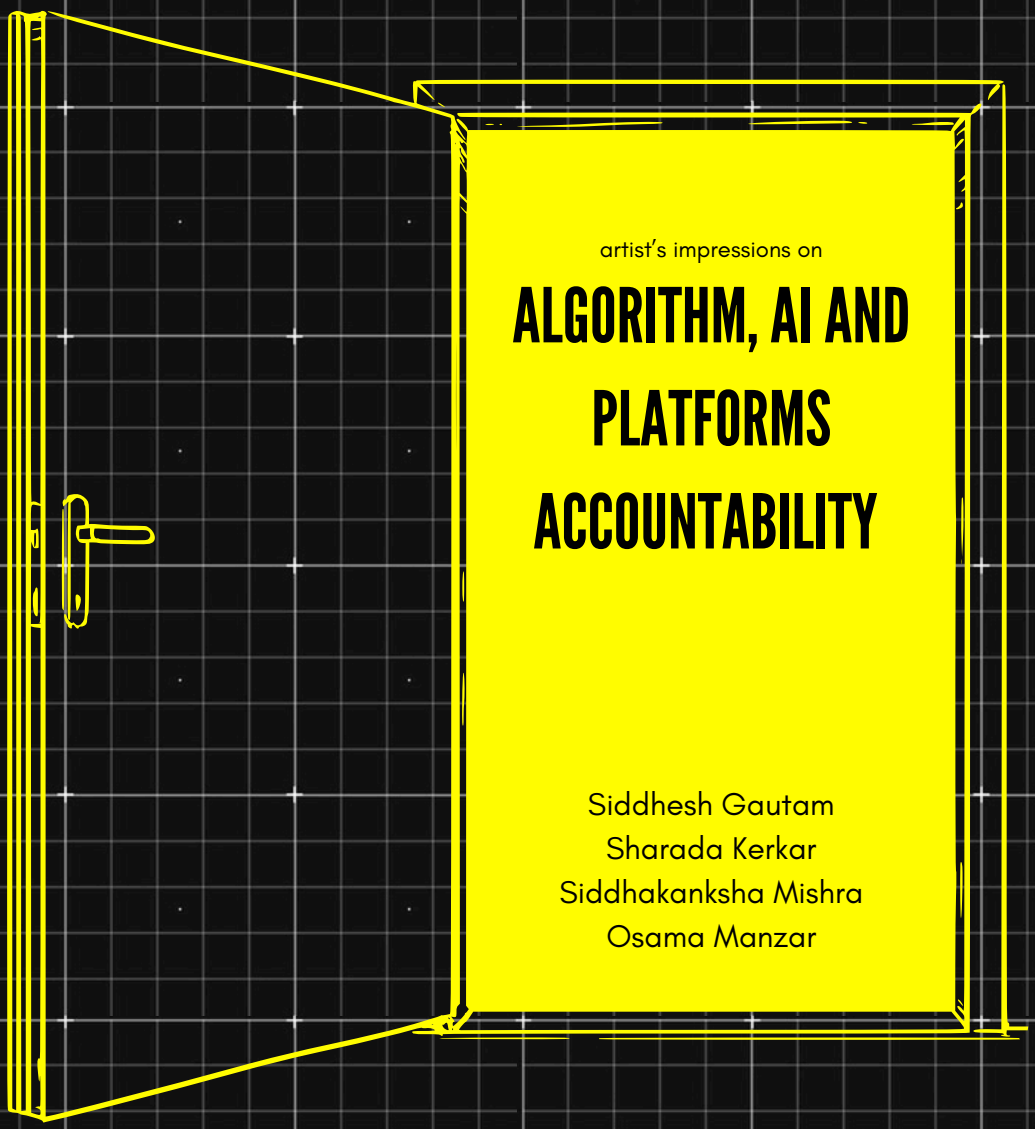
defindia.org



artist's impressions on

ALGORITHM, AI AND PLATFORMS ACCOUNTABILITY

Siddhesh Gautam
Sharada Kerkar
Siddhakanksha Mishra
Osama Manzar

A·CODE
Art and Collective for Digital Empowerment

This small book is a compilation of artistic impressions capturing the experiences of the current generation—navigating algorithm-driven apps, programs, and platformization, all without accountability. While half the world suffers from lack of connectivity and digital exclusion, the other half is burdened by datafication.
This is an alpha version, with plans for new editions to be released every six months, featuring additional contributions from more artists.

Special thanks to ACODE (Art and Collective for Digital Empowerment) for assembling this compilation and printing it for wider distribution.

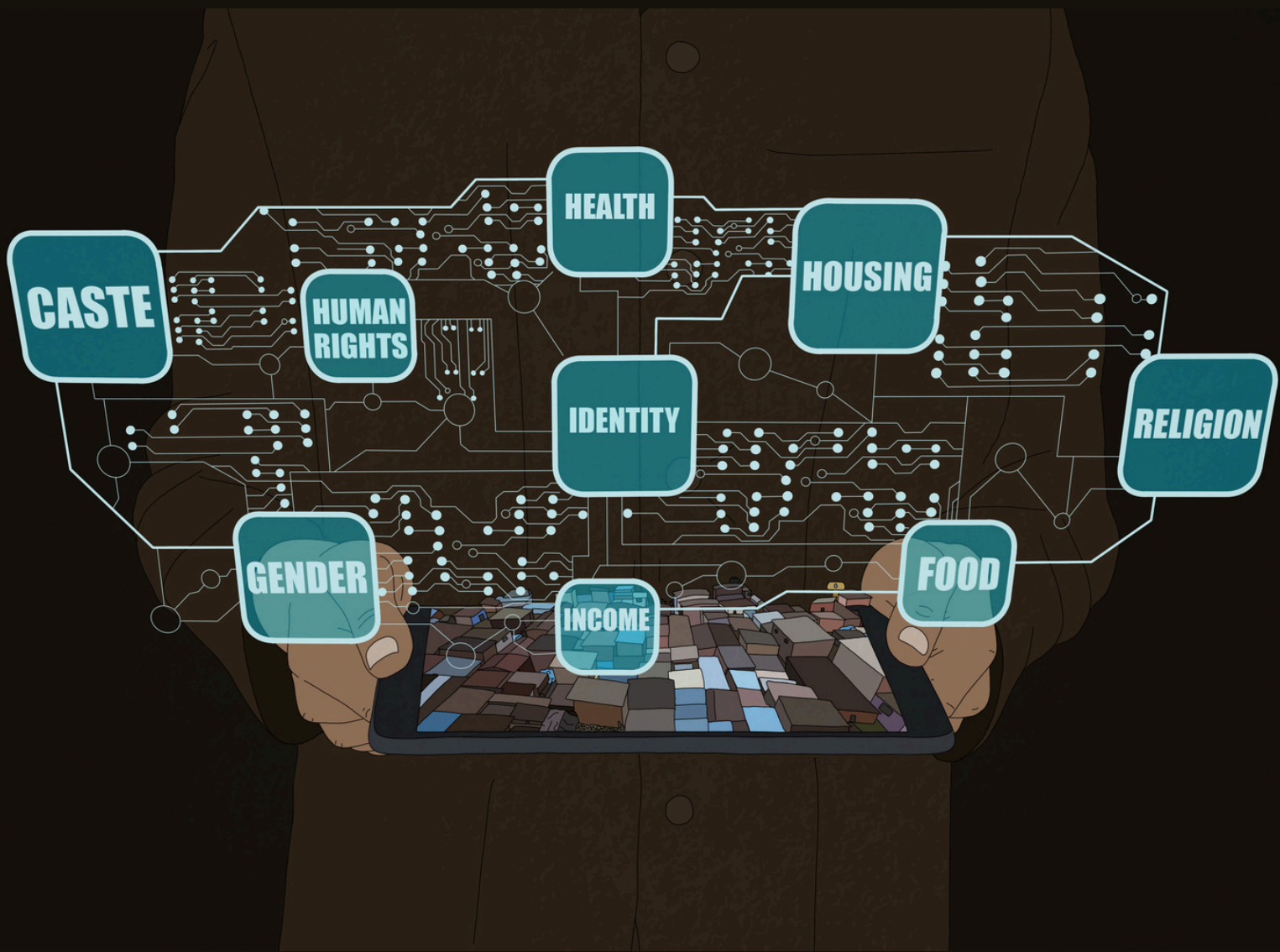
Siddhesh Gautam
Sharada Kerkar
Osama Manzar

Siddhesh Gautam

Siddhesh Gautam is a Delhi based multi-discipline, mixed-media artist, designer, writer, poet, dreamer, storyteller and an Ambedkarite.

His work is currently focused on the visual documentation of the anti-caste movement, global warming and gender equality.

Our Homes are just Data Points



Algorithmic Command and Control



Humanise Before you Digitise



Sharada Kerkar

She is the Co-Founder of Museum of Goa where she specializes in organising skill development projects and the integration of art into livelihoods.

