

Me-We-World Whitepaper 2026-2027

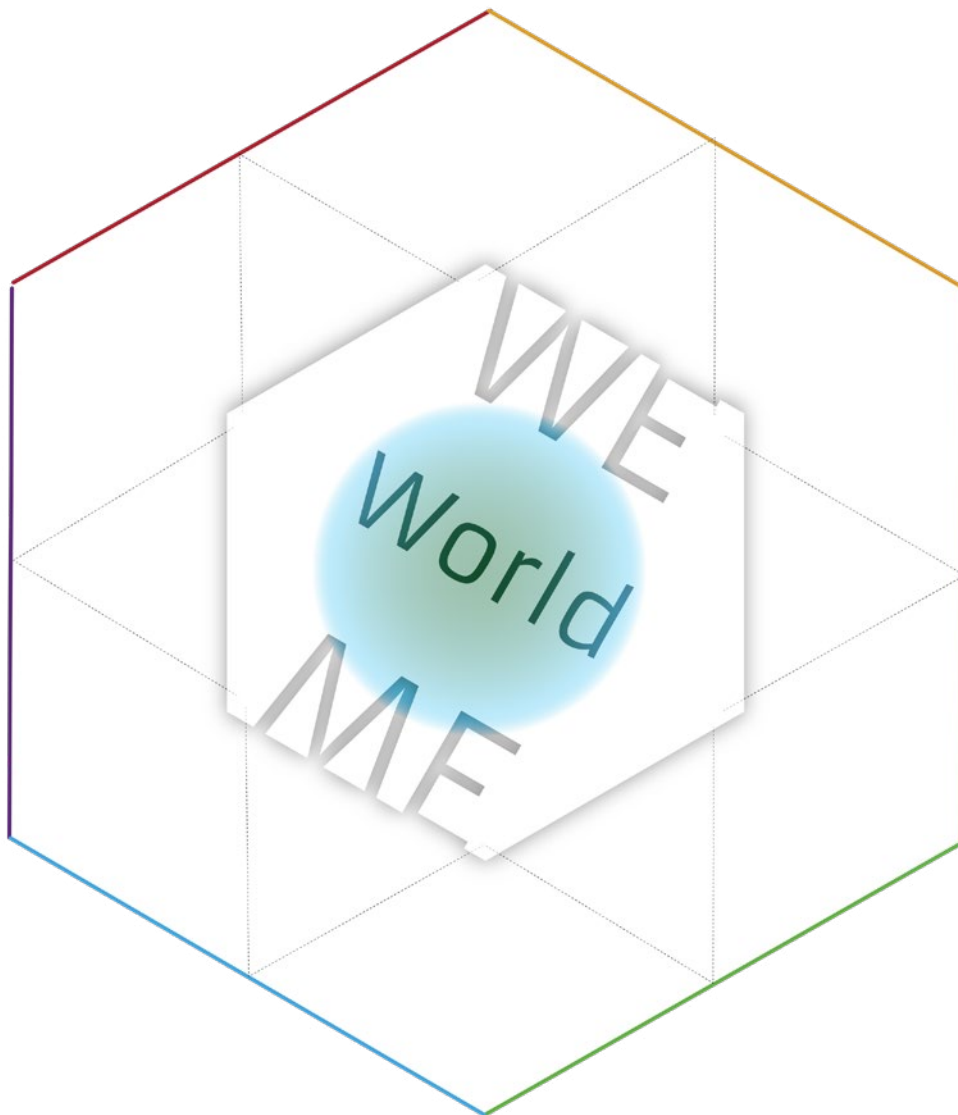
A Relational Framework for Navigating Complexity

Reading situations before intervening in them.

