Changing minds: you can, but should you?

Elizabeth Ayer
Agile on the Beach, 2023

About the speaker

Elizabeth Ayer (she/her)

Seattle, USA
& Cambridge, UK

Private sector & Public sector

Product background

Currently 18F & Conflux

How to influence…

Harvard Business Review

How to Increase Your Influence at Work
by Rebecca Knight

Forbes

FORBES > LEADERSHIP > LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

How To Enhance Your Influence And Impact

Entrepreneur

7 Scientifically Proven Steps to Increase Your Influence

MIT Sloan Management Review

MAGAZINE FALL 2008 / RESEARCH FEATURE

How to Have Influence
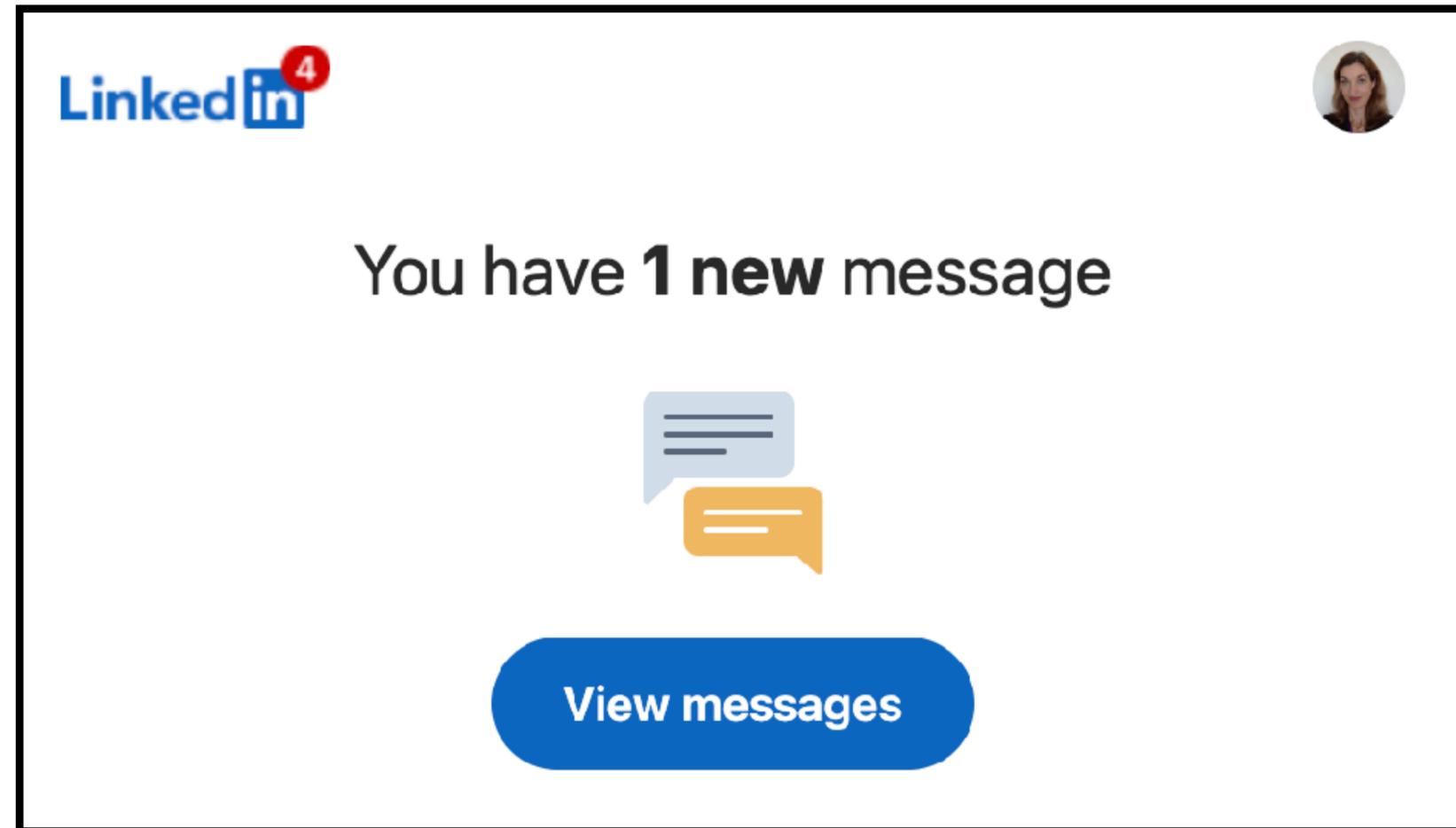
When to influence...

