

OPEN PRACTICE IN AN ERA OF ENCLOSURE: IS THE MEDIUM THE MESSAGE?

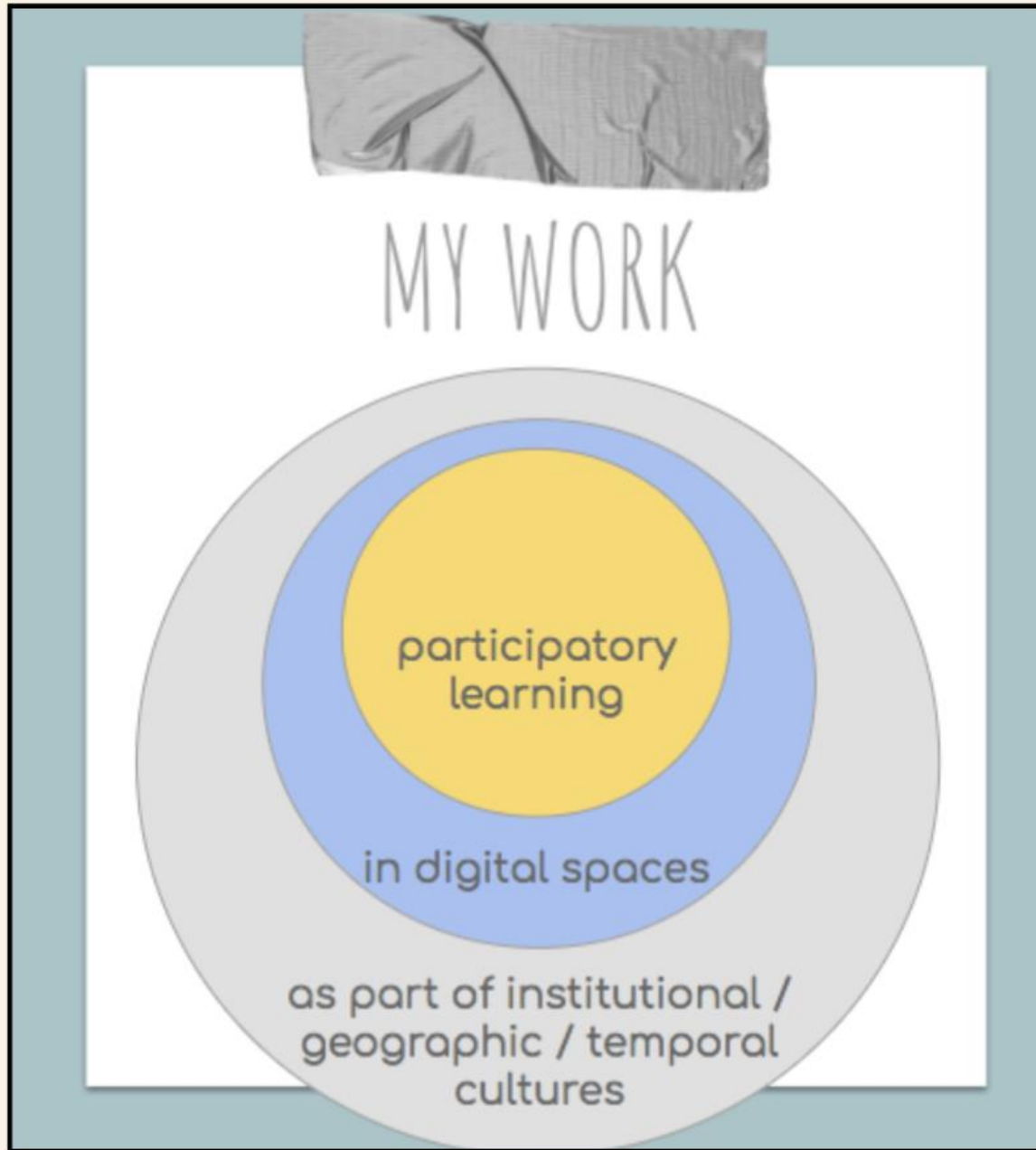


DR. BONNIE STEWART

University of Windsor

(Three Fires Confederacy Territory)

Fall 2025



ONCE UPON A TIME...

MY WORK CENTERED AROUND OPEN
PARTICIPATORY PRACTICE.

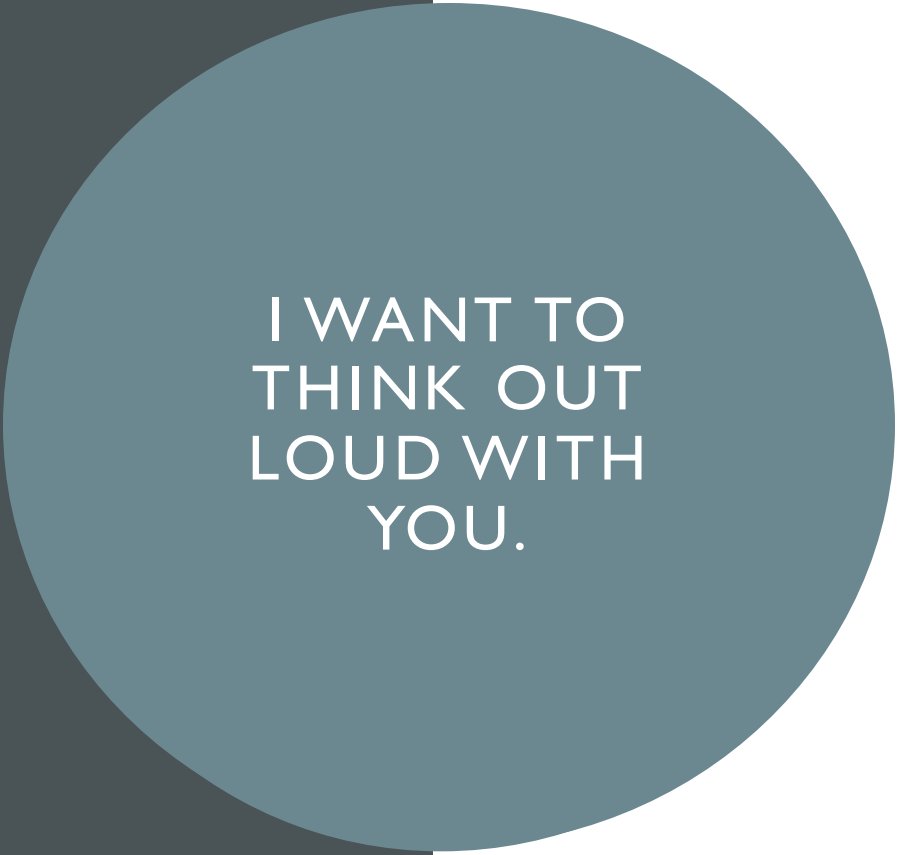
AS DIGITAL CULTURE & PEDAGOGY.

AS ROOTED IN PLACES &
CONNECTIONS & NETWORKS.

FUN FACT:

**THE INTERNET WAS ONCE A FUN
PLACE FOR WATCHING CAT VIDEOS
INSTEAD OF MONITORING THE
REAL-TIME COLLAPSE OF LATE-
STAGE CAPITALISM**





I WANT TO
THINK OUT
LOUD WITH
YOU.

