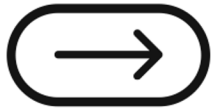
Thinking about change

Scaling Regenerative Agriculture



Pieter de Vos, PhD

Challenge Question

“How might we **grow** Alberta's regenerative agriculture system in a way that preserves its **integrity**, while maximizing **the positive social, environmental,** and **economic impacts** for **communities**?”

We are in the Change Game!

Exploration Phase
- Creative, messy & uncertain
- Multiple Perspectives
- Probes & Little Experiments

Maturity Phase
- Stability
- Specialisation
- Standardization
- Low Risk Tolerance
- Return on investment

Adapted from
Brenda Zimmerman

scarcity trap

growth

charisma trap

chronic disaster trap

rigidity trap

Development Phase
- Entrepreneurial
- Adaptive structure
- Prototypes & Pilot Projects
- Risk-taking

Release Phase
- New Energy & Urgency
- Chaotic
- Loss, Anger, Conflict
- Little structure

Explore

What new ideas, approaches or processes might we consider?

What is **worth trying out**?

(Re)Birth

Which of our strategies will we **invest in** and **develop further**?

Exploration

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- Multiple Perspectives
- Probes & Little Experiments

Maturity

- Stability
- Specialisation
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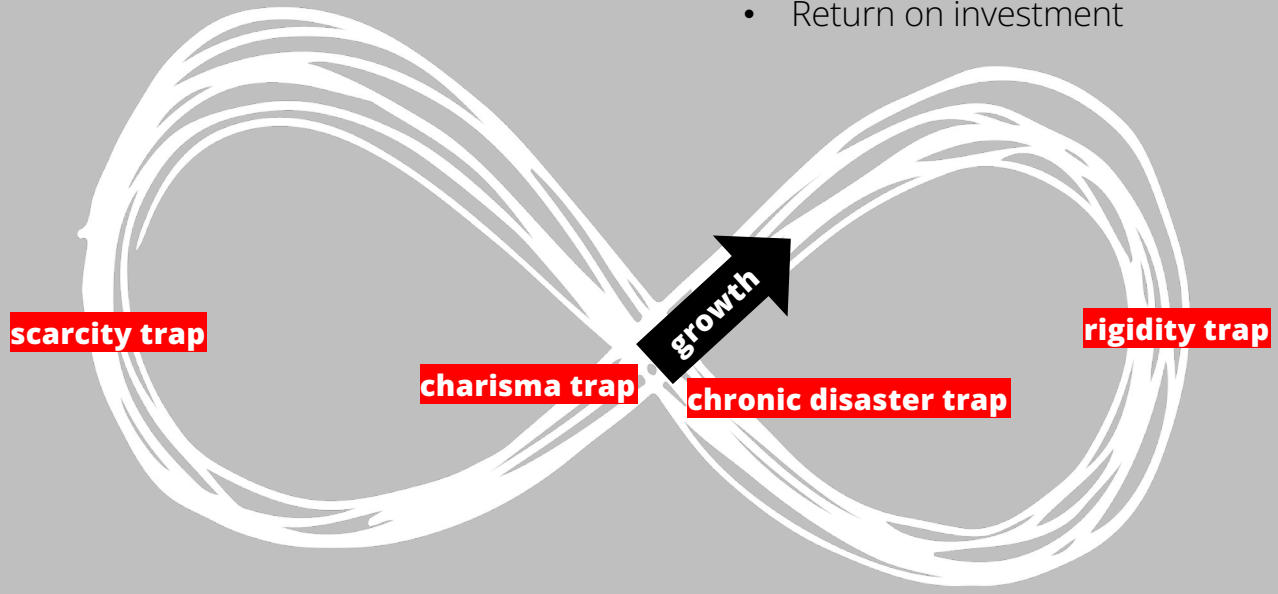

Development

- Entrepreneurial
- Adaptive structure
- Prototypes & Pilot Projects
- Risk-taking

Collapse

- New Energy & Urgency
- Chaotic
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Conserve

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

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

Release

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

Leverage Points for Change

Shifting individual, organizational, and system behaviours

Shifting the behaviour of individuals & organizations

Some of our work is aimed at influencing the **actions** of key system actors: individuals and organizations.

The **behaviour** (the decisions, actions and investments) of producers and others along the value chain is likely influenced by their...

