BEYOND VIRAL

ARTBOOK FROM THE ANIMATED VIDEO

ILUSTRATIONS
BEATRIZ TRAVIESO AND ASTRID PINEL

BASED ON THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE BY
MANUEL CEBRIAN, IYAD RAHWAN AND ALEX PENTLAND

BEYOND
VIRAL

BOOK ADAPTATION
BEATRIZ TRAVIESO

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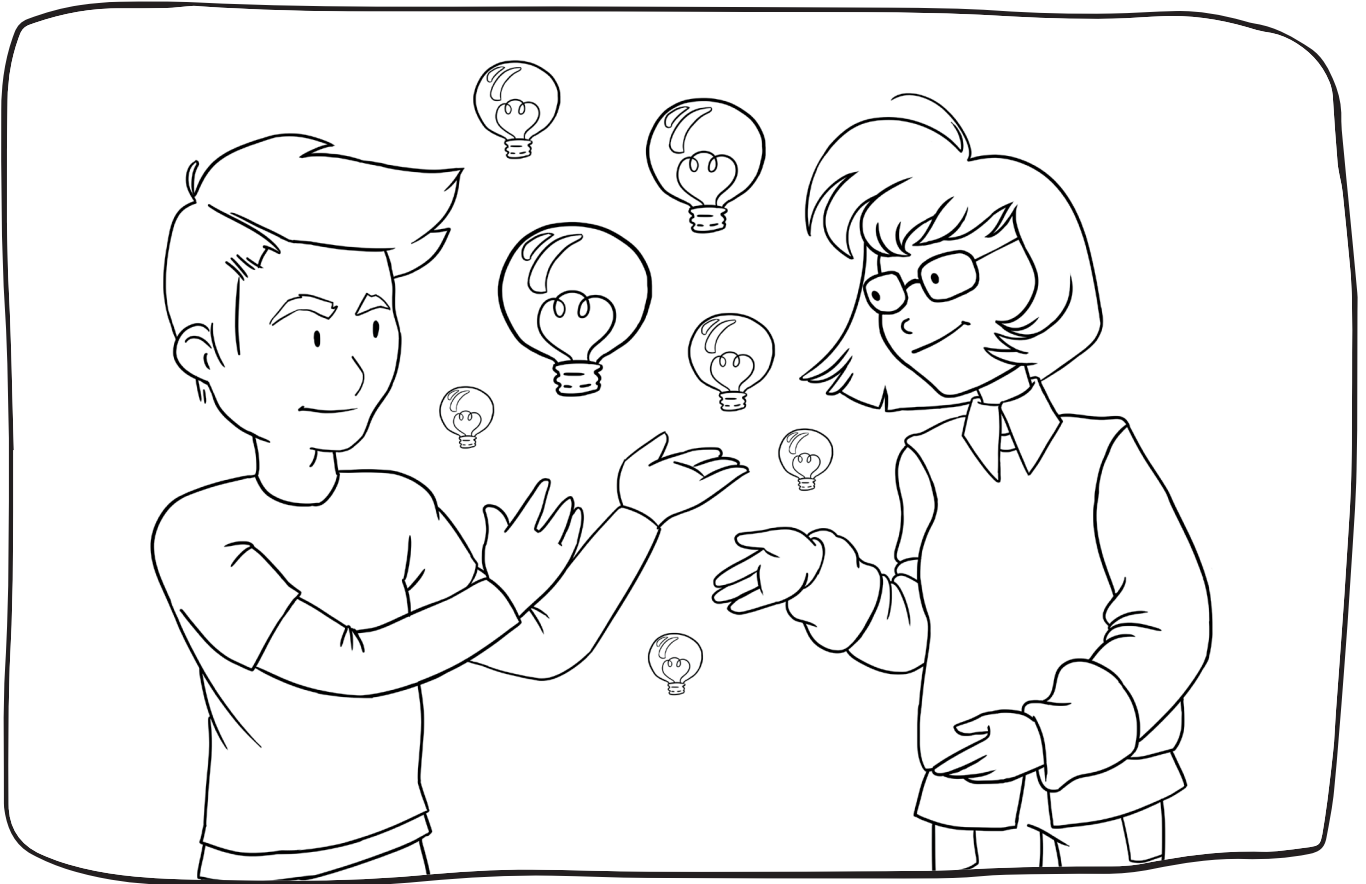
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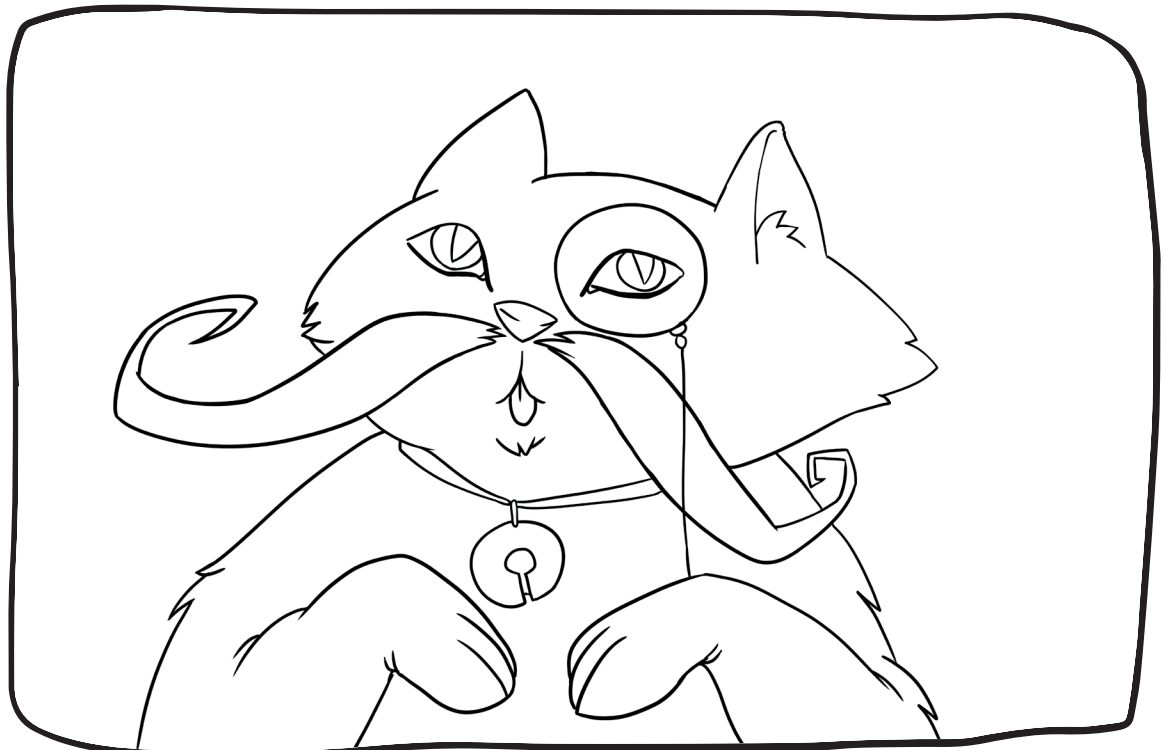**MANUEL CEBRIAN, IYAD RAHWAN AND ALEX PENTLAND**

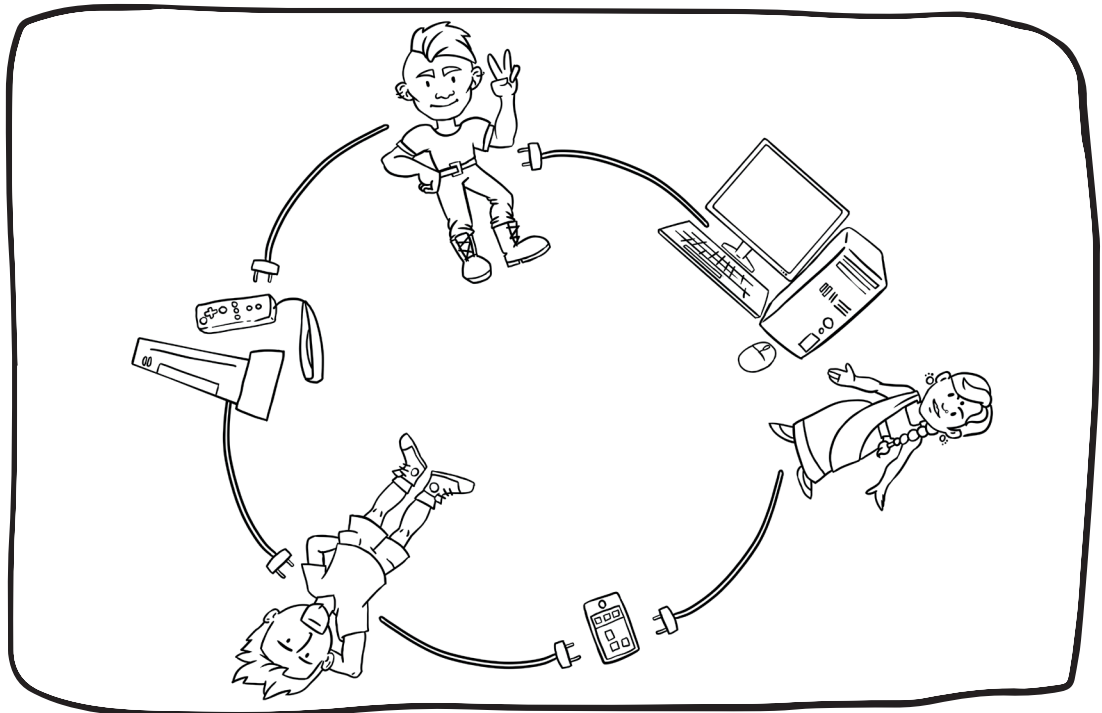*CREATIVE DIRECTION*
BEATRIZ TRAVIESO

In this day and age, anything, ANYTHING, from a revolutionary
idea that could change the world,

to a picture of a cat with a funny mustache--

--can reach far and wide. A concept can reach millions in less than a day, and we have social media to thank for that in part.


We're all connected, and information is something we share with one another daily.

You'd think that social networks would be the perfect vehicle for spreading urgent global issues like wildfire, and it does happen from time to time, which is a great thing.

