

Recursive canvases in management consulting: applied systems thinking or not?

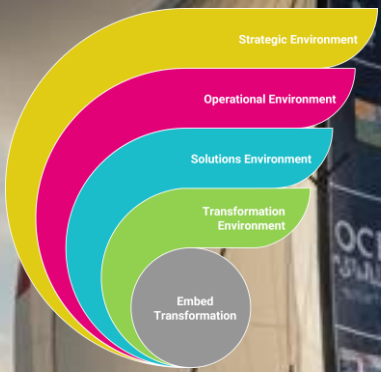
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ICMR 1 (Ground)
Day TWO 10:30–10:55



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Business Strategy & Transformation

Strategy Canvas



Recursive canvases in management consulting: applied systems thinking or not?

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Management Consultant, BMT

SYSPRAC25, The Open University, Milton Keynes, 3-4
Sept 2025

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Recursivity

Background to canvases

The Strategy canvas

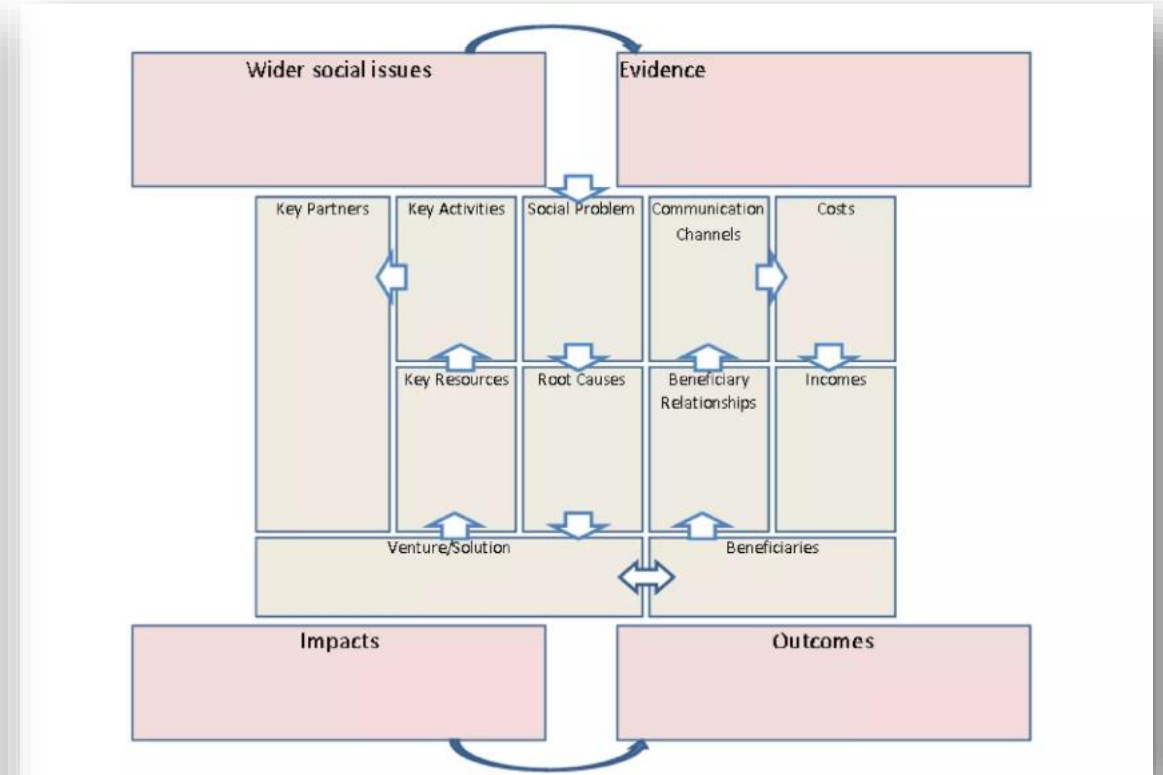
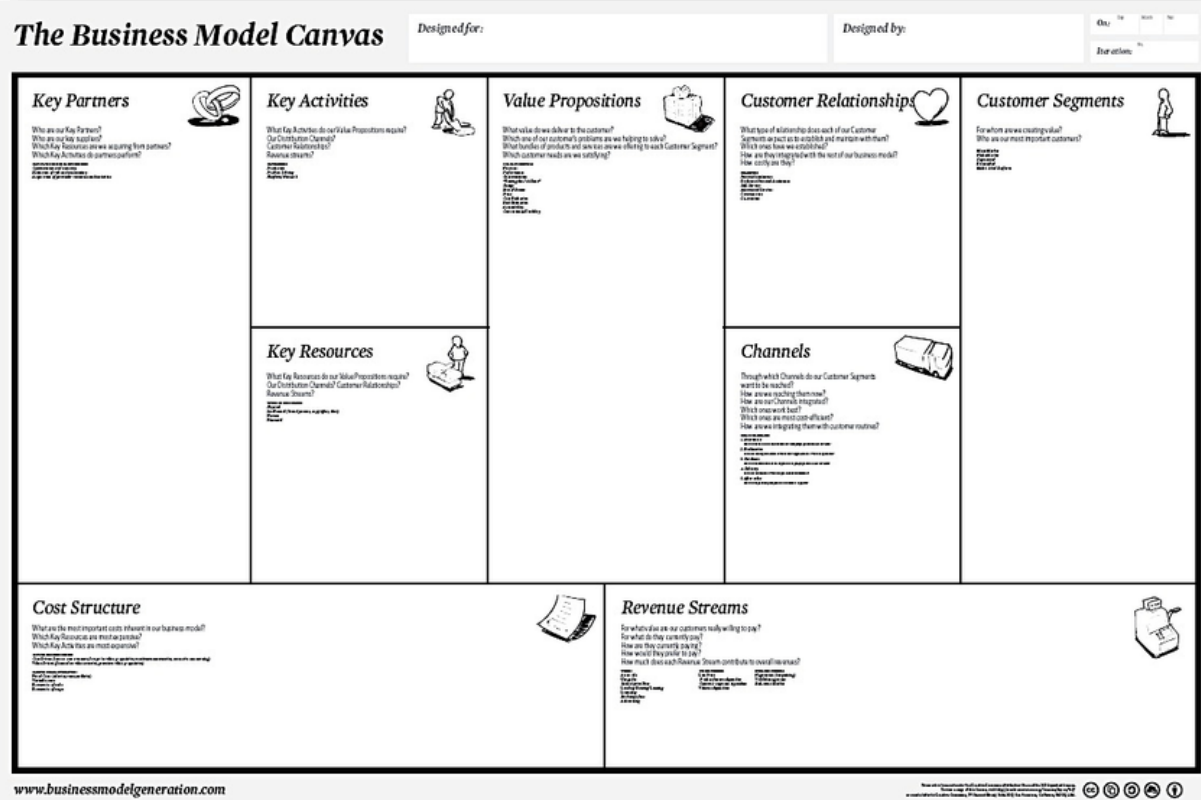
VSM implementation

