

# MASTERCLASS SERIES

*in Systems Thinking*



## Transformational Systems Change and the Role of Evaluation

23 April 2024

### SPEAKERS

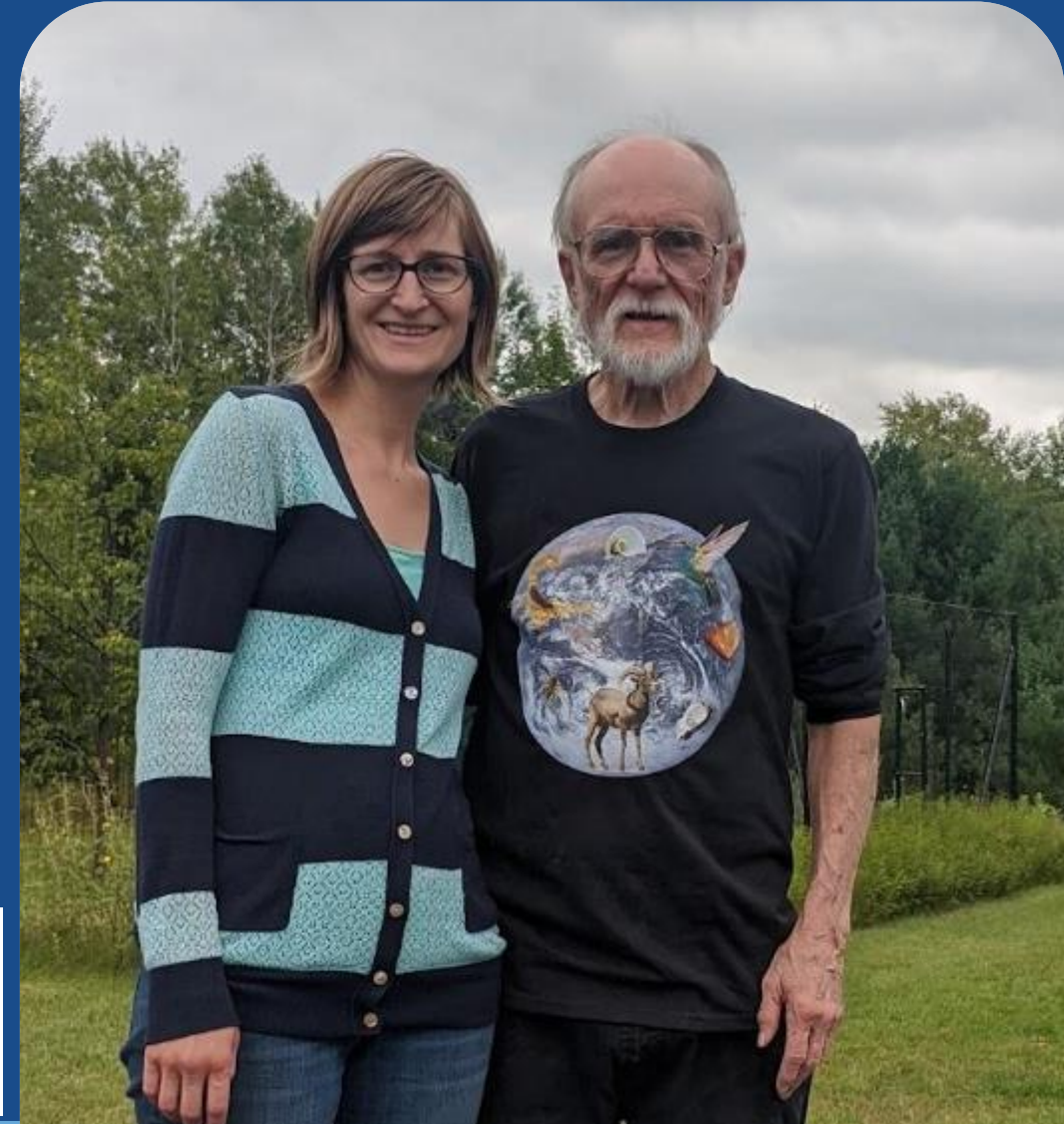
Michael Quinn Patton  
Charmagne E. Campbell-Patton

**ECD EXPERT:** Hirokazu Yoshikawa

**MODERATOR:** Shekufeh Zonji



**BLUE MARBLE**  
evaluation



The Systems Thinking for Early Childhood Development (ECD) Initiative is a partnership between ECDAN and Harvard University and supported by Porticus.

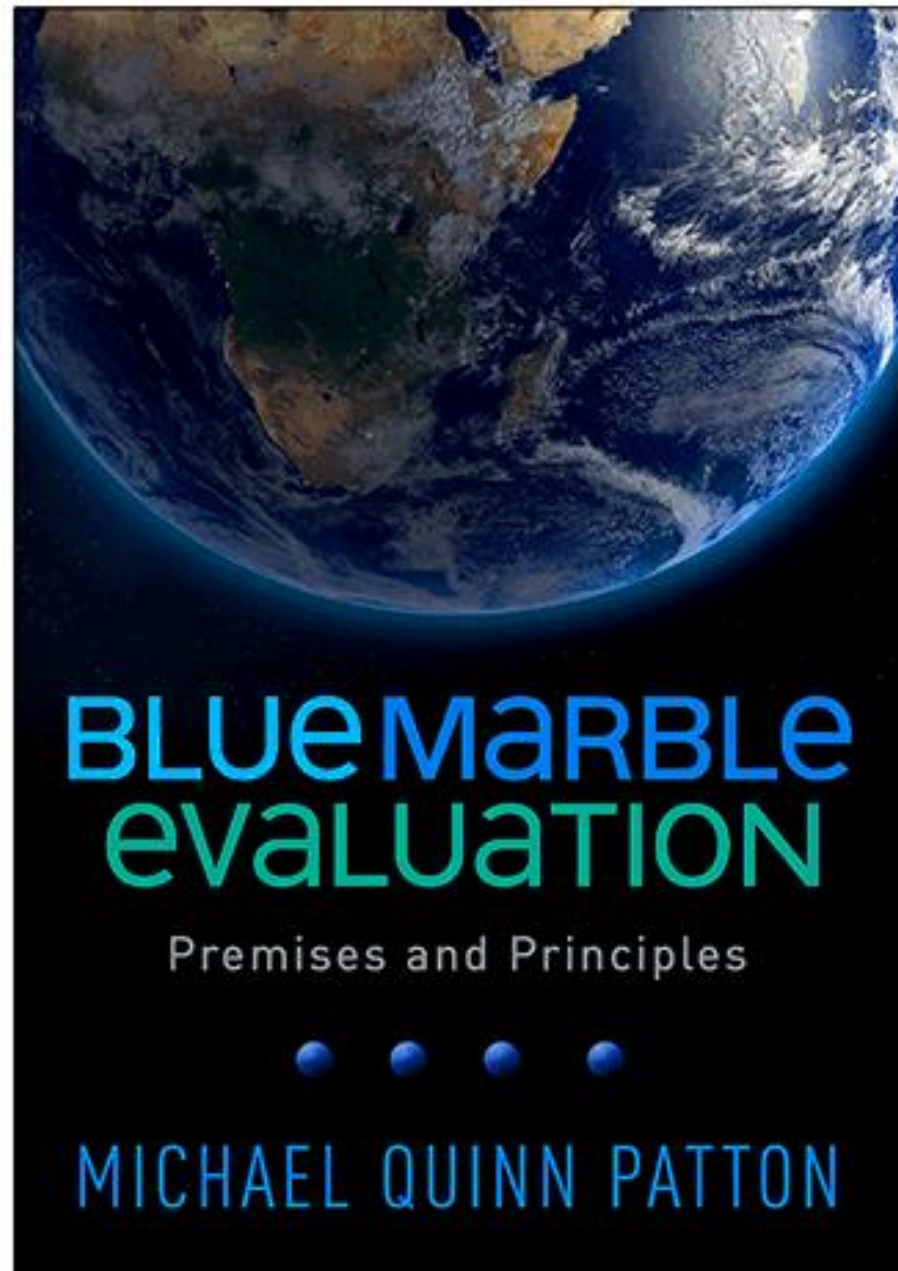


**HARVARD T.H. CHAN**  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**Minnesota is located on traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of the Indigenous Dakota and Ojibwe people, on land ceded in the Treaties of 1837 and 1851. Minnesota is the birthplace of the American Indian Movement**



[illegible]



**GETTING TO MAYBE:  
HOW THE WORLD IS CHANGED**

THIS BOOK IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE AND WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. THIS BOOK IS FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO WANT TO MAKE CONNECTIONS THAT WILL CREATE EXTRAORDINARY OUTCOMES. THIS IS A BOOK ABOUT MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPEN. **GETTING TO MAYBE.** HOW THE WORLD IS CHANGED.



“

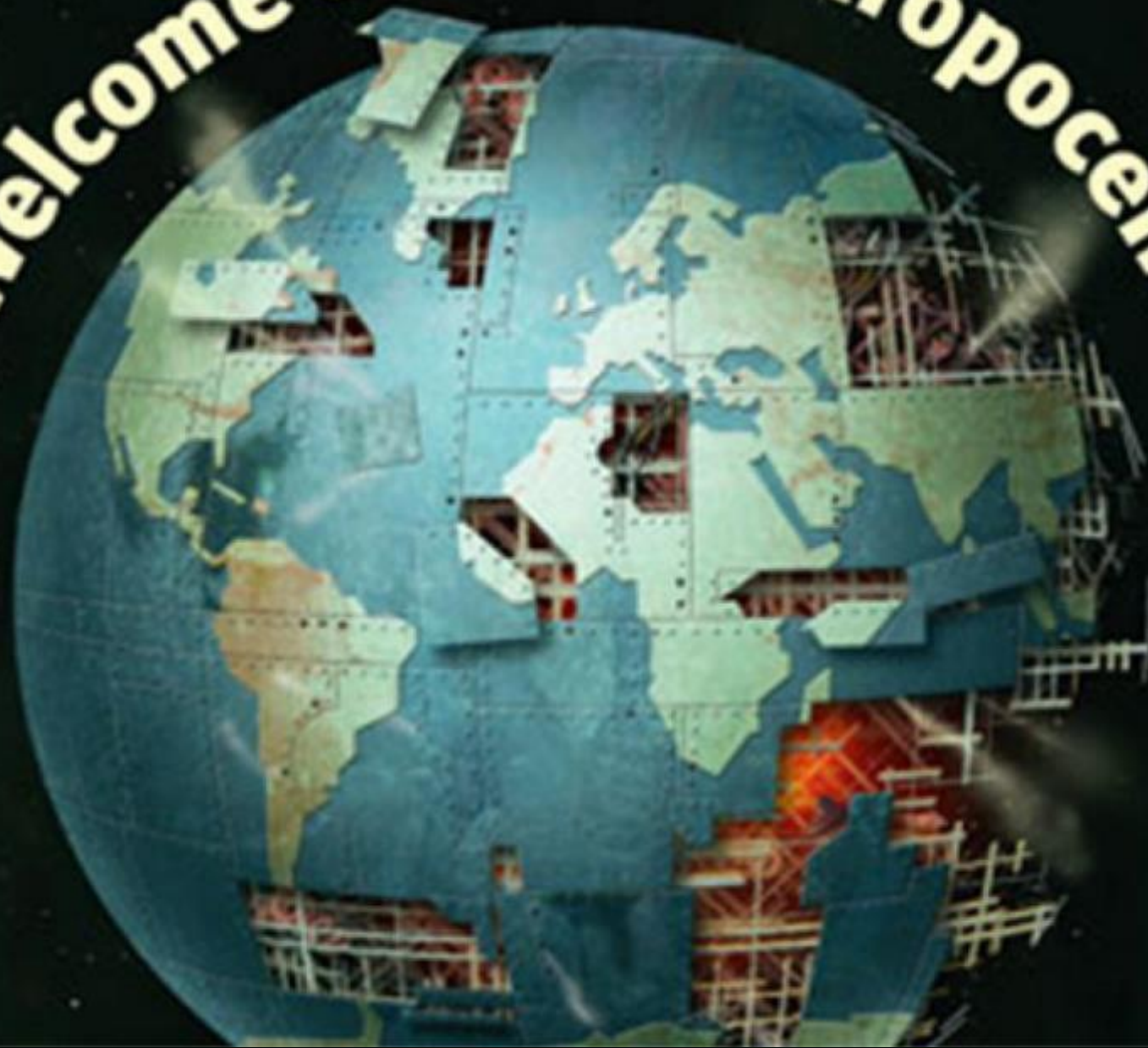
We are the first generation to know that we are destroying the planet, and the last generation that can do anything about it.

