

Source Available is
Thriving but Open
Source is Dying

Given the current conditions of today, many problems encountered by open source participants right now are being most aptly handled by **controlling interests** that:

- have become legible to corporations
- work on developing legibility towards nation states
- are developing resilience towards value capture by agents exercising soft and hard power
- and have remained culturally palpable to open source communities

(now before we get too far ahead of ourselves,
let's get some vocabulary straightened out)

Source Available,
Open Source,
Free / Libre, ...

What's the Difference?

(Disclaimer: I am ***briefly*** summarizing *decades* of debate and evolution)

Free / Libre Software

Fundamental freedoms

- 0. Execution of software
- 1. Modification and study of software
- 2. Redistribution of unmodified software
- 3. Distribution of modified software

Free / Libre Software

Software as a social and ethical
issue

Free / Libre Software

How humans learn

Open Source

Required license terms

1. Free Redistribution
2. Source Code
3. Derived Works
4. Integrity of The Author's Source Code
5. No Discrimination Against Persons or Groups
6. No Discrimination Against Fields of Endeavor
7. Distribution of License
8. License Must Not Be Specific to a Product
9. License Must Not Restrict Other Software
10. License Must Be Technology-Neutral

Open Source

Community / Public Good

Open Source

Pragmatic, not idealistic

Source Available

Freedoms

1. Viewing of software

Source Available

(Choose-your-own-adventure goes here)

Ethical Source

Principles of Ethical Source

1. Work benefits the commons.
2. Work is done in the open.
3. A community that strives to be welcoming and just.
4. Work respects accessibility as a human right.
5. Work prioritizes the safety of people.
6. Work protects privacy.
7. Work deserves support.
8. Work is volunteer-led and member-driven.

Looming Event Horizons

- Funding crisis
- Political turmoil
- Mounting pressure (regulation, security, ...)
- Community attacks (`xz-utils` was not an anomaly)

Why Does it Matter?

We're attempting to answer the question "how does collaboration work at scale?"

How Did We Get Here?

What do you mean we live in the real world?



If Open Source does not become sustainable, it will remain exploitable



If Open Source¹ does not become² sustainable³, it will remain⁴ exploitable⁵

1. Whatever we mean by that, I guess?
2. For some definition of "become", up to—and including—"MY project figured that out 25 years ago, pffh"
3. Not sure what sustainability means, either...
4. Remain? Says who?
5. Exploits are only exploits if they come from the threat model region of "I care about that," otherwise they're just sparkling code paths.go

Funding Crisis

ZIRP go ZIP

Crisis? Or bad
business model?

Freeloaders vs Freeloaders

Political Turmoil

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Ok but, that's not *my* problem,
right?

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Power & Capital

What Do We Do
About It?

Dirty Secret

Most open source problems
aren't (uniquely) open source
problems

Strategies

- Legibility
- Governance (including licensing)
- Policy
- Identity

Legibility

- For governments
- For corporations
- Make hidden costs visible
- Make support feel obvious

Governance

- Licensing that addresses "bad faith" and "violating social contract" shaped issues
- Structure project to prevent governance capture
- Experiment! Embed your values into your governance
- Rules of engagement

Policy

- Government oversight for necessary support
- Corporate rules of engagement for supply chain
- Curate your dependencies, your time, your energy, your ...

Identity

- Are you a cook or a chef?
- Project? Product? Community? Ecosystem?
- What are your problems?

It's not Hopeless,
it's just Dire

References and Resources

- <https://www.alilleybrinker.com/blog/open-source-software-and-corporate-influence/>
- <https://opensource.org/osd>
- <https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html>
- <https://ethicalsource.dev/what-we-believe/>
- <https://medium.com/@stephenrwalli/sustaining-open-source-software-4a62a4b6dof3>
- <https://www.cisa.gov/news-events/news/continued-progress-towards-secure-open-source-ecosystem>