



# CATALYSTS FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

WORK BOOKLET

## Training Overview

This training is part of an 8-module training curriculum in Community Catalisation, which has the following **overall purpose**:

To deepen the adaptive capacities of our communities and organisations so that they can respond more regeneratively and transformatively to systemic crises, contributing to greater community and territorial resilience, as well as a more diversely and transversally engaged community.

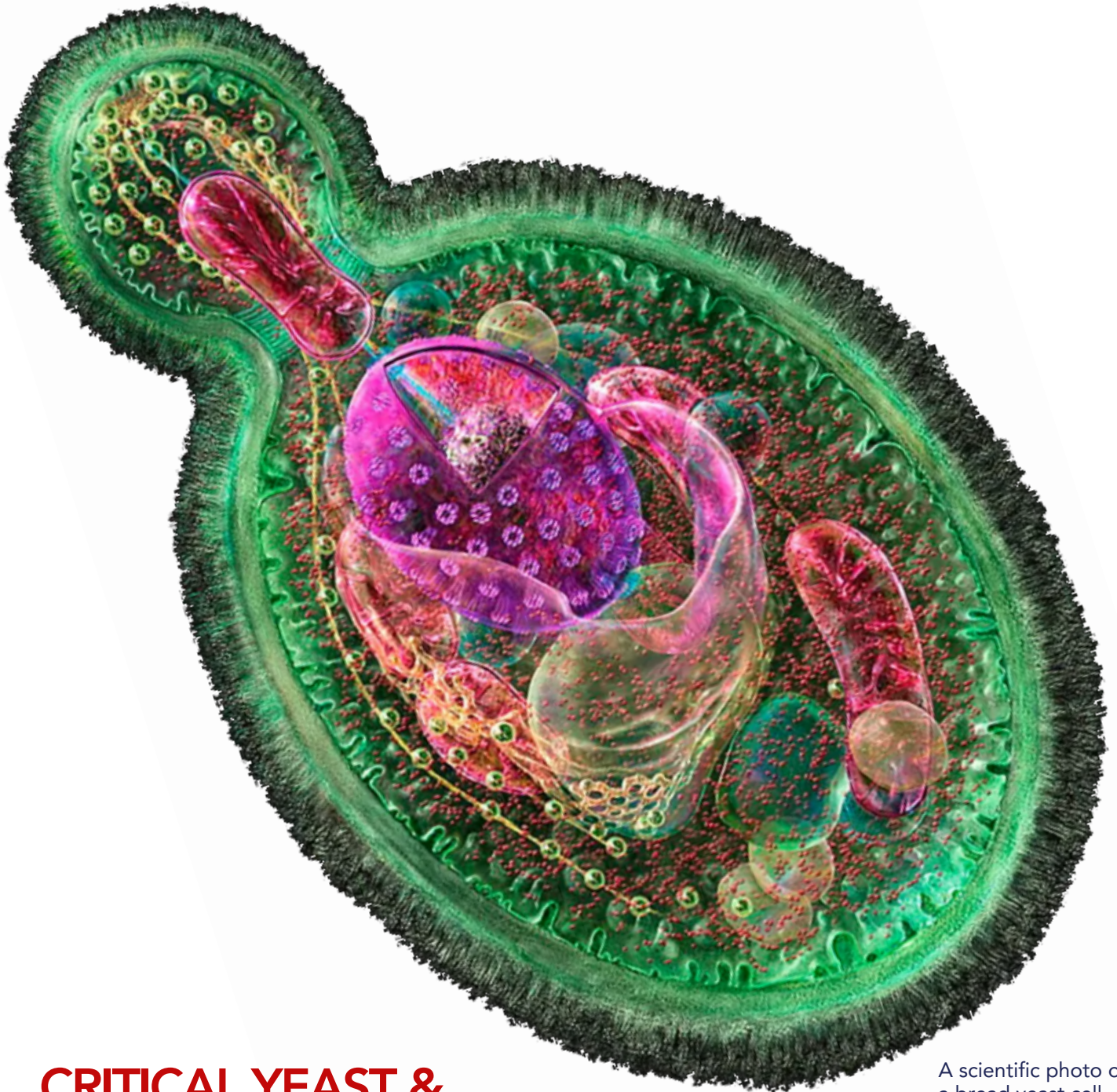
The **goal** of this introductory training is to empower community workers and activists with experiential methodologies, storytelling techniques, and regenerative tools. It aims to spark hope through adaptive, decolonial, and intersectional thinking. Participants will learn about systems thinking as a way to understand community resilience and engagement better, and they'll be provided with frameworks that enable them to realise their transformational potential in a culturally sensitive and flexible manner. Ultimately, the workshop equips participants with the skills and mindset necessary to effect positive change in communities by embracing diversity and adaptability.

