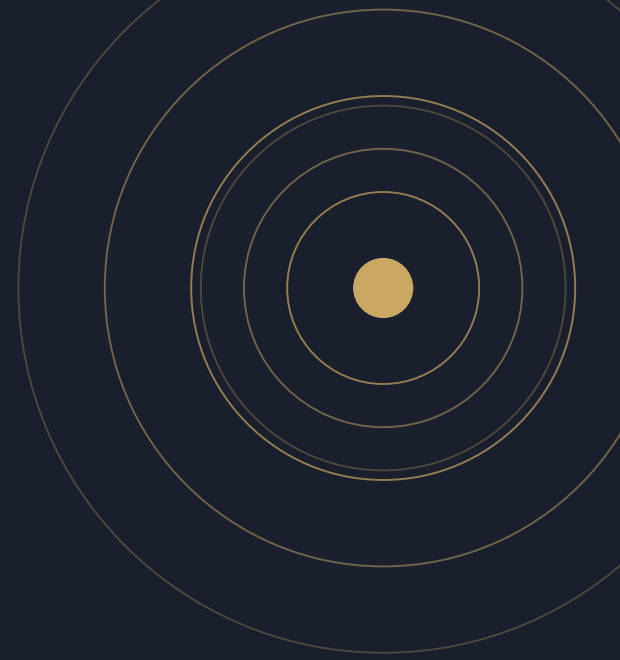


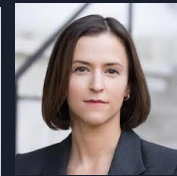
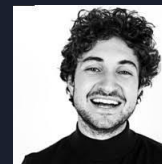
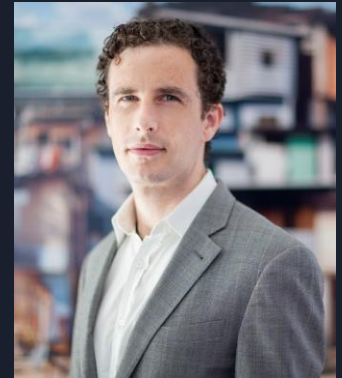
THE DIVINITY SCHOOL

Humanity's Sociotechnical Grand Challenges For the Age of AI



E. Glen Weyl

Microsoft Research · Plurality Institute · RadicalxChange



We are spending Apollo-scale on the machines.

Almost nothing on the society that must absorb them.

AI INFRASTRUCTURE · 2024-25

several × Apollo + Manhattan combined (% of global GDP)

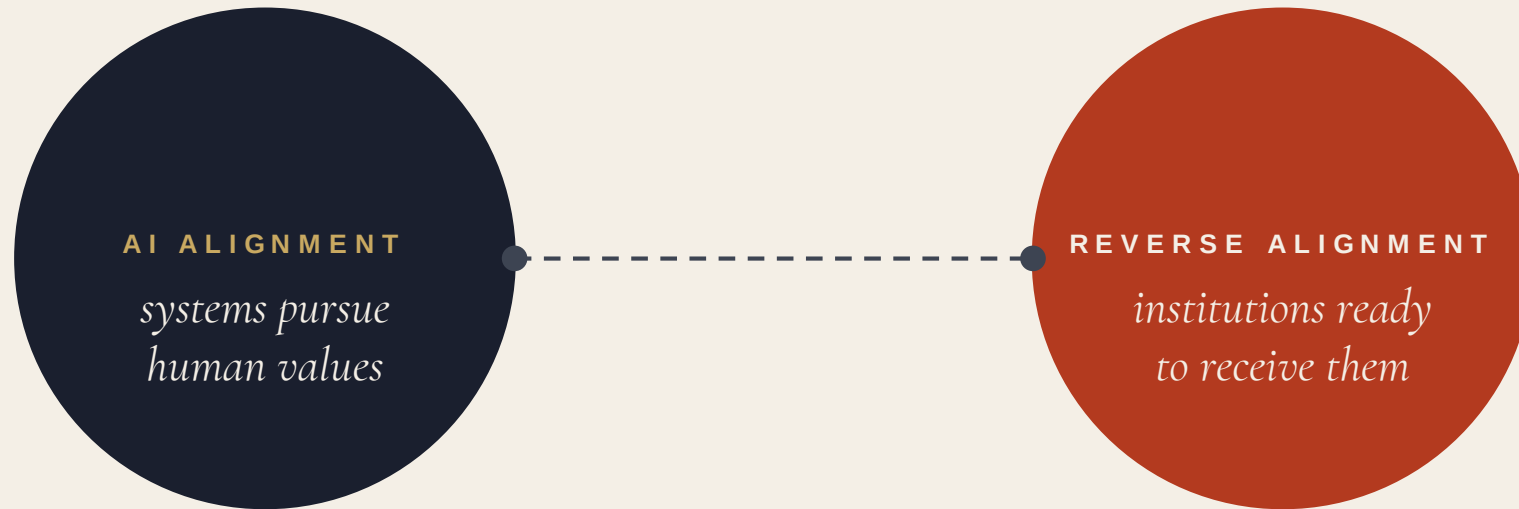
INSTITUTIONAL & CIVIC PREPARATION



a tiny fraction

*For every dollar invested in making AI more capable,
a tiny fraction goes toward the institutional and civic
infrastructure required to integrate it.*

Alignment is a two-sided problem.



