

*The Innovation Challenge:*  
Addressing Poverty and Rigidity  
Traps

Brenda Zimmerman

Schulich School of Business, York University

You must have a hope that will let you  
stomp and sing at any cold dawn.....

You must read the story again and again  
to the child who receives you with a  
bovine stare.

You must get up everyday to punch in  
not dreaming of transcendence, not  
desiring new heroes or gods, not looking  
the other way, and ready to talk to  
everyone on the line.

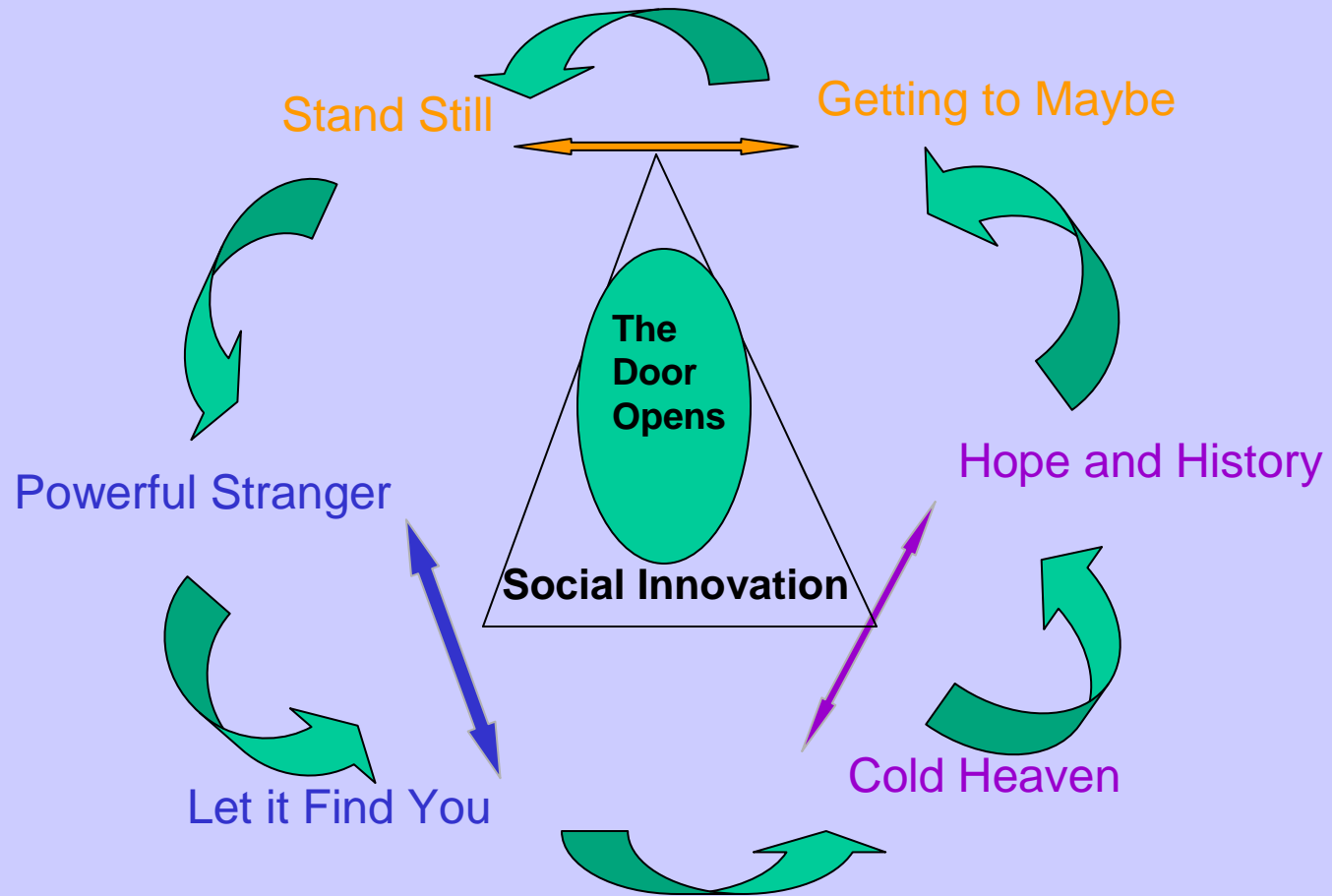
You must not wait for official approval or  
general consensus to rage.

You must come again to kneel in shiny,  
rock-strewn soil not to pray, but to plant.

Yes, even now as ice caps melt and  
black top goes soft in the sun,

you must prepare for the harvest

-Jon Anderson

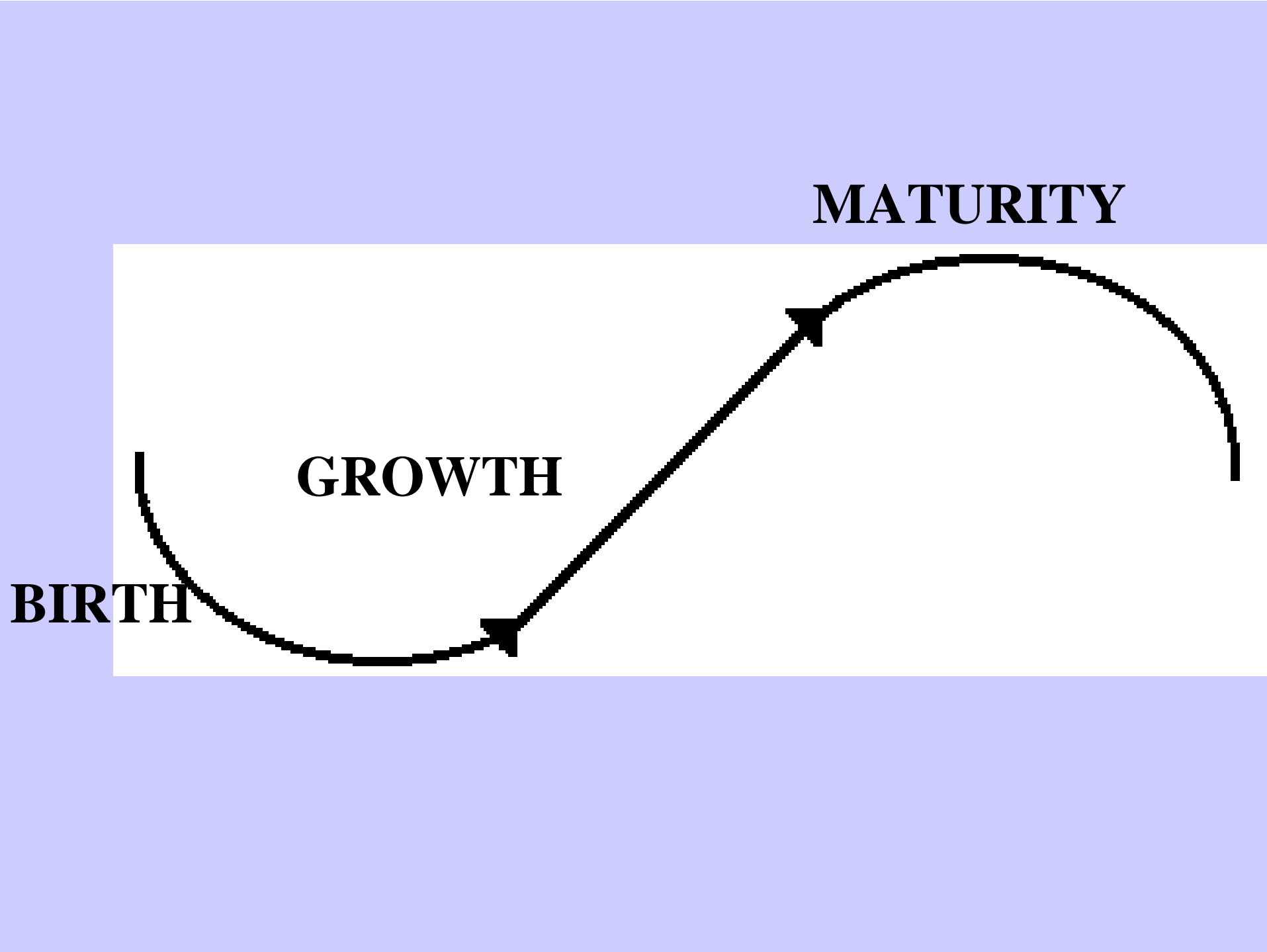


# *Stand still*

A framework for analysis

**Stand still.  
The trees ahead and bushes beside you  
Are not lost.  
Wherever you are is called Here  
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger  
Must ask permission to know it and be known.  
The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,  
I have made this place around you.  
If you leave it, you may come back again, saying Here  
No two trees are the same to Raven  
No two branches are the same to Wren  
If what a tree or a branch does is lost on you  
Then you are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows  
Where you are. You must let it find you.**

