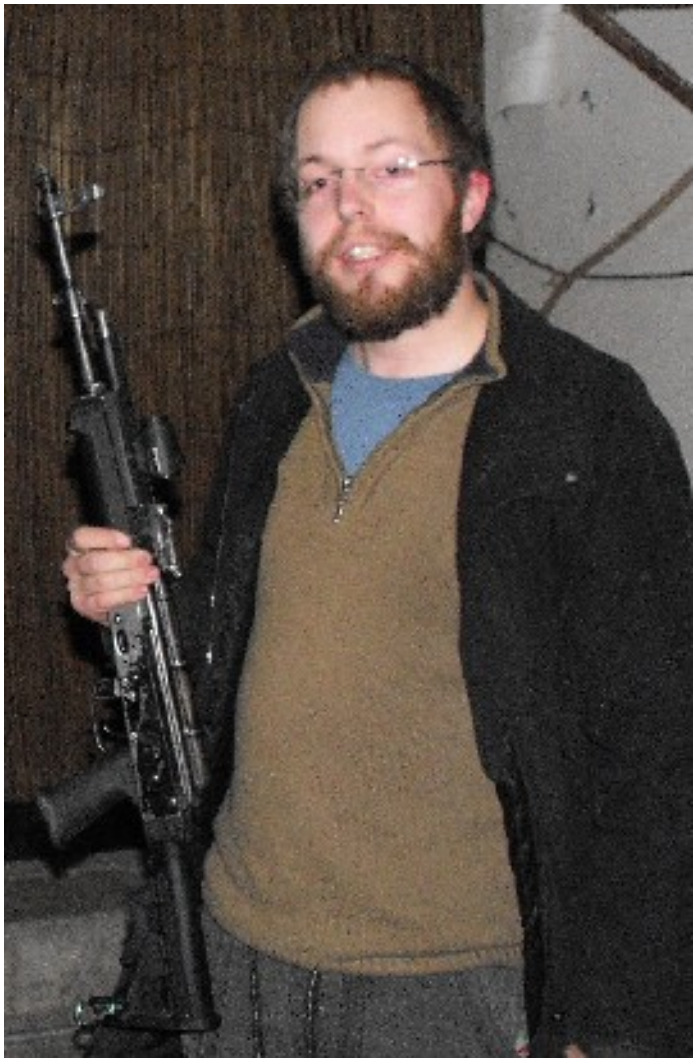
The End of (artificial) Scarcity

Failures in our society's structure, and how to fix them

Smári McCarthy
<smari@anarchism.is>

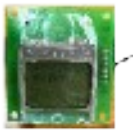
CC BY SA



VS.

Smári's social projects network

No metric defined on topology



Global Swadeshi

Hexayurt Project

school of everything

creative commons

FSCONS

fsfe

disastr

STAR TIDES

Oekonux

Software Freedom Law Center

FSFÍ

Lotaye

STRONG ANGEL III

FabLab Jalalabad

beint.lydraedi.is

Anarchism.is

Shadow Parliament Project

FabFolk

SmartAID

FABLAB

FabFi Wireless

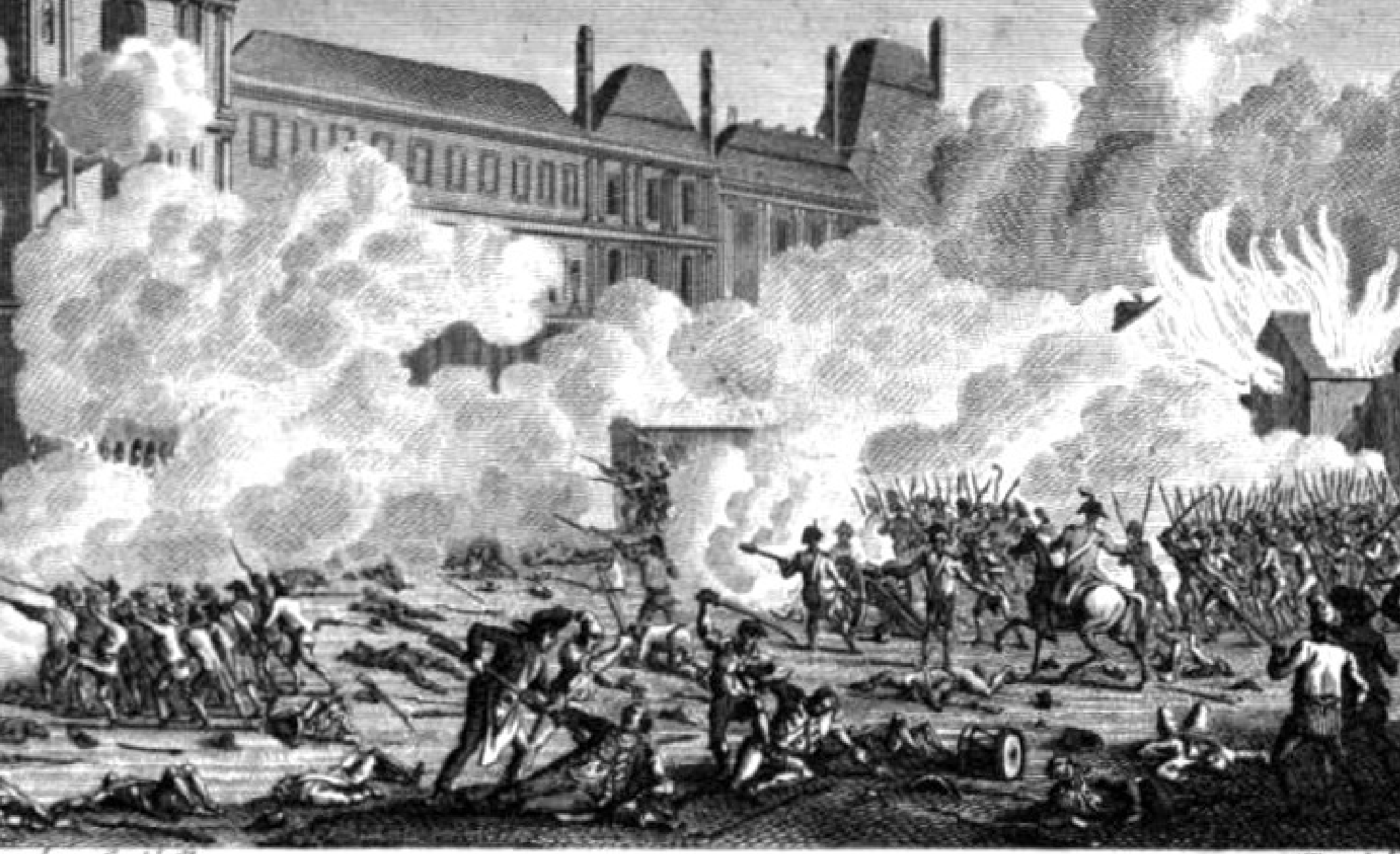
Cascade

Open Manufacturing

FOME

Informal relationship (Channel exists)
Formal relationship (I work with this)
Organizational relationship (I help with this)
Existential relationship (I made this)

WITHOUT FREEDOM OF THOUGHT
THERE CAN BE NO SUCH THING AS WISDOM
& NO SUCH THING AS PUBLICK LIBERTY
WITHOUT FREEDOM OF SPEECH
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN 1722

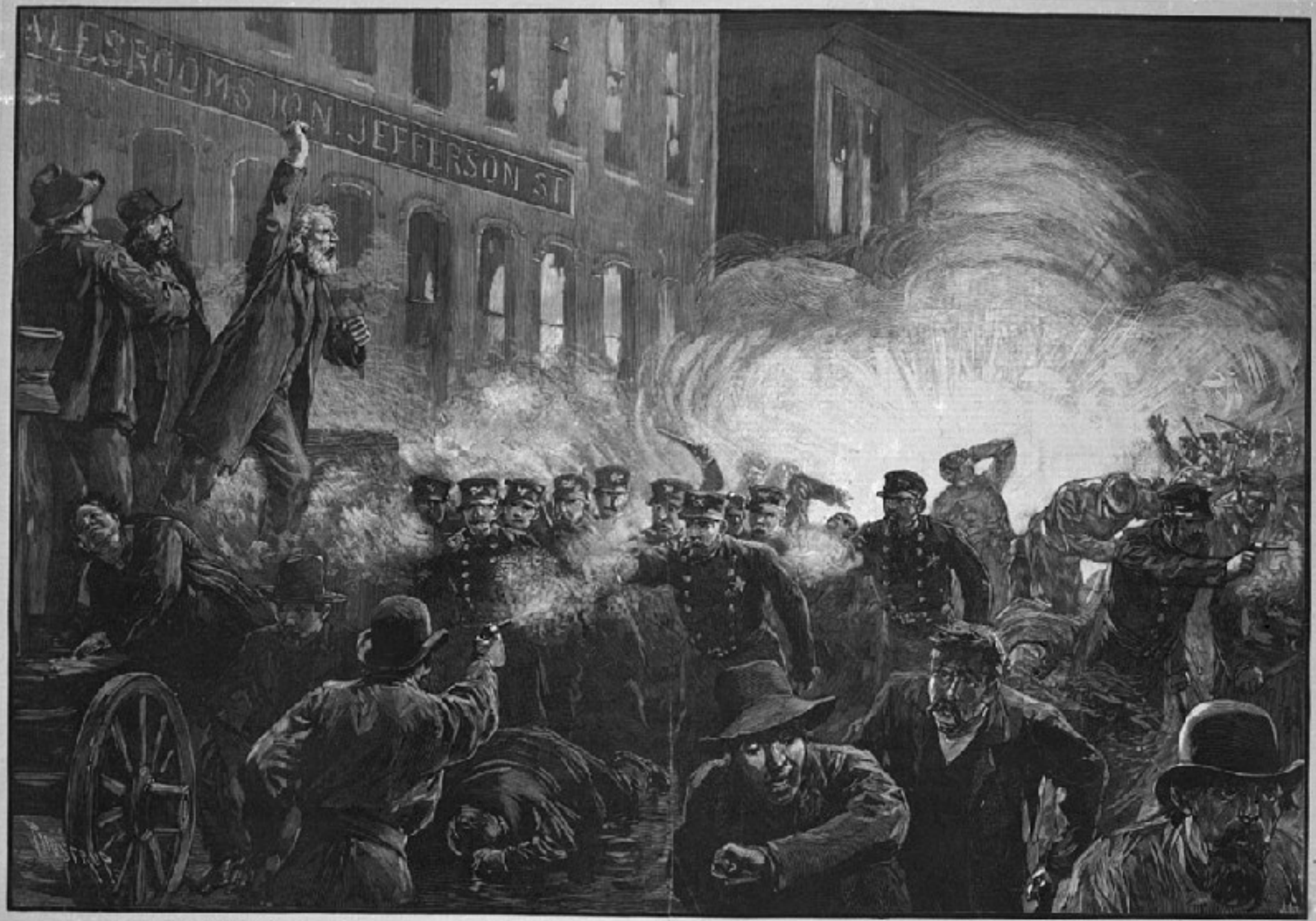


...avé par Couché fils

Terminé ...

Événements de la journée

du 10 Août 1792.



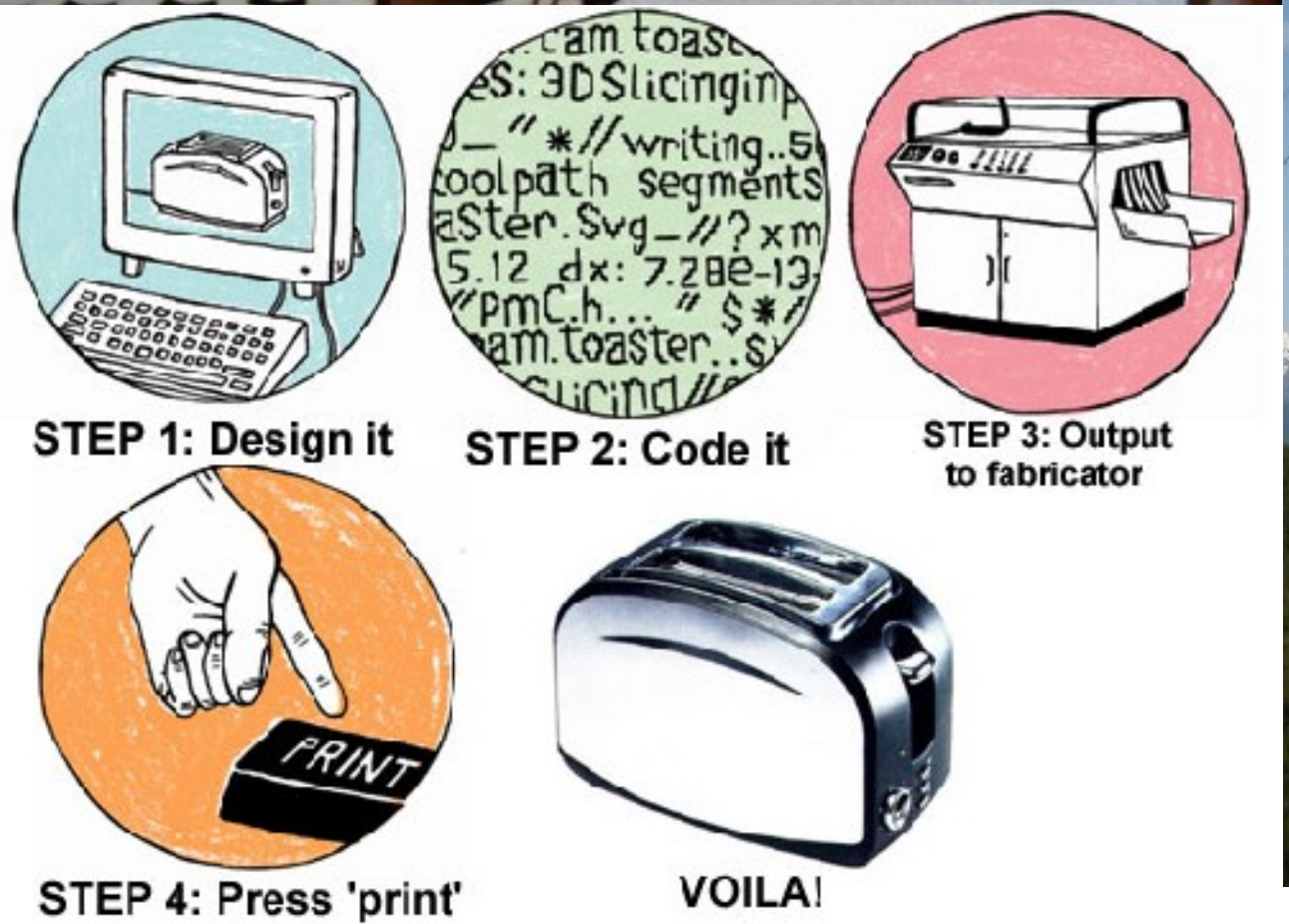
THE ANARCHIST RIOT IN CHICAGO—A DYNAMITE BOMB EXPLODING AMONG THE POLICE.—Drawn by T. de Thulstrup from Sketches and Photographs furnished by H. Fleischmann.—[See Page 815.]

