



Agendashift™ Academy

Leadership and strategy in the transforming organisation

What Lies Beneath

Mike Burrows

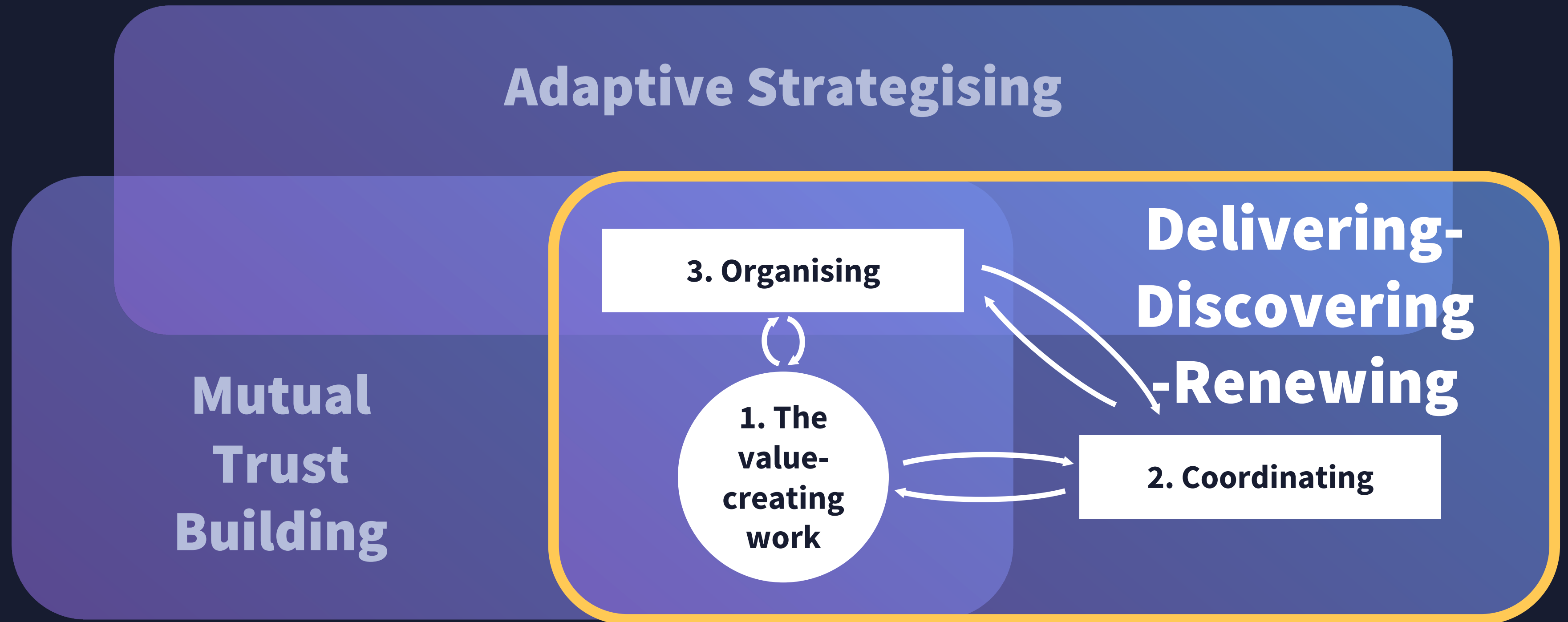
Wholehearted: Engaging with Complexity in the Deliberately Adaptive Organisation (2025)

