

# Innovation Resistance

Moving Beyond Dominant  
framings

Helena Fornstedt

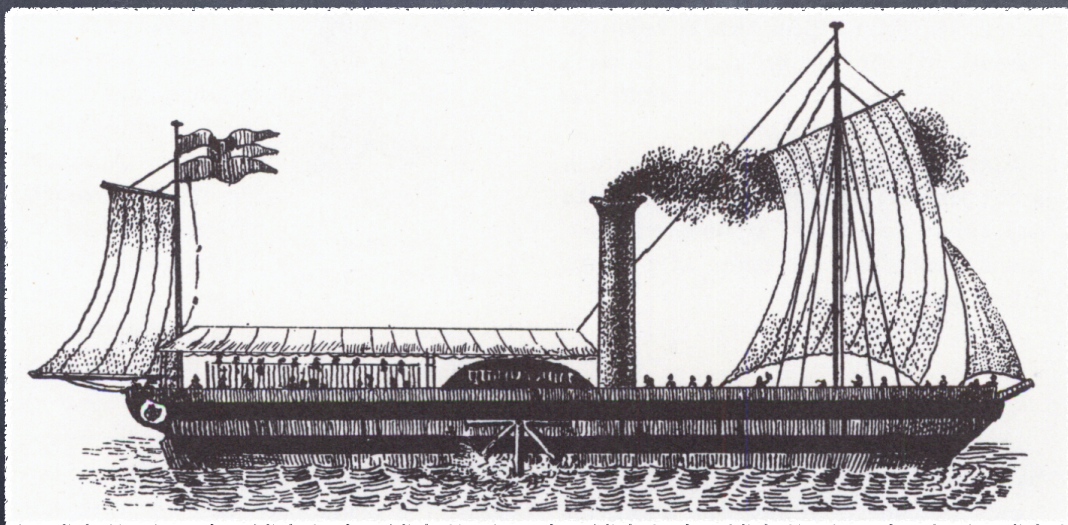
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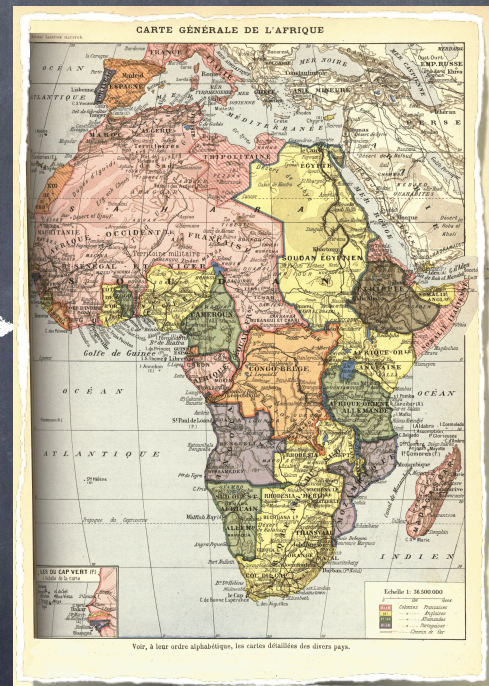
# Innovation







