

# **Wicked Problems & Clumsy Solutions: The Role of Leadership**

Keith Grint

What work problem is proving the most difficult to solve?

# Change

1. The Problem of change & a typology of problems:  
Tame, Wicked & Critical
2. Elegant Solutions to Tame & Critical Problems
3. Why Elegant Solutions don't resolve Wicked Problems but  
Clumsy Solutions might

# Ebbs, Flows and Residual Impact

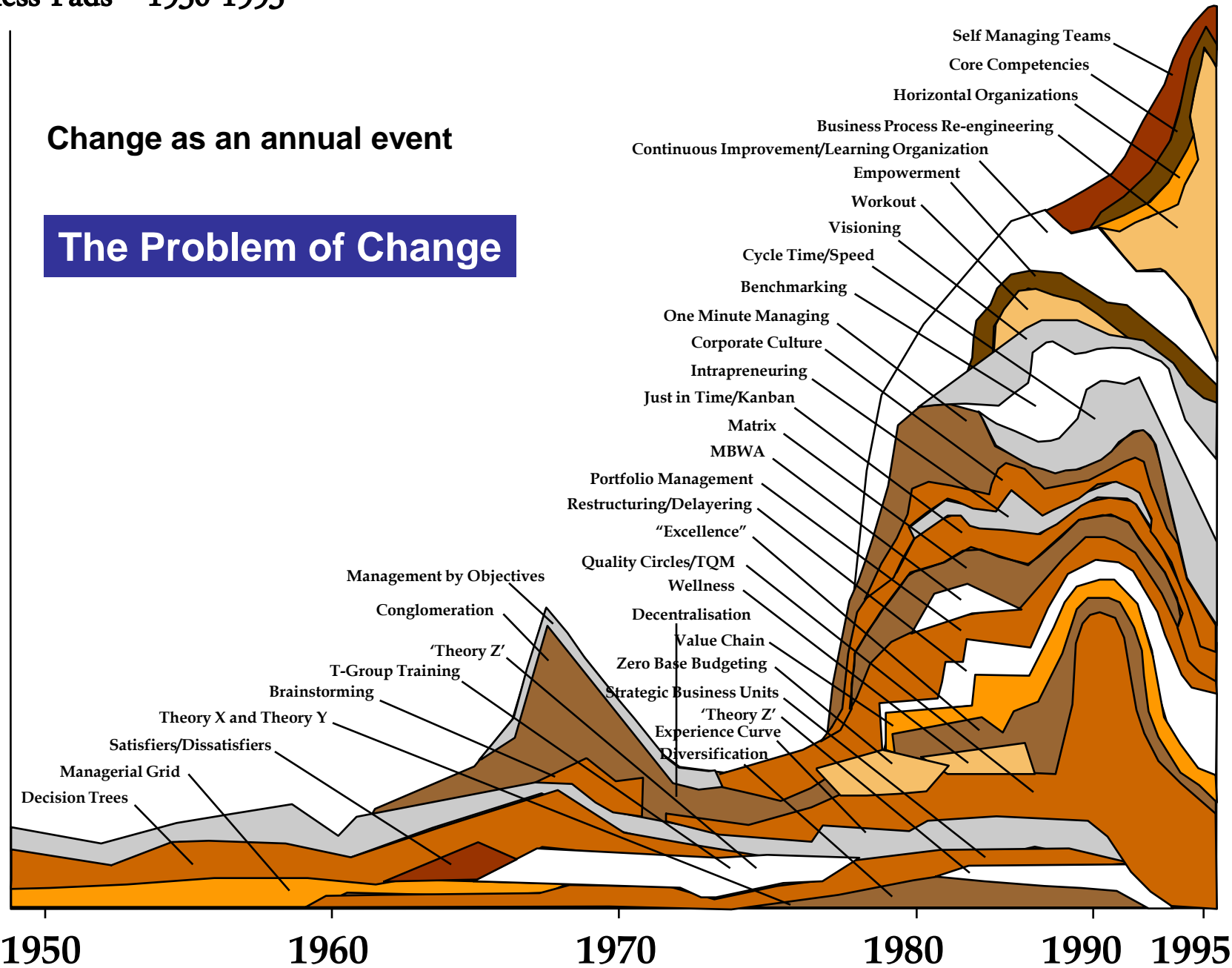
of Business Fads \* 1950-1995

Richard Pascale

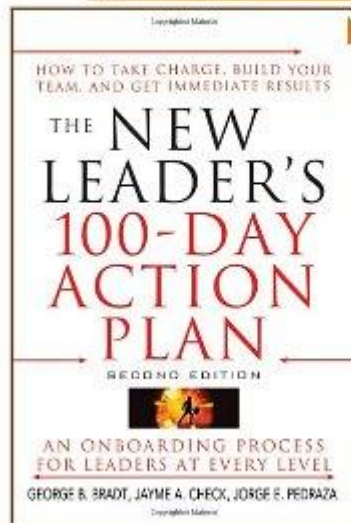
Change as an annual event

## The Problem of Change

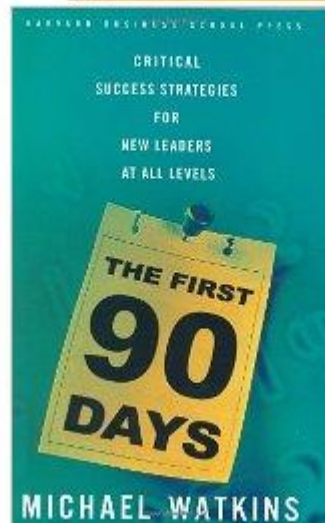
Influence Index



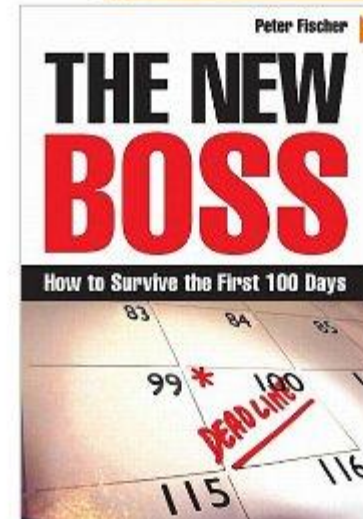
Click to **LOOK INSIDE!**



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Click to **LOOK INSIDE!**



# The NHS: ¼ century of change (AKA Restructuring)

1982: Abolition of Area Health Authorities

1982-85: Introduction of general management

1985: Creation of NHS Board at the Dept of Health

1989-93: Establishment of NHS Trusts

1989-95: Creation of GP Fundholding & Commissioning

1989-95: Setting up NHS Management Executive (later NHS Executive)

1990: Replacement of FPCs (Family Practitioner Clinic) by FHSAs

1991-97: Reconfiguration of Health Authorities

1991: Restructuring of NHS Organisation Boards

1994: Reorganization of RHAs (Regional Health Authorities)

1994: Abolition of FHSAs & incorporation into Health Authorities

1995: Reconfiguration of Acute Services & Trusts

1996: Abolition of RHAs, incorporation into NHS Executive

1997: Abolition of GP fundholding, replacement with PCGs (Primary Care Group)

2000: Abolition of NHS Executive, incorporation into the Dept. of Health

2001: Abolition of NHS Executive Regional Offices, move to Regional DHSCs

(Directorate of Health & Social Care) at Dept of Health

2001: Replacement of larger health authorities with SHAs (Strategic Health Authorities)

2001: Replacement of PCGs with PCTs (Primary Care Trusts)

2002: Creation of Foundation NHS Trusts

2002: Creation of Health and Social Care Trusts

2005: Merger of 300 PCTs into 100 larger PCTs

2005: Merger of 28 SHAs into 10 larger SHAs

2006: Reorganization of Dept. of Health to split NHS and DH responsibilities

.....

2010 White Paper: abolition of PCT's & SHAs; decentralization of budgets to GPs & Consortia



## Major inquiries and the main legislation affecting policing 1960-2008

1960	Establishment of the Royal Commission on the Police
1964	Police Act – establishment of the Tri-Partite Structure for policing
1967	Home Office circular encouraging unit beat Policing
1968	Lord Denning ruling
1976	Police Act
1977	Fisher Report
1980	Home Affairs Select Committee Report on Sus Laws
1981	Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, Byford Inquiry – The Yorkshire Ripper
1983	Home Office circular 114/83 (Financial Management Initiative)
1984	Police and Criminal Evidence Act
1988	Home Office Circular 106/88 (new management strategies for Police)
1989	Publication of the Operational Policing Review
1989	Taylor Report on the Hillsborough Stadium Disaster
1991	Royal Commission on Criminal Justice
1993	Audit Commission publishes <i>Helping with Enquiries</i>
1993	White Paper on Police Reform
1993	Publication of the Sheehy Inquiry report
1994	Police and Magistrates Court Act
1994	Audit Commission publishes <i>Cheques and Balances</i>
1995	Core and Ancillary Tasks Review – Final Report
1996	Final Report on the Cassels Inquiry, Audit Commission publishes <i>Streetwise</i> , Police Act
1997	Police Act – Creates PITO and NCIS
1998	Crime and Disorder Act
1999	Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report
1999	Patten Report – future of Policing in Northern Ireland
2000	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act
2001	Criminal Justice and Police Act, Cantle Report, Clarke Report,
2001	Home Office White Paper – Policing a New Century, Private Security Industry Act
2002	Police Reform Act-National Policing Plan, PCSO's introduced IPCC established
2003	Richard Inquiry, HO Green Paper- Policing: <i>Building Safer Communities together</i> , Anti-Social Behaviour Act
2004	National Policing Plan 2005-2008
2005	HMIC report on workplace modernization, <i>HO report – Neighbourhood Policing</i>
2005	Prevention of Terrorism Act, Serious and Organized Crime and Police Act
2006	Terrorism Act, Police and Justice Act (Establishes the NPIA)
2008	Flanagan Report
2008	Policing Green Paper

## MOD changes to personnel 1964-2009

1964 MOD formed from Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry, & Ministry of Defence itself.

**Secretary of State for Defence: Nineteen since 1964**

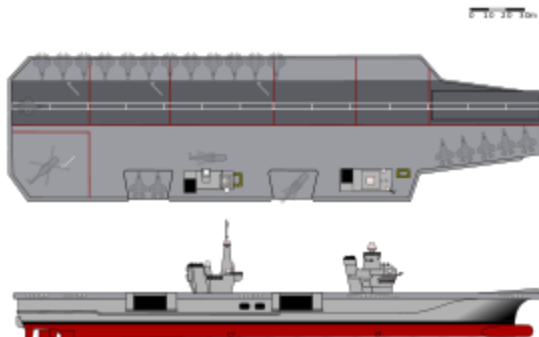
**Chief of the Defence Staff: Twenty since 1964**

**Chief of the General Staff: Eighteen since 1964**

**Chief of the Naval Staff: Eighteen since 1964**

**Chief of the Air Staff: Fifteen since 1964**

**Ninety chiefs in 45 years (@ one every 6 months)**



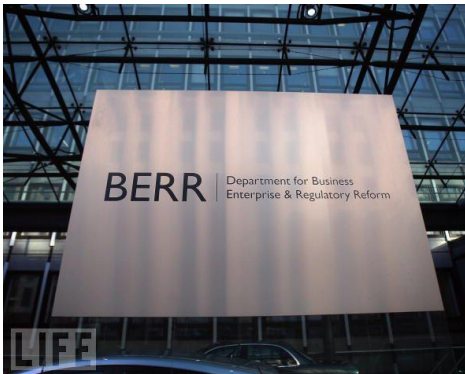
HMS QE decision via strategic defence review 1998  
In service @ 2018





## Government's Whitehall Restructuring (National Audit Office, 2010)

1980 – 2009: 25 new government depts created (Cf. 2 in USA); 13 of these no longer exist  
2005- 2009: 90 reorganizations of central gov & arms length's bodies, cost: £780m - £1bn  
Little attempt to assess VfM for any changes



Department for  
**Innovation,  
Universities &  
Skills**

# The Problem of Change

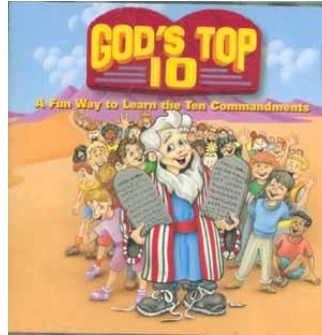
Drowning in the waves of change



BOHICA

# Top ten critical change issues

## The Problem of Change



1. An accepted need to change
2. A viable vision/alternative state
3. Change agents in place
4. Sponsorship from above
5. Realistic scale & pace change
6. An integrated transition programme
7. A symbolic end to the status quo
8. A plan for likely resistance
9. Constant advocacy
10. A locally owned benefits plan

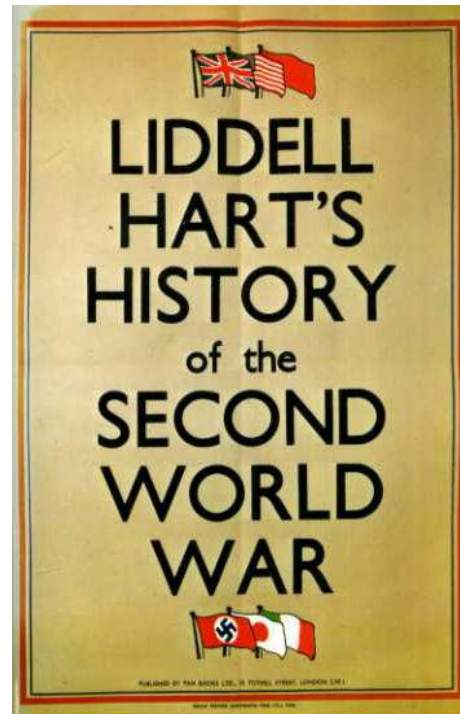
## The Problem with Change:

@ 75% of change programmes fail in their own terms



Basil Liddell Hart: 1944.

‘The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind is getting the old one out.’



# The Problem with Change

Do different kinds of problems require different kinds of change?

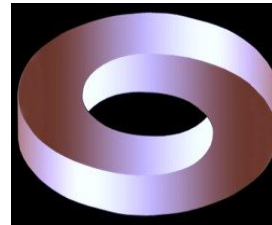
1. Critical Problems: Commander



2. Tame Problems: Management



3. Wicked Problems: Leadership





# Problems, Problems, Problems

## Critical Problems: Commander



1. Portrayed as self-evident crisis; often at tactical level
2. General uncertainty – though not ostensibly by commander who provides ‘answer’
3. No time for discussion or dissent
4. Legitimizes coercion as necessary in the circumstances for public good
5. Associated with Command
6. Encouraged through reward



Commander's Role is to take the required decisive action – that is to: provide the *answer* to the problem

# Plato's Philosopher-Kings: Omnipotent and Omniscient Commanders



White Elephants:

1. Albino Elephant: Deity - Omniscient & Omnipotent
2. Expensive & Unnecessary & Foolhardy Expense



# Problems, Problems, Problems

Tame Problems: Management – Tame and Wicked Problems (Rittel and Webber, 1973).

