

SURVIVAL KIT

ECHO 
Ethical Common Human and Open Source Network



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INTRODUCTION

What kind of impact do digital tools have on our lives, our societies and the planet ?

This Survival Kit is a tool that allows each association to create reflection paths adapted to their own reality;

This tool aims to offer formal and informal groups, ideas for reflection and activities to facilitate the discussion around the ethics of digital.

The call is to identify a problem, discuss in association and seek possible solutions.

To facilitate this process, activities and examples of associations already working in this direction are proposed.

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1. ASK YOURSELF A QUESTION AND BUILD UP AN ANSWER

Participants: the members of the association

Activity: «The digital in our association»

Materials: Magazines, scissors, cardboard, glue, twine* and clips* (* optional), post-it notes, markers.

Each participant will have to build 4/5 cards (10x7 cm) choosing images of the digital used in the association.

Duration 20/30 minutes.

The cards you build will be shown to the group.

Activity «Questions and answers»

The following questions will be asked:

1. «Why do I use this tool?»
2. «Can I do without it? Is there an alternative tool?»
- 3- «What is the environmental impact?»
4. «How does it protect privacy?»
- 5- «How much does it cost?»

The answers written in post-it notes will be placed next to the reference image.

Debate

Divided into small working groups, the solutions to the problems will be sought; Each small group will create a report entitled :

- « **You are not alone against the world** » : someone (body, collective, association) who has already done something to solve the problems that have emerged;
- « **you are not alone** » : examples of paths, software, applications, sites, etc. in search of more ethical solutions;

How to deepen ?

The group will create a document with links to videos, articles, documents, books, etc... that will be the basis for future reflections.

2. WHO IS THE BOSS IN YOUR DIGITAL HOME

The association to «exist» NEEDS a computer and the computer NEEDS some software to «work».

REAL or induced need? The market offers us a simple way that sometimes free of charge.

The choice and first of all the evaluation on what has to be done; doing it then only because an algorithm says so, trusting in the accuracy of its calculation.

But true does not mean « right ».

Debate

Activities :

1 - we ask you to think back on your experience of buying the PC or phone, what were the reasons for the purchase and for which use we make a list of answers and group them by proximity.

2 - create a list of programs/apps that are present in the devices, which we have installed and which we have found pre-installed, which we use.

3 - We build a pc/phone with the images of the programs/apps that we use

How to deepen ?

- https://competendo.net/en/Main_Page

- <https://framalibre.org/>

3. WHAT IS THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF YOUR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY?

Your association must be connected, it is the mantra that everyone repeats to us (and we ourselves are contacting you through a website and not chatting together on site). But if we want to understand at what cost and with what consequences we respond to this «must», we have to face a research that can generate surprises and hard to digest consciences.

Below we throw a couple of facts on the subject, we do not want to be catastrophic, but certainly break that lightness of technology dresses.

Energy

Data storage requires energy. To produce it locally is recycling the disputed practice of fracking, suspected of releasing harmful chemicals and even carcinogenic and polluting groundwater, renamed Geothermal Thermal and promoted to eco-sustainable green practice. The Fervo in the desert of Nevada supplies from 2023 with «clean» electricity to the gigantic local data centers of Google, which is a partner of the project, 24/7. The plant currently produces 3.5 megawatts, but the next one aims to generate 400.

How to deepen ?

- <https://futurism.com/the-byte/google-experimental-geothermal-plant>

- <https://phys.org/news/2022-10-fracking-key-terms-negative-effects.html>

Water

The consumption of water is linked to the operation of artificial intelligence and artificial currency. According to the researcher Shaolei Ren (Riverside University, California) generative AI such as Chat GPT would consume the equivalent of a bottle of water for one search performed.

The reason ChatGPT consumes so much water is that artificial intelligence data centers heat up enormously when they perform calculations. Cooling the facilities to lower the temperature of the servers therefore requires large quantities of water.

For example, in Virginia, where the main data centers of large technology companies such as Amazon, Google and Microsoft are concentrated, the water demand of large data centers collides with the same need for water of local populations. The frequent droughts that affect these areas already see today the demands of the digital industry clash with those of the people who live in the vicinity of the centers.

Debate

Many of our members and activists have a decent environmental sensitivity, it is not uncommon that, in order not to waste energy and essential goods, use water bottles instead of plastic bottles. You propose streaming videos to invite them to a discussion on these topics and start with a small sacrifice: the speaker empties his water bottle on the ground (get a bucket if you are inside). The impact of this «waste» will give meaning and make visible what otherwise escapes us. Having fun chatting, watching reels, making us write poems from Chat GPT has a price.

