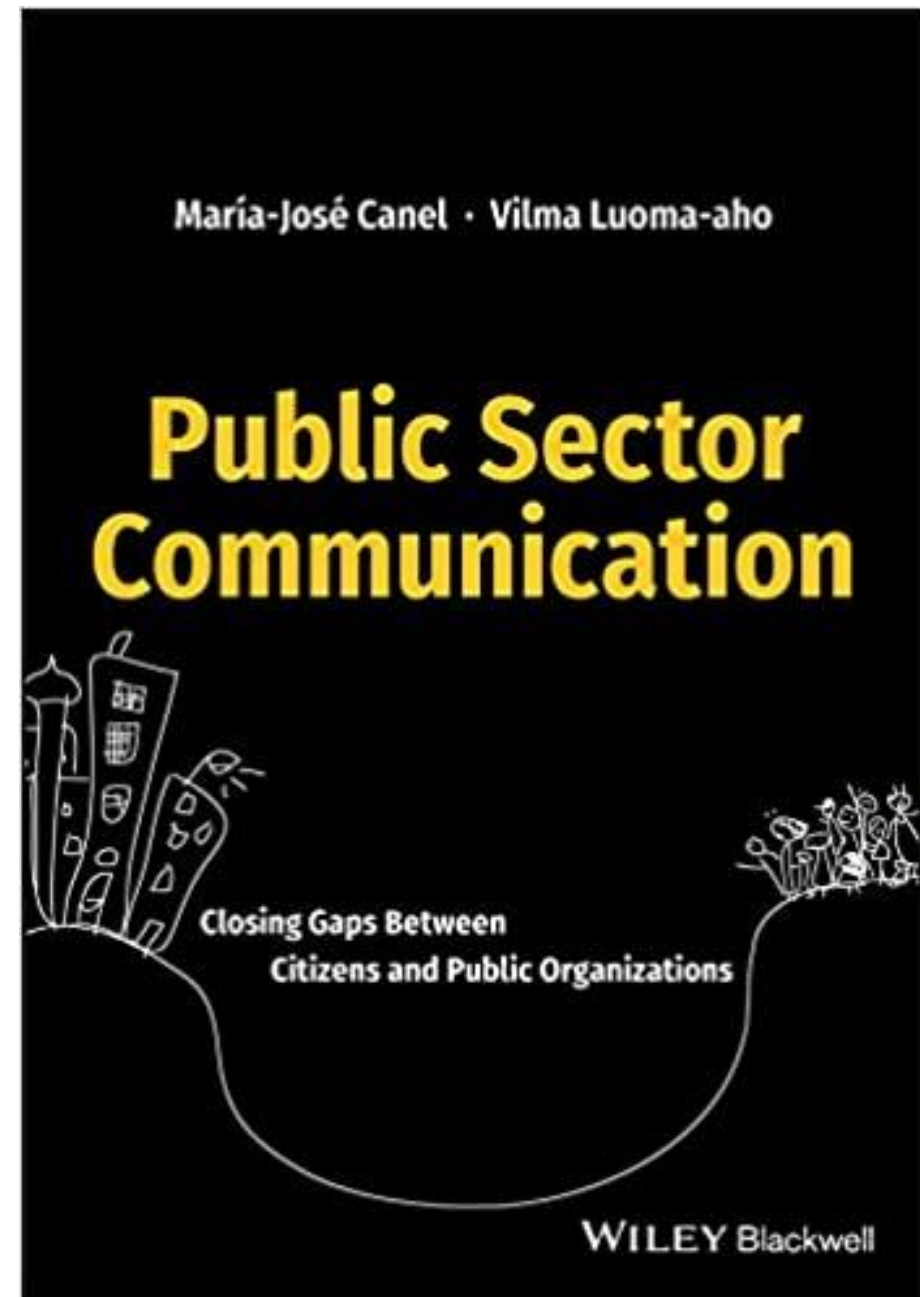
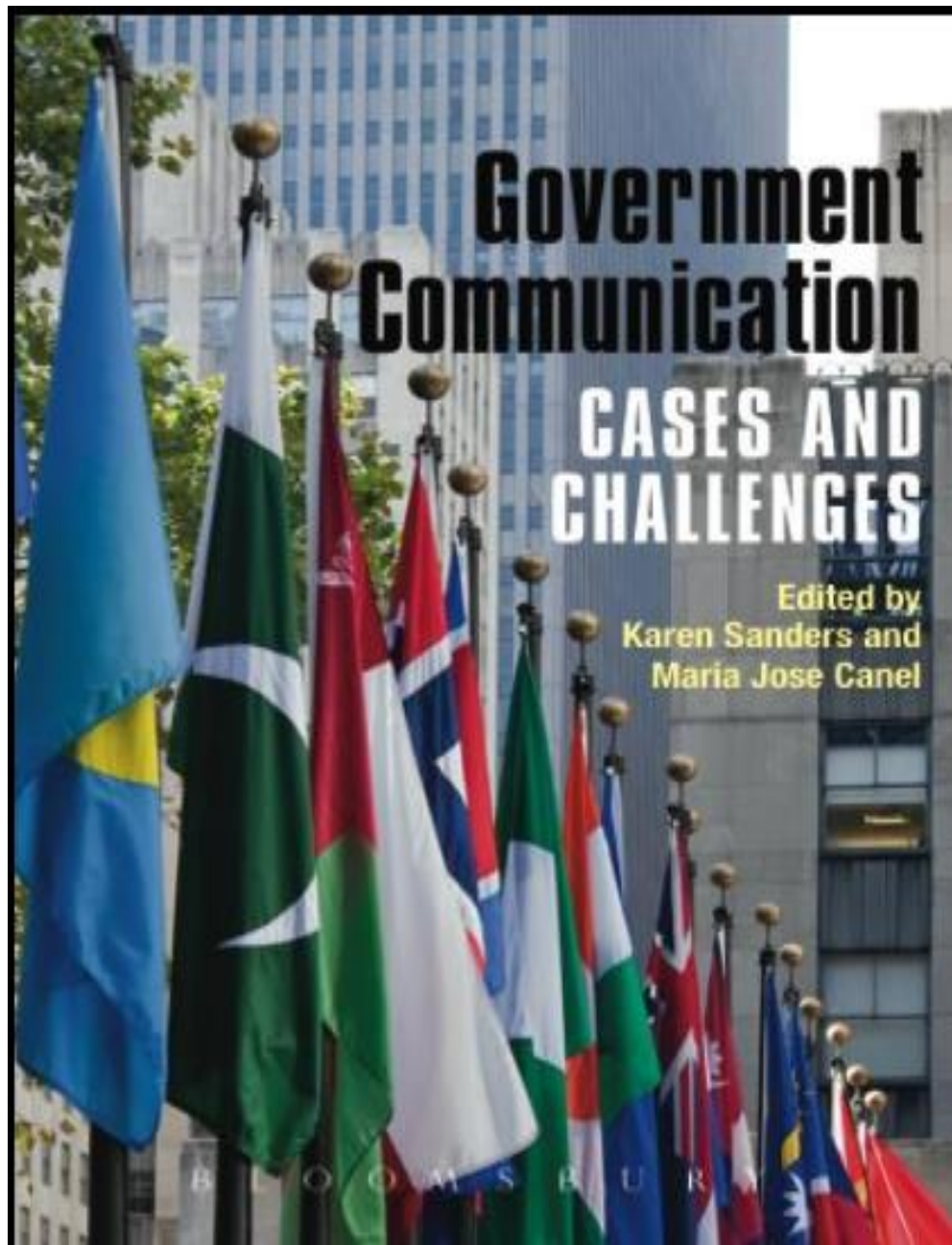




