



Evidence for action in new settings: The importance of middle-level theory

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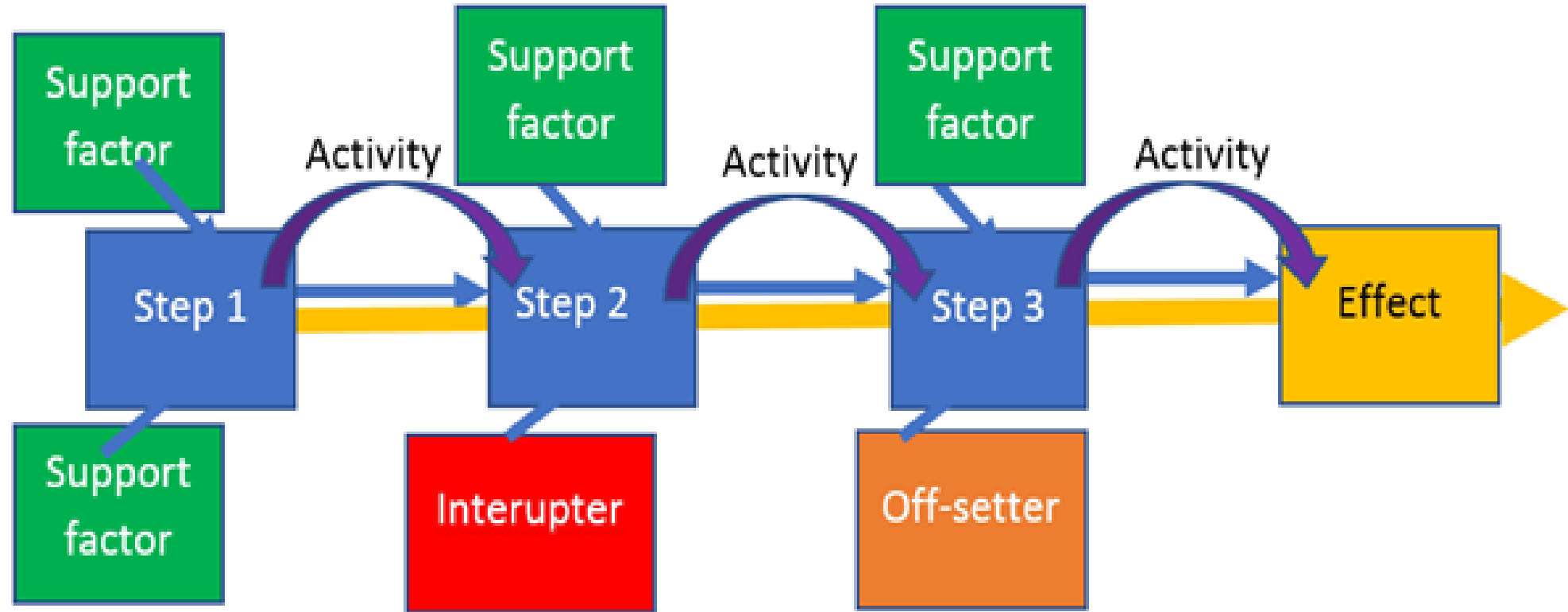
CEDIL & CfE, June 2019

Assumption

For reliable prediction
evaluation for a new setting



Thick
local
causal model

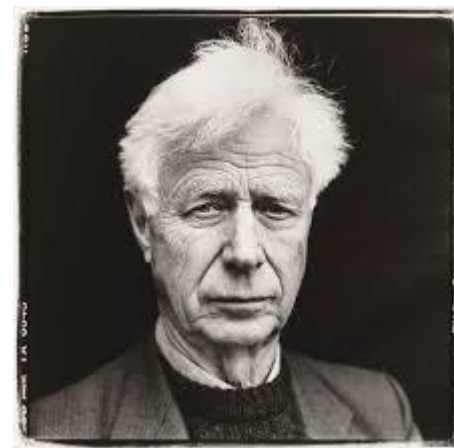




Middle-level theory
tools for constructing these



Middle-level 'theory'



MIXED BAG 3 TOOLS

ToCs

Mechanisms

Markers

C. Oly.
DART

1 - 25 AUGUST EXHIBITION CATALOGUE





Plan

1. ToCs
2. Mechanisms
3. Markers
4. What we should demand of programme developers



Tool 1

Middle-level ToCs

Theories of action/change

- “... the underlying **theory of action**—**how** the program’s resources, activities, and outputs **lead to** desired outcomes....
- ... the processes, actions, and events **through which** the program resources achieve the intended outcomes; they are the **steps in implementing a program.**”

DD == Democracy dyad

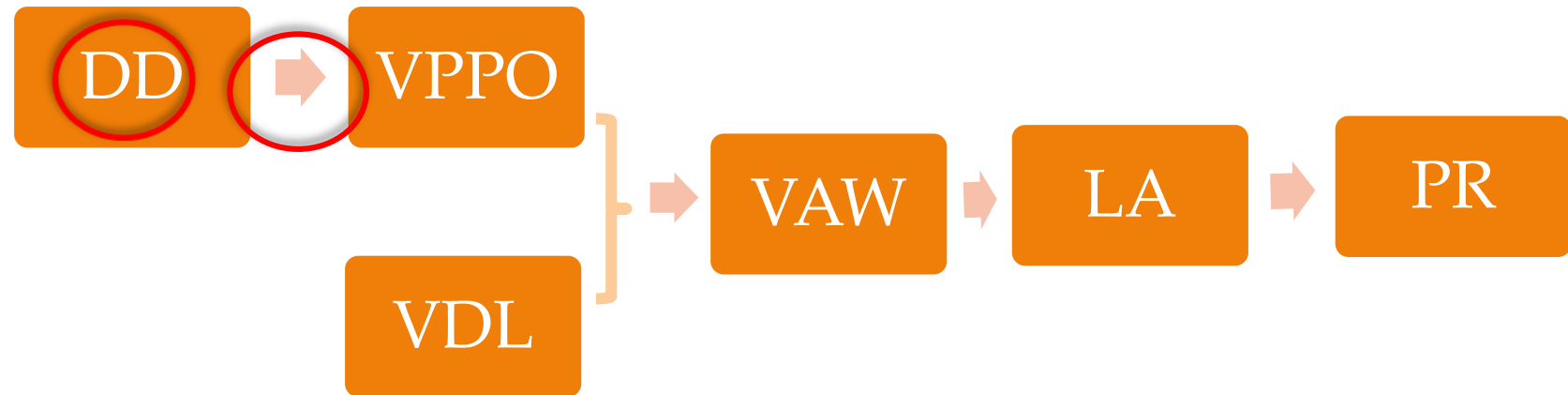
VPPO = Voters perceive powerful opponent

