Why free software and digital sovereignty are made for one another

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About me

- **free software enthusiast** since 2004
- former international marketing project lead at OpenOffice.org (volunteer role)
- founding member, statute co-author, executive director of **The Document Foundation**

What is free software?

for the purpose of this talk:

free software =

open source =

libre software

What is digital sovereignty?

"Digital sovereignty [..] is the concept that a **state, organisation, or individual** should **possess meaningful control** over the digital **infrastructure, data, hardware, and software** upon which it **depends** to [..] **protect citizens' data, ensure cybersecurity resilience, and reduce structural dependence** [..]"

(Source: Wikipedia)

Another approach to explain

- you produce **data** that is an outflow of **your personality**
  e.g. diaries, e-mails, photos, doctor's reports, payslips
- you have **other people's data**
  e.g. phone numbers, birthdays, personal messages
- you want to **know and control** e.g.
  - who can **access** this data
  - how this data is **processed and analyzed**
  - where this data is **stored**
  - how **secure** is this data
  - how you can **ensure you can read** this data forever

What is needed for digital sovereignty?

- the use of truly **open standards** and file formats
  they guarantee access to your data independent from one vendor
- a **free software license**
  your rights cannot be restricted or revoked
- **worldwide collaboration** across the borders of continents
  makes things independent from a single government
- organized in **democratically driven** projects
  to ensure transparency, openness and trustworthiness

Is digital sovereignty something European?

- digital sovereignty is often about independence from X, Y or Z
- I find this **very** problematic
- open source projects are usually **global**
  e.g. the LibreOffice community is very strong also in Brazil or Japan
- the idea is that **anyone** can **use, learn and contribute**
  no matter their background, country, religion or culture
- **any** country can be more independent and more resilient
- **every** citizen can overcome the digital gap
- **become independent from monopolies, not countries**

What is LibreOffice?

- **LibreOffice** is
  - the leading free (speech **and** beer) office productivity suite
    used by over 210 million people worldwide
  - a worldwide community (“project”)
    with hundreds of contributors from around the globe

LibreOffice
The Document Foundation

- **The Document Foundation (TDF) as legal entity**
  - is a nonprofit ”Stiftung” (foundation) based in Berlin
  - ”The objective of the foundation is the **promotion and development** of **office software** available for use by **anyone**”
  - its objective **cannot be changed**

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What’s the idea behind LibreOffice?

- share knowledge for the development of **both the software and the community**
- statutes that vouch for **openness and transparency**
- **independent** from one **single** sponsor
- lower **entry barriers** e.g. via mentoring and workshops
- **cooperation** with other entities: e.g. OASIS, OSI, FSFE

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Before digital sovereignty became popular...

Next Decade Manifesto

For the past ten years, the OpenOffice.org community has developed, supported and promoted the world's leading open-source office productivity suite. We have attracted the support of tens of thousands of individuals and corporate bodies during this period.

We now call on all our supporters to follow us into the next phase of our development, as we become an independent Foundation.

Our Values

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:	WE REJECT:
To eliminate the digital divide in society by giving everyone access to office productivity tools free of charge to enable them to participate as full citizens in the 21st century	The ownership of office productivity tools by monopoly suppliers which imposes a de-facto tax on global electronic free speech and penalises the economically disadvantaged
To support the preservation of mother tongues by encouraging people to translate, document, support, and promote our office productivity tools in their mother tongue	The creeping domination of computer desktops by a single language, forcing all people to learn a foreign language before they can express themselves electronically
To allow users of office productivity software to retain the intellectual property in the documents they create by use of open document formats and open standards	The ownership of file formats by proprietary software companies - documents belong to their creators, not software vendors
To an open and transparent peer-reviewed software development process where technical excellence is valued	A closed software development process where errors can lie hidden and poor quality is accepted

https://www.documentfoundation.org/media/tdf-manifesto.pdf from **2010**

...we had it in our DNA already!

Preamble

”[..] The Foundation fosters a **sustainable, independent**, and meritocratic community for the **international development** of free and open-source software based on **open standards**. [..] This software is **made available to everyone**—including businesses and government agencies—for **free use**, without infringing on the intellectual property rights of **their own files**, to ensure **full participation in a digital society**.”

Translation of https://www.documentfoundation.org/media/satzung.pdf, in place since **2012**

What else makes LibreOffice users sovereign?

- **no** subscription, **no** vendor lock-in, **no** forced cloud
- can be used **in parallel** to other software
- is available as **portable version**
- can read other proprietary file formats incl. legacy ones
  https://www.documentliberation.org
- available in **120 languages**

What else makes LibreOffice users sovereign?

- planable releases with two main versions per year
  https://wiki.documentfoundation.org/ReleasePlan
- different **UI flavours**
- we invest in **accessibility**
- freely available **documentation in many languages**
- **accountability and transparency**
  https://www.documentfoundation.org/financials-and-reports/

Who actually uses LibreOffice?

- federal state of Schleswig-Holstein, **Germany**
- the **Austrian** Army
- the **Italian** Army
- the **French** Gendarmerie
- the Government of **Taiwan**
- conservative estimate of **210 million users worldwide**

What can you do?

- **inform** yourself and inform others
  Where is my data, who processes it, who has access to it?
- **contribute** to a free software community
  It is fun and it will enrich your life.
- **donate** to an open source project
  Time and idealism are invaluable, but money is a necessity too.
- **be open minded**
  The world is changing at massive speed.

Thank you! Any questions?

- e-mail: floeff@documentfoundation.org
- LibreOffice: https://libreoffice.org
- personal website: https://effenberger.org/en/



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