

Lemann Centre South-South Program: Community of Practice



**CENTRO
LEMANN**

DE LIDERANÇA PARA
EQUIDADE NA EDUCAÇÃO



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Examples of Systems Change Work





They are CEOs, non profit organisation leaders,
NGO leaders, influential academia...









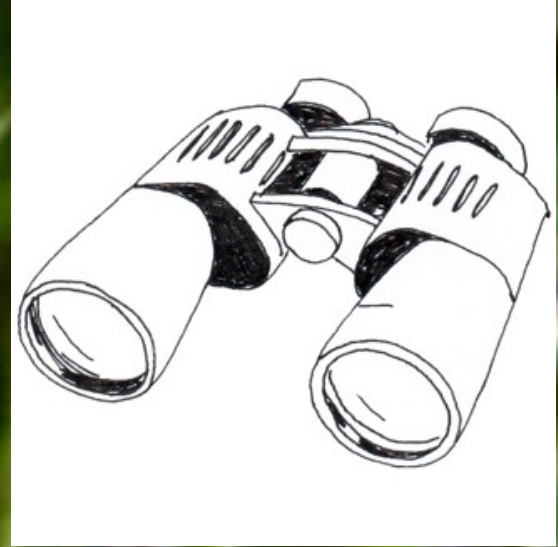
JET EDUCATION SERVICES
THINK EDUCATION. THINK JET.



- Taking a systemic approach to parental involvement in education
- Post-Secondary Education Sector: Scenarios for the future
- Addressing learning backlogs due to COVID-19 (with the Zenex Foundation)
- Teacher Internship Collaboration



What is Systems Thinking?

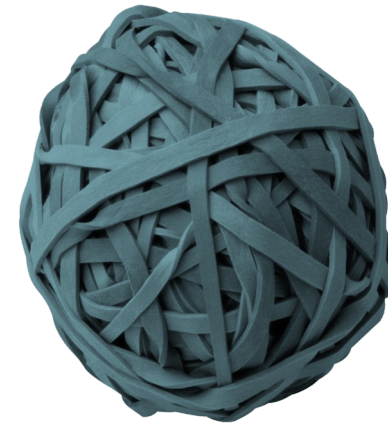




A definition of a system

“Any portion of the material universe (including ourselves and everything we have invented including social systems) which we choose to separate in thought from the rest of the universe for the purpose of considering and discussing the various changes which may occur within it under various conditions.”

- *Josiah Willard Gibbs, Yale Scientist*





What is Systems Transformation?





Systems change means:

Addressing root causes rather than symptoms by altering, shifting, and transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics, and rules through collaboration across a diverse set of actors with the intent of achieving lasting improvement of societal issues on a local, national, and global level.