- Open as Voice
- Enclosure
- A Polluted Information Ecosystem
- Thinkers for This Moment

FOR ME,
OPEN
WAS
VOICE.

The web as a space for
interconnection & meaning-making.





WHAT CANNOT BE CONTAINED IS BETTER CONNECTED.

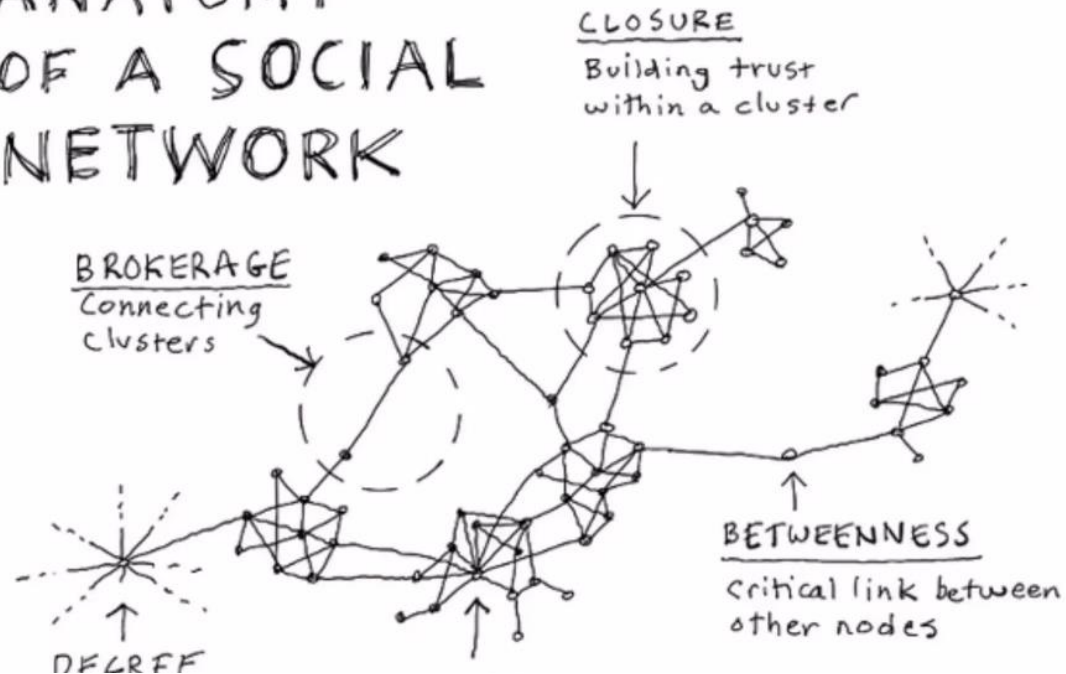


BLOGGING WAS MY
GATEWAY TO OPEN
EDUCATION & OPEN
PARTICIPATORY PRACTICE.

FOR ME, OPEN EDUCATION
WAS ABOUT PUSHING
THE LIMITATIONS **PRINT**
HAD IMPOSED ON
LEARNING, FOR CENTURIES.



ANATOMY OF A SOCIAL NETWORK



...IT WAS ABOUT BUILDING **LEARNER VOICE**,
USING TOOLS & PRACTICES
THAT SUPPORTED CONTRIBUTION TO
KNOWLEDGE ABUNDANCE.

MANY-TO-MANY
COMMUNICATIONS.

BUILDING OPEN
CONNECTIONS &
FOSTERING AGENCY.



Bonnie Stewart @bonste... · 2015-07-17 ...
[#upei21c](#) Ed 626:
1. tweet me your [#ed1to1](#) tally
2. tweet somebody you enjoyed connecting with = tell 'em.
conversation need not stop. :)

6 1

hypervisible @hypervis... · 2015-07-17 ...
[@bonstewart](#) Thanks for doing this.

1

Bonnie Stewart @bonstewart
X.com

[@hypervisible](#) thanks for being part of it. it's been a real success, overall...and brought me new connections like you. [#ed1to1](#)

9:23 AM · 2015-07-17

1

hypervisible @hypervis... · 2015-07-17 ...
[@bonstewart](#) I will be at [#dIRN15](#) and am looking forward to continuing these

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT THE WEB.

BUT.





THINGS CHANGED. THE PARTICIPATORY WAS PUSHED OUT FOR **PROFITS**.

A photograph of a public restroom. The room features a black and white checkered tile floor. On the left, there is a row of white pedestal sinks. The restrooms are enclosed in glass stalls with metal frames. Each stall contains a white toilet. The walls are light-colored with a decorative border. Large windows are visible at the top of the image. Overlaid on the image is the text "WE HAVE UPDATED OUR PRIVACY POLICY" in a large, bold, black font.

“WE HAVE UPDATED OUR PRIVACY POLICY”

EXTRACTIVE PLATFORMS **ENCLOSED** THE WEB, INCLUDING ITS COMMONS OF KNOWLEDGE & OPEN PRACTICE.

The stated justification for enclosure was to improve the efficiency of agriculture.^[7] However, there were a range of motives, one example being that the value of the land enclosed would be substantially increased.^[8] There were social consequences to the policy, with many protests at the removal of rights from the common people. Enclosure riots are seen by historians as 'the pre-eminent form' of social protest from the 1530s to 1640s.^{[9][10]}

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enclosure>

AT THE SAME TIME,
EDUCATION HAS
BECOME A
DIGITAL-FIRST
INFRASTRUCTURE.
& BEEN **ENCLOSED**
IN THE PROCESS.



THIS CHANGES WHO HAS **POWER** OVER
WHAT COUNTS AS **KNOWLEDGE**.
AND WHAT COUNTS IN **SOCIETY**.

WEAPONIZATION:



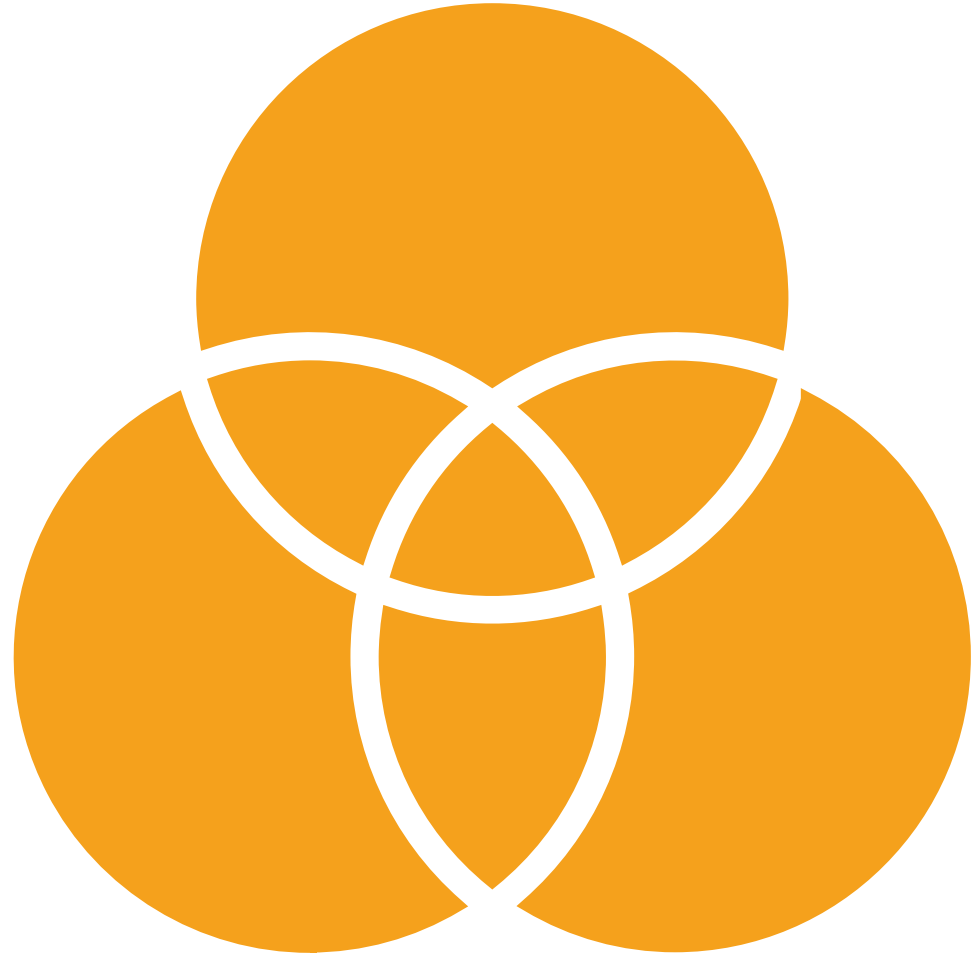
“weaponization” generally refers to the deliberate misuse or distortion of information, ideas, or institutional/individual acts, to harm or manipulate an opponent or a group

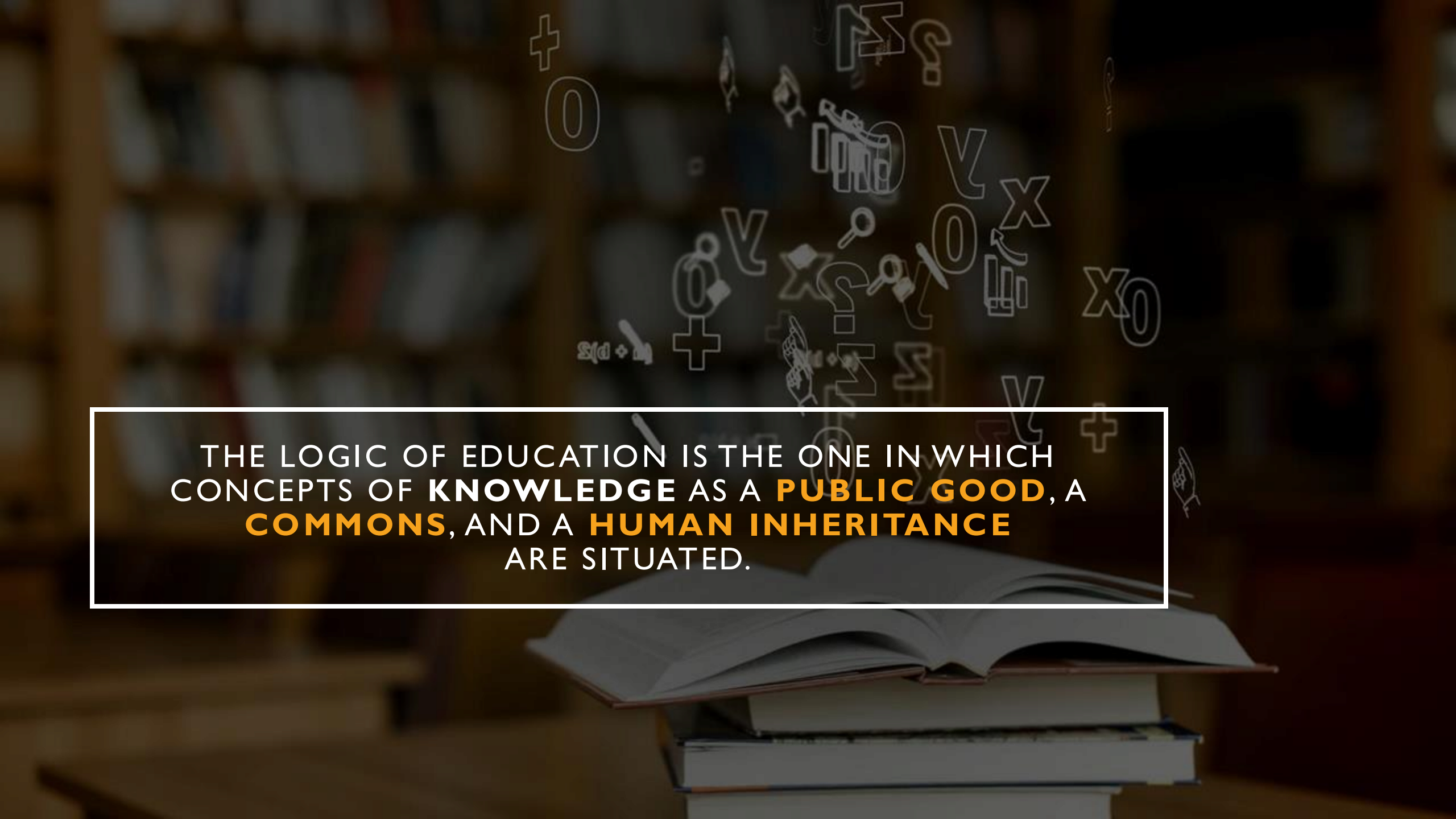
<https://bdtechtalks.com/2018/09/13/weaponized-social-media-how-protect-yourself/>



THREE KEY
LOGICS IN
SOCIETY:

- BUSINESS
- MEDIA
- EDUCATION



The background of the image is a blurred photograph of a library with tall wooden bookshelves filled with books. Overlaid on this background are various white, hand-drawn mathematical and scientific symbols, including plus signs, minus signs, multiplication signs, division signs, percentages, and letters like 'x', 'y', and 'z'. Some symbols are larger and more prominent than others. In the foreground, at the bottom center, is a stack of books. The top book is open, showing its pages. The text is centered within a white rectangular border.

THE LOGIC OF EDUCATION IS THE ONE IN WHICH
CONCEPTS OF **KNOWLEDGE** AS A **PUBLIC GOOD**, A
COMMONS, AND A **HUMAN INHERITANCE**
ARE SITUATED.

Education VALUES

logic/reason

mutual communication

collaboration

growth

justice

honesty

independence

morality

mutual respect

inclusive

caring

critical thinking

ethos

SUPPORTED BY PRACTICES:

- open learning
- participatory learning
- active learning
- experiential learning
- problem-posing education

BUT OUR ENCLOSED INFORMATION
ECOSYSTEM NO LONGER **FOSTERS** A
LOGIC OF EDUCATION.



AGENCY &
CONSENT ARE
BEING
UNDERMINED BY
THE TOOLS THAT
ENCLOSE US.



Sune Selsbæk-Reitz ✓ • 2nd
Tech Philosopher | Creator of Promptism & Deontol...
1w • 🌐

[+ Follow](#) ...

