

Preparing Accessibility for the Future and the Present



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The ancestral and traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe & the Huron-Wendat

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Over 4 decades
in the accessibility field
to learn from mistakes



“Rebuke and rebuke”

.. Judy’s memorial service

96.8 % of web site home
pages

Machiavellian Play Book



What if Machiavelli didn't want
Web Accessibility to succeed?

Prioritize an impossible strategy

- WCAG, not ATAG or UAAG (authoring tool or user agent accessibility guidelines)
- Requires compliance by every author, not a few companies
- Requires understanding difficult technical requirements and motivation by all possible authors

Entrench WCAG in legislation

- Requires simple, static, testable criteria
- Serving a group that is highly diverse and variable
- In a context that is quickly changing
- Pitted against innovation
- Framed as a stick and legal risk not an opportunity

Sell techno-solutionism

- Myth of a fix, so problem can be dismissed
- Formulaic tests irrespective of context
- Certification of compliance
- Promote notion of “fully accessible”
- Set completion dates as though it can be completed

Encourage Dependent Industry

- Accessibility auditing industry
- Seen to advocate for accessibility
- Shaming, blaming and conflating trivial misdemeanors with real barriers
- Self-perpetuating, survival dependent on problem

Favoritism

- Competitive process for including requirements
- Divisiveness built in by exclusion of under-represented groups
- Meritocracy as justification of internal hierarchy

Faux performance of inclusion

- Promoting WCAG is seen as supporting accessibility
- Can ignore critical emerging issues
- Obfuscates new risks and knowledge needed

What are we?

An industry A profession

- Motivated by profit
- Remediation rather than prevention
- Proprietary expertise
- Protecting dependence on experts

A religious movement

A political club

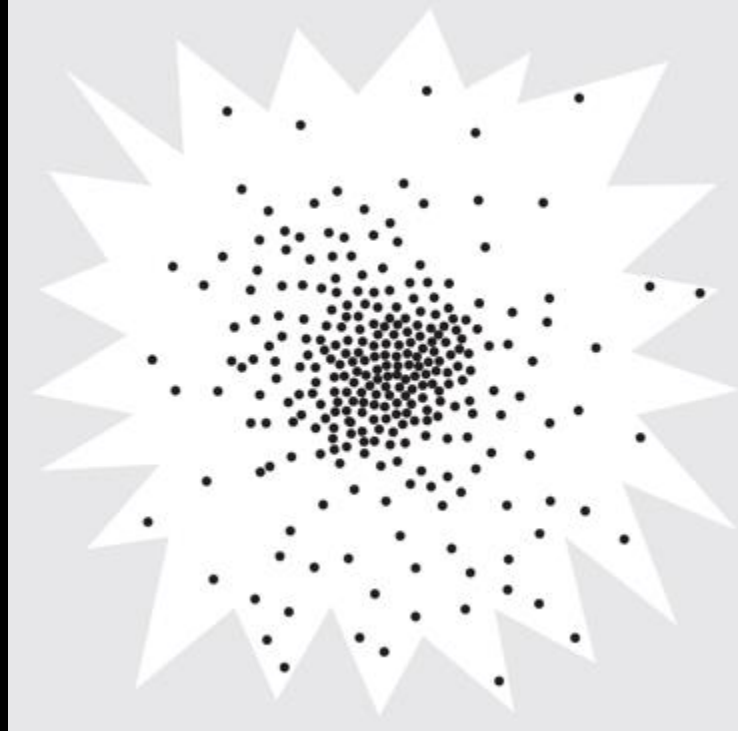
- Dogmatic rituals
- Believers and non-believers
- Insider language
- No room for self-critique

