<u>Identifying commoning aspects in the work of the Noesya</u> <u>cooperative (1/5)</u>

yala 1 Juin 21, 2024, 2:15

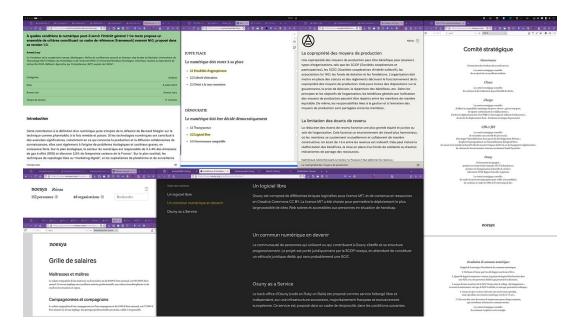
The consideration of <u>Ergonomy of development experience and common reproducibility</u> <u>questions around maintaining degrowth.net</u> have incurred a little enquiry into the means of operation at Noesya with regards to the apparent focus on commoning of computational media. This post documents a critical reading of published material and seeks to evaluate the question, how much Commons there is in Osuny and Noesya.

Seen from the entrance page noesya.coop, it is the priority one objective of the organisation:



1. Computational Commons. Develop suitable tools to serve the Commons.

As first sketched in the linked thread, there is plenty of activity and material in the spheres of Noesya and the large Osuny community. It is largely French speaking and spreads from government institutions to informal initiatives and private concerns. Many activities are described in very accessible form, using the very system to openly publish documents, articles, reports, codes, directories of people and organisations up to political manifests and a certification programme for evaluating computational Commons.



To understand better which forces are at play in this large environment, allow me to dive a bit into the presented for retracing the paths and drawing the lines that allow to cluster the major narrative strains and domains.

Most of these publications where found after inspecting the website footer and by indirectly hitting them via the website code repositories at <u>noesya · GitHub</u>. The ones below are being put in focus for excerption and commentary.

Language disclaimer: I'm writing this with a secondary language that is not my primary language. The writing will mostly also be received by non-native speakers. It is also a colonial and hegemonic language. J'aimer passer la parole en français un autre jour. Pour l'instant j'utilise ma langue de travail, qui est la *lingua franca* de la domaine de la numérique. Die Indirektion über eine Fremdsprache birgt immer ein Restrisiko des Missverständnisses. Aber was wäre eine Sprache, die nicht zu deren Überwindung taugt?

It is a large corpus of documentary and discursive material that is available, which is in general a good thing. With this wealth of information presented in so many different locations, it is also a bit challenging to comprehend the inner workings of the community and its many ideas and outputs.

But a grand « Chapeau! » to what is made available to the public here.

Now let's look a bit closer at Noesya to ask how they relate themselves to the Osuny Common.

Publicly available governance documentation contains a reference to a pretty recent strategic communiquée from 2023-11-23 by a *Comité stratégique* comprised of six people.

Comité stratégique

20231123-comite-strategique.pdf

The document states strategic recommendations to make regarding several subjects of noesya's work.

For example at the top they reflect on their **Governance** role and present the first strategic domain, **Clients**:

Comité stratégique

Gouvernance

Présentation des résultats du second exercice.

Le comité stratégique conseille : de se réjouir de ces excellents résultats.

Clients

Le comité stratégique conseille : de continuer la diversification du portefeuille de clients.

Not so far below, the document also brings up **Osuny**:

Osuny

Présentation des progrès : premier site d'université rémunéré (IUT de Bordeaux) ; premier site d'organisation Culturelle (La Criée) ; subvention 70 k€ Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine.

Le comité stratégique conseille : de vendre les jours en temps junior pour veiller à la rentabilité ; de continuer à vendre la TMA à 15% du temps de dev.

It seems to be a viable source of income for the organisation, given the paragraph speaks a lot about subvention and rates for selling service.

For what interests us here, further down the document also has a special section about the **Incubation of computational commons**:

Incubation de communs numériques

Rappel de la stratégie d'incubation de communs numériques.

- On finance Osuny que l'on développe sous licence libre ;
- Quand le logiciel commence à réussir, la gestion du logiciel doit basculer dans une SCIC avec des personnes dédiées qui prennent les décisions;
- noesya devient sociétaire de la SCIC Osuny, dans le collège «développement»,
 et assure la maintenance tant que la SCIC le décide, en tant que prestataire technique;
 - noesya n'a pas vocation à devenir une société mono produit, mais à produire un commun numérique tous les 3 à 5 ans;
 - Cela veut dire créer des rentes de maintenance pour chaque commun, qui contribuent à financer le commun suivant.

