



FROM SILOS to SYSTEMS

Marianne Ashton-Booth • Head of Product Design & Design Systems, ITVX

UXDX Berlin | May 2026

FROM SILOS TO SYSTEMS

PERCEPTION

of a design system









FROM SILOS TO SYSTEMS

REALITY

of a design system









itv

H U B

Nov 2015

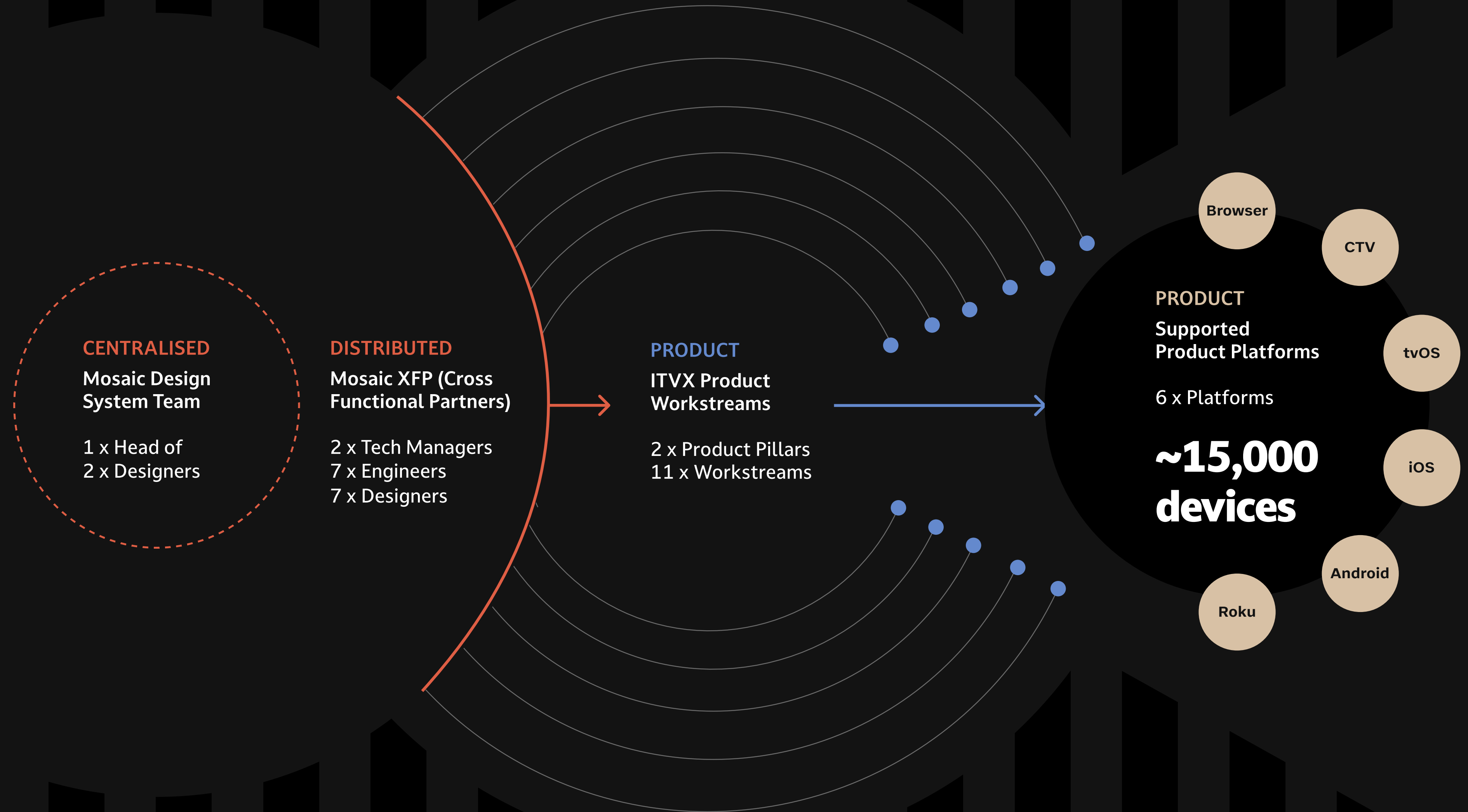
7 years

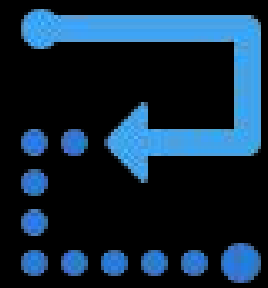


itvX

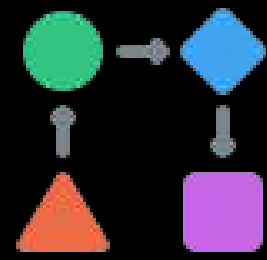
Nov 2022

3.5 years

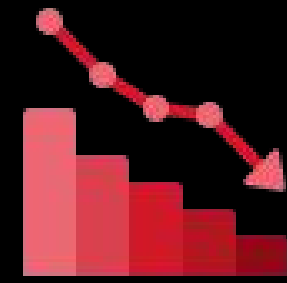




Fragmented
Workflow



Duplicated
Patterns



Inconsistent
Adoption



Competing
Priorities



Reduced
Resources



Governance
Tension

FROM SILOS TO SYSTEMS

SILOS SUCK

FROM SILOS TO SYSTEMS



**Design Systems
are not just
a design thing.**

PHASE 1

Adoption

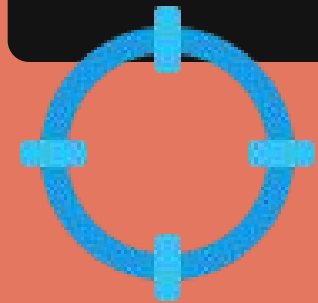
This is exciting.
Everyone's engaged
and momentum is high!



PHASE 2

Optimisation

We're scaling quickly
now, but complexity is
starting to appear."



PHASE 3

Expansion

Different team needs are
emerging and alignment is
getting harder.



PHASE 4

Maintenance

The system is established
now, but sustaining
consistency takes effort.



PHASE 1

Adoption

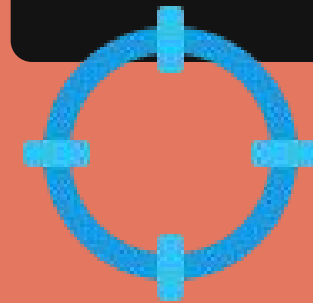
This is exciting.
Everyone's engaged
and momentum is high!



PHASE 2

Optimisation

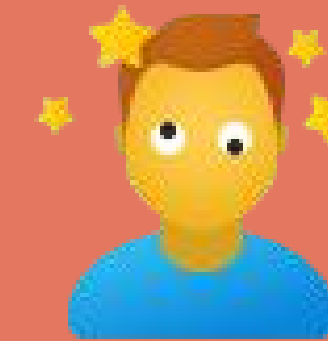
We're scaling quickly
now, but complexity is
starting to appear."



PHASE 3

Expansion

Different team needs are
emerging and alignment is
getting harder.



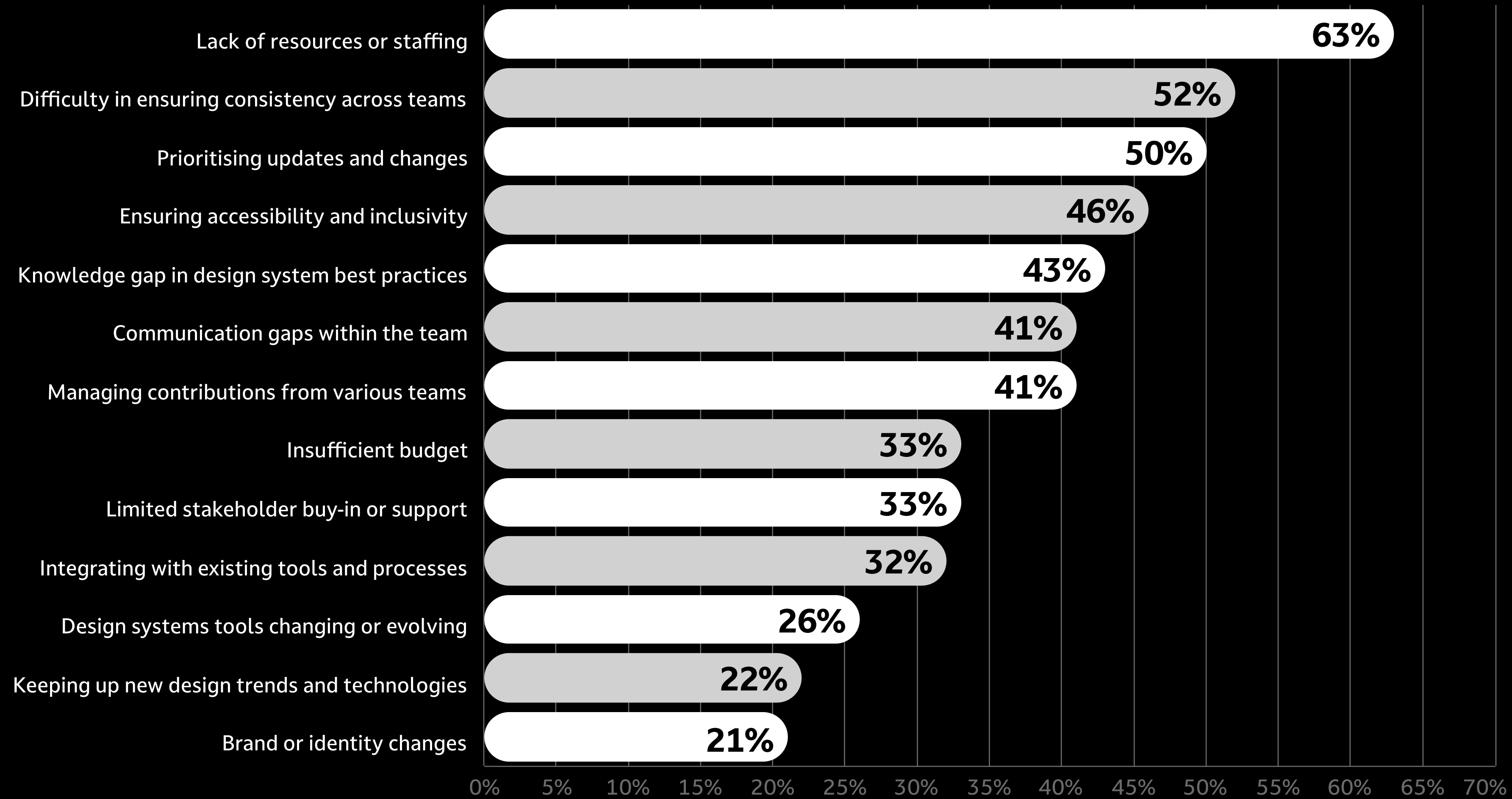
PHASE 4

Maintenance

The system is established
now, but sustaining
consistency takes effort.



