From Rocks to Laptops

A Tech Mining Tour and Discussion

Melissa Hsiung

Prepared for LOCOS Seminar

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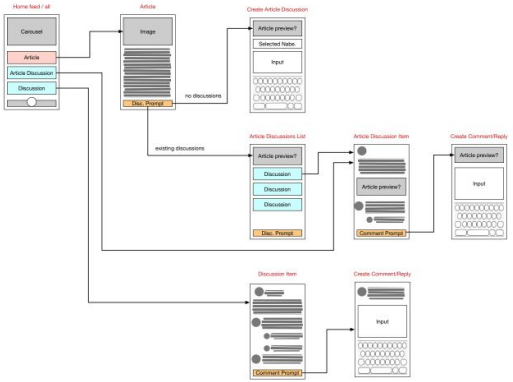
Agenda

1. Tech mining tour
2. Bauxite mining in Guinea, Lynnette Widder
3. Discussion
4. Framing & action

👋Hello

1. Former product manager
2. ClimateAction.tech (CAT) organizer
3. Green Web Foundation Fellow

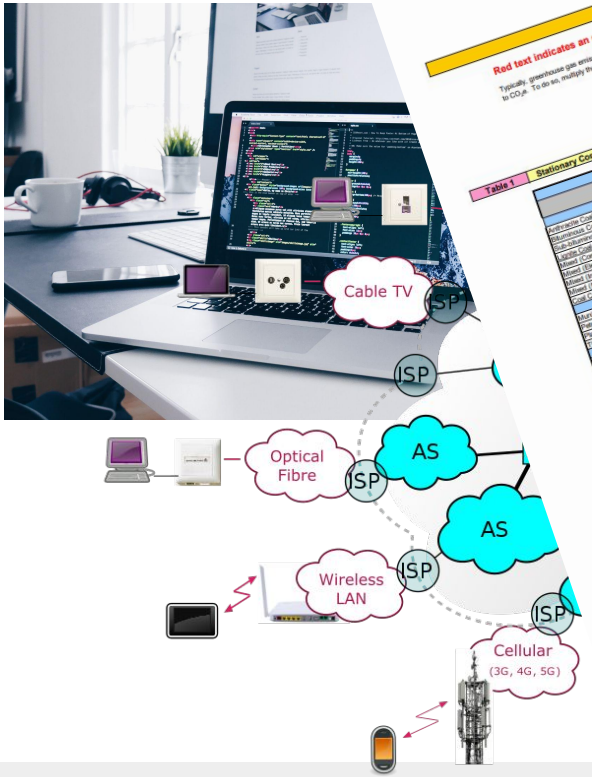


ClimateAction.tech

GREEN WEB FELLOWSHIP

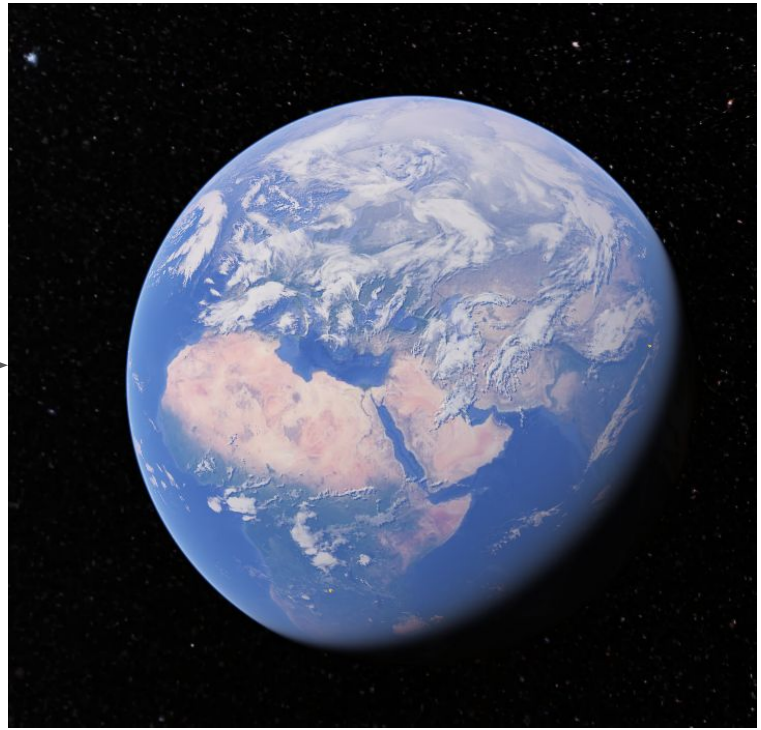
For
Digital Rights and
Climate Justice

What is a just, sust



Internet diagram by BWenk, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons | Openstreetmap contributors, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons | Virginia Tech data center by Christopher Bu… …nt by Steven Baltakatei Sandoval, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

What is a just, sustainable internet?