1813



1898

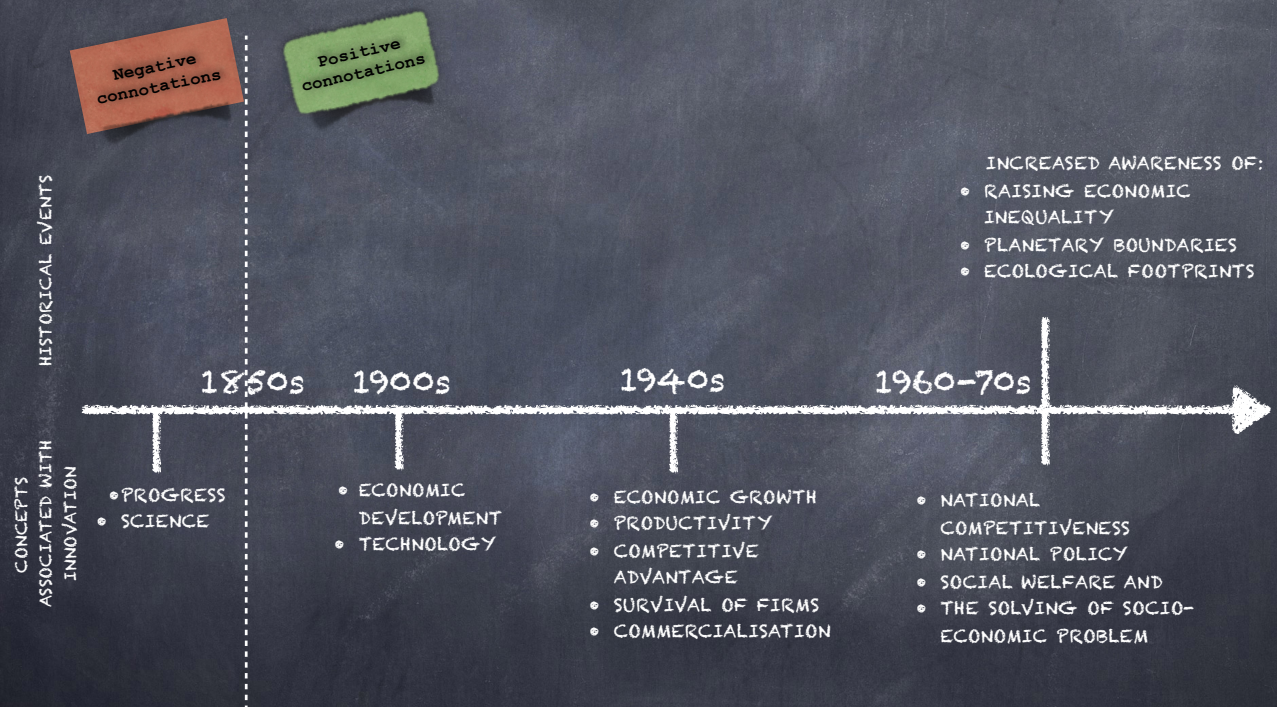
Ref: Headrick, 1979 Pictures: Wikipedia commons

- An innovation process can not be judged objectively
- It cannot be assumed to, in general, be something positive.
- The assessment of the innovation's value is determined from a certain perspective in time and space

What perspective  
To chose?



# Pro-innovation bias in the literature



Ref: Godin (2016, 2019) mf

The association with Progress might nudge a researcher to

- view innovation as a neutral concept
- obscuring the conflict-lines between different stakeholders
- recharacterising phenomenon previously seen as innovation as - when adverse effects are made salient - not being innovations after all
- linear view on innovation processes where only one outcome is possible.
- makes it seem like innovation linearly and accumulatively improves the conditions for humans and nature



## The association with Technology and Science might nudge a researcher to

- symbolical associate it with masculinity
- view nature as detached from technology. See technology as:
  - the means through which humans control and dominate nature (Laestadius, 2018).
  - a resource that has no value unless it is owned by someone that put a price on it (see Parrique, 2019).
  - something that depend on the acceptance and tolerance for waste production

## The association with Capitalism and Corporations might nudge a researcher to

- unwittingly becoming pro-profit and pro-firm portraying firms as self-evident forces of good (see Alvesson, et al., 2009, p. 7
- unknowingly promote neoliberal capitalist values.
- a focus on problem-solving for an economic elite and risks downplaying problems affecting non-affluent social groups.
- assume that only products or practices undesirable for the users are outcompeted (Soete, 2013)
- focus on commercialising research gives an innovation researcher a pro-innovation milieu that risks blinding them to innovation processes' adverse effects.



## The association with **Economic Growth** might nudge a researcher to

- Assume that innovation is a purely positive phenomenon (given its positive effect on growth)
- Remain blind to any adverse effects of the innovation (Gripenberg, et al., 2012).
- promote the belief in techno-fixes (as opposed to system changes) for social and ecological problems.
- one-sidedly favour the study of economic relationships and neglect relationships outside of the economy, often symbolically likened to the female.
- neglect of the decline that also follows innovation processes (see Goulet & Vinck, 2017).

