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ONE SIZE FITS NONE

ALEJANDRO JUÁREZ CRAWFORD & MIRIAM PLAVIN-MASTERMAN

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ONE
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TIME FOR AN ENTREPRENEURIAL REVOLUTION

ALEJANDRO JUÁREZ CRAWFORD & MIRIAM PLAVIN-MASTERMAN

One Size Fits None is a must-read for anyone grappling with the systemic breakdowns that seem to define our era – whether it’s crumbling infrastructure, unresponsive institutions, or the deepening climate crisis. Instead of searching for a single, scalable fix (Go Big or Go Home), the authors challenge us to rethink problem solving itself: How might we empower a generation hungry to make a change, the way Apple and Microsoft once empowered hundreds of millions through personal computing? What if we empowered local innovators to develop solutions tailored to their communities, while learning from each other in real time? The real challenge, the book argues, is redefining who we believe has the power to innovate. Backed by original research, this book makes a compelling case that

such a shift is not only possible but necessary within the decade. A revolution isn't sparked by one person alone, but by countless people experimenting, sharing, and building change together.

— *Sebastian Groh*, cofounder and CEO, SOLshare, Earthshot finalist, and winner, Zayed Sustainability Prize

One Size Fits None holds the blueprint for an innovation revolution. Crawford and Plavin-Masterman argue convincingly that the biggest challenges we face today – from climate change, to disruption from technological change, to unresponsive corporations, governments, and institutions – require a completely different approach to finding solutions. The key to a better future comes from broadening who gets to innovate through developing experimentation as a mindset. Following the authors' journey over years of practical application of their methods shows that, not only will the solutions *not come* from the traditional halls of elite entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and private equity bankers, but the solutions will be far superior when developed at the local level by those who are most familiar with the problems at hand and arrive, through experimentation, at outcomes that would benefit them directly.

— *Michael Horvath*, economist and cofounder, Strava

One Size Fits None strips away the hype of AI, algorithms, and Big Tech invincibility, and confirms their real effects on our lives – then shows us a better way. Yes, technology can seem able to do anything for us, not only help us buy or stream anything we want with one click, but also serve all our lifestyle desires. While tech visionaries rhapsodize about it as companion, babysitter, teacher, and co-author, we've all become part of a "cattle class" struggling to get the help we need because it isn't one of the menu options. *One Size Fits None* reminds us that the better way is human ingenuity; data shows that real people can develop real solutions that actually work – for us. This brilliant book will make you feel seen, and inspire you to take back the initiative and seek solutions among the wildly diverse, messy miracles of humanity itself.

— *Barclay Palmer*, executive editor, *Climate and Capital Media*

We've all been victimized by the "doom loop," where no well-informed human can ever answer our urgent questions about our bills, our 103 degree fever, our blue-screen computer, the climate crisis, you name it. *One Size Fits None* explains how we got here, how much damage these loops are causing, and – most importantly – how we can escape them. The simple solution, the authors argue, is to scale down our businesses and unleash millions of small-scale enterprises capable of delivering personalized and localized goods and services. They persuasively show that we have the right tools – of design, ingenuity, and capital – to create these kinds of solutions, if we're smart enough to use them. And there's no better book to explain what these tools should be, and no better time to deploy them than now.

— *Michael Shuman*, publisher, *Main Street Journal*

About the Authors



Alejandro Juárez Crawford, as cocreator of the RebelBase platform and cofounder of the Democratizing Innovation Institute, leads a global collaboration enabling people to build solutions of their own. He serves as clinical professor of innovation at the Bard MBA in Sustainability and cohosts the *What if Instead?* podcast with Miriam.



Miriam Plavin-Masterman is a Professor in the Business Administration/ Economics department at Worcester State University. She studies how social entrepreneurs repurpose industrial infrastructure to make cities more livable. She cohosts the *What if Instead?* podcast with Alejandro.

Acknowledgments

This book began as we grappled with a series of questions. Why can't we fight climate change? Why am I stuck in a doom loop? Could these things be related? We asked ourselves these questions while working on a series of op-eds with the cleantech investor and *Climate and Capital* executive editor Barclay Palmer, who pushed us to articulate the underlying question more clearly. We are grateful for his insights at the start of this process.

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Last but certainly not least, when in doubt, ask Chris and Tuba what they think. We can't possibly express how much we appreciate the ongoing lesson in what it means to surround yourself with those who love you most and criticize you best.

Part I: The Real Cost of The Hockey Stick

Ch.1. No Recourse

Footnotes

¹ UHC denied the cancer patient's overnight stay. Then, in February 2025, defamation lawyers representing UHC sent Dr. Potter a letter insisting that "UnitedHealthcare never asked or expected you to step out of surgery," and demanding: "You must promptly correct the record by removing your videos, posting a public apology to UnitedHealthcare " The doctor posted the letter on Instagram (Potter, 2025).

² An externality is a consequence of an activity not reflected in that activity's cost, and not primarily borne by those directly involved in the activity.