***-David Wagoner***

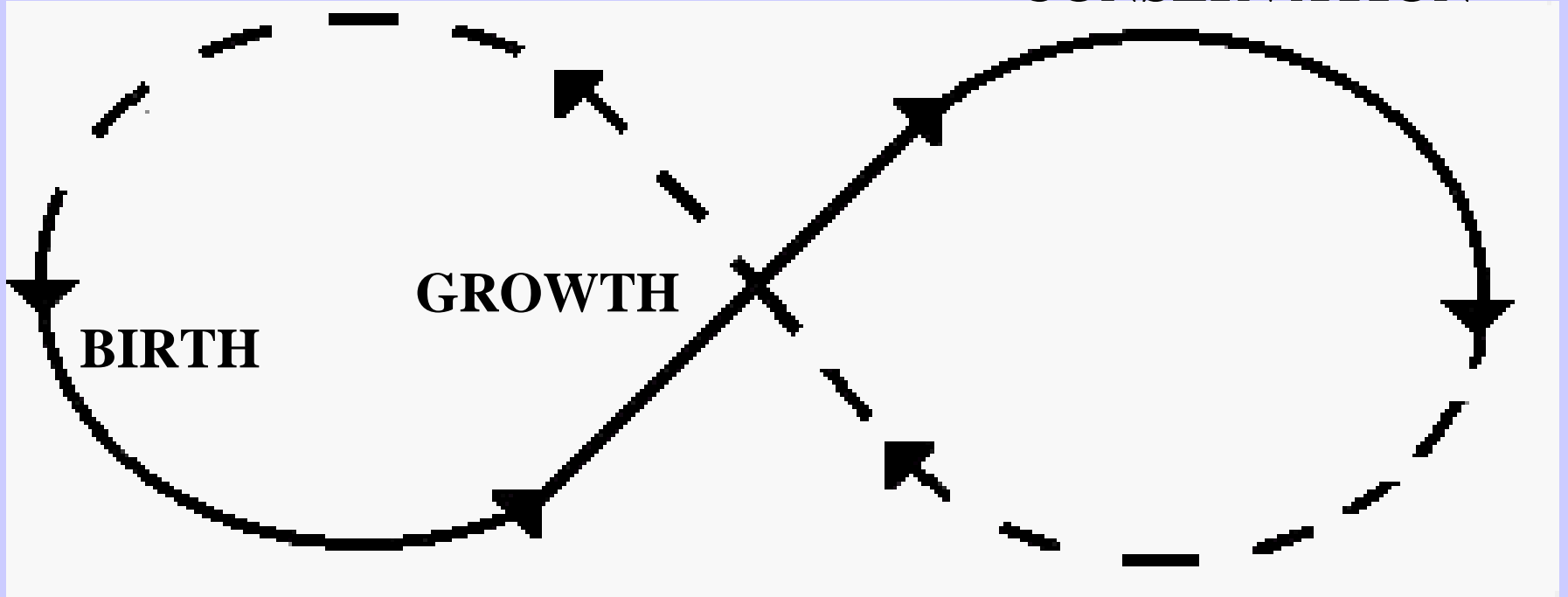


**MATURITY**

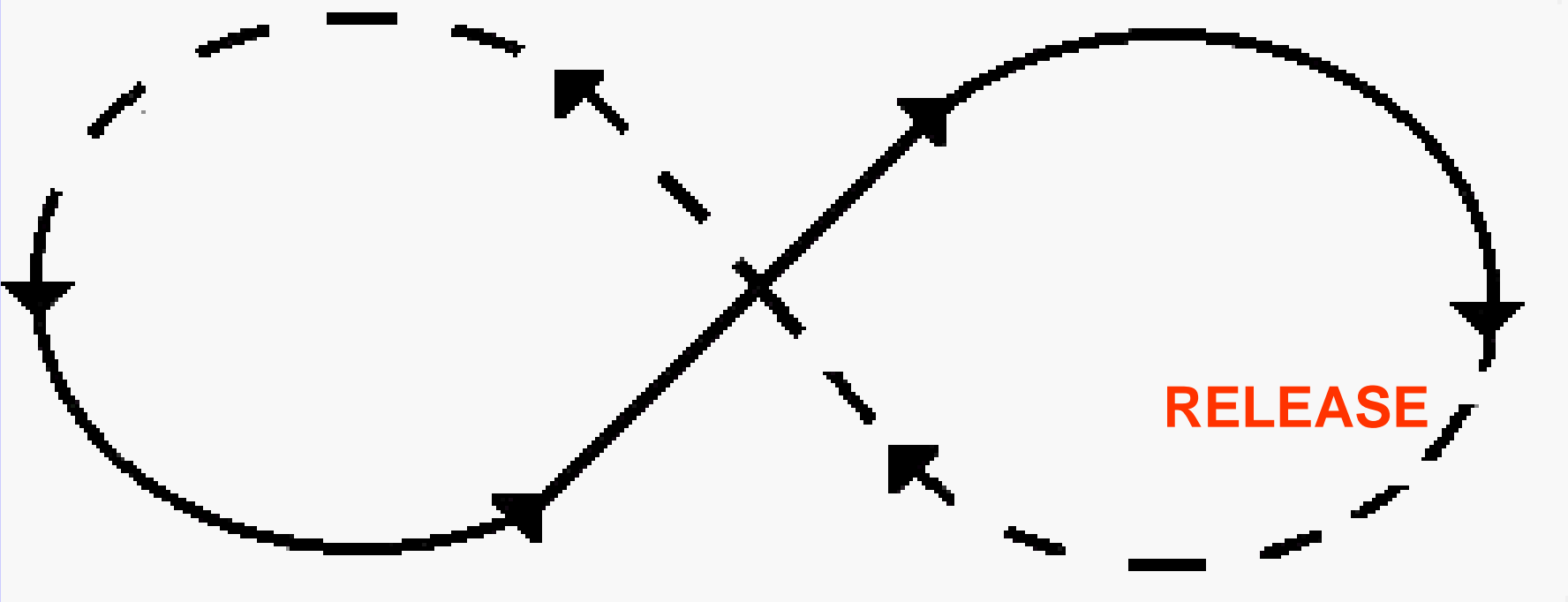
**GROWTH**

**BIRTH**

**MATURITY/  
CONSERVATION**

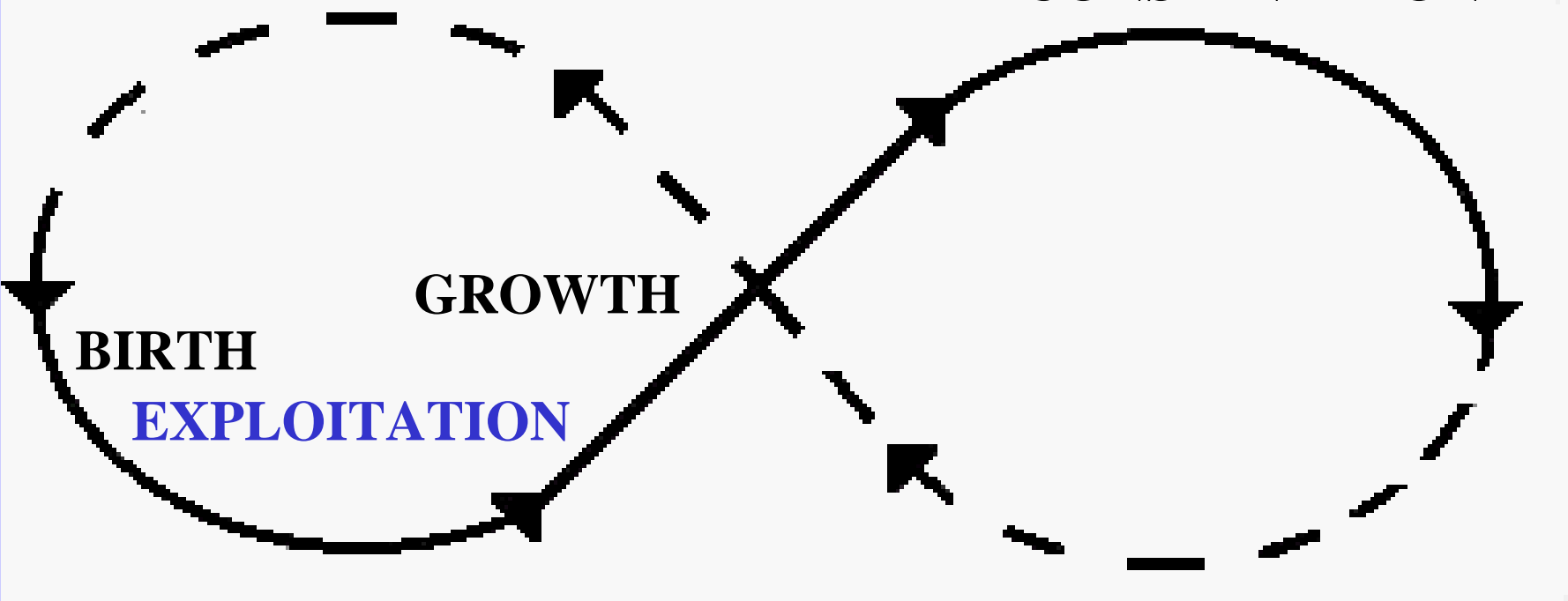


**REORGANIZATION**



**RENEWAL/EXPLORATION**

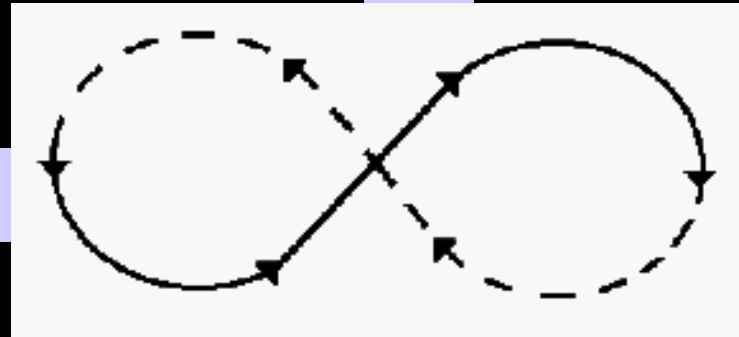
**MATURITY/  
CONSERVATION**



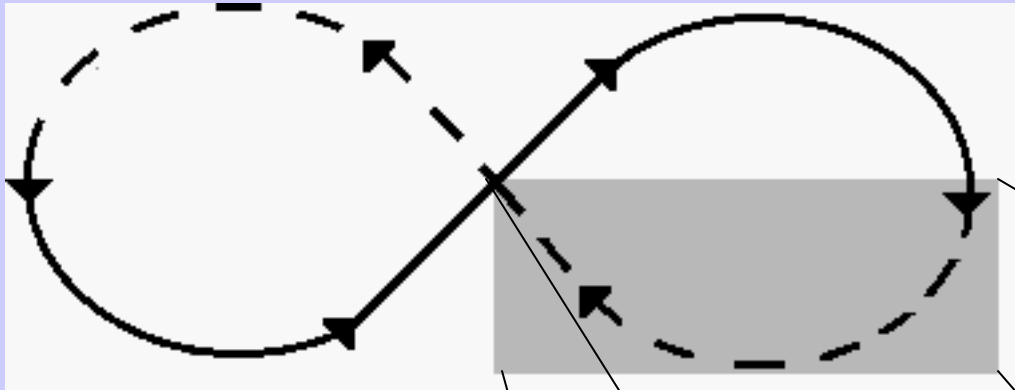
**RELEASE/  
CREATIVE  
DESTRUCTION**

# The birth, growth, destruction and renewal of a forest

Little ← CAPITAL STORED → Much

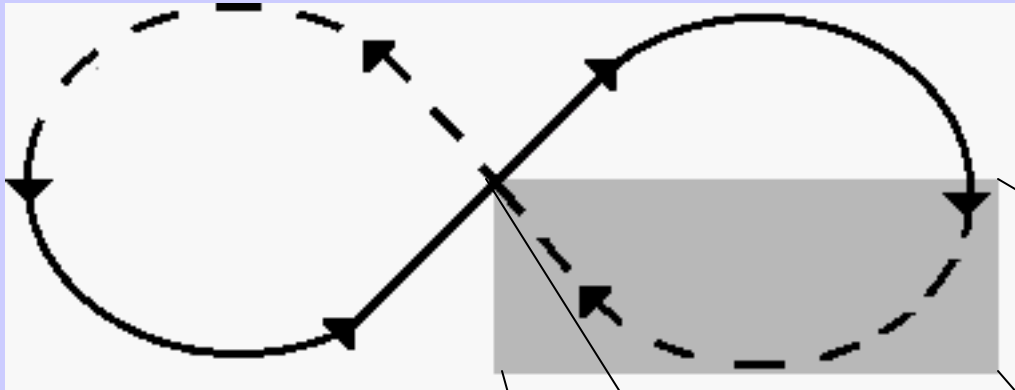


Weak ← CONNECTEDNESS → Strong

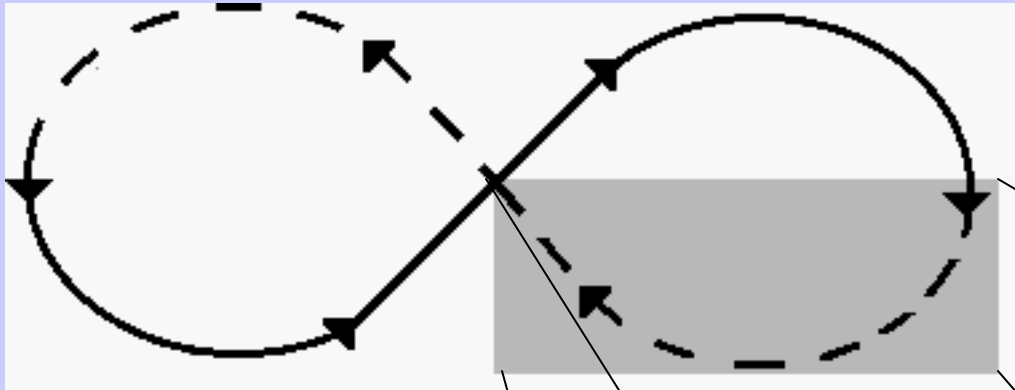


**Creative  
Destruction/  
Release**





