PHILANTHROPY AND
DIGITAL CIVIL SOCIETY:

BLUEPRINT

THE ANNUAL INDUSTRY FORECAST

by Lucy Bernholz

2024

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WHAT IS THIS MONOGRAPH?

Philanthropy and Digital Civil Society: Blueprint 2024 is the 15th 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, trying to not get hurt by exposed rebar. I eavesdropped on discussions with contractors, planning agencies, homeowners, and draftsmen[1]—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 and 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 in the fediverse (Mastodon) and on Bluesky at #blueprint24.

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 50 most influential people. I studied history and earned a BA from Yale University and an MA and PhD from Stanford University. In the fediverse I'm known as **@p2173@norcal.social**, I'm **@p2173 on Bluesky**, and my website is **www.lucybernholz.com**.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

In addition to my blog and website, information about Stanford's Digital Civil Society Lab is at **https://pacscenter.stanford.edu/research/digital-civil-society-lab/**. 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. The Digital Civil Society Lab curates, creates, and shares free resources related to data governance at **www.digitalimpact.io**.

"PAST PERFORMANCE IS NO GUARANTEE OF FUTURE RESULTS."[2]

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission requires mutual fund advertisements to run this disclaimer about their products. We're in a time when a similar disclaimer is necessary in other domains as well: from economic models and methods of measuring inequality to climate predictions to monitoring infectious diseases to forecasts about philanthropy and digital civil society. Throughout this year's Blueprint*, I hope to show how our current efforts at understanding the present and future are failing—largely because we're using out-of-date data, built on assumptions that no longer hold, and with models that can't account for the kinds of dynamics we think are coming but have yet to experience.*

INTRODUCTION

Today's headlines routinely declare the dangers of COVID-19, climate change, artificial intelligence (AI), and autocracy. These daily headlines warn of both imminent and existential horrors from a heating planet and uncontrolled AI development, while political discourse (in the United States, at least) involves a focus on one candidate campaigning on threats to individual people, pledging to "slit throats" of government workers, **execute generals**, and investigate **news outlets for treason** (and that was just one week in September). Wars, invasions, terrorism, and violence implicate nations and rogue states alike. One thing became clear in 2023: The rules of war and the international order no longer hold. To paraphrase Hannah Arendt, we seem to be living through the banality of apocalyptic predictions.

It's not just the headlines. More important, on all fronts, everyday people are losing their homes to climate change, losing out on jobs and benefits because of AI, exhausting themselves protecting democratic norms and practices from those who seek to hold power, and dying from or being disabled by COVID. Real harms are happening now.

Regarding climate catastrophe, pandemics, uncontrolled AI, autocracy, and the "international rules-based order," we are now in the future many of us feared.

Regarding climate catastrophe, pandemics, uncontrolled AI, autocracy, and the "international rules-based order," we are now in the future that many of us feared, and it seems we haven't learned many helpful lessons. We will be unprepared for the next pandemic. Since I am one of tens of millions of people barely surviving the "last" one, this is particularly bad news.[3] Logic—or the "economic man" (*Homo economicus*) that political scientists and economists like to manufacture for their analyses—suggests that people learn lessons. The lessons of the coronavirus pandemic should be (1) prepare for another, (2) invest in public health, (3) take basic health precautions, and (4) build an economy that keeps people safe. But none of these four actions are part of broad political discourse. The result? Having survived a global pandemic, many nations are doing less to prepare for the next one than we were doing before the one we're in. Instead, we seem to be learning lessons of selfishness, defensiveness, and hatred.

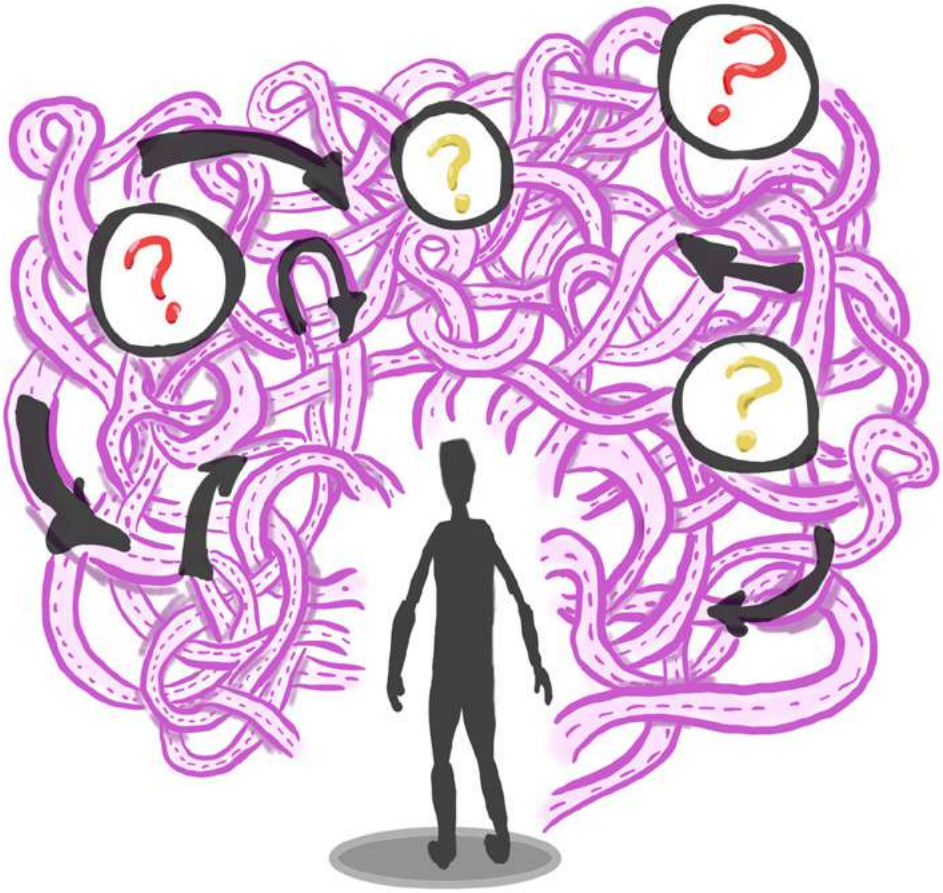
I yearn for an era that has never existed—one in which we commit ourselves to democratically run institutions built for inclusivity, universally accessible, and exalted. Today, some such systems exist, but, at least in the U.S., they are being derided, defunded, and diminished. Some of this is driven by a false sense of scarcity. Most of it is deliberate destruction by political and economic actors. The book bans, the library defunding, the fights against African American studies, school board violence,

and the attacks by governors and legislatures on universities (see Florida, Wisconsin, and West Virginia) are all direct, intentional attacks on democracy. The message is clear. There is a minoritarian power movement in the U.S. supporting an ongoing assault on the institutions of a healthy, multiracial democracy. That—a healthy, multiracial democracy—is what they are fighting against. From the (actual) steps of the Capitol building to the dispersed infrastructure of **education**, learning, and cultural inclusivity, the attacks continue.

It's not just institutions that are under attack, it's also norms and rights. Laws against protest continue to proliferate. "Freedom of expression" is now used as a justification for violence—in communities, at universities, from elected officials, and from social network owners. Internet shutdowns are hard to impose in the U.S. but easy elsewhere. They are a very effective form of stopping assembly, expression, and voter participation. We are living in an era when one might hope for stronger connections and big investments in interdependence. We're still in a global pandemic, and a devastated climate is wreaking havoc everywhere, on everyone. Rather than facing these challenges together, national politicians and many media outlets are actively pushing people farther and farther apart.

From endlessly extractive economies, we're moving (erratically, and with significant pushback) to ones no longer based on endless growth. From the **rule of law** in the U.S. and other established democracies, we're moving to … something else. In a 2023 *Philadelphia Inquirer* column decrying the way the media are contributing to the U.S. political situation, Will Bunch wrote:

> America is entering its most important, pivotal year since 1860, and the U.S. media is doing a terrible job explaining what is actually happening. … What we are building toward on Nov. 5, 2024, might have the outward trappings of an election, but it is really a show of force. … [There is] a dangerous antisocial movement that has embraced many of **the tenets of fascism**, from **calls for violence** to its dehumanizing of "others"—from **desperate refugees** at the border to **transgender youth**. …



> These are the stakes: dueling visions for America—not Democratic or Republican, with parades and red, white, and blue balloons, but brutal fascism or flawed democracy.[4]

This period will go down in history as a rupture. Our times will be looked back on as being "like a glitch in a CCTV recording … a few juddering frames and static, after which the picture returns and everything has changed."[5]

Living through such a rupture is different than looking back on one. We don't know what lies ahead. Many countries have transitioned in and out of democracy. There are exciting **new models of democracy**[6] being tried around the world. Some of these models take deliberate advantage of digital technologies (crowdsourcing constitutions, for example, and allowing diasporic citizens to participate). Other innovations include citizen assemblies, which use random selection for representation and involve intense, facilitated deliberation. Democracy can change and is changing. It's our job to change it to be more inclusive, more responsive, and more robust.

When we think about digital civil society and philanthropy in democratic systems, we must account for the dynamism and uncertainty all around us. Democracy can change and is changing; it's our job to change it to be more inclusive, more responsive, and more robust.

When we think about digital civil society and philanthropy as actors in democratic systems, we must acknowledge and account for the dynamism and uncertainty all around us. It's one thing to know where we've been; it's another to know where we are going. This version of the *Blueprint* doesn't pretend to predict the future. Instead, I've written it to help you think about your work, your activism, your contributions at a time when everything is changing—including the ways we give and make change.

Looking beyond the formal mechanisms of governing to the structures and roles of civil society, we see similar degrees of foment. Civil societies have changed from a sector of foundations and nonprofits to one that includes LLCs, informal groups funded by crowds, data trusts (that hold and manage data, not money), DAOs (decentralized, autonomous organizations),[7] temporary online associations, and dark money. Civil society organizations are being used and abused for political purposes, for financial gain, to manipulate online publics, and as a means of justifying interest in new technologies. They are also supporting planet-saving climate action, nurturing a new generation of activists and advocates, and being flexed and strained and reinvented even while being attacked at almost every turn. (See sidebar on page 7.)

ATTACKS ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE UNITED STATES

- Book bans—1,477 individual bans on 2,570 unique titles;[8] there were attempts to ban books in 48 of the 50 states in 2022.[9] Book bans have led to calls to defund libraries in several states.[10] As of September 2023, nine of 50 U.S. states had withdrawn from the American Library Association (a 150-year-old national nonprofit membership group).[11]
- Legislation against protest—45 states considered 269 bills and passed 15 laws.[12]
- Laws suppressing the vote—45 states considered 323 bills and passed 13 laws.[13]
- Laws suppressing curriculum choices in K–12 and state colleges—49 states considered 619 bills, with 241 laws passed at the local or state level.[14]
- Hyperpartisanship about voter registration is growing—45 states are considering 322 laws that would limit voting.[15]
- People's participation in running elections, as either officials or volunteers, is declining at rates that are leaving some jurisdictions dangerously understaffed.[16]

The attacks on democratic institutions are diverse, but not independent. The proposed laws are modeled on legislation written by think tanks such as the Manhattan Institute,[17] the Heritage Foundation,[18] and affiliated advocacy organizations.[19] To be clear: There are coordinated efforts that use civil society organizations in the United States to weaken or destroy key institutions of democracy, such as schools, universities, libraries, and nonpartisan election offices. These strategies are used to attack democracies around the globe.

