



WHAT AI CAN'T BUILD

A STORYTELLER'S GUIDE TO THE HUMAN
CHALLENGES OF AI

Based on the paper by E. Glen Weyl,
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industry, and civil society.

Every great technology in history, from railroads to the internet, only delivered broad prosperity after decades of institutional redesign.

Right now, we're building the engine without the roads, the traffic laws, or the driver's ed.

That gap is where the drama lives.

FOR EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED IN MAKING AI MORE POWERFUL, ALMOST NOTHING GOES TOWARD PREPARING THE HUMAN SYSTEMS THAT NEED TO ABSORB IT: OUR LAWS, WORKPLACES, SCHOOLS, DEMOCRACIES, AND INFORMATION ECOSYSTEMS.

A COALITION OF 25 RESEARCHERS, TECHNOLOGISTS, AND POLICYMAKERS WROTE A PAPER ARGUING THAT HUMANITY'S REAL CHALLENGE ISN'T BUILDING SMARTER AI. IT'S BUILDING THE HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURE TO MATCH IT.

THIS DECK TRANSLATES THEIR WORK INTO LANGUAGE FOR STORYTELLERS, BECAUSE STORIES ARE HOW MOST PEOPLE WILL FIRST ENCOUNTER THESE IDEAS.

IMPORTANT KEY TERMS

REVERSE ALIGNMENT

AI "ALIGNMENT" USUALLY MEANS MAKING AI MATCH HUMAN VALUES. REVERSE ALIGNMENT FLIPS IT: REDESIGNING HUMAN INSTITUTIONS, LAWS, AND NORMS SO SOCIETY CAN ACTUALLY ABSORB AI SAFELY. AI NEEDS TO FIT US, BUT WE ALSO NEED TO BE READY FOR IT.

THE PRODUCTIVITY PARADOX

AI CRUSHES BENCHMARKS BUT BARELY MOVES THE ECONOMIC NEEDLE. DROPPING POWERFUL TOOLS INTO OUTDATED SYSTEMS IS LIKE GIVING A FORMULA 1 CAR TO A CITY WITH NO ROADS. THE BOTTLENECK ISN'T THE TECH. IT'S EVERYTHING AROUND IT.

PERSONHOOD CREDENTIALS

CRYPTOGRAPHIC TOOLS THAT LET YOU PROVE YOU'RE A REAL HUMAN ONLINE WITHOUT REVEALING WHO YOU ARE. AS AI MAKES IT TRIVIAL TO FAKE IDENTITIES, DOCUMENTS, AND FACES, THESE BECOME THE NEW FOUNDATION OF DIGITAL TRUST.

PROVENANCE

A VERIFIABLE RECORD OF WHERE CONTENT CAME FROM, HOW IT WAS MADE, AND WHETHER IT'S BEEN ALTERED. A CHAIN OF CUSTODY FOR INFORMATION. IN A WORLD OF DEEPFAKES, PROVENANCE IS HOW YOU DISTINGUISH REAL FROM FABRICATED.

DATA VALUE / ATTRIBUTION

AI IS TRAINED ON THE WORK OF MILLIONS OF CREATORS, BUT ALMOST NONE OF THEM SEE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS. DATA VALUATION ASKS: WHO CONTRIBUTED WHAT, AND HOW DO WE MAKE SURE THEY'RE COMPENSATED? THE COPYRIGHT DEBATE OF OUR GENERATION.

AGENTIC AI

AI SYSTEMS THAT DON'T JUST ANSWER QUESTIONS BUT TAKE ACTIONS ON YOUR BEHALF: SCHEDULING, NEGOTIATING, PURCHASING, FILING. WHEN YOUR AI AGENT TALKS TO SOMEONE ELSE'S AI AGENT, WE NEED TRUST SYSTEMS THAT DON'T YET EXIST.

