Winners and Losers in FOSS

Open Source Has "Won" - Have We?

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Agenda

Today's topics are…

1. A(nother) quick history of FOSS
2. Are we building the same software?
3. The state of FOSS today
4. What do we do about it?

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Disclaimer

This talk does not seek to analyze the morality of who you work for

This talk does not seek to analyze the morality of technology companies of any kind

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FOSS

A Quick Timeline

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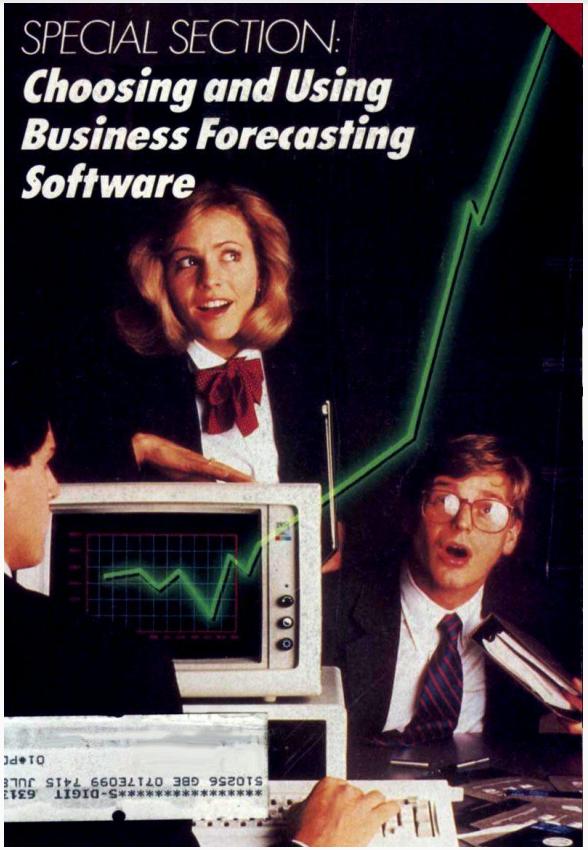
1970 - 2000



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Four Freedoms

1. The freedom to run the program as you wish, for any purpose (freedom 0).
2. The freedom to study how the program works, and change it so it does your computing as you wish (freedom 1). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.
3. The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help others (freedom 2).
4. The freedom to distribute copies of your modified versions to others (freedom 3). By doing this you can give the whole community a chance to benefit from your changes. Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

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1970 - 2000

“There are some new modern-day sort of communists [Free software activists] who want to get rid of the incentive for musicians and moviemakers and software makers under various guises. They don't think that those incentives should exist.”

- Bill Gates, News Corp Interview 2005

https://web.archive.org/web/20050106153433/http://news.com.com/2102-1041_3-5514121.html?tag=st.util.print

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1970 - 2000

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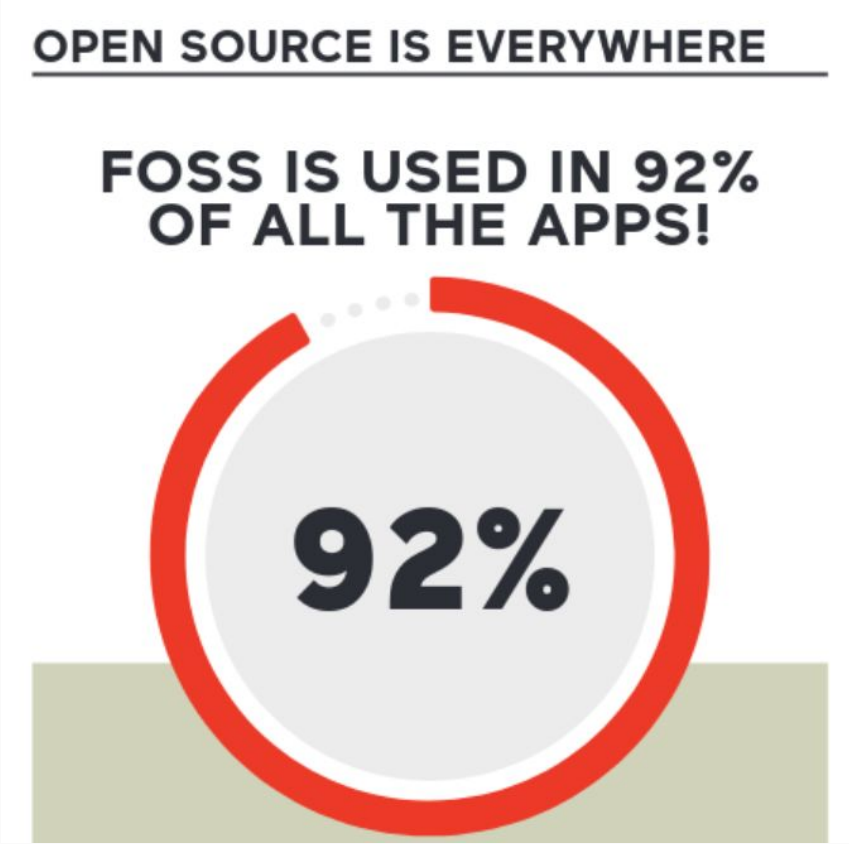
2000-Present