🤔 Microsoft has invented a new kind of consent: rate-limited.

In OneDrive, you can now only turn off facial recognition three times a year. After that, it stays on until the system decides you've earned another "no."

That line, "You can only turn off this setting 3 times a year," says more about modern tech ethics than any keynote ever could. It's not even hiding the logic anymore: control, disguised as convenience.

First they automated our clicks.
Now they're automating our conscience.

And when refusal itself becomes a feature.

We're not users anymore
We're data with preferences.

THE
POLITICAL
ECONOMY OF
AI IS BEING
FORCED ON
HIGHER ED



Rene Corbeil

@utrgv-edtech.bsky.social

"Despite most of the students enjoying the benefits of AI, more than half feel that universities and colleges aren't doing enough to prepare them for the future shaped by the rapidly evolving technology." [#edtech](#) [#ILoveEdTech](#) [#ImFutureReady](#) [#elearning](#) [#AIEdu](#)



Students think universities should do more to prepare them for an AI-driven future

Academic institutions have an important role to play in providing concrete pathways to reinforce students' optimism and curiosity about AI.

www.ecampusnews.com

November 12, 2025 at 10:49 AM Everybody can reply



AI = **ALGORITHMIC** LEARNING:

The promise of '**personalized learning**': the step-by-step pathway YOU need to get to a goal.

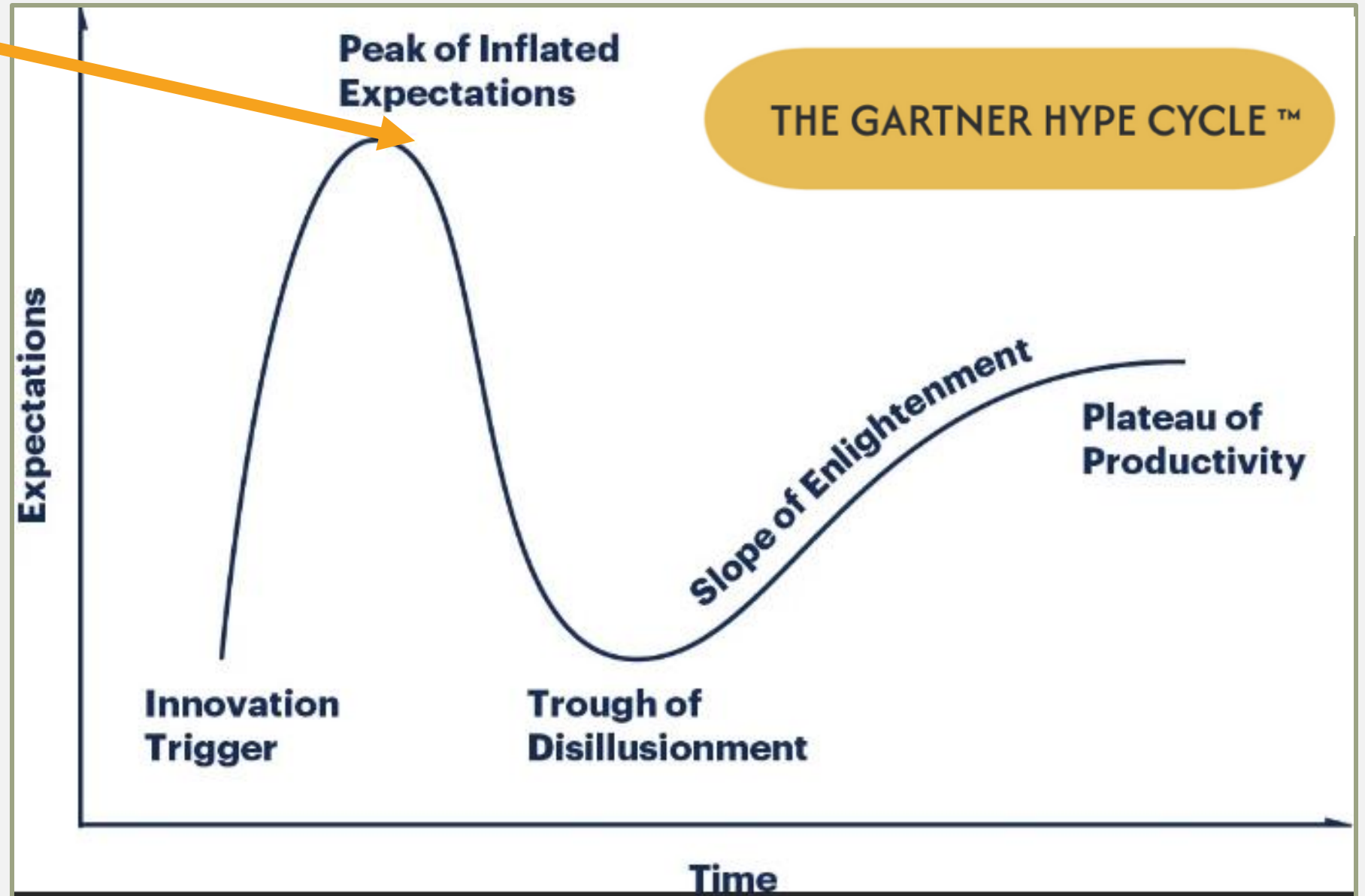
But it is always pre-set. And always extracting data that the user has no control over.

WHY?

REALITY:

**EDUCATION IS STUCK
IN THE MIDDLE OF A
BUSINESS GOLD RUSH.**

YOU ARE
HERE



Silicon Valley makes
its \$\$ on hype. It's a
feature, not a bug.



A HYPE CYCLE IS A
SPECULATION BOOM...IN
SEARCH OF A
FUNCTIONING BUSINESS
MODEL.

none of this is
happening
by accident.



Peter Geoghegan
@petergeoghegan.bsky.social

+ Follow

From Saturday: New figures obtained by Democracy for Sale reveal that Labour ministers and senior civil servants met with tech industry executives and lobbyists an average of six times a week during the government's first six months in office.

democracyforsale.substack.com/p/revealed-s...



Revealed: "Shocking" scale of Big Tech's influence over Labour

Science and technology secretary Peter Kyle asked Google boss to "sense check" AI policy and told Amazon he'd "advocate" for them to competition watchdog

democracyforsale.substack.com

AI and Democracy: Critical Questions Series



Thursday, November 13, 2025

3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Campus Center 375



All are
welcome
to attend!

Radio TV Computers Internet YouTube MOOCs
AI Will Democratize Education 🙌

Charles Logan

Post-doctoral research fellow at Northwestern University's
Center for Responsible Technology, Policy, and Public Dialogue

WE'VE BEEN
HERE BEFORE,
FRIENDS.

Vendors & billionaires want public \$\$
locked into AI before the hype cycle
slumps or the **bubble bursts**.

Optimally, they wanna be 'too big to fail.'

Seven tech companies now account for more than a third of the value of the S&P 500 and trade at prices 70 times higher than their earnings, on average. And while nearly eight in 10 businesses already use generative A.I., [just as many](#) report “no significant bottom-line impact” from doing so.



Kaitlin Is Just Getting Started

@gothamgirlblue.com

This is the dream of every industry developed post-2008. We haven't had actual growth since then, just various debt-fueled, top-down hype cycles because everyone wants the deal that the banks got: Become so essential that any risk is collectively funded and all rewards are private.