Ethics washing for hire

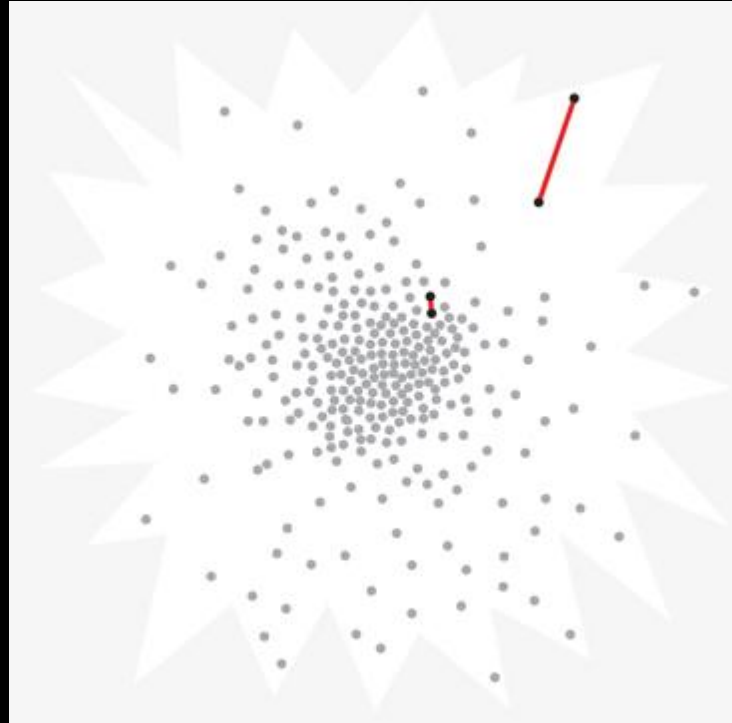
- Inspiration porn
- Tokenism
- Unsustainable good news stories

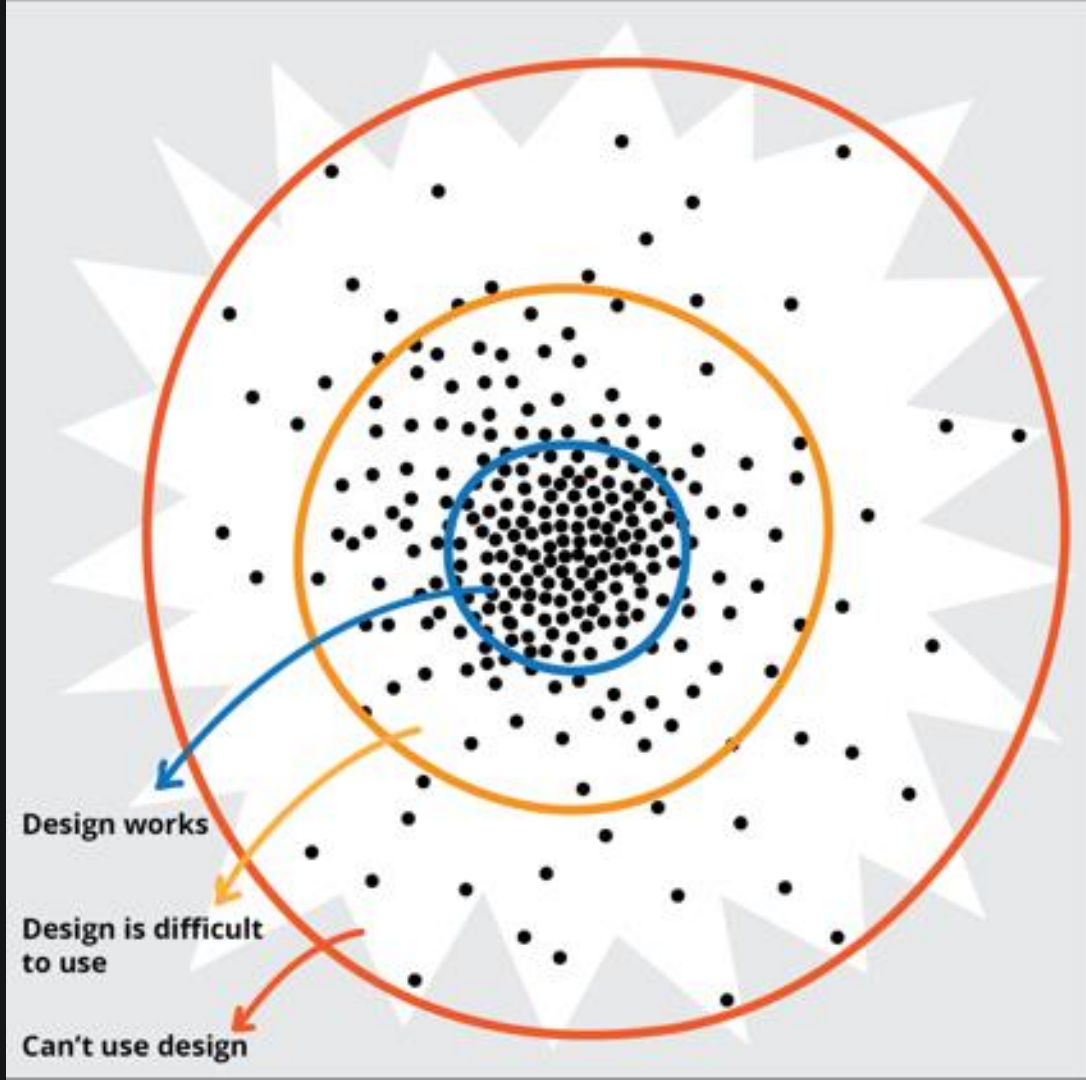
What have I learned
in 4 decades?

