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Flexible Systems Management

Rajneesh Chowdhury

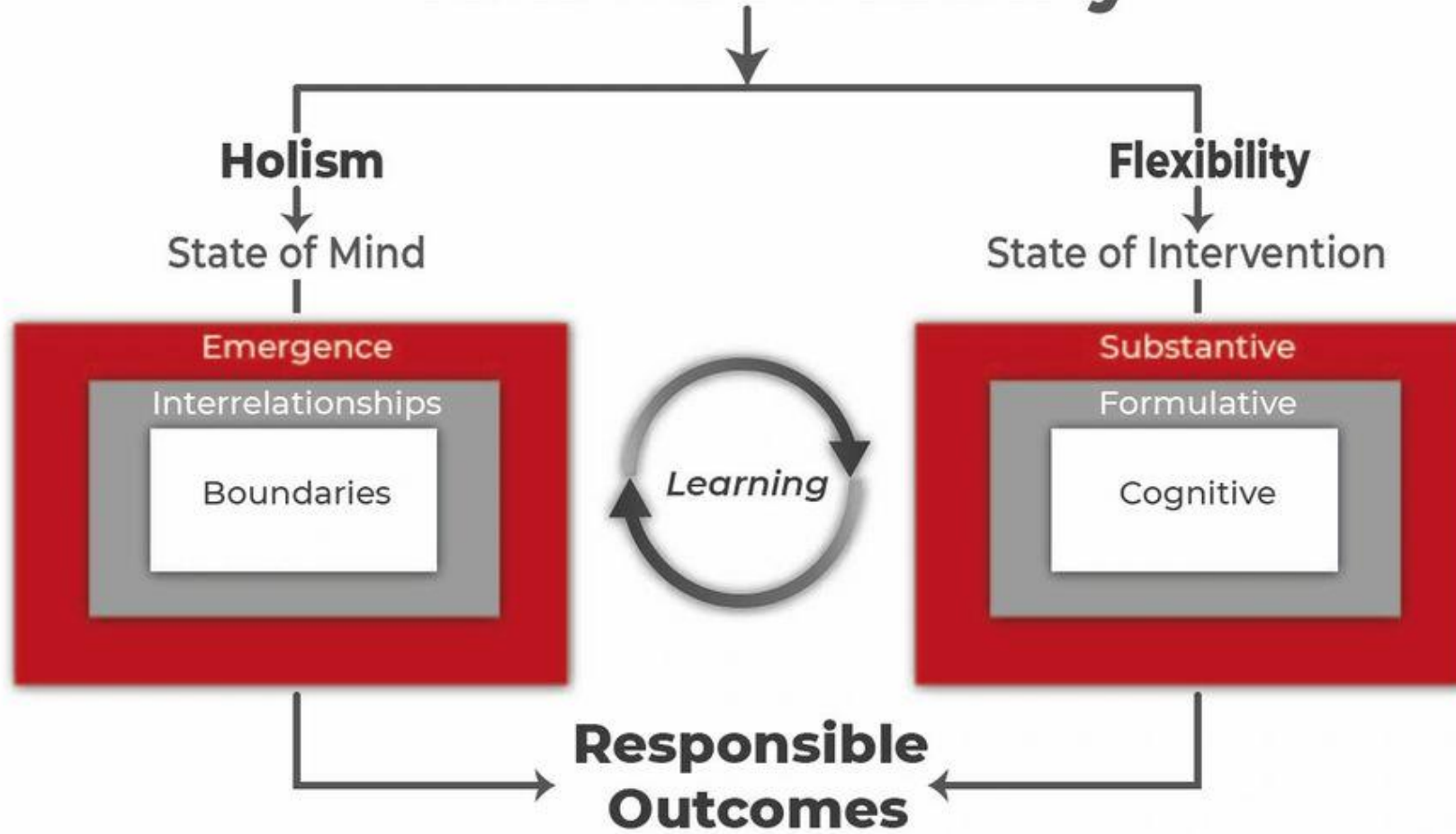
Systems Thinking for Management Consultants