When to influence…

Chirp

Dark patterns are an example of excessive *external* influence

Dark patterns

Very dark patterns

MOTHERBOARD
TECH BY VICE

'Horribly Unethical': Startup Experimented on Suicidal Teens on Social Media With Chatbot

Koko, a mental health nonprofit, found at-risk teens on platforms like Facebook and Tumblr, then tested an unproven intervention on them without obtaining informed consent. "It's nuanced," said the founder.

By Chloe Xiang

https://www.vice.com/en/article/5d9m3a/horribly-unethical-startup-experimented-on-suicidal-teens-on-facebook-tumblr-with-chatbot

"Asshole Design" (Gray, 2020)

Constrains, controls or entraps users into decisions that benefit not them, but the company

https://www.wired.com/story/facebook-social-media-privacy-dark-patterns/

Inside orgs, we have more reason to act ethically….

An ethical culture in your org may…

* Increase trust

* Lower stress

* Lower risk

* Improve personal wellbeing

And if you ignore ethics, there's a downward slide.

# Short intro to ethics

Ethics: Utilitarianism (consequence-based)

"[I]t is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong" (Bentham, 1776)

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A_fragment_on_government/Preface

Ethics: Universalism (duty-based)

"Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or that of another, always as an end and never as a means only" (Kant, 1785)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groundwork_of_the_Metaphysics_of_Morals