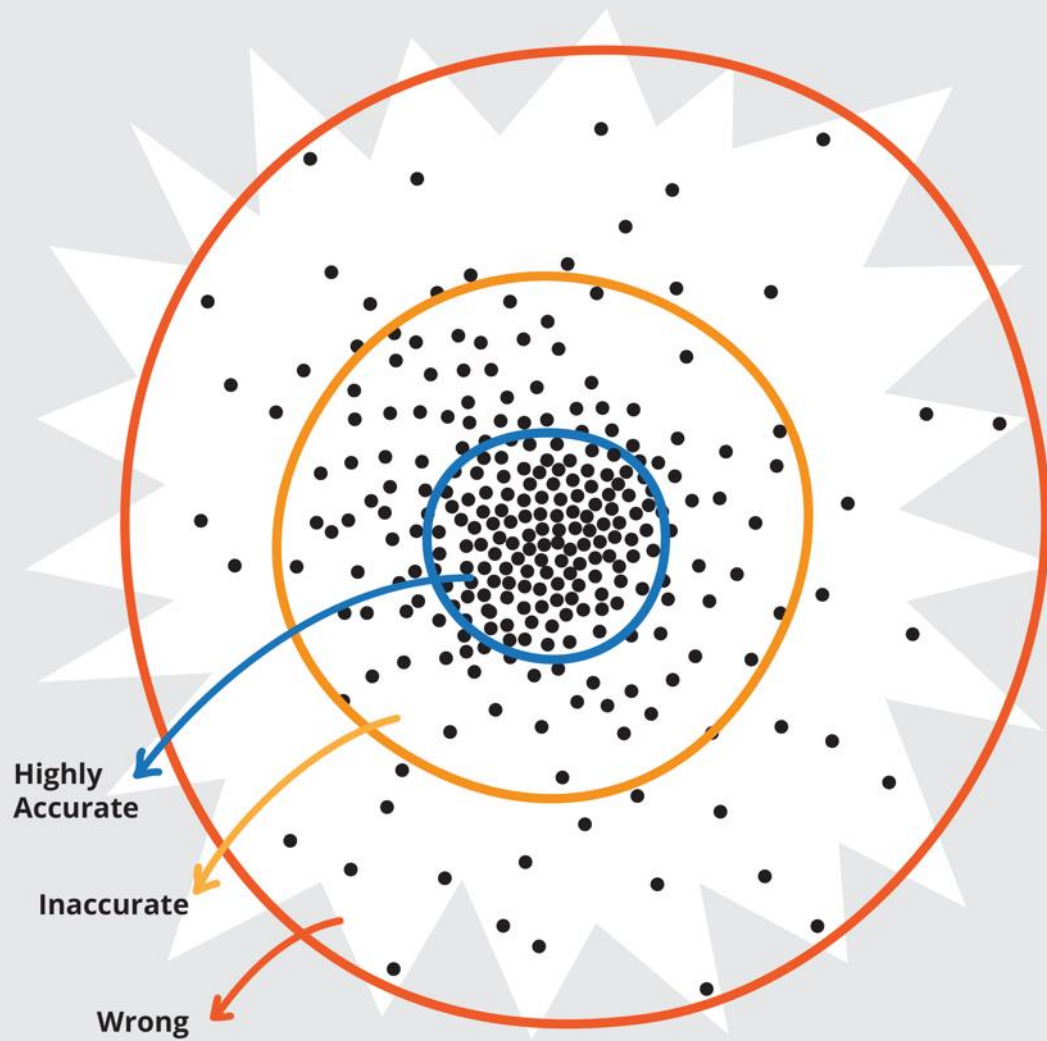
Our human starburst...

