



Communicating your impact

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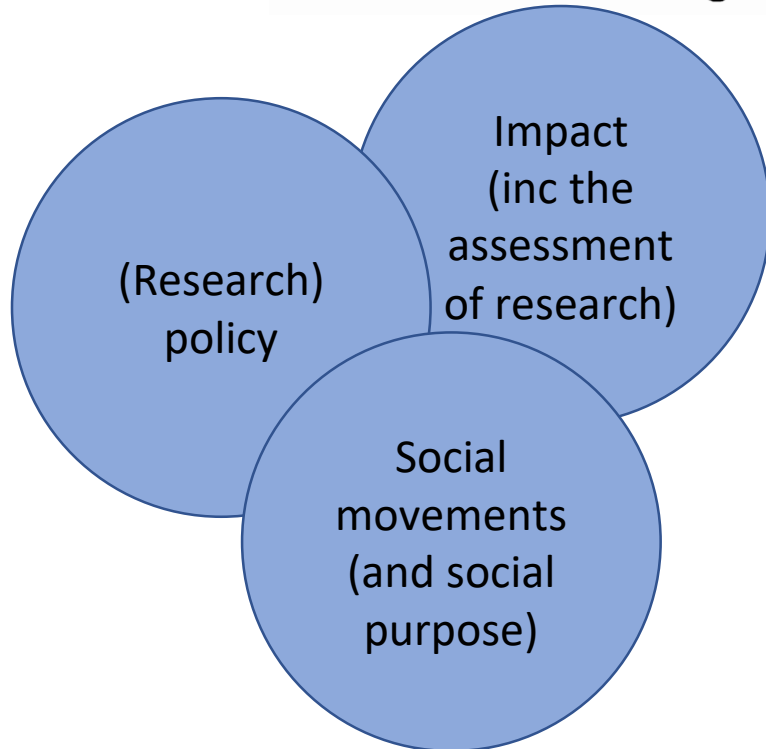
[!\[\]\(c3d993ca47bfe2a953c700506ce31fa0_img.jpg\) @jonathancgrant](https://twitter.com/jonathancgrant)

Take home messages

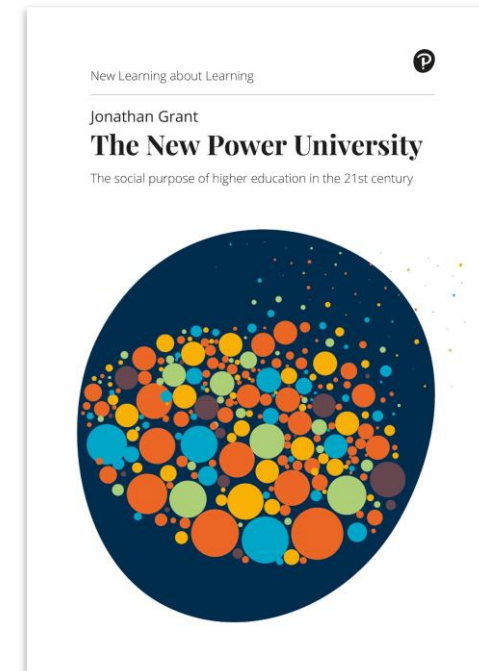
- ① An undervalued element of research impact assessment is communications
- ② Audiences are diverse, often requiring different and concurrent approaches to communicating impact
- ③ The 'pyramid principle' is a good approach for communicating impact to policy and decision makers
- ④ It is not rocket science, but you do need to think about communications and design that into impact and impact assessment
- ⑤ There is no point having an amazing impact if you can talk about it!



My impact story



Resulted in an interest in 'telling stories' (and how)



Impact by design ... The 7Cs

Emerald Open Research
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OPINION ARTICLE
Impact by design: Planning your research impact in 7Cs [version 1; peer review: 2 approved with reservations]

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Abstract
Although supporting and assessing the non-academic 'impact' of research are not entirely new developments in higher education, academics and research institutions are under increasing pressure to produce work that has a measurable influence outside the academy. With a view to supporting the solution of complex societal issues with evidence and expertise, and against the background of increased emphasis on impact in the United Kingdom's 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) and a proliferation of impact guides and tools, this article offers a simple, easy to remember framework for designing impactful research. We call this framework: 'The 7Cs of Impact' – Context, Communities, Constituencies, Challenge, Channels, Communication and Capture.

Drawing on core elements of the Policy Institute at King's College London's *Impact by Design* training course and the authors' practical experience in supporting and delivering impact, this paper outlines how this framework can help address key aspects across the lifecycle of a research project and plan, from identifying the intended impact of research and writing it into grants and proposals, to engaging project stakeholders and assessing whether the project has had the desired impact.

While preparations for current and future REF submissions may benefit from using this framework, this paper sets out the '7Cs' with a more holistic view of impact in mind, seeking to aid researchers in identifying, capturing, and communicating how research projects can and do contribute to the improvement in society.

Keywords
research impact, research assessment, research evaluation, REF2021, knowledge exchange, research design, impact literacy

This article is included in the [Education and Learning gateway](#).

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Contexts

What are the wider environmental, political, social, technological, legal and/or economic contexts to which your research may be relevant?

Communities

Who are the communities and beneficiaries of your research?

Constituencies

Who has a (positive) interest in your project and can influence change?

Challenge

What is the situation, and challenge, you will solve through your research questions?

Channels

What approaches will you use to reach those constituencies?

Communication

What is the appropriate style, tone and structuring needed to get your main message across?

Capture

How will you demonstrate your impact?

<https://emeraldopenresearch.com/articles/1-18/v1>

Some questions to get going

1. Tonight is a Friday, are you going to go dancing all night (1) or get a good book and read that in front of the fire (10)?

1. You are going on holiday in 4 weeks time, do you buy a guidebook and plan what you are going to do and when (1) or are you more spontaneous, lasminitue.com (10)?

1. Would you rather write a romantic novel (1) or a popular science book (10)?

1. When you decided to sign up to this course did you think hard about the pros and cons of participating (1) or did you just decide to give it a go (10)?







