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Sustainability Research & Practice Seminar  
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Sustainability Research & Creative Activities @  
WCU

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11-15-2023

### **Beyond Sustainability Curriculum Integration - Educating Otherwise**

Paul Morgan

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# **SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH and PRACTICE SEMINAR**

**NOVEMBER 15, 2023**

**Professor Paul Morgan**

*Educational Foundations and Policy Studies*

Beyond Sustainability Curriculum  
Integration – Educating Otherwise

**Wednesday, 12:00 to 12:50 pm in person (255 A/B Sykes Student Union)  
and in our Zoom room: <https://wcupa.zoom.us/j/91259797459>, passcode: 194422**

Beyond Sustainability  
Curriculum Integration  
**Educating Otherwise**

May 2024?



# WCU

WEST CHESTER  
UNIVERSITY



Sustainability Curriculum Integration

Implicit

Theory of Change?

# IMAGINETHIS

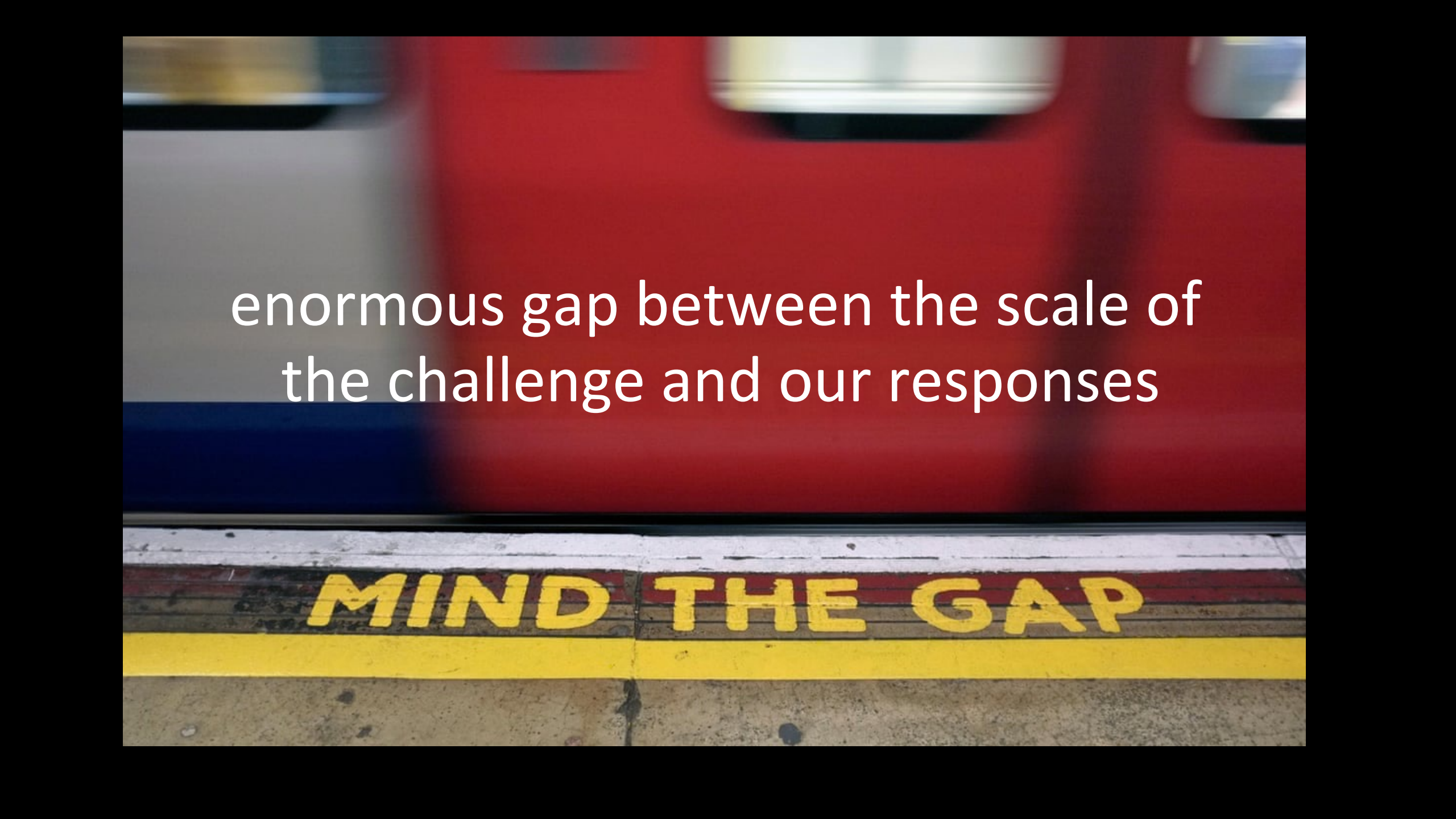
2 Million Bachelor's Degrees

1 Million Graduate Degrees

Every May, of the **millions** of graduates, a critical number fan out into communities and into every profession where they have the understanding, vision, and practical experience to help lead efforts to *regenerate* everything.

