "open"? The answer is almost anything. Part of the power of the word is drawn from its flexibility. Depending on the circumstances, "open" could mean open for anyone to access; open for anyone to modify and improve upon; open for anyone to share freely; or open processes and decisions, documented and visible to all. The fundamental aim of all varieties of openness, though, is to empower us to take control of our world by taking control of the things that we use, from our computers to our parliament.

Recent innovations, including the all-knowing Internet and a twenty-four hour all-seeing media, mean that the world has never been so open, with an unprecedented flow of information, knowledge and communication. But there is a dark side to this openness: governments today put their entire populations under surveillance, while monopolistic corporations sell intimate details of their customers' lives to advertisers.

Given these tensions within the concept of openness, the Elevate discourses kept returning to one overwhelming question: Can we harness the power of openness for democracy, without slipping into an Orwellian nightmare?

Open Author, Open Writing

My name is David Charles and this book is largely based on the political discourse sessions of the festival, with each session forming a chapter of the book. Unfortunately, being monolingual, I was only able to attend the sessions that were either in English or translated by Elevate's excellent simultaneous translators, Silvia Glatzhofer and Renee Kadanik.

Before being asked to write for the festival, I had never been to Elevate – or even to Graz. I had never met any of the discussants before either, except for one of the organisers. Furthermore, I had no particular expertise in the field of openness. In fact, far from being an expert, I was more or less an ignoramus. In many ways, I was the worst possible person they could have chosen to write about the festival: a complete newbie. But if openness is to sweep the world, then its supporters need to be able to communicate to people like me, people who are new to its principles and ideas. Naivety *is* my expertise.

As for my style of writing, I'll say this much: I'm wary of photographic deception. Photographs are always taken from one angle, from one particular point of view. There is no such thing as a photograph taken from two angles, let alone from every possible angle. Nevertheless, photographic images are so realistic that we often forget this simple fact and mistake its one angle for the objective reality of the world at that moment. In fact, because they are taken from only one point of view, photographs are the ultimate in subjectivity.

Writing is similar. Writing can be so authoritative that it conceals its author. Newspapers are regarded as being essentially neutral, pedlars in objective facts, not subjective gossip. "Editorial Comment" is an officially sanctioned section of all newspapers where opinions are expressed – but this is a red herring, designed to mislead us. The convenient untruth that follows is that, "Editorial Comment" aside, the rest of the paper is strictly impartial facts. Nothing could be further

from reality. Every story, like every photograph, is taken from a single point of view.

The art of writing has one advantage over photography: we can write introductions that betray our angle on the world. So here it is: do not be deceived by literary photography; what follows is only an impression; everything *is* refracted through my subjective experience. For all the opinions expressed, for all the errors, misapprehensions and assumptions, I apologise, but you can't say you weren't warned.

Open Book

Well you've done that already, but, wait – there's more. In the spirit of Creative Commons, this book is a Free Cultural Work, meaning that you are free to use the book however you want – hell, you can even print out a million copies, turn it into a *New York Times* bestseller *and* pocket all the cash. Be my guest.

Finally, many thanks to Elevate and to everyone who contributed to a festival that was both invigorating and thoughtful.

Notes on an Overland Journey

Somewhat impressively, the very first train on my thirty-four hour overland journey to Elevate is late. The 6.00 train from Liverpool Street to Norwich is delayed due to a signalling problem. This wouldn't ordinarily be much of a catastrophe (or much of a surprise), but I have a connection to make. There was supposed to be twenty-six minutes between the arrival of this train at Manningtree and my next train's departure for Harwich International Ferry Terminal. When I booked the ticket a couple of weeks ago, twenty-six minutes seemed like an aeon. But, as the train stands stuck stock still on Platform 9, twenty-six minutes seems irresponsibly brief. Nine of those minutes have already evaporated and, with no sign of imminent departure, I'm getting skittish.

Of course, the red-eye four o'clock night bus had been precisely on time, leaving me stranded at Liverpool Street with fifty-five minutes before my train. This I spent searching for daybreak food and giving paltry amounts of small change to the homeless. One chap, recently discharged from the army, needed eleven pounds sixty to give as a minimum donation to the army benevolent fund so that he could stay in their hostel until Wednesday morning. I gave him about seventy pence, with which he seemed inordinately happy.

As part of my time-wasting campaign, I read a pair of notice boards that informed me there was a two percent chance of my Greater Anglia train being delayed by at least thirty minutes, or being cancelled altogether. Either of these eventualities would mean no connection at Manningtree, no train to Harwich, no ferry to Holland and no Elevate. It is at this precise moment that I wonder why I didn't fly. It would have been cheaper, it would have been faster, it would have been more comfortable, it would have been more convenient. And, even if it hadn't been all of those things, at least it would have fucking got me there. But

no. I have instead chosen to embark on a journey of thirty-four hours, seven trains, five Twixes, one ferry and no sleep. Why?

No matter – at last the tyrannical signals relent and the train squeals sluggishly on the rails. I check my clock: only twelve minutes late. All is forgiven.

But at every stop the driver blithely announces a progressively later lateness for the train. At Stratford: "Due to signalling problems at Liverpool Street station, this service is now running fourteen minutes late." At Chelmsford: "Due to signalling problems at Liverpool Street station, this service is now running fifteen minutes late." On arrival at Colchester: "Due to signalling problems at Liverpool Street station, this service is now running eighteen minutes late." On *departure* from Colchester: "Due to signalling problems at Liverpool Street station, this service is now running *twenty* minutes late."

We are flirting with disaster: twenty of my twenty-six minutes of connection time have been frittered away by what must be the laziest train on the Greater Anglia network. Has the driver forgotten to take the handbrake off? And how can we have arrived at Colchester eighteen minutes late and leave, no more than thirty seconds later, twenty minutes late? Have we entered the hitherto unknown Essex Time Warp? And why is the driver still scapegoating Liverpool Street's signals, long since left behind? He's not fooling anyone.

Mercifully, the time warp lifts and we lumber into Manningtree only twenty minutes late. I have plenty of time to get completely lost in a station of three platforms and one pedestrian subway.

* * *

In spite of Greater Anglia's efforts, I make the connection to Harwich, I make the ferry to Hook and I get my reward for a sleepless

night: the North Sea, under gale warnings, soaks my mind and pummels the London grime from the pores of my skin.

Hook van Holland has a comfortable, functional sort of a feel. There are pretty trees lining the railway, blown sideways until they grow sideways. The bleating of sheep mingles with the clunking of the cargo cranes and their lorries. The sky is an industrial grey with blue lacing where the clouds don't quite knit together. The railway tracks are powered overhead and all the roads seem to curve away invitingly, making me wish I had my bicycle. I get the same feeling arriving in Dieppe, the most practical and piratical of the England to France ferry ports. There is something in stepping from sea to shore that releases a surge of freedom. I don't get that feeling with airport arrivals: a trudge, a slog, a plod past immigration, customs, baggage reclaim, then a spiral of hither-thither escalators to fluorescent shuttle stations. Sitting here, waiting for the Rotterdam train, I can still see my ferry. It can't be more than three hundred yards away, with only a cursory glance of officialdom between us.

And that answers the why of why I don't fly. Flying is one glorious ballistic leap over a dirty continent; overland travel is a thousand everyday journeys. I join the school run in Rotterdam, after work drinks in Utrecht and the morning commute in Munich. I travel hand-in-hand with the whole of humanity: babies laughing and crying, homeless panhandling, bus stop rappers rapping, whole families migrating south, businessmen conferencing over sheaves of paper, retired Scrabblers disputing the word "mif", three clean teens learning how to smoke and an entire hockey team from Holland. Why would I not want to be a part of all that?

It has long been understood by writers, artists and inventors of all stripes that there are three short-cuts to creativity: the bath, the bed and the bus. And if one twenty minute bus ride is good, then surely thirty-four hours, seven trains and a ferry is excellent. If travel is

creativity, then no-frills flying is a relentless diet of Mills & Boon and James Patterson; going overland is magical realism. I detest travelling by plane for the simple fact that you don't get a good story out of sitting your fat ass on a plane for two hours (unless it crashes and, frankly, I'd rather be on the ground than in the air in that situation). The richness in life is found in depth, not speed: the man who collects a couple of shells from the beach is a tourist; the man who collects forty-thousand shells from beaches all over the world is a renowned conchologist.

I haven't slept now for two nights running. A frosty breakfast is taken waiting for train number six in Munich's old botanical garden. If I'd flown, I'd have seen two generic airports that I've seen in replica a hundred times, all over the globe. I could have interacted with my fellow harried passengers, the nervous police and a bored flight crew. The miracle of human flight and its godlike perspective of the earth is too often missed by blasé travellers like me, hidden behind a book, a magazine or an electronic device of dubious ethical origin. In contrast, even though I've only been glimpsing, my overland experience of Manningtree, the North Sea, Utrecht, Munich and Bavaria has been undeniably physical. These places are no longer dots on a map. It's about a thousand miles from London to Graz – but that's only two hours and ten minutes by plane, a sort of poor man's teleportation. I will arrive dirty, hungry and dog-tired, but with an odd sense of achievement. A shower, a meal and a bed will never feel so good.

My final connection is from Bischofshofen, Platform 5. Looking up at the departure board, I am overcome with emotion to see there my seventh and final train, destination: Graz. My hands shake, my heart flutters, I give a choke and my eyes fill with tears. Flying is glorious, to be sure, but travelling overland has its moments of sublimity. Even if an electronic departure board is a strange way for it to come out.

WEDNESDAY

"I love crisis."

Opening Show: Elevate Open Everything?

WEDNESDAY, 23 OCT 20:00 – 22:00 Dom Im Berg

The scene is set: a hollowed cave, buried deep within the bosom of an Austrian mountain. Darkness ripples over the crowd, already kept waiting. The subterranean envelops us, the atmosphere increasingly oppressive, like we are trapped in the underground volcano lair of one of the more flamboyant Bond villains. The compacted earth above and around us vibrates with the bass thrum of expectant conversation. Then...

A spaceman bounds onto stage, dressed in a full service-issue orange space suit, complete with fish bowl space helmet, clumpy boots and "irritating" gloves. "How can we make things truly open? How can we get people to support each other?" yells Johannes Grenzfurthner (once his helmet has been ripped off). "These are the answers that I want from Elevate. Otherwise, in two hours, I will go to Kazakhstan, enter this space rocket and leave planet Earth. After all, the outfit is pretty cool."

Johannes' field of investigation is context hacking: how can we get people interested in things, when everyone thinks they already know everything? His answer, evidently, is by bounding onto stage dressed in what must be an impossibly sweaty space suit and asking some of the world's most prominent political activists why he shouldn't just bugger off to the moon. It's compelling. It also serves as a potted table of contents for this book.

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Thomas Lohninger and Michael Bauer recently organised a mass protest against data storage in Austria. "Your telephone company knows who you are, where you are, who you call, who you text – what

you text – everything," Michael says chirpily. "Corporations and the government now know more about us and our behaviour than we know ourselves," Thomas adds with a cheeky grin. "And apparently we're not allowed to do anything about that." You can read more good news from Thomas and Michael in "Is an Open Society a Free Society?" (p22).

If you think this is all just the half-crazed mumblings of the tin hat brigade, then meet Anne Roth. Six years ago, Anne was put under surveillance for a year by the BKA (the German investigative police) because they suspected her husband of being a terrorist. "Encryption used in a proper way is the only thing that helps," Anne says. "I believe it is important to become aware of these things – not to push them away." There's more from Anne in the session "Open Everything?" (p33).