The specific **learning objectives** are:

1. To become familiar with systems thinking to help us understand how community resilience & engagement works.
2. To provide adaptive and decolonial frameworks that empower and regenerate community workers to achieve their transformational potential.

For more information about the 8-module training, please visit the Community Catalysts website at [catalysts.community](https://catalysts.community) (available in 5 languages).

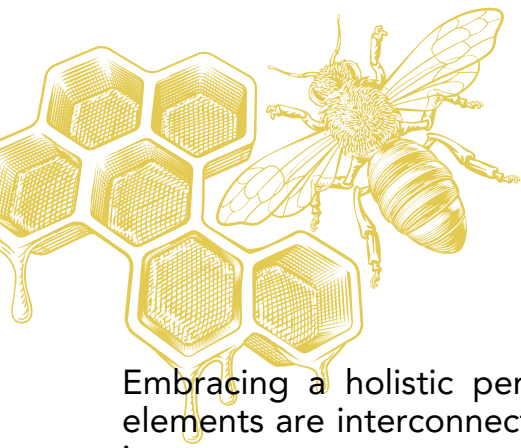
**We are an ecosystem of engaged community workers, designers and facilitators who are dedicated to catalyze change in our local communities.**



A scientific photo of a bread yeast cell.

## CRITICAL YEAST & CRITICAL MASS

The critical yeast catalyses social transformation by catalysing the critical mass. The critical yeast makes up 1% - 3% of the population and has enough relationships to mobilise into action the 11% of the population that make up the critical mass.

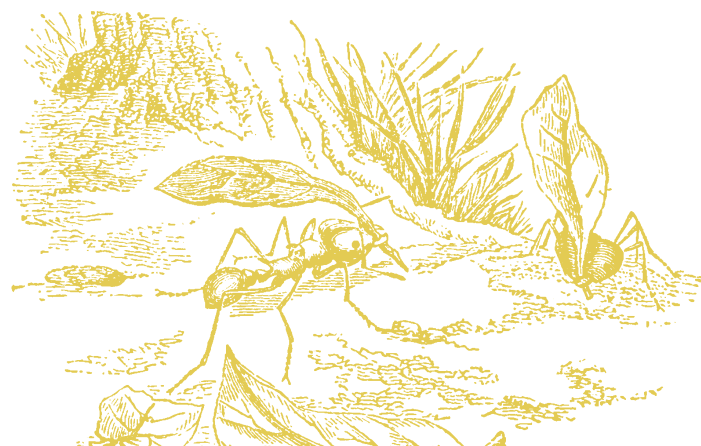


## Systems Thinking

Embracing a holistic perspective, **systems thinking** delves into how the different elements are interconnected, contrasting with traditional analysis that breaks systems into separate components. It is like understanding the ecosystem processes of a forest instead of just looking at the trees.

When people come together for a common purpose, we are embodying our capacity as the **superorganism** that we are. A cohesive entity that emerges when species collaborates toward shared objectives, analogous to communal efforts of ants or bees. Drawing inspiration from the synergy, cooperation, and altruism observed in superorganisms, this model becomes a guide for human collaboration (Woolley-Barker, 2017; Gorissen, 2020).

