

Cardano project communications in the era of Intersect

This document aims to talk about some of the reasoning around various changes to project communications that we're trying to encourage as part of the move to Intersect. It's a pitch: I am writing this because I want you to change your behaviour and I have had similar conversations a few times, so I thought I should write it down.

What's the point?

There are a few goals we are aiming for here.

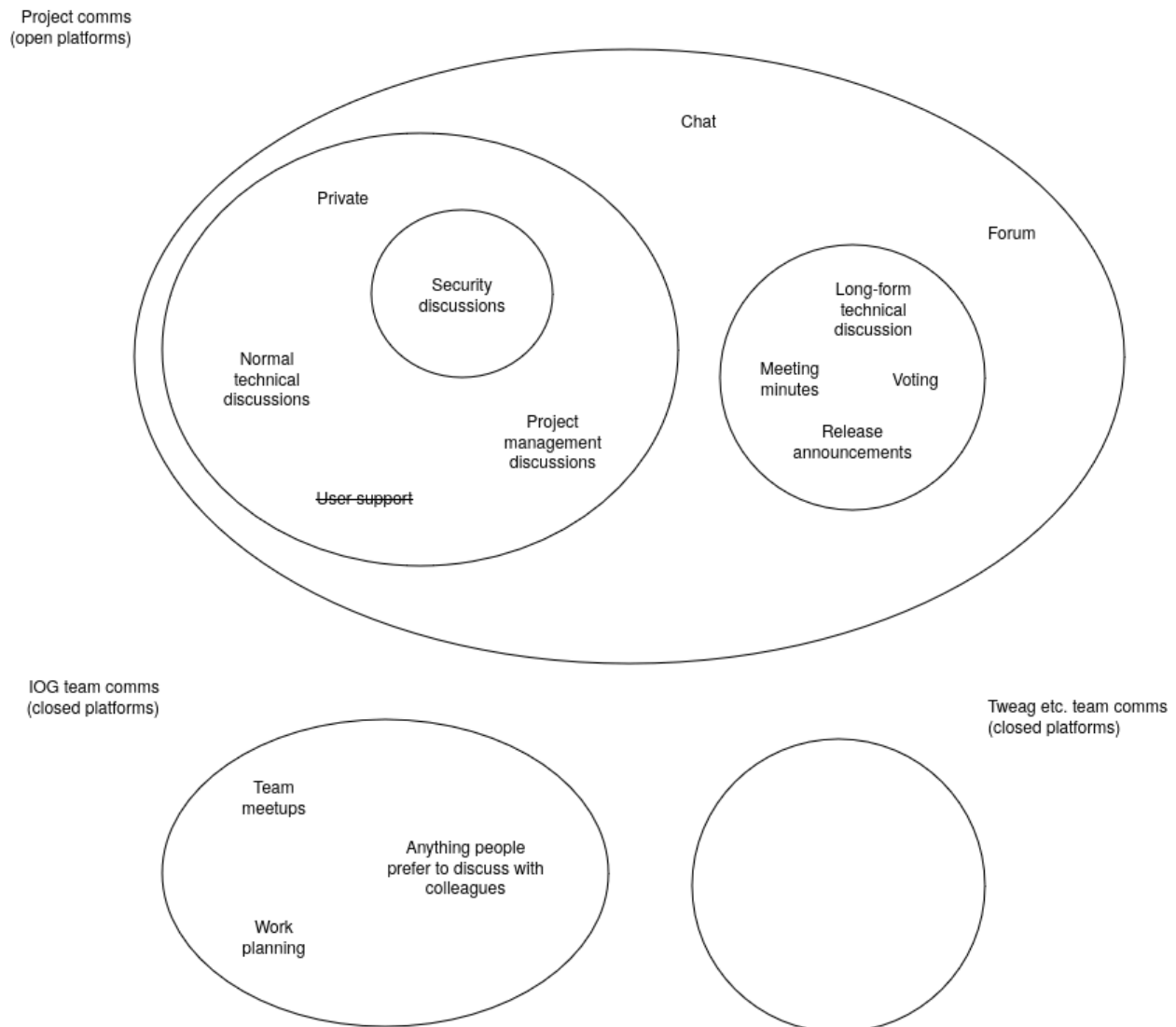
1. Intersect open-source projects should be as "normal" as possible.
 - a. "Normal" is obviously not well-defined and open-source projects are very diverse, but I think the "typical small-to-medium project hosted on github" has a somewhat consistent style
 - b. This is both so that we can learn from the (implicit) wisdom of what other people do, but also so that contributors to our projects have as familiar an experience as possible. This does matter: projects with unusual contribution workflows tend to be offputting.
 - c. This is quite a powerful and simple heuristic: when in doubt, do the normal ("normal") thing
 - d. It's also a general argument against doing something abnormal: if it's such a big problem, how does everyone else get away with doing it?
2. Intersect in general wants things to be very transparent
 - a. This is somewhat implied by the previous point, since open-source projects tend to be pretty open by default, but Intersect has extra incentive to do this because it is trying to position itself as a community project. Having work done in secret silos very much cuts against that.
 - b. We have been gradually moving in this direction over time. For example, we now do at least make CIPs for most of our design proposals, but still typically at a very late stage. We can expect more scrutiny - the best thing is IMO to embrace it.
3. We need to accommodate a future where we have multiple major corporate contributors to a project, each of which has a whole team working on it
 - a. We can't assume everything is going to be primarily IOG with some hangers-on
 - b. We need somewhere where all these people can talk
 - i. At the moment we basically just bridge everyone into the IOG slack!Somewhat presumptuous of us
4. We need to have a place for everything. At least:
 - a. Normal chat
 - b. Technical discussions (including long-form ones)
 - c. Security or otherwise sensitive discussions

