



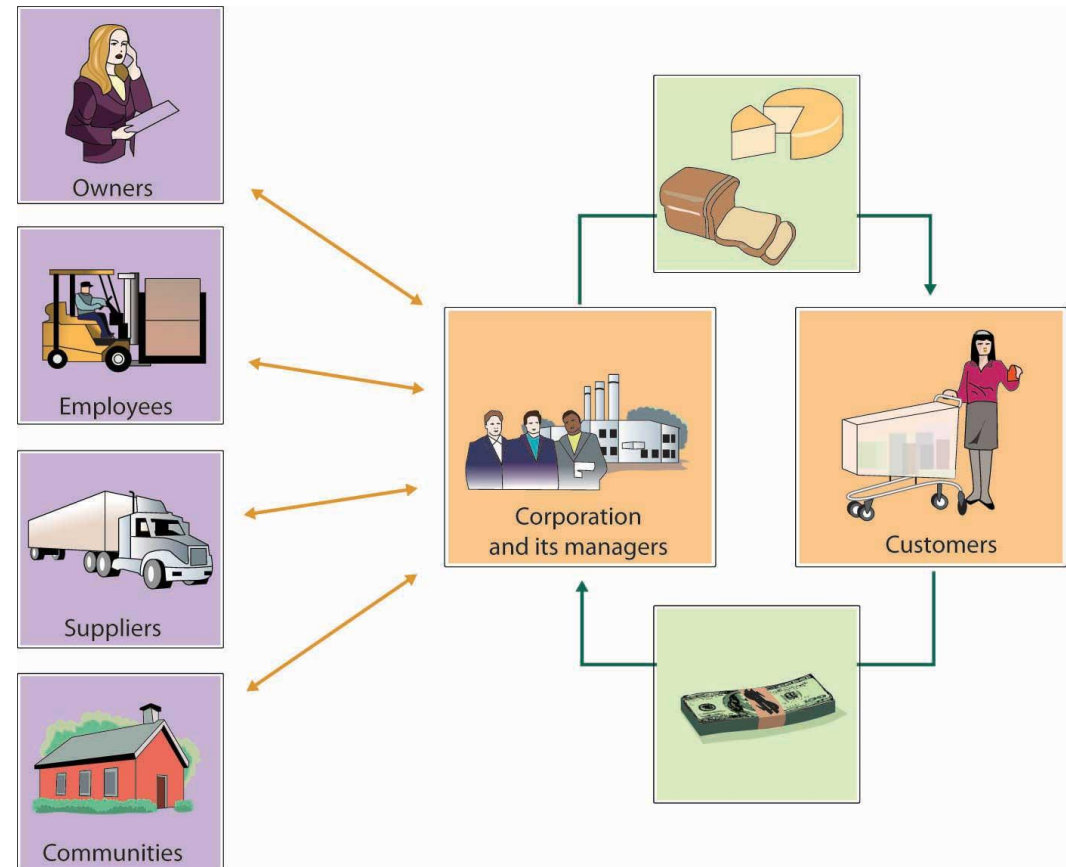
Democracy

Stephen Downes

December 24, 2021

Corporate Citizenship

- Right now, most AI is produced by, and represents the interests of, corporations
- But corporations (especially digital corporations) haven't been very good citizens
- That's why we fear their AIs won't be either



Corporations as Bad Citizens

“The power of corporations is frequently misused, usually to the advantage of the financial and managerial elite. Employees, communities, consumers, the environment, and the public interest in general are elbowed aside in corporate decision-making, unless the corporation can make money by taking them into account. Corporations are managed aggressively to maximize shareholder return. As a result, the risks they run—whether of oil spills in the Gulf or of financial crises erupting from Wall Street—are often unrecognized until too late. The executives who run American corporations do not generally think of themselves as having obligations to the public. The social contract of American corporations is pretty thin.”

[Kent Greenfield](https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/02/if-corporations-are-people-they-should-act-like-it/385034/), 2015, The Atlantic <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/02/if-corporations-are-people-they-should-act-like-it/385034/>

Towards Platform Democracy

- “Platforms working with governments, civil society, can have experienced and neutral facilitators deploy these new processes for the toughest policy questions.”
- “Policy decisions will then be made by the impacted populations and informed by key stakeholders, often leading to a strong public mandate (which may even help defend against partisan or authoritarian overreach).”