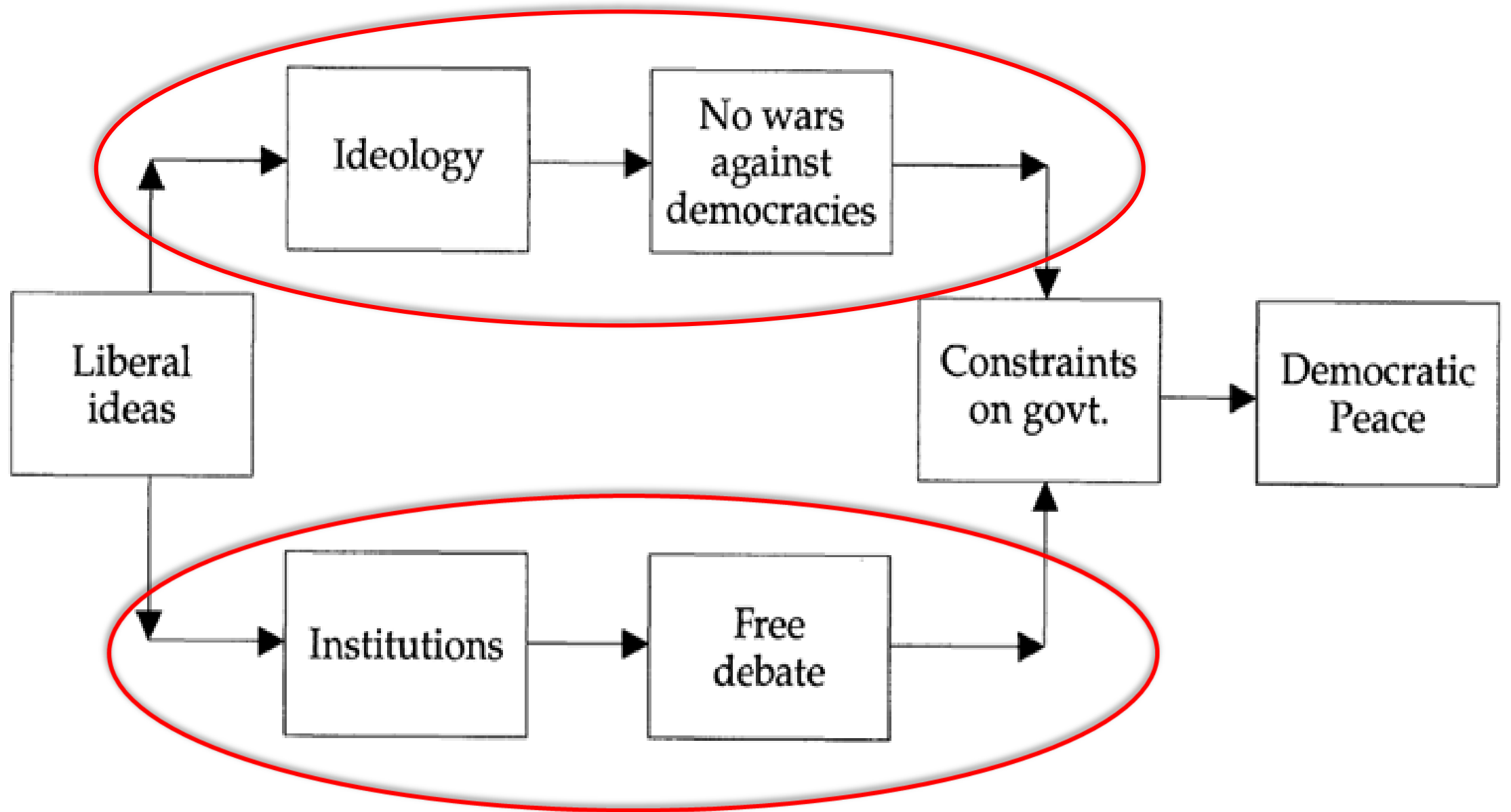
VDL = Voters dislike losing

VAW = Voters against war

LA = Leaders aim to avoid war

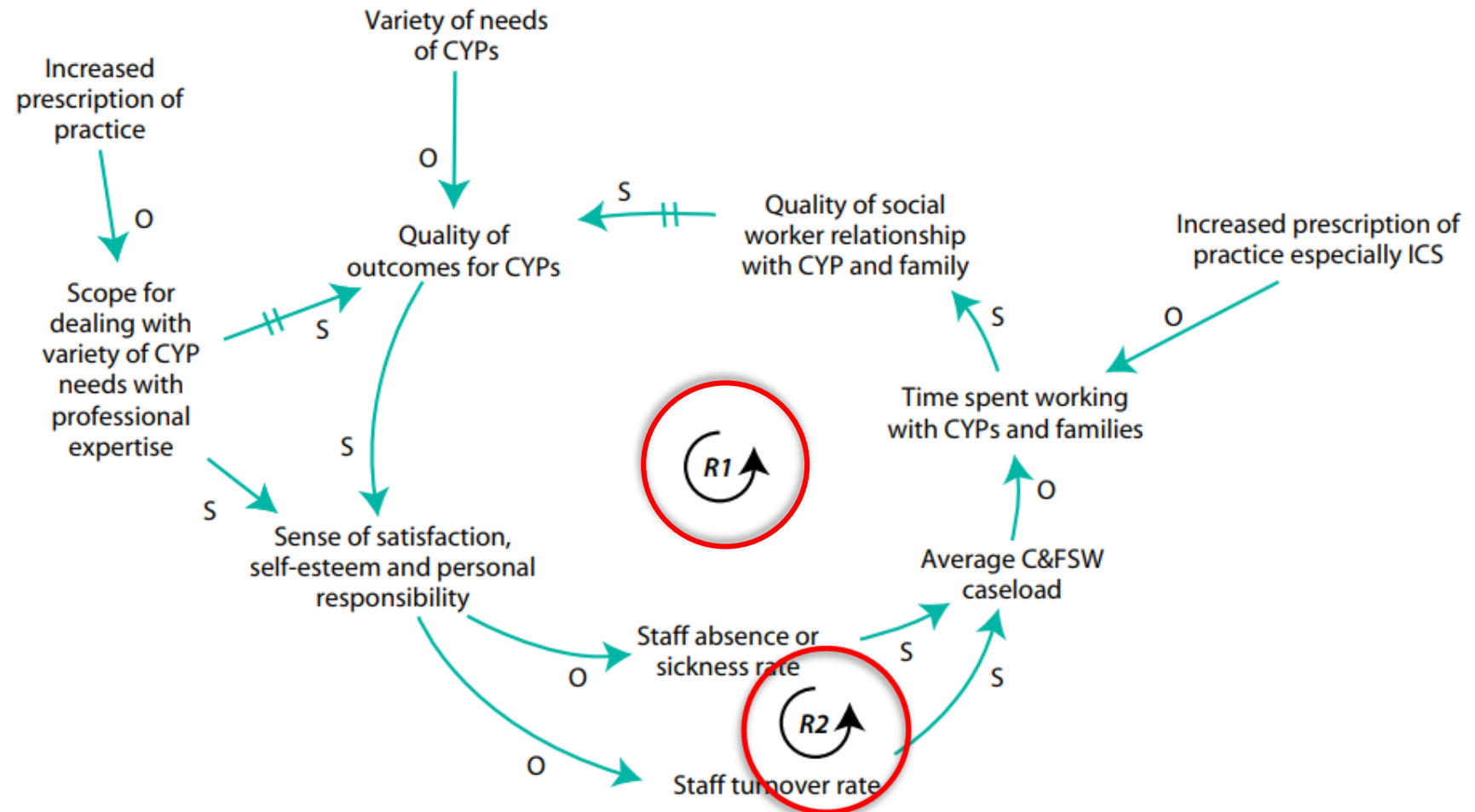
PR = Peaceful resolution

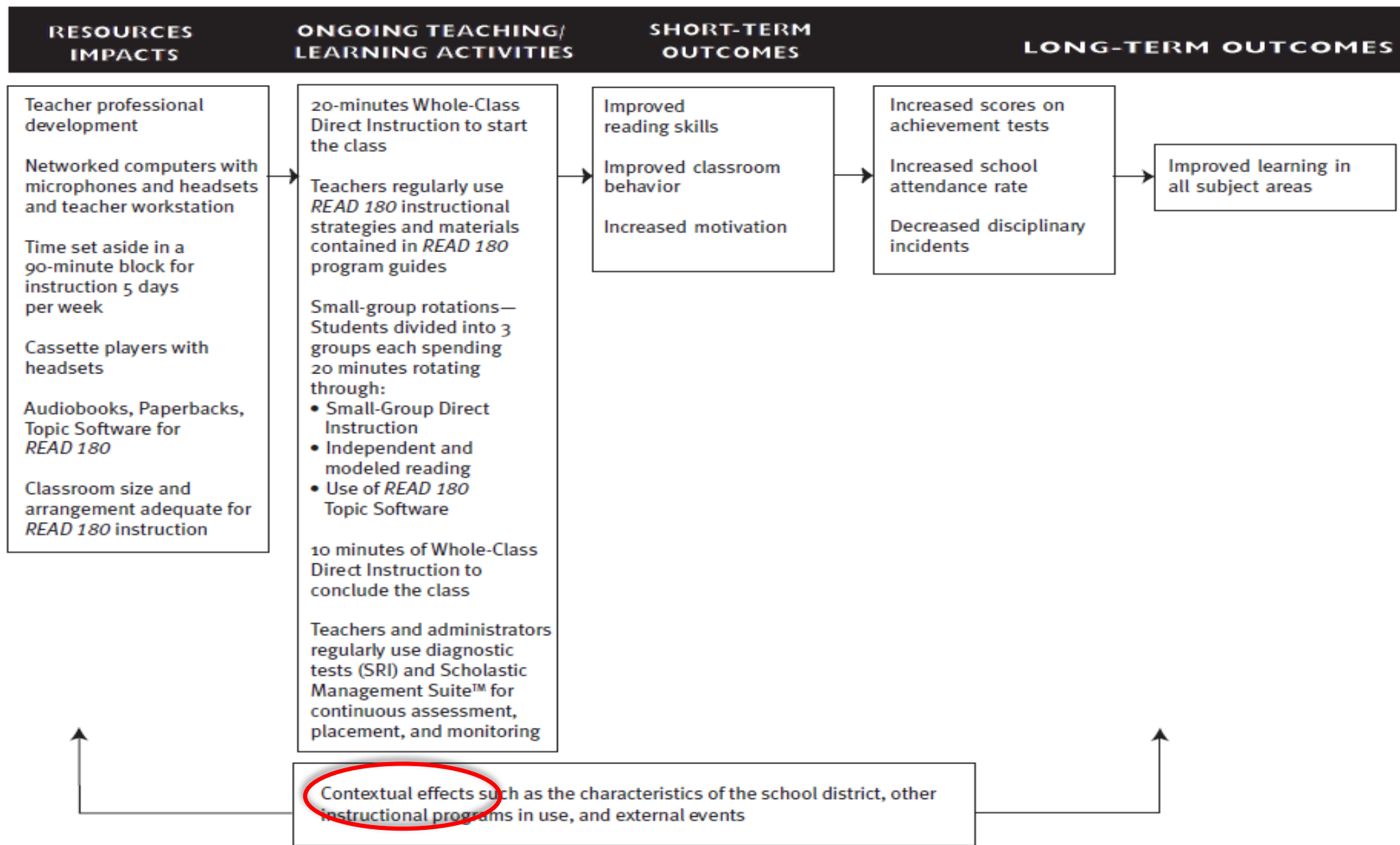




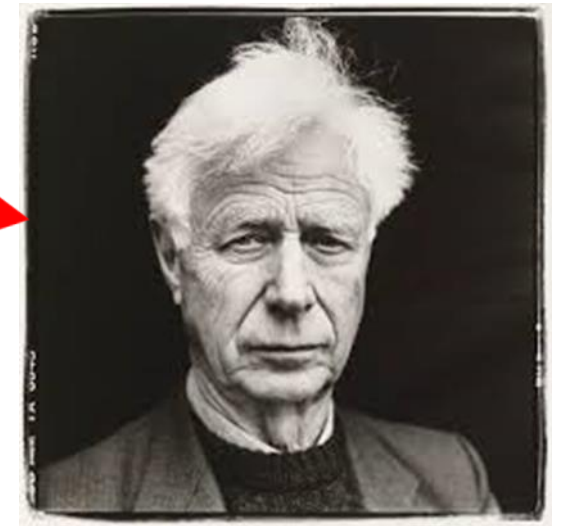
Causal Loop Diagram exploring systemic impact of efforts to improve social work through increased prescription of practice

Developed in collaboration with Dr David Lane, London School of Economics and Political Science.





