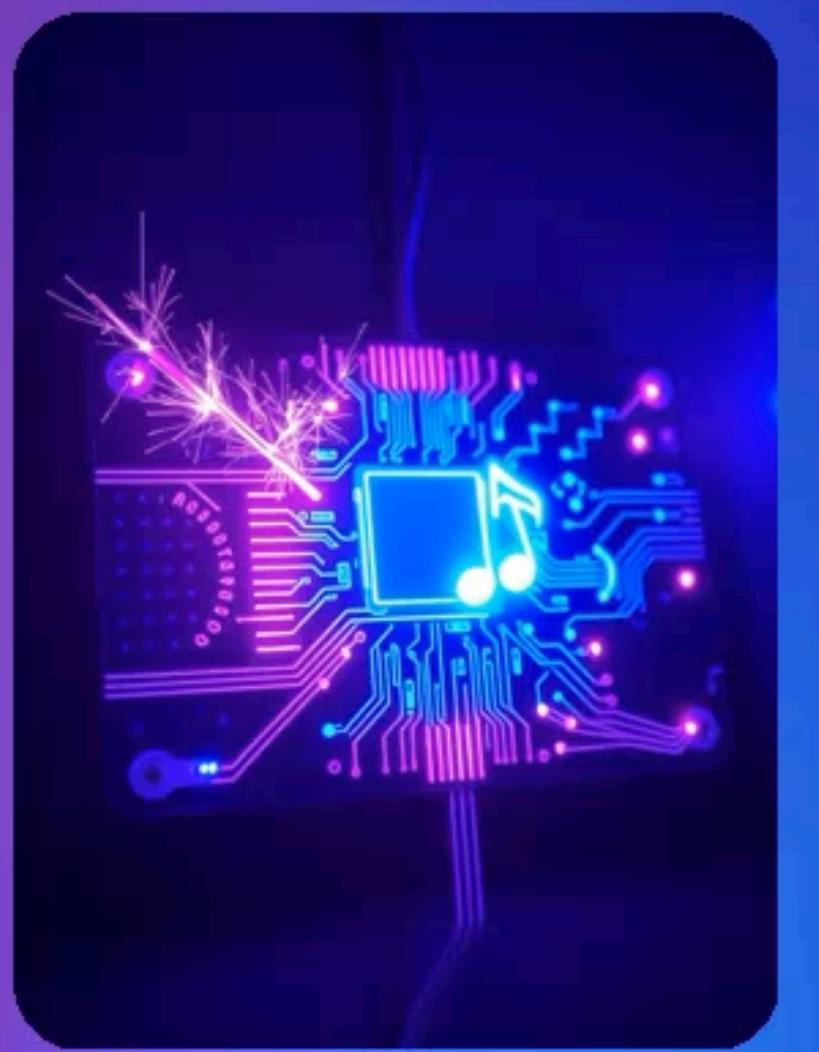


The CS 278 Song (Official...

by @defnr



CS 278

[Verse 1] You worked hard
on your projects
Platforms for the web and
your phones

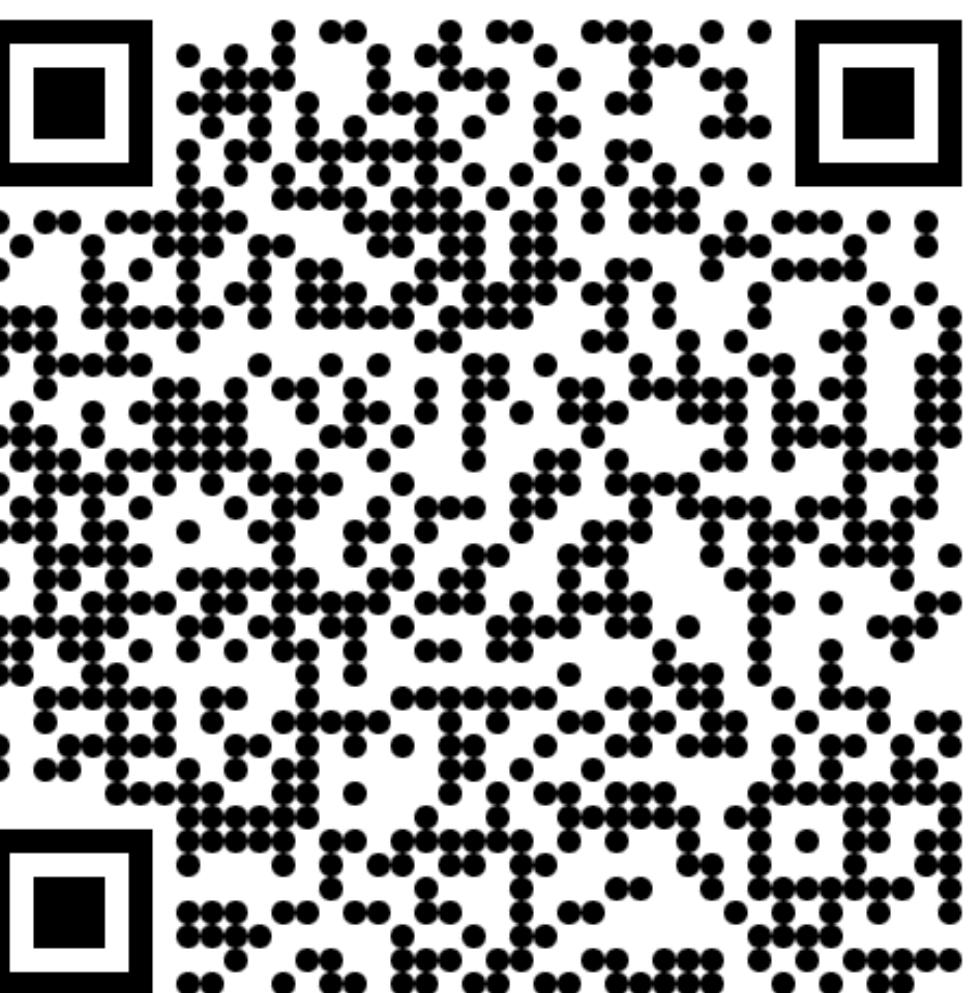
MADE WITH **SUNO**





Governance

CS 278 | Stanford University | Michael Bernstein



Announcements

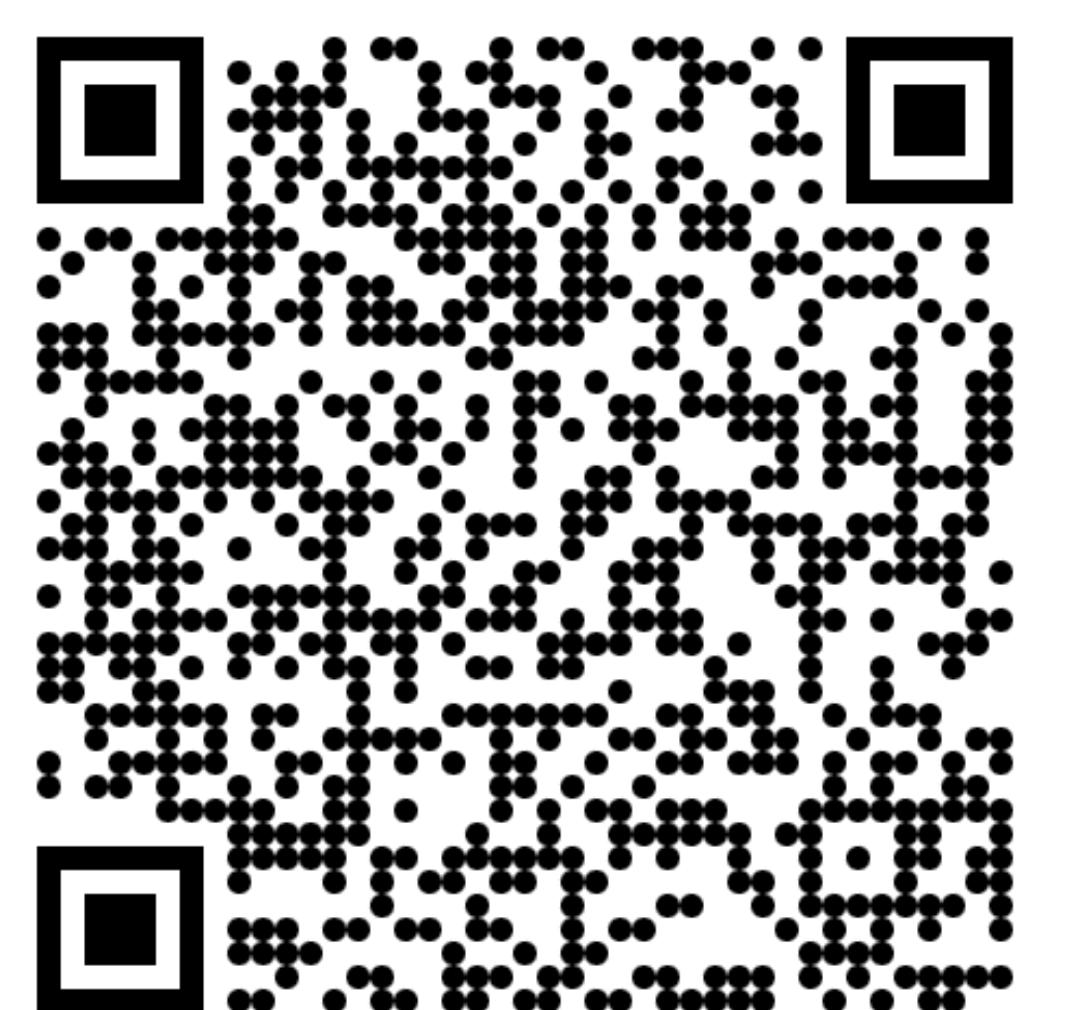
Sticking the landing:

Today: Last lecture!

Wednesday: Michael's final office hours until Fall 2026

Thursday: no lecture—dead day

Friday: Final projects are due. Trade projects on Ed!



Help evaluate the Embedded Ethics Program!



<https://tinyurl.com/EmbeddedEthicsSP25>

10-15 minute survey, taking it (or not) won't impact your grade in the class in any way, and teaching team won't know who participates or not.

Option to provide your **Stanford email address** to receive a \$10 gift card, **up to the first 800 participants**. Compensation once per quarter (SUNet login required).

