



## Software for humans and society

We are super empowered people. We have vast arrays of communication channels grown through technologies such as the Internet that allow us to communicate with anyone, anywhere instantly. This accessibility allows us to grow networks of people around us. Our communications networks are becoming collaboration networks in which people naturally cluster around a shared interest, goal or sense or purpose - a digital community.

Some of us are lucky. We live in progressive, open and peaceful societies. We naturally wish to see those values continued within our digital communities. Sadly, that is rarely the case. As individuals we have pioneered the Internet, yet and as citizens we have failed to take society with us.

## Introducing Barnraiser

We are a Swedish registered non for profit organisation. We are dedicated to giving people the tools they need to share knowledge and further society through social software.

### **Summary of organisational activities**

We are a growing movement of people that want to contribute directly to a better society by pushing forward the boundaries of social software development and education.

Social software is developed from social convention rather than software features. Social software facilitates interaction and collaboration and is changing how people communicate.

Installing computers and supplying Internet connection is not enough when building capacity within society. We need software, software that allows that society to develop, allows the people within that society to share knowledge and contribute towards their information society.

We facilitate this by creating free social software and ensuring that people can have access to it and the knowledge to use it. We can break this down three core operational activities focusing on software development, education and society. You will find details of these activities in the "Core operational activities" section of this document.

We incubate and support projects where we see social significance. You will find an overview of our incubator activities under the "Introducing our projects" section of this document. Detailed information on each project can be found in the Appendix.

### **Why 'Barnraiser'?**

When an Amish family needs a new barn their community gathers to build a barn in a single day,

a tradition called barn raising. In building a barn together in a day they achieve something that no single family can do.

We share that spirit as we build for society.

## Core operational activities

In order to achieve Barnraisers mission we need to focus on three core activities; software development, education and society. The following describes each business unit and its role in ensuring that we deliver upon our goals.

### **Software development program**

As technologists we want to contribute directly to a better society. Like minded technologists have joined with us to create software solutions to improve and progress society. All of our software is released under a free software license ensuring that society has full access to it. Everyone benefits including our technologists whom gain recognition and experience from collaborating with us.

#### *Free software explained*

The free software movement is a movement of developers and technologists whom wish to build software that is free to all. By free we mean free as in "freedom", software that is freely available under a free license<sup>1</sup> to society – a social software license.

Under the license people can copy the software, redistribute it, explore the code and change or modify the code, thus enhancing the software. In most cases people choose to "give something back" by publishing those changes back to the community under the same license. We take those published modifications and we build them back into the main software, thus constantly enhancing the software for all.

Many developers support this approach. From it they quickly learn and understand that they can work with us and contribute directly to a better society and to giving people access to software that would otherwise be unaffordable to poorer parts of society. They join us and work with us. Our team is growing and encompasses every continent giving the project a wide variety of talent.

These developers give knowledge, time and energy to the project without a wish for payment. Their knowledge increases, their team skills and network develops and they quietly know that they are building for society.

As of the 11th January 2005 a total of 3194 hours have been donated by those people in developing our social software. We estimate this to be 300,000€ in kind investment to this project.

#### *Our software methodology*

We develop our social software solutions using the Extreme Programming (XP) methodology which is a deliberate and disciplined approach to software development. All our software is developed to world wide web consortium (W3C) standards including conformance to level Double-A of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These guidelines ensure accessibility for people with disabilities.

#### *Introducing aroundme*

Barnraisers core social networking and group collaboration platform is called 'aroundme'. Aroundme has three central components; social networking, groupware and activity and task

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<sup>1</sup> We use the GNU/GPL free software license. A copy of the license can be read at <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html>

management.

Aroundme enables people to freely build Internet based communities. Examples include localised youth communities, membership based communities, global theme based communities and business communities.

Aroundme was conceived by Tom Calthrop, founder of Barnraiser. You can find out more about aroundme, its features and the roadmap in the Appendix which includes information on how to see a demo of the software.

## **Summary**

We will constantly strive to ensure that we create best of breed social software solutions. We will strive to ensure that our software remains accessible by all regardless of disability, culture or ethnic origin. We will strive to ensure that our software and development methodologies meet with open standards.