The battleground for civil society is civil society.

Both the efforts to suppress or proscribe liberties such as peaceful assembly and the efforts to protect those liberties are led by civil society organizations and funded by philanthropy. In other words, the battleground for civil society is civil society.

Changes in civil society have been underway for decades, and they're not linear. Somewhere in our future lies the moment when the old gets outnumbered by the new. The old won't disappear (especially if it's endowed), but it will be surrounded by something else. The rise of philanthropic LLCs and use of DAFs (donor advised funds) by billionaires shows this in action: They're increasing in size and number. But we still focus on the number of foundations and nonprofits when we quantify the sector. This is what discontinuity feels like—new entities defying hidebound rules and assumptions.[20]

Existing organizations fight to continue existing—they're not fighting for democracy or democratic values.

Change is painful. Extant organizations and their lobbyists fight hard to prevent it. Take a close look at the policy agendas of the foundation/nonprofit associations in your country. Fighting to preserve their privilege is what they're doing. This is important to keep in mind. Existing organizations fight to continue existing—they're not fighting for democracy or democratic values. They're fighting to preserve their role in the existing order. And the new groups on the block? They're not fighting for democratic norms either, though they love to use "democratizing" as a marketing pitch.[21] In most cases these new structures (LLCs, DAOs, DAFs) are just new products fighting for shelf space in the "givingscape."

Like its 14 predecessors, this year's *Blueprint* includes essays, buzzwords, and a scorecard of last year's predictions. What it doesn't include is a set of predictions for the year 2024. I no longer think we have the insight to make such timed calls. Our means of analysis, from **decentralized networks of futurists** doing their work in public to opaque algorithms buried inside institutions, are also in flux. When both the **variables and the equations are new**, then the predictions—and their timing—are far too uncertain to make claims of next month, next year, next decade. It seems as likely that 2024 will bring massive, structural changes to nature, governments, borders, and economies as that it will be "just another year." Instead of predictions, I'm trying something new this year. In the chapter "Critical Questions," I've posited some ideas for you to consider within the context of your work and with the partners and colleagues with whom you pursue your mission.

Fifteen years after writing the first *Blueprint*, I think it is time for more than a little change—in civil society, philanthropy, and this document. In the six years since I began work on ***How We Give Now: A Philanthropic Guide for the Rest of Us*** (MIT Press, 2022), I've come to think that we lack the language to explain what we're actually doing. *Philanthropy* is a term that is much loathed by many. Does it even describe the ways we give? Is it an appropriate descriptor for both commercial products sold as financial management tools and helping one's neighbors in a health crisis? Are foundations and charitable nonprofits, which dominate most discussions of philanthropy and civil society, still as central to the actual practices that people choose to make change? In an age of mobile phone-enabled participation, flash mobs of crowdfunded creativity and protest, bots, robots, and AI-enabled advisors, what does participation mean? What does it mean to assemble or associate?

In an age of mobile phone-enabled participation, flash mobs of crowdfunded creativity and protest, bots, robots, and AI-enabled advisors, what does participation mean? What does it mean to assemble or associate?

MAKING SENSE AMID UNCERTAINTY

Deceleration, unpredictability, and a time to experiment

As I've argued consistently since 2010, we are in an era of widespread institutional innovation. From online patient groups to DAOs, from crowdfunded creativity to massively distributed task-based workforces, and from global networks of 3D-printing prosthetic makers to anonymous troll farms, organizations today have the innate opportunity to function globally as easily as they used to operate at a neighborhood level. Institutional creation and innovation exist in abundance. There is tremendous creativity and (some) diversity in the ranks of the people who are imagining and proposing alternatives to corporatized AI systems, centralized political power, or managed "free markets." These efforts are, for the most part, not coming from elected officials. They are not being legislated. They are work-arounds, alternatives, sub-rosa imaginings, and returns or reinventions of communal practices that predate the corporatized, financialized, extractive systems we know so well. They are slow and deep and move at a speed of human connection, not at the overhyped pace of techno-promises.

To the extent that civil society refers to community-driven, pluralistic alternatives to the mandated or market-driven mainstream, this is civil society's time to shine even as we pursue sometimes-painful changes.

Faced with the choice between painful change or a suicidal status quo, those with status (and power) tend to double down on the quo. To the extent that civil society refers to community-driven, pluralistic alternatives to the mandated or market-driven mainstream, then, this is civil society's time to shine even as we pursue sometimes-painful changes. This makes it a great time to slow down and experiment. And there are innumerable experiments underway—around the globe, in cities and rural areas, being led by all kinds of people except those with lots of money or traditional power.

This makes the typical reviews and analyses of philanthropy part of the problem. Those who have achieved great riches, and the industries of advisors that serve them, have little incentive to challenge the current system. The things they invent, promote, and invest in are those that further

secure their wealth.[22] They won't be the source of alternatives that really would be democratizing (as opposed to using that phrase for marketing) or that could equalize wealth or power. It's not where new thinking is going to come from. It's not where sustainable, pre-/post-capitalistic practices of economic equality or community health are going to be reimagined, nurtured, or built anew.

Geologists read the Earth and can point to periods of tremendous and relatively sudden change—called *discontinuities*—written in rock. Historians who look back at the early 2020s will be looking at signs of great change not in the rock but in the written, texted, and emoji-ed record, assuming there are any accessible archives of our digital communication. That was the era, they might say, when climate breakdown started outrunning the best models, when once-in-a-century events happened everywhere all at once. And then repeated. They might note the hold on power by white supremacists and extreme right-wing politicians across the globe. They might also note the rapid pace at which generative artificial intelligence tools went from speculation to spectacle to obscure and hidden powers built into every type of consumer software.

We are not in a new normal—we are in an expanding rupture filled with unpredictable changes and ripple effects.

Individually and collectively, we've been thrown off-balance by technologies we've created and the damage we've done, causing extensive physical and moral harm. As with all things human, neither the damage suffered nor the profits gained from these changes are distributed equally or fairly. Although those who've caused the greatest damage to the planet are feeling the effects of their actions much later than those who didn't, no one is immune. We are not in a new normal—we are in an expanding rupture filled with unpredictable changes and ripple effects. Can people continue to live where they've lived for millennia? How much biodiversity is already too far gone, and how quickly will ecosystem collapse spread beyond singular spots to broad swaths?

Surrounded by uncertainty, people are both pulling back and stepping forward. It's hard, in the moment, to analyze all the information, consider all the opportunities, and hold in one's mind all the simultaneous, mutually excluding arguments being made by economists, political scientists, pastors, and politicians. I wonder what an historian in the years 2033, 2053, or 2173 might call this period. We are living through the storm, not yet able to name it or see beyond it to calm the waters.

Philanthropy and civil society are also in flux. Their changes are shaped by, and in

turn shape, larger political and economic forces. Given this, policy recommendations that declare setting up nonprofit governance mechanisms as the solution to political and economic problems are even more out of touch than ever before.[23]

Efforts to destroy democracy are challenging to discuss. Perhaps it's because they are so ubiquitous and seemingly diverse (transgender bathroom rights and libraries? the right to protest and public school funding?) as to seem like unrelated acts. The mainstream media discusses democracy's challenges as if they were part of a natural process, like aging. I disagree.

Democracy is weak—and weakening—in the United States because it is being attacked. Democratic decline is not inevitable; in the case of the U.S. in 2023, the attacks are deliberate.[24] I can't point to organized efforts on the front end that connect all the different actions to weaken democracy, but I do believe that all the many, varied efforts to hold on to minority rule and power lead us in the same direction as if they all were coordinated. And here I mean "minority" in at least three ways: a political party run by a minority of its members, a minoritarian culture of white nationalism,[25] and, numerically, a minority of people.

Seemingly disparate actions interact with and multiply the impact of the others: the Alabama Legislature's defiance of Supreme Court rulings on gerrymandering (did they think the court would enable them?); the harassment of disinformation researchers by U.S. congressmen; violent murders by white supremacists; ongoing support for an ex-president facing 91 felony counts; the continuation of lies and lobbying by fossil fuel companies; the glorification of those who are ready to "colonize" Mars; and on and on. It means we celebrate runaway technologies that create vast wealth for a few at the expense of economic stability for everyone else. If we extrapolate from our public response to the pandemic and apply what we find to any of the other existential issues we face, we can see that we're driving ourselves toward environmental and planetary collapse, led by a minority of people for whom existing systems have always worked better than for anyone else.

There are very different stories playing out at the household and community levels. Here I can't use "we," because there's great variety. There are as many stories of community care as there are communities. Mutual aid and peer-to-peer lending and economic alternatives and culturally specific preparation for disease and climate mitigation and regenerative agriculture and sustainable innovation and age-old wisdom—all are thriving. Unions and the labor movement in the U.S. may be one of the few national trends that reveal the existence and the collective power of communities. There are great and hopeful stories to share and learn from and build upon. You can check in with **One Project**, read ***Scalawag***, learn from **7 Directions of Service**, get involved with **MediaJustice**, or consider the recommendations made in the ***Our Common Purpose*** report for examples of beautiful, possible futures. People actively engaged in the communities around them or with whom they share some connection know these stories. I'd like to believe that you, dear reader, as well-positioned as you are, being someone interested and, I assume, engaged in civil society and philanthropy, are actively involved in and aware of communities like these. If you're not, I will ask the question: Why not?

As the introduction makes clear, I have more questions and fewer answers. I am hopeful for communities, while being terrified by national and global politics.

I am hopeful for communities, while being terrified by national and global politics.

SENSEMAKING WORKSHEETS

HOW CAN WE MAKE SENSE OF ALL THIS?

How do we make sense of and give meaning to our collective experience? In some quarters, this is called *sensemaking*. How do we move forward in a period of such tremendous change and uncertainty, when information comes from so many directions, posing so many hard questions about the future? How can we find the signal in so much noise?

To help in this effort, I suggest a few approaches to try and questions to ask within your organization that may help you find meaning and direction during such uncertain times. I offer these approaches as a set of worksheets written as an integral part of this *Blueprint*. They are designed to be cut out and used independently if you choose.

Let's start with the following group exercise:

Imagine we're together, in a large group, standing outside a conference room, with coffee, some good snacks, and lots of sunlight. When we enter the room, it's full of the usual whiteboards, sticky notes, tables, chairs, and pitchers of fresh water. We've already left reality for millions of people, but set that aside for the moment. I'll assume that if you are reading this, you've been in the setting I just described. In fact, you probably spend a lot of time there (maybe minus the sunshine).

As we file in, we encounter walls covered with ideas, events, and paraphrased news headlines. Perhaps they read:

- "**Wildfires blanket Canada** with smoke"
- "**BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa)** to expand membership"
- "**AI used for salary** negotiations"
- "**Kenyan gig workers sue for safety and pay**"
- "U.S. think tank linked to **billionaires behind Supreme Court** wealth tax case lobbying"
- "AI **harms are happening now**, not later"
- "Nonprofits **lobbying less than 20 years** ago"
- "U.S. politicians **warn of civil war**"
- "**National carbon registry** recognized as digital public good"
- "Scholar on **disinformation responds to disinformation** from legislative committee on disinformation"
- "Students **win case against state** for climate change"
- "India **suspends visas for Canadians**"
- "Sam Bankman-Fried charged for using **stolen millions for political donations**"

"Welcome!" says the cheery moderator after we've settled. "Get into groups of three, pick a few of the headlines, and make sense of them in the context of whatever work brought you here—foundation CEO, program director at housing nonprofit, human rights advocate, community-college student, or family office investment advisor."

