1 October 2025

Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2025

POLISH AIRLINES LOT
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

ECS european solidarity centre

POHJOIS-POHJANMAA
COUNCIL OF OULU REGION

PROT Pomorskie Tourist Board

Ministry of Sport and Tourism

EUSBSR
EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION
Policy Area Tourism

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region

Co-funded by the European Union

1 October 2025

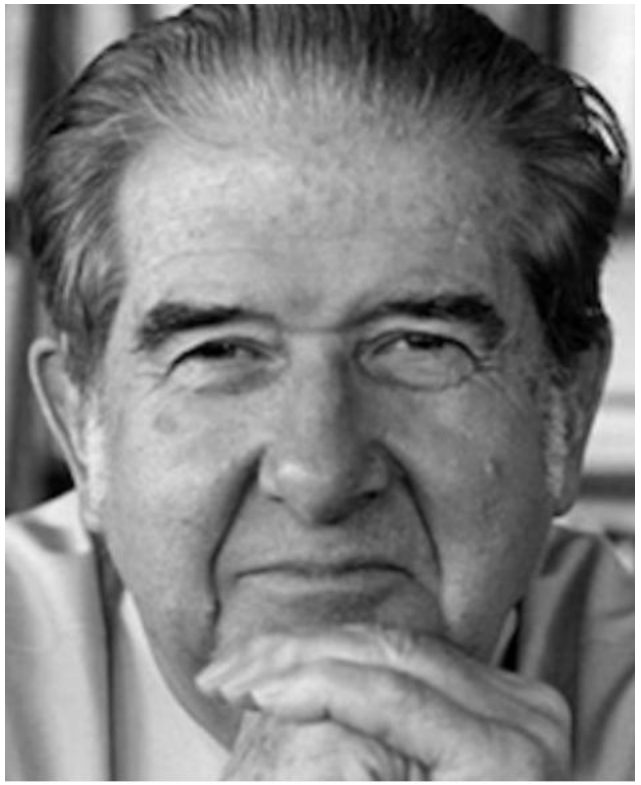
Regenerative Tourism:

Buzzword or Radical Re-think?

Anna Pollock
Conscious.Travel

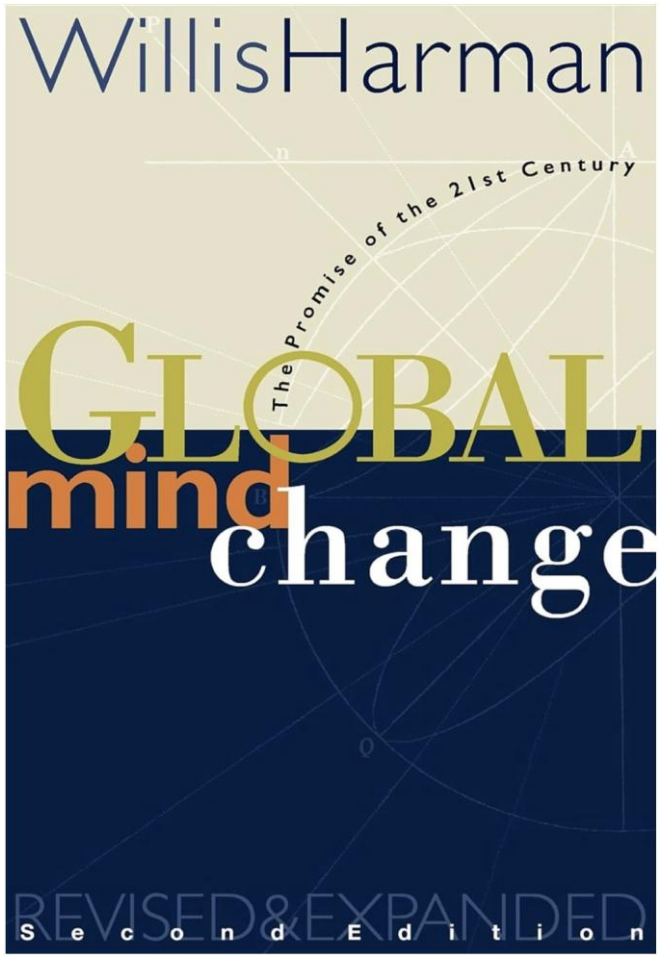
Andreas Koch
Tourythm

Early Influence



The really fundamental changes in societies have not come from the dictates of governments and the results of battles but through

- vast numbers of people changing their minds – sometimes only a little bit
- changing their internal image of reality; and
- challenging their hidden assumptions.



Is Tourism operating a flawed model?

Globally tourism comes in two forms

LARGE BRANDS

Large brands – control volume
Global, generic
Extractive – energy, water, emissions,
Standardized, homogenous systems
Focus on efficiency, quantity, yield
Price competitive
Ownership – shareholders, concentrated
Top-down decision making
Vulnerable

SMALL-MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

Small, often family owned
Localised,
Generative in community
Place-shaped solutions
Focus on quality, experience, care
Value oriented
Ownership – mixed, diverse, spread
Bottom-up
Resilient, adaptable

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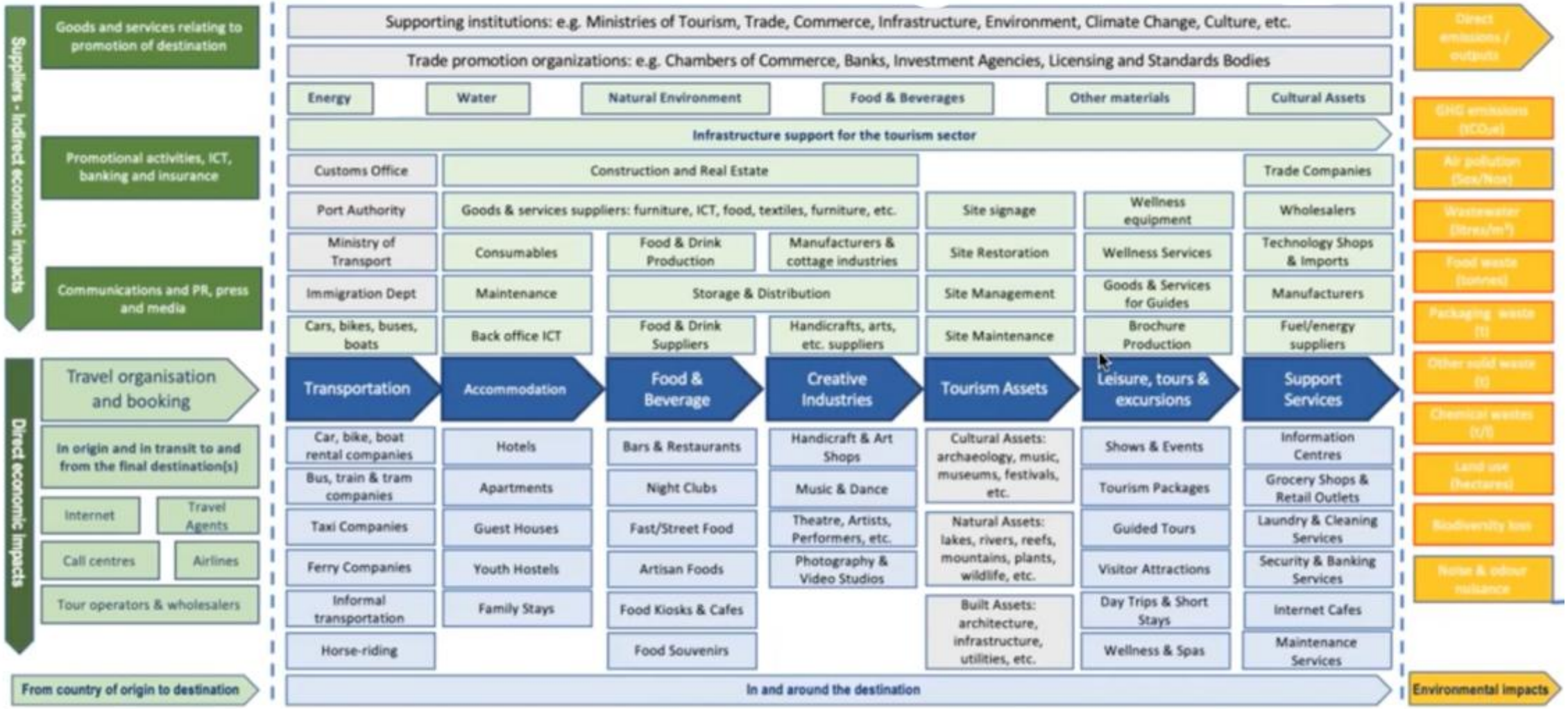
Tourism is presented as an “industry”

Operating as an **industrial machine**, with destinations as conveyor belts...

and viewed this way – 1960s to Now



A Production Consumption System

Experiences → commodities

Travellers/guests → consumers

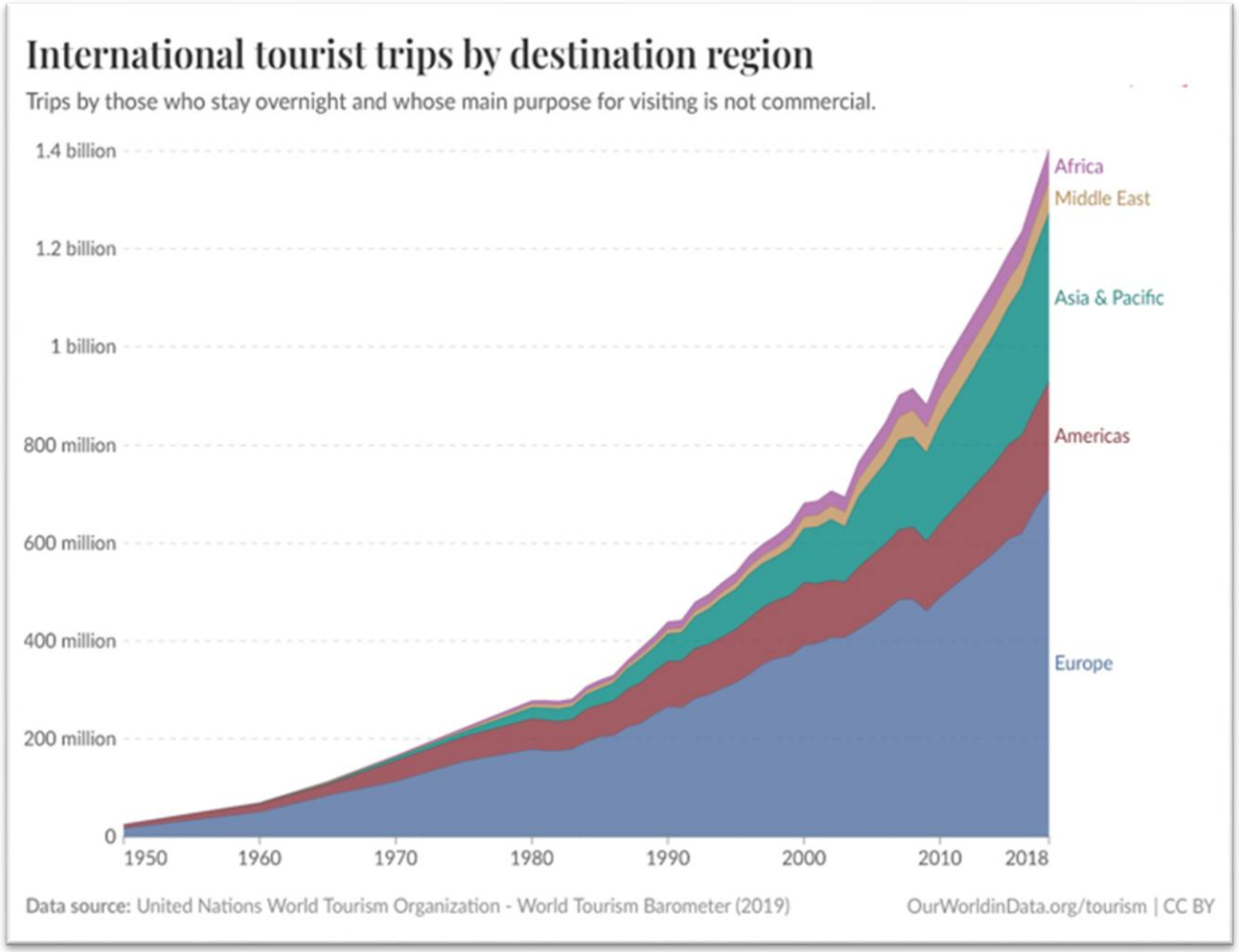
Hosts became → suppliers

Travel agents → retailers

Tour operators → wholesalers

Places became → destinations

Tourism: The Engine of Growth?



