# TOOLKIT
## FOR YOUTH ECO-ACTIVISM

NOURISHING WELL-BEING AND CATALYSING COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR EARTH

## Acknowledgements

This toolkit is a culmination of the great work of many organisations and young people who took part in **The Youth Action for Nature and Well-Being project**. Expertise was shared from a range of stakeholders and co-designers. Particular thanks go to Cristina Castellana Tenedor, Erika Zárate, Jakub Dvorsky, Monika Slaninova, Òscar Gussinyer Galceran, Pedro Pedrosa, Renārs Manuilvos, Richard Hennery, Shirley Gleeson, and Yan Teixeira.

Graphic project by Particheli Studio
Creative direction by Bianca Particheli
Design and graphics by Barbara Bianco
Illustrations by Victoria Souza and Bianca Particheli
Cover image by Victoria Souza



Contact: bianca@particheli.com

Lead partner: ECO-UNESCO

Contact: info@ecounesco.ie



This art work in this toolkit is license under a **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Public License**. Full details of the License can be found here: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode



Made possible through the support of the EU and Erasmus+

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union


## Youth co-designer list

Adrián Kopecký, Adrians Gabriels Alenčiks, Agnès Hernandez Berga, Agnese Rāte, Aida Font Martínez, Ailita Volkova, Aina Cortada Quintero, Aleksandra Maija Kļaveniece, Alexander Chrobák, Alise Salnāja, Andreas Grogan, Anjelica Foley, Anna Chovanová, Anna McWey, Anna Šņore, Ava Hagan, Barbora Stigova, Berta Batlle Mallol, Caoimhe McGrath, Carla Güell, Cèlia Colldecarrera Sunyer, Clàudia Jané Martínez de la Casa, Cora Coll Solà, Dagnis Timofejevs, Daniel Belian, Darens Adrians Vovks, Dominika Hammelová, Dorota Krátka, Edvīns Litčenko, Elmārs Ņērbulis, Ema Jarabekova, Ema Korbasova, Emma Cox, Grau Cifuentes Tremoleda, Isabelle Relyea, Jack Noonan, Jack Mulholland, Jēkabs Ozols, Jenny Salmon, Jessica Soares, Jiayue Laura Shao, Joana Parés Cornet, John Isaacs, Julen Vallès, Júlia Batlle, Julia Magallanes Campos, Karen Gill, Kārlis Ansons, Katarína Turanová, Katerina Poutchnine Costa, Kayleigh Harris, Kristers Dulevičs, Kristiāna Rupeika, Kristiāns Jakuška, Ksenija Jakovicka, Laia Canals Danès, Laura Afanasjeva, Lili-An Martin Montalvo, Lívia Zajaková, Lluc Girgas Tejon, Maia Beà Pascual, Mamma Ben Youssef Rahmouni, Marianna Jochlíková, Mario Gutiérrez Guardiola, Markuss Bruno Reisels, Markuss Mikus Puziņš, Matas Babrauskas, Matthew Murray, Mayu Inoue, Melānija Raimonda Alenčika, Michal Kisel, Nada Bellova, Nina Melicherová, Núria Altarriba, Oskars Sabo, Pau Vicenç Micó Gómez, Peter Belicak, Radia O'Gorman, Ralfs Beikmanis, Rebeka Melicharova, Renārs Strūve, Rianna Carroll, Roland Fleischhacker, Roman Stefanik, Romana Jarabekova, Romāns Bažanovs, Ronalds Volodka, Rosangela Condori Chavez, Salim Ali Kajani, Samanta Marjeta Eglīte, Samuel Bratko, Samuel Sadlak, Sara Hana Slaninová, Sarah Rapple, Sidhanta Gupta, Simon Bahno, Sinéad O'Reilly, Sofia Keogh, Solvita Birīte, Sunna-Miwa Anderson Anderson, Veronika Kyselova, Yasmin Nabil Miftah Al Sadai, Zita Neurathová.

Without all of you, this toolkit would not have been possible. Thank you.

# Project introduction

The Youth Action for Nature and Well-Being project was funded by Erasmus+ and involved a strategic partnership between six non-governmental organisations: ECO-UNESCO, Resilience.Earth, Gaia Education, The Rural Parliament of Slovakia, Youth for Smile, and Ecowellness Consulting.

Together, the partners collaborated with young people across Ireland, Slovakia, Latvia and Catalonia to co-design an educational toolkit for youth eco-activism.

Alongside the toolkit, the project produced a case study paper which documents the transformative experiences of project participants. A pedagogy design guide was also created, allowing practitioners in related fields to understand the collaborative processes and engage with the theories underpinning the toolkit. The toolkit has been adapted into an E-learning course to increase learning access. Finally, an evaluation tool was produced to help toolkit users reflect on their transformational journey and collective capacities.

The project ran from 01/05/2021 to 31/08/2023 and the partnership continues to support those looking to engage with the toolkit. Full details of the project and its outputs can be found here.

# Toolkit design

The project partners used design thinking methods to develop this toolkit. Design thinking involves placing the end user (in this case, youth eco-activists) at the heart of the design processes. To ensure the toolkit's content would be relevant, appropriate, and effective, the Youth Action for Nature and Well-Being project hosted four international youth events in Ireland, Slovakia, Latvia and Catalonia.

During these events, the project partners trialled and developed innovative new teaching and learning methods based on partners' experience in the field. Youth engagement with the activities and formative feedback transformed the event activities into an exciting toolkit that provides an opportunity to rethink how we work, learn, and exist on our planet.

As future custodians of the world, today's youth can be accompanied and supported by this toolkit, to tackle social-ecological challenges, to grow into environmental stewards and to become regenerative practitioners.

The toolkit is aimed at young people aged 16-25 and features a huge variety of learning methods and topics. The core design concept was to support the youth in building resiliency within their eco-activism. It has been designed by young people, for young people. In this way, the toolkit can be engaged without the need for expert facilitators or youth workers.

Some of the activities have templates which can be found in the appendix of the toolkit. There are also some references to websites that have hyperlinks on the digital version of this toolkit. If you are reading the physical copy and wish to engage with the online references and material, you can download the toolkit here.



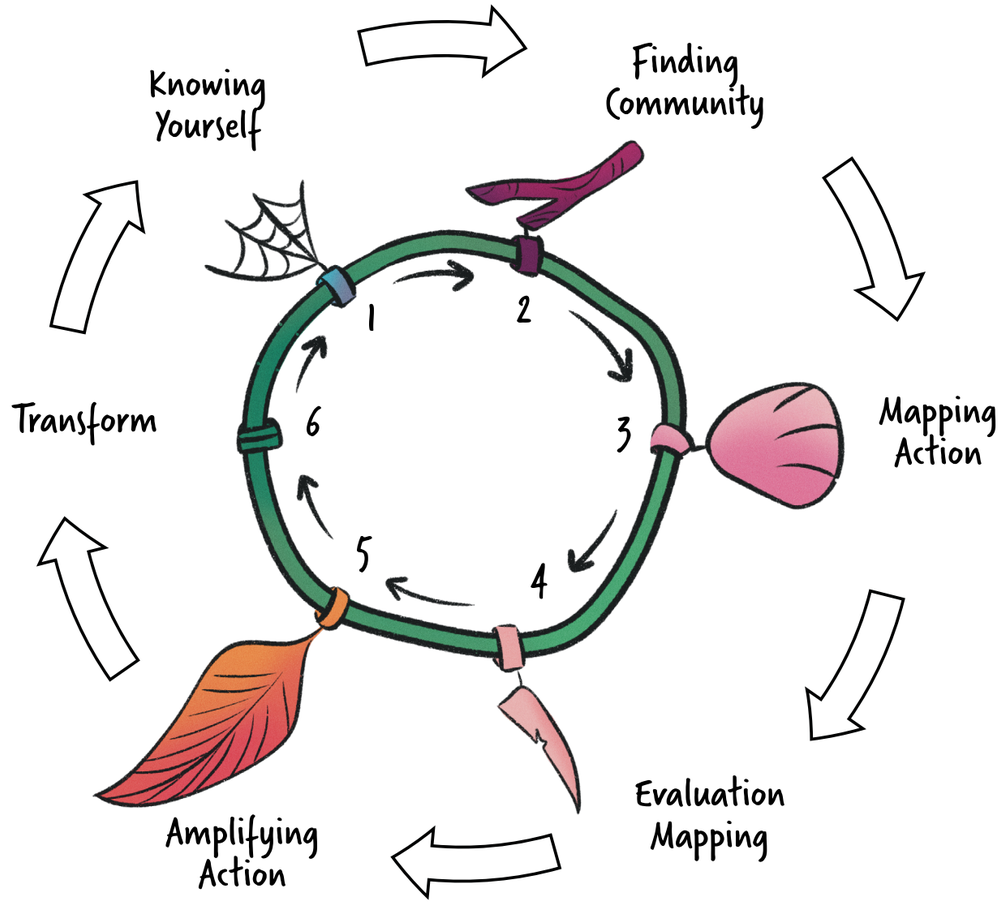
# How to use the Toolkit

All community members can find value in reading this toolkit. Whether you are an eco-activist, an educator, or a young person interested in the environment, this toolkit can have implications for your life and help you respond to social-ecological challenges.

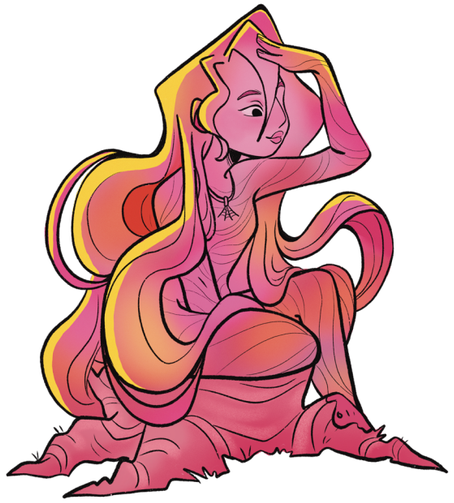
The toolkit can be used independently by the youth. It is primarily intended for individuals who wish to establish a collective group of local youth eco-activists. However, if you already have a group to collaborate with, that is fantastic.

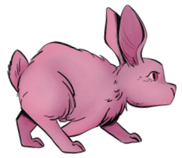
The toolkit can be read linearly, from start to finish through 6 phases of activism. This is a journey you may take with River, the main character featured in this toolkit. Along the way, you and River will encounter a variety of animals that will present tools and activities for eco-activists to try. It is possible to get creative with the tools and use nature as a canvas, drawing patterns and ideas with sticks or stones into the earth. However, having a recycled notebook on hand will be beneficial, as many of the activities encourage reflection and writing. If you are new to eco-activism, we recommend you work through the 6 phases one after the other, using the tools that resonate the most for you or your group.

Another possibility is to navigate your way through the toolkit using the learning icons. If you are already engaged with eco-activism, you may find it more helpful to focus on what is needed at the moment or skip certain phases of your journey.



# Introduction





## River

River is the main character and protagonist of the toolkit. She begins her journey in phase one, exploring her own self and how she connects with nature around her. Initially, River has a limited knowledge of eco-activism. However, by progressing through the six phases, she ends up fully immersed and embedded in her ecosystem - equipped with a variety of tools to take meaningful action and focus on her well-being at the same time. River will crop up regularly to interact with the tools and help unpack their uses.

## Friends

River encounters a series of friendly creatures through her journey. These animals all have unique perspectives on the world, and they offer some advice and examples of how they like to use the tools that River stumbles upon. The friendly creatures can be really useful for River, and hopefully for you too!

## Learning Icons

7 icons appear in this toolkit, each referring to a specific learning method. These icons provide you with some flexibility in the navigation of this toolkit. If you find yourself drawn into a particular method, you can skip around the phases to find other instances of that method and icon.

well-being

nature based

civic engagement

community learning

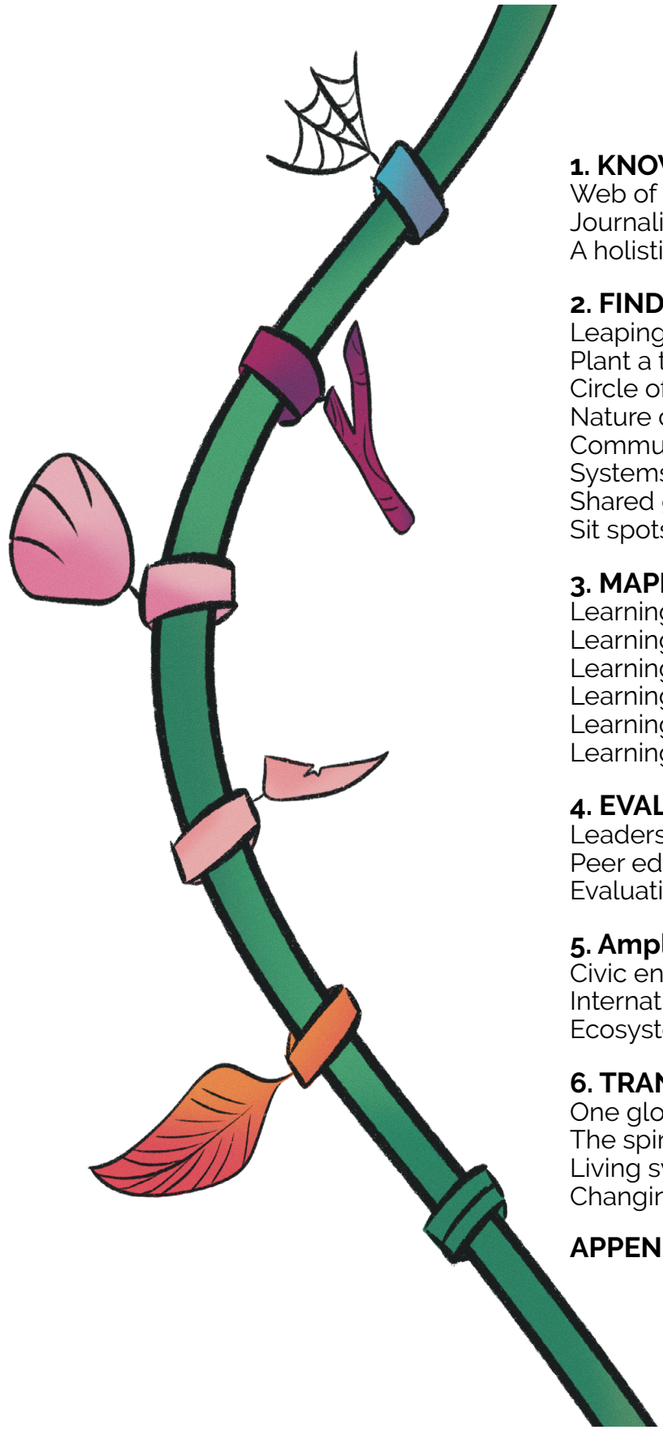
systems thinking

transformative learning

peer education



# Content




**1. KNOWING YOURSELF** **8**
Web of life 10
Journaling & nature integration 11
A holistic journey 12

**2. FINDING COMMUNITY** **15**
Leaping out 16
Plant a tree 18
Circle of hands 19
Nature connection 20
Community forest 22
Systems in motion 24
Shared governance 26
Sit spots & well-being 29

**3. MAPPING ACTION** **33**
Learning to surf 34
Learning to fly 36
Learning to dive 39
Learning global 46
Learning local 50
Learning to combine 53

**4. EVALUATING ACTION** **56**
Leadership 58
Peer education 61
Evaluations 64

**5. Amplifying action** **68**
Civic engagement 70
International networks 72
Ecosystem development 74

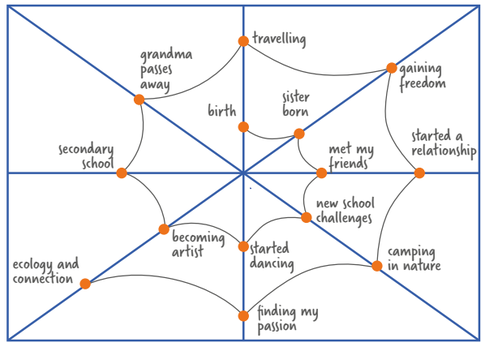
**6. TRANSFORM** **77**
One global ecosystem 78
The spiral pattern 79
Living systems and the essence 80
Changing how we learn 82

**APPENDIX**

# 1 KNOWING YOURSELF

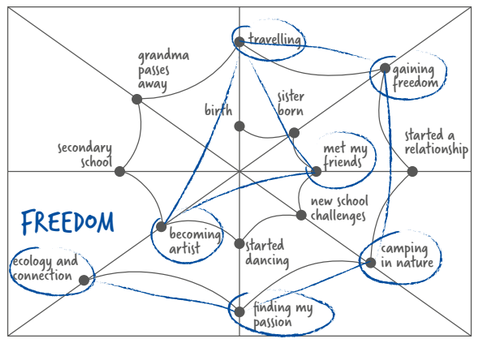
# Web of life

**Everything on Earth has a story to tell.** Each being has a past to uncover, a present to explore, and a future to grow into. Knowing yourself is the first step in your activism, allowing you to prioritise your well-being and connect to the purpose of your work. In West African mythology, the storyteller Anansi often takes the form of a spider. Weaving our own story can help reveal patterns and important moments from our past. Discovering these critical junctures may give a powerful insight into who you are. Inspired by the indigenous Akan storytelling practise in Ghana, the tool below can be used to ground your context and know yourself.




**Step 1:** Take a sheet of A4 paper and fold it to create the blue guidelines you see on the image to the left.

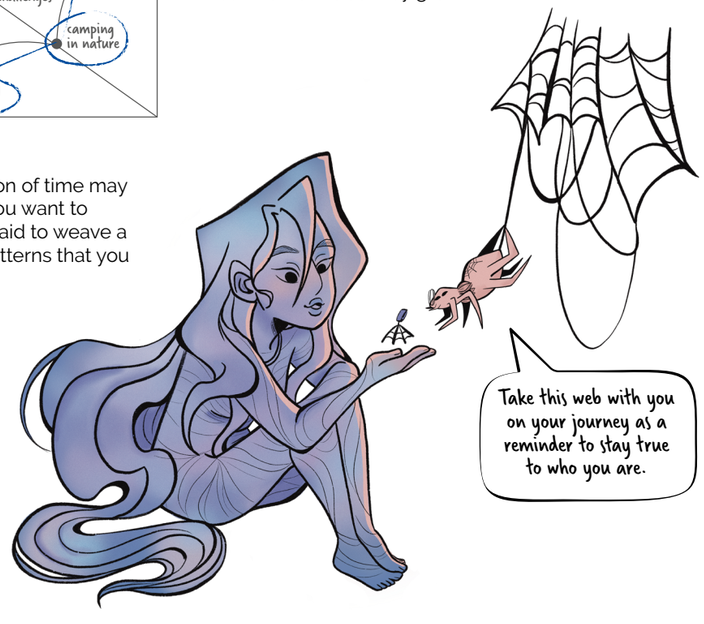
**Step 2:** Spiders weave their webs in spirals. Start from an earlier point in your life and begin weaving your own web, pausing when you meet the folded guidelines. Along these lines, consider a significant moment in your life, and write or draw that significant moment in the space between the line and the centre on your web. Continue expanding the spiral until you reach this present moment.




**Step 3:** Seek out patterns. For example: *Do you see a balance of joyous and hard moments? Are there cycles that repeat? Are there themes that connect various points? How much is in your control?* See if you can find a way to reflect on this mapping exercise, jotting down notes or connections that emerged. In River's example, she found freedom to be an important theme and focus of her life, re-emerging in healthier forms as they grow.

Your web and your conceptualisation of time may look different. It depends on how you want to approach this exercise. Don't be afraid to weave a web to your liking, following any patterns that you feel are helpful for your thinking.

The idea is to reflect on your defining moments and seek out patterns that might give you an insight into the paths you have taken, and the way your web of life is constructed. After you finish your map, ask yourself the reflection questions on the template (see appendix).






# Journaling & nature integration

Healthy ecosystems look after themselves, in a delicate balance of energy. There are changing seasons, day and night, predators and prey... There is a balance between chaos and order. Healthy humans tend to do the same, we look after ourselves because we love and care for ourselves. We try to keep our health in a good place, we try to remain social and contribute to society in the best way we can.

Being nature, we reflect those patterns. Earth is mostly water, just as we are. All the carbon within us was formed from the hearts of long dead stars over the course of billions of years. We share 98.8% of our DNA with chimpanzees but have common ancestors with every lifeform we see around us. Everywhere we look, the world shows us we exist as an ingrained aspect of this whole and complete system.

Indigenous cultures throughout the world have remained in balance with ecosystems through this sense of belonging to land and community, and in turn through their roles as stewards of these same ecosystems. This is done with an understanding that humans are not just working to serve nature, but that we are nature ourselves.

If we are able to recognise that we are nature, we are then able to understand that loving and caring for nature means loving and caring for ourselves, in all our diversity. This is the realm of Deep Ecology, which explains that humans must remember the understanding that all life is of inherent worth. Not in a financial or exploitative sense, but in a spiritual and relational one.

**Journaling can be a great way to help explore Deep Ecology, the self, and your progression through your activism journey.** Throughout this toolkit, periods of reflection will be encouraged to help map emotions and thoughts, making meaning out of experiences. Journaling prompts can be a useful starting point for those trying out this method for the first time. Find a place to record your thoughts and use the prompts below to help begin, exploring your relationship with nature and your integration as nature. Try being open and free of any judgement as this will help you learn new things about yourself. You may find being outside and more immersed in nature can facilitate this process and act as a support for you during this exercise.

**Prompt 1:** Think about one of your favourite nature experiences...
What image comes to mind when you think about it? Describe it.

- *How did it make you feel?*
- *What could you see, smell, hear, taste, or physically feel?*
- *What influence did it have on your life?*

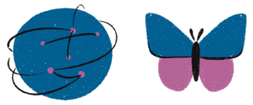
**Prompt 2:** Would you say that spending time in and with nature is something you value?

- *Do you feel you get health benefits or other support from nature?*
- *Are you able to spend time in nature frequently?*
- *What is your favourite part of the landscape you have locally and why?*
- *Is there a specific tree, animal, bird or other part of nature that you connect with most? Describe this part of nature as if you were describing a close friend.*

**Prompt 3:** What does Land mean to you?

- *How would you describe your relationship with nature? (personal /emotional /spiritual connection)*
- *How do you feel you have been shaped by your local landscape?*
- *How does your culture / heritage value or prioritise the local land?*

# A holistic journey



Practising self-exploration through the ***Web of Life*** and ***Journaling*** activities can set us up internally for the path ahead. Yet there are external factors that guide and shape the world around us, and so these could be examined in more detail before you begin your activism.

These external factors are sometimes viewed as individual elements all separate from each other. There is our prevailing economic structure of capitalism for example, which affects the types of jobs we hold. There are social dynamics and societies which help us form connections and develop a sense of identity. There are wild spaces like rainforests which keep our planet healthy and full of biodiversity. These different elements, among thousands of others, form the conditions our planet finds itself in.

Alternatively, these factors can be viewed as interconnected. In this way, the different factors can be best explained in reference to the whole. To truly understand a slice of cake, one should think of the complete cake from which the slice came from. Thinking in this way, with interconnections and 'wholes', is called Holistic Thinking. With this approach, there are no isolated elements – there are only parts of a bigger picture that must be considered to understand the whole.

Take sustainability for example. Sustainability refers to a set of conditions that enable our needs to be met, without compromising the needs of future generations. Extending this out to all living things, holistically, we can conceptualise four pillars of sustainability which support one another. The following framework highlights the characteristics or values of these four pillars, showcasing both how we can act as ecosocial activists, as well as how the interconnection of these characteristics can spark change. Consider the four dimensions in the framework below as mutually reinforcing and interdependent forces that can create sustainable conditions for Planet Earth and all who live here.

The **four dimensions** are supporting each other in their visions and values. The **worldview** values include demands for a new social structure, dipping into the social dimension. It connects deeply with cultures and world perceptions, so it includes well-being and spirituality.

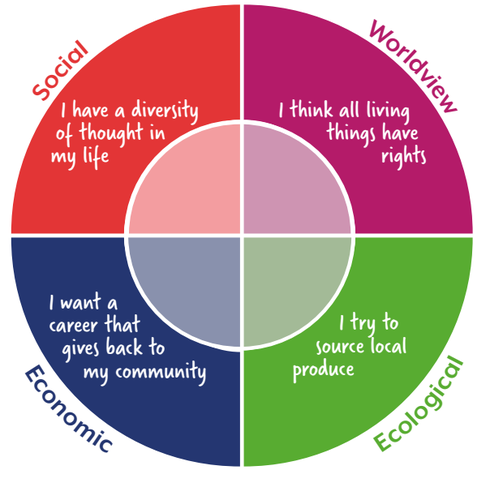
**Social** values include participation by all, expressing that we are a "communion of subjects." In this way, the right to define how we want to live with nature and each other, is a human and environmental right, dipping into the ecological dimension.

**Ecological** values include clean soil, air and water, conscious buildings, and fresh local food in abundance while living in a diverse ecosystem, with low "ecological footprint", leaving room for economic activities and development that is more responsible.

**Economic** values include local economies under control of local democracy; and the subservience of economics to ecology rather than the reverse - expressing the interconnection between the economic and ecological dimensions once more.



Using the framework just shared (which you can find more on Gaia Education's website and courses), the tool below can be completed during several intervals of an activism or eco-project journey. As this activity relates to all 4 dimensions and brings up a deep sense of systems thinking, it's useful to complete it at this initial phase and then revisit the concept as you progress through the toolkit.




**Step 1:** Start by just feeling into the 4 dimensions. You can do this alone or in a group if you have one.

Ask yourself:
*In which dimension do you see yourself most active in your life projects and activities?*
*In which dimension do you see yourself less active in your life projects and activities?*

**Step 2:** Recreate or use the template to record one positive aspect of your life or work inside the dimension circle (see appendix).

**Step 3:** On the outside of each dimension, write down the ways in which you could grow. Notice the areas of investigation that you have to pursue.

**Step 4:** Shade in the inner box with weighting that represents your connecting and comfort with that dimension in your daily life.

In the example above, the ecological pillar is well understood, and the economic pillar is where plenty of work can be done, represented by the level of shaded colour in the centre boxes. As all these dimensions are connected and understood in a holistic way, working in areas you are already comfortable in, such as the social or ecological pillars, can only enhance your abilities in the other dimensions of economics and worldview! Viewing these themes as interconnected is an important realisation that is echoed throughout this toolkit. The upcoming activities, phases and tools are a holistic approach to eco-activism, encompassing a variety of methods and techniques.

As you journey deeper within, we can revisit the four dimensions templates as a reflective tool as well as a monitoring tool.

# FINDING COMMUNITY 2

If you want to make the most impact in your activism, consider how you can reach out to people with similar intentions, collaborate with them and establish a well-functioning team. Working within a community allows you to share the work, support each other, complement each other's skill sets, and approach complex problems from varying and unique perspectives.