For each local setting





2

Ways
to Thicken

soups & gravies
with fewer carbs



donnareish.com



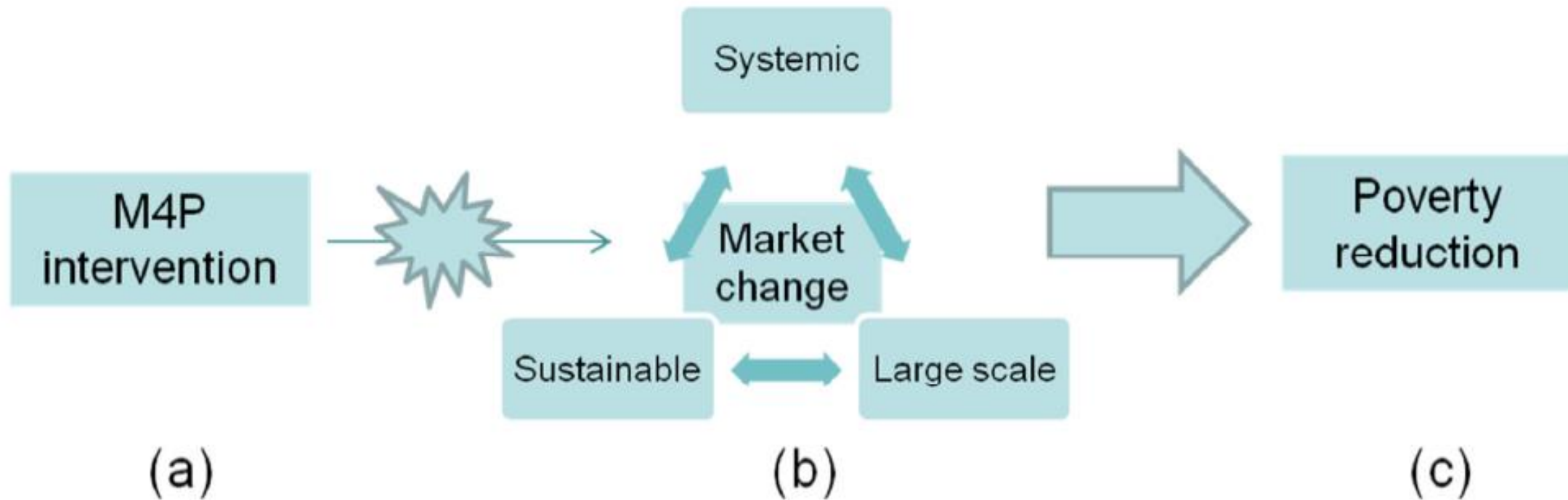
Thickening 1

Abstract/ general concepts



Specific

Figure 3: A systemic logical model for M4P enables better capture of M4P impact



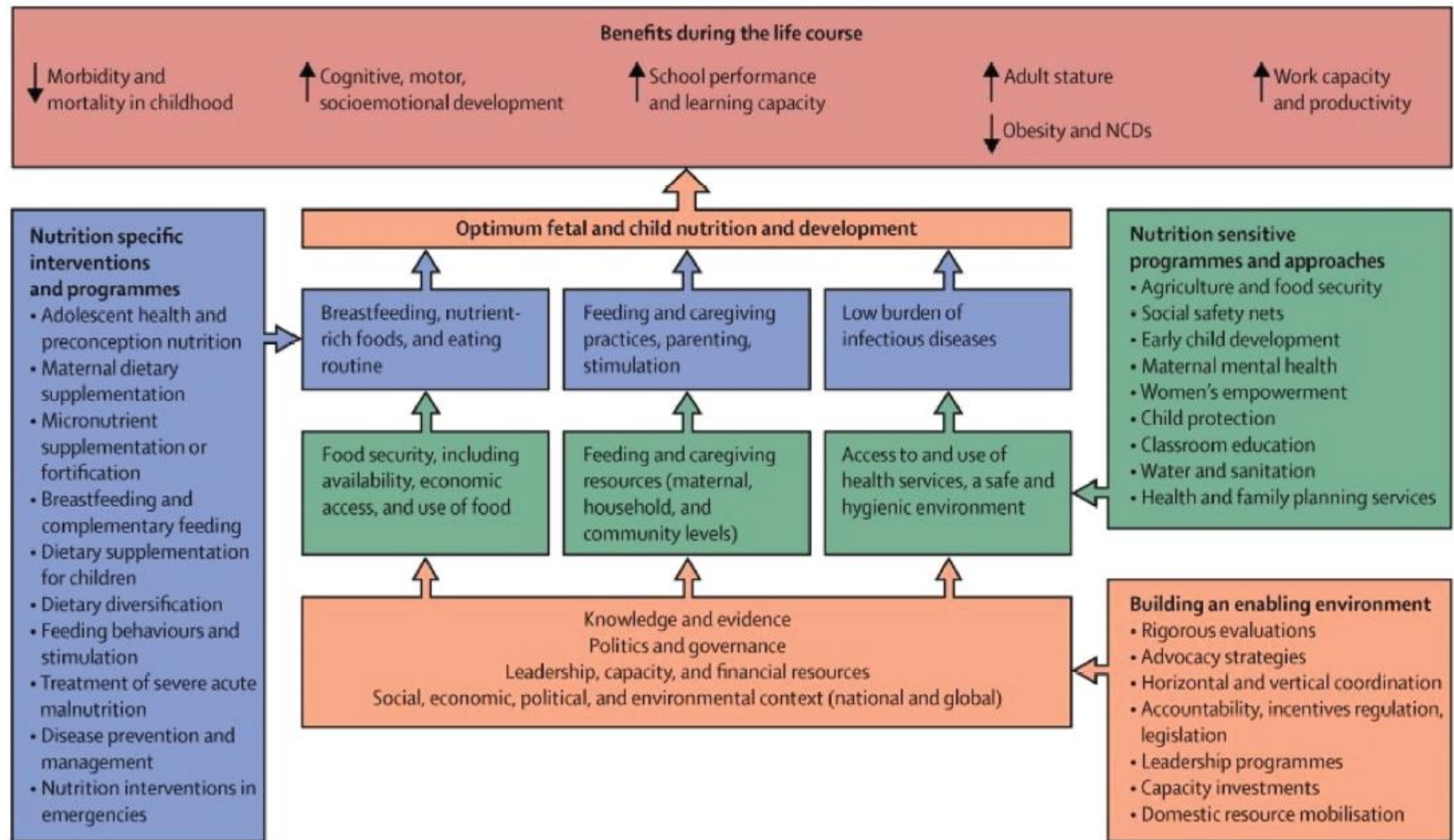


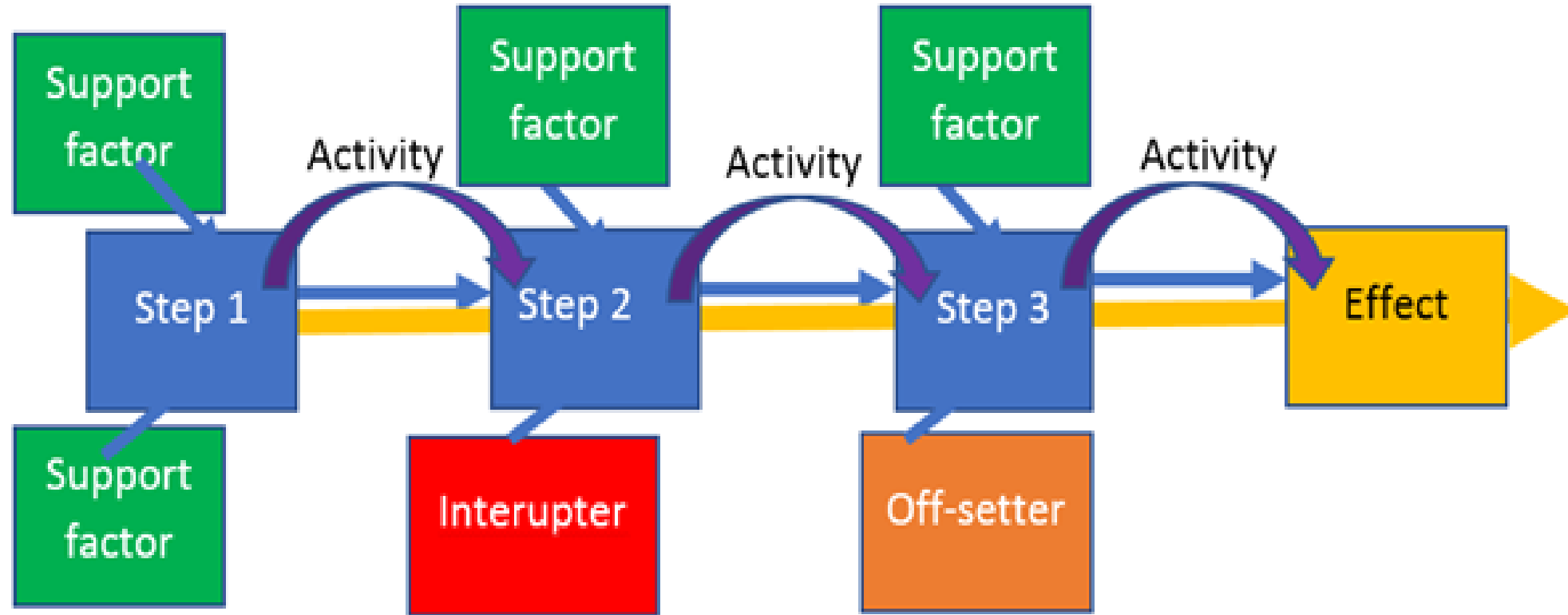
Figure 1. Framework for actions to achieve optimum fetal and child nutrition and development.^[21]