Ch.2. Business Class Ticket Holders May Now Begin Boarding

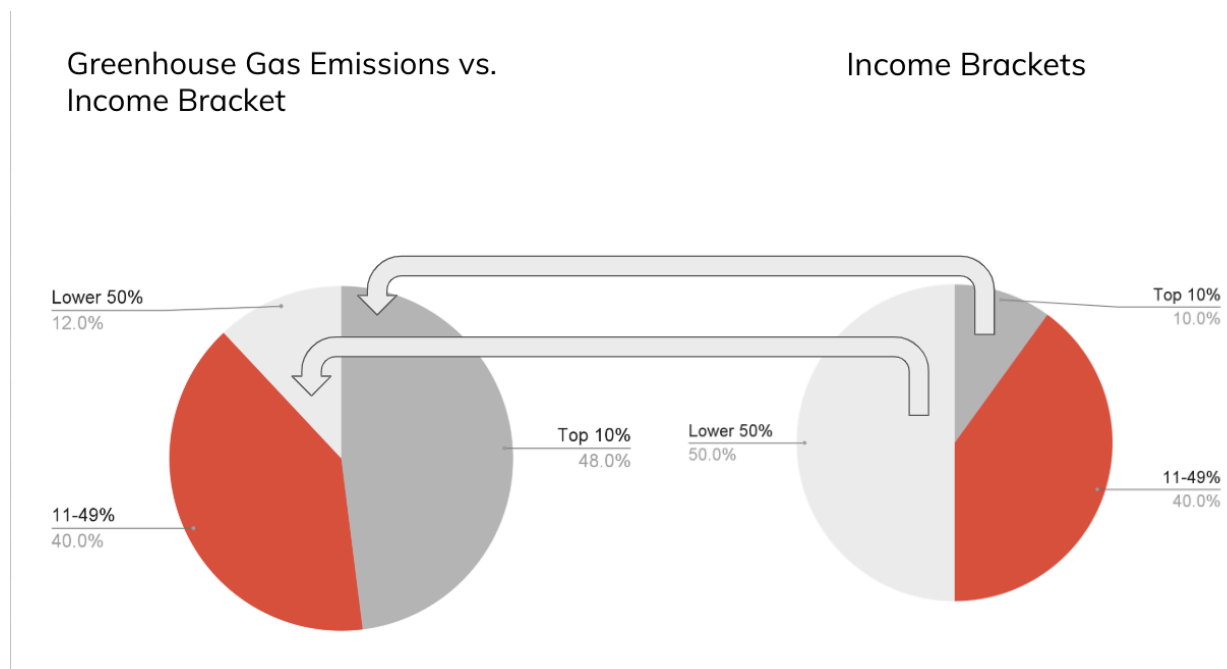


Fig. 1. Percent of Annual per Capita GHG Emissions vs. Income Distribution Percent. *Source:* Adapted from Chancel (2022).

Footnotes:

¹ Coyotes - those facilitating migration, often exploiting migrants in the process.

Ch.3. A Number of Our Teams Made Changes to Be More Efficient and Work Better

Ch.4. The Blank Page Problem

Footnotes

¹What the company as a whole is worth on the market if you add up the value of all its shares.

²The S&P is a weighted index of 500 leading publicly traded companies.

