



National Early Years Summit 2020

Working together
for their first 1000
days and beyond

11-12 March 2020
Albert Park
Melbourne

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Unpacking the theory and practice of system change

What is systems change?

A system is “a set of things—people, cells, molecules or whatever — interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behaviour over time.”

Donella Meadows
Thinking in Systems: A Primer (2008)

A system is about shifting the conditions that are holding a problem in place

John Kania
Collective Impact (2011)

When do we need systems change?

Complex problems are difficult to frame

The cause and effect relationships are unclear

There are diverse stakeholders

Each experience of is unique

The characteristics & dynamics of the issue evolves

There is no obvious right or wrong set of solutions

There is no objective measure of success

How do systems change?

By changing patterns within the system

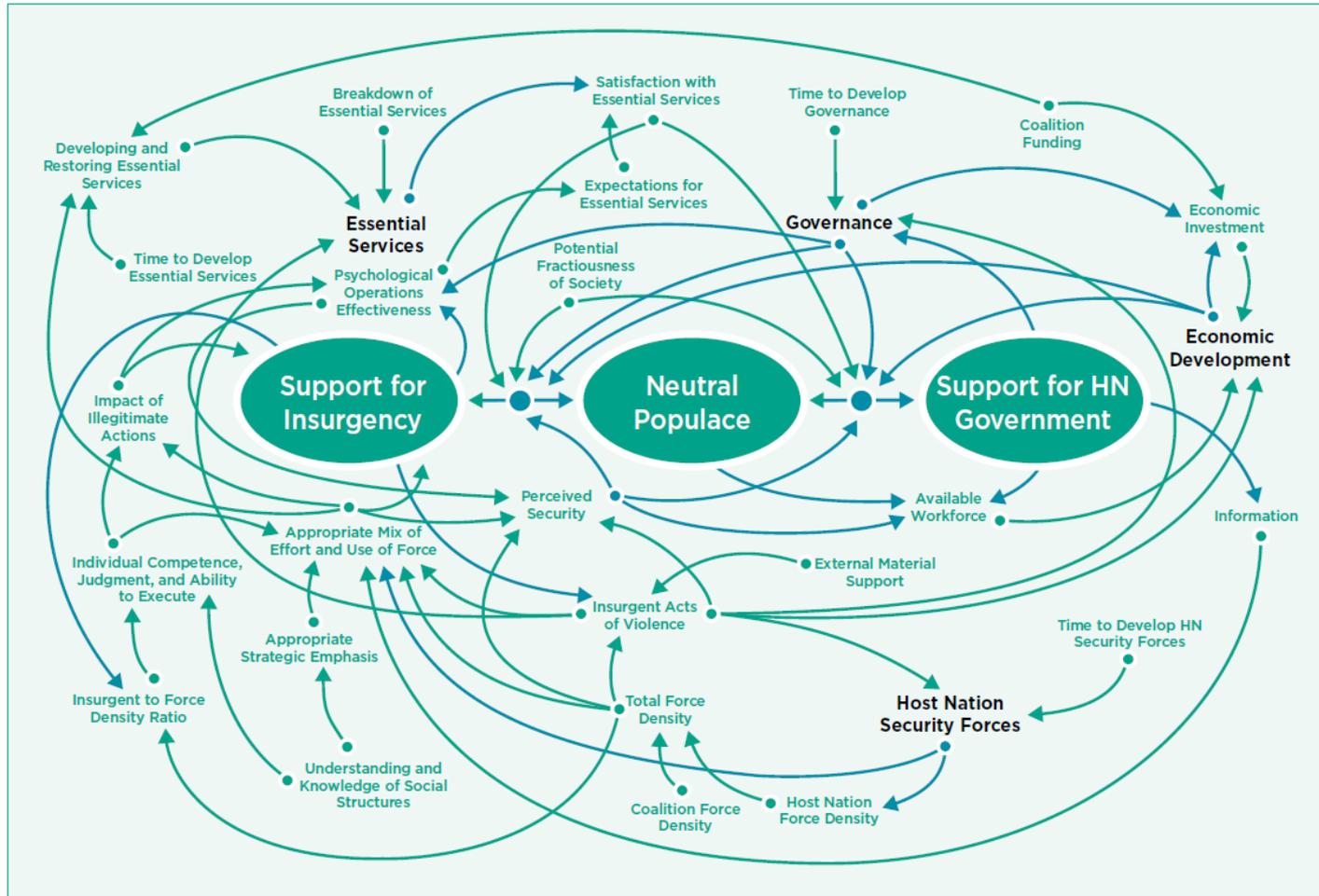
To change patterns we need to:

1. Diagnose the system well
2. Form hypothesis about the best places to intervene (leverage points) in order to create new patterns
3. Prioritise the high leverage point interventions (small change, big impact)
4. Intervene, watch, adapt and learn

“System change is the emergence of a new pattern of organisation or system structure.”