She is also a freelance illustrator with a strong passion for visual storytelling. She holds a Master's in Public Policy and Human Development from the United Nations University in the Netherlands and is a Policy and Design Consultant at Justice Adda.

Identity, Homelessness and Machine Systems: Working with a Homeless Shelter in Delhi



Disconnected by Design: Unraveling the Impact of Digitized Attendance on NREGA Workers



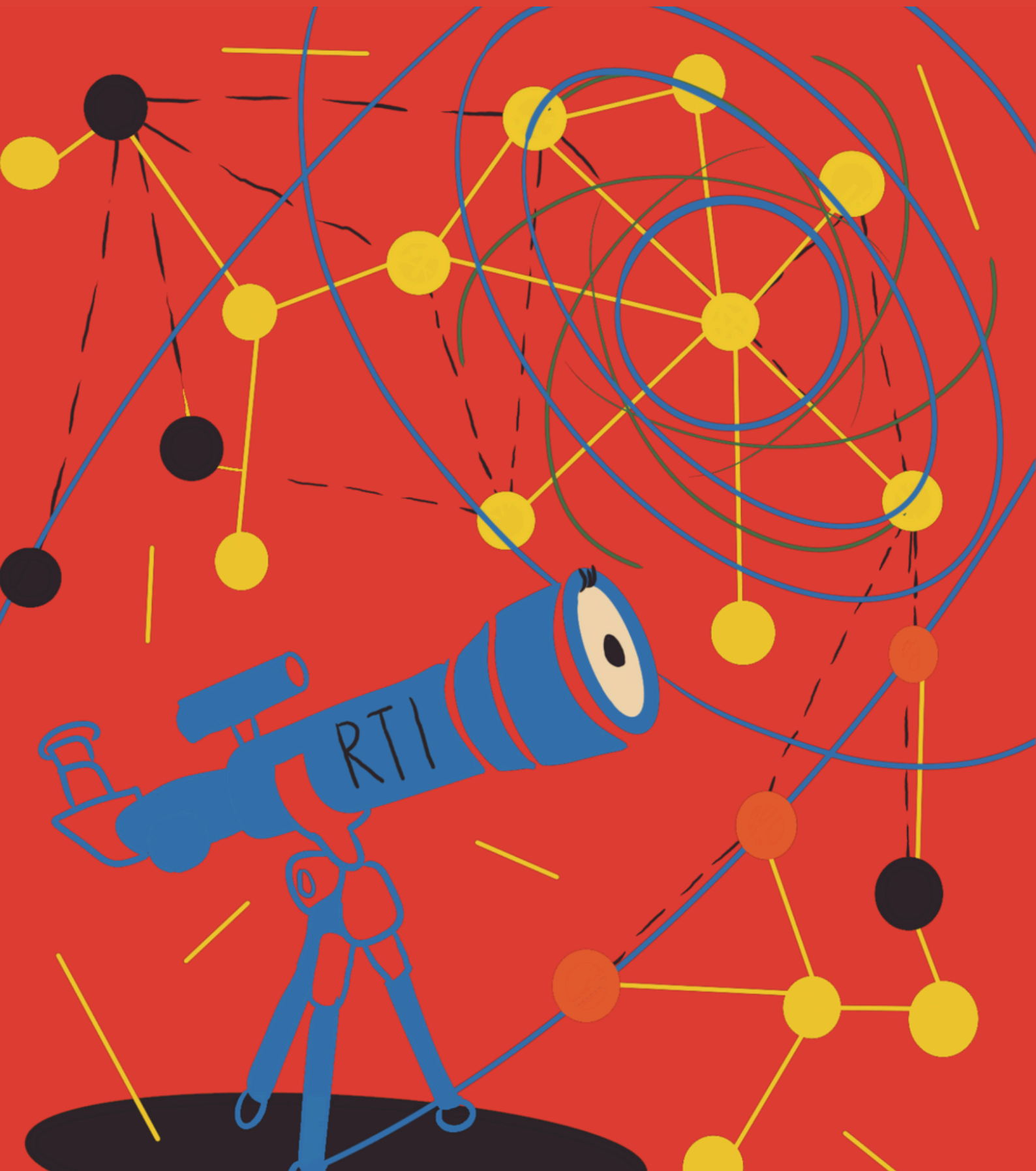
Humanisation of Data and the Datafication of Humans: Government, Private Entity, and the Struggle for Data Justice



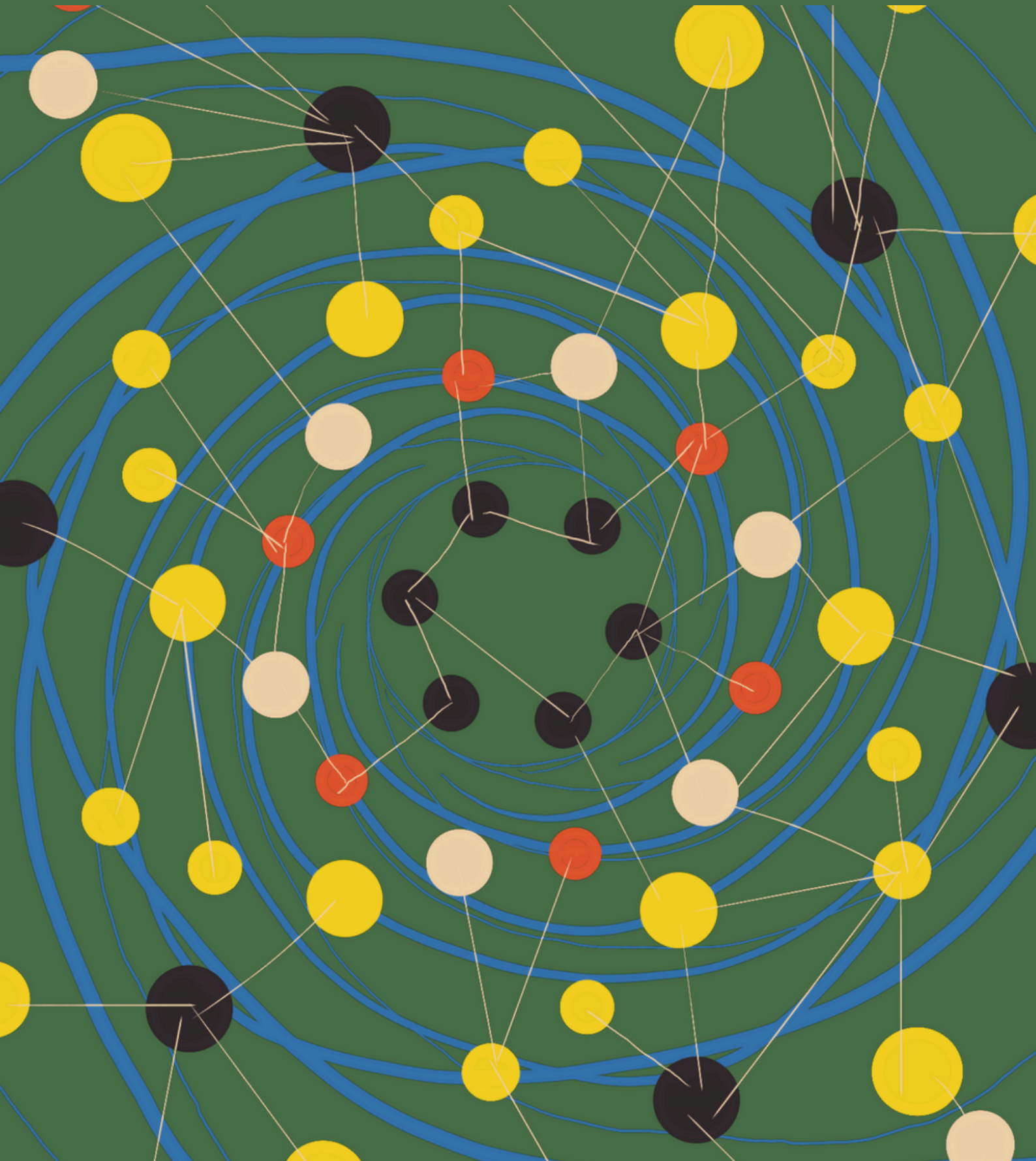
The Moving City and Static Inequalities: Platform Economy and Transport Data in India