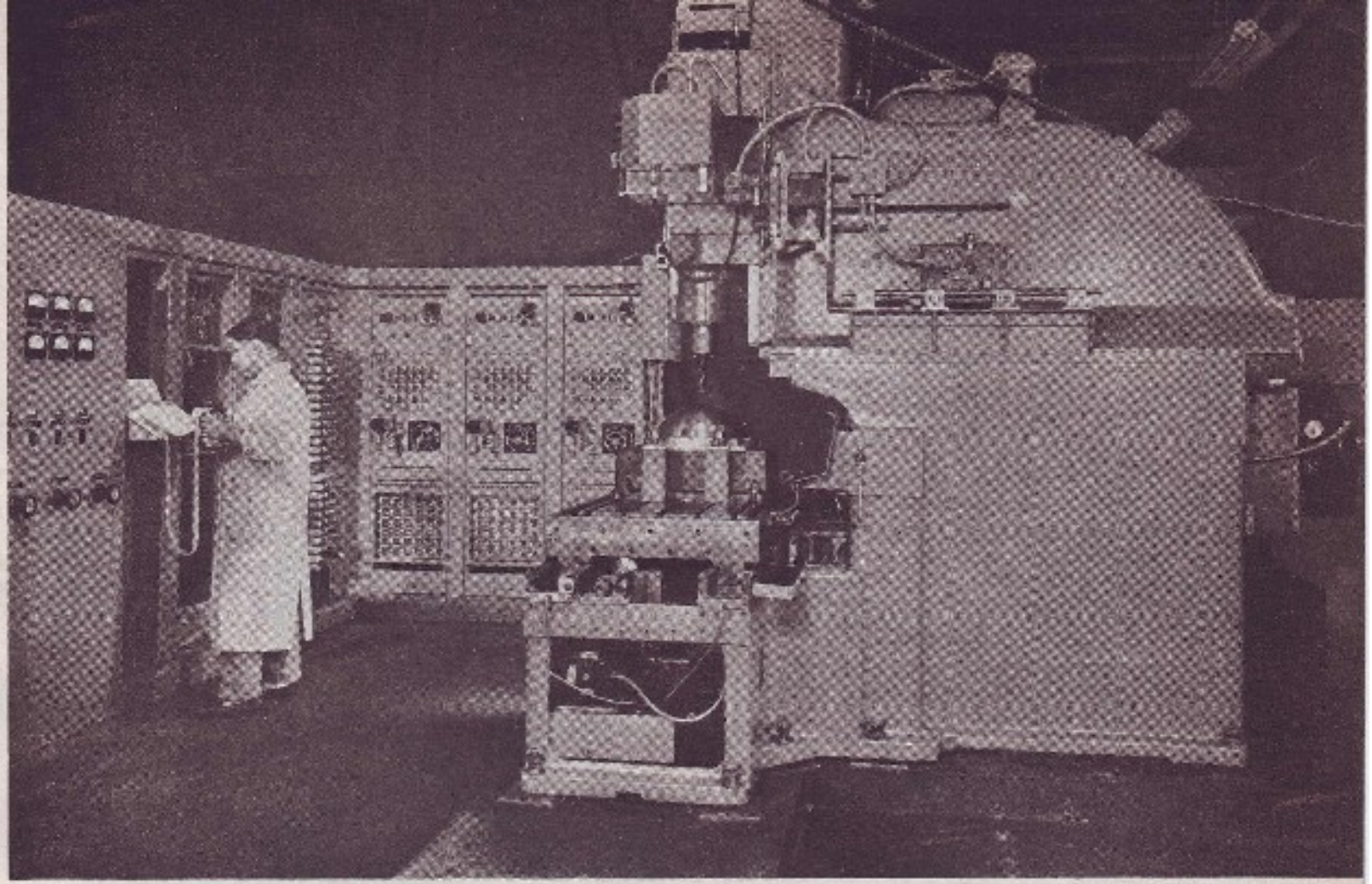
Increasingly, our

Freedoms

are hinging on our

Digital Freedoms


STEP 1: Design it
STEP 2: Code it
STEP 3: Output to fabricator
STEP 4: Press 'print'
PRINT
VOILA!



Too big yet for home shop, this MIT milling machine is run by computer-control at left.

of tapes—one each for legs, arms, back and seat.

That night, he clamps a nice piece of birch into his Tapemaster, slips the tape into the control box, flips the switch, and sits back with his pipe and the new issue of *Outdoor Life*.

Forty minutes later, the rumble of the Tapemaster stops and Joe takes a look. One leg is finished. So he clamps on another piece of birch . . .

Sure it's a dream—in 1955. But the engineering basis for Joe's Tapemaster exists right now. Sitting up in the Servomechanisms Laboratory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass., is a milling machine that will turn out any metal part at the command of a little roll of tape. Originally a standard, vertical 28″ Cincinnati Hydro-Tel, it now has hitched to it $50,000 worth of electronics.

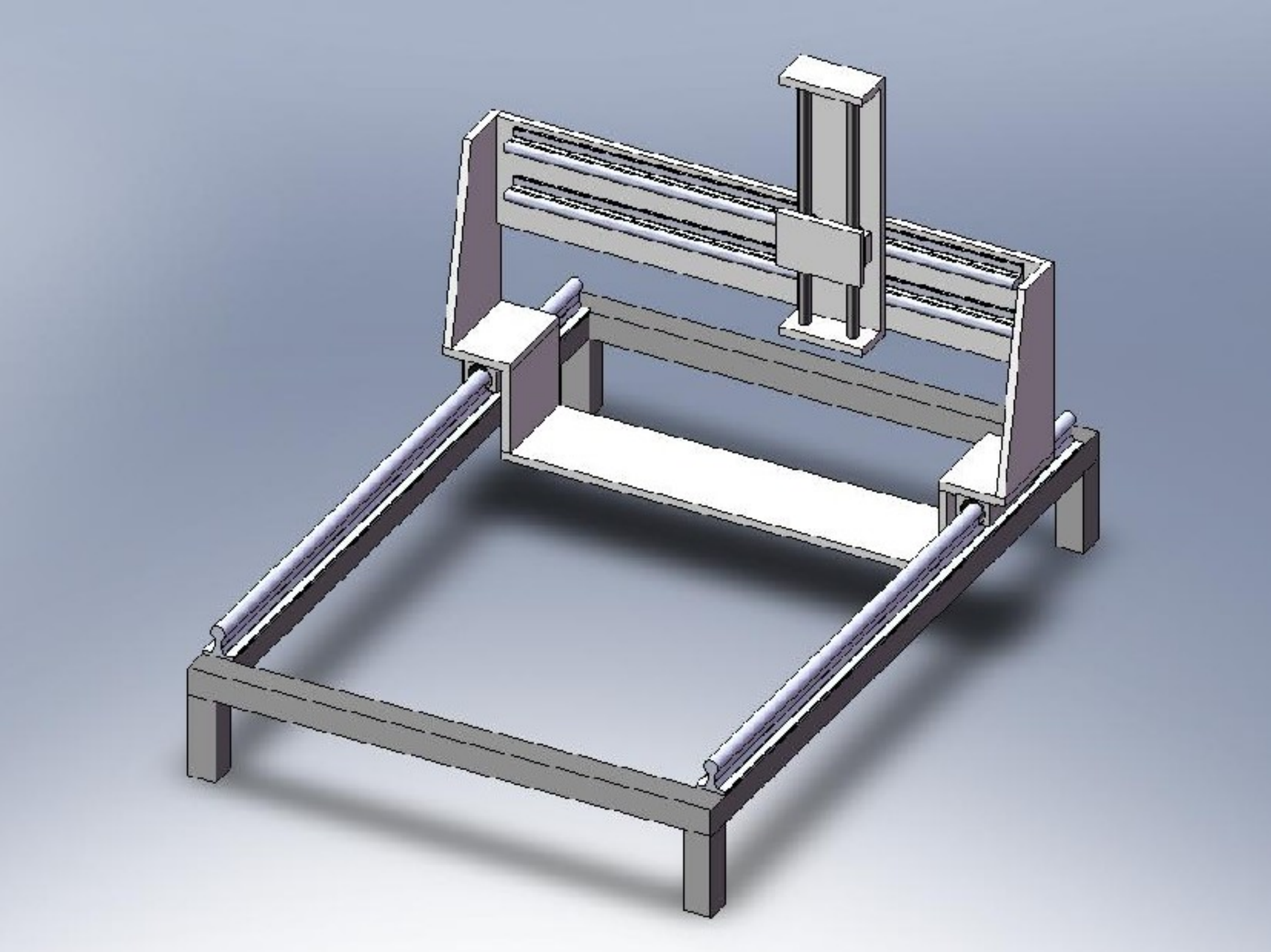
To conceive, design and build the MIT machine took some quarter-million

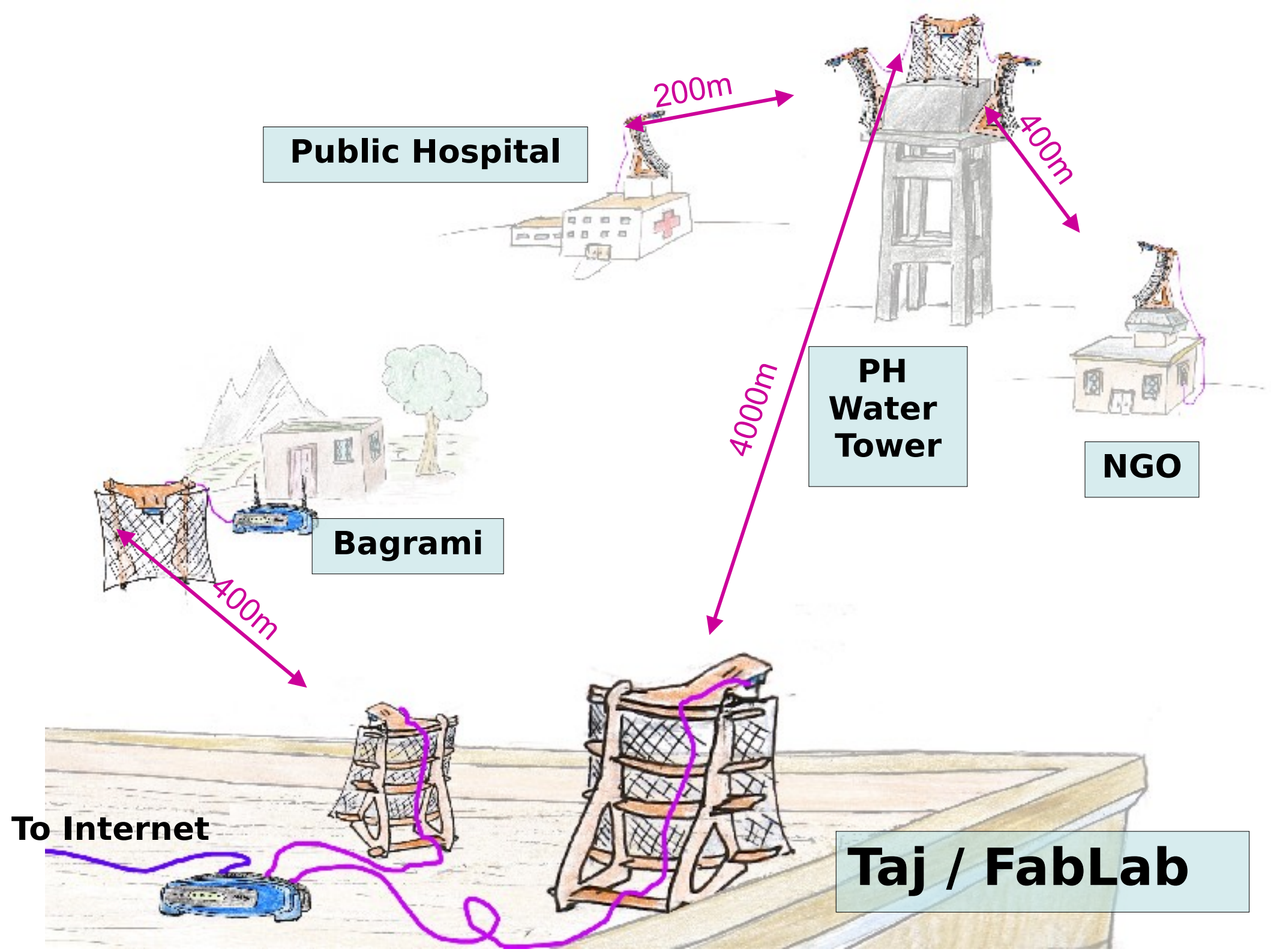
Fab Labs

Democratizing innovation

What would you make
if you could make *anything*?

Where are the limits of peer to peer design?