Outcomes   Agile: why not both?   Humanity

Utilitarianism   Universalism
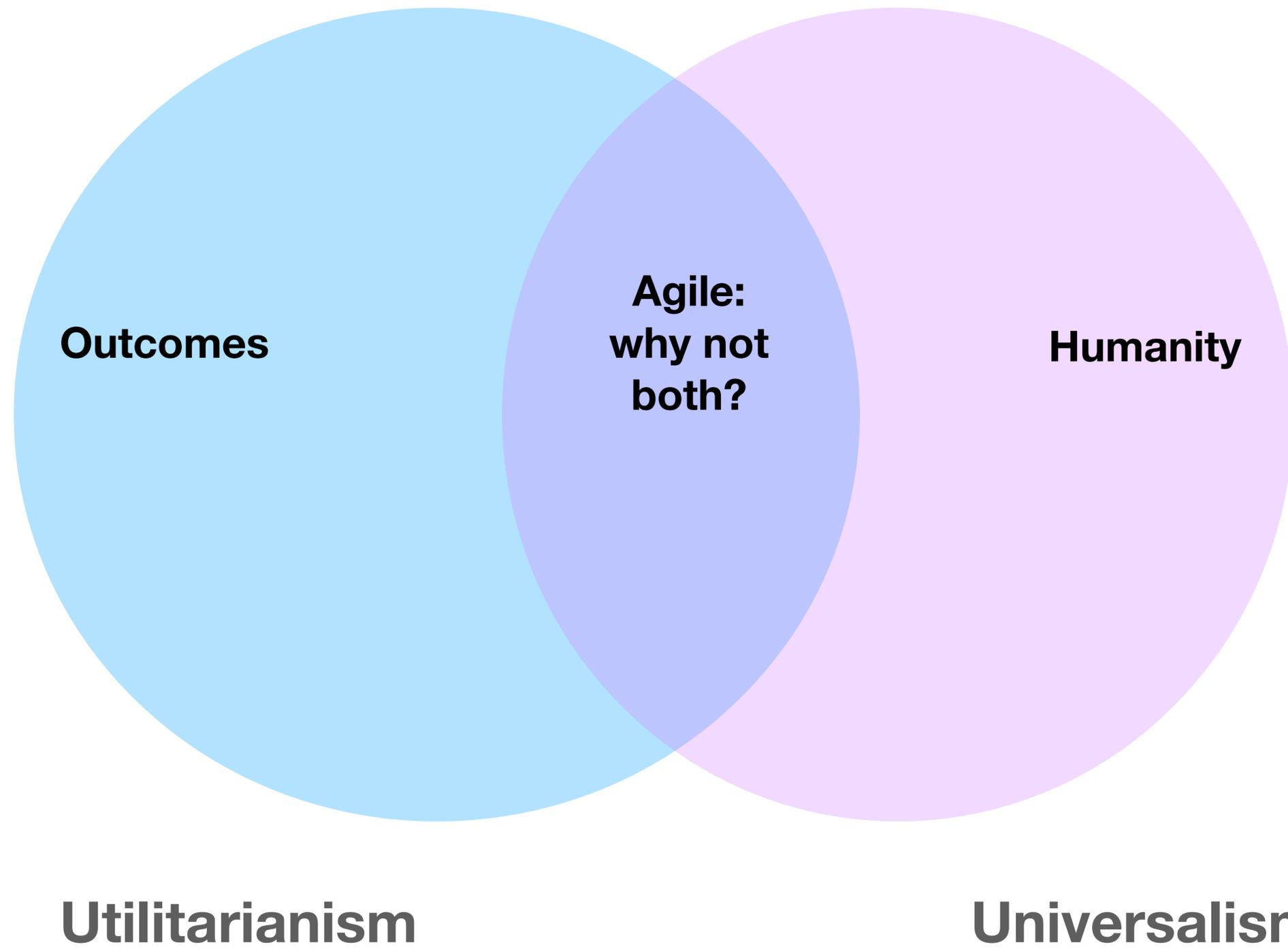
Utilitarianism has a tendency to

- embed a concept of acceptable human damage

- concentrate power

Are power and ethics orthogonal?

Gain power, lose touch

https://americansfortaxfairness.org/wp-content/uploads/billionaires.png

How can we stay ethical as we gain influence?