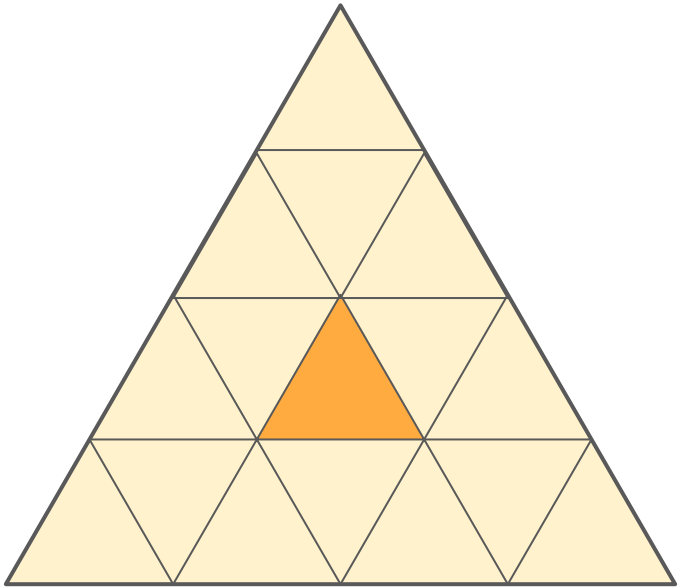
Earth satellite image by DATA SIO, NOAA, US Navy, et. al.

Google Earth Tour

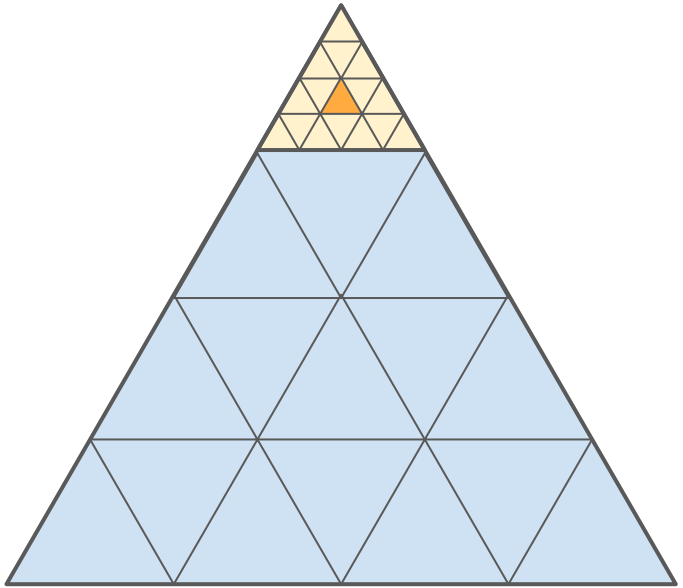
https://earth.google.com/web/data=MkEKPwo9CiExeElqQ1FhVUxQcnJmQ2JYMHRiLUY2R1NmZUpfcHh1a1USFgoUMEI4Q0ZBRTE2RDIyNTYzQURFOUQgAQ

What we do matters

Where we think we are:

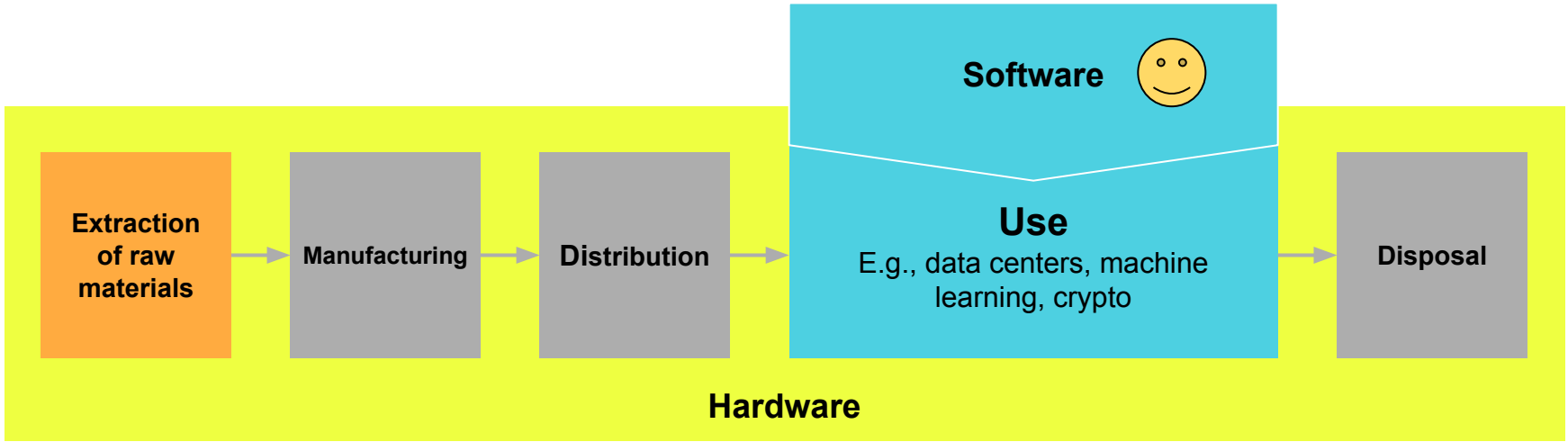


Where we actually are:



Tech lifecycle

Software support & performance often determines when a user needs to replace a device



What next? (for those in tech)

For software: Learn more about software updates, obsolescence and backwards compatibility:

- Repair and Software: Updates, Obsolescence, and Mobile Culture's Operating Systems, Discard Studies
- Device sustainability through long-term software support, Privacy International
- Sustainable software products—Towards assessment criteria for resource and energy efficiency, Future Generation Computer Systems
- Green Mode Design & Graceful Degradation, LOCOS Seminar #16

Software considerations: Software support and performance affects the obsolescence of hardware.

- How long software should last? How long should hardware last?
- What types of devices do our users have? How will the software perform?
- How do we code and test for backwards compatibility?

For hardware: Look into clean supply chain initiatives, e-waste, and e-waste recycling:

- GoodElectronics
- Responsible Sourcing Network, minerals program

What next? (for everyone)

Civic action:
Participate in the right to repair movement so that we can make our devices last as long as possible:

- Repair Association (US)
- Right to Repair (EU)

Local action:
Find out if there are any mines near you and community groups that you can join.

Get involved with projects that support citizen science, like KoboToolbox.

Consumer action:
If repairing isn't an option, buy refurbished or second-hand when possible.

When shopping for a new device, ask customer service if the device is ethically produced and free from conflict minerals. They may not be able to answer, but it will send a signal to the company that customers are aware of unfair practices in the supply chain.

Thank you

How to take action (as a tech worker)

How can we help? And what is the business-case?

How about high-quality carbon offsets? With blockchain!

And AI too right? I'll start a Discord server!

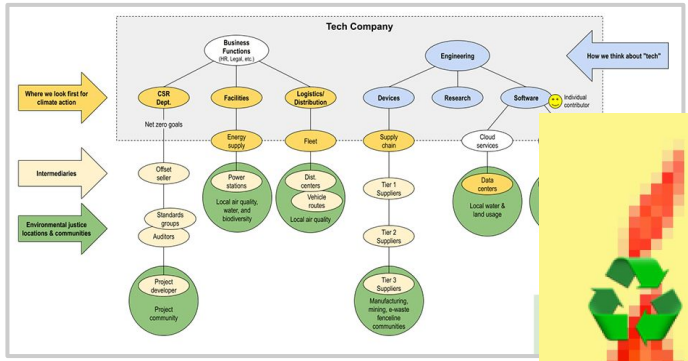
“Climate action is commendable, but it must not cause us to overlook the circumstances of social and economic injustice which make climate action necessary.”

