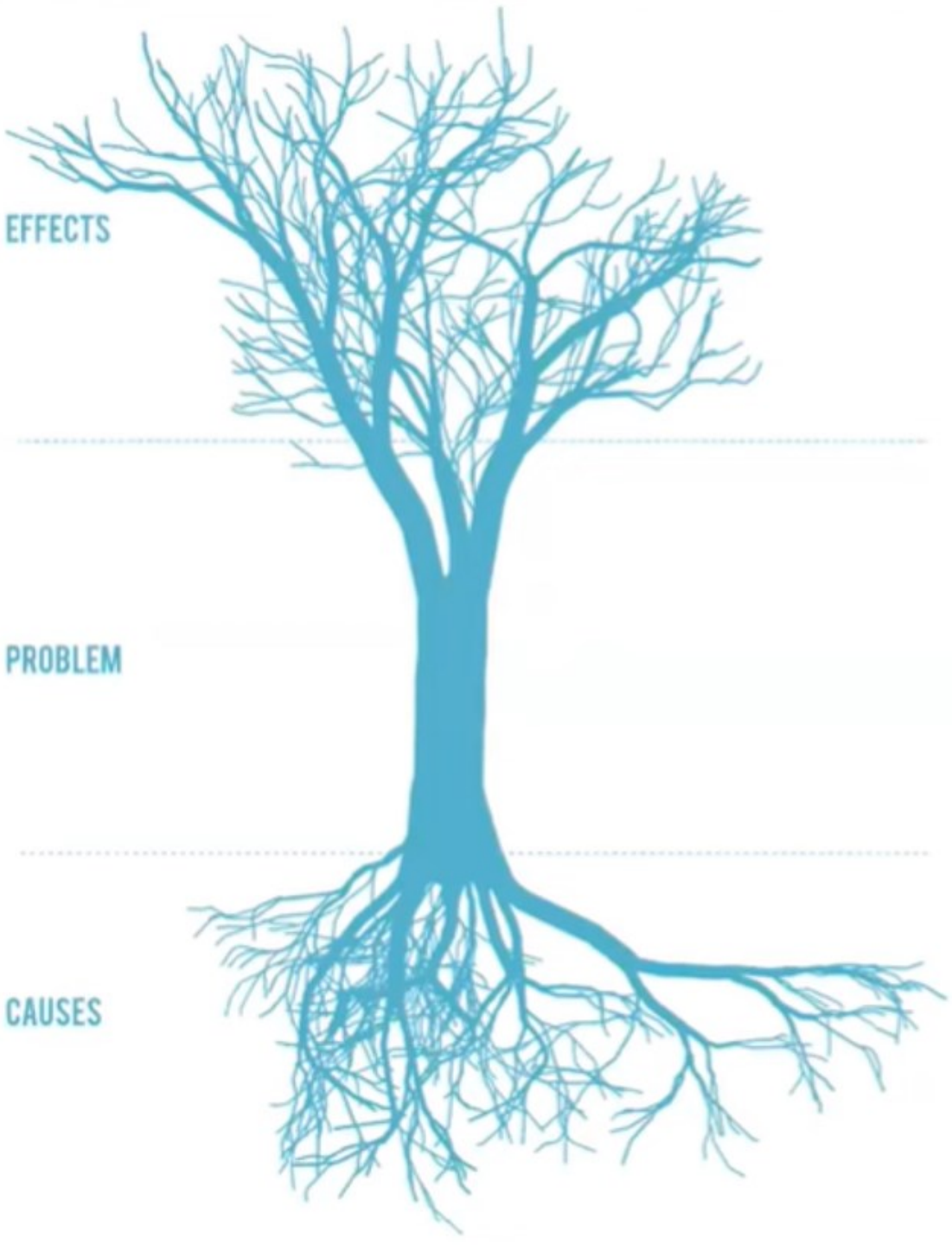
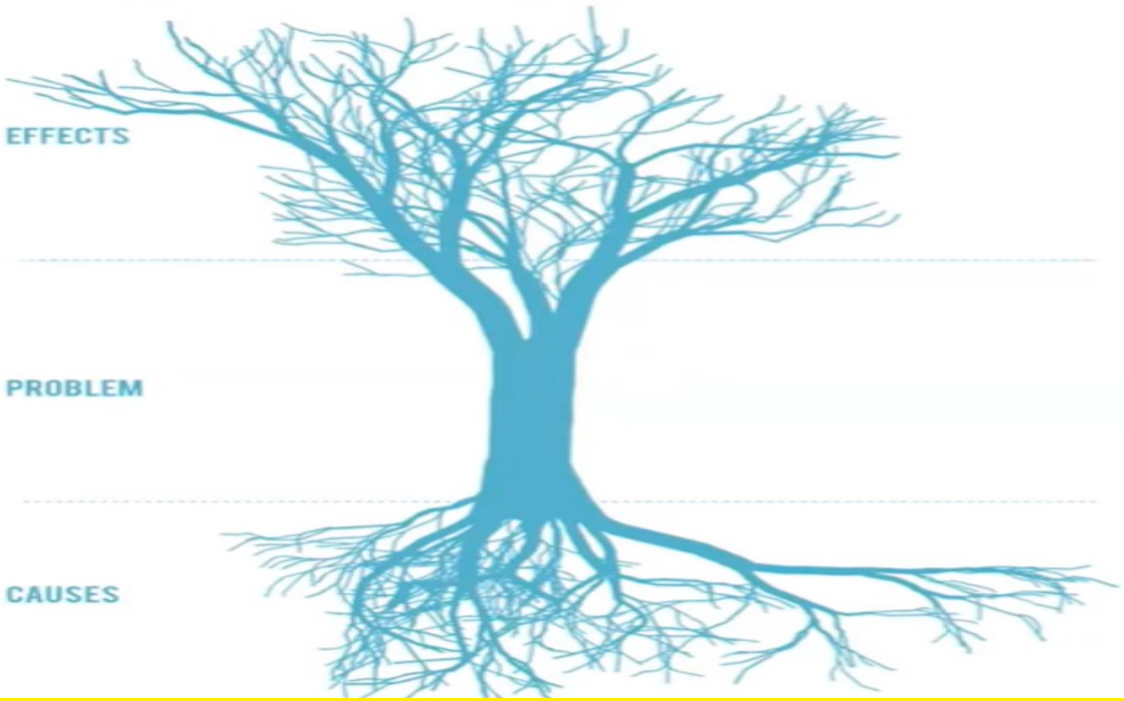
Problem Tree Analysis