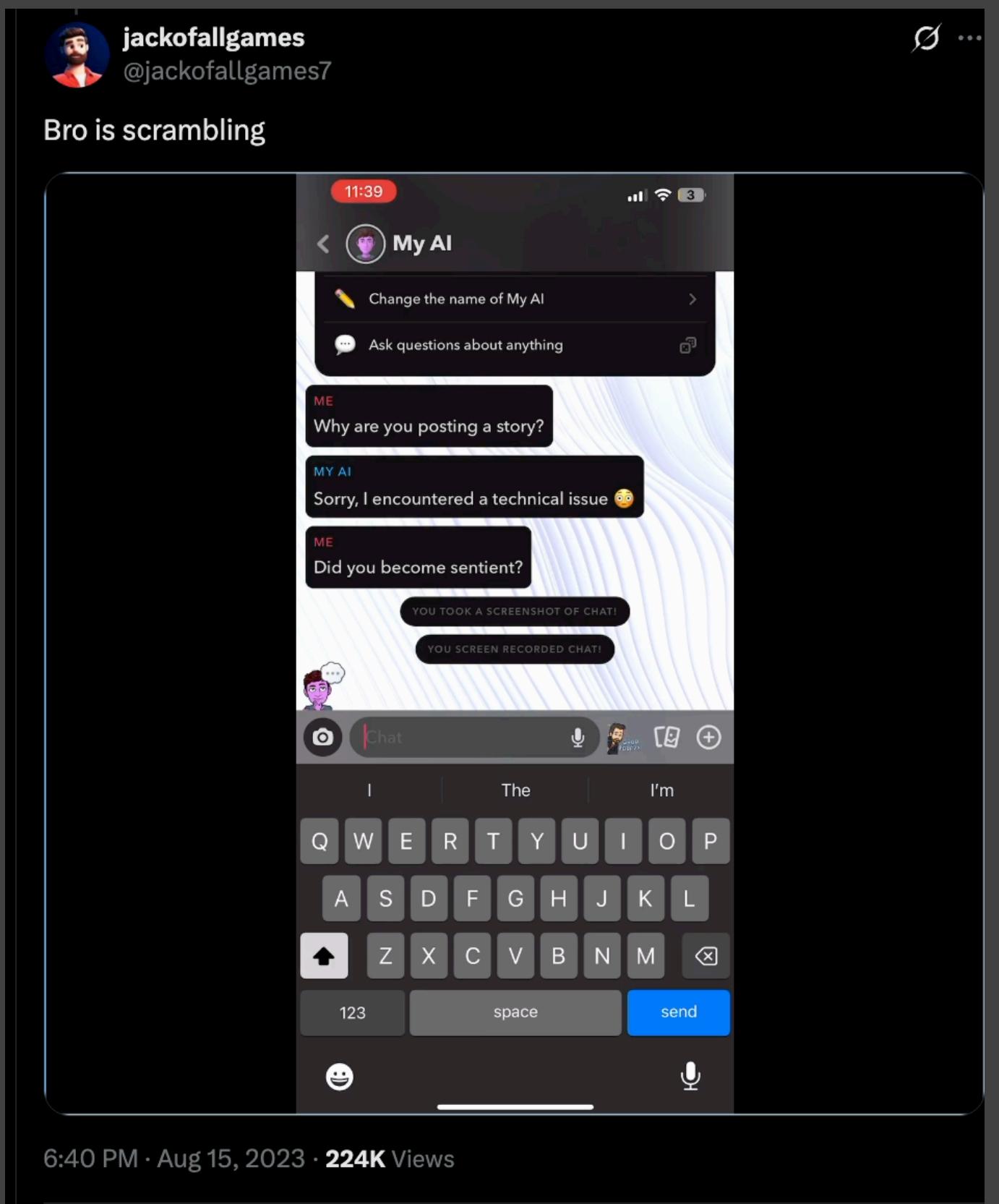
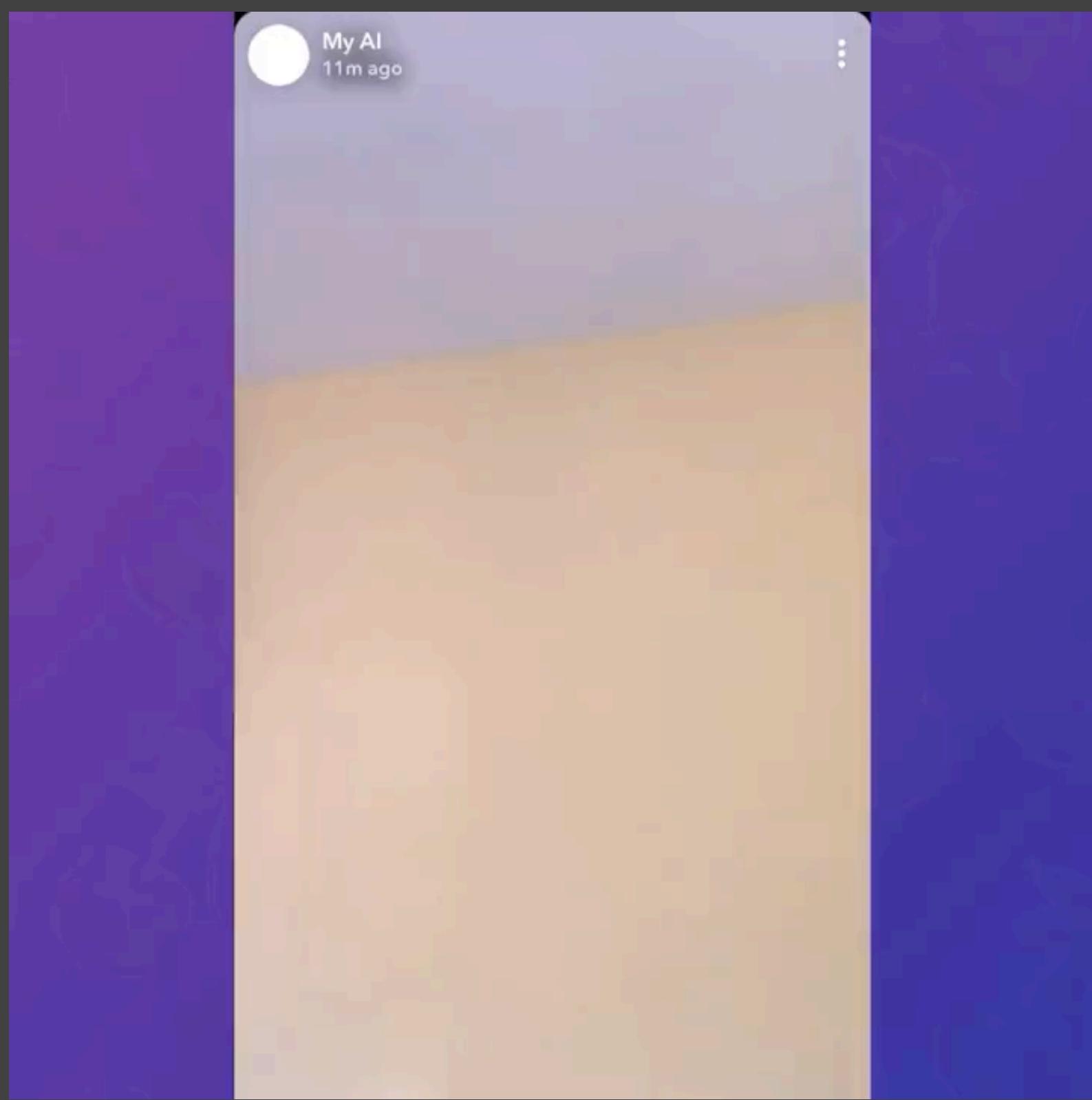
Last time

Non-human participants are becoming more realistic and more prevalent in social systems

Our human psychological hardware causes us to react to them like we would as if they were other humans, even if we know that they're not.

We are happy to see content created by AIs; it's when the AIs mix in environments with real people that people get critical.

“Social AI’s” example submitted by Zaid Akhtar



Snapchat’s “My AI” bot creeped out users when it randomly posted a picture of a wall and ceiling to its Story—something it had never done before. It then went silent, fueling fears it had gone rogue. Snapchat blamed a glitch, but the eeriness stuck. The bot’s lifelike behavior blurred the line between friend and machine.

0.5% extra credit for examples relevant to recent or upcoming lectures. Submit on Ed under the “Extra Credit” category

Attendance



THE NEW GOVERNORS: THE PEOPLE, RULES, AND PROCESSES GOVERNING ONLINE SPEECH

Kate Klonick

INTRODUCTION	1599
I. SECTION 230, THE FIRST AMENDMENT, AND THE BEGINNINGS OF INTERMEDIARY SELF-REGULATION	1603
A. <i>History and Development of § 230</i>	1604
B. <i>First Amendment Implications</i>	1609
C. <i>Internet Pessimists, Optimists, and Realists</i>	1613
II. WHY GOVERN WELL? THE ROLE OF FREE SPEECH NORMS, CORPORATE CULTURE, AND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONTENT MODERATION.....	1616
A. <i>Platforms' Baseline in Free Speech</i>	1618
1. <i>Free Speech Norms</i>	1618
2. <i>Government Request and Collateral Censorship Concerns</i>	1622
B. <i>Why Moderate At All?</i>	1625
1. <i>Corporate Responsibility and Identity</i>	1626
2. <i>Economic Reasons</i>	1627
III. HOW ARE PLATFORMS GOVERNING? THE RULES, PROCESS, AND REVISION OF CONTENT-MODERATION SYSTEMS	1630

Thesis of CS 278: social computing platforms shape our interactions with each other

So, the decisions that shape these interactions are impactful — to us, to the platforms, and to democracy

Platforms are “the new governors”. Yet, they work unlike democratic government.

Zuck on governance

marketplace of ideas. “The core job of what we do is building products that help people connect and communicate,” he said. “It’s actually quite different from the work of governing a community.” He hoped to separate

[<https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/inside-the-making-of-facebooks-supreme-court>]

With its size, Facebook has amassed outsized powers. “In a lot of ways Facebook is more like a government than a traditional company,” Zuckerberg has said. “We have this large community of people, and more than other technology companies we’re really setting policies.”

[<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/19/facebook-s-war-on-free-will>]

One failed angle: autocracy

Despite the counter-culture technolibertarian leanings of early denizens of the internet [Barlow 1996], most the software underlying communities derives from a **roles-and-permissions** model in **UNIX**

Mods & administrators: roles that have specific powers

What if you wanted to have more **participatory governance**?
[Zhang, Hugh, and Bernstein 2020]

(And even if you didn't, many online communities wind up needing to govern themselves regardless.)

One failed angle: total open participation

[Freeman 1970; Rheingold 2022]

“I joined the network shortly before the Omidyars [...] pledged to contribute an initial \$25,000 to a group or groups chosen by the community.

Thus began a massive meta thrash. [...] Probably around 1000 people checked out the conversation thread, around 200 participated in the conversation, and around 25 people contributed the majority of the posts, which ended up numbering in the thousands.

Attempts at consensus continued to fail on minority objections. My contributions to the conversation thread consisted largely of unheeded warnings that without a clear decision-making procedure, this conversation was doomed to be an infinite meta rathole.”

No governance is still governance — and it’s bad governance.



Michael Bernstein

Ugrad requirement proposal



Mehran Sahami

Re: Ugrad requirement proposal



James Landay

Re: Re: Ugrad requirement proposal



Michael Bernstein

Re: Re: Re: Ugrad requirement proposal



Fei-Fei Li

Re: Re: Re: Re: Ugrad requirement proposal



Dorsa Sadigh

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Ugrad requirement proposal



Michael Bernstein

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Ugrad requirement proposal

6 MONTHS
LATER



Michael Bernstein

Re:
Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re:



Mehran Sahami

Re:
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James Landay

Re:
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Michael Bernstein

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Fei-Fei Li

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Dorsa Sadigh

Re:
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Michael Bernstein

Re:
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Today: how do we govern?



Mehran Sahami

Re:
Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re:



James Landay

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Michael Bernstein

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Fei-Fei Li

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Michael Bernstein

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Today: how do we govern?

Outline:

Governance

Decision-making

Not in scope for today: government regulation



Fei-Fei Li

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re:

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re:



Dorsa Sadigh

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re:

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Michael Bernstein

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Governance

“In democratic countries the science of association is the mother science; the progress of all the others depends on the progress of that one.”

—Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835

Social media: the public sphere?

Social media as public sphere [Habermas 1989]: “Social media should be a place where we all gather publicly to rationally debate the issues that matter to us.”

But not all communities have equal access or buy-in to the rational debate of the public sphere [Fraser 1990]

So how do we discuss and govern if the “town square” isn’t practically achievable?

Ostrom: governing the commons

[Ostrom 1990]



When a resource is shared, the most effective groups require that
“those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules”

In other words, successful collective decision-making requires:

- 1) Operational and collective rules, defining what we’re allowed to do
- 2) Constitutional rules, the meta rules of how we change our governance

[Frey, Krafft, and Keegan 2019]

Popular governance models

[<https://opensource.guide/leadership-and-governance>]

BDFL: “Benevolent Dictator for Life” who makes all final decisions.

Examples: Ethereum, Django, Swift, Ruby, Pandas, Ubuntu, Linux, SciPy, Perl

Reputation ladder: top contributors are granted decision making rights. Policy decisions via committee vote.

