

Au revoir Techno-Feudalism, bonjour Emancipated (Social) Web



BOF: FOSDEM AW1.121, Sun Feb 2nd 2025, 12:00

Interlude I: Why Feudalism?

- Cory Doctorow / Yannis Varoufakis[1]
- licensed rather than owned
- no appeal, no decision
- cloud rather than on-prem
- in short: billionaire websites

[1]: jacobin.com/2023/10/cory-doctorow-seize-the-means-of-computation-big-tech-democratization-infrastructure

Interlude II: root

- root is the initial, `privileged user` account on UNIX computers
- who of you is root on a host offering internet services?
- how many of your friends are?
- how many of your family? Neighbours?
- how many parents of your kids' classmates?

=> they can't even think about self-determined Social Web
and that's a democracy issue.

what can non-roots do?

- accept having no claim
- become a root
- hire a root
- make do with shared hosting (no-root)

Example: Seppo.mro.name

Generously incubated as nlnet.nl/project/Seppo by  NGI0

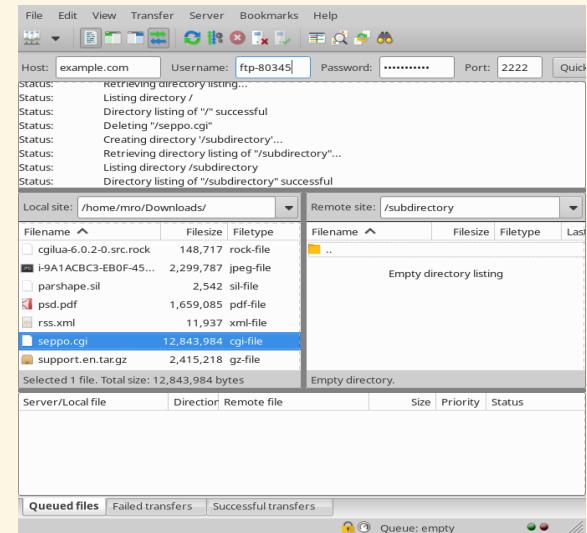


works like that: 1. rent Shared Hosting

- no way as convenient as a juicy sign-up button, but
- no privileged user (root) required
- no root know-how required either, copying is all
- around since long (unhip, stable, many vendors, affordable)
- fair business model

2. download + copy 1 file

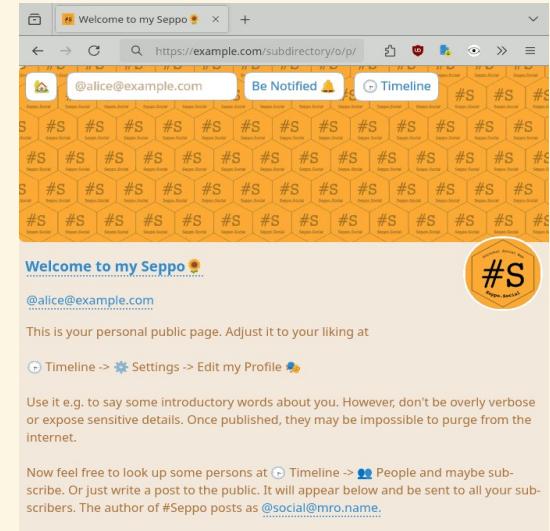
- statically linked CGI[1], no DB
- billionaires hate it (scales well to n=1)
- many young never heard of it (older than the web some say)
- no PHP updates etc.
- no SQL injection etc.



[1]: datatracker.ietf.org/doc/html/rfc3875

3. done! You now have

- single-user, self-operated ActivityPub server
- your own (domain & user) name, full ownership
- few malicious users & small attack surface
- no database or scripting engines to tend
- unattractive attack target
- full control



Some Design Decisions

- safety over simplicity over everything else
- statically linked binary (built in  OCaml)
- single user, easy operation
- no database, no server-side scripting
- persistence to plain, inspectable text files
- template rendering via browser-side XSLT
- javascript for convenience and eye candy, not mandatory

Some Painpoints

- plain text notes, no HTML/markdown formatting
- hacky background processing (maybe allow cron)
- alpha
- no fav/boost management, but fire + forget
- no account move so far
- no images so far

Inspired by

- [PermaComputing.net/Principles](#),
- *Occams Razor* (*William of Baskerville*, ~1340),
- *The Imperative of Responsibility* (Hans Jonas, 1979),
- *Tools for Conviviality* (Ivan Illich, 1973),
- *A Plea for Lean Software* (Niklaus Wirth, 1995).

Merci bien for your attention!

Seppo.mro.name/development

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