



## Civic Statistics and the Evidence Ecosystem

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### **Abstract:**

Human knowledge is not a coherent body of carefully structured knowledge, created by an expert group, and made accessible to others. Rather, it should be thought of as a dynamic fluid created and reshaped in an ecosystem that is made up from a web of creators and consumers who are connected in complex ways. Here, we identify some of the elements in this ecosystem, and map some of their relationships with Civic Statistics. Civic Statistics embraces many of the ideas of the Enlightenment - notably that human happiness can be increased by knowledge, evidence and wise actions. Many actors in the evidence ecosystem share Enlightenment views, but may have honest disagreements about evidence; other actors reject the Enlightenment view entirely. Here, we argue that students should see the evidence they encounter in their daily lives (and in class) in the context of an evidence ecosystem, comprising agents whose ambitions range from benign to malevolent. As educators, we should look for ways to develop student resilience - in particular to make them more resistant to polluting elements in the evidence ecosystem. This is clearly a political stance - not a stance on either right wing or left wing politics, but rather a stance on Enlightenment vs counter-Enlightenment positions. Students need to be aware of the web of creation and destruction that underpins knowledge building, and of the tensions between the Enlightenment and the counter-Enlightenment movements. We offer some practical suggestions for educational practices.

### **Keywords:**

Ecosystem; Democracy; Pollution; Enlightenment