

# SERIES: GET SOUTH AFRICA TALKING

## BREAKFAST DIALOGUE: IS SOUTH AFRICA AT THE EDGE?

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# Rampant destruction is hindering service delivery

Country's culture of violence must end, writes **Geordin Hill-Lewis**

**T**HE DESTRUCTION of public property in South Africa does not receive enough attention. Perhaps this is because in such a violent society, with stories of new and ever more horrible crimes appearing weekly, damage to property is considered comparatively uninteresting.

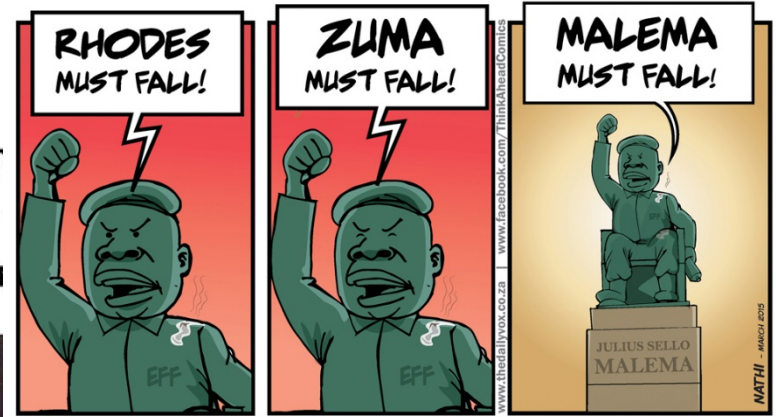
But we really should focus more attention and scrutiny on how much public property and infrastructure is damaged across the country.

This week the City of Cape Town was scheduled to begin the installation of 900 new chemical toilets in an informal settlement called Kosovo, in Philippi. The installation was supposed to take five weeks, with all of the new toilets installed by the end of April.

Work began on Tuesday, but the contractors were soon forced to leave the site after the first eight toilets were destroyed by a small group of protesting residents just minutes after they were installed. Now, the contractor refuses to return to the site until the city can guarantee the safety of the workers, who themselves are residents of Kosovo and who fear for their own safety. The city, in turn, is nervous that if the



**UP IN FLAMES**  
A service delivery protest in Strandfontein Road where police arrested several people for public violence. PICTURE: HENK KRUGER



## VULNERABLE POSITION



cities in South Africa on single measure of service but we could be doing it if it weren't for this kind of destruction. Put simply people could be receiving basic services.

Our city leaders, the police, and the SAPS need to be tougher on the destruction of public property. And, in the communities themselves, they must stand up and make it clear that they will no longer tolerate the destruction of their