Introducing Holistic Flexibility

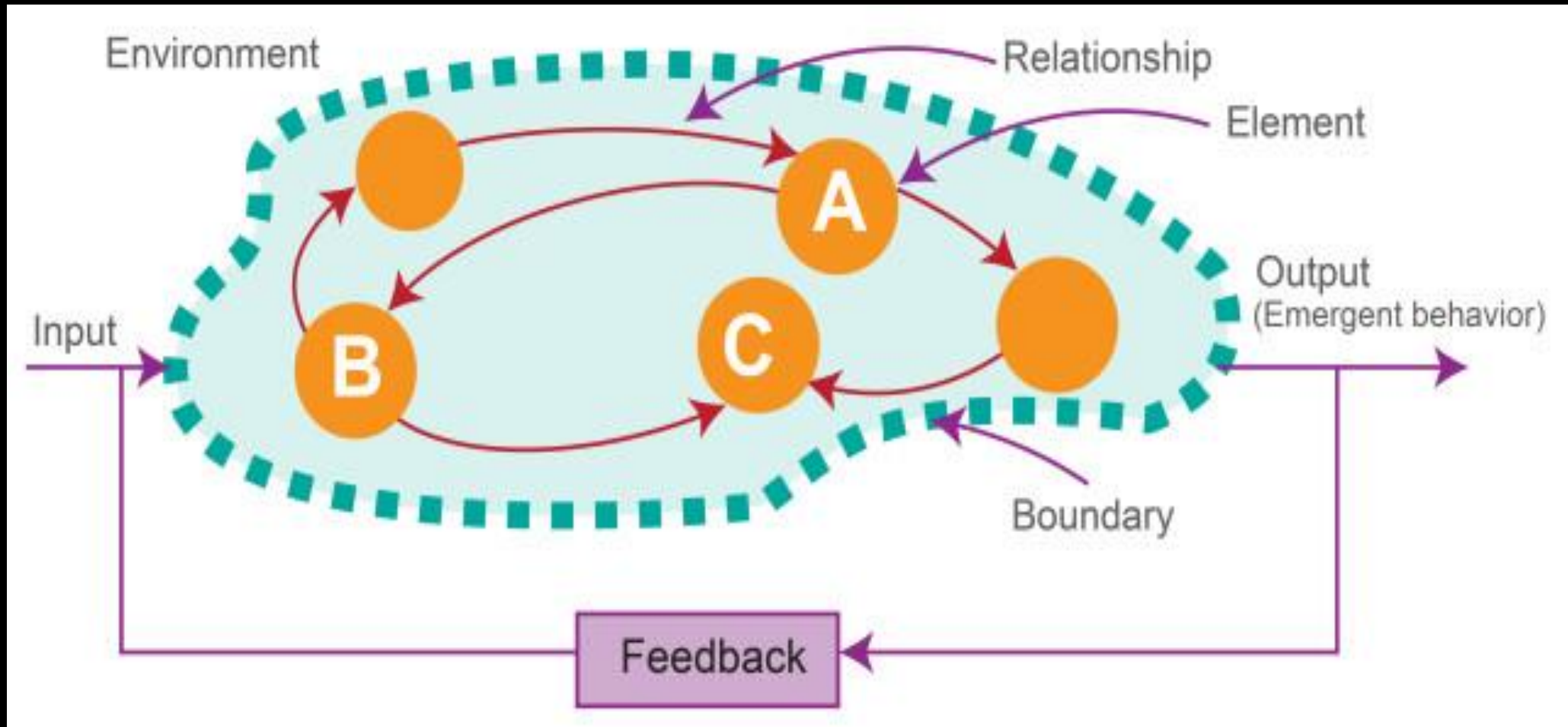
*Foreword by
Professor Michael C. Jackson OBE*

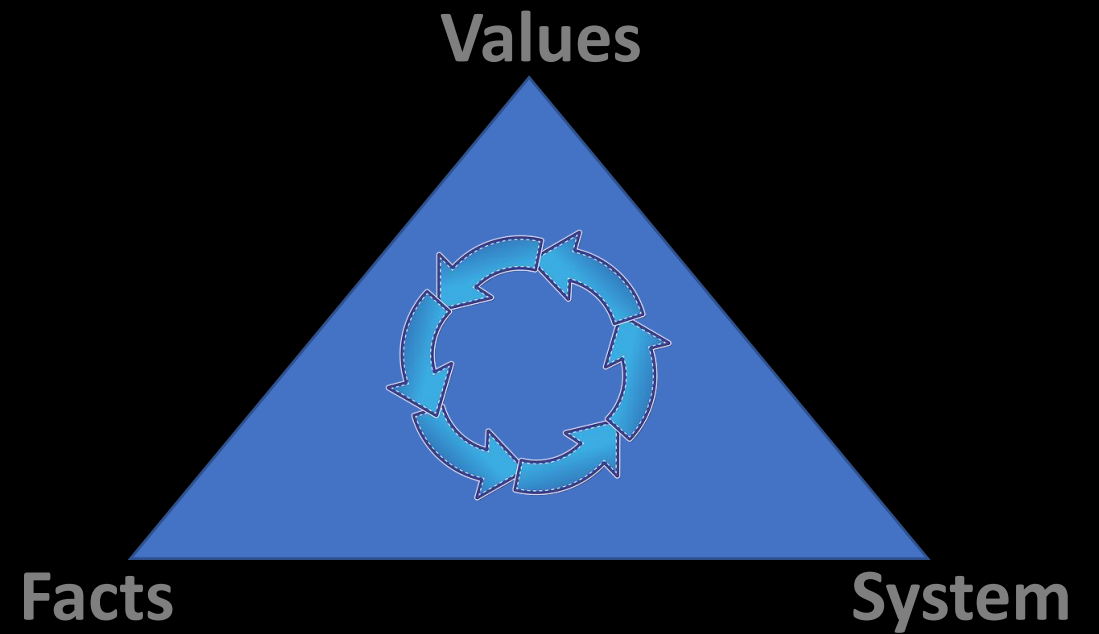
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Holistic Flexibility