TANYA STEELE

World Wildlife Federation

Will evaluation be part of the problem, or part of the solution?

# Welcome to the Anthropocene







— ” —  
All we need now is a way to  
focus attention on a problem  
[climate change] that is too  
slow to be called a crisis and  
too dangerous to be called  
anything else.

— ” —  
TIM HARTFORD

AUTHOR OF THE DATA DETECTIVE



"He's a genius at telling stories that illuminate our world."  
—MALCOLM GLADWELL

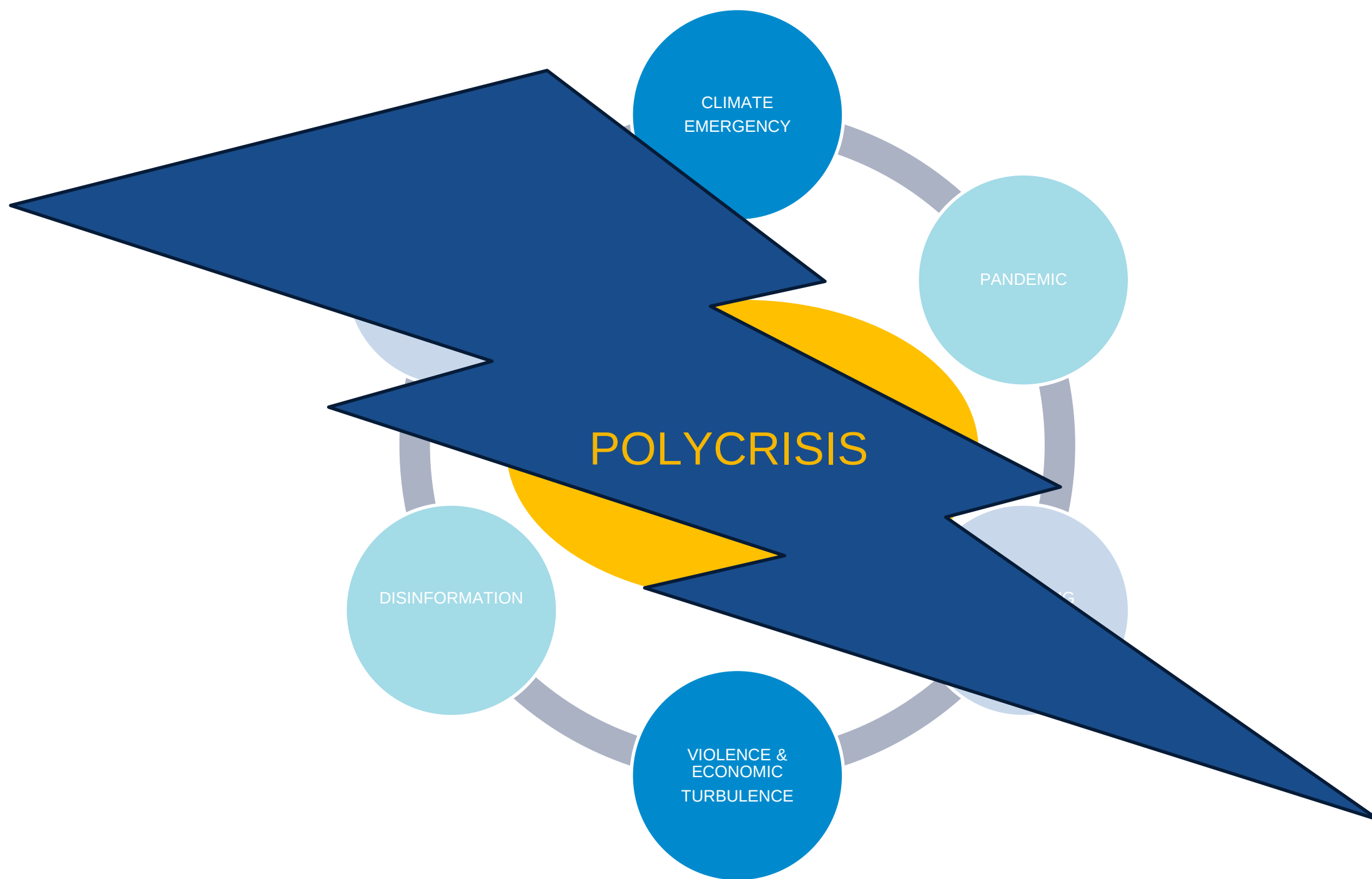
# THE DATA DETECTIVE



TEN EASY RULES  
TO MAKE SENSE  
OF STATISTICS

TIM HARTFORD

Author of the bestseller THE UNDERCOVER ECONOMIST



**Aligned with Earth Day 2024, evaluators worldwide affirm our  
commitment to include environmental, social, and economic  
sustainability and regeneration criteria in all evaluations.**



<https://chnng.it/6gVHZgWyz7>

Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability in Evaluations

# **EARTH DAY EVALUATION DECLARATION**

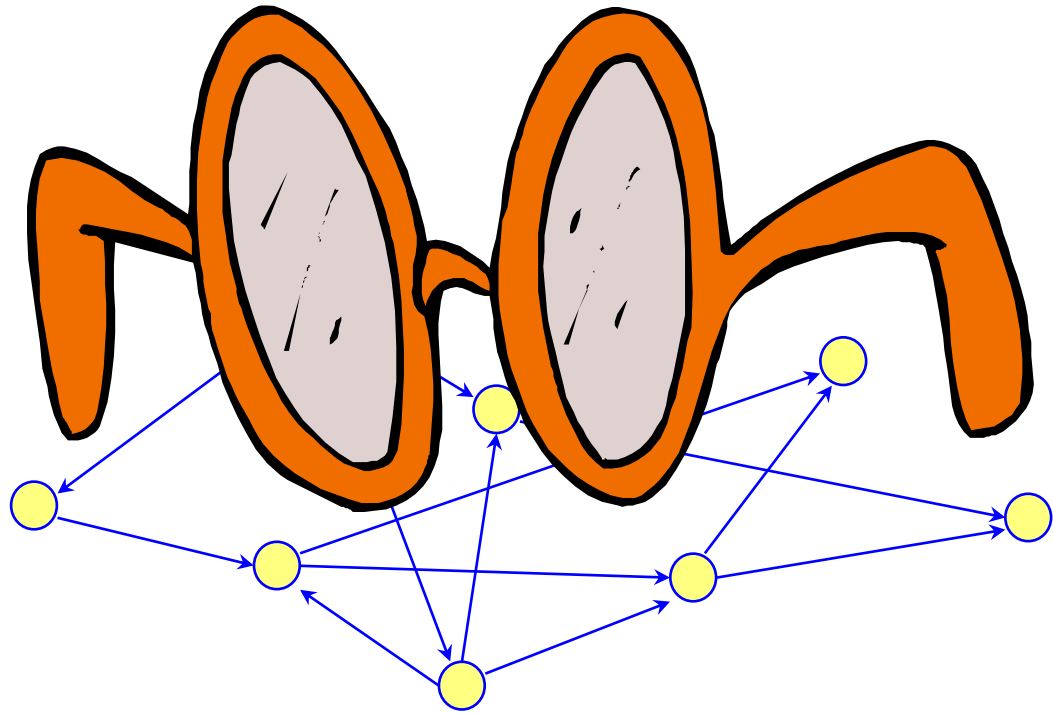


# Linear Project Mentality



# Applying Systems Thinking





# Seeing Through a Complexity Lens

# Defining Systems Transformation

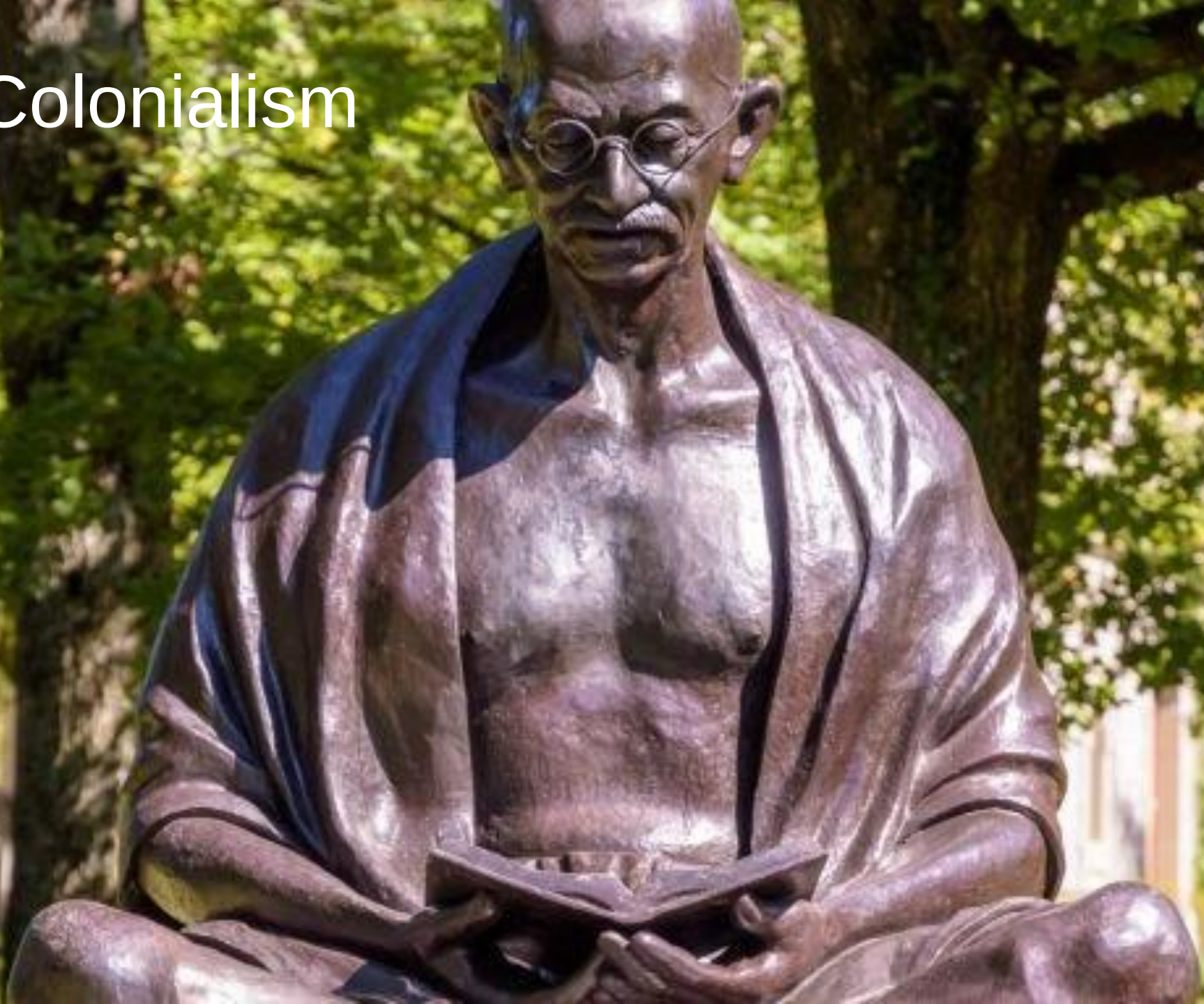
A profound, significant and enduring change in the way that members and elements of a system act and interact – the way they operate and relate to one another – resulting in dramatically different processes, outcomes and impacts within the system and in interrelationship with other systems.



