

PHILANTHROPY AND
DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY:

BLUEPRINT

THE ANNUAL
INDUSTRY FORECAST

by Lucy Bernholz





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WHAT IS THIS MONOGRAPH?

Philanthropy and Digital Civil Society: Blueprint 2022 is the 13th annual industry forecast about the ways we use private resources for public benefit in the digital age. Each year, I use the *Blueprint* to provide an overview of the current landscape, point to big ideas that will matter in the coming year, and direct your attention to sources of future promise.

WHY IS IT CALLED A BLUEPRINT?

I use the metaphor of a blueprint to describe the forecast because blueprints are guides for things yet to come and storage devices for decisions already made. My father is an architect. I grew up surrounded by scale models of buildings, playing in unfinished foundations and trying to not get hurt by exposed rebar. I eavesdropped on discussions with contractors, planning agencies, homeowners, and draftsmen¹—all of whom bring different skills and interpretations to creating, reading, and using blueprints. Creating a useful blueprint requires drawing ideas from many people, using a common grammar so that work can get done, and expecting multiple interpretations of any final product. I intend my *Blueprints* to speak to everyone involved in using private resources for public benefit as well as to help people see their individual and institutional roles within the dynamics of the larger collective project of creating civil society. I hope you will use it as a starting point for debate and as input for your own planning. Please [join the discussion on Twitter at #blueprint22](#).

WHO WROTE THIS DOCUMENT?

I'm Lucy Bernholz, and I'm a philanthropy wonk. I am senior research scholar and director of the [Digital Civil Society Lab](#), which is part of [Stanford University's Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society \(PACS\)](#). *HuffPost* calls me a "philanthropy game changer," *Fast Company* magazine named my blog [Philanthropy2173](#) "Best in Class," and I've twice been named to *The Nonprofit Times*' annual [list](#) of the 50 most influential people. I earned a BA in history from Yale University and an MA and PhD from Stanford University. On Twitter, I'm known as @p2173, and my website is www.lucybernholz.com. The Digital Civil Society Lab curates, creates, and shares free resources related to data governance at www.digitalimpact.io.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

In addition to my blog and website, information about Stanford's Digital Civil Society Lab is at www.pacscenter.stanford.edu. Previous *Blueprints* can be downloaded at <https://pacscenter.stanford.edu/resources/blueprints>. If you are just joining the *Blueprint* series with this edition, welcome. If you've been reading since 2010, thank you. Feel free to go back in time by reviewing previous editions, several of which include organizational worksheets. The worksheets are free online at <https://digitalimpact.io/tools/>.

INTRODUCTION

“Don’t forget to envision a world that values humanity.”

Ytasha L. Womack²

I’m trained as an historian. I’ve learned this means I have a different sense of time than some other people. In my normal routine, I think about the moment I’m in by first remembering or wondering about what came before. Then, my mind flashes forward to wonder if and how future historians will think about the time I’m in from their perch in the years to come. So, at any given moment, I’m thinking about the past and how the future will think of the past that is, in fact, the present I’m in. This is also what I think Octavia E. Butler might have meant when, in 2000, she noted about herself: “I don’t predict the future. All I do is look around at the problems we are neglecting now and give them about 30 years to grow into full-fledged disasters.”³

At any given moment I’m thinking about the past and how the future will think of the past that is, in fact, the present.

I don’t know if I became an historian because of the way that I experience time or if training as an historian did this to me. I just know that it is.

Imagine living through the last two years (five years, 50+ years) in this manner. For most of 2020 and 2021, people could be

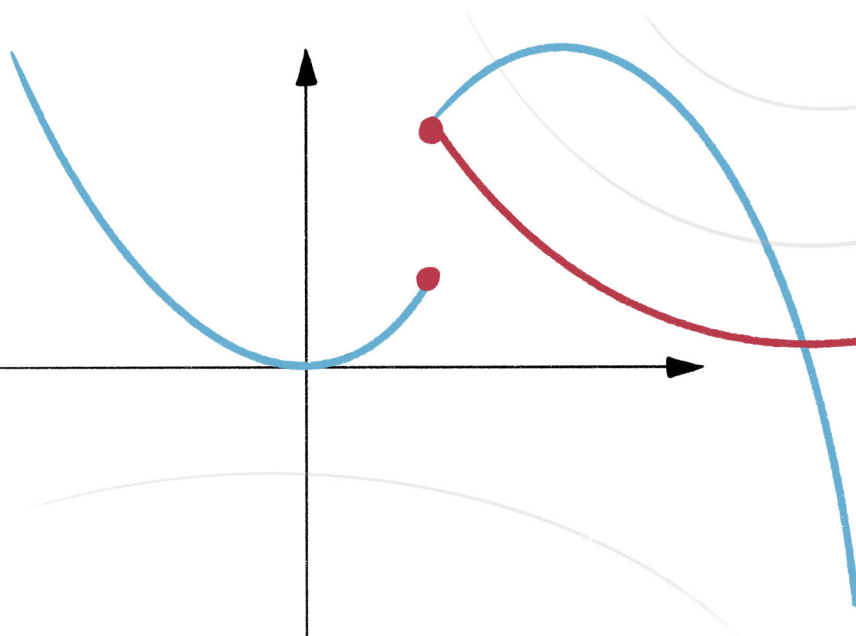
heard saying, “I don’t know what day it is.” I was unanchored from past rhythms and was spending my time in video meetings across time zones. I adapted to the routinelessness of days that bled together—punctuated by brief moments of relief and relentless fear of the next fresh horror. This was all intermingled with persistent grief, which punctuates time in its own ways. I’ve had lots of time to think about time—how we experience it and how we try to alter, structure, or soften into those experiences.

In last year’s *Blueprint*, I borrowed author Arundhati Roy’s image of **the pandemic as a portal**. She encouraged us to think of our times as a threshold, an opportunity to determine what to take through with us to the future and what to leave behind.⁴ Public discourse has been full of attempts to make sense of the times we’re in. Most people on the planet are still facing the terror of a deadly, contagious virus with little to protect them but distance and face masks. A small percentage of humanity has been vaccinated, and too many of the vaccinated act as if their virological protection is a calling card to return to something called normal. (Such a “normal” must exist on the “before” side of the pandemic, so why would you want to go there?) In fact, in her image of a portal, Roy said, “Nothing could be worse than a return to normality.” Scientists who focus on the

mutating nature of viruses and those who study the rapidly accelerating pace and scope of climate-damaged physical transformation urge us toward understanding the permanent state of change we're in.

Scientists who focus on the mutating nature of viruses and those who study the rapidly accelerating pace and scope of climate damage urge us toward understanding the permanent state of change we're in.

Writers, artists, and others pay a lot of attention to the constancy of change. Their work might be focused directly on climate change or on the braided implications of a changing planetary ecosystem with humanity's existing practices, biases, laws, and institutions. A favored word among such writers is discontinuity—a term that in mathematics means the point at which a function shifts or stops.⁵ In physics, it describes “an interruption in the normal structure of a thing.” Here's a modified graph of a mathematical equation with a “jump discontinuity.”



I like this picture because without even thinking about the math you can see a significant shift, a redirection, a new path. The argument to consider is this: People and our systems brought on global warming, and it is now clear that the structures and practices which brought us to this point—whether they be economical, political, or social—will neither redress nor solve the harms done. We've reached the point on that graph (marked by two red dots) where doing the same thing won't take us in the expected direction, but rather will catapult us somewhere else entirely. It's not merely a matter of passing through a portal—we need to “leap” through the moment, making major shifts.

We and our systems brought on global warming, and it is now clear that the structures and practices which brought us to this point will neither redress nor solve the harms done.

That's a big challenge. Not only does it call into question all that we as individuals, communities, and institutions do, but it also should cast doubt on our usual tactics for thinking about and planning for the future. Theories of change, strategic plans, linear processes, even “agility” and “adaptability” don't seem up to the task of hopping across that break. The discontinuities brought on by global warming led to the descending blue line above—that's what a mathematical discontinuity looks like. If we choose instead to act courageously, informed by science and

with an eye toward positive futures for all, we can use the discontinuity point to leap into positive futures. We are at this point of discontinuity—only big changes will lead to positive futures. Ytasha L. Womack, whose epigraph begins this Introduction, reminds us that when we do jump, we can't leave our humanity behind.

*Only big changes will lead
to positive futures.*

Digging into the use of the term discontinuity, I learned something about common narratives. We're all familiar with the term disruption, a phrase and claim that entrepreneurs, investors, and the media have hyped with such persistence that no corner of society—least of all nonprofits and philanthropic foundations—has been spared. It turns out that the original text that started this obsession drew from previous work that used the phrase discontinuity instead.⁶ Still, there's one notable difference I see between disruption and discontinuity as they've played out in common parlance. Disruption is something well-resourced, valorized individuals and companies do unto others; discontinuity is done unto all of us.

I recommend taking today's discontinuity seriously. This historical moment echoes previous political and social ones—the years after World War Two, the fall of the Soviet Union, or the years leading up to and immediately following the American Civil War. While we focus on politics and social choices—that is, things humans design—we must factor into today's calculations the environmental forces that our previous choices have unleashed, which are moving at a pace and scale that surpass anything we've experienced. Historians look back

and connect dots; it's harder to connect dots when you're experiencing them daily. We now have reason to imagine that many desirable “impossibilities” are possible and to ask what we can do to make them reality.



I've written this publication for 12 consecutive years—this is the 13th edition. In the spirit of doing something different, this seemed like a good time to structure it in a new way. When I started the *Blueprint*, there were few others writing about the intersections of philanthropy, social economies, technology, and public policy. Now, there are robust alternative frameworks (see Edgar Villanueva's work about **decolonizing wealth**, Caroline Shenaz Hossein's work about **community banking**, and Sara Horowitz's work about **Mutualism**) and solid scholarship (see **Reich, Morey, Ming Francis**).⁷ Additionally, harsh **critiques of philanthropy** are appearing and receiving **pushback**, though the **impact of the critiques themselves is less impressive**. In the U.S., there's even a small boom in public writing that loudly and consistently questions extreme wealth and big philanthropy, from **Tim Schwab** at *The Nation* to a new publication called **Puck** (which, as an historian, makes me smile, since its namesake and **predecessor** is a humor magazine from the 1870s that is core to American social history).

This edition of the *Blueprint* is organized around three principles of physics—time, space, and motion. Why? We (and here I

mean all humans) are experiencing an era of extraordinary uncertainty and potential. Physicists ask big questions, often about the tiniest particles of matter. Big questions about systems paired with the examination of our own individual practices are useful for thinking about philanthropy and digital civil society.

To help me with these questions and to carry forward the larger project of the *Blueprint*, I'm including voices beyond my own in this edition. For several years, I've been trying different ways to do this, both to globalize my thinking and to engage with people who experience and understand the world in ways that are different from the way I do. I hope to pass off the *Blueprint*, or the idea of it, to others—to take myself out of the way. I'm trying several ways to do this, including a new section called *Collective Architecture*.

For the most part, I will use time, space, and motion metaphorically—specifically as prompts to think about urgency, community, and action. I hope not to offend any quantum physicists, or anyone else, by not digging into the newest, most awe-inspiring research about these concepts. Rather, I simply want to try to capture the wonder of that knowledge—the sense of “Wait a minute, things don’t work the way we think they do. Perhaps there are other ways.” Sara Hernden, a professor at Olin College and author of one of my favorite books from the last year⁸, wrote about how urban planners, who design physical spaces, **can use time as a design element**. Braiding time and space together, or urgency and community—this kind of thinking is what I’m thinking about.⁹

The principles of time, space, and motion each have their own section in this *Blueprint*, but they’re also useful outside these sections. You’ll find additional references to them throughout the document.

SECTION 1

COLLECTIVE ARCHITECTURE

"We have to move from survivalist tactics, aimed at protecting individual lives in a disaster, to survival strategies that could help our entire species make it through a mass extinction."

Annalee Newitz¹⁰

Everything I know, I learned from other people. This section is based on two different sets of conversations I've had in the past year. The first, *Philanthropy Provocateurs*, holds my reflections on a conversation held in September 2021 that included several foundation presidents, advisors to them, scholars, and critics. Participants included Drs. Carmen Rojas, Glen Galaich, Megan Ming Francis, Maribel Morey, Erica Kohl-Arenas, and Tyra Mariani.

The second, *Digital Civil Society in Action*, draws from individual and group discussions with current and former fellows of the Digital Civil Society Lab; all are people who come from civil society and are focused on intersections of technology, justice, inclusion, and democracy. Where permission was granted, I attribute ideas to those who voiced them. For others, participating in these discussions was predicated on not being named. I call this section *Collective Architecture* to riff further on the *Blueprint* theme—people working together see different opportunities and highlight different challenges.¹¹

I am inspired by *Portals to beautiful futures*, led by the **Guild of Future Architects** and funded by the **Omidyar Network**. Shaping the future is about more than just leaving certain assumptions and structures behind; it is very much about making explicit our dreams and hopes for a better world.

Shaping the future is about more than just leaving certain assumptions and structures behind; it is about making explicit our dreams and hopes for a better world.

What follows are insights based on what I've learned from each set of conversations. They are organized in line with the broader themes of time, space, and motion, which I also discuss in more detail later in the *Blueprint*.

PHILANTHROPY PROVOCATEURS

I have worked in or around institutional philanthropy since 1991. For much of that time, there has been a trope among center and center-left foundations that right

wing and conservative foundations get things done. They fund for the long term, make general operating grants, stay the course, and, perhaps most importantly, work together toward a shared vision of free markets and individual liberties. The appointment of three conservative justices to the U.S. Supreme Court between 2017 and 2020 was seen by many as the culmination of a 40-year philanthropic strategy.¹² How that philanthropic strategy entwines with overtly political funding is a critical part of any such analysis.¹³ Alongside this trope is one about philanthropy on the left which is that it ... shares none of those characteristics. It is problem-focused, not vision-driven; it's short-term and programmatic; there are constellations of visions, but no single organizing force; it's populated by professionals who are more liberal (maybe progressive) than the boards or donors who made the money and make final decisions. There are truths in all of this, proven by the exceptions to these statements as much as anything else.