Birgitta Jónsdóttir is an MP for the Icelandic Pirate Party. Johannes is flabbergasted: "An anarchist in a political party?". Birgitta ignores his provocation. "I love crisis," she says. "Crisis is the only time we can change things. But in Iceland we discovered that, if you don't act fast, it can slip away." She appeals to us in the audience: "I want to hear from you – where do you want to see this planet in a hundred years, in fifty years, in twenty years?" Johannes interrupts: "I'll be dead, I don't give a shit." You can read Birgitta's response in "Open Democracy: The Iceland Experiment" (p25) and "Knowledge is Power, Open Knowledge is Empowerment" (p38).

"We have the Internet in Africa," Marion Walton says, "but many people don't have the money to pay for the connection." In Friday's discussion, "Democratising Networked Communication" (p48), she'll be asking: "What can we do without the Internet and with a phone?" This is a discussion, "for people who want to reconfigure the network for everyone, not just for the 1% – or even the 10%."

Sam Muirhead has recently finished a year of living open source.

He politely suggests that Johannes shouldn't go to Kazakhstan, but to Copenhagen, where a couple of guys are trying to build an open source spaceship. You can read a lot more about Sam, his project and the iconoclastic world of open source hardware in "Self-Determined Production" (p57).

The 2013 Elevate Opening Speech is delivered by Jacob Appelbaum, a man who could have been cast as uber-geek "Q" in our Bond film. Although I can't imagine "Q" would end up exiled in Germany because the US authorities think he's a terrorist. "For states, openness means that our lives are an open book," Jacob says. "But for us, there is a different level of openness." With this statement, Jacob sounds a note that rings throughout the festival. You can read more from his opening speech over the page.

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The last action of what must have been a very sweaty night for a spaceman is Johannes confirming what we knew all along: the Elevate programme (and thus this book) is awesome. "I will remain here!" he declares and, with that, clunks off-stage.

Opening Speech: Jacob Appelbaum

WEDNESDAY, 23 OCT 21:30 Dom Im Berg

Jacob Appelbaum obviously has something to hide. He is an advocate, security researcher and developer for the Tor Project. Tor aims to bring true privacy to the web. If you use Tor, you are anonymous: no one can see who you are, where you are or who you are communicating with. It is the service of choice for terrorists, money launderers, drug smugglers and child pornographers.[1] The rest of us, the law-abiding, right-thinking rest of us, have no need for Tor because we have nothing to hide.

So what is Jacob Appelbaum's dark secret? The Internet tells me that he works with WikiLeaks and identifies as being bisexual; that he has been detained twelve times by US government agencies and enjoys photography. But most dastardly of all, Jacob Appelbaum is delivering the 2013 Elevate opening speech.

An ordinary man wearing black frame glasses takes the stage. He could be anyone: a commercial architect from Berlin, a Wall Street lawyer or an off-duty arms dealer. His anonymous post-millennial disguise suits his work on digital anonymity. He is precise with his words; the kind of precision that comes from the patient confidence that he has the right of the argument, if only people will listen.

So we listen.

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We like to pretend that there is such a thing as "private information". This, we imagine, includes such things as our bank account and credit card numbers; our emails and social networks; the

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1   "The Four Horsemen of the Info-pocalypse".

searches we make on the Internet and the websites we visit; our telephone calls and the numbers in our address book; where we travel and who pays for our plane ticket. But a series of whistleblower leaks from the US security agencies has left our pretence of privacy in tatters. When Edward Snowden revealed intimate details of the US and UK electronic surveillance programmes, he also destroyed the mirage of what we thought was "private". What, Jacob asks, can "private" even mean, when the state, foreign states and even corporations have open access to much of our data?

Privacy, thanks to clandestine surveillance by the security agencies and voluntary surveillance on social networks, is dead. We are living in a world "post-privacy". Some people (Johannes Grenzfurthner, our spaceman, is one) argue that there is nothing we can do about the death of privacy and that we should embrace openness, with nothing to hide. And it is true that, if we know everything about everyone else and everyone else knows everything about us, then state surveillance loses its power to control. Jacob is more pessimistic. "It's not privacy that's died," he says, "it's liberty."

"Who here was surprised when they heard that Angela Merkel's phone had been tapped by the US government?" he asks.[2] The room drops a decibel of silence. "No one?" Jacob scans the room. "No one," he confirms. "Why? Because knowledge is power. Surprise means you admit to not having that power. And no one likes to admit to being weak."

If knowledge is power, then you would expect to see knowledge, like power, aggregating around certain privileged groups of people. Those people will stop at nothing to collect more and more knowledge and they will do anything to stop others from getting hold of it. Is there a more fitting description of our security agencies? If they can get away

2   Note the familiar by-line: http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/merkel-calls-obama-over-suspicions-us-tapped-her-mobile-phone-a-929642.html

with it and if they can afford it, then the NSA, GCHQ and others will spy on us.

Jacob argues that the point is not to forbid the NSA and GCHQ from doing what we would expect them to do, but to make it politically and economically too expensive for them to abuse their power. We limit the power of our politicians by law, but we are doing very little to limit the knowledge-gathering capability of our security services. One way of doing this on an individual level is by using cryptography, leveraging the dizzying complexity of nature's own mathematics. Encrypting your emails won't make them safe from the NSA – they have sledgehammers, lock-picks and sometimes even the keys[3] – but it would make their surveillance of your communications more expensive and time-consuming. If everyone used cryptography, then it would still be possible for security agencies to target suspicious individuals with their sledgehammers, but total state surveillance would be infeasible.

The consequence of doing nothing, Jacob prophesies, is doomsday. "If we don't take action," he warns, "then serious action can be taken against us and against those we love." Perhaps not now, perhaps not here, but what would the racist Greek nationalist Golden Dawn party like to do with a surveillance system as total as that created by GCHQ in Britain? If you think that's implausible, then what about Richard Nixon – a US president so paranoid that he bugged his own Oval Office – do you think he would have used the NSA's current surveillance capabilities solely for targeting terrorists? All of a sudden, we can see Jacob's point when he equates privacy with liberty.

There is a second, more subtle, aspect of so-called post-privacy as it stands today: only a small number of people have privileged access to

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3   The NSA and GCHQ "have inserted secret vulnerabilities – known as backdoors or trapdoors – into commercial encryption software." http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/05/nsa-gchq-encryption-codes-security

huge information gathering programmes; the rest of us have next to nothing. To the NSA, we are already living post-privacy; but, at least to us, the NSA is shrouded in shadow. "We can't live in a post-privacy world until we live in a post-privilege world," Jacob says. Of course, this knowledge-privilege is easily translated into power, which can certainly impinge on your liberty to act.

Need an example? Let's go back to the tapping of Angela Merkel's phone.[4] Suppose there is an important round of US-German trade negotiations. If the US knows exactly what strategy Angela Merkel is planning to use, then they can act decisively to get the better of the deal. It's as if Germany is fighting with one hand tied behind their back.[5] US knowledge-power restricts German liberty.

Now I know it's hard to get worked up about the tapping of Angela Merkel's phone, but what about yours? What if you were a journalist working on a story about GCHQ and they used their superior knowledge-power to track your partner as he travels across Europe and then to detain him for nine hours on suspicion of terrorism?[6] Or if you're a professor of anthropology who plans to engage in a little street theatre to protest a royal wedding and the police use their surveillance of social networks and superior knowledge-power to arrest you on suspicion of conspiracy to cause public nuisance the day before the wedding even takes place?[7]

So when people say they are not surprised to hear about surveillance, perhaps we should ask them a follow up question: "Okay, when you're done being not surprised, do you have any other feelings?

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4   I should point out that the US says that Merkel's phone is no longer being tapped, as of June 2013, and that they will not to monitor her in the future.
5   Or, as Mikko Hypponen would say, it is as if the US is acting like Germany is a mere colony.
6   http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/18/glenn-greenwald-guardian-partner-detained-heathrow
7   http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/apr/28/royal-wedding-protest-three-arrested

Does that mean you approve?"

"Because, once we lose our liberty, we no longer have a democracy," Jacob says, "regardless of whether we still have a vote or not." He fixes us with that bespectacled seriousness. "Voting doesn't make a democracy," he says. "The decisions taken by politicians come directly from the security agencies – they just pick one of the options presented to them." Jacob's conclusion is clear: knowledge-power no longer resides with the politicians, but with the security agencies and, you might add, with corporations that extract and analyse our personal data. "The tin hat people, the really paranoid people, well, it turns out they weren't paranoid enough." It sounds like a joke, but the only laughter in the cave is nervous.

In summary, the issue of state surveillance is important because surveillance invades our private world. Our private world is important because that is where we store everything there is to know about us, from our raw data to our most intimate secrets. Whoever has the ability to invade this private world, has the ability to claim almost total knowledge of us. Whoever has knowledge of us, has power over us and can restrict our liberty. State surveillance, therefore, is a direct attack on our liberty. And any attack on our liberty is an attack on our democracy.

Just in case you are wondering: yes, it is right to use the language of war – because it is a war. We are not the surveillance partners of the NSA, we are surveillance targets. But there are two sides to every conflict and the war is not over. It is being fought in courts, in parliaments, in the media, on the ground and in the cloud. It turns out that privacy is not dead after all. But it *is* mortally wounded, lying in intensive care, and any enemy combatant who tries to administer emergency aid is mercilessly hunted down by those who would rather keep things as they are.

One such combatant, on the run for daring to expose the extent of the surveillance programmes, is Edward Snowden. "If there's anything you can do," Jacob asks us, "to help get Ed Snowden political asylum then please do it. There is no single person in the world who understands all these systems better – and is willing to share that knowledge at risk of his own life – than Ed Snowden." If you think that is over-dramatic, then spare a thought for Chelsea (né Bradley) Manning, who will be in prison for the next thirty-five years for sharing with us hundreds of thousands of secret US diplomatic cables, a leak that is widely credited with inspiring the Arab Spring revolutions. For many people, including US Congressman Mike Rogers, Manning's imprisonment is a disgusting travesty of justice: they wanted the death penalty.

Some argue that all we need are better data protection laws. But they're missing the point, according to Jacob. "Data doesn't need protecting," he says. "People do." Surprisingly, I think the NSA and GCHQ would agree with him there. After all, their surveillance programmes are essential weapons in the war on terror: the UK security agencies claim to have foiled thirty-four terrorist plots since the 2005 7/7 London bombings.[8] The security services invade our privacy to protect the people; surveillance is the small price we pay to live free from terror.

Where Jacob and the NSA differ is on their definition of terror. "When we talk about terror, we should be afraid, not of a small set of people outside the group, but of a small set of people inside the group," Jacob says. "The greatest terror that has ever existed in Europe was perpetrated by white Christians." As a Jewish atheist whose family

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8   And the NSA once claimed that surveillance had foiled fifty-four terrorist plots since 9/11. Unfortunately, ProPublica could find evidence of only four such plots and the deputy director of the NSA himself concedes that only one *might* have been foiled by bulk phone record surveillance. http://www.propublica.org/article/claim-on-attacks-thwarted-by-nsa-spreads-despite-lack-of-evidence

fled to the US from European National Socialism, Jacob does not say this lightly.

But, even if it were true that total state surveillance is only about fighting terrorism, is Al-Qaeda really such an existential threat that we're willing to do *anything* to defeat them? Are we willing to throw out our laws on privacy, the US Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? From the Massacre of the Innocents to the Killing Fields of Cambodia, history teaches us again and again that the foulest terror is perpetrated, not by the targets of surveillance, but by those in power. We shouldn't be scared of small numbers of angry Muslims, but of our masters becoming tyrants.[9]

You may not fear sharing your secrets with your government today, but what about tomorrow? Nobody has anything to hide, until they do.

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9 Interestingly, it seems that people are coming around to this idea. "A Pew poll at the end of July found that for the first time in a decade, the majority of Americans are more concerned about the government infringing on their civil liberties than about a potential terrorist attack." http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/29/poll-nsa-surveillance-privacy-pew

THURSDAY

"If I disappear, please find out where I am."