AESIS



Logical / rational

Big picture



Detail

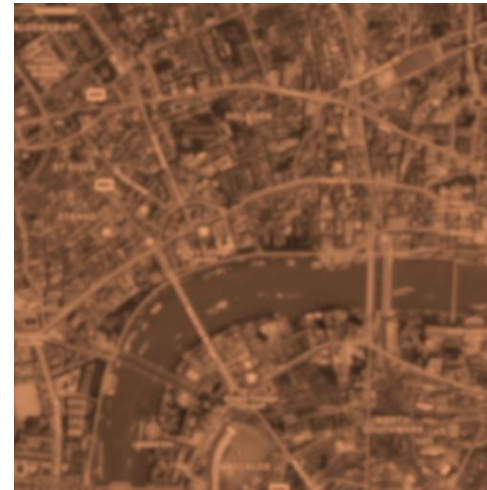


Big picture

Logical / rational



Emotional



Detail

AESIS

AESIS

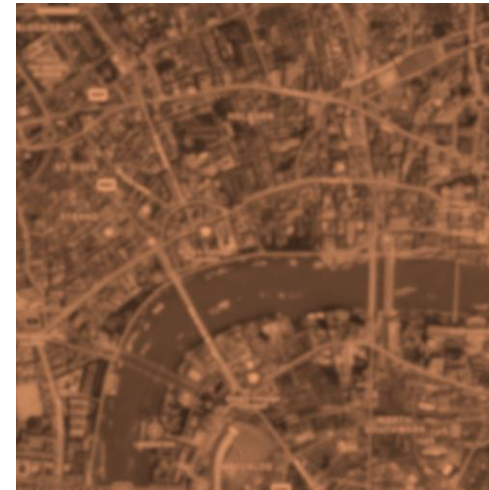


Different preferences, require different communication tools

Logical / rational

Emotional

Big picture



Detail

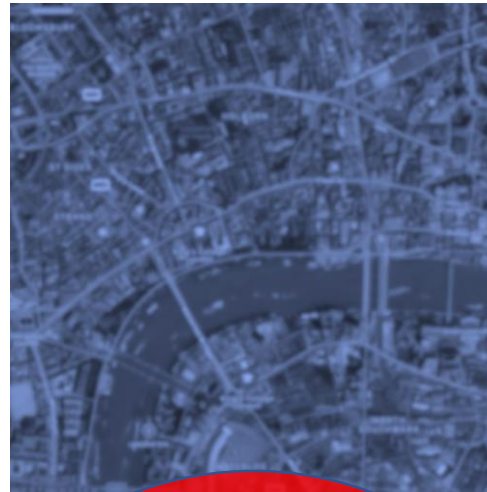


Different preferences, require different communication tools

Logical / rational

Emotional

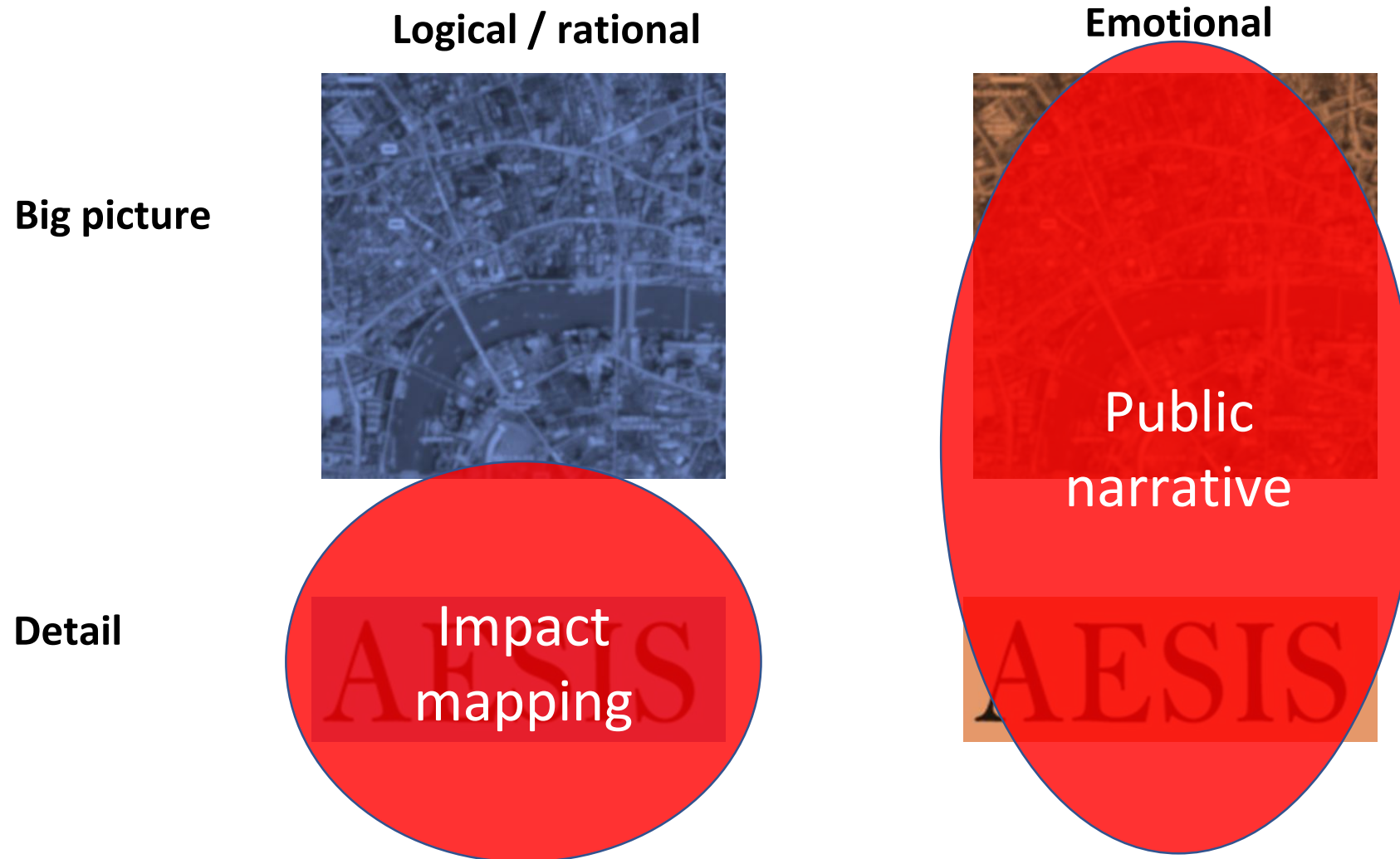
Big picture



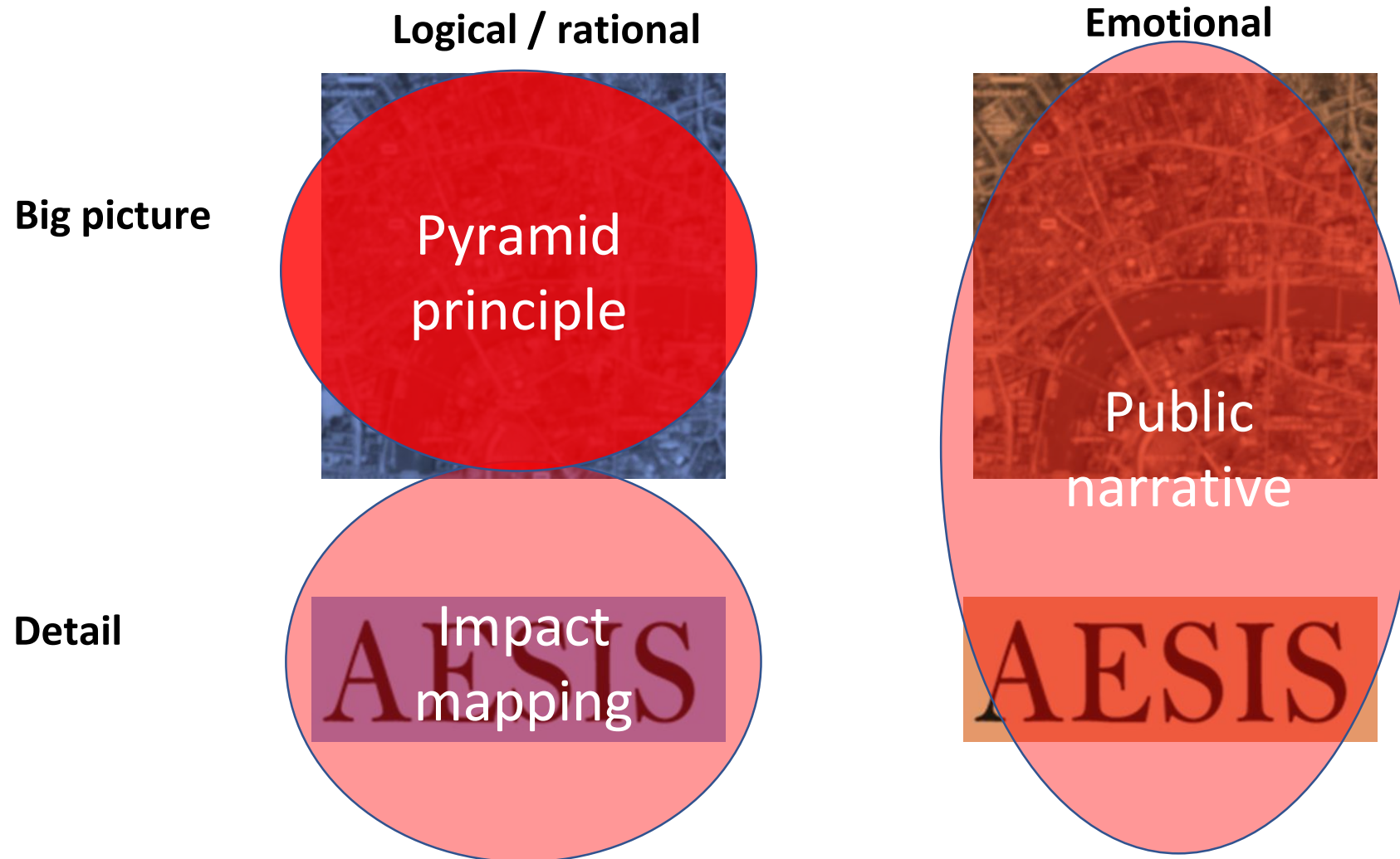
Detail

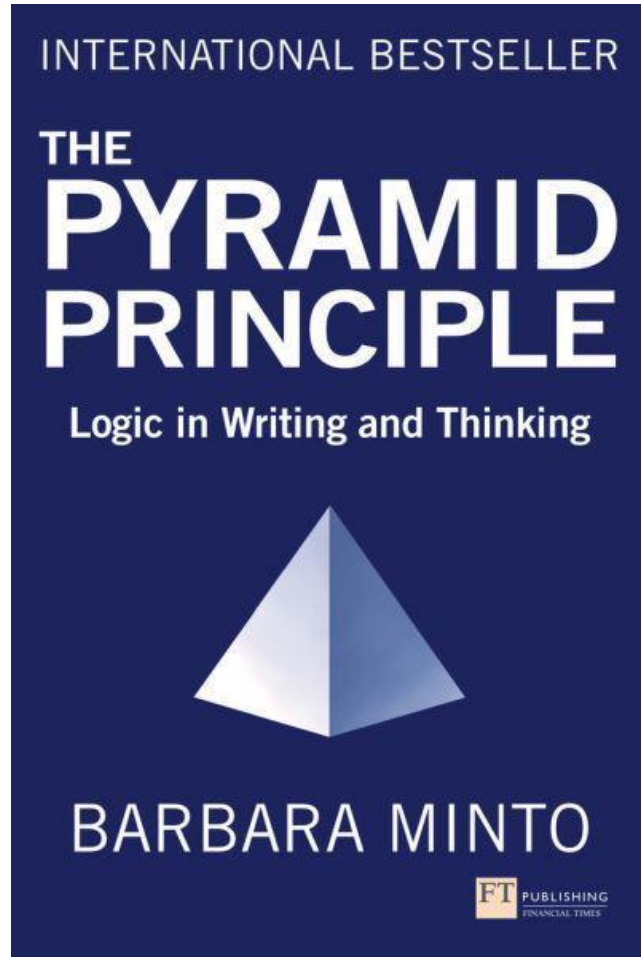


Different preferences, require different communication tools



Different preferences, require different communication tools





- **Getting to the right question**
- **Structuring your ideas**





Take the flags and organise them into different groups. I don't mind how you do that but there must be a reason.

Getting to the right question

Situation + Complication = Question

Diabetes is one of the world's biggest health challenges with prevalence rates increasing globally and the costs of diabetes-related treatment accounting for a significant proportion of healthcare budgets.

Bariatric surgery is a proven, cost-effective approach to reducing the impact of diabetes amongst those patients showing most risk of the disease BUT is not being widely adopted.