DECEMBER 2  
INTERNATIONAL DAY  
FOR THE ABOLITION  
OF SLAVERY



# End of Colonialism



# End of Apartheid



# Transformational Social Movements



## THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF HIV & AIDS

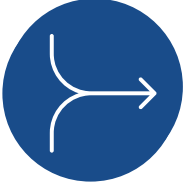


**38 million people**  
**worldwide** are currently  
living with HIV or AIDS.





# Nature of Systems Transformation



## Emergent

Happens through decentralized actions of many diverse actors often moving in the same direction, but without a shared 'plan'



## Cross-Scale

Occurs across multiple distinct-yet- interdependent scales (the micro/personal to the macro/global)



## Non-linear

Unpredictable little things can lead to tipping points while enormous efforts can lead to almost nothing at all.



## Cumulative

Results from a series of both large and small changes that generate critical mass over time.



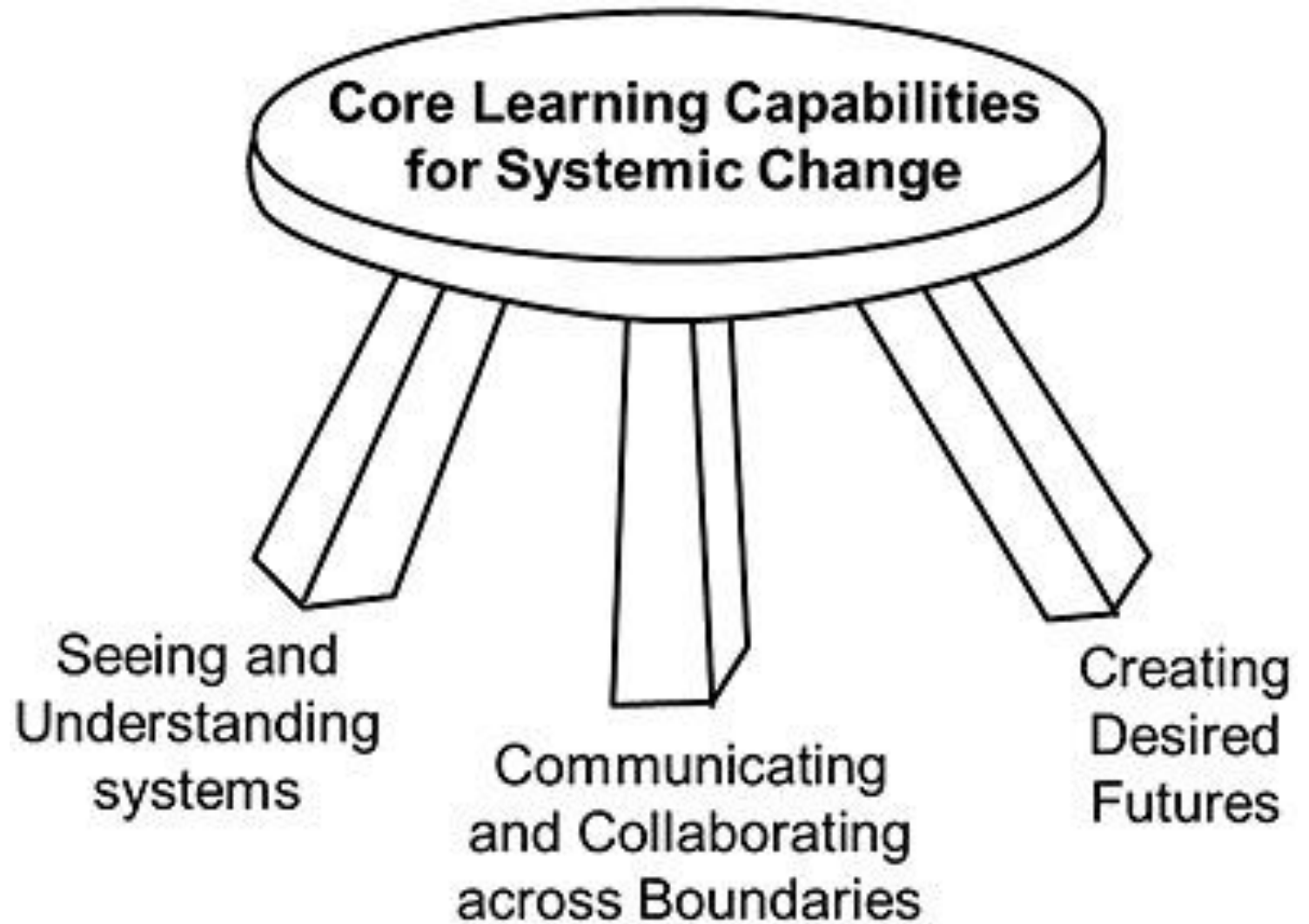
## Often Resisted

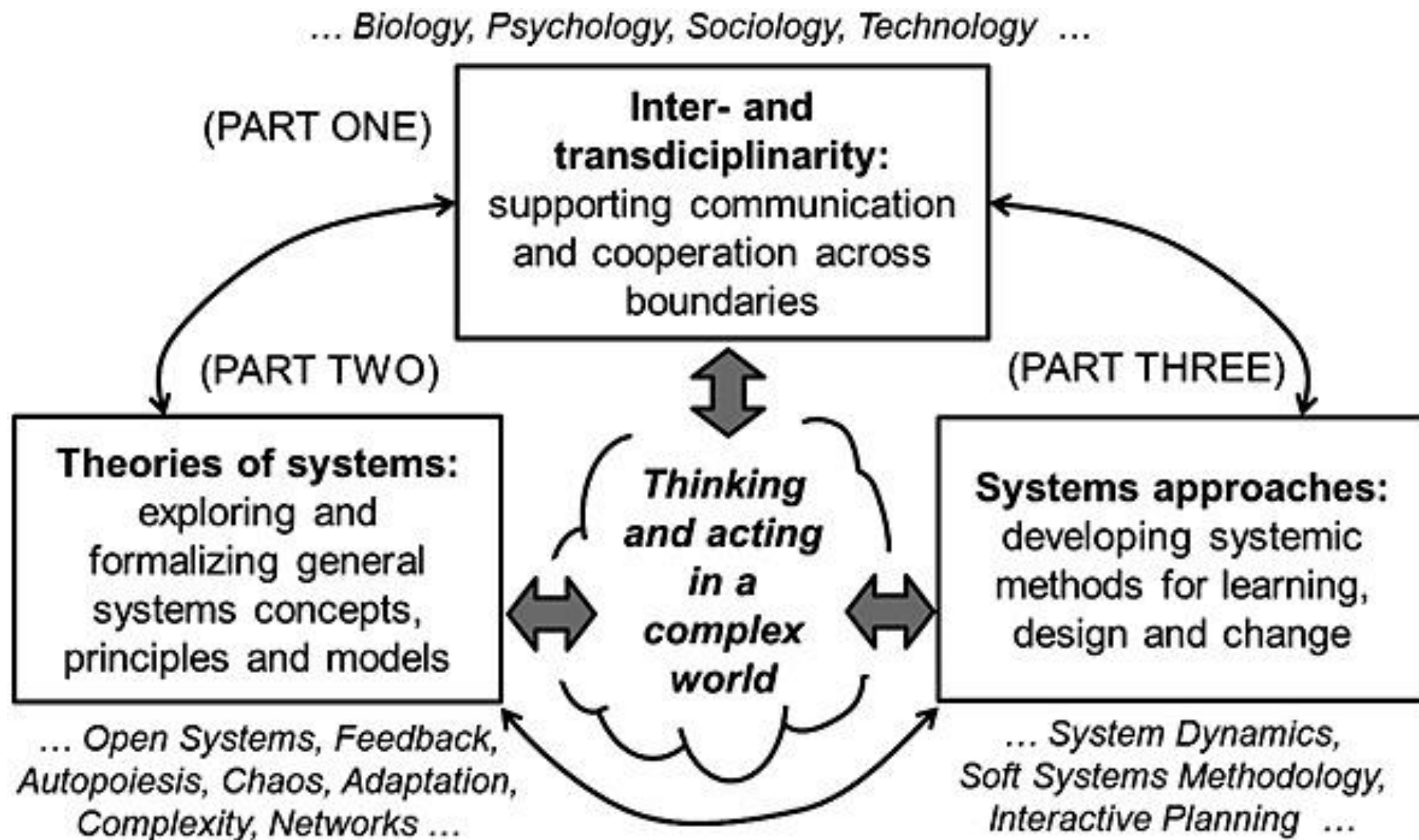
Challenged by powerful status quo actors with vested interests in the way things are.

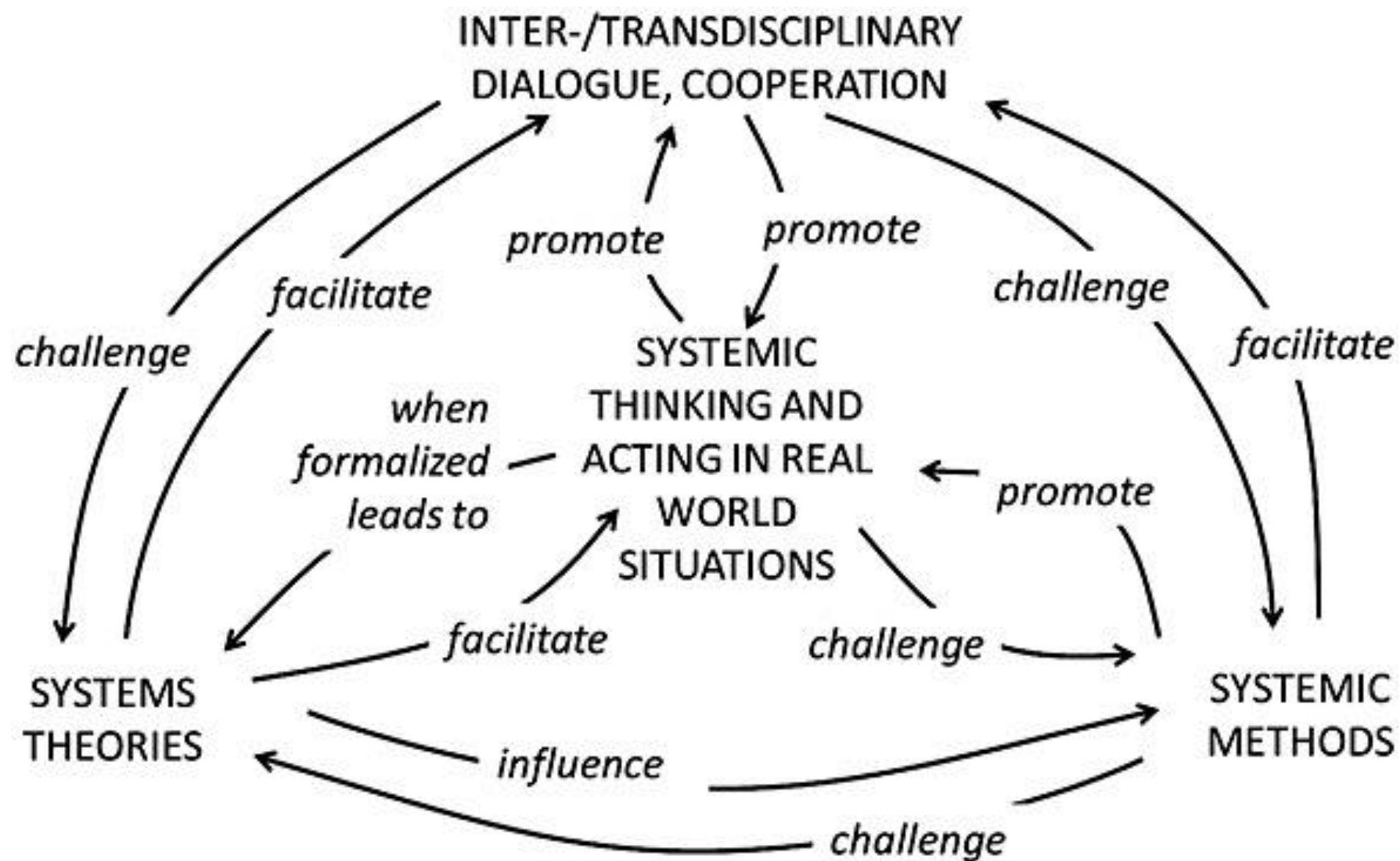
# Understanding Systems Science: A Visual and Integrative Approach