Graphs are thanks to: *The Coproduction of Open Source Software by Volunteers and Big Tech Firms* by The Digital Commons Policy Council

https://dcpc.info/



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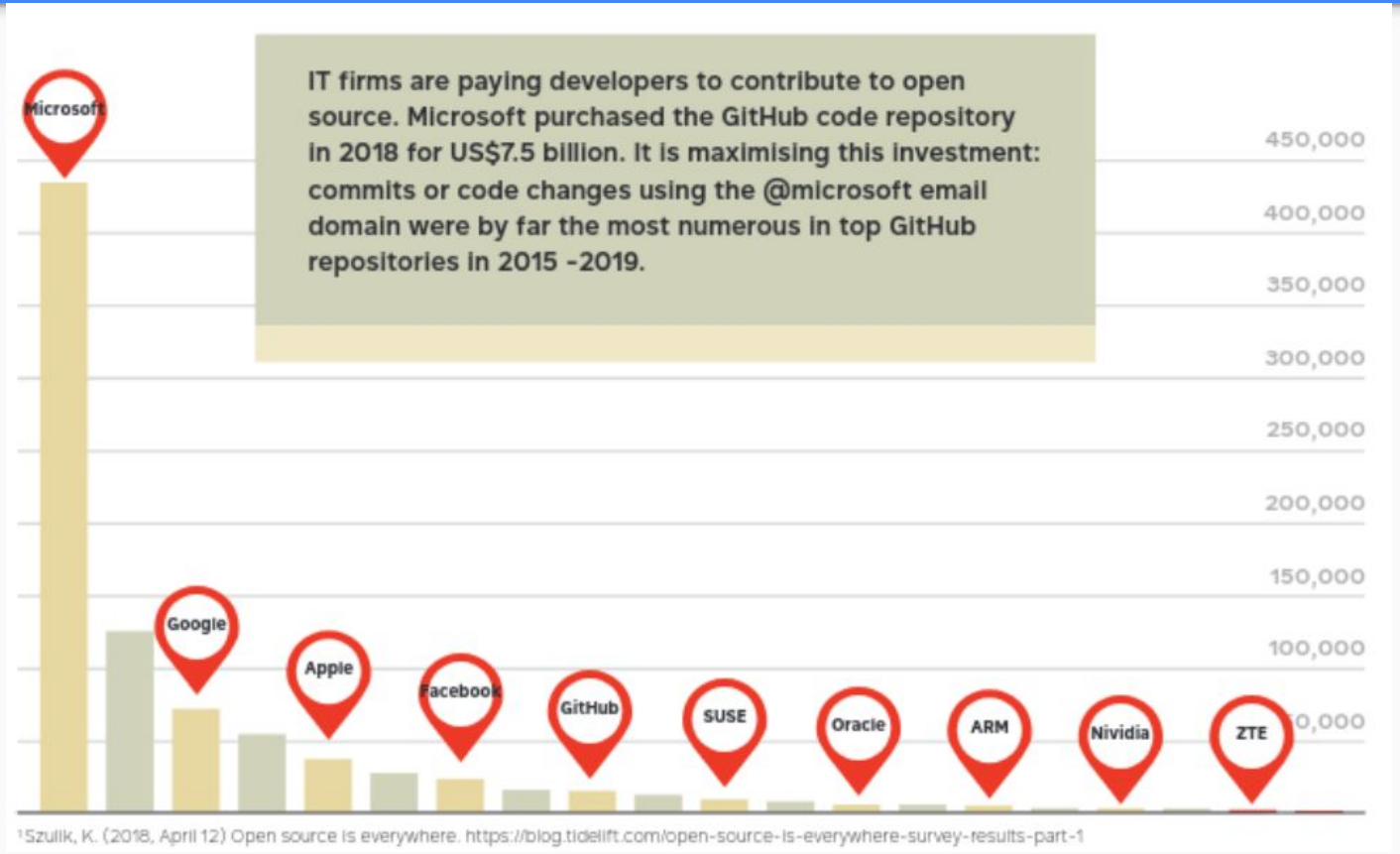
2000-Present



