SHAPING DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING IN THE AGE OF AI

Artificial Intelligence in Politics

ROD RIVERS

The Challenge Before Us

Do you want the future of AI in Politics to be determined by the CEOs of big tech and foreign powers? We need to recruit AI to improve political processes, not take control of them.

A Critical Moment for Democracy

AI has the potential to change politics and policymaking. In fact, it is already doing this. Look at the way social media is using AI to influence election outcomes. However, we need to recruit AI to improve political processes, not seize control of them.

If we do not take stock of this now, there is a real danger that the crucial decisions influencing UK society will be increasingly made by people and organisations outside the political arena.

Decision-making processes will become more hidden from public view, and the opportunity for debate, scrutiny and accountability will be lost. However, changes to the processes of political and policy decision-making are hugely difficult.

Our current systems are deeply embedded and entangled. Habit, complexity and vested interests are intimately related barriers to any change and especially so in relation to political decision-making itself. And often rightly so, because processes that have stood the test of time are important to keep and not disrupt.

But AI has come out of left field as a major disruptor to almost everything, and its implications for political decision-making must be assessed and absorbed. To achieve this, we need to not just focus on how AI can be used to enhance the economy but also how AI can be used to enhance the political decision-making processes themselves.

The Opportunity Ahead

01 Short-Term Applications

In the near term, AI can enhance democratic processes through:

- Better civil engagement and public consultation
- Enhanced policy insights and forecasting
- Increased administrative efficiency
- Greater transparency in political processes

02 Long-Term Transformation

Looking further ahead, AI can enable:

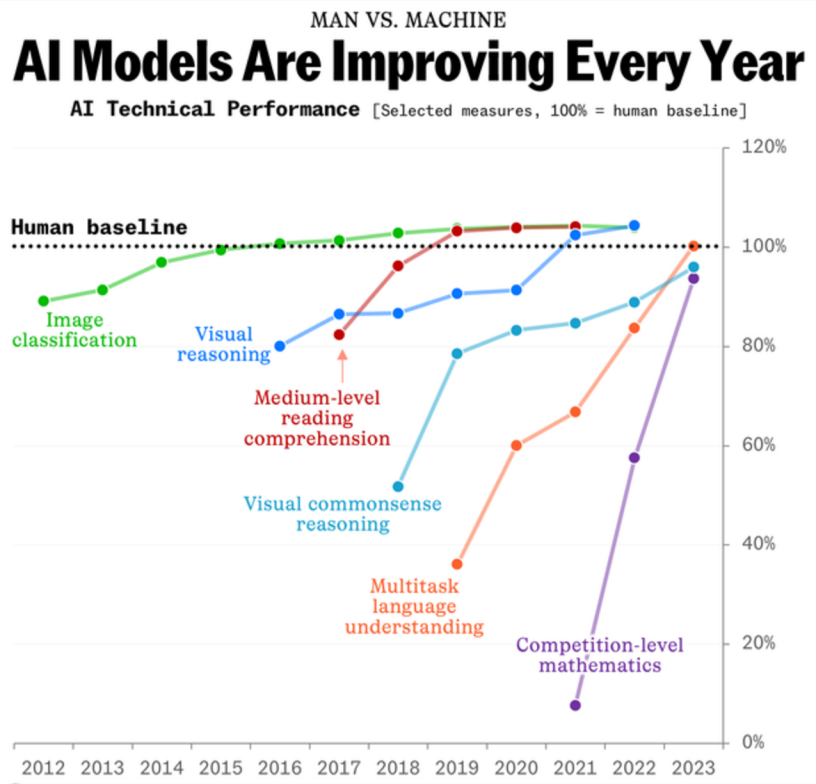
- Constitutional innovation and institutional redesign
- Facilitation of deliberative democracy at scale
- Explicit modelling of trade-offs between different group interests
- Multi-perspective critique of proposed legislation
- Coordination between central and local planning
- Augmentation of government decision-making at all levels

Join the Conversation

We are in danger of rolling out AI such that it merely automates our current ways of going about things, embedding some poor practices even further. However, abrupt and radical change is also unacceptable because it is disruptive and destabilising.

What is needed is a firm and agreed vision based on sound principles, and a plan of managed transition that incorporates new ways of making political decisions incorporating AI, that are based on best practice—evidence-driven, comprehensively consulted, robustly modelled and tested.

