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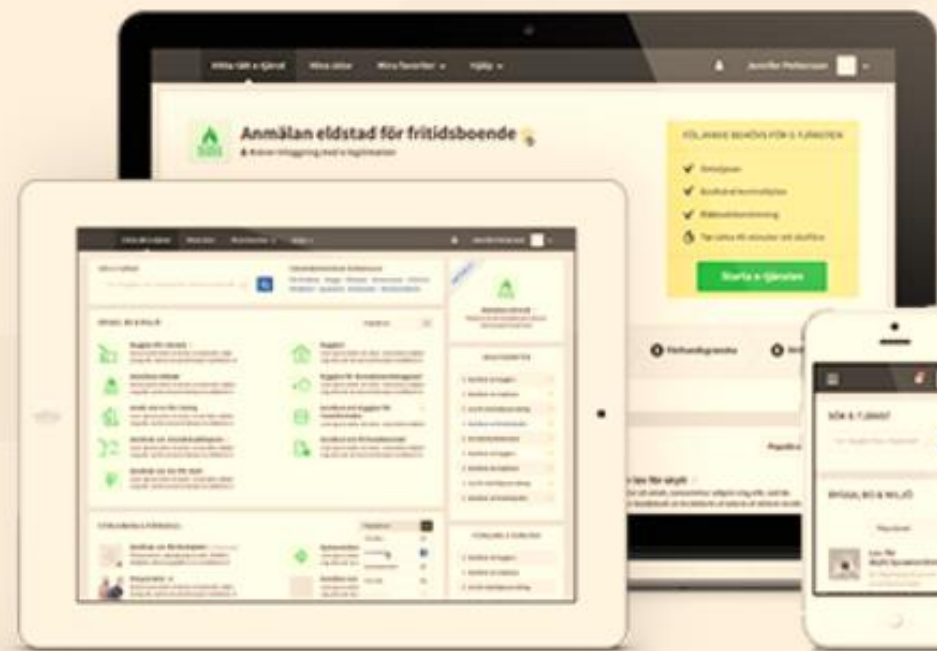
Municipal collaboration on Open Source Software - Why is it so hard?

Lessons learned from Open ePlatform



Open ePlatform

En e-tjänsteplattform helt i öppen källkod



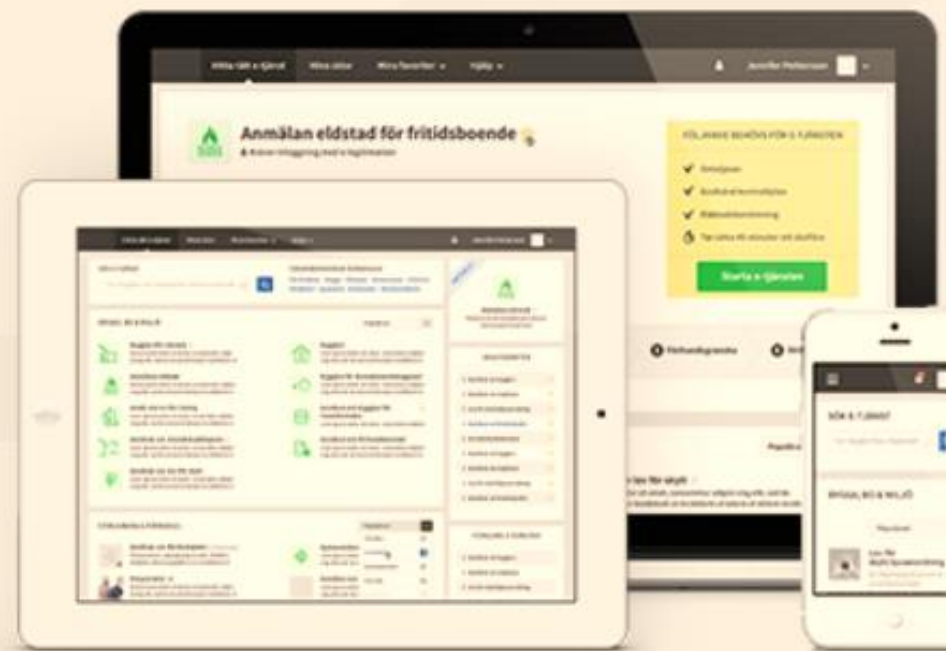
Background

- OSS e-service platform (APGLv3) established in 2014
- Outcome of the Regis EU project including five municipalities
- Productified by vendor including operations and management at a fixed price, as well as further development via traditional procurement,
- Now over 180 customers



Open ePlatform

En e-tjänsteplattform helt i öppen källkod



Is Open ePlatform really open?

