

Proactive Governance to Build Sustainable Open Source Projects

OSSummit NA in Minneapolis 2026

Dr. Dawn M. Foster

OSS Strategy consultant. CHAOSS & OpenUK Boards

<https://fastwonderblog.com/2025/12/03/good-governance-for-open-source-projects>

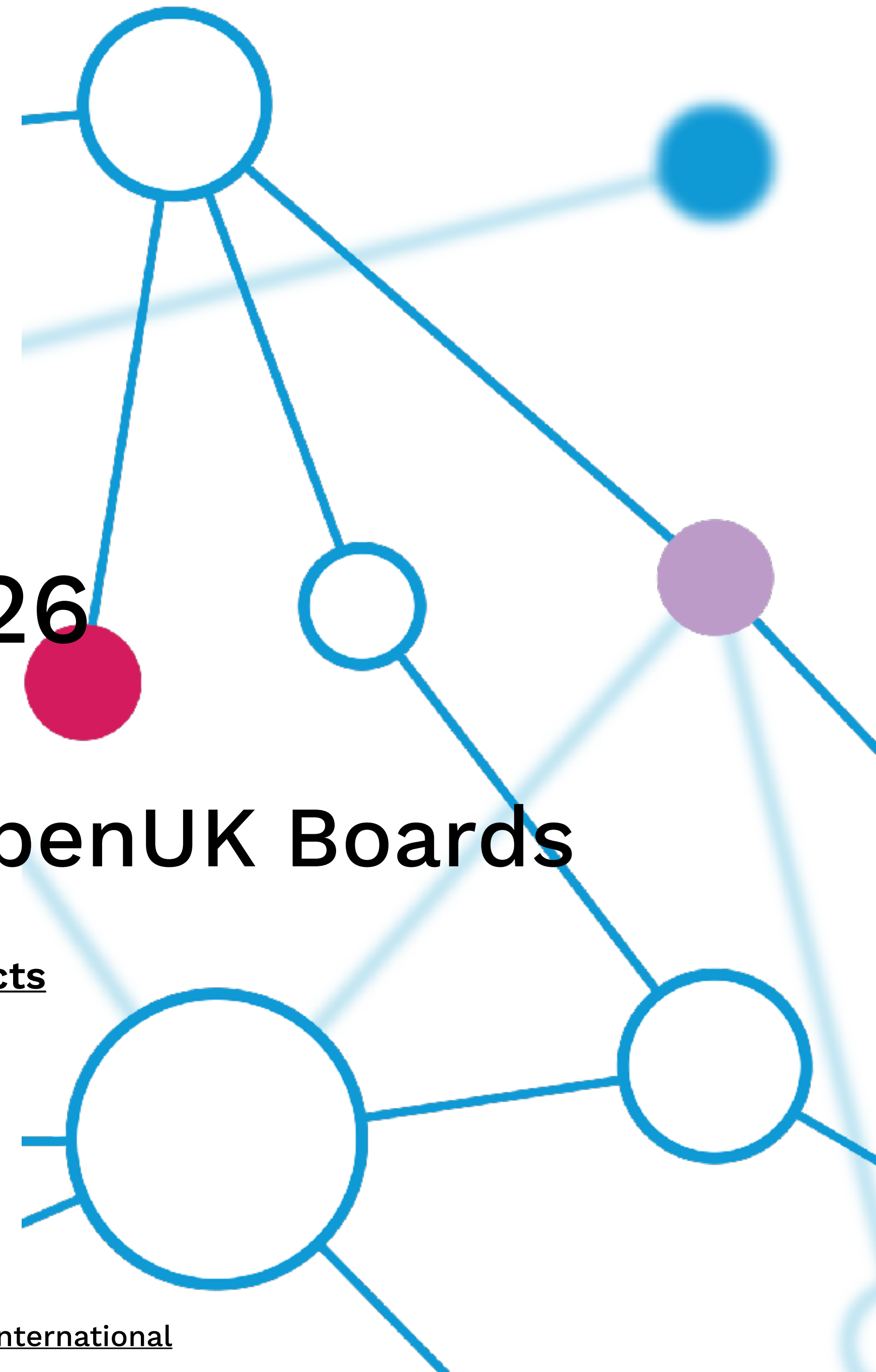
 <https://fastwonderblog.com/>

 <https://github.com/geekygirldawn>

 @geekygirldawn@hachyderm.io

 @geekygirldawn.bsky.social

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Agenda

- **Why governance?**
- **Defining governance**
- **Pathway to leadership**
- **Creating intentional culture**
- **Project ownership decisions**
- **Cautions and potential hazards**