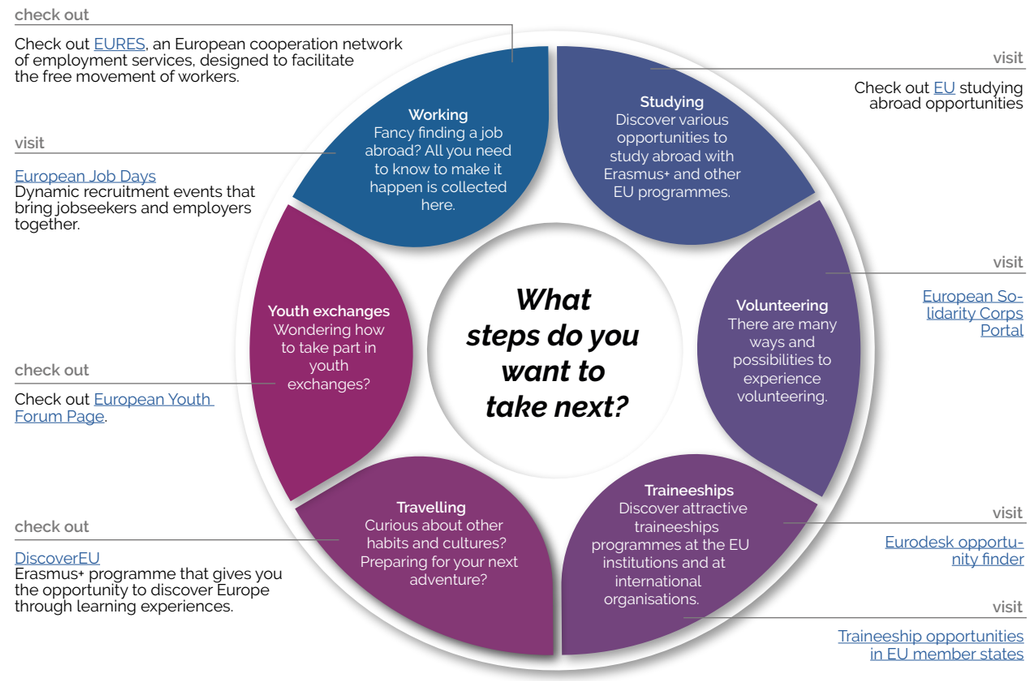
# Leaping out

For young people living in Europe, there are many opportunities available that can enhance your personal and professional development. For example, Erasmus programmes provide the chance to study abroad, learn new languages, and gain valuable cultural experiences. Erasmus also offers opportunities for internships and volunteering, which can help with skill-building and networking with professionals in activism fields.



Within Erasmus, we find Youth Participation activities which encourage young people to become involved in their local communities and engage in decision-making processes. Mobility programmes allow young people to travel to different parts of Europe and explore different cultures while participating in educational, cultural, or professional activities. These programmes are designed to be accessible and inclusive, so regardless of the background or interests, there is likely a programme that fits with your goals.

Erasmus is just one path to form connections though. You can use the diagram below to map out a pathway that makes sense for you:




Taking those first leaps of faith can be full of nervous energy, which can then transform into meaningful experiences and connections. Here are some words from participants of the Erasmus+ project that created this toolkit:

> *"I have realised that I am not alone with my problems, that we are not alone. I have learned about my own well-being and how to look after it. Now I know that it's important to have space for thinking and generally to have space just for yourself."*
> ***Sara Slaninova***

> *"Building a sense of community and working collaboratively with others in this project allowed the development of the toolkit to flourish. Throughout this project there was a consistent ability of participants to build strong relationships with each other which made a true positive impact on how the toolkit turned out. In this project I had the opportunity to gain so many new perspectives from so many inspiring individuals which I will forever be grateful for."*
> ***Matthew Murray***

> *"The event was a new and eye-opening experience for me. I have never before met a group of strangers and have been able get so close to them in such a short amount of time. To have such deep and meaningful conversations with people from other countries really had me coming away with a new mindset. I had a wonderful time and could not recommend getting involved with an Erasmus project enough."*
> ***John Issacs***

# Plant a tree

Planting a tree is akin to seeding the future we want for our planet. Rich learning opportunities can arise from the planting processes or even from simply reflecting on this idea.

At this moment, you are invited to reflect on your own soil and other important elements of your journey. You can do this alone, but this is a great first activity for a group to embark on.

You can choose to either physically plant a tree or take your notebook and write about the following reflections.

Before you plant a tree, it is important to consider 5 aspects:

SUNLIGHT: Does the location have enough sunlight?

WATER: Enough water?

SOIL: Is the soil fertile?

SPACE: Does it have enough space to grow?

PROTECTION: Is it protected?

Find the best location for your tree and before you plant it, make sure you have the tools needed to make the hole and loosen the soil, and water to give the tree a deep drink once it is planted. Once you are finished planting the tree, you can sit by it, and reflect upon the questions below. If you don't have a tree, find the best location for an imaginary tree and sit there while you reflect upon the following questions.

Like a tree, we can learn from these aspects and make a scan through our own conditions of flourishing. On a piece of paper, or in a group setting, reflect upon the following questions:

SUNLIGHT: Do you feel energised by your family, school, and life? Do you have motivations for the future?

WATER: Do you feel cared for by your social and natural environment? Have you been taught how to manage your emotions?

SOIL: Do you have enough resources to express your potential? Do you have all the knowledge needed to take action?

SPACE: Is there anything restraining or blocking you from expressing your full potential? How can you disrupt or remove these restrictions?

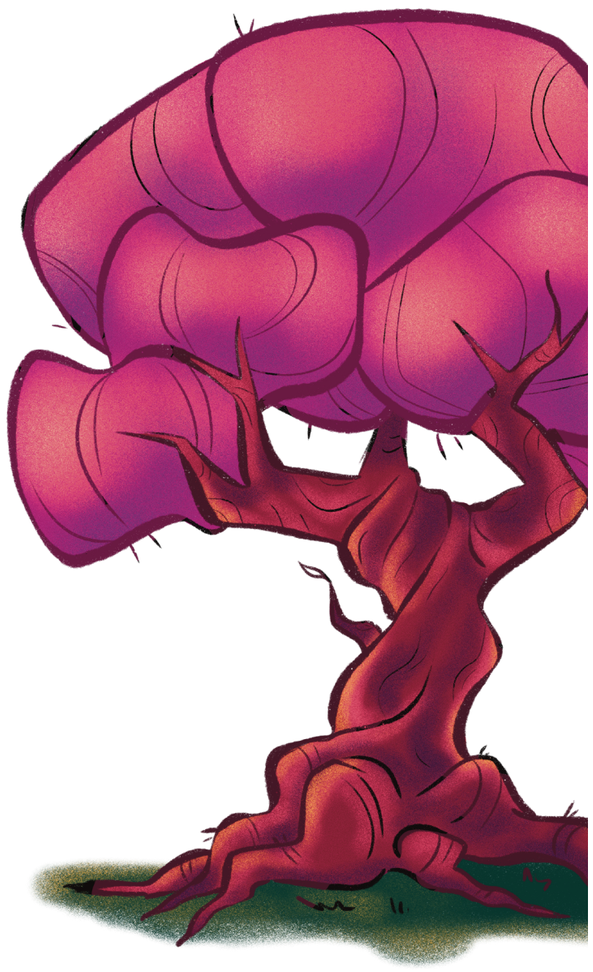
PROTECTION: Do you feel safe to be who you are? Do you feel that you can express who you are in the different aspects of your life?

It is very normal for these questions to reveal some concerns or shortcomings with your environment.

Identifying the issues is a step in the right direction. A natural digestion and understanding will evolve over the course of this toolkit journey, and in the end, directions will emerge. For now, confront any shortcomings with open arms and be proud of your ability to recognise them.

If you or your group were able to physically plant a tree, consider returning to this space frequently for meetings, as you nurture the growth of the tree and the growth of yourselves together in harmony.

*NOTE: This activity is highly recommended to do in a group setting, where you and other people can reflect together about your different conditions and experiences.*

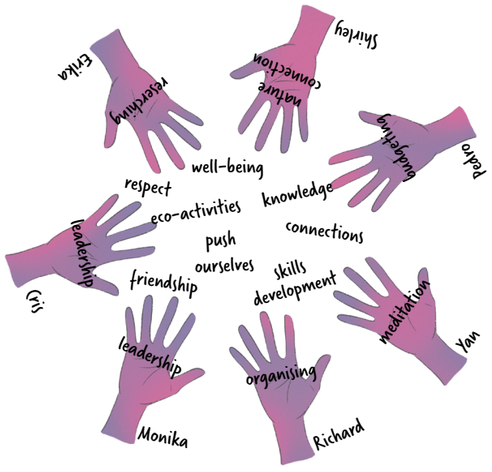




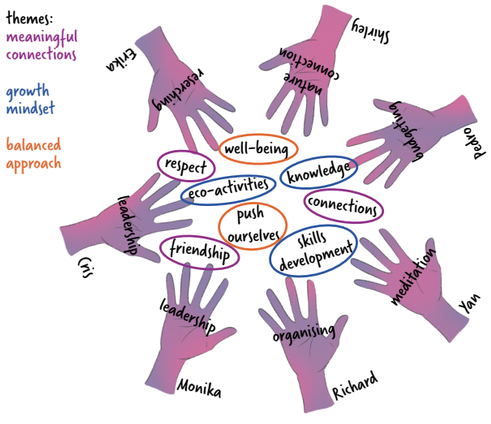
# Circle of hands

For this activity, and for the rest of the toolkit, where possible we encourage you to work with a group of like-minded people and form a collective.

Groups are made up of individuals. Those individuals all carry important voices, dreams, and desires. Creating a culture of openness and reciprocity right from the start of a partnership can increase the effectiveness of the collective. One way of creating that culture is to highlight the aspirations and expectations to keep you on track.




**Statement of group agreement:**
We commit to creating a respectful, supportive and safe environment within the group, so that we may work together as equals to advance our collective knowledge and skills in eco-activism.




**Step 1:** Gather the group in a circle around a large piece of paper and invite people to raise a pen in their right hand and lower their left hand onto the paper to form a circle of hands. Make sure that the hands are touching the other hands with the thumbs and pinky fingers. (if you're feeling nature-bound, you could try to do this outside on bare earth, using sticks and small pieces of paper)

**Step 2:** Each person takes the right hand with the pen and traces the hand of the person to their left. By the end of this step, there will be a circle of hands drawn on the paper, with fingers and thumbs touching, representing the collective.

**Step 3:** Each person should write their name on the wrist area of their hand, and write what they bring to the group (strengths, talents, offerings) inside the hand.

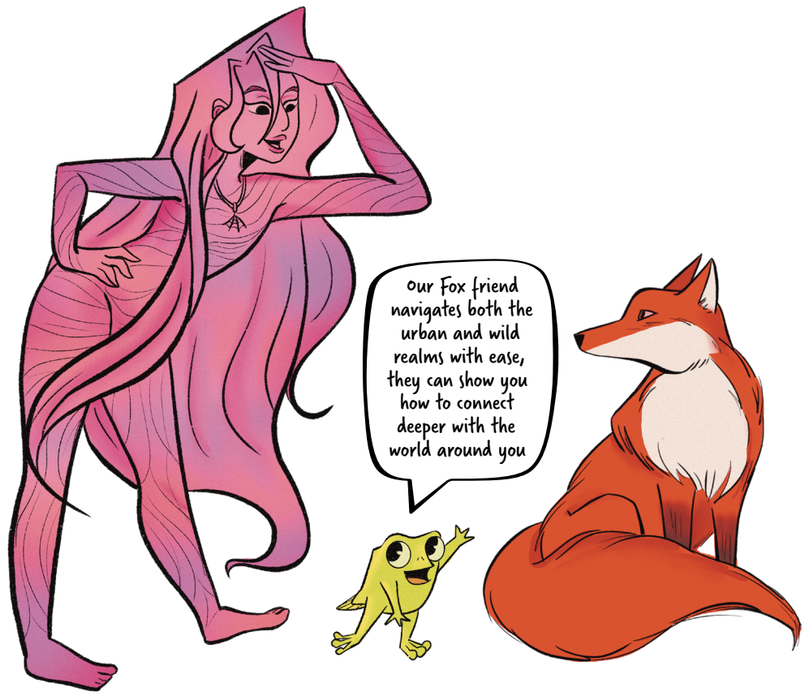
**Step 4:** Each person then writes what they want from the group in the centre of the circle, producing something similar to the example on the left.

**Step 5:** On the outside of the circle, each person can write what motivated or propelled them to be a part of this group.

**Step 6:** Collectively, seek out any themes or patterns that emerged from the circle. For example: *Is the group looking for support and connections? Can our skills help create the environment the group needs? Do some of the ideas complement each other well?*

**Step 7:** Make a note of the patterns and create a statement of group agreement. Where possible, this agreement should represent the circle of hands and their wishes. There will be opportunities to revisit the agreement as you begin your work, so for this stage, just try to focus on the core desires and energies needed by the collective.

Optional further exploration: You can go deeper on group agreements by exploring the group's needs and values when working together. Discuss how they resonate with everyone and write whatever feels essential to the group as your defining collective characteristics and agreements.




# Nature connection

If we are to be working in nature, for nature, as nature, we must learn to connect with nature in deep and meaningful ways, listening to its needs and rhythms. Becoming in tune with nature and setting aside structured connection time can guide our activism and maintain our well-being.

The modern world can sometimes hide nature connection opportunities from us. With some intentionality, the magic will reveal itself and be a source of both calm and inspiration. More than calm, nature is healing.

Nature-Based Therapy is a growing body of techniques including Forest Therapy, Ecotherapy, Nature Based Expressive Arts, Horticultural Therapy and Animal Assisted Therapy. Underpinning them all are three exciting ideas:

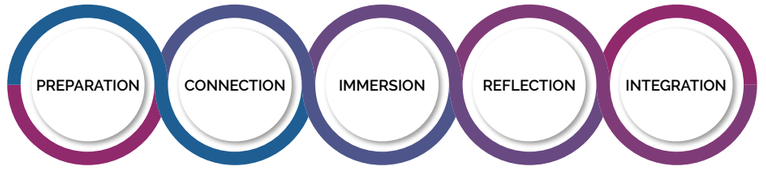
1. The **Biophilia Hypothesis** believes that we have an innate connection to nature and if we separate ourselves from it then psychological stress and disease can occur.

2. **Attention Restoration Theory** proposes that spending time in natural settings, can restore our attention and promote cognitive restoration from the exhaustion from technology and screens.

3. **Stress Reduction Theory** explains that natural environments reduce psychophysiological stress in the mind and body and promote relaxation.



These ideas show us a link between strong nature connectedness and positive well-being, personal development and self-awareness. To achieve these benefits, a **5 stage process model** can be followed. The 5 stage process model is a good example that anyone can use to deepen their relationship with nature.




The first stage is **Preparation**. This is both physical and mental. There are logistical preparations, thinking about what you need before going outdoors - clothing, maps, a journal, food and drink. But there are also more spiritual preparations like letting go of stresses, creating intentionality and thinking about your purpose behind experiencing natural spaces. Your spaces of connection can be your garden, your local park, your nearby woodland or even a wilderness area.

The second stage is **Connection**. *How do you connect with the landscape? How do you connect with yourself? How do you connect with others if you are in a group?* There are a number of nature based connection activities found in the appendix that can help you engage with these questions and strengthen your connection with nature.

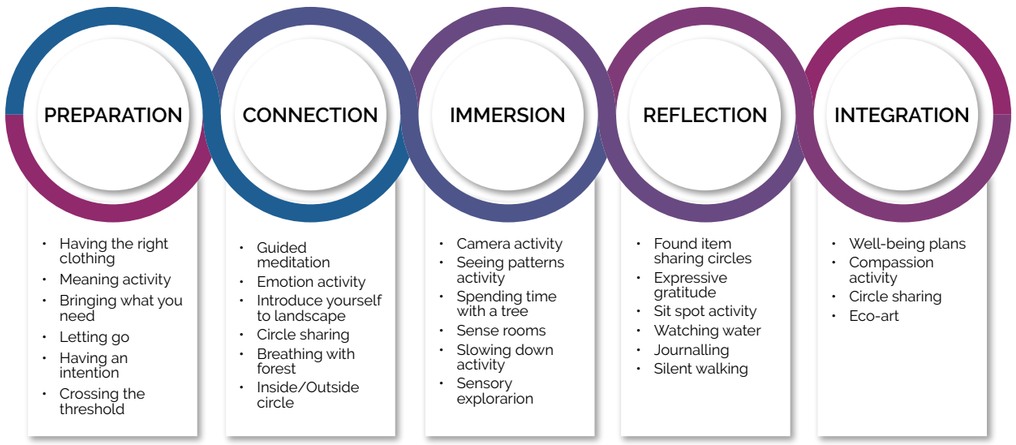
The third stage is **Immersion**. In order to be fully present in nature and obtain optimal benefits for your well-being you need to immerse your senses. Just noticing what you can see, what you can touch, what you can taste, what you can smell and what you can hear is a great way of getting out of your thinking mind and into your body.

The fourth stage is **Reflection**. Spending time in nature in silence and having space for contemplation and reflection can help you with your strong emotions and give you clarity on some issues in your life that you would like to improve. In the modern busy world there can be little space or time for reflection. As we are dealing with a number of complex environmental and social issues, slowing down and reflecting in nature can help shift our perspective, enhancing creativity and innovation.

The final stage is **Integration**. *How do you integrate any lessons or insights and learnings you have received from nature? These are gifts that we carry with us into our everyday lives to support us when times get tough. How can you continue to support the environment whilst also supporting your own well-being?*

Working alongside this process are different pathways developed by Ryan Lumber at the University of Derby. Moving beyond mere contact with nature, these different pathways help to develop our relationships with the natural world. That is our emotional attachment and beliefs about our inclusion within nature. The pathways include Beauty, Meaning, Emotion, Senses and Compassion. These aspects affect our being – how we experience the world, our emotional response, our attitudes, and behaviour towards nature. If you want to learn more about the pathways, you can explore the University of Derby's Nature Connection Handbook.

This diagram below shows some examples of nature connection activities that work together along the 5 step process model. They utilise the different pathways to awaken the senses, experience the beauty of nature, make meaning from connections and offer spaces to reflect on the emotions you have towards nature and practice gratitude. You can find the detailed explanation of these activities in the appendix.



# Community forest

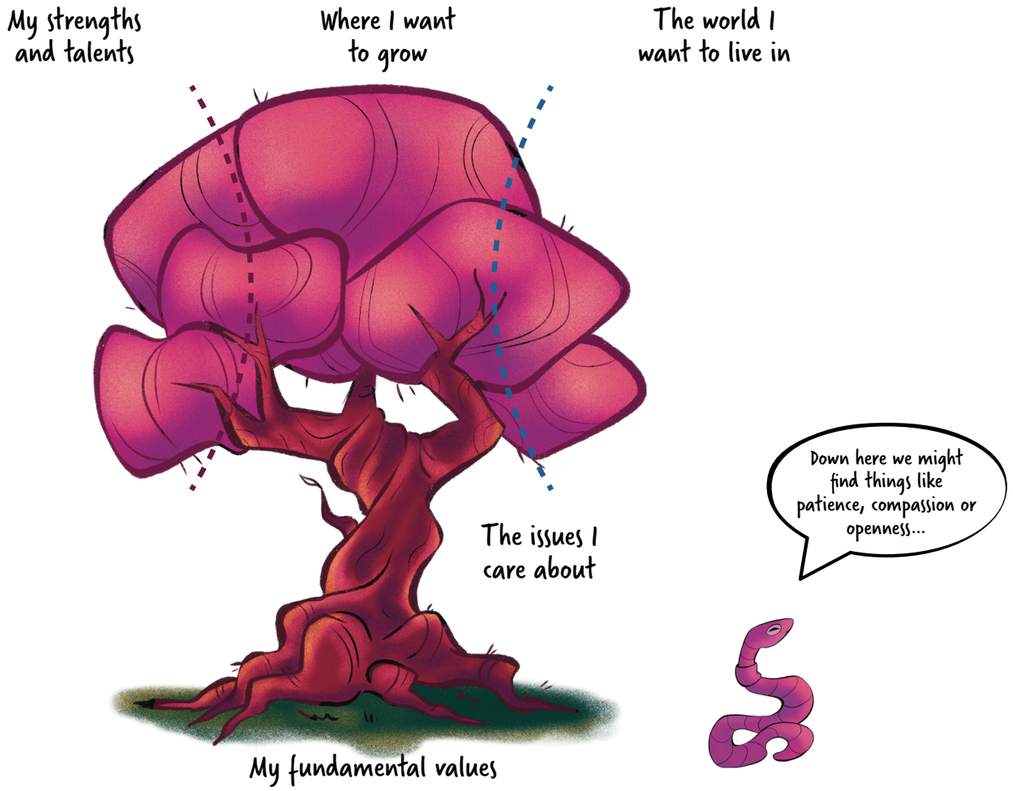
In folklore and in Druidry in Ireland, it is said the druids received knowledge from sacred oak trees and met in ancient woodland to share their wisdom. There exists insight shared among the trees. A complex connectivity of energy. Modern western science continues to confirm what some have always known – that trees communicate and collaborate collectively.

A collective refers to a group that shares or is motivated by a common issue or interest. Collectives work together to achieve a common objective, yet individuals within the group may have different strengths, values, or approaches. An indigenous Akan proverb helps us understand...

*The family is like the forest: if you are outside, it is dense; if you are inside, you see that each tree has its own position.*

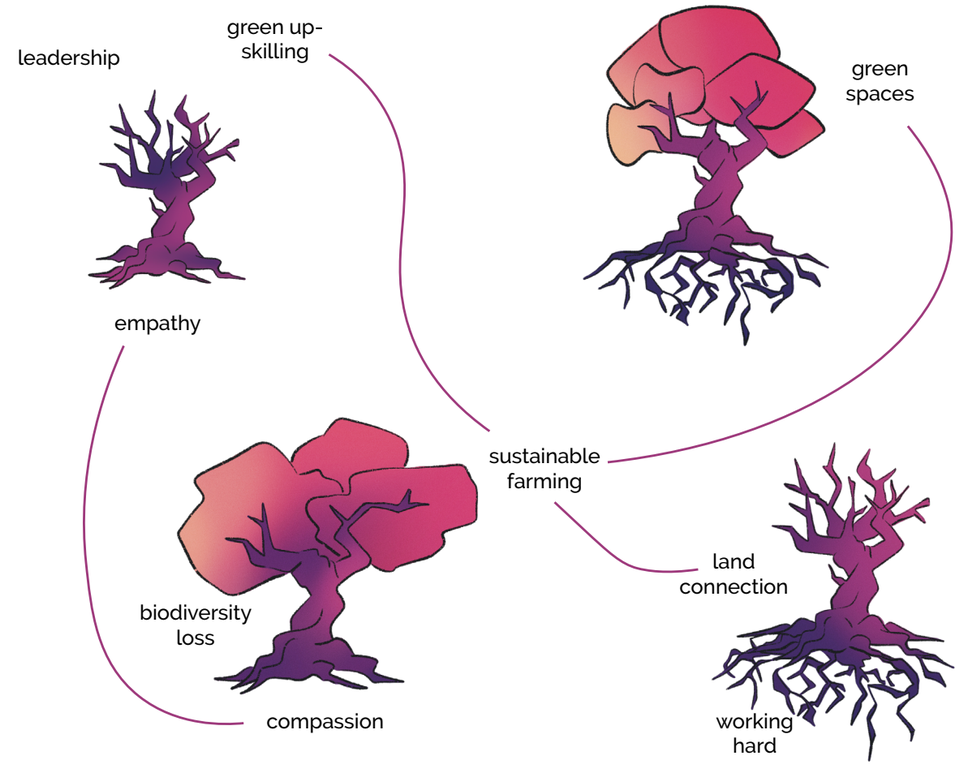
Who you choose to work with matters, yet your understanding of your collective purpose matters even more. When working within a collective, it can be useful to explore the values held by its members to recognise each tree's position in the forest. This can help shine a light on collaboration and learning opportunities. We can call these overlaps synergies. These synergies can be mapped using the imagery of trees in a forest. It is possible to complete the first part of this activity as an individual, but ideally you will want to do this in a group setting.

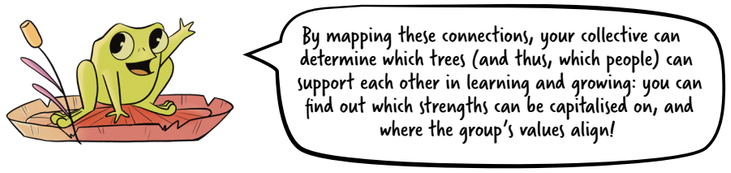
**Step 1:** Each member of your collective can draw a complete tree with roots, a trunk, some branches, and some leaves. On the root system, write your fundamental values. Think about what unwritten rules you live by; think about what you stand for; consider the qualities others admire in you. On the trunk, consider the environmental issues that you care about. Think both locally and globally. Finally, divide your branches and leaves into three sections to map out your personal strengths, areas for growth, and aspirations for the future.






**Step 2:** After the people in your community have created a tree, you can begin to map the synergies by creating a collective forest. To do this, you simply place your trees on the ground and use what you have around you (sticks, pencils, string) to point out and form connections between similar ideas. Each tree in your collective forest will be different, as everyone brings their worldviews to the community. The purple lines below illustrate examples of synergies...



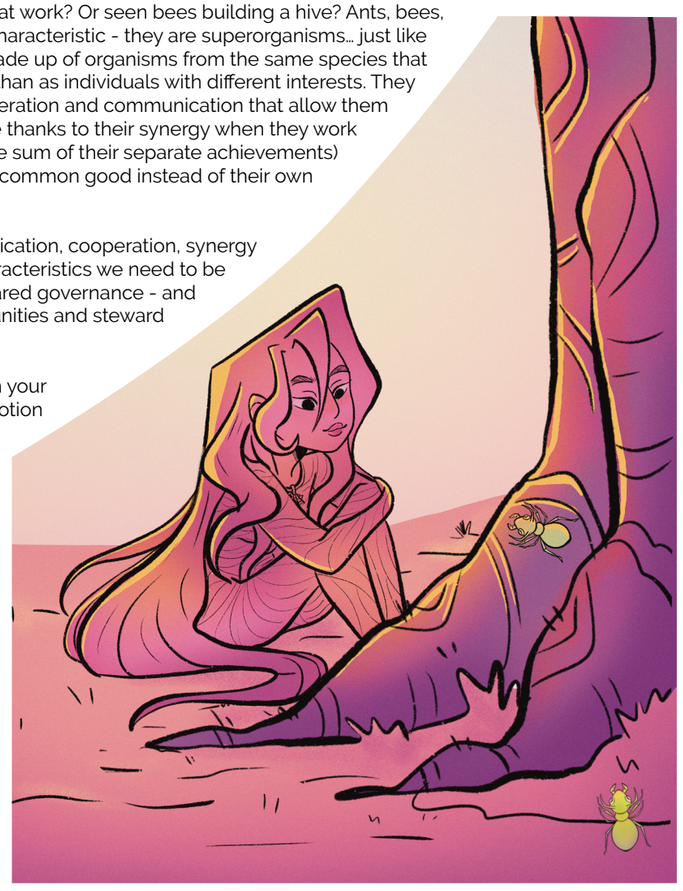

**Step 3:** After the mapping phase, facilitate a group discussion on the trends and synergies found in your forest. In addition to the connections and similarities detected, differences can be mapped between the trees in the forest. These differences are called outliers, and they can help create transparency around various approaches or ideologies, helping the group respond to conflicts or utilise a unique ability. Connecting the values of your group can help establish a stronger collective identity and develop a better understanding of your community.

**Step 4:** Using some discussion time, your collective can synthesise the main ideas, the shared values, and the synergies. Creating one final tree representing your forest can be a nice way to close this activity, noting the keywords or themes that your collective resonates with. This final tree can be reflected upon at later stages to ensure your eco-activism is grounded in the group's values.

This activity can be done with the trees out in your environment. You could even embody the trees yourselves, draw with a stick in the ground, or assemble images in your unique ways, sharing your synergies orally.

# Systems in motion

Have you ever watched a trail of ants at work? Or seen bees building a hive? Ants, bees, wasps, and termites share a unique characteristic - they are superorganisms... just like us, as humans! A superorganism is made up of organisms from the same species that operate as a collective whole, rather than as individuals with different interests. They do this through unique forms of cooperation and communication that allow them to thrive as a species. They also thrive thanks to their synergy when they work (the combined result is better than the sum of their separate achievements) and their altruism (thinking about the common good instead of their own individual interests).



As a human superorganism, communication, cooperation, synergy and altruism are some of the key characteristics we need to be able to make decisions together - shared governance - and also to be able to care for our communities and steward the planet.

In order to understand this better with your group, you can practise Systems in Motion together.

**PURPOSE:** This activity helps introduce some characteristics of systems dynamics, or how systems work, through an experiential exercise.

Before you do this exercise, make sure you have access to a clearing in a forest or in a park, or if you are indoors, a room without chairs or tables. You might find a notebook or a whiteboard helpful to note down the observations and ideas that people share during the activity.

