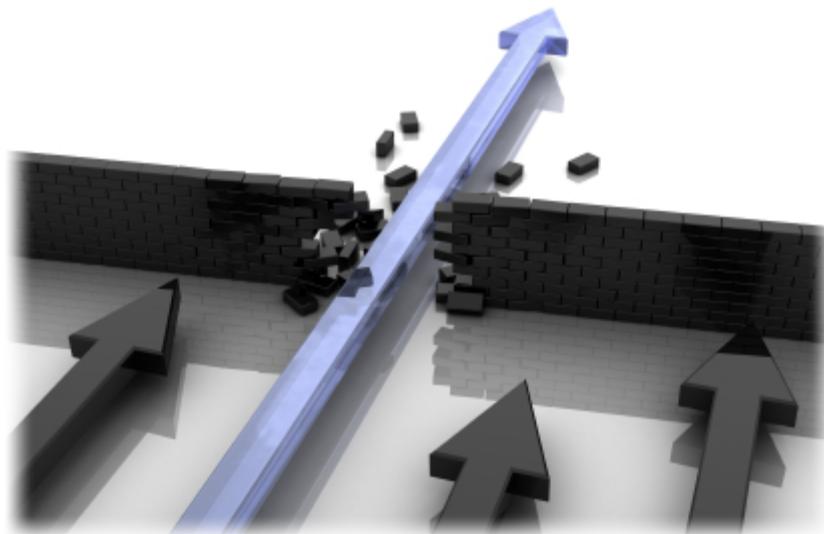


# emergent design & evolutionary architecture



**NEAL FORD** software architect / meme wrangler

**ThoughtWorks**

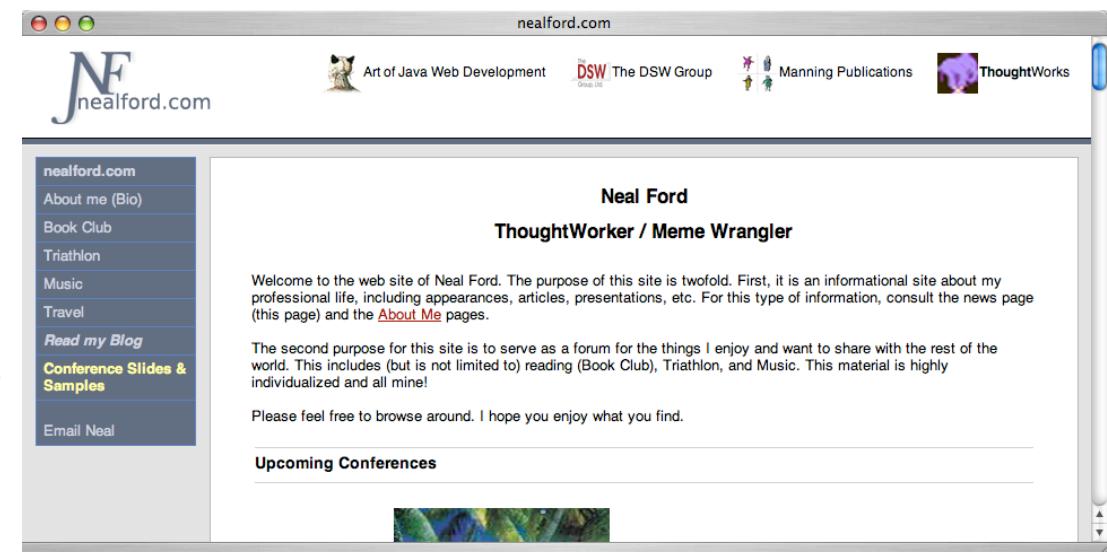
---

[nford@thoughtworks.com](mailto:nford@thoughtworks.com)  
3003 Summit Boulevard, Atlanta, GA 30319  
[www.nealford.com](http://www.nealford.com)  
[www.thoughtworks.com](http://www.thoughtworks.com)  
[memeagora.blogspot.com](http://memeagora.blogspot.com)

# housekeeping

ask questions anytime

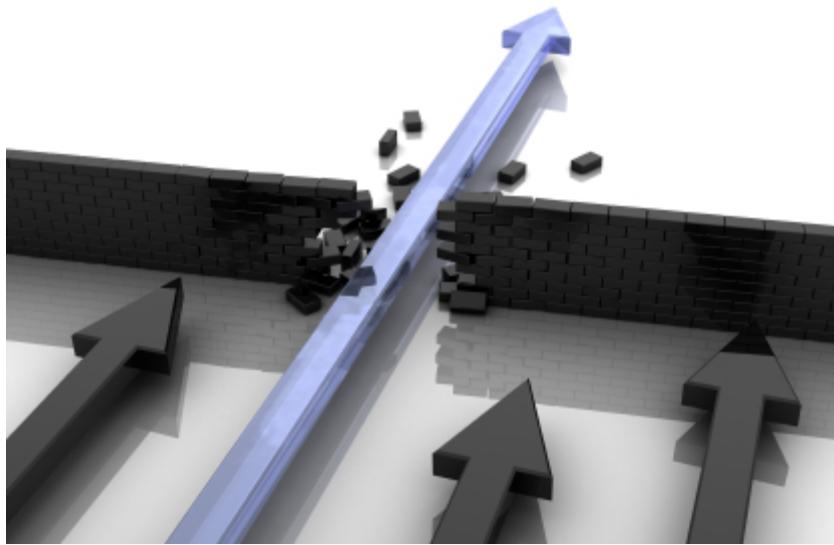
download slides from  
nealford.com



The screenshot shows a Mac OS X window for the website [nealford.com](http://nealford.com). The header features the site's logo (a stylized 'NF') and the URL. To the right are links for 'Art of Java Web Development', 'The DSW Group', 'Manning Publications', and 'ThoughtWorks'. The main content area is titled 'Neal Ford' and 'ThoughtWorker / Meme Wrangler'. It includes a welcome message, a sidebar with links to 'nealford.com', 'About me (Bio)', 'Book Club', 'Triathlon', 'Music', 'Travel', 'Read my Blog', 'Conference Slides & Samples', and 'Email Neal'. A section for 'Upcoming Conferences' is also present.

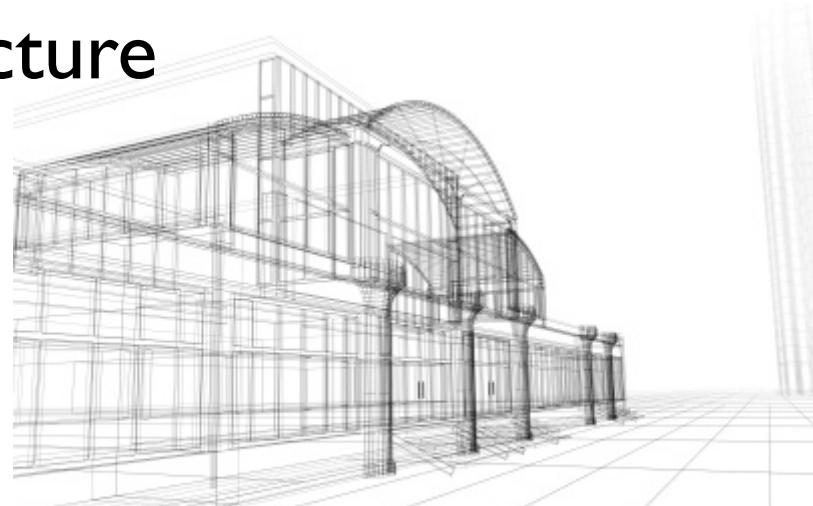
download samples from [github.com/nealford](https://github.com/nealford)

# emergent design family



emergent design &  
evolutionary architecture

test-driven  
design



real  
world  
refactoring

# Evolutionary architecture and emergent design: Investigating architecture and design

Discovering more-maintainable design and architecture

Level: Intermediate

Neal Ford ([nford@thoughtworks.com](mailto:nford@thoughtworks.com)), Software Architect / Meme Wrangler, ThoughtWorks Inc.

24 Feb 2009

Software architecture and design generate a lot of conversational heat but not much light. To start a new conversation about alternative ways to think about them, this article launches the [Evolutionary architecture and emergent design](#) series. Evolutionary architecture and emergent design are agile techniques for deferring important decisions until the last responsible moment. In this introductory installment, series author Neal Ford defines architecture and design and then identifies overarching concerns that will arise throughout the series.

Architecture and design in software have resisted firm definitions for a long time because software development as a discipline has not yet fully grasped all their intricacies and implications. But to create reasonable discourse about these topics, you have to start somewhere. This article series concerns evolutionary architecture and emergent design, so it makes sense to start the series with some definitions, considerations, and other ground-setting.

## Defining architecture

Architecture in software is one of the most talked about yet least understood concepts that developers grapple with. At conferences, talks and birds-of-a-feather gatherings about architecture pack the house, but we still have only vague definitions for it. When we discuss architecture, we're really talking about several different but related concerns that generally fall into the broad categories of *application architecture* and *enterprise architecture*.

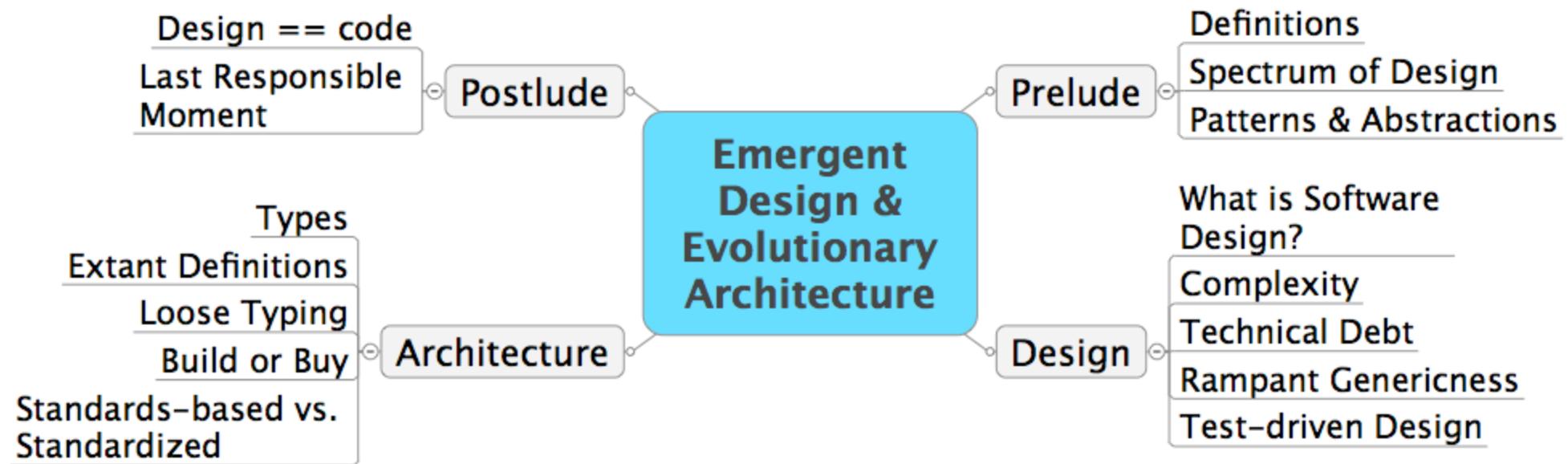
## About this series

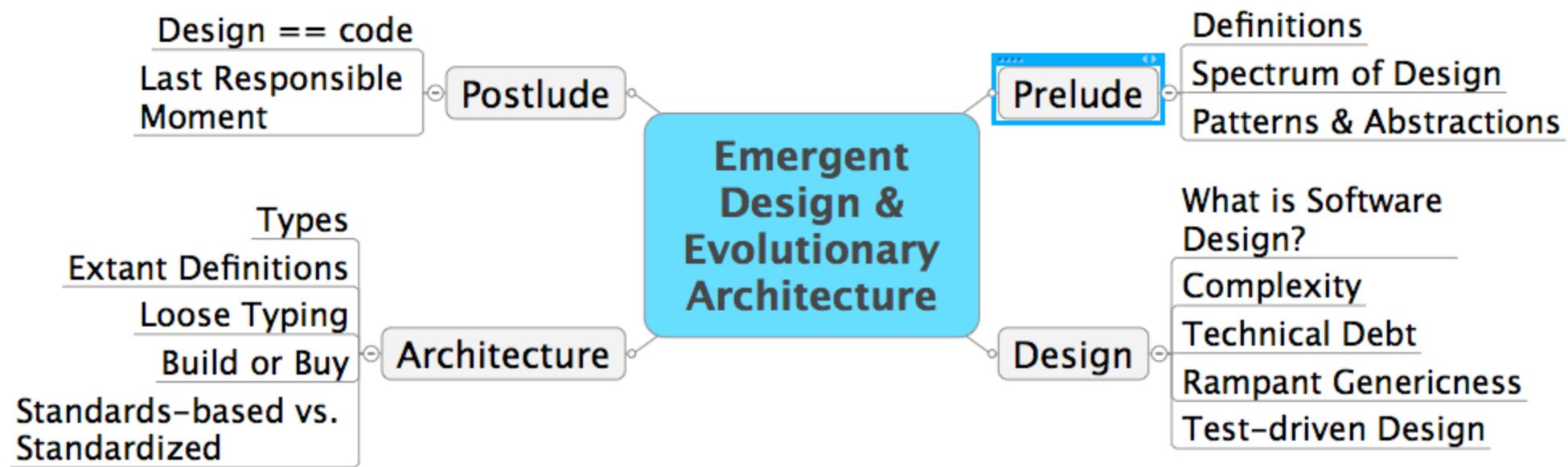
This [series](#) aims to provide a fresh perspective on the often-discussed but elusive concepts of software architecture and design. Through concrete examples, Neal Ford gives you a solid grounding in the agile practices of *evolutionary architecture and emergent design*. By deferring important architectural and design decisions until the last responsible moment, you can prevent unnecessary complexity from undermining your software projects.