Even if you feel these issues are too remote, too diffuse, and removed from your work, I'd challenge you to tackle this task anyway. Maybe over lunch with a colleague. Maybe by yourself during your commute. The extent of change represented in almost every one of those headlines is quite broad. Following are some of the approaches you could take.

1 Try clustering the headlines.

It can be helpful to find a common theme in the headlines that matter to you. Cluster those stories together, and then ask if or how they make a difference to your work and life. For example, take the climate-related ones—from smoke to carbon registry to lawsuits. Do you see them as positive news or a drop in the bucket—too little, too late? How are you thinking about climate change in your work, and have your timelines changed?

Look for patterns in the information. And then look for the implications of these patterns. It's unlikely to be any individual headline that makes a difference; rather it's the process of identifying an overall direction of change or the development of a new dynamic that matters. These skills of foresight and context-setting are important tools for people and organizations invested in making meaningful and lasting change.

2 A key question you could ask: *What roles are civil society and philanthropy playing in each story?*

Some of the headlines make it quite clear. Take, for example, the two that mention lobbying. One of the headlines points to a study that shows a decline in nonprofit lobbying (in the U.S.). The other, regarding think tanks, billionaires, and the Supreme Court, seems to defy the implications of the first. Are nonprofits lobbying less? Are wealthy individuals, think tanks, and other mechanisms such as political nonprofits (501[c][4]s in the U.S.) influencing the Supreme Court? If the latter is true, what difference does the former make? And what if we add into our considerations the story about Montana's young people and their successful lawsuit? Isn't their lawsuit, supported by nonprofit advocacy organizations, influence of a powerful kind?

Perhaps a lesson to take from this question is that civil society and philanthropy have found new ways, less obvious than nonprofit lobbying, to influence laws and public policy. The *Blueprint* series has been calling out changes like this for more than a decade. These contemporary headlines reveal some of the implications of these changes.

3 Take a single headline and really dig into it.

For example, what insights should we draw from the fight about disinformation between scholars and Congress? If you dig into this, you will find a three-way reset happening between academia, social media companies, and regulators. The company and site once known as Twitter no longer moderates much of anything, nor does Facebook after massive layoffs. **Both companies**, along with YouTube and others, have stopped moderating political misinformation. **Scholars are being harassed** for their work on moderation. States are passing laws declaring that moderation equals censorship. The U.S. Congress is putting out reports that require fact-checking, while at the same time they're trying to **censor nonprofits that study hate speech**. Truth? Where?

4 Another question you could ask: *How do you make sense of social media?*

Social media is apt to come up as you consider many of these headlines. How do you make sense of it if you're not a disinformation researcher, scholar of content moderation, tech company employee, or member of Congress? Here are some ideas in the form of questions:

- What is the social media landscape today, and how is your organization using it safely, equitably, and effectively?
- What might new laws in the U.S. (home to several of the most influential social media companies globally) mean for your use of these tools?
- Social media sites **have become** core parts of communication infrastructure in disasters. Since they are no longer investing in trust and safety, where will you find reliable information now?
- Whom do you believe online? Who will believe you (your organization, your communications efforts) online?
- Can you find any evidence for claims that using AI in communications will help your organization build trust?
- Do you or your organization have the skills to answer these questions? If not, who can you turn to?

5 All organizations should ask: *What are the effects of climate change on your work?*

Is it time to consider the effects of climate change on your donation strategy or the work you do? At this moment, I'd argue that no matter where you are or what you're working on, climate change matters. This is true especially for organizations in civil society that claim concern for the health and vitality of their community. And it's just as true for endowed foundations or endowments of any sort. Three decades ago, it become obvious that every civil society organization needed some kind of technology plan. Two decades ago, what was needed was a social media plan, and a decade ago we started working on data governance plans. Organizations need climate mitigation/recovery plans to go along with their newly minted pandemic responses. And all these plans need to be repeatedly updated.

6 Finally, at the end of this exercise, you might ask, *"What about our five-year strategic plan?"*

The answer is that no such planning can ignore the issues of climate, pandemics, and technological change. Five-year plans are too inflexible and stretch their core assumptions too far into the future. They will benefit from annual revisions or biannual sensemaking checkups. And a set of internal procedures for quick changes.

These sensemaking conversations are intended to help your organization and team stay agile and informed. You can use headlines and augment them with insights from research and from community members (invite them to the conversations!). Some of these conversations may lead to important new insights. Should you undertake discussions like this on a regular basis, your team's skills at seeing patterns and cross-referencing insights will improve. They also may help you extend concerns about equity or digital responsibility across programs and into all the work your organization does. They can help build relationships internally and break down silos between programs. These activities are not about predicting the future; they are intended to make sense of the very recent past and present. Finally, when it does come time to do formal strategic planning, everyone who participates in regular efforts at cross-program sensemaking will be better informed and better positioned to contribute to organization-wide planning.

Wild cards, diverse teams, and uncertainty

Some of you will be better positioned than others to navigate these waters. Diverse teams of people, who share different backgrounds, experiences, and information sources, are more likely to have a richer and more nuanced understanding of any of the issues addressed above. Organizations that nurture their staff's abilities to listen and to seek expertise everywhere and that build partnerships designed to flex (or provide funding designed to flex) are best positioned to bend and redirect instead of breaking under new, unseen pressures.

Diverse groups also will be better at generating wild cards. In thinking about the future, wild cards serve several purposes. They are "maybe" events. Or they are events that cause big ripples. They describe forces or events that—if they happen—will shift the meaning of other events. Or they could change everything, everywhere, all at once. Here are some examples of wild cards:

- Migration rates across national boundaries triple in the next year.
- The Murdoch news empire is broken up.
- More countries leave the European Union.
- Worldwide disaster response alliances fall apart from overuse.

- The **slow civil war** in the United States shifts into an acknowledged war.
- High taxes on endowments are put in place to redress public budget deficits.
- Encryption technologies are outlawed worldwide.
- Instead of global expansion, war in the Middle East ends with commitments to peace.
- Anonymous donations to charities are outlawed.

Generating wild cards and then reanalyzing the headlines provided earlier (or those that you've identified) is another helpful exercise for getting assumptions out into the open and for identifying potential threats to and opportunities for your strategies. What wild cards really matter to your work, and how will you know if they're happening?

While you and your organization probably don't have the resources or expertise in-house to separate signal from noise in a random group of headlines, there are organizations and collaboratives, industries and associations that do. I'd suggest that philanthropists and civil society actors—who almost by definition are working on complicated problems with an eye toward lasting change—need this kind of information and these skills as much as anyone else. While foundations and nonprofits have numerous associations of like organizations, I'm not aware of any industry-wide or cause-wide sectors that have built or are even trying to access ongoing, shared, collaboratively built sensemaking systems to inform their work. There's a great collective opportunity here.

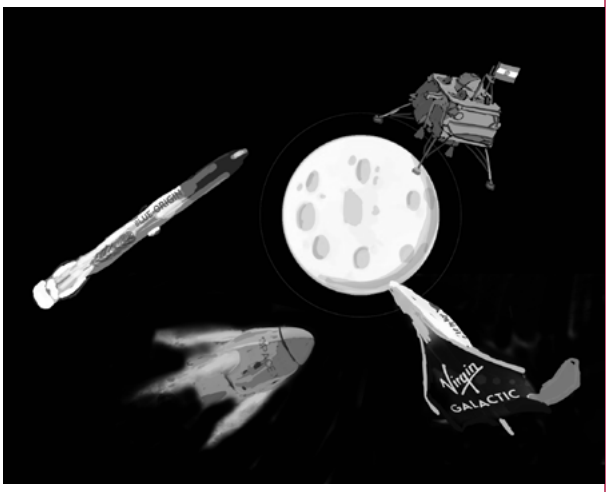
The work of making sense of our unpredictable and changing world can be done collectively and shared broadly. It can be the basis of experimentation. It can be built into the robust conference and meeting infrastructure that defines philanthropy in the U.S., and the findings can be shared broadly for discussion, debate, and revision. Those in the commercial sector of philanthropy—large financial institutions, for example—may have access to the kind of forecasting and context analysis that is key to investment strategy. But it's worth imagining—and, I'd argue, creating—similar systems for everyone to contribute to and to use.

These are some quick examples of seeking a signal in a lot of noise. Making sense of headlines is only one way to ask questions, of course. Community expertise matters. Local news matters. Information from partners and constituents matters. This is some of what goes into sensemaking. Where and how do you (and your organization or partners) do this?

Extra credit: Seeing the full scope of civil society

If you're already asking these kinds of questions and are set up for reflection and adaptation, here's an extra-credit signal to ponder. I start with an example whose implications may seem particularly far afield from your daily work.

"What's with the moon?"



I don't mean astronomically. I mean this question as a way of asking, what's behind the new interest that nations have in space travel? What does it tell us about global political ambitions? What might it say about climate concerns and the fate of Earth? How do we make sense of what's happening here?

We can't discuss space travel in 2024 and only talk about NASA or the Russian space program. Most important, we can't ask these questions without also asking questions about private space travel companies such as Virgin, Blue Origin, and SpaceX. Asking what's going on in space exploration and ignoring the role of private actors would be an obvious omission. It's also worth wondering what space exploration might tell us about the changing roles of public actors (nations) and private actors (billionaires, in the case of space travel). If we only understand NASA's role in space, we'll have a distorted picture of what's going on. To understand it more fully, we must redefine what we mean by space exploration and human travel to the moon.

As we try to understand and make sense of the role of civil society and philanthropy in 2024, we must avoid making the same mistake. We need to expand our definitions. For far too long philanthropy has been equated with foundations, and civil society has been read as meaning "charitable nonprofits." Expanding these definitions has been a core purpose of the *Blueprint* series: The 2010 edition opened with a look at **new features on the landscape**. Here are examples of what I mean:

- Giving by the wealthiest is now done through a mix of products. LLCs, donor advised funds, and family offices are very much part of the **millionaire/billionaire toolbox**.
- **Giving by people of regular means** includes kinship support, crowdfunding, mutual aid, political contributions, consumer choices, and direct cash contributions to other individuals.
- Social change is the province of mutual aid networks, loan circles, certain business enterprises, and some corporate structures, as well as informal networks of protesters, groups organized via encrypted chat, care communities, political advocacy organizations, and crowds sourced, organized, and funded online.
- We can't look only at foundations and think we know much about big philanthropy. We can't look at donations to nonprofits and think we understand everyday giving. And we can't look at charitable nonprofits and think they sum to civil society.

To get extra sensemaking credit, you might ask questions like these:

- Where do you or your organization fit among the features in this landscape?
- How do you interact with other groups that give in ways different from your own?
- How are the goals you're pursuing being pursued by others in this mix?
- What might you do more or less of, now that you see a bigger picture?

To make sense of the new features on the landscape and where you fit in, you will want the data about these other parts of civil society. As you seek this information, you'll quickly realize that the data on philanthropy and civil society haven't kept up with the changes in the field.

