



Hold Fast: Care, Responsibility, and Ai in a Scottish Tradition

Professor Donald Macaskill

Exploring ethical Ai through
Scottish cultural values and
practice

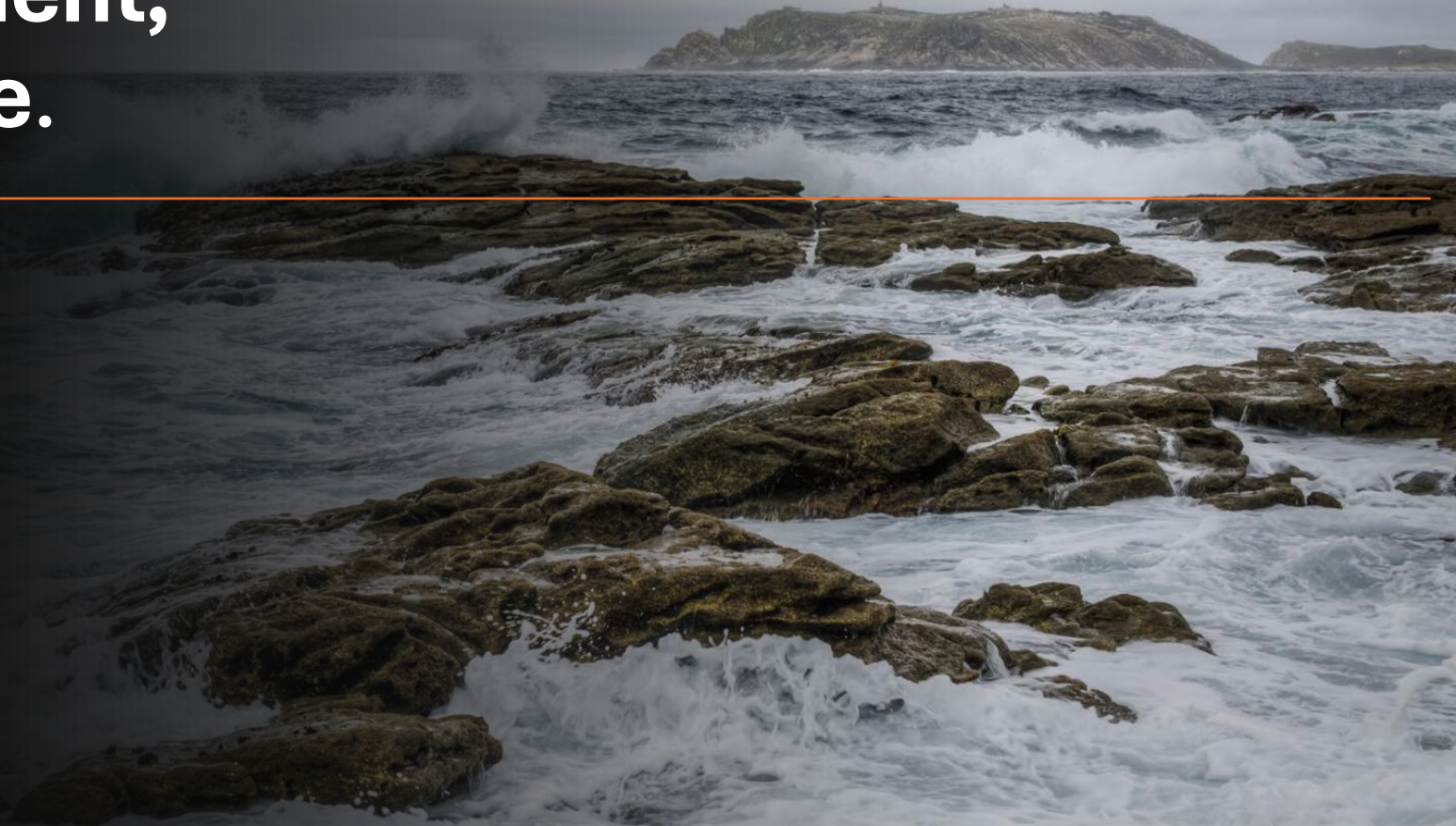


I'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Turrbal and Jagera peoples, and pay my respects to Elders past and present. I recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and community, and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples here today.