Le comité stratégique conseille : de continuer à explorer cette stratégie.

In summary, the cooperative will finance Osuny, which is developed under a libre license. When this works well, it is outsourced into a separate legal body and established in a cooperative model with

shared-ownership. They want to follow this exit-to-community plan every three to five years with changing products. Which in turn means to create revenue for the individual projects, in order to contribute to shared maintenance of the Commons.

While it is clear and evident, that establishing and maintaining the Commons is a high value for noesya, it is also evident, that classic contractual client work also plays a large role in the activities of the cooperative. Further there seems to be a line of work in Osuny that is recognised by public funding.

Seen from this perspective, Osuny is a product by a cooperatively economising entity that is branded as a Common to produce more favourable client relationships. In this regard, the resource maintained in shared ownership, Osuny, appears to be appropriated by an economic process to produce revenue and income for its maintainers. Eventually there are aspects in the Osuny body of work that do not fall under the production logic of relations in financialised reciprocity, which tend to be more visible in such « official » documents.

Let's look a bit further at the publications and increase our focus on how the stewardship of the cooperative creates the space for the Common to flourish.

Gouvernance

The governance page was **found in the GitHub organisation** and is also linked as the first item in the hamburger menu of the noesya.coop website on second sight.

Gouvernance noesya • Gouvernance Noesya

The site contains a repository of **documents** and links to the **strategic committee**, which we learned about above. The documents are filed into categories about *strategy*, *jurisdiction*, *economy*, *ecology* and *ethics*.

Following on with the investigation, it is very easy to find regular financial reports about the activities of the organisation, which provide a good overview on the scale and dynamics of development operations.

Économiques • Gouvernance Noesya

From mere price lists for contract work and salary accords, through annual and quarterly financial reports, there is even a voluntarily signed dedication to ethical conduct in the work.

We are presented with common tariffs in the business:

Prestations

Le tarif journalier est unique, à 800 € HT

- Grille de tarifs Gouvernance Noesya
- o Microsoft Word grille-de-tarifs.docx grille-de-tarifs.pdf

Maîtresses et maîtres

Le salaire temps plein d'une maîtresse ou d'un maître est de 8.000 € brut mensuel, soit 96.000 € brut annuel. Ce niveau implique une excellente maîtrise professionnelle, une culture interdisciplinaire et du recul sur les situations et enjeux.

- Grille de salaires Gouvernance Noesya
- o grille-de-salaires-1.2.pdf

We are also given a look at the annual turnover:

Total du bilan 560 109,19 Euros

Chiffre d'affaires 744 754,47 Euros

Résultat net comptable 275 799,50 Euros

- Comptes annuels 2022-2023 Gouvernance Noesya
- NOESYA noesya-comptes-annuels-2022-2023.pdf

These documents underline the economic functioning of the cooperative for its practitioners. From the numbers, it seems to be a well-functioning affair, which gives confidence in the longevity of operations.

The undersigned <u>Charte Numérique Responsable</u> (<u>PDF</u>) states a high-level commitment to all that's good in computing and through that indirectly names a few risks that challenge the conformity to the declaration.

It especially refers to the ecological impact of electronic appliances, with some answers to reduce them, and highlights the questions of diversity and inclusion for a just participation model.

The charter does not have an understanding of the Commons nor expresses any relation to them.

Let's inspect the other resources for finding evidence to more relatedness to common affairs.

Diagnostic

There is a nice digital intervention that calculates the discrete and physical ecological impact of a website. It's neat and calls for more action.

- noesya/coop.noesya.diagnostic
- Diagnostic écologique de https://ecobytes.net noesya

Réseau

The <u>Réseau noesya</u> website (<u>github</u>) gives a nice overview of people and organisations connected with Noesya and Osuny. Its directory is grouped in categories for *Research*, *Strategy*, *Design*, *Tech* and *Ethics* and once again highlights the large network of practitioners connected with the cause.

<u>152 personnes</u> ⊕ <u>48 organisations</u> ⊕

Yet also not much word about explicit commoning efforts.

Let's not hesitate and seek further how Noesya establishes Osuny as a Common.

Sane

One of the activities of Noesya is an *action research* about **alternative systems & emergent norms**.

systèmes alternatifs normes émergentes • sane

The research asks hard questions about compatibility of organisations with post-growth conditions, how to build relations with other organisations, how computing can serve the common good with a

special focus on interactive media for communicating ethical experience.

