



Monday 24 May 2021

Foundation of Complexity 2

# an introduction to effective strategy

Session 1/2/3



**axiom 1**

**paradigms are built from practices**

Source: *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* – Thomas Kuhn



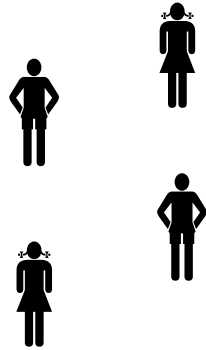
**axiom 1**

**paradigms are built from practices ;**

**practices are built from tools, processes, spaces, ingredients,  
and customs**



**paradigms**



**practices**

**paradigms**



**practices**

visible



invisible

**paradigms**

→  
**socialisation**



→  
**culture**

**practices**

visible

invisible





## **axiom 1.1**

**we rarely choose our paradigms, the paradigm usually chooses us**



## **axiom 1.1**

**we rarely choose our paradigms, the paradigm chooses us**  
**we rationalize our practices AFTER the choice is made**



THE TESTS  
ARE RIGGED. THE  
DEATH COUNT IS  
FALSE. MASKS  
ARE USELESS.





**any assessment of “effective” requires a comparison,  
“as compared to what?”**



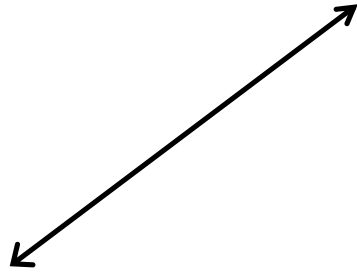
**technocratic paradigm =**

**“antibiotics should be used”**



**technocratic paradigm =**

**“antibiotics should be used”**

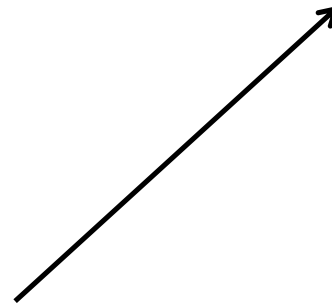


**“anti-complexity paradigm” = “I don’t take antibiotics”**

“antibiotic resistance arises from not understanding complexity”

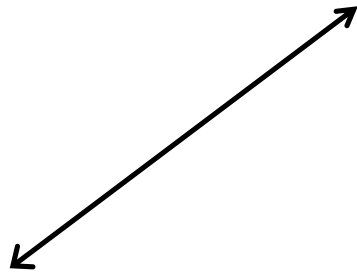


**complexity paradigm**



**technocratic paradigm =**

“antibiotics should be used”



**anti-complexity paradigm = “I don’t take antibiotics”**



**complexity paradigm**

**deliberate**

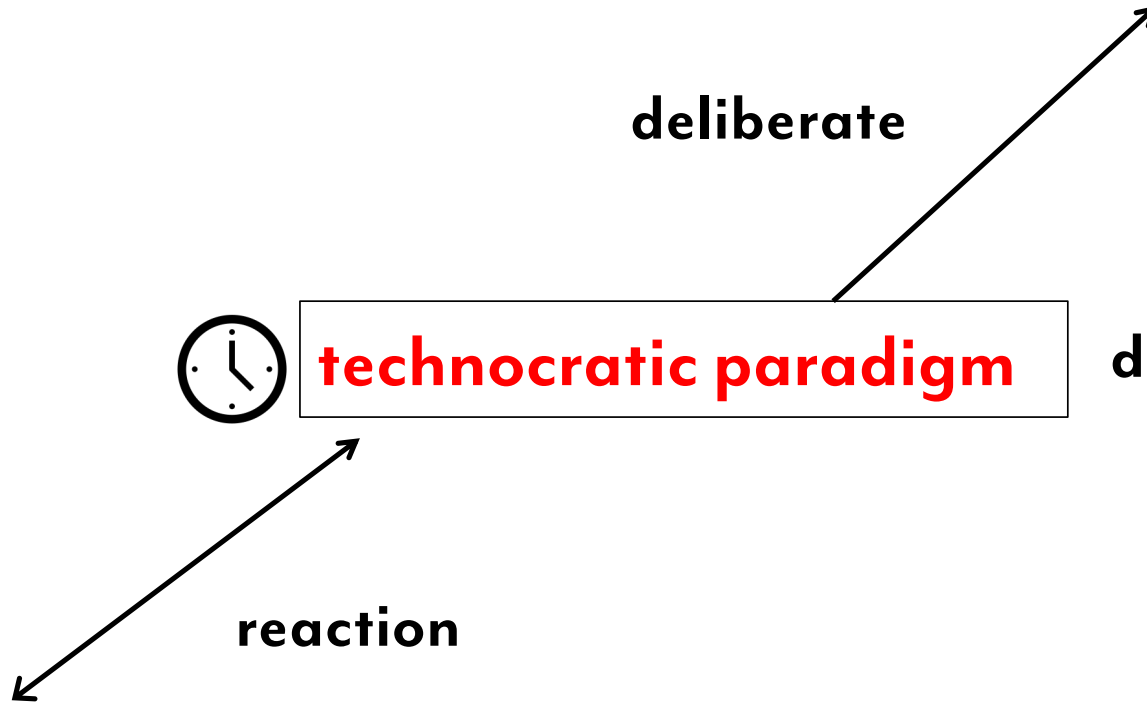


**technocratic paradigm**

**dominant**

**reaction**

**anti-complexity paradigm**



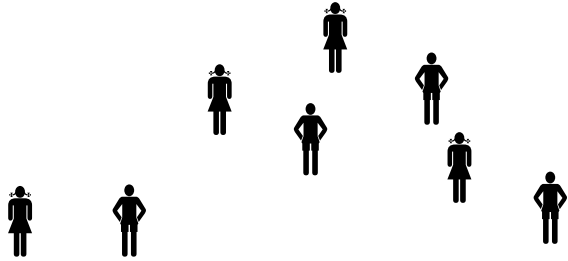


**what is effective (vs ineffective) strategy?**

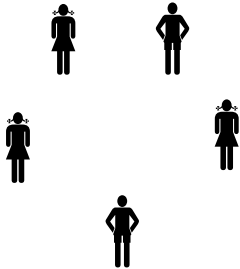




**how do we move a group of people from one place to another?**

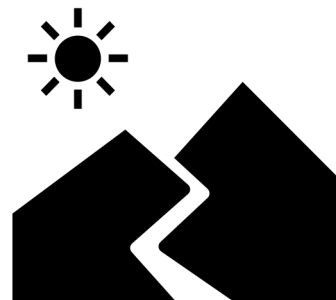


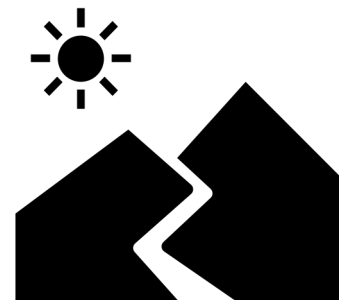
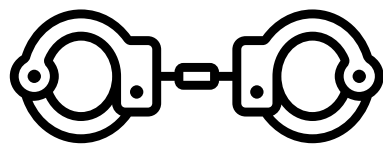
**how do we move a group of people from one place to another?**

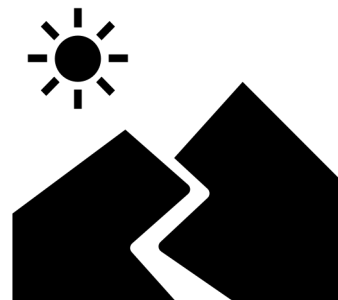
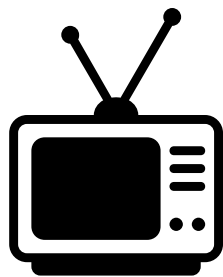




?



