Open source human governance

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Attendees

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Raw notes

- **Why care about governance?**
  - Two decades in: some governance structures are unclear / non-transparent; some tooling not friendly to new contributors
    - Sometimes people don't know how to affect change
    - Contention among humans meeting
  - Transparency
    - Many projects say nothing about how they are governed
    - "Black box" of how decisions are made
    - Open source is not democratic?
  - Transparency as trust
  - Models for contributing code, for committers
    - So focused on code, but is it really focused on people?
    - Without people, no code
    - Creating model for governance that enables collaboration and (healthy) growth is important
    - Happens organically but not talked about often
    - Especially with company engagement in open source
      - With community being involved in these kinds of conversations
      - Keeps these things going
    - Supporting everyone who came to the community
      - Inclusion for skill sets that show up
      - Accepting different types of skills and not labeling them with different tiers of value
- **Summary of previous**
  - **Process transparency**
    - Aging gracefully
    - Governance that changes with times and people
  - **Moving beyond code governance to human governance**

- - - Career paths (corporate model)
    - ○ Tactical ideas
      - Codes of Conduct / diversity and inclusion for getting people to stay
      - Practical implementation of governance models
- **To not have governance**
  - ○ Assumptions of defaults
    - BDFL-style of governance
      - "Explicitly implicit" in several projects
      - Because it's unwritten
    - Corporation / organization
  - ○ "Never write your own license"
    - "Don't write your own contribution process"
    - Pick a tweak, make a tweak
    - But don't start from ground zero
  - ○ "Every project had different ways of governance"
    - At different places, across different industries
    - OpenOffice vs. NetBeans
    - Articulate good models, make those available for different projects based on *where they're at*
    - OSI license review process
      - There is a standard for what open source licenses should be
      - Experts can create models around this but must have core attributes
      - Peer-reviewed, then approved (or rejected)
- **Having something similar with governance?**
  - ○ NOT having a checklist of things "to be a valid project"
  - ○ Having a specific need and making accommodation
  - ○ i.e. no requirements
  - ○ Guidelines for hiring open source candidates to have impact on who you attract to apply
  - ○ Risk of some taking guidelines as gospel
    - Must be cognizant of how people could interpret guidelines as a literal interpretation for requirements to be successful
    - **Have side-by-side contrast to show difference between models**; show commonalities across all and some characteristics that work well for specific projects
      - Might learn something new for us about what similarities are there
    - Example: Political science background people advising on guiding principles?
  - ○ Not producing a tool at risk of misuse vs. incorrect use of a model
    - Only principles published and "actual thing" is secret sauce
    - Going from principles to functioning object can be significant stop energy
    - Changes to model have basis, not just bikeshed
  - ○ Guidelines vs. Best practices: maybe the same thing?
    - Licensing, codes of conduct
    - Provides guidelines for new folks and gives them a choice of choosing something
    - Coming from an valid source, risk of taking literally
  - ○ **Carl Fogel, Open Source Archetypes**

- ■ Different styles of open source projects / organizations / licenses
- ■ Choosing one that is closest to your needs
- **Defining governance models**
  - ○ Licensing, CoCs, governance
  - ○ Licensing is fairly static; communities / governance is dynamic
- **Should governance follow will of people or prescribe how people are to behave?**
  - ○ Are we responsible to answer this?
  - ○ Defining an "adoption point"
    - ■ Written as code but not blindly executed as code
  - ○ But projects don't […]
  - ○ "Governance" should not be stop energy for change
  - ○ Being explicit: "please don't think we're stuck here"
  - ○ But who is governed?
    - ■ Define your community and define who is touched by your governance
    - ■ Who actually selects which model?
  - ○ Tldrlegal.com / choosealicense.org
    - ■ Similarities between governance
  - ○ Is choosing governance up front overwhelming?
    - ■ How to get unstuck when model doesn't match for community
  - ○ Governance models including: "Hi I'm here by myself until other people show up, but once people show up, let's have a conversation about it"
  - ○ **Recommendation**: minimum requirement for common governance decision; room to change
    - ■ Living document
- **Final wrap-up / summary / takeaways**
  - ○ Need for some type of guidance / recommendations
    - ■ Not too formal or prescriptive
    - ■ Something along the lines of tldrlegal.com / choosealicense.org
    - ■ Aspects to consider for governance
  - ○ Governance should be living document to evolve with project
    - ■ Clear to participants how decisions / changes are made
  - ○ How is difficult; assistance and guidelines are helpful instead of starting from scratch
  - ○ Contribution policies are always living documents, have room for community to share feedback and make improvements
  - ○ **Starting point**: Looking at models in existence, capturing what works and what doesn't work
    - ■ RIT LibreCorps: idea of how to get others (e.g. students) to support research