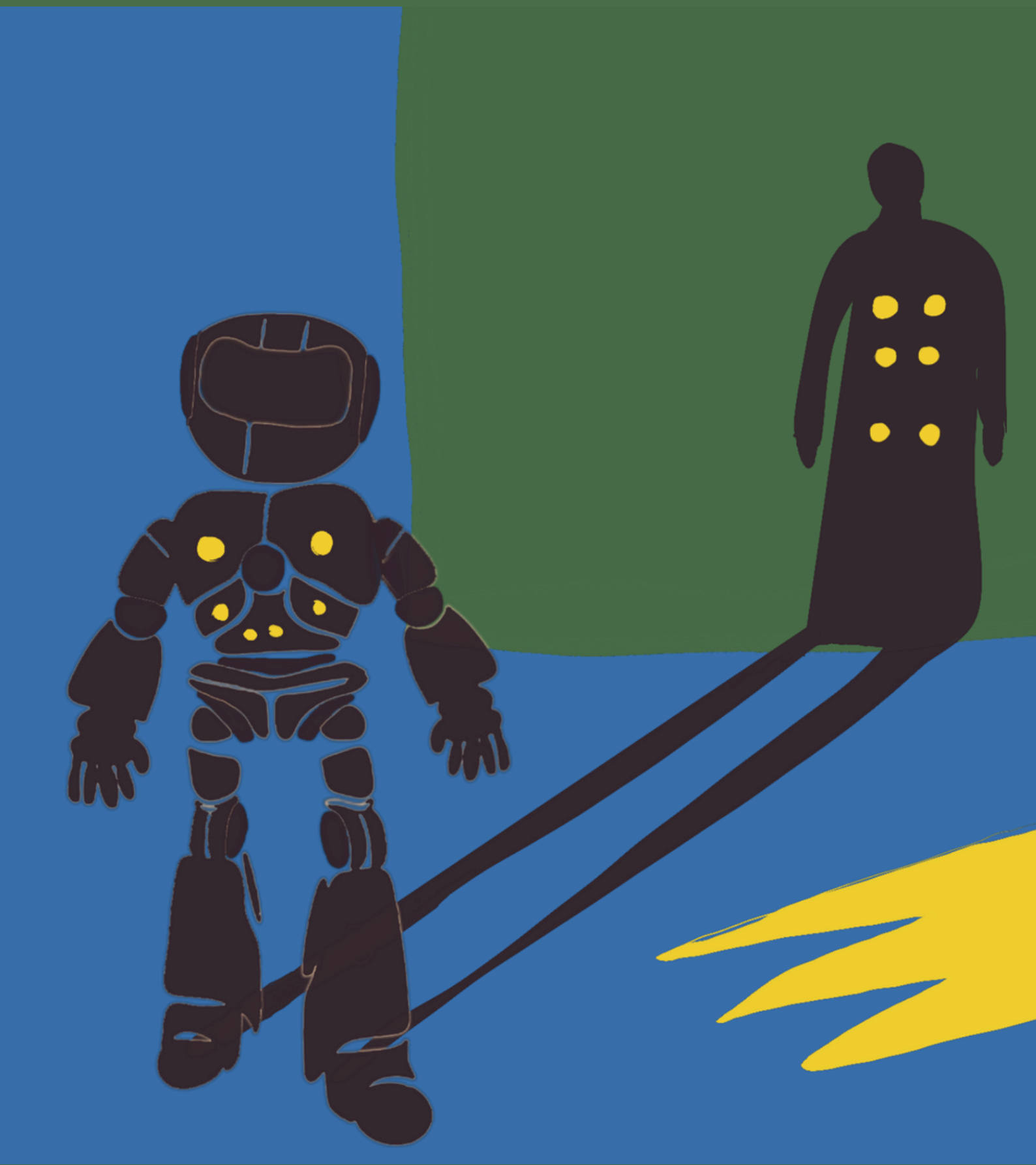
Who Governs “Data Governance”



e_Governance and Digital Governance Imagination in India



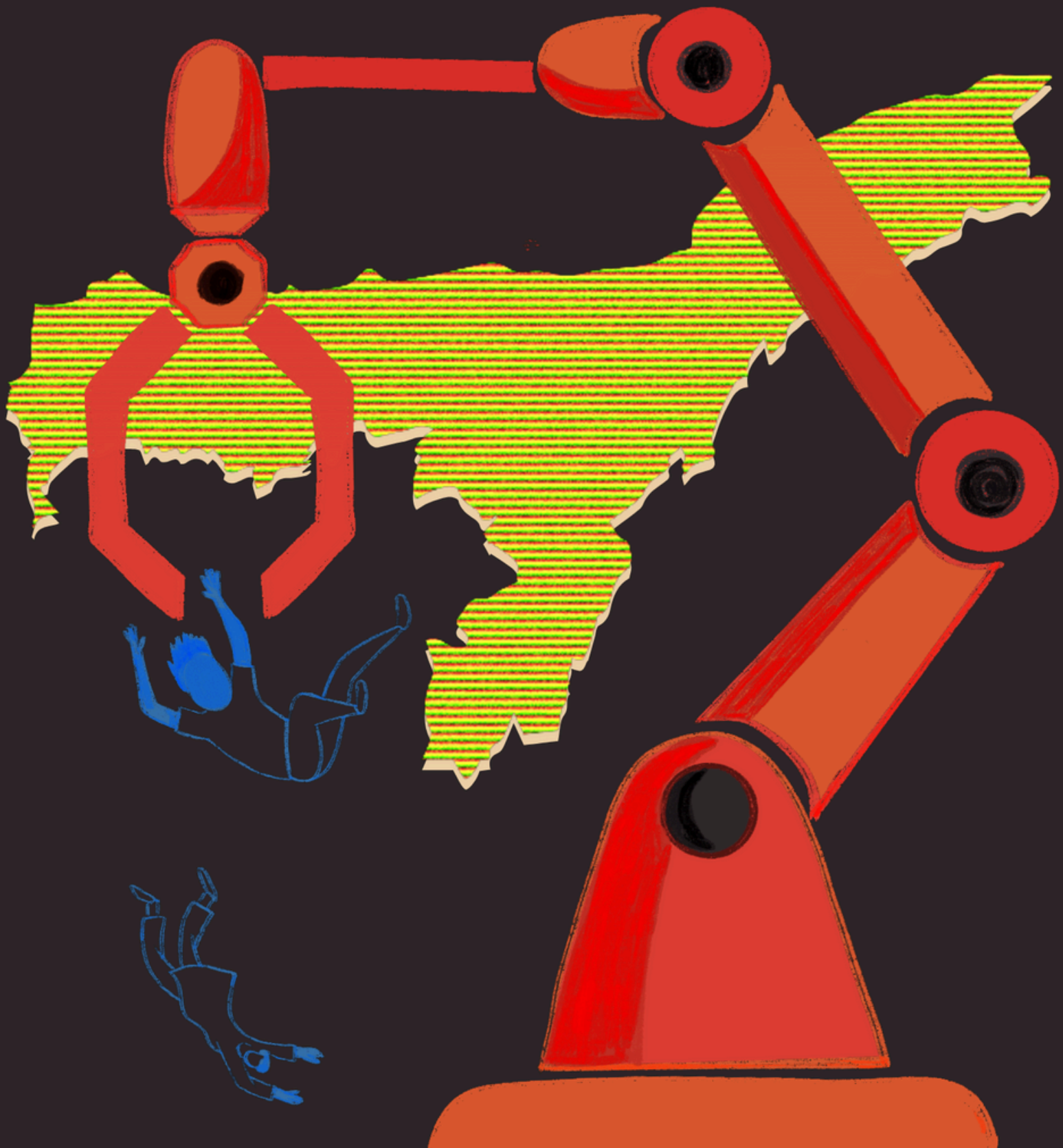
Non-Neutral Technologies and AI Policies: Evaluating Biases and Algorithms



Corporate Imaginations of Artifiicial Intelligence and the Need for Structural Reform