But my conversations with the “philanthropy provocateurs” prove that there’s also more to any such story. And we must think about this in the context of our time—a time when inequality in wealth, income, health, education, and fissures in social cohesion are at all-time extremes.¹⁴

TIME

We are in a moment right now in which the contours of a shared, progressive, collective vision of society are visible. In the U.S., longstanding movements for reparations, land back, abolition, and full

enfranchisement are gaining traction. Each of these actions is an element of a world that is free for more people than ever before in this nation’s history. They are pieces of a shared vision. Progress on each of them is being made on a small scale. Reparations are being paid in some places and being discussed in legislatures. Some of the philanthropic funding unleashed after the murder of George Floyd has been used to buy back land stolen from Native Americans and others. Police abolition offers an important real-time example of how what was once a radical thought is now framing discussions, even if most of the philanthropic engagement around it is limited and centers around small-scale police reforms (see section on Overton Windows, page 17). This is the historic process of moderation and capture that is part of the history of social movements and philanthropy told so well by scholars Megan Ming Francis, Maribel Morey, and Erica Kohl-Arenas.¹⁵

These ideas and the progress made toward them are examples of possible “impossibles.” Some may be able to see them most clearly by reflecting on the ferocity of opposition to them. The U.S. has been structured to pursue a true multiracial democracy only since the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, and efforts to prevent it from taking full effect have intensified with every additional step forward. This push-counterpush through time can also be seen when you look closely at legal advances in the expansion of voting rights (1965), which were followed by efforts to reshape jurisprudence in pro-corporate ways (e.g., The Powell Memo of 1971, credited with sparking the creation of conservative think tanks, such as Heritage, Manhattan, and AEI). A more recent example is the election of the nation’s first Black president countered by an increased focus on gerrymandering and control of state legislatures (which set voting rules).¹⁶

We are in a moment right now in which the contours of a shared, progressive, collective vision are visible.

It is also the story of contemporary events, such as growing electoral participation by Black people and people of color countered by efforts to make voting more difficult and shift state-level control of elections from nonpartisan offices to legislatures.

SPACE

Time and space—urgency and community—entangle in the progress of multiracial, equitable participation, and the intensity of the reactions to them contributes to feelings in the U.S. that there is no common ground, that extreme polarization rules, and that the country may break into pieces (or has already done so). These feelings demonstrate what’s known by scholars as “affective polarization,” which focuses on the degree to which people feel negatively about political parties other than their own. It has been growing around the globe over the last several decades, significantly in the United States.¹⁷

For the most part, the mediated public discourse about this polarization pitches it as a bad thing. The assumption seems to be that comity is preferable to tension. It’s important to see in this more than the simple observation that comity doesn’t lead to much change for those marginalized and oppressed by the status quo. The country may be more than two centuries old, but the legal frameworks to enfranchise people from every background (including those who were here before the colonists) have existed only in my lifetime. This is a new starting ground for what has been an age-old pursuit—a pursuit that clearly is not shared by all.

This moment in time in the U.S. is often compared to the 1960s, or the 1920s, or the 1870s—each of which followed a major war. Historical comparisons are only so helpful; they elide the long pursuits of participation that come before, and they can’t account

for our current institutional, legal, and information landscapes. Philanthropic foundations are now established parts of those landscapes. Many forces being felt today have been developing since the 1960s, including the shifting boundaries between political and charitable activity and the rules about financial disclosures. During the same time, large fortunes have played an outsized role in shaping public discourse, financing political campaigns, and funding efforts to limit legal protest, expand protected speech, suppress voting, and influence judicial appointments. As artist Jenny Holzer once noted, “[We] live the surprise results of old plans.”

What is it we are funding toward, building to, seeking to create?

MOTION

The foundation executives who joined our discussion noted that foundations on the center/left are not asking, “What does freedom look like?” It’s also a tough question to answer when posed in a positive way: What is freedom *for*, not *from*? There’s plenty of wisdom among those for whom the pursuit of freedom is their multigenerational history. Yet the visions elicited by asking this second question might provide more opportunity for philanthropic imagination, more points of leverage or connection, and more urgency for participation and reconsiderations of power. What is it we are funding toward, building to, seeking to create?

Those in philanthropy and digital civil society who are committed to multiracial democracies have an opportunity to help create something that’s never before existed—not in the U.S. nor, as **Danielle Allen of Harvard reminds us**, anywhere. Articulating the true scope of this vision—government

that is truly by, for, and of all the people—is more than a continuation of old struggles. It’s the pursuit of something that’s never existed. It’s a grand vision.

The true scope of this vision—government that is truly by, for, and of all the people—is more than a continuation of old struggles. It’s the pursuit of something that’s never existed. It’s a grand vision.

DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY IN ACTION

Over the last five years, I’ve had the good fortune to work with 40 people from around the globe as part of the Practitioner Fellows Program that the Digital Civil Society Lab hosts along with Stanford’s Center on Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity. The fellows are individually brilliant and collectively powerful. They’ve driven changes in municipal, state, and federal law. They’ve imagined and nurtured bridges between the expertise of marginalized communities and digital rights experts. They’re leading thinkers on collective community power, designers of profound systems of resistance, poets, tinkerers, governance nerds, and policy wonks.

TIME

Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative and author of *Just Mercy*, introduced many funders to the importance of proximity. He writes of the need to “get proximal,” to get close to the people you are trying to help. **Julie Owono**, who works on content moderation in international contexts, and **Elizabeth Adams**, an AI expert who works on integrating technology into municipal commitments to racial equality, helped me understand that this “nearness” is not only about relationships and space, but it is also about time. You may be familiar

with the quip from William Gibson that “the future is already here, it’s just not evenly distributed.” The same is true of the past. An oft-heard complaint among white people in the U.S. is, “Why must Black people (and others) make everything about race?” While simultaneously denying prior racial violence, white Americans would also like to think that racism and terror are things of the past. Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color experience racism every day, all the time. It is not just in the past.

An example from another part of the world may be helpful. **Pádraig Ó Tuama**, an Irish poet, notes that Brexit reanimated the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in many ways, including new requirements for identification. For the decision makers in Westminster, the troubles of that border are a thing of the past, yet Ó Tuama and his neighbors must now carry evidence of it in their **wallets**—again. Those who hold power can control the narrative of time. Those targeted by power have their own sense of time and continuity. The work of fellows such as Owono, Adams, or **Samir Doshi** (who works with farmworkers) reveals one value of this timeframe difference: It makes the consequences of power inequities clearer, faster. People being harmed today know what harms await the rest of us—in this way, they are predictors of other people’s futures. When I read a tech company’s apologies or obfuscation of the “unintended consequences” of their products or read their promises of predictive technologies to come or when I hear rich politicians debating the costs of mitigating climate change, I think there’s a better way to see into this future: We can live with and listen to those for whom that future is already here. If we want to create futures without harm, we’d be wise to heed the advice of those for whom the harms are both past and present.

If we want to create futures without harm, we'd be wise to heed the advice of those for whom the harms are both past and present.

SPACE

The fellows have helped me think about space in two different ways. I should note that we've hosted two cohorts of fellows during the pandemic. One group was able to meet in person for a week in January 2020 and has otherwise only connected online. The other cohort has not yet gathered physically. The fellows come from several countries across nine time zones. The geographic scope of their work ranges from a single municipality to an entire continent.

The first adjustment to my understanding of space comes from what I have heard from the fellows about our gatherings. Our meetings—which happen by video conference and email listserv—have been described as “hope sustaining,” “a place to bring my whole self,” “the community I count on,” and “the only place I can ask these questions, bring these concerns, vent my feelings.” How did this group of people make this space so sacred? I don't have a single answer to this question other than to say that we, the hosts, do not really host; we provide the digital gathering point and let the fellows guide its use. We celebrate each other. We come when we're called, and the fellows call

in each other. There are not enough “spaces” like this, I am often told. What did I learn about digital space from these experiences? It's not where, but how. What's important is not that they happen in digital space, but that we must make more such spaces available.

The second adjustment to my understanding of space has to do with our tools of belonging. Part of the idea of the fellowship is to inform change at Stanford. Bringing a cohort of racially and geographically diverse community leaders to campus changes who speaks at conferences, who gives guest lectures, who provides opportunities for students, and who faculty and graduate students seek out as partners. We've been able to do this even through a year of online-only classes and campus activities. The fellows don't get the experience of physical visits; instead, their affiliations have been marked by email addresses, library access, and the ability to sign up for campus newsletters, speakers' series, and lab demos. Their “space” at Stanford exists through these tools of access and these markers of belonging. Providing virtual library access for 40 people has a marginal cost close to zero to the institution, and it can be catalytic to individuals and organizations.

How might the expense of digital infrastructure, subscriptions, or data repositories that foundations use for their work be shared with those they support?



Leaving aside for a moment the important work of open educational resources and access to knowledge, how might other organizations—foundations, for example—share the access they have with their partners? How might the expense of digital infrastructure, subscriptions, or data repositories that foundations use for their

work be shared with those they support (without locking anyone in, surveilling them, or compromising their safety)? There was a period in the late 1990s and early 2000s when lots of foundations were building physical spaces that were open to the nonprofit community as well—what might this “space sharing” look like now? Perhaps every financial grant includes a “technology tip,” and by “tip” I don’t mean advice, I mean, quite literally, either the money or the technology that a nonprofit group could use to protect and connect itself. Alternatively, grants could include a “knowledge tip” that provides grantees independent access to the expensive online subscriptions that foundations use for their staff. Better yet, ask the people you support—what do they need?

MOTION

In the spirit of using “motion” as a proxy for action, I can’t help considering what I’ve learned from both sets of conversations. Insights provoked by one can inform actions by the other. The following are ideas for both philanthropists and civil society actors to consider about how, with whom, and toward what end they work.

Several fellows, for instance, have told me that work at the intersection of race and technology is still marginal. Even as public discourse begins to reckon with technology’s harms, an enduring (and extremely well-financed) story of technological innovation as inherently good continues. In San Francisco, where I live, the whiplash of this is omnipresent. Local discussions are like walking through the looking glass. It’s easy to hear someone point out that ridesharing apps have taken a big toll on workers, public transit, and the environment, and, in the next breath, herald the arrival of autonomous vehicles or surveillance

technologies while ignoring their likely contributions to similar racialized problems.

As I listened to both sets of conversations, I began to fear that we in universities, research centers, and foundations are building a gig economy of fellowships. If we continue to host and pay for these temporary positions, it behooves us to foresee and mitigate the temporal, professional, and opportunity costs of this on the people who seek to become fellows, on those who succeed, on the work they do, and on the organizations at which they work. It also begs the question of whether there are contributions these fellowship programs can make in the aggregate that none can make alone.

Perhaps the forward “motion” we need, that is, the action we need to take, has more to do than just uplift individual activists and conduct more research focused on the human and environmental impacts of technology. We also need to strengthen and expand the ways that existing networks of centers, fellows, and advocates influence policy, counteract corporate lobbying and financial support, engage with issues of energy and climate, and draw a more complete picture of where and how digital technologies are in our world.

There are green shoots of this happening: Porticus Foundation supported FASresearch to map digital advocacy, research, and policy work as it applies to the EU. Elsewhere and independently, activists ([Tawana Petty](#)), lawyers ([Catherine Sandoval](#)), and scholars



(Jonathan Zittrain, Evelyn Douek) are beginning to shift the frames we use to think about digital technology from media to public safety. An ongoing challenge is helping all of civil society—all activists, political organizers, and nonprofits—to apply to their work what Alix Dunn has called “**technical intuition**” and bring their domain-specific expertise into the debates and activism around technological infrastructures. **Mary L. Gray**, an ethnographer of digital work and a MacArthur fellow, notes that these alliances need a third support, what she calls “**scaffolding expertise**.” She uses this term to refer to the people who support efforts to integrate advocacy across issues or build technologies to serve a set of values beyond commerce and profit. I would add the need to ensure that the “technological” expertise category also includes environmental impact.

An ongoing challenge is helping all of civil society—all activists, political organizers, and nonprofits—to bring their domain-specific expertise into the debates and activism around technological infrastructures.

Technology creators never stop making promises. It’s easy to predict the next iteration of such promises—whether it be for distributed ledgers, augmented reality in the workplace, or the expansion of automated decision making. All it takes is asking the same questions that I and others have asked in the past and that are being finally being applied today: Who controls the data? Who pays the costs (in terms of individual agency, the harm of displacement, or surveillance)? How is this system being used to exacerbate existing injustices? I am not arguing that there is no net positive in new technologies. I am arguing that we—people and communities more likely to be users and targets of technology—need to counter the predictable hype and promise of efficiency with an experientially-informed commitment to minimize societal costs.

SECTION 2

TIME

“Felix senses he is in the presence of a simple, yet decisive sign, a symbol of himself, an unexpected keyword, yet another commentary on time’s dividing things into a before and an after. And he remembers he read somewhere that crossing a threshold is the most common and most fleeting way to experience eternity.”

Sergio Chejfec, *The Incompletes*¹⁸

Thinking about time can mess with your head. It can also mess with your sense of progress and even your sense of how to move forward. Many of us would like to keep our eyes on the future. But much of the work in life—from healing friendships to pursuing racial justice to repairing broken systems—requires looking back. It requires taking responsibility. It requires acknowledging, apologizing for, and learning from past harms, mistakes, and damage. Edgar Villenueva’s critical work on **Decolonizing Wealth** emphasizes this—and offers practical ways for people, philanthropists, and those who aspire to be changemakers to do this.

Global warming and the precarious nature of democratic governance and are good examples of the tension that arises when a sense of urgency confronts a challenge that requires a long view.

I’ve focused on time for several reasons. There is a tension between urgency and the long view that is common to some and newly familiar to others. Problems such as the precarious nature of democratic governance (and by and for whom) and global warming are good examples of the tension that arises when a growing sense of urgency confronts a challenge that requires a long view. Scientists have been warning about global warming for decades. Only today are we seeing widespread demands for action, and even those are met with the continuation of self-interested campaigns to cast doubt or sow fear. The health of democracy (at least in the U.S.) reveals similar dynamics of urgency mixed with a need to think far into the future, with people’s own and familial experiences over time perhaps shaping their sense of new concern.

Finally, there’s the question of portals and discontinuities. A portal invites a conscious transition, the chance to deliberately leave



certain things behind and change behaviors. A discontinuity, on the other hand, is an abrupt break. It is not just a threshold between two states; it exerts an energy of its own. A portal suggests firm ground both before and after, where a discontinuity exists at the point where the ground itself gives way. The two are different transitions in both time and space.

WHAT IS YOUR TIME FRAME FOR CHANGE?

What is your time frame for change? This seems like an obvious question for those seeking a better world, but I rarely hear it asked. Foundations will tell you that their grant lasts one, two, or three years. Strategic planners love five-year time frames. Those time frames align to organizational priorities, not to the issues being addressed.

Racial justice activists will tell you change takes generations. Native Americans (and other Indigenous communities) act with intention seven generations into the future. Tawana Petty, national director of organizing for Data for Black Lives, asks people, “What time is it on the clock of the world?”—a question she credits to her mentor, activist Grace Lee Boggs. There are many ways to interpret this question. For me it raises a sense of both urgency and persistence, an awareness of the individual in the context of what is experienced globally.

