

Roots of Transformation

Lessons and leverage points for sustainable living

2019-2021



Who we are

Forum for the Future is a leading international sustainability non-profit with offices in London, New York, Singapore and Mumbai.

We specialise in addressing critical global challenges by catalysing change in key systems.

For over 20 years, we've been working in partnership with business, governments and civil society to accelerate the shift towards a regenerative and just future.

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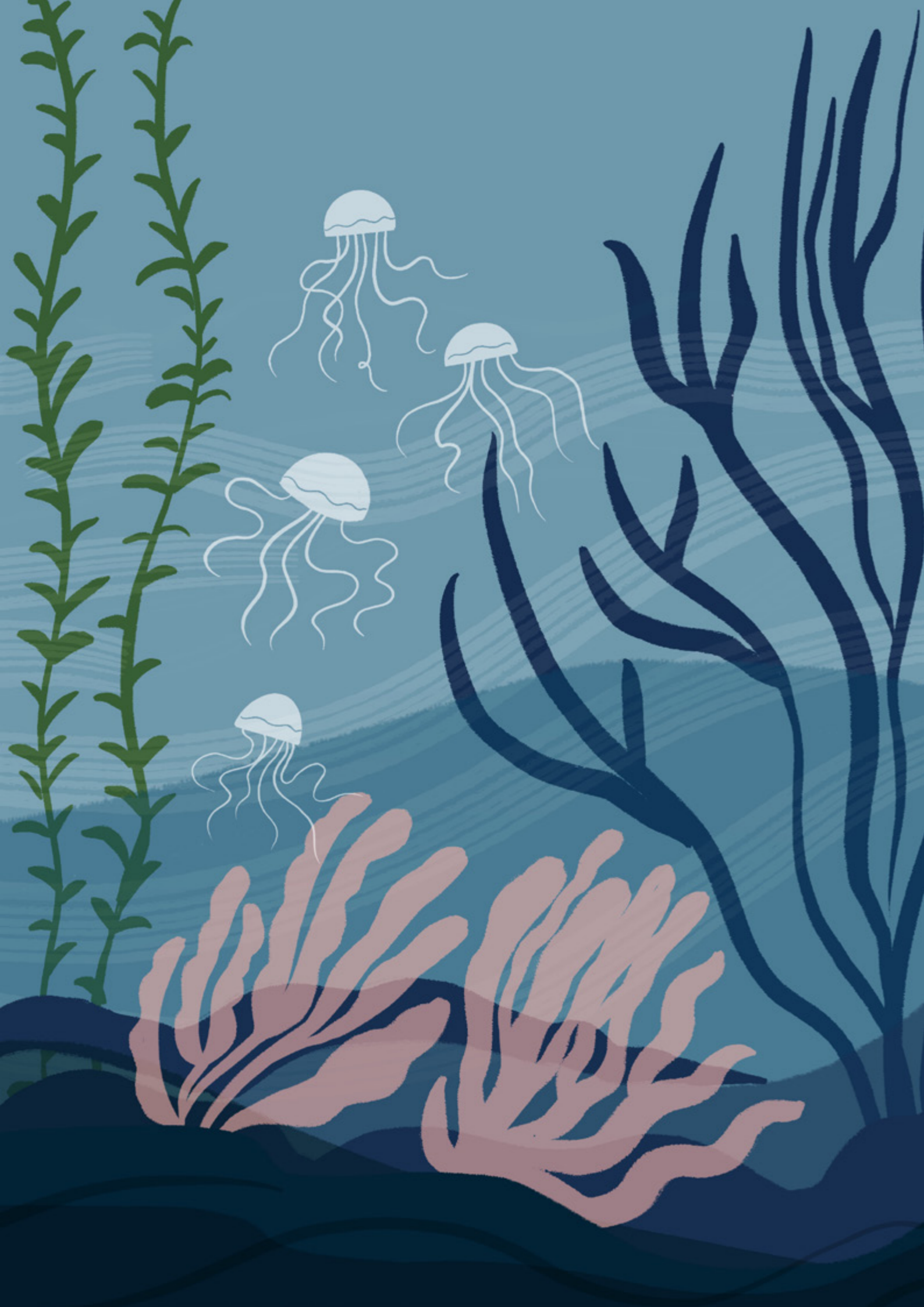
We are extremely grateful to the members of Boundless Roots for being part of and shaping this journey and for their commitment to enable and support radical change for a better future.

We also want to acknowledge and appreciate the work of Lewis Akenji and Kate Power in creating the initial space to start the conversation with the Hot or Cool Network.

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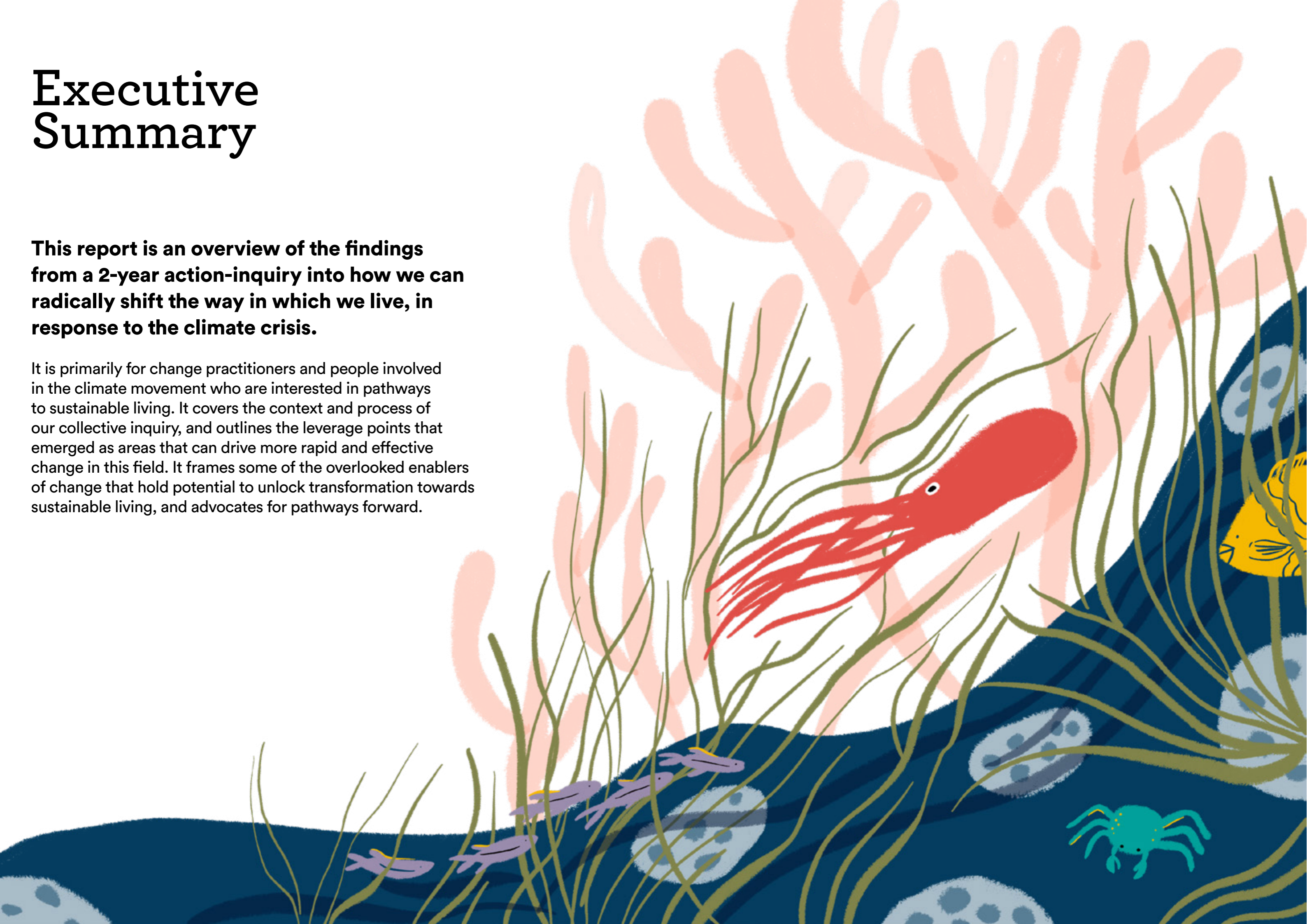
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Executive Summary

This report is an overview of the findings from a 2-year action-inquiry into how we can radically shift the way in which we live, in response to the climate crisis.

It is primarily for change practitioners and people involved in the climate movement who are interested in pathways to sustainable living. It covers the context and process of our collective inquiry, and outlines the leverage points that emerged as areas that can drive more rapid and effective change in this field. It frames some of the overlooked enablers of change that hold potential to unlock transformation towards sustainable living, and advocates for pathways forward.



Who is the Boundless Roots Community?

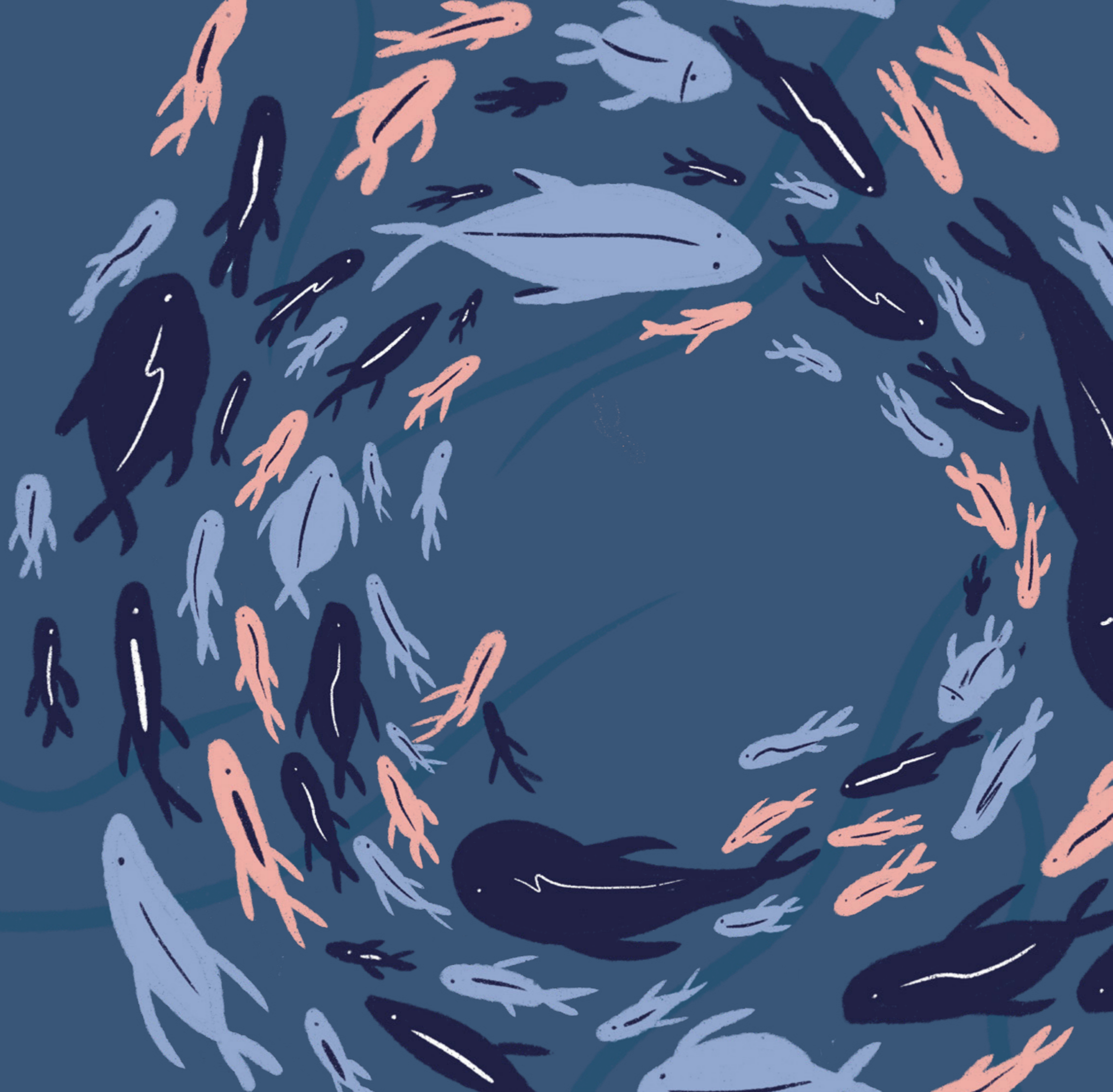
The Boundless Roots Community is a global group of practitioners looking at how we can change the way we live to meet the scale of the climate challenge facing us. The community finds its own roots in the question: How might we, a community of sustainable living practitioners with different approaches, create the conditions for radical changes in how we live? We acknowledge the need for drastic changes if we are to meet the 1.5 degree challenge. But how do we actually do it?

We wanted to get under the surface of our various efforts to create change, to better understand the critical issues that underpin shifts to sustainable living, and improve our individual, organisational and collective approaches to change.

What's the process we went through?

We decided to take an action-inquiry approach, which is a process that allows for uncertainty and complexity; providing space to step back from action to reflect, integrate learning and adapt our approach.

This process values multiple perspectives and questions underlying assumptions about the work we're doing - trying to make the hidden aspects of our work visible. It also values constant learning and looks for opportunities to test and experiment through practical action.



Themes and Enablers

Key:

Themes - overlooked leverage points for radical change

Enablers - areas that impact our individual and collective ability to bring about radical change.

The Boundless Roots community believes we need to change the metaphors to change the deep cultural frames, so we're experimenting with illustrating the themes and enablers we've identified through our inquiry as an ocean ecology, rather than land based metaphors you might otherwise expect when thinking about sustainable lifestyles.

- **The motivating force of meaning: Towards rapid & regenerative meaning-making**
Like the aliveness of the ocean

- **Working with polarities**
We don't see polarities in nature, they just are - like the calm and the ferociousness of the water

- **The dynamic of power: Contributing to healthy power**
Like the invisible currents of the ocean that push us forward and drag us down

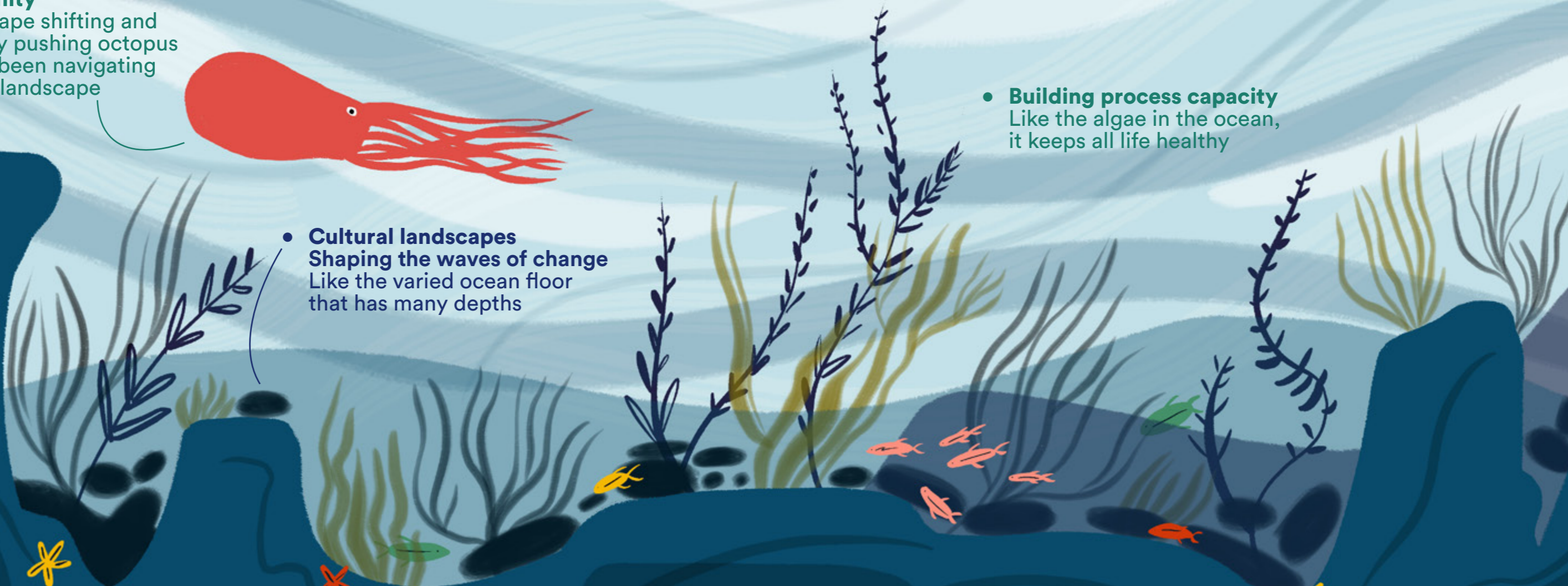
- **Working with trauma**
Like the microplastics in the ocean, trauma is polluting the whole ecosystem

- **Boundless Roots Community**
Like a shape shifting and boundary pushing octopus that has been navigating this vast landscape



- **Building process capacity**
Like the algae in the ocean, it keeps all life healthy

- **Cultural landscapes**
Shaping the waves of change
Like the varied ocean floor that has many depths



Key learnings & leverage point summary

Over the course of over 32 community conversations in different inquiry groups, three key themes emerged that we think have the potential for us to both shift and deepen the work of sustainable behaviour change.

These themes offer a reframing to the field when thinking about how to respond to the scale and urgency of the climate crisis and the need for lifestyle change. They highlight openings of what is important to pay attention to and where there is opportunity for leverage - when coordinated action can have disproportionately high impact on the system, and where we might put our energy for change. The three areas for attention are:

- The cultural landscapes that shape our behaviour
- The dynamic of power that can either block or enable radical change
- The motivating force for changing how we live: meaning



Cultural landscapes: Shaping the waves of change

We, as society, have been experiencing a shift in social awareness in relation to climate recently, and noticing moments of cultural resonance at different times in different cultures (for example how a 15 year old girl going on school strike on her own can lead to a global movement of millions of people in 1,600 cities across 125 countries marching for “the climate”). In our inquiries we acknowledged the dominant frames of our culture that make sustainable living so hard. We are unintentionally complicit in extractive, high-polluting systems: the way we move, eat, stay warm, have fun, interact online and earn money often contribute to the climate crisis, and most of us know it. In this context people often feel defeatist, hopeless or in denial, encouraged by a dominant culture that tends to treat us as passive consumers, degrading our agency and autonomy in affecting change.

As a field we recognised the need to get better at working with moments of cultural resonance and translating them into sustained action; we need to get better at working with shifting cultural narratives in different contexts; and we need to get better at shaping the dominant frames of our culture.

We need to:

- Develop and invest in narrative work - supporting collaboration between climate and narrative practitioners to leverage opportunities
- Organising, coordinating and funding messaging and frames that centre life and partnership culture
- Create collective sensing spaces of the cultural landscape - so that moments of resonance can be acted upon
- Invest in building alliances for cultural leaders to support shifts in paradigm

The dynamic of power: Contributing to healthy power

We can't ignore the roots of our unsustainable behaviours in the historic journey of power. The climate crisis has been created by historical processes of injustice, and our global supply chains have been shaped through patterns of colonialism and control. This history has created power dynamics that affect our ability to make changes in our own lives. It has left us with structural and relational blockers to radical changes in how we live.

We may want to live a low carbon life, but if the only accessible and affordable options we have are the unsustainable ones, we're not free to make the sustainable decision. Our decisions are constrained by the unequal economic structures we live in and the infrastructure available to us. In addition to these structural blockers, these power dynamics affect our relationships, so we need to pay attention to how abuses of power are blocking us from feeling agency to create change both in our own lives, in our communities and in our wider political system.

Working with power healthily affects every level of the system, from our personal relationship with power and the dynamics in our relationships, to our community, organisational and political decision-making.

We need to:

- Name and reframe power in our messaging and embody healthy power in our relationships
- Invest in process leadership to design and facilitate healthy power, including:
 - Funding shared governance and decision-making processes
 - Embedding healthy power in the education system
 - Investing in learning between funders and practitioners to build healthy relationships - especially in relation to money

The motivating force of meaning: Towards rapid & regenerative meaning-making

One of the core tensions in the shift towards sustainable ways of living is between creating rapid change and deep change. It is quicker, easier and immediately impactful for people to do simple things like recycling. But to transform to a low-carbon world we need much more radical changes in our ways of life — which are often the result of deeper shifts in our ways of seeing the world and our place in it. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, we need to move with both urgency and depth.

We recognised that rapid and deep changes happen when we tap into what gives life meaning because our ways of seeing the world can shift in an instant. Structural changes take time, but shifts in meaning can happen in seconds, and what we find meaningful is the driving force behind our behaviour: if you shift that, everything else shifts with it.

We need to:

- Support people to deal with the impacts of climate breakdown - through:
 - Creating contemporary rituals
 - Giving space to indigenous, spiritual, and faith community work
 - Addressing burnout in the field of practitioners
- Catalyse collaborations between organisations working on meaning-making practices, adapting and disseminating regenerative processes
- Enhance Education for meaning making by:
 - Funding the meaning-making pedagogy
 - Transforming education spaces to include more experiential, self-aware and non-human world elements

Enablers

We've also identified three enablers of change - things that impact our individual and collective ability to bring about radical change.

These are things that we do not like talking about in our current (action-oriented, outcome-focused and separation-oriented) dominant culture, but we suggest that we cannot take a whole systems approach to changing our behaviour without totally changing how we work with trauma, polarities and process.

Working with polarities:

Increasing polarisation and an unwillingness to understand and work constructively with 'others' who hold different perspectives is blocking radical collective change and contributing to the breakdown of our social fabric - we need to work skilfully with polarities to create radical shifts in how we live.

Working with trauma:

Trauma distorts what we can perceive so until we include it in our maps, what we take to be reality will be affected by it, in ways we cannot see. To overcome this we need to change our relationship to the past and ongoing wounds, injuries, oppressions and injustices that haven't been acknowledged and repaired in our society. Until trauma and injustice has been acknowledged, and repair and healing are underway, only then is it possible for groups or communities to shift towards healthier, more sustainable ways of living.

Process capacity:

We need to build capacity in the system to facilitate the process of change - paying attention to how we organise, come together and the practices and processes we use to do this. We need millions of people equipped with a ****power- trauma- polarity- and meaning-making-informed approach**** to facilitate lifestyle change that has depth and longevity in terms of impact.

Seeds for the future

Through this whole inquiry process we have aimed to nourish the soil of projects looking to create radical shifts towards sustainable living, so that seeds could be planted and have the best chance to influence deep and rapid change. We have emerged with some seeds within which we see particular potential.

Firstly, there are the emerging areas of work in the community. As the relationships in the community developed alongside the inquiries, various groups formed to explore areas of work where the community saw particular potential to create change. As we published this report, these areas are continuing to be developed:

- **Paradigm shift, behaviour change and early years education:** transitioning to educational models rooted in regenerative healthy power
- **Climate, tech and polarities:** building a movement for regenerative technology
- **Cultural leaders and paradigm shift:** building the capacity of cultural leaders and trusted messengers through paradigm-shifting processes
- **Ecology of change:** mapping the various approaches and practices of change in the wider movement and how they fit together
- **Citizen assemblies and system change:** bringing a systems change lens to citizens assembly facilitation
- **Working with trauma:** exploring pathways to healthy human culture and cultural frames
- **Governance support group:** A peer-support group for advice and support in transitioning to shared governance models

Beyond these ripe areas for action, we will continue to share the learnings, the practices and the process of action inquiry to feed the wider field of changemaking. Our intention is that what we advocate for in this report can contribute to building momentum and energy for some of the overlooked but vital work in creating radical changes in how we live. We are aware that there are many other complementary approaches to ours, but we hope that the relationships nurtured through this process, and the new questions and inquiries we're holding now, will continue to nourish the soil of sustainable living far beyond the porous boundaries of the Boundless Roots Community.

If you see particular potential in any of these seeds, then we invite you to get in touch with us. Perhaps you have soil within which to plant them, or water or nutrients with which to nourish them, or perhaps some seeds of your own you'd like to plant alongside them. We want these seeds to grow and flourish, so please reach out if you sense potential.

Contact: contact.boundlessroots@forumforthefuture.org



How to read this report

This report is intended mainly for sustainable living practitioners and people involved in the climate movement who are interested in pathways to one planet living.



That's not to say that it wouldn't find use in the hands of any individual thinking about how to live more sustainably.