Feedback

Structural & Process recursivity

- The recursive structure of the firm is not a hierarchy of command, but a hierarchy of autonomy.” (Beer, 1972, Brain of the Firm)
- **Self-similarity across levels:** The same thinking tools (e.g. boundary critique, feedback loops, stakeholder mapping) can be applied to a team, a department, an organisation, or the system of systems.
- **Nested systems:** Organisations are composed of subsystems (teams, units, individuals), each of which can be treated as a system in its own right.
- **Reflective practice:** Recursive systems thinking encourages practitioners to apply systems thinking to their own methods, assumptions, and interventions.
- **Learning loops:** Recursion supports double-loop and triple-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978), where not just actions but underlying norms and frameworks are questioned and refined

Background –business to social innovation



NOVATION Critical perspectives in social innovation, social enterprise and/or the social solidarity economy

Beyond bricolage: social innovation as systematic, consistent and repeatable processes



STRATEGISE

INVOLVE

DEFINE

As-Is
Value

DESIGN

To-Be
Value

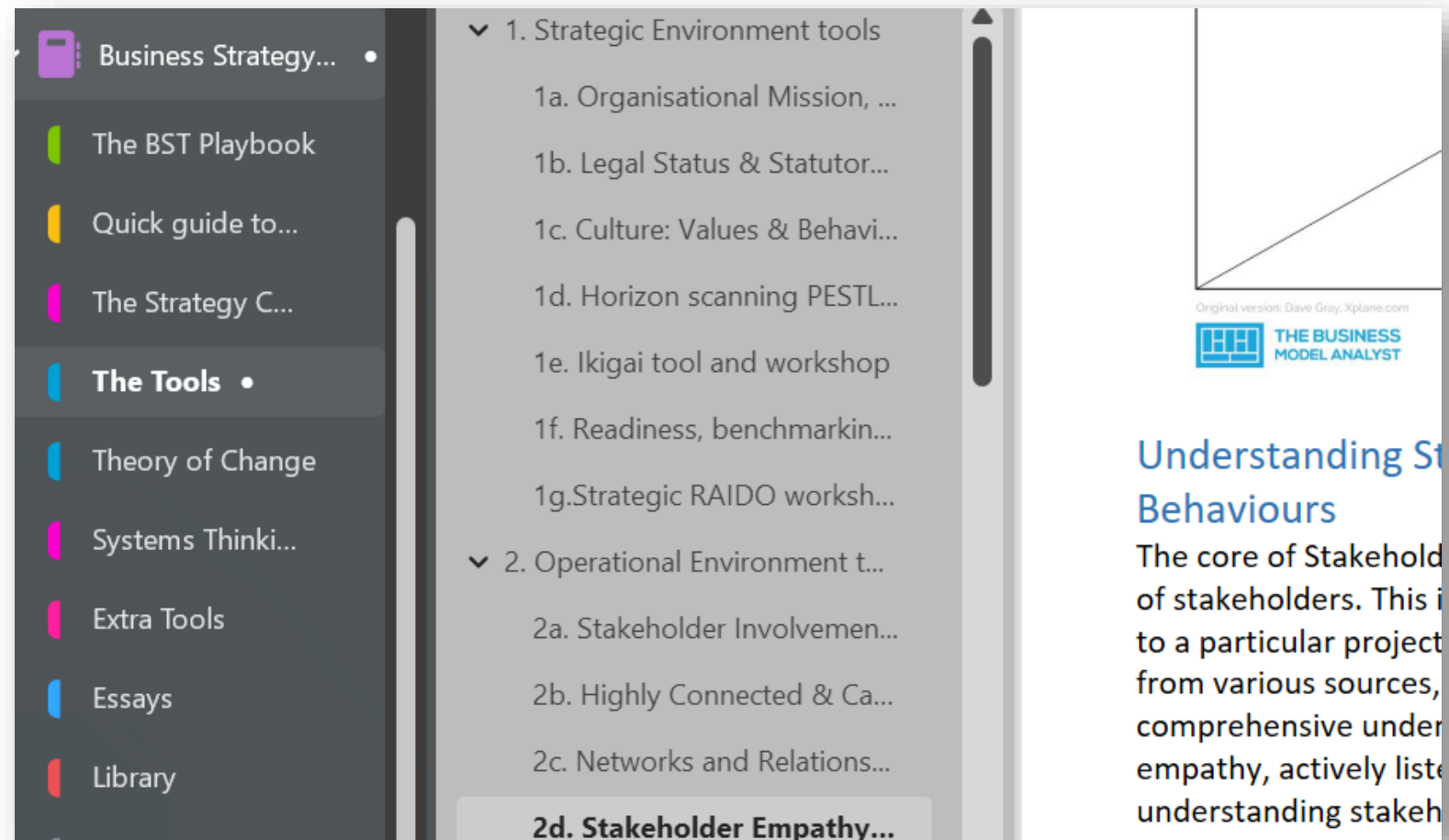
TRANSFORM

EMBED

INNOVATE

What is the Strategy Canvas?

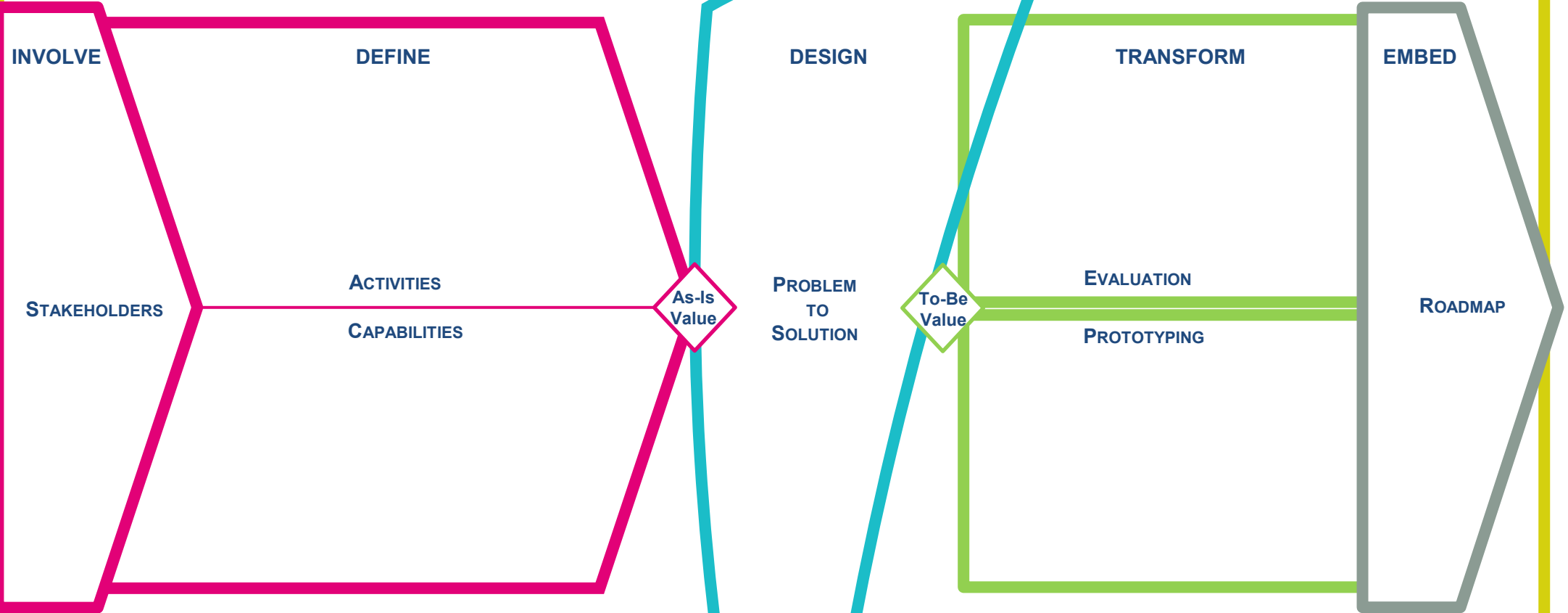
- development of Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas, made more suitable for non-commercial clients
- Mural based model used alongside a Playbook of guidance and tools,





