Open Source Anti-Patterns

Tech Day by Init 2019

Bio – Johan Thelin

- Qt, Linux and Open Source
- Currently combining Kuro Studio and Mbition
- Runs foss-north – be in Gothenburg March 29 – April 1

Autoliv TROLLTECH BitSim Xdin MBITION

PELAGICORE Experience Change luxoft F KURO STUDIO

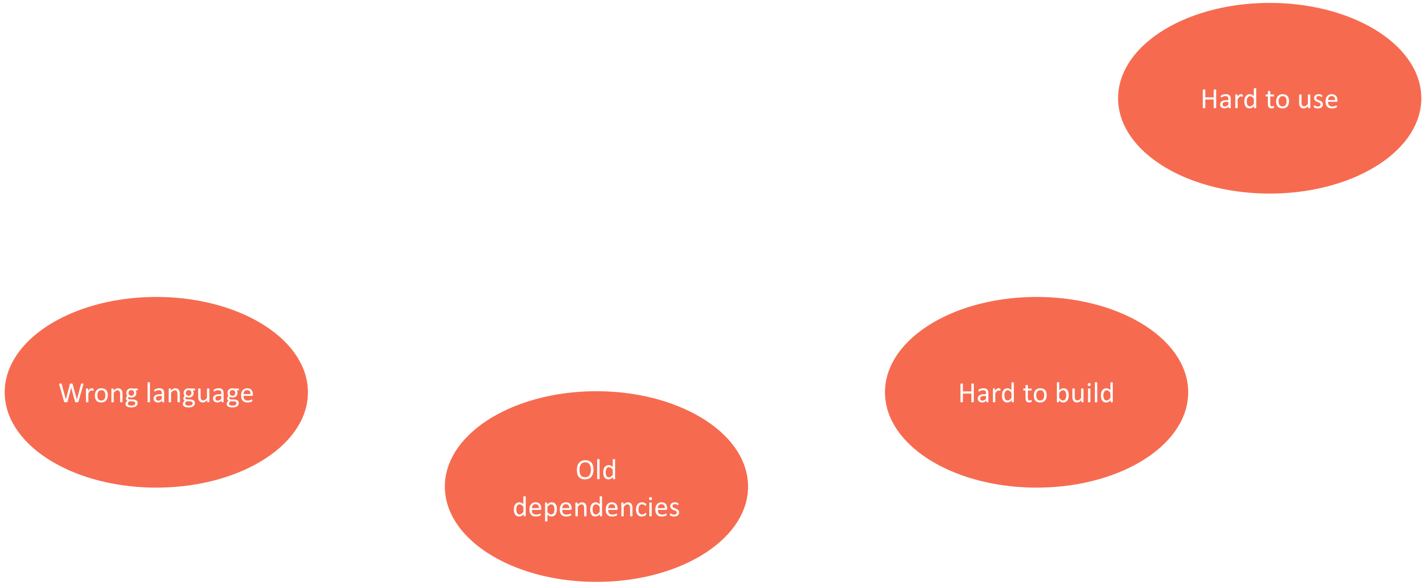
Target

- To build a sustainable community around a (set of) shared open source component(s)

- Other goals are ok, but not what we are discussing here
  - Learning, future proofing, etc

