

Organizing, Mutual Aid, and Activism

May 1, 2025

See [If not now, when?](#) for the overall context

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Welcome! A few quick reminders

- We are dedicated to providing a positive, inclusive, and harassment-free experience for everyone.
- No racism, ableism (including mental health shaming and stigmatization), sexism, microaggressions, gaslighting, sea-lioning, trolling, bullying, calling group members names, personal attack or harassment are allowed.
- We're using a riseup pad for notes. Please help if you can!

Goals

Short-term goals for this loose working group

- Prioritize some needs for key organizing, mutual aid, and activism use cases
- Present to partners incentivized to make progress

Even shorter term goals for this meeting:

- Share (and get feedback on) progress to date on prioritizing needs
- Refine and calibrate scope and context for work
- Prepare for meetings with possible tech partners
- Identify short list of short-term areas to focus on
- Decide on (initial) communications strategy for ongoing work

Agenda

- High level needs
- Tech and social stack
- Projects and organizations to partner with
- Priorities and opportunities
- Organization and communication going forward
- Key takeaways, action items, and next steps

A pluriverse: multiple social networks

Need to think about operating in different kinds of spaces

- Friendly(ish) platforms and software we (mostly) control
 - Can provide more safety and faster tech/social improvement here – but lower reach
- Contested terrain
- Hostile platforms and software, controlled by and/or supporting fascists, eugencists, genocide perpetrators, white supremacists, etc
 - The technology and policies are stacked against us
 - It's where most people are today, so we need to operate there

Apps, bridges, and social technologies span networks

- Apps/bridges require API access
 - May be limited and tracked – especially on hostile platforms
- “Low tech” / no-tech approaches can more flexible although less efficient
 - cut-and-pasting, sending a link to a friend, list of accounts to block in a file, taking notes on paper, in-person discussions

Social networks are only part of a bigger system

Tech stack

secure messaging, collaborative editing, search, storage, video + audio streaming, hosting, etc

Social stack

governance, norms, economic sustainability, onboarding, training, non-extractive collective/coop-based ecosystem ...

The tech and social stacks we use for this project and projects we partner with are prototype implementations with current technologies

And we also want to catalyze next-generation implementations!

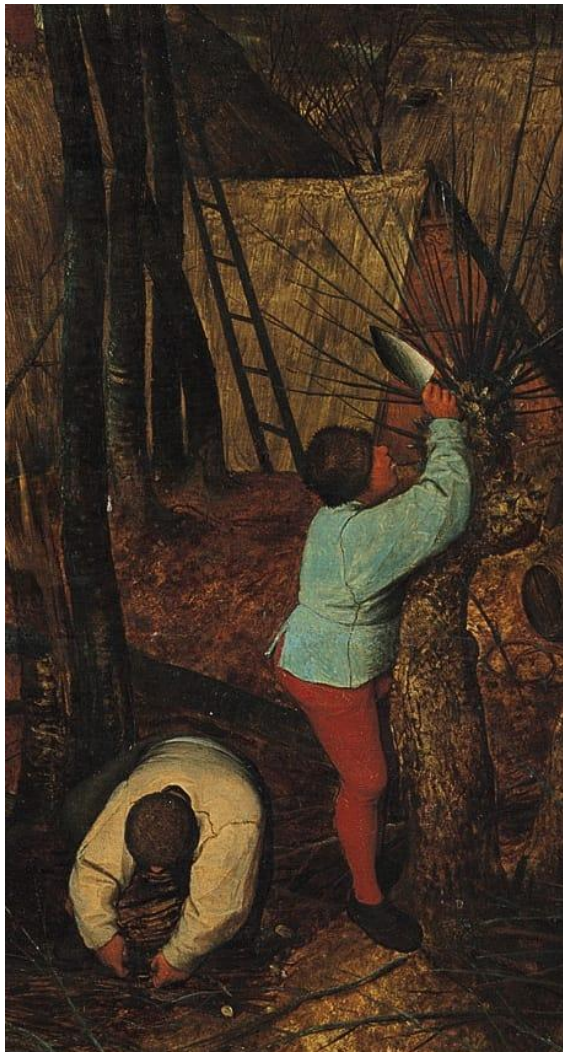
High level use cases

- Genocide prevention in multiple languages
- Collective sense-making
- Safety and community defense – online, and helping in the physical world
- Mutual Aid
- Anti-fascist, anti-racist, pro-LGBTQIA2S+ organizing spaces
- Influencing broader narratives
- Amplifying public actions, events, media coverage, announcements, etc
- Developing, refining, and communicating strategy, plans, and priorities
- Inviting, recruiting, and onboarding new people (while remaining conscious of the risks of infiltration)
- Working in coalitions
- Disaster response
- Legislative and electoral activism
- Resisting authoritarian governments
- Finding community, support, respite, and joy

Genocide prevention in multiple languages

Background: *What do Anti-Genocide Activists Need from Social Media Platforms?*

- “Friendly” platforms don’t currently do a great job at these (although better than hostile platforms). Where are short term opportunities?
- For hostile platforms, how can bridging and social technologies help?
- Some of the needs require regulation; enough pressure on platforms might help with others. So traditional political activism is also in scope for these needs



Collective sense-making

“At [Unbreaking](#), we’ll be spending the foreseeable future dredging up the knowledge from which we can build a durable and coherent sense of what is happening to us—collectively, and at scale.”