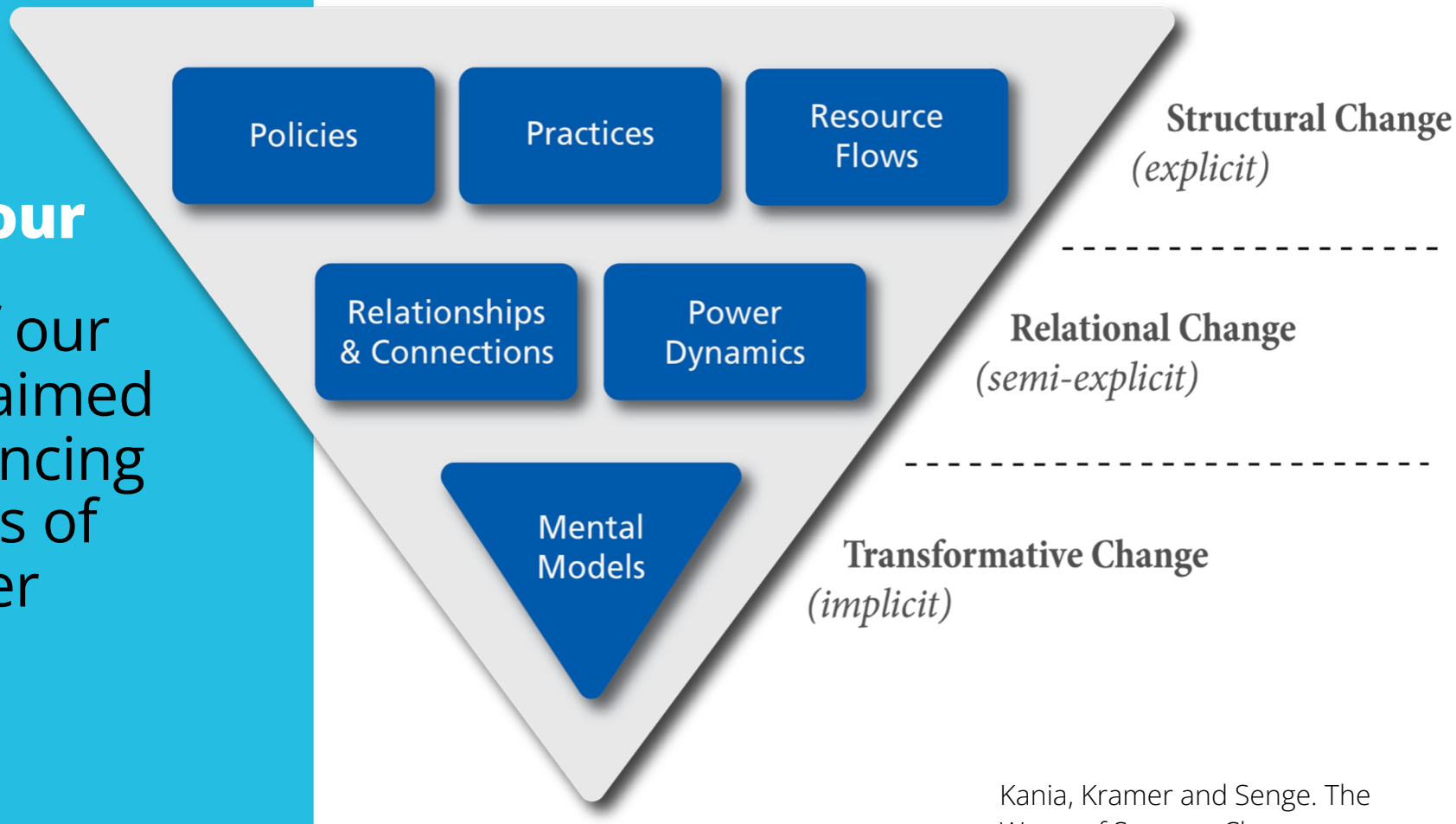
Knowledge & Capabilities

Opportunities (physical, social, economic)

Motivation (values & interests)