Anna Birney (2015)

Step 1: Diagnose the system



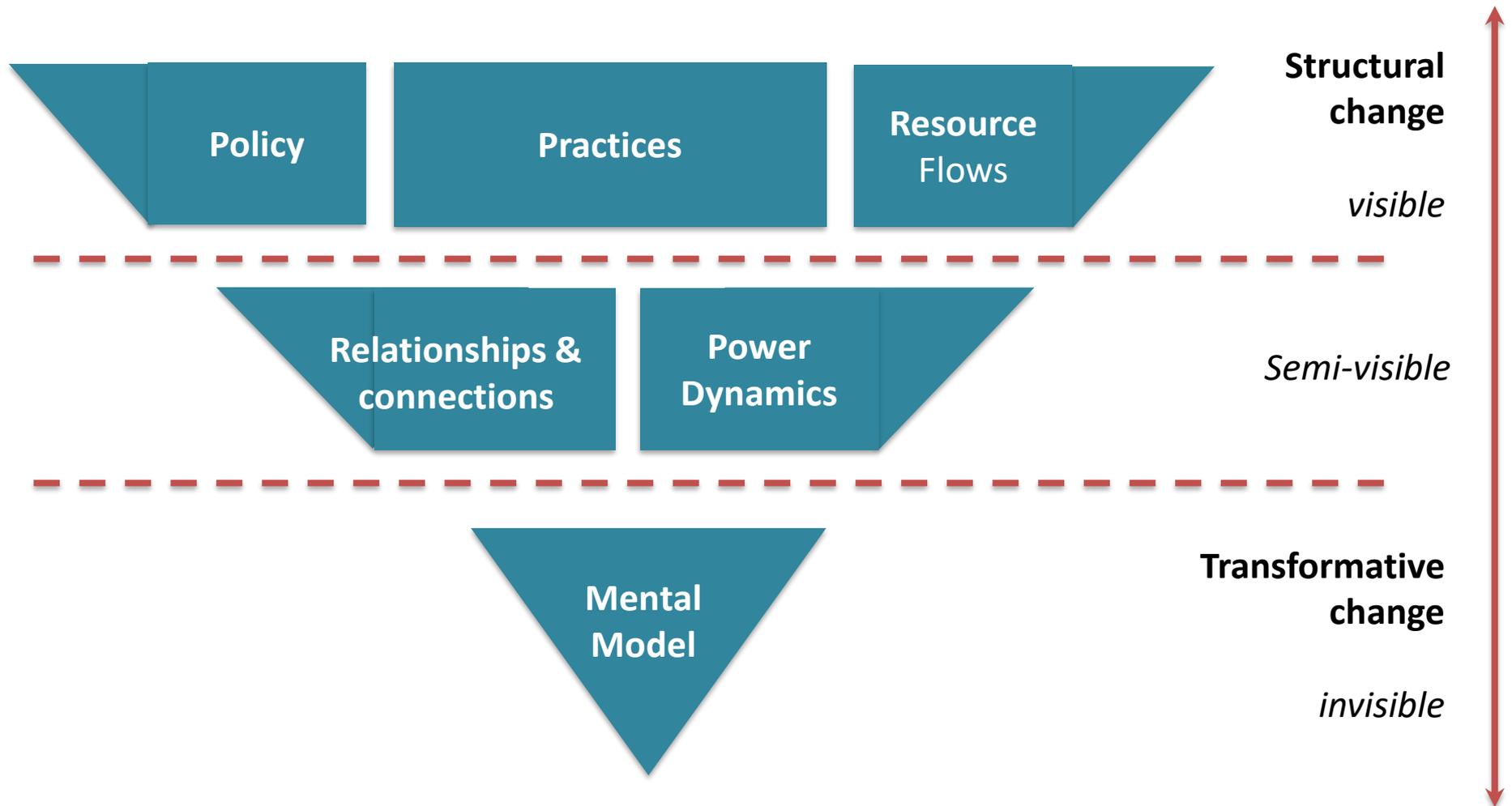
Step 2 & 3: Find best places to intervene