# Listening to the plurality of contemporary voices. What can be learned from the public sector?

María José Canel

University Complutense Madrid, Spain



# What is common?

Listening for communicating the Christian message



Listening for communicating the Public Sector

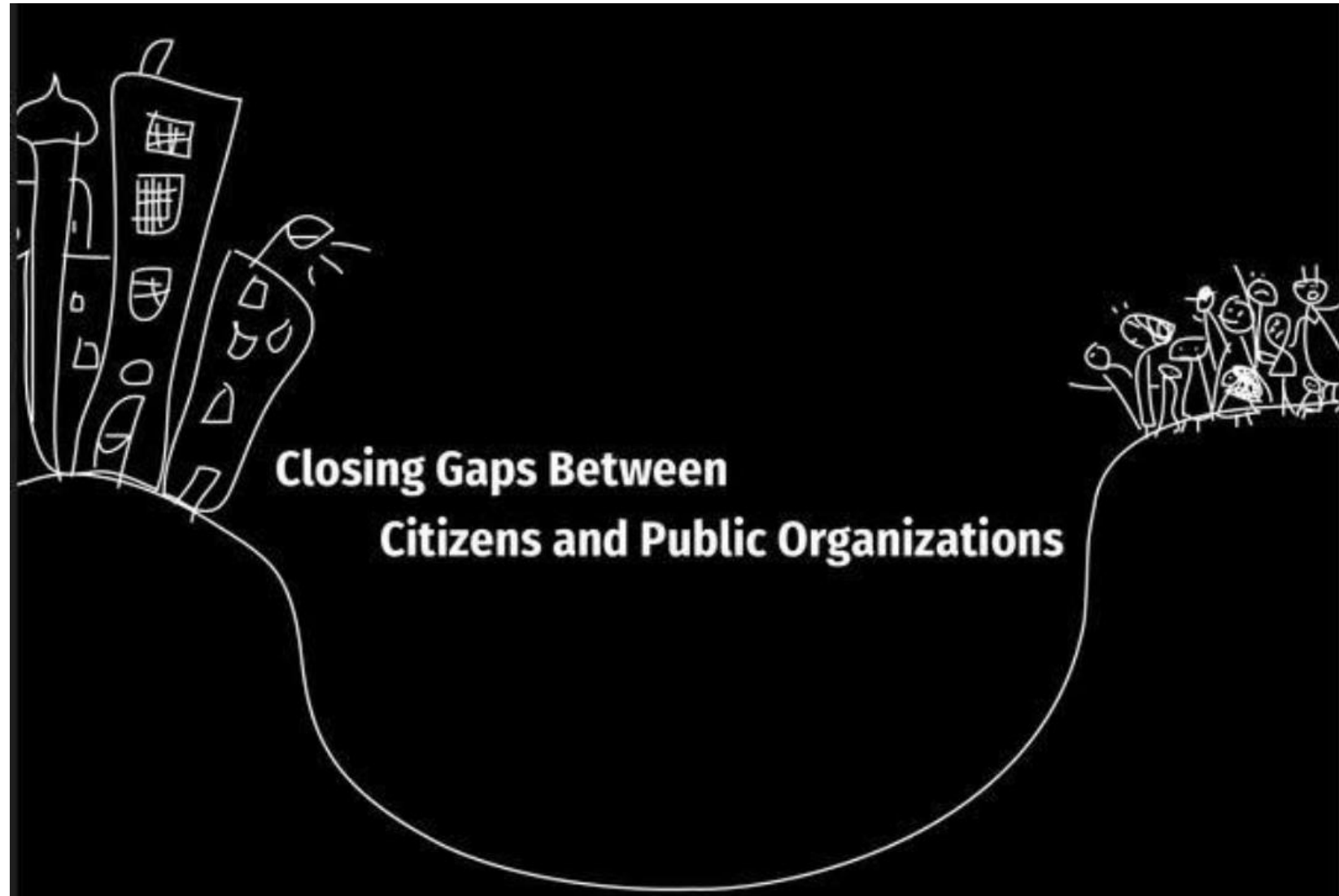




**Closing Gaps Between  
Citizens and Public Organizations**



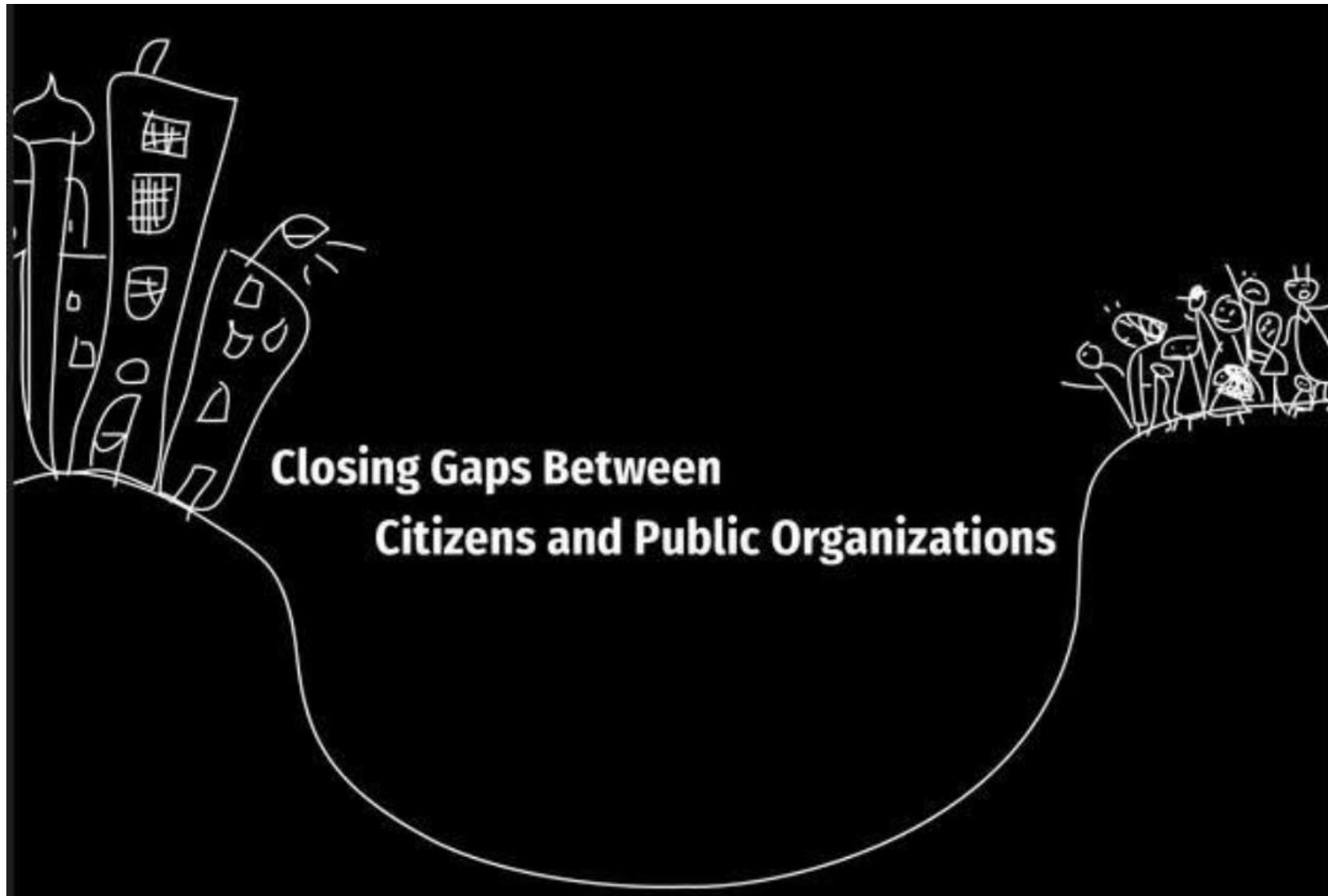
“The hearts of society  
are far away from us!”  
(public leader)