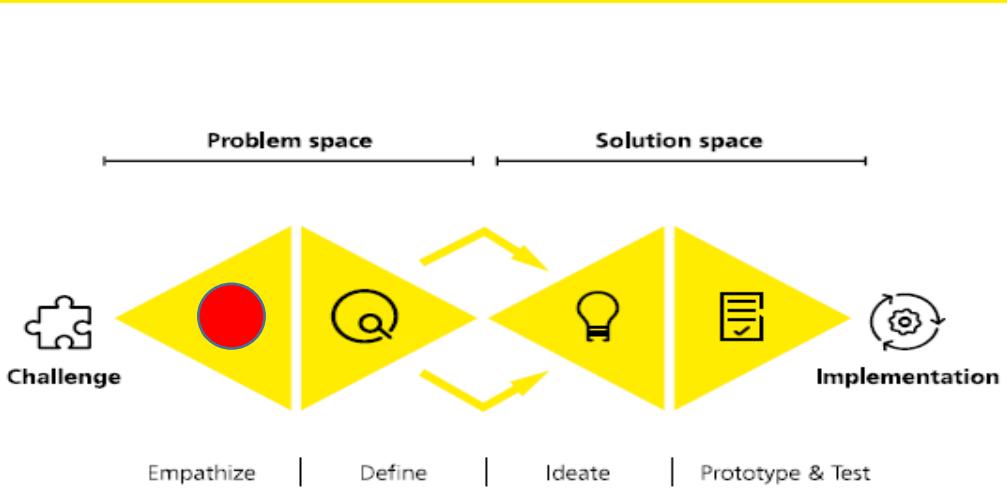
Method and Template



The problem tree analysis is …

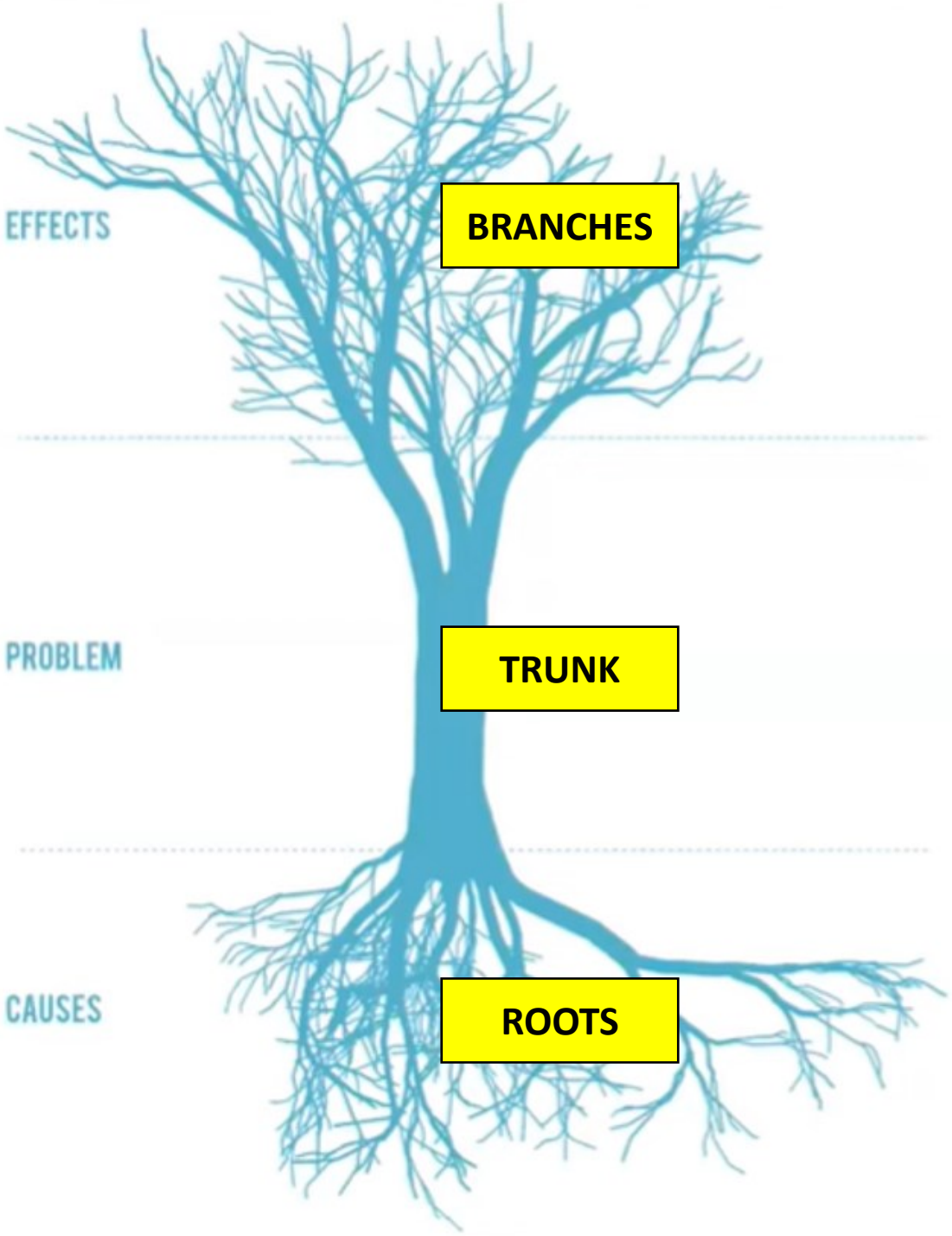
- a method to analyse the causes and effects of a problem
- to deep dive and get a holistic picture of it – in a multi-stakeholder setting
- to see how different problems sometimes connect to each other