- Technical debt hindering others to contribute, concern raised in 2016 and raised in reports 2019, and 2022
- No actions taken yet. User community lacks technical insights due to closed development
- Important documentation and infrastructure kept closed, hindering additional vendors
- In other words, a core is available under an OSS license as part of a single-vendor model



So, what can we learn from this?

- You can't hope for a vendors good will to actively drive an open source project to attract additional vendors - it's simply not in their business interest to raise competition
- The vendor has done nothing wrong in this case though, packaging a product offering on hosting and further develop an open source project - the main issue is that there has been no active steering of the open source project from public sector



Develop in-house in the municipalities?

- Some municipalities develop and release OSS.
- Municipality of Sundsvall has invested in developing reusable components for the last 2 years, components that builds an ecosystem that can be scaled
- Has anyone contributed to, or forked, any of these repositories?
- No!
- Why is it so?



Why is it so hard?

- Lack of internal capabilities and dependency on external resources
- Uncertainties and lack of practice in considering OSS in an acquisition and procurement process
- Discoverability of OSS options in the planning-phase of an acquisition (see <http://offentligkod.se/>!)
- Locked-in to a proprietary technology, standard, platform, or ecosystems since before
- Glances at neighboring municipalities and copies procurement structure



Why is it so hard?

- Uncertainties and fear for legal and security-related risks
- Cultural challenges in terms of risk aversiveness, short-term horizons, focus on own municipality
- Lack of sustainable political support and clear policies
- No coordination or organization in acquisition process nor development and maintenance stages
- ...



**How have
others
done?**



**RI.
SE**

Municipal Foundation for OSS

- OS2 –Association of 70+ Danish municipalities
- Projects are initiated by smaller numbers of municipalities with development procured from ecosystem of vendors
- Governance and project development process in place. Vendors sign an MoU.
- Copyright transferred to OS2.
- Technical committee responsible for long term maintenance together with vendor(s).
Procurement through municipalites directly.
- Additional municipalites can join at any time.
Finacial logic based on size.



Civil Society foundation for OSS

- Open Cities (Otevřená Města) – a Czech non-profit gathering 20 cities in Czech republic to support their digitalizations
- Recieves and hosts OSS projects initaited by public entities. Facilites joint requirements engineering and planning
- Currently hosts three projects, including Cityvizor - an open source tool for transparent municipal management
- Collaborates with civil tech and hacker communities
- Features implemented by municipalities directly. City of Prague a lead user. Collaboration with public service provider.



Lead User leading the way

- Lutece – an e-service platform with an ecosystem of 400+ plugins
- Developed by the City of Paris since beginning of 2000s
- Drives the development through internal IT department. Open to contributions, onboarding new cities and universities
- Pre-packaging containerized solutions and providing as-a-service
- Working to grow community nationally and cross-border



Co-owned service provider

- CommunePlone – a set of tools for civil servants and modules for e-government solutions
- Initiated as grass-roots project initiated by two individuals from two municipalities
- Now hosted and developed through the public service company IMIO, co-owned by 120 Wallonian municipalities.
- Facilitates collaborative requirements engineering process and offering necessary services to operationalize tools developed in CommunesPlone



Evolving from one to the other

- Signalen - a tool for creating, sending, receiving and handling reports about the public space
- Developed in the wild between municipalities supported by civil society Foundation for Public Code
- Transitioned into Dutch Association of Municipalities with formalized governance and technical steering
- Development mainly performed by Amsterdam. Ambition to onboard others and grow community cross-border



What can we learn?

- There is a need for...
 - facilitated collaboration and pooling of resources and knowledge
 - joint ownership of code and all deliverables, and thoughtful licensing
 - common governance and processes for requirements engineering and maintenance
 - larger municipalities with resources to take lead and drive work (initially at least)
 - Include service providers, suppliers, academia, civil society and hackers in the community
 - Lower barriers to adoption and engage the community actively