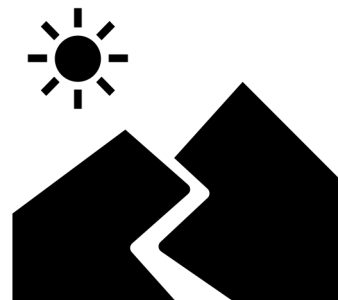






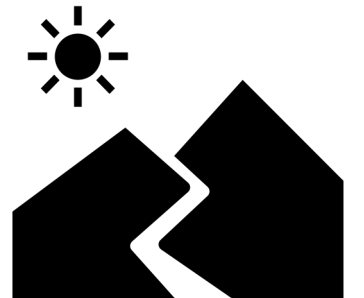


\$





**strategy is the practice of getting from current realities  
to a desired future**



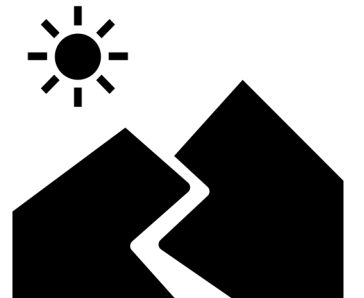




**unsustainable**



**sustainable**

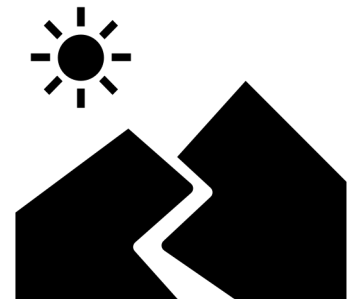




**white supremacist**

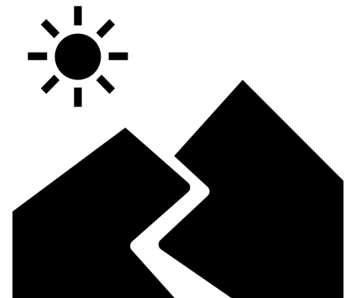


**black lives matter**



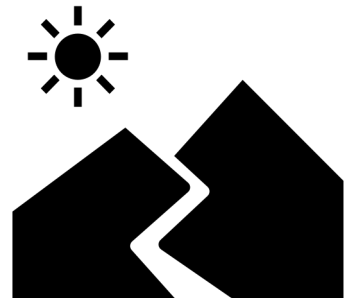


**assume there is a large ocean between us and your desired future, how does that change things?**



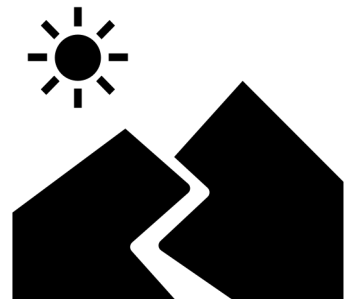


**how is the journey typically sold?**



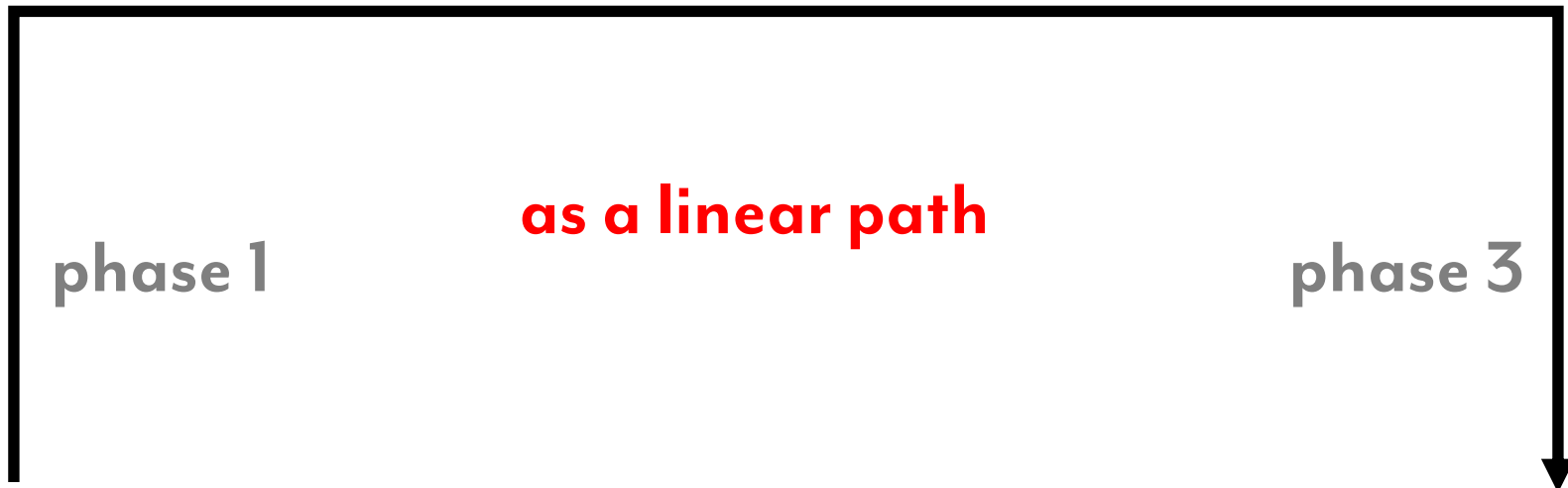


**as a linear path**





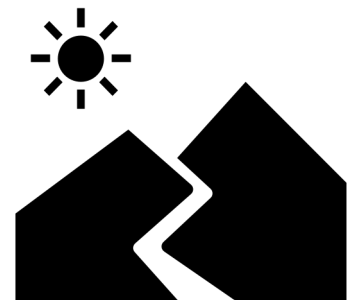
phase 2

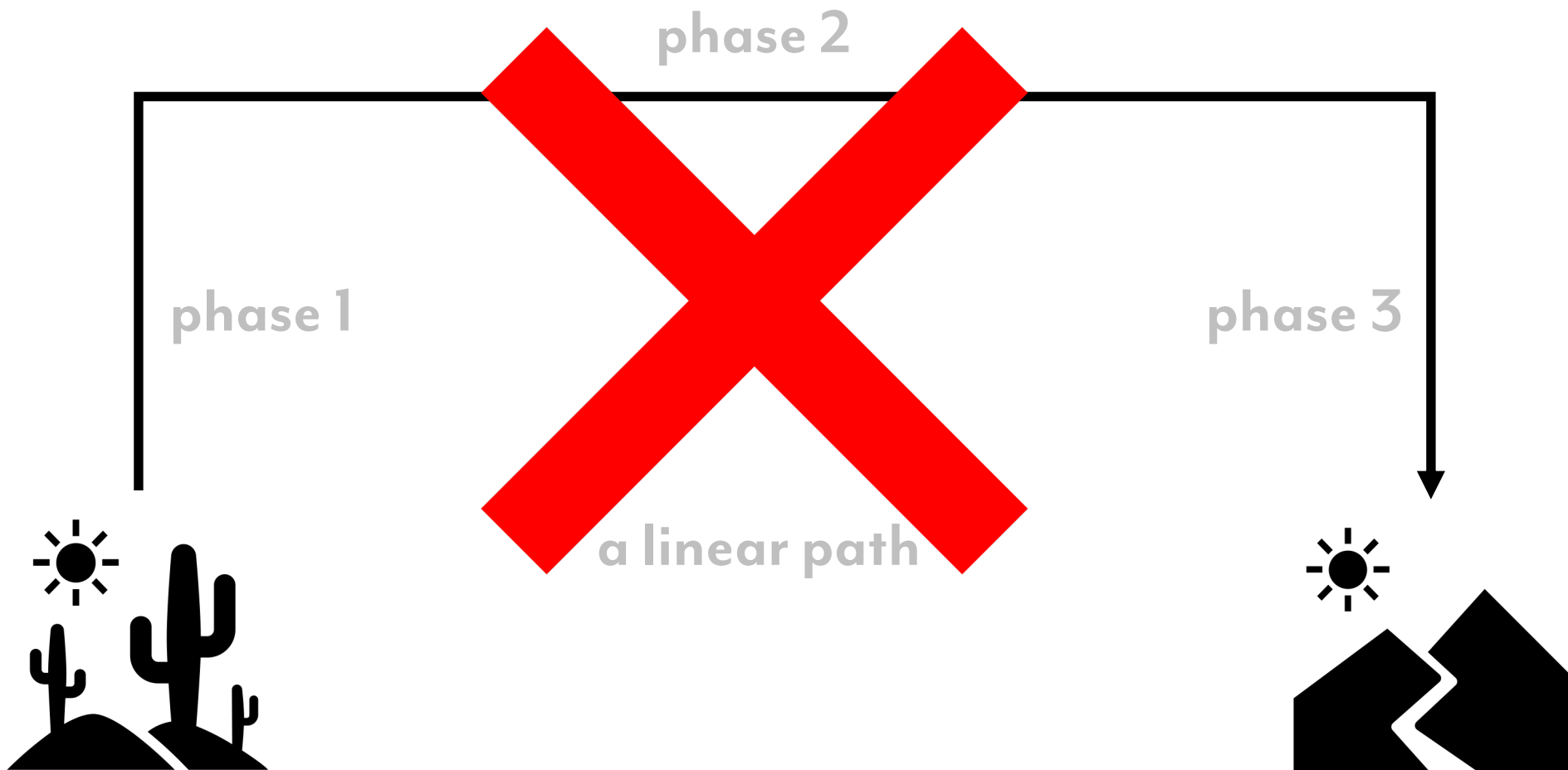


phase 1

**as a linear path**

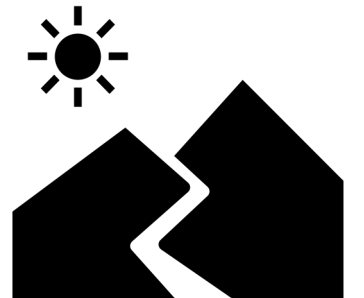
phase 3







**strategic planning is largely unchanged for 100 years**





**ПЯТИЛЕТНИЙ  
ПЛАН  
ВОССТАНОВЛЕНИЯ  
И РАЗВИТИЯ  
НАРОДНОГО ХОЗЯЙСТВА  
СССР  
НА 1946-1950 гг.**



**ОСНОВНЫЕ ЗАДАЧИ ПЯТИЛЕТНЕГО ПЛАНА СОСТОЯТ В ТОМ, ЧТОБЫ ВОССТАНОВИТЬ ПОСТРАДАВШИЕ РАЙОНЫ СТРАНЫ, ВОССТАНОВИТЬ ДОВОЕННЫЙ УРОВЕНЬ ПРОМЫШЛЕННОСТИ И СЕЛЬСКОГО ХОЗЯЙСТВА И ЗАТЕМ ПРЕВЗОЙТИ ЭТОТ УРОВЕНЬ В ЗНАЧИТЕЛЬНЫХ РАЗМЕРАХ**

РОСТ ПРОДУКЦИИ ПО СРАВНЕНИЮ С ПРЕДВОЕННЫМ 1940 ГОДОМ СОСТАВИТ  
ПО ПРОМЫШЛЕННОСТИ ПО СЕЛЬСКОМУ ХОЗЯЙСТВУ



Иллюстрация: С. Сидорова. Карикатура: В. Давыдов. Фото: В. Сидорова. Фотохудожник: В. Давыдов. Дизайн: В. Сидорова. Москва, 1946

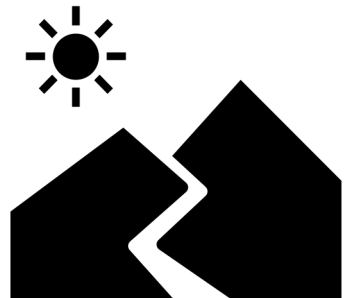


# 2020-2030 Strategic Plan for NIH Nutrition Research

A Report of the NIH Nutrition Research Task Force



**if we can get gravity wrong for twenty centuries,  
we should consider the possibility that we've gotten strategic  
planning wrong for one century**





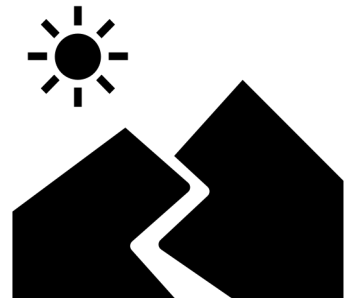
**in systems characterized by complexity, strategic planning  
is a form of malpractice (and work avoidance)**



**complexity will eventually drive strategic planners to the status of a fringe cult**

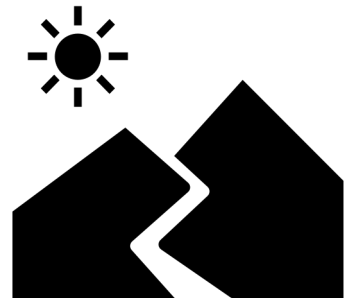


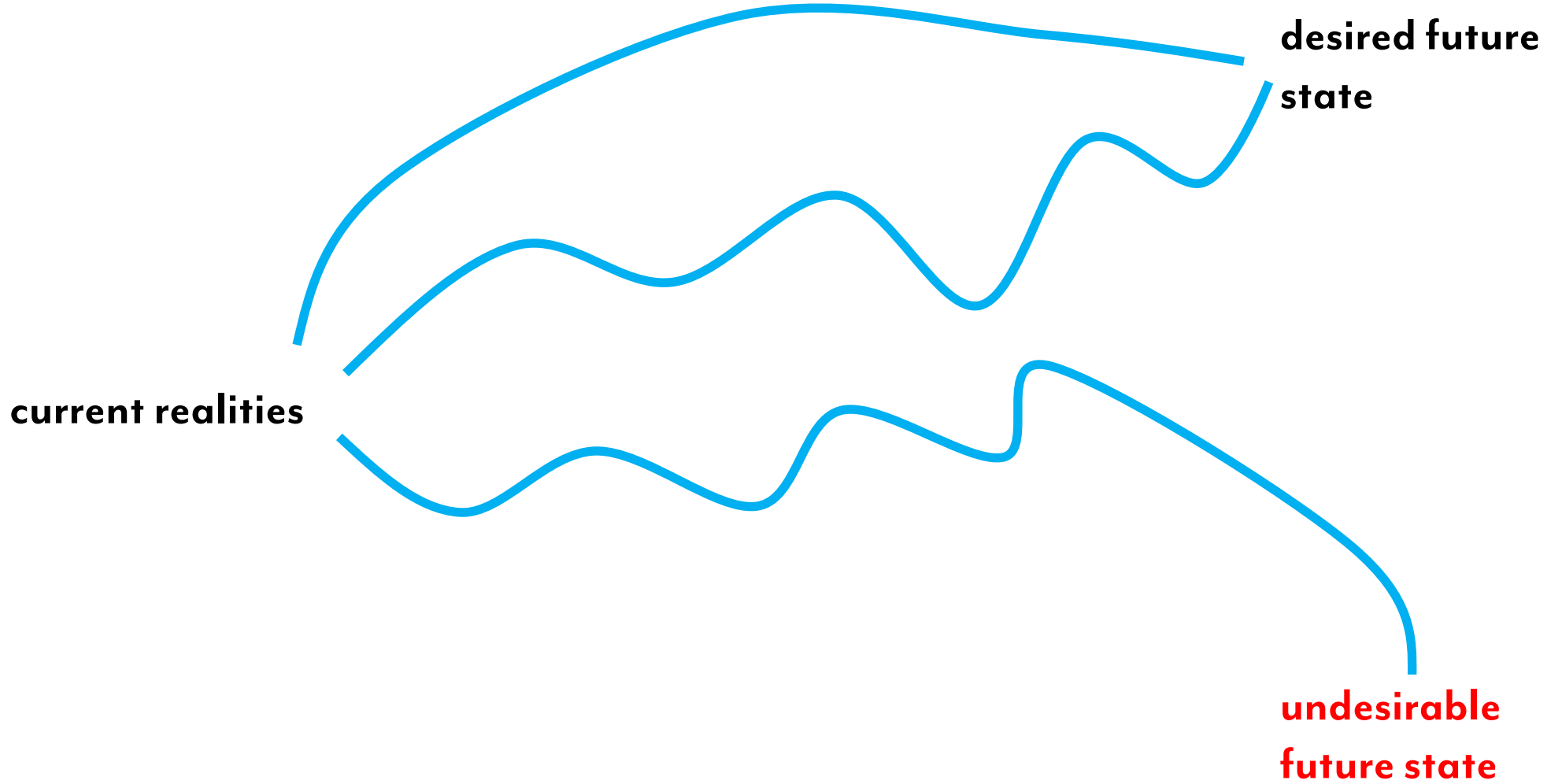
**what is the reality of the journey?**



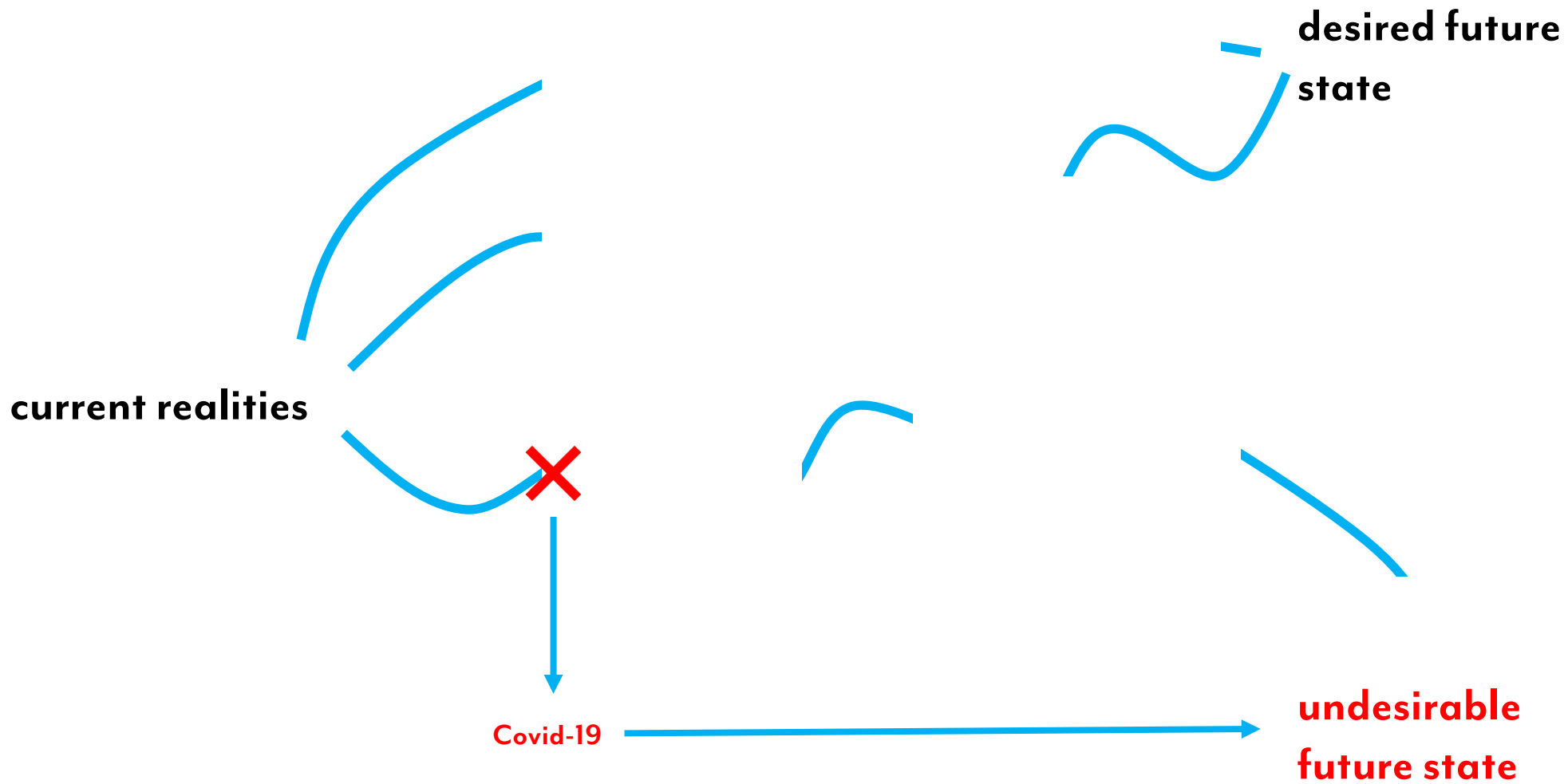


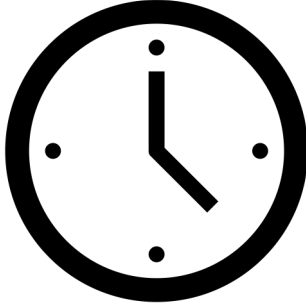
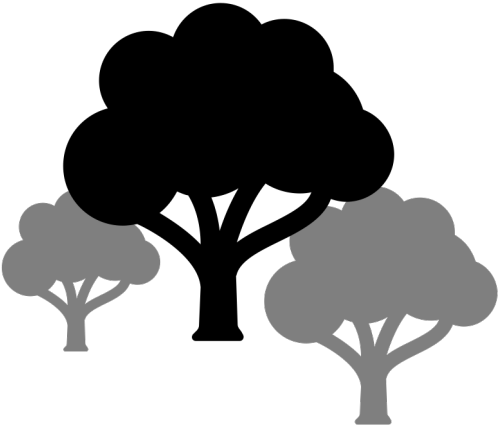
**it's impossible to predict in advance**