Guptagate

Business Complacency

SABC Board Service Delivery Protests

Nkandla Burning Libraries

Safety & Security Tenderpreneurs

Ailing Infrastructure Civil Society Apathy  
State Capture

Hawks SAA fiasco

Pravin Gordhan

NPA foibles Health Systems Collapse

Higher Education Crisis

Fees Must Fall

# Is South Africa at the Edge?



# Why this dialogue?

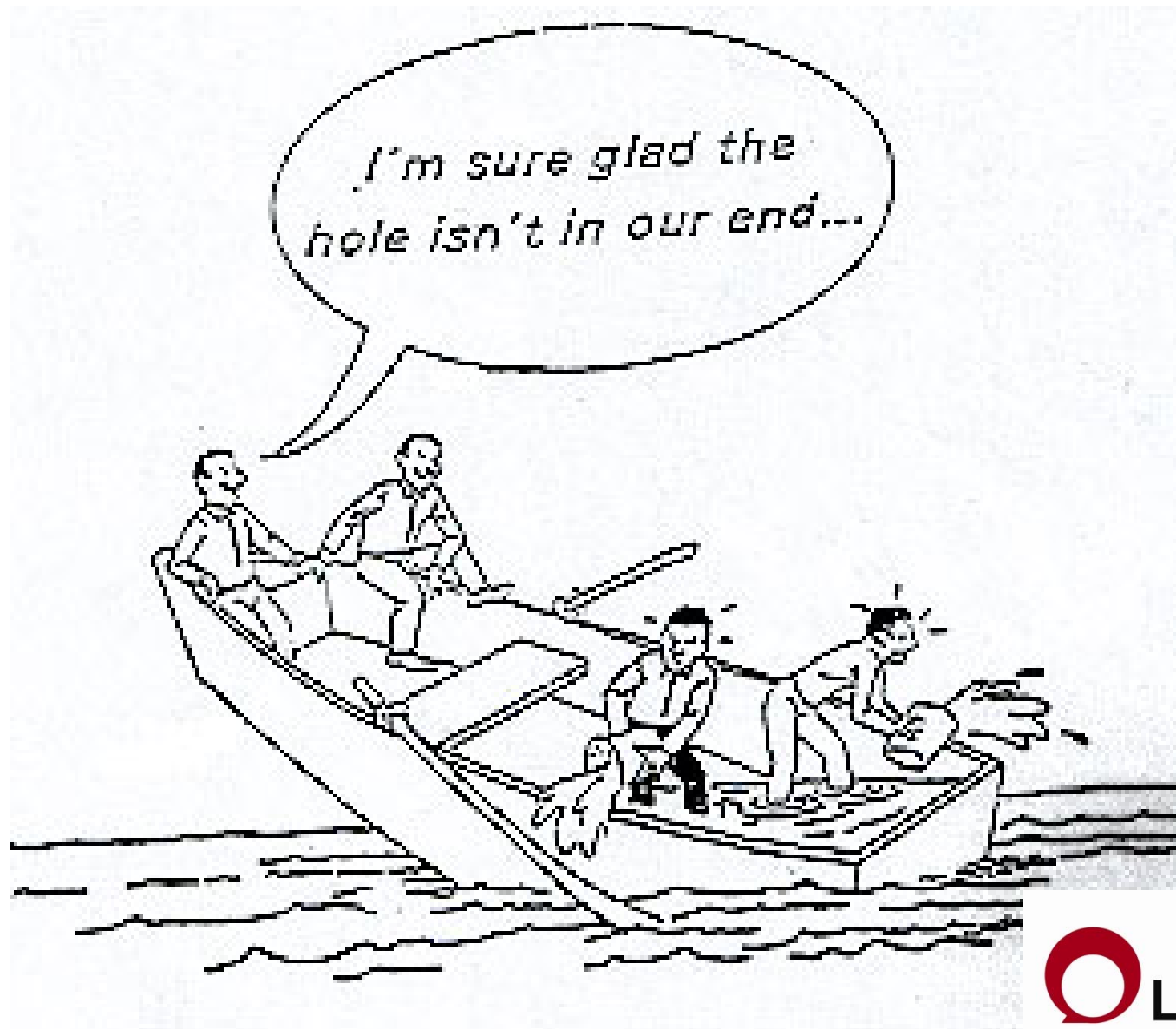
- 1980s - Mass Democratic Movement
- Post 1994 Transition - Civil Society disengaged
- Abdicated to Government, Business and Opportunists
- Leadership Crisis
- Huge social disparities, racism, patriarchy, and myriad other ills
- Health System, Education System, Safety and Security System
- Democracy under threat
- Lack of incisive, investigative journalism
- **Get South Africa Talking**
- **Active citizens – Critical Thinkers – Creative Doers**

# Dialogue and a Systems View

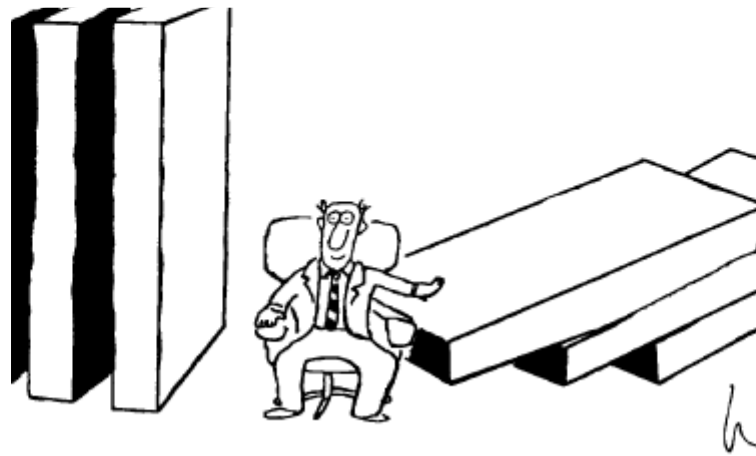
- Deeper perspective
- Perceived malaise