BMT Business Transformation Strategy Canvas

STRATEGIC PRESSURES



STRATEGIC PURPOSE

STAKEHOLDERS

ACTIVITIES
CAPABILITIES

As-Is Value

PROBLEM
TO
SOLUTION

To-Be Value

EVALUATION
PROTOTYPING

ROADMAP

STRATEGIC GOALS



BMT

INNOVATION

ORGANISATIONAL VISION

MISSION & PURPOSE STATEMENT

INDUSTRY DYNAMICS

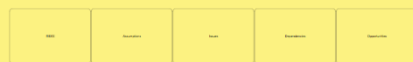
LEGAL STATUS

STRATEGIC MISSION & PURPOSE

VALUES

BEHAVIOURS

EVIDENCE OF VALUES & BEHAVIOURS IN ACTION



STRATEGIC PRESSURES



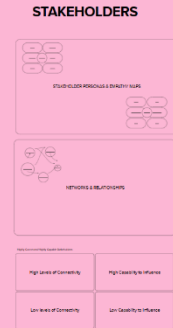
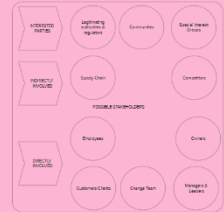
LONG						
MEDIUM						
SHORT TERM	Political	Economic	Social	Technological	Legal	Environmental

Operational Environment

Solutions Environment

Transform Environment

Embed Environment



INVOLVE & AGREE

ACTIVITIES & CAPABILITIES

AS-IS VALUE

PROBLEMS & OPPORTUNITIES

TO-BE VALUE

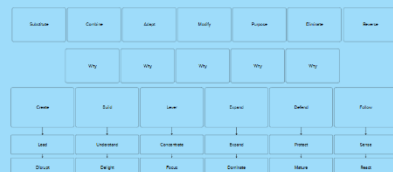
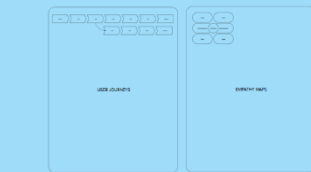
EVALUATION & PROTOTYPING

BUSINESS CASE

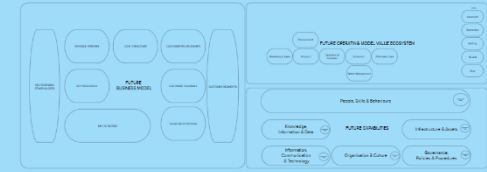
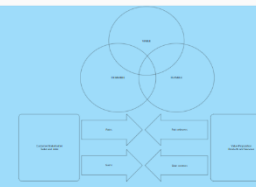
CHANGE ROADMAP