In 2023, when the ***Giving USA Annual Report*** was released, an **insider debate** erupted about **what gets counted as giving**. It's not an easy question at all. But asking it would help us also address critical policy questions such as "Where is the line between politics and charity?" and "What giving practices are worthy of recognition and perhaps incentivizing, beyond the white, Anglo-centric practices already privileged in the U.S.?" The debate is a good step toward better, more diverse and robust, data collection on giving and, ultimately, a better, more representative understanding of how people participate in their communities.

Making the data we have easier to use has been a key goal of philanthropy infrastructure groups. These data power the evolution to mobile giving, online giving platforms, and crowdfunding. It's core to new efforts, like a joint **data infrastructure project** from The Aspen Institute, Charity Navigator, GivingTuesday, and the Urban Institute. It's also a key part of the **Data Commons** work being led by Giving Tuesday.

At the same time, the data on giving to nonprofits aren't very useful because of the incomplete picture they portray. Advocating for better, more diverse data while simultaneously doubling down on products that rely on the current, incomplete data sources is self-defeating. The broader the landscape of resources—from websites to giving platforms to research—that are built on the current data source (nonprofit tax filings), the more and more cemented into truth those data become.

Changing what gets counted as giving won't happen quickly. But we can make sure that those who are using these data sources understand the limits of what they're using. This could come in the form of disclaimers on data sets or in the resulting research.

To not do this, to continue to act as if nonprofit 990 data is a meaningful picture of how people engage in their communities, is akin to discussing space travel in 2024 and only talking about NASA.

Before moving to my next essay, I'd like to make a connection between it and the first essay. The first has been about making sense of where we are amid today's uncertainties in civil society, philanthropy, and democracy, and the second discusses artificial intelligence and civil society. In addition to the changes we've already discussed, we need to make sense of the increasing use of hybrids throughout civil society and philanthropy. What are the implications for civil society, philanthropy, and democracy *writ large* as organizations and funding entities hybridize with commerce and/or politics (see Arnold Ventures, for example)? How do we understand this? I suggest that making sense of hybrids in the specific arena of trustworthy artificial intelligence can inform how we think about their roles in civil society and democracy writ large.

HYBRIDS AND THE CASE OF AI SAFETY

For at least a decade, scholars of civil society and philanthropy have been drawing attention to the rise of LLCs and DAFs as giving vehicles. Simultaneously, there's been steady interest in social entrepreneurship, B Corporations, and businesses-that-do-good.

Over the summer of 2023, a student helped me build a spreadsheet of organizations working on "trustworthy," "safe," "responsible," or "ethical" artificial intelligence. You can access the data **here**. As we tried to classify these organizations by corporate structure and funding, we realized that there were a number of what we came to think of as *hybrids*—where a single name connects to a nonprofit, a commercial enterprise, and a set of partnerships with research institutes. These are funded by a mix of grants and investments, often by donors managing multiple funding streams via their LLCs.

The database also includes organizations that have changed corporate form. OpenAI, which started as a nonprofit and now calls itself a capped-profit corporation, is perhaps the best-known example. Others using corporate forms beside strict nonprofit or commercial forms include Anthropic (public benefit corporation, United States) and GENIA (public benefit corporation, Brazil). The first question to ask is "Why are they setting themselves up this way?"

Four quick possibilities:

- No one can predict the business model that will work where "safe AI" is concerned, so hybrids enable founders to hedge their bets.
- There's a clear commercial play, but the focus on "safe" or "responsible" can benefit from the nonprofit "halo" effect.
- Founders plan to sequester some information in the commercial enterprise and make open the information held by the nonprofit.
- Multiple structures enable greater degrees of opacity and lesser degrees of external accountability.

Effective altruism (EA), a utilitarian giving philosophy and self-declared movement, offers a glimpse into funders operating with multiple structures and may answer the question of why effective altruists have set up hybrids. Open Philanthropy (an EA-oriented funder) funds numerous policy fellows in the U.S. Senate and regulatory agencies via the **Horizon Institute**, even as staff members are directly involved with or married to executives at companies that stand to benefit from the regulatory foci favored by effective altruists. The web of EA-aligned AI organizations makes it appear as if the movement is bigger than it might be, because the same people can fill multiple roles at multiple organizations.[26] Obscuring connections to effective altruism has become more important for its practitioners as Sam Bankman-Fried's arrest and trial for fraud in the name of the movement drew significant, negative attention.

It's clear that there is no single, assured path to safely producing AI models. AI organizations are trying and testing all the old models of commercial or nonprofit, **open or closed**. Their business models are in development. For this reason, our "safe AI" data set includes both purely commercial firms and nonprofits. The answer to the "why" question may be as simple as "try everything." It might also be a copycat phenomenon based on OpenAI starting as a nonprofit and then **shifting to be a capped-profit commercial firm**. Whatever is going on in the world of responsible AI, it's clear that civil society and philanthropy are very involved. But it's not at all clear where any of this is going.

Now, think beyond AI. These same strategies—hybrids funding hybrids—are all around us. From **Emerson Collective's** ownership of *The Atlantic* to Pierre Omidyar's media studio (**Participant**), this kind of hybridization across commerce, politics, and philanthropy has existed for some time. Despite its popularity, hybridization remains poorly studied, and its implications are unclear.

What are the implications for civil society, philanthropy, and democracy writ large as organizations and funding hybridize with commerce and/or politics? Elements of the worst-case scenario were revealed in the legal case against Sam Bankman-Fried, who was found guilty of numerous crimes, some of which were enabled by the extensive, overlapping network of organizations and people he used to make direct and indirect financial contributions to public policy makers.[27] Simply put, hybrids and networks collapse politics, profit, and policy influence in ways that evade laws on disclosure and self-dealing. It's important to note that effective altruists did not invent the hybrid networked model of organization that mixes profit making, politics, philanthropy, and policy. The use of LLCs for their philanthropy by the wealthy is frequently celebrated for the ways it enables this approach to allocating resources. Research unrelated to AI—on the Koch Brothers' development of octopus-like networks, for example—reveals precedents.[28]

What's happening in AI safety, I posit, is less about AI itself and more about these fundamental shifts in civil society and philanthropy, and in the increasing use of hybrids. If I'm right about the role of hybrids, all our assumptions about nonprofits and foundations and all our regulations, oversight, incentives, and industry supports, are out of sync with what's happening on the ground.

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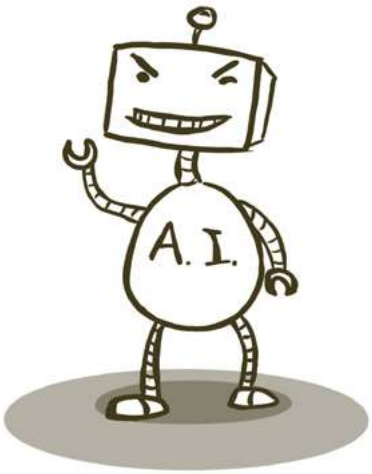
CIVIL SOCIETY AND AI

As a publication about digital civil society, the *Blueprint* can't avoid the topic of artificial intelligence (AI). I'm sure you can't either. You've read about it, heard about it on the news, been marketed to about its wonders, and maybe even played around with one of the many available generative AI systems like ChatGPT or that new "AI Companion" button on Zoom. You've also, by now, used/been used by it if you've logged into a Google Doc, searched using Bing, or used any video call transcript service.



I know that you know this is yet another tech hype cycle—the very same cycle and hype we've been through about big data and social media. Remember NFTs and the metaverse? Not only is the speed of technology change increasing; so is the speed at which hype replaces hype. NFTs and the metaverse were "everything" just a year ago; now, not so much. I know you're skeptical. I know you're under pressure to come up with an AI strategy for your organization. There's no shortage of sources ready and willing to help you do this, to encourage you to do this, to will you to do this (and to buy their product while you're at it).

I want to ask you something, though. Why? Why do you think you or your organization needs to use AI? And why now? Prior to November 30, 2022,[29] did you need it? The idea that every organization needs an AI strategy is a great argument for anyone selling AI. Individual organizations are software customers.

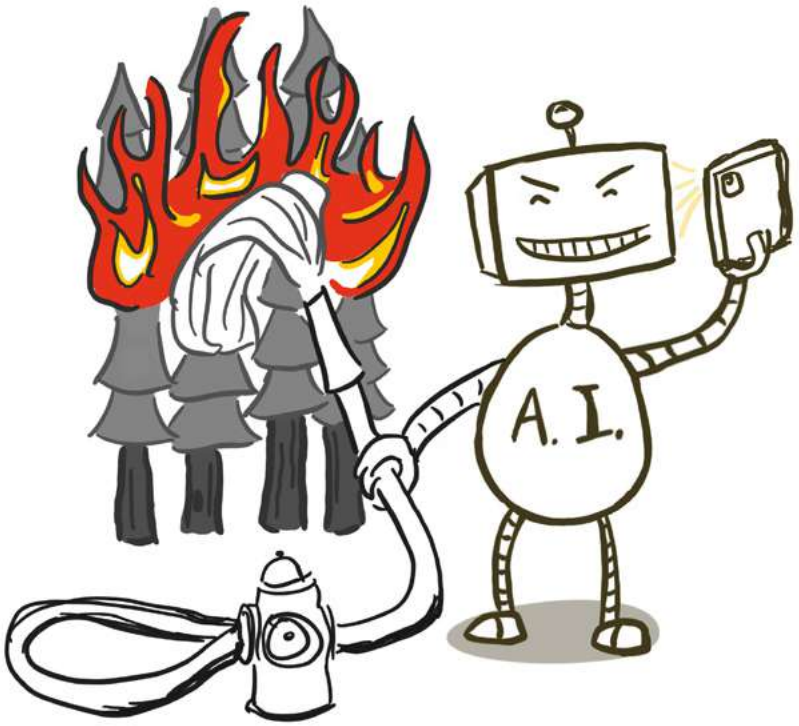
You will use AI at work. You don't have a choice. It's already in the products you use every day. So set some limits on the kinds of data you will feed into these companies' ever-expanding data vacuums.

But in the case of AI and civil society, focusing on AI and individual organizations is an incomplete step—and, at this point, a distraction. Let's get the obvious out of the way first: You will use AI at work. You don't have a choice. It's already in the products you use every day—Microsoft's Office, Google's everything, Zoom, Canva, Salesforce, etc. You and everyone in your organization need to know this and set some limits on the kinds of data you will feed into these companies'

ever-expanding data vacuums. So, once again around we go: Read the terms and conditions. Know what you're giving away. Have a disaster plan, get insurance, and train your board members. Everything that applies to **good data governance** still applies.

As for developing an AI strategy and using it to address the issues your organization works on, you may very well find uses for it—if your organization is a large, well-resourced nonprofit. No doubt, these organizations are being pursued by tech companies looking for partnerships. Marketers know that nothing sells a product like being able to say, "Hey look, it works for disasters! The Red Cross is using it! Here's an anecdote (in health) and another (in education) and another (in environmental conservation)! Look, look! AI for good!"

And right there—"AI for good"—is the rub. If you're paying attention, you've heard that there is great disagreement among industry insiders, industry critics, regulators, academics, and politicians about how to control AI and how to develop it responsibly and safely. There are wildly differing assessments of the problems and how to solve them, but they are all concerned about AI. Some are comparing it to nuclear weapons, while others point out that no one ever "slipped a little nuclear" into your fundraising or word processing software.



