



**Federating efforts towards a thriving world  
Rethinking sustainability in terms of commons?**

**Peoples' Sustainability Treaties – Converging on a transformative agenda post 2015  
Helene Finidori – April 2014**

# A systems thinking experiment



# A systems thinking experiment

LinkedIn Systems Thinking World conversation:  
Time for revolutionary thinking and action. How  
to make it happen?

- 8000 comments
- 2 years
- 100s of commenters
- Unanimous recognition of a threat
- No unifying synthesis
- Plurality of approaches, levels of intervention, solutions

# Accumulative systemic threat



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We could agree on

- Intrication of wicked problems
- 'accumulation' of systemic threat
- rapid globalization of new forms of monoculture
- technologies and models that foster massification of behavior
- amplification of effects making us increasingly vulnerable
- need for urgent 'coordinated' action

# No unifying synthesis in response



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Facing accumulative threat, as a whole we

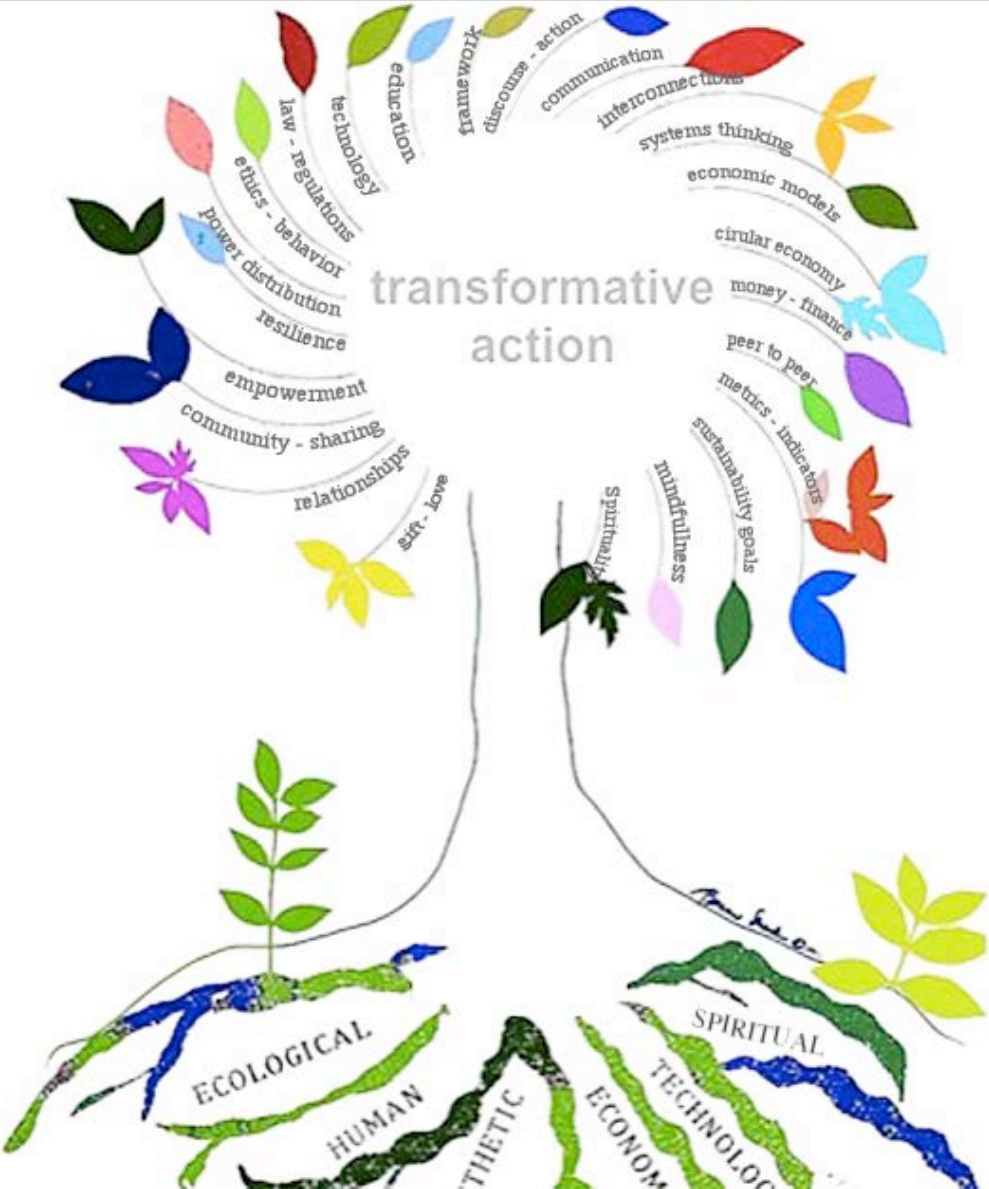
- Couldn't agree on causes
- Couldn't agree on priorities
- Couldn't agree on values
- Couldn't agree on roles & responsibilities
- Couldn't agree on courses of action
- Couldn't 'construct' 'common' responses

>> But is this really what is needed?



