

# **DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY AS AN ENABLING CONDITION FOR PARTICIPATION IN ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS**

## **A BUSINESS RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE**

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**Workshop on accessibility of electronic communications  
services**



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# Who gets to participate in the digital economy?

Participation depends on **more than just access** to technology.



## NOT EVERYONE STARTS FROM THE SAME PLACE

Differences in skills, resources, confidence and life circumstances create unequal starting points.



## DIGITAL PARTICIPATION REQUIRES MORE THAN INTERNET ACCESS

It depends on digital skills, usable services, relevant content and accessible environments.



## EXCLUSION LIMITS POTENTIAL AND GROWTH

When people are left out, talent goes unused and innovation and productivity suffer.



## INCLUSION STRENGTHENS ECONOMIES AND SOCIETIES

Broad participation drives innovation, resilience and sustainable development.

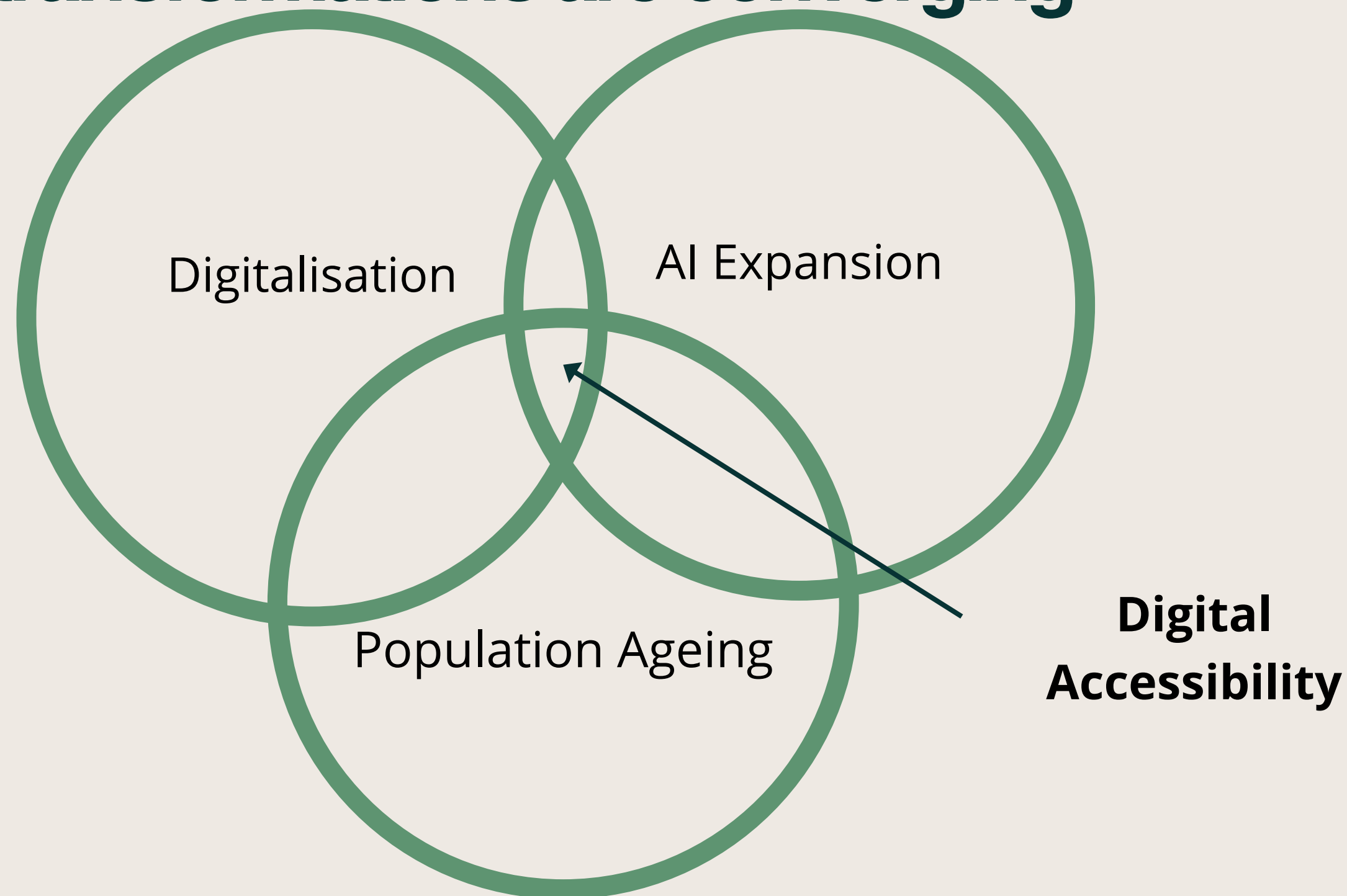


A digital economy that works for everyone **must be accessible, inclusive and equitable.**