Updated Edition — June 2026

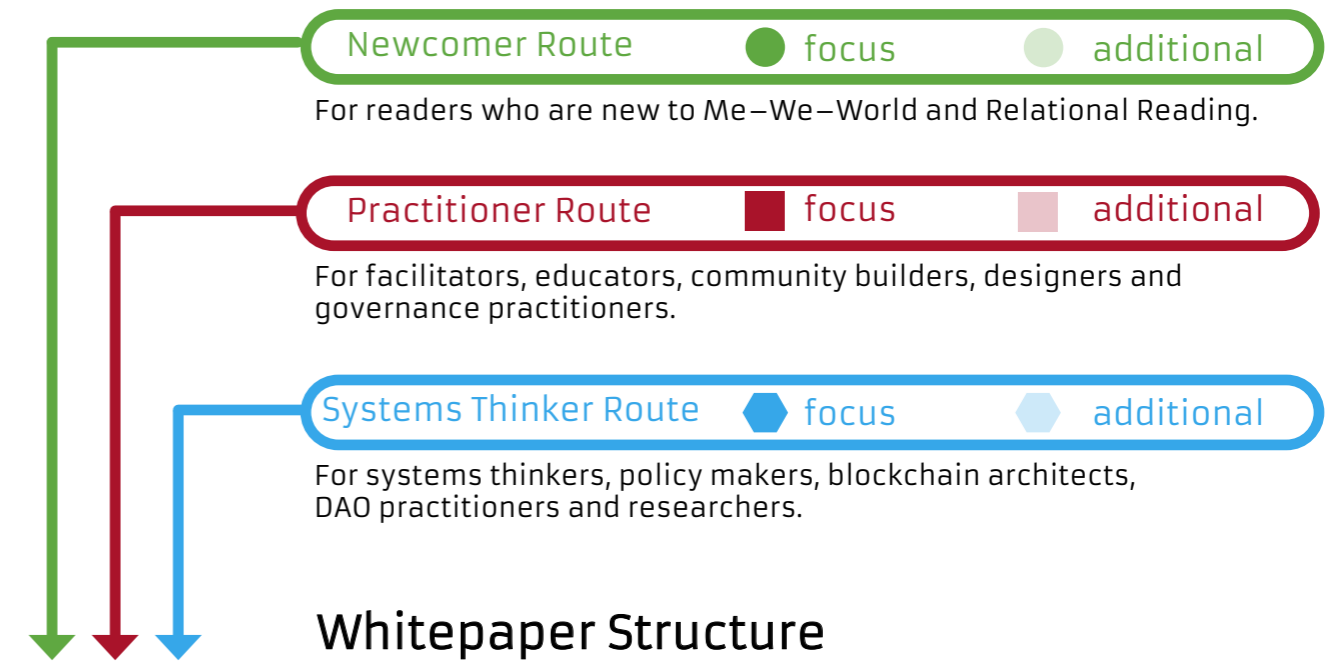
A concept by Lawrence Kwakye

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Three Entry Routes

This whitepaper can be read in different ways, depending on your background and interests. **The routes highlight areas of focus, while all chapters remain part of the wider conversation.**



●	□	◇	1	Why MWW Exists Why existing approaches often struggle with complexity.
●	□	◆	2	The Challenge of Complex Realities Why complexity demands new forms of navigation.
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1. Why Me-We-World Exists



Seeing More, Understanding Less

It is often said that we live in an age of unprecedented access to information.

We can measure more than ever before. We can connect across continents in seconds. We can model complex systems, predict patterns and generate knowledge at extraordinary speed. Yet despite this abundance of information, many people experience a growing sense of uncertainty.

Not because reality has become unknowable, but because the relationships between things have become increasingly difficult to see.

Questions of technology, governance, ecology, economics and culture are often discussed separately. In practice, however, they continuously shape one another.

Decisions made in one domain create consequences in another. Actions that appear beneficial from one perspective may generate tension elsewhere.

The more interconnected our world becomes, the harder it becomes to understand it through a single lens.

The Limits of Specialisation

Modern societies have achieved remarkable things through specialisation.

Scientists, engineers, policymakers, educators, entrepreneurs and designers each contribute forms of knowledge that would be impossible for any individual to develop alone.

Yet specialisation comes with a consequence. As knowledge becomes more precise, it also becomes more fragmented.

Experts learn to see deeper into particular domains, while the relationships between domains often remain less visible.

This does not mean that expertise is the

problem. Rather, it suggests that expertise alone may no longer be sufficient.

Living With Partial Perspectives.

Every perspective conceals something.