**Creative  
destruction**



**Creative  
Destruction/  
Release**



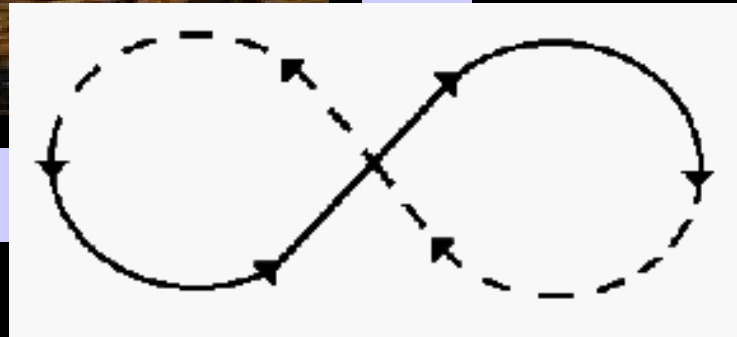
# *Creative destruction*

- Not devastation of “soil”
- Crisis.... from root word “to sift”
- Creation requires destruction
- Release – of energy, of resources
- To honor creation... open to destruction
- Externally imposed
- Internally driven



# The birth, growth, destruction and renewal of a forest

Little ← CAPITAL STORED → Much



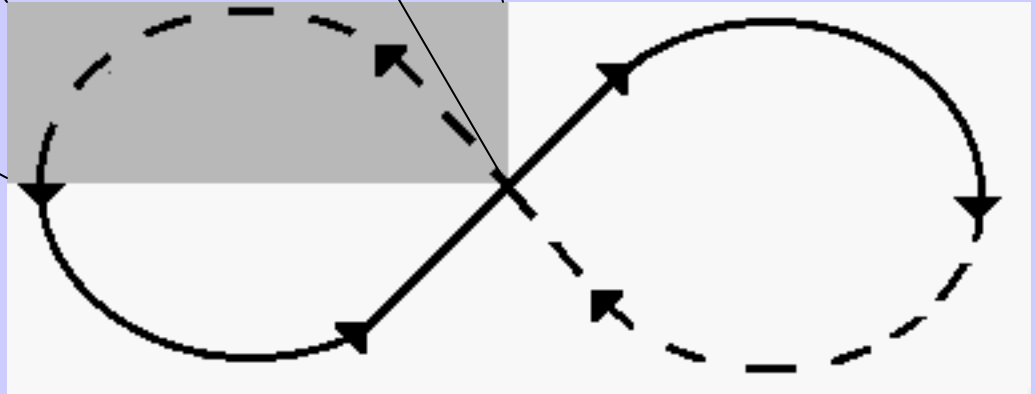
Weak

← CONNECTEDNESS

→ Strong

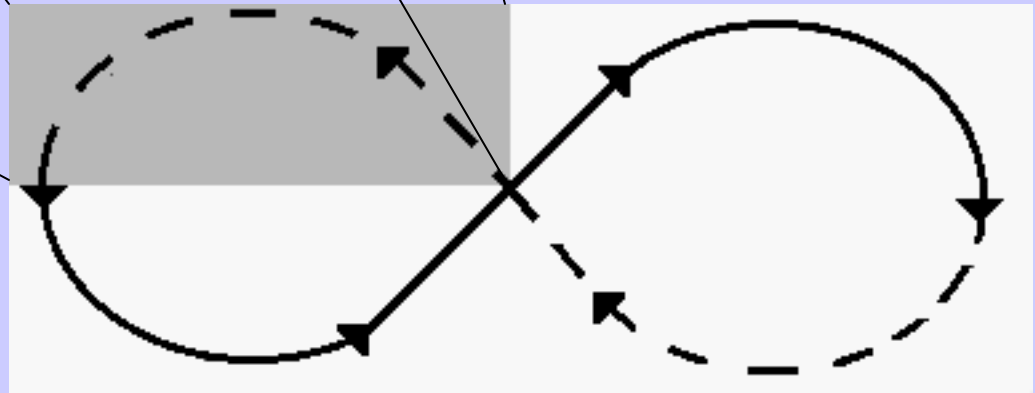


**renewal**



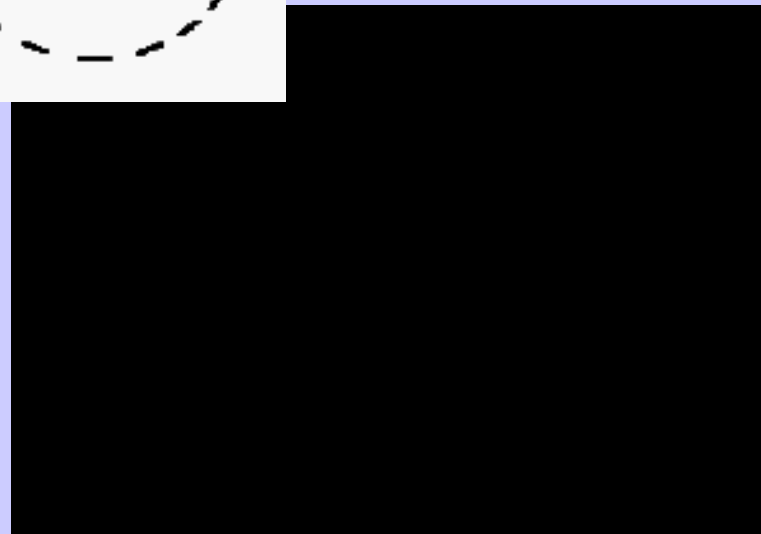
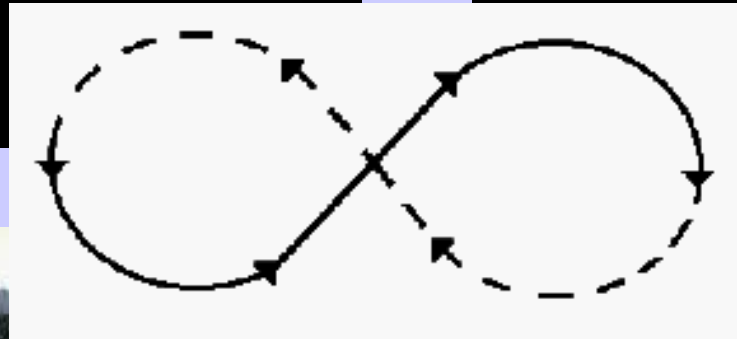