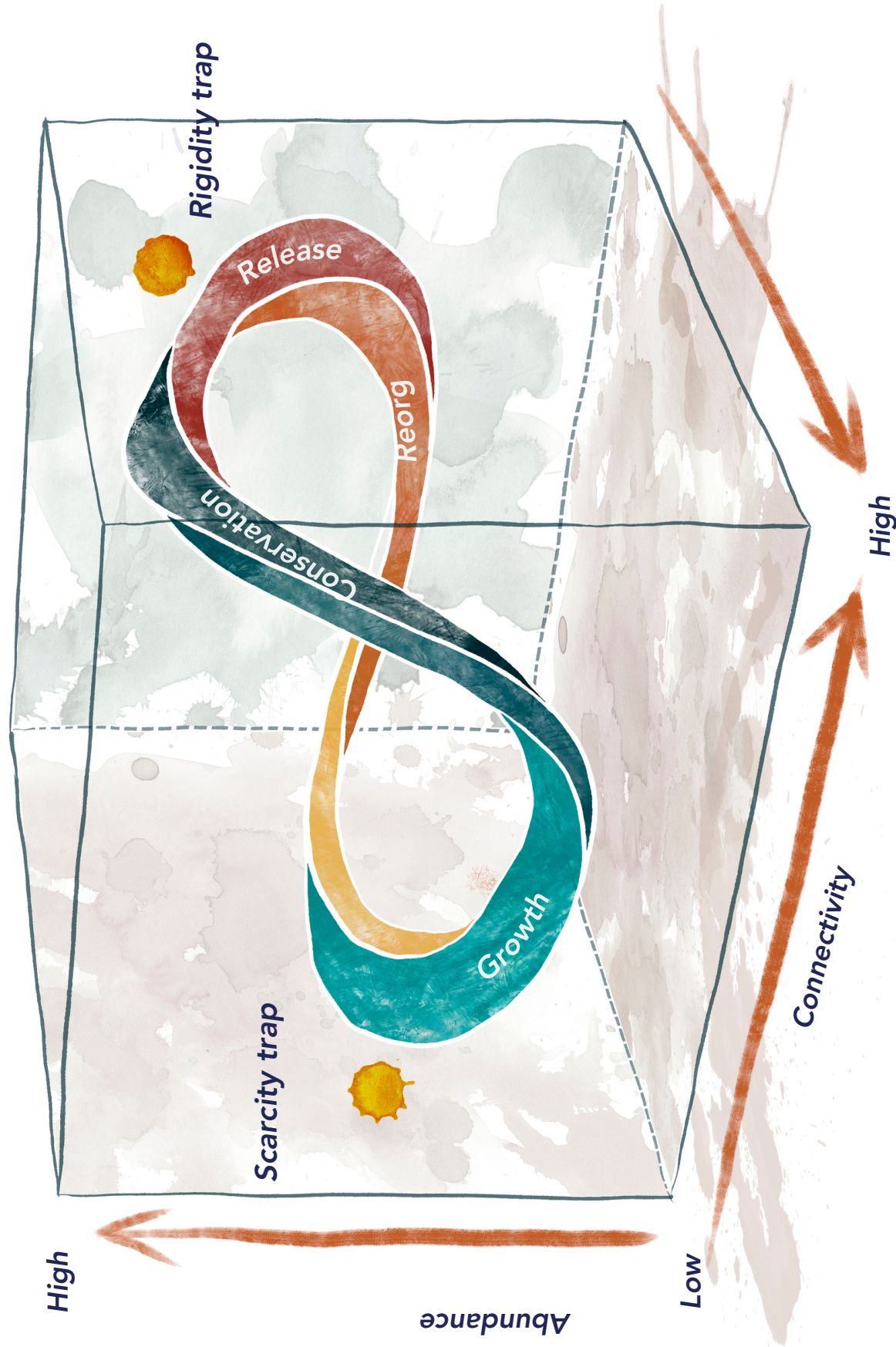
Facilitating this synergy involves the establishment of a **critical yeast** (Lederach, 2010), a core group of people representative of the system's social diversity, and capable of sparking momentum in change processes by reconciling the diverse voices. The critical yeast acts as a catalyst of the **critical mass**, in support of a specific change. This dynamic process mirrors the harmonious coordination observed in superorganisms. Just as ants or bees collectively construct hives, humans, as a superorganism, need effective communication, cooperation, synergy and altruism in order to make decisions collectively, care for our communities and steward our land and the planet.