Please note that when we mention the dominant culture, or 'our' unsustainable lifestyles, we are focusing on Western, urban ways of living. This report is written from the perspective of the core Forum for the Future team, who were the facilitators, sensemakers and navigators of the Boundless Roots Community for two years. The insights in this report have emerged over the course of the project, from the various conversations and streams of inquiry with the community. We have sought feedback from the wider community in writing it, and we have inserted illustrations of the community members' work where relevant, but we are not pretending to write on behalf of the community in this report, and community members may not agree with, nor advocate all of the content within it.

This is not an academic report. It is a report rooted in the experience and conversations of the community. The bulk of the report is 'Key Learnings & Leverage Points', which are the areas of intervention that we believe can have disproportionately high impact on shifting the system towards one planet living. It is made up of three themes, which emerged strongly through our conversations as the primary areas of potential, and three enablers, which are often overlooked areas with the potential to drive much more rapid change across the three themes.

We use 'sustainable living' and '1.5 degree living' interchangeably in this report - all used to mean radical shifts in living that meet the challenge of keeping global warming up to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Holding Questions

Just like a potato salad is best served cold, so is this report best absorbed with an attentive, questioning mind. A quick read through will surely offer some insights but full experience also relies on the reader's curiosity and reflections. To deepen the engagement with the content in the coming pages, we suggest some questions to keep close to the surface of the mind as you take in the words:

- What catches your attention as you're reading? What surprises you?
- What does this mean for you and your work? What's useful?
- What does this mean for the wider field of which you are part? What would you share with a friend? And Why?

Share your thoughts here
<https://forms.gle/pJmhdI4PLStEneHa9>

Key

We have included different types of content to support and illustrate the themes and enablers. These are formatted accordingly:

“Advocacy voices of the community”

“Quotes from community members”

Definition boxes

Boundless Roots Community member illustrations & stories from their practice

Resource boxes of the community-sourced content

Scene-setting

01

Why this work?

Why lifestyles matter

Boundless Roots' purpose is to contribute to the amplification and creation of transformative projects that create the conditions for lifestyles to adapt to one planet living.

Our patterns of living have a huge impact on the world: from the food we eat to the products we buy, to how we move, work, organise and relate to others. Currently most of us in high-polluting countries are contributing to the climate crisis through our daily patterns of living, but changing how we live remains an often overlooked area when it comes to strategies to meet the 1.5 degree challenge.

However, changing how we live is a necessary part of the puzzle. The [IPCC](#)¹ has acknowledged that changing our behaviour needs to form part of our mitigation pathway, and from a carbon perspective: behaviours at scale reduce emissions. To drive the political and structural changes needed to stay at 1.5 degrees of warming, we also need an engaged public; the far-reaching policy change we need requires active citizens that will advocate and vote for change. The [1.5 Degree Lifestyle report](#)² by the Hot or Cool network articulates the level of change needed in per capita carbon emissions, concluding that:

“The required levels of reductions highlighted by this study, in some cases more than 90% based on current lifestyle carbon footprints, imply a radical rethink of sustainability governance and need for new business models”

— [hotorcool.org](#)

As more people wake up to the reality of the climate crisis, we're grappling with an existential question: what happens when our current ways of living become literally unlivable,

in a real and material sense? How can we live our lives in a way that doesn't destroy life for future generations and the many human and non-human communities suffering with the consequences today?

Why it particularly matters now

Halfway through our two-year project focusing on how we radically change how we live, the COVID-19 virus became a pandemic, thus radically changing how we live. This shifted the context of our project. We witnessed values and behaviours change rapidly. We saw a shifting role of government all over the world. Globally, we've been connected in loss and uncertainty. We've seen both incredible solidarity and support and we've seen people go deeper into scarcity and control mindsets. We've been reassessing how we live, how we work, how we relate, how we spend our time. We've also experienced the death of George Floyd and the momentum behind the Black Lives Matter movement, shining a light on colonial histories and the structural inequalities still very much with us.

These shifts only amplified the need for the work we'd been doing in Boundless Roots. Our inquiries about working with polarities, power and meaning in changing cultures seems more relevant than ever. **How do we work skillfully with polarities and with the momentum of changing cultures to contribute to healthy power and support meaning-making processes that can shift us towards radically different ways of living?**

Who we are

Background

The Boundless Roots Community is an incarnation of an intention that has taken different forms in the last 4 years. It was initiated by Kate Power, from KR foundation and Lewis Akenji from IGES. The intention was to find ways to reduce the dissonance between people wanting more radical thinking, radical action and systemic change, but finding that existing projects or ideas were not radical, nor ambitious enough. They were looking for ways to get more transformative sustainable living projects off the ground. They wanted to shift the Overton Window - facilitate the move from what is currently unthinkable to most people, towards acceptability and popularity. And by doing so, changing the narrative around both system change and individual change.

Forum for the Future requested and received funding to facilitate the community and decided to take a systems change approach to get to the roots of how we could support the level of change needed, looking for areas of potential that could accelerate the shift towards 1.5 degree living. So we started exploring what sits underneath the various efforts to create change in the field. Our intention was to explore the roots and nourish the soil of the field, to seed projects with the ambition that could match the scale of the challenge. You wouldn't plant seeds in polluted soil, first you take care of the soil - so that's what we set out to do.

Our overarching question was: How might we, a community of sustainable living practitioners with different approaches, create the conditions for radical changes in how we live? We acknowledge the need for drastic changes in how we live to meet the 1.5 degree challenge. But how do we actually do it?

The Boundless Roots Community (BRC) forms part of a rich and growing ecology of change; a movement of movements, all playing different parts in creating a more just and regenerative society and culture. There are lots of initiatives around the world working on radically changing how we live at different scales. What if, by better understanding the niche or gifts we best offer, as practitioners and organisations, to this ecosystem of change, we could increase the impact of our work, while amplifying others and making best use of resources and capacity? Our hypothesis is that if we can create a community of practitioners eager to go further in their ambition to change how we live together, we can

increase the number, ambition and impact of sustainable living interventions globally. Ultimately this will create an enabling system to support changes to how we live in different contexts and at different scales.

The community objectives are to:

- Create an ecosystem of practitioners, working across many different but complementary approaches to change, who inform, challenge and support each other's work — starting in our Boundless Roots Community but extending across the organisations and sectors of which we are part.
- Embark on a common exploration and a better understanding of critical issues that underpin shifts towards sustainable living.
- Experiment and share learning, to get better at what we do, creating more effective interventions, more ambitious in scale, reaching millions of beings around the world.

“There was back-forth conversation between more external, intrusive, manipulative methods of behavior change with more internal, empathy-building methods of behavior change. I personally think that both methods are required as they engage different camps of individuals, or rather convince different individuals on this “spectrum of behavior change”. At this point, the conversation felt like it was diverging, but in looking at it as an “ecology of change”, there is definitely synergy and convergence. I’m wondering how all kinds of methods can co-exist, perhaps driven by an underlying principle and a clear, compassionate end goal for just climate action but we use different tools to get there.”

— Qiyun Woo

Who are our members?

The Boundless Roots Community is a global group of practitioners looking at how we can change the way we live to meet the scale of the challenge facing us. We are supporting each other to navigate some of the big questions in this uncertain time, and doing this in a way that demonstrates a shift in mindset that we want to see emerge and go mainstream.

The community has a mix of specialisms. Having a focus on climate is the shared engagement, but it is not the only focus of members, and members have different theories and practices of change, with different length of experience and ages within the community, with some members with a few years' experience, and others with whole careers behind them. The community is majority white, with members based mostly in Europe, but with members also based in India, US, Brazil and Zambia as well. With this in mind, our conversations tended to bias Western urban ways of living. Members work across sectors and scales, from grassroots action to a multinational corporate, with many different theories of how change happens within the community. There were no policy makers or funders that formed part of the community.

You can find the biographies of community members past and present in the Appendix.

How we worked

We decided to take an action-inquiry approach, which is a process that allows for uncertainty and complexity; providing space to step back from action to reflect, integrate learning and adapt our approach. This process values multiple perspectives and questions underlying assumptions about the work we're doing - trying to make the hidden or invisible aspects of our work visible. It also values constant learning and looks for opportunities to test and experiment through practical action.

“A wonderful friend gave me a beautiful phrase over the weekend, which was: for the future to emerge, can we be still enough to kiss a butterfly?”

— Jenny Andersso

What is an action-inquiry approach?

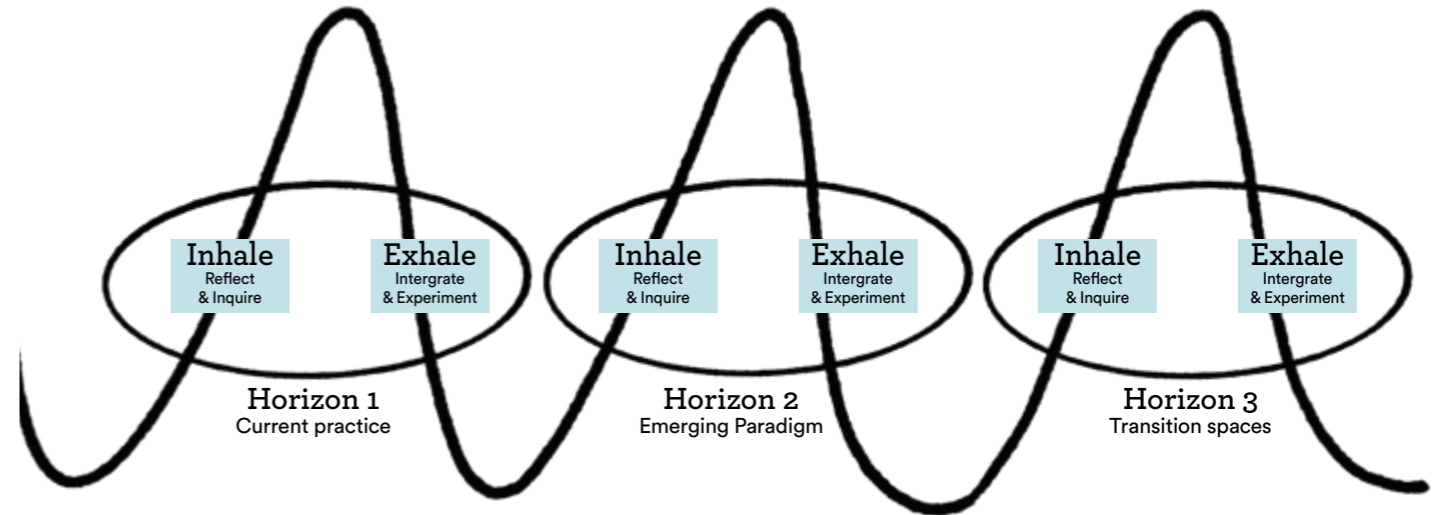
For systems to change we know that we need to question the fundamental purpose, assumptions, framing and understanding of our existing systems. We need more spaces that can host this type of exploration; an action inquiry approach provides one way of doing this. Inquiries provide a legitimate platform for people to question some of the widely accepted truths in a way that doesn't alienate, dismiss or belittle them, but encourages curiosity. It allows for enacting a different way of being / thinking / doing / relating that could provide hints for what existing in a different paradigm might look like.

Some of the qualities of systemic action inquiry³ are:

- Starting from a position of uncertainty
- Valuing multiple perspectives - nobody has a monopoly on the truth, but we all hold partial truths
- Questioning underlying assumptions and the status quo - make the invisible visible
- Seeing ourselves as part of the inquiry
- Constantly learning and adapting, and contributing towards the collective intelligence and experience about how change happens
- Looking for opportunities to test and experiments through practical action

We ran two cycles of action-inquiry. The second one in 2020 was more structured, inspired from the [GAIA Journey by the Presencing Institute](#)⁴, we went through 3 Inhale/Exhale mini cycles (see image below). Each action-inquiry-cycle has a cross-pollination session with the whole community coming together to discuss patterns. Some of the methodological frameworks that informed the process of inquiry were: The Iceberg, The Three Horizons framework, Fractals/Nested systems, the Adaptive Action Cycle (for more information, please see the Appendix).

Our second cycle of action-inquiry in 2020



We delivered a programme of online meetings and events to identify opportunities and develop ideas for new projects, including:

- 24 inquiry work sessions
- 8 community calls
- 24 drop-in community sessions
- 2 Gatherings: one in person (3 days), one online (2 days)
- 20+ project support and ad-hoc sessions

Our inquiry questions and how they evolved in 2020

Each of our inquiry groups was formed around a question. These questions emerged from conversations with practitioners in the community and challenges and tensions they were facing in their work. The process was guided by what practitioners found valuable and grounded in the lived experience and practice of the community members. We intentionally aimed to create an emergent space, which could react to external changes, such as COVID-19, Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion, and bring them into the inquiry process. On the next page you can see the inquiry questions around which we organised over the two years.

“For me, one of the most profoundly helpful aspects of Boundless Roots Community was that we had a team of skilled and dedicated facilitators who shepherded the process, brought tools to support our journey, offered regular summaries and reflection, and provided integration support throughout with all the images, metaphors etc. Even when we were being asked to contribute to something, reports, enquiry design etc, there was clear guidance on how to do this and a quick simple structure provided e.g. mini surveys, little videos, step by step guides etc. This made it possible for busy practitioners to take part and be held through the process, which was a massive relief.”

— Deborah Benham

The Boundless Roots inquiries

2019

How do we create the conditions for moments of cultural resonance and visibility?

How do we build capacity for millions of actors to accelerate the transformation to sustainable lifestyles?

How do we balance the urgency of the task with the need for deep change?

How do we work with privilege and colonialism, collective trauma and power?

2020

How can we work with the momentum of what's changing culture now and operationalise that in new ways?

How are we inviting people into an open, evolving conversation about what gives our lives meaning?

How do we work skillfully across polarities?

How are we contributing to healthy power, becoming more aware of power so that we can work with it more fluidly?

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/chapter-2/>
- 2 <https://hotorcool.org/hc-projects/1-5-degree-lifestyles/>
- 3 This approach has been adapted by Forum for the Future and informed by Danny Burns: "Systemic action research: A strategy for whole system change and Bill Torbert's work" <http://www.williamrtorbert.com/action-inquiry/>
- 4 <https://www.presencing.org/gaia>

Key Learnings and Leverage Points

“Maybe you are searching among the branches, for what only appears in the roots.”

— Rumi

01

Sustainable living as the starting point

The Boundless Roots Community finds its own roots in the question: How might we, a diverse community of sustainable living practitioners, create the conditions for radical changes in how we live? We acknowledge the need for drastic changes in how we live to meet the [1.5 degree challenge](#).¹ But how do we actually do it?

A multitude of approaches will be required to achieve the radical changes we need to see, in order to prevent human-induced, planetary breakdowns. All of us are confronting different parts of the system in our own way and learning from and working with each other helps us

deepen our understanding of what works where. There is not one correct way to create change or influence how we live, so we need to come at this challenge from many angles and with our different approaches. Understanding our place within this ecology of change helps us to better understand how we might operate better as an ecosystem of practitioners, and also help others find the routes and pathways to join.

So what sits underneath our various efforts to create change? What are some of the things blocking and facilitating change under the surface that are difficult to see? We wanted to use a systems approach to get to the roots of how we could support the level of change needed and find areas of potential that could accelerate the shift towards 1.5 degree living. One systems model that helps to conceptualise what sits under the surface of our behaviours is the Iceberg model (see Appendix for more). The Boundless Roots Community did not focus on

Events

What is happening?
These are the kind of things you see in the news

Patterns

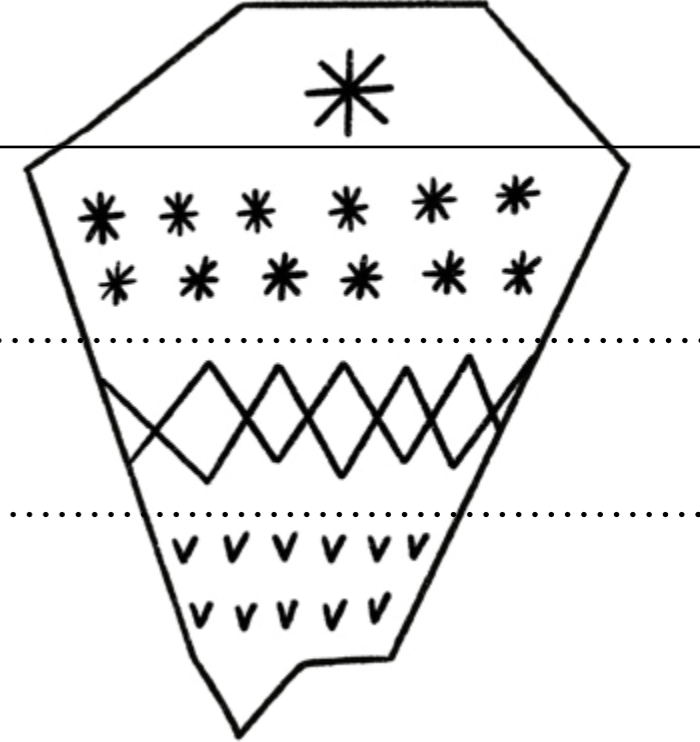
What are the trends or cycles that can be observed?
These are the kind of things academics or institutes might report on

Structures

What creates or influences the patterns?
Draw the relationships between the parts

Mental Models

What assumptions, beliefs and values underlie the system, that hold it in place?
Think, big ideas or values passed down over time



Source: Adapted by The School of System Change

the explicit policies needed at the structural level in this inquiry, but clearly there are roles for structural stakeholders such as municipalities, national governments and corporates in driving structural changes (e.g. large-scale divestment, market mechanisms and infrastructure provision to make sustainable behaviours easy, attractive, social and timely - especially harder to tip behaviours even if your values shift e.g. retro-fitting, public transport, renewable energy feed-in tariffs). The work of the [Cambridge Sustainability Commission on Scaling Sustainable Behaviour Change](#)² goes into more depth about some of the structural changes needed to scale sustainable behaviour change.

As our name suggests - the Boundless Roots Community focused more on the roots - the semi-explicit and implicit levels of change, the dimensions of change that might be harder to point at, or pick up and look at, but that drive so much of human behaviour. We did this to understand deeper leverage points, the invisible or semi-visible societal levers, that are often missing or not brought to the fore as much in the 'sustainable-behaviour-change' field.

Key themes: Leverage points for sustainable living

As we explored the roots, and the barriers and tensions that block us from making the radical changes we need - we noticed many intersections across the work that the community is doing, and three themes emerged which the community sees as having particular potential for us to both shift and deepen the work of sustainable behaviour change. These themes offer a reframing of the field when thinking about how to respond to the scale and urgency of the climate emergency and need for lifestyle change.

They highlight openings of what is important to pay attention to, where there is opportunity for leverage - when coordinated action can have disproportionately high impact on the system - that is where we might put our energy for change. The three areas for attention are:

- The cultural landscapes that shape our behaviour
- The dynamic of power that can either block or enable radical change
- The motivating force for changing how we live: meaning

We know we are part of an ecology of change so we have placed the themes in an ocean ecology to explore the

inherent interdependence and layers. Boundless Roots as an approach and community has been like the octopus traversing and exploring the diversity of this ecosystem.

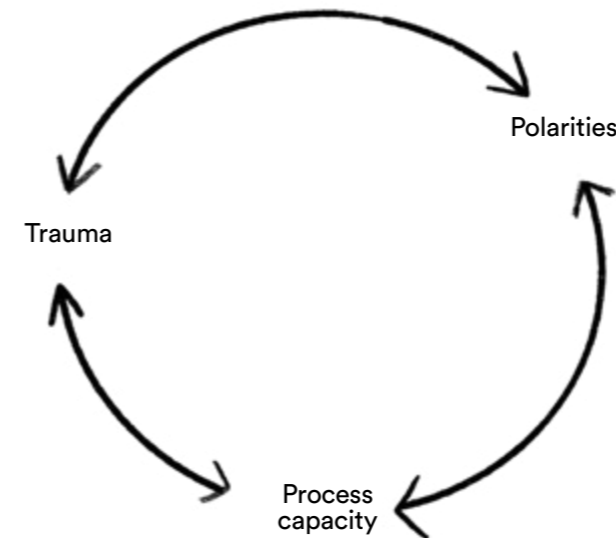
Key enablers: Overlooked elements of radical lifestyle change

We've also identified three enablers of change - forces which impact our individual and collective ability to influence and impact change. They each reinforce each other, amplify the change in the theme areas and can bring about or block sustainable behaviours and lifestyles expressed by individuals, collectives or society. Bringing awareness and actively working with them - they can be the source of serious dynamics shifting in the system.

Like losing sight of a tree by focusing on a forest, or losing sight of a forest by focusing on a tree, these are things that are easy to overlook because of their scale and pervasiveness, but it is crucial to be aware of, work with and invest in them - (1) how to work skillfully across differences and with polarities, (2) an understanding of trauma and its impact on human culture and behaviours and (3) building capacity around the process of change. Changing how we work with these three enablers has the potential to drive much more rapid change across the three themes. These are things that we do not like talking about in our current (action-oriented, outcome-focused, separation-oriented) dominant culture, but we suggest that we cannot take a whole systems approach to changing our behaviour without totally changing how we work with trauma, polarities and process.

1. **Polarities** - increasing polarisation and an unwillingness to understand and work constructively with 'others' who hold different perspectives is blocking radical collective change and is antithetical to social cohesion - we need to work skilfully with polarities to create radical shifts in how we live.
2. **Trauma** - trauma distorts what we perceive, so until we include it in our maps, what we take to be reality will be affected by it. To overcome this we need to change our relationship with the past and our open wounds, injuries, oppressions and injustices that often haven't even been acknowledged let alone repaired in our society. Trauma and injustice have to be acknowledged, and the healing journey prioritised, for communities to shift towards healthier, more sustainable ways of living.

3. **Process capacity** - we need to build capacity in the system to facilitate the process of change - paying attention to how we organise, come together and the practices and processes we use to do this. We need millions of people equipped with capabilities³ to facilitate lifestyle change that has depth and longevity in terms of impact.



The next part of the document explores each of these themes and enablers in more detail, bringing in the voice and experience of Boundless Roots members, examples of inspiring practices of where this is already happening and links to reading, tools and approaches to explore further.

Themes: How to work with these levers of change

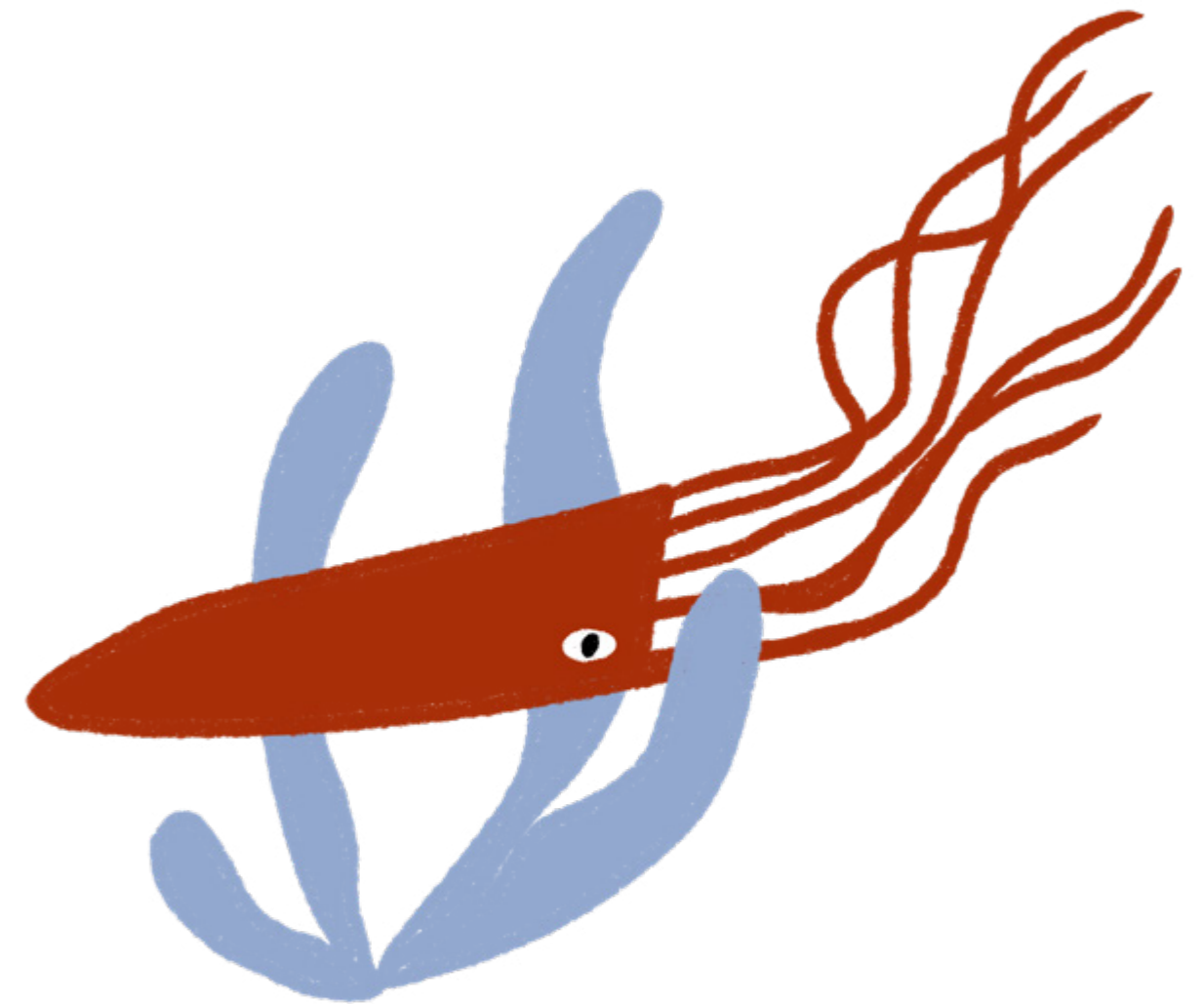
02

Under each of these sections we have explored why each theme is a leverage point for change.