Thickening two

At each step, fill in

- Support factors
- Derailers/ interrupters
 - Off-setters





Tool 2

Middle- level 'Mechanisms'

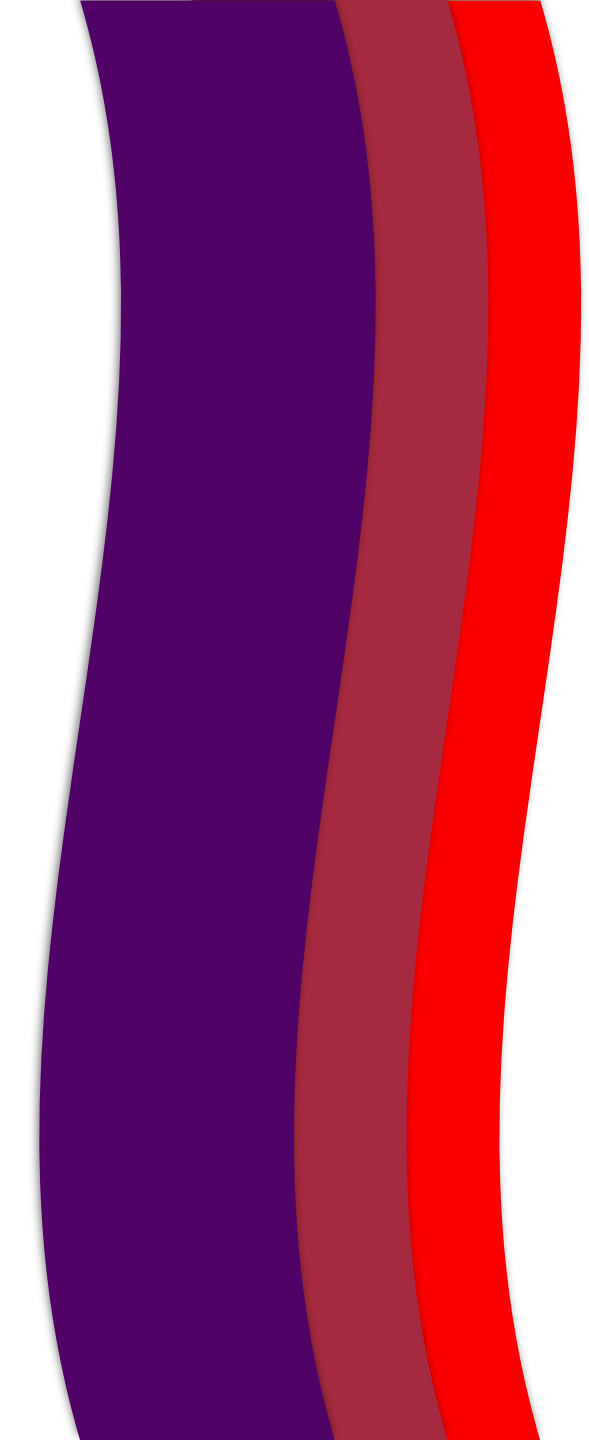


Roughly speaking,
mechanisms are frequently
occurring & easily
recognizable causal patterns
that are triggered under
generally unknown conditions
or with indeterminate
consequences.

