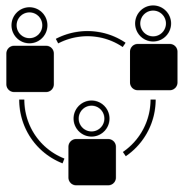# Network Weaving

Form and Function

Pieter de Vos, PhD

Evaluation Capacity Network

Community University Partnership (U of A)
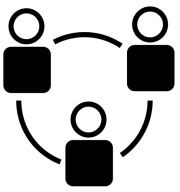
devos@ualberta.ca

780.914.1064

Arc of Session

- Explore Changes & Aspirations

- Discuss Network Aims & Functions
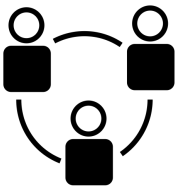
- Explore mind-sets, skill-sets & heart-sets

Why Organize?

| Disorganized	Leadership	Organized
Passive	Shared Story	Active
Divided	Relational Commitments	United
Drift	Effective structure	Purpose
Reactive	Creative strategy	Initiative
Inaction	Effective Action	Change

Effective organizing…

- Identifying, recruiting, and developing **leadership**

- Nurturing **intentional public relationships** rooted in shared interests and values.

- Turning leadership and community resources into the **ability to act**.
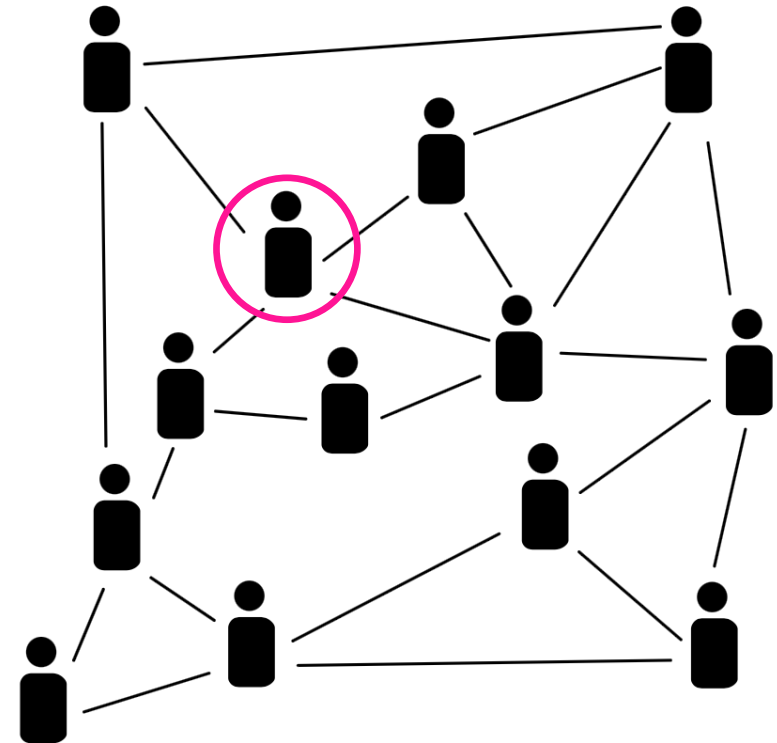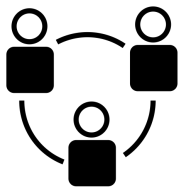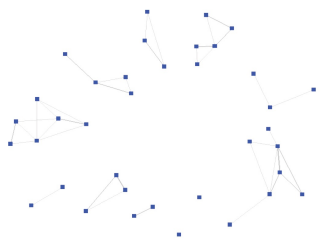
Power = Ability to Act (to achieve purpose)

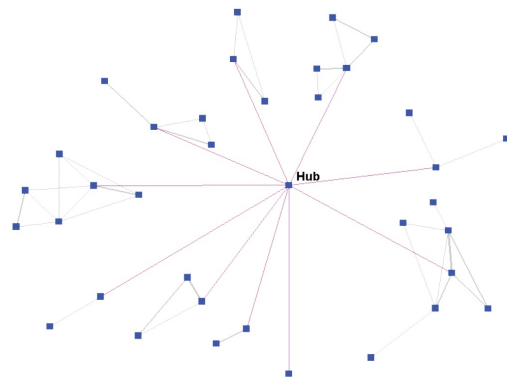Organized People **+** Organized Resources **=** Ability to Act
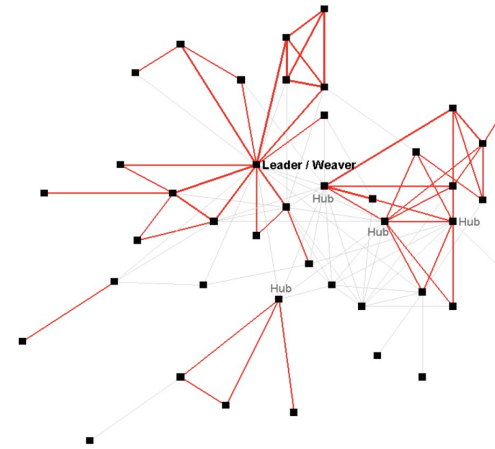
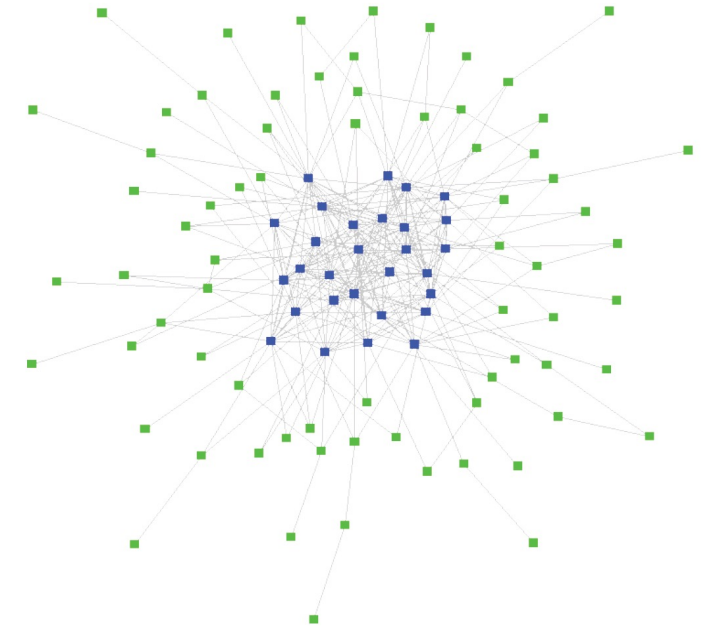# Effective organizing...

Fragmentary

Single Hub

Multi-Hub

Core/Periphery

Opening Reflection

What are the **most significant** <mark>changes</mark> you have witnessed or experienced as it relates to seniors' care in Edmonton?

[Plenary – 10 min]

What new ideas, approaches or processes might **we test** or **explore**?

What is worth trying out?

Adapted from Brenda Zimmerman

Which of our strategies or pilot projects might we consider **developing and investing in further**?

Renewal/Reorganization
∗ Creative ∗ Messy ∗ Uncertain
∗ Multiple Perspectives
∗ Probes & Little Experiments

Maturity/Conservation
∗ Productivity ∗ Stability
∗ Standardization
∗ Low Risk Tolerance
∗ Return on investment

What ways of doing or ways of thinking are **working well**?

What should we **continue to support and strengthen**?