Each section includes:

- What the theme is about and why it is important
- What this means for our work in terms of radically changing our ways of living
- Summary of where we are advocating change

You will also find quotes and illustrations from Boundless Roots members to ground this in practice.



Cultural Landscapes

“You think you are thinking your thoughts, you are not; you are thinking the culture’s thoughts.”

— Krishnamurti

Shaping the waves of change: working with the momentum of changing cultures

Why did we explore this?

Working with moments of cultural resonance and momentum for change

Over the last two years, community members noticed a surge in global awareness of climactic dangers, with wildfires in the Amazon, Australia and the US and as the climate movement responds with more visible activism and organisation, for example the IPCC [Global Warming of 1.5°C report](#)⁴, the Global Youth Strike for Climate, Extinction Rebellion...⁵ Never before has there been such focused attention on the climate crisis. But has this translated into radical shifts in behaviour in line with the goals and aspirations of the Paris Agreement? Are such aspirations even adequate? Is it changing the dominant culture around unsustainable lifestyles?

In the Boundless Roots community we noticed that there was a shifting social awareness around the climate movement, and increasingly there were moments of cultural resonance in which people could connect their own lives and experience - their own sources of meaning - to the climate crisis. Greta Thunberg is an example of somebody who symbolises one of these moments of cultural resonance; how a 15 year old girl going on school strike on her own can lead to a global movement of millions of people in 1,600 cities across 125 countries marching for “the climate”.

Cultural resonance:

An echo of meaning at different levels of the system; from the individual, to the community to the organisational to the societal. At an emotional level it’s about feeling heard, that your experience matters to others, and is shared by others. The feeling that this experience speaks to your values and identity, and ripples out through the culture.

In the community, we noticed that the wider sustainable behaviour change field often misses opportunities to fully engage with these moments of cultural resonance and work with them to support the shift towards radical changes in our lifestyles.

“I am very interested in helping to create the social and cultural conditions necessary to shift from fossil fuels towards a sustainable and just world. Cultural work is a very underdeveloped area, but a necessary condition for change. There have been bursts of change in the climate movement (ie. IPCC report, youth strikes), but the sustainable behavior community has not yet been able to take advantage of these moments. Our job is to help create moments for cultural change while also developing strategies we can push when change is occurring.”

— Jill Kubit

The challenge of shifting cultural contexts

Part of the challenge is that key moments of change appear at different times and depths in different cultures, and often in response to context-specific pressures. Dealing with this level of cultural context-dependence is difficult because when it comes to changing how we live, since where and how we live varies massively, with huge cultural differences based on things such as the relative influence of technology, the market, the state and civil society on our cultural landscape. For example, some countries have a high level of state control over the media, which influences how narratives get shaped and how

much agency citizens feel to commit to radical action. In other contexts, anything that is perceived as anti-business does not get airtime in the media, and interpretations of what is radical are culture-specific. Beyond geographical contexts, different segments of society will experience local cultures differently, and have varying levels of access to the infrastructure and services needed for sustainable living. As the Cambridge Sustainability Commission articulates, 'There is no one theory of change that applies to all settings... so culture- and context-sensitive approaches will be critical to ensuring any proposed measures are relevant, effective and durable.' (p.6 Cambridge Sustainability Commission).

“India is at a moment in history where the issues around sustainability and climate change, while all around us, have not yet seeped into hearts and minds in a way that is changing how we think about our world. It is still a distant and fragmented topic that has yet to find its roots in Indian culture today, even though its roots can be traced back for centuries in Indian history”

— Shloka Nath

“It is important to sit with some of these questions around how to contextualise international frameworks and solutions into our own work in India.”

— Jai Warrior

The barriers to change in our dominant cultural frames

Another part of the challenge in shifting towards sustainable ways of living is the reinforcing stories and frames of our dominant culture. Our behaviour is embedded within social groups and cultures. Our identities, values and actions are shaped through our languages, narratives and framings, and the shared worldviews and beliefs of our cultures that affect how we see our lives; our Overton Windows. Our dominant lifestyles in high-polluting nations are currently locked into society's patterns of living based on high levels of consumption in a fossil-fuel based economy.

We are unintentionally complicit in extractive, high-polluting, and often exploitative systems: the way we move, eat, stay warm, have fun, interact online and earn money often contribute to the climate crisis, and most of us know it. In this context people often feel defeatist, hopeless or in denial, encouraged by a dominant culture that tends to treat us as passive consumers, degrading our agency and autonomy in change. Our experiences of powerlessness in this culture signal to us that our own actions don't make a difference, and our psychological responses to this powerlessness tend to be pathologised. Instead of trying to confront the roots of this, we find other fixes that help us get through; we work harder, we medicate, we buy more stuff, we scroll through social media, we binge watch tv, or we find another distraction in our increasingly attention-based economy. To achieve radical changes there are therefore significant barriers based in the dominant social and cultural landscape.

This dominant cultural landscape is reinforced through deep-rooted stories and frames about ourselves and our place in the world. One approach to working with these cultural narratives is to communicate visions of positive futures, focusing on what low-carbon lifestyles can look like in different contexts and across different domains (e.g. food, transport, energy). An example of this is [One Earth's Envisioning Low Carbon Lifestyles](#) project⁶. The goal is to communicate positive futures to people in such a way that appeals to their emotions and articulates the co-benefits of moving towards healthier, sustainable lifestyles and through doing so inspire action and radical behaviour change.

In Boundless Roots we wanted to further explore ways to work with moments of cultural resonance and the momentum of changing cultures to support a shift in the landscape towards radical changes in behaviour.

“Is our work to create the conditions for radical changes in how we live or is it as much, if not more, about recognising that radical changes are happening/ coming and that we're seeking to create conditions which mean we can roll with these changes, find the good, protect the vulnerable, speak the truth, live well and die well?”

— Sarah McAdam

What does this mean for our work?

We've pulled out some key considerations from our explorations about what this means for how change might happen in our cultural landscape for sustainable living.

Shifting narratives, stories and our cultural frames

If our behaviour emerges from different cultural contexts, which provide the lens through which we see the world, then our different cultural narratives, framings and worldviews are critical to changing how we live. This is about working with collective psychology; the social systems and networks which we are part of, as well as our shared values, meanings, languages and relationships.

One of the routes to working with the shared values of our culture is to find the stories that connect with peoples' lived experience in their context and then to amplify these stories to build resonance in the culture. This is about working with the existing cultural narratives in the system and connecting what people care about in their lives today to our work on the climate crisis and creating a unifying, common cause with low carbon living.

Compassion not consumerism movement – Global Action Plan UK - Sonja Graham

GAP aims to highlight narratives that drive unsustainable behaviour for people and planet and replace them with positive ones. For example, our #Idontbuyit campaign creates spaces for teens to talk about the illusion of “success” that social media perpetuates, its toll on their mental health and to explore more sustainable futures for them and the planet; these personal stories are shared to help build public support for regulation for targeted advertising to children online. Through Flickers of the Future we are also working with young filmmakers to develop scripts that centre relatable characters and storylines in radically different and positive sustainable futures.

<https://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/compassion-not-consumerism/about-compassion-not-consumerism>

DearTomorrow - Jill Kubit

DearTomorrow is a global storytelling project where people write climate messages to loved ones living in the future. Messages are shared at deartomorrow.org and through social media, community events, and public art to inspire deep thinking and bold action on climate. DearTomorrow utilizes legacy-based thinking and values-based communications to reduce the psychological distance of the climate crisis and to shift mindsets and motivate long-term action. DearTomorrow's framework allows for people to think more deeply about what the climate crisis means in our own lives and to make and share commitments (including: sustainable behaviors, social actions and political actions) to act. Since launching in 2015 DearTomorrow has collected more than 2000 personal climate stories from over 50 countries, and has engaged hundreds of community organizers, teachers, faith leaders, and NGO leaders to develop and share personal climate stories in their own communities. Combining climate communications, behavior science, a digital platform, community organizing, storytelling, and public art, DearTomorrow creates a new model for public engagement.

deartomorrow.org

Another route to change is to re-frame the dominant cultural narratives to tell and experience a different story about ourselves and our position in the world. The assumption here is that if we want to influence cultural change at the roots, we need to work with the deep-rooted stories we tell ourselves and widen our embodied experiences towards alternative ways of life, with different habits and routines. These are based in different ways of seeing and experiencing the world on a daily basis, and shape the ways we design our institutions, our policies, and our behaviour. In [Donella Meadows' systems theory](#)⁷, one of the deepest levers for changing the system is to re-frame the unspoken assumptions and stories of the dominant system. Living these alternatives day-to-day, or experiencing them at least once, they become part of us.

We discussed how our dominant (western, urban) culture has disconnection, disembodiment and separation built into who we are. It's rare that anyone would subscribe consciously to this dominant cultural narrative, but it is still there and reinforced through our ordinary, daily habits. This human exceptionalism, or the idea that we are closed off from the wider systems in nature that we rely on for

survival, plays out at every level of the system. From our feelings of powerlessness in relation to creating change, to how we design our policies, to our relationship to the living world, it informs our behaviour and lifestyle decisions.

Report on the everyday living implications of COVID-19

- Ulrike Ehgartner

“My work addresses dynamics and signals of change in cultural narratives from the perspective of cognitive sociology, by trying to understand cultural-perceptual frames. That means I am looking at how people interpret or demonstrate awareness of the socio-cultural context they are living in as well as how cultural meaning is carried out in their practices. A changed cultural context can alter how people relate to or engage with activities, whereby adjustments in some areas of day-to-day life have knock-on effects on other areas of life. Over the past year we could observe a substantial disruption of the normality of everyday lives, with some remarkably positive short-term sustainability impacts. Whether the embodied experiences and meanings we gained during this period will lead to long-term cultural change depends on the interplay of a variety of factors that go way beyond a change of values - as shown in this report. As an academic interested in change and transformation, I know this cannot be achieved unless people working in different fields connect, share, collaborate and build the foundation for new visions and experiences together. In this context, I have found the connection to the Boundless Roots Community invaluable.”

<https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/report-published-on-covid-19-related-change-to-everyday-life-and-impacts-on-sustainability/>

“Many people have this feeling as if all the world is unreal because, disconnected from the embodied sense of being and interconnectedness, we are as if just watching a film in our heads.”

— Sabina Enéa Téari

This cultural narrative needs to be challenged. In Boundless Roots we discussed alternative narratives that move us from a lack of ownership and powerlessness to one of power in relationship as part of an open, interdependent system.

“With Foresta Collective we are tuning-in to sense, seek, perceive the emerging narratives beyond the established perceptual logic of current cultural paradigm. We see our role in nourishing the soil for new perspectives, values and stories that contribute to human and ecological wellbeing. Rooted in embodied culture and linking large scale thinking to the immediate reality of everyday life. Working with creative expression to enlarge the imagination of what’s possible. Moving away from the prescriptive paradigm.”

— Sabina Enéa Téari

Foresta Collective Seasonal Academy - Sabina Enéa Téari

Seasonal Academy is an online and onsite experiential learning program unfolding within the context of a cultural paradigm shift towards regeneration and a multi-layered sustainability mindset. Taking place within 4 learning trails during 4 seasons, it is dedicated to supporting individuals from diverse walks of life, who want to start or strengthen their projects, practices or develop livelihoods based on ecosystems thinking. Rooted in embodied culture, artistic practices, impulses and inquiries, our work aims to offer people space and processes to deepen into the ecological mindset, develop practical skills and longer-term strategies for envisioning and realising their work, while taking care of themselves and the world around. Seasonal Academy sessions are kind of hikes, climbs, journeys into the learning wilderness, to discern together what the new narratives might be about and how do we find ways of inhabiting them, individually and collectively, where thinking, sensing and making are intertwined.

<http://www.laforesta.co/seasonal-academy>

We want to re-centre serving life in our stories and messaging. This is the central narrative of a shift toward sustainable ways of living - us living and evolving within a dynamic living system. The whole association of ‘sustainability’ as being about ‘how do we take in a way that is less bad?’ is rooted in the narrative of separation; we are taking from something out there that we are not a part of. But what if this narrative shifted toward staying in a reciprocal relationship with life? This is what we mean by regenerative ways of living; connecting to that which gives us life and being able to evolve and adapt as part of a wider living system. We are seeing signs of these narratives gaining more momentum, often rooted in indigenous wisdoms, for example Robin Wall Kimmerer’s [Braiding Sweetgrass](#)⁸ and Tyson Yunkaporta’s [Sand Talk](#).⁹

A great example of this regenerative narrative shift is [this work to frame a narrative and design principles for an Ecological Civilisation](#). Along with his colleagues, Jeremy Lent articulates principles rooted in a reciprocal relationship with life, or ‘6 rules for humans rejoining nature’:

- **Diversity:** A system’s health depends on differentiation and integration e.g. community self-determination and restorative justice.
- **Balance:** Every part of a system is in a harmonious relationship with the entire system, which in practice means a Global Wealth Tax, the abolition of offshore tax havens and new measures for progress such as the Genuine Progress Indicator.
- **Fractal organisation:** The small reflects the large, and the health of the whole system requires the flourishing of each part, which among other things means universal access to housing, healthcare and education.
- **Life cycles:** Regenerative and sustainable flourishing into the long-term future, which has implications for our infinite-growth-oriented economy, and might mean ‘A Rights of Nature declaration, recognizing the inalienable rights of ecosystems and natural entities to persist and thrive, would put the natural world on the same legal standing as humanity’
- **Subsidiarity:** Issues at the lowest level affect health at the top, which means a preference for decision-making at the lowest possible levels and models of organising enabled by organisations such as the P2P Foundation, Global Citizens Initiative and the Global Commons Alliance.
- **Symbiosis:** Relationships that work for mutual benefit, which in practice means circular economies and manufacturing processes and regenerative agriculture.¹⁰

Another example is [a collaborative inquiry](#) between

Green Economy Coalition, Wellbeing Economy Alliance, The SpaceShip Earth and Friday Future Love, whose purpose is to “bring forth new and ancient stories into our culture, which weave a narrative of interconnection and help us design a new type of economy. An economy where we put life at the centre, the health and wellbeing of people and planet, of all life, an economy re-designed to be in service to life. Weaving this narrative needs engagement across cultures. It will need everyone who brings stories into our cultures to participate and play.”¹¹

More organisations working to create these shifts in narrative are [The Narrative Initiative](#)¹², which catalyses narrative change for equity and social justice, and the [Long Time Project](#)¹³, which uses the arts to shift our culture towards a longer-term perspective on our existence, with the aim of changing the way we behave in the short-term.

The role of the arts, of filmmakers, designers and story-tellers in this narrative shift is huge. This is a massively under-funded area because it’s difficult to communicate the inherent complexity and monitor impact, but it’s essential to invest in bringing the power of the arts and creativity to communicating narratives that drive action on the climate crisis. We noticed the influence on our culture of some of David Attenborough’s recent documentaries, and the power of the story of the relationship between a man and an octopus in [My Octopus Teacher](#).¹⁴ These stories re-frame the separation narrative through putting our mutual relationship with the living world at the heart of the story.

“I see particular potential in using stories and re-empowering myths in the modern world”

— Peter Emery

Change the metaphors to change the deep cultural frames

Central to our current ways of living lie metaphors that we’ve received about who we are, what the world is like and our role in it. Given the complexity of the world, and our capacity to see only bits of it at a time, we develop metaphors (or “mental models”) early in life, that are reinforced through the experiences and stories we grow up with. As [George Lakoff](#) argues, if we come across facts that do not match up with our deep metaphors about the world, we tend to ignore the facts in favour of the metaphor.¹⁵

Film: Rewilding in Britain

- Peter Emery

What films do well is to help audiences understand information new to them, through empathy and association, and with characters and environments that they identify with, whether real or fictional. Imagined worlds provide a test area to play out ideas and scenarios, risk free, until they are ready for the real world. The Rewilding in Britain film project is full of ideas, but its greater aim is to connect related issues together and to help the audience understand context and scale. The format of the film blends knowledge, imparted by experts, mixed with stories of people playing out this knowledge in the real world. These stories work as evidence and enhance and validate understanding, and they help the audience see the relevance for their own lives.

<https://www.peter-emery.com/>

Marine CoLAB - valuing the ocean

- Anna Birney

The Marine CoLAB is a collaboration of marine and related NGOs working together to put value at the heart of shaping solutions for our ocean. As a collaboration it believes that at the heart of the challenges the ocean faces, for example from ocean plastics to community engagement in marine protected areas that people are more likely to protect what they value. As such we take a values based approach to communication and experiments. This means we root our practice in the intrinsic value of the ocean to us living on this planet. We design experiments which enable people to consider the behaviours and actions in relation to the ocean - for example the Oneless campaign frames the single use plastic water bottle challenge about ensuring that we are valuing the ocean rather than from a purely behaviour change perspective. The CoLAB therefore aims to increase collaborative action and explore how to communicate why the ocean matters - using narratives, reframing and connecting to what gives life meaning.

<https://marinecolab.org/oneless/>

The Rights of Rivers South Asia Alliance

- Abhayraj Naik

The Initiative for Climate Action (ICA) has been actively supporting the development and emergence of a new transboundary alliance called the Rights of Rivers South Asia (RoRSA). RoRSA is part of a global regenerative narrative shift where rivers (and nature in general) are legally recognised as living entities with rights instead being viewed as resources to be exploited for human economic growth. RoRSA aims to “foster dialogue and collaboration around the concept of Rights of Rivers, and to enable community empowerment, regeneration, conservation and responsible policymaking. Inspired by the worldviews of local and indigenous communities across South Asia and the world, we recognise that systemic changes that honour the deep interconnections between humans and nature are essential in order to transform destructive current paradigms of development.”

<https://rorsa.org>

South Asia Bioregionalism Working Group

- Abhayraj Naik

The ICA is actively involved with supporting and promoting a new South Asia level ‘bioregionalism’ working group that questions/unsettles the dominant narrative around fixed and rigid political-administrative boundaries in the South Asian region. An early-stage unpublished concept note from the working group (November 2020) suggests: “With the risk of climate chaos increasing rapidly, the well-being of people and nature in this region depends on society, state and markets working from a bioregional perspective... Existing political and administrative boundaries often cut across contiguous ecological and/or cultural landscapes, thereby disrupting the natural movement of wildlife and genes, as also the historical movements and links of communities (especially nomadic ones). So the idea is to rethink/relook at existing political and administrative boundaries, and consider transboundary or borderless or reconstituted approaches that respect Eco-Bio-Cultural linkages and contiguities.”

<https://actionclimate.org>

We have deep emotional connections to these metaphors that hold us; they provide the framework through which we survive in the world. These patterns have been noticed by Riane Eisler in her work on [domination and partnership culture](#),¹⁶ and Lakoff describes the prominence of the ‘strict father’¹⁷ frame in conservative politics in the US, which has been well funded by conservative groups to reinforce the cultural message that we should prioritise strength and competition over nurture and care (the ‘nurturing mother’ frame).

“We need to hit cultural / behavioural tipping points before the climate hits its own. We don’t have time to pick off people one at a time or only focus on the people who already agree with us. The movement has a poor understanding of collective psychology and what influences it - and how to.”

— David Powell

What are the metaphors we are using to shape our cultural frames? How are we putting care for our children at the heart of our metaphors, rather than reinforcing old frames by always centering the discussion on the economy or on techno-fixes? What if we could begin to change those deep-rooted pathways in our brains through consistent messaging through different metaphors?

Some examples of attempts to shift the metaphor in the wake of COVID-19 include Ella Saltmarshe from The Comms Lab, who gave us [8 Tips for framing Covid-19](#)¹⁸, emphasising the importance of picking metaphors with care, favouring navigation, journeys and natural systems over individual strength and panic. Charles Eisenstein’s essay and podcast on [The Coronation](#), also tries to do this reframing work, proposing that this is a moment to question control-based responses, to question the mindset underpinning a ‘War on Death’, and calling us to build on love in a world of separation.¹⁹

Anticipating the waves of cultural change

Working with existing cultural narratives to create cultural resonance and reframing our deeply rooted stories and metaphors are two key avenues to shift us towards sustainable ways of living. But our culture is changing, with times of crisis and collapse alongside surges of social awareness, so as practitioners we felt the need to get better at working with the momentum of cultural change.

The COVID-19 virus became a pandemic just after our first community gathering; as a community we had a collective experience of adapting to a radically different context in a rapid way. We know the coming decades are likely to be turbulent, so what does it mean for our work when we’re experiencing one crisis after another? How do we cope with the collapse we are expecting? How are we remaining flexible and adaptive in response?

We acknowledged the importance of living the waves of cultural change, which includes letting go of the old waves to welcome in new ones. Times of instability and collapse are uncomfortable and painful; it tends to mean loss, uncertainty and change, and in most cultures we fear it. But it can also give rise to radical change, in which the emergence of something new is possible through the death of something old.

To embrace these waves of change we, as practitioners, need to learn how to let go of ways of working, theories of change and messaging that are no longer relevant or useful in this context. We need to re-frame our stories in such a way that acknowledges that change is messy and complex, and that allows us to embrace our failures and vulnerabilities and enter into uncomfortable conversations about different theories of change. We need to learn how to sit in the unknown space in-between and work with uncertainty as a condition of our work. This involves making space for new approaches and ways of working that can respond to this changing landscape, for example spaces of shared inquiry that allow us to sense together what needs to emerge, rather than assuming we know what needs to be done based on old assumptions.

Deep Adaptation - Naresh Giangrande

Deep Adaptation, which some of the Boundless Roots members work with, has created a space for people to engage with each other about the collapse they are experiencing and sense together what’s needed in response. It is an example of an organisation questioning, often in very controversial ways, our collective myths of progress that unconsciously maintain existing unequal power structures.

<https://deepadaptation.ning.com/>

As citizens, this means learning how to accept that our ways of living might no longer be viable, and building capacity to cope with the impacts on our identities of radical shifts in living. For this we need narratives that recognise the uncertainty of this changing landscape and support us

through these shifts. And we need the conversations and processes to make meaning out of these changes that support the emergence of new ways of living.

We have noticed growing momentum through COVID-19 for organisations and practices that helps us work through uncertainty and loss. The [Work That Reconnects](#)²⁰, [Deep Adaptation](#)²¹, [Stewarding Loss](#)²² and [Grief Tending](#)²³, are all examples of initiatives engaging with these cycles of change.

“Human life is an ecological project, a ‘worlding’ project, with no set categories. If we begin to think how we think, not reinforcing what we already know, opening the leaky corners and edges of the established ways of sense-making, we can also look at death in a different way. Indeed, it is an ultimate letting go, it is painful and heartbreaking, but if we are less ontologically heavy, we may come to different, perhaps more generative, ways of understanding the cycles of life and death.”

— Sabina Enéa Téari

“I didn’t understand why we were talking so much about death to start with, but I think it’s linked to our protective instincts that can be a blocker to making needed change. Then linked to that is an idea that we need to be ‘brave’ in what we are trying to do. “

— Peter Emery

Cultivating the skills of empathy and adaptability, to sense what is emerging and remain agile enough to act and respond to what is changing enables people to live the waves of change. It leaves the question, what role does culture play in priming, anticipating and preparing us as individuals and societies for the turbulence that lies ahead?