It's a large research programme, which involves many organisations, cooperatives and universities,

Le programme • sane

It is summarised in these headlines:

- Bring about a political project
- Prepare organisations for the time after-growth
- Promote computing in the common interest
- Contribute to the triage state + market + commons
- Act through the action research

The programme is bold and has strong criticism in ecological and economic areas. It explicitly mentions the tensions and forces between the different operational logics of state, markets and the Commons. While it doesn't reject the state nor markets, it offers a reinterpretation of capitalocentric logics by the view of Raworth's Doughnut economics.

Here we want to focus on the third axis in the matrix of activities under the Sane umbrella:

• Numérique d'intérêt général • sane

To cite:

noesya participates in contributing to computing in the common interest through its **productions** and diverse actions. But how to define what is computing in the common interest? How to characterise it? How to distinguish the projects which serve the common good from those who are commons washing, green washing or social washing?

An ex-citing proposition to start with and good material for later reflection. For now we recognise a dedicated effort to sustain the Commons also in the field of information and communication technology (ICT). It culminates in publication of a declaration of a **reference frame for computational Commons**.

There is a nice article by <a>@arnaudlevy which provides a lot more context.

Pour un numérique d'intérêt général | Communication et démocratie

Lancement du site numeriqueinteretgeneral.org • sane

Let's inspect this reference frame more thoroughly (remember, bold claims need bold evidence) and see how we can put it to good use with Osuny.

This appears to be a major culmination of year-long efforts to support the common good with solid and profound criteria to distinguish, if one is acting in the common interest, or not.

Numérique d'Intérêt Général

The first question I ask myself when reading the title of this proposal, is why it speaks of *intérêt général* and not of *bien commun*. This might be a little lost in translation, but it is nevertheless interesting. All language cultures always have space for more diversity in a given discussion.

NIG, un cadre de référence pour le Numérique d'Intérêt Général • N

The NIG, as it is called, splits up in several sections (Just ends, Just place, Democracy, Respect the law, Respect the people, Care, Sovereignty) and also seeks to be a reference frame for certification of computational Common(s). We will look at two examples from the reference frame.

Excursion: Label Numérique en Communs

They make no mistake that openness is a main pillar of the whole operation:

Open

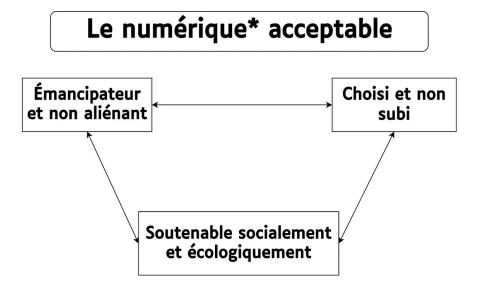
Having made available the computational elements in discussion (software, databases, plans, concept material, etc.) by principle in an open format and under an Open Data license.

Let's not be distracted by the appropriation and enclosure of the Commons by the state. We continue with our reading of the **NIG 1.1 • Numérique d'Intérêt Général**, which was grown from its own grassroots.

2.1 Possibilité d'appropriation • Numérique d'Intérêt Général

l'articulation avec les logiciels libres permet d'envisager un numérique « choisi et non subi », « émancipateur et non aliénant » pour reprendre les termes proposés par Louis Derrac dans sa définition d'<u>un numérique acceptable</u>

Following the link:



*Le numérique étant ici vu comme l'ensemble des technologies, équipements, infrastructures, terminaux traitant de l'information numérique

V2

louisderrac.com (cc



The acceptable computing*

- Emancipatory and non-alienating
- Chosen and not imposed
- Socially and ecologically sustainable

*The computing is herein seen as the ensemble of technologies, equipments, infrastructures, which ultimately treat computational information

The **possibility of appropriation** means in this sense, that an articulation [of human affairs] with Free Software allows to imagine a different kind of compute, when these criteria are met. How can we know they are?

Let's return to one of the points in the NIC article about the label. It was mapped to the *Openness* category and is point 3.2. about *Free Software* (before NIC v1.1 was released it was known as point 3.1).

