Break Free from Big Tech NOW!



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Agenda

- Break Free from What?
- Why now, why me, why?
- Obstacles
- Break Free to What?
- Migration Pathway
- Recommended alternatives
- Hands-on
- Resources



Break Free from What?

instagram
adobe
google
aws
uber
azure
evernote
gmail
mailchimp
windows10/11
android
google search
amazon
hp
salesforce
youtube
apple
oracle
x
office365/copilot
spotify
kindle
edge
paypal
threads
drive
meta
linkedin
chrome
outlook
sonos
spotify
microsoft
nextdoor
dropbox
ios
icloud
zoom
booking
facebook
bing
tiktok
airbnb

And many others...



Break Free from What?

All these companies have an active role in facilitating, promoting and catalyzing right-wing populism, militarisation of the industry and of education, state surveillance, war mongering, climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss

And many others...



Why? (1)

- **Enshittification**: Big Tech is providing increasingly poor and expensive services, but there are few alternatives available
- Dependence on Big Tech poses a significant **risk** of temporary or permanent loss of services and/or data, causing business-critical processes to fail (business continuity). Also: privacy risks
- **The U.S. has changed** and is no longer the obvious partner, and Big Tech plays a major role in this change
- Big Tech is fully committed to **artificial intelligence (AI)**. Going along with the hype only increases your dependence (makes it more difficult to leave).



Why? - Enshittification (2)

- Enshittification (book by Cory Doctorow)
  - Big Tech’s monopoly position (antitrust law)
  - Lock-in
  - Deteriorating value for money
  - Privacy violations
  - Unrestrained surveillance



Why? - Risk (3)

- A significant risk of temporary or permanent loss of services and/or data, causing business-critical processes to cease functioning
- Excessive dependence on a few (mostly U.S.-based) Big Tech companies (monopolies)
- Excessive complexity (too many connections required to maintain a functioning service over excessive distances)
- Global instability, certainly including in the U.S. (the collapse of that society is unfolding before our very eyes as we speak)
- All that is considered to be woke or antifa may by cut off

  → Precautionary principle



Why? - Fascism (4)

- Big Tech is the driving force behind the rise of “End Times Fascism”
  - Chaos is the goal → risk of societal collapse, followed by a tech dictatorship
  - Business continuity is at risk
  - It’s spreading to Europe (this is already happening)
    - https://authoritarian-stack.info/
  - Books on this topic:
    - End Times Fascism (Naomi Klein & Astra Taylor)
    - The Nerd Reich (Gil Duran)



Why? - AI (5)

- Big Tech is fully committed to AI and is becoming increasingly difficult to do without as a customer. Going along with the hype increases your dependence and risk:
- Scarcity: AI consumes unimaginable amounts of electricity, water, land, and money (required investments)
- Lack of interpretability
- Misuse of all our personal data by other companies or authoritarian regimes based on surveillance and oppression – catalyzing the implementation of fascism
- Too many problems: low quality (intentional), racism, social phobias, control over the truth, mass layoffs, human rights, the environment, resources/materials, security, wars, the AI bubble, lack of regulation



Obstacles

- Lock-in:
  - Everything at Microsoft, Google or Apple (convenience)
  - Current situation not well documented
  - Groups (e.g. friends, your family app, Facebook support groups)
- Export of existing data not always possible (please note: expect this to get worse). Also: Compatibility
- Fear of the unknown (including strong resistance to change)
- Accessibility of alternatives is, at best, mediocre. Usability of alternatives needs to be improved greatly
- It's (a lot of) work and it's not always easy to find a good alternative, plus technical things scare people of



Break Free to What?

- Switch to European alternatives. Characteristics to look for:
  - EU-based (or Switzerland), hosted as close as possible. Consider self-hosted
  - Open source
  - Encryption
  - Uncentralized / peer-to-peer / decentralized / federated
  - As green as possible
- How will your alternatives still work for you during a long-term emergency (societal collapse)? The fewer systems you have, the easier it is to keep them running
- A paper-based system is also a system (possible back-up)

Consider decommissioning and to not replace certain apps or applications 😰😱



Migration Pathway

- First things first (What would be really disastrous to lose?)
  - Email & messaging
  - Files & storage
  - Office applications
  - Platforms
  - For organizations: applications essential for your business process
- In parallel: find solutions for all your other apps, applications and platforms
- For activists: get your security up to par

Yes, I know this might be time consuming and not always be easy or even possible!