Examples: Red Hat, StackOverflow, Apache

Issue: outspoken people are the ones who get credit

Liberal contribution: allow as many contributors as possible, and use consensus-seeking for policy decisions

Examples: node.js and Rust

Popular governance models

[<https://opensource.guide/leadership-and-governance>]

Steering committee: regular elections from active contributors produce a small committee empowered to make decisions when consensus isn't working

Examples: Python (post-Guido), node.js (for resolving technical disputes)

Decentralization: is it an answer?

Mastodon and others stand for decentralization: individual servers run their own affairs, and pass content between each other via a protocol

For example, a stanford.social Mastodon server could verify all accounts, and publish posts to other servers



**Social networking
that's not for sale.**

Your home feed should be filled with what matters to you most, not what a corporation thinks you should see. Radically different social media, back in the hands of the people.

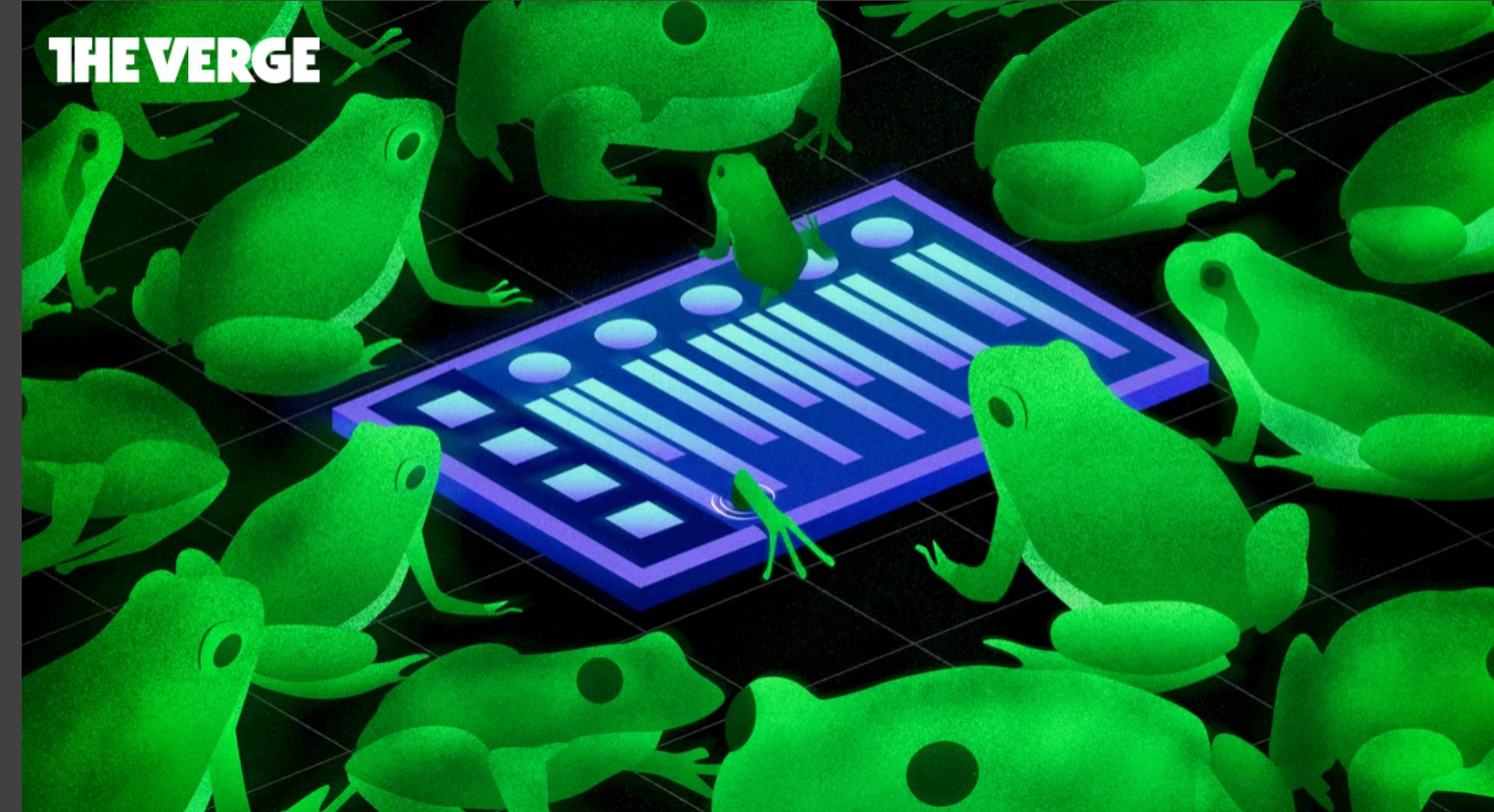
[Join mastodon.social](https://mastodon.social)

[Pick another server](#)

Decentralization: is it an answer?

The issue: when hate groups start a server, you can only block them from publishing to your server, not create any broader consequences for them

This is where **federal governance** is useful: the ability of a central government to maintain overall standards



WEB

HOW THE BIGGEST DECENTRALIZED SOCIAL NETWORK IS DEALING WITH ITS NAZI PROBLEM

Mastodon was built to be a kinder, more decentralized version of Twitter—then Gab showed up

By Adi Robertson | @thedextriarchy | Jul 12, 2019, 2:51pm EDT

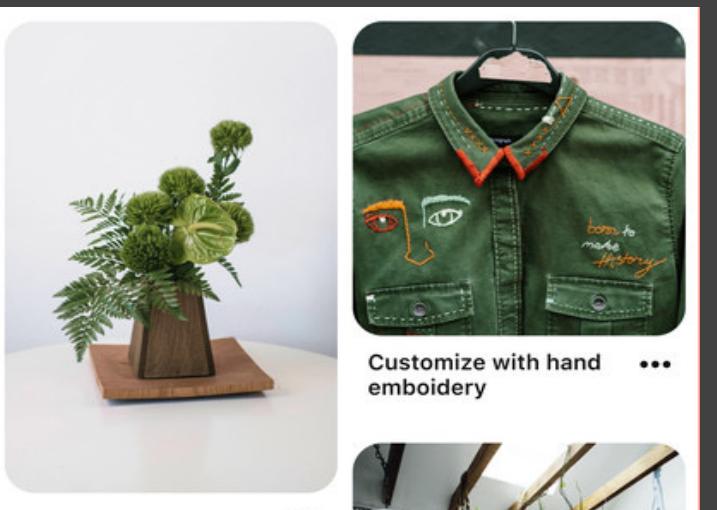
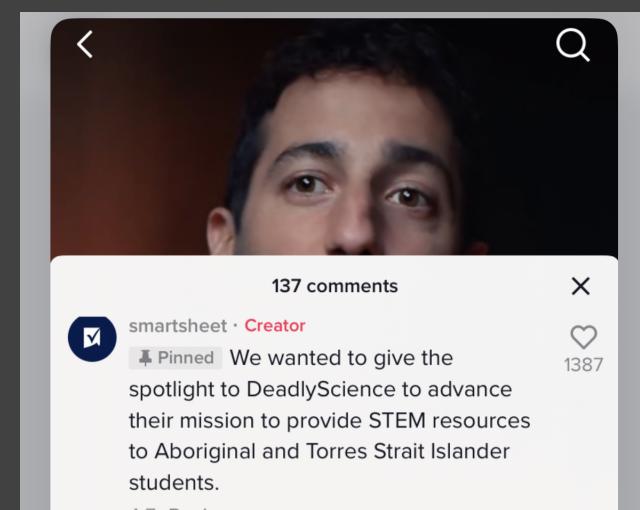
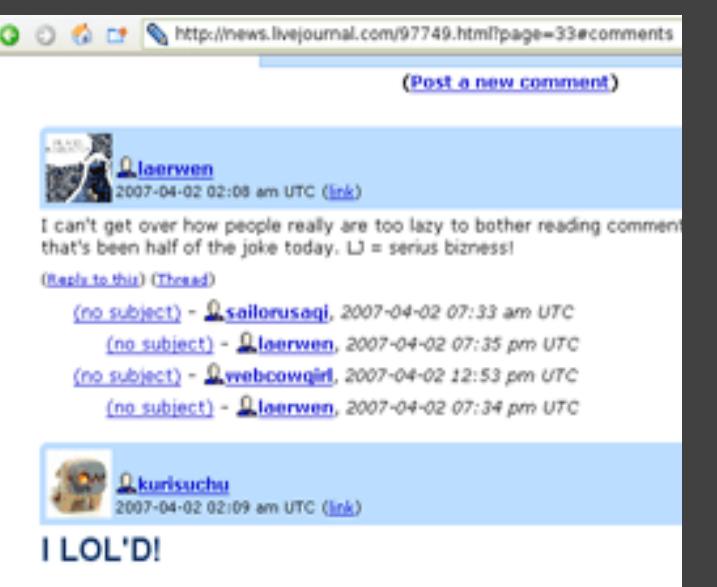
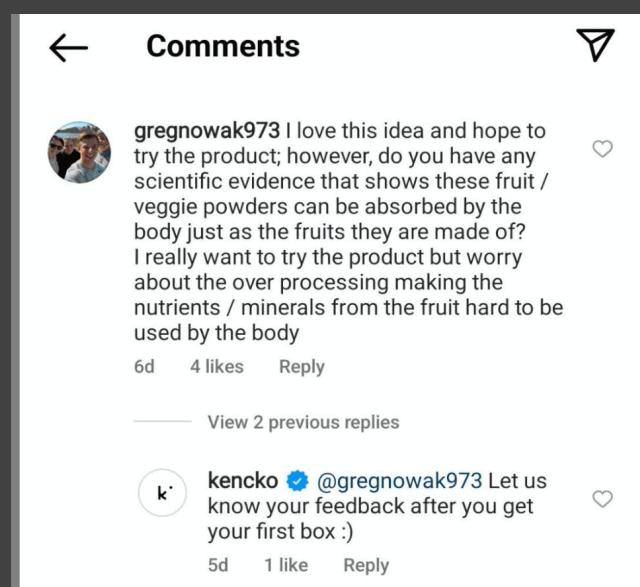
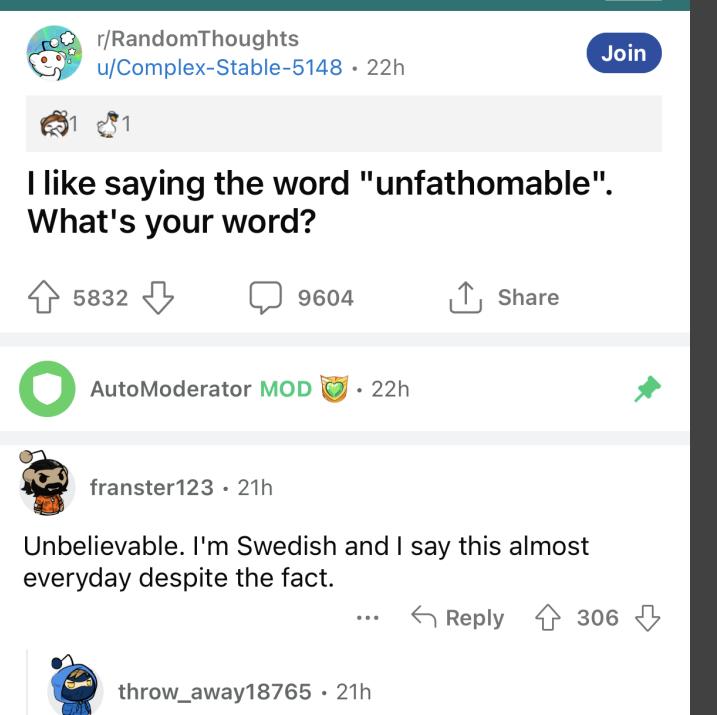
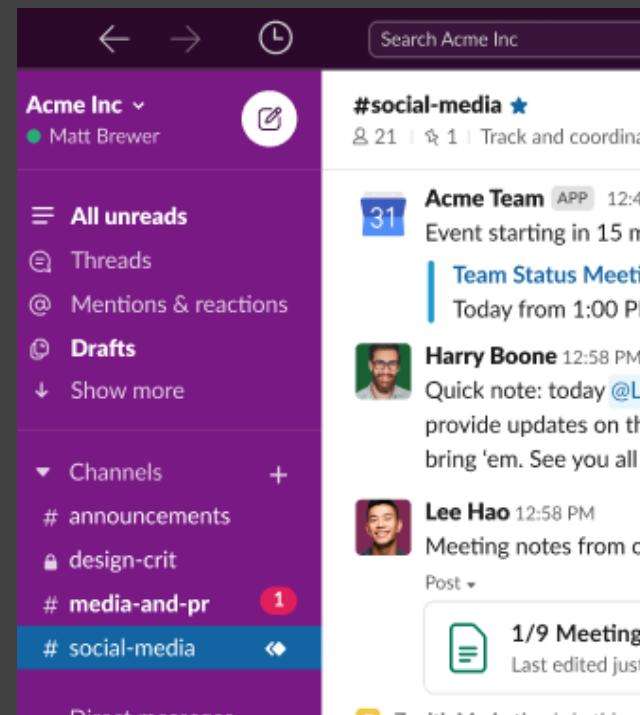
Illustration by Alex Castro

   SHARE



ver the past few years, Mastodon has become the model for [a friendlier kind of social network](#), promising to keep out the hateful or ugly content that proliferates on larger and more centralized networks. Journalists hailed it as “[Twitter without Nazis](#)” and for years, it’s generally lived up to that promise. But last week, the social

Recall: From How is content delivered?