Behaviour

Some of our work is aimed at influencing elements of the larger system



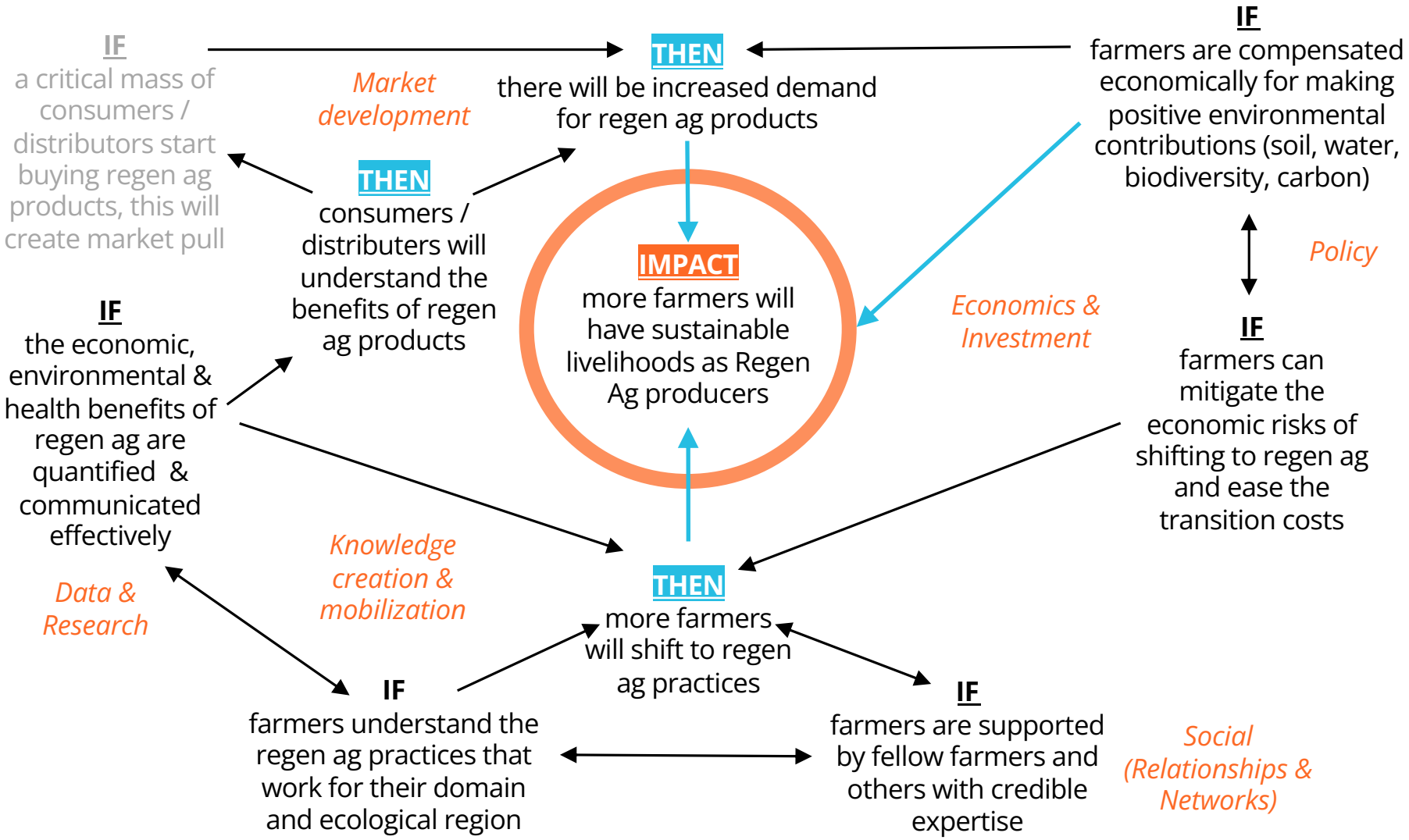
Kania, Kramer and Senge. The Water of Systems Change

How do we become more explicit about the assumptions that underpin our strategies and our impacts?