- d. Corporate discussion that isn't relevant to the open project

I hope that these goals at least strike you as desirable. I think many of us do have some ideological or psychological attachment to the “normal” open-source way of doing things, the scary bit is that I am suggesting we do more of our work in this way.

What does this even look like?

Here's an attempt at a summary diagram:



In words:

- We have public, open channels associated with the project itself.

- This includes both a chat platform (currently proposing Matrix), and a forum-like platform (currently proposing Github Discussions) to enable both short- and long-form discussion
- We also have the capability for private communications on those platforms for sensitive topics
 - Matrix has private rooms, Github has security advisory discussions that are private
 - Details on the whole security thing very much TBD
- Project channels are for the contributors to the project primarily, they are not for supporting random users (unless that's something you want to do, or they're discovering helpful bugs)
 - Much like with having public issue tracking on Github, there is potentially a spam or nuisance problem, but we just need to tell people they're allowed to deal with them
 - We have moderation powers, we can use them
- Corporate teams working on the project are going to have their own internal comms for dealing primarily with company stuff
 - That is hopefully the eventual fate of our existing slack channels!
 - Ideally, everyone is happy with and wants to discuss project stuff in the open
 - BUT: team channels are not going away, if you don't feel comfortable talking in the open you don't have to. The more we do, the better our open community
- I left out issues since I think people are mostly already on board with an open-first approach to that

FAQ

- What if I just don't want to talk in public?
 - Then you don't have to. Or you can prioritise talking on topics that seem important. Or you can discuss things with your colleagues privately beforehand.
 - Thought experiment: would you feel like this about chatting in the chat channel for a normal open-source project?
 - Thought experiment: do you feel like this about commenting on public github issues?
- What if I find it weird having so many people listening to what I say?
 - Mostly they are not paying attention.
 - But you can also just not like it, see above.
- What if I say something dumb in public?
 - Probably nobody cares. You are not Linus Torvalds, whose out-there statements are interesting enough for people to write articles about.
 - But you can also just not like it, see above.
- What if I say something dumb in public and my employer gets angry with me?
 - We're going to have to sort this out with our respective employers, but we'll just have to hope they're sensible.

- If they say “you can’t communicate in the open project channels” that’s going to be a big problem for their ability to contribute to that project...
- What if I accidentally talk about something sensitive in public?
 - This is a risk! It’s one that most open-source projects with security-sensitive issues manage to navigate, so I believe we can do it too. Mostly it means being more aware, but also we can e.g. delete messages on Matrix and so on, which helps a bit if you say something you shouldn’t.