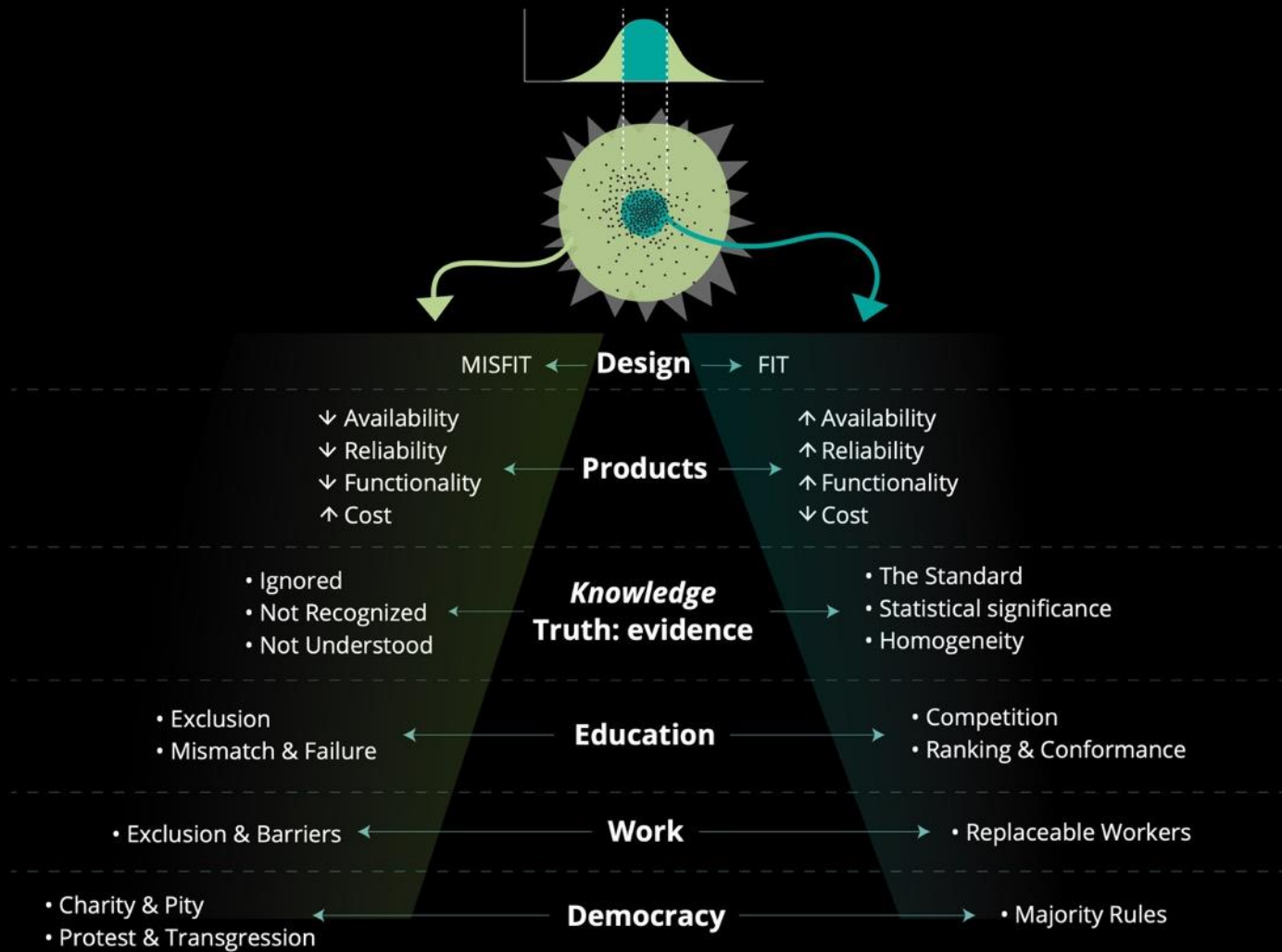


Difference...