Artificial intelligence right now is like the Wizard of Oz. Insiders are marketing it as having all kinds of powers, but behind the curtain is just a guy (and **tens of thousands of low-paid workers**) pretending to be more than he really is.

The AI train is not going away. It will be with us from now on forever. In some parts of the world, there will soon be regulations—perhaps even new regulators. In the U.S., lawsuits (versus Google, Amazon) and strikes (Writers Guild, Screen Actors, Auto Workers) are currently more productive routes to setting standards than legislation. **Scholars and community experts** are clear on the present dangers, and they are trying hard to be heard over the interests of industry and effective altruists, who were early to focus on select dangers of artificial intelligence. Civil society and philanthropy have important roles to play at this juncture, and it's much bigger than whether or not you should **use a chatbot** to improve your donor outreach.

We should be considering the whole of civil society and its role in democracies. First, in the context of AI, we should take actions framed within the larger purpose of civil society and philanthropy in democracies. That is, we should focus on human safety, dignity, and flourishing and provide viable alternatives to market pressures and governmental responsibilities. Second, we should carry that larger purpose into the debates about this technology and into

Civil society must understand the antidemocratic nature of AI in its current forms, and we must use our strengths to redirect, reshape, and refuse the AI hype.

discussions of AI guardrails to protect the rights and norms of civil society. Third, civil society must understand the antidemocratic nature of AI in its current forms, and we must use our strengths to redirect, reshape, and refuse the AI hype.[30] The very least civil society can do in this regard is to refuse the industry hype. This probably won't be enough to dissuade industry from burying AI into every piece of software, but it will prevent civil society from being captured by AI companies the way it has been by social media platforms. It will be easier for regulation to catch up and install rules to control AI if everyone isn't already hooked on it.

Mustafa Suleyman, co-founder of both DeepMind and Inflection AI, has a useful way of summarizing the challenges we face. Since the dawn of humans, he says, progress has been about doing things—inventing new things and making them widely available. Today, where AI is concerned, says Suleyman, who is both a former human rights activist and a successful AI entrepreneur, progress will come from saying no, from not doing things. Keep those words in mind: "Progress will come from saying no."[31]

"Progress will come from saying no."—Mustafa Suleyman

It's not about how you use AI. It's about how AI uses you.

I'm going to say the quiet part out loud. Right now, your organization doesn't need an AI strategy beyond "Know what you're giving away to the company whose tool you're playing with." You don't have enough data, the AI models we have are **BS spewers**, and any efficiencies you might gain won't be worth the long-term costs (the data you've given away and unchecked industrial AI development). Take the now-infamous case of the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA). To lower overhead costs (and possibly stave off a unionizing effort), the **NEDA launched an AI-powered chatbot in 2022**. Users soon reported that "Tessa" was providing dangerous, life-threatening advice. The **organization took it down**. And became the poster child for how not to use AI.

The **information landscape is being battered by AI**. Recent estimates pick next year (2025) as the turning point when more than **90 percent of content on the internet** will be AI-generated junk. Deepfakes (AI-generated fake videos, audio recordings, or **voices**) are pervasive, and criminals are having fun finding new ways to use them. The big question for resource-constrained civil society organizations is not whether to join this maelstrom, but rather to figure out how to find the truth amid the dross and protect people from harms—and help others do the same.

What your organization needs is a strategy to **understand how AI is being used** in the domains in which you work. You will find that it's probably causing harm—right now, to real people.[32]

The big question for resource-constrained civil society organizations is to figure out how to find the truth amid the dross and protect people from harms.

As I said about big data in earlier *Blueprints*, most of AI is organizationally unimportant to most nonprofits and foundations because they simply don't have or use enough high-quality data. What does matter—and it matters a lot—is how AI is being used in and on the lives of the people these organizations purport to serve. For example, you could ask the following:

- Within education (one of the biggest areas receiving philanthropic funding), how is AI being used in schools (and how are schools trying to stop it from being used)? What effects are these uses having on students' successes? On student punishments? What is it doing to teacher preparedness? Teacher success? Who is being affected how?
- In health, what new disparities might AI exacerbate? What do patients know and understand about the use of AI and their data? What gets shared with insurance companies? How is it being used to determine treatment plans, insurance coverage, or reimbursement?
- In housing, are AI-powered tools such as cameras and door codes being used to surveil residents? To prevent them from assembling or gathering? To track people's movements? What do residents know and understand about how AI is being used? What public policies need to be addressed to change this?

You can ask the following questions in any domain in which you work or give. Several questions apply across domains, including questions about awareness, consent, due process, ownership, and oversight. Regardless of the domain you're thinking about, be it the arts or community development, housing or environmental protection, here's a quick set of questions to ask about AI and your work:

AI QUESTIONS LIST

- Is AI being used by the public sector in this domain (education, health, immigration, etc.)?
- Do the people affected in this domain know this? Do they understand it?
- How transparent is the public system being about its use of AI?
- What recourse do participants in the system have? Can they opt out?
- Who owns the systems being used, and who, if anyone, can explain them?
- What recourse do participants have if the AI "rules" against them?
- What are the population-level results of the AI use?
- Are the companies selling the AI using human labor in exploitative ways?
- What protections are there for those whose data is being fed into online, publicly available, or proprietary systems with AI built in?

All these questions apply to every domain in which AI or automated decision-making systems (ADs) may be deployed. Note that the questions are all focused not on how to use AI, but on how to protect the people on whom AI is being used.

Toward these ends, you should also recognize that your organization or you yourself may be feeding the AI beasts without your knowledge, consent, or compensation. Most AI systems are being trained on data scraped from websites. This includes copyrighted text by novelists, musicians' recordings, artists' paintings, and news content published by newspapers. Big companies have recognized that this means of developing the massive AI datasets is an unfair deal. Tech companies scrape content, train AI models, then release those models and profit off them. But the original creators of the text, visuals, and news are not compensated in any way. Thousands are opting out and fighting this version of internet extraction. Is your organization's content part of this "deal"? If so, you may want to join those opting out. The easy, technological steps involve making minor changes to how your website interacts with web crawlers (here's some guidance). Of course, the real work is human. It will involve training, risk management procedures, board discussions, and (maybe, maybe) the creation of small, sandboxed side experiments.

There are steps that your organizations can take to protect your data, train your staff, and avoid the kinds of immediate scams and harms that AI presents. There are resources available from trusted partners such as Tactical Tech, Responsible Data, and Digital Impact (from the Digital Civil Society Lab). Ariadne has made available a good guide on funding technology. Take care of those things, and let's move on to the more

A pressing question is: What are the collective responsibilities of civil society and philanthropy vis-à-vis artificial intelligence?

pressing question: What are civil society and philanthropies' collective responsibilities vis-à-vis artificial intelligence?

AI, digital civil society, and democracy

Some sections of civil society and philanthropy do have the right data and the right skills and are working on big enough questions that AI may be useful to them. At the sector level (medicine, health, education, environmental protections, tax policy, affordable housing, migration, etc.), AI has applications, though these too need to be considered carefully in terms of who gets hurt and who benefits.

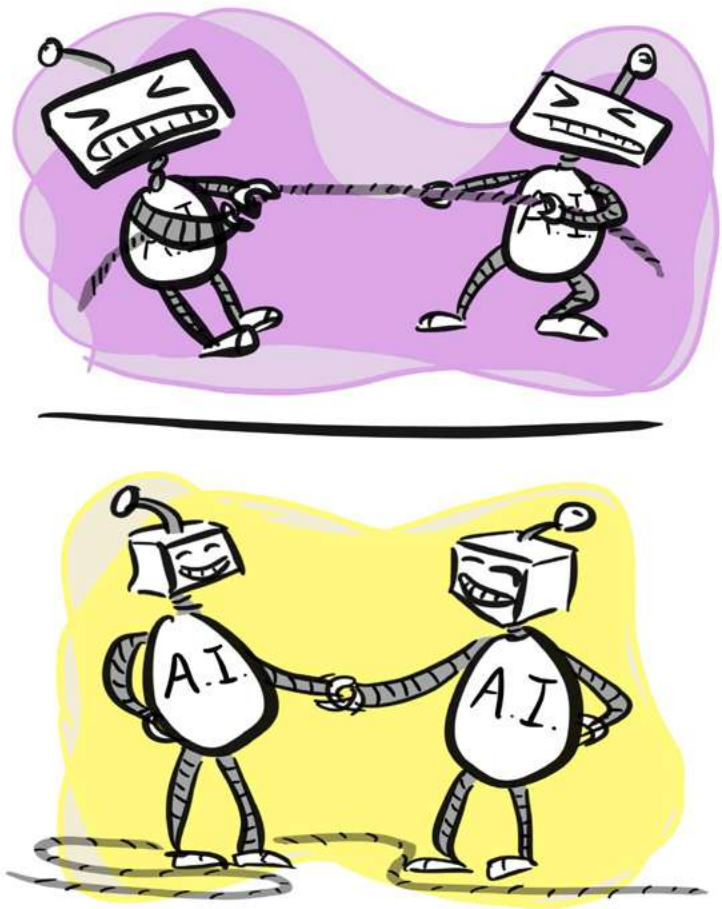
Building off the previous discussion about how people give and how their giving is measured, let's start with an obvious issue. Today's AI is being trained on existing datasets—even when we know the limits of those datasets. The more AI gets trained on 990 nonprofit tax data, the more dependent we become on data *we know to be incomplete*. Remember where we started this *Blueprint*—civil society and philanthropy include more than nonprofits and foundations. The more we use data just on nonprofits and grants, for example, the more we exclude other forms of giving and other types of recipients.

Rolling out AI systems about civil society (and even about nonprofits) using data we know to be incomplete and unrepresentative is a regressive idea. It's not a better future

if it's modeled on poor-quality, incomplete, and biased representations of the past.

Two core premises of democratic governance are (1) the people make decisions, and (2) those decisions can be seen, explained, and contested. Currently, AI systems meet neither standard.

But there are bigger issues at hand and other aspects of AI systems that should give civil society actors pause. For one, it's not possible to square today's AI systems with the democratic norms of transparency and explainability.[33] Two core premises of democratic governance are (1) the people make decisions, and (2) those decisions can be seen, explained, and contested. Currently, AI systems meet neither standard. While those who build the systems know what's going on, they evade responsibility by claiming their inventions are inexplicable—hence all the language you hear about "black box" systems. There's no doubt that blaming the technology is a neat way to avoid responsibility by the humans who build (and those who sell and use) the technology. This dynamic alone violates core principles of democratic participation.



We've already reached the point where two automated systems interact with each other to make decisions. This is the point at which we have effectively removed people from the decision-making process—an "achievement" that clashes with definitions of democracy, civil society, and philanthropy. Bots negotiating with bots may lower a corporation's overhead costs but doesn't do anything that advances democratic practice.

This is exactly what's happening. Companies in every industry are racing each other to **spackle a little AI onto their existing products**. They're desperate to sell AI to everyone, including civil society organizations. This is partly why philanthropy and civil society organizations feel pressure to come up with an AI strategy. Large, regulated industries—such as health care, finance, and many government agencies—are taking measured approaches, usually by fencing off some of their data for AI use only by some of their experts in a specific case while prohibiting the rest of their employees from using commercial AI systems like ChatGPT on company computers.[34] On the other hand, foundations, nonprofits, donor advisors, and others are simply buying AI products. I hope people at least think a little bit about what it is they're buying and what they're trading away for "efficiency."

