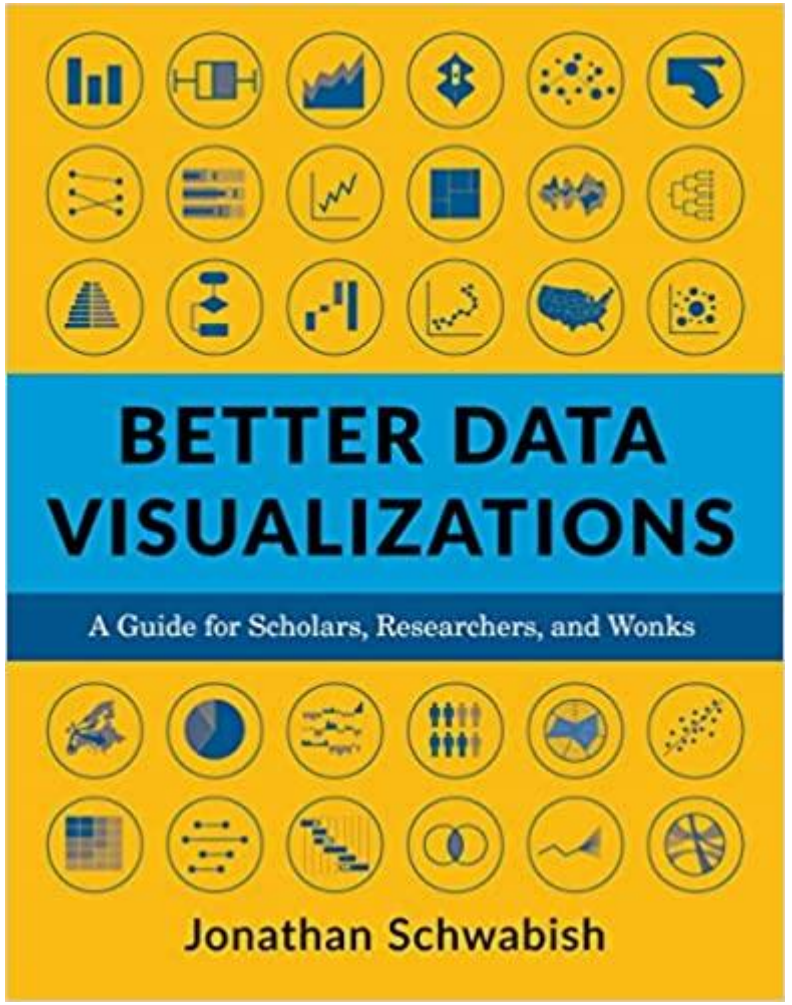
Telling Stories with Data

Sydney Shep, Wai-te-ata Press
Te Whare Tā O Wai-te-ata

Te Herenga Waka
Victoria University of Wellington



The Beginning

“Data does not just provide neutral and straightforward representations of the world, but is rather entangled with politics and culture, money and power.”

The Data Journalism Handbook 2: Towards a Critical Data Practice, 2019

Data encodes the stories of our lives, capturing not only our tastes and interests but also our hopes and fears. Data isn’t an abstract idea or a set of numbers or qualitative responses. It can be and is, ultimately, human.

https://acumenideas.com/whose-data-is-it-anyway-3f9ba60c8924

A beginning, A middle, and An end

The most basic story structure is familiar to us all. It consists of a beginning, a middle and an end.

The beginning (context)

To allow readers of a report to grasp its full meaning and insights, they need to have a point of reference. That reference is the context in which reported events took place or the assumptions on which forecasts are based. The context could be actual performance vs plan, this period's performance vs prior ones, explaining what events led to the current situation or any other relevant background information.

The middle (discovery)

To make your message compelling, make the middle about discovery. Explain a conflict, the hurdles that had to be overcome and potentially the wrong turns that were taken in arriving at the real proposed solution and call to action.

©Miriam Gilbert Storytelling with Numbers

Mixing graphical representation with narrative enables you to convey your message while still allowing your audience their own journey of discovery. This is particularly powerful in interactive settings but as our example shows, can be done with conventional reports, too.

The end (conclusion)

Many business reports leave the reader with the question "so what?". To achieve their full purpose, effective Data Storytelling must go beyond simple display of data but answer the so-what-question. This means including a conclusion, recommendation, forecast or next step suggestions. Yes, it means you have to have an opinion and a message – *and as we have seen earlier, those aspects differentiate you from a trained monkey*.

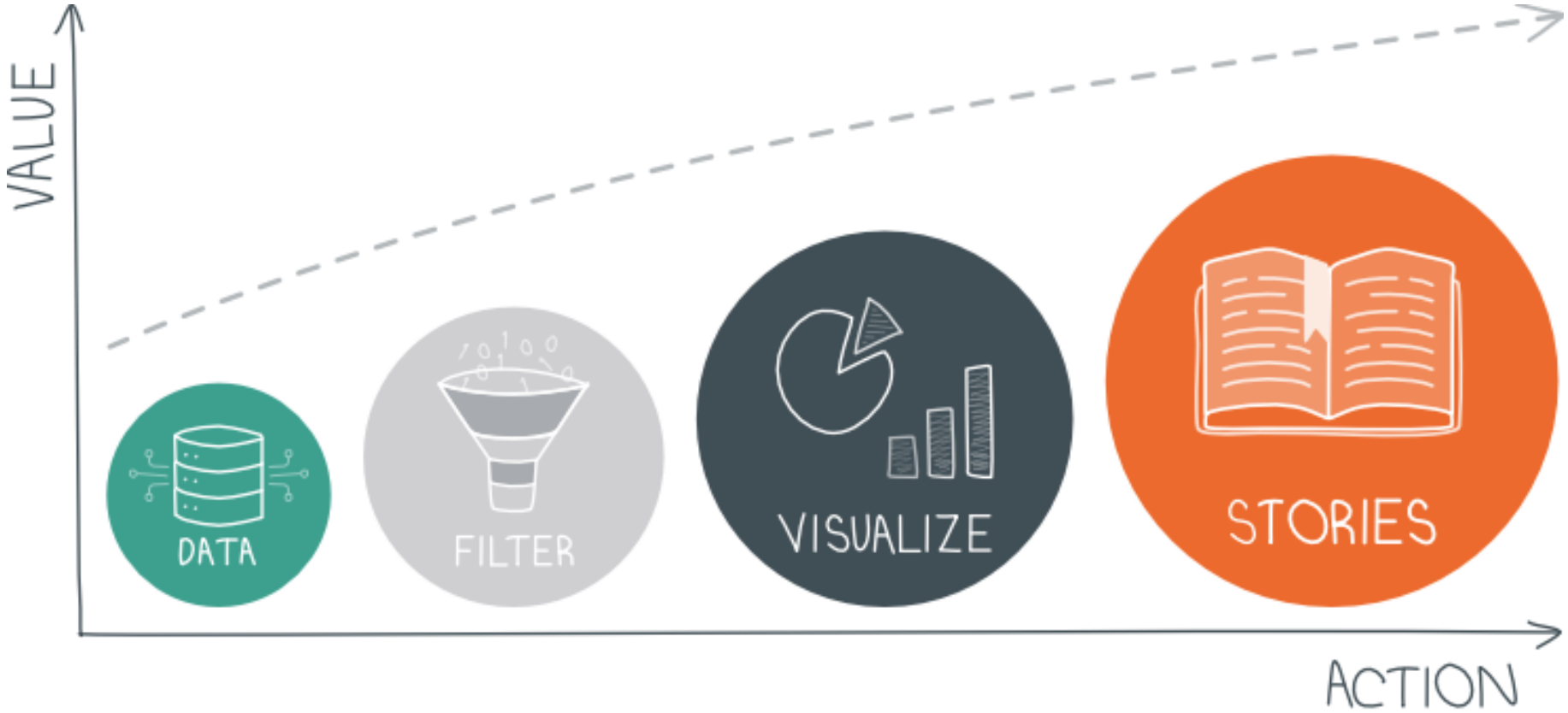
https://www.slideshare.net/miriamgilbert08/data-stories-workshop-34390209

Kurt Vonnegut on the Shapes of Stories

Short lecture by Kurt Vonnegut on the 'simple shapes of stories.'