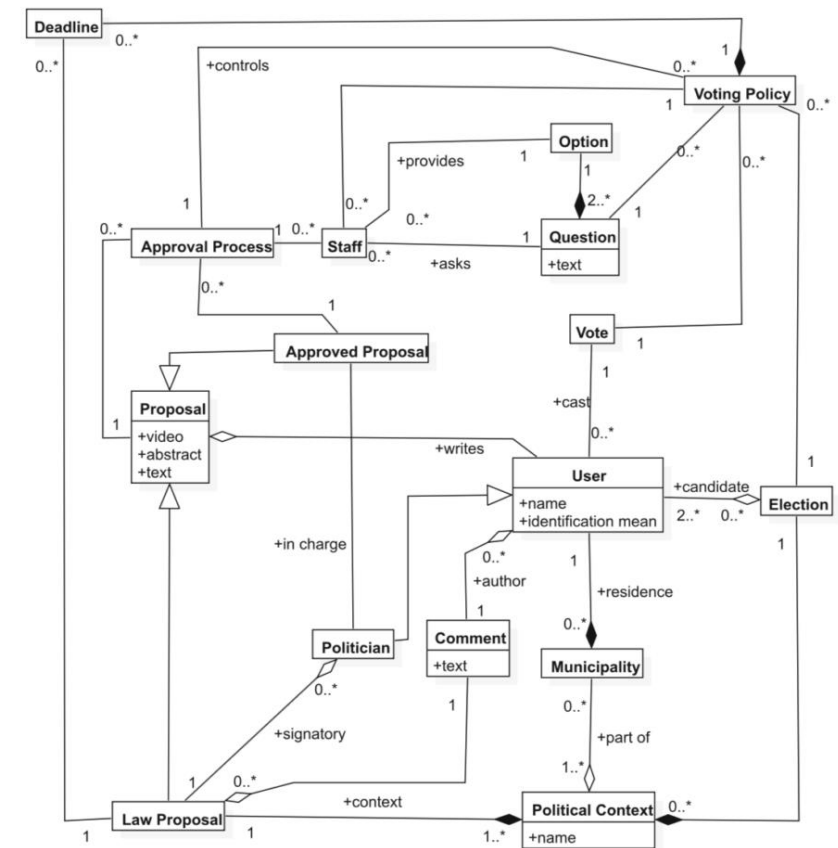
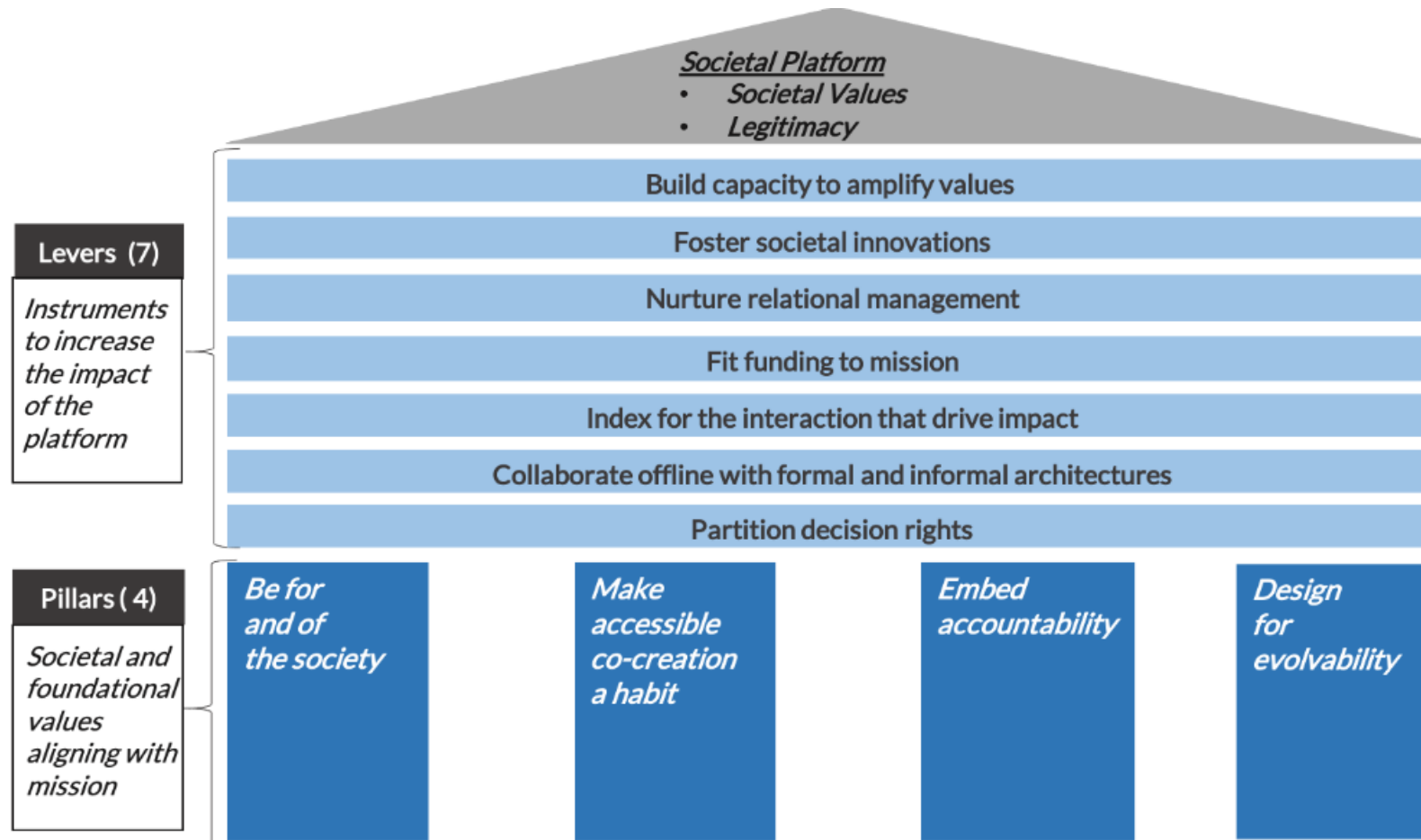