However there seems to be a disconnection between the attention and support a particular cause generates, and the ACTIONS taken in response, or LACK, thereof...
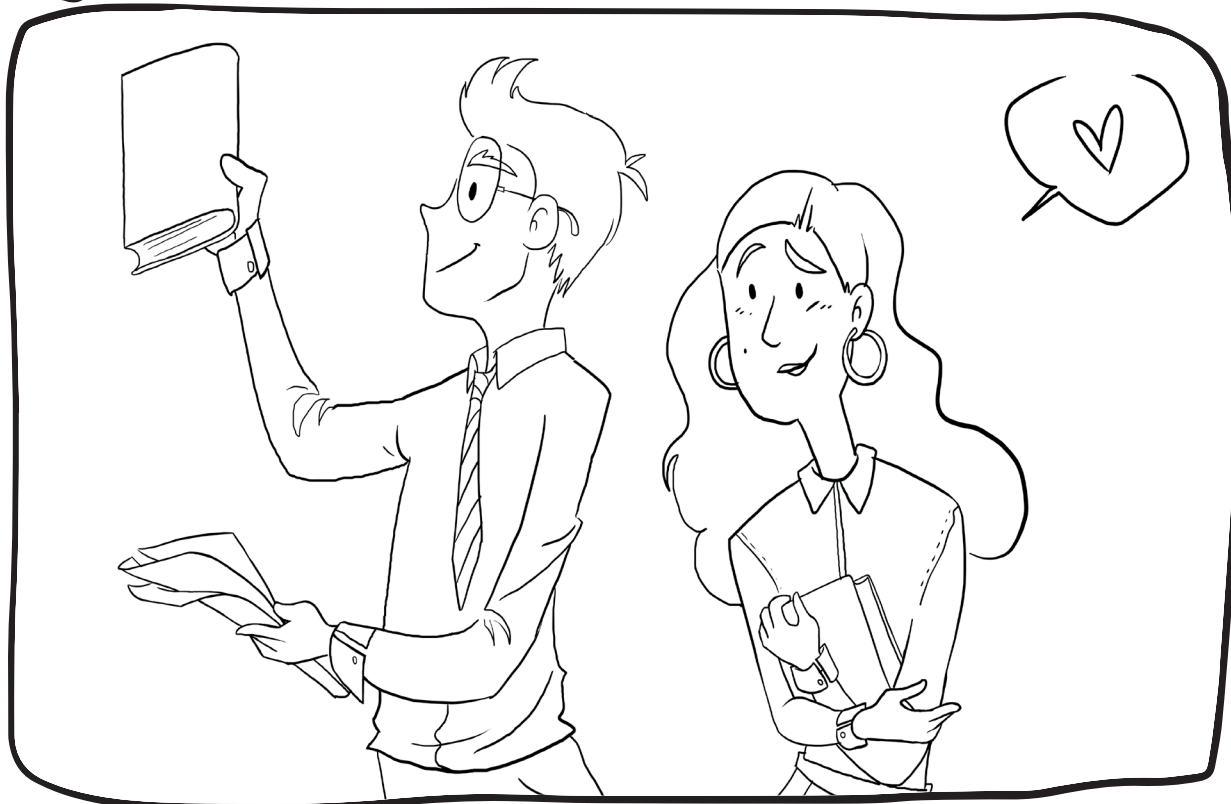
You see, actions in the real world matter. If you like someone but never tell them, it's unlikely that they will ever find out.
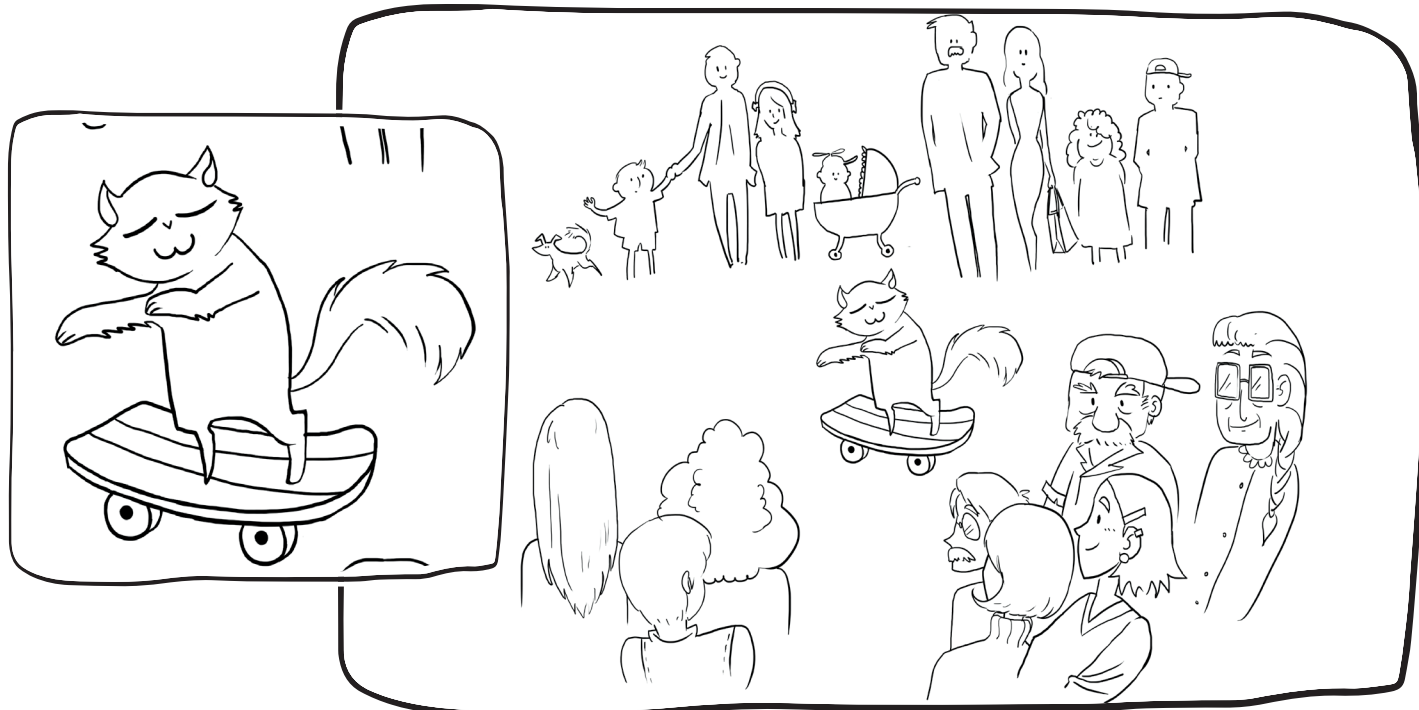
And this era of sophisticated and powerful social media, seems to be unfortunately plagued with the inability to maintain attention on a particular matter for enough time to generate any significant social mobility or political action. We are captured and motivated for a brief period of time before the fad wears out and the next thing comes along.
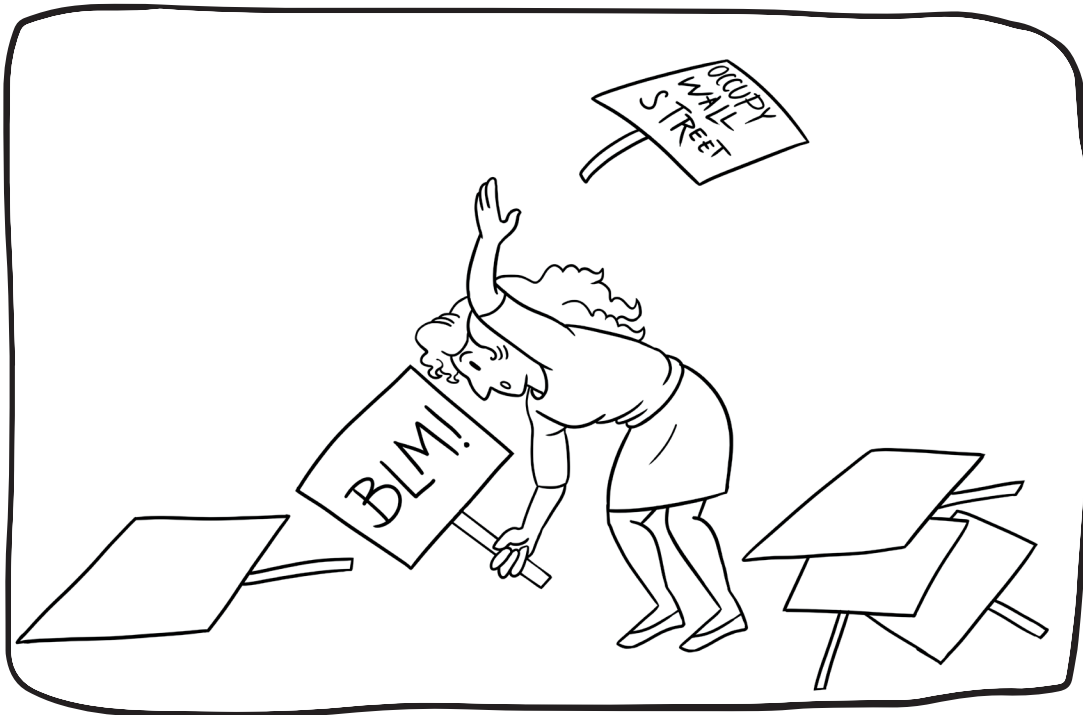
BEYOND VIRAL