Working with cultural leaders

Taking a systemic approach to cultural change sees patterns of relationship and networks in which different ideas, organisations and people have different levels of power and influence to shift the ways we see the world. In this view, who is sending the messages matters: ‘It clearly matters where, when and who leads such change.’ (CSC p.51)

“In social groups or communities not everyone has equal influence to affect change in the system. We might look at who the messengers are, the cultural leaders, the community organisers and facilitators of change and how they might leverage greater effect in their groups, for example your Imam or other religious leader. We also need to then understand what capacities they might need or support that is required to bring about change.”

— Anna Birney²⁴

The central nodes in cultural networks are the social, cultural and religious leaders, the media gatekeepers, the trendsetters. We see a critical role for well-networked, trusted messengers that can model a new way of being in the world, and the ripple effects this can have on the wider social system. These are the people with agency and capacity in the system, who can work to influence social norms. One of the examples we’ve come across is [Climate Outreach’s work with media gatekeepers](#)²⁵, influencing the narrative and messaging about the climate crisis, and members of the Boundless Roots Community have different approaches to this.

Working with cultural influencers can happen at different levels, from providing them the messaging to use and share on their platforms, for example the French campaigning organisation [On est Pret](#)²⁶ involving a large network of YouTube influencers in each campaign, to taking them through learning experiences to shift the way they use their influence, which is what the Comms Lab aims to do with [Reclaiming Agency](#).²⁷ We believe we need all of these levels to work together, but we advocate more ‘scaling deep’ work, accessing the values and processes of meaning-making that shape peoples’ identities, which we explore further in the meaning-making theme. What capacity building is needed for cultural leaders and influencers?

Social Media Activism

- Qiyun Woo

I run an Instagram advocacy account @theweirdandwild and am developing an interactive climate communications page @climatecommons in a bid to introduce play and construction into understanding sustainability and to appreciate all its complexity that we often try to water down when explaining the situation. From my experience, social media activism and the digital climate communications page are underlined by the same principle of interactivity. Be it learning with a voice that is taking you through sustainability issues or learning on a page that encourages you to figure it out as you play triggers a part of your brain that encourages play, curiosity and wonder that we have lost as adults. I hope that in this manner, these projects can open more minds and hearts to co-creating the ecological civilisation we want to be a part of.

<https://www.instagram.com/theweirdandwild/>

FFCC Field Guide for the Future

- Kenny McArthy

The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission wanted to challenge common narratives that view farmers as climate and nature villains, ignoring the critical role farmers and rural communities can play as a force for change as positive stewards of the land. Travelling the whole of the UK by bike, we met farmers, growers, businesses who are showing how farming can deliver positive outcomes for climate, nature, health and communities. The Commission’s bike tour set to amplify the voices of communities doing things differently, provide evidence for policy making and produce stories of the future, happening now.

<https://ffcc.co.uk/library/field-guide-for-the-future>

“Change influencers. Change the influenced. Change society. Identify, say, 1,000 influential culture makers, and take them through an extended learning experience that connects them more deeply and personally to our climate emergency. The experience will alter them, awakening a desire to use their position of influence to help heal the world. They will begin to take more responsibility for the output they create, bringing climate into the foreground, raising awareness and energising the audiences they serve. The knock-on effect will be that they will influence millions of people across society and influence other content producers. Influence a small group of people who influence large groups of people.”

— Jonathan Wise

“The biggest step change in engaging the cultural community comes in shifting the conversation away from “climate change” (or emergency, or crisis...) and towards the key question of “how do we transition into a thriving, resilient and sustainable society?” Once we have accepted that climate changes will likely shape the rest of our lives and that getting to a zero carbon society involves a high degree of disruption, the creative opportunities open up for content makers as that transition manifests itself in everything around us! The challenge becomes about how to enable all audiences to find their voice on the topic and to find a sense of agency and empowerment.”

— Jeremy Matthieu

Across all of this, we need to acknowledge that the climate and changemaking field has a lot to learn from these industries about what it takes to create and tell compelling stories. This is already happening, for example through [Stronger Stories](#)²⁸, the [Narratives Initiative](#)²⁹ and the [Common Cause Foundation](#).³⁰ However, we need more mutual collaborations across disciplines to learn from each other's experiences and build alliances and collaborations to craft the narratives, stories and frames needed to drive collective action over the coming decade. What infrastructure is needed to amplify the work, how much will it happen organically, and what might be needed to support this? We see huge opportunities here and are left with questions we can't answer alone.

Reclaiming Agency, from the Comms Lab

- Jonathan Wise

Launched in 2017 and now in its third cohort, Reclaiming Agency is a six-month, part-time leadership programme for senior people in the advertising and marketing communications industry. Like an initiation into the truth of our environmental situation, each cohort is gently and safely guided through a process to work through the emotions that arise, building confidence and skills, and acting to help address our climate emergency, modelling a more open and human leadership style. Much of the progress the UK ad industry has made on climate has been initiated by Reclaiming Agency alumni.

<https://www.reclaimingagency.com>

Sustainable living 1.5: The Anatomy of Action

- Garrette Clark

The Anatomy of Action (AoA) social media toolkit showcases evidence-based actions people can take to live better and lighter. Targeting governments, companies, media, educators, sustainability and youth-based organizations and influencers – it raises awareness and galvanizes action through challenges, designing policies or dialogues. By changing what we eat, the stuff we buy, how we spend money, how we move and what we do for fun, we can live the SDGs. UNEP with others is activating AOA challenges to reach 10 million youth leading into Stockholm+50 (2022).

Resources: [The Anatomy of Action](#) (links to assets) example: [Video](#); [Blog post](#) and Instagram account [@TheOfficialAnatomyofAction](#)

The Great Reset, Purpose Disruptors

- Jonathan Wise

Led by alumni of Reclaiming Agency (above), The Great Reset is an initiative created by people within the UK advertising industry. It resulted in the creation of a national campaign to embed the positive environmental behaviours we experienced during lockdown. At its heart, as shown in the launch film, was a question for those in the industry: Do you want to use your creative superpowers to get people to return to buying more stuff or to help embed pro-environmental behaviours? Over 1000 people from industry choose to get involved, showing the power of a question and providing the opportunity and infrastructure for action.

<https://greatreset.com>

So what are we advocating for?

Working with cultural landscapes at all levels is critical if we're to create resonance at scale and shift the pace of action. Working this way will contribute to the wider ecology of change by reframing the way we understand our world and each other. It will also provide space where new frames and narratives can flourish, challenge and replace today's dominant culture and worldviews.

Advocacy areas

- **Shifting narratives:** development and investment in the collaborative practice and process of narrative work between climate and narrative practitioners to understand systemic change and be better poised to leverage opportunities.
- **Changing the metaphors to change the deep frames:** invest in reinforcing frames that centre life and embed these across all our change work and communications approaches. Development spaces for communication teams of change-making organisations to ensure this is central to programming.
- **Anticipating the waves of cultural change:** create community/collective sensing and learning spaces. Collective scanning of the cultural landscape for changing narratives and moments of resonance that could be acted on early. Have fast moving funds and or ways of operating that allow for rapid responses to such opportunities - be prepared and able to organise quickly around these.
- **Building capacity of cultural leaders:** invest in spaces for and building alliances and collaborations between cultural leaders interested in paradigm shifts that currently feel isolated. Support these leaders to influence and put in place strategies for change in their organisational and sectoral contexts.

Advocacy voices

“Radical behaviour change requires change agents whose influence radiates in spheres that ultimately influence communities. These waves of change are fueled by the ability of the change agents to inspire others through role modelling the desired changes. Teachers, lead farmers, community leaders and learners need to be equipped with the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes for their own transformation so they can radiate the desired change in their communities.”

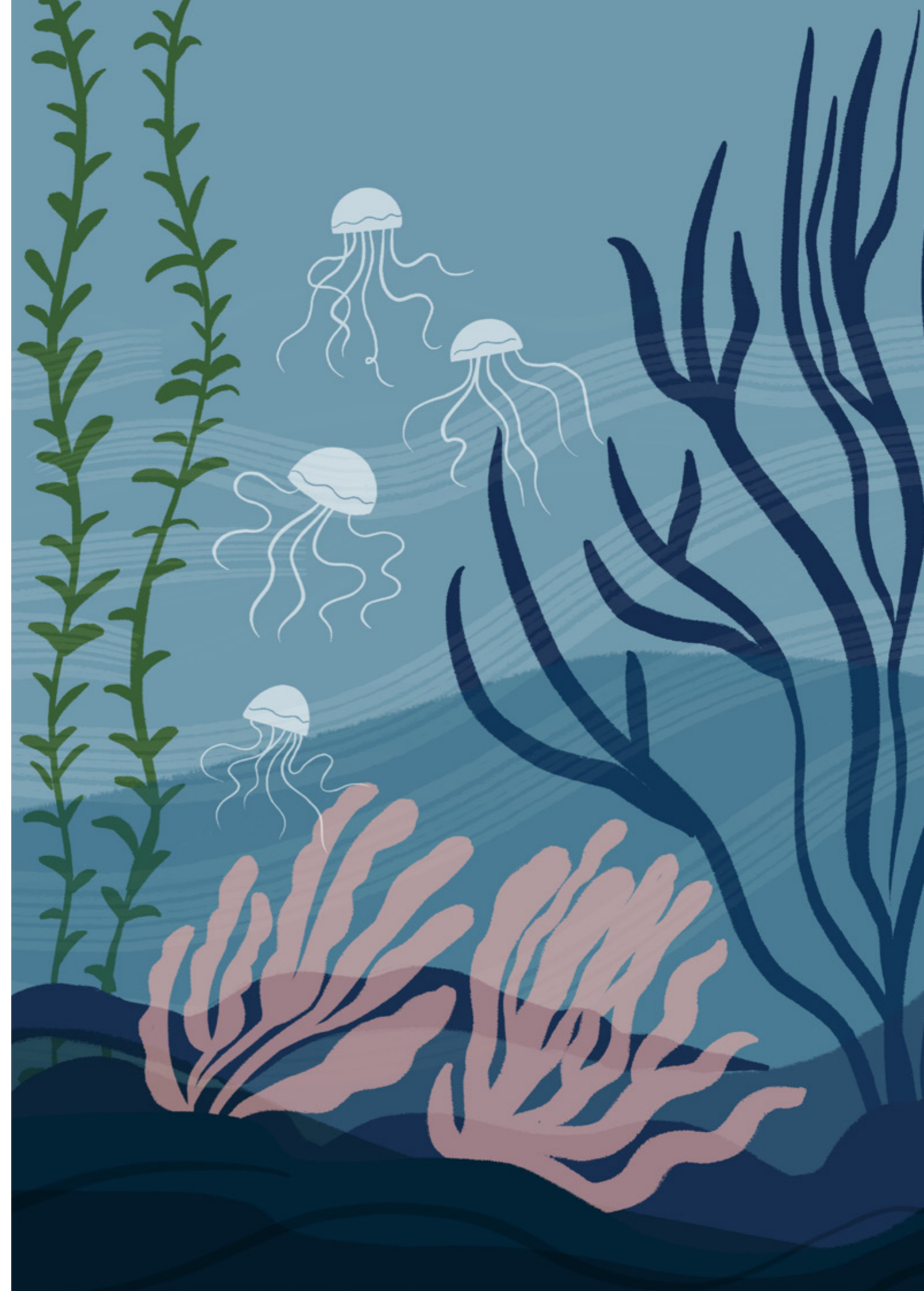
— Mugove Walter Nyika

“We need to learn to listen to and learn from nature and history...and then we also need to learn how we could apply some of our learnings at the personal, interpersonal, and systemic levels. Finding, celebrating, and learning from the lesser known stories in a way that provides a systemic roadmap for change is the key need of the hour. This will require creative constellations of people and organisations from different parts of the world to work, imagine, and experiment in many new and often-times strange ways! We must support such weird forays into the wild in any and every way possible!”

— Abhayraj Naik

Resources for practitioners

- The collaboration between Green Economy Coalition, Wellbeing Economy Alliance, The Spaceship Earth and Friday Future Love to help create stories that contribute to the redesign of a healthier economy: <https://stories.life/>
- Tools for [Regenerative Leadership](https://www.regenerativeleadership.co/), by Laura Storm and Giles Hutchins - <https://www.regenerativeleadership.co/>
- [New Metaphors](http://newmetaphors.com/) by the Imaginaries Lab - A Creative Toolkit for generating ideas and reframing problems - <http://newmetaphors.com/>
- Climate Outreach: [Communicating climate change during the coronavirus crisis](https://climateoutreach.org/communicating-climate-change-during-the-coronavirus-crisis-evidence/) - what the evidence says - <https://climateoutreach.org/communicating-climate-change-during-the-coronavirus-crisis-evidence/>
- Climate Outreach: [Mainstreaming Low Carbon Lifestyles](https://climateoutreach.org/reports/mainstreaming-low-carbon-lifestyles/) - <https://climateoutreach.org/reports/mainstreaming-low-carbon-lifestyles/>
- University of Manchester on [Covid-19, Changing Social Practices and the Transition to Sustainable Consumption and Production](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341214697_Covid-19_Changing_Social_Practices_and_the_Transition_to_Sustainable_Consumption_and_Production) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341214697_Covid-19_Changing_Social_Practices_and_the_Transition_to_Sustainable_Consumption_and_Production
- [Collective Psychology Project - A Larger Us](https://larger.us/ideas/) - <https://larger.us/ideas/>
- Michael Braithwaite in [this article](https://thetilt.org/blm-k-pop-stans-and-zoomers-just-taught-us-everything-about-narrative-control-a13284f6862f) writes about why the message of Black Lives Matter cut through - <https://thetilt.org/blm-k-pop-stans-and-zoomers-just-taught-us-everything-about-narrative-control-a13284f6862f>



Working with Power

“Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change”

— Dr. Martin Luther-King

Contributing to Healthy Power

Why did we explore this?

If our collective psychology and cultural psyche is the ocean within which we're swimming, then power is the current that gives it movement and momentum. Power is everywhere, it can function as both an uplifting wave and a devastating riptide. It is hard to see but its force is felt even if it is ignored.

We can't ignore the roots of our unsustainable behaviours in the history of power. The climate crisis has been created by historical processes of injustice, and our global supply chains have been shaped through patterns of colonialism and control.

This history has left us with power dynamics that affect our ability to make changes in our own lives. It has left us with structural blockers to radical sustainable behaviour change. For example, we may want to live a low carbon lifestyle and move towards using purely renewable energy in our homes, but if the only accessible and affordable options we have are the unsustainable ones, we're not free to make the sustainable decision. Our decisions are constrained by the unequal economic structures we live in and the infrastructure available to us, whether that be local food, public transport or renewable energy.

“Until recently I've embraced sustainability through stinginess – cooking simple vegan food, travelling by bike and wrapping up rather than using central heating. But my house was growing mould and the winter cold was getting to me too, so I decided on an eco-rebuild. I now have a net-zero house: the solar panels generate three times more electricity than I use year-round, which will displace gas-fired

generation from the grid and pay off the carbon embodied in the build. It makes sense as a demonstration and learning project – for me, the builder and the architect – but it's taken money, personal contacts, knowledge and time that are not available to most people.”

— Laurie Michaelis

In addition to these structural blockers, these power dynamics affect our relationships. As relationships are at the heart of the way we live in community as well as the way we cultivate change, we need to pay attention to what consequences these power dynamics are creating and how it affects our lives and the ways in which we change.

“At the heart of our system lies an attitude of domination that impacts us at every level - in our culture, our social structures, our relationships with others and with ourselves. This is a deep root of how we've ended up in our current predicament and understanding and defusing it could unlock a way for us to move forward.”

— Eva Schonveld

The dominant power dynamic is one of 'power-over' coercion and control, which has left us with unhealed injuries that block change and stop us from living in healthy relationship with each other. This unhealthy power dynamic may show up as a lack of agency and feelings

of powerlessness, or as a tendency to dominate and be careless about how behaviours impact others. It affects our capacity to make collective choices about the way we live by degrading our ability to trust, be open to change and to listen to and work with others. This past year we've witnessed the death of George Floyd and the growing momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement, shining a light on colonial histories and the structural inequalities still with us. The racialised power imbalances didn't appear just now, but they have been made more visible. This movement shows us how far we have to go in healing our relationships if we are going to be able to work together for change and in moving towards healthy relationships that create strong, trusting and resilient social networks that are adaptive to changes in their context.

‘The causes of climate change are predominantly created by the wealthiest nations or peoples, whose wealth accumulations were a result of using and burning carbon so as to (supposedly) improve their lives. It drove dominance in our global economy, through the industrial revolution which is a history deeply rooted in colonialism. The dominance of one nation, peoples over another, which also has the power to control resources and nature itself. The effects of climate change are also acutely felt in those places which are more vulnerable, who have consequently developed in unequal ways. The climate crisis is primarily a crisis of injustice. These abuses of power have also created individual and collective trauma, which affects the ability of people and societies to transform.’

— Anna Birney, in [Unlocking potential for deep social transformations towards sustainable lifestyle](#)²¹

We recognised through our experience and practice that **“issues of power, privilege and trauma come up repeatedly in the different contexts I’m working with as barriers to collective agency on climate change”** (Eva Schonveld). When power is clustered in the hands of a few people or groups, or accumulated in pockets, it blocks our ability to change and make things happen. We’ve learnt

that it’s partly about our own agency in change, but it’s also about our responses to historical and personal traumas. If we want the whole system to participate in change, we need to pay attention to abuses of power which block participation and prevent us from working together.

“The capacity to make positive choices and shape our own lives as individuals depends partly on our level of psychological integration and also the health and level of consciousness in our relations to others and to our culture, community and society. Trauma and issues of power can get in the way of this. Similarly our capacity to make collective choices about the way we live and about the wider system is dependent on our ability to be open, to hear one another, to trust etc. and these are inhibited by personal and collective trauma and by imbalances of power and privilege.”

— Laurie Michaelis

“We need to support ourselves and others to be more present, to feel ourselves to be part of an interconnected system and then make better choices, understanding our impact on that system. We need to develop a dynamic balance of agency and empathy, so that each of us is empowered to act and be receptive to feedback as we work together to bring about change in the world. We can only achieve this by actively identifying and finding ways to address the distortions and disconnection that arise from collective trauma and the abuse of power. If we attempt to ignore these factors they show up anyway, damaging our

collaborations and stifling our creativity. In contrast, healthy experiences of sharing power, releasing trauma, decolonising our minds and institutions and collaborating effectively across difference, bring energy, solidarity and powerful collective intelligence into our work.”

— Sarah McAdam

We acknowledged that as a majority white European community, the hypocrisy of not engaging with power dynamics when talking about changing how we live would be intolerably selectively blind. It would be the opposite of taking a systems approach; ignoring many of the root causes of our unsustainable behaviour and our own position of power in the system. Advocating radical changes in how we live is itself a form of taking control, and using our power to create change. We asked ourselves: who’s asking whom to change how they live - and what are the power dynamics at play? If our focus is on individual lifestyle change, that could be seen as putting responsibility onto the individual, i.e. ‘you have to change!’, which does not take account of systems of oppression and perpetuates a conversion/control mindset. We acknowledged how we could contribute to unhealthy power-over dynamics by not working with power healthily. If we don’t investigate, challenge, change and embody our relation with power, how can we embed it into our external work with integrity?

Deep cultural transformation and radical changes in behaviour will not happen if we don’t address the dynamics of power. It is central to the work we are doing and if we don’t pay attention to it in the way we design and think about our work, we’ll miss really important parts of the puzzle. Our first inquiry question was: How do we work with privilege and colonialism, collective trauma and power?, which evolved to: ‘how are we contributing to healthy power?’ in the second inquiry cycle.

What does this mean for our work?

We’ve pulled out some key considerations from our explorations about what this means for how change might happen in relation to contributing to healthy power in this work.

Reframing power: a force to work with

“The core question for this inquiry is how do we transition to a different way of relating in society - from one that is power-over to one that is power-with? or How might we transform society, its power dynamics, from the power-over model that permeates today to a new form of relating, organising? The word transition is important here - what is the pathway to relating differently - doing the work is unravelling deep rooted identities and positions and are there ways to shift this or is it just about long hard work of building relationship?”

— Anna Birney²²

“Unhealthy power is so pervasive, so entrenched that it is easy to feel overwhelmed, difficult to feel hopeful.”

— Sarah McAdam

The group both recognised the pervasiveness of unhealthy power in the system, whilst also holding onto the experience of the alternative; that working with power healthily has the potential to become the lubricant of change - creating much more rapid and effective action. When we distribute power and participation around the system, we come up with better responses that are rooted in a richer picture of the problem and we catalyse action in different places. We also avoid getting stuck on peoples’ responses to abuses of power further down the line.

When the group first started discussing characteristics of healthy power, two aspects emerged as particularly important to acknowledge and reframe: firstly that it is fluid - we need to see it and cultivate it as dynamic so it can move around the system, and secondly that it is visible, named and understood - rather than lurking in the shadows, so that we can actively address it.

- **Fluidity:** power flowing rather than being stuck. Power is not bad, it’s essential to things happening, it just needs to be able to move around the system to respond to challenges, rather than being locked in one place.

- **Visible, named and understood:** being conscious of how power and trauma show up in everything we do, rather than remaining under the surface and controlling what's happening in the shadows. This means specific abuses of power can be named and dealt with.

This has implications at multiple levels, from our personal relationship to power, to the structures and processes through which we try to shape change. In this section we will explore these different elements of power and how we can start to cultivate a healthy approach.

A personal practice of healthy power

“On the individual level, the tools are to adopt all the soft qualities that patriarchy eschews: humility, tenderness, vulnerability, mourning, celebration... those are the key personal tools to move out of our devastating, wrenching complicity with patriarchy. And when I say patriarchy, it’s not about men and women... we are, all of us, fully scripted within patriarchy. Patriarchy is about either/or. It’s about control. It’s about scarcity, separation and powerlessness. It’s about right/wrong. All of these things that are like the air that we breathe.”

— Miki Kashtan³³

Understanding our own position and privilege is the starting point for this practice because our individual relationship with power is a microcosm of the wider system. Once we’ve explored our own power and privilege with humility, we can better use that power in service of the whole. This involves being able to slow down, consciously listening and receiving feedback, showing vulnerability, and asking ourselves in every moment: What’s my role? How much power do I have and how can I use it for the good of the whole? This involves building the capacity to let go of your power and control if it best serves the wider system, and taking ownership of your power when needed, because **“sometimes not claiming power is as damaging as claiming too much, for example silence acts as complicity in the face of white supremacy.”** (Lisa Donahue).

Doing inner work and dealing with personal triggers and trauma is a vital part of working with power effectively. Our unresolved pain blocks our ability to create change and work with others, and it locks us into unhealthy power dynamics which means we get defensive, we freeze up or we blame others for the problems we see in the world. These personal responses then play out at a societal level and drive polarisation, action paralysis and denial. So as practitioners we need to understand our own patterns of relating and to develop a means of owning our histories and the ways in which they influence how we work with others and facilitate change.

At the personal level, meditation and mindfulness practices help to build this self-awareness. There are also processes that can build our capacity to work with this in healthier ways with groups, for example [Processwork](#)³⁴, [The Work That Reconnects](#)³⁵ and the [Tavistock Tradition](#)³⁶. [Transition Network](#)³⁷ has also developed a large selection of free resources to support local community groups to work with healthy group processes and collaborative culture.

Deep Decolonisation Resource - Eva Schonveld

This draft document attempts to tease out different ways that colonial culture impacts on us in our everyday lives in conscious and unconscious ways and offers suggestions about what we can do to address this. We have started with elements of the culture of domination and then turn to elements of the culture of connection that is alive and well within and between us as our birthright as human beings... We are testing this material out in groups we are part of and wholeheartedly welcome any comments or additions that come out of others’ experiences or experimentations.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PbW_XZLEDhL_-mpadhefjLJXPoxF6NXmYETME5sp98U/edit#heading=h.b5kwyxz1zql

Processes for practicing healthy power

One of the blockers to us working with power dynamics effectively is that we often undervalue the process of change; the dominant culture, organisational management norms, funding organisations etc. place the emphasis on outcomes and undervalue deeper change and neglect the ‘how’. From our exploration of power dynamics in change, the way in which we come to a decision is as important as the decision itself. The process of change is where you encounter power dynamics, and how you deal with these

sets the conditions for the outcomes, which in turn lay the foundations for a wider process of change. But working on processes is undervalued in our system.