2025

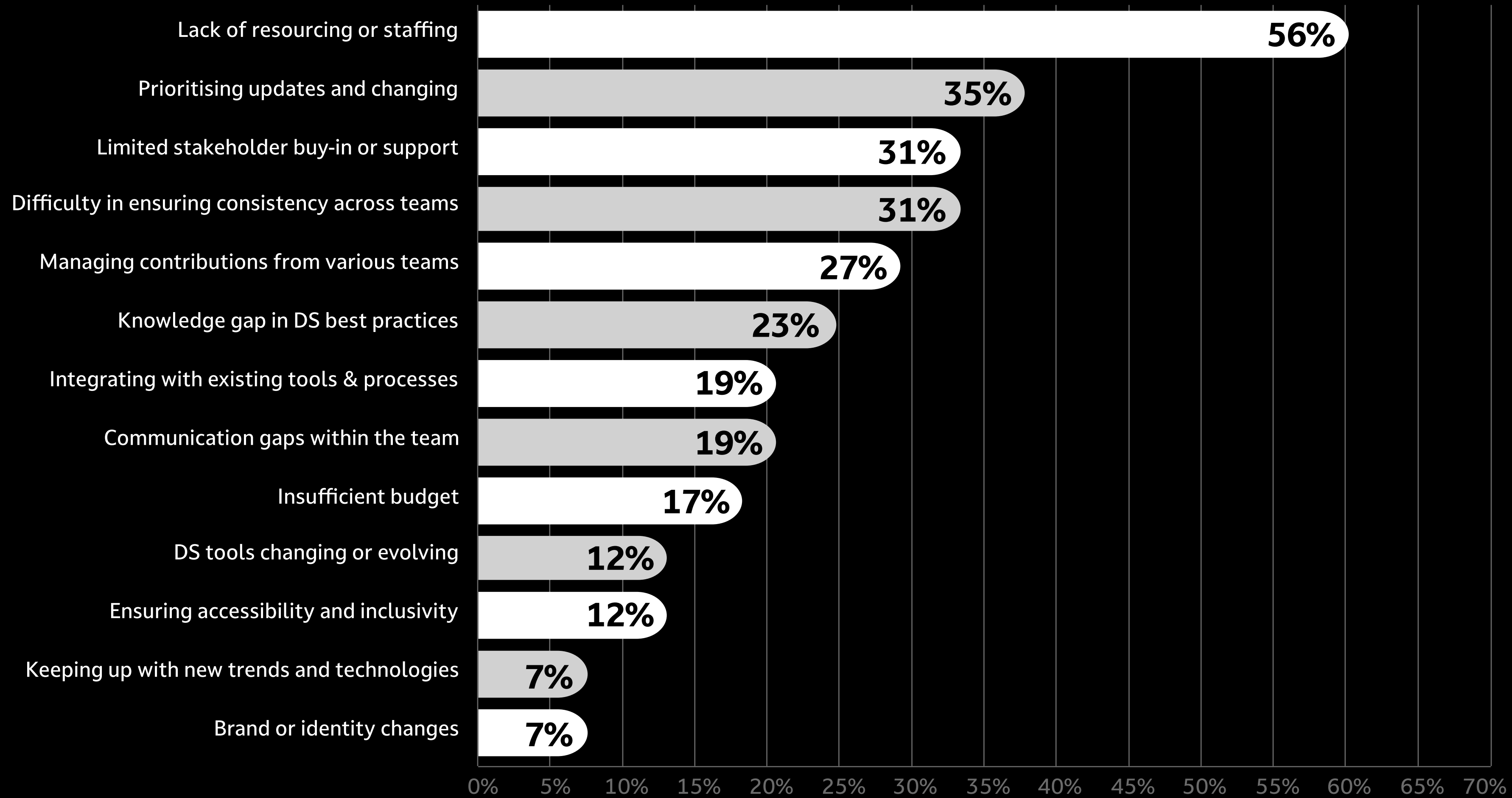


Zeroheight
Design System
Report 2025

*Based on 294
respondents



2026



Zeroheight
Design System
Report 2026

*Based on 147
respondents



An organisation is viable if it can survive in a particular sort of environment. For although, it's existence is separate, so that it enjoys some kind of autonomy, it cannot survive in a vacuum.'

Stafford Beer, Diagnosing the System, 1985

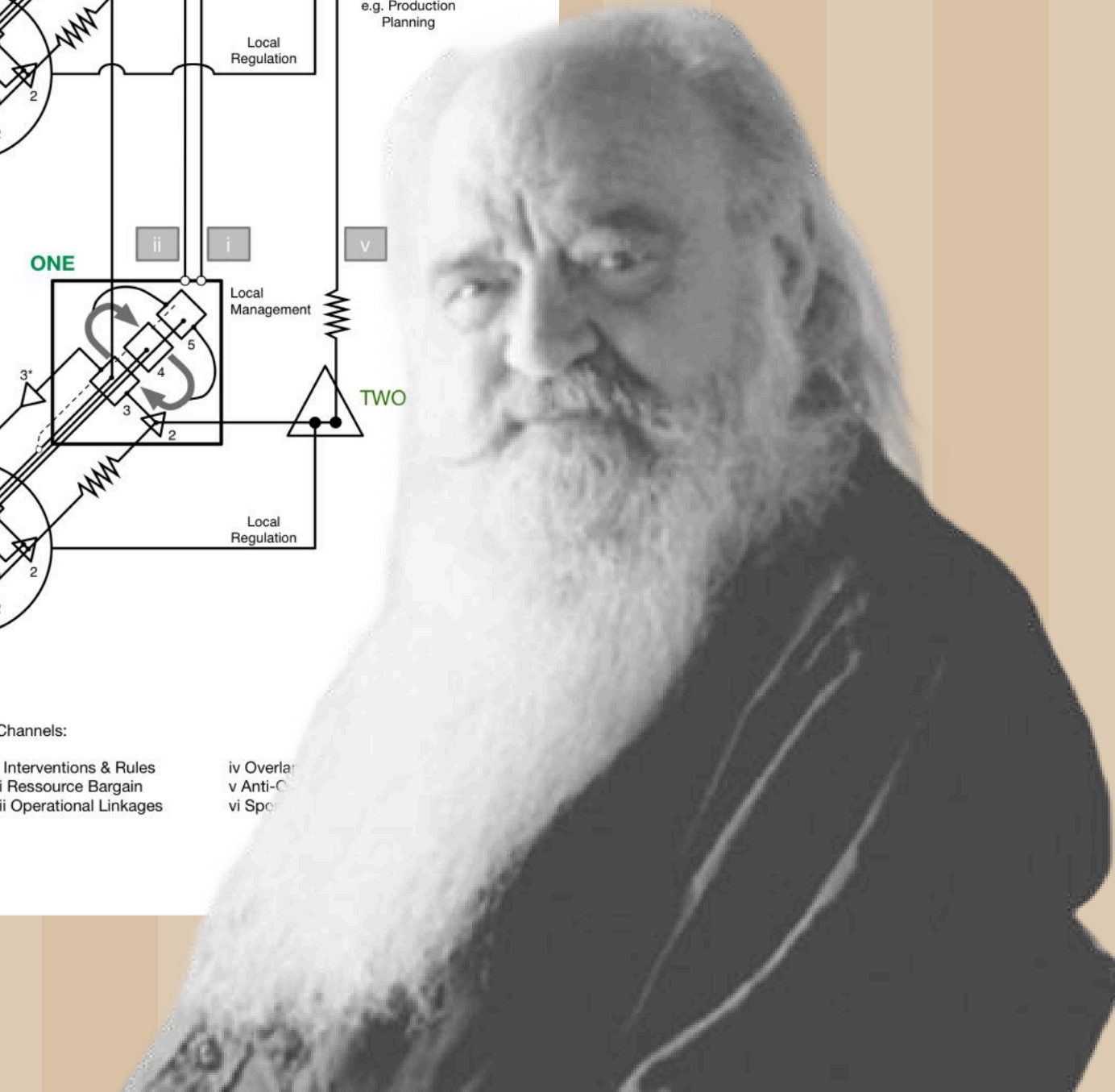
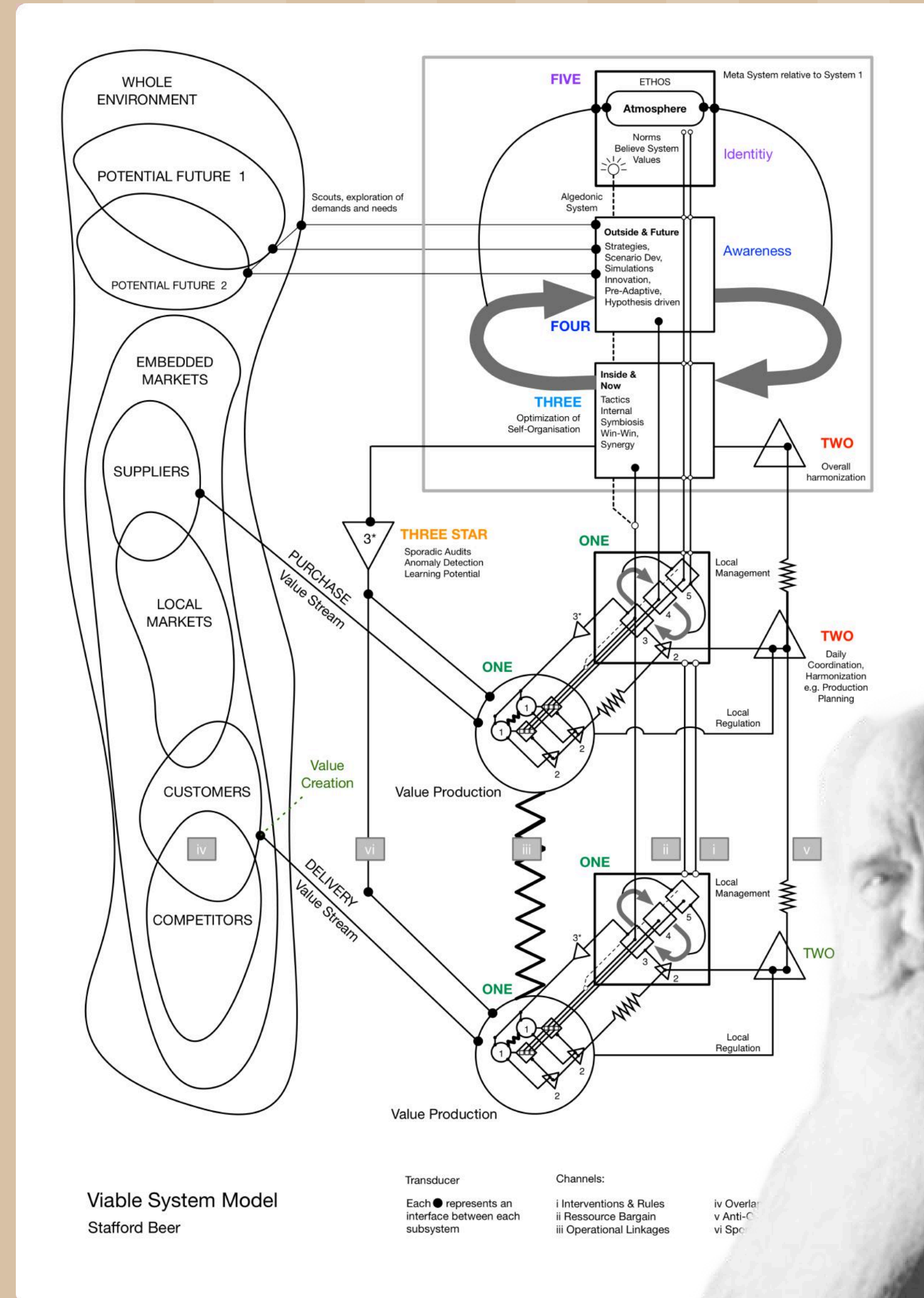
A design system
~~An organisation~~ is viable if it can
survive in a particular sort of
environment. For although, it's
existence is separate, so that it enjoys
some kind of autonomy, it cannot
survive in a vacuum.'