Scarcity Trap

Parasitic Trap

Chronic Disaster Trap

Rigidity Trap
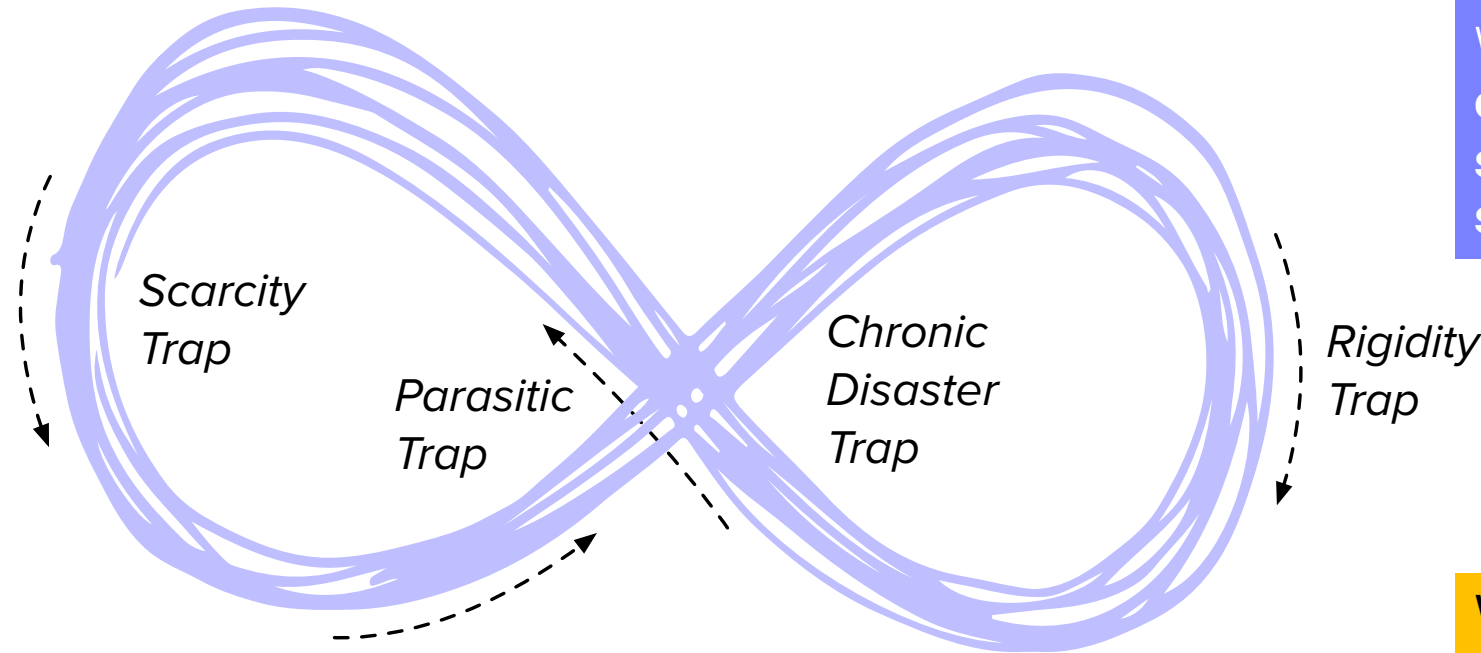
Birth/Development
∗Entrepreneurial
∗ Adaptive structure
∗Prototypes
∗Pilot Projects

Release/Collapse
∗ New Energy & Urgency
∗ Chaotic & Uncertain
∗ Loss, Anger, Conflict
∗ Little structure

What approaches or ways of thinking are no longer "fit for purpose" and we should **let go of**?

Why a Network?

What **shifts** are we aiming to affect with our organizing / network-weaving effort?

From...   To...

[Small Groups – 15 min; Plenary – 10 min]

From:	To:
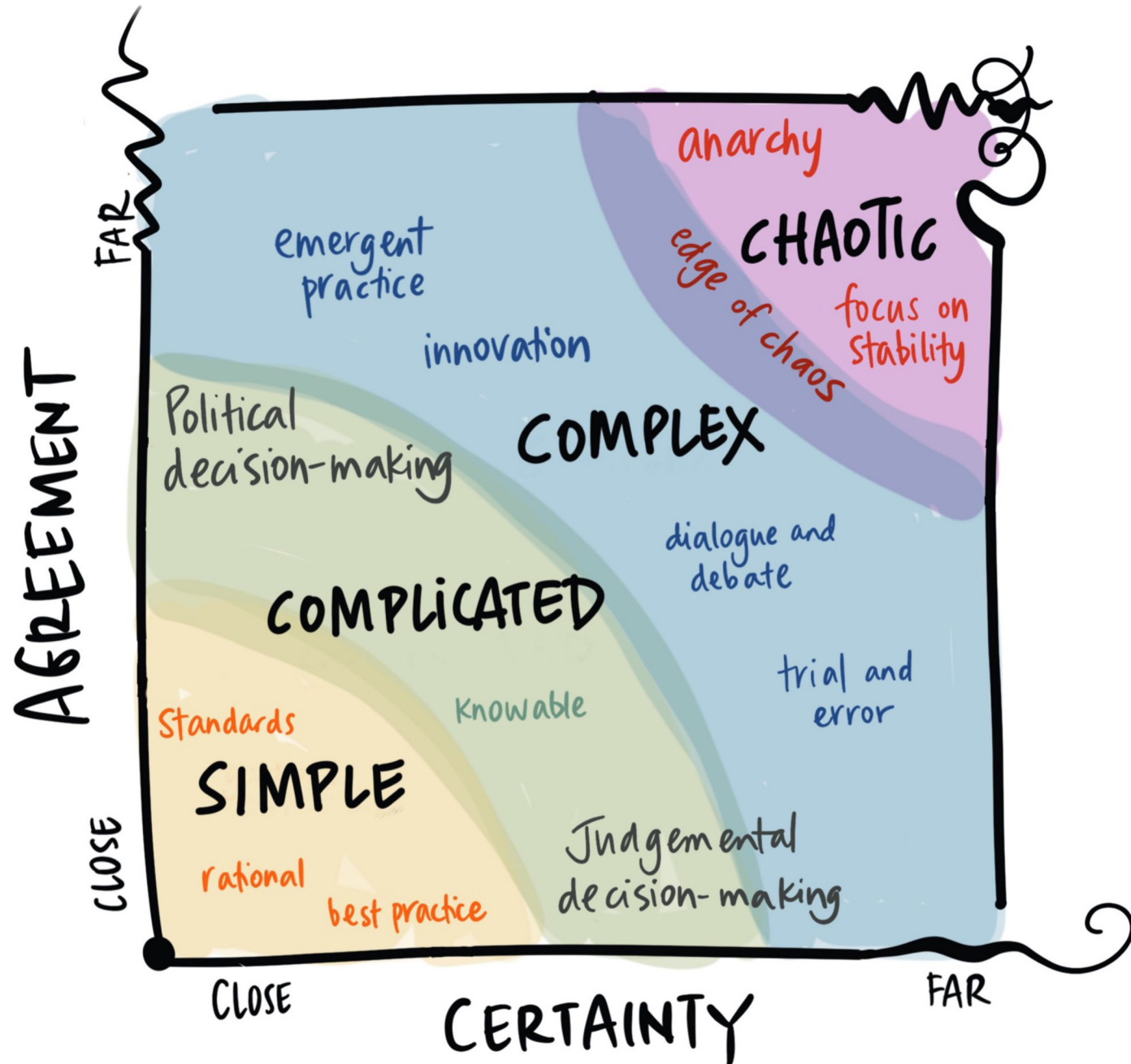
matching **form** to **function**

(Complicated) Technical Problems	(Complex) Adaptive Challenges
• Problem is well defined • Answer is known • Implementation is clear • Solution can be imposed by a single organization	• The challenge is complex • Answers are not known • Implementation requires learning • No single entity has the authority to impose solution on the stakeholder; requires changes in behaviours by stakeholders
Examples	Examples
• Funding scholarships • Building hospitals • Installing inventory controls for a food bank • Developing a COVID-19 vaccine	• Reforming public education • Providing affordable healthcare • Increasing organizational effectiveness • Achieving 80% vaccination rates

Ronald A. Heifetz et al, "Leading Boldly" Stanford Social Innovation Review Winter 2004
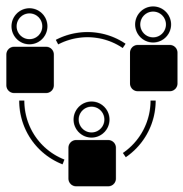
Why a Network?