MEASURE IMPACT

STRATEGIC VISION & GOALS



PROPOSED CHANGES & INNOVATIONS

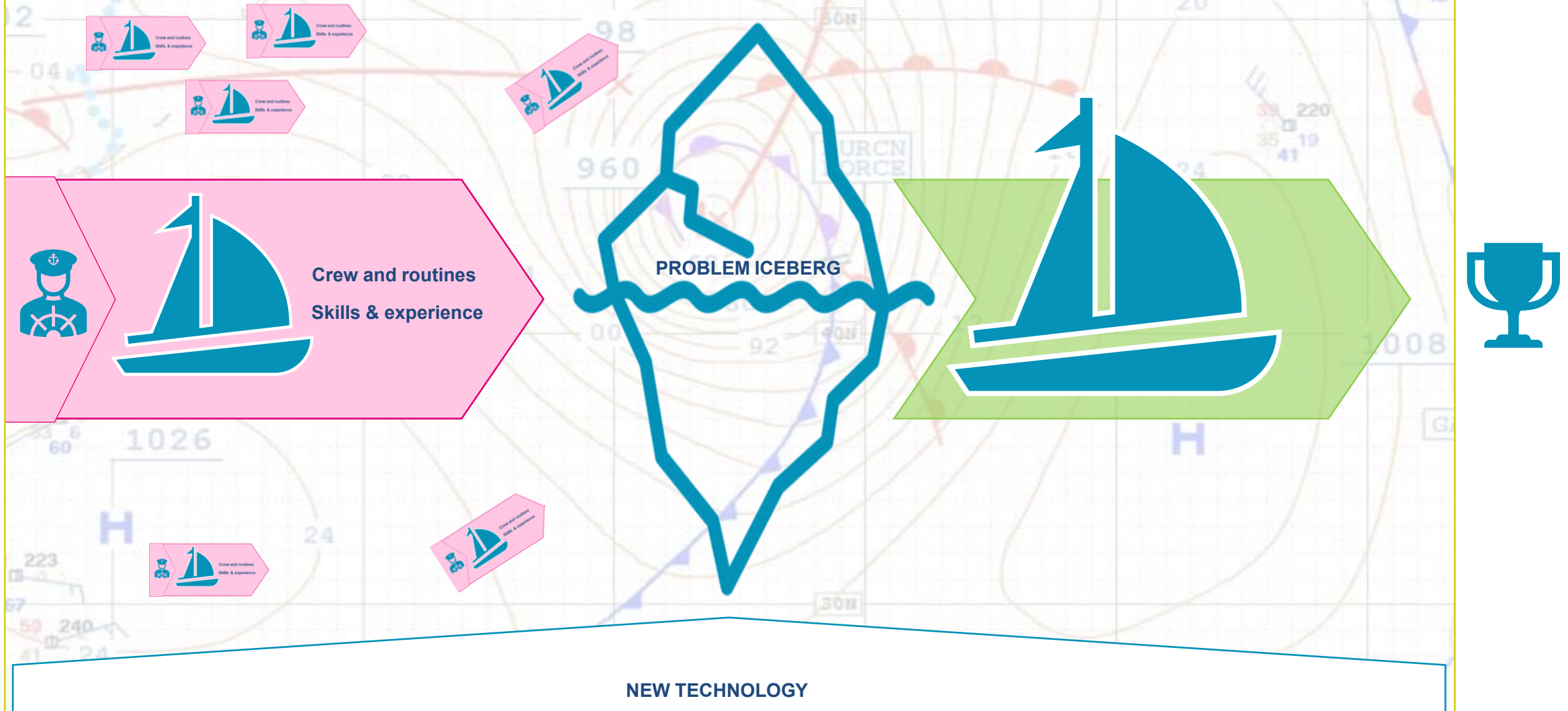


Principles of use

- Putting people at the heart of change:
 - The playbook and canvas directs the change team to INVOLVE those affected by the proposed changes to be identified in the STAKEHOLDER environment in the DEFINITION of the problem space, as well as in the prototyping of the CHANGE design and supporting the organisation to EMBED change.
- Working across the canvas:
 - Wherever the change team are starting, all the environments need to be considered and compared to ensure that the change programme is comprehensive and considered
- Evidence led change:
 - The canvas, especially when used in Mural, encourages the change team to collate the evidence (documentary and workshop) of their deliberations, for audit and transparency purposes