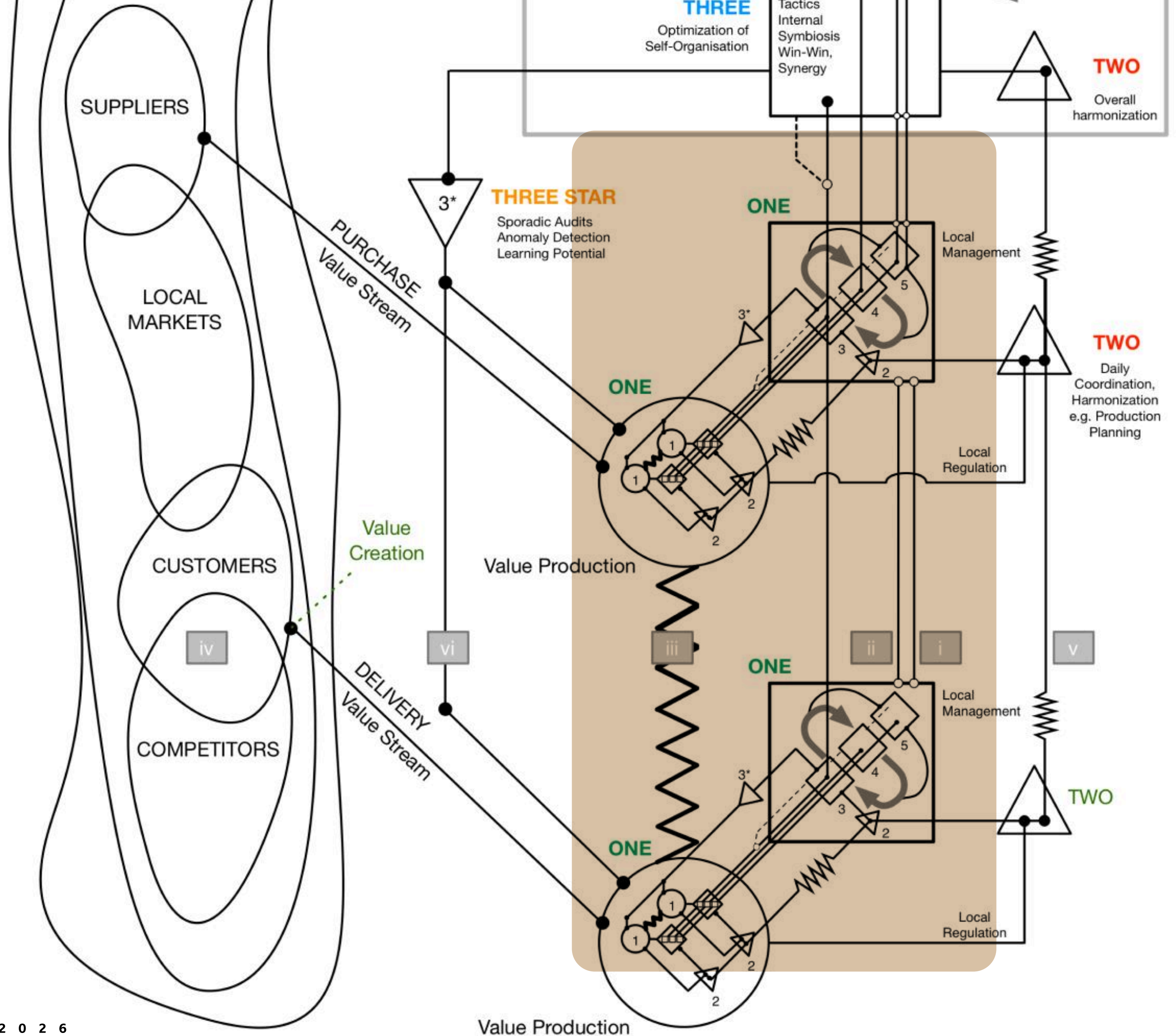
~~Stafford Beer, Diagnosing the System, 1985~~