It's crucial to find a way for pressing matters to go beyond viral.
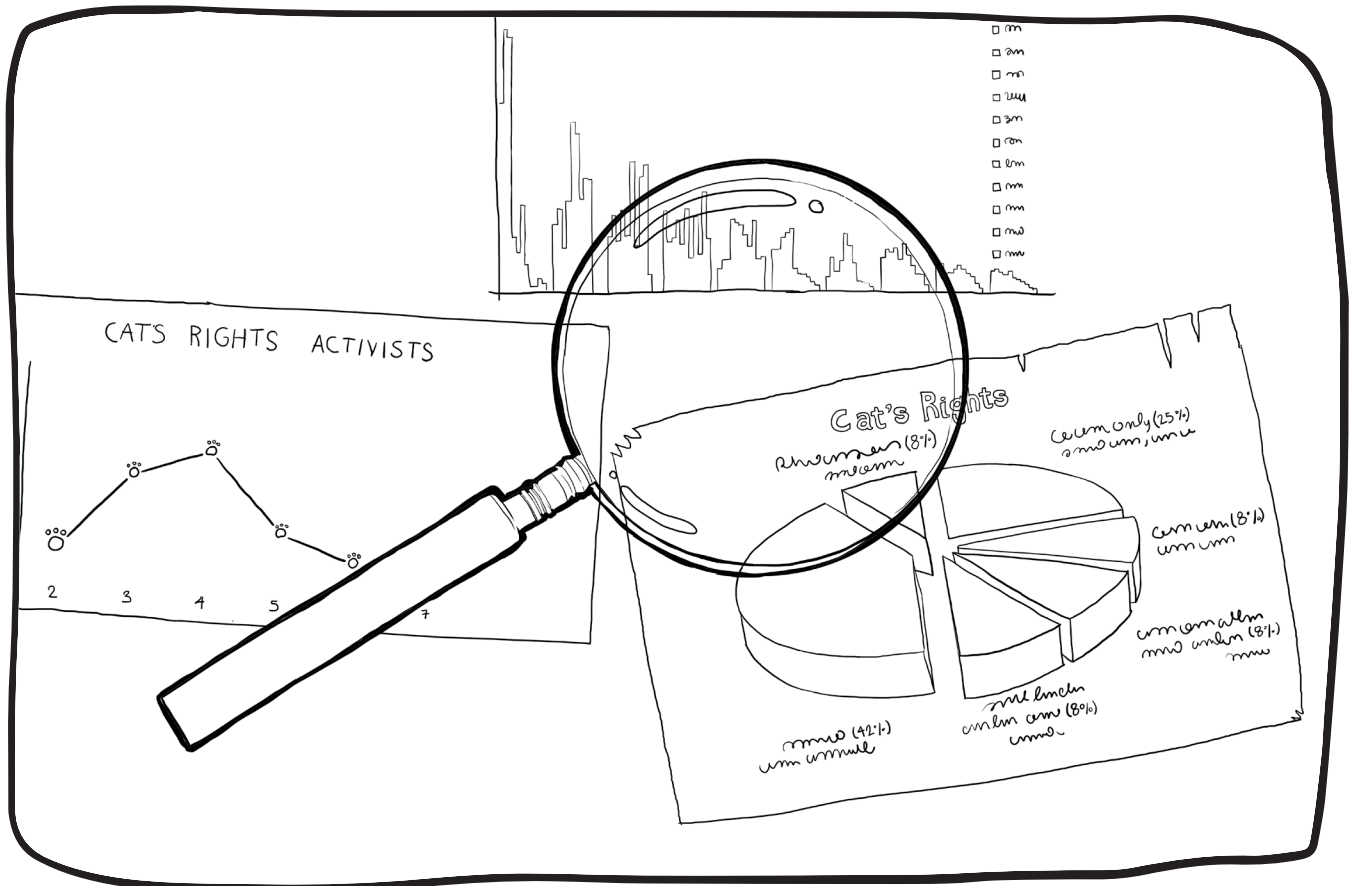
social media

There actually ARE cases in recent years where social media has been a decisive player in social mobilization events of historic proportions,

such as the Occupy Wall Street Movement, and the chaos generated by the England Riots.


However, data availability and analysis by very clever scientists points out that political activists have a very difficult time using social media to effectively mobilize the masses.
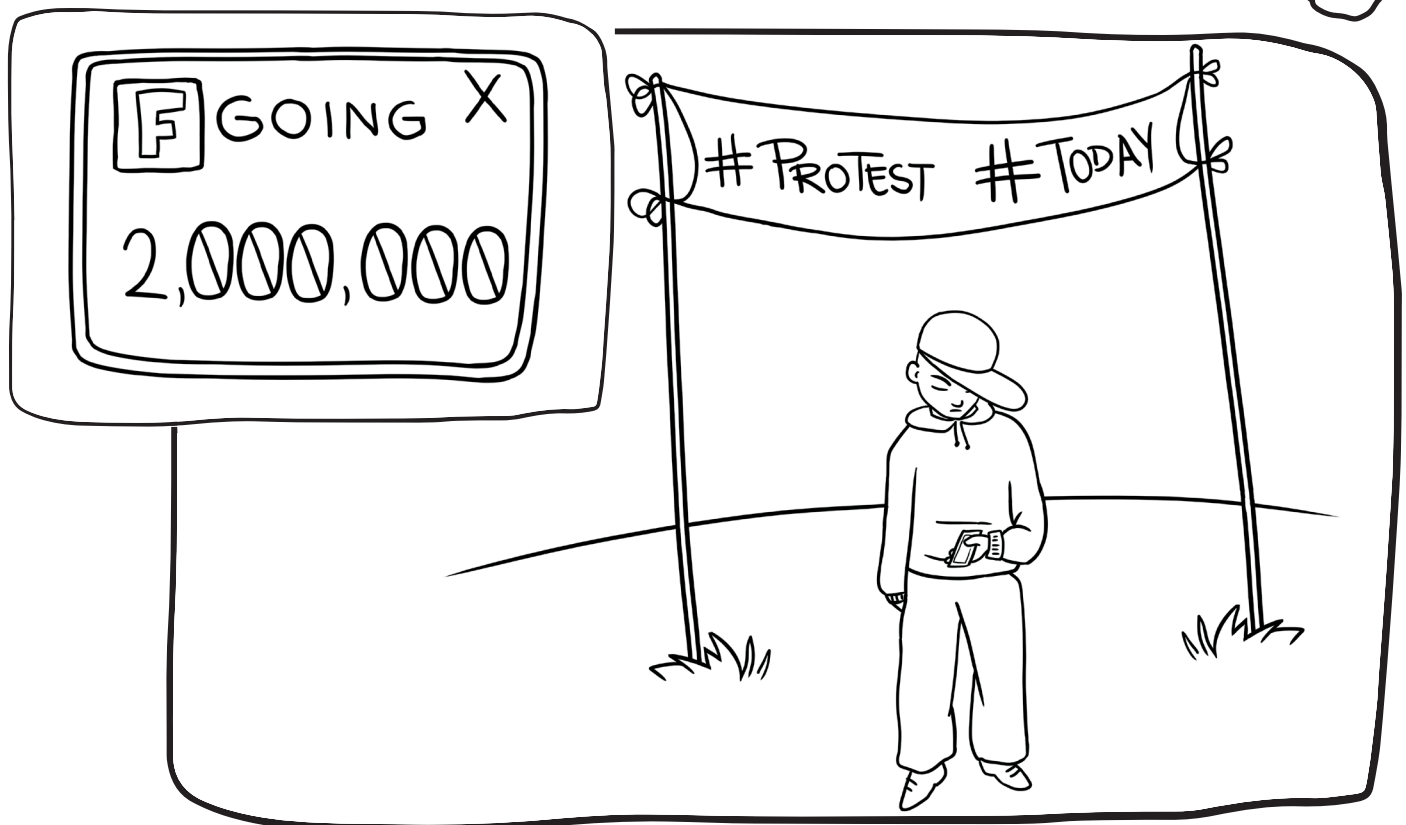
And even when successful, they find it very challenging to sustain the focus until any substantial social change has been achieved. They burst into scene and just as quickly are doomed to oblivion.


Even intelligence agencies aren't able to predict social uprisings effectively, and they DO monitor social media very closely. They actually seem better at predicting that when it comes to repercussions in the real world, social networks are well, UNPREDICTABLE. And they are left scratching their heads.
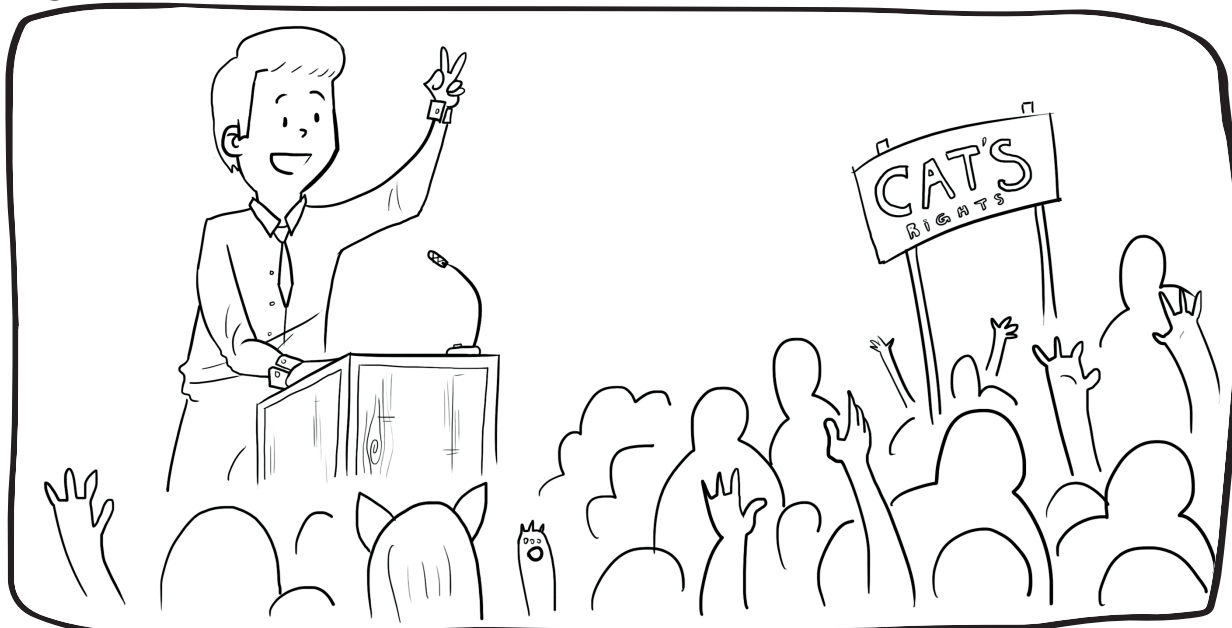
Basically, no charismatic leader or motivated crowd has yet been able to use this tool effectively for lasting social progress.