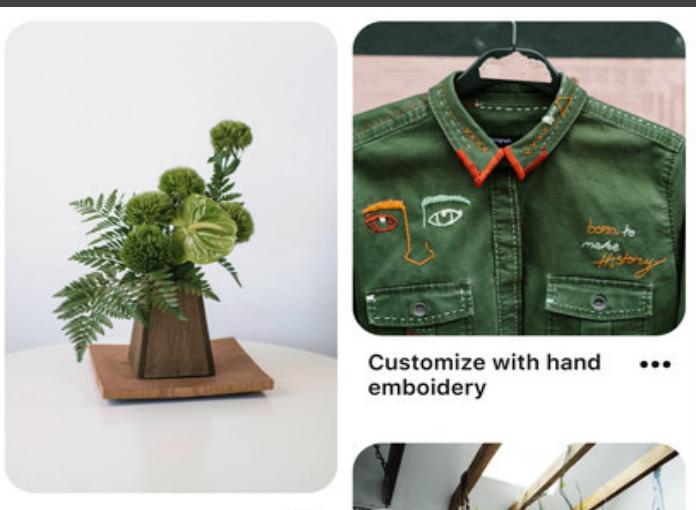
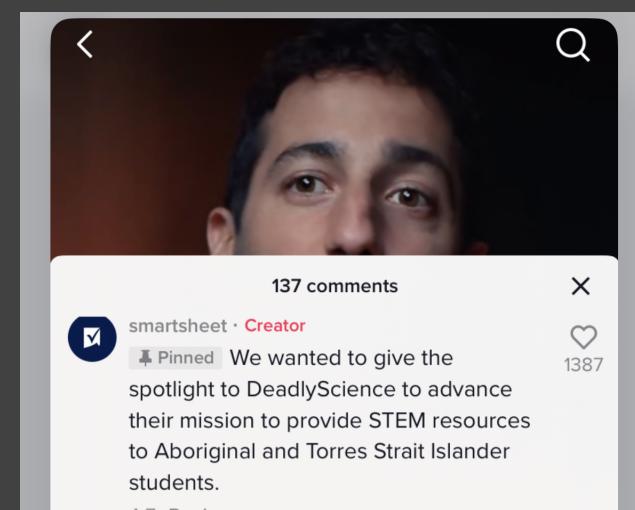
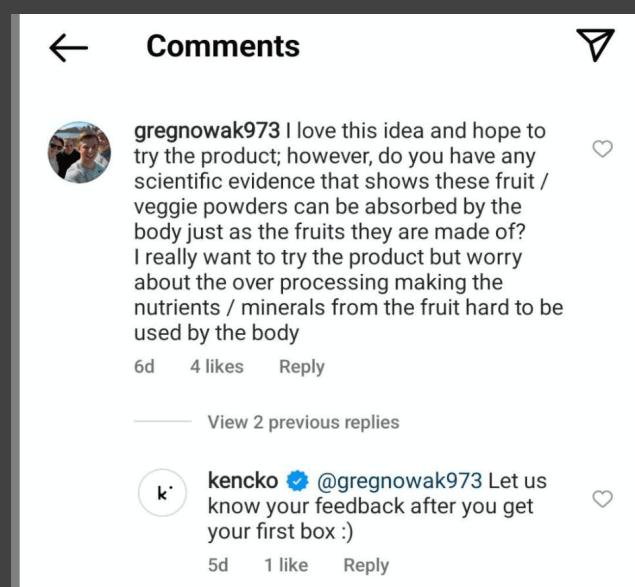
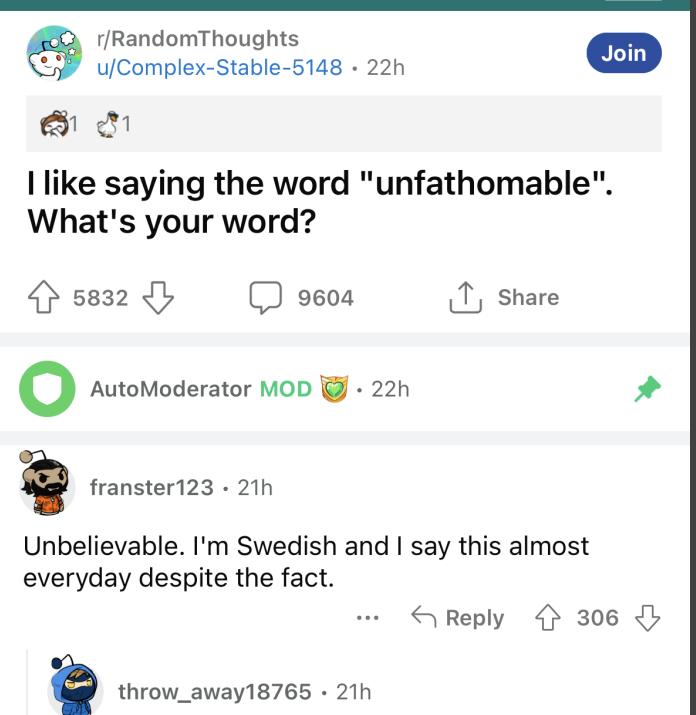
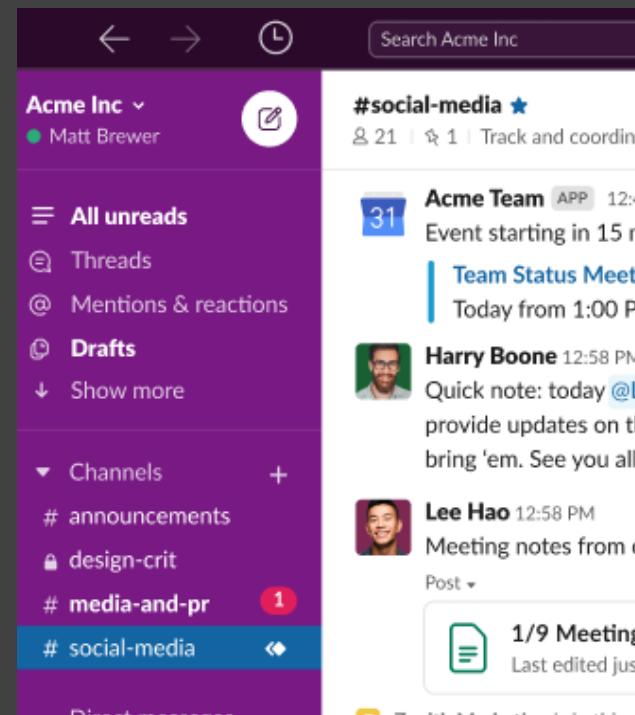


Spaces Joinable locations

Network Friend or follow relationships

Commons Drawn from entire platform

Recall: From How is content delivered?



Spaces

Local government and platform governance

Network

Platform governance only

Commons

Platform governance only

One experiment: an independent judiciary body that reviews cases from Facebook and is intended to establish precedent in its moderation policies.

ANNALS OF TECHNOLOGY

INSIDE THE MAKING OF FACEBOOK'S SUPREME COURT

The company has created a board that can overrule even Mark Zuckerberg. Soon it will decide whether to allow Trump back on Facebook.

By Kate Klonick

February 12, 2021

Governance evolves over time

Self-governing communities often start out with very few rules and then grow in the number and complexity of their rules over time
[Frey and Sumner 2019]

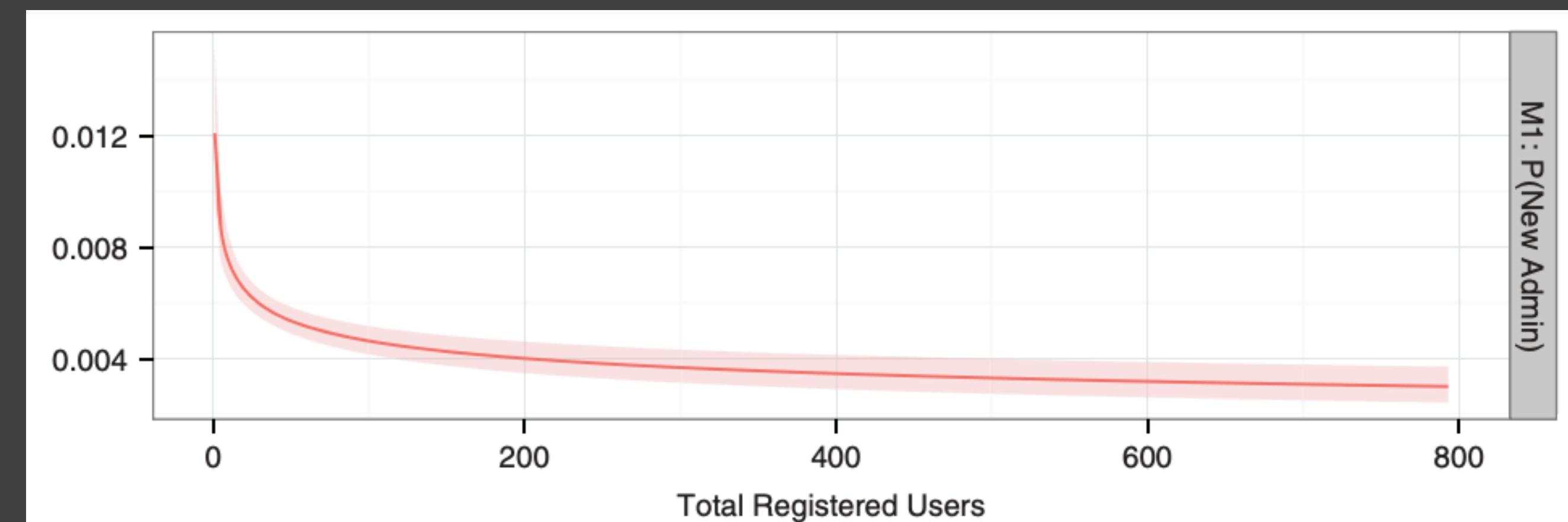
It's not clear that this is optimal: communities may be reacting to drama rather than planning

Governance ossifies over time

While open-source projects and collaborative wikis sound very decentralized, in practice, leadership hierarchies emerge.

[Benkler, Shaw and Hill 2015]

As a system grows, it's harder to become an admin [Shaw & Hill 2014]



Resolving conflict: juries

When there is bad behavior, must we rely on mods? Can we empower a jury of your peers?

Two communities that use this approach:

Sina Weibo: estimated 20,000–60,000 judges recruited from the user base who review cases of verbal abuse and personal attacks. About 2,000 expert judges review more complex cases such as rumor propagation.