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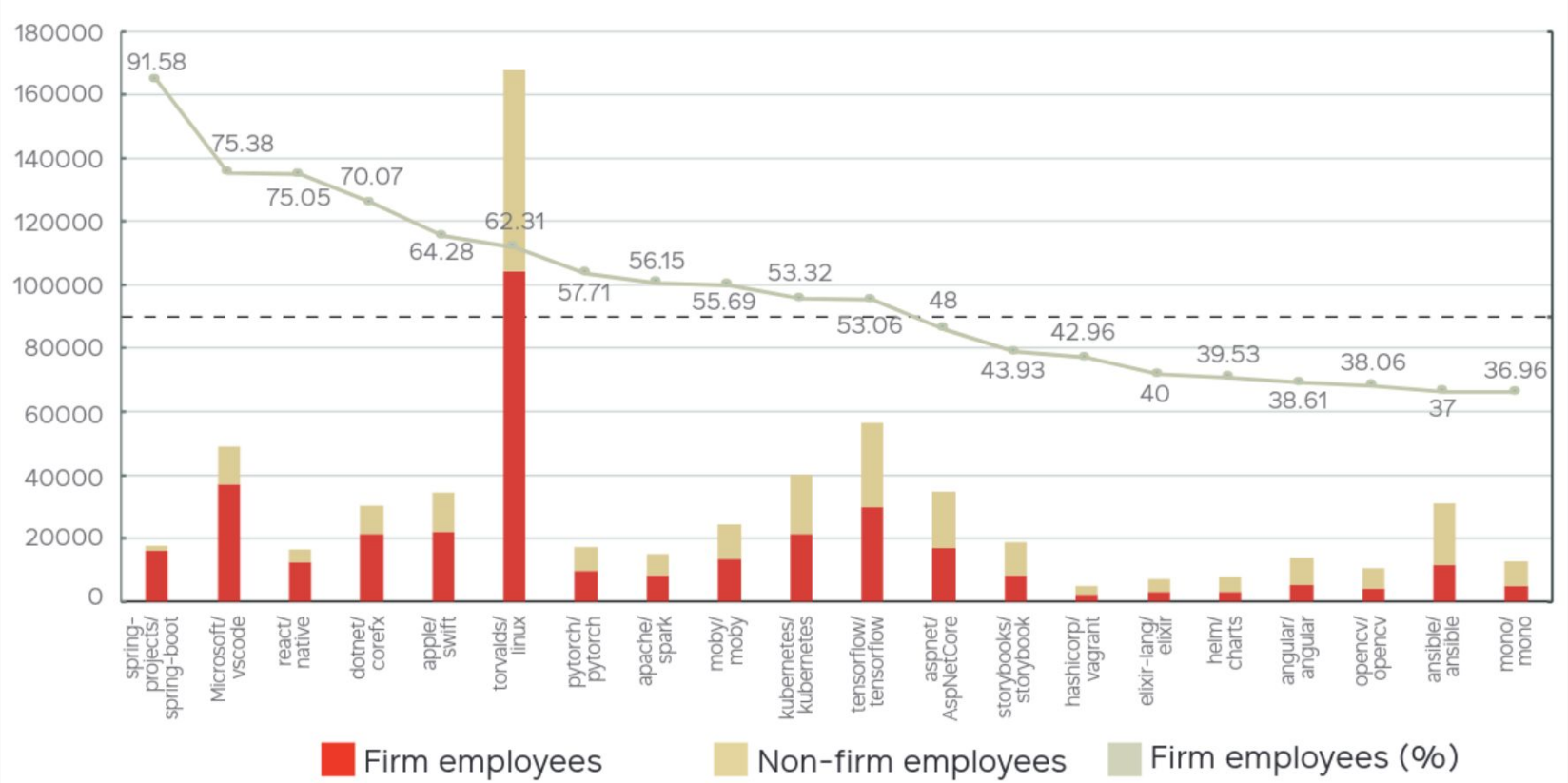
2000-Present