Digitizing Citizenship and Measuring Genealogies: The NRC and Algorithms



The Decisive Machine and Algorithm Exclusions



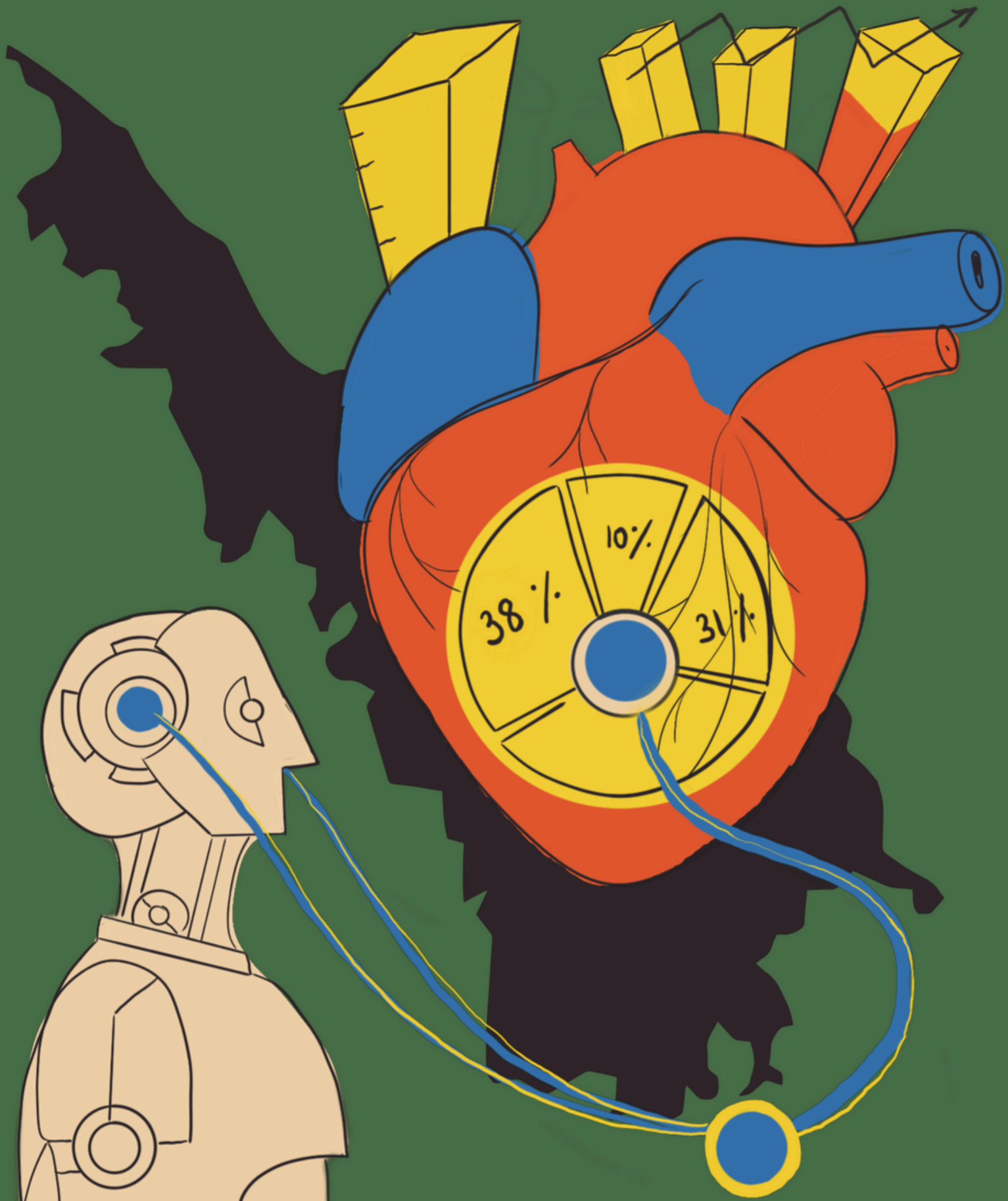
Why Exploring the Legal Structure of Data Usage, Engagement with IT Systems and Digital Architecture is Necessary for Ethical AI



Between Emerging Technologies and the Common Good



Imagining Digital Governance and Health



Siddhakanksha Mishra

Sid Mishra is an Artist, Illustrator and a Graphic Designer. Her work reveals and questions the social constructs of gender, prejudice and power. She has maintained anonymity and publishes under an alias: @smishdesigns on social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter.

Data Inception



Algorithmic Digital Media: You Are What You Eat



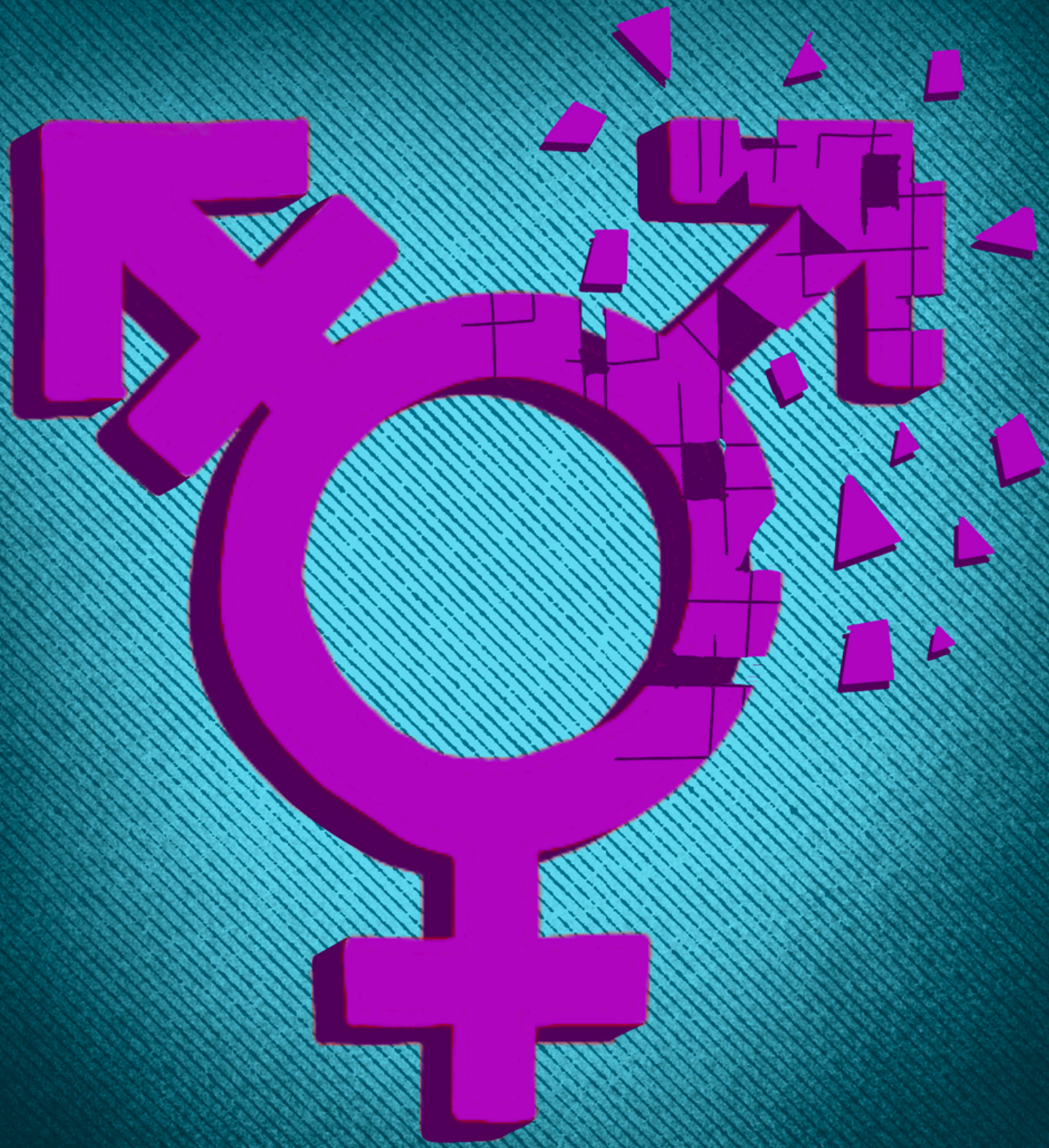
Panopticon(ised)



Social (Divide) Media



Gender Digital Divide



Osama Manzar

Osama Manzar works at the cusp of Access to Rights and Rights to Access. A Senior Ashoka Fellow and British Chevening Scholar, founded the Digital Empowerment Foundation in 2002, an organisation that has digitally empowerment more than 35 million people through 2000 digital centers across the country.

He also influenced India's Digital Literacy Mission, Common Service Centres, banned FreeBasics, liberalized ISP licensing, and initiated fight against misinformation at a village level that created a cadre of 500+ rural women fact checkers.

The Condundrum of Datafication of Humans



INFORMATION AGENTS WITH SOCIAL CAPITAL

DIGITAL WORLD

OSAMA MANZAR

Respond to this column at
feedback@livemint.com

Can a video call save life? Can a tablet convert you into a change maker in a village where nothing works?

Let me tell you about SoochnaPreneurs (information agents), as we call them, making a lasting impact on individuals, families and households, one village at a time.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to meet Anjali Kumari, a motivated 25-year-old woman who is a champion for some and a threat for others. She hails from Angada block in Ranchi district of Jharkhand, where child marriages—despite the laws against it—are not uncommon.

Sometime last year, Anjali received a call informing her that a 14-year-old girl was being forced into marriage in the village. Anjali immediately headed for the venue and asked the girl's parents to call off the wedding.

When they didn't agree, she made a video call from her tablet to a local news reporter, seeking his help and sharing glimpses of the ongoing ceremony. The local reporter contacted the regional Childline, a helpline run by the local administration for rescuing children in distress.

Within an hour, officials arrived at the venue and helped Anjali stop the wedding. Initially, the girl's parents were furious. After all, they had invested all their savings in their daughter's wedding. However, they were shocked to learn that the police had investigated the girl's inlaws to be and found that they had already set a deal to sell her to a man in Punjab after the marriage.

When I first heard this story, I was extremely impressed and was curious to know why she had rushed to help. She is neither a social worker nor a government employee. Anjali is a SoochnaPreneur who has been serving her community by enabling access to government entitlements, citizen rights and public schemes through information.

