

A complex network diagram with various colored nodes (red, blue, green, purple, grey) and connecting lines, set against a light grey background. The nodes vary in size and are interconnected in a dense, web-like structure.

Chaos or CHAOSS :

What we hear from the CHAOSS Community

by Georg Link & Kevin Lumbard

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About the Interviews



38 Interviews

If you are in the audience, you know who you are, we thank you!



Disclaimer



The statements in this presentation are not endorsed by CHAOSS. We synthesized sentiment that we heard from many people. Not everyone will agree with every statement. The presentation of findings is a starting point for discussion, not a conclusion.

Consider how the statements resonate with you and engage in the ongoing conversations.



How are people using metrics? (1/3)



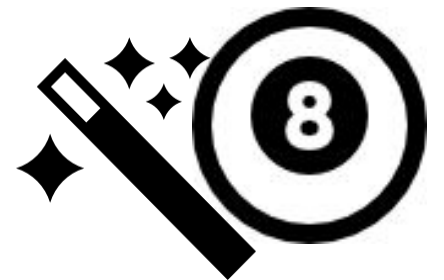
We just started discussing metrics

“[Using metrics] makes it sound like we have everything we need and are measuring right now. No, what I am doing is building a process with goals for establishing a baseline that will allow us to become more efficient.”

We use metrics based on available tools

“My approach has always been to figure out what metrics I can count, and then see what questions I can come up with based on those. I realized recently that's totally backwards.”

“We're using metrics that are tied to the tools we're using. Numbers of activity in Gerrit, for example.”



How are people using metrics? (2/3)



We try to signal value and influence decisions

“We’re looking at the value of the project to the company, because we take a utilitarian view of open source projects. We need to invest our time and energy into those projects that are most valuable to the company.”

We evaluate organizational diversity through private lists

“We have a secret sauce list. The project leader, who prepares these statistics, has a secret list of people who he knows works for [our company] but who do not use their [company] email address in our community.”

We infer quality of a project from the quality of its documentation

“If it’s an established project and they don’t have very good documentation, it’s a bit of a red flag. It doesn’t seem like they care about anybody else other than the people who are already in the know.”



How are people using metrics? (3/3)

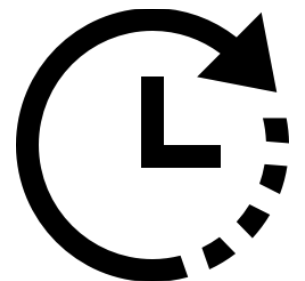


We want to know changes of project health over time

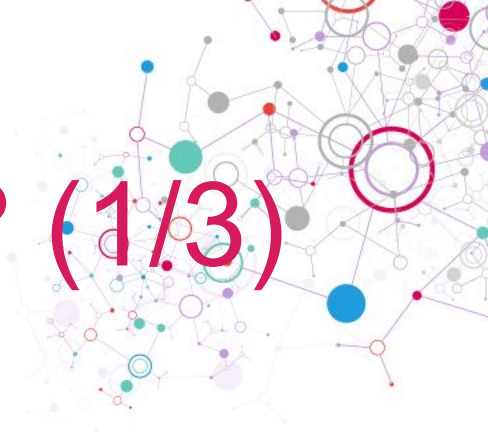
“We are looking at trends. For example, we have six months release cycles, and we are also trying to track how a release cycle went, and where things changed within those six months, and then also where things changed from release cycle to release cycle.”

We don't know how to use metrics

“I would love to know what to do with all of this information, in order to answer the questions I'm asked. ”



How do people want to use metrics? (1/3)



We want people in open source to easily know the health of a project

“We have a very quickly growing open source world that is growing faster than we can feed it talented, experienced people. Give somebody who came to open source in the last few years the ability to make sophisticated analytical decisions and we’re going to see real change.”

We want metrics and visualizations off the shelf ready to use

“Putting the data together and doing the visualization varies from project to project. Projects have limited resources and limited skill sets.”

We want a rigorous method that is defensible against other metrics approaches

“I believe that we should leverage the academic folks involved in CHAOSS to come up with something with rigor so that anybody who wants to come up with another method has to put the same level of rigor in.”



How do people want to use metrics? (2/3)



We want to compare archetypical communities using standardized metrics

“I believe it is extraordinarily important for CHAOSS to define a set of criteria by which you can compare communities. I think that CHAOSS should pick something so that we don't have to have an argument about a lot of picking.”