Dare Obasanjo @carnage4life.bsky.social · 13m

OpenAI has now committed to \$1.4T in AI infrastructure spending on chips, cloud devices and data centers. If it falls through, there will be significant ripple effects as many companies have their fortunes tied to its success.

The AI bubble popping won't just take down AI startups.



Too Big to Fail?

Intertwine the startup throughout major tech players puts it at the heart of the U.S. economy.

CRISIS OF MEANING

<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/2025/10/ai-slop-winning/684630/>



Is the medium the message?

HOW CAN WE **DO** OPEN
PRACTICE – BASED IN
EDUCATIONAL VALUES –
USING ENCLOSED TOOLS
DESIGNED FOR **EXTRACTION**
& **AUTOMATION**?

I HAVE HARD NEWS...
I DON'T KNOW. ☹️

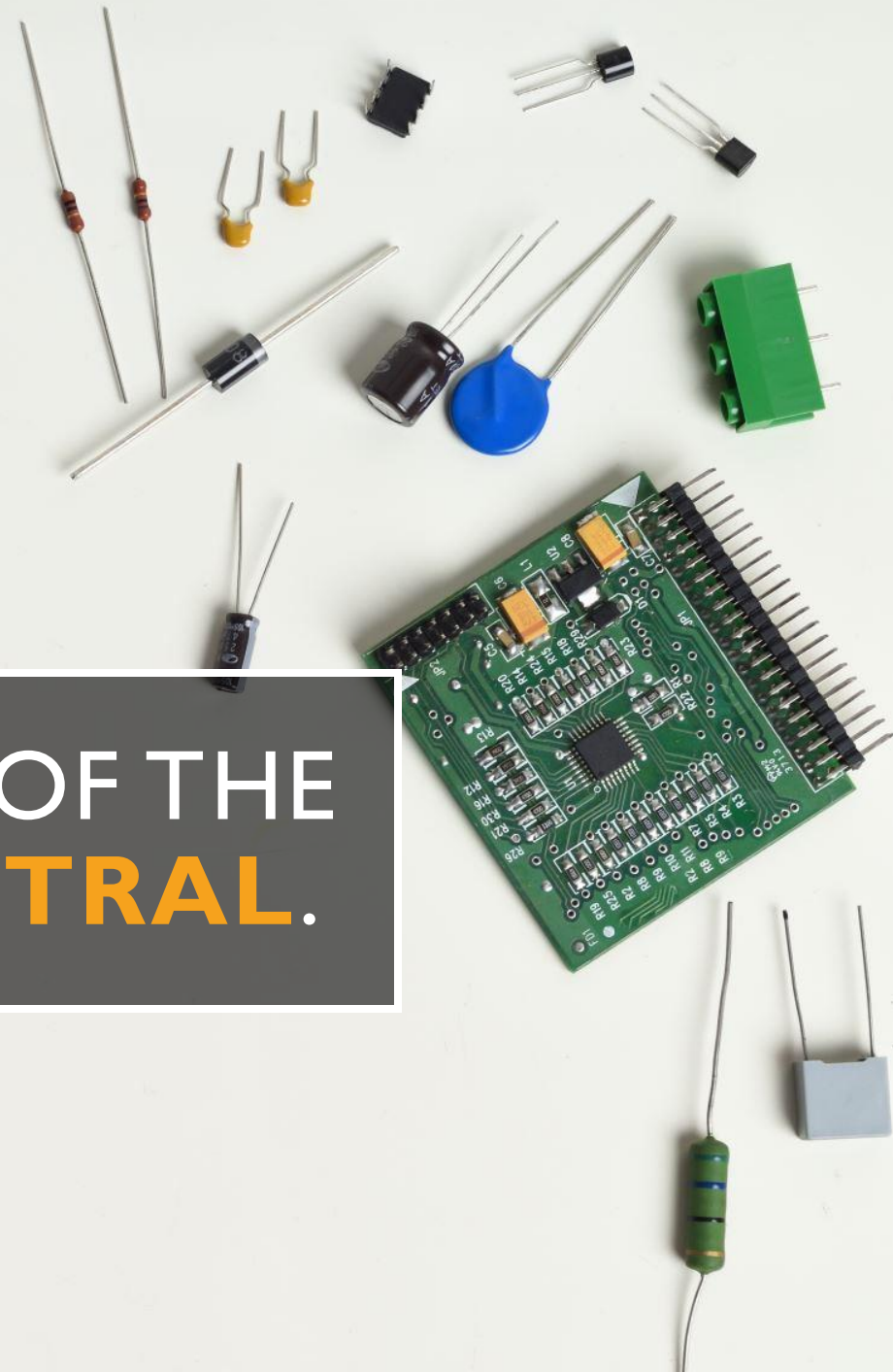


BUT I DO KNOW THAT WE DO **NOT** NEED TO BUY THE
FUTURE WE ARE BEING **SOLD**.

**THERE IS ABSOLUTELY
NO INEVITABILITY AS LONG AS
THERE IS A WILLINGNESS TO THINK**

- Marshall McLuhan. 1967

AND WE NEED TO LET GO OF THE
IDEA THAT TOOLS ARE **NEUTRAL**.