@ElizAyer #AOTB2023
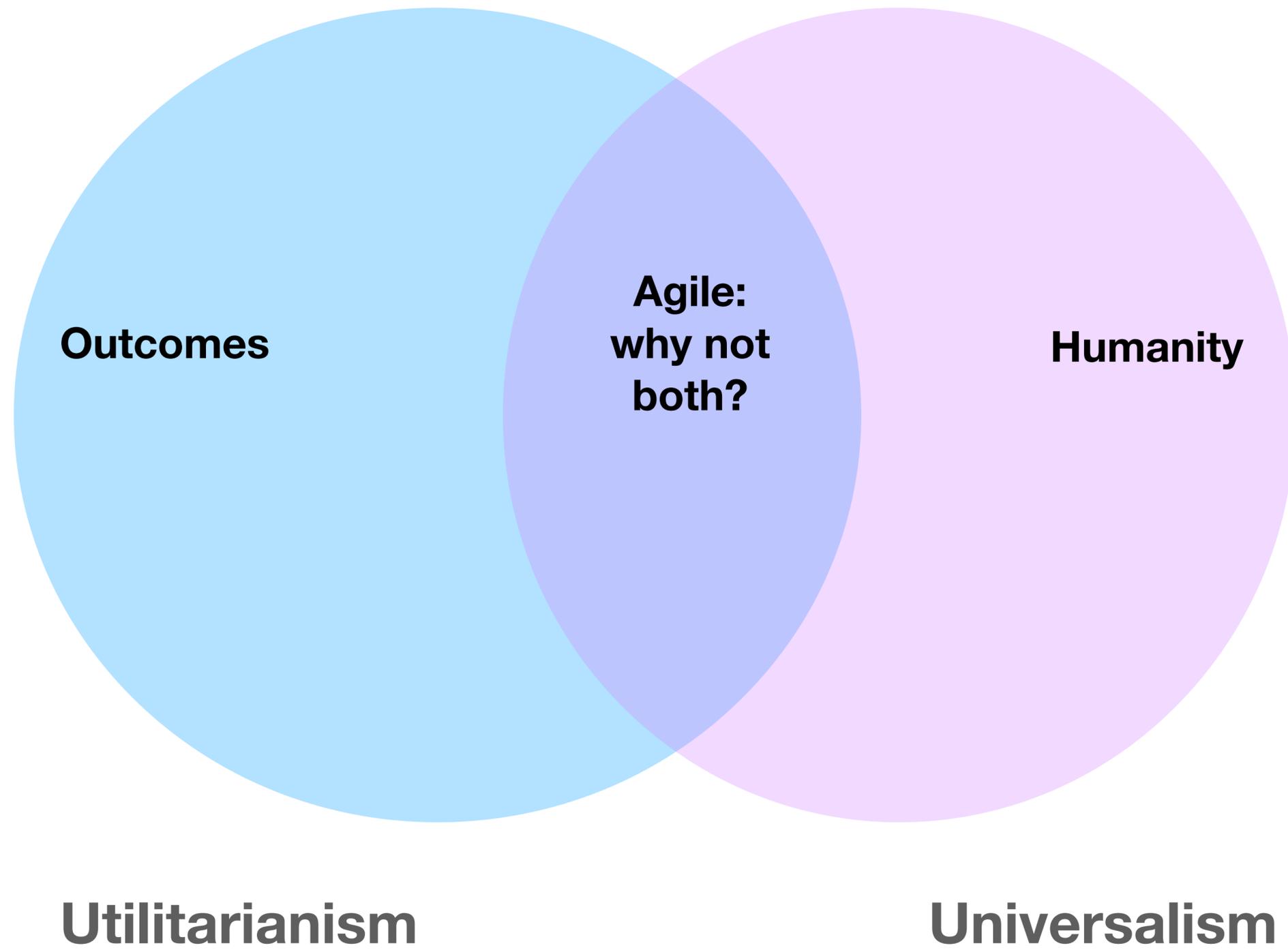
Useful phrase for staying grounded:

"No decisions about us without us"

Ethical spectrum

Change-maker changes someone without consent

Change-maker supports self-determination

Ethical spectrum

Change-maker changes someone without consent

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Coercion

Violence

Ethical spectrum

Change-maker changes someone without consent

Change-maker supports self-determination

Coercion

Violence

Convergent facilitation

Clean language

Pure coaching

Ethical spectrum: Management
(Mary Parker Follett)

**Change-maker changes
someone without consent**

**Change-maker supports
self-determination**

Power Over

Power With

Power To

Command &
Control

Empowerment

Building
Capability

<——>

Ethical spectrum: Design
(KA McKercher)

Change-maker changes someone without consent

Change-maker supports self-determination

Design At   **Design For**   **Design With**   **Lead By**

<--->

Ethical spectrum: Design
(KA McKercher)

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Design At   **Design For**   **Design With**   **Lead By**