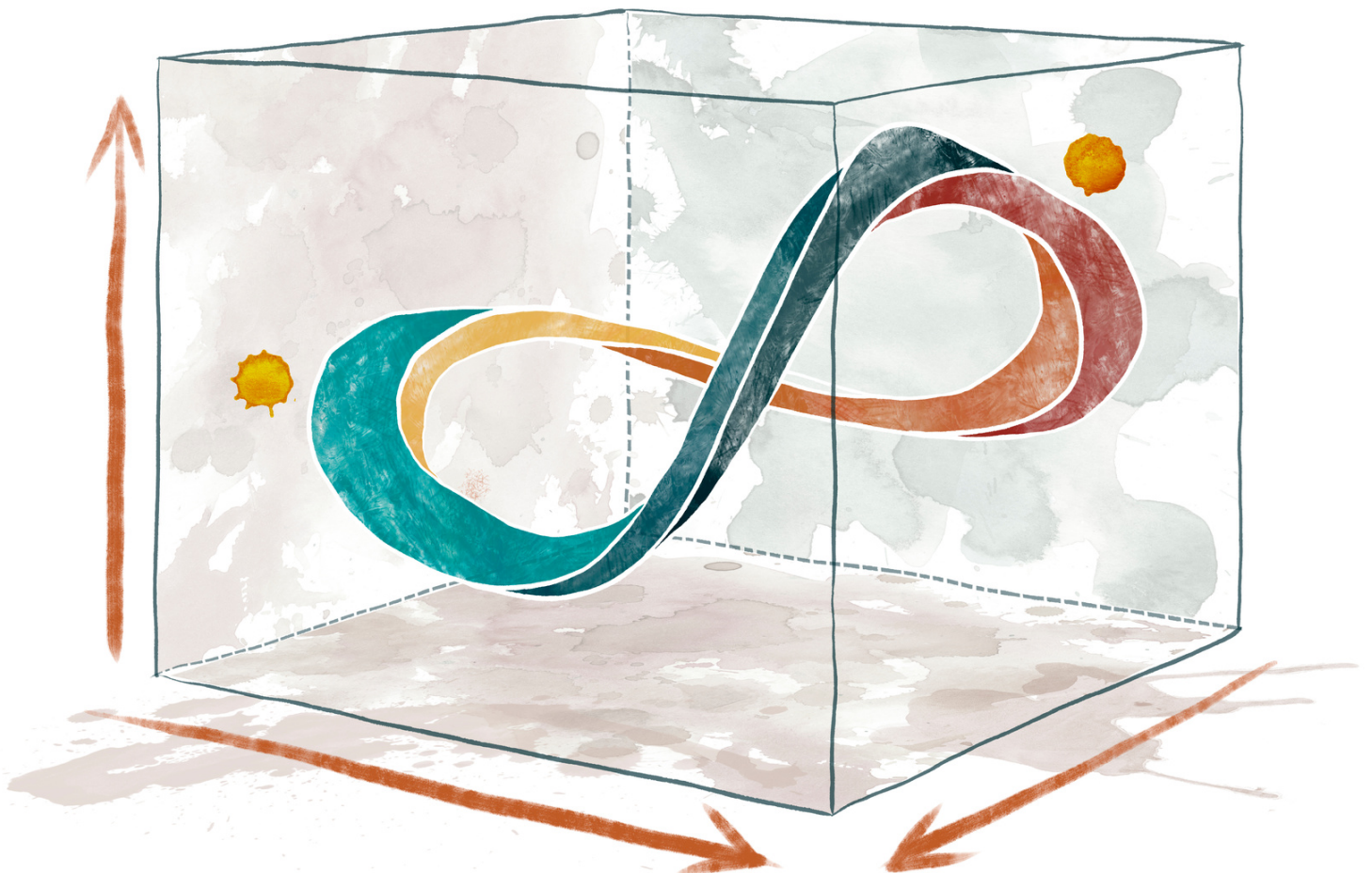
# RESILIENCE CYCLE

Exploring the cycle of adaptive change in systems



## Resilience Cycle

The **resilience cycle** refers to the dynamic process that systems undergo in response to stress, change, or disruption. It typically involves several phases, including conservation (maintaining stability), release (allowing for transformation), reorganization (restructuring and rebuilding), and ultimately, growth (thriving and adapting). Along the way, the system could face potential traps, such as the rigidity trap (resisting change) or the scarcity trap (addressing missing elements). The resilience cycle highlights the adaptive capacity of systems to navigate challenges and evolve over time.