So why is social media so monumentally unreliable when it comes to constructive social change? Nobody knows. Someone has yet to come with a proven, reliable, theory.
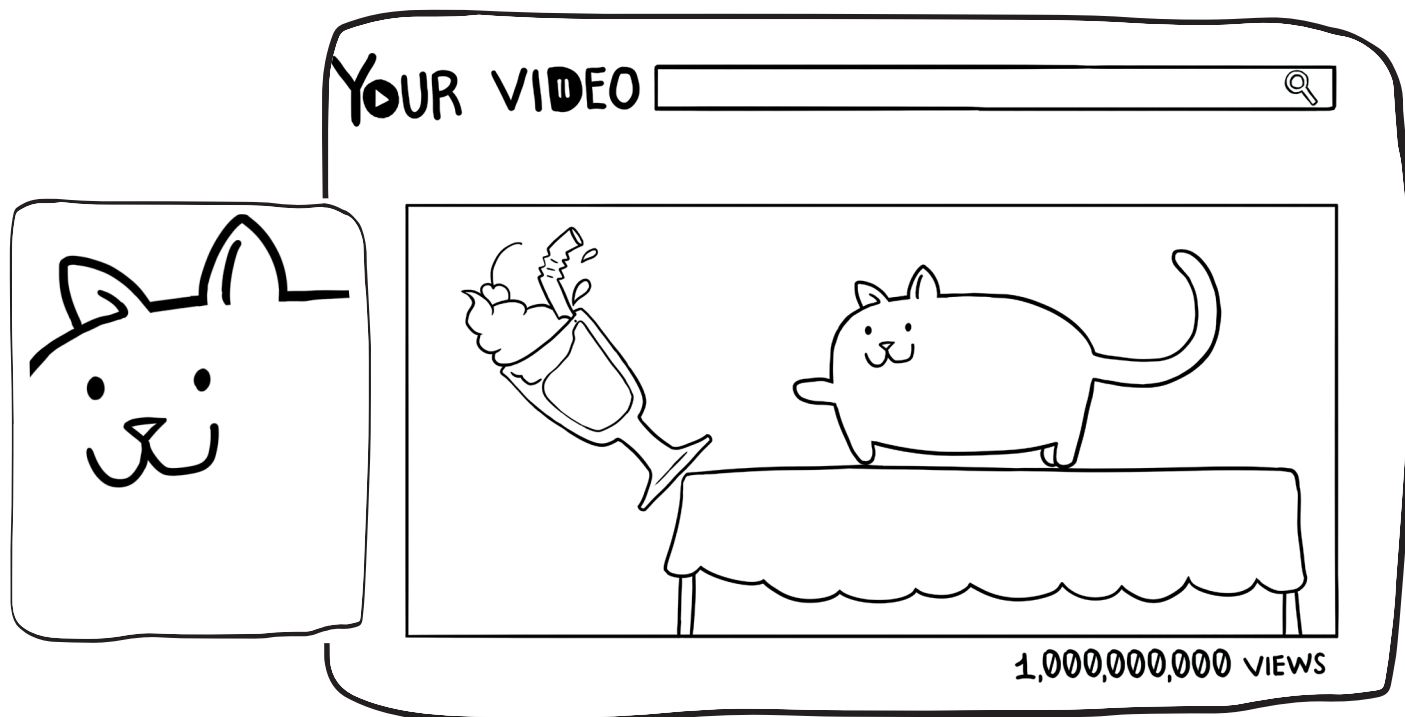

What is proven, though only to a certain extent and - sometimes in a very unscientific way, is that there are ways to make things GO VIRAL.

Though sometimes it just HAPPENS for no apparent reason, some of these virtual 'phe-nomena' are tailored with virality in mind, like shows that create hoax videos they PREDICT will go viral, that are later revealed to be fake.

Social media seems to favor ANYTHING that draws immediate attention. But the content, or how long it the user remembers it, is usually not that important.

There are invisible algorithms to keep people clicking, scrolling, and sharing as fast as possible. The more clicks and views, the more advertising social networks can sell. This is one of the reasons why many platforms have very high "views", but terrible engagement.
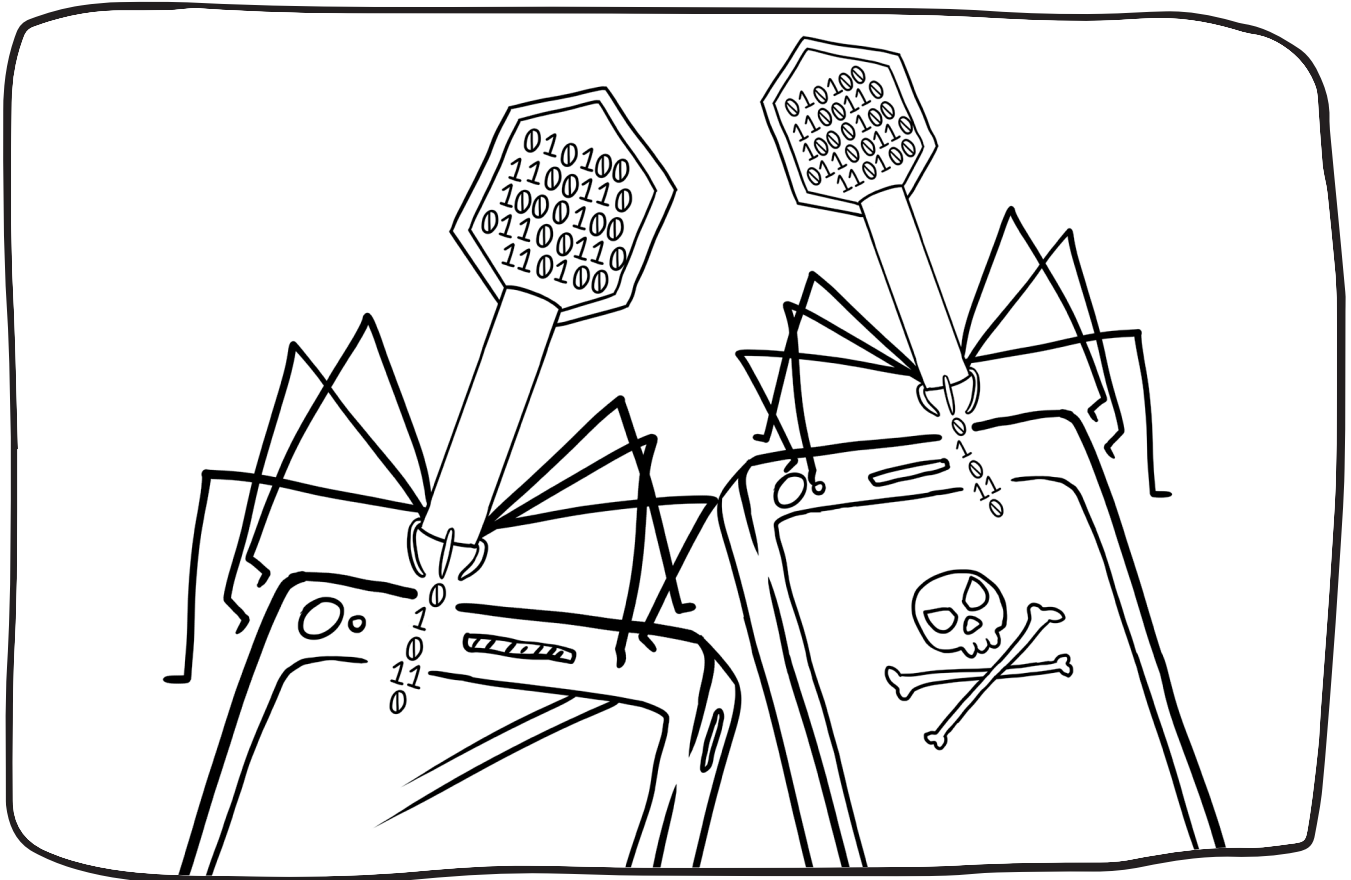

These algorithms do not contribute to longer-staying ideas because they are highly refined towards the maximization of clicking and sharing... and eventually spreading. They help propagate a virus alright, just one that causes no symptoms or consequences.
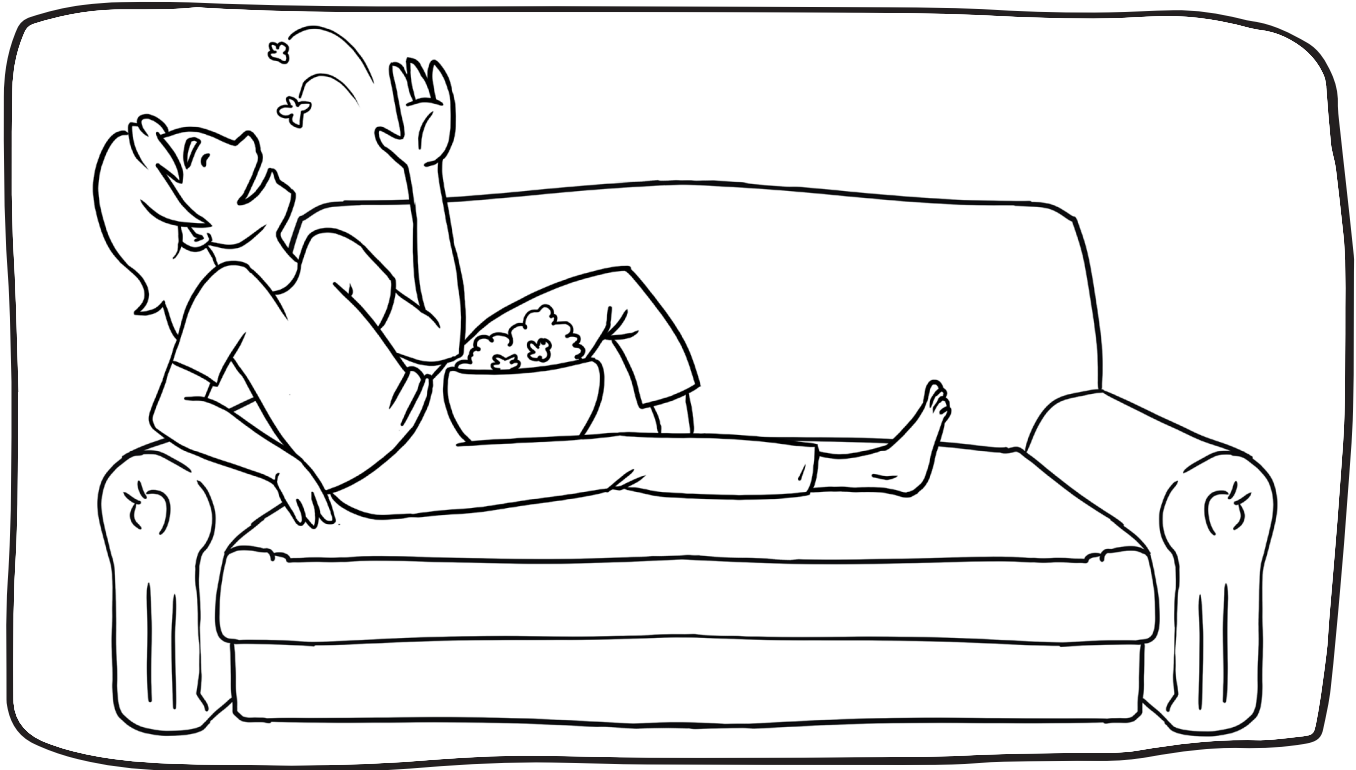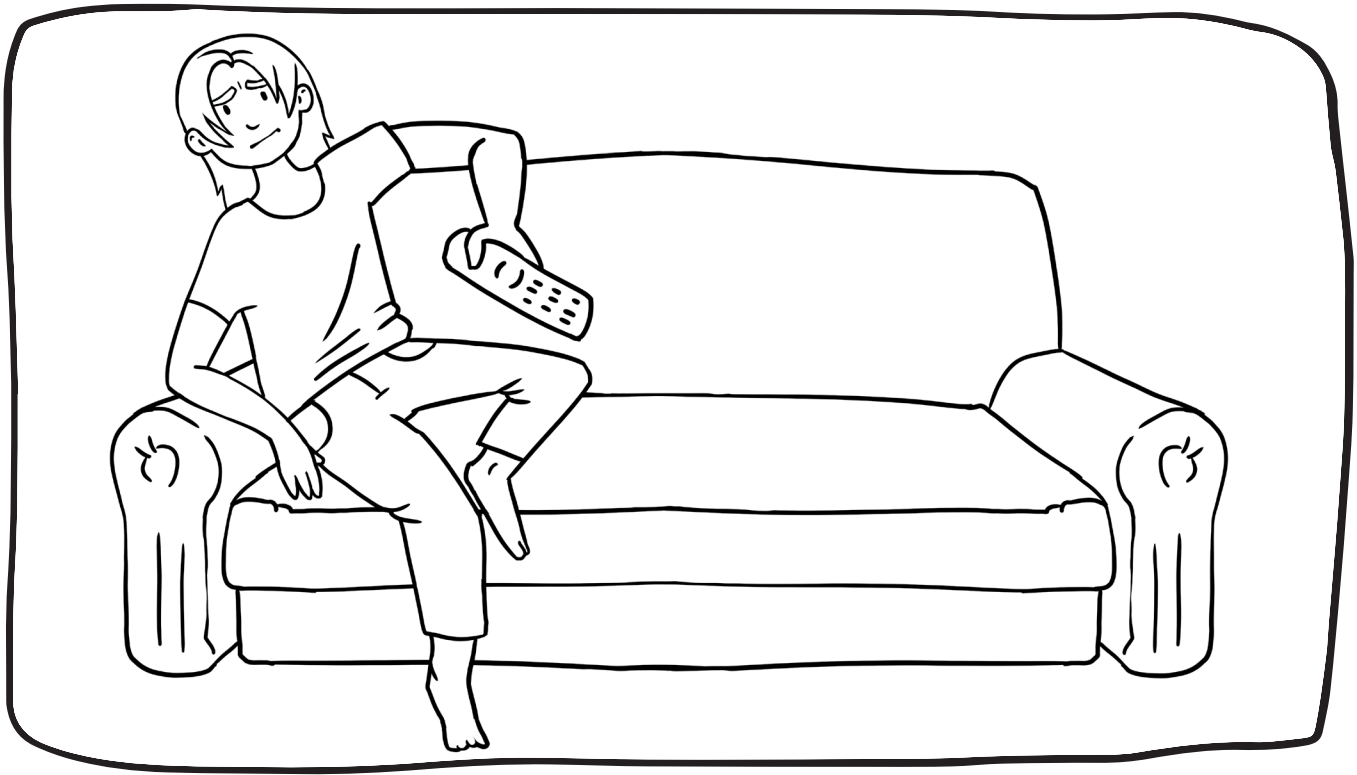
However, since the real world needs action for reaction, the underlying motivation, incentive, and consistency that MOVES masses is absolutely crucial to go beyond the virality. Without them, as proven by previous analysis, it's really just too hard to keep focus and achieve enough momentum to act and produce any substantial results.