Why is bariatric surgery not being used more widely in the treatment of diabetes?



A research narrative: 'Jesus was married'

“On 18 September 2012 a newly-discovered Coptic gospel fragment, purportedly dating from the 4th century, was announced in Rome. It generated worldwide publicity: for in it, Jesus refers to ‘my wife’.

Three days later, Professor Francis Watson posted a short paper online, in which he used a form of compositional analysis which he has pioneered to argue that the fragment is most probably a recent forgery.

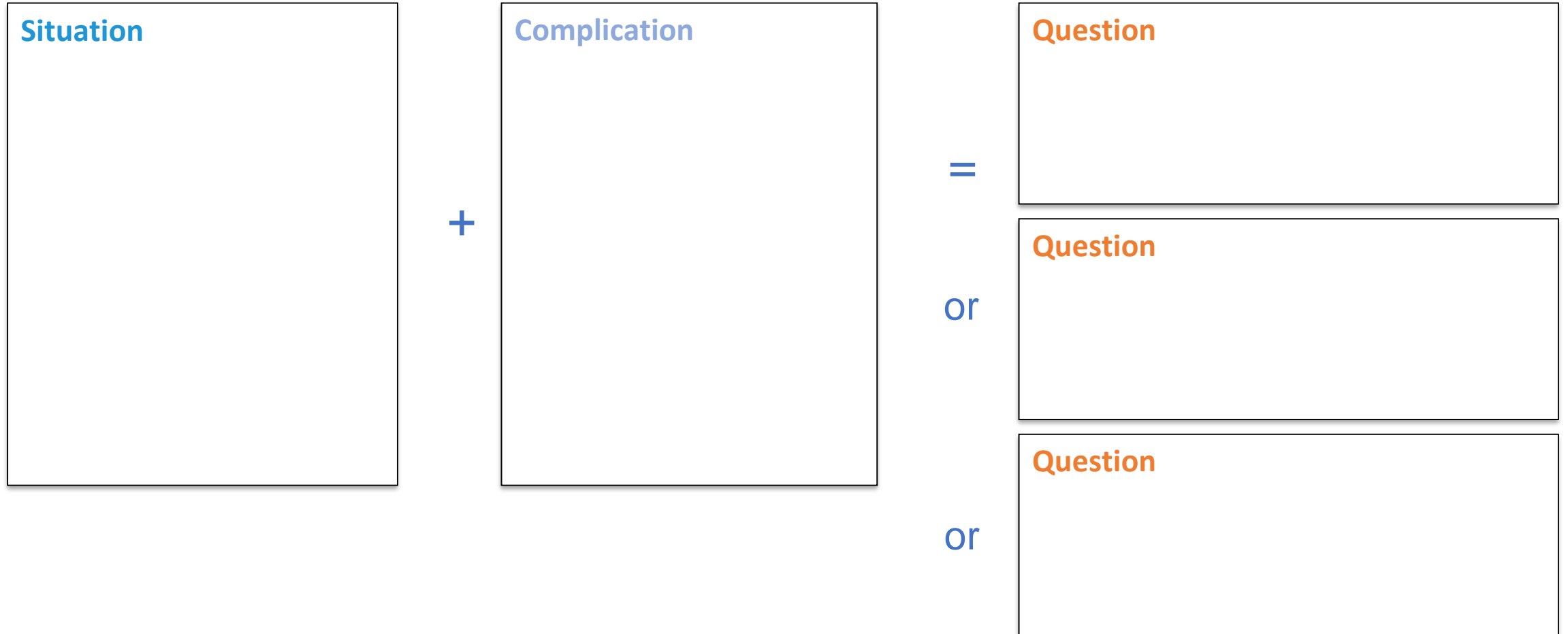
Watson's paper was extensively read and reported, and widely regarded as conclusive. An imminent TV documentary on the fragment was promptly postponed indefinitely.

Watson's research transformed the way that this fragment was perceived by an international public. As such, it prevented a serious scholarly error from becoming lodged in the public consciousness.

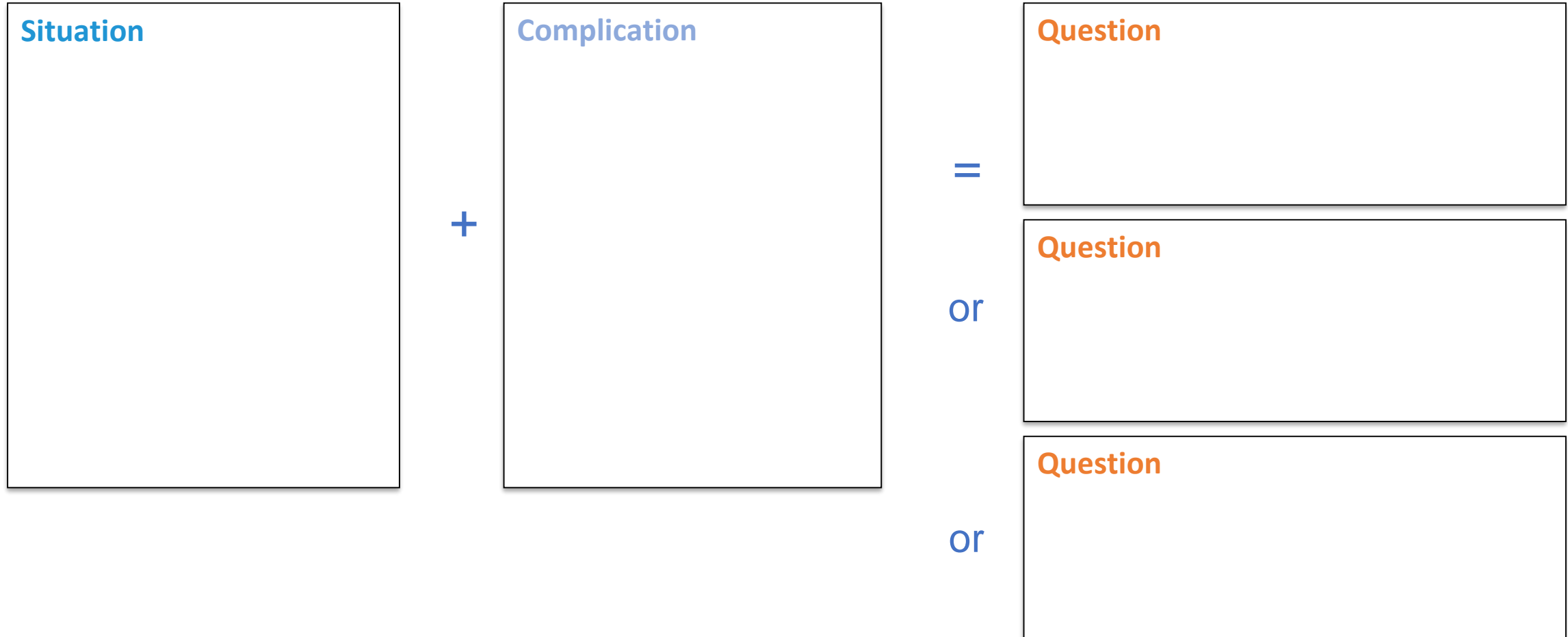
It is an example of the power of a timely web-enabled intervention by a scholar in a fast-moving news story.”



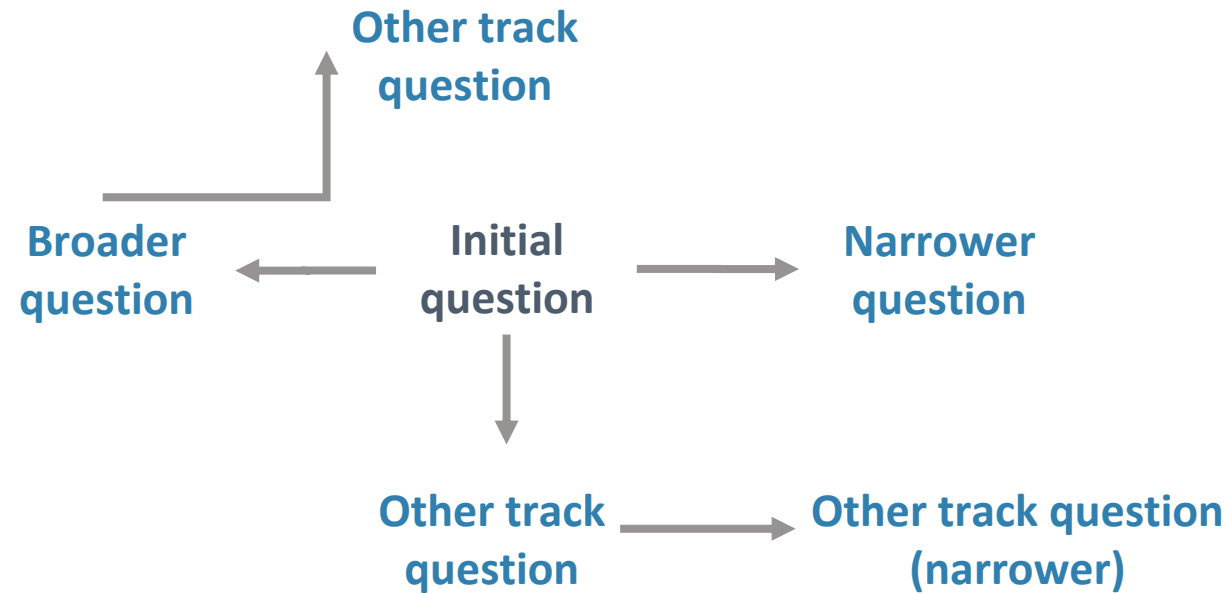
Let's try together ...