# REGENERATIVE SPIRAL

Evolving through value-adding paradigms of development



ENERGY REQUIRED OF THE SYSTEM

ENERGY OF THE SYSTEM

Glass Ceiling of Legitimacy



**Equality**  
Justice and Empathy

**Progress**  
Reason and Freedom of Speech

**Order**  
Morality and Rule of Law

**Determination**  
Control and Security

**Resistance**  
Trauma and Survival

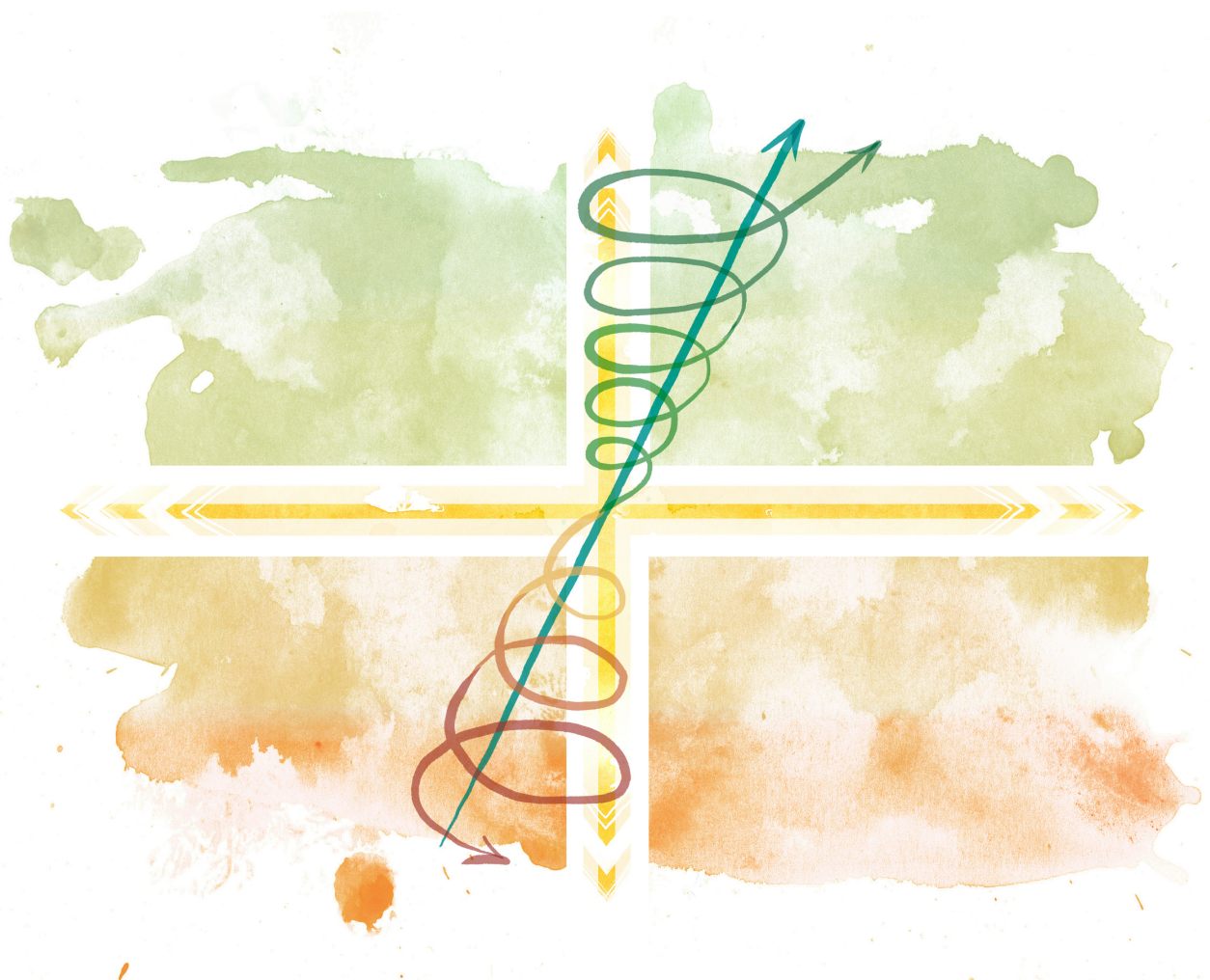
Threshold of Legality





# Regenerative Spiral

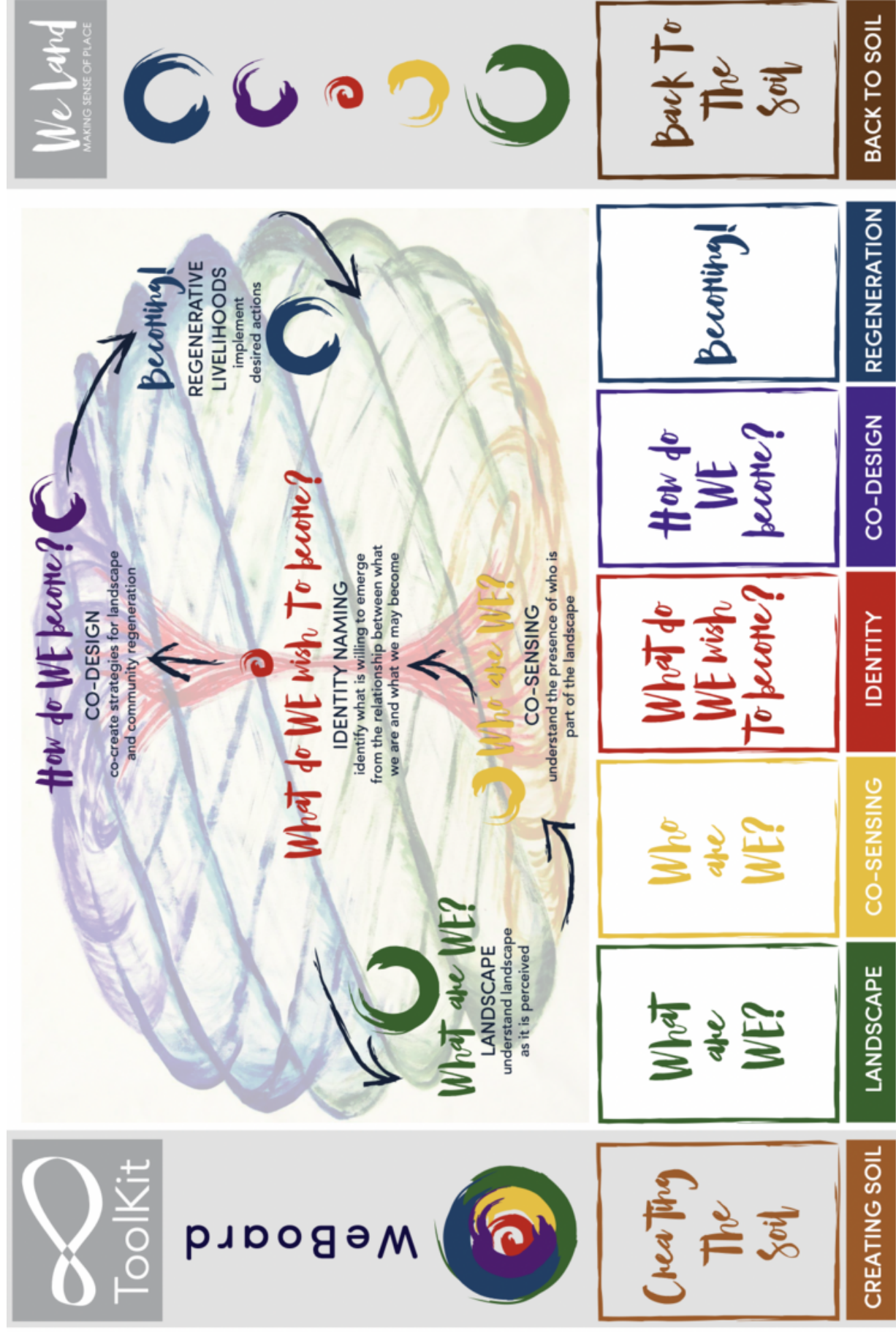
A **regenerative spiral** is a conceptual model that maps the dynamic evolution of systems, such as communities, organisations, or ecosystems, along two axes—energy balance and complexity. The horizontal axis reflects the energy cost or abundance generated by actions, while the vertical axis represents the complexity of the system. Moving left on the horizontal axis involves actions with a higher cost, whereas moving right generates more abundance. Moving down on the vertical axis reflects less complexity, while moving up indicates increasing complexity. The spiral comprises paradigms ranging from resistance and determination to holistic thinking, representing the system's journey from trauma and imbalance to healing and regenerative coexistence.





