

# On communities, cooperation and cooking

Lessons learned from 16 years  
with open source and free software

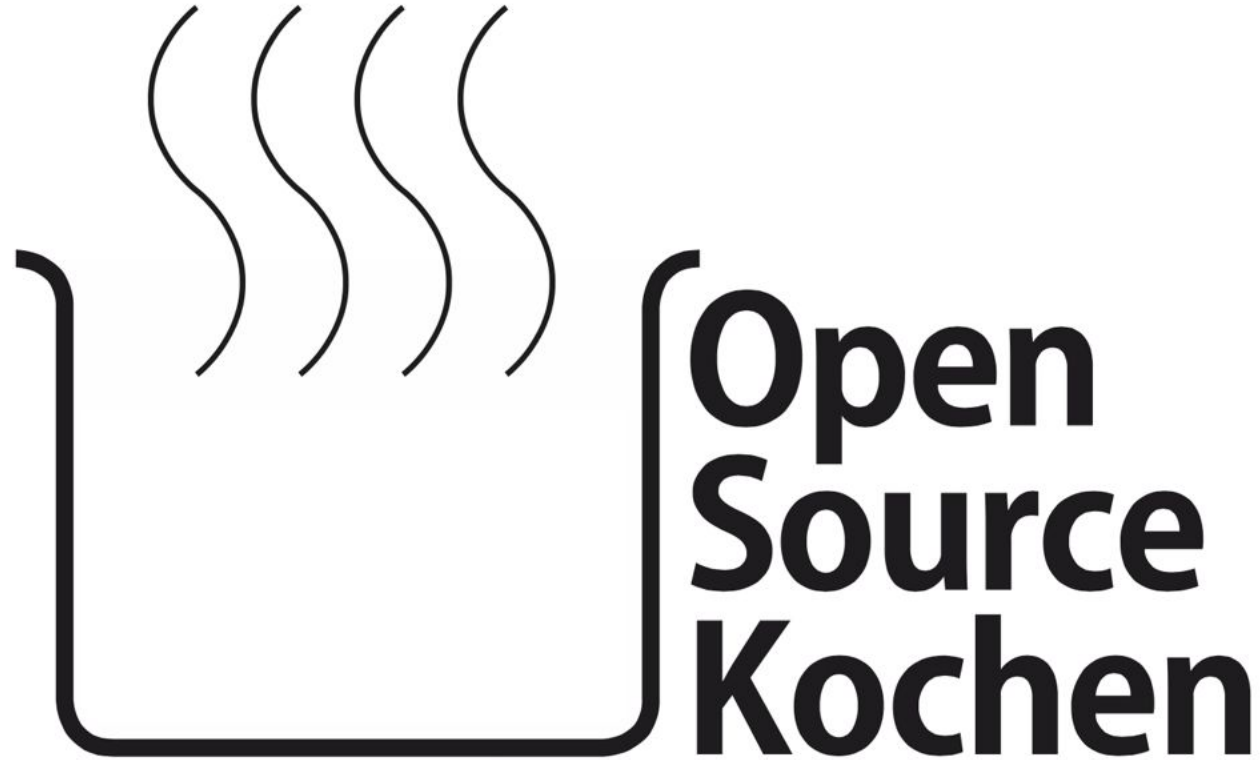
- **Florian Effenberger @floeff**
- FOSS Backstage Extra  
May 6, 2020

# Who's waking me up?!

- **free software enthusiast** for over sixteen years
- founding member and executive director of **The Document Foundation** (LibreOffice)
- active with **Open-Source-Treffen e.V.**
- previously
  - volunteered in **infrastructure, marketing**
  - worked as freelance **journalist**
  - designed **educational** FLOSS computer networks

Are you hungry yet? ;-)

# Open Source... Cooking!



# Open Source... Cooking?!?!

- Be careful with stupid **ideas**:  
“Hey, you have a kitchen, we could cook for 30 people...”
- first event in April 2010
- **around 15 events** so far, Fridays after work
- **20-30 participants**, max. 40 possible
- Not so stupid idea anymore:  
”meeting **apart from PC and smartphone**”,  
people nowadays bring their kids and families

<http://www.linux-community.de/Internal/Artikel/Print-Artikel/LinuxUser/2011/01/Von-Spaghetti-Code-Forks-und-Slices>

# Indeed, Open Source!

- **cooking per “open source principles”**
  - we enjoy **working together**
  - we are a **community**
  - we have adventurous **interest and excitement**
  - we **learn** from our mistakes and **share knowledge**
  - everyone contributes **what they’re best at**
  - we **motivate** others to contribute
  - **coordination is key...** but a bit chaotic :-)
  - **everyone benefits** from the result – and it’s tasty!