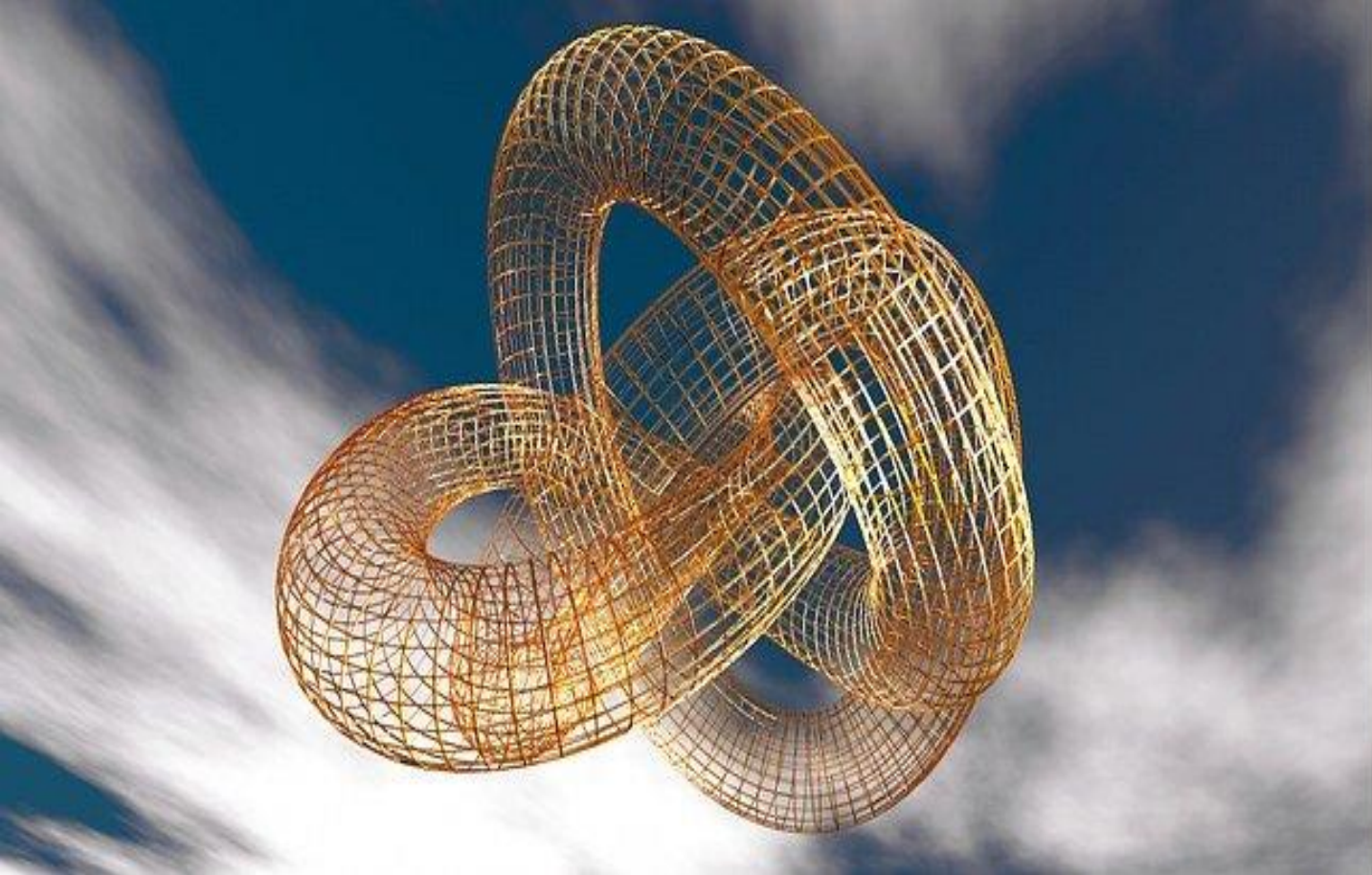


A System



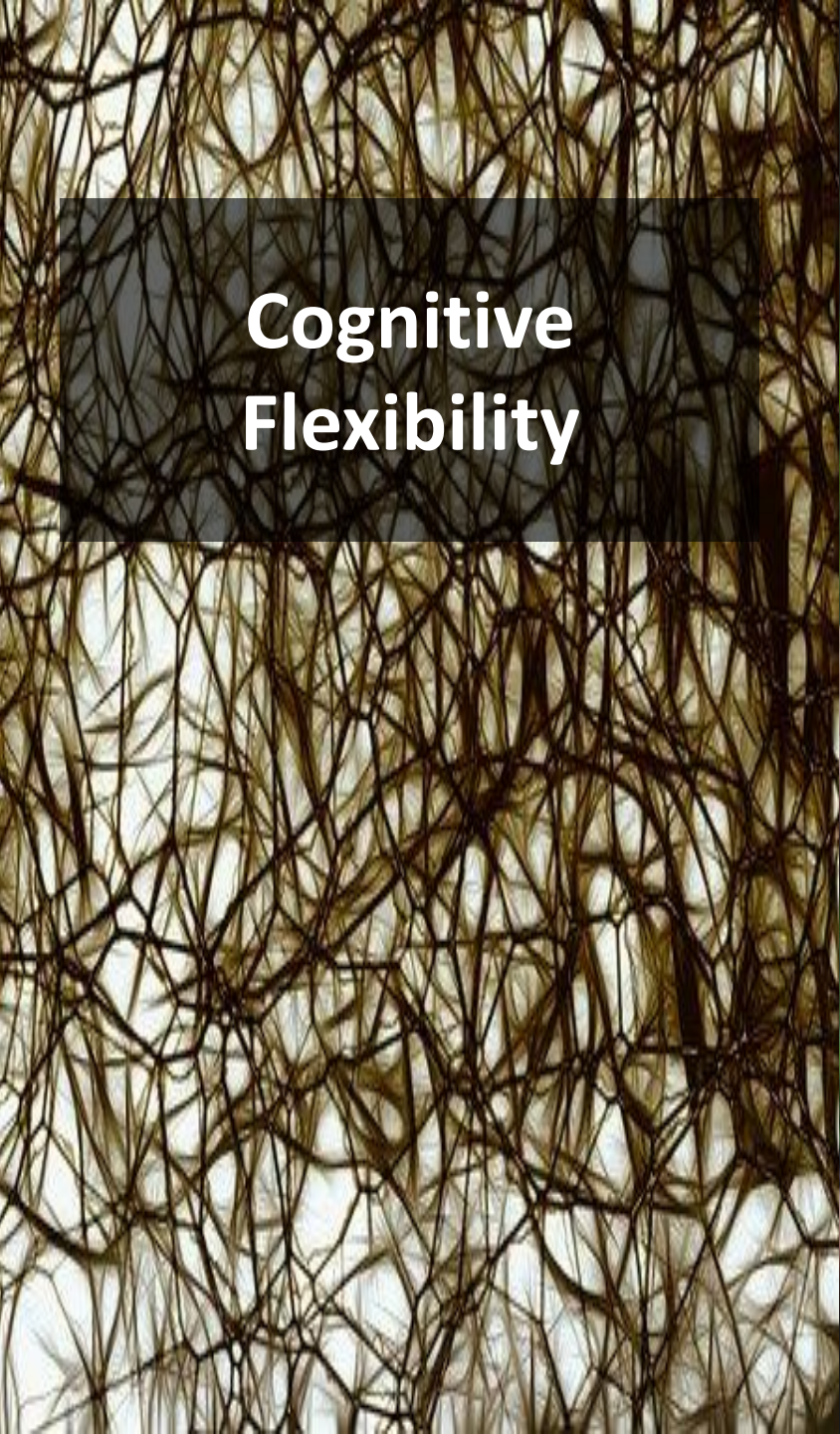


- **Holistic flexibility** is a dynamic interplay between a state of mind that has the ability to absorb systemic complexity, and a state of intervention that has the ability to embrace flexibility both in intent and form