Source: OECD (2019, 2026); ITU (2025); European Commission (2024)

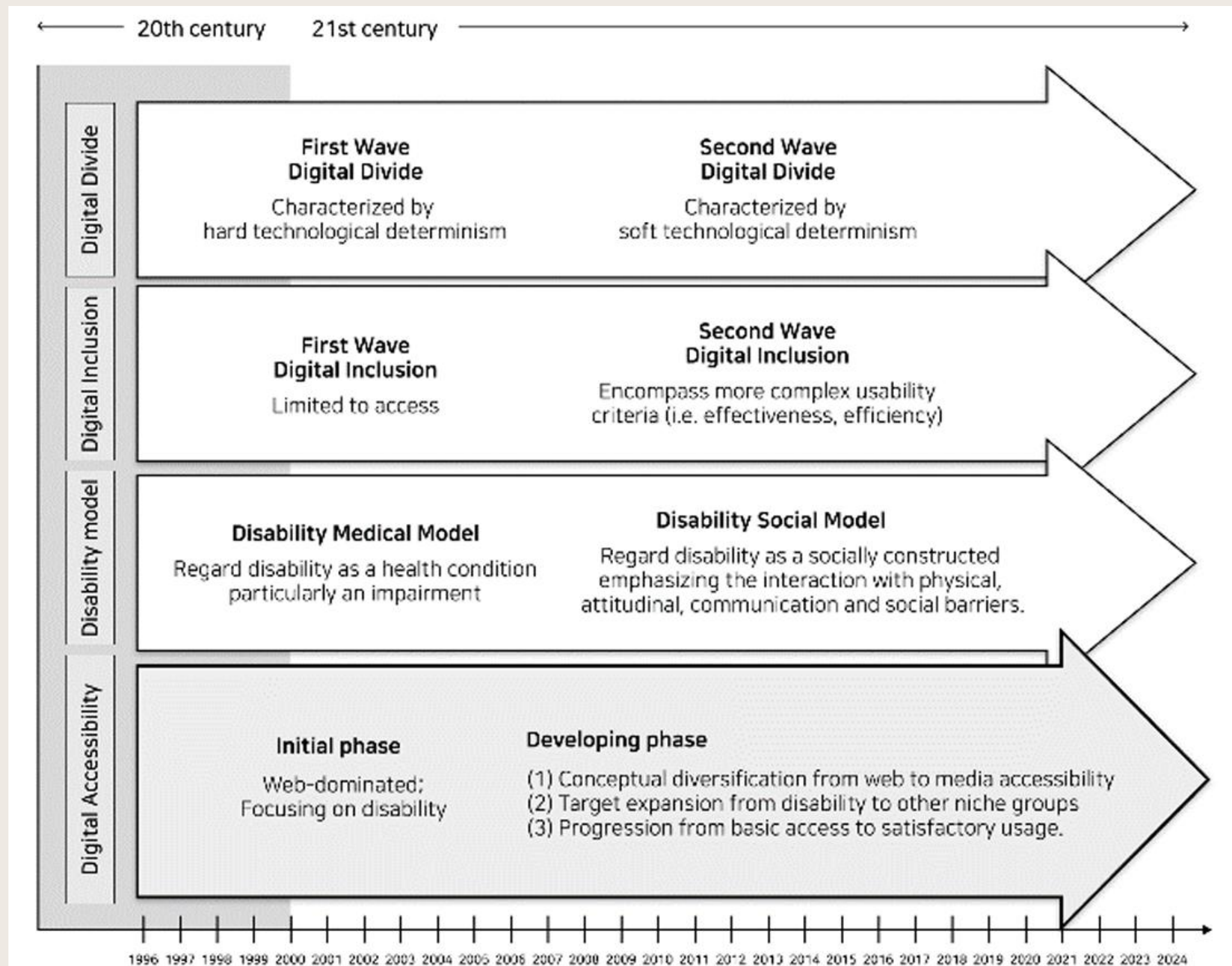
# Why this matters now?