**axiom 1**

**paradigms are built from practices ;**

**practices are built from tools, processes, spaces, ingredients,  
and customs**

**axiom 12**

**effective strategy in complex systems is a practice  
(it is about what you actually do)**

**axiom 13**

**effective strategy in complex systems is an infinite game**  
**(not a finite game)**

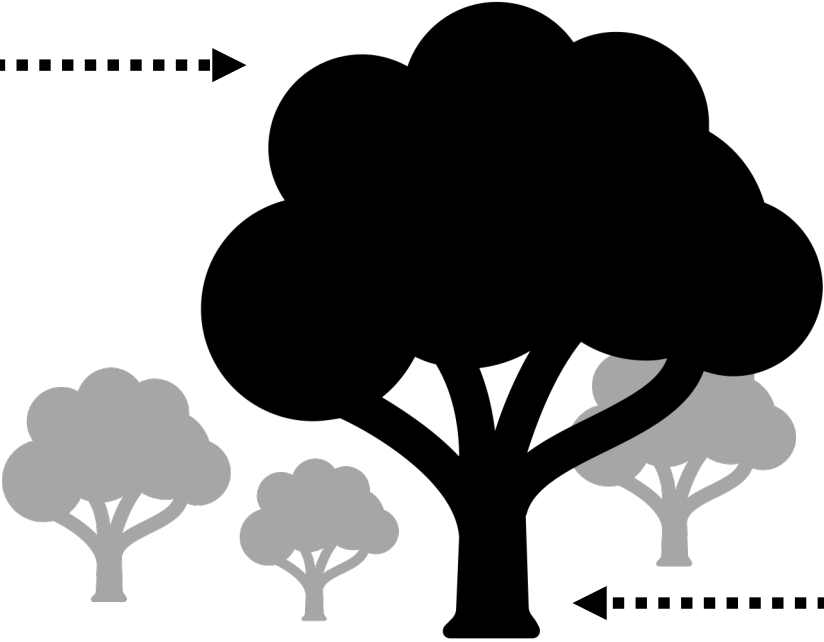


## **axiom 14**

**in any complex system always take at least three perspectives –  
the existential, strategic & tactical**



**strategic**



**tactical**



the view from the treetops

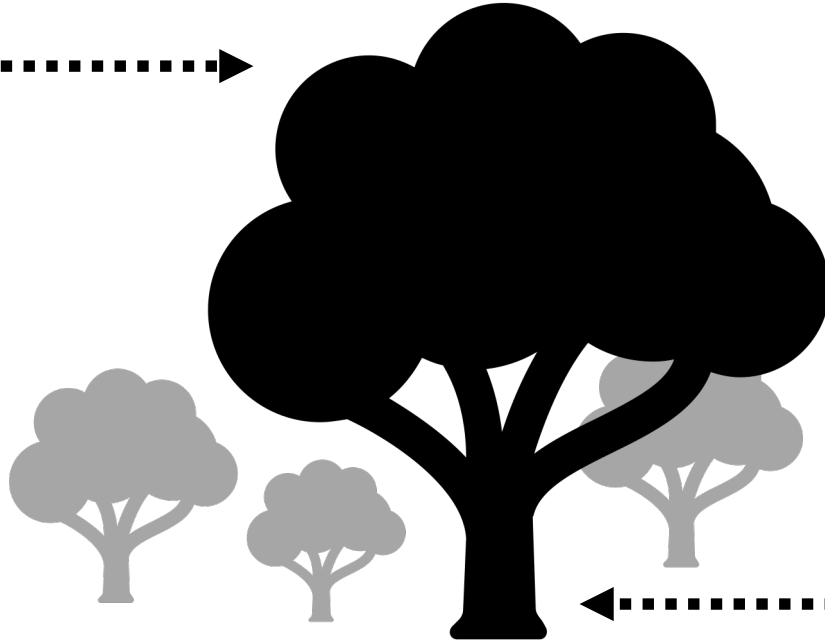
**strategic**



big picture

seeing far

long term



the view from the ground

**tactical**



detailed

close up

short term





the view from the stars



**existential**  
**purpose**

the view from the treetops

**strategic**



the view from the ground



**tactical**



## **axiom 15**

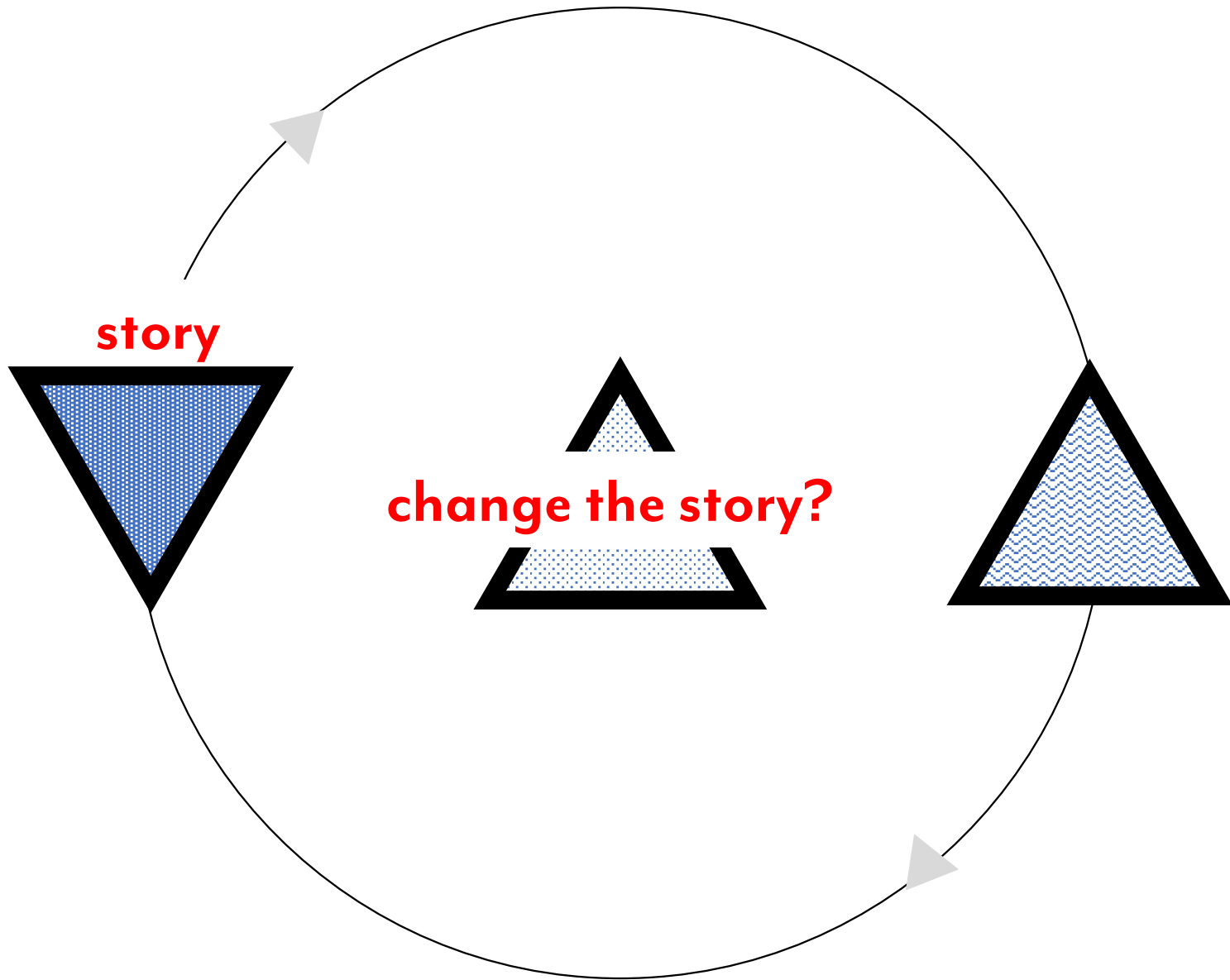
**Never privilege any one perspective over another – beware of your own bias (to one perspective over another)**

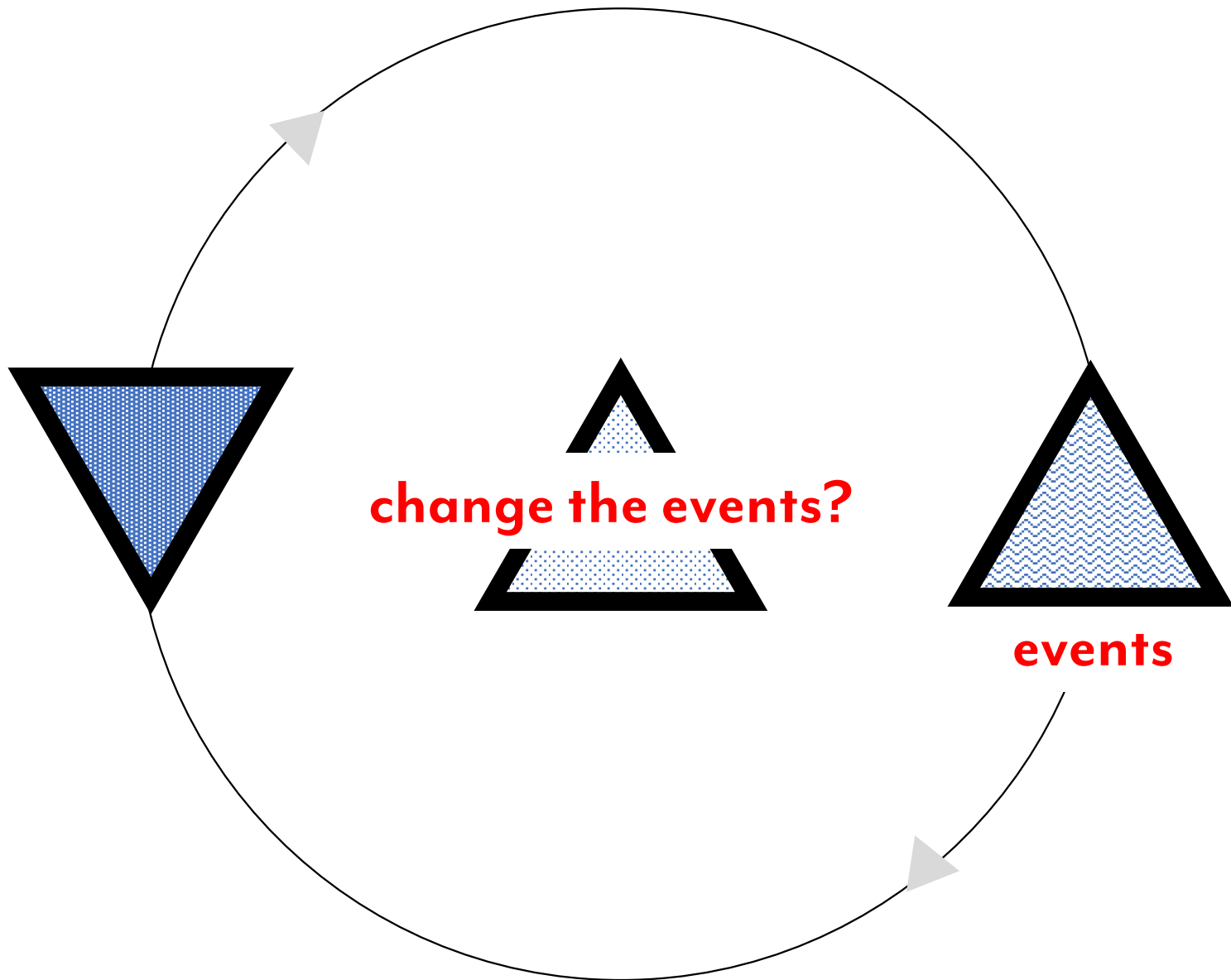


## **axiom 16**

**there are always three critical places to intervene in any complex system**

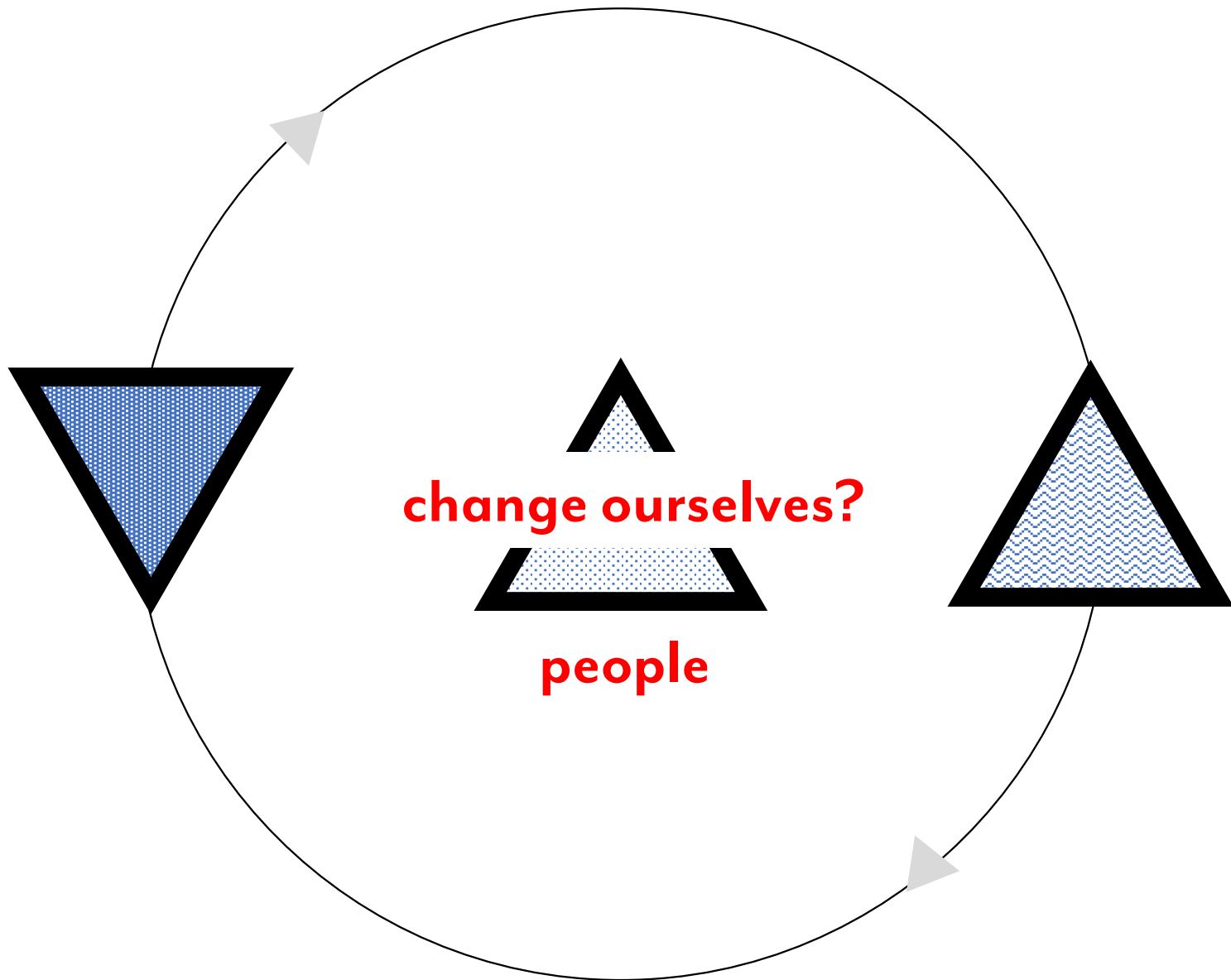
**(existential = story, strategic = people, event = tactical)**





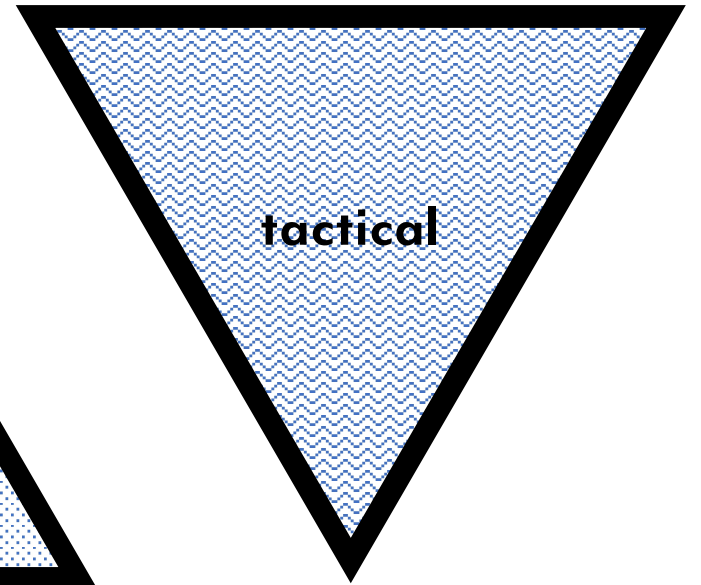
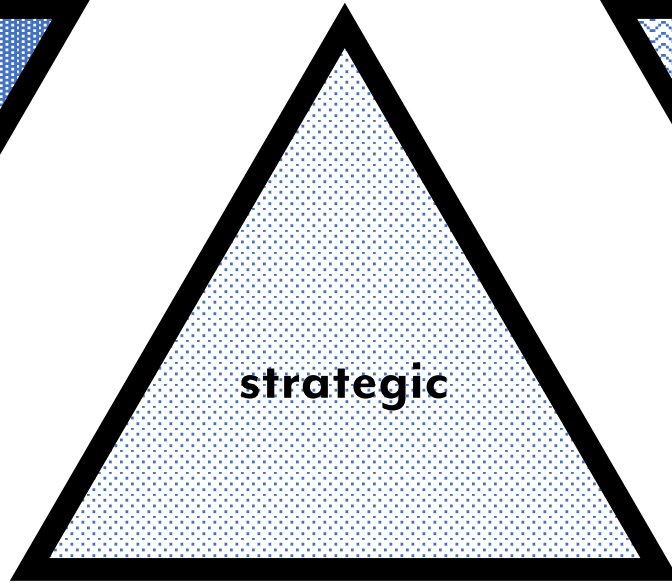
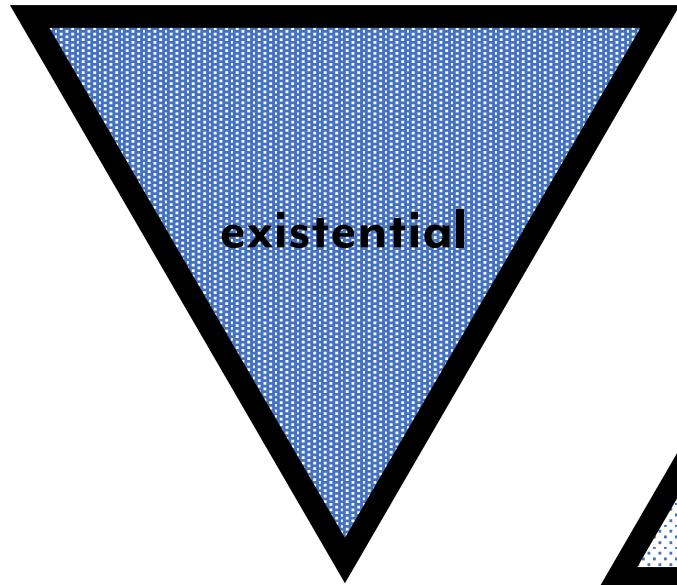
**change the events?**