– Erin Kissane in [The work at hand](#)

Some clear overlaps with Anti-Genocide needs

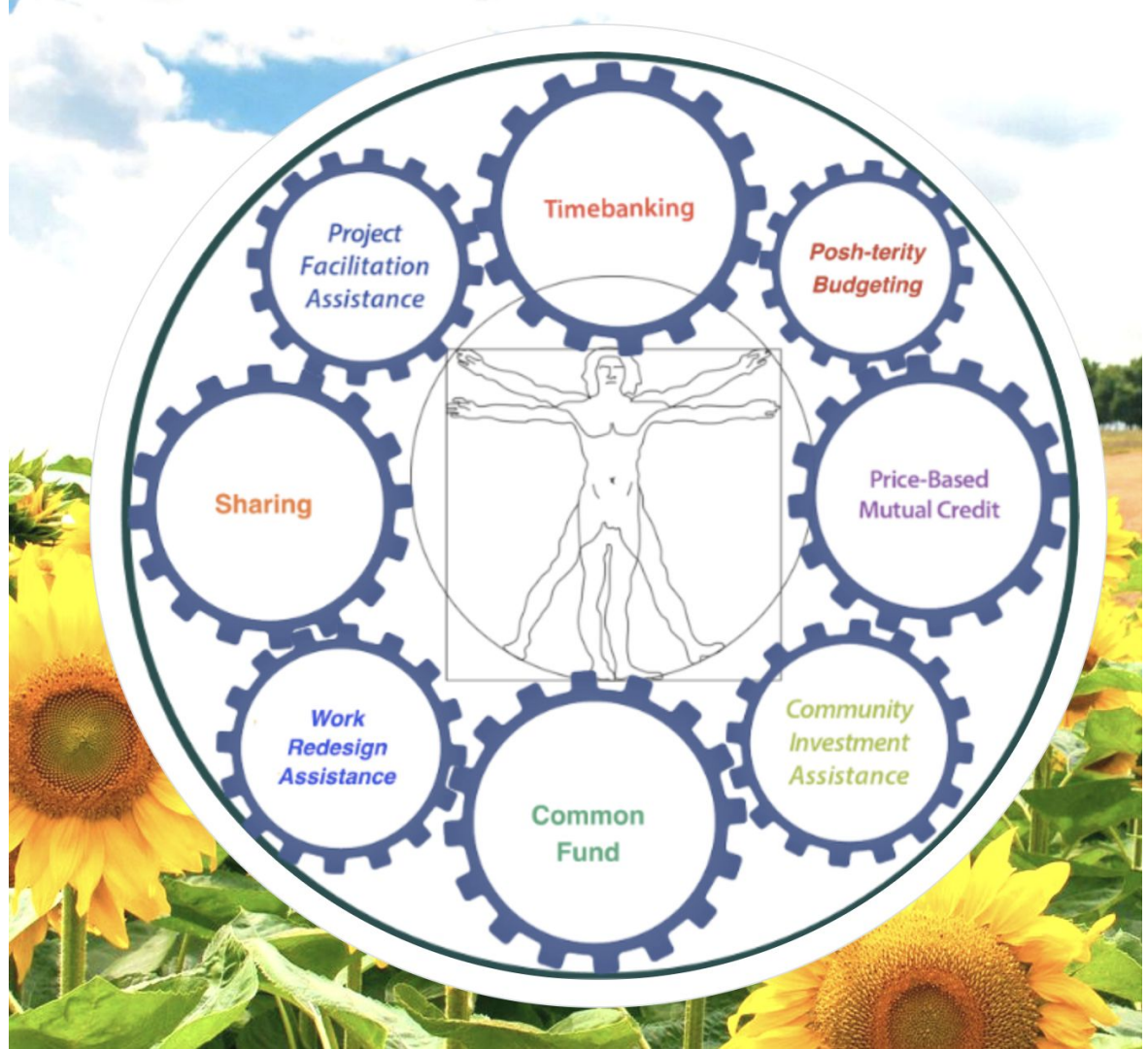
- Holding important information for longer periods so it doesn’t get lost into the abyss
- Widely disseminating on commercial social networks
- Tactical but useful: connections to tools like Canva for infographics and easy scheduling of content (e.g. Canva)