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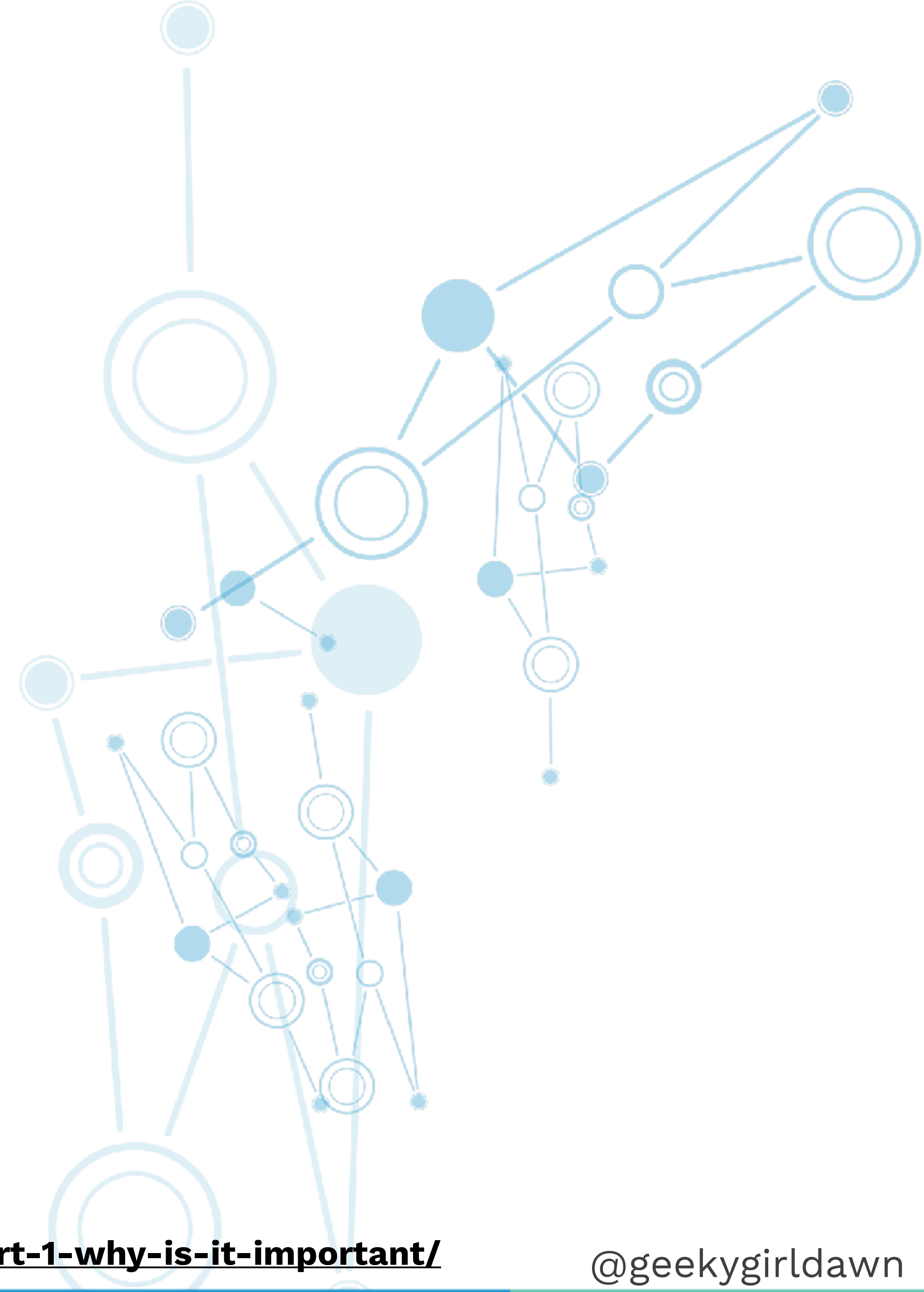
Whoami



- Geek, traveler, reader
- 30+ yr tech career focused on open source (VMware, Intel, Puppet, ...)
- Open Source Strategy Consultant
- OpenUK Board
- CHAOSS Board and WG lead
- Previous CNCF TAG Co-Chair
- PhD on Linux kernel collaboration

Photos by Mom, the Linux Foundation, and me

Why Governance?