Label NEC	NIG 1.1
Accessible	5.1 Accessible
Appropriable	2.1 Possibilité d'appropriation
Éthique	1.1 Besoins réels (beaucoup plus large)
	3.2 Gouvernance compatible (plus juridique)
	5.2 Simplicité
Ouvert	3.1 Logiciel libre
Sécurisé	7.3 Infrastructure et application sécurisées
Sobre	1.3 En dessous des plafonds environnementaux (beaucoup plus large)
	6.3 Frugalité

En synthèse, NIG est plus large, parce qu'il resitue le dispositif numérique au service d'un projet social et politique, et qu'il se préoccupe de gouvernance de façon systémique. Le label est une très bonne base pour le *comment*, mais ne pose pas la question du *pourquoi*.

In synthesis, NIG is larger, because it resituates the compute paradigm in service of a social and political project, and which preoccupies itself with systemic governance. The label is a very good base for the *how*, but it does not ask the question of the *why*.

3.2 Logiciel libre • Numérique d'Intérêt Général



Les outils et contenus numériques d'intérêt général doivent être produits sous des licences libres (Free [Libre] and Open Source Software, FOSS / FLOSS) pour les codes sources, et ouvertes pour les contenus (Creative Commons, CC ou licences hippocratiques par exemple). Ces licences permettent l'accès sans restriction, et garantissent l'autonomie future, de façon plus ou moins restrictive: certaines licences imposent la réutilisation dans le même cadre légal, d'autres acceptent des cadres moins ouverts. Aucun objet numérique privatif ne peut légitimement se réclamer d'intérêt général.

The pattern is strong and prescriptive. It speaks about software, data and content tools in the general interest. Following the script, they have to be produced under Free licences, which allow for access without restriction and grant future autonomy, under more or less restrictive terms. No single privatised computational object can legitimately claim general interest.

There is a lot to unfold from this section, which we can keep for later. For now it is enough to remember that the NIG culminates in a radical prescription of granted liberties, while inviting for accountability and fair conduct with regards to environmental and social, say civic liabilities.

We're on a brink to something here, but let's withhold it for more appropriate timing. We still have some reading to complete.

Laboratoires - recherche et développement

Noesya also run an R&D lab, which is basically a blog of their activity in the design and advocacy fields. We can check it out to hear directly from the people.

- <u>R&D Lab</u>
- Confiance et publics Lab (video)
- Nous sommes B Corp et c'est pas top Lab

The cooperative is also part of A, an organisation that follows another **charter**, against which one can get certified, too. The logo is a nod towards anarchism:



Now that we've gotten enough inspiration of the vibe and flair that surrounds the noesya atmosphere, let's proceed to a practical example and examine their most prominent production.

Which brings us to the star in the manège, the Osuny common.

Osuny

I'm looking at the <u>osuny.org</u> website and am exploring it from the outside. My onset is to discover the application from the perspective of a systems developer within the computational commoning collective <u>allmende.io</u>, who is looking for a nice interface to a content API that can be used for

building static web pages. Osuny shines in this area, and we are seldom shy and often happy to participate in a replication study of applying FLOSS to voiced use cases (<u>next.allmende.io/</u>). Publishing a website is an often heard case, and remains so, even in times of platform media. Why Osuny is even more relevant to cater for free and diverse speech in the public web.

What can Osuny offer in this regard and which guarantees does it give me to support me on this journey? Let's find out!

The website is structured in the larger narrative arcs of *Usage*, *Values*, *Functionalities*, *Governance*, *Put to action*, next to policies, a *blog*, the *directory of organisations and people*, plus their *meeting notes*.

I'm picking some pages of interest that state the values and provide guidance on how to contribute out in the open. It has become evident that this public interest tech is rooted in a large community and sustained by a large number of clients. We should be able to find out where its open source community lives?

1. Communauté l Osuny



The community page of the website has a disclaimer at the top, which cites a famous definition of the Commons as a shared resource. It adds to it a notion of zero margin costs, which are present in disembodied and ephemeral ICT.

A common is « a **resource** shared by *a group of people* » . Computation permits to develop commons benefitting from *marginal zero cost* , by mutualisation of the *infrastructure* and the development of functionalities that benefit all. The publication in open source [...] grants *perpetuity* of the solution. [Emphasis by the author.]

Speaking from the perspective of seeing the Common as the material residue of an encompassing and activating Commoning practice, the habit of speaking from it only as a resource has consequences on the way how maintenance and interaction are structured.

A curious visitor of the page might ask themselves: what is it that the Common does or enables, which is made possible by the act of engaging here in a not marketed, non-reciprocal relation with each other?

2. Liberté | Osuny





When speaking of the liberties attached with Osuny, the parole is again focussed on the artifacts, hence residue from the interactions that make them possible. We see licenses and program languages and libraries and others mentioned here.