**Renewal/exploration**



# The birth, growth, destruction and renewal of a forest

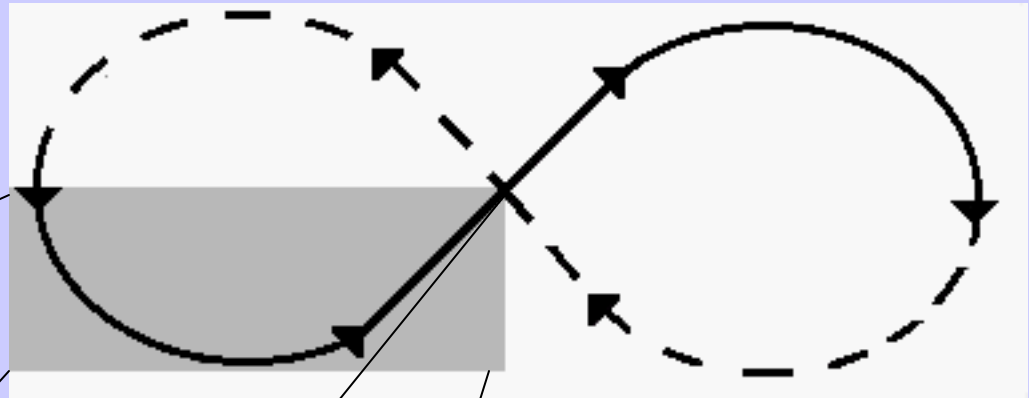
Little ← CAPITAL STORED → Much



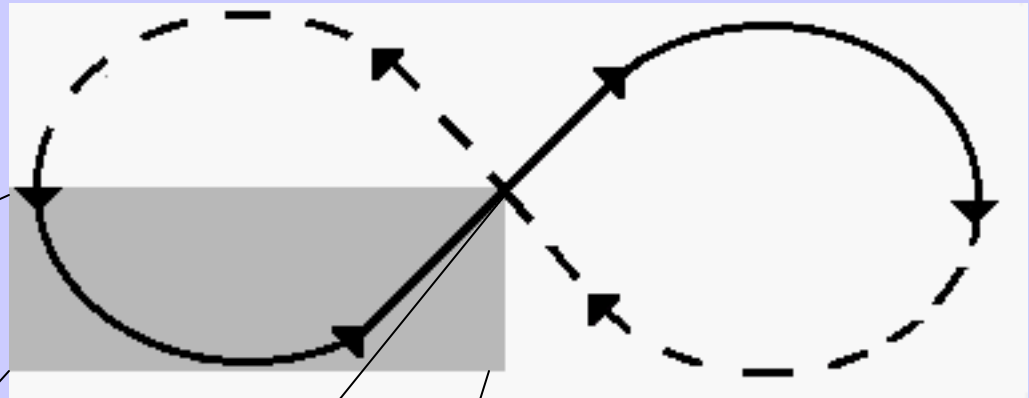
Weak

← CONNECTEDNESS

→ Strong



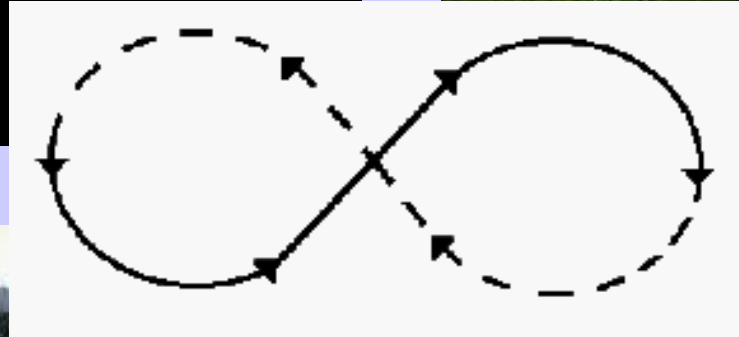
**exploitation**



**Exploitation/  
Growth**

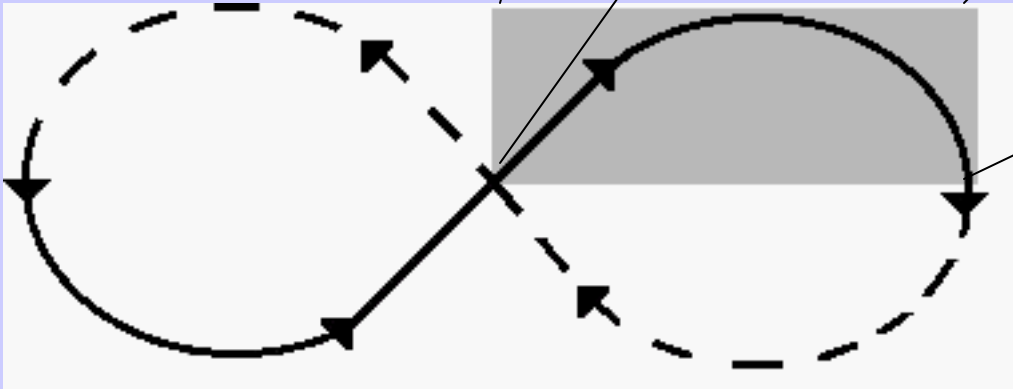
# The birth, growth, destruction and renewal of a forest