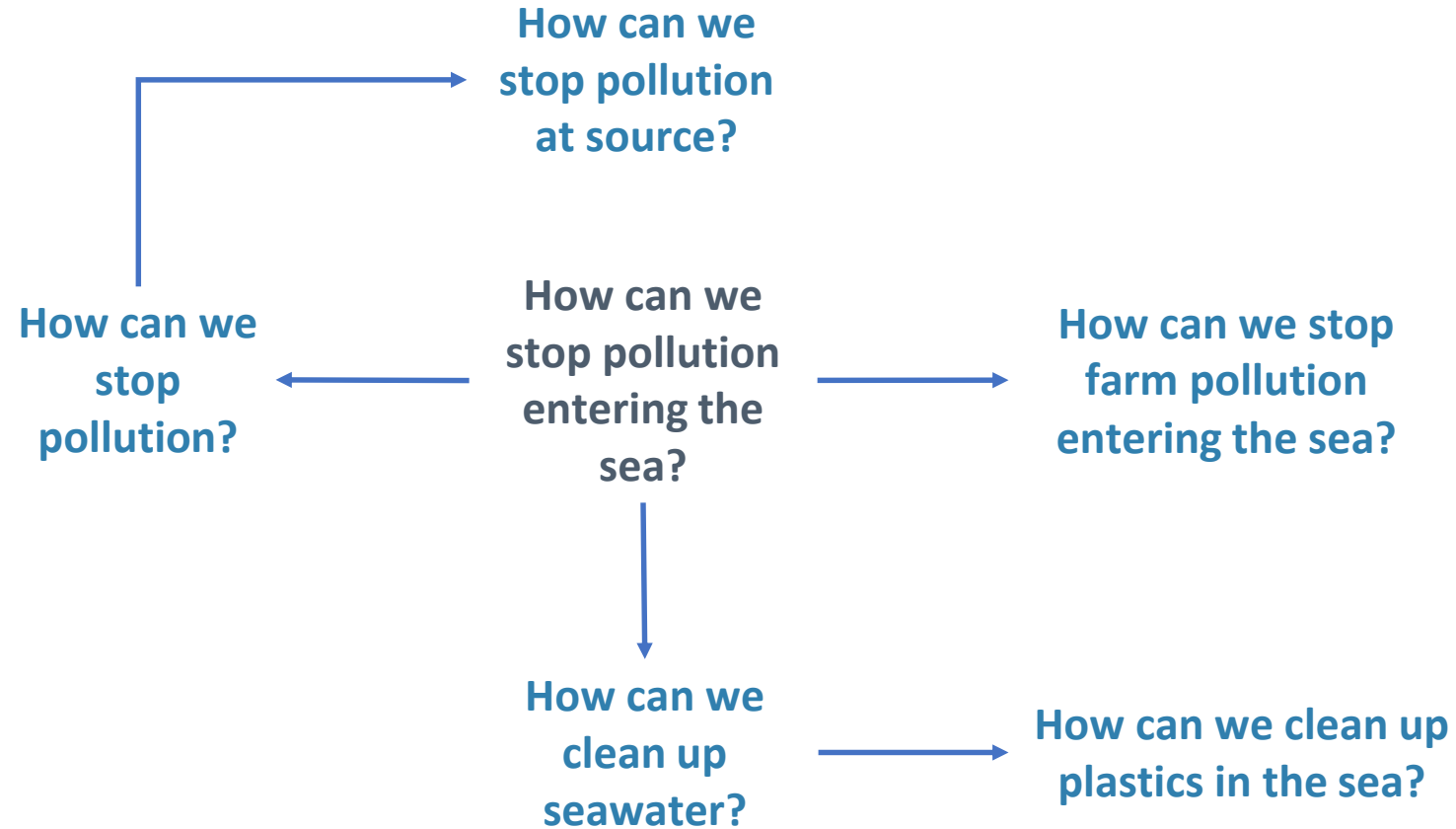
Now your turn ...