Is an Open Society a Free Society?

THURSDAY, 24 OCT 13:00 – 14:00 Forum Stadtpark

This is a loose transcript of a dialogue between Michael Bauer, who works for the Open Knowledge Foundation in the School of Data, and Thomas Lohninger, who is a software developer and studies Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Vienna.

What is an open society?

Michael: It is the right to design one's own space of life. Naturally, that will also be in collaboration with others.

What is a free society?

Thomas: A free society is almost like pornography – you know it when you see it. The fight for a free society is never won: we have to draw the line again and again – especially where digital rights are concerned. We need basic freedoms for a functional democracy and, because democracy is happening more and more on the net, we have to pay special attention to digital rights.

What can Open Everything change?

Michael: There are three basic rights which make something "open": the right to access this thing; the right to adapt this thing to my needs; and the right to share the things I adapt – or even to sell them.

There's a nice example of the power of openness from the UK. When British Members of Parliament handed in their expenses, *The Guardian* newspaper appealed to its readers and asked them to help analyse the mass of data.[10] A lot of interesting stories were told about this data and, as a result, MPs changed their behaviour because they knew that people were looking into how they were spending public

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10 http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2009/jun/18/mps-expenses-houseofcommons

money.

Is there a limit to open data? Can there still be privacy?

Thomas: Open data must end where our privacy begins, but it is difficult to define privacy. In fact, different people in different situations in different countries all have different boundaries between public and private.

Previously, the Stasi[11] had to look through thousands of individual files to find suspicious persons. Today, the NSA have powerful computer clusters that use algorithms to analyse vast quantities of data and these machines will automatically decide whether someone looks suspicious or not. This kind of profiling is also used by insurance and credit checking companies to allow or deny insurance and credit. We have very little control over these decisions – they are made by computer algorithms. This can be a serious problem if you fall on the wrong side of the threshold.

We talk about PRISM in the US, but what's it like in Europe?

Michael: There is no difference. My phone company, email provider and social networks all record data on where I am, what I say and who I say it to. This data can be used by governments as a way of managing dissidents, which is very different to their stated purpose of protecting citizens from outside threats.

Air passenger data agreements can put "suspicious" travellers on a global travel black list. This is called "identification of unknown suspects", where people who behave a little differently are automatically considered possible threats. The problem is that the percentage of people who are actually criminals is tiny; but everyone is under surveillance and many people are wrongly labelled as suspicious.

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11 The official state security service of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany).

What is the problem with the surveillance of suspects?

Thomas: All human beings change their behaviour when they know they're being watched. Are we still living in a free society? I don't think so: under constant surveillance, we act differently.

Surveillance is widespread now because it is cheap and easy, but surveillance only gathers data. It still has to be interpreted. Patterns in the surveillance data are now being used to identify possible criminals. The only problem with this "pre-detection" of crime is that it lacks the chain of causality.

What can we do to get out of here?

Michael: *Don't* change the way you behave. Don't avoid saying things that need to be said just because you are under surveillance. There is an imbalance of power at the moment. The state knows everything about me. I am transparent, but the state is trying to act in the most secretive way possible.

In Europe, we do have laws on data protection, but they don't really work. We need to make them work; we need to make sure that less information gets into the hands of governments and companies. Equally, governments and companies need to become more transparent. States create the context of our lives; we want to know how they do it.

Does technology change our values or can our values change our technology?

Thomas: It's time to stop experimenting with IT and start building hardware and software around data protection. Security needs to be hard-wired into the systems. We need new tools for data self-defence. The state shouldn't be trying to protect itself from citizens – it should be the other way around.

Open Democracy: The Iceland Experiment
THURSDAY, 24 OCT 13:30 – 15:30 Forum Stadtpark

Until October 2008, Icelanders were on top of the capitalist world. Capitalism worked, they thought, and they had the plasma screens to prove it. By the end of the month, the country had suffered a complete financial collapse. Nobody was ready: they were all watching their plasma screens.

Until October 2008, Birgitta Jónsdóttir was a fringe direct democracy activist, megaphone to mouth, yelling herself hoarse to tiny crowds about the ecological degradation of Icelandic fisheries and political reform in Tibet. By the end of the month, the crowds had grown and they were banging on her door, asking, "How do we get megaphones?"

First dozens, then hundreds, then thousands of people turned out onto the streets, clanging together their pots and pans, demanding the resignation of parliament. The politicians pleaded with the people to return to their plasma screens, but the people would not be turned aside. Four months later, the popular protests had brought down the government. In the subsequent elections, the Citizens' Movement party won 7% of the national vote and Birgitta "accidentally" found herself the only anarchist in a parliament made up entirely of leftists and led by the world's first openly gay Prime Minister.

Birgitta knew they had one, and possibly only one, opportunity to change everything. The constitution, a half-baked copy left behind by the Danes in 1944, was an obvious and ambitious target. And so the building of the world's first horizontally-designed constitution began.[12] A thousand Icelanders were randomly selected to draft the first vision

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12 For much more detail: http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/thorvaldur-gylfason/democracy-on-ice-post-mortem-of-icelandic-constitution

of the constitution. Constitutional experts were only called upon *after* this popular vision had been drafted. The experts published a five hundred page report on how Iceland's dream could be made reality. Then a twenty-five person constitutional council was elected from an open ballot of five hundred candidates, with the job of thrashing out a final draft that was both popular and legally workable.

Katrín Oddsdóttir originally studied journalism in Dublin and once worked as a local journalist in rural Iceland, covering stories such as "Sheep Left In Field". In October 2010, now a human rights lawyer, she was elected as a member of the new constitutional council. But the dominant political system will always try to crush anything new – "Like in a David Attenborough film," Katrín says, "where the lion is just waiting to attack." A spurious legal case was brought to declare the election invalid, on obscure technical grounds. But Birgitta's parliament pressed on and instead directly appointed the twenty-five elected councillors to a special committee, on a full-time parliamentary wage for four months.

Parliamentary business ("democracy", if you like) is usually conducted in a warlike manner, with the majority victors crowing over the minority losers: "Take that! Democracy beat you!". But this constitutional council (if you haven't realised by now) was different. Katrín and the others decided to proceed by consensus. No twelve to thirteen marginal votes; it would be all twenty-five together or nothing. Of course, the council was not always in complete accord. Most councillors wanted no reference of the church in the constitution, but there were two men of the cloth in the council so they had to reach a compromise. They ended up, quite reasonably, deferring the final decision to a public referendum.

The council also embraced transparency and technology by posting weekly updates and inviting comments on the draft constitution

through YouTube, Facebook and their own website.[13] "It was like taking your clothes off in public," Katrín says. "But vulnerability is empowering. When you give people respect by giving them a voice, they give you respect." Comments and questions from the public were addressed and incorporated into the final draft. This new constitution was made up of one hundred and four articles, covering everything from the form of government to a prohibition on compulsory military service.[14] All twenty-five councillors, complete strangers only months before, now spoke with one voice: the constitution was adopted by the council unanimously.

"What this experiment proves is that the wisdom of the crowd is both great and underestimated," Katrín says. "It's always said that people want to do things only for themselves – but that's not true." The result of the writing process was an unprecedented piece of documented hope. All that remained was to put the constitution before the people of Iceland in a referendum.

But lawyers are never happy when the people make the law: parliament sat on the constitution for a year and did nothing. Politicians were nervous about an article which stipulated that only 10% of the population was required to call a national referendum (Article 65); the large fishing corporations that dominate the Icelandic economy were outraged by the idea that the natural resources of the country should belong to the people, not to business (Article 34). Finally, though, parliament was called to account and the referendum went ahead. 67% of the population agreed that the one hundred and four proposed articles should form the basis of the new constitution. An unequivocal triumph for the new constitution and the horizontal process that had created it.

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13 http://stjornlagarad.is/english/
14 You can read the English translation here:
    http://stjornlagarad.is/other_files/stjornlagarad/Frumvarp-enska.pdf

And now? "Now the parliament are trying to pretend it never happened," Katrín says. "Power always tries to maintain itself when it is accumulated in one place, like in the Icelandic parliament. It isn't going to give up easily to direct democracy." So what happened? According to Birgitta, the leftist government made a deal with the powerful business lobbies, which totally scuppered the budding constitution. In the dying days of that revolutionary parliament, Birgitta tabled a simple motion that the next government should honour the referendum. No one turned up to the debate. "The media didn't give a shit," Birgitta says. "But when the next crisis comes, we'll be ready. If we have this constitution, then we have some tools to keep the politicians honest. When the next crisis comes, then the people will realise that they need to love this constitution."

The leftist government was massacred in the polls, but Birgitta retained her seat. "It's up to us," she says. "We need lots of direct democracy movements. This government will just undo what the last government did – and that's not good for the people. We need something new and we can do it."

"You can do anything if you have the will," Katrín agrees. "We had the will to make the drafting of the constitution open. It's bullshit to say openness is too complicated or too difficult."

"Every generation should have the right to rewrite their constitution from scratch," adds Birgitta. "It's not sacred stuff; it's about what kind of society we want to be."

"It's half time," Katrín says, with a grim smile. "We're 1-0 down, but we're going to win."

Open Source Economy

Stefan Meretz strides onto the stage, eyes blazing, promising fire and brimstone. Channelling the revolutionary power of his medieval countryman, Martin Luther, Stefan proceeds to nail his iconoclastic theses to the door of the Elevate church. Except that he's using PowerPoint. And there are only ten. And they're all in German and all about the economy of which I know nothing. But I imagine that medieval journalists in Britain had a similar problem with good old Martin Luther and his Catholic nonsense, so I'll press on regardless.

Thesis 1: Open source and openness are the result of product development forces.

How much of a car's manufacture, Stefan wonders, is thanks to the raw materials – the metal, the plastic and the leather upholstery? And how much is thanks to the generations and generations of human technical knowledge that were required to invent the car and all of its components? Stefan speculates that it might be as little as 5% materials and as much as 95% technical knowledge. A car is therefore a vast physical repository of knowledge. Plus a bit of metal. From this example, Stefan hopes to show that technology is nothing more than collected knowledge, and that the development of technology amounts to the development of knowledge.

Furthermore, the development of this knowledge demands cooperation and communication; the car would not be anywhere near as developed as it is today if one motor manufacturer had jealously guarded his designs unto death.[15] It is a simple observable fact that, where knowledge development is concerned, open cooperation and communication beats the closed form. It follows that product development encourages openness.

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15 This would have been an intriguing alternate history, had Henry Ford and others not fought the Selden patent infringement case in the early 1900s.

Thesis 2: Open source is two-faced.

Open source is pro-capitalistic: it can be used to make goods and sell them. But open source is also commonistic: it shares resources, processes and products. These two aspects operate simultaneously.

Thesis 3: If you want to talk about open source, you've got to talk about capitalism.

Open source can only conquer the world through capitalism, because capitalism pays. People need money and it has to come from somewhere. People choose to work on their open source project instead of going to work for money. They choose to make a voluntary contribution instead of a monetary exchange, but they still need to find enough money to buy food. And that money, Stefan asserts, must come from capitalism.

Thesis 4: Capitalism and ecology are in contradiction.

Capitalism, by its very nature, demands a growing economy. We are never allowed to say, "Stop, that's enough!" because that is what we call a financial crisis. Stopping might be good for the environment, Stefan says, but it is bad for humans because of all the social problems that follow from economic crises.[16]

Thesis 5: The question is not whether capitalism is going to drown, but only when and how.

The financial market is nothing more than a gigantic bet on future production, the proceeds of which are fed into the economy now. At some point, this cycle of gambling will break down. When? Who knows. Stefan speculates that the Romans, wrapped up in their togas, didn't see it coming in 376 AD either.[17]

Marxists thought that capitalism would collapse and simply

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16 Others might say that stopping capitalist consumption would be good for humans as well, but we'll leave that for now.

