

Erlang Solutions Ltd.

IT as a People's Movement— People's Movements and IT

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About Me

- 19 years of Erlang
- Grew up in Athletics
 - (Father was an Olympic coach, among other things)
- 13 years of choir singing



People's Movements

- A.k.a. Popular Movements or Social Movements
- Initially, people rising against injustice
- Most literature deals with
 - Organized protest groups (e.g. ATTAC)
 - Extensions of the Welfare State (e.g. unions)
- “Non-profit charitable organizations”
 - Ideell förening in Swedish
 - Ideelle Verein in German...



My focus

Trouble with naming

- No direct correspondence in English
- In Britain
 - “Non-profit, unincorporated members’ clubs”?
- In the U.S.
 - “Non-profit, charitable organization” (NCO)
 - 501(c)(7)...
- In Sweden, “förening” implies all the above
- Let’s just call them clubs



Vikings and their clubs

- 90% of the Swedish population belonged to at least one club in the year 2000
- Sveriges Riksidrottsförbund has 3 million members in 22,000 clubs (*population: 9 million*)
 - (Ca 600,000 people sing in choirs...)
- Norges Idrettsforbund has 2 million members in 12,000 clubs (*population: 5 million*)
- Danmarks Idræts-Forbund has 1.6 million members in 10,600 clubs (*population: 5.5 million*)

Why is this important

- Demonstrates the power of non-profit volunteer organizations, since ca 1850
- Swedish Sports clubs receive ca 2.7 BSEK/year
 - Estimated cost, if all “staff” would be paid: 20 BSEK/year (ref: youth recreation leader salary)
 - 5000 salaried employees for 3 million members
 - WC Athletics 1993 alone: 700 MSEK profit
- Benefits to society include health, crime prevention, and culture (hard to quantify)

Troubling Trends

- 7% decline in club involvement in the last decade
- (At least in Athletics:)
 - Increasing interest among kids
 - Decreasing interest/time among adults
- At the same time
 - Increasing child obesity & stress-related disease
 - Increasing alarm about lack of exercise
- Slippery slope of complex society...



How are they run?

- Practically all clubs have a democratic charter (most federations mandate it)
 - No membership restrictions
 - General Assembly elects the Council
 - Rules for transparency (proofing and publishing minutes, etc.)
- 90% of the population gets democratic training in their spare time...

Shift in perspective

- Fewer people show experience from “democratic” work in clubs
- OTOH, young people work differently
 - Fewer meetings
 - More on-line interaction
- Old-style democracy vs Internet age
 - Representative rule vs social web
 - Process vs (rough consensus and results)