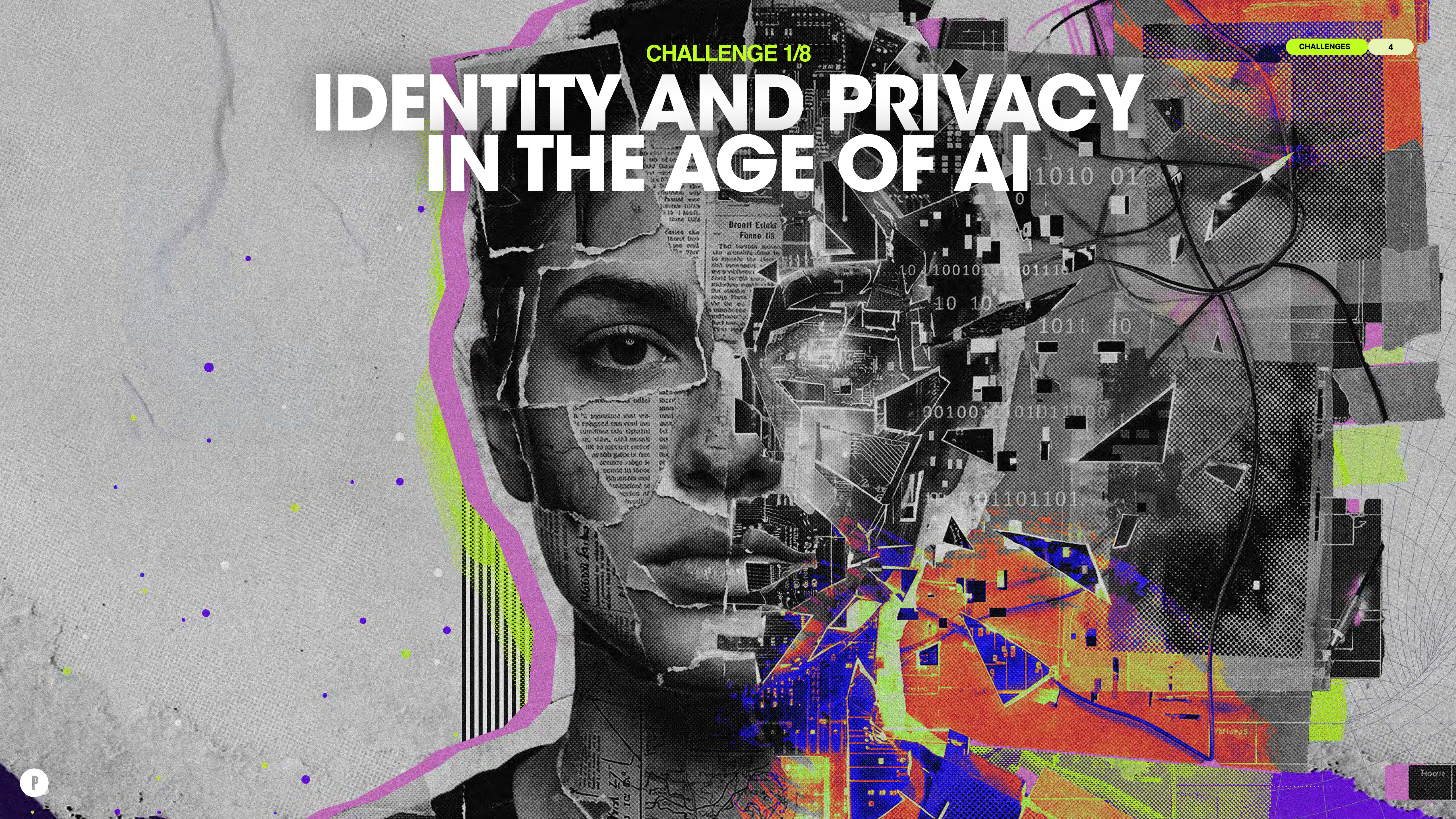
COMMUNAL SENSEMAKING

THE ABILITY OF COMMUNITIES TO COLLECTIVELY UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING AND DECIDE WHAT TO DO. ALGORITHMIC MEDIA FRACTURED THIS. NEW DESIGNS COULD REBUILD IT BY SURFACING WHERE GROUPS ACTUALLY AGREE, NOT JUST WHAT GETS CLICKS.