Problems as PUZZLES – there is a solution

Can be complicated but there is a unilinear solution to them –  
these are problems that management can (& has previously) solved



The problem of heart surgery is a Tame problem  
It's complicated but there is a process for solving it  
& therefore it has a Managerial Solution/Answer



Launching a(nother) new product is a tame problem



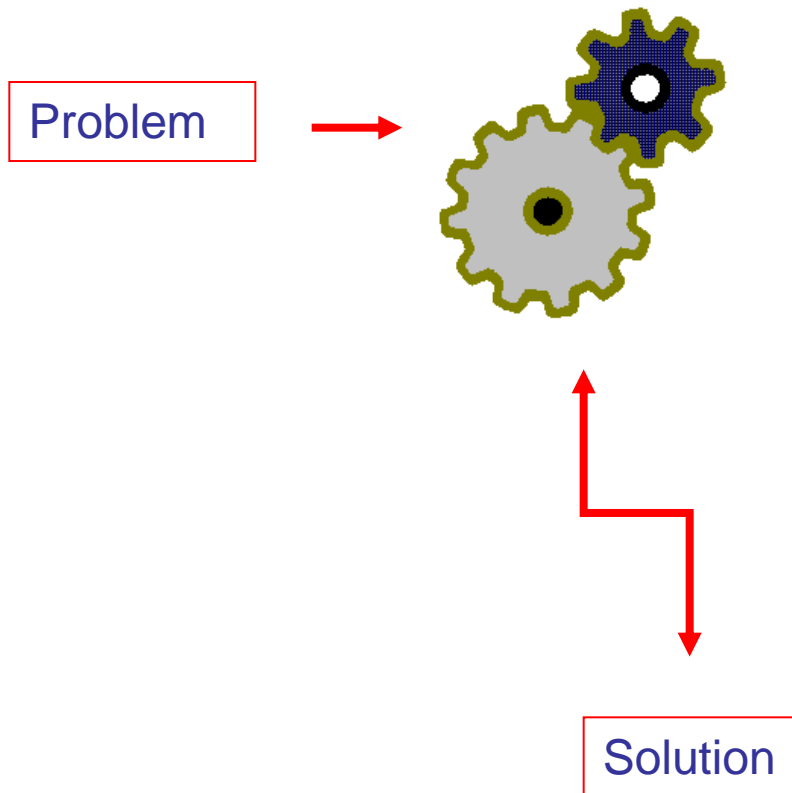
Relocating is a tame problem

Heifetz: Technical leadership

Management's role is to engage the appropriate process to solve the TAME problem

# Management as a Science

F W Taylor's engineering:  
the application of science to achieve the one best solution



## Reception class (4-5 years) 'possible learning experiences' to be noted in (28) children's files

### 35 Possible Learning Experiences in 'Cosy Corner' (six other stations with separate learning experiences to be noted)

PSRN - hear and use number names

PSRN - recite numbers

PSRN - count a wide variety of things in a range of real and play situations

PSRN - to make collections of things which interest them, & use them in their play

PSRN - see and make use of written numerals

CLL - listen to and use oral language, including well-told stories

CLL - listen and respond to the sound and rhythm of words in rhymes, poems, stories and songs

CLL - create their own rhymes and stories, retell familiar ones and share them with others

CLL - ask and answer questions

CLL - take part in short and more extended conversations

CLL - associate sounds with patterns in rhymes/ words

CLL - experience and explore a print-rich environment inside the setting and in the locality

CLL - choose a book

CLL - share fiction and non-fiction texts with adults and other children

CLL - understand how books are organised and that picture, symbols and print carry meaning

CLL - respond to shared texts and express opinions

CLL - use books to find interesting information

CLL - make marks with a range of tools

PSED - experience play and learning in a range of indoor and outdoor environments which stimulate wonder, imagination, excitement and the disposition to learn

PSED - experience respect for their own individuality

PSED - demonstrate respect for the differing needs and values of others by their behaviour

PSED - develop self esteem and self worth

PSED - develop confidence and a sense of security

PSED - form positive relationships with familiar adults

PSED - form positive relationships with other children

PSED - create and experience co-operative play

PSED - share and take turns

PSED - experience play and learning, independently and as part of a group

PSED - handle and use resources with care, and understand the need for safety

PSED - develop independence in selecting activities and resources

PSED - experience play and learning which takes account of their cultures and beliefs and those of others

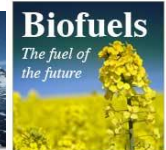
PSED - develop an understanding of fairness, justice, right and wrong

KUW - have time and opportunity to wonder

KUW - question and form their own hypotheses about why things happen and how things work, move, grow and change

CD - explore the colour, texture and form of natural and made things

# Wicked Problems have no simple solution because:



Either novel or recalcitrant

Complex rather than complicated (cannot be solved in isolation)

Sit outside single hierarchy and across systems – ‘solution’ creates another problem

They often have no stopping rule – thus no definition of success

Sometimes the solution precedes the problem analysis

May be intransigent problems that we have to learn to live with

Symptoms of deep divisions – contradictory certitudes

Have no right or wrong solutions but better or worse developments

Uncertainty & Ambiguity inevitable – cannot be deleted through correct analysis –

Keat’s “Negative Capability”

Heifetz: Adaptive Leadership



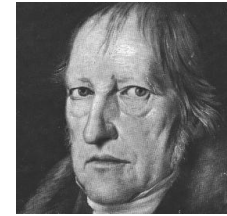
Problems for leadership not management; require political collaboration not scientific processes - role is to ask the appropriate *question* & to engage collaboration

## Wicked Problems tend to be beyond your experience

Hegel's (1770-1831) Owl of Minerva – only spreads its wings at dusk



**Soren Kierkegaard** (1813-55)



'Life can only be understood backwards,  
but it must be lived forwards.'

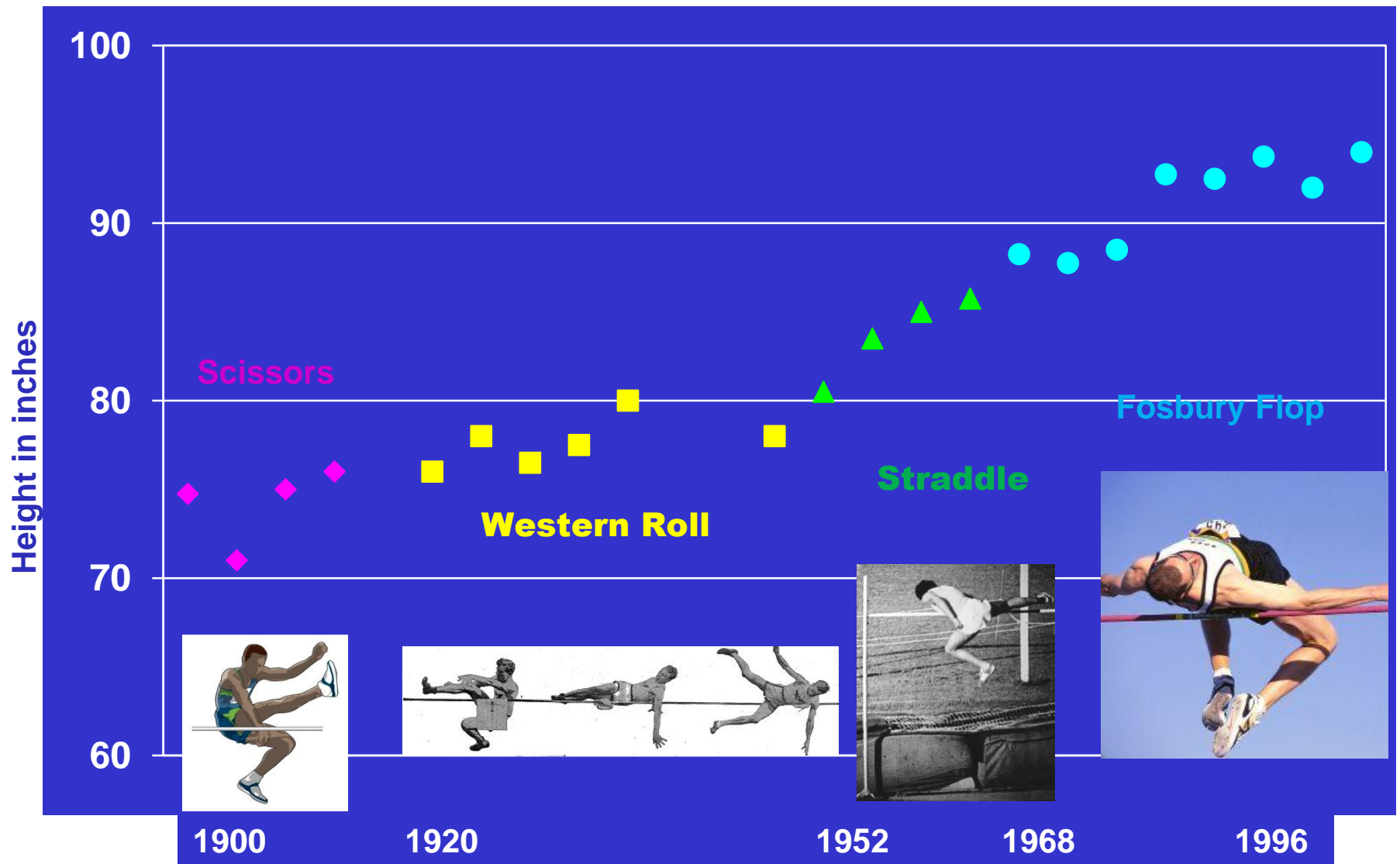
**Walter Benjamin's** (1892-1940) Angel of History:  
Faces the past but is 'blown backwards into the future'.



**Samuel Taylor Coleridge** (1772-1834)



'If men could learn from history, what lessons it might teach us! But passion and party blind our eyes, and the light which experience gives us is a lantern on the stern which shines only on the waves behind us'



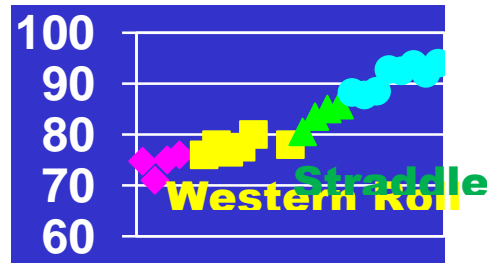


The problem of NIS improvements: Tame - efficiencies & budget cuts

The problem of NHS improvements : Wicked – from NIS to NHS –

e.g., 811,000 people in hospital in 2008 in UK through alcohol; cost - £2.7bn.

Professor Ian Gilmore, president of the Royal College of Physicians



Birmingham Total Place Final Report report (2010: 5)

96% of health spend on treating illness only 4% on keeping people well.



**Peter Connelly** (also known as "**Baby P**")



But what happens when an issue like this occurs?

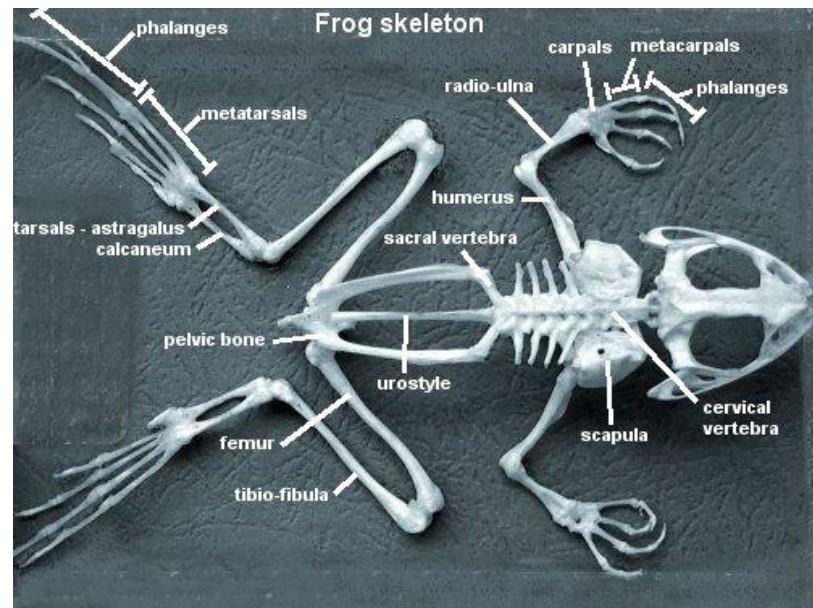


# HARD SHELL - SOFT SHELL

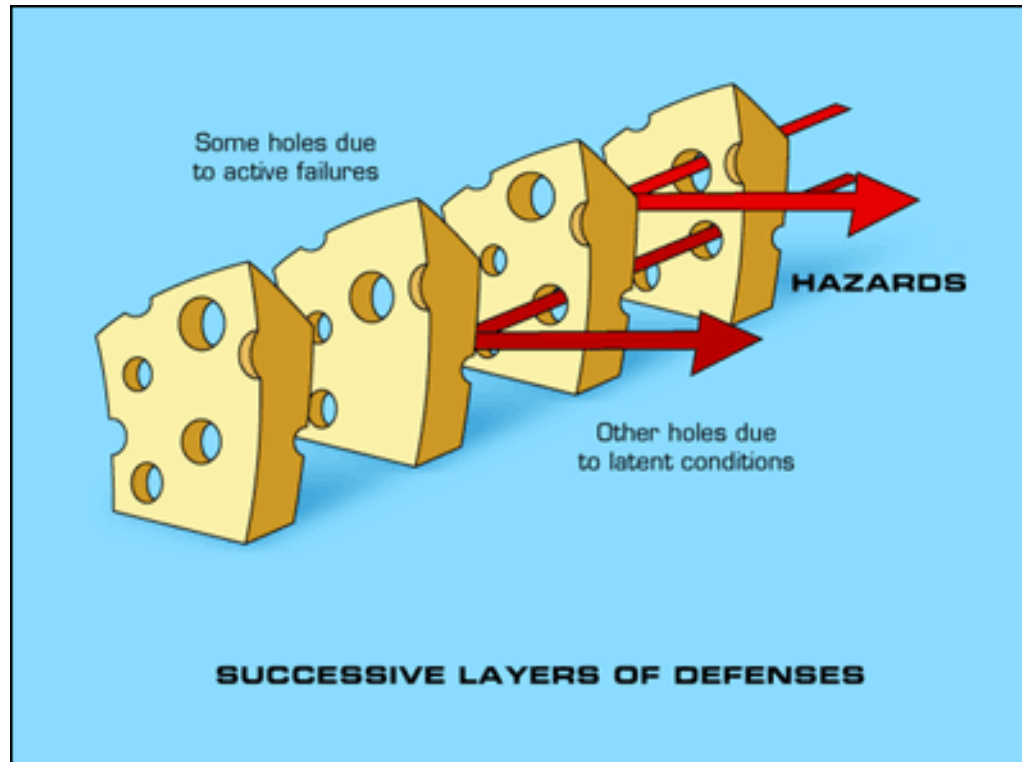
Hard Shell (Exogenous) V Soft Shell (Endogenous) organization

Hard Shell – externally strong but brittle system designed to prevent error via perfect processes/defences

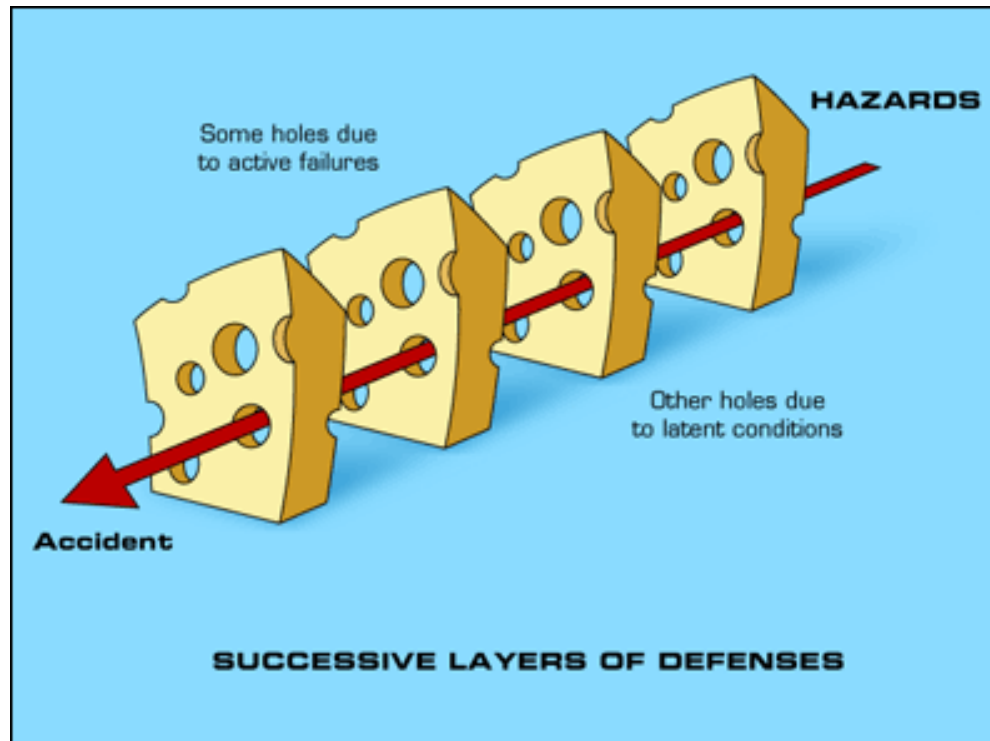
Soft Shell – externally weak but flexible system:  
built in resilience via capacity to learn & rectify error



