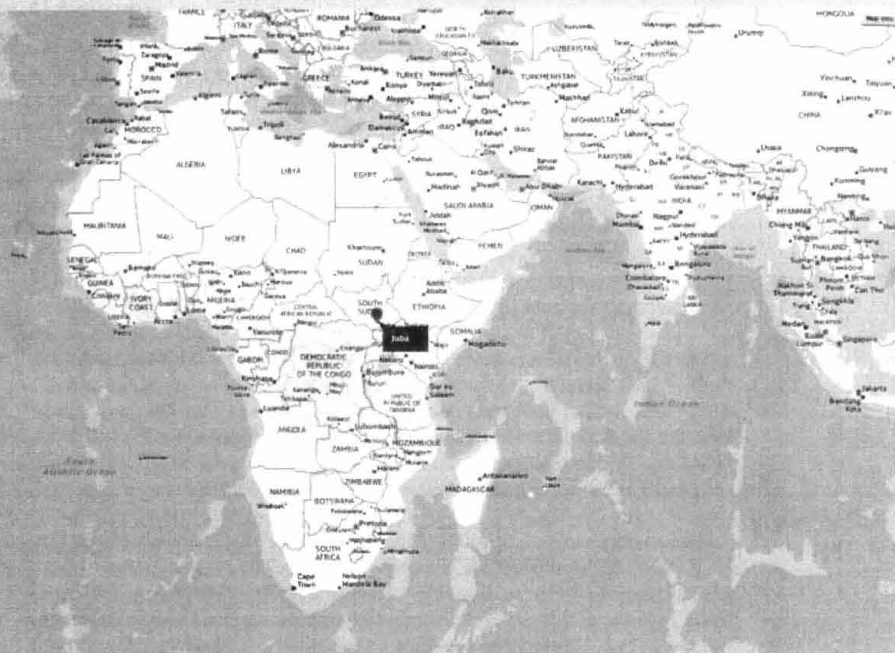


#OSJUBA



Juba. The world's first Open Source City?

Open Source and DIY Culture in Post-Conflict Development

S T E P H E N K O V A T S

In many parts of the world, new governments and civic societies emerging from shattering conflict and revolution are facing the challenge to (re)construct nothing less than entirely new nations. Urgent calls to define political participation, state identity, economic development, self-determination and freedom to speak, learn, move and - very often- to reconcile among resolute opponents have transformed seemingly local conflicts into issues of global concern. Considering this scenario in the age of social networks, citizen media and globally generated, shared and accessible data #OSJUBA seeks to apply the means and tools of creative Open Source, DIY and collaborative methodologies to the future of development and capacity building, particularly in post-conflict society.

Where no uniform political entity or national infrastructure has existed in the past, what are the priorities in establishing a state? Who charts the paths and gives the people a voice in their collective destiny? How will a new, post-conflict identity, based on the hopes and aspirations of former lifelong combatants emerge? How will the new state's cultural contours form, and how will these be perceived by its neighbours and by the world at large?

**July 9, 2011 - a nation is born.
One year later - do we have a capital yet?**

After more than four decades of brutal conflict, South Sudan, the world's newest country gained independence. A complex multi-cultural and multi-ethnic mesh of peoples and competing interests, the new state seceded from Sudan after a referendum for independence supported by close to 99% of its population. Juba, nominally a capital since the 1972 Addis peace accords granted the South autonomy, this dusty regional administrative town now finds itself in the eye of a storm of competing interests, speculation and hectic unbridled development - a chaotic city juggling 'nation building' against the sheer basics of urban survival. With independence government calls have grown to build an entirely new capital city.

A capital city is however a unique place. Vested in symbolic attribution and a nation's aspirations it must act as both an efficient administrator as much as the showcase of the nation's identity. In the case of a new state still working to define its own cultural and societal contours, the capital city takes on an even greater symbolic - as well as pivotal function. In Juba, this is a free-for-all dominated by the interests of external powers jockeying for pole position in a potentially lucrative battle for natural resources. Having acted as guarantor for the fledgling state's viability to survive as an independent nation, South Sudan's oil reserves, fertile lands and Nile waters now become its accessible rewards. Who will gain the upper hand in their exploitation, and how will its

citizens experience not only the symbolic assets of freedom, but participate in its autonomy and self-determination?

The world's first Open Source City?

#OSJUBA proposes to apply the means and methodologies of the international Open Source / FLOSS, DIY, free culture, accessible technologies and hacktivist communities in creating a vision for the new capital of South Sudan. Building a model to be applied in the broader context of an emergent, transparent and participatory democracy Open Source and DIY methodologies also play a crucial role in fusing diverse cultural traditions into existing, established and highly engaged global communities. In the context of many developing and post-conflict societies such those that comprise the nascent South Sudanese state these are cultures where DIY in particular is not only alive and thriving, it forms a fundamental basis for the very survival and operation of everyday economic and cultural practice. It is THE essential market survival mechanism and knowledge generator creating complex and rhizomatic forms of experience, providing not only basic sustenance but highly sophisticated business models touching large and broadly networked communities. Open and free DIY methodologies also provide the necessary cultural vocabulary that can be applied as sustainable models linking traditional knowledge and contemporary Open Source practice - be they digital, manual or spoken.

The elements inherent to DIY and Open Source of cultural collaboration, grass-roots enterprise and economic innovation are driven by multidisciplinary ideals that have the ability to support and augment the most complex development issues and scenarios including:

- creating new economies and user-based technologies informed by local knowledge
- crowdsourcing and open access to data for better transparency in government and resource management
- increased digital mobility for networking information and communication fostering freer expression, civic interaction and cultural diversity
- new forms of citizen-based, community or device journalism, incl. SMS, radio, data streaming
- enabling open peer to peer education formats complementing traditional learning structures

The essential characteristic of such methodologies is one of sustainability. As economically and politically powerful tools, Open Source technologies, mobile platforms, DIY infrastructures and collaborative data sourcing methodologies now have the ability to be implemented as viable alternatives to tried and often

failed attempts at nation building, urban and social development. Given the rise of user generated tools, content and technologies, the world's Open Source communities are in a unique position to strengthen the basic tenets of free and open expression, investing in the boundless potentials of media literacy, community development and individual enterprise.

Challenging and Identifying Open Source Approaches

In collaboration with its partners Media in Cooperation and Transition (MICT) and SUPERMARKT Berlin, r0g_agency for open culture and critical transformation hosted an introductory look on the 'eve' of South Sudan's first anniversary of independence at the challenges this new country faces, discussing leading developers, artists, activists and policy makers how the mechanisms of the global Open Source and free culture movements can be used as effective engines for new forms of global development practice. The event critically examined the robustness and feasibility of Open Source and its related DIY and collaborative methodologies squaring these off against the issues of operating sustainably and avoiding the issues of international development 'colonialism' in regions challenged by post-conflict reconstruction, lack of infrastructure, and poverty that bars access to the most basic of daily needs. With the aim of creating a vocabulary and tool kit of Open Source Culture for Development #OSJUBA hopes to encourage a new discourse for development and post-conflict resolution.

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