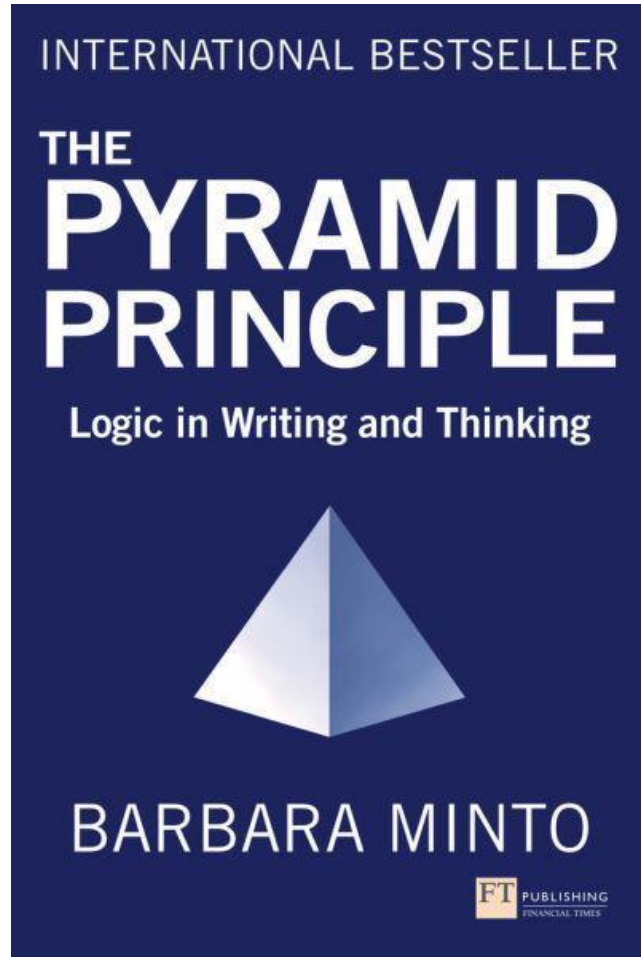


Finding the right question



Finding the right question

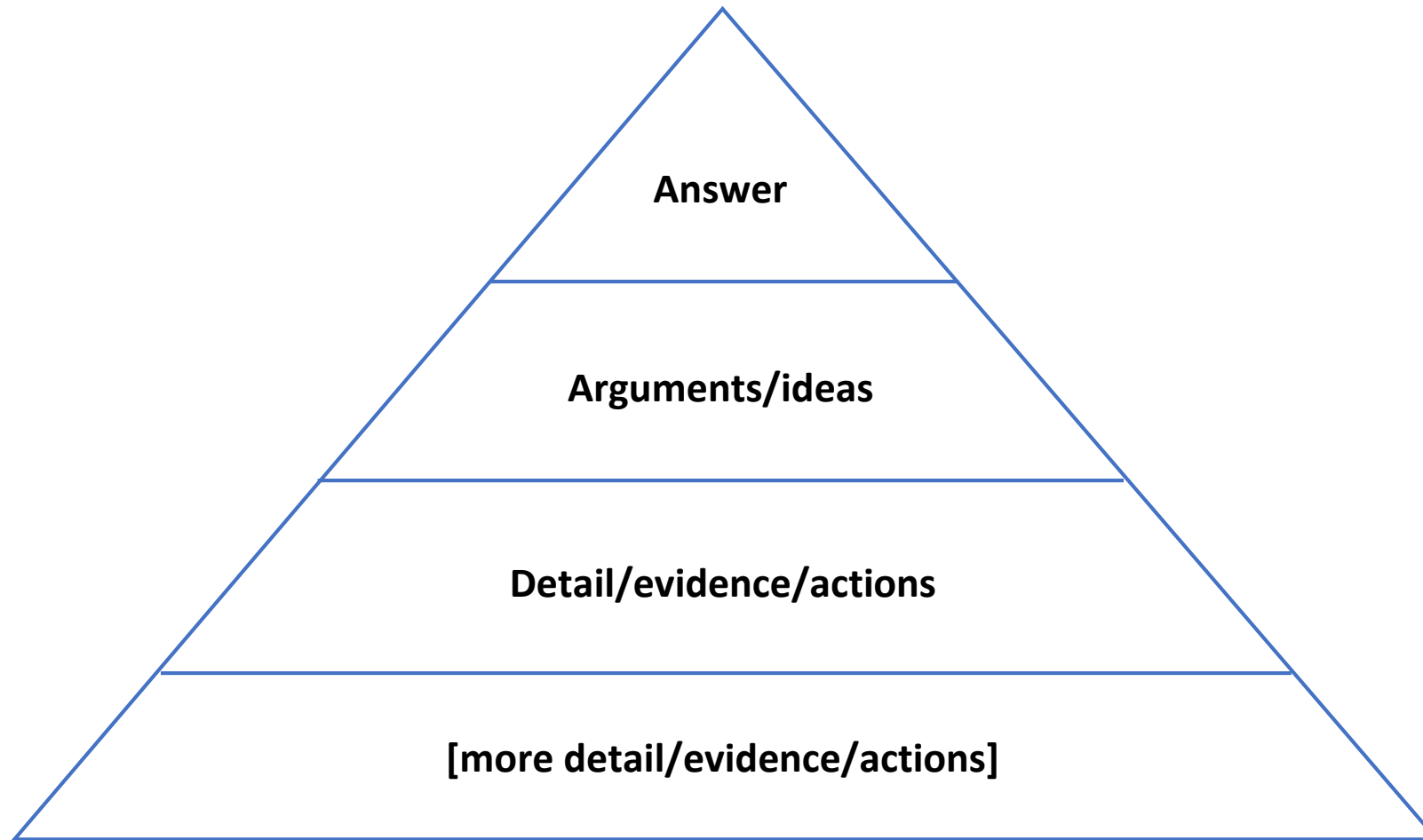




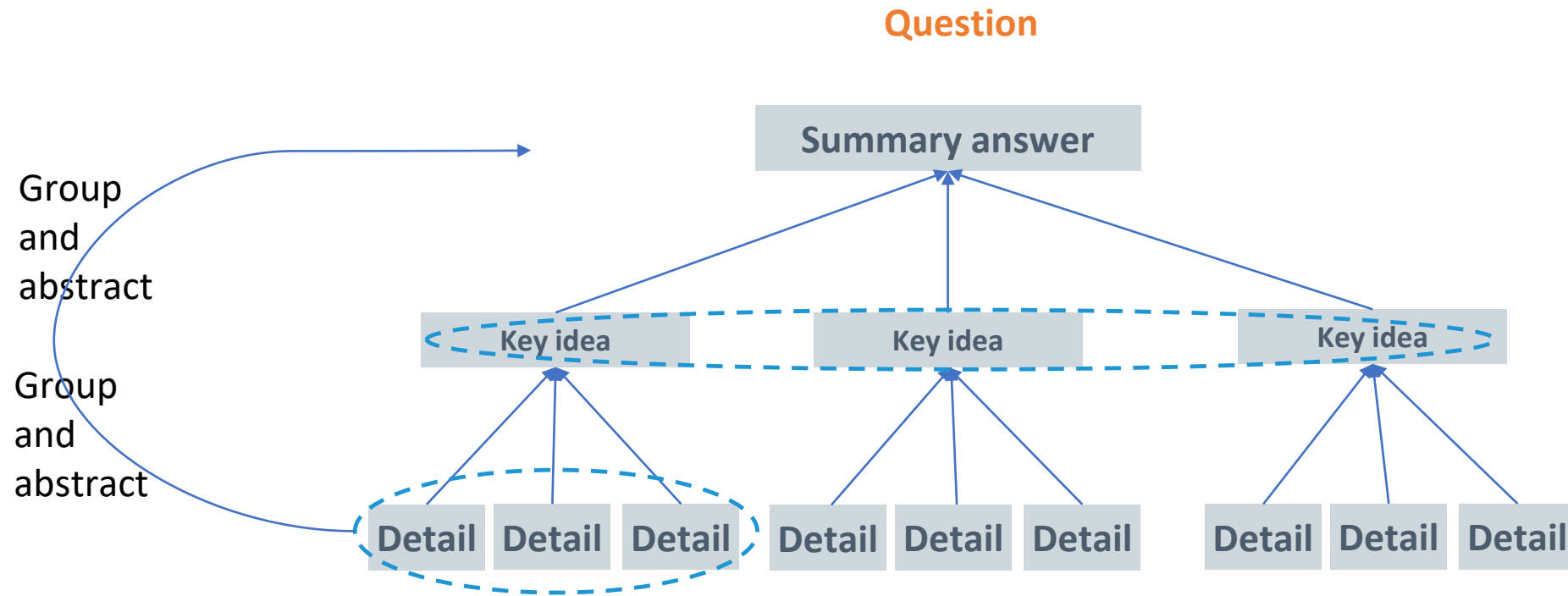
- **Getting to the right question**
- **Structuring your ideas**



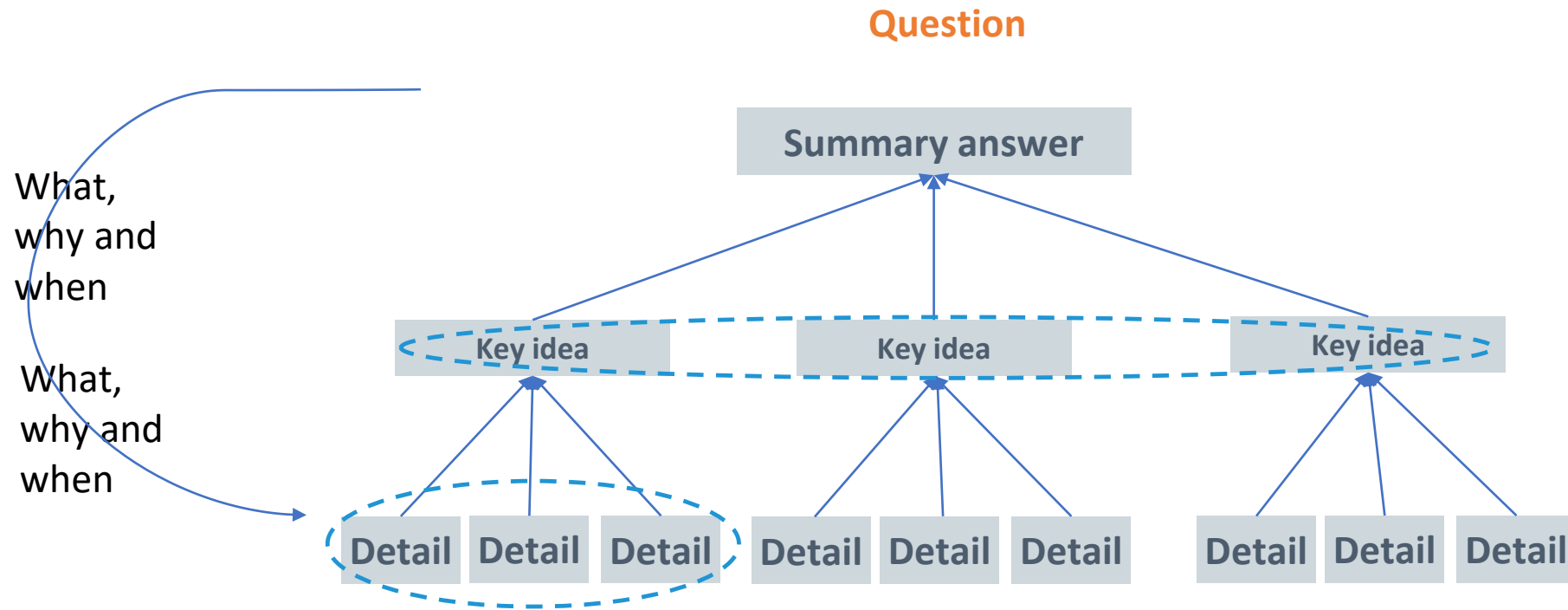
Situation + Complication = Question



Building the ideas 'bottom up'



Expanding the ideas 'top down'



Use the boxes to construct a thought pyramid...