- The problem or opportunity is big
- The problem is beyond the reach of a single organization
- You need new ideas & the solution is not clear
- You need to build a new system
- You need to engage people from different backgrounds
- The issue requires long-term collaboration

Network Aims
& Functions

Differences between "Organizations" and 'Networks"

Organization Characteristics	Network Characteristics
A clear chain of command and decision-making	Openness and transparency
A strong and stable structure, where leadership is centralized and set, organizing is top-down	Loose boundaries and structures invite a diversity of perspectives and encourage healthy disagreement
People are assigned tasks according to their place in the organization	Focus on innovation, experimentation, and learning
People need to agree; there is pressure to be aligned	Leaders encourage peers to act and take initiative; responsibility is shared
Focus on planning and goals	Organization is bottom up, emergent, and responds to current context
Management thinking is dominant	Requires new mindsets, processes, and structures for working together

Ontario Nonprofit Network
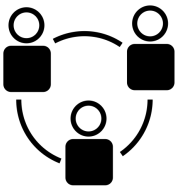
- Align around shared purpose and values
- Know the stage of your network
- Act intentionally to strengthen your network
- Hold each other accountable to working like a network
- Wait to add structure until you need it
- Don't underestimate the challenge

https://blog.kumu.io/building-intentional-networks-that-drive-impact-part-1-90a7271c7a2a

Tips for building intentional networks

Purpose to Practice

Purpose
Mandate

Principles
Values

People
End Users

Practices
Methods

Partners
Members & Allies
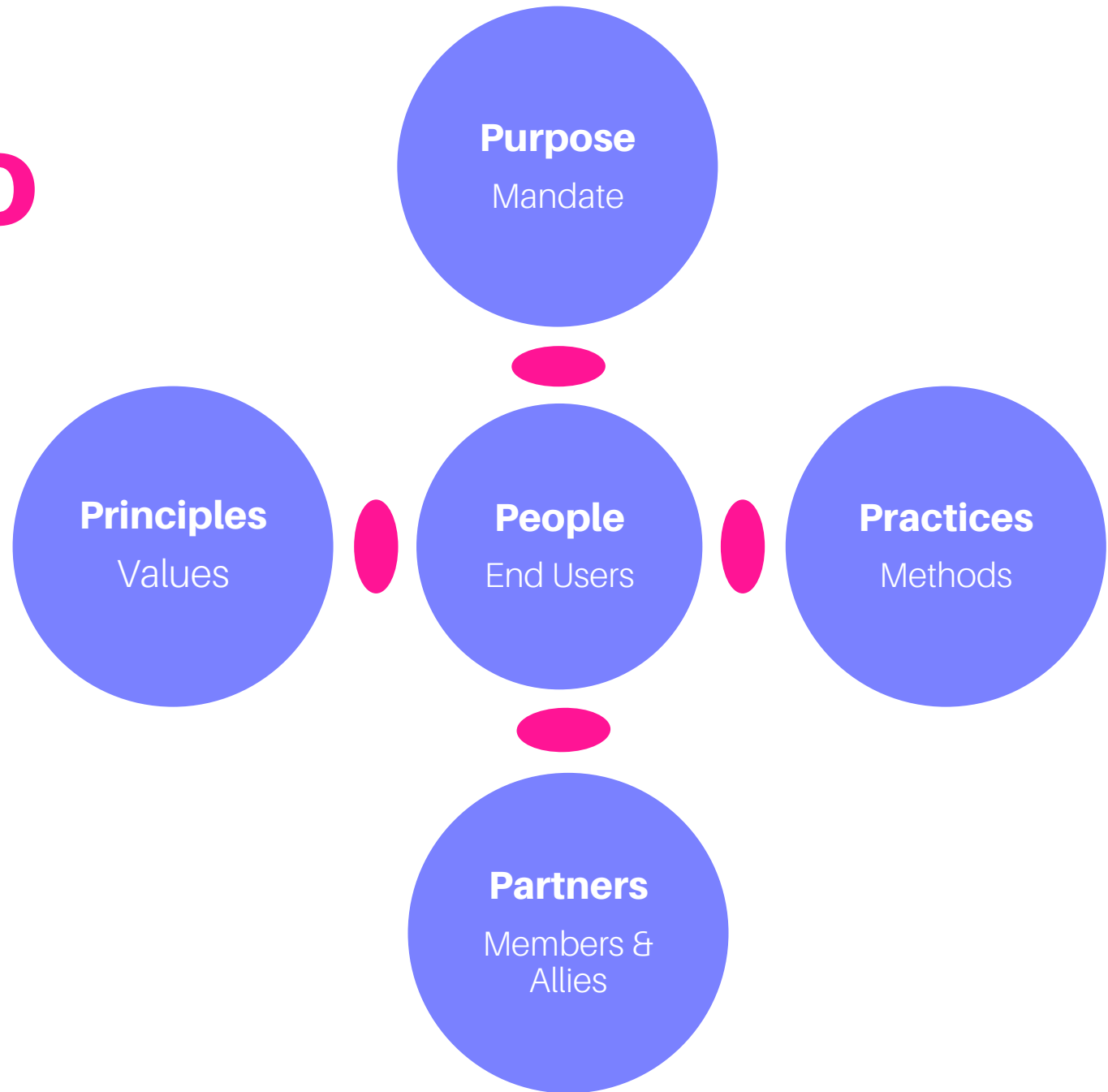
Your network needs to decide...

Criteria	Questions
Purpose	• What is our network's purpose? What are our shared aspirations?
Principles	• What principles guide our network?
Goals	• What do we want to accomplish as a Network?
Membership	• What are the roles and responsibilities of members?
Governance	• How will we make decisions? How will we evaluate progress?
Coordination & Operations	• How will the network be coordinated?
Strategy & Planning	• What is the overall strategy for change?
Action	• How will we act? How will we make decisions around actions?
Money & Resources	• Where will the money and resources come from?

June Holley, Network Weaver Handbook

We are in the **Change Game!**

Strategic Aims & Postures

Portfolio approach

Adapted from
Growth Agenda Limited

Transforming

"Playing for a new system and a new world"

Visionary Thinking

Different game;
Different rules

Adapting

"Seizing emerging opportunities by introducing new services and approaches"

Entrepreneurial Thinking

Same game;
Different rules

Optimizing

Core Business
Status Quo

"Maintaining and improving services and approaches that are working well already"

Managerial Thinking

Same game;
Same rules

Systems & Policy Focus

Greater Tension +

2

4

Working in this space requires an entrepreneurial mindset, a comfort with uncertainty and complexity, and a high tolerance for risk and responsible disruption.

Policy Research & Recommendations

Advocacy & Collective Action

Optimization	**Adaptation**	**Transformation**
same game; same rules	same game; different rules	different game; different rules

This is the zone of best practices and experts.

This space tends to favour individuals with managerial mindsets and a lower tolerance for risk and uncertainty.