## Three transformations are converging



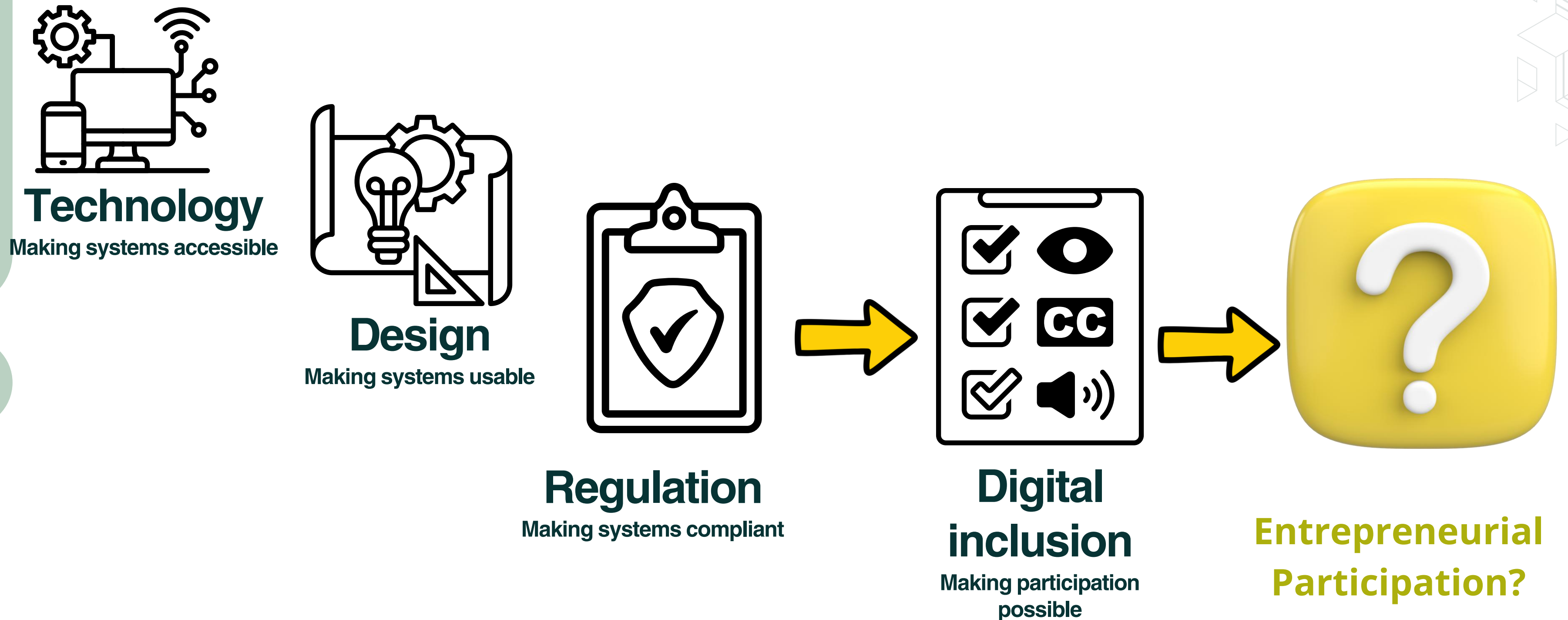