What if we chose leaders in society based on their ability to exercise healthy power? We need to nurture and equip leaders with the capacities and processes to work with change and conflict, so that difference can be used as a source of creativity, rather than a divisive force that blocks us from changing together. We need to build capacity in the system to design and facilitate processes that build relationships on foundations of trust that then ripple through the system. One of the challenges is when people don’t have the confidence nor the tools to communicate effectively, which can end up being expressed in violence or aggression. So we need process leaders with the capabilities to create spaces for healthy conflict, tension and communication, with clear agreements for supportive relationships and confidentiality. These process leaders would be equipped with toolboxes to create spaces for co-creation and collaboration, building the capabilities of groups to continue to change without their presence. There are lots of examples of tools for this process work.

Examples of tools & processes:

- [Deep Democracy](#)³⁸
- [Non-Violent Communication](#)³⁹
- [Dynamic Facilitation](#)⁴⁰
- [Art of Hosting](#)⁴¹
- [Wisdom Councils](#)⁴²
- [Way of Council](#)⁴³
- [Bohm Dialogue](#)⁴⁴
- [Transition Network Healthy Groups resources](#)⁴⁵
- [Transition trainer Nick Osbornes free and affordable resources for healthy groups](#)⁴⁶
- [Sociocracy for All training videos and practice groups](#)⁴⁷
- [Holacracy website free videos](#)⁴⁸

Another part of this work is having the processes to support reconciliation and reparation. How can we work together if one person is looking at another, thinking ‘you are part of a group that’s damaged me and I don’t see any recognition or acknowledgment of this harm?’ Or the opposite response from people in positions of power, that can be expressed as defensiveness, or ‘shrinking away’, which is unhelpful in terms of giving people the respect and benefit of the doubt that as adults they can work together for change.

Climate Citizens’ Assemblies - Claire Mellier-Wilson

A big reason for the surge of interest in climate citizens’ assemblies (at the local, national and global levels) is the lack of confidence in, and poor track record of, conventional policymaking in tackling climate change. In 2020, two high-profile national climate assemblies — in France and the UK — proposed hundreds of measures and recommendations; and more climate assemblies are planned in Germany, Spain, and beyond. But do they work? Will CAs really help address the climate crisis? In short, they could, but assemblies need to help citizens understand where power lies, what is the scale and urgency of the challenge, use robust rules and procedures, and create genuine public debates that touch all parts of society.

<https://carnegieeurope.eu/2020/11/05/getting-climate-citizens-assemblies-right-pub-83133>

Grassroots to Global - Eva Schonveld

This project looks at how to build new bottom-up political structures, deeply grounded in the needs of local communities, but also able to connect and collaborate to address issues at the regional, national and international levels. We’re working to develop processes and resources that enable these structures to be emotionally intelligent and able to work with trauma and conflict as the deeply transformative opportunities they are, rather than to ignore or run from them. This is about ordinary people taking power into our own hands to creatively address the social and environmental issues that affect us, not about asking for permission.

<https://www.grassroots2global.org/>

“We can have all the visions of everyone radically changing their behaviour and working together to create the shifts we need to see, but we’re not there yet - there’s reconciliation and reparation that needs to be done first.”

— Lisa Donahue

Reconciliation and reparation is a key enabler to more rapid change when centered from the outset and integrated throughout a project. When we have educated ourselves about systems of domination and can talk about (and act to address) our role in perpetuating them, people are acknowledging their roles in the system. Those that have been abused or oppressed by the system can start the process of reconciliation because there has been that acknowledgment, rather than historic injustices sitting below the surface of the relationships and influencing peoples’ behaviour without being named.

Structures for distributing power

Through the experience of the power inquiry group, when you create the space and time to build a relationship, deeper and longer-term collaborative action can be nurtured, and when we distribute power and participation, we come up with better responses that are rooted in a richer picture of the problem and trigger action in different places. We asked: What if our governance structures made it easy to work with power and learn from the wisdom of marginalised voices?

Governance structures:

The formal and informal rules, procedures and protocols through which decisions get made in a group or organisation

One of the key enablers we identified is to transition to structures and models of organising that allow us to do this work quicker, and adapt to change faster as a result. Part of this shift is moving towards more inclusive decision-making processes and ownership structures, for example gathering perspectives from people impacted by decisions using deliberative democracy processes like [citizens assemblies](#)⁴⁹, tools like [Pol.is](#)⁵⁰ or [SenseMaker](#)⁵¹, or transitioning to decentralised decision-making processes

inspired by [Sociocracy](#)⁵², [Holacracy](#)⁵³ or [teal organisational structures](#)⁵⁴. A recent example of this appetite to shift power is [The Mock Cop 26](#), a youth led, youth run online conference aiming to show the world what would happen if young people were the decision makers. The 230 delegates from 140 countries published their treaty which includes policies on Climate education, Climate Justice, Climate resilient livelihoods, Physical and Mental Health, National Determined Contributions and Protecting Biodiversity.⁵⁵

When shared governance structures are in place, working with power dynamics becomes part of the process of change, taking up less time and energy, and leading to fewer blockers-to-change, further down the line. These forms of organising that intentionally distribute power can be seen at every level, from individual organisations to global movements for climate action, for example the [Transition Movement](#)⁵⁶, [makesense](#)⁵⁷ and the [Climate Justice Alliance](#)⁵⁸, building community-led momentum for change.

There are a growing number of organisations and networks supporting this shift to shared governance, for example [Universite du Nous](#)⁵⁹, [Practical Governance](#)⁶⁰ and the [Losing Control Network](#)⁶¹. The group acknowledged the need for more people, organisations and networks to speed up the transition to distributed power structures and spread collaborative culture, and the Boundless Roots Community developed its own group to share learnings and coach each other through shared governance challenges through a series of [case clinics](#)⁶².

Governance structures might seem like a strange area of exploration when inquiring into sustainable living, but through the experience of the group, we developed the hypothesis that when you feel agency to shape the decisions affecting you, it empowers you to drive change in your own life, the work you do as well as contribute to creating the wider political shifts needed for low carbon living.

Global Ecovillage Network

- Laurie Michaelis

Many intentional communities and ecovillages exemplify sustainable ways of living, including growing organic food and building with renewable materials. Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) is a UK charity which acts as a convenor, voice, and research and learning hub for the ecovillage movement. The network is extremely diverse, ranging from ecovillages founded in the Global North as alternatives to the mainstream, to indigenous settlements using traditional land practices. Ecovillages are rooted in local, participatory processes but GEN has grown fast and it has been hard to sustain trust and involvement by all in the global hub. GEN is currently restructuring, working with the consent-based methods of Sociocracy to enable the whole network to guide the organisation.

<https://ecovillage.org/>

Transition Network’s New Governance Model

- Sarah McAdam

Created as a UK charity in 2011, Transition Network developed structures and practices that were an unclear and sometimes uncomfortable mix of hierarchy, consensus and individual autonomy. In 2016, we decided to invest time and energy to experiment with, and then shift to, a new governance model, supported by a team with expertise in shared governance. The process exposed and helped us address tensions long unacknowledged in our organisation. We are still learning and our governance continues to evolve, but our organisation now feels more resilient, more coherent and much more aligned to the change we are seeking to support in the world.

<https://transitionnetwork.org/about-the-movement/how-we-work/shared-governance/>

makesense

- Solene Aymon

makesense is a community-based organization whose mission is to give everyone the power to act. makesense runs programs for citizens who are willing to take action, for social entrepreneurs to grow their impact, and for organizations willing to transform themselves.

The organizational structure of makesense is based on holacracy models. Members of the community also belong to makesense governance bodies and participate in decisions about the future of the organisation, leading to unexpected projects and initiatives which have had huge impact, reaching more people, different audiences and deep lifestyle change.

<https://makesense.org/>

Extinction Rebellion

- Theresa Fend

Extinction Rebellion is a decentralised, international and politically non-partisan movement using non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to persuade governments to act justly on the Climate and Ecological Emergency. The movement’s DNA is built upon learnings from previous movements and communities (Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Suffragettes, Occupy Wall Street, etc.). Across the movement we aim to implement Self-Organising Systems as our governance structure. It aims to ensure the movement stays agile, participatory, decentralised, and inclusive while empowering anybody to act as part of Extinction Rebellion, so long as they agree to follow our ten core principles.

<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Self-Organising-System-One-Page.pdf>

Navigating the power of money

From a practitioner perspective, money and funding repeatedly came up as tricky points and blockers to radical change. Money is a means of being in relationship and exchange, and given the power of money in our culture, it often comes with the ability to control or coerce, and holds traces of unjust histories, for example how philanthropists have accumulated wealth and perpetuated power differentials might become a source of tension. There is also rarely healthy awareness of these issues and therefore communication about it is non-existent or poor. We felt the need to develop practices that help people navigate the power dynamics involved with money, which so often block us from having healthy, collaborative working relationships.

We witnessed how money would often get stuck rather than flow to the organisations and communities where it is most needed. There was a common challenge in the community about feeling our capacity squeezed, and feeling like we need to work so hard to receive money to do the work we feel is needed. This came with recognition of the weight of responsibility that comes with distributing money, the burden that it puts on funders in terms of wanting it to be used well and needing to understand impact. And for those who are supported to justify their value and time. We noticed how imbalanced relationships between grantees and funders would often give rise to these power dynamics and communication challenges and how difficult it can be in having open dialogue about our working relationships. How do we model healthy, mutual power-aware relationships with those we work closely with and with those who are financially enabling the work to happen?

Developing co-learning journeys with funders to build deep, trusting relationships was identified as a key intervention point across the field. This might also include the co-design of activities and interventions, and the creation of new models for monitoring and evaluating some of the less tangible change work. An illustration of this in practice is Forum for the Future's [‘Investors in Change’ programme](#)⁶³ for those with funds to deploy, who are going through a co-learning process to explore their power and role in change as funders.

Transition Network

- Sarah McAdam

Transition Network's role supporting an international grassroots movement in a fast-changing environment required us to shift away from long-term strategic planning (predict and control) and find structured ways to respond to needs and opportunities as they arise (sense and adjust). We have a long-term relationship with a foundation that seeks to question and disrupt unhealthy power dynamics and so we were able to have an honest and creative conversation about the changing needs of both organisations. We redesigned the grant agreement together, found ways to achieve clarity about the work without committing to specific outputs and, with our funder's support, are undertaking a collective evaluation process which feels meaningful in our context.

School of System Change and Lankelly Chase Foundation partnership

- Anna Birney

The School and Lankelly have both been exploring how we build the field of systems change practice over many years. They had entered into conversations and shared learning about what they were both doing and learning. Lankelly as a funder also provided core funding to the set up of the Schools programmes and learning infrastructure. As we were co-learning together the issue of power came up not only as a core issue in the field of practice but as we were exploring it externally we also had to look at the power dynamics in our own relationship - that being of a funder providing money to enable our work to grow. We did this by bringing awareness to the issue, as well as setting in place conflict processes (and external facilitation, using deep democracy approaches) that could support difficult conversations. A deeper process of trust building also put us in good stead to help us navigate these dynamics.

Integrating healthy power in our education systems

“Healthy power is the urgent sense that each and every human needs to find their power because we need everyone. It’s all hands on deck. So there’s a lot of work to be done by those of us who have some power and how to wield it, implement it and lift up others who might not be feeling their own.”

— Lisa Donahue

What if a primary purpose of schools was to support children to exercise healthy power and collaborate well across differences? What if we were all equipped with the tools to use our own position to name unhealthy power when we sense it and support a shift towards health? We explored the importance of giving young people an experience of healthy power, building their capacity to work with conflict and how to collaborate at a young age and involving them in decision-making at all levels. Kids need a voice in shaping our future, and tasting a different way of working with power dynamics earlier in life can be transformative for the changes we want to see. We're seeing momentum for this growing, some examples of learning models that centre healthy power include:

- LearnLife - <https://learnlife.com/>
- The New School - <https://www.newschool.edu/>
- Barefoot College - <https://www.barefootcollege.org/>
- Springhouse Community School - <https://springhouse.org/>
- LightSchools - <https://lightschools.org/>

The Ecoversties Alliance

- Dan Rudolph

The Ecoversties Alliance is a global alliance of individuals and organizations that are dedicated to creating learning spaces that “reclaim diverse knowledge, relationships and imaginations to design new approaches to higher education.” The Alliance acknowledges that education is just one part of much wider institutional ecosystems. As a result of this reality, one of the overarching visions of the alliance is to “transform the unjust economic, political and social systems/ mindsets that dominate the planet” in order to enable “human and ecological flourishing.” From a systems view, the Ecoversties Alliance is dedicated to bringing forth more just forms of power within education institutions, and beyond.

<https://ecoversities.org/>

Gaia Education

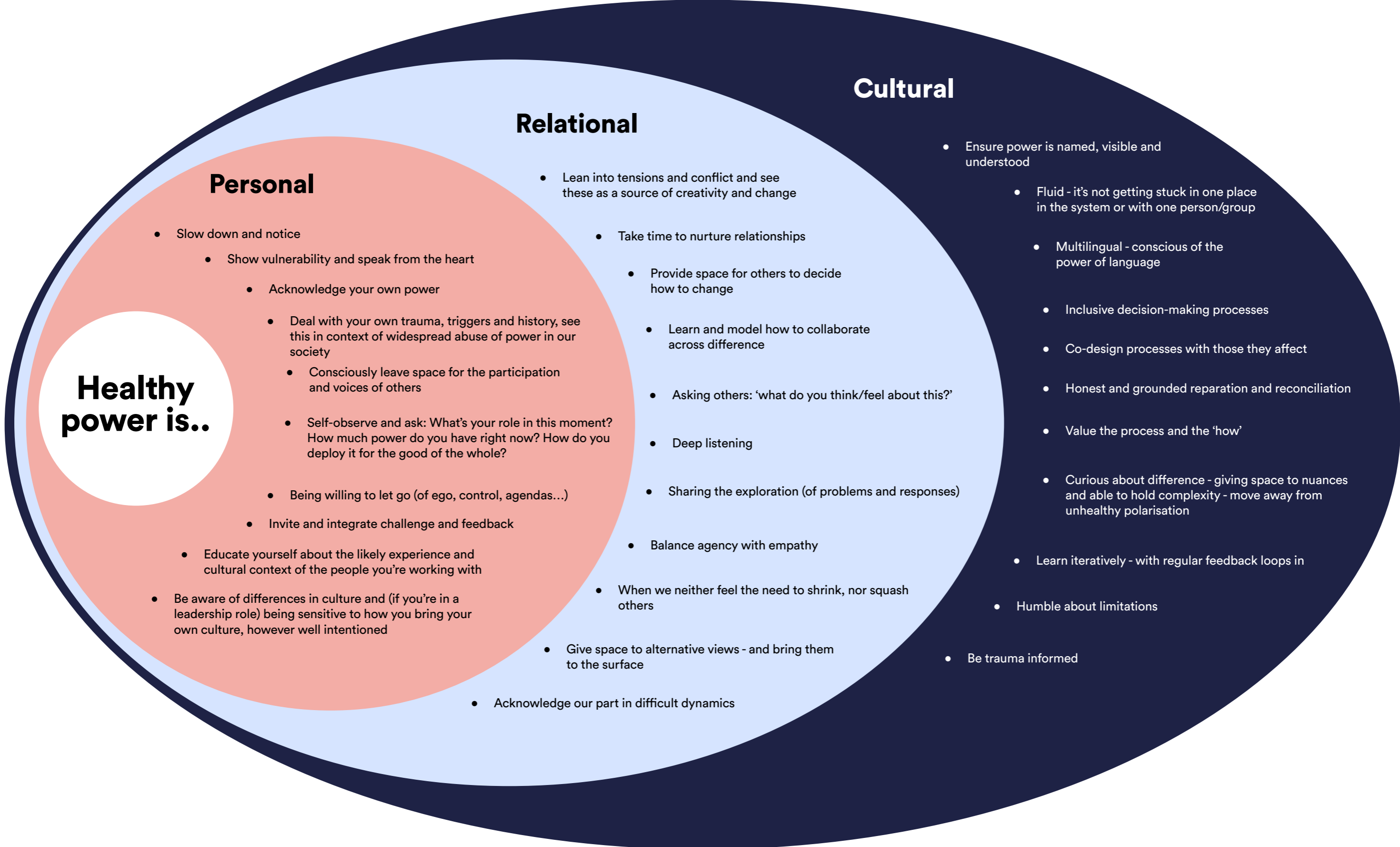
- Naresh Giangrande

Gaia Education's programmes equip students of all ages and cultural backgrounds with the appropriate knowledge, skills and critical thinking tools necessary to design a society which uses energy and resources with greater efficiency, distributes wealth equitably, and makes quality of life the focus of future thinking. Our learners become change agents capable of playing active roles in transitioning their existing communities, neighbourhoods, cities and regions to sustainable and regenerative practices, lifestyles and infrastructures.

We recently completed a research paper, one of the first on Regenerative Education, which proposes an educational framework for the UN's SDG 4.7.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/10/2832>

Contributing to healthy power



So what are we advocating?

In order to address the roots of unsustainable patterns of living, we must address our relationship with power and model and enable cultures of healthy power to emerge. There is a need to integrate this into our personal practice, our processes, our relationships, our organisational structures and our education systems.

Advocacy areas

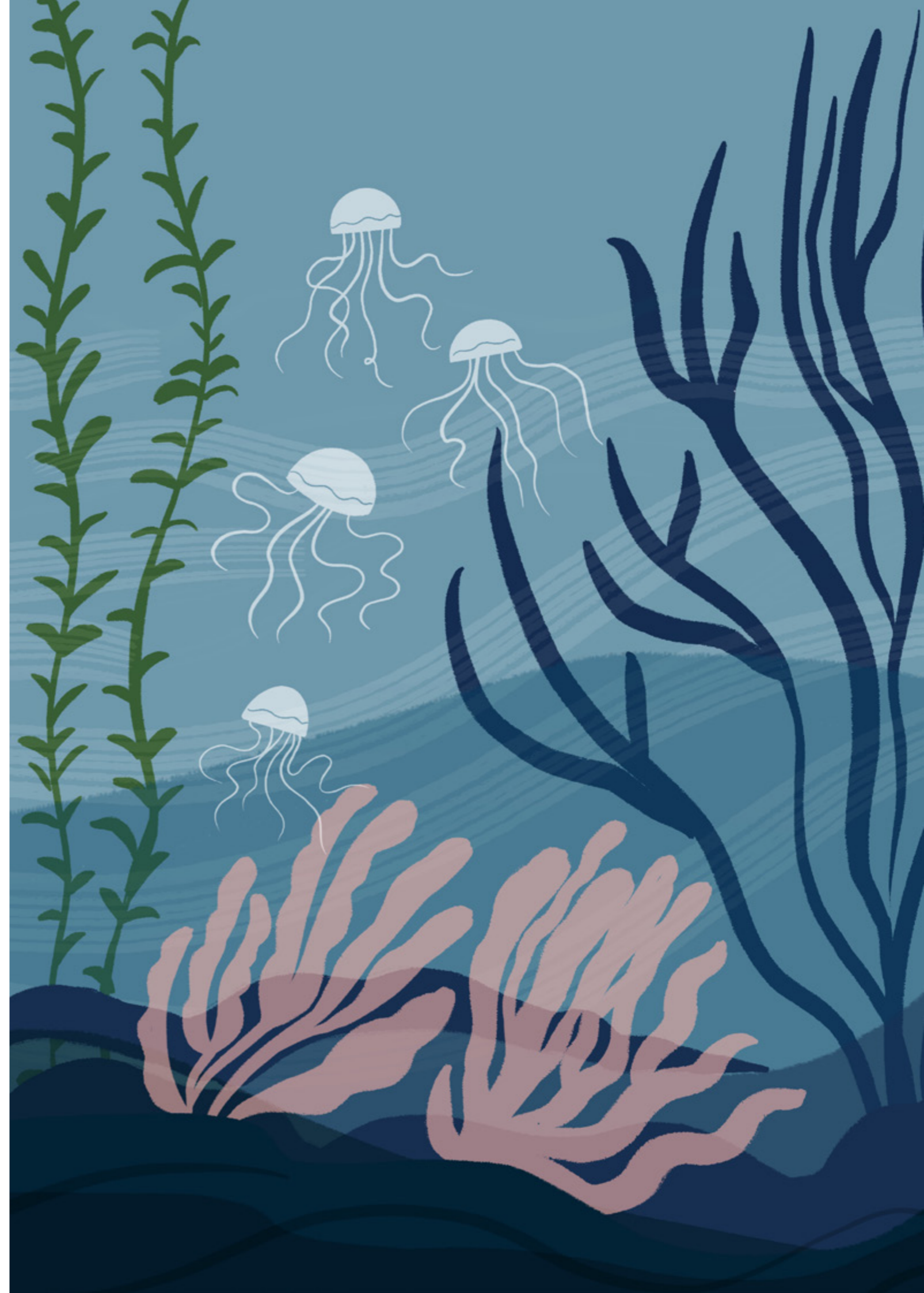
- **Reframing power: a force to work with:** we need to frame power as a dynamic in our messaging. Recognise it is omnipresent, fluid, evolving and build awareness of it, the more we can work with it as an enabling force, rather than a static blocker to change. We need to be more comfortable at naming power dynamics in our work.
- **A personal practice of healthy power:** create more training, coaching and support for practitioners in the sustainable living field to build awareness of our own power and privilege so we can use it to better effect change. We need to walk the talk and embody healthy power in our relationships. This means investing time and energy into understanding and working with our own relationship with power and how it shows up in the work we do.
- **Processes for practising healthy power:** we need to invest in process leaders who can design and hold processes that model healthy power and facilitate tension, conflict and charge in the process of change. These leaders should be equipped with a suite of tools and practices that support healthy communication, co-creation and decentralised decision-making. With this in mind, Boundless Roots members have been working on an emerging project area: Citizens Assemblies & System Change. We also support the funding of organisations and networks that deliver processes for reconciliation and reparation.
- **Structures for distributing power:** we need decision-making processes that learn from the wisdom of marginalised voices. This means we need healthy power to permeate the formal and informal governance structures of our system, from policy-making, to municipality planning, to organisational governance structures. We call on funders to invest in support for transitioning to shared governance models.
- **Navigating the power of money:** we need co-learning spaces for funders, practitioners and others to build trusting relationships and dialogue about the power and purpose of money. We need to invest in

experiments that test different models for funder-practitioner co-design and we need to co-develop methods for monitoring, evaluation and learning the psycho-socio-cultural work.

- **Integrating healthy power in our education systems:** we need to invest in embedding healthy power into our educational systems at all levels, from niche educational models to mainstream curricula. This involves practicing conflict transformation, learning about collaborative tools and developing an early practice of self-awareness and trauma literacy.

Resources for practitioners

- [Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures](https://decolonialfutures.net/project-type/pedagogical-experiments/) explores different pedagogical experiments that aim to contrast the dominant imaginary, guided by their Compass Questions - <https://decolonialfutures.net/project-type/pedagogical-experiments/>
- [Leadermorphosis](http://leadermorphosis.co/) is a podcast exploring the emerging world of self-management and progressive organisations. Hosted by Lisa Gill, each episode features a guest thought leader or practitioner offering a unique perspective on new and innovative ways of working - <http://leadermorphosis.co/>
- Eva Schonveld on [Politics, Trauma and Empathy: Breakthrough to a politics of the heart?](https://medium.com/@evaschonveld/politics-trauma-and-empathy-breakthrough-to-a-politics-of-the-heart-8591d8dce628) - <https://medium.com/@evaschonveld/politics-trauma-and-empathy-breakthrough-to-a-politics-of-the-heart-8591d8dce628>
- [Power Literacy Guide](https://www.power-literacy.com/) by Maya Goodwill - <https://www.power-literacy.com/>
- Characteristics of a [White Supremacy Culture](https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture.pdf), by Tema Okun - https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture.pdf
- [Power Dynamics: A Systemic Inquiry](https://medium.com/school-of-system-change/power-dynamics-a-systemic-inquiry-c30e2e658d3e), by Anna Birney - <https://medium.com/school-of-system-change/power-dynamics-a-systemic-inquiry-c30e2e658d3e>
- [The Roots of White Supremacy are in our Bodies](http://bodyintelligence.ca/2017/09/the-roots-of-white-supremacy-are-in-our-bodies/) - articles by somatic practitioner Madelanne Rust D'Eye - <http://bodyintelligence.ca/2017/09/the-roots-of-white-supremacy-are-in-our-bodies/>



Meaning Making

“We cannot live without meaning, that would preclude any sense of identity, any hope, any future.”

