TITLE: The Human Insights Missing from Big Data
https://www.ted.com/talks/tricia_wang_the_human_insights_missing_from_big_data

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COURSE: TEDx Cambridge
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ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Why does big data so often fail?

QUESTIONS/KEY IDEAS:

Vocabulary:

Big data - large amounts of data, collected by computerized systems

Oracle at Delphi - told prophecies in ancient times

Quantification bias - tendency to value what is measurable more than what is immeasurable

Thick data - essentially, qualitative data (stories, emotions, rich description of observations)

Concepts

Big data is popular, partly due to quantification bias, but hasn't led to better results. Data is easy to collect in volume now, but all that data is hard to use well.

Focus on a mass of numbers can make you miss forest for trees (or tornado when you're focused on a haystack).

Thick data is important for interpretation, insight, innovation.

NOTES:

- **Big data** as modern **oracle** (predict the future)
- Increasingly popular but
  - Investing in big data = easy
  - Getting good results = hard esp in dynamic systems
- Qualitative research
  - Speaker = ethnographer, lived in China to understand tech use 4 Nokia
- Nokia missed ↑ of smart phones - "100s of data points" vs. 100
- **Quant'n bias:** measurable over immeasurable
- Relying on big data
  - Illusion = know everything
  - Really = ↑ chance of missing stuff
- "Quantifying is addictive" but…

Looking for needles in   Meanwhile, tornado
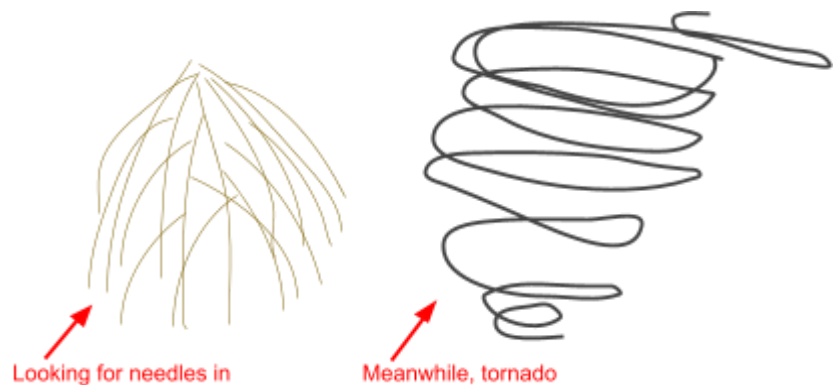
- Solution: **thick data** (stories, emotions)
  - Balance/complement/aid interp. of big data (like temple guides @ Delphi)

SUMMARY:

Big data on its own is like a babbling oracle spouting answers: at worst, nonsense; at best mystical.

Big data with thick data is like an oracle being interpreted by temple guides who can provide human, contextual insights.