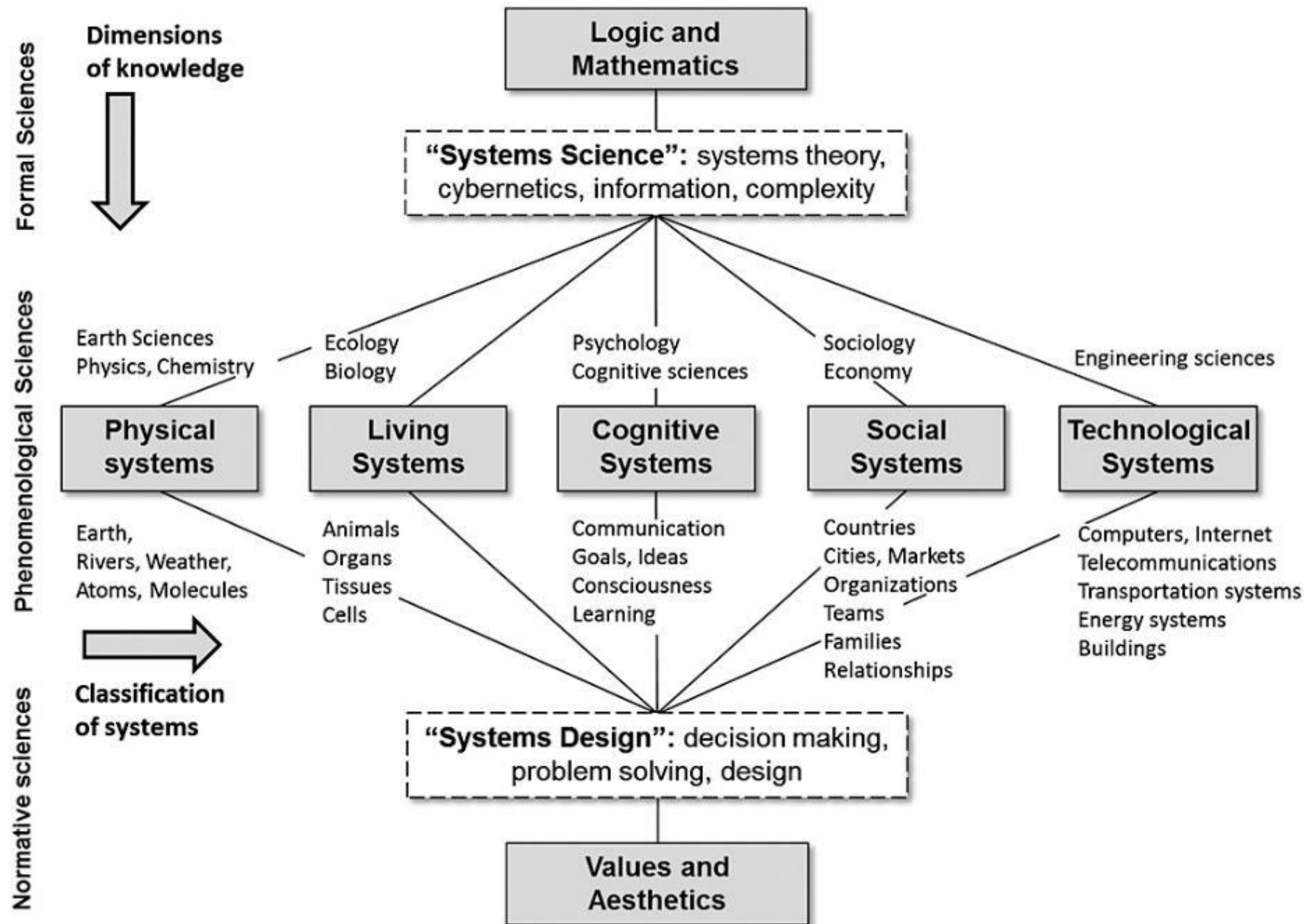
**Andreas Hieronymi**  
*University of St. Gallen,  
Switzerland*

Systems Research and Behavioral Science  
October 2013

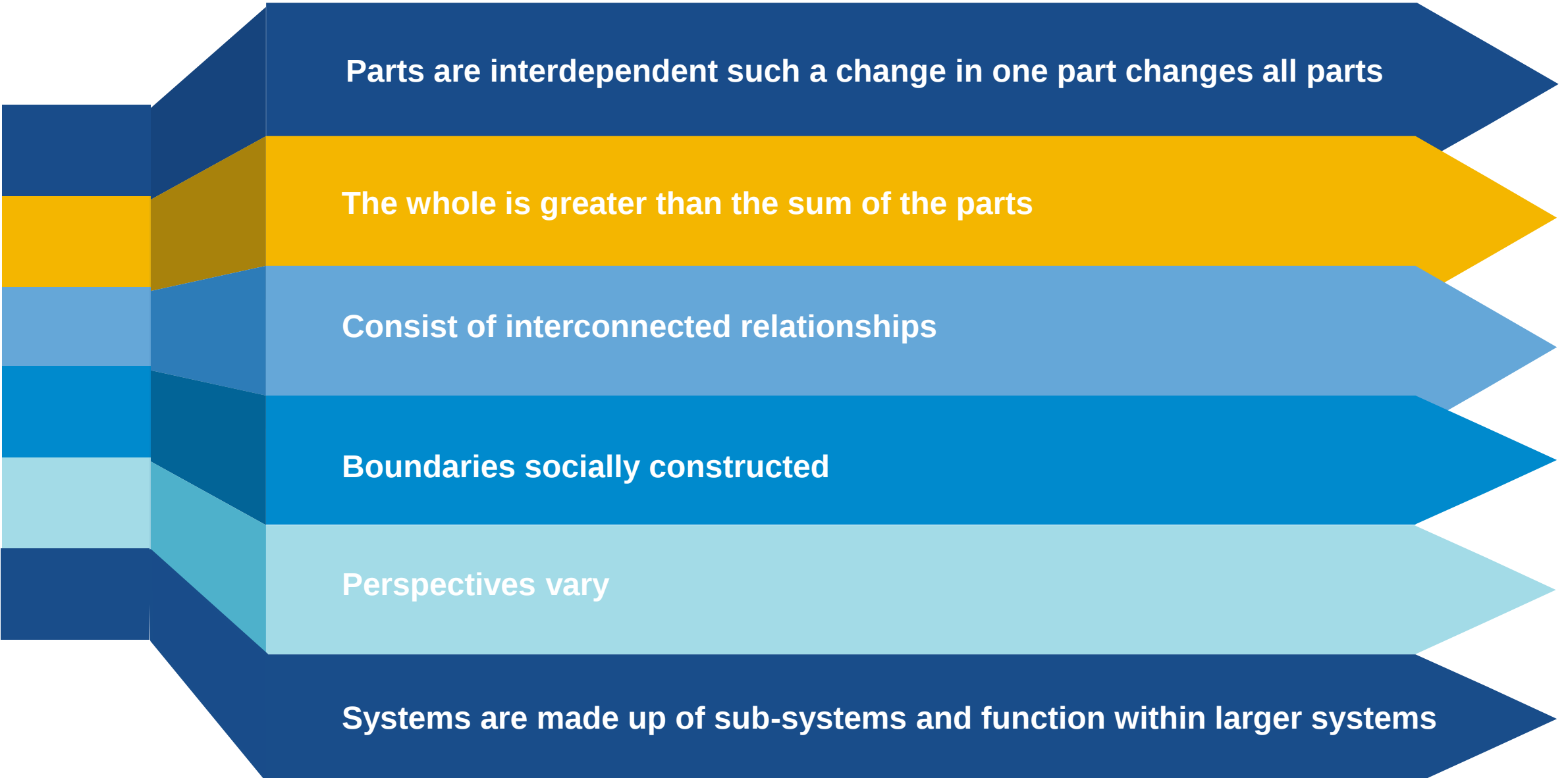








# Characteristics of Systems



**Parts are interdependent such a change in one part changes all parts**

**The whole is greater than the sum of the parts**

**Consist of interconnected relationships**

**Boundaries socially constructed**

**Perspectives vary**

**Systems are made up of sub-systems and function within larger systems**

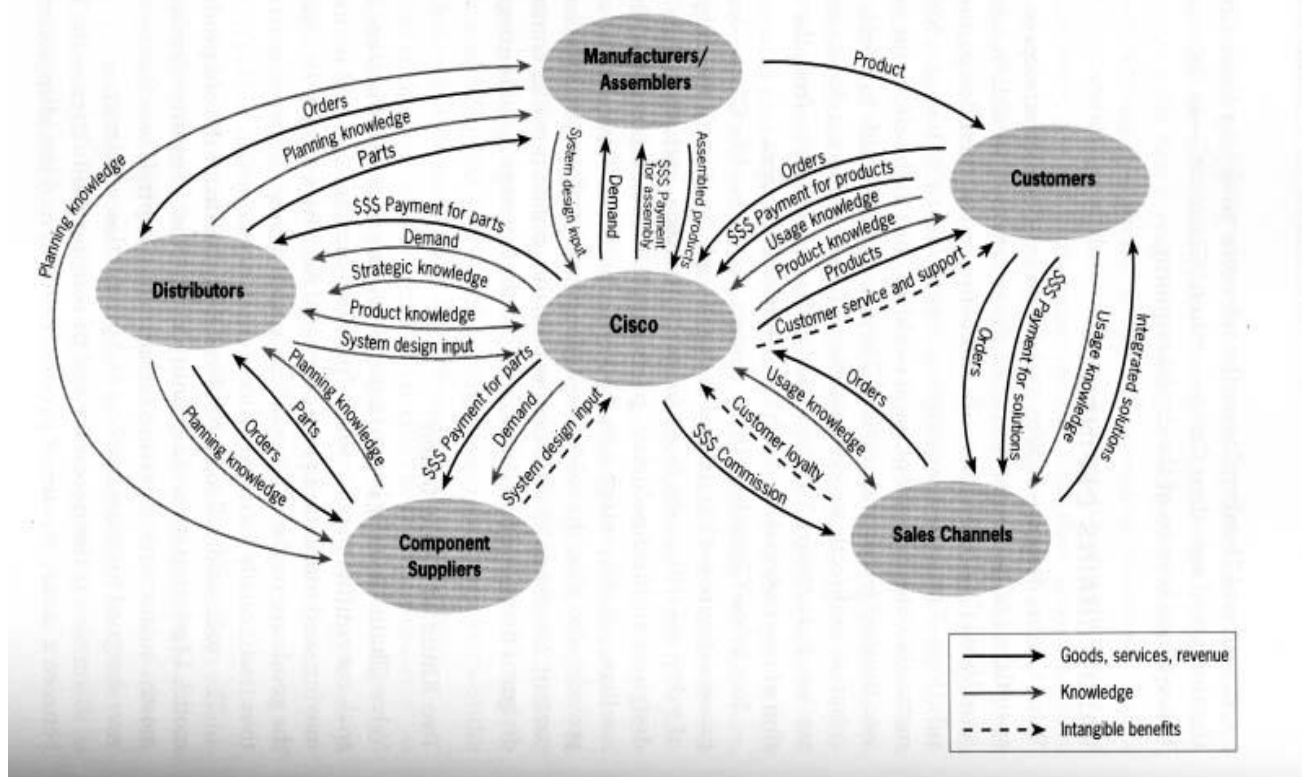


# Systems Thinking Exercise

What SYSTEMS come into  
play in a passionate kiss?