Much  
CAPITAL STORED  
Little

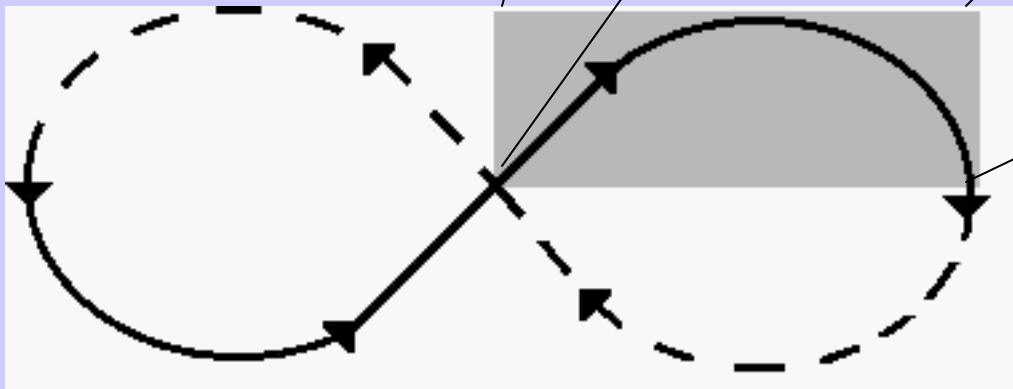


Weak ← CONNECTEDNESS → Strong

**conservation**



# Conservation/ Maturity

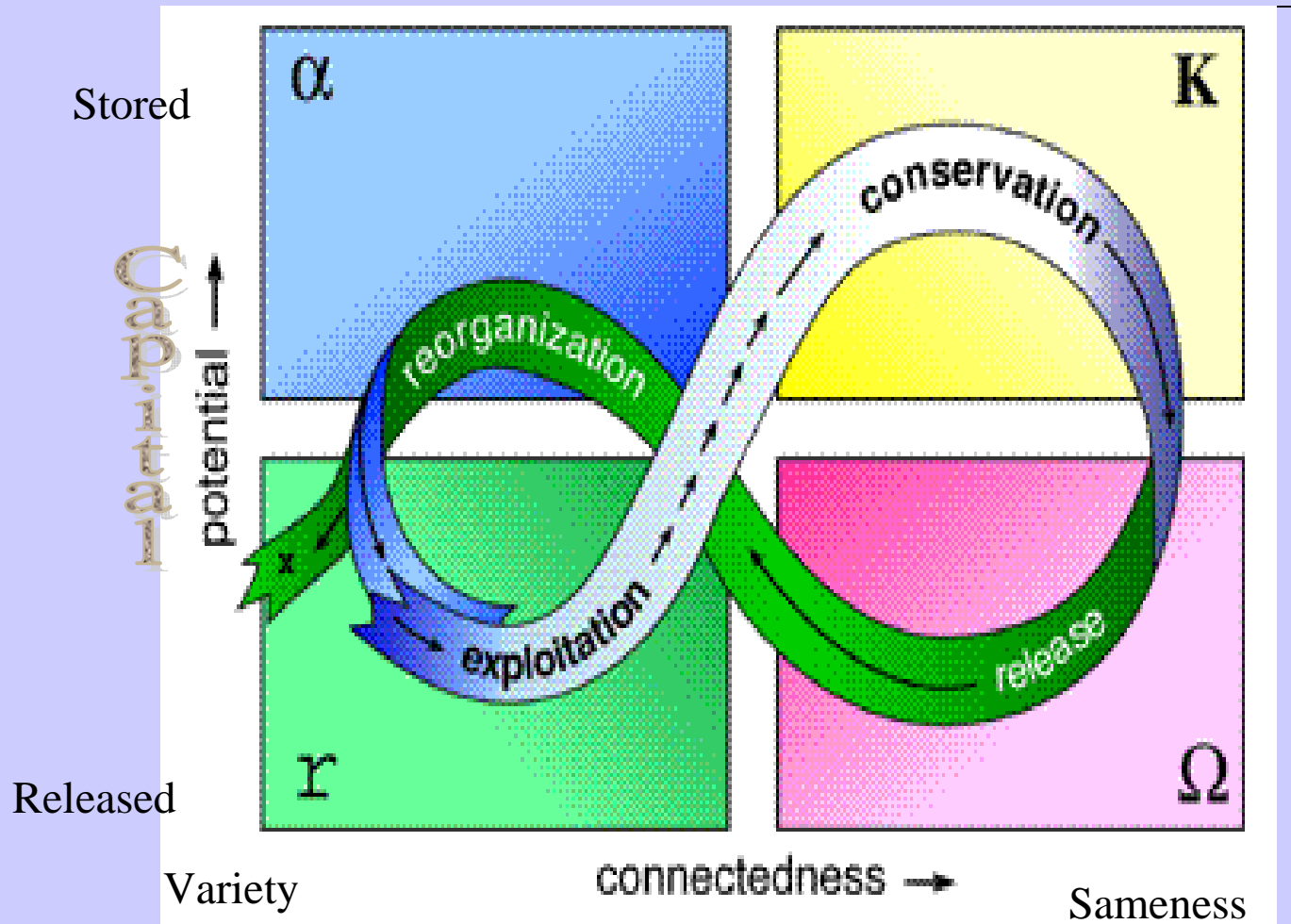


# The birth, growth, destruction and renewal of a forest

Little ← CAPITAL STORED Much

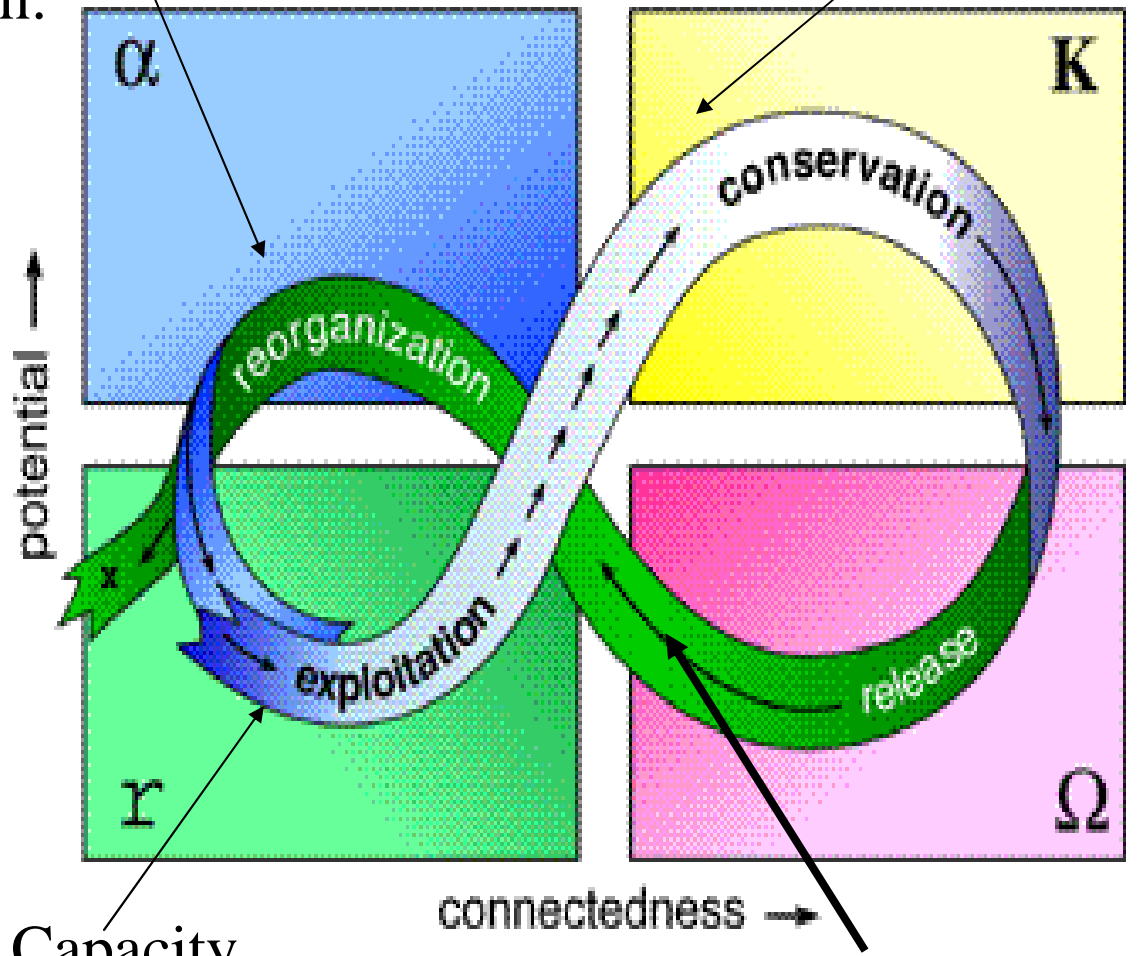


Weak ← CONNECTEDNESS → Strong



Understanding, supporting and evaluation the dynamics of exploration:

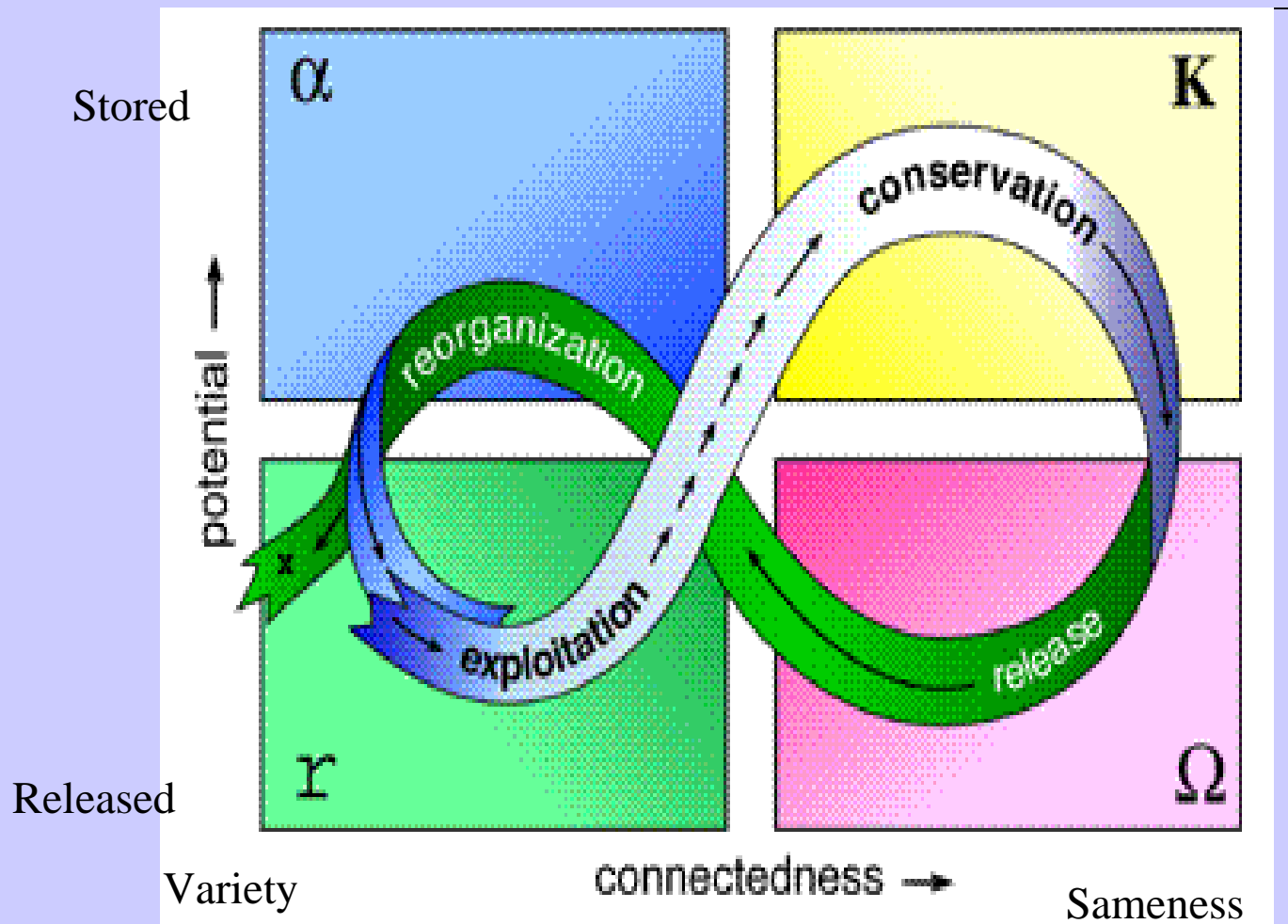
Building efficiency and economies of scale



Building Capacity

Developing new ideas/  
Intrapreneurship

*Organizational Level*



“ We don’t resist change. We resist transitions.”