1950 *25 million* ***2018*** *1.3 billion* **2024** *1.4 billion*

Our World in Data

IATA

Airlines, Transportation, Tour Companies & Governments Key Drivers

IATA's 2024 Results & Projections

5.2 billion passengers

Gross revenue: $1.2 trillion

Net income $7 per passenger

Demand growth 8.0%

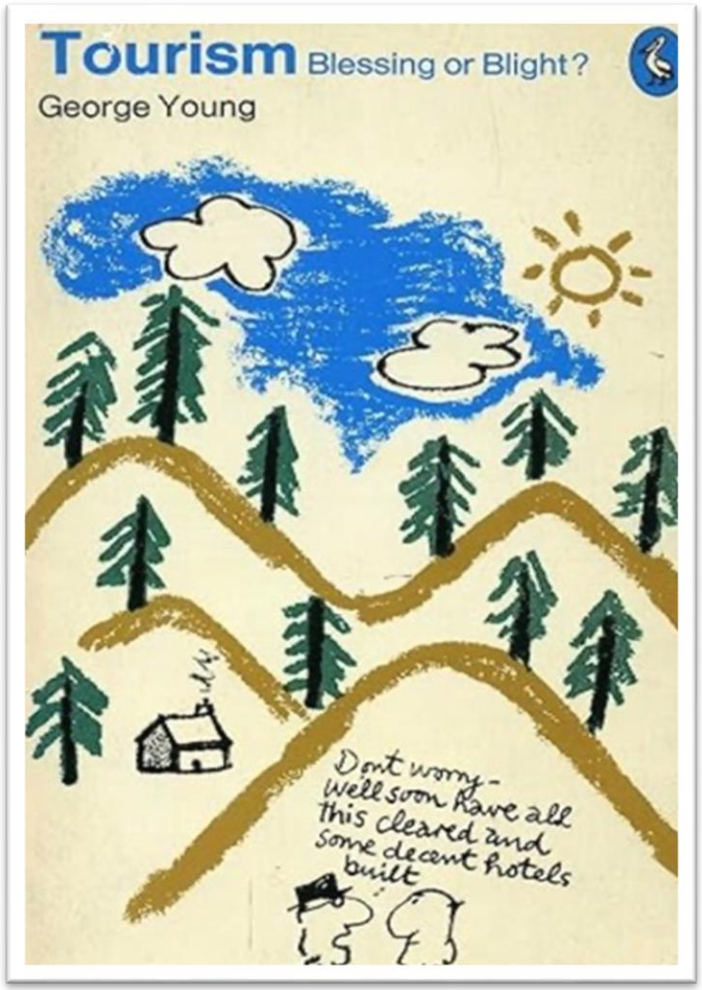
Capacity growth: 7%

Expenses growth: 4.0%

The cost of success?

Overtourism

Not new - 1974



Has Physical Limits

Wise Words

"Anyone who thinks that you can have infinite growth in a finite environment is either a madman or an economist."

Source?

Kenneth Boulding 1966

The costs of overtourism are always born locally

Rising Prices and scarcity for locals

first, worker then residential housing

food and infrastructure – water, access

Overcrowding + poor behaviour

Waste & pollution

Water shortages

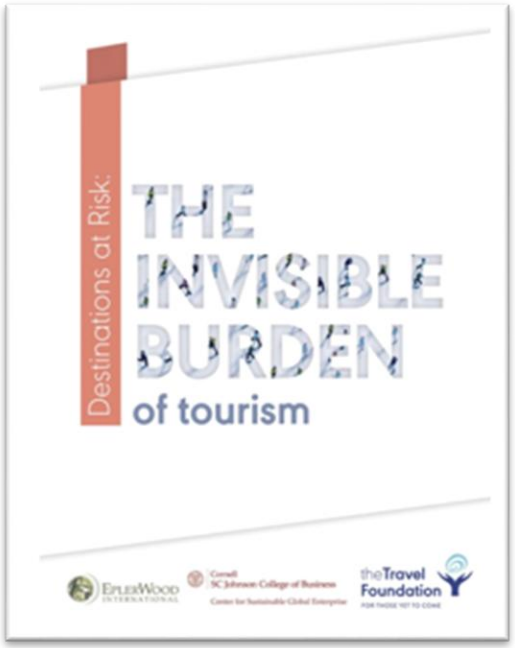
Strain on public services & nature

Seasonality

Drop in attractiveness

Deteriorating Quality of Life for residents

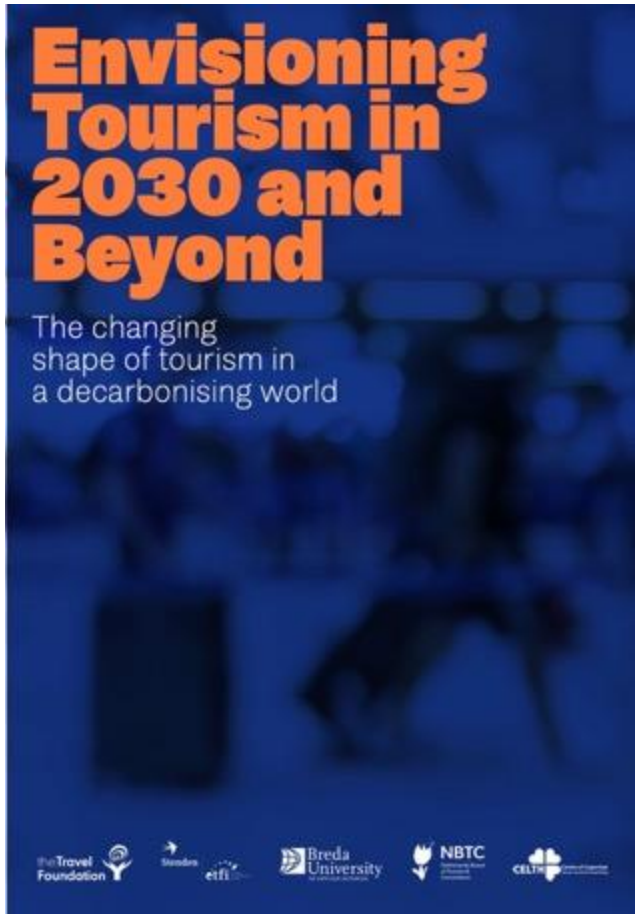
The costs have only recently been identified & counted



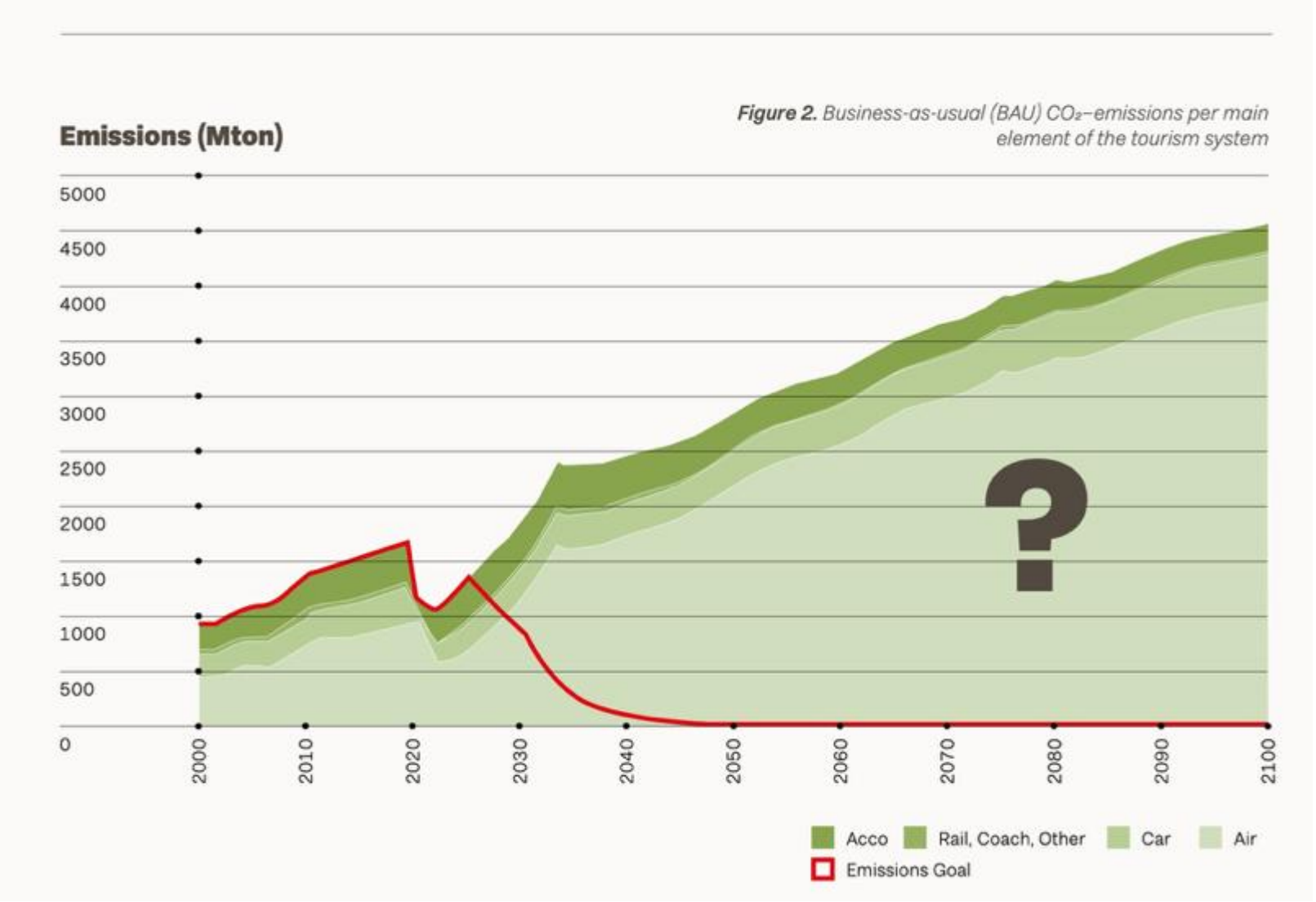
What is the NET benefit?
Who benefits and who pays the costs?
Leakage?
Fragmented views