[http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/java/library/j-eaed/index.html?S\\_TACT=105AGX02&S\\_CMP=EDU](http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/java/library/j-eaed/index.html?S_TACT=105AGX02&S_CMP=EDU)

<http://tinyurl.com/nf-ead>

# agenda





things to  
think  
about



**Emergent, a.**

[L. *emergens*, p. pr. of *emergere*.]

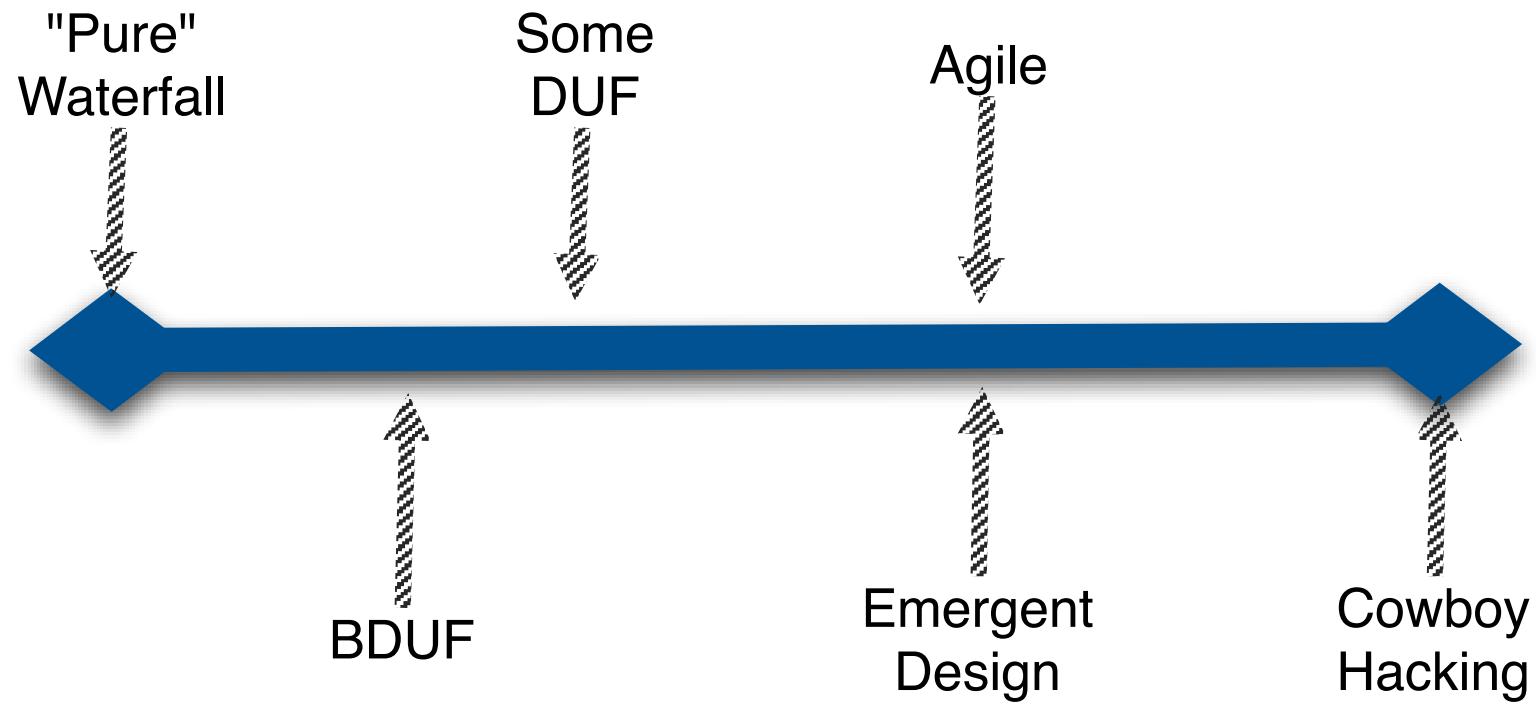
I. Rising or emerging out of a fluid  
or anything that covers or  
conceals; issuing; coming to light.

[1913 Webster]

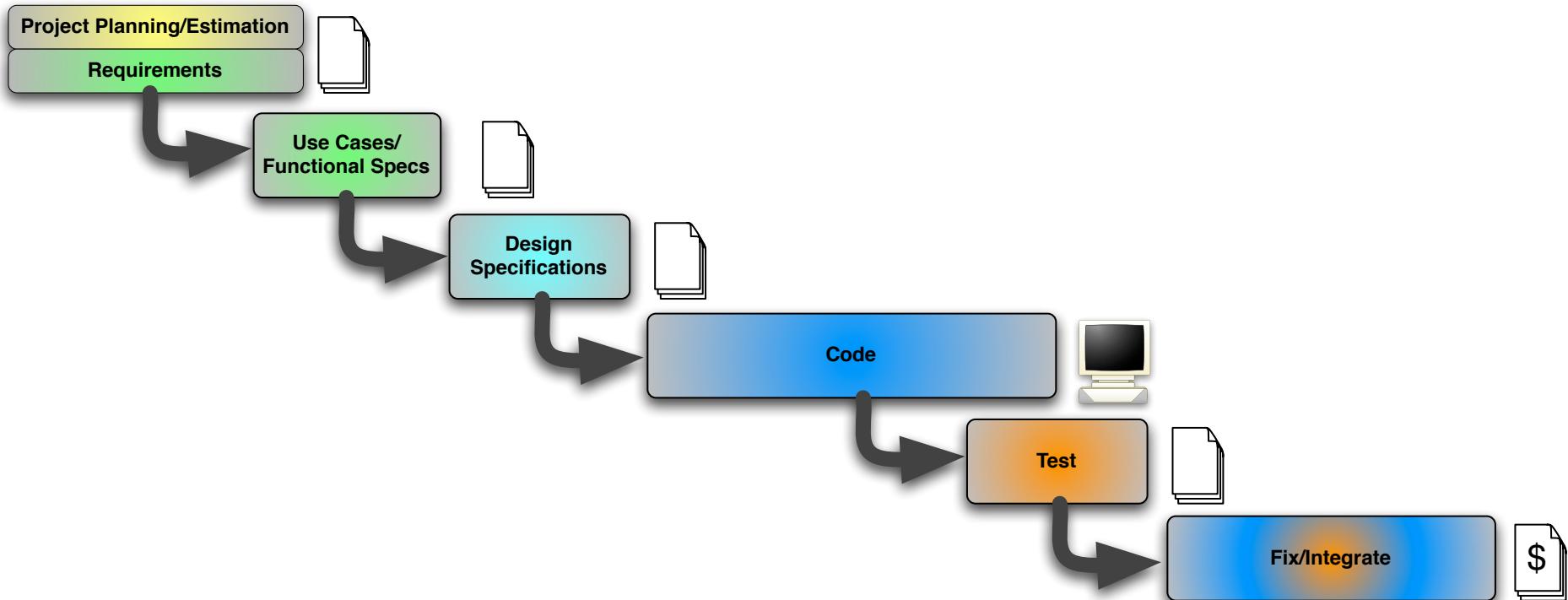
2. Suddenly appearing; arising  
unexpectedly; calling for  
prompt action; urgent.

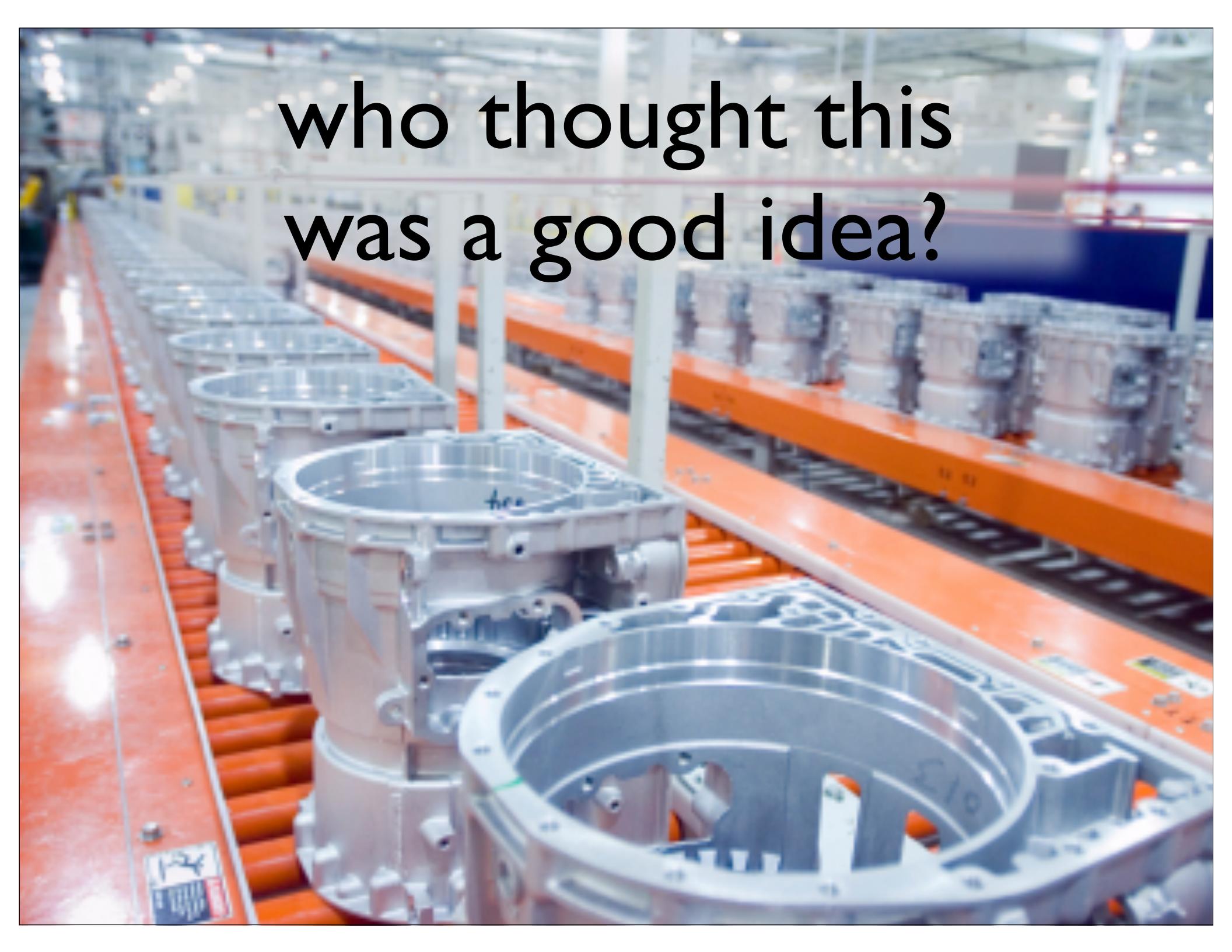
[1913 Webster]

# spectrum of design



# big design up front

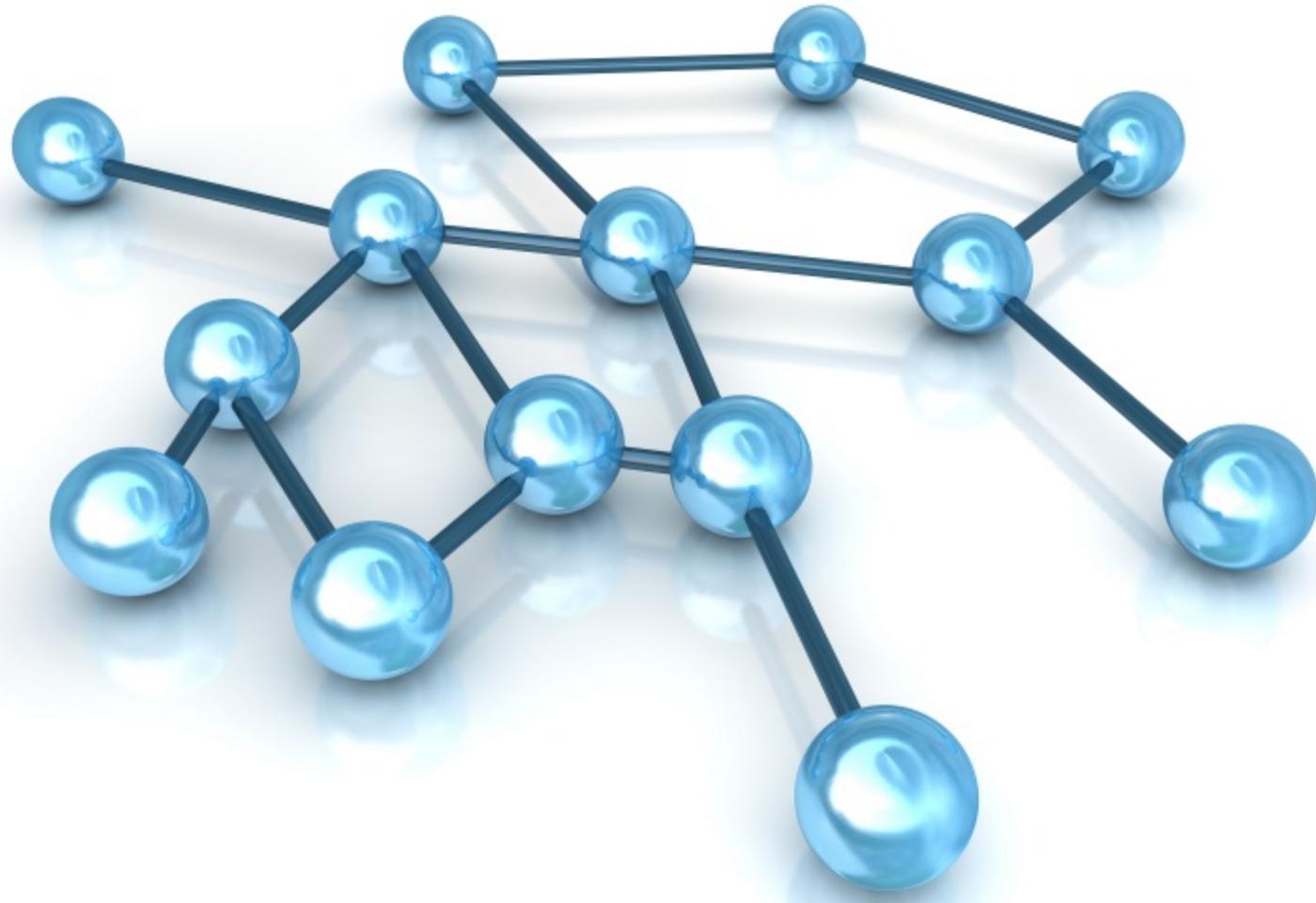




who thought this  
was a good idea?