# “Call for Recipes”

- **proposals** via e-mail and social media  
→ *no “spaghetti code”, but really **good** food*
- **everyone’s** included
  - vegetarians, vegans
  - allergies
  - Who (dis)likes what kind of food?
- Japanese, Mexican, Hungarian, Indian - support by **locals**
- **betatest** at home ;-)

# Compiling things...

- ▶ **build requirements:** a **group** of people will go **shopping** at a large grocery store together  
*(ETA: three hours!)*
- ▶ “project management”: **amounts and costs** estimated by **spreadsheet and search engine**
- ▶ costs shared, **5-15 € per participant**  
*way less expensive than good food in a restaurant*



# Release Engineering

- **“package maintainers“** for all three menu courses, cooking **together**
- **disseminators:** only a **few can actually cook**
- stove has a **scalability limit**, only four hotplates
- **parallelization** is important  
*18 kg tomatoes, 100 eggs, sixpack of wine*
- **time-based release model**, sort of...  
*main course between 21:30 and 01:30*
- **documentation** could use some improvements ;-)  
*some recipes not public yet*

# post-install scripts

- **cleanup process** hard to set up (*washing the dishes...*)
- donation of food, so **also others** have a wonderful evening  
*for us, it's just 1 € more, but for others it means a lot*
- we are geeks, so more **ideas** on the way
  - **cooking abroad**
  - working with celebrity chef?  
*(First TV show already asked!)*
  - finally buy the **700 € pumpkin ;-)**
  - ask a grocery store to donate **1 € for people in need**  
for each Euro we spend there for food

# Long-term maintenance, sustainability

- ▶ last event took place **several years ago**
- ▶ **key people** not available anymore  
→ not because of lack of interest,  
but people's life and hobbies change
- ▶ someone needs to “wear the (chef's) hat”  
→ create projects in a **sustainable** way  
avoid “**bus factors**”, **re-invent** yourself



Warning:  
You might get hungry! :)



**SIPIONE**

**Saffran**  
Saffron

100% PASTA  
100% WHEAT  
100% DURUM  
100% SEMOLA  
100% TENERE  
100% DURE  
100% SOFT  
100% HARD  
100% DURUM  
100% TENERE  
100% DURE  
100% SOFT  
100% HARD

100% PASTA  
100% WHEAT  
100% DURUM  
100% SEMOLA  
100% TENERE  
100% DURE  
100% SOFT  
100% HARD













# Different human aspects

# What is a community?

*Being active in a free software project is about **much more than just code**:*

***It's about people, trust, friendship** –  
and making the best out of that  
combination to work on the same goal.*

# What is a community?

*Open source communities  
**can be like a dandelion.***

*If there are many seeds that gather  
around a common root, **spread and  
share them**, so they eventually will  
**shine** in a beautiful colour everywhere.*



# What is a community?

*An **apartment** is just a physical place. It eventually **becomes home** when people breathe, love, discuss, argue, celebrate and share it.*

*In the same way, an open source **project** eventually **becomes a true community** when its **contributors fill it with passion and joy.***

# What is a community?

*Contributing to an open source community  
can be like composing a song.*

*There are **several voices and instruments**  
that need to be **arranged on one sheet**,  
resulting in a wonderful tune.*

# What is a community?

*Open source communities are like popcorn when watching movies.*

*They might **take a while** to pop up, are **sometimes salty and sometimes sweet**, but both is tasty and it's simply not the same without.*



# Conferences bring people together

*A good conference is like a concert.*

*You **plan months ahead**, venue might be far away, hotels expensive and travel **burdensome**.  
When the first tune is heard, all stress is gone.*

*To be a success, it needs both the stage **performers** and background **technicians**,  
even more the **audience**.*



# Mentors are so very important

*Open source communities let your **skills shine**, help you **discover new passion**, enable you to fight weakness, can take your fear from **new and unknown things** and **provide a safe place** to explore your **undiscovered talent**.*

*One of the greatest gifts there is the incredible amount of things you can **learn from skilled talents** around the world. **Shared knowledge** is the basis for every project's success.*



# Ten thoughts on communities

# What is a community?

- “a **group of people** with a **shared identity** and **joint interests**” (loosely based on a German Wikipedia article)
  - be it in **private capacity** and/or as **company representative**
  - my take: shared identity often **due to** joint interest
  - common **memories, ventures and experiences**
- term these days is used **way too frequently**
  - marketing website around any random product  
→ “community”?!