Technology's impact on people, especially on vulnerable people, is not a new concern for civil society and philanthropy. Civil society has long been involved in protecting the most vulnerable from harmful technologies. In fact, the first signs of digital civil society can be found in informal associations that date to the 1950s when people first began getting together to make and share networked technologies. The first nonprofit association focused on AI (the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence) dates to 1979.

Today, it is nonprofits like the Distributed AI Research Institute (DAIR), the Algorithmic Justice League, and the ACLU that are focusing our attention on the harms of AI that exist now, specifically on behalf of the people being subjected to AI practices. This is critical to understand.

- They prevent us from seeing that other futures are possible, different from those built around the assumptions of the AI industry.

In the United States, several corporate leaders in AI and the federal government are spending lots of time together—"summiting," "conferencing," and making amiable public statements about their shared interest in regulation and the need for voluntary compliance with industry-generated guardrails. While the conversation is notably different from previous technology corporate resistance to any regulation, these summits and pronouncements have yet to produce anything beyond voluntary promises by companies.

Nonprofits like the Distributed AI Research Institute (DAIR), the Algorithmic Justice League, and the ACLU are focusing attention on the harms of AI, specifically on behalf of the people being subjected to AI practices.

On the other hand, there are a lot of self-serving AI industry warnings of existential harms that AI could cause. These warnings serve at least three purposes for the industry:

- They generate a sense that the industry cares (instead of simply wanting to shape regulations).
- They distract from the existing now to a maybe future (the future the same people issuing warnings are actively building).

AI, human values, and the future

A lot of work is being done on AI ethics and the future. The database of "safe" or "responsible" AI organizations hosted by the Digital Civil Society Lab lists more than 160 enterprises, many of which are nonprofits, informal associations of dissenters, or (public or nonprofit) university-based labs.[35] Civitates and the European Artificial Intelligence & Society Fund have supported a number of organizations working on AI, and many of these grants support integrating expertise on AI with domain-specific expertise on migration, education, or other issues.

While the database reveals a great deal of activity, it doesn't answer several important questions:

- What are the existing harms of AI, and who is experiencing them?
- What alternatives exist to the way AI is currently developed, marketed, and sold?
- What decisions should be made only by humans?
- Other than effective altruism, what other philosophies are guiding big philanthropic investments in AI safety/trust/responsibility?
- Who and how should AI systems be developed? How should they be governed?

Mary L. Gray, a researcher at Microsoft and author of *Banality of Scale: An Anthropologist's Fieldguide to the Future of Computing* (forthcoming), frames the questions we must ask this way:

> *Our biggest challenge is to realize that, in all cases, the benefits and successes of AI hinge on the conscious decisions we make about when, why, and how we use it—and on who makes these decisions.*[36]

Many of the organizations working on trustworthy, responsible, or safe AI are working on the interior mechanics of the systems themselves. They focus on the training data or on the size and contours of the large language model that underpins a system, or they create ways to audit the systems for biases. A few work on demonstrating present-day harms. Others argue that the systems must be "aligned" with human values. Which humans and what kind of alignment is left unanswered. Looked at this way, the size and fragmentation of the field becomes a feature, not a bug. Can't you hear the donors asking, "Do we *need* 167 organizations devoted to safe AI?" Consider that, and ask yourself the converse question: Is there any one group that should oversee, or even be dominant in, determining which human values should be encoded?

The issue of alignment and values is very present in the current philanthropic approach to AI. Of the 167 organizations included in the Digital Civil Society Lab's safe AI database, we found, 16 (10 percent) of them have explicit connections to the effective altruism (EA) movement. If you count only the 66 that are clearly philanthropically funded nonprofits, the percentage connected to EA funders jumps to 25 percent. One might wonder, why is EA so interested in artificial intelligence? The EA community regularly takes up this question, and you can find their robust debates about it online.

I have a different question: How do the artificial intelligence systems and/or definitions of responsibility and ethics align with the worldviews of the EA community? Like all technology, AI systems represent the worldview of their builders. This is why Elon Musk is promising an "anti-woke" AI, compared with offerings such as ChatGPT, which researchers claim has a liberal political

bias. What is to be made of such a significant philanthropic investment in AI by such a controversial group of philanthropists? Research done by *Politico* found that many of the staff members working on AI policy and regulation at the federal level in the U.S. had received funding from effective altruism sources or worked at EA-funded organizations before going into public policy.[37] One AI researcher noted that the EA movement's prominence in funding fellowships for emerging scholars is shaping both public discourse and research agendas through its attention on existential and possible harm. In other words, a small group of philanthropists—with a very specific worldview—is shaping the regulations and policies that will define how AI affects you. This has real costs. Efforts to address real harms created by the AI now in use and being experienced by real people get ignored. Late in 2023, 10 foundations *not* aligned with the effective altruism movement announced $200 million in funding to focus on governing artificial intelligence.[38] It will be important to watch which organizations get funded for this work and which communities and governance approaches they represent.

Civil society and philanthropy can play a key role in ensuring that AI systems recognize the great diversity of humanity; they should be working together, strategizing, and seeking protections where the use of AI by companies or governments affects living people.

Civil society and philanthropy can play an important role in ensuring that AI systems recognize the great diversity of humanity. They can help society answer the questions posed by Mary Gray. They can offer alternative paths to the development and use of these systems. They can monitor and pressure public policy on AI, and they can conduct oversight of and demand transparency from AI companies. It is at this level—where the use of AI by companies or governments affects living people—that civil society organizations and philanthropy should be working together, strategizing, and seeking protections.

Civil society's responsibilities for AI

"What protections are there for those whose data is being fed into online, publicly available, or proprietary systems with AI built in?" This question has already caught nonprofits and foundations unprepared. What recourse do you have if your information is fed into a third-party AI system by someone other than yourself? This question should be addressed by organizations before they start using ChatGPT or any of the commercially available systems. Any information you enter into these systems becomes the property of the system. Enter a donor's name and address into ChatGPT to help draft a solicitation letter, and you've handed over that information to OpenAI and Microsoft (owners of ChatGPT). The same is true if you enter program evaluation results, participant data, or the zip codes of all the people you've served in the last 10 years. Donors have sued nonprofits over data breaches. If I were still making predictions, I'd put this down for 2024:

A donor will sue a nonprofit for releasing their confidential information to outsiders via the use of an AI-enabled software product.

A key role for philanthropy and civil society vis-à-vis AI now is like that of the 19th-century Luddites who fought the social and economic displacement created by new tools.

One primary role of civil society in democracies, according to political theory, is to serve as a check or balance on the powers of governments and markets. Seen in this light, a key role for philanthropy and civil society vis-à-vis AI now is similar to that of the 19th-century Luddites. The Luddites were experienced British weavers who recognized the ways that new industrial technologies were destroying existing social and economic systems. Although modern-day parlance tends to cast the Luddites as technology haters, they were not opposed to the technologies per se. They *were* fighting against the social and economic disruption caused by new tools. Dave Karpf quotes from Brian Merchant's 2023 book, *Blood in the Machine: The Origins of the Rebellion of Big Tech*:

> **[T]he Luddite rebellion was, first and foremost, about labor power.** The Luddites were not reflexively anti-technology. They were skilled artisans who had a history of incorporating new technologies into their profession. The *specific* technology they opposed (the power loom) was poised to wreck their industry and replace them with factories filled with child laborers, who would flood the market with lower-priced, lower-quality goods. This technology stood to make a few businessmen fabulously wealthy, while immiserating an entire skilled profession…. [They] objected to the ways tech "was being used to undermine their status, upend their communities and destroy their livelihoods."[39]

The concerns raised in 2023 on the picket lines in Hollywood and at U.S. auto plants are much the same as those of the Luddites. The workers are fighting the social structures that determine which new technologies such as AI get introduced—technologies that, if unexamined, create a handful of very rich people while ruining the lives of thousands of others. Merchant writes, "[T]he kind of visionaries we need now are those who see precisely how certain technologies are causing harm and who resist them when necessary."[40]

Critiquing and improving the labor conditions for workers of all types is where civil society, both community organizations and labor unions, comes in. While writers and assembly line workers don't seem to have much in common, both kinds of work, along with many others, are in the crosshairs of AI systems. I'm not a labor historian, but even I can see how public discourse around AI is different from its immediate tech disruptor predecessors, such as big data and social media. I believe a big reason for this difference is that it's very clear already that AI may change the jobs of educated, white-collar professionals as well as laborers.

White-collar workers have largely stood by as digital technology upended work for hourly workers. But AI is coming for salaried white-collar jobs now.

In fact, AI is likely to change the lives of lawyers and doctors and academics more than it does those of plumbers and painters and tradespeople. These white-collar workers have largely stood by as digital technology upended work for hourly workers. But AI is coming for salaried white-collar jobs now. In an irony for the ages, AI can now write computer code. In doing so, it decreases the need for individual computer programmers (who've been long privileged in the modern economy). Where programmers often encourage each other to "eat their own dog food" (which means use the tools you create), their newest creation may eat their jobs.

I've argued for years that organizations (and people) are essentially tenants on the computer hard drives of the cloud software they use. We are in the early days of legal battles over what these companies can do with your data. **Authors and news organizations are suing** because their **books were used to train** these public systems—without knowledge, consent, or compensation. AI models have a nearly insatiable appetite for data. As more producers of information refuse to allow the AI companies to take that data, the more desperate AI companies become for good data. In the fashion of Ouroboros, the tail-eating snake, AI companies are facing the prospect of training their models on data generated by other AI systems. An AI trained on AI, just like bots talking to bots, is a sign of an unhealthy information ecosystem.

AI highlights the adage, "If you're not paying, you're the product." The legal boundaries of data use by companies building AI are unclear. Copyright law is being stretched and challenged. In 2023, a **U.S. judge ruled that AI-generated creations cannot be copyrighted**. If this decision holds, it will change the profit equation for AI-generated releases from movie and recording studios, publishers, pharmaceutical companies, and others who depend on copyright for their fortunes.

Intellectual property (IP) law is a good example of how important questions about AI move well beyond the technology and into the legal and social systems that surround them. Hollywood's writers settled a five-month strike that centered in part on guardrails for using AI. The pressure AI is putting on existing intellectual property law is likely to result in new IP rules down the road. In the same way, AI is also challenging assumptions about open-source software as a form of anti-corporate activism. Long seen as a way of fighting corporate consolidation of power, releasing open AI models may further entrench monolithic corporate control.[41]

The ripple effects of readily available AI systems include challenging existing **intellectual property** law, upending business partnerships, introducing terrifying new possibilities for weapons and war, and opening up entirely new areas of medical research, from protein folding to **using scent as an input** in pharmaceutical development. It's also enabling tech companies to abandon any responsibility for the information they publish, allowing police departments

to foist blame on predictive algorithms, and providing justification for a single corporation's efforts to label every human on the planet with a **proprietary digital ID system**.

What AI doesn't do is automatically lower costs, make sense of bad data, take responsibility for mistakes, or replace human contact, gathering, or community. And unless and until we solve the big questions of how to control these tools democratically and inclusively, we will be running behind the technology with ill-fitting means of recourse.

Major questions about AI remain unanswered. Engaging with these questions through the lenses of safety, civil liberties, racial equity, human dignity, and democratic participation is *the* big job for civil society and philanthropy.

