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# Talk is silver, code is gold? Contribution beyond source code in Free/Libre Open Source Software communities

**David Rozas (University of Surrey)**

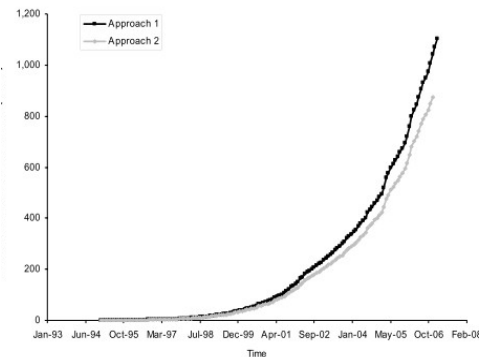
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# Outline

- Introduction
- The notion of contribution, research questions & methodology
- Findings
- Discussion
- Conclusion

# What is Free Software?

- Software which allows its use, copy, study and modification in any way
- Huge increment in adoption and production
- **Not only about the software:** new ways of producing it (Raymond, 2001)



Deshpande and Riehle (2008)

# Commons-Based Peer Production

- New mode of production (Benkler, 2006), characterised by (Fuster Morell, 2014):
  - **Collaborative process**
  - **Peer-based**: different levels of structure depending on the process, but not mainly based on contractual obligations neither forms of coercion
  - **Commons-process**: process driven by the general interest, results in openness of the resources
  - **Favouring reproducibility**: via Free Software or Creative Commons licenses



# What is Drupal?



- Free software **content management framework**, started personal project of a student (2001)
- Powering +2% websites worldwide (W3Techs, 2014): whitehouse.gov, mtv.co.uk, data.gov.uk, ...
- A **community project**: **“you come for the software, you stay for the community”**
- Currently **+1M** users registered at Drupal.org, +30k code contributors (Drupal.org, 2014a)
- Hundreds of local F2F events, dozens of camps and cons in 4 continents (Drupal.org, 2014b)





# Contribution

- A blurred (but critical!) notion: meanings constantly evolving as part of negotiation processes between the participants. Economy of contribution (Wittel, 2013)
- “Talk is silver, code is gold”: code-centrism in communities & literature
- What about other contributions? Affective labour as the “lifeblood” of the commons (Bollier, 2014): immaterial labour creates or modifies emotional experiences (Hardt, 1999)

```
17 string input;
18 int iLength, iN;
19 double dblTemp;
20 bool again = true;
21
22 while (again) {
23     iN = -1;
24     again = false;
25     getline(cin, input);
26     stringstream(input) >> dblTemp;
27     iLength = input.length();
28     if (iLength < 4) {
29         again = true;
30         continue;
31     } else if (sInput[iLength - 3] != '.') {
32         again = true;
33         continue;
34     } while (++iN < iLength) {
35         if (isdigit(sInput[iN])) {
36             continue;
37         } else if (iN == (iLength - 3)) {
38             continue;
39         }
40     }
41 }
```

# Research questions

- RQ1: What type of activities are perceived as contributions in the Drupal community? Do the “official” meanings match the ones of the members of the community?
- RQ2: How are the identified activities represented in the main platform of collaboration in an individual level?
- RQ3: Can some of these activities be understood as affective labour and what relevance do they have? Are there any differences on how they are perceived between members with different degrees of experience?

# Data and methods (stage 1)

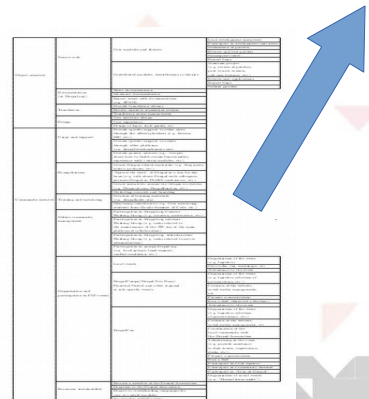
- Ethnographic methodological approach: online and offline
- Triangulation of data collection methods:
  - Participant observation (6 months): online participation, 13 events, etc.
  - Documentary analysis: Drupal Planet as “native” starting point. +2 years archive (3,266 documents): [http://www.davidrozas.com/lab/drupal\\_planet\\_archive.php](http://www.davidrozas.com/lab/drupal_planet_archive.php)
  - Semi-structured qualitative interviews (4): London and Madrid
- Analysis supported by CAQDAS