Coordination & Capacity-building

Service Redesign & Innovation

1

3

Less Tension -

Programs & Services Focus

"Change means movement;
movement means friction;
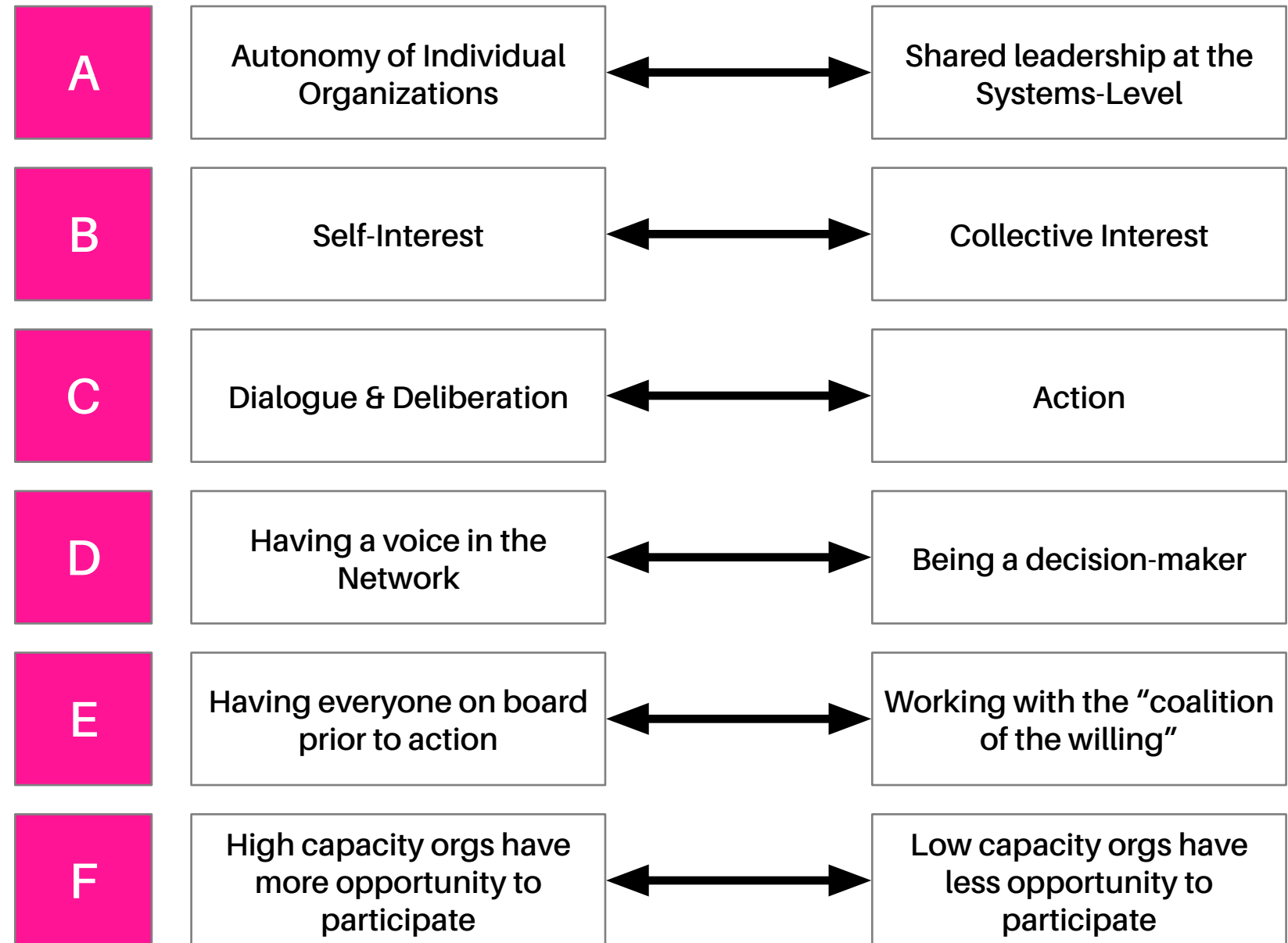friction means heat;
heat means controversy."

Saul Alinsky

What **tensions** might we face as we build and grow this network?

[Small Groups – 15 min; Plenary – 10 min]

Dynamic Tensions

A	Autonomy of Individual Organizations	⟷ Shared leadership at the Systems-Level
B	Self-Interest	⟷ Collective Interest
C	Dialogue & Deliberation	⟷ Action
D	Having a voice in the Network	⟷ Being a decision-maker
E	Having everyone on board prior to action	⟷ Working with the "coalition of the willing"
F	High capacity orgs have more opportunity to participate	⟷ Low capacity orgs have less opportunity to participate

Mindsets & Skillsets

What ways of **thinking** and ways of **doing** might be necessary to work in the dynamic context of seniors' care?

[Plenary– 15 min]

Organizational Leadership	Network Leadership
Positional authority	Role, behaviour
Few leaders	Everyone is a leader
Leader broadcasts	Leader engages
Leader tells what to do	Many people initiate
Small group in the know	Leader facilitates and supports
Directive	Openness and transparency
Top down	Bottom up
Leader ensures tasks are completed	Leader helps identify breakthroughs
Evaluation	Reflection and learning
Planning	Innovation and experimentation
Provides a service	Supports self-organization

Adapted from June Holley,
Network Weaver Handbook

Network Mindset

Ontario Nonprofit Network

Work is action and energy focused.

"What do we need to accomplish and what is the best way to get there?"

Balancing order and chaos.

Plans can change a lot, so flexibility is key.

The network is smarter than any one of us.

Working groups with diverse people from the network provide multiple viewpoints on an issue.

Learning from failure.

When an approach isn't working, or something we're trying comes to an unexpected end, we need the confidence and humility to let go, disband, and move on.

Speak truth to power.

Even when it's not popular, stand by core values.

A clear common motivator.

There's a reason for the work of the group. Answering "Why are we doing this together?" should be easy.

Agreeing to disagree.

Getting organized is not binding on partners' other work. We need common interest, not full consensus.

Self-interest is acknowledged & harnessed for mutual benefit.

Not everyone needs to have the same reason for being at the table, but surfacing why we're there helps us move toward common goals.

Leadership is shared, not hierarchical.