Ashoka Innovators for the Public

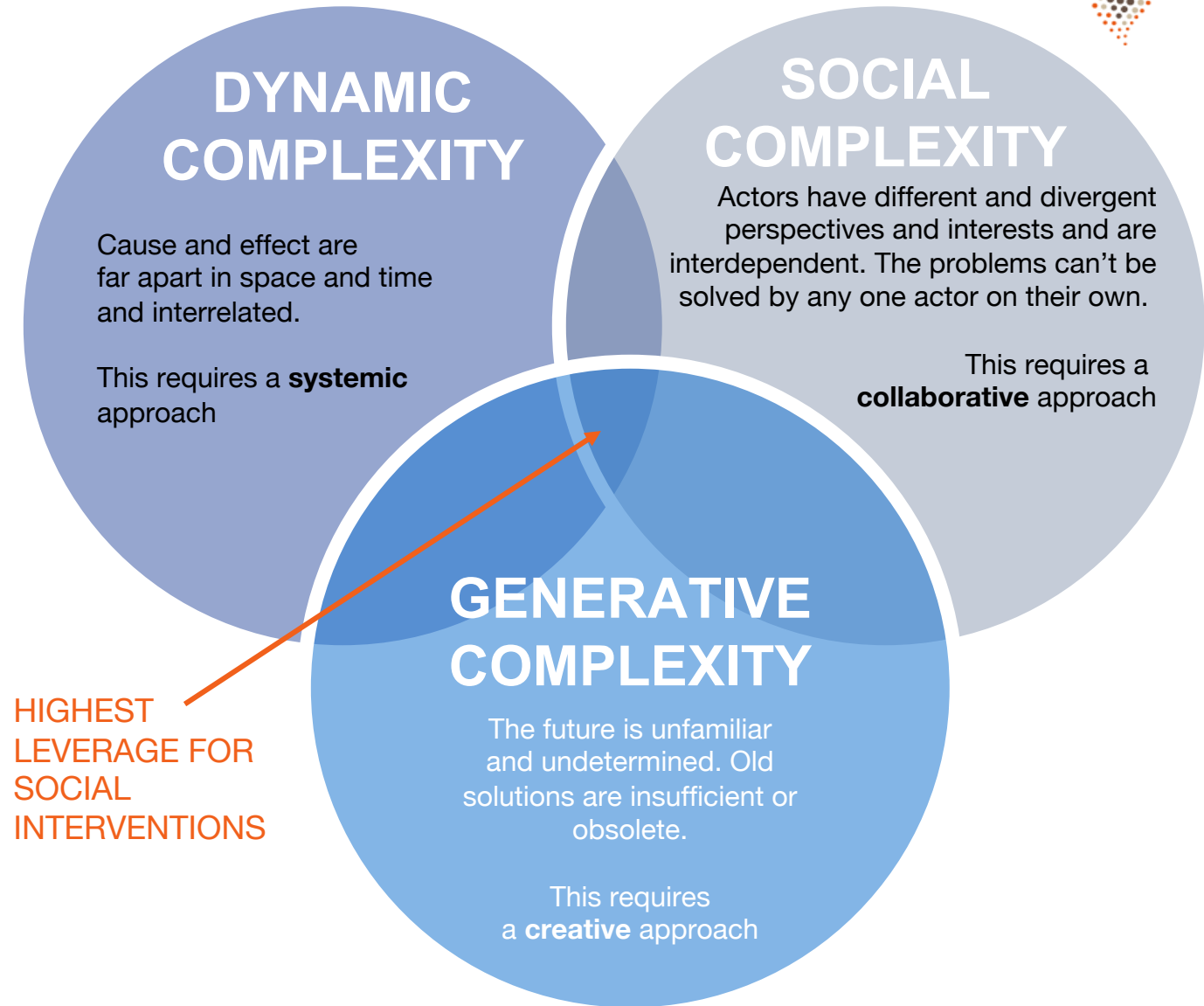


Understanding Complex Problems

The problems of the decisive decade are dynamically, socially, and generatively complex. They are multi-dimensional, they are continually evolving in unprecedented and unpredictable ways, and they involve multiple trade-offs and divergent interests.

As such, they cannot be solved piece by piece or through pure reliance on conventional planning and on experts and authorities. There are no silver bullets.

Rather, these problems demand an approach that is **systemic**, **collaborative**, and **creative**.



Systemic Drivers: The Bottom of the Iceberg

When addressing complex problematic situations, it can be helpful to distinguish between surface-level events and patterns that are directly experienced as opposed to underlying systemic conditions that keep a problematic situation in place, leading the events and patterns to recur.

When we react at the level of events through “firefighting” or “rescuing”, we are treating the symptoms rather than the causes. When we act on underlying structures and culture, we are shifting the conditions that lead events and patterns to recur.