# Findings: Contribution beyond source code (RQ1)

- Two main types emerged, according to the focus of action:
  - **“Object-oriented”**: source code, documentation, translation, etc.
  - **“Community-oriented”**: usage & support, online community management, training & mentoring, organisation & participation in F2F events, etc.
- Suggestive, not exhaustive, list

Organisation and participation in F2F events (SG2.5)	Local events (SG2.5.1)	Organisation of the event (e.g. logistics) Give talks, run workshops, etc. Attendance to the event
	DrupalCamps / Drupal Dev Days / Frontend United and other regional or role-specific events (SG2.5.2)	Organisation of the event (e.g. logistics, selection of presentations, etc.) Creation of the website, social media management, etc. Prepare a presentation Run a BoF (Birds Of a Feather) Attendance to the event



# Findings: lack of visibility (RQ1)

- Analysis of main platform shows that **“community-oriented” ones are less visible**
- From them, this affects **especially local/regional F2F events**

## User support

Even the most gifted Drupal developers were new once, and chances are someone has helped you at some point along the way. No matter your skill level, you can give back by sharing what you know with other users needing support. It's a nice thing to do, and who knows? You might learn something, too!

[Find out how to help with user support.](#)

### Documentation

Whether you're interested in providing fine-grained API documentation, writing step-by-step tutorials for the handbook, or producing multimedia content, helping people how Drupal works, you can help improve Drupal's documentation and provide a valuable resource to the community.

[Find out how to help with documentation.](#)

### Translations

Drupal supports several languages, from Afrikaans to Turkish. If you know another language, you can offer your skills to help maintain Drupal core and contributed module translations.

[Find out how to help with translations.](#)

### Testing

If you have a keen eye for detail, or even just a knack for breaking things, you can help Drupal with testing. Good testing directly contributes to the stability of our platform, and is an excellent way for people of all backgrounds to make a valued contribution to the project.

[Find out how to help with testing.](#)

### Design and Usability

Have you ever been someone who's never used Drupal before or are new to Drupal yourself? Have specialized knowledge in web accessibility and other standards? Contribute feedback to Drupal's usability!

[Find out how to help with Drupal core UX or visit the Drupal Usability group.](#)

## Donations

Want to help but don't have the time? Want to say "thank you" to the folks who have put work into making Drupal what it is? Want to ensure that Drupal's infrastructure stays healthy and strong? Why not consider a monetary donation?

[Donate now or find out how to help with donations.](#)

### Development

Drupal thrives on developer contributions, in the form of both contributed modules and patches to core. Helping out in development helps the project improve, stay competitive, and is the best way to ensure that Drupal can do what you need it to do on your next project!

[Find out how to help with development.](#)

### Themes

Want to get your feet wet? Live and breathe XHTML and CSS? Contribute your knowledge to Drupal in the form of themes!

[Find out how to help with themes.](#)

## Marketing

Help get the word out about Drupal! Put your graphic design skills or marketing savvy to work in promoting Drupal and spreading the word!

[Learn more in the Drupal marketing group](#)

# Findings: Contributions in user profiles (RQ2)

- Profiles are key elements in the **generation of perceptions** by other users (Marlow, Dabbish & Herbsleb, 2013), significant role in the process of **status attainment** in FLOSS communities (Stewart, 2005)



Spain

[LinkedIn](#)  
[Twitter](#)  
[Drupal Answers](#)  
[GitHub](#)

**Current Role(s):**  
 PHD Student  
 University of Surrey

IRC: drozas

#### Professional Info

**Companies Worked For**  
 University of Surrey, Educatic,  
 Infosys, Norwegian University of  
 Science and Technology, Solusoft

<http://www.davidrozas.com>  
[http://www.surrey.ac.uk/sociology/people/phd/david\\_rozas/index.htm](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/sociology/people/phd/david_rozas/index.htm)

#### Personal Info

Gender: male

Languages spoken: English  
 Spanish

#### Bio:

I am a free software enthusiast and I have been learning and having fun with Drupal and its community since 2010.