Technical

- We will not talk about this today



Hard to use

Wrong language

Old dependencies

Hard to build

Working without a user

- Scratching your own itch…
- …might not be everyone’s itch

- Key to have a user
  - Can be another project
  - Can be an actual user

Too generic

Yet another…

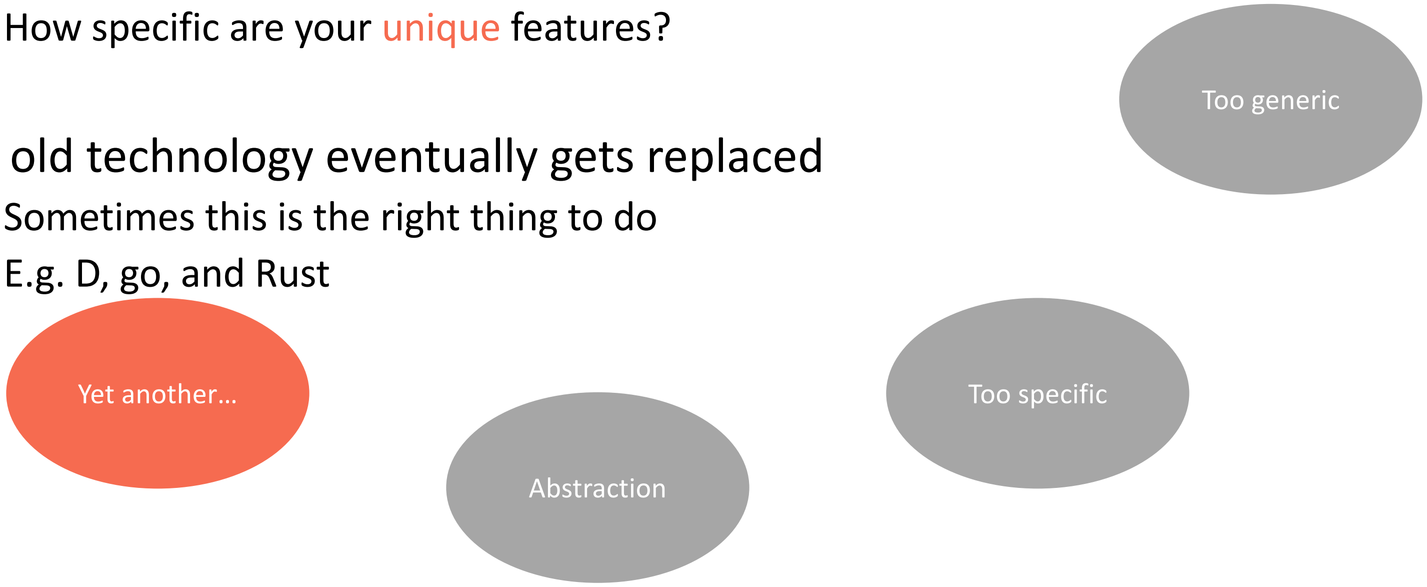
Abstraction

Too specific

Working without a user

- Doing the same thing as someone else better
  - Why not extend / improve the original project?
  - How specific are your unique features?

- But old technology eventually gets replaced
  - Sometimes this is the right thing to do
  - E.g. D, go, and Rust