**events**



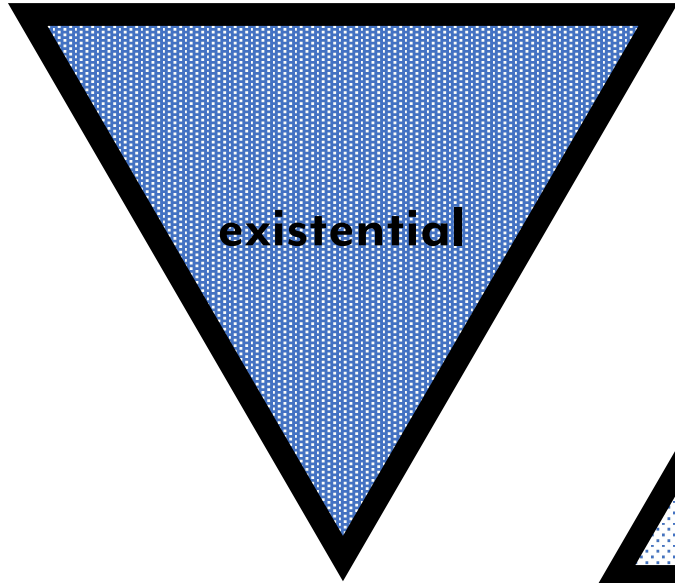
**change ourselves?**

**people**

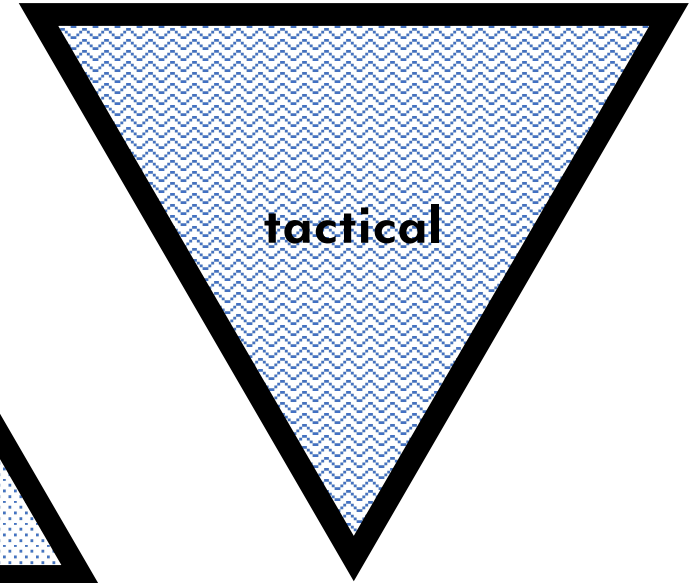




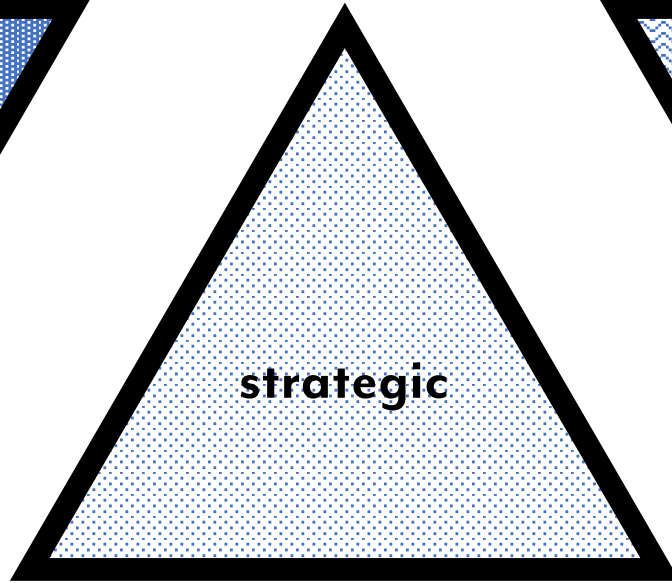
**strategy as story-telling**



**strategy as action**



**strategy as inner-game**







## **axiom 17**

**effective strategy in complexity requires mastering three practices simultaneously**

**(strategy-as-storytelling, strategy-as-action, strategy-as-inner game)**



Wednesday 26 May 2021

Foundation of Complexity 2

# an introduction to effective strategy

Session 1/2/3

**doing nothing vs strategic planning**

**doing nothing vs strategic planning vs effective strategy**

**the culture of strategic planning is not fit for purpose**

(if we can get gravity wrong for 20 centuries,  
shouldn't we consider possibility that we've gotten  
**strategic planning** wrong?)

**strategic planning in complexity is malpractice**  
**just don't do it**

**the critical question to ask of any strategy is “who benefits?”**



**system**

ie. biodiversity

**sectoral**

ie. conservation

**institutional**

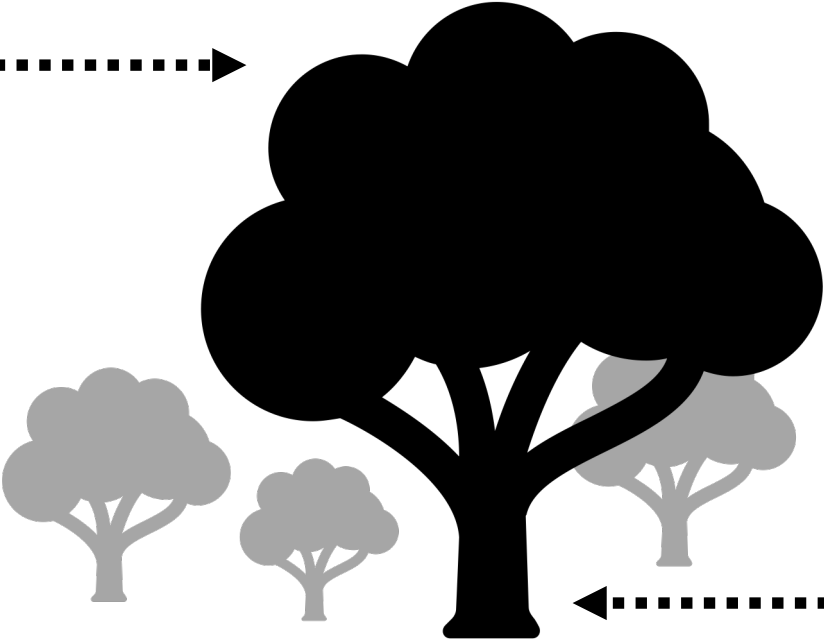
ie. organizations

**project**

**personal**



**strategic**



**tactical**



the view from the treetops

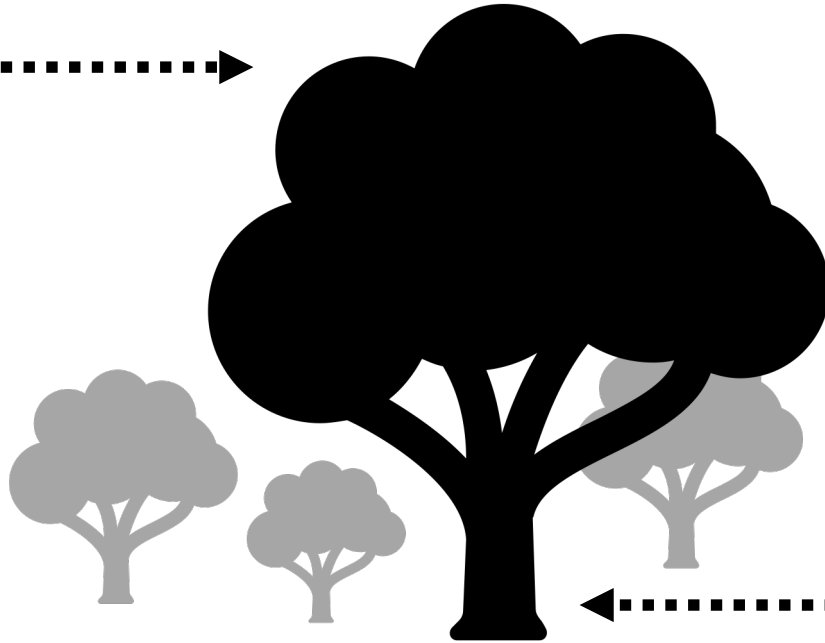
**strategic**



big picture

seeing far

long term



the view from the ground

**tactical**



detailed

close up

short term



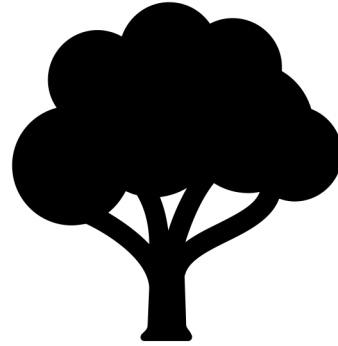
the view from the stars



**existential**  
**purpose**

the view from the treetops

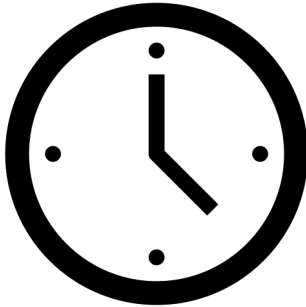
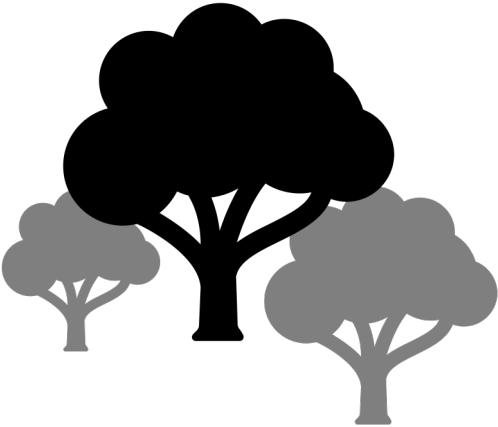
**strategic**



the view from the ground



**tactical**



**“complex”**

**vs**

**“non-complex”**

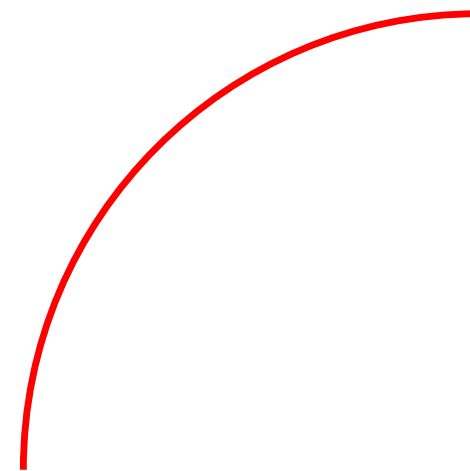
**“pigeon”**

**vs**

**“rocket”**



**VS**





**“complex”**

**vs**

**“non-complex”**

**“prototyping”**

**vs**

**“strategic planning”**

**what does effective action in a complex system look like?**

**interventions are governed by “complex causality”  
not “simple causality”**

**“Erosion control in Japan is like a game of chess. The forest engineer, after studying his eroding valley makes his first move, locating and building one or more check dams. He waits to see what Nature’s response is. This determines the forest engineers next move, which may be to build another dam or two, an increase in the former dam, or the construction of side retaining walls. Another pause for observation. The next move is made, and so on, until erosion is checkmated.”**

**Source: James C Scott, *Seeing Like A State***

**at the heart of effective strategy is the practice of prototyping**

**at the heart of effective strategy is the practice of prototyping  
which at its simplest is **trial and error****

**“In 1976, I lent \$ 27 to 42 people to help them get out of these unfair deals. People who received my money were very happy. Seeing how easy it was to make so many people so happy with such a small amount of money, I thought I should work out a way to find money for them in a permanent basis. So I went to the bank to arrange loans for them. Bank said they cannot give loans to the poor people because they are not creditworthy.**



**So I thought I should take upon myself to find out whether their conclusion was right. I offered myself as a guarantor and took loans for the poor people. Tried some simple ways of handling these loans. They worked. Everybody paid back their loans.**

**This triggered a whole series of experimentation - from one village to 5 villages, then to 20 villages, fifty villages, hundred villages. Every time it worked. But conventional banks did not want to change their minds.**

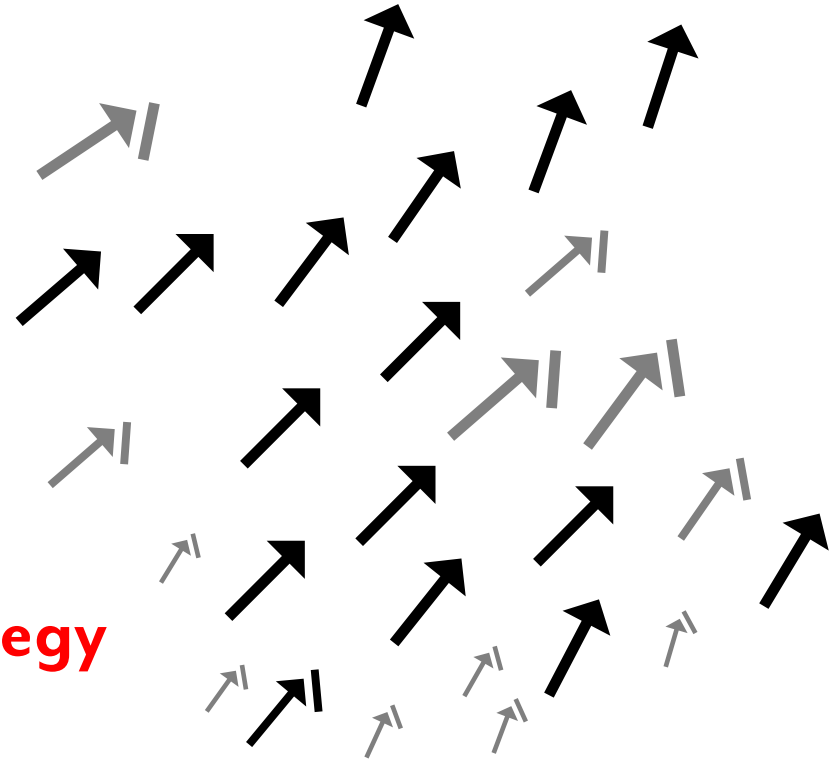
**Finally, in 1983, we created a bank of our own. Now we work in 37,000 villages of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has a total of 68,000 villages. We now lend out to 2.2 million borrowers, 95 per cent of them are poor women. Our repayment rate has remained over 98 per cent.”**