3 KEY
THINKERS
I DRAW
ON RIGHT
NOW

1. McLuhan
2. Franklin
3. hooks

MCLUHAN'S
TETRAD OF
MEDIA EFFECTS
SITUATES TOOLS
IN SOCIETY

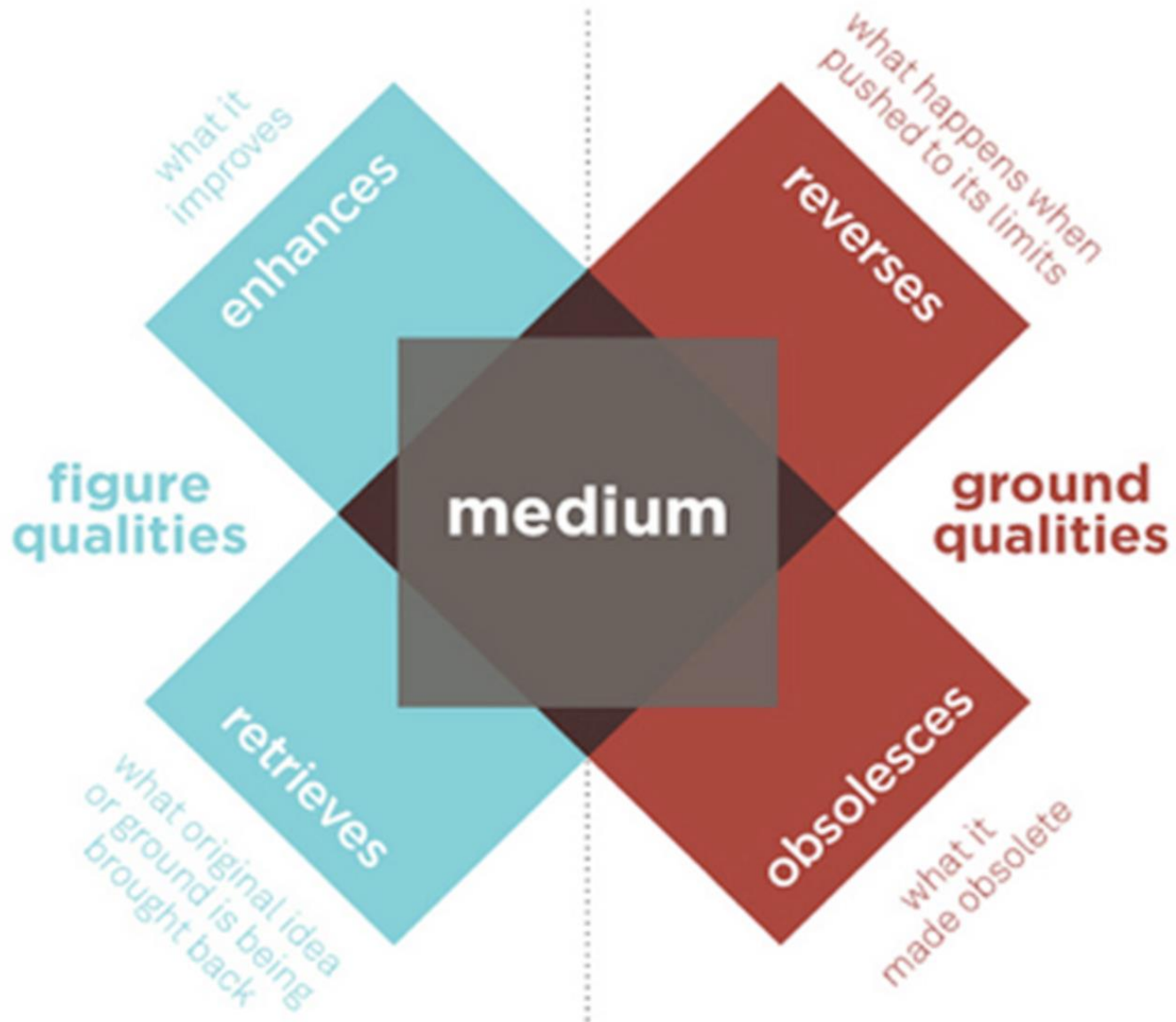


Figure 1

The McLuhan Tetrad. Source: Mvaliab Social Media Marketing ([2012](#)).

ONLINE
WORLD,
21ST
CENTURY

our digitally mediated society

every medium —

extends a human property,

obsolesces the previous medium (& often makes it a luxury good),

retrieves a much older medium &

reverses its properties when pushed to its limits

*“ridiculously easy
group-forming”*
—Seb Paquet

*“global orthodoxy
that ruthlessly
narrows public
thought”*
—John Robb



*“offline is the
new luxury”*
—Gerd Leonhard

*“tribalization will
make our society
vulnerable to
information warfare”*
—David Ronfeldt

McLuhan wrote that the visual, individualistic print culture would soon be brought to an end by what he called "electronic interdependence": when electronic media replace visual culture with aural/oral culture. In this new age, humankind will move from individualism and fragmentation to a collective identity, with a "tribal base. (Wikipedia)

<https://www.tonybates.ca/2011/07/20/marshall-mcluhan-and-his-relevance-to-teaching-with-technology/>

We are in an information war. Understanding this is the first step in fighting for democracy.

Agnotology: the strategic & purposeful production of ignorance

—danah boyd

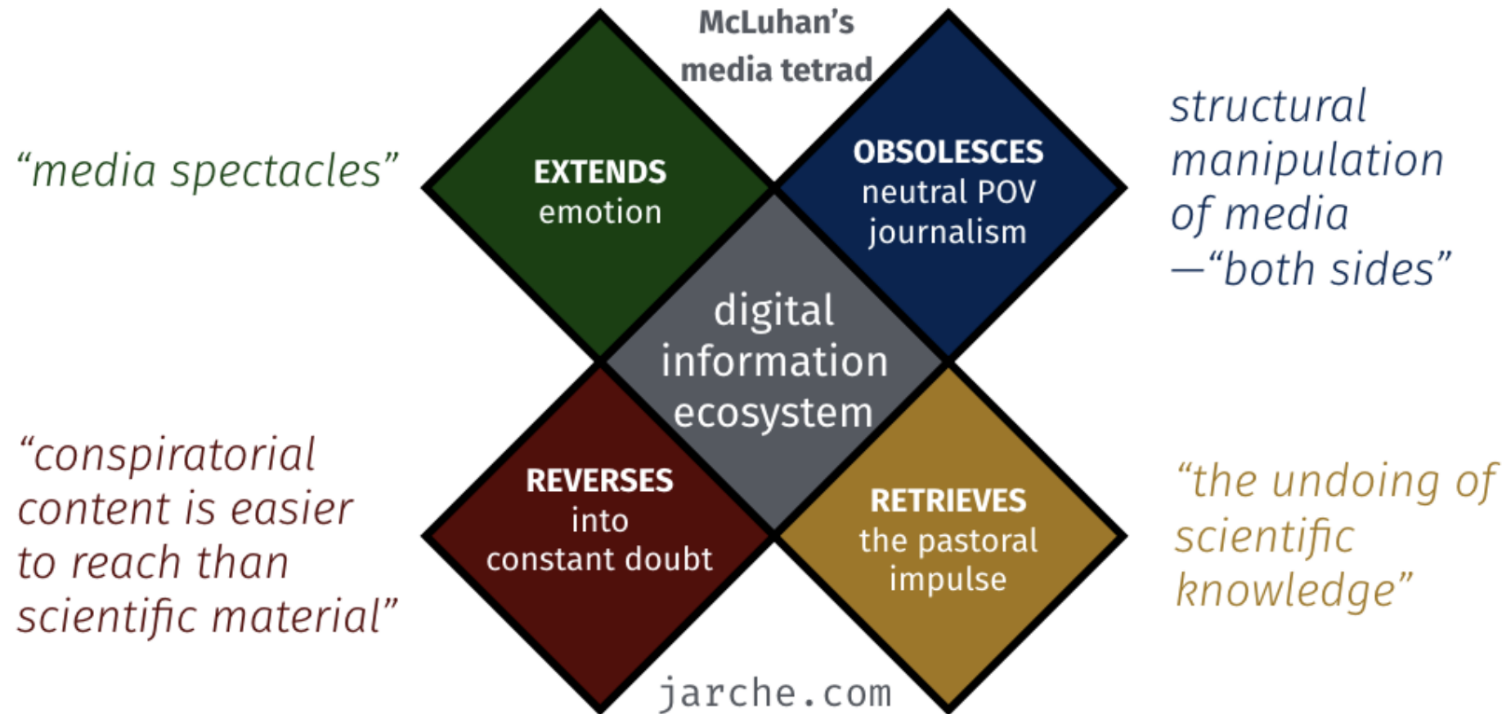
every medium —

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OUR
KNOWLEDGE-
MAKING
HAS BEEN
ENCLOSED BY
LOGICS
ANTITHETICAL
TO
EDUCATION.

<https://jarche.com/2022/01/the-balance-between-emotion-and-logic-in-the-digital-age/>



for evaluating tech & its
impact, Ursula Franklin's
concept of **holistic** vs.
prescriptive
technologies is a **key**
thinking tool

“**Holistic technologies** are normally associated with the notion of **craft**...[they] support a certain amount of improv.