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ON_wVykiVL0

Ecologically generating a “Credibility Gap”

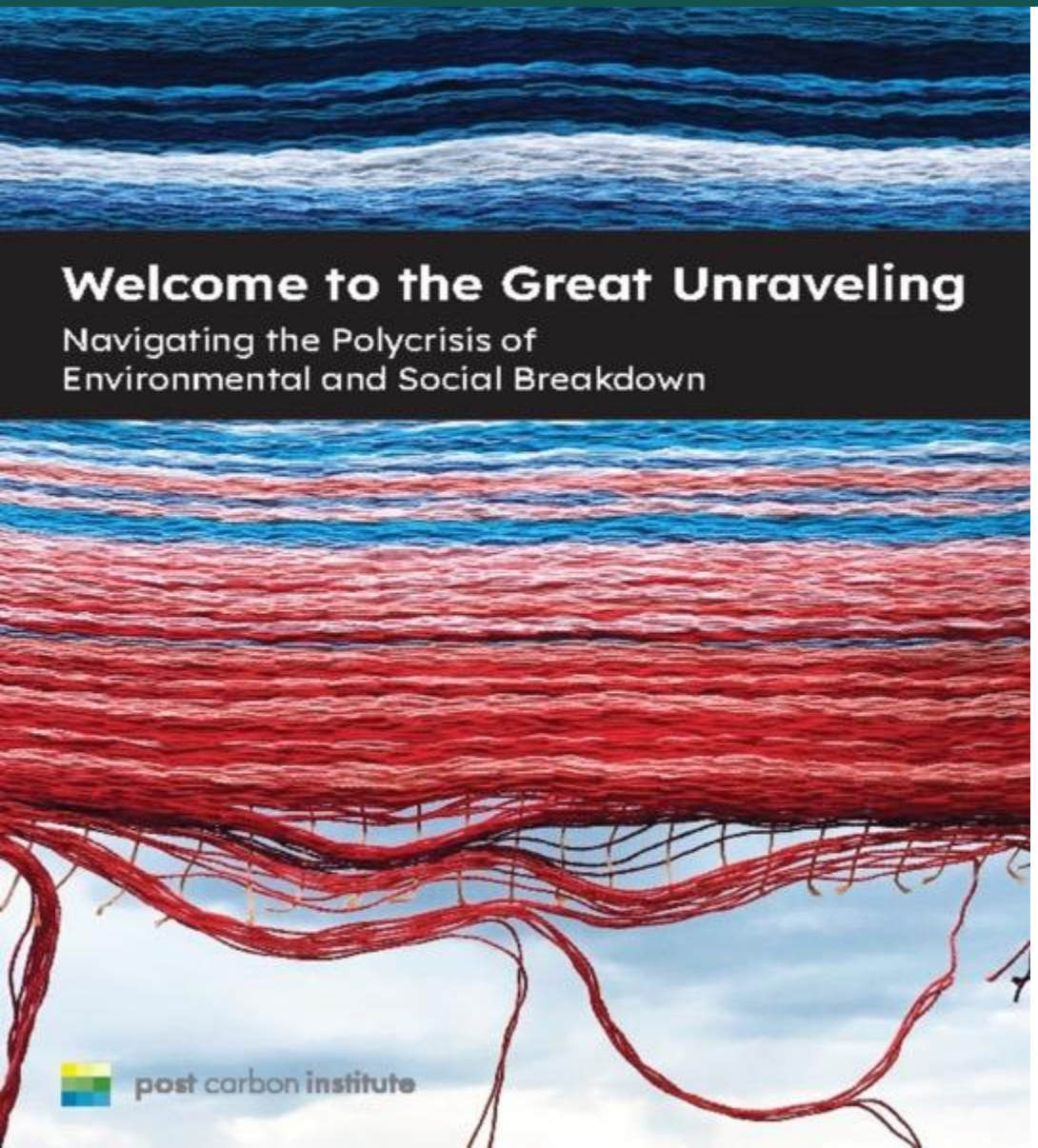


The Travel Foundation, 2023



Tourism Part of a Bigger System

A System That is Unravelling & Causing Crises



- Climate
- Biodiversity
- Toxic Chemicals
- Ocean Acidification
- Waste
- Soil loss and harm
- Resource Depletion
- Extreme Weapons
- Wealth Inequality
- Artificial Intelligence
- Political Polarisation

Described by some as a Polycrisis

World Is Facing Unprecedented Polycrisis, Warns WTO

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the Director General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

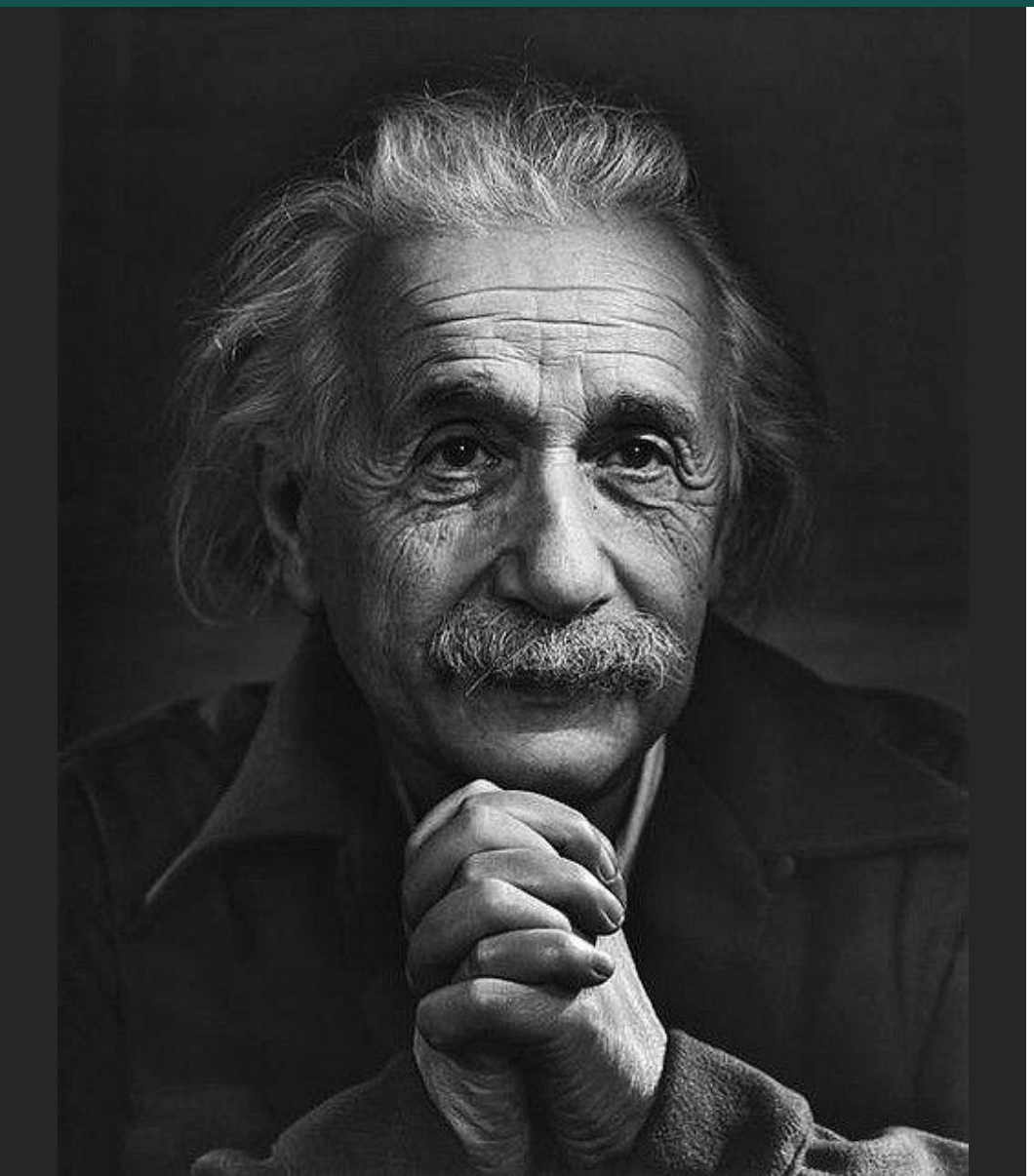
*"a **'polycrisis'** – a cluster of related global risks with **compounding effects**, such that the **overall impact exceeds the sum of each part**".*

By others as a Meta Crisis

Risks are not just entangled but
share a common ROOT cause =
The way we "see" and make sense of <u>our</u> world…

We need a different way of seeing, being and doing

Einstein was right



"The world we have created is a product of our thinking; it cannot be changed without changing our thinking.

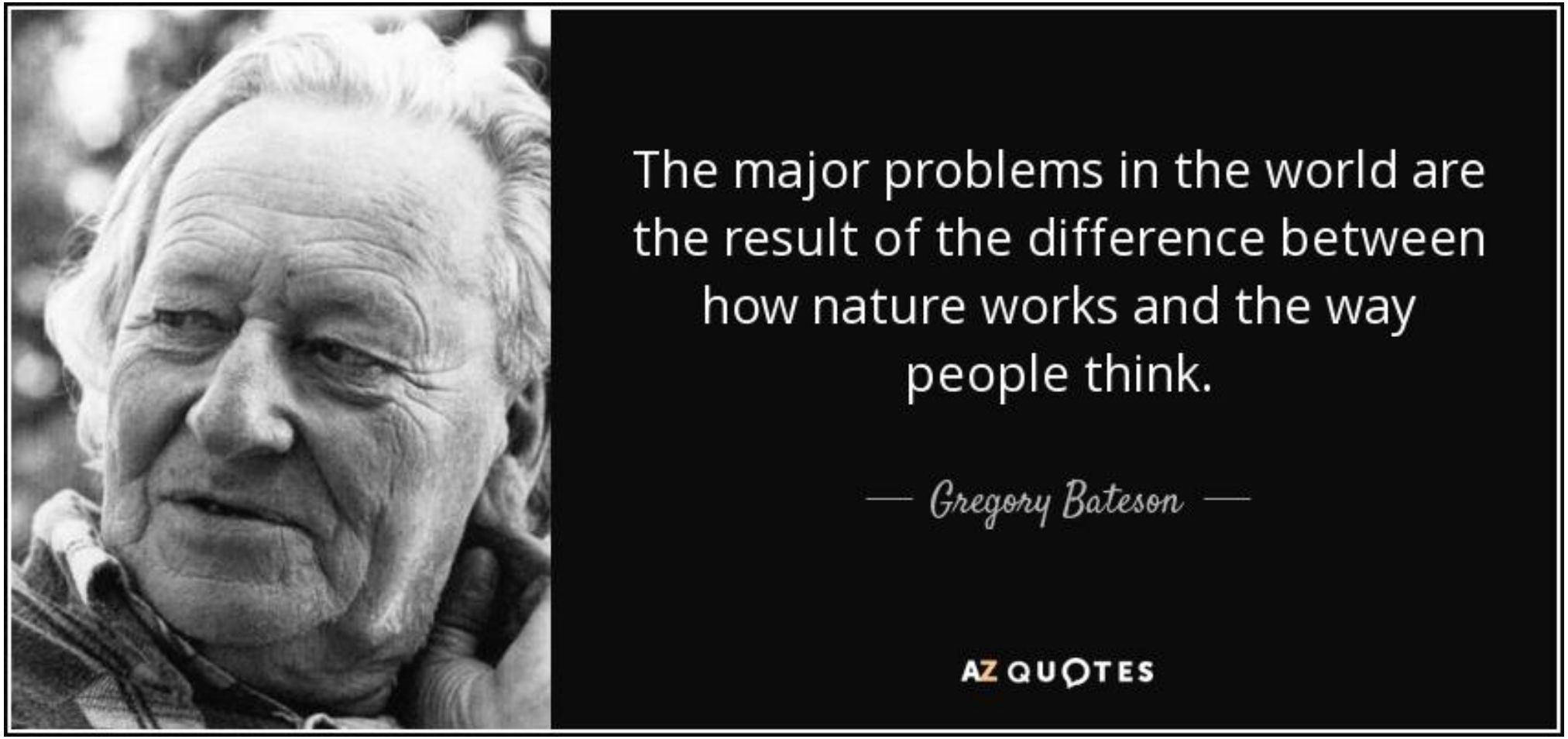
No problem can be solved with the same consciousness that created it."

