

Corporate involvement and social responsibility
in OSS projects and communities

*Results of
three studies*

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Description

In 2006, the journal MIS Quarterly published the article "The Transformation of Open Source Software" by Brian Fitzgerald, in which he "contend[s] that **the open source software phenomenon has metamorphosed into a more mainstream and commercially viable form**, which [he] label[s] as OSS 2.0" and that **there will be challenges in "achieving balance between value-for-money versus acceptable community values"** in OSS 2.0.

This article was the basis of Josianne Marsan's doctoral thesis defended in 2010 at HEC Montréal. Since then, Josianne has co-initiated the SECOHealth research project on the health of OSS ecosystems. She has involved her doctoral student Patrick Marois, whose thesis is rooted in SECOHealth and reveals that corporate involvement in OSS projects and communities can undermine their health and that corporations have a social responsibility towards that.

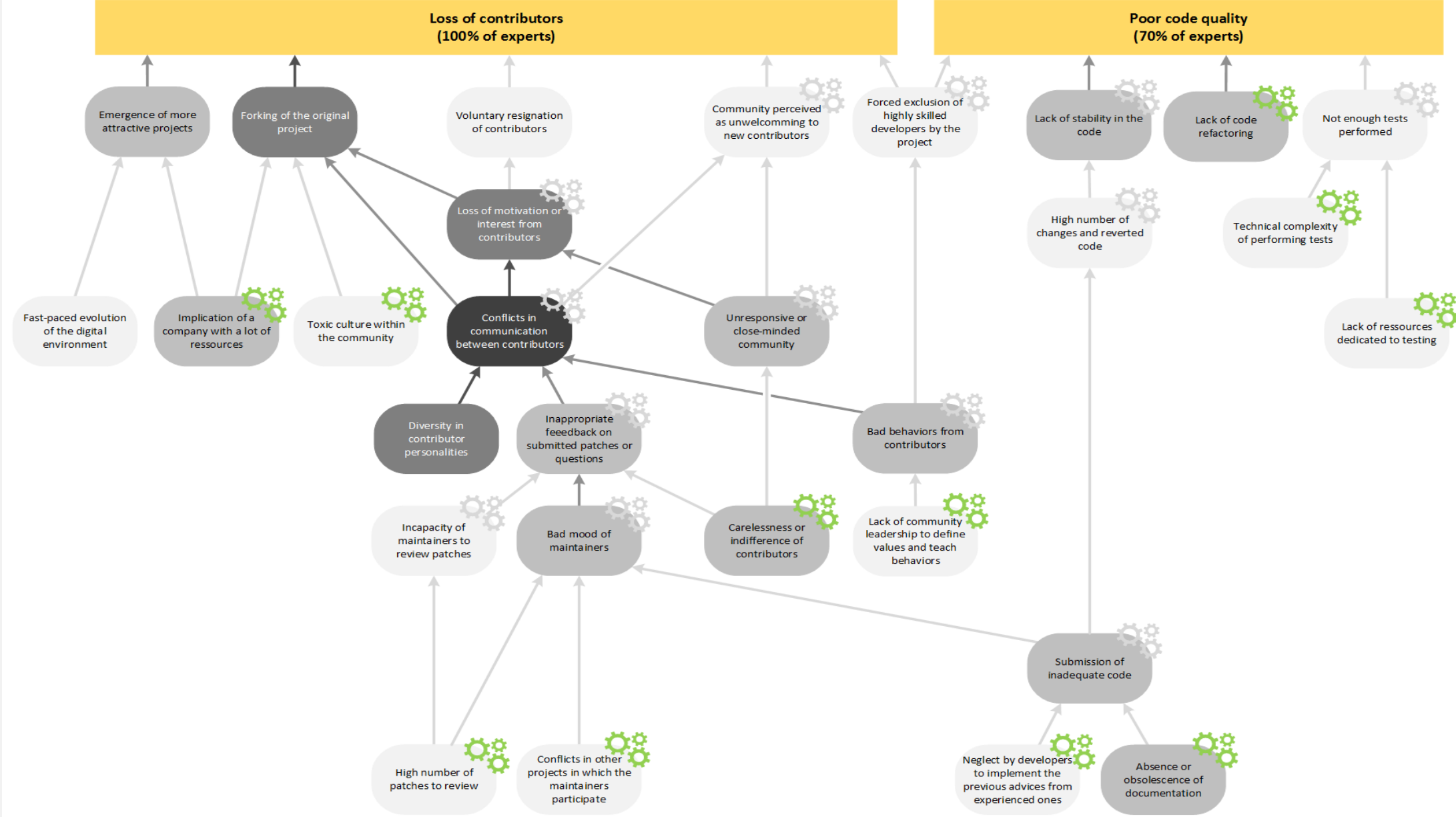
Josianne and Patrick will present the main results obtained within this thesis nearing completion at FSA ULaval, the Business School of Université Laval.

Research question of Study 1 (SECOHealth)

In collaboration with Mathieu Templier, Bram Adams, Kevin Carillo, Georgia Mopenza

What are the most important **health problems** that OSS ecosystem involving several interrelated open source projects and communities encounter and what **causes** each of these problems?