User-centred
Design

Co-design

Design Justice

Align voice in decisions with

✦ **who has most experience and**

✦ **who will be most affected**

Change techniques and the ethical spectrum

Change management frameworks: patterns to effectively carry out change in an org

Example: ADKAR

The change-maker creates

- Awareness

- Desire

- Knowledge

- Ability

- Results

Example: ADKAR

The change-maker creates

To-state is already decided

- Awareness

- Desire

- Knowledge

- Ability

- Results

Example: ADKAR

The change-maker creates

- Awareness

- Desire

- Knowledge

- Ability

- Results

Risk of gaslighting

Example: ADKAR
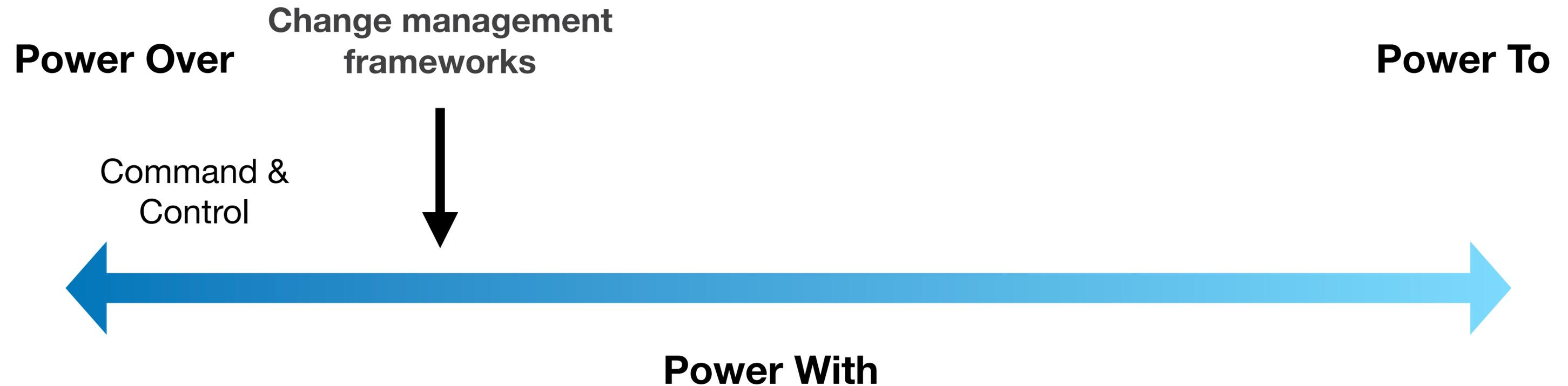
The change-maker creates

- Awareness

- Desire

- Knowledge

- Ability

- Results

**No real openness to
being changed back**

Change-maker changes someone without consent

Change-maker supports self-determination

Change management frameworks

Power Over

Power To

Command & Control

Power With

Influence-spotting: covert influence

Personal connections

Hidden agendas

Information quality

Framing

Influence-spotting: covert influence

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Influence-spotting: covert influence

