

# Organizational Culture Detectives

- Are skilled at observing
- Are aware of roles people play and symbolic interactions of those roles
- Approach organizational culture armed with a variety of detective analytics

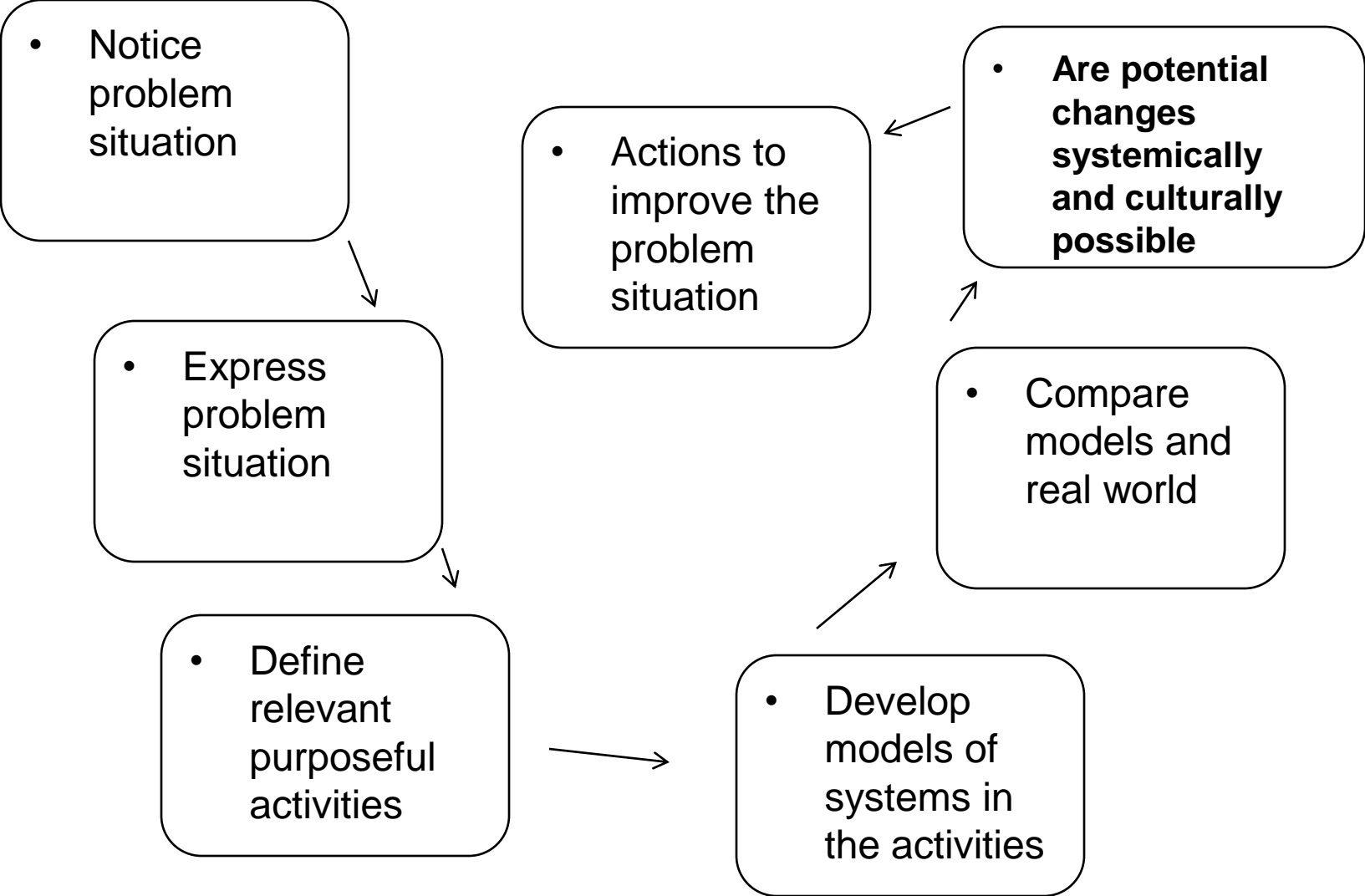
# Before we start the work for tonight

- Let's practice some stress management
- Four deep breaths
- The two minute meditation

# Topics for today

- Observe, describe, explain, predict, influence
- Soft system analysis
- Defining small problem sets
- Role theory
- Stakeholder analysis
- Dimensions of culture

# Soft systems methodology



- What we have here is a social mess.