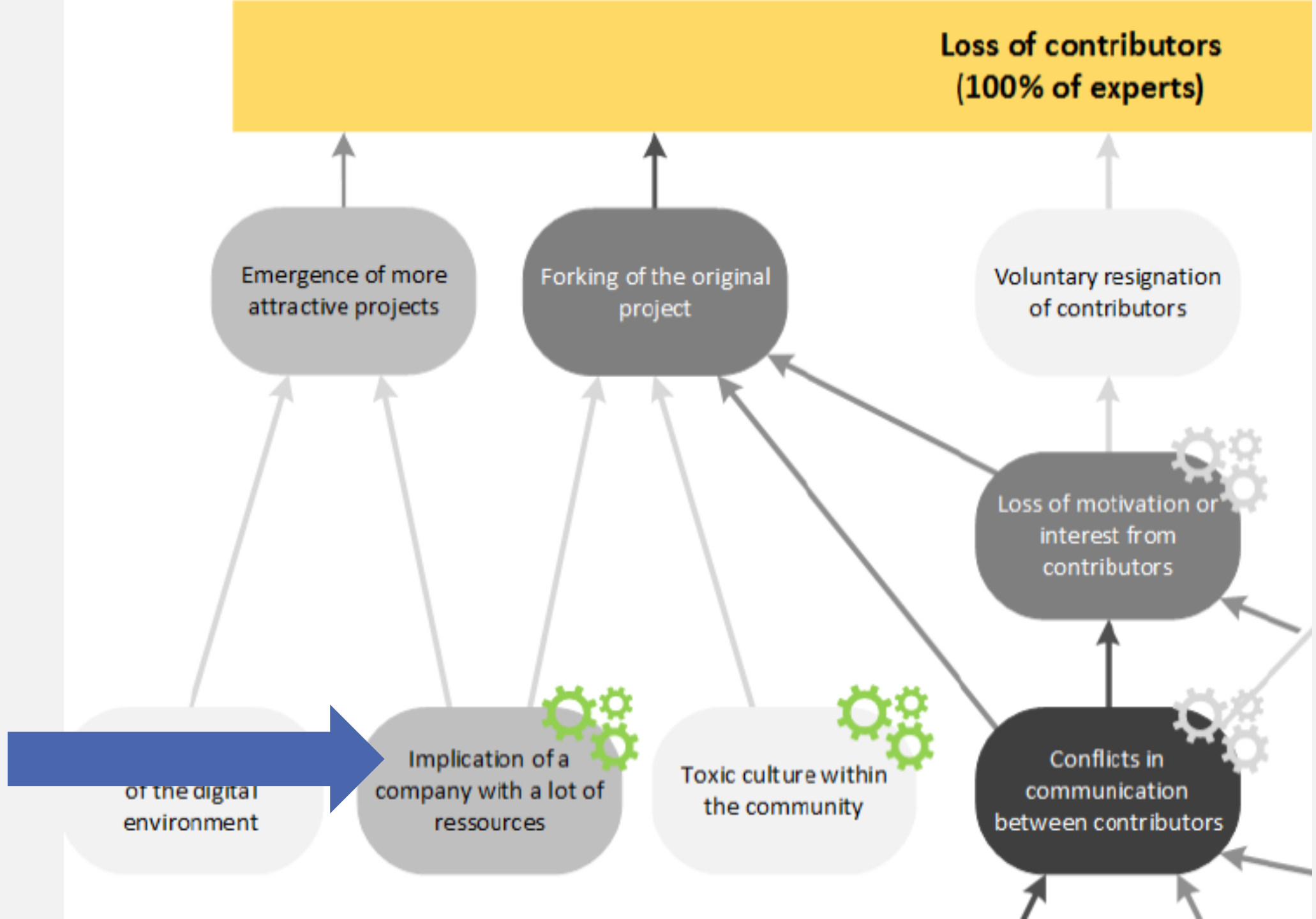
Results



LEGEND:

- Problem:** Yellow box
- Causal factor:** Rounded rectangle (shades of grey)
- Actionable causal factor:** Rounded rectangle with gear icon
- Actionable root cause:** Rounded rectangle with gear icon
- Causal link:** Arrow
- Percentage of experts affected:**
 - <25% of experts: Lightest grey
 - 25-49% of experts: Light grey
 - 50-75% of experts: Medium grey
 - ≥75% of experts: Darkest grey

Results



Companies' involvement in OSS communities

High degree

6

Companies becoming members of OSS communities (creating codes, supporting the community, co-managing the community)

5

Companies participating in OSS projects led by a community (creating codes, supporting the project)

4

Companies leading OSS projects (managing the project, creating codes, supporting the project)

3

Companies combining proprietary software with OSS

2

Companies as "community customers" using the OSS and sometimes also supporting the community with money

1

Companies imitating and translating ideas from OSS communities (duplicating incentives, knowledge-sharing within the firm, user-involvement)

Low degree

Research question of Study 2 (in progress)

How the collaborative relationship between companies involved in OSS projects and communities can go from "harmonious" to "conflictual" to the point of having a negative impact on the projects or communities ?

Results (preliminary)

The company is very involved in the development of the code but **stops contributing to or maintaining the code** at some point, not having any more interest in it. The company **creates a situation of weakness the community of volunteers** that no longer receive contributions from the company.

The company is involved in the development of the code and, for its growth needs, **hires voluntary contributors from the community, one by one**. At the end, the company comes to **exploit the community of volunteers until its final extinction**.

The company, led by its economic needs, **wants to take control of the open source project** and bring it in a direction where the community does not agree. The volunteer community resists the influence from the company and **both end up competing for available resources**.

Research objective of Study 3 (in progress)

Given that the collaborative relationship between companies involved in OSS projects and communities can go from "harmonious" to "conflictual" to the point of having a negative impact on the projects or communities, we suggest that **companies have a responsibility towards OSS projects and communities they are involved in, particularly at Levels 5 and 6.**

We suggest to add a new stakeholder in the conceptualization of Corporate Digital Responsibility (CDR): OSS communities.

Special thanks to...

- Participants in studies 1 and 2: open source developers, maintainers, non-coding contributors and community managers
- Linux Foundation : for helping to access the participants
- SECOHealth project members (<https://secohealth.github.io/>)
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**Thank you for
your attention**

