

# **Reclaiming Urban Digital Networks: Toward an Alternative to the Corporate “Smart City”**

**Panayotis Antoniadis <panayotis@nethood.org>**

**Ileana Apostol <ileana@nethood.org>**

**Félix Tréguer <felix.treguer@sciencespo.fr>**



# Towards “smarter and safer cities”?

## Security for smart and safe cities, including for public spaces

ID: SU-INFRA02-2019

**Focus area:** Boosting the effectiveness of the Security Union (SU)

Type of action:

◦ IA Innovation action    Deadline Model : single-stage    Opening: **14 March 2019**    Deadline: **22 August 2019 17:00:00 Brussels time**

Open

Horizon 2020



Horizon 2020 Website



**Work programme:**



Secure societies - Protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens

**Work programme year:** H2020-2018-2020



**Call name:** Protecting the infrastructure of Europe and the people in the European smart cities | **Call ID:** H2020-SU-INFRA-2018-2019-2020

[See all topics of this call >](#)



See budget  
overview

# **Towards “smarter and safer cities”?**

**In the EU Commission calls on “smart and safe cities”, applicants are asked to propose pilot projects focusing on:**

- “methods to detect weapons, explosives, toxic substances”**
- “systems for video surveillance”**
- “methods to identify, and neutralize crime perpetrators whilst minimizing intrusion into crowded areas.”**

# **A word on netCommons**

- **EU H2020 project (2016-2019)**
- **Looking at commons-based telecommunications network (aka “Community Networks)**
- **Interdisciplinary: computer science, economics, urban studies, law and history**

# **The Commons?**

**= “Peer-to-peer approach in which every user can be a provider and consumer at the same time, or even be involved in the platform governance (...). If the actors involved do not just share a resource but collaborate to create, produce or regenerate a common resource for the wider public, the community, they are cooperating, they are pooling for the commons”**

**(Report of the European Committee of the Regions, Brighenti 2016).**

**(on that shared basis: strong political differences within commons-based movements – Papadimitropoulos 2017)**

[www.netcommons.eu](http://www.netcommons.eu)



THE PROJECT ▾

GET IN TOUCH ▾

MEDIA ▾

RESULTS ▾



## The netCommons project

netCommons is a Horizon2020 research project, which follows a novel transdisciplinary methodology on treating **network infrastructure as commons**, for resiliency, sustainability, self-determination, and social integration. Project partners have expertise in engineering, computer science, economics, law, political science, urban, media, and social studies; and close links with successful Community Networks like guifi.net, ninux.org, and

**netCommons was part of H2020  
subprogram CAPS  
(Collective Awareness Platforms for  
Sustainability and Social Innovation)**

- **Leveraging digital technologies to “enable citizens’ participation in democratic processes”**
- **Boost the “collaborative economy”**
- **Decentralized, bottom-up collective action to tackle a wide range of social and environmental issues**

