

# Kafka Index

## Evaluative criteria for identifying bad protocols

- No (or hidden) feedback loop**
  - Lack of consequences for failed outcomes
  - Outcomes aren't visible to participants
  - No evaluative metrics, or wrong metrics prioritized
- Too many edge cases addressed at once**
  - Binary success response; participant required to pass through all use cases sequentially
  - No branching or forking of use cases
- No happy path to follow**
  - Protocol increases the number of decisions that participant must make
  - User error is possible (multiple ways to "plug it in")
- Success outcomes are randomized or ambiguously defined**
  - Outcomes succeed or fail inexplicably, even when all inputs appear to be the same
  - Outcomes can't be debugged or explained retrospectively by participants
- Multiple protocols exist that attempt to solve the same problem**
  - Redundant protocols create conflict and confusion regarding the desired outcome
- Recursive, nested protocols**
  - Protocol's complexity is sprawling, with multiple dead ends
  - Participants can get trapped in endless loops or "whirlpools" with no resolution
- No market or alternatives exist**
  - High cost to participate, with no other options available
  - Significant costs incurred if participants defect

## Applying the Kafka Index

**Interactive voice response (IVR) systems for customer service**  
too many edge cases addressed at once;  
no happy path; recursive nested protocols

**Overcriminalization, or excessive laws that criminalize civilian behavior, even when no criminal intent exists**  
no feedback loop; ambiguous success outcome;  
redundant and conflicting protocols; no alternatives

### Airport security

no feedback loop; randomized success outcome;  
conflicting protocols; no alternatives

# Dangerous Protocols

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## 3 archetypes of protocol "goodness"

### Kafka — failure archetype

"I can't find my way round in this darkness."

Protocol holds too much power.

Participant is trapped in a maze that they can't understand and also can't escape.

### Bartleby — failure archetype

"I would prefer not to."

Participant holds too much power.

Maintaining a high level of agency limits their ability to manage increasingly complex tasks.

### Whitehead — success archetype

"Civilization advances by extending the number of important operations which we can perform without thinking about them."

Balanced power between protocol and participant. By relinquishing some agency, participants are able to accomplish much more than they could alone.

# ProtocolKit

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