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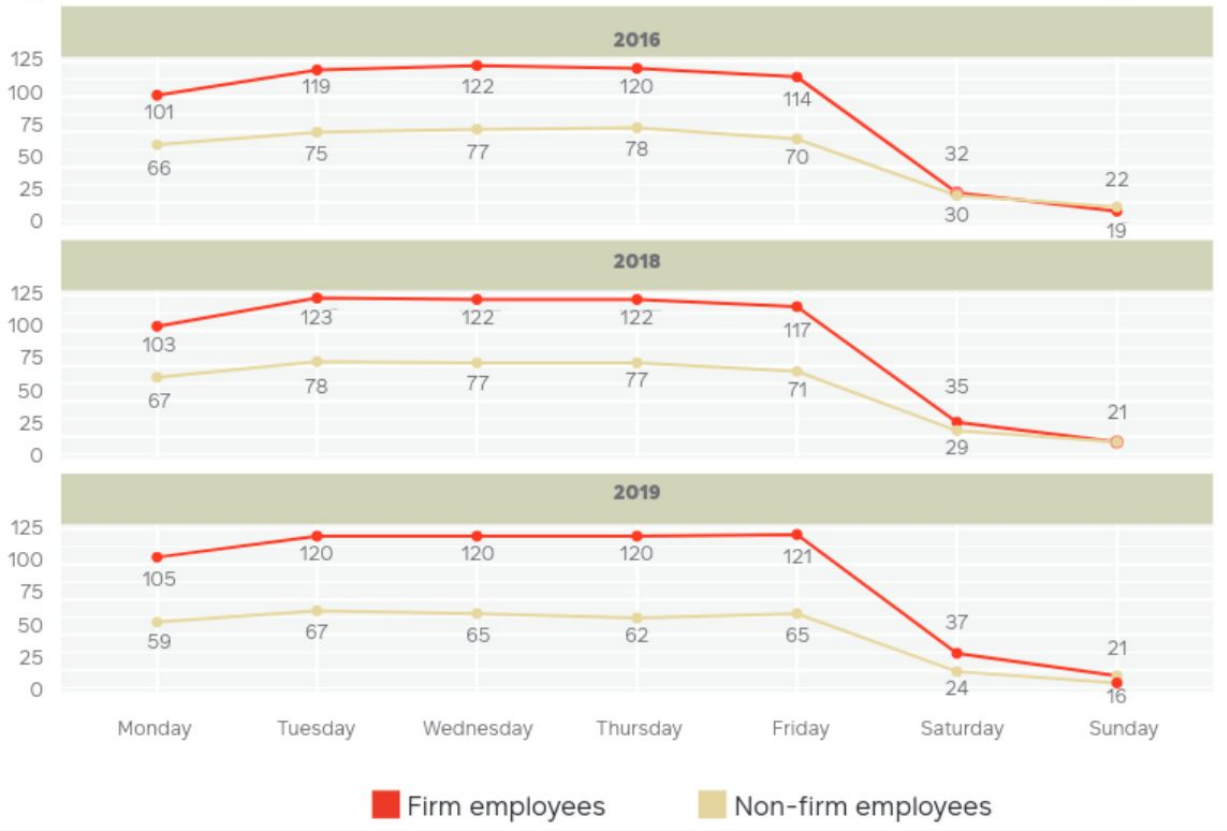
2000-Present



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2000 - Present

Project	Total	Firm-made commits	Proportion firm-made	Leading firm by commits	Proportion leading firm
torvalds/Linux	340710	247864	0.73	Intel	0.07
NixOS/nixpkgs	125205	63042	0.50	LogicBlox	0.01
Homebrew/homebrew-core	108709	54352	0.50	Charcoal Design	0.001
apple/swift	67197	40351	0.60	Apple	0.56
kubernetes/kubernetes	74201	40041	0.54	Google	0.30
Microsoft/vscode	49418	37366	0.76	Microsoft	0.72
tensorflow/tensorflow	56656	29515	0.52	Google	0.46
dotnet/corefx	32884	25660	0.78	Microsoft	0.71
DefinitelyTyped	54801	17920	0.33	Microsoft	0.10
aspnet/AspNetCore	34946	16486	0.47	Microsoft	0.39
spring-projects/spring-boot	17855	16357	0.92	Pivotal	0.89
ansible/ansible	31544	16252	0.52	Red Hat	0.06
elastic/elasticsearch	33983	16051	0.47	Elastic	0.23
rust-lang/rust	57790	15897	0.28	Red hat	0.003
facebook/react-native	16908	12704	0.75	Facebook	0.63
moby/moby	24472	11743	0.48	Docker	0.16
home-assistant/home-assistant	18876	10756	0.57	Affolter Engineering	0.04
pytorch/pytorch	17717	10492	0.59	Facebook	0.49
apache/spark	15180	8584	0.57	Databricks	0.30
storybooks/storybook	18968	7297	0.38	Dependencies	0.12

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What are we building?

Platforms!

Platforms

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The state of FOSS today

Has FOSS “Won”?

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Not really. After all, Google and Twitter just fired most of their OSPO staff and that’s why I got my speaking slot

What is to be done?

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Let’s Review

- FOSS no longer **competes** with proprietary software
- Our labor is increasingly **dictated by firms**
- FOSS contributors are **precarious** in the **workplace**
- Software is no longer **discrete**

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The New FOSS Politics?

- Not all contributions are equal
- Organize within the workplace
- Organize ourselves politically
- Find/develop new workplaces

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Recommended Reading

- **DCPC**: The coproduction of open source software by volunteers and big tech firms
- **Wendy Liu:** Freedom isn't Free
- **Yasha Levine:** Surveillance Valley
- Handbook of Peer Production
- **Evgeny Morozov:** Meme Hustler
- **Me:** The Evolution of FOSS (2021)

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