KEY TERMS:
**System:** 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, the material needed to run the school. Other examples of a system include a forest, a country, and even the planet itself.
**Nested System:** A nested system is a system within a system within a system. Like a person who is a part of an organisation that is part of a community structure which is part of a region which is part of the planet.

**INSTRUCTIONS AT THE BEGINNING:** As the facilitator of the following two activities, explain the purpose of the activity and deliver a couple instructions first.
No Talking: In the activities, no talking is allowed, but other forms of expression are permitted.
Clapping signals: When you clap your hands once, everyone starts walking and if you clap your hands once again, they will have to walk faster or slower depending on the instruction you say. When you clap your hands twice, everyone must stop as quickly as they can.
Defined Space: If you are outside, agree with your colleagues what the limits of the space for this activity are (more or less the size of a large classroom). If you are indoors, the limit will be the walls of the room.



## ACTIVITY 1 - SWARMING

**Step 1:** Invite the group to move around the space in constant motion, filling in gaps so that everyone is the same distance from each other while they walk. To get them started, clap your hands once while saying "Go!".

**Step 2:** Once they have a good rhythm, clap your hands once again while saying "Faster!". You can repeat this a few times until they are practically running, and then clap them to go "Slower" until you clap twice to stop the activity.

**Step 3:** Ask the participants if they found anything challenging or anything easy about the activity, and collect the answers on a sheet of paper or visibly on a whiteboard. Then ask them if they saw people doing things in common (patterns of behaviour). If no one remarks about communication, cooperation, synergy or altruism, ask the group if they think they demonstrated any of these superorganism skills and if so, how. For example, if the group has started moving like a whirlpool, this could serve as an example of "collective intelligence" or "swarm intelligence", like a flock of sparrows in flight.

## ACTIVITY 2 - ORDER AND CHAOS

**Step 1:** The second part involves adding "rules" to help, or hinder, how the group coordinates and communicates amongst itself, as a "superorganism". Invite the group to move about the space like the first exercise, clapping once to get them going.

**Step 2:** While they are walking, have them think of the name of one person in the group, but without looking at them or saying their name out loud. While they are still walking ask them to position themselves at all times at a distance of one metre from the person they had named in their head.

**Step 3:** Once they seem to have a good rhythm, or even before, clap again asking them to go "Faster!" one or two times, and then have them go slower until you ask them to stop by clapping twice. It will likely take the group a minute or so to slow down to a full stop.

**Step 4:** Repeat this activity again, asking people to name a second person in their head. When the group begins moving, ask them to maintain the same distance (equidistance) between themselves and the two people they are tracking. Slowly speed up and then slow down the group, eventually to a full stop.

**Step 5:** Do a final round, asking people to name a third person in their head. When the group begins moving, ask them to maintain an equidistance between themselves and all three people they are tracking. Slowly speed up and then slow down the group, eventually to a full stop.

**Step 6:** Ask the group if they found anything challenging or anything easy about the different steps of the activity, and collect the answers on a sheet of paper or visibly on a whiteboard. Then ask them why they think it took a while to slow the system down to a full stop when you clapped your hands twice. This relates to the inertia in the system, a consequence of the energy left in the system that they generated, because of the "rules" they had to follow. Also, inquire as to which activity had the smoothest flow, and which was more chaotic and which one was more ordered. This indicates the "sweet spot" between order and chaos, also known as the "edge of chaos".

**Step 7:** For final reflection with your group, what does your sweet spot look like as a group? What do you need to be able to surf the edge of chaos together? Any "rules" that might help? At this point you can revisit the ***Circle of Hands*** activity and the group agreement that came out of it. Ask the group which of the agreements could serve to give just the right level of order so that the group can communicate and collaborate better. Ask the group if there are any other things that should be added to the group agreement that will help it thrive in balance.

In conclusion, order and chaos can both limit and enhance humans' ability to act like the superorganism we are. Too much order and we become burdened down by rules and bureaucracy, too much chaos and we lose direction and purpose. But if we are able to surf the edge of chaos, this is where complexity lives, the sweet spot between order and chaos. By harvesting what enriches our group from order and chaos, we are able to express our potential as a superorganism, and become capable of thriving in balance with nature.

# Shared governance

Governance is the process of making decisions and upholding the decisions made. There are many governance structures that exist in the world today, although some of these structures help humans cooperate and communicate better than other structures do.

It can be useful to first think about what your collective is trying to accomplish. Your group is working within the context of a wider system. Eventually, you will come up with a project or two that can make an impact in the ecological space (maybe you have one already!). Your project will play a role in a wider purpose. Even if you don't have your project idea yet,  you can do this next activity by imagining what role you would like your potential projects to play.

## ACTIVITY 1 - OUR NESTED PURPOSE

**Step 1:** Draw very large concentric circles on the floor with string or masking tape, then invite the group to reflect on their group's purpose as well as their unique roles in the system that is their group or project.

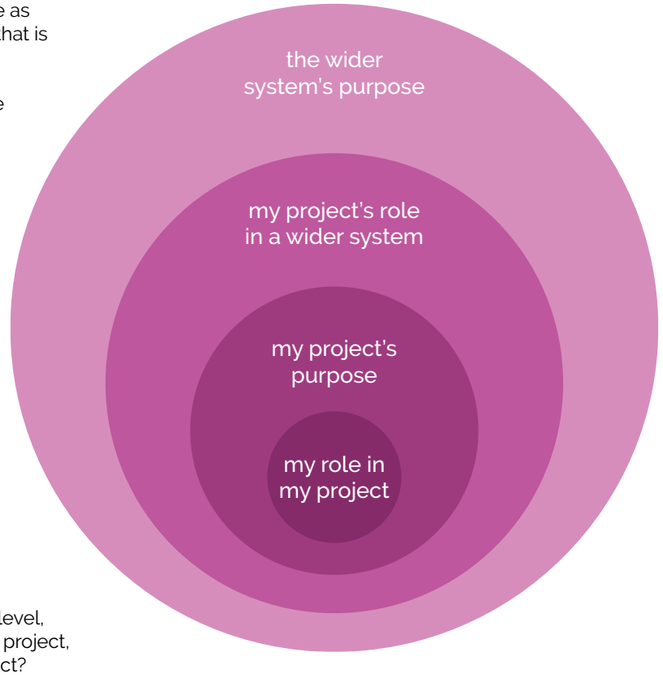
**Step 2:** First, have everyone stand in the outer circle and ask yourselves what is the wider system. Is it the community? The region? What is its purpose or reason for being? Note these down on a whiteboard for everyone to see or in a notebook.

**Step 3:** Next, have the group move into the next circle and ask yourselves what is your project's role in service of the wider system. Note down the responses and have the group move into the next circle.

**Step 4:** Ask yourselves, given this role, how would you define the purpose and objectives of your eco-activism project? Note these down and have the group move into the most inner circle.

**Step 5:** Ask yourselves, at an individual level, given the purpose and objectives of the project, what is your/my unique role in the project?

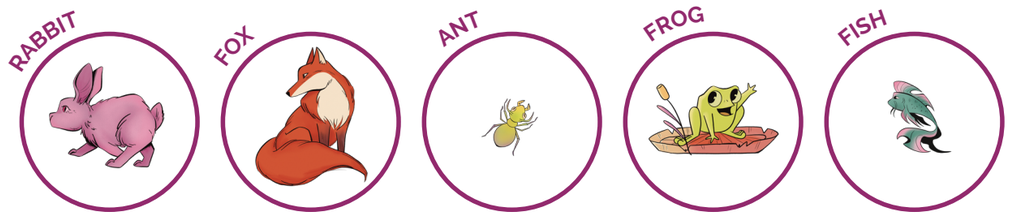
**NESTED ROLE/ PURPOSE MODEL**




## ACTIVITY 2 - ANIMAL ROLES

The nested system of role and purpose that you just engaged with might bring up the idea that different group members have unique ideas of what their roles could be. You may also find that the ***Community Forest*** activity highlighted some useful skill sets which can inform the roles that group members might embody.

Even if your group is small, you will probably need a range of roles in order to be able to design, decide, co-create and deliver your actions as a group. These roles could be more or less static, although some groups will prefer to rotate the different roles at different times. While you are deciding the roles that you need, think about people's strengths. To keep them memorable, you can use a grid template and animal imagery to record the roles and responsibilities of each member of the group. You can decide together which roles make sense and what might be needed. Don't be afraid to revisit them as your project activities begin to unfold, as the needs of your group and the context might change. To start, you can consider the following roles:




**RABBIT:** *an emotional support figure hopping around where needed*
Having this role ensures the group values and prioritises their collective well-being. This person is usually compassionate, empathetic, a good listener, and someone very approachable. Group members can turn to this person in times of need, to raise sensitive concerns, or to focus on their well-being. This person can also encourage the group to reflect after activities, lead discussions and assist the group in finding time to relax and enjoy the process of living!

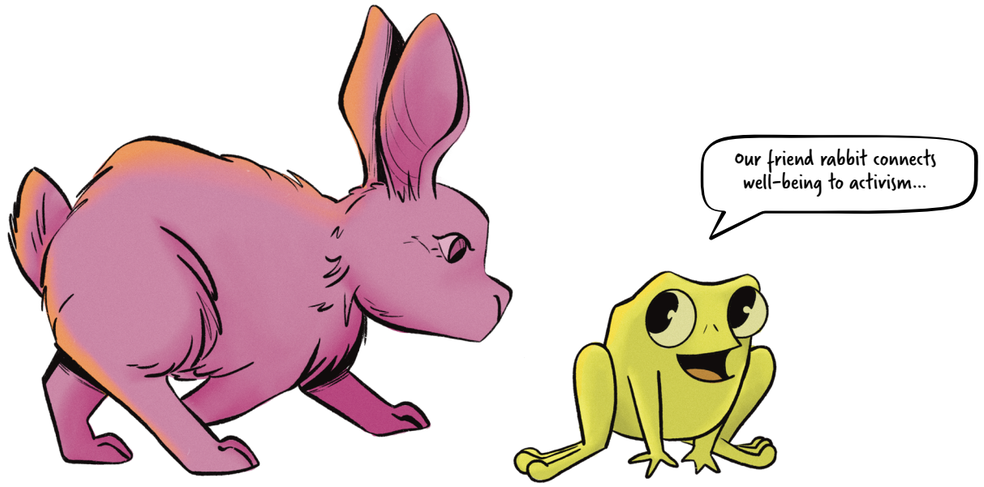
**FOX:** *a nature connection figure bridging environments*
Creating this role will remind your group to stay grounded and connected to your landscape and work in harmony with it. While we operate in societies, this person reminds us where we come from and helps us navigate the natural environment. This person can break up sessions with some outdoor time, incorporating nature integration into the work of the collective. This role is suited for someone who enjoys meditations, finds beauty all around them, or wants to further engage with the 5 step nature connection process model.

**ANT:** *a community gatherer keeping governance strong*
Having this role can keep the group more organised and collaborative. This person ensures the group is harnessing both order and chaos and reminds us about how decisions can be made and the importance of teamwork. This person is loyal to the group and must be attentive to the happenings around them. They ensure people are engaged, present, and together - physically and also emotionally as they collaborate. This person can also act as a timekeeper and help with other organisational things like creating agendas.

**FROG:** *a leaping energiser keeping everyone active*
Finding someone for this role can inject some energy into the group to start sessions or lift people up when things get mentally heavy. Many of the activities that groups will participate in can be intense, and they require a lot of mental focus. To make sure the group is well prepared, physical activity is also important. Energisers are like warm up games that build connectivity and keep the body aligned with the mind. This person might be someone energetic from your group who has a flair for creative games and mood lifters!

**FISH:** *a fast swimmer that collects ideas and navigates the working space with ease*
This role improves the efficiency of a group by assisting the lead on an activity. When you're leading a session, it can be so helpful to have someone nip around the space and collect or hand out resources, keep things in order, and help map out the knowledge being produced. Often a flipchart or some kind of collective notetaking or brainstorming will be happening during working sessions or meetings with your group. This person can take responsibility for organising the thoughts of the group and synthesising the core ideas. This person tends to be good at thinking in systems, someone who has a mind for logic and patterns, who listens carefully, and is a quick notetaker.

Different groups may need different roles. The idea is to share responsibilities and work together to keep sessions and meetings fun and engaging. There is an ecosystem to be found when all your roles synergise and support each other. Creating this type of governance structure can build on people's strengths, provide opportunities for personal growth and encourage leadership to rotate and emerge organically. You can try out having different people run certain working sessions and share the leadership duties more explicitly. Try to find roles that make sense for your group and think of ways they could be rotated or adapted over time.

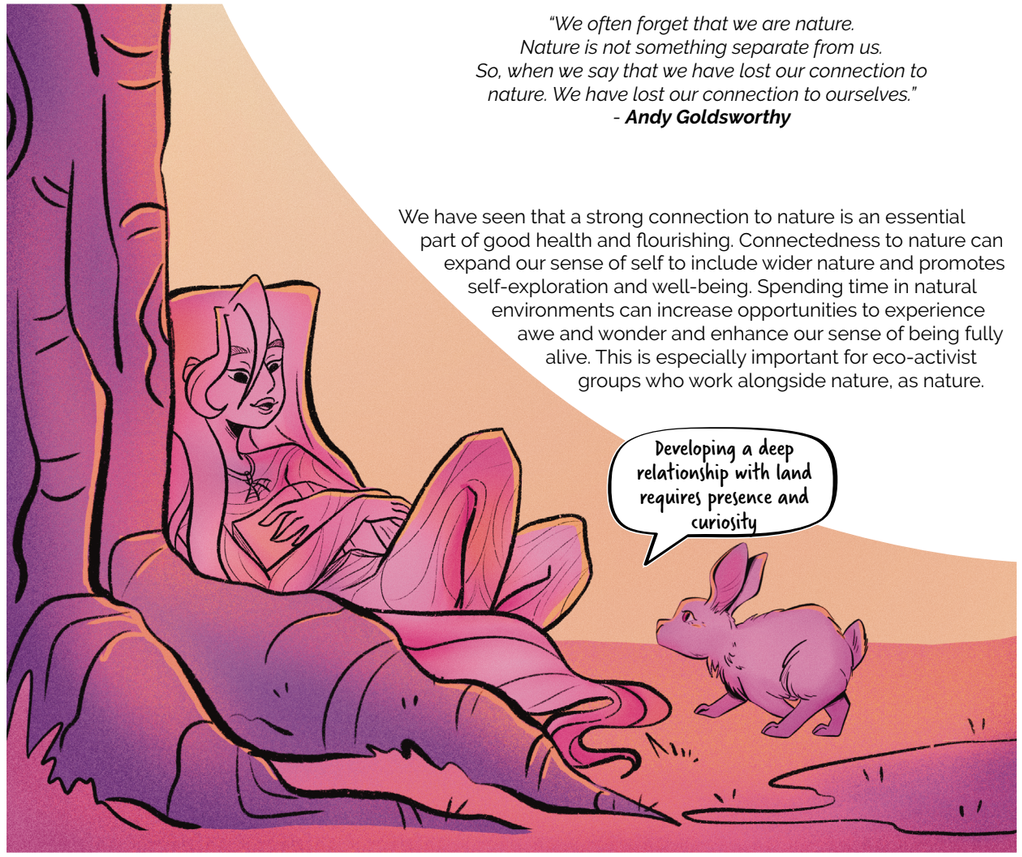





# Sit spots & well-being

*"We often forget that we are nature.*
*Nature is not something separate from us.*
*So, when we say that we have lost our connection to nature. We have lost our connection to ourselves."*
*- **Andy Goldsworthy***

We have seen that a strong connection to nature is an essential part of good health and flourishing. Connectedness to nature can expand our sense of self to include wider nature and promotes self-exploration and well-being. Spending time in natural environments can increase opportunities to experience awe and wonder and enhance our sense of being fully alive. This is especially important for eco-activist groups who work alongside nature, as nature.




With the Goldsworthy quote in mind, you can create a well-being plan to explore nature, your connection and relationship to it, and create strategies to draw on its strength to help you in times of need. You can even share your well-being plan with your group and learn from each other's strategies. Looking after your own health and well-being can prevent activism burnout – We can't be a support for nature if we can't support ourselves!

Firstly, you can explore your surroundings to find a **Sit Spot**. If possible, your sit spot should be outside. A sit spot is a place in nature that you feel comfortable in and that will help give you inspiration and support you to write your plan. Visit your sit spot in different seasons and different times of the day to really get to know your local area and all that inhabit it. To find your sit spot, just gently tune into your body and trust where your body wants to take you in nature. Give yourself the gift of space and silence, which can deepen your reflection.

Once you find the sit spot, connect with it; take your time to tune into the energy around, the animals and plants that you can connect with. The second invitation for this activity is that once you are acquainted with your spot, you use that space to reflect and journal.

Your journaling can include observations of what you are noticing in the natural world around you and what you are noticing in yourself in terms of your reactions and emotions. You can sketch what you see in nature, and how you feel. You can add colourful images from magazines or the internet of inspiration from nature. The possibilities are endless, be as creative as you like! You can include all the things you are grateful for in your journal and also three good things in nature you notice every day.

There are many well-being benefits to journaling. Sometimes when we experience overwhelming emotions, journaling can be a positive way to express ourselves. It can support us to manage our anxiety and reduce stress levels by getting clarity on what is bothering us. You don't have to worry about sharing it with anyone else or worry about spelling and grammar. It is just for you.

Another great resource if you want to enhance your journaling and nature connection is "Sit Spot and the Art of Inner Tracking" by R. Michael Trotta. This is a 30-day challenge to develop your relationship to self, earth, others, and the wisdom of the ancestors.

Now that you are all set on your sit spot, try to follow the steps below to create a well-being plan (you can do these steps on different occasions, it depends on what your goals are with them and how much time you have):

**Step 1:** Reflect on the following question:
*What does nature mean to you?*

Write your thoughts down to begin your plan. You may get some inspiration from looking around the landscape you are currently in. You could write some words, a poem, draw an image, or make a natural sculpture; please be as creative as you want!

**Step 2:** Relationships are a two-way process. It's important that we don't just take from nature all the health and well-being benefits, but we also give back. Spend a few minutes reflecting on the following:

Ask yourself:
*What do you mean to nature?*

**Step 3:** Now that you've reflected on these important moments, take some time to familiarise yourself with the benefits of nature exposure, noticing the inter-relationship between nature, health, and well-being. Reading and absorbing information at your sitting spot can be as valuable as writing and producing.

Ask yourself:
*How does spending time in and with nature improve your health and well-being?*

List what you currently do to support your well-being. What are the signs of stress impacting your well-being in relation to your thoughts, emotions, and behaviours? By working through the above, an understanding of your prior relationship with nature can reveal itself. This can set the foundation for developing a tailored well-being plan.

**Step 4:** Think about the 5 step process model and tools of nature-based techniques from the ***Nature Connection*** activity. These tools are aspects of the natural environment that enhance your well-being and give you pleasure. They can be based on different pathways, including beauty, meaning, compassion, emotion, and senses. They can also include nature--based activities indoors (nature meditations, nature imagery, nature sounds) and outdoors (green exercise, forest bathing, bird watching, nature hikes). Experiencing the sensory gifts from nature is deeply important; for example, walking on wet grass, the sound of a blackbird singing, the taste of fresh berries, the sight of a beautiful sunset, and the smell of the damp earth. You can think about and list your nature-based well-being tools, considering your contexts, what is around you locally, what you have access to, etc.

Ask yourself:
*How do I integrate some of these tools into my daily life at present? (Time of day, duration, frequency).*
*In relation to my nature-based well-being plan what are the barriers to implementation?*
- Internal (Psychological)
- External (Practical/Resources)

*How do I ensure that I maintain my nature-based well-being plan?*

Creating a safe and pleasurable space for relaxation and restoration in your home can be just as important as spending time outside. Particularly if you are forced to stay indoors for long periods of time. Experiencing a sense of "getting away" from everyday life can enhance stress recovery and increase vitality. This can be achieved no matter how small the space is.

Neuroaesthetics is a field of study that explores the impact aesthetics have on the brain and behaviour; how design can impact our health and well-being. Designers and architects are using certain colours, materials, light, and sound to create indoor spaces to engage the senses and enhance our well-being.

**Step 5:** Think about your own indoor spaces and how they might be adapted to help improve your well-being.

Ask yourself:
*How can I create my own nature and well-being sanctuary in my home or at our group meeting spaces?*

**Step 6:** Reflect on the process (with a group if you have one) of creating a well-being plan with the following prompts:

*What surprised me the most about creating this well-being plan?*
*What insights did I gain?*
*What will I do more to support my well-being?*

# MAPPING ACTION 3

# Learning to surf

If you are someone who worries about nature and the state of the world, it could be worth exploring your concerns before jumping into action. Being concerned about the climate is a perfectly normal thing, and this sensation is experienced by a great number of people. These feelings can sometimes include grief, anxiety, or guilt. These worries can feel deeply personal because ecological losses affect people's lives and thus their identities. Unpacking any internalised concerns or anxiety can help you take appropriate action, both in terms of environmental action and in terms of looking after your own mental health and well-being.

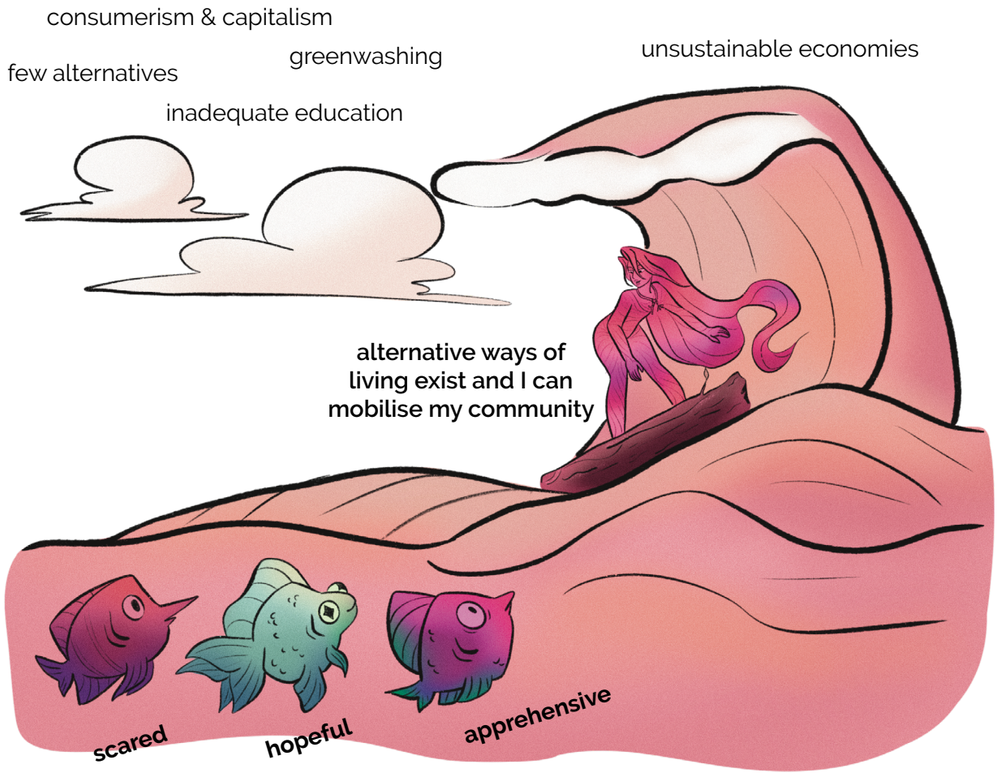
The accumulation of stress can sometimes overwhelm us, unless we develop and use strategies to be able to better understand the root causes of the stress and how to address them. Despite the very real ecological issues facing our planet, it is also true that there are numerous good things happening, and recognising this fact is an important step in exploring your concerns. You can map your own ideas and feelings using the imagery of a wave. This tool can help you discover your perceptions around various concerns, what you think causes them, how they make you feel, as well as how to respond. A range of stress management and emotional regulation techniques can be found in the appendix so make sure to check out some of these ideas if you need some support.

**Step 2:** Now that you have a wave, consider how it makes you feel. You can add feeling fish to your wave to visually represent your emotions. Add them underneath your wave. Try not to think of these fish as 'negative' or 'positive'. Just think about your wave and how it makes you feel. Some of the feelings you assign to these fish might be scary, but being honest with yourself will let you design more effective strategies to respond to the stresses and eco-concerns in your life. You can place fish at different depths as well, with the deeper fish correlating to deeper emotions.

**Step 3:** After your wave has its feeling fish, you can turn your attention to systems. Think about where your concern wave comes from, at a structural and systematic level. Examples of these systems could include: Economic or political systems, cultural or societal norms, education institutions, poor governance, lack of transparency, etc. Your wave comes from a vast ocean of systems, and the wind has formed your wave out of those complex systems. Consider where you believe your wave came from and add some wind paths to your diagram to represent these systems.

**Step 4:** Every wave needs a surfer, which represents you and your understanding of the nuances and transformation potential in the wave. If you do have concerns and stress related to the state of the environment, this is an indicator that you are very connected to nature/yourself. Surfers can help you acknowledge the silver linings, illuminate the opportunities for change or growth, or point out your own resilience or responsive strategies.

Putting all the above together, your diagram will help look at the bigger picture surrounding your own eco-concern.




Your wave represents the eco-concern, the fishes represent your emotions, the wind represents your perception of the causes, and the surfer represents the positives to be found within the concern.

Asking your collective to join you in doing this activity can lead to some interesting discussion and sharing opportunities. Other people's surfers can help shift your perspectives and potentially reprioritise different concerns. When it comes to anxieties, first accept your feelings and explore where they come from. Recognise any grief you are experiencing before responding to the eco-concern through action. This gives you the best chance for sustainable success and meaningful action.

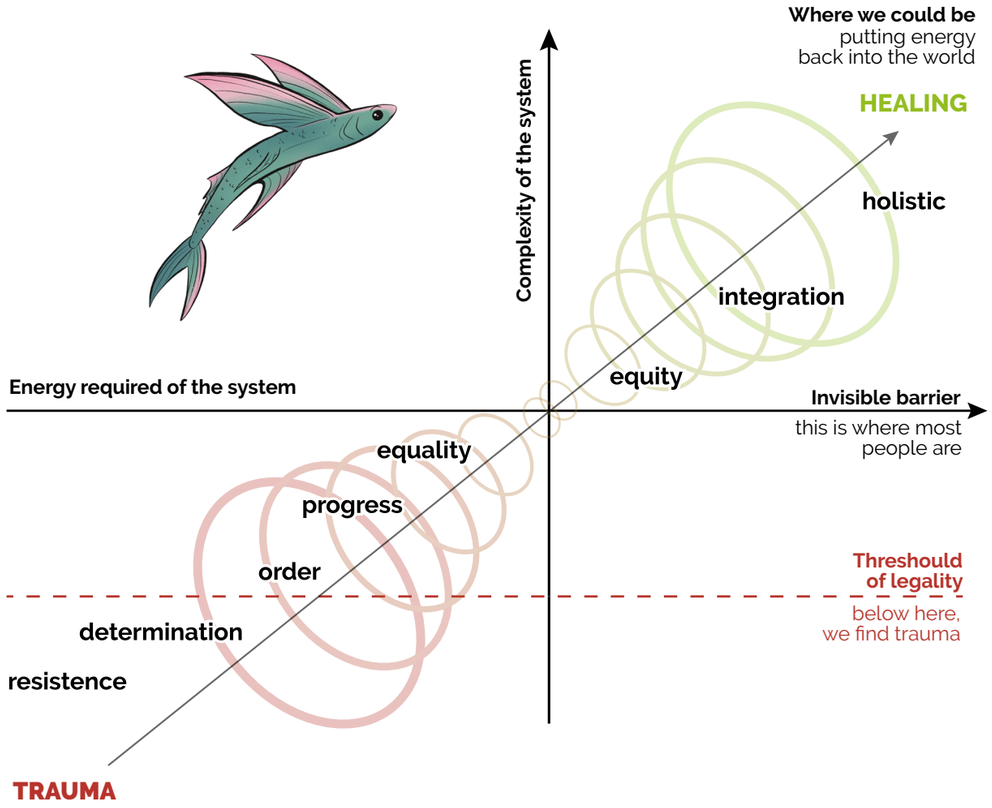
These diagrams can challenge assumptions about the state of the world and can help make sense of the thoughts and beliefs held by groups, and you may find your eco-concern becoming more productive than you could have ever imagined!