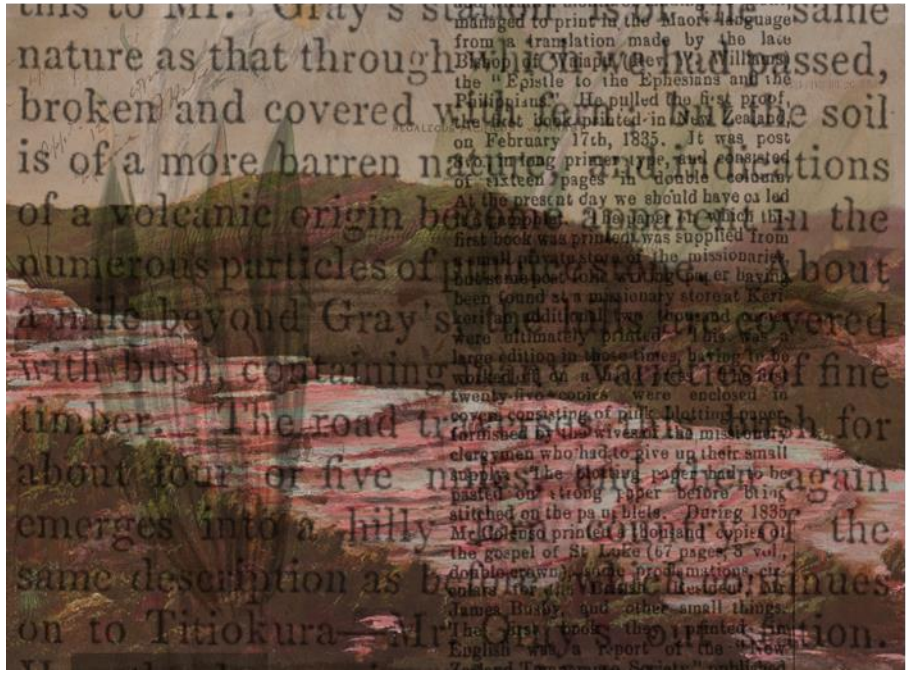
www.youtube.com

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oP3c1h8v2ZQ



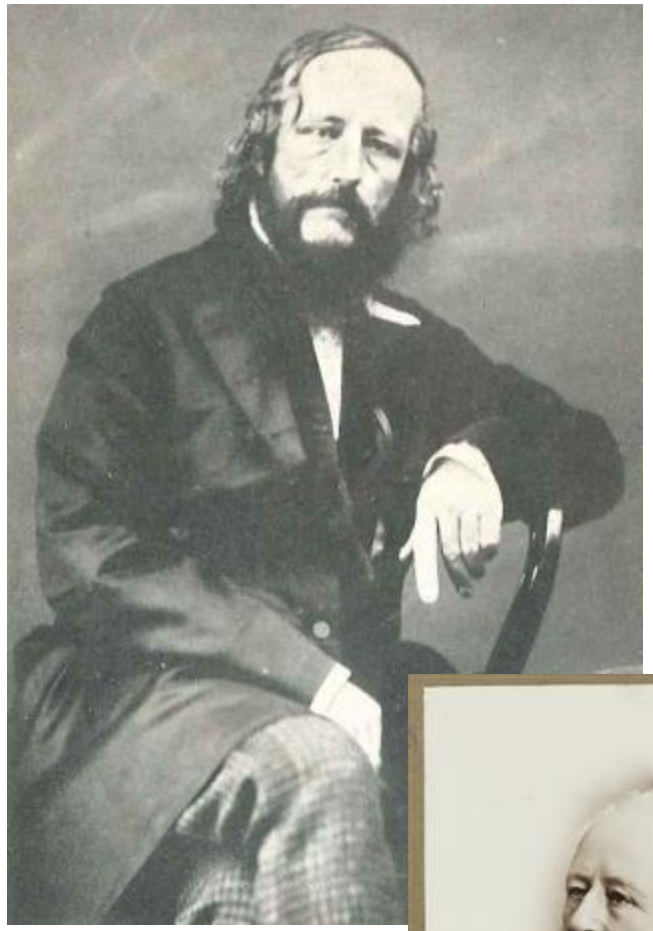
"data analysis is not just about visually appealing graphics and charts. It's about **telling a good story**. The visualization is the means, **the story is the actual message**. And the more compelling it is, the more value you will eventually derive from your data."

https://blog.adverity.com/crunching-data-need-tell-stories



Chapter 1

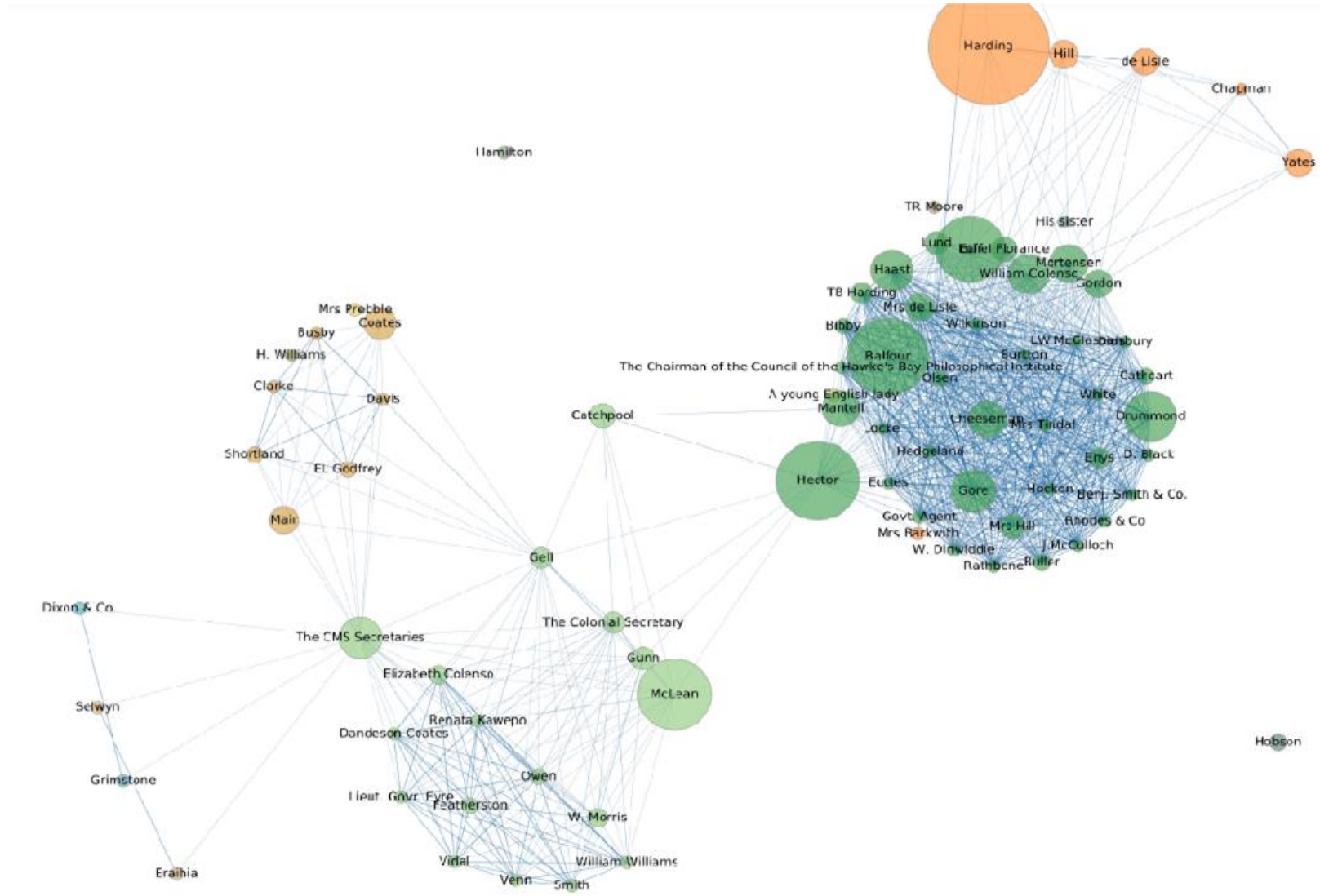
Algorithmic Storytelling



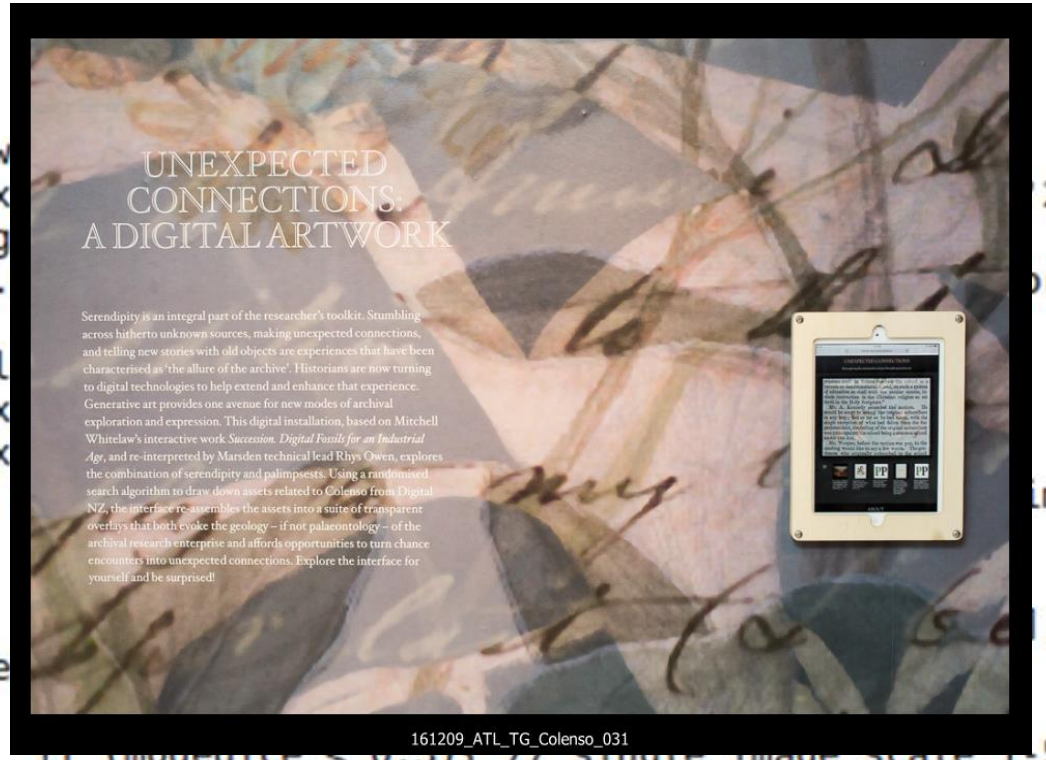
Bookplate designed for the late R. Coupland Harding by D. H. Souter.