Too generic

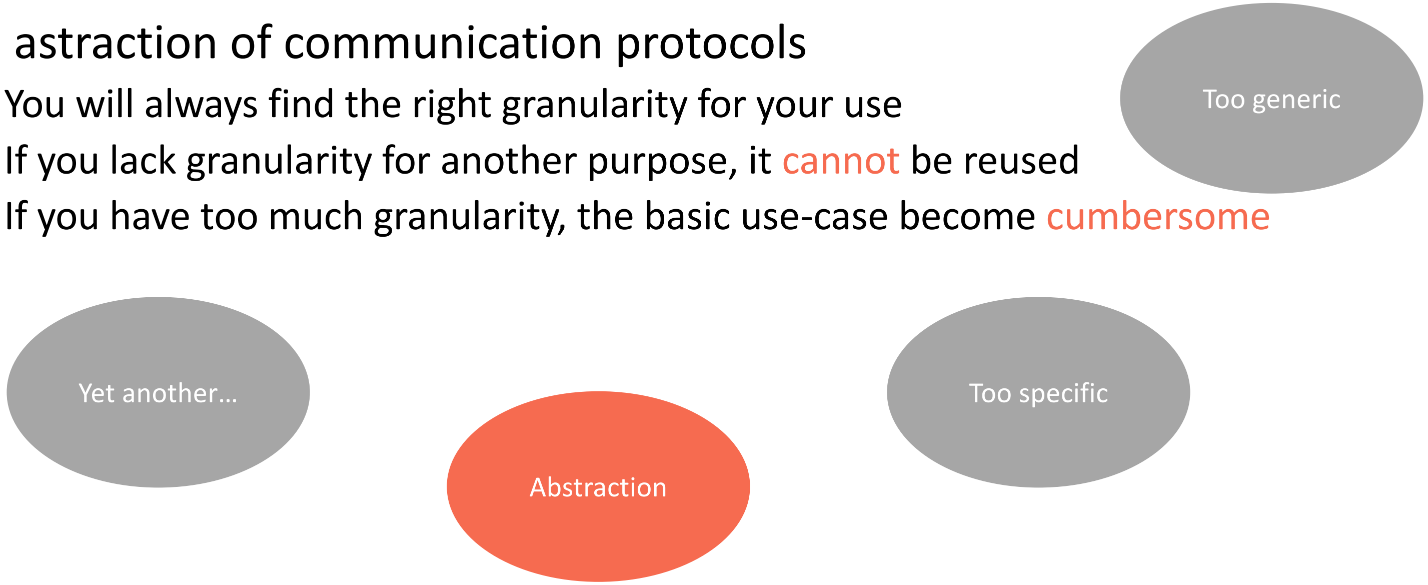
Yet another…

Abstraction

Too specific

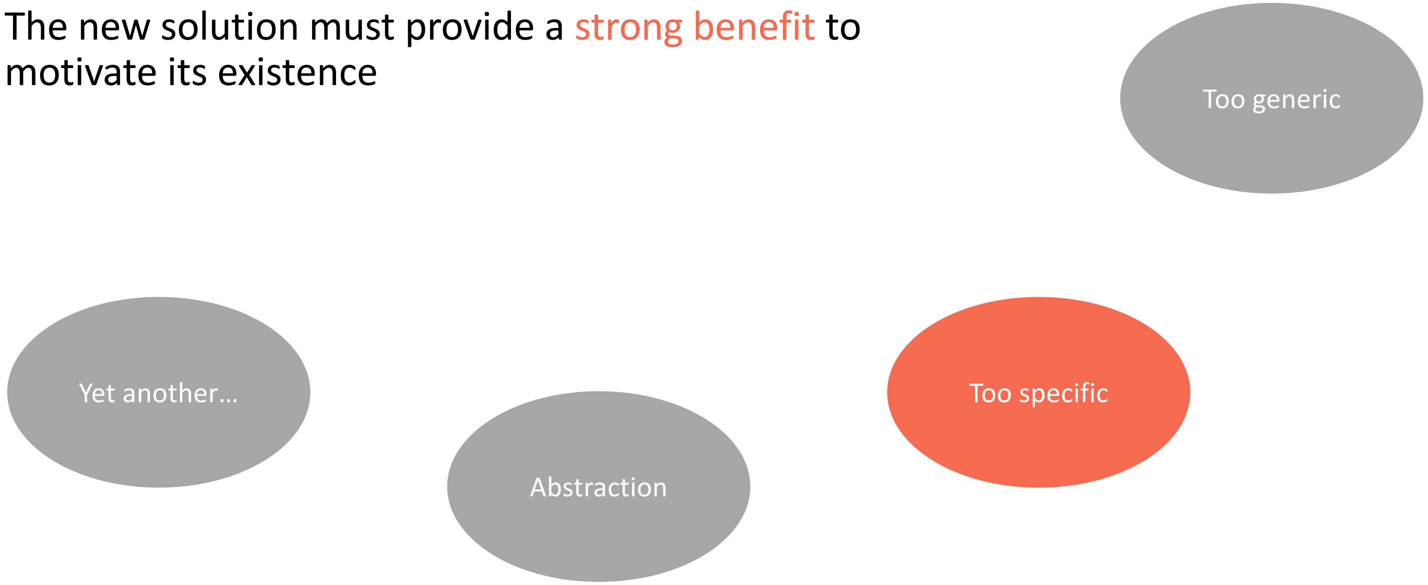
Working without a user

- Abstraction is hard to sell
  - Abstraction always lose granularity
- E.g. astraction of communication protocols
  - You will always find the right granularity for your use
  - If you lack granularity for another purpose, it cannot be reused
  - If you have too much granularity, the basic use-case become cumbersome