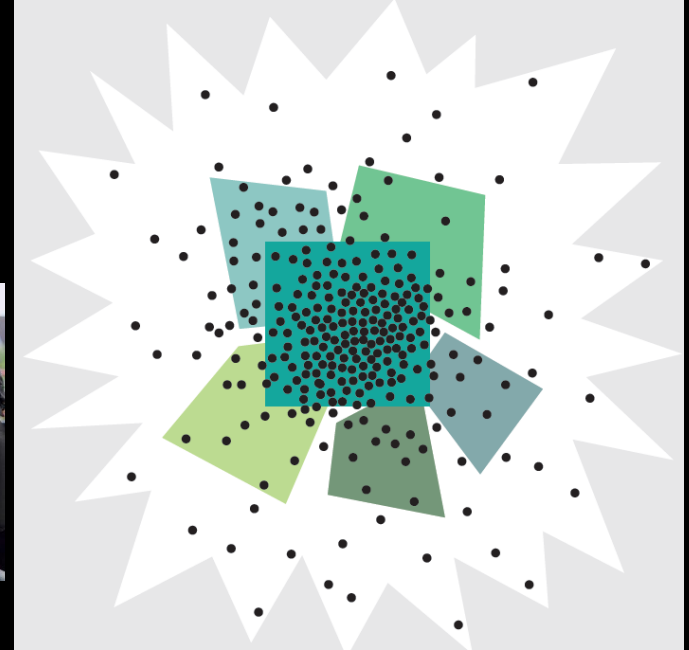




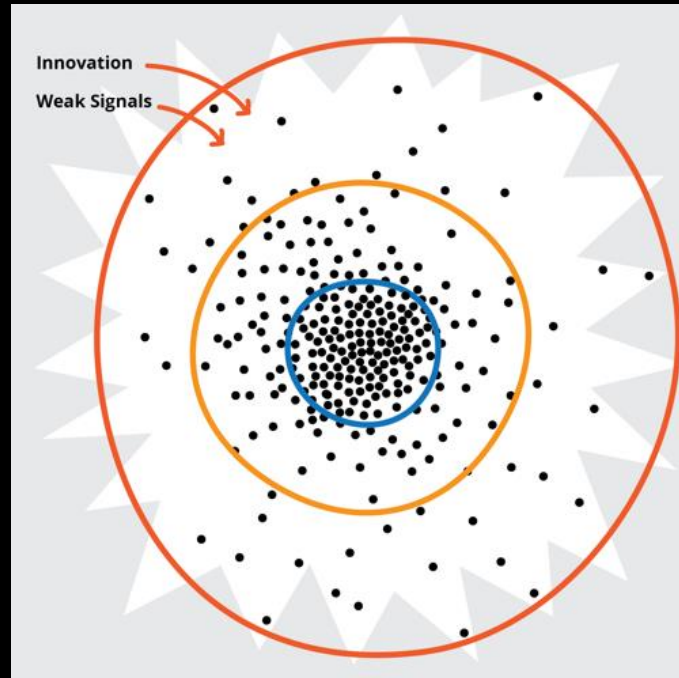


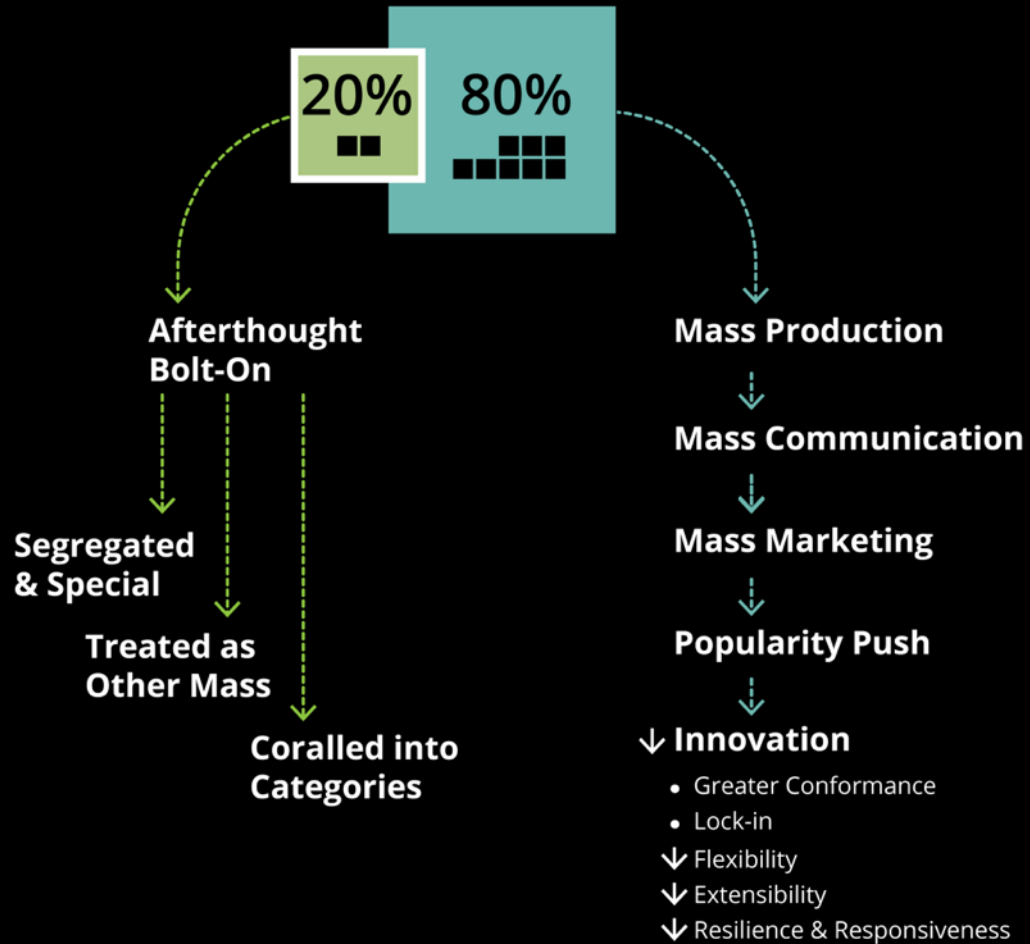