*Even a perfectly aligned AI underdelivers — or causes harm —
if deployed into democracies, economies, and legal systems unprepared to absorb it.*

Technology waits decades for institutions to catch up.

BEFORE

*Factories arranged around
a central steam shaft.*



AFTER (40 YEARS LATER)

*Reorganized around
distributed electric motors.*



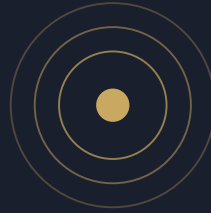
The bottleneck was not the technology. It was the organizational imagination.

Three failure modes already visible.



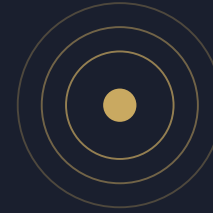
*Productivity
without prosperity*

Work reorganized faster than people can
retrain, bargain, or transition.



*Execution
without verification*

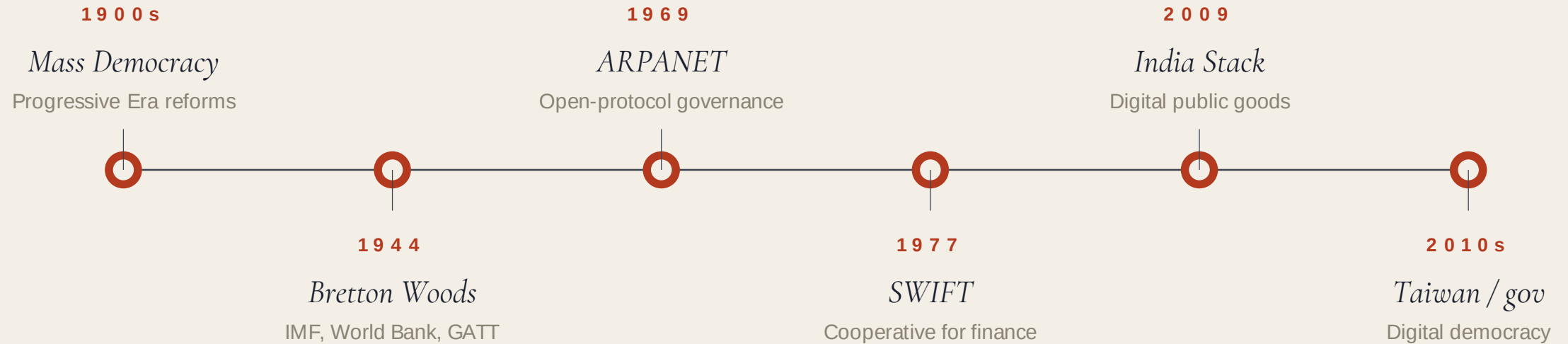
Decisions easier to automate than to justify.
Content easier to generate than to
authenticate.



*Capacity
without constraint*

States grow more powerful while
contestability, appeal, and civil liberties don't.

Every great technology required a sociotechnical match.



None of these came from a single sector. All came from coalitions that crossed boundaries.

Twelve sociotechnical moonshots.

Each requires its own coalition. None can be solved alone.



Identity



Privacy



Provenance



Data Value



Agentic Trust



Sensemaking



Democracy



Organizations



Law



Research



Education



Labor

Who is real? What is real?



P E R S O N H O O D

*Prove you are a unique human
— without revealing who.*

Personhood credentials distinguish humans from synthetic agents. **Verifiable credentials** let identity remain relational — anchored in community, congregation, profession — not just biological.



M E R O N Y M I T Y

*Reveal what's needed.
Nothing more.*

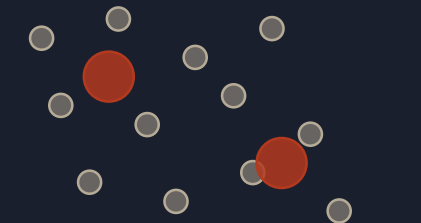
Zero-knowledge proofs, secure multiparty computation, federated learning. The cryptography exists. The legal frameworks and cultural norms — the harder part — do not.