# emerging design





**finding abstractions &  
patterns**

# Patterns

patterns == nomenclature

patterns describe effective abstractions

good abstractions disappear

the simpler the substrate, the easier the abstraction

abstractions leak

# leaky abstractions

*All non-trivial abstractions, to some degree, are leaky.* joel spolsky

file system in java

javascript libraries

o/r mapping

ActiveRecord in ruby on rails !

# abstracting too early

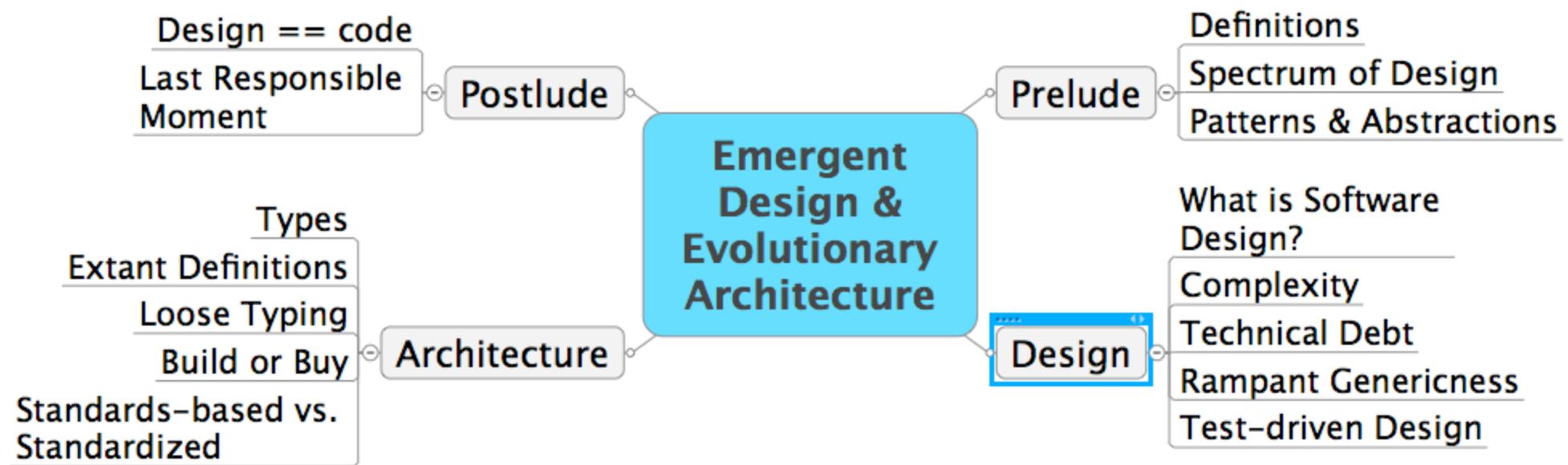
speculation without facts

yagni

business processes change radically and often

experience helps

spike solutions

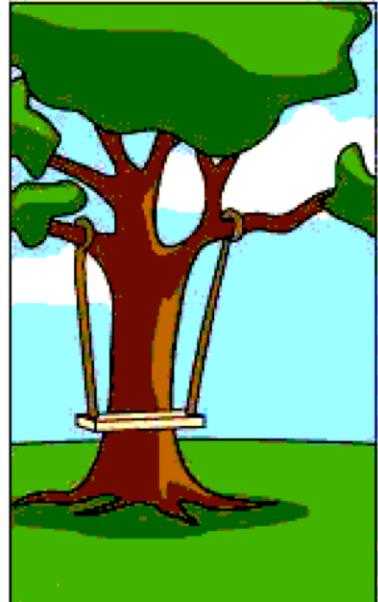


A high-resolution satellite image of Earth's surface, showing clouds, landmasses, and oceans. The planet is set against a dark, star-filled background of space.

emergent  
design



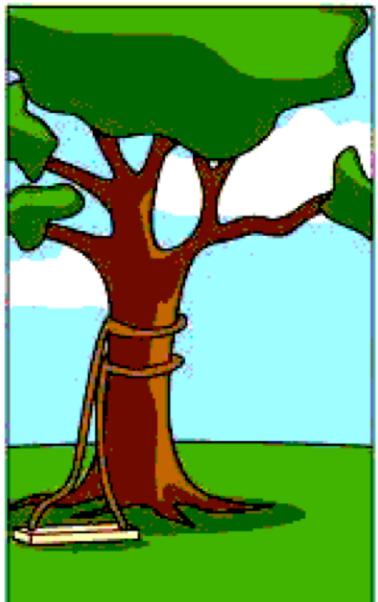
How the customer explained it



How the Project Leader  
understood it



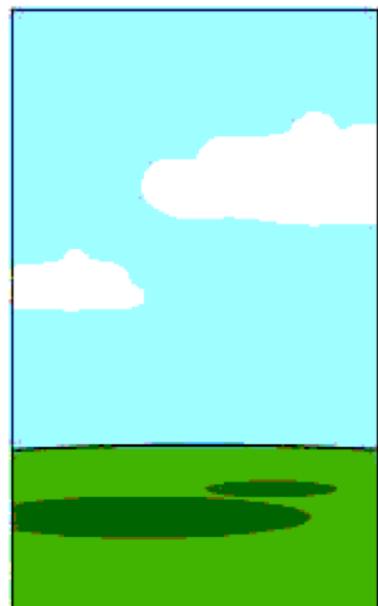
How the Analyst designed it



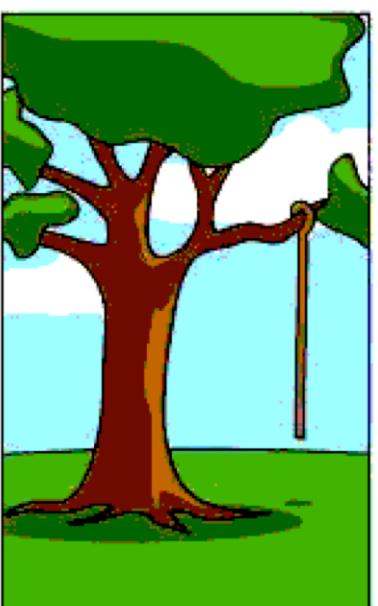
How the Programmer wrote it



How the Business Consultant  
described it



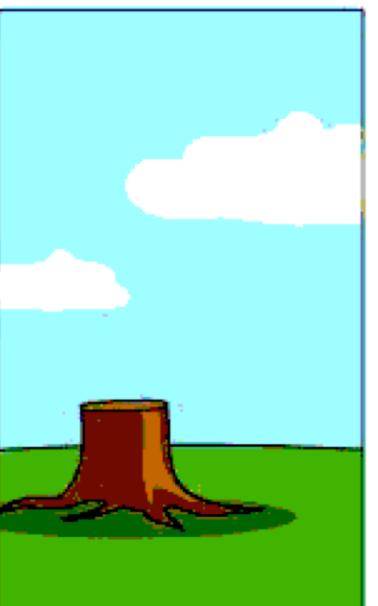
How the project was  
documented



What operations installed



How the customer was billed



How it was supported



What the customer really  
needed

# “what is software design?”

Jack C. Reeves  
fall 1992, c++ journal

[http://www.developerdotstar.com/mag/articles/reeves\\_design.html](http://www.developerdotstar.com/mag/articles/reeves_design.html)

# software “engineering”

“*The final goal of any engineering activity is some type of documentation*”

“*When the design effort is complete, the design documentation is turned over to the manufacturing team.*”

what is the design document in software?

the source code

# source == design

*“...software is cheap to build. It does not qualify as inexpensive; it is so cheap it is almost free”.*

manufacturing == build process

*“...software design is easy to create, at least in the mechanical sense.”*

*“Given that software designs are relatively easy to turn out, and essentially free to build, an unsurprising revelation is that software designs tend to be incredibly large and complex.”*

# source == design

*“...it is cheaper and simpler to just build the design and test it than to do anything else.”*

*“The overwhelming problem with software development is that everything is part of the design process.”*

*“Coding is design, testing and debugging are part of design, and what we typically call software design is still part of design.”*

*“Software may be cheap to build, but it is incredibly expensive to design.”*

# emergent design

discovering design in code

finding effective abstractions

technical abstractions

problem domain abstractions

ability to harvest idiomatic patterns

things that  
obscure  
emergent  
design



# complexity



**essential complexity**

*inherent complexity*

**accidental complexity**

*all the externally imposed ways that software becomes complex*

**essential vs. accidental**

**complexity**

# examples

Hunting  
Season

EJB / Biztalk

Field Level  
Security

Essential

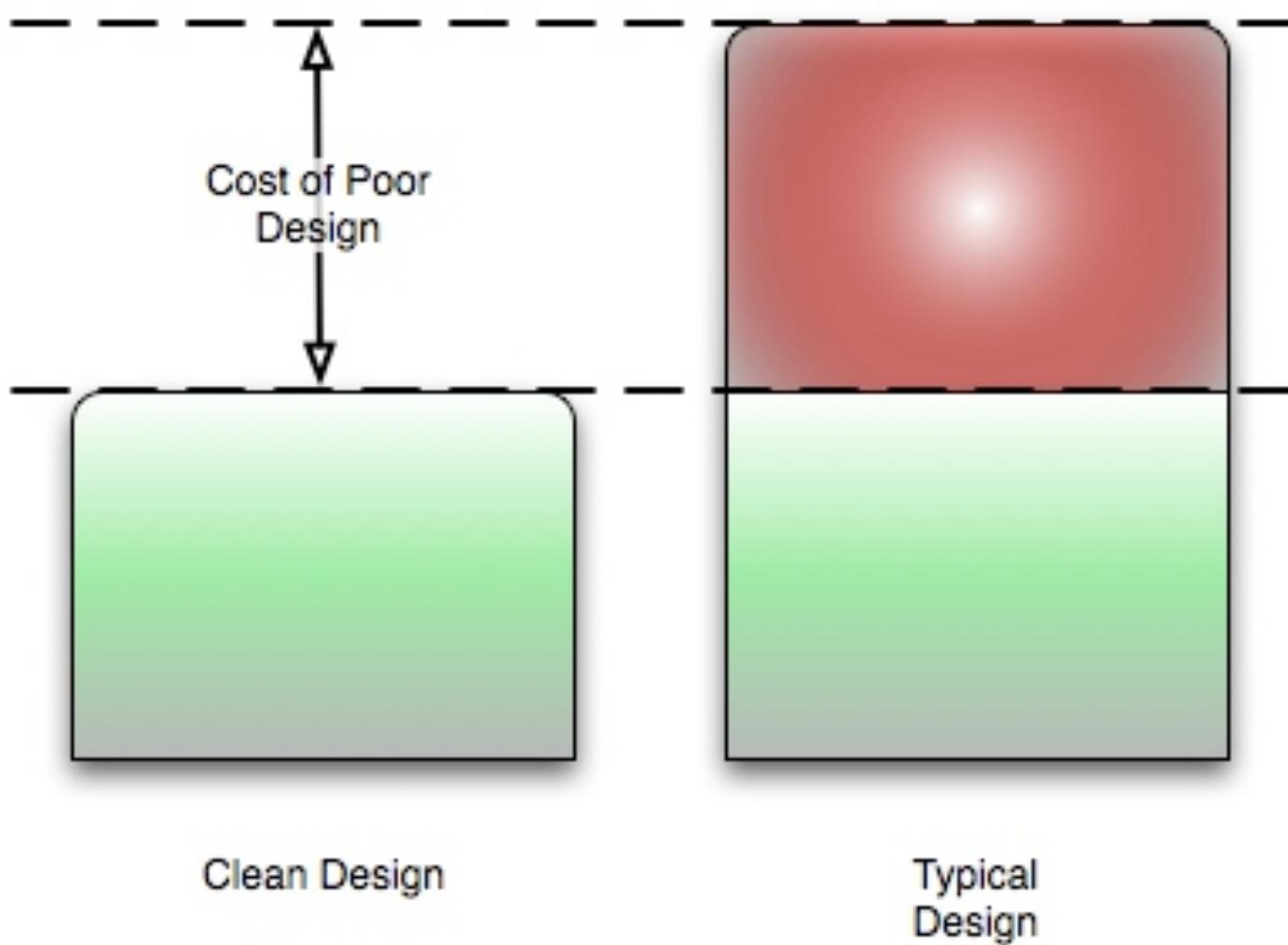
Accidental



The background of the image is a solid blue color. On it, there are several large, metallic, three-dimensional letters spelling out "YEAR 2024". The letters have a reflective surface, catching some light. The "Y" and "E" are partially visible on the left edge. The "2024" is centered and more prominent. In the foreground, the words "technical debt" are overlaid in a large, dark gray, sans-serif font.