League of Legends: judges at The Tribunal (now defunct) reviewed cases of AFK flaming, harassment, racial slurs, and more



Peer juries: complications

[Kou et al. 2017; Fan and Zhang 2020; Hu, Whiting and Bernstein 2021]

Users find the human-driven system more procedurally just than the platforms' decisions or than algorithmic systems, but still have limited trust in each other:

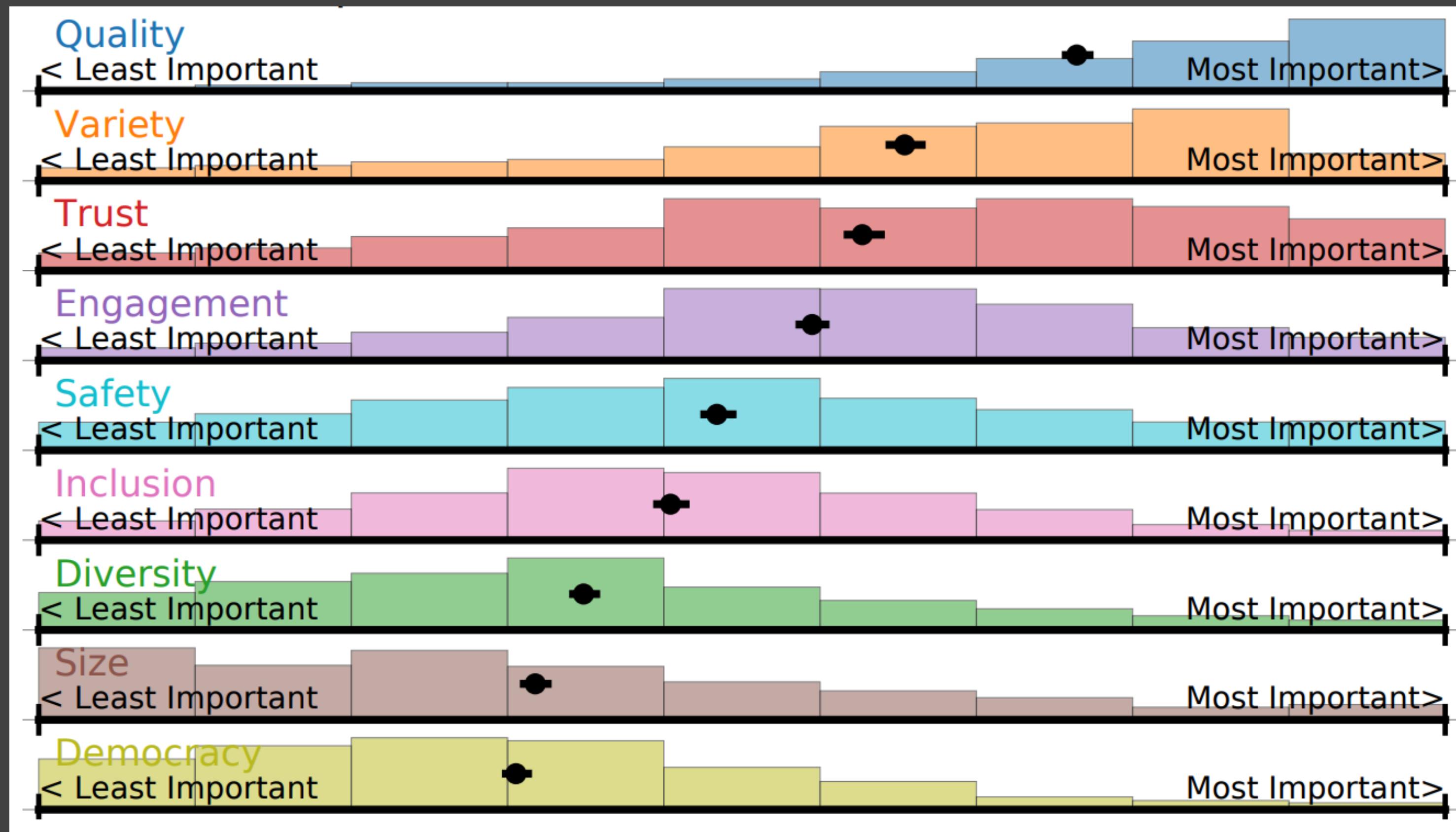
“But why should I be judged by other ordinary Weibo users?”

“As far as I know they just let random players make random decisions over whether a player can continue to play [League of Legends] or not.”

Why is there less trust in these systems than in local, offline juries?
What could be done about it? [1 min]

However...

Surveying many Reddit communities about the most and least important values their community might express:



[Weld, Zhang, and Althoff 2022]

And equally concerning...

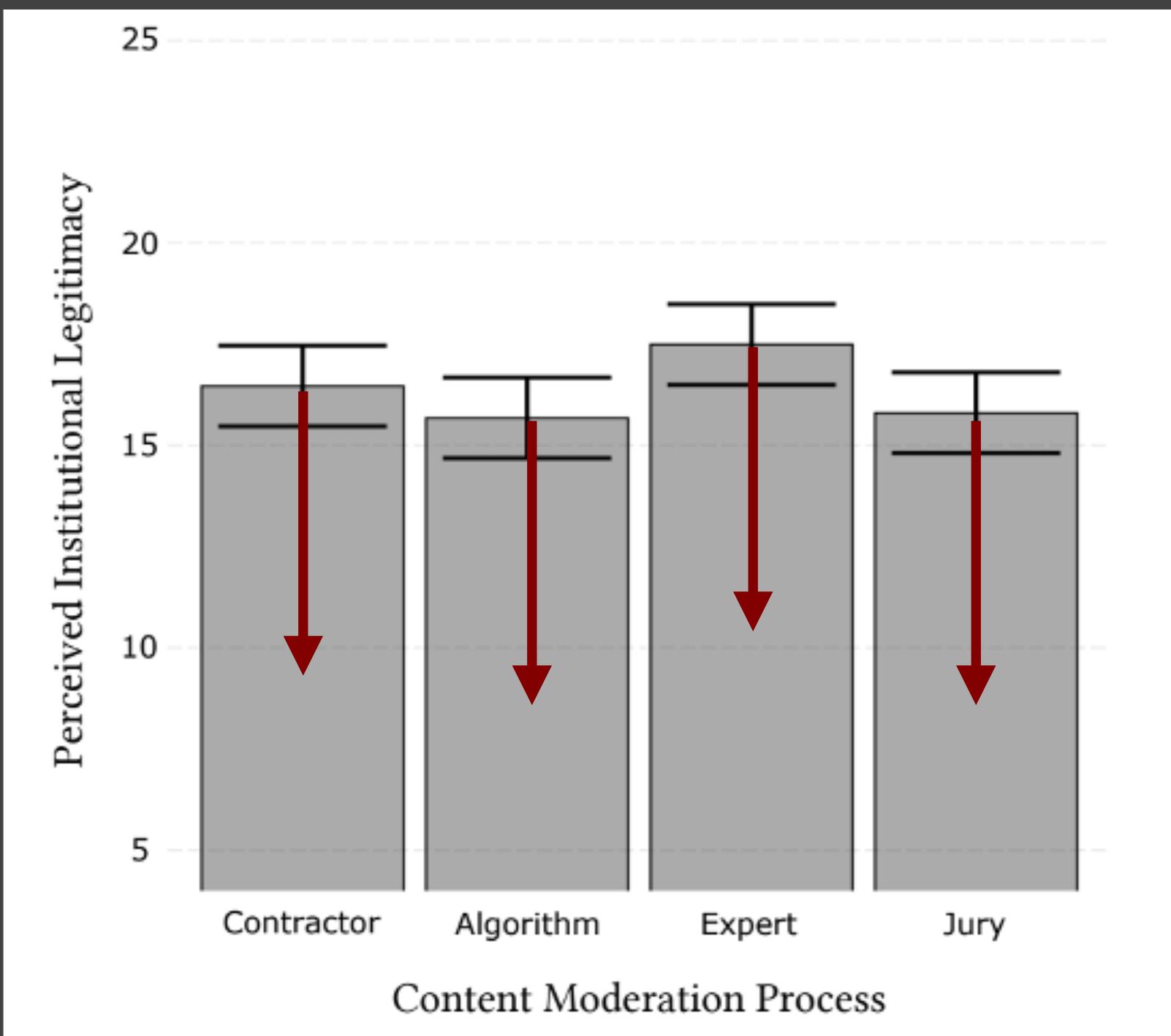
We ran a survey experiment comparing the legitimacy attached to moderation decisions made by AI vs. paid contractors vs. expert panels vs. digital juries... [Pan et al. 2022]

Which do you think was the most legitimate?

Our study result: expert panels (by ~ 1 pt of 25)

But, whether people agreed with the result had much more influence (~ 7 pt out of 25)

∴ It will be a severe challenge for any process to build legitimacy in a polarized media environment



Envisioning opportunities

Could we envision platforms that are...

Constitutionally governed?

Locally owned and governed?

Nonprofits?

B Corps?

Public utilities?

Or do you think that the current model is the only sustainable one?

[2min]



If you want to go deeper...

The image shows the homepage of the Metagov website. The header features the word 'Metagov' in a large, stylized, green, blocky font. Below the header is a dark navigation bar with white text. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'About' (with a large 'Metagov' logo), 'Our mission' (with a globe graphic), 'The Metagov Seminar' (with a green box for sign-ups), 'Support' (with a 'Support Metagov's Research and Programs' button), 'Projects' (showing logos for Govbase, PolicyKit, and others), 'People' (listing the Research Director, Team, and Alumni), and 'Join the Community' (with a 'Join the Metagov Community' button). The overall design is clean and modern, with a focus on green and white colors.

Decision-making

Why is this hard?

The same features that make it easy to gather online also make it easy to disperse. [Salehi et al. 2015]

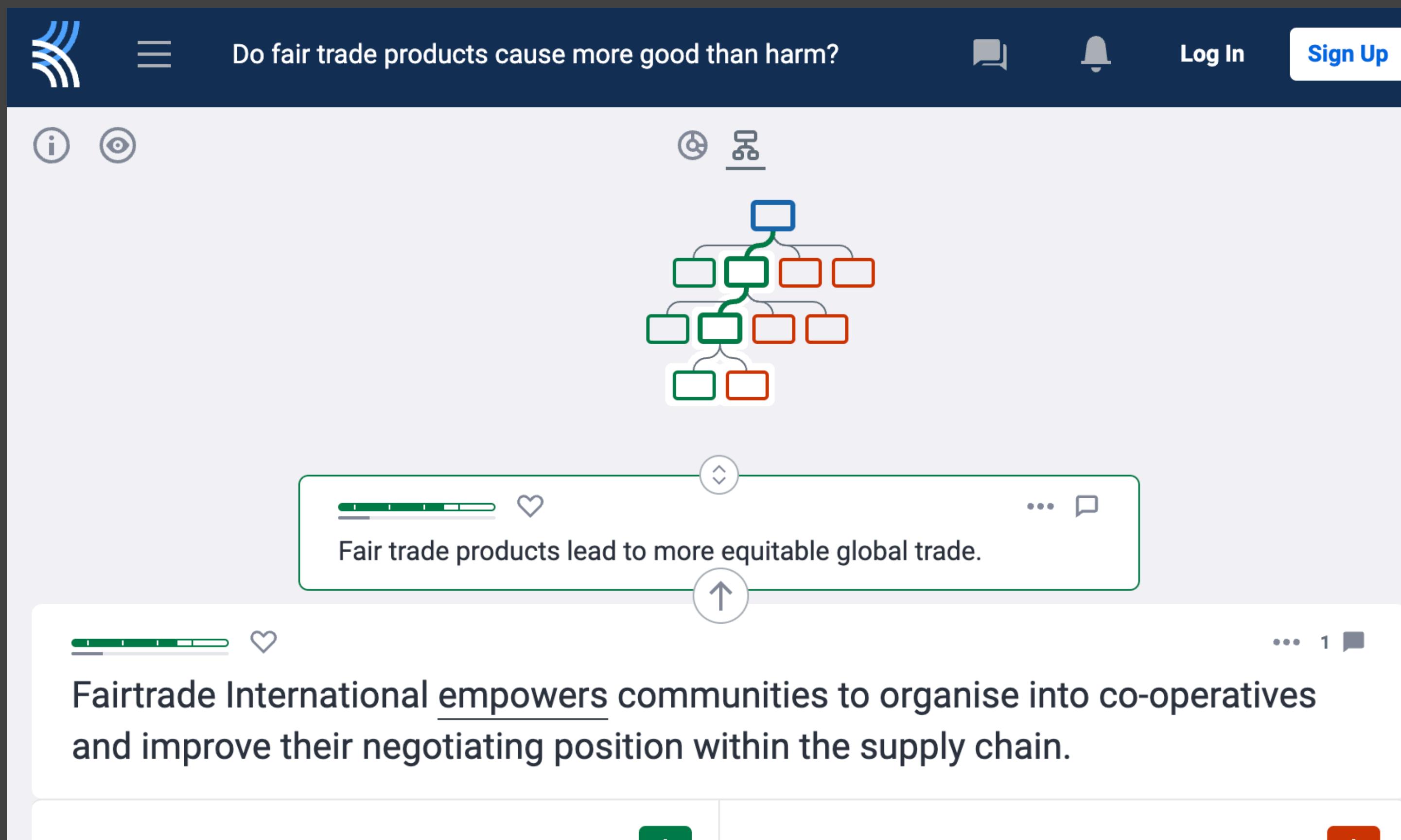
A thumbnail image of a New York Times article. The header 'The New York Times' is in its signature black serif font. Below it is a thin horizontal line. The main title of the article, 'Twitter Users Split on Boycott Over Platform's Move Against Rose McGowan', is displayed in a large, bold, black serif font. The background of the thumbnail is white.