The technology is mostly here. The institutional imagination is the bottleneck.

Platforms can divide. They can also bridge.

WHAT WE BUILT

Algorithmic feeds optimized for attention



Pluralistic ignorance at scale.

WHAT WE COULD BUILD

Bridging algorithms that surface shared ground

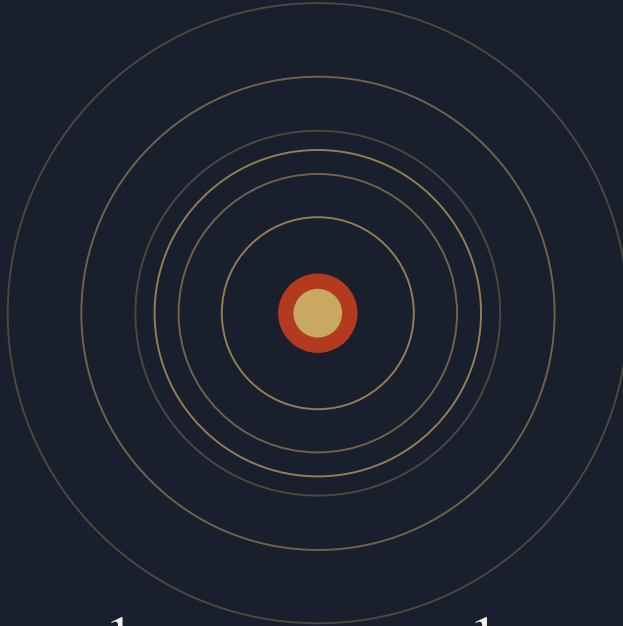


Pol.is · Community Notes · vTaiwan

Surface what communities agree on across difference. Represent diversity and complexity transparently.

Move from advertisers paying for attention to communities paying for coherence.

T H E Q U E S T I O N F O R T H I S R O O M



What is at stake is not only productivity.
It is character, coherence, and the social fabric itself.

Whether AI ends in flourishing or fragmentation depends on what we choose to build alongside it.

Coalitions, not consensus.

Sufficient alliances that demonstrate value early and draw others in.



Cross-sector secondments

Embed technologists in government. Civil servants in research labs. Public-interest advocates in platforms. Build the shared mental models without which coalitions fragment into parallel monologues.



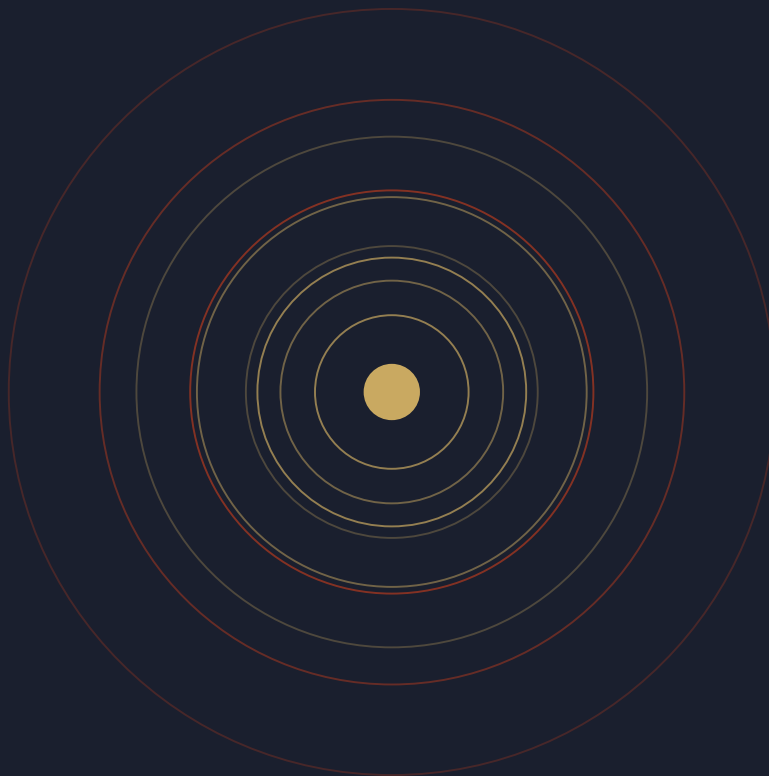
Advance market commitments

Funders guarantee demand for sociotechnical infrastructure that doesn't yet exist — privacy-preserving compute, interoperable credentials, bridging algorithms — the way we did for vaccines.



Quadratic & deep funding

Direct resources toward projects with broad-based rather than concentrated support. Use AI to map cross-silo collaboration and fund what others won't.



It is time
*to build as ambitiously for our social systems
as we have for our algorithms.*



Thank you.