—Applying Martin Luther King, Jr.'s critique of philanthropy* to climate

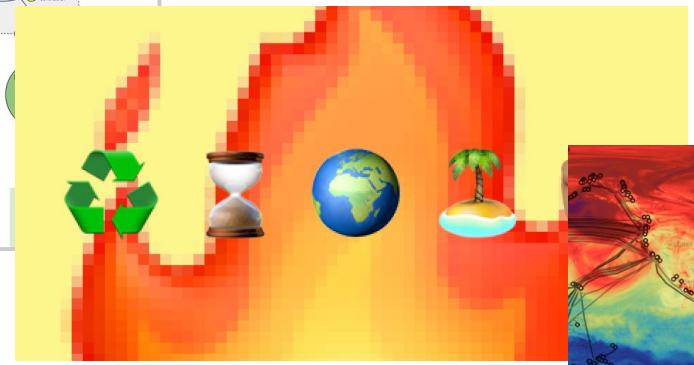
Three easy steps!

Step 1: Get oriented

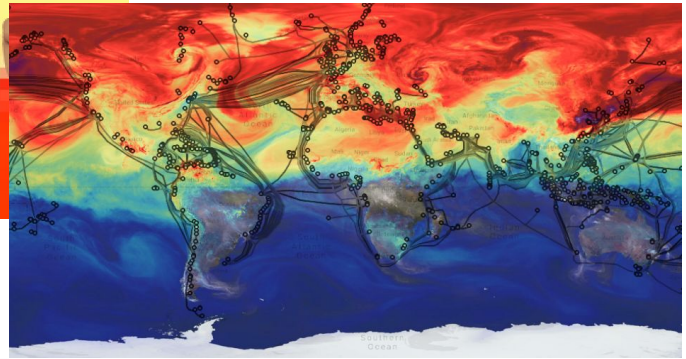
Where are we, what are we talking about, and "Whose footprint is this?"



Position, distance, & influence



Comparing climate narratives



Our unjust, unsustainable internet

Step 2: Reskill and upgrade your view

Climate is a complex social/power/economics problem, not a complicated input-output problem:

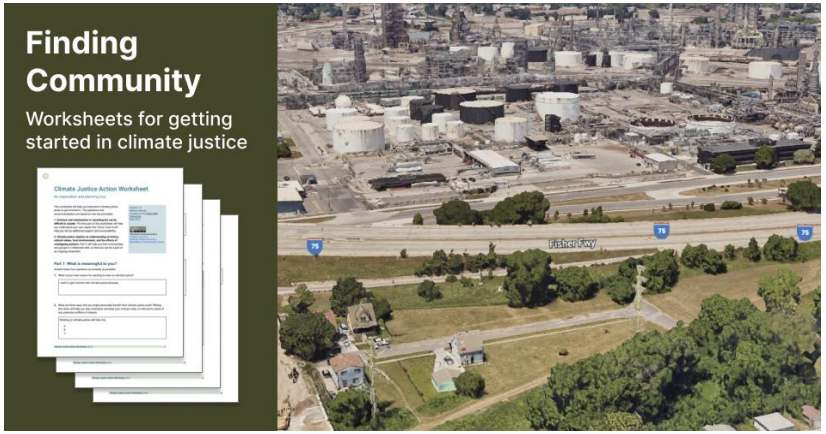
Reskilling for climate justice

Switching lenses

Step 3: Connect IRL

Start with what's close to you:

Tech Materials Tour

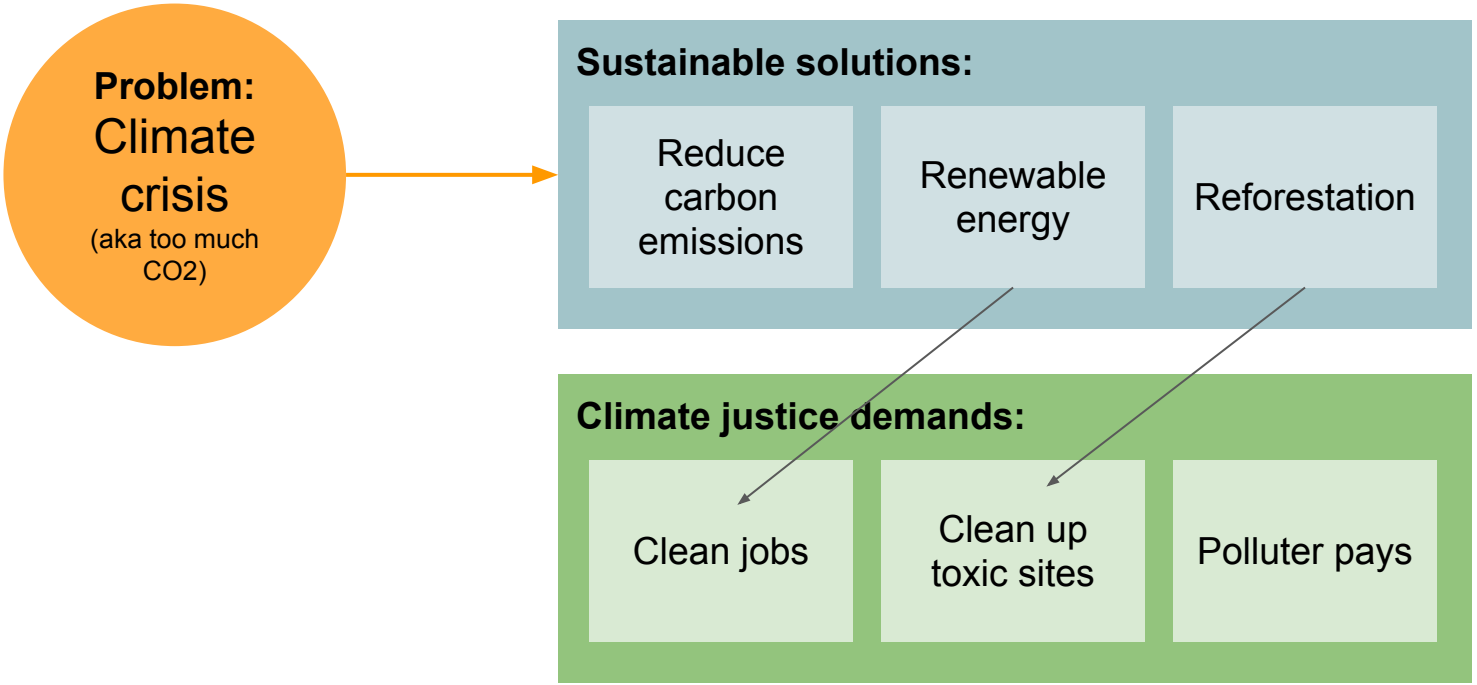


Finding Community

Take Good Care of Life 💚

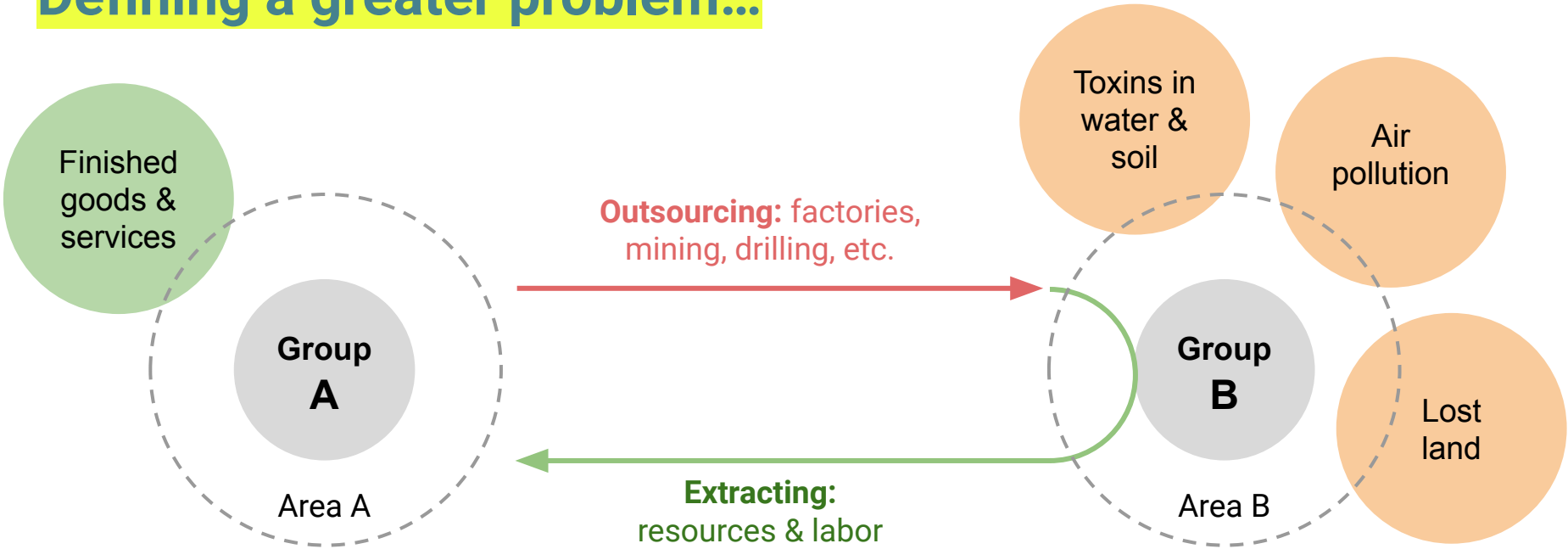
How I used to think about climate justice:

Morally important extra features



How I think about climate justice now:

Defining a greater problem...

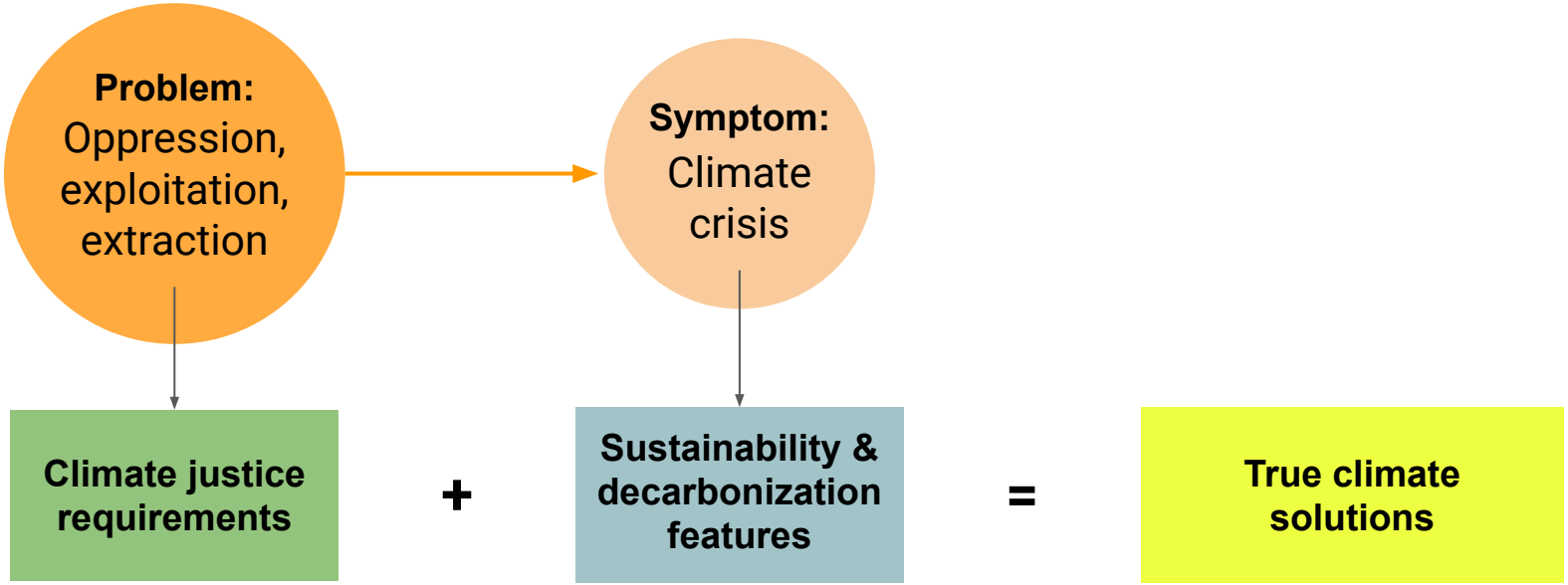


Group A has no incentive or signal to stop. Everything is fine in their area.