[William Colenso](#)
1811-1899

161209_ATL_TG_Colenso_011

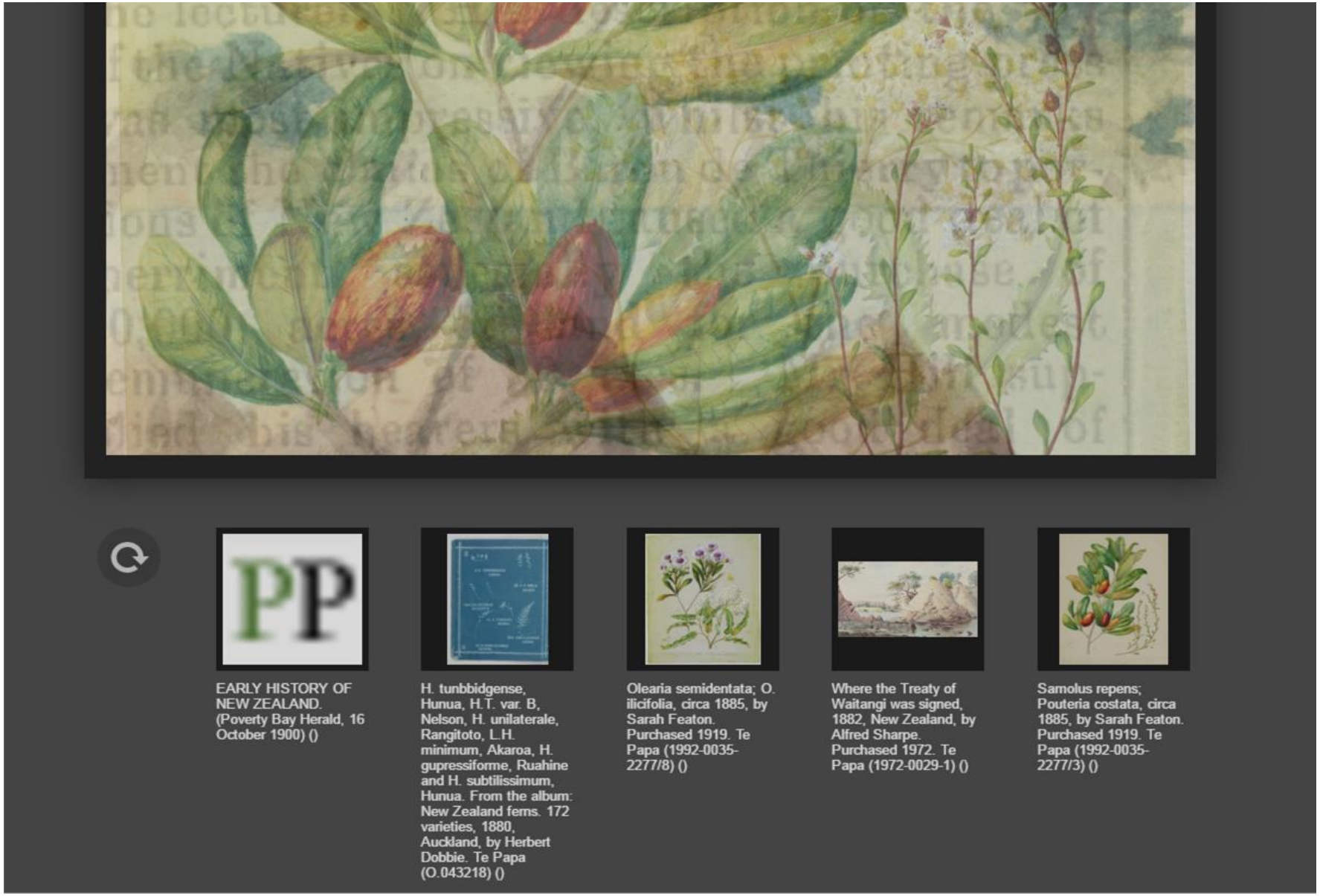


Colenso's correspondence networks modelled by [Dion O'Neale]



161209_ATL_TG_Colenso_031

161209_ATL_TG_Colenso_001



EARLY HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND. (Poverty Bay Herald, 16 October 1900) ()

H. tunbbidgense, Hunua, H.T. var. B, Nelson, H. unilaterale, Rangitoto, L.H. minimum, Akaroa, H. gupressiforme, Ruahine and H. subtilissimum, Hunua. From the album: New Zealand ferns. 172 varieties, 1880, Auckland, by Herbert Dobbie. Te Papa (O.043218) ()

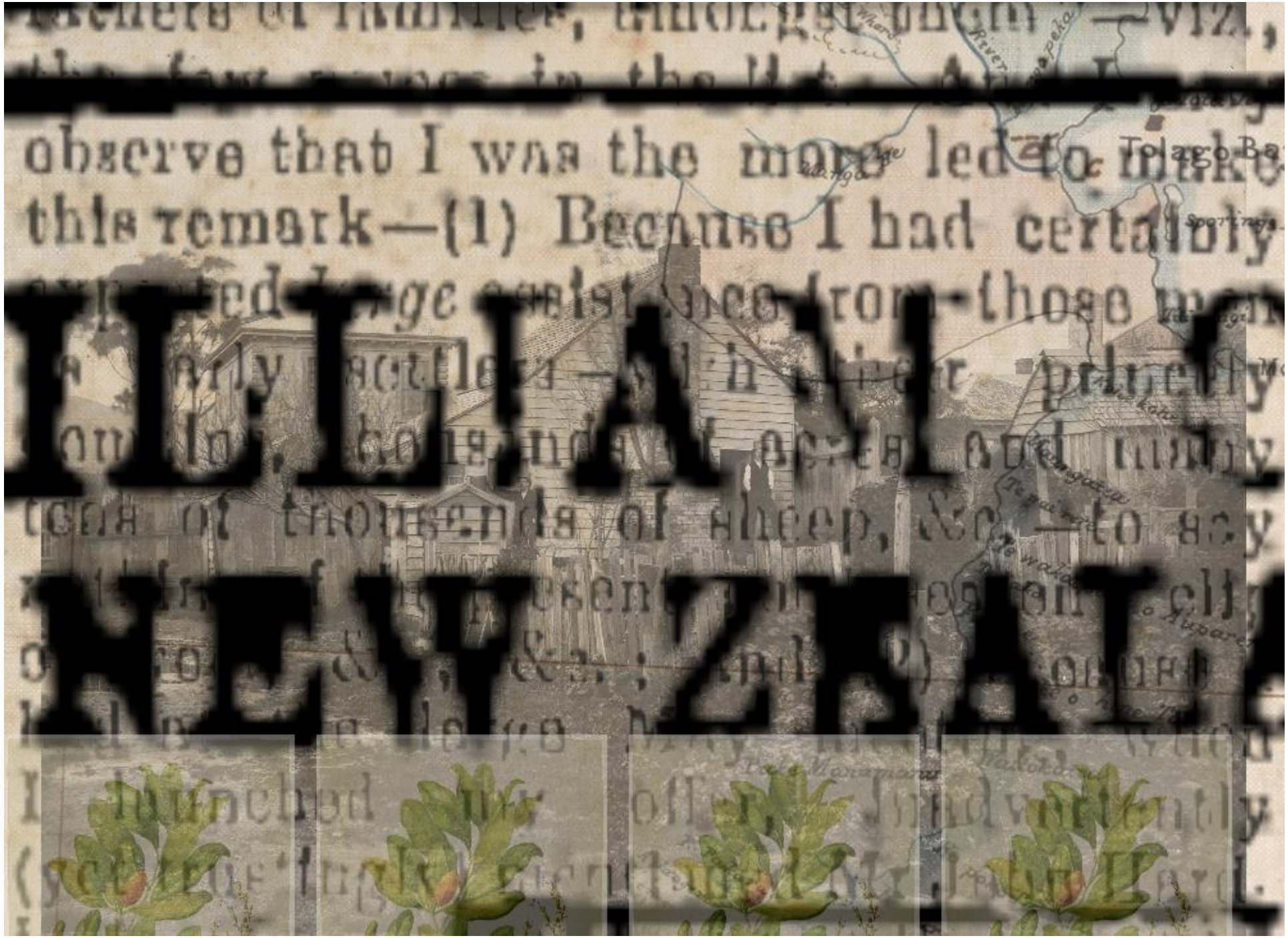
Olearia semidentata; O. ilicifolia, circa 1885, by Sarah Featon. Purchased 1919. Te Papa (1992-0035-2277/8) ()

Where the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, 1882, New Zealand, by Alfred Sharpe. Purchased 1972. Te Papa (1972-0029-1) ()

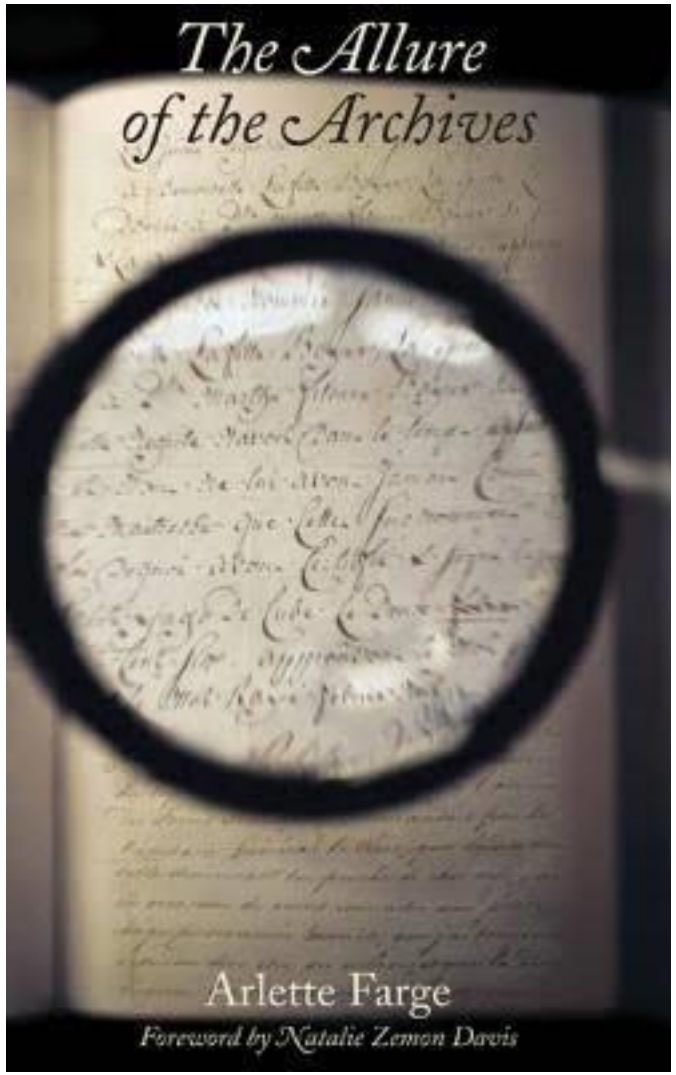
Samolus repens; Pouteria costata, circa 1885, by Sarah Featon. Purchased 1919. Te Papa (1992-0035-2277/3) ()