## Closing Gaps Between Citizens and Public Organizations

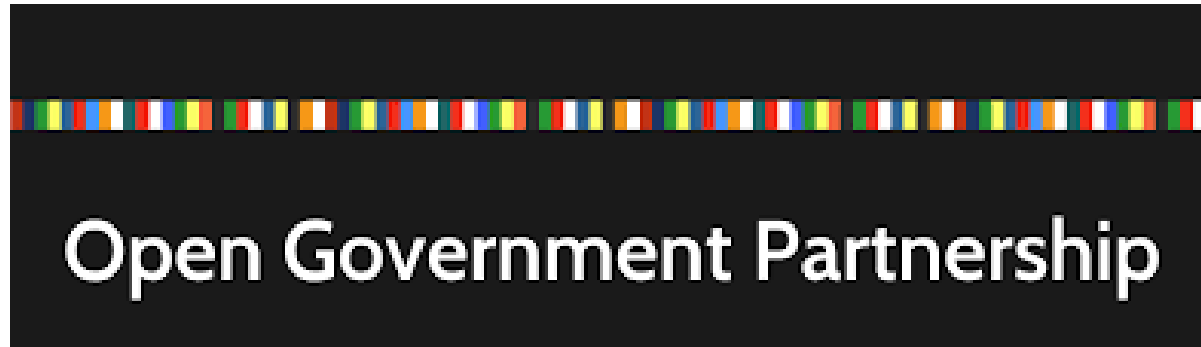
- There is an **imperative need** for organizations to **close gaps** with stakeholders



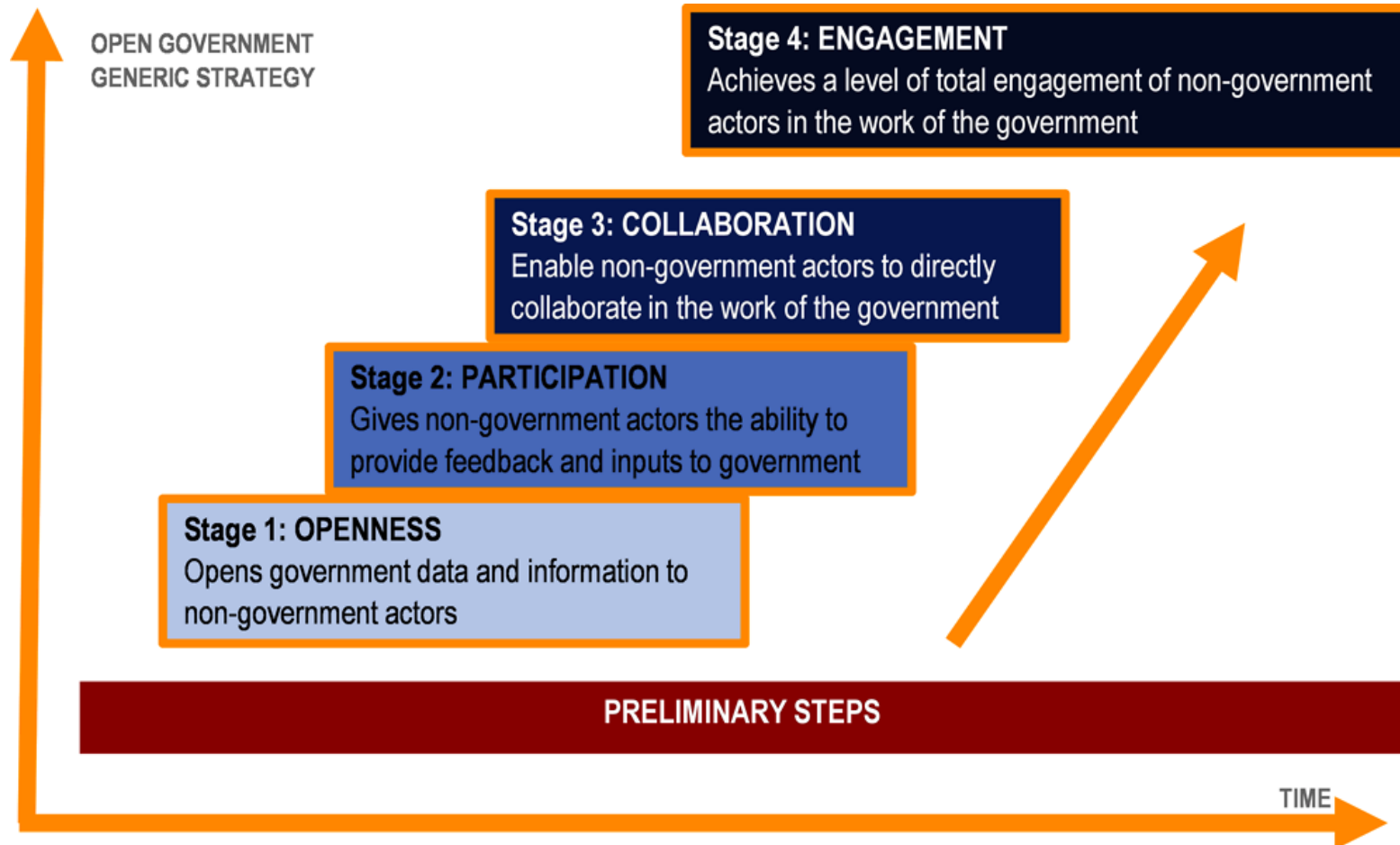
➤ There is an **imperative need** for organizations to **close gaps** with stakeholders