Be Proactive

**Governance may
not seem important
until you really need it,
but then it's too late**



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About People

Defines how people
collaborate and
make decisions



Be Explicit

**Explicit, documented
governance increases
project viability**



Defining Governance



<https://fastwonderblog.com/2025/08/03/governance-part-2-defining-governance>

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Current Governance

Start by documenting your existing decision-making processes, leadership selection, and other elements of governance



Key Elements

- **Link to your Code of Conduct**
- **Leadership selection process**
- **Processes for removing people (voluntary and involuntary)**
- **Voting – actions that require a vote**

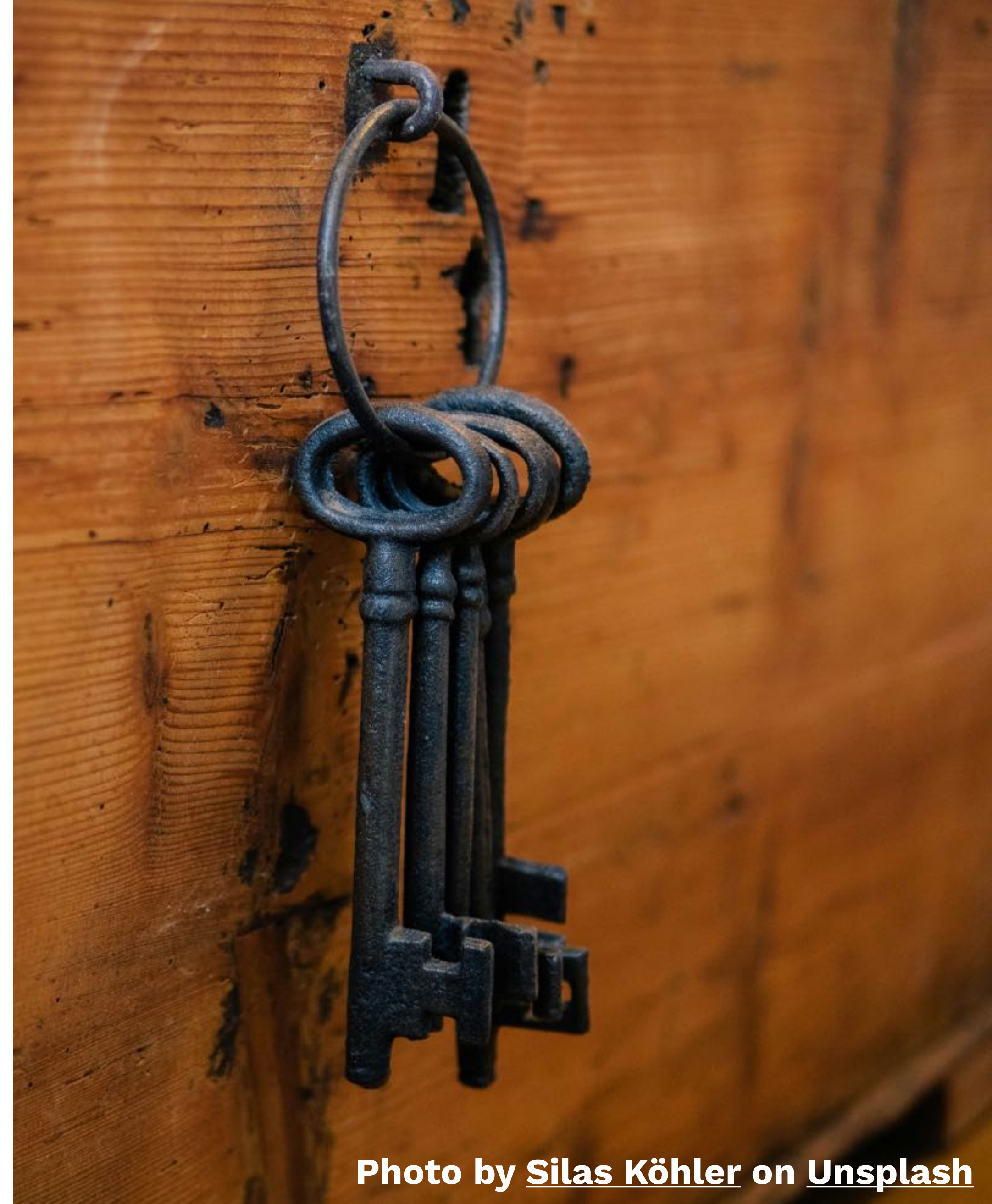


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Start Simple and Adapt

Start simple, but
evolve with your project
and adapt to
changing needs



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Pathway to Leadership



<https://fastwonderblog.com/2025/08/12/governance-part-3-new-contributors-and-pathways-to-leadership/>

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Contributor docs

Grow your contributor base
and scale your project
over time



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Leadership

**Contributors can
climb the ladder
into leadership**



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Emeritus

**Set your project
up for success
even when some
people leave**



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Creating Intentional Culture

<https://fastwonderblog.com/2025/08/19/governance-part-4-creating-intentional-culture>

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Inclusion

**Building a
welcoming, diverse,
and inclusive
community**



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Security

Process for
reporting and
responding to
security issues.