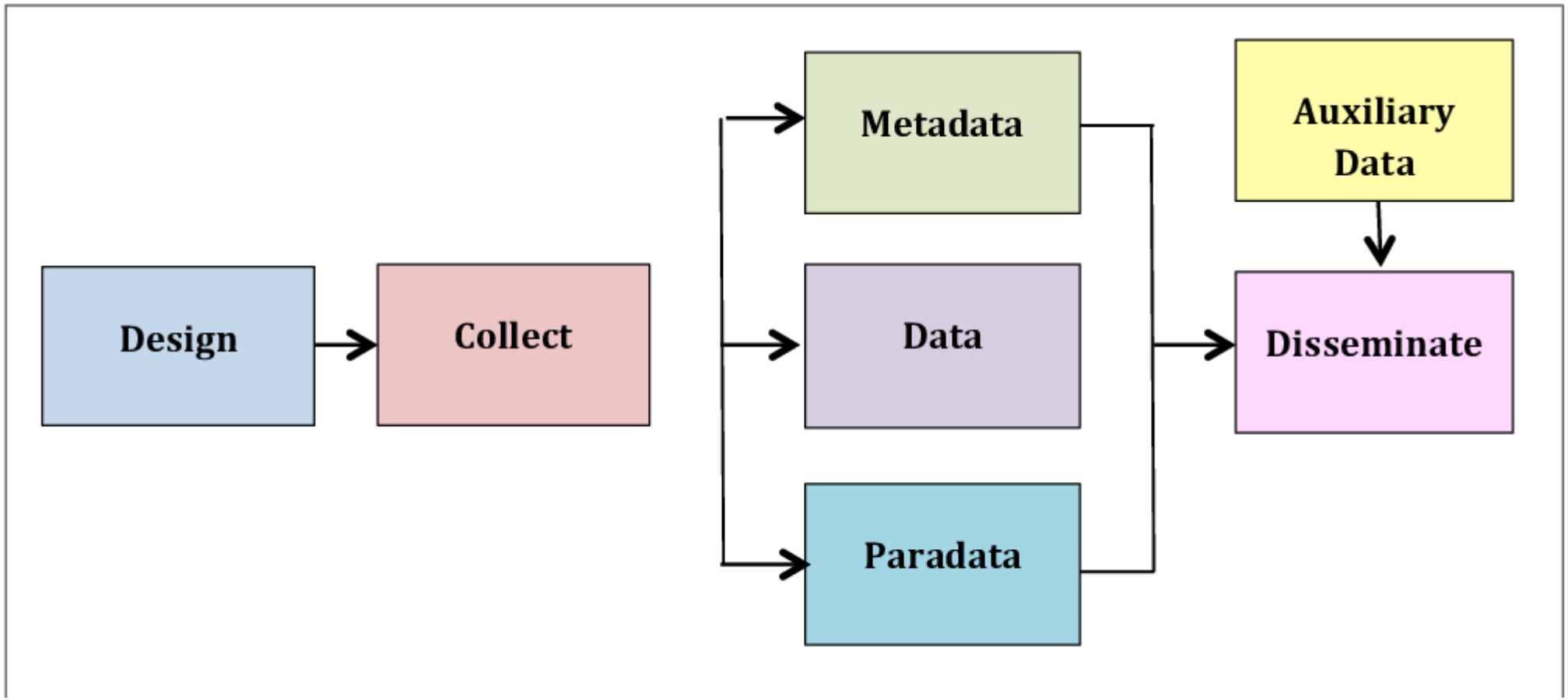
https://wai-te-ata-press.gitlab.io/unexpected

Mitchell Whitelaw, Succession


observe that I was the more led to make
this remark—(1) Because I had certainly
HELLO
NEW ZEALAND

Arlette Farge
Folio
Le goût
de l'archive
Histoire


The Allure
of the Archives
Arlette Farge
Foreword by Natalie Zemon Davis



https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Creating-Rich%2C-Structured-Metadata%3A-Lessons-Learned-Vardigan-Donakowski/4284c2e9851c6e070d8b90b2508a1dcce219e936/figure/2

Chapter 2

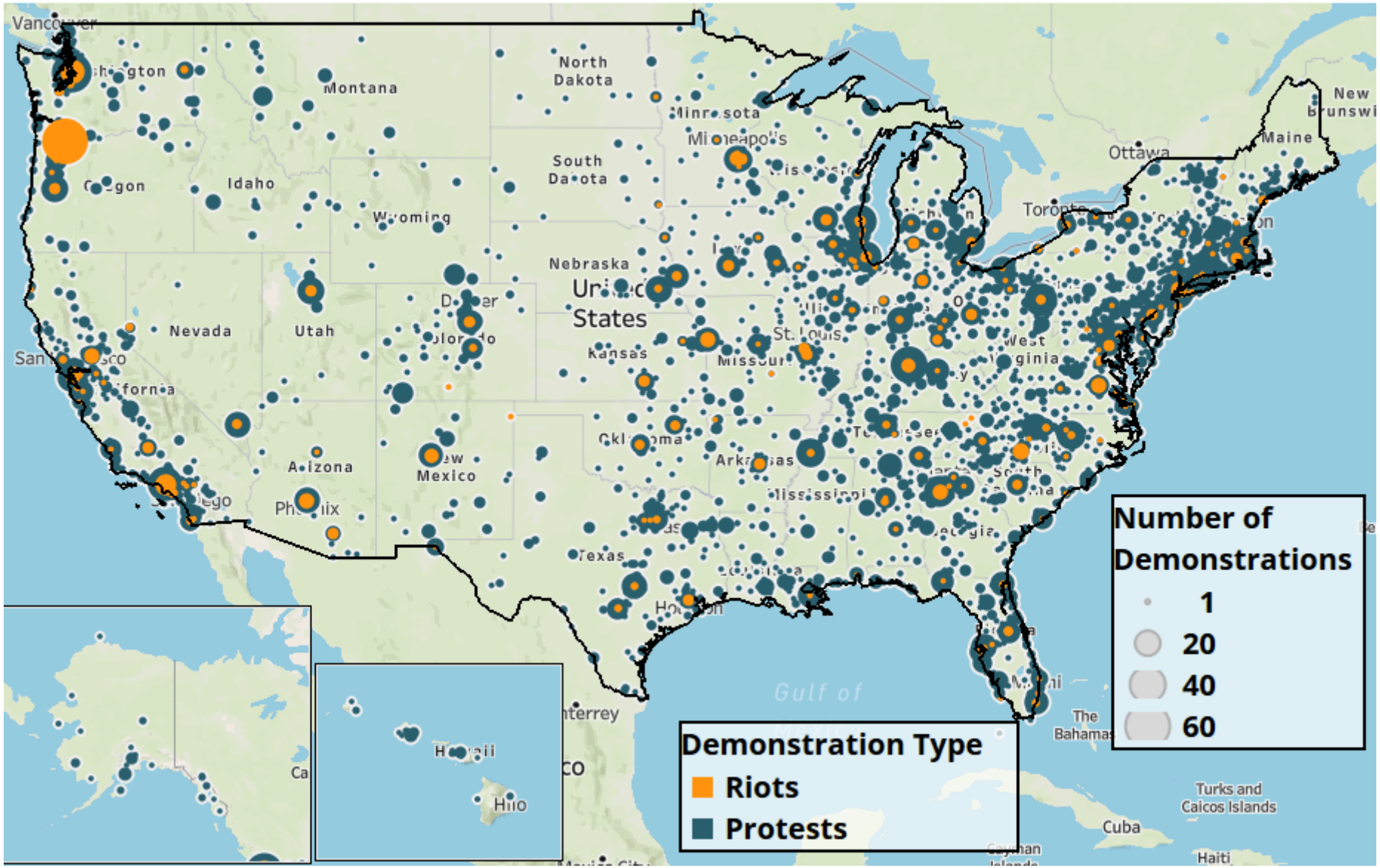
Whose Story?

“Stories are Data with Soul”

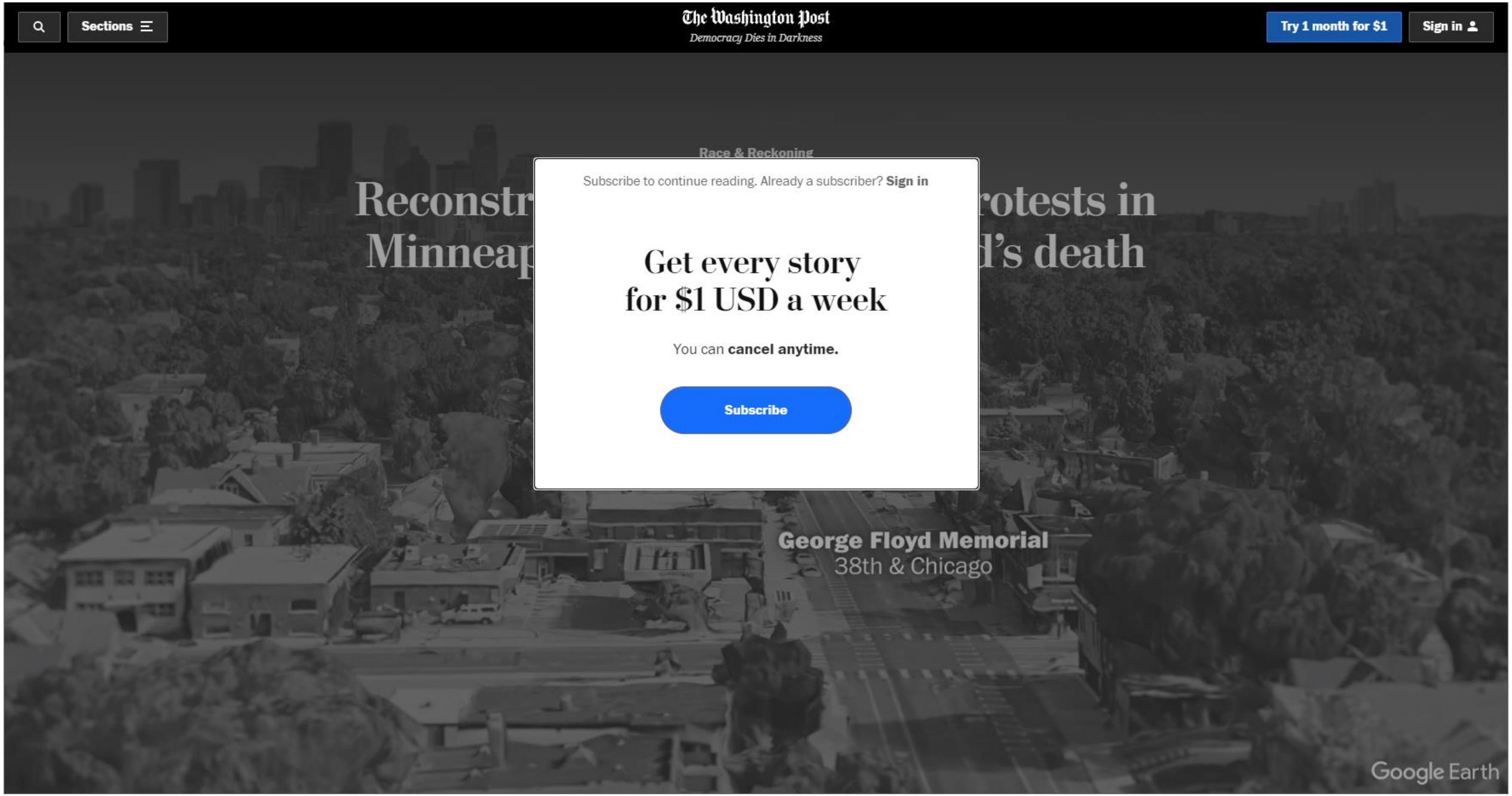
- **S** uspicion of master narratives of knowledge
- **T** ools of knowledge gathering and dissemination
- **O** bjection to objectivity
- **R** eflexivity of the positioning of researchers
- **Y** earning for and working for transformation and change