# What is a community?

- ▶ many **different actors**, many **different directions** (“anthill”)
- ▶ organization or entity as **legal backing**
  - ▶ **donations/funds** and contracts
  - ▶ **statutes** and rules
  - ▶ **roles** and elections
    - ▶ **formal**: board, treasurer, supervisory board
    - ▶ **informal** (often “dynamic”): marketing, infrastructure
  - ▶ *If you’re not running away fast enough, you’ll get some role ;-)*
  - ▶ **But: What does such a role entail?**

# 1. “Cooperation”

# Cooperation

- unclear, **who** will actually share a role with you
- **cooperation** is key
  - **open and honest** → you're all in the same boat
  - plausible and trustworthy → **transparency**
  - **effective** → after all, it's your (spare) time
  - both internal **and** external → community

# Cooperation

- ▶ some **things in common** are important
  - ▶ share your **goals**, visions and plans
  - ▶ define clear **responsibilities** and duties
- ▶ **different views**
  - ▶ new perspectives = **diversity** = new opportunities
  - ▶ compromises and **common denominators**
  - ▶ goals are not always mutually exclusive
  - ▶ *rope pulling is no fun without some resistance ;-)*
- ▶ if working together is **fun**, this is the icing on the cake

## 2. “Commitment”



# Commitment

- your **contributions** were noticed by others
- the community trusts you and your **skills**  
→ be **proud** of that **trust put in you**
- but beware: now there will be **additional work** for you
  - **completely new** tasks await you in **additional areas**
  - **additional time will be required**
- depending on role, organisation, size and contributors, up to **15-20 working days per year**

# 3. “Variety”

# Variety

- ▼ **public face** of the project
  - ▼ organizational
  - ▼ as representative
  - ▼ **legally**
- ▼ Sounds like being a rockstar, but **the blatant truth** is...
  - ▼ regular **meetings**
  - ▼ **budget planning** and reserve building
  - ▼ **tax declaration** and activity report
  - ▼ coordination of **employees** and **tenders**
  - ▼ trademark, copyright, regulations
  - ▼ **cooperations** and partnerships
  - ▼ **barely visible** to the public
    - **frustration**

# Variety

- you might need a **”thick fur”**
  - willingness to **learn**: new things and about yourself
  - **persistence**
  - **tolerance** to frustration
- take advantage of **different skills** and interests
  - > everyone can do something different,  
**make use of your group’s strenghts**
- clear definition of **responsibilities**

# 4. “Delegation”

# Delegation

- it's a **sign of strength**, but needs **trust**
  - you simply **cannot** always do everything on your own
- colleagues, volunteers, service providers, employees
- key areas and their rationale
  - **accounting** (*is time consuming and boring*)
  - **legal** and **tax** advise (*needs knowledge and bears risks*)
  - **administrative** (*is time consuming and boring*)
  - **IT services** (*needs availability and security*)

# Delegation

- rather focus on the essentials
  - **smaller tasks** distract, “**micromanagement**” sucks (time)
- **strategy**, long-term goals (“**the big picture**”)
- **responsibility** for community and project
- **gather knowledge**, to **control** tasks delivered
  - “delegate, control, be interested”
- **trust** your comrades
- **Topics unknown to you can be important!**

# 5. “Responsibility”



# Responsibility

- ▼ everyone's **shared responsibility**
  - ▼ **you** are part of the group, **you** are responsible
- ▼ tasks and **duties**
  - ▼ get an **overview**, meet the **deadlines**
  - ▼ comply with **regulations** → doesn't get easier
  - ▼ timely and sensible **use of donor's money**
- ▼ **Topics unknown to you can be important!**

## 6. “Social”

# Social

- responsibility for tasks, projects and **maybe a paid team**
  - paid team members **depend on their job!**
  - **They are therefore depending on the project's success. And as such, they also depend on YOU.**
- **Even if you do this pro bono**, your team **rightly** expects
  - job **safety** → keep good employees
  - a **positive** work environment
    - make use of that: “turn your hobby into a job”, international cooperation, “working for the good thing”