Adaptive Strategising

**Mutual
Trust
Building**

**Delivering-
Discovering
-Renewing**

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Adaptive Strategising

**Mutual
Trust
Building**

3*. Contextualising

3. Organising

**1. The
value-
creating
work**

**Delivering-
Discovering
-Renewing**

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Wholehearted

Engaging with Complexity in the
Deliberately Adaptive Organisation

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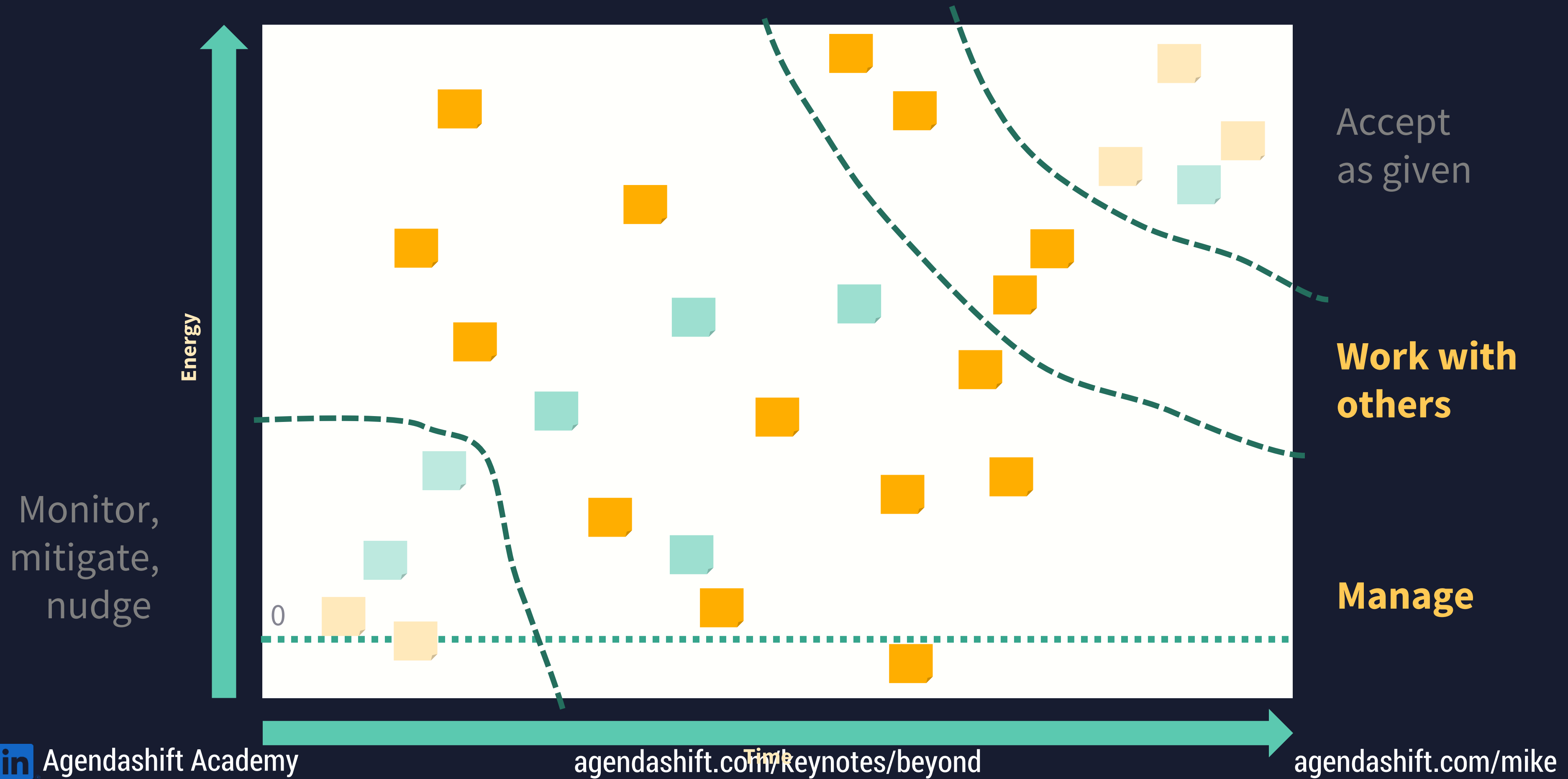
Foreword by
Benjamin Taylor

New ways to understand your organisation, and new ways to engage with its challenges.

The Deliberately Adaptive Organisation is a fresh, ground-up reconstruction of the classic Viable System Model, approached humanely and with a 21st-century appreciation for complexity.

agendashift.com/keynotes/beyond

Where we will get to: **Things we'd like to change**



Where we will get to: **Ideas we're motivated to act on, hypotheses we'd like to test**



We believe that **<actionable change>**
will result in **<meaningful outcome>**.