Communities survived not
by speed or force, but by
**steadiness, judgement,
and mutual reliance.**







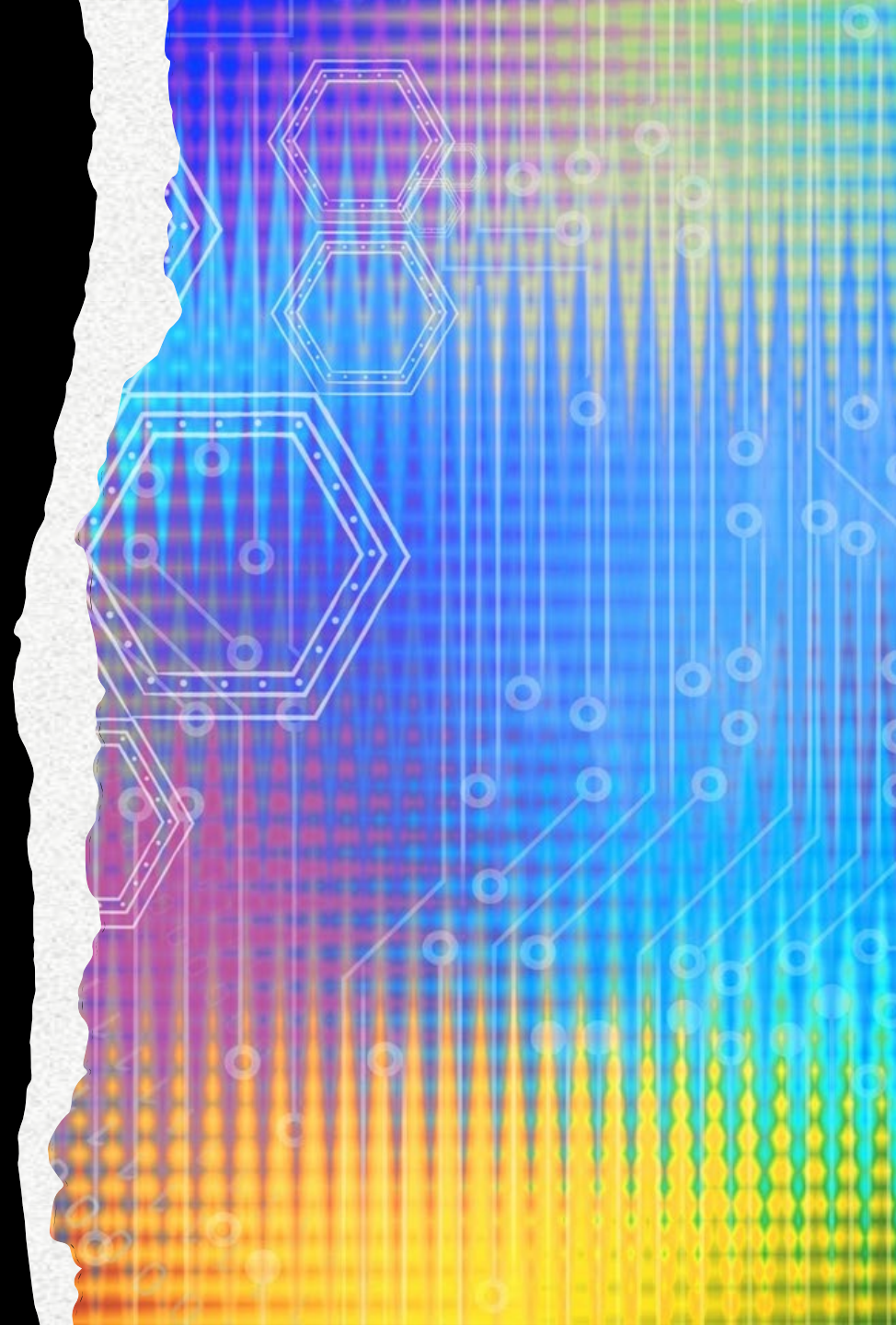
Hold Fast.