## **Open education program**

As part of Barnraisers mission, we wish to create open, engaging and interactive informal educational material to enable people to interact with a non formal education program which supports knowledge sharing and the greater goals of our organisation.

In many of our projects you will find poor or outdated formal education. Whether it be from a lack of teachers, aid or simply privatisation, people are being excluded from high quality education and therefore are being held back in realising the potential they have. Other people are simply not engaging in formal education and find more interest in external activities.

We believe that people should be both encouraged and rewarded for social knowledge sharing (contributing in a positive way) and activity based community education (learning together) and it is this that forms the goal of our open education program.

### *Social capital*

Social capital consists of the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviours that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible<sup>2</sup>.

Those concerned with social capital have looked to the density of social networks that people are involved in; the extent to which they are engaged with others in informal, social activities; and their membership of groups. We can provide a mechanism for a community to measure an individuals contributions and social interaction within that community thus providing the individual with a measurement of their social capital within both group and wider community.

This gives the individual a social curriculum vitae (CV) providing a reference to ones social worth and knowledge contribution within both group and community. Our goal is to create a social CV that is capable of acting as a reference in our lives. In many of our projects young people are either denied access to an academic CV or simply find more interest in learning from other activities. We aim to provide them with a social CV.

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<sup>2</sup>Cohen and Prusak 2001: 4

### *Informal education initiatives*

We would like to initiate non formal education initiatives focusing on two genres:

#### **Basic technical literacy**

Every person should be capable of using the Internet for research and education. Every person should be capable of using a computer and understanding the basics of how a computer works. We wish to initiate an open and interactive introduction to computers and the Internet. We term this "a computer driving license"; a course in which people can engage in understanding technology. We wish to work towards certifying this so that people can use this in seeking work.

### *Health and wellness awareness*

We can all benefit from understanding more about ourselves - the human body, the effects of diet, mental health and awareness. We wish to create a health and wellness educational program starting with AIDS education.

AIDS creates prejudices, fear and nonchalance. Much of this stems from hearsay, rumours and false information about HIV and AIDS. Many campaigns either push for safe sex or remind you of the effects of contracting HIV. This, especially in younger people can create disinterest and in worst cases a rebellious backlash.

The way that the body works, the immune system and the way that AIDS attacks the immune system is fascinating. If we can engage people in learning about this we build a platform of educated knowledge about AIDS. This knowledge alleviates fear and help people addresses the prejudices we hear from others naivety. Furthermore, if we can engage young people in a playful and scientific discovery process we may help form their interests in science.

We wish to create an engaging and interactive introduction to AIDS. From this we expand our program to address the wider aspects of health and wellness awareness including mental awareness, diet and eating disorders.

### *Publishing and collaborative learning*

There are many knowledgeable people that wish to create interest in "their" subject. Equally there are many young journalists and copywriters which find interest in shaping information.

Taking the above example:

As part of their mission the International AIDS society<sup>3</sup> wishes to increase the understanding in AIDS. They have access to professors and researchers that share that goal.

The Swedish young persons media organisation<sup>4</sup> has a membership of youth that want to write and want projects to write about. These young people can improve their writing experience through experience based learning.

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3 [Http://www.ias.org/](http://www.ias.org/)

4 [Http://www.ungmedia.se/](http://www.ungmedia.se/) (site in Swedish)

Young people in schools like Hyper Island<sup>5</sup> engage in design and interactive media work. They wish to work on real world creative projects.

A coordinated effort can create educational material for free distribution with a goal of introducing it to our incubated projects. The material is deemed to be free content and is licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License (GFDL)<sup>6</sup>, meaning that it may be freely used, freely edited, freely copied and freely redistributed thus ensuring that we provide educational material for all. Following the free software model this also ensures that the material will get translated and localised and will be collaboratively kept current through people publishing their modifications – free and open education.

## Summary

Informal learning, non formal education, activity based education and knowledge sharing and social capital are all tools we use increase knowledge sharing and knowledge networks. We can achieve this through close cooperation with our open education and software development programs and associated network of contributing individuals, schools and organisations.