Sarojini Nadar, “’Stories are data with Soul’ – lessons from black feminist epistmology,” 2014

Demonstrations associated with the killing of George Floyd (May 24 – August 22, 2020)

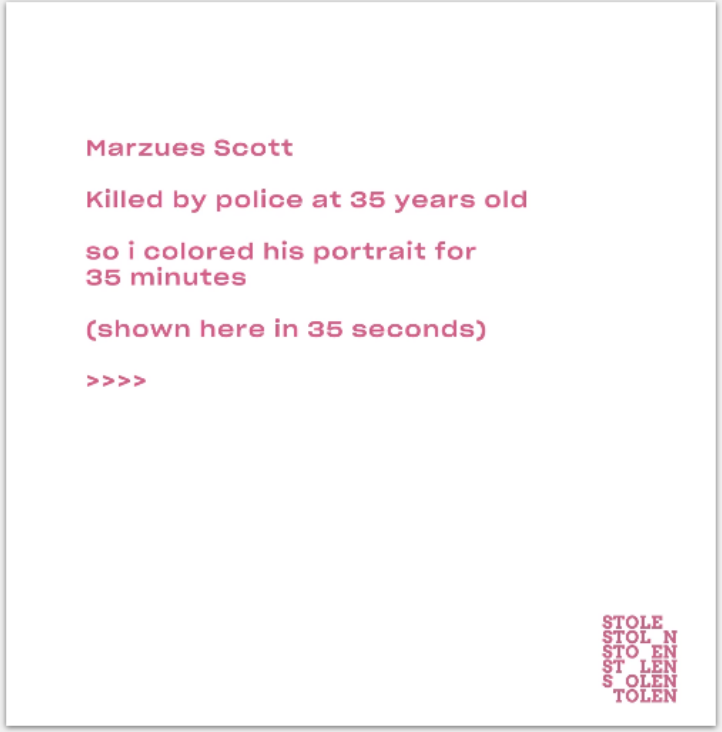


https://www.visualcapitalist.com/year-review-2020-in-20-visualizations/



https://flowingdata.com/2020/10/09/reconstructing-protests-in-minneapolis-using-hundreds-of-livestreams/

←

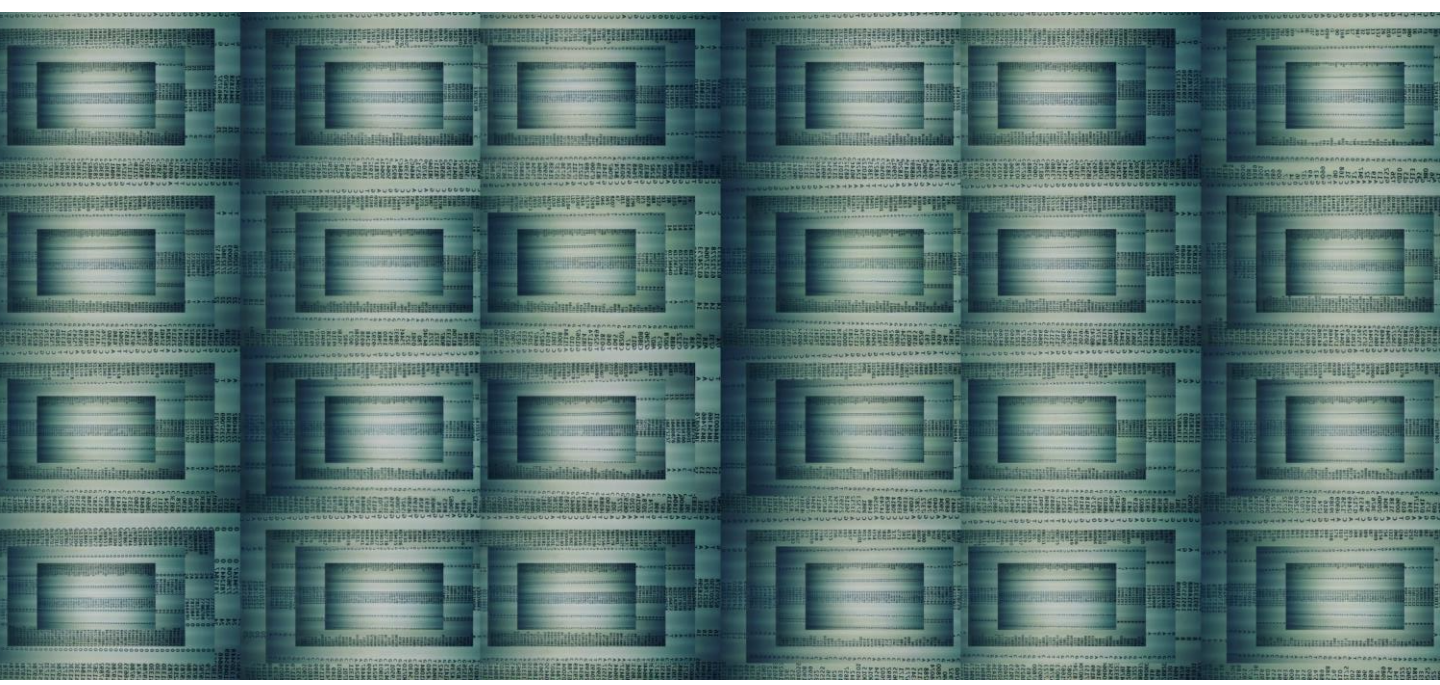


stolen

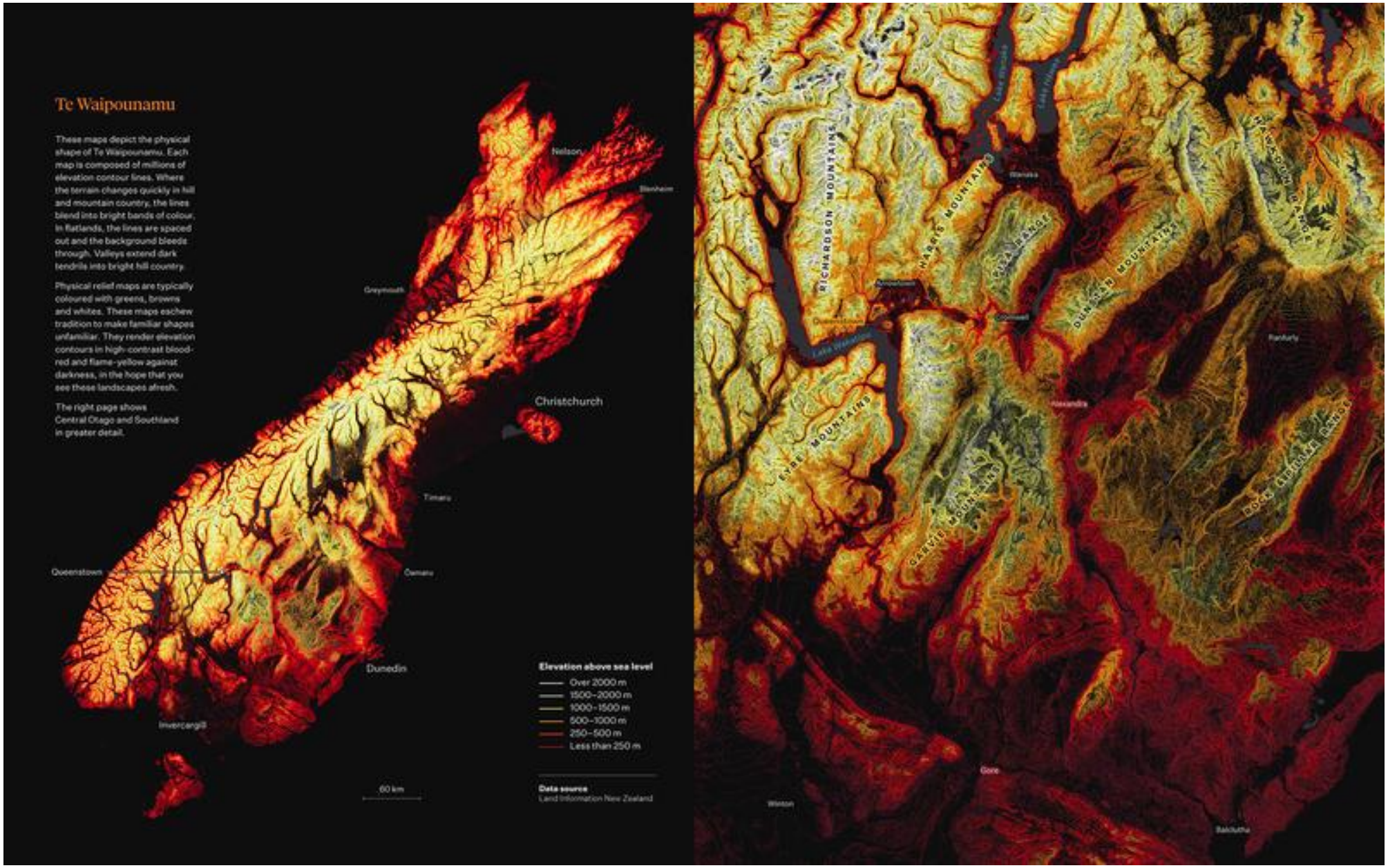
This series is dedicated to the many black people that were robbed of their lives at the hands of the police. In addition to using markers and pencil, I use time as a medium to define how long each portrait is