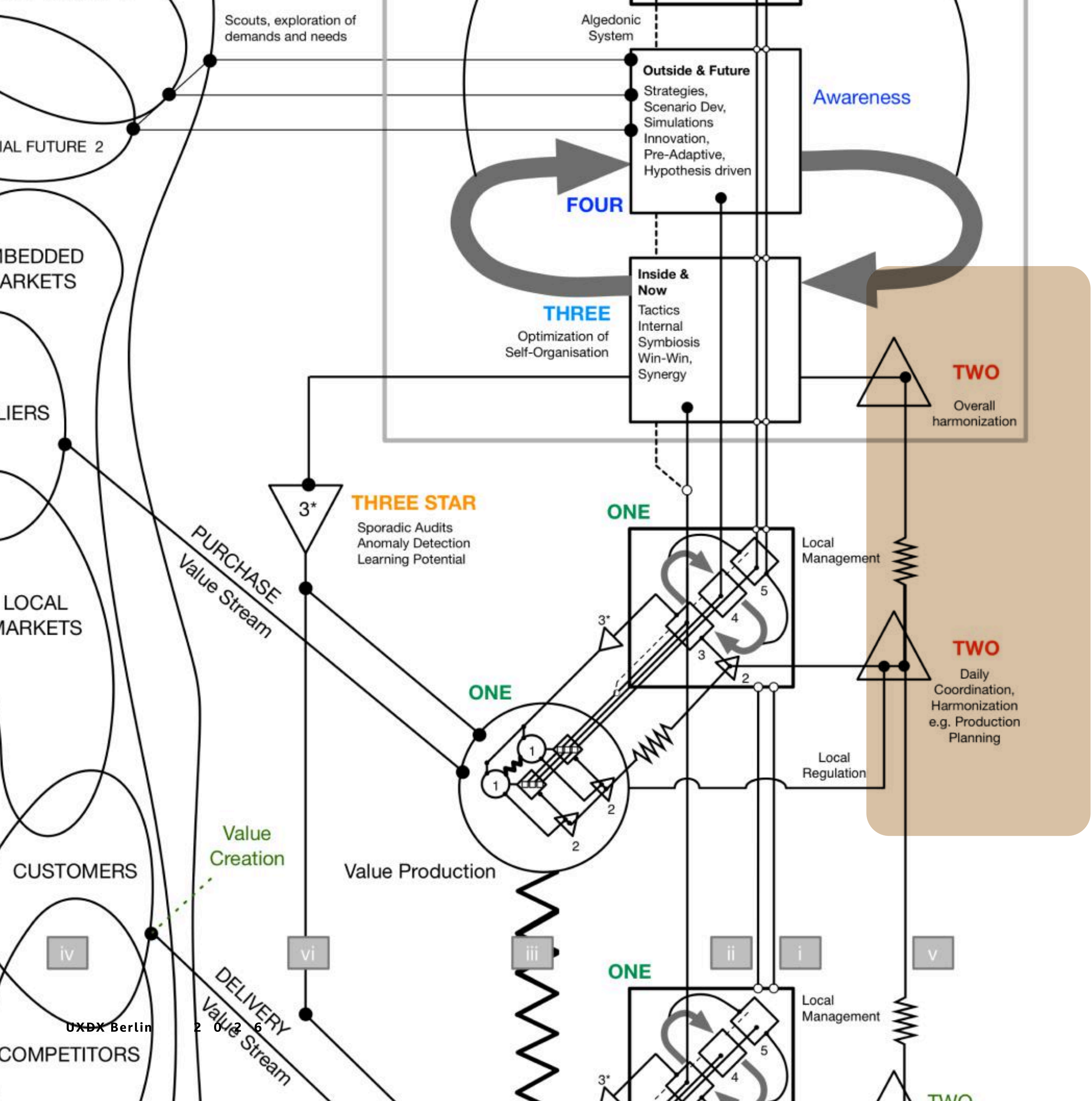
Marianne Ashton-Booth

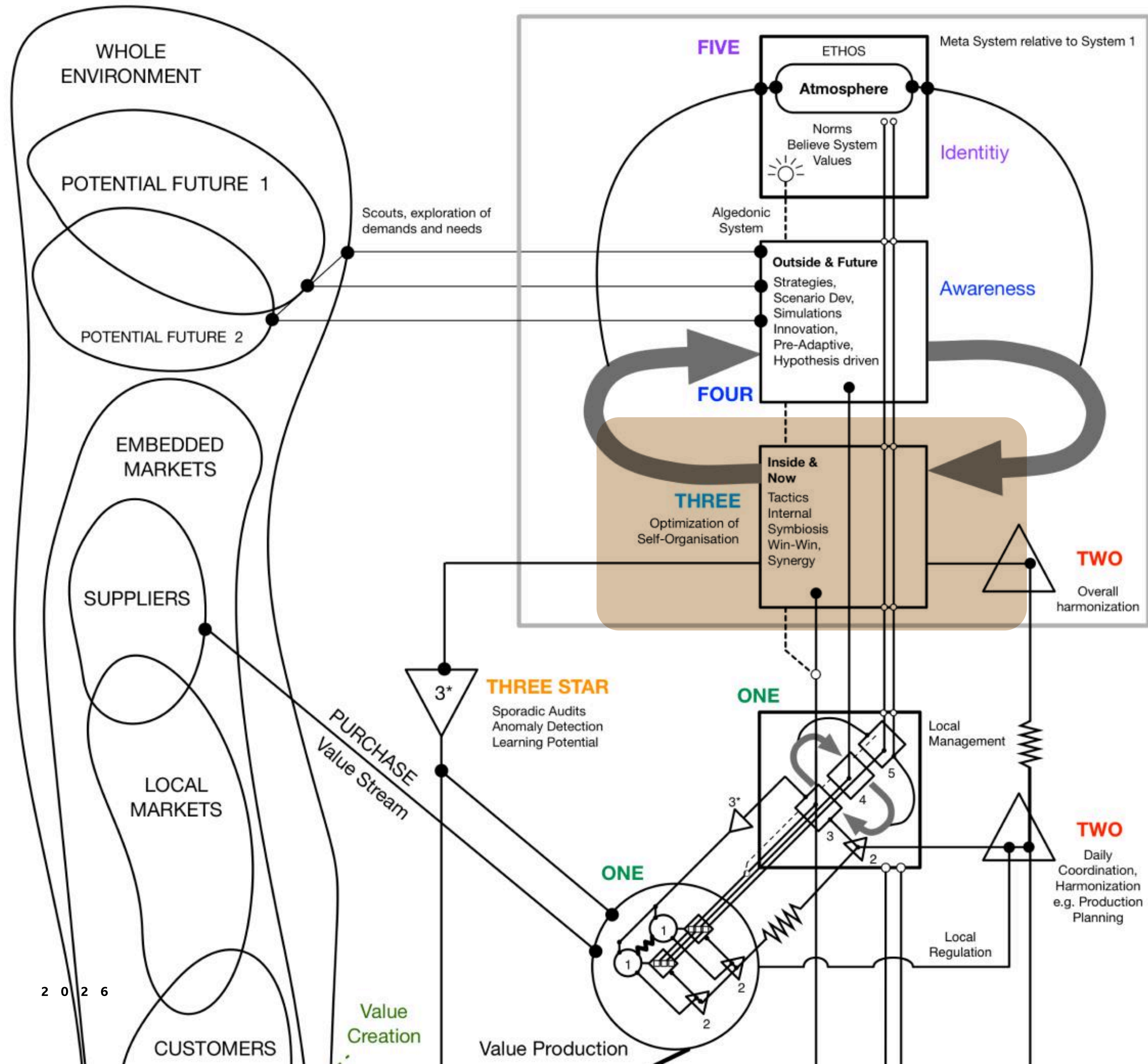
The Viable System Model

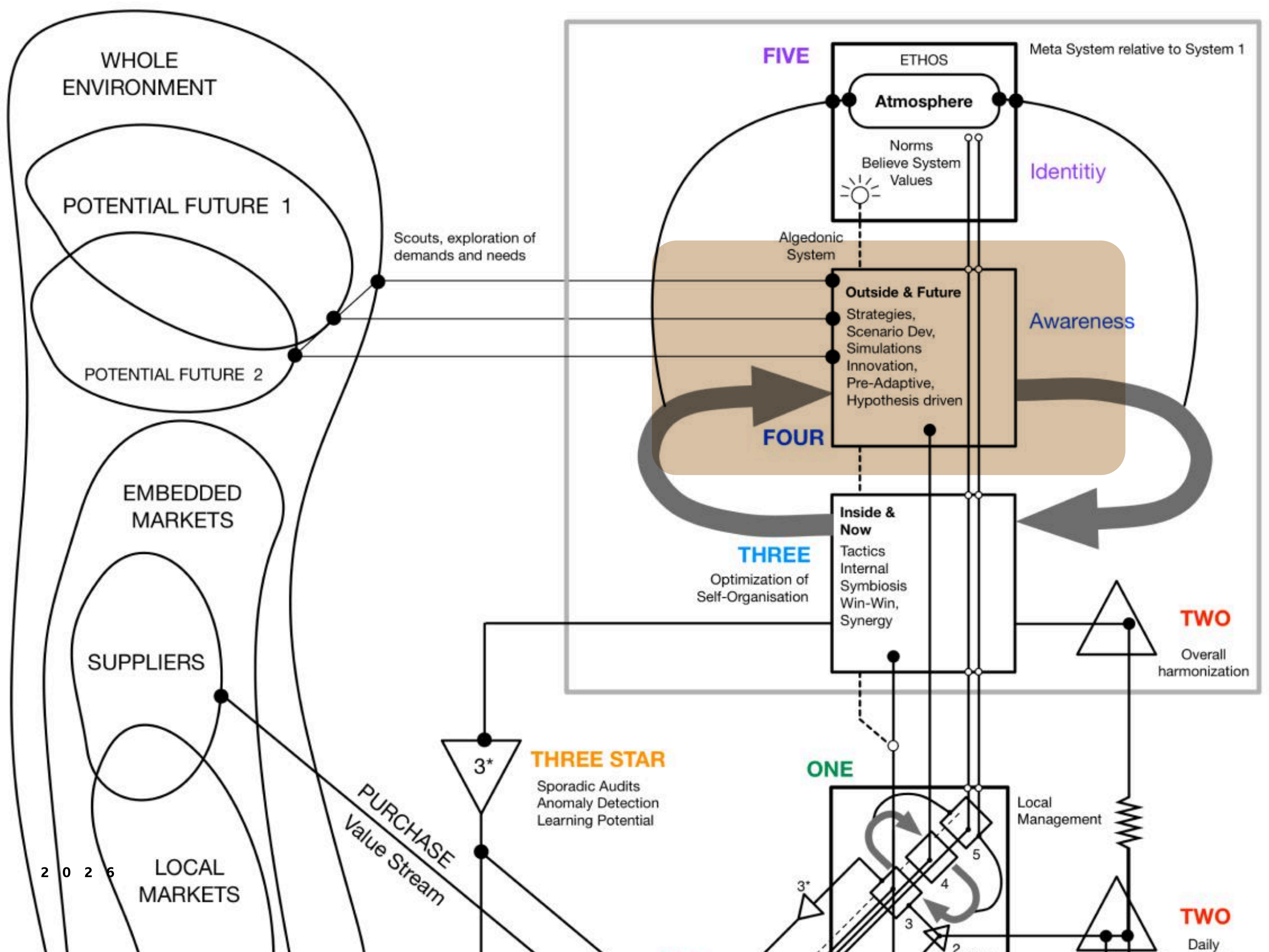
The Viable System Model, developed by Stafford Beer, is a framework for creating organisations that can self-regulate, adapt and remain resilient in changing environments.