Prescriptive technologies require each person to operate with precision, according to a **pre-arranged plan**. With holistic technologies, the worker is **in control**; with prescriptive technologies, *the worker is **under control***.

While we should not forget that these prescriptive technologies are exceedingly **effective** and **efficient**, they come with an enormous social mortgage....**a culture of compliance**.

- Ursula Franklin, 1990

HOLISTIC VS PRESCRIPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES



“Using holistic technologies does NOT mean that people do not **work together**, but the WAY in which they work together leaves the individual worker **in control** of a particular process of creating or doing something”

- Ursula Franklin, 1990

FRANKLIN'S 5 STAGES OF TECHNOLOGY:

SOCIETALLY,
IT IS IMPORTANT TO ASK **WHAT POWER STRUCTURES**
GET STANDARDIZED IN STAGE 4?



INVENTION



GROWTH



ACCEPTANCE



STANDARDIZATION



STAGNATION

bell hooks:

“When culture is based on a dominator model, not only will it be violent, but it will frame all relationships as **power struggles**.”

bell hooks, 2004

<https://dn721601.ca.archive.org/0/items/the-will-to-change-men-masculinity-and-love-by-bell-hooks-z-lib.org.epub/The%20Will%20to%20Change%20Men%20C%20Masculinity%20and%20Love%20by%20bell%20hooks%20%28z-lib.org%29.epub.pdf>

EDUCATION AS A PRACTICE OF FREEDOM

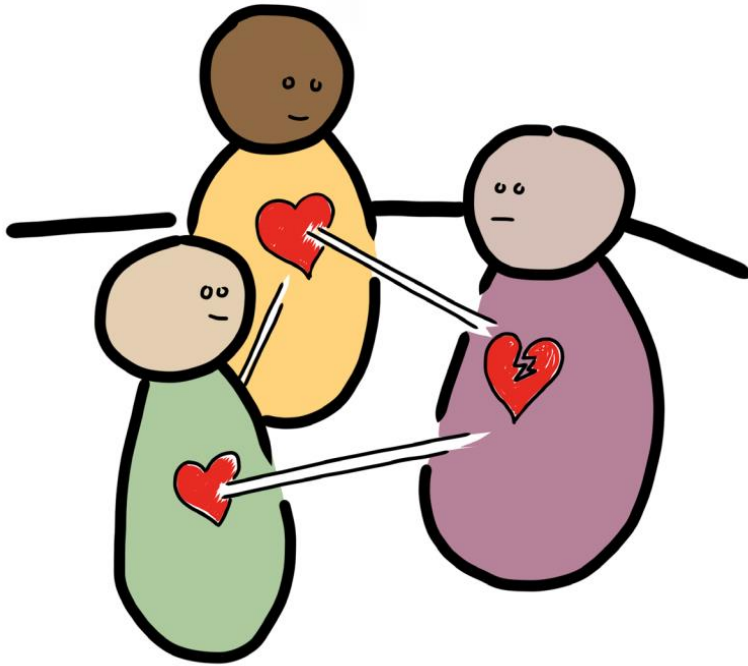


TOOLS OF **POWER**
VS
TOOLS OF
KNOWLEDGE

The power of this speech is not simply that it enables **resistance** to white supremacy, but that it also forges a space for **alternative cultural production** and **alternative epistemologies**—different ways of thinking and knowing that were crucial to creating a **counter-hegemonic** worldview.

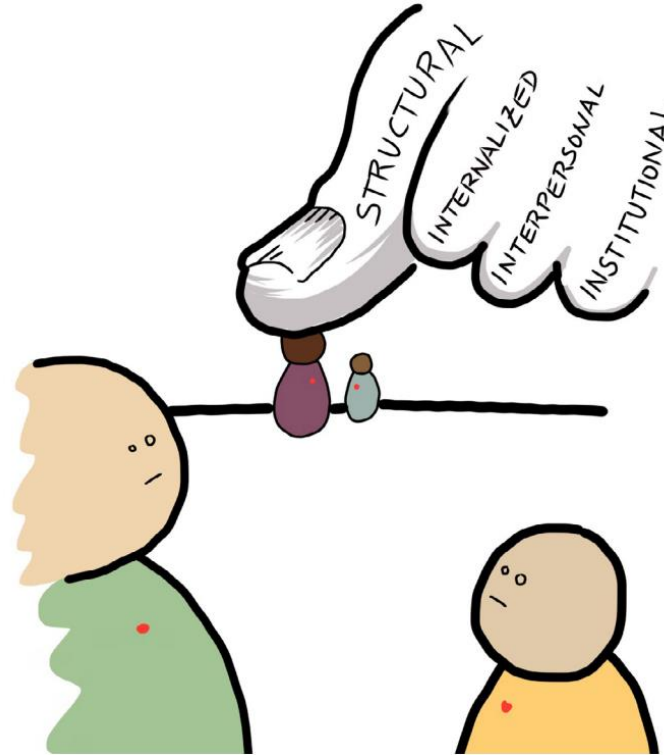
- bell hooks, 1994

<https://newlearningonline.com/literacies/chapter-7/hooks-on-the-language-of-power>



Build Relational Trust

Invest in relationships with intention, especially across difference. Honor stories. Practice empathetic listening.



Recognize Oppression

Learn to see how oppression, in its many forms, has shaped designs that lead to inequity.



Seek Liberatory Collaboration

Recognize differences in power and identity to design "with" instead of "for." Design for belonging.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60380011d63f16013f7cc4c2/t/64e7eec1af73ab61a813bd72/1692921543446/Liberatory+Design+Deck.pdf>

LIBERATORY PRACTICES FOR PARTICIPATORY NAVIGATION OF UNCERTAINTY

'Study after study shows that students want to develop these critical thinking skills, are not lazy, and large numbers of them would be in favor of banning ChatGPT and similar tools in universities', says

[@olivia.science](#) www.ru.nl/en/research/...



'Opposing the inevitability of AI at universities is possible and necessary' | Radboud University

Since the widespread release of ChatGPT in December of 2022, AI has taken over much of the world by storm – including academia. Most of this happened with very litt...

www.ru.nl

BECAUSE
FUTURE
GENERATIONS
DESERVE **BETTER**
THAN JUST
ENCLOSURE.

GOOD NEWS!

WE KNOW **HOW** TO EDUCATE HUMANS FOR **AGENCY** AND **CONNECTION**.



Will Richardson  • 1st

Building capacity and community for educators (and others) ready ...