The goal is not for one group to command others, but to join-up everyone's contributions.
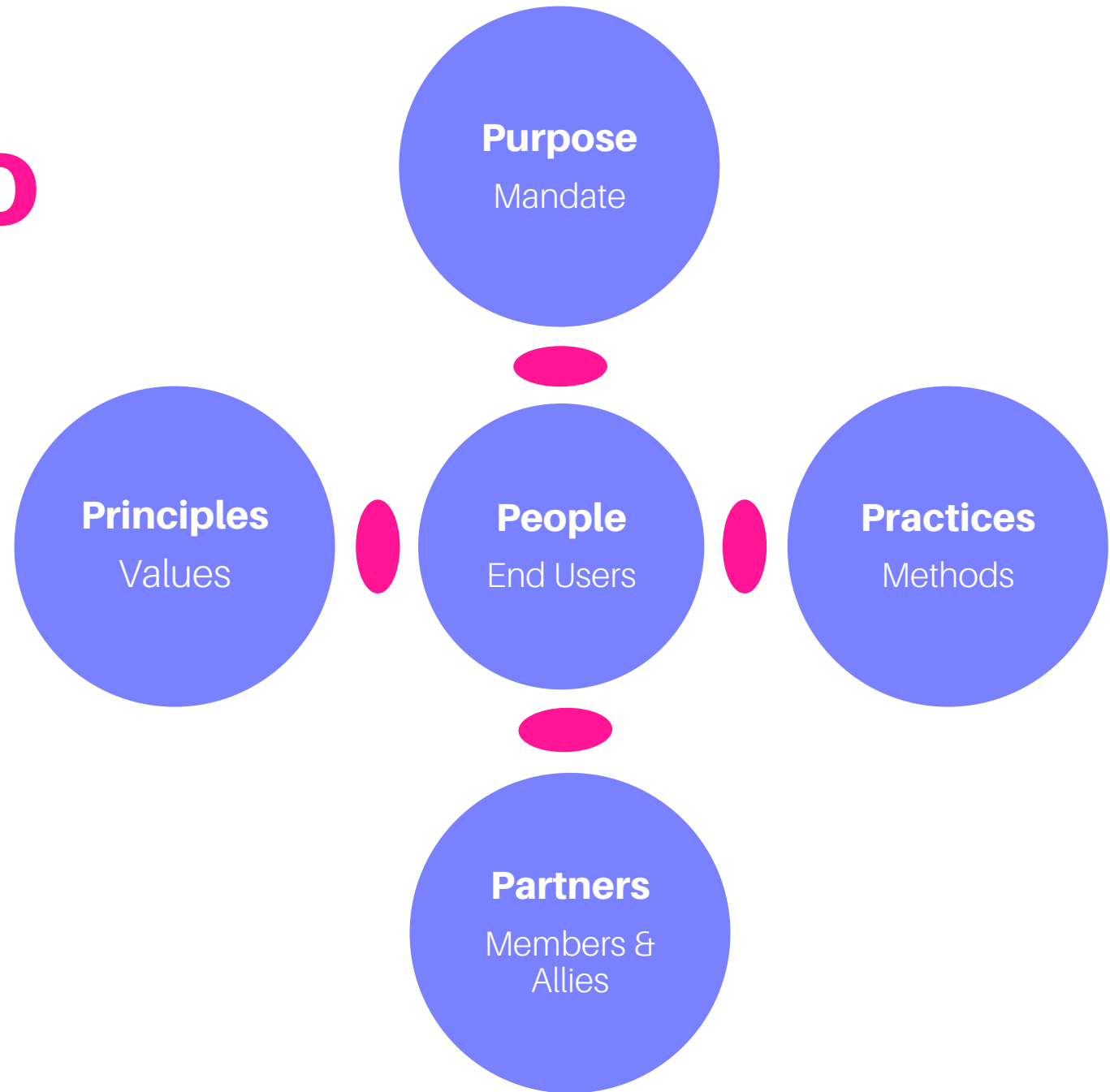
We win together.

We want to build up the leadership of others and redistribute opportunities and resources to those who may be better positioned to take them on.
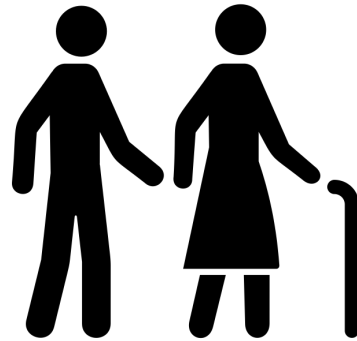
What are we aiming to achieve?

Purpose to Practice

Purpose
Mandate

Principles
Values

People
End Users

Practices
Methods

Partners
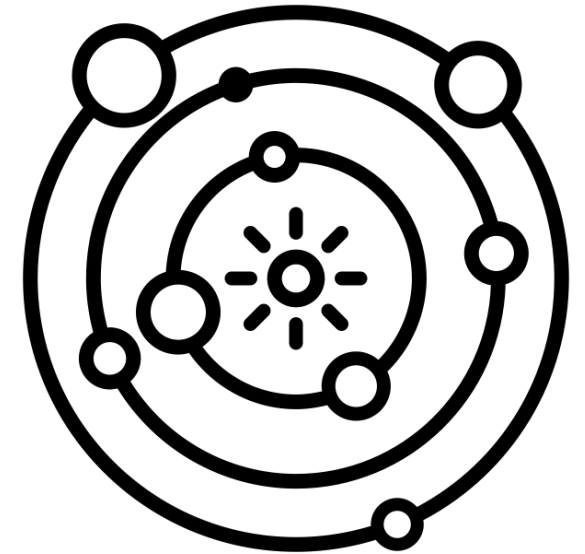Members & Allies

What would success look like?

What would we point to as evidence of impact?
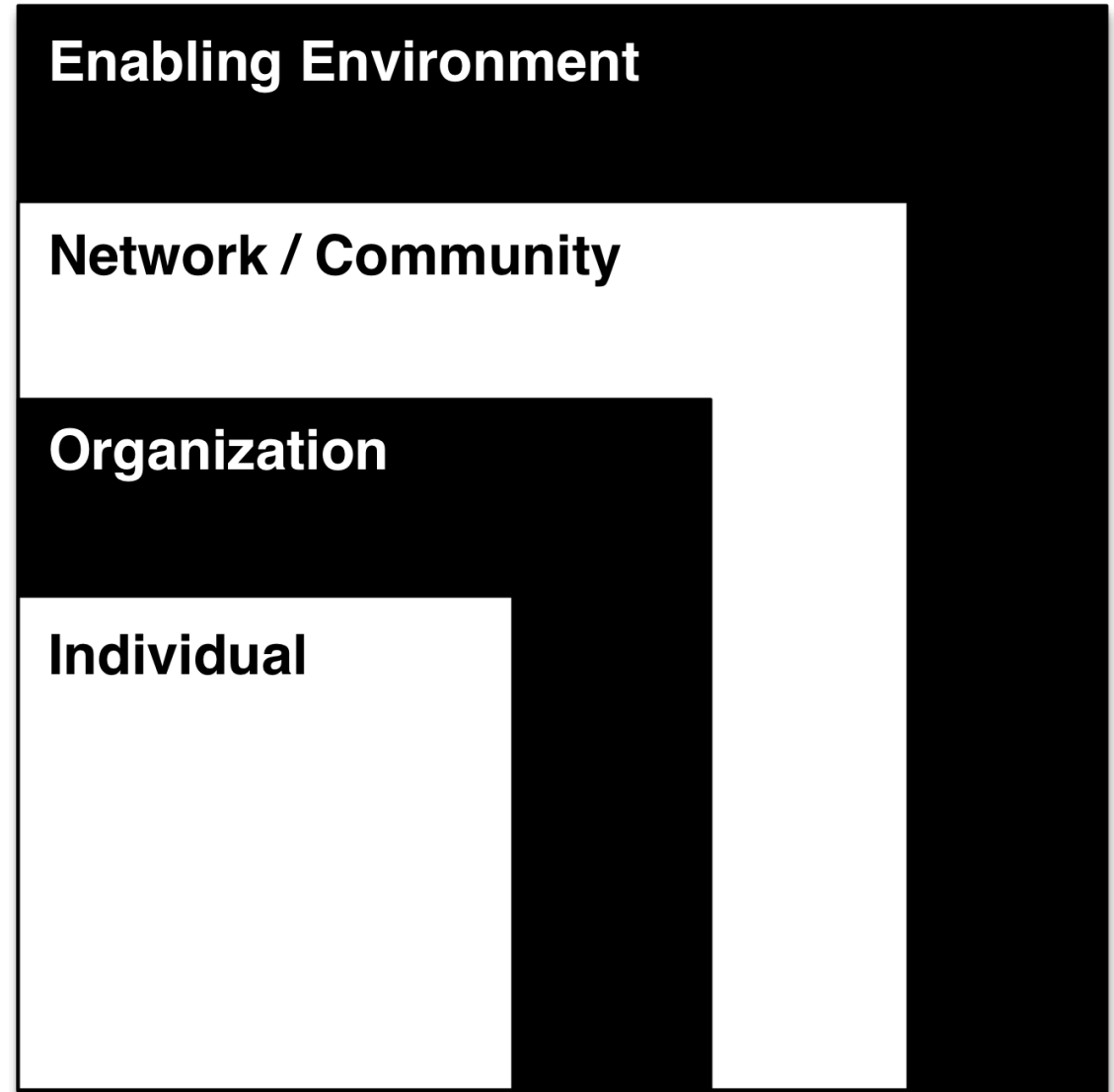
Seniors