17 If you're wondering, that's when the Goths crossed the Danube into the Roman Empire. Within a hundred years, it was all over.

disappear, so they were busy planning an alternative to capitalism. But, as we learnt from the Soviet experiment, you can't plan an economy. Furthermore, it is perfectly conceivable that the system to emerge from the smouldering wreckage of capitalism will be (drum roll, please) only a slightly different form of capitalism. We can't simply let capitalism break down and expect everything to be fine afterwards.

Thesis 6: Capitalism needs open source and open source promotes capitalism.

Why on earth have IBM invested one billion dollars in open source software? This would seem to be the equivalent of taking a billion dollars out of the bank and burning it: they will never make a cent back from the free software they have helped to create. So why do it? Surely this can't be a case of a corporation acting selflessly for the good of mankind? Not at all. They're doing it because, by devaluing the software segment (incidentally dominated by their arch-rivals Microsoft), they can sell more of their hardware. This has been a great success for IBM because they are swimming with the current: openness will triumph in the long run.

Thesis 7: If you want to understand open source, you have to understand commonism.

In capitalism, self-development is always done at the cost of others. The standard copyright license is exclusive: you exclude others from using what you produce and you develop alone. Open source, however, encourages individual self-development in tandem with inclusive cooperation or "commonism". With the Creative Commons license used in open source, we actively invite others to co-create new software: our development is tied to that of the group.[18] To create a successful open source project, then, you have to understand this cooperation.

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18 Read more about Creative Commons: http://creativecommons.org/

Thesis 8: Commonism is not the alternative to capitalism, but describes the general way humans organise themselves.

Even slavery was a form of commonism, in that it described one (rather limited) means of human organisation and development. Capitalism is just the way that we organise ourselves at the moment. To be sure, capitalism is a very dynamic and compelling form of commonism, but it also limits us because it must include the exploitation of capital and labour, where an elite benefit at the expense of others.

Thesis 9: Commonism is the folding up of commonism on its own basis.

I told you I didn't understand all of it.

Thesis 10: Commonism is necessarily contradictory.

Commonism must be created to include as many people as possible, away from the control of the market, but also away from the control of the state. Exclusivity has to be weakened and that means no borders and no barriers. And here is the contradiction: a world of 100% inclusivity is not possible; there will always be limits. But we must try.

Open Everything?

THURSDAY, 24 OCT 18:30 – 20:30 Forum Stadtpark

The danger of designing a discourse programme around the theme of "Open Everything?" is that, if you're very unlucky, the discussions will end up being hijacked by ding-dong arguments over privacy. Or do I mean: if you're very *lucky* they will end up being hijacked by ding-dong arguments over privacy?

These tedious arguments are not often heard outside the activist community. Sure you might sometimes meet someone whose Hotmail account got hacked (hi) or someone who stopped using Google search because they were beginning to get freaked out by the level of personalisation (hi) or someone who pettishly stands behind the cameraman at public meetings because you never know where the photographs might end up (hi) or someone who – you get the picture – but no one in the real world actually takes privacy seriously (hi).

And for good reason. The way of the Internet today is that we pay for excellent and useful services with our private data. The way we communicate with each other, by text, by voice or by video, the way we store our photos and memories, the way we learn a language, the way we find a lover – everything is free (terms and conditions may apply[19]). What does it matter if, in return for finding out where my local Chinese takeaway is, I have to give away information about who I am, how old I am, where I live and my personal sexual preferences? I am getting something very real (chicken chow mein) in exchange for something I can't even define (privacy). And, besides, I have nothing to hide. Right?

If you have some misgivings about the last paragraph, then maybe you agree with me that, as it turns out, perhaps we do need more ding-

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19 See "Terms and Conditions May Apply", a superb film on privacy by Cullen Hoback.

dong arguments about the murky world of privacy. If you're *not* convinced by me, then perhaps you'll listen to Dilma Rousseff, president of Brazil and another victim of the NSA's monitoring: "In the absence of the right to privacy," she says, "there can be no true freedom of expression and opinion, and therefore no effective democracy."[20]

In the ding-dong blue corner is Johannes Grenzfurthner (now divested of his space suit): "Why do we fight for civil rights? That sounds quite conservative to me." In the red corner is almost everyone else, including political activist Anne Roth: "If I disclose everything, then I give away power to others. Post-privacy only works in a world without power structures and that is a utopia."

But Johannes does have a point. "The privacy that we're trying to protect developed side-by-side with our capitalist democracy," he explains. "It is part of the bourgeoisie ideology – and why should we fight for that?" He illustrates his argument by describing a typical bourgeoisie household, the private domain of the all-powerful paterfamilias. In his "private" world, the head of the household can do as he pleases with his wife and children, without interference from the state or meddling human rights lawyers. This absurd illustration at least makes it clear that, in order to defend the private realm, we have to define the private realm. Anne Roth and Thomas Lohninger unite to argue for a basic bill of privacy rights, an agreed border between what is acceptable and what is not. "Basic rights are protective rights against the government," Anne says. "The private sphere is there to fend off the government."

All well and good. But what about the positive side of openness? "When I make something public," suggests moderator Brigitte Kratzwald, "doesn't this offer me some protection?" This is the same

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20 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/24/brazil-president-un-speech-nsa-surveillance

brand of openness that protects hearty Alpine hikers who leave details of their route with the mountain rescue service. This is the same brand of openness that contributes to freeing Prisoners of Conscience from Guantanamo Bay. This is the same brand of openness that your parents were always nagging you for. As Anne puts it: "This is where I'm going; if I disappear, please find out where I am."

But openness by choice and openness by default are two very different things. Thomas points out that the gradual "coming out" of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community over the last forty years has largely been by choice. There was no systematic process of "outing" by government or corporations. But today, our privacy choices are increasingly being made by those governments and corporations. As Johannes reminds us: Facebook algorithms can know whether you're gay or not just from the things you "like".[21] Furthermore, post-privacy is only even vaguely comprehensible from a position of privilege. In Austria, it's okay to say that you are transgender, but in some parts of the world that admission could cost you your friends, your liberty or even your life.

Perhaps, though, we are sleepwalking into a society where post-privacy and total transparency is no longer a privilege, but a default setting. Jacob Appelbaum calls mobile phones "tracking devices" and he's got a nasty surprise for those of you who thought that tracking only happened online or in spy films. The NSA can target drone attacks using your mobile,[22] while fashion shops like Nordstrom can use your phone to follow you around as you browse the rails.[23] Needless to say, Jacob doesn't carry a mobile phone. "But if I choose not to walk

21 According to a study from the University of Cambridge:
   http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2013/03/06/1218772110.full.pdf+html
22 http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/nsa-growth-fueled-by-need-to-target-terrorists/2013/07/21/24c93cf4-f0b1-11e2-bed3-b9b6fe264871_story_1.html
23 http://qz.com/104413/when-it-comes-to-retail-tracking-shoppers-prefer-being-watched-in-their-homes/

around with a tracking device," he says, "then I am automatically a suspect, just because everyone else has chosen to have a tracking device." People choosing to be under surveillance has become the social norm. A teenager not on Facebook is not a teenager. Before you get too smug, granddad, the fastest growing demographic on Facebook is 45- to 54-year-olds. How long before you're ostracised for being outside the post-privacy circle, for wanting to keep some things private?

"Surveillance is an epidemic, like HIV," says Jacob Appelbaum. "Just because you weren't safe with your previous partners, doesn't mean you shouldn't start being safe now." According to Jacob, the concept of post-privacy, where we're all supposed to be comfortable about sharing everything, is nothing more than a coping strategy for our loss of liberty – a sort of Stockholm Syndrome for Big Brother.

Like most people, I have personal experience of this post-privacy world. A couple of months ago I left Facebook, after seven years of supplying Mark Zuckerberg and the NSA with the personal information of myself and my closest friends. What a relief. It feels like a part of my brain that I didn't even realise was being occupied with social trivia is now free for other tasks. But in a Q&A with Cullen Hoback (director of the largely depressing privacy film "Terms and Conditions May Apply"[24]), I asked him the following question: "After leaving Facebook, to what extent and for how much longer am I totally fucked?" His answer? "In perpetuity – or rather, until such a time as Facebook decide that your information no longer has any monetary value to them."

After the revelations about the hacking of Angela Merkel's phone by the NSA, no one (not even politicians) can afford to ignore the problem of surveillance and privacy any more. Unfortunately, we now have a new problem: no solution.

24 Really, please do watch this film.

FRIDAY

"I feel foolish for being surprised."

Knowledge is Power, Open Knowledge is Empowerment

FRIDAY, 25 OCT 14:00 – 16:00 Forum Stadtpark

Knowledge of your opponent's next chess move. Knowledge of how to make an improvised explosive device. Knowledge of your boss's sexual infidelities. It is not hard to find examples where knowledge can easily be translated into power.

Knowledge is also political power. One of the cornerstones of a true democracy has always been education: in order for the rule of the people to work, the people must be fit to rule. It is no coincidence that universal suffrage and universal education developed hand-in-hand. What would democracy be if we didn't know how to participate? What would an election be if we didn't know the candidates? What would parliament be if we didn't know how they voted?

Never before in human history has this equation of knowledge and power been so significant. Thanks to the development of the Internet, never before has the diffusion of knowledge been so cheap and so easy. Equally, never before has total surveillance, and therefore total knowledge, of a population by those in power been so cheap and easy. The Internet has the potential to be both a great democratising power (through its tools of education, direct democracy, transparency and accountability) and a great totalitarian control mechanism (through its tools of surveillance and algorithms of detection).

The starting point for today's Elevate discourse is that the first potential, of open knowledge for all, is vastly preferable. The only problem is that the vast majority of people don't give a toss; most people only care that they get free email or free lolcat video clips. So the question is: How can we persuade people to give a toss about the future of the Internet and, indeed, of knowledge itself?

The first thing we must realise is that open knowledge is possible: the fight is not yet lost. After the 2008 crisis, the new Icelandic government passed legislation to turn their country into an international transparency haven.[25] In many countries, knowledge is often closed down by law courts and the threat of litigation. The new Icelandic laws will support the opening up of knowledge by protecting investigative journalists, their sources, publishers and whistleblowers. We need to remember: if it is possible in Iceland, it is possible anywhere.

Four necessary elements of open knowledge were discussed by the panel: open Internet, open democracy, open social media and open public service media.

1. Open Internet

Claudia Garád, Executive Director of Wikimedia Österreich, asks us to imagine the Internet as an extension of our real life. Imagine living in a city where every street, every building and every park was privately owned, and you weren't welcome unless you had money to spend.[26] We are already living in that city online: there are thousands of commercial websites, where you are only welcome if you are a paying customer or if you are willing to be sold as a product to advertisers, but there are very few genuinely open public spaces on the Internet. In fact, there is only one of any size: Wikipedia.

The problem is that the business model of the Internet doesn't support this kind of public space. "It's too hard to create something like Wikipedia now," Claudia says. "Most people build something and sell it off as soon as they can." We are lucky that Jimmy Wales didn't sell Wikipedia. Furthermore, it's not just finance that blocks our way to a

25 The project was led by Birgitta Jónsdóttir and supported, among others, by WikiLeaks. Read more here: https://immi.is/index.php/projects/immi
26 This dystopia is coming true in some of our city centres, but that's another story. See "Ground Control" by Anna Minton.

more open Internet; legal threats also discourage the development of open spaces. Wikipedia is now big enough that it can't be scared off by a court case, but a new start-up simply couldn't deal with the expense. At the merest whiff of a judge's wig, it would have to back off.