Is it happening?

Is it working?

A photograph of a red train car with a yellow stripe and the text 'MIND THE GAP' painted on the side. The text is in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font. The background is a blurred red surface, likely the side of the train car. The text is centered horizontally and vertically in the upper half of the image.

enormous gap between the scale of  
the challenge and our responses

**MIND THE GAP**



# Sustainability Integration







# A Hard Truth

“Almost everything being done in the name of sustainable development addresses and attempts to reduce unsustainability. But reducing unsustainability, although critical, does not and will not create sustainability”

--John R. Ehrenfeld, *Sustainability by Design*



















**More Sustainable?**





**Less Unsustainable!**







# WCU

WEST CHESTER  
UNIVERSITY





**More Sustainable?**





**Less Unsustainable**



How do we ensure that our *graduates* are not our institutions' most harmful emissions?

# CONUVIDRUM

Our higher ed institutions have not yet made the bold transformations needed to address the depth, scale, and nature of our challenges.

It all amounts to . . .

**BUSINESS  
AS  
USUAL.**



**WITH  
A LITTLE MORE  
GREEN**



What do we do?

*More of what we're  
already doing?*

*Fallacy of  
Sustainability  
Education*

First – clarity about  
our assumptions

# We need . . .

**Clarity** about the scope, scale, and *nature* of the challenge so that we can approach our work with inspired, courageous purpose.

**Clarity** about what we *think* we're doing and *why* so we *actually* produce graduates who are empowered to work towards a sustainable future.

How serious is our  
predicament?













1.



**EVERYTHING  
IS FINE**



**KEEP  
SHOPPING**

## 2. This is Solvable

The problems can be addressed adequately with changes to policy and practice, plus technological **solutions**

# 3. Transformation Needed

We will need to take concerted collective action and mobilize political will in order to enable the kind of transformations that can adequately address the serious problems we face.

# 4. Time to Hospice Modernity

The depth and magnitude of the problems we face will make impossible the continuity of our existing ways of knowing, being and relating; we will need to disinvest from dominant problem-solving strategies and tap into exiled capacities to address these challenges.

From *Hospicing Modernity*, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira



5.











Right Answer?

# All of the Above

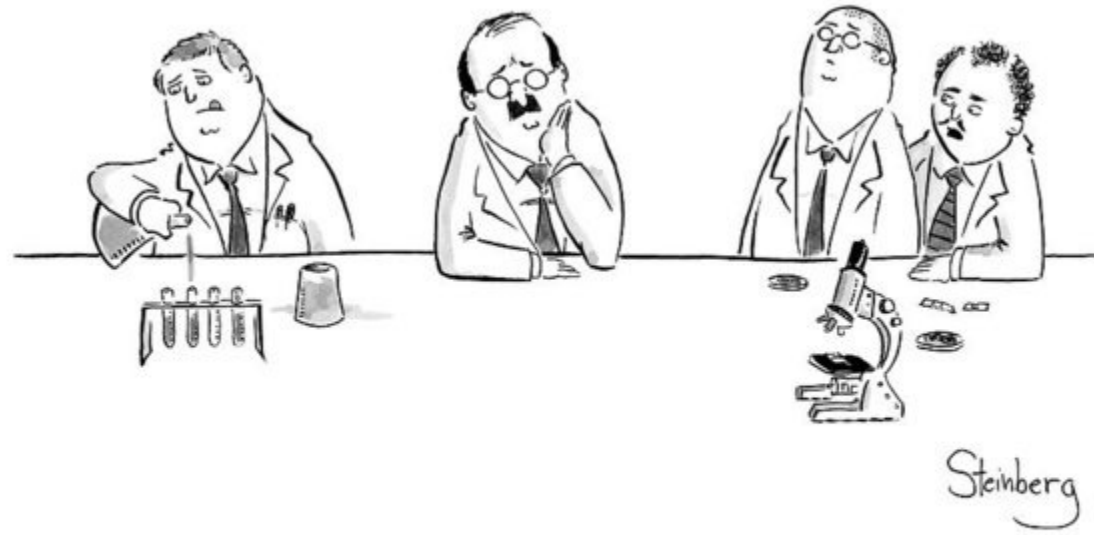
(minus the shopping and imminent apocalypse)

Why are *solutions*  
and *collective action*  
not enough?