@N!

# An ecology for transformative action

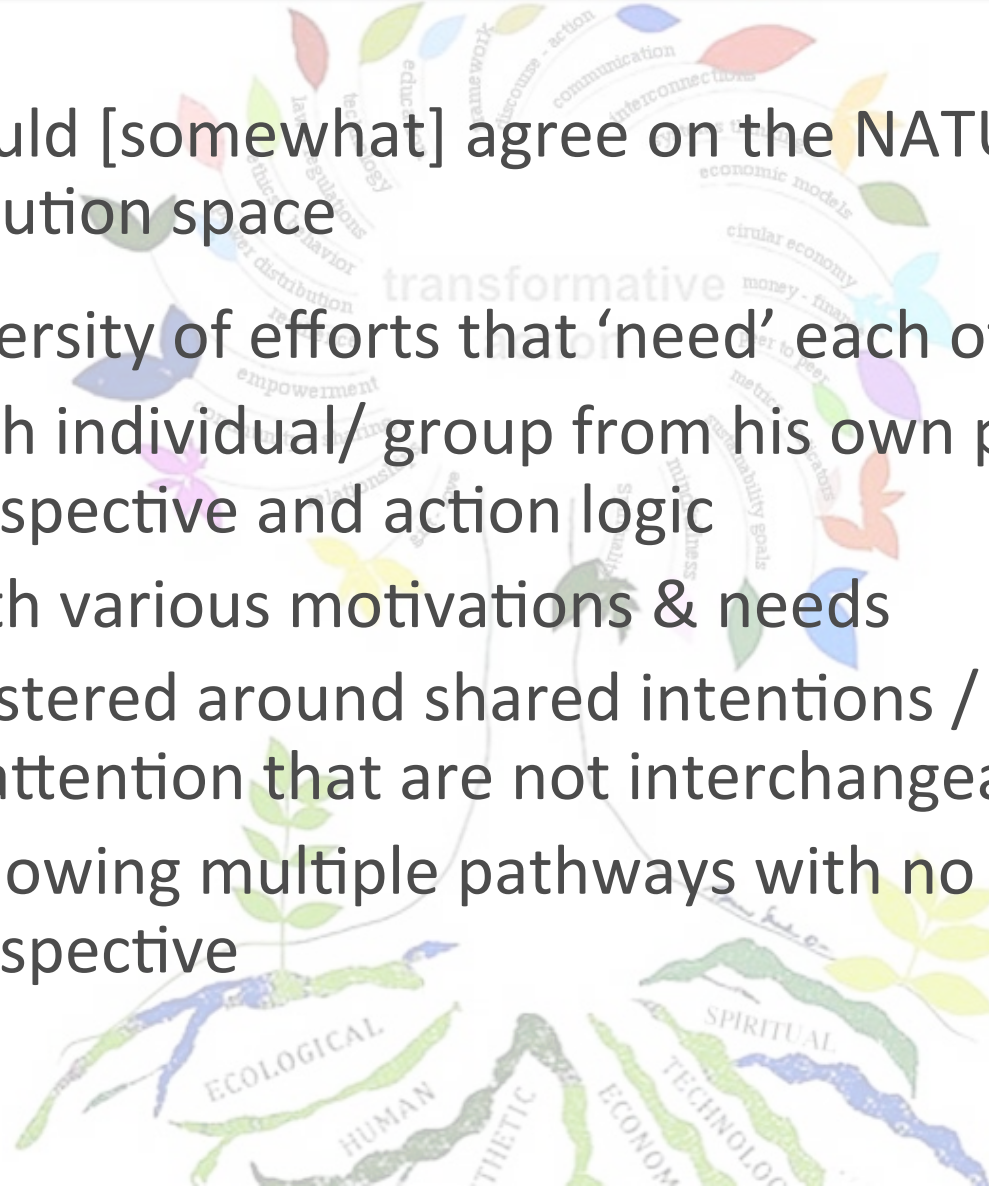




# An ecology for transformative action

We could [somewhat] agree on the NATURE of the solution space

- Diversity of efforts that 'need' each other
- Each individual/ group from his own place, perspective and action logic
- With various motivations & needs
- Clustered around shared intentions / objects of attention that are not interchangeable
- Following multiple pathways with no central perspective