CBSS Organizations

Larger System of Support

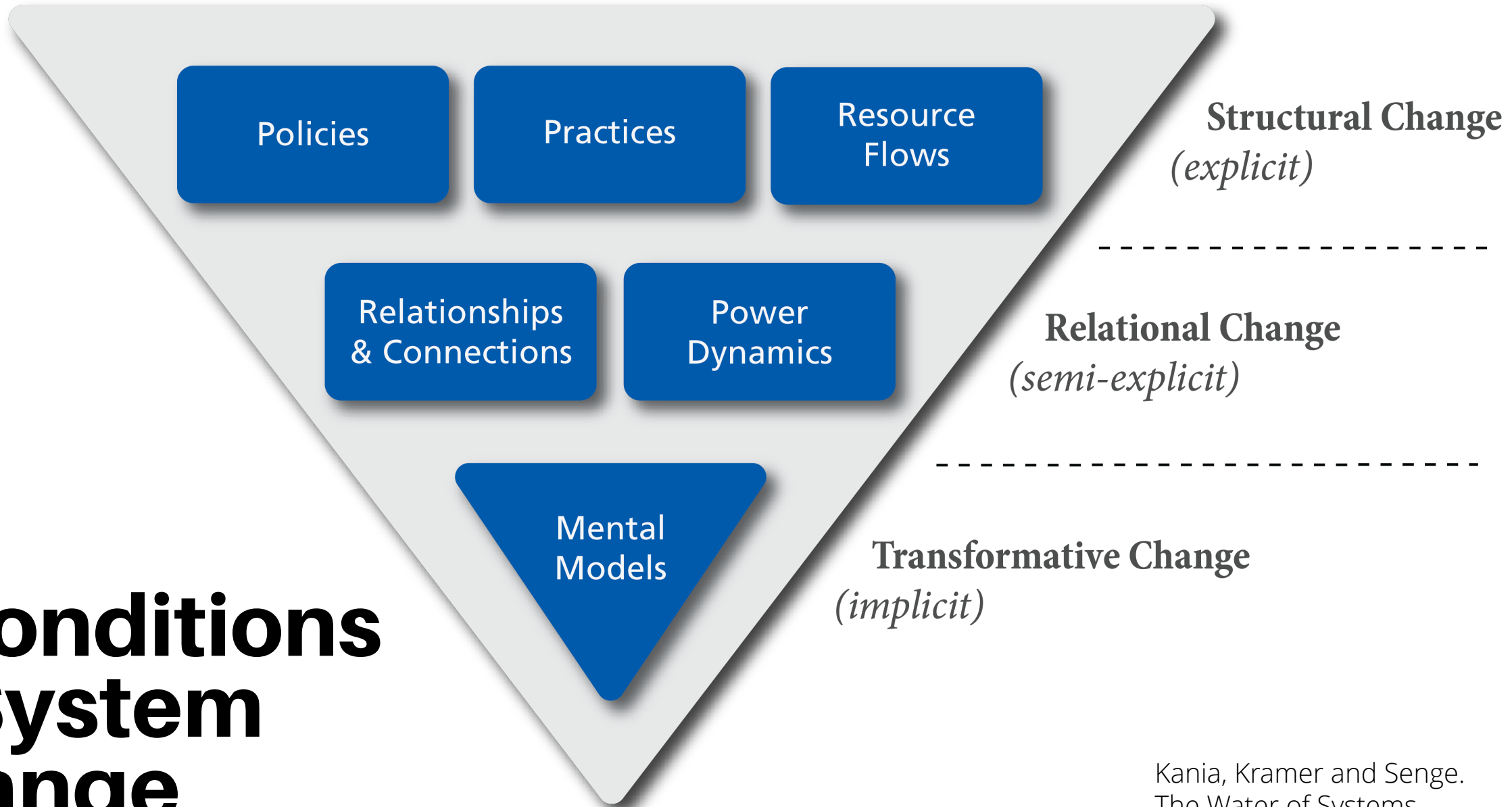# Where are we aiming to make a difference?

At what level?
What is within our scope of influence?

6 Conditions of System Change

Policies

Practices

Resource Flows

Relationships & Connections

Power Dynamics

Mental Models

Structural Change
(explicit)

Relational Change
(semi-explicit)

Transformative Change
(implicit)

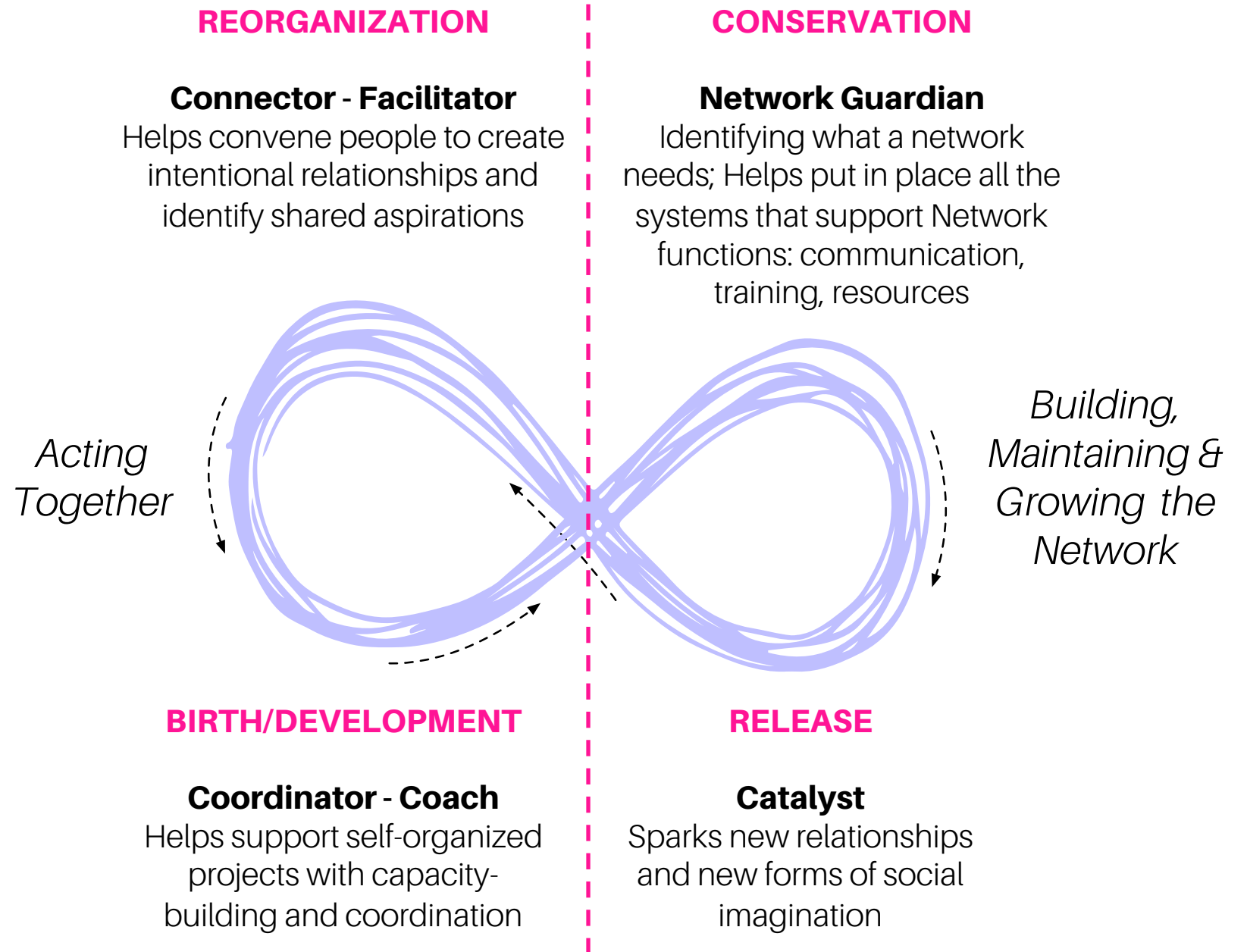Kania, Kramer and Senge. The Water of Systems Change