## The association with **Competition** might nudge a researcher to

- promote speed at the expense of reflectivity
- downplay ethical dimensions
- see resistance primarily as something that makes countries and firms fall behind in the race—subsequently casting human and non-human resistance to innovation in a pejorative light



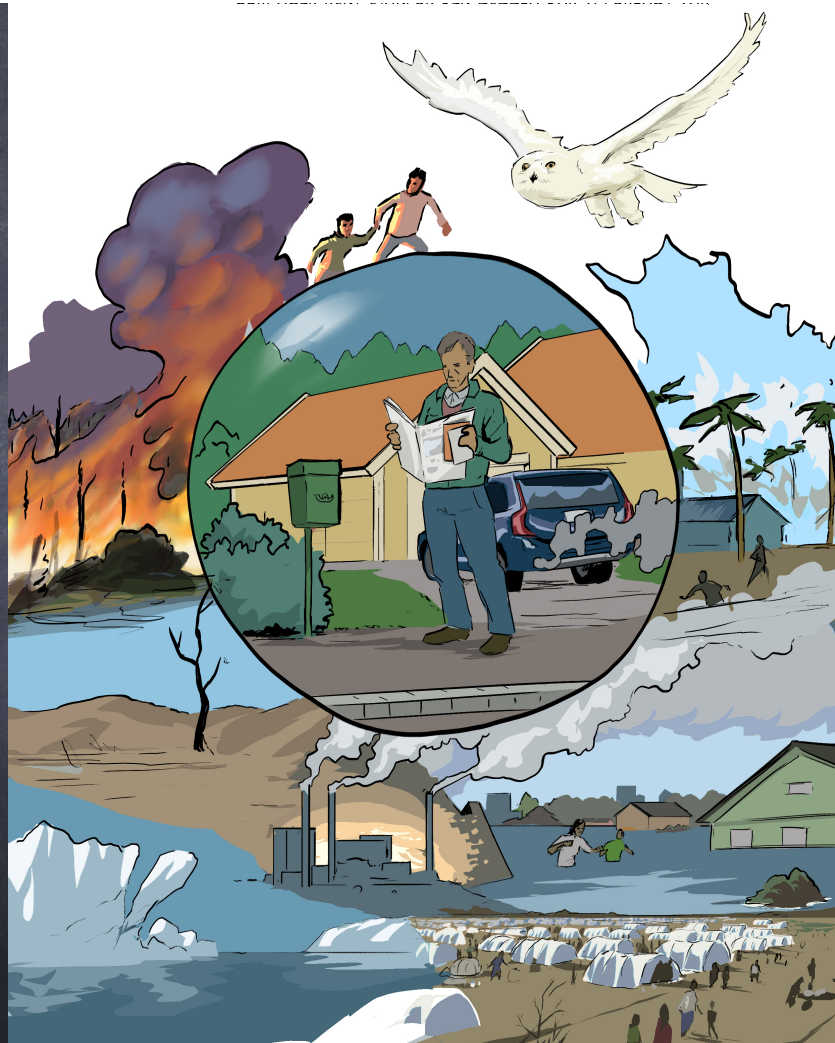
## The association with Welfare and Wicked Problems might nudge a researcher to

- see innovation under capitalism as a solution to wicked problems evading discussions of system changes on macro-level
- Become blind to the limitations of the corporation as an organisational form.
  - Innovating firms are motivated to innovate just enough and targeting actor who can pay.
  - The possible innovation processes aiming to meet grand challenges become limited to only include activities that also contribute to growth