Working without a user

- Solving an extremely specific problem or having an extremely specific unique feature limits the outreach
  - The new solution must provide a strong benefit to motivate its existence



Too generic

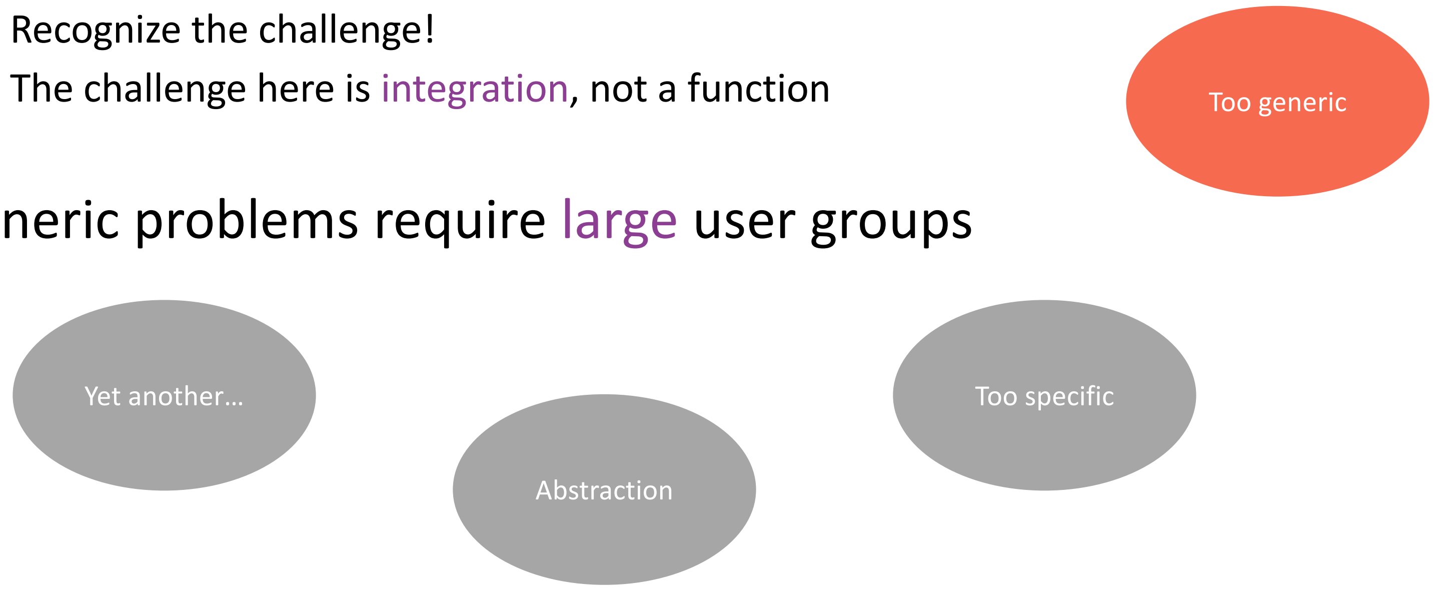
Yet another…

Abstraction

Too specific

Working without a user

- Solving a very generic problem is also hard
  - Yet another Linux desktop distro, anyone?
  - Recognize the challenge!
  - The challenge here is integration, not a function
- Generic problems require large user groups



Too generic

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Working without a user - Actions

- Ensure that the problem you solve is generic and specific
- Ensure that it is being used
- Ensure that alternatives need to be replaced

Being Unreachable

- I do this with qmlbook.org –no time to be responsive :-(

- How can you make sure that users and contributors can find you and communicate with you?