This is not a failure of perception. It is a condition of being human.

No individual, organisation or institution is capable of seeing the whole of a situation.

We participate from positions.

Our experiences, responsibilities, histories and relationships shape what becomes visible to us and what remains in the background.

The challenge is therefore not to discover a final or objective viewpoint from which everything can be understood.

The challenge is learning how to navigate situations in which multiple partial perspectives coexist.

A Different Question

Most approaches to change begin with intervention. The underlying assumption is understandable. When a situation becomes problematic, attention naturally shifts towards solutions, improvements, reforms or innovations. Yet complex situations often reveal a different challenge. People may disagree about what should be done because they are not reading the situation in the same way. What appears obvious from one position may be invisible from another. What appears rational within one institutional context may feel harmful within another. Before disagreements emerge around action, they often emerge around interpretation. For this reason, Me-We-World starts from a different question>>

Not:

What should we do?

But:

How is this situation being understood?

Only when the conditions shaping perception become more visible can action become more conscious.

Between Certainty & Participation

Modern institutions often operate as if better information will eventually produce better decisions.

In many situations this assumption remains useful. More knowledge can improve understanding, reduce uncertainty and support coordination.

Complex situations, however, introduce a different challenge.

The issue is not always the absence of information. More often, people are confronted with an abundance of information, interpreted through different experiences, responsibilities and worldviews. The question then becomes less about determining who possesses the correct perspective and more about understanding how different perspectives emerge in the first place. This does not imply that all perspectives are equally valid, nor does it suggest that judgement should be suspended indefinitely.

At some point decisions must be made.

Resources must be allocated.

Responsibilities must be accepted.

Participation requires position-taking.

Yet every position remains partial. Every decision is taken from within a particular context, at a particular moment, based on the information available at that time.

Relational Reading begins by recognising this condition rather than attempting to overcome it.

Why Me-We-World Exists

Over time, a recurring observation emerged across community projects, governance dialogues, systems innovation initiatives and educational settings.

Again and again, people found themselves discussing solutions while interpreting the situation itself in fundamentally different ways. Conflicts that appeared to concern policy often turned out to involve questions of trust. Disagreements about implementation frequently reflected different understandings of responsibility. Technical discussions revealed underlying tensions around legitimacy, participation or identity. What appeared at first to be a problem of coordination often proved to be a problem of orientation.

This observation gradually led to a different way of looking at complexity.

Rather than beginning with intervention, Me-We-World began exploring what happens when greater attention is given to the conditions, relationships and assumptions through which situations become meaningful. The result was not another intervention framework. It was the beginning of an inquiry into Relational Reading.

Closing Reflection

The purpose of Me-We-World is not to eliminate uncertainty.

Nor is it to replace expertise, governance or decision-making.

Its purpose is to support more conscious participation in situations that can never be fully known, fully controlled or fully resolved. Rather than asking how complexity can be removed, Me-We-World asks how complexity might be navigated more responsibly.

This question forms the starting point for the chapters that follow.

2. The Challenge of Complex Realities

Beyond Isolated Problems

Many of the challenges we encounter today resist simple definitions.

Climate change is not only an environmental issue.

Artificial intelligence is not only a technological issue.

Housing is not only an economic issue.

Healthcare is not only a medical issue.

Energy transitions are not only infrastructure projects.

Each of these examples simultaneously involves institutions, technologies, values, governance structures, economic realities, human behaviour and lived experience. Attempts to isolate one aspect often reveal its dependence on many others. What initially appears to be a technical problem may gradually reveal itself as a social challenge. What appears to be a governance issue may expose deeper questions of trust, identity or legitimacy. The boundaries between issues become increasingly difficult to maintain.

The Return of Interdependence

For much of the modern era, progress has been closely associated with specialisation.

Breaking complex problems into manageable parts has enabled extraordinary achievements in science, engineering, medicine and governance.

Yet many contemporary challenges seem to operate differently. The behaviour of a complex situation cannot always be understood by analysing its individual components separately.

Relationships matter.

Context matters.

Timing matters.

Meaning matters.