# **A brief history of community-owned communication networks**



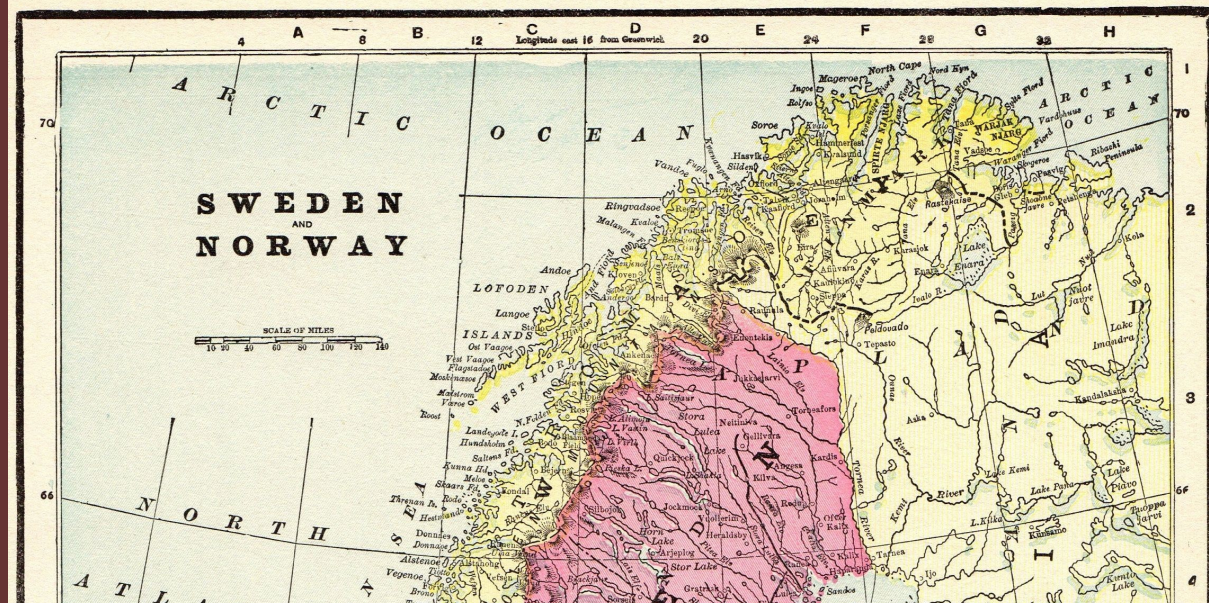


**US independent telephone companies**

**Locality, connectivity and community in community-owned telephone networks at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

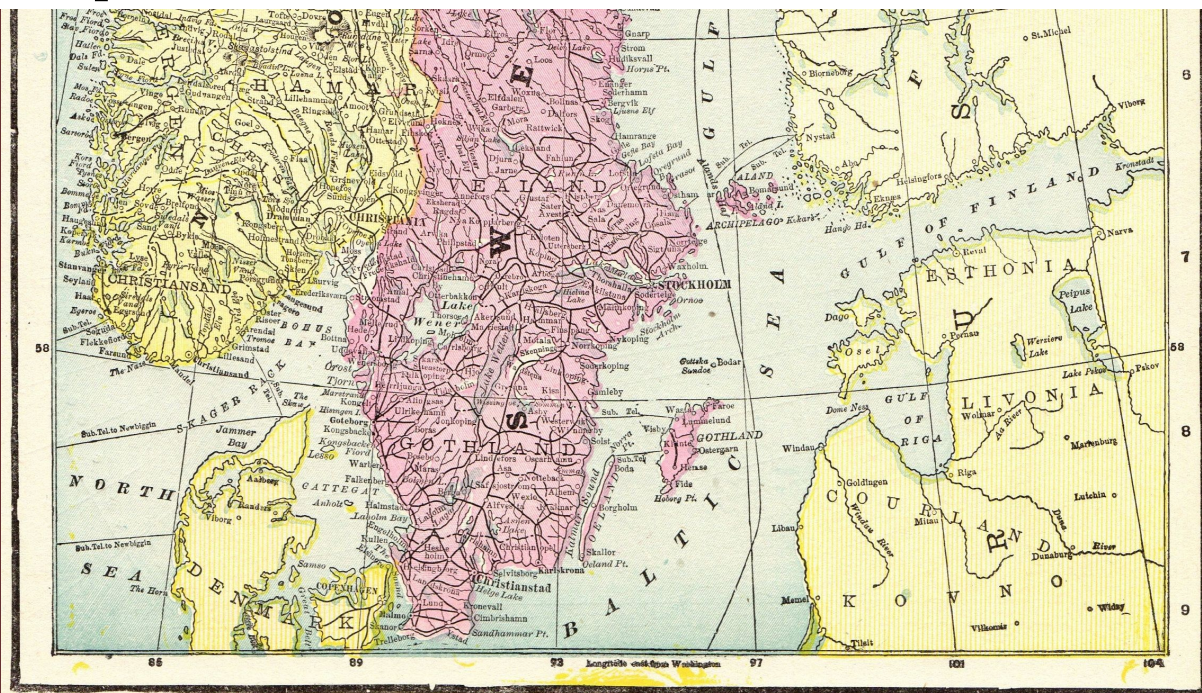
"My word! You do tickle me."