Expecting to be found

Not answering

Too many channels

Can you see the bugs?

Being Unreachable

- It takes time to support users and contributors
- You must allocate this time and allow for it to take time
- Not answering is the best way to make users and contributors to go away

Expecting to be found

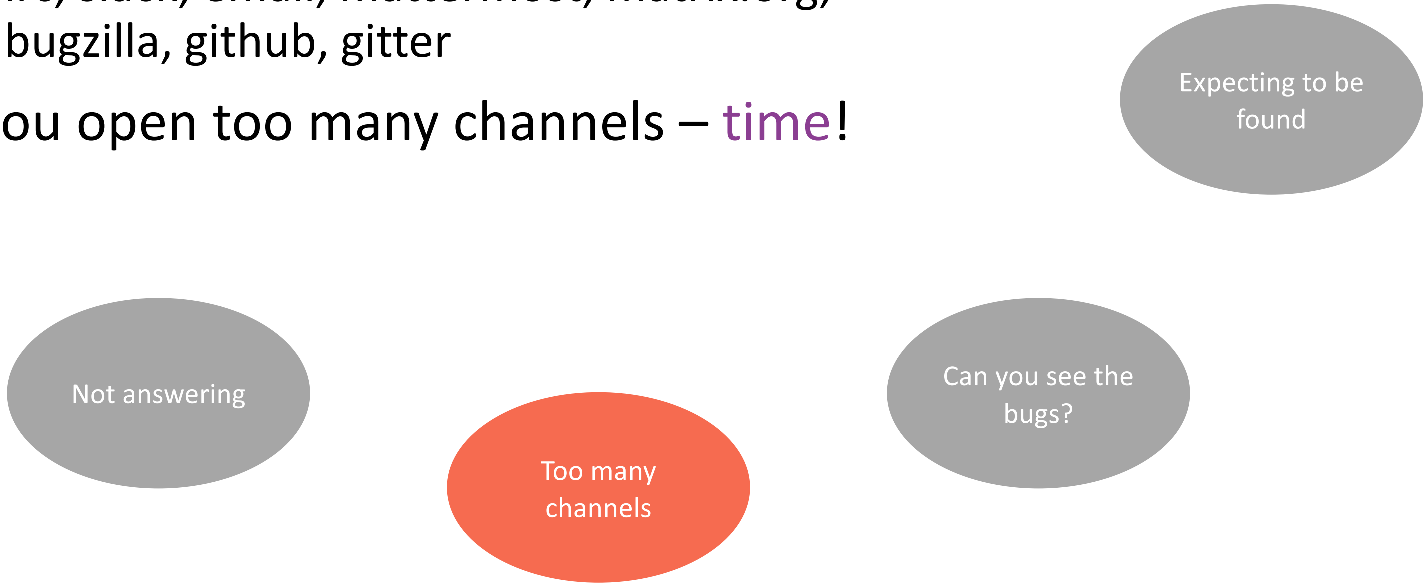
Not answering

Can you see the bugs?

Too many channels

Being Unreachable

- Make it clear how you want to be reached?
  - irc, slack, email, mattermost, matrix.org, bugzilla, github, gitter
- If you open too many channels – time!