# Learning to fly

After you have reflected on strategies to surf your waves of concern or stress, you may be asking yourself what you can do to make a difference in your region, your community, and yourself. Some actions are more transformative than others, so it is important to see the bigger picture and understand the ways of thinking that underlie the actions that people do. These ways of thinking are also known as paradigms.

Take a look at the image below. This framework is called the **Regenerative Spiral** and it shows us different paradigms. These ways of thinking result in how we act in the world, how we treat nature, each other, and ourselves. Because this is a systemic framework, the "we" system could be at the individual level, group level, community level, national level, or even global level.






Bill Reed developed the framework of the ***Regenerative Spiral*** (subsequently adapted). Let's first explore the two axes.

The **horizontal axis** represents how much energy our actions require. If we move towards the ways of thinking to the left of the central point, the actions that we do require more energy than what they give back. The more to the left, the higher the cost to the system, as in natural resource depletion, community conflict, etc. If we move towards the right, the actions that we do generate increasingly more abundance to the system, as in more biodiversity, healthier community relations, etc.



The **vertical axis** represents how much complexity there is in the system, and by system we could refer to either an individual, a group, a community, a country, or even the planet. The further down you go from the central point, the less complex the system is. If you recall the exercise of ***Systems in Motion***, where you explored the **"Edge of Chaos"**, that is where complexity lives, in a fine balance between order and chaos. The paradigms that are found below the central point are increasingly less complex and, therefore more fragile and vulnerable to crisis. Above the half way point we find systems that are much more healthy. To get here can often be tricky. There is a kind of invisible barrier that society imposes. Imagine a glass ceiling... You can look through it, but when you run towards it you bump into it and it shoves you back down. The term 'glass ceiling' is used to refer to the unacknowledged barrier to advancement, and it usually disproportionately impacts women and members of minorities.

The more you go down and to the left in the model, the more trauma is happening in the group or community. The more you go up and to the right, the more you are able to heal individually and, most importantly, collectively.

Now, let's get into the different paradigms, starting from the ones lowest down, **below the Threshold of Legality**.

**Resistance** - ***Survive the crisis with as little impact as possible;***
Here, we find illegal or overtly violent practices, like war or human trafficking. But we also have to recognise the willpower of the people in being able to resist, because of or despite the violent context.

**Determination** - ***Get out of the critical situation as quickly as possible;***
Here, we continue to find illegal or overtly violent practises, like mining companies exploiting resources in the Global South. However, we are also seeing people whose way of thinking is very determined. In the mining example, that determination may be focused on either getting the most resources out of the earth or on fighting those who are illegally extracting these resources.

Once we **pass the Threshold of Legality**, we get to ways of thinking that are organised around some rules or laws.

**Order** - ***Minimum community consensus;***
Here is where the first rules and laws appear. Because there is still a big difference between rich and poor people, in the mining example from before, we see companies lobbying governments to make sure they can continue to make huge profits. This results in weak environmental rules and laws, even though other social or political laws might be very strict in order to prevent war from happening again. In this paradigm, we celebrate that order has been established and that people's way of thinking now has clear rules or values that help give structure.

**Progress** - ***Recover the ability to improve and evolve;***
Here, we see society recognise the collective demand to grow and develop in more harmony with others and with the environment. However, there is a lot of greenwashing going on here as we see people and companies pretending to care about the environment. We see clever advertising and the promotion of 'eco-sensitive products'; yet underlying these things are more of the same extractive processes. There are advancements from the Order paradigm that can be celebrated though. Even though they are not practising it, people are learning about sustainability, and it is often just a small step to take to move to the next paradigm of equality.

**Equality** - ***Guarantee individual needs;***
This way of thinking is also known as the sustainability paradigm. Here we find people, groups, and communities that recognise the fragility of the world and genuinely care about it. We take and we give equally. The focus is on making sure things don't get worse than they already are in sustaining the world as we know it, even though it is in rough shape. This way of thinking is often motivated by guilt for having caused so much ecological strife, which can paralyse our ability to think differently and to try out new things, for fear that they will make things worse.

Everything discussed so far takes energy out of the world – or, at best, maintains the situation we have. We are **reaching the Invisible Barrier**, but haven't gone through it yet. We ride the waves of concern with other like-minded people who share our worries about the state of the climate. We are trying to work in the realm of sustainability – yet there is a place beyond this... A bigger wave approaches!

This wave is the wave of regeneration, and we have to **cross the Invisible Barrier** to get there. This invisible barrier marks the difference between thinking individually to thinking collectively, the difference between egocentric thinking and ecocentric thinking. We are more aware of how interconnected we are, and this gives us more legitimacy as a collective and as a community. And we are more aware of how our actions can impact others and the environment, although we understand that our impact does not have to be negative, but can be wholly positive, regenerating the quality of our environment and our relationships with our community and the land. These ways of thinking are called regenerative paradigms.

**Equity -** ***Individual update within the community;***
The first regenerative paradigm is about restoring our environment and our communities to a state when they were more in balance. Restoration is central here, as is balance. This paradigm is also about understanding that we are not all the same, but rather we all have unique roles to play, diverse needs to meet, and singular strengths to share. This diversity requires that sometimes some people or other members of our environment receive more or less than others because of this uniqueness. An easy example of equity is when we see a cinema or theatre that has more toilets for women than it does for men.

**Integration -** ***Update within the community process;***
Once we understand the importance of diversity and have been able to restore the balance in our communities and environment, we can start thinking like a superorganism. Just like the different roles you find diverse species playing in an ecosystem, humans can take on different roles in our collectives, communities, and regions to make them thrive like a superorganism. Here we are also attentive to tensions and conflicts that have been left unresolved, and we are able to reconcile them. This requires being able to deeply listen to, understand and integrate all the voices involved in the conflict, including non-human ones, because each of these voices brings an ingredient needed for the root of the conflict to be resolved. Reconciliation, in fact, is another term for this paradigm, and is a key step in healing ourselves, our communities, and nature.

**Holistic –** ***Perception of community culture;***
This is perhaps the most scarce paradigm of all, as it is present in communities that have been able to restore (or maintain) the ecological balance of their environment and reconcile any conflict, land- and/or people-related. This paradigm is also known as the Regenerative paradigm, and is when humans are not just working alongside or with nature, but as nature itself (ourself). Here, every action we take contributes towards greater biodiversity as well as thriving communities.

This bigger wave of regeneration above the glass ceiling can seem daunting! It is not occupied by many folks, and the power of this wave is enormous, but that is why it is so exciting! Our friend Flying Fish has been up here for a while, pioneering a new way of viewing our relationship with the world. It can feel hard to jump onto this new wave, but if we can somehow break through, we can reach new heights in our activism.

You can explore the **Regenerative Spiral** framework with your collective in an experiential way to help you understand where you are and where you want to be.

**PREPARATION:** You will need 3 long ropes (if you are working outside) and/or masking tape to draw the framework on the ground or floor of a meeting room, first marking the two axes and then drawing the spiral on top with rope or tape. You will also need the titles of each of the paradigms as well as for the Threshold of Legality and the Invisible Barrier.

**Step 1:** After you have created the spiral model on the floor, invite group members to physically place themselves in the space at the point in the spiral which best represents them and their life.

**Step 2:** Encourage a dialogue and figure out why people placed themselves there. It could be that some discussion prompts others to move up or down, as unique perspectives on the problem can offer new insights. At this stage, it is important to honour the journey taken to reach where you are now. On a paper version of the Regenerative Spiral, you can note down where you are with a star. Beside the star, you can write down all the things you learned along the way that are now a part of how your group thinks and sees the world.

**Step 3:** Ask each other what ways of thinking you can shift or change to help you move one space up the spiral. On a paper version of the regenerative spiral, write down the ideas everyone is suggesting besides the paradigm level you want to be at. From here, you can continue the exercise, thinking about what might be needed to move up the other levels. You don't have to reach all the way to the Holistic paradigm level, but if you feel inspired, please do so!

Using this knowledge and framing of the world, we are now ready to deep dive into the particular problems facing our communities and design an action project that can help us move up the Regenerative Spiral.



# Learning to dive

There are many ways to carry out eco-activism. However, not all these ways will generate a significant change in improving our communities and environment. In fact, some actions or projects will invite you to sink all your energy into them, leaving you feeling burned out. Imagine going to pick up litter in your local river and then returning the next week to find that it is full of litter again? While the river needs to get cleaned, it would be normal to experience burnout after several weeks of carrying out the same task.

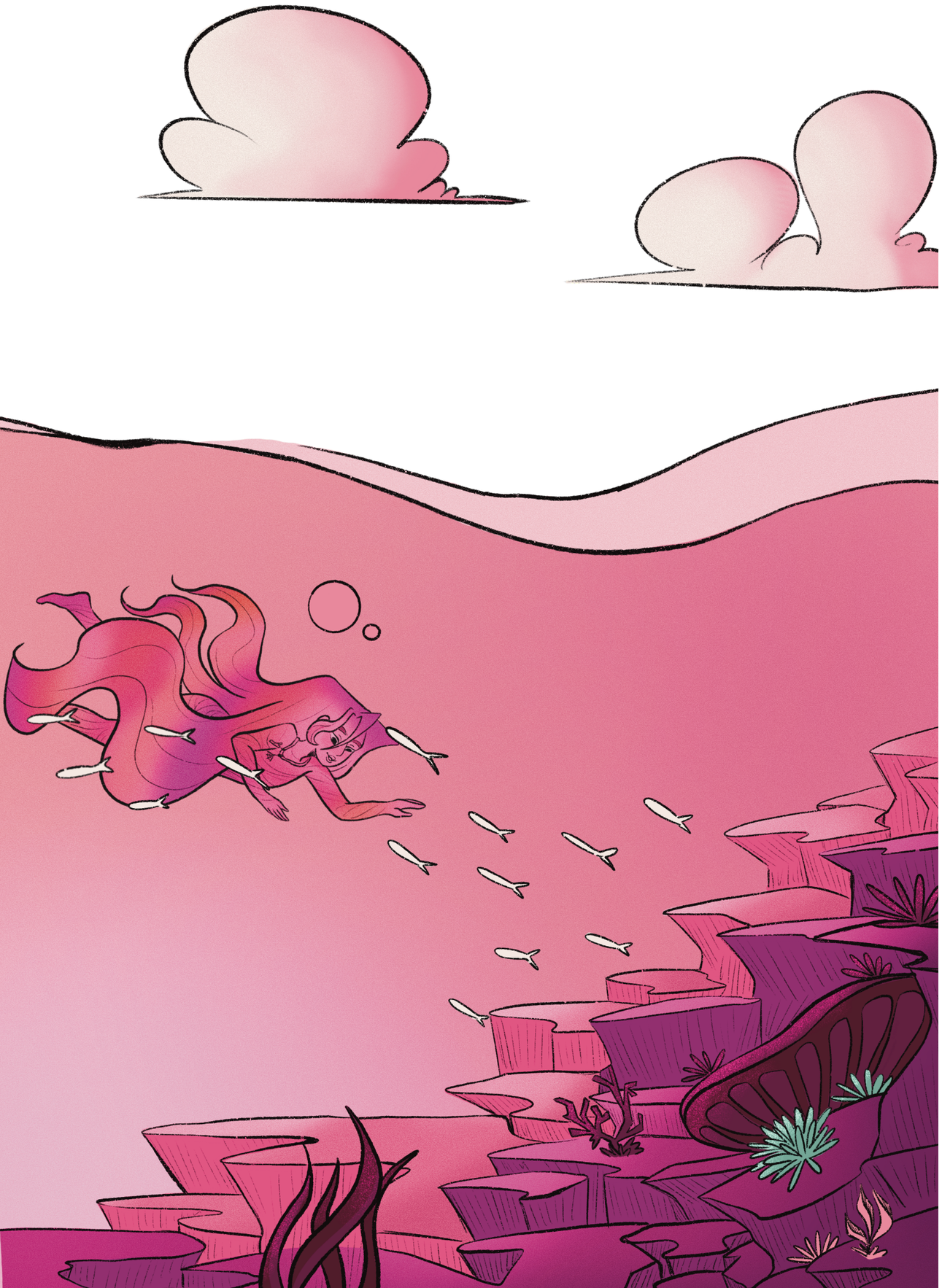
If you can investigate the reasons behind the litter ending up in the river, and work your way down the chain until you reach the root of the issue, perhaps you could stop the litter from arriving in the river in the first place.

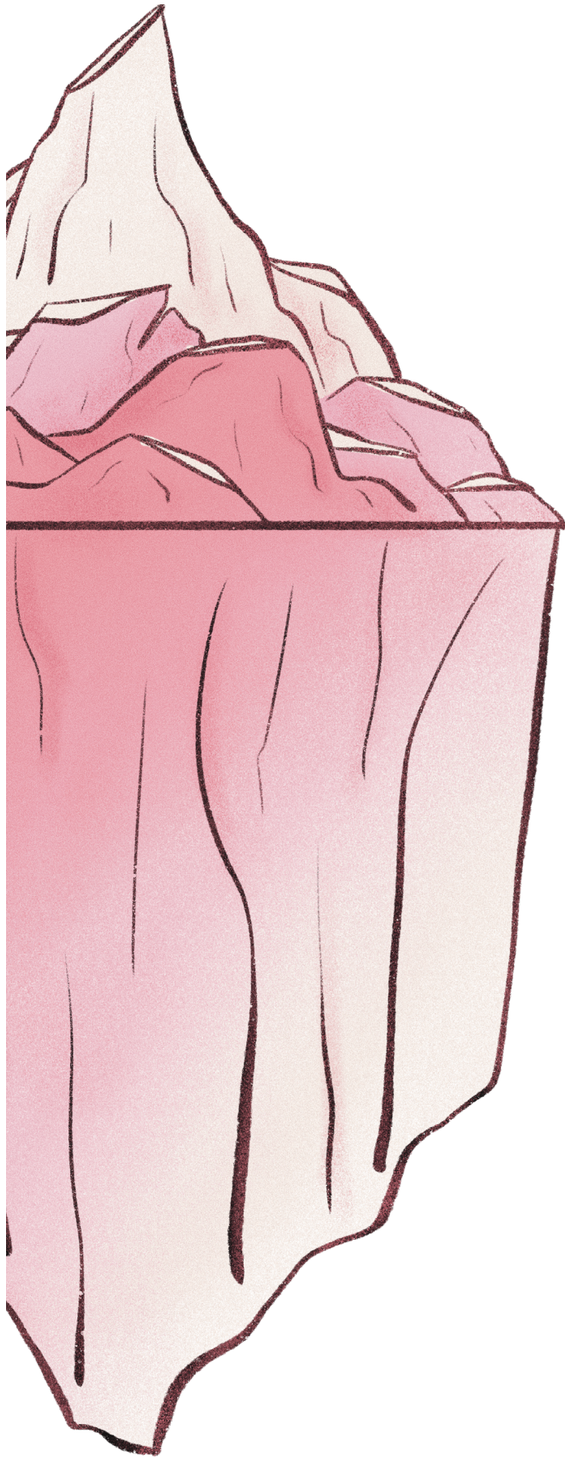
To find the best place to intervene in a system, or in a problem that you have detected, it is very strategic to identify possible leverage points. The concept of leverage points was originally developed by Donella Meadows in 1997 (Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System) and has revolutionised society's understanding of how social and ecological change happens. A leverage point is a place in a system where we can act to effect change, big or small. A LOW leverage point is when a small action causes a SMALL change in the system. A HIGH leverage point is when a small action causes a BIG change in the system. These high leverage points can speed up change processes.

One way to understand leverage points is by using the imagery of an iceberg…

Seeing the top of an iceberg only tells a part of the story. What we see above the surface is exactly that - surface level. Imagine pushing with all your might against the top of the iceberg. You might only move it a little bit. What if you were to push with that same force at the bottom? How far would the top of the iceberg move? Working at the bottom of the iceberg is a much more effective leverage point.

Using the **Iceberg Model** below, we can better systemically analyse the root causes of ecological and social issues in our communities. This is done by going through the 5 different levels, from top to bottom. To get a better understanding of the 5 levels, we will present a summary of what each level is about.





**Actions:** This is what we see at the surface level. Say for example, a local school that is struggling socially or ecologically.

**Behaviour & relationships**: Here we discuss the various interactions going on between people and spaces. It helps explain why we see the issues encountered at the surface level. We can look at the connections between the school teachers and other stakeholders. We can ask questions about the school's integration with the landscape.

**Structure**: Going deeper, we can explore the structures that create the conditions for the behaviour and relationships that we detected earlier. The local school is a part of a wider national structure directed by a Department of Education. This level also captures how we make decisions about the problem at hand, from the structure of the decision-making process itself to who is involved. It is important to note that this is the level where we can start identifying potential root problems, and the potential leverage points that can counter them.

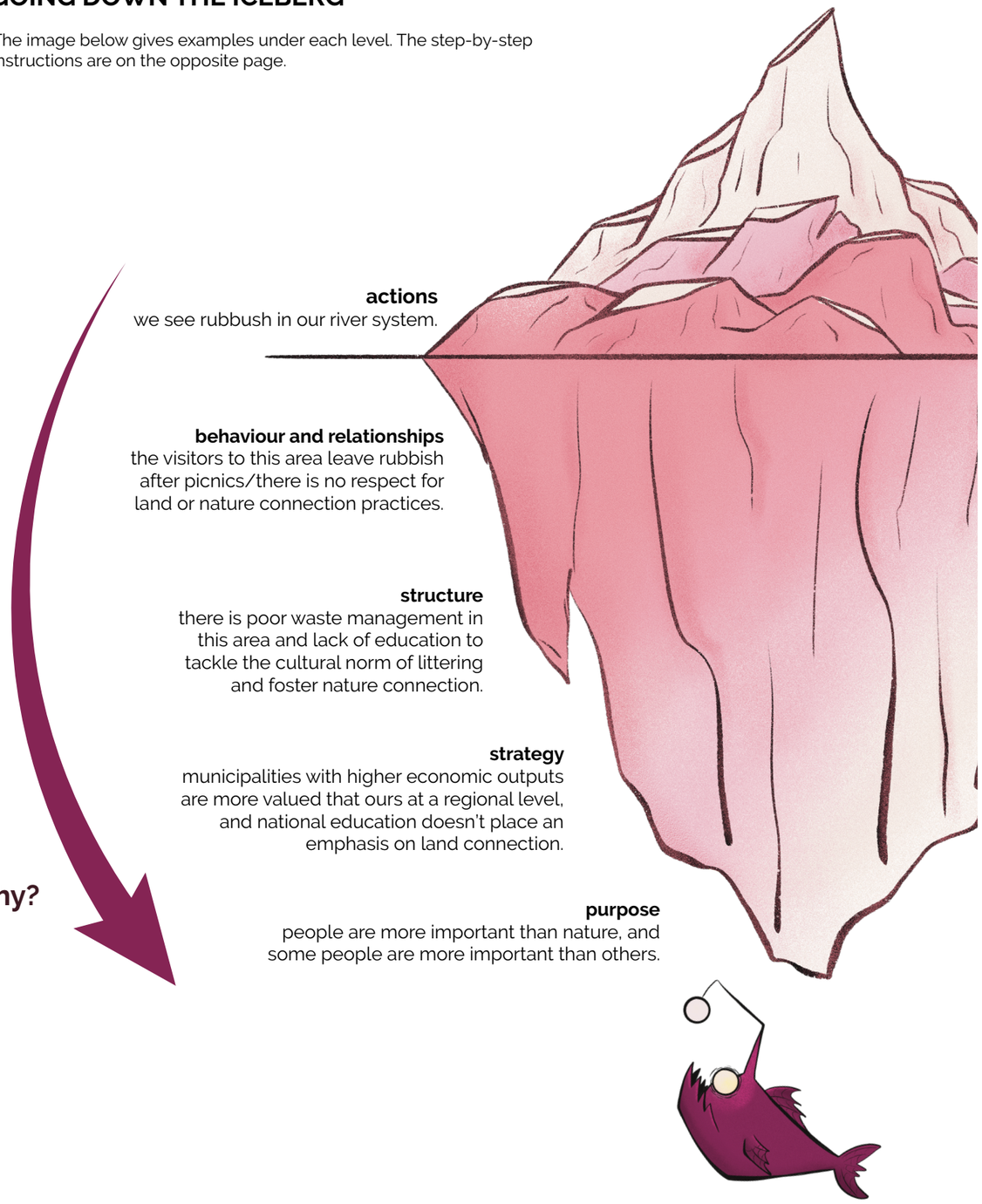
**Strategy:** The Department of Education was put in place as part of a broader strategy of the state. At this level of thinking, we explore why and how a particular set of Structures were established and analyse the underlying motivations. The patterns we see become understood as systemically connected issues, and here we detect deeper root causes and leverage points that can generate greater transformation.

**Purpose:** At the bottom of the model we have conversations about how we think about and treat ourselves, our communities, and nature. We are now at the Paradigm, or Worldview, level, which are the roots and seeds of our systems. The values and assumptions that people make about the world provide the foundations of our strategies, which result in the structures we have, which generate the behaviours we demonstrate, and which result in the actions we see. The ideology of the Department of Education provides the written or unwritten foundation of education policy. If we are able to make changes at this level, the ripple effect can be culturally significant to our communities and territories.

**SET UP:** For this activity, if you want to do it individually, you can use a copy of the Iceberg model on A4 paper plus a pen to take notes. Alternatively, if you are doing this collectively, you will need A4 paper with the names of each level on a different sheet of paper. You will also need rope if you are working outside or masking tape if you are working inside. To prepare the space, please draw a triangle on the ground with the rope or tape, and place the names of the levels in order from bottom to top. If you are a big group, post-its might come in handy, so that everyone can participate more freely.

## GOING DOWN THE ICEBERG

The image below gives examples under each level. The step-by-step instructions are on the opposite page.






**Step 1:** Once you have your framework ready, start at the **Actions level**.

Ask questions to the group:
*What do you see?*
*What do you want to change?*

For all the steps, note down all of the responses, ideally on post-its if you are a big group. If you see ones that relate to each other, group them or draw connecting lines between them.

**Step 2:** Once you have identified and grouped the actions you see, move to the **Behaviour and Relationships level**.

Ask the questions:
*Who is involved and how are they involved?*
*How do they relate to each other and nature?*

**Step 3:** Once you have identified and grouped the behaviours and relationships, move to the **Structure level**.

Ask the questions:
*What structures (or lack of structures) enable this to happen?* Think about institutions/associations/networks/physical infrastructure/cultural norms.
*How are decisions made?*

At this level you can start detecting the beginnings of the root problems and potential leverage points. See if you can name the grouped observations as this might help you identify these root causes and leverage points.

**Step 4:** Once you have identified and grouped the structures involved, move to the **Strategy level**.

Ask the questions:
*What strategies underpin these structures?* Think about political/economic/social policies and plans.
*Are there any gaps in these strategies?*
*Are there any unwritten strategies at play?*

See if you can name the grouped observations as this might help you identify these root causes and leverage points.

**Step 5:** Once you have identified and grouped the behaviours and relationships, move to the **Purpose level.**

Ask the questions:
*What ways of thinking underlie the strategies at play?*
*What other assumptions or worldviews are responsible for the problems that you noted above?*

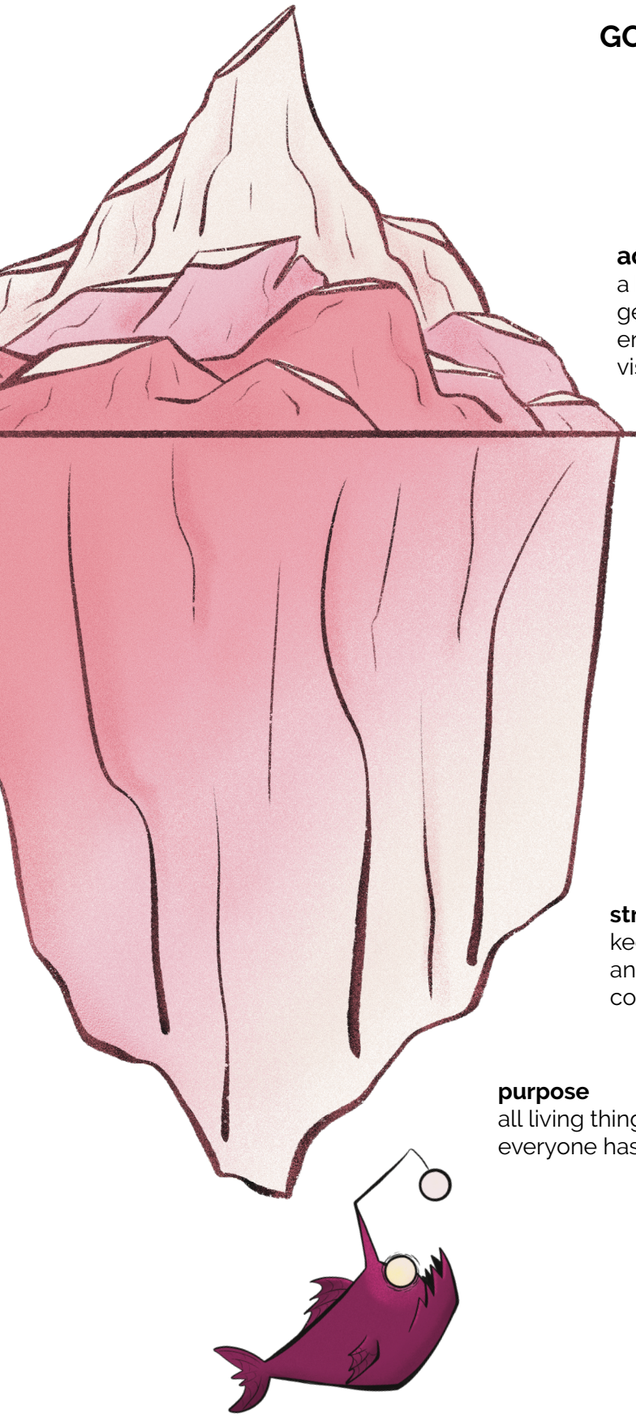
**The iceberg has much more to offer**. It is not intended to only help explore systemic problems. It also has applications to create solutions and responses to those problems. This process involves working your way from bottom to top, reversing the stages of exploration. It is valuable to start at the bottom and place yourselves into the framework.

By moving down first, you have likely discovered a purpose/paradigm/principles that have generated the problem you detected initially. But what about you? What about your collective? Here you have an opportunity to create your own purpose and strategy as a response and as a seed for the future you want to contribute towards. It can be helpful to link your purpose and strategy to the issue you have been exploring.

In River's case, she has been looking at litter and its impact on relationships and connections to nature. While moving down the iceberg, at the purpose level, River found that a fear-based mentality resulted in a separation of people and nature, with some individuals valuing themselves over others. Given an opportunity to design her own purpose to respond to this, River chooses a purpose and worldview that values all living things and advocates for healthy landscapes that are accessible to everyone and that are rich with interconnections.

When you do this exercise of going up the Iceberg, you will need the same materials as those you used to go down the Iceberg. We start from the bottom level of purpose and move our way up by asking questions like 'How?'

## GOING UP THE ICEBERG



**actions**
a healthy river system/an engaged community/new local environmental projects/more visitors who value preservation.

**How?**

**behaviour and relationships**
interactions between visitors and community education/respect for the land and integration with it/use of bins.

**structute**
establish community bins/create outdoor gathering space for peer education/6 week peer-led nature connection sessions.

**strategy**
keep local environment litter free/encourage and build skills in nature connection/promote community dialogue and reflection.