Ch.5. There's No Such Thing as a Free Flywheel or Hockey Stick

Part II: A Feature, Not a Bug

Ch. 6 Those Other Countries are Closer than They Appear

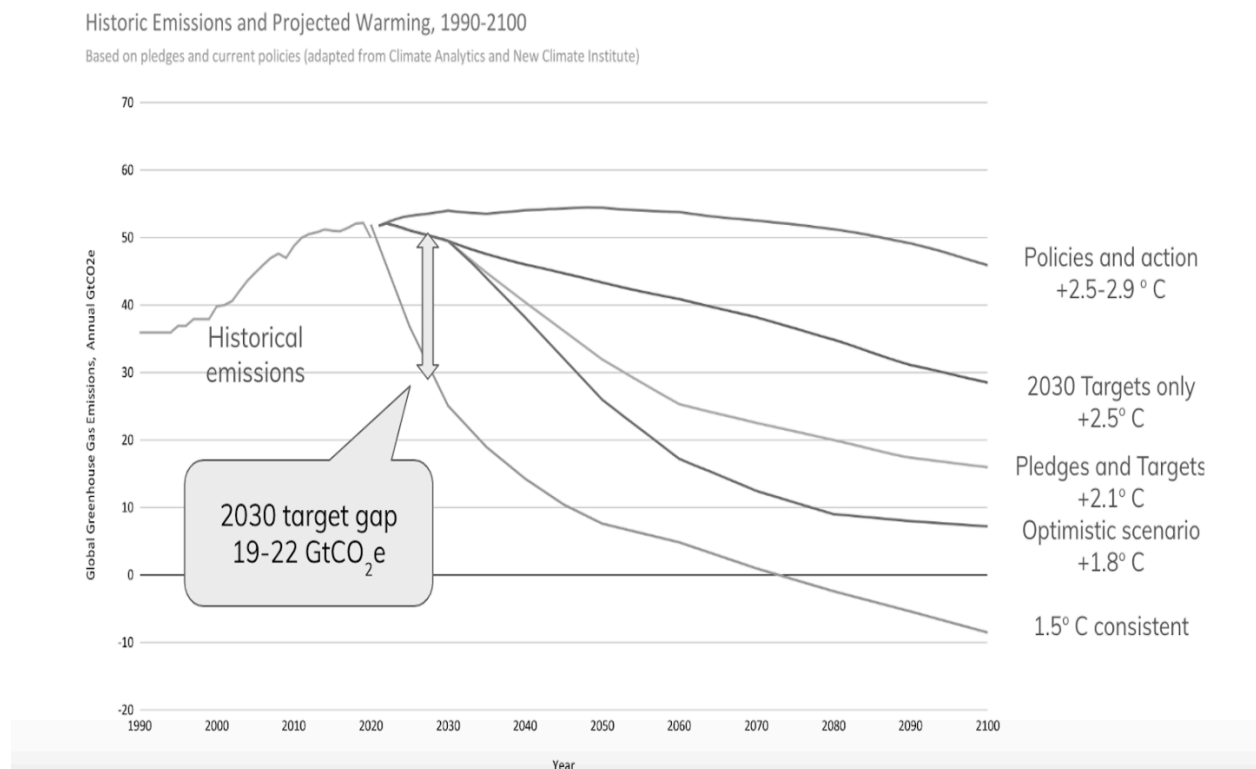
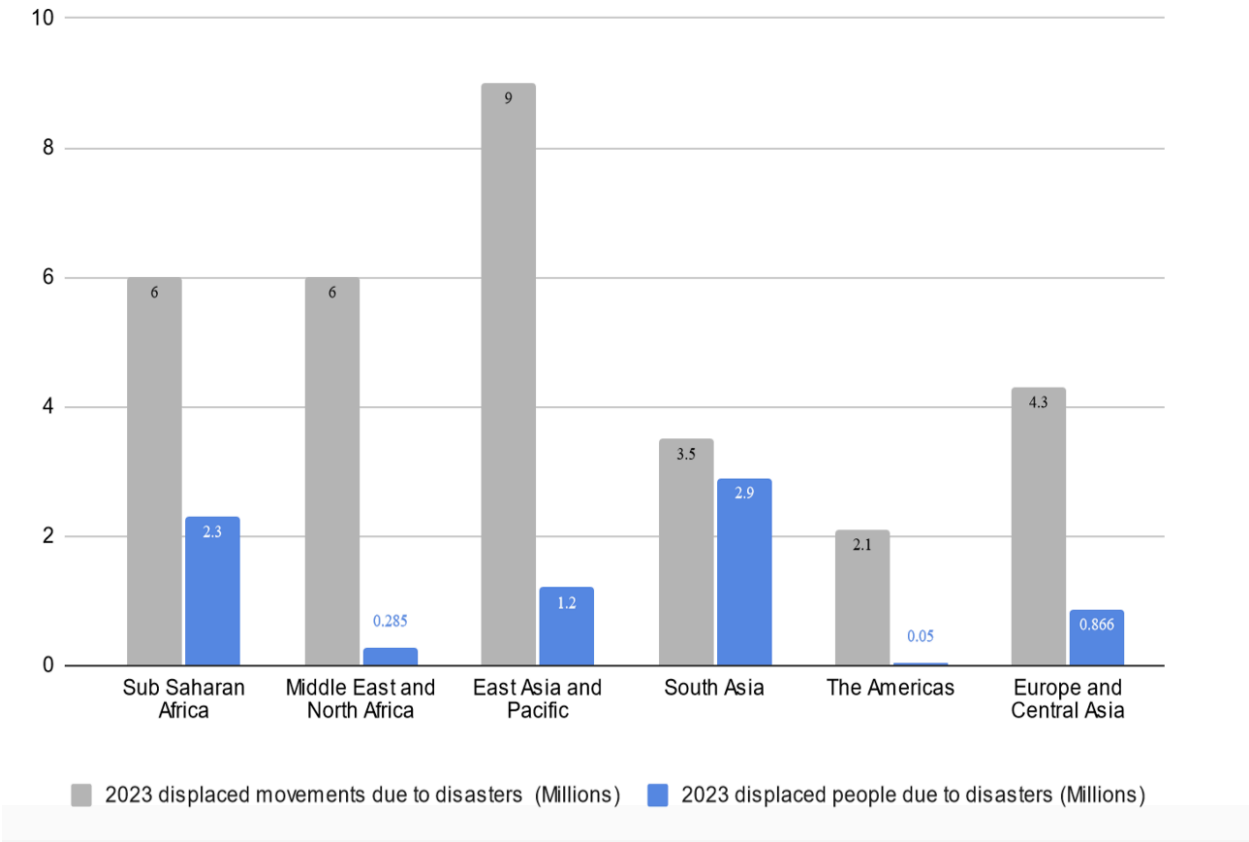


Fig. 2. 2100 Warming Projections, as of December 2023. *Source:* The authors, adapted from Climate Analytics and New Climate Institute data, 2023.