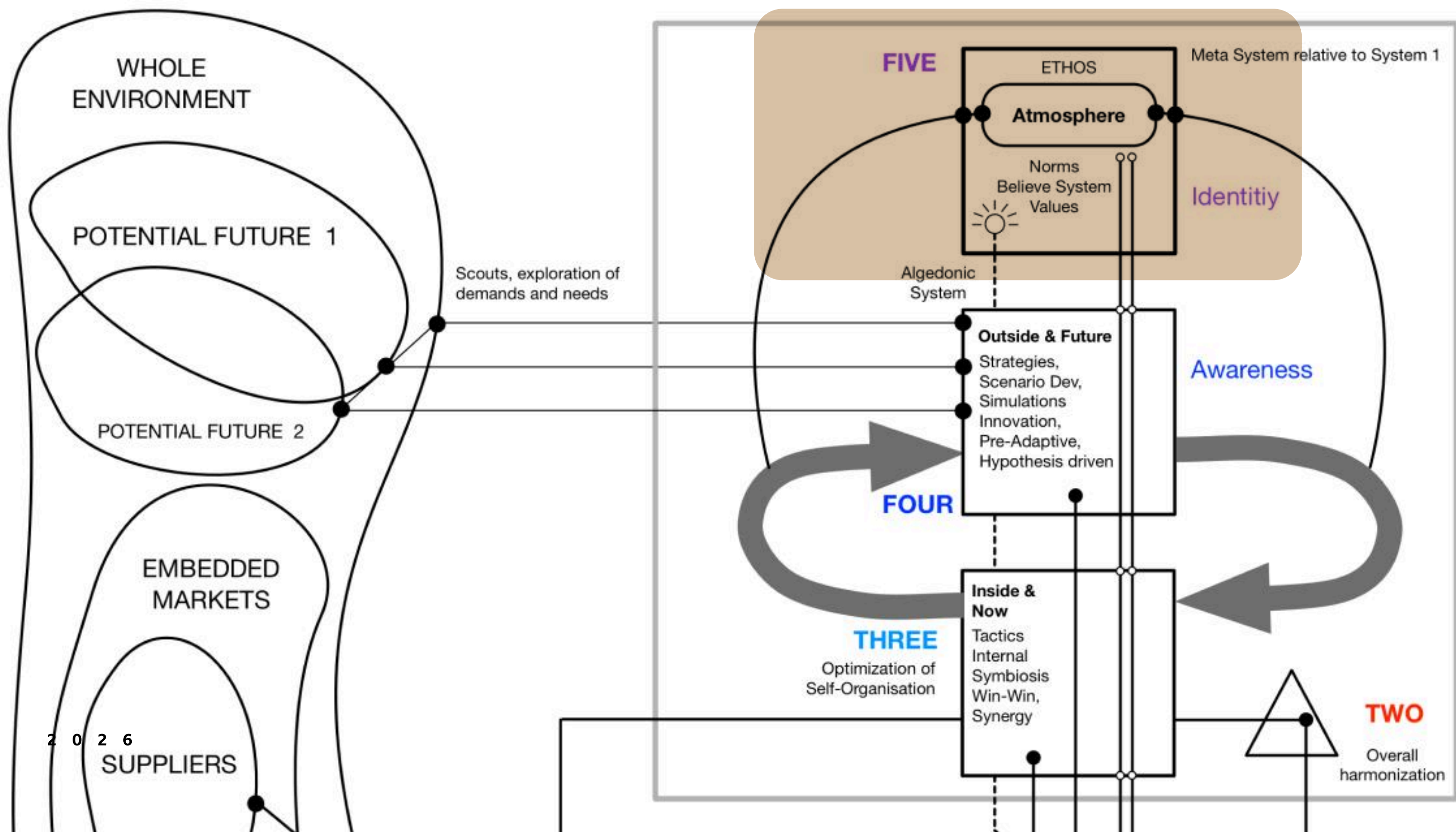






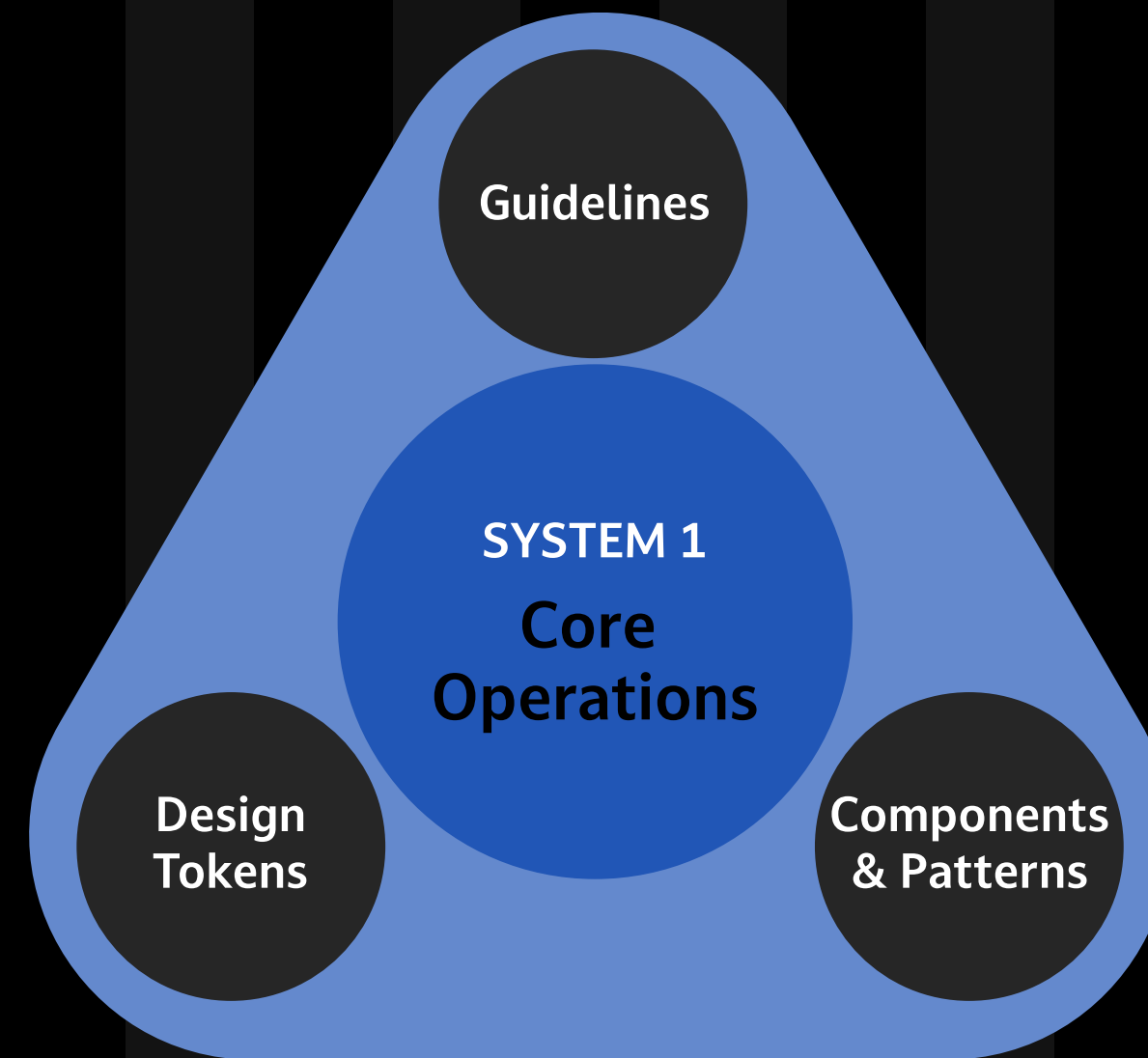


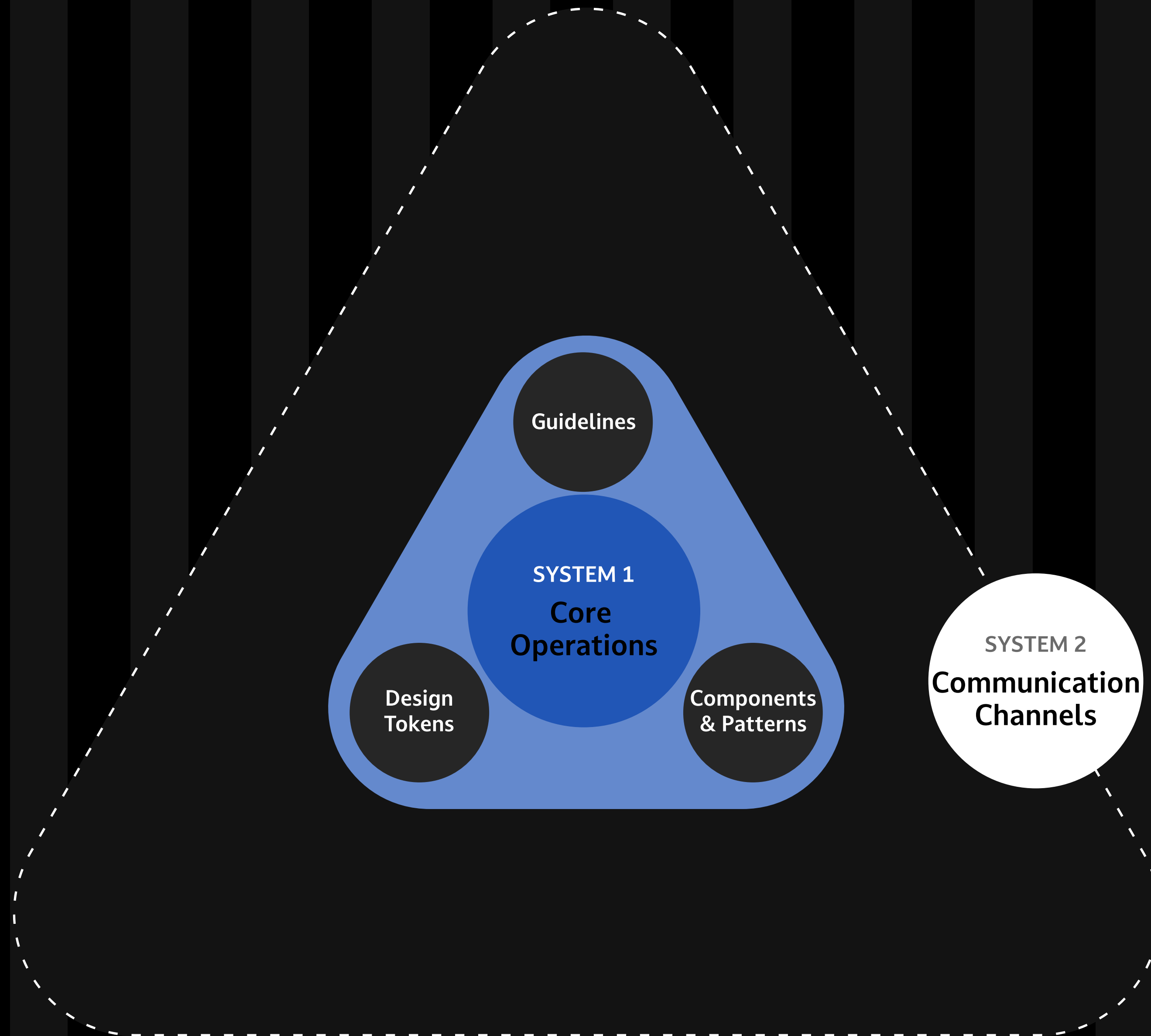


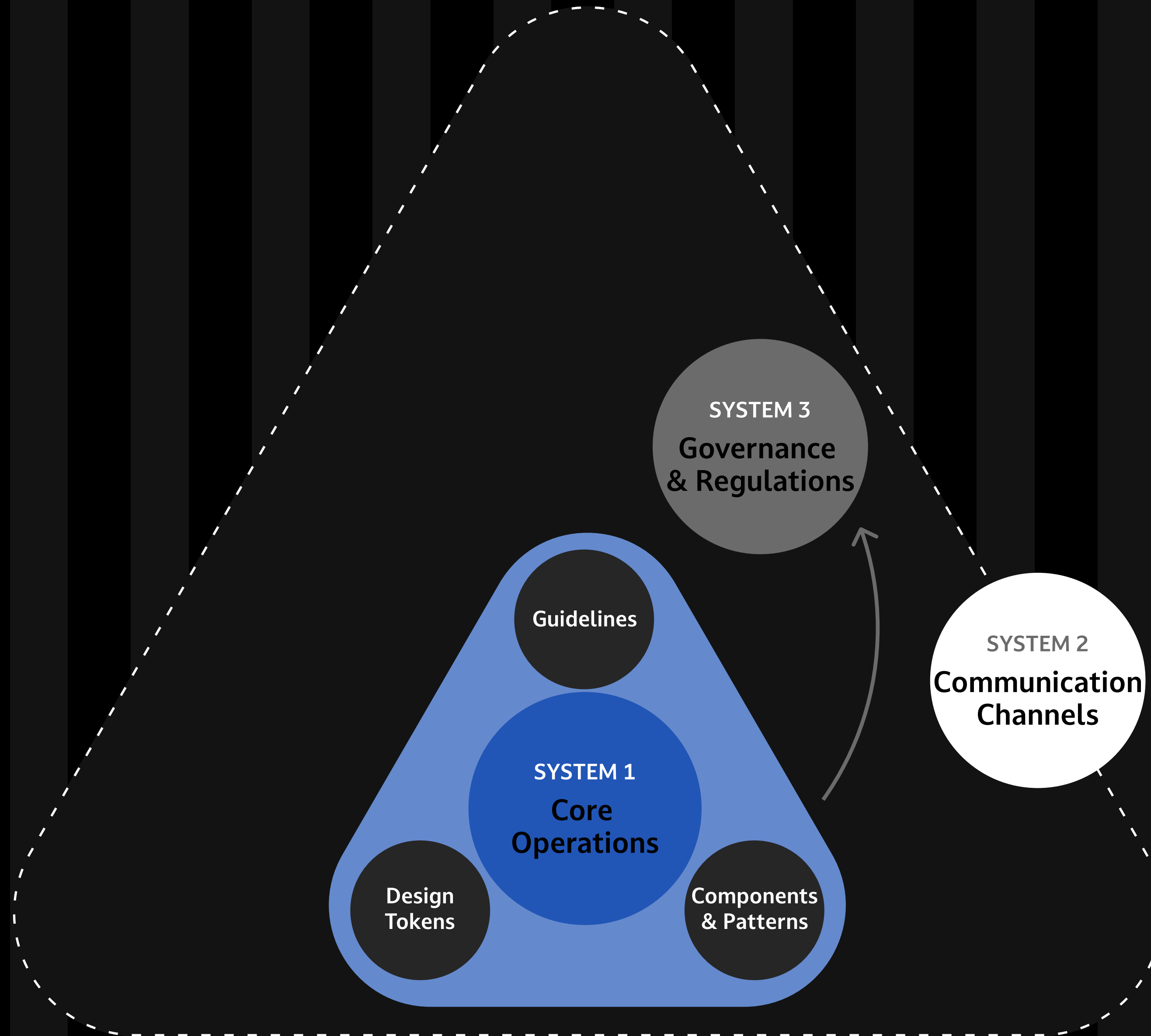


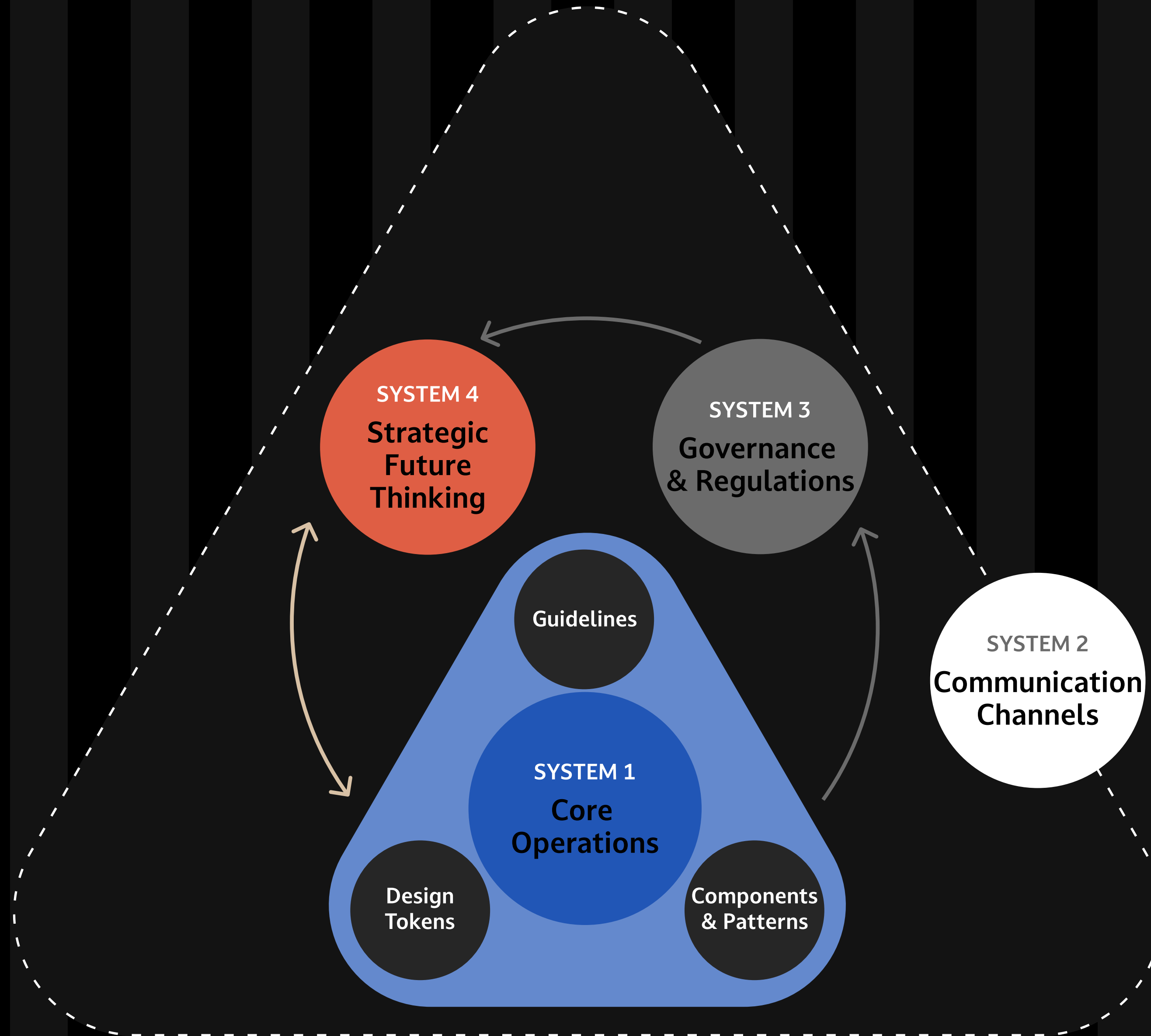
FROM SILOS TO SYSTEMS

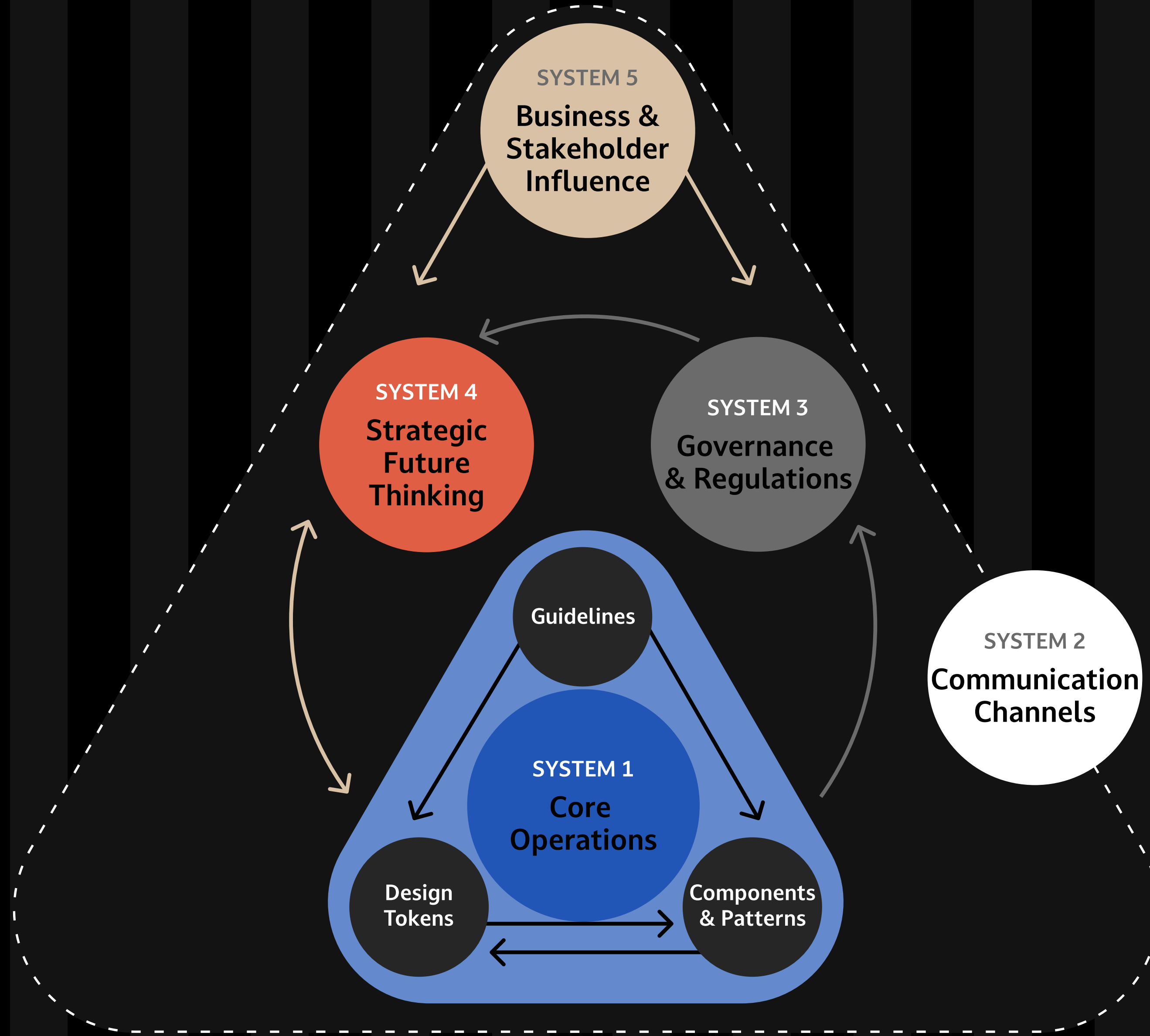
**VSM for
design
systems?**









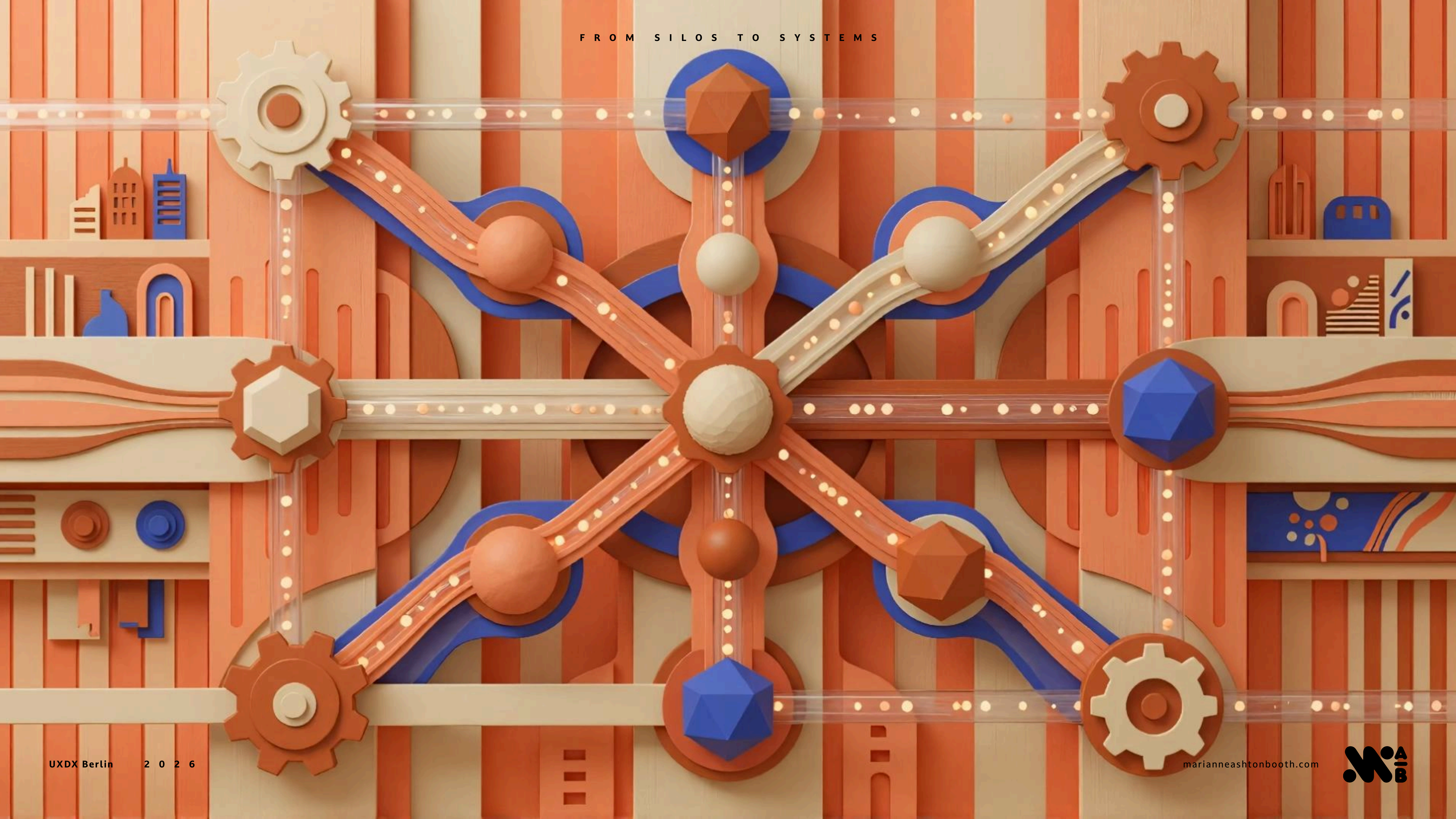


FROM SILOS TO SYSTEMS





FROM SILOS TO SYSTEMS



Now

Next

Future



NOW

Tactical Planning

Next

Future

NOW

Tactical Planning

NEXT

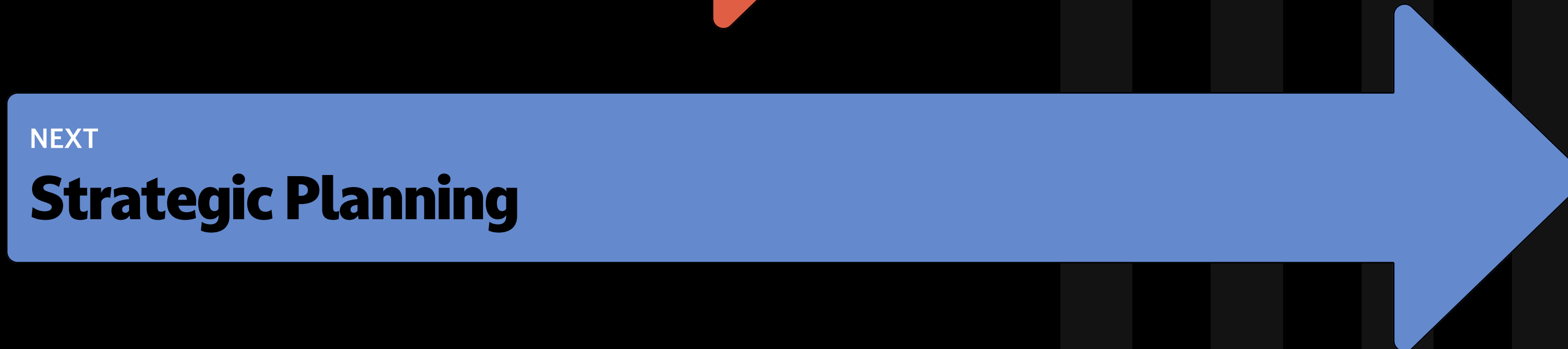
Strategic Planning

Future

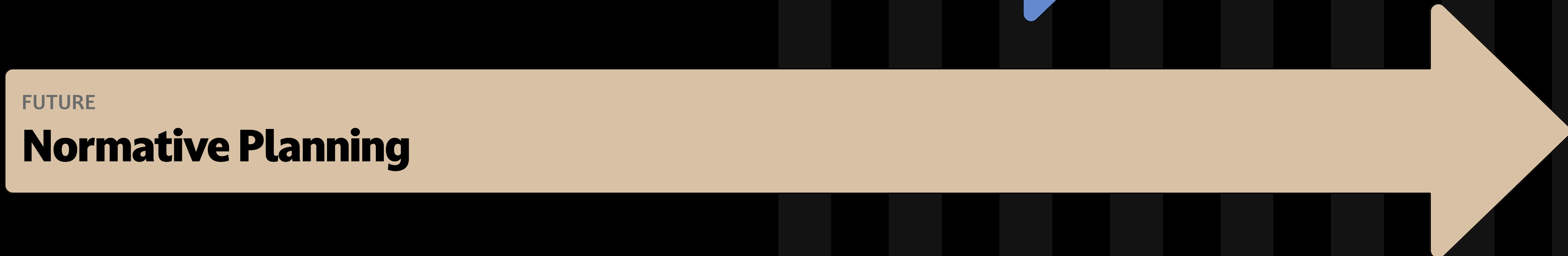
NOW
Tactical Planning

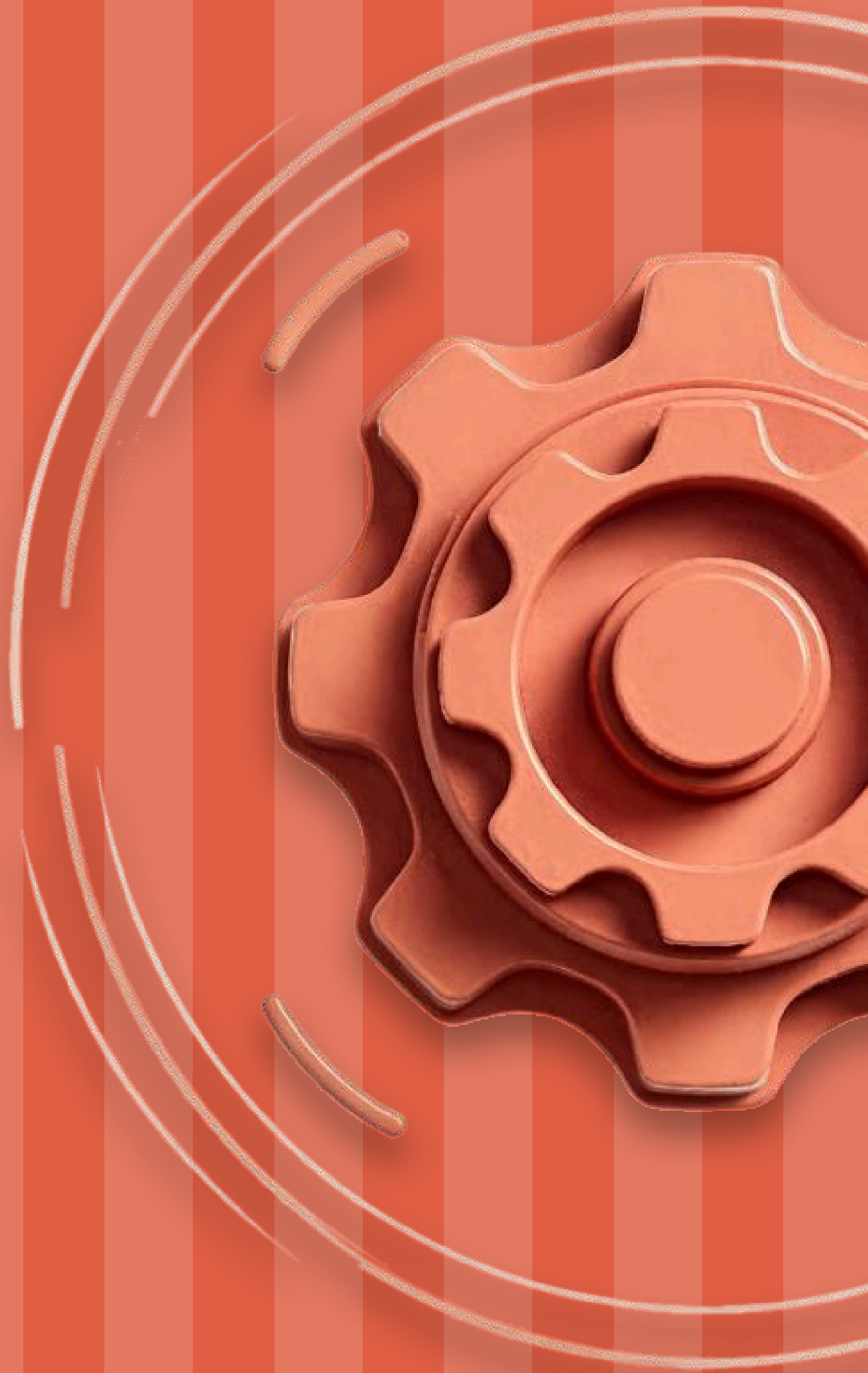


NEXT
Strategic Planning



FUTURE
Normative Planning





Tactical Planning

Move quickly, Remove friction

KEY QUESTION

How do we support teams and keep delivery moving?

Focused Action

Clear short-term priorities

Daily Support

Helping teams deliver

Removing Blockers

Resolving friction quickly



Strategic Planning

Create direction and alignment

KEY QUESTION

How do we scale in the right direction?

Clear Priorities
Aligning around what matters

Cross-Team Alignment
Connecting teams and goals

Long-Term Thinking
Planning beyond immediate needs

Normative Planning

Build belief and shared purpose

KEY QUESTION

How do we create trust and long-term adoption?