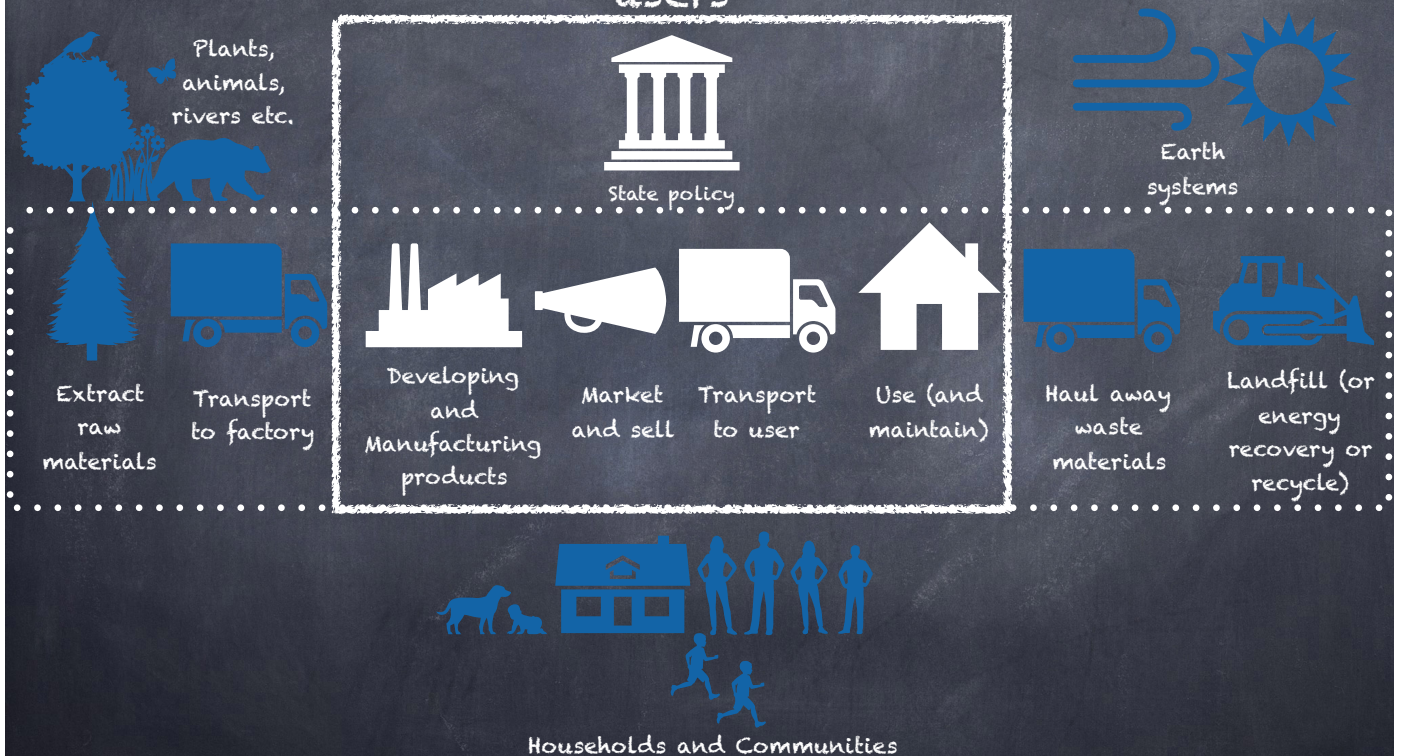
## Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) studies in a crisis

Both "science policy" and "innovation studies", to stick to Ben Martin's terminology, are, I would argue, today in a fundamental, even existential crisis; as if the economic-inspired policy approaches to science, technology and more broadly innovation, have reached their intrinsic limits [p.852]