- Albert Einstein

" The root cause is a crisis in perception = the way we see and understand our world."

- Fritjof Capra

So was Gregory Bateson

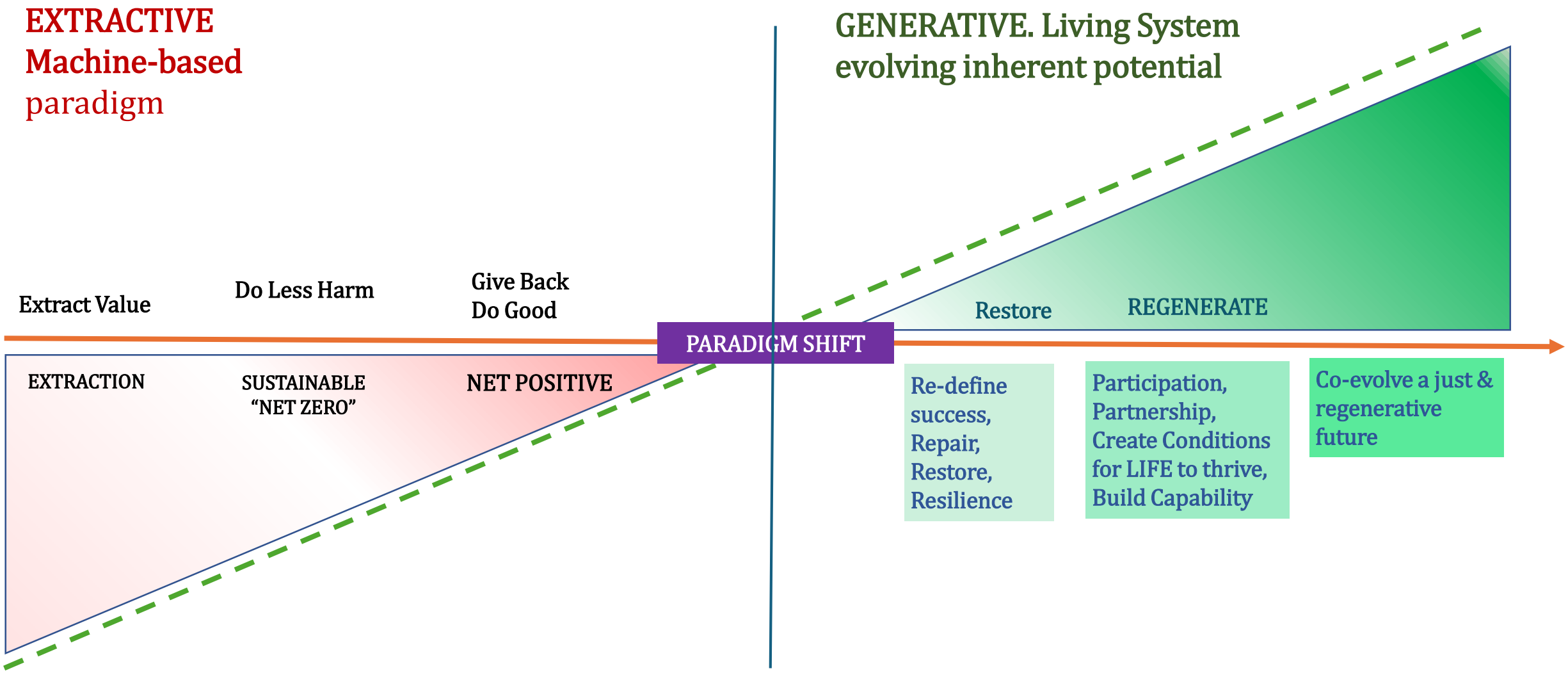


We are moving between two worlds

WE ARE NOT SEPARATE
PARTS OF
A DEAD MACHINE

BUT INTEGRAL BEINGS
OF A
LIVING SYSTEM

Learning and re-learning as we go!



Regenerative thinking IS & ENABLES the Paradigm shift !

Regeneration is a **PROCESS**, **a VERB**, a way of seeing, being and doing that applies to living systems. It's what life does…

"Life creates the conditions for life to thrive and evolve."

- Lynne Margulis

Regeneration revitalizes – bringing back to life that which was dying or degenerating.

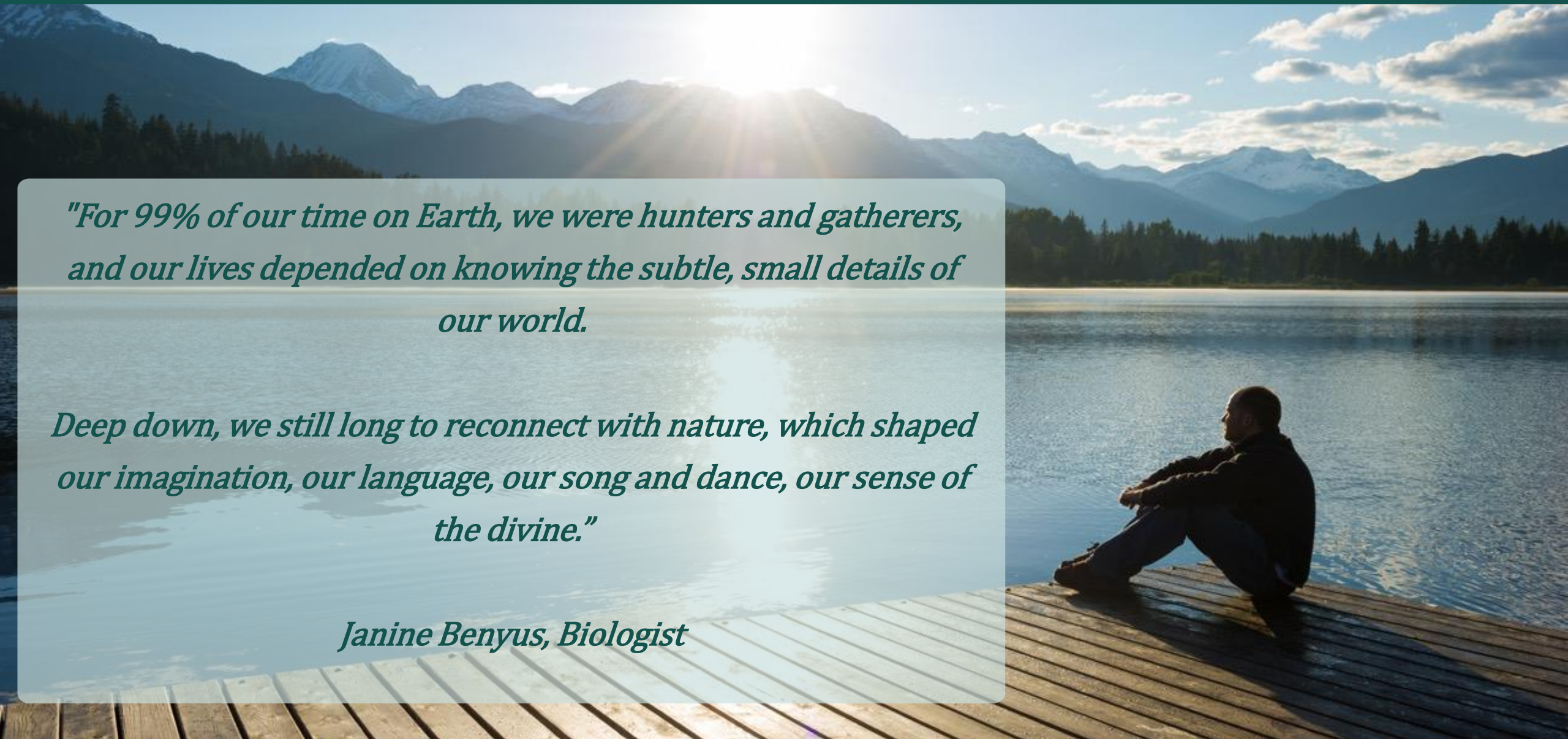
By **making it whole** again = healing the fragmentation.
It is also a process of "re-membering."

Regeneration is the **SYSTEMS CHANGE** we need.

If sustainability is doing less harm, then **regeneration** is about developing the innate **capability** of a system to self-organise, thrive and evolve.

How do we start this journey ?

By deep re-membering



"For 99% of our time on Earth, we were hunters and gatherers, and our lives depended on knowing the subtle, small details of our world.

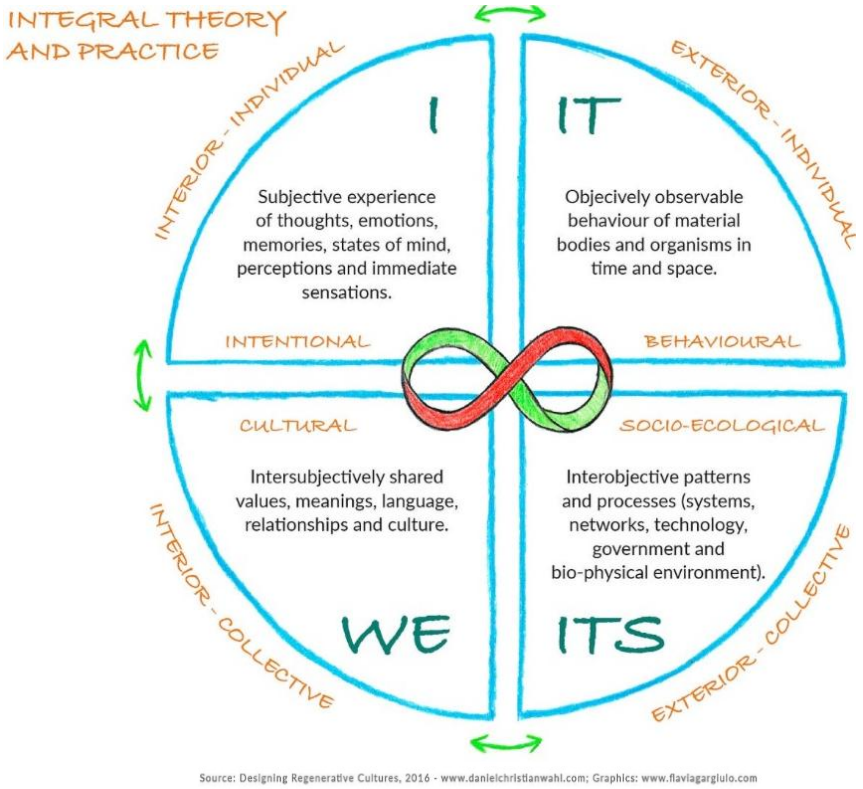
Deep down, we still long to reconnect with nature, which shaped our imagination, our language, our song and dance, our sense of the divine."