Footnotes:

¹Preindustrial levels provide a baseline for the climate before humans started pumping trillions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere each year. In Fig. 2, we express these in carbon equivalent units, where the current annual level is just over 50 million kilotons.

Fig. 3. 2023 Disaster Displacements by Region. *Source:* The authors, adapted from IDMC – Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2024.



²The internal displacements figure refers to the number of forced movements of people within the borders of their country recorded during the year. This helps capture repeated and multiple movements. While displacement from conflict and disaster are captured in separate datasets, they can influence and amplify each other’s effects.

³For detail by industry, please see: https://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/report_2023

⁴Countries producing more than 14 annual tons of carbon per capita include Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Brunei, Trinidad and Tobago, Saudi Arabia, New Caledonia, Oman, Australia, the United States, Sint Maarten (Dutch part), Canada, the Faroe Islands, and Kazakhstan (Global Carbon Budget, 2023). <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/co-emissions-per-capita?tab5table>

Ch.7. Markets Serve Whom?

Footnotes:

¹Doughnut economics proposes that the economy thrives when it exceeds social requirements but stops short of planetary boundaries (Doughnut Economics Action Lab, n.d.).

²A practice disallowed in the United States until 1982 (Reich, 2024).

Ch.8. All the Running You Can Do, to Keep in the Same Place

Footnotes

¹“Creative destruction refers to the incessant product and process innovation mechanism by which new production units replace outdated ones. It was coined by Joseph Schumpeter (1942), who considered it ‘the essential fact about capitalism’” (Caballero, 2008, pp. 1–5).

²Employees constitute a yearly recurring expense, which must be deducted from the money that comes in when calculating profits. They count as a cost the company needs to pay in a given period, rather than one that varies with how much it sells.

Ch.9. Genius!

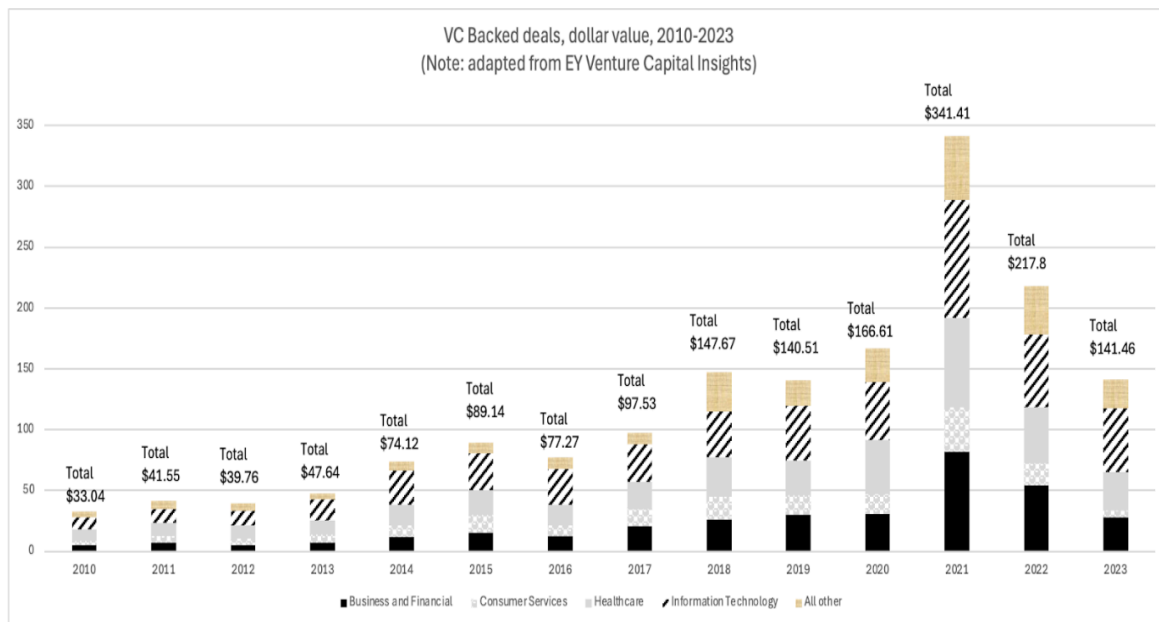


Fig. 4. Dollar Value, VC Deals by Sector, 2010–2023. *Source:* The authors, adapted from EY Venture Capital Insights, 2024 (Ernst & Young, 2024).