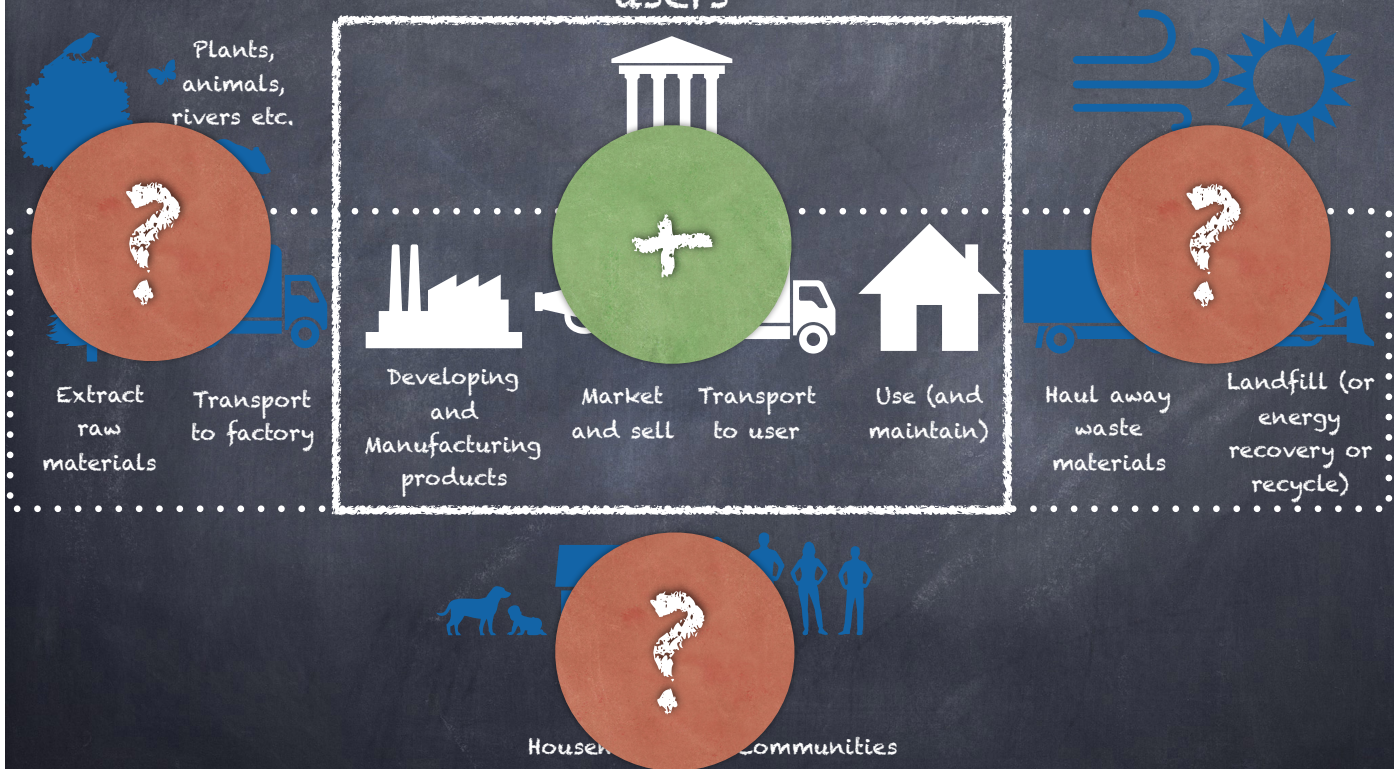


## Perspective: Companies, Governments (growth) and users





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## Innovation resistance

Innovation's positive effect on:

- Economic growth
- Survival of firms
- Competitive advantage



Innovationsmotstånd:

- Dysfunktionellt
- Fel-informerat
- Underläget
- Rigidt
- Dogmatiskt
- Trångsynt
- Provinsieell egennytta