Shared Principles

Creating consistency in thinking

Strong Relationships

Building trust across teams

Continuous Alignment

Keeping people connected over time

**Design systems
don't fail because
of components**

**They fail because
they lose alignment
with the organisation**

LeanDS Framework

11 sections across 3 key areas

WHY?

Understanding
the purpose

WHAT?

Understanding
the drivers & motives

HOW?

Understanding
the feasibility

WHY?

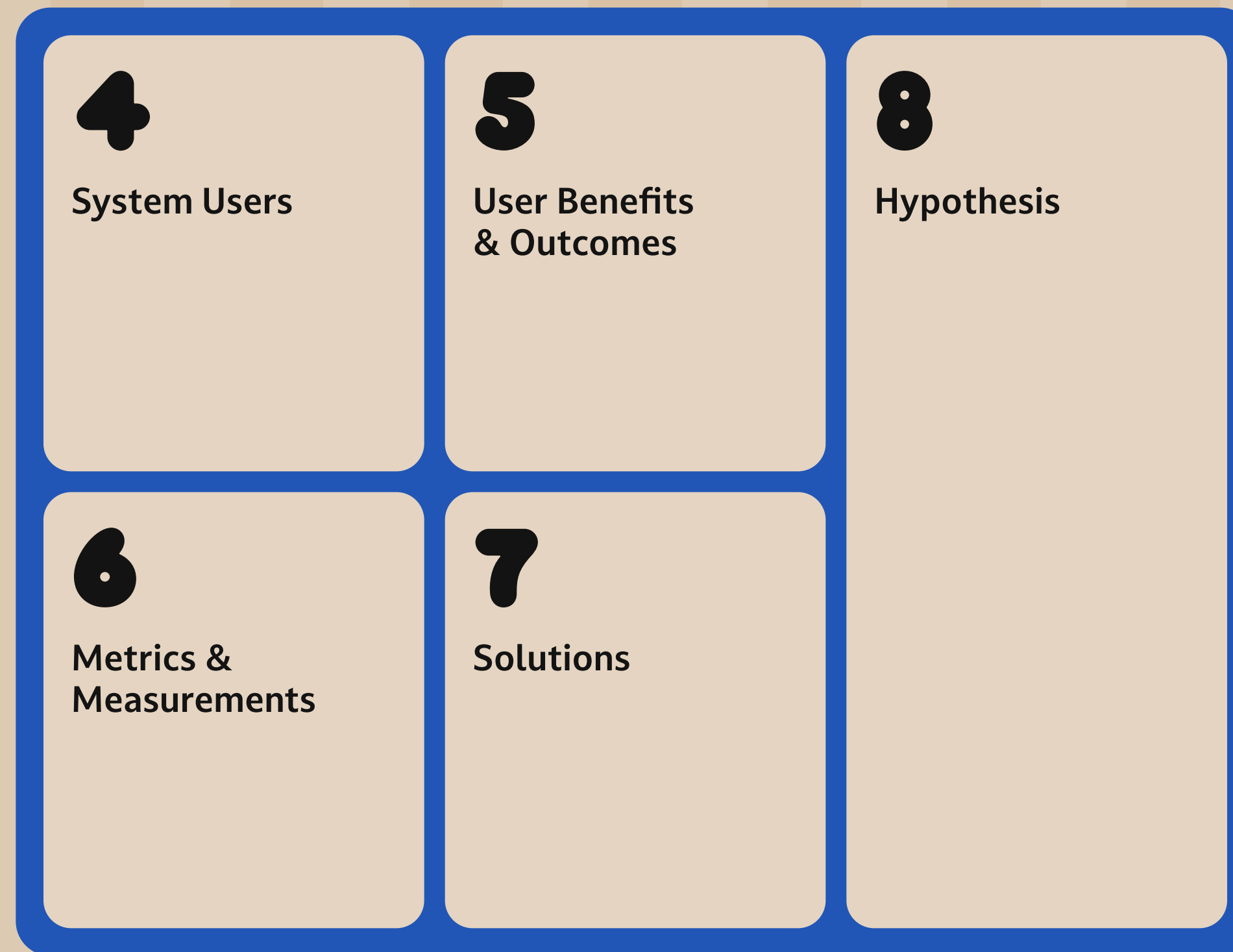
Understanding the purpose



Adaptation

WHAT?

Understanding the drivers & motives



Aligned with the LeanUX canvas

HOW?

Understanding the feasibility



Adaptation

WHY?

Understanding the purpose

1 The Wider Organisation

How big is the organisation? Who does your design system serve? Single brand? Multi-brand?

2 Business Goals & Objectives

What is the business focused on right now?

3 System Problem

What is the problem you are trying to solve? What's working at the moment and what isn't working well?

WHAT?

Understanding the drivers & motives

4 System Users

Who interacts and/or uses the design system? How often do they use it?

5 User Benefits & Outcomes

What are the benefits that your users get from the system? What are their expected outcomes?

8 Hypothesis

What are you aiming to achieve?

6 Metrics & Measurements

Known metrics and measurements that you have already or assumptions that you have

7 Solutions

What sort of ideas do you have to solve the system problems you have outlined?

HOW?

Understanding the feasibility

9 Design system team model

What is the operational structure of your design system team? Are you centralised or distributed? How does it operate?

10 Scope & Risks

What is the potential scope and/or size of this initiative? What are the potential risks?

11 The Plan

How to do aim to achieve your goal? What do you expect or need to complete in a given quarter?

WHAT?

Understanding the drivers & motives

8 Hypothesis

We believe that tackling → [Box3: Design System Problem]

in line with our → [Box1: The Wider Organisation]

and → [Box 2: Business Goals & Objectives]

we will help → [Box 4: Design System Users]

to → [Box 5: User Benefits & Outcomes]

success will be shown by → [Box 6: Metrics & Measurements]

we plan to achieve this through → [Box 7: Solutions]

this approach will be supported by our → [Box 9: DS Team Model]

whilst considering → [Box 10: Scope & Risks]

and is part of → [Box 11: The Plan]

FROM SILOS TO SYSTEMS

What then?

**Who do you need
to convince?**

Influence

WHAT?

The stakeholders influence on the direction and growth of the design system

WHY?