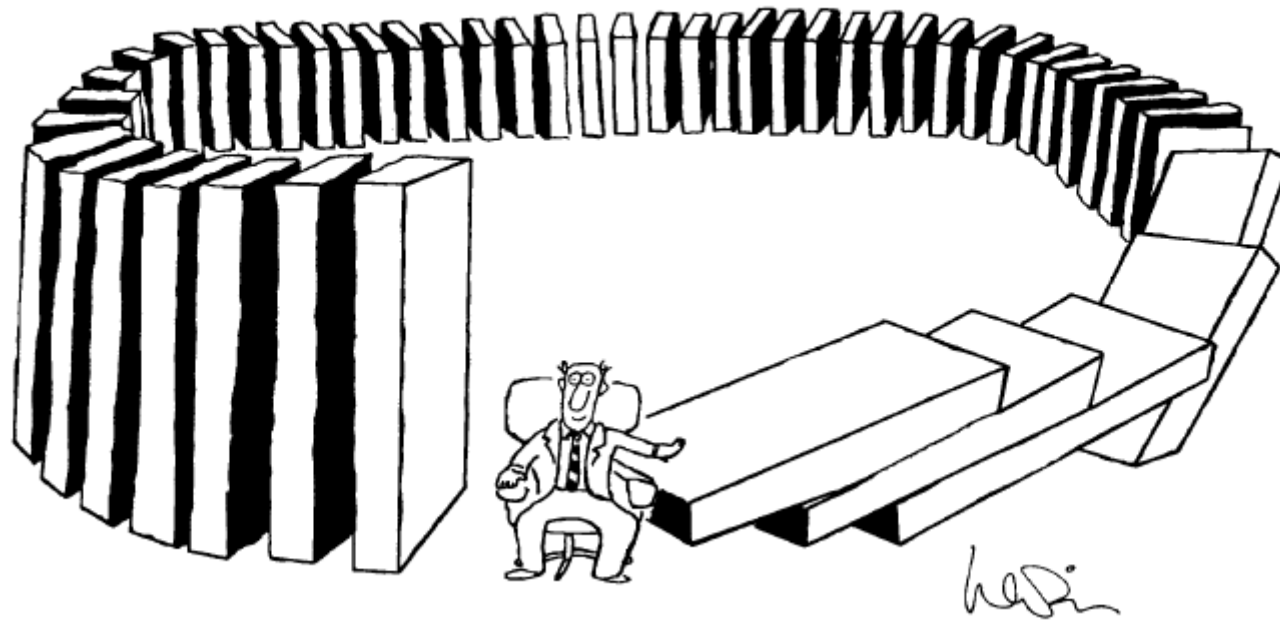
# Is South Africa at the Edge?











# Systems Concepts

- What is a system?
- Holism vs. Reductionism
- Boundaries
- Emergent properties
- Feedback
- Delays
- “Worse before better” behaviour
- Mental models
- Multiple perspectives – “My truth is not the truth”

# Systems Thinking – 7 Thinking Skills

- Dynamic Thinking
- Systems as Cause thinking
- Closed Loop Thinking
- Forest Thinking
- Operational Thinking
- Quantitative Thinking
- Scientific Thinking

# Systems Thinking

- Dynamic Thinking
  - Behaviour over Time
  - Accumulations
- Systems as Cause Thinking
  - We have seen the enemy and it is ourselves?
- Closed Loop Thinking
  - Structure Drives Behaviour
  - “Rules of the Game”
- Forest Thinking
  - Don’t get overwhelmed by the detail
  - High level aggregate behaviour
- Operational Thinking
  - How things happen actually ...concrete...not abstract concepts
- Quantitative Thinking
  - What you can’t measure you can’t manage
  - No!
- Scientific Thinking
  - Disconfirming evidence
  - Treat our perspective as hypotheses
  - Our pet theories are wrong
- Delays – Oscillations in systems
- Worse before Better behaviour

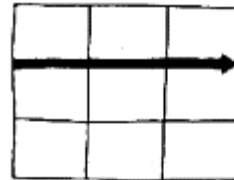
# Systems as Cause Thinking





# Dynamic Thinking

- Behaviour over Time
- Accumulations



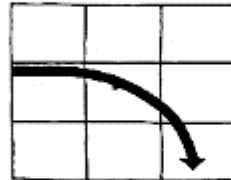
STAGNATION



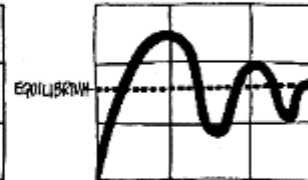
LINEAR GROWTH



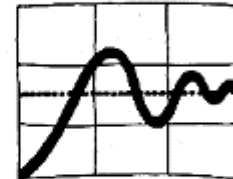
ACCELERATED GROWTH  
(POSITIVE FEEDBACK)



DECLINE



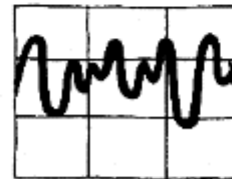
STABILIZATION AT ONE  
EQUILIBRIUM VALUE  
(NEGATIVE FEEDBACK)