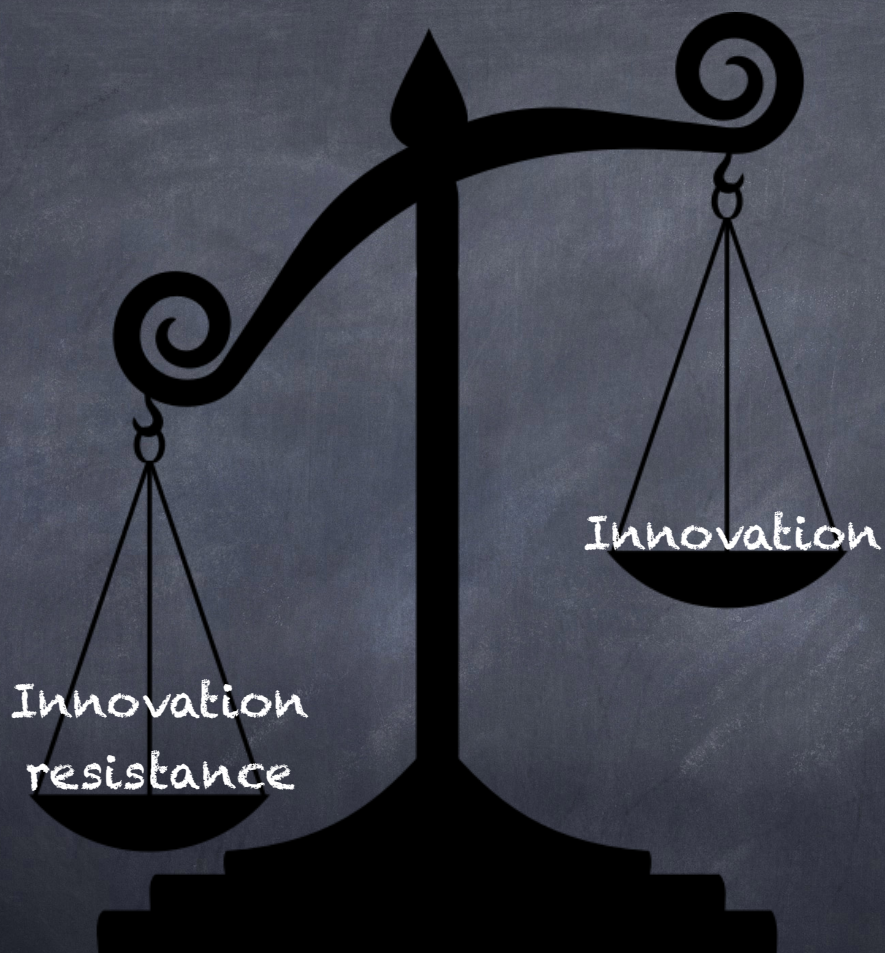


## Barriers

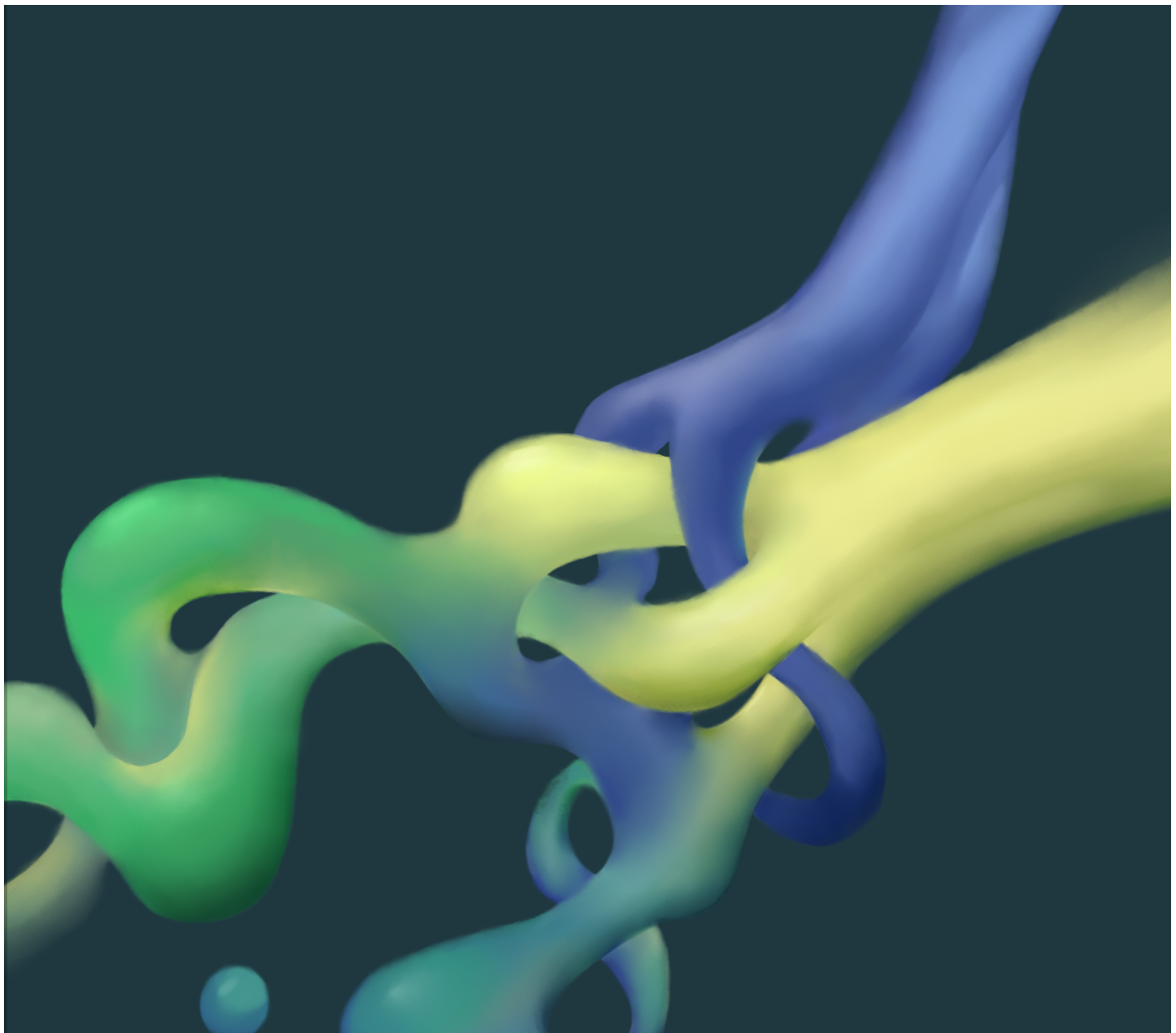
Non-humans, such as regulations, laws, risk, cost + humans