# Map Systems as Webs

FIGURE 4-1 Cisco Value Map

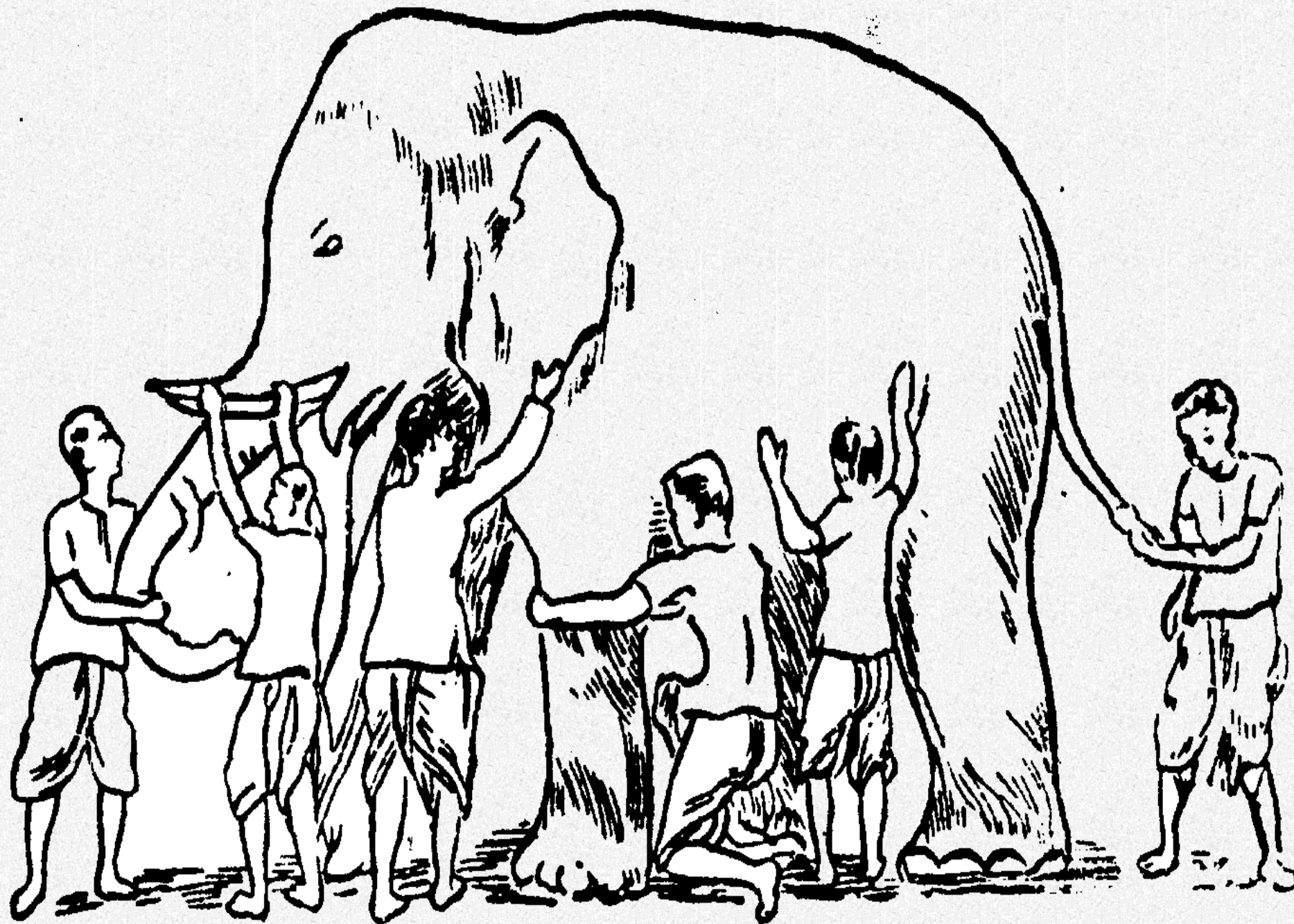


Source: Digital Capital: Harnessing the Power of Business Webs,  
By Don Tapscott, David Ticoll and Alex Lowy



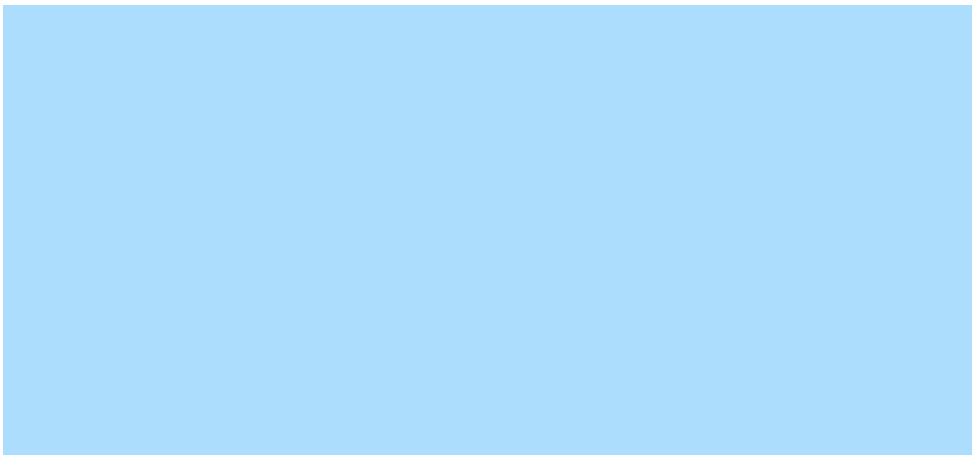
# Understanding the Elephant from a Systems Perspective



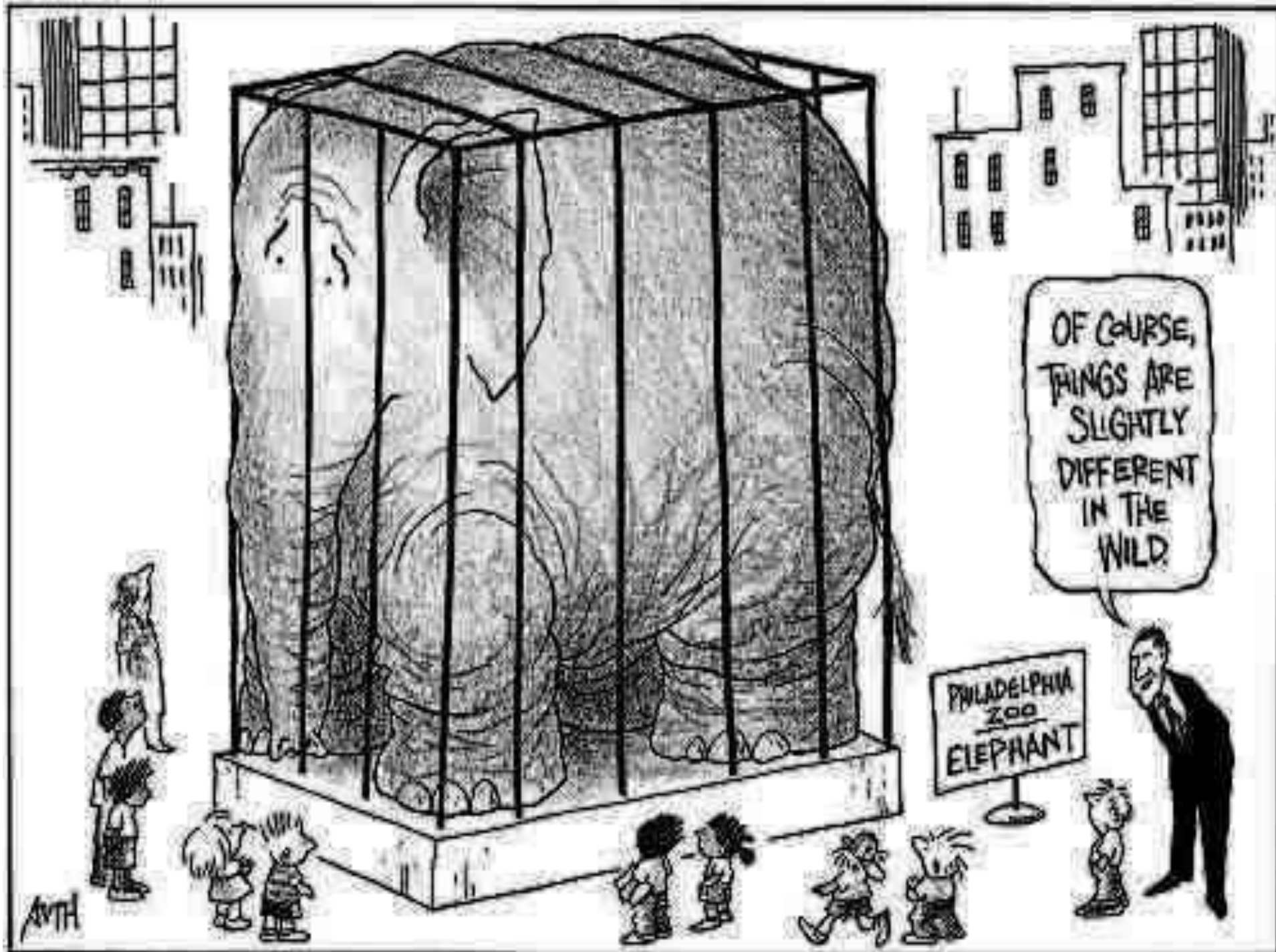












# The relationship between what goes in and what comes out



What conceptual  
framework informs  
situation recognition and  
sense-making?

# Sample ECD Logic Model

| INPUTS                    | ACTIVITIES                                      | OUTPUTS                                                          | SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES                         | INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES                     | LONG-TERM OUTCOMES         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Staff                     | Childcare, early care and education programming | Children who participate in high quality learning activities (#) | Cognitive ability of children increases     | Delinquent behaviors of children decrease | Graduation rate increases  |
| Research-based curriculum |                                                 |                                                                  | School readiness improves                   | Academic proficiency scores increase      | Crime rate decreases       |
| Location                  |                                                 |                                                                  | Language and literacy skills improve        | Mental health problems decrease           | Household income increases |
| Funding                   |                                                 |                                                                  | Social-emotional skills of children improve |                                           |                            |