Figure 9.2 Number of VC Deals by Sector, 2010-2023

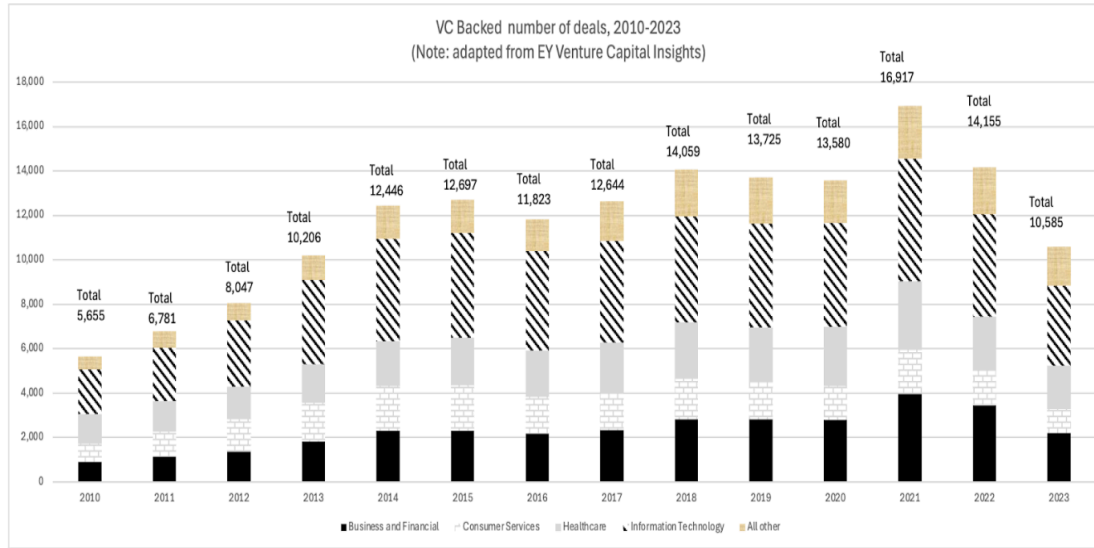


Fig. 5. Number of VC Deals by Sector, 2010–2023. Source: The authors, adapted from EY Venture Capital Insights, 2024 (Ernst & Young, 2024).

Footnotes

¹ Some large firms and governments attempt to borrow from this model through vehicles such as corporate VC and strategic government funds. Various “accelerators” promise to help startups reach the next stage and secure the relevant funding.

² In the 2020s, big tech experimented with new mechanisms for acquiring innovations developed by startups. In 2014, Google acquired AI firm DeepMind (Gibbs, 2024). Ten years later, under antitrust scrutiny, the tech giant agreed to pay billions to license the technology of another AI startup, Character.AI. Google used most of the licensing fees to buy out the shareholders, while hiring the founders along with key employees. Microsoft and Amazon have pursued similar strategies for acquiring innovations in ways that compensate founders and investors without acquiring the firms outright (Griffith & Metz, 2024).

³ Note: both sets of data are based on equity financings into US-based, VC-backed companies. Totals include investment by (among others) corporate investors, VC firms, individuals, and other private equity firms.

⁴ A polycrisis, according to historian Adam Tooze, occurs when seemingly separate crises seem to pile up for many people at once (Whiting, 2023). Edgar Morin and Anne Brigitte Kern coined the term, referring to “problems, antagonisms, crises, uncontrolled processes, and the general crisis of the planet” (Morin & Kern, 1999, p. 74).