The tool is used…

- at the start of a project to to clearly understand the problem
- to empathise and expand views before defining the aspect of the problem to be solved
- To exchange knowledge and path the way for a co-creational work spirit



The problem tree structure is …

trunk = problem to explore

roots = causes of a problem

branches = effects of causes

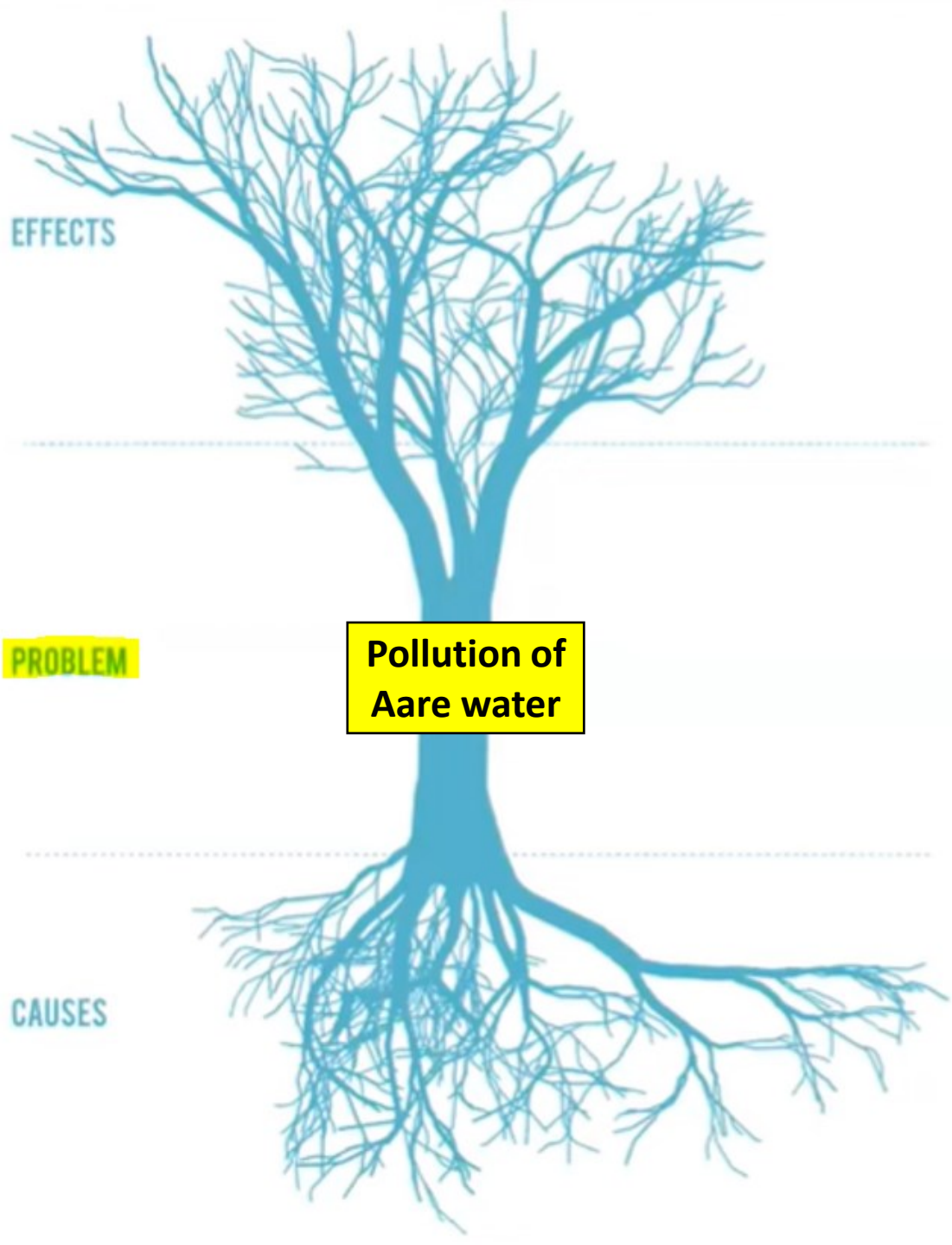
Analysis Step 1: Choose a problem