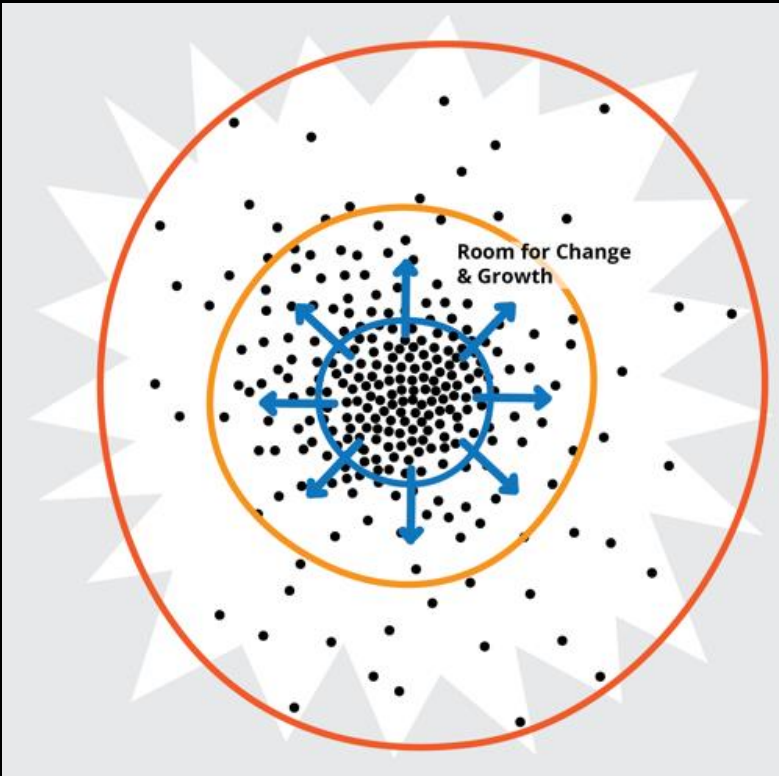


Our current strategies...

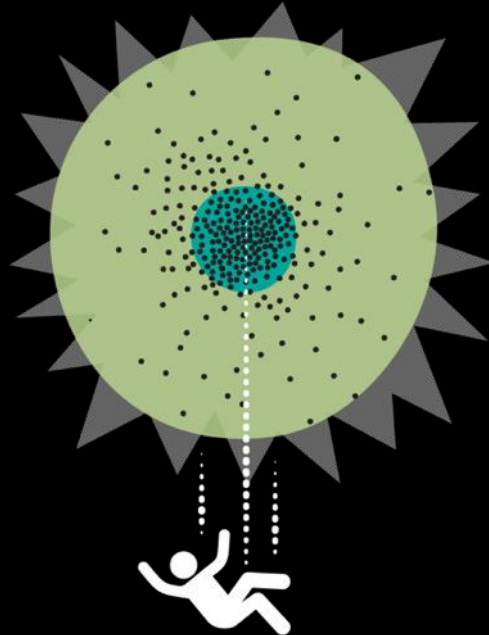


The importance of the edge..