But why is motivation so important for action?
Why do we study so urgently the day BEFORE the test?
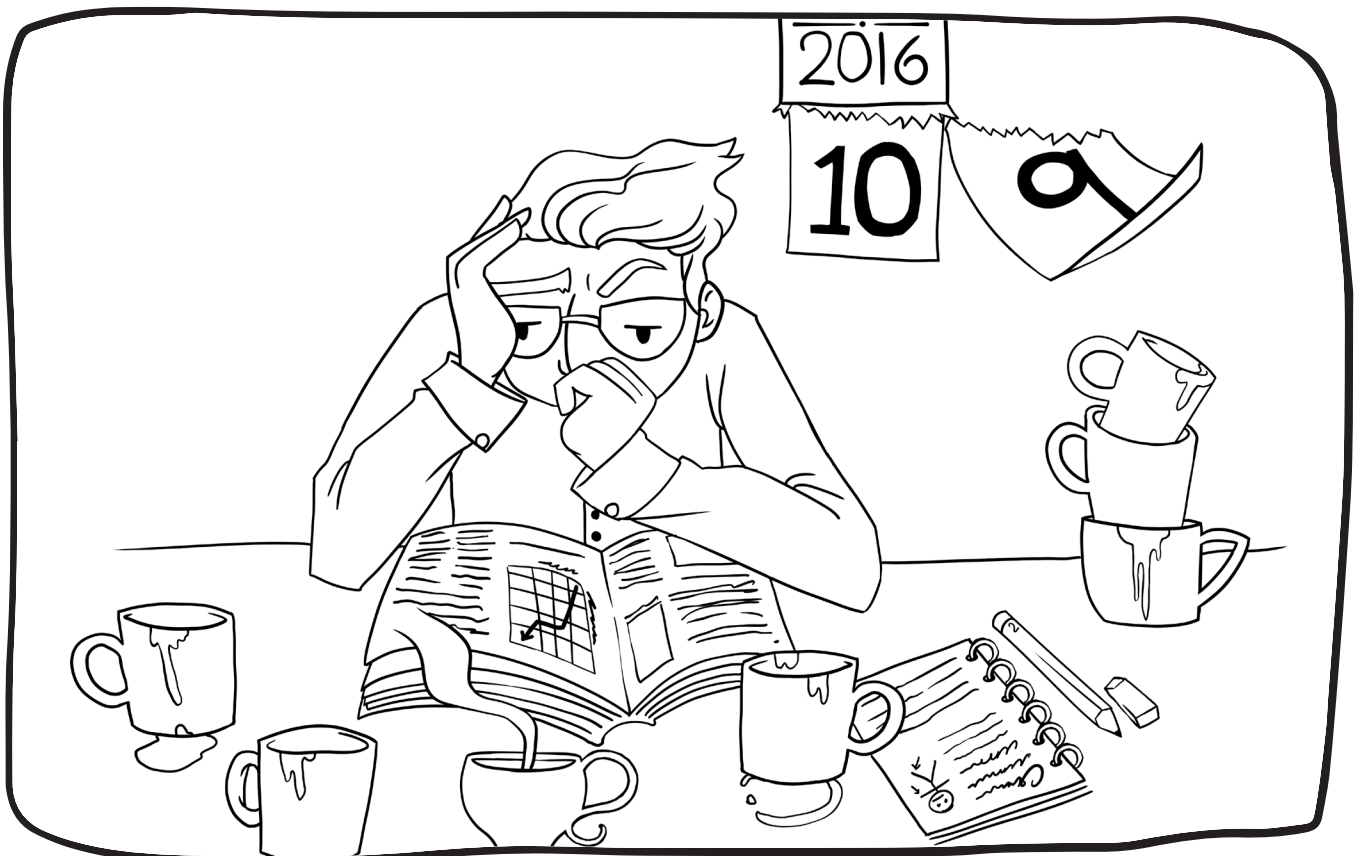
Deadlines are so effective in part because there is an underlying mechanism that motivates. What happens if you don't make it? Will there be consequences?
In contrast, what happens if you DO make your deadline? Is it a personal goal? Will someone you care about benefit from it?
Motivation is a core player in forging commitments to go beyond the initial ideas, to actually see them all the way through.
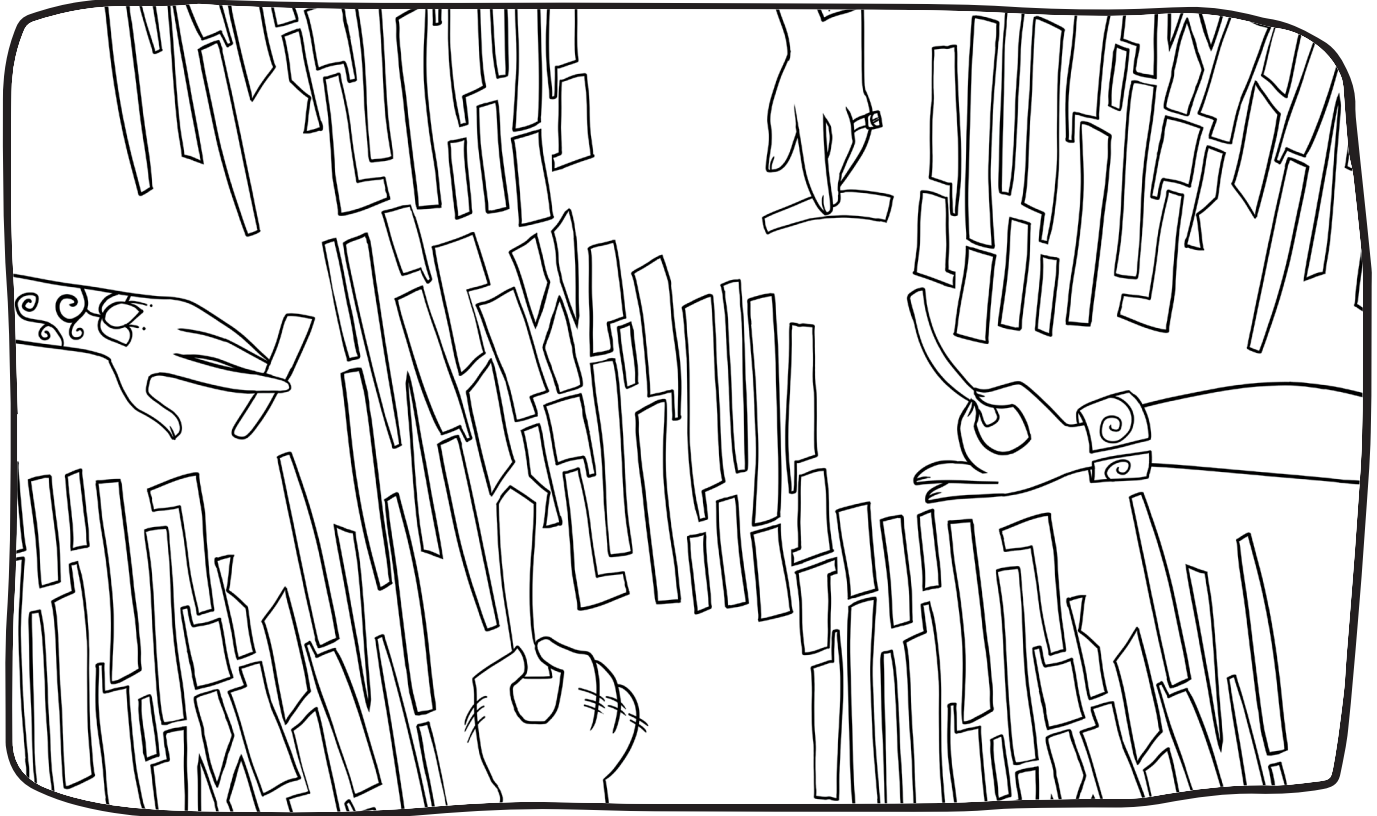
In a series of collaborative experiments conducted on a planetary-scale, a team of three scientists from institutions in Australia and the U.S. found out that an incentive structure was crucial to achieving a goal in the real world. They had the highest rate at successfully recruiting random people and persuading them to collectively perform seemingly impossible tasks, such as reconstructing shredded documents in a very short time.
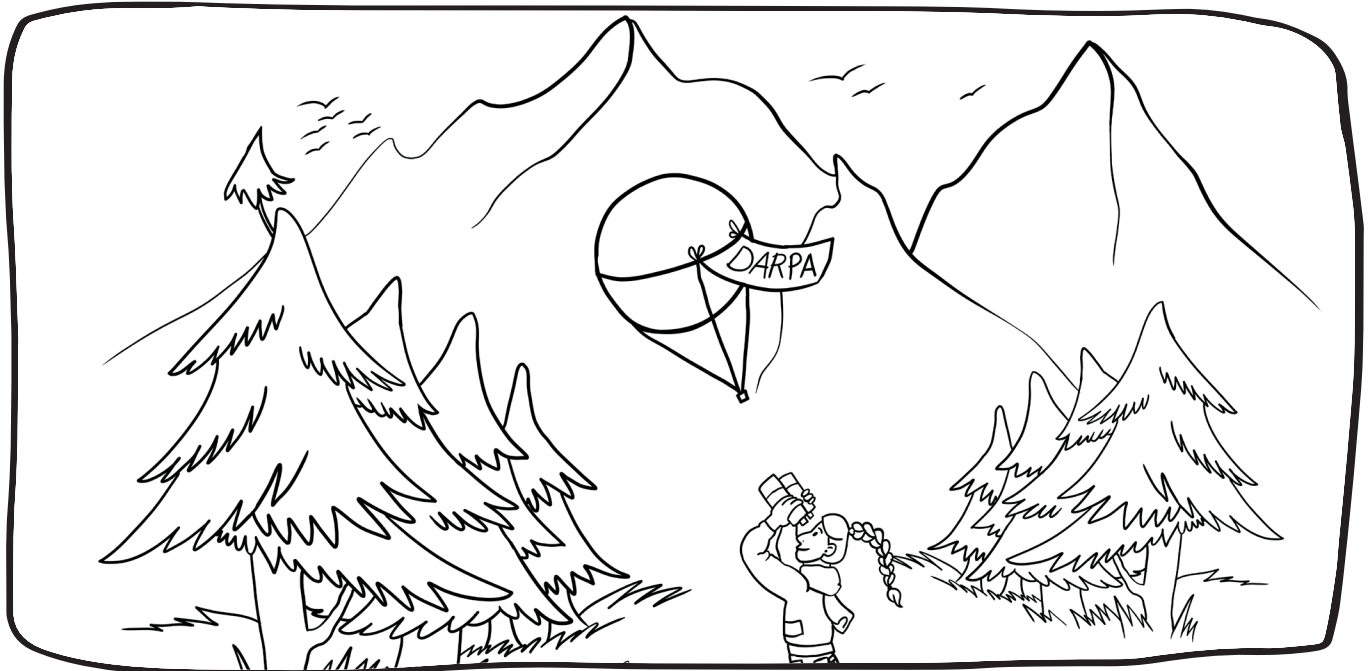