– David Leach, MD, ACGME conference Sept ’07

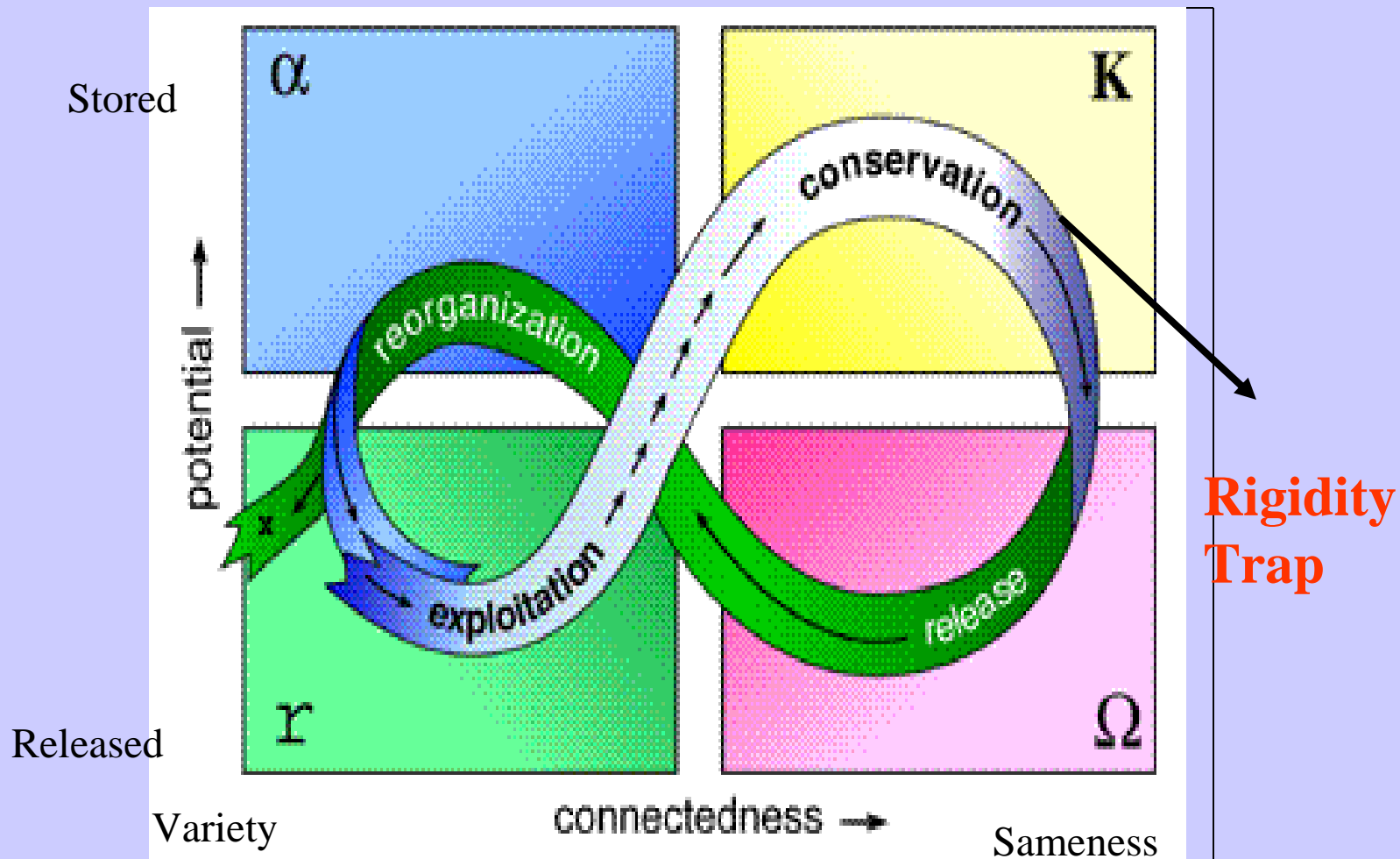
Resisting transitions is getting caught in traps.

# To avoid the traps....

## For each critical transition

- Must overcome “lag” or resistance
- Demands new leadership capacities (situational leadership)
- Demands new and often different kinds of social connections or relationships (social capital investments).
- Requires external resource re-alignments
- Transition is gestalt shift - new ways of seeing demanding new meanings

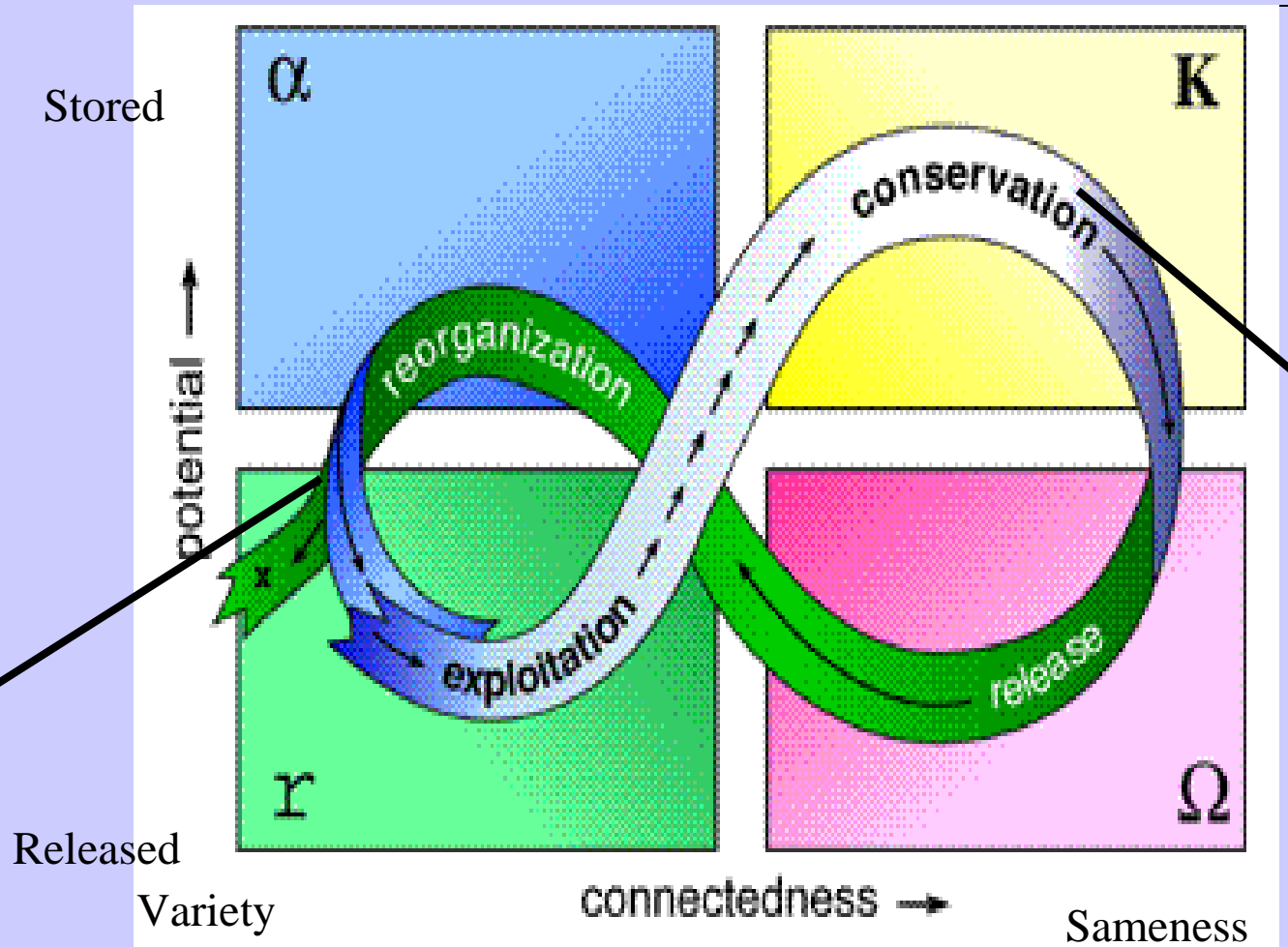
From Frances Westley, University of Waterloo



# To avoid rigidity trap

- Letting go, identify the key inviolables/values and let the rest be released
- Open organization to outside influences
- Look for variation – positive deviants
- Patch dynamics
- Institutionalizing letting go
  
- Recognize that forms are ephemeral – including organizations, programs etc.
- Realize that you are more than your title