For a design system mission to succeed, it's important to recognise and understand the influential partners within your company

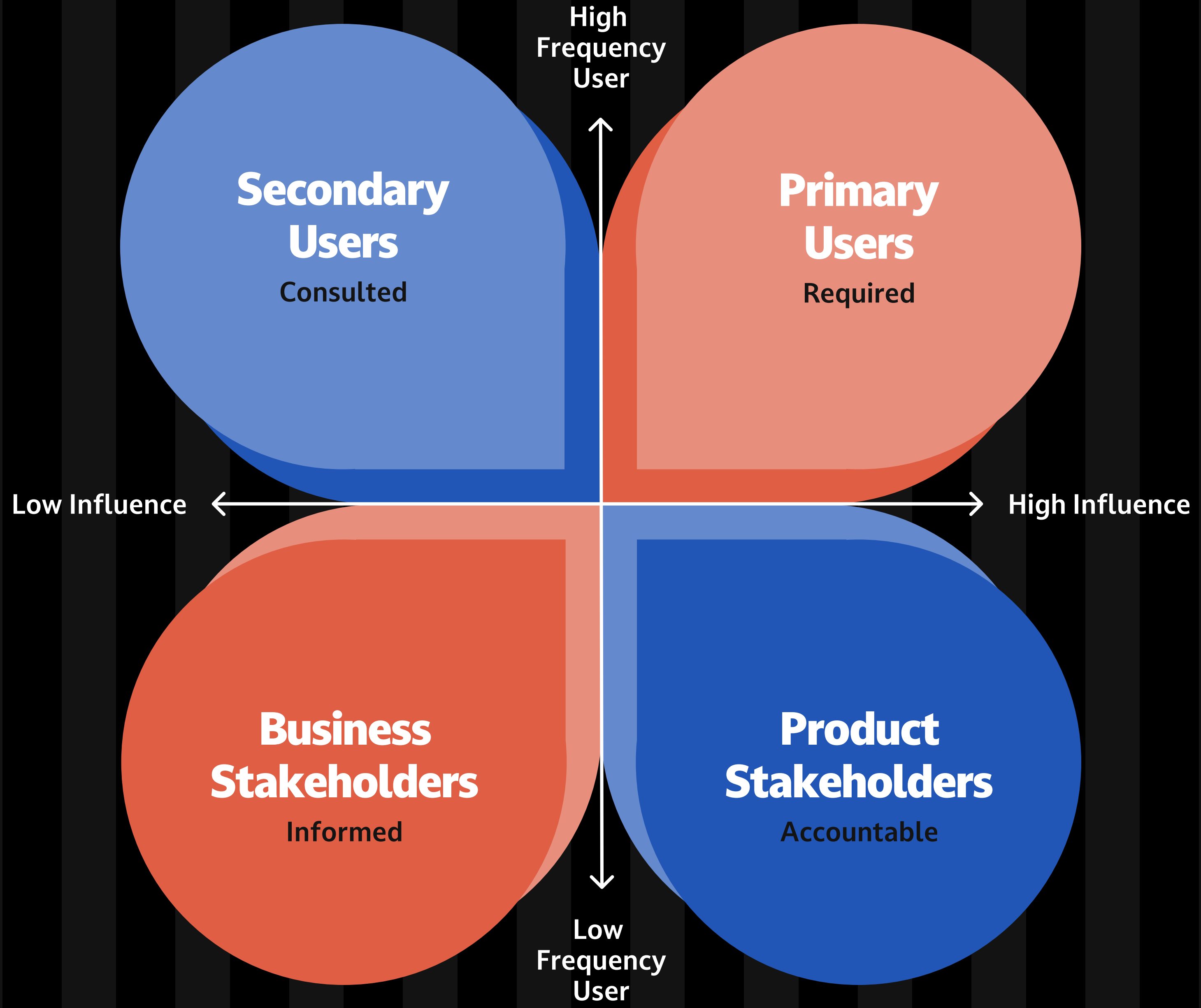
Frequency

WHAT?

How often the user interacts and/or uses the design system

WHY?

User frequency impacts competency, changing how you communicate and meet varying user needs.



High
Frequency
User



**Secondary
Users**
Consulted

**Primary
Users**
Required

FOCUS

Why

CONCERNS

How does the design system support our product strategy?
Which metrics should we use to assess the system's impact?

FOCUS

What

CONCERNS

How can I create the most value in my role?
How can I use the system and contribute back?

Low Influence ←



→ High Influence

FOCUS

Impact

CONCERNS

How does the design system shape our creative strategies?
What technical advantages does the design system offer?
How does the design system impact our overall product success?
How does the design system contribute to our business goals?

FOCUS

How

CONCERNS

How do we ensure that the design system meets project/workstream standards?
How can we best integrate the design system?
How can we improve design system resource sharing and communication?

**Business
Stakeholders**
Informed

**Product
Stakeholders**
Accountable

Low
Frequency
User



The Golden Circle

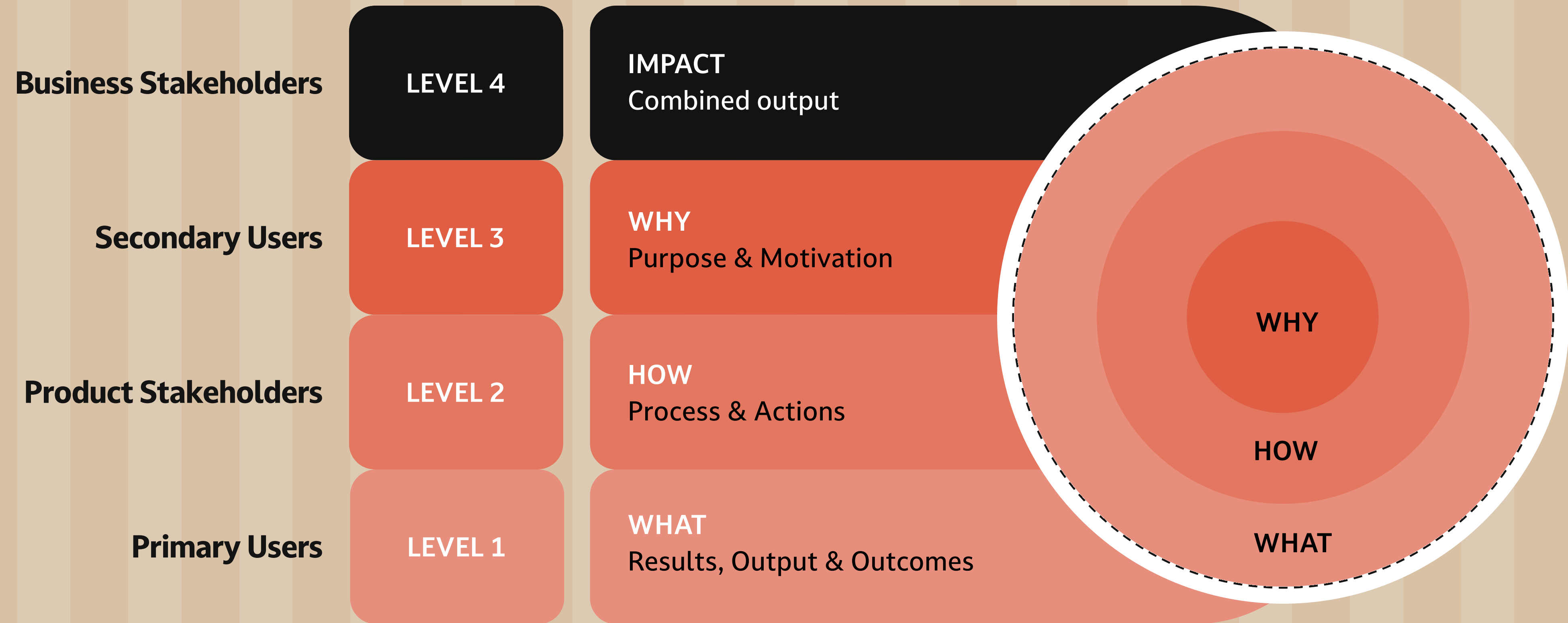
In order to inspire change, Simon Sinek developed a communication model called the golden circle theory. His research suggests that by starting with the why, you can develop a distinctive voice that distinguishes you from your competitors.

WHAT

HOW

WHY







Systems shape behaviour

Design systems influence how teams communicate, collaborate and make decisions across an organisation.

ASK YOURSELF:

Are we designing for people or just patterns?

Does our system reduce friction across teams?

Are we investing beyond components?



Alignment is never finished

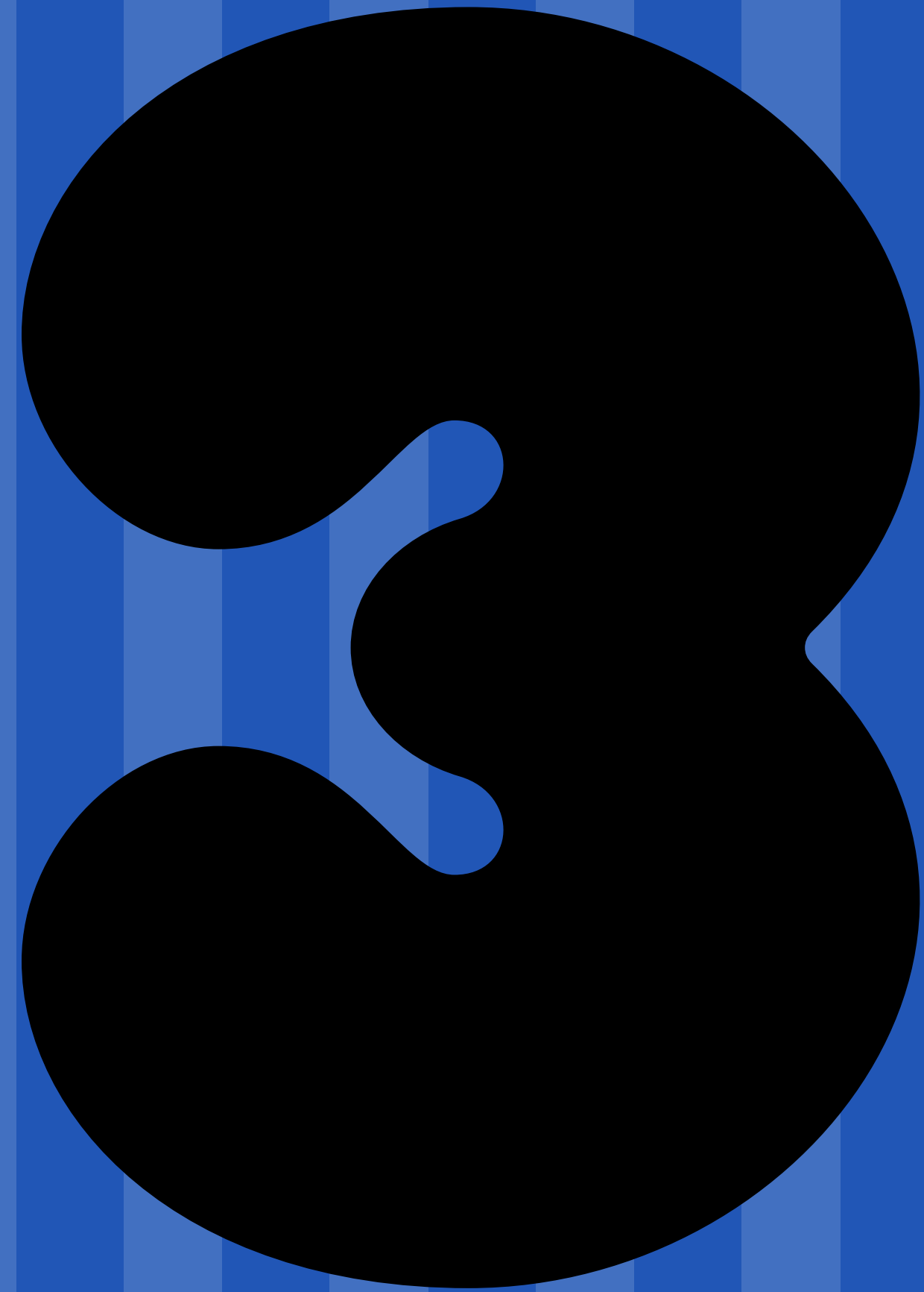
As organisations evolve, alignment needs constant visibility, communication and recalibration.

ASK YOURSELF:

Where is friction appearing today?

Are trade-offs visible enough?

Has the system kept up with the organisation?



Adaptability creates longevity

The strongest systems are the ones capable of adapting to changing business and team needs.

ASK YOURSELF:

Are we optimising for flexibility or control?

Can the system adapt across contexts?

Are we learning or defending?

**The goal isn't to
eliminate complexity**

**The goal isn't to
eliminate complexity**
**It's to build systems
capable of adapting to it.**

CHEERS!

Where to find, follow and keep in touch!

Linkedin [marianneab](#)

Substack [marianneab.substack.com](#)

Website [marianneashtonbooth.com](#)

Instagram [@maz_ashtonbooth](#)