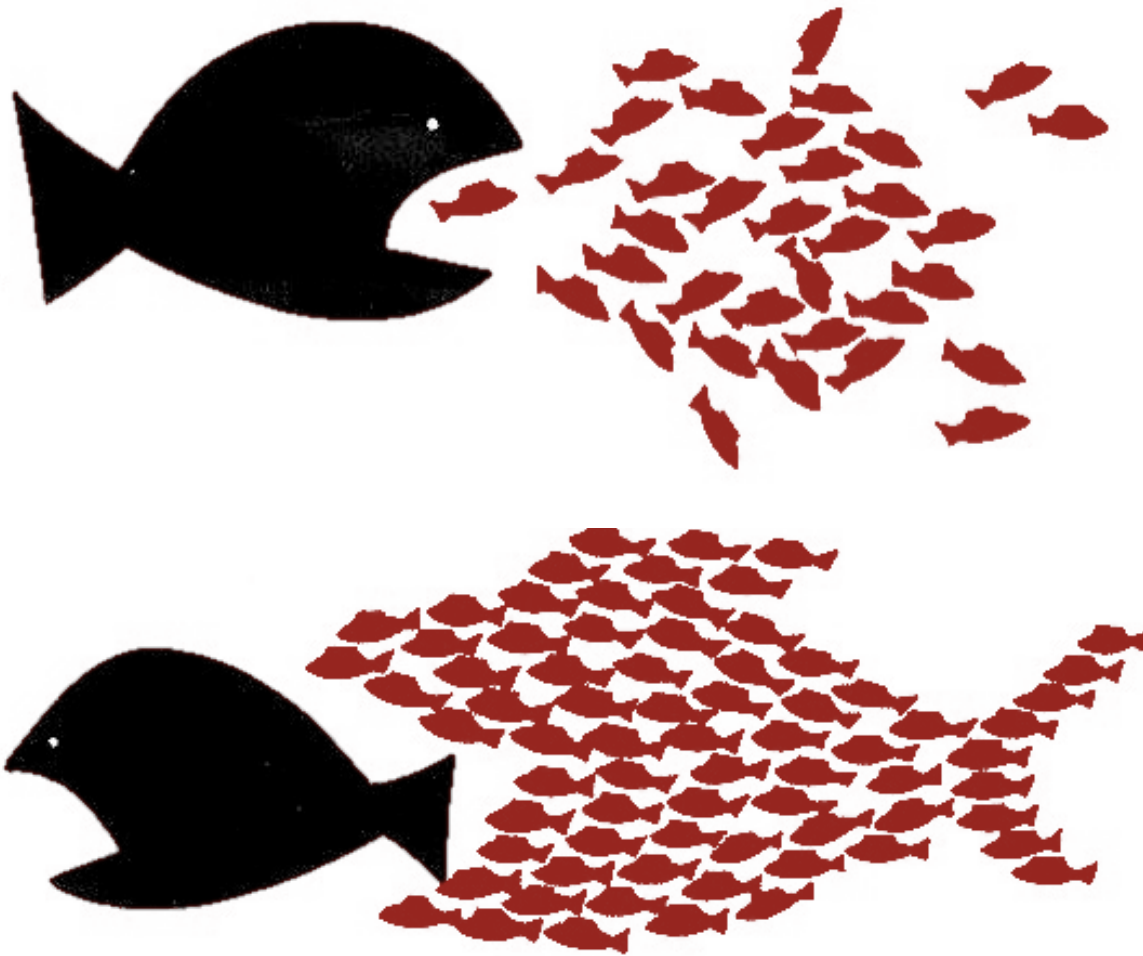


# Diversity people > pathways > efforts

- Back to basics, relationships, community, gift, love
- Human and earth rights, justice, equity
- Ecology, planetary limits, global commons
- Local empowerment, autonomy, resilience
- Education, communication, sharing of practice
- Ethics, morality, behaviors
- Rules, regulations against excess & abuses
- Power & resource distribution, technology
- Structure & framework to organize discourse & action
- Big picture thinking, systems, interconnections
- Macro and micro economic models, money & finance
- Goals, indicators & metrics
- Mindfulness, spirituality...

