

James T Jones



# Making sense through stories: participatory narratives as a pathway to local resilience

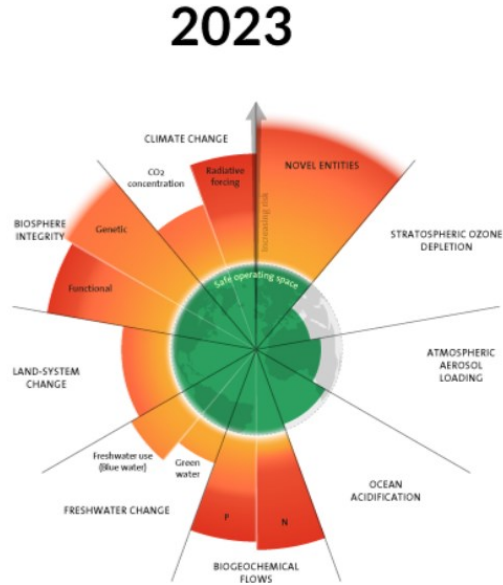
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Social and Ecological Sustainability



# Polycrises and Perception



# Sustainability As a Crises of Perception



- *“The role of the organizing idea in cognitive perception is of such an active kind that if the idea changes, then what is seen changes.”*
  - — Henri Bortoft (1996) *The Wholeness of Nature : Goethe's Way Toward a Science of Conscious Participation in Nature*
  - *“Could mortal lip divine  
The undeveloped Freight  
Of a delivered syllable  
'Twould crumble with the weight.”*
- Emily Dickinson 1894 (Dickinson, 1894)

# Perception, Attention and Participation

- *“the kind of attention we bring to bear on the world changes the nature of the world we attend to...Attention changes what kind of thing comes into being for us...If you are my friend, the way in which I attend to you would be different from the way I would attend to you if you were my employer, my patient, the suspect I am investigating, my love, my aunt, a body waiting to be dissected...And yet nothing objectively has changed”*  
(McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary* 2009, p. 28)
- *“What am I to do?” with “Of what story or stories do I find myself apart?”*.
- -Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 1981

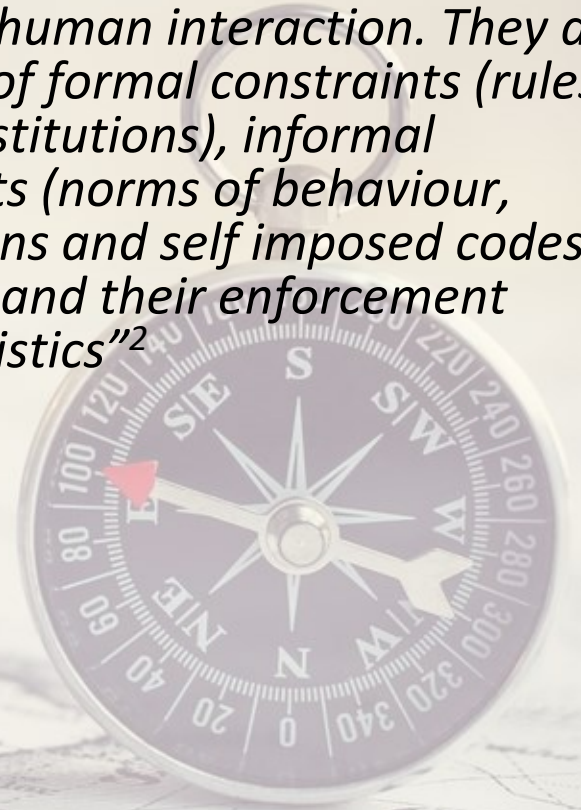
## Narratives

*“The primary form by which human experience is made meaningful...Narrative meaning is a cognitive process that organises human experiences into temporally meaningful episodes.”<sup>1</sup>*

*"Social knowledge extracted from daily rhetoric can point to what informs decisions, actions, interests, and principles and, thus, may be useful for discovering what is considered public truth and preferable behavior" (Fisher, 1985).*

## Institutions

*“Human devised constraints that structure human interaction. They are made up of formal constraints (rules, laws, constitutions), informal constraints (norms of behaviour, conventions and self imposed codes of conduct), and their enforcement characteristics”<sup>2</sup>*



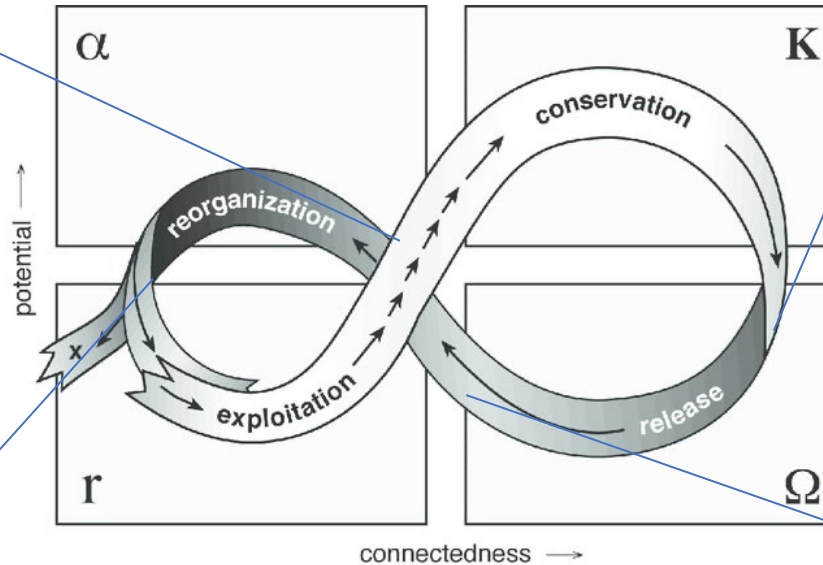
# Collapse Now and Avoid The Rush

## Practices Nurturing Renewal

- Recruitment areas
- Seasonal harvest closures
- Protection of species/age classes/habitat