- **Emergence** can be of multiple kinds

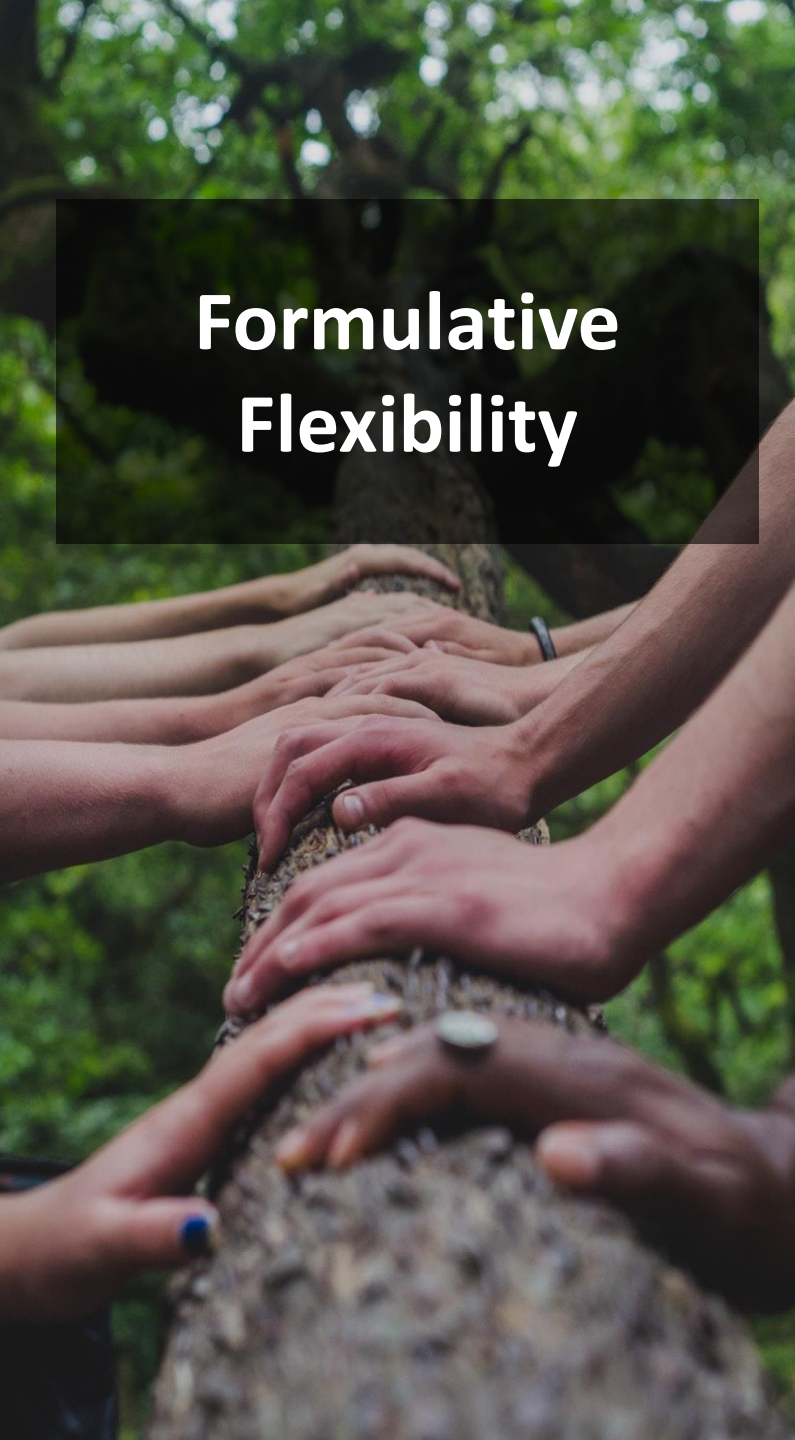


- Dynamic interrelationship defining reality
- Everything is connected to everything else
- Boundaries are continually reshaped
- Conventional ideas of problem solving are obsolete
- Power rests in the agency of networks