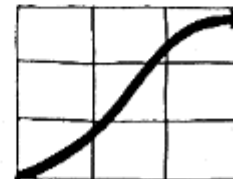
EXPONENTIAL GROWTH  
AND REGULATION



LIMITED GROWTH



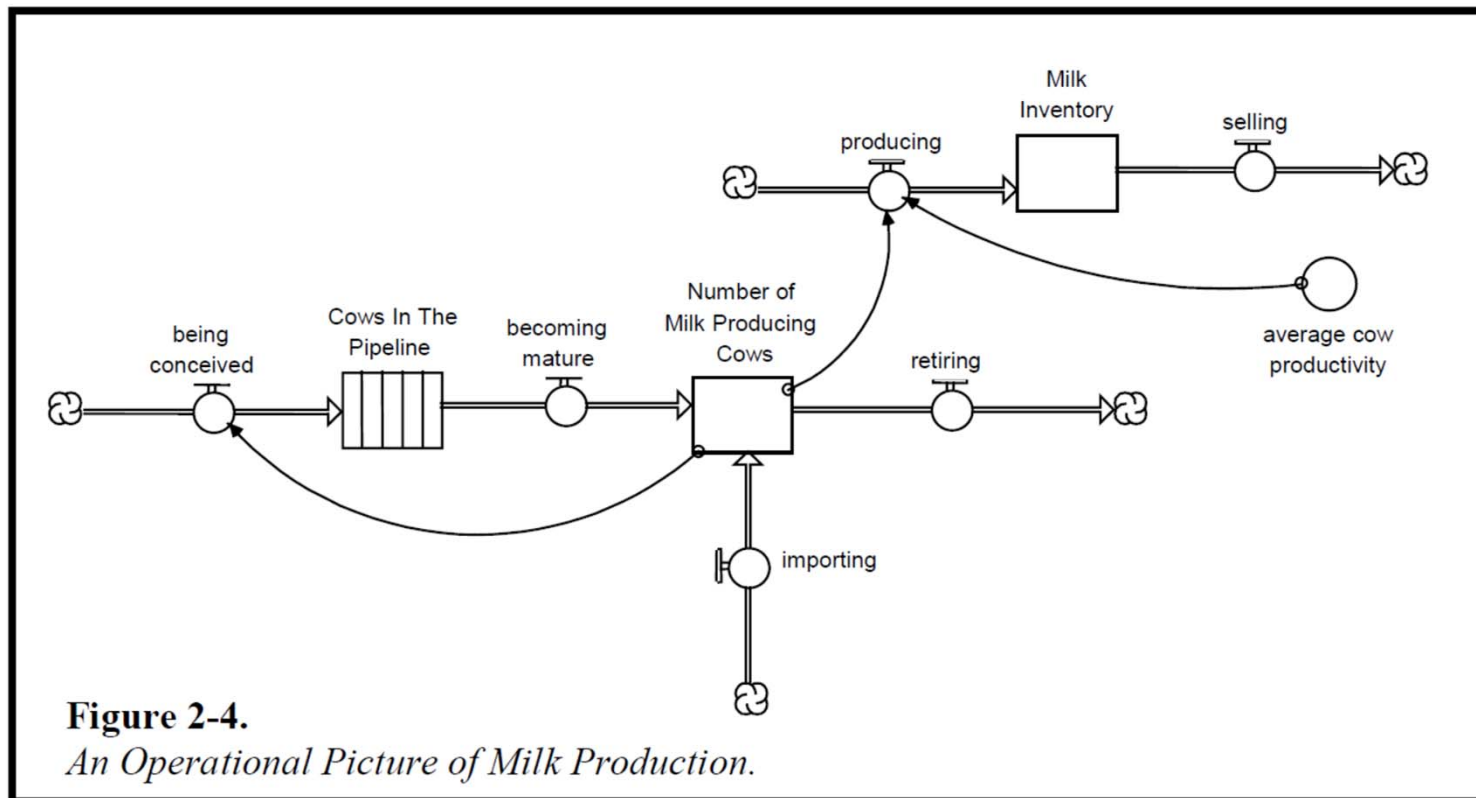
OSCILLATIONS AND FLUCTUATIONS



ACCELERATED GROWTH  
AND SATURATION

# Operational Thinking

- How things happen actually ...concrete...not abstract concepts
- Example: Econometrics Model