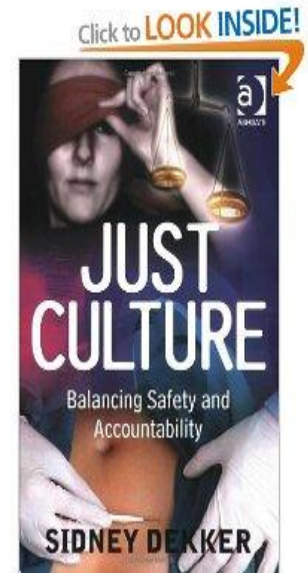
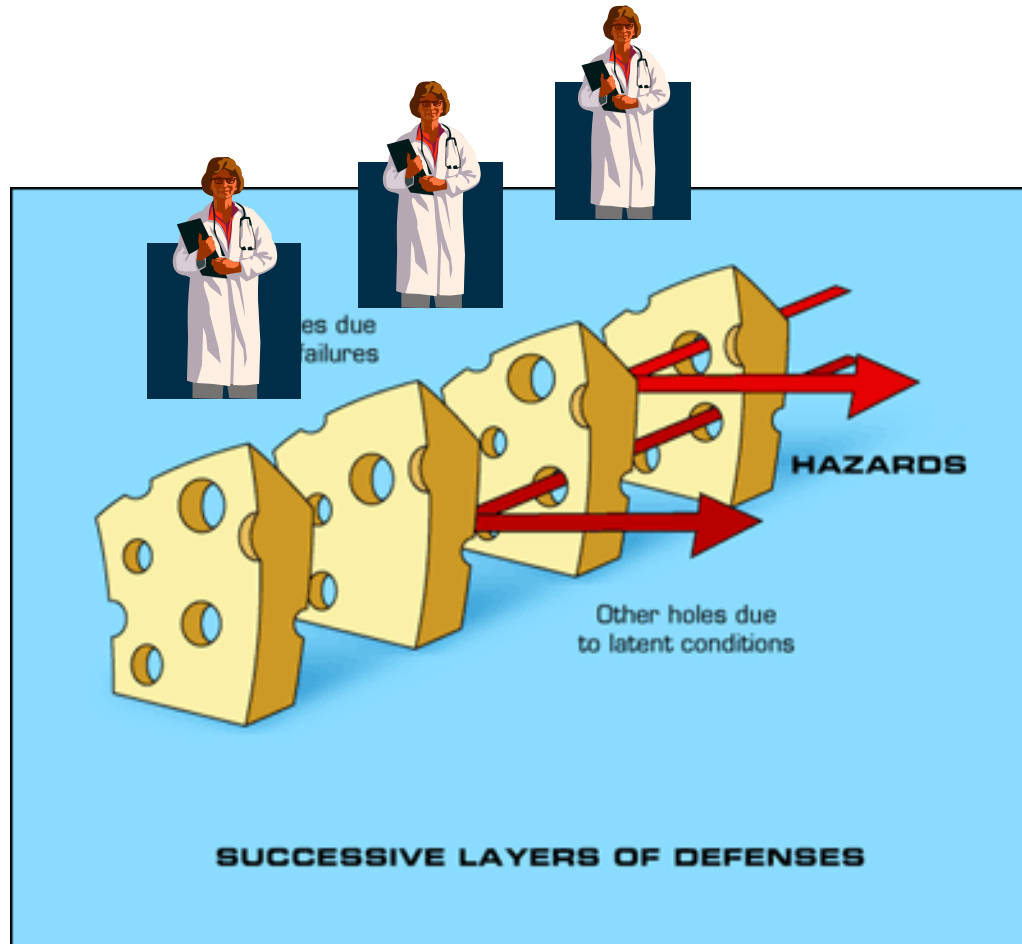
## Reason's Swiss Cheese (Tame) model of causal chain of 'accidents'



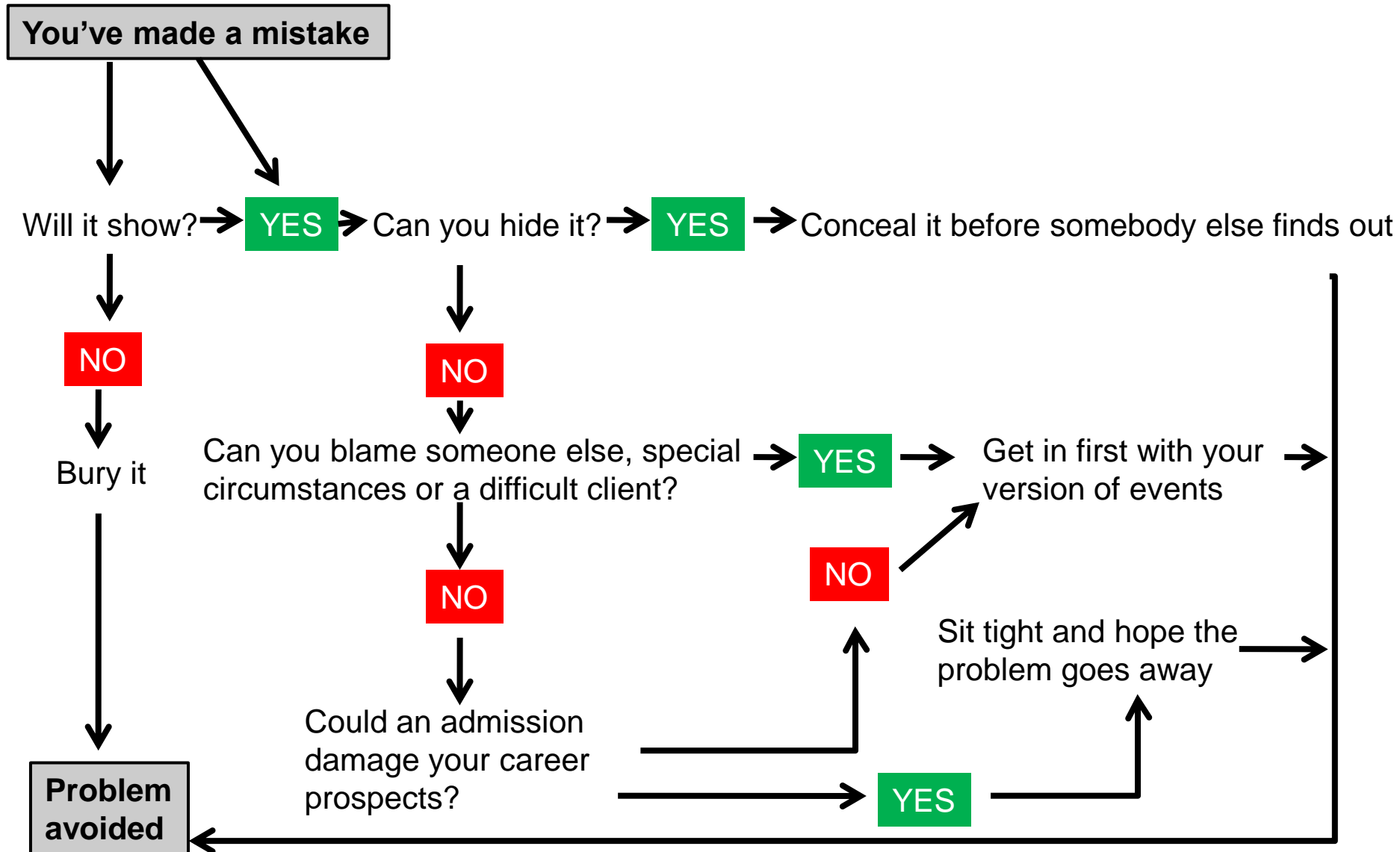
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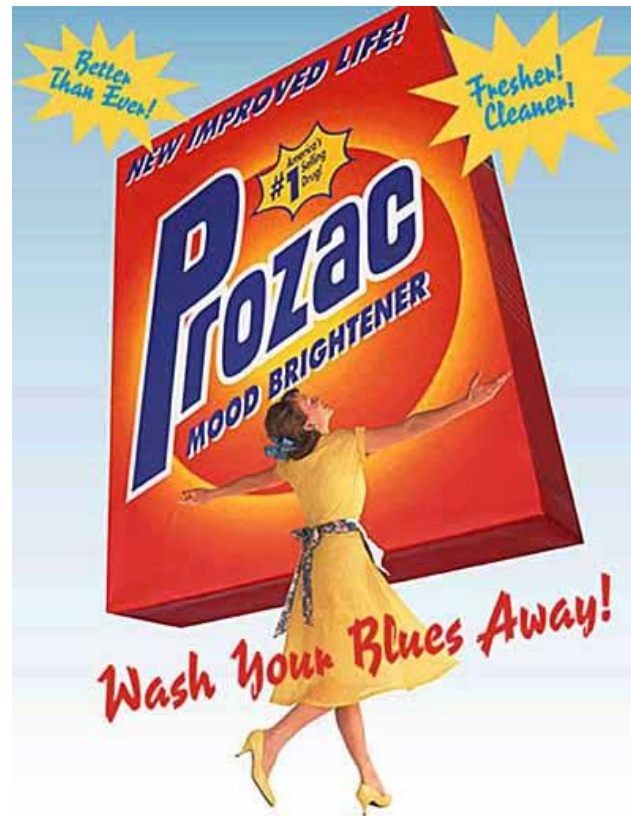
Or, is safety a consequence of individuals making the system safe by bending rules?



# The Sweep it under the carpet school of management



## The other side of the Blame Culture Coin: Prozac Leadership





Prozac Leadership (Collinson, 2011)  
Unremittingly positive approach:

1. Encourages leaders to believe their own propaganda
2. Discourages people for raising problems, admitting mistakes, focusing on failure
3. The only people that believe the corporate messages are the corporate leaders
4. Corporate leaders constantly surprised when things go wrong given how well everything seems to be going....



‘Over the ten years that I have had the privilege of addressing you as Chancellor, I have been able year by year to record how the City of London has risen by your efforts, ingenuity and creativity to become a new world leader. Now today over 40 per cent of the world's foreign equities are traded here...So I congratulate you...on these remarkable achievements, an era that history will record as the beginning of a new golden age for the City of London.’

*(Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2007)*





# Prozac Military Leadership

Not just mind the internal gap but the external gap. They only live here: what would they know?

2004: International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander, General Barno,  
'without question 2004 will be a decisive year'

2005: General Abuzaid, '2005 will be a decisive year'

2006: General Richards, '2006 will be the crunch year for the Taliban'

2008: General Champoux, '2008 will be a decisive year'

2009: General McChrystal

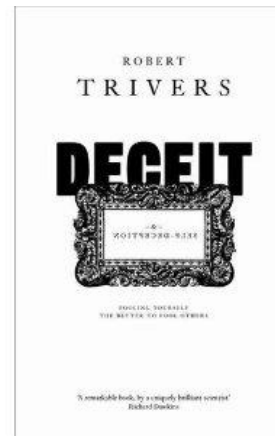
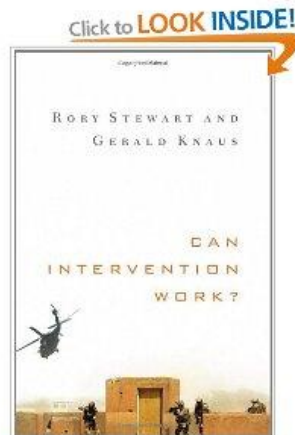
' the Taliban no longer have the initiative... We are knee deep in the decisive year'

2010: David Miliband, '2010 will be a decisive year'

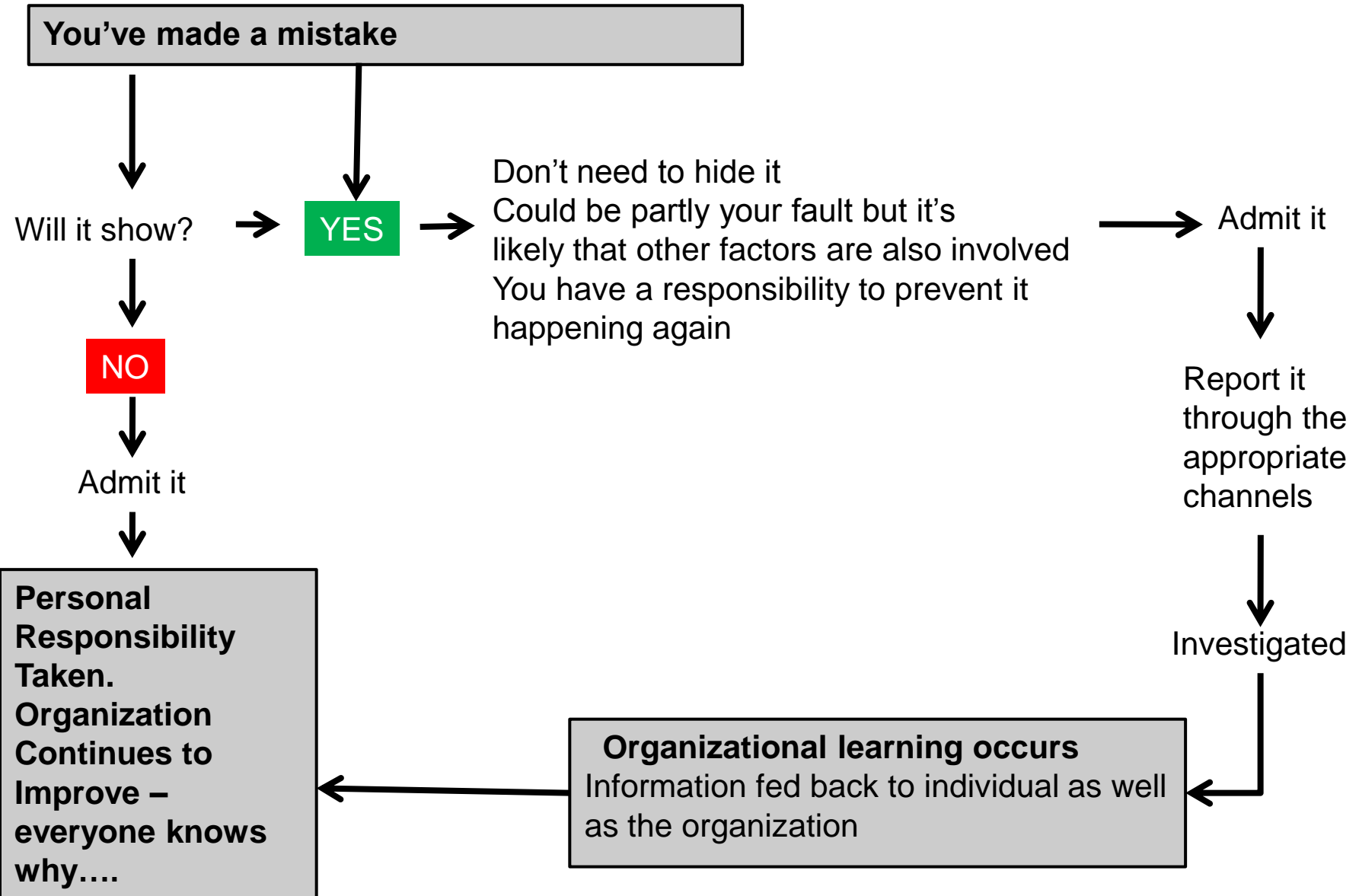
2010: Pres. Obama, '

For the first time in years, we've put in place the strategy and the resources'

2011: Guido Westerwelle (GRM FM), '2011 would be a decisive year'



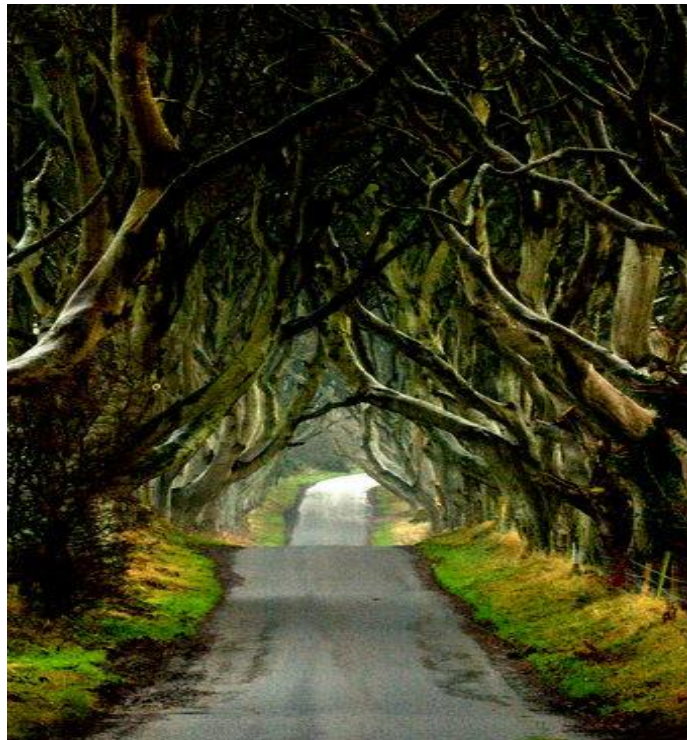
# JUST CULTURE:



The highway from one merchant town to another shall be cleared so that no cover for malefactors should be allowed for a width of two hundred feet on either side; landlords who do not effect this clearance will be answerable for robberies committed in consequence of their default, and in case of murder they will be in the king's mercy.