➤ Which implies an **imperative need** for organizations to **listening** to stakeholders

# The imperative need to listening in the public sector



# The challenge: not only about listening



<https://n9.cl/q0t3s>

The challenge:

Listening

To involve

The challenge:

Listening

To involve

What for?



What is common?  
The challenge

# Refining the challenge



# Refining the challenge



Relevance *versus* Listening?

# Refining the challenge

Relevance *versus* Listening?

To what extent are listening data relevant for self-identity?





# What is common? Common problems

# There is organizational resistance to change

## COMMON PROBLEMS

# Organizational resistance to change

- Listening is costly
- Inertia
- What is heard includes contradictory voices
- Difficulties to make sense of listening data
- **Fears of undermininig self-identity**

The public sector:  
fears of loosing power

The Christian message:  
fears of trivializing  
christianism

# Stakeholders' resistance to speak

## COMMON PROBLEMS

# Stakeholders' resistance to speak

- Low participation: 3%
- Skepticism: What is this government looking for with this listening process?
- Frustration: “They didn’t hear me”
- Distrust caused by a listening process

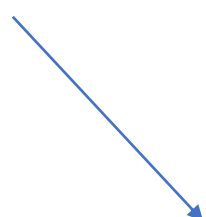
# Frustration



**Listening enhances accountability, consensus, legitimacy, social capital and trust**

(Coursey, Yang, & Pandey, 2012; Bovaird et al., 2015; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Yang & Pandey, 2011)

Mixed  
evidences  
about listening  
outcomes



**There is suspicion about what it is attempted to with listening** (Rhodes, 2003; Head, 2007; Head, 2008)

**If politicized, there is skepticism** (Sanders & Canel, 2015)

**Expectations are disappointed, and with it, satisfaction and trust go down** (Font & Navarro, 2013)

# There are communication gaps

## COMMON PROBLEMS

# Communication gaps



- What we do



- What people perceive



**GAP**



There is a problem of communication

Luhoma-aho, 2008; Sanders et al., 2010; Canel et al., 2010; Luoma-aho & Canel, 2021

# The problem of listening in postruth times

## COMMON PROBLEMS



**2016**





In post-truth:

**“Objective facts are less influential** in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”  
(Oxford dictionaries)

**Emotions carry more weight than evidence:** There is “a certain relativism where personal values, beliefs and emotions take precedence” (Ihlen et al. 2019, 2).

**Content is trivialized:** informed analysis are presented on the same footing as bombastic claims or rumors.

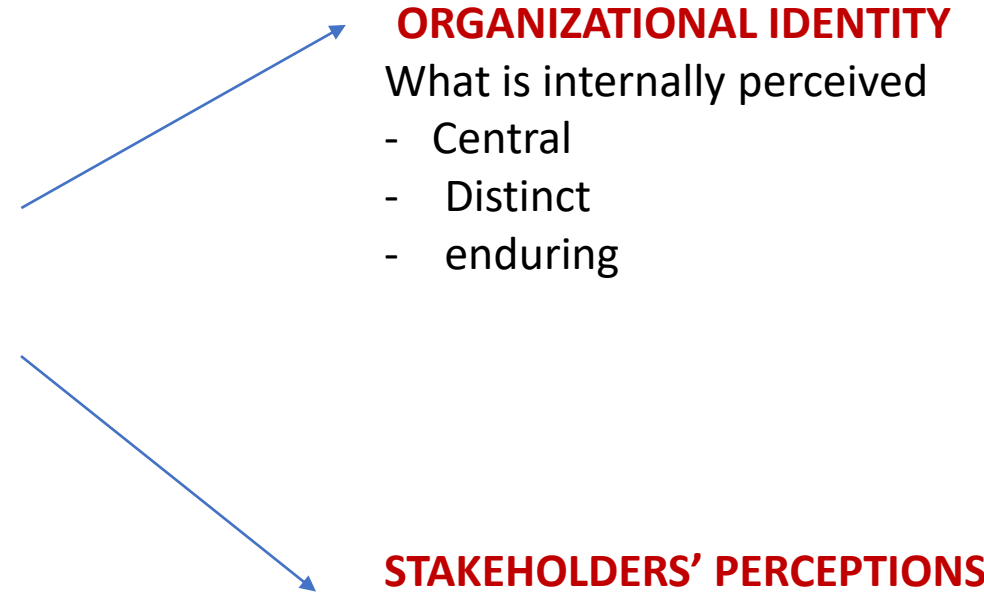
How to process listening data which are based on emotions over evidences without diminishing self-identity?

