Facilitating Contexts for Open Innovation in Open Source Software
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Data Collection
- New feature requests were analyzed over several months.
- WIKI entries and IRC and mailing-list communications were analyzed over time, to permit enculturation in community practices.
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five community members who were well-indoctrinated into community practice around the new feature request process.

Findings
- There were three ways new feature requests could be introduced, contract development through a software service company, direct code contribution implementing the feature or direct request to the community. (See Fig. 1.)
- When an institution cannot develop the feature on their own and wishes to contract out, there is a complicated process of networking to build support and to pool funds if needed.
- While there appears to be a philosophy of wanting ideas to bubble-up from the community - which would be aided by community member feedback – this does not appear to occur frequently. Difficulty in maintaining user awareness may contribute to this lack, as may a lack of incentives to provide feedback on issues that don’t affect the community member’s institution.

Implications
Three aspects of a technology-enabled participation architecture were identified that appear core to meaningful involvement in open innovation:
- The linkage between idea submission and community influence (such as the ability to mobilize funding to implement a new feature).
- The ability to present and to represent innovation ideas so they are visible across the community.
- The ability to maintain awareness of innovative ideas in order to obtain feedback necessary for idea co-creation.

Future Work
This is the first stage of a multi-site study to explore how technology-mediated participation architectures shape community interactions and mindfulness across innovation communities. The objective is to understand how we may design participation architectures that encourage meaningful user participation!

References

Advisor: Dr. Susan Gasson