Move from
problem solver
to a
convenor
mindset



**Cognitive
Flexibility**



**Formulative
Flexibility**



**Substantive
Flexibility**



Cognitive Flexibility

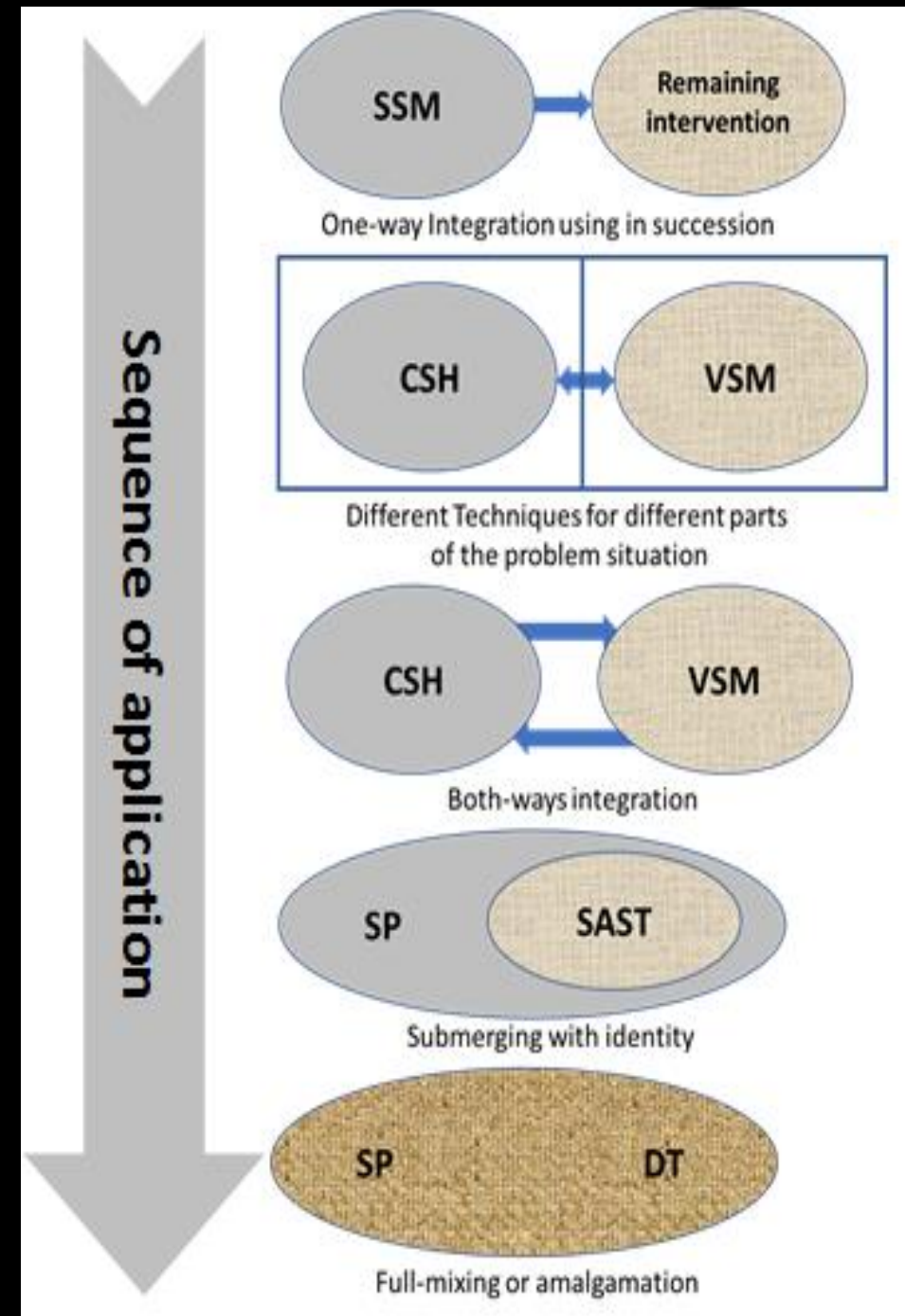
“Cognitive flexibility represents someone’s ability to shift thoughts and adapt his or her behaviour to an ever-changing environment. Levels of cognitive flexibility are reflected by your ability to disengage from a previous task and respond effectively to another task — or to multitask. The more cognitive flexibility an individual has, the greater the chances are that this person can **optimise his or her human potential.**”

(Bergland, 2015)

- It all begins with the ability to think
- A person needs to be able to transcend silos of affiliation to specific concepts, mental models, actions and tasks
- Presented with different and/or differing responsibilities, he or she needs to be able to move between thoughts and effectively shift between tasks
- Psychological studies have established that if there is no perceived negative consequence, human beings are open to experimentations and trying something new

Formulative Flexibility

- Every problem situation is unique and although meta-methodologies are designed to be suited for all situations, consultants can, and often need to, introduce their **own nuances and specificities**