# How our understanding of accessibility has evolved?

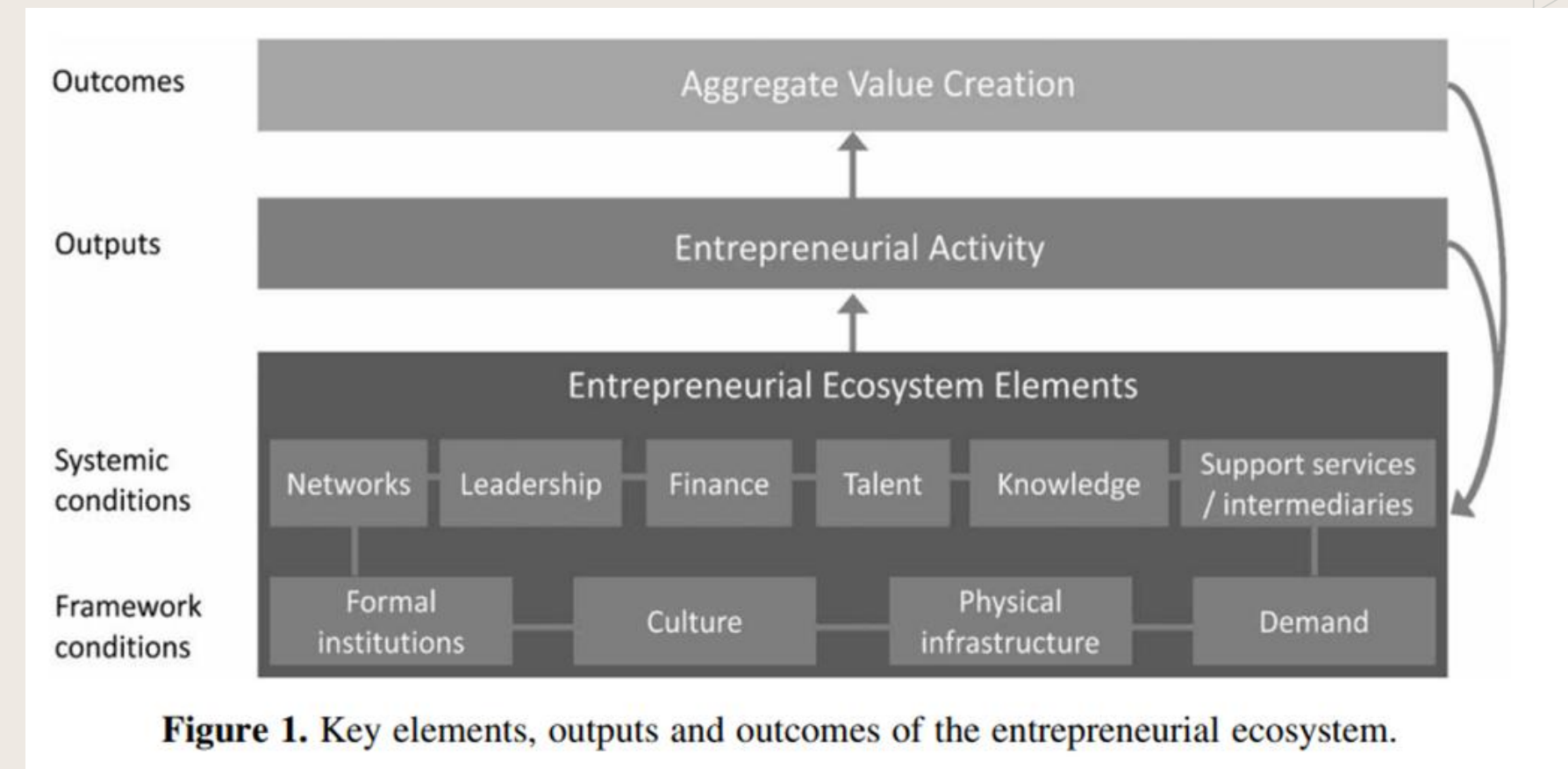
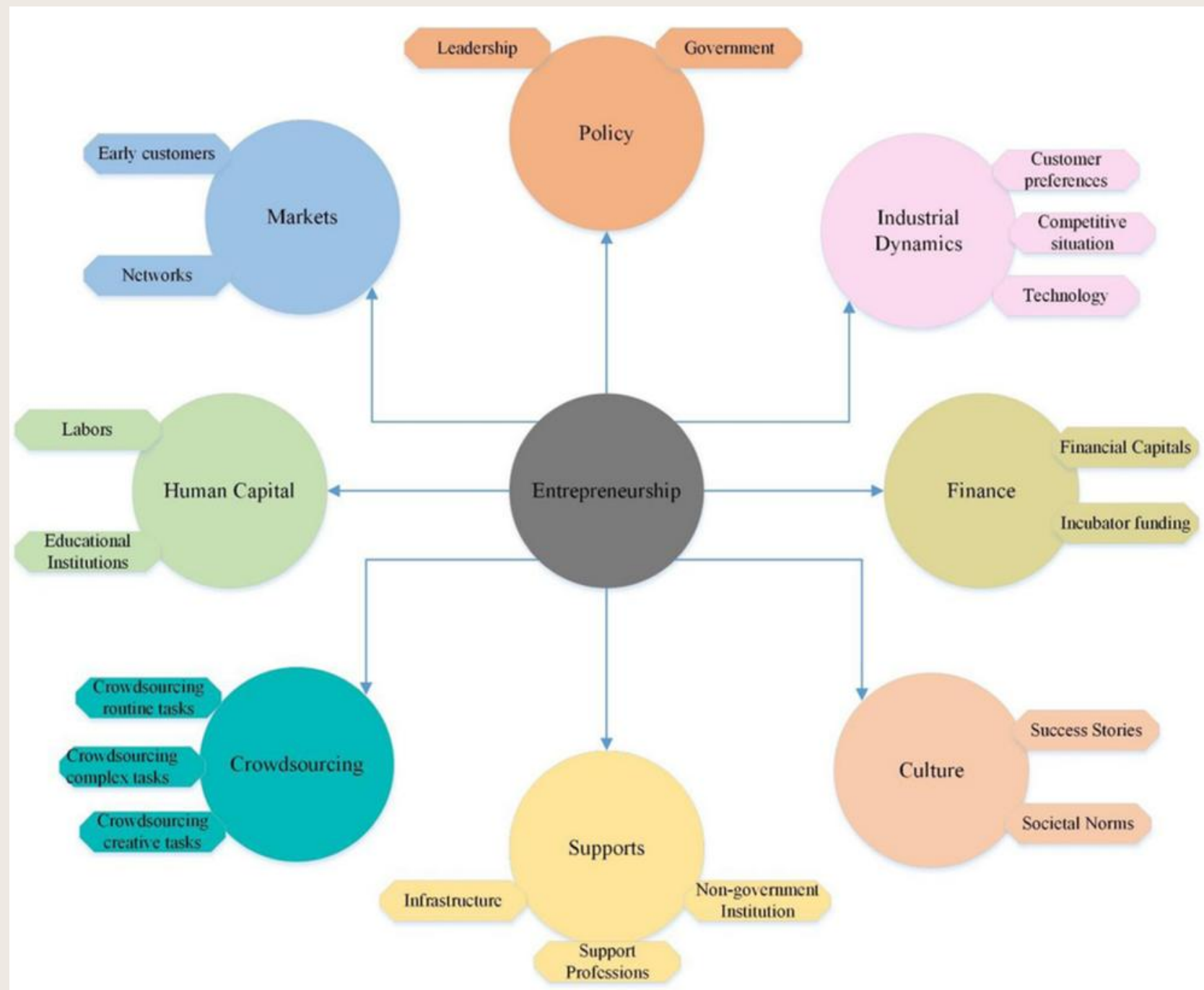