**purpose**
all living things have value and we believe everyone has right to nature connection.



**Step 1:** Once you have your framework ready, start at the **Purpose level**.

Ask questions to the group:
*What is your worldview?*
*Fundamentally, what is your purpose and what are your principles?*

Note down all of the responses, ideally on post-its if you are a big group. If you see ones that relate to each other, you can group them. Together with the rest of the group, craft a purpose statement that reflects the core essence of what everyone is saying and make sure there is a strong agreement about this. If you feel that it would be helpful, you can also name three or four core principles that are fundamental to your group.

**Step 2:** Now you have your own purpose and worldview, you can work your way back up the levels of the iceberg, designing your own **Strategies and Structures** by asking:

*What strategies can you put in place that will make your purpose a reality?*

If you look at the results of the Iceberg going down, there may be some leverage points that will help you identify strategies that accelerate the change you want to see.

**Step 3:** Next, identify if there are any **Structures** you need to help your group enact the **Strategies** you have proposed.

You can ask yourselves:
*How will your group organise itself?*
*How will you communicate with each other, make decisions and coordinate actions?*

Write down the responses.

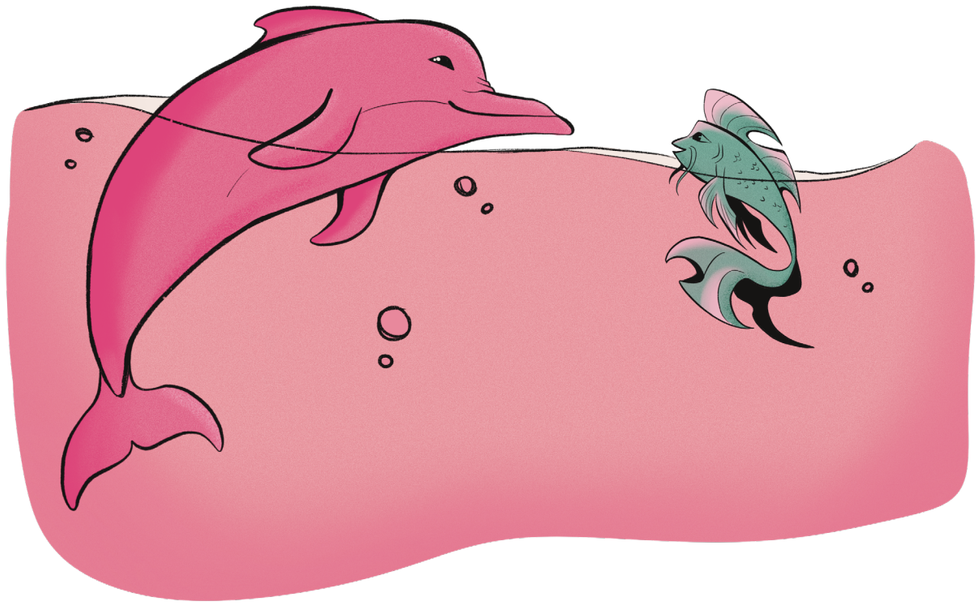
**Step 4:** Next, reflect collectively about what **Behaviours** you want to nurture and promote in your group, by asking:

*How do you want to relate to each other?*
*How do you want to relate with the community and the land?*

**Step 5:** Lastly, identify the **Actions** that you want to do as a group, by asking:

*What changes do you want to see happen?*
*What can you do as a collective to make this a reality?*

**There is no right or wrong way to use the iceberg**. Instead, it is meant to serve as a thinking tool, helping us dive deep into the systemic and structural causes of what we see around us. Doing this exercise can reveal a hidden purpose behind those systems. This allows us to form our own alternative worldviews and purpose. We then create strategies and structures that are reflective of our worldview, resulting in activism that is deeply connected to purpose. This tends to result in actions that are more responsive to the root causes and more adaptive to changing contexts. These actions can also be quite synergistic, with reinforcing impacts.

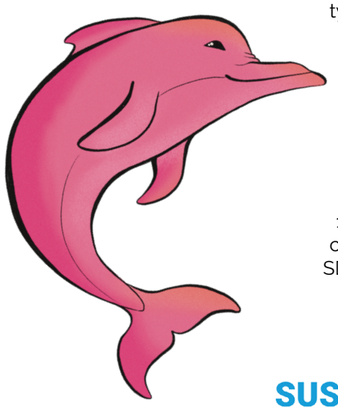


# Learning global

Some things in this world are simple, like making a cup of tea. However, if we think about all the things needed to make that cup of tea, this supposedly simple act can suddenly reveal quite a number of complexities. You first need someone to grow the herbs, to harvest, to wholesale, to ship them around the world… You also need a vendor, then you need to visit a store, you need a kettle or another type of heat source, you need a mug, some water… And where does that water come from? You'll need a job that earns money to pay for the water supply and the mug… And so on…

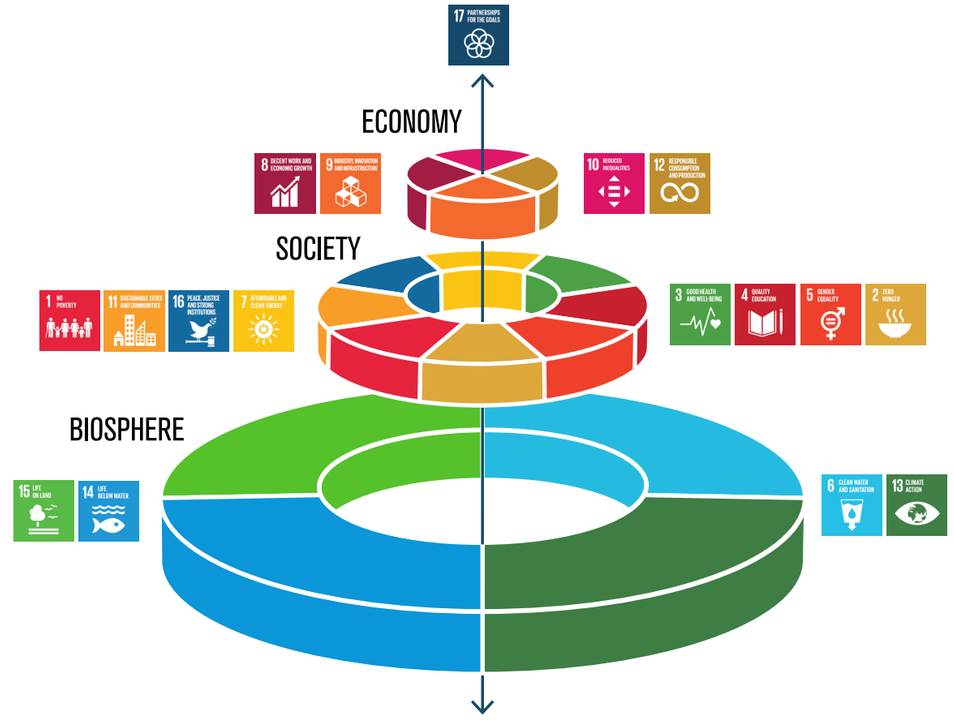
Understanding the complex systems behind simple things can help you navigate solutions when those systems are failing you. Let's say your tea is too hot, too expensive, too unethical, or too spicy. Each problem can have its own response, but if you know how a particular problem relates to a variety of different factors, you can explore those factors and benefit from a holistic approach lens.

The word 'holistic' means viewing the bigger picture, the whole picture; not just a small part of it. A holistic view of making tea involves considering all the factors mentioned above. If there is a problem with the tea, a holistic solution would take into consideration the whole picture – supply, demand, lifestyle, politics etc. We can use a similar approach when discussing sustainability in our communities. Sustainability at the community level will involve people working together, collaborating, and coordinating their efforts. A complex system will be at play here. Either your systems are functioning well, or they are not; or maybe they are absent altogether! Thinking about systems holistically will highlight interconnections, relationships, synergies, and important areas for engagement to make a difference for you as an activist.



To get a little bit more into these complex sustainability systems, this activity will guide you through an exercise that uses the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to map local issues to global concerns. To get the most out of this activity, use the UN's website on the SDGs to familiarise yourself with the goals and their targets:

Even though these SDGs are clearly separated into 17 different goals, there is some danger of misinterpreting them as separate issues that need to be dealt with one by one. Instead, you can think of them as all being interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Many organisations have noticed patterns or themes of connection among the goals. The Stockholm Resilience Centre for example has created the 'wedding cake' model of the SDGs to help visualise how economy and society are embedded in the biosphere.




Graphics by Jerker Lokrantz/Azote

The 17 SDGs (and the patterns within) will become easier to navigate if you select a sustainability issue present in your area. This could be anything from littering or water pollution to greenwashing or ideology. Use the SDG Mapping Template (found in appendix) to work through 6 steps of the activity:

**Step 1:** My local sustainability issue is…
On the first page of the template, in the box in the middle, write down a local sustainability issue you are interested it. This could be anything to do with the relationship between society, the economy and the environment. For example, littering, water pollution, soil erosion etc. Try to make the issue contextual by explain the specifics about the problem.

**1. My local sustainability issue is…**

*Food waste and single use plastic waste are prevalent in our river system*

**Step 2:** At a local level, how does this issue connect to SDG areas?
Now you have your sustainability issue, think about the 17 areas which the SDGs are tackling. Does your issue intersect with any of these areas at a local scale? If you can think of any connections, draw lines from the middle box to the appropriate SDG areas.

**Step 3:** Why is the issue a problem in your community?
Think about the symptoms of your issue, the causes and the ways in which this issue impacts your community. Write down some notes in the space below to help you explore and keep track of your thinking. It could be that your issue is very personal, or maybe it's a systemic problem. Either way, think about the various stakeholders in your community and how this issue affects them.

**Step 4:** What does my community already know about the issue?
Consider if your issue is well known by other community members. Think about the awareness, the mobilisation, the action already happening. Think about which demographics care, and which people don't. Exploring what is already known or happening will allow you to better understand why the issue is prevalent.

### 3. Why is the issue a problem in your community?

The poor river health results in less biodiversity (fish and their prey/predators) in the area - this in turn reduces the plant life and worsens soil conditions - we can see erosion taking place along the banks - If we don't control the litter, the river health will only worsen over time. There is a missed opportunity here to create a peaceful, clean and welcome place for people to connect with nature.

### 4. What does my community already know about the issue?

People know littering is 'bad' but they do not know about the real world implication this stuff is having on our river and how the river health connects to their own well-being. Some community steakholders are aware and in activism spaces, lobbyng the council for bins on the banks and taking part in annual clean-ups. our local school stopped doing field trips their science groups due to degradation - is this not a learning opportunity?



**Step 5:** Which SDG areas are the most important?
Take a look at all the lines of connection you drew from your local sustainability issue box to SDG areas around the circle (local sphere). Ask yourself which areas you consider to be the most important. Pick between 2 and 5 areas you consider to be strongly related to your chosen issue. Then, flip the template over to reveal the second page. Here on this second diagram, represent your issue's most important connection areas by drawing stars on the appropriate colours found on the inner circle (local sphere). For example, if you thought SDG goal and area 15 Life on Land was of particular importance, you would put a star on the matching green colour.

**Step 6:** Can you connect these local issues to global concerns?
Finally, think about the global nature of the SDGs. Each goal has targets and they do not exist in isolation. The SDGs link to economic, social, and environmental issues. They exist in relation to one another and they all have a role to play in shaping the world we want to live in and with. For your sustainability issue, choose one of your local sphere stars (the most important areas) and consider how that area relates to the global landscape. Are other groups or nations prioritising this concern? Does your local issue have implications at a planetary level? Is the cause of your issue somehow rooted in globalisation? For each star, draw lines of connection from your local sphere to the bordering global goals. Make some notes on these connections if you wish. This final phase will help you conceptualise all the moving parts behind a local issue.

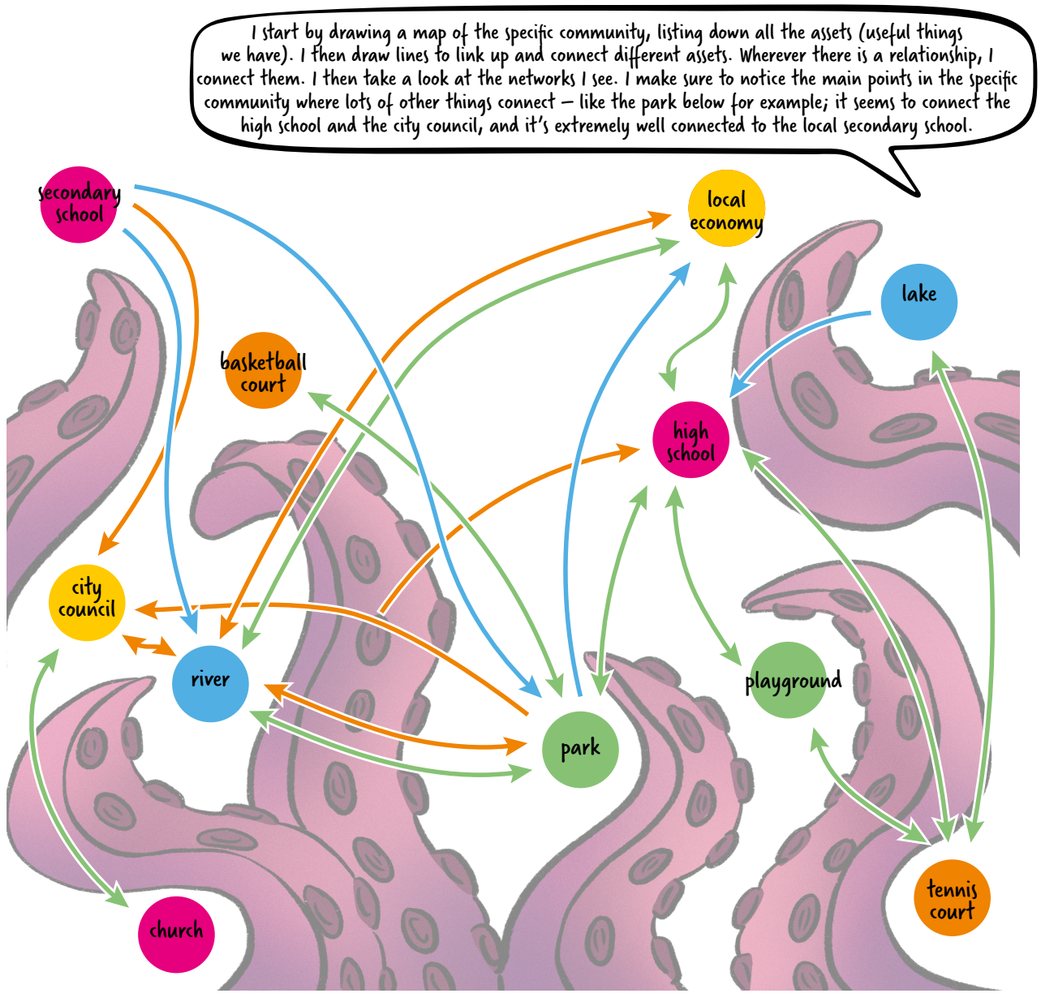
Putting all the pieces together, this 6 phase exercise hopefully enables you to unpack a local problem, recognise its complexity and its connections to other issues and other regions. Exploring these connections can give you a more holistic view on an issue, which will help ensure your solutions are strategic and tackling the problem from multiple angles.

# Learning local

Eco-activism tends to be born at local levels. It is important that you have a tool to help frame and interact with the resources in your local area, to help you build connections and collaborations that improve resilience and sustainability. There is a huge amount of value to be found locally if you know where and how to look. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) offers a mechanism through which meaningful reflections and engagements can occur. In this context, an asset is anything and everything we can use for something positive.

Often when we talk about development, we use a deficit model (thinking about what's missing from a community, what needs to be built etc.). ABCD moves away from this mindset, to focus instead on the pre-existing assets in the community. In identifying the strengths, more can be done with less, and activism can be community-led from within - which increases sustainability! Collaborating with local assets fosters local ownership for community processes and highlights the potential for participatory methods.

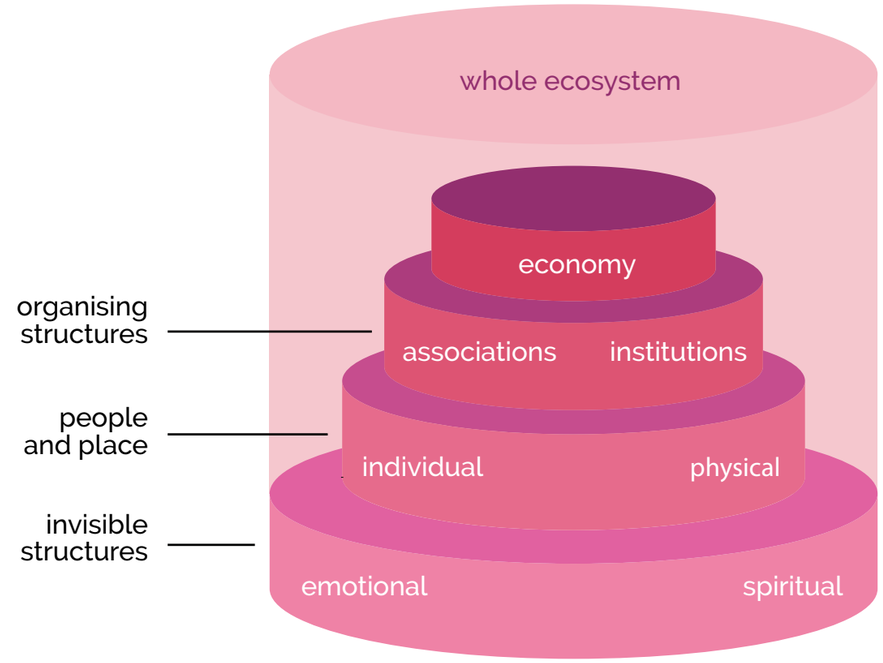
When we map down our assets and plot the links between them, patterns emerge, information flows are highlighted, and community hubs can be identified. Equally, assets that are disconnected will emerge. You can use this information in your activism to establish who to partner with, where to promote your ideas, where to source expert knowledge, etc.

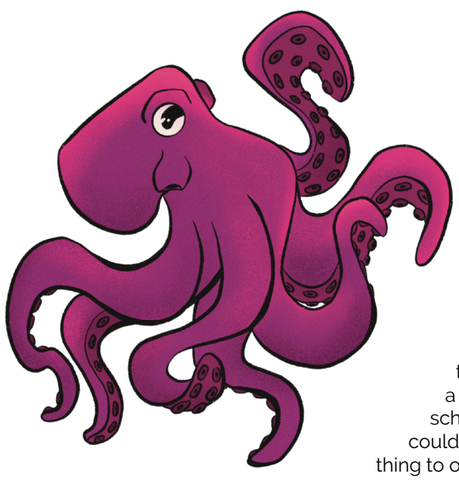





**Asset Mapping** can become much easier and even generate new meanings through patterns if you create some categories and classes to help visually organise assets. You'll notice in the Octopus map that different asset types were coloured according to groups. It's important to organise assets while recognising the embedded nature of community systems.

Every community has underlying energies and invisible structures that maintain cohesion. Communities carry people and places and organise those assets into structures to create an economy and an ecosystem. All these assets are embedded and intertwined. Below is one way you can organise assets into classes to help make sense of complex interactions. Asset mapping is designed to help promote a strength-based way of thinking about community. As long as the process helps you identify where we need to strengthen connections and who you can collaborate with, then you should feel free to create your own organisation system and asset categories.



**Invisible Structures**
There are foundational energies within a community that can be recognised as the building blocks for a whole system. People within your community may have different levels of emotional availability and expertise, but everyone innately carries this capacity for emotional engagement and compassion. Identifying this as a resource can be useful to help understand which individuals can best support your activism. The physical landscape holds a spiritual presence that supports connectivity between people and places. Local cultural traditions and practices are often deeply rooted in the physical environment and there is a support system to be found here as well.

**People and Place**

Individuals
All individuals have gifts and talents, and these can be used to drive development from within. For example, a youth activist, a local organic farmer or government official, a keen secondary school teacher, community elders, or a supportive parental figure could all be potential community assets. In fact, everyone has something to offer if we build authentic connections. Through individuals, we can harness and strengthen the underlying emotional energy of a community.

### Physical
Physical assets in the community can be any physical element that strengthens the community. Sacred or local heritage sites, rivers, forests, or other landscape features. They can also be created by people, like water tanks, road networks, a park, a local landmark, etc. These are tangible entities that can carry with them either a spiritual essence or a more practical application. Through physical assets, we can harness this underlying spiritual energy and create important sites and networking spaces.

## Organising Structures

### Institutions
Institutions organise people around infrastructure and represent a professional body where important skills and resources can be acquired. These can be any physical structure or place that people use in an organised and professional way; like a school, a church, a residential care home, or a library. They reflect the coming together of people and place, and these are hubs of formal sectors.

### Associations
Associations represent the more grassroots, organic and volunteer-based organising structures. Their presence can demonstrate pre-existing motivations, governance strengths, and common interests that can be used to generate support and action in line with your objectives. Associations include volunteers and support groups that contribute towards developing their community, such as athletic clubs, food preservation, child care, etc. They reflect informal sectors which tend to help spearhead activism on the ground.

## Local Economy
The local economy is a unique system creating opportunities for community subsistence. Here we conceptualise economy as everything that the community's residents produce, create, contribute, or consume; through local businesses, training, or external links. Associations and Institutions create organising structures for the economy, but individuals directly participate as well. When it comes to identifying economic assets, you can pick out things like a farmer's market, a local production chain, a consumption cycle, or a site that uses ticket sales to divert resources back to the community.

## Whole Ecosystem
If we conceptualise assets as being embedded and connected into a wider system, we can gain some insights into their power. A local economy cannot be separated from the organising structures that create it. Similarly, community members have interactions with those structures, and these relationships all take place within the emotional and spiritual context of the physical landscape. It can be useful to consider these connections during asset mapping exercises so that new collaboration opportunities emerge.

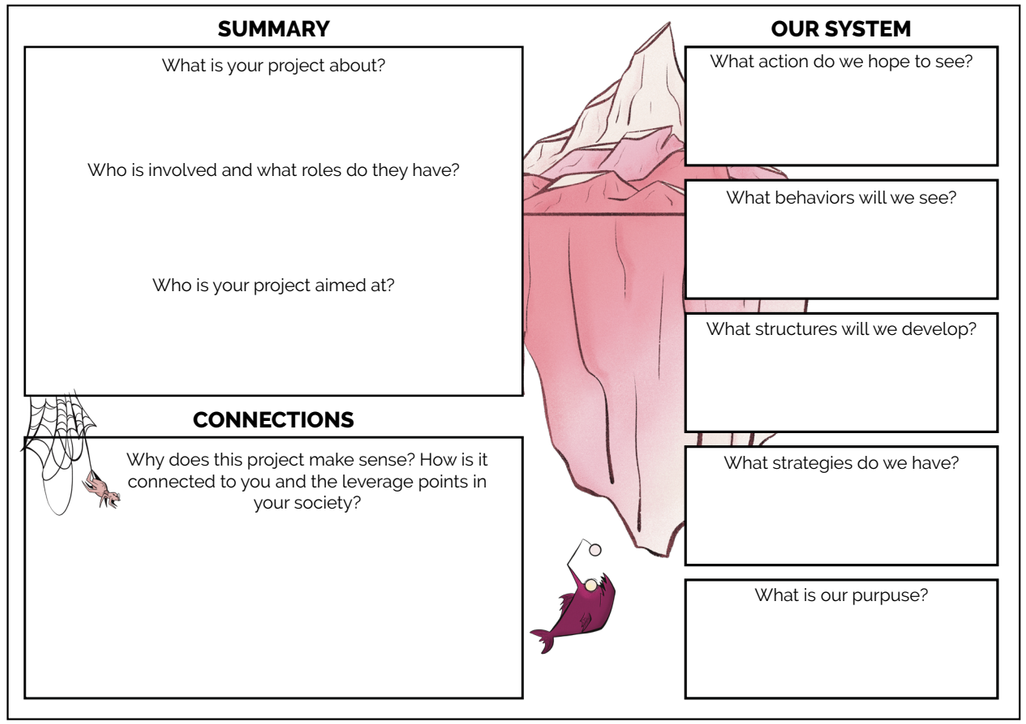
You can get creative and find your own categories that work for your collective. These assets can be represented on your community map through nodes. These are small colour-coded circles. Nodes connect to each other through links. Draw lines to represent these links. Networks are that created through combinations and clusters of links.

When you have your map, ask some of these questions to generate discussion:
Are there many connections already in place between assets?
Are there any key connections missing?
Who are playing leadership roles in the association asset category?
Who is not, but should be?
Who are the experts in identified institutional assets?
Who are the individuals in our community that others seek out for advice?
Which place-based assets mean the most to the project group?
Are collaborative alliances forming between local assets?

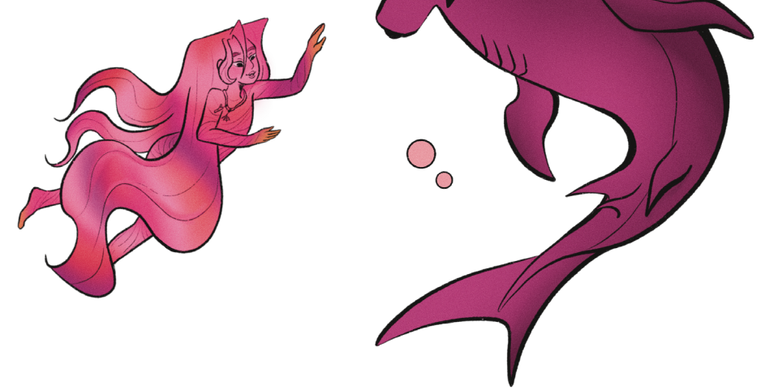


# Learning to combine

Looking back on the learnings from this phase and its activities, your collective might be ready to start planning your actions. Having your ideas written down in a simple and streamlined template can focus your energy and enthusiasm into the things that really matter. It can also serve as a tool to pitch your ideas to others to gain support. At this stage, we are becoming the apex eco-activist! Just like our friend Shark. You can follow her as they tells us about the project canvas tool (you can find the full template in the appendix).




Summarise your project and use the iceberg model to connect your activism to purpose. Think about how your ideas respond to leverage points in society and how your own journey through life has lead you here.



**COLLABORATIONS**

What assets will the group collaborate with?

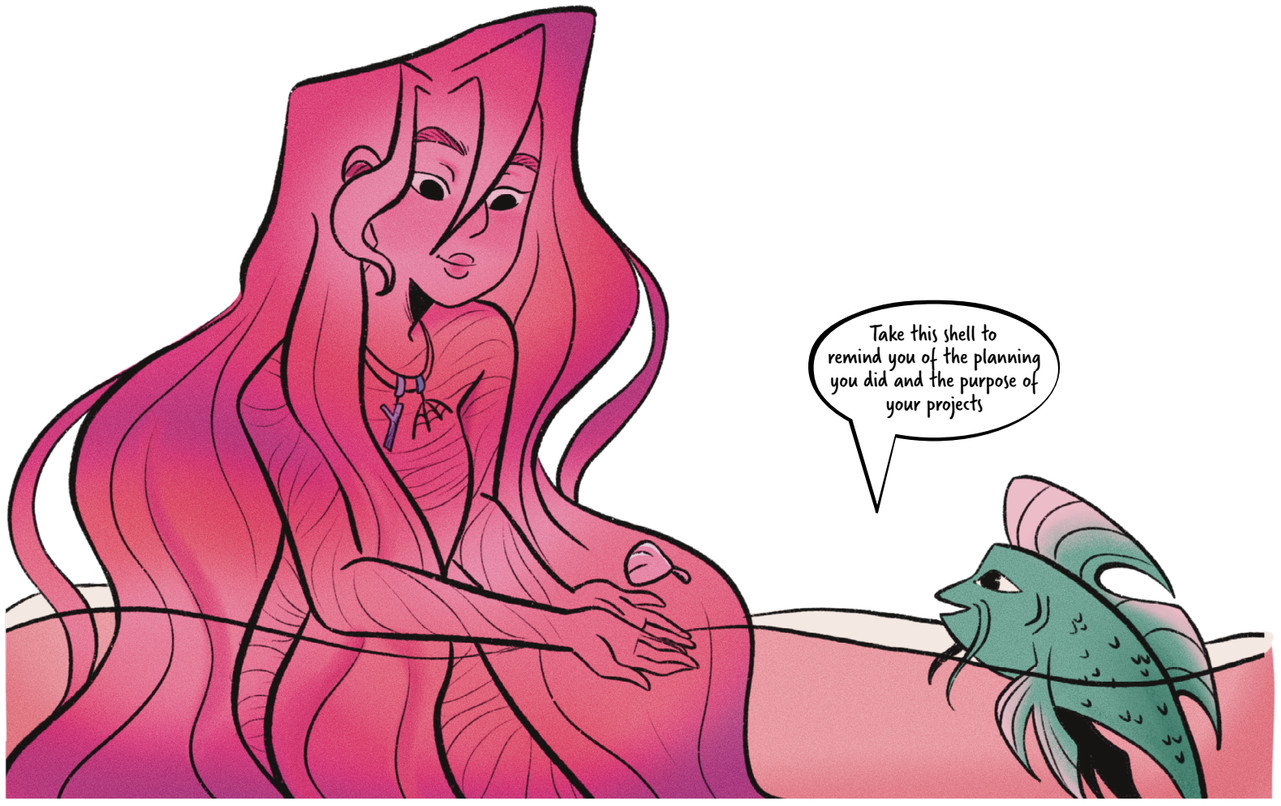
**WELL-BEING**

How will our group prioritise our individual and collective well-being?