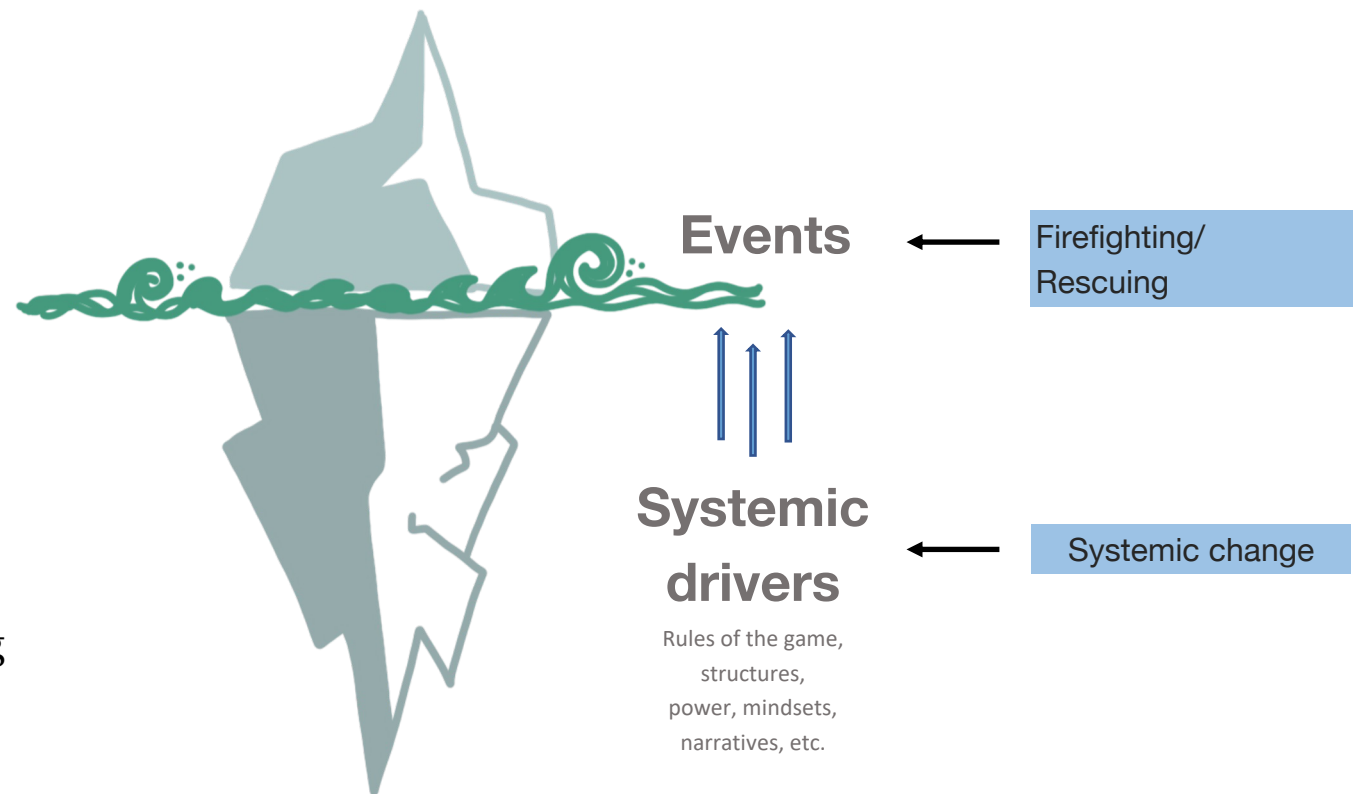
The deeper you go under the surface of the iceberg the greater your ability to understand and influence a complex problem. This is systemic change.

Both are needed!

Fighting fires alone leaves the roots of the problem to grow and evolve.

Addressing **systemic drivers** alone does little to protect individuals and societies exposed to immediate, harmful impacts with potentially devastating consequences.

The work of Reos is primarily focused on systemic change.



"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.