Expecting to be found

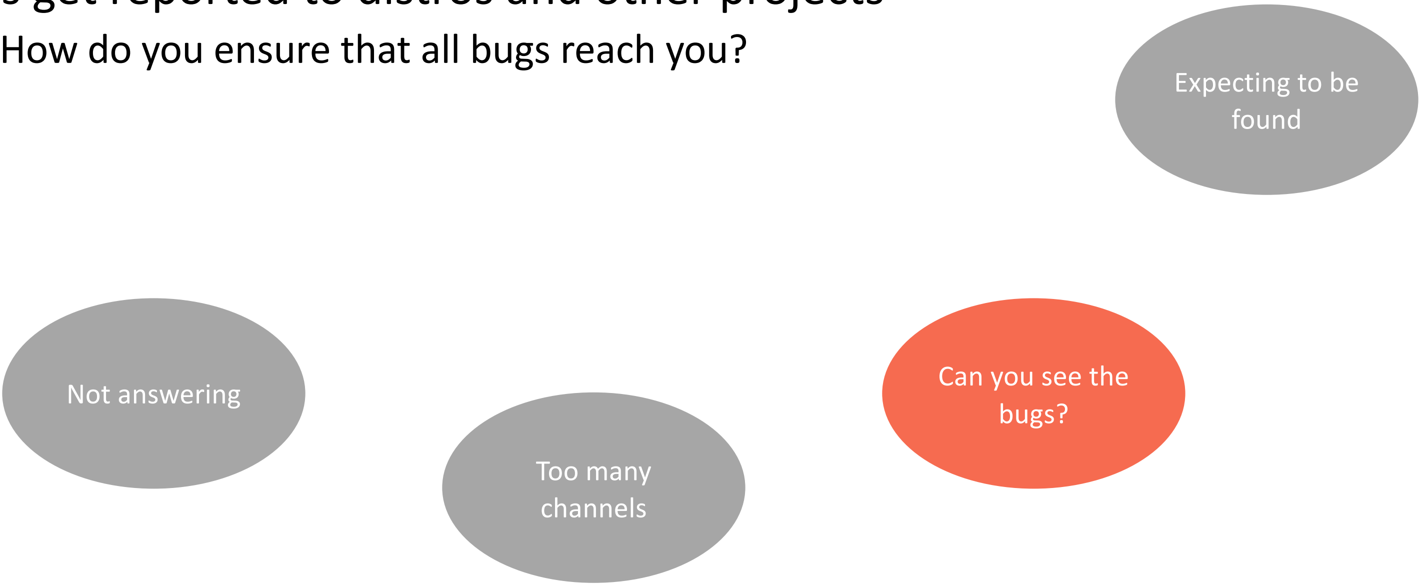
Not answering

Too many channels

Can you see the bugs?

Being Unreachable

- This is a community problem
- Bugs get reported to distros and other projects
  - How do you ensure that all bugs reach you?



Expecting to be found

Not answering

Too many channels

Can you see the bugs?

Being Unreachable

- Creating a web site and waiting around will not work
  - Conferences
  - Forums
  - Blogs, vlogs, podcasts
- You must work to be seen – this takes time too

Expecting to be found

Not answering

Too many channels

Can you see the bugs?

Being Unreachable - Actions

- Be visible in the right places

- Make sure that everyone knows how to contact you
- Take time to answer
- Be smart with your time – answer in wiki / forum

- Ensure that bugs are reported to your issue tracker
  - Work with users and packagers

Planning Paralysis

- Open Source is about code!

- Consortia driving specifications does not mean that code get written…
- …and paying someone to write the does not mean that it will be maintained

- Contributors are not staff, and planning is personal

Design by Committee

Roadmapping others

Planning Paralysis - Actions

- A roadmap is a backlog
  - Priorities, not a time-line
  - Should communicate a goal and a strategy

- Discuss concrete code, not specs
  - View ”The Art of the Pull Request”
  - https://foss-north.se/2018/speakers-and-talks.html#padams

- Do not plan other people’s time

Licenses

- Licensing is hard

- Combining protection with openess

License changes

Too strict

Too open

CLAs?

Licenses

- What are you building?
  - A tool?
    - Strong copy-left ensure to get modifications back
  - A library?
    - How can the user base be maximized?
  - An example?
    - Ensure that it can be used
  - A service?
    - What do you want back from a hoster?