**Substantive
Flexibility**

Tangible resources

- Capital
- Infrastructure
- Workforce

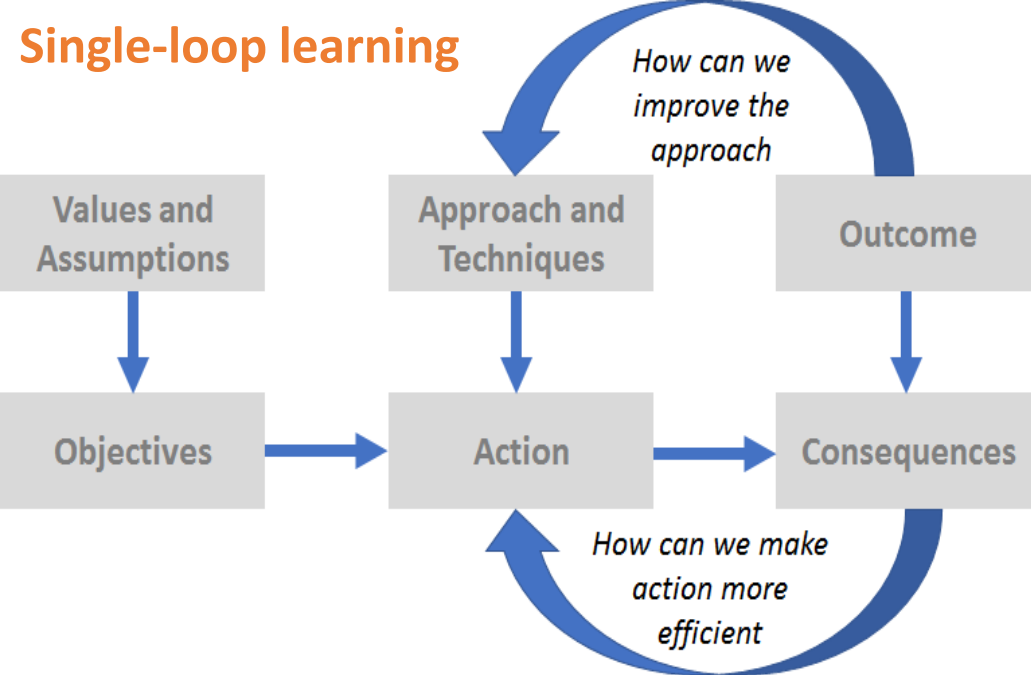
Intangible resources

- Time
- Competencies
- Goodwill/ Support

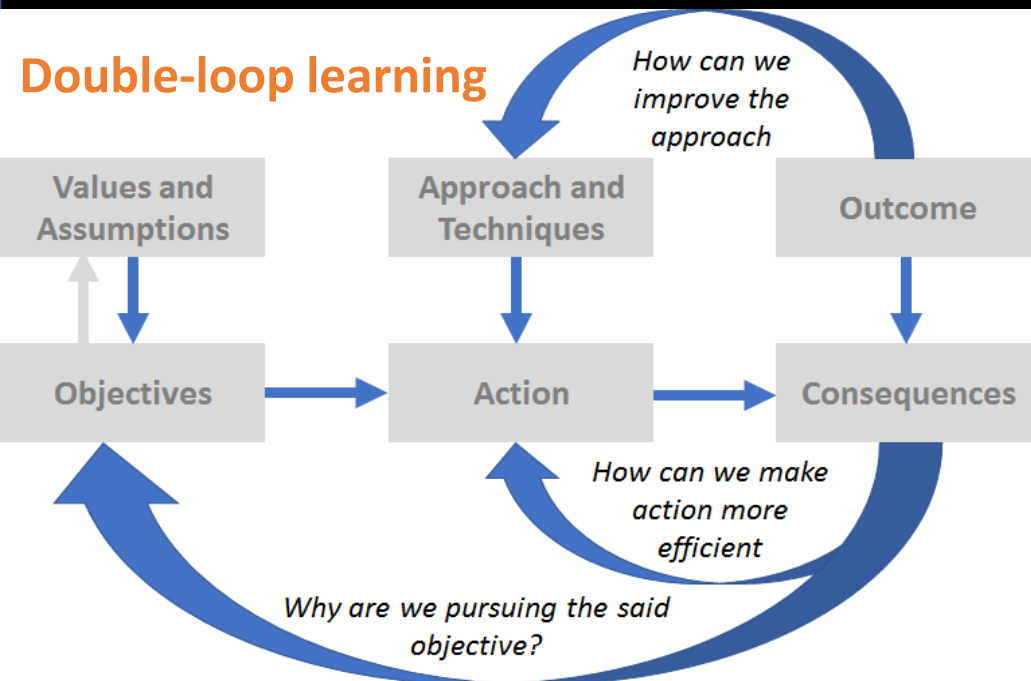
	Aspect addressed	Dependency	Related discipline
Cognitive flexibility	Thinking	Nature-Nurture	Psychology, Psychiatry, Neuroscience, Sociology
Formulative flexibility	Planning	Frameworks & Models	Management, Administration
Substantive flexibility	Action	Resource availability	Material Sciences, Finance, Human Resource, Supply Chain