**Poverty trap**

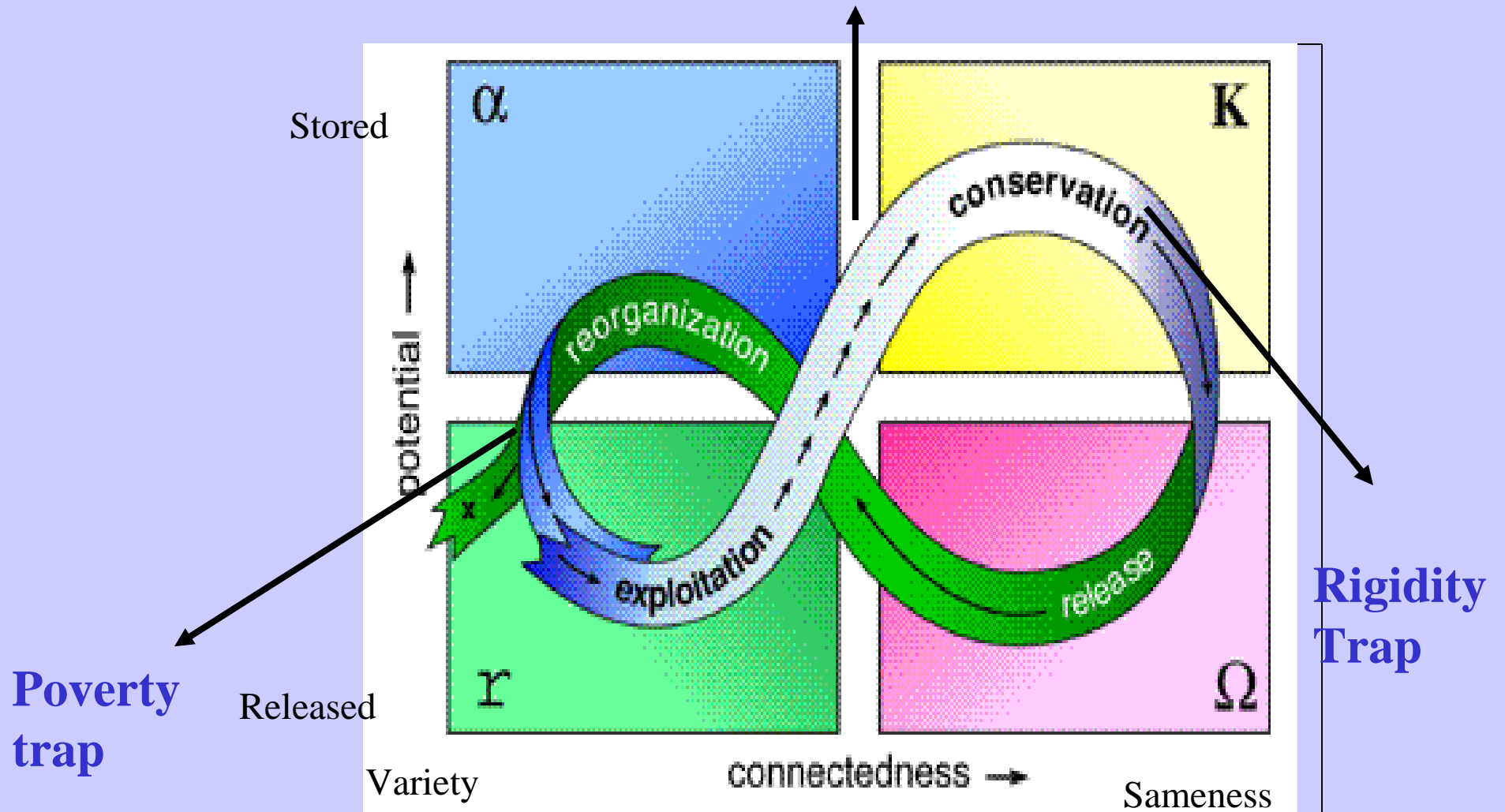


**Rigidity Trap**

# To avoid poverty trap

- Generate necessary connections and exchange of information,
- Protect space for experimentations and learning
- Have faith in the self-organizing properties of information and groups
- Pruning – making choices (paradox with self-organization)
- Investing enough resources (including energy) to allow real growth and maturity
- Developing quick feedback loops so that you can see what is working and what isn't
- Don't expect this to be linear – rather expect iterative process and be ready with contingencies

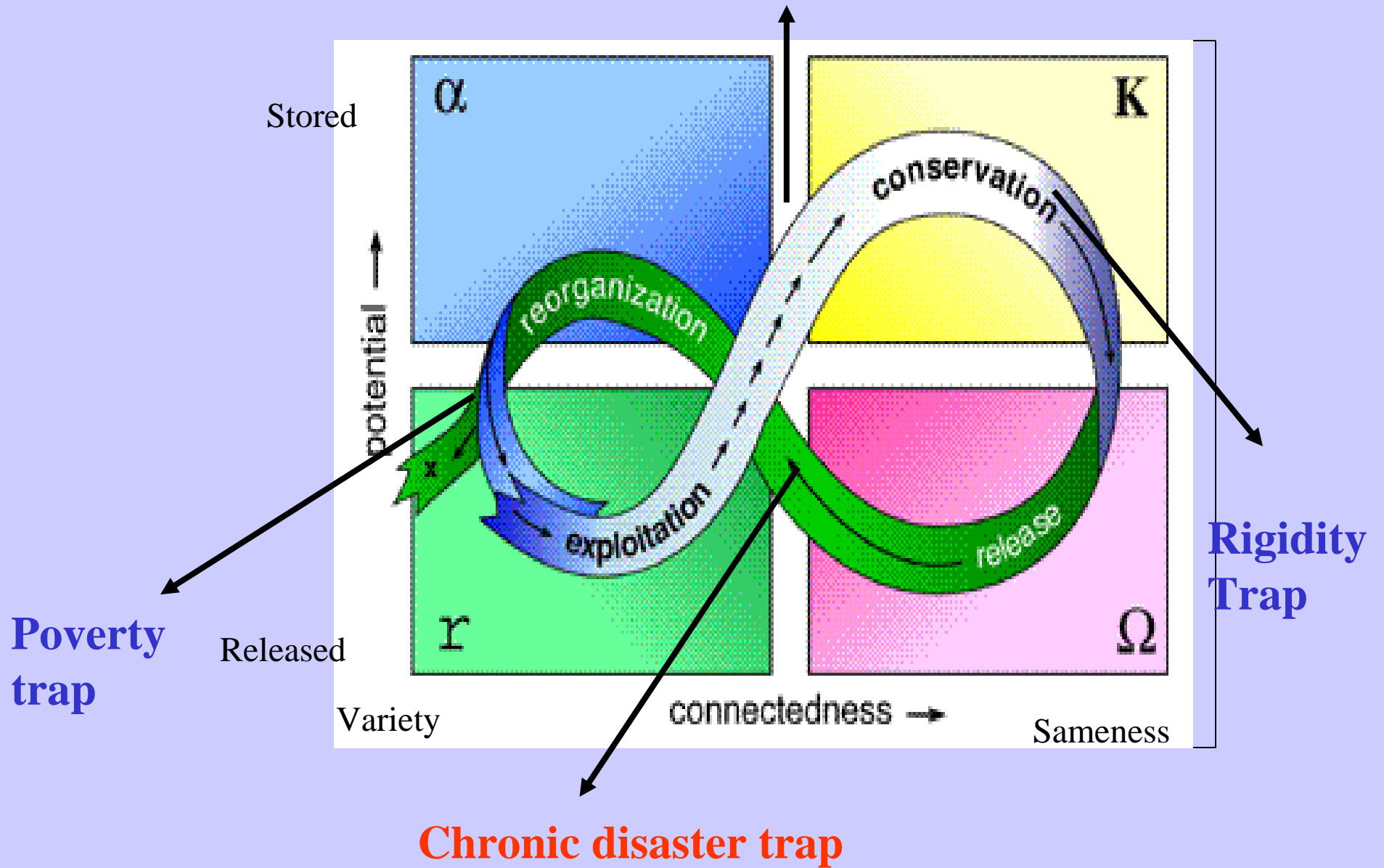
# Charisma trap



# To avoid charisma trap

- Sharing leadership/initiative
- Celebrate the founder's role and create opportunities for real hand-off
- Support the system – build system capacity rather than individual capacity
- Look for efficiencies and scale – early on