Please note: We would also like to create business education such as project plan writing and presentation techniques educational material. This is a wish list item and is still in the research phase.

## Social structuring and support program

Giving people access to software and educational material does not necessarily mean that the users of that software will ensure the rights and liberty of all individuals interacting within that software. In order to achieve our mission we have to create a framework in which people can ensure a social structure within these environments.

Our social structuring program promotes community citizenship. Our goal is to create an electoral process and to hand over the governance of each of our incubated project networks to its citizens in a format that provides them with a direct democracy platform ensuring the building of a framework for a open Internet based society.

We believe in encouraging this for the benefit of society and the rights and liberty of humankind, however there are also very logical reasons for doing this. By giving people citizenship we effectively hand over ownership to them. Once they “feel” this they naturally express a wish to protect it. This in turn leads to a positive social environment in which people grow “their” community. This is a key element in our projects success. For young people engaging with our incubated projects in developing countries this is their first taste of an open society in which they can engage and feel a sense of ownership.

Our social support program works with people to counter negatives within our incubated projects. Hate, segregation, harassment and inequality can fester within such environments. We counter this through partnership and social education to non for profit organisations. For instance, in our Swedish youth network we have engaged youth, social, cultural and educational organisations which operate within the project. These organisations can collectively counter any social negatives within the project.

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5 [Http://www.hyperisland.se/](http://www.hyperisland.se/) (site in Swedish)

6 <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>

Appendix 9, "Social issues" discusses some of the issues that can arise and how we have designed our program and software to counter those issues before they arise.

### *Summary*

Our social structuring and support program ensures the extension of localised society onto an open and localised Internet based platform. In many countries in which we operate a peaceful affluent society is not available to people. This program helps ensure a structure in which people can be introduced to an open society.

## Introducing our incubated projects

There are many good social projects that benefit from our software and services. Where we see a need for such a project we incubate one. In short, we research it, start it, build it and give it to its citizens and then provide them with a support network.

Our incubated projects never finish. They cannot be collectively measured nor can they produce pre set deliverables. We set goals on a per project basis. Below is a summary of our projects. For a detailed information on each project please see the projects Appendix page.

### **Balkan project (Kosovo project)**

In 2004 we started work in both Kosovo and Serbia in incubating interest in ICT and in our platform. This became known as "the Kosovo project", however we prefer to call it our "Balkan project" as it is expanding throughout the region.

In the mid 90's war broke out across many parts of the Balkan region. This culminated in NATO's bombing of Serbia which led to its eventual defeat in the Summer of 1999. Serbian forces fleeing Kosovo left behind them a land ethnically cleansed with hundreds of thousands of refugees returning from Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro. The UN took over the administration of the province and the task of rebuilding its society started.

Today the need for education in Kosovo is vast, enhanced by the large number of disabled victims of war that find it hard to receive a standard education.

The economy is poor. International aid is being reduced and unemployment is on the rise (currently estimated at between 60% and 80%). Youth are increasingly finding it hard to see any future for themselves or their families.

Despite the problems, there are success stories in Kosovo. With the influx of aid in the past 5 years, Kosovo has a broadband wireless Internet infrastructure. Pristina, the capital has over 100 Internet cafés alone giving youth plentiful access to Internet based communications technology (ICT).

Most Kosovo youth use the Internet for chatting and playing multi-player games. Sadly, they are unaware of the potential to learn using the world wide web for educational purposes. Here we see a vivid reminder that installing hardware and providing Internet access alone is not enough.

Our project is run by local youth in Kosovo. In their words, "to provide us with an Internet based

network to better our education, move us towards economic growth and self sustainability and allow us to participate in the information society".

The community has approximately 350 youth in it today with both ethnic Albanian and ethnic Serbia origin. This number may appear small, but one should note that these people have been in War, been ethnically cleansed (which included the cleansing of teachers) and have received little education for over a decade.