On your own, take one of the envelopes on your table

Look at the bits of paper

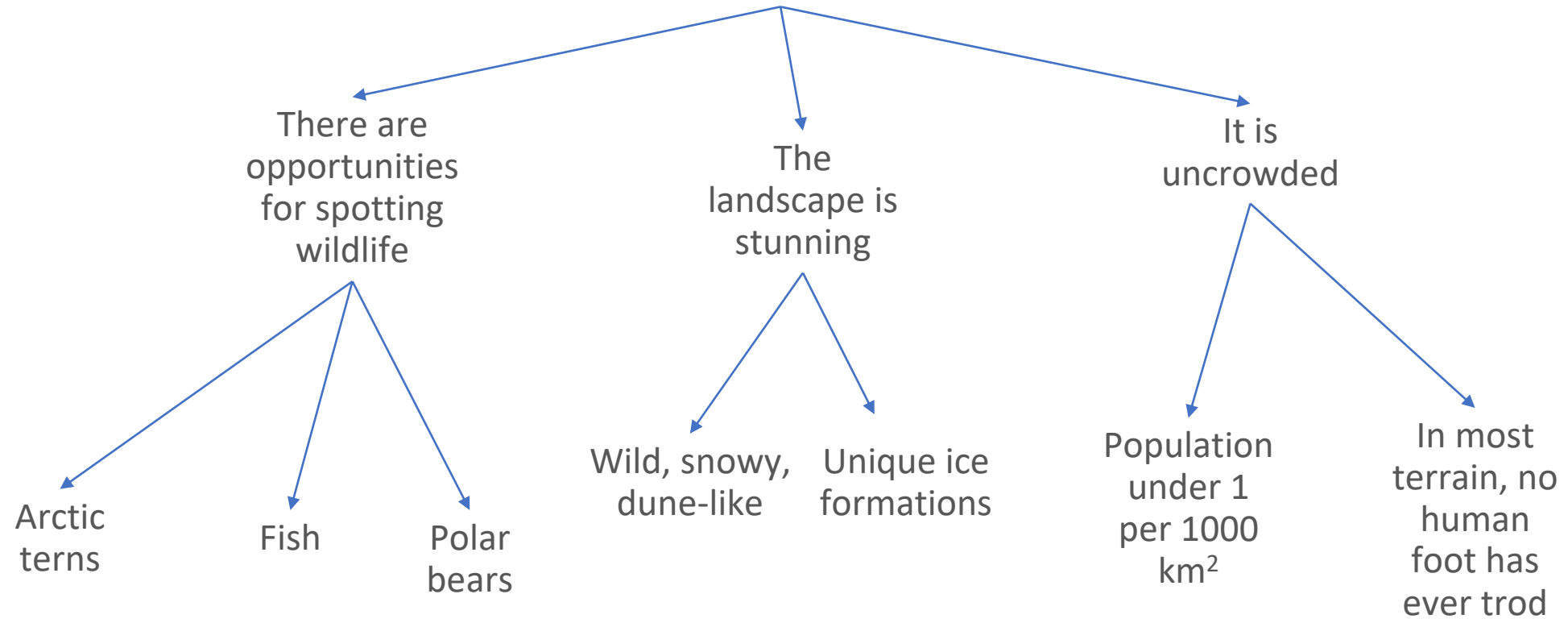
Organise the ideas into a pyramid

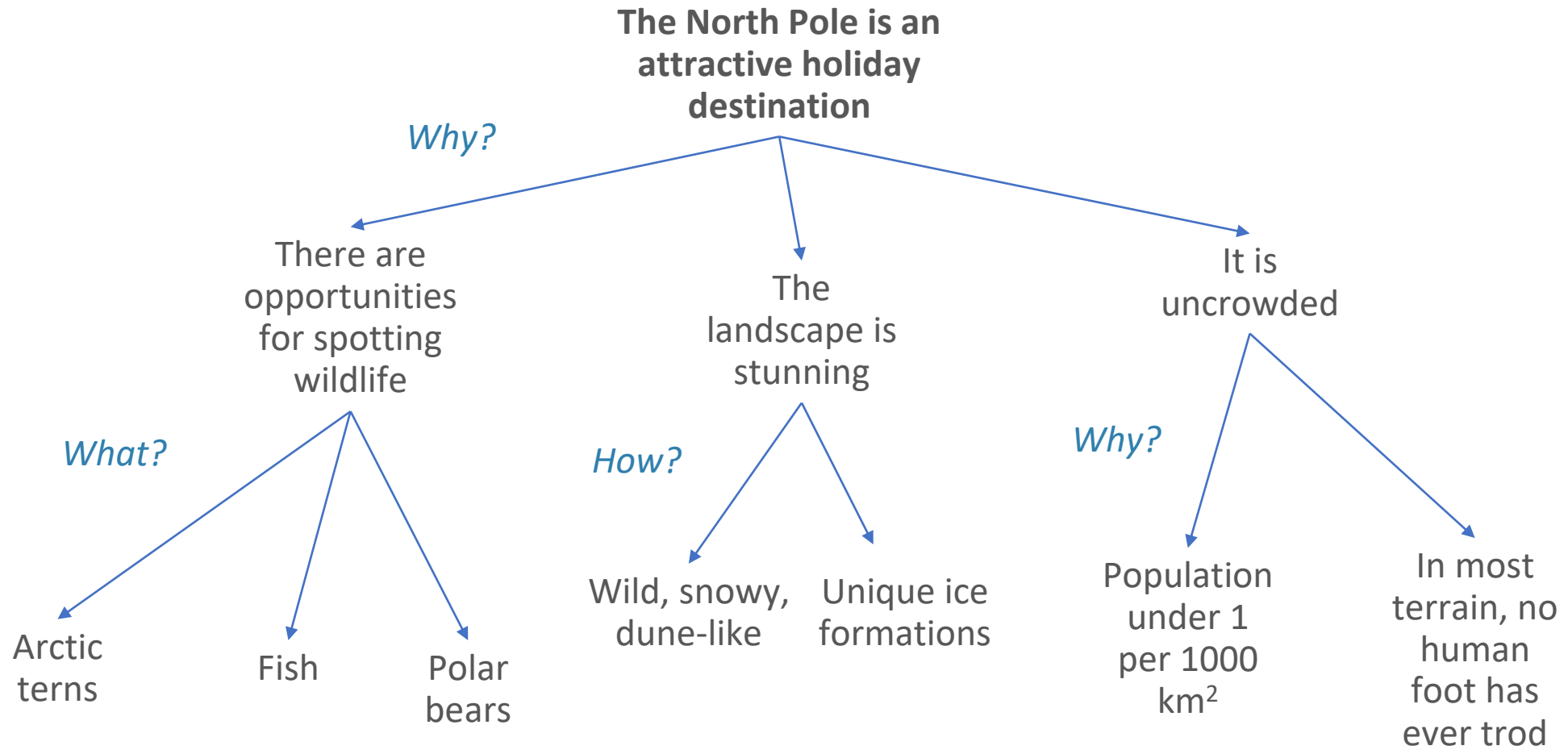
It should have 3 levels:

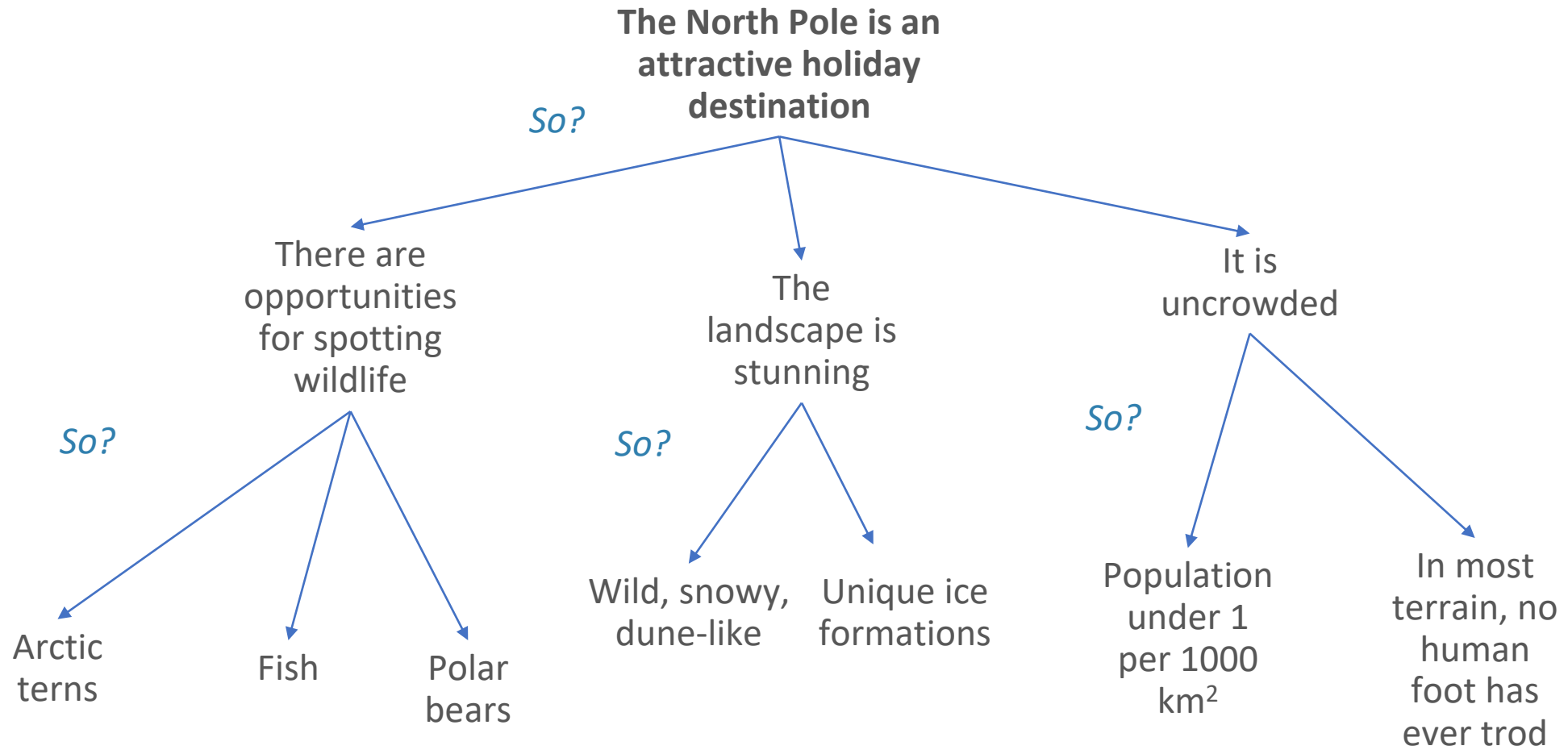
- Summary answer
- Key ideas
- Detail



The North Pole is an attractive holiday destination







Fossil-fuel divestment

No smoking

Institutional investors should divest from oil, gas and coal only if their beneficiaries understand the trade-offs



THEY have chained themselves to the White House fence, blockaded Australian coal ports with dugout canoes and mooned the offices of a British minister. But protesters from a green pressure group called 350.org have had their greatest success doing something far duller: petitioning institutional investors to “divest” from stocks and bonds issued by firms that peddle fossil fuels. Opponents of divestment marshal arguments from theory and practice to pooh-pooh such campaigns. But that is both to misunderstand the goals of the activists and to dodge hard questions about how best to serve the interests of their clients.

Denigrators of divestment point out, rightly, that selling a security does not materially reduce the price if there are lots of buyers still out there. Any buyer is likely to have fewer qualms about the firm or country concerned than the seller, so the pressure for immediate change may actually dissipate as divestment proceeds. That is why some fund managers, like Hermes, argue that engagement with polluting firms is better than walking away. In the case of fossil fuels, the sceptics add, divestment has the wrong target: state-owned firms, not listed ones, control the bulk of reserves.