She uses her tablet and her computer to find relevant government schemes for people; helps file and submit applications; and follow up cases with the authorities until entitlements are received by the beneficiaries. She offers this help as a service from her small one-room office where she also offers digital services such as photocopying, printing, scanning and access to the internet. It is through this work that she has earned the trust of many in her village and in nearby villages.

It is wonderful to see how in this digital era, oral society—illiterate, predominantly poor and dependent on government schemes—is taking advantage of the digital revolution to meet daily requirements, access entitlements, document knowledge or bring about change in the society.

There are so many who cannot read and write, but can record or listen to audio or video calls, and share these with others. The digital medium allows people to watch and share news and local scenarios in real-time, across geographies and topographies.

These are the reasons that entitlements are moving online today. However, to access these services people still require some amount of formal literacy and computer know-how. The oral or illiterate society requires an intermediary to provide them with this information and facilitate access to these services. It is known that hundreds of middlemen around the country are exploiting the poor in the name of facilitating services. Common Services Centres (CSCs) were started as a trailblazing scheme. But their success has not touched all regions, especially the deep locations and villages beyond the taluks and tehsils.

Realizing the gap in information availability, Digital Empowerment Foundation along with Qualcomm initiated a project called SoochnaPreneur last year. The project is aimed at creating an army of information agents who will eventually be present at the block level across all the 272 backward districts of India.

Under the first phase of the project, we started with 100 SoochnaPreneurs, each of whom has been trained in handling technology as a tool, dealing with information as a service, interacting with people as agents of change. The emphasis, while training SoochnaPreneurs, is on creating social capital at the village and community levels and encouraging entrepreneurship.

In the months that followed, we have not just seen SoochnaPreneurs transform as individuals, but have also witnessed how they have driven transformation in the communities they serve.

Equipped with an app called MeraApp, which comes with information on hundreds of government schemes, the SoochnaPreneurs serve their community with information and digital services.

The SoochnaPreneurs have been trained to charge fees only for facilitating a service and not for offering information. For example, they don't charge for providing information on government schemes. But they do charge for printing an application form for the scheme. They don't charge for filling up an application form, but charge a nominal fee after the entitlements have been received by the beneficiary.

COLUMN

For all the services offered by SoochnaPreneurs, they can only charge people based on government-approved rates formulated as per CSC's list of services.

It is through this work that SoochnaPreneurs have become the go-to persons for all kinds of information and help in these communities.

Here, I must mention some civil society organisations which have been running Sahayata Kendras in Jharkhand to offer information services that enable people to access rights and entitlements without any charges whatsoever.

After eight years, their efforts have been recognised by the Jharkhand government which has signed memorandums of understanding with them earlier this year to strengthen them. This highlights the fact that the government too can see the genuine need for credible information facilitation services beyond existing government offices and infrastructure.

This has motivated our SoochnaPreneurs to work harder to be recognised by the government; and quite a few have been allowed by the Rajasthan government to operate from panchayat kendras, gram sabhas or Atal Seva Kendras in Rajasthan where local bodies have placed high trust in them.

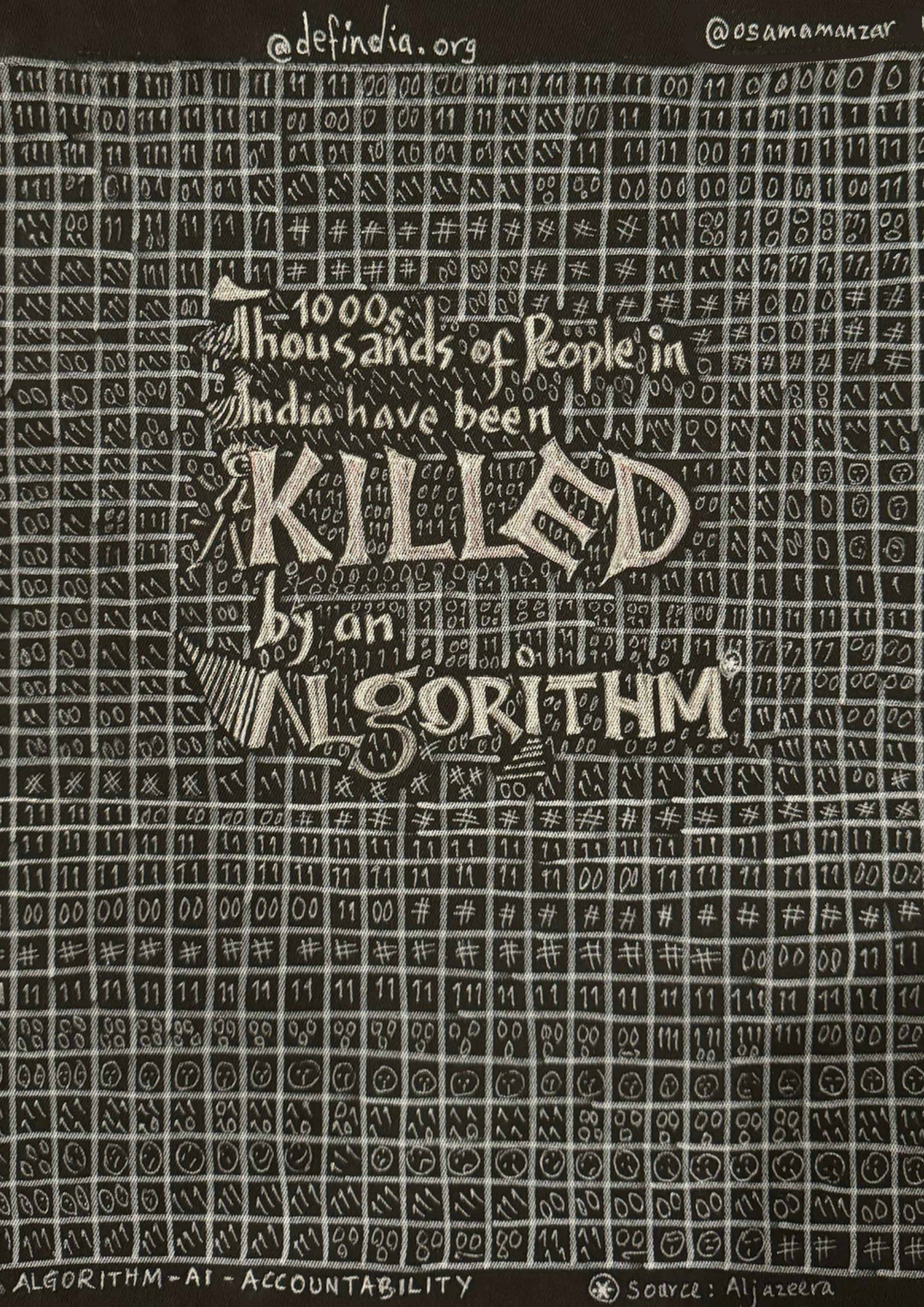
The efforts of SoochnaPreneurs, Sahayata Kendras and CSCs broadly prove a point that there is a tremendous need for organised facilitation services for information and information-based products.

Disclosure: The SoochnaPreneur programme is a joint initiative of Digital Empowerment Foundation and Qualcomm.

Osama Manzar is founder-director of Digital Empowerment Foundation and chair of Manthan and mBillionth awards. He is member, advisory board, at Alliance for Affordable Internet and has co-authored NetCh@kra–15 Years of Internet in India *and* Internet Economy of India. *He tweets @osamamanzar.*

@defindia.org

@osamamanzar



ALGORITHM - AI - ACCOUNTABILITY

Source: Aljazeera

@defindia.org @osamamanzar

necrocapitalism

ALGORITHMIC MANIPULATION // PLATFORMISATION SANS ACCTABILITY // DATAFICATION

How an algorithm denied food to thousands of poor in India's Telangana

—AlJazeera

It adopted AI in welfare schemes to weed out ineligible ones, but has wrongfully removed thousands of legitimate ones.

Bismillah Bee was denied access to Telangana's food security schemes for possessing a car even though she doesn't own one [@the Reporters Collective]

courtesy: aljazeera.com

In India, an algorithm declares them dead; they have to prove they're alive

Dhuli Chand was 102 years old on Sept 8, 2022, when he led a wedding procession in Rohtak, Haryana. But instead of a bride, Chand was on his way to meet govt officials. Chand resorted to the antic to prove to officials that he was not only alive but also lively. A placard he held proclaimed, in the local dialect: "thara foofa zinda hai," [your uncle is alive] Six months prior, his monthly pension was suddenly stopped b'cos he was declared "dead" in govt. records.

@policycircle.org

DEATH BY ALGORITHM: GIG WORKERS NEED PROTECTION NOW

Gig platforms are pushing workers to their physical limits in a system that prioritises profit over people's well being.

Pawan Kumar and Rohit Garg, gig workers whose grueling schedules in extreme temperatures led to health emergencies that they had to manage by themselves, with no support from the platform. Unfortunately such events are not isolated: Last year Uber driver Priyanka Devi was attacked by assailants who slashed her neck and stole her belongings. She says the platform offered no assistance as she lay bleeding in her car. Sheikh Ismail, a grocery delivery agent, was injured by a kite string during a trip and spent his personal funds for treatment.

collecting real-time data simplifies the algorithm's task of pushing workers to their physical limits.