FLASH TEAMS / ORGANIZATIONS

DYNAMIC TEAMS ASSEMBLED ON THE FLY FOR SPECIFIC PROJECTS, THEN DISBANDED. AI ENABLES THESE BY HANDLING COORDINATION OVERHEAD. THE FUTURE OF WORK MAY LOOK LESS LIKE FIXED DEPARTMENTS AND MORE LIKE CREATIVE PRODUCTION CREWS.

IDENTITY AND PRIVACY IN THE AGE OF AI



AI can now fake faces, voices, documents, and entire personas at near-zero cost. At the same time, it can turn your scattered digital footprint into a detailed profile. We need systems that let people prove they're real without giving up their privacy. The old binary of "anonymous" vs. "transparent" is breaking down. The future demands something in between.

HIGH-CONCEPT PITCH

PERSONHOOD ARE NOW HOW YOU ACCESS EVERYTHING. A WOMAN WHO ESCAPED AN ABUSIVE MARRIAGE HAS REBUILT HER LIFE UNDER A NEW IDENTITY — LEGALLY, CLEANLY. AN OLD CREDENTIAL SURFACES AT A CUSTODY HEARING, NOT BECAUSE THE SYSTEM WAS HACKED, BUT BECAUSE A WELL-MEANING INTEROPERABILITY UPGRADE LINKED TWO SYSTEMS THAT WERE NEVER SUPPOSED TO TALK. SHE FIGHTS NOT AGAINST SURVEILLANCE, BUT FOR THE RIGHT TO CONTEXTUAL IDENTITY — TO BE DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF HER LIFE. THE QUESTION ISN'T "CAN YOU PROVE YOU'RE REAL?" IT'S "WHICH VERSION OF REAL GETS TO COUNT?"

DROP INTO YOUR WRITERS' ROOM

A "CREDENTIAL ARCHITECT" HELPS CLIENTS DESIGN HOW THEY SHOW UP IS CONSTANTLY MANAGING COLLISIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT LIVES THEY LEAD. A COMING-OF-AGE STORY WHERE A TEENAGER IN A RICH COUNTRY MEETS SOMEONE FROM A FAILED STATE "LOW-TRUST ZONE", AND THEIR FRIENDSHIP CHALLENGES WHAT BELONGING MEANS. A WORKPLACE DRAMA WHERE A COMPANY'S HIRING ALGORITHM SILENTLY PRIVILEGES CANDIDATES WITH DEEPER CREDENTIAL NETWORKS, AND A BRILLIANT LONER FIGHTS TO PROVE THAT THIN IDENTITY ISN'T THIN CAPABILITY.

PROVENANCE AND THE CRISIS OF TRUST



When anyone can generate a convincing video, photo, or audio clip of anything, how do we know what's real? Provenance is the answer: a verifiable chain of custody for content. Legislation is already being written, and technical standards exist. But we're in a race between fabrication and verification, and fabrication is winning.

HIGH-CONCEPT PITCH

A DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER IS ABOUT TO RELEASE A MOVIE ABOUT A WATER CRISIS IN A WESTERN FARMING COMMUNITY. EVERY FRAME IS METICULOUSLY AUTHENTICATED. BUT A RIVAL FILMMAKER RELEASES AN EQUALLY VERIFIED DOCUMENTARY FROM THE SAME LOCATION TELLING THE OPPOSITE STORY: RASHOMON FOR THE AGE OF DIGITAL PROVENANCE.