The curious visitor occupied with their replication study continues to ask: How does all of this perform as running code in a replication experiment?

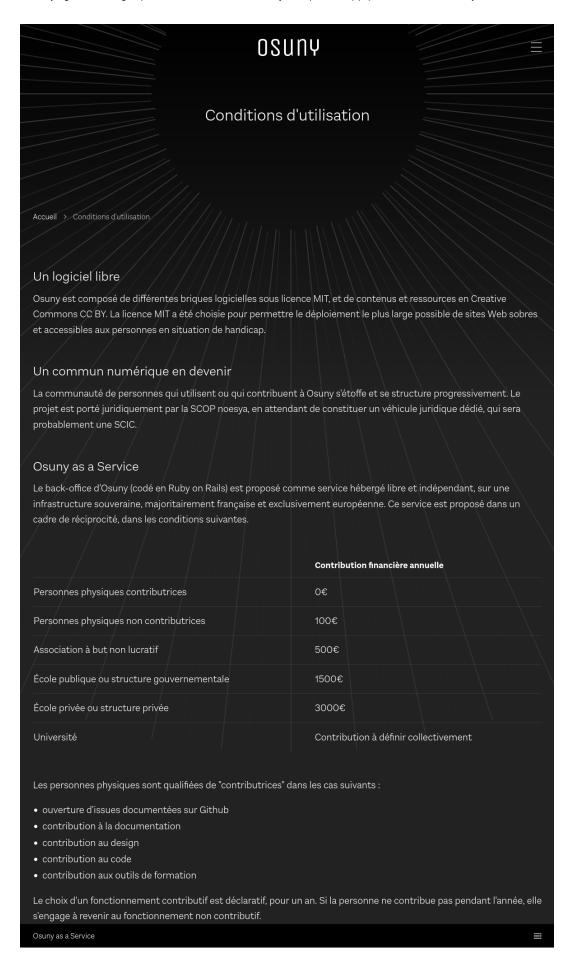
3. Stabilisation | Osuny



The stabilisation of Osuny sees it on a path to *become* a Common. What is stated here makes it seem, that there is a lot of background work going on in establishing new structures and bodies for sustaining its longevity by juristic, governance and technological means.

« Where is the large community in these procedures? », the interested individual asks.

4. Conditions d'utilisation | Osuny



I had come here to this forum to find the community and to find ways to interact with them. This is

because I am an Osuny user and developer at the IDN and interested in reproducing an environment that is suitable for hosting Osuny instances. To make use of this liberty, I need access to documentation and technical specifications that help to set up a reproducible execution environment that is capable of holding all run-time components with exclusively Free Software.

At eco:bytes, who care for <u>allmende.io</u> and its other communities, we rely on self-hosted Free Software to avoid the vendor lock-in of and costly contracts with proprietary platforms. Being part of the Librehosters and beknown to CHATONS, I am able to infer that there may be other people who operate under similar constraints.

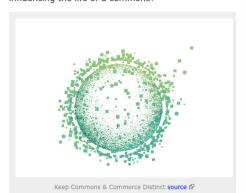
The reasons given by noesya for why to put computational artifacts and runtime components into the Commons are exemplary, striking and profound. Where less community-oriented operations is perceived and more service-oriented offers are presented, it does not explicitly exclude an interweaving of a bit of the open source spirit.

When we worked with EnCommuns from Lille ten years ago in the TransforMap project, we had a big discussion about how to **Separate Commons and Commerce To Make It Work For the**Commons (P2P Foundation Wiki). The article, from Simon Sarasin, had a nice graphic and explained why it's worth the effort to strengthen the distinction between the two modi operandi.

This text ultimately sparked a pattern in the research of Silke Helfrich and David Bollier...

Keep Commons & Commerce Distinct

How to deal with the tension between commoning and pressures to commercially exploit shared assets? How can we prevent money from negatively influencing the life of a commons?



Money is used in commons—when necessary. However, because the quest for money can threaten the social coherence of a commons and people's intrinsic motivations, it is essential to not let money interfere with togetherness, people's intrinsic motivations, and internal goals. It is therefore important to de-couple flows of money from the practices and culture of commoning. There is an affirmative need to resist pressures toward commercialization and price competition, as well as misplaced funder priorities. Who contributed what should not determine internal governance or allocations of money.