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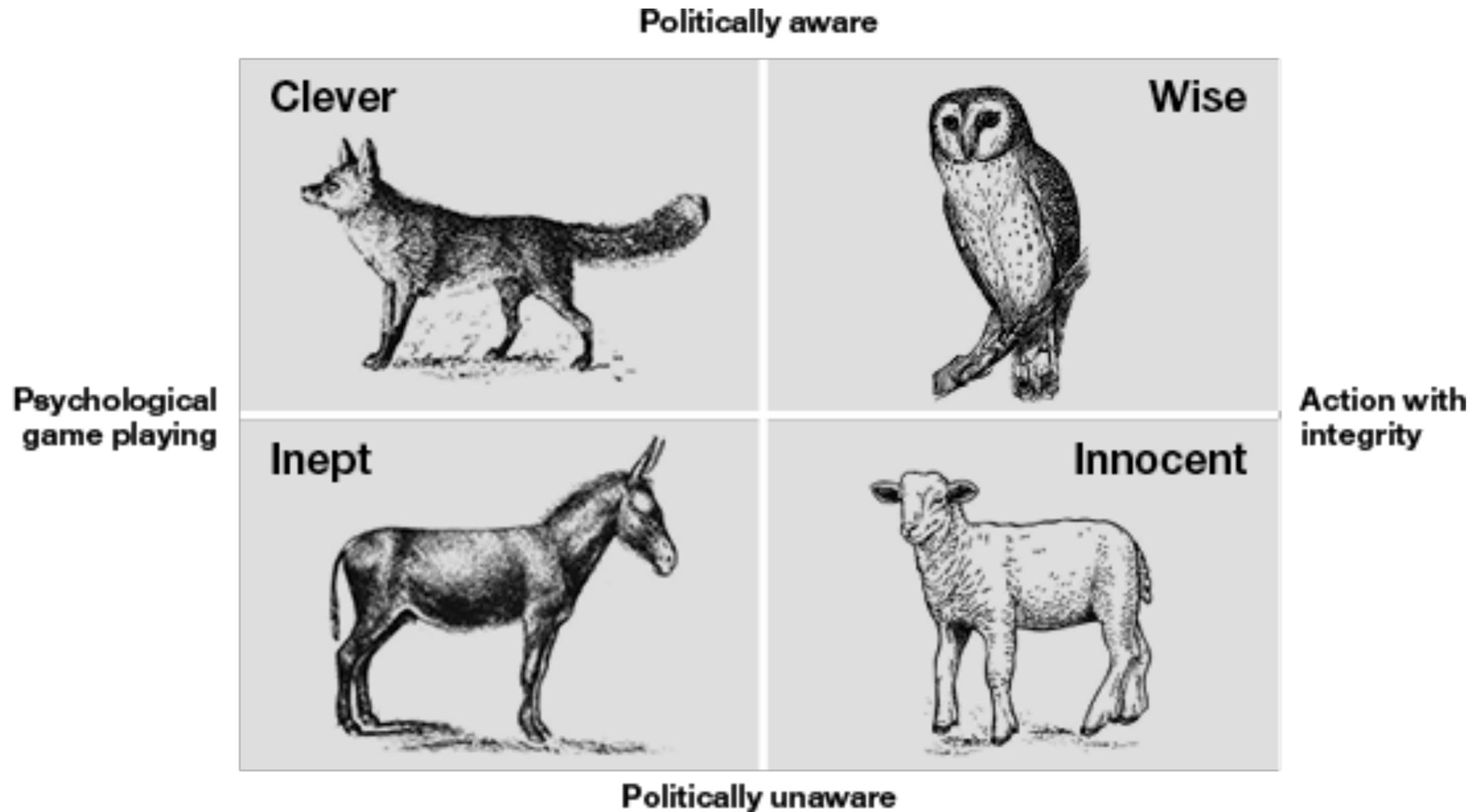# Remember Nudge?

Influence by exploiting cognitive bias and choice architectures.

Product Managers, Designers, and Facilitators have a lot of influence by setting up the choices to be made.

Influence through framing

https://www.leadershipcentre.org.uk/artofchangemaking/theory/owl-fox-donkey-sheep/

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Change-maker supports self-determination