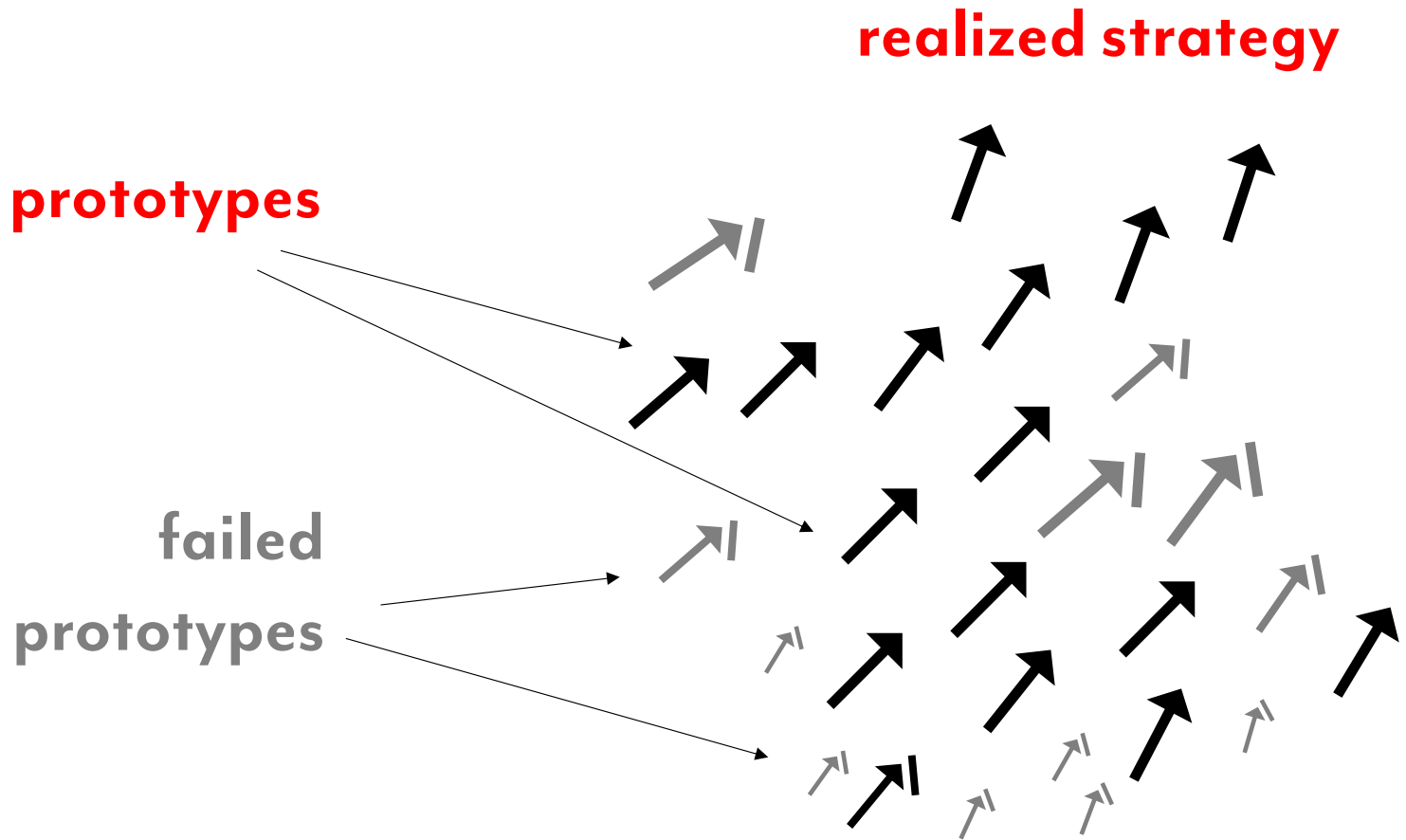
**Source: Mohammad Yunus, Grameen Bank**



**realized strategy**

**emergent strategy**







DRAWDOWN ONE TON OF CO<sub>2</sub> IN 10 DAYS

# TON X 10

CAN YOU GET THE FULL HOUSE?  
#TONXTEN #CARBONBINGO

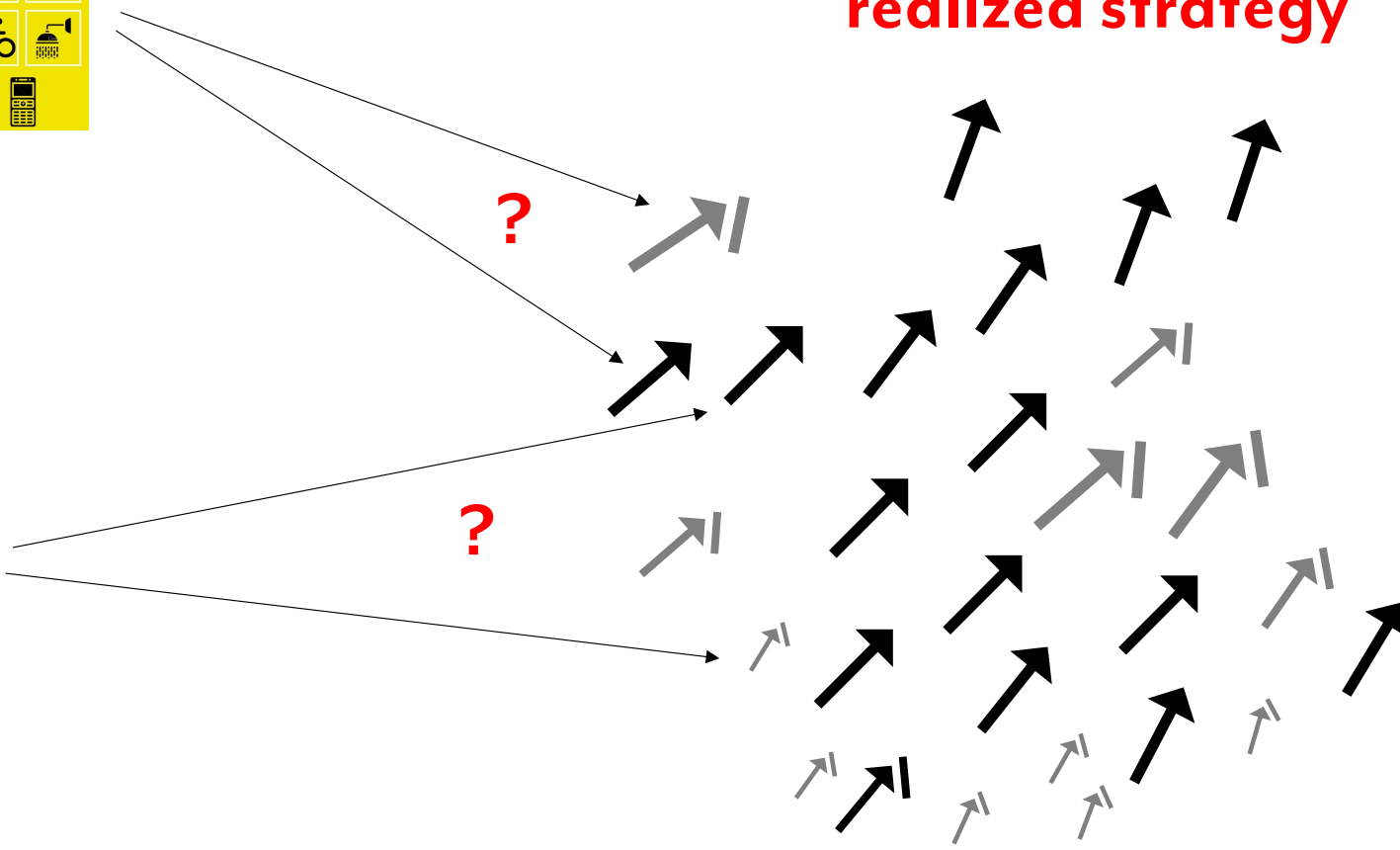
do your bit for the environment  
&  
**EARN FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION TICKETS**

**IN MUMBAI & DELHI**

you count a sign and half ticket. In quick steps and over 1000. do not cross.

More info in the link on the post!

**realized strategy**



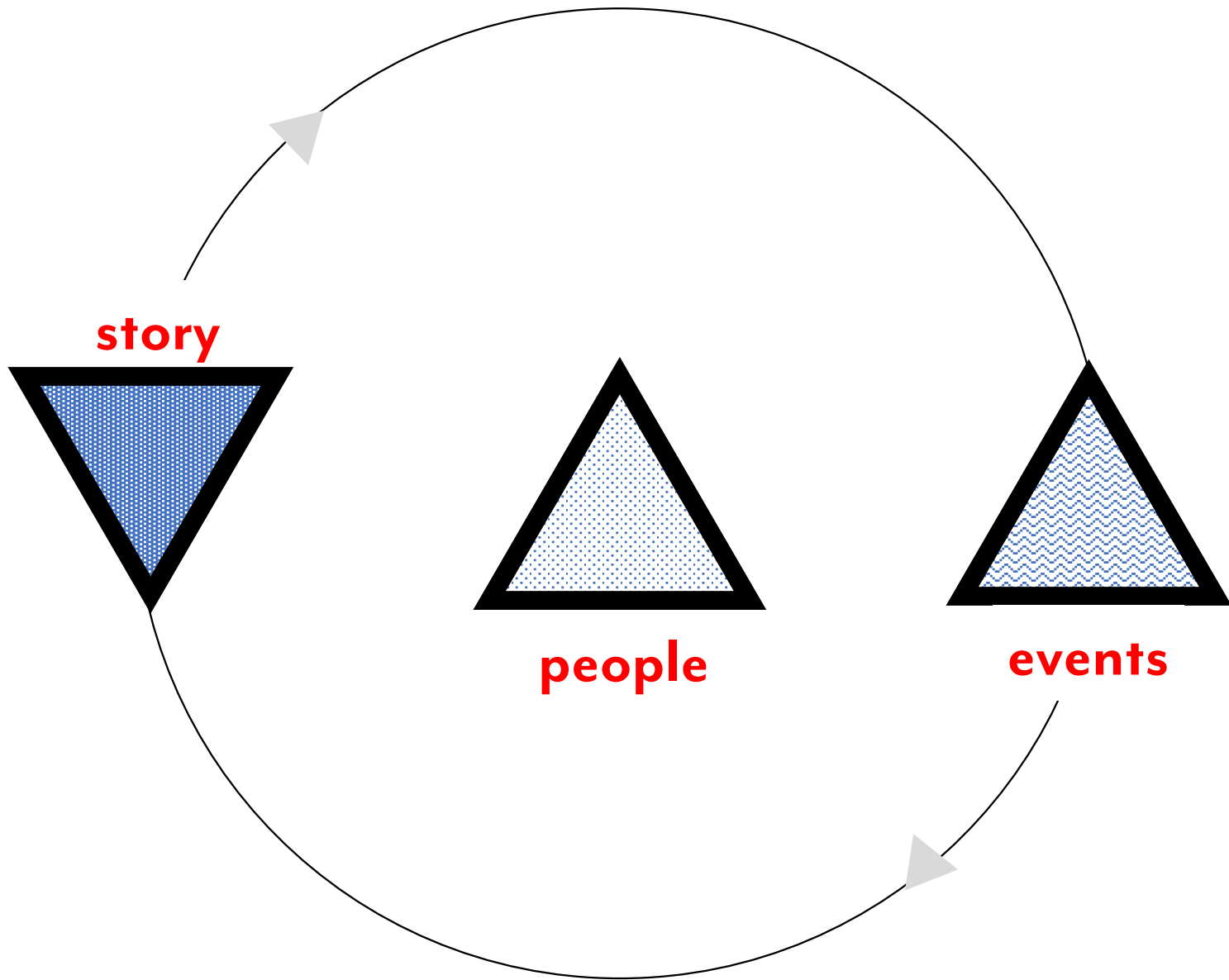
**what did mohammad younus do wrong?**

**frying is not a cooking, it is a process**

**prototyping is not a strategy, it is a process**



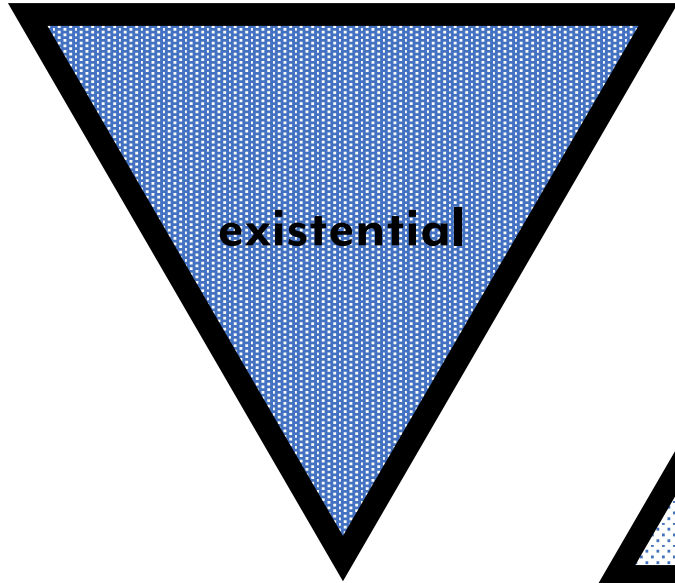
**3 places to intervene in a complex system**



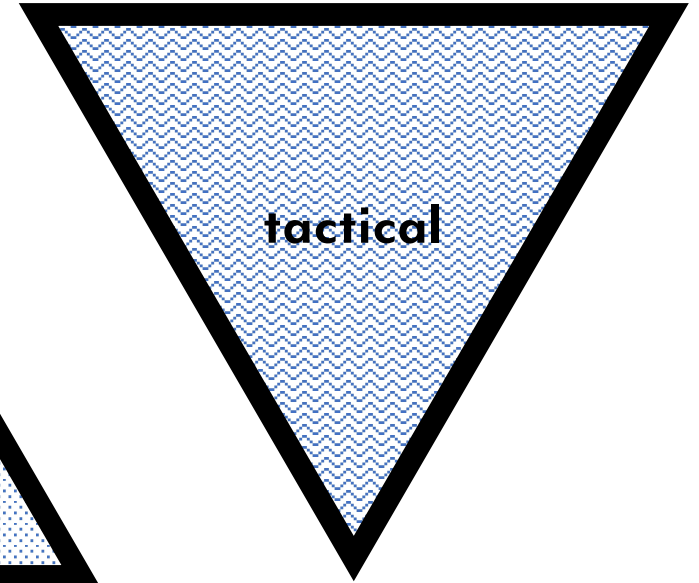
**effective strategy in complex systems = three practices**