Janine Benyus, Biologist

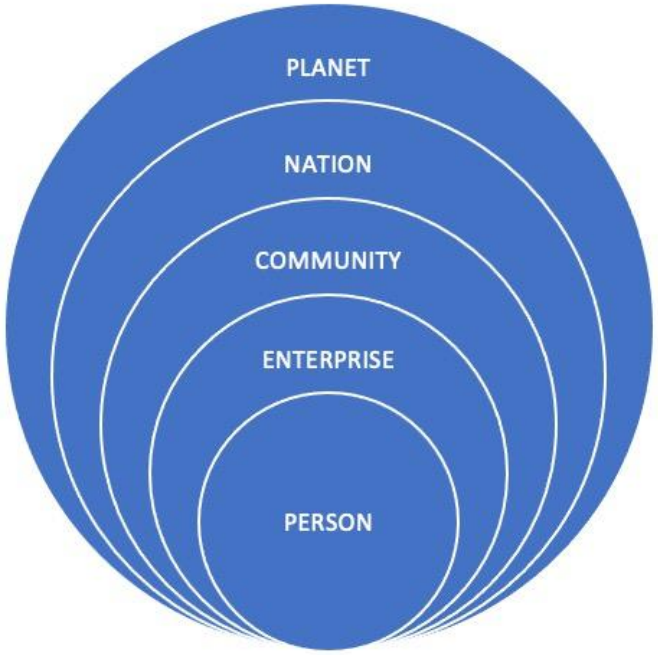
And reversing a Journey of Separation

In order to think and act as wholes

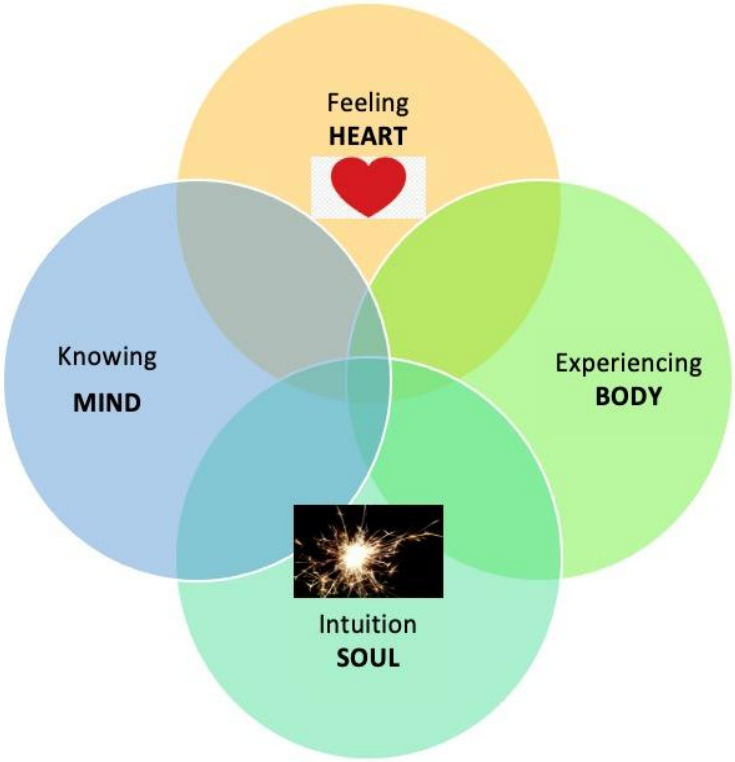
INNER - OUTER



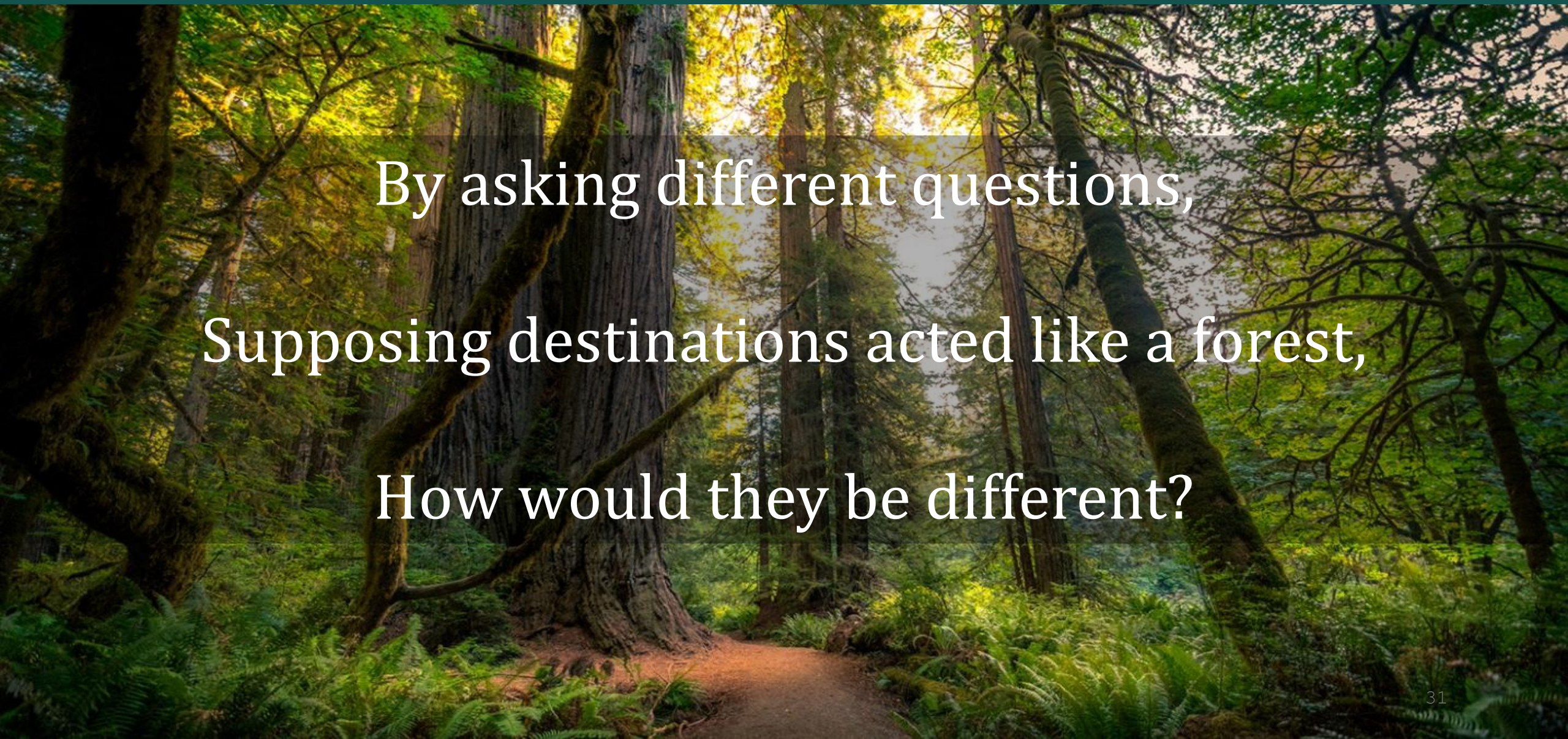
NESTED LIVING SYSTEMS



4 WAYS OF KNOWING



…and by learning from Nature

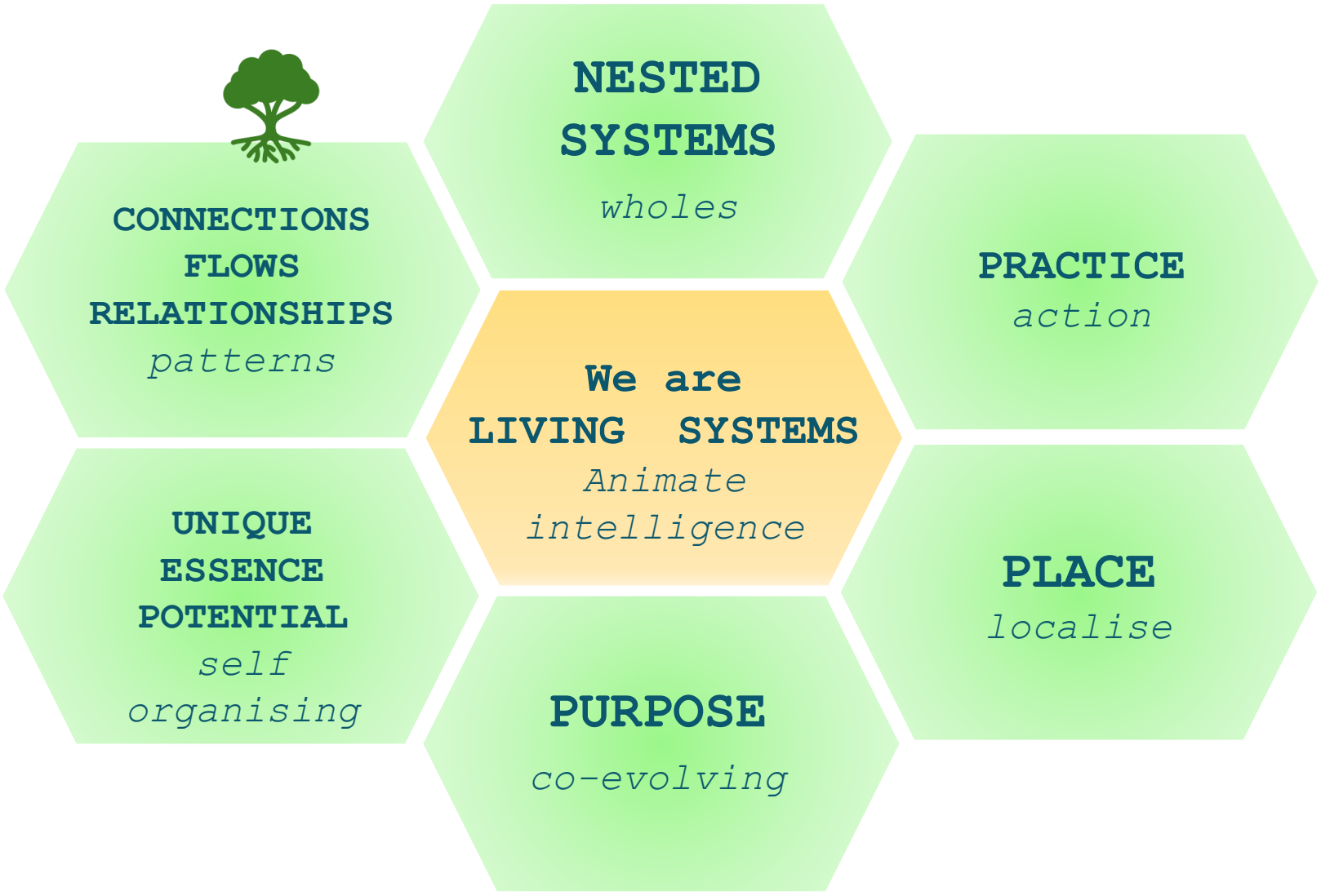


By asking different questions,

Supposing destinations acted like a forest,

How would they be different?