https://www.adrianbrandon.com/stolen

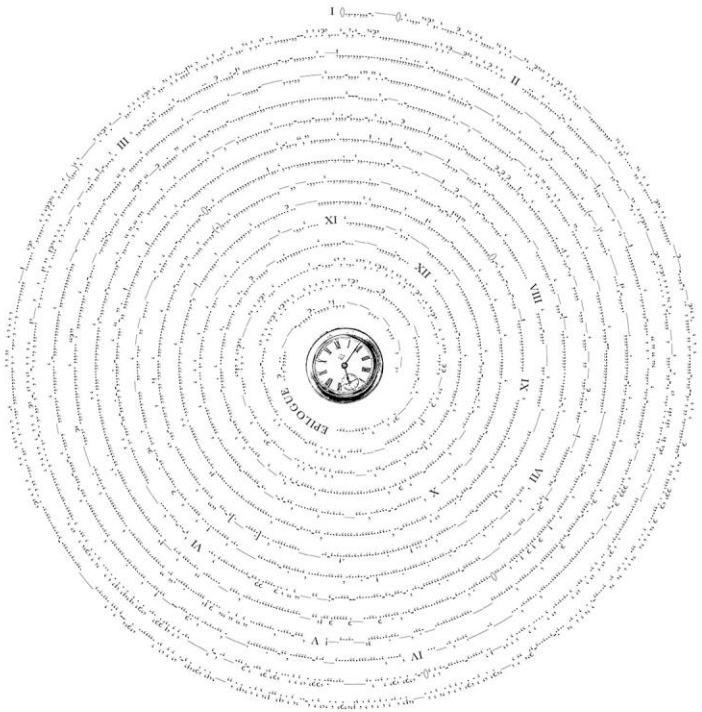
Chapter 3
The Geography of Self



Abi Hart (2019),
Self Portrait, or, USER_SCOPED_TEMP_DATA_MSGR_PHOTO_FOR_UPLOAD_1556421407865.jpg



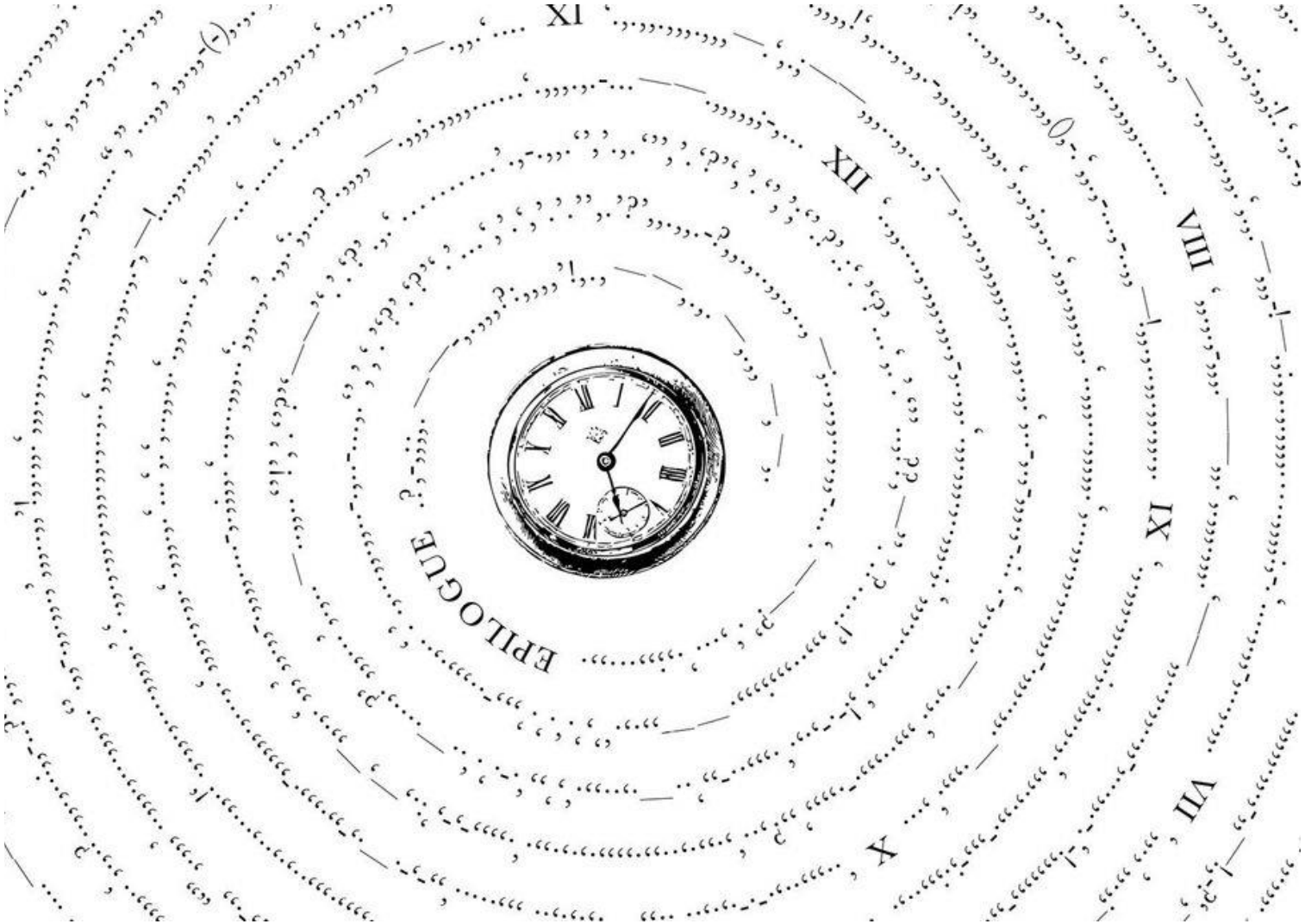
https://issuu.com/masseypress/docs/pages_from_we_are_here



THE PUNCTUATION OF

THE TIME MACHINE

by H. G. Wells



https://www.c82.net/work/?id=347

Moriarty Naps

Hover for Companion tunes

← back

Maps of Home

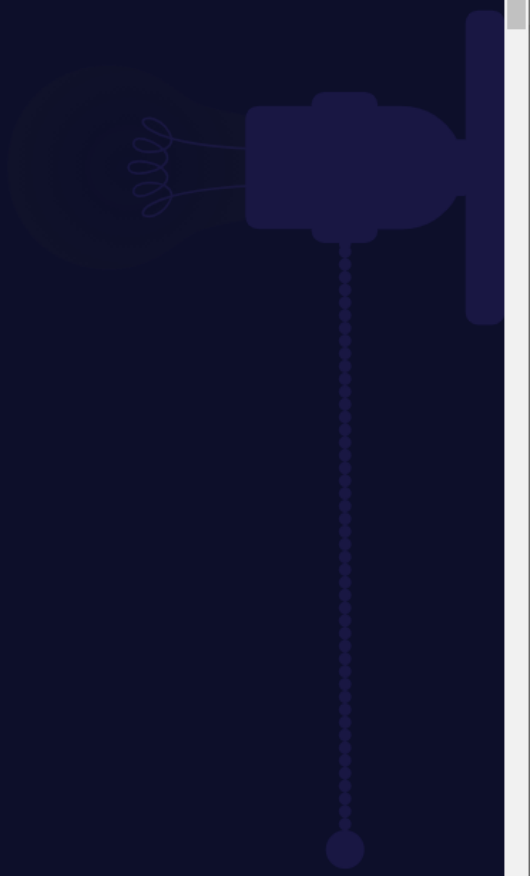
This is Janesville, Wisconsin

https://moriartynaps.org/maps-of-home/

The Pudding

Story + Code by **Ilia Blinderman**

Design by **Jan Diehm**



Whoa, it's dark in here!

Better turn the light on.