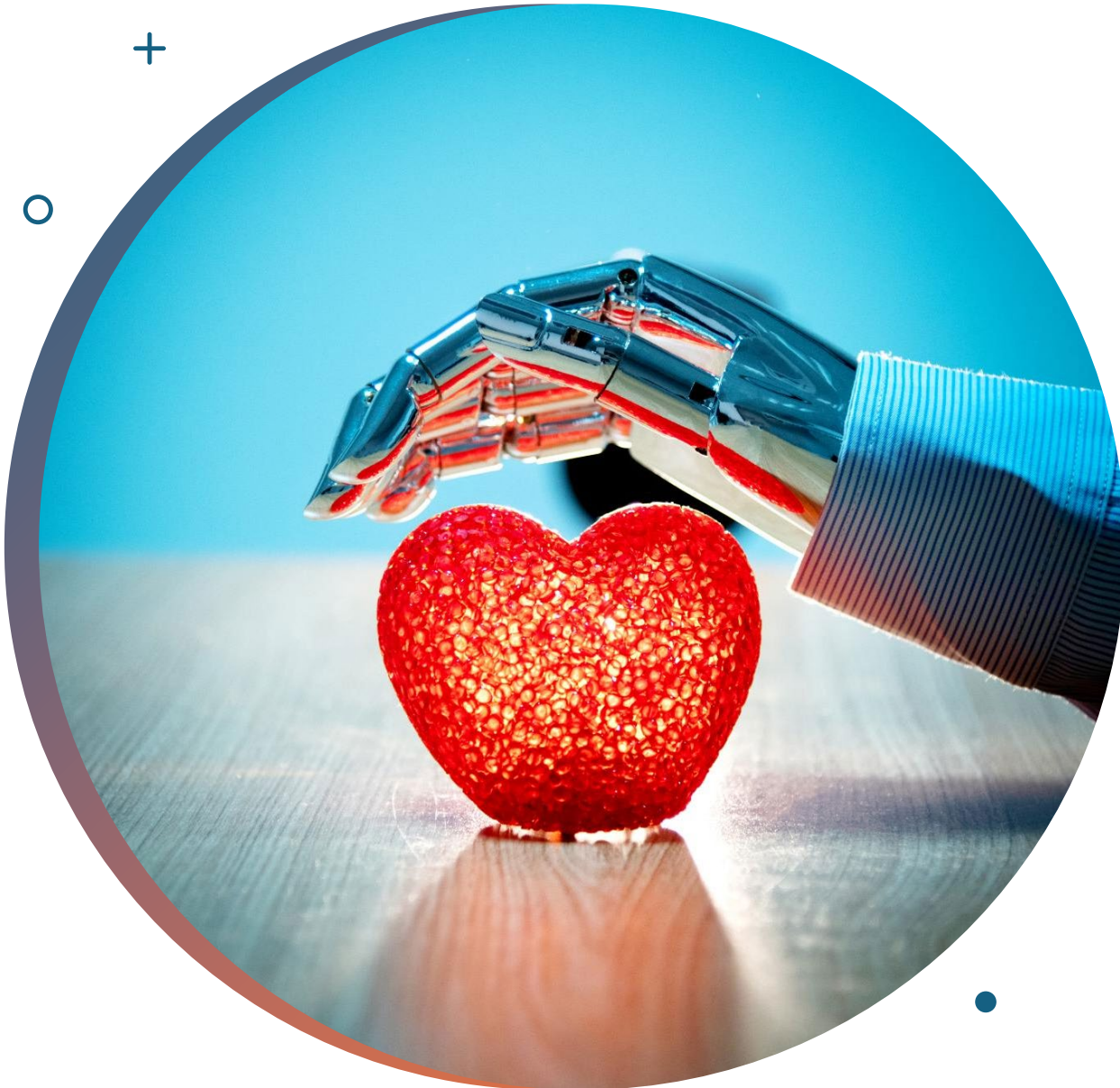




Because care, like life on the edge of the Atlantic, is **not about optimisation or even efficiency.**

It is about **holding on - to dignity, to relationship, to accountability - when conditions are harsh or uncertain.**





Ai brings.

- Prediction.
- Pattern recognition.
- Speed.
- Automation.
- The promise of relief for overstretched systems.

real potential here ...

To bestow voice and autonomy and to move from the old models of person-centred care and support and onto something that **is more person-led**, valuing individual **autonomy and agency of the person** being supported and cared for.





Agentic AI is artificial intelligence that can independently plan and take actions to achieve goals with minimal human intervention.