# Swedish telephone cooperatives (1900s)

Locality, connectivity and community in community-owned telephone networks at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century





## **The Free Radio movement (1970s):**

**When new broadcasting technology meets new social movements**

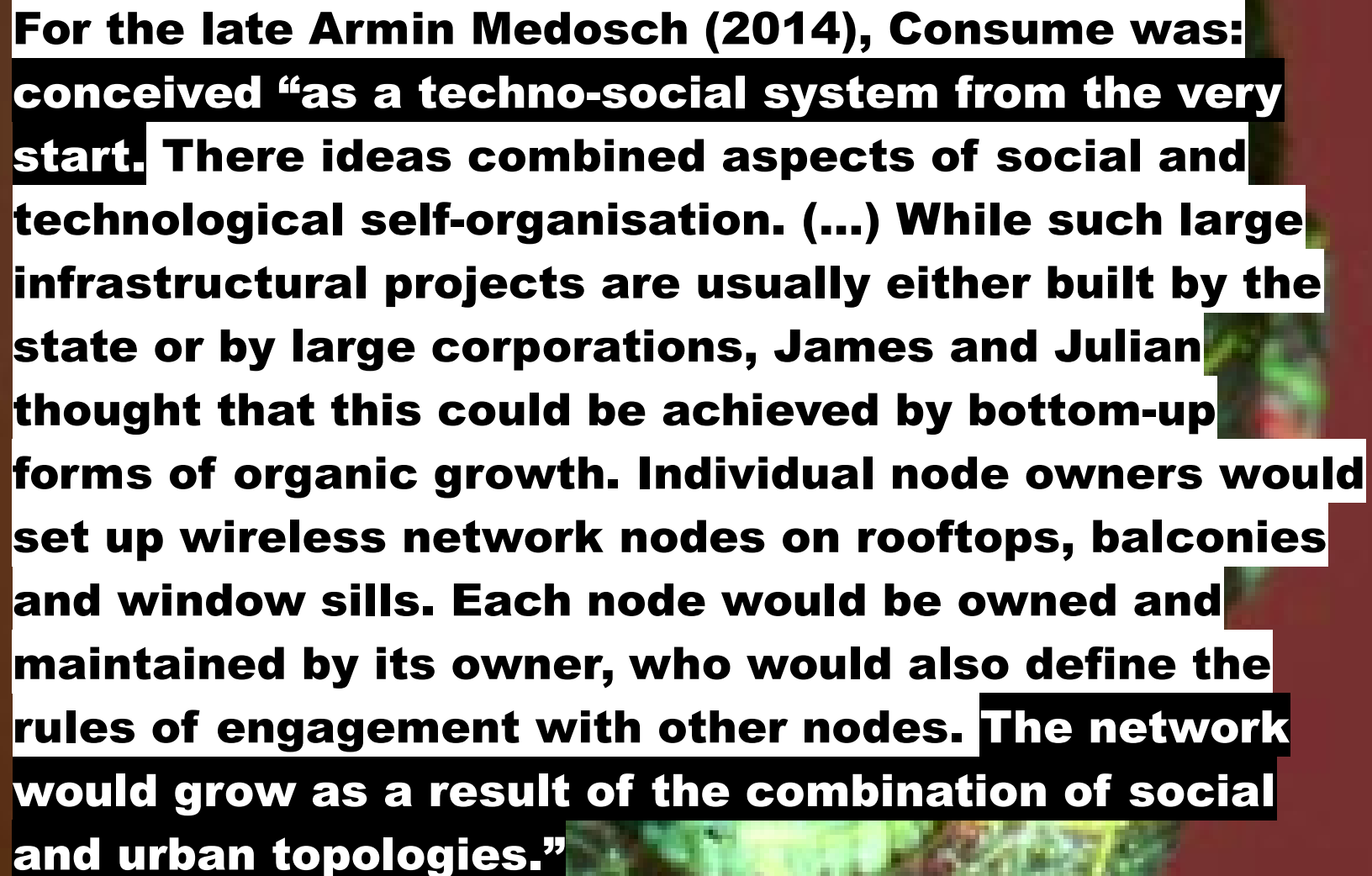




**Consume.net (1990s)**

**First IP-Based and wireless Community Networks**



The background of the slide is an abstract image featuring a dark, textured field with numerous thin, glowing green and yellow lines that resemble a network or a complex web. These lines are more concentrated in the upper and lower portions of the slide, framing the central text area.