What to do with your  
stakeholders' perceptions?

# The concept of “identity resilience”

# “Identity resilience”

“Organizational identity resilience represents the **dynamic maneuvering** of organizational members between:

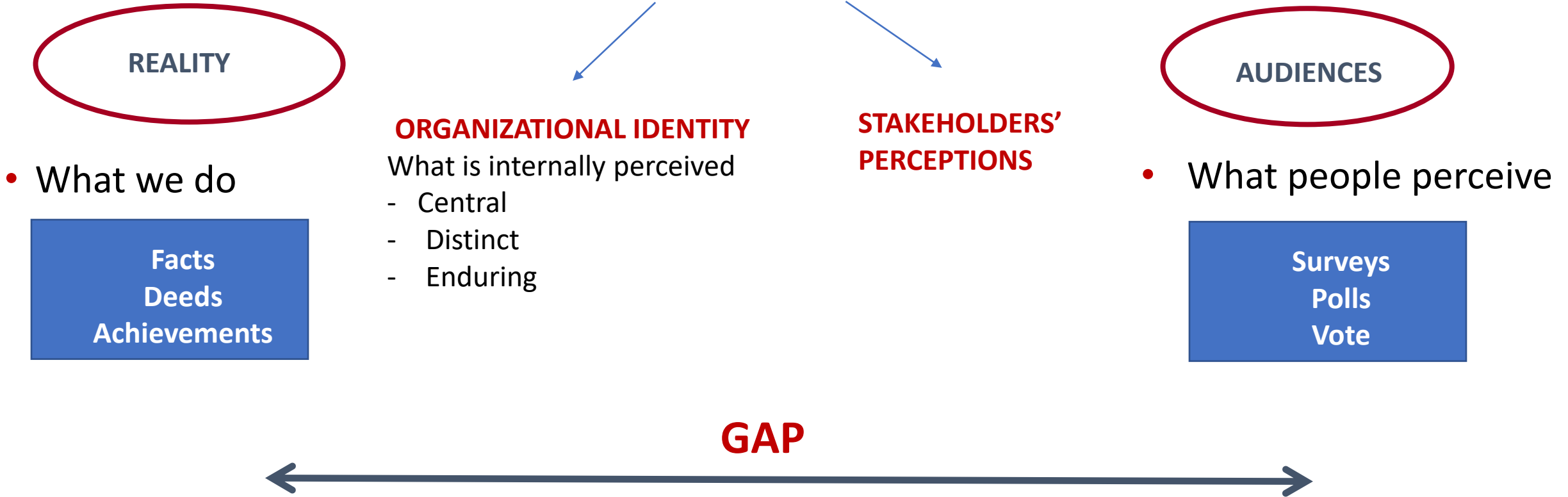


that **over time positively distinguishes what the organization is and will remain”**

(Anderson & Jones-Bodie, 2022)

# Managing the tension at the communication gap

## Dynamic maneuvering



There is a problem of communication

Luhoma-aho, 2008; Sanders et al., 2010; Canel et al., 2010; Luoma-aho & Canel, 2021

# SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS TO BUILD YOUR “IDENTITY RESILIENCE”

Listen to monitor and address  
your communication gaps to  
avoid “post-communication”

Am I post-communicating with  
the Christian message?