Regeneration is based on Nature's Principles



Nature's Systems as Nested

NESTED SYSTEMS
wholes

"A system is a set of things - people, cells, molecule or whatever – interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behaviour over time."

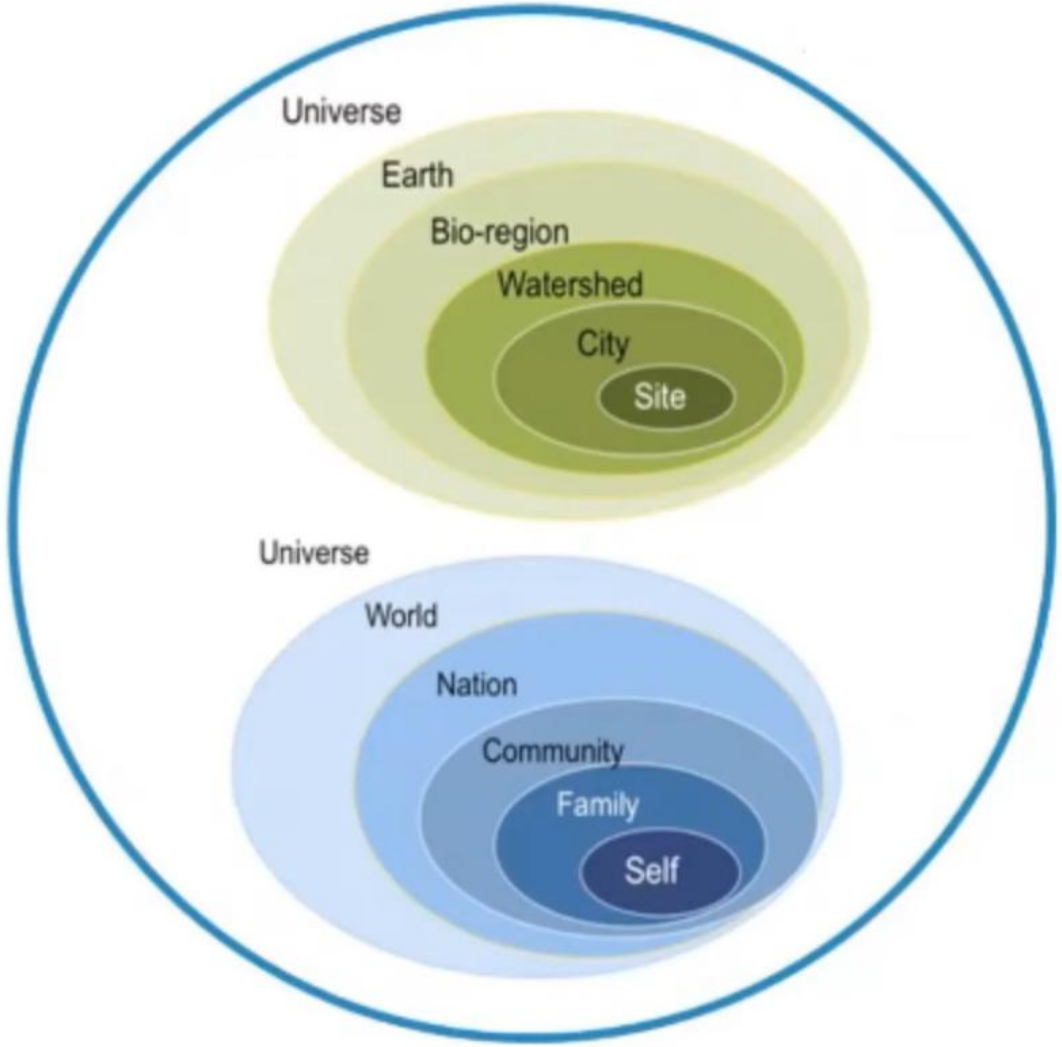
- Donella Meadows

Wholes are Nested

Wholes are nested

Generating value—
outward and inward.

No real boundaries.



More on Nested Wholes

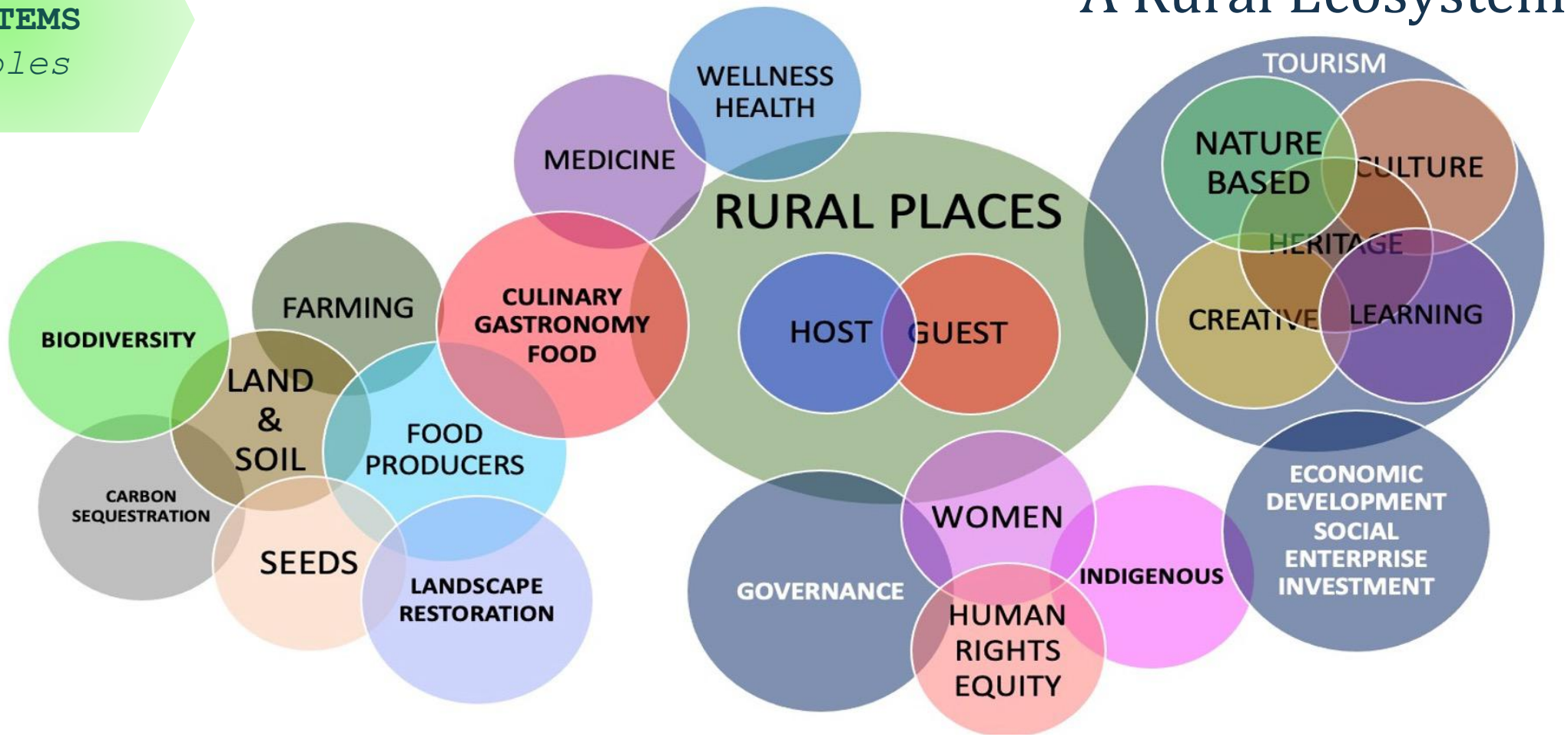
- ✓ Each whole has a unique identity
- ✓ It's alive! Don't reduce wholes to parts, you'll kill it!
- ✓ Wholes exist in a context- - relationships
- ✓ Always exchanging information, nutrients, etc.
- ✓ Each whole supports the larger whole (which is the context for the smaller whole)
- ✓ The larger whole reciprocates and supports the smaller whole generating benefit, ensuring health

Q: if you want to understand these systems,
what's the one thing you can do with a machine that you can't do with a living system?