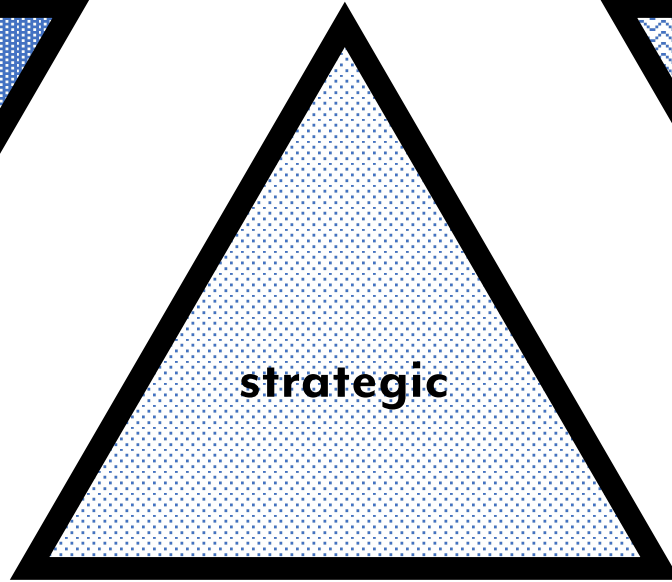
**strategy as story-telling**



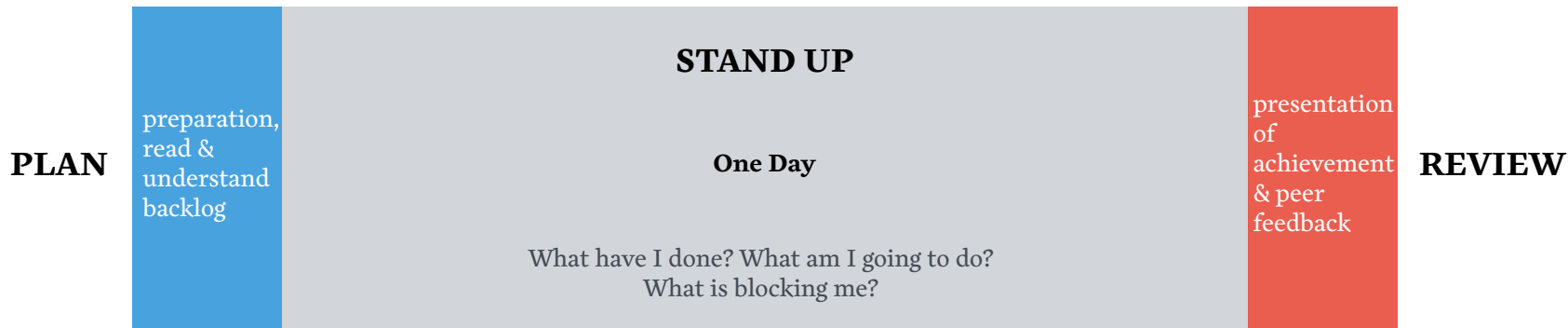
**strategy as action**



**strategy as inner-game**



**prototyping is not a strategy, it is a process, it's 1 of 7  
elements of strategy-as-action**



← X WEEKS →

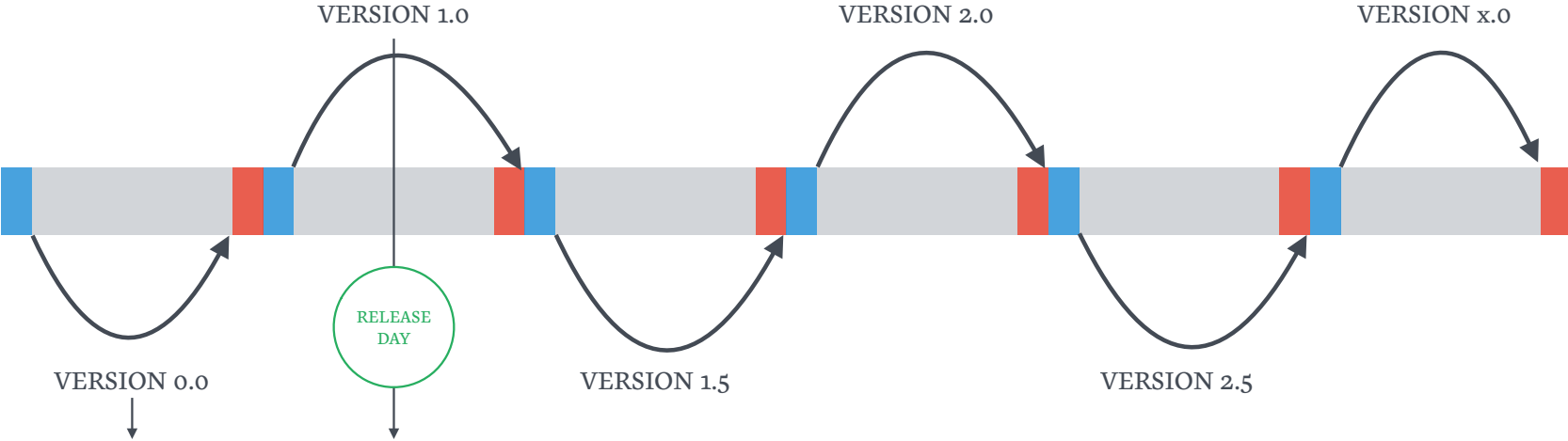
### SUSTAINABLE PACE

Are we achieving anticipated velocity? (Internal to team)