## Answers

- They will never do more than make an unsustainable system somewhat less unsustainable.
- Successes within Business-as-Usual tend to decrease creative tension
- We literally can't imagine what a sustainable future looks like

# THOUGHT EXPERIMENT





At some point in the near future . . .



Not Apocalypse







allen lane

# The Uninhabitable Earth

A STORY OF THE FUTURE

David  
Wallace-Wells







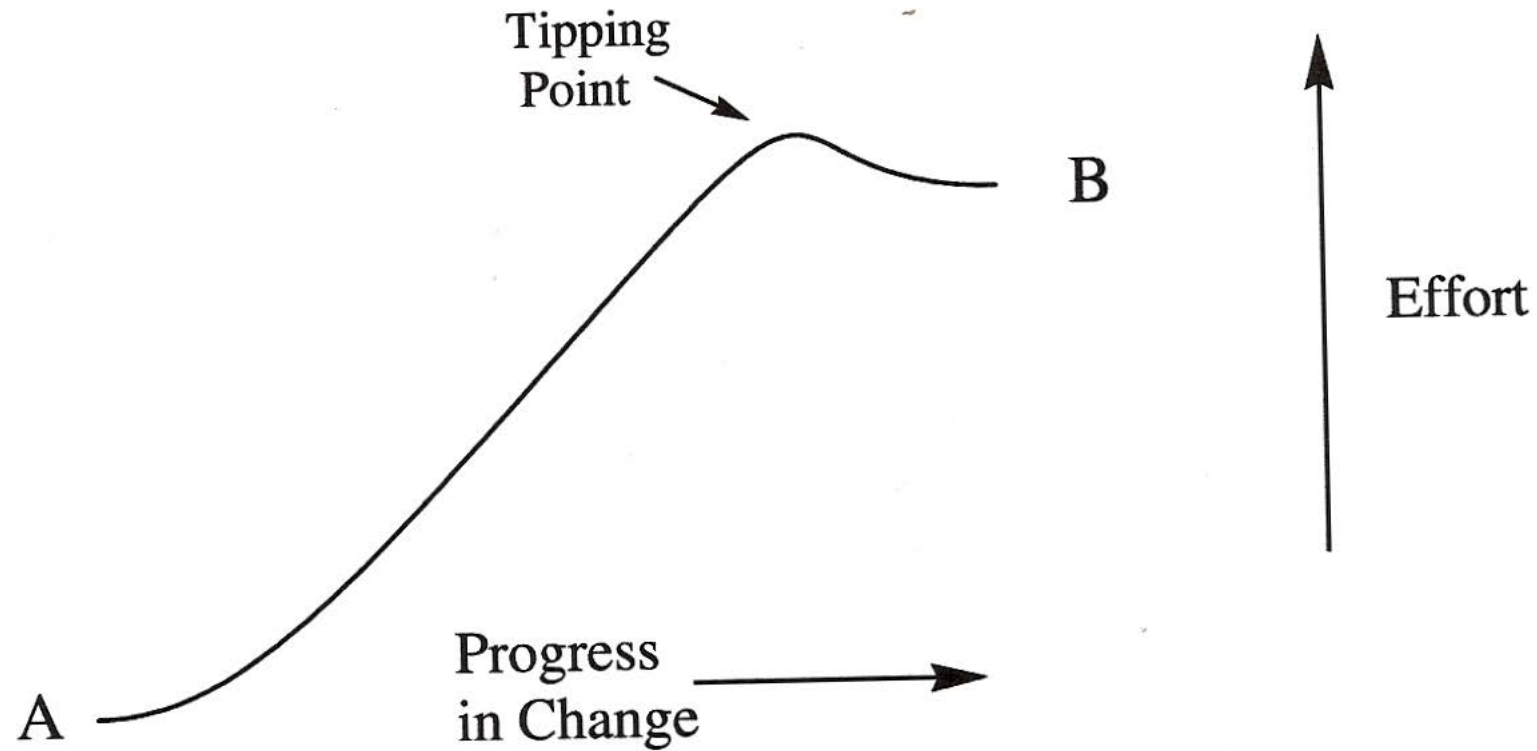
THE  
MINISTRY  
FOR THE  
FUTURE

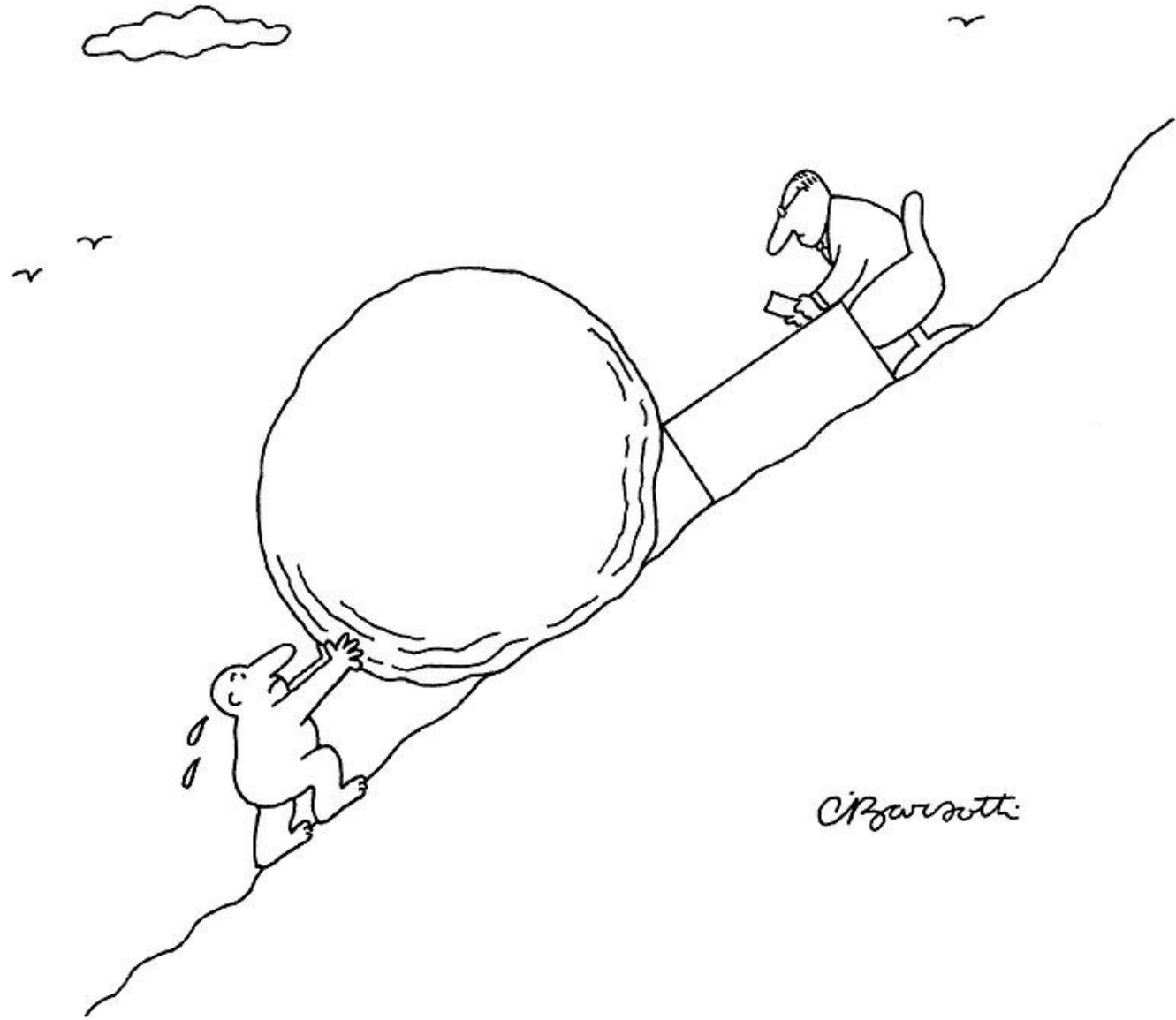
A NOVEL

KIM  
STANLEY  
ROBINSON

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# Pivotal Moment





CPawarathi



# Barriers Evaporate

Obstacles to action will melt away, and higher education sustainability educators (aka, **you**) will be called on to present your plans for rapidly transforming the purposes and practices of higher education in order to respond to the planetary crisis.







What do we . . . *do*?

What *initiatives, what purposes,*  
*and what kind of learning* will  
help us transform beyond BAU?



What do colleges and universities need to be or *become* to stay relevant once the the sh\*t has hit the fan?

# In Groups

What would you propose we do when barriers to implementation melt away? Generate a list of initiatives & priorities . . .