Three kinds of flexibility

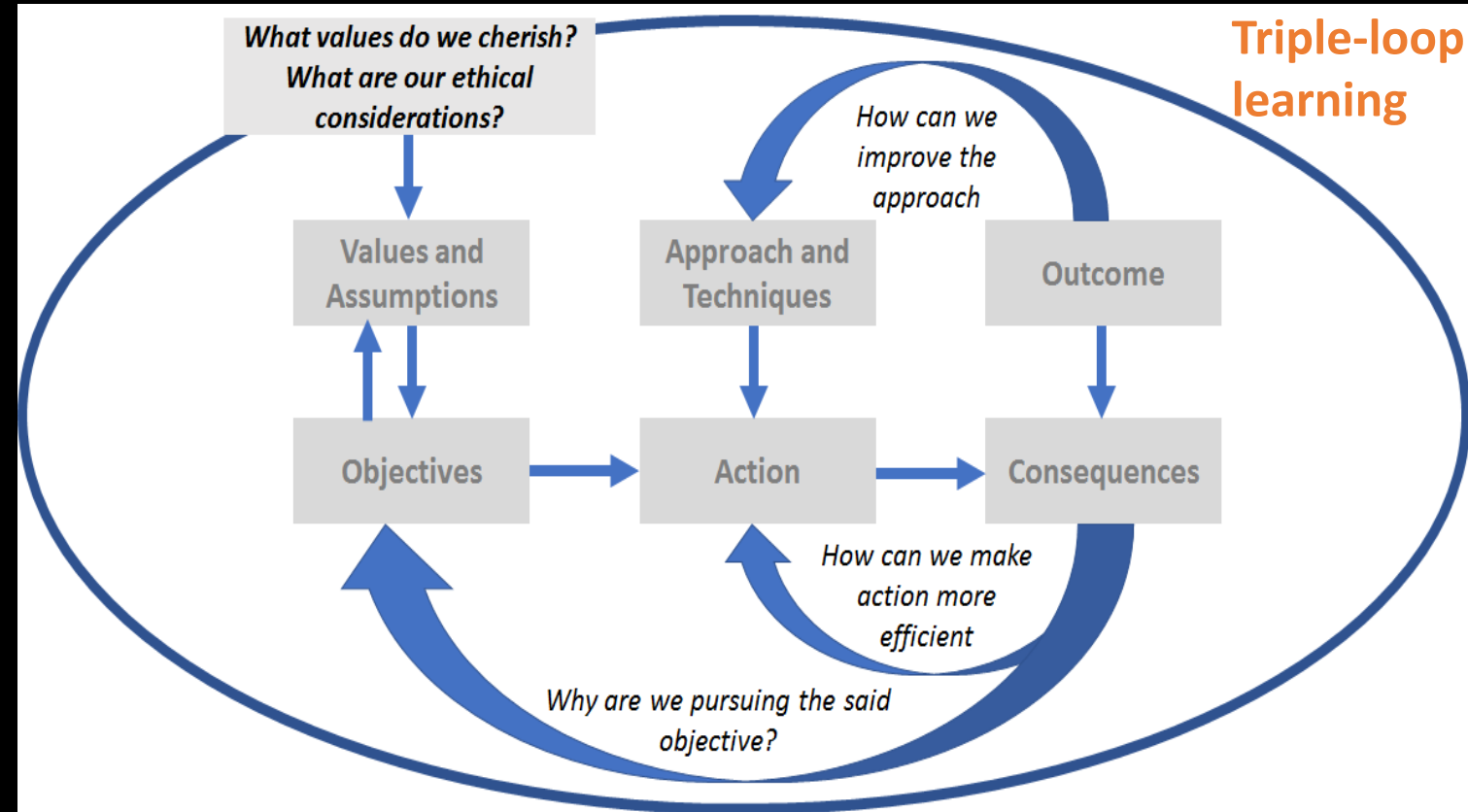
Single-loop learning



Double-loop learning



Triple-loop learning



Black-box consulting

- Consultants have to manage expectation and navigate **ethical considerations** both at the level of self and at the level of the client
- Difficult questions and difficult situations do not mean that consultants/managers can afford to **shy away** from these realities and carry on working “as usual”
- Time has come when failures and assignments led by misguided consulting values have begun to surface in the corporate world with **grave consequences**
- There is still **lack of regulation** of management consultants on how they ought to operate, create value and what ethics they ought to adhere to