Ch.10. Break the Stranglehold on Innovation

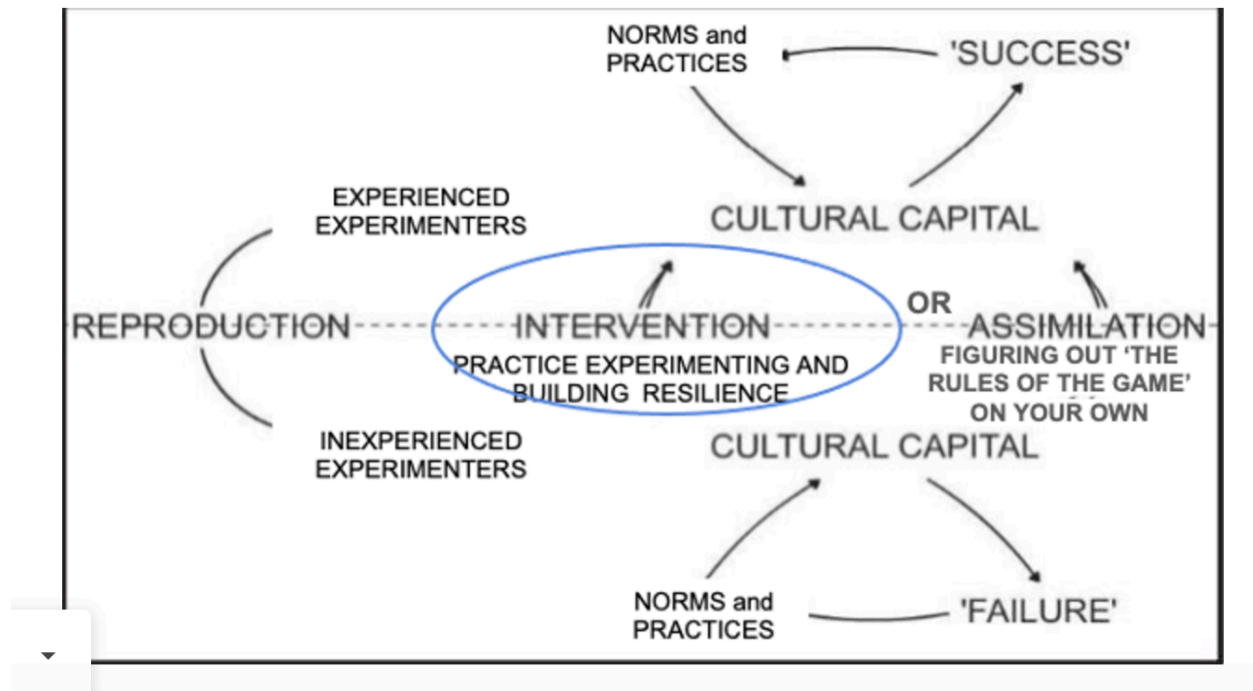


Fig. 6. Paths to Cultural Capital for Success. *Source:* The authors.

Footnotes

¹ Grades 6–8, generally 11- to 14-year-olds.

² In the United States, a school the family pays for, as opposed to one supported by the state.

³ A unicorn is a startup valued at \$1 billion or more while not yet listed on the stock market.

⁴ The affect heuristic describes our tendency to make decisions based on emotion over data (Hoffman, 2024). The availability heuristic refers to our tendency to relate to events to the extent that they seem memorable (Sohail, 2024).

⁵ An angel investor invests their own money into an early-stage startup, hoping the idea becomes a reality.