Alternatives

- Email
- Messaging
- Storage
- Office
- Browser / Search
- Social Media
- AI
- Internet Down
- Miscellaneous

Visit https://european-alternatives.eu/ to get started



Email

- Gmail, Outlook, Live, iCloud, Hotmail, ...
- Alternatives:
  - **Proton Mail** (proton.me)
  - **Posteo** (posteo.de)
  - **Tuta Mail** (tuta.com)
  - **Mailbox.org**
  - **Infomaniak**
  - **Soverin**
- You may consider self-hosting (not very easy)



Messaging

- Whatsapp, Telegram, iMessage
- Alternatives:
  - **Signal** (do it if you haven’t already)
    - There are already more people on it than you think. Move as many app groups over as possible.
    - But… Signal also has its issues (management, AWS, Chat Control)
  - **Delta Chat**
    - Based on email, decentralized, open source
- Others:
  - **Element/Matrix** → good for topic related groups, but only federated
  - **Threema** → expensive and still centralized
- But… consider Reticulum apps: **Ratspeak, Sideband, Meshchat**



Storage

- Hosted **Nextcloud** (many providers). You may consider self-hosting
  - thegoodcloud
- **pCloud** (pcloud.com, make sure you select eu)



Office

- MS Office, Google Docs, Apple iWork
  - Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Pages, Numbers, Keynote
- Alternatives:
  - **LibreOffice** (application on your computer) or Collabora (online like Google Docs, can be part of Nextcloud)
  - **Cryptpad** (online): https://cryptpad.fr/
  - **Proton Docs** (like Google Docs, but still in development)
  - **EuroOffice** (maybe)
  - ! Not: OnlyOffice



Browser / Search

- Edge, Chrome, Firefox, Brave
  - Bing, Copilot, Google Search, Startpage
- Alternatives:
  - Browser: **LibreWolf, Vivaldi, Tor**
  - Search: **Ecosia** or Kagi (paid US-based service...)
- Consider VPN



Social Media

- Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, Threads
  - Also: Bluesky (Eurosky, Oso, Blacksky, wsocial)
- Alternatives:
  - Facebook, X, Threads, Bluesky → **Mastodon** (Fediverse)
  - Instagram → **Pixelfed** (Fediverse)
  - TikTok → **Loops** (Fediverse)
- Tip: make Mastodon you primary platform and automatically cross-post from there (maybe use Fedica). This ensures that whenever you cannot access other social media, you already have an alternative with an audience.



AI

adobe edge evernote zoom google meta uber bing booking ios apple aws instagram outlook search gmail meta mailchimp youtube windows11 drive facebook icloud dropbox amazon hp oracle salesforce office365 spotify linkedin

- ChatGPT, Claude, Grok, Gemini, Copilot, ...
- Alternatives:
  - No AI (!) → energy consumption, all your data/information will be used elsewhere, many examples of mistakes & deception
  - Local AI
  - Proton Lumo



Internet Down

- What now?
  - **Meshcore** (https://meshcore.io/)
    - Messaging using LoRa (long range radio) devices
  - **Reticulum** (https://reticulum.network/)
    - The internet redesigned:
      - Uncentralized (no hierarchy)
      - Fully encrypted
      - Mesh networking using any network (wifi, bluetooth, TCP, LoRa, paper-based, etc)
    - Not yet mature, but very promising



Miscellaneous

- Windows/Mac OS → Linux Ubuntu (many flavors)
- Maps → OpenStreetMap, OsmAnd
- Smartphone → Volla, Fairphone, Murena, Jolla
- Adobe Illustrator → Inkscape
- Music → Deezer, Qobuz
- Credit card → maybe not necessary anymore?

Anything else?



Hands-on (Mastodon)

- Download Mastodon app
- Create account (mastodon.social, todon.nl or other)
- Follow @haikomeelis@mastodon.nl



Hands-on (Reticulum)

- **Reticulum**
  - Download Ratspeak @ ratspeak.org
  - Create identity
  - Connect network
    - Network
    - + Internet/TCP



Resources

- Europese alternatieven: https://european-alternatives.eu/
- Switch recipees: https://di.day/, https://doeidag.nl/
- Open source toolkit https://opensourcetoolkit.com/
- For activists:
  - https://archivegenocide.com/cybersecurity/
  - https://www.notrace.how/
  - https://www.anarsec.guide/posts/
- Remove accounts: https://justdeleteme.xyz/
- Books:
  - Enshittification (Cory Doctorow)
  - End Times Fascism (Naomi Klein & Astra Taylor)



QUESTIONS?

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Mastodon: @haikomeelis@mastodon.nl
Bluesky / Eurosky: https://bsky.app/profile/meelis.org