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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

The endlessly complex links between the digital economy and “real life.” Multiple stories this week provided valuable lessons on the topic, from different perspectives.

 **Decentralized and equitable:** [In a new story for Protocol](#), the journalist Karl Bode explores how Native nations in the U.S. are forging their own decentralized, affordable broadband networks to fill a void left by telecoms and the federal government. The piece describes how companies developed basic broadband infrastructure around tribal land in the '90s, but failed to expand to these communities out of what Bode calls “convenience, cost or apathy.”

 “I really think of it as technological redlining,” Marisa Duarte, an associate professor at Arizona State University and member of the Pascua Yaqui tribe, told Bode. “It’s a form of segregation.”

 If you’d like to know more about the physical *stuff* that makes the internet work, check out Ingrid Burrington’s book [Networks of New York](#). It’s fascinating, fun, and totally accessible—a hat trick, given the subject matter!

 **New alarm over fertility tracking apps:** Following this week’s Supreme Court news, privacy experts are cautioning people against using fertility-tracking apps and other digital services to find information related to abortion. “Privacy advocates say data collection could become a major liability for people seeking abortions in secret,” Geoffrey Fowler and Tatum Hunter [reported in the Washington Post](#). “Phones can record communications, search histories, body health data and other information. Just Tuesday, there was new evidence that

commercial data brokers sell location information gathered from the phones of people who visit abortion clinics.” Carly Page at TechCrunch also [explored the issue](#) with depth and nuance.

🤔 Regardless of your views on abortion and the leaked Supreme Court memo, the news serves as an urgent reminder of the mind-boggling consequences of living a life mediated by smartphones and largely unregulated online services. Sensitive personal data is easily linked to specific individuals, as the [Wall Street Journal illustrated in a story](#) this week about user data on the location-based dating app Grindr being sold through ad networks. Shifting political and cultural contexts can quickly turn that data [into a serious liability](#).

🗞️ **Facebook causes “chaos” in Australia:** In response to a controversial Australian law that would have forced the social media giant to pay news companies for content published on its platform, Facebook (or “Meta,” as Mark Zuckerberg would prefer you call the company) may have “deliberately created an overly broad and sloppy process to take down pages—allowing swaths of the Australian government and health services to be caught in its web just as the country was launching Covid vaccinations,” [per the Wall Street Journal](#). Facebook denies this was a purposeful strategy to negotiate with the Australian government, though the fact remains that the company had the ability to make such a move—yet another sign of the power big tech holds over public life.

📈 **“Gas” fees are rising:** So-called “gas” fees for major NFT transactions are skyrocketing. Recently, “many buyers who paid less than \$10 for an NFT had to shell out several tens of thousands of dollars in gas fees,” Scott Nover [reported in Quartz](#). “One anonymous buyer of a \$5,800 NFT paid about \$45,000 in transaction fees.”

📱 What is “gas,” anyway? As Griffin Mcshane [explains on Coindesk](#), “Gas is the term for the amount of ether (ETH)—the native cryptocurrency of Ethereum—required by the network for a user to interact with the network. These fees are used to compensate Ethereum miners for the energy required to verify a transaction and for providing a layer of security to the Ethereum network by making it too expensive for malicious users to spam the network.”

High gas fees illustrate how this system sometimes favors the wealthiest buyers. You could possibly imagine buying a piece of NFT artwork for a few dozen (or hundred, or maybe thousand) bucks, but if you can’t afford the overhead, you’re effectively locked out of this particular corner of the digital economy. Eep.

🏠 **And finally, the Vatican embraces web3:** “The Vatican will debut [an] NFT gallery so that audiences around the world can view the art, manuscripts, and other objects held in its collection,” [Shanti Escalante-De Mattei reports for ARTnews](#). “The Vatican’s press representative claimed that the NFTs won’t be used to sell products or objects, though it is unclear what they will be used for.” Bless!

There's still time! Help us build a healthier internet 🙋

As we first shared last week, we're excited to extend an invitation for you to play a key role in developing a new Project Liberty Manifesto — a document that will serve as a guiding light toward a better internet for all. The effort is named after one of our central projects at Unfinished: **Project Liberty**. It's a project that has as its goal building a more equitable architecture for the web.

As an easy starting point, we'd like to ask you to **take a 10-question survey** to share your thoughts and expertise on this topic. Depending on the depth of your answers, this survey could take 5 to 20 minutes. Your responses will form a key foundation for the manifesto's development — and all answers are recorded confidentially, so please be candid!

The survey closes Monday! Make sure your voice is heard before then.

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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