A) Identify challenges with your ecosystem beforehand or

B) Collect challenges with other stakeholders on site

✓choose one problem to tackle

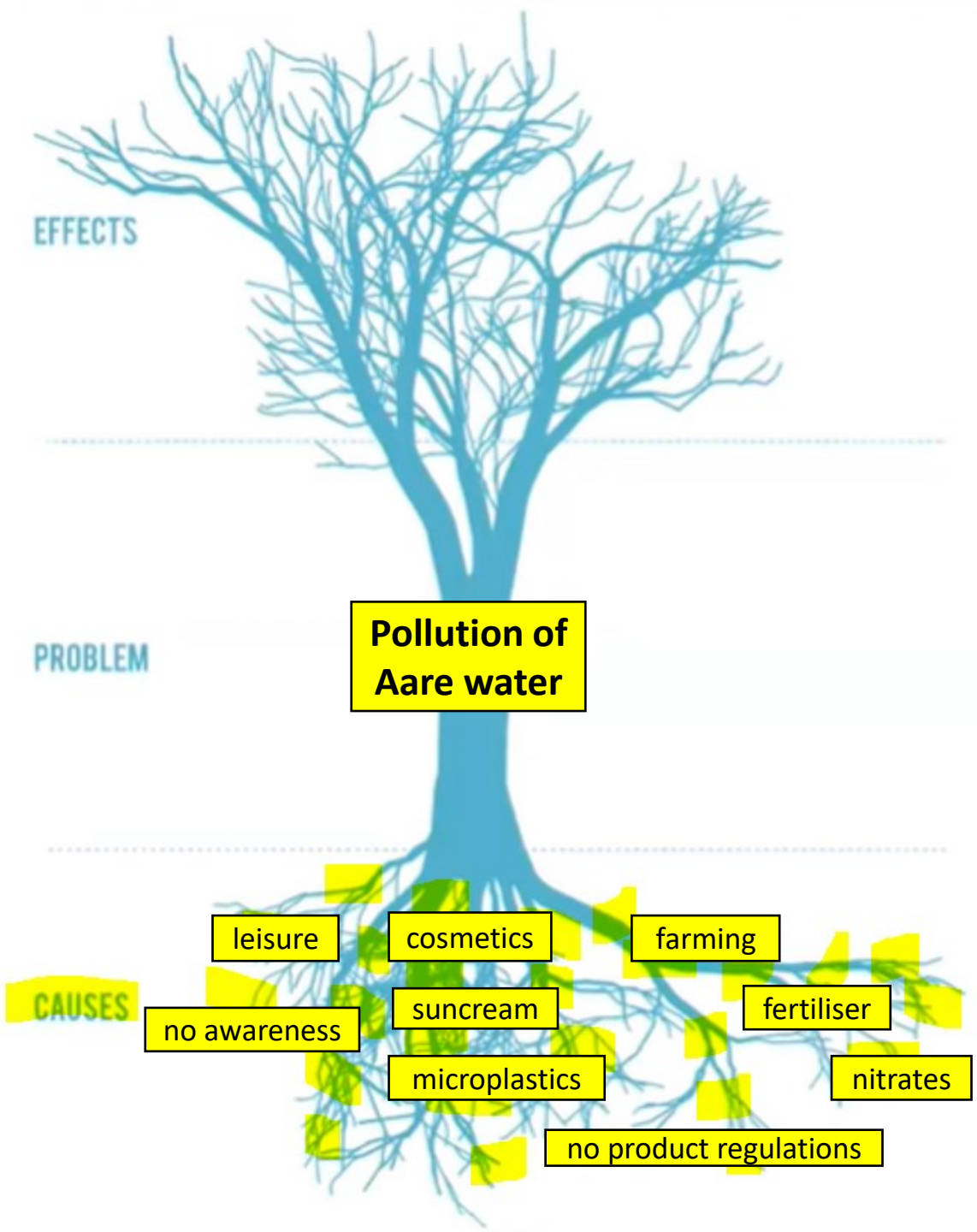
✓put the problem on the trunk



Analysis Step 2: Look for causes

- ✓discuss all possible causes in mixed teams with mixed competences
- ✓put them to the tree roots
- ✓for each cause, ask 3 times «why, why, why» to get to deeper root causes.