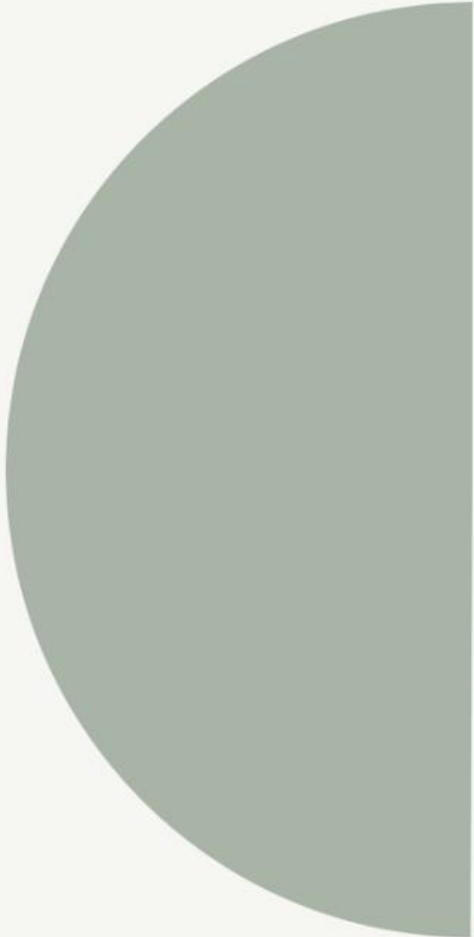
[View my newsletter](#)

1w • 

Education is not about preparing students for the future.

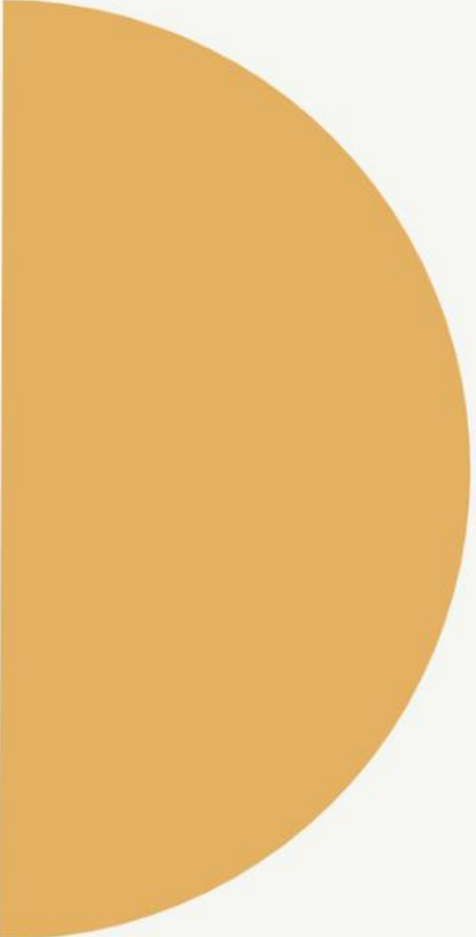
Instead, education is about preparing students to CARE for the future.

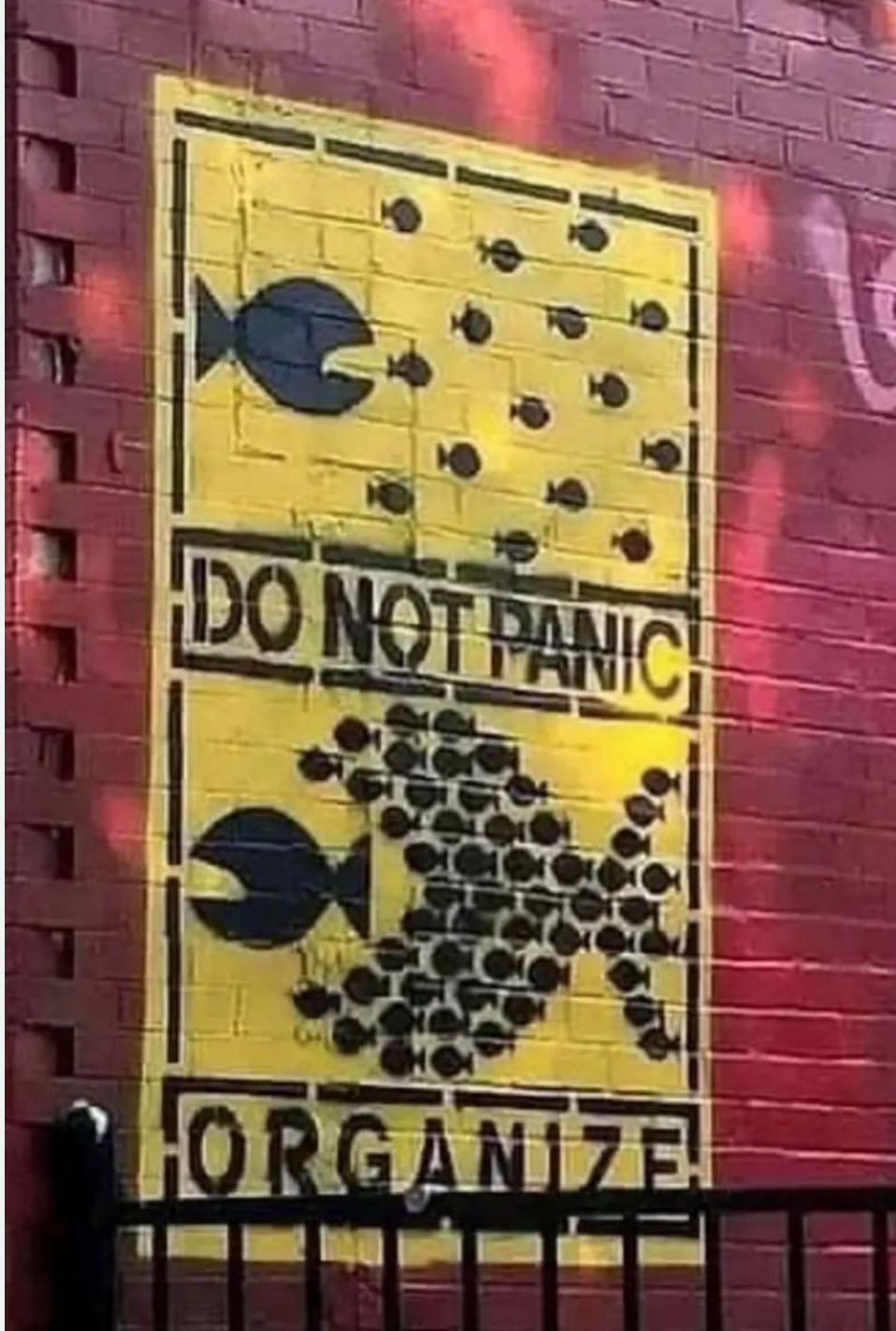
DISTANCE WITHOUT **SCALE** IS KEY TO SUPPORTING CONNECTION & BELONGING



“Belonging and engagement require **human-scale**, relational interactions, even in digital environments. The approach prioritizes educational quality and student success over enrollment maximization. This positions UHI as distinctive in an education landscape increasingly driven by scale economies.”

- UHI Belonging & Place report, p. 16





SO. THE MESSAGE CAN **EXCEED**
THE MEDIUM.

BUT WE NEED TO SEE THE
MEDIUM OF OPEN PRACTICE FOR
WHAT IT IS...& WORK ON.
ONWARD.

GROUNDING IN THE EDUCATIONAL & DEMOCRATIC VALUES
OF DIVERSITY & EQUITY.



”THE PUBLIC SCHOOL IS THE BEST DEFENSE OF A DEMOCRATIC NATION”

WE LIVE IN CAPITALISM -
ITS POWER SEEMS INESCAPABLE



BUT SO DID THE
DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS
URSULA K LEGUIN

THANK YOU.