Public Hospital
200m
400m
4000m
PH
Water
Tower
NGO
Bagrami
400m
To Internet
Taj / FabLab

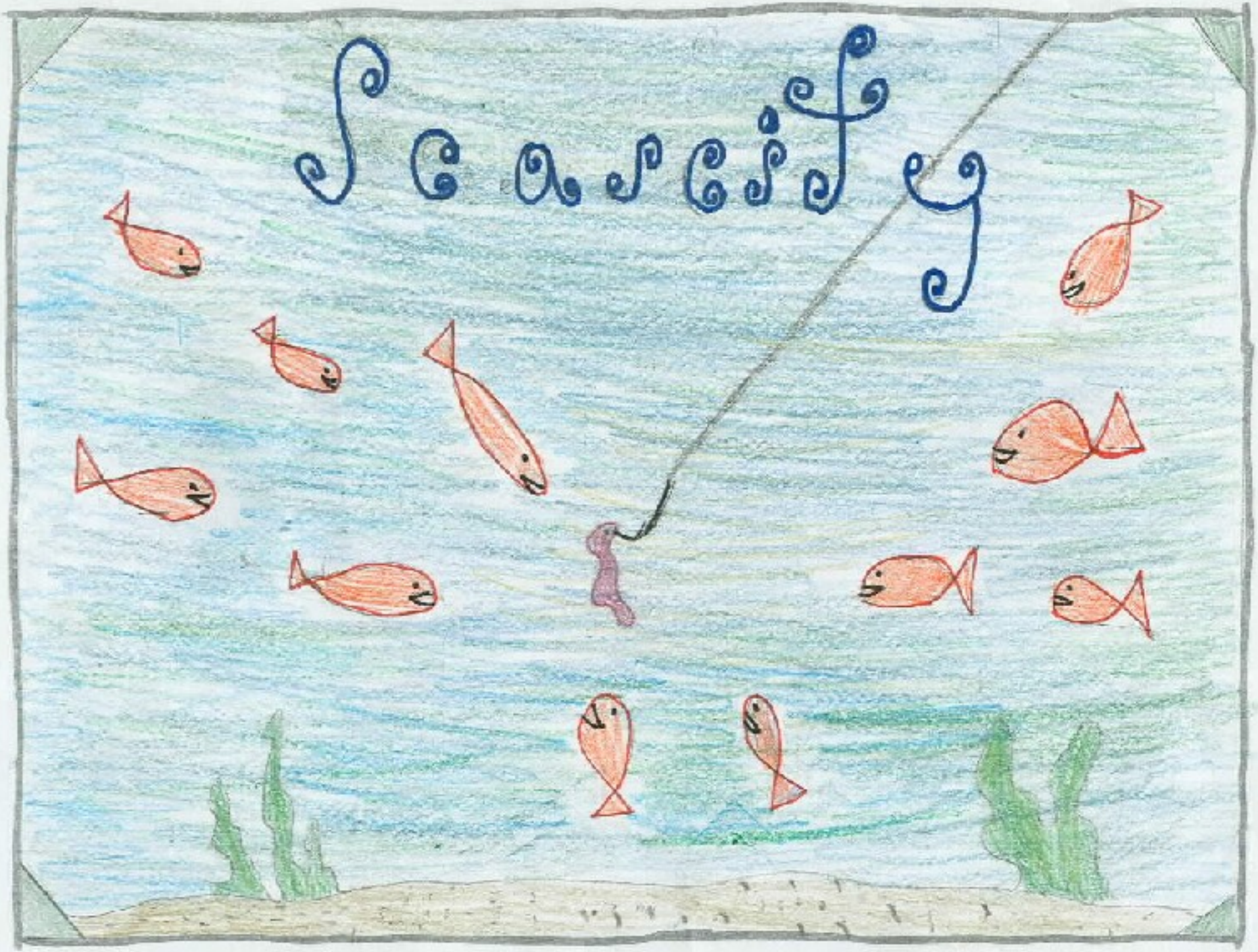
Hobbes' Lie

- From Leviathan (1651)
- Without a strong ruler, chaos will ensue -

  Bellum omnium contra omnes

Malthus' Lie

- Without restrictions on human behaviour, we will overpopulate, deplete our resources, and chaos will ensue
  - Viz the *Tragedy of the Commons* (Hardin)

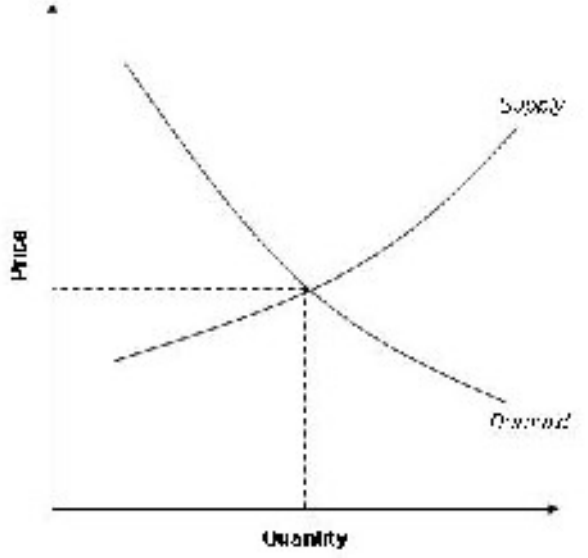

Seafish

The illusion of scarcity

- The fundamental assumption of all major economic dogmas is the inherant scarcity of “products”
- Roughly twice the amount of food needed to feed all humans produced in the west
  - Two thirds of it thrown out.
- Rerouting “wasted” food to areas of poverty considered too *costly*.

http://www.wastedfood.com/

The illusion of scarcity



- On the one hand, distribution will happen naturally. On the other hand, it is the alpha and omega of the system.
- So why then are there so many laws governing trade and distribution?
- According to the men who designed the systems that we purport to live by, distribution is extremely important and should not be stifled at any cost. And yet, this is being done.

The illusion of scarcity

- Freeganism is the ultimate social phenotype for this:
  - Kids dumpster diving for food and clothing, not because they must, but because they can.
  - Able to sustain a higher standard of living by foraging for waste than by working low paying jobs.
  - It doesn't take a genius to see that this does not scale.

http://www.freegan.info/ http://www.dumpsterdiving.net/ http://www.dumpsterworld.com/

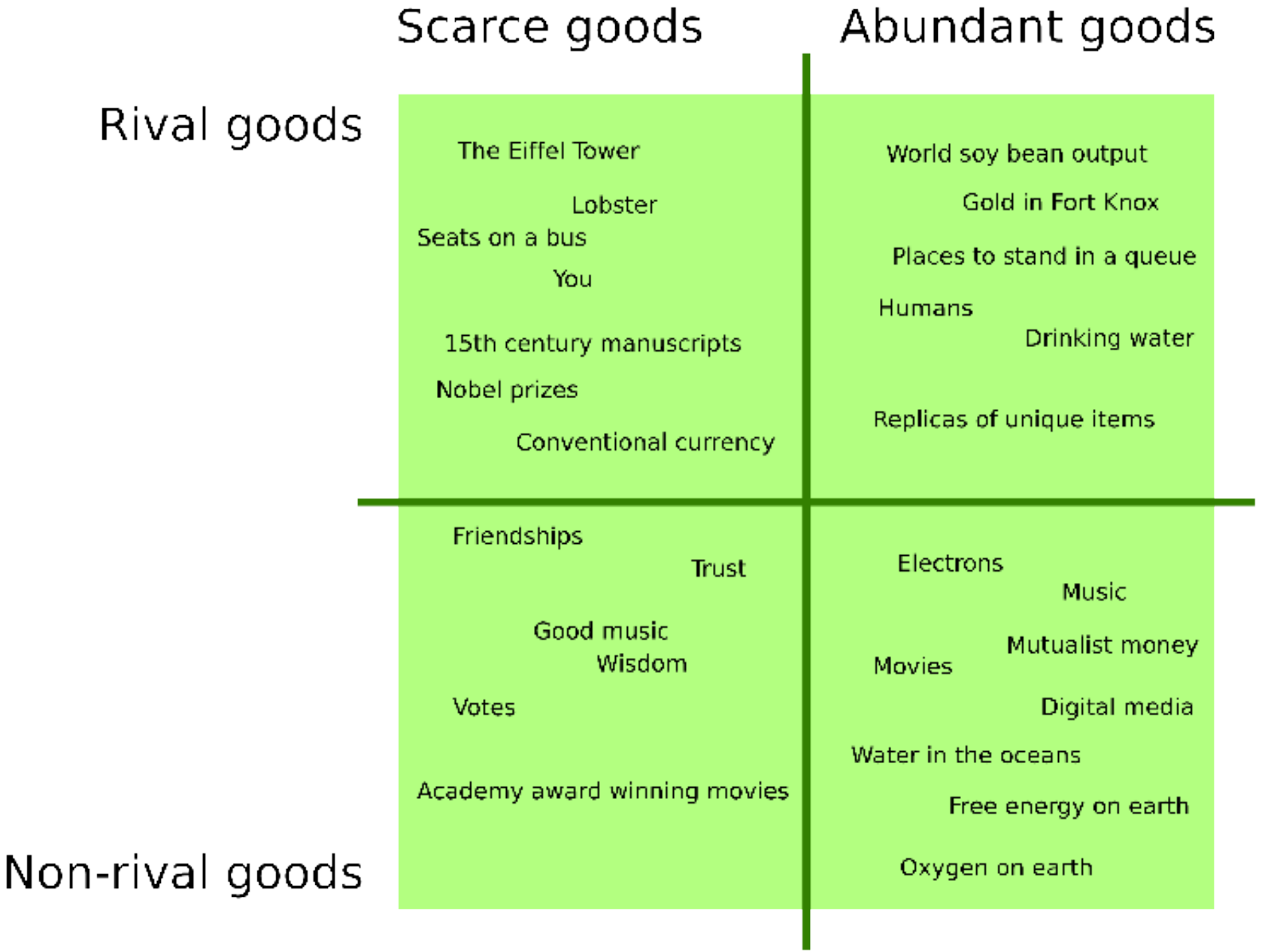
#define

Scarce is any thing or concept, the supply of which can be depleted with sensible use.

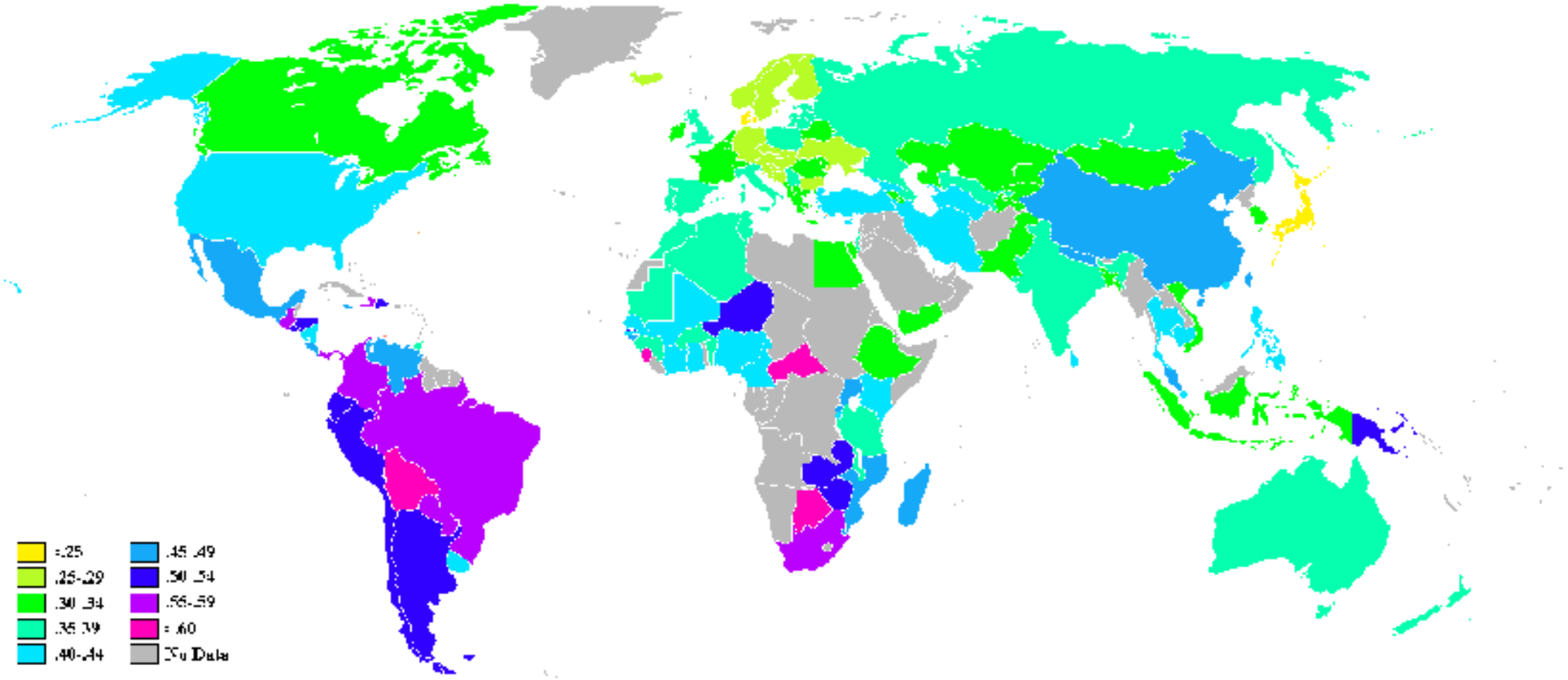
Abundant is anything not scarce.