DROP INTO YOUR WRITERS' ROOM

A ROMANCE SET IN A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE EXCHANGE "VERIFIED MEMORIES" — AUTHENTICATED RECORDINGS OF THEIR EXPERIENCES — AND A COUPLE DISCOVERS THAT THEIR VERIFIED MEMORIES OF THE SAME RELATIONSHIP TELL IRRECONCILABLY DIFFERENT STORIES. A NEWSROOM DRAMA WHERE A SENIOR EDITOR FIGHTS TO PRESERVE THE EDITORIAL ROLE OF *INTERPRETATION* IN AN ERA WHERE AUDIENCES TRUST PROVENANCE STAMPS MORE THAN JOURNALISTS.

DATA VALUE & THE INVISIBLE LABOR BEHIND AI



Every AI model was trained on the work of real people: writers, artists, coders, musicians. Almost none were compensated. Without fixing this, creators stop creating and AI models "collapse" on AI-generated content. New data valuation methods and collective management organizations are emerging, but remain fragmented.

HIGH-CONCEPT PITCH

JOAN IS THE HIGHEST-COMPENSATED DATA CONTRIBUTOR IN COUNTRY MUSIC — HER PLAYING SHAPED THE CORE OF THE GENRE'S MOST POPULAR AI COMPOSITIONS. SHE'S RICH BUT ANONYMOUS. WHEN A YOUNG ARTIST SAMPLES HER *ACTUAL* RECORDINGS FOR A RETRO-HUMAN ALBUM, THE DATA CMO FLAGS IT AS A LICENSING VIOLATION. SHE LAUNCHES A LEGAL AND CULTURAL FIGHT NOT FOR MONEY, BUT FOR THE RIGHT TO BE *KNOWN*,

DROP INTO YOUR WRITERS' ROOM

A COMEDY ABOUT THE RISE TO WEALTH OF AN ISOLATED AFRICAN TRIBE FOR THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THEIR ISOLATE LANGUAGE TO MODEL PERFORMANCE. A FAMILY DRAMA WHERE SIBLINGS INHERIT THEIR LATE MOTHER'S "DATA ESTATE" — AND FIGHT OVER WHAT TO SELL V. HOW TO PROTECT THEIR FAMILY SECRETS.

AGENTIC COLLABORATION AND DIGITAL TRUST



AI "agents" are handling tasks on our behalf: scheduling, purchasing, negotiating. Soon they'll interact with each other at scale. But today's agents are built to be unconditionally helpful - dangerously naive, like interns who'll do anything anyone asks. We need trust systems where agents build track records over time. Without shared standards, this only works inside Big Tech walled gardens.