Given at Winchester, October 8, in the thirteenth year of the king's reign.

—Statute of Winchester of 1285, Chapter V, King Edward I

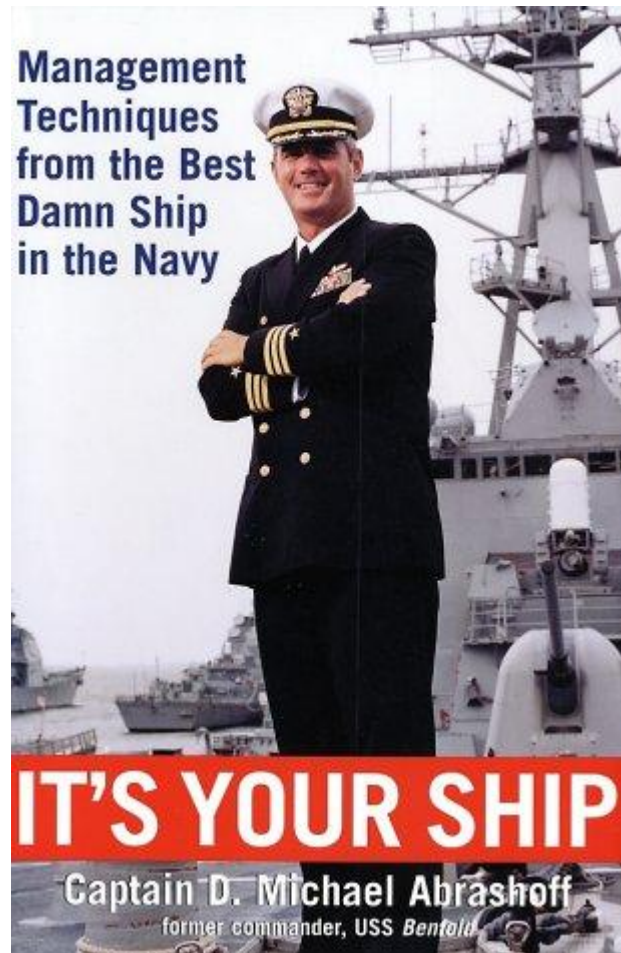


2003: FBU fire strike: reduced fires





## USS Benfold 1997-1999 Guided missile destroyer



**The Problem: the worst performing ship in the US Pacific Fleet**

# Leaders as wheelwrights: Leadership as an art



3C. BC Emperor Liu Bang held banquet on consolidation of China

Surrounded by nobles, military & political experts.

Guest asked Chen Cen (military expert) why Liu Bang was Emperor.

Chen Cen: 'What determines the strength of a wheel?'

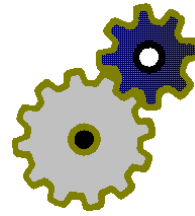
Guest: 'The strength of the spokes'

Chen Cen: '2 sets of spokes of identical strength did not necessarily make wheels of identical strength. The strength was also affected by the spaces between the spokes, & determining the spaces was the true art of the wheelwright.'

Differentiating 'Authority'  
(legitimate power)  
**Command**, **Management**,  
&  
**Leadership**



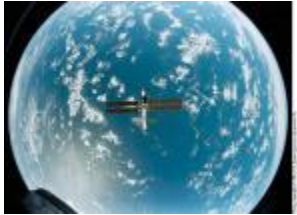
**Command**



**Management**



**Leadership**



**Space**

**Tactical**

**Operational**

**Strategic**

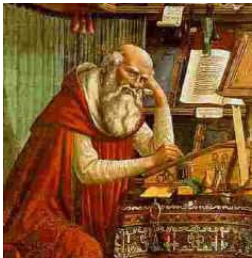


**Time**

**Short Term**

**Medium Term**

**Long Term**



**Problem**

**Critical**

**Tame**

**Wicked**

# Differentiating Management, Leadership & Command

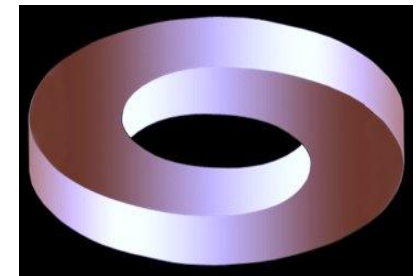
Command: just do it (it doesn't matter what you think)



Management: *déjà vu* (I've seen this problem before; I know what process will solve it)



Leadership: *vu jàdé* (I've never seen this problem before; I need to get a collective view on what to do about this)





# Problems & Power

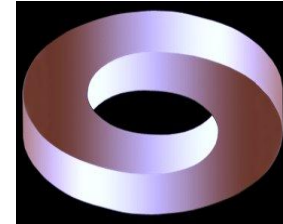
Crisis



Tame



Wicked



Coercive



Calculative



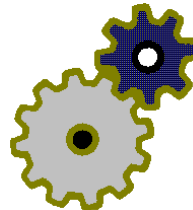
Normative



Command



Management



Leadership



Etzioni's forms of compliance

Increasing  
uncertainty about  
solution to problem

WICKED

TAME

CRITICAL

**COMMAND:**  
Provide Answer

**MANAGEMENT**  
Organize Process

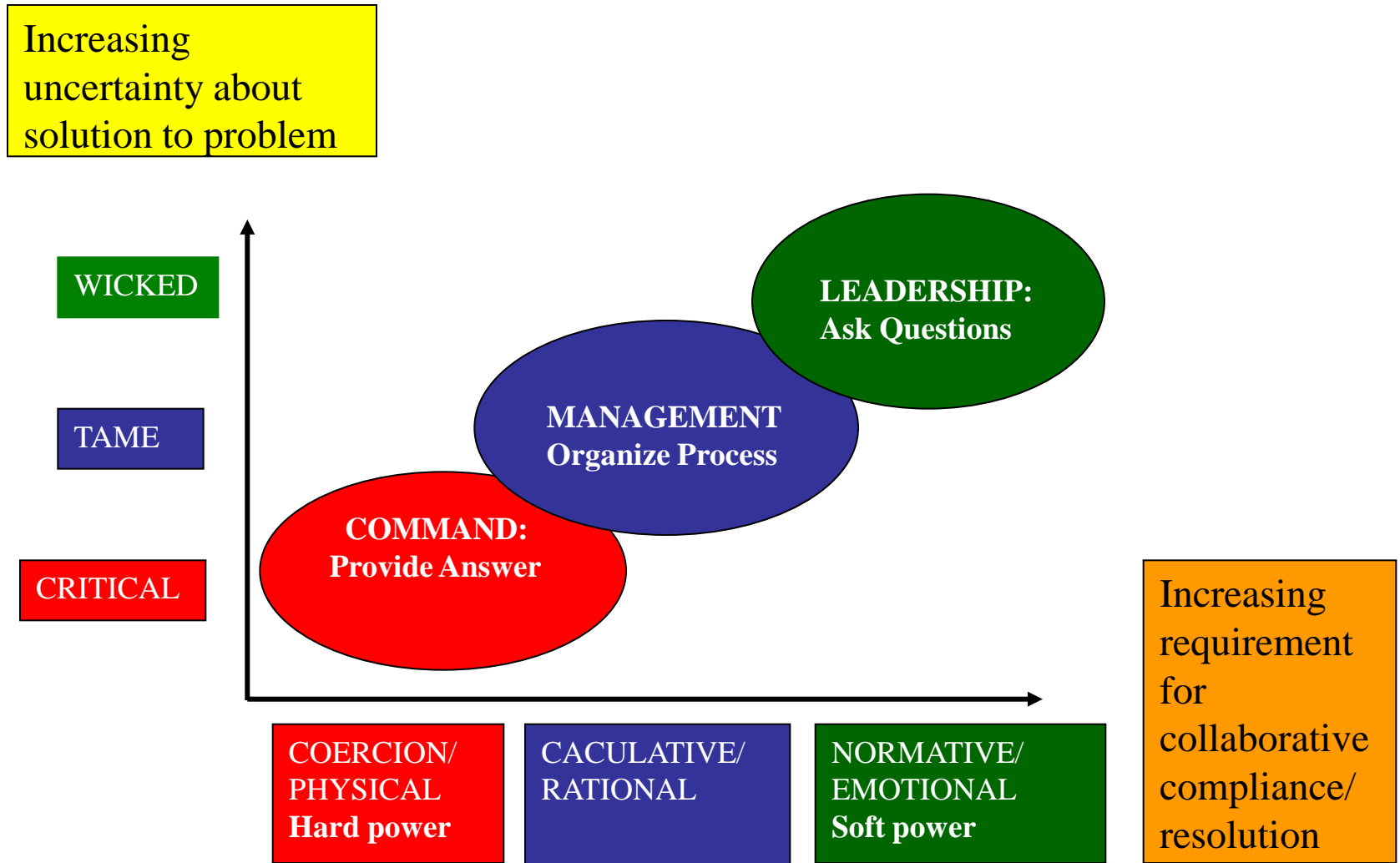
**LEADERSHIP:**  
Ask Questions

COERCION/  
PHYSICAL  
Hard power

CACULATIVE/  
RATIONAL

NORMATIVE/  
EMOTIONAL  
Soft power

Increasing  
requirement  
for  
collaborative  
compliance/  
resolution



**WHAT KIND OF PROBLEM IS IT?**

**DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?**

**YES**

**NO**

**IS IT A CRISIS?**

**DOES ANYONE KNOW TO SOLVE THIS?**

**YES**

**NO**

**YES**

**NO**

**CRITICAL PROBLEM**

**ACT AS A COMMANDER**

**BE DECISIVE  
PROVIDE ANSWERS**

**TAME PROBLEM**

**ACT AS A MANAGER**

**USE S.O.Ps.**

**WICKED PROBLEM**

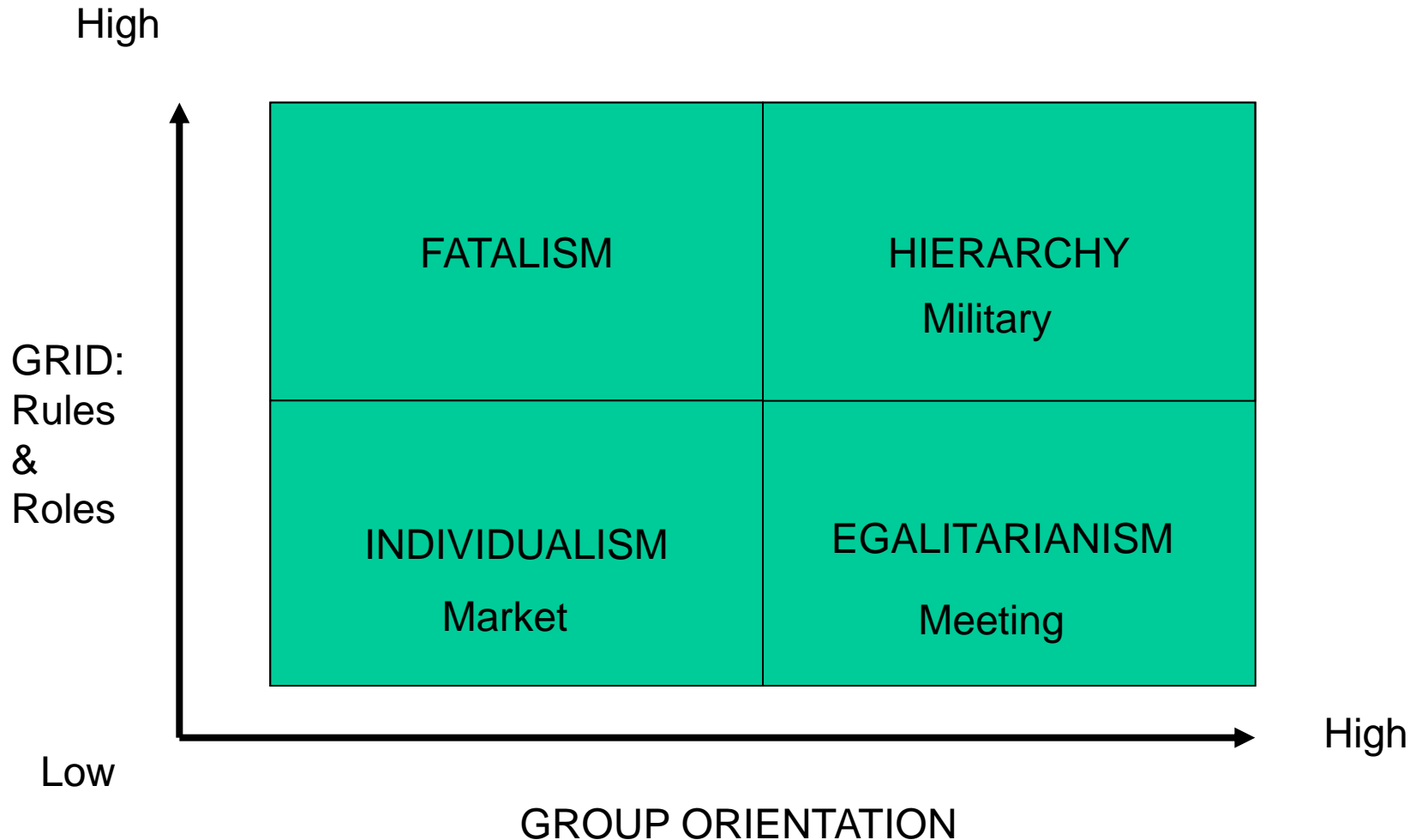
**ACT AS A LEADER**

**ASK QUESTIONS & USE CLUMSY SOLUTIONS**

## Addressing Wicked Problems:

- Why Elegant Solutions don't resolve Wicked Problems

Four primary ways of organizing - and understanding - social life  
(Weberian ideal types via Douglas)



More freedom to pursue rational logic as the Individualists' elegant solution to the Wicked Problem of making followers comply

## Argument & the limits of elegant logic



More freedom to pursue rational logic as the Individualists' elegant solution to the Wicked Problem of making followers comply

## Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance

‘Dissonance: discord

Aesop's Fable: The Fox and Grapes



Pragmatics of Change



# Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance

The power of faith: the god Sananda cult  
Midnight 21 December 1954: global flood  
Press release from Marion Keech



Phone call: 'Hey, there's a flood in my bathroom – wanna come over & celebrate?' = Sananda's special assistant

Attitudes reoriented to fit behaviour/'reality'  
Public statements at variance with private beliefs generate change in private beliefs



Humans are rationalizing rather than rational animals

# Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance

The power of money: spools, pegs

\$1 or \$20





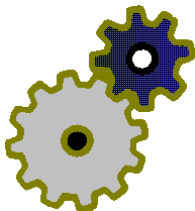
10/5/2010



**The former UK Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage said he was "lucky to be alive" after his plane crashed in Northamptonshire.**

# Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance

Humans are Rationalizing creatures not Rational creatures



## Turandot (Puccini)



ROYAL OPERA HOUSE  
COVENT GARDEN

BOOK ONLINE

SEATING PLAN

TICKET PRICES

£35 -£150

Explore the  
**Royal Opera House**  
website

the first place to come  
for news, features,  
information and more  
about this world-class  
lyric theatre...