## Richard Ackoff

- There are problems where we cannot find "the cause," There are problems where there are so many interacting causes that we cannot isolate the ones to work on. There are problems where we cannot directly work on the cause. Such problems cannot be solved by analytical thinking -- we must design think our way out of them.
- Eduardo de Bono (1992). *Serious creativity*. NY: Harper Collins
- There is a whole realm of social planning problems that cannot be successfully treated with traditional linear, analytical approaches. These are *wicked problems*, in contrast to *tame problems*.
- Rittel & Webber, 1973

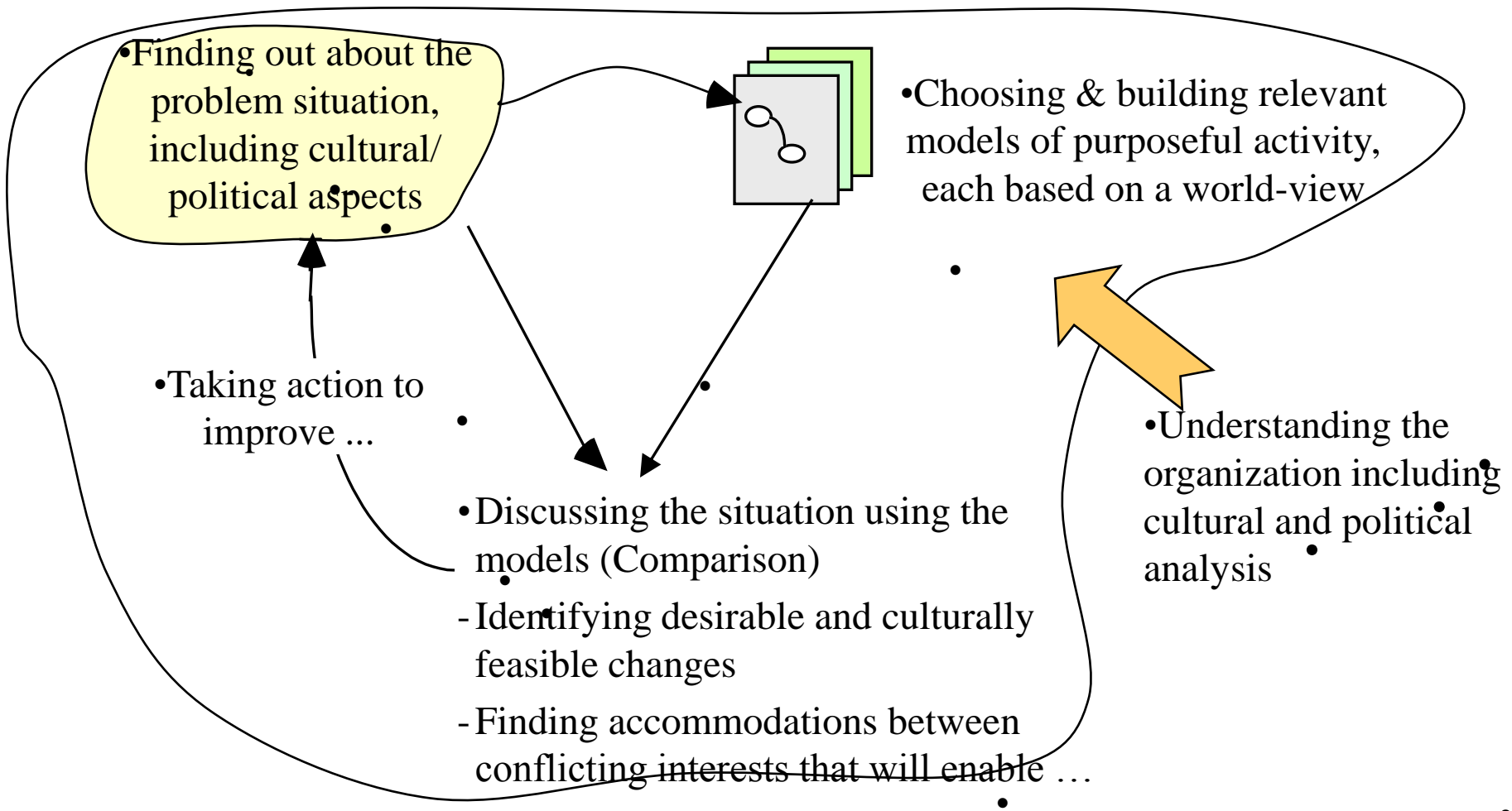
# Wicked social mess problems

- Are complicated, complex, and ambiguous.
- Are full of uncertainty – even as to what the conditions are, let alone what the appropriate actions might be
- Are highly constrained
- Are tightly interconnected, economically, socially, politically, technologically
- Are seen differently from different points of view, and quite different worldviews
- Contain many value conflicts
- Usually seem a-logical or illogical

## Our (juicy) wicked social mess problem

- MBA program's social reputation
- **As manifested by these descriptions:**
- *Nobody knows that NCState offers an MBA*
- *I have to explain what an MOT MBA is*
- *Career center not helpful to a marketing major*
- *Hard to get ahold of staff*
- *Big firms not recruiting here*

# SSM activities – these are not stages or steps.



# CATWOE matrix

- **C**ustomers – the beneficiaries or victims of the transformational process
- **A**ctors – those doing the transformational process
- **T**ransformational process
- **W**orldview --that which gives meaning to the transformational process
- **O**wners – those who could stop the process
- **E**nvironmental constraints – elements outside the process that are taken as “a given”

## Symbolic interaction and role theory

- Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them
- The meaning of such things comes out of social interactions
- We develop roles in groups
- We are all constantly re-interpreting things and roles together