Overlapping Systems

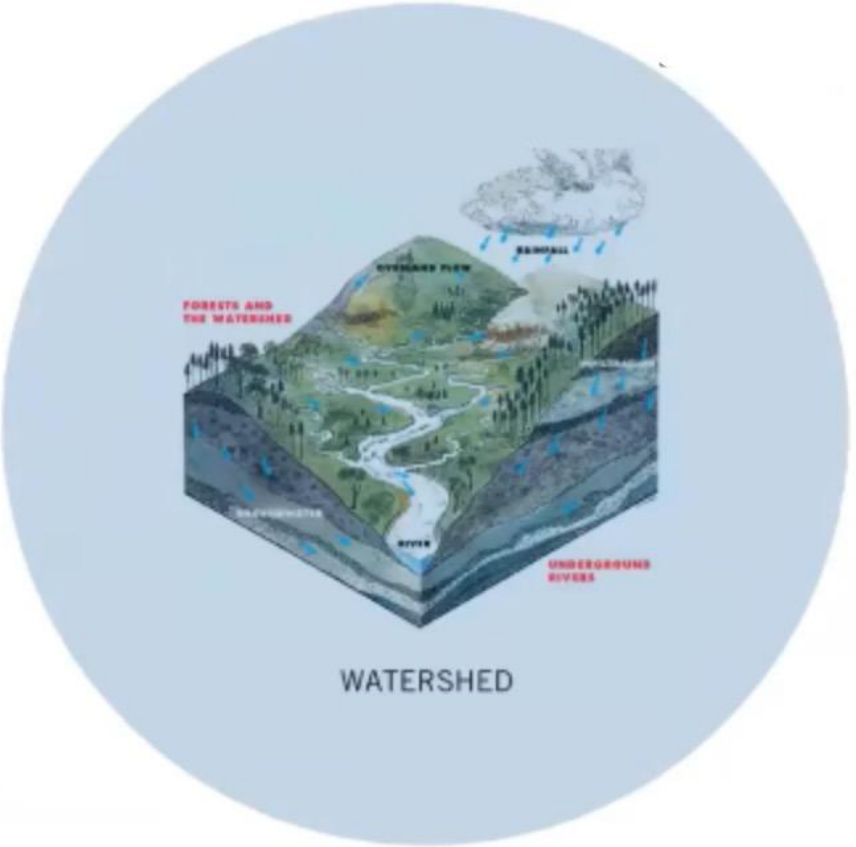
NESTED SYSTEMS
wholes

A Rural Ecosystem



Other Examples

You cannot have a healthy business
in a sick economy and
a degraded watershed

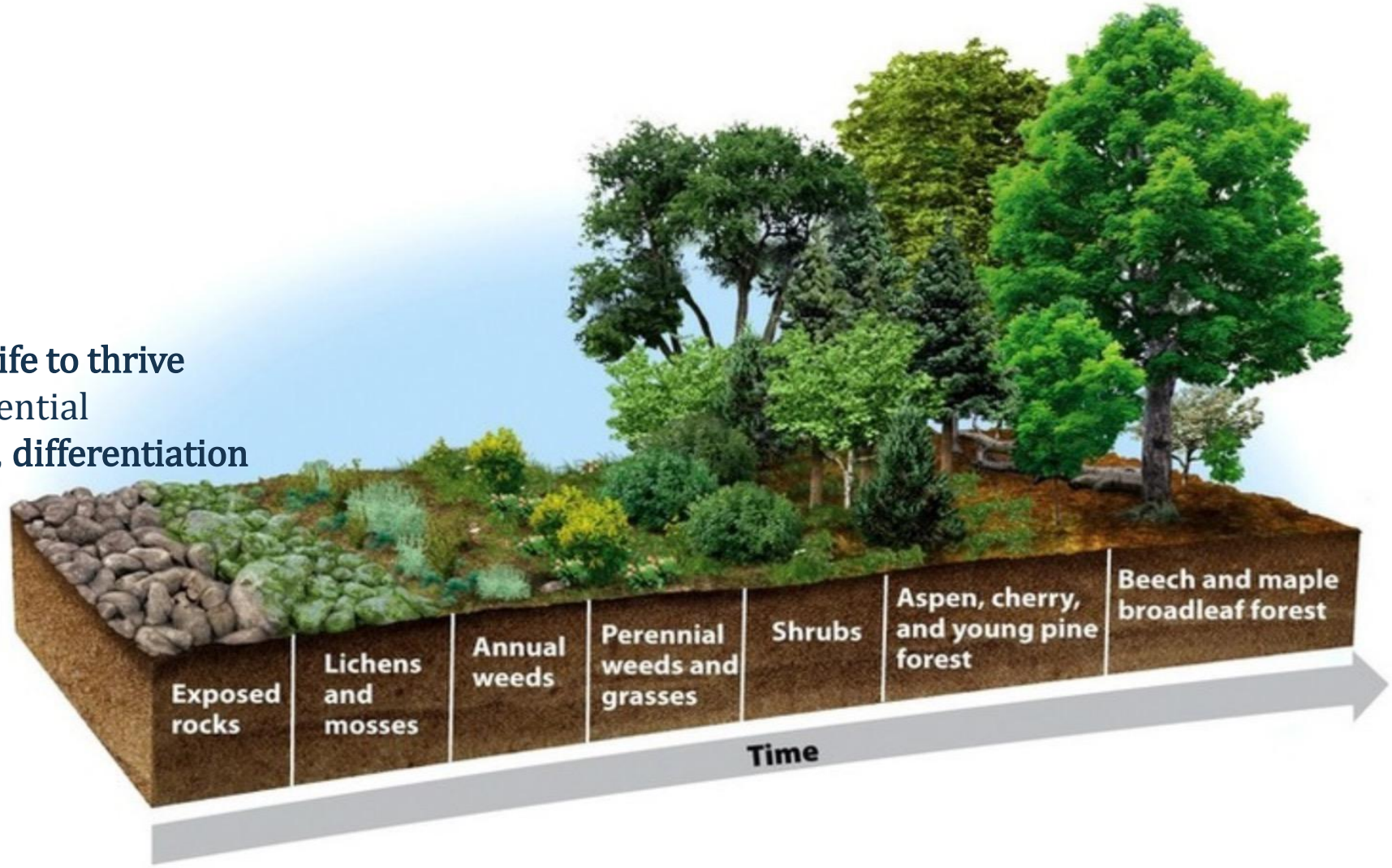


Life's Purpose to Evolve

PURPOSE

co-evolving

Life creates the conditions for **life to thrive**
Every **living system** has the potential
to **evolve** to new levels of order, **differentiation** and
organisation



Life's Purpose to Evolve and thereby…

…create the conditions for **life to thrive**

As a parent we create the conditions for the baby to thrive & repeat the process…

While that child is growing up,
we are maturing too – that's **co-evolution**…

Parents **self-organise** and nurture the capacity for self-organisation…

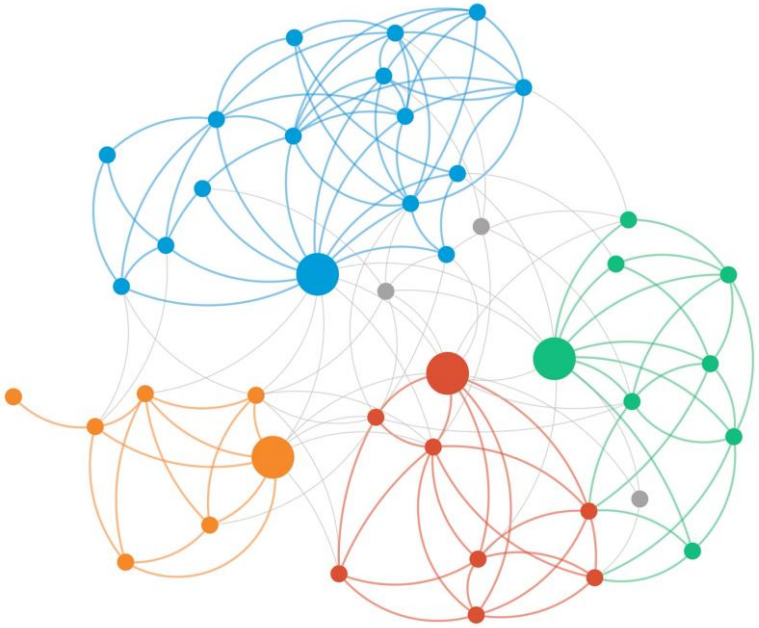
To **learn** and **adapt**

Networks & Flows

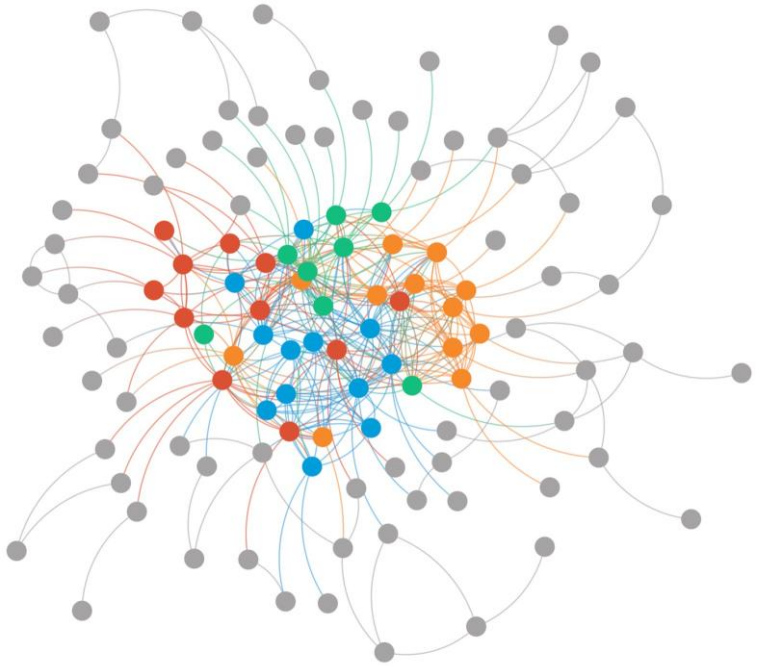
CONNECTIONS
FLOWS
RELATIONSHIPS
patterns

"*Life didn't evolve through combat but via **networking**" - **Lynn Margulis***

"*Networks **connect** – communities **care**"* **- Henry Minztberg**



From June Holley and Valdis Krebs, re-created by Kumu



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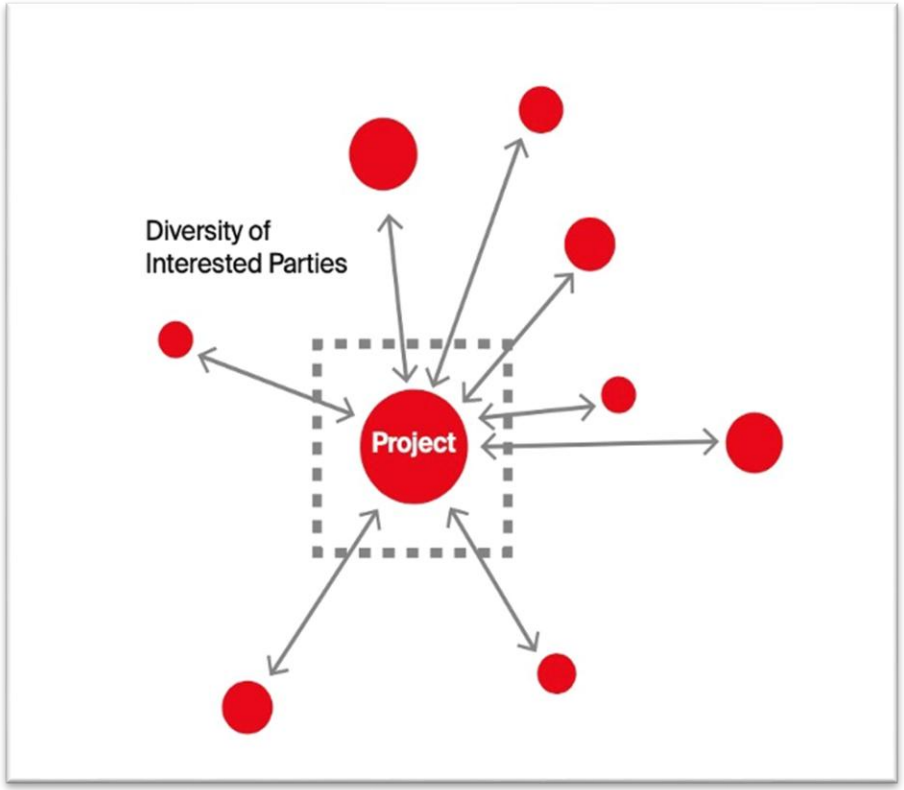
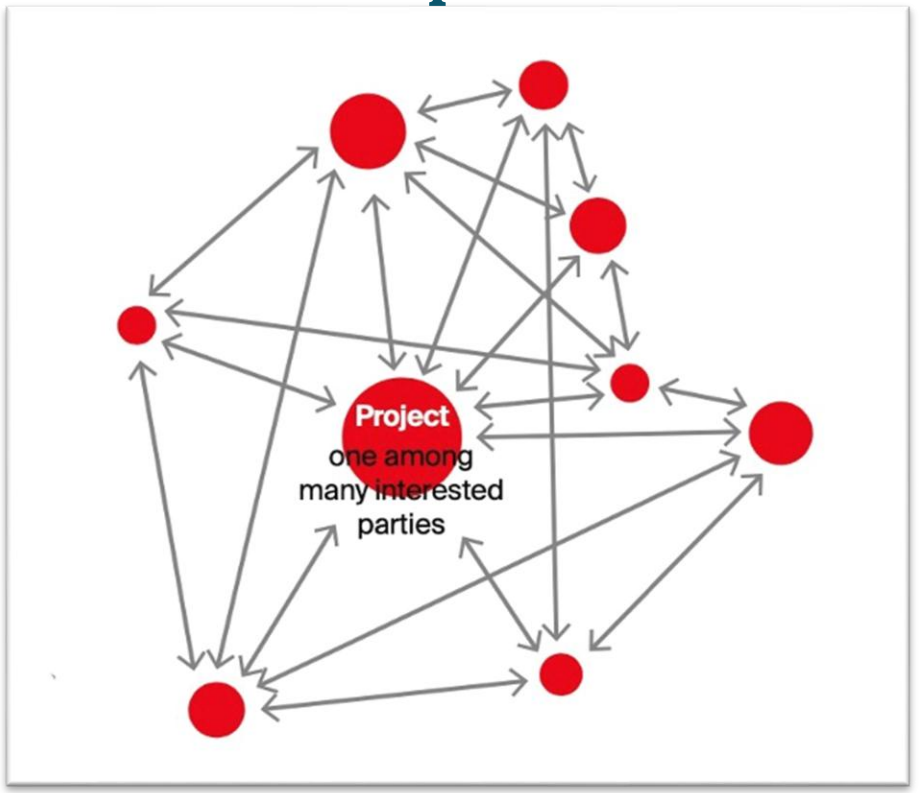
Different Types of Networks