"Nudge"/
Choice architectures

Power Over

Power To

Command &
Control

Change
management
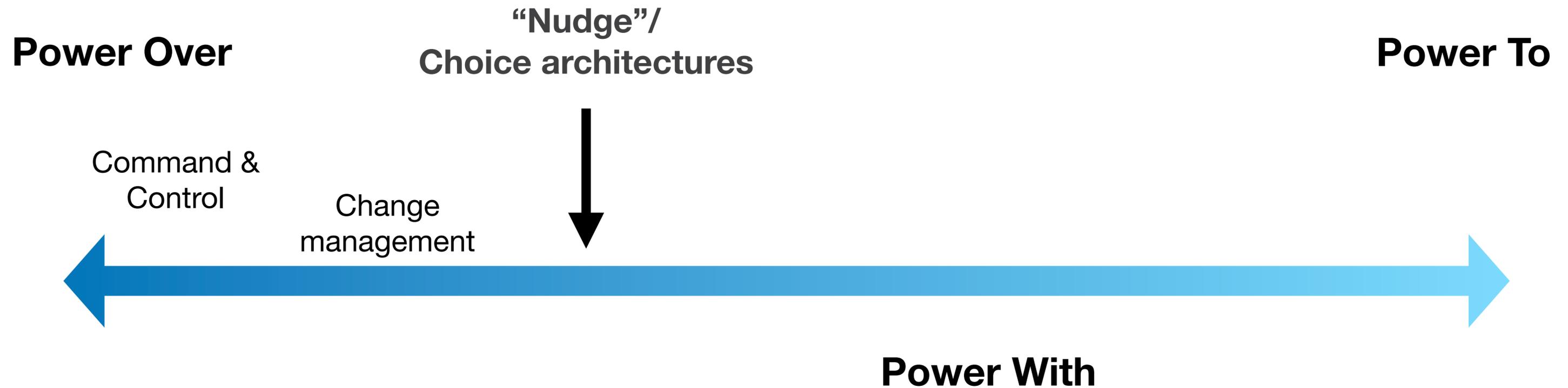
Power With

Change-maker changes someone else without consent

Change-maker supports self-determination

Power Over

Command & Control

Change management

Nudge/choice architectures

User-centred design

Co-design

Power To

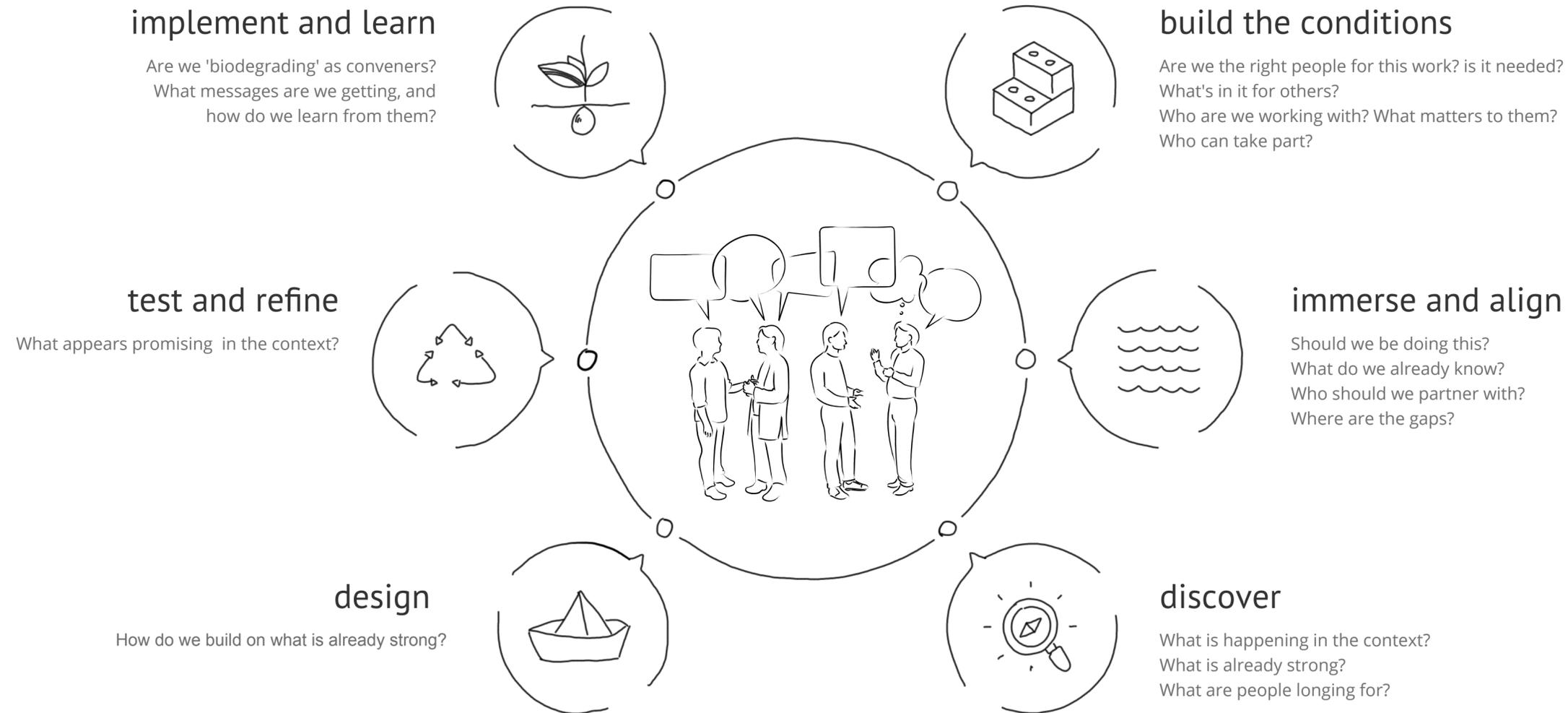**Power With**

4 principles of co-design

- Share power

- Prioritise relationships

- Use participatory means

- Build capability

co-design
process

implement and learn

Are we 'biodegrading' as conveners?
What messages are we getting, and
how do we learn from them?

build the conditions

Are we the right people for this work? is it needed?
What's in it for others?
Who are we working with? What matters to them?
Who can take part?

test and refine

What appears promising in the context?

immerse and align

Should we be doing this?
What do we already know?
Who should we partner with?
Where are the gaps?

design

How do we build on what is already strong?

discover

What is happening in the context?
What is already strong?
What are people longing for?

BEYOND STICKY NOTES

From
"What is co-design"

KA McKercher

https://www.beyondstickynotes.com/what-is-codesign

Change-maker changes someone else without consent

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Power Over

Power To

Command & Control

Change management

Nudge/choice architectures

User-centred design

Co-design

Coaching
Convergent facilitation

Power With

Tools

To decide how to influence, ask yourself some good questions....

Tools for deciding when it's ethical to influence

✦ Positionality reflection

✦ Equity pause

✦ Is it co-design?

Positionality reflection: know thyself

What is my interest in influencing here?

Is there anyone who should be influencing instead of me?

What do I have that nobody else does?

Positionality reflection: know thyself

What is my interest in influencing here?