#define

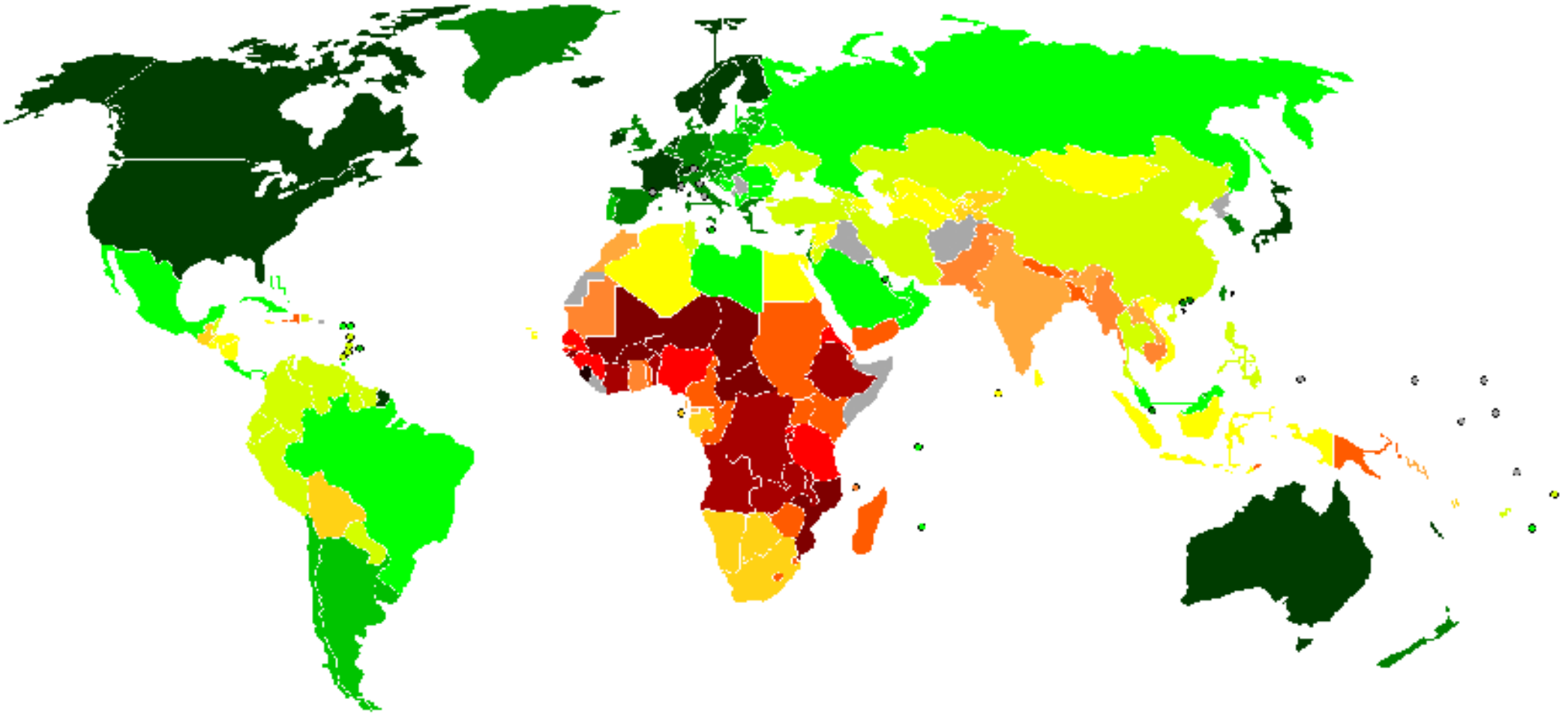
Rival is any thing or concept, the use of which precludes the use of the same by others.


Scarce goods
Abundant goods
Rival goods
Non-rival goods
The Eiffel Tower
Lobster
Seats on a bus
You
15th century manuscripts
Nobel prizes
Conventional currency
World soy bean output
Gold in Fort Knox
Places to stand in a queue
Humans
Drinking water
Replicas of unique items
Friendships
Trust
Good music
Wisdom
Votes
Academy award winning movies
Electrons
Music
Mutualist money
Movies
Digital media
Water in the oceans
Free energy on earth
Oxygen on earth

Gini coefficient



Human development Index



The story so far

- Scarcity of basic human requirements was made extinct by the industrial revolution.
- Scarcity is artificially maintained by faulty political and economic systems.

- More freedom from
- Less violence
- More education
- Less poverty
- More food
- Less censorship
- More freedom to

Social Change

- Consumerism is trashing our planet and making people miserable
- Economical underpinnings rely on continued subserviance
- The context of Malthus' and Hobbes' lies needs to be broken

Industry 2.0

- P2P design and small scale democracy
- A new paradigm for industrial production
- Probably won't change our society in a fundamental way, but it will force us to reconsider our assumptions
- Eliminating scarcity for non-exotic objects

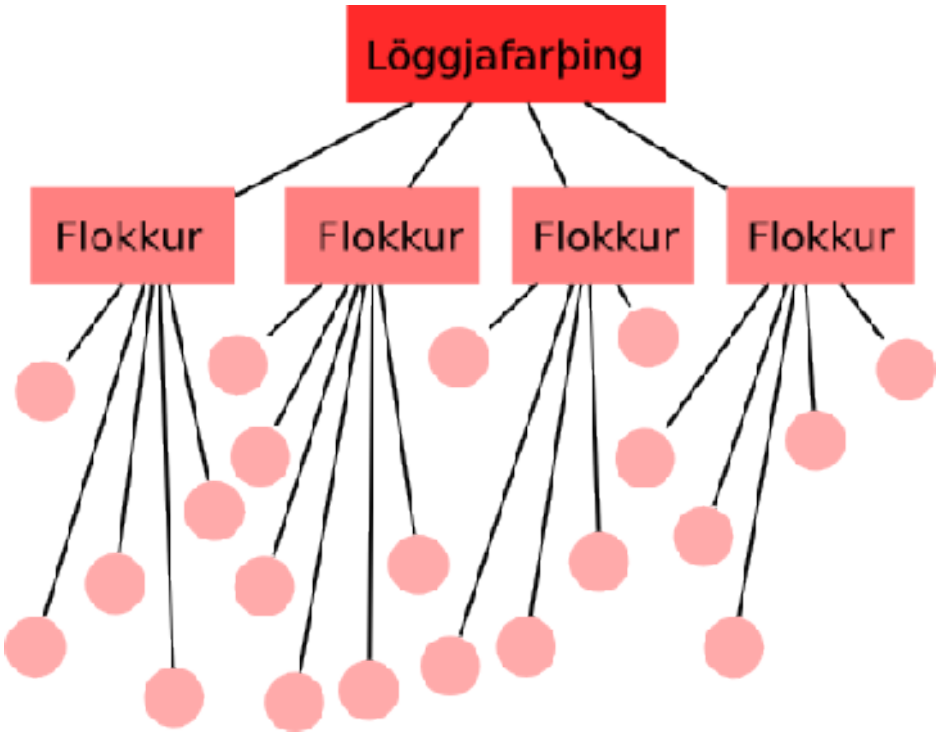
What is the Law?

- Social software project
  - software that runs on society
- Open Source
  - everybody can read it
- Public domain
  - the legal code is free and not under copyright
- Developed by:
  - Committee elected by users (in republics)
  - Malevolent dictators & his cronies (in dictatorships)

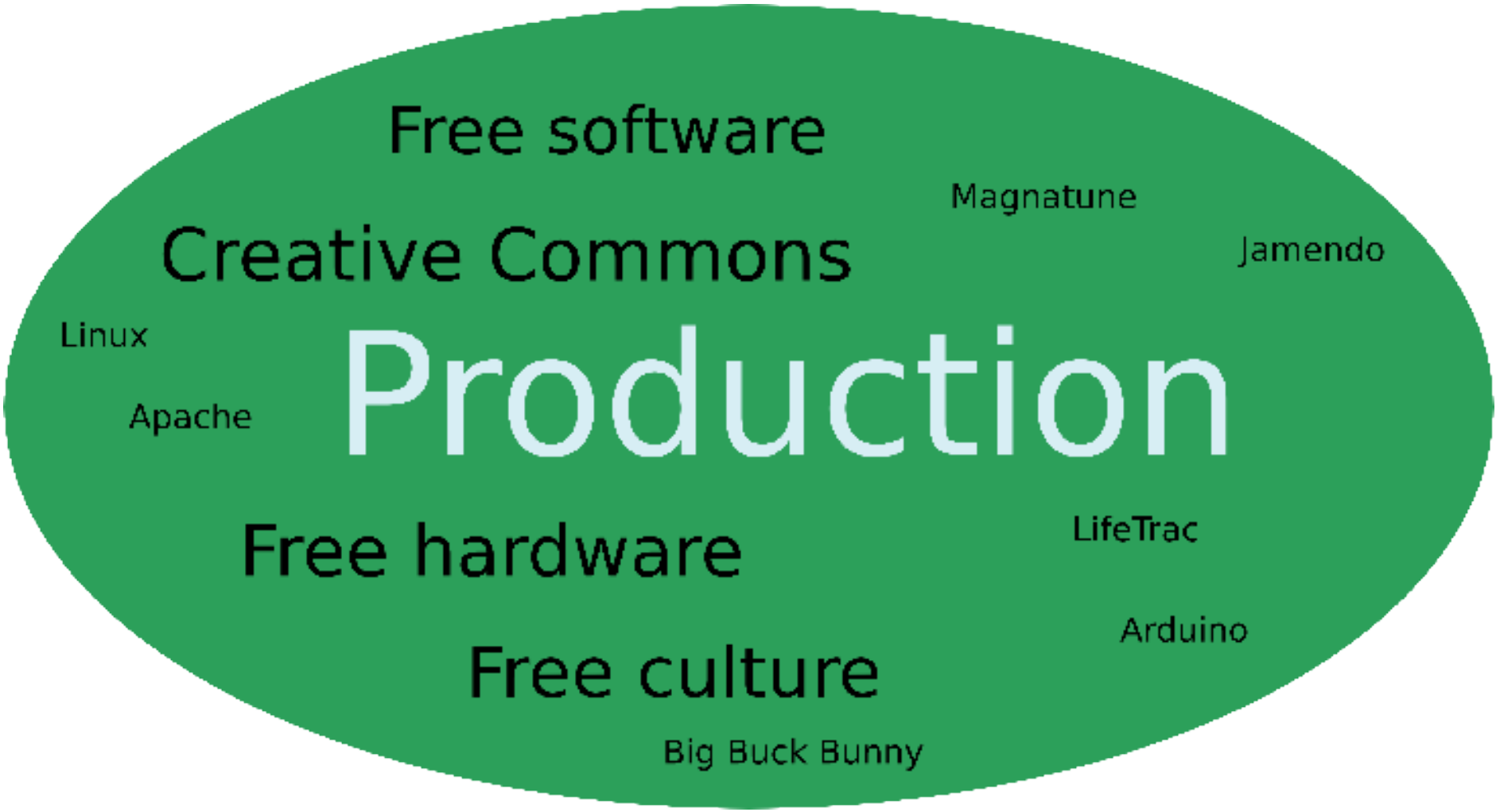
Self-modifying code?

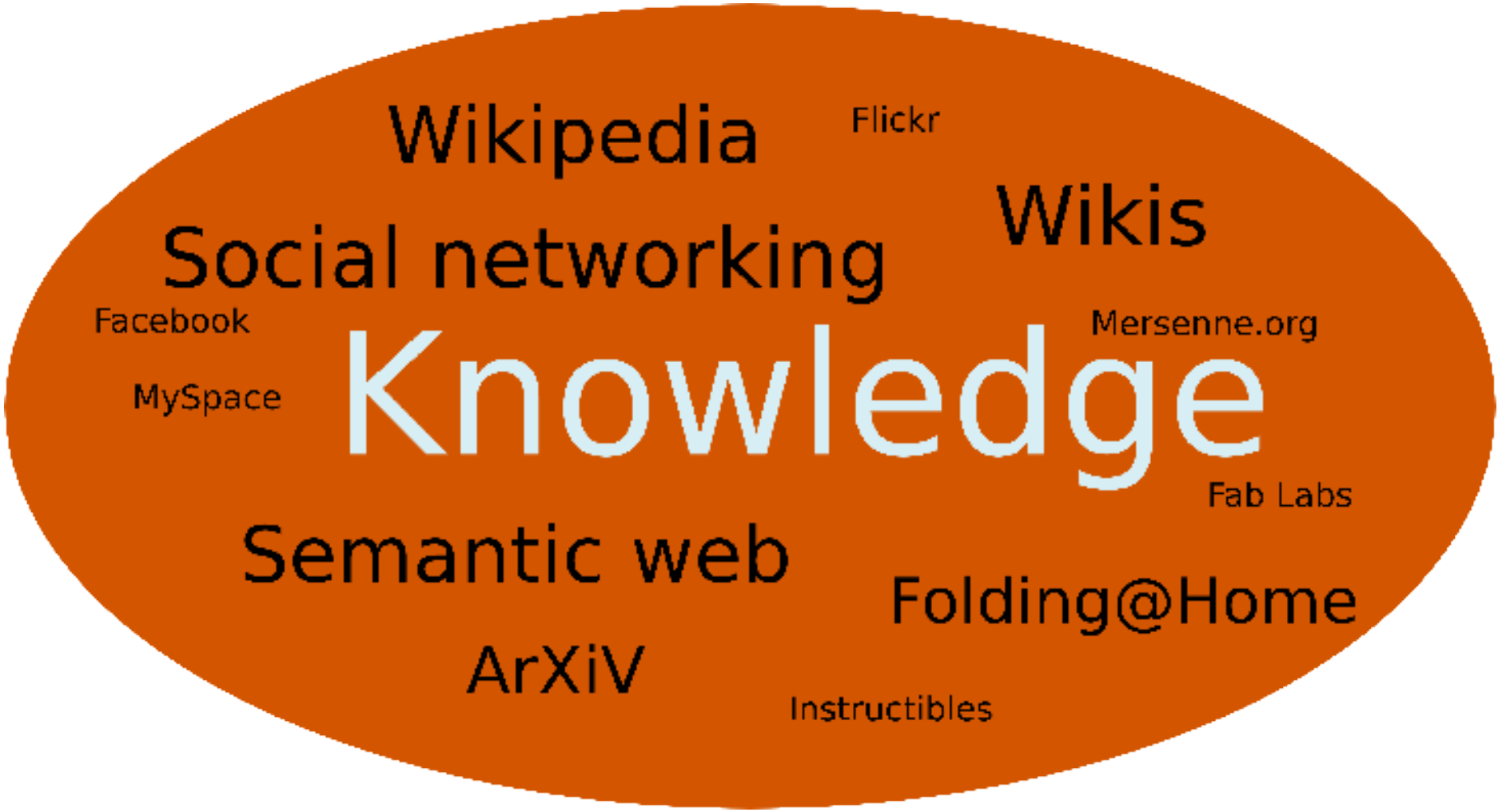
- Changing legal code is tricky, because society is running on it in real time.
  - Any changes that are checked in to the code base take effect immediately, and can render the system unusable.
- Peer review is done in real time, and most minor crashes are salvageable.