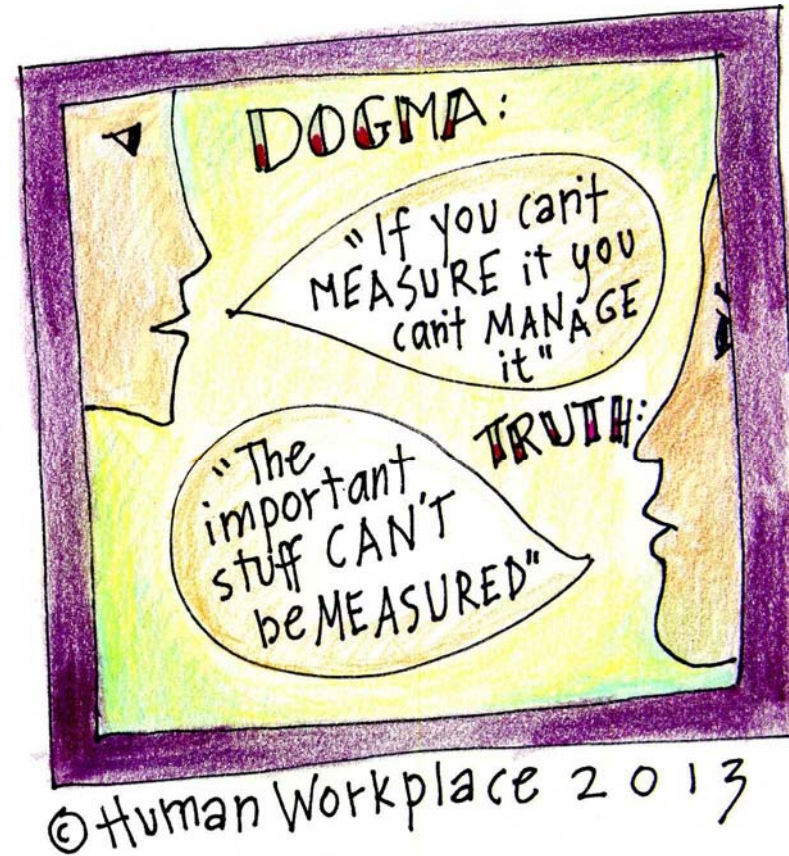


# Forest Thinking



- Don't get overwhelmed by the detail
- High level aggregate behaviour

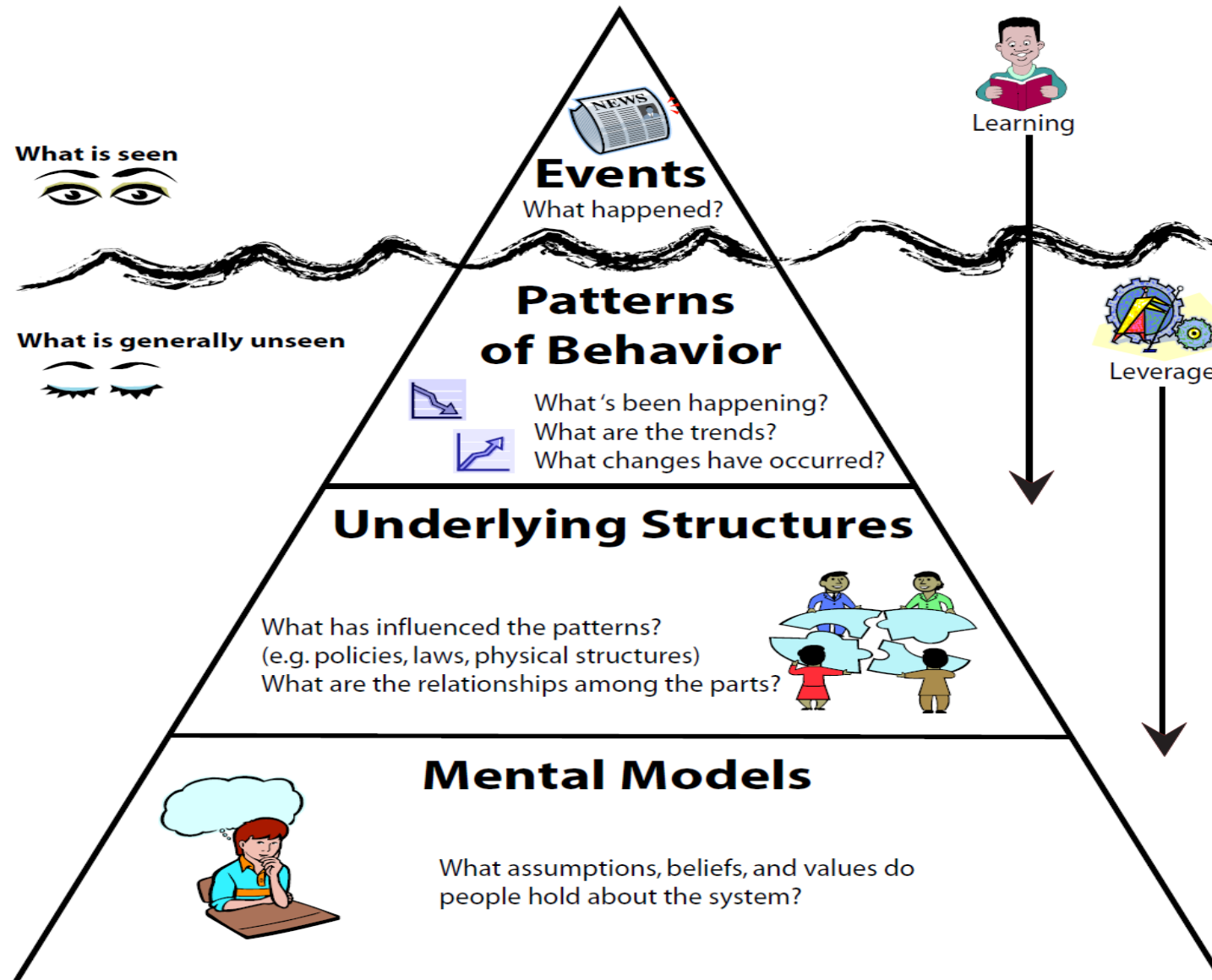