While social media perniciously presents a perpetual present, today’s headlines all have backstories; many are the results—direct or circuitous—of previous deliberations.

While social media perniciously presents a perpetual present, today's headlines all have backstories; many are the results—direct or circuitous—of previous deliberations. The following paragraphs are meant to provide *some* of that context for three issues shaping U.S. politics and global climate reality. The stories run much longer than these snippets, which are “tidied up” histories of today's headlines, drawing only from within my lifetime. They are meant to remind you of the punctuated rhythms of change and that even the big, surprising moments of today—the things some say they never saw coming—have clearly visible precedents.

- In 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (in *Citizens United v. FEC*) that political donations were a form of free speech, opening the door to additional rulings that signaled open season for the private funding of U.S. politics. The phrase “dark money” entered the vernacular. I **wrote then** about the type of money laundering this would inevitably lead to as political donors (individuals, corporations, foundations) pushed money through nonprofits into politics, washing their names off their dollars. In June 2021, the Court handed down another decision, ***AFP v. Bonta***, that makes this workaround legal, ruling that protecting rich people's identities is more important than keeping politics transparent. Do I anticipate a fast growth in **fraud, dark money**, and faster, further erosion of trust in government? Yes. Yes, I do.
- In 1965 an Advisory Panel warned U.S. President Lyndon Johnson that the effects of “greenhouse gasses” were of grave concern. More than 50 years later, fossil fuel company documents about climate change are analyzed as **case studies in disinformation** while **numerous lawsuits** pile up against them and the effects of

climate change itself are felt everywhere on earth.

- Also In 1965, with the passage of the Voting Rights Act, the United States finally sets its path to be a multiracial democracy. In 2021, state legislatures, governors, the Republican Party, and a former president, all with ties to **anonymous money**, propose and pass voter suppression laws targeting Black people, Native Americans, and communities of color. The Supreme Court puts **further restrictions** on the Voting Rights Act, having gutted it once in **2013**.

During the pandemic, some foundations rapidly changed their practices. Their time frame for change shifted, and they found funding both to fight the virus and to support efforts to increase racial justice when the longstanding crisis in policing couldn't be ignored. Both are signs that change is possible. Just 18 months after George Floyd's murder, it's already clear that momentary rhetoric outweighed action, especially regarding funding commitments to racial justice.¹⁹ Now that the muscle of working differently has been found, foundations need to keep exercising it. What other practices that seemed untouchable in the past are not today? Vu Le's blog, **Nonprofit AF**, is an encyclopedic source of ideas about changeable grantmaking practices.

During the pandemic, some foundations rapidly changed their practices. Now that the muscle of working differently has been found, they need to keep exercising it.

As important as the practices are the unstated assumptions that undergird them. Foundations might ask: Are our assumptions stuck in time in a way that prevents us from changing our practice?

- Was the foundation established to make change in the world or to protect the status quo? Answers to this don't lie in the mission statement. They lie in the investment policies. As Clara Miller **notes**, a review of foundation investments needs to go beyond just environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards and mission alignment. Understanding the degree to which endowments hold "alternative investments"—private equity, VC funds, hedge funds—is key. These types of investments are growing at foundations, which Miller reads as signs that the foundations exist as asset growth machines with short time frames, not as change makers. How? Private equity funds are notorious contributors to foreclosures, housing speculation, and the death of local journalism. No amount of grantmaking millions for affordable housing or nonprofit news will counter the impact of investing billions of dollars in the very source of the problems.
- What expertise matters? If you truly believe that those closest to the problem are critical sources of solutions, how do you support that expertise? Support could be given through long-term investment in people, supporting long-term relationships between leaders, raising up leaders whose credentials are different from those of your staff, and recognizing that every community has leaders, networks, wisdom, and institutions of support. Yet, no matter how it is supported, the question is what the expertise and those who hold it reveal to your philanthropy and to your

own ways of seeing. This is deeper than participatory grantmaking and more systemic than having a diverse staff (though both practices matter).

- Do the communities that you work with want anything from you other than your money? If so, how will you know what that is?

OVERTON WINDOWS - CREATING SPACE THROUGH TIME

The **Overton Window** is a concept from political science meant to describe the range of policy ideas that the public will find acceptable at any given time. The window of possibilities shifts along with changing social norms or economic conditions, and sometimes it shifts with intentional efforts to create new or different narratives. One example would be same-sex marriage as a politically protected right. While this issue may have struck some as coming out of nowhere, it was at least partly the result of decades of work and millions of dollars. Another important example involves women's health in the U.S., which stands on the precipice of losing legal protection. This moment did not just arrive, it was pursued by decades of activism and millions of dollars. One question being asked now is whether those seeking to ban abortions have reached beyond the frames of the "window," passing laws so extreme that they will **backfire**.

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As an historian, I'm interested in the past work that goes into shifting today's proverbial window. I think about where we



are today to help imagine how that window could change in the future. When I think about philanthropy in 2021 in the United States, I see, still dominating the center of the frame, a professionalized industry made up of intersecting roles—wealthy donors, lobbyists, financial service companies (including asset managers, donor-advised fund purveyors, family offices, LLCs, crowdfunding platforms), and lawyers (trust, estate, IP). Also in the center, I see **wealthy people** moving **money** across business, **politics**, and charity and hoping the public misses the connection. I also see consulting firms, education providers, a beleaguered but determined set of regulators (state attorneys general, corporate and tax authorities), and a loop-di-loop of networks for professional staff. When I write about philanthropy in 2021, as I do in my book *How We Give Now*, I look to the periphery, where I find individual people choosing how to use their time, money, and data to make change—blending together actions of kindness, obligation, solidarity, mutualism, politics, faith, charity, consumption, and care.

Somewhere between the center and the periphery one finds emergent forces, some pulling and pushing at the center trying to shift it, others focused outward. Each is trying to draw the eye to a different horizon. Within these many forces are giving circles (or some of them); the **Community-Centric Fundraising** movement; **Justice Funders**; Edgar Villanueva and those who've joined him in the **DecolonizIng Wealth Project**; **Zebras United**, a group pushing for a different framework of investment and capital creation; the Patriotic Millionaires, **reparations-oriented donors**, and advisors, activists and advocates (on all sides of every issue) melding charitable structures with political ones; revolutionaries **demanding change to entire systems** (such as the police abolitionists); and reactionaries demanding more of yesterday (see the **groups funding the denial of global warming and narratives**).²⁰

THE STATUS QUO AND THE SPEED OF CHANGE

One question I asked last year (and that remains unanswered as far as I can tell) is if, how, when, and led by whom will the emergent forces at the periphery succeed in shifting the center? This question was at the heart of the first *Blueprint* I wrote, back in 2010. The players have changed, but the question remains: Why has change been so slow? Is there something within the logic of today's discontinuities that might accelerate the ability of the periphery to change the center or to simply become more central itself? And how will the sector shift as the status quo reacts to the potential of real change?

How, when, and led by whom will the emergent forces at the periphery of the giving landscape succeed in shifting the center? Why has change been so slow?

Again, a little history may help. Thirty years or so ago, institutional philanthropy—a primarily nonprofit endeavor until then—was joined by commercial purveyors of donor-advised funds (DAFs). Perhaps inconceivable in 1991, the philanthropy industry has since become fully hybridized. It now includes commercial and nonprofit vendors, endowed nonprofits and enormous financial service firms, nonprofits and benefit corporations, LLCs with nonprofit and commercial (and political) bank accounts, crowdfunding platforms backed by venture capital, and so on.

Once philanthropy is looked at it in this way—as an industry made up of vendors of wealth management products—it

becomes easier to understand the policy priorities put forth by the national advocacy organizations. National lobbying groups for philanthropy and nonprofits in the U.S. take policy stances premised on institutional self-preservation and expansion. The operating assumptions of this advocacy and lobbying are to maintain the dominance of tax-exempt nonprofit organizations as the primary institutions of civil society and to encourage the growth of tax-exempt financial assets controlled by private boards of directors.

Those working toward a more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and pluralistic civil society face an entrenched, wealthy, and powerful set of institutions and lobbyists dedicated to self-preservation and power retention. The “do good” mantle that seems to be auto-attached to philanthropy and nonprofits (in the U.S.) can make it hard to see or accept this industrial framing, but the policy positions of the sector's national policy groups are revelatory. These groups seek neither meaningful enforcement of laws about dark money nor any sort of policy that might boost public investment but impinge on future philanthropic asset growth. They don't seek to expand the benefits they receive to include philanthropy to organizations that don't have 501 (c)(3) status. They don't promote giving to mutual aid groups, cooperatives, collectives, or any other non-501(c)(3) institutional form for collective action. On the contrary, their lock on regulatory incentives is so great that most associations or informal groups of activists have only one structure available to them should they choose to formalize themselves—the charitable nonprofit. This isn't a rhetorical problem. It's a bit of forced extinction or adaptation because the reciprocal or horizontal aspirations of mutual aid groups, rotating loan

associations, and numerous giving traditions conflict with the hierarchical accountability structures of nonprofits.

There's also been a deliberate bit of marketing that runs through the past few decades. The creation and marketing of DAFs and the explosion of products for managing financial gifts in general is talked about by those who sell them (and too many of those who just write about them) as a "democratizing" of philanthropy.²¹ It is no such thing. It is the *commodification* of giving—the creation and sale of products to manage certain types of giving. I would hope it could go without saying that democracy and products are not the same thing. Conflating them contributes to the financialization of care, a focus on industry growth rather than social change, and the creeping privatization of public responsibilities.

I've come to think that the true cost of this to us as a society is the degree to which the status quo is both an active form of opposition to change and a way to limit our imaginations. Suppose you want to encourage more participation in communities. A living wage, low-cost childcare, and publicly governed, affordable broadband would make a bigger difference for more people than charitable tax deductions, but you'd never know it from looking at the policy proposals coming from philanthropy and nonprofit groups.²²

I've come to think the true cost of the status quo to us as a society is the degree to which it is both an active form of opposition to change and a way to limit our imaginations.

The hybridization of the industry—mixing for profit and nonprofit enterprises—homogenizes the policy agendas it pursues. This can be seen in the way community foundations and "national donor-advised funds" (read: those supported directly by financial service firms) line up to **oppose changes to the rules** about donor-advised funds. This "anti-regulatory, don't-increase-our-spend-out" position reveals that the highest value these organizations place is on institutional preservation.

Organized philanthropy's resistance to any requirements to spend more money from their massive piles is hard to accept when the very wealthy themselves say **they can't give away their money fast**



enough. In mid-2021, *Inside Philanthropy* counted half a dozen ideas for increasing philanthropic giving that were making the rounds of the media, punditry, and even legislatures. Half were focused on legislation or regulation, and half were voluntary. As *Inside Philanthropy* noted, “It is an overlapping set of initiatives involving many of the same players, with signatories for one pledge serving as organizers of another. In that way, it is hard to evaluate whether all of this simply amounts to a lot of noise or if it’s a burgeoning constituency for change.”²³ Some of the action is coming from within philanthropy, including the punny initiative named by the Tides Foundation to “**get off your assets.**” How well the **early leaders** of these efforts can rally others to their cause is still to be seen.

A lot of policy attention is being directed to payout rates for donor-advised funds, and it’s here where the philanthropy industry’s real politics are revealed as being about growth and self-interest. Teddy Schleifer, a journalist who writes about billionaires for the new website Puck, describes the growth in DAFs as the “shadow banking system of [the] high-altitude philanthropic world,” noting that 12.5% of philanthropic assets are parked in DAFs, and, even through the pandemic, the industry has resisted new rules on the rate of spending out these funds.²⁴

This position is even harder to square with their simultaneous rhetoric about equity. How can you be working toward

How can you be working toward equity—racial, gender, or wealth—if you’re not willing to redistribute the wealth you control that has been carved out from the collective tax base?

equity—racial, gender, or wealth—if you’re not willing to redistribute what you control that has been carved out from the collective tax base? I wrote last year about the **toxic tax policies** that have figured so heavily in the massive income inequality in the U.S. as well as the underinvestment in public systems—from schools to sewers, power grids, and public health. Through efforts to preserve tax policies known to exacerbate harms on working and low-income people, organized philanthropy, nonprofits, and their advocacy/research groups are demonstrating the same self-preservationist behavior as those that use income from their fossil fuel investments to fund environmental grants.

JUMPING THROUGH THE PORTAL?

When SARS-CoV-2 first arrived on the planet, people everywhere were caught unprepared. Massive changes of all kinds were made quickly. Almost two years later, the pandemic is nowhere near over. The resources, knowledge, and amazing scientific breakthroughs weren’t enough to stop the virus, the mutations of which ensure that it will now always be with us.

Decisions being made now that still look to “return to (some sort of) normal” on either front—viral pandemics or climate—are illusory.



















However, two years later—and 57 years after the first notifications about global warming—we can no longer claim we weren’t warned. Decisions being made now that still look to “return to (some sort of) normal” on either front—viral pandemics or climate—are illusory. They are the fodder for a politics of fear, which is what authoritarianism feeds on. Two years since the start of the pandemic,

we are still perched on the edge of Roy's portal, and there's no going back. Given the discontinuities we face at this edge, we each need to make deep shifts in our individual lives and even bigger shifts in our political imaginations if we are to learn how to adapt to a climatically unstable planet and create new ways for humans to thrive.

Institutional philanthropy spends a lot of time talking about change. Many people working inside foundations are pushing for practices that address the problems of power that are inherent in massive wealth accumulation. They work with and alongside community partners, and they expect and support change from **both themselves** and the organizations they support. Still, the question for those doing this work is this: What is their end vision? What kind of institutional philanthropy do we want,

and what, if anything, do we want it to do? This kind of thinking forward is where time and motion come together.

On April 14, 2021, the Technology in the Public Interest Program of The MacArthur Foundation in Chicago held a **design justice workshop** for Foundation staff. The Design Justice Network is committed to “challeng[ing] the ways that design and designers can harm those who are marginalized by systems of power.” This workshop was led by Wesley Taylor and Sasha Costanza-Chock and the group looked at how “...design justice methods [could] be applied to grantmaking in order to challenge, rather than reproduce, structural inequalities in philanthropy.”²⁵ The image below represents some of what they came up with. Look closely at the right-hand-most column, the year 2222.