Everyone...



- Anytime
- When you least expect it
- Greatest Probability

While we are checking to make sure
every unwanted advertisement has
valid alt-text...

AI hiring tools eliminate all
candidates with disabilities...

Social media sites censor people
with facial disfigurements...

People with cognitive decline are
targeted with financial fraud..

Automated security systems mark
people with disabilities as
threats..

Social Darwinism Revival

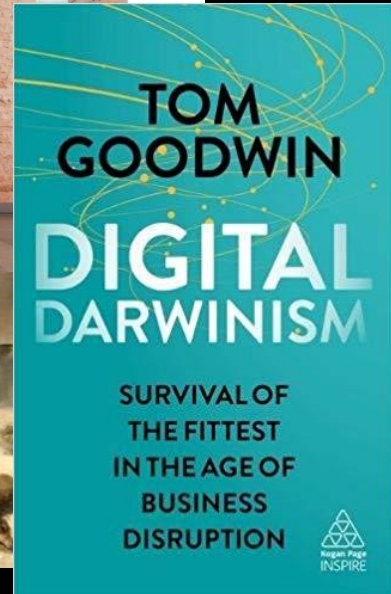
- Survival of the fittest
- Life is a winner-takes-all, zero sum game

People With Disabilities Face Threat Of Medical Bias, Health Care Rationing During COVID-19 Outbreak

By KATHLEEN CREEDON & KIM JOHNSON • JUL 7, 2020

PROGRAM
The Source

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Innovation leaders propose
eliminating disability..

Why do we need vulnerability and fragility to survive?

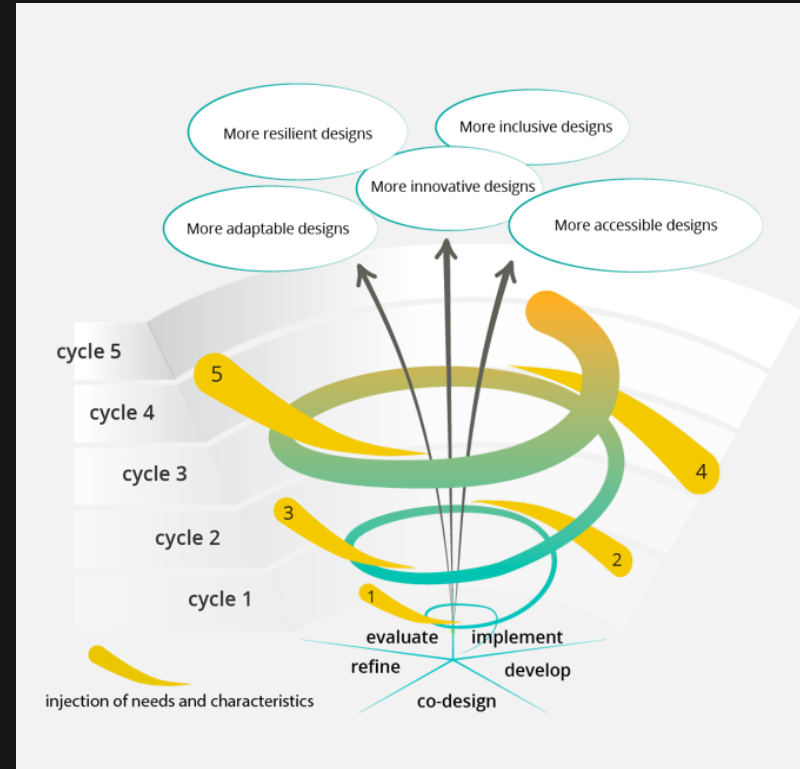
- Compels us to create a system that will work for us when we are vulnerable
- Helps us to survive the next storm
- Perfect monocultures won't survive
- Social Darwinism will leave us without adaptive choices or safety nets

When our processes are guided
by individuals who have lived
experience of struggle &
adversity, our systems will
function in times of struggle and
adversity.

The value of the imperfect,
impermanent and incomplete...
- Wabi-Sabi

There is no winning solution..