Interdependence repeatedly reappears where simplification attempts to remove it. The challenge is not that reduction is wrong. The challenge is that reduction alone often becomes insufficient.

When Different Realities Meet

One of the more difficult aspects of complexity is that people can participate in the same situation while experiencing fundamentally different realities.

A policymaker may see a necessary transition.

A resident may experience uncertainty.

An engineer may focus on technical feasibility.

A community leader may focus on social cohesion.

None of these perspectives are necessarily incorrect. Each emerges from a different position within the situation itself. This creates a challenge that is not merely technical. It becomes relational. The question is no longer:

Which perspective is correct?

but increasingly:

How do these different perspectives relate to one another?

Without this shift, dialogue often becomes a competition between realities rather than an exploration of them.

The Limits of Control

Many modern institutions were developed during a period in which the world appeared more stable, more predictable and more separable than it does today.

Problems could often be isolated.

Responsibilities could be assigned.

Processes could be standardised.

Outcomes could be measured.

These approaches remain valuable and continue to play an important role in organising society.

Yet many contemporary challenges reveal limits to what can be achieved through control alone.

The more interconnected a situation becomes, the harder it becomes to predict how interventions will unfold.

Actions generate unintended consequences.

Solutions create new tensions.

Optimisation in one area may produce vulnerabilities elsewhere.

The issue is not that control has become obsolete.

The issue is that control alone no longer provides sufficient orientation.

The Risk of Reduction

Faced with uncertainty, there is a natural tendency to seek clarity.

Metrics provide clarity.

Rules provide clarity.

Targets provide clarity.

Models provide clarity.

These instruments play an important role in organising collective action.

At the same time, every model simplifies.

Every metric highlights certain aspects while leaving others in the background.

Every rule privileges particular forms of behaviour while discouraging others. Problems emerge when these simplifications are mistaken for the reality they are intended to describe.

Human beings become resources.

Communities become stakeholder groups.

Participation becomes compliance.

The map gradually replaces the territory.

The issue is rarely bad intentions.

More often it is a gradual narrowing of attention.

Towards Relational Reading

Over time, these questions began to appear across very different contexts.

Community initiatives.

Governance dialogues.

Organisational change processes.

Technology projects.

Educational environments.

Although the topics differed, a similar pattern repeatedly emerged.

People often moved quickly towards solutions while carrying very different assumptions about the situation itself.

What appeared to be disagreement about action frequently revealed deeper differences in interpretation.

This observation gradually led to a different line of inquiry.

Rather than beginning with intervention, what would happen if greater attention were given to the way situations are perceived, interpreted and understood before decisions are made?

The exploration of this question became the starting point for Relational Reading.

The next chapter describes how this inquiry emerged through practice and why it eventually became the foundation of the Me–We–World framework.

3. The Emergence of Relational Reading

A Pattern That Kept Returning

The idea of Relational Reading did not emerge from a single theory, methodology or research project.

It emerged gradually.

Across different contexts, involving different people, different questions and different forms of practice, a similar pattern kept returning.

Conversations about solutions often concealed deeper differences in interpretation.

Disagreements that appeared to concern policy frequently revealed questions of trust.

Technical discussions exposed underlying tensions around responsibility, legitimacy or participation.

What initially appeared to be a problem of coordination often turned out to be a problem of orientation.

Again and again, attention was drawn to the same question:

What are people actually responding to?

From Community Building to Systemic Questions

Many of the early experiences that informed Me–We–World emerged in community-based settings.

Neighbours, volunteers, citizens, professionals and organisations were invited to work together around shared concerns.

The assumption was often straightforward.

If people could come together, exchange information and identify common interests, collective action would naturally follow.

Sometimes this happened.

Often it did not.

People who appeared to agree on an issue nevertheless struggled to move forward. >>

Conversations became repetitive.

Frustrations accumulated.

Solutions generated new disagreements.

Over time it became clear that information alone was rarely the limiting factor.

What mattered just as much were the conditions under which people interpreted information, the relationships through which meaning was created and the assumptions that remained unspoken.

The Me–We Question

This observation eventually gave rise to a recurring inquiry.

How do individual experiences relate to collective realities?

And how do both relate to the wider systems within which they are embedded?