		PHILANTHROPY of the FUTURE		
		2025	2050	2222
ACCESS	5	SIMPLIFY GRANT-MAKING PROCESS 	COMMON APP WITH OTHER FOUNDATIONS 	NO NEED for FOUNDATIONS 
NETWORK	2	BUILDING BRIDGES b/t COMMUNITIES 	REPARATIONS PAID 	MUTUAL AID REPLACES FOUNDATIONS 
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT	1	MORE GRANT APPLICATIONS & REPORTING OPTIONS 	TRANSFORMED LEADERSHIP & STAFF STRUCTURE 	FUNCTIONING GOVERNMENT 
CAPACITY BUILDING	6	MORE PARTICIPATORY FEEDBACK LOOP 	CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK, CHANGE, & ADAPTATION 	FOUNDATIONS & BINARIES NO LONGER EXIST 
RECLAIMING SPACE	3	RECLAIMING LOBBY for NATIVE PEOPLE 	EMPOWER BENEFICIARIES to DESIGN THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS, NO STRINGS 	WE STOP PRIORITIZING ACCUMULATION of WEALTH OVER EVERYTHING ELSE 
DIVERSIFYING RESOURCES	4	AGREE ON DEMOGRAPHIC DEFINITIONS 	REPORTING FEEDBACK, RE-EVAL, TRANSPARENCY, & ACCOUNTABILITY 	NEW FRONTIERS, HAVING ADDRESSED INEQUITY 

(Image by Tamra Carhart. Used with permission, Design Justice Network.)

Some readers will look at the last column in that chart and think, “not possible.” Others will look at it and think, “not desirable.” It’s notable to me that the workshop that generated this picture was hosted by a foundation program focused on technology. Technology, like climate change and pandemic response, is a domain filled with people and institutions that operate in opposition to each other’s goals. Some want to concentrate money and power in their own hands. Others want to distribute both to as many people as possible.

Historians train to think backwards and forwards and then connect dots (while we wait for information to become public). Telescoping time in this way helps me understand the importance of individual moments because I see them in relation to the past and the future. The **2021 decision** by the U.S. Supreme Court to allow **nonprofits to shield the names of donors**? It’s very much of a piece with the decision by the same court 11 years earlier that opened the floodgates to dark money. Reactions to change are as strong as the changes themselves. As the U.S. becomes ever more racially diverse, the reactionary grip on White power will become ever stronger, ever more insidious, and burrow ever more deeply into systems and structures. Thinking ahead to 2025, 2050, or 2222 as the participants at the MacArthur Foundation Design Justice session did, we must be as clear in identifying the opposition to the progress we seek as we are in defining the progress we are working to build.

What kind of philanthropy do you want to see in the future?

What role should it play in democracies? How are you contributing to making it so?



What kind of philanthropy do you want to see in the future? What role should it play in democracies? How are you contributing to making it so? These are the questions I hope this section has inspired. Oh, and there’s one more. This section is called TIME. Here’s one more challenge for you. Think back to when you were a teen (if you happen to be one now, thanks for reading, and think back to when you were a child). Think of three things that are now part of your “normal” that weren’t then. I’ll list four of mine here: school shootings, wearing seatbelts, “fire season,” and public malaise about billionaires/corporations funding elections. Think about the people and interest groups, the money, time, and planning, and all the other things that went into “normalizing” whichever three things you listed. What time is it on the clock of the world?

SECTION 3

SPACE

“Art is not a luxury as many people think – it is a necessity. It documents history – it helps educate people and stores knowledge for generations to come.”

Dr. Samella Lewis, Scripps College²⁶

I highly recommend reading Clint Smith’s book, *How the Word Is Passed*. Visiting eight different sites in the U.S. and Senegal, Smith examines how physical places—memorials, monuments, plantations, cemeteries, and others—shape the physical, cultural, and taught history of chattel slavery. It’s a vital book—expansive and personal, familiar and surprising. Smith doesn’t need metaphors—he draws visceral connections between the acts of preserving, building, and knowing. Both Smith’s work and Dr. Lewis’s quote in the epigraph remind me of how physical objects—art, memorials, and monuments, specifically—are ways we make meaning of and give meaning to spaces.

As I write here about space, I mean it in many ways. Space is a—perhaps *the*—most **familiar metaphor** for the internet—cyberspace, digital space, online space. The more I learn about digital civil society, the more I think about **liminality**—edges and transition points between spaces.

We are now so dependent on digital systems (for communication, consumption, energy,

education, healthcare, entertainment) and our digital systems are so pervasive (in our homes, cars, office buildings, public parks, government, and civic spaces) that we are almost always generating digital signals. Most of us have come to understand that we generate digital signals with every click, mouse hover, use of the back button, swipe, or text message, and some of us pay a lot of attention to the likely gatherers of those signals. Fewer of us seem to be aware of the data trails we generate when we swipe our bus pass, tag into the office building, drive past the flashing speed limit sign, ring our neighbor’s doorbell, or walk through the library doors past the CCTV cameras. We know even less about who is gathering this data and what they’re using it for—other than that it’s all **surveillance**.

We are generating digital data actively (using our devices, carrying our phones), passively (walking through sensed spaces), and almost constantly. We have digitized our physical spaces to track us almost as persistently as when we’re actively using software. We should assume that the data

gathered in both “spaces” is sold, aggregated, mixed, and analyzed.

This digital pulse extends beyond earth. Satellites have been part of the digital sensing machinery for decades, but 2021 brought home the reality of just how far this digital pulse reaches as we saw billionaires intent on colonizing what used to be called “outer space.”

WHERE IS DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY?

Where is digital civil society? Everywhere. Defined as collective action enabled by digital systems, about digital systems, or that takes place exclusively on digital systems, there are lots of examples and types of action within each of these three areas:

- Collective action “enabled by” digital systems captures almost everything that was once analog—your nonprofit that uses email, your foundation that makes payments via electronic fund transfers, and your organizing that includes social media or “missed calls” as a means of mobilizing people.
- Collective action “about” digital systems includes protests against big tech, labor organizing within gig industries, or advocacy for digital concerns such as broadband access, net neutrality, data protections, and more.

Digital civil society can be defined as collective action enabled by digital systems, about digital systems, or that takes place exclusively on digital systems.

- Collective action “exclusively on” digital systems captures actions such as content moderation, the use of Facebook groups for political organizing or for protests against the company’s policy decisions, and consumer boycotts of digital advertisers.

For most people now, civil society is digital civil society. They are one and the same. In places where digital access is unreliable, expensive, and not widely available, it’s likely that there are community demands for “access”—meaning that, in those places, becoming digital is part of what civil society is seeking. The three subsections of collective action overlap—lots of civil society work today involves all three types of action. I’ve said it before, I’ll say it again—all of civil society is digital. It’s digital civil society now.



So, where is it? Everywhere. But organizations in civil society—specifically foundations and nonprofits—still haven’t integrated this reality into their work as deeply as they need to. They still act as if ransomware won’t happen to them, public policies about data collection don’t matter to their work on X, Y, or Z issue, and there’s nothing to worry about in sending confidential documents over unencrypted channels to board members to read on their personal devices. Even the pandemic shift to remote work, which required nonprofits to take a hard look at their digital systems, doesn’t seem to have convinced everyone that every nonprofit, association, funder, or informal group of activists today is dependent on digital systems.

Knowing this is critical. Understanding the implications of these digital dependencies and carrying forward known characterizations of digitization into decision making is the type of “digital literacy” that civil society leaders need. It’s not about being able to write software code. It is about understanding that software code and data collection mimic and extend known biases; that the use of cloud-based software or software as a service (SaaS) requires asking questions about data ownership, security, liability, and portability; and that the choices you make about digital infrastructure have equity, accessibility, and privacy implications for everyone you work with—colleagues, beneficiaries, community partners, volunteers, board members, policy allies, and financial donors.

The choices you make about digital infrastructure have equity, accessibility, and privacy implications for everyone you work with.

It’s not just the practical implications—like developing organizational policies on data governance or complying with legal requirements (although these matter). It’s a mindset that should kick in whenever the tech hype-machine kicks into gear about the latest must-have “cryptocyberartificiallyintelligentbiometric gewgaw” so that your first thought is, “Who does this harm? What is the seller of this gewgaw doing with the data about the people I’m supposed to be helping? Who pays the costs of extracting this data?” It’s the knowledge that every commercial digital promise allows a new intermediary to collect and store data about everything you do. I often tell people to think about their software as their landlord—each program you use is like letting your landlord sit in on all your meetings, take notes, and leave with them, to make money with what she learns however she pleases.

Rather than acting as if you or your organization uses software, think about how the software uses you.

The metaphor of space may help build this mindset of digital civil society. Rather than acting as if you or your organization uses software, think about how the software uses you. The more you use cloud-based software, the more you might picture your entire organization—all its data and communications and everyone you interact with—as a folder on the hard drives of Microsoft, Amazon, and/or Google. Use of the cloud will continue to grow. Microsoft has announced plans to only support cloud-based versions of its Office programs after 2025 (and it also announced a **major data breach** in 2021).²⁷ Thinking about where your colleagues are (physically) and

all the places your organization's data are located (phones, laptops, servers) is one way to think about space. Looking at your organization through the lens of "where's our data?" can increase understanding of how digitally dependent you are. Another way to "see" these dependencies is to look at your budget over the last few years. Most nonprofits share the three top line items in their budget— salaries, rent, and insurance. Several years ago, we started seeing big nonprofits spending more on data storage/ software/hardware than on rent; their digital infrastructure had surpassed their physical infrastructure as a cost. As remote and hybrid work continues, this too will grow.

THE CONTEXT IN WHICH CIVIL SOCIETY LIVES AND WORKS

Building a mindset attuned to your digital dependencies is important beyond the implications for you and your own organization. Here are a few ways in which digital dependencies matter for your work as it exists in a larger context:

- **Disinformation.** We've learned a lot over the last decade about disinformation—the business of it; the ways in which race, language, and gender are used as vectors to spread it; and the intricate braiding together of the politics, identity issues, and timing on which disinformation thrives. This is the context within which organizational communications, community-building, or fundraising efforts happen.
- **Everything is intermediated.** Whether it's sending emails or storing documents, using social media or meeting on Zoom, there is always a company (at least one) in between you and others in the digital sphere. Their products and incentives shape how you work with their tools.

You may want to set limits or rules determining what information, processes, meetings, or services can be provided using which digital tools.

- **Surveillance of nonprofits and journalists.** When news broke of **NSO spyware being installed on cellphones around the world**, the three most noted types of people being targeted were politicians, journalists, and activists. Many in this last group were associated with international nonprofit/ nongovernmental organizations. All nonprofits (and foundations) should have full-on assessments of their adversaries and have risk-mitigation and safety practices in place.

Global warming puts us all at risk of losing power and connectivity. We need to prepare for technology regression and loss—both in our lives and at our organizations. Individuals should make sure they have important phone numbers, addresses, medical information, etc. written down on paper (which few of us do anymore, since we've outsourced our brains to our phones).²⁸ Nonprofits and foundations need to assess the same information needs and have analog backup plans.

- **Remote or hybrid workplaces.** Many organizations went to remote work and are now grappling with what comes next. Researchers are studying everything from how **sidebar chats during online meetings** elevated some voices but overwhelmed others to the ways **distributed workplaces shift people's feelings** of safety. For decades,

many people with disabilities have been calling for a hybrid work structure and for a meaningful commitment to inclusivity, which includes organizing the workplace to fit people and not the other way around. There are generalizations to be learned and made, perhaps the most important being the need to understand the specific dynamics at your organization. Braiding these dynamics into the work you may be doing about racism and sexism will be key. And don't forget to factor in the implications of the **surveillant nature of workplace software**.

Shifting away (slightly) from technology and organizations in digital civil society, the space and context of philanthropy and civil society writ large is shifting. Over the last two years, in the United States, there has been a marked rise in direct attacks on core assumptions about civil society. Specifically:

- Many of the worst purveyors of lies about **election fraud**, **COVID**, **climate**, and other serious topics come from within civil society, funded by **philanthropy**. Civil society doesn't just fight disinformation; it foments disinformation.
- The U.S. Republican Party has been pushing for state level laws that **limit the right to protest**. These efforts go hand in hand with efforts to **suppress the vote** in BIPOC, low-income and rural communities. Sometimes, as in a proposed Florida law, the two are explicitly linked—where a violation of **laws against protesting** can result in losing the right to vote. The same political party has also begun efforts to make it harder for **nonprofits to bail people out of jail**.
- Donors are also pushing to **limit legal requirements for nonprofit transparency**—and they're winning.

- Efforts to change **school curricula** or **zero-budget libraries** are signs of a long game at work, as both institutions educate future generations. These are **coordinated** efforts to maintain an educational system that is built on and sustains white supremacy.

Civil liberties and human rights have never been equally distributed. Public spaces don't welcome all people. Governments surveil individuals and communities. These are longstanding truths in the U.S. and other "advanced" democracies (and elsewhere).

The challenge for people in power or with money or privilege is recognizing that the shifts and threats we are now experiencing are longstanding reality for others.

The challenge for people in power or with money or among the privileged in their countries (which includes pretty much anyone in foundation philanthropy and a large percentage of nonprofit decision makers and/or board members) is recognizing that the shifts and threats we are now experiencing are a longstanding reality for others. This is just one reason why learning from the expertise of those most proximal to and most familiar with harms, such as discrimination, surveillance, under-resourcing, suppression, and oppression, is critical. The other work we have to do is to question our own roles in perpetuating that discrimination, surveillance, resource hoarding, and oppression.

NEW THREATS TO THE SPACE OF DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY

Four new intersections of digital systems and civil society are growing in importance

and reveal the shifts and discrepancies we're experiencing. They are threats that require attention. All four contribute to the interruption or lack of continuity in what was normal. The first involves digital identity systems; the second involves voice-activated technologies; the third deals with consolidated control of data; and the fourth requires consideration of how we're digitizing physical spaces.

DIGITAL IDENTITY

Until March of 2020, the digital identity discussion centered around national systems—such as those in Argentina, India, and Kenya—or systems used by international organizations serving refugees and asylum seekers. Then Covid-19 arrived, and countries around the globe—and companies eager to sell products to those countries—rolled out digital contact tracing systems and proposed digital vaccine passports. The debate over digital ID systems goes back decades, but the public health arguments for them are heating up, and both government and private sector are expanding efforts to put them into action.

Foundations and nonprofits both extoll and decry digital IDs. Some funders have started in one camp and shifted to the other, driven perhaps by increasing concern about the vulnerability of these systems to malfeasance. The shift may also come as wealthy people and nations start to realize that the digital systems of control and containment they devise for other people and other places will surveil them as well. Certainly, the danger of these tools is displayed by the disaster of the U.S. role in Afghanistan, up to and including its development of **extensive digital ID systems** about Afghan people which it then abandoned to the Taliban.

Surveillance technologies are designed and used by those with power who believe themselves to be insulated from the harms even while the universality of damage becomes ever more obvious.