Ha, S. (2024). Is digital world accessible to all? A Comprehensive Review of Digital Accessibility Research (1996-2024).

# How Digital Accessibility has been studied?



# What does Entrepreneurial Ecosystem research tell us?



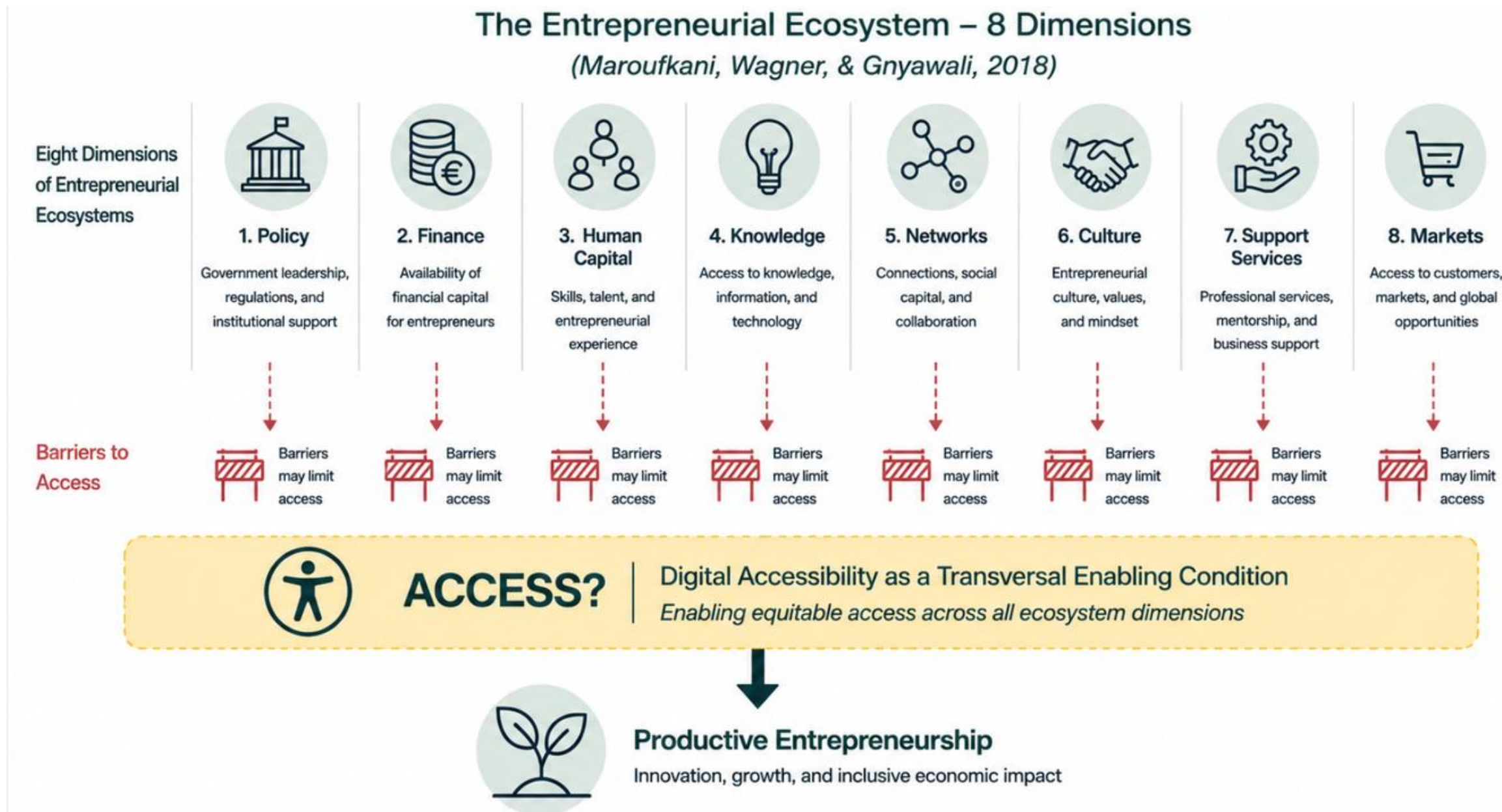
**Figure 1.** Key elements, outputs and outcomes of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

**Entrepreneurial ecosystems focus on resources.**  
**Accessibility focuses on access.**

Source: Isenberg (2010, 2011); Maroufkhani, Wagner & Wan Ismail, (2018), Stam, (2015); Spigel (2017); Stam & Van de Ven, (2021)



# The Missing Question: who can access ecosystem resources?



Adapted from Maroufkani, P., Wagner, J., & Gnyawali, D. R. (2018). Environmental factors shaping entrepreneurial ecosystem. *Management Decision*, 56(5), 1117–1133.