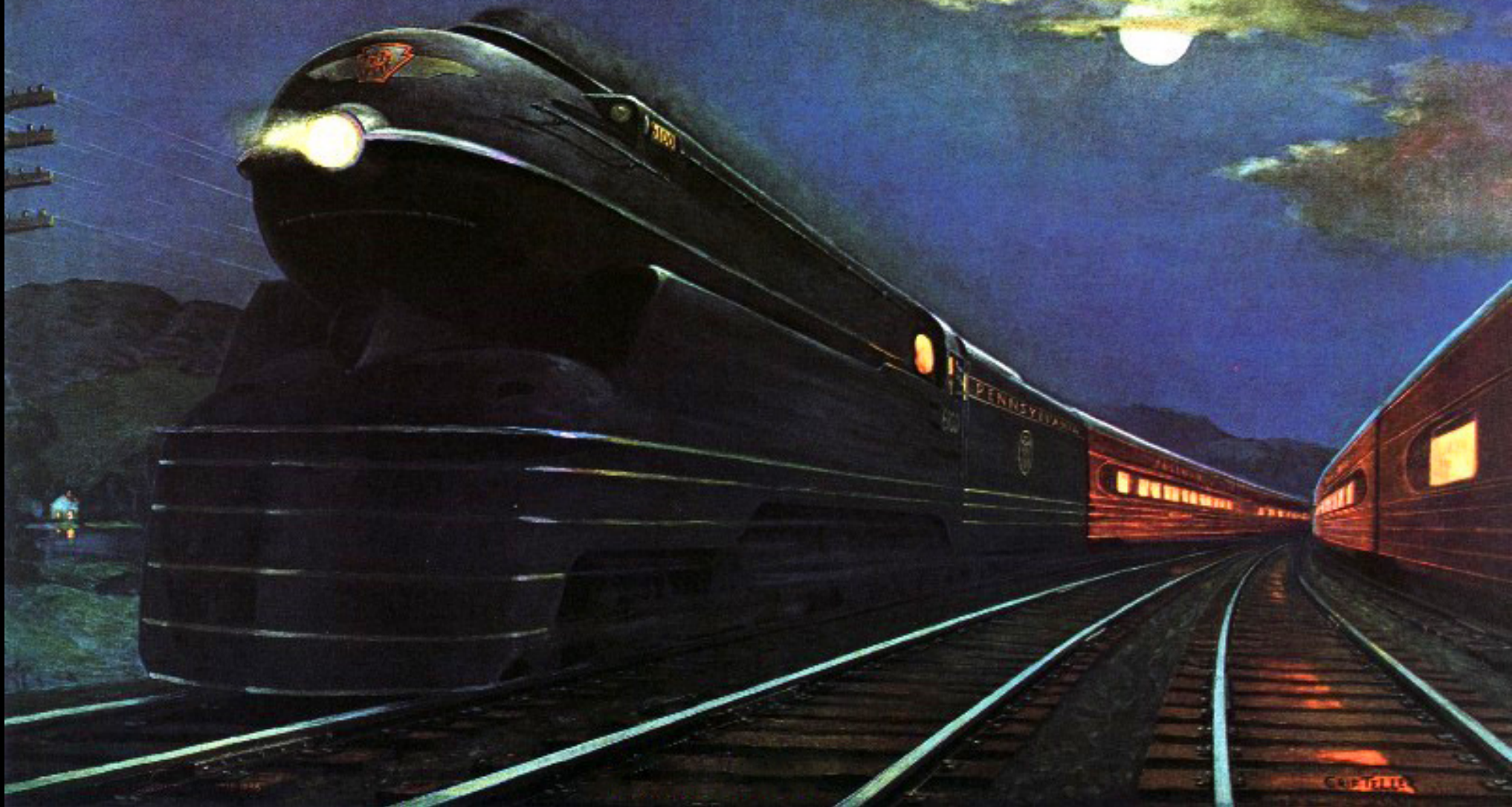
But . . .

Most of us have trouble imagining anything other than schooling-as-usual with greener stuff and a greener curriculum.

Why?



# The Juggernaut of Modernity





BlakkReign ©2007

<http://blakkreign.deviantart.com/art/End-Of-The-Road-54717011>





[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dutch\\_green\\_train.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dutch_green_train.jpg)  
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# A Unique Historical Moment

“Now for the first time in human history, a particular **worldview** is becoming conscious of its own impending fall and has the opportunity to consciously re-forge its worldview to confront the threat.”

--Jon Kohl

Yes, but we are **stuck** on the  
juggernaut of modernity.

Why?

Because it's not out there. It's in us.



Modernity

is *it* in you?



# Entranced