BMT Business Transformation Strategy Canvas

TAIL WIND

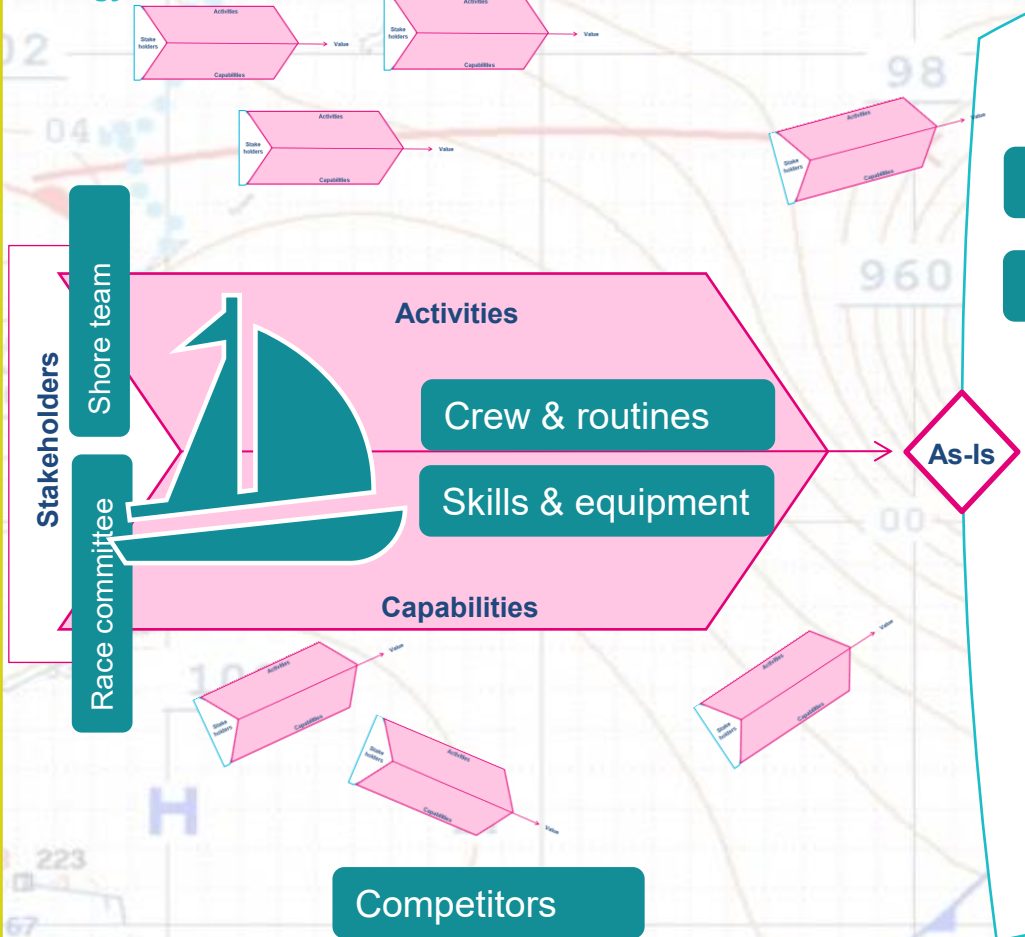


To sail & win races

1. STRATEGIC PURPOSE



BMT Business Transformation Strategy Canvas



Changing wind

3. STRATEGIC PRESSURES

Changing tides

Crew tired

Incorrect sails

New sails are better but more difficult to use

10. EVALUATION

9. PROTOTYPING

Try out rigging new sails onshore

Rehearse new routines before race

11. ROADMAP

To win prizes and Get attention & admiration

2. STRATEGIC GOALS



Upskill the crew

8. INNOVATION

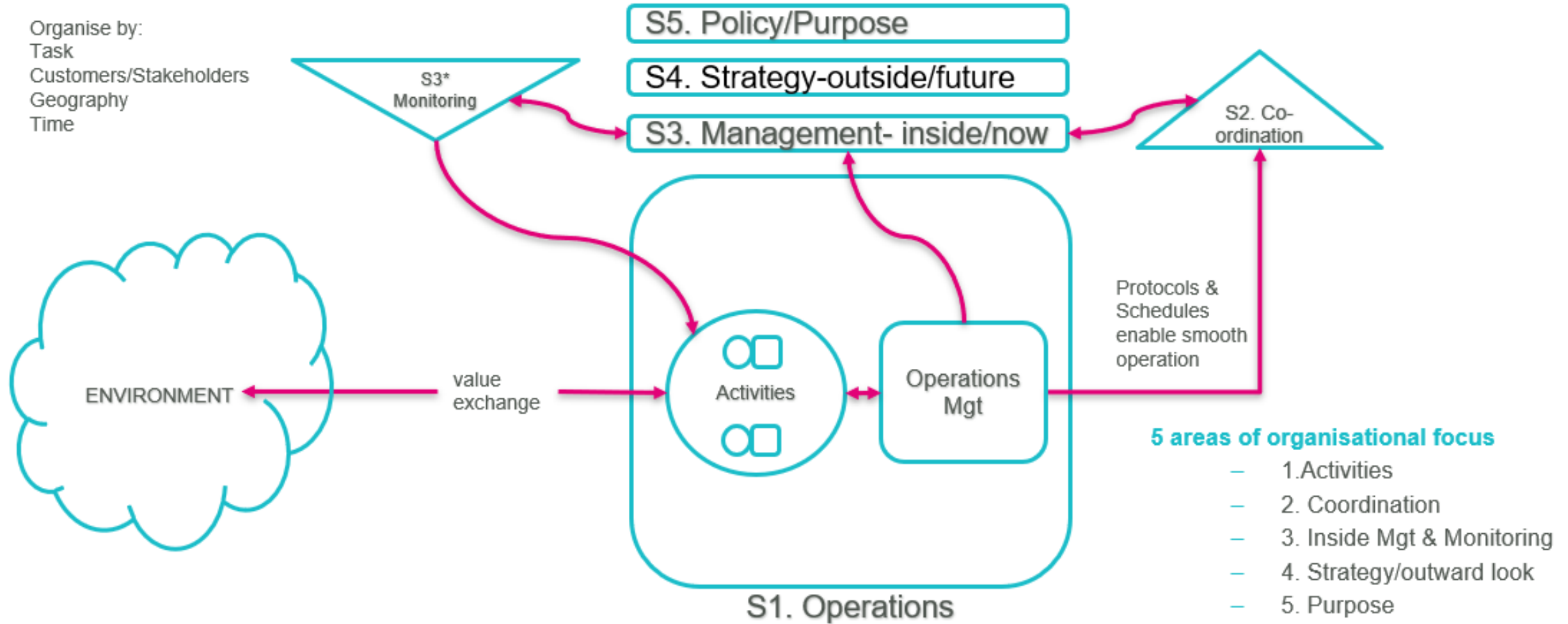
Different sails



- Strategic Environment
- Operational Environment
- Solutions Environment
- Change Environment