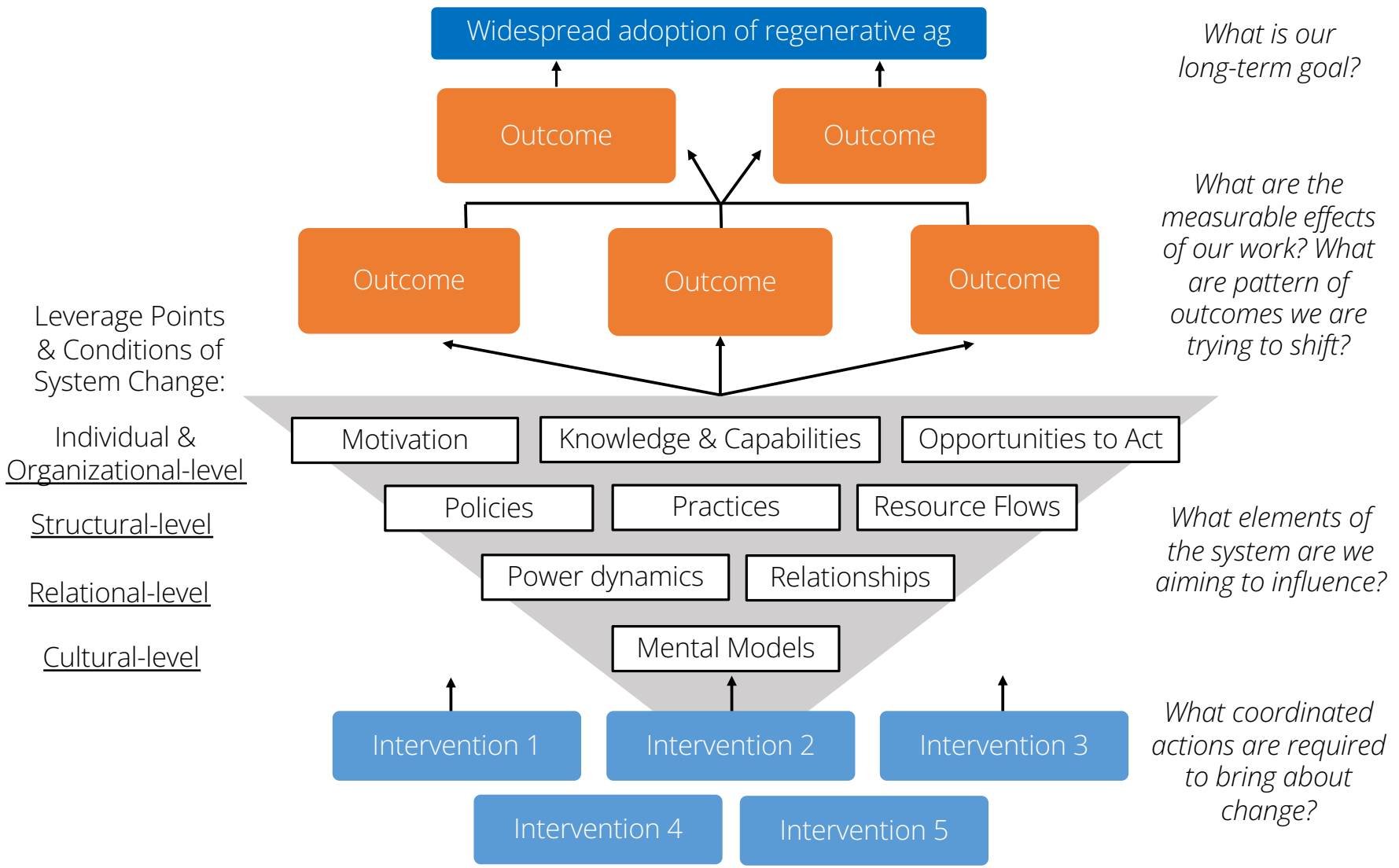
Naming our assumptions about change

Adapted from Mark Cabaj,
Here to There, 2012

1. What is the **working definition** of the challenge we are trying to address?
2. What is the **pattern of outcomes** we want to shift?
3. What are the **causes** underlying this challenge?
4. What are the **leverage points** for change we aim to address?
5. What are the **starting point strategies** for addressing these challenges?
6. What is our group's **role** in moving these strategies forward?
7. What are the **principles,** values and simple rules?


IF
a critical mass of consumers / distributors start buying regen ag products, this will create market pull
Market development
THEN
there will be increased demand for regen ag products
IF
farmers are compensated economically for making positive environmental contributions (soil, water, biodiversity, carbon)
THEN
consumers / distributers will understand the benefits of regen ag products
IMPACT
more farmers will have sustainable livelihoods as Regen Ag producers
Policy
Economics & Investment
IF
the economic, environmental & health benefits of regen ag are quantified & communicated effectively
IF
farmers can mitigate the economic risks of shifting to regen ag and ease the transition costs
Knowledge creation & mobilization
Data & Research
THEN
more farmers will shift to regen ag practices
IF
farmers understand the regen ag practices that work for their domain and ecological region
IF
farmers are supported by fellow farmers and others with credible expertise
Social (Relationships & Networks)

Tying it all together


Widespread adoption of regenerative ag
Outcome
Outcome
Outcome
Outcome
Outcome
Leverage Points & Conditions of System Change:
Individual & Organizational-level
Structural-level
Relational-level
Cultural-level
Motivation
Knowledge & Capabilities
Opportunities to Act
Policies
Practices
Resource Flows
Power dynamics
Relationships
Mental Models
Intervention 1
Intervention 2
Intervention 3
Intervention 4
Intervention 5
What is our long-term goal?
What are the measurable effects of our work? What are pattern of outcomes we are trying to shift?
What elements of the system are we aiming to influence?
What coordinated actions are required to bring about change?