The distinction between Me, We and World emerged as a practical way of exploring these questions.

Not as separate levels.

Not as categories.

But as relational dimensions that continuously influence one another.

A personal concern may reflect a collective pattern.

A collective pattern may be shaped by institutional conditions.

Institutional conditions may in turn influence personal experience.

What appeared separate often proved deeply interconnected.

Encounters With Systems Thinking

As the work evolved, systems thinking became an increasingly important influence. >>

>>The writings of Donella Meadows and many others offered valuable insights into feedback loops, structures, incentives and leverage points.

These perspectives helped explain why certain patterns persisted even when people were motivated to change them.

At the same time, a new question emerged.

Systems thinking often asks:

Where can a system be influenced most effectively?

This is an important question.

Yet practical experience suggested that another question frequently preceded it.

Before deciding where to intervene, people often struggled to understand what they were actually looking at.

The challenge was not only intervention.

The challenge was interpretation.

Reading Before Leverage

This insight became increasingly visible in projects involving governance, participation, community development, technology and systemic change.

Discussions about incentives revealed deeper questions about intention.

Conversations about accountability exposed tensions around trust.

Efforts to improve coordination highlighted differences in meaning and lived experience.

Again and again, leverage points appeared to depend upon something that had not yet been sufficiently explored:

the way a situation was being read.

Gradually a simple principle emerged:

Before asking where to intervene, it may be necessary to understand what is being affected.

This shift did not replace systems thinking.

It complemented it. >>

Reading became a necessary step before leverage.

Towards Relational Reading

Over time, these observations began to converge.

Questions of participation, governance, systems change, community building, ethics and human experience appeared less separate than they initially seemed.

What connected them was not a particular solution.

It was a shared need for orientation.

Relational Reading emerged as an attempt to address this need.

Not as a method for producing consensus.

Not as a tool for eliminating uncertainty.

But as a practice of exploring how situations become meaningful before decisions are made about how they should change.

The chapters that follow describe the conceptual foundations that gradually emerged from this inquiry.

The emergence of Relational Reading was not the result of a single project or methodology.

It developed gradually through years of practice across community development, governance dialogues, systems innovation, educational environments and collaborative design processes.<<

* Several of these experiences have been documented separately and remain available as companion publications for readers interested in the practical origins of the discipline.

4. What Is Relational Reading?

Reading Before Acting

Most contemporary approaches to change begin with action.

The focus may differ—strategy, innovation, governance, participation, systems change or design—but the underlying question often remains similar:

What should be done?

Relational Reading begins elsewhere.

It starts from the observation that before people disagree about solutions, they often disagree about the situation itself.

They may use the same words while referring to different realities.

They may support the same objective while interpreting the challenge in fundamentally different ways.

They may participate in the same process while experiencing it through entirely different conditions.

Before action comes interpretation.

Before intervention comes orientation.

More Than Observation

At first glance, Relational Reading may appear similar to observation, analysis or sensemaking.

It shares characteristics with all three.

Yet it is not identical to any of them.

Observation often focuses on what can be seen.

Analysis seeks to explain.

Sensemaking attempts to create coherence.

Relational Reading is concerned with something slightly different.

It asks how a situation becomes meaningful in the first place. >>

What conditions shape perception?

Which relationships influence interpretation?

What assumptions remain unnoticed?

What appears obvious to one participant while remaining invisible to another?

These questions shift attention from events themselves to the relational processes through which events are understood.

Situations Are Not Self-Explanatory

Complex situations do not arrive with fixed meanings attached to them.

Meaning emerges through interaction.

People interpret situations through experience, responsibility, culture, education, institutional roles, personal history and countless other influences.

As a result, different participants may be responding to very different realities while believing they are discussing the same issue.

Relational Reading does not attempt to eliminate these differences.

It seeks to make them visible.

The aim is not agreement.

The aim is greater awareness of how understanding itself is formed.

Between Relativism and Certainty

The recognition that perspectives differ can easily lead in two directions.

One response is to search for certainty.

To determine which interpretation is correct and which should be dismissed.