I'm annoyed by tech's ethical monoculture, I'd like to connect with and support other folks who are interested in this subject, and I quite fancied a trip to the beach.

Is there anyone who should be influencing instead of me?

Not that I know of, but maybe I'll find out this way.

What do I have that nobody else does?

Willingness to do the work, ability to come to this particular place.

Tools: Equity Pause (Agrawal, after equityXDesign)

Awareness: What would we like to say that hasn't been said?

Inclusion: Who are we not hearing from?

Relationships: Is this moving towards relationship?

Acknowledgement: Are we acknowledging history?

Process & Practice: Are we on the right track?

Goal: Are we moving towards more and/or improved equity and inclusion practice?

Implicit Biases: Where are our blindspots and biases

Never would I ever: What social issues must I recuse myself from?

https://www.publicdesignforequity.org/resources/2020/5/25/equity-pause-questions-H71mB

Tools: Co-design quick test (McKercher)

Was there mutual learning?

Was there some degree of co-deciding?

Were people with lived experience recognised for their time?

https://www.beyondstickynotes.com/what-is-codesign

Recap

Summary

✦ Business literature implies more influence is always better.

✦ More influence is not always better (Asshole Design).

✦ Agile has represented an ethical shift from "ends justifies the means" towards relating to each other as humans (Consequence-based to Duty-based)

✦ There's an ethical spectrum of how much agency and voice change-makers allow ("No decisions about us without us")

✦ Change management, choice architectures, co-design

✦ Pausing to question

(PS Try not to overthink this)

Acknowledgements

This talk has been influenced by Design Justice, KA McKercher, Colin Gray, Mary Parker Follett, Miki Kashtan, Shalini Agarwal, equityXDesign, Kevin Mori, Nour Sidawi, and others.

Questions/Discussion?

Thank you!

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