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Mission

Purpose, advantages,
and key features



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Scope

**Avoid misunderstandings
and set expectations**



Values / Principles

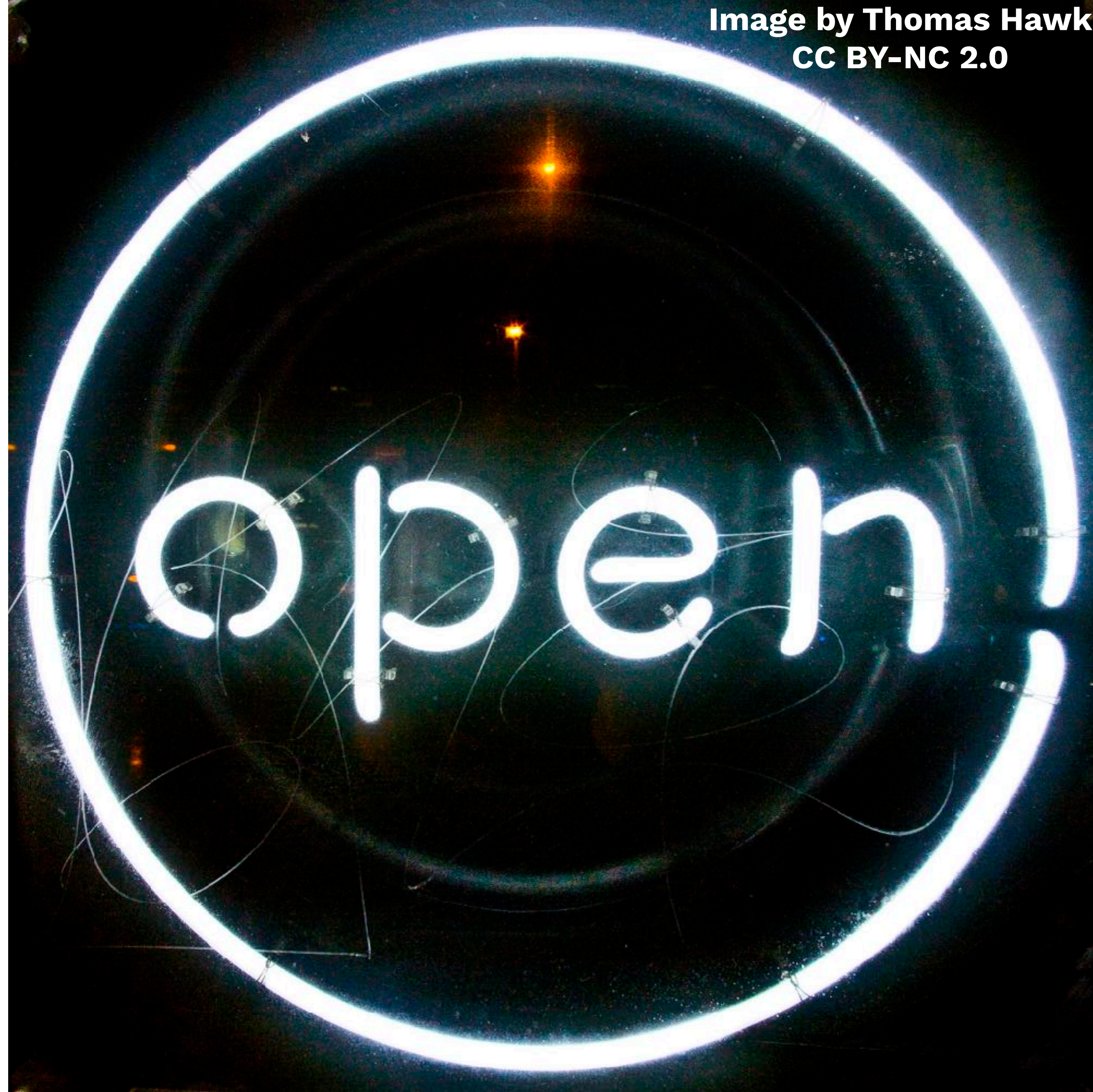
Openness

Fairness

Community over Company

Inclusivity

Culture of participation





Project Ownership Decisions

<https://fastwonderblog.com/2025/08/31/governance-part-5-overall-ownership-of-a-project/>