Necropolitical workforce //

Those who work at the cost of their Lives

Necrocapitalism

an economic order where employers drive vulnerable employees to ill health or death for pecuniary gain.

Data Journalism TOP 10

Algorithm Bias, Mapping Femicide, India's Deadly Cold, Bisexual Superman

Every year thousands of welfare recipients in the Dutch city of Rotterdam are put under investigation on suspicion of committing benefits fraud. But a detailed investigation by Lighthouse Reports by WIRED used freedom of Information Laws to obtain the city's fraud algorithm and the data behind it — finding that until 2021 the city was using a system that "discriminates based on ethnicity and gender."

@gijn.org

INSTAGRAM'S ALGORITHM OFFICIALLY LISTED AS THE CAUSE OF DEATH IN A COURT CASE IN THE UK

—FirstPost.com

Instagram and Pintrest have been officially listed as the cause of death by a coroner in a 14-year-old girl's suicide case in the UK. This opens up the debate again on whether social media platforms are responsible for the content algorithms that are being fed to its users.

Algorithms embedded into the platform control workers' time, physical person, and life, devaluing their individuality, and converting them into expendable labour. Mobile phone technology makes algorithmic surveillance so nuanced it is impossible to know exactly what is being measured and when.

such events constitute necrocapitalism, an economic order where employers drive vulnerable employees to ill health or death for pecuniary gain.

Gig workers relying on platforms for their livelihoods thus become 'necropolitical workforce' those who work at the cost of their lives'

DIGITAL WORLD

OSAMA MANZAR



Respond to this column at feedback@livemint.com

DIGITAL EXCLUSION RAISES COST OF LIVING FOR RURAL MASSES

COLUMN

Recently, I had a chance to address and mentor several Gandhi fellows. This fellowship is an initiative of Kaivalya Education Foundation and Piramal Foundation for Education Leadership and is an intensive two-year residential programme that helps talented young people develop the leadership skills essential to effect positive change in society.

It is one of the few fellowships in India that gives a chance to young graduates, in the age group of 20-25, to work in villages and explore life around them. Each fellow is given the task of engaging with social issues at the grassroots level and finding solutions to every day problems of rural communities. The fellow is also given the responsibility of bringing about positive change in the teaching and learning processes at five schools in and around the village he or she lives.

One of the Gandhi fellows I met is Ashwani Tiwari, a B.Tech graduate who completed his fellowship this year. He was excited and interested to know how technology and the Internet can change the lives of people in villages. He shared his experience of working in a village called Dhani Poonia (under Jhaadsar Chhota panchayat in Churu district of Rajasthan), where he lived and worked as a fellow.

Tiwari's report has interesting statistics about the village, based on interviews of almost every household in it. The aim was to find out how much villagers will pay for various Internet-based services that are currently not available.

Dhani Poonia village has 168 households and with a total population of 1,022 people in the village. Out of these, 443 are female and 483 are male, including 410 students among others. As many as 145 families are Jaats (OBC) and the rest belong to the Schedule Caste (SC) community. None of the 168 families have access to the Internet at their homes or in their village. So every time an individual wants to access any online or offline digital service, they need to travel a minimum distance of 25km. Tiwari spoke to 165 households.

Dhani Poonia has just one upper primary school and no hospital or eMitra Kendra (there are 40,000 eMitra centres in Rajasthan that have been established for citizen services). While almost every mobile network is available in this village, connectivity is low and restricted to 2G services. The local panchayat is supposed to be connected, it isn't most of the time, forcing villagers to travel to Rajgarh or Taranagar to access Internet services and spend a minimum of ₹50 on transport.

Those offering the digital services in these two villages charge ₹5 per printout and ₹20 per hour for Internet usage. For example, a student who needs help to fill a form or apply online for admission has to spend a minimum of ₹70 (₹50 for travel and ₹20 for the Internet).

According to Tiwari's survey, each household in Dhani Poonia spends an average of 5.4 hours a year on the Internet, bringing the total number of hours spent by the 165 households, on Internet-related work, to at least 890 hours annually. At least 10 of the households used the Internet for nine hours annually.

To most of us living in urban areas and connected to the Web at all times through our laptops, smartphones, tablets and even smart watches, nine hours a year would seem like a number that's not even worth talking about.

However, we must realize that it's worth more than a day's wage for these people. These are people who are living below the poverty line. Every time a villager travels to a nearby town or village to access the Internet, he or she is spending at least two hours on just commuting back and forth from the digital centre. So nine hours could easily mean nine days of wages for people who are earning as little as ₹200 a day.

Barring one household comprising two members that spent ₹100 on accessing Internet-related services, no household in Dhani Poonia spent less than ₹400 a year. The highest amount spent for such services touched ₹4,000 for a person called Ranveer who heads a family of 10 that used the Internet for four hours in the entire year. The same goes for Harsingh Mandiya of the same village who heads a family of 11. That's almost 20% of their annual income.

A small village like Dhani Poonia is shelling out more than ₹176,598 annually to access the Internet when this access should be made available to it for free or at a nominal cost at the nearest panchayat under the National Optic Fibre Network.

The figures explain how the lack of Internet connectivity works like a tool of exclusion in villages. If a village or a community is digitally excluded, its cost of living increases with the expenses for commuting to access digital services. On the other hand, if this connectivity is provided to the communities, not only does the community save money, it also has a chance to access information easily.

Dhani Poonia village has 168 households and with a total population of 1,022 people in the village. None of these 168 families have access to the internet at their homes or in their village. So every time an individual wants to access any online or offline digital service, they need to travel a minimum distance of 25 kilometers.

Payment

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_... · 57m
Vinaram from Uplagarh in Sirohi, Rajasthan laments over the introduction of #NMMS App and the distress it has caused amongst the #NREGA workers. He wants the government to roll back the NMMS app and introduce the manual muster roll system.
#saveMNREGA



NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_... · 58m
Kanta Devi from Chhota Naraina in Ajmer Rajasthan says that with the introduction of NMMS App workers are not getting paid their legitimate wages as they get low attendance against the work they do in #NREGS. She wants the Government to immediately stop the Online Hazri.



NREGA Sangharsh
@NREGA_Sangharsh

Lassi from Rajasthan - She has been working through NREGA for ten years. Three years ago her husband passed away. She recounts how only 80 Days of work is given and payment is late from 15 days to 2 months. Especially, with regard to ABPS, she says that her Aadhar Card...

"Modi Hatao, Rozgar Bachao!" says Manuja from Bicchiwara village in Rajasthan's Dungarpur district. MNREGA was a lifesaver when it first came, it gave us our livelihood and our rozi-roti. But today we get neither while NREGA is taking its dying breaths...



NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 4m
And now with NMMS, our attendance is not recorded properly & we are losing more wages. We have filed endless complaints - from Panchayat to BDO to district officer, but no help is forthcoming. They even refuse to meet us now...

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 4m
MNREGA is our guaranteed right - under law and the Constitution of India #ModiGovt must increase NREGA budget, increase our wages, and take back the NMMS app

Jaymatiya of MCB district in Chhattisgarh says that NREGA workers get turned away from the work site if they get later than 7 am because of time restrictions to register attendance on the online app. (1/n)





12:58 · 05/04/23 · **383** Views

10 Likes **6** Retweets **1** Quote

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_Sa... · 1h
"Some women who were regular workers in NREGA are not being able to join because of time restrictions," she adds. (2/n)

Surguja (CG), says, "The govt says that NMMS and ABPS is for our (labourers') benefit, but how are we benefited when we have to run from pillar to post for the correct documents etc to earn our rightful wages?" (1/2)



Kisan Majdoor Sangathan. "Aapka MIS, aapka system -- aap samjho. Hum niyam anusaar kaam rahe hai, aur humein har haal mein 15 din ke andar payment milna chahiye", says Narendra Kumar Das, member of CKMS from Surguja, CG.
(1/2)



44th day of NREGA Dharna at Jantar Mantar
Name: Shaniram
District: Surajguja
I demand the government to increase the minimum wage from ₹221 to ₹800 atleast. I have not been paid since the last 2 months. We workers want to live a dignified life too. We demand appropriate...



NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 4h
trouble for them to not even get our payment in time in our Account. I have not been paid for my work since 4 Months. We don't get Network in our phones to upload our pictures daily twice on the NMMS portal. One day, more than 100 workers were not paid for their work all because

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 4h
The server was down the whole day for everyone at the work site. This government is stealing from the Poor Workers of this country. For every 6 days we work, we get paid for only 2/3 of those days. I demand this criminal NMMS app is taken back and ABPS

Name: Paramvati
District: Koriya, Chattisgarh
Our family is facing great trouble because of the government's increased attacks on NREGA - We are lucky to get more than 40 days of work through #NREGA, when the policy says it should be...