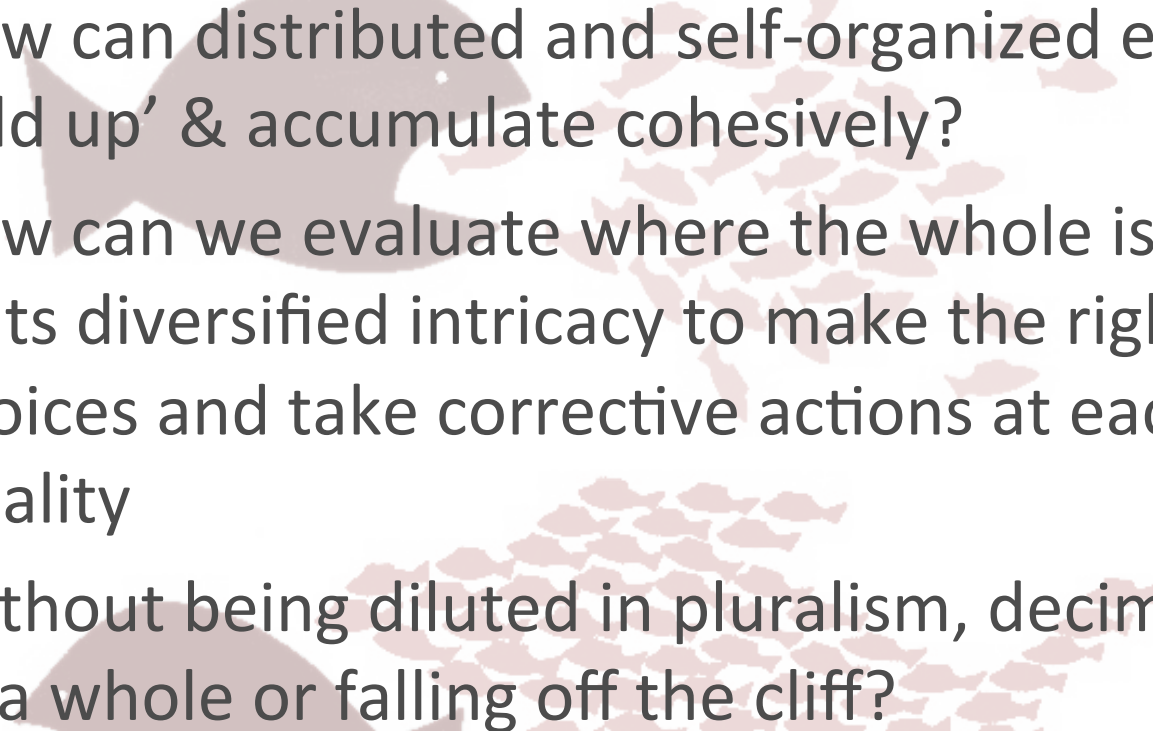
# How to coalesce efforts?

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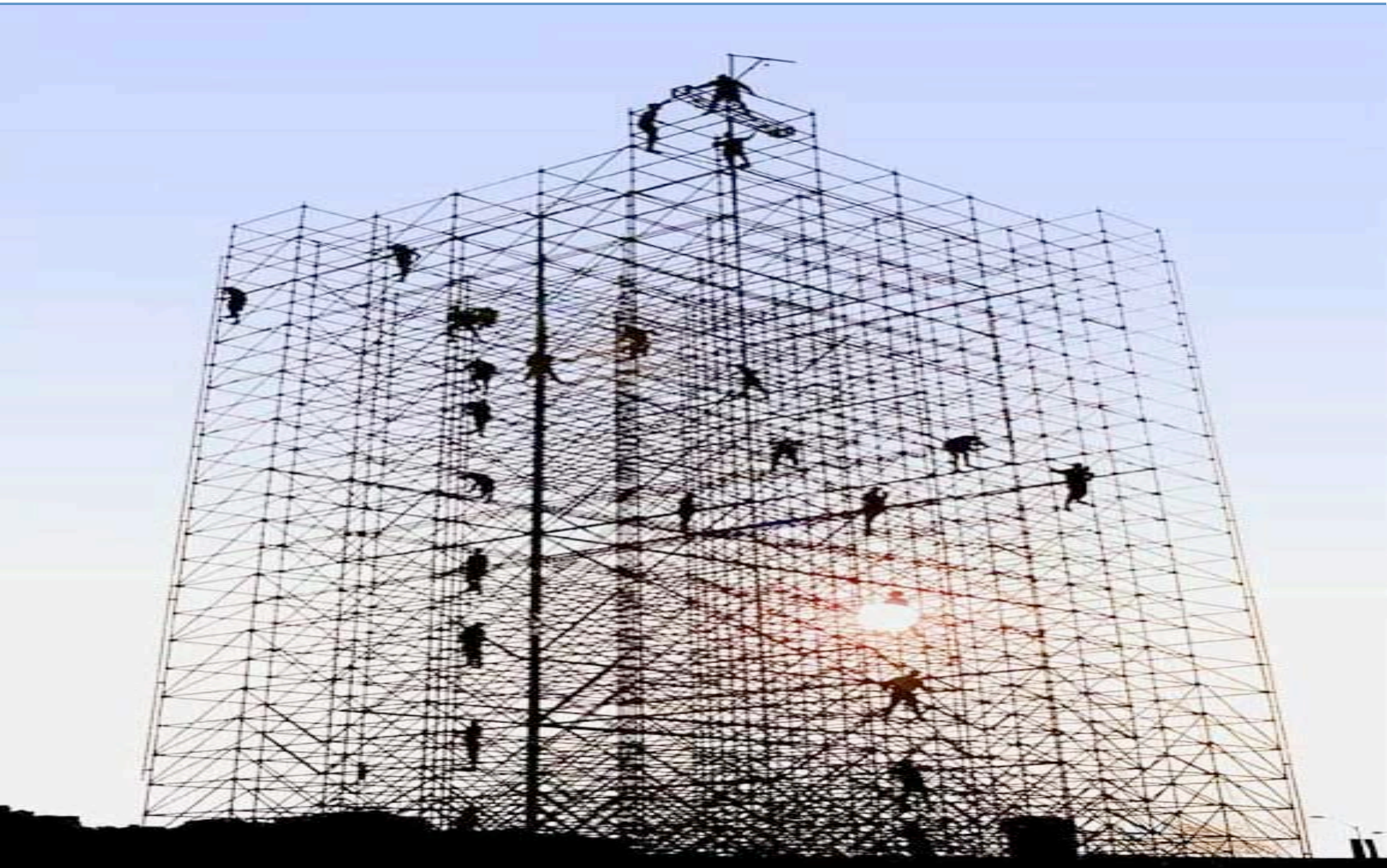