If successful, we might expect to see

- **<observable impact 1>**
- ...
- **<observable impact n>**

How will we get there? Not like this: **the IdOO (“I do”) pattern**



Or like this: **15-minute FOTQ**

From Obstacles

- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

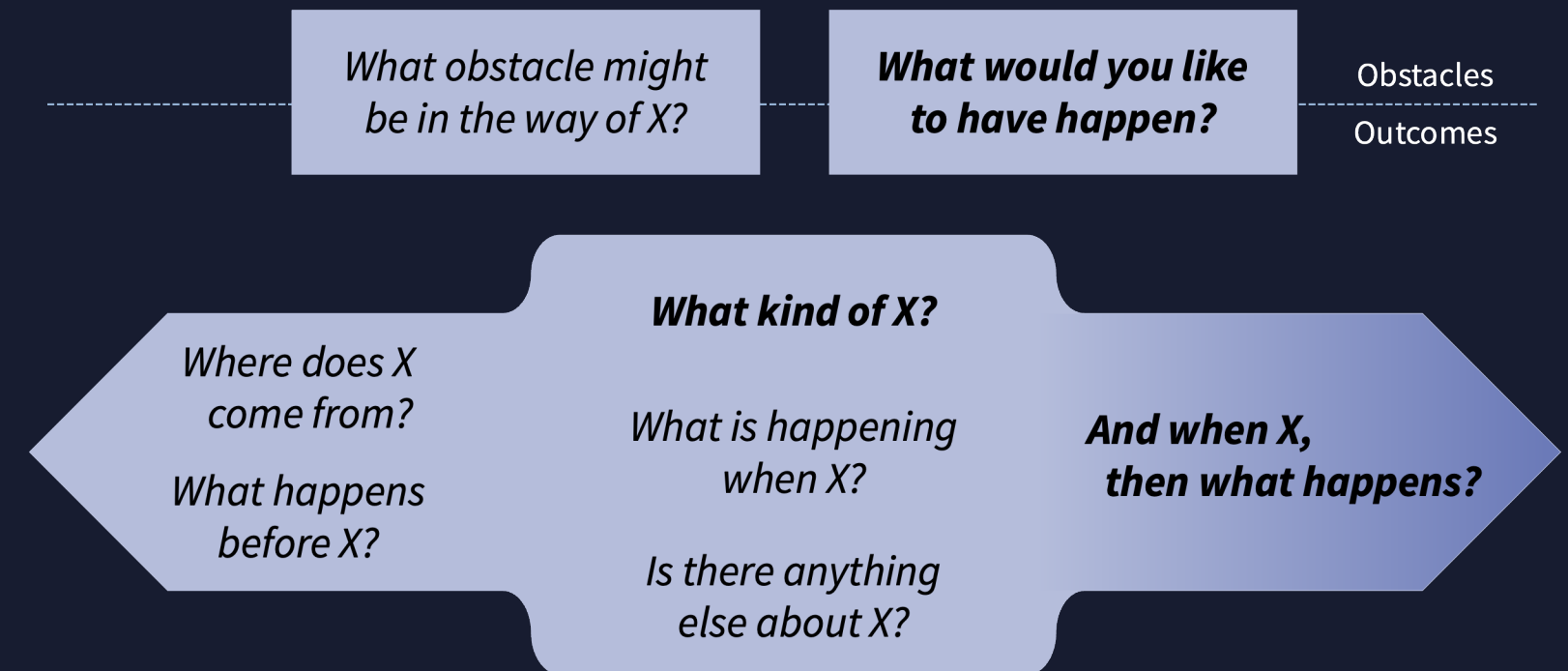
To Outcomes

- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
- ~ ~ ~ ~ ~



– as many as you
can generate in just
15 minutes...

... using only these Clean
Language questions...



... and (for the X's) words
previously generated

Welcome to Constraints Club

True North: Ideal

Imagine...

Everyone able to work consistently at their ideal best:

- Individuals, teams, between teams, across the organisation and beyond
- Right conversations, right people, best possible moment
- Needs anticipated, met at just the right time

When all of this is working at its ideal best for us, what's that like?

*Whose needs would we be meeting?
What new stories could they tell?*

True North: Ideal

Exercise 1

Imagine...

Everyone able to work consistently at their ideal best:

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Whose needs *would we be meeting?*

What new stories *could they tell?*



Welcome to Constraints Club



Credits

- Dave Snowden, for Affordance Mapping (aka Estuarine Framework) the visual part of his Estuarine Mapping process
- Mushon Zer-Aviv, an inspiration and collaborator in some of the process and wording employed in the Constraints Club exercise

See *What Lies Beneath (Spoiler: Constraints)*,
blog.agendashift.com/2023/10/09/what-lies-beneath-spoiler-constraints/

Constraints Club

True, fair, and relatable observations of what we'd like to change

Exercise 2

1. *Why is that important?*

- of a prompt, **story**, obstacle, or outcome we have prioritised or captured that best identifies **where change is needed**

2. *How do we experience that today? What stories can we tell?*

- Short sentences, **true and fair observations** of how things are now
- **Eliminate** what might be perceived as judging, blaming, theorising, or selling
- Where you struggle to write something that most people would easily agree with, **scope it down**

3. *What makes it that way? What keeps it that way? Out of what does that emerge?*

- More **true and fair observations** of how things are now, refined as above

4. *What else makes it that way (etc)? How else do we experience that today?*

What else is important, and why? Drilling down or expanding, repeat from 3, 2, or 1.