- Virtuous tornado
- Iterating to the edge



“The master’s tools will never
dismantle the master’s house”

~ Audre Lorde

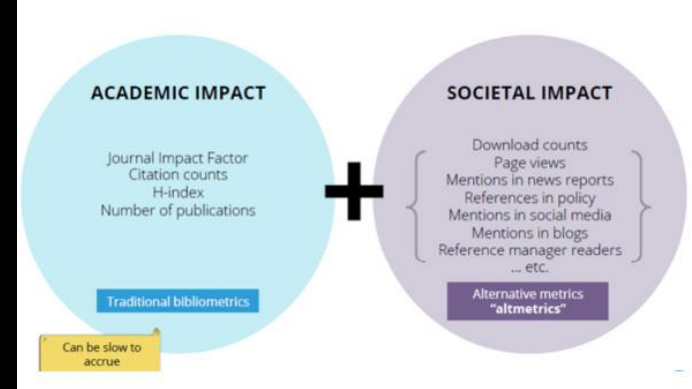
We equate evidence
with majority,
repeatability and
probability, ...



If you are not like
the average,
probability is wrong

We equate impact
with a single measure
for a large
homogeneous number

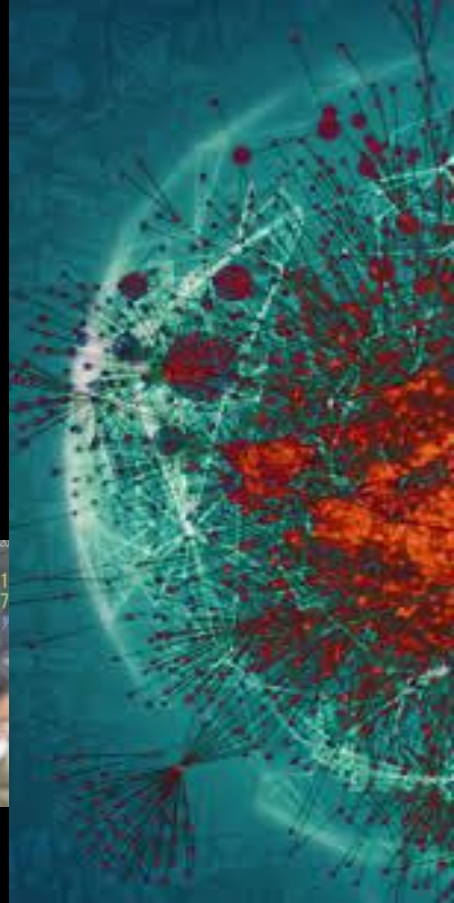
We are
heterogeneous and
need different
measures



We need new approaches..

Complex Adaptive system in accelerating flux...

- Entangled and complexly connected
- Rife with feedback loops
- Viral
- Not just complicated or amenable to engineering



Prone to “Cobra Effects”

- unintended consequences of over-simplistic “solutions” to complex problems
- linear thinking
- Not considering the complex adaptive system we live in

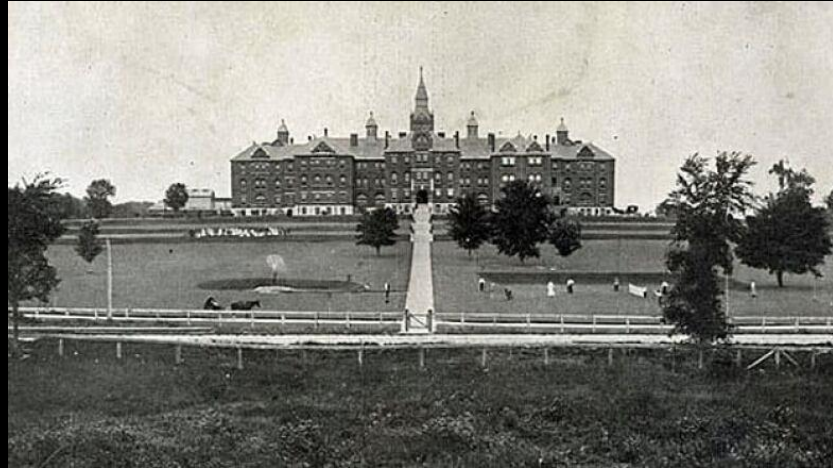


Ursula Franklin



- "**Technology** involves organization, procedures, symbols, new words, equations, and, most of all, a mindset."

“I see you, I respect you, I
value you”



What is the accessibility
community?