Fig. 1. Class diagram with the reverse-engineered domain model of the e-democracy platform "Rousseau".

Aviv Ovadya, Oct. 18, 2021, Towards Platform Democracy: Policymaking Beyond Corporate CEOs and Partisan Pressure <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/towards-platform-democracy-policymaking-beyond-corporate-ceos-and-partisan-pressure> Image: <https://arielsheen.com/index.php/2019/04/15/review-of-democratic-process-and-digital-platforms-an-engineering-perspective/>

Platform Governance



- Bias interactions to deliver impact
- Embed accountability
- Design for evolvability

Design as Participation



- Kevin Slavin says in Design as Participation, "You're Not Stuck In Traffic--You Are Traffic."
- Joi Ito: "Instead of trying to control or design or even understand systems, it is more important to design systems that participate as responsible, aware and robust elements of even more complex systems."

<https://jods.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/design-as-participation/release/1>
<https://joi.ito.com/weblog/2017/12/20/resisting-reduction.html>

Access and Inequality



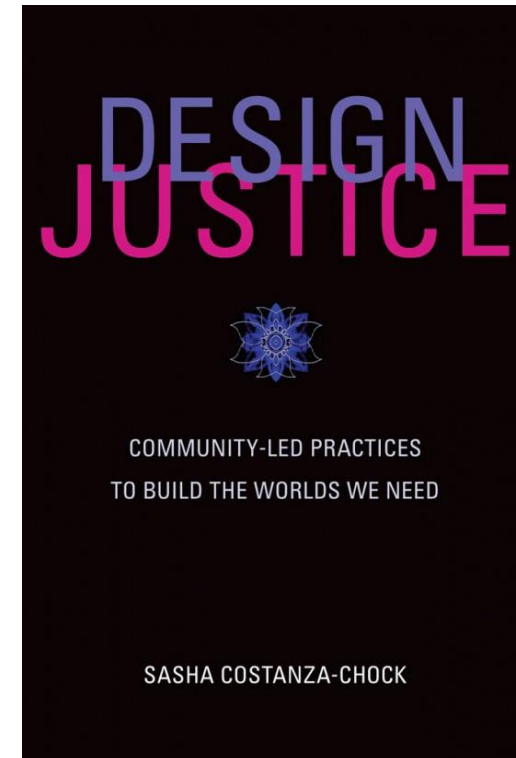
From OLDaily: “We've been engaged recently in a project to define and assess data literacy, and topics related to this were in my mind as I attended the AI Policy Community of Practice (AIPCoP) discussion this afternoon. These topics overlap in the concept of data feminism, a “way of thinking about data science and data ethics that is informed by the ideas of intersectional feminism.” This open access book provides one way of approaching the topic; it's a collection of 26 papers discussing data literacy, the role of data visualization in media, and its relation to inequality in society.”