The New York Times

Twitter Users Split on
Boycott Over Platform's Move
Against Rose McGowan

Structured debate

Deliberation: add metadata so that similar arguments get merged and replies get connected to the original argument



The screenshot shows a debate interface for the question "Do fair trade products cause more good than harm?". The interface features a dark blue header with a logo, a menu icon, the question text, a speech bubble icon, a bell icon, a "Log In" button, and a "Sign Up" button. Below the header is a navigation bar with icons for information and search. The main content area displays a tree-structured argument. At the top of the tree is a blue node. Below it are several green and red nodes, with some green nodes having their own children. A green box at the bottom contains the text "Fair trade products lead to more equitable global trade." with a green progress bar and a heart icon. A reply box below it contains the text "Fairtrade International empowers communities to organise into co-operatives and improve their negotiating position within the supply chain." with a green progress bar and a heart icon. The interface uses a clean, modern design with a white background and light gray borders for the boxes.

Kialo tree-structured debates

< Statewide measures

< prev next >

Should we License marijuana production, distribution, and possession?

Top Cons



Dispensary growers and employees are still at risk from the Federal Government.

10/7/2012, 0 comments 



Any revenue raised can be seized by the Federal Government.

10/7/2012, 0 comments 



Pointless to legalize, the fed's won't let you have it (read more)

Top Pros



Legalizing marijuana and taxing sales would generate more revenue for the state.

9/6/2012, 1 comment



"Creating" criminals for something that's no different than alcohol use, which is legal, ruins lives unnecessarily and burdens society

10/5/2012, 2 comments

pol.is



I think AI should label training data before model training to reduce model copying and social bias.

I feel that as a creator, the content I generate using AI should be regarded as my copyright.

A

B

C





GMOs Are Good

Last updated: March 7, 2019

In its broadest sense, a genetically modified organism (GMO) refers to an organism whose genetic material has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally. Genes change naturally, either by mating or by natural recombination. But in this case, genetic fragments are scientifically inserted into the DNA of another organism to transform its collective genetic makeup, a process known as gene splicing. In plant and animal biotechnology, there are three fundamental areas that genetic modification is concerned with; the quality of

Yes because...

Production of Edible Medicine and Vaccines

This is perhaps the most innovative application of GMO. This process involves the modification of animal and plant genes in order to yield edible output with preventive molecules, for example milk, eggs and fruit. Edible vaccines, produced in milk or fruit could ease manufacturing and distribution costs by making it globally accessible to people. Vaccination through injection has many disadvantages, including the need for medically trained staff, high costs, not to mention constant cooling during transportation and storage. Use of needles also increases the risk of infections. In these cases, an edible vaccine comes in handy. In recent years, there have been examples of transgenic plants developed by researchers to help developing countries. [Transgenic](#) potatoes which contain cholera toxins have been developed to immunize against diseases. In 2004, the Pharma-Planta Programme was granted 12 million euros to develop genetically modified plants to help grow vaccines against tuberculosis and rabies.

No because...

It is important to note that development of edible vaccines is still at very early stages. So far, the benefits outlined are only human-centric. It has not been articulated clearly how implementation of this

Are these designs enough to craft decisions? If not, what would it take?
[1 min]

No. Back to this situation...



Michael Bernstein

Re:
Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re:



Mehran Sahami

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re:
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James Landay

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Michael Bernstein

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Fei-Fei Li

Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re:
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Diagram illustrating a circular relationship between 'stalling' and 'friction'. The word 'stalling' is at the top, and 'friction' is at the bottom. Two white curved arrows point clockwise, connecting the two words in a loop.

stalling

friction

Losing momentum,
no viable path

Outright flaming or
violent disagreement

between scylla and charybdis...

Michael's take

Adding metadata to discussion is helpful usability-wise, but is no panacea.

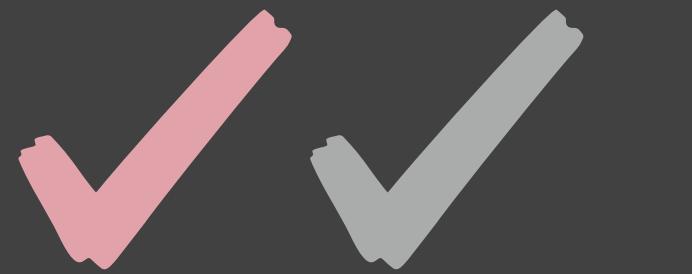
In contrast, structuring the rules and roles by which we're able to engage with each other is much more likely to produce productive deliberation.

Most online communication tools such as email fail at deliberation because they don't structure those rules and roles. We just continue to ricochet from stalling to friction and back.



Voting

Idea 1



“Vote on your top two ideas”

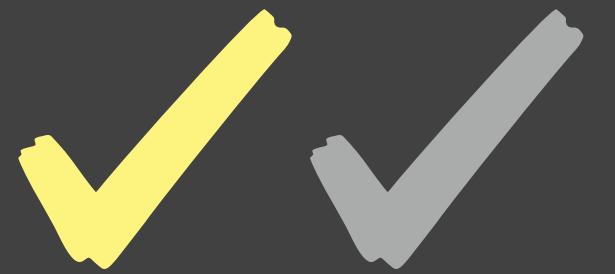
Idea 2



Strengths: simple user model,
useful for selecting a single best
option

Idea 3

Idea 4



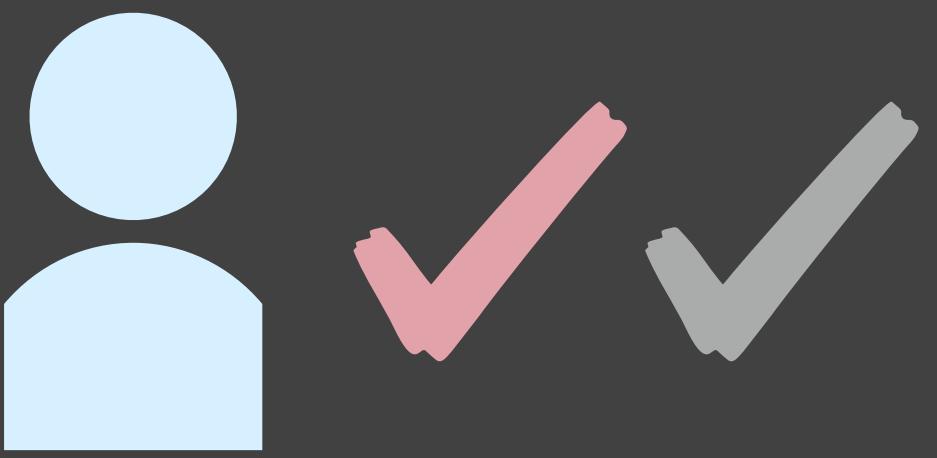
Weaknesses: known
pathological cases (instant
runoff voting improves), not
great for producing a ranking

Idea 5



Liquid democracy

Idea 1



Idea 2 ✓

Idea 3 ✓ ✓ ✓

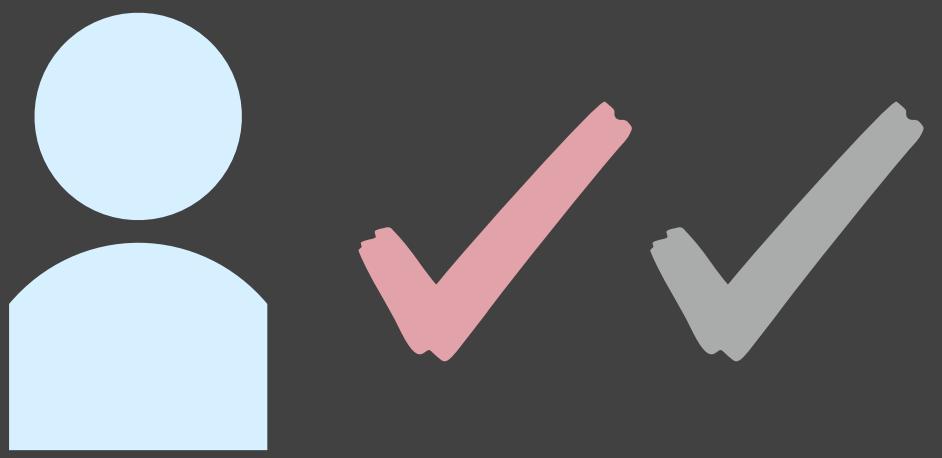
Idea 4

Idea 5

I can vote directly, or delegate my vote to a person or institution who I think knows more about the issue. They can then either vote or delegate their own votes.

Liquid democracy

Idea 1



Idea 2 ✓

Idea 3 ✓ ✓ ✓

Idea 4

Idea 5

Benefits: compromise between direct and representative democracy; made feasible by the web.