Safety and community defense

- “Need safety. Not to deal with trolls 24 hours and being in a bad mood. A safe online space.”
- Deplatforming
 - On hostile platforms, requires public pressure (and even then is unlikely)
 - On friendly platforms (and friendly areas of contested platforms), moderation services, blocklists, defederation, instance catalogs etc are powerful tools, but insufficient
- Quick intervention mechanism.
- Risk escalation level
- Providing resources and training for people to protect themselves

Mutual Aid

From
mutualaidnetworks.org



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To do

- Expand high-level use cases into more detailed needs
- Include social aspects as well as technology
- Group common needs
- Identify shared building blocks
- Expand into more specific requirements

Developing / refining / communicating strategies (etc)

- Scheduling, defining agendas for, taking and communicating notes for meetings
- Collaboratively developing, reviewing, getting feedback on, and editing documents (etc) explaining proposed and/or agreed on strategy, plans, priorities
- Discussions and decision-making
- Communicating potential and/or agreed on strategies, plans, and priorities to the "core team" (presumed to be familiar with the context), broader network, people from other organizations, media, general public, etc.
- Threat modeling
- Tracking action items and other project management

Tech stack for developing, refining, and communicating strategy, plans, and priorities

- Scheduling, defining agendas for, taking and communicating notes for meetings: [when2meet](#), [audio/video room scheduling](#), [collaborative editing/reviewing of slides and notes](#), [video platform](#), [group and 1-1 communications](#)
- Collaboratively developing, reviewing, getting feedback on, and editing documents (etc) explaining proposed and/or agreed on strategy, plans, priorities: [collaborative editing](#), [group and 1-1 communications](#), [surveys](#)
- Discussions and decision-making: [group and 1-1 communications](#), [loomio?](#)
- Communicating potential and/or agreed on strategies, plans, and priorities: [group and 1-1 communications](#), [public communications](#)
- Threat modeling: [???](#) [collaborative editing](#), I guess
- Tracking action items and other project management: [project management](#), [collaborative editing as a fallback](#)

Social aspects of developing, refining, and communicating strategy, plans, and priorities

- Scheduling, defining agendas for, taking and communicating notes for meetings: **who's at the table? who gets to speak? who takes/edits notes?**
- Collaboratively developing, reviewing, getting feedback on, and editing documents (etc) explaining proposed and/or agreed on strategy, plans, priorities: **who's involved? who is able to use the software effectively? what feedback gets prioritized?**
- Discussions and decision-making: **how are decisions made?**
- Communicating potential and/or agreed on strategies, plans, and priorities: **who gets to see what? what gets emphasized in talking points?**
- Tracking action items and other project management: **herding cats!**

Social stack for organizing (etc)

- "Communities"
- Values, norms and community guidelines
 - Including mutual aid orientation: sharing what you can, getting what you need
- Organizing structures
- Governance and “federated diplomacy”
- Moderation
- Sensemaking
- Care work
- Learning (including training)
- Knowledge repositories
- Decision making processes
- Inviting and welcoming newcomers who share values and find norms compatible, and helping them while also helping them find ways to contribute and help

Example organizing structures

- Different channels for leadership, trusted members, broader group, network
- “Lobby” for newcomers (with greeters), followed by inviting people to group channel(s)
- Shared calendar
- Curated feed (for important announcements, actions, events, news stories, etc)
- “Welcome packet”, FAQ, and newcomer discussion group and meetings
- Status page (possibly with limited visibility) so everybody can see what’s up

Technology-independent:

- channels + lobby can be implemented on Signal, Matrix, Discord, forums, multiple fediverse instances (if you’re a masochist), ...
- Status page could be a web page, GoogleDoc, CryptPad, pinned thread in forum or Matrix channel, ...

Inviting, recruiting, and onboarding new people

- Public presence: website, social media accounts, feeds, etc
- Signup form / survey
- Invitations from current members
- Informational meetings
- Initial vetting
- Lobby with greeters
- “Starter pack”
- Welcome team
- Welcome meeting(s)
- FAQ & Q&A
- Knowledge repository

Tech stack for organizing (etc)

- Private(ish) messaging: 1-1, small group
- Medium-to-large community discussions
- Sharing, discussing, discovering, and curating media, links, status, etc
- Moderation tooling
- "Verification", vouching, web of trust, etc
- Threat modeling
- Events, calendars, scheduling
- Video + audio: streaming, meetings/ rooms, archived
- Time-banking
- Offers and wants
- Marketplace
- Job board
- Contact sharing

- Search
- Surveys
- Collaborative editing: text, presentations, videos, etc
- Project management and facilitation
- Budgeting and accounting
- Payments