# Possible 'post-communication'

REALITY

- What we do

Facts  
Deeds  
Achievements

AUDIENCES

- What people perceive

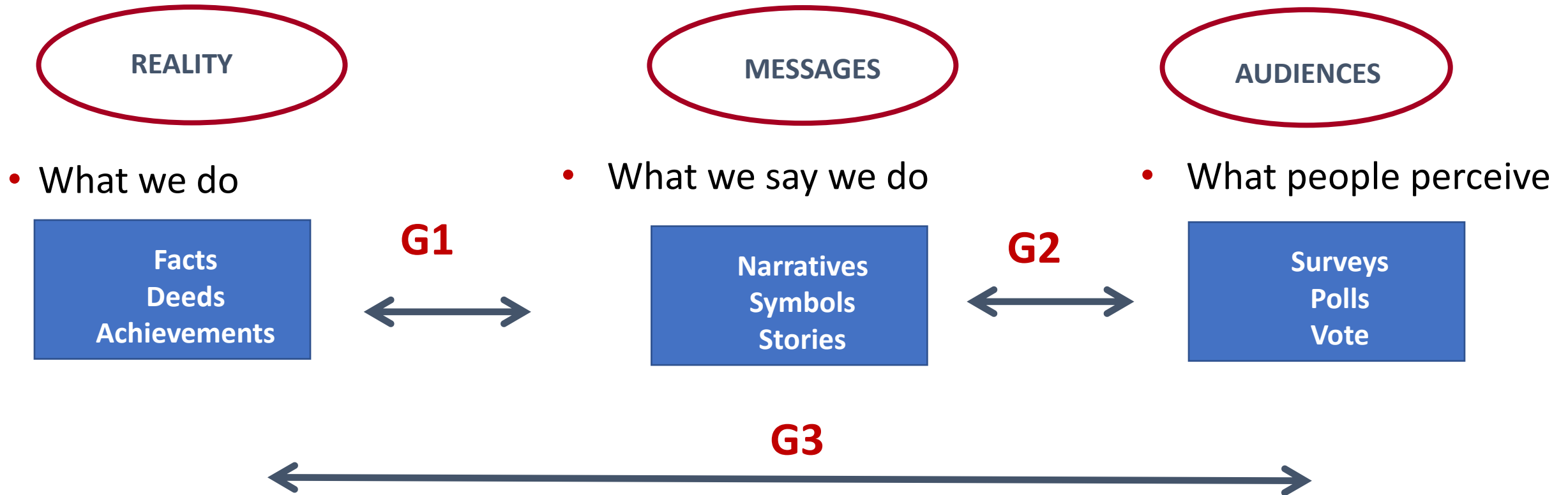
Surveys  
Polls  
Vote

**GAP**

There is a problem of communication

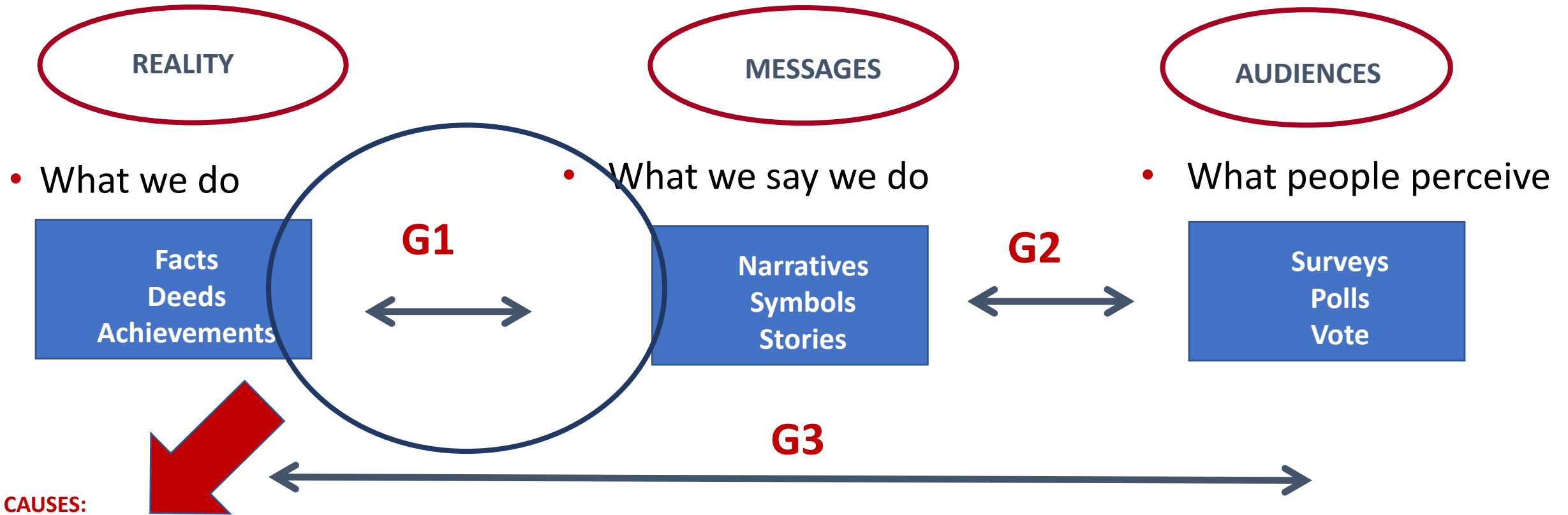
Luhoma-aho, 2008; Sanders et al., 2010; Canel et al., 2010; Luoma-aho & Canel, 2021

# Possible 'post-communication'



Luhoma-aho, 2008; Sanders et al., 2010; Canel et al., 2010; Luoma-aho & Canel, 2021

# Listen to plot the gap



Non-defined identity

Deficient strategy

Deficient coordination

Luhoma-aho, 2008; Sanders et al., 2010; Canel et al., 2010; Luoma-aho & Canel, 2021

A deeper cause for my 'post-communication':

**Am I really on my reality?**

# Am I really on my reality?

- **Possible drivers for my 'post communication':**
  - **Lack of listening data:** my self identity is defined without stakeholders' participation
  - **Too prescriptive approaches for strategic communication:**  
The comfort of deliberation *versus* the “mud” of action

# The challenge

Relevance *versus* Listening?