Generative AI *tells you what to do;*

Agentic AI *does it (or progresses it) on your behalf.*

Global retail and agentic Ai

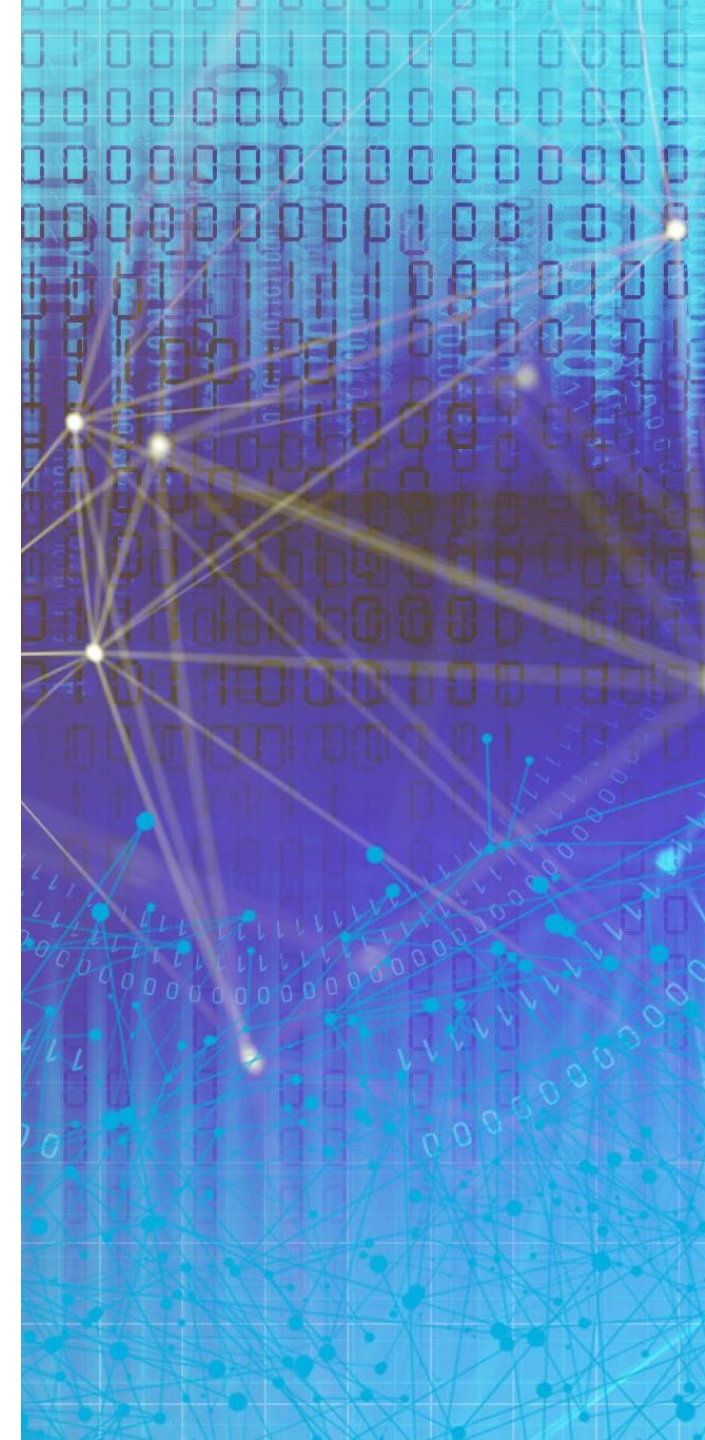
- searches,
- compares,
- validates,
- builds baskets,
- completes purchases

— sometimes without the human ever asking directly.



The omniconsumer.

Retail is not only evolving personalisation; it is dissolving the idea of channels altogether. You are not a user of a platform - ***you are the platform.*** Everything flows around you. You become the pivot, the context, the centre point.



W(h)olistic Ai in care

Retail's omniconsumer is simply a commercial metaphor for what we in care have known for generations:

A person's life is not a set of disconnected episodes - it is a whole, living, relational story.

And AI allows us, perhaps for the first time, to coordinate care in a way that honours that wholeness.



But with this immense capability comes risk.

We could see:

- erosion of autonomy,
- opaque decision-making,
- surveillance without consent,
- systems that infantilise rather than empower,
- a loss of the right to “be” rather than be managed.





the soul in the circuit





Oxford's University's Institute of Ethics in Ai





a definition of responsible AI
rooted not in efficiency, but
in **human rights, dignity,
independence, choice and
control, equality and
wellbeing.**

**It is a deliberate refusal to
let innovation outrun
responsibility.**



**Progress that
requires us to
let go of what
matters most
is not progress
at all.**



In Fife, a family-run provider,
Abbotsford Care,
has been developing
an AI-enabled
approach to daily
care reporting called
Coorie Well.



**They did not bend
care to fit the
technology.
They chose to
shape the
technology around
care.**





**the process of co-design
not only enables a better
localisation of product but
shapes that product to the
uniqueness of the space
and community that uses
it.**



‘ the journey is
as important
as the
destination.’