— Carlina Rinaldi

The motivating force of change: Working with meaning

Why did we explore this?

A tension

One of the core tensions in the shift towards sustainable ways of living is between creating rapid change and deep change. It is quicker, easier and immediately impactful for people to do simple things like recycling. But to transform to a low-carbon world we need much more radical changes in our ways of life — which are often the result of deeper shifts in our values, aspirations and belief-systems. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, we need to move with both urgency and depth.

We recognised how these two aspects of changing how we live could easily be understood in binary terms - either you change behaviours or you change minds. But behaviour changes can create embodied experiences and a feeling of empowerment that results in deeper mindset changes. Mindset shifts can trigger persistent and systemic changes in how we live and ripple out through social norms that change others' behaviour too. There is a reinforcing relationship between the two approaches; we can change behaviour and change the paradigm. We increasingly realised that polarised thinking is part of the paradigm shift needed, and building our capacity to work with polarities would become one of our central inquiries. To move beyond the polarity framing, we iterated our inquiry question: How do we make urgent changes that have depth, integrity, and longevity in terms of impact ?

“I see a tendency toward ‘either/or’ polarised thinking and I would like to explore how we shift mindsets to ‘both/and’ thinking. All questions which seem to have an ‘either/or’, but could be reframed as ‘both/and’ interest me. In particular, I am interested in how we can both respond to urgent

issues, while also conducting ourselves with integrity - in alignment with the values of self awareness, relationship and regenerative practices - which can sometimes require some time and attention (depth), and can seem counterproductive to urgency. Personally I think depth, in the context I see it, creates stronger foundations for long term solutions to urgent problems. So I do not see them as counterproductive, but rather good partners - if done with awareness of the need for balance between ‘doing’ & ‘process.’”

— Deborah Benham

It's all about meaning

The inquiry into urgent changes that have depth, integrity and longevity kept coming back to conversations about where people find meaning in their lives, and the need to better understand and work with what gives life meaning. Rapid and deep changes happen when we tap into what gives life meaning because our deeply held assumptions and ways of seeing the world can shift in an instant, as evidenced most recently by COVID-19. Structural changes take time, but shifts in our mindset about what's meaningful can happen in seconds, and what we find meaningful is the driving force behind our behaviour: if you shift that, everything else shifts with it.

“This exploration of life's meaning is central to my work engaging with those leading the way on one-planet living. Historically the environmental

movement has been focused just on the science, data, fear and guilt communications - or often the message has been that overconsumers can continue to live the same lives in a slightly greener way. The needed shift is to focus beyond the footprint impacts from our housing, mobility, food, goods and instead on how we transform our entire ways of living. When we explore what actually gives life meaning - trusted relationships, a sense of purpose, health - then we can find ways forward to enable happy lives justly without unsustainable environmental impact. The focus on 'meaning' sheds light on new solutions and opportunities for action."

— Vanessa Timmer

"If you asked me for a 'Theory of Change' I would say that, in order to make the transition to a more sustainable society, you need to transform the hearts and minds of millions of people. Fast. Hence 'Urgency and Deep Change'. This needs to be at the core of any societal shift. We can't just 'nudge' our way there!"

— Jonathan Wise

How this quest for meaning shows up for us as practitioners

Many of us in the change-making world look to fulfil our need for meaning through activism that can easily lead to burnout. It's what some call the 'dirty secret of the climate movement' because we are held in a stress-state of overworking, never feeling like we're doing enough. We put so much energy into work we care about, but there are few spaces to come to terms with the exhaustion and process the difficult emotions involved, so we burnout and break down. We - as practitioners - need to also question how we conduct meaningful work while staying healthy and living sustainably.

"Can we create rhythms that allow us to do all of this thinking and working while really taking care of our bodies, our little-me's, our relationships, our own inner work & healing and allow us to stay in the long game and act from a place of joy and love?"

— Theresa Fend

What does this mean for our work?

We've pulled out some key considerations from our explorations about working with meaning-making in our practices of change.

Open to the plurality of what is meaningful

Connected to the power dynamics at play in the field, the group was very conscious of not wanting to impose something on other people. Facilitating the processes by which people find meaning instead of telling people what's meaningful is a critical difference in approach. It's about inviting people into experience, conversation, asking questions and creating a sense of connection that supports people to discover it for themselves. It's an invitation into inquiry to learn about ways of living differently together, not telling people that this is the right way to view the world. This means as practitioners in the sustainable living field we need to be open to other entry points into the conversation; we have to be able to drop our own agenda if we want to create the change we want to see.

It's about creating contexts in which people are attracted to participate, contexts they can help shape, rather than including people in something that we already have a plan about. Too often the climate movement can be seen as hippies preaching about how we should live, or interpreted as imposing our way of looking at the world on other people, which is not the intention behind working with meaning; it's about embracing the plurality of what gives people life, and bridging and translating between differences.

Engaging people about what's meaningful is inevitably going to be filled with real and material differences (in values, in worldviews, in context), and given that we so often have pain and trauma that we haven't acknowledged or repaired under the surface of our relationships, these

differences tend to become polarised, and we push the other away rather than engage. The conversation becomes: 'you don't understand, I don't like you', rather than going into and learning from the differences underneath. So in this context, how do we work with meaning? How do we move past dominance and dogma, but in an open, evolving and questioning way that invites people in?

Creating spaces for rapid & regenerative meaning-making

There are several challenges associated with talking about meaning in contemporary culture. We realised how rarely we actually have this conversation, and how the speed and pace of life doesn't lend itself to pausing to consider the meaning behind our actions very often. Our attention is the new commodity that drives our economy, and the push of secular consumer society tends to disconnect people from what gives life meaning, leading to narrower definitions of happiness and wellbeing, and the formation of well-rooted habits and fears that block us from changing.

"Much of people's attention is invested into the established categories, unquestioned pursuits, which are often prescribed from mainstream culture and devoid of personal meaning."

— Sabina Enéa Téari

Part of this is driven by our compulsive relationship with technology, with algorithms designed to polarise us and applications designed by behavioural scientists to hold our attention for as long as possible. This contributes to the separation of our attention from our intentions in the world. Our focus becomes detached from our purpose and what we find meaningful in life. Shoshana Zuboff's [Age of Surveillance Capitalism](#)⁶⁴ goes into great detail about the nature of these 'big tech' systems, and the behavioural futures markets that trade our future behaviour as a commodity.

The dominant worldviews driving our structures at the moment - like those of the tech giants - are global, disconnected and abstract, which mean we end up with systems rooted in values that are not pro-social or human-focused, and conversations about meaning then tend to become individualistic and relativistic. We need more spaces to engage with our deeper needs and motivations in the world and time to tap into what gives us life. Offering these spaces at moments of transition in life has the potential to create lasting changes

(when we're changing careers, becoming parents, moving city/country), as highlighted by Climate Outreach in relation to [Mainstreaming Low Carbon Lifestyles](#)⁶⁵.

"Becoming a parent or a grandparent is a major life transition moment where people have the potential to shift their mindsets and behaviors. Furthermore, engaging people through the lens of parental responsibility, love, and legacy is a natural way to connect the climate crisis to people's existing identities and values. We believe that engaging and inspiring people through the parenting and legacy lens is a potentially game-changing strategy for activating citizens and also influencing key decision makers, many of whom are parents and grandparents themselves."

— Jill Kubit

These are moments where we tend to re-evaluate our priorities and patterns of living; meaning-making moments that open the window to shifting how we see our role in the world and what this means for our behaviour and lifestyle choices. The COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed how we live. We witnessed values and behaviours change rapidly and globally we've been connected in loss and uncertainty. We've had many of the things we took for granted in life taken away. We've reassessed how we live, how we work, how we relate, how we spend our time. COVID-19 has reminded us about where we find meaning in our lives by taking many of those things away.

Rapid & regenerative meaning making:

Processes that support people to have rapid shifts in the way they see the world and their role in it, and connect that to having a regenerative presence of life on Earth. That is, our ways of living contribute to the vitality, viability and evolutionary capacity of human life as part of a wider web of life.

How are we using these moments of recalibration to sense into what's needed and shift us towards regenerative ways of living? How are we practically offering spaces (retreats, festivals, moments of nature connection, personal development opportunities, conversation groups and gatherings etc. etc.) that can hold us as new meaning emerges?

Processes for rapid & regenerative meaning-making

There are toolboxes, processes and frameworks that support us as practitioners to facilitate processes for rapid and regenerative meaning-making in our work. These processes go deep, to the core of how we see and experience the world, and contrary to popular belief, it doesn't always take ages. As Donella Meadows says: **'There's nothing physical or expensive or even slow in the process of paradigm change. In a single individual it can happen in a millisecond. All it takes is a click in the mind, a falling of scales from the eyes, a new way of seeing.'**

Some of the practices and processes that the members of the group use and adapt are influenced through The Work That Reconnects, Theory U and the 8 Shields creative/regeneration cycle used as the basis for Extinction Rebellion's regenerative action cycle. These processes tend to be rooted in the natural cycles of life, inviting us to embrace a more cyclical approach connected to life and change.

Community building processes are also used to create safe and transformative learning spaces, which also have a dual function of modelling and sharing embodied experiences of regenerative culture - which can then be applied more widely in other aspects of life. These include the 8 Shields Acorn leadership model and Village building processes, [peer-to-peer learning model⁶⁶](#), or [Gaian Community gatherings⁶⁷](#) to support, nurture, and mobilise more holistic actions and commitment, and there are many others.

We recognised the need to build capacity in the system to facilitate these processes, that often use nature connection, community building and storytelling to connect people to their deep values and build appreciation and action for the living world. These processes trigger curiosity and learning, which drives internal motivation to participate in change, rather than relying on any external prescriptive force or conversion, which tends to lack longevity in terms of impact.

OwnIt - Women moving money for the climate - Mary Stevens

In the Innovation Team at Friends of the Earth we were struck by how much of an impact we can all have with our personal finances (spending, savings, pensions, investments) but how difficult it can be to shift away from the default choices and behaviours. Lots of people who are committed to sustainable living are simultaneously funding fossil fuel extraction in ways that are hidden to them; this is a particular issue for women who are most keen to make change, but least likely to have the confidence to act on their values. With Enrol Yourself we prototyped and piloted a peer-led model to support women taking action with their finances. Since 2019 we have trained over 40 'hosts' who use a peer-coaching methodology to support friends and colleagues to identify and make changes. So far participants have moved at least £1.2m - probably much more - and also gained confidence in their personal agency. Three learnings stand out: 1) that behaviour change on 'hard' topics is much easier in a social context, where psychological safety, new norms and accountability are 'wired in', 2) that making change is a journey - and one-off information events will rarely be enough and 3) financial empowerment and climate action go hand-in-hand. With the right support in place, when we consciously exercise control over our money we can start to understand our emotional responses and liberate ourselves from the growth-at-all-costs consumer economy.

<https://experiments.friendsoftheearth.uk/projects/ownit-get-your-friends-or-colleagues-together-take-climate-action-your-finances>

Core Routines of Deep Nature Connection - Deborah Benham

Over the last 35 years 8 Shields founders and practitioners around the world, with guidance and inspiration from many land based communities and traditions, have created a set of core routines for nature connection and community building. These go past the educational and cognitive routes, into a more relational and embodied reconnection with the living world and all its inhabitants, based on practices which integrate the human nervous system and senses. Practices such as regular sit spots (similar to mindfulness - in nature and using all the senses), timeless wandering, bird language, animal forms and more, help people build ropes of connection with species and landscapes, creating a deep sense of empathy, care and stewardship and an embodied sense of interconnection within the web of life. These programmes often lead to lifelong changes in attitude and behaviour both toward the natural world, and toward how people show up as citizens and community members in human society.

<http://8shields.org/>

ReSCOPE Programme - Mugove Walter Nyika

In response to the challenges faced by schools, including being overly examination-oriented, theoretical, classroom-based and teacher-centred, as well as additional challenges relating to food and nutrition insecurity, we developed the whole school integrated approach that we have been sharing with schools since the mid 1990s. This is a participatory and inclusive process that involves the parents, teachers and learners in hands-on experiential learning with outcomes to help to meet some of their basic needs. The programme is now active in 5 countries in east and southern Africa and is helping to shape mindsets for the future that we all want.

<https://www.seedingschools.org/>

Making these processes accessible

One of the issues facing these rapid and regenerative meaning-making processes is that most people don't have access to them. This is partly because of the lack of facilitative capacity in the system, but it's also because they are niche, people don't know about them and they can be prohibitively expensive.

So how do we communicate more widely about these transformative spaces? How do we make them more accessible financially? How do we remove cultural, linguistic, classist obstacles?

We saw particular potential in decentralised, peer-to-peer ways of organising and dedicated community building (e.g. makesense, Ownit/Friends of the Earth), and replicating and adapting models that target specific sectors and industries (e.g. Reclaiming Agency) as routes to spreading these practices.

Makesense - La "Paumé.e.s" / "La Brèche" programmes - Solene Aymon

In 2018, 3 members of makesense realized that most of them were rather feeling lost in their lives. So did their friends. The quest of meaning was a real topic for many youth. And so started the "Paumé.e.s" community (which means 'Lost'). The community started with a podcast. Then followed hundreds of events where people could meet in small groups to discuss solutions related to the topic of quest of meanings (e.g. finding a job with a purpose, how to deal with a blurry future due to social and environmental crises, etc).

<https://france.makesense.org/citoyens/s-engager/paumes/>

A 2-week program called "La Brèche" (breach) helps to deconstruct several topics and build new plans such as anti-racism, living in a local community, finding a job with purpose.

<https://france.makesense.org/citoyens/s-engager/la-breche/>

Embodiment & other ways of knowing

“We need to start with our own body: if we do not inhabit our bodies, we are not connected to the world around us.”

— Sabina Enéa Téari

Meaning-making can often be obstructed by becoming too intellectual, too heavy and existential. We asked how we can feel safe enough to trust our intuitions to guide us towards meaning, so it's not so heady and anxiety inducing? This connects to a deep narrative in our system of prioritising the intellect and rationality, and separating that from our lived experience and how we come to know and learn through our bodies. In regenerative meaning-making we acknowledge the role of embodiment and somatic practice as a way of exploring and understanding the world. This is partly about listening to the feedback of our bodies; our past experiences and traumas get locked in our bodies (cf. [The Body Keeps the Score](#)⁶⁸), so really valuable information about how we're responding and connecting to the world around us can emerge from attending to that feedback. How is my body feeling when I make this change in my life? How is my body responding to my life choices at the moment? Embodiment practices provide an additional source of information, energy and meaning-making in the journey of radically transforming ways of living. Some examples of embodiment practices are meditation, breathing techniques and body movement.

“Embodied relations are an easier route in and tune into a common frequency rather than philosophising about meaning.”

— Theresa Fend

Recognising that we are all embodied living beings on the same planet is less abstract than philosophical discussions about the meaning of life. This is about noticing and giving attention to the small things that anchor us in the moment, how this is a pathway to connection to other living beings and a way to tap into that which gives us energy and keeps us alive.

More broadly, we want to explore how the climate movement learns from and works with religious, spiritual, indigenous and interfaith communities that cultivate regenerative meaning-making. We need more spaces to learn from each other, name what's happening together and build mutual understanding and collective action.

[Living the Change](#)⁶⁹, [GreenFaith](#)⁷⁰, [Coming Down to Earth](#)⁷¹, [Flourishing Diversity](#)⁷² and the [Transition What Next summit](#)⁷³ are examples of this already happening.

Embodied Culture Dojo

- Sabina Enéa Téari

Embodied culture is at the core of our work as Foresta Collective. It's continuous research into ways we embody our environment, upbringing, education, current structures of power, cultural and social values, into how bodies speak against ways they are being neglected, commodified and exploited through symptoms and illness, as well as potentials to liberate from cultural prejudice, gender stereotypes, or other reductions through liberating in our bodies, through unknotting the knots of inherited values that do not correspond to us. We understand embodied cultures a way that invites being receptive and acting from there, with attentiveness and care.

This dojo originated as a continuation of our Body Matters research-in-public, that we moved online with the pandemic in order to keep an online space as a practice for deepening embodied cognition, self-regulation, awareness and wellbeing. It is structured around monthly themes and bi-weekly meetings.

Embodied Culture article: <http://www.laforesta.co/body-matters>

Embodied Dojo: <http://www.laforesta.co/embodied-dojo>

Cultivating a regenerative mindset

Connected to embodiment, we discussed how difficult it can be to align our attention with our intention, our values with our action, both as practitioners and citizens. Part of this dynamic are the distractions of our culture, but it's also about our experience of our own capacity. Across the inquiry groups people felt like they lack time and capacity for doing the work they feel is needed, risking burnout and feeling lost and powerless. How can we and the communities we want to support free up more time to put into the activities that provide meaning, nourish us and expand our work; how can we better align our attention with our intention?

“How difficult it can be to reconcile practice and intention. For example, my intention might be to be curious about conflict or lean into it, but my personal practice pushes me away / back into comfortable modes of being.”

— Mary Stevens

We spoke about the need to move away from having a scarcity mindset around time and capacity. Feeling like we don't have capacity is a feeling. It's a stress response. What if we saw time as a positive rather than focus on scarcity? I can give time to this; I can create it and focus on the things that give me energy. This then becomes a practice of managing our energy and balancing the times of stretched capacity and growth, with the times of rest and recuperation that work for us. Two of the tools or practices that were mentioned in the group were the [Window of Tolerance](#)⁷⁴ and the [Power of Full Engagement](#)⁷⁵. How do we integrate that into our work with communities?

“Have taken a new step on my own journey to actively slow down and go deep on a subject - a world away from how I have approached work as a practitioner over the last number of years.”

— Ali Sheridan

Cultivating a regenerative mindset is also about connecting to the wider cycles of life, sensing when to commit to collective action and when to slow down and create the space for something different to emerge. There's an opportunity to explore how we can time our interventions in such a way that are receptive to our various changing contexts. This is about committing to change as an ongoing process and practice; meaning-making is not a static thing, it changes and we can work with what's relevant for people based on the cycles in their lives and in the wider system. This might be working with the seasons, finding organisational and work rhythms which balance action and reflection, and finding those moments of transition that are particularly ripe for making changes.

We explored the anchors that keep us rooted in times of change, and how much change we're experiencing now, and explored the rituals that can connect us to our

intentions through times of change. We were left with the question: What are the new anchors around which we create meaning for rapidly changing new contexts

Zero Carbon Quakers

- Laurie Michaelis

Quaker practice combines stillness and activism. We emphasise listening, inwardly and outwardly, being open to “new light” and the path it illuminates; and following that path, working for transformation. Quakers engaging with the climate crisis have often called for a united approach – perhaps focusing on simple living, green spirituality, nonviolent direct action or building interfaith alliances. But people seem to need to make their own journeys. We also need company. We share our experiences at face-to-face gatherings or, for the last year, in fortnightly “eco-listening” sessions on Zoom. Slowly, slowly, we learn to tread in each other's footsteps.

So what are we advocating?

Meaning-making is the motivating force for change.

Rapid and deep changes happen when we tap into what gives life meaning. Being open to what this means for each person is essential, embracing embodied, spiritual and indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world. Tapping into key life cycles, transitions and teachable moments offer moments for deeper shifts in our values, aspirations and belief-systems. Cultivating a regenerative mindset is the foundation of this work.

Advocacy areas

- **Anchors - the contemporary rituals:** designing and creating new anchors for people in times of change; bringing people together to create anchors that will support us through the coming decade as the impacts of climate change are increasingly felt.
- **Transition moments:** catalyse collaborations between organisations that are present around particular transition moments and organisations working on rapid and regenerative meaning-making practices. Reframe the narratives and stories around transitions,

particularly letting go, dying and rebirth as part of a natural cycle of life.

- **Education moments:** we need to work towards a shift in education towards a model of education that has Earth at the centre; transforming spaces of education to include more experiential leanings, to develop more self awareness about the non human world. Parents and children together at a very young age is a leverage point. We need children and parents to demand change of the education system.
- **Accessibility:** invest in disseminating the pedagogy behind regenerative meaning-making processes and in communicating more widely about these transformative spaces. Make them more accessible financially through funding capacity building and bursary places, and invest in the infrastructure to support the dissemination of peer-to-peer and community building approaches.
- **Indigenous and spiritual knowledge:** create spaces for the climate movement to learn from/acknowledge/ uplift/amplify/ally with and give space to indigenous, spiritual and faith communities' work.
- **Practitioners sustainable living:** address burnout in the climate field. Support practitioners with access to supportive spaces for their own wellbeing and practices and resources to bring this topic into their projects and organisations.

Advocacy voices

“Peer pressure is a key element to accelerate the transition towards radical behavior change. Learning how to get our relatives on board is key, it empowers us to make more changes and it reinforces social connections which are absolutely essential in times of crisis and in moving beyond polarities. It is also critical in spreading messages to different audiences through our own words and in influencing social norms. We need to invest in scaling the peer-to-peer infrastructure that does this work.”

— Solene Aymon

“Peer learning is a key element to accelerate the transition towards radical behaviour change. In a supportive peer-group the norms are shifted, but we also feel that sense of connection that builds accountability and trust. These are the spaces where we can start to really feel that a different world is possible and popular.”

— Mary Stevens

“Attentiveness, integrity and care, are crucial elements if we are to change cultures towards regeneration and sustainability. Inner and outer worlds are deeply interconnected. Let's invest into imagination, invention and creation of the possible and desirable, while staying humble, respecting the mystery of the fabric of becoming of which we are part of, and allowing the space for the “not-only”, the leaky corners, the unknown.”

— Sabina Enéa Téari

Resources for practitioners

- [This resource from Starter Culture collating lots of fantastic emotional/spiritual resources](#) that are being shared by many different organisations and networks - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/186LKEwckLf5L-uEEtrNpITRxf41oAitlwLPcoJRTfE/edit>
- Body based work around trauma, safety and group facilitation - <http://bodyintelligence.ca/>
- [Communities for Impact](#), Theresa Fend - <https://communitiesforimpact.org/>
- [Gaian Community Meetings](#), monthly Zoom gathering of Earth-conscious and ecocentric individuals to support, nurture, and mobilize more holistic actions and commitment. <http://gaianism.org/how-do-i-get-involved/upcoming-events/>
- Sophy Banks' [blog](#) on Burnout - <https://transitionnetwork.org/news-and-blog/editorial-sophy-banks-on-balance-or-burnout/>
- Transition Network is about to launch a new set of resources to support the Inner/personal aspects of being a sustainability, climate or community building practitioner - <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/>
- [Earth Ed, Rethinking Education on a Changing Planet](#) - Erik Assadourian. <http://earthed.info/book/>
- [Parents for a Future](#), Rupert Read - <https://www.waterstones.com/book/parents-for-a-future/rupert-read/9781911343370>
- [Ritual Recipes for Coping with Change](#), from Rebecca Birch & Fan Sissoko - https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1e03eqrHyq_0ViADeZoy8tu_INOuaznpxo6pLZxXY99Q/edit#slide=id.gac91fb34fb_1_32

Resources for practitioners

- [A Baby to Change Everything](#) - Mathilde Golla, Valère Corréard - <https://www.marabout.com/un-bebe-pour-tout-changer-9782501144360>
- The [Urban Mindfulness Foundation](#) provides free Mindfulness Training Courses in City locations for [Individuals](#), [Families](#), [Youth Groups](#), [Schools](#), and [Business](#). Every course is designed to facilitate health, well being and pro-social connection - <https://www.urbanmindfulnessfoundation.co.uk/>

Cross Theme Enablers

Alongside the three core themes, we've identified three enablers, that when given attention and energy, have the potential to beneficially impact each of them. When they're not taken into account or overlooked, they present blockages to change and disable action. They are crucial considerations that tend to either lock us into the same patterns or unlock the door to new possibilities. They are (a) how to work skillfully with polarities, (b) changing our relationship to trauma and (c) building capacity for facilitating the process of change.

These enablers are also mutually reinforcing and amplifying each other. For example, being organised around a stress-response to trauma in our system stops us from holding complexity and pushes us towards a polarised either/or opposition. We've experienced the value of working with polarities effectively; how conflict can be the greatest source of creativity and change, but this requires having the capacity and knowledge of processes to do so. And how working through trauma together builds trust, resilience, capacity and confidence in individuals and in our wider systems.

They are also a direct response to the themes - for example, our dominant culture is currently full of and exaggerates polarities. Our lack of capacity to work with power exacerbates unhealthy power, and trauma can be understood as a rupture in "meaning-making". If we ignore these enablers, it limits our potential to respond to these themes and shift the dynamics.