Engaging with the big unanswered questions about AI through the lenses of safety, civil liberties, racial equity, human dignity, and democratic participation is the big job for civil society and philanthropy.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS (IN LIEU OF PREDICTIONS)

As this volume's epigraph reminds us, advertisements from financial services firms are required to point out that past results are not indicators of future performance. In 2023, every part of the world seemed to live through some version of this, courtesy of Mother Nature. For decades, climate science has been denied, denounced, and lied about. This year, many of its scariest predictions started to become real on the ground in the forms of floods, fires, droughts, and inhumane heat. The scientists' predictions were coming true much sooner than the models had called for. Why? Well, the data and the models can't capture the way small changes reinforce each other, since they haven't happened before in our lifetimes. It's one thing to predict a rise in temperatures here and a change in ocean currents over there; it's another thing to predict the interactions between these new data points.

Based on this and all I see around me in terms of threats to democracy, changes in commercial philanthropic offerings, continuing and unbridled economic inequality, and the unknowns of artificial intelligence, economic transitions, and resistance, I no longer think we can project current pathways very far into the future.

Or, more accurately, I no longer think that I can do this with any credibility. When I started this series 15 years ago, I could assume that I was discussing a democracy when I wrote about the U.S.—a broken one, with much work to do, but still a democracy. Today, that's no longer true, and one of the two major political parties is actively campaigning against the Constitution and the nation's status as a democracy.

I've made predictions about the coming year every year since 2008. In fact, the predictions (and buzzwords) predate the *Blueprint* and first appeared on my blog.

Now, 15 years later, I'm retiring from this practice, not because it's not important but because I think the "mitigating factors," "externalities," or whatever you'd like to call them are so numerous, immense, and mutually reinforcing that the only thing predictable is unpredictability.

David Karpf, author of *The MoveOn Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy,* is in the process of updating his book, 10 years after its original publication. He's sharing his process in his newsletter. In the course of his work, he is also reading the entire archive of *WIRED* magazine. I was struck by his insights on the July 1, 1997, issue of *WIRED*, in which futurists Peter Leyden and Peter Schwartz predicted a "Long Boom" from 1980 to 2020. We now know that's not quite how things played out. But what Karpf points out is that the article included a sidebar of scenarios that could disrupt this optimistic prediction. Almost everything in that sidebar—from democratic demise to global pandemics—did come true!

With that in mind, I'm retiring from making predictions, and I leave it to others to do that work. In the past, I've always kept score of how I did with the previous year's predictions. You'll find my scorecard for 2023 later in this *Blueprint*.

What I offer here instead are some critical questions that are worth considering as you look to short (five years) and longer-term (20 years) futures. Unlike earlier questions in this *Blueprint*, these are intended to raise your eyes to a horizon that is both farther away and cloudier. Asking these questions requires thinking beyond your own organization to the sector level. I encourage you to use them as conversation starters in your community, among your peer organizations, and with both donors and doers.

Critical questions

- Even as they can be an uncomfortable fit, philanthropic foundations are a product of democracies. So are nonprofit organizations. Democracies are struggling around the globe, although Freedom House, which measures such things, reports that the decline may be slowing globally, even as it accelerates in some of the world's most durable democracies, such as the U.S. What happens to nonprofits and foundations in countries with diminishing democracies?
- Informal associations of volunteers, crowdfunding, and digitally enabled mutual aid are on the rise. What does a civil society that is mostly dependent on digital infrastructure look like? What are the opportunities and where are the limits? Does this more diverse, but also more commercially entangled, suite of choices advance pluralism or constrain it?
- Donor advised funds and LLCs enable more control and greater anonymity over an individual's or an organization's philanthropic giving than do foundations. What should democracies do as ever more private capital is deployed through these opaque and unaccountable giving mechanisms?
- In practice, the line between politics and charity, in the United States at the least, has become a farce. Politicians, donors, and activists manipulate the rules regularly and repeatedly. In the U.S. in late 2023, headlines revealed numerous examples of billionaire influence on the Supreme Court and detailed the behind-the-scenes efforts of conservative activists to take advantage of the court's rulings on nonprofit political activity. The issue of dark money and nonprofits has only grown more problematic over time.[42]

Should there be a line between politics and charity? Where should it be drawn? How might that happen?

- How will your region handle the growing policy differences between the organizations and associations that claim to represent philanthropy and social change (national associations of nonprofits or foundations, for example) and commercial corporate structures such as family offices and LLCs, and those that sell DAFs?
- Even cautious AI projections predict rapid and major changes. Here's one I think is likely: There will be a new device, "smarter" than current smartphones, "an AI-enabled phone," carried around by two to three billion people by 2028. The uptake of a device like this may rival smartphones in speed and reach. How will your life change, how will your work change, how will your organization change, when such "personal assistants" are ubiquitous?
- In *Blueprint 2021*, as people around the world struggled through the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I drew on Arundhati Roy's writing that encouraged people to view the pandemic as a portal—a passing through, from an old to a new. Has this been the case for you? Are you doing something new or different than you were before? Is your organization doing so? What did you take with you through the portal, and what did you leave behind?[43]

If you do want predictions or prompts to think about, here are some sources I recommend:

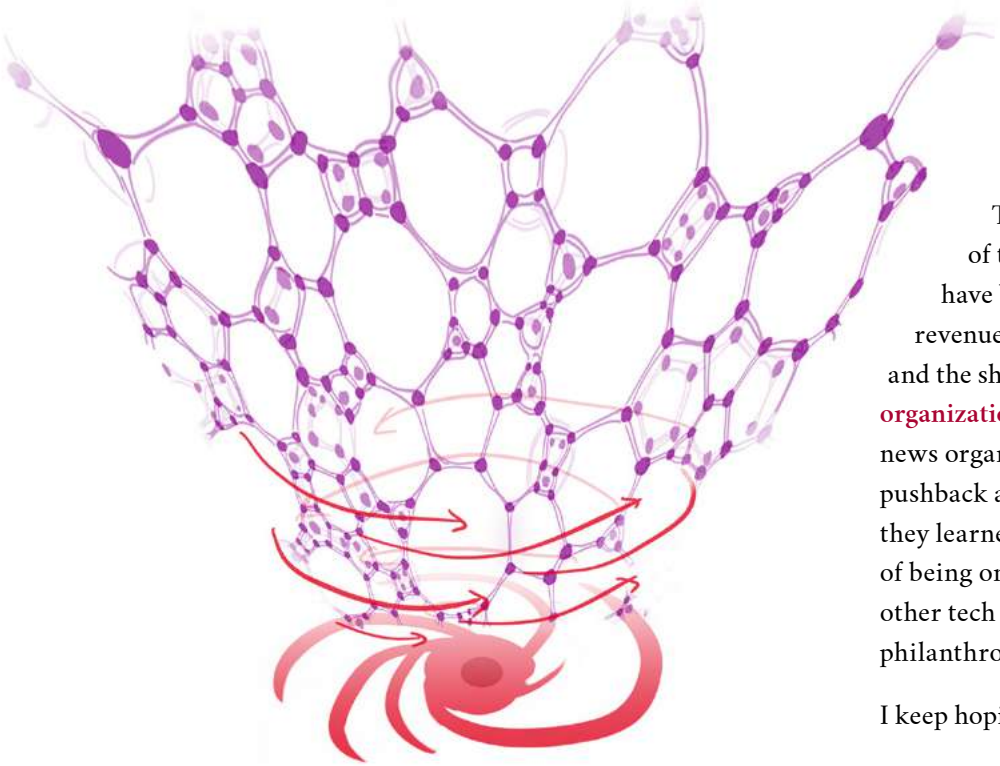
- FutureGood: Trisha Harris trained at the **Institute for the Future** and focuses on philanthropy.
- **Institute for the Future**: Provides resources and trainings.
- Inside Philanthropy: 16 predictions for philanthropy in the 2020s.
- Near Future Laboratory: Tools and resources for thinking about the future.
- **RADAR**: A distributed network of futurists.
- The Monitor Institute at Deloitte: Several **future-oriented publications** for philanthropy.
- The "More Resources" appendices to **Imagining Better Futures for American Democracy** has an extensive list of futurist and related resources.

CONCLUSION

Fifteen years ago, I started this series because I believed that nonprofits and foundations were ignoring key changes around them. At that point, those changes were things like B Corporations, social enterprise, and political giving as the other side of a charitable donation. Those developments have since become familiar around the globe. Nonprofits and foundations, researchers, and policy makers pay much more attention now to these adjacent strategies and structures. That's good.

For the last decade, the focus of the series has been on the implications of digital dependencies for civil society and philanthropy. Previous *Blueprints* have pointed out the impact of depending on corporatized software, the surveillant nature of extant social media and the digital environment, the expansion of these concerns into physical space, and the ongoing struggle between the centralizing and controlling nature of technologies and the divergent and pluralistic nature of civil society.

This issue's focus on AI is an extension of all those themes. AI is in many ways familiar. It is being marketed in ways we've seen before, using messages of urgency and efficiency that have rarely held much actual use for civil society but are as irresistible as an after-dinner chocolate for many of us. With each new swing around the tech-hype cycle, I hope we'll learn to start by seeking out and mitigating the harms before we put real people through the entirely predictable episodes of discrimination, racism, hatred, and lack of recourse.



I've long argued that the history of change that digital technologies have brought to news organizations provides a useful guide for nonprofits. Two of the most significant effects of these technologies on journalism have been the loss of advertising revenue, which has led to mass layoffs and the shuttering of entire news organizations. It's interesting to see that news organizations are now leading the pushback against AI companies. Perhaps they learned from their previous experience of being on the losing end of deals with other tech companies. Will civil society and philanthropy learn similar lessons?

I keep hoping.

BUZZWORD WATCH 2024

You will hear the following terms and phrases a lot in 2024. They are drawn directly from media about AI, coverage of civil society, and emerging trends in philanthropy.

Alignment. This is an-AI safety research term that describes the goal of ensuring artificial intelligence systems achieve desired outcomes and are "aligned" with human values. Aligning AI with human values would seem to require thoughtfully defining *which* values. Questions such as "which humans" and "what kind of alignment" are important to specify, though only critics seem to point this out. The EA (effective altruism) community's dominance in funding AI fellowships, for example, results in an overemphasis of "alignment" with issues that matter to the utilitarians in the EA community, namely posited, existential risks, compared with near-term, actual harms.

Data Lake. A data lake is a shared repository of data stored and secured for use by multiple authorized users. **Several organizations** in the United States worked together to build a data lake of **nonprofit tax information**. They refer to this shared data repository as the 990 Data Infrastructure Project. A data lake allows multiple analyses of a dataset, by different organizations and analysts, without having to release data to third parties.

Digital ID. We're used to using passwords, Google log-ins, usernames, and captchas to distinguish ourselves from others when accessing a website. As artificial intelligence takes off, we also must find ways to distinguish humans from bots and automated systems. Hence, we now have more salesmen making arguments for every person on the planet to have a digital ID. Some of the same people (Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI) who are building powerful AI systems are also pushing globally relevant digital IDs built around human biometrics (see Altman's Worldcoin, for example). Digital identifications are controversial and speak directly to questions of public and private responsibility, permanence, surveillance, and safety.