**BUDGETING**

What are the costs and how can we sustainably fund this project's activities and impact?

| SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS | IMPACTS (short and long term) |
|---|---|
| SOCIAL | |
| ECOLOGICAL | |
| ECONOMIC | |
| WORLDVIEW | |




Completing a project canvas will leave you in a good position to translate all of your collective preparation and connection work into productive eco-activism. Better still, your plan will be well informed, rooted in purpose and whole systems thinking that bring the power of leverage and strength-based approaches into your work.

Each collective working with this toolkit will come up with a contextual project and the engagement with this phase hopefully has provided tools to help develop and expand your ideas.

# 4 EVALUATING ACTION

# Leadership

Over time, the world has seen many leaders rise with multiple characteristics and qualities; depending on the context. Leadership styles are informed by both personality and context.

We all can practise leadership in our contexts, even though someone in our community may take on a more prominent role in particular situations. Exercising leadership is about inspiring others and taking actions to support certain values and goals. Those values and goals have been set by your collective already. Leadership is not a chance to flex your ego. The role of an elder in indigenous communities, as a person of authority, is often to point out when protocol is broken and ensure the group is functioning as intended. This is a form of healthy leadership that responds to the context of the people and place.

As this phase is about evaluation, the first invitation is to ask yourself: *"Can you think of a leader that inspires you? What characteristics do they have?" And "What type of leadership do you exercise in your life?"*

The concept of leadership may seem to be an isolating principle, one that separates those we see as 'leaders' from those we see as 'regular people'. We may wonder, *"How could I be a leader? Do I have the skills and knowledge that leadership might require?"*

But in troubled/critical times, society has a need for leaders in all corners of the world, and we need to expand the meaning of leadership. What if we considered leadership to be something that anyone may step into, as a service to the group? What cultural change would make that possible?

Asking ourselves what it would take in order for us personally to consider playing a leadership role in our own group -- such as facilitating a meeting, hosting a conflict dialogue, or sitting on a board of directors -- often reveals our own internal barriers, such as fear, anxiety, or a lack of resources. And if we are honest with ourselves we can see, perhaps a bit painfully, that such barriers can only be overcome by two crucial pursuits:

- Self-improvement such as raising self-awareness, healing from trauma, reducing reactivity, accepting not-knowing, relearning curiosity, gaining emotional literacy.
- Developing empathy for oneself and others; and seeking support from other group members, from non-human sources, and from others in our personal circles.

To facilitate a discussion on leadership with a group, each person can create a drawing that represents their leadership style. By examining the interactions between leadership drawings, a nuance can emerge to help reflect on the emergent leadership potential of the group. Rather than focus on developing one set leader, the group can then work to develop a culture of leadership throughout their collective.

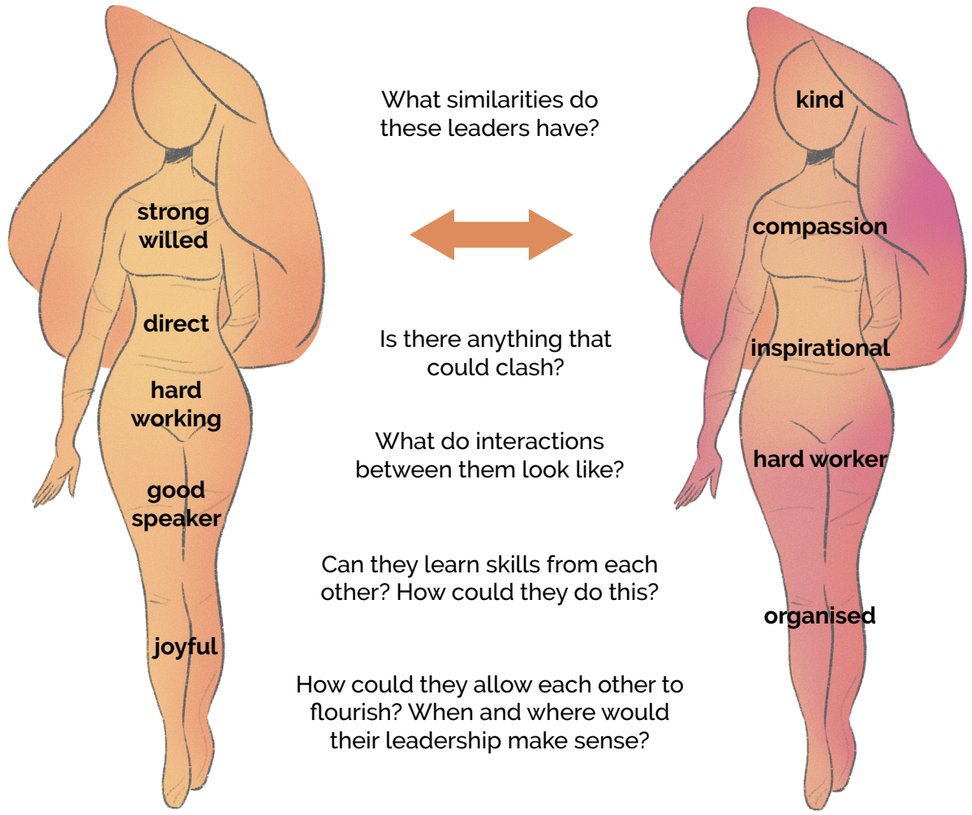


**Step 1:** Have a group discussion about leaders and how each member of the collective can contribute towards building a culture of leadership. Reflect on the ways you have all directed activities, contributed to the planning, and promoted ideas or ways of thinking.

**Step 2:** Each person draws an outline of themselves as a leader. On the inside of the drawing, they write down the qualities they have as a leader.

**Step 3:** Drawings are placed down on the floor and compared. *How many overlapping ideas are there? Are there patterns emerging? Have you seen a quality that you want to improve on in yourself? Any inspiration you can get from this?*

**Step 4:** Time to look at interactions between leaders. Display the drawings in ways that you can see more than one image together. It can be in pairs or bigger groups. Ask yourselves the following questions:




You can create your own questions if you like. The idea behind this step is to draw attention to the relationships and interactions between potential leaders in your group.

**Step 5:** As a group, reflect on the drawings and interactions with the following discussion prompts:
*What are we leading, people or change?*
*Is there a difference between management and leadership?*
*Who do we look up to in society, and why?*

Indigenous people are often spearheads of leadership in environmental stewardship. It's well worth getting to know some of the wisdom that has come before us. Wangari Maathai, bravely stood up for people and places throughout her decorated life. Growing up in a rural village during colonial rule in Kenya, Wangari Maathai used her social awareness, spiritual and indigenous knowledge, and the power of education to sustain and regenerate her land. Wangari Maathai was a holistic thinker and leader, navigating political spaces, grassroots activism, education departments, and international sectors to create networks of change agents. She founded the Green Belt Movement to empower women through tree planting, and when the government planned to turn public land in Nairobi Uhuru Park into offices and shopping malls, Wangari Maathai mobilised and began defending the rights of her people and the rights of the land.

It was not an easy path for Wangari Maathai. During those struggles, she was arrested many times, subject to ridicule and disinformation campaigns, physical attacks, and more. But she knew her purpose. She heard her calling. She used community organisation and grew her Green Belt Movement into a Pan-African body planting millions of trees each year through engagement with women. Despite not always winning, whenever similar issues arose throughout the years, Wangari Maathai fought. When the government attempted to privatise more land in Nairobi's Karura Forest, Wangari Maathai led a group of activists through the land, planting trees in the face of attacks. She inspired the youth to start a huge student protest which eventually led to the state banning all allocation of public land.

Her story is one of great leadership. Nobel Peace Prize-winning leadership. Yet her story is also one of empowerment. A story of raising others up to join her. In her 2010 book, Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World, she stresses "the importance of communities taking responsibility for their actions and mobilising to address their local needs," adding, "We all need to work hard to make a difference in our neighbourhoods, regions, and countries, and in the world as a whole. That means making sure we work hard, collaborate, and make ourselves better agents to change."

# Peer education

Leaders are important as they catalyse the power of the collective. But the power still is maintained and retained by the collective themselves – and not the leader.

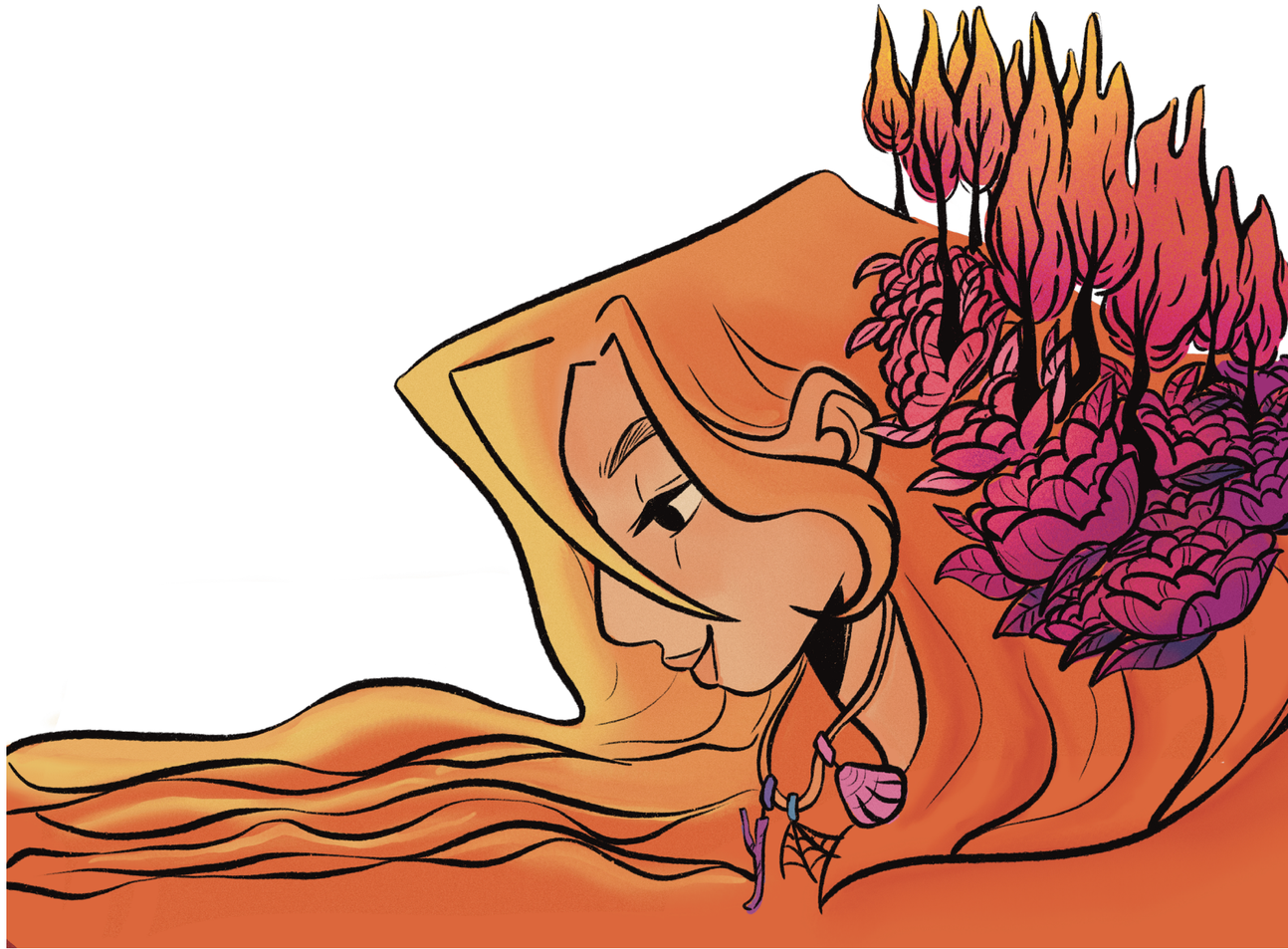
The richness of your group was explored in earlier phases, where Worm connected values in the ***Community Forest.*** Each of you will be bringing a unique voice, a set of skills and offerings articulated in the ***Circle of Hands.*** With so much opportunity for learning amongst your peers, it's worth assessing how much you have grown in your groups and how best to tap into the potential of peer education.

Peer education takes place all throughout your activism. Anytime you interact with members of your group and learn something or grow, you are practising peer education.

On the next pages is a flow that helps shed light on the power of peer education. Consider asking yourselves the reflective questions to learn about how you can improve or evaluate your own peer learning. This flow concept shows us that collectives can foster transformative experiences for their group by following certain principles.

Working through the reflective questions as a group might highlight a point in the peer education flow where the group could work better together. The transformative experiences facilitated through peer education can take time to manifest, so don't worry if you find that your collective is still working in an early part of the process.

A healthy peer education environment can be fostered through regular reflections using the questions on the next flow diagram, frequent focus on well-being and nature connection, and encouraging emergent leadership opportunities, as we saw with the wolf.



## diversity

You form a collective of peers that features a range of different voices and backgrounds where possible. Here you have created a space for diversity, tolerance, and empathy.

*What kind of diversity exists in our collective?*
*Is there space for every voice to speak?*

## communication

You listen to the needs of those diverse voices and co-agree on equitable roles and rules your group will use for governance. With your co-defined structure, your peers can dialogue freely and be open to new ideas. Here you have Enhanced communication skills.

*Are our group rules and roles working for us?*
*Who created and who shapes these roles?*
*What sorts of things do we chat about with our collective?*

## connection

Better communication develops deeper bonds, as you and your peers understand your collective's united purpose and interest in eco-activism. Here you have formed genuine connections based on values.

*Who are you most close to in your collective?*
*What are your shared values among the collective?*

## expression

Equipped with the knowledge that common values unite each of your peers, members of your collective can be vulnerable and articulate their needs better. Here you establish safe spaces for emotional expression.

*What tools within your group do you have for emotional support?*
*How do you create an environment for others to share freely?*



## transformation

You and your peers have changed how you learn, and can incorporate that into your everyday lives. Here you are having transformative experiences from the interaction processes of peer education and true dialogue.

*What things did you learn from your peers that you can bring into everyday life?*

## horizons

Here you are Broadening horizons to realise that multiple realities and ways of learning exist. At a paradigm level, your peers greatly value their mental growth and frame it within the context of group and peer learning.

*What is possible with this group?*
*How far can you take your activism together?*

## perspective

Spaces for expression highlight that there is great power in collective thought and collaboration. Your peers see that different perspectives can help solve problems. Here you have gained an appreciation for diverse perspectives, alternative worldviews, and problem-solving methods.

*What has the group achieved together?*
*How have your peers changed their outlooks on life?*
*What inspiration do you peers give you?*

# Evaluations

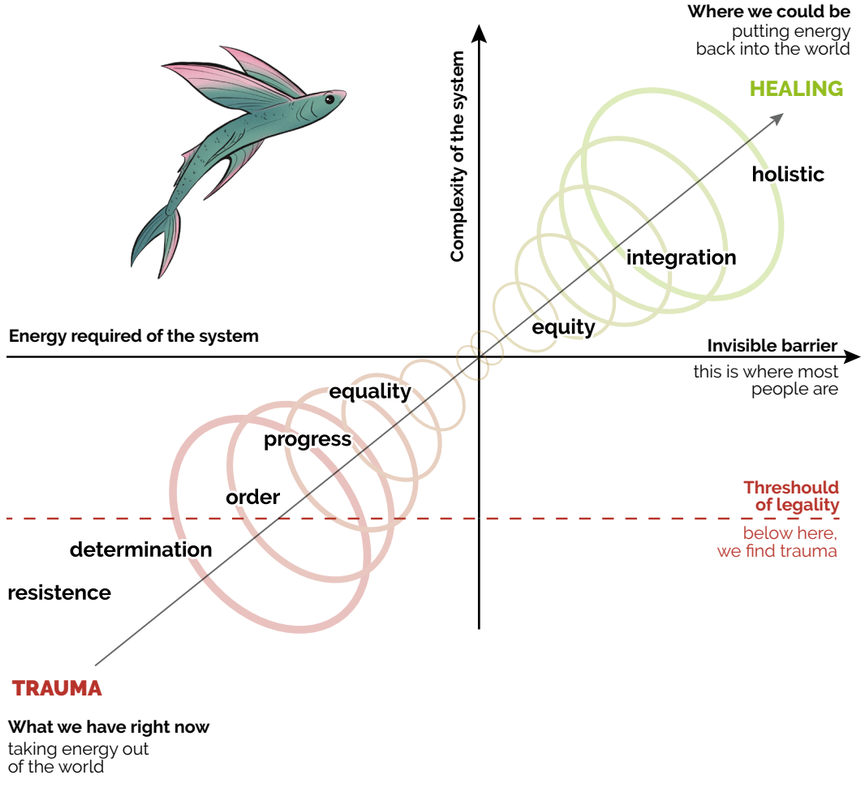
You'll reach a point in your activism project where you should take a breath, pause, slow down, and see where you've come from. Figure out where you are going to. Check if you are heading in the right direction. Re-align with your values and your mission. This is the power of evaluation.

At this stage, we want to introduce you to the **Seismograph**, a diagnostic tool that will allow you to assess your project's degree of resilience and community connectivity, and take steps towards the best direction. Doing a meaningful evaluation takes time. A quick half-baked questionnaire might not give you the insights you need to make informed changes for your collective. So we encourage you to take the time to first understand how you got here and then take the time to really consider your situation.

In order to evaluate our own processes, we must first understand that human communities have evolved throughout history as an integral part of natural ecosystems. We have been constantly changing, just like all the different landscapes and other animals around us.

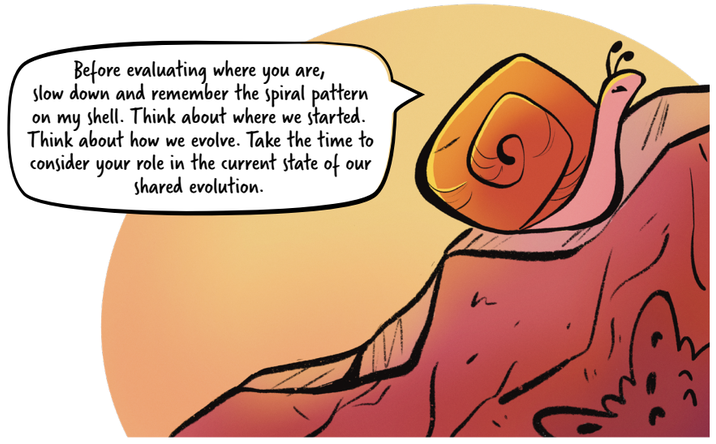
Keeping up with everybody's needs can be a challenge. But it is well worth investing time into exploring these needs. The more needs we are able to cover, the more complex our systems and behaviours are. And complexity is a beautiful thing! We saw how complexity can be great back in phase 2 with ***Systems in Motion.*** But whose needs are most valued in this complex society? Are humans the only ones with needs?

We need to be mindful of how our societies evolved over time. We did it together with our environment, informed by the needs of us and others around us (including the needs of non-human entities). This interpretation of human cultural evolution is derived from indigenous worldviews (such as Siksika Nation). This knowledge aligns with the ***Regenerative Spiral*** that we explored with Flying Fish in phase 3 when we were learning how to fly.






The seismograph tool we are about to share can help us detect movements in the earth, movements in your collective, and movements in the culture. If we want to make our communities more respectful and progress up the spiral, it is important to be able to work from reconciliation, heal community traumas, and evolve with processes that foster empathy and diversity.




## THE SEISMOGRAPH

A seismograph typically records the motion of the ground during an earthquake. In 132 AD in ancient China, Zhang Heng created the first of these devices. It was made as a large bronze jar with 8 decorative dragons fixed to the side of the jar. Each dragon had a ball in its mouth. Surrounding the jar on the ground were 8 bronze toads, mouths open, lining up with the dragons. During a distant earthquake, a central pendulum inside the jar would drop and release the ball in whatever direction the seismic shock came from. The ball would drop into a toad's mouth, giving information about the direction of the earthquake.

Symbolically, these earth movements were characterised by the dragons, representatives of the life force. Toads were used to symbolise life's ability to anticipate change, as toads have the ability to detect earthquakes before they occur.

Our seismograph tool uses the same symbology to make visible the strength of cultural movements, which can generate more impact than an earthquake. The tool uses 8 dragons that illustrate the 8 cultural paradigms distributed into different states (from trauma, to individualism, and collectivism). The Renerative Spiral moves through these states and paradigms reflecting potential evolutions.

The seismograph tool will pose a series of questions to you. By answering these questions, you will provide lots of different indicators related to you, your collective, and your community. You can think of your answers like the toads - indicators of directions.

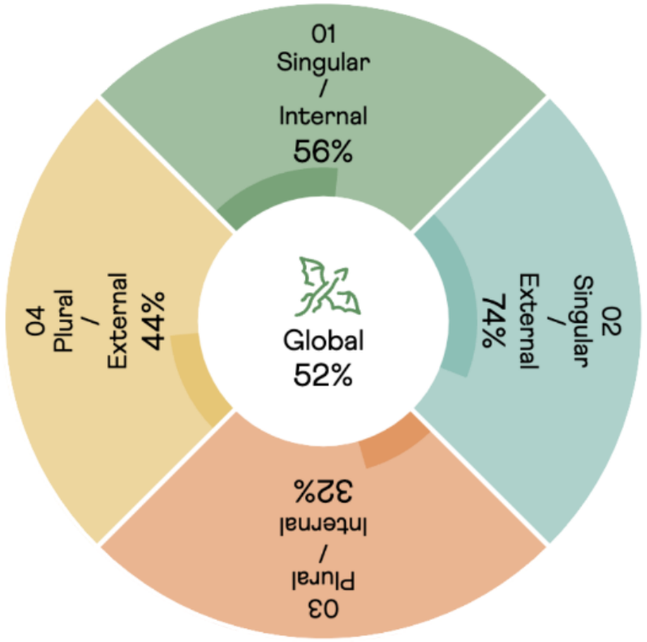
The seismograph tool then uses your answers (toads) to establish patterns, detecting changes in the evolution of the 8 paradigms. These are the dragons, and at the end of the process, upon receiving the result of the seismograph, small dragons will tell you which paradigm you are at and where the most important blockages are.

We mentioned already how the seismograph tool tries to look for patterns in your answers. These patterns commonly fall into 4 different perspectives. These 4 perspectives provide useful ways for you to view your work. Below are the 4 basic perspective principles:

**Singular** - About you
**Plural** - About your collective
**Internal** - About looking inwards
**External** - About looking outwards

To give you a better idea about what works and what doesn't work in your projects, the seismogrpah tool combines these key principles in the following ways:

1. **Singular Internal** - How you are doing within yourself.
2. **Singular External** - How you are doing within your collective.
3. **Plural Internal** - How your collective is doing within themselves.
4. **Plural External** - How your collective is doing with other collectives and the wider community.




When interpreting the results, if the dragon is dark red or orange, it means your collective is in a state of trauma in that particular dimension. In this state we find the most basic needs, which only allow us to survive.

If the colour is light orange, yellow or green, it means your collective is in a state of individualism: it focuses on the well-being and healing of people as individuals, guaranteeing the minimum resources to get out of a precarious context.

If the colour is light blue, blue or purple, it means your collective is in a state of collectivism: it goes beyond the individual and manages to sustain a community based on reciprocity between people and with the natural ecosystem.

Hence, results with a lower percentage, marked in redder colors, imply leverage points with the ability to generate a large potential change. The greater percentages, marked with green and bluish colors, represent the strengths and, therefore, what each community and organisation can offer to the others as service, support or training.

You will learn lots more about how the tool works when you visit it's website. The seismograph tool can be found online at this address.

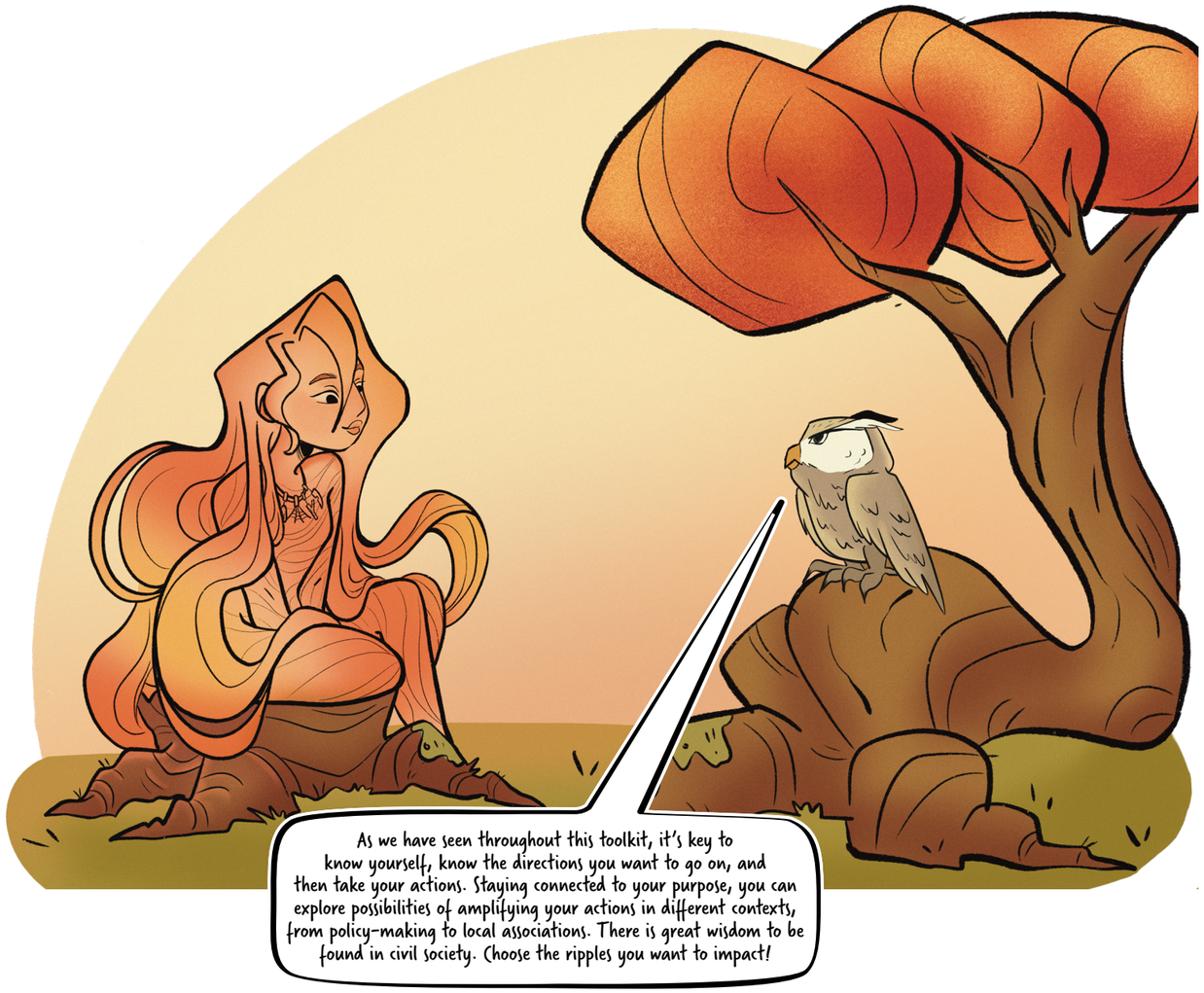
When you finish using the tool you will hear from the dragons about your important blockages. This may be due to personal, relational, or ecosystemic issues, but the tool will always identify a way for you to improve or catalyse the organisation, that is, to accelerate its organisational process. These blockages that the dragons will identify are leverage points (just like we saw with the iceberg model) because their potential is enormous once we unlock them - it will allow your community to move to the next dominant paradigm, or perhaps even much higher.