The trajectory of concern about surveillance technologies mirrors concerns about climate change: A small group raises the alarm for years and is ignored until prevention seems impossible and remediation is all that's left. Surveillance technologies are designed and used by those with power who believe themselves to be insulated from the harms even while the universality of damage becomes ever more obvious. Similarly, only now are wealthy people and nations acknowledging that the damage we've done to the planet doesn't happen "over there" or to "those people," but everywhere and to everyone.

It is a mistake to assume these interdependencies will bring people together. Not only do wealthy countries produce most of the surveillance technologies and carbon emissions, wealthy people also buy "luxury surveillance" technologies (**exercise monitors**, "smart" appliances, sleep aids) and expect that they can buy their way out of climate disasters, on this planet or another one.²⁹ Understanding all this requires studies not of climate or technology, but of power, agency, racism, and sexism.



Why does this matter to philanthropy and civil society? Thinking about digital ID systems is best done through the lens of collectivity, as affecting all of us. Corporate data collectors have essentially created IDs on everyone with regular internet access. Government or humanitarian data collection intended to apply only to certain groups will certainly be breached, misused, quietly expanded, or sought out by authoritarian forces. The idea of temporary or focused use is a false promise. For foundations and nonprofits, who often see them as themselves as “doing unto others,” there is no “other” when it comes to digital ID. Philanthropy and civil society would do well to incorporate into their work an awareness of digital identification systems and the broad social challenge they present.

VOICE-ACTIVATED TECHNOLOGIES

“Hey, Google.” “Siri.” “Alexa.” These are the “wake words” for three of the most familiar voice-activated technologies. They allow people to speak to a device which will then search its own databases or the internet. It will then either respond with an answer or perform a “skill,” such as playing music or turning on the lights in a room. Being able to speak to a device instead of interacting with it through a keyboard has the potential to bring people into the digital age without regard for their literacy levels or physical ability to type. Voice activation does, theoretically, give us a “do over” on the English-dominated internet—providing a chance to create access and content in every spoken language. It opens all kinds of design possibilities if no keyboard or “input” device other than the spoken voice is needed.

Google, Apple, and Amazon have a 3-way lock on voice activated technology; they’re prioritizing commercial opportunities and extending their data-hoovering efforts.

All that’s to the good, but it’s not what’s happening. Google, Apple, and Amazon have a three-way lock on voice-activated technology. Almost any voice-activated system you’ve used—to find out about the next bus, to get government services, or to correct a bank error—is built on top of the systems built and owned by these three companies. Just as Microsoft tried to lock down web-based access via Internet Explorer in the 1990s, these companies are rapidly consolidating control of voice-activated gateways. They’re prioritizing commercial opportunities. They’re locking in public services and other industries. They’re collecting a lot of data as you talk to your student loan processor, public library, or doctor’s office. And these systems further extend the data-hoovering efforts of these companies. Not only do they already collect and hold an insane amount of very personal information, but this technology also adds voice signatures to the mix, which, along with your face and thumb imprints, provides a robust biometric version of you. None of which prevents the systems from hardwiring in biases against accents, dialects, skin tone, etc. The more data they hold, the harder it becomes for any alternative system to get traction.

The “metaverse” is after even more of your data

Voice technology is only one part of this picture. There are new software programs that make video calls feel immersive by using avatars, augmented reality backgrounds to make it feel like you’re in the room together, or anything that makes your video call feel more like a video game. For example, see [Hubs](#) (from Mozilla) and other VR collaboration systems. There’s also a lot of talk about immersive experiences. Facebook’s focus on the “**metaverse**” is all about convincing people to move the few things we still do away from our screens onto our screens so they can **collect more data**. See Metaverse under Buzzwords.



Nonprofits and foundations using or suggesting the use of these systems should be wary of the contributions they are making—or forcing others to make—to corporatized data collection and its homogenizing, discriminatory, and exclusionary reality. Open-source alternatives being built at academic institutions and via organizations such as Mozilla are worth understanding, as are strategies to legally limit this corporate enclosure. At the very least, efforts to use voice-activated technologies in the public interest should factor in the very real harms of the current situation before falling for any of the hype.

CONSOLIDATION OF DATA IN THE SOCIAL SECTOR

There has long been a faction of philanthropy determined to bring market forces and assumptions to bear on shared social

challenges. One area where this thinking is easily seen is in the social sector’s discourse about technology. Voices calling for “scale” and “efficiency,” for example, are certain that these market-based principles warrant adoption around social challenges. Within the world of technology for the social sector, there have been long-running concerns about the fragmented market of vendors and the efforts (mostly failed) to build open-source software solutions to counter commercial pressure. What has largely escaped attention in these conversations, however, are the positive effects of fragmentation and decentralization. These tend to include closer community participation, deeper experience and expertise, and control over local resources. Small scale doesn’t (yet) get the attention it deserves.

Ironically, the discourse on scale seems to be continuing among philanthropists

Fragmentation and decentralization can have positive results including closer community participation, deeper experience and expertise, and control over local resources.

and nonprofits even as the designers of the internet—the system which catalyzed discussions of scale like no other—are focusing on new approaches to decentralization and distributed control. I'll leave the **re-decentralize the web** discussion as a topic for you to dig into on your own. What I want to focus on here is the privatization and centralization of key datasets that is underway. Political organizers in the U.S. are on the front edge of this. These groups, from all political perspectives, have become critical users of data and early testers of new communication methods, adapting new tools and approaches with every electoral cycle. Whether it's mass texting campaigns or the use of geofencing technologies that allow location-based targeting, political campaigns are coalmine canaries for the rest of the sector. And while this space, especially on the left side of the political spectrum, looks fragmented, unruly, and highly decentralized, the data all these groups use is rapidly being consolidated under the control of a few vendors.

In mid-2021, three separate vendors of organizing tools merged into one, as part of a **\$2 billion private equity deal**. Unlike the situation involving the “.org” domain name, in which a similar attempt to corporatize URL management was **stopped by nonprofit protest**, no such effort is underway against the consolidation of data for organizers. The potential for price gouging, the dangers of centralized data, and the capture of key data for mobilization and outreach is not in the best interest of either the organizers or democracy itself. Philanthropy and

nonprofits need to recognize the depth of their dependencies on digital systems, including the boring details of who controls them. Failing to do so opens the door to continued capture of the sector by those who control not only funding but also data.

Privatized data sources

The growth of commercial payment systems (crowdfunding like GoFundMe or direct payment systems like Venmo, Cash App) and proprietary donation management systems (BlackBaud, others) is privatizing the data sources on giving. Even as data from nonprofit tax forms (the 990s) is being digitized and made more accessible, data from these other systems is locked away. The **Giving Tuesday Data Commons** and the **Fundraising Effectiveness Project** are both working with coalitions of private vendors to make some of the information available, but nonprofit sectors and regulators globally must rely increasingly on the goodwill of companies to understand how and where people are giving money.

DIGITIZED PHYSICAL SPACE

QR codes have been around for more than a decade. They are pervasive in China (where they are key to using WeChat and other apps) and common in India and throughout Latin America. The pandemic has been a boon for their use in other parts of the world, as “touchless” became the preferred way to present information—from café menus to public art signage. While QR codes help keep people safe from germs, they create an enormous opportunity for mischief. Think of them as the mobile phone camera equivalent of the “link in the email” that you know you shouldn’t click. QR codes can be innocent, or they can direct you to a spoofed website, fill your phone with malicious software, or grab all your contact information.

Think of QR codes as the mobile phone camera equivalent of the “link in the email” that you know you shouldn’t click.

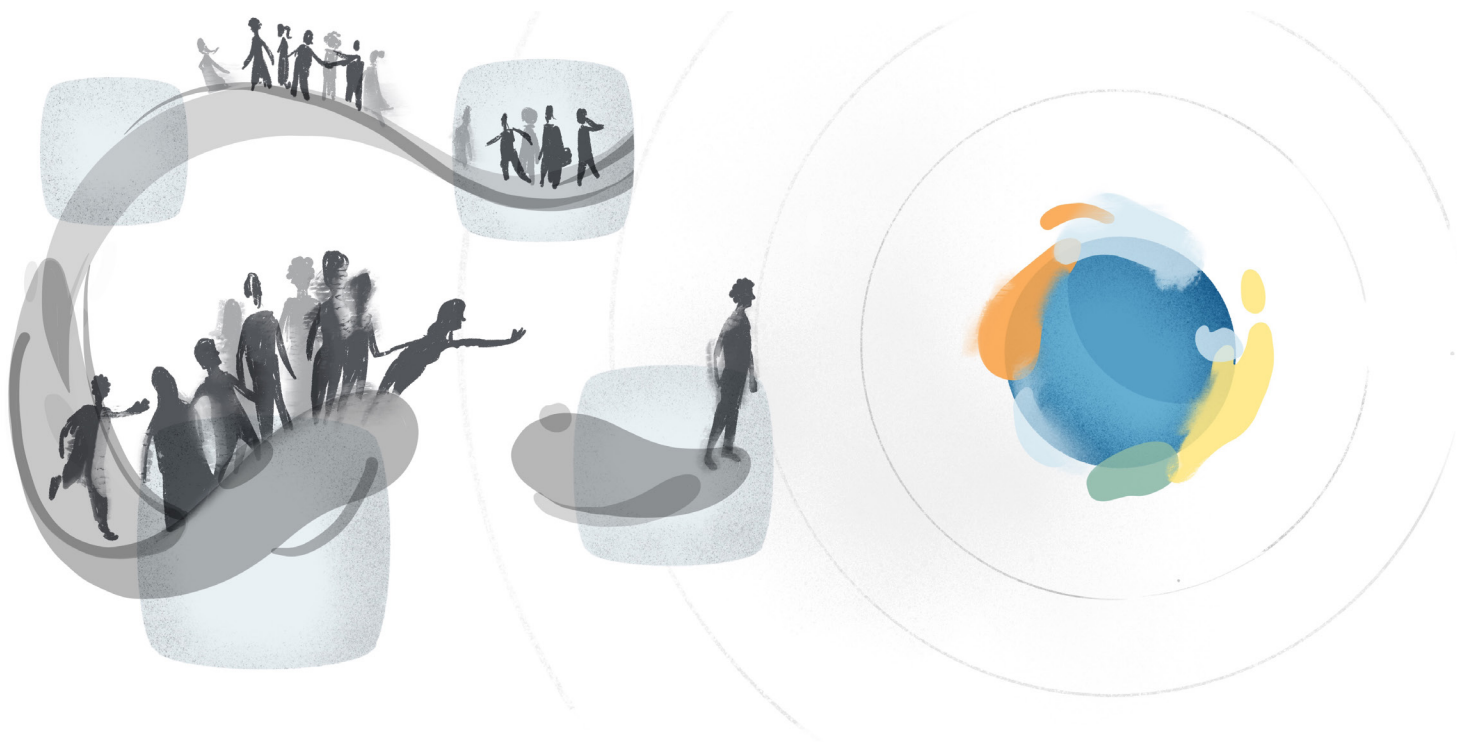
To date, their limited use in the U.S. has kept big companies and marketing firms from paying them a lot of attention. As usage grows, we should anticipate the normal Silicon Valley corporate response: Buy up the companies that generate them, consolidate them into a vast repository of marketing-relevant information, mine the data to sell more ads, backdoor share the information with police, and integrate the whole shebang into the ever-expanding surveillance state. In the tried-and-true manner of “user-generated content” powering social media companies, rampant use of QR codes enlists each one of us in generating a digital trail from our everyday movements, sending location information off to some company that will surely find ways to mine it, sell it, and hand it over to authorities.

Political campaigns that have already mastered the use of geofencing technologies will surely pay for and use such data sources. Authorities interested in monitoring the movements of religious, racial, ethnic, or political minorities will eagerly “subscribe” to such a service, adding it to their repertoire of military-grade surveillance tools, such as stingrays and license plate readers. The use of sensors on residential and office buildings, parking garages, toll booths, bike and scooter shares, and transit passes has already made navigating a city a quiet, barely visible exercise in surveillance. Add cameras, facial recognition technology, gait monitors, and “affective computing’s” claims to be able to register your emotions while watching you through the camera in your workplace- or school-issued laptop, and it’s time for us to recognize how we’ve transformed physical spaces into digital hybrids.

IMAGINING BETTER DIGITAL SPACES

Many of our digital spaces have become truly horrible. While much of the attention focuses on the big social media companies, the worst of us find a way to use just about every digitally connected space to cause harm. Roblox (a game platform mostly geared toward children), which has about 40 million daily users, has regularly been used as a site to recreate the shooting massacre that occurred in **Christchurch, New Zealand**. Twitch, a place where gamers stream their games, talk to each other, and often raise funds for charity, is so full of racism, misogyny, ableism, and homo/

While much of the attention on horrible digital spaces focuses on the big social media companies, the worst of us find a way to use just about every digitally connected space to cause harm.



transphobia—as well as organized “hate raids”—that streamers organized a **strike for protection** from harassment and for fairer pay.

What to do? Regulatory investigations are finally getting traction in the U.S., influenced by advocates, journalists, whistleblowers, and even politicians. Civil society also continues to be the richest source of imagined alternatives. **New Public** is one such effort, bringing together academics, techies, and community members. The idea of **public digital infrastructure**—which I **wrote about** in *Blueprint 2021*—continues to get attention and spark investment and ideas. Community networks, digital stewards, mesh networks, and alternative technology continue to flourish—at the margins. Threatened communities, such as Black and Indigenous people, immigrants, environmental activists, and journalists, continue to practice and teach security and self-protection measures for online and offline safety. More must be done.

Philanthropy has an enormous role to play in bringing the ideas in this “space” section of the *Blueprint* out of their tech-centric incubators and into the mainstream of civil society and nonprofits. Civil society is thoroughly entangled in digital technologies—whether we’re gathering in physical space (organized through digital tools), communicating in group chats or message threads online, fighting for better work conditions (whether as gig workers or office workers/students trying to be free of pervasive surveillance), or raising funds online and paying people through Cash App. The expertise about safer, fairer, and more just digital, physical, and hybrid environments lives in civil society. Civil society is the sector with the clearest incentive to bring these ideas to fruition and to spread them as norms. It is not only civil society’s job to play defense concerning the harms of our current digital systems; we have an incredible opportunity to imagine, inform, and create alternatives.

SECTION 4

MOTION

“Every decision, every investment, every target, needs to have the climate at its core.”