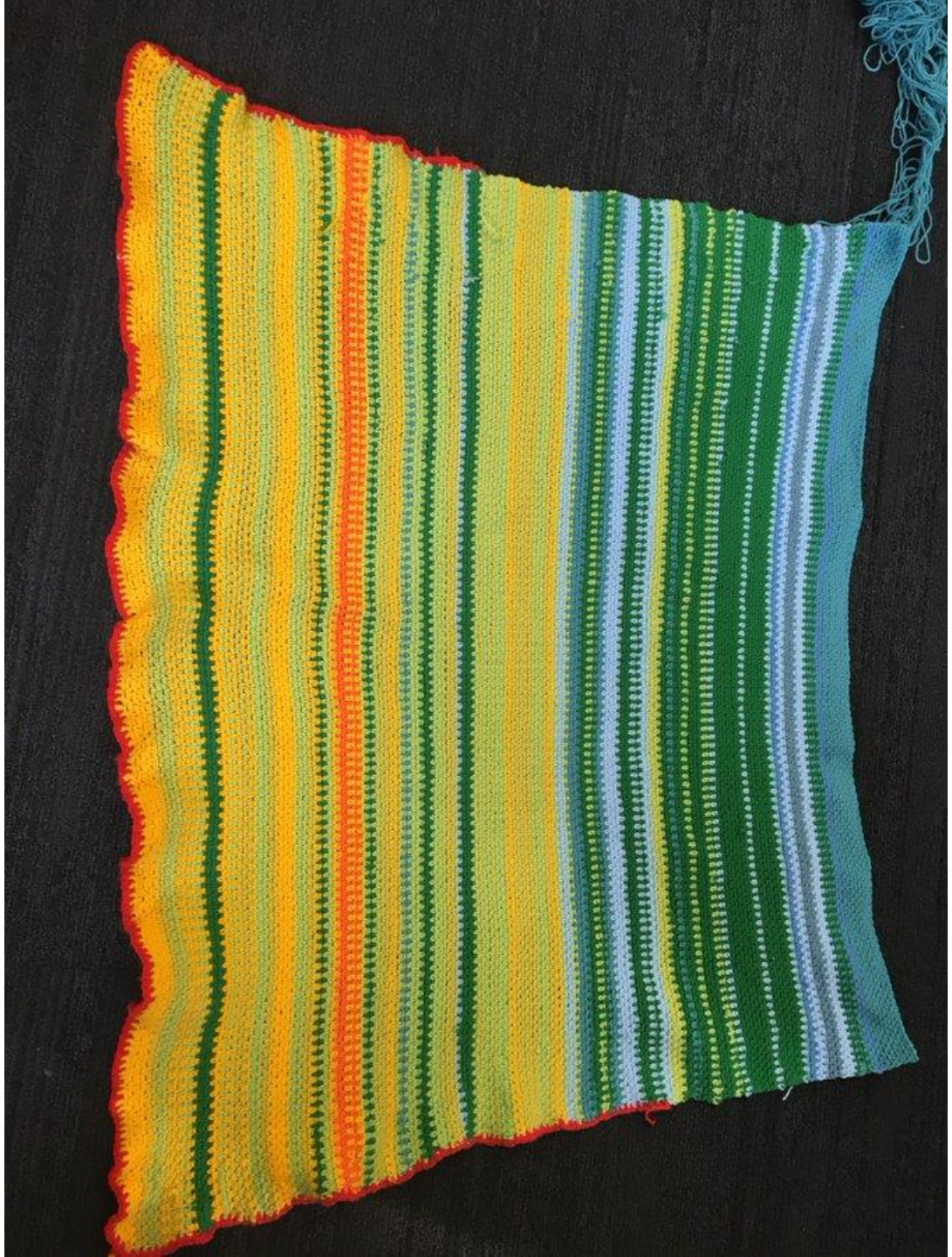
Scroll down to turn the light on

https://pudding.cool/2020/12/lighting-cost/

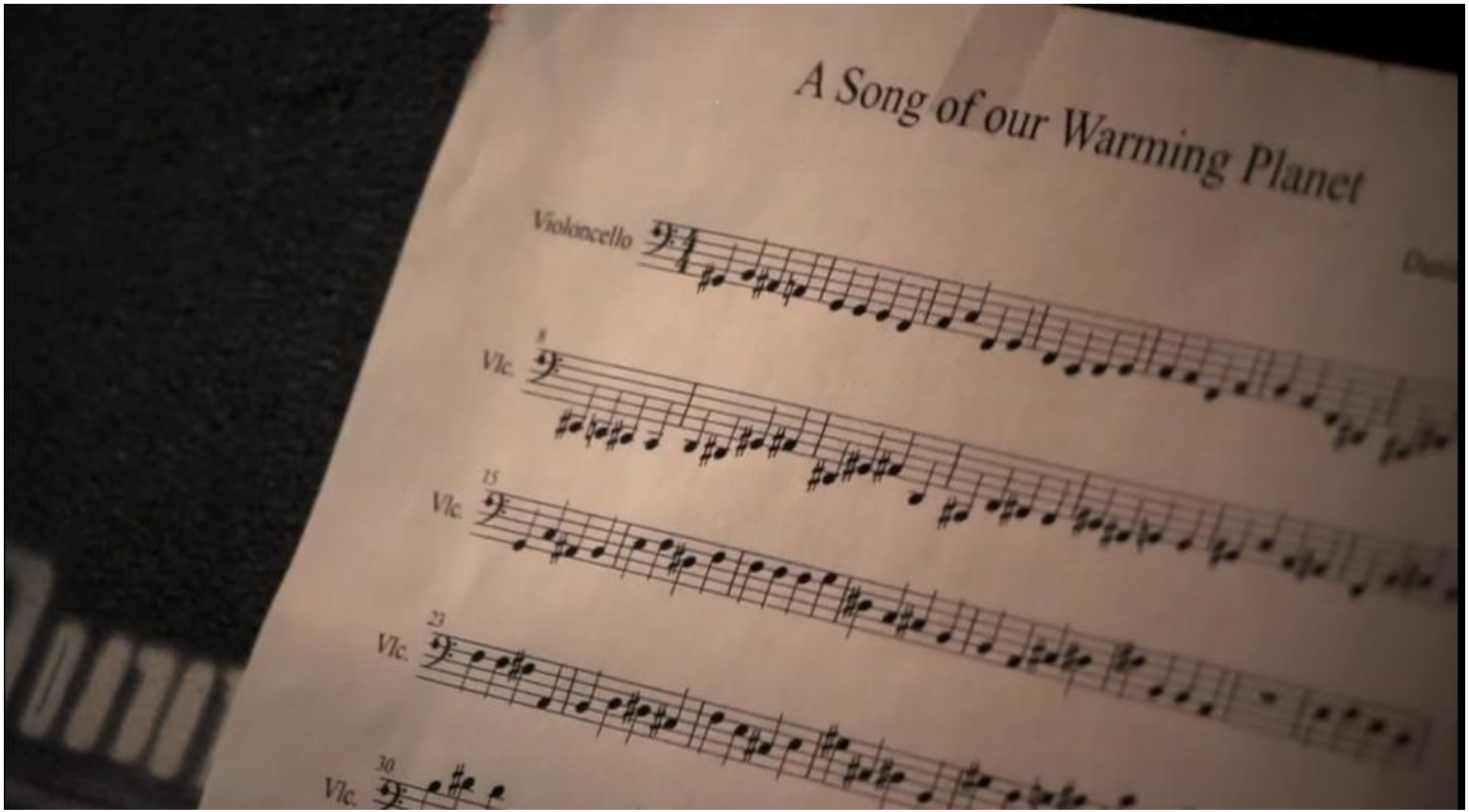
https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/wtapress/about/news/augmented-reality-literary-atlas http://litatlas.nz/

Chapter 4

Too hot to handle?



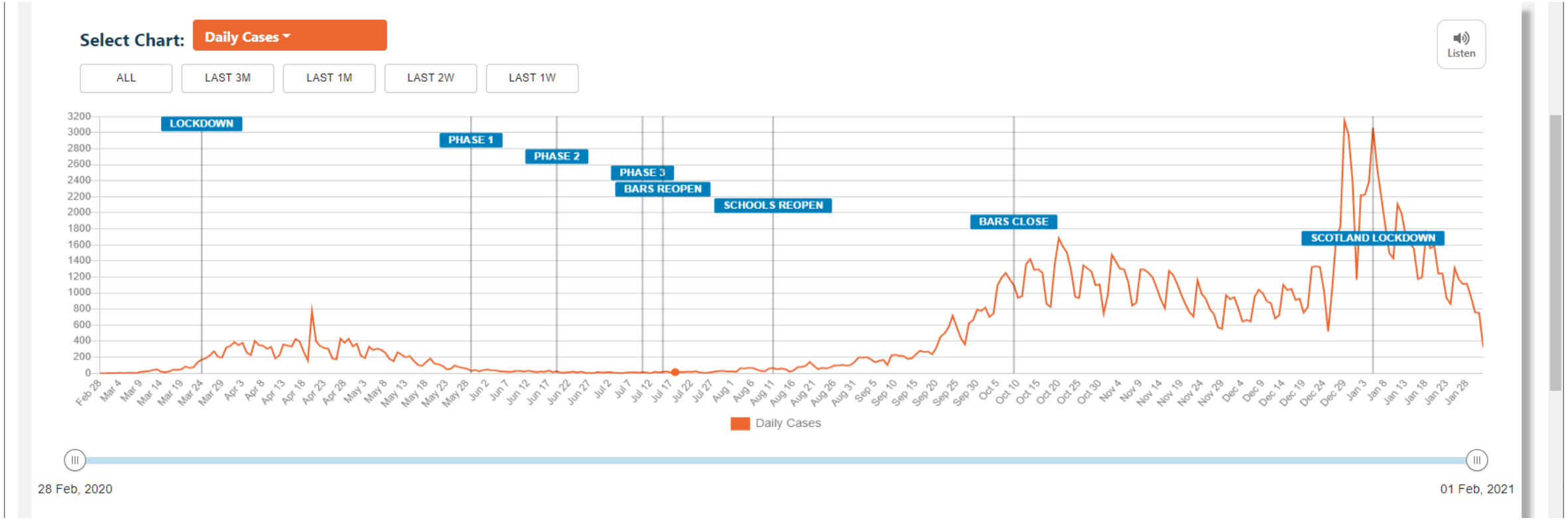
https://twitter.com/opendatanz/status/1145870642710867968