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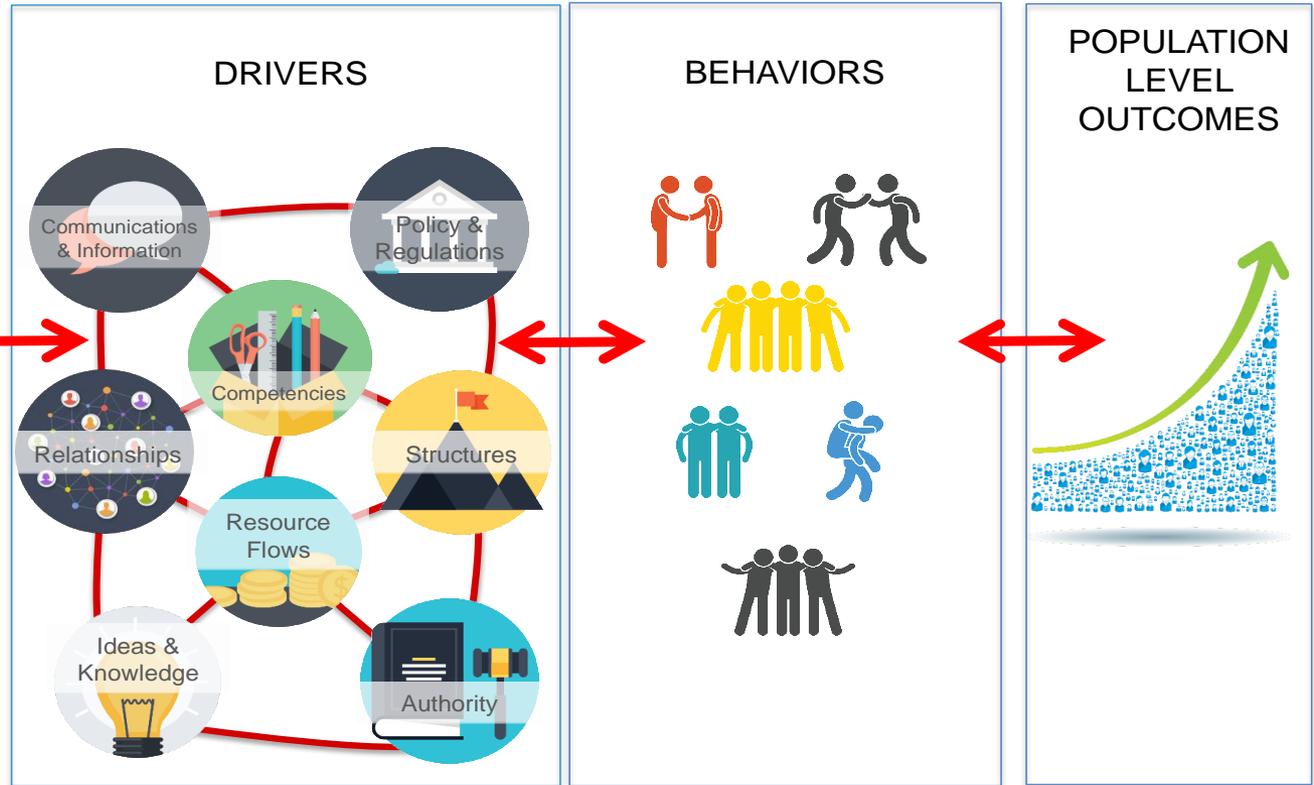
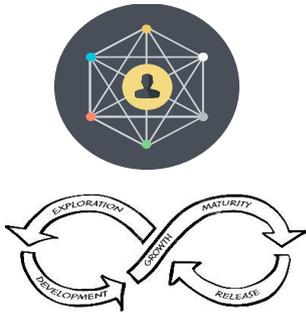


Step 2 & 3: Find best places to intervene

- **Structures** – changes in the physical structures of a system
- **Flows**—changes in how flows of information, finance or value are distributed, configured or relate to each other
- **Rules**—changes in the rules that dictate how the system is organised; if they change they will have an impact on the flows and structures of the system
- **Power to evolve**—changes in the power to add, change, evolve, or self-organize system structure; if the system is self-organising it has the power to keep evolving (innovating and learning) and thus can keep addressing the complex challenges it addresses
- **Goal**—changes to the purpose and function of the system, ultimately determining how the rest of the system operates
- **Paradigm**—changes in the set of assumptions, perspectives or views about how the world works; paradigms are the patterns with which we organize our thoughts and make sense of the world, which informs how we act and how structures, flows, rules, goals arise. This is the most significant system change - a paradigm shift from one underpinning model to another.