How to deepen ?

https://www.ansa.it/english/newswire/english_service/2024/03/01/the-huge-environmental-impact-of-artificial-intelligence-2_ed8367cb-93ef-4cfd-b145-c49afe9c8ed5.htm

4. WHAT DIGITAL YOU USE AND WHICH YOU NEED

They sell us a Ferrari and we need a Panda.

Invitation to consumerism: in the devices we buy there are programs on trial to update or purchase, software that we do not care about, specific programs of the computer brand and apps that we may not need.

The purchase of a computer does not imply the obligation to accept the attached operating system (you can then ask to delete it and lower the price), we can install after one released for free.

They sell us narratives, omnipotences that are expiring. Many of these programs will waste our time and lead us into other situations that will lead us to buy or sell our data again.

Diderot effect: we are naturally and strongly induced to cultivate the drive to buy new things because old ones seem «unbalanced», a kind of spiral that leads to buy many more things than realistically would be needed.

Simplicity of use and critical consumption: even if you use cloud solutions associated with the idea of «dematerialization», we tend to forget that digital tools and flows are not neutral in terms of energy and environment. Digital sobriety must take into account that digital accounts for around 4% of greenhouse gas emissions and digital emissions are increasing by 9% each year.

Planned obsolescence.

Is the industrial strategy that limits the life cycle of a «product» to a sufficiently short period in order to fuel the demand for products on the market. The smartphone is an example of this: once purchased, after a couple of years security updates are no longer released, new applications are no longer compatible with the existing operating system and the product becomes «technologically old». Obsolescence also concerns the materiality of the device: use materials of lower resistance, special screws and devices such as to make a simple disassembly impossible, assemblies that do not make it possible to extract the single defective element, the lack of spare parts available shortly after production and at very high prices, which make repair unaffordable.

How to deepen ?

- <https://theshiftproject.org/en/article/lean-ict-our-new-report/>

5. DO YOU USE WHATSAPP ?

For many of us, WhatsApp working groups have become the ultimate communication tool: whether it's sharing work news, arranging appointments, send photos, ... the application is problematic as it collects data from its users for profiling and marketing purposes. In addition, the security of exchanges is not guaranteed, as well as that of the files (photos, voice, videos...) which are deposited there. There are alternatives.

Signal is often considered one of the most secure messaging applications in terms of privacy. In fact, it uses «end-to-end» encryption for all communications: only the people communicating with each other can access the content of messages; the application does not have access to the content of conversations.

In addition, Signal is developed by a non-profit organisation that regularly publishes independent security reviews to demonstrate that its application is safe and transparent. Finally, the application does not contain advertisements and does not collect user data to sell them to third parties, unlike WhatsApp, Messenger and many others...

How to deepen ?

- https://competendo.net/en/Apps_and_Tools

6. WHY DO WE NEED TO CHANGE A COMPUTER/LAPTOP

My PC is too old for Windows 11, should I throw it? Windows 11 is not compatible with many powerful and relatively new PCs.

There are other systems! And these are based not on the profits of a company and planned obsolescence, but on cooperation.

For decades, in agreement with microprocessor manufacturers eager to double sales at regular intervals to optimize productivity, Windows has required increasingly powerful hardware configurations to continue to work. If this wild rush has slowed down a bit with Windows 10, the new version of Windows 11 does not work with most newer PCs.

Debate

The invitation is to make a collective reflection on what we need the PC or a mobile phone (or similar) in association, starting generically with some questions.

Where do we stand in these 4 areas?

- 1. Non-intensive web browsing, office work and streaming video viewing.*
- 2. Photo editing, office work, more intensive web browsing.*
- 3. Programming, video editing, rendering, multitasking.*
- 4. Game.*

How to deepen ?

[- https://www.linux.org/pages/download/](https://www.linux.org/pages/download/)

7. WHY SHOULD WE LOOK FOR ALTERNATIVES ?

There may be some additional inconvenience: getting used to another operating system, changing email address, convincing your friends to use an encrypted application rather than the one «everyone uses», means committing to do more precise research with a tool that doesn't already know everything about you... Why complicate your life by using free software?

- Because behind this choice of free digital there is an ethical choice that allows us to do the same actions, the same uses, without selling our privacy.
- Because choosing a free digital means opting for a sharing society/economy in which many people work for the common good, and not for a society of surveillance capitalism in which some enrich themselves on the conscious manipulation of all others.
- Because the choice of a free digital is a political choice of a democracy still possible. When GAFAM prove that they can manipulate elections, influence public opinion through their social media, choosing free software becomes a political, democratic choice.

The concentration of power in a few private companies, which develop free apps globally able to guarantee them an income equal to the GDP of some African countries, still guarantees a possible independence from political decision-makers?

- Because the choice of a free digital, in the world of school education, is no longer a choice but a duty. It is not conceivable that educational action could be proposed with the aid of instruments of mass submission.