**For the late Armin Medosch (2014), Consume was: conceived “as a techno-social system from the very start. There ideas combined aspects of social and technological self-organisation. (...) While such large infrastructural projects are usually either built by the state or by large corporations, James and Julian thought that this could be achieved by bottom-up forms of organic growth. Individual node owners would set up wireless network nodes on rooftops, balconies and window sills. Each node would be owned and maintained by its owner, who would also define the rules of engagement with other nodes. The network would grow as a result of the combination of social and urban topologies.”**

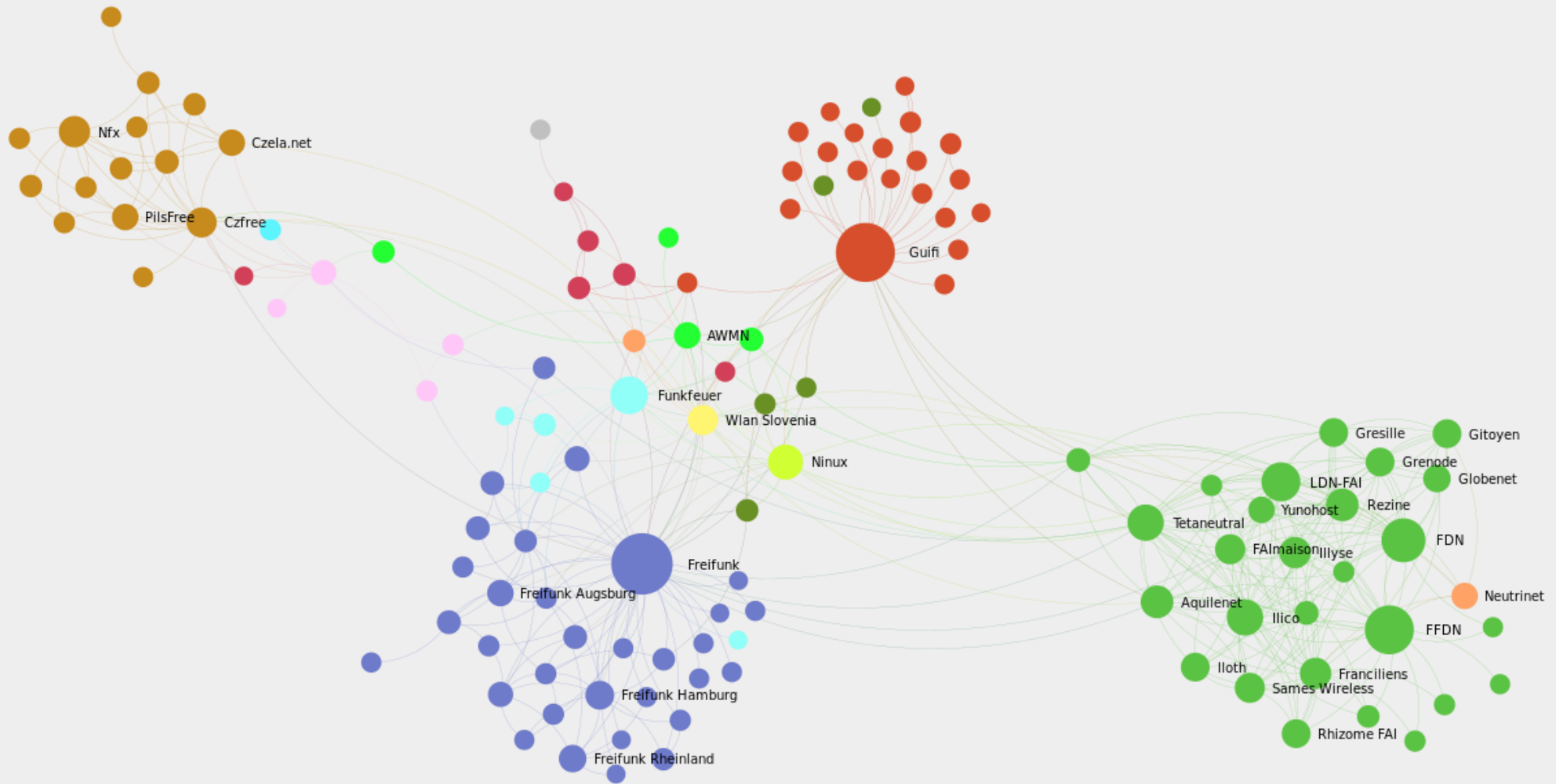
## **2. The possibility of an organic Internet**