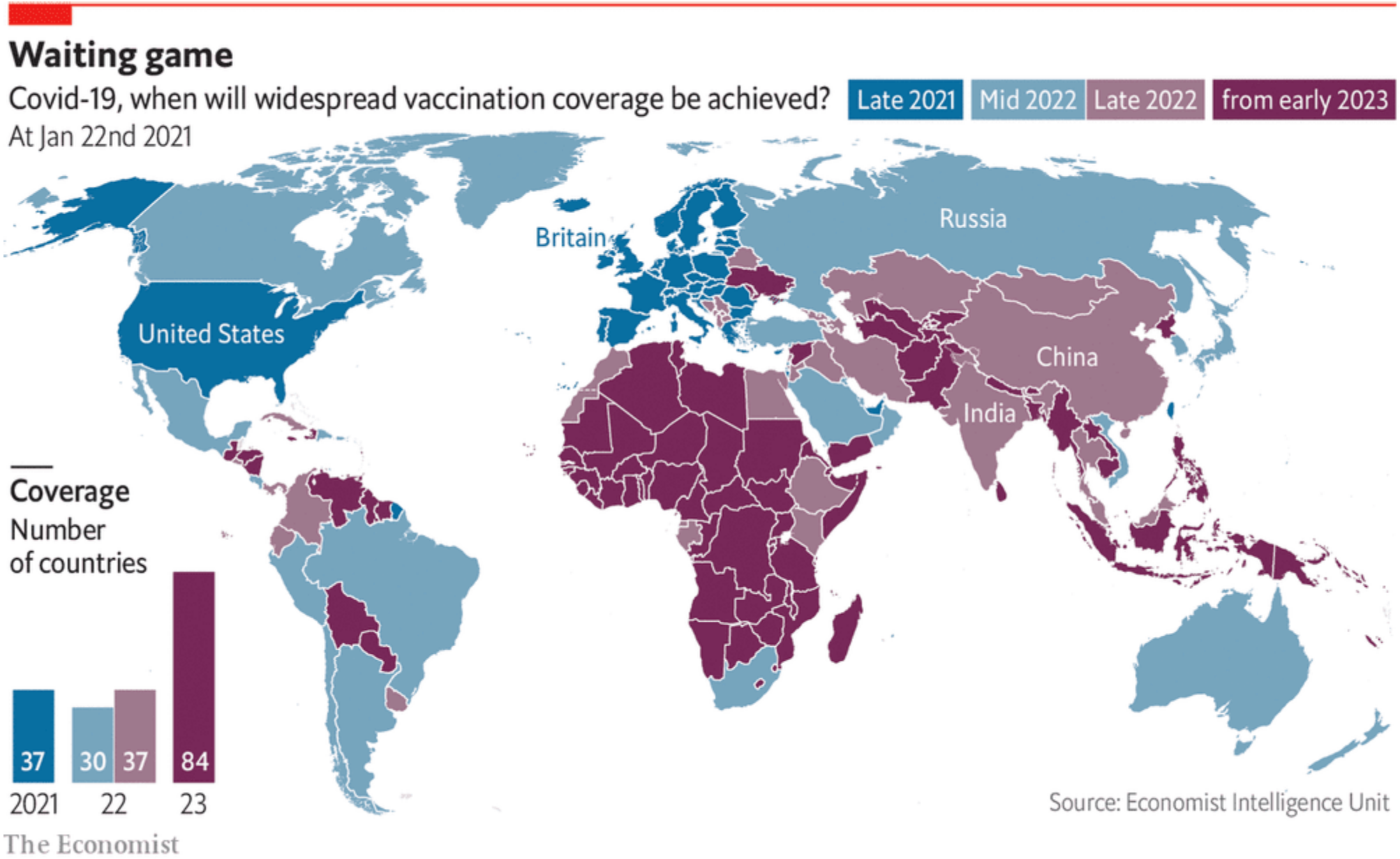
https://vimeo.com/69122809

Chapter 5
A COVID Story

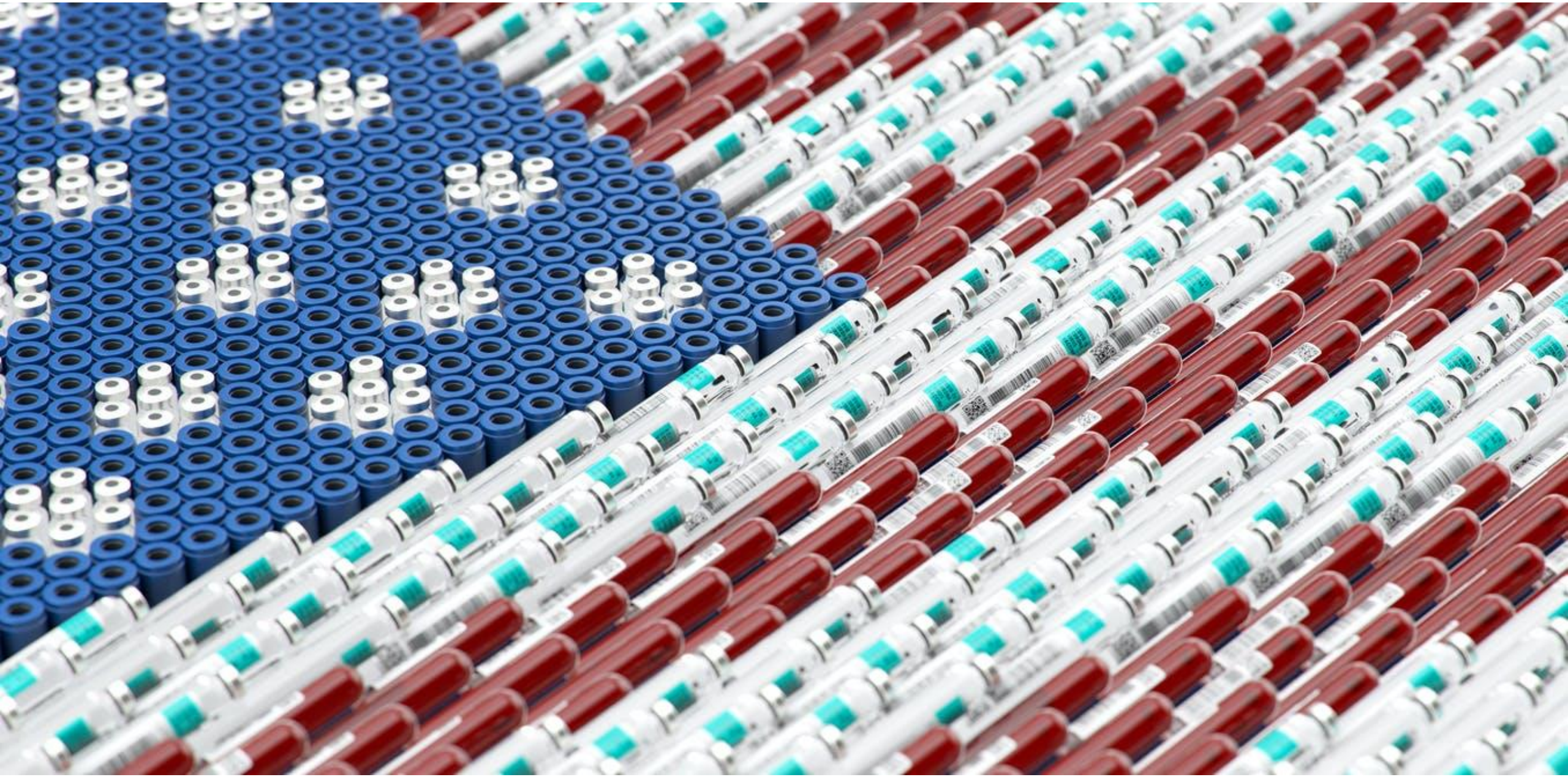
https://vimeo.com/401314240



https://covid19.scottishtecharmy.org/



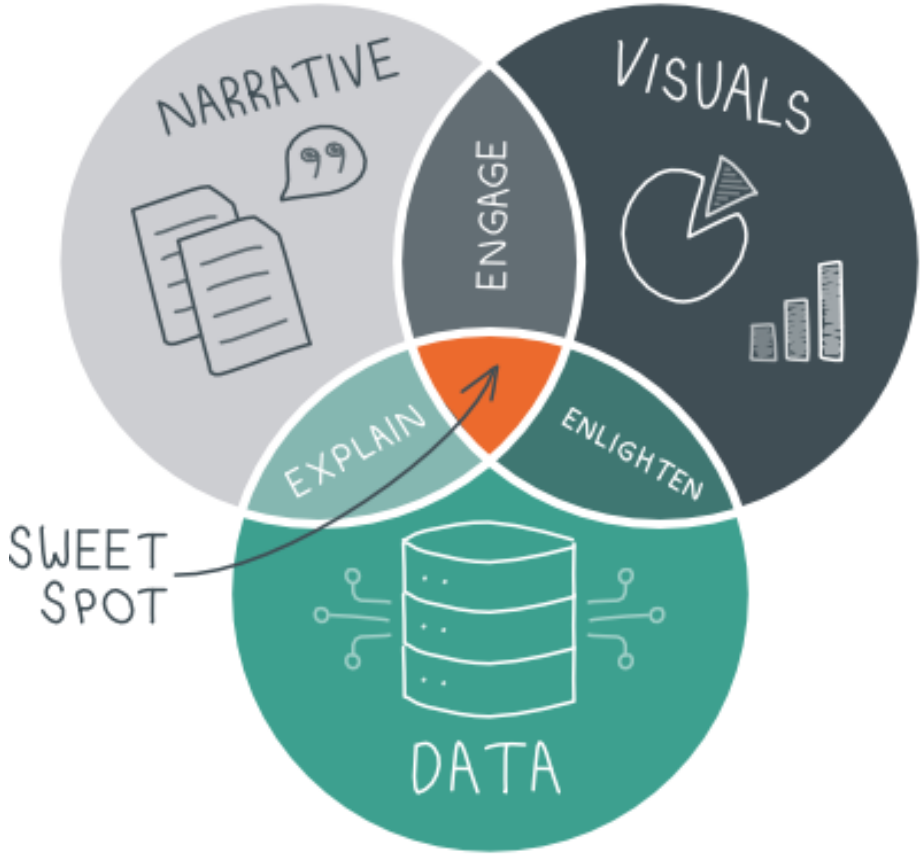
https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2021/01/28/vaccine-nationalism-means-that-poor-countries-will-be-left-behind



https://theconversation.com/how-vaccine-nationalism-could-block-vulnerable-populations-access-to-covid-19-vaccines-140689

https://liberal-international.org/news-articles/vaccine-nationalism-is-the-latest-threat-to-global-cooperation/

https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-africa-pan-african-2020-11-vaccine-nationalism-a-threat-to-african-mobility/



“Crunching data is not enough – you need to be telling stories.”

https://blog.adverity.com/crunching-data-need-tell-stories

Finding the Sweet Spot

- Who’s your audience?
- What’s your message?
- Why is your story important?
- How are you going to connect?
- Narrative hook
- Impact through medium

https://www.jerthorp.com/

The End