In one scenario called the DARPA Network Challenge, the goal was to locate ten specific weather balloons tethered ANYWHERE across the whole United States. There were no clues whatsoever, just the mission: find the balloons.
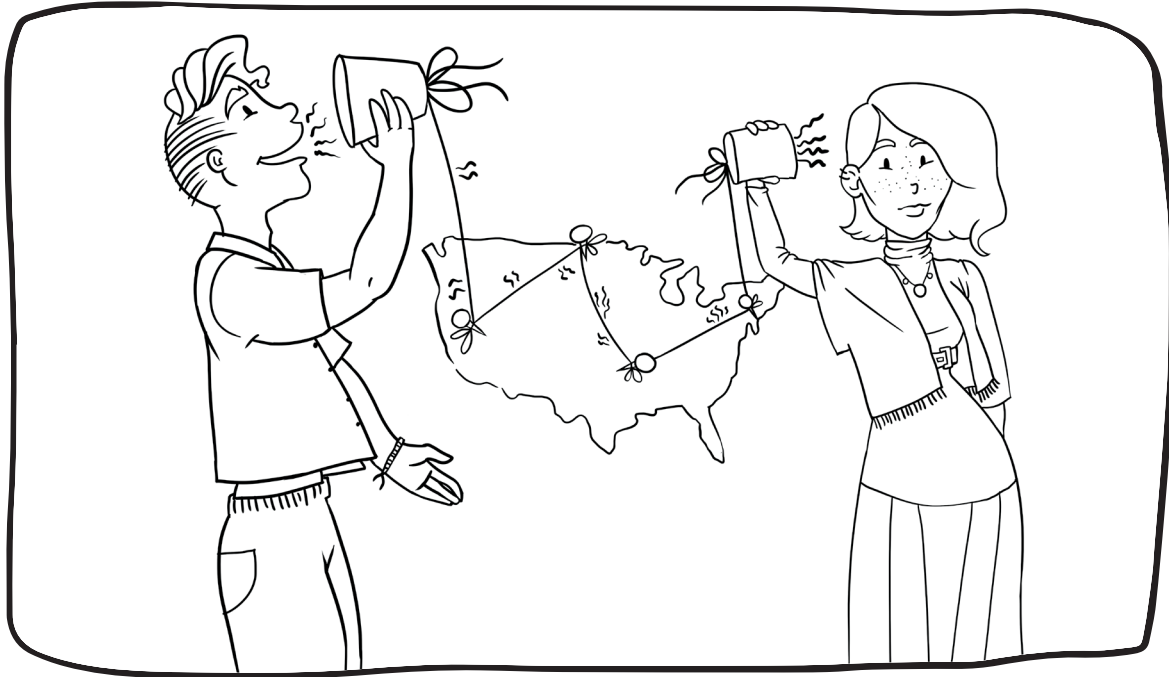
Using strategies that were specifically incentive-designed, they were able to move over 2 million searchers and found the balloons in under 48 hours.
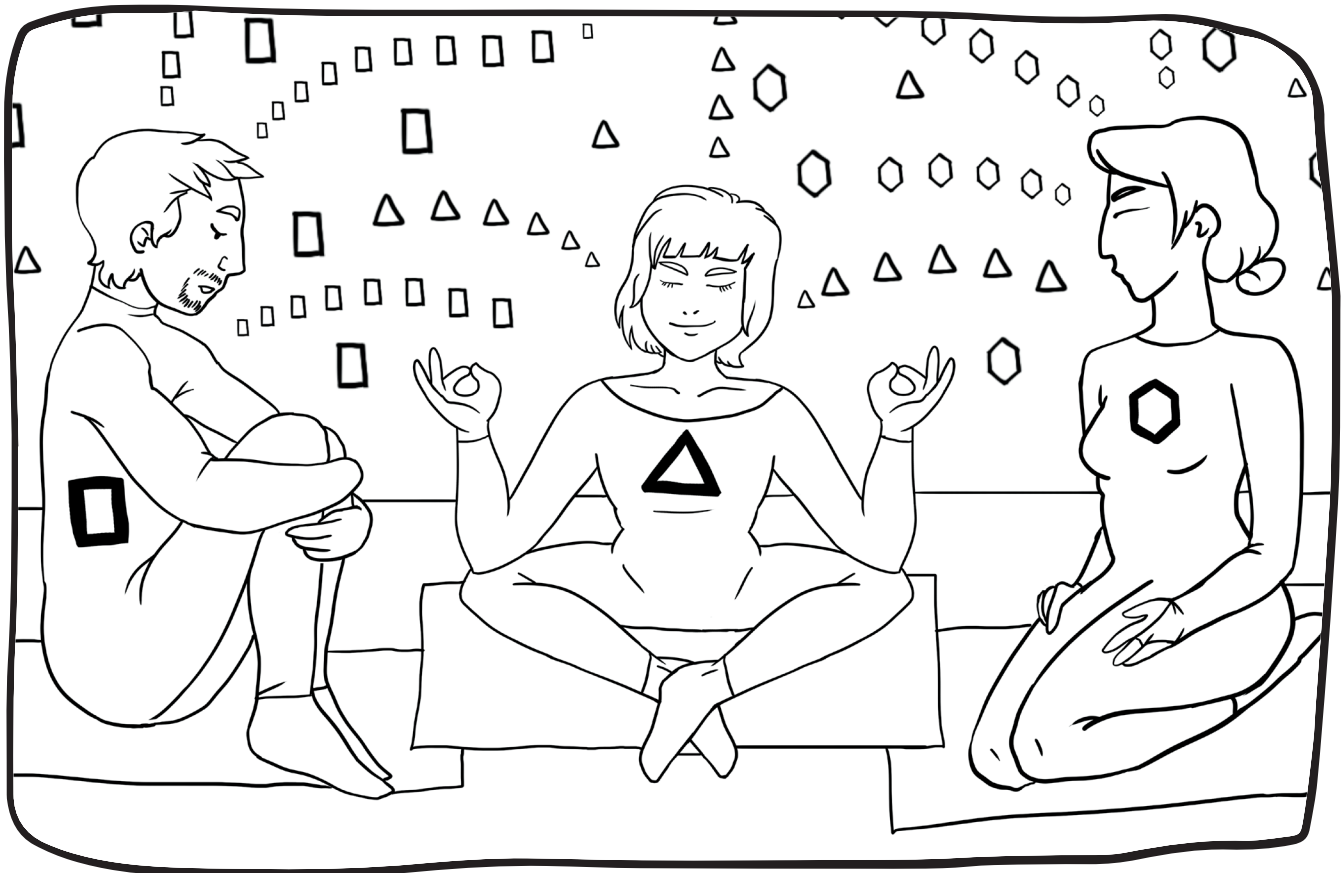