**Community Networks, and more.**

**CNs as alternative to corporate online services**

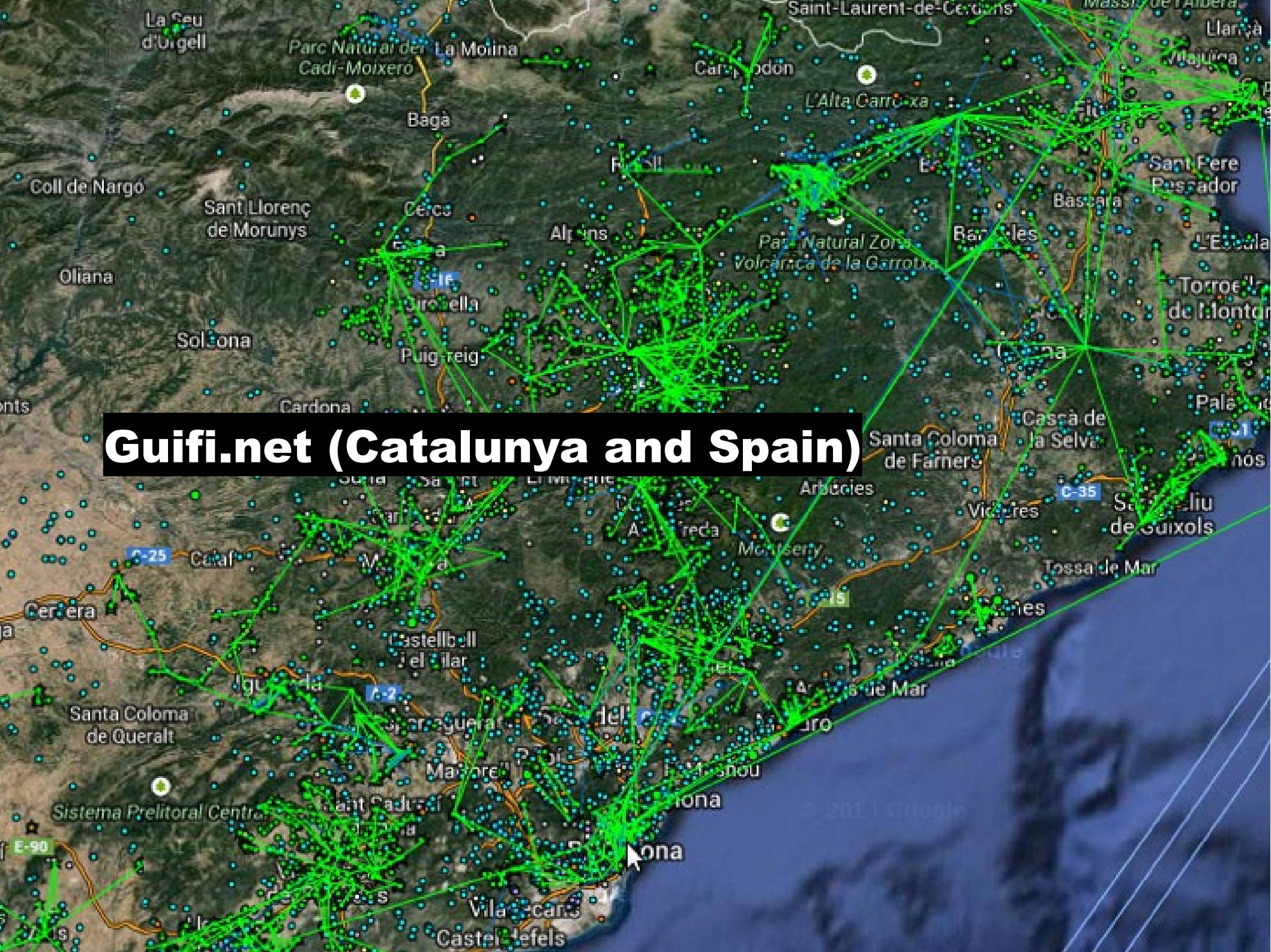
**“Community Network” is a simple term to describe a wide variety of efforts by local communities, and not private companies or the state, to build and manage all or parts of the infrastructure required to enjoy and co-create the Internet and other communication services.**