Constraints Club

True, fair, and relatable observations of what we'd like to change

Exercise 2

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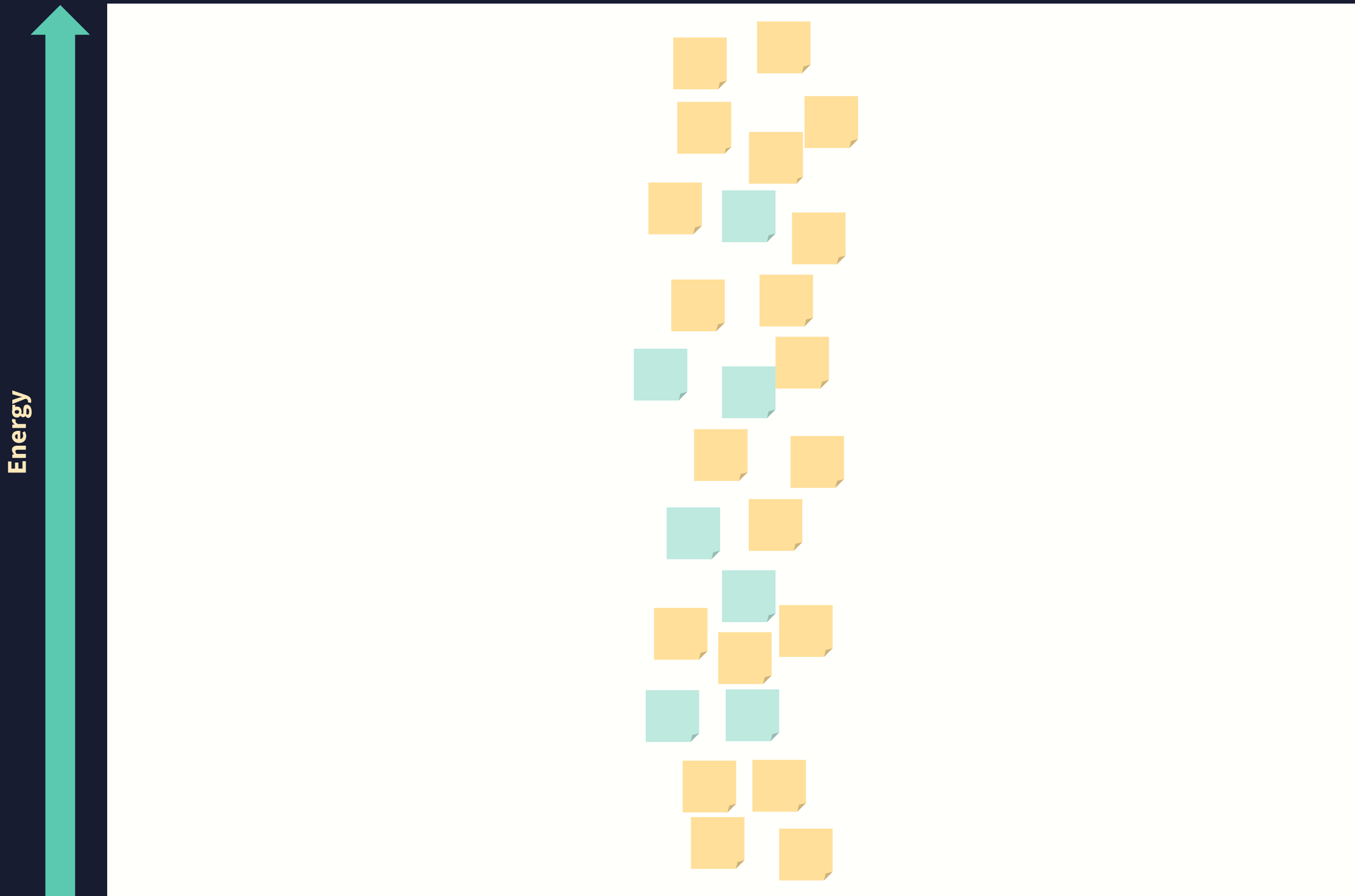
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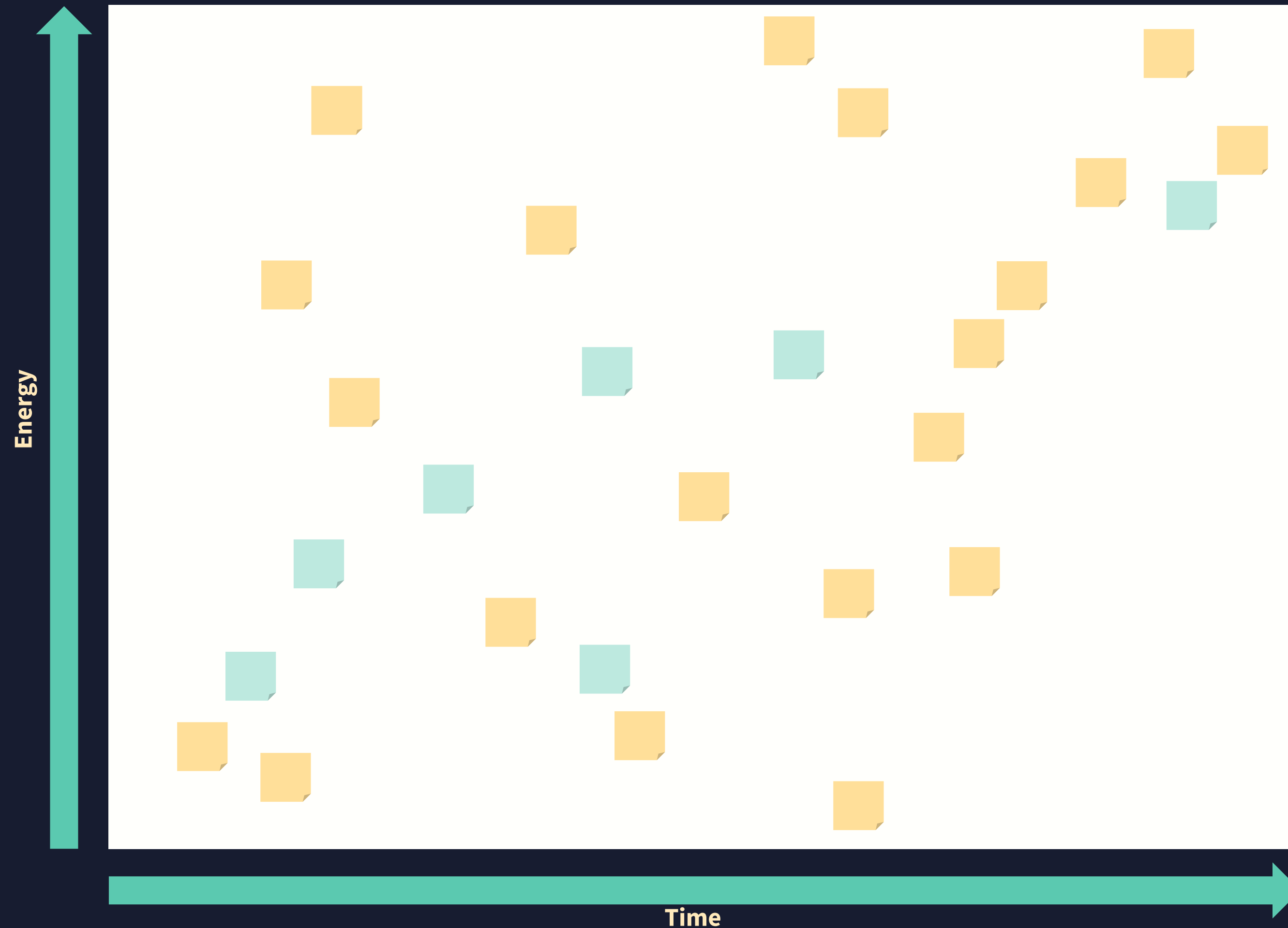