## Narratives Nurturing Renewal

- **Relational focus**
- **Land as teacher**
- **Wholism**



The adaptive cycle (from Panarchy, edited by Lance H. Gunderson and C.S. Holling: Figure 2-1 (page 34). Copyright © 2002 Island Press.

## Practices Slowing Release-

- Saving banks
- Emergency crops
- Fire brakes
- Landscape-level management

## Narratives Slowing Release

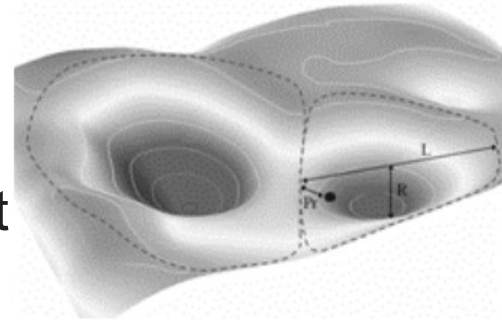
- **Human-nature separation**
- **Reductionism**



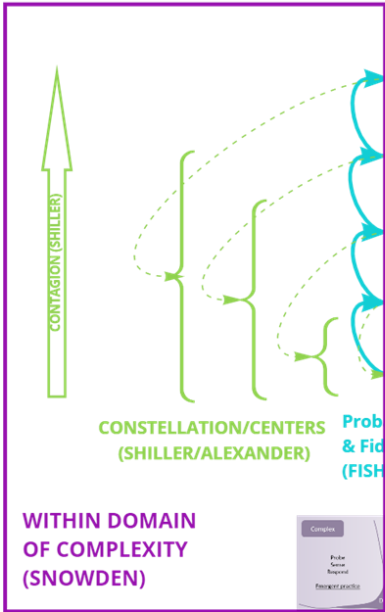
# Vector Theory of Change (Snowden)

- Theory of Change for complex environments
- We decide on what direction we want to go in
- map the system's current state,
- run experiments to shift in that direction,
- measure the system's state again and assess what interventions might be most useful.
- This is an iterative process that incorporates feedback and allows for continually taking stock of a dynamic environment so we can take advantage of new opportunities as they arise

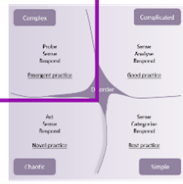
Fig. 1a. Three-dimensional stability landscape with two basins of attraction showing, in one basin, the current position of the system and three aspects of resilience,  $L$  = latitude,  $R$  = resistance,  $Pr$  = precariousness.







- Ur-Narratives**  
e.g ontology, epistemology
- Grand Narratives**  
e.g capitalism, human rights, sustainability
- Meta Narratives**  
e.g. governance, collectivisation,
- Narratives**  
e.g. technology, media
- Stories** e.g work/ leisure, health, family



# Chrono

Patterns over time such as long-view of material and Earth cycles and sociohistorical conditions which limit cognitive capabilities. Both highlight the need for co-evolutionary processes as primary boundary.

# Macro

Biophysical and social limits to growth and change including planetary boundaries and existing social norms.

# Exo

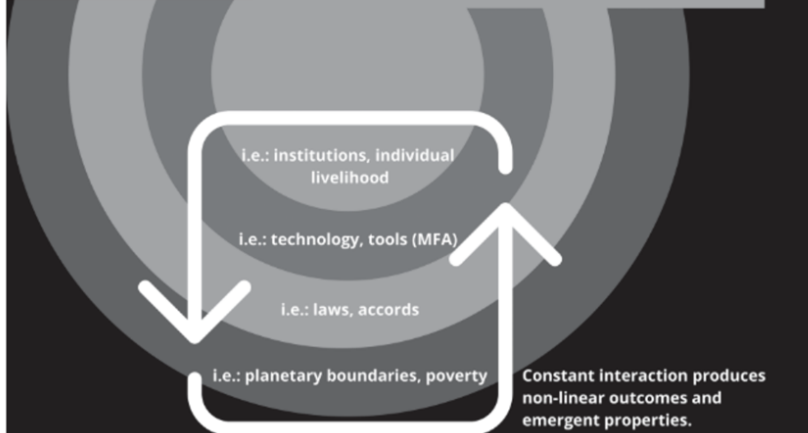
Feasibility of changes in relation to existing macro realities and common philosophy.

# Meso

Methods of approaching change are founded on macro and exo realities that meet micro needs.

# Micro

Outcomes and institutions are efficient in allocation, equitable in distribution, and sustainable in scale.



Constant interaction produces non-linear outcomes and emergent properties.