## Resistance

Humans such as customers and social movements



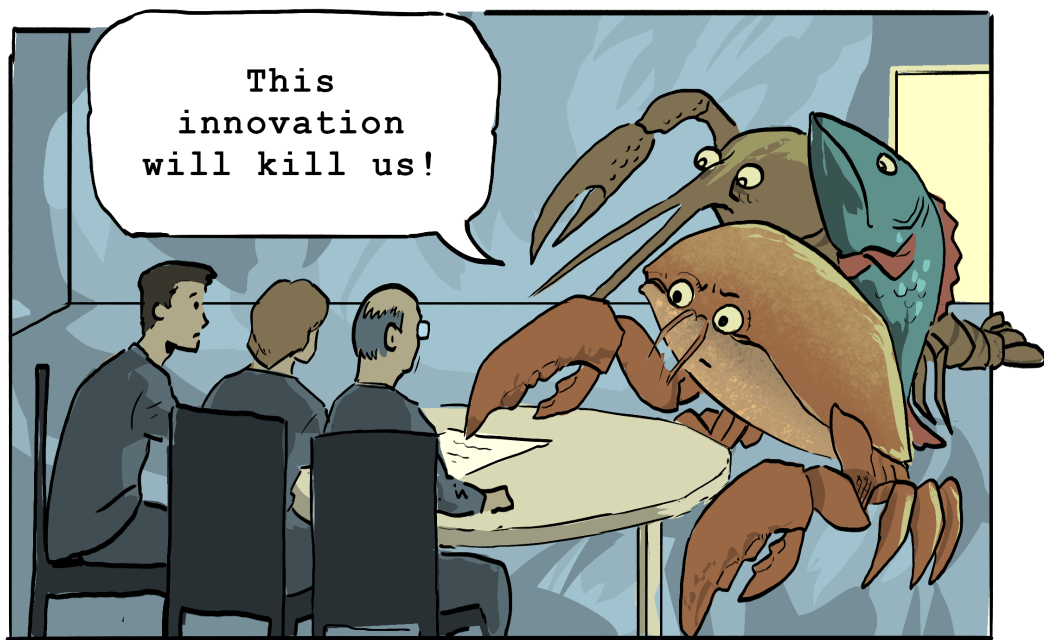




## Innovation resistance

- Shapes the innovation
- Potentially protects the Other from an undesirable or harmful innovation
- Might lead to reflection
- Is to some degree expected





Lack of resistance  
can come at a cost





This is about  
perspective. Which/  
Who's perspective do  
we use in our studies?





Thank you!