

---

# Penguin in a new suit: a tale of how *de novo* entrants emerged to harness free and open source software communities

---

Linus Dahlander

---

A growing body of literature has explored the motivations for individuals to take part in free and open source software (FOSS), yet how firms participate is largely an unattended research area. Building on information from an extensive dataset of secondary sources and 30 in-depth interviews, I show that *de novo* entrants have emerged in conjunction with a changing institutional infrastructure and a more pragmatic attitude toward firms that focus on technological benefits rather than ideology. To understand how these firms try to harness the work of these communities, I use the empirical data to derive a 2\*2 matrix of different approaches. The X axis reflects whether or not the firms initiated a new community or relied on communities founded by peers, whereas the Y axis represents the degree of participation of the firm in the community. This taxonomy illustrates how *de novo* entrant are initiating new forms of communities or joining communities established by peers. This suggests that while many of the central pillars of FOSS remains, *de novo* entrants have emerged to find new ways of making business resulting in various implications for firm strategies and knowledge disclosure.

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

To understand the organizational principles of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS), scholars interested in the subject repeatedly make analogies with Robert K. Merton's notion of the ethos of science (Bezroukov, 1999; Kelty, 2001; Kogut and Metiu, 2001; Dalle and Jullien, 2003; Weber, 2004). Merton argued that science develops 'commons', or resource pools, that exhibit the characteristics of public

---

<sup>1</sup>Henrik Bruun, Helena Buhr, Elad Harison, Vincent Mangematin, Maureen McKelvey, Francesco Rullani, Ammon Salter, Ralph Schroeder and two anonymous referees provided invaluable comments and suggestions on earlier drafts. All errors and omissions are, of course, my own.