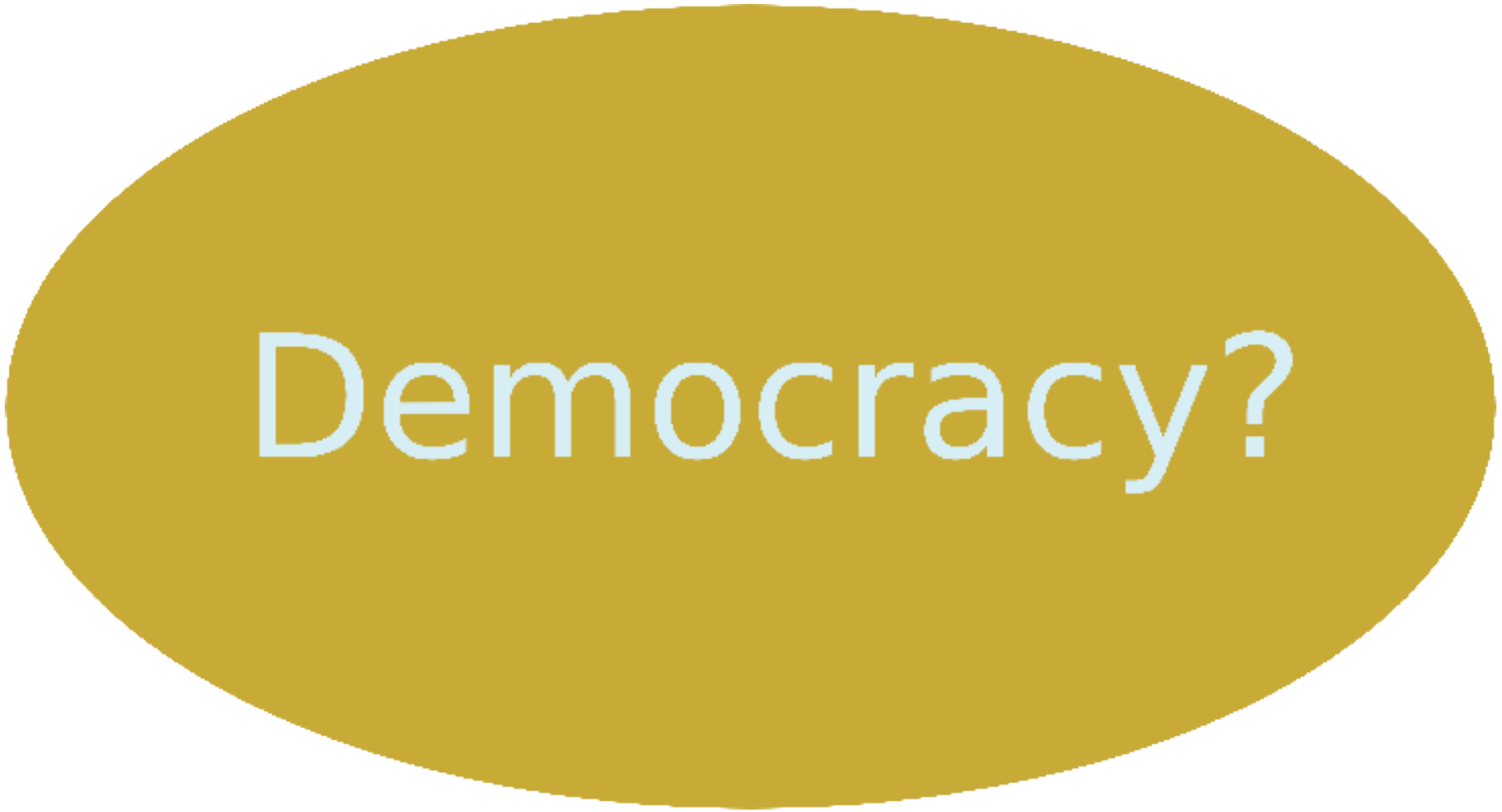
Modern “democracy”



Blog
Indymedia
Wikileaks
YouTube
Social links
Reddit
Wikinews
Mass media
RSS
Twiter
Ojuice
Podcasts
Technorati
Forums
Slashdot


Free software
Magnatune
Creative Commons
Jamendo
Linux
Production
Apache
Free hardware
LifeTrac
Arduino
Free culture
Big Buck Bunny


Wikipedia
Flickr
Wikis
Social networking
Facebook
Mersenne.org
Knowledge
MySpace
Fab Labs
Semantic web
Folding@Home
ArXiV
Instructibles

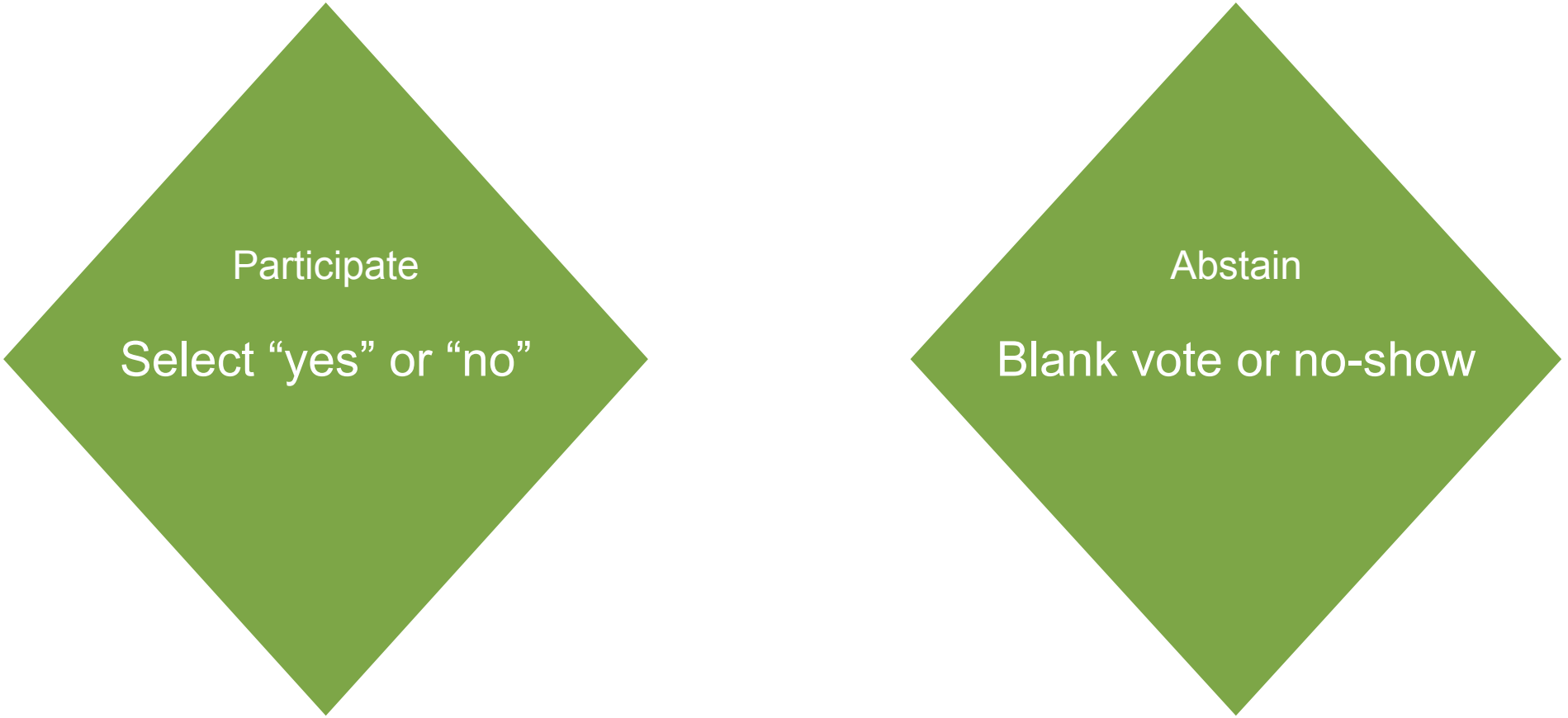

Democracy?

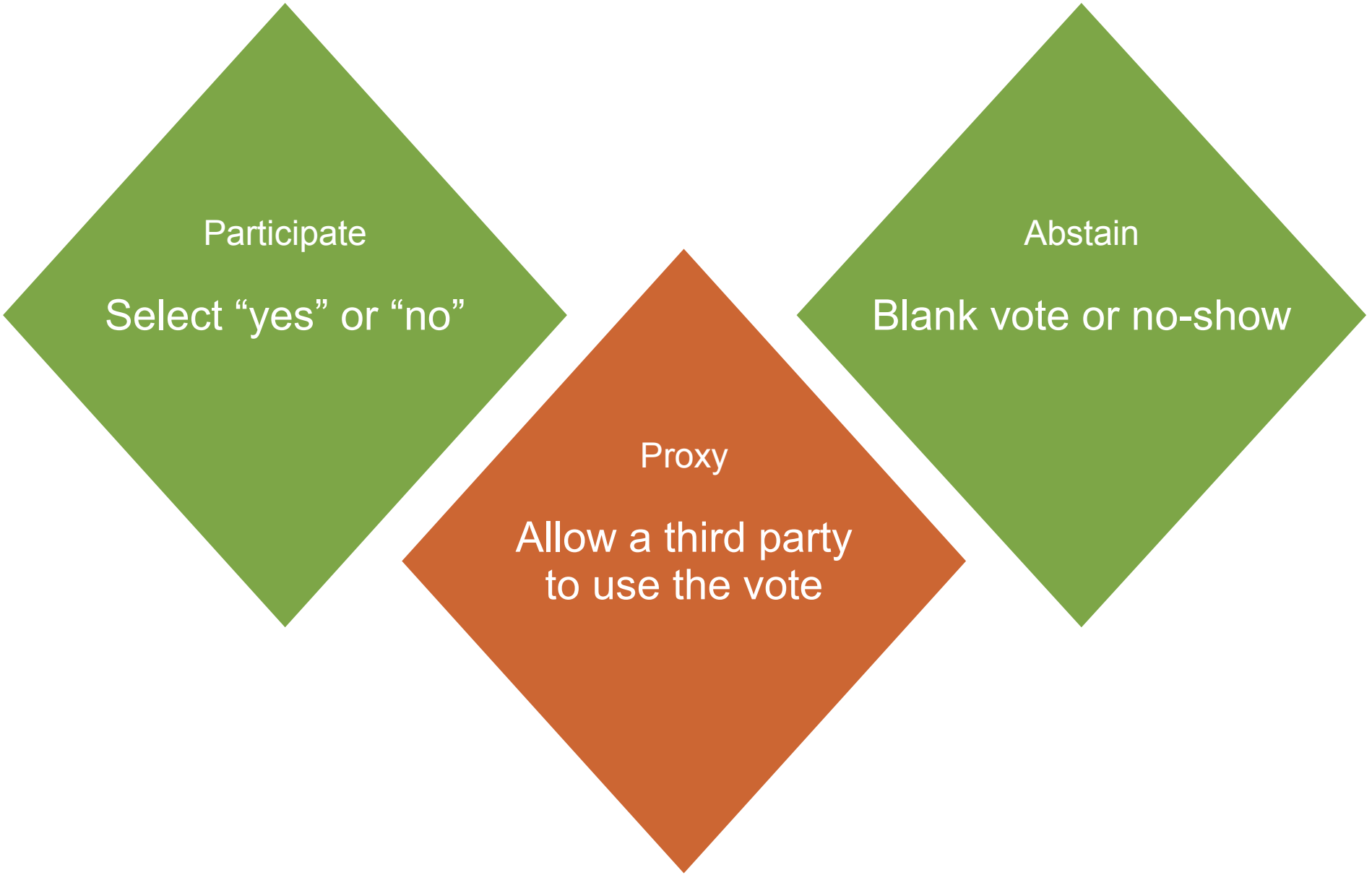
“Nice idea, but it doesn't work”

Nevermind Switzerland...

“People can't keep up with *every* issue”

... with the exception of Parliamentarians...


Participate
Select “yes” or “no”
Abstain
Blank vote or no-show


Participate
Select “yes” or “no”
Proxy
Allow a third party to use the vote
Abstain
Blank vote or no-show

Proxying

General

Categorical

Per issue

Proxying can happen in three different ways

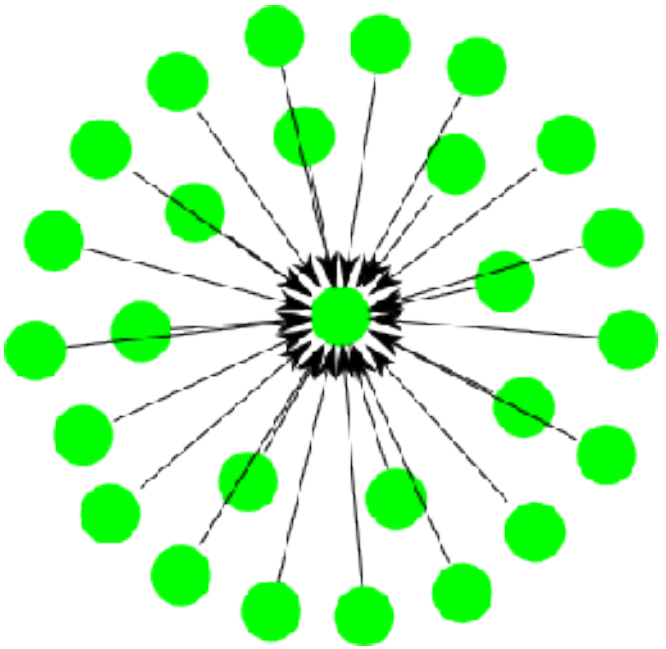
- General (“I'm apolitical, but I trust you.”)
- Categorical (“I know nothing of agriculture, but I trust you.”)
- Per issue (“I have no opinion on this, but I trust you.”)

