

CS499 - Open Source software development

Lecture #08: Social and Political Infrastructure of OSS Projects
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Governance Vs. License

- What's the difference?

Questions And More Questions

- How does it work?
- What keeps a project running?
- Who makes the decisions?



How it Works? Beyond Meritocracy

- *“Technical success is not hard to achieve, but without a robust developer base and social foundation, a project may be unable to handle the growth that initial success brings, or the departure of charismatic individuals.” – Fogel*
- Operational health
- Survivability

Forkability

- Forks can be:
 - Short
 - Social/Political
- The power of someone is dictated by the decisions and the project conduction
- Social Forks give the power to the contributors
 - Bad decisions → New project

Balance is Key

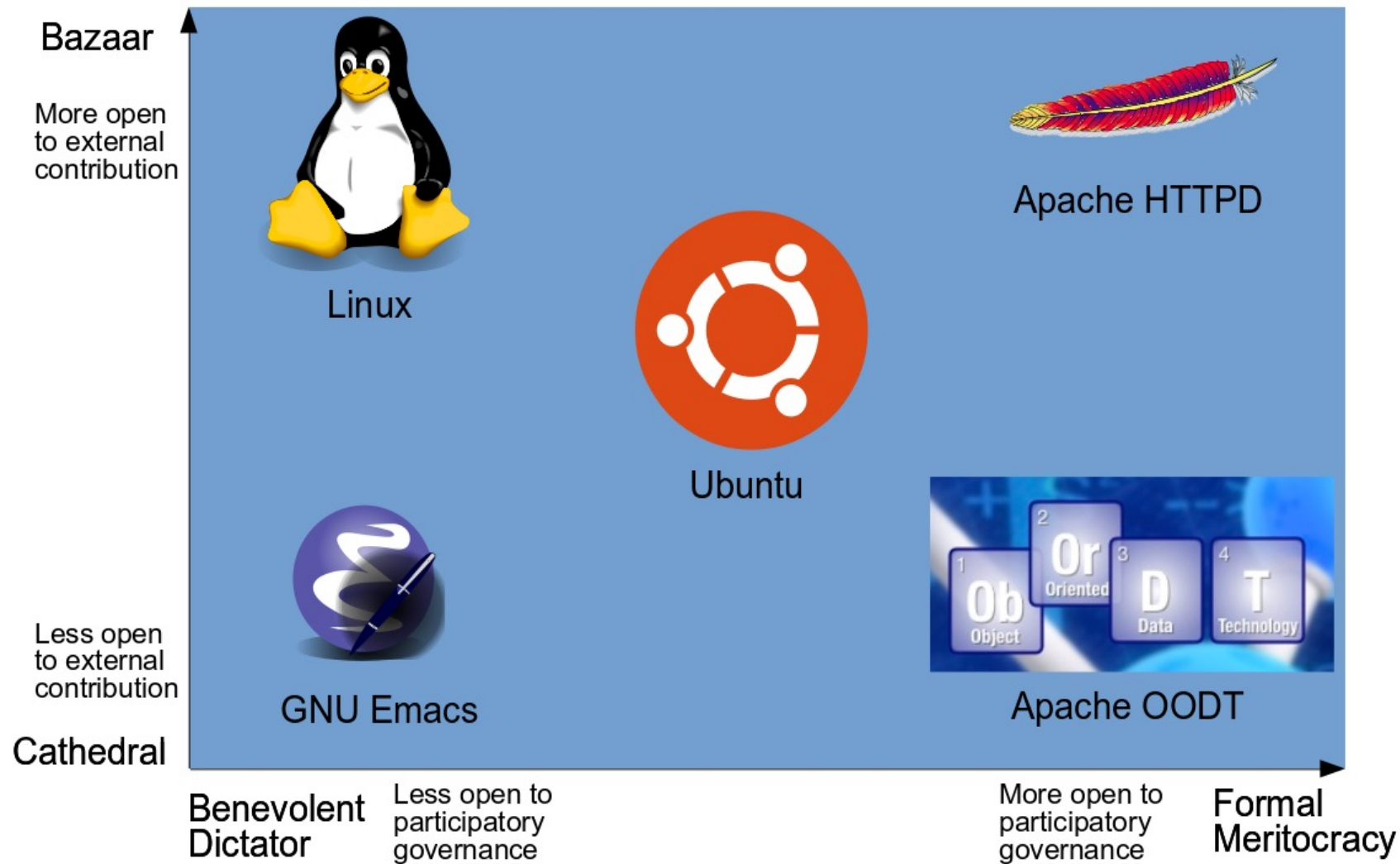
RULES
VS.
TOTAL FREEDOM

Balance is Key

PEOPLE
VS.
PROCESS

Balance is Key

EMPOWERING
VS.
DIRECTING



Benevolent Dictators Governance Model

- Final decision-making authority rests with one person
- “Dictator” is more like a judge or arbitrator



Benevolent Dictators Governance Model

BD recognizes
people

BD drives
consensus

BD nominates
leaders

Benevolent Dictators Governance Model

PROS

- Simple
- Efficient

CONS

- Single point of failure
- Easily questionable

Consensus-based Democracy Model



Consensus-based Democracy Model

- But not so much...
 - Voting mechanisms can be used
- Version Control is key
 - Small changes are assumed to be OK
 - More complex changes can generate discussions

Consensus-based Democracy Model

PROS

- No power hierarchy
- Efficient

CONS

- Evaluation/Merit are relative
- Oligarchies may be a problem

Discussion

- Company-owned projects → How does it work?
- I open-sourced a project → How does it work?
- I forked a project → How does it work?

Another level: NPO

- Successful open source projects → Formal entities
 - Money
 - Legal
- Create a new organization
- Join existing organization
- Distinguish between social/development and legal/bureaucracy