Weaknesses: a small number of people can gain massive influence
[Kahng, Mackenzie, and Procaccia 2018]

Likert Scale Rating



Idea 1 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

“Rate each idea”

Idea 2 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Strengths: gets more information per idea, allows ranking

Idea 3 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Weaknesses: people tend to use the scale differently

Idea 4 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Idea 5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Likert Scale Rating



Idea 1 ○○○○○

“Rate each idea”

Idea 2 ○○○○○

Strengths: gets more information per idea, allows ranking

Idea 3 ○○○○○

Weaknesses: people tend to use the scale differently (some are nice)

Idea 4 ○○○○○

Idea 5 ○○○○○○

Likert Scale Rating



Idea 1 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

“Rate each idea”

Idea 2 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Strengths: gets more information per idea, allows ranking

Idea 3 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Weaknesses: people tend to use the scale differently (some are nice, some are mean)

Idea 4 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Idea 5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Likert Scale Rating



Idea 1 ○○○○○

“Rate each idea”

Idea 2 ○○○○○

Strengths: gets more information per idea, allows ranking

Idea 3 ○○○○○

Weaknesses: people tend to use the scale differently (some are nice, some are mean, many are extreme)

Idea 4 ○○○○○

Idea 5 ○○○○○○

Likert Scale Rating



Idea 1 ○○○○○

“Rate each idea”

Idea 2 ○○○○○

Strengths: gets more information per idea, allows ranking

Idea 3 ○○○○○

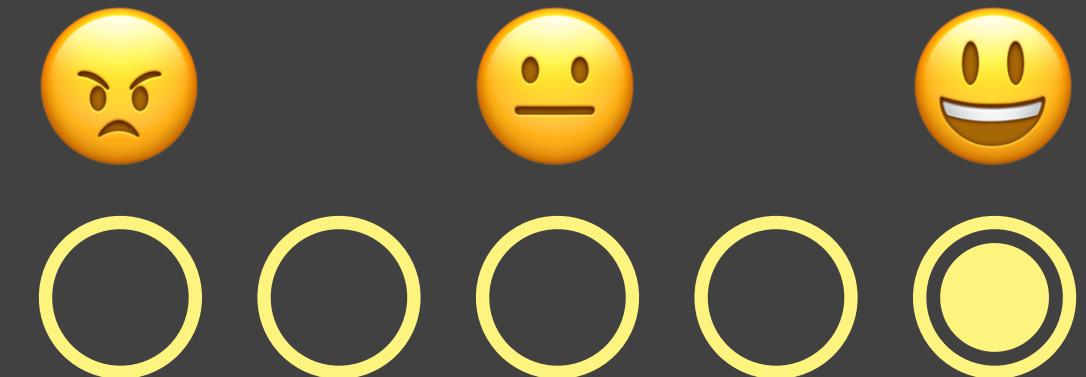
Weaknesses: people tend to use the scale differently (some are nice, some are mean, many are extreme), we have limited resolution into the differences between the 5s

Idea 4 ○○○○○

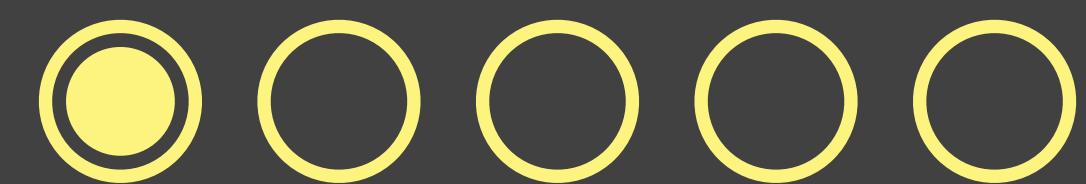
Idea 5 ○○○○○

Likert Scale Rating

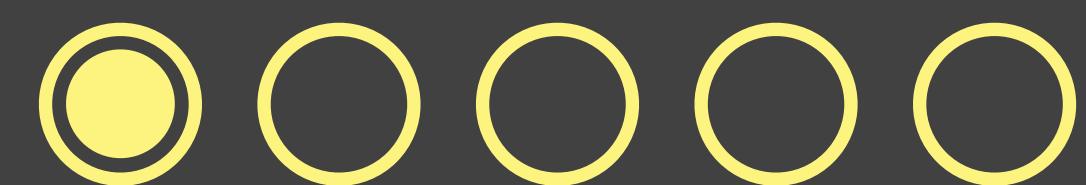
Idea 1



Idea 2



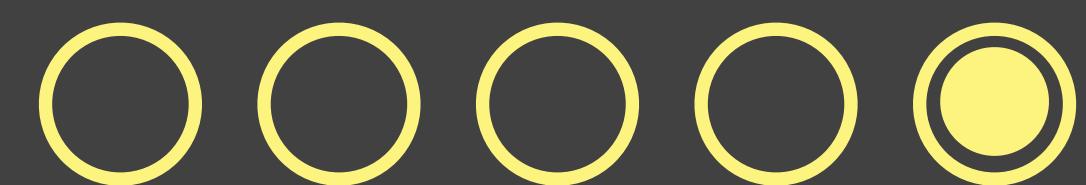
Idea 3



Idea 4



Idea 5



6. [Pho Avenue](#)

375 reviews

\$\$ • Vietnamese

3. [Pho Vi Hoa](#)

1073 reviews

\$\$ • Vietnamese

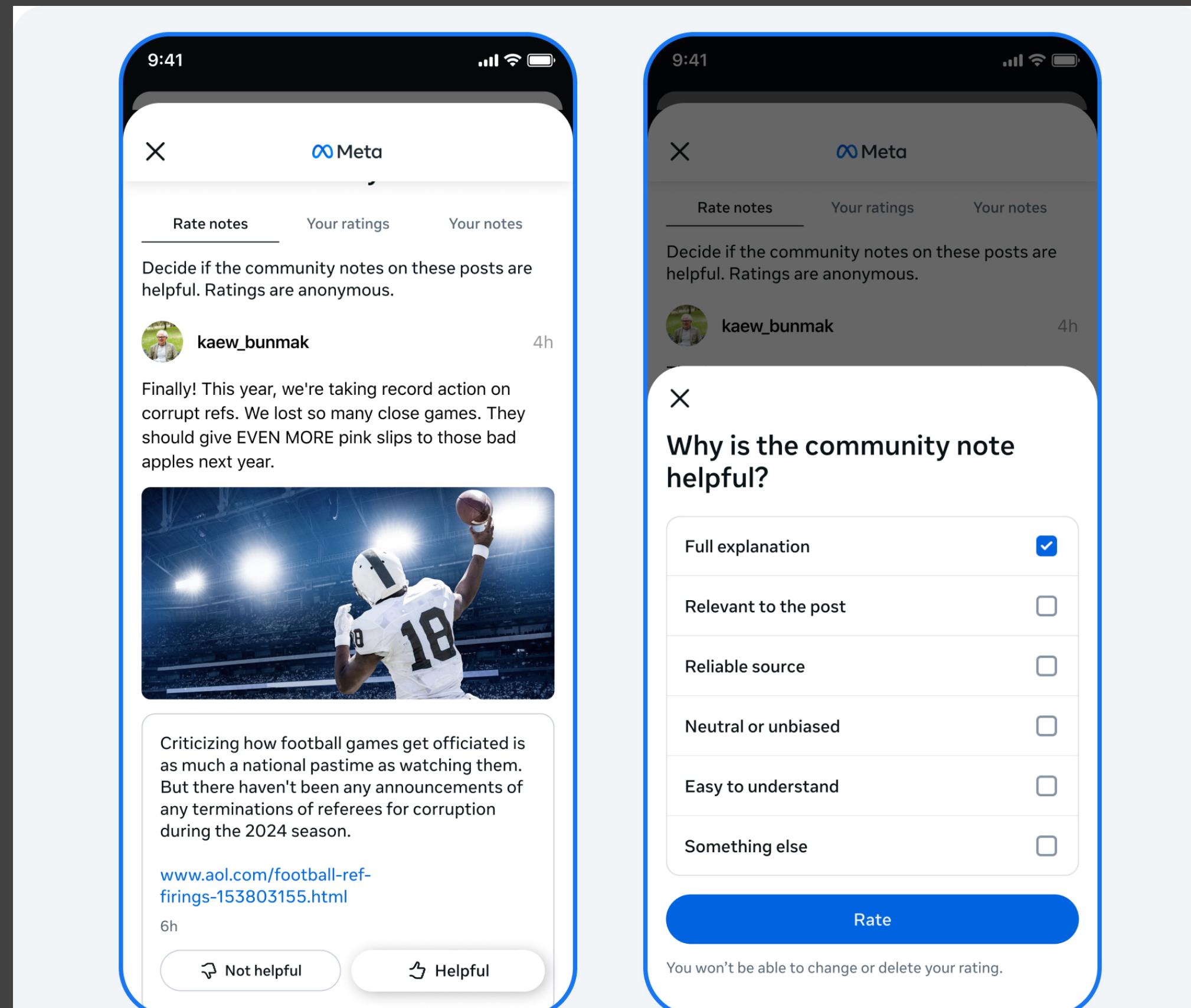
9. [Hometown Noodle](#)

564 reviews

\$ • Vietnamese, Noodles

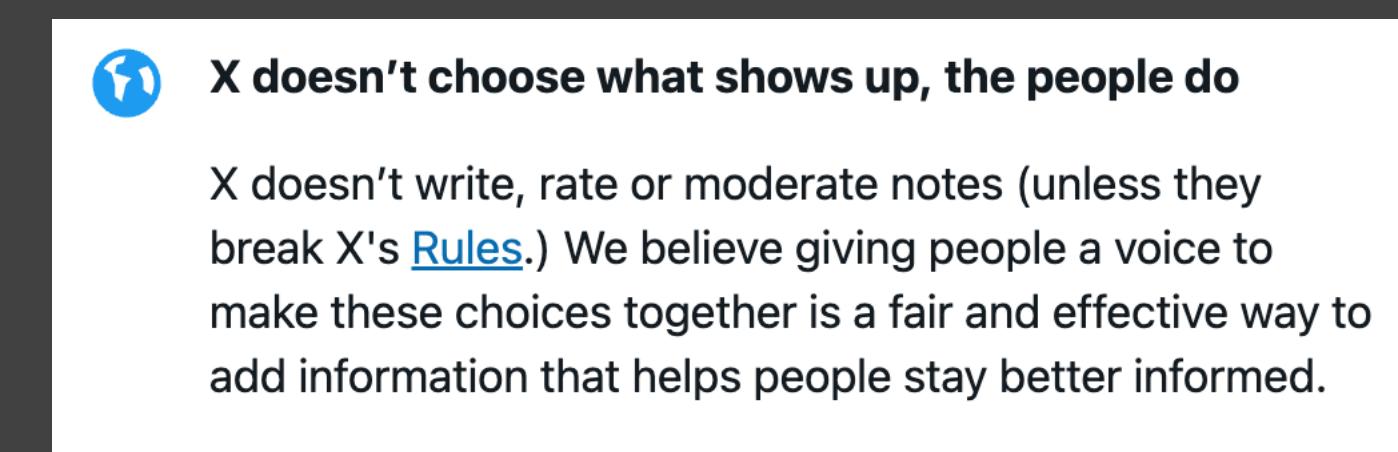
As a result,
not a ton of
signal to use
to tell these
restaurants
apart on
Yelp.

One approach: bridging algorithms



Anyone can author a note, and anyone can vote.

Helps platforms dodge bias claims:



But how do we avoid communities just brigading each others' posts?
[Allen, Martel, Rand 2022]

One approach: bridging algorithms

Community Notes collects votes from different people on different topics

They run a matrix factorization algorithm (e.g., PCA) to "flatten" all these votes into a small number of dimensions that capture most disagreement. The first dimension that arises is typically politics. The notes that appear

live have to appeal broadly across that first dimension [Wojcik et al. 2022]: this is called a bridging algorithm because it identifies content



Only notes rated helpful by people from diverse perspectives appear on posts

Community Notes doesn't work by majority rules. To identify notes that are helpful to a wide range of people, notes require agreement between contributors who have sometimes disagreed in their past ratings. This helps prevent one-sided ratings.

Comparison ranking

Which of these two ideas
do you prefer?

Idea 1

Idea 2

Comparison ranking

Which of these two ideas
do you prefer?

Idea 4

Idea 3

Comparison ranking

Which of these two ideas
do you prefer?

Idea 1

Idea 3

Comparison ranking

Which of these **hard** difficulty questions
is a better midterm question?

NOTE: Some submissions have links. Please follow them and give each question the time and respect you would want given to your own.