# How to coalesce efforts?

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- How can distributed and self-organized efforts 'add up' & accumulate cohesively?
  - How can we evaluate where the whole is going in its diversified intricacy to make the right choices and take corrective actions at each locality
  - Without being diluted in pluralism, decimated as a whole or falling off the cliff?
- 
- A large, faint, light-brown silhouette of a fish is positioned in the background, facing right. Overlaid on and around this silhouette is a school of many smaller, similar fish, also facing right, creating a sense of movement and collective effort.

# A scaffold to aggregate coherence



# A scaffold to aggregate coherence



- We need a meta-narrative as scaffold to aggregate different kinds of powers and mechanisms to support the emergence of the new.
- Something strategically ambiguous to draw coherence from a variety of disparate micro narratives.

*Ann Pendleton Jullian  
Architect, professor of design  
explores the interchange between culture, environment and technology.*

Underlying not overarching principles



# Underlying not overarching principles

- We need a unifying principle that increases the diversity of the system. One that does not transcend and resolve differences, but that preserves and adds to them.
- Such unifying principle would be foundational to generative processes, as an undertow for transformative action.

*Bonnitta Roy*

*Process philosopher, explores post-conventional thinking across multiple domains (psychology, biology, evolutionary systems, process dialectics, etc...)*



# The Commons as generative system



# The Commons as generative system

The commons in their extended definition are:

- resources & factors of enablement
  - > **the common goods** – what to care for
- Practices, processes & tools people use to relate to each other, to their resources, to earth
  - > **the commons ethos** – how we care for them
- outcomes that result from these practices
  - > **the common good** – in turn objects of care