# Quantitative Thinking



# Systems Iceberg



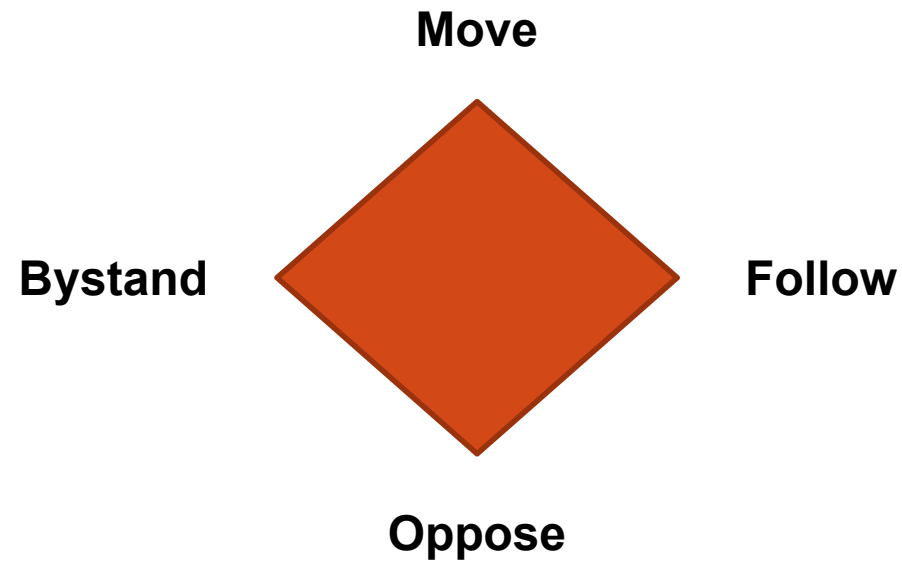
# Iceberg... Seeing What's Below the Surface



