

## Proposal of Research Ideas about Open Source Software

### *Topic 1: Companies and „their“ Communities*

This area of research investigates the Open Source Software environment out of the perspective of software companies publishing and maintaining Open Source projects. Examples of formerly proprietary software are Mozilla released by Netscape, Eclipse by IBM and OpenOffice.org and OpenSolaris released by Sun Microsystems. Large Open Source projects initiated by companies like the MySQL database by MySQL AB, Ubuntu by Canonical, Fedora by Red Hat and many other Linux distributions are another group of possible research objects. Long examined 2003 the differences between community and company initiated Open Source projects.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Possible research questions:**

- What are the strategic reasons/intentions of companies releasing and maintaining Open Source projects?
- How should companies publish/release formerly proprietary software code as new Open Source projects?
- What are the differences between releasing a formerly proprietary software vs. initiating a new Open Source project?
- How should the company interact/collaborate with voluntary contributors in Open Source communities?
- What are the mayor/possible errors in communication/interaction with the community?
- How can they control the development of the software into a certain direction?
- What are the effects of Google's Summer of Code and other bounty systems?<sup>2</sup>

#### **Possible methodology:**

- Analysing companies that released an Open Source project at least one year ago
- Analyse organisational structure, Open Source Software business model, profit figures, image of the company, job attraction, project structure, joining script etc.

### *Topic 2: Voluntary vs. paid work*

This field of research analyses the effects of voluntary work in an Open Source project and investigates the edge of this non-compensated work. The goal should be to lay a theoretical groundwork for topic 1.

#### **Possible research questions:**

- What kind of activities are accomplished on the long term by voluntary work of people?
- What kind of work must be financially compensated when they should be performed in high quality?
- What are the causes and effects of the so-called “voluntary fatigue?”
- What are successful incentive systems so important but unattractive tasks get accomplished?
- What role should software companies take to support the development process?

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Long: “How Firm Initiation and Control of Projects Affects Open-Source Development”, May 12, 2003; Harvard College, Cambridge, MA; <http://opensource.mit.edu/papers/long.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gnome.org/bounties/> <http://code.google.com/summerofcode.html>