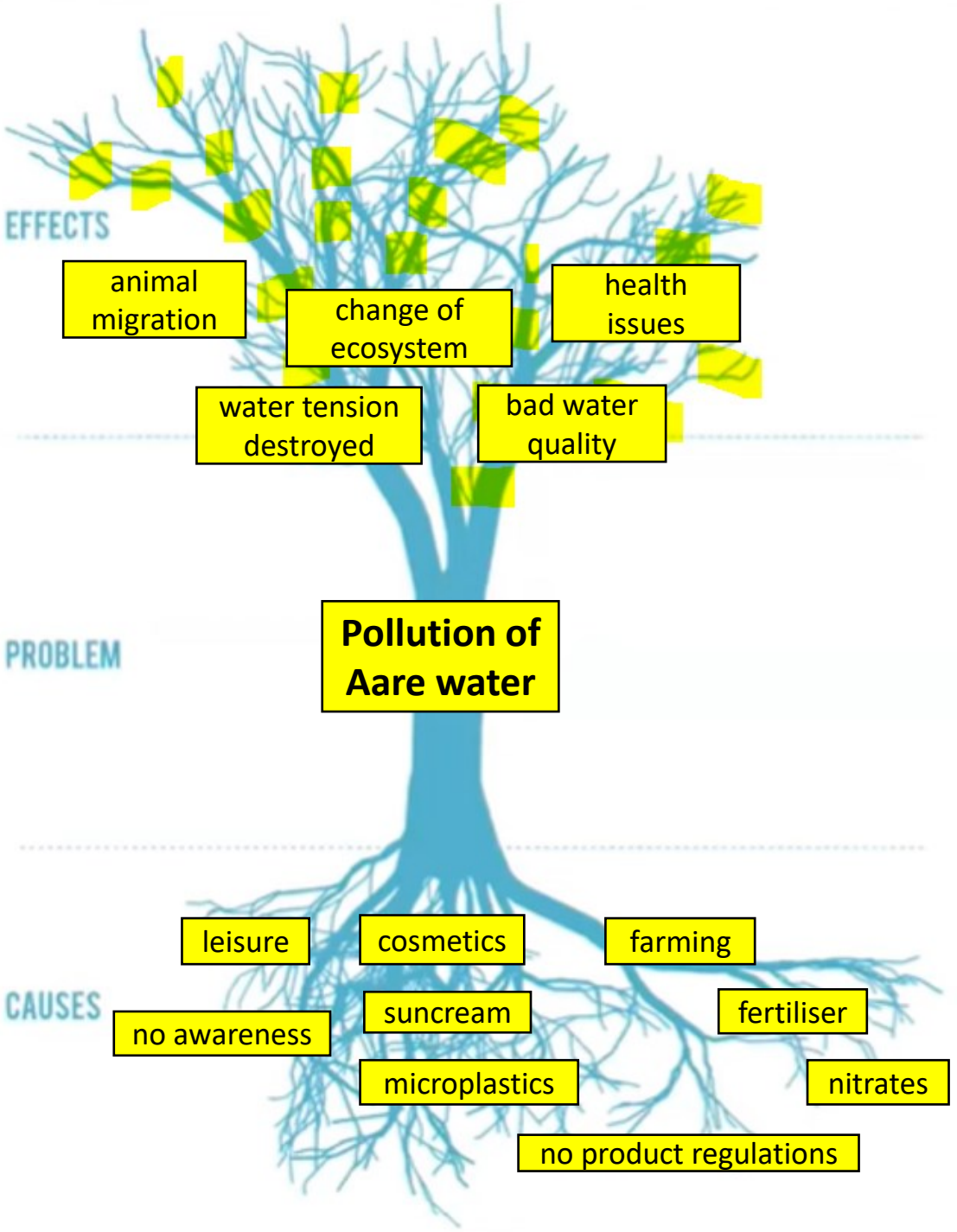
- ❖causes can be economical, social, policy-related, cultural, behavioural etc.



Analysis Step 3: Look for effects

- ✓discuss consequences of all the causes found
- ✓put them to the branches on first and second level order

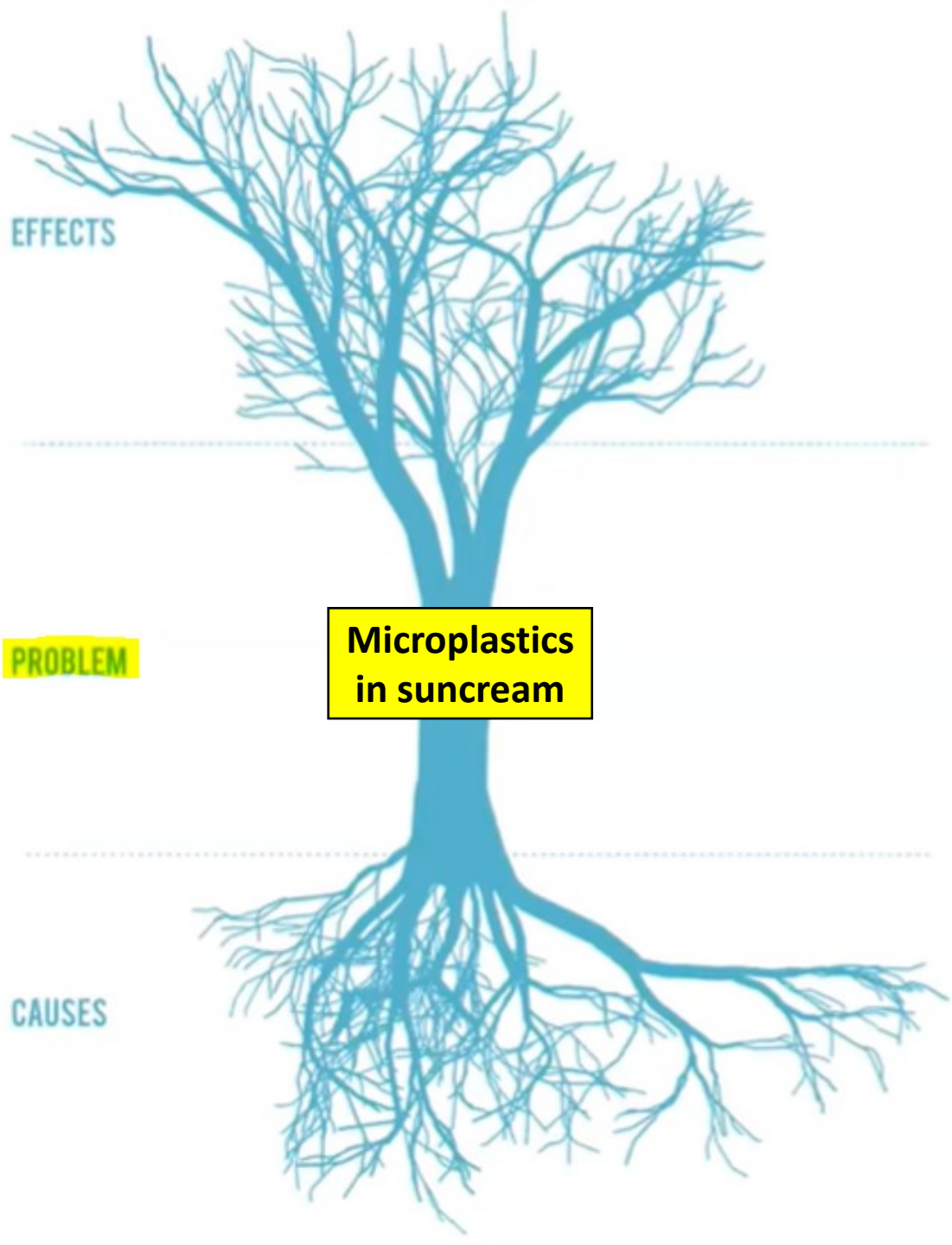
- ❖connect the consequences if you feel they are related