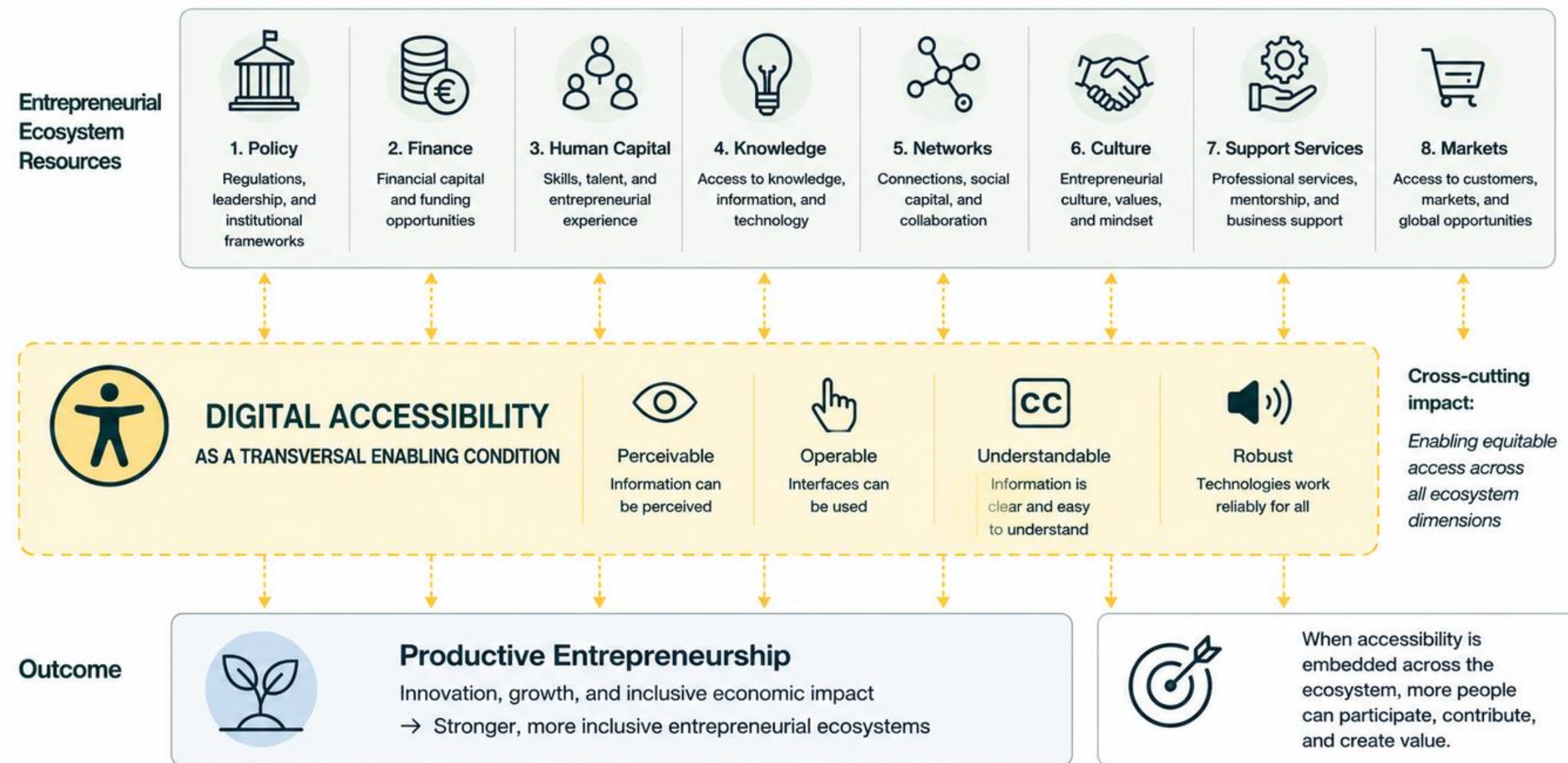
**Entrepreneurial ecosystem models explain what resources matter. Accessibility research explains who can reach them.**



# Proposed perspective:

## Digital Accessibility as a Transversal Enabling Condition

*Accessibility does not replace ecosystem resources.  
It enables access to all of them.*



Based on: Maroufkhani, P., Wagner, J., & Gnyawali, D. R. (2018). Environmental factors shaping entrepreneurial ecosystem. *Management Decision*, 56(5), 1117–1133.