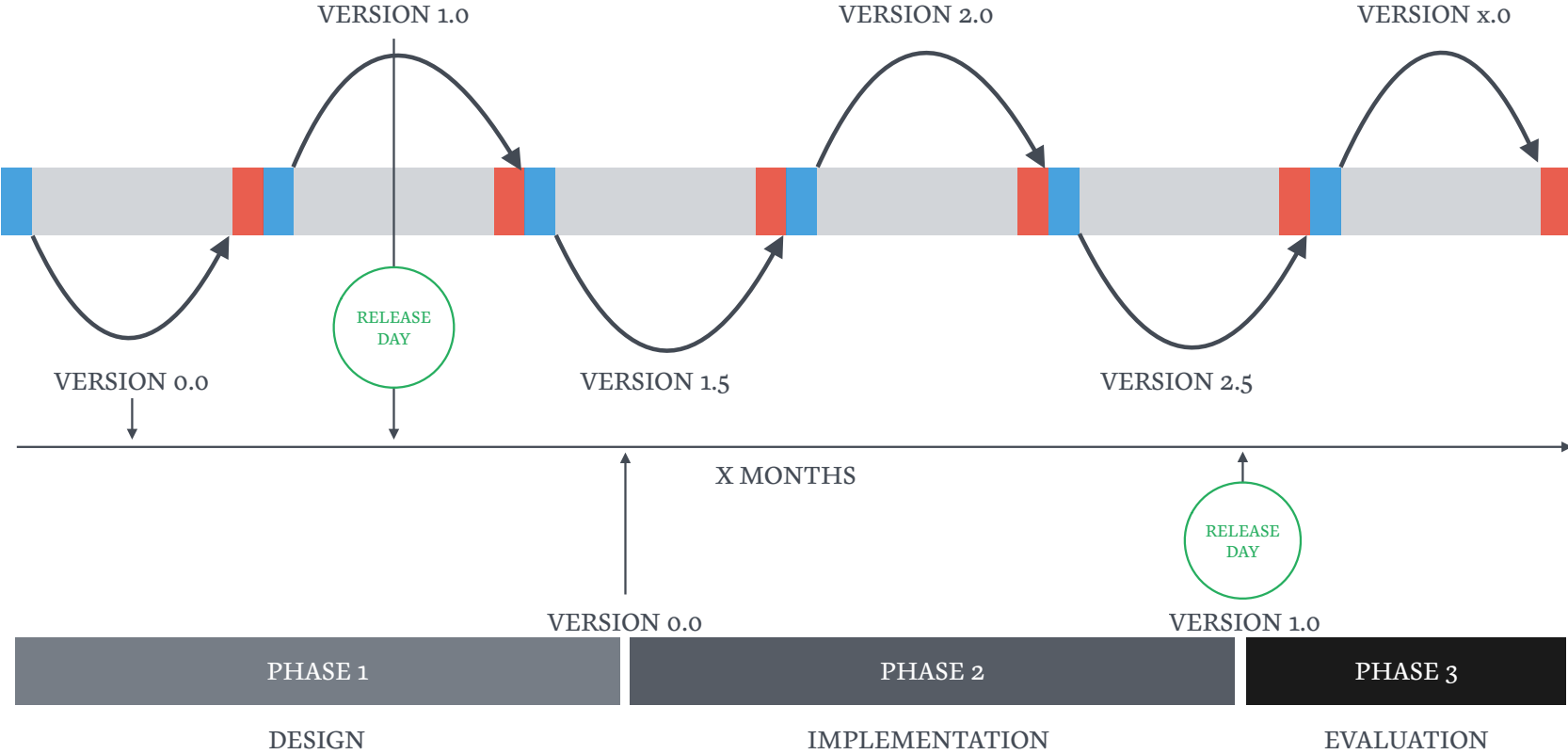
← ONE MONTH →

# COMPLEXITY PARADIGM = PROTOTYPING



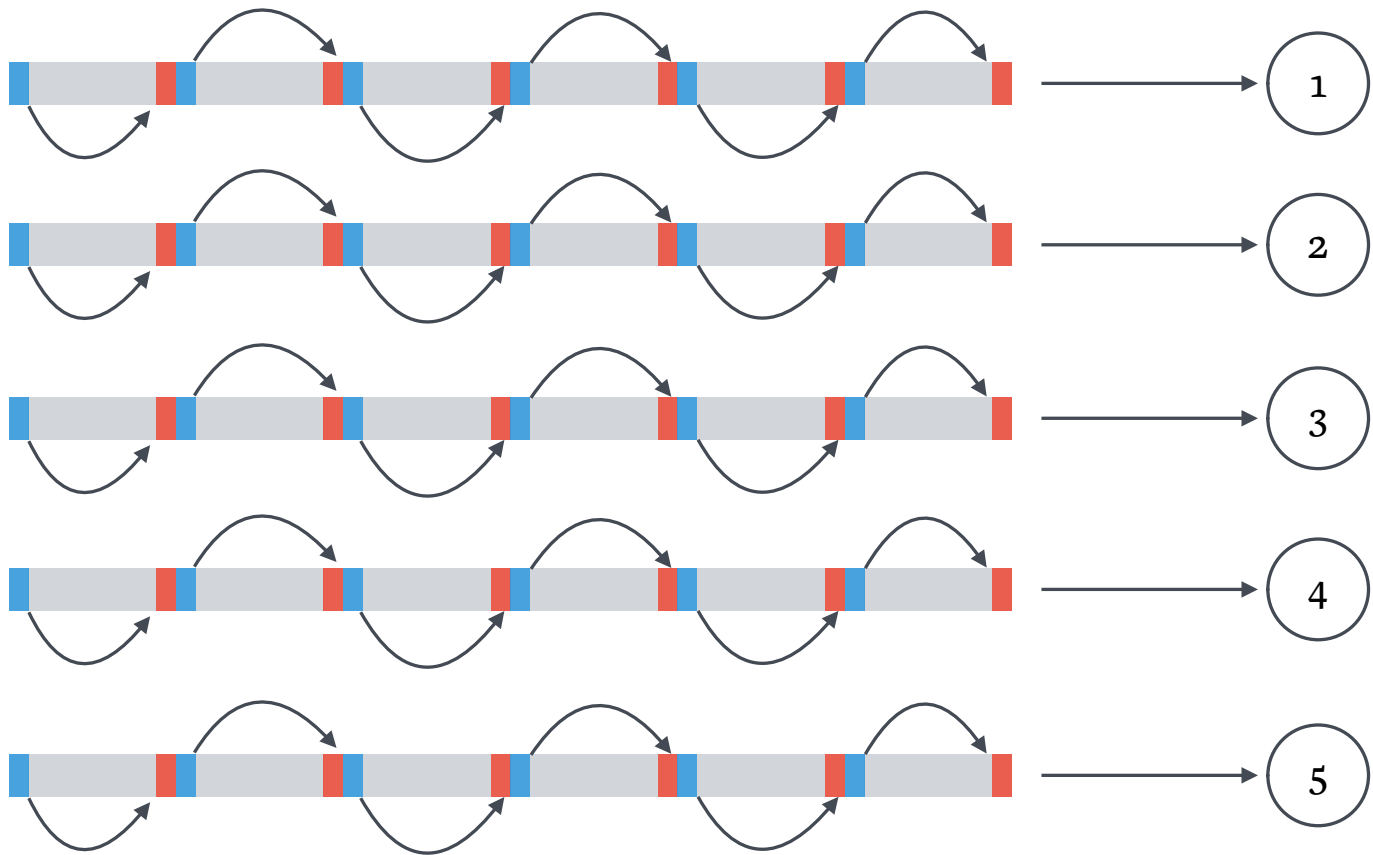
# "CLOCK" PARADIGM = STRATEGIC PLANNING

# COMPLEXITY PARADIGM = PROTOTYPING



# "CLOCK" PARADIGM = STRATEGIC PLANNING







Friday 28 May 2021

Foundation of Complexity 2

# an introduction to effective strategy

Session 1/2/3



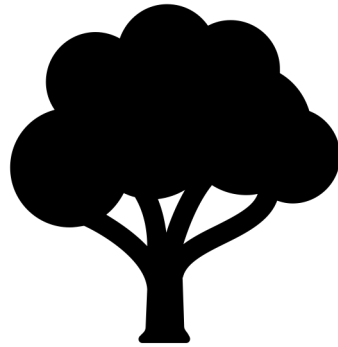
the view from the stars



**existential**  
**purpose**

the view from the treetops

**strategic**



the view from the ground



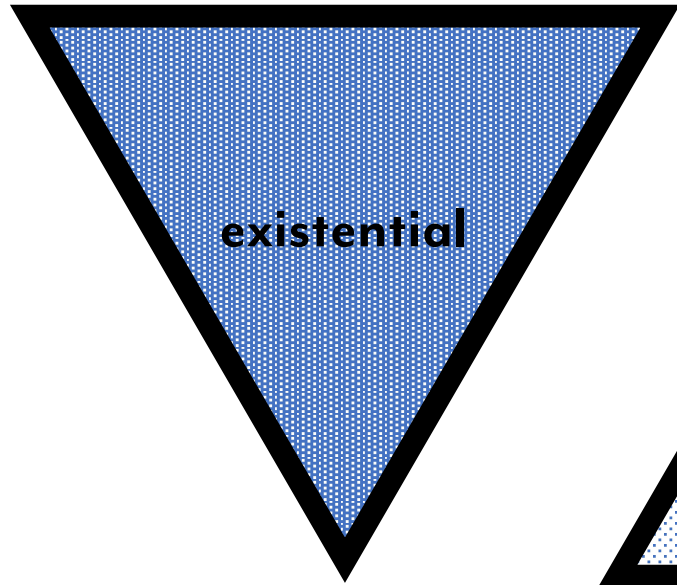
**tactical**



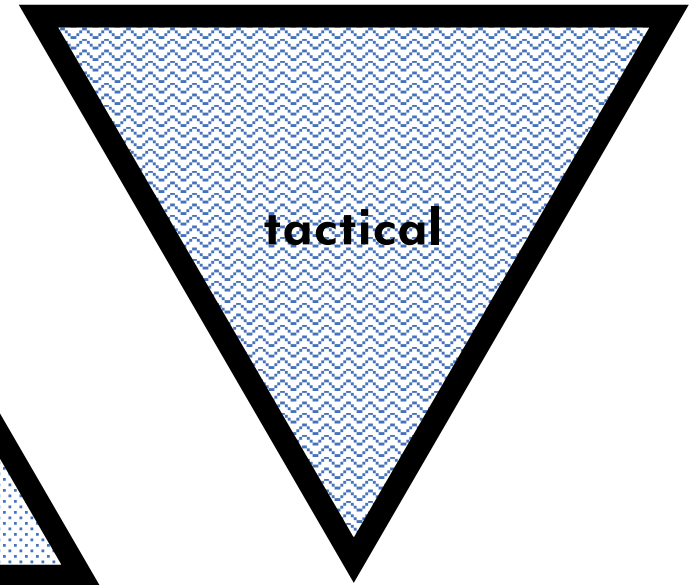
**what is effective strategy?**



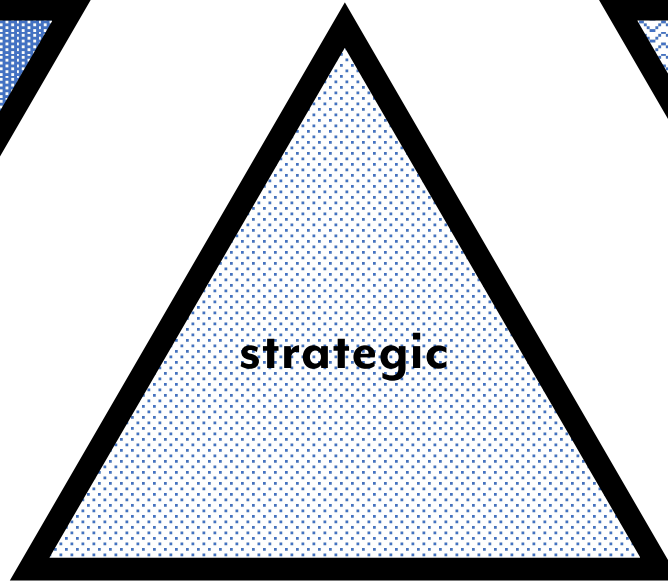
**strategy as story-telling**



**strategy as action**

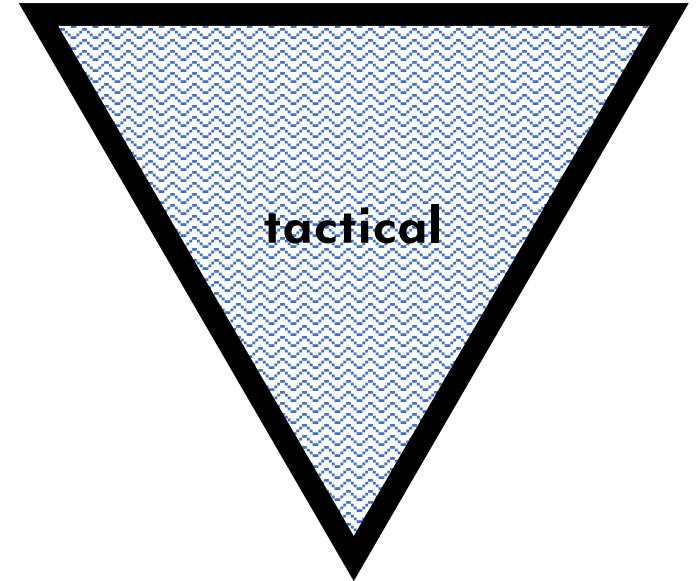


**strategy as inner-game**



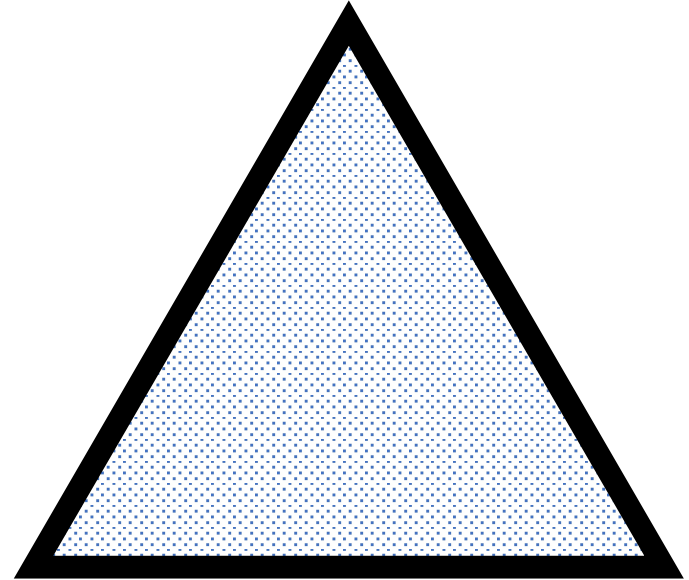
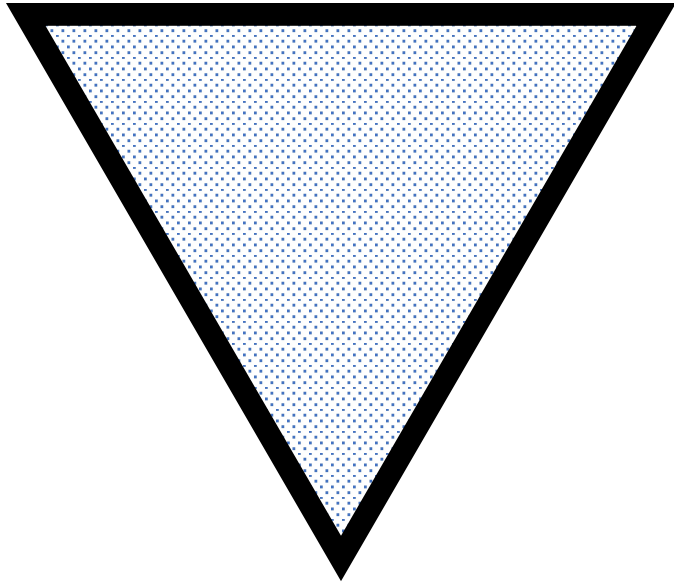


**strategy as action**



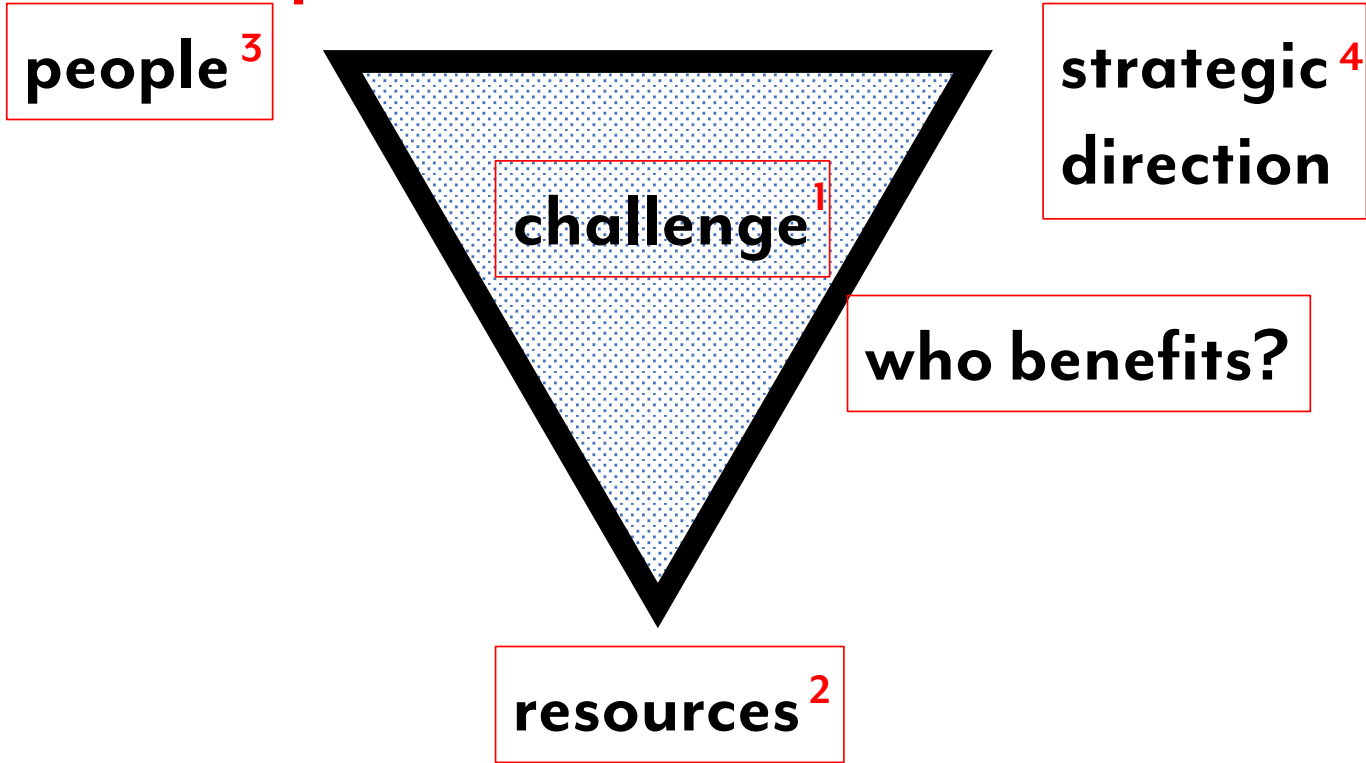
**what is strategy-as-action?**

**preconditions for action**



**core elements of action**

**preconditions for action**



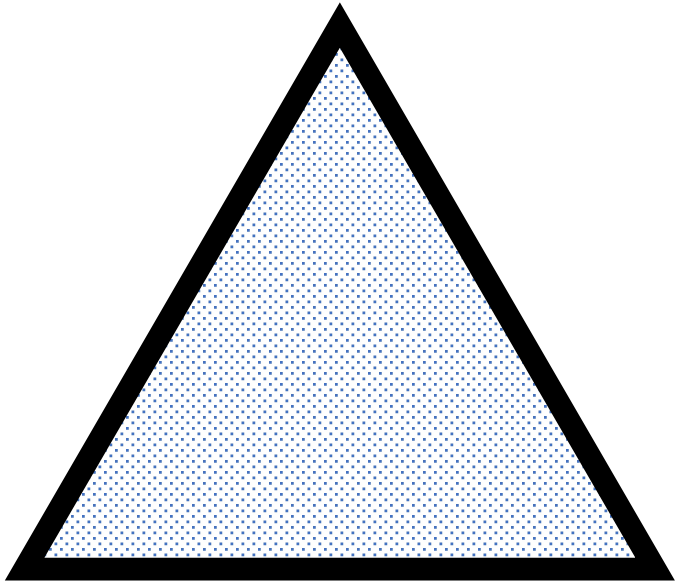


**preconditions are everything**

**“An infinitesimal change in starting conditions can have enormous consequences later.”**

**- Drift into failure, from Hunting Broken Components To Understanding Complex Systems, Sidney Dekker**

**team**<sup>5</sup>



**process**<sup>7</sup>

**architecture**<sup>6</sup>

**core elements of action**

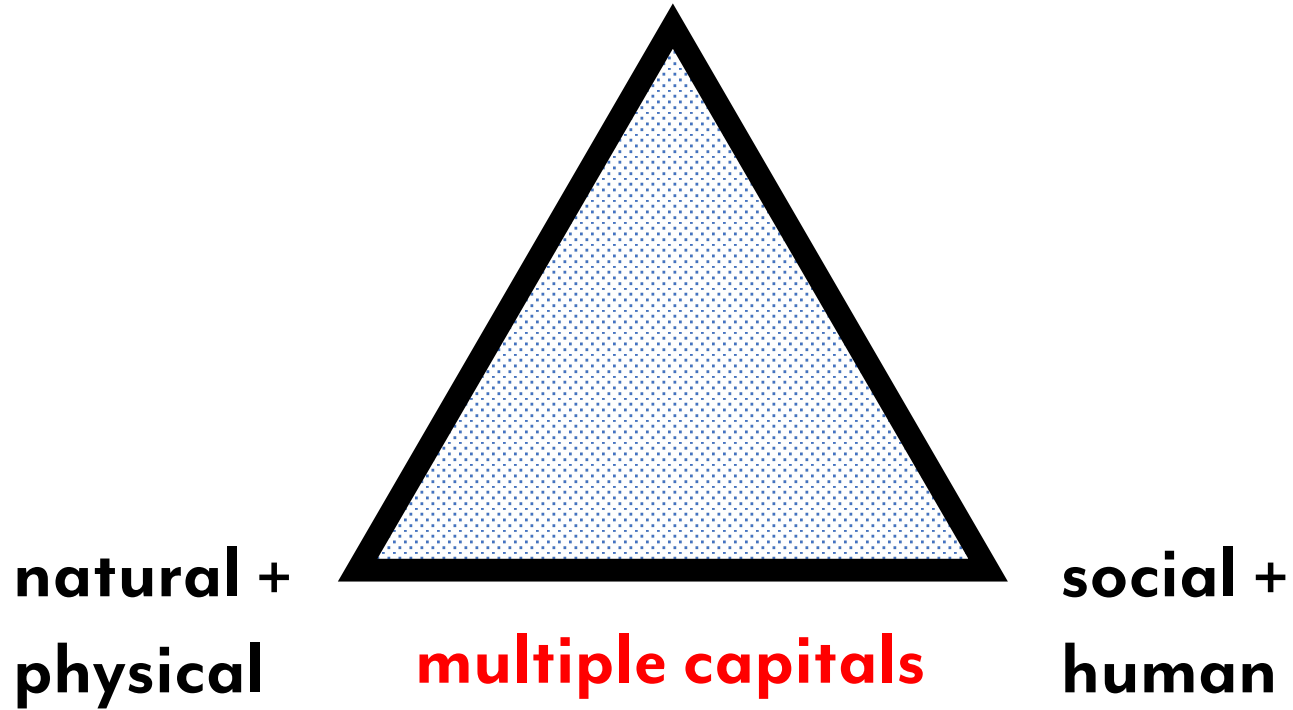
**putting these elements in place will generate multiple outputs**