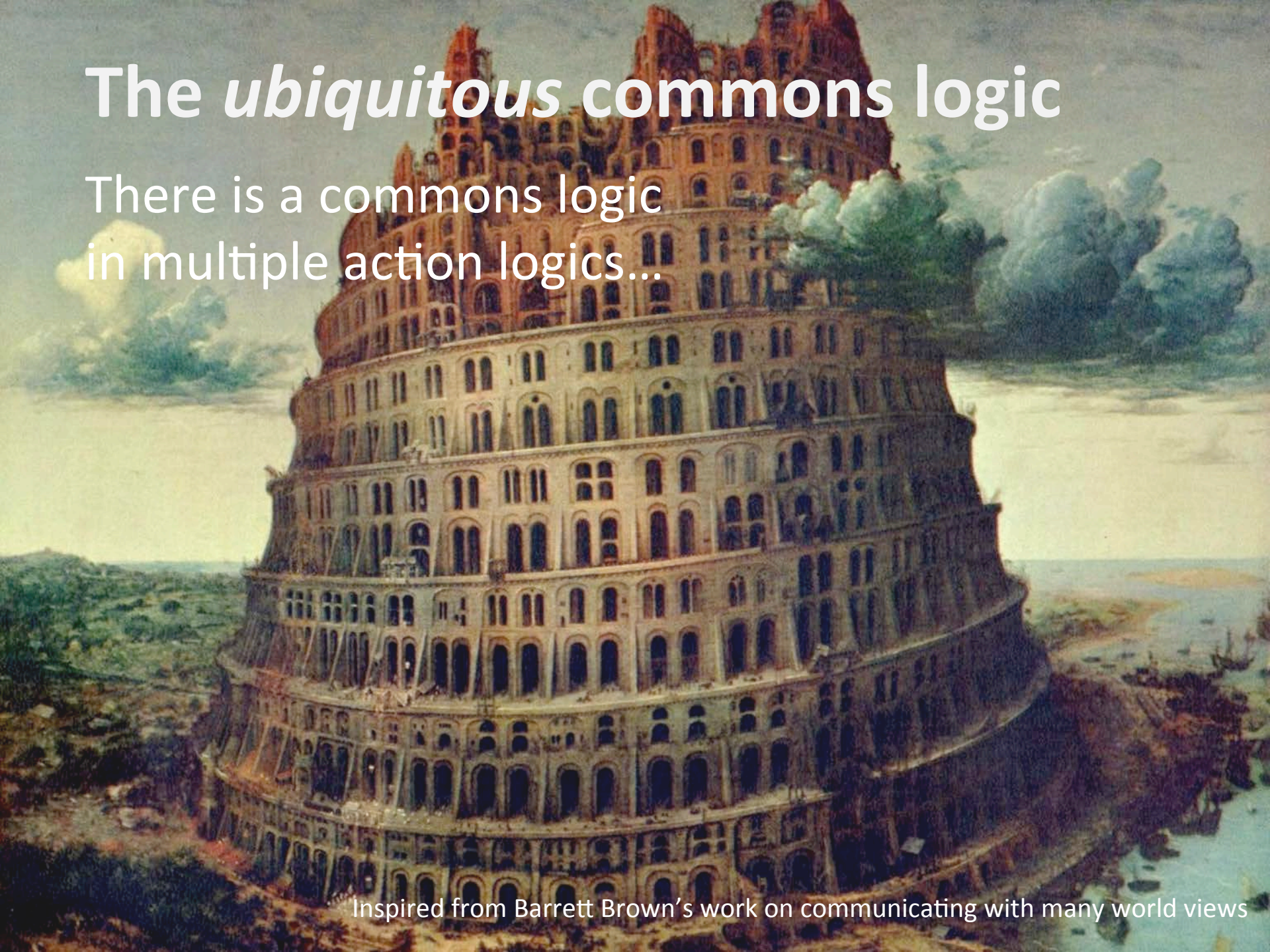
All to be protected, nurtured, grown...

# The Commons as generative system

- a system generative of livelihood that takes multiple forms
- a tangible 'social object' versatile enough to aggregate disparate efforts, and to play as underlying logic to guide choice at various levels and scales

# The *ubiquitous* commons logic

There is a commons logic  
in multiple action logics...



Inspired from Barrett Brown's work on communicating with many world views

# Going back to the source & essentials honoring ancestral traditions & mother earth



>> The mythical, sacred, spiritual dimensions of the commons and commoning. Commons as harmony, attunement, giving, communing with each other and nature.

# Self-protecting livelihoods fighting the system as survivors or heroes



>> The empowering, enabling dimension and distributed nature of the commons. P2P production & creation of commons, commons activism, creative commons, open access, local commons, generative of autonomy and resilience.

# Creating Legitimacy & stewardship through governance & institutions



>> The stewardship and governance dimension of the commons; legitimacy and protection of the commons through institutions, law & policy. Preservation, conservation, human rights, right to access, public domain & intellectual property, global commons, justice & equity, ethics & behaviors.

# Seeking rational solutions & efficiencies via new strategies & mechanisms

## THE BUSINESS CASE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable Development... can also be called: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); Good Corporate Citizenship; Conscientious Commerce; Sustainable Capitalism and Triple Bottom Line.

*Common Objections*

"WE'RE TOO BUSY!"

"WE CAN'T AFFORD IT!"

