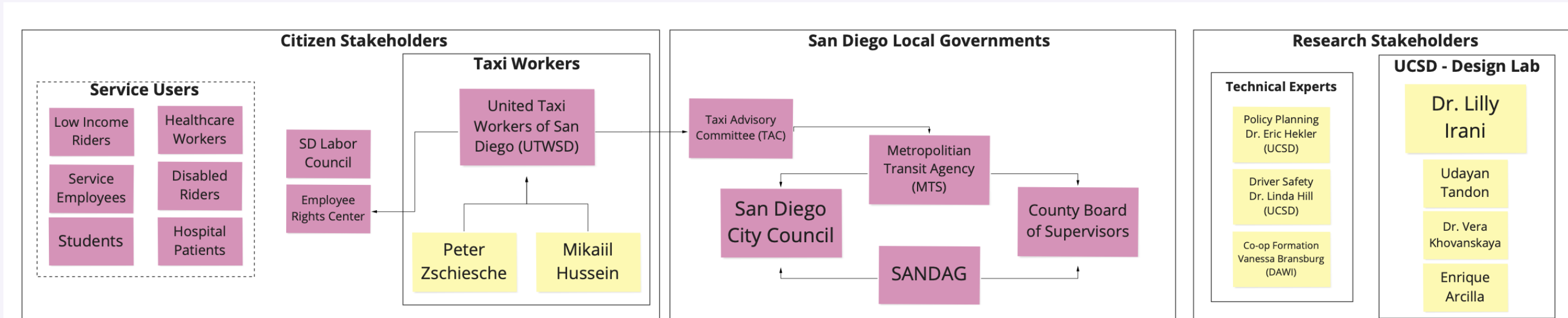## Vera Khovanskaya

University of California, San Diego

What is the role of technology and data expertise in supporting worker advocacy movements?

Hostile Ecologies and Barriers to Community-Led and Worker-Driven Technology Design

This project explores how the contemporary technology innovation ecology is hostile to worker-centered and community-driven design. These hostilities are important to understand if we want to intervene in the policy landscape of technology innovation to support viable alternatives to big tech consolidation and more democratic ways of developing and maintaining technology. We describe the challenges faced by transportation workers, community organizers, and allied technology researchers as they work toward building a cooperatively-owned taxi business with a digital dispatching technology.

Stakeholder map, 2022 (Vera Khovanskaya and Udayan Tandon)

The hostile innovation ecology manifests as constrained access to resources, an inequitable regulatory framework, diminished agency in the software design process, and limits to the will of our community partners. We discuss the paths toward innovation for United Taxi Workers San Diego as compared with transportation network companies (e.g. Lyft, Uber) in terms of access to funding, regulation, labor, expertise, and market. We argue that a critical examination of institutions and polices in the innovation ecology is a necessary step toward charting fair, equitable, and community-strengthening pathways for technology innovation in the future. Collaborators: Udayan Tandon, Enrique Arcilla, Lilly Irani at USCD; and Mikaiil Haji Hussein and Peter Zschiesche at UTWSD. Publication forthcoming.

United Taxi Workers San Diego (UTWSD)
The mission of UTWSD is to unify taxicab workers, to improve working conditions through direct advocacy and empowerment to increase education and civic participation by taxi drivers and their families, and to improve professional transportation services for the San Diego community and visitors to the city.

The centralizing impact of data tools on worker advocacy organizations

This project explores the use of data technologies to manage membership relations within worker advocacy organizations. We explore how contemporary data tools shape the experience of work for staff organizers and the impact of the tools on the centralization of knowledge, expertise, and strategic decision-making within worker advocacy organizations. We approach these questions through qualitative research into the design, procurement, use, and maintenance of these membership tools through interviews with worker advocates, data coordinators and software designers, along with a historical investigation of the membership management strategies used in the past. Our goal is to create a set of best practices for worker organizations to manage their data and support member-driven decision-making.

Image captions: *Top row*: marketing image from a present-day organizing software platform (2022, anonymized); *Second row, left to right*: Dues and Meetings Attended pages from an International Printing Pressmen and Assistants Union Working card (1933), Dues Payment Record page from an International Ladies Garment Workers Union Dues Card (1971); *Third row*: International Ladies Garment Workers Union Dues Cards (1960-1970).