Empirics of the Bazaar: Discussion

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Five Years Ago-

◆ Halloween documents

- – Leaked from Microsoft
- – Posted on Eric Raymond's website

◆ "Since money is often not the (primary) motivation behind open-source software, understanding of the threat posed requires a deep understanding of the process and motivation of open-source development teams...."

And here we are...

The Empirics of F/OSS

◆ Despite ESR's evocative name, F/OSS is NOT a Bazaar!

◆ Bazaars have transactions.

◆ Even if agents can "run a tab", ie, have credit, there is still settling up.

So What Is F/OSS? Three Views

◆ **Von Hippel**
  – F/OSS is a user network

◆ **Hann et.al.**
  – F/OSS is a professional "school"

◆ **Ghosh**
  – F/OSS is a "cooking pot" economy
  – Possibly a "different way" of writing software

Von Hippel

"Horizontal, distributed innovation networks containing user participants only *can be fully functional.*"

Evidence:

◆ Existence of other user networks: lots

◆ Conditions satisfied in F/OSS? Yes

◆ Gap in argument: What if users compete with one another?

Hann, Roberts, Slaughter, Fielding

"Greater open source participation… as measured by contributions, does not lead to wage increases. Higher status …within the Apache Project does lead to significantly higher wages."

Claim: Spencian Signal, NOT Human Capital

Very appealing claim, must examine it carefully…

Hann, et al, continued

Evidence:

- ◆ Survey, Fitted wage equation (Mincer)

Problems:

- ◆ Unrepresentative sample: 93 out of 137 respondents are NEW to Apache Project

- ◆ Distributions of key variables are left-censored and HIGHLY skewed, there are OUTLIERS
  - – Need non-parametric tests and graphs

- ◆ Spence: "It is not necessary to insist that the actor… think of himself as signaling or conveying information." Yes, but… need mechanism!

Ghosh

Look to the code… it is the only record of "transactions" in the F/OSS "cooking pot" economy.

◆ Overview of tools under construction and problems arising along the way.

◆ Very ambitious project, great promise.
◆ Stay tuned for results!

Conclusion: Where is the money?

From these papers:

- ◆ F/OSS is probably both of the following:
  - – User network (Von Hippel)
  - – Professional "school"/Source of training& reputation & credentials (Hann et al)
- ◆ F/OSS may be a different (better?) way to design complex systems/write code
  - – In general, today large codebases are NOT VERY modular
  - – Because of code-mixing incentives of incumbents vs. enforced decentralization of open source, F/OSS may be "More Modular"
  - – More modular = More improveable = More valuable