# Web cartography of European Community Networks

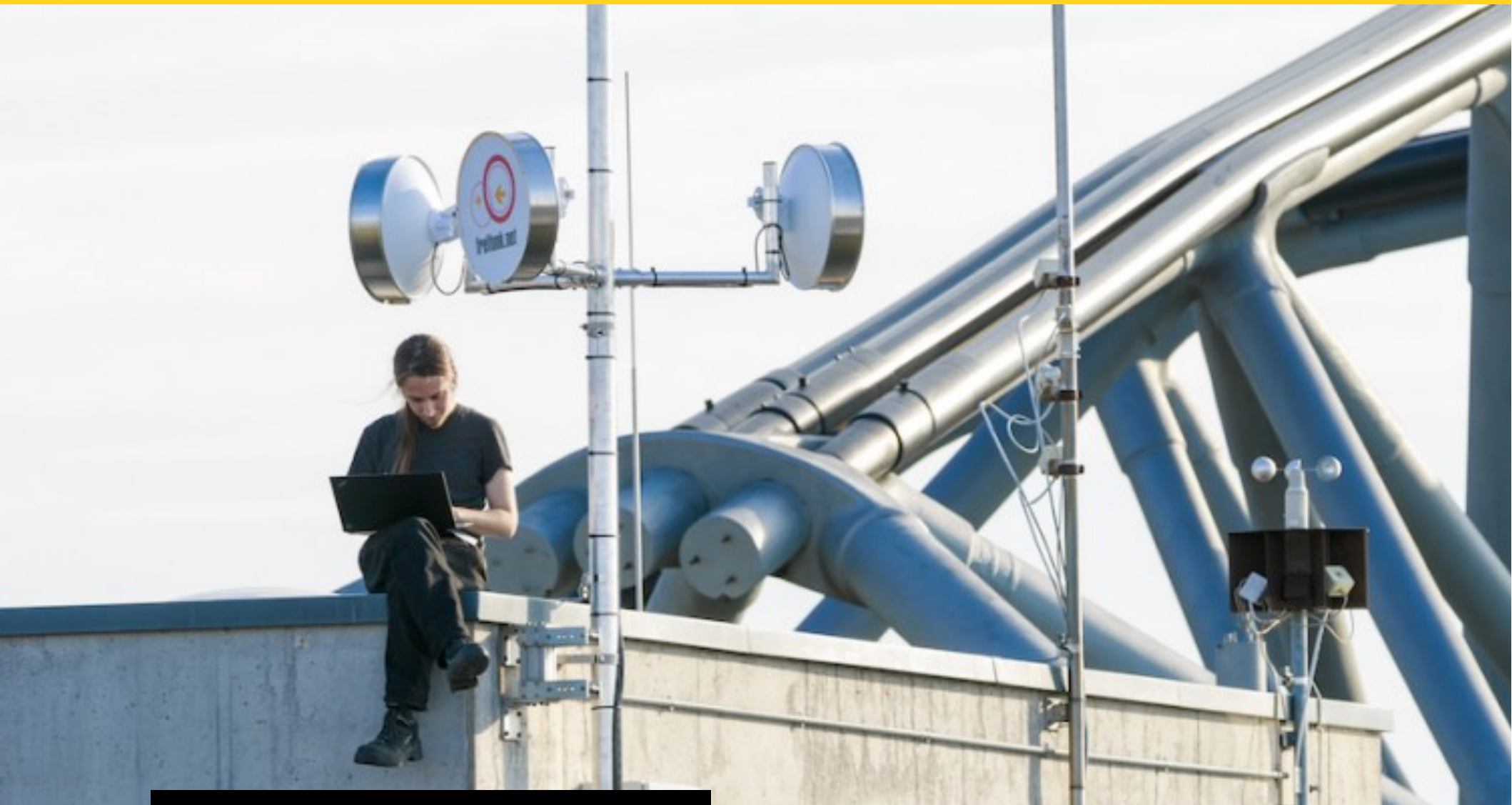
# Guifi.net (Catalunya and Spain)