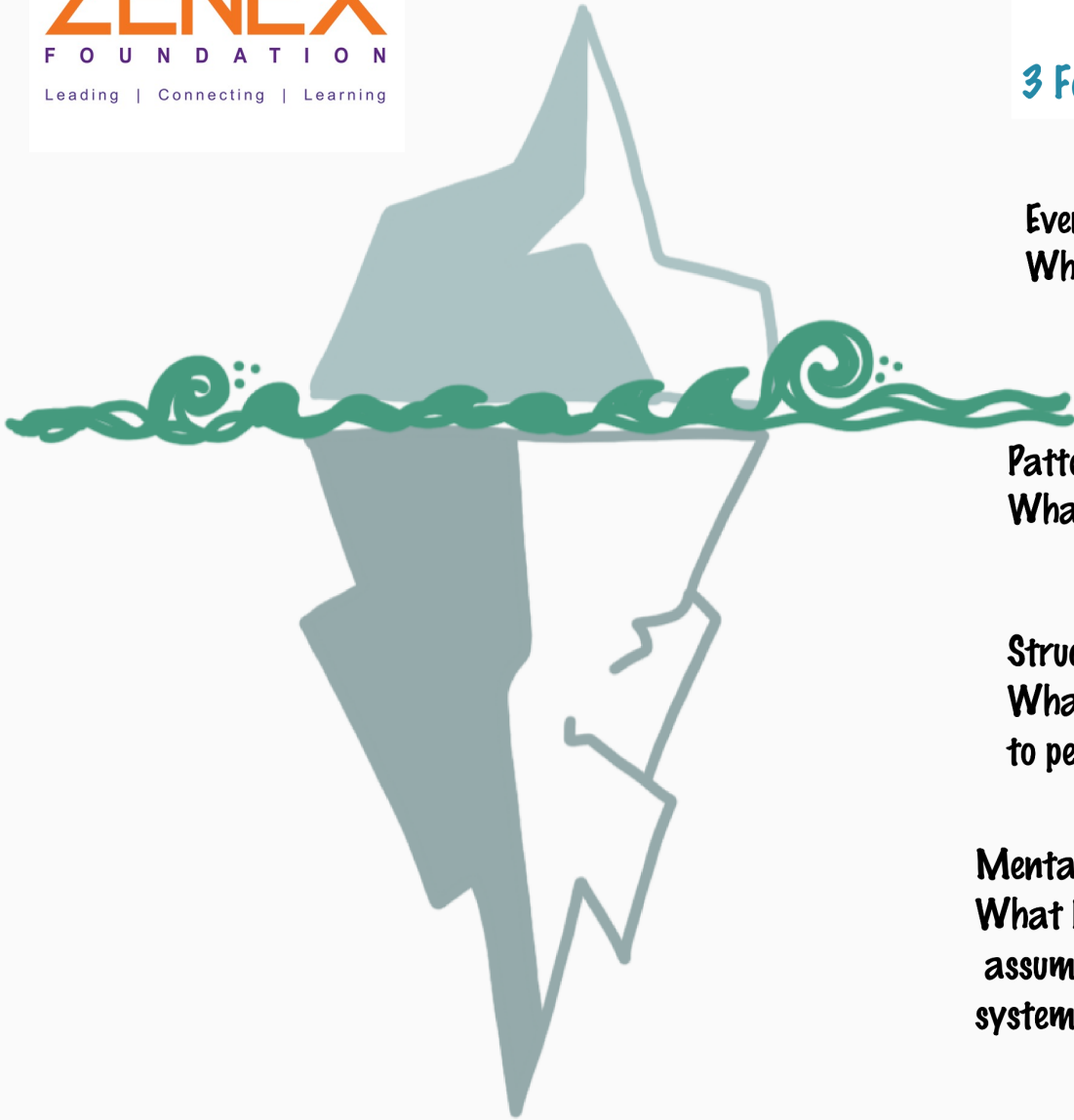


So I thought I should take upon myself to find out whether their conclusion was right. I offered myself as a guarantor and took loans for the poor people. Tried some simple ways of handling these loans. They worked. Everybody paid back their loans. This triggered a whole series of experimentations -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

Using the Iceberg model to structure proposed themes, events and recommendations emerging from the Learning Backlogs workshop:

3 February 2022



Events
What happened?

The Covid 19 pandemic

Closure of schools

Lockdown restrictions

Curriculum changed 2021

Patterns
What trends are there overtime?