Transactional



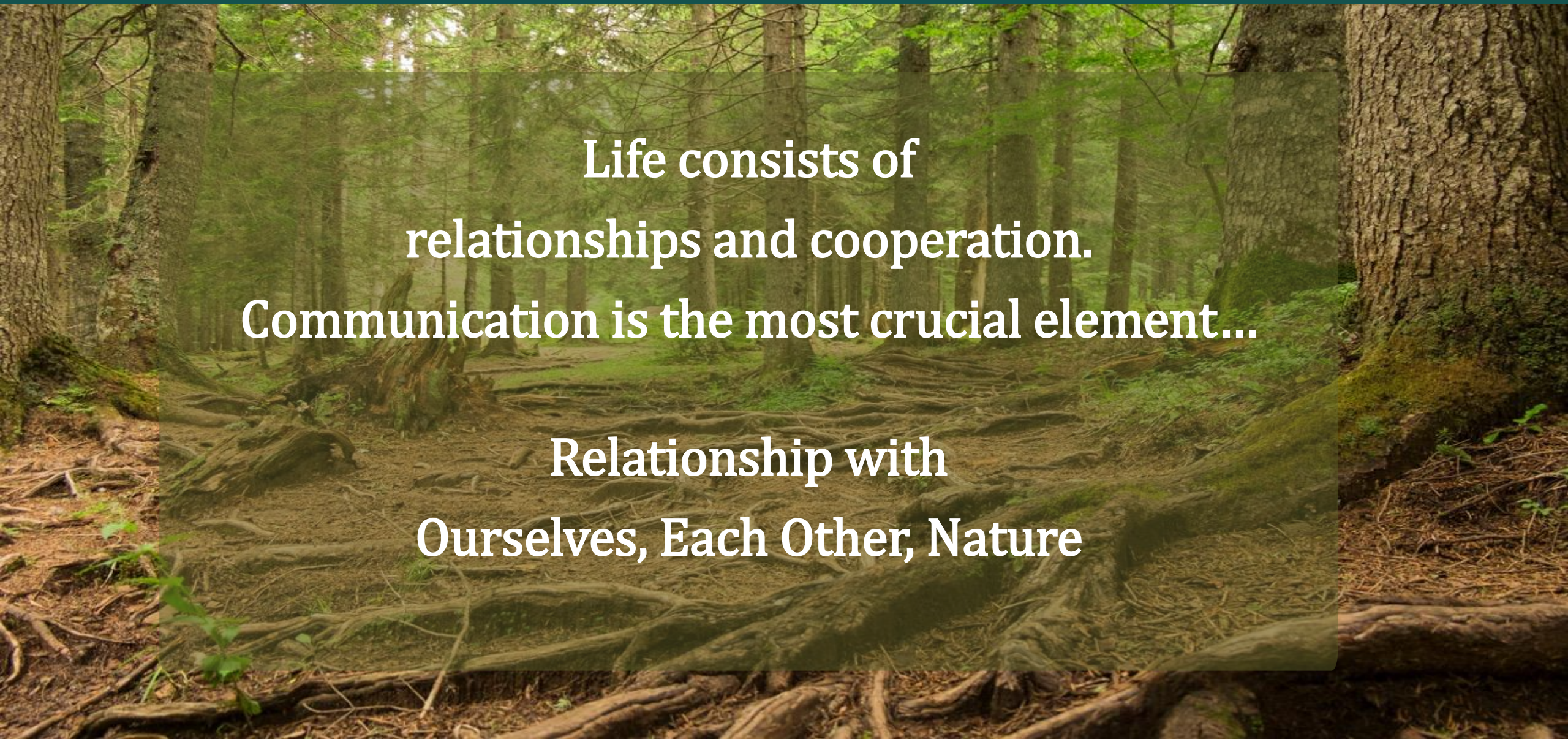
Rewards (costs and benefits)

Reciprocal



“a dance of mutual benefit & greater potential”

Relationships are more important than Parts



Life consists of
relationships and cooperation.
Communication is the most crucial element…

Relationship with
Ourselves, Each Other, Nature

Work With Essence & Potential

UNIQUE
ESSENCE
POTENTIAL
self organising

Each **living system** however small or large is **unique**
i.e. has a singular **essence**

"The possible number of snow crystal shapes exceeds the estimated number of atoms in the known universe"
- Jon Nelson

Work with Essence & Potential

Each unique living system has **potential**…

…and is in the process of **actualising**, **developing** and **evolving** that potential

The goal is **health** = wholeness + the capacity to evolve further

Regenerative work is about creating the conditions for potential to be realised (become real)

Learn to Observe, Listen, Sense

„To listen more than to speak – this is what nature teaches us: it gave us two ears, but only one tongue.“

Gottfried Keller

Learn to Observe, Listen, Sense

hopeful

What's coming up? Where are you right now?
minor adjustments
Reflection
Innovation
Renewal
Piloting
Growth
Success
Harvest
Retreat
radical innovation

CLOSED
FOR
MAINTENANCE

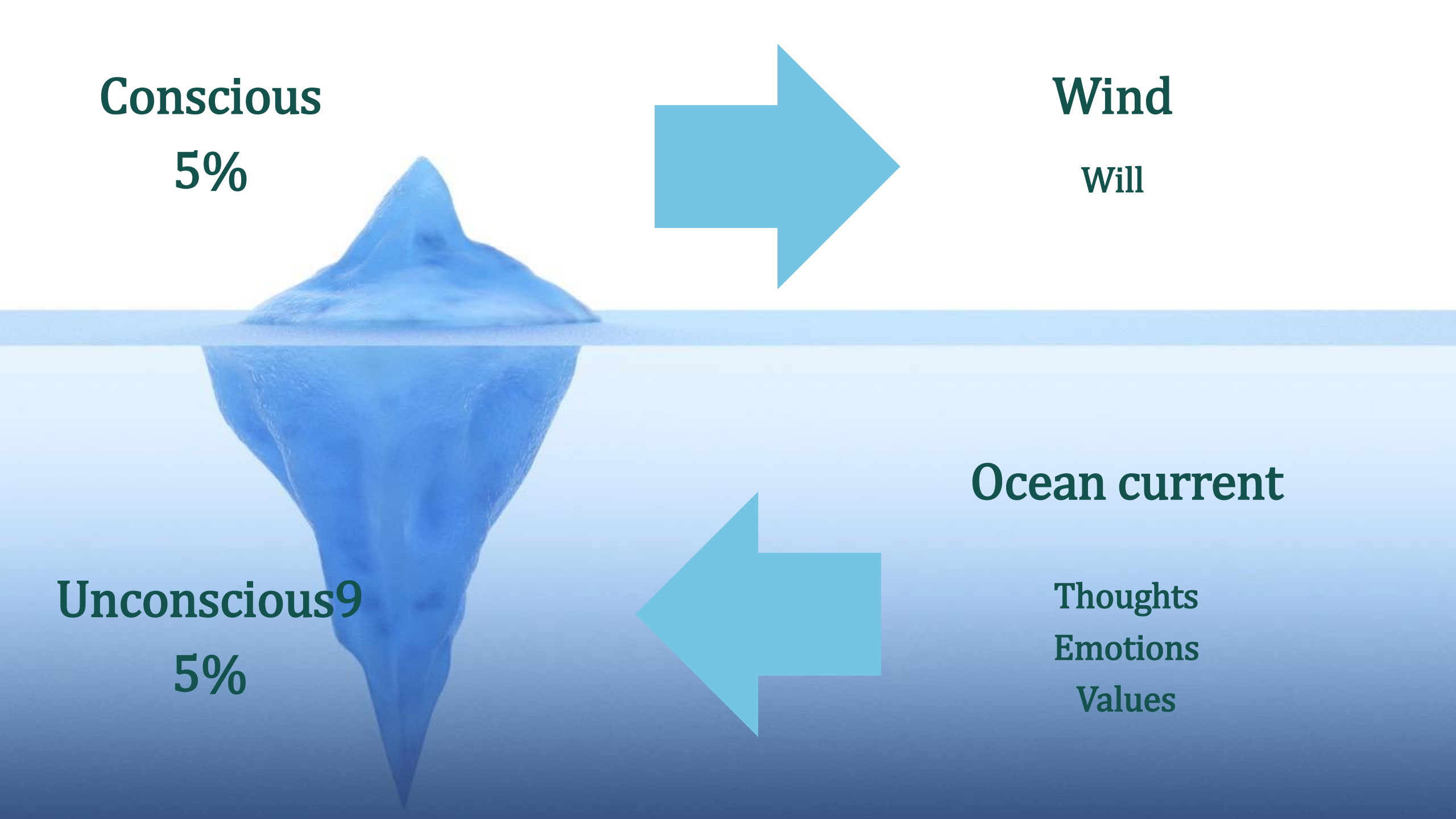
There are many reasons to be hopeful

There are many reasons to be hopeful

More reasons to be hopeful

Conscious

5%



Wind

Will

Ocean current

Thoughts

Emotions

Values

Unconscious9

5%

Closing Thoughts

The game is not winning, it's being able to stay in the game
It's not about projects – it's about building the capacity of a system to thrive

You can't do that alone – contribute to the community
If there isn't a community, build one
It's not what you take but what you put in

Step out of your silo – this is not a tourism issue, this is a survival & thrival issue

Tourism can contribute to our coming back to life…

1 October 2025

Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2025

Thank you!

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

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