# WeLand - Making Sense of Place FRAMEWORK

A framework to co-design community catalisation projects.



# WeLand Framework

## DESCRIPTION

WeLand is a five phase cycle, flowing through making sense of place into regenerative livelihoods. It moves from a holistic connection with the landscape in a wide sensorial diagnosis, aiming for deep engagement between the community, the land and each other. This creates a confluence of understanding which names the identity of a place.

Emerging from the naming phase, key actors re-engage the community in co-designing their future. Ideas crystallize and are tested. New information is gathered and collated as interaction with landscape deepens, thus refining identity through a continuous iterative process. WeLand can happen simultaneously at a variety of scales and through multiple interacting projects.

## WELAND PHASES

The design process happens in a vortex movement along 5 phases of inquiry:

1. **Landscape Integrity:** To understand landscape as it is perceived
2. **Co-Sensing:** Understand the presence of who is part of the landscape
3. **Identity Naming:** Identify what is willing to emerge from the relationship between what we are and what we may become
4. **Co-design.** Co-create strategies for landscape and community regeneration
5. **Regenerative Livelihoods:** Implement desired actions



# Community Catalyst Roles

Originally called the FOSET model - Fractal Organisation of Social and Ecological Transformation (Zárate & Gussinyer, 2014), we created this to start exploring change catalyst roles more deeply. Heavily inspired by the Haudenosaunee Medicine Wheel, thanks to Janice Longboat's teachings in Six Nations, and the Quechua Chakana, thanks to José Zárate and Orfelinda Bustamente's teachings, as well as our experience in the social and ecological movements over the past 25+ years. This is a beta version, feedback welcome!

The roles described below are not static or one-person roles. A person can change roles over time and even fulfil two roles at the same time. At the same time, they can be filled by one or more people, and some roles may not be filled by anyone.

1. **ELDERING:** A member of the community who is considered a reference for being an elder and capable of sustaining the history of the place. Someone widely respected. A person that is calm and that can mediate conflict.
2. **LEADING DIRECTIVELY:** Someone who is a clear leader, whom people consider as a reference, and who is capable of mobilising the community. In many cases it is a politician or someone known to the general public.
3. **LEADING ORGANISATIONALLY:** Someone who is leading in the background, not as known to the general public, but very well-known within their own community. This is someone who is generally well-respected within their community, possibly the coordinator of an organisation or owner of a company.
4. **AMPLIFYING:** Someone who is active in the local economy, and who could be an employee or a self-employed person. Very responsible and hard working. They are able to amplify messages, thereby engaging a wider range of people.
5. **INNOVATING:** Someone known as a creative person and who is capable of generating money or through creativity is helping their community. This could be someone related to new technologies, and in general, open to take risks when innovating.
6. **POLLINATING:** Someone who knows a lot of people in the community, even people from different ghettos, or influential people. They could be from the private sector, or social sector or an activist.
7. **ENABLING:** Someone who has power in the community and is capable of letting things happen or stopping them. Usually someone working in the administration, as a technician. They can be very organized people, knowledgeable and aware of what is beneficial and what is not for the community.
8. **ACTIVATING:** Someone who is compassionate and works to distribute the power and to create space for the people at the bottom of the pyramid. Probably someone working in an NGO. They can be empathetic and compassionate.
9. **GENERATING:** Someone who starts new things that didn't exist before, someone with a lot of energy and who wants to change things, and is really propositive. This could be someone from a startup or an activist.
10. **RECONCILING:** Someone who looks beyond, and who may not be entirely understood in the community, but someone who is trying to bring balance, someone who thinks outside the box, but doesn't get stuck on one side. This person could look like a cross pollinator but the cross pollinator looks more at the people who have influence, and the reconciler looks beyond the powers that be, to what the collective potential is.



