VSM- the minimum components of organising

Organise by:
Task
Customers/Stakeholders
Geography
Time



In-model VSM implementation

Business model

S5/S4 Policy/Purpose

Operating model

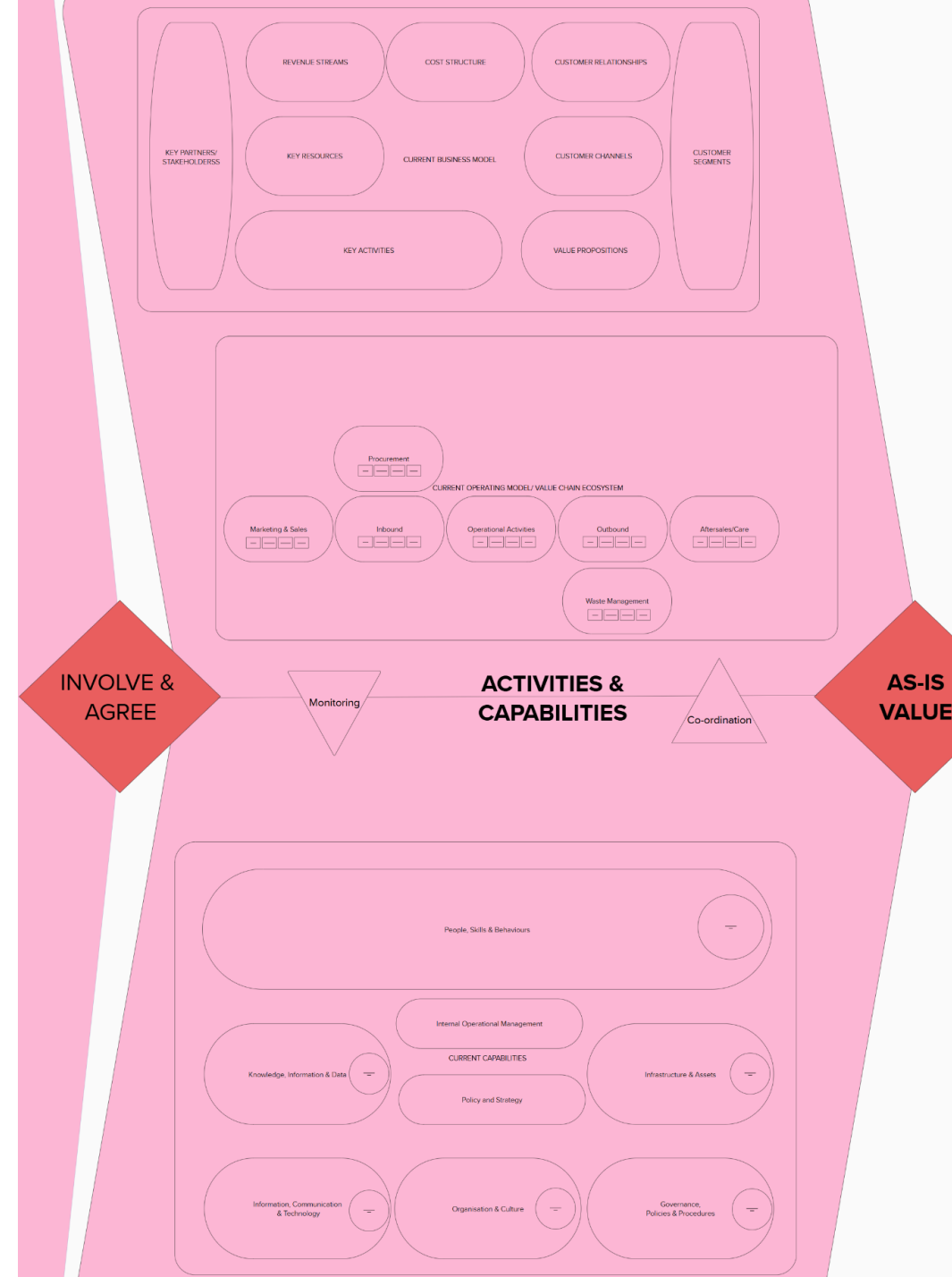
S1 Operations

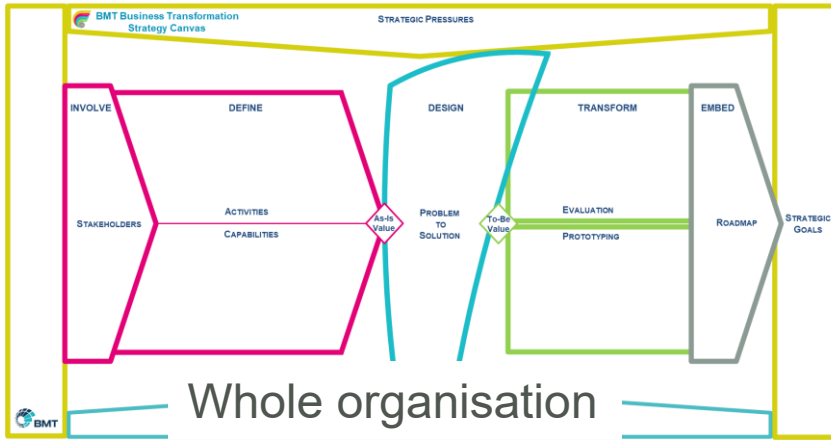
S3* Monitoring

S2 Coordination

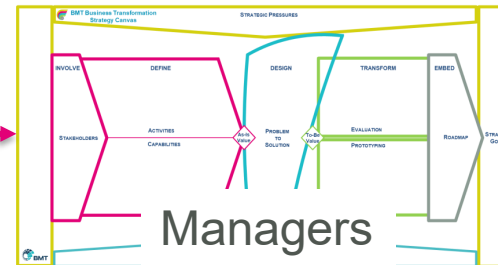
Capability model

S3 Management

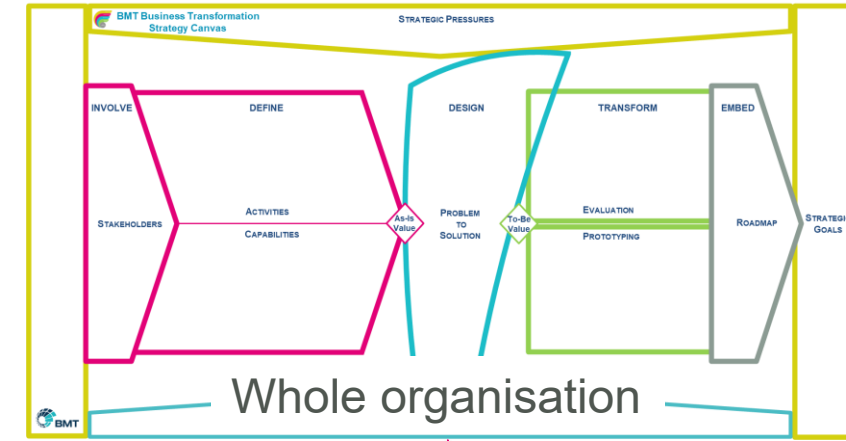




Structural or Functional recursivity



Different Departments



The canvas provides a **consistent and repeatable** template for considering the whole organisation at the strategy level, down to an individual operating unit, and be built back up to the strategic level again, the outcomes at the micro scale adding together to the strategic outcomes.

What next?

- Are the Strategic Pressures/Activities/Innovation/Transform/Embed environments meaningful?
- How would you express them?
- Would you agree that it's a recursive model?
- What would enhance or improve this approach?



THANK YOU!