

## HacktionLab 2022

It is always good to realise that co-operation is continuing, when it seems that commercial competitiveness dominates the world. I recently attended a conference called **HacktionLab**, which combines the activism of political awareness with creating open source software. Some of the most useful has been years in development, so they aren't flash-in-the-pan ideas but solid programs (apps).

**Karrot** is one such; a tool for self-organised community organising <https://karrot.world>. Used by groups across Europe, it was originally designed to help groups which save food from being wasted, although it's usable for any type of activity. It was described as better than Facebook groups or Meetup for organising. It's one of the few digital tools that doesn't impose hierarchical admin roles, instead it uses a 'trust' network system, and democratic processes. It records all transactions, allowing for statistics, and feedback can be left. It even has some built-in translation. When conflict arises, the software can be used to assist in resolution, through a process prompting a vote on proposed outcomes, eg. expulsion, or remain a member, or vote to continue the discussion.

Nick Sellen, one of the UK-based developers is really interested to find groups in the UK that might find **Karrot** useful to support their activities.

**Mastodon** was described as a very popular social media which is not "corporate". Instead of being based in Silicon Valley, it's decentralised, open source and without the censorship/promotion algorithms used by Facebook, etc. Rather than being a "Wild West" of uncensored nonsense, federation is optional, and users can exclude whole blocks of usage, eg. porn, fascism, and certain users. It was described as being good for publicity - "getting the word out".

Examples of special types of Mastodon instance include **PeerTube**: a video peer-to-peer site. Video is free to view or download, and live streaming is now being introduced (example: <https://sub.media>).

**Inventaire** was described as a site to list and share your books locally, making a decentralised library: <https://inventaire.io>

Others mentioned were **Castopod** for podcast hosting: <https://castopod.org>, and **Pixelfed** for free and ethical photo/image sharing: <https://pixelfed.org>. Also **Pleroma** and **Frendica** were recommended as more Facebook-style social media, and **Writefreely** for blogging: <https://writefreely.org>.

**radar.squat.net**, was the subject of another talk. This is software for online publicity via radical events calendars. It was started 20 years ago, before the all-powerful social media, and is now very reliable, and widely used.

Local groups form events websites, approving what's listed online in their area (say, a city). Activists post events in one place and they get copied on to elsewhere, "syndicated" as appropriately "tagged". The decisions for what gets publicised are taken at local level; there are no top-down rules, because the software writers realised that defining "radical" varies between locations.

**In summary, HacktionLab** was an interesting and inspiring conference. We all know that social media giants are *not* working for the benefit of humanity, but for profit – at almost any cost. The role of software in positive social change is yet to come. The values of open source software align well with those of the Co-operative Movement, and it's good to know that many of the software writers are very radical and politically aware.

**Jonathan Cook, 2022**