4 Likes

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 3h
atleast 100 days. I demand that the online system of Attendance (NMMS App) and The ABPS is taken back. The banks are more than 20 KMs. away from the worksite. We have to miss multiple days just travelling to the Bank, asking them if our money aot deposited or not.

panchayat which is in the unscheduled region, where PESA act gives them legal right to make their own laws, they used to collectively work under NREGA. Now that community organisation of work has been destroyed.





NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_... · 25m
has a mistake in its documentation which will delay the payment process for her even further.

NREGA Sangharsh
@NREGA_Sangharsh

Jasoda has shared that three women from her family are working through #NREGA. Her aunt, grandmother and mother. The work site is as far away as 10 km many times and the workers have to reach the site by 7 AM. In this case they have to travel long distances at early hours and...



NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_Sa... · 1h
if they are even 5 minutes late, they are marked absent. Because of this they have to come back as without attendance they will not be paid. The time gone in traveling to and from the site ensures that they cannot go to another site for different work.

NREGA Sangharsh
@NREGA_Sangharsh

Name: Rupi
Rupi has worked for 20 years. The #NREGA work site is 3 km away from her home. She has said that if the photo and network issues occur during attendance her labour for the day goes to waste as she is not paid at all.



NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 11h
Pushpa from Rajasthan's Ajmer district calls #NMMS a very harmful app.
"We work all days but still do not receive our complete wages - the server is down, our photos are not uploaded - for some reason or another, our attendance is not marked. #ScrapAppAttendanceSystem



NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 11h
#NMMS app is not designed for us workers, it is made for the looters and exploiters sitting in Parliament who have decided to end NREGA
@MoRD_GoI take back #NMMS immediately and restore physical attendance #मोदी_वर_करो_दिहाड़ी_वर_करो
#ReviveNREGA
#NREGA_बचाओ

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_... · 10h
Shyamlal, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan: We want NMMS app to be taken back. We live in the forest and there always have network issues. We don't have our own land and NREGA is our survival. This system is an obstacle to development. Majdoor is working hard and yet being paid less.



NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_... · 10h
#मोदी_वर_करो_दिहाड़ी_वर_करो
#ReviveNREGA
#GuaranteeRightToWork
#NREGA_बचाओ
#रोजगार_गारंटी_बहाली
#ScrapAppAttendanceSystem
#EndDelayPayments
#ChaloDilli

Name: Sonapati, District MCB,Block Manendragarh, Panchayat Kachhod
Hardly any work is available in our village; even when there is, we have no work facilities like first aid, creche, shade facility etc. (1/n)



Tweet your reply

For attendance, the panchayat secretary and gram rozgar sevak would ask us to leave our job cards with them and say they'd do it on a weekly basis, even though the law requires that our attendance be marked at the worksite itself. (2/n)

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_... · 40m
But the govt's solution of introducing this online attendance system NMMS is worse cause it is completely inaccessible to us. We have no idea whether our attendance is being marked, there is no way for us to verify. (3/n)

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_... · 40m
The system is completely opaque and removed from our daily reality.
Worse, there is endless delay in paying our wages and often we are not paid at all. When we complain, we are told that our aadhar is not linked. (4/n)

to us. We have no idea whether our attendance is being marked, there is no way for us to verify. (3/n)

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_... · 40m
The system is completely opaque and removed from our daily reality.
Worse, there is endless delay in paying our wages and often we are not paid at all. When we complain, we are told that our aadhar is not linked. (4/n)

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_... · 40m
But how can we be expected to figure all these technical things out?
All we want is that we get 100 workdays as guaranteed and paid our wages on time. (5/n)

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_... · 39m
#मोदी_वर_करो_दिहाड़ी_वर_करो #ReviveNREGA #GuaranteeRightToWork #NREGA_बचाओ

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 2h
Rozgar for us, We want to Work and this government is lying when they say that the demand for NREGA work has reduced which has resulted in reduction in the budget. We are Workers and we are for eager for Work.

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 2h
At our work site, we are told that our payment has been deposited in our Bank, and when we go to the bank, no such payment has been made. I demand that we are paid properly for our work and the ABPS System is rolled back.

NREGA Sangharsh
@NREGA_Sangharsh

44th day of NREGA Dharna at Jantar Mantar
Name: Archana
District: Sarguja, Chattisgarh
NMMS App is a blunder. The server is often down for us to even access it, this is a targeted attack on us Workers. We don't get our payment on time, sometimes it takes months...



18:18 · 07/04/23 · 155 Views
4 Likes 2 Retweets

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 2h
It is very difficult to manage affairs at home when there is no money or no

1 Like 3 Retweets

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 6h
Because of online attendance, although the tasks are done collectively, but attendance is not registered. He says that "We demand that our elected officials recognise the PESA act by respecting community laws in Gram Panchayat and our rights over our 'Jal, Jangal, Zameen'."

Name: Chamal Saye
District: Surajguja
"Ham kab tak bhooke reh sakte hai?"
I used to work as a Mate in 2017-2018, back then we did not face any problem with attendance for our work or our payment.



a system that has caused an upheaval in our life. So many of us do not have an Aadhar card or a Passbook that we can link with our Bank Accounts - We are being constantly asked to update our documents and verify them.

NREGA Sangharsh @NREGA_S... · 6h
They leave us helpless while we visit one bank to another, while our pay gets cut and our payment is not deposited for months. I have not been paid since December of last year. I demand that the ABPS system is taken back and the old attendance system is restored.

#ReviveNREGA


@defindia
algorithms, ai, & accountability
@osamamanzar
data

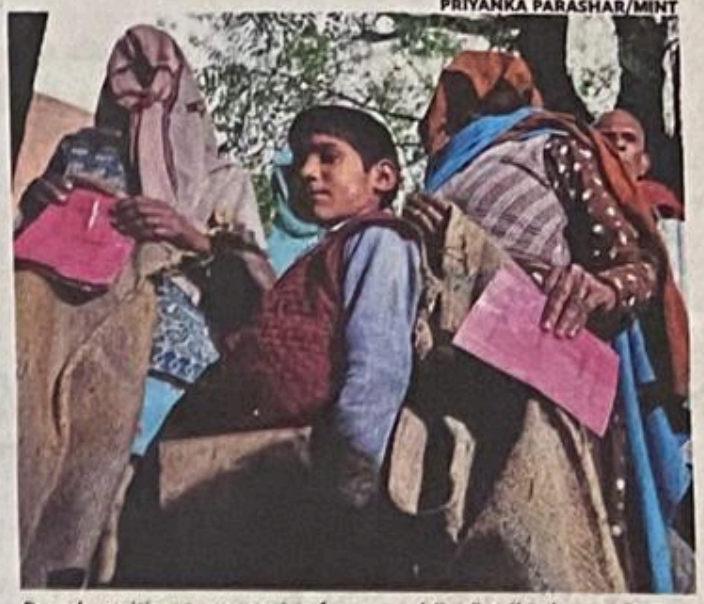
DEATH BY DATA

DIGITAL WORLD

OSAMA MANZAR

Respond to this column at
feedback@livemint.com

PRIYANKA PARASHAR/MINT



People waiting to get ration from a public distribution system outlet in Haryana. The digitization of delivery of government services is good, but insensitive policies, coupled with poor implementation and flawed security measures, can have grave consequences.

She died of starvation. She was all of 11 years old, a tribal from Karimati village of Simdega district in Jharkhand. Ideally, she should have at least received one decent meal a day. However, even in school, she often spent her day studying without any mid-day meal that she was entitled to by the Government of India.

On 28 September, Santoshi Kumari died after starving for four days. Her family had not received its supply of ration, as promised to them under the Food Security Act, and were dependent on the mercy of their neighbours.

In India, hundreds die every day of hunger. So what makes Santoshi's death unique? It is because Santoshi did not die due to lack of availability of food but due to the lack of access to available food. She died because her access to ration was dependent on information stored in an online database that required internet connectivity to access. She died because of lack of synchronization between different government databases. She died because the government's implementation process is flawed. It was death by data for Santoshi.

The young girl's death is extremely sad. However, this death has brought attention to the consequences of inefficient mass digitisation processes. Let me clarify here that the process of digitisation for delivery of government services is not harmful, but insensitive policies of the government, coupled with poor implementation and flawed security measures, has the potential to end lives.

Born in a poor and impoverished family, Santoshi was among millions of Indians completely dependent on government entitlements that promise our food security to poor citizens. As per the government's mandate, members of her family had been registered in the Aadhaar database that gave each one of them a unique identity (UID) number; the family was also registered under the public distribution system (PDS) that entitled them to a monthly supply of food grains. Both these databases with citizens' information are digitised, and are (ideally) supposed to be well integrated with each other.

It is the citizen's role to visit a local office and submit their Aadhaar and PDS papers for linking of the two; and it is the government's role to ensure the integration of the two.