# Charisma trap



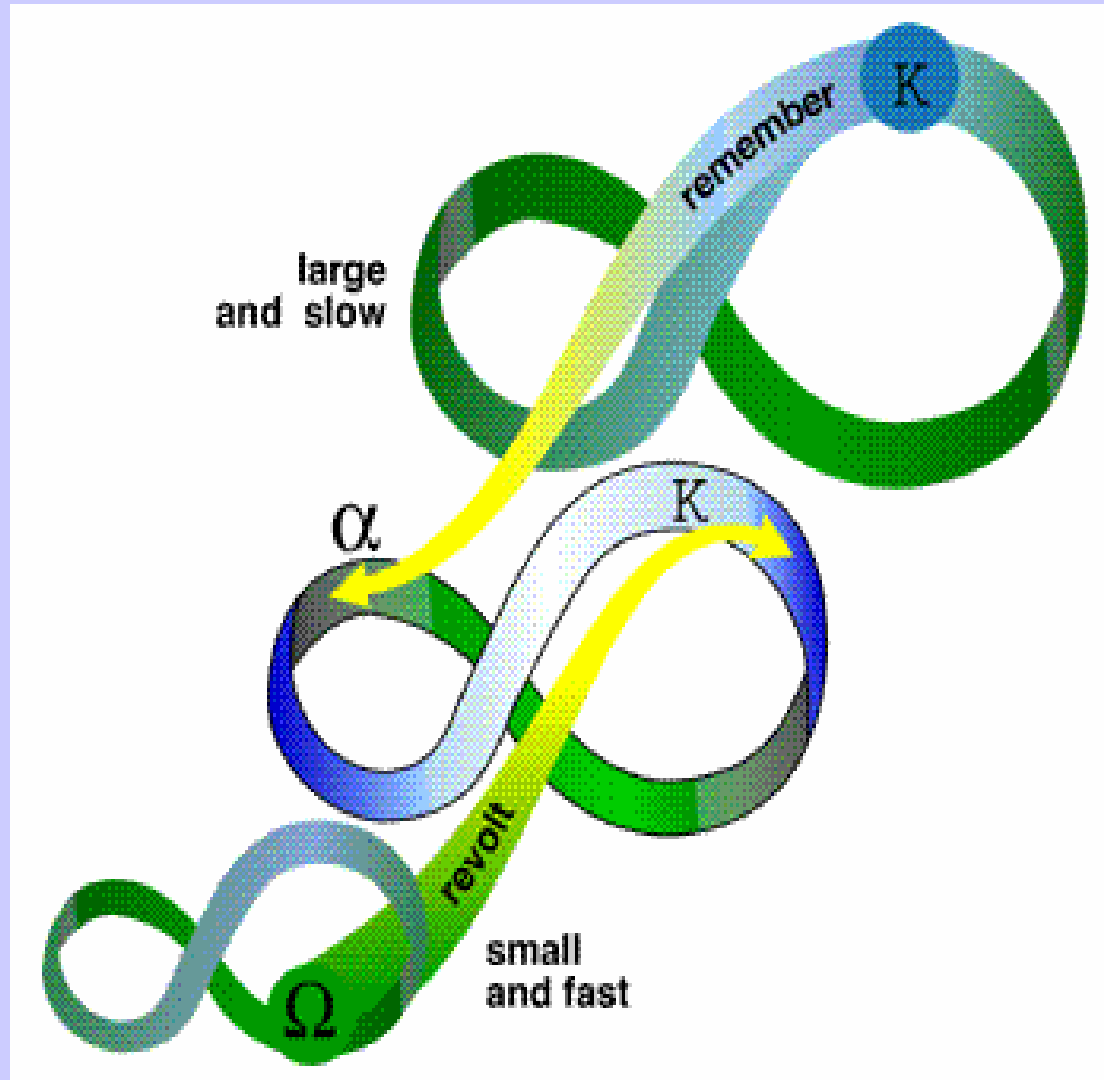
# To avoid chronic disaster trap

- “standing still”
- ‘active” reflection
- Contemplation
- listening
- “seeding new ideas”

# Critical transitions

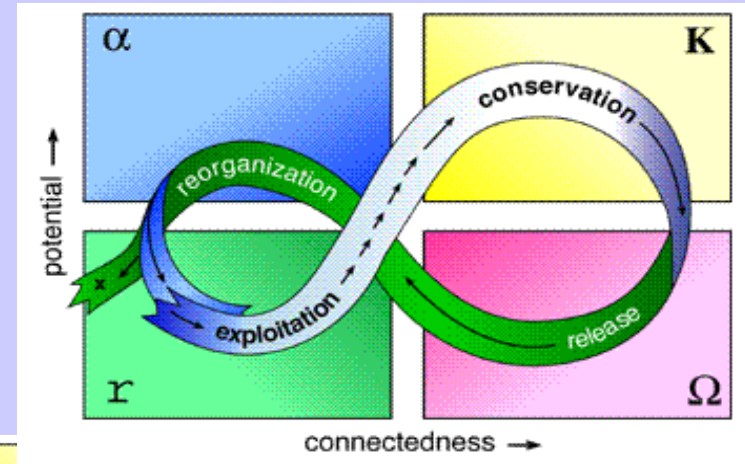
- Long period of “hidden” change results in sudden shift (conversions, structural reconfigurations in organizations)
- Trigger of transition may be relatively small change (broken window phenomena)
- Gestalt shift results - all elements change resulting in new phase appropriate identity

# Cross scale interactions



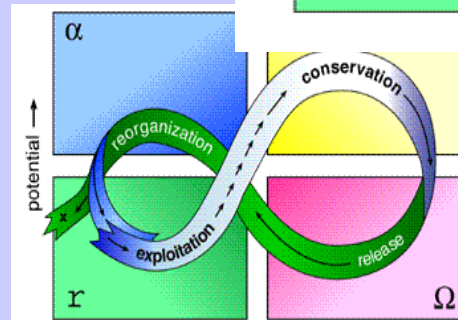
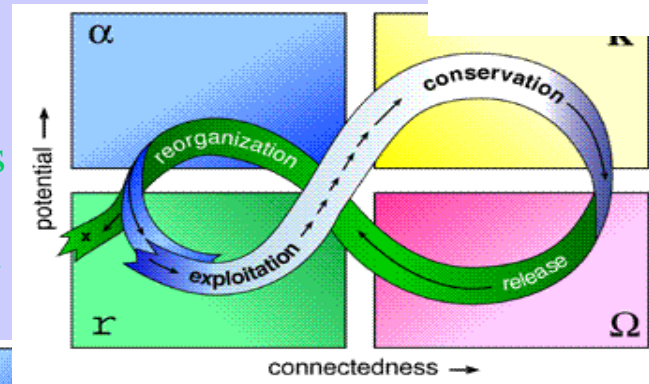
## Institutional level

A change in culture  
A change in laws  
A change in resource  
distribution/availability



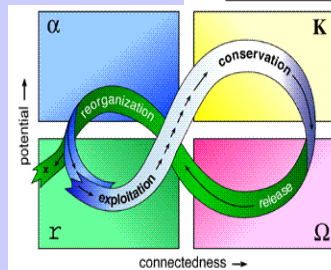
## Organizational level

A change in strategies  
A change in procedures  
A change in resource  
distribution/availability



## Network or group level

A change in conversation  
A change in routine  
A change in resource  
commitment or influence

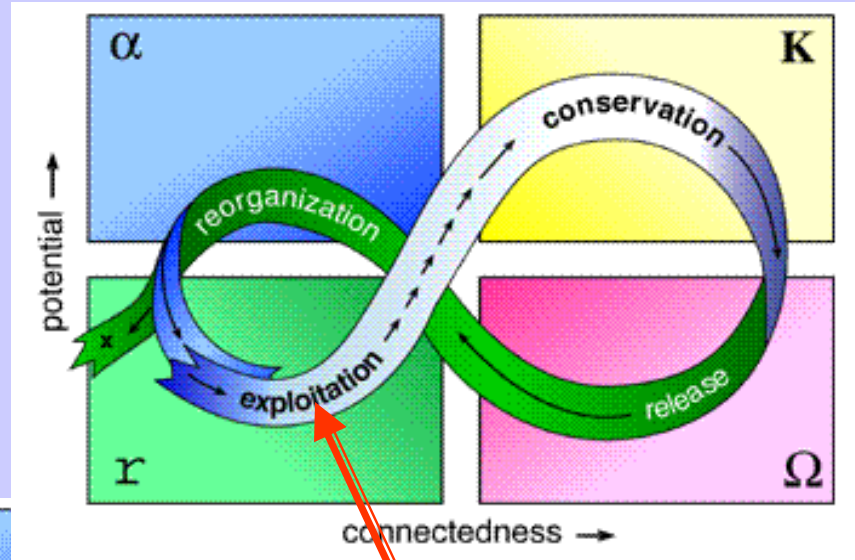


## Individual level

A change of heart  
A change of habits  
A change of ambition

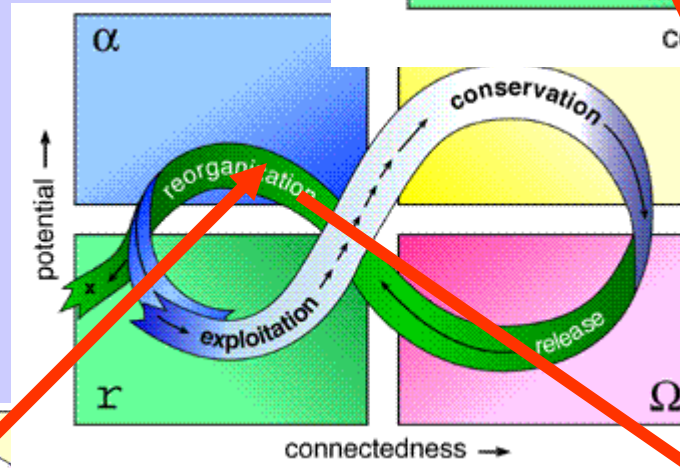
Institutional level

Changing the definition of citizenship for policy impact



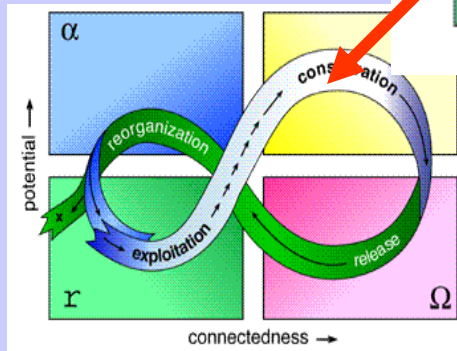
National level

Can successful initiative be disseminated?



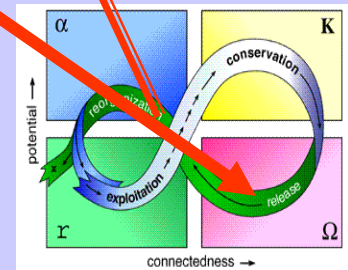
Individual level

Fatigue and questioning



Organizational level

Success brings many demands



# Summary

- What are your takeaways about the back loop of creative invention? - moving from release to renewal?
- What are your takeaways about the front loop of diffusing, articulating and institutionalizing the innovation? - moving from exploitation to conservation
- How can you enhance (1) patch dynamics (at one scale or across scales) and (2) movement between the phases?
- What can you do to avoid the traps?

**History says, Don't hope  
on this side of the grave.  
But then, once in a lifetime  
the longed for tidal wave  
of justice can rise up,  
and hope and history rhyme.**

**So hope for a great sea-change  
on the far side of revenge.  
Believe that a further shore  
is reachable from here.  
Believe in miracles  
and cures and healing wells.  
-Seamus Heaney**