Data Visualization in Society - <https://www.downes.ca/post/71408>

Martin Engebretsen, Helen Kennedy, Amsterdam University Press, 2020/09/25

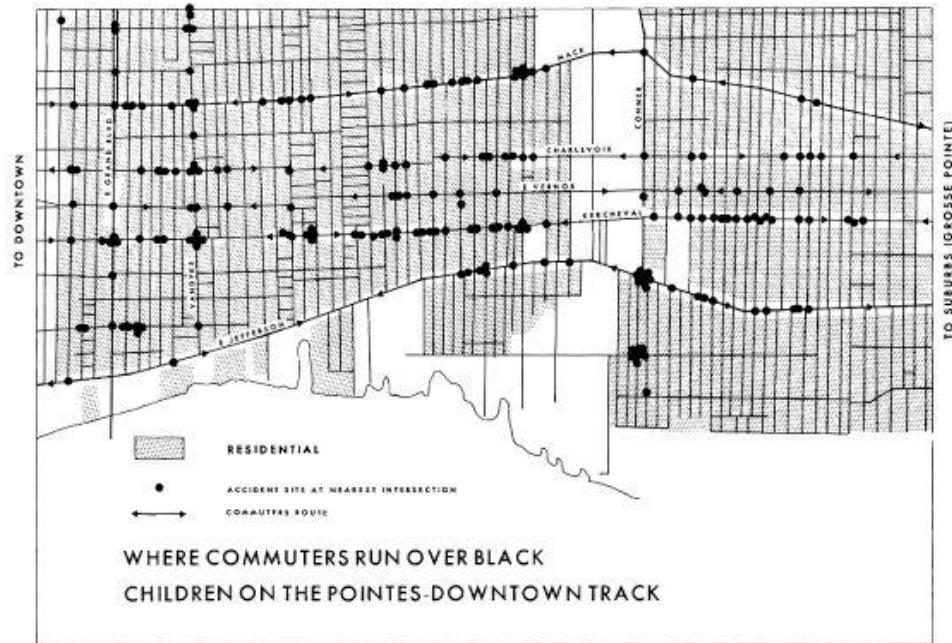
Community Leadership & Design Justice

- “Universalist design principles and practices erase certain groups of people—specifically, those who are intersectionally disadvantaged or multiply burdened”
- Proposes platform design led by marginalized communities to “dismantle structural inequality, and advance collective liberation and ecological survival.”



https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/43542/external_content.pdf?sequence=1
<https://designjustice.org/>

Data Feminism



“The most complete knowledge comes from synthesizing multiple perspectives, with priority given to local, Indigenous, and experiential ways of knowing.”

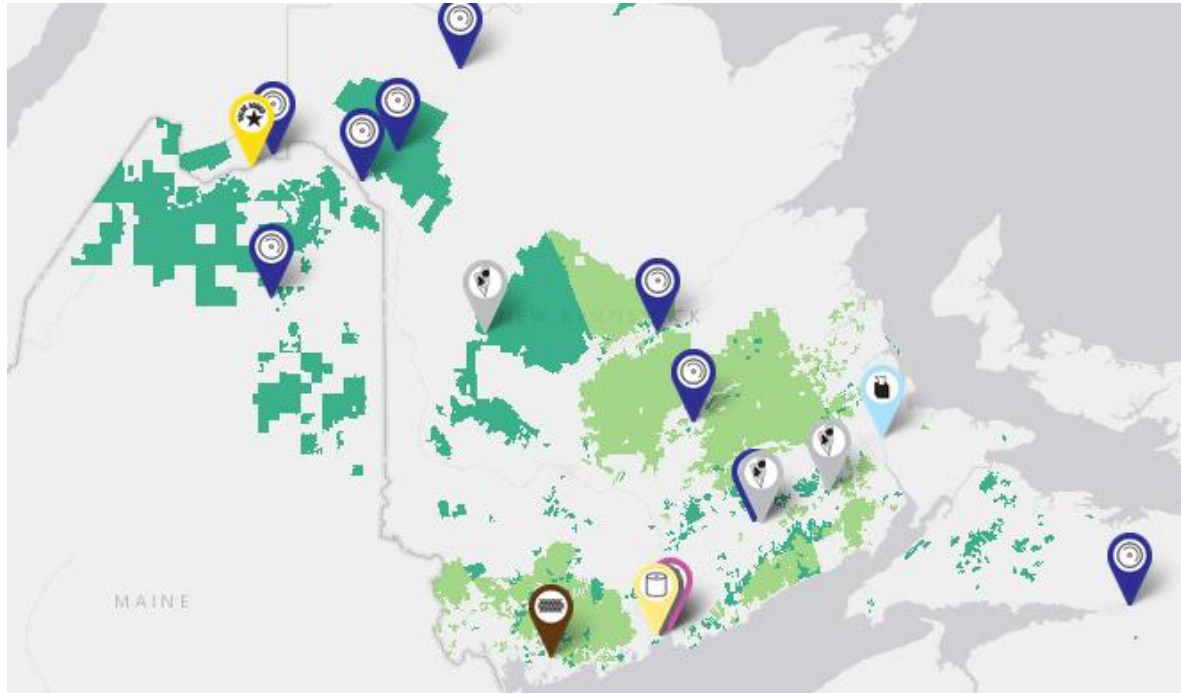
<https://data-feminism.mitpress.mit.edu/> By Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein

Amy Collier, EDUCAUSE Review - Inclusive design <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/10/inclusive-design-and-design-justice-strategies-to-shape-our-classes-and-communities>

Care being taken not to create experiences that harm people <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/58698/how-to-fend-off-educational-numbness-with-experiential-learning>

Algorithmic Justice

“Give members of communities most impacted by algorithmic bias more direct democratic power over crucial decisions”



- not merely after its deployment, but also at the design stage.
- meaningful opportunities for bottom-up democratic deliberation about, and democratic contestation of, algorithmic tools ideally before they are deployed.”

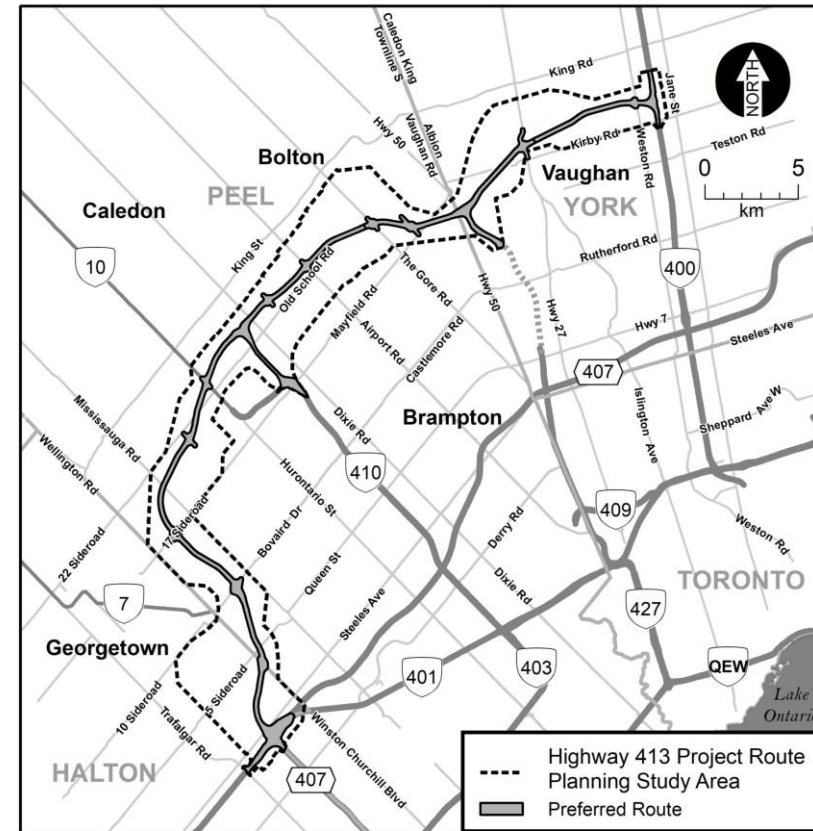
<https://www.irvingwoodlands.com/jdi-woodlands-map-of-operations.aspx>

(Zimmerman, et.al., 2020)