⁶ Rent the Runway is a subscription service for renting women's luxury clothing and accessories.

⁷ The RealReal is an online luxury consignment site.

Part III: From the Direction You Least Expect

Ch.11. Equip People Close to Problems to Build Solutions



Fig. 7. Toothpaste Locked in a Drugstore Cabinet. *Source:* Richard D. Crawford, with permission.
Footnotes

¹ 42% of Bangladeshis live in cities, and Bangladesh has about 30 times the population of Colorado, in roughly half the territory.

² In its simplest form, comparative advantage, applied to countries, suggests that each country should produce what it's best at, and trade it for everything else – even if it's also good at producing what it gets through trade.

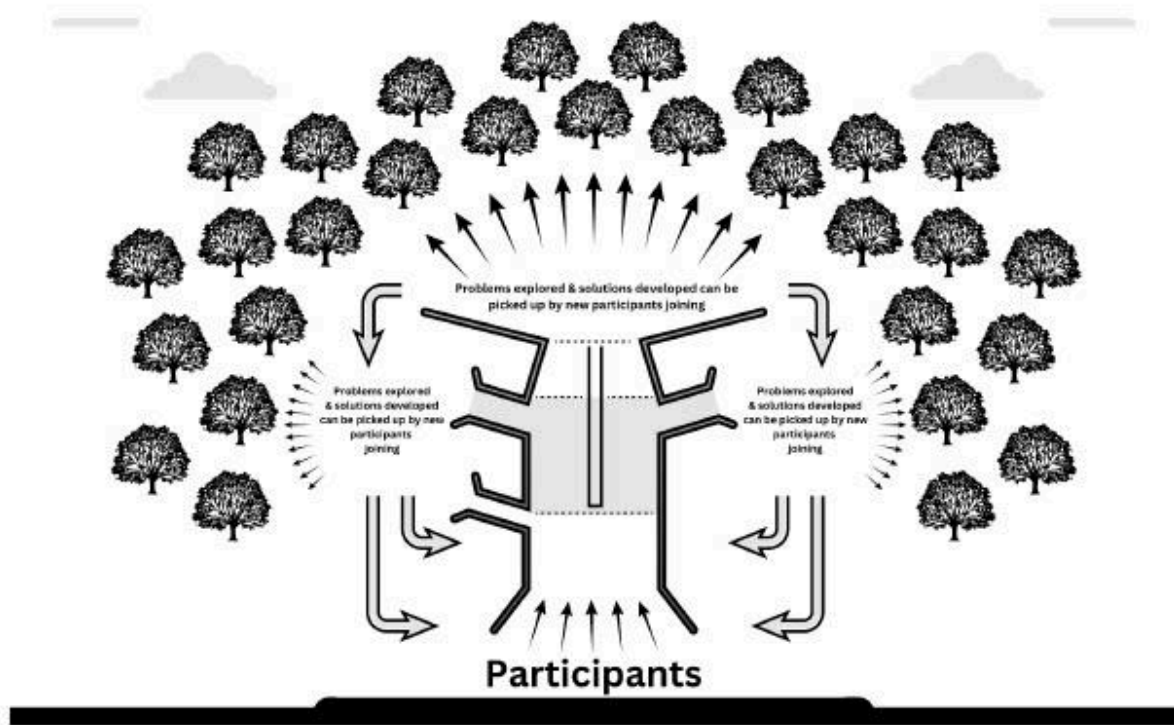
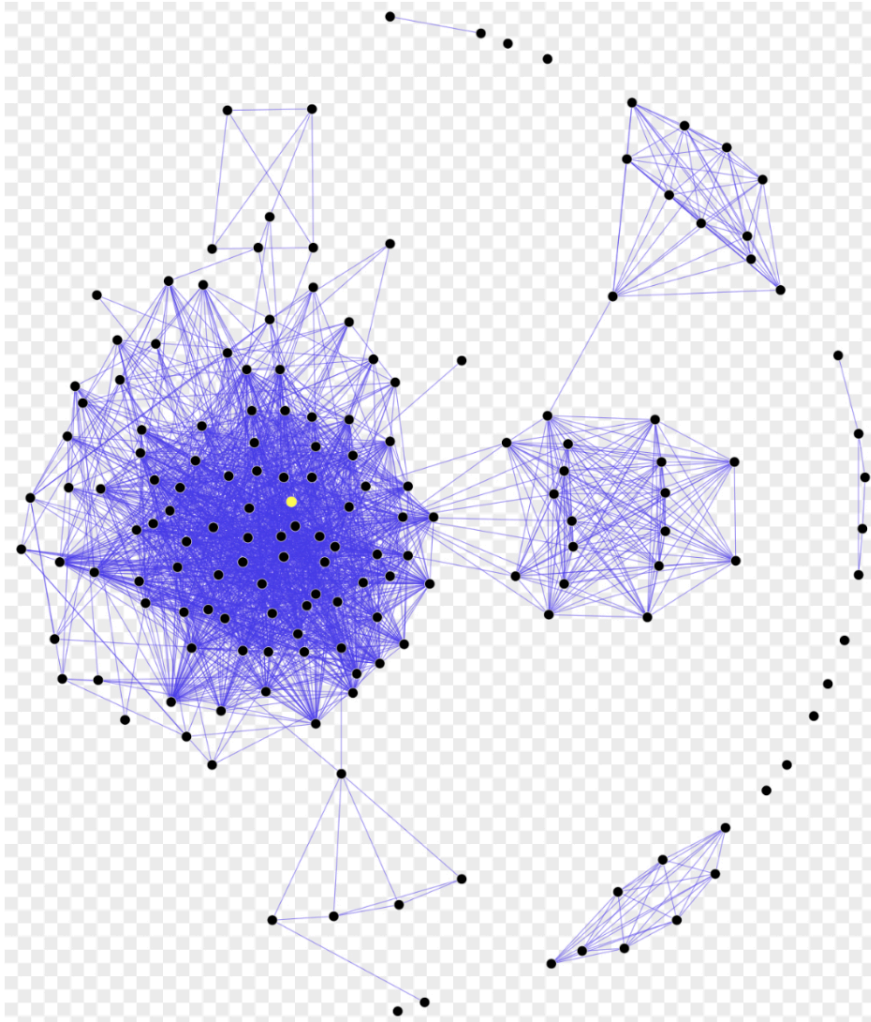