All forms of government ever seen are possible **states** in this system

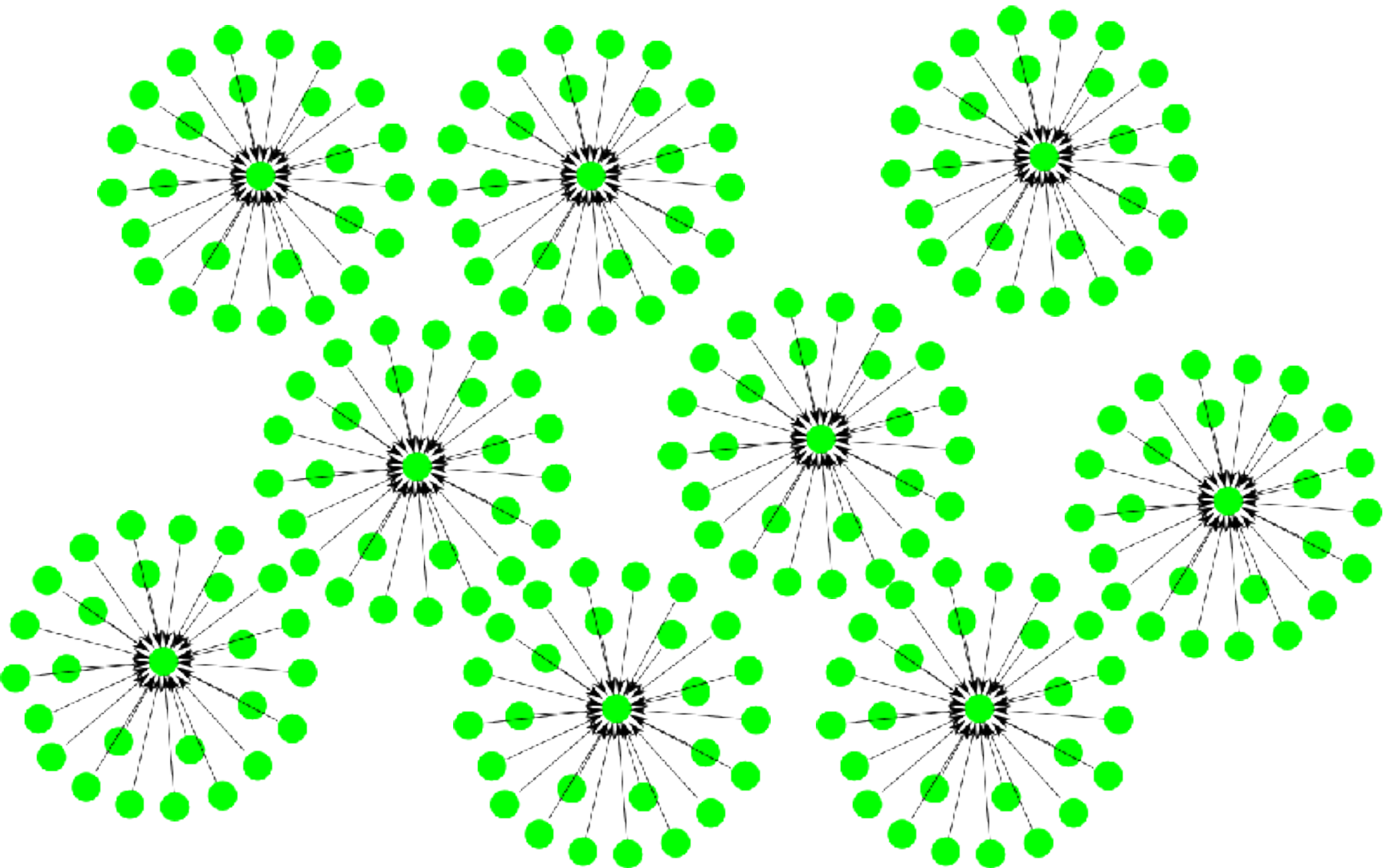
- And a plethora of new (previously unthinkable) states become available.

- One state for every concievable set of proxies.

