

The term "late capitalism" (Spätkapitalismus) was first used by Werner Sombart in his magnum opus *Der Moderne Kapitalismus*, which was published from 1902 through 1927, and subsequent writings; Sombart divided capitalism into different stages: (1) proto-capitalist society from the early middle ages up to 1500 AD, (2) early capitalism in 1500–1800, (3) the heyday of capitalism (Hochkapitalismus) from 1800 to the first World War, and (4) late capitalism since then. Sombart's work was never translated into English, but historians sometimes do refer to late bourgeois society in contrast to early bourgeois society in the 17th and 18th century, or classical bourgeois society in the 19th and early 20th century.

Wikipedia

I use the term "late capitalist software" to describe software development that is driven by monetary incentives.

Just so we're clear, there is nothing wrong with trying to make money, in fact, I would argue that it is impossible to make software without someone paying for it, whether it be your school, your employer, or yourself with time and or money.

So This is not a take down of capitalism or startups culture or anything but rather an attempt to aptly name the patterns & practices.

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I think this is a nice framework for analyzing software development as well.

Continuing the parallels,

Proto-capitalist software: From the early days of computing up to the .com bubble. Hochkapitalismus software: From the .com bubble to the winter of tech layoffs/covid. Late capitalist software: From the winter of tech layoffs/covid to now.

Hochkapitalismus era was about unprecedented growth, unicorns and hiring like crazy.

When Google and Facebook, would hire you and figure out what you'd do later.

A very blatant attempt to controlling the means of production, by hiring all the talent and not letting them work for the competition.

This is sort of the heyday of open-source as well, when the aforementioned companies could afford to pay people to work on open-source projects, and the projects themselves were not monetized.

The tides are slowly turning and the product managers are being put under more pressure to show ROI on the open-source projects they are sponsoring.

The late capitalist software era is about the commodification of open-source software.

The commodification of open-source software is not a new thing, but it is becoming more prevalent.

Where we see LLMs being shoved in to anything and everything that it can be shoved into.

A great example of this is the new AI weather summary.

I can't believe I have to say this but, I don't need a Large Language Model to summarize "Cloudy with a chance of rain". There is no value add there.

Stop it.

Look, my point is that open-source is not a very apt name to describe a pattern.

Android is open, in the sense that it is very open about the fact that it's a Google product. So is Chrome.

I want to make this clear, I don't think it's possible to develop software without paying for it, whether it be with your own time or money, or a university or an employers. It takes time to write software, someone has to pay for it.

But let's stop pretending that if something is open-source it is a purely altruistic endeavor.

It's not.

If it were product hunt wouldn't look like the skymall of LLMs.