We want to combine metrics to create key performance indicators

“I would try and come up with metrics that may combine multiple KPIs but provide something that in the end is simple and can speak for itself.”

We want a need-driven process in which we choose metric according to our need

“It all comes down to defining metrics without prejudice about whether you have the tools. You want to figure out what information it is that you need first and then you can worry about how you're gonna get that information. If it becomes: ‘Oh, we want this metric but we don't have tools that do it so we shouldn't include it’, then you run into issues where you're defined by your tools rather than your needs.”



How do people want to use metrics? (3/3)



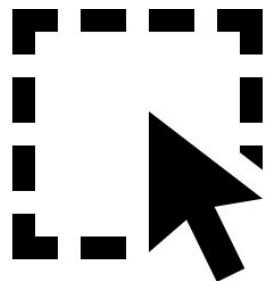
We need help choosing what metrics are relevant to our projects

“If a metric is relevant to a community, what is the right way to measure it? It would be great to see case studies of different kinds of communities: ‘This community deliberately doesn't measure downloads, or deliberately doesn't measure this other metric, or this is how community X or Community Y was able to report on itself.’”

We need help with the interpretive step of figuring out how to respond to metrics

“I don't think we reached the point where we have good practices, norms, and tools for doing interpretation. Possibly because we don't have the right metrics collected in a way that matters. “

“I would like to see suggestions about how you should interpret metrics in different situations. There's no way the CHAOSS project can cover all different situations, but it can cover some of the common ones and suggest what your next steps might be or what you should consider or what projects you're comparable to. For a given category or type of project, what is the most useful way to interpret a metric of a certain type.”



Points of Concern (1/3)



We are concerned that no one will use CHAOSS metrics

“My concern would be that you put these metrics out there and nobody uses them. We are asking people who have been managing communities for some time, to start measuring their own work and their own effectiveness. That's a lofty goal and it's a very positive goal, but it's also asking them to do more work.”

We are concerned that the definition of metrics might end up too academic

“I hope when we get these metrics, that they're not going to be so academically oriented that the information can't easily be disseminated to a larger community. I don't want metrics hyper specialized where it takes me an hour to explain why this metric is good for you.”

We are concerned that tools are too complicated

“Training on software is key. It's often underestimated in open source. In open source, developers think if the software is fantastic people should be happy to use it, even if they're not being trained. That's not true because normal people don't give a damn about software.”



Points of Concern (2/3)

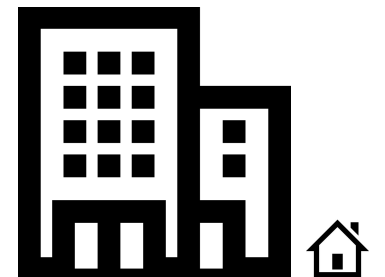


We are concerned about deanonymizing individuals

“We need to be very careful about making sure that if we do have identity built into our metrics that we don't expose people accidentally or that we don't make it a tool for someone that allows doxing. There's a lot of risk in it and I think that there's a great burden on us to figure that out right and not fail to learn.”

We are concerned that smaller communities might be disadvantaged

“I'm worried that, if [CHAOSS] would put numbers for different communities on the same dashboard, that would encourage people to compare those numbers. I really wouldn't want us to be responsible for smaller communities dying because their numbers were just smaller.”



Points of Concern (3/3)



We are concerned about different interpretations and no shared meaning

“My other concern is how health is defined in metrics? If we're talking about 'health', the definition is going to change in every context by everyone who uses that word.”

We are concerned that metrics will be gamed or misrepresent

“I work in a corporate environment with managers who look at numbers, then pick three and decide to make those numbers as big as possible for their companies. That results in really unhealthy behavior and really unhealthy decisions. Such numbers in sales pitches to customers have obviously nothing to do with any sort of health-related questions.”



Food for Thought



Comparing metrics over time vs. comparing community health reports over time

Interpretive community health report as a knowledge base and community history

Contributor demographic diversity vs. corporate diversity

Stakeholders of metrics and their contexts

Question-driven vs. tool-driven metrics use



Call to Action



Join CHAOSS calls to make your voice heard in the discussion

Contact us if you want to anonymously contribute via an interview

CHAOSS



Thank you! Questions?



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