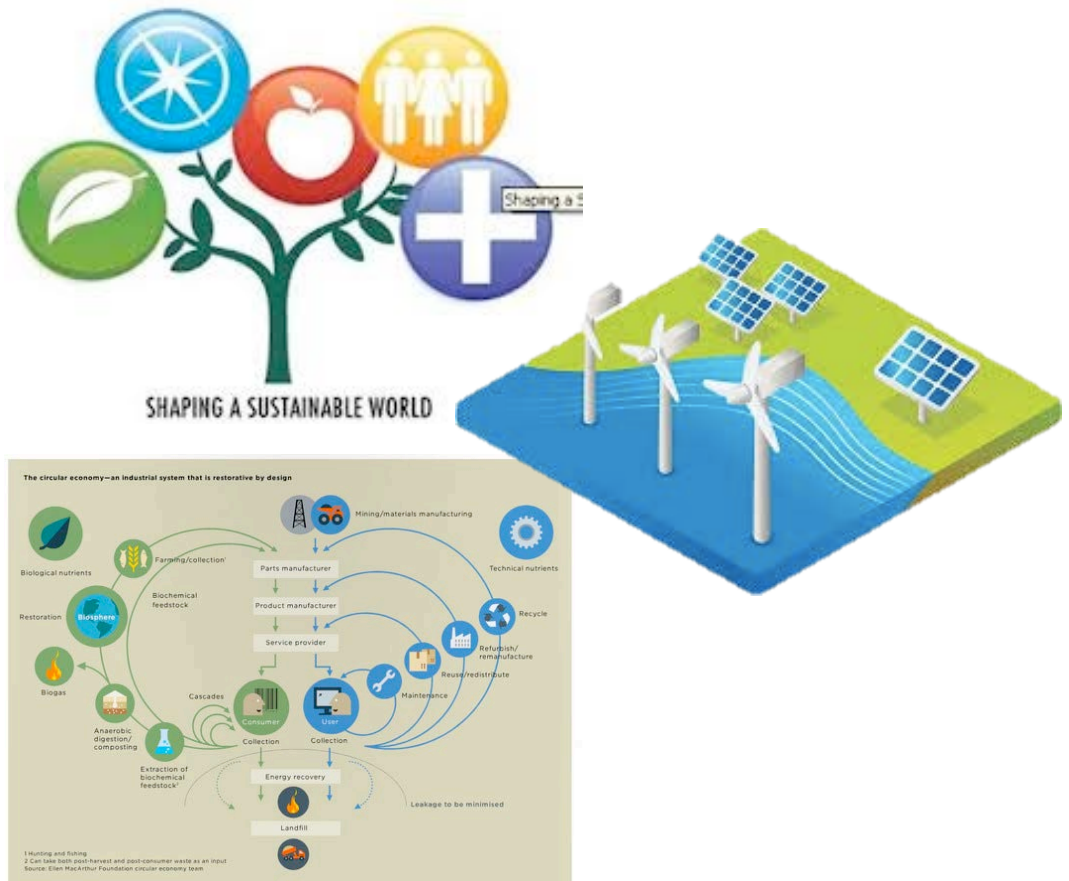
"WE NEED SHORT-TERM RESULTS!"

"WE DON'T WANT TO BE ACCUSED OF GREEN WASHING!"

Invite people to be part of something meaningful.

1. Easier Hiring of the Best Talent (PEOPLE BENEFIT)
2. Higher Retention of Top Talent (PEOPLE BENEFIT)
3. Increased Employee Productivity (PEOPLE BENEFIT)
4. Reduced Expenses in Manufacturing (ENVIRO BENEFIT)
5. Reduced Expenses at Commercial Sites (ENVIRO BENEFIT)
6. Increased Revenue & Market Share (PROFIT BENEFIT)
7. Reduced Risk, Easier Financing (PROFIT BENEFIT)

bth.se



>> The 'tools' and 'science' serving the commons... Management and conservation/preservation technologies, macro and micro economic models and policies, indicators and metrics. Alternative & complementary currencies and finance instruments...



# Fostering emotional relationships between people & with nature



## C'MON COMMONERS,

Join us to explore commons and commoning in New Cross!



We all know we can't rely  
on oil forever...