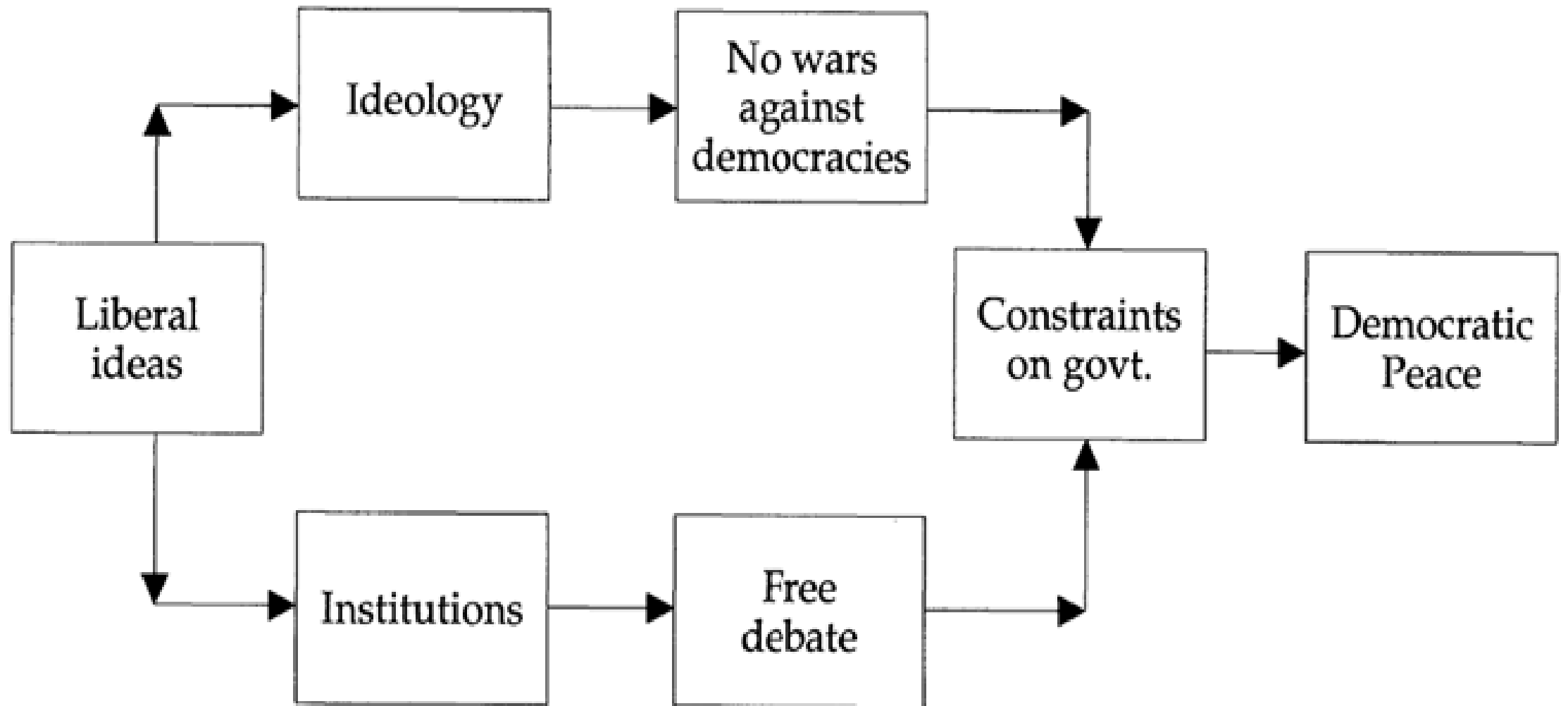


Elster-type 'mechanisms'

- Dispositions/ behaviours that are common in individuals or institutions (sometimes location relative)
- Highly defeasible
- May need triggering
- What happens when they operate depends on the context



Knowing what mechanism
should operate at each step =
a powerful tool for context-
thickening a middle-level ToC



?