The critics are right that it is hard to detect much impact from divestment campaigns on firms’ cost of capital. The first recruits to the fossil-fuel campaign were charities and universities with relatively small investments. Its biggest coup came earlier this year, when Norway’s vast sovereign-wealth fund resolved to sell its investments in coal and the dirtiest forms of oil production. A few big pension funds, such as PFZW of the Netherlands, have promised to reduce the carbon footprint of their holdings. But the consequences for the share prices or bond yields of the spurned firms, if any, are not discernible amid the far bigger swings attributable to changes in the price of oil, gas and coal (see page 71).

Much the same is true of other such campaigns. The shares

of cigarette-makers have performed brilliantly in recent years, despite a big divestment drive. The falling price of gold and growing popular unrest probably had more to do with South Africa’s rising borrowing costs in the dying days of apartheid than divestment did. Israel’s borrowing costs have fallen and its stockmarket has boomed despite the BDS (boycott, divestment, sanctions) movement, which is intended to press it into making peace with Palestinians.

But advocates of divestment do not really expect to raise their targets’ cost of capital. Rather, they want to create the sense that a business or a country is a pariah. If you believe that global warming is a mortal threat to all humanity, and that the world’s attempts to ward it off are inadequate, then it makes sense to do more or less everything you can to bring about change. Campaigners use divestment not as a tool of corporate finance, but as a facet of free speech—part of a broader push, involving boycotts, protests, lobbying and public advocacy, to sway opinion and influence regulation. Good luck to them: they have every right to make their case.

For love or money

Whether campaigners should prevail is less clear. Individual investors can settle the matter on their own. The complication with divestment campaigns is that investment committees are looking after the money of other people. Discerning their preferences is often hard and sometimes impossible. End-investors frequently want to have things both ways, demanding that funds are both green to a fault and deeply in the black. University-endowment funds can heed the views of today’s students, but not those of future generations.

Occasionally, as with smoking, the moral issues are sufficiently clear-cut for managers to act on unambiguous instructions from their investors. But many issues are more complex and, even in the days of instant cost-free communication, money managers cannot spend their time polling investors and expect to get a useful response. More often, therefore, they should be conservative and set themselves clear aims. That means maximising returns. ■

No smoking

Institutional investors should divest from oil, gas and coal only if their beneficiaries understand the trade-offs

Answer



THEY have chained themselves to the White House fence, blockaded Australian coal ports with dugout canoes and mooned the offices of a British minister. But protesters from a green pressure group called 350.org have had their greatest success doing something far duller: petitioning institutional investors to “divest” from stocks and bonds issued by firms that peddle fossil fuels. Opponents of divestment marshal arguments from theory and practice to pooh-pooh such campaigns. But that is both to misunderstand the goals of the activists and to dodge hard questions about how best to serve the interests of their clients.

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2nd key idea

Detail 2.1

Detail 2.2

1st key idea

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Detail 1.1

Detail 1.2

Detail 1.3

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Much the same is true of other such campaigns. The shares



Institutional investors should diversify from fossil fuels if people understand the trade offs

Selling shares does not reduce price if there are a lot of buyers

No impact on share prices

Some pension funds have tried

No real impact

Advocates of divestment are not interested in share prices

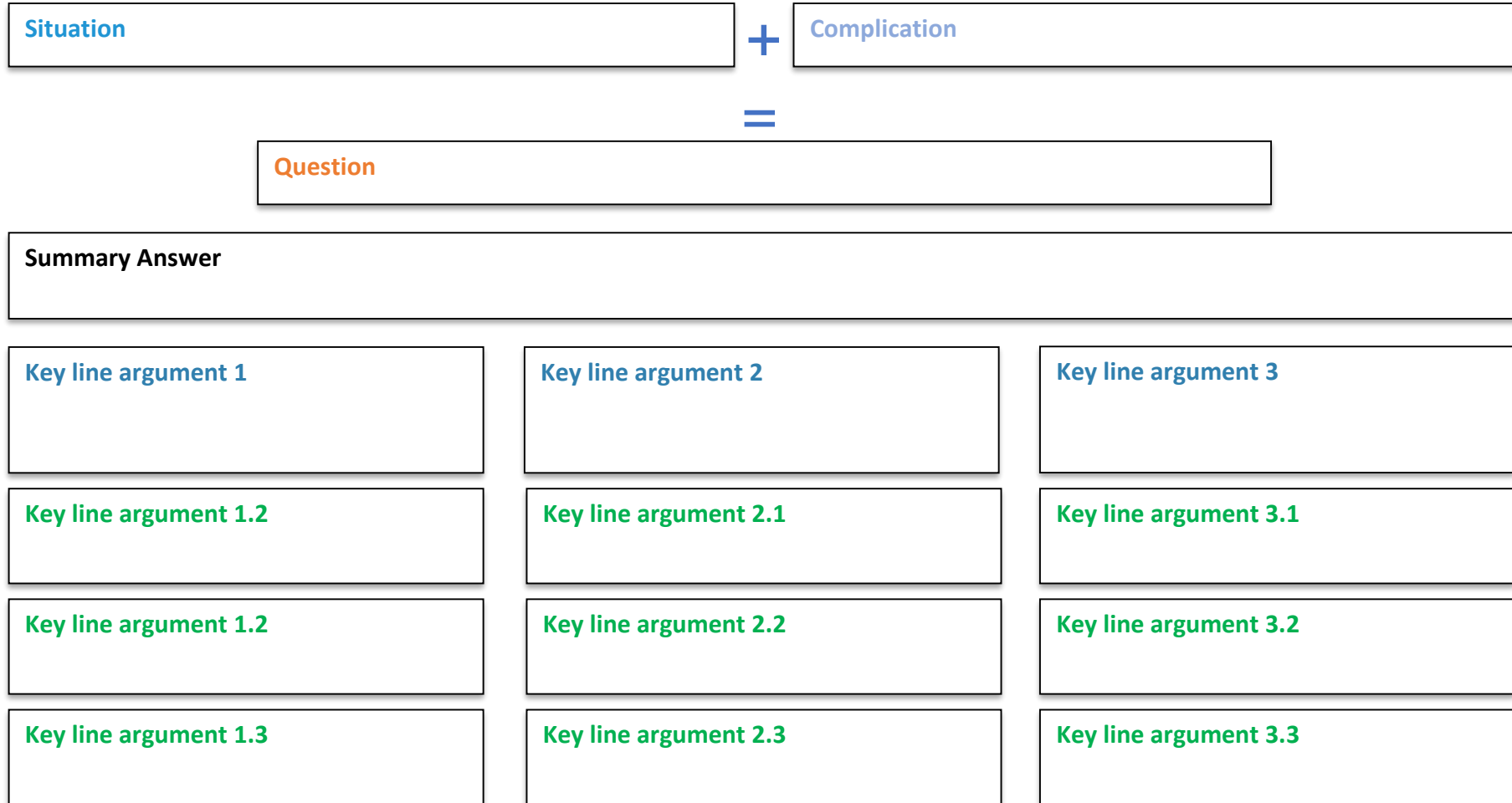
It is a moral argument – global warming threatens humanity

Divestments debate is a vehicle for protest and raising the issue





Now your turn ...



What tools does Gregory use to get his message across?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSb-plloOFc>

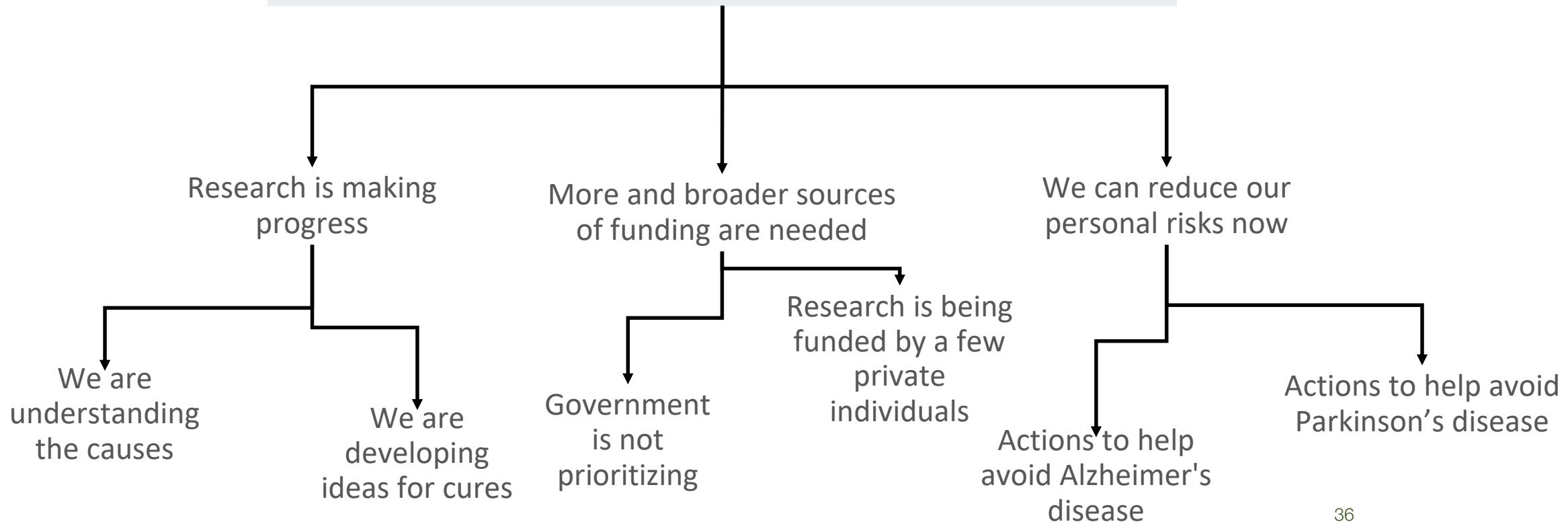


Gregory Petsko's thought pyramid

Situation: More people are old and are getting older + **Complication:** Growing incidence and cost of A&P diseases

Question: What should we do about the challenge of A&P diseases?