Step 4: Intervene, watch, adapt & learn

SYSTEMIC INTERVENTIONS

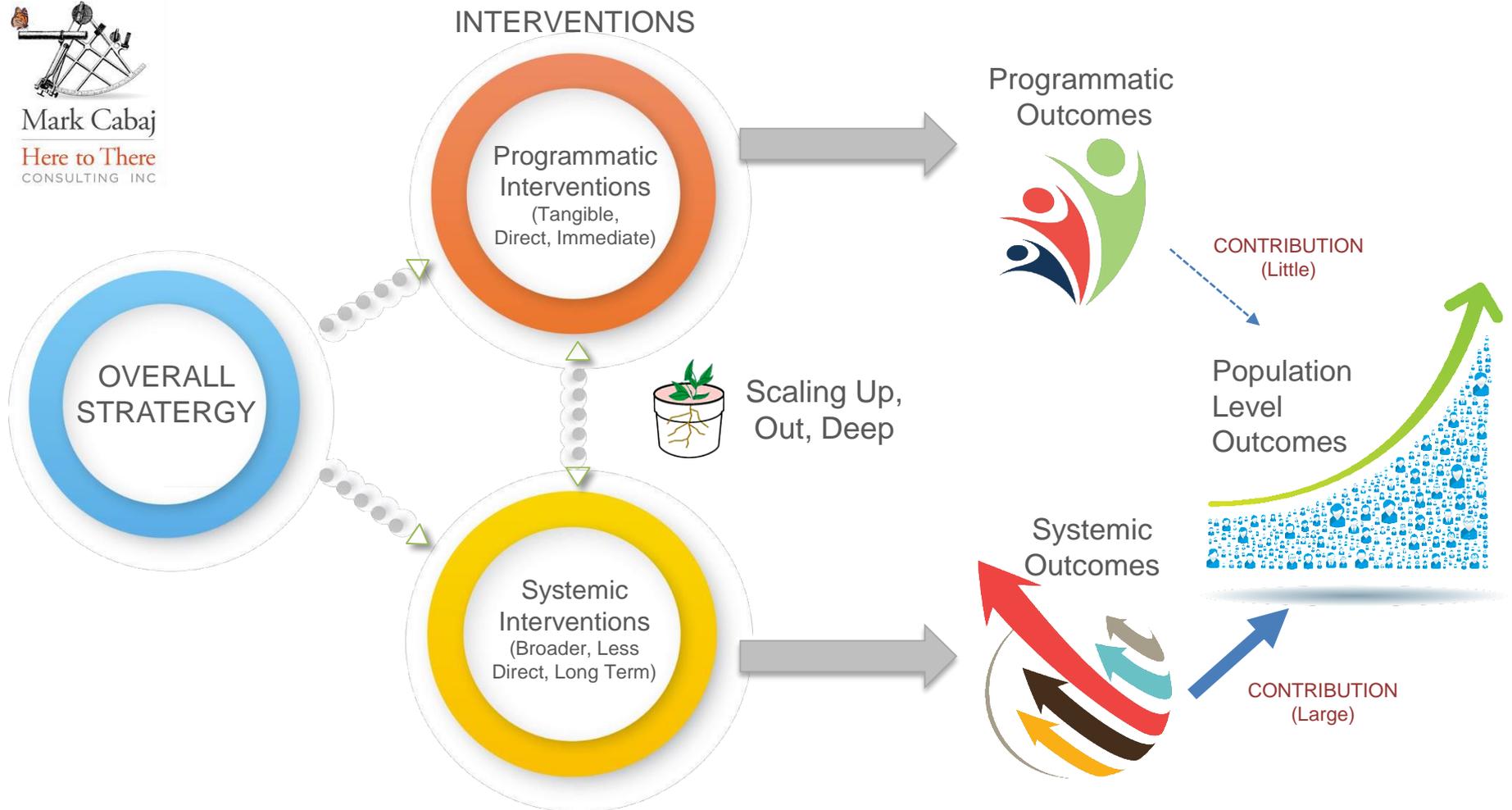
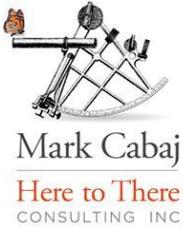


To what extent are we changing drivers?

To what extent are behaviours changing?