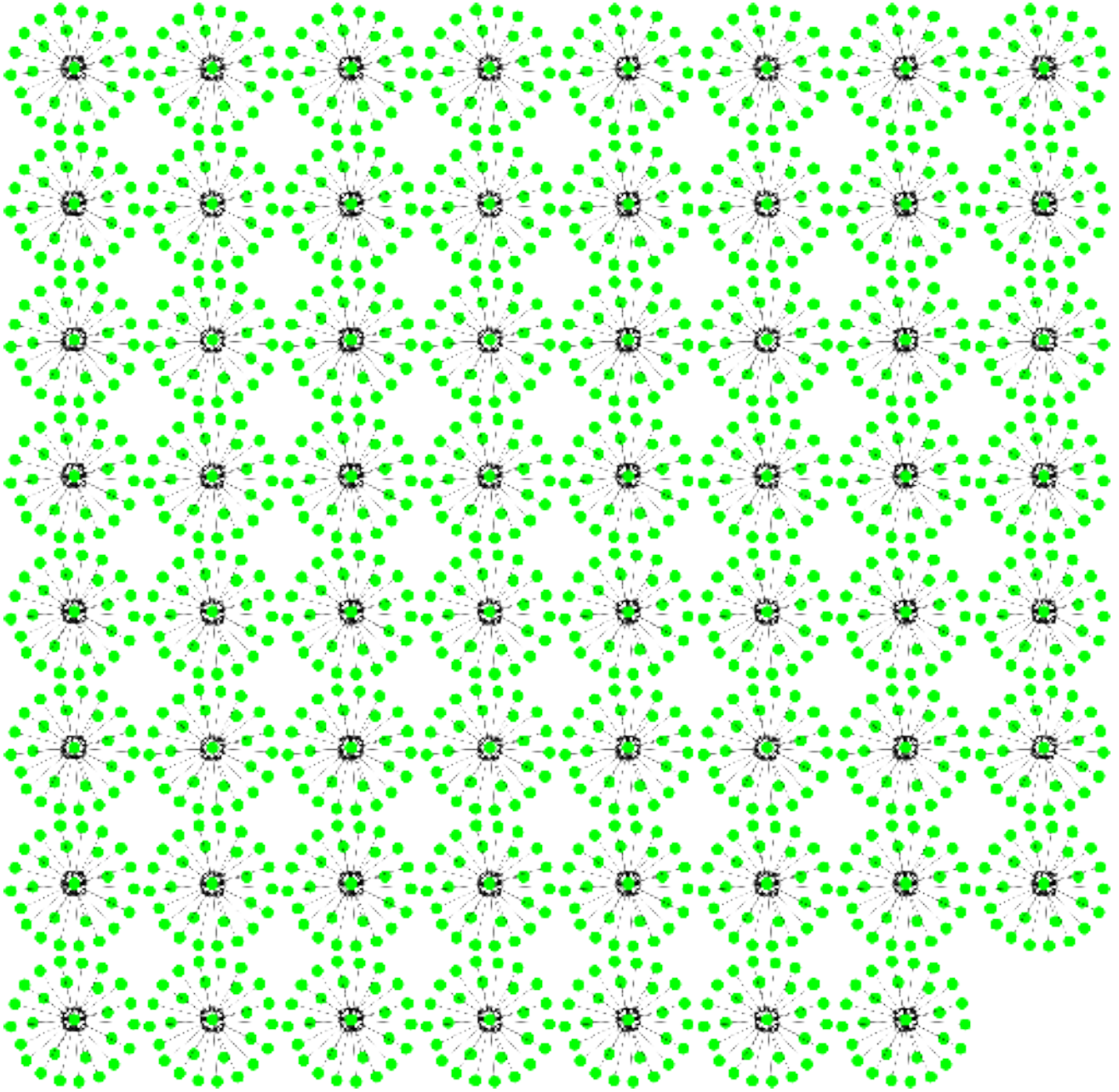
Dictatorship



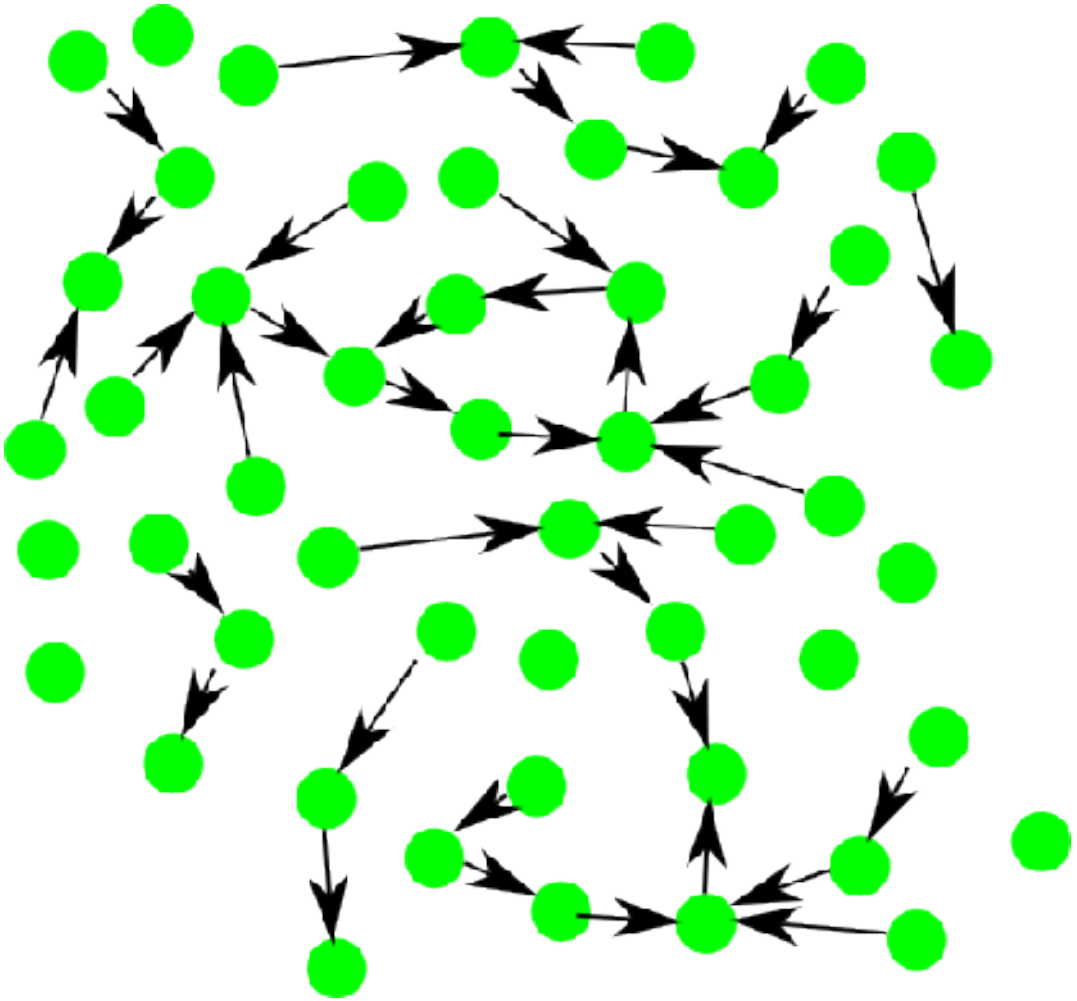
Representative democracy

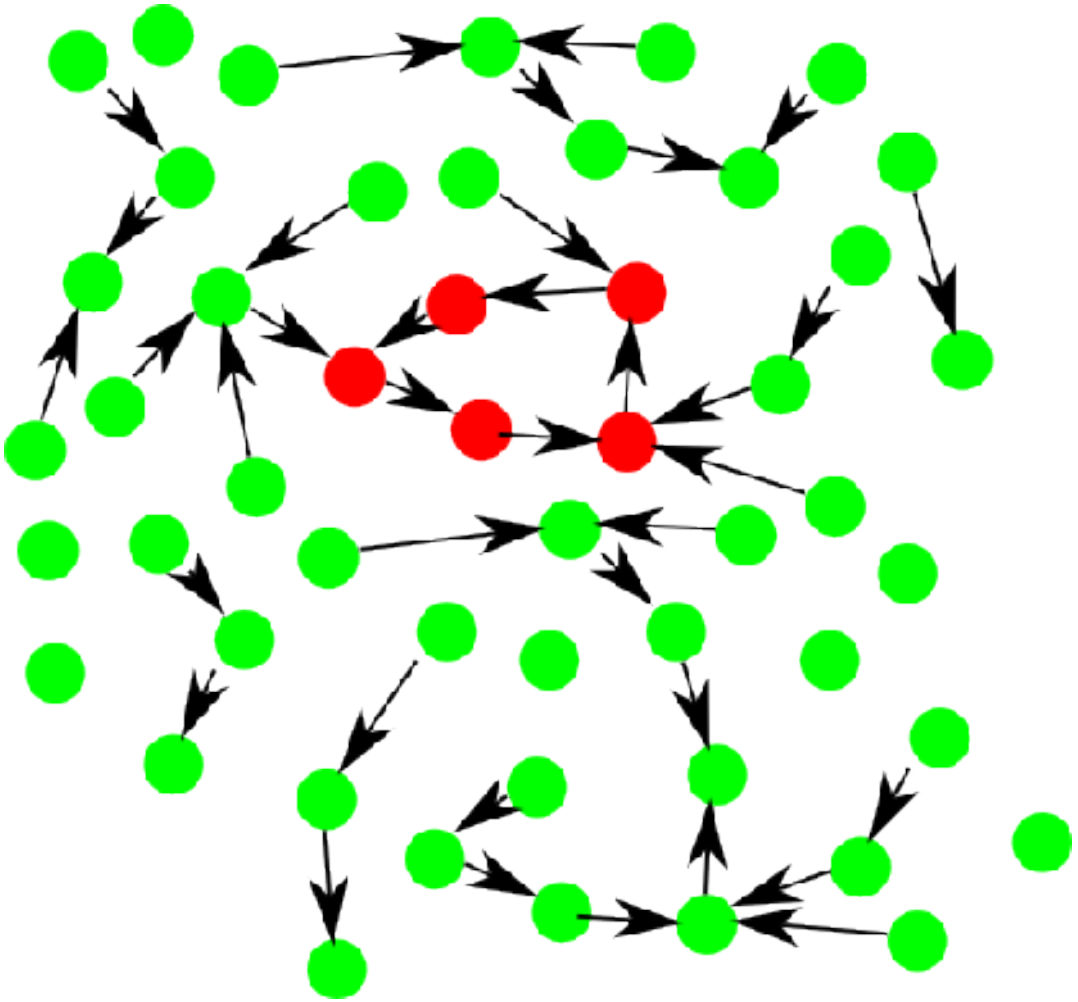


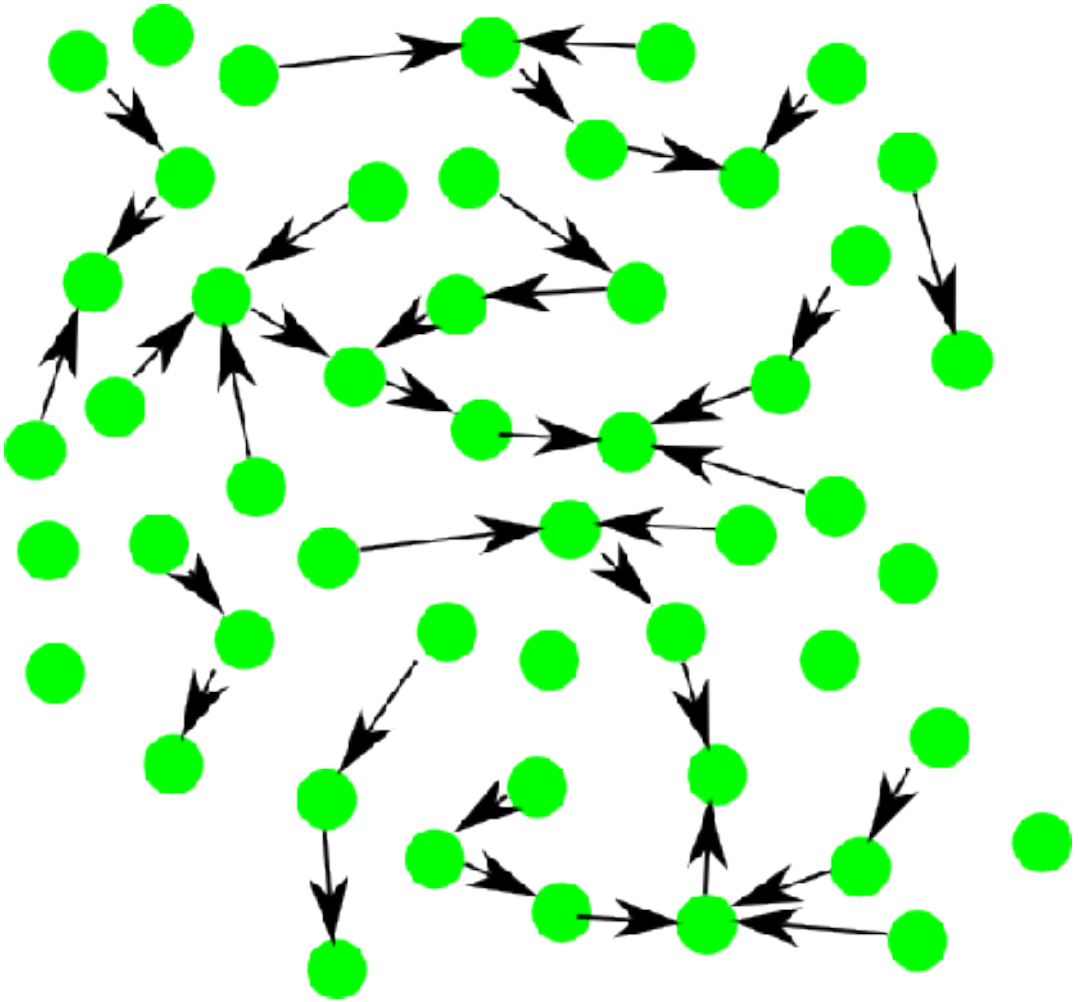
Case study: Iceland

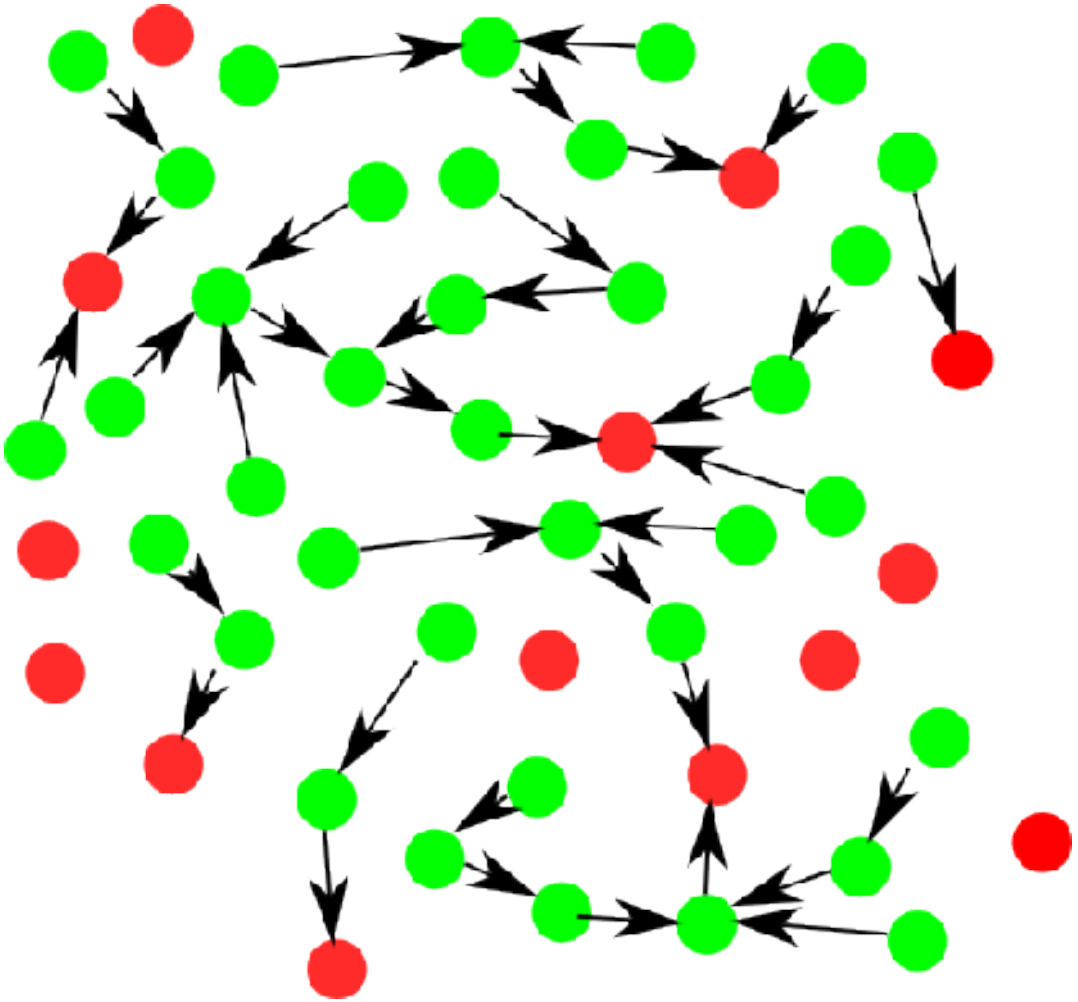


What about this?









Changing your mind

- To change one's mind is *human*
  - Modern democratic systems don't assume it's possible to change one's mind
  - In fact, it's not technically possible!
  - But public key crypto makes it *easy*
- By allowing people to change their minds, to follow their convictions irrespective of instant, we get lots of free features...

#1

No longer can opinions be forced on people.

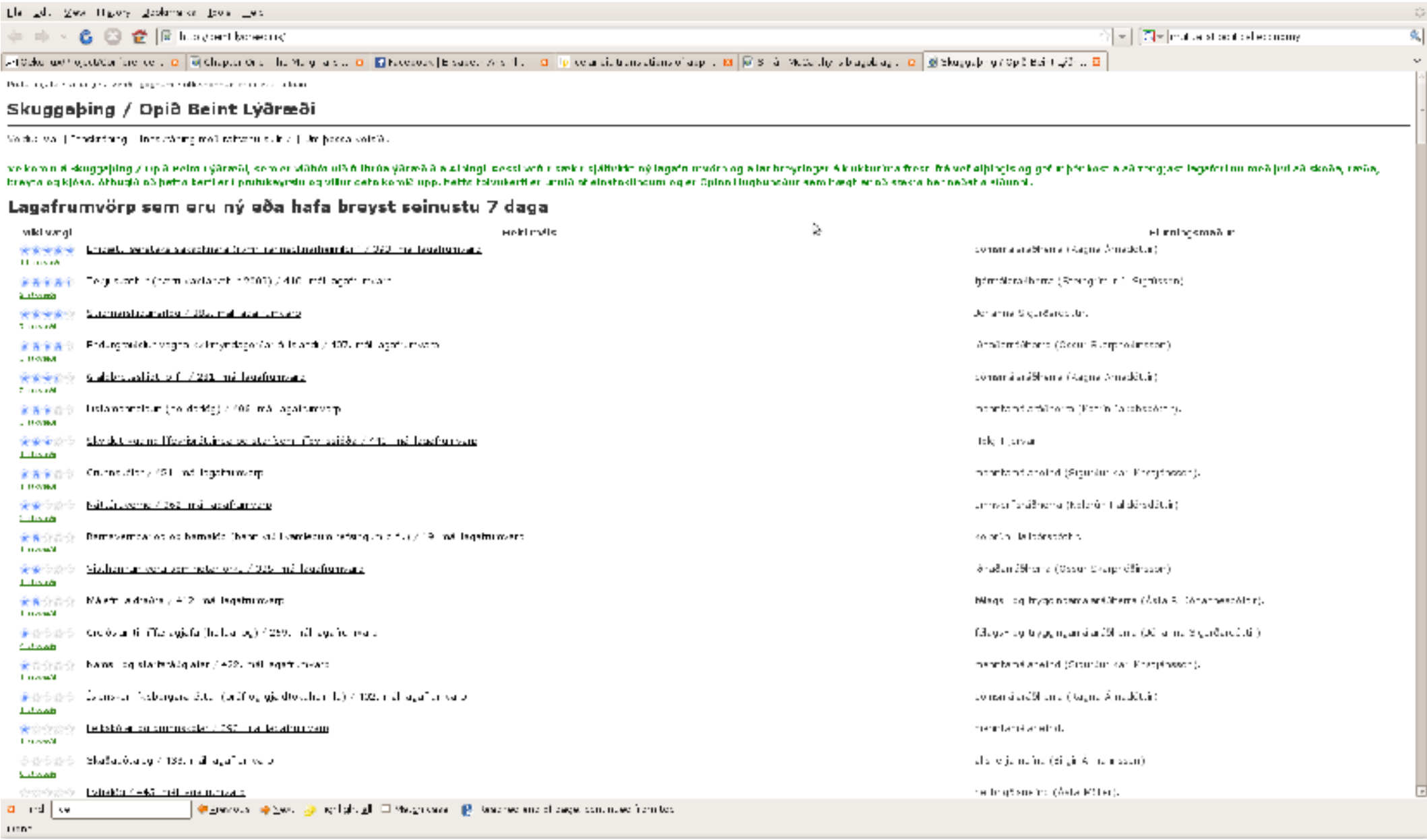
#2

Changes in trust lead to changes in structure

#3

Democracy evolves over time

http://direct.democracy.is



Who gets to make motions?

Why not everybody?

Who gets to make motions?

- Anybody can raise a motion
  - The legal code becomes like a Wiki where the “official version” is decided by vote
- A free market of motions – everybody can participate.
- Popularity roundoff: good motions bubble up, poor ones recieve less attention.

How long to motions stay open?

Why put arbitrary limits?

How long do motions stay open?

- Motions become law when they have enough support. (>50%?)
- Laws stop being law when they lose support. (<50%?)
  - A dampening rule can be put in place to ensure that laws don't fluctuate in and out of existence.
  - This is ***very*** unlikely, and grows increasingly unlikely as the society grows.
  - Polarization on issues gives hints as to larger problems in the society

Who can vote?

How about everybody who's *alive*?

Who can vote?

- We can discuss at length whether or not children have a right to have opinions...

- More importantly: votes of the deceased stop counting.

Living law

- The oldest laws currently in force in Iceland are from 1275.
  - No living Icelander has agreed to this law
  - A recent “poll” suggested that most people think it's an absurd piece of legal code
  - And most people simply don't know what the law says

More responsive society

- It is important for plutocrats and bureaucrats that most people don't understand the law, much less know what the law is.
- Direct democracy means that people *must* be well informed about what the laws are
  - And maybe are more willing to obide by them?

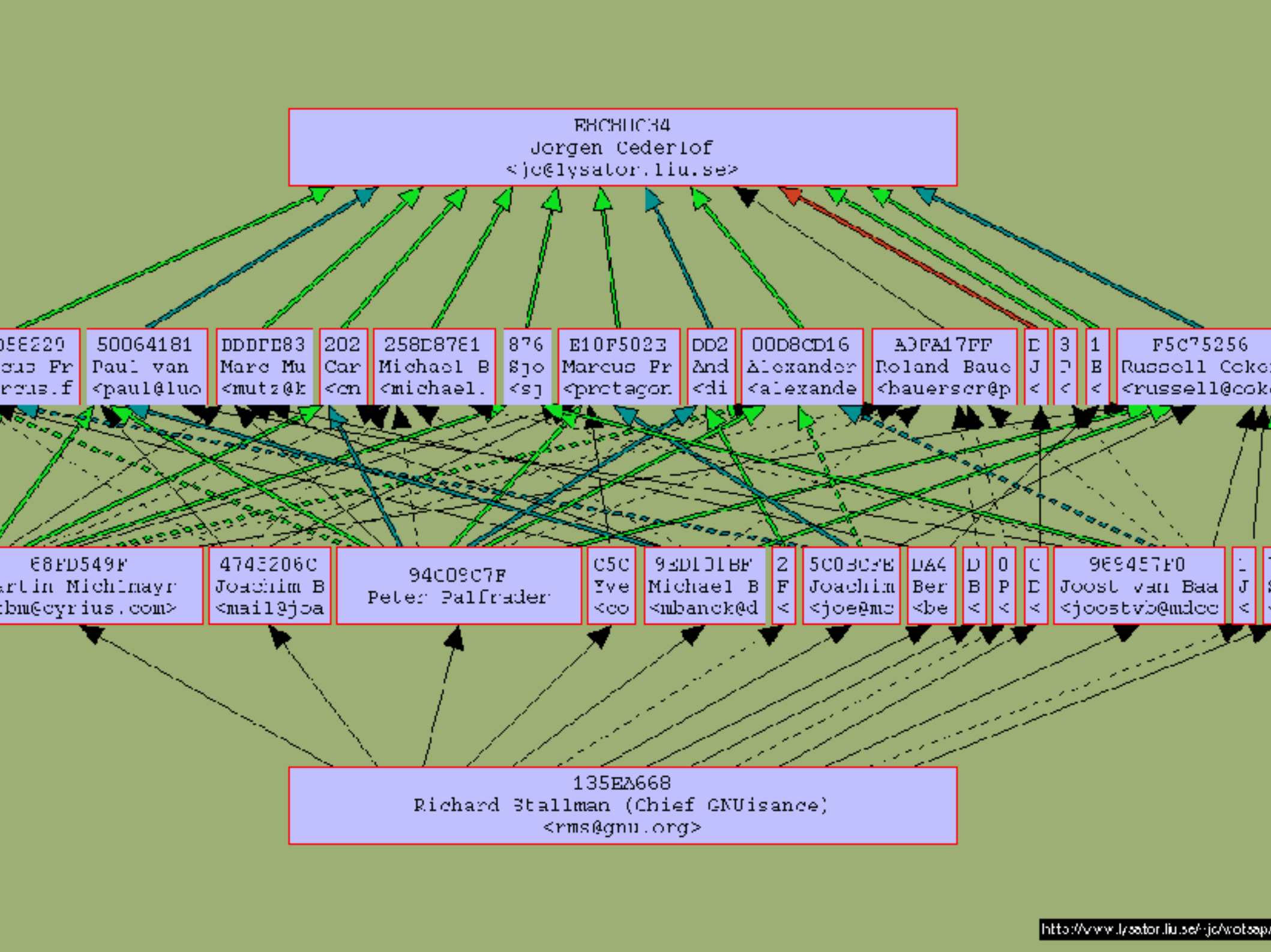
Fork motions

- If significant disagreement exists on a matter, demographic distribution might suggest forking a good idea.
  - Different geographical regions completely polarized
  - Different SIGs wanting different legal code
  - Microstates emergent, possibly franchises.