Fig. 8.Double Funnel. *Source:* Image developed by Tomas Mora Selva and reprinted with permission from the Democratizing Innovation Institute.



Source :DarwinPeacock, Maklaan, CC BY 3.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37438799>

Fig. 9. Social Network Diagram. *Source:* DarwinPeacock, Maklaan, CC BY 3.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37438799>

Ch.13. The Kitty Hawk Principle

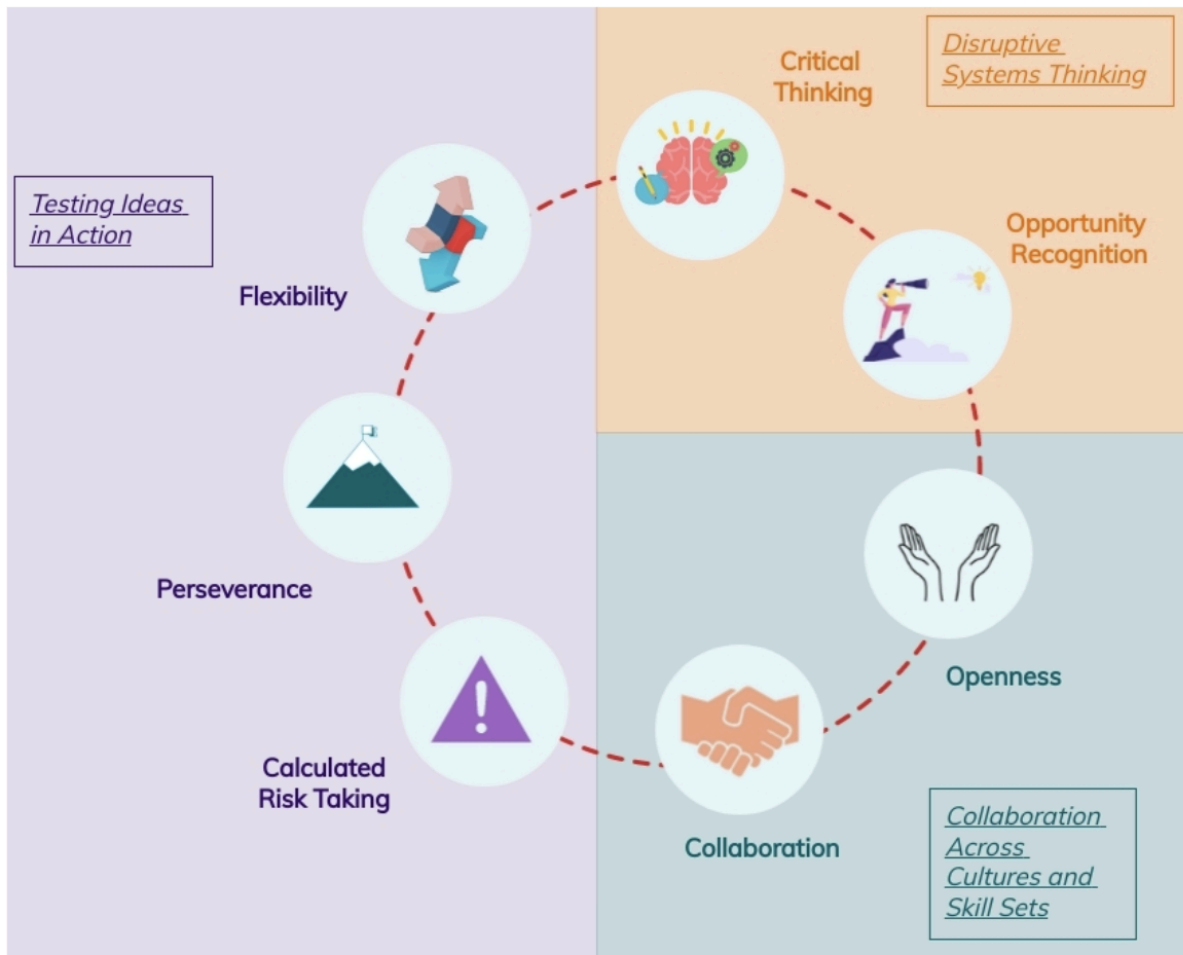


Fig. 10. Competency Framework. Source: RebelBase, reprinted with permission

Table 1. RebelBase Survey Responses, 2020–2023.

Domain	(a) % of respondents who report an increase in scores	(b) % of respondents who report consistent high scores	(c) ((a) + (b)) Increase or retained level %
Critical Thinking and Opportunity Recognition			
Critical Thinking	52%	34%	86%
Opportunity Recognition	62%	23%	85%
Openness and Collaboration on Diverse Teams			
Openness	45%	44%	89%
Collaboration	42%	43%	85%
Testing and Refining Ideas in Action			
Calculated Risk-Taking	64%	20%	83%
Perseverance	50%	32%	82%
Flexibility	46%	35%	81%

Note: 392 responses out of 855 surveys sent, for a response rate of 46%. See Appendix A for detailed methodology.

Source: RebelBase, with permission

Footnotes

¹ <http://www.democratizinginnovation.org>

² Project-based courses assign students practical projects ranging from developing a startup or business plan to working with an existing organization to effect change or help it grow. Accelerators and incubators help startups grow and develop. Incubators typically support early-stage startups, while accelerators serve startups that are already established.

³ A group of people who share a common interest or goal and work together to improve skills and knowledge.

⁴ For a sampling of experiments, some of which will become established projects as they go through the funnel – and others of which will enable project teams to build capabilities along the way, see: <https://app.rebelbase.co/browse>

Ch. 14. Launch a Bottom-Up Revolution

Appendix A: Survey Research Design and Methodology Summary

Goals of the Study: The primary objective of this ongoing study is to evaluate skills and mindset built through project-based learning (PBL) and explore the scalability of such learning globally, using a shared digital platform. The broader ambition is to understand what it takes to equip individuals to tackle systemic issues through live experiments and social innovation.

Study Design: The study employed a structured PBL approach, in which participants from global cohorts developed projects to solve real-world problems through a series of modules on the RebelBase platform. Participants focused on developing solutions, refining them through feedback, and presenting cohesive final projects. The program followed a practicum model, including weekly peer critiques and workshops to support continuous project improvement.

Project-Based Format: Participants collaborated globally to work on social and environmental challenges, such as reducing waste and developing financial models for rural farmers. Each week, they submitted project components for feedback from instructors and peers, refining their work. This collaborative format fostered diverse perspectives and standardized the experiential learning process across geographical regions.

Competency Framework: Three broad competency domains were evaluated using surveys with retrospective questions:

- (1) Disruptive Systems Thinking – Participants’ ability to critically analyze existing systems and identify opportunities for change.
- (2) Collaboration Across Cultures and Skill Sets – The capacity to collaborate on diverse teams, integrating perspectives and skills to solve problems.
- (3) Testing Ideas in Action – How well participants took calculated risks, demonstrated perseverance, and exhibited flexibility in adapting their solutions.

Research Methodology: Surveys were administered anonymously after program completion. By asking participants to assess their level before and after participation, survey questions aimed to capture participants’ self-assessed growth in skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and entrepreneurial problem-solving. The study’s outcomes provide insights into how PBL, combined with a global, collaborative digital platform, can foster the development of entrepreneurial and social innovation skills and mindset on a global scale.

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