Robert David Steele, an activist and former spy, calls for us to give up control to gain control. "The single biggest untapped resource that we have on the planet is the brains and ideas of the billions of poor who are kept out of the conversation by the rich West," he says. "Give everybody free Internet at high speed and just get out of the way." It can be done: Montreal, for example, has city-wide free Wi-Fi.

2. Open Democracy

The Internet is already having a opening effect on democracy – and in more radical ways than the fact that most politicians are on Twitter. The Pirate Party, which recently won over 2% of the electoral vote in Germany and over 5% in Iceland, is run using a web-based system called Liquid Feedback, which aims to facilitate transparent, accountable democracy without the need for leaders. A similar online system called Adhocracy has also been used in Germany to develop new policy ideas. Activists are currently working to turn this into a permanent part of the political system, alongside the usual parliamentary process.

Open democracy has already won notable victories on specific issues. Volker Ralf Grassmuck, a media sociologist and activist, reminds us that the networked public sphere helped to kill the "Stop Online Piracy Act", which would have introduced a maximum sentence of five years for unauthorised streaming of films (would there have been anyone left on the outside?). Ksenia Ermoshina, a sociologist of technology, tells us about a smartphone app that has been used to detect and prosecute electoral fraud in Russia, including one case where ballot pens were filled with vanishing ink.

Birgitta Jónsdóttir, the Icelandic Pirate Party's only MP, is more cautious about the benefits of Liquid Feedback and moving democracy online. "It's just a voting system," she says of Liquid Feedback. "I do think there is some magic that happens when you are physically in the space with people, which you can't get online." In the US, there are even more fundamental problems. In 2012, Robert ran for president, hoping to uncover the corruption in the system. "Did you know there are actually eight different political parties in the US?" I didn't. "Nine times Congress has been asked to put all eight parties on the ballot," Robert says. "Nine times the two party tyranny has refused." Surprise, surprise.

3. Open Social Media

"Facebook is digital drugs," Robert says. "Let the people amuse themselves." Birgitta disagrees: "The revolution in Iceland would never have happened without Facebook," she says. "Iceland is a small community and almost everyone is on Facebook, so little preparation is needed to organise a demonstration." Arguments over the activist benefits of social media come down to the usual arguments over privacy. Everyone agrees that social media can be a useful tool for organising. Thomas quotes Max Schrems, an Austrian activist who is suing Facebook for keeping data he had "deleted": "I *want* to use Facebook; I also want to protect my privacy."[27]

"We've let governments and companies build a toxic Internet with no respect for privacy," Robert counters. "We need absolute security and trust on an individual level, which then migrates to the Internet, not the other way around." But, as Ksenia demonstrates, social media can bring communities together, first online, then in the real world. She describes a mysterious problem with leaky roofs in St Petersburg that was solved when an online app was built to report the issue and the leaks were found to coincide with the work of inept council roof-cleaners.

27 For more on Max Schrems: http://europe-v-facebook.org/FAQ_ENG.pdf

4. Open Public Service Media

I discuss open media in much more detail in "ORF Dialogue Forum: Open Media" (p66), but the crux of the problem is summed up by Birgitta: "All media is unsustainable at the moment," she says. "It's going online, where the model is terrible: we write titles with sex and violence to get the clicks." Ultimately, it comes down to whether we want to pay for good journalism.

The alternative, Ksenia suggests, is that the future of journalism lies with small local interest groups working together to become experts. "The mother of two can become more of an expert than the man with five diplomas," she says. Volker is sceptical that citizen journalism could replace full-time professional investigative journalism. "But," he asks, "if we can create a complex encyclopedia in an open, voluntary format, then why can't we create open journalism and media?"[28]

Birgitta agrees, but says that it's not only open access that matters; it's what we do with it. "How are we going to make you spend as much time learning about and participating in the system, compared to the time you spend watching TV?" she asks. "How can we make you realise that you are the system?"

"Never miss a good crisis," replies Volker. "I'd never have thought that Angela Merkel would bring Germany out of nuclear power, but the crisis of Fukishima created that. Of course, you'd never hope for a crisis like Fukishima, but..." He leaves the sentence hanging. "Let's see if we can maintain the momentum of Edward Snowden. Now is the time."

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28 And Volker is trying with http://www.wikivision.eu (currently in German).

The Asshole Problem

FRIDAY, 25 OCT 15:15 Forum Stadtpark

Imagine: You are putting on an international conference about open source intelligence, gathering experts from around the world. You think it would be a cool idea, while you're all together, to edit the open source intelligence Wikipedia page. You spend hours collectively making that page the best it can be; after all, you are the global experts in the field. There is nothing more that can be said on open source intelligence that you can't now find on Wikipedia. A triumph for open knowledge.

Then some sixteen year-old Wikipedia editor goes in and massacres your carefully written and researched page, based on nothing more than his own assumptions and rampant hormone-fuelled ego. Quite frustrating, don't you think? So you follow it up on the article's talk page, the place where editors and writers can discuss any issues. The sixteen year-old editor stonewalls you – you, the international authority on open source intelligence! The little gobshite refuses to roll back his changes and there's nothing you can do about it. Welcome to the Asshole Problem.

Okay, so you might not have experienced this exact scenario (it's Robert David Steele's story), but I'm sure you all recognise the situation: the one guy who screws it up for the rest of us. It's a problem that we all run into, in our personal and public lives, but it's one that particularly exercises activists in political movements. The Occupy movement, for example, was constantly trying to deal with undercover police and agents provocateurs, as well as trying to help vulnerable people with disruptive behavioural patterns, while not letting them distract from the business at hand.

"We have problems with trolls online and offline," says battle-

hardened activist Birgitta Jónsdóttir. "If someone tries to take over a conversation, I brush that person off like dust. These people are often paid to disrupt conversations." A dog in the audience barks loudly. "Yes, you behave yourself!" The dog snuffles into his owner's coat. "I give them one chance only to change their behaviour. If they don't – they can do it somewhere else." You wouldn't mess with Birgitta.

The asshole problem that Robert faced resulted from the fact that Wikipedia is not one hundred percent democratic. "It is open to everyone and transparent," says Claudia Garád, of Wikimedia Österreich, "but it's not democratic. At a certain level, senior editors can make decisions in their own best interest and there is little that new editors can do to fight this." The asshole problem is particularly heartbreaking when it is encountered by newcomers. "They wanted to contribute something and then they are very disappointed," Claudia says. "It means that some groups are shoved off permanently – women particularly."

The assholes can and do win. Ksenia Ermoshina was a member of a very open and welcoming Russian activist group who were forced by trolls, saboteurs and assholes to retreat deeper and deeper into themselves and ended up extremely paranoid and closed – eventually going offline completely. Mark Kennedy, a world-renowned asshole and British undercover cop, was so successful that he was hired by the police forces of twenty-two different countries to break up environmental activist groups. Birgitta tells the story of agents provocateurs trying to drive activists into the arms of the black bloc in Athens, "to radicalise us so that the police could then justify brutality."

Birgitta, possibly the most experienced activist on the panel, is explicit about the warlike nature of dealing with assholes. "Open knowledge is not about having open fights," she tells us. "We are dealing with fucking adversaries: the other parties want to kill us," she says, referring to her Pirate Party. "So we don't invite them into our

bathrooms. We just don't."

The most interesting thing about the foregoing discussion is that, despite starting the topic, Robert was no longer a part of it. Robert had been Skyping into the conversation from his laptop in Afghanistan and was present in the form of a computer screen perched atop a black leather chair on the stage. Shortly after describing his grievance against Wikipedia, he became embroiled in an entirely unnecessary confrontation with an audience member. The dialogue went something like this:

> ROBERT
> (Ranting about Wikipedia)
> It's a lack of integrity — there is no process to respect the work of others on Wikipedia. It's too easy to hijack a page. Don't get me wrong, I love Wikipedia — it is the answer to about sixty percent of my questions. But it is analytically useless, it's not the place to bring experts together.

At this point the moderator of the discussion calls on a member of the audience who has his hand raised.

> AUDIENCE MEMBER
> (Standing)
> This is the Asshole Problem — people who are too far outside the community-agreed rules. The question is: How can a community implement a process to deal with the assholes or the trolls?

Robert mistakes the target of this comment.

<div align="center">ROBERT</div>
<div align="center">(Furious)</div>

Fuck you! *I'm* an asshole? Jesus, okay —
I have more important things to do in
Afghanistan. You guys can read my books.

<div align="center">AUDIENCE MEMBER</div>
<div align="center">(Heatedly)</div>

I wasn't referring to you, Robert. Tend
to your ego!

<div align="center">ROBERT</div>
<div align="center">(Shouting)</div>

Fuck you!

Robert quits Skype. His screen goes black.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

So what can we conclude from this little episode? Well, to be
honest, I see it as further evidence of a working hypothesis I've had for
a while: we are all assholes. We all fuck up a lot of the time. It's human
nature. We get cranky, bitchy, difficult, obstructive and just plain
confused fairly often, especially under the strain of activism.

Maybe if we all acknowledge that we're assholes, that might go
some way towards ameliorating the problem. We could all take a
solemn vow, hand on heart: "My name is David and I'm an asshole."
Admitting that we are all assholes is admitting that we are all human.
This would help us build empathy with each other and help us build a
community based on mutual support instead of a battle of egos. It's
pretty hard to keep up an iron-clad inflated ego fortress if you've just

called yourself an asshole.

I don't mean to suggest that this will solve the asshole problem – there will always be people who want to disrupt for whatever reason – but it might stop us from becoming part of the problem ourselves. If we are all assholes, then the only ones to watch out for are those who can't see themselves for what they truly are.

Democratising Networked Communication

FRIDAY, 25 OCT 17:00 – 19:00 Forum Stadtpark

Premise: If knowledge is power, then the Internet, as the greatest store of knowledge in history, is also power. Conclusion: It is vitally important that the power of the Internet be under democratic control.

The starting point of this discussion is that the Internet is currently in no way democratic and is actually accelerating towards a closed system, where enormous monopolistic corporations swallow up smaller competition. There is already only one shopping superstore (Amazon), only one auction site (eBay) and only one social network (Facebook). Other services are increasingly restricted to a couple of major players: Google and Microsoft compete almost alone in the fields of video and video calling (YouTube, Hangouts and Skype[29]), search (Google and Bing) and email services (Gmail and Hotmail). How can we have a democratic Internet when we are heading full-pelt towards an Internet dominated by privately-owned monopolies? What makes this worse is that most of the computer servers on which these monopolies reside are located in the United States. This means that all our web traffic is subject to laws for which we, as EU citizens, have no democratic oversight.[30]

It's hard to remember that there was a time (in living memory, believe it or not) when none of these Internet services existed. Each of the panel, Marion Walton, Nadim Kobeissi, Griffin Boyce, Linnea Riensberg and Andreas Krisch, came online between 1994 and 2000, for reasons varying from communicating with distant family to learning about Zen Buddhism. The one thing that everyone has in common is

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29 Skype was originally an Estonian company and used to be end-to-end encrypted. In 2011, it was sold to Microsoft and is now subject to invasion by PRISM.
30 Not to mention China's ability, demonstrated in 2010, to divert and swallow large portions of Internet traffic for their own delectation.

that their discovery of the Internet was like a revelation. Online, they found a virtually unlimited world of emancipatory education and uncensored communication.

So how do they feel now that we know everything we do and say on the Internet is being filtered and monitored by security agencies? "On the one hand, it's extremely surprising," Griffin Boyce says. "On the other hand, I feel foolish for being surprised." I should mention that Griffin works on anti-censorship projects including the Tor Project; if he is surprised, then we're in trouble. Andreas Krisch, president of European Digital Rights, agrees. "We always said that communication is not as safe as it could be," he says. "But the scale is not what we expected: GCHQ save everything that goes down these fibre optic cables. It's on an incredible scale." Marion is horrified by the very personal invasion of privacy. "A kid and a mother shouldn't have their communication read by the NSA," she says. For Griffin, the way data is delivered is also absurd. "You shouldn't have to go through a server in the US to send a message to a friend next door," he says, "that is ludicrous."