We have trained coordinators and administrators who bring youth together peacefully despite the proximity of renewed violence and enforced UN separation in the region. We see them cooperate and eventually collaborate. We see them learn and we see the potential that this project has. We also made mistakes which we must learn from:

1. We trained youth whose role remained voluntary. As soon as they were trained they got offered employment in the regional Banks. Whilst it is good to create employment it has a negative effect on the project if we cannot distribute that knowledge. We must ensure that we obtain funding to employ administrators and coordinators in the future so that we can retain their services and knowledge and so that they can train locally and expand the regional knowledge base.
2. We wasted nearly one year in looking for localised funding. Initially we wished to empower local youth in their mission to obtain funding however the project is not understood by local developing country donor offices. Barnraiser needed to take a more central role in the fund-raising process at an International donor level. Then use that to build the project to a point where local donors "see" and "understand" the project.

Throughout 2005 we will seek regional funding and open the project up to be a regional project with headquarters in Kosovo. Part of that funding will be longer term project employment for localised coordinators and administrators. The youth of Kosovo want this project. They desperately need the educational opportunities that it can bring with it and Kosovo and the region longs for progressive social and economic growth. We cannot let them down.

### **Swedish youth project**

Sweden has an affluent and above European average education system and social welfare system. Sweden is an established and well respected society and is often looked upon with jealousy by its European counterparts. Despite all this acclaim youth in Sweden face mounting problems. They increasingly spend time hanging around on the Internet. They increasingly fall prey to image and the health problems that can stem from this. They are disinterested in the political process and they live in an environment in which is changing with increased immigration and media attention highlighting segregation issues.

In many ways this is the perfect country in which to introduce a Barnraiser project. Virtually 100% of youth use the Internet. Many already use communities. If we can activate them and introduce an ownership model to them in which they can take part in a political process we can re-engage them in an interest in their society. If we can do that then they will become the future pioneers of social computing and as such will actively promote their open and peaceful society to other regions of the world as they engage in helping youth around the world set up localised networks of their own.

We have approximately 15 youth organisations in Sweden today that formally support this project. Although we are in the fund-raising process we have already created the first community which is



today used by those youth organisations to incubate the wider project, a project which we predict will take three years to spread the throughout Sweden.

### **Estonian youth community project**

In the early 1990's Estonia regained its independence following the collapse of the USSR. Just over a decade later Estonia established itself with the western alliance when it joined the EU in May 2004.

We have worked with the Estonian UNESCO Youth Centre in establishing a test community. The test community had initial success when UNESCO dropped funding for the youth centre. Those involved are now students at Tallinn. They have requested that we visit their University with a view to starting the project from the campus.

This project is now on hold until we can review the opportunities of a wider Baltic region project. We will do this directly after initial successes in the Swedish youth project as we wish to connect the Swedish youth networks with those in the Baltic region in the future.

### **JIP project**

There are many youth organisation operating in the Middle East. Several of them have expressed a wish to collaborate and to bring together youth throughout this region – a huge opportunity to promote open and peaceful societies within the region.

We would like to work with youth organisations in linking together Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian (JIP) youth.

We have a lot of work to do in this region and with this project. The real issue here is the promotion of peace and positive activities. We have learnt a lot from our Balkan project and we are now ideally placed to start this project.

Phase one will involve localising the software and setting up a contact network. Phase two will involve a research trip and a test community. We aim to complete this by mid 2006 with a view to having a fully funded operation in late 2006.

### **Reasoning**

Maybe we do not have the best graphical interface today or maybe we lack a few technical features today. They will be solved. This project is not only about software. Our project is a collaboration project. It's about people coming and contributing directly to a project that promotes open Internet society. We cannot think of a better definition of community spirit as we come together in a mission to build best of breed social software or "digital communities".

We travel throughout war torn countries. We meet young enthusiastic and determined people that wish to create open and peaceful societies. They see this project as part of that process. Should we win this award we wish it to be dedicated to all those people.

Any financial award will be used for our project in Kosovo.

## Supporting resources

You can find out more about us, our projects and our software at <http://www.barnraiser.org/> . A demo of the software is available at <http://www.barnraiser.org/demos/> . Photographs of our Kosovo project are available at [http://www.barnraiser.org/case\\_study.php](http://www.barnraiser.org/case_study.php) . Details of aroundme are available at <http://www.barnraiser.org/aroundme/>

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