This not only demonstrates the usually untapped potential of action IN THE REAL WORLD aided by social connectivity, but also advances strides in a system that takes into account the inner motivational needs of an individual.
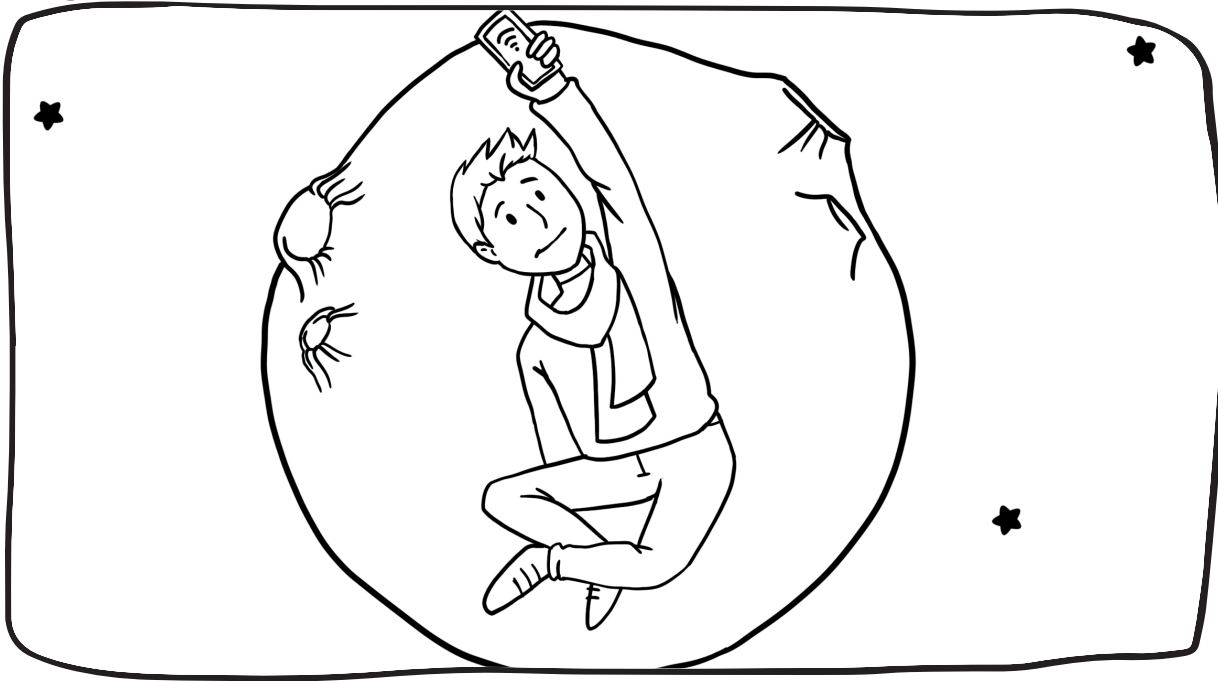
Some people may share cultural and geographical similarities, but each individual is a different world.
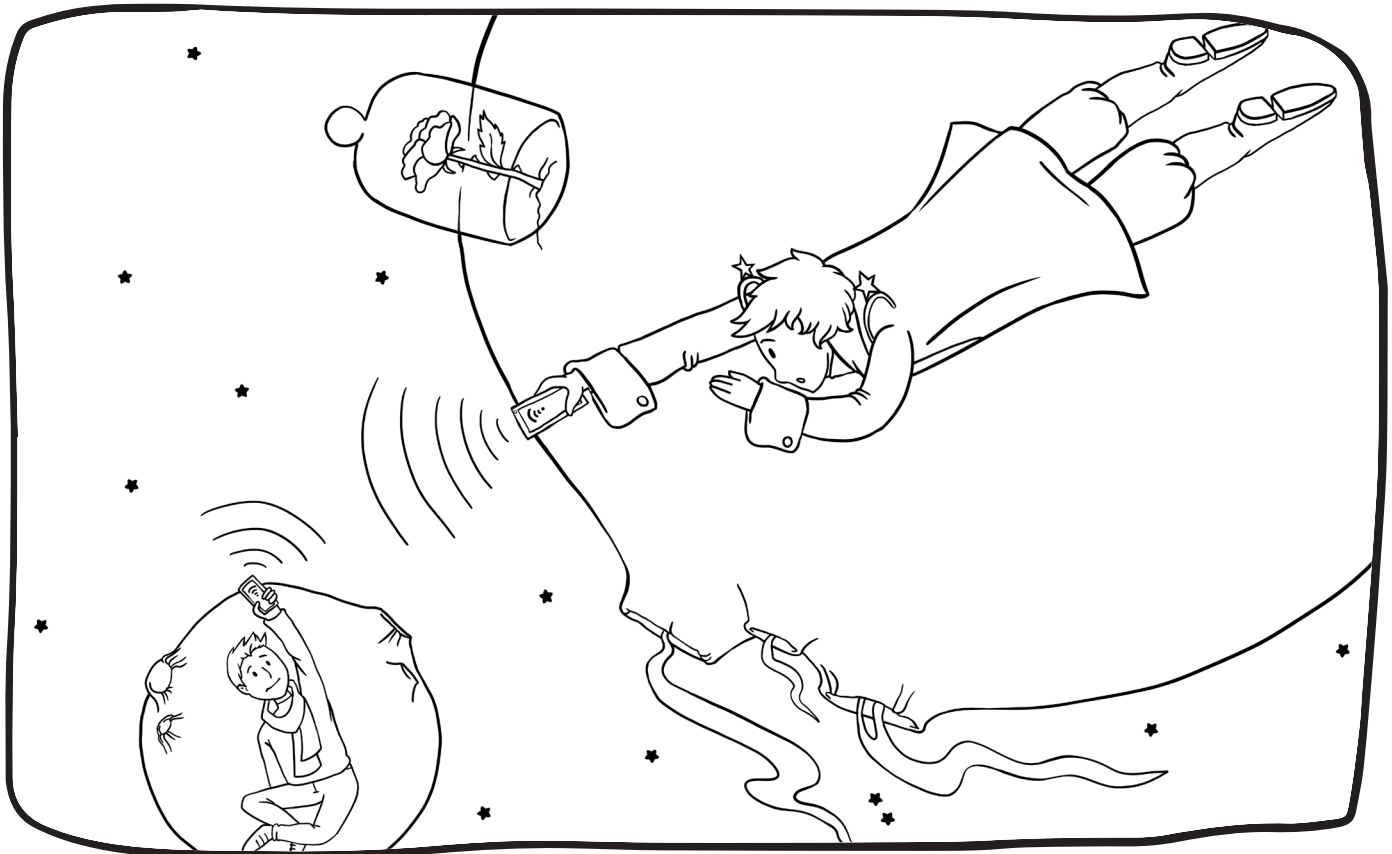
What drives one may be fundamentally different from another. It could be a reward, charity, entertainment, or a combination of other factors. With a proper system that triggers deeper motivation, the wide-spread of ideas is much more effective in fishing a percentage of interested individuals who will ACT, based on their distinct personal drives, and will ultimately move them towards the same real-world objective, producing tangible results.
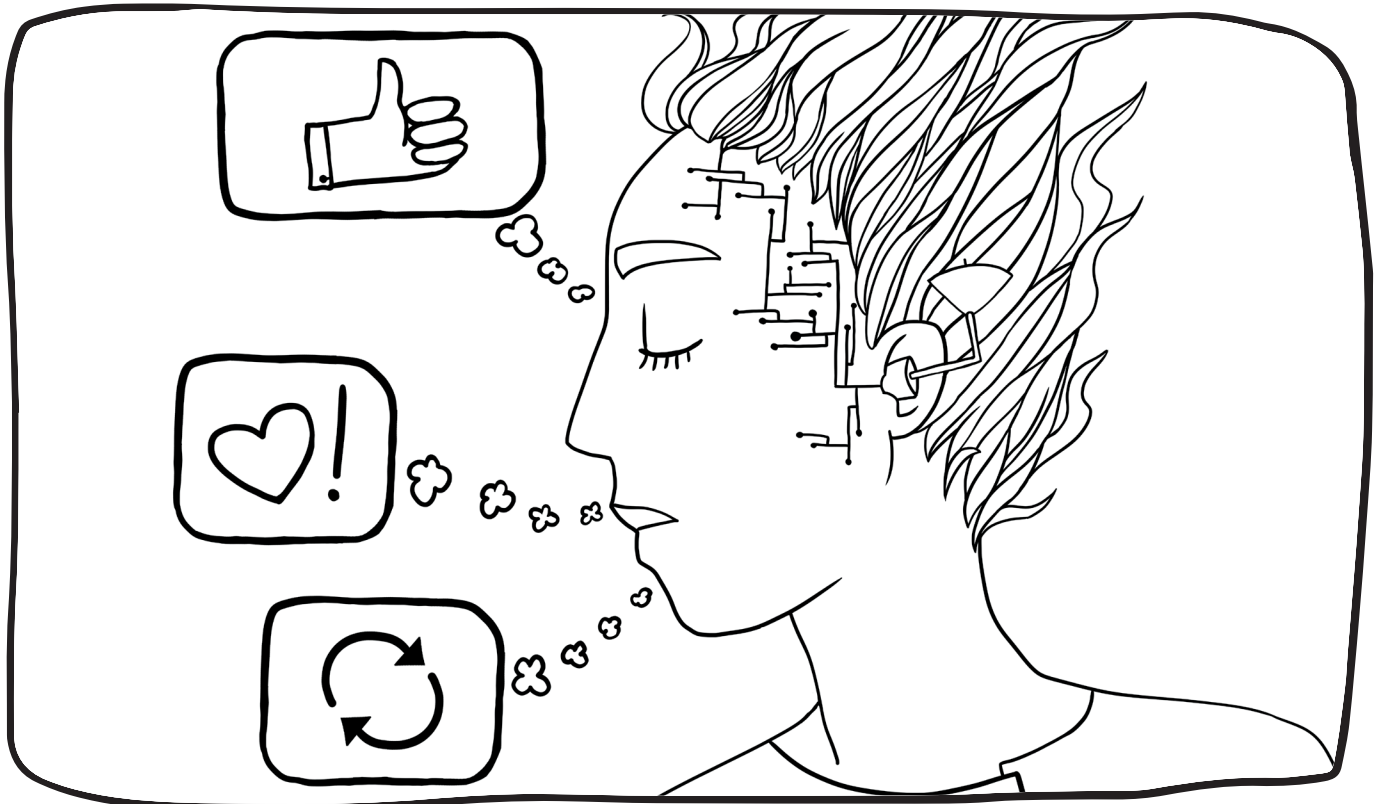