# Social

- **steep learning curve** especially when pro bono
  - **remote team** needs good interaction
    - takes a **lot of time** and is a **challenging task**
  - **talk with** each other, **listen** to each other, mutual **understanding**, **laude** their work → **“soft skills”**
- You’ll get a lot in return...
  - **motivation** and **loyalty**
  - a lot of **valuable experience**, also for your own job
  - **a good cooperation with the community**

# 7. “Diversity”

# Diversity

- ▼ **Open source projects are amazing, because they are diverse and international.**
  - ▼ language, **culture**, religion, use of **nicknames**
  - ▼ age, **profession** and **life experience**
  - ▼ points of view and values
  - ▼ **but also:** peculiarities, challenging personalities
- ▼ **big difference** between local associations and worldwide projects
- ▼ new points of view, positions, opinions and insights
  - **be open and challenge yourself!**

# Diversity

- ▶ At many open source conferences there are community members **from far away**.
- ▶ They have long **travels**, jetlag and don't speak **English** on a daily basis.
- ▶ The insight they share from their communities **is invaluable**.

# 8. “Coordination”



# Coordination

- **languages**

- **English** as common denominator?

- Many countries **are part of the community** and give precious insights

- language for **contracts**?

- **timezones**, seasons

- daylight savings can be different (e.g. US)

- **meetings**, office times, work-life-balance

# Coordination

- **volunteers** prefer evenings and weekends, **paid employees** prefer regular office hours  
→ there is **no “ideal” scheduling**
- **practical hints** for a good compromise
  - polls (including time zone support!) and time zone converters
  - alternate time slots
  - calendar invites (timezones!)

# Coordination

- **ways of communication**
  - **e-mail** → asynchronous, everyone gets a copy
    - *Hint: proper subject tagging (vote, discuss, info etc.)*
  - **phone/video** → easier for some topics, but synchronous
    - *Hint: preparation and actual vote on different media*
- everyone's **participation**, also subject to regulations
  - sensible meeting **frequency**
  - proper **agenda, deadlines** and voting periods
  - **representation** and **quorum**