Andreas is more worried about the malevolent influence of GCHQ in the UK – "And the UK is in the EU," he says, darkly. "It gets outrageous when we learn this week that the European Commission are to postpone stricter data protection laws for at least a year, on the instructions of the UK government." These new laws would have increased the size of fines handed out to tech companies like Google for violations of privacy, from 2% of global revenues to 5% or €100m, whichever is greater. So it is particularly sinister that these laws have been blocked by the same UK government that is spying on our communications.[31]

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31 https://leaksource.wordpress.com/2013/10/26/david-cameron-shills-for-us-and-tech-giants-persuading-eu-to-postpone-new-data-protection-rules-until-2015/

While he agrees with much of what has been said, Nadim Kobeissi, the developer of encrypted chat programme Cryptocat,[32] is not so alarmist. "I don't believe that Facebook is evil or that the Internet is toxic as a result, but they have failed at dealing with this particular issue of privacy," he says. "There are simple political issues that we have to sit down to discuss because we got it wrong. It's much simpler than people are making out."

This, then, is the scale of the threat to our online communication. The question now is how do we wrest back democratic control? The panel discuss seven parts of the answer: education, access, data protection, mesh-networking and non-networked alternatives, state investment and being cool.

Basic Internet education

"Everyone has a right to basic education," Marion states. "And I think how to use the Internet is basic; it's a tool for lifelong learning." Griffin agrees: "We've got to educate users about the dangers of the Internet in the same way that we teach kids about the dangers of an oven: this part is hot, don't touch it."

Equal access for all

"There are villages in Germany where villagers don't have Internet access because it doesn't make financial sense for the company," Linnea says. "You should be able to do whatever your neighbour is able to do, or what someone in a city is able to do."

Data protection law and enforcement

"There are no real clear data protection laws in the US," Griffin says. "There is only case law, which can be fought and is not voted on by the people." The situation in the EU is different. "The protection is already there in the EU," Andreas says, "but we need enforcement.

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32 https://crypto.cat/ Cryptocat is designed to be as easy to use as Facebook Chat, while also offering strong encryption. And cats.

With proper enforcement, everything will change."

Mesh-networking and non-networked alternatives

Griffin is a big advocate for mesh networks, which are groups of routers that relay a local network outside government or corporate control. The Freifunk activist movement in Germany use mesh networks to serve up the Internet free from state interference, while the Red Hook mesh network in Brooklyn helped to get Hurricane Sandy survivors back online after the local authority had switched off electrical power.

"There are projects like that in Africa," Marion says, "but all commercial forces are against them. People would rather trust someone from Microsoft first, not someone from the open source community." On the other hand, Marion points out that, "libraries are secure, paper is secure." High technology is a default for activists and perhaps that's a mistake. "Going to a photocopy shop is much easier for a schoolteacher than setting up a mesh network," she says. "The people are the network, not the pipes."

State investment

"Do we spend more time in cars or online?" moderator Daniel Erlacher asks the panel. "Every year, we spend millions on maintaining roads, so why not the same on investment in the net?" The unfortunate answer is that no one is lobbying for it. "Governments only care about national security and software makers only care about making money out of your social data," Nadim says. "So the interests of privacy don't align on either level."

Being cool

"Most of the rest of the world would think that having a two-hour panel discussion on the Internet is like having a two-hour panel discussion on refrigerators," Nadim points out, quite correctly. "We have to make cryptography so cool that people use it."

Most of all, though, democracy, online or off, depends entirely on ordinary people standing up and taking control. Every member of the panel is standing up: Marion with her research on software and marginalised groups in Africa; Nadim and Griffin with Cryptocat and Tor; Andreas and Linnea with their work on digital rights. But they need our help to take back control.

SATURDAY

"I was illegally importing non-EU hay."

Graz, Styria, Austria
SATURDAY, 26 OCT 09:15 – 16:00 Schöckel

Tom Waitz – "with a zed" – is a bluff blond bear of a man whose job it is to take care of the Elevate guests. Every year, bright and early on the Saturday morning, he leads a group to the top of the nearest mountain, Schöckel. Frankly, though, I'm not expecting him to show up for our 9.15 rendezvous at Jakominiplatz bus station. I happen to have it on good authority that he was up until four in the morning taking excellent care of the dance-floor. His voice on the phone is thick with sleep and I wonder how long I'll be waiting before he arrives. At least it's a beautiful day for waiting. The sun is barely peeking over the tops of the buildings and already people are packing away their winter coats in astonishment.

The astonishment only deepens when I see Tom sauntering into the square at 9:15 precisely, still wearing the same rainbow-striped woollen jumper that had put a smile on my face when I first met him yesterday. Has he even been to bed? Other guests aren't such troopers: there are only five of us on the trip. "Every year, at least fifty percent of people who promise to come don't show up," Tom says. "But they always regret it." The sun quickly burns away any residual hangover (or Tom does a game impression that it has) and we stand for the duration of the twenty minute bus ride to Schöckel. At the base of the mountain is the starting line for a "backpack run", in which contestants run to the summit wearing a backpack. Today is Austrian National Day. It strikes me as a strange, but very Austrian, way to celebrate. Luckily for us, also at the base of the mountain is a vertiginous cable car.

Over a traditional lunch of beef and dumpling soup, Wiener Schnitzel and a tall glass of Almdudler, Tom tells us his story. He is a Green Party politician. Unlike some politicians, he lives the life that he advocates for, running a farm that straddles the border with Slovenia.

"It used to be a nightmare before Slovenia joined the EU – we had border guards on our land all the time," he says. "I was transporting hay from one of my fields in Slovenia, to my stables, which happened to be in Austria. According to the EU laws, I was illegally importing non-EU hay." He laughs. "Eventually, they gave me a certificate of exemption – I have framed it on my wall." Sadly, a couple of weeks ago, Tom narrowly missed out on election to the Austrian Parliament.

Schöckel is a loaf, with steep sides and a flat top, perfect for weekend pursuits. Eschewing the more physical activities on offer – a luge run, frisbee-golf and paragliding – we find a sunny spot and slide to the ground. Lying flat on the soft grass, looking up into skies with no visible horizon, my thoughts drift, following the thermal float of the gliders.

Tom's story – and the story of Elevate – is that of a small town, a small region and a small country. Graz has a population of only 300,000, about the size of the Reading and Wokingham urban area. Styria has a population of only 1.2 million, about the size of Birmingham. Austria has a population of only 8.5 million, about the size of London. Think of that, the next time you're hoping to start a fire in the Big Smoke: you're taking on a city the size of a small European nation.

But don't underestimate the power of smallness either. A little experience, a little knowledge, a little action goes a long way in a small place. And one small change in one small country echoes around the world. Iceland was able to make radical changes to their democracy precisely because activists were able to network extremely fast throughout their small nation and get a large percentage of the population out onto the streets, demanding change. As a result, Iceland now leads the world in popular awareness of direct democracy and laws of free speech. For the rest of us, Iceland represents a proof of concept. Their horizontal constitution experiment gives direct democracy

activists the world over something to point to and say: "Look, it works." It is far harder to argue against something that already exists, than against something that is a mere pipe-dream. Far better to build something real in a small village, than to merely imagine something fantastic in a big city.

The first Elevate festival took place in 2005 and suffered a significant financial loss. The association went bankrupt. One of the organisers even got assaulted in a bar by a friend of a friend to whom the association owed money. But three of the original founders of the festival (Daniel Erlacher, Roland Oreski and Bernhard Steirer) did not give up and, with the support of their (small) community, Elevate returned the next year. And the next. And the next. Each time, they increased their ambition. 2014 will be the tenth Elevate Festival, the tenth anniversary of that first abysmal failure. And Daniel's latest idea? He wants to build a 360° immersive audio-visual dome experience, one of very few in the entire world.

As for Tom, what's his next move after failure in the national elections? He gives me a widespread smile: "Next year, I'm running for the European Parliament." I smile back. From talking to him, from seeing how he engages all kinds of people, from drinking his orchard-fresh apple juice – hell, even from his rainbow jumper – I have a sneaking suspicion that Austria's loss will be Europe's gain.

But what am I trying to say? I suppose this: Don't be intimidated by starting; starting small is still a start. Don't be intimidated by failure; start small and you'll fail small. Don't be intimidated by success; succeed small and build momentum. Don't be intimidated by the size of the task ahead; your momentum will carry your success around the world.

"Large streams from little fountains flow,
Tall oaks from little acorns grow."[33]

33 From an essay by D. Everett in "The Columbian Orator", 1797.

Self-Determined Production: Sam Muirhead and the Year of Open Source

SATURDAY, 26 OCT 18:30 – 20:30 Forum Stadtpark

In August 2012, Sam Muirhead started living his "Year of Open Source".[34] What does that mean, other than that he switched Microsoft Windows for open source Linux? At a basic level, it meant he could no longer buy all rights reserved, patented products: no fancy Apple gadgets, no Hollywood cinema and no copyrighted books. This isn't as restrictive as you might think, however: there is no copyright on clothes or recipes, for example. In fact, open source life is closer to "real" life than you'd expect; this was no "Super Size Me" radical lifestyle shift. And Sam was never intending to launch an ambitious project like building an open source car or a wiki-house, although nor was he going to buy a patent-protected car either.

So what did he do? Well, he drank open source beer and made open source pants.[35] In which case, you will be wondering, what on earth makes this open source life any different from the standard Bank Holiday DIY life? The main difference, according to Sam, is community. Open source means that you publish your plans online, so that people all over the world can instantly see what you've made and exactly how you made it. Anyone on the planet can replicate your product for themselves and even make improvements. In this way, the open source method harvests the collective brainpower of the group to make a better product. DIYers may come together and share ideas, but it's not built into the method; for most people, DIY means Ikea and fiddling with hex keys.

There is a big difference, however, in the public perceptions of DIY and open source. DIY is seen as a harmless middle class occupation

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34 http://yearofopensource.net/
35 Among other things. See above.

that has taken the place of going to church. Open source is seen as, well, crappy. The only time that Sam's girlfriend baulked during the Year of Open Source was when she heard him talking about MakerPlane, a group dedicated to developing an open source plane.[36] As Sam puts it, she didn't hear "open source plane", she heard "crappy plane" and her response was: "You are not getting on an open source plane."

This is the public perception of open source and it is totally misconceived. As Alicia Gibb from the Open Source Hardware Association points out: open source software is ubiquitous – most of the Internet is based on open source software – and people need to realise that it still turns a profit for companies, it still makes things work and in some cases it is *more* secure than any closed software alternative. Where DIY might result in a product that's a bit rubbish (thinking specifically of the shelves in my bedroom here), open source *by definition* always results in a product that is better than that which you could make alone. I'll try to illustrate this with an example taken from real life.

Suppose I wanted some shelves for my bedroom. I have a few options. I could go to a shop and buy some shelves, ready made, and pay someone to put them up in my house (closed process). Or I could go to a hardware shop, buy some wood and some screws, then make the shelves and put them up myself (DIY process). Or I could first upload my plans for the shelves to the web, where I would invite criticism of the design, suggestions on where to source materials and tips on how to wield a drill. Only then would I construct the shelves, before re-uploading the final design to the web so that future generations of shelf-makers can take my design, make their own modifications and additions until we have, as a society, the very best possible shelf design in this universe (open source process).

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36 http://makerplane.org/

I know this is a lofty ambition, especially for shelving, but you can see how the process might be useful for, say, designing safer planes or more effective cancer drugs.[37] It all comes down to the simple ethos that, if two heads are better than one, then seven billion heads networked over the Internet are quite a lot better than one.