Another response is to conclude that every interpretation is equally valid and that no meaningful judgement can be made. >>

>> Relational Reading follows neither path.

It begins from the assumption that every perspective is partial.

This does not make all perspectives equivalent. Nor does it remove the need for responsibility.

People still make decisions.

Institutions still establish rules.

Communities still negotiate priorities.

The challenge is not to avoid judgement, but to recognise the conditions under which judgement takes place.

Reading as Participation

A common image of understanding suggests that we first observe reality and then form an opinion about it.

Relational Reading proposes something different.

We are never entirely outside the situations we seek to understand.

We participate in them.

Through our roles, histories, interests, responsibilities and relationships, we influence the situations we observe while simultaneously being influenced by them.

Reading therefore becomes a participatory act. The reader is never entirely separate from what is being read.

This applies equally to individuals, organisations, communities and institutions.

A Discipline of Orientation

Relational Reading is not a method for producing consensus.

Nor is it a technique for eliminating uncertainty.

Its purpose is more modest, and perhaps more demanding.

It seeks to cultivate the capacity to remain attentive to relationships, conditions and meanings before moving too quickly towards intervention. >>

In this sense, Relational Reading can be understood as a discipline of orientation. A practice of becoming more conscious of how situations are interpreted, positioned and navigated.

The chapters that follow introduce the conceptual foundations that support this practice.

Beginning with the relational field itself: **Me, We and World.**

Life

5. The Relational Field



Beyond Individuals and Systems

Many approaches to complexity distinguish between individuals, groups and systems. While these distinctions can be useful, they can also create the impression that reality consists of separate layers that can be studied independently. Experience suggests otherwise. Personal concerns often reflect collective dynamics. Collective dynamics are influenced by institutional conditions. Institutional conditions shape personal experience. What appears separate is frequently intertwined. For this reason, Me–We–World does not begin by dividing reality into categories. Instead, it invites us to explore different dimensions of participation that are present within every situation.

Three Dimensions of Participation

The terms Me, We and World do not describe separate entities. They describe three interconnected dimensions through which situations can be experienced, interpreted and navigated. Every situation contains all three. Every participant moves between them. And every intervention affects them simultaneously. The distinction is therefore not intended to separate reality, but to help reveal relationships that might otherwise remain unnoticed. >>

Me

The Me dimension concerns lived experience. It includes questions of perception, identity, responsibility, motivation, memory and personal meaning. People do not encounter situations as neutral observers. They participate from particular positions shaped by experience and circumstance. The Me dimension draws attention to how situations are experienced from within.

It asks:

- What is being experienced?
- What concerns are present?
- What responsibilities are felt?
- What remains unspoken?

The purpose is not to individualise complex issues, but to recognise that every collective process is ultimately experienced by people.

We

The We dimension concerns relationships. It focuses on what emerges between people rather than within them. Trust, dialogue, misunderstanding, cooperation, conflict, belonging and collective sensemaking all emerge within this relational space. Many contemporary challenges are often described as technical, political or organisational. Yet in practice they frequently involve questions of relationship. How do people coordinate? understanding itself is formed. >>

>> How do they establish legitimacy?
How do they navigate disagreement?
How do they build trust?
The We dimension invites attention to the quality of these relationships and to the meanings that emerge through them.

World

The World dimension concerns context. It includes the wider conditions within which participation takes place. Institutions. Technologies. Economic structures. Policies. Governance systems. Ecological realities. Cultural narratives. These broader conditions shape what appears possible, desirable or legitimate. At the same time, they are continuously influenced by human action. The World dimension reminds us that situations never exist in isolation. They are always embedded within larger systems of relationship and dependency.