Accessibility operates across finance, talent, knowledge, networks, markets,

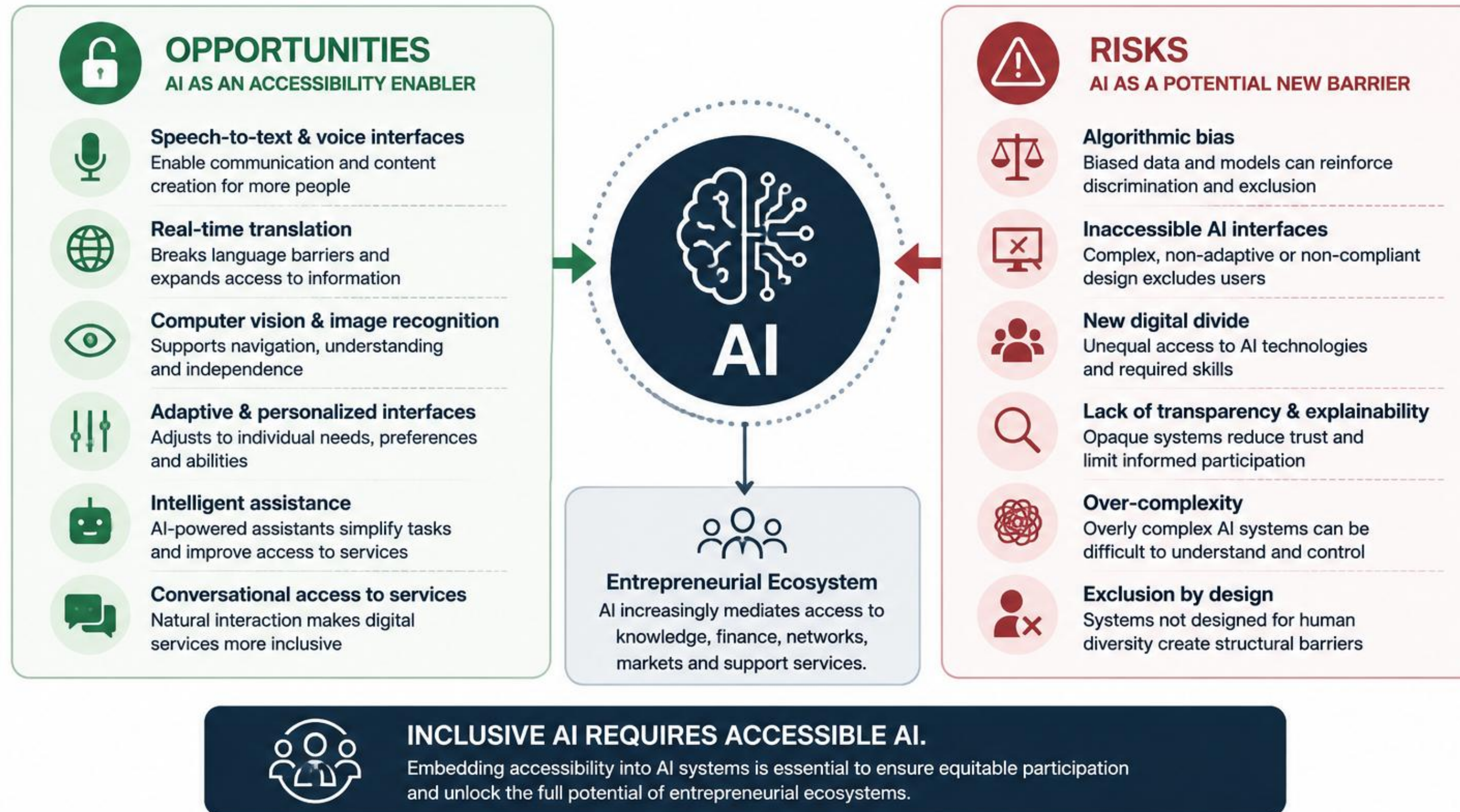


# When accessibility barriers become entrepreneurial barriers

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Dimension	Accessibility Barrier	Entrepreneurial Consequence	Key References
Human Capital	Inaccessible digital learning and training environments	Reduced skills acquisition and entrepreneurial capability development	Van Deursen & Helsper (2015); Seifert et al. (2021)
Finance	Inaccessible digital financial services and fintech platforms	Reduced financial inclusion and access to entrepreneurial finance	Ozili (2023); World Bank (2022)
Networks	Inaccessible communication and collaboration platforms	Lower participation in entrepreneurial networks and social capital formation	Spigel (2017); Treviranus (2018)
Markets	Inaccessible websites, e-commerce and digital marketplaces	Reduced market access and customer reach	Lazar et al. (2015); European Commission (2023)
Support Services	Inaccessible incubators, accelerators and business support systems	Unequal access to mentoring, advisory services and ecosystem support	Stam & Van de Ven (2021); Maroufkhani et al. (2018)



# AI: Opportunity or New Barrier?



Sources: Floridi et al. (2018); Shinohara & Wobbrock (2016); Treviranus (2018); European Commission (2021); OECD (2022).



# Accessibility as Institutional Change.

*Beyond compliance. Shaping more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems*



# Research and Policy Agenda. Questions for Research, Regulation and Market Actors

## Research

- ◆ How does digital accessibility influence participation in the digital economy and entrepreneurial ecosystems?
- ◆ Which accessibility barriers most strongly affect access to finance, knowledge, networks and markets?


## AI & Innovation

- ◆ Can AI reduce accessibility barriers and expand participation?
- ◆ How can emerging technologies avoid creating new forms of exclusion?

## Policy & Market Implications

- ◆ How can accessibility be embedded into digital ecosystem development rather than treated only as a compliance requirement?
- ◆ How can regulators, service providers and ecosystem actors collaborate to create more inclusive digital environments?
- ◆ How can accessibility become a measurable dimension of digital ecosystem performance?





**Digital accessibility determines  
who can participate in the digital  
economy.**

**Inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems require  
accessible digital environments.**



# Thank you!