[Begin here ►](#)

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE | COVENT GARDEN | LONDON WC2E 9DD



Barry Staw (1975) 'Attribution of causes of performance'  
*Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance* 13: 414-32



Two random groups: A & B

Task: Estimate co. future sales & earnings

Randomly Inform group A - very accurate; group B - very poor

Group A's self assessment – success through:

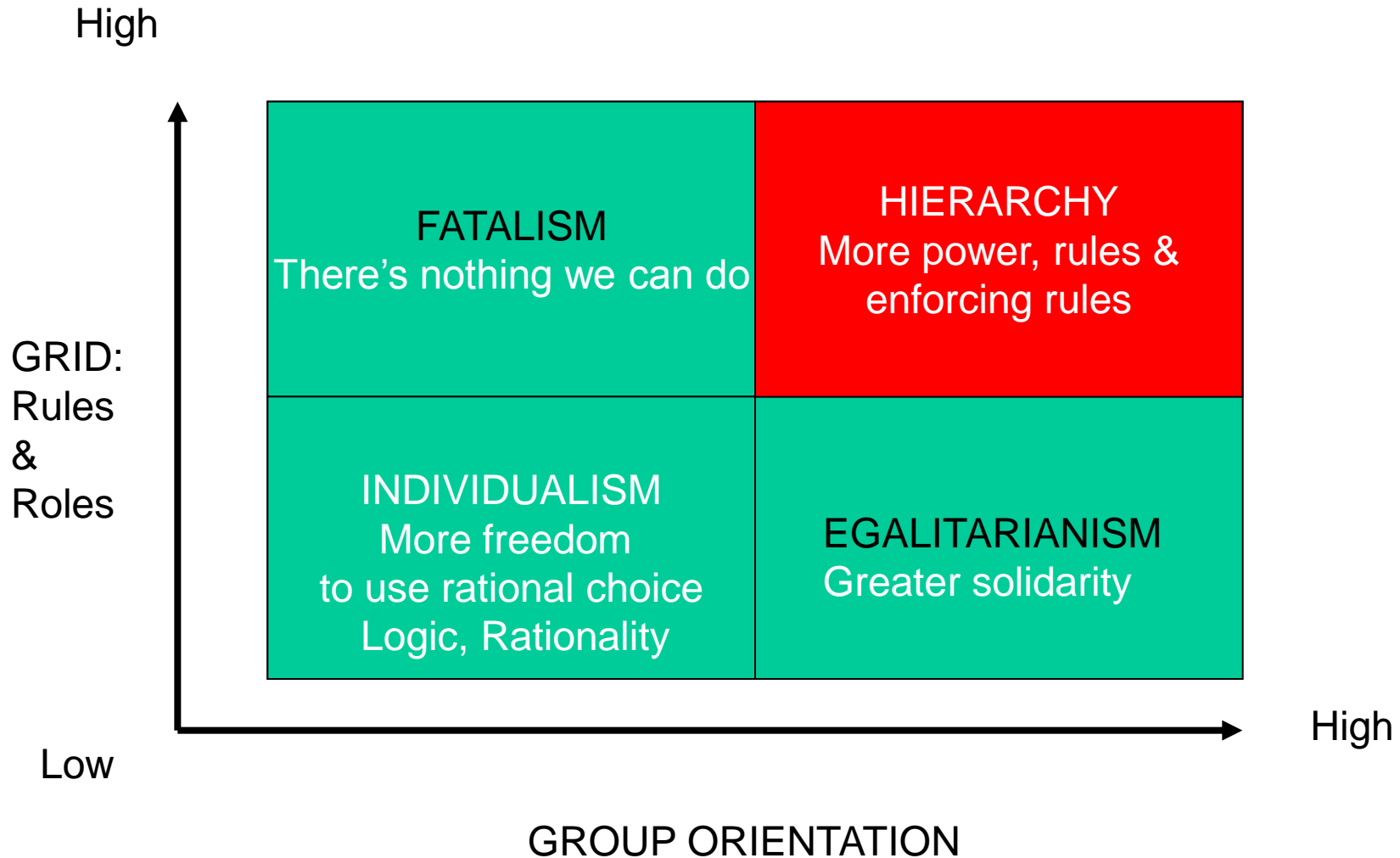
good cohesion, good communication, open to change, well motivated

Group B's self assessment – failure through:

low cohesion, poor communication, change res

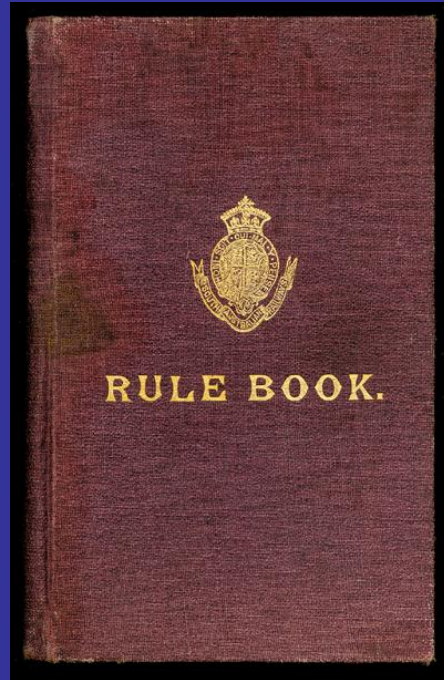


But elegant solutions don't solve Wicked problems

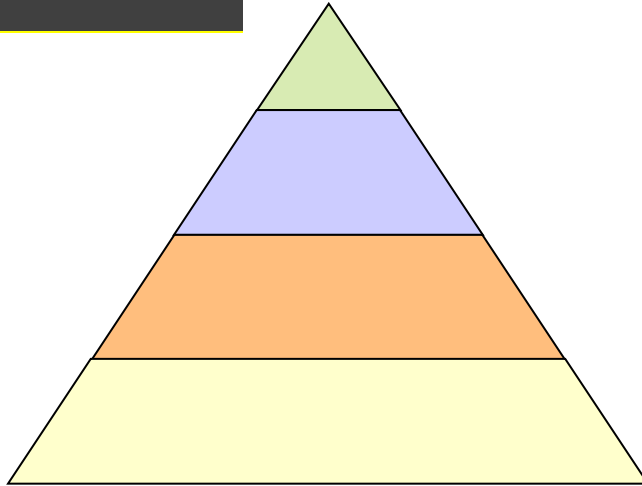
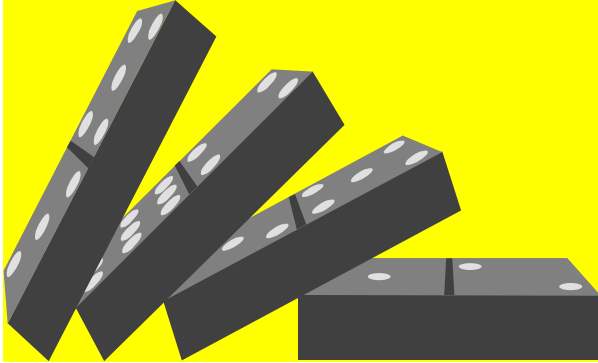




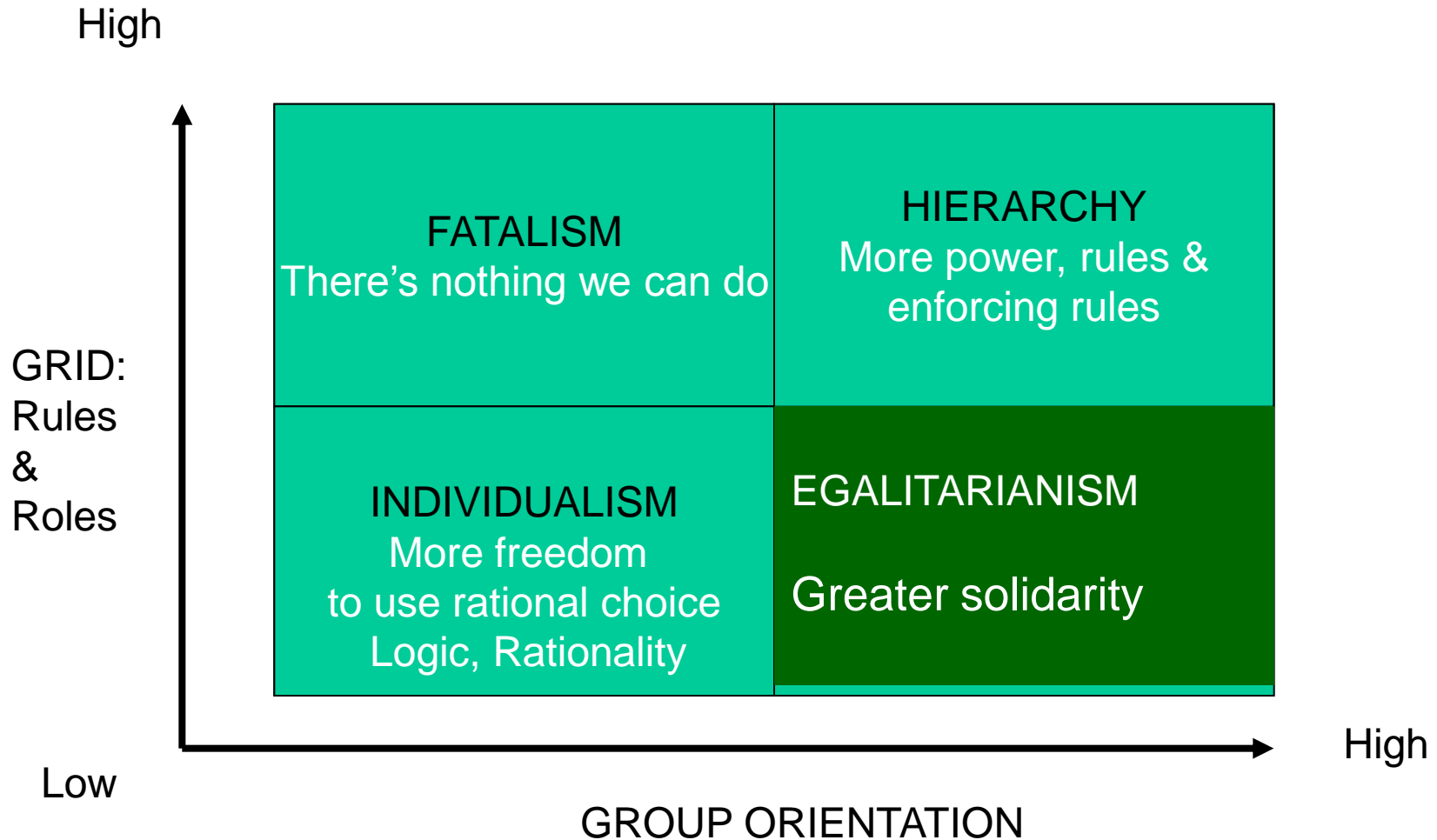
Rule-following as the solution to the perennial problem of leaders: how to stop followers “using their initiative”







But elegant solutions don't solve Wicked problems



# Why the elegance of egalitarians' solidarity doesn't solve Wicked Problems: Group think & Peer Pressure as regressive

## Latane and Darley: The Bystander Problem (1968)

Room 1 has an individual staging an epileptic fit

Adjoining room has:

1 person = helps 85% of the time

5 people + = help only 31% of the time



Smoke emerging from room reported  
75% of the time by lone passers by  
38% of the time by groups passing by  
Groups diffuse responsibility

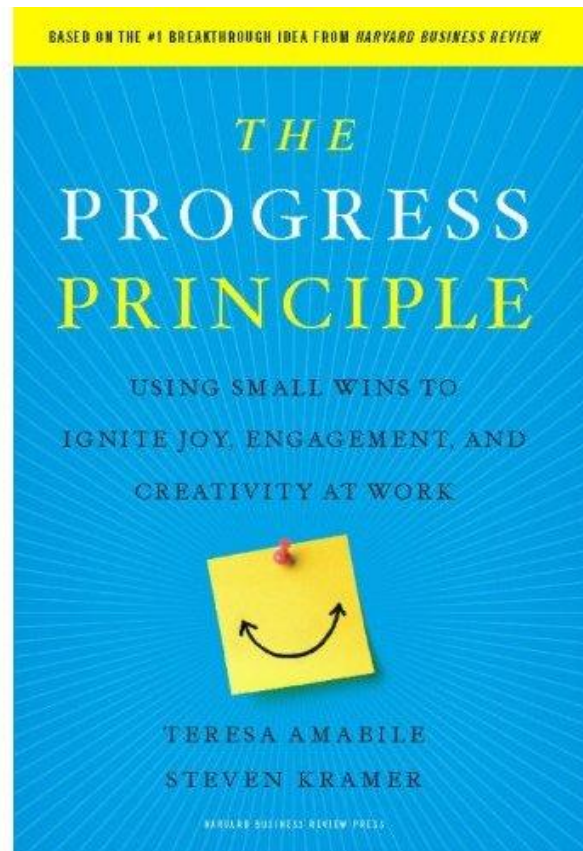


# **“If I look at the mass I will never act”: Psychic numbing and genocide**



Paul Slovic<sup>1</sup>  
Decision Research and University of Oregon  
[Judgment and Decision Making](#), vol. 2, no. 2, April 2007, pp. 79-95.

Some problems appear so large people give up:  
Go for small wins  
Karl Weick: 'Small Wins'



**Do we always need to discuss and agree everything?**

**Average manager spends about 17 hours a week in meetings  
& about 6 hours in planning**

**Over 1/3 of the average manager's week is spent in meetings**

**Some 25 million meetings occur in corporate America daily.  
Roughly half that time is wasted**

<http://www.tsuccess.dircon.co.uk/timemanagementtips.htm>

[http://www.enebuilder.net/theayersgroup/e\\_article000450602.cfm?x=b11,0,w](http://www.enebuilder.net/theayersgroup/e_article000450602.cfm?x=b11,0,w)



Ignatius of Loyola  
1491-1556

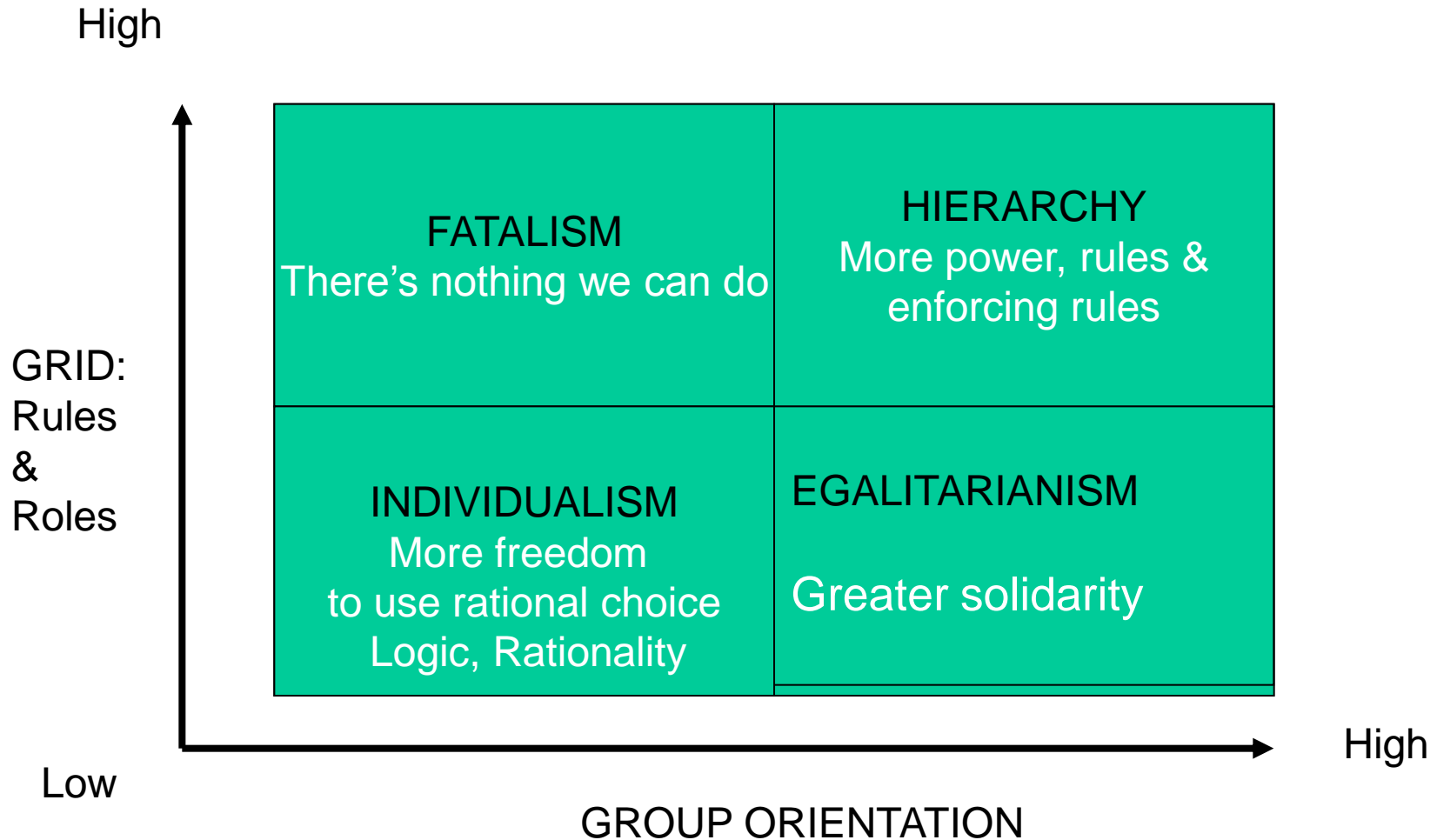
General Congregation of 20,000 Jesuits meet to elect a new Superior General or agree a change of policy.