Robert Louis Stevenson

PANEL:

- . Participation
- . Accountability
- . Non-discrimination
- . Empowerment
- . Legality



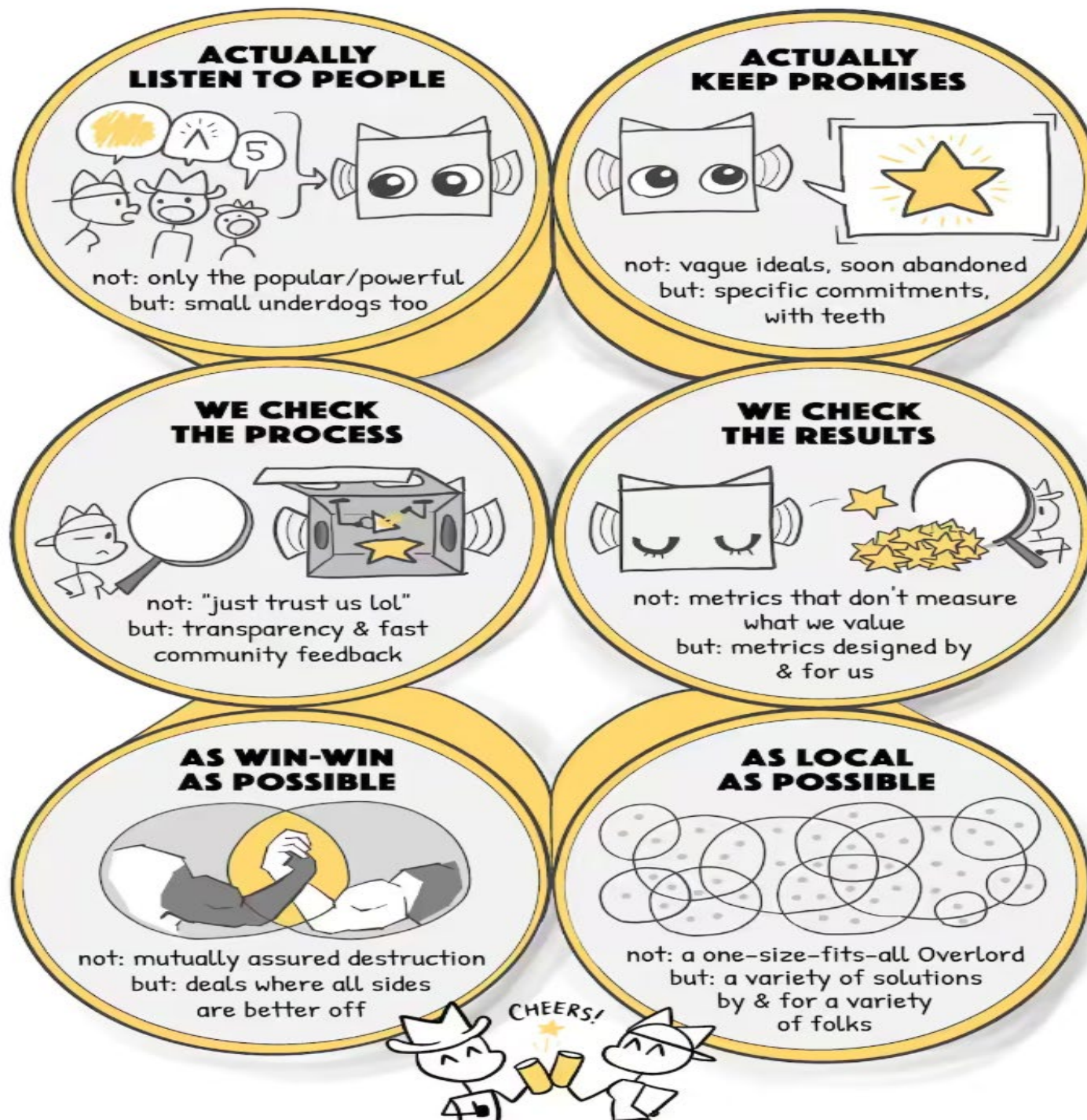
Participation means people are not passive recipients of technology, but shapers of it — as Coorie Well demonstrates.

Accountability means there is always a named human being answerable for outcomes.

Non-discrimination means bias is confronted, not normalised.

Empowerment means systems expand agency rather than narrow it.

Legality means rights are lived, not simply stated.



Civic AI : keep power close.

**Audrey Tang and Caroline Green
on 6-Pack of Care**



**You can only
hold fast to
something
you are
close
enough to
feel
slipping.**

Ai must not become the thing that loosens our grip.

- If AI is used to monitor rather than support, it will fail.
- If it replaces presence rather than protecting it, it will fail.
- If it substitutes for investment rather than complements it, it will fail





Hold Fast.

Not to habit.
Not to convenience.
But to responsibility.

- Hold fast to dignity when efficiency tempts us otherwise.
- Hold fast to accountability when systems grow opaque.
- Hold fast to relationship when substitution seems easier.

If we hold fast to
human rights, to
care as relationship,
and to
responsibility that
can be named and
challenged, then we
can move forward
without losing
ourselves.



*Mòran
taing*