There is still much to be learned and understood about these areas of inquiry. We've aimed to articulate why we think these are critical enablers of change, starting points on how to work with them based on the experiences of the community, and then we've framed questions that we hope can function as starting points for shared investigation.

How do we work skilfully with polarities?

A recurring theme runs through these three themes of culture, power and meaning, which is: how do we work skilfully with polarities? We noticed increasing polarisation in the world and we noticed some of our own polarising tendencies in how we framed our different inquiries, for example one of our first inquiry questions was ‘is it fast or deep changes we need?’. But we saw other binaries emerge in our conversations, like it is bottom-up OR top-down, do we work with the political reality OR the physical reality, is it individual OR systems change? However we acknowledged that these aren’t binary questions and instead are all part of the ecology of change. We also acknowledged the ease with which we see things in binary terms and the difficulty of holding complexity.

We had also experienced the difficulties of working with deep differences in worldviews and values in cultural change, and how abuses of power tend to polarise people against each other: pitting one side against another.

“Taking a stance on sustainable living tends to polarise - it splits what I want to identify with from what I don’t want to identify with.”

— Laurie Michaelis

We need to be able to work constructively with others in creating the shifts in living we need to see, but the tendency to polarise and see things in binary terms blocks our ability to create change. So in 2020 we ran an inquiry on how to work skilfully with polarities in order to support us to hold complexities and support others through the messy process of change in increasingly polarising contexts.

We spoke about some of the imbalanced polarities in our dominant culture e.g. strength/weakness, right/wrong, action/reflection, being/doing, and we wanted to learn together about how to work with these effectively.

Working with polarities

Nature is full of polarities - they keep things moving and often we don’t even notice them, like the calm and ferociousness of the ocean, or the relationship between night and day. We recognised that there are

some polarities that need to be balanced for health, for example the amount of time we spend awake and resting, while there are other polarities that tend to be healthy or unhealthy, for example peace and violence. It is not either/ or when it comes to polarities - it is both BOTH/AND and EITHER/OR - some polarities are healthy and some are not.

We noticed in ourselves that we tend to fight or freeze in the face of polarities - so we explored some of the enabling and disabling conditions for working with polarities effectively in groups settings:

Questions we’re holding now: Technology and polarities

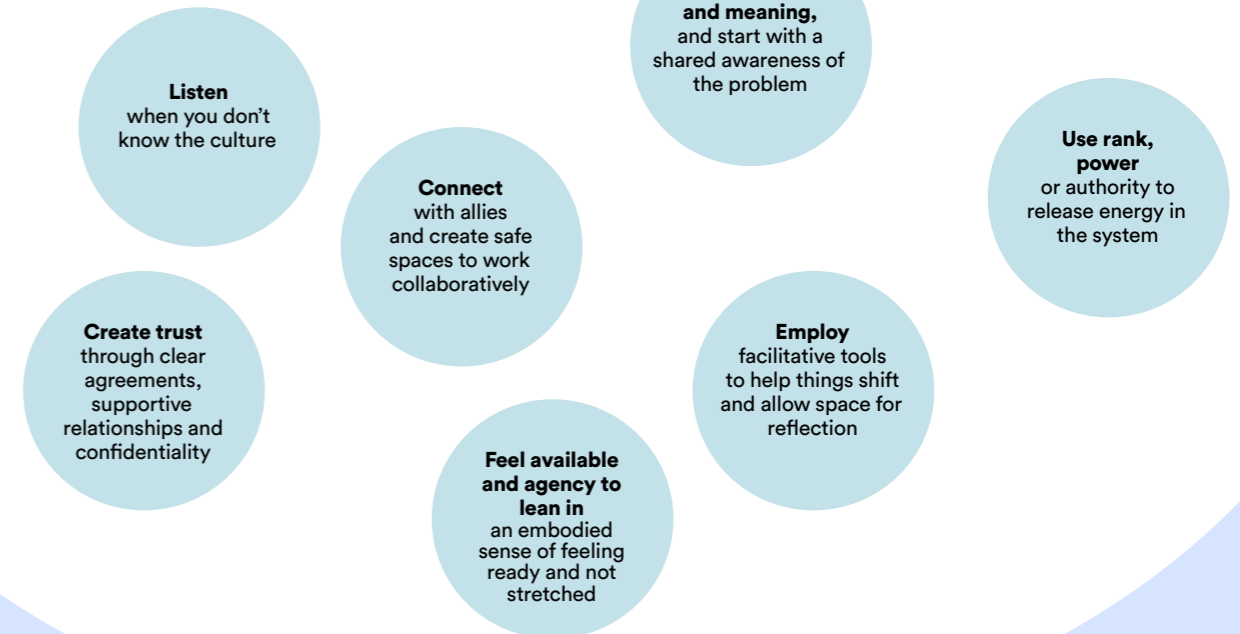
We became particularly curious about the role of technology and social media in driving polarisation, and posed the question: How can we shape the changes in the techno-illogical landscape that are happening to avoid a polarised future? Which technologies help us inhabit a shared world, rather than one in which we each see vastly different realities? How can technologies support people to escape their echo chambers, encounter difference and contribute to a regenerative future, rather than preying on vulnerability and polarising people through their algorithms? In our lifetimes the technological transformation has been one of the key system changes and has contributed to shifts in living that we’ve all experienced and can learn from - it has both enriched our lives and created new challenges to overcome. So why do sustainable living practitioners often have a ‘blindspot’ around tech, often shying away from deep engagement with the underlying power and opportunity it presents to us individually and collectively and the life giving potential it brings?

Holding these questions, a project group has developed to explore the routes **towards Regenerative Tech, as part of regenerative and sustainable ways of living.**

“I think that the key polarity to be transcended in the context of technology would be that between: on the one hand, the techno-utopians (à la Elon Musk or those behind the Ecomodernist Manifesto <http://www.ecomodernism.org>) who believe that our planetary crises - including climate change - will be solved through technical, engineering, and technological solutions... and, on the other hand, the techno-skeptics (one

Working with polarities

Enabling conditions



Disabling conditions



could include here well-known critics of modern industrial civilisation like Gandhi, Ivan Illich, etc. to technophobic proponents of degrowth to many more mainstream environmentalist accounts that remain suspicious of fossil-fuel based technologies). Resolving/dissolving/transcending this polarity through a new paradigm of regenerative technology or some such (and this possibly includes decentralised, indigenous, and open-source approaches to technology) would enable us to imagine new approaches and philosophical orientations to our relationship with technology and its [potential] role in responding to the climate crisis afflicting us and the world.”

— Abhayraj Naik

Resources for practitioners

- [Compassionate Conversations](#) empowers us to transform difficult and contentious conversations into opportunities to bridge divides by providing the conflict resolution skills we need to be successful, including: Listening, Powerful self-expression, Reframing, Working with strong emotions
- <http://compassionateconversations.com>
- Empathy Talks are a conversational toolkit for fostering empathy on complex issues, that acknowledges and seeks to work within conditions of polarisation. It was trialled with Climate KIC in Rybnik, Poland on polluting habits and heating systems, and in the USA and Germany on educational and political issues. Give it a try: empathytalks.com
- [A Tale of Two Karens](#) - on bridging political divides
- <https://www.yesmagazine.org/health-happiness/2021/01/20/women-bridging-political-divides-unlikely-alliance/>
- [Braver Angels](#) - a national movement founded by David Lapp in the US aimed at creating friendly spaces for potentially unfriendly conversations <https://braverangels.org/>
- [#dontgobacktonormal](#) is a movement of people who commit to change every facet of their lives, and build a movement around these changes. It leverages examples of regenerative technology to encourage the transition to new platforms or services or subscriptions that move towards more sustainable ways of living in the wake of the pandemic <https://dontgobacktonormal.uk/>

Working with Trauma

Why trauma?

Linked to our tendency to polarise is our personal-through-to-societal relationship to trauma. Traumatized consciousness tends to polarise, and trauma locks us into rigid, behaviour patterns, so understanding and working with trauma opens the door to more radical changes to our ways of living.

Why is it that we avoid talking about pain and trauma in our dominant culture? Instead we avoid or pathologise pain, and we are not very good at working with past injuries and injustices, or listening to what they tell us about what might need to change in the system. We acknowledged the importance of having a trauma-informed approach to the work that we do, where we can change our relationship to pain in the system, and see it as a valuable feedback signal warning us of problems, rather than something to be treated, fixed or ignored. Sophy Banks has been exploring this topic in depth in her work on [“Healthy Human Culture”](#).

“Pain is carried by the whole system. The pain pervades our system but somehow those people with capacity are presenting us with a false picture of our culture, that the culture is basically benign and that “we’re OK”. The difficulty is getting people with the most privilege to experience the pain. Why is that? When I do that I meet my fragility. The ones most needing to learn from the pain in the system, are the least resourced to deal with it because they’ve been shielded from it and they have the most to lose when they confront the consequences of their privilege for others.”

— Sophy Banks

It’s key to do this because trauma reverberates in individuals but also through our cultural patterns including our societal beliefs, patterns of addiction, organisational culture, leadership, resistance to systems of oppression,

and more. David Trickey⁷⁶ says trauma can be understood as a rupture in “meaning-making” and also contributes to unhealthy power in our systems.

How to be trauma informed

If we can listen to our own pain, and hold space for others to listen to theirs, we can develop the “social and cultural technologies” (Sophy Banks) that can help us move towards more healthy patterns of living. Rather than perpetuating a culture organised by stress-states and fear, we can organise from a place of trust, care, self worth, mutual empowerment and responsibility, placing life at the centre rather than material or financial substitutes. If we reframe pain and grief - we can see it can be enriching to our lives in the wisdom it holds.

We are seeing increasing momentum for this work in Western cultures, as we start to become more aware of the role of trauma in our conscious and unconscious systems. Examples we’ve seen recently include [Stewarding Loss](#), [The Grief Summit](#) and [Good Grief Fest](#), which signal that we are recognising the need to work with the pain and grief in the system if we are going to shift the underlying patterns of our unsustainable behaviour.

Questions we’re holding now:

- How can we work with grief at a collective level?
- How can we transform unhealthy power? What support is needed for people identified with strength in the system, those with capacity and privilege, to engage with the trauma that sits underneath?
- What are the ways we can support peoples’ journey to a place of pragmatic, sustainable action, that comes from a place of health rather than stress?
- What does it take to cultivate a “healthy human culture”?

Grief tending in Community

– Sophy Banks

Grief tending in community might look like this... Building solid river banks for the grief to flow strongly, we speak and hear from each others' hearts, call in support as beauty, spirit, the beyond human, inspiring people, practices that strengthen us, each in their own way or tradition.

With strong banks created the grief can pour out – tears, fear, rage, numbness, guilt, emptiness, despair, more – can have their expression through sound, movement, words, images, silence, objects, poetry and more...

Each is strengthened by moving between being the support for others, and being held, witnessed and accepted by the group. Grief becomes a community practice, no longer private or privatised.

After the release we soothe, allowing body–mind–feelings to integrate the experience, and feel the energy that is freed up now that painful feelings are no longer suppressed.

Perhaps we take time to reflect on what has been shared, and how the process of sharing it increases aliveness, connection, coming to sanity, knowing we are not the only ones carrying pain. Often the feedback is surprise at the joy, love, beauty of a grief ceremony, and the lightness after.

<https://griegtending.org/>

Resources for practitioners

- [Trauma, Fear and Love](#), by Franz Ruppert
- <https://www.waterstones.com/book/trauma-fear-and-love/franz-ruppert/vivian-broughton/9780955968365>
- Dr. Gabor Maté on [The Connection Between Stress and Disease](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajo3xkhTbfo>
- On working with trauma, the relation between trauma and seeing/sensing the present and the future. Thomas Hübl invites us to understand the basics of collective trauma. <https://thomashuebl.com/>
- [MOOC on Interior Transition](#) from Colibris University exploring the inner dimensions to achieving radical change (with over 10,000 sign-ups!)
- <https://colibris-universite.org/formation/mooc-transition-interieure?fbclid=IwAR1X4NF38hDatTN4vaBaP9aRjesQB85CmEVxltHDgazLlzWFwV-OdOVJac>
- [On Activist trauma-bonding and cultural codependency](#) - Tada Hozumi
- <https://selfishactivist.com/on-activist-trauma-bonding-and-cultural-codependency/?fbclid=IwAR0n8bhEVsv-mhfUxIUUnVIJsRahhJ7hHYe87F3jCG2j4GoWM5mmedVf2RF4>
- [Radical Welcome Heals](#) from Hasshan Batts, a Community Epidemiologist, community based participatory researcher and leading expert on Trauma Informed Care, Reentry and community engagement.
- https://www.ted.com/talks/dr_hasshan_batts_radical_welcome_heals/up-next
- [Critical Psychologies and Climate Change](#), by Matthew Adams
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352250X21000087?dgcid=author>
- [How to Health the mass traum of Covid-19](#) by Ed Prideaux <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210203-after-the-covid-19-pandemic-how-will-we-heal>

Capacity building

Why process capacity?

The pervasive need running through the three themes is facilitative capacity: having the capacity and space to design and hold the processes that can bring about radical changes in our ways of living. As we've articulated above, for the Boundless Roots Community the emphasis of this is less on changing specific behaviours in specific areas of our lives, but more on the relational, structural and cultural blockers to radically shifting our ways of living. We have mentioned the role of processes that address issues of power and injustice, that work to bridge across difference and hold polarities, and that work to facilitate the processes for rapid and regenerative meaning-making in an uncertain and unsettling context.

For the Boundless Roots Community, change is a social process - in relationship and together in a shared cultural landscape. If we want millions of people to make radical changes to their ways of life in line with '1.5 degree living' - and if we want this to happen in a way that doesn't perpetuate the power dynamics and relationship to trauma that contributed to us being in this mess in first place - we need millions of people with the skills and capacity to design, create and hold spaces, in neighbourhoods, projects, organisations, even families, with the facilitative skills to use the right processes at the right time and to deal with the tensions and conflict that might emerge through this.

How to build capacity

We need more training in the processes of change - in the climate movement, in civil society organisations, in the education system and in funding networks. Every organisation and community needs people equipped to deal with these dynamics of change. This could take the form of internal organisational capacity building, professional development courses, mentorship, peer-to-peer learning groups, the establishment of whole new schools and institutes teaching established pedagogy where people can learn through practice. Our system does not value work on process as much as work on outcome, and we know of relatively few capacity building spaces or courses that teach and practice a ****power-trauma-polarity- and meaning-making-informed approach**** to facilitation, underpinned by an awareness of interdependence and attention to relational dynamics this requires. This also means recognising that this involves inner work, relational practice and structural and cultural enablers to keep developing this practice of change in context.

To support this we need spaces of shared inquiry that allow us to sense together what needs to emerge. These are the spaces for sense- and meaning-making out of uncertainty and complexity that can birth radically new ways of working, living and playing together on a living planet facing a climate crisis.

The Boundless Roots Community is one example of this type of shared inquiry, through which practitioners have been given a facilitated space to step back, make sense of what's happening and explore pathways forward together. How are we spreading and sharing these spaces across the changemaking field?

Resources for practitioners

- [The Uncertain Times Tools](#) from Cassie Robinson and Ella Saltmarsh. <https://cassierobinson.medium.com/the-uncertain-times-tools-13a882716e>
- [6 Acts for Liminal Leadership](#) from SYPartners: the death of certainty, universal grief, inner work for outer work, moral imagination, collective creativity and composting. <https://vision.sypartners.com/2343117/>
- [Systemic Action Research](#), by Danny Burns. <https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/systemic-action-research>
- [The Presencing Institute](#), including Gaia Journey and U.Academy. <https://www.presencing.org/>
- [Sensemaking 101](#) by Phoebe Tickell. <https://phoebetickell.medium.com/sensemaking-101-tips-for-improving-your-sensemaking-in-a-time-of-confusion-c2399a5f9981>
- [The School of System Change](#). <https://www.forumforthefuture.org/school-of-system-change>
- Training from the [Process Work Institute](#). <https://www.processwork.edu/>
- Training from [The Hum](#) on decentralised organising. <https://www.thehum.org/>

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>
- 2 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/blog/2020/07/22/answering-the-big-questions-launching-cambridge-sustainability-commissions/>
- 3 By which we mean the capabilities to take a *power-trauma- polarity- and meaning-making-informed approach* to facilitation
- 4 <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>
- 5 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ceciliarodriguez/2019/03/15/unprecedented-global-climate-change-strike-by-students-to-save-the-planet-in-photos/?sh=73ee62397c44>
- 6 <https://envisioninglifestyles.org/>
- 7 <http://donellameadows.org/archives/leverage-points-places-to-intervene-in-a-system/>
- 8 <https://milkweed.org/book/braiding-sweetgrass>
- 9 <https://www.waterstones.com/book/sand-talk-how-indigenous-thinking-can-save-the-world/tyson-yunkaporta/9781925773996>
- 10 <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/ecological-civilization/2021/02/16/what-does-ecological-civilization-look-like/>
- 11 <https://stories.life/>
- 12 <https://medium.com/@thelongtimeinquiry/the-long-time-3383b43d42ab>
- 13 <https://narrativeinitiative.org/about-us/>
- 14 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Octopus_Teacher
- 15 <https://georgelakoff.com/2014/11/29/george-lakoff-in-politics-progressives-need-to-frame-their-values/>
- 16 <https://rianeeisler.com/cultural-transformation-theory/>
- 17 <https://georgelakoff.com/2017/08/01/the-president-is-the-nation-the-central-metaphor-trump-lives-by/>
- 18 <https://medium.com/@ellasaltmarshe/8-tips-for-framing-covid-19-f3c897c1ffa6>
- 19 <https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/the-coronation/>
- 20 <https://workthatreconnects.org/>
- 21 <https://deepadaptation.ning.com/>
- 22 <https://www.stewardingloss.com/>
- 23 <https://grieffending.org/past-events-and-workshops/>
- 24 <https://medium.com/boundless-roots/unlocking-potential-for-deep-social-transformations-towards-sustainable-lifestyles-5f8812c01d04>
- 25 <http://krfnd.org/portfolio/engaging-media-gatekeepers-to-catalyse-a-new-visual-language-for-climate-change/>
- 26 <https://www.onestpret.com/>
- 27 <https://www.reclaimingagency.com/>
- 28 <https://strongerstories.org/>
- 29 <https://narrativeinitiative.org/>
- 30 <https://valuesandframes.org/>
- 31 <https://medium.com/boundless-roots/unlocking-potential-for-deep-social-transformations-towards-sustainable-lifestyles-5f8812c01d04>
- 32 <https://medium.com/boundless-roots/unlocking-potential-for-deep-social-transformations-towards-sustainable-lifestyles-5f8812c01d04>
- 33 <https://accidentalgoods.life/miki-kashtan/>
- 34 <https://www.processworkuk.org/>
- 35 <https://workthatreconnects.org/>
- 36 <https://www.tavinstitute.org/what-we-offer/professional-development/>
- 37 <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/>
- 38 <https://lewisdd.com/>
- 39 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWb2B2uPfMo>
- 40 <http://www.dynamicfacilitation.com/>
- 41 <https://www.artofhosting.org/>
- 42 <https://www.wisedemocracy.org/>
- 43 <https://www.ancienthealingways.co.uk/way-of-council>
- 44 http://www.david-bohm.net/dialogue/dialogue_proposal.html#1
- 45 <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/healthy-groups/>
- 46 <https://evolvingorganisation.co/module-1/introductory-video/>
- 47 <https://www.sociocracyforall.org/>
- 48 <https://www.holacracy.org/>
- 49 <https://propositions.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/>
- 50 <https://pol.is/home>
- 51 <https://sensemaker.cognitive-edge.com/>
- 52 <https://www.sociocracyforall.org/>
- 53 <https://www.holacracy.org/>
- 54 <https://reinventingorganizationswiki.com/>
- 55 <https://www.mockcop.org/treaty/>
- 56 <https://transitionnetwork.org/about-the-movement/>
- 57 <https://makesense.org/>
- 58 <https://climatejusticealliance.org/about/>
- 59 <https://hum-hum-hum.fr/>
- 60 <https://www.practicalgov.co.uk/>
- 61 <https://www.losingcontrol.org/about/>
- 62 https://www.presencing.org/files/tools/PI_Tool_CaseClinic.pdf
- 63 <https://www.forumforthefuture.org/investors-in-change#coursestructure>
- 64 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2019/11/04/book-review-the-age-of-surveillance-capitalism-the-fight-for-the-future-at-the-new-frontier-of-power-by-shoshana-zuboff/>
- 65 <https://climateoutreach.org/reports/mainstreaming-low-carbon-lifestyles/>
- 66 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtU4VTvNqFs>
- 67 <http://gaianism.org/how-do-i-get-involved/upcoming-events/>
- 68 <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/313183/the-body-keeps-the-score-by-bessel-van-der-kolk-md/>
- 69 <https://livingthechange.net/>
- 70 <https://greenfaith.org>
- 71 <https://www.conflicttransformationsummit.org/>
- 72 <https://flourishingdiversity.com/>
- 73 <https://transitionnetwork.org/news-and-blog/what-next-summit/>
- 74 <https://bodyalchemy.rebeccamridge.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/tolerance-graph-1.jpg>
- 75 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJ6dOHpknA0> / <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRjqGWLlgUY>
- 76 <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210203-after-the-covid-19-pandemic-how-will-we-heal>

Summary and seeds for the future

03

Through this work we identified areas that need further investment, energy and action in order to cultivate the roots for deeper transformation in sustainable living.

What we see is needed is the development and investment in more narrative work, that is collaborative, to work with the cultural landscape of change, creating spaces to sense what is shifting and what might be acted upon as well as ensuring that these narratives are framed and centred around “life”.

We need to ensure we both name and understand the power dynamics that are at play; finding ways to embody healthy power in all forms of relationships, through investing in the facilitators, the formal decision making and governance processes, and through exploring what it looks like practically in places like education and between funders and practitioners.

Finally, we also need to help people find meaning in what is happening around them and in what gives meaning to their life to support the transformation. This means growing practices that support people to deal with the impacts of climate breakdown, for example through contemporary rituals, drawing on indigenous and spiritual work and addressing burnout in practitioners. There is also a need for exploring and building capacity to facilitate meaning-making approaches, especially life-centered models.

Seeds for the future

Through this whole inquiry process we have aimed to nourish the soil of radical shifts in living, so that seeds could be planted that have the best chance to influence deep and rapid change. The following are some of the seeds within which we see particular potential.

Our action inquiry process:

This process is one that embodies complexity and allows for uncertainty and emergence. We see the model of action-inquiry-in-community we've been using as a replicable process that could be applied and adapted to a wide range of fields and contexts. Part of the work to come will be sharing the learnings from a process design perspective and scoping opportunities for how this process can serve other change-making work.

Re-framings & learnings:

We are hoping that the learning from the community's inquiries, rooted in the experience, hopes and needs of practitioners, can support others working in the field to recognise some of the potential blind spots in this work, and that it provides practical insights which practitioners can use to lay strong foundations for work on behaviour change.

Advocacy messages:

Our hope is that the advocacy messages in this report can contribute to building a shared voice about where we need to put our attention, energy and investment in driving change. Through articulating these advocacy messages our aim is to name and build the legitimacy of work that is often under-recognised and de-prioritised in the field.

Relationships:

The relationships nurtured through the process will have a legacy of their own. Trust has been created through sharing openly and vulnerably in spaces of shared inquiry in each person's whole self has been welcome. We hope that the relationships built on these foundations of trust will have ripple effects long into the future, which might manifest as an ongoing peer-community of support, as collaborators in change-making work, or as wise counsel in times of need.

Practice sharing:

Throughout this report there are many examples of innovative and regenerative practice that make up our evolving ecology of change. There are many more that are not represented in this report. Sharing these pockets of leading practice holds the potential to inspire action and connect and share learning between different approaches.

Emerging areas of work:

As the relationships in the community developed alongside the inquiries, various groups formed to explore areas of work where the community saw particular potential to create change. As we published this report, these areas are continuing to be developed:

- Paradigm shift, behaviour change and early years education: transitioning to educational models rooted in regenerative healthy power
- Climate, tech and polarities: building a movement for regenerative technology
- Cultural leaders and Paradigm Shift: building the capacity of cultural leaders and trusted messengers through paradigm-shifting processes
- Ecology of change: mapping the various approaches and practices of change in the wider movement and how they fit together
- Citizen Assemblies and System change: bringing a systems change lens to citizens assembly facilitation
- Working with trauma: exploring pathways to healthy human culture and cultural frames
- Governance Support Group: A peer-support group for advice and support in transitioning to shared governance models

Dream Projects

Here are some of the ‘dream projects’ that members would love to work on:



“With Foresta Collective, as a way to dream possibilities into being, we would like to find ways of sharing our work, rooted in transdisciplinary tissues, reconnection with the living world, embodied culture and art-thinking-and-making, with more people worldwide in ways that would be regenerative and joyful.”