License changes

Too strict

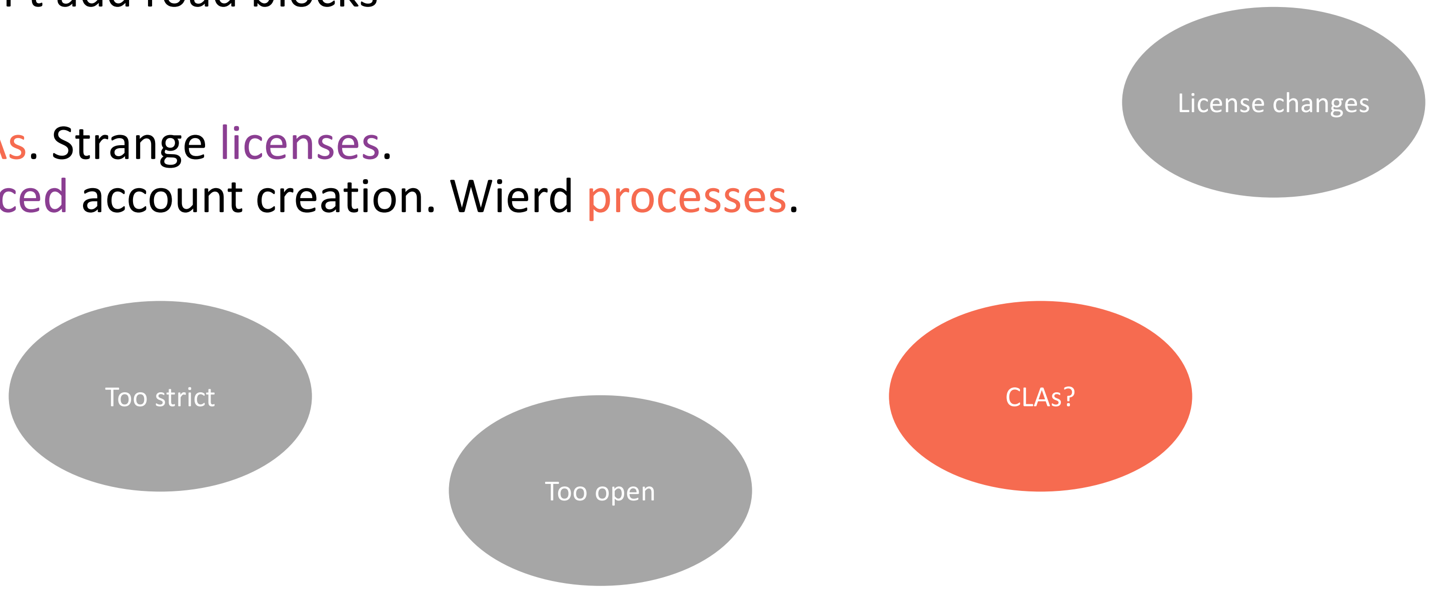
Too open

CLAs?

Licenses

- It is hard to find contributors
- Don’t add road blocks

- CLAs. Strange licenses.
  Forced account creation. Wierd processes.


License changes

Too strict

Too open

CLAs?

Licenses

- Changing the license is a mess
  - Rewriting parts in a clean environment
  - Impacting users
  - Alienating contributors

License changes

- Example: beware of the +
  - GPLv2+ compared to GPLv2 – who decides?

Too strict

Too open

CLAs?

Licenses - Actions

- Think about licensing options
  - What do you want to achieve?
  - Think forward – how can you avoid a future license change

- Don’t make it hard to contribute
  - Stick to standard licenses
  - Stick to standard processes
  - Avoid road blocks

Hidden Agenda

- Do you want to monetize?
  - How? By whom?
- Do you take project decisions based on external factors?
  - A paying customer pushing you in a strange direction?
- Do you block contributions due to hidden reasons?

Commercial Setup

Who is in control?

Hidden Agenda - Actions

- Be clear and transparent
  - Does someone pay for the development?
  - How and why?

- How are decisions made?
  - By whom?
  - Who can be included?

What did we Learn?

- What are you creating and why?
- How do you want to be found?
- How do you want to be reached?
- Share your goals and strategy
- Think about licensing. What do you want to achieve?
- Be clear about your goals and intentions

- Write code!

KURO

STUDIO