I am currently studying a PhD under the supervision of Professor Nigel Gilbert and Dr Paul Hodgkinson. My research concerns individual involvement and group dynamics of Commons-Based Peer Production communities, focussing on the Drupal community as a case study. More info: [http://www.surrey.ac.uk/sociology/people/phd/david\\_rozas/index.htm](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/sociology/people/phd/david_rozas/index.htm)

#### History

**Member for** 5 years 2 weeks

**Documentation** Over 100 edits

#### Areas of Expertise:

Site builder  
 Developer  
 project manager,

**Drupal Events:**  
 DrupalCon Copenhagen 2010  
 DrupalCon Amsterdam 2014

#### Projects

FB Likebox (79 commits)

QScience (51 commits)

Patterns (47 commits)

Patterns Installation Profile (41 commits)

Patterns Client (16 commits)

Patterns Server (15 commits)

Total: 249 commits

**You Rock!** Thank you for purchasing a [Drupal Association](#) membership. Your support has helped us to support the Drupal community. Your membership will expire on Nov 08, 2016.



drozas helps support and grow the Drupal community with the [Drupal Association](#).

#### My mentors:



2 people list drozas as a mentor

I contributed Drupal patches  
 I contributed Drupal modules  
 I contributed Drupal installation profiles  
 I contributed to Drupal issue queues  
 I contributed Drupal documentation  
 I contributed Drupal translations  
 I provide Drupal-related services

# Findings: Contributions in user profiles (RQ2)

Examples of “object-oriented” contributions reflected in the profiles

## History

Member for 9 years 5 months

Documentation **Over 1000 edits**

## Projects

[Drupal core](#) (**6486 commits**)

[Poll \(from core\)](#) (2557 commits)

[Spark](#) (160 commits)

[Quiz](#) (102 commits)

[Drupal Module Upgrader](#) (92 commits)

[Pants](#) (76 commits)

[Revision Moderation](#) (74 commits)

[Organic groups](#) (72 commits)

[Documentation](#) (60 commits)

[Webchick's test profile](#) (52 commits)

[Drupal 7 to 8 Module Upgrader \[dead\]](#) (51 commits)

## Localization contributions

### Spanish

**1124 approved translations**

## History

Member for 4 years 4 weeks

Primary profile [Profile on https://www.drupal.org/](https://www.drupal.org/)

# Findings: Contributions in user profiles (RQ2)

Examples (the few) of “community-oriented” contributions reflected in the profiles

- Put each item on a separate line or separate them by commas. No HTML allowed.
- I contributed Drupal patches
  - I contributed Drupal modules
  - I contributed Drupal themes
  - I contributed Drupal installation profiles
  - I contributed to Drupal issue queues
  - I contributed to Drupal.org
  - I contributed Drupal documentation
  - I contributed Drupal translations
  - I helped organize DrupalCon
  - I contributed Drupal automated tests
  - I reviewed Project applications
  - I help in the Drupal support forums
  - I provide Drupal-related services
  - I help mentor new contributors
  - I attended the Drupal conference at FOSDEM 2005 (Antwerp, Belgium)
  - I attended OSCON 2005 or the off-site Drupal conference at OSCON 2005 (Portland, Oregon)
  - I attended LinuxWorldExpo London
  - I attended DrupalCon Amsterdam 2005
  - I attended the Drupal conference collocated with the Open Source CMS and Blogging Tools Summit (Vancouver, Canada)
  - I attended the Drupal conference 2006 (Brussels, Belgium)
  - I attended OSCMS 2007, Sunnyvale
  - I attended DrupalCon Barcelona 2007
  - I attended DrupalCon Boston 2008
  - I attended DrupalCon Szeged, Hungary 2008
  - I attended DrupalCon DC 2009
  - I attended DrupalCon Paris 2009
  - I attended DrupalCon San Francisco 2010
  - I attended DrupalCon Copenhagen 2010
  - I attended DrupalCon Chicago 2011
  - I attended DrupalCon London 2011
  - I attended DrupalCon Denver 2012
  - I attended DrupalCon Munich 2012
  - I attended DrupalCon Portland 2013
  - I attended DrupalCon Sydney 2013
  - I attended DrupalCon Prague 2013
  - I attended DrupalCon Austin 2014
  - I attended DrupalCon Amsterdam 2014
  - I will attend DrupalCon Latin America 2015
  - I will attend DrupalCon Los Angeles 2015
  - I will attend DrupalCon Barcelona 2015