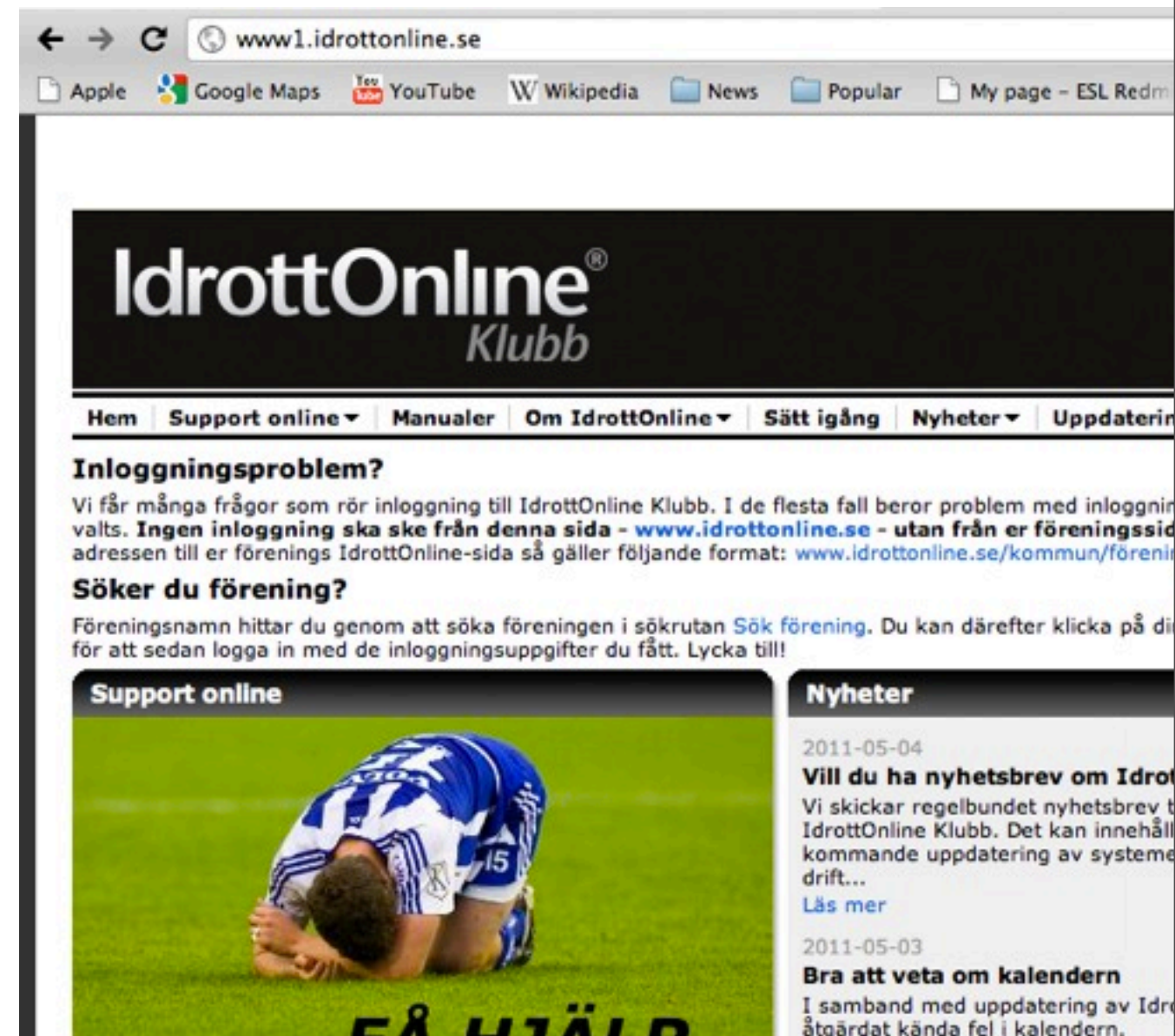
OSS-Style Democracy

- Open Source exposes the force of Web-scale mindshare
- “Meritocracy”—you earn the right to influence
 - This is also mostly true in clubs
- No imposed structure, but structure emerges
 - Largely true also for clubs
- Best effort—often excellent
 - Few control structures (not always good)



Clubs and IT

- Sports clubs have a shared web CMS framework
- (Bought from a commercial vendor)
- Clubs and federations often buy bespoke software and services
- Often need to pay for custom adaptations