It might be a good idea to plan  
what we'll be instead

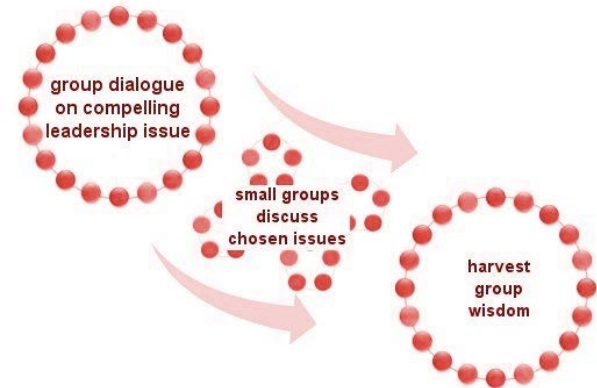
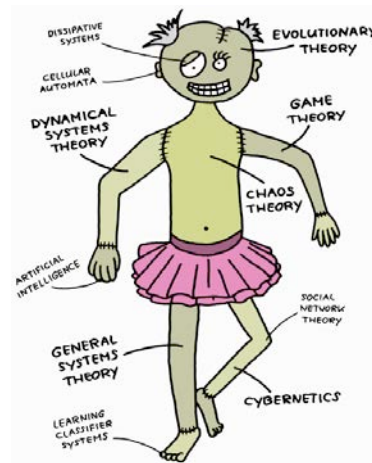
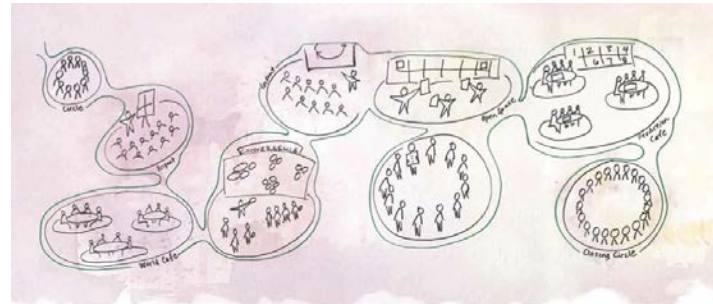
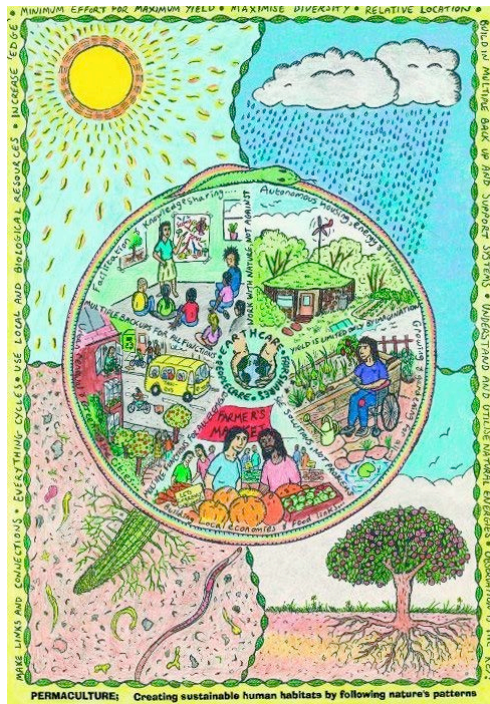


Transition Rodney is a community response to the problems that climate change and peak oil pose.



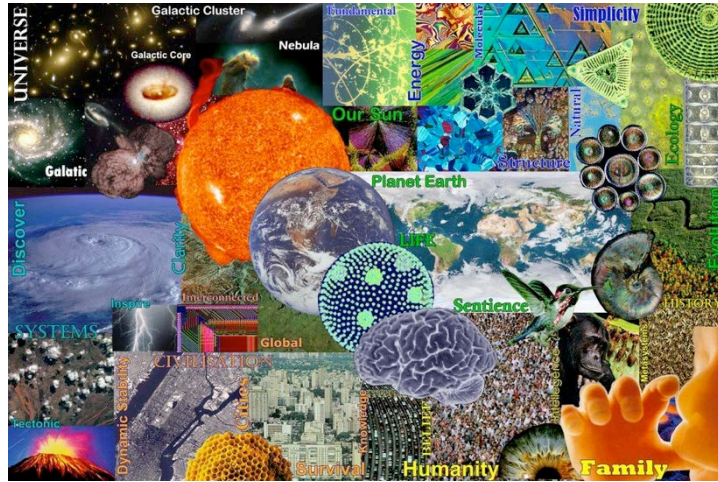
>> The commons as social practice and outcome. Community involvement, social responsibility, learning, collaboration. The loving, sharing, participating, consensual dimension of the commons. Commons ideals and relationships, practices, wellbeing.

# Understanding systems & complexity linking theory & practice



>> The integrative and dynamic aspects of the commons. Commons and associated practices as a system and process. Interweaving contexts and development, the cultural, natural and technological. Dialogue based methodologies, leadership development.

# Transforming self & others integrating the material, spiritual, societal



>> The commons as enlivenment, at the interplay of awareness, thought, action, effect. Experience of wholeness of existence through mind and spirit. Sense making and deep awareness of systems interactions and dynamic processes.

# The commons as support narrative

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# The commons as support narrative

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The commons take multiple forms, speak multiple languages...

They can support the implementation of strategies and narratives of a variety of actions logics expressed on the ground...

Whether an initiative grows the commons or not can serve as vetting system for sustainability policy


In return they benefit as a whole from each of the individual initiatives in a feedback loop.

# What next?

How can each of the strategies, stories, actions towards a thriving world find more strength in the commons as common ground?

How can a story of the commons and a new paradigm emerge from these various stories?

How can the actions in each of these areas contribute to strengthen each other and the commons as a whole?



*It is our role as change agents  
to manifest the commons logic  
in its different variations  
at all levels and scales!*

**Thank you!**