# Sarantaporo (Greece)







**Freifunk (Germany)**

# Federation FDN (France)





**Alternative to Big Tech:**

**Working towards self/community-hosting**



### **3. The Right to the Hybrid City**

# **Defining Hybrid Cities**

**Digital technologies act as mediator for interactions between people, define social spaces = contemporary urban spaces have an inherently hybrid (digital and physical) nature**

**‘Right to the hybrid city’ (Antoniadis and Apostol, 2014) = a set of fundamental rights within this ongoing struggle.**

- a) the right to access the core resources of the city;**
- b) the right to be represented, to be part of the collective identity;**
- c) the right to participate in important decisions regarding urban policies and design;**
- d) the right to ownership of the urban commons.**





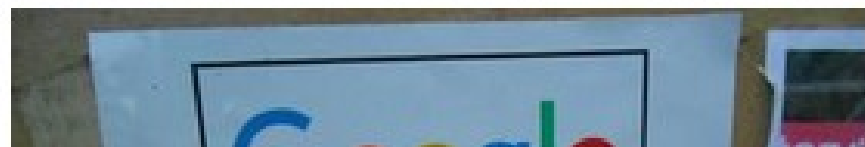
**Urban and digital activists unite!**

**Articulating an alternative to the corporate smart city (both by resisting to Big Tech and building alternatives)**



## #FuckOffGoogle campaign in Berlin

"All empires must FALL - Rise up against GO..."





A black and white photograph of the Toronto skyline, featuring the CN Tower prominently on the left. A large, stylized rainbow is superimposed over the image, with its arc spanning from the left side of the frame to the right. The rainbow's colors are red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. The text "#Against SidewalkLab in Toronto" is overlaid in white, bold font across the middle of the image.

**#Against SidewalkLab in Toronto**

**Upcoming  
Technopolice  
campaign against Safe  
City projects in France**



**TECHNOPOLICE**



**Guifi.net members working with eReuse.org to reuse electronic waste and manage it as a commons**

# **Freifunk working to bring Internet access to refugees in Germany**





An aerial photograph of a city, likely Toulouse, showing a large, modern building complex with green roofs and solar panels. The complex is surrounded by other urban buildings and green spaces. A large black text box is overlaid on the image, containing the text "Tetaneutral in Toulouse connecting a healthcare clinic for homeless people".