# Glossary

<b>Autopoiesis</b>	An understanding that the development of life is an ongoing cycle of interaction between the being and the environment
<b>Biomimicry</b>	The practise of imitating nature's designs and processes to solve human problems and create innovative solutions
<b>Colonisation</b>	The imposition of a dominant world view on minority communities
<b>Critical Mass</b>	A strategy for making things happen by mobilizing large numbers to effect a desired change. Driven by political, business, and military concepts, we seem to have an image that this kind of strategic thinking translates into maximizing output
<b>Critical Yeast</b>	Critical yeast refers to a small group of people who are able to build enough momentum to articulate a critical mass towards a specific change. This is done by bringing together the leading diverse voices of a community and generating a reconciliation process in a safe space. Afterwards, this reconciliation process can be amplified fractally, catalyzing the critical mass
<b>Decolonisation</b>	Decolonisation involves identifying colonial systems, structures and relationships, and working to challenge those systems. It is not "integration" or simply the token inclusion of the intellectual achievements of non-white cultures. Rather, it involves a paradigm shift from a culture of exclusion and denial to the making of space for other political philosophies and knowledge systems. It is a culture shift to thinking more widely about why common knowledge is what it is, and in so doing adjusting cultural perceptions and power relations
<b>Hierarchy of needs</b>	A theory in psychology proposed by Abraham Maslow. It is a pyramidal classification system which reflects the universal needs of society as its base and then proceeding to more acquired emotions
<b>Intersectionality</b>	The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination "intersect" to create unique dynamics and effects. For example, when a Muslim woman wearing the Hijab is being discriminated against, it would be impossible to dissociate her gender identity from her Muslim identity and to isolate the dimension(s) causing her discrimination [Centre for Intersectional Justice, 2022]
<b>Leverage points</b>	Leverage points are places within a complex system (a corporation, an economy, a living body, a city, an ecosystem) where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything [Donella Meadows Institute, 2017]

<b>Mycellium</b>	Mycelium are a dynamic underground network of fungi that enable biological nutrient cycling. The social mycelium mimics this collective intelligence on a human scale with symbiotic interconnections that support the whole
<b>Nested Systems</b>	A nested system is a system within a system within a system. Like a person who is part of an organization that is part of a community structure, which is part of a region, which is part of the planet
<b>Paradigm</b>	A society's deeply ingrained set of beliefs about how the world works
<b>Privilege</b>	A special, unearned advantage or entitlement, used to one's own benefit or to the detriment of others; often, the groups that benefit from it are unaware of it. These groups can be advantaged based on social class, age, education level, disability, ethnic or racial category, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion
<b>Reconciliation</b>	The process in which the crisis of the old paradigm is nurturing the emergence of a new one. A global solidarity network of rooted communities who are slowly engaging in ongoing intercultural dialogue, resulting in a complex, resilient and conscious Earth-based global society
<b>Regeneration</b>	The increase in the complexity of a system rooted to a place
<b>Resilience</b>	The adaptive capacity of a system in the face of external shock, its ability to maintain its basic functions
<b>Structural violence</b>	A form of violence wherein some social structure or social institution may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Institutionalized adultism, ageism, classism, elitism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, speciesism, racism, and sexism are some examples
<b>Superorganism</b>	A superorganism is made up of organisms from the same species that operate as a collective whole, rather than as individuals with different interests
<b>System</b>	A system is a set of elements that interact with each other, like a person who is made up of organs, tissue, blood, bones, etc. Or like a community or a school, which is made up of students, staff, the building itself, and the material needed to run the school. Other examples of a system include a forest, a country, and even the planet itself
<b>System Thinking</b>	A holistic approach to analysis that focuses on the way that a system's constituent parts interrelate and how systems work over time and within the context of larger systems. The systems thinking approach contrasts with traditional analysis, which studies systems by breaking them down into their separate elements



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