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Company Owned

Be honest and
realistic about
how people can
participate and
who can lead



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Foundations

Neutral foundations allow
collaboration as equals



Contributing to Foundations

Give up control for increased collaboration



Governance Evolves

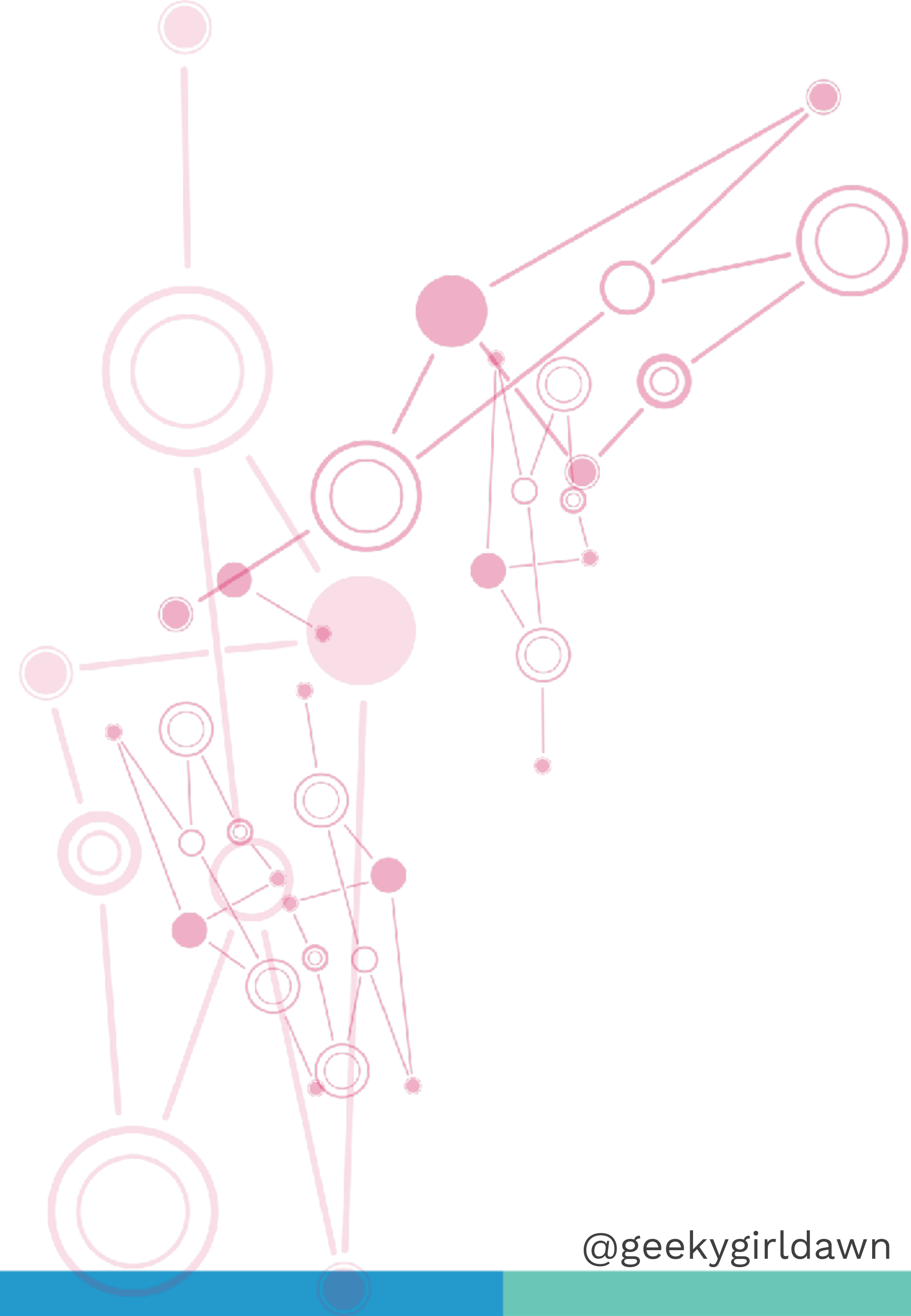
Never "done" and
can always
be improved



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Cautions and Potential Hazards