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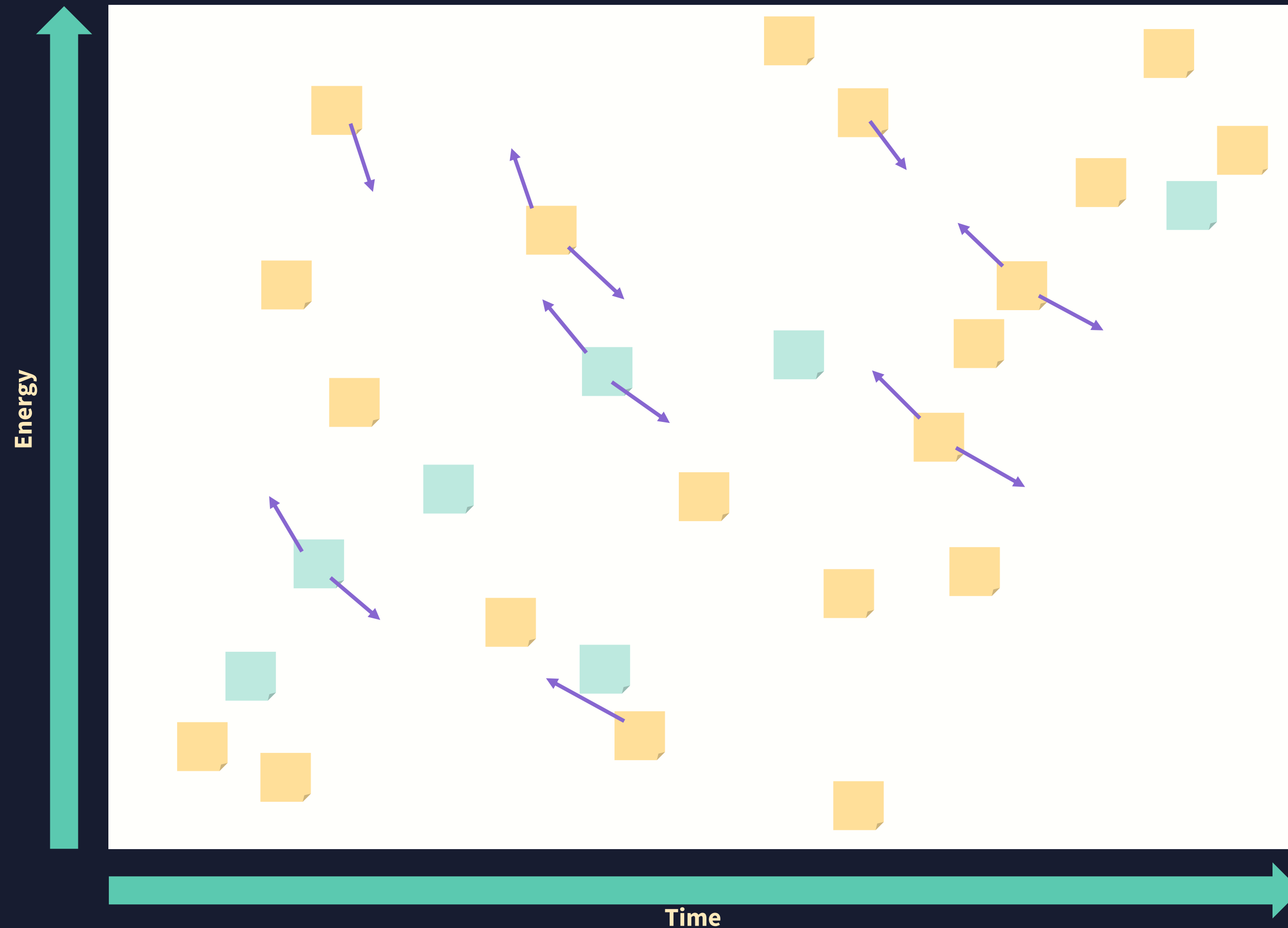
Energy: How much energy must we invest to make these no longer true?