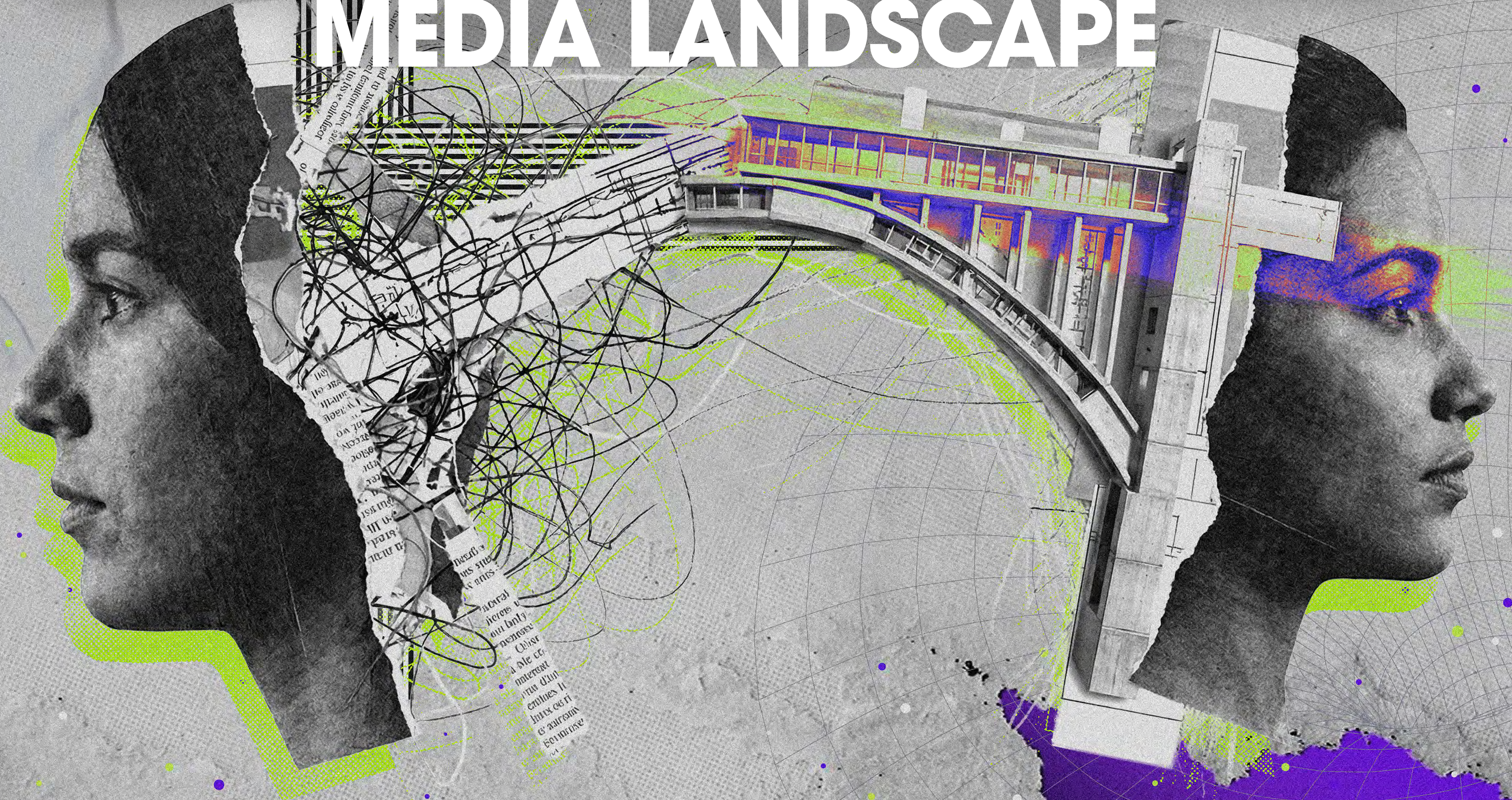
HIGH-CONCEPT PITCH

THE DIPLOMAT FOR THE AI ERA. TWO COUNTRIES ON THE BRINK OF A TRADE WAR DISCOVER THAT THEIR AGENTS HAVE ALREADY QUIETLY NEGOTIATED A BRILLIANT COMPROMISE — ONE THAT NEITHER COUNTRY'S LEADERSHIP WOULD HAVE PROPOSED, BUT ACCEPTING IT MEANS ADMITTING THAT MACHINES UNDERSTOOD THE COUNTRIES' INTERESTS BETTER THAN THEIR ELECTED LEADERS DID. A JUNIOR DIPLOMAT IS TASKED WITH FINDING A WAY TO *SELL THE AGENTS' DEAL AS A HUMAN ONE* — AND WRESTLES WITH WHETHER THAT DECEPTION SERVES DEMOCRACY OR UNDERMINES IT.

DROP INTO YOUR WRITERS' ROOM

A LEGAL PROCEDURAL ABOUT "AGENT MALPRACTICE" — WHEN A REAL ESTATE AGENT (AI) NEGOTIATES A TECHNICALLY FAVORABLE DEAL THAT DESTROYS A NEIGHBORHOOD'S CHARACTER, AND RESIDENTS ARGUE THE AGENT LACKED THE *VALUES* TO REPRESENT THEM PROPERLY. A PRESTIGE DRAMA ABOUT A CEO WHOSE AGENT HAS BECOME SO TRUSTED BY PARTNERS AND INVESTORS THAT THE BOARD QUIETLY WONDERS IF THE AGENT SHOULD BE RUNNING THE COMPANY.