Learners falling behind

Literacy and numeracy pace of learning significantly slowed down

Learners not attending school

Deaths due to COVID 19

mental health issues - learners and teachers

Structures
What enables these patterns to persist?

Inadequate and uncoordinated responses to COVID crisis in the system

Bloated curriculum

No adaptive framework to support teachers and learners in diverse contexts

centralised approach from DBE which results in lack of agency at local levels and low responsiveness

continued backlogs and lack of psycho-social support

Mental models
What beliefs, values and assumptions hold this system in place?

Perception that the government is not leading, or doing enough

Assumptions about roles and accountabilities of stakeholders, who to inform, consult and involve

some stakeholders believe they have the 'silver bullet'

Traumas and legacies

Existing historical inequality in the education sector

Continuing and increasing learning backlogs and losses

Increased and ongoing trauma in the education system due to C19 and other systemic issues in SA

Polarised and mistrusting relationships across sectors

These levels and their interactions, as well as how they inform the Reos Results Framework, are illustrated on the following pages.

Five Levels of Change

To inform how we design our interventions to **contribute** to impact in the world, the Reos theory of change considers five levels:

1. Landscapes

The landscape is the level of the **ultimate purpose** of a systemic initiative: for example the actual carbon emissions, biodiversity levels, poverty trends, justice needs met, nutrition levels, violent conflict, etc. This is the space of human needs and planetary boundaries, the domain of shifting trends and bending curves. It is also the context in which an initiative takes place and which needs to be navigated.

2. Culture

Culture is the level of **narratives, identities, values and paradigms**. It shapes the lenses through which we observe and interpret the world. Our systems and structures are embedded in and reproduced by culture.

3. Structures

Systemic structures are the level of **rules of the game** – policies, institutions, processes, practices, power structures, resource flows, and infrastructures. They generate conditions that keep problematic situations in place and create constraints and opportunities for innovation.

4. Niche Innovations

Niche innovations provide **new or adapted responses** or ways to remove obstacles that hold a problematic situation in place. Niches are protected spaces where innovations can be incubated. The system provides the enabling environment or not for these innovations to scale. A critical mass of mutually reinforcing and effective innovations can be supported and scaled to influence systems and culture.

5. Agency and Capability

The **inner transformation** of agency (i.e. confidence, commitment) and the capacity (e.g., knowledge, awareness, skills, resources, power) of social innovators, changemakers, and system leaders enhances their ability to address problematic situations. This applies individually *and* collectively (e.g. at the level of teams, organizations, networks). The collective level involves the depth of trust, connection, shared understanding, and collaborative practice.