Formed 1534, how many meetings of the General Congregation since then?





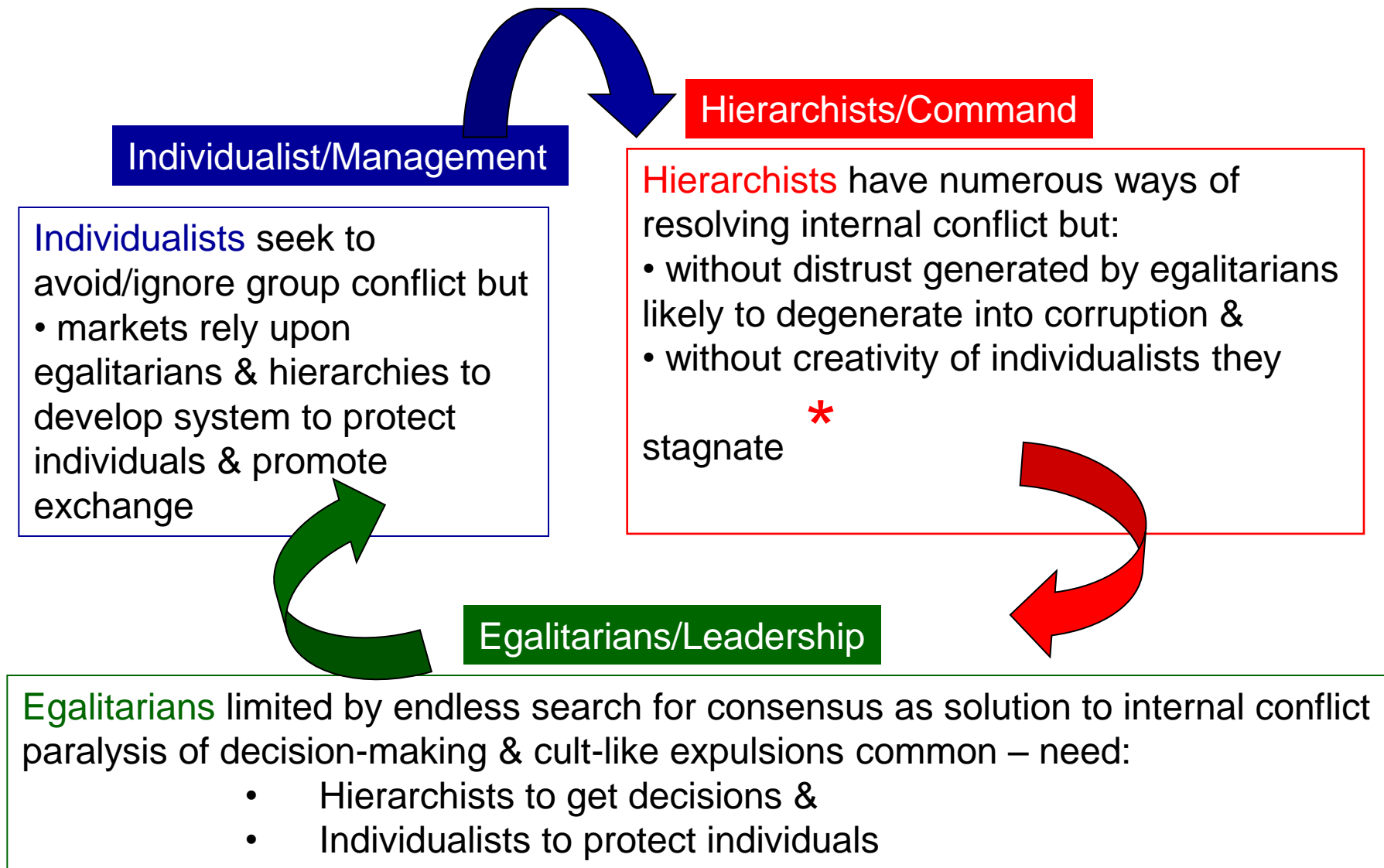
But elegant solutions don't solve Wicked problems



So how do you address wicked problems?

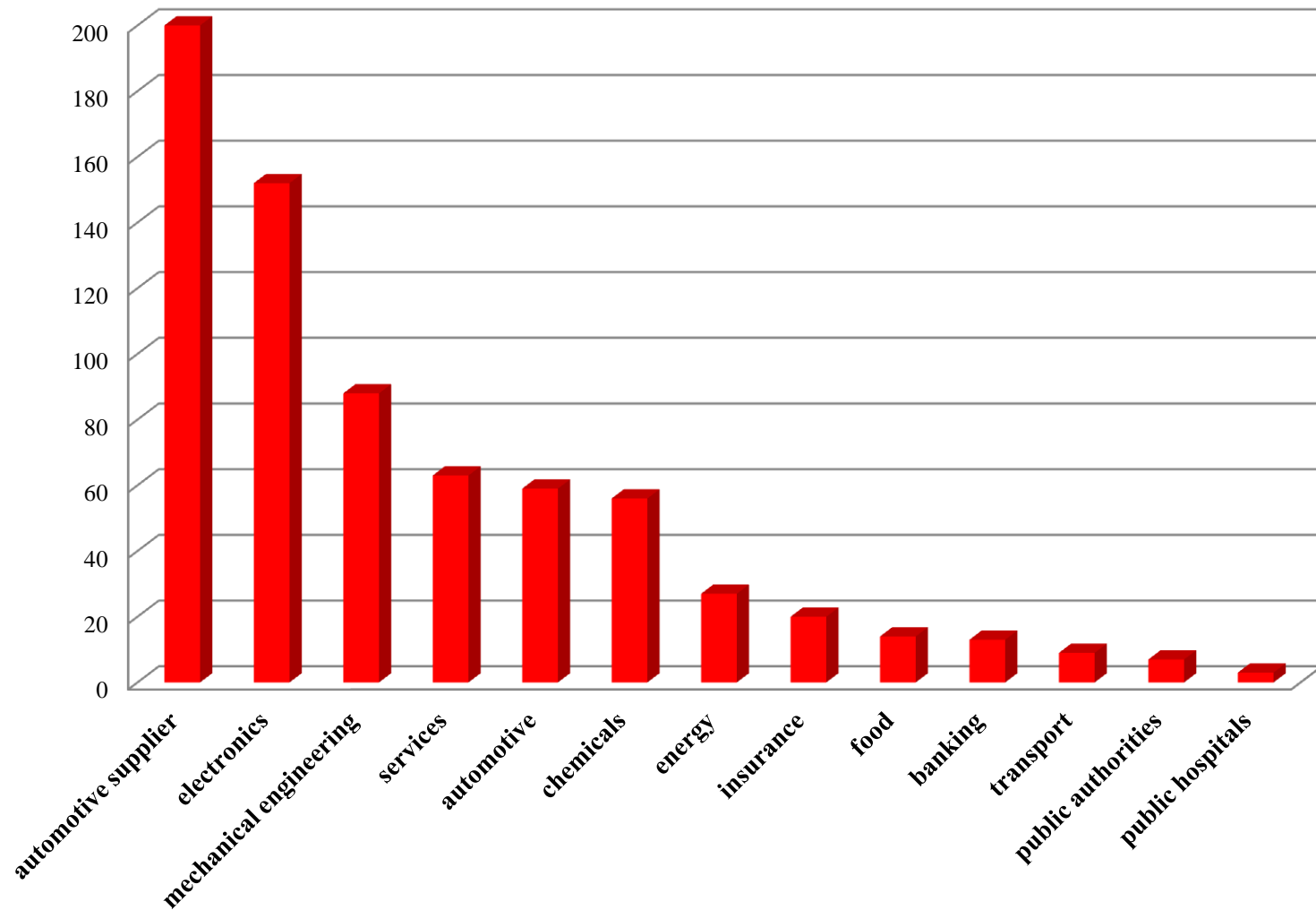
- **First, recognize that Elegant Solutions probably won't work**
- **Second, consider the pragmatic utility of Clumsy Solutions**

## But Elegant solutions don't necessarily provide solutions for Wicked Problems: Scissors, Paper, Stone



# Innovation across sectors

(improvement suggestions per 100 employees)  
2008 German Institute of Management

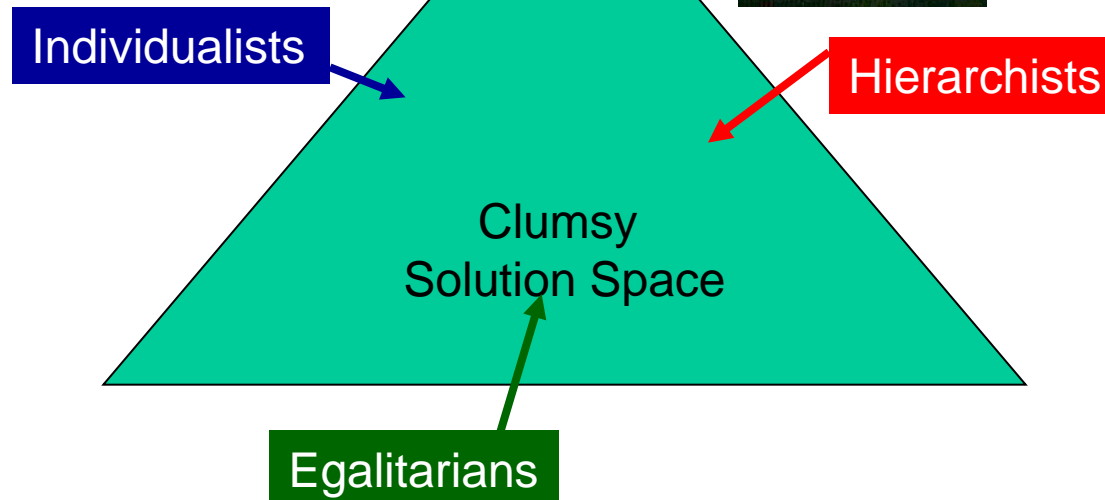
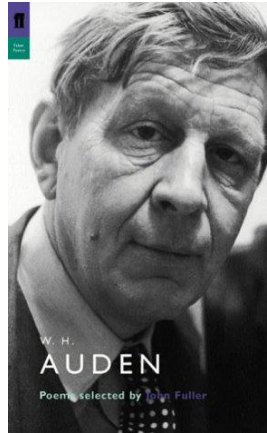


# Clumsy Solutions for Wicked Problems: Creating a **Clumsy Solution Space**

From elegant to clumsy; from straight line to crooked; from architect to bricoleur  
'You shall love your crooked neighbour with your crooked heart'

(W H Auden: *As I walked out one morning*)

'Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made' (Kant)





High

## Elegant (single mode) Solutions to Global Warming

GRID:  
Rules  
&  
Roles

<b>FATALISTS</b>  There's nothing that can be done People are selfish AKA: we're all doomed	<b>HIERARCHISTS</b>  The rules are inadequately enforced: get a disciplinarian in charge to sort it out a Kyoto style agreement that works
<b>INDIVIDUALISTS</b>  Need to facilitate individualism & encourage creative competition Technological innovation & market forces will resolve the problem	<b>EGALITARIANS</b>  Need to rethink our approach To consumption and shift to decentralized & self-sustaining communities



UN Framework  
Convention on  
Climate Change



High

GROUP ORIENTATION

### The CO<sub>2</sub> extractor

Air containing dissolved CO<sub>2</sub> pumped in

Air + CO<sub>2</sub>



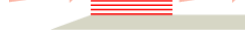
Air passes over an ion exchange resin. CO<sub>2</sub> sticks to the resin and clean air is pumped out

Clean air



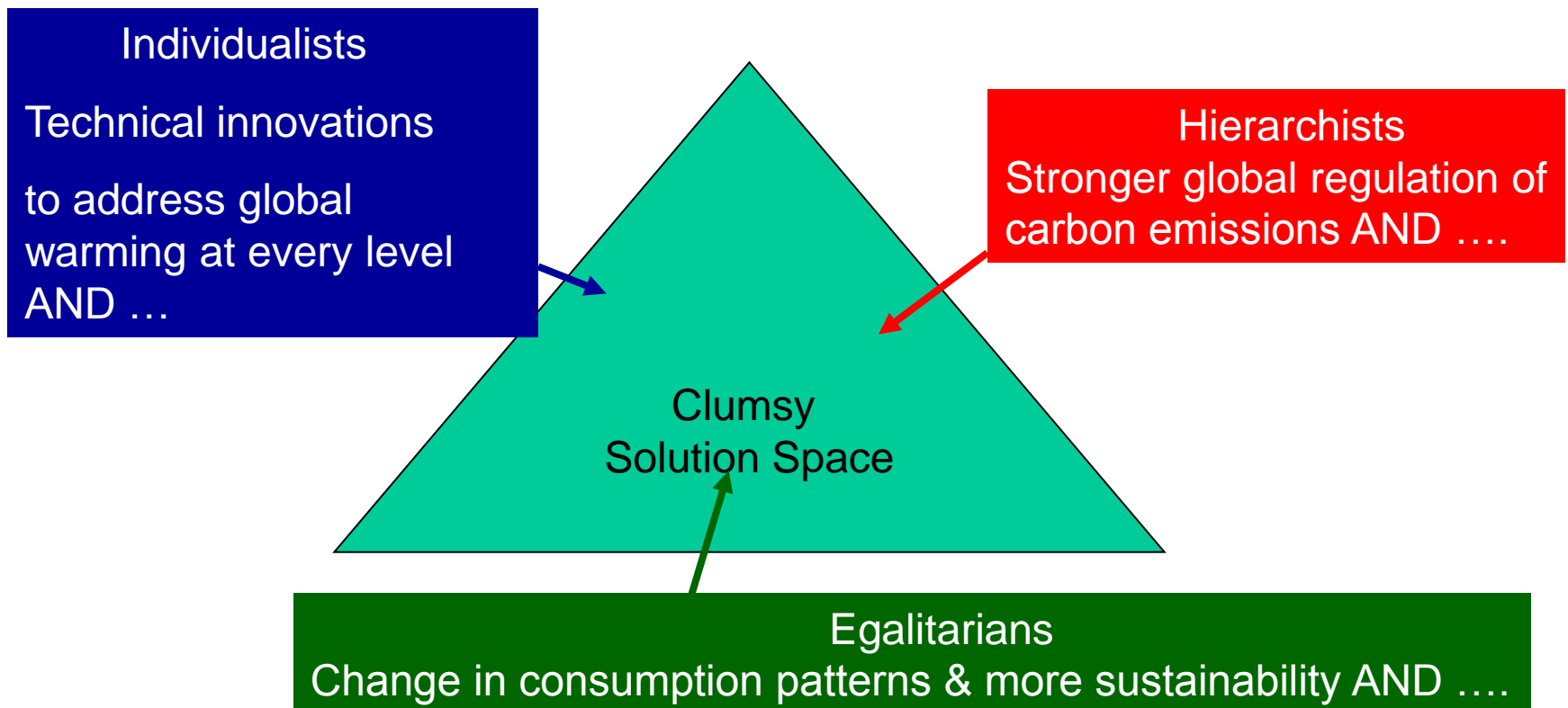
Ion exchange is washed with humid air which cleans off the CO<sub>2</sub>. CO<sub>2</sub> can now be extracted and either buried or used in other ways

Humid air





# Clumsy Solution for Wicked Problem of global warming





High

## Elegant (single mode) Solutions to Malaria:

Kills 800,000 every year; mainly <5 years.

