



CULTURE COUNCIL

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What's This?

BEYOND CORPORATE AI: WHY WE NEED AN OPEN-SOURCE REVOLUTION

Broadening the pool of AI development contributors beyond corporate labs is not just ideal — it's essential.

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What do Wikipedia, Creative Commons and open-source software have in common? Aside from the fact that they are all powered by collaborative efforts, private businesses reap the benefits in the form of cost efficiencies, faster innovation and continuous improvement. If there was no open-source option, they would need to navigate around a myriad of legal protections to try to learn from each other. We accomplish more, faster, when there is an open, collaborative arena.

While AI development has largely been driven by private entities, incorporating open-source principles would democratize its evolution and accelerate breakthroughs. Broadening the pool of AI development contributors beyond corporate labs is not just ideal — it's essential.

Open-Source Software: The Hotbed of Innovation

Richard Stallman, the founder of the Free Software Foundation, spoke at the early 2000s at the inaugural Telluride Tech Festival. I ate lunch with him, saw the cob, kernels dropping into his iconic beard, and listened to him talk about the benefits of the open-source software movement.

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Open-source software (OSS) is source code that anyone can use and modify, unlike private software that requires the sale and licensing of products. The guiding principle behind open-source development is to drive collaborative innovation. The creators of Linux, an open-source operating system, could have easily released a pay-walled product. Instead, they focused on creating a highly accessible solution for businesses across all industries.

Today, Linux is available through an open-source license, allowing anyone to improve the software without restrictions. Open-source software is relied on by many major corporations, including tech giants like Amazon, Google and Netflix.

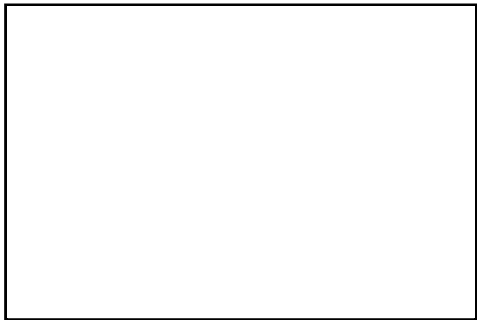
Linux ultimately achieved more than just the first example of an open-source OS. It changed the way the technology and business sectors as a whole approached innovative software tools, paving the way for the widespread adoption and the push for open-source AI we are seeing today.

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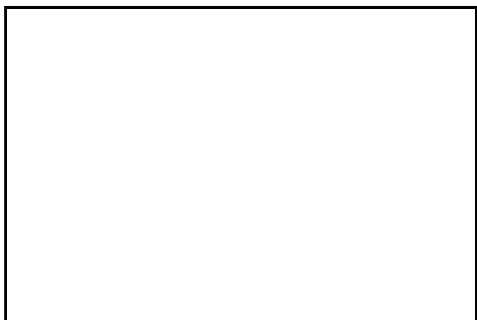
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Two Possible Futures

Up until now, AI development has largely been driven by major corporations and tech giants. A different future is possible with open-source AI, where the core software and code are publicly available.

If you've been even remotely tuned into the zeitgeist over the past year, you've heard about ChatGPT, a text generation program free for use by anyone with an Internet connection. ChatGPT, an OpenAI product, is alleged to have raised its money and seeded its data on the premise it would be open-source and has since been **funded** by a multibillion-dollar investment from the tech giant, Microsoft.

However, the source code that powers ChatGPT is not offered to the public. Instead, it is kept private, and only OpenAI and its partners can access it. This illustrates the continued dominance of corporations and investors backing OpenAI — including tech giants like Microsoft — and the lack of equal access to AI source code.

Despite pushback from major tech organizations, there is progress being made in revolutionizing AI development. One example is **Amazon Web Services (AWS)**, which supports many types of open-source development and fosters a community of developers.

leverage the Cloud Native Computing Foundation and the Apache Software Foundation, which provide a wide range of open-source software, including source code for AI and machine learning.

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Open source is far from bad for business. Instead, businesses can use open-source development of AI products to customize and build upon each other's innovations, establishing a robust and secure underlying infrastructure that benefits all businesses.

The Power of Community-Driven Development

Linux OS showed how open-source software creates opportunities for tech startups to grow into corporate entities. In turn, they can empower other small to mid-size companies to innovate in their development processes, much like how AWS, Amazon's **most profitable** business line, relies on Linux's open-source OS to offer its own open-source capabilities.

Open-source AI development offers three primary benefits: transparency, community-driven ethics and a counter to monopolistic control. As AI technology grows in complexity, open source provides a transparent foundation for ethical and security standards. When open source represents collective ethics, it ensures that AI systems are developed responsibly and without bias. Moreover, it prevents tech giants from monopolizing the AI space, which inherently promotes innovation.

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So, why are we still witnessing hesitation?

It all comes down to corporate backing. While some corporat
open-source development, others still need convincing that t

development is truly beneficial and profitable.

Overcoming this challenge will likely depend on regulation. We can have a robust, safe infrastructure of new technology on which to build or we can limit innovation and economic development by giving responsibility to just a few large, existing companies that are incented to keep the status quo and reap the benefits of AI development only for themselves.

Building a Diverse AI Future

The key to unlocking a truly diverse approach to AI development lies in the coexistence between both open-source and private entities.

In a capitalist environment, we are never going to see the total elimination of private AI development — nor is that something we want. At the same time, the future of AI shouldn't be singularly dictated by massive corporate interests.

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Governments wield significant influence over technological trajectories. For example, when it comes to AI, China is the **leading innovator** of surveillance tech. The United States, a nation that champions freedom and democracy, should let those principles direct regulation. This summer, the government **made an effort** to secure voluntary commitments from leading tech companies to be solely responsible for managing the risks posed by AI, but we need a holistic approach to policy that doesn't put power solely in the hands of big tech or government. We need policy that reflects governance by the people, for the people.

Encouraging open-source AI isn't just about innovation—it's about upholding values that resonate with democratic ideals. We can cultivate a diverse and groundbreaking AI landscape that mirrors our collective cultural aspirations by ensuring a collaborative ap
entities.

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