This brief paper is a call for us to take stock of what has already been done, both in research and practice, in using AI for political and policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and iterative revision. This will set out the landscape so that we can better plan the journey ahead and help head off a situation where players outside parliament—large corporations, foreign governments, the media, and others—use their increasingly powerful command of AI to determine the political agenda.



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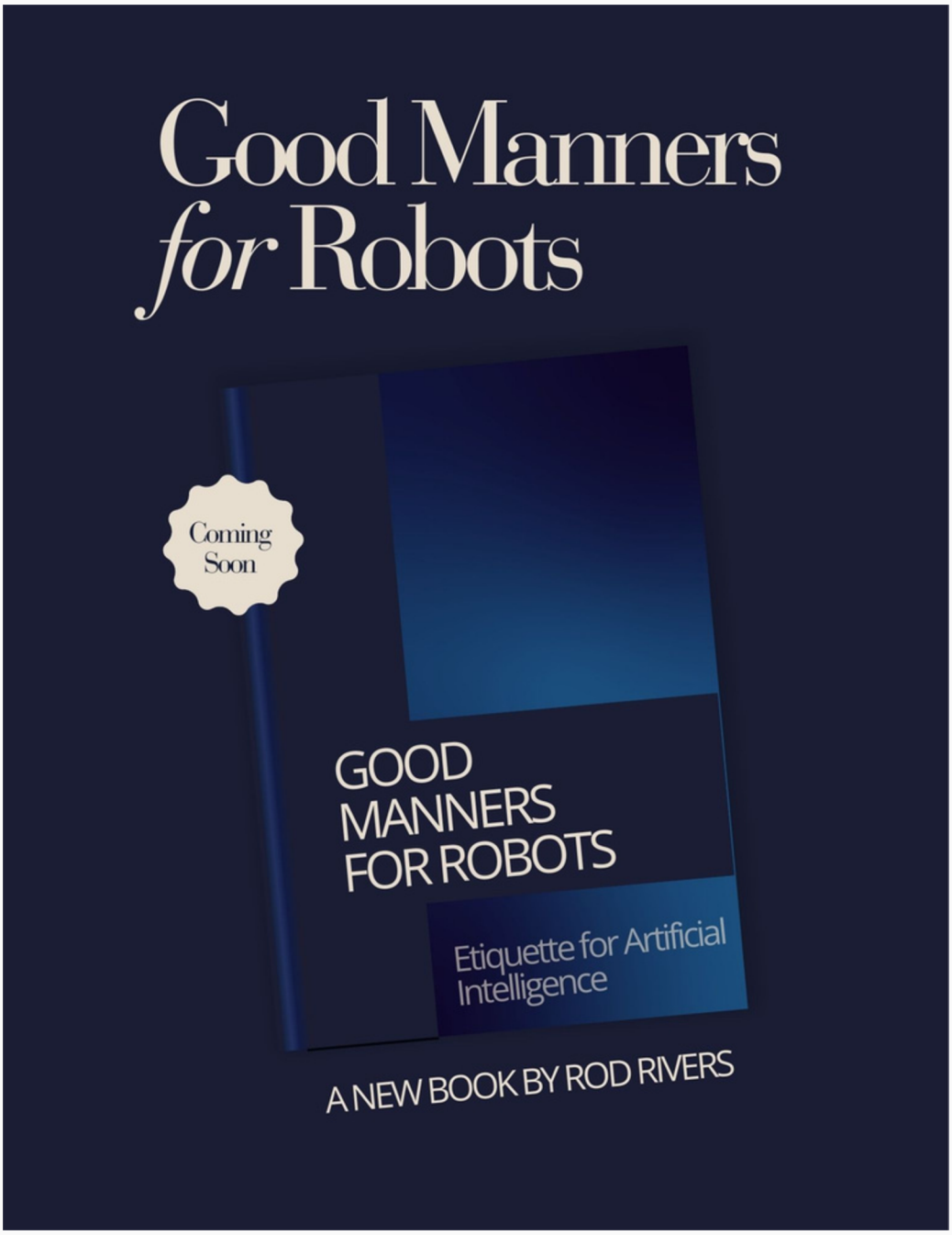
Forthcoming Publication

Express interest to receive a brief paper that takes stock of what has already been done in research and practice in using AI for political and policy formulation and decision-making. This broadly sets out the landscape so that we can better plan the journey ahead and help head-off a situation where players outside parliament (large corporations, foreign governments, the media etc.) use their increasingly powerful command of AI to determine the political agenda. A comprehensive new book for 2026 examining AI's role in political and policy decision-making.



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