Analysis Step 4: Repeat excercise

- ✓causes or sub-causes can become the core problem
- ✓put a specific (sub)cause to the trunk and create a new problem tree
- ✓repeat exercise steps 1-3

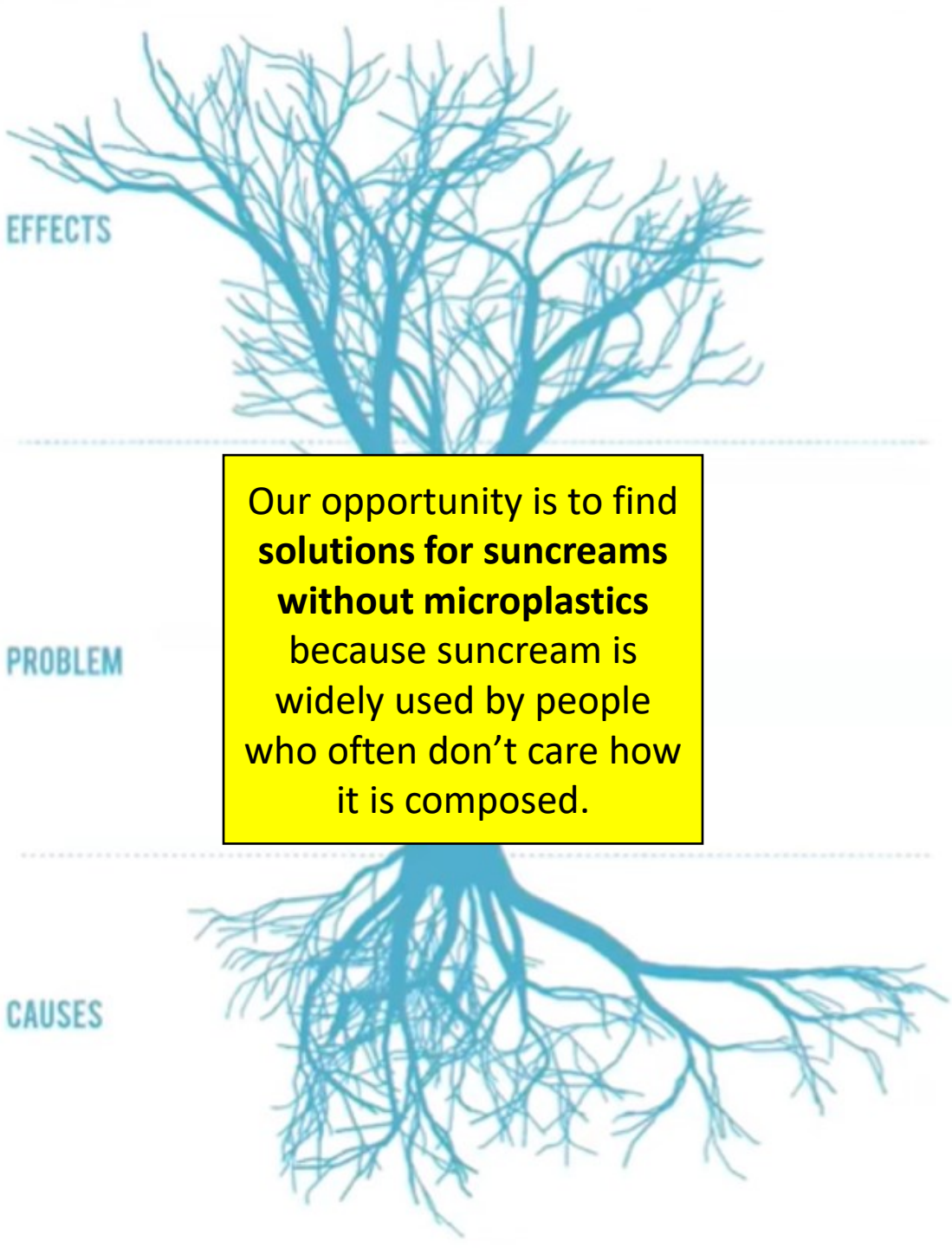
❖ this iteration step helps generate an even deeper problem understanding