**Tetaneutral in Toulouse connecting a healthcare clinic for homeless people**

**FFDN partnering with independent movie theaters to establish an independent distribution system based on BiTorrent**



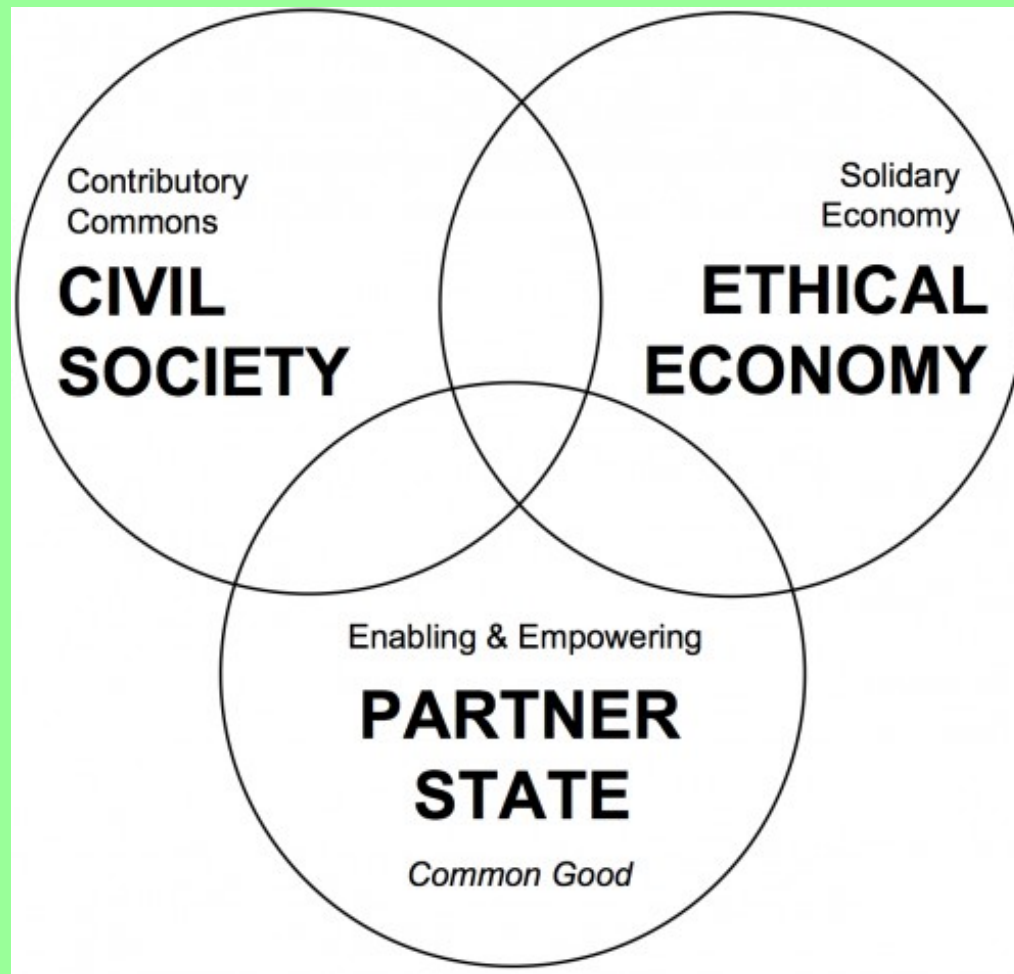


**Framasoft  
providing  
alternative online  
services targeted  
for the activists  
and not-for-profit  
sector**

- Google Doc : <https://framapad.org/>
- Google Drive : <https://framadrive.org/>
- Doodle : <https://framadate.org/>
- Dropbox : <https://framadrop.org/>
- Slack ou Facebook Groups/Messenger : <https://framateam.org/>
- Google Form : <https://framaforms.org/>
- Skype : <https://framataalk.org/>
- services blog des GAFAM : <https://frama.wiki/>
- Pour le reste, voir : <https://framasoft.fr/#topPgCloud>

# Alternative models to the corporate Smart City exist for hybrid cities.

But it would require significant changes in policy, and sound strategies to avoid the cooptation by state or market actors



# **Reclaiming Urban Digital Networks: Toward an Alternative to the Corporate “Smart City”**

**Panayotis Antoniadis <panayotis@nethood.org>**

**Ileana Apostol <ileana@nethood.org>**

**Félix Tréguer <felix.treguer@sciencespo.fr>**