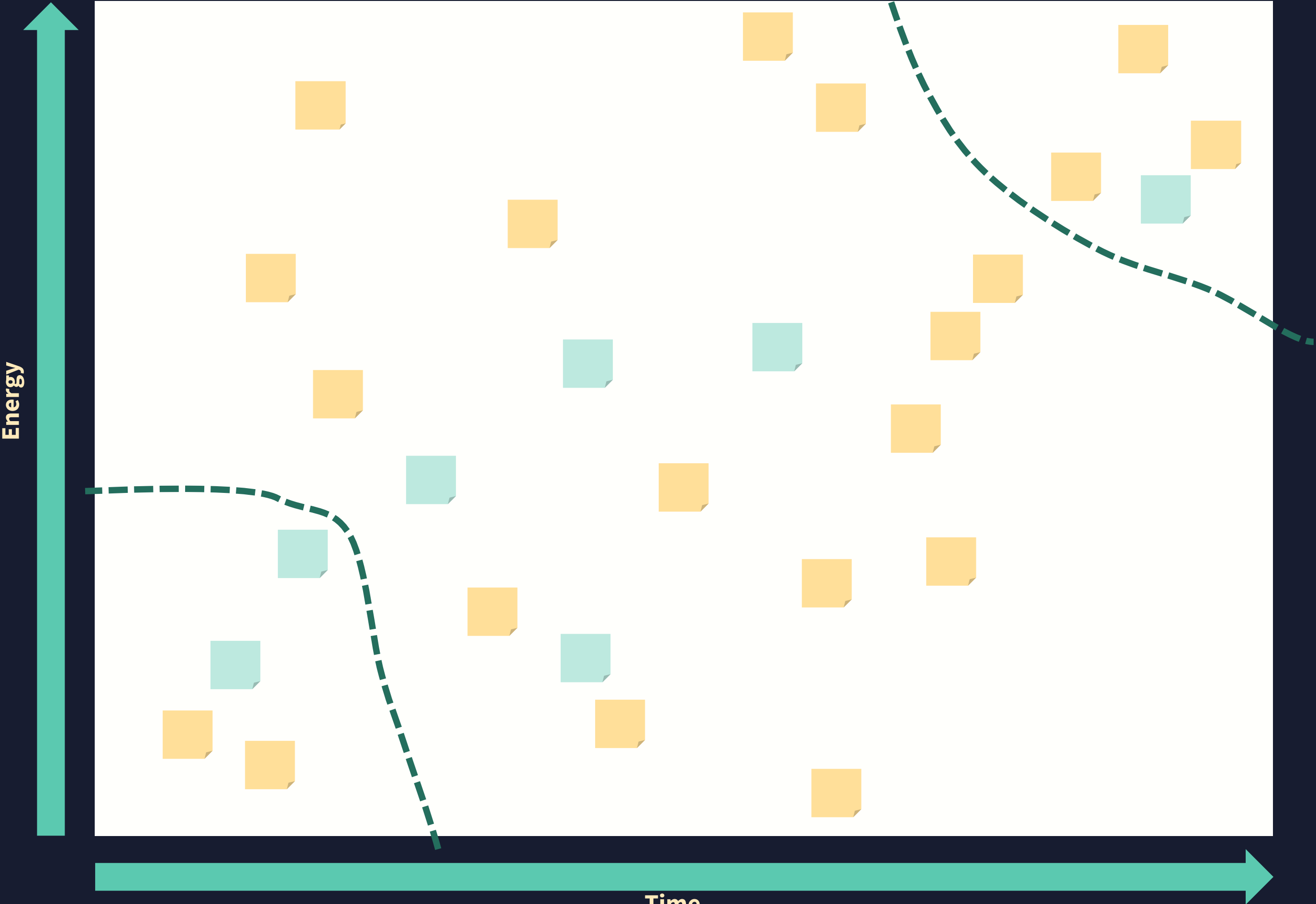
Time: How much elapsed time to make these no longer true?