Analysis Step 5: Opportunity statement

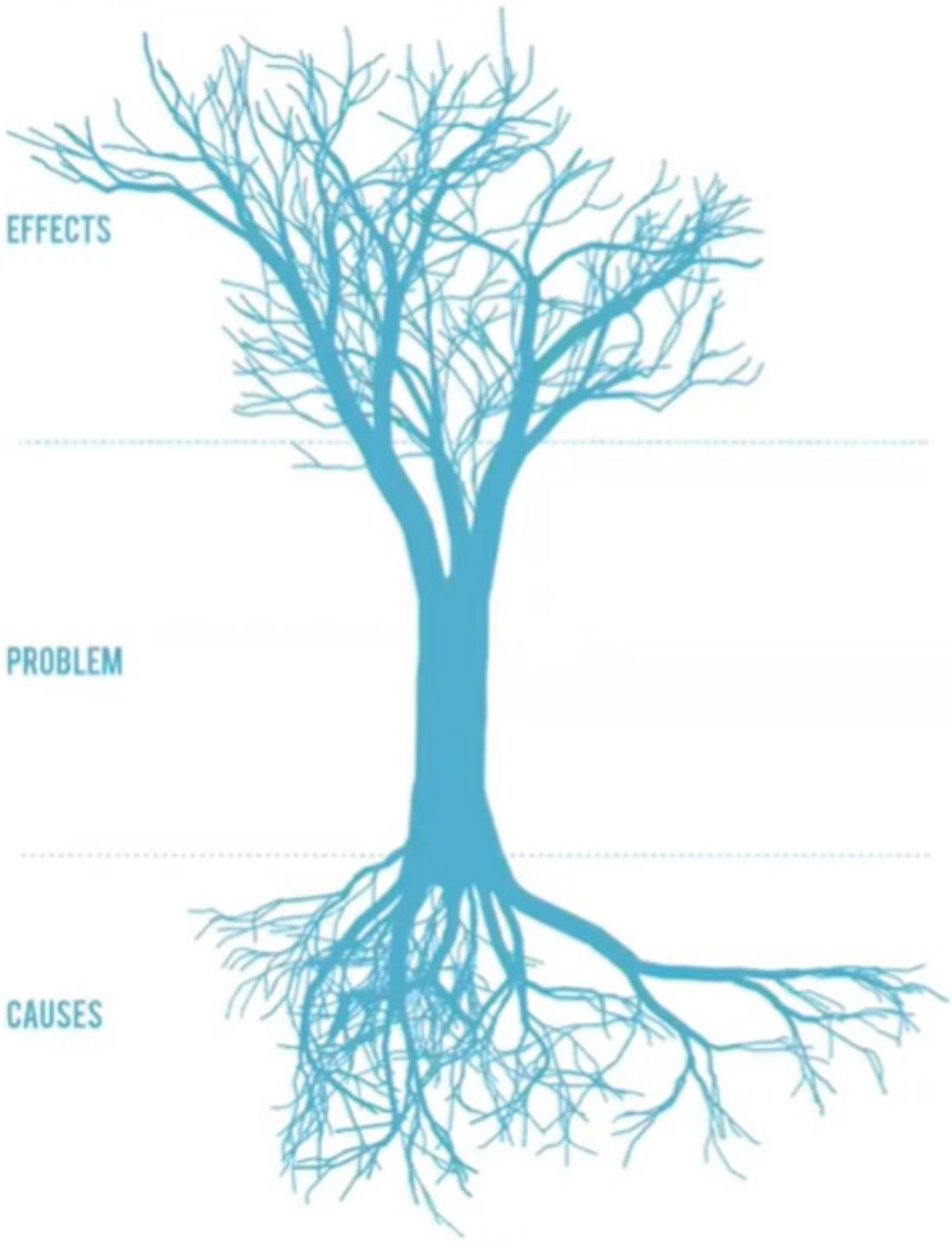
- ✓select a problem/cause in which you have expertise
- ✓research around it to see if solving it is a promising opportunity
- ✓think about the impact you can get if you remove it
- ✓formulate an opportunity statement which includes the reason to solve the problem

❖«Our opportunity is to find solutions for X because Y»