# technical debt

# technical debt





--- **principal**

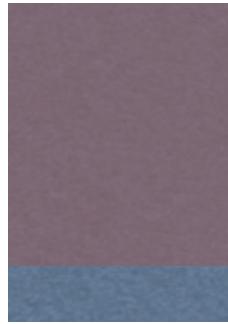


**effort for  
new features**



**interest**

*technical debt*



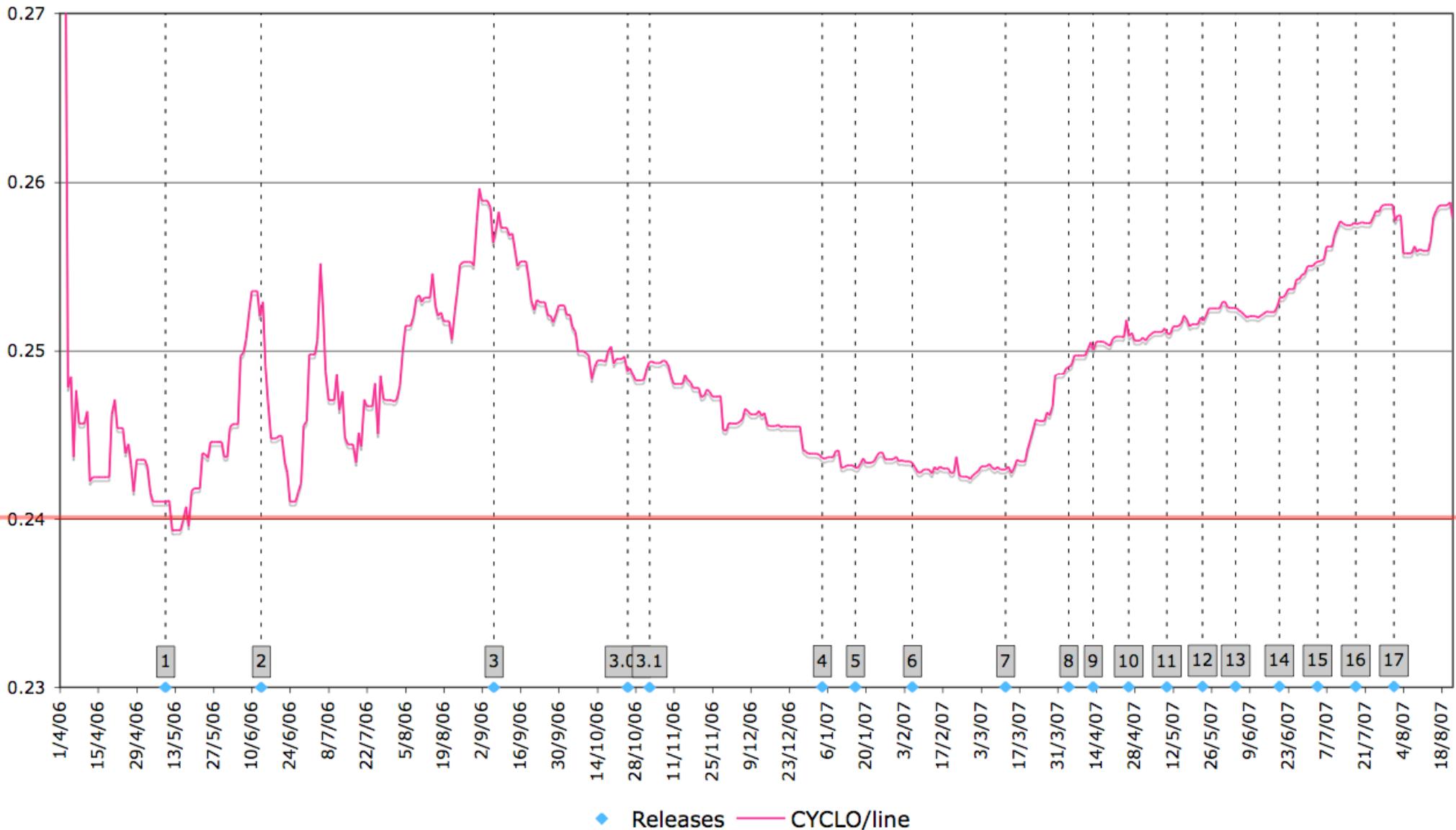
# **negotiating repayment**

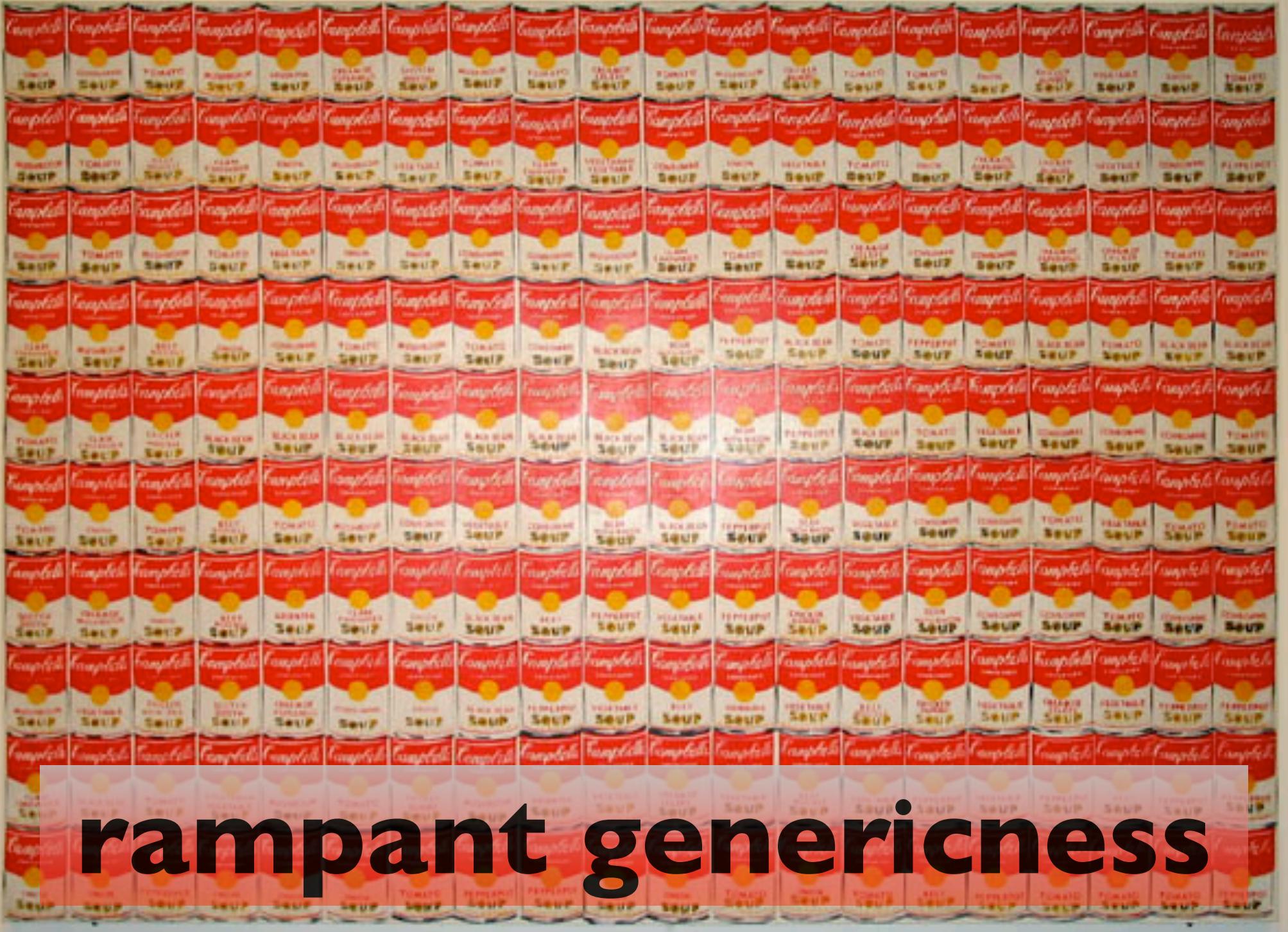
**you must convince someone technical debt exists...**

**...start a conversation about repayment**

**demonstration trumps discussion**

## Operational Complexity (branching point density)



A grid of approximately 100 Campbell's soup cans, arranged in about 10 rows and 10 columns. The cans are white with red labels featuring the Campbell's logo at the top, followed by a yellow circle with a black dot, and the word "SOUP" in large letters. Below that, the flavor name is printed in a smaller font: "TOMATO SOUP", "POTATO SOUP", "CLAM CHOWDER SOUP", "MUSHROOM SOUP", "LAW FIRM SOUP", "SWEETONION SOUP", "CHICKEN SOUP", "BLACK BEAN SOUP", "PEPPERMINT SOUP", or "ROSEMARY SOUP".

rampant genericness



# genericness

often result of over engineering

“if we build lots of layers for extension, we can easily build more onto it later”

increases software entropy

accidental complexity

generic obfuscation

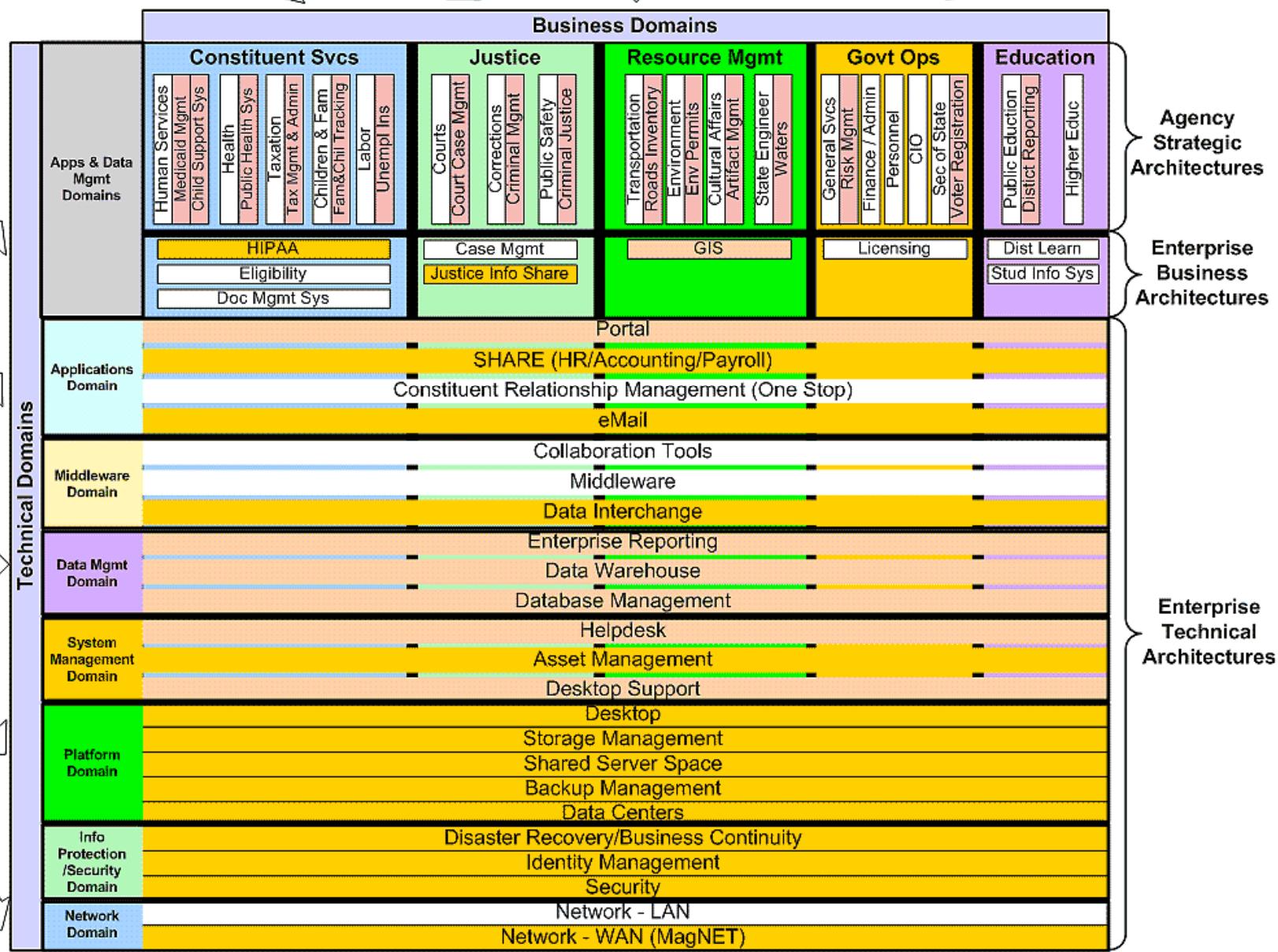
# IT Service Delivery Model & Consolidation Phases

State of New Mexico  
ITC Architecture Committee

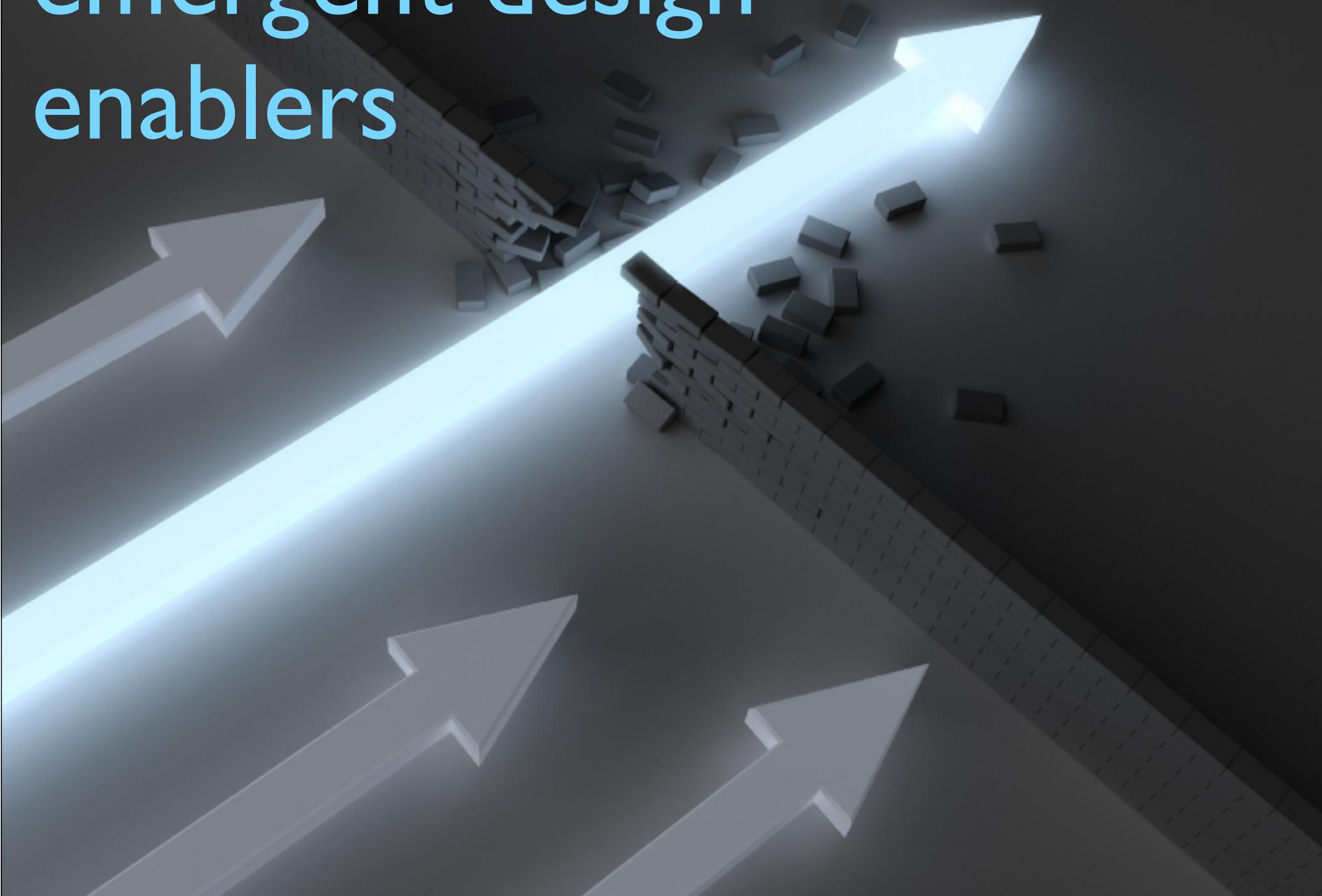
Consolidation and Standardization Phases:

- First Phase
- Second Phase
- Future
- Not Considered

## State of New Mexico Vision and Mission



# emergent design enablers





# testing as a design tool

confidence against unanticipated side effects

regression testing

understandable (executable) documentation

executable intent

protection between API boundaries

# test driven design

more about design than testing

design will emerge from tests

atomic understanding of intent

better abstractions

less accidental complexity

# perfect number case study:

$\sum$  of the factors == number  
(not including the number)

$\sum$  of the factors - # == #

see *appendix b for complete source*



JavaNCSS:

File Help

Packages Classes Methods

Thu, May 29, 2008 00:58:57 America/New\_York

Nr. NCSS CCN JVDC Function

1 13 5 0 com.nealford.conf.tdd.perfectnumbers.PerfectNumberFinder2.isPerfect(int)

Average Function NCSS:

13.00

Average Function CCN:

5.00

Average Function JVDC:

0.00

Program NCSS:

18.00

JavaNCSS:

File Help

Packages Classes Methods

Thu, May 29, 2008 00:55:08 America/New\_York

Nr.	NCSS	CCN	JVDC	Function
1	7	3	0	com.nealford.conf.tdd.perfectnumbers.Classifier6Classifier6(int)
2	2	1	0	com.nealford.conf.tdd.perfectnumbers.Classifier6.isFactor(int)
3	2	1	0	com.nealford.conf.tdd.perfectnumbers.Classifier6.getFactors()
4	4	3	0	com.nealford.conf.tdd.perfectnumbers.Classifier6.calculateFactors()
5	3	1	0	com.nealford.conf.tdd.perfectnumbers.Classifier6.addFactor(int)
6	5	2	0	com.nealford.conf.tdd.perfectnumbers.Classifier6.sumOfFactors()
7	3	1	0	com.nealford.conf.tdd.perfectnumbers.Classifier6.isPerfect()
8	3	1	0	com.nealford.conf.tdd.perfectnumbers.Classifier6.isAbundant()
9	3	1	0	com.nealford.conf.tdd.perfectnumbers.Classifier6.isDeficient()

Average Function NCSS: 3.56

Average Function CCN: 1.56

Average Function JVDC: 0.00

Program NCSS: 39.00

# tdd vs test-after

test after doesn't expose design flaws early

example: thinking at the wrong abstraction level

tdd forces you to think about every little thing

encourages refactoring what's not right



# refactoring

collective code ownership

fix broken windows whenever you see them

regularly fix obsolescent abstractions

prudently refactor aggressively

code should get stronger with age

# expressiveness matters

if code is design, readable design matters

complex languages hurt readability

most comments don't help

not executable

always (potentially) out of date

# idiomatic pattern without closures

```
public void addOrderFrom(ShoppingCart cart, String userName,  
                        Order order) throws Exception {  
    setupDataInfrastructure();  
    try {  
        add(order, userKeyBasedOn(userName));  
        addLineItemsFrom(cart, order.getOrderKey());  
        completeTransaction();  
    } catch (Exception condition) {  
        rollbackTransaction();  
        throw condition;  
    } finally {  
        cleanUp();  
    }  
}
```

# without closures

```
public void wrapInTransaction(Command c) throws Exception {
    setupDataInfrastructure();
    try {
        c.execute();
        completeTransaction();
    } catch (Exception condition) {
        rollbackTransaction();
        throw condition;
    } finally {
        cleanUp();
    }
}

public void addOrderFrom(final ShoppingCart cart, final String userName,
                        final Order order) throws Exception {
    wrapInTransaction(new Command() {
        public void execute() {
            add(order, userKeyBasedOn(userName));
            addLineItemsFrom(cart, order.getOrderKey());
        }
    });
}
```

# with closures (groovy)

```
public class OrderDbClosure {  
    def wrapInTransaction(command) {  
        setupDataInfrastructure()  
        try {  
            command()  
            completeTransaction()  
        } catch (RuntimeException ex) {  
            rollbackTransaction()  
            throw ex  
        } finally {  
            cleanUp()  
        }  
    }  
  
    def addOrderFrom(cart, userName, order) {  
        wrapInTransaction {  
            add order, userKeyBasedOn(userName)  
            addLineItemsFrom cart, order.orderKey  
        }  
    }  
}
```

# with closures (ruby)

```
def wrap_in_transaction
  setup_data_infrastructure
  begin
    yield
    complete_transaction
  rescue ex
    rollback_transaction
    throw ex
  ensure
    clean_up
  end
end

def add_order_from cart, user_name, order
  wrap_in_transaction do
    add order, user_key_based_on(user_name)
    add_line_items_from cart, order.order_key
  end
end
```

