

Open Source Governance

The legal dimension

A quick look at two aspects

- Conditions and determinants for governance
- Traditional governance structures in Open Source Communities

Governance

A governance model describes the roles that project participants can take on and the process for decision making within the project. In addition, it describes the ground rules for participation in the project and the processes for communicating and sharing within the project team and community. In other words it is the governance model that prevents an open source project from descending into chaos

OSS Watch

Darwinism...

[Framework for]... a more agile network form that can be readily be adapted to local contingencies or emergent conditions that arise in the interactions among project participants, the technical computing systems/resources at hand, or the joint sociotechnical system that is the OSS project.”

(Jensen)

Sustainability

A project must have sustained capability for maintaining as well as creating the software and that a healthy project will evolve from a project model to a service model over time”

... a set of conditions that are sufficient for a software product to reach the end of its natural life for at least one customer, or, in other words, conditions that are sufficient for a software product to complete the product lifecycle ,,.. However, there are two absolute requirements for sustainability; a sustained need for the software and a sustained capability for creating and maintaining the software

(OSS watch – Sustainability)

Key questions for Open Source Communities

- What affects the different governance models for OSC?
- What has to be taken into account for appropriate governance in OSC?
- What do we have to understand in order to be able to decide on an appropriate governance model for Decidim?

Usual factors to understand: determinants

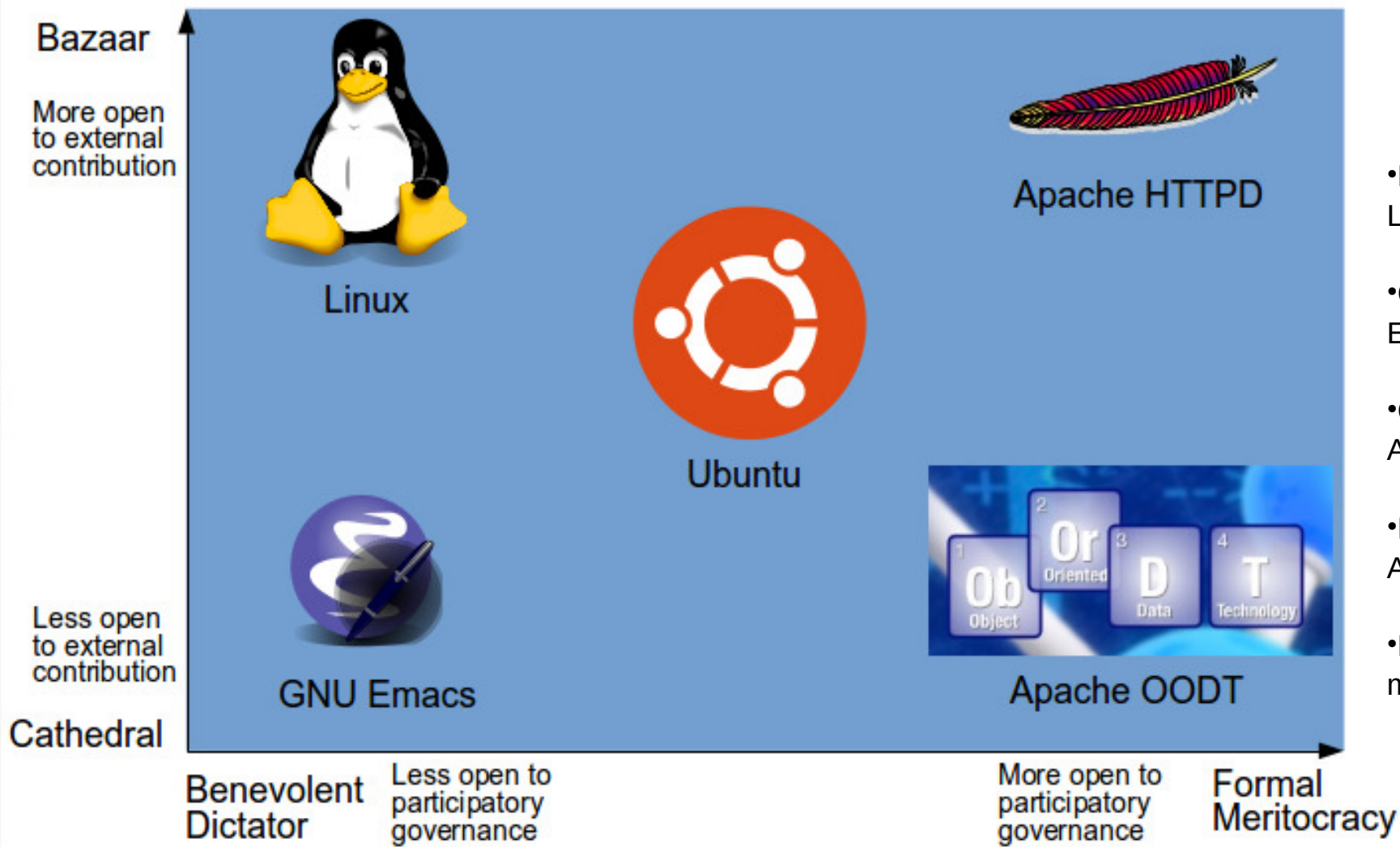
- Types of stakeholders and roles (fixers, developers, subject matter experts, coordinators/managers)
- Types of project (developer software, user applications)
- Types of motivations for the stakeholders/participants (intrinsic, extrinsic)
- Stage of Project development (Introduction, growth, maturity, revival)
- Potential barriers and risks
- Points of conflict (roadmap, infrastructure, membership, goals)

Usual aspects to decide on: Governance mechanisms

- Legal structure
 - Formal entity?
 - Contractual relationship?
 - Nothing?
- Decision making bodies (WHO)
- Decision making processes (HOW)
- Key decisions (WHAT)
 - Technical, organisational, economic
 - Legal: trademark, IPR management, contributions

Traditional models

- Benevolent Dictators (for life)
 - Decision focused/centred on Project founder or leader
- Meritocracy
 - Decisions taken by most proficient / participative members
- Comitology
 - Decisions taken through appointed committees
 - (question: how to appoint the committees)



- Bazaar + Benevolent Dictator (BD): Linux
- Cathedral / closed (centralised, BD): Emacs
- Centralised / Closed Meritocratic: Apache OODT
- Decentralised / Open meritocratic: Apache HTTPD
- Benevolent Dictator supported by meritocratic Committees: Ubuntu