1955-69 Global Eradication Prog (Rockefeller Foundation support) helpful (urbanization, reduced rural labour, DDT, quinnine, but post 1970....



GRID:  
Rules  
&  
Roles

<p><b>FATALISTS</b></p> <p>There's nothing that can be done AKA: we're all doomed</p>	<p><b>HIERARCHISTS</b></p> <p>Need a UN backed Nation State Integrated top down expert-led Plan: (1937 League of Nations)</p>
<p><b>INDIVIDUALISTS</b></p> <p>Need to encourage competition: innovation &amp; market forces will work – dumping nets just undermines local market Glaxo-SmithKline's vaccine will work</p>	<p><b>EGALITARIANS</b></p> <p>WHO 1973 'Health for all by 2000' Requires radical transformation of entire world political, economic system to remove inequalities</p>

LEAGUE OF NATIONS



SOCIETE DES NATIONS



Low



GlaxoSmithKline

GROUP ORIENTATION

High

## Identity Protective Cognition

People fit their views into those of others with whom they share identity

We (often subconsciously) conform to group beliefs about facts & risks

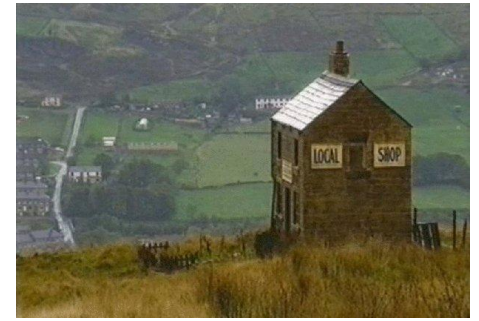
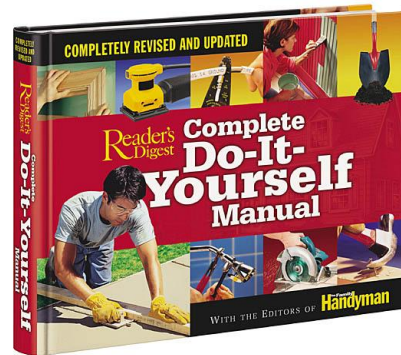
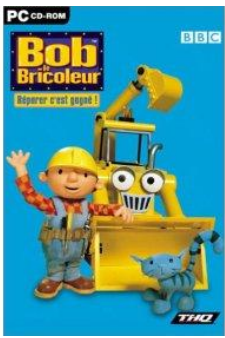
Cultural theory - a better explanation of this than class, age, education, personality type  
More likely to believe experts that fit with our own cultural disposition than those who don't.

Thus we believe the scientific consensus actually supports our predisposition



Cultural Cognition as a Conception of the Cultural Theory of Risk

Dan M. Kahan in Roeser, S. (ed.) *Handbook of Risk Theory* (Springer Publishing).



Wicked Problems require *Bricoleurs* not Rational Calculating Machines

Those who can prosper in a clumsy pragmatic way, not those restricted to elegant single logics:

Those who 'do it themselves', who experiment, & learn from mistakes — change comes from people doing real work, not telling others how to do it differently

Those who recognize that local engagement is critical  
*Bricoleurs* make progress by stitching together whatever is at hand,  
whatever needs stitching together to ensure practical success.

Not clean world of analytic models & rational plans for progress to perfection from the top down — it doesn't matter where you start from, start from where the energy for change lies and follow the new connections

**Bricoleurs & the possibility of rescue: First-Responders to the flooding in New Orleans**  
**Kroll-Smith et al, (2007) *Journal of Public Management & Social Policy* (Fall)**



**The CPR (Cardiopulmonary resuscitation) paradox:  
5 trainee + 1 experienced paramedics filmed using CPR  
Film shown to three groups: who is the experienced one?**

- 1. Experienced paramedics get it right 90%**
- 2. Students right 50%**
- 3. Instructors right 30%**

**Why?**





## **St Claude Bridge**

**People sheltered on the bridge but the water rose rapidly  
Police officer went to National Guard base near the bridge and  
asked a colonel for the buses to rescue the people  
Colonel refused but said he would ask his general –  
but wasn't sure where he was ... No buses left the depot**



**One ambulance driver  
carried 42 people in one go**



**Police officer commandeered (stole) a  
refrigerator truck siphoned (stole) diesel  
from abandoned vehicles to keep it running  
to feed 100 people for days**





# So how do you address wicked problems?

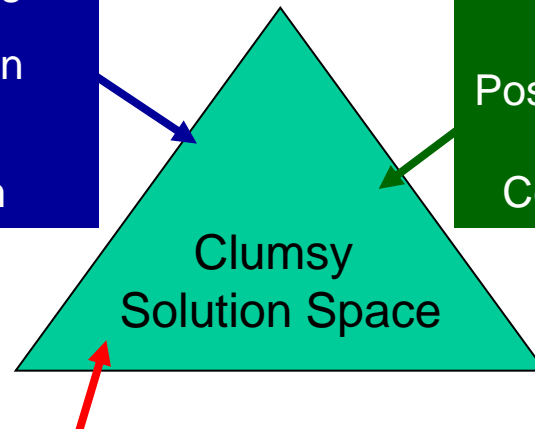
Adopt the role of the *bricoleur*: stitch together a clumsy systems' solution comprised of elements of all three 'elegant' modes to **reframe** the problem

## Individualists

Questions not Answers  
Reflection not Reaction  
Empathy not Egotism

## Egalitarians

Collective IQ not Individual Genius  
Positive Deviance not Negative Acquiescence  
Community of Fate not Fatalist Community



## Hierarchists

Relationships not Structures  
Constructive Dissent not Destructive Consent  
Extraordinarization of the Mundane

## **Individualists**

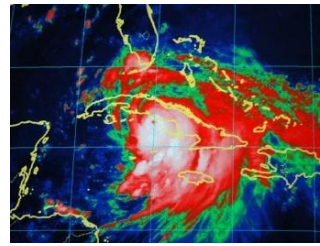
Questions not Answers

Reflection not Reaction

Empathy not Egotism

## Questions not Answers

Pre Katrina briefing for George Bush



Max Mayfield, National Hurricane Centre: “I don’t think anyone can tell you with any confidence right now whether the levees will be topped or not but it’s obviously a very very grave concern”



Michael Brown, Director FEMA, “My gut tells me this is going to be a bad and a big one ... I don’t know whether the dome roof can withstand a cat 5 hurricane”



George Bush **asks no questions**



George Bush on national TV on the eve of the hurricane  
George Bush: “I want to assure the folks at home that we are fully prepared”

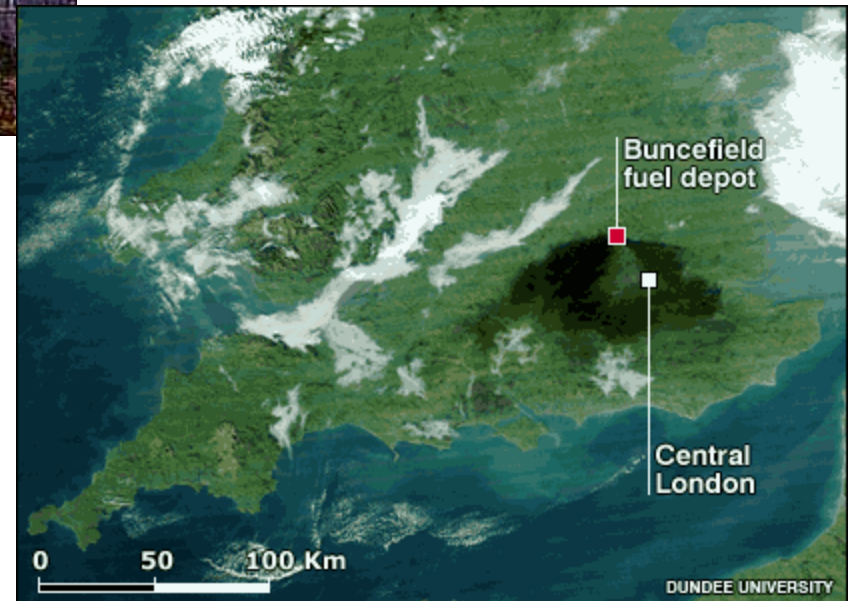
## Reflection not Reaction



Buncefield fire as a Wicked problem

Negative Capability: the creation of  
space & time to reflect

Positive Capability: the ability to make an  
instant decision





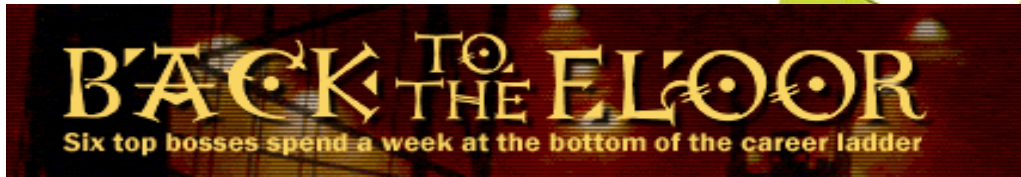
## Empathy not Egotism

How to acquire empathy: become an anthropologist

(Drew Jones: *The Innovation Acid Test*, 2008, Triarchy Press)

Walk a mile in my shoes:

Go back to the floor



Become a mystery customer

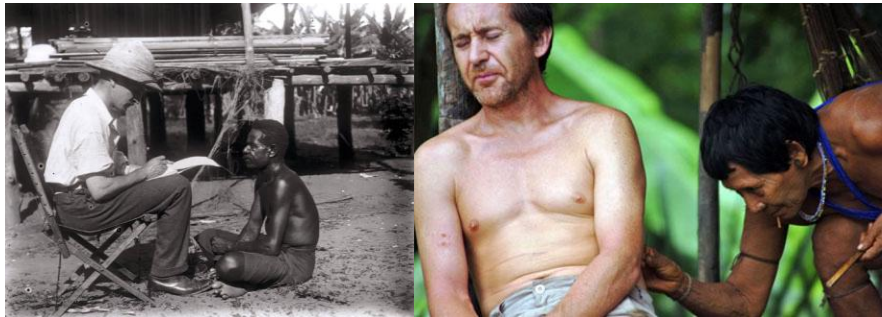
Not what people say in focus groups or in surveys – these are artificial environments

—

but what they do under normal circumstances

Heifetz:

The balcony &  
The dance-floor



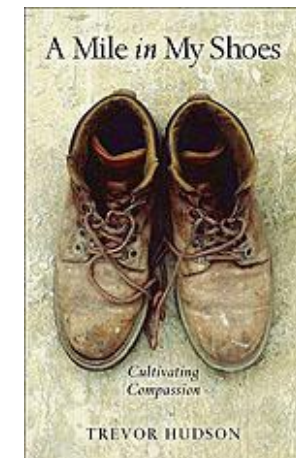
Bruce Parry



Allan Leighton  
Royal Mail



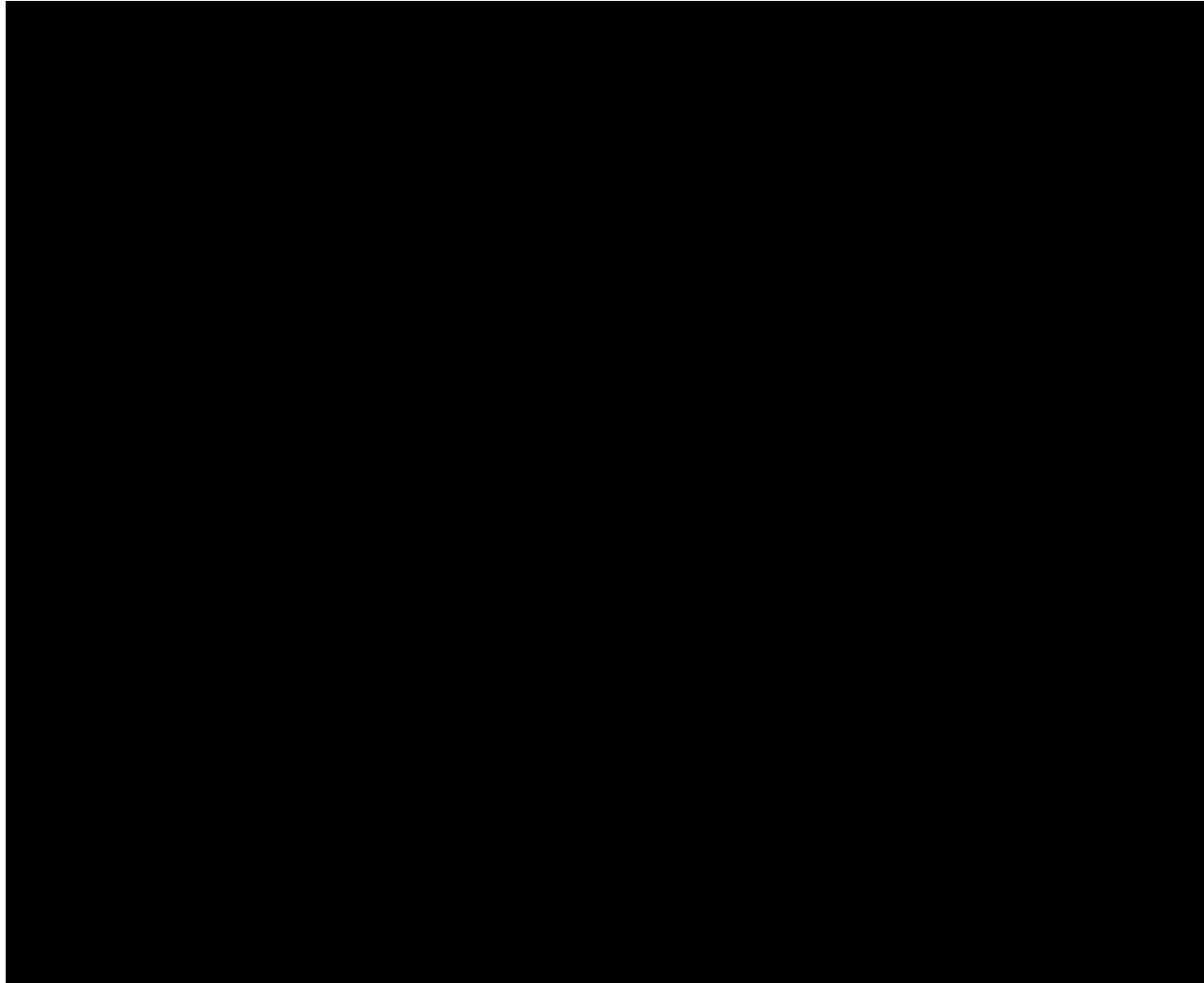
or reverse this -





## Questions & Reflection Kennedy & the Cuban Missile 'Crisis'

MUTE



## **Egalitarians**

Collective IQ not Individual Genius

Positive Deviance not Negative Acquiescence

Community of Fate not Fatalist Community

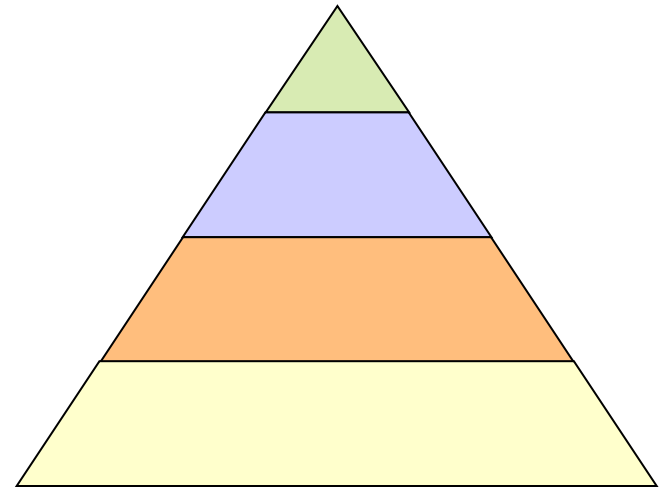
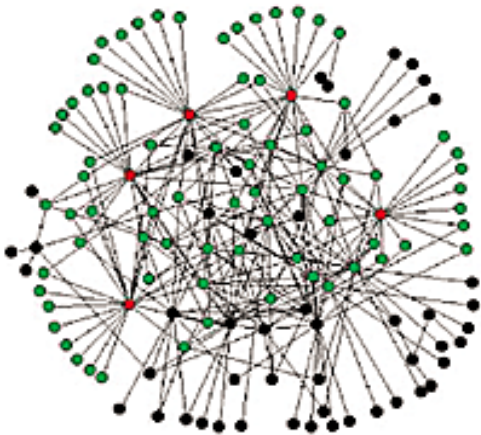


## Collective intelligence not individual genius –

Whole Systems or Hierarchies?