A Relational Perspective

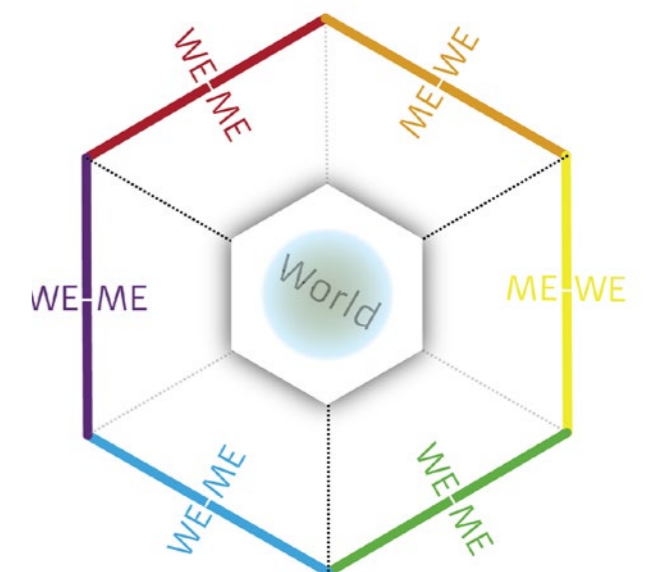
The value of the relational field does not lie in the three dimensions themselves. Its value lies in the movement between them. A concern expressed at the level of Me may reveal a pattern at the level of We. A tension within the We dimension may be reinforced by conditions at the level of World. A policy decision at the level of World may alter the experience of individuals and communities. Relational Reading therefore pays attention not only to what appears within each dimension, but also to how the dimensions influence one another. >>

The aim is not to determine which dimension matters most. The aim is to cultivate awareness of their interdependence.

From Dimensions to Reading

The relational field provides an orientation. It helps reveal where attention is being directed and where important aspects of a situation may remain unseen. Yet orientation alone is not enough. Once a situation is approached through the dimensions of Me, We and World, another question emerges: What exactly are we reading within these dimensions? This question led to the development of a second layer of observation. Not simply where we look, but what we look for. The next chapter introduces this reading framework through three interconnected lenses:

Conditions, Relations and Actions. <<





What Are We Actually Looking At?

Once a situation is approached through the dimensions of Me, We and World, another challenge quickly emerges.

Where should attention be directed?

Even relatively simple situations contain an overwhelming amount of information.

People describe experiences.

Relationships influence interpretation.

Institutions create constraints.

Events unfold.

Decisions are made.

Consequences emerge.

Without some form of orientation, it becomes difficult to distinguish between what is happening, why it is happening and what might happen next.

The challenge is not only where to look.

The challenge is what to look for.

Three Modes of Reading

Over time, a recurring pattern began to emerge across different contexts.

Whether people were discussing community initiatives, governance questions, organisational change, technology projects or societal transitions, their observations often clustered around three different aspects of a situation.

They spoke about circumstances.

They spoke about relationships.

And they spoke about actions.

This observation eventually led to the development of the C·R·A framework:

Conditions — Relations — Actions

Not as a sequence.

Not as a process model.

But as three complementary modes of reading.

>>

Conditions

Conditions refer to the circumstances within which a situation unfolds.

Some conditions are visible.

Others remain largely unnoticed until they begin to influence behaviour.

Conditions may include:

- available resources
- institutional constraints
- emotional states
- historical circumstances
- technological infrastructures
- social norms
- environmental realities

Conditions do not determine outcomes.

They influence possibilities.

They shape the space within which relationships and actions become possible.

When conditions remain invisible, interventions often address symptoms rather than causes.

Relations

Relations concern the connections through which meaning emerges.

People rarely respond directly to events.

They respond to how events are interpreted.

These interpretations are influenced by relationships.

Between individuals.

Between communities.

Between institutions.

Between people and systems. >>

>> Relations influence:

- trust
- legitimacy
- expectations
- power
- cooperation
- conflict

They shape how situations are understood and how responses become coordinated.

What appears to be a disagreement about action often reveals a difference in relationship or interpretation.

Actions

Actions refer to the decisions, behaviours and interventions that become visible within a situation.

Actions include:

- individual choices
- collective agreements
- organisational decisions
- policies
- technologies
- governance arrangements

Actions are often the most visible aspect of a situation.

For this reason they frequently receive the greatest attention.

Yet actions do not emerge in isolation. They are influenced by conditions and relationships, while simultaneously reshaping both.

Every action creates new conditions.

Every action alters relationships.

The cycle continues. >>

Reading Across Me, We and World

The CRA framework becomes particularly useful when combined with the relational field introduced in the previous chapter.