SENSEMAKING IN A FRACTURED MEDIA LANDSCAPE



Algorithmic media industrialized polarization, showing us content based on inferred group memberships without telling us which communities see the same material. Everyone thinks they're in the minority. But alternative designs exist: bridging algorithms surface ideas that earn support across divided groups. When communities pay for coherence instead of advertisers paying for attention, incentives flip.

HIGH-CONCEPT PITCH

A SMALL COASTAL CITY HAS USED BRIDGING PLATFORMS BECOME A NATIONAL MODEL OF CIVIC HARMONY. THEN A MARINE BIOLOGIST DISCOVERS THAT THE LOCAL FISHING INDUSTRY IS POISONING THE BAY — BUT EVERY TIME SHE POSTS ABOUT IT, THE BRIDGING ALGORITHM BURIES HER FINDINGS BECAUSE THEY'RE "DIVISIVE". SHE DOESN'T FACE CENSORSHIP. SHE FACES SOMETHING WORSE: *STRUCTURAL IRRELEVANCE*.

DROP INTO YOUR WRITERS' ROOM

A POLITICAL DRAMA WHERE A NATIONAL BRIDGING PLATFORM ACCIDENTALLY SURFACES A POLICY POSITION THAT 70% OF THE COUNTRY ACTUALLY AGREES ON — BUT NO POLITICAL PARTY HAS EVER CHAMPIONED IT, BECAUSE IT CUTS ACROSS DONOR INTERESTS. THE SCRAMBLE TO CLAIM OR SUPPRESS THE FINDING BECOMES THE STORY. A WORKPLACE COMEDY ABOUT A COMPANY THAT ADOPTS INTERNAL BRIDGING TOOLS AND DISCOVERS THAT THE "CONSENSUS" ON COMPANY CULTURE WAS MASKING A QUIET REBELLION NO ONE HAD WORDS FOR.

DEMOCRACY, LAW, AND THE BALANCE OF POWER



AI supercharges the executive branch: surveillance costs drop to near zero, legal filings can be generated at industrial scale, enforcement becomes automated. Legislatures and courts are overwhelmed. The frictions that used to prevent abuse of power were actually load-bearing parts of our constitutional order. Removing them without new checks doesn't modernize governance. It concentrates power.

HIGH-CONCEPT PITCH

YOUR NUMBER IS UP: A MOCKUMENTARY SITCOM (*JURY DUTY* MEETS *PARKS & REC*) WHERE ORDINARY RESIDENTS ARE DRAFTED BY LOTTERY TO RUN THEIR LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR SIX MONTHS. A RAG-TAG COLLECTION OF NEIGHBORS MUST COOPERATE ACROSS BIG DIVIDES AND SUPERFICIAL DIFFERENCES TO TACKLE REAL PROBLEMS — UNCOVERING LATENT CREATIVITY, UNEXPECTED ALLIANCES, AND THE DELIGHTFUL, SOMETIMES MOVING QUESTION: COULD YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBORS ACTUALLY DO A BETTER JOB RUNNING THE PLACE?

DROP INTO YOUR WRITERS' ROOM

A DEFENSE ATTORNEY DISCOVERS PROSECUTION IS FILING AI-GENERATED CASES AT 100X THE PREVIOUS RATE, OVERWHELMING PUBLIC DEFENDERS, AND DECIDES TO BEEF UP HERSELF, ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT THE LAW IS MORE THE PROBLEM THAN THE UNEQUAL RESOURCES. A CITY COUNCIL DRAMA WHERE AN AI GOVERNANCE SYSTEM IDENTIFIES AND IMPLEMENTS THE OPTIMAL ZONING REFORM OVERNIGHT — AND RESIDENTS WAKE UP TO FIND THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD REZONED WITHOUT ANYONE ATTENDING A MEETING.