Money?

How do we democratize money?

Turns out, it's easy



Jorgen Cederlof
<jc@lysator.liu.se>
50064181
Paul van
<paul@luo
DDDFE83
Marc Mu
<mutz@k
202
Car
<cn
258D8781
Michael B
<michael.
876
Sjo
<sj
E10F502E
Marcus Fr
<protagon
DD2
And
<di
00D8CD16
Alexander
<alexande
A9FA17FF
Roland Baue
<bauerscr@p
F5C75256
Russell Coke
<russell@cok
68FD549F
Joachim B
<mail@joa
94C09C7F
Peter Palfrader
C5C
Eve
<co
Michael B
<mbanck@d
Joachim
<joe@mc
DA4
Ber
<be
Joost van Baa
<joostvb@mdcc
135EA668
Richard Stallman (Chief GNUisance)
<rms@gnu.org>
http://www.lysator.liu.se/~jc/wotsap/

Money has a few features

1. Geographically defined

Money has a few features

2. Money is created from nothing

Money has a few features

3. It is created through loans

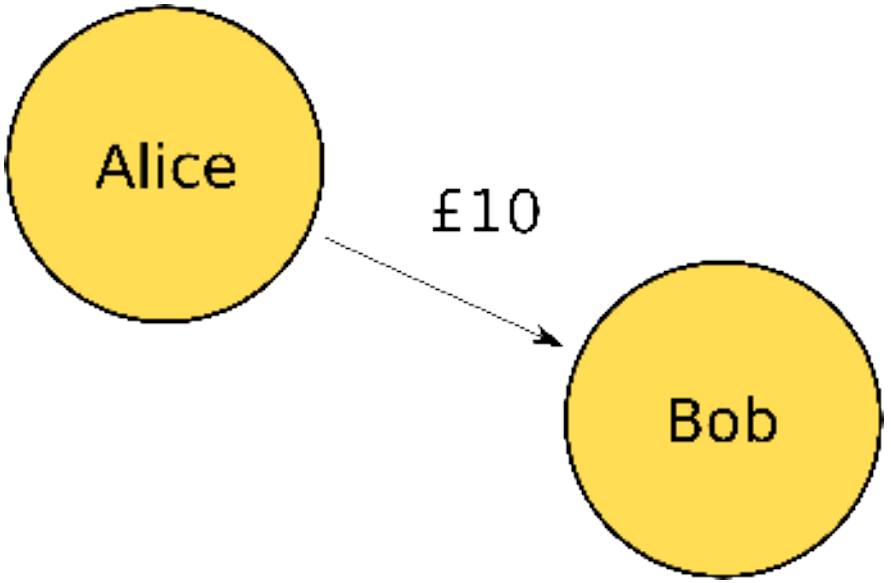
Money has a few features

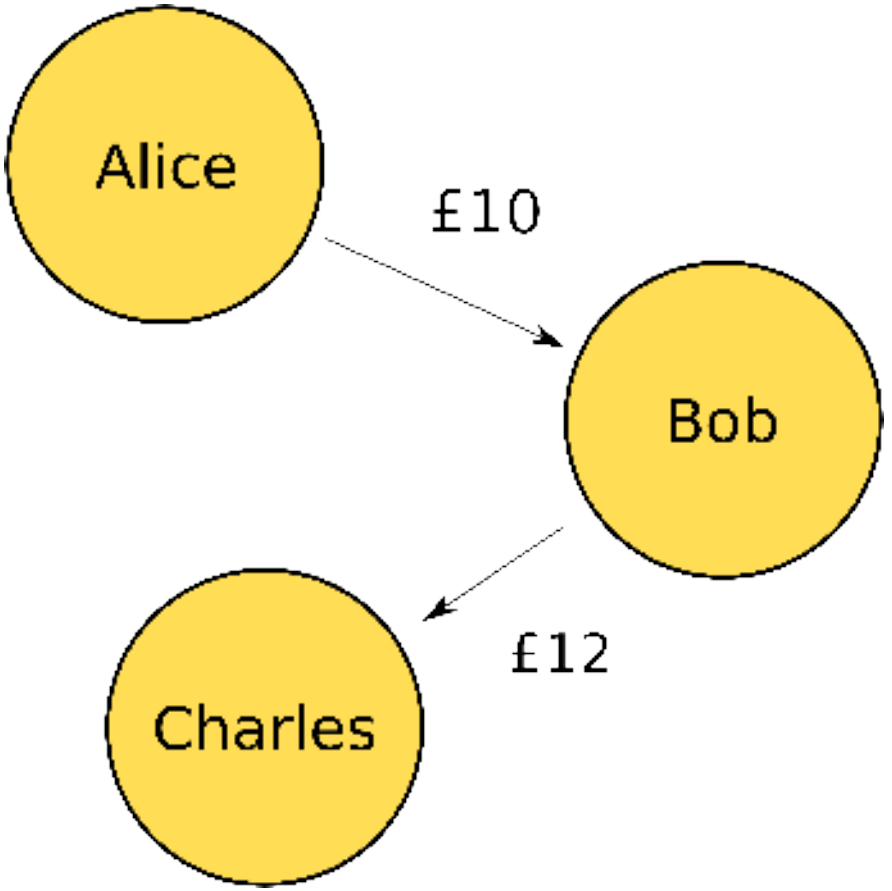
4. Interest is payed on debt

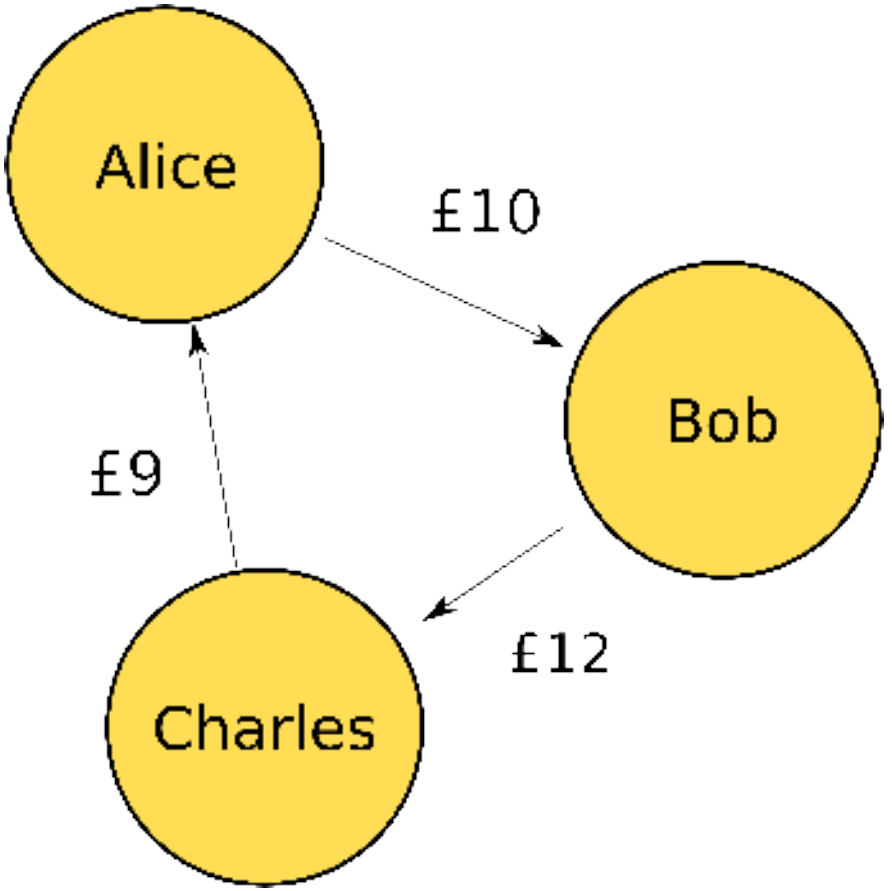
Source: *The Future of Money*, Bernard Liataer

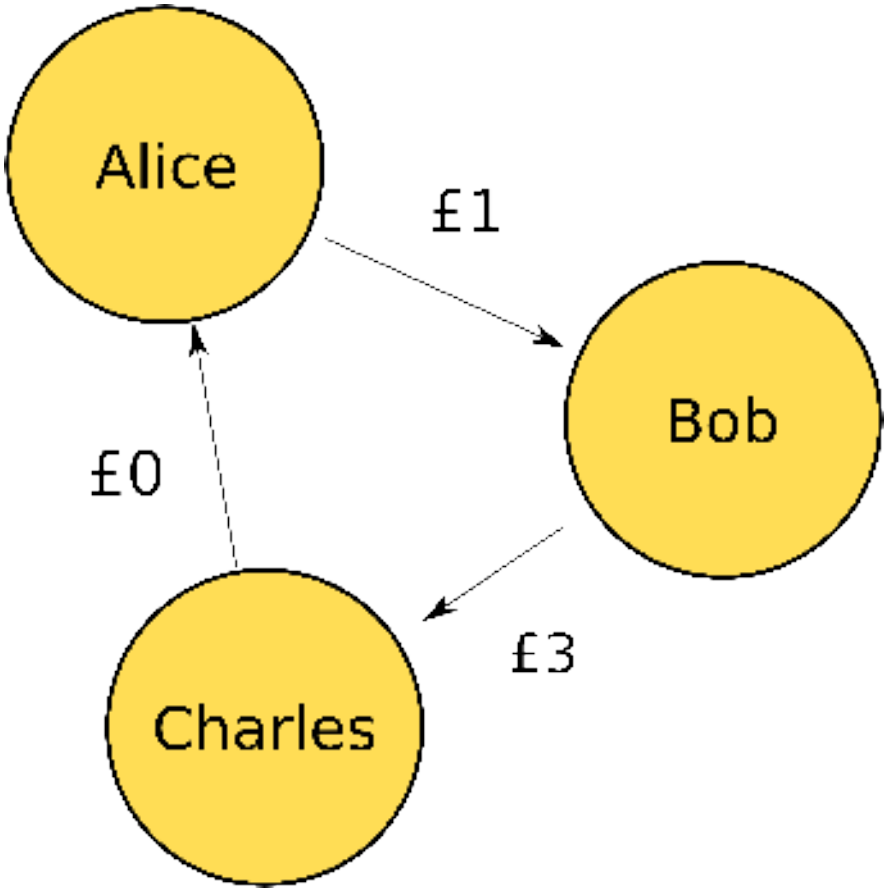
What happens if we change that?

How about this...


Alice
£10
Bob

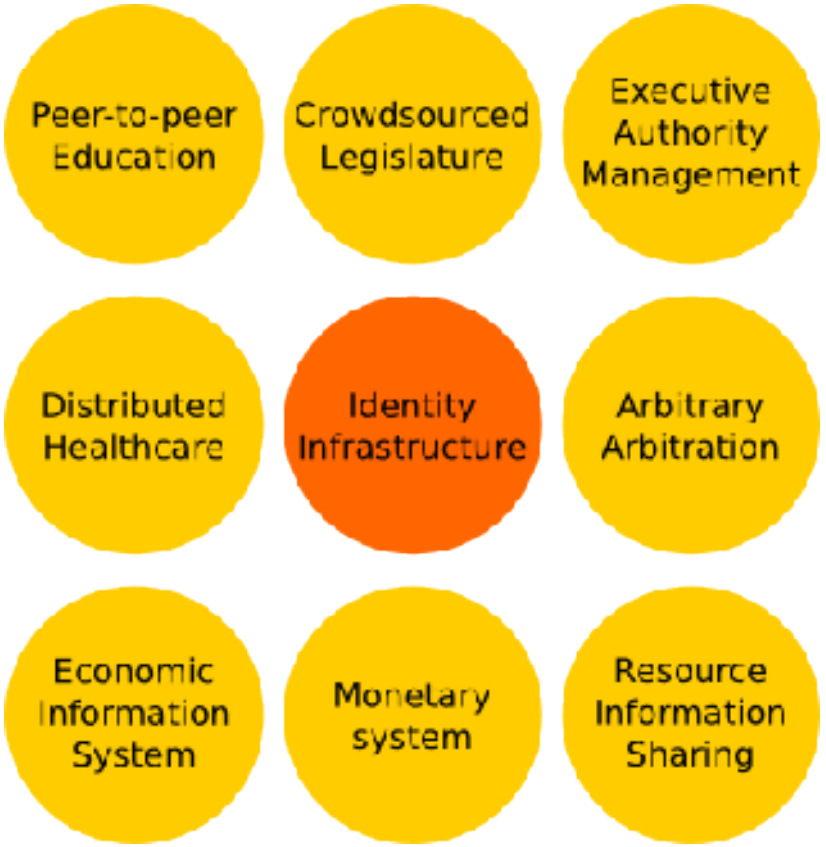

Alice
£10
Bob
£12
Charles


Alice
£10
Bob
£9
£12
Charles


Alice
£1
Bob
£0
£3
Charles

So how does this work?

I'm going to let you in on a little secret


Peer-to-peer Education
Crowdsourced Legislature
Executive Authority Management
Distributed Healthcare
Identity Infrastructure
Arbitrary Arbitration
Economic Information System
Monetary system
Resource Information Sharing

(A few books)

- Post-Scarcity Anarchism by Murray Bookchin
- The Second Industrial Divide by Michael Fiore &al
- The Wealth of Networks by Yochaï Benkler
- Democratizing Innovation by Eric von Hippel
- Ephermalization by R. Buckminster Fuller

- www.globalswadeshi.net
- www.openfarmtech.org