N = dem



C bel N =
dem

C bel dem =
power



C predict
lose to N



C oppose
war w N



People informed T by sources deemed reliable tend to believe T

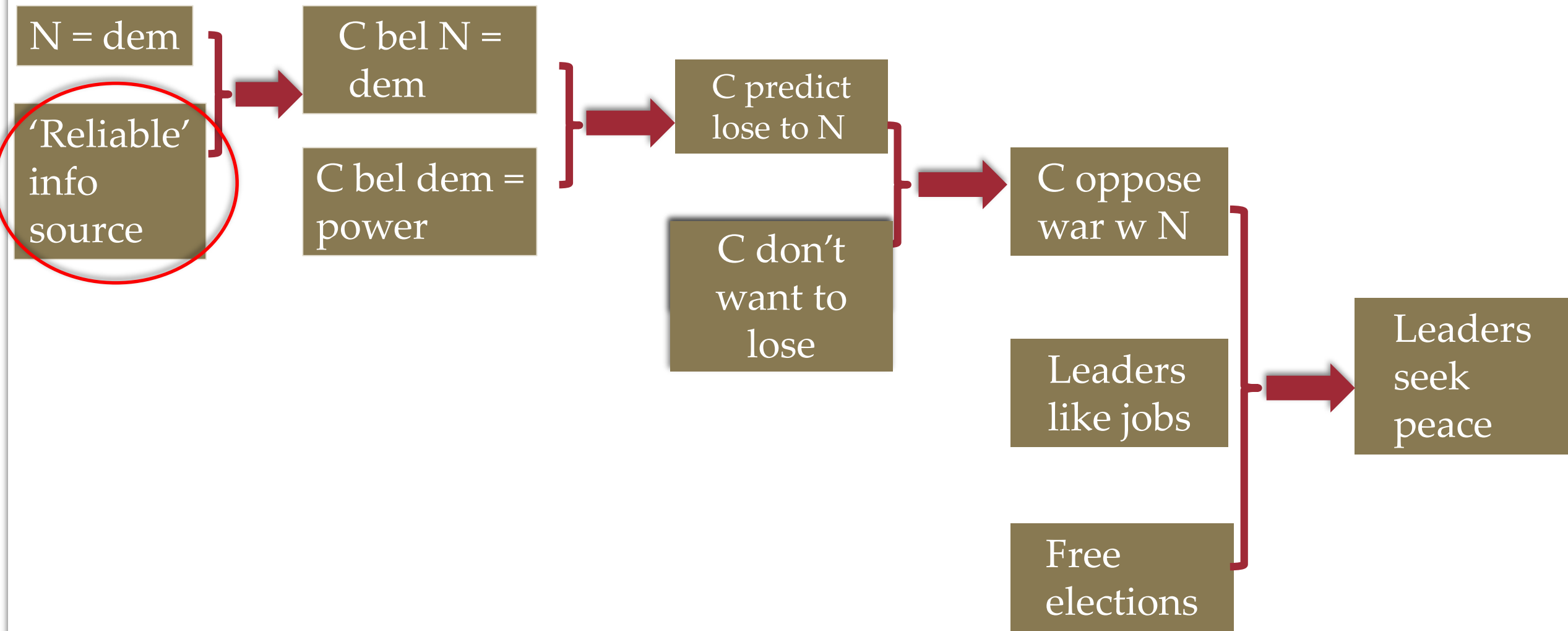
lose

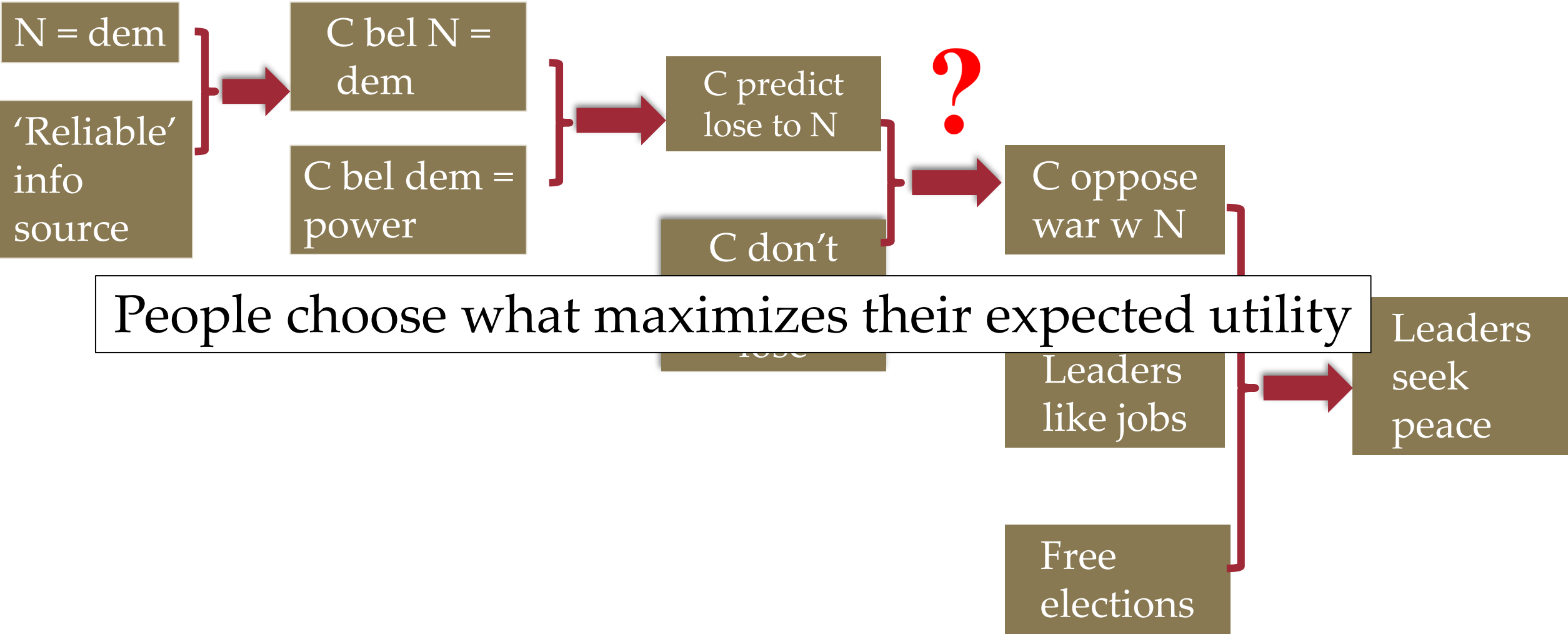
Leaders
like jobs

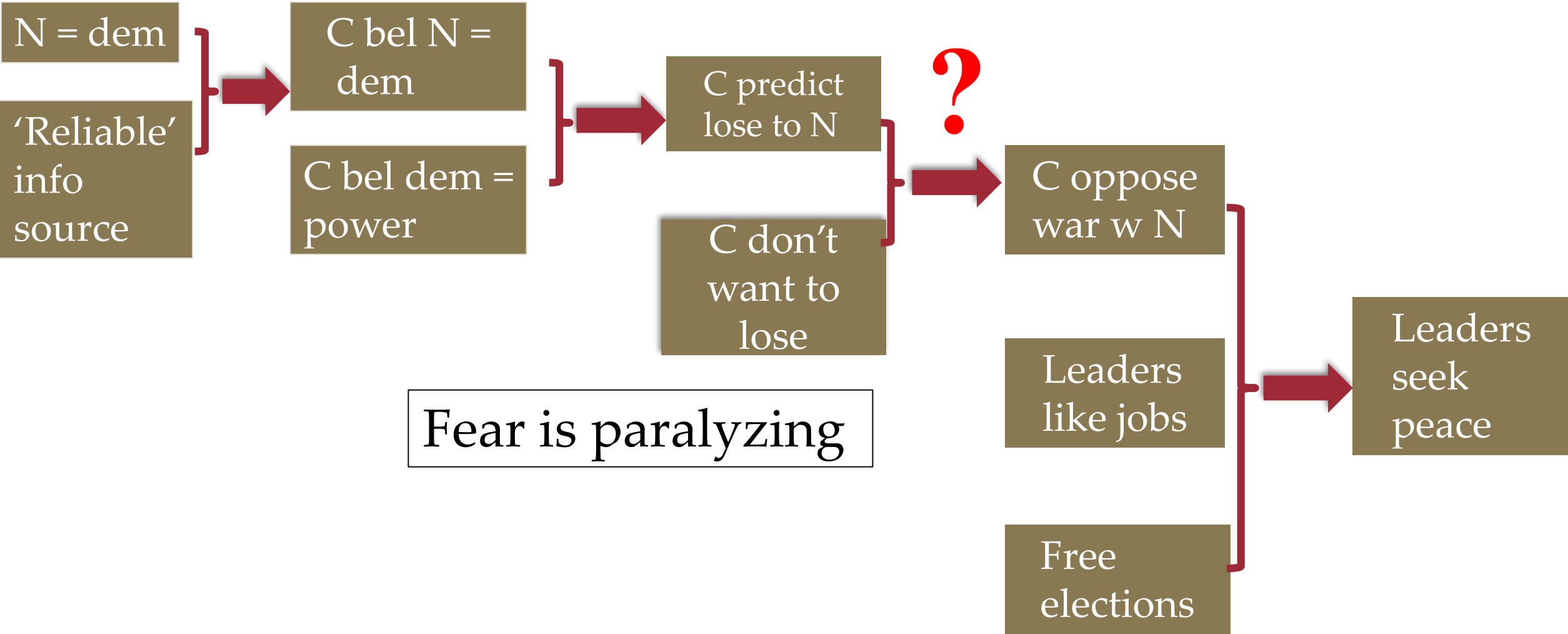
Free
elections



Leaders
seek
peace









Where can these mechanisms
produce the requisite pathway?