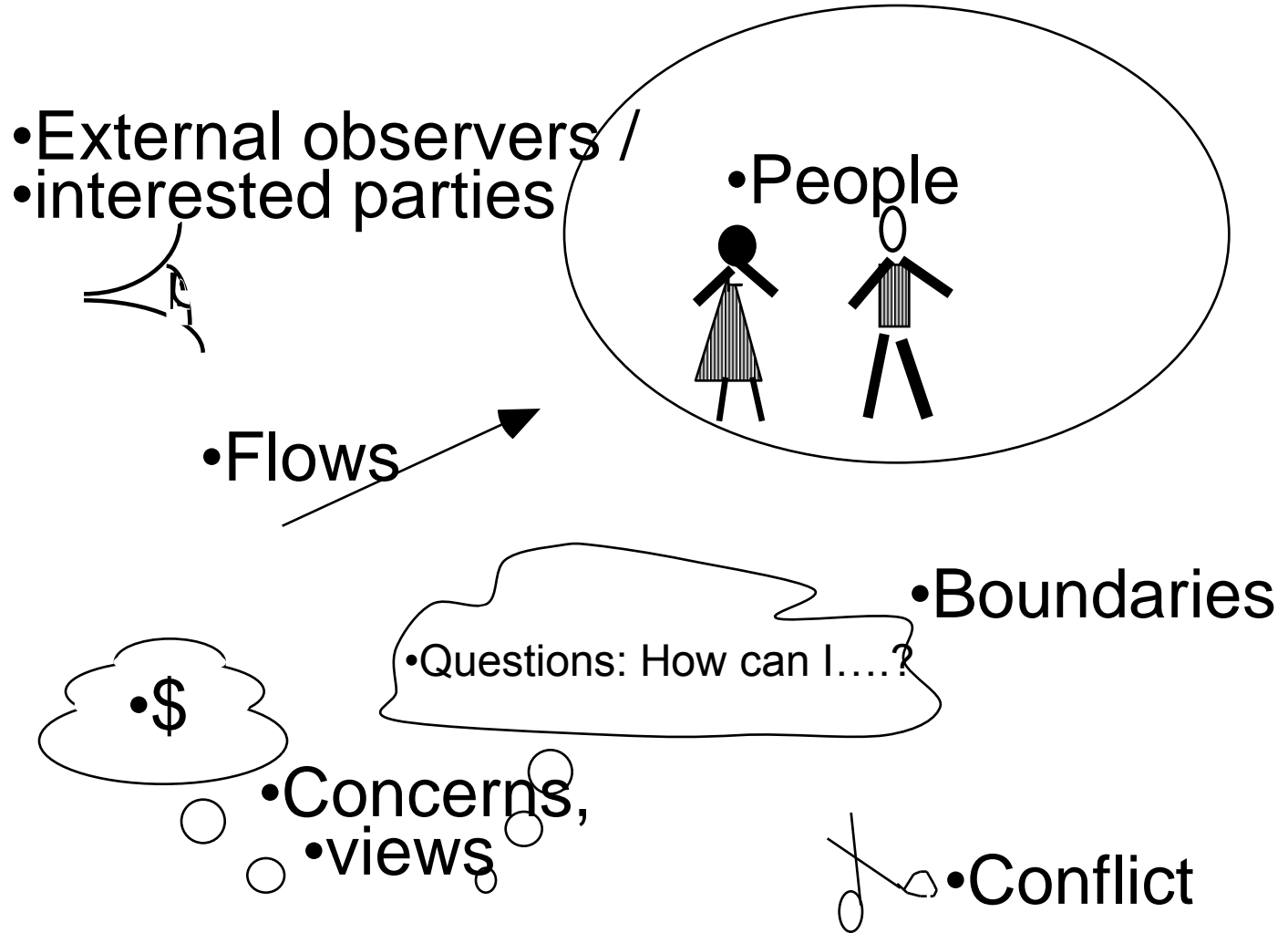
# Stakeholder Analysis

- 1). Identify who the stakeholders are.
- 2). Work out their power, influence and interest – this helps prioritize and focus for further action
- 3). Develop a good understanding of the most important stakeholders
- 4). Record this analysis on a stakeholder matrix

# What to put in a rich picture

- Structure, e.g.
  - departmental or organization boundaries,
  - geographical considerations,
  - people and institutions.
- Process - activities, information or material flows.
- Connections - the relationship between structure and process, and any associated problems.
- ‘Soft facts’ - concerns, conflicts, views.
- Environment - external interested bodies, factors affecting the organization.

# Rich pictures use symbols



## Hofstede in 1980 – IBM around the world

- **Power distance** – how hierarchies and unequal power distribution is viewed.
- **Uncertainty avoidance** – the extent to which people are comfortable or uncomfortable with uncertainty and little structure.
- **Individualism** – this is the anchor at one end of two poles, where the other anchor would be collectivism. This is the extent to which individuals are supposed to be self-reliant and look after themselves, versus being more integrated into a group.
- **Masculinity or Femininity** – the dimension that has probably caused the most uproar. This dimension reflects hardness vs softness; toughness vs tenderness in a culture.
- **Long term or short term orientation** – this has to do with the culture's members having a stance on delayed, or immediate, gratification.

Chatman (1991)—

Dimensions of Organizational Culture (in LAS language)

- Risk-taking or Cautious
- Attention to detail or “Good enough for fruit salad”
- Results orientation or Process orientation
- People orientation or Things oriented
- Team orientation or Individual orientation
- Conflict confronters or conflict avoiders
- Flexibility or Stability

## Aiman-Smith & Cantwell (2007)

- Performance Orientation
- Fun and People Orientation
- Openness to Change
- Social Responsibility
- Team Orientation
- Fitting In
- Autonomy
- Trying New Things
- Being Organized
- Conflict
- Managing Resources

# It's the people – it's the practices

- What gets done and who does it is what makes the culture.
- People and business practices are what makes the culture

How all this relates to organizational culture

Knowing about an organization's culture comes "...from observation, from questioning, from trying to clarify what may be invisible or hazy." Schein (1999)

"Culture as a social control mechanism can determine organization members' commitment or intensity of feelings.."  
O'Reilly & Chatman (1996)