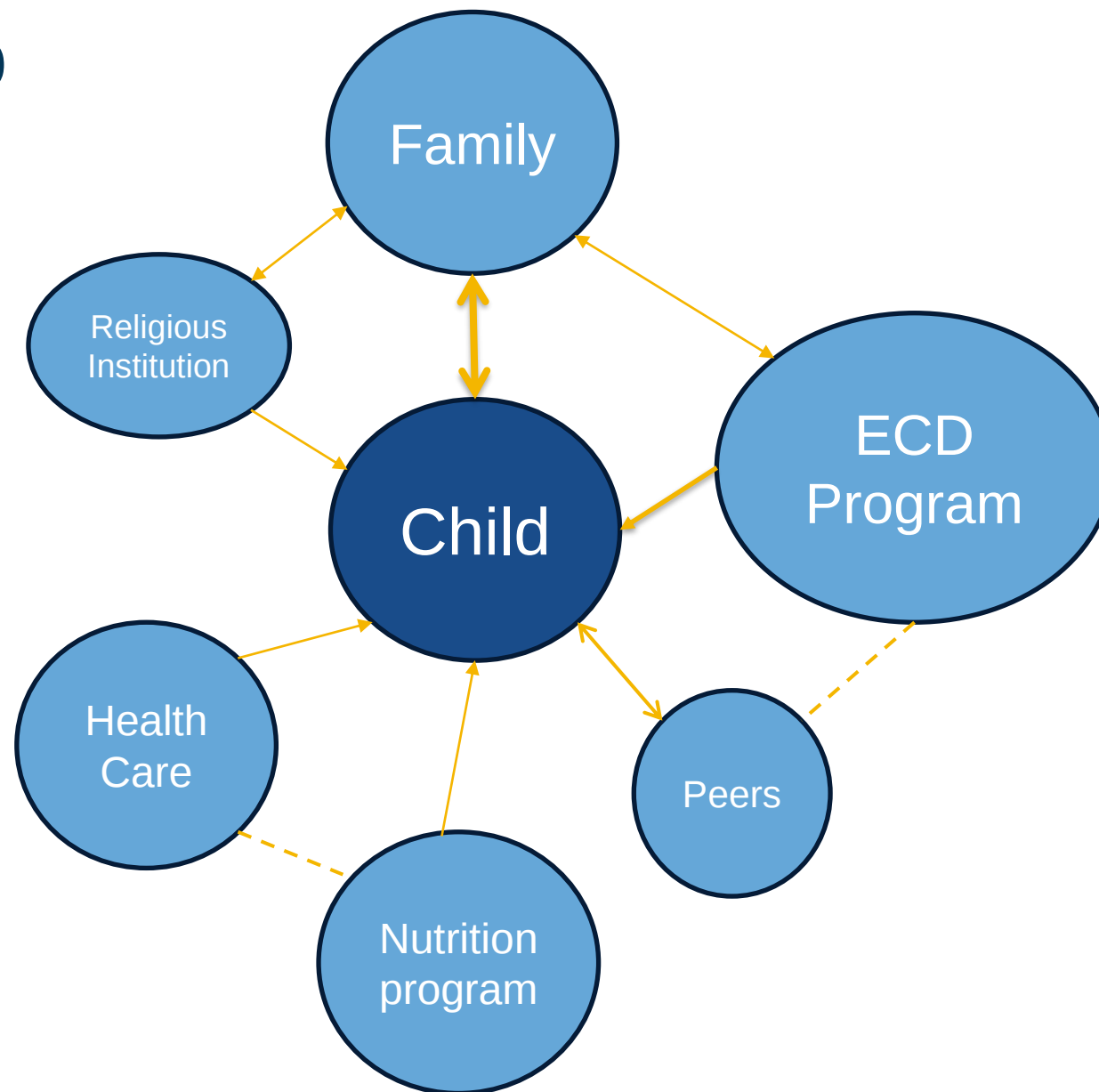
# ECD Systems Map

## Other Systems of influence:

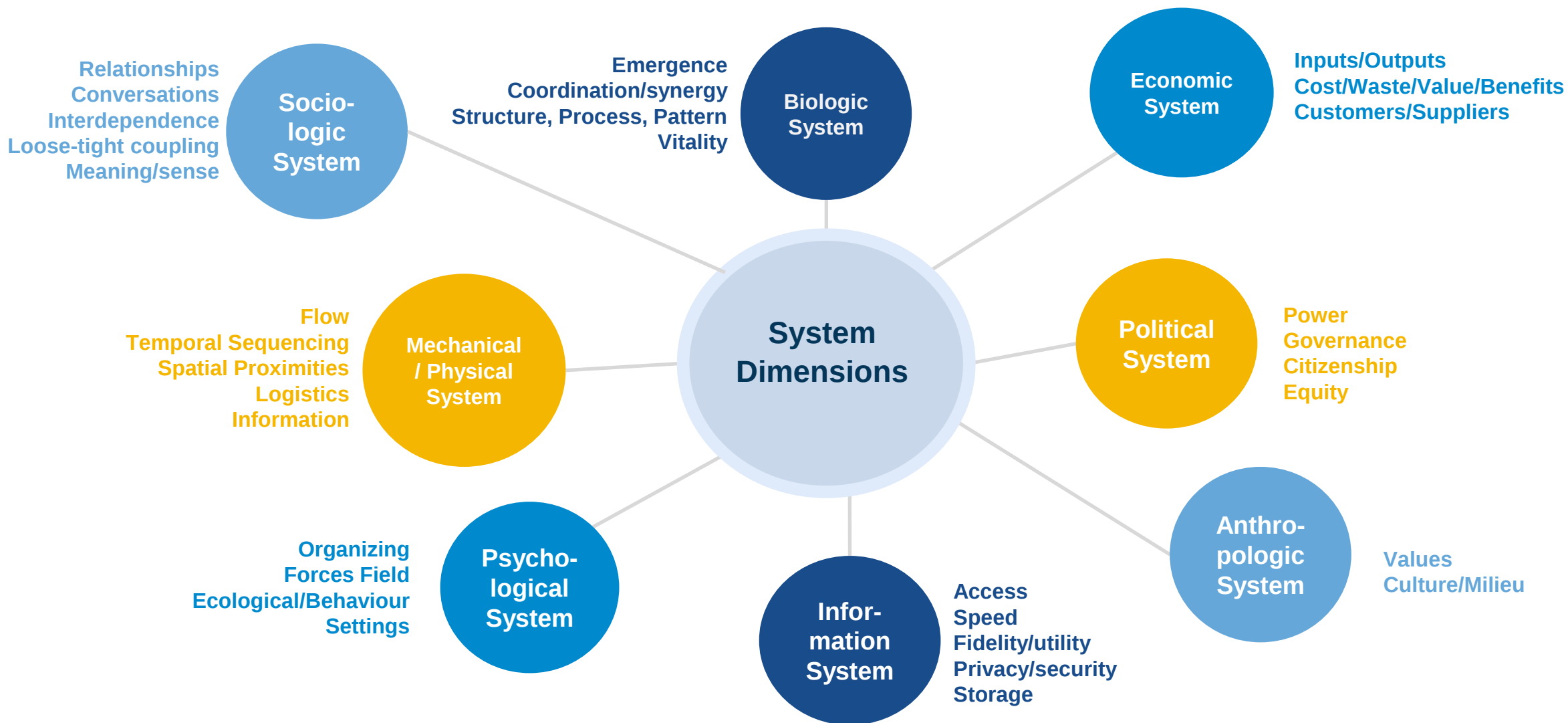
- Welfare
- Legal
- Nutrition programs
- Transportation
- Child protection
- Media

## Contextual Factors of Influence

- Politics
- Economic incentives
- Environment
- Social norms
- Culture



# Using Different System Lenses to Understand a “particular” System



# Principles for Systems Thinking in Evaluation

*Systems in Evaluation Topical Interest Group*



## Systems-in-Evaluation

View the evaluation situation through the lens of systems thinking.



## Interrelationships

Critically deliberate on, work to examine, understand and to appropriately address interrelationships regarding both the evaluand and the evaluation itself.



## Boundaries

Critically deliberate on, set, and explain the boundaries and boundary decisions that relate to the situation being evaluated and the evaluation itself.



## Perspectives Principle

Capture, critically deliberate on, work to understand, represent, and appropriately address diverse perspectives.



## Dynamics

Focus on the patterns of change that emerge within the system to understand their influence and significance for the evaluation.

# Systems in Evaluation Principle

View the evaluation situation through the lens of systems thinking.

1

## Operating Principle 1

Throughout the evaluation process, critically deliberate on and apply the principles of interrelationships, perspectives, boundaries, and dynamics in integrated ways.

2

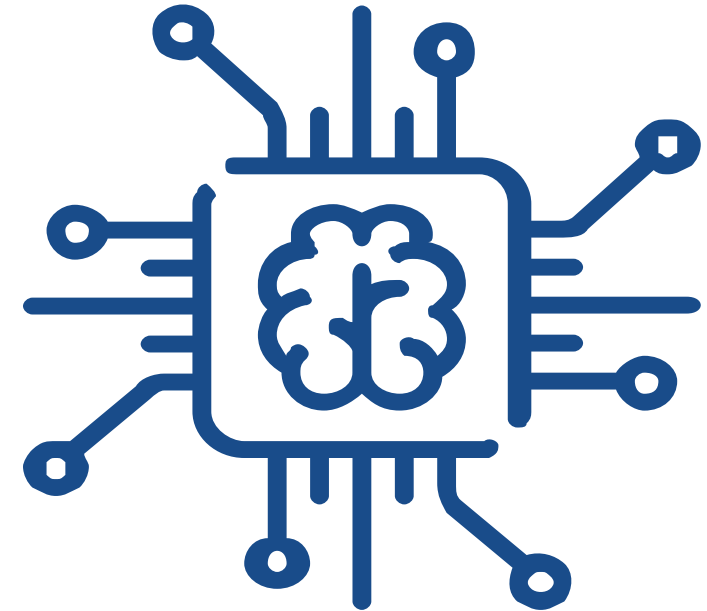
## Operating Principle 2

Understand and describe the relationship between the various concepts, methods, and tools which inform the evaluation.

3

## Operating Principle 3

Ensure that key evaluation documents (plans, reports, messages) identify and describe the systems thinking concepts, conceptual frameworks, methods, and tools which inform the evaluation.



# Interrelationships Principle

Critically deliberate on, work to examine, understand and to appropriately address interrelationships regarding both the evaluand and the evaluation itself.

1

## Operating Principle 1

Identify, capture, map, and track key interrelationships that influence, could influence, and/or should influence the evaluand and the evaluation itself.

2

## Operating Principle 2

Identify key interrelationships that result from, could result from, and/or should result from the evaluand and the evaluation itself.

3

## Operating Principle 3

Consider alternative interrelationships within and beyond the boundaries of the system as currently defined, along with potential consequences of including them in the evaluation.

4

## Operating Principle 4

Make transparent and support interrelationships that positively influence or are positive results from the evaluation while remaining open to revision.



# Perspectives Principle

Capture, critically deliberate on, work to understand, represent, and appropriately address diverse perspectives.

1

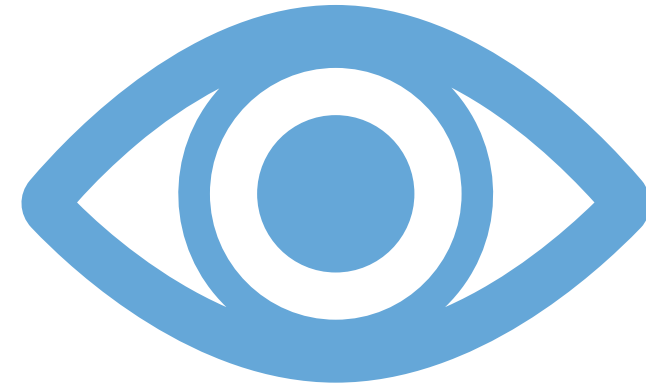
## Operating Principle 1

Identify and represent diverse perspectives and the values on which they are based. Seek dissent as well as consensus.

2

## Operating Principle 2

Attend to the types of power associated with each perspective and consider the consequences.



# Boundaries Principle

Critically deliberate on, set, and explain the boundaries and boundary decisions that relate to the situation being evaluated and the evaluation itself.

1

## Operating Principle 1

Identify key boundaries that influence and should influence the situation being evaluated and the evaluation itself

2

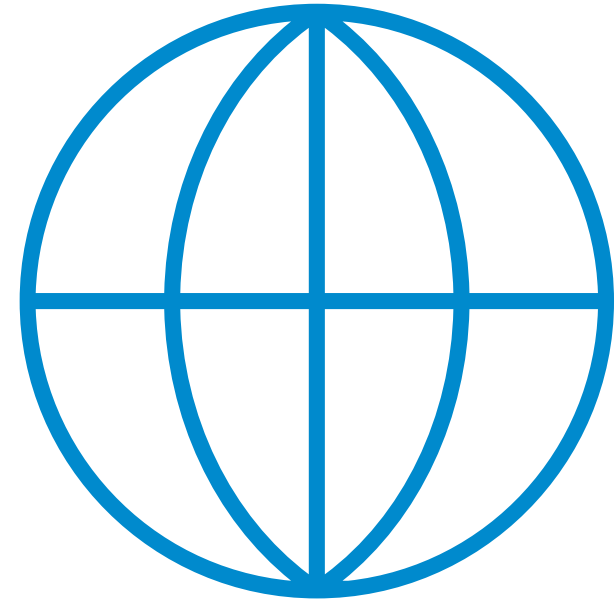
## Operating Principle 2

Deliberate on a range of critical boundary choices along with potential consequences.