LABOR TRANSITION & THE FUTURE OF MEANINGFUL WORK



AI doesn't just eliminate jobs. It unbundles them into tasks, some handled by AI, some made more valuable. But our workforce infrastructure was built for stable roles at single employers. It can't handle continuous task reallocation. AI companies have detailed data about how work is changing, but governments and training systems are flying blind. The risk: work reorganized faster than people can retrain.

HIGH-CONCEPT PITCH

A MASTER WOODWORKER SPENT 40 YEARS PERFECTING HAND-JOINED FURNITURE. HER WORK IS EXQUISITE — AND ECONOMICALLY IRRELEVANT. SHE'S WELL COMPENSATED FOR HER DATA BUT STRUGGLES WITH *PURPOSE* UNTIL A YOUNG FLASH-TEAM COORDINATOR ASKS HER TO TEACH A ROTATING COHORT OF WORKERS THE *PRINCIPLES* BEHIND HER CRAFT. THE SERIES FOLLOWS HER STUDENTS AS THEY CARRY THOSE PRINCIPLES INTO WILDLY DIFFERENT FIELDS, ASKING: WHAT IS CRAFT IN A WORLD WHERE THE PRODUCT DOESN'T MATTER, BUT THE *PRACTICE* DOES?

DROP INTO YOUR WRITERS' ROOM

A COMING-OF-AGE STORY ABOUT A YOUNG WORKER WHO'S NEVER HAD A "CAREER," ONLY A SERIES OF FLASH ASSIGNMENTS, MEETING A RETIREE WHO SPENT 35 YEARS AT ONE COMPANY, AND EACH ENVYING THE OTHER'S LIFE. A UNION TRYING TO NEGOTIATE AI TRANSITION PROTECTIONS IN A LEGAL VACUUM.

EDUCATION, CREDENTIALS, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



When students can produce polished work without understanding, the premise of education is disrupted. Colleges always built critical thinking as a byproduct of content delivery. AI makes that bundling untenable. We need education that uses AI as a "stationary bike for the mind" (building strength) not an e-bike (doing the work for you), plus credentials reflecting what people actually know.

HIGH-CONCEPT PITCH

CLASS OF 2036: A SITCOM (*COMMUNITY* MEETS *NEAR-FUTURE*) WHERE A CONVENTIONALLY-TRAINED MATURE-AGE STUDENT TRIES UPSKILLING AT A UNIVERSITY WHERE THE BUILDINGS LOOK THE SAME BUT THE DEGREES — SENSEMAKING, COMMUNITY TENDING, PROVENANCE — LOOK NOTHING LIKE TODAY. FISH-OUT-OF-WATER COMEDY AS THEY NAVIGATE THIS CURIOUS NEW WORLD ALONGSIDE YOUNG CLASSMATES, PLAYFULLY EXPLORING WHAT OUR KIDS WILL ACTUALLY BE STUDYING AND WORKING ON, AND HOW THE REST OF US WILL ADAPT.

DROP INTO YOUR WRITERS' ROOM

SIBLING RIVALRY: THE PERFECT STUDENT V. THE MISFIT, WITH NEW AI POWERED CREDENTIALING SHIFTING THE BALANCE OF OPPORTUNITY TO THE SECOND. AN ABSURDIST COMEDY ABOUT PEOPLE MASTERING THE ART OF ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO AI. A MENTOR-STUDENT DRAMA WHERE A RETIRED PROFESSOR, TRAINED IN THE OLD SYSTEM, TUTORS A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL WHO'S CREDENTIALIAED BUT FEELS HOLLOW — AND THEY DISCOVER TOGETHER WHAT LEARNING LOOKS LIKE WHEN IT'S PURSUED FOR NO EXTERNAL REWARD AT ALL.

CREDITS

This playbook was based on the paper by E. Glen Weyl, James A. Evans, Danielle S. Allen, and 22 co-authors from research, governance, industry, and civil society.

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