What is the value you attribute to your stakeholders in defining your identity?



# Reassure fearing bosses

**BUILDING IDENTITY RESILIENCE**

# Reassure fearing bosses

- Facilitate internal consensus about key attributes
- Build spaces for jointly make sense of listening data

# Challenge too confident bosses

**BUILDING IDENTITY RESILIENCE**

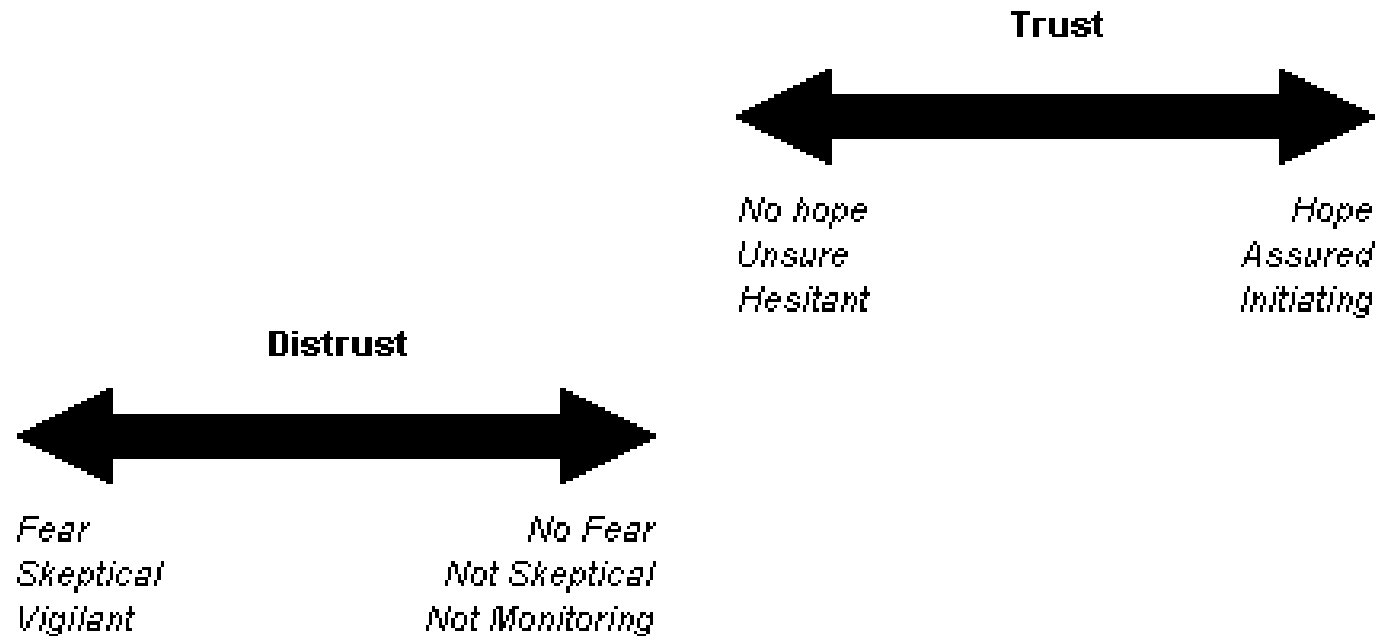
# Challenge too confident bosses

- Make sure your boss gets in front of the mirror: Do you really know what our stakeholders perceive of us?
- Do you really acknowledge your stakeholders' contribution?
- Are you really willing to listen?
- Are you open to share power?
- Do we have clear listening policies?

# Learn about working with hostile audiences

**BUILDING IDENTITY RESILIENCE**

# Distrust ≠ Low trust



Tomlinson & Roy, 2003, [https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/trust\\_overview](https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/trust_overview)



## The paradox of trust: perceived risk and public compliance during COVID-19 in Singapore

Trust in a competent government should not lead one to assume that little or no individual action is required to manage risks. Our team found that high levels of public trust in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with lower levels of compliance and a belief that individual action was not required for effective risk management.

Read the full journal article by the Lead Scientist, Olivia Jensen and Research Fellow, Catherine Wong from the LRF Institute for Public Understanding of Risk (IPUR) at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13669877.2020.1756386>

- COVID-19: high levels of public trust results in lower levels of compliance and a belief that individual action is not required to manage the risks effectively.

Wong, C. M. L., & Jensen, O. (2020). The paradox of trust: perceived risk and public compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic in Singapore. *Journal of Risk Research*, 23(7-8), 1021-1030.

# Distrust $\neq$ Low trust

Functional Distrust	Functional Trust
Disfunctional Distrust	Disfunctional Trust

(Oomsels, 2017)

# Trusting works better than asking for trust

**BUILDING IDENTITY RESILIENCE**

What about your authenticity  
when listening?



**Closing Gaps Between  
Citizens and Public Organizations**