# 5 AMPLIFYING ACTION

# Civic engagement

Have you ever heard of the butterfly effect? There is this idea that a small butterfly flapping its wings could cause a typhoon on the other side of the world. How could a small butterfly impact such huge events so far away? The image of the flapping butterfly and its relationship to a typhoon points to a deeply interconnected world where small occurrences influence much larger complex systems. This isn't just a nice idea. The butterfly effect is grounded in a field of study called chaos theory which helps explain the patterns of interconnection, feedback, and self-organisation that we find in so-called 'random' events in complex systems.

Just like the butterfly, all of our actions cause ripple effects out in the world. Sometimes we see them, and sometimes we don't. Here in phase 5, we are talking about amplifying our actions. We should ask how we can send the right ripples out into the world to contribute to a broader movement. Luckily, we are not alone. We have the wisdom of others to lean on.






**NGOs**
Play a key role in facilitating and empowering participation in local communities. These organisations often specialise in specific areas such as human rights, social justice, education, or environmental conservation. NGOs provide platforms to get involved in advocacy campaigns, community service projects, and policy discussions. NGOs also act as intermediaries between young people and local government institutions, helping bridge the gap and ensuring youth voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes. Their expertise, guidance, and resources contribute to creating an enabling environment for young people to actively engage in shaping their local communities.

**School or College Governance**
Within educational institutions, you can participate in student councils or other forms of governance bodies. You can represent student interests, propose improvements, and engage in decision-making processes related to school policies, extracurricular activities, or facilities.

**Neighborhood Associations**
Getting involved in neighborhood associations provides you with opportunities to engage in local decision-making and community building. You can attend meetings, share your perspectives, and work collaboratively with residents to address local concerns.

**Youth-Led Media**
You can create your own media platforms, such as newsletters, blogs, podcasts, or YouTube channels, to raise awareness about local issues and engage your peers in discussions. This allows you to inform, educate, and empower others within your community.

**Youth-Led Initiatives**
You can initiate your own projects or organisations aimed at addressing community needs. These initiatives could focus on areas such as arts and culture, sports, education, or social services. You can organise events, workshops, and campaigns to benefit the local community.

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Community Service**
Engaging in community service allows you to contribute to your local area's welfare. You can volunteer for various projects such as cleaning up public spaces, organising events, assisting local organisations, or participating in environmental initiatives.

**Volunteering for Political Campaigns**
If you are interested in politics, you can volunteer for local political campaigns. You can support candidates or issues you believe in by organising events, mobilising voters, or even running for local offices yourself.

**Youth Councils**
You can join or establish local youth councils that serve as platforms for discussing and addressing issues relevant to your community. You can actively participate in decision-making processes, voice your opinions, and propose initiatives.

**Participatory Budgeting**
Some cities and communities have participatory budgeting processes that allow residents to directly influence how public funds are allocated. You can attend community meetings, propose projects, and vote on budget decisions.

**Local Advocacy**
You can become an advocate for causes you are passionate about, such as education, climate change, mental health, or social justice. You can actively participate in local campaigns, raise awareness, and lobby for policy changes.

**Participating in Public Meetings**
Attending public meetings, town halls, or city council sessions provides you with opportunities to observe local decision-making processes, voice your concerns, ask questions, and contribute to discussions on matters affecting your community.

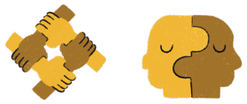
**Civic engagement** is all about action and is a vital part of any healthy democracy. There are many opportunities for young people to get involved in policy spaces in European Union (EU) countries. One way to access these spaces is to participate in youth councils or advisory committees that provide input to local, regional, or national governments on issues that affect young people. Many countries also have programmes that allow young people to attend legislative sessions, meet with policymakers, and participate in public hearings.

Another way to engage with policy spaces is to join a political party or advocacy organisation that aligns with your values and interests. By becoming a member, you can participate in party or organisational meetings, contribute to policy development, and help shape the political agenda. You can also attend public demonstrations or rallies to show support for causes that are important to you.

Social media and digital platforms provide new opportunities people to engage with policy spaces. Many politicians and policymakers have active social media accounts, and some even hold virtual town halls or Q&A sessions where they interact with constituents. By following these accounts and engaging with policymakers online, you can have a voice in the policy-making process from the comfort of your own home.

In EU countries, there are plenty of ways to access policy spaces, whether through participation in youth councils, joining a political party or advocacy organisation, attending public demonstrations, or engaging with policymakers online. By getting involved, you can help shape the policies that affect your life and the lives of those around you.

# International networks



It is important to remember that you are never alone in your dreams and passions. There is great beauty in our ability to connect socially and build collective intelligence. In the eco-activism space, we continue to see a global movement of communities creating a resilient and healthy future for people and the planet. Even creating this toolkit was a collaborative effort stretching across Europe, with all the co-designers forging new relationships and networks of peers.

At this stage of your activism work, you can celebrate your journey and reach out to other networks to share, learn and grow. Growth here will be for yourselves and also for the movement. It is a bit like a migration of ideas across international contexts. One idea can spark another, spreading change across connected landscapes.

**ECO-UNESCO** is Ireland's leading environmental education and youth organisation. They specialise in Education for Sustainable Development and aim to promote the personal development of young people through practical environmental projects. They develop a broad range of environmental programmes for young people through schools, youth organisations, and community groups. One of their flagship programmes is an awards framework called The Young Environmentalist Awards that encourages action through a simple 6-step process. This results in thousands of participants each year; so if you are interested in learning about how to grow action, it would be worth reaching out. ECO-UNESCO mostly works with people under 18, and there are rich opportunities to learn about school-level engagement, peer education, informal learning spaces, and action-oriented approaches through their networks. This is a good place to share your project ideas, build a network and learn about what other young people are up to in Ireland. One more sentence to be added: You can find out more about the organisation here.

**Gaia Education** is a leading provider of sustainability education that promotes thriving communities within planetary boundaries. Gaia Education works internationally to equip students of all ages with the appropriate skills and analytical tools to design a sustainable society. Gaia Education works a lot with the SDGs, and they have great resources around this. E-learning is also a strength of theirs. If you enjoyed the learner-led and transformative element of the toolkit, be sure to reach out to Gaia Education and discover their 4 Dimensions curriculum, SDG flashcards, and networks of changemakers.

**Resilience.Earth** is a cooperative of educators and other professionals in Catalonia dedicated to strengthening community resilience and ecological sustainability. They work in community service, nurturing effective change agents at all levels. They are great at tapping into the power of a community, helping foster connections and cultivating local knowledge and wisdom. They do this through some innovative thinking tools, exploring regeneration and resilience. If you have been enjoying the theoretical side of this toolkit, the thinking frameworks, and the idea of regeneration, reach out to Resilience.Earth to connect with their amazing networks and learn about eco-activism movements.



**Jaunatne smaidam (Youth for Smile)** is a youth organisation focused on grassroots, informal and mobile education in Latvia. They focus on experiential learning and have great expertise in youth leadership, European mobility programmes and cultural exchange practises. This is the really hands-on side of youth work, where a holistic approach is taken to tailor personal development to the needs of the community. They travel across Latvia innovating mobile youth outreach in the country. If you are interested in youth-led leadership, volunteering, and international exchange opportunities, Youth for Smile would be a great place to connect with other young people and learn about those principles.

**Ecowellness Consulting** specialises in nature-based interventions for mental health and well-being here in Ireland. They have an international network focused on health and social care. If you have enjoyed the well-being aspect of this toolkit, Ecowellness can point you towards further opportunities to develop nature connection techniques and skills. If your project ideas include land connection work, Ecowellness could help support or share your work.

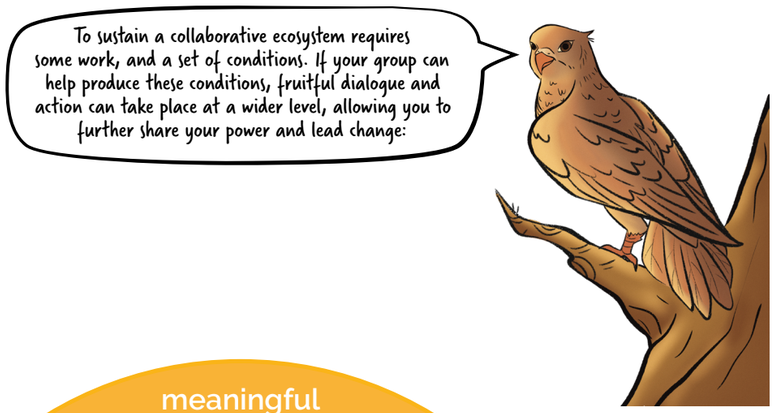
**Rural Parliament of Slovakia** has a team with vast experience in civic engagement and youth participation in Slovakia. They focus on rural development through youth empowerment and could help you understand what it takes to establish or join youth forums and parliaments. If you enjoyed the asset mapping processes or the civic engagement pathways offered in this toolkit, reach out to the Rural Parliament of Slovakia and share your ideas. You could find a lot of information on European programmatic opportunities or find other youth groups to connect with.

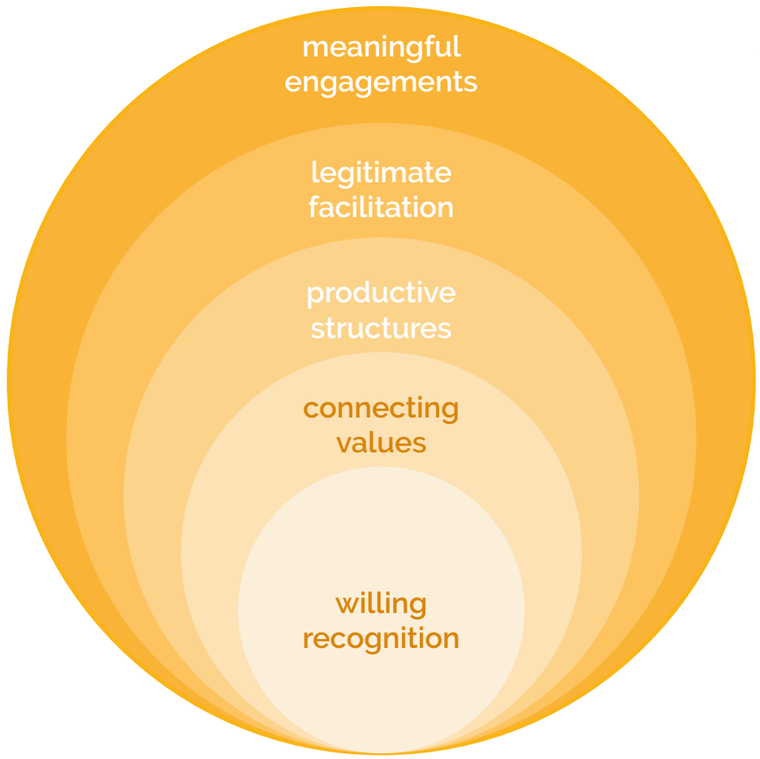
Keep an eye out for opportunities to expand your perspective. Collaborating or even just chatting with activists from different contexts can help build a clearer picture of the movement and illuminate some new ideas for your own work.

# Ecosystem development

In this phase, we have been looking at how civic engagement and international networking can amplify and reinforce your action. By taking good care of these networks, the connections and relationships you make can mature into an ecosystem. This is a whole systems thinking approach, much like Octopus showed us with ***Asset Mapping***. Your ecosystem includes all the relationships you maintain with different stakeholders - your collective, other individuals, local politics, the wider community, international groups, and so on.

Productive dialogue between network members or between potential network joiners is really critical. This tool below helps to sustain your ecosystem through meaningful engagements where all parties benefit from the interactions.






This is a nested model, where ideas are embedded into each other at different levels. Starting from the innermost circle, you should work to create these conditions to realise meaningful engagements that sustain networks and ecosystems. This model can be applied at different levels. To help explain its application, the eagle will share an example with us.

**Action example:** You have a compost project, and you put some flyers up about your project, and some interested people got in touch, so you arranged a meeting in the park. You are going to meet with a new group of people from your community, and you want to share your eco-activism work and suggest ways for others to get involved and grow the movement. The first thing you need to do is create willing recognition:

**Willing Recognition**
All participating stakeholders need to be ready and willing to engage in a conversation about an issue, problem, or research question that is of common concern. Everyone should be willing to explore what an issue means, who it impacts, and how it can be addressed. When establishing a space for dialogue, whether that is online, in a small meeting, or at a larger workshop, make sure to cover the purpose of the gathering and lead people into recognising the reason behind everyone's participation. It doesn't have to always revolve around an issue. It could be a willing recognition of positive work happening in the field.

**Action example:** You meet with the new community group, and after introductions and an energiser, you begin with an open discussion on organic waste and composting in the community. Forming a circle, you explore together what happens to most of the organic waste in the community, what are the impacts, and you share case studies of other small towns that have established a communal composting system. You explain your intended purpose to grow your project and invite those who are interested to create a purpose statement by doing a ***Circle of Hands*** group activity (phase 2).

**Connecting Values**
The topics discussed must be valued by the participants. They expect their investment in the process – in terms of time, money, effort, political capital, etc. – to produce beneficial experiences and outcomes, especially in the longer term. When working with others, make sure to connect the values explicitly and often. Here you can explore how the values of a group synergise and also how the values of individuals are connected to the purpose of the gathering and dialoguing.

**Action example:** Taking inspiration from the ***Community Forest*** activity (phase 2), you ask each of your community members attending your compost project meeting to think of a value they have that relates to the project and its purpose (such as compassion, teamwork, etc.). You write them all down on a flipchart and talk through the overlaps and how these values could be better reflected in the group's purpose statement.

**Productive Structures**
Collaboration needs to be structured in such a way that it offers a safe space, both physically and socially. Participants should be able to express themselves without attribution or retribution. People may need some guidance on how to express themselves in a non-adversarial and non-confrontational manner. Here you can provide structures to follow so that the discussion format is known and mutually agreed upon. A clear structure can help bring initial buy-in and connected values forward into a productive conversation.

Action example: When you build the communal composting bin, you start a Whatsapp group for the community compost expansion group and use the platform to have members self-assign monthly roles and responsibilities to maintain the project infrastructure. You organise a regular meeting every 3 months, where the purpose is to bring on board new members to the collective.

**Legitimate Facilitation**
Everyone must recognise the legitimacy of the facilitator. As a connector of values, the facilitator's role is to oversee the structure and help reinforce its protocol. Reminders of the willing recognition may be needed here, but the structure should carefully position the facilitator as legitimate.

Action example: During the meetings at 3-month intervals, the coordination, use, and growth of the project are discussed, and you remind the group of the values and recognition of the collective. You encourage others to lead upcoming meetings and share the leadership role.

**Meaningful Engagement**
The levels below should allow for collaboration that encourages participants to actively learn, listen, explore, and understand the diversity of everyone's opinions, interests and concerns. Participants in this ecosystem may experience ideas widely outside their own familiar territory and thoughts. However, with a respected facilitator supporting a clear structure underpinned by connected values and a willing recognition of purpose - meaningful engagement is likely to follow.

Action example: You have a group of people who share values and are rooted in a united purpose. Your project has been able to share its knowledge and grow through structured meetings and good facilitation. You continue to work with the nested model to build sustainability and self-organisation among the ecosystem.

# 6 TRANSFORM

# One global ecosystem

**It's wonderful to see you have come this far in your journey!** We want now to invite deeper reflections, contemplate patterns from an observer perspective and discuss inspirational paradigms.

In the late 1960s, James Lovelock, a NASA scientist studying life conditions, came to a profound realisation: by studying all the elements that made life possible on Earth and noticing how they sustain those conditions for millions of years, he saw Planet Earth as a living entity! He argued that when we look at Planet Earth as a whole system, the living and the non-living components seem to be tightly interrelated and interact through complex feedback loops. Life actively contributed to creating and maintaining conditions on Earth that are favourable for higher organisms. Over time, James Lovelock's hypothesis has matured into a new field of scientific investigation that is referred to as Gaia theory or Earth Systems Science.

With this hypothesis in mind, it becomes easier to feel that we are all part of one big life force, and we share feelings, aspirations, and needs with every element of our Planet. In fact, this idea was around long before Lovelock. The word Gaia comes from the primal Greek goddess personifying the Earth. Many indigenous cultures around the world have similar sentiments in their belief systems, for example the Andean people of Latin America refer to Earth as Pachamama, conceptualising Earth as one coherent entity.

This activity is a circle back to journaling mixed with exploring some powerful transformational concepts. You and the group can decide whether to explore this in a circle setting or by taking the journal or paper to ***Sit Spots***, as we learned in phase 2.

**A Letter from Gaia**
Imagine now that Gaia, as a living organism, can speak; what would it tell you?

*Take a blank paper and start with:*
*"Dear [your name here],*
*Here is Gaia writing …"*

You can continue the letter with the words that come naturally to you, let your hand and pen flow, and discover what wants to be said.

This activity gives the opportunity to experience being part of something bigger; it gets closer to a narrative where we are not separated from nature but deeply embedded in it. Explore with your peers (either 1:1 or bigger groups) how you feel about this theory/concept. *Do you feel empowered to keep caring for nature? What are the inspirations you notice in your heart?*



# The spiral pattern

Noticing patterns in nature is a great way to level up observational skills and open yourself to learning ancient and valuable knowledge. Different patterns can represent different ways to deal with and distribute resources and energy, for example. Branch patterns distribute resources very efficiently, like trees or wave patterns that distribute energy in layers.

Spiral patterns allow for growth and movement. They uniformly fill space and maximise material holding potential. Spirals increase exchange transport and help with anchoring. They enable things to move against gravity. Spirals concentrate or disperse, speed up or slow down flow depending on which direction the spiral is moving. Spirals are found in many places in nature, the most common spiral being the Fibonnaci spiral, which is found in sunflowers, pinecones, nautilus shells, and even human beings!

The spiral pattern can also be an extraordinary way of understanding transformation. Life's journey is not like a straight line that you go on, live new experiences every time, never see those feelings again, or never revisit your own patterns again. Nevertheless, the journey also is not circular, where we always go back to exactly the same experiences, never evolving. If you did the spider web activity from phase 1, you had the feeling of how the spiral pattern works.

If we are seeking a transformative life journey where we hold on to an apprentice approach to everything, the spiral will be a great pattern to look at.

Consider that in your life, you will revisit places, experiences, and knowledge many times. If you follow the spiral pattern, you will revisit them from a new angle every time, learning new things and making decisions better equipped. Going back and forth on your spiral journey is a mindset that can be very helpful for your activism growth, as you may face challenges or situations along the way, you can always rely on some tool you learned, someone you worked with, or simply the fact of knowing that this is a learning experience.

Similar to Gaia's activity, this is a journaling prompt invitation to explore the time dimension (which can work as a spiral) and simulate a conversation with someone 7 generations in the future from you.

Now, imagine what this person wants to talk to you about. Open your mind and listen. Now begin putting it on paper, as if this future person were writing a letter especially for you.

You can circle back or discuss in pairs what were the insights from this activity.
*PS: This activity is inspired by the amazing work of Joanna Macy.*

# Living systems and the essence

In many indigenous cultures across the world, there is a knowledge that all places and objects possess a spiritual essence. River has felt these connections with the land on her journey. The trees hold wisdom, and the rocks hold understanding of time. The water has as much life and vibrancy as the creatures found within its waves. Each creature encountered has a spiritual essence and knowledge to share.

The landscapes and the beings are deeply connected through space and time, through energy systems that are living. River has moved with the landscapes, just as the landscapes move themselves. Everything here is alive. Sometimes we create things that work very well using discrete parts and human-made mechanics. Take, for example, the wristwatch. An intricate piece of equipment that measures time linearly. A watch can be broken down, cleaned, and reassembled in the exact same routine - time and time again.

This is where our creations diverge from nature. A river does not align with the trees as the gears align in our watch. Instead, it meanders through the forest and adapts to its environment, just as the trees then adapt to the river. You can't take apart a forest and reassemble it just as it was before. There is a whole system of truth at play in nature, which is different from the whole truth of a watch.

To understand and take part in regeneration, it can be useful to look towards the whole systems we find in nature. This can be a source of inspiration, as these living systems have evolved and maintained resilience in the face of everything that has come before us. Living systems have complexity, and there is much to be learned from them. For now, we offer five characteristics of living systems that can be mimicked in activism projects. By listening to the living and whole systems, we can better move with them and design our work alongside its ancient truths:

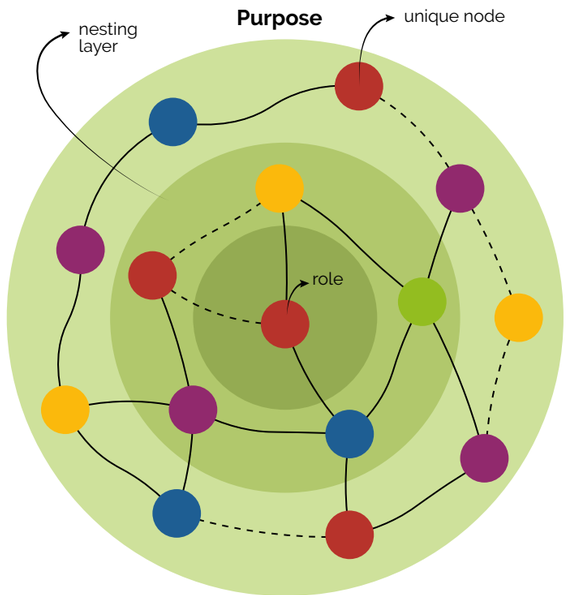
**Be Nested** – Like a series of circles with each one inside of the next. A child is part of a family, which is part of a community, which is part of a species, which is part of a planet, which is part of a solar system...

**Be Nodal** – Links can form networks, as River saw with assets, but there are fundamental nodes all around us that we can identify.

**Be Unique** – Each node has an essence and is distinctive.

**Be Whole** – Rather than chopping your project into little bits, learn to imagine it working and alive as a whole.

**Be Purposeful** – Evolutionary speaking, everything serves a purpose, giving a cosmic meaning to the roles of nodes.




**Alive**

Within these living systems, we find ourselves. Our identities are wrapped up in another type of system – a social one. We are all part of a group that helps define our social markers. In this sense, we have another way to be part of a whole. You might be a student, a basketball player, a vegetarian, or an activist. These are wholes that can be described with ease. We can predict their behaviour or characteristics. Take, for example, 18-year-olds. We can ask: *What are 18-year-olds like? What are they focused on in terms of the future? What do they get up to each day? What do they not like about the world? What have they been through in life so far?*



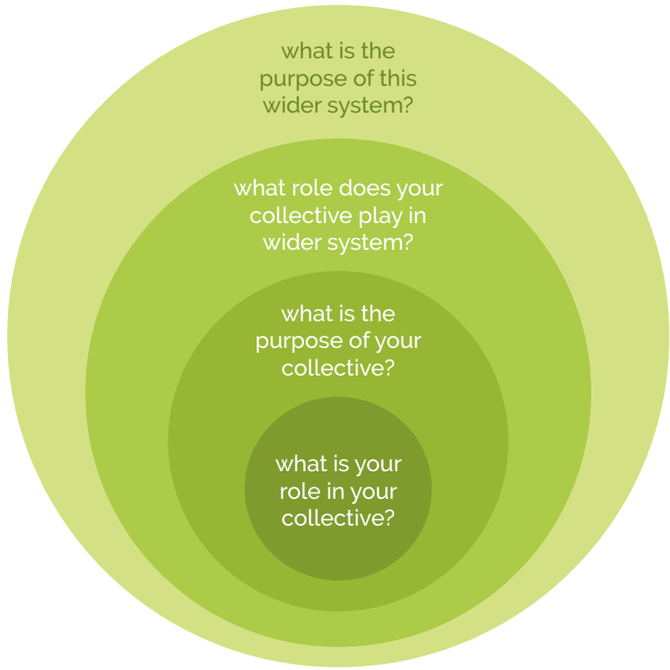
We might get answers like: They are stressed. They are focused on job opportunities. They study hard. They are frustrated with the state of the world they are inheriting. They have been through growing pains and uncertainty. Answering the questions can reveal information about the whole - But it is limited information.

We can also look towards the essences of this whole. If we ask the same set of questions to an essence (in this case, one particular 18-year-old), we can gain knowledge of a different sort: *What are you like? What are you focused on? What do you do each day? What don't you like? What have you been through?*

If you answer these questions as an essence, you'll reveal a more complex story that helps to explain the traits of a whole. Rather than solely looking at the whole and 'best practises', you may find use in looking at the essence of your peers so you may build those principles and experience/knowledge into a contextual project that really resonates with your collective. You can do this by reflecting on the ways in which your collective follows the principles of living systems. *How do your peers celebrate the essences and the whole of your group?*

Here is an example of a nested model that helps explore the difference between role and purpose, just as we saw way back in phase 2. We encourage you to give this another go now that you have progressed so far in your journey. Starting from the innermost circle and answering these questions could help make a deeper connection between someone's day-to-day role in an activism project and the wider purpose of an entire social-ecological movement.

*Remember...*
**To support nature, as nature – be like nature!**



# Changing how we learn

River has undergone a kind of transformation in her thinking and being, like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. After the transformation, the butterfly can not be a caterpillar anymore, even though it may remember how life used to be. Every move it takes from here on in is as a beautiful butterfly.

Every move River takes from here on in is taken as she is now, in her transformed state. She can apply her learning to new adventures, new situations, and new challenges. This is what transformative learning is about. Rather than having a particular fact or piece of wisdom to rely on, River has a new way of learning altogether. She has changed how she learns.

This toolkit has accompanied River on her journey towards transformation. It has tried to do this through processes of:

**Experience** - learning by doing, participating in society, and engaging in actions you are passionate about;

**Exploration** - removing boundaries to make room for creativity, 'not knowing', and open-ended systems thinking;

**Dialogue** - working collectively to gain an awareness of different, values, assumptions, and constructions of reality;

**Reflection** - stepping back to increase the awareness of the self and the relationships between people and place.

These processes reflect transformative learning - a new way of learning that you can apply to your everyday life and broader life-long education.

In the 1990s, the sociologist Mezirow recognised that trying to apply old ways of learning to new situations wasn't all that effective. He noticed that adults returning to higher education enter those spaces with a set of their own beliefs, judgments, and feelings. Mezirow called this a 'meaning structure'. Meaning structures are assembled when you are young, and if you don't deconstruct them or change their design regularly, you will learn about a new situation using outdated perspectives.

Our meaning structures are connected to our past experiences. What we were told as children, what values our elders had, the science of our generation, etc. River (and hopefully you as well) was able to challenge static meaning structures through this toolkit and make them dynamic and fluid.