# abstraction styles

imperative

structured / modular

object-oriented

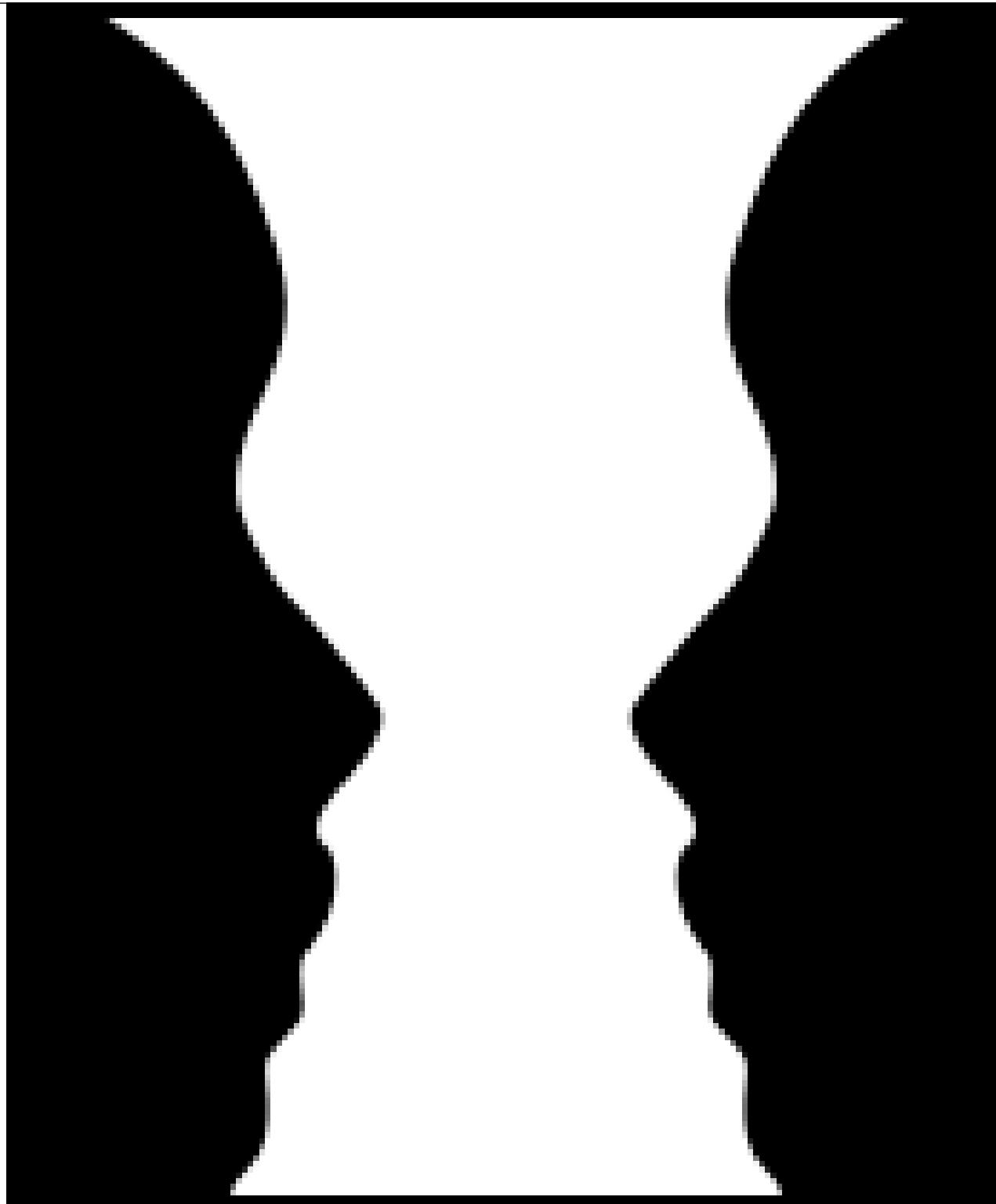
functional

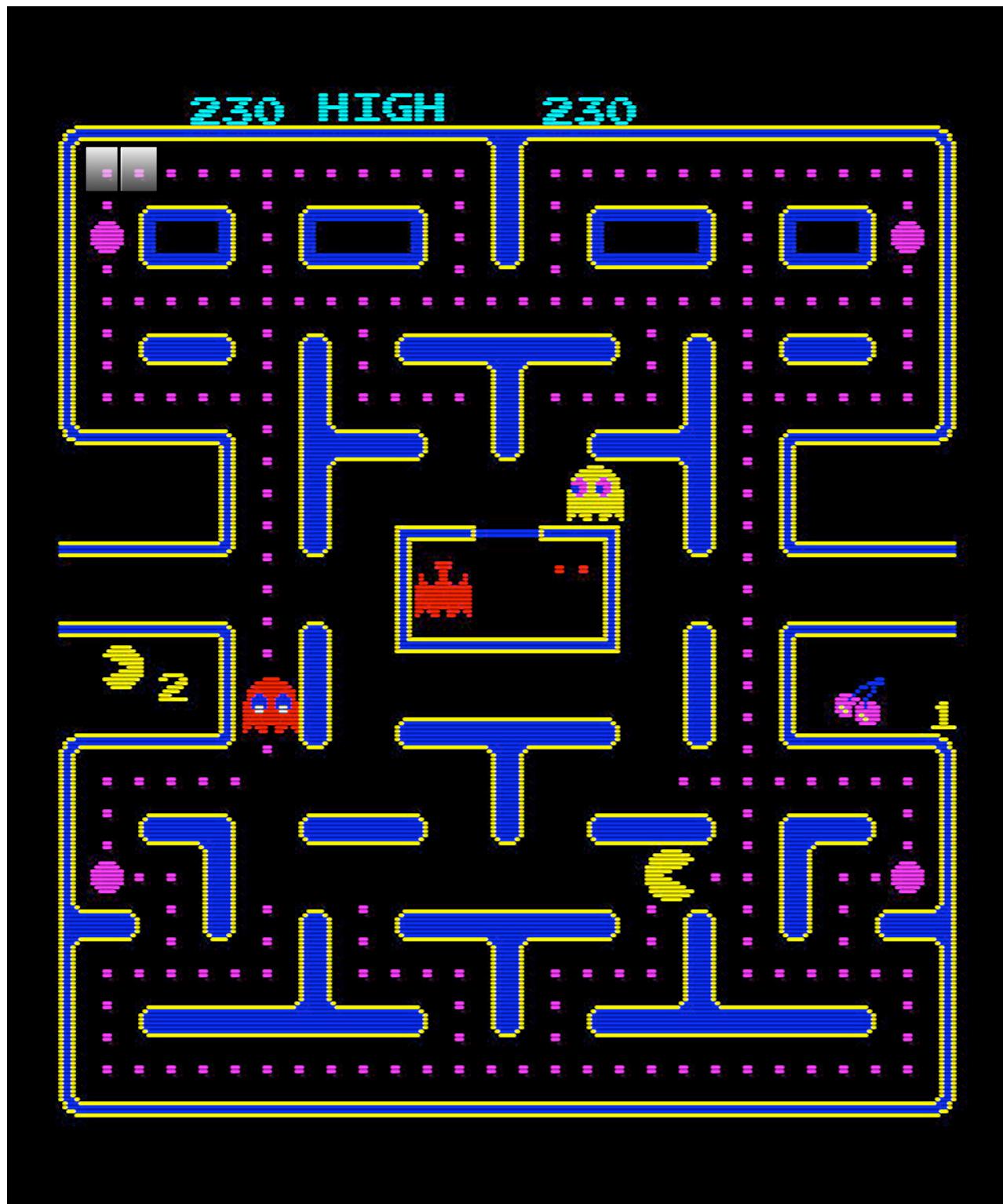
anti-objects

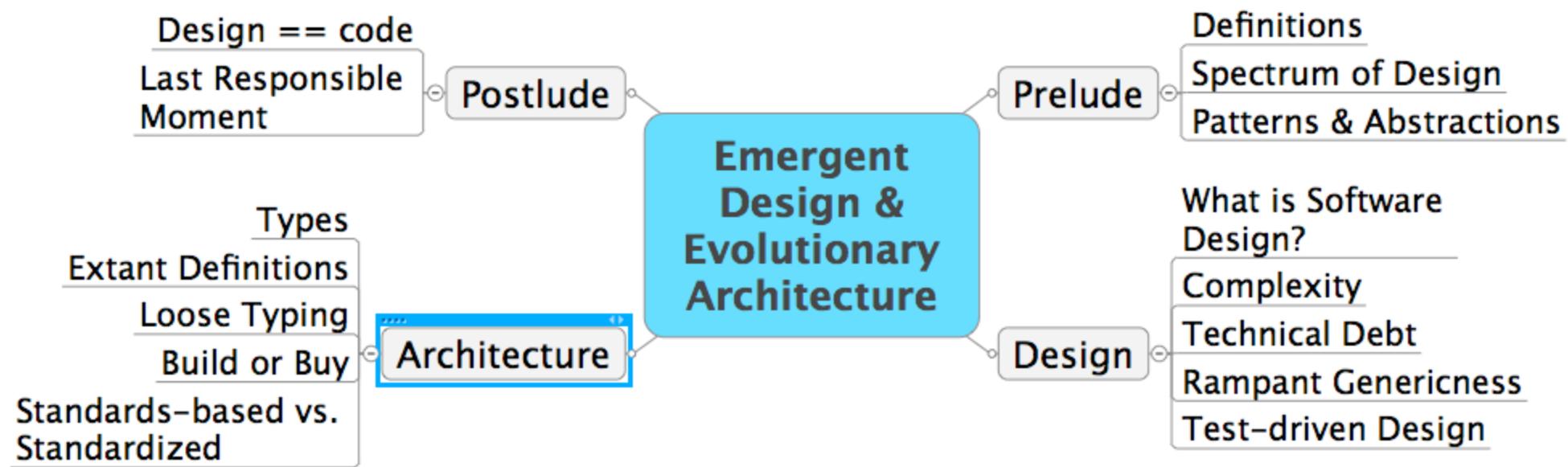
# collaborative diffusion

*“The metaphor of objects can go too far by making us try to create objects that are too much inspired by the real world.”*

*“...an antiobject is a kind of object that appears to essentially do the opposite of what we generally think the object should be doing.”*







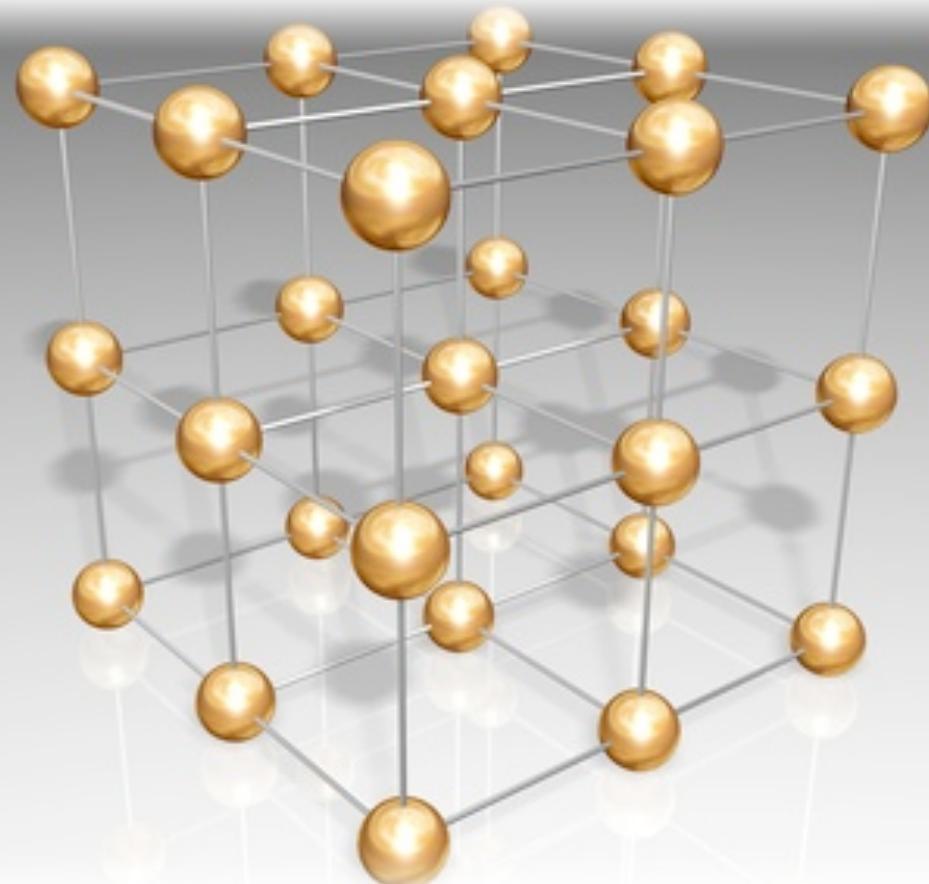


architecture

Evolution, n.

[L. *evolutio* an unrolling: cf. F.  
['e]volution evolution

I: a process in which something passes by degrees to a different stage (especially a more advanced or mature stage)



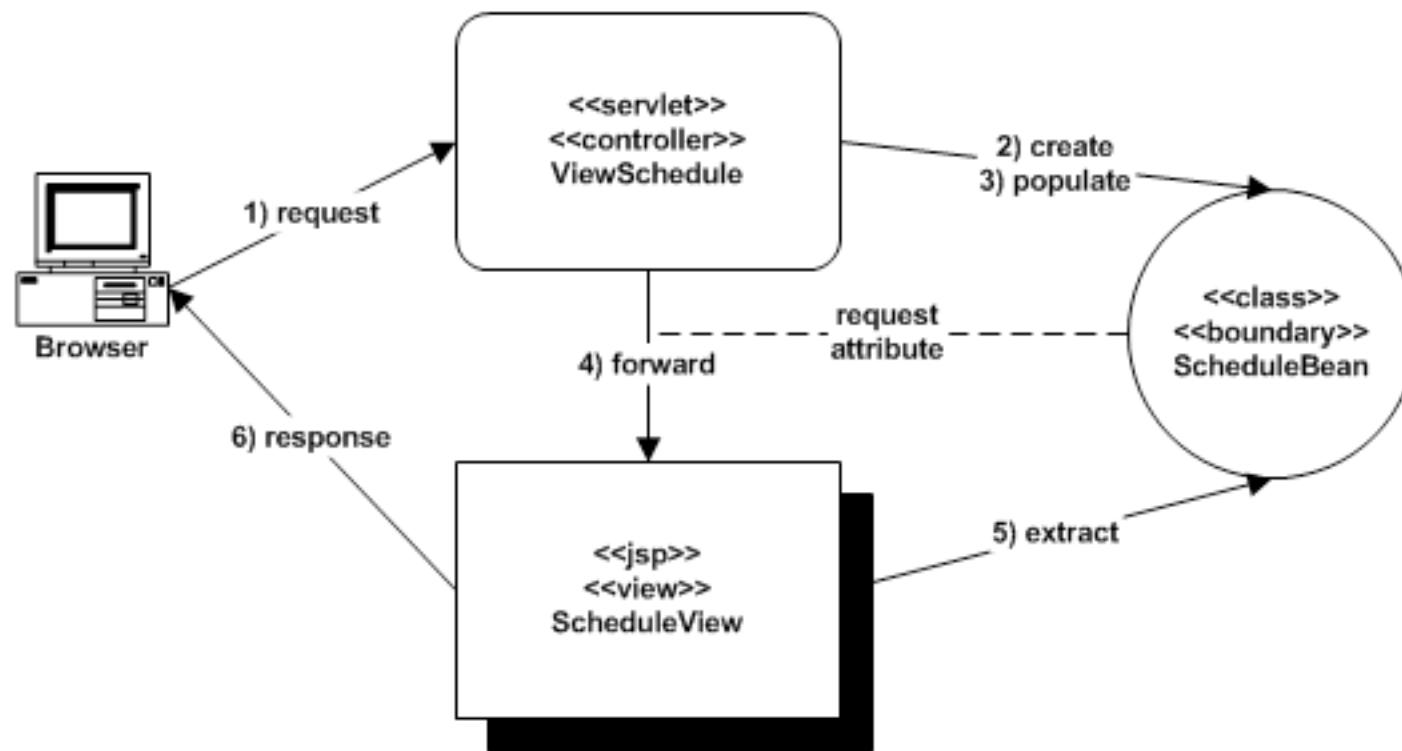
emergent



evolutionary

# application architecture

describes the coarse-grained pieces that compose an application



# framework level architecture

the unit of reuse in java is the *library*

when was the last time you downloaded a  
single class?

JSR 277, the java module system...abandonware

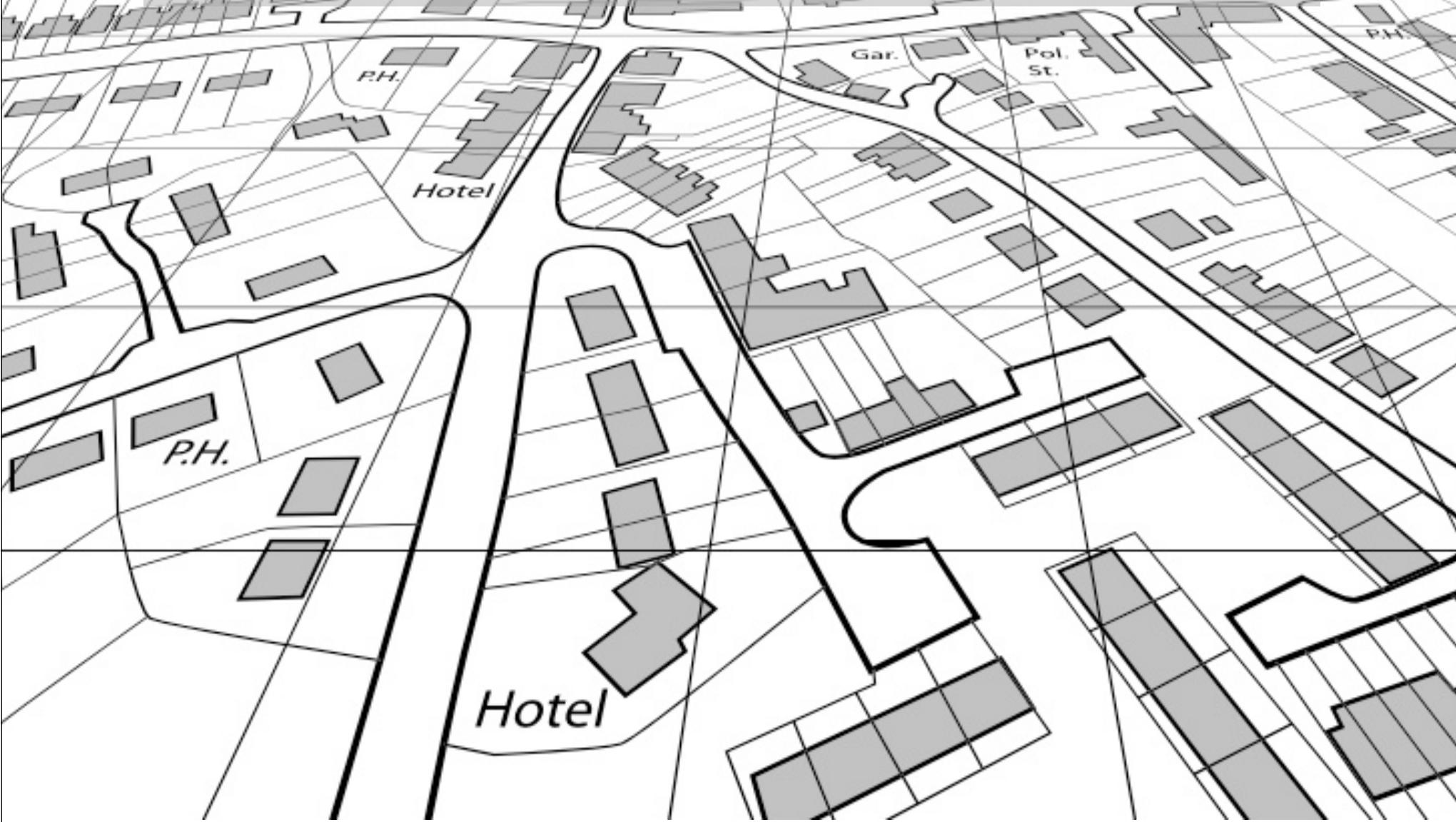
JSR 294 (superpackage)...IN JAVA 7!