# 9. “Trust”

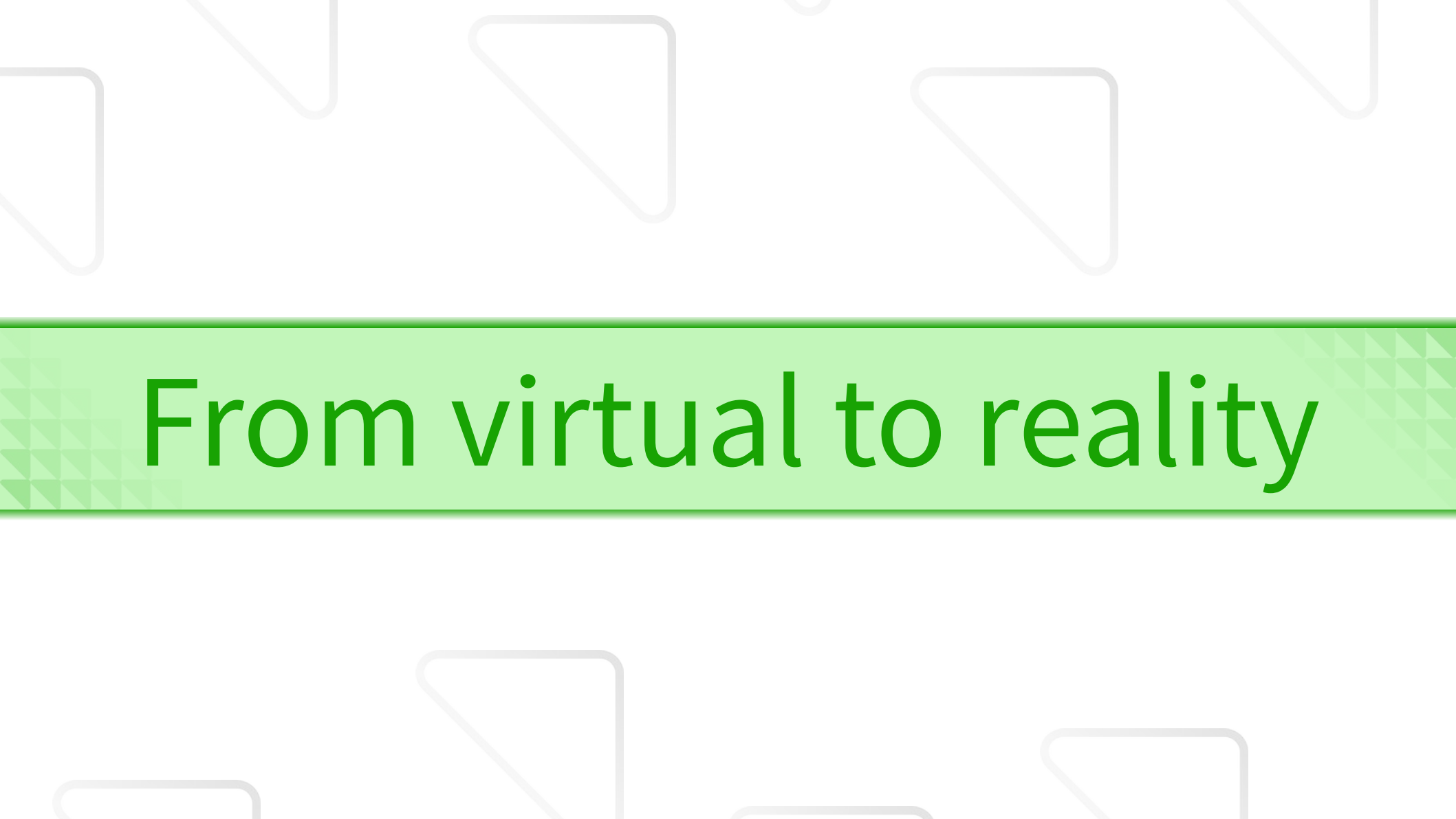
# Trust

- **no role can fly without trust**
- “e-mails don’t have a face”
  - **gestures and facial expression**, feelings and emotions
- always assume the best → **confirmation bias**
- a different legal setting can be a challenge
  - create **translations** of key documents
  - **trust** your colleagues and employees

# 10. “Reward”

# Reward

- It's **worthwhile** and exciting.
- It lets you grow **personally**.
- It will give you **professional** advantages.
- It gives you new **points of view**.
- It **enriches** your life.
- You will make **new friends**.



From virtual to reality



# Open-Source-Treffen

- ▶ “**every fourth Friday for free software**” since 2009
- ▶ initially planned country-wide,  
now recognized event in Munich
- ▶ idea: free event at central venue to **bring together**
  - ▶ projects with projects
  - ▶ users with users
  - ▶ communities with users
- ▶ **one event for many** projects

<https://www.opensourcetreffen.de>

# Open-Source-Treffen

- takes place in a big city → **people can gather there**
- (previously) walking distance to **main station**, well connected with **public transportation**
- Friday from 1800 on → after work, but **not during weekend**
- **no entrance fees**, no registration
- **no catering requirement**, but inexpensive snacks and drinks
- provides wifi, projector

# Open-Source-Treffen

- venue from Munich youth services (“Kreisjugendring”), with a focus on media pedagogy → **perfect match**
- supported and surrounded by other activities
  - Raspberry Pi Workshops
  - YouTube meetups
  - Wikipedia meetings
  - FSFE meetings

# Open-Source-Treffen

- ▶ 1-2 lectures, usually **limited to ~20 minutes**
- ▶ **96 events so far**, 20-30 attendees, **broad range** of topics
- ▶ DFD evening, previous Mozilla events, FSFE Munich meeting

Public Wi-Fi | DKIM and DMARC | Docker | History of  
Computer Development | Redmine | GnuPG Firefox |  
OpenWRT | FSFE | Security Hardening | RPM packaging |  
Bitcoins | Webradio | DokuWiki Wikidata | 3D Printing | XBMC |  
Arch Linux | Vintage Computing | OpenIDM | Websecurity | CI  
with GitLab | AWS | Perl | git | vGPU | Nix&NixOS

# Open-Source-Workshops

- **additional workshops** on specific topics
- a day **during the weekend**
- 5-20 participants, broad range of topics
- free, incl. reference materials, but **registration required**

Typo3 and Drupal | OpenStreetMap and JOSM |  
git | bash scripting | Blender | Python | Wikipedia |  
IPv6 | Perl | Postfix | OpenWRT | Raspberry Pi

# Thank you very much!

## Let's get in touch...

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- ▼ Twitter: [@floeff](https://twitter.com/floeff)



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