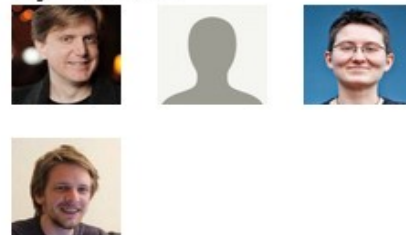
Drupal

My mentors



(after the study)

My mentors:



13 people list LewisNyman as a mentor

## Findings: Contributions in user profiles (RQ2)

- Offer empirical evidence of the need of **widening our understanding** of contribution activities
- **Inequality** in the representation of “community-oriented” activities
- Affecting specially to “organisation and participation in **local/regional F2F events**”



## Findings: Role of affective labour (RQ3)

- Analysis focussed on organisation and participation in F2F events – most clear example of **affective labour** (immaterial, creation and modification of emotional experiences)
- These contribution activities play a relevant role in the **sustainability** of the community: “come for the software, **stay for the community**”

## Findings: Role of affective labour (RQ3)

“[...]indeed, the fact of attending these meetups [referring to local events], it was really good. Because you realise there are people behind the source code, right? There are people behind the modules. And you meet people that can tell you this kind of personal story.[...] And then, it stops being something anonymous, it becomes something yours.”

Drupal developer and devop, M, 1.5 years. Original reply in Spanish.

- Drupal **becomes a community**, avoid barriers, increases the will for reciprocity, etc.
- Also very relevant for experienced Drupalistas (e.g. avoid to burnout)

## Findings: Role of affective labour (RQ3)

“Because the community is growing, then you have less of a sense of community. But I think the solution to that is to have smaller local communities.

So, you know, as the worldwide community grows, then you start finding, like whereas before it might have been 50 people worldwide, now you have like 50 people in your part of London, or wherever.”

Drupal themer and developer, M, 11 years.

- Local activities help to **scale up the sense of community**, as it grows

## Findings: Role of affective labour (RQ3)

- Existence and relevance of affective labour
- Different types of emotional experiences which foster collaboration. Vary according to degree of experience
- Not only understood as a **type of contribution**; not only **unequally represented**; they are **key for sustainability**

## Discussion

- Role of events in free software and hacker culture (Coleman, 2013, p. 73), having “affective, moral, economic and political dimensions [...] people embark on decisions and actions they probably would not have considered otherwise. Some hackers decide to formally apply to become a Debian developer, while longtime developers decide not to quit the project”.
- **Framing them as contributions**, and empirical evidence of **lack of visibility** in main platform of collaboration

## Discussion

- Participation “transforms the local subjectivities” of Drupalistas, **as in non-digital domain**: community-based forest in Odisha (Singh, 2013). Shaping subjectivity: **becoming a “commoner” through “commoning”** (Linebaugh, 2008)
- Not only socio-cultural reasons: need of exploring new dimensions of value in CBPP communities (P2Pvalue, Open Value Network), and incorporate them in socio-technical systems



## Conclusion

- **Broaden our understanding of contribution activities** beyond “object-centric” ones
- **Lack of visibility** of “community-oriented” ones and its relevance
- **Keep on exploring** conceptualisation and incorporation of **value** in these communities



Working paper: <http://bit.ly/1LiRKX5>

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# Any questions/feedback?

Thanks!

¡Gracias!

Ευχαριστώ!

Danke!

¡Obrigado!

+info|contact:

• @drozas    [...]

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