Infrastructure:

- Identity
- Storage
- Translation
- Platforms like ATProto, Veilid, Spritely, etc
- Mesh networks + Offline-first tech

Gaps across today's tech stack

- Design Justice and Design from the Margins perspectives
- Multi-network (“pluriverse”) focus
- Accessibility (disability, income, language, Global Majority needs, ...)
- Focus on safety for marginalized people (including threat modeling)
- Consent-based architectures
- Communicating across differences (language, background, norms and customs, terminology, education/expertise)
- Offline-first
- Trauma-informed design
- Security and privacy
- “Distros” – packaged tech stack, with social support
- Ecosystem of coops, non-exploitative small business and individuals, community-focused non-profits, etc
- Focus on well-being and joy

Projects and organizations to partner with

Tech partners

- Blacksky (and Northsky?)
- Bonfire
- Mastodon
- The Bad Space
- A New Social
- May First
- *Who else?*

Other groups exploring related areas

- Sarell + conveners
- Possible Futures
Discord
- *Who else?*

Explore collaborating on tech and social stack?

Use case partners

- Genocide prevention:
- Mutual Aid
- Collective sense-making
- Creating anti-fascist (etc) spaces
- Finding community, support, respite, and joy

TODO: come up with initial list in meeting, and then expand

Discussion

- Opportunities
- Priorities
- Next steps

Thoughts about communications going forward

- Announcements / event invitations
 - “Status page” that people can bookmark and check to see what’s up
 - Signal group
 - NodeBB forum
 - Email list? It’s useful for sending calendar informations (etc) but a pain to maintain
- Working groups emerging on specific topics
 - Each may want to choose their own communications channels
 - Default: a category in the NodeBB forum (or a channel on a future Matrix server)
 - Each group is likely to schedule their own meetings as well
- Whole-group discussions
 - NodeBB forum
 - Public: on Bluesky and fedi (using forum to highlight key ones, eventually a feed)
- Less-structured time (frequency TBD)
 - “office hours”, collective sense-making of day’s weeks events, etc etc etc.

Some more ambitious ideas (maybe)

- Meetings: increase tempo to one per week (realizing that most people won't be able to attend most meetings)
 - Maybe shift to Jitsi
 - Or maybe three per week, at very different times, to accommodate different timezones and weekday/weekend preferences? I'm okay staying up late and getting up early occasionally!
- A workshop on one or more of these topics, inviting others as well
 - Possibly co-organized?
 - Eventually multiple workshops but let's not get ahead of ourselves here!
- Maybe something [FediForum](#)-related, details TBD
 - FediForum v. next is likely in May – but it's not clear they're planning on addressing any of the structural anti-Blackness / anti-equity issues, so hard to know if it will not make sense to participate

Getting new people involved

- Short term: inviting people we know who would be good additions
 - Please keep diversity and equity in mind!
 - Suggestion: once the cleaned-up notes/slides of this meeting are up, share the notes and slides and the registration link to the NodeBB forum
- Medium term: approach as prototype of [Inviting, recruiting, and onboarding new people](#) use case

Action items, next steps

- Talk to more anti-genocide activists (etc) about needs
- Write up structured list of questions to ask
- IFTAS to distribute keyword lists (etc) if communities can come up with them
- Jon to set up and write up communications channels (status page, etc) and schedule upcoming meetings
- Jon to writeup notes, clean up slides
- All to consider inviting new people to participate once the cleaned-up notes, slides, and "status page" are available
- Shift to weekly cadence for meetings (and start scheduling for times that are good for people in other geographies)

Appendix - background slides

Social networks and online organizing

Social networks *complement* other kinds of organizing

Social networks are (potentially) good for

- Sharing public information (events, actions, alerts) with a broad audience
- Following and having discussions with activists, journalists, politicians, organizations, etc.
- Tracking news
- “Private” discussions (like Facebook groups)

Social networks are **not** good for Secure communications.

- Use Signal!
- Make sure you check who's in your group chat!!!!!!

Some open questions in today's political climate ...

- With protest getting criminalized, how long will public social network organizing be feasible?
- With dissenters getting targeted, how long will sharing news and discussions on public social networks be a viable option?
- With increasing surveillance, how long will private-but-not-encrypted social network organizing be a viable option?
- How can we use whatever time window we have effectively?

Some key use cases

Public communications

- getting the word out about events, action alerts, programs
- recruiting new people
- fundraising and asking for resources
- messaging
- sharing and contextualizing accurate news and information
- countering disinformation and propaganda

“Private” (ish) communications:

- within a group's leadership team
- between leadership and members
 - announcements
 - questions and answers
 - polls and surveys
 - discussions
- cross-group
 - coalitions of different groups
 - chapters in a distributed org
 - working groups of individuals
- sharing secure contact info