Digital Public Goods. Digital public goods are defined by the UN as open-source software, open data, open AI systems, and open content collections that adhere to privacy and other best practices, that do no harm by design, and that are relevant for attainment of the United Nations 2030 **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs). There is a **registry** of these tools and a **global standard**. These tools are a key part of discussions around the globe regarding questions of government and/or civil society's responsibility in an age when corporations control much of the digital landscape. Many foundations are helping to fund the creation of digital public goods. It's not yet clear if the public (meaning taxpayers) will be on the hook for maintaining these resources.

Donor Codes of Conduct. Perhaps as an outgrowth of the #MeToo movement and informed by growing calls to make fundraising more community-centric and less donor-focused, more and more organizations are creating **codes of conduct for donors**. These are designed to protect fundraisers and others who are at the front face of a very lopsided power dynamic.

Doom Loop. After the shelter-in-place orders and the shift to remote work, **many cities and rural towns** are experiencing major shifts in the use of office space, raising concerns about both the viability of commercial real estate and the vitality of downtown centers. Empty offices lead to empty public transit leads to fewer people on the street leads to dirt and fear, further driving away people. One crisis creating another is the much-feared, much-hyped doom loop.

Green Hushing. The socially responsible investment movement has been growing for decades. It must have reached a peak, because the backlash against it is leading companies to **go quiet about their sustainability goals** to hush the critics. In the U.S., seven states have passed laws against investing in companies that report out on ESG principles, and another 13 states are considering legislation (as of March 2023). This is quite the reversal from the days of "reenwashing," in which companies touted actions they weren't taking.

Insurance. Insurance costs are skyrocketing and now influence where people can live and whether they can afford a car. Property insurers are redlining entire counties because of the cost of natural disasters; cyber insurance is already expensive. If I were making predictions (and I'm not), I'd predict insurance costs becoming an increasing pressure on nonprofit budgets, possibly causing organizations to close.

Nalexone. This is the generic name for Narcan, a drug used to reverse opioid overdoses. The fentanyl crisis and the prevalence of drugs laced with worse drugs means that bars now carry Narcan. Ambulances carry it. Parents and grandparents carry it. And soon, elementary and high schools will carry it. Every organization that hosts events might consider whether they need to carry it also. It's **available in stores and online**.

Safe, Responsible, Trustworthy, [fill in the blank] AI. There are legitimate efforts to put guardrails around artificial intelligence. There are an endless number of descriptors for what kind of AI is preferred, ranging from aligned (see above) to trustworthy, human-centered to responsible. Few of these terms are defined in ways that can be used to cross-check one set of claims against another. At least, "ethical" now has some company. These terms, and all these organizations, require deeper scrutiny from the public and more input from civil society. A new **$200 million philanthropic effort** might help.

Salary Transparency. There's been a robust push in the U.S. for nonprofits to list salaries as part of job postings. It helps reduce salary discrepancies within organizations, **among other values**. The movement got a big boost from state laws (USA) requiring salary listings in all job postings. The norm is slowly shifting from opacity to "Why aren't you sharing the salary range?"

SCORECARD: **RENOVATIONS TO 2023 PREDICTIONS**

I'm not making predictions for 2024. Here's how I did on those I made for 2023.

PREDICTION	RIGHT	WRONG	NOTES
There will be a boom in cy pres funding for nonprofits. Courts will order the creation of philanthropic funds from the settlements born of defamation suits (*United States v. Alex Jones, Dominion Voting Systems v. Fox News Network*, etc.). These will follow along the lines of previous court-created funds in tobacco, big tech and privacy, and elsewhere.	✔		Opioid settlements are fueling these—e.g., The **West Virginia First Foundation**.
The hype about crypto giving will die down as the rest of the crypto world deals with the fallout of massive fraud and collapsing value. It's worth being on alert about: "Do good" crypto hype is likely going to rise as a tactic for a battered industry.	✔		Uh, FTX and Sam Bankman-Fried, anyone?
Trusts will return to fashion, especially as a way of creating funding sources for both philanthropy and politics, following in the footsteps of the **Patagonia Purpose Trust** and the **Marble Freedom Trust**. (See also prediction on Twitter, Inc., below.)	✔		Craig Newmark and Mike Bloomberg followed in Patagonia's footsteps.
Legislative and regulatory attention will turn to ensuring external access to corporate data.		✔	Bills were introduced, and the topic arises in policy discussions. But "regulate AI" debate has taken over policy discussions.
Twitter will cease to exist in any meaningful form. Some of its code and assets may wind up in a trust (see above), or lawsuits against the company's new owner might produce trusts.	✔		Elon Musk officially killed Twitter on July 23, 2023. Its replacement, X, is full of racism, misogyny, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and homophobia. If it were a physical neighborhood, would you go there?
Technology companies' 2022 layoffs will set the table for another cycle of start-up hype, accompanied by a smaller burst of "tech for good" initiatives led by those who've lost their jobs.	✔		Sigh. AI for good, anyone? See the database of AI organizations hosted by the Digital Civil Society Lab (**https://pacscenter.stanford.edu/research/digital-civil-society-lab/ai-civil-society/**).

PREDICTION	RIGHT	WRONG	NOTES
Labor fights against surveillance technology, in both white- and blue-collar settings (do those terms still mean anything?), will increase globally, including within the nonprofit sector.	✔		See strikes by writers and actors.
Experiments in ways to **pay to own digital artifacts** will continue beyond the NFT-hype cycle. This will include a growth in platforms such as **Patreon**, but also in **cooperative ownership models** and ways to pay for the **future value** of artists, journalists, and others. There's a great opportunity here for funders to reimagine capital markets beyond copyright.	✔		Hard to quantify, but growth in Open Collectives and attention to work such as **Media Economies Design Lab's "Exit to Community"** are both encouraging signs.
Effective altruism will return to being a niche interest of quant jocks and philosophers.	✔		It took a reputational hit after Sam Bankman-Fried. Adherents still wield significant funding, especially in AI.
Foundation and nonprofit workplaces, including those that stay as hybrids of in-person and remote work, will begin to adapt to the needs of disabled and chronically ill colleagues.		✔	This was overly optimistic and dependent on people understanding that the pandemic isn't over.

RESOURCES

Affirmative Action

One very important change for civil society and philanthropy in the U.S. involves the Supreme Court's decisions striking down affirmative action in 2023 in two cases, *Students for Fair Admissions Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions Inc. v. University of North Carolina*. Several nonprofits and foundations played critical roles in bringing the cases and making the argument to end affirmative action. I didn't highlight this in the text because it's U.S.-specific, but for those looking for information, you can check out these resources:

- *The Atlantic*: "**This Is the End of Affirmative Action**"
- Davis Wright Tremaine LLP: "**Ban on Affirmative Action: Implications, Risks, and Strategies for the Charitable Sector**"
- Hewlett Foundation: "**Resources to prepare and respond to the Supreme Court's affirmative action decisions**"
- ***Nonprofit Quarterly***: "Centering Inclusion after Affirmative Action"

Books and Reports

Michael Beckel, Amelia Minkin, Amisa Ratliff, Ariana Rojas, Kathryn Thomas, and Adrien Van Voorhis, "The High Cost of High Turnover," Issue One, September 26, 2023, https://issueone.org/articles/the-high-cost-of-high-turnover/.

Meredith Broussard, *More Than a Glitch: Confronting Race, Gender, and Ability Bias in Tech* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2023).

Deb Chachra, *How Infrastructure Works: Inside the Systems That Shape Our World* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2023).

The Digital Civil Society Speaker Series: Monthly free streamed and recorded talks on digital civil society by international experts. Be sure to check the publications of each speaker.

Cory Doctorow, *The Internet Con: How to Seize the Means of Computation* (London, UK: Verso, 2023).

Abel Escribà-Folch, Joseph Wright, and Covadonga Meseguer, *Migration and Democracy: How Remittances Undermine Dictatorships* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023).

Justin Farrell, *Billionaire Wilderness: The Ultra-Wealthy and the Remaking of the American West* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

Thomas Halliday, *Otherlands: A Journey Through Earth's Extinct Worlds* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2023).

Journal of Democracy, October 2023 issue: Includes a special symposium on democracy and AI, https://journalofdemocracy.org/articles/.

Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America* (New York: Viking, 2017).

Brian Merchant, *Blood in the Machine: The Origins of the Rebellion Against Big Tech* (New York: Hachette, 2023).

Mara Mills, ***How to Be Disabled in a Pandemic*** (New York: NYU Press, 2024, forthcoming).

Imani Perry, *South to America: A Journey Below the Mason-Dixon to Understand the Soul of a Nation* (New York: Ecco, 2022).

Maria Ressa, *How to Stand Up to a Dictator: The Fight for Our Future* (New York: HarperCollins, 2022).

Heather Cox Richardson, *Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America* (New York: Viking Books, 2023).

Mustafa Suleyman, *The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the Twenty-First Century's Greatest Dilemma* (New York: Crown Books, 2023).

David Gray Widder, Sarah West, and Meredith Whittaker, "Open (For Business): Big Tech, Concentrated Power, and the Political Economy of Open AI," SSRN, August 17, 2023, **https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4543807**.

Newsletters

Arvind Narayanan and Sayash Kapoor: ***AI Snake Oil***—Two Princeton researchers on AI.

Joyce Vance: ***Civil Discourse***—U.S. politics, especially criminal cases against Donald J. Trump.

(Multiple authors): ***Fakequity***—Insights on racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity.

Melanie Hamburger: ***Funder Follies***—The name says it all.

Lauren Crichton: ***Pass It On***—Nonprofits and technology.

Podcasts

Exposing the Invisible—From Tactical Tech.

High Turnout, Wide Margins—U.S. election officials discuss all things electoral.

IRL: Online Life Is Real Life—From the Mozilla Foundation.

On the Media, "We Don't Talk About Leonard," episodes **1**, **2**, **3**—On Leonard Leo and dark money in politics.

Past Present—Historians discuss the present.

Technically Optimistic—From the Emerson Collective.

Tech Policy Press—Discussions of technology and public policy.

Answering Questions About AI Safety—A bot-powered research collection of useful links on AI responsibility, safety, etc.

NOTES

1. Draftsmen don't really exist anymore in the age of computer-aided design (CAD). This 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 hand-drew every draft of every floor plan. They've gone the way of typing pools.
2. This is the standard SEC required disclosure on mutual fund advertisements.
3. As I told you last year, I have long COVID and am now disabled. There are tens of millions of people with this disease. There is currently no reliable treatment plan or cure.
4. Will Bunch, "Journalism fails miserably at explaining what is really happening to America," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 27, 2023, https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/media-2020-election-trump-authoritarianism-20230827.html.
5. Thomas Halliday, *Otherlands: A Journey Through Earth's Extinct Worlds* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2022).
6. Felipe Rey Salamanca, *El Sistema Represenativo*, 2023, https://www.gedisa.com/ficha.aspx?idcol=300&cod=302711&aut=Rey%20Salamanca,%20Felipe.
7. A DAO is a distributed, autonomous organization—a structure made possible by digital networks and encrypted technologies.
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43. I have had long COVID since January 2022. This has required me to leave many things behind—my ability to walk exercise and hike, my ability to drive or to travel, and many other things. During the writing of this *Blueprint*, I experienced a crisis with my eyesight and was unable to read or write on a screen. These are not only the core tasks of my employment—reading and writing are who I am, they're what I do. It's possible that I will need to retrain my brain to process information in an entirely new way, and when the time comes, I will do so. I have left many things on the "before" side of the COVID portal, and I am actively seeking to figure out what I will make, build, be, on this side.