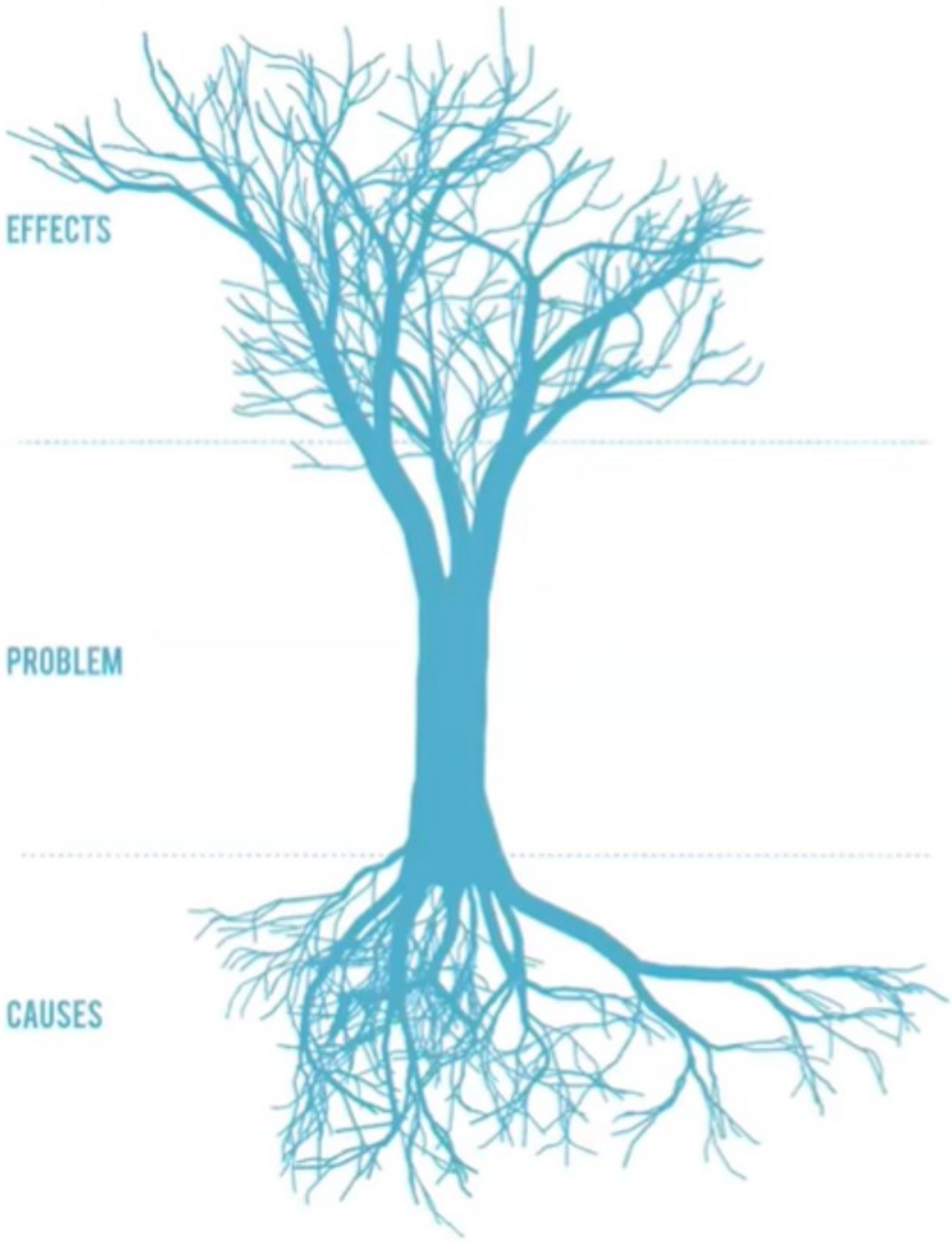
Important

- ✓don’t discuss solutions during the exercise
- ✓don’t integrate potential solutions into your opportunity statement
- ✓rate all problems equally
- ✓feel attached to a problem you want to tackle
- ✓work in teams with mixed competences and skills



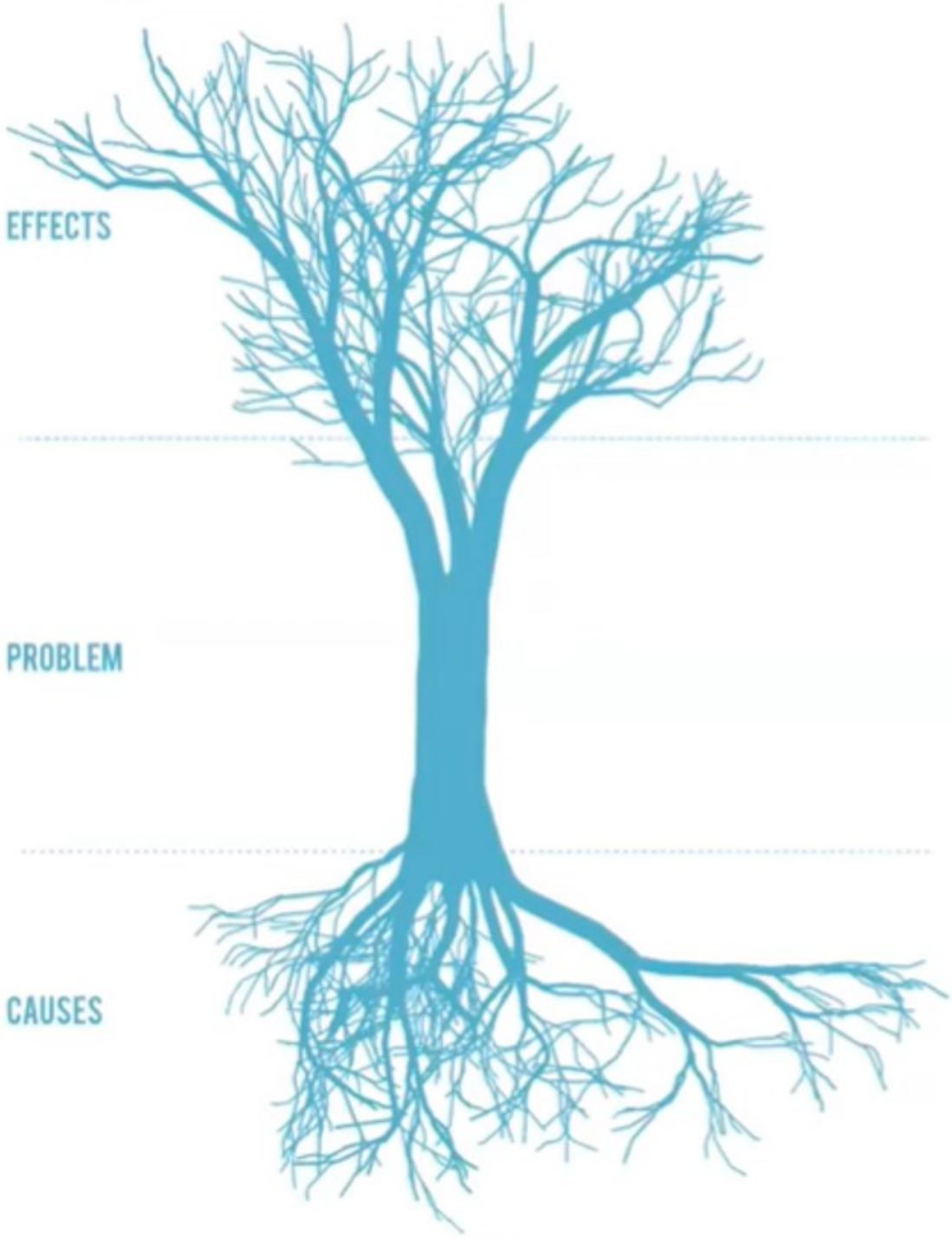
What more

- ✓focusing on the problem, the excersise does not touch on IP questions
- ✓to work faster, the different stakeholders could prepare the tree beforehand
- ✓when they get together they can complete each others picture



Links

- ✓How to master the Problem Tree Method – YouTube
- ✓Problem tree | URBACT to download a template for the problem tree analysis



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