Who knows what the future holds for the next generation of social media. Will it be an evolution of the current model, or will it be even more ubiquitous and interact with us at the thought level? Whatever it becomes, our underlying human motivational processes will definitely have to be a part of it, since regardless of the technology, we're only human,
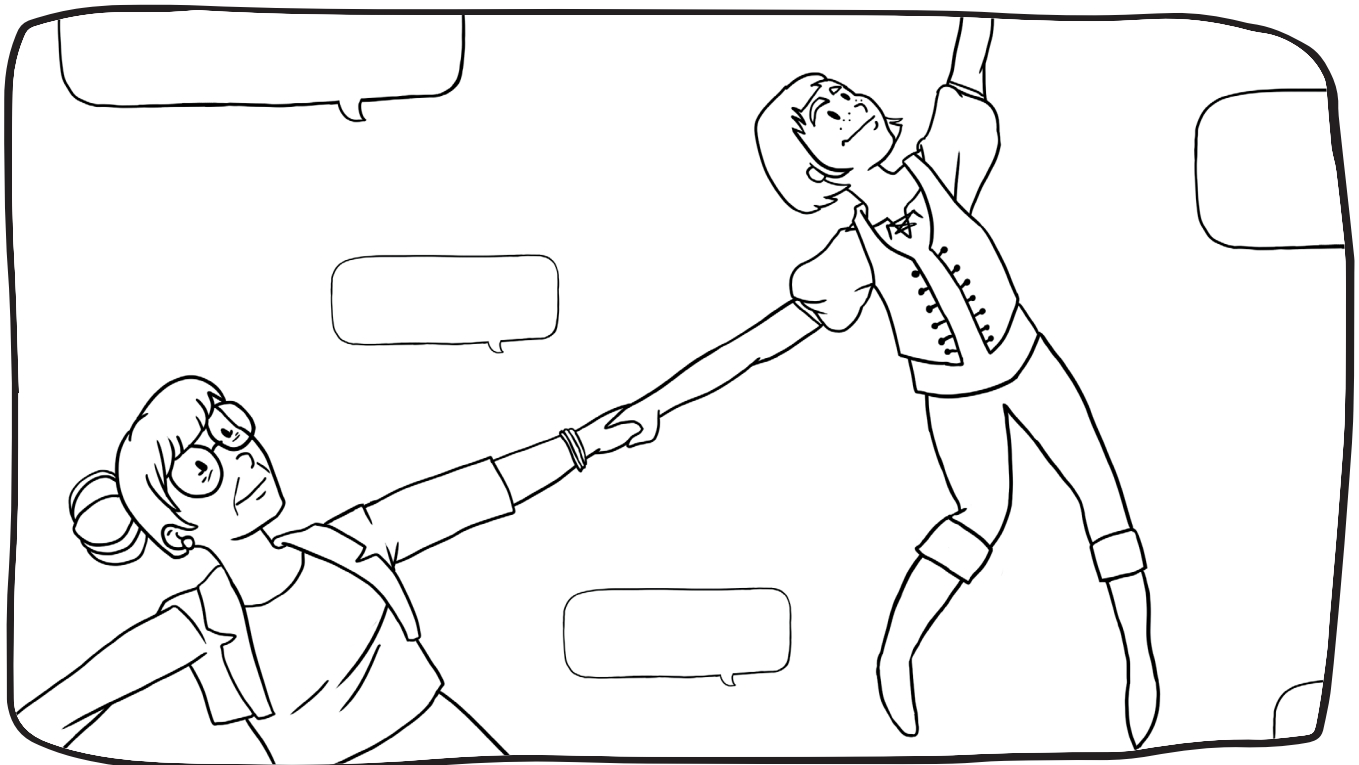
and we connect to fulfill a very basic need. And that is to interact with one another in a healthy society that we ALL work to improve constantly.
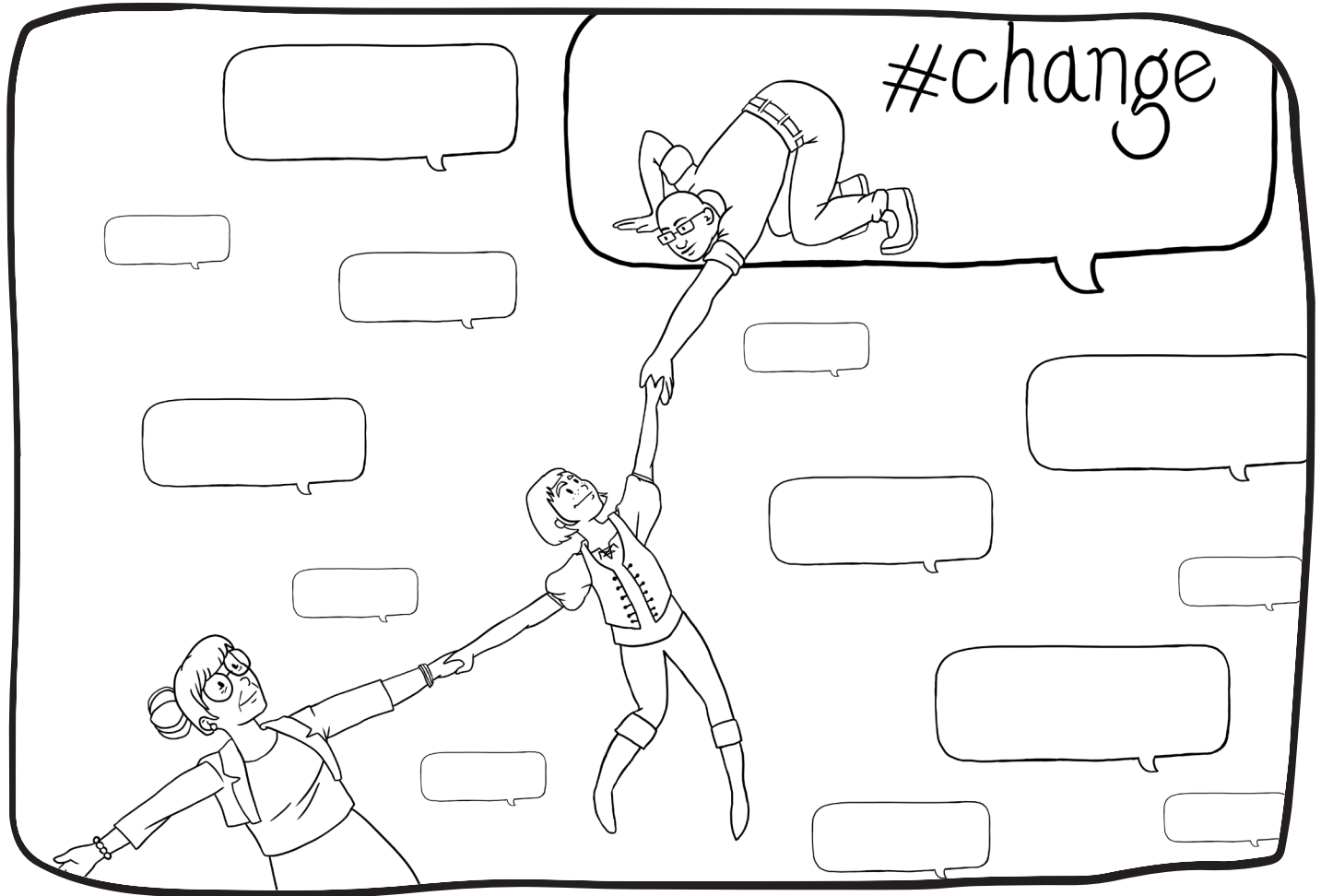
With a system that includes personal and collective motivation as its
building blocks, viral campaigns would not only create awareness,
but also a sense of urgency to act as a community and solve matters
in the real world. These new positive symptoms would hopefully spread
from one group of people to another, and help us break the feeling that
virally liking and sharing issues alone will make them go away, because
they won't!
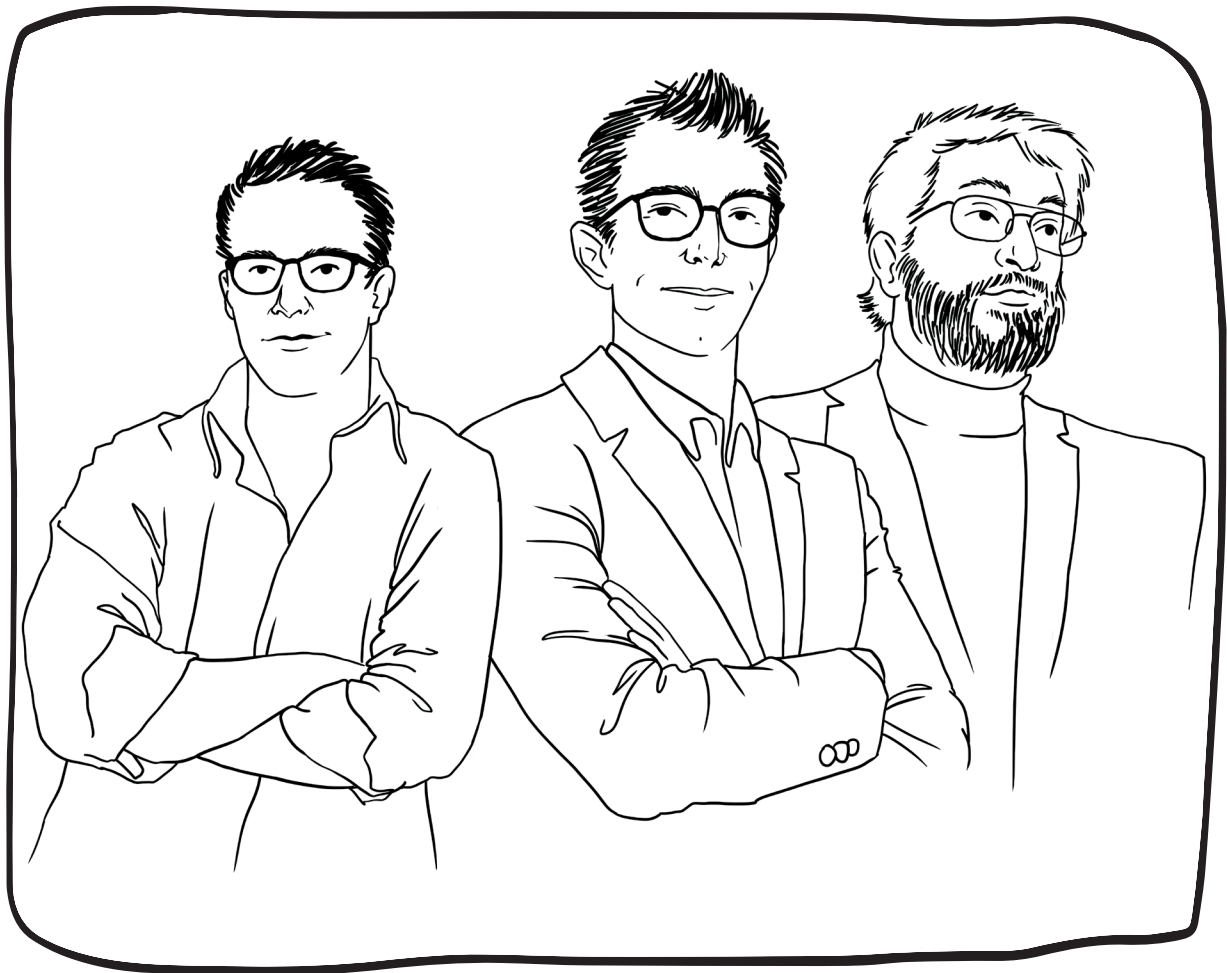
(the writers present the closing credits)