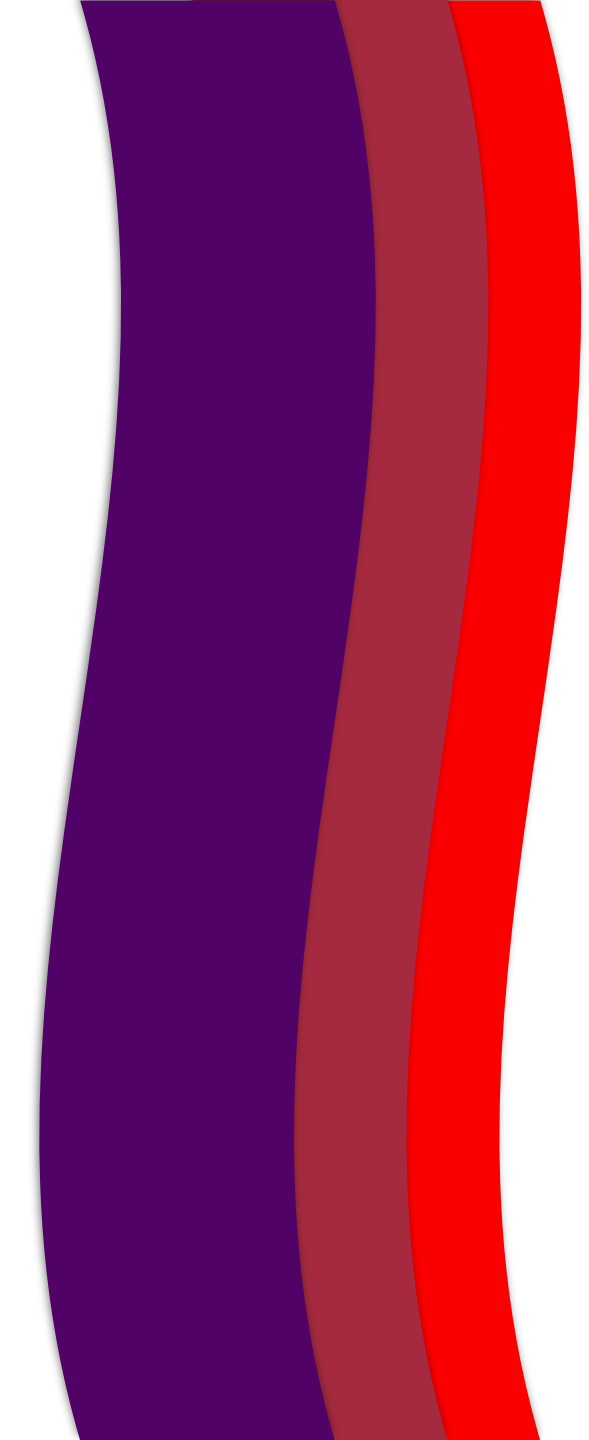


Tool 3

Markers

Social systems: afford causal pathways





Figuring out what the local system is like and what pathways it affords is

- Difficult
- Costly

Markers can suffice

System markers

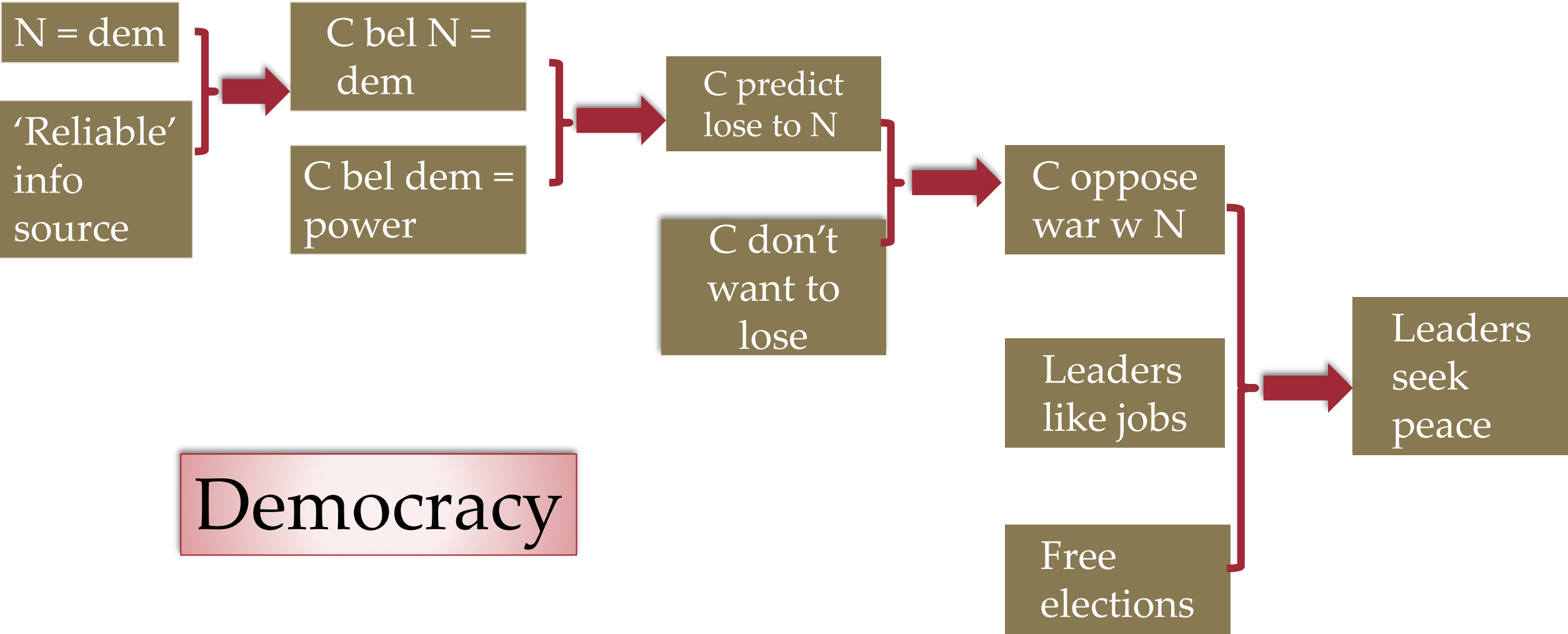
- Manufactured items come with labels, logos



- God-made structures are often recognisable 'from the outside'



- What about social systems?





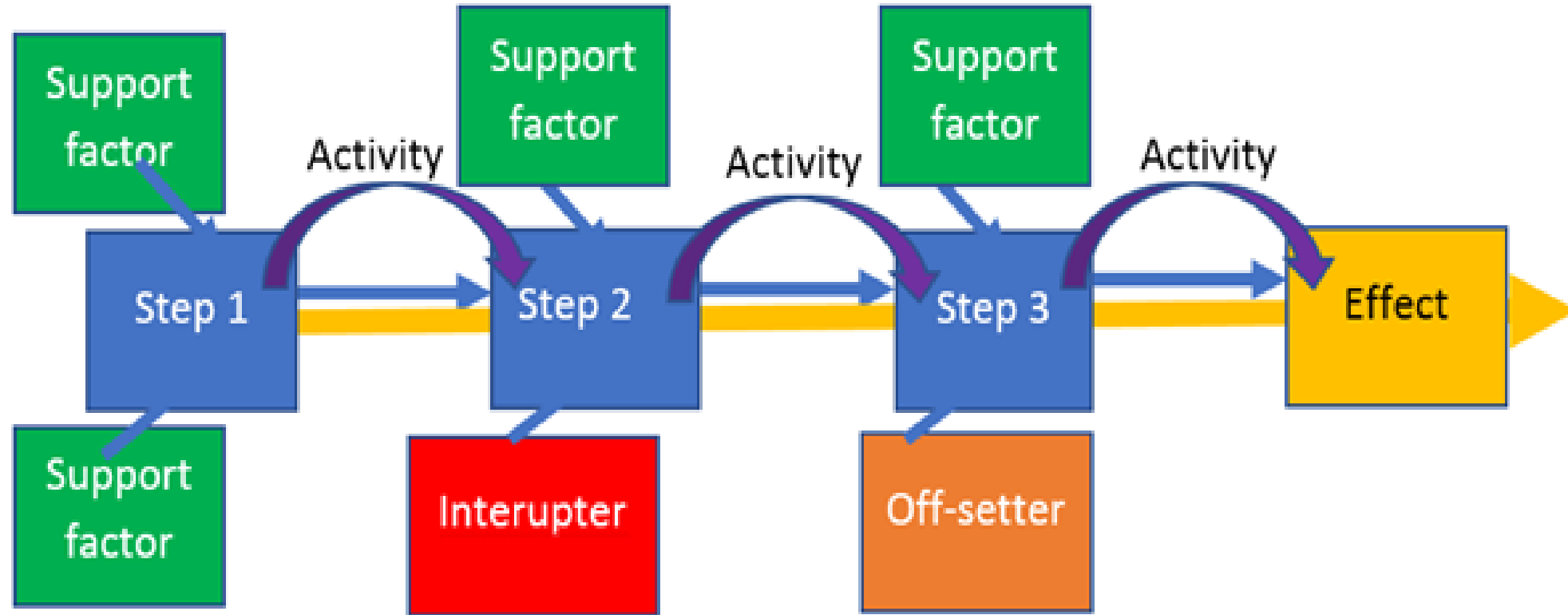
Common development markers

- Democracy?
- Good governance?
- Growth/ GDP?
- Women's participation?
- Foreign direct investment?
- ...



So...

- Best way to get reliable prediction/evaluation in a new setting is to build a thick local causal model

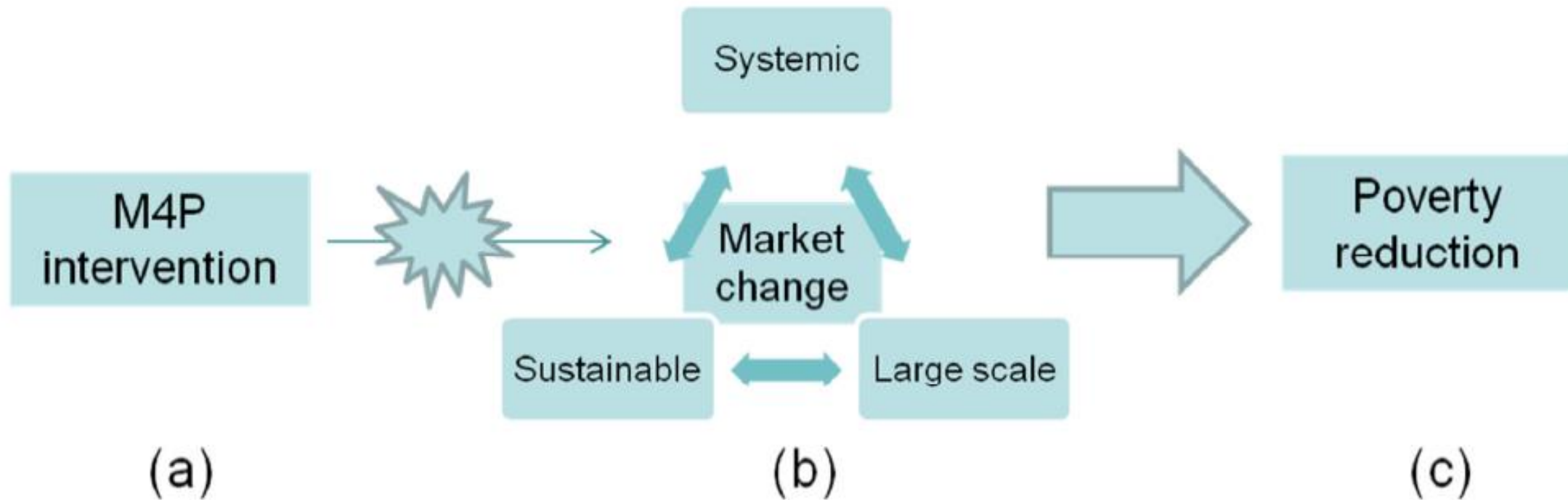




So...