Helen Clarkson³⁰

Despite the cautionary quote (often misattributed to Ben Franklin) to not confuse motion for action, I am, in this *Blueprint*, using motion as a proxy for action. Physics is sometimes described as the study of matter and its motion in space and time. Here, I am interested in what my reflections on time and space inspire in terms of action. What must we do? I also am trying to build on a lesson that **Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson** shared with Dr. Tressie McMillan Cottom on an episode of *Hear to Slay*. Her advice: Climate catastrophe is the setting for everything now. At this stage, we all must keep climate change in the forefront of our decision making, hence the epigraph above for a section on motion (action).

ACTIONS THAT ONLY CIVIL SOCIETY CAN TAKE

One of the most oft-heard refrains in the world of philanthropy and nonprofits is that no one sector can do it alone. It doesn't matter what the “it” is—we've convinced ourselves that big problems require government, market, and civil society partnerships. The late Lester Salamon

of Johns Hopkins University studied and documented these partnerships around the globe for decades, noting both their tangible (financial flows) and intangible (organizational culture and expectations) impacts on nonprofits and philanthropy. While theoreticians of civil society in democracies have advanced beyond the binary choice of civil society as a response to failures in either the market or public policy, practice and rhetoric seem rooted in this framework still.

In this context, I think we've been distracted from what civil society's values are and what it can do. The incentives and purpose of this space—entwined with the other two sectors but not driven by them—provide clear opportunities to lead. Only civil society depends on the active expression of alternatives that can act beyond motives of either profit or government control. Priorities such as mutualism or reciprocity are also the purview of a (functioning) civil society—again because the incentives of such approaches are distinct from both externalized profiteering and centralized control.

PROVIDING ALTERNATIVES TO CURRENT DIGITAL STRUCTURES

I argue that digital civil society is THE place where alternatives to our consolidated, extractive, harmful communications technologies can come from. Guided by values of care, kinship, mutualism, justice, dignity, participation, pluralism, and equity, what kinds of technological systems can we create? Here are examples of civil society-led initiatives that show civil society assuming the leadership that it can uniquely provide. These same initiatives also point to new threats.



DATA AS POWER

The understanding that data is power has become axiomatic in our relationship to data-extracting technologies of all types, whether social media or social service provisioning. Today, that power is held by corporations, and research into how they use that power is often stymied.

In 2021 alone, Facebook shut down two major civil society-based efforts to learn from the company's data. In July and August, the company shut down research

on political ads at [New York University](#) and research on algorithms being done by [AlgorithmWatch](#), a nonprofit in Berlin. Google fired its own ethical AI team when they spoke out about the **harms of the company's systems**. Facebook also began limiting external research through a platform called **CrowdTangle**, which the company purchased. These examples show not only that corporations seek to control enormous stockpiles of data on billions of people, but also that they are determined to control public understanding of how the systems work. The cases of NYU and AlgorithmWatch are explicit examples of corporations using **data dependencies**

to shut down parts of civil society. If companies continue to control both the data and the sensemaking of it, there is little hope for independent auditing, research, or recourse for harms, and their digital capture of civil society will continue unless we step up.

Following the enactment of the General Data

Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), a new form of “data activism” has emerged that is beginning to shift the power of data from corporations to civil society. Both sets of regulations provide individuals with the right to copies of their data that companies

A new form of “data activism” has emerged that is beginning to shift the power of data from corporations to civil society.

collect. This individual ability is helpful, but if we in civil society can aggregate it collectively, it can be powerful. To do this requires gathering the data that companies have on lots and lots of people which will allow us, in essence, to build external datasets that mirror those held behind company doors.

Organizations like the **Workers Info Exchange** (WIX), which works on behalf of gig workers, are using Data Subject Access Requests (DSARs) to do just this. Here's how it works. The WIX gets permission from individual gig drivers to serve as their data proxy and to request copies of the drivers' data. The drivers get to see their data, and the WIX creates an aggregate data set from all the individual contributions. As the dataset grows, WIX analysts (informed by drivers' qualitative experiences) can look for signs of discrimination, price gouging, and asymmetries between what riders are charged and what drivers earn. Because the companies control the data, WIX needs this parallel data set to see what's really going on. DSARs are one step toward doing that. They are akin to, and likely to become as important as, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for external investigatory efforts at understanding and accountability.

This approach is slow and time consuming, but it's beginning to work. Consumer Reports (CR), a U.S.-based consumer protection nonprofit, is doing something similar by asking people to "donate" their **cable television bills**. With enough such contributions, CR intends to study trends in pricing and speed using what it creates in a miniature external database that mirrors what the cable companies hold internally. Similarly, the **Dark Patterns Tip Line** invites people to submit screenshots of "dark patterns," website and app designs that collect data in hard-to-spot, manipulative

ways ("play next video," anyone?). The submissions enable the tip line to create a database full of dark patterns experienced by people in different contexts.³¹

Civil society and philanthropists can support these efforts in two key ways: 1) by standing behind policy proposals that incorporate an individual's right to access, either directly or through proxies, the data that is collected about them; and 2) by supporting efforts led by marginalized and minoritized communities to set boundaries and imagine practices for giving data. They are the experts in "predicting" harms. By combining philanthropic expertise on protecting donors with the wisdom of collectives about community decision-making, we have the opportunity (perhaps a responsibility?) to imagine and create norms for giving data that are rooted in equity, public safety, and harm reduction. No other path is morally defensible.

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DATA DONATIONS

The above examples of early civil society efforts to use data as power require people to share their data—be it screenshots of UX designs, cable bills, or their proxy rights to request data from companies. Donating data is critically different from extracting it. Donating data has long been part of civic science efforts and medical research. We are seeing many more uses for data sets built by voluntary contribution—defining the rules and norms of such practices is a job for civil

society. It is critical that any new regulations or laws about donating data be structured around commitments to personal safety, equity, and agency and that they be modeled on harm reduction principles. The best way to determine if and how to do this is to take guidance from the communities who are most vulnerable to the extant extractive practices. The work of the **Design Justice Network**, highlighted earlier on page 22, hints at how this might happen.

Allowing corporations and governments to set the terms for data donations is a path we must not take.

Don't forget, big corporations (Facebook, Google, etc.) already hold the right to share their data streams with researchers, nonprofits, and advocates of which they approve. They do this on their own terms during disasters, and they call it **data philanthropy**. Allowing corporations and governments to set the terms for data donations is a path we must not take. Corporate practices speak louder than their words; allowing them to exert ever further control over the data we each generate is dangerous. Allowing them to do so under the guise of philanthropic largesse will lead to even faster capture of civil society and the death of independent, research-based oversight. Civil society and independent philanthropy are critically needed to develop—quickly—frameworks for giving data that are rooted in democratic aspirations, prioritize individual and community safety, and foster the pursuit and protection of minority traditions and worldviews.

The potential for data donations is growing, and so with it the potential for harm. Defining and designing how to give data is precisely the kind of big challenge for which civil society is purpose-built.

Defining and designing how to give data is precisely the kind of big challenge for which civil society is purpose built.

Efforts across domains—from medical research to biodiversity sciences, cultural preservation, and consumer protections—are already underway.³² That our digital data **live on after we die** is another reason for civil society to lead when it comes to considering the uses of data donation for public benefit. Financial philanthropists can support and ensure that the people most likely to be harmed by any such practices lead the development of new frameworks. For everyone committed to racial equity, this is a chance to invest in an empowered multiracial future, forged from diverse knowledge practices and built for justice. For example, Black feminists have long studied, taught, and acted on the power of resistance and refusal as tools for change. There may well be types of data that should *not* be donated, or even gathered. Developing new frameworks—normative and legal—for giving data should include more than these possibilities, but our thinking should begin from this perspective of collective safety.

The early days of data donations are taking place within a larger context. Every day we experience the damage—to individuals, communities, democratic governance, and planetary health—of the concentration of power and wealth through corporate control of digital data. Seeing the collective harms—global warming, viral pandemics, rising authoritarianism, a decline in shared truths—can open our eyes and imagination to the possibilities of truly alternative approaches to governance, knowledge, finance, and power. The need to define and set rules for data donations presents a rare opportunity

to imagine and implement new systems on a global scale. We can apply the wisdom of knowledge traditions built on relationships and reciprocity—two values that “fit” civil society’s networked data more easily than private ownership.

NEW POSSIBILITIES GENERATED BY DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY

More than ever, people need mechanisms to protect **the way they want the data that represent them to be used**. There are many paths forward here—through commons governance, participation in **data coalitions**, or public benefit intermediaries. Where are these ideas about guidelines for the donation, use, and protection of data being generated and taking root? In civil society.

Designing systems to facilitate data donations is part and parcel of larger efforts to develop systems for data governance in the public interest.

Designing systems to facilitate data donations is part and parcel of larger efforts to develop systems for data governance in the public interest. Specifically, civil society can design systems that privilege people and communities, not corporations. We can align efforts to repair past harms and pursue equitable futures with the challenges of governing data donations. This would include deciding how, when, and when not to enable, allow, incentivize, or prevent data donations. People who have experienced the most harm from our existing practices of data extraction and from our current

systems of economic, political, and social power should lead in imagining and designing our data governance systems—because those who are closest to the harms are wisest about alternative solutions.³³

One positive sign on the horizon is a growing number of civil society efforts to shape our digital options. One example is the work of **New Public**, which is fostering design conversations that might lead to digital spaces that better mimic the best of physical spaces. Foundations in the U.S. have been busy over the last five years funding work at the intersection of democracy and social media—some of which touches on the many ways digital dependencies are shifting civil society. These efforts complement **scholarly attention** and may be a sign that civil society—organizers, nonprofits, and particularly foundations—are finally recognizing that “**assuming digital**” requires recalibrating almost as many assumptions as do the discontinuities of climate change.

We’re at a fork in the road. If civil society and philanthropy do nothing, data-rich corporations will continue to use their control over their data resources to shape public narratives, limit research, and prevent external accountability. That corporate data aggregators might accomplish all



If civil society and philanthropy do nothing, data-rich corporations will continue to use their control over their data resources to shape public narratives, limit research, and prevent external accountability.

this AND find some way to wash it all in the halo of philanthropy is depressing and dangerous. It is also avoidable. To prevent it, we need a great deal more attention from civil society writ large and a dedicated commitment by affected communities (with support from philanthropists) to design something different. We also need to work with policymakers to protect these new opportunities through law and regulation. In 2020, the Digital Civil Society Lab published *Integrated Advocacy: Paths Forward for Digital Civil Society*, which called for digital rights groups and civil society organizations to work together to address the pervasive harms of digital dependencies. This is another area where combined expertise and advocacy is needed.

DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY AND ALTERNATIVES

Digital civil society is making headway on some of the most vexing problems created by digital systems. Specifically, efforts continue to develop and use trusted intermediaries for holding and managing data on behalf of communities. While no such enterprise form—be it a data trust or what have you—has fully fledged yet, the awareness of the need and the willingness to experiment continues. The challenges that **Social Science One** faced in working with Facebook and the **hijacking of the data trust model by Sidewalk Labs** over the Toronto Quayside project were high profile flameouts. Some of the biggest organizations in the nonprofit sector—namely, universities—are

considering the potential roles they can play in offering up institutional alternatives for massive data-related research and protections. On policy issues, civil rights and racial justice advocates continue to **make headway against municipal uses of facial recognition** technology, even as the federal government continues to expand its uses of the technology.³⁴ Civil society alternatives for incubating massive AI projects (such as GPT-3, a natural language model that produces human-like text) are being discussed. Even the U.S. Congress has woken up, and hearings and proposals about digital harms are much more common among federal U.S. legislators than in the past—much of this being pushed for by civil society organizers.

In a paradoxical way, the influence of civil society might best be seen by looking at those who oppose it. In the summer of 2021, the world learned that an Israeli tech firm called the NSO Group had been selling spyware to just about any autocrat who wanted it, and that—lo and behold—those autocrats were using the **software to spy on people**. Who were (and are) among those being targeted? Nonprofits and rights activists. In another paradoxical sign, nonprofits are increasingly the targets of **ransomware attacks** and data breaches.

CODA

WHY NOW MATTERS

AN HISTORIAN'S VIEW OF NOW: A "SECOND GILDED AGE"?

The entirety of the *Blueprint* series, which I started in 2010, has existed during what some have referred to as the “second gilded age” (which started sometime in the 1990s with the first internet boom). Today, the “gilded age” phrasing equates great wealth and philanthropic growth in the U.S. with societal success, and the year 2021 even seemed to go out of its way to provide us with not one, but three billionaire spaceman adventures, just to make sure we got the message.

Even though the harms of unmitigated wealth are beginning to get more media and policy attention, the celebratory, upbeat attitude about enormous philanthropic wealth continues to obscure and distract from the inseparable connection between extreme wealth and extreme poverty. This framing presents private wealth accumulation as distinct from public deprivation—as if the wealth were a result of something other than decades of tax policy and the privatization of public responsibilities. In fact, signs of the connections between wealth and poverty are everywhere in the U.S., and not only in the bank account differentials between a few hundred billionaires and 200 million others.

The celebratory, upbeat attitude about enormous philanthropic wealth continues to obscure and distract from the inseparable connection between extreme wealth and extreme poverty.

Celebrating wealth and philanthropic fortunes is not only a means of hiding the growing poverty in the U.S. It's more insidious than that. It is a celebration of, and an excuse to allow more, privatization of once public responsibilities—education, health care, highways, journalism, internet access, criminal justice, hospice, elder and childcare, even the military and space exploration. It's hard to think of a societal domain that hasn't been restructured from public, democratic governance to private profiteering. It is harder still to think of one where this sell-off has served the public well.

Although many don't want to admit it, big philanthropy isn't simply the result of this privatization, and nonprofits are not simply the beneficiaries of it. Rather, we help to create and justify it. Some philanthropy does this very intentionally. Funders who support smaller government, free market ideals, and “choices” (excluding reproductive ones) are quite clear that philanthropic or commercial support is, in their mind, preferable to public

funding or governance. Public policy options that encourage the growth of philanthropic assets and nonprofit organizations and frame them as opportunities for pluralism and local control simultaneously weaken or decrease the role of public dollars. Minimizing the role of public dollars minimizes the role of public governance, which comes with such pesky obligations as transparency, some (perhaps rhetorical) commitment to equity, and most importantly, collective decision making with some degree of accountability.

In the U.S., a well-organized, well-funded industry with both nonprofit and commercial participants is absolutely committed to protecting philanthropy asset growth and nonprofit organizational security. This industry and its lobbyists swat down policy efforts that might reduce either the size or the scope of foundations and 501 (c)(3) charitable organizations. This is seen in decades of efforts focused on the laws about philanthropic perpetuity or annual payout. There is no equivalent industry or set of political lobbyists organized to push for the public provision of services currently provided by 501 (c)(3) nonprofits and episodically paid for by philanthropists.