**these outputs can be understood as forms of multiple capitals**

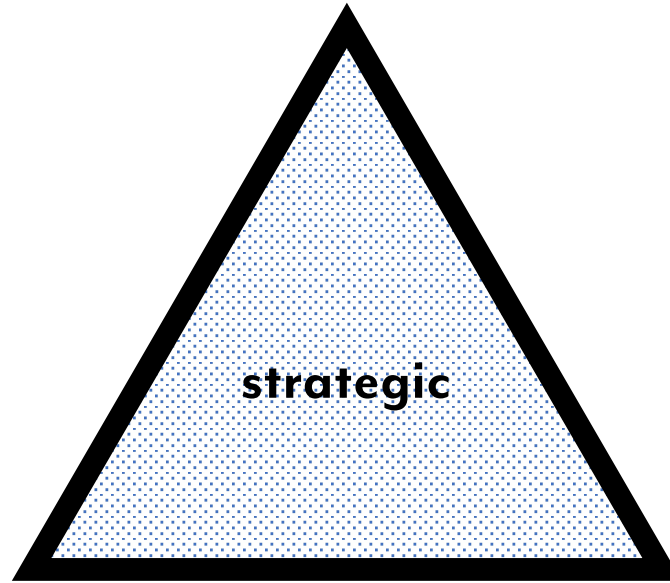


**financial + intellectual**





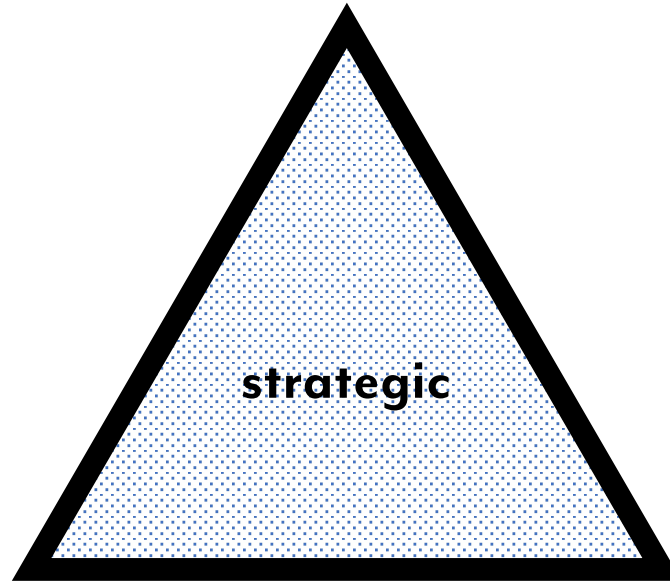
**what is strategy-as-inner-game?**



**strategy as inner-game**

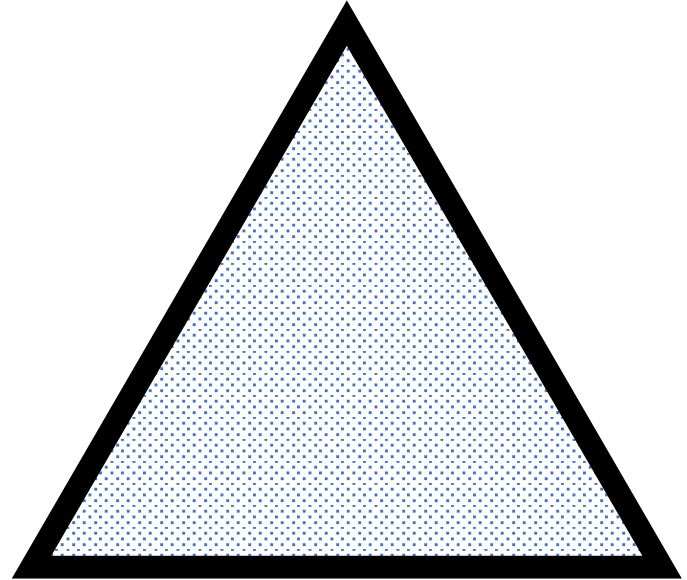
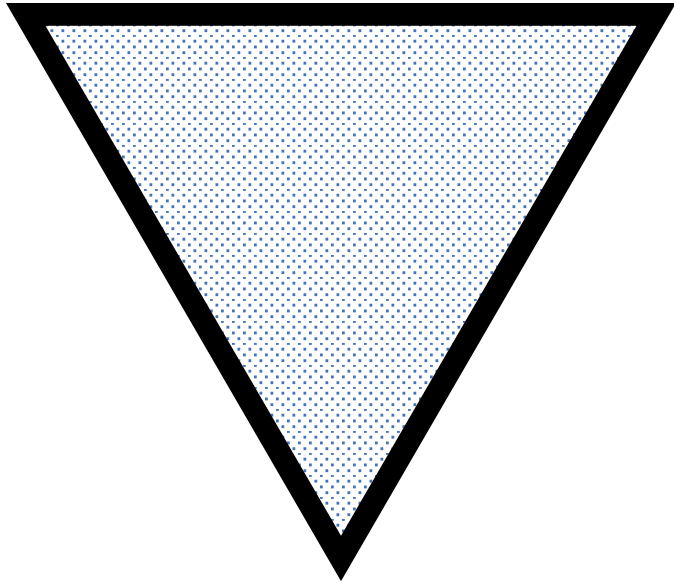


**what is strategy-as-inner-game?**



**strategy as inner-game**

**preconditions for play**



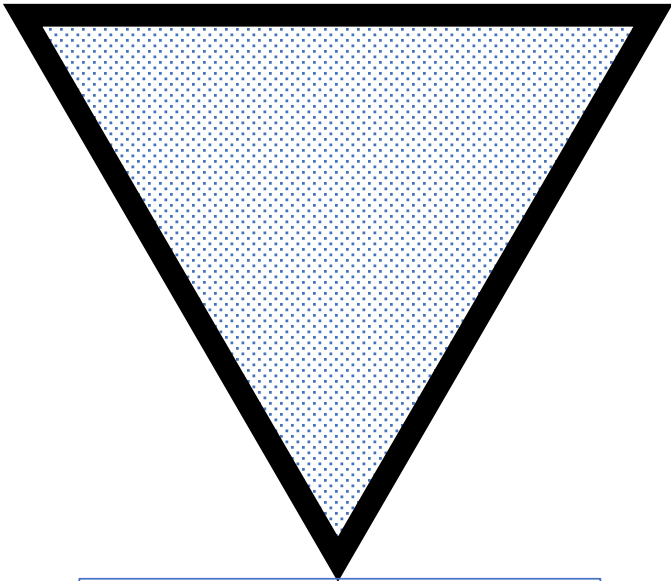
**playing the game**



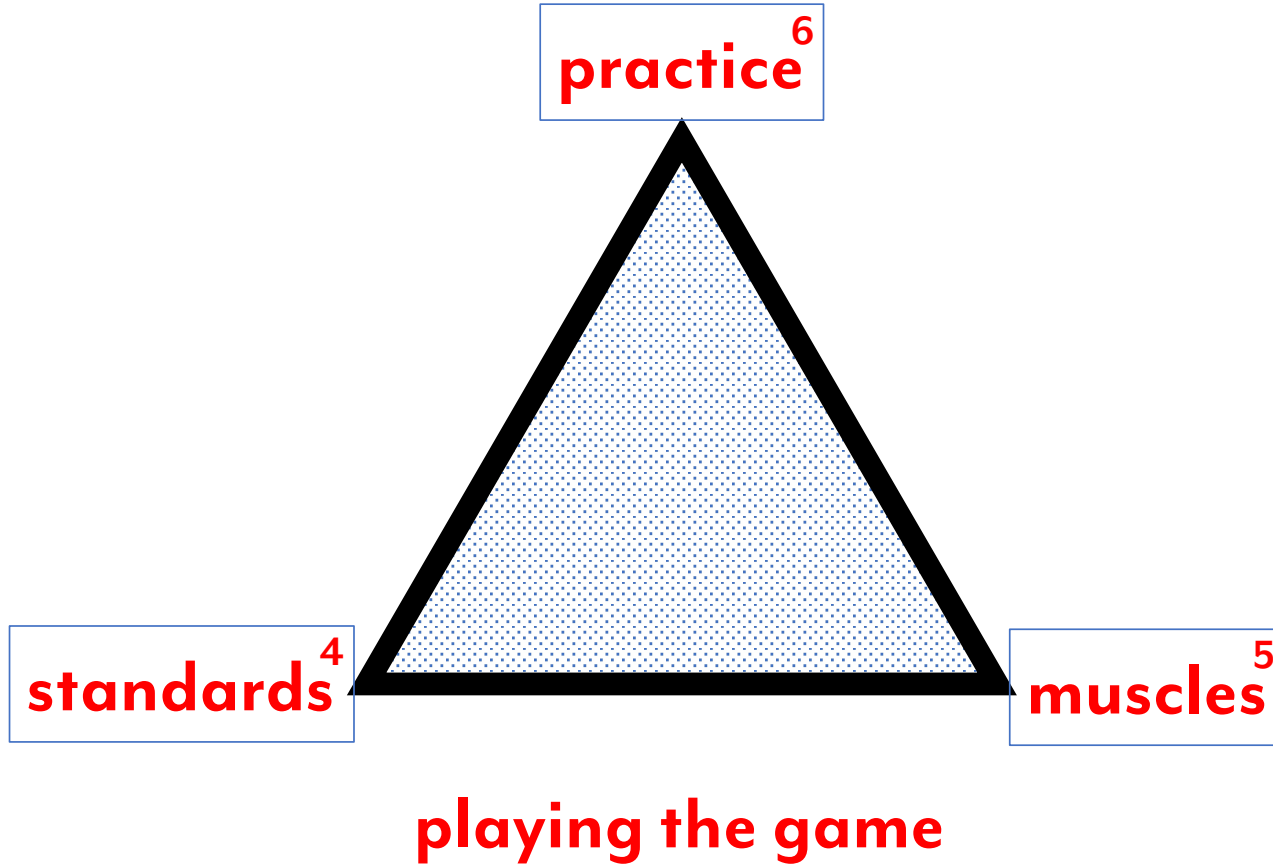
**preconditions for play**

**strategic intent<sup>1</sup>**

**skin-in-the-game<sup>2</sup>**



**operational risk<sup>3</sup>**



**“Scars signal skin in the game.”**

- Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Skin in the Game: Hidden Asymmetries in Daily Life*

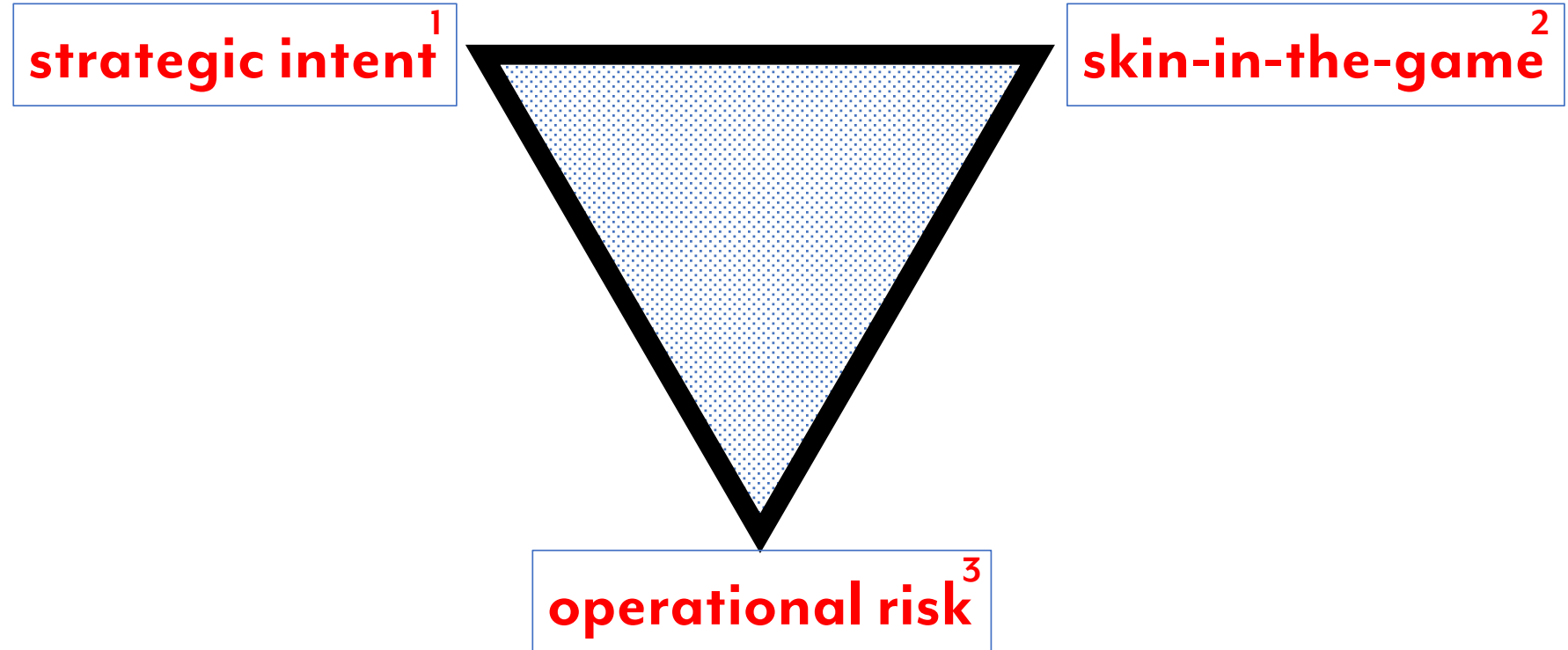
**challenge**

**how can we work together to support young people aged  
18-23 in Mumbai to develop resilient livelihoods?**

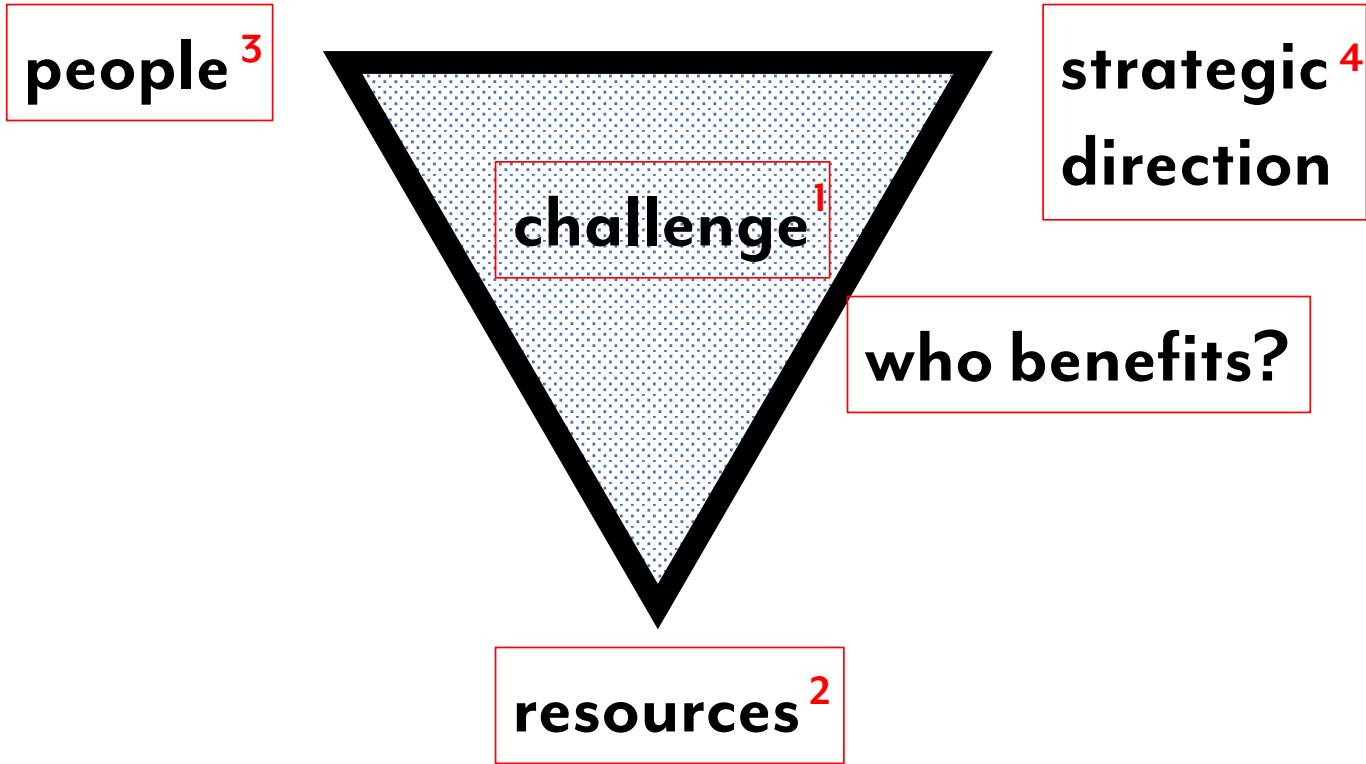
**breakout**

**spend 25-minutes discussing what the “preconditions for play” and “preconditions for action” are for this challenge**

## preconditions for play



# preconditions for action



**case study**

**racial equity in chicago**



## **challenge statement**

**how can we work together to support young people in  
chicago to develop resilient livelihoods?**

<https://www.grovearchive.org/archive/>



**summary**



**one**

**the dominant practice of strategic planning evolved during  
an era of seeing the world through a modernist paradigm  
(technocratic - the clock as metaphor)**



**two**

**seeing the world as being characterized by complexity  
dramatically changes the practice of strategy  
(from clock to forest as metaphor)**



**three**

**effective strategy in complex systems is a practice,  
it is about what you actually do (not what you might do)**



**four**

**there are three “practices” together constituting effective strategy, strategy-as-action, strategy-as-inner-game, strategy-as-storytelling**



**five**

**if you want to change the paradigm, then change your  
practice – paradigms are built from practices ; practices are  
built from tools, processes, spaces, ingredients, and customs**