What are Population level changes?

System vs program interventions



How do you 'do' system change?

- The adaptive cycle
- Theory U
- Sustainability transitions theory
- Collective Impact
- Systems innovation

“There is no single correct way to do systems change.”

Amanda Beswick, Oak Foundation

Universally agreed stuff

Principles:

- Understand needs and assets
- Engage multiple actors
- Map the systems
- Do it together
- Distribute leadership
- Foster a learning culture

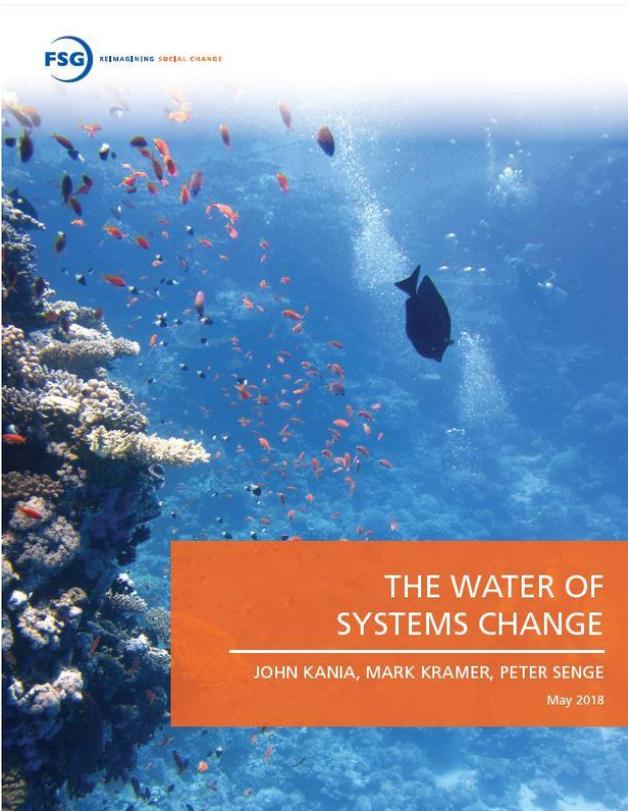
Learnings

- Embrace complexity & adaptability
- Build the evidence base
- Create, convene and coordinate coalitions
- Engage government
- Shift systems with humility

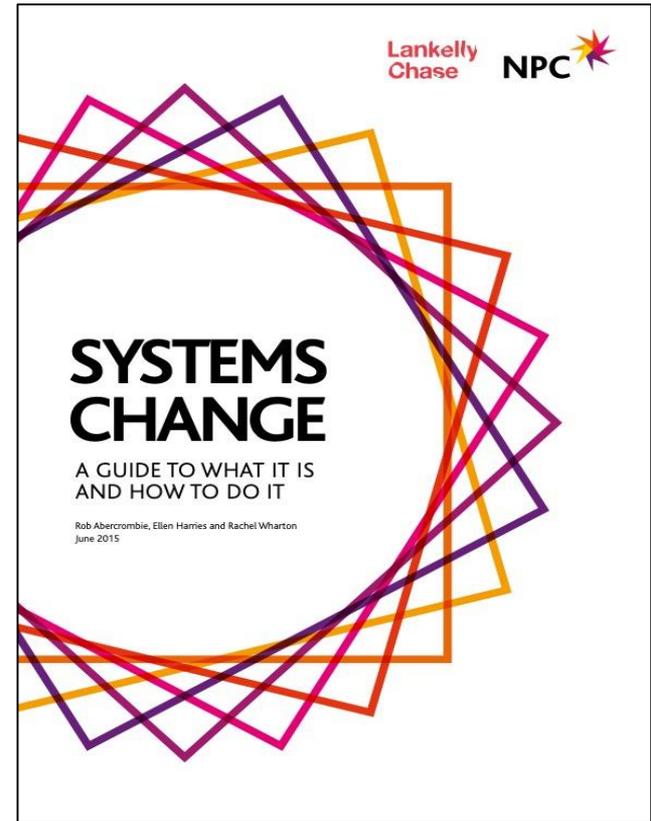
What to expect at the Summit

- Wedding seating
- Being resourced to engage with different perspectives /knowledge & learn
- Being supported in that learning
- Being part of a developmental process
- Being engaged the whole time
- Having the opportunity to keep participating / take up leadership post-Summit

Want to SWAT-UP before the Summit?



https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change



<https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/systems-change-a-guide-to-what-it-is-and-how-to-do-it/>