implemented by ivy & maven

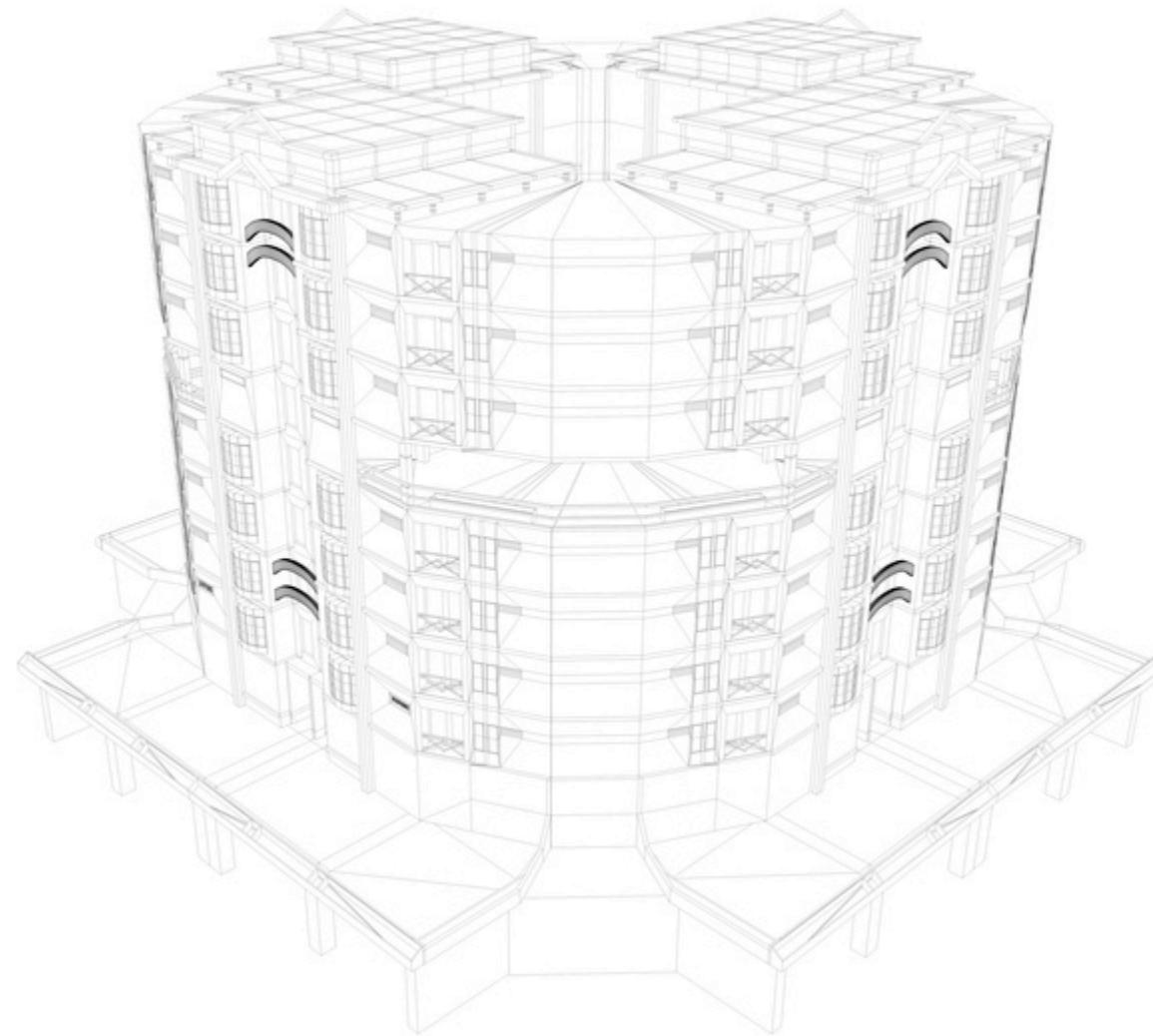
# enterprise architecture

*concerns itself with how the enterprise as a whole  
(which usually means the applications running  
inside a large organization) consumes applications*

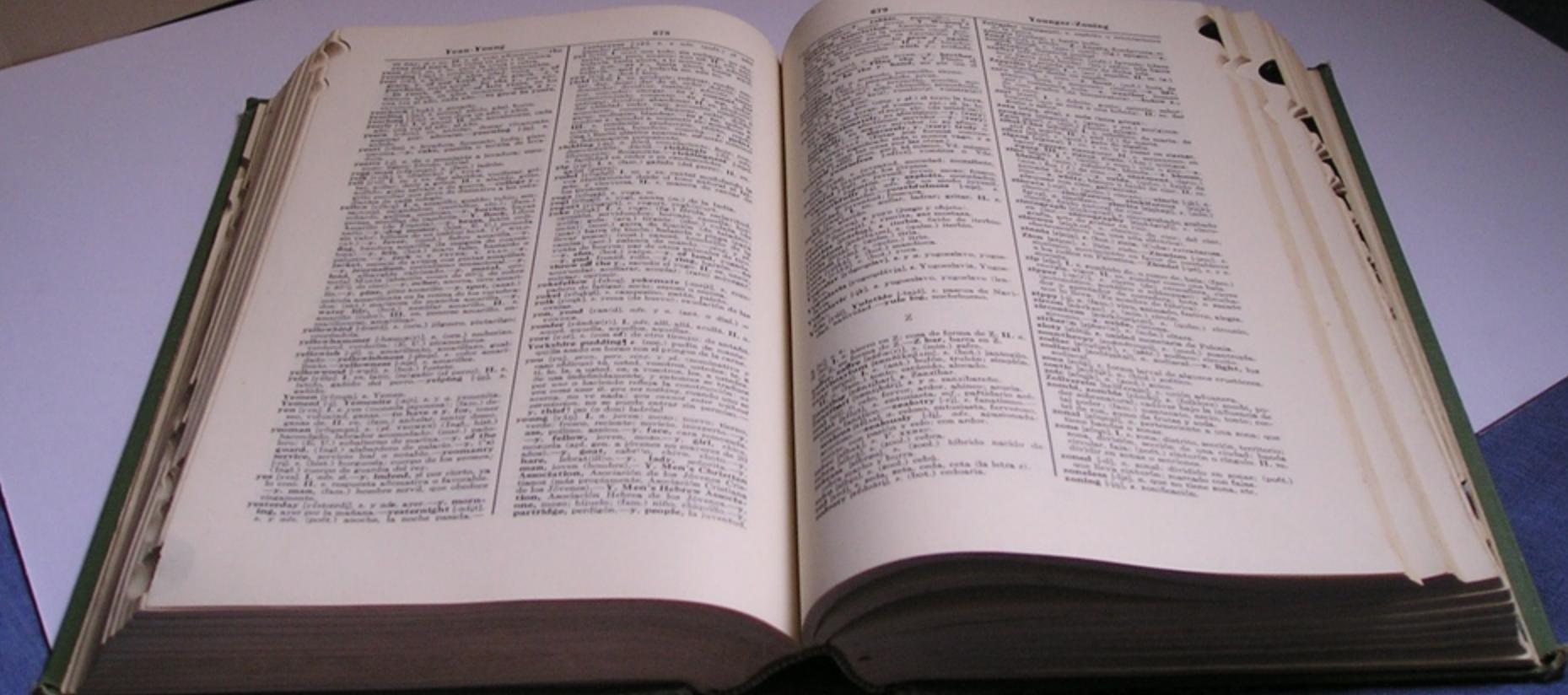
# enterprise architecture = city planning



# application architecture == building plan



# extant definitions



## Who Needs an Architect?

Martin Fowler

Wandering down our corridor a while ago, I saw my colleague Dave Rice in a particularly grumpy mood. My brief question caused a violent statement, "We shouldn't interview anyone who has 'architect' on his resume." At first blush, this was an odd turn of phrase, because we usually introduce Dave as one of our leading architects.



The reason for his title schizophrenia is the fact that, even by our industry's standards, "architect" and "architecture" are terribly overloaded words. For many, the term "software architect" fits perfectly with the smug controlling image at the end of *Matrix Reloaded*. Yet even in firms that have the greatest contempt for that image, there's a vital role for the technical leadership that an architect such as Dave plays.

### What is architecture?

When I was fretting over the title for *Patterns of Enterprise Application Architecture* (Addison-Wesley, 2002), everyone who reviewed it agreed that "architecture" belonged in the title. Yet we all felt uncomfortable defining the word. Because it was my book, I felt compelled to take a stab at defining it.

My first move was to avoid fuzziness by just letting my cynicism hang right out. In a sense, I define architecture as a word we use when we want to talk about design but want to puff it up to make it sound important. [Yes, you can imagine a similar phenomenon for ar-

chitect.) However, as so often occurs, inside the blighted cynicism is a pinch of truth. Understanding came to me after reading a posting from Ralph Johnson on the Extreme Programming mailing list. If it's no good I'll quote it all. A previous posting said

The RUP, working off the IEEE definition, defines architecture as "the highest level concept of a system in its environment. The architecture of a software system (at a given point in time) is its organization or structure of significant components interacting through interfaces, those components being composed of successively smaller components and interfaces."

Johnson responded:

I was a reviewer on the IEEE standard that used that, and I argued uselessly that this was clearly a completely bogus definition. There is no highest level concept of a system. Customers have a different concept than developers. Customers do not care at all about the structure of significant components. So, perhaps an architect is the highest level concept that developers have of a system in its environment. Let's forget the developers who just understand their little piece. Architecture is the highest level concept of the expert developers. What makes a component significant? It is significant because the expert developers say so.

So, a better definition would be "In most successful software projects, the expert developers working on that project have a shared understanding of the

"The RUP, working off the IEEE definition, defines architecture as 'the highest level concept of a system in its environment.' The architecture of a software system (at a given point in time) is its organization or structure of significant components interacting through interfaces, those components being composed of successively smaller components and interfaces."

*post on the XP mail list*

*technical definition*

"A better definition would be: In most successful software projects, the expert developers working on that project have a shared understanding of the system design. This shared understanding is called "architecture." This understanding includes how the system is divided into components and how the components interact through interfaces."

*Ralph Johnson, rebutting the original post*

*process definition*

Architecture is about the  
important stuff.

Whatever that is.

*Martin Fowler's definition*

# **“the *important stuff*”**

vague but descriptive

many arguments about architecture revolve around misunderstanding what is important  
what's important to business analysts differs from important stuff for an enterprise architect

differences can in fact be mutually exclusive

**“SOA favors *flexibility over performance*”**

Stuff that's hard to  
change later.

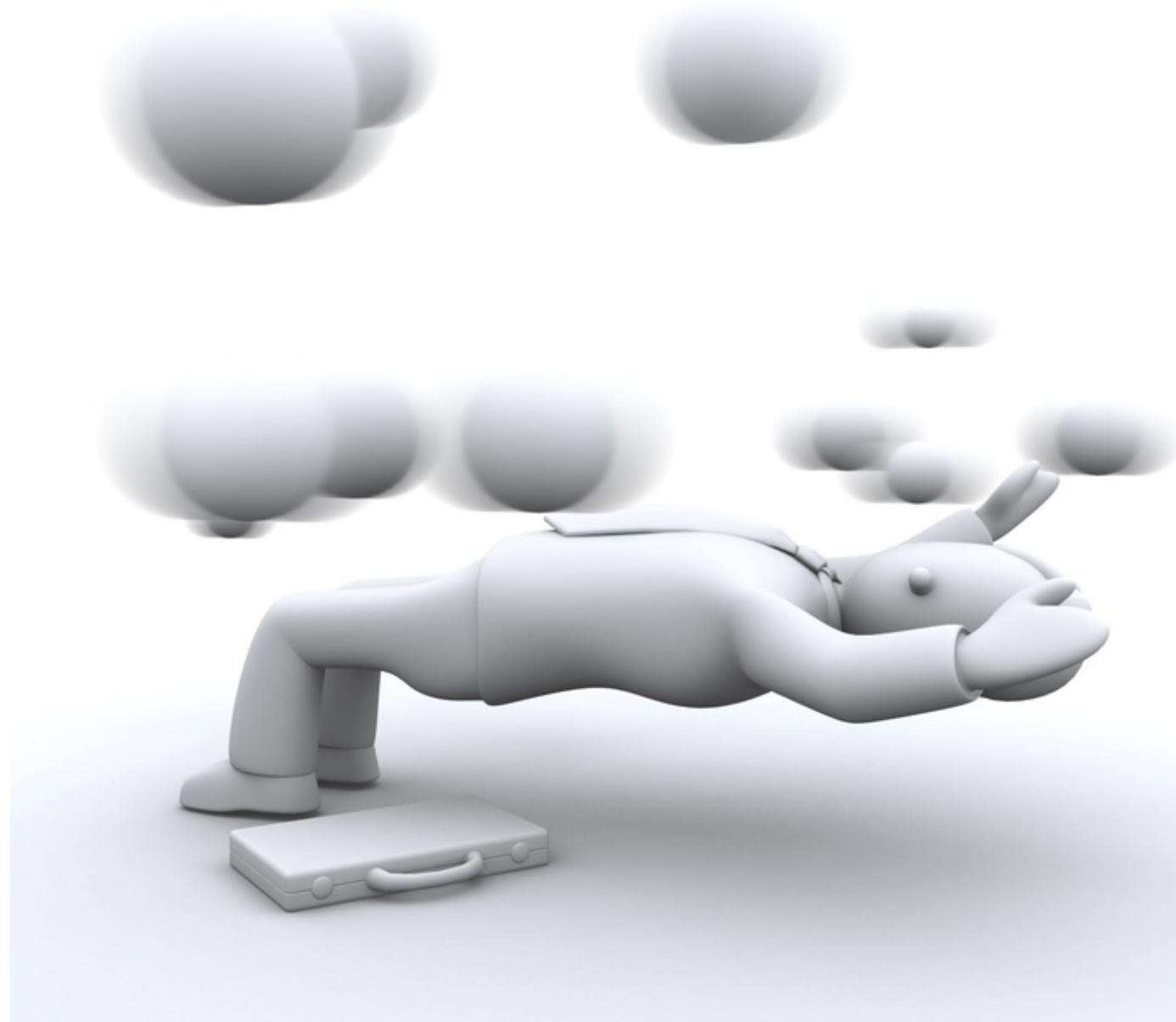
*Martin Fowler, in conversation*

There should be as little of  
that stuff as possible.