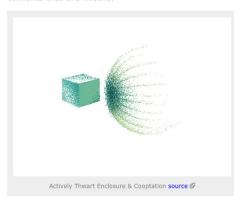
Examples

- It is important to accept external funding (e.g., from philanthropy or the state) only where its terms do not undermine the culture of commoning.
- Encommuns
 a French network of software programmers, noticed that the priorities of one of their municipal clients were overshadowing the needs of those involved in the project. To combat this dynamic, Encommuns detached spending from income: payments for code-writing as part of the project were officially considered donations to the entire group, and not as transactional payments to outsiders for individual services or products. These payments thereby became the financial basis for the whole commons moving forward together.

Related Patterns

Actively Thwart Enclosure & Cooptation

How do commons stand protect themselves in contexts that are hostile?



Commoners constantly have to be aware of different forms of enclosure and cooptation. As they gain clarity on these challenges, their creative resistance gives rise to concrete solutions that neutralize dominant (ownership) structures and to counter the appeal of market approaches.

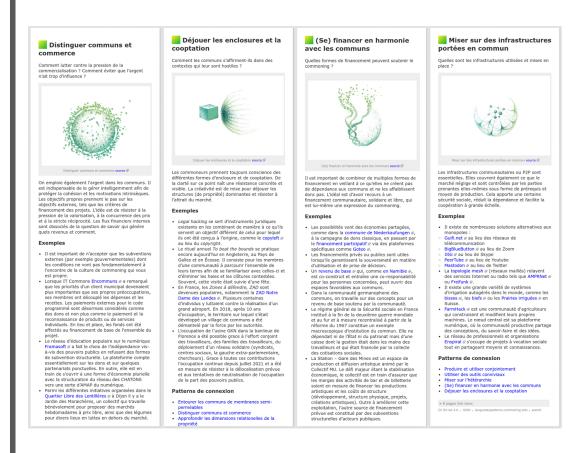
Examples

- "Beating the bounds" was an annual ritual in England whereby the members of a community would walk the perimeter of their lands together in order to refamiliarize themselves with it and remove hedges or fences that had privatized the commons. The walk, an affirmation of community control of common wealth, was often followed by a celebration.
- "Legal hacks" attempt to use existing legal instruments for purposes other than those for which they were originally developed, in order to protect commons against enclosures. One example is Copyleft plicenses used as tools to enable legal sharing of content, which derive from copyright law.
- A community land trust is an organization form that allows a group of people to acquire land and take it off the market in perpetuity, preventing speculators from acquiring the land for marketdriven purposes.
- Participants in the acequia systems for irrigation water in New Mexico and Colorado have secured protection under state law for their commoning, preventing investors and companies from claiming property rights in water or selling it.

Related Patterns

<u>patternlanguage.commoning.wiki/view/keep-commons-commerce-distinct/view/actively-thwart-enclosure-cooptation</u>

We helped Frédéric Sultan and Remix the Commons to reify it in French.



<u>languedespatterns.commoning.wiki/view/distinguer-communs-et-commerce/view/djouer-les-enclosures-et-la-cooptation/view/se-financer-en-harmonie-avec-les-communs/view/miser-sur-des-infrastructures-portes-en-commun</u>

I hope you already had the pleasure with EnCommuns folks. They do a good job in decoupling their environment into the ecosystem and this way spread their roots, while providing for others.

- <u>LSC Legal service for commons Structures juridiques pour soutenir les communs</u>
- Pourquoi 3 hébergeurs ? Collectif Point Communs

How do you think does application hosting fit into the discourse around reproduction of computational artifacts in the Common? Which are suitable modes of production, and how to provide the means? Especially when it's funded by public sources. I'm seeing a fair chance, that cooperation with federations that control compute, like CHATONS and Librehosters, will play a meaningful role in the upcoming discussions about sovereignty and portability of public interest tech.

This last screenshot also shows the only place that I could find which occupies itself with providing guidance on how to contribute back to the project. Other examples remain hard to find.

I'm interested in learning more about how noesya sees itself and operates as an « agent commoneur », qui se comprends comme un nœud dans un réseau des communautés commun?

Or to ask stealing the words from a former colleague: What do we have in common?

After this enduring consumption of public documentation on what noesya does and in which setting Osuny is embedded into, we have good material to work with when checking the artifacts for reproducibility.

Let's continue with our investigation on finding out how much Osuny can be made fit to meet our hypothetical expectations, and about finding obstacles to do so. Now off to the more practical handson part.

Working with Osuny out in the open: a replication study to increase the resiliency of the computational Common (2/5)