Education can only be emancipatory, otherwise it is nothing but obedience and alienation.

- Because choosing free digital is the only way to try to get out of the Orwellian world that promise us or submit the GAFAM: a world where everything is «marketing», in which every element becomes an opportunity to see ourselves as consumers, whether it is a health data, religious or political choices or a simple metadata that allows us to know when our brain is available for advertising.
- Because the choice of free digital is a social choice that we can make. On the one hand we can choose a society of surveillance capitalism - a 2.0 capitalism in which we are only consumers - and on the other, instead, a society in which sharing, volunteering, cooperation, the desire to «make companies» guide our actions.

Install and try LibreOffice. Why not?

It works, and the community of people who use it every day is very active.

How to deepen ?

- <https://documentation.libreoffice.org/>

8. DOES MY DEVICE SPY ON ME ?

The digital devices we use on a daily basis continuously collect digital information (i.e., «data») about us. The collection and use of data (useful in certain situations) is often used for different and non-transparent purposes.

The apps we install on our smartphone are automatically authorized to access many confidential parameters that may include our location, contacts, call logs, files contained in the device and the type of use we make of them (which apps do we use most and in what times of the day, which websites we visit and so on).

Permissions may also allow some apps to activate our device's microphones or cameras at any time and then automatically record voice or images.

These permissions, which in theory should serve to improve the overall functioning of the device, also and above all serve to collect an infinite amount of data that contributes to user profiling and that ultimately (and at best) are used for commercial purposes.

Data exchange in the network

In addition to collecting data, operating systems and apps installed on our devices continuously exchange digital information to their reference servers, even when they are not in use or when they are on standby.

This «background» data exchange enables operating systems and apps to update automatically and offer services (e.g. traffic forecasts, latest news, etc.), but also collect usage data and thus profile the user.

All apps exchange data in the background, especially those of social networks.

In the settings, under «Data usage» we can control which apps exchange data and prevent apps from exchanging data in the background.

In general we can limit the data exchange in the background for almost all apps without any problem in using our smartphone.

Debate

All devices allow us, in the settings to control which apps access which data and to limit or prevent these accesses. We can minimize data access by almost all apps.

You can activate a specific app to control which other apps are used and how often.

Web browsing data - Cookies

When we visit websites or use online apps, we download on our devices so-called «cookies», that is small files containing more or less detailed information about our online activity. Cookies can be of different types but basically they are divided into «technical» cookies (necessary and not invasive from the privacy point of view) and «profiling» cookies (which allow the display of advertising, collect usage data, preferences, etc.).

The current legislation in the European Union provides that all websites and apps that use cookies must notify the user through a banner that allows you to choose whether to allow (or not) their use.

Profiling cookies can be very invasive from the point of view of privacy, they allow web portals or apps to collect for commercial purposes or control very detailed browsing data, which also affect other sites and other apps we use.

Debate

In general, you should never accept the use of profiling cookies or periodically delete cookies from our devices through your browser settings. You should also use privacy-aware browsers (e.g. Mozilla Firefox) that automatically block social media tracers, intersite cookies, « fingerprinters » and other invasive actions.

WHAT WE CAN DO

Actions

Search and try alternatives to known services and software, which have different names but equal services and have a high ease in both installing and uninstalling them.

- Protect the confidentiality of electronic correspondence by choosing privacy-friendly applications and providers.
- Install the «mail client» Thunderbird on my PC and/or K-9 Mail on my Android smartphone. Configure the installed software so that it can access my email inbox, from the provider I have chosen.

You prefer a more sober operating system and applications that respect your privacy; that do not store tons of data to profile or « deliver » unwanted targeted advertising. Make sure you are the customer and not the product, make sure your data is not used by the giants of the web that exploit it for their own benefit. Get help and advice from other users who have already taken this step.

Resources

- <https://degooglisons-internet.org>
- https://competendo.net/en/Main_Page
- <https://www.agendadulibre.org/>

- <https://e.foundation/>
- <https://doc.e.foundation/easy-installer#list-of-devices-supported-by-the-easy-installer>
- <https://murena.com/>

WHAT WE CAN DO

Actions

- Find out about the manufacturing conditions of the equipment.
- Know their repair rating.
- Discover the actors engaged in the service of digital sobriety.

Convince our loved ones and our professional or school contacts to switch to Signal, for
Be able to continue interacting with them safely !

To favour a more sober operating system such as Linux.
Buy second-hand computers.
Discover GNU/Linux by yourself or with volunteers

Resources

Fairphone : <https://www.fairphone.com/fr/>

Scaricare Signal :
- <https://signal.org/download/>

- <https://www.linux.org/pages/download/>

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