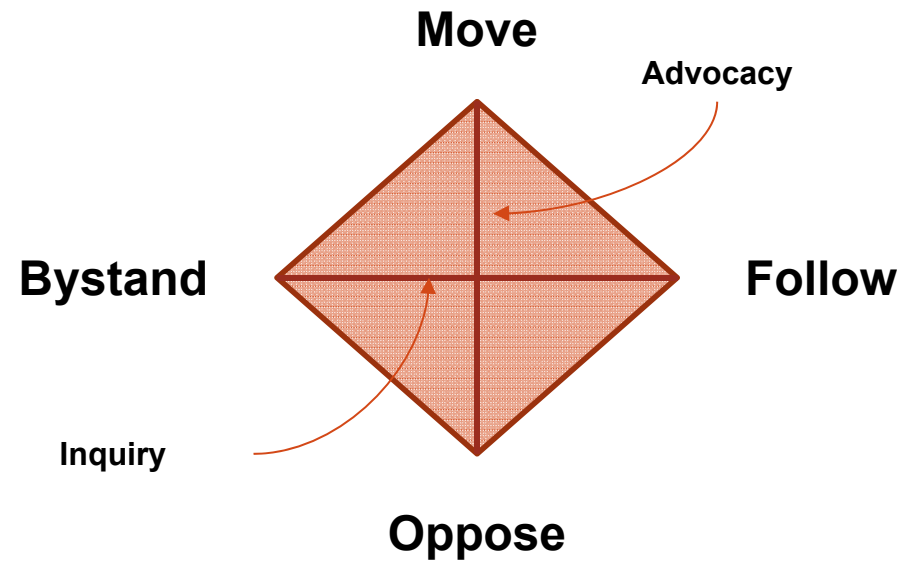
# Dialogic Leadership



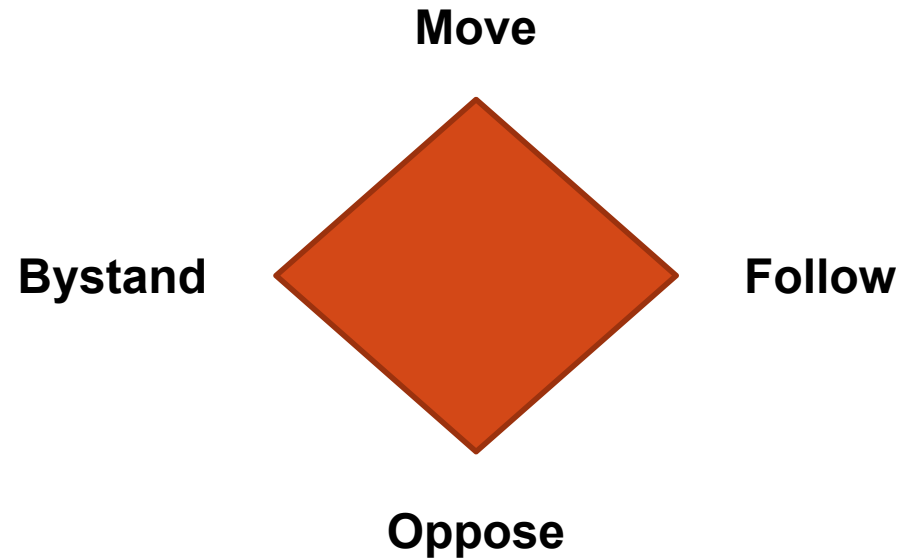
# Action Capabilities



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**Without Movers there is no  
Direction**

**Without Followers there is no  
completion**

**Without Opposers there is no  
Correction**

**Without Bystanders there is no  
Perspective**

# Dialogic Leadership

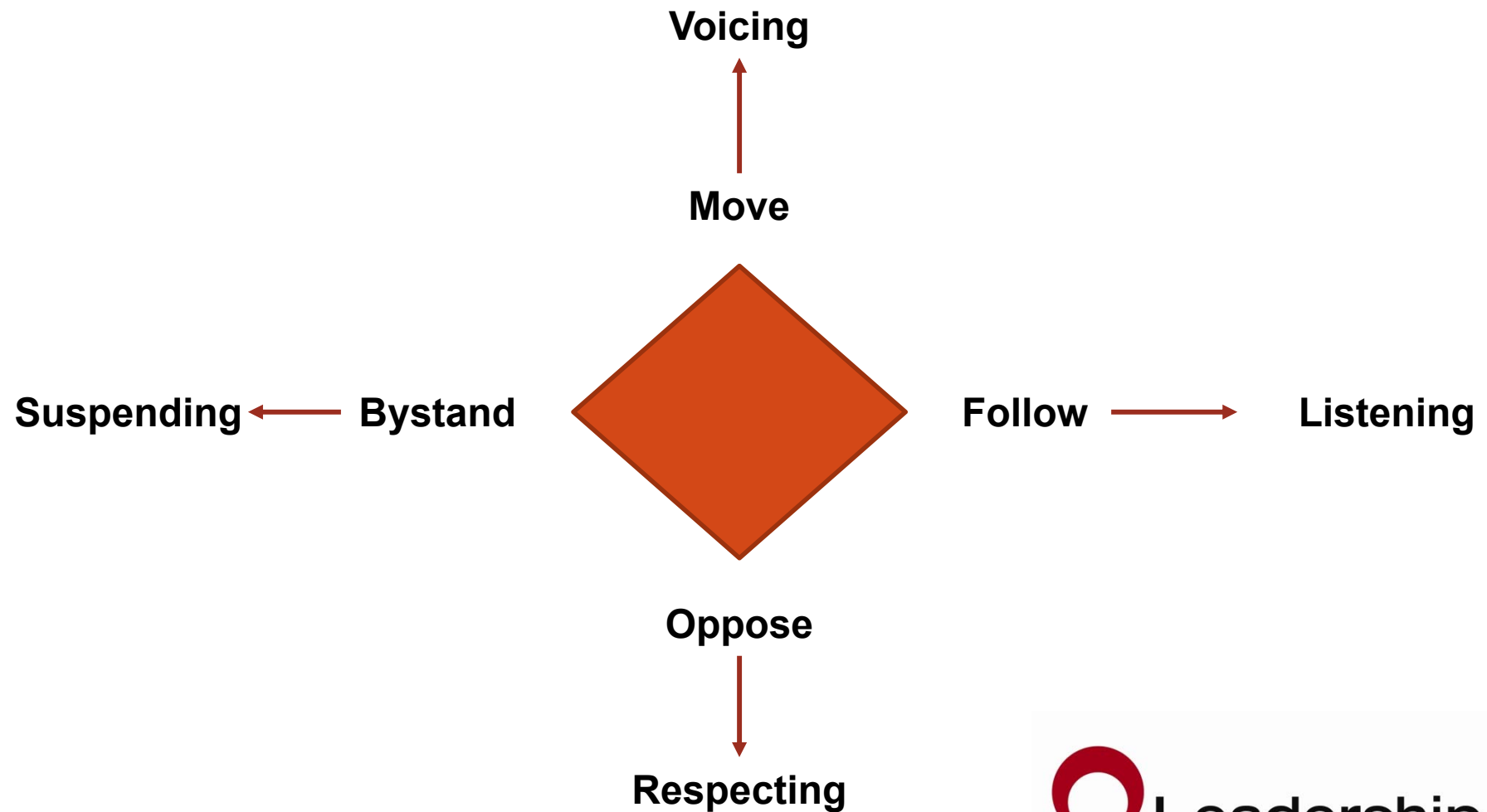
- Ability to listen together
- To learn to be part of a larger whole
- The voice and meaning emerging not just from **me** but from **us**
- Sense of **flow**
- Follow not just each other but the emergent flow of meaning