Whether the argument is efficiency or pluralism, choice or local control, glossy magazine-style celebrations of wealth or racialized and gendered condemnations of poverty, the result is the same. Philanthropy and nonprofits in the U.S. contribute to the privatization of public responsibilities. Some, as noted above, do this deliberately. Others struggle with it internally when they deliberate over funding public services or systems. Very few nonprofit or foundation advocacy groups support legislation that would produce greater public revenues (a different tax structure). In the aggregate, we must consider how the growth in these private mechanisms—of philanthropy and

nonprofits—stems from and contributes to the demise of publicly accountable, public financial support for our social systems.³⁵

WHY THIS MOMENT MATTERS

In addition to outsourcing our public responsibilities to private organizations, another reason for concern about declining opportunities for accountable, shared governance is the sheer scale of what we're facing. Slowing or preventing ever more climate catastrophes may be the biggest challenge for which we need massive transformation, but it's not the only one (as the ongoing syndemic demonstrates).³⁶ Manjana Milkoreit, a political scientist at Purdue University, writes that, "Transformations require the capacity to collectively envision and meaningfully debate realistic and desirable futures." Later in the same piece, she notes, "Responding to grand societal challenges such as climate change involves complex, systemic change in linked social, economic, political, cultural, and technological systems."³⁷ If we are to be able to make the necessary transformations to survive, to even exercise the imagination required, we had better get better fast at imagining different futures together, making shared decisions, and acting on behalf of the collective. Where, we must ask, will we learn to do so? In civil society, in digital civil society.

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In just a few short years, the U.S. Congress went from actively ignoring calls to regulate the tech industry to juggling numerous

investigations, legislative proposals, regulatory action, and legal cases. The European Union continues to expand its regulatory and legal efforts to exert public oversight over corporate data, algorithmic uses, and business practices. China surprised many in 2021 when it too started taking strong regulatory measures against big data companies. While technology and policy analysts debated the direction of China's policy actions, they seemed to largely agree that increased **tech billionaire philanthropy in China** was a response by the companies to the political crackdown.

What's the easiest way to sum up this 2022 *Blueprint*? The door is open for the decade ahead to see very different dynamics between technology companies and regulators. We may see the development of new forms of regulation and new regulatory bodies designed specifically to address the global nature of these corporations. The environmental impacts of the corporations, long secreted away, are being exposed, and the necessity of new social, legal, economic, and political action about the fate of Planet Earth will include heightened fights over technology as **problem** or **solution**.

Fights between people and technology companies and by people for the planet are important on their face, but they are also important for the many other issues they encompass—from democratic governance to public safety, from migration rights to basic human dignity, from sustainable food systems to meeting basic health needs.

On an individual scale, many of us have experienced the breakdowns of our most basic societal expectations over the last two years. For many, this has long been the case, but the extent and pace of harm has been breathtaking. For others, the experience is new and may involve deep disillusionment.



All of us, however, can use this time to collectively pursue visions that seemed impossible not long ago. That is what Arundhati Roy meant when she described the pandemic as a portal back in 2020. It is a threshold, a moment of choice. What we take through with us matters—whether that be a deepened commitment to the health of our neighbors, the joy we've found in creating mutual supports for our children and elders, the pride we can take in successful collective action, or the hope of new ideas. These are the greatest potential powers of civil society and philanthropy.

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BUZZWORDS 2022

The buzzwords list has evolved over time. For the first decade, I was actively tracking jargon that I expected people to be hearing in the news, at conferences, and around meeting tables. They included ephemeral rhetoric, marketing pabulum, and hints at something meaningful in the air. Over the last few years, the list has shifted a bit to be more hints about trends/concerns—phrases or words that point to or reflect external forces shaping giving more than “insider jargon.” If you’ve got buzzwords of either type, please send them to me via Twitter (@p2173).

DAOs. You’ve probably heard enough about blockchain by now. DAO stands for Distributed Autonomous Organization and is an idea promoted by enthusiasts of blockchain and other distributed ledgers as a new type of organizational structure. A DAO theoretically allows for a member-owned organization without central leadership because all decision-making authority is written into the software code. A **search** in October 2021 surfaced 470 DAOs. Most of these seemed to revolve around making money, while some were focused on artists, art collecting, and art investing.

Dark patterns. Dark patterns are user interfaces in digital systems that deceive or manipulate people into taking actions that benefit the company behind the system but not the user. A common example is the “play next video” feature. Fundraising sites that default to recurring payments raised awareness of the practice in the world of political donations; how common these manipulative tactics are in other fundraising is worth investigating.

Dataraising. Efforts to get people to give their data for a cause. See discussion on donating data on pages 37-39 in this volume.

Data Subject Access Rights. This is the right of a person to request information that companies hold on them. It is part of the Right of Access within many data protection regulations. Individuals can assign their rights to third parties (such as a union, collective, or nonprofit). These aggregated rights can then be acted upon to request data and enable the building of a “mirror database” by the third party to inform advocacy or organizing. See examples in this volume on page 37.

Geofence. A geofence is an invisible digital boundary set by a third party around a physical location to send messages to all cell phones found within. Geofences can be used by retailers to send ads to any cell phone within a prescribed distance of a store, for example. They are used by political parties to send messages to people in a specific location, such as a **house of worship**, or to get out the vote. Nonprofit communications consultants are promoting geofencing to their clients. Expect more text spam.

Givingscape. The landscape of giving products now marketed across the U.S. and elsewhere includes everything from text message giving, rounding up your receipt, cash register donations, donor-advised funds, foundations, etc. More information on the givingscape, its relationship to commodification, and the ways data and money flow through it can be found in *How We Give Now*.

GPT-3. This is a machine learning model, trained on internet data, that generates text. The acronym stands for the third generation of a Generative Pre-Trained Transformer. It was developed by **OpenAI** and enables anyone to enter a small amount of text and receive large amounts of text produced by “AI.” It has been used to write **news articles**, product descriptions, and at least one book (**Pharmako AI**). You may have read text generated by GPT-3 without knowing it. (This text was generated by a person, Lucy Bernholz.)

Metaverse. Originally a term from **fiction**, you can think of the metaverse as life inside the internet in which all our interactions exist in networked spaces. It’s a combination of video games, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR). It wouldn’t appear on this list of philanthropy buzzwords if the big tech companies weren’t now throwing millions of dollars into both the tech and the PR surrounding it, with Facebook now referring to itself as a “**metaverse company**.” Why does it matter to you? If your boss makes you use video conferencing software where photos of your colleagues float above a conference room background, that’s the metaverse. Look for nonprofits and foundations to get bombarded with hype about it in 2022. What are they really selling? Ever more data-extractive workplace software.

Mirror database. These are representative databases built by academic researchers or civil society groups to mirror the databases held by companies or governments. They are used to allow the researcher or civil society organization to better understand what information the companies hold and what patterns they can see but which are otherwise hidden to the public. They are increasingly important tools of advocacy and negotiation by consumer protection organizations and labor groups. Academic researchers build and depend on them to study the influences and practices of companies. The Mozilla Foundation recently launched an open-source browser tool (**Rally**) to enable more of such research and address the information imbalance between people and companies.

Urgency. Global warming has passed the point of no return. The experts tell us we have eight years to slow things down before all hell breaks loose. Democracy in the U.S. is under **direct assault**, and the probability of an electoral crisis in 2024 is greater than not. Foundations, governments, and the media will bombard us with a sense of urgency, but I’m skeptical as to how much will change in practice. In the meantime, continue to look to communities, activists, and distributed networks of people working to make change happen.

BONUS BUZZWORD

NFT. In case you haven’t had enough of blockchain talk, NFT (which stands for non-fungible tokens) are a way to make digital items distinct and non-interchangeable. Digital photos can be easily copied so they are abundant. Associating an original photo with an NFT enables us to distinguish the original from copies. NFT’s make unique versions of things that are otherwise easily replicated, allowing for ownership and provenance to be proven. Since capitalism depends on scarcity for value, NFTs are a way to make digital items rare and collectable. NFTs had a big year in the art world in 2020 and the buzz will continue in 2021.

PREDICTIONS FOR 2022

In 2020, I turned to the crowd for help with this section. It worked well, and I had hoped to do it again in 2021, but life intervened and I wasn't able to do so.

- We will see more high-profile cases of **philanthropic renaming**. Look for the continuation of efforts to remove the names of donors from buildings because of the wealth-making practices behind the donations. These include removals of the Sackler family name because of its role in selling **addictive opioids**, the Trump family because of illegal action by their foundation, donors who **failed to meet pledges**, and organizations/individuals tied to slaveholding.
- **Crypto donations** will increase. More organizations than ever will accept **donations** of cryptocurrencies.
- **Restrictions on the right to protest** will increase. States across the U.S. and nations around the world are implementing laws to prevent protest. Some of this is driven by the fossil fuel industry seeking to protect its infrastructure. Some of it is simple anti-democracy practice by increasingly authoritarian leadership.
- **The number of collectives** will increase. People are reinvigorating collectives as means to nurture and care for each other, share resources, limit their environmental impact, and promote their values or way of life. Artists, shared housing, freelancers, **writers**, and others are creating collectives (I'll acknowledge right now there will be no way to track this next year).
- **Accountability for foundation pledges** on racial equity will continue. Many promises were made in 2020 and many **tracked in 2021**. This external oversight will continue. Some of these pledges are likely to evolve into ongoing accountability practices. See next prediction.
- We can expect more independent **foundation accountability projects**. Big pledges for divestment, equity, and climate mitigation and growing skepticism about big philanthropy will lead to more projects like the Foundation Practice Rating project that launched in the UK in 2020.
- We will see more **hybrid public art projects**. The practice of building digital databases (accessible everywhere) of physically specific art or activism will increase. This **database of anti-racist art** in Minneapolis, along with its **partner project on COVID-19 related public art**, brings together digital data, activism,

art, healing, outrage, grief, and so much more. It's also an example of how we seek **to gather across distance and time**, or, in the case of a world of endemic viruses, across isolation even in proximity. Expect to see much more of this as artists and performing venues shift from their extraordinary emergency virtual adaptation mode to hybrid futures.

- **NFTs will boom for another year, then bust.** An NFT (Non-Fungible Token) is a means of making digital artifacts “one-of-a-kind.” They had a boom year in 2021 as a means of selling digital art. The novelty will continue for a bit longer, but I predict a scandal in the not-too-distant future.
- Gazillionaires will continue to **move away from establishing foundations and toward LLCs and donor-advised funds.** The more scrutiny on foundations, the more the wealthy will seek to keep their giving private and control the publicity around it. Foundations make this hard to do, while DAFs, LLCs, and other intermediaries make it easier.
- More people from the tech industry will resign in disgust and establish their own nonprofit organizations to propose solutions to the harms of their former employers (see The Center for Humane Technology and the Integrity Institute). We will be better off if they tried to get jobs with, or put their resources behind, the numerous community-rooted organizations that have been doing this work for decades. See, for example, the organizations that make up **ConsentfulTech**.

SCORECARD: RENOVATIONS TO 2021 PREDICTIONS

Making predictions is still a pretentious, but fun, thing to do. Holding myself accountable is less fun, but that's how I do it.

PREDICTION	RIGHT	WRONG	NOTES
2020 will have the highest-ever level of grants from DAFs as percentage of assets. (Woodrow Rosenbaum)	✓		
More countries around the world will introduce restrictions on foreign funding (as with India's new FCRA 2020 laws) (Rhodri Davies)	✓		This report from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights discusses how this is happening within the EU. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-challenges-facing-civil-society_en.pdf
The "Trump Bump" that was experienced by progressive or civil liberties-focused nonprofits in 2017 will be replaced by the "SCOTUS bump," as organizations focused on civil rights, civil liberties, immigration, workers safety, health care, and environmental protections see funding spikes.	✓		This is not quite the example I had in mind, but this is one story that shows how politicized things are getting. https://www.vice.com/en/article/akgaep/charity-sees-massive-donations-boost-after-criticism-from-right-wing-politicians
The big six U.S. technology companies—Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, and Twitter—will at least double their corporate spending on lobbying and charitable giving/community partnerships, as regulators increase their scrutiny of the industry.	✓		Add Chinese technology to the list. A similar phenomenon unfolded in China as the government took several major steps regarding independent technology companies/fortunes. https://fortune.com/2021/08/06/china-big-tech-crackdown-billionaires-philanthropy-giving-donations/
Virtual volunteering will reach new heights and stay there. (Jayne Cravens)	✓		
Corporate volunteering will nosedive and take a long time to recover.	✓		
Experimentation with and use of forms, such as trusts or data collaboratives, will grow as governments engage communities in use of administrative data and pushback against data extraction continues. (Michelle Shevin, Sean McDonald)	✓		

SCORECARD: RENOVATIONS TO 2021 PREDICTIONS (CONTINUED)

PREDICTION	RIGHT	WRONG	NOTES
We still won't get reliable, auditable, longitudinal data about giving from commercial funding platforms (Venmo, GoFundMe, etc.), but awareness of this need will rise.	✓	✓	These proprietary platforms are contributing to the privatization of data about the social sector.
Nonprofit organizations, especially (but not only) advocacy organizations, will increase their focus on the physical and digital security of their staff, volunteers, and board members. This will be reflected in the development of risk management plans and budget allocations.	✓		
More high-net worth donors will declare their intention to or announce a time frame for "spending out" their foundations or philanthropic institutions.	?	?	I still have not figured out a way to track this, especially as it seems more HNW donors are using LLCs and DAFs.
We'll start wondering in 2021, but may not see data on this until 2022, what happened to all the women and the (already few) Black, Indigenous, and people of color in nonprofit leadership roles, as the economic fallout and closure of nonprofits hits these professionals first.		✓	It is too soon to tell, though focused media coverage on burnout, especially among people of color, increased. See, for example, https://nonprofitquarterly.org/backlash-burnout-and-poc-leaders/
Climate migration will become a common issue for wealthy people around the globe, not only the poor, and so media narratives, public policy, and insurance strategies will change.	✓		Nothing but truth, here. See this: "No One Is Safe: Extreme Weather Batters the Wealthy World" https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/17/climate/heatwave-weather-hot.html
There will be state-level regulatory changes in the way donor-advised funds work and spend their resources. (Adin Miller)		✓	California legislation moved forward, and federal legislation was proposed, but neither was implemented in 2021.
Nonprofit boards and leaders will finally demand guidance/support from capacity-building programs and consultants about digital governance, as ransomware continues to plague the sector and the shadow of the Blackbaud data breach (and subsequent lawsuits) lengthens.	✓	✓	Ransomware reached new heights (new lows). Nonprofits and foundations were clearly targeted and suffered. But capacity building that prioritizes digital knowhow alongside financial, operational, and human resource management is still lagging. We worked on it: https://digitalimpact.io/upgrade/
We will see more new forms of collective governance—for money and data—emerge as well as an increased use of trusts, collaboratives, commons-based models, and cooperatives. "Exiting to community" will trend. (Divya Siddarth, Woodrow Rosenbaum)	✓	✓	The discussion grew for sure. NYC even saw the launch of a cooperative alternative to Uber and Lyft. But...data? We still don't have what we need. Sigh.
Someone will find a way to measure nonprofit closures in real-ish time, rather than waiting years for the IRS to declare non-filing organizations closed. The numbers will be big.		✓	I was so wrong on this that I've completely changed my mind. Given the rise of dark money and anti-transparency efforts, I'd say we're heading ever further away from tracking organizational lifecycles systematically and publicly.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE

TOOLS/RESOURCES:

Access suggestions for Public Events:

<https://www.sinsinvalid.org/news-1/2020/6/8/access-suggestions-for-public-events>

Ayeta: Digital Rights Toolkit developed in and for African civil society by the Paradigm Initiative,

<https://paradigmhq.org/programs/digital-rights/ayeta/>

Organizers Activity Book: Tactical Tech Collective developed this book of exercises for organizers within civil society covering: an introduction on how personal data is used in event organizing, registration tools, travel bookings, social media at events, and online conference software, <https://ourdataourselves.tacticaltech.org/posts/the-organisers-activity-book/>

“Portals to beautiful futures,” Guild of Future Architects and Omidyar Network,

<https://omidyar.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Portals-to-Beautiful-Futures-2021.pdf>

Stanford-MIT Healthy Elections Project, Resources on election administration and count from U.S. 2020 election,

<https://healthyelections.org/>

The Tech Worker Handbook, resources for tech workers looking to speak out on issues of concern,

<https://techworkerhandbook.org/>

The Revolution Must Be Accessible: A guide for building access-centered movement education,

https://www.canva.com/design/DAEDHGN5pxI/izkCgCrsPKuKrG_KTMT9ZA/view#2

Upgrade/Digital Impact: Free materials for nonprofits to learn more about organizational data governance and digital public policy issues that intersect with their work. Built with and for nonprofits, <https://digitalimpact.io/upgrade/>

TOOLS/RESOURCES:

Moya Bailey. *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women’s Digital Resistance*. New York, NYU Press, 2021.

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-- , *Gathering: A Prerequisite for Democracy*, Knight and Kettering Foundations, 2020.

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William A. Darity, Jr. and A. Kirsten Mullen, *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century*, Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2020.

Kate Darling, *The New Breed: What our History with Animal Reveals about the Our Future with Robots*, New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co, 2021.

Daniel Greene, *The Promise of Access: Technology, Inequality, and the Political Economy of Hope*, MIT Press, 2021.

Jan Grue, (English translation from Norwegian by B. L. Crook), *I Live a Life Like Yours*, New York, MacMillan, 2021.

Eliot Higgins, *We Are Bellingcat: Global Crime, Online Sleuths, and the Bold Future of News*, New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.

Sara Horowitz, *Mutualism: Building the Next Economy from the Ground Up*, New York: Penguin Random House, 2021.

Tim Hwang, **Subprime Attention Crisis**, New York, NY: Macmillan, 2020.

Shannon Mattern, *A City is Not a Computer*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021.

Clara Miller, "Trouble in Paradigm: Foundations' Bargain with the Devil," *Nonprofit Quarterly*, June 30, 2021, <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/trouble-in-paradigm-foundations-bargain-with-the-devil/>

Maribel Morey, ***White Philanthropy: Carnegie Corporation's An American Dilemma and the Making of a White World Order***, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

Thomas S. Mullaney, Benjamin Peters, Mar Hicks, Kavita Philip, *Your Computer is on Fire*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021.

Arvind Narayanan, Arunesh Mathur, Marshini Chetty, and Mihir Kshirsagar, "Dark Patterns: Past, Present and Future," *Communications of the ACM*, September 2020.
<https://cacm.acm.org/magazines/2020/9/246937-dark-patterns/fulltext>

Annalee Newitz, *Four Lost Cities: A Secret History of the Urban Age*, New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2021.

Rey Ramsey, "How our Foundation Confronting Racial Inequities Through Investments, Not Just Grants," <https://www.goodcitizen.com/how-our-foundation-is-confronting-racial-inequities-through-investments-not-just-grants/>

Rob Reich, Mehran Sahami, and Jeremy Weinstein, *System Error: Where Big Tech Went Wrong and How We Can Reboot*, New York: Harper Collins, 2021.

Melvin L. Rogers and Jack Turner, *African American Political Thought*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Paul Shoemaker, *Taking Charge of Change: How Rebuilders Solve Hard Problems*, Harper Collins, 2021.

Clint Smith, *How the Word is Passed*, New York: Little Brown & CO, 2021.

Cyndi Suarez, “Why Civil Society Needs to pay Attention to AI,” *Nonprofit Quarterly*, July. 15, 2021
<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/why-civil-society-needs-to-pay-attention-to-ai/>

Keeanga- Yamahatta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, Haymarket Books, 2016.

Joseph Turow, *The Voice Catchers: How Marketers Listen in to Exploit Your Feelings, Your Privacy, and Your Wallet*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020.

Edgar Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance*, Second Edition, New York: Penguin Random House, 2021.

Xiaowei Wang, *Blockchain Chicken Farm: And Other Stories of Tech in China's Countryside*, New York, NY: Macmillan, 2020.

NEWSLETTERS

Roxane Gay, *The Audacity*

Robin Sloan's newsletter, <https://society.robinsloan.com/>

Six Signals, <https://ethicalfutureslab.substack.com/>

Micah Sifry, <https://theconnector.substack.com/>

Tressie McMillan Cottam, *Essaying* (In August 2021, Dr. McMillan Cottam began writing a column for *The New York Times*. It's not clear to me if that **newsletter** will replace *Essaying*.)

PODCASTS

Public Books podcast, with Data & Society, season three, “Becoming Data,”
<https://www.publicbooks.org/category/podcast/season-three/>

Does Not Compute, podcast from CITAP at UNC, <https://citap.unc.edu/does-not-compute/>

No Compromise, Pulitzer Prize winning podcast on social media, outrage, and guns,
<https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510356/no-compromise>

Zoe Chase, *The Improvement Association*, podcast on election fraud in North Carolina in 2018,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/22/podcasts/election-fraud-improvement-association.html>

How to Save a Planet, <https://gimletmedia.com/shows/howtosaveaplanet>

ENDNOTES

1. In the age of computer-aided design (CAD), draftsmen don't exist anymore. CAD was just coming into practice at the time I'm referring to, and there were still people (the ones I knew were all men) who drew every draft of every blueprint by hand. They've gone the way of typing pools.
2. <https://www.ytashawomack.com/blog>
3. Octavia E. Butler, in response to a question from a student, as reported in "A few rules for predicting the future," reflecting on an essay in *Essence Magazine*. <https://commongood.cc/reader/a-few-rules-for-predicting-the-future-by-octavia-e-butler/>. The quote appeared in the 2021 exhibit, "Mothership" at the Oakland Museum of California, rewritten so the first clause is as it appears in the text here. In the original, the opening clause is reported as "I didn't make up the problems."
4. Imani Perry and Arundhati Roy, "The Pandemic Is a Portal," Video recording from Haymarket Books and the Department of African American Studies at Princeton University, <https://aas.princeton.edu/news/pandemic-portal>
5. See, for example, Alex Steffens, "Discontinuity is the Job," <https://alexsteffens.substack.com/p/discontinuity-is-the-job> (August 8, 2021) or John Kao, "Disruption or Discontinuity – Why the Distinction Matters to All of Us," *Forbes*, October 22, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkao/2020/10/22/disruption-or-discontinuitywhy-the-distinction-matters-to-all-of-us/>
6. Justin Fox, "The Disruption Myth," *The Atlantic*, October 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/10/the-disruption-myth/379348/>
7. Maribel Morey, *White Philanthropy: Carnegie Corporation's An American Dilemma and the Making of a White World Order*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2021; Megan Ming Francis, (2019) "The Price of Civil Rights: Black Lives, White Funding, and Movement Capture," *Law and Society Review*, (53:1), pp. 275-309, <https://doi-org.stanford.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/lasr.12384>
8. Sara Hernden, *What Can a Body Do? How We Meet the Built World*, New York, NY: Random House, 2020.
9. Sara Hernden, "The Simplest Tool for Improving Cities is Also Free," *The New York Times*, July 16, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/16/opinion/cities-reopening-time.html>
10. Annalee Newitz, *Scatter, Adapt and Remember: How Humans Will Survive a Mass Extinction*, New York: Doubleday, 2013, p 7.
11. In thinking of the term collective architecture, I discovered there is an architectural practice that goes by this name based in the U.K. Scrolling through their website, I found beautiful projects that emphasized community wellbeing, sustainable design, and participation. The firm is owned by an employee-run trust. It seemed like a good fit. <https://www.collectivearchitecture.com>. That said, I'm using the term as an idea, not as it refers specifically to this company.
12. Jeffrey Toobin, "The Conservative Pipeline to the Supreme Court," *The New Yorker*, April 10, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/17/the-conservative-pipeline-to-the-supreme-court>; Ben Soskis "A History of Associational Life and the Nonprofit Sector in the United States," in Walter W. Powell and Patricia Bromley (eds) *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook* 3rd edition, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020. pp 19-80.
13. Jane Mayer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Radical Right*, New York, NY: Doubleday, 2016.
14. <https://casbs.stanford.edu/episode-8-can-we-rebuild-social-cohesion-us>
15. Megan Ming Francis, "The Price of Civil Rights: Black Lives, White Funding and Movement Capture," *Law and Society Review*, (53:1) January 29, 2019; Maribel Morey, *White Philanthropy: Carnegie Corporation's An American Dilemma and the Making of a White World Order*, Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2021; Erica Kohl-Arenas, *The Self-Help Myth: How Philanthropy Fails to Alleviate Poverty*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015.
16. See <http://www.redistrictingmajorityproject.com/> The Redistricting Majority Project, A Program of the Republican State Leadership Committee.
17. See Levi Boxell, Matthew Gentzkow, and Jesse M. Shapiro, "Cross-Country Trends in Affective Polarization," August 2021, <https://www.brown.edu/Research/Shapiro/pdfs/cross-polar.pdf>

18. Sergio Chejfec, *The Incompletes*, Open Letter Press, 2019 translated by Heather Cleary, p. 23.
19. Malkia Devich Cyril, Lyle Matthew Kan, Ben Francisco Maulbeck, and Lori Villarosa, "Mismatched: Philanthropy's Response to the Call for Racial Justice," Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, 2021, <https://racialequity.org/mismatched/>.
20. See Robert J. Brulle, Galen Hall, Loredana Loy and Kennedy Schell-Smith, (2021) "Obstructing action: foundation funding and U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations," *Climatic Change*, (166:17). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-021-03117-w>
21. See Ben Soskis, "What we talk about when we talk about democratizing philanthropy," The Urban Institute, June 20, 2017 <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/what-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-democratizing-philanthropy>
22. We don't yet have data about how many Americans claimed the \$300 tax deduction for charitable giving that came with the CARES Act. Data on those claiming a tax deduction in 2018 showed about 10% of Americans doing so, after major changes in the tax code in 2017.
23. Michael Kavate, "Six New Efforts to Get Philanthropists to Open Up Their Wallets," *Inside Philanthropy*, August 16, 2021, <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2021/8/16/six-new-efforts-to-get-philanthropists-to-open-up-their-wallets>
24. Teddy Schleifer, "The Stratosphere," August 17, 2021, <https://ckarchive.com/b/qdu8h7h9re35>
25. The workshop is documented here: <https://designjustice.org/news-1/2021/philanthropy-workshop>. More information on the design justice network can be found here: <https://designjustice.org/>. I am grateful to the leaders of the network for allowing me to reproduce this work. I did not attend the workshop.
26. Dr. Samella Lewis was the first African American woman to earn a PhD in Art History and the first tenured Black professor at Scripps College. The Samella Lewis Contemporary Art Collection was established at Scripps in her honor in 2007. <https://rcwg.scrippscollege.edu/blog/exhibitions/current/she-rises-selections-from-the-samella-lewis-collection-of-contemporary-art/>
27. <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/lifecycle/end-of-support/end-of-support-2025>
28. Toshi Reagon and adrienne marie brown have a great discussion about this on episode four/Chapter four of their podcast, *Octavia's Parables*. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/parable-of-the-sower-chapter-4/id1519024926?i=1000484648929>
29. Luxury surveillance is a term coined by Chris Gilliard, known as @hypervisible on Twitter. See this profile: Will Oremus, "A Detroit community college professor is fighting Silicon Valley's surveillance machine. People are listening," *The Washington Post*, September 17, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/09/16/chris-gilliard-sees-digital-redlining-in-surveillance-tech/>
30. Damian Carrington, "IPCC report's verdict on climate crimes of humanity: guilty as hell," *The Guardian*, August 9, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/aug/09/ipcc-reports-verdict-on-climate-crimes-of-humanity-guilty-as-hell>
31. Full disclosure: the Dark Patterns Tip Line was developed by Stephanie Nguyen and Jasmine McNealy as part of a civic science fellowship from the Rita Allen Foundation and was initially hosted at Consumer Reports. The Digital Civil Society Lab took over the site in September 2021 and invites professors and teachers to use it for research and teaching purposes.
32. Chapter Six of *How We Give Now* addresses data donations directly. See also Lucy Bernholz and Brigitte Pawliw-Fry, "The Looming Fight Over How We Give our Data," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter, 2022, pp 24-31.
33. See Lucy Bernholz and Brigitte Pawliw-Fry, "The Looming Fight Over How We Give our Data," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2022, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_looming_fight_over_how_we_give_our_data
34. See this report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Facial Recognition Technology: Current and Planned Uses by Federal Agencies," August 2021, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-526.pdf>
35. For more on the harms of privatization see Chiara Cordelli, *The Privatized State*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020.
36. See Lucy Bernholz, *Blueprint 2021: Philanthropy and Digital Civil Society*, Stanford, CA., 2021, p. 6. <https://pacscenter.stanford.edu/publication/philanthropy-and-digital-civil-society-blueprint-2021/>
37. Manjana Milkoreit, (2017) "Imaginary Politics: Climate Change and Making the Future," *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, (5:62), University of California Press. <https://online.ucpress.edu/elementa/article/doi/10.1525/elementa.249/112449/Imaginary-politics-Climate-change-and-making-the> My thanks to Anne Focke for bringing this work to my attention.