Group B's environment no longer supports their previous way of life. Cycle continues.

How I now think about climate justice:

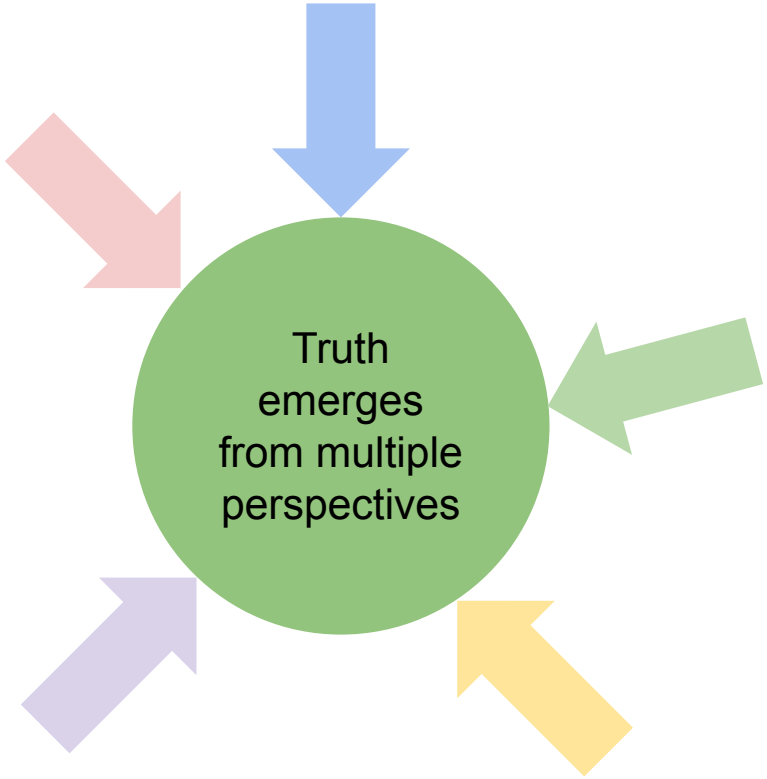
...and core functionality & design principles



Climate justice is worth it

Disclaimer

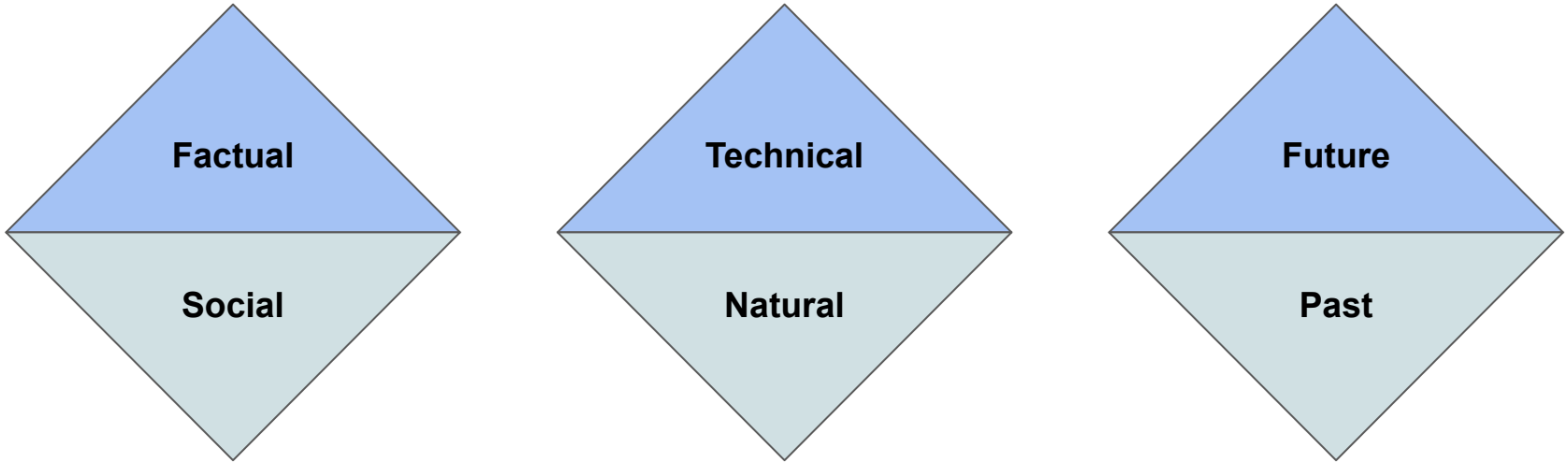
Single source of "truth"