The Network as a vehicle for change

Adapted from Mark Cabaj, Here to There, 2012

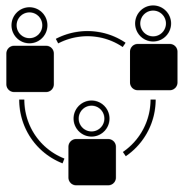|	**(Complicated) Technical Challenges**	**(Complex) Adaptive Challenges**
1	Focus on few elements	Chunk and link systems
2	Engage usual suspects	Multiple (unusual) stakeholders
3	Leverage expertise	Worm's eye & bird's eye
4	Plan the work, work the plan	Good enough vision; learn-by-doing
5	Best practices	Multiple actions at the fringes
7	Strive for consensus	Court and mediate dissent and conflict
8	Pursue right solutions	Uncover and embrace paradoxes
9	Use formal channels/processes	Listen to the shadow system
10	Solvable in a leap	Relentless incrementalism

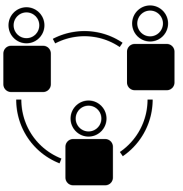# Network Weaver Roles

Adapted from June Holley, Network Weaver Handbook

REORGANIZATION

Connector - Facilitator
Helps convene people to create intentional relationships and identify shared aspirations

CONSERVATION

Network Guardian
Identifying what a network needs; Helps put in place all the systems that support Network functions: communication, training, resources

Acting Together

Building, Maintaining & Growing the Network

BIRTH/DEVELOPMENT

Coordinator - Coach
Helps support self-organized projects with capacity-building and coordination

RELEASE

Catalyst
Sparks new relationships and new forms of social imagination

Reflecting on Engagement

Many **private concerns** are connected to **public concerns**.

Organizing Cycle
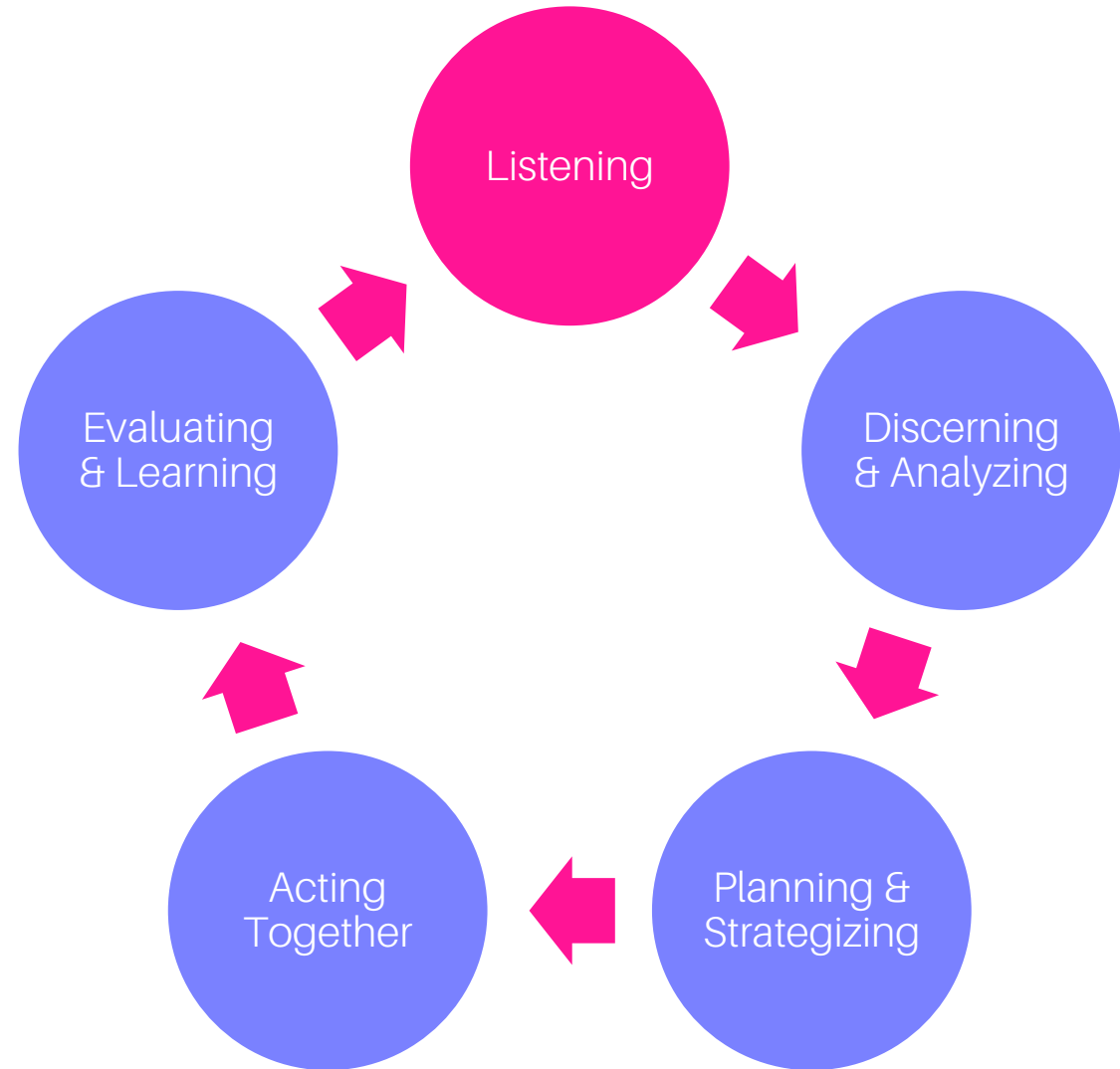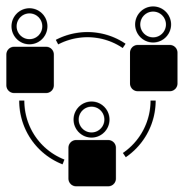
Listening