Summary answer: We should invest more in research and take personal actions to reduce risk



Take home messages

- ① An undervalued element of research impact assessment is communications
- ② Audiences are diverse, often requiring different and concurrent approaches to communicating impact
- ③ The 'pyramid principle' is a good approach for communicating impact to policy and decision makers
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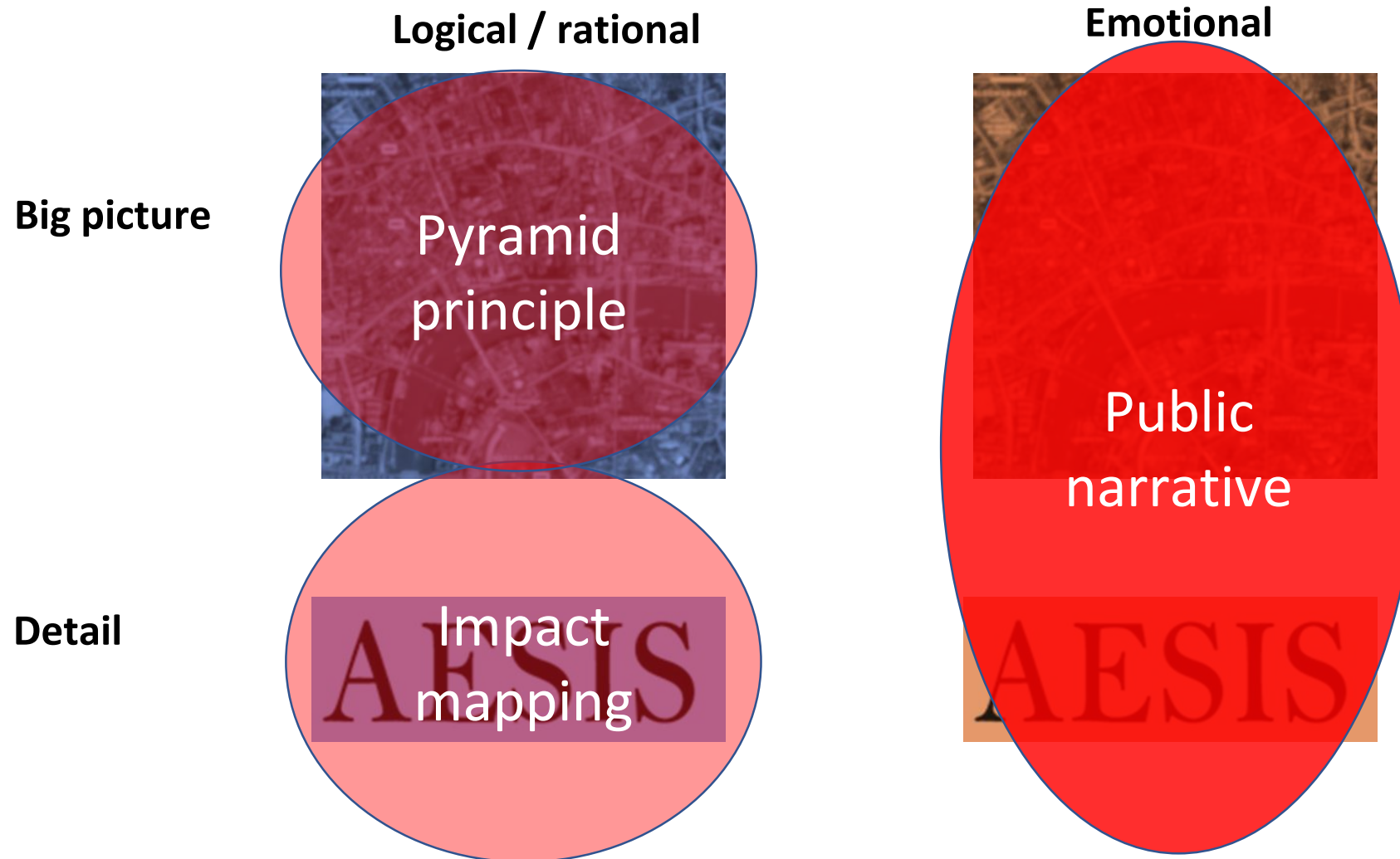




Back up if time (unlikely)



Different preferences, require different communication tools

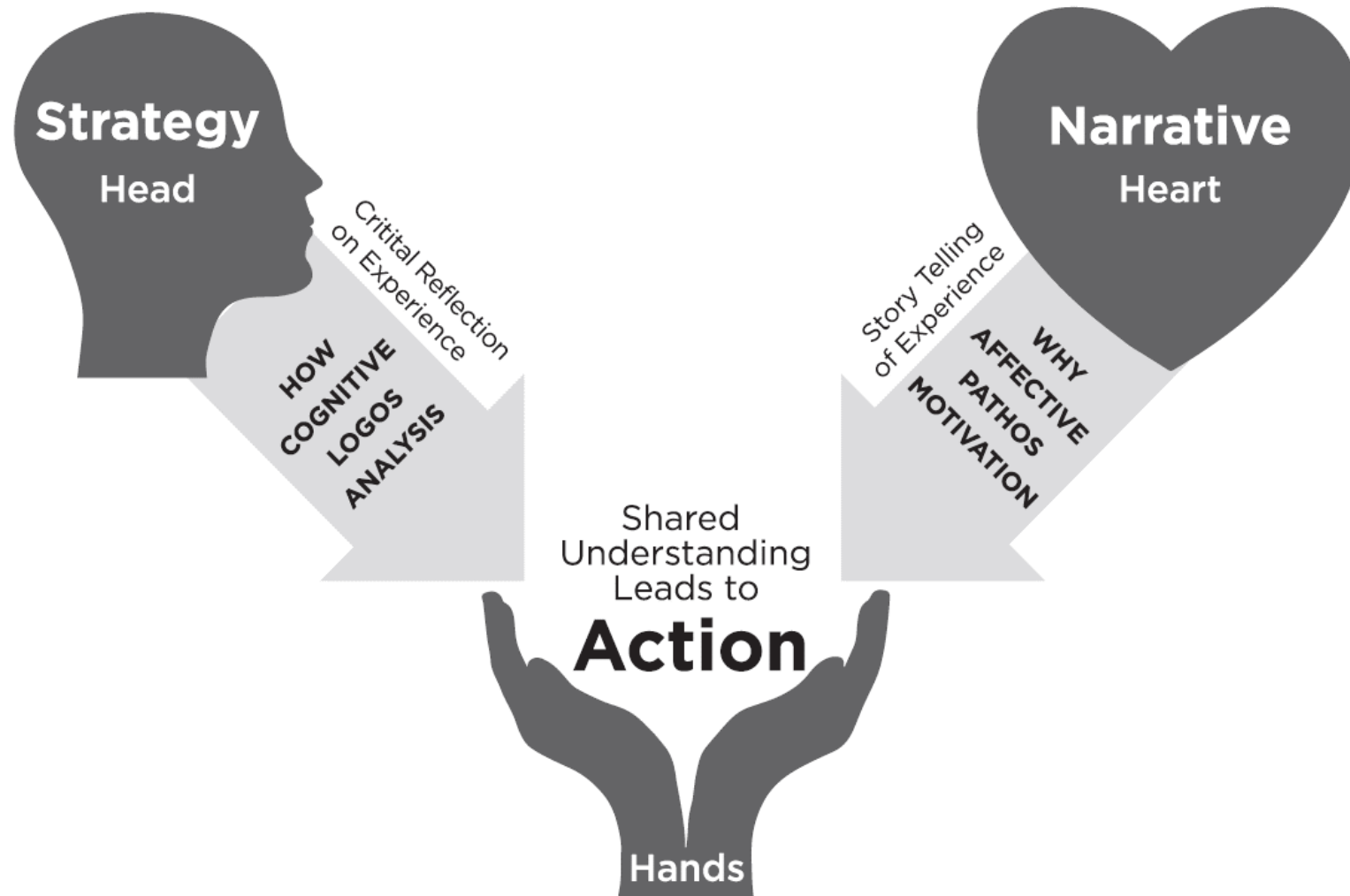


Marshall Ganz's approach to Leading change

- Rita T. Hauser Senior Lecturer in Leadership, Organizing, and Civil Society, Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University
- Written widely on community organising and social movements
- Developed the idea of the 'public narrative' which is how you tell the story of a movement
- Became an organiser and advisor for a number of political campaigns
- Credited with the grass roots community organising approach that underpinned Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign
- Lots of material on the web and a reading list provided
- Adapt some of his thinking and approaches to the telling of research narratives



The head, the heart and the hands



An effective public narrative combines 3 stories



The **'Story of Self'**

...tells of the people and events in our lives that have influenced us as individuals and shaped who we are and the path we have taken to this moment



The **'Story of Us'**

...tells of the shared purpose and values that can inspire others to act in concert by identifying with each other



The **'Story of Now'**

...tells of the urgent challenge we are called upon to face, the hope that we can face it and the choices we must make to act



What makes a good story?

