


May 13, 2022


Welcome back to the Unfinished newsletter, where we explore key issues at the intersection of tech, ethics, and society.


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What we're thinking about

We have a lot of Unfinished-focused news we're excited to share with you. But first, a handful of interesting links to start your weekend on a thoughtful note.

 It's easy to be jaded about the dark side of social media — we've all read too many stories about misinformation, manipulation, and algorithms run amok. Still, the latest from *Washington Post* reporter Geoffrey Fowler is genuinely shocking. He [started posting pictures of his baby on Instagram](#) — and the app quickly returned algorithmically generated disturbing content, like “babies missing limbs, babies with bulging veins, babies with too-small heads, babies with too-big heads, even hirsute babies.” Eep.

 Fowler talked to Facebook whistleblower and former product manager Frances Haugen for her take. She points out a common factor in algorithmic feeds: that engagement — hovering over an image or words — can be a sign you like something, but it can also be a sign something truly shocking or upsetting has come into your feed, capturing your attention (but not in a good way). She says: “The reality of being a new dad is that you are more vulnerable to the suffering of children... And I am sure when you run into one of the shocking photos, you're not intending to spend time on that photo, but you pause. And the algorithm takes note of that longer duration.” (Indeed, lingering over certain posts, even without tapping anything, will affect how apps like Instagram serve you content.)

 Rest of World, an excellent website that covers how technology impacts the parts of the globe outside of the West, published a great list of 100 global tech changemakers. These are “100 people outside Silicon Valley and the West whose efforts directly impact countries where the majority of the world's

population lives,” the editors wrote. It’s an inspiring list that serves as an important reminder to look beyond the Big Tech power bubble in the United States. You can see the full list [here](#).

🔗 “Decentralization” is a core tenet of web3 — but ask 10 different people what the word means, exactly, and you’ll get 10 different answers 😊. The artist and coder Sarah Friend — who is part of [Unfinished Camp](#), an ongoing project that brings together dynamic, emerging artists and technologists to envision a better web — spoke about this recently from the Venice Biennale (you can [listen to her on that here](#)). And this week in *Wired*, the editorial team called together [three experts to give their perspective](#) on the best way to proceed with the concept. “Our view of decentralization is about coordination,” they write. “It emphasizes solving problems through the federation of ‘local’ units, clustered around the social contexts most relevant to the decision at hand.” They go on to point out that so-called decentralized approaches — where distinct groups are empowered to make decisions that ladder up to a larger entity (think local, state, and national governments, as one example) — are not new! We found this framing helpful in demystifying something that can get pretty heady pretty fast.

👉 For more like this, we recommend this great recent talk from our partners at the McCourt Institute: [Competing visions for the future of social media](#).



Unfinished goes to Davos...

In a little over a week from now, we’re going to be pulling together an incredible group of thinkers and leaders for a series of panel discussions during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on May 23-25.

We’re doing this in collaboration with the [Web3 Foundation](#), live from [Polkadot](#)'s venue on the promenade. The panels will convene leading voices in tech, media, and social impact, like *Atlantic* CEO Nick Thompson, *The Markup* CEO Nabiha Syed, and Microsoft VP Teresa Hutson. The Unfinished discussions include: **Tech and the Future of Democracy, What Will it Take to Build a Better Web?**; **The New New Media: Exploring the Possibilities of Communication and Compensation in the Next Generation of the Web**; and **TikTok at War: Trust and Truth at a Time of Conflict**. [You can view the full slate of programming here](#).

And don’t fret: If you won’t be in Davos, you’ll be able to livestream our panels. Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) for updates.



... and Austin!

People often focus on cryptocurrencies and decentralized finance when they discuss web3 — important concepts, but a fairly narrow band of what’s actually possible. At Unfinished, we’re interested in exploring how this new technology can work for positive social impact.

To that end, on June 9, Unfinished is co-producing the Web3 Impact Summit in Austin, Texas. The event will be an intimate gathering of leaders focused on

learning and collaborating to create a positive impact through web3 technologies. Guests include Kimbal Musk, founder of Big Green DAO; Allyson Downey, founder of Meta Angels; Nihar Neelakanti, CEO of EcoSapiens; and Kevin Owocki, founder of Gitcoin.

If you're interested in web3's intersection with the impact space, [we'd love for you to apply to join us in Austin here](#) — attendance is free when your application is accepted.



Plus, join us for a virtual salon

*In a thriving multiracial democracy,
how can we find a shared purpose?*

UNFINISHED SALONS

Angela Glover Blackwell
in conversation with
Dr. Danielle Allen, Eric Liu,
and Rev. Dr. Starsky Wilson

#002

Wednesday, June 8 • 1-2 PM ET

Unfinished will hold the second in an ongoing series of virtual salons next month. At a time of deep division in the United States, listen to four democracy pioneers share their wisdom and powerful ideas on one animating question: *In a thriving multiracial democracy, how can we find a shared purpose?* We've got Harvard University ethics professor Dr. Danielle Allen, Citizen University CEO Eric Liu, Rev. Dr. Starsky Wilson, CEO of the Children's Defense Fund, and Angela Glover Blackwell, the civil rights attorney, founder in residence at PolicyLink, and chair of the Unfinished Network.

Anyone can join: [register here](#).

Thank you for reading.

Follow Unfinished ([@byUnfinished](#)) on Twitter for ongoing chitchat on the changing web.

Have a great, restful weekend.

The Unfinished team

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