It's Hard

People have feelings
and change is hard,
especially for people
deeply invested in a project



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Expectation Setting

Role model good behavior
because tolerating
bad behavior
makes it seem acceptable



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Removal

Important to have a process
for removing people
(voluntary and involuntary)



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Final Thoughts

Take time now to work
on governance to set
your project up
for success

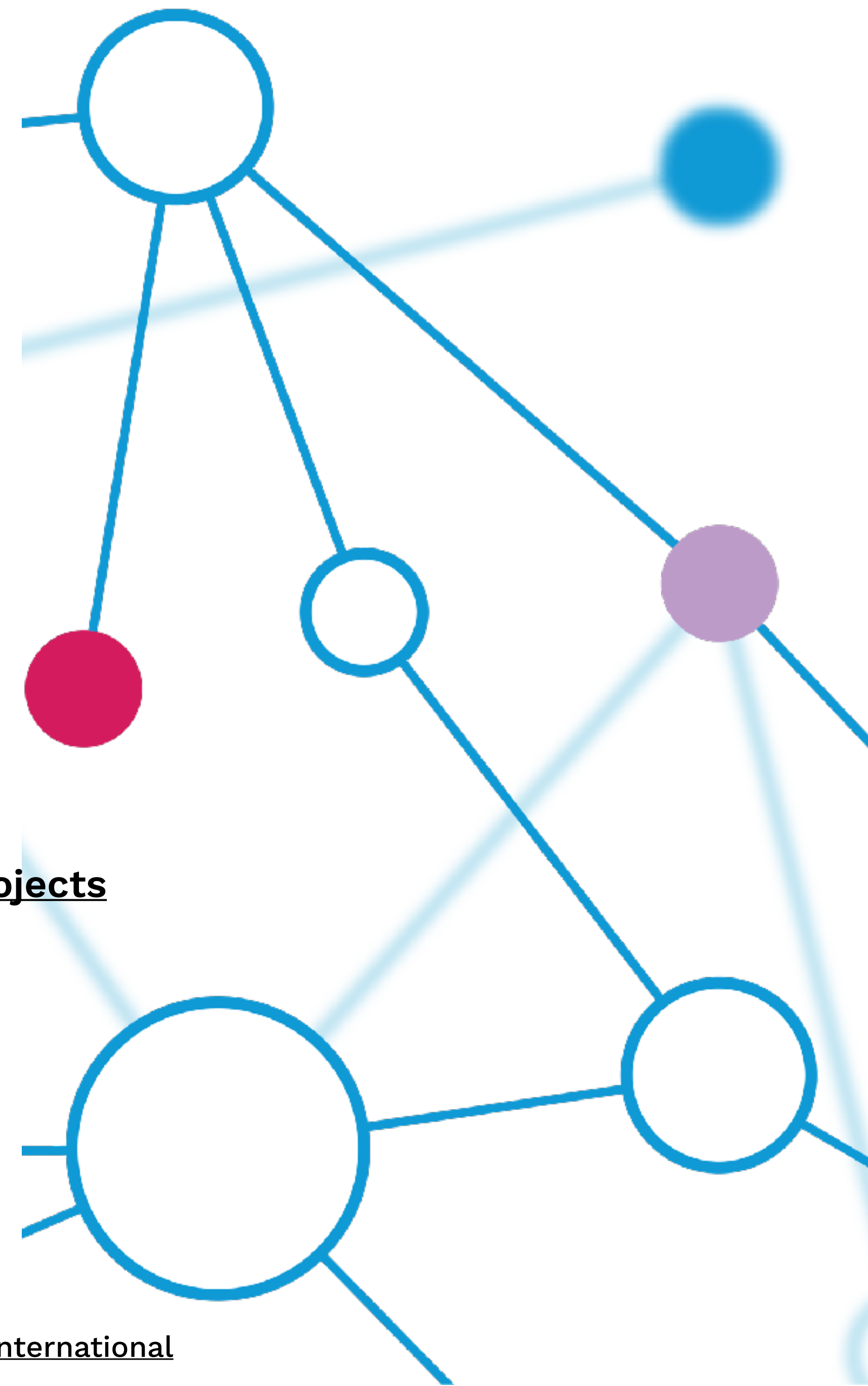


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THANK YOU!

Any Questions?



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-  [@geekygirl dawn.bsky.social](https://bsky.social/@geekygirl dawn)