Wholes or Horizontal Slices or Vertical Slices?

IKEA & Ektorp sofa: 48 hours to change the system  
2003, Future Search (Weisbord and Janoff)  
52 stakeholders & 18 hours to redesign the product  
& system





**Save the Children®**  
USA

## Positive Deviance not Negative Acquiescence

If you don't have the answer find those that do:



Positive Deviance



Via Maria Zeitlin:

Why, in the midst of malnourishment are some children well nourished?

-Because they adopt deviant practices

-Jerry & Monique Sternin field test in Vietnam for *Save the Children* 1990

-TBU: Conventional wisdom on malnutrition is TBU: true but useless

- poor sanitation,
- food-distribution,
- poverty,
- poor water:

-all these take time

# Positive Deviance not Negative Acquiescence

## Positive Deviance: Malnourishment in Vietnam (Sternin)

1. Don't assume you have the answer:

2. Identify conventional wisdom: what do the majority do?:

Avoid food considered as low class/common

Don't feed children with diarrhoea

Let children feed themselves or twice a day max.

4. Identify & analyze positive deviants:

Use low class/common food – it's nutritious: field shrimps, small crabs & sweet potatoes

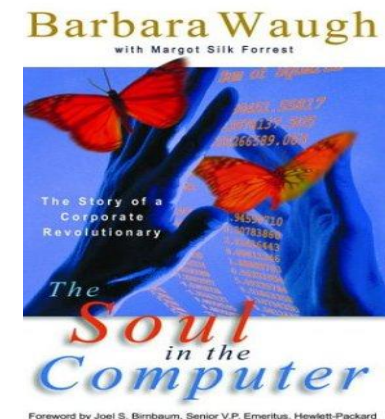
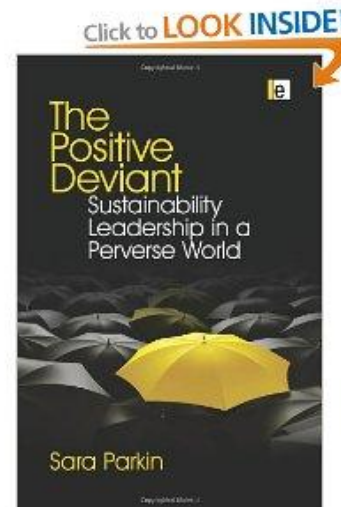
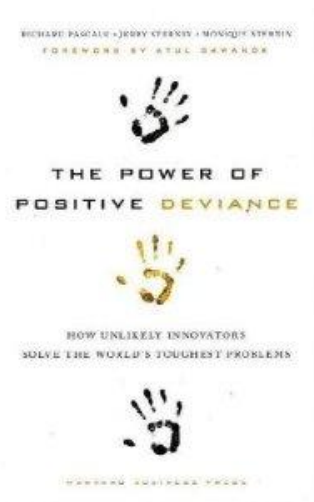
Feed children with diarrhoea – it's critical to recovery

Actively feed children many times during the day

- self-fed children drop food on floor so it's contaminated
- children's stomachs can only take a finite amount of food at any one time



Sternin, &  
Pascale, (2005)  
“Your  
Company's  
Secret Change  
Agents.”  
*Harvard*  
*Business*  
*Review*. May



## Community of Fate not a Fatalist Community

**Panorama: Taking Back the Streets BBC One 8.30pm on Monday 3 March 2008**



Anne Glover  
Braunstone in Leicester

"It never ceases to amaze me how a minority can control an area where a majority of people live... all because of the fear factor. If you stick together on an issue they can't intimidate you."

Anti Social Behaviour: Social Capital & Leadership



## **Hierarchists**

Relationships not Structures

Constructive Dissent not Destructive Consent

Extraordinarization of the Mundane

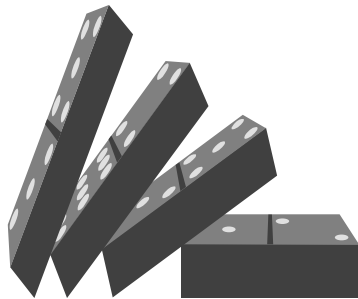
# Relationships not Structures

The NHS: ¼ century of change (AKA Restructuring)

1982: Abolition of Area Health Authorities  
1982-85: Introduction of general management  
1985: Creation of NHS Board at the Dept of Health  
1989-93: Establishment of NHS Trusts  
1989-95: Creation of GP Fundholding & Commissioning  
1989-95: Setting up NHS Management Executive (later NHS Executive)  
1990: Replacement of FPCs (Family Practitioner Clinic) by FHSAs Family Health Service Authority  
1991-97: Reconfiguration of Health Authorities  
1991: Restructuring of NHS Organisation Boards  
1994: Reorganization of RHAs (Regional Health Authorities)  
1994: Abolition of FHSAs & incorporation into Health Authorities  
1995: Reconfiguration of Acute Services & Trusts  
1996: Abolition of RHAs, incorporation into NHS Executive  
1997: Abolition of GP fundholding, replacement with PCGs (Primary Care Group)  
2000: Abolition of NHS Executive, incorporation into the Dept. of Health  
2001: Abolition of NHS Executive Regional Offices, move to Regional DHSCs  
(Directorate of Health & Social Care) at Dept of Health  
2001: Replacement of larger health authorities with SHAs (Strategic Health Authorities)  
2001: Replacement of PCGs with PCTs (Primary Care Trusts)  
2002: Creation of Foundation NHS Trusts  
2002: Creation of Health and Social Care Trusts  
2005: Merger of 300 PCTs into 100 larger PCTs  
2005: Merger of 28 SHAs into 10 larger SHAs  
2006: Reorganization of Dept. of Health to split NHS and DH responsibilities



Structure  
Process



Relationships & Identity:  
Not - what do you do? (e.g.,  
how many operations have  
you undertaken)  
But – what are you? (e.g.,  
what is your purpose?)



Monday, 20 August 2007, 10:35 GMT  
11:35

BBC  
NEWS



Tackling violence

'I won't sit back again if I see trouble,' says Jeremy Vine

Leadership, Constructive Dissent & Permission Giving





General Marshall, Chief of Staff US Army from 1/9/1939 –1945

Increases army size from 200,000 to 8,500,000

Churchill called him, “the true organizer of victory”

1947 outlines what became The Marshall Plan for economic reconstruction Western Europe

1953 Awarded Nobel Peace Prize

Back to first week as Chief of Staff (5/9/1939) gathers his subordinates around him and expresses his disappointments in them:

# The Choir: Boys Don't Sing

2007, choirmaster Gareth Malone  
Took a teaching position at Lancaster  
School, Leicestershire - largest all-boys  
comprehensives in the country noted for  
sports – not singing



1. Few boys interested
2. Response: "I tried about 25 different techniques to get them interested."

# Permission Giving: from Destructive Consent to Constructive Dissent

Air Florida 90 ('Palm 90') (737), January 13 1982, due out 14.15 to Fort Lauderdale.

Captain Larry Wheaton; 1<sup>st</sup> Officer Roger Pettit

Take-off check list commences

Pettit: Air conditioning & pressurization?

Wheaton: Set

Pettit: Engine anti-ice?

Wheaton: Off

15.59: cleared for take off & throttles open

Pettit: 'It's real cold, real cold'

Wheaton: It's spooled. Real cold, real cold.

Pettit: God, look at that thing. That doesn't seem right, does it?

Uh, that's not right.

16.00 Wheaton: Yes, there's 80 (knots)

Pettit: Naw, I don't think that's right. Ah, maybe it is.

Wheaton: 120

Pettit: I don't know

Wheaton: V1. (Lift off, but nose rises too quickly) Easy. V2

16.01 Crashes into bridge over Potomac: 6 survivors



Cf. RAF Crew Resource Management System

Army/Navy: 'Stop Fire'

Navy: 'Still'

Heifetz: Protect the voices from below

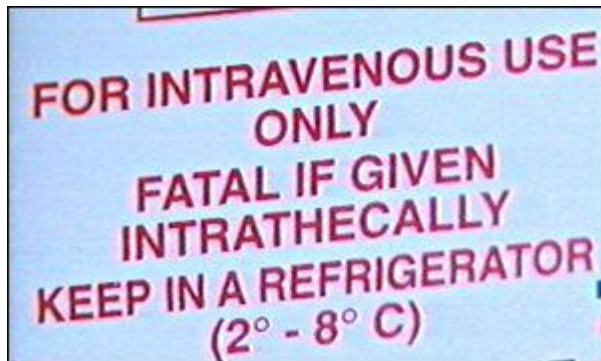
Tarnow 'self-destructive obedience' in Blass

(ed.) *Obedience to Authority*

25% of all crashes caused by  
destructive consent (obedience)



## Destructive Consent and Irresponsible Followers



Wayne Jowett

Thursday, 19 April, 2001, 16:06

GMT 17:06 UK

**Catalogue of blunders that led to death**

Dr Mulhem – Specialist Registrar; Dr Morton – Senior House Officer

Dr Morton asked Dr Mulham whether the Vincristine should be given spinally and said Dr Mulhem had told him yes.

Dr Morton said “He was surprised by this, but had not felt he could challenge a superior. “

# Permission Giving: from Destructive Consent to Constructive Dissent



## Sloan's Dilemma

‘Gentlemen, I take it we are all in complete agreement on the decision here?’

Consensus of nodding heads.

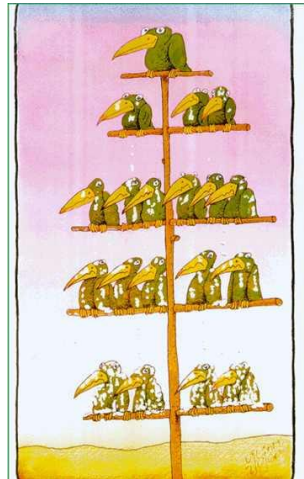
‘Then I propose we postpone further discussion of this matter until our next meeting to give ourselves time to develop disagreement and perhaps gain some understanding of what the decision is all about.’

# Permission Giving: from Destructive Consent to Constructive Dissent



## Sloan's Dilemma & Constructive Dissent

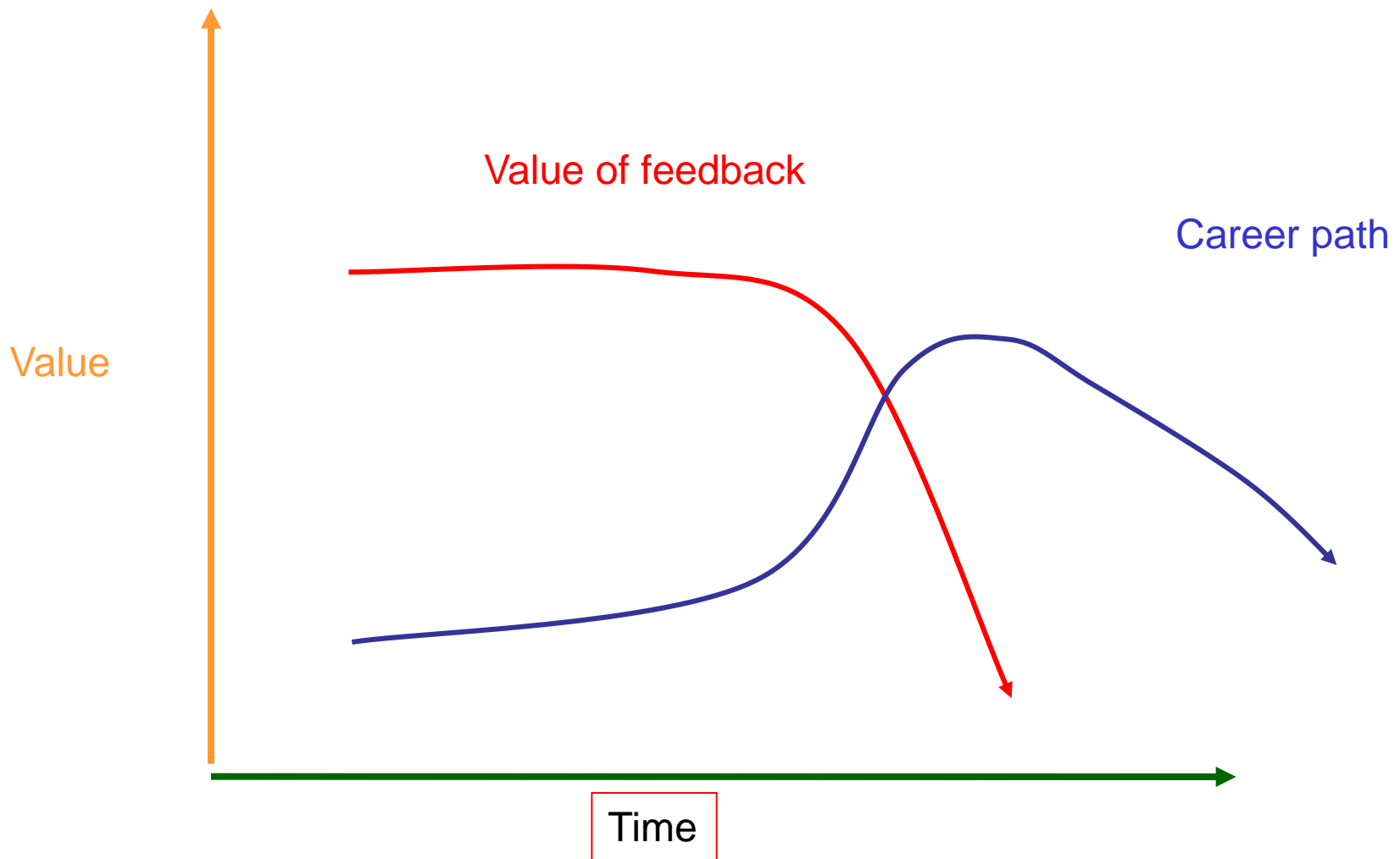
What is to be done?



Order of decision



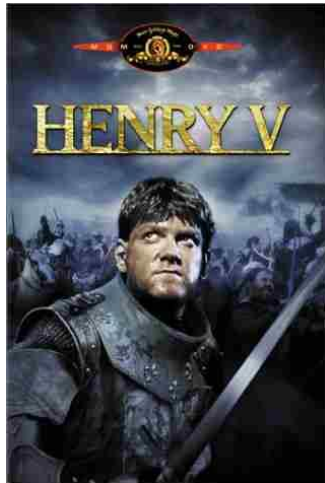
Persian military  
decision-making





# The Extraordinarization of the Mundane

Alvesson & Svenningson



‘little touch of Harry in the night’



## Critical Learning Points:

1. What kind of problem are you facing?
  1. Tame – Manage the SOPs
  2. Critical – Command the answer
  3. Wicked – Lead the collaborative effort
2. Organizations generate default cultures:
  1. Hierarchists assume rules & power are critical
  2. Egalitarians assume greater solidarity is critical
  3. Individualists assume greater freedom is critical
  4. Fatalists have given up
3. Elegant (single mode) solutions are OK for Tame & Critical Problems but not Wicked Problems
4. Wicked Problems require Clumsy Solutions that pragmatically use all 3 elegant modes – they require *bricoleurs*:

Click to **LOOK INSIDE!**