You will notice that I didn't say I would be *selling* the plans for my awesome shelves. That's not the open source way. I could make my millions by selling the awesome shelves themselves, but the plans will remain available to everyone for free, forever. This is another advantage of open source: your rights are very clear. You can take the plans, whatever they are, and you can copy them, you can modify them – you can even make money from them. This transparency means that people can experiment with designs without worrying about future intellectual property, patent or copyright issues. And more experimentation means better shelves for everyone.

But what about the starving artist-inventor who helplessly watches on as their idea is financially exploited by others? Doesn't open source cut off the copyright and patent protection we give to artists and inventors? Plenty of shelf-makers see open source as a threat, but there's no reason why it can't be an opportunity. "A lot of bad art exists

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37 The pharmaceutical industry is an interesting example, due to its deadly conflict between open and closed systems. The scandal that most of the drugs created to treat HIV infection are under patent contrasts vividly with the history of the polio vaccine. The polio vaccine was developed in 1952 by a chap called Jonas Salk, who declared: "There is no patent. Could you patent the sun?" As a result, polio is now, according to the NHS, "essentially a disease of the past". Open source pharmaceuticals is clearly good for us, Joe Public, but it would also be better for science. Websites like Folding@home, where thousands of volunteers donate their computer power to calculate protein foldings, or polymathprojects.org, where anyone can help solve mathematical problems, collectively do science more quickly and more accurately than the closed alternative. Furthermore, science-specific crowdfunding sites have the potential to fund final solutions to common, but unprofitable, medical problems, like colds, headaches and teenagers.

because there was no criticism," Sam says. "Open source does criticism very well: after contact with the open source community, your idea will be stronger, not weaker."

Alicia Gibb argues that perhaps "intellectual property" is the wrong way to think about ideas and creativity. Take the fashion industry: you can't copyright clothing design, only trademarks. If you want to, you could copy an Yves Saint Laurent dress, stitch by stitch, and sell it for your own profit. Have you ever wondered why Louis Vuitton handbags are scrawled with trademarks? Now you know. So, if you are worried about protecting your ideas, look at the fashion industry: they've been doing it for generations without going out of business. This is, in part, thanks to their hyperactive innovation; a new collection every quarter and, if you want the freshest designs, you have to buy direct from the creator. The lack of copyright protection means they innovate *more*, which can only be a good thing for the industry.[38]

Frankly, I think there's a good case to be made for following the fashion industry and abolishing copyright altogether. Everything I have learnt in my life builds on everything that others learnt before me. I would be foolish to claim that my ideas are anything other than a logical extension to the thoughts of others. Isaac Newton once wrote: "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants", and he was a pretty clever chap. There was no copyright law in Isaac Newton's day and, if he is happy crediting the rest of humanity for his ideas, then who am I to argue?[39] Ideas belong to everyone.

"One hundred percent originality doesn't exist, of course," Sam agrees, without going quite as far as me in saying that ideas belong to everyone. "There are still people creating cool new surprising things all

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38 This is true regardless of whether you think the fashion industry is worthwhile – it's only an example.
39 The first state copyright law, the Statute of Anne, was promulgated in 1710, 23 years *after* Newton's "Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica".

over the world, so I think there's an argument for the attribution license, some recognition to the person who had the idea," he says. "It's not that ideas belong to everyone, but that they should be available to everyone and everyone can use them however they want." I think old Sir Isaac could agree with that.

At the moment, though, the world of open hardware is pretty basic. "There are a lot of good ideas and designs," Sam says encouragingly, "but it's nowhere near as easy as going down to Ikea." During his Year of Open Source, Sam found it time consuming and expensive to find suppliers and manufacturers for his open source designs. But he's optimistic. "Hopefully, different business models will develop around open hardware and create an interlocking network of designers, suppliers and manufacturers. Once the open source hardware ecosystem has grown, it will become much easier and cheaper."

One of the things I like about Sam is that he is resolutely *not* a child-genius computer hacker with thick black frame glasses and a bionic arm. He spent the whole year wrestling with the geeky-gadgetry of an open source smartphone, only to find that the hardware itself was faulty. I appreciate this naivety because, as I get older, I'm finding that the more technology I encounter, the more it repulses me. As I uncover more of Donald Rumsfeld's unknown unknowns, my brain gets overloaded and I just want to chuck the whole lot into the landfill.

That's why the Global Village Construction Set appeals to me. It's a list of fifty different machines, with open source plans, that could re-create a comfortable modern civilisation from scratch.[40] This my brain can handle: I can just about imagine myself making fifty things. There's a bakery oven and a plasma cutter; a hydraulic tractor and a compressor to make bricks for an open source house. The aim of the project is to reduce the technology we use to only the most simple, human and necessary. Needless to say, your iLife is not on the list. Sam

40 http://opensourceecology.org/wiki/Global_Village_Construction_Set

is more upset about another omission: "The only piece of kit missing from the global village list," he says, "is a washing machine." The washing machine is a great liberator, he argues. In the developing world, clothes washing still takes up a lot of time, usually of women. If we could liberate that labour from washing, the world would be a more equal and productive place. "Designing an open source washing machine," Sam says ruefully, "is the one thing on my list that I really should be doing that I know I won't."

Sam's Year of Open Source ended in August, but it isn't like he immediately rushed out to bulk buy branded underwear. He still uses Linux and he vows to continue exploring the world that has opened up to him in the last year. "One of the inspirations for the Year of Open Source project was to get people thinking about alternatives," Sam says. Also at Elevate festival is Elf Pavlik, a man who represents the most radical alternative imaginable: he has been living both moneyless and stateless for over four years.[41] Pavlik is a web developer who operates in the gift economy: he shares his skills freely and finds that, when he does, others do too. He is gifting Elevate an open city app for Graz; Elevate is gifting him accommodation and food. "It makes you think about the concept of money and what it means," Sam says about Pavlik. "The sharing economy that Pavlik is involved in is certainly very close to the open source community."

Sam's collaborative open source economy and Pavlik's "for the love of it" gift economy offer us two robust, codependent alternatives to capitalism. With a little courage and a little imagination, we too can follow more sustainable, more productive and more cooperative lifestyles.

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41 https://twitter.com/elfpavlik

What Happened to the Loop?

SATURDAY, 26 OCT 23:37 The Dungeon

The girl unfolds, follows her fingers, curled in ballet. The black-stubble soundman interfaces with his instruments: minute adjustments to a silver-cased box of knobs and click buttons, anxious checks on his silver-cased Apple controller. Unstable cables of sound trickle over tables into ears.

Serious, scarcely-shuffling feet study the live sound situation tight-lipped. An orthodox rocks at wedding celebrations to the barest sensations. What chance the profane when Austrian dance boy can only wipe a hand over insensate eyes, while a battery of blondes (the latest objectives of the drunk) take fleeting photography? Only dreadlocks swing in the smoke, to pebble spit audio from speaker stacks three metres high.

A girl in a print dress starts to follow an imaginary rhythm she hears beneath the krkakrka of an electrical assault. She laughs, but her invasion of the soundman's sacred space provokes a mounting assault. The necessary drunk, freshly pressed for tonight's disaster, pulls moves on anything that moves – is there something noble behind his persistent cross-eyed lechery, insensitive to incensed blonde looks of horror?

Skeletons of bogus dragons project themselves onto the walls of the dungeon. Revellers stand in a reflective semi-circle of shame and privacy. I decibel scream into the speaker stacks, but no one can hear me, each of us alone in our freedom. This is the way Elevate gets down, to mysterious electrical impulses, fired through epileptic fusions and static shocks. I stumble over stones and bones. The lights shaft the smoke plumes. Still life of cigarettes and dirt.

SUNDAY

"The police won't beat you until you're dead..."

ORF Dialogue Forum: Open Media

SUNDAY, 27 OCT 15:00 – 17:00 Dom Im Berg

The Dom is, perhaps portentously, only half full for this discussion on the future of the media. Perhaps the good people of Graz don't agree with the statement that a functioning democracy needs, not only an independent judiciary and an independent government, but also an independent media to critique them both. Perhaps the good people of Graz have already decided that the future of media is oblivion. They would certainly have good cause to think so: readers, listeners and viewers expect to get their journalism for nothing. This means that the only metric for judging an article's value is clicks, to make the advertisers happy. A story that goes viral is an excellent story. And what goes viral is, well, kittens.[42]

'Twas ever thus, you might say, but modern journalists are now also competing with a million other writers (not to mention video makers, kitten photographers and podcasters) who are publishing gigabytes of new copy every second. Competition is no longer just the other newspapers on the shelf. This rabid rivalry does encourage excellence, but excellence in the field of "Strip club owner buys a house next door to his ex-wife... and installs a giant middle finger statue facing her property".[43] By the way, this excellent story succeeded: the headline made me want to click and I could feel the advertising execs at B&Q just sobbing with glee as my face was exposed to their "Handy deals".[44] But I'm not sure the story made my democracy any more robust.

And it only gets worse for journalists. Readers also expect to be able to share these marvellous stories for free with their friends on social networks. The corollary of this is that readers no longer read an

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42 Example par excellence: http://deshommesetdeschatons.tumblr.com/
43 From today's edition of the most popular British news site, The Daily Mail Online. I refuse to link to it.
44 Except that it wasn't because I use an adblocker. You should too.

entire newspaper or watch a whole news programme from start to finish. They read and watch news clips that have been passed on by their friends. There is no sense of loyalty to a particular writer. All of this means that the funding for a lot of journalism, including the investigative journalism that can help keep an eye on our government and judiciary, has all but disappeared. I can't help wondering if our current apathy towards politics is in some way compounded by the current failures of journalism.

Thank goodness today's ORF[45] Dialogue Forum is going to make everything better. Right off the bat, everyone seems to agree that a good media is an open media. Lizzie Jackson, professor of interactive media at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, describes the following attributes of open media: open access to the public; transparency in its dealings with the public; engagement and interaction with its audience; innovation and creativity to stay ahead; and the ability to be change ready. Franz Manola of ORF Radio adds that, in order to have an open media, we need open data and governments and corporations must be forced by law to publish this data. Meanwhile, Volker Ralf Grassmuck, a media sociologist and activist, would like to see more experts doing journalism. "The issues we face, such as climate change or security surveillance are becoming more and more complicated," he says. "So genuine experts are becoming more and more important to journalism and the accurate transfer of knowledge to the public." It all sounds very idealistic.

One of the great advantages of the Internet is that all journalism is available all the time and it's all searchable. When you pick up a newspaper, you get that day's news and that day's news only. When you pick up the Internet you get everything, ever. Although this might lead to problems with information overload, it is good news for democracy. News archives are one way of making politicians and businesses more

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45 Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF) is the Austrian national public service broadcaster.

accountable for their actions. If you can go back to the original speech and see that a politician lied or a business promised something that they never delivered (imagine), then you can hold them to account. But, besides information overload, there is another downside to digital archives: they can be modified or even deleted. The erasure of past news brings to mind George Orwell's Ministry of Truth in "1984", where the news is simply rewritten to suit the changing political climate.