# Dialogic Leadership

- Listening *together*
- Respect is the practise that shifts the quality of our opposing
- “Legitimate others”
- Looks for sense in what others are thinking and saying
- To respect is to listen for the coherence in their views
- Even when we find what they are saying unacceptable
- Suspending...our opinion and the certainty that surrounds it
- Voicing...when we move by speaking our authentic voice we set up a new order of things, open new possibilities and create.

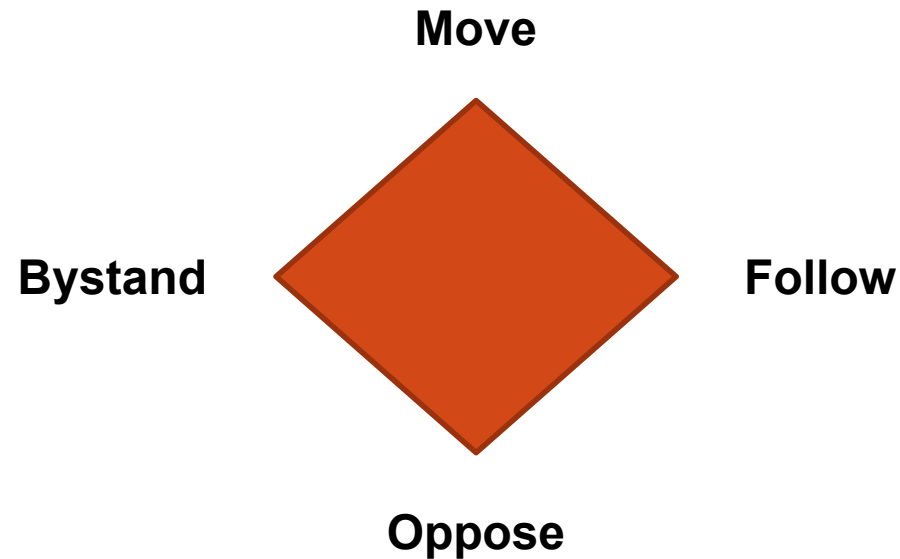
# Action Capabilities



# We shall now move into the dialogue...

- Provocative Questions
- Systemic approach
- Each table has a host
- Coloured paper – Kokis
- Hand-Mind Integration
- No summary at the end
- Dialogic process itself is where the value lay
- Synthesis
- Outcome of the dialogue emailed to all participants

# Dialogic Leadership



**Without Movers there is no  
Direction**

**Without Followers there is no  
completion**

**Without Opposers there is no  
Correction**

**Without Bystanders there is no  
Perspective**

# Dialogue Questions

“We have seen the enemy and it is us”

How do each one of us in our personal, professional and organisational capacities contribute to the morass that we are in as a country?

“Systems are perfectly designed to give the outcomes that we get.”

What are the mental models that we as a society hold that give us the dysfunctional state that we are in as a country?

Audacity of Hope

What are the concrete steps we can take out of this dialogue breakfast to make a small change?

Thank you