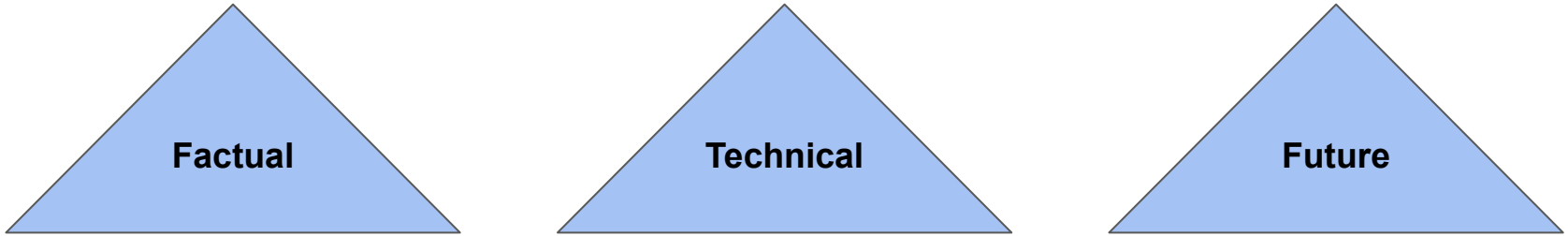
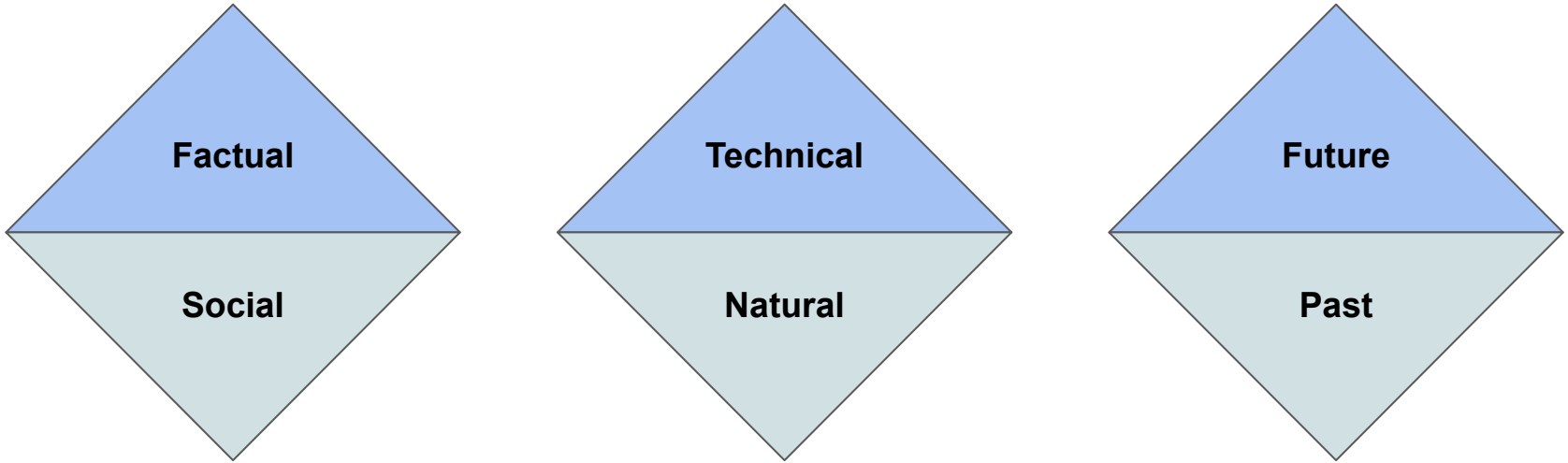
It is difficult to understand something when your identity depends on not understanding it.

— bastardized Upton Sinclair

What is a tech worker identity?



How do tech workers view the climate crisis?



How does climate justice view the climate crisis?