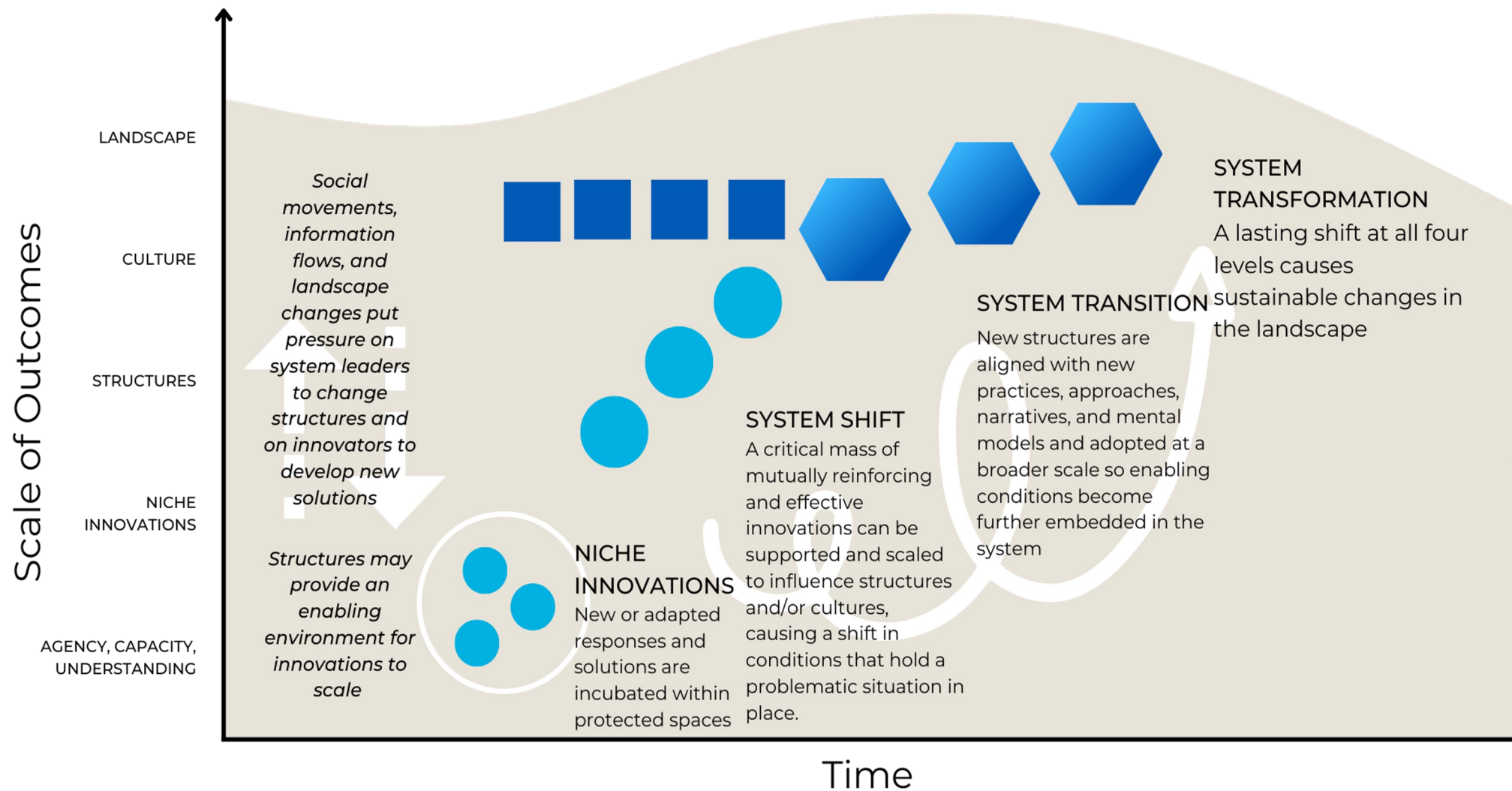
Reos Theory of Change



The Reos theory of change illustrates our understanding of how change happens in the world, within complex adaptive systems.

This diagram is not a depiction of a singular, linear narrative of change. Rather it is intended to offer a language for strategic conversations about outcomes, contributions, synergies, and complementarities in systems change initiatives and to inform design of interventions.

It draws on work from the Reos Partners evaluation team with inspiration from Mark Cabaj of Here to There consulting and the work of Frank W. Geels.



Cumulative Impact in Systems Change

RESULTS THAT MAY BE ATTRIBUTABLE TO AN INITIATIVE

Agency, Capacity & Understanding

Increase in the **agency, capacity, relationships, commitments, and understanding** of innovators and other stakeholders to be able to address a problematic situation



Niche Innovations

A **portfolio of new or adapted responses** that stakeholders develop or adapt and implement to address a problematic situation



System Shift

Promising changes are **institutionalized** in the system, catalyzing a shift in the structural and/or cultural **conditions** (systemic drivers) that hold the problematic situation in place.



RESULTS AN INITIATIVE CONTRIBUTES TO

System Transition

New practices, approaches, and structures, are adopted at a **broader scale** and rooted in shared narratives, values, mental models. Enabling conditions become further embedded in the system through alignment and mutual reinforcement between structure and culture.



System Transformation

A **lasting shift** at all four levels (capacity, innovation, structure, and culture) contributes to changes in the landscape. This is mission-level impact.

The cumulative impact scale illustrates increasing extent of ambition and impact. This is not a linear process.