3

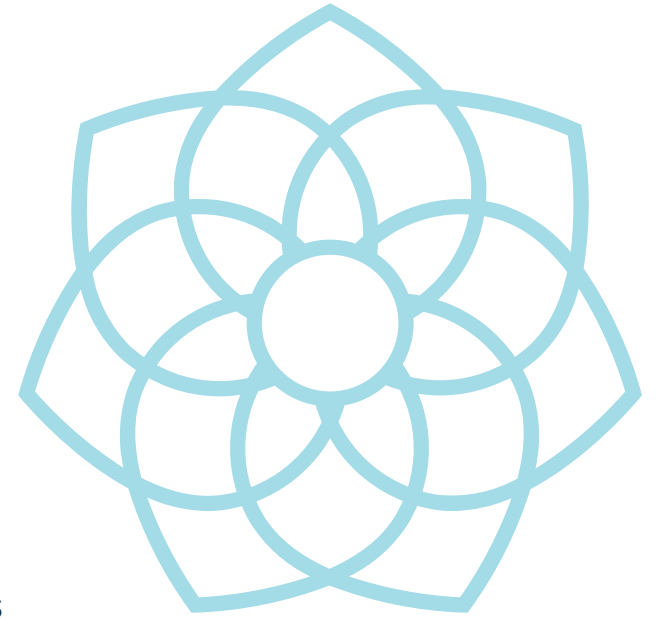
## Operating Principle 3

Make transparent and justify the boundaries used in an intervention and the evaluation while remaining open to revision.



# Dynamics Principle

Focus on the patterns of change that emerge within the system to understand their influence and significance for the evaluation.

**1**

## Operating Principle 1

Consider how dynamics related to time, location, anticipated and unanticipated reactions, and current states and rates of change interact to create patterns that are nonlinear and multi-directional to help understand how dynamics shape the systems relevant to the evaluation.

**2**

## Operating Principle 2

Design an evaluation plan that is responsive to emergent developments; collects information about what, when, how, and why change occurs; and incorporates learning as it is received to document and respond to dynamics in the evaluation.

**3**

## Operating Principle 3

Investigate how observers' worldviews and their judgements about useful and convenient representations of system behavior influence the conceptualizations of dynamics.

**4**

## Operating Principle 4

Consider the interactions and influence of the evaluator and evaluation with and within systems relevant to the evaluation to document the role of evaluation in shaping system behavior.

# Systems Questions to Consider



## Interrelationships

What relationships are important to the ECD intervention?



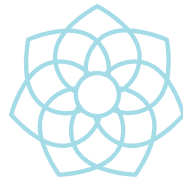
## Perspectives

Whose perspectives is it critical to understand, represent, and address?



## Boundaries

What are the boundaries of the intervention?



## Dynamics

What patterns of change are emerging within the system and how are they influencing the intervention and the evaluation?

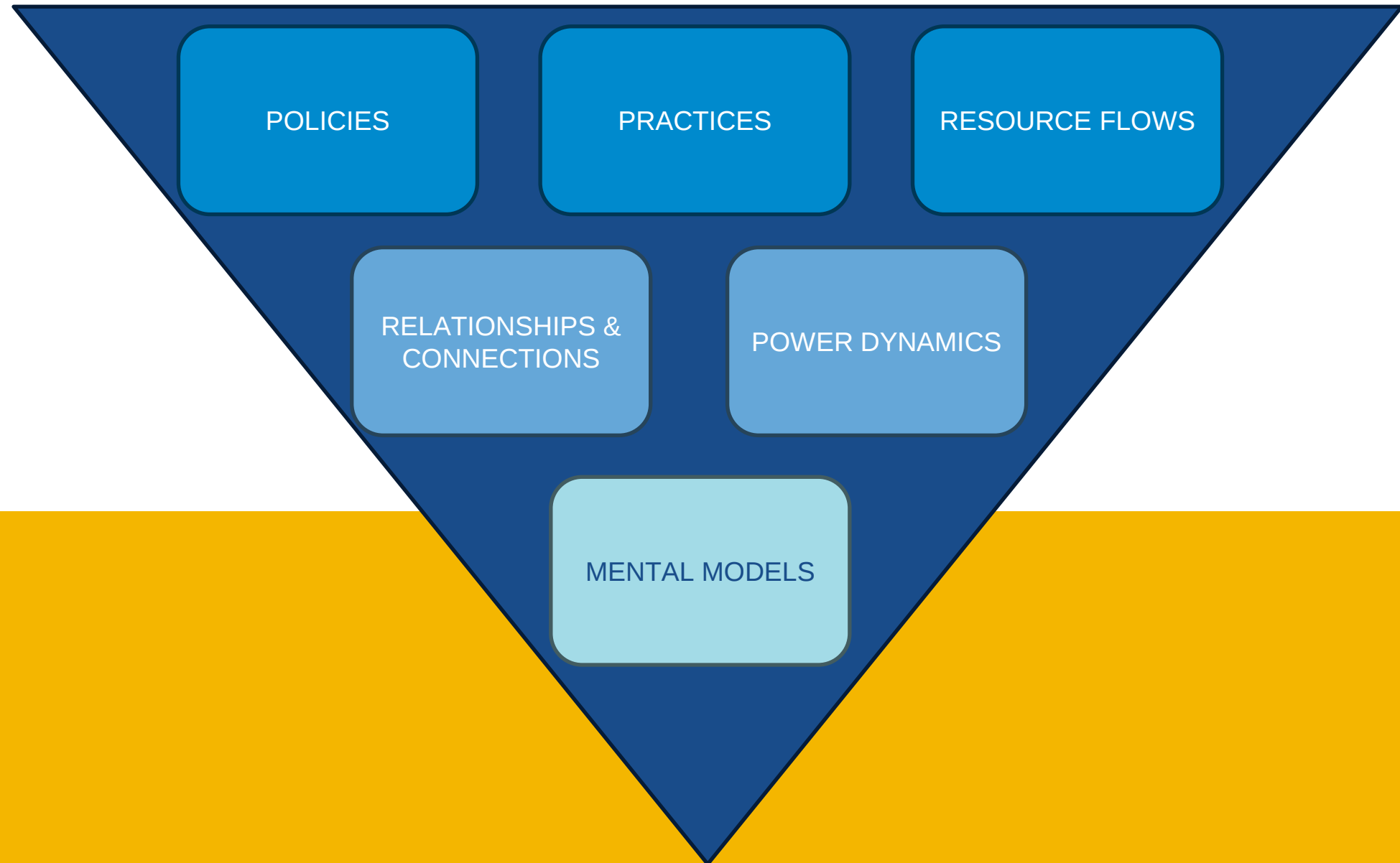


# Water of Systems Change<sup>48</sup>



# Six Conditions of Systems Change

49



# ECD Systems Assessment

| What existing elements are reinforcing the current conditions and hindering our progress? |                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| EXPLICIT                                                                                  | POLICIES                    |
|                                                                                           | PRACTICES                   |
|                                                                                           | RESOURCE FLOWS              |
| SEMI-EXPLICIT                                                                             | RELATIONSHIPS & CONNECTIONS |
|                                                                                           | POWER DYNAMICS              |
| IMPLICIT                                                                                  | MENTAL MODELS               |

# Evaluating Systems Transformation



BLUE MARBL  
evaluation

# Evaluation

## Traditional

### Evaluating...

- Grants
- Projects & Programs
- Clusters of grants
- Goal attainment
- Outcomes
- Implementation

### Generating...

- Lessons
- Recommendations

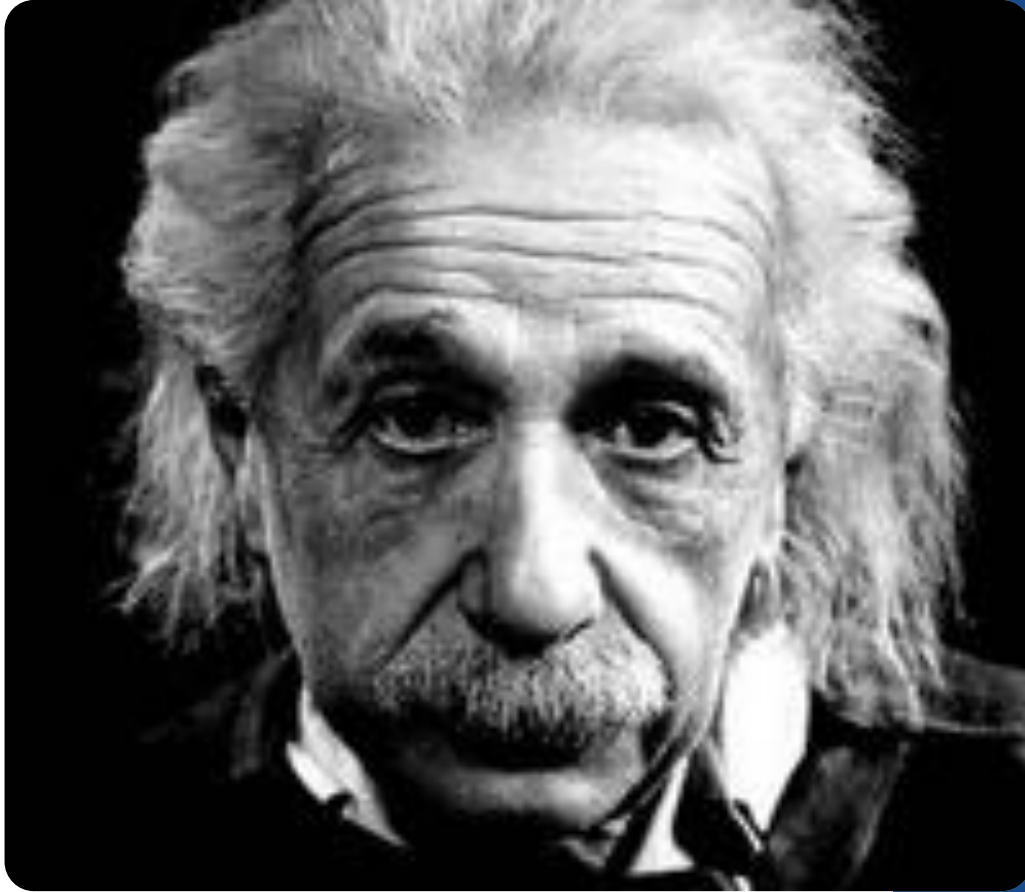
## Nontraditional & New Directions

### Evaluating...

- Mission fulfillment
- Strategy
- Innovation
- Advocacy campaigns
- Policy change
- Systems Change
- Complex dynamic interventions

# Innovations & Challenges

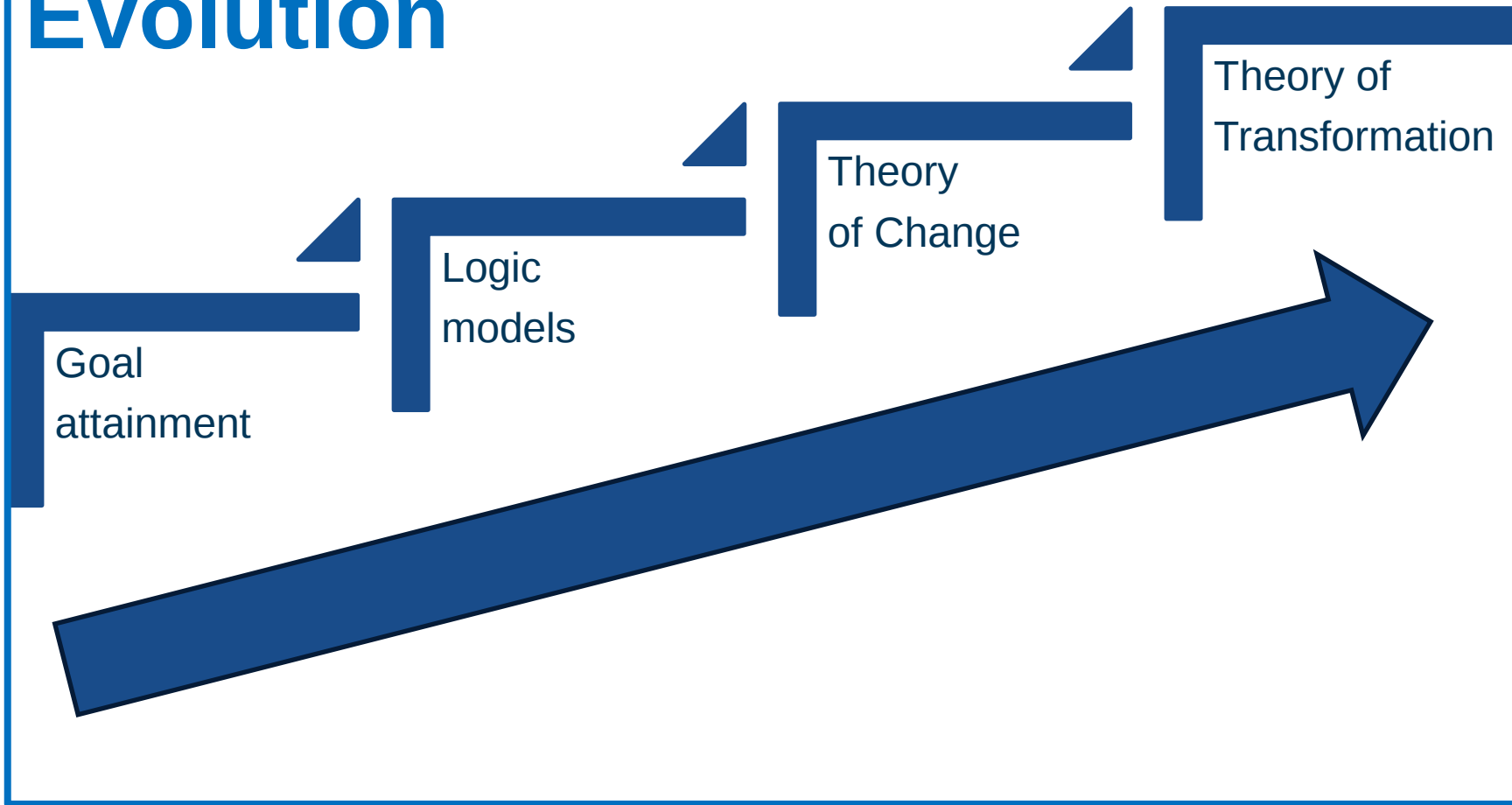
- Community impacts
- Regional initiatives
- Networks and collaborations
- Leadership
- Inclusiveness and diversity
- Innovation
- Collective impact
- Scaling
- Environmental ecosystem sustainability
- Global systems change & TRANSFORMATION