Discerning & Analyzing

Planning & Strategizing

Acting Together

Evaluating & Learning

5. Building alliances, coalitions, and local-regional partnerships

Bridging

4. Creating more stable forms of organization that can nurture leaders and widen the circle of civic participation

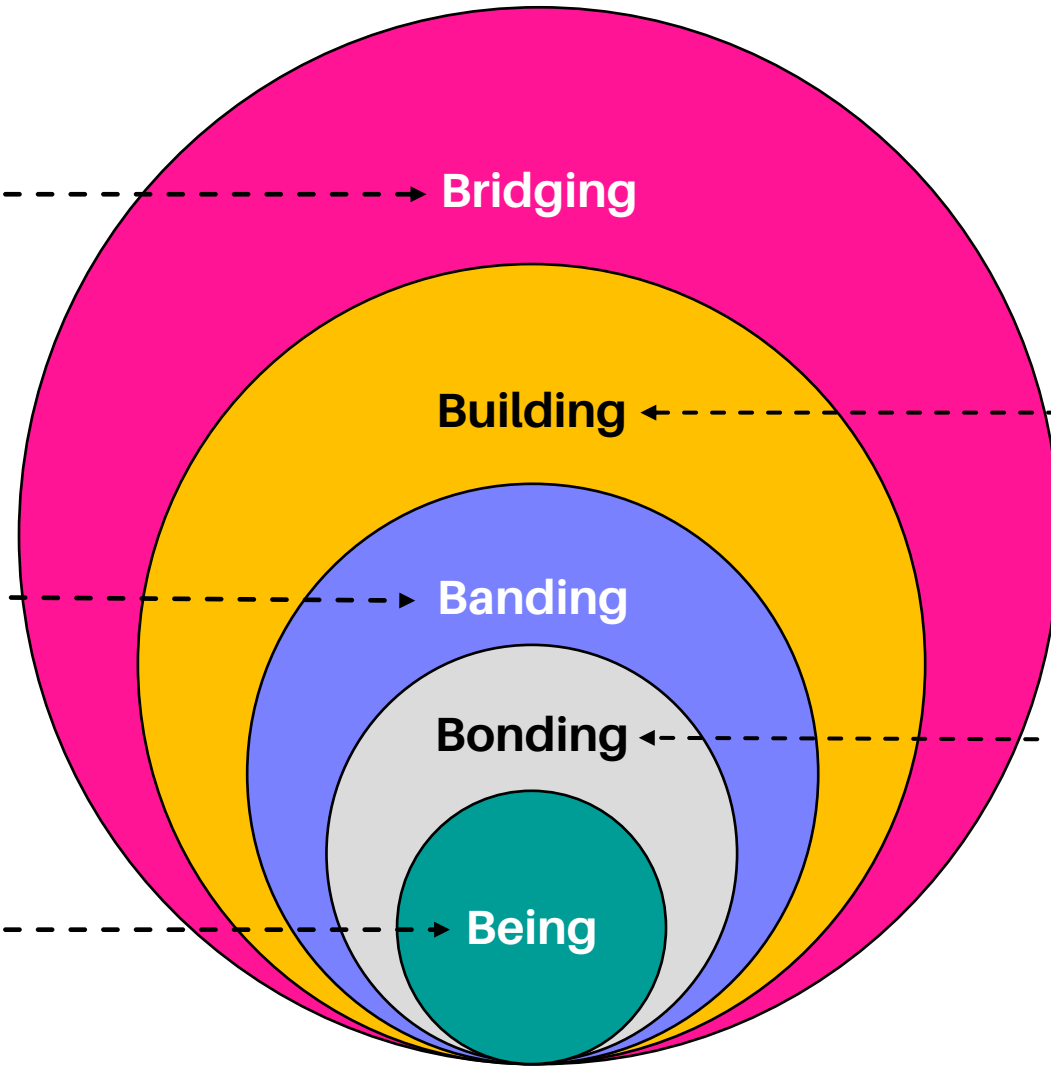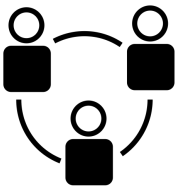**Building**

3. Coming together for collective action

Banding

Bonding

2. Listening, observing, and dialogue; and building relationships

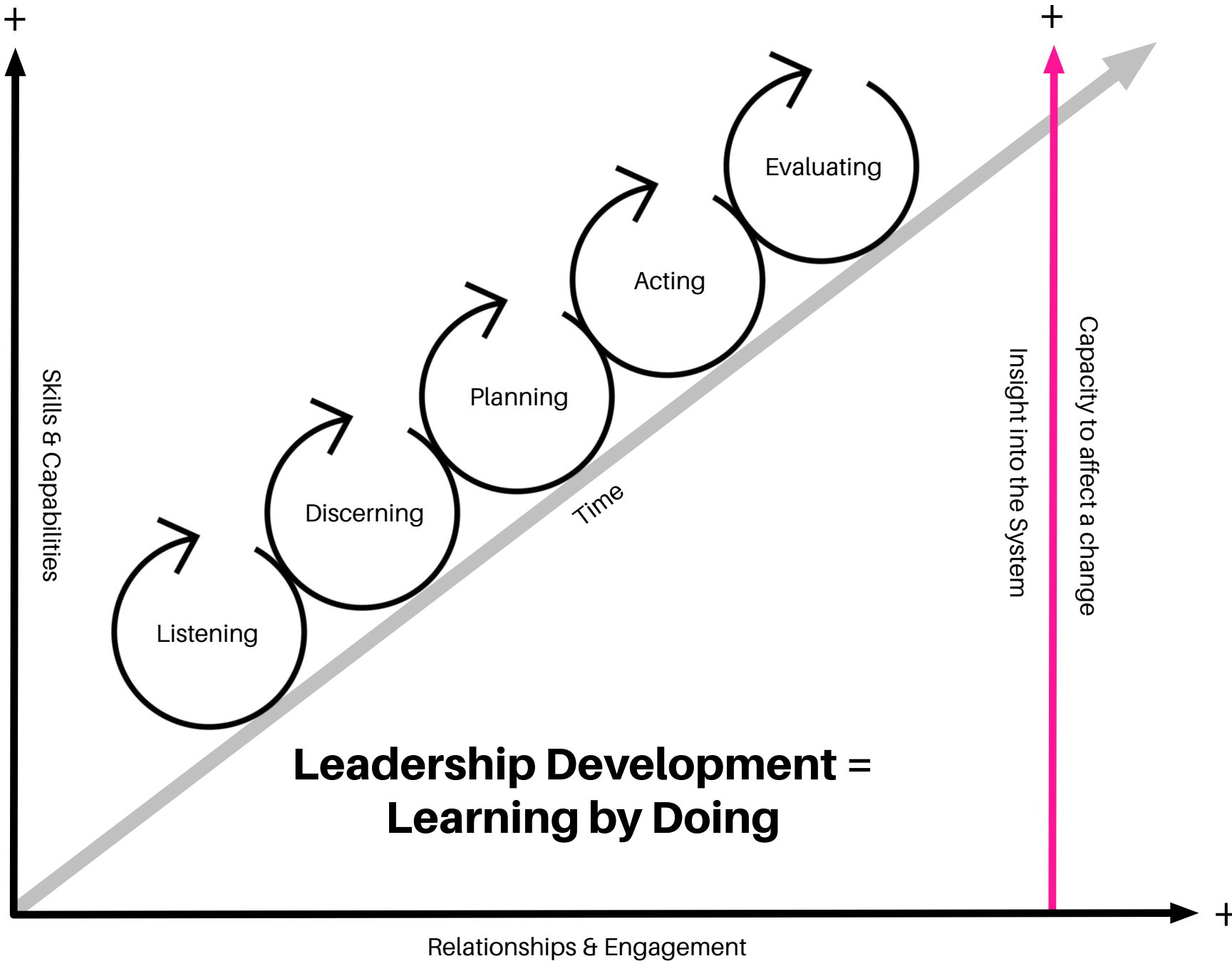1. Reflecting on who we are, what we value, and what we do.

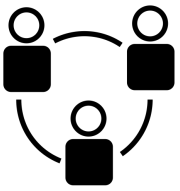**Being**

Effective organizing…

Identifying, recruiting, and developing leadership

Nurturing intentional public relationships rooted in shared interests and values.

Turning leadership and community resources into the capacity to act.

Leadership Development = Learning by Doing

The Organizing Process, Pieter de Vos, 2021

- What is **sticking** for you?

- What is **puzzling**?

- What is **promising**?

Closing Reflection