Systemic Value Add

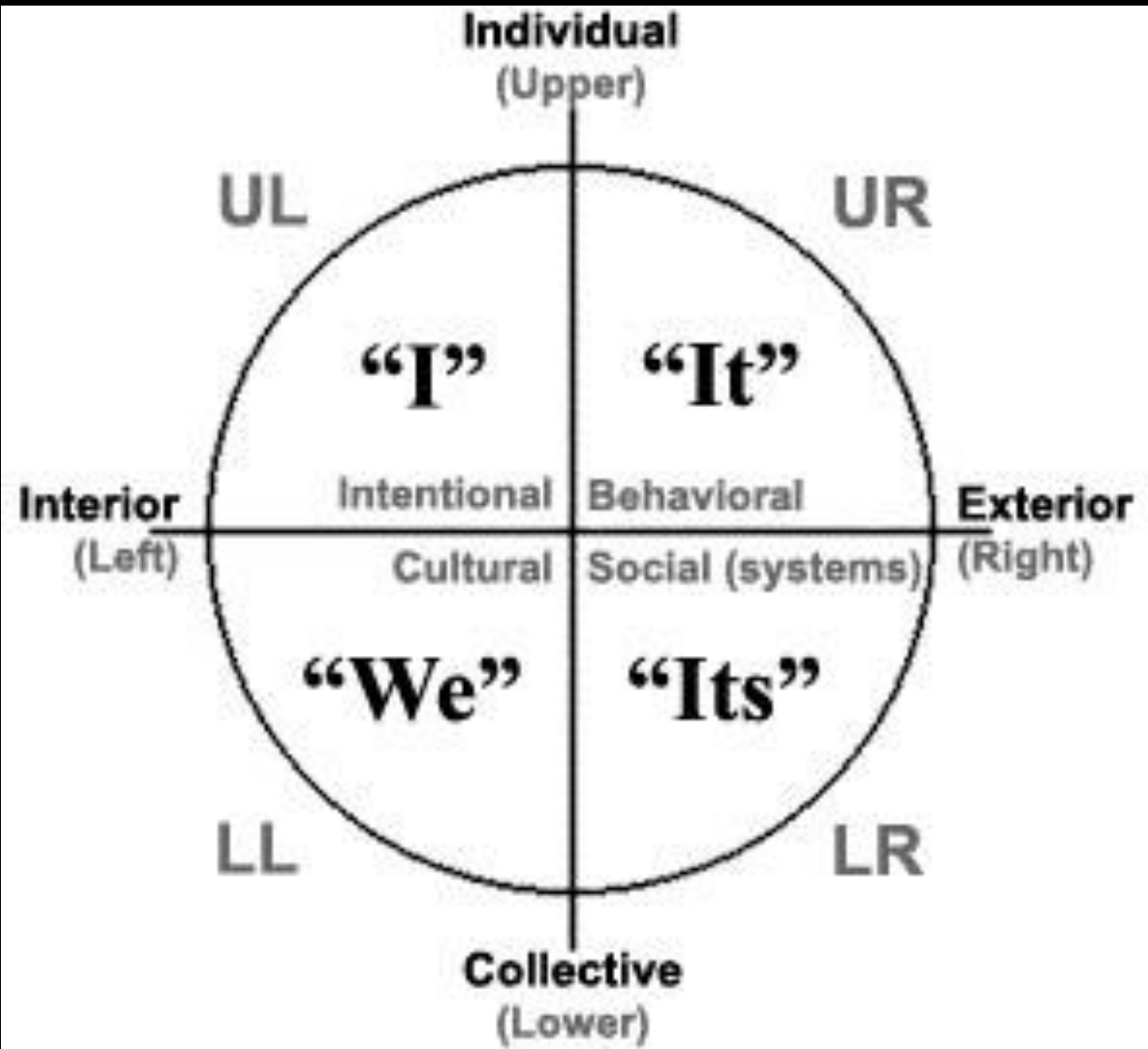


Emancipation



Sustainable Outcomes

Integral Thinking

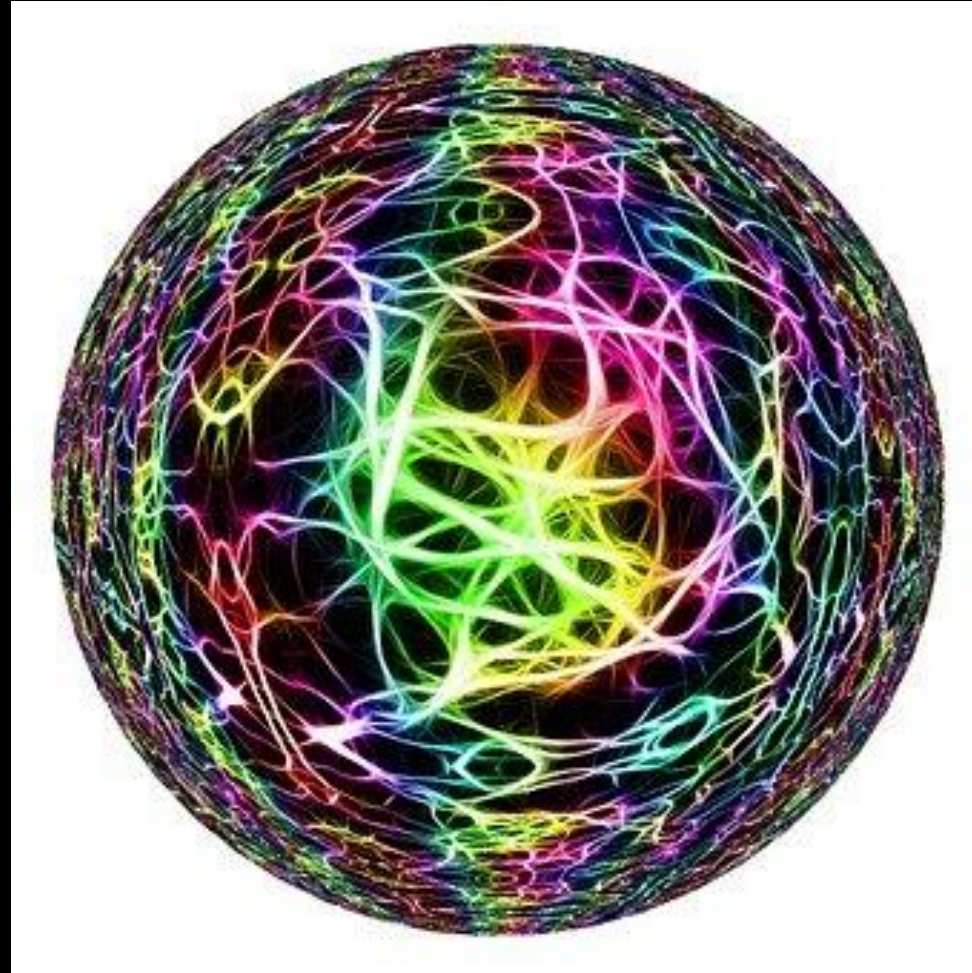


Critical Systems Thinking

- Boundary Critique
- Methodological Pluralism
- Emancipation

There is great **complementarity** between Integral Thinking and Critical Systems Thinking

Emergence



Complexity

Interconnectedness

Unknown



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