**We can not solve our  
problems with the same  
level of thinking that  
created them.**

**ALBERT EINSTEIN**

# Evaluation's Evolution



# Blue Marble Principles

## Global Thinking Principle

Apply whole Earth, big picture thinking to all aspects of systems change.

## Anthropocene as Context Principle

Know and face the realities of the Anthropocene and act accordingly.

## Transformative Engagement Principle

Engage consistent with the magnitude, direction, and speed of transformations needed and envisioned.

## Integration Principle

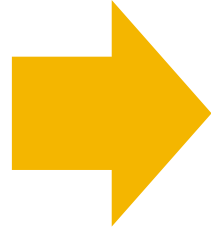
Integrate the overarching and operating Blue Marble principles in the design, engagement with, and evaluation of systems change and transformation initiatives.

# Global Thinking Principle Explicated



## Global Thinking Principle

Apply whole Earth, big picture thinking to all aspects of systems change.



## Premise

Global problems like climate change, worldwide pollution, and global disparities require global interventions and, correspondingly, globally-oriented and world savvy evaluators.

# SUSTAINABILITY as a universal criterion in evaluations



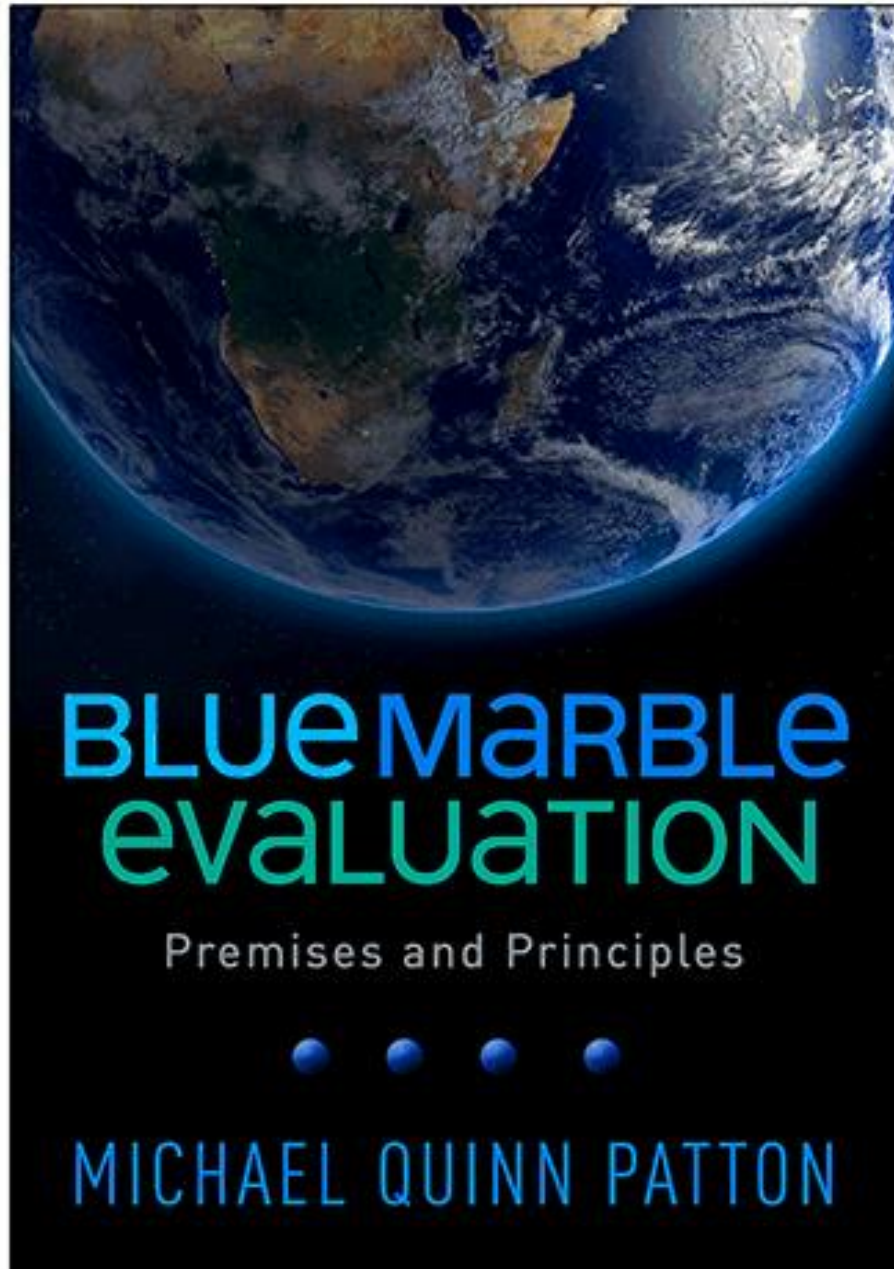
**“All hands on deck.”**



All evaluations should  
address equity.



Jara Dean-Coffey



Tracking  
trajectories  
toward  
major systems  
transformations

# Blue Marble Overarching Principles

## Transboundary Engagement Principle

Act at a global scale.

## GLOCAL Principle

Integrate interconnections across levels.

## Cross-silos Principle

Connect across sectors and issues.

## Time Being of the Essence Principle

Act with a sense of urgency short-term and support resilient sustainability for the long-term.

## Yin-Yang Principle

Harmonize conceptual opposites.

## Bricolage Methods Principle

Conduct utilization-focused evaluations incorporating Blue Marble principles to match methods to the evaluation situation.

## World Savvy Principle

Engage in ongoing learning relevant to Blue Marble principles and practices.

## Skin in the Game

Acknowledge and act on your stake in how the Anthropocene unfolds.

## Theory of transformation principle

Design and evaluate transformation based on an evidence-supported Theory of Transformation.

## Transformation Fidelity Principle

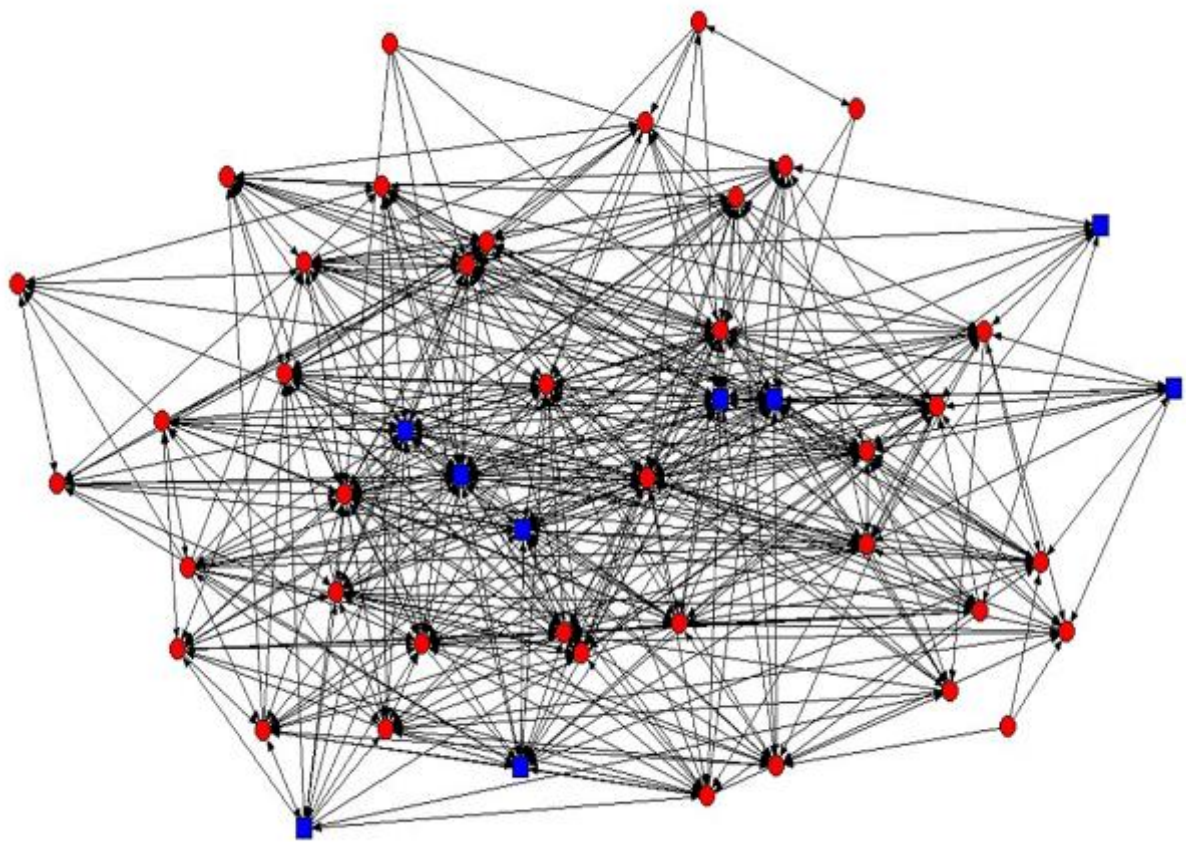
Ensure that what is called transformation constitutes transformation.

## Transformational Alignment Principle

Transform evaluation to evaluate transformation.

## Evaluation as Intervention Principle

Integrate and network evaluations to inform and energize transformation.



# Monitoring Interconnectedness Momentum

Identify, understand, and evaluate  
the interconnections that are  
essential and integral to  
transformation

*to support, nurture, catalyze, and  
accelerate transformational  
trajectories.*



*Think globally,  
Act locally and globally,  
Evaluate the  
Interactions*

# ZOOMING IN & ZOOMING OUT

- A BLUE MARBLE  
EVALUATOR  
SKILL!



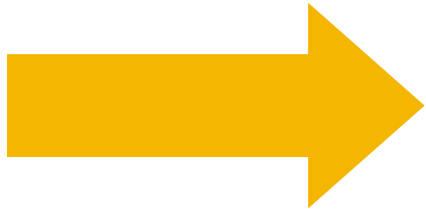


# Theory of Transformation

# Theory of Transformation Implications



Transforming International Development infrastructure and architecture



Transforming evaluation to evaluate transformation



# Contact Information

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