Trade energy vs time?



Boundaries



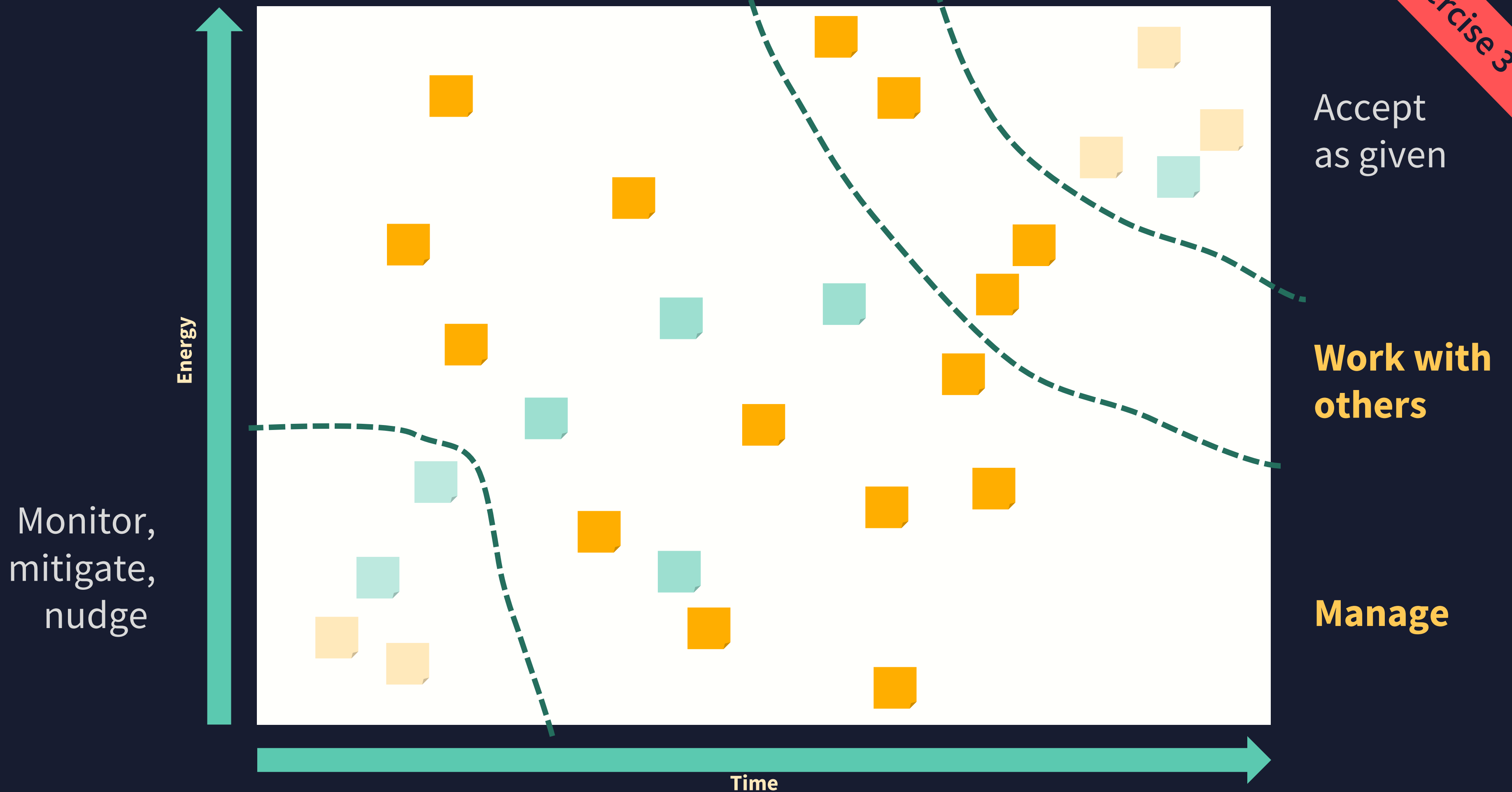
Accept
as given

Monitor,
mitigate,
nudge

Time

Affordance Mapping (energy vs time; boundaries)

Exercise 3



Meaning, Measure Method

– an outcome-oriented innovation pattern

AGENDA FOR CHANGE

MEANING

Focusing on what's important

MEASURE

How we'll know that we're winning

METHOD

New ideas and how we'll test them

FEEDBACK & LEARNING

Meaning before Measure

AGENDA FOR CHANGE

MEANING

Focusing on what's important

MEASURE

How we'll know that we're winning

METHOD

New ideas and how we'll test them

FEEDBACK & LEARNING

Measure before Method

AGENDA FOR CHANGE

MEANING

Focusing on what's important

MEASURE

How we'll know that we're winning

METHOD

New ideas and how we'll test them

FEEDBACK & LEARNING

Relevant, motivated

AGENDA FOR CHANGE

MEANING

Focusing on what's important

MEASURE

How we'll know that we're winning

METHOD

New ideas and how we'll test them

FEEDBACK & LEARNING

Set up for maximum feedback and learning

AGENDA FOR CHANGE

MEANING

Focusing on what's important

MEASURE

How we'll know that we're winning

METHOD

New ideas and how we'll test them

FEEDBACK & LEARNING

1. Agenda for Change

2. Meaning

3. Measure

4. Method

Choose an interesting outcome:

- Appetite for early(ish) progress
- Interestingly ambiguous:
 - Multiple interpretations
 - **Multiple solution approaches**
 - First-time success not guaranteed
 - The potential perhaps to make things worse

**1. Agenda for
Change**

2. Meaning

3. Measure

4. Method

Why is that important?

**1. Agenda for
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Why is that important?

***When that's working at
its ideal best for us,
what's that like?***

***Whose needs would we be
meeting? What new
stories could they tell?***

**1. Agenda for
Change**

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Why is that important?

***When that's working at
its ideal best for us,
what's that like?***

***Whose needs would we be
meeting? What new
stories could they tell?***

***What stops that? What
gets in the way?***

Why is that important?

**1. Agenda for
Change**

2. Meaning

3. Measure

4. Method

**Starting small, keeping it
meaningful:**

- signs of emergence
- indicators of progress
- measures of success
- goals and aspirations

1. Agenda for Change

2. Meaning

3. Measure

4. Method

Keeping in mind all the preceding

- What's important
- What its ideal best looks like
- What stops that
- How you'll know that you're winning

1. Agenda for Change
2. Meaning
3. Measure
4. Method

Now generate several solution ideas (3 or more), as diverse as you can make them.

Tips:

- *“15% is always there for the taking”* (Gareth Morgan)
- What has worked elsewhere? What is already beginning to work here?
- Tool vs non-tool
- Outside vs inside initiative
- What would experts from different backgrounds recommend?

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Method (II) A hypothesis for your most intriguing idea

Exercise 5



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