Santoshi's family had done their bit, and were assured of their regular supply of ration. Yet, they suffered.

In an ideal scenario, if a person has linked their Aadhaar with the PDS, they should be able to use either of their government identity cards in a replaceable manner. This means, if I present my Aadhaar card at the ration shop, the government system should be able to recognise my PDS details linked to my UID.

However, when Santoshi's family visited the ration shop, the database on the local computer refused to recognise Santoshi's family as one enrolled under the PDS. Even after several attempts, that stretched over more than half a year, the Aadhaar and PDS details could not be matched on the system despite various layers of identification recorded—name, address, UID, finger print and even iris scan. These details can either be matched manually by feeding in the details onto a computer or through a biometric-enabled point of sale (POS) machine. The functionality of both and their ability to match the linked databases is dependent on two major infrastructural requirements: a functional internet connectivity with adequate bandwidth and uninterrupted supply of electricity. Both are often casualties in rural and remote locations of India.

Under a digitized eGovernance system, it is the data and not the physical presence of a person that decides whether or not a person is eligible for benefits.

This means a poor person can only access food through a ration shop based on the availability of an Aadhaar card, a ration card, a linked database of the two, a functional biometric-enabled POS machine, uninterrupted supply of electricity and the internet; and unquestionable ability to recognize humans from their data. Once all these requirements are met, the fair price shop must have adequate supply of ration to distribute among the beneficiaries.

COLUMN

But can the government confidently vouch for the quality infrastructure or efficient integration of databases?

Programmes such as Digital India are meant to bring people out of information asymmetry and provide them with a channel to improve their quality of life through access to government services and benefits. However, in the presence of poor policies, shoddy implementation, rampant corruption and unaccountable governance, the marginalised communities are only excluded further.

India does not need its multilayered bureaucracy replicated online to exploit the exploited. The vision of Digital India cannot be achieved unless the government involves smart policy makers to draft visionary policies that leverage digital tools to improve lives rather than make the lives of the rural poor even more complicated and deprived than they already are.

Osama Manzar is founder-director of Digital Empowerment Foundation and chair of Manthan and mBillionth awards. He is member, advisory board, at Alliance for Affordable Internet and has co-authored NetCh@kra–15 Years of Internet in India *and* Internet Economy of India. *He tweets @osamamanzar.*

Why Did Santoshi Die?

December 15, 2022 **The Beacon**

Calligraphy and Found Poem by H Masud Taj, based on the words of **Osama Manzar**, Digital Empowerment Foundation, to coincide with '20 Years of Digital Empowerment for All' convention held in Guwahati on December 16, 2022. Osama Manzar's mission is to teach rural Indians the use of the Internet and create livelihoods.



Calligraphy and Found Poem by H Masud Taj, *based on the words of Osama Manzar: "**The Man who travelled to 10,000 villages**". The Found Poem is based on his article "**Death by Data**." The Osama Manzar calligram can be downloaded from **Academia**.*

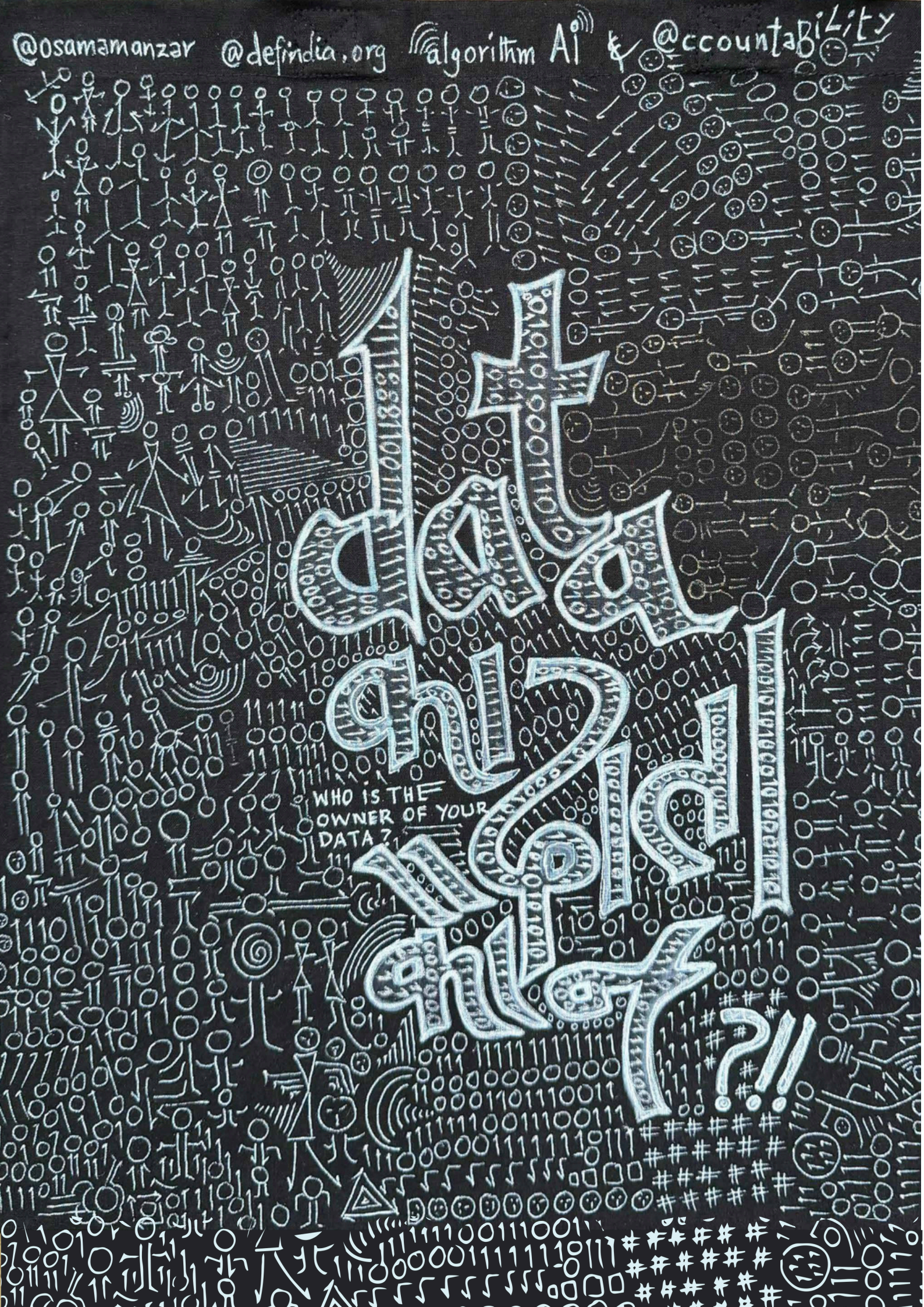
Why Did Santoshi Die?

She was a tribal
all of eleven years
from the village of Karimati
district of Simdega
in Jharkand.
At school
she did not receive
the midday meal
she was entitled to
by the government.
At home
her family had registered
in the Aadhar database
each member had a UID
(unique identity number)
Her family was also registered under
the public distribution system PDS
entitling them
to a monthly supply
of food grains.
Santoshi's family
visited the local office
submitted their Aadhaar
and PDS and were assured
a regular supply of ration
But at the ration shop
the database in the computer
refused to recognise
Santoshi's family
as enrolled in PDS.
They tried for half a year
but their Aadhaar and PDS
could not match
despite layers
of Identification -
1. name
2. address
3. UID
4. fingerprint
5. iris scan.
Under a digitized e-governance
it is the data and not the physical
presence of the person
that decides whether or not
a person is eligible for food.
A poor person can only access food
based on the availability of an Aadhaar card
a ration card and linked database of the two
a functional biometric-enabled POS machine
uninterrupted supply of electricity
as well as internet connectivity
and unquestionable ability
to recognize humans from their data.
After starving for four days
Santoshi Kumari died
Her death was caused
not due to lack of
availability of food
but only due to
lack of access to
available food
It was
death by
data.



Calligraphy and Found Poem by H Masud Taj, based on the words of Osama Manzar: "The Man who travelled to 10,000 villages". The Found Poem is based on his article "Death by Data." The Osama Manzar calligram can be downloaded from Academia. Osama Manzar's mission is to teach rural Indians the use of the Internet and create livelihoods.

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@osamamanzar @defindia.org algorithm AI & @ccountaBiLity
digital right?!!
WHO IS THE OWNER OF YOUR DATA?

In a world driven by change, where collaboration and creativity merge, a collective emerges to harness the transformative potential of the arts. A-CODE (Art and Collectives for Digital Empowerment) is an effort to enhance collaboration among civil society organisations working in different sectors, and advocating for a more pivotal role in the inclusion of the arts for social change. A-CODE is a platform created with the support of 20+ organisations and fellows who are committed to finding art, expression, culture, and heritage.

defindia.org

acode.defindia.org



A·CODE

Art and Collective for Digital Empowerment