— **Sabina Enéa Téari**



“A dream piece of work at the Initiative for Climate Action would be to design, launch, steward, and sustainably scale-up a truly transformative, ecosystem-creating, and learning-doing experiential program for climate action leaders from India and the South Asian region. By 2030, we would like to have significantly contributed towards enabling a rapid just transition towards decarbonisation in the South Asian region through our thought leadership, policy engagement, learning programs, and overall systemic change initiatives.”

— **Abhayraj Naik**



“A dream piece of work would be to get practitioners and institutions together to develop and execute design-focussed ideas of change to tackle problematic structures in which people go about their daily lives, and shift the focus from thinking critically about our actions, towards actively creating sustainable alternatives which become part of peoples’ day-to-day lives.”

— **Ulrike Ehgartner**



“A dream piece of work would be to scale up Reclaiming Agency to other cultural sectors. Run three times within the UK advertising industry, we have proof of concept - we can influence the influencers and this in turn changes the output to take us towards a more sustainable world. What if we were able to run similar across all creative sectors that influence society? Journalism, marketing, the arts, TV, film and digital platforms? We could bend the cultural conversation to foreground climate and our ecological emergency within our society.”

— **Jonathan Wise**



“A dream piece of our work at makesense would be to scale up our infrastructure to provide a multitude of peer-to-peer transformative programs on different topics that require a radical change of behavior. Mobilize 10% of the world’s young people around environmental and social issues in 2030. In order to multiply our engagement programs, we would train thousands of involved citizens, and develop a high-performance digital infrastructure. Those programs would bring people together willing to make a change but unable to start. Keeping people connected through an active community is also a way to encourage a lasting change of behaviour.”

— **Solene Aymon**



“A dream project would be to launch a MAJOR climate arts and storytelling fund that would support, connect, and amplify the work of culture makers in the climate sector. This fund could provide funding for new and established artists, practitioners, groups, and organizations working on a range of cultural practices (visual arts, theater, installations, public art, filmmaking, videos, books, blogs/ think pieces, digital projects, storytelling, advertising, AR/ VR experiences, etc.). This fund would provide at various levels and types of funding including: seed funding, fellowships, funds to scale projects, funds to replicate projects across locations, creative collaborations, and best practices research, among others. The purpose of this initiative is to incentivize, connect, and learn from cultural engagement strategies and thus help create the cultural conditions necessary to transition to a zero carbon society.”

— **Jill Kubit**



“A dream piece of work would be to create a group that takes Healthy Human Culture ideas out to those who need them most. So that change-makers, leaders, elders, activists, politicians, journalists, creatives, managers, shapers of organisations and the cultural sphere understand how our current way of understanding humanity, life, meaning, power and more is perpetuating systems of harm. At the centre is shifting away from framing life and society around action, productivity or the economy as if life should serve money, and putting life at the centre so that the adult world of work serves life. A central piece of this is to create healing from the field of trauma that underpins modern urban ways of living, that is experienced consciously by those with the least power to do anything about it, and regularly denied or diminished by those framing the cultural narrative.”

— **Sophy Banks**



“A dream piece of work at ReSCOPE would be to catalyse a critical mass of school communities across the African continent to embrace regenerative sustainable approaches and to use these to re shape local practice and mindsets in their schools. The momentum of this work would by 2030 inspire national discourses towards the transformation of education systems. To achieve this we need to deepen our engagement with whole communities in order to transform landscapes and shift mindsets by empowering a critical mass of farmers with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes. We will need to train up to a third of the farmers and young people in each community and reach the rest through relevant demonstrations by schools and lead farmers.”

— **Mugove Walter Nyika**



New questions, new inquiries

In true inquiry style, we are still left with many questions. These questions hold potential for future exploration and learning within and outside the community. Some examples of our ongoing inquiries are:

- How can we transform unhealthy power? What support is needed for people identified with strength in the system, those with capacity and privilege, to engage with the trauma that sits underneath?
- How do we communicate more widely about transformative spaces? How do we make them more accessible financially? How do we remove cultural, linguistic, classist obstacles?
- How are we spreading and sharing spaces of shared inquiry across the changemaking field?
- How can we shape changes in the technology landscape that are happening to avoid a polarised future?
- How can we work with grief at a collective level?
- What are the ways we can support peoples' journey to a place of pragmatic, sustainable action, that comes from a place of health rather than stress?
- What does it take to cultivate a "healthy human culture"?

If you see particular potential in any of these seeds, then we invite you to get in touch with us.

Perhaps you have soil within which to plant them, or water or nutrients with which to nourish them, or perhaps some seeds of your own you'd like to plant alongside them. We want these seeds to grow and flourish, so please reach out if you sense potential.

Contact: contact.boundlessroots@forumforthefuture.org

Thank you.

Appendix

Our approach: Models we used

Four models have lightly framed the design of our inquiry process and our conversations.

1. The Iceberg Model

“The iceberg makes us look at a system through different lenses and provides a way to talk about the pictures we each hold of what is happening in the system. It forces us to expand our horizon and not limit ourselves to looking at just a single activity [, behaviour] or event, but to step back and identify the different patterns that event is part of, the possible structures that might be causing it to occur, and finally, the thinking that is creating those structures.”

— [Reos Partners](#)

By looking at the structures and ways of thinking underpinning some of the behaviours we’re seeing in the world today, we can move towards understanding the roots and drivers of dysfunctional, unsustainable and unhealthy patterns of behaviour. We can begin to ask questions about the type of thinking that might influence change in designing new structures, and create a shared language about where our own practice and projects sit on the iceberg, recognising the need for interventions at all levels.

For more info on this, this is a nice overview from Richard Karash on [How to See “Structure”](#)

You could also [check out Forum’s use of the iceberg](#) to talk about the dynamics of change in the civil rights movement in the US, which has also been made into [a video](#).

2. The Three Horizons Framework

The Three Horizons (3H) is a simple but (we’ve found to be) powerful futures tool that can help us think about

different patterns of change over different time horizons. It was first conceived by Bill Sharpe and the International Futures Forum. It allows us to work with uncertainty whilst also generating agency, by bringing our attention to different horizons of change. Horizon 1 (H1), is the current dominant system, the mainstream ‘status quo’. Horizon 3 (H3) is the visionary future that we want to create, and building a picture of this often involves uncovering a lot of assumptions and tensions between different perspectives, but serves as a ‘North Star’ to direct your agency and intention in the world. Horizon 2 (H2) is the entrepreneurial transition space in between H1 and H3, and is the locus of innovation. This innovation can be incremental (helping to maintain the H1 status quo) or transformative (reaching towards the visionary H3 system).

Given the dynamic nature of the world, the dominant H1 system is always changing through pressures from the external context, and this model helps us identify those actions and innovations that can help us avoid moving from just another iteration of the dominant system [recapture and recapitulation], but instead move us towards the visionary H3 future.

As you can see from the diagram, all three horizons are present at all times. This means that there are seeds of the future in the present, and parts of the dominant system in the visionary future. In fact, all three horizons exist within all of us - I both want to maintain some things about the way the world is now (H1) and I want to totally change it (H3). So it’s almost better to think of the horizons as mindsets that we all have, but if we can recognise them and talk about them, it will improve the quality of our discussion about change, and help us think about what is the incremental and what is the transformative work to be done.

More info:

- 6 minute *video* overview from Kate Raworth: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5KfRQJqpPU&t=8s
- 30 minute *video* overview from Bill Sharpe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHRyNnwiGz0>
- *Research paper* about Three Horizons as a transformation practice: <https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol21/iss2/art47/>
- *Book* - Three Horizons: The Patterning of Hope, Bill Sharpe: <https://www.internationalfuturesforum.com/p/three-horizons-the-patterning-of-hope>
- *Book* - Transformative Innovation, Graham Leicester: <https://www.internationalfuturesforum.com/p/transformative-innovation-guide-to-practice-and-policy>

3. Nested system

“All living systems are made of smaller systems nested within larger systems. [...] All of these levels of system are whole and distinct from one another, and at the same time, they are dynamically interdependent and inseparable.”

— Ben Haggard and Pamela Mang, *Regenesis*

Life is organised in a pattern of nested wholes. Think of a heart cell - with its constituent parts forming a whole that serves a purpose - within a heart, within a circulatory system, within a human body, within a family, a community, an ecosystem. Asking ourselves how wholes are nested together, and what the meaningful relationships are between them is essential to doing change work that aligns with the regenerative potential of life.

It also helps us work in small ways to create big change. With patterns repeating themselves across these nested wholes - the networked structure of a mammal's brain follows the same pattern as the galaxies in the universe! - we can learn to shift or create patterns at a small scale that through the power of fractals can ripple out into the wider systems our work is nested in.

Some useful questions we can ask ourselves here are: What is the smallest *whole* we are working with? And what is the larger whole this living entity is nested within? And an even greater whole? (wholes can be *material*: a body, a place, an ecosystem, or *immaterial*: a field of work or endeavour. Living wholes sometimes don't follow the boundaries of organisational or administrative systems!) Can we spot an essence *pattern* that is repeating across these scales? What patterns of purpose, process and valuable contribution can we see repeated? What might a new pattern look like?

Nested systems are a useful way of right-sizing the sphere of work we're going to focus on, not getting overwhelmed by the complexity of the greater whole we're ultimately looking to change or influence. It's also a great way of understanding who else is in the system who is contributing to the change happening at different levels, asking ourselves who we need to be, to work with the others in this space, to create the change we want to see in the world.

Working with this framework can unlock fears around needing a representative group, or all the parts of the system 'in the room' before we get started on change work. The new pattern created by just a few folks coming

together purposefully can have the power to start a fractal movement of change.

More info:

Book *Regenerative Development and Design*, Pamela Mang & Ben Haggard
<https://regenisigroup.com/book>

4. Adaptive Action Cycle

“Adaptive Action is an iterative, deceptively simple planning process that allows you to move forward in uncertainty. When you feel like you cannot move forward because you don't know what to do, you can always use Adaptive Action to identify your next wise action.”

— Human Systems Dynamic Institute

Using Adaptive Action you ask three questions. 'What?' helps you name patterns of interaction and decision making that shape success. 'So what?' helps you make sense of those patterns. 'Now what?' helps you inform action to influence yourself and your team toward greater fit, success, and sustainability.

Adaptive Action is an elegant and powerful method for engaging with dynamical change in an ever-emerging, always self-organizing world. The Adaptive Action model consists of three questions:

What? So What? Now What?

What?

What? What do you see? What changes have occurred? What is the same as before? What is different? What containers are most relevant? What differences are emerging or disappearing? What are the current exchanges and how strong are they? What is the pattern of the past? What desires are there for patterns in the future? What?

So What?

So what surprises you? So what do your observations mean to you? So what do they mean to others? So what might you expect in future? So what assumptions or expectations were confirmed or denied? So what containers are open to change, and what might those changes mean? So what differences are open to change, and how might new or more effective differences be infused into the system? So what options are there for

building new exchanges, changing existing ones, or breaking ones that are not helpful? So what?

In a complex world, you don't always see all that shapes the patterns around you. Adaptive Action gives you a way to see deeply into your world to understand the conditions that shape those patterns. You may work in an organization where the culture is toxic with competitive and hidden agendas. Adaptive Action gives you a path toward understanding the conditions that shape those patterns, and insights into potential actions to influence new patterns to shift the culture.

Every day you are challenged by sticky issues questions with no answers. Problems that defy solution and recurring entanglements hold you in a limbo of indecision. Adaptive Action can move you forward by reminding you to look at the dynamics of your world to understand what is and to inform your next wise action.

Now What?

Now what will I do? Now what will you do? Now what will we do together? Now what messages should we send to others? Now what outcomes might we expect? Now what will we do to collect data for our next and emerging cycle?

Use Adaptive Action in your next sticky issue to:

- See the patterns in the challenges you face.
- Understand the dynamics that shape those patterns.
- Take wise action more toward greater coherence and sustainability.

More info:

- <https://thesystemsthinker.com/%EF%BB%BFadaptive-action-leveraging-uncertainty-in-your-organization/>
- <https://www.hsdinstitute.org/resources/adaptive-action.html>

Boundless Roots members in 2019 and 2020.

Members were invited to join Boundless Roots with the different hats they wear. Below we outline some of their professional responsibilities, but we invite you to [explore this KUMU map](#) where you will discover the wealth of life experiences they have brought with them in our collective work, as well as the connections between the members

Abhayraj Naik

Co-founder - Initiative for Climate Action
Teacher - Azim Premji University / National Law School of India University
India

Ali Sheridan

Sustainability consultant
Ireland

Anna Birney

Director of School of System change and Global Director Learning and Community - Forum for the Future
UK

Claire Mellier-Wilson

Researcher - Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation (CAST)
UK

Daniel Ford

Senior Sustainability Strategist - Forum for the Future
UK

Daniel Rudolph

Chief Curator - Re-imagining Our Future
USA

David Powell

Associate - Climate Outreach
Co-host - Sustainababble
UK

Deborah Benham

Training & Change Practices - Transition Network
Co-founder - Nature-Culture Network
Course Coordinator - 8 Shields
UK

Erik Assadourian

Community builder - Gaianism
Adjunct Professor - Goucher College
USA

Eva Schonveld

Co-founder - Starter Culture
Co-founder - Grassroots to Global
UK

Fernanda Balata

Senior Researcher and Programme Manager for environment and green transition - New Economics Foundation (NEF)
UK

Garrette Clark

Sustainable Lifestyles Programme Officer, Consumption and Production Unit, Economics Division - UN Environment France

Gemma Bridgman

Sustainability reporting - Unilever UK

Hansika Singh

Principal Strategist - Forum for the Future India

Jai Warriar

Co-founder - Initiative for Climate Action India

Jenny Andersson

Co-founder - The Really Regenerative Centre CIC
Founder - We Activate The Future UK

Jeremy Mathieu

Sustainability Advisor - BBC
Sustainability Consultant UK

Jill Kubit

Co-founder - DearTomorrow
Founding member - Our Kids' Climate USA

Jonathan Wise

Co-founder - The Comms Lab
Co-founder - The Purpose Disruptors UK

Kate Power

Sustainable Behaviour Consultant - KR Foundation
Development Lead - Hot or Cool Institute Germany

Kenny McCarthy

Programme and Partnerships Lead - Food, Farming and Countryside Commission UK

Laurie Michaelis

Founder - Living Witness UK

Leila Hoballah

Co-founder - makesense
Boundless Roots Project Lead - Forum for the Future UK

Lisa Donahue

Chair of the board - Nature Connection Mentoring Foundation USA

Louise Armstrong

Systemic action inquiries lead - Forum for the future UK

Lucie Argelies

Director of the Enriche Program - Barefoot College France

Mariana Nicolau

Project Manager - Academy of Change Germany

Martha McPherson

Head of Green Economy and Sustainable Growth - UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP) UK

Mary Stevens

Experiments Programme Manager - Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) UK

Mugove Walter Nyika

Founder - Regional SCOPE (ReSCOPE) Programme
Founding President - Friends of International Permaculture Convergences (FIPC) Zambia

Naomi Scott-Mearns

Former Sustainable Consumption Manager - Consumers International UK

Naresh Giangrande

Co-founder - Transition Town Totnes and Transition Training
Training Development - Gaia Education
Co-Founder - Contemplative Activism
Nicole van den Berg
Researcher - Utrecht University Netherlands

Ollie Burch

Strategy Director - Among Equals UK

Peter Emery

Film-maker UK

Qiyun Woo

Climate Activist - @theweirdandwild Singapore

Rebecca Nestor

Director - Learning for Good Ltd,
International associate - Leadership Foundation for Higher Education UK

Ricardo Ruiz Freire

Member of the supervisory board - Global Innovation Gathering
Co-founder - 3Ecologias Brazil

Rocío Armillas Tiseyra

Former Designer Innovation and Engagement - Climate KIC Germany

Sabina Enea Teari

Creator and Curator - Foresta Collective Germany

Sarah McAdam

Delivery Director - Transition Network UK

Sean Andrew

Systems change coach - Forum for the Future UK

Shloka Nath

Executive Director - India Climate Collaborative India

Solene Aymon

Head of Community - makesense Spain

Sonja Graham

Co-CEO - Global Action Plan UK

Sophy Banks

Co-founder - Transition Training
Lead Facilitator - Grief tending UK

Theresa Fend

Freelancer - Ouishare, the Global Innovation Gathering, Impact Hub, Extinction Rebellion Spain

Ulrike Ehgartner

Research Associate - University of Manchester UK

Vanessa Timmer

Executive Director - One Earth Canada

Experience of the community

In January 2020, a feedback survey was conducted about the community experience of Boundless Roots. We received 27 responses - what follows is a selection of the results.

What are three qualities of BRC that you like?

- Open and honest and deep conversations
- Diversity of perspectives and people with whom we can explore different avenues and partly formed ideas
- Exploratory and inspiring
- There's an openness and emergence to it
- Learning, truth-seeking, pollinating and the inquisitiveness
- Inclusive, warm, compassionate, empathetic

What are three qualities of BRC that you don't like, or find challenging?

- The emergent nature of it - it feels like there's a lack of progress, not as structured or outcome-oriented as we might like
- It feels broad and sprawling - we want more practical collaboration, it can feel quite cerebral and heady
- Accessibility is also an issue, in some of the language and ways of communicating, in terms of there being a bit of a sense of exclusivity and in terms of the amount of content shared and a lack of capacity to engage with everything

How has being part of BRC been of benefit to you?

On a scale from 1 to 10:

- 20 members answered more than 7
- 3 members answered 4 or 5
- 4 did not answer

Top 5 professional benefits

- New insights or learnings (22/27)
- Hearing different worldviews / perspectives (22/27)
- Useful connections to people / organisations (22/27)

- Better understanding of my contribution to the field (16/27)
- Re-framing some of my work (14/27)

“The open, free thinking nature of BRC, its resistance to draw conclusions too soon and diversity of deep thought, creates a nature which is closer to an extension of mind, rather than just a network of practitioners. My involvement has deepened my understanding of the state of thought within sustainability and also allowed opportunities to help other practitioners understand how art and storytelling can be used within the field. I cannot clearly see where this is going, but I think we’re moving into a transformative period.”

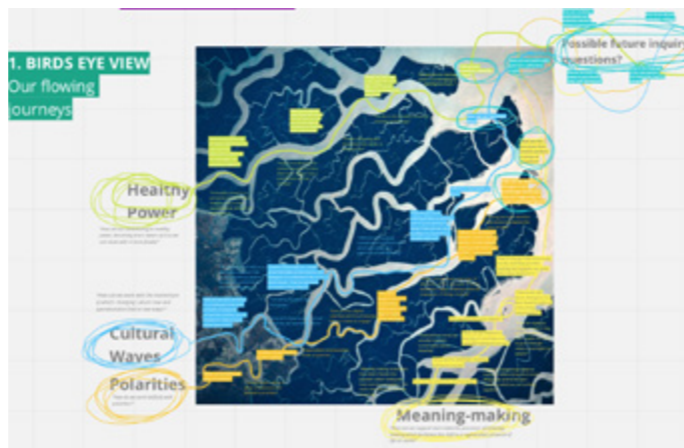
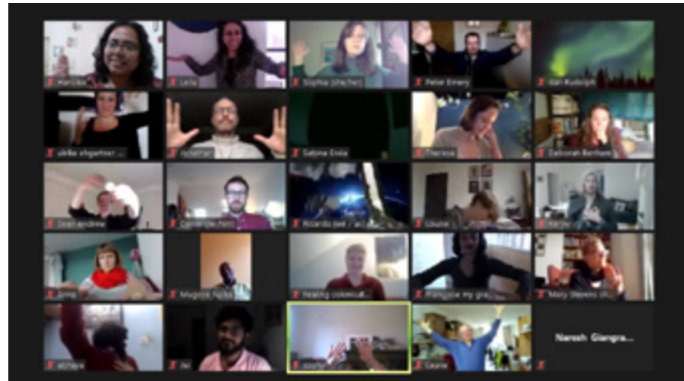
— Peter Emery

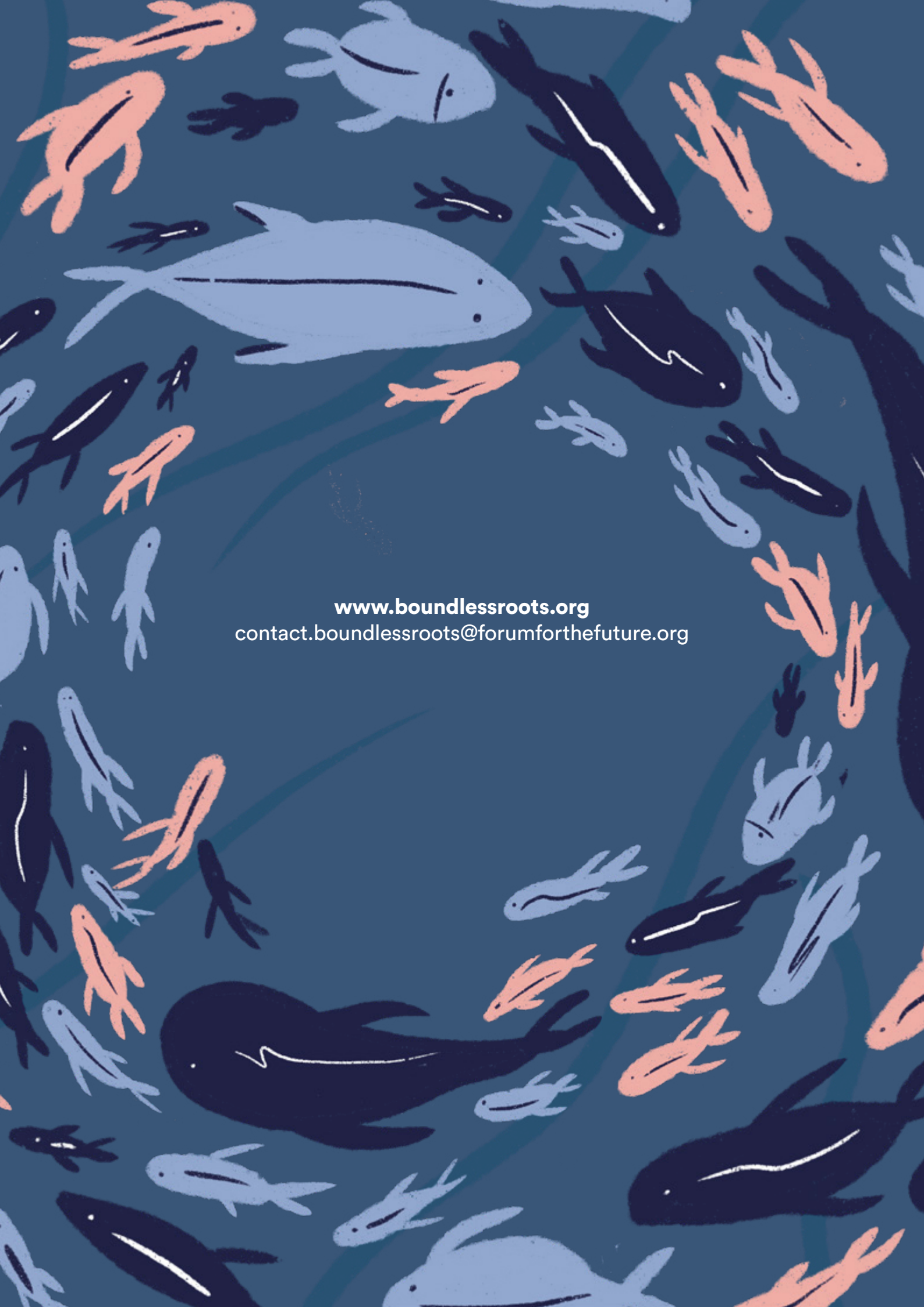
Top 5 personal benefits

- Feeling less alone and supported (22/27)
- New friendships (19/27)
- New perspectives that have changed how I live (12/27)
- Modelling balance of inner / outer work (11/27)
- Support with challenges (8/27)

“In the current times, it feels like a real privilege to be held and witnessed by such a beautiful group of people. The depth and sensitivity of our exchanges are the highlights of my weeks these days.”

— Claire Mellier-Wilson





www.boundlessroots.org
contact.boundlessroots@forumforthefuture.org