In some ways, we are already living in "1984". The European Commission already restricts the funding of public service media to levels commensurable with private broadcasters, in order to facilitate competition. According to Wolfgang Ritschl, one unintended consequence of this is that Ö1 radio are only allowed to keep articles online for a week. Content from two years ago is gone, together with all the hard work that went into it. In the UK, the BBC online budget was reduced by twenty-five percent partly to help level the playing field for commercial news organisations. I can't see how a reduction in service benefits citizens; and how do broadcasters choose what to delete? The Conservative Party in Britain have recently deleted ten years' worth of speeches from their online archives, as well as blocking access for the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine.[46] Newspapers, too, are not averse to disappearing articles from the online archives when they change their opinions or are threatened with legal action.[47]

Despite the democratising power of news archives, Franz Manola argues that public interest in archive material is quite small. "Being a journalist is like being a writer for a day," he says. The news is read today and thrown away tomorrow. "It is not the primary task of a journalist to make sure that data is available in the future," he adds. A

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46 http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/nov/13/conservative-party-archive-speeches-internet

47 http://wikileaks.org/wiki/Eight_stories_on_Obama_linked_billionaire_Nadhmi_Auchi_censored_from_the_Guardian,_Observer,_Telegraph_and_New_Statesman

more relevant problem, for Franz, is that of funding. Without paying a living wage, even today's news would not be written. As Klaus Unterberger, the ORF public value representative and moderator of the discussion, wryly points out, "It's a problem that, in a democracy, people work in PR and not in journalism."

The threats to traditional media are real and there is no doubt that, as Lizzie says, public service media must innovate to stay alive. I should make special mention of WikiLeaks here, as an organisation that is innovating for the benefit of serious investigative journalism. But what of the journalists themselves? Speaking as a writer myself, do I have a future in this business? I will answer with a suggestion. George Orwell, in "Why I Write", described four motivations for writing, one of which was fame or, as he put it: "sheer egoism".[48] My suggestion is this: with all due respect to George, perhaps it is time for us to drop this motivation.

The open source community has no truck with fame: if your idea is good, it will be copied and re-used; if it is bad it will be discarded or modified until it is good. Either way, the original author is only one cog in the machine. The joy of working with the open source community is not to be found in the pursuit of fame, but in being useful to others and seeing your ideas come to fruition.

A question, then, for myself and other writers: What would you write if it didn't have your name on it? If you could detach your ego from the writing process, what would you write then? There would be no point in writing about giant middle finger statues, just for the Internet traffic, because those pieces wouldn't reflect their popularity onto you. The only stories worth writing, in fact, would be stories that overwhelm you with the feeling: *People must know this.*

And that is what journalism should always be.

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48 By the way, "Money" is not one of the four.

Elevate Awards 2013

SUNDAY, 27 OCT 20:00 – 22:00 Dom Im Berg

Daylight saving kicked in last night, marking the official start of winter, but inside the Dom it's t-shirt weather for runners, nominees, cameramen and all of us in the crowd. That big event buzz hums around the cave; a tired-but-happy festival buzz. A red carpet trips up to the stage, where a light box stamped with the ubiquitous clocktower logo fades from purple through to orange. The awards themselves, miniature Schloßberg clocktowers in green, red and gold, rest demurely atop a soft-lit podium.

A barrel-chested man, suited in a black shirt and red tie, takes the stage. Herr Hermes looks like a 1950s Labour politician, but is actually a comedian: "There are three cameras here tonight – welcome to the NSA live stream," he jokes. The co-organisers of the festival, Daniel Erlacher and Bernhard Steirer, join Herr Hermes to explain why we're all sitting here. "We do a lot of talking," Daniel says, "but we must not forget the extremely committed people out there fighting for great causes. This is an opportunity to thank them."

It makes me wonder: Why do we all love awards ceremonies? For the winners, I'm sure it makes them feel good about their work – the cash prize of two thousand Euros helps too. The eyes of the television cameras might also raise the profile of the nominated organisations, as well as the winners. But I like to think that the awards are as much for the audience as for the winners. They remind us that there are other people in the world, doing inspirational things, showing us how to face difficulties with courage and imagination. I only hope that the pomp and ceremony doesn't also isolate us from taking responsibility: we invite these activists onto a stage, we applaud them, we feel good about our applause and we walk away with a smile on our faces. But it shouldn't end there; we must take action. Equally, I hope that none of

the winners feel like an Elevate award is the end to their struggle.

But, as an entertainment and as a coda to the hard work of the festival, the awards are a success. They bring the delegates together for one last celebration of all the things that struggle has achieved in the last year. The process of nominating, selecting, voting and awarding leaves us feeling inspired and energised for the year ahead. As does the Zirbenschnapps.

I won't go into the details of all the nominees because I couldn't do them all justice and they are all worthy of our applause.[49] For the presentation of the international award, though, a familiar member of the jury comes on stage: Jacob Appelbaum. His words are a fitting conclusion to the festival: "Each of our struggles are interconnected," he says. "When we support others through solidarity, we strengthen our own causes in ways that we can't imagine."

The winners of the international award are a refugee protest camp in Vienna, a cause that is obviously of special interest for Jacob, an exile himself, albeit a highly privileged one. "The police won't beat you until you're dead," he reminds us, "but they would do that to a refugee. It helps to stand with those refugees in solidarity, to use your privilege in a useful way." The representatives from the refugee protest camp are humble in their defiance. "I would like to thank you very much for this kind of honour," one says, "because people don't like us."

The three young refugees stand on the red carpet with a gold clocktower and a cheque for two thousand Euros, embarrassed in the applause. Their words of acceptance ring out, beyond the cavern walls of the Dom, into the homes and minds of the national television audience: "This award is not only for us, this award is for all people who fight for human rights."

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49 Read about the nominees here: http://2013.elevate.at/en/awards/information

Obey or Fight

"Red alert!" Daniel, face flushed, brandishes the bottle, lining up a hundred thimbles of medicinal Zirbenschnaps[50]. We drink again to Elevate. "I am not a good barman to have," Daniel says. He is the best kind of barman: shot after shot follows the first.

Dom Im Berg is filled with the cast of characters I've only just got to know. An American of Vienna, trying to blend in by acting out the pre-war imperial conservative, complete with twirling moustache and braces. A black bloc obsidian retriever basks in the drunken adoration of the Elevate staffers. Exhausted from five days of shipping, shoving and stomping, a weary production assistant tries to leave. "Red alert!" Daniel cries out again, hauling him back by his shirt sleeves.

A couple of overland days later, I'm welcomed back into the UK with the usual inexplicable delay on Greater Anglia trains. Once again, it's my train to Manningtree, but this time I do not have twenty-six minutes' connection time to play with. Worse still, if I don't make that connection, then I'll miss the birthday party of one of my best friends. Either I wait for my delayed train and miss my connection at Manningtree, or I violate the terms and conditions of my ticket, sneak onto an earlier train and catch it.

Now you might think that this choice is piffling and I suppose you'd be right. But it is also a symbolic distillation of the choice that faces us every moment of our lives: Do I obey? No right-thinking person would just stand there and do nothing, forlornly waiting for another horribly delayed Greater Anglia train. But the law commands me to stand there. Like a lemon. Equally, no right-thinking person would just stand there and do nothing, forlornly waiting while governments, security services and corporations build a state of total

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50 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zirbenlik%C3%B6r

surveillance. But those are the laws that command us today. Like the lemons we might as well be.

Remember the overwhelming question of Elevate? Can we harness the power of openness for democracy, without slipping into an Orwellian nightmare? The answer is that it's up to us, both together and as individuals. As Birgitta Jónsdóttir says, we are the system and every moment we make the choice to either obey or fight.

In my own piffling way, I plump for the latter option. Two hours later, a full thirty-eight after leaving Elevate, I step off the train and into the party. I should violate terms and conditions more often.

A Million Things You Can Do

HERE – NOW

I don't want this book to end with a full stop; I want it to end with action. There are a million things you can do to join the fight for democracy. Here are just a few, inspired by Elevate.

1.   **Watch** "How the NSA betrayed the world's trust", a TED talk by Mikko Hypponen. Especially if you are still not convinced.

2.   **Lose** your mobile phone, AKA your "tracking device". If this is too extreme for you, then bear in mind that you are not secure from tracking unless the battery is out of the device. And that the NSA can use your phone to target drone assassinations. Wow.

3.   **Stop** using Google search or that of other corporations who have a vested interest in extracting as much data about you and then selling it. There are alternatives, for example Startpage.com, which uses Google's search results, but preserves your anonymity.

4.   **Get** your news from open media, like OpenDemocracy, DemocracyNow! or Global Voices.

5.   **Stop** using Facebook. There are alternative social networks, like Diaspora, which don't take ownership of your information and which aren't part of the NSA's PRISM surveillance programme.

6.   **Demand** a copy of all the data that Facebook hold about you. Max Schrems tells you how at europe-v-facebook.org.

7.   **Start** using encrypted chat, like Cryptocat, and encrypted internet connections, like VPN or Tor, which works on a solidarity network: the more people who use it, the better it will get.

8.   **Free** yourself from services like Gmail, Hotmail, GMX or other web-based cloud services. They earn their money by exploiting your

personal data.

9. **Pay** actual money for valuable web services, especially if they are a not-for-profit venture.

10. **Support** Wikipedia and other parts of the open Internet.

11. **Write** citizen journalism and support journalists who write the news our democracy couldn't live without. Check out the Bureau of Investigative Journalism: www.thebureauinvestigates.com.

12. **Use** a secure and open source web browser, like Firefox, and ideally with a Tor connection. Control the data websites send to each other using extensions like "NoScript" and "Request Policy".

13. **Build** a mesh-network for your local area.

14. **Stop** using aeroplanes so much. Travel overland.

15. **Use** open source software. There's an open source version of pretty much everything you'll need – and they're often better than their proprietary alternatives. Beware proprietary "freeware": you pay for it with your soul (see the prank played by Gamestation on April Fool's Day 2010).

16. **Start** using open source hardware. Make your own pants, like Sam Muirhead did.

17. **Break open** your own ideas and projects, whatever field you're in. If there can be an open source tractor, then there can be an open source whatever you're doing.

18. **Use** the CC-BY-SA license for your work, like this book does. Remember that the fashion industry has been peddling unprotected ideas with spectacular success for over a hundred years.

19. **Start** using pro-democracy websites that help hold your representatives to account. In the UK: theyworkforyou.com.

20. **Accept** that you too are an asshole.

21. **Switch off** your plasma screen and start using a megaphone.

22. **Lobby** your government for proper enforcement of EU Data Protection Laws. Then ask them for even more protection.

23. **Dance**.

24. **Start** living moneyless and stateless, like Elf Pavlik. A how-to guide for moneyless living is "The Moneyless Manifesto" by Mark Boyle. You can read it online for free at moneylessmanifesto.org.

25. **Visit** and support Iceland in their campaign for direct democracy and the creation of more transparency havens.

26. **Use** Adhocracy or Liquid Feedback and campaign for their use alongside the usual parliamentary process. If it works for the Pirate Party, then why not for the Conservative Party?

27. **Encrypt** your emails using PGP, especially if you are an at-risk activist. You can get an easy-to-use plugin for your open source Thunderbird mail client. Most other encryption services have been compromised.

28. **Write** a letter of complaint to Greater Anglia trains (joke).

29. **Lobby** your government to construct a new Internet, as Germany and Brazil are contemplating, away from the prying eyes of the NSA.

30. **Go** to the library more often. Educate yourself and others about privacy, surveillance, openness, activism and democracy.

31. **Join** a protest movement. Protect yourself by standing up for others less privileged than yourself. Or you'll be next.

32. **Watch** the talk "Is this you?", by Elevate speaker Tom Scott: tomscott.com/isthisyou.

33. **Fight**. Violate more terms and conditions.

34. **Watch** the film "Terms and Conditions May Apply" by Cullen Hoback. You will never feel the same about your beloved Google / Facebook / Hotmail again.

35. **Read** "NSA Files Revelations Decoded" from *The Guardian.*

36. **Read** "Cypherpunks", a book-conversation on freedom and the future of the Internet between Julian Assange, Jacob Appelbaum and other activists.

37. **Share** this book – it's free.

38. **Remember**: Nobody has anything to hide until they do.

Finally:

**Join us at Elevate 2014, the tenth anniversary edition,
23-26 October 2014 in Graz, Austria.**

For more information: www.elevate.at