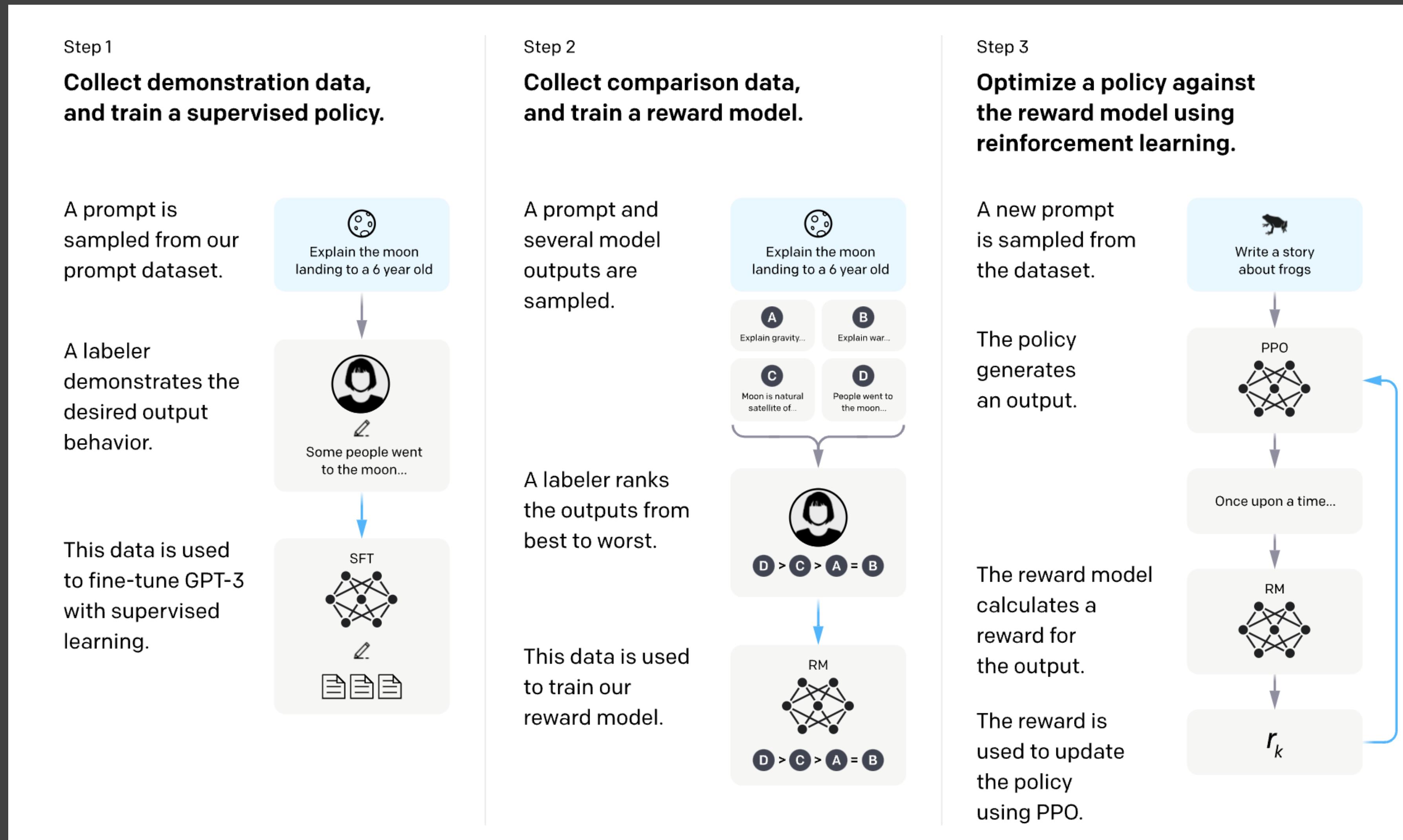
Some messaging apps show you when the other person is typing. What is the name of this design pattern? What are the two requirements needed to make it successful?

Briefly explain the concept of honest signals. Provide a design example of a social computing system that maintains and deepens strong ties through fostering honest signals from its users. In your reply, outline the type of user behaviours that would take place within the system.

The left one

The right one

Comparison ranking



Comparison ranking

But how do we turn a bunch of comparisons into a score or ranking per item?

Intuition:

If I beat something that's known to be low ranked, I must not be terrible.

If I beat something that's known to be high ranked, I must be really good.

But how do I know what's low ranked and what's high ranked?

TrueSkill and Elo

Elo is the system that was developed to rank chess players based on their win-loss records against each other.



Imagine that each player's performance across a number of games is normally distributed. Sometimes they play amazingly, sometimes less so. Our goal is to estimate the mean of each player's distribution. Each game is a draw from the players' distributions.

TrueSkill and Elo

Intuitively, in Elo, we have some belief in the skill of each player before they play each other, and we update that belief based on the result of the game.



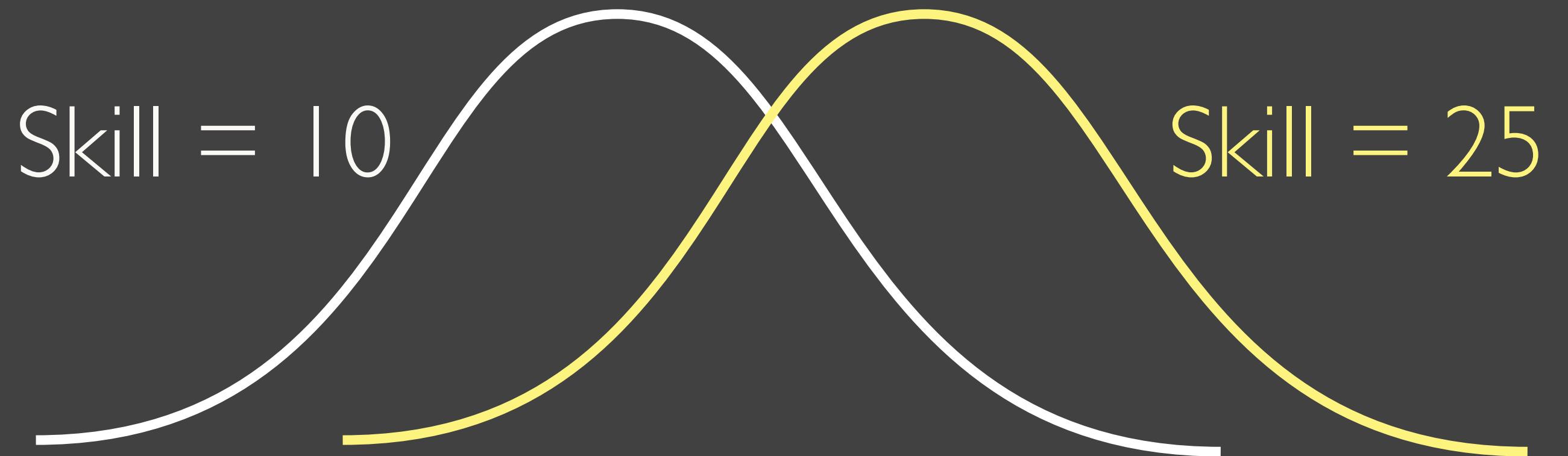
If white beats yellow, white's skill score is updated by a multiplier α of $\alpha(25 - 10) = \alpha \cdot 15$

α is tuned on how quickly the score should adapt based on recent games

TrueSkill and Elo

In TrueSkill [Herbrich, Minka, and Graepel 2006], the same general idea holds, except the entire algorithm is done by performing Bayesian inference on a generative model

$$p(\text{skill} | \text{result}) = \frac{p(\text{result} | \text{skill}) \cdot p(\text{skill})}{p(\text{result})} \quad \longleftrightarrow \text{ Bayes' rule}$$



Summary

Social computing systems are great at eliciting a lot of opinions, but generally terrible at helping produce consensus toward a decision.

Deliberation is challenging because there are no stopping criteria. Structuring the rules of the debate can help overcome stalling and friction.

There are many popular governance models — but the most important thing is to pick one from day one

Different elicitation methods such as voting, liquid democracy, rating, and comparison ranking provide possible solutions for single choices

Pulling it all together

Thank you, TAs!

Congrats, seniors

(About one third of you are seniors)

What I hope you take away

That every social system is designed, either explicitly or by default.

That designs can have substantial influence over the behaviors in that system.

That, as socio-technical systems, those designs require a combination of computation and of structured human behavior to succeed.

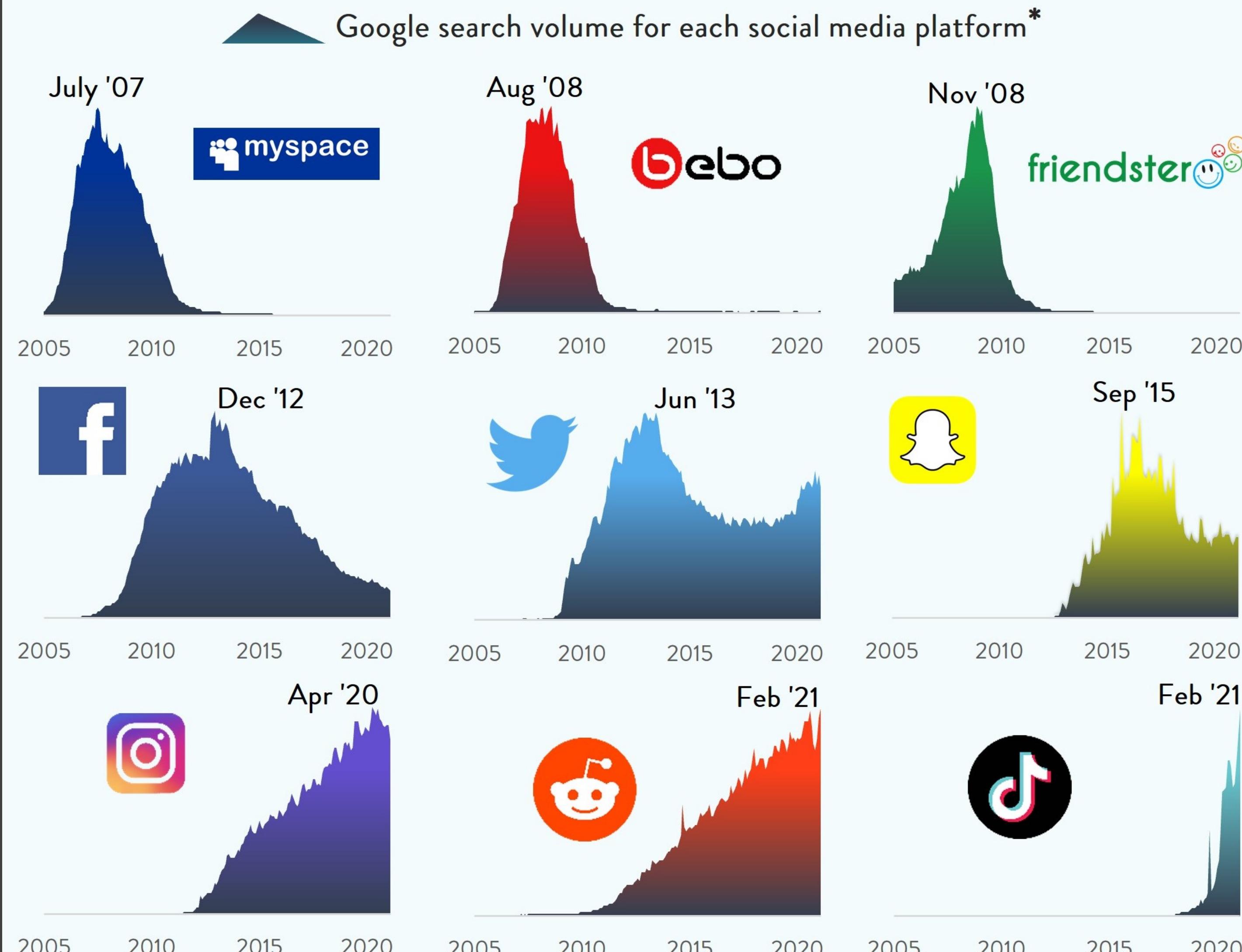
That we have many tools in our toolbox to help us create enlightening, fun, and meaningful spaces.

Social Media: When Was Each Platform Generating Its Peak Buzz On Google

The more things change,
the more they stay the
same.

I, a geriatric millennial, am
not cool. Ergo, systems I
liked are no longer cool.
Ergo, systems you like will
soon no longer be cool.

But the fundamentals will
remain.



*Y-axes are not comparable, charts show when each had its own peak search interest. Data source: Google Trends

more at www.chartr.co

How can we design
the social systems
that we inhabit?

fin.

have a great summer!

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