The background of the image is a photograph of a vast, textured landscape of clouds, likely taken from an airplane window. The clouds are illuminated from below by the setting sun, creating a warm, golden glow against the darker, upper layers of clouds. The horizon line is visible in the distance, showing a mix of bright and shadowed cloud formations.

architectural  
considerations

# politics of architecture



# build or buy



# business processes are not commoditizable

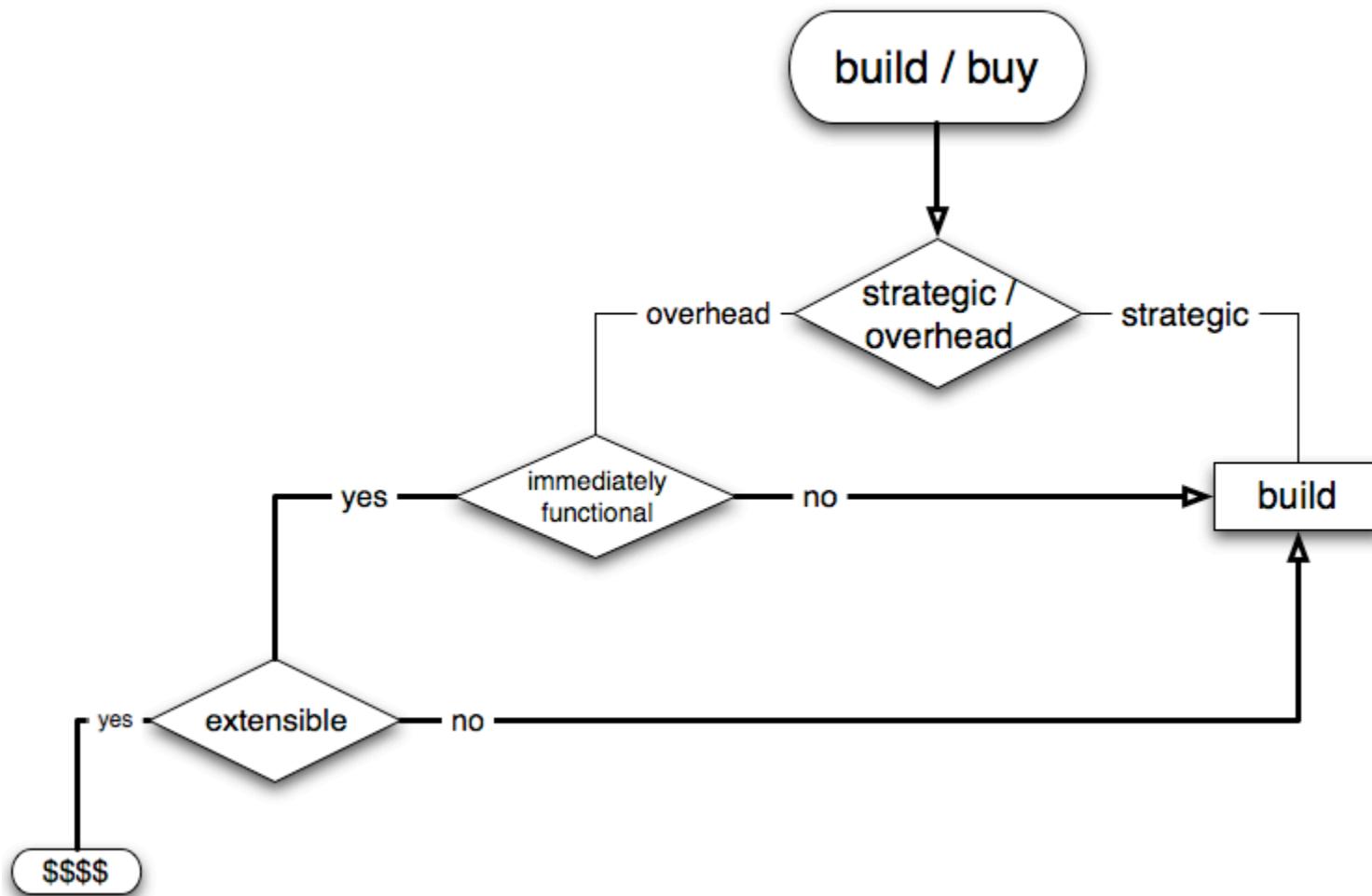
“you can buy this generic business process software...”

“...we just need to tweak it with a few customizations”

myth

radically unique across similar businesses

software can provide strategic business advantage



# standards-based vs. standardized

flash-back to java web development before j2ee

standards helped developers tremendously...

...but vendors hate it

the price of commodity software quickly  
approaches \$0

contrast j2ee & sql

# ESB: standards-based but not standardized

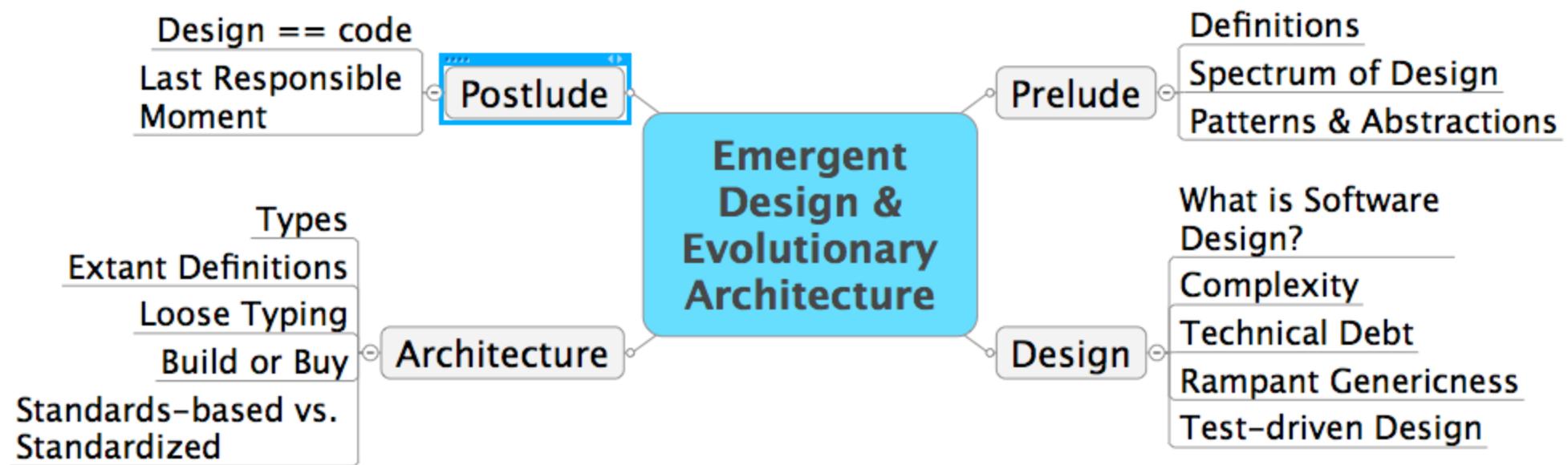
big enterprise package software touts  
standards-based

held together with highly proprietary glue

even the open source ESBs suffer from this

not likely to change

consider the impact on your overall  
architecture





postlude

# design is about code

other artifacts aid in creating code

all artifacts besides code are transient

code hygiene matters

fix broken windows

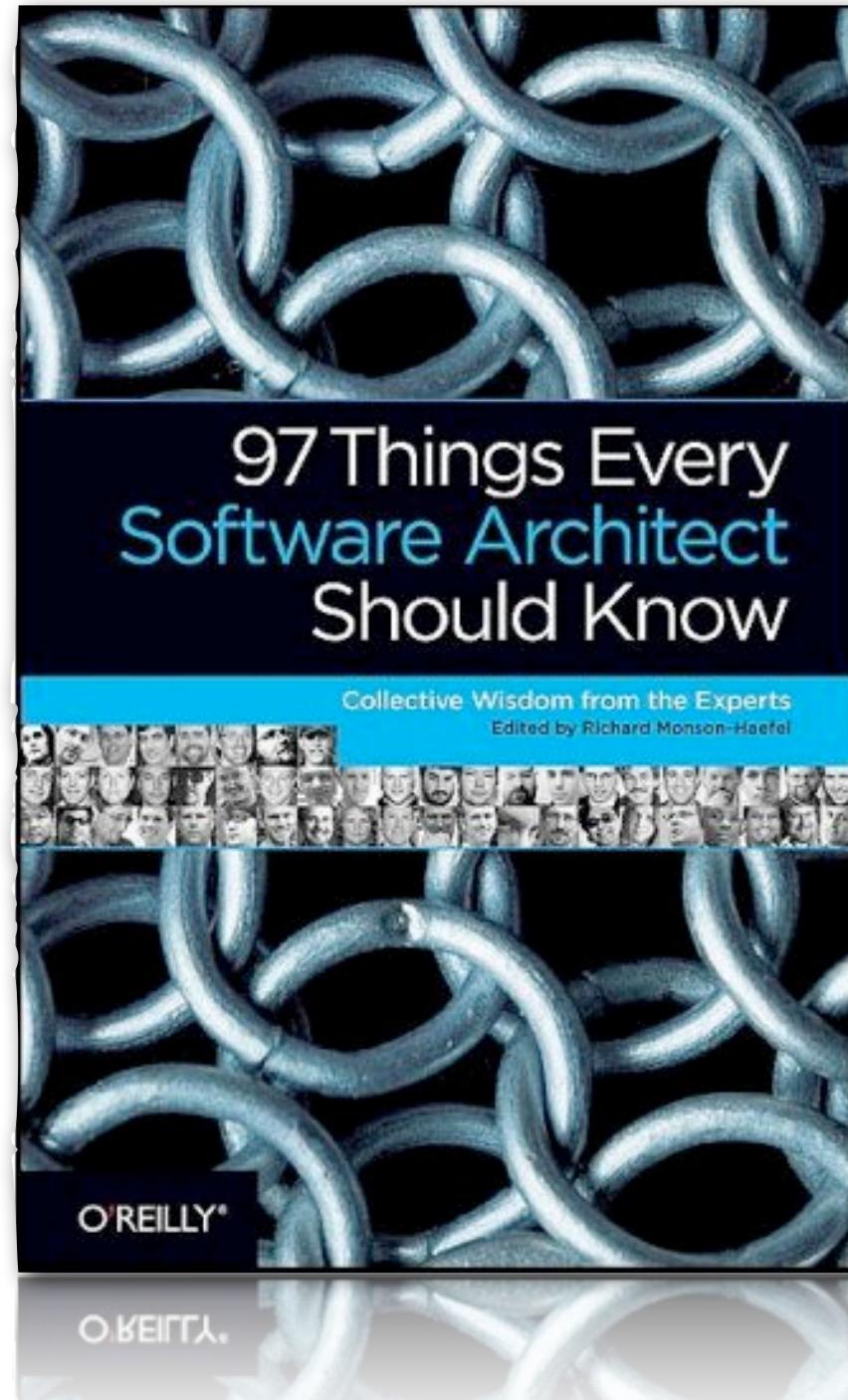
pay back technical debt

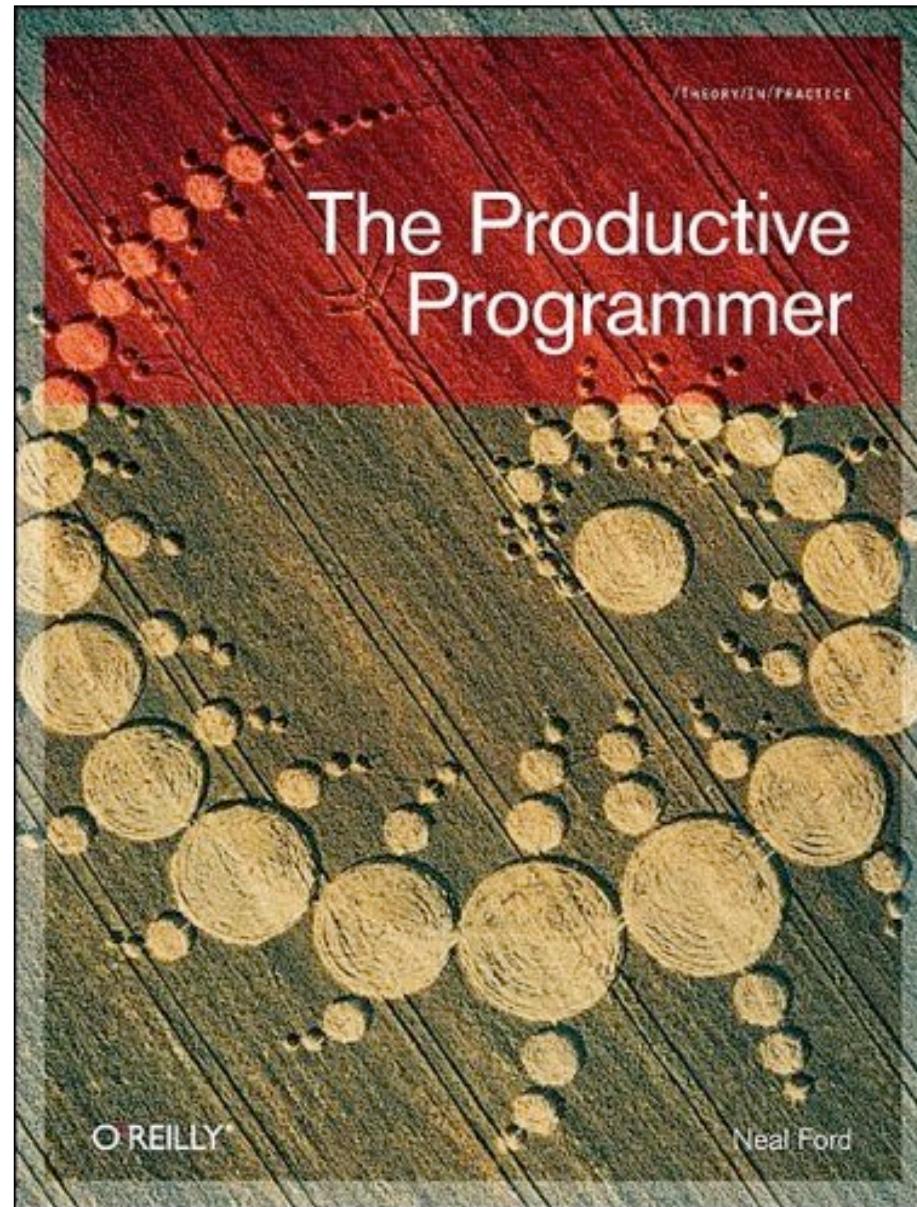
# last responsible moment

How can I make my  
decision reversible?

Do I need to make  
this decision now?

What can I do to  
allow me to defer the  
decision?





? , S

please fill out the session evaluations  
samples at [github.com/nealford](https://github.com/nealford)



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# resources

Emergent Design & Evolutionary Architecture  
series:

<http://tinyurl.com/nf-ead>

# **appendix a**

**Test-after vs.TDD Perfect Number Finder**

# appendix b

Martin Fowler's *Who Needs an Architect*