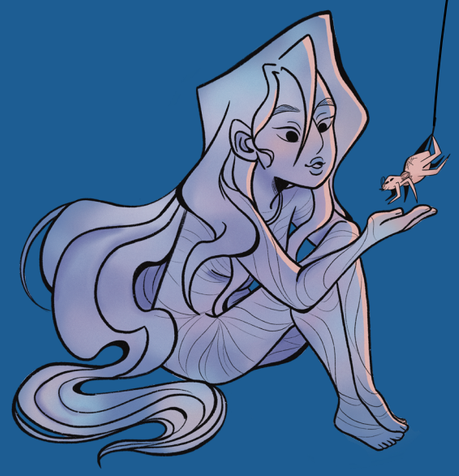
When encountering new information in any part of life, we can apply the same transformative process. We can critically reflect on meaning structures (our beliefs, judgments, and feelings) and evaluate them. New information can then be used to readjust our meaning structures or dismantle them completely! This gives us the potential to shift our perspectives and worldview, helping us find new and evolving meaning in our lives.

A holistic approach is needed to sustain this transformational learning. We have the thinking tools that help with task-oriented problem-solving and the evaluation of systems (like the iceberg model). But equally important are tools for communication and emotional expression (like some of the nature connection techniques).

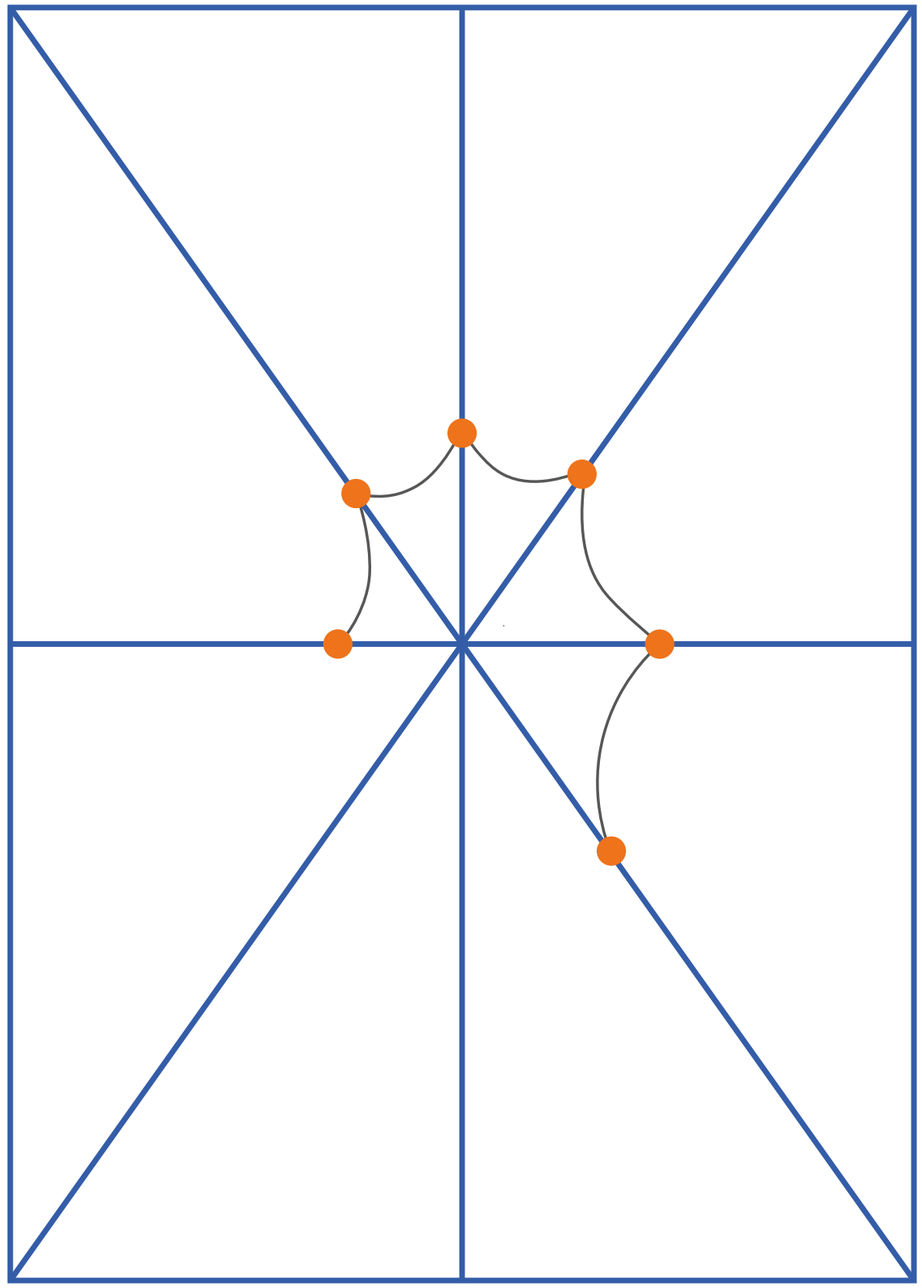
You can return to previous phases of the toolkit in your transformed state to challenge your assumptions and drive your action in new directions. Use the evaluation tool to gain an understanding of your position, and respond with an open mind and open heart. Share this toolkit or some of the thinking methods found within. Take comfort in your role as part of a wider purpose and movement. Lead the change you believe in for nature, as nature.



# APPENDIX



# Web of life



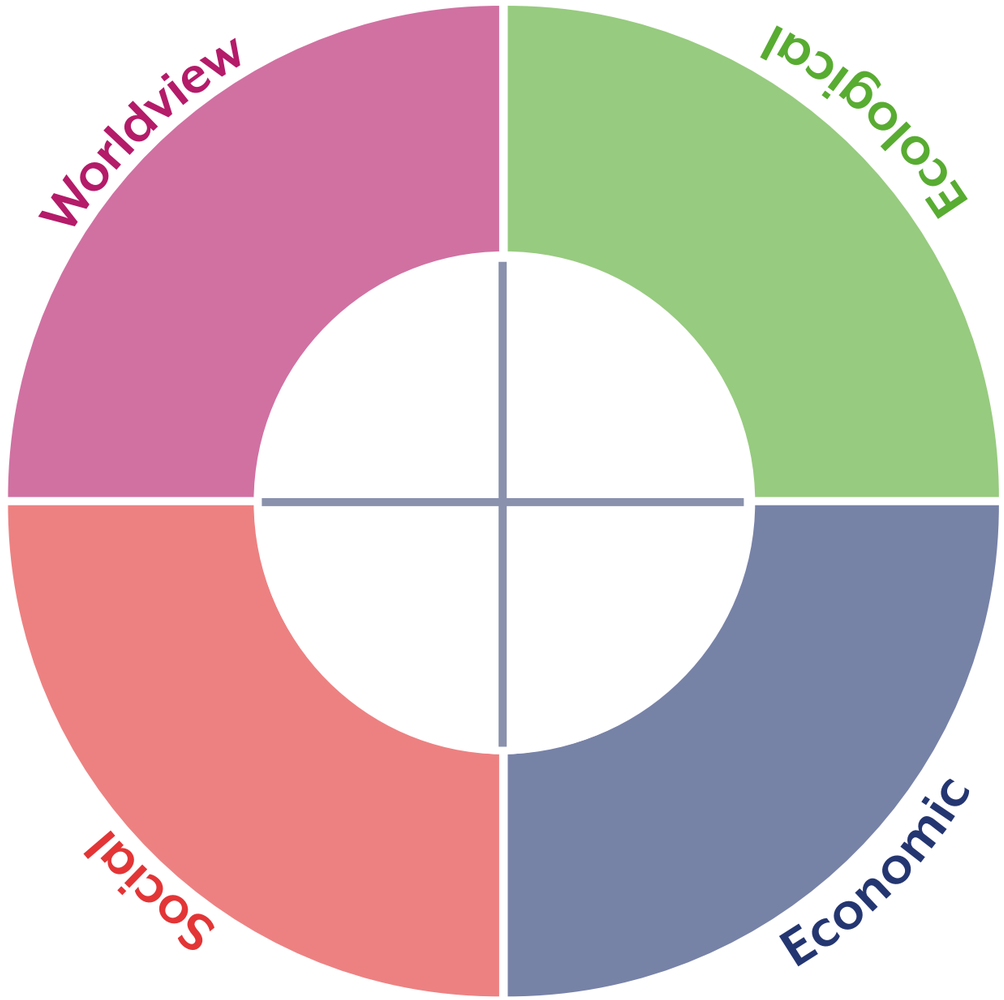
1. Who are you?

2. What patterns where the most useful?

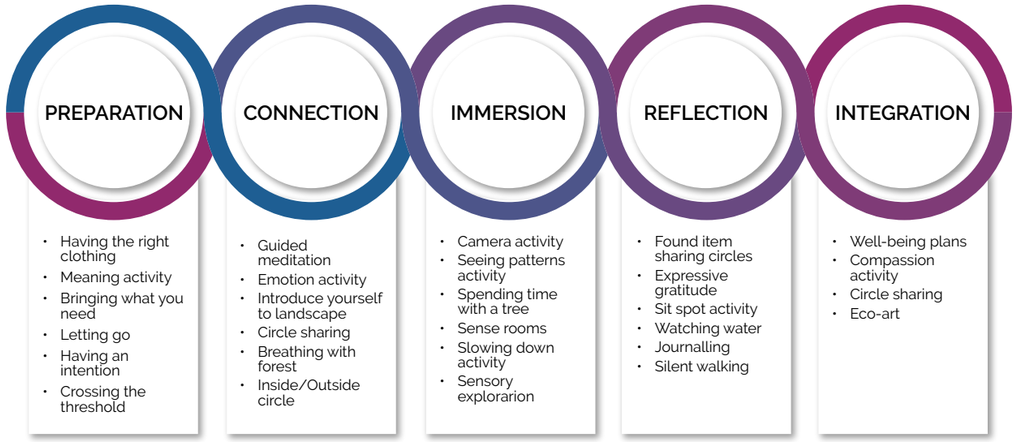
3. What role did nature pay in these moments?



# A holistic journey



# Nature connection




## PREPARATION STAGE

### Meaning activity

This activity is helpful to do in pairs when you are walking along together. You can both share some of your meaningful experiences in nature with the other person.

Example 1: Tell a story that you have in nature.

Example 2: Recall some memories of a particular tree you have encountered in your life or perhaps have had a special relationship with.

Example 3: Share your favourite place in nature.

Decide which one of you will share first. The other person can just listen and receive the story. This activity can lead down all sorts of interesting pathways. It is a reflection to encourage people to find gratitude, peace, and joy in their experiences.

### Crossing the threshold

This can be done when you or your group are out in nature, especially if you are about to embark on a more in-depth nature connection session. This simple idea helps to mark the transition from everyday life into a quiet and contemplative time in the natural world. You can do this by consciously crossing a threshold in nature, such as walking through a gate, crossing a bridge, walking between two trees, or even placing a stick down on the ground that you physically walk over, marking a different space. You can cross back over the threshold when you finish your session, back to day-to-day life. This is connected to the intentionality exercise and the letting go activity. It is about gaining presence at the moment and leaning into the experiences nature has to offer.

### Letting go

This can be done alone or in a group. It is about seeking support from nature to allow you to be more present. First, walk around and pick up a natural object. This could be a stone, a leaf, a twig, or anything that calls to you without disturbing the natural environment. Take a minute just to feel it, noticing its qualities. Simply allow yourself to be aware of anything that may be distracting you at present, any thoughts or worries that are preventing you from being fully here. Tune into what you want to let go of. Maybe there is some confusion or stress in your life. See if you can find something you want to let go of, just for the moment, so that you can be truly present. When you are ready, project those worries or energies onto the piece of nature and place your natural object down wherever you feel comfortable. Do this, knowing it will be fine to pick it up again whenever you want. Now, leaning on nature's strength to hold your worries, give yourself the gift of time, and allow yourself permission to be fully here, in this place, at this time. You can go for a walk, for example, letting go of the things holding you back. You can always return to collect these energies after you are done.

### Having an intention

This one is really simple. When you engage in nature--based therapeutic work, it is good to set an intention as to what you want to get from the session. Examples could be to strengthen your connection with nature, to feel more peaceful, to have some fun, or to gain clarity on a problem you are struggling with. Simply acknowledge your intention and be open to nature's surprises and wisdom! Whether working alone or in a group, practice intentionally and make it an explicit part of your process.



## CONNECTION STAGE

### Guided meditation

Meditation is a wonderful way to connect. Below we offer you a script you can use with your group to guide them. This is one you can use on a forest walk. Feel free to make it your own and adapt it, changing some of the language to suit your environment:

*In a moment, you'll be invited to close your eyes. But first, let us take a moment to look around and notice the surroundings and each other as we are together on this walk here today. Just check in with yourself briefly and make sure that you are comfortable. (pause). When you are ready, close your eyes. Or, if you may not be comfortable with your eyes closed, simply lower your gaze, and allow it to soften a bit.*

*Feel the weight of your body, standing on the earth. Notice the space around us, air moving all around. Take a few deep breaths. Noticing how you are taking in the oxygen from the trees and releasing carbon dioxide back. (pause). You are breathing with the forest.*

*Start to notice your sense of touch. If you are in the sun or shadow, does that feel differently on your skin? What about the parts covered by clothes? Simply notice the feel and sensations that may arise. Maybe there's a chance to feel the earth under our shoes and feet and what that contact is like. (pause).*

*Now turn your attention to your sense of hearing; perhaps notice what the farthest away sound is that you can hear. (pause). Moving in a bit closer, notice if there are any nearby sounds and what they might be. (pause). Move in even closer, (pause), and closer still. (pause).*

*Turn your attention to your sense of smell. Take a few deep breaths and really take in the smell of the forest. Turn your head gently from side to side to see if you can notice any of the subtle scents in the air. Finally, turn your attention to your sense of taste. See if you can you taste any of the different flavours in your mouth. (pause).*

*In a moment you will open your eyes, but before you do, simply imagine that you have just arrived here, as if you were carried here with your eyes closed. You have never ever been here before, so everything is seen as for the very first time. What wonders are there for you to notice? What is giving you particular pleasure? (pause). Open your eyes when you are ready.*

### Emotion activity

To better connect with things around you, some emotional exploration can help. Even really simple questioning prompts can help you or your group ease into these emotional spaces. For example, you could encourage people to share in pairs an experience in nature that had a special significance in their life. Asking them to talk about how it felt and in what way did it change them? For some, emotional expression won't come naturally, so weaving in some questions like this can help a lot.

### Introduce yourself to the landscape

When we walk into someone's house, we introduce ourselves to the people who live there. We can do the same in nature by introducing ourselves to different elements in nature, the trees, the rocks, the water, the animals, the plants, and everything else! This is a nice way to acknowledge the space around you and the living things your share the space with. It brings you more into the moment. You move away from being an observer into being a participant in the environment.

### Breathing with the forest

You can do this by yourself, or you can lead a group in giving it a try. The idea is to wander amongst some trees until you find a tree you feel comfortable with. Simply sit or rest against it. Notice that you are breathing in oxygen and breathing out carbon dioxide. Notice how the tree supports you by giving you the oxygen you need. If you feel comfortable, close your eyes or soften your gaze. Take a deep inhalation for 4 seconds, hold for 6 seconds, and breathe out through your mouth slowly for 8 seconds. Repeat this a number of times until you feel more relaxed.

### Inside/outside circle sharing

Conducting your work in a circle setting is really important. Tyson Yunkaporta (founder of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Lab - who also wrote a fantastic book called Sand Talk) talks about circles having the power to remove the hierarchical barriers that might be present in a  group. He describes a circle, or even a rough circle shape, as having no audience and stage spaces. When these things are not separate, dialogue can flow quite freely, and no one feels right in the middle with a spotlight on them. Forming circles like this is a good way to start sharing processes. Asking simple questions like "What are you noticing?" can be a powerful way to connect. There is also room for silence if people don't want to share. You can also invite people to share through movement, sound, and gesture; the more creative, the better. A great extension of this sharing circle is to ask a group: 'What are you noticing inside yourself?' and 'What are you noticing outside yourself?'. You can share an example to start, such as: 'Inside I am noticing calm, outside I am noticing the movement of the clouds.',

## IMMERSION STAGE

### Camera activity

This activity was developed by Joseph Cornell and works well in pairs. One of you is the Photographer, and the other is the camera. It is the role of the photographer to guide the camera. Ask your camera how they want to be guided: How do you want me to guide you?  With my voice? Holding your hand? Tell your camera that you are placing the lens cap on them, so they can now close their eyes. Tell them that you will gently and safely guide them to a spot that calls out to you and where you would like to take a photo (walk to the spot with your camera). Position your camera and then adjust the angle of your lens (body, neck, and face). The camera's eyes will remain closed until you say 'Camera!'. Then they will open their eyes as you remove the lens cap. Describe to your partner why you chose this image, and what it represents to you. You can then swap roles.

### Seeing patterns activity

Whilst in an immersion stage, you can really dive deep into your senses. This is just an example for sight. Looking at fractal structures and patterns can actively engage the senses, so try seeing what you have around you. You can simply gaze at flowers, trees, and plants in nature and notice the feeling in your body, noticing how beauty affects you. Try standing under a complex tree and looking directly up, noticing its patterns from this new perspective. Where can you see such patterns repeat? What type of patterns often appears in your visual world? Are there other senses you associate with these patterns? You can focus in on one sense like this, or try to notice the connections between senses. The idea is to immerse and allow yourself to get 'lost' in the sense and in the process, become found!

### Spending time with a tree

This is connected to the sit spot activity that will appear in the reflection stage. It is also similar to the breathing exercises from earlier. See if you can follow your intuition for this one. Try and find a tree that you want to spend time with. Stand in front of it, sit down, simply enjoying how the breeze plays with the tree. Explore its textures and feel its calm presence. If you have a question to ask, ask it and simply listen with your heart and body to what comes back. If you do with with your group, encourage each individual to spend time with that tree however they like. Some of your group might be more tactile, more active, and want to climb. Others might be quiet and sensitive; maybe some are drawn to art. Keeping the activity open to their interpretation and intuition can help with engagement.

### Sense rooms

When we enter someone's home or a new place, we notice that each place and room have its own feel to it. The sense of the hallway is different from the living room; the bedroom feels different from the kitchen. And for each passing to a new room, there is a threshold or gateway into the next room, making us sense that we are truly entering into another space. In the forest, it is the same. We are moving as if from room to room, into spaces that each have their own sense of presence, but many times we may not notice it. For this activity, you can explore the natural surroundings and discover sense rooms. Different parts of the forest can give off different vibes, different aesthetics, different energies and qualities.  It may be that we pass through many different rooms before we find one where we'd like to settle down for a while. Feel free to do whatever you feel called to do in your sense room and allow your playful, creative mind to guide you. Explore it for doors or windows, perhaps be creative and build or decorate something, maybe you wish to tend to it in some particular way, or maybe just stay for a rest there for a while. If you do this as a group, try to get people to find their own rooms in the forest and then share with the group later about the qualities of that space.

### Slowing down

The next activity helps you to really slow down. You can talk to a friend and guide them through this process, a bit like meditation. Or you can give it a try on your own during a walk. Start by meandering along at a very gentle pace. As you walk, notice what is moving around you. This could be anything from things on the ground to things up to the sky and everything in between. Follow what draws your attention. During this activity, also allow yourself to be carried away from time to time by the pleasure of touching, smelling, hearing, or tasting. Feel free to stop and allow yourself the gift of silence, especially if you are walking with a partner. This helps deepen the experience and has a restorative effect. Slowing down can be difficult at first, as we are all moving so fast in life, but we often see things from a different perspective when we truly slow down.



## REFLECTION STAGE

### Found item sharing circle

In a group setting, invite people to wander in an area exploring touch and textures. Each person can collect at least one thing that captures their senses. Gather again as a small circle. Ask people to explore their items with all their senses. Then, you can invite them to pass their objects to the person on their left and explore what they receive with all their senses. After a minute or so you can ask them to repeat this, passing the objects around the circle. Remember, do not disturb anything in nature! After a few rounds, you can ask the group to return the found items to their original person who can then return them to where they found them in nature.

### Expressive gratitude activity

Here you can be very creative with your approaches. The core idea is to express gratitude for the beauty of nature and the experiences you have as a part of it. For example, you could gather the group in a circle around a tree and hand out little scrolls to write on with string attached. Each person then writes one thing they are grateful for on their scroll and hangs it on a central tree. You can then encourage the group to wander around the area and seek out all the beauty in the space, returning to the tree after some time to pick up a random scroll and read it, reflecting on that person's gratitude and your own. Activities like this can be developed to include many expressive arts such as poetry, embodiment, mindful movement, eco-art, music, photography, and other forms of expressive writing etc.

### Journaling

This is another activity featured in the toolkit. It can be a great way to build your connection and relationship to nature-based activities and places. To learn more about the power of journaling, please see page 11 in the toolkit.

### Sit spot activity

There is a section dedicated to this activity in the toolkit. The idea is to provide and create an opportunity to wander around and find yourself a spot where you´d like to sit down. A place where you can simply be with whatever is taking place, where you can allow all your senses to bathe and really take in the world around you. You can start by connecting to your body and walking in whatever direction feels good to you, trusting that you will find your place simply by allowing your body to guide you. When you find your place, sit and relax for 15- 20 minutes and notice what is all around you. You can nurture a relationship with this spot by frequently visiting or journaling there. You can see page 29 of the toolkit for more on sit spots.

### Watching running water

If you find yourself in a place with running water, see if you can spend some time there. Water is a great force, and we find it all around us. Even within us! If you manage to find a place by running water, try to notice the flow of the water; is it fast, slow? Take a few deep breaths and just tune into the rhythm of the water. Let your body move with the water without any judgement. You can use the flow of water to represent the flow of time. Reflect on your experiences in nature from this session, this week or this year. Consider how the past events (further up the river or steam) impact the present situation (where you are with the water right now). You can use nature in this way to conceptualise time and your growth.

### Silent walking

We seldom experience silence in modern life with constant noise and talking. Walking in silence in nature can help restore our bodies and minds. This one is really as simple as it sounds. See how long you can be in comfortable silence. Reflect on the thoughts which pop up in your mind during this time. Are you able to process other experiences during this silent time?

## INTEGRATION STAGE

### Compassion activity

It is of course important to respect the natural environment. When we treat the natural spaces around us as connected, as a whole and as alive, we can better build a connection and respectful relationship with nature. You can help foster this respectful relationship by asking permission from whatever aspect of nature we wish to engage in before we enter into its space. For example, if you want to take sticks or stones, ask for permission before you do. Then you can return the kindness by "gifting back to the earth". Giving back can be through some pro-environmental behaviours such as tree planting or through a symbolic gesture of gratitude. To help further understand this relationship you can develop, ask and describe:

'Nature supports me by….'
'I support nature by …'

Nature helps us in so many ways. Try to find a way for you or your group to give back to nature. This could be through a poem, a gesture, art, words, movement or action. Wander and find signs of compassion in nature. Consider how do you show compassion to yourself and how you could show compassion to nature.

Also, another fantastic resource is the Connecting with Nature for Health and Wellbeing Toolkit.

### Well-being plans

Putting these activities together in structured ways and making them a part of your routine can contribute towards creating a well-being plan. This is something mentioned in the toolkit. For further details of the well-being plans, see page 29 in the toolkit.

### Ecoart

This last one is best done as a group, and it is a wonderful way to finish a session. A bit like the found items activity, invite your group to find something from the forest that they want to use in an art piece. The art piece will represent an offering back to nature as a form of gratitude (always emphasising the importance of respecting the landscape). Each person then finds natural objects around them. Encourage the group to build something together from the materials. If you are many, consider splitting into two or three groups. Each eco-art piece can be unique and represent whatever the group desires. When finished, have the group explain their piece and its symbolism. You can of course do this by yourself as you walk along a beach or forest - give it a try!



# Learning to surf

Here are some stress management techniques that will support you during difficult times. Use whatever techniques you find helpful to support positive mental health. You will find links to short videos that explain the techniques by clicking the bold words (or visiting the digital toolkit)

## MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

### Deep breathing

Use your breath to help relax your mind and body. Deep breathing is a powerful technique that you can use in any place and at any time.

### Body scan

This is a great tool to enhance self awareness in understanding how you feel in your body and what areas you hold tension and stress.

### 5 Minute nature visualisation

Watching natural imagery can help with restoration when we become overwhelmed and exhausted. Let the images of nature soothe you.

### Self compassion

Sometimes we are very tough on ourselves which is negative for our wellbeing. Learning to be compassionate towards ourselves is vital for overall positive health.

## COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL TECHNIQUES

### Practising gratitude

By focusing on all the things you are grateful for, it reduces the focus on all the negative things that are happening around the world.

### Active hope

Joanna Macy understood the importance of maintaining hope in the middle of chaos and engaging in action to create change.

### Positive self talk

The way we talk to ourselves is important. In times of great stress and uncertainty it is vital to be gentle with ourselves and focus on the positive things we can do instead of being overly harsh.

### Strengths focus

Focusing on our strengths rather than our weaknesses is a great strategy to help us to keep going in times of adversity.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

### Green exercise

Being physically active outdoors in nature has added benefits than simply exercising indoors. 30 minutes of moderate physical activity outdoors a day will enhance your overall resilience.

### Barefoot walking

Walking barefoot on grass can be very beneficial in reducing stress levels and levels of inflammation in your body. It also improves sleep which is essential for good mental health.

### Yoga outdoors

Stretching outdoors is good for your body, mind and soul. Even 15 minutes a day can help you manage stress and is really fun!

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

### Nature sounds : Listening

Listening to the calming sounds in nature can help reduce tension in the body. Our natural soundscape needs to be protected.

### Journalling

Regularly writing out our thoughts is a good way to gain clarity about how we are feeling and also expressing our emotions in a healthy way.

### Outdoor art therapy

Do something creative and engage in art therapy outdoors. Getting in touch with our creative selves energises us and supports our mental health and wellbeing.

# Learning global

1. My local sustainability issue is...

2. At a local level, how does this issue connect to SDG areas?

3. Why is the issue a problem in your community?

4. What does my community already know about the issue?

5. Which SDG areas are the most important?

6. Can you connect these local issues to global concerns?

## SUMMARY

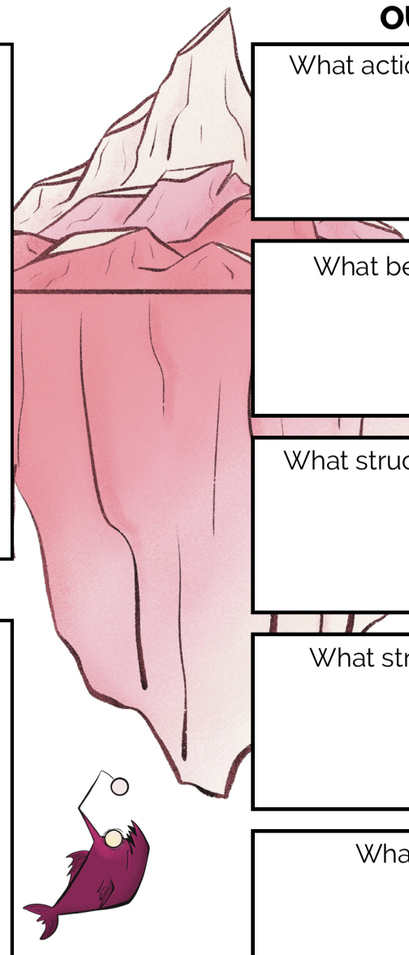
What is your project about?

Who is involved and what roles do they have?

Who is your project aimed at?

## CONNECTIONS

Why does this project make sense? How is it connected to you and the leverage points in your society?



## OUR SYSTEM

What action do we hope to see?

What behaviors will we see?

What structures will we develop?

What strategies do we have?

What is our purpuse?

# Learning to combine

## COLLABORATIONS

What assets will the group collaborate with?

## BUDGETING

What are the costs and how can we sustainably fund this project's activities and impact?

## WELL-BEING

How will our group prioritise our individual and collective well-being?

| SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS | IMPACTS (short and long term) |
|---|---|
| SOCIAL | |
| ECOLOGICAL | |
| ECONOMIC | |
| WORLDVIEW | |