Conditions, Relations and Actions can all be explored through the dimensions of:

- Me
- We
- World

This creates a richer picture of a situation. A challenge that appears personal may reveal collective dynamics.

A relational tension may be reinforced by systemic conditions.

An institutional intervention may influence individual experience in unexpected ways.

The purpose is not to fill every box in a matrix. The purpose is to cultivate a more

comprehensive reading of the situation being explored.

From Awareness to Conditions

Earlier versions of Me–We–World used a different framework:

Awareness – Relations – Actions

This insight led to a shift.

Rather than beginning with awareness, the framework now begins with conditions.

Not because awareness is unimportant.

But because awareness itself emerges within conditions.

The transition from A·R·A to C·R·A reflects a broader movement within MWW:

from understanding reality as something that is observed from a distance towards

understanding reality as something in which we already participate. >>



	Me	We	World
Conditions	Embodied condition	Relational condition	Contextual condition
Relation	Personal positioning	Shared meaning-making	Structural framing
Action	Personal commitment	Collective agreements	Systemic implementation

>> Reading Before Solving

The purpose of CRA is not to explain everything. Nor is it intended to replace specialised expertise.

Its purpose is more modest.

It offers a way of slowing down the tendency to move directly towards solutions.

By exploring conditions, relations and actions together, practitioners often discover aspects of a situation that would otherwise remain invisible.

In this sense, CRA functions less as an analytical tool and more as a discipline of attention.

A way of reading before responding.

Towards Relational Quality

While C·R·A helps reveal the structure of a situation, another question remains.

Two situations may contain similar conditions, relationships and actions, yet feel profoundly different.

One may generate trust.

Another may produce anxiety.

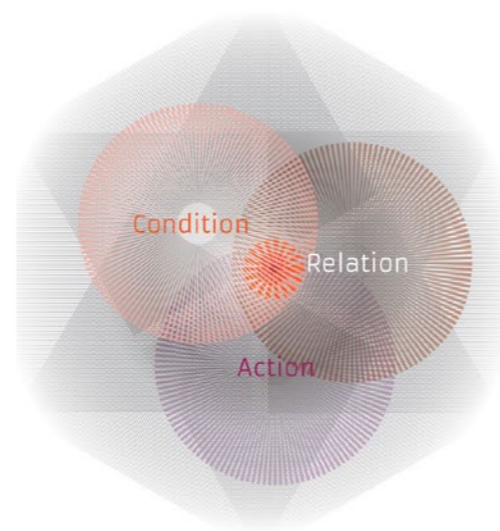
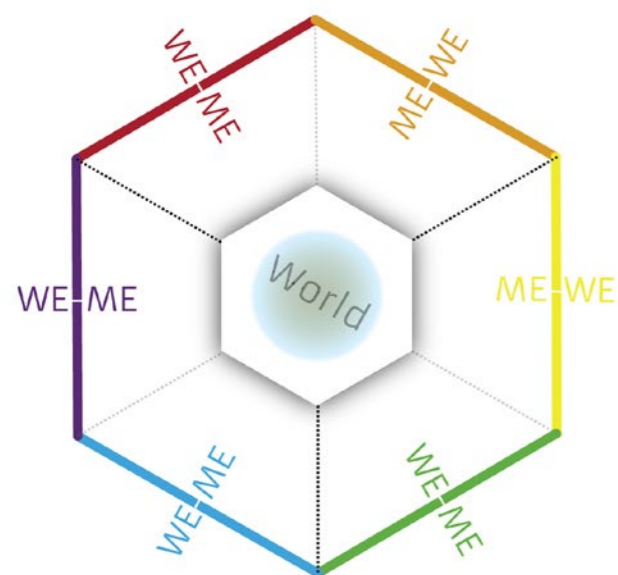
One may invite participation.

Another may lead to withdrawal.

To better understand these differences, MWW introduces a second layer of observation.

Not focused on structure, but on quality.

The next chapter explores this dimension through the S·T·U·A·R·T framework. <<



These are the first 6 chapters of the new whitepaper 2026-2027 Chapters 7-12 will be available by the end of June 2026