Algorithmic Injustice

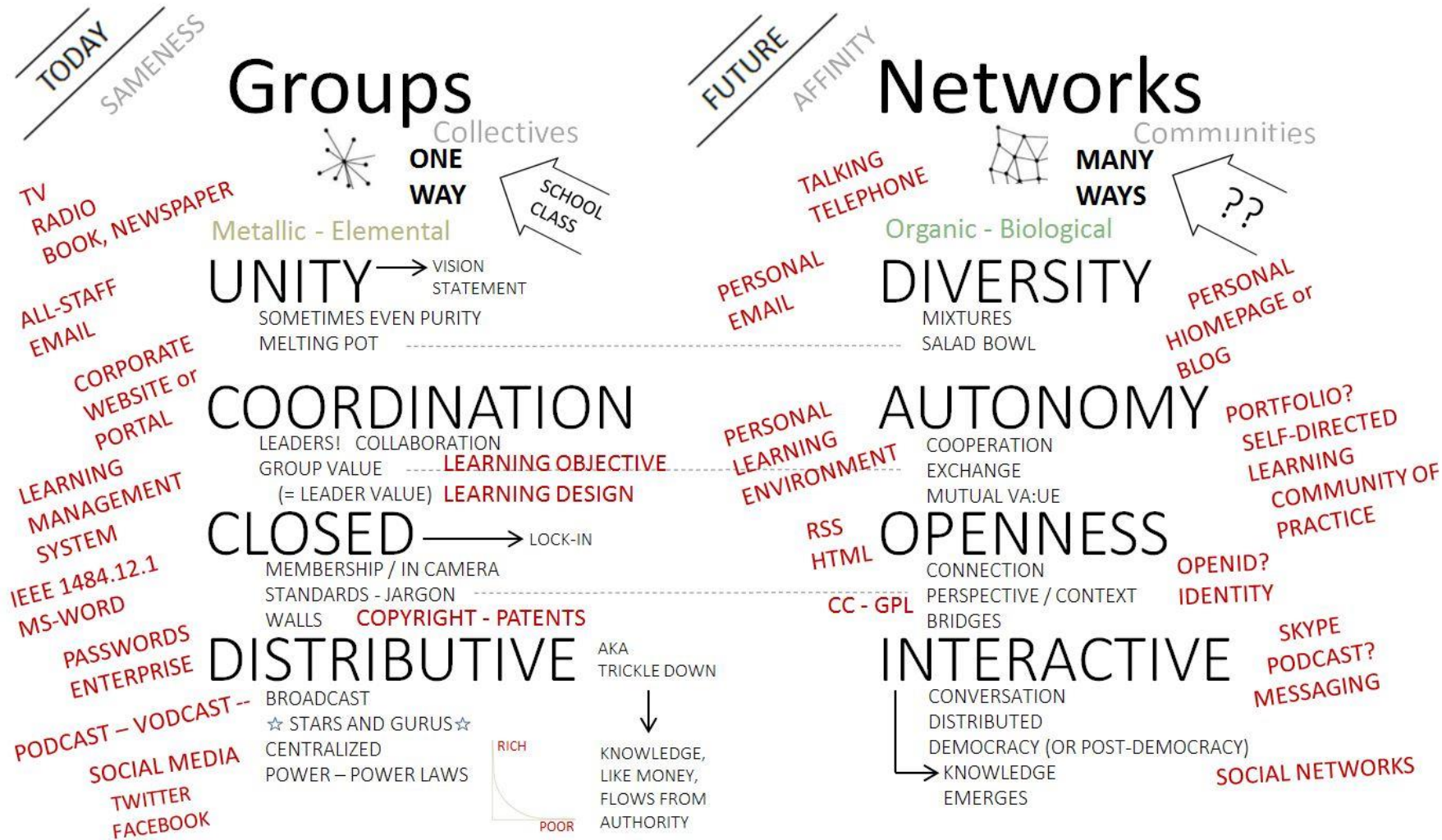
- “We need to first make it possible for society as a whole, not just tech industry employees, to ask the deeper ex ante questions
- “Changing the democratic agenda is a prerequisite to tackling algorithmic injustice, not just one policy goal among many.”

“Highway 413 could save you up to 30 minutes.”



<https://www.highway413.ca/>

The Democratic (Semantic) Condition



Digital Citizenship Frameworks

The Algorithmic Fairness and Opacity Group (AFOG) at Berkeley has written an open letter to Google executives supporting fired ethics researcher Timnit Gebru and the response of AI researchers inside Google.

The telling point is this: "Ultimately change requires that dominant groups cede power. Institutional commitment must be embodied in practices and processes to enact meaningful change."

In this letter dominant groups are defined in terms of position and race, but the same basic equation applies no matter how power is defined, whether it be by income, ethnicity, religion, language, or whatever. Change requires that dominant groups cede power.

And what *this* means is that no single group or individual has ultimate power - it means moving from a hierarchy to something different. I'm not sure Google has the skills, capacities, or even the legal right to do this. But it's the only way to replace rapaciousness with ethical behaviour. <https://www.downes.ca/post/71772>

https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5f2876f679889c3267ee6dee/5fdd9622618da2c43dd7fffb_support_gebru_ethical_ai.pdf