- Best way to get reliable prediction/evaluation in a new setting is to build a thick local causal model
- 3 kinds of middle-level theory can, deployed together, help you do so
- But you need those tools to do so
- This is NOT a good starting point

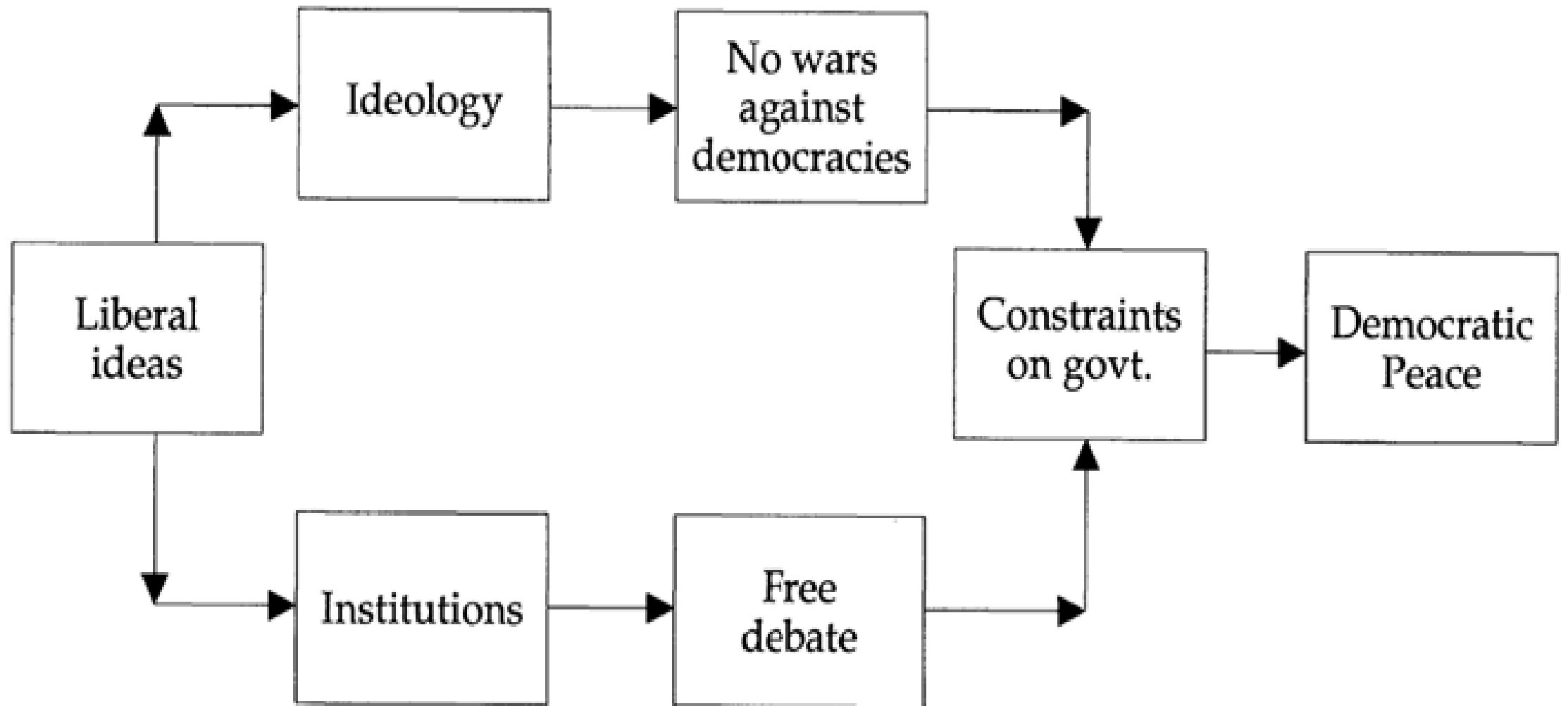
Figure 3: A systemic logical model for M4P enables better capture of M4P impact





So...

- Best way to get reliable prediction/evaluation in a new setting is to build a thick local causal model
- 3 kinds of middle-level theory can, deployed together, help you do so
- But you need those tools to do so
- This is NOT a good starting point
- Nor this

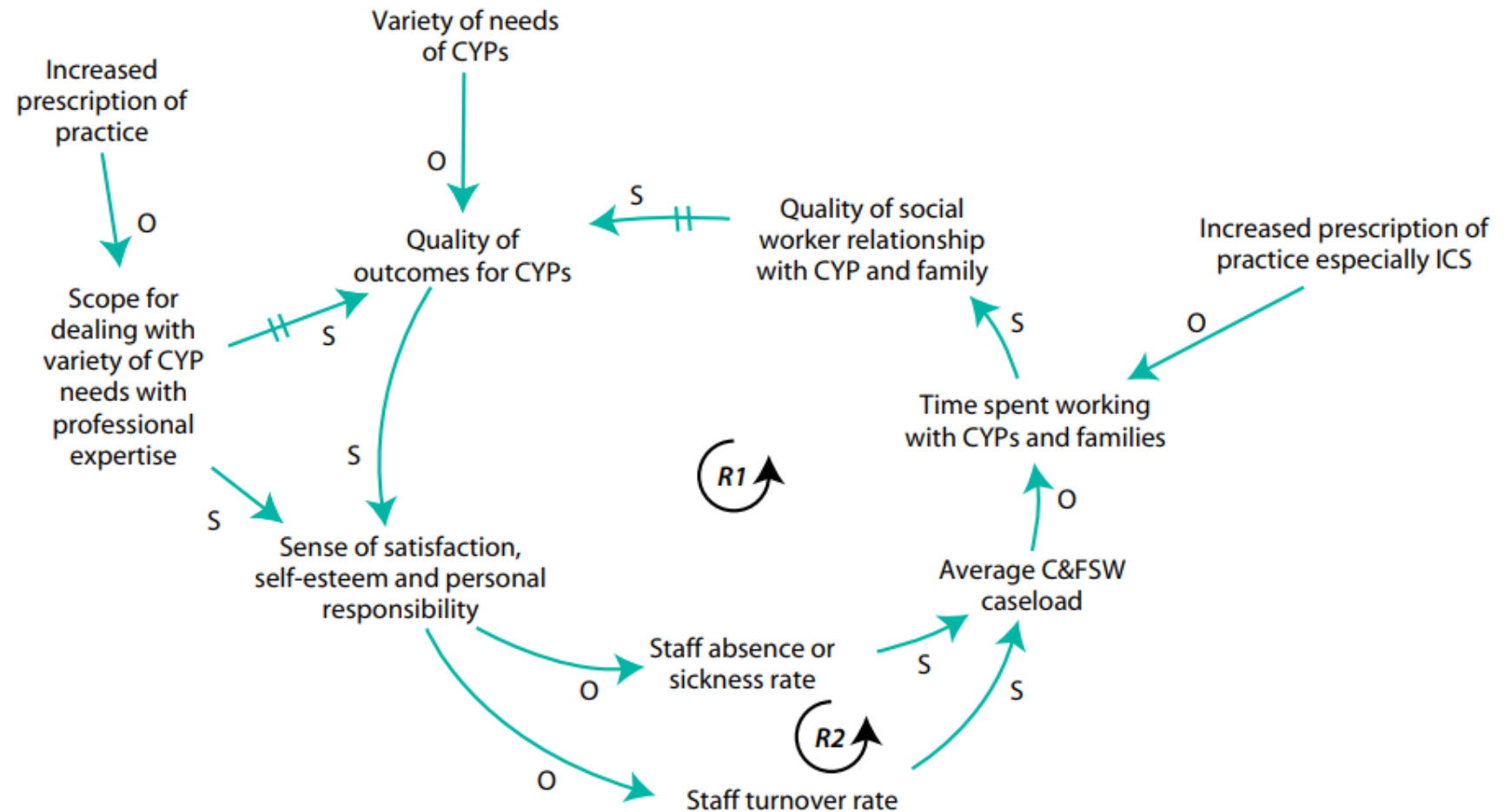




Better....

Causal Loop Diagram exploring systemic impact of efforts to improve social work through increased prescription of practice

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*Responsible programme development:
provide a ToC w these ingredients*

1. The series of steps by which the intervention is to produce the outcome
2. The principles by which the effect is produced at each step
3. An account of, or a marker for, the kind of underlying structures that afford this sequence of changes



Knowledge for Use



Thank you

The K4U project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 667526 K4U) The above content reflects only the author's view and that the ERC is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains

Outcomes, not indicators

- “Indicators are different from ... outcomes... indicators are specific, measurable targets related to the outcomes...”
- NC: Because presence/absence of intermediate **outcomes** is stronger evidence of success than indicators of those