My own IT & Sports story

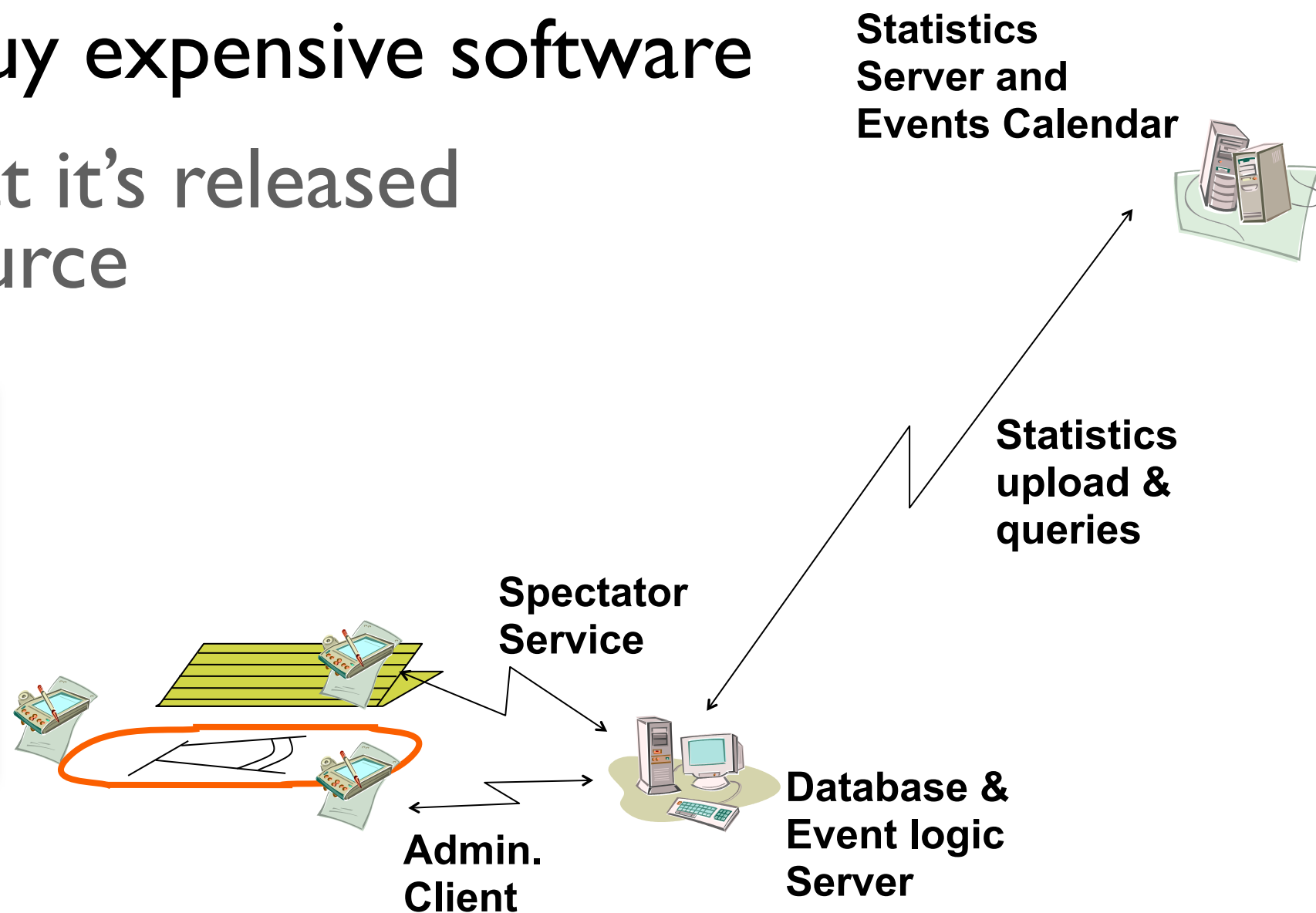
- Ran admin for District Championships in 1986
 - SW reused a few times in following years
 - DBASE running from a 720K floppy...
- Many years as speaker, admin, starter, photo finish operator, etc.
- Open Source programmer since, um... 1998
- Tried convincing the Athletics community to embrace Open Source in 2003



CyberAthletics 2003

- Real-time results & stats service for Athletics
- Rather than buy expensive software
 - Mandate that it's released as Open Source

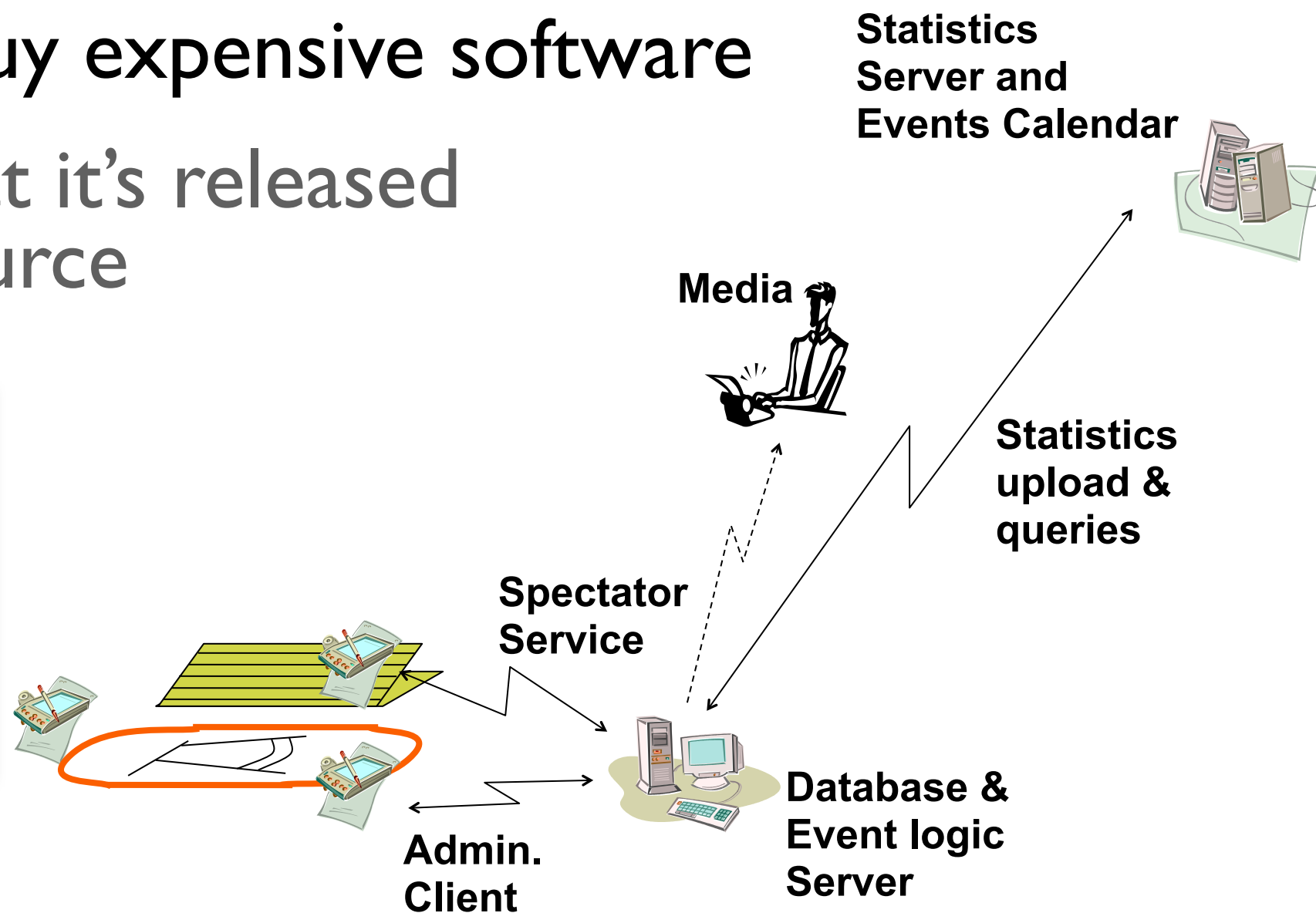
- WLAN suitable for a stadium
- GPRS/3G an alternative or complement
- Spectator gets the same kind of information as if he/she were at home in front of the TV
- The athlete can go home at night and view the current statistics online
- Lots of possible new features



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“Consortium” members

- Ericsson (& SICS)
 - U. Wiger, J. Armstrong, B. Däcker
- KTH
 - Prof. Björn Pehrson
- Swedish Sports Federation
 - Erik Wiger, Martin Eriksson (PhD)
 - ...



The basic idea

- Maintaining Open Source software is no more expensive than buying bespoke SW
 - ...and buying updates in the coming years
- You can pay for development even when the product is free
- The sports clubs have lots of good programmers
 - Yours truly, Martin Eriksson, Staffan Strand, and many others
 - who would love to combine their passions



Meager success

- Swedish Athletics Federation was out of money
- Didn't really see the point (then...)
- Now they have started to take interest
 - but the “consortium” was disbanded long ago
 - Open Source idea still not quite “sold”
- Swiss Athletics Federation was more successful



In summary

- Passion-driven organizations are wildly productive (we knew that)
- Traditional club activity is slowly crumbling as people become increasingly busy
 - Given 10x higher cost-point for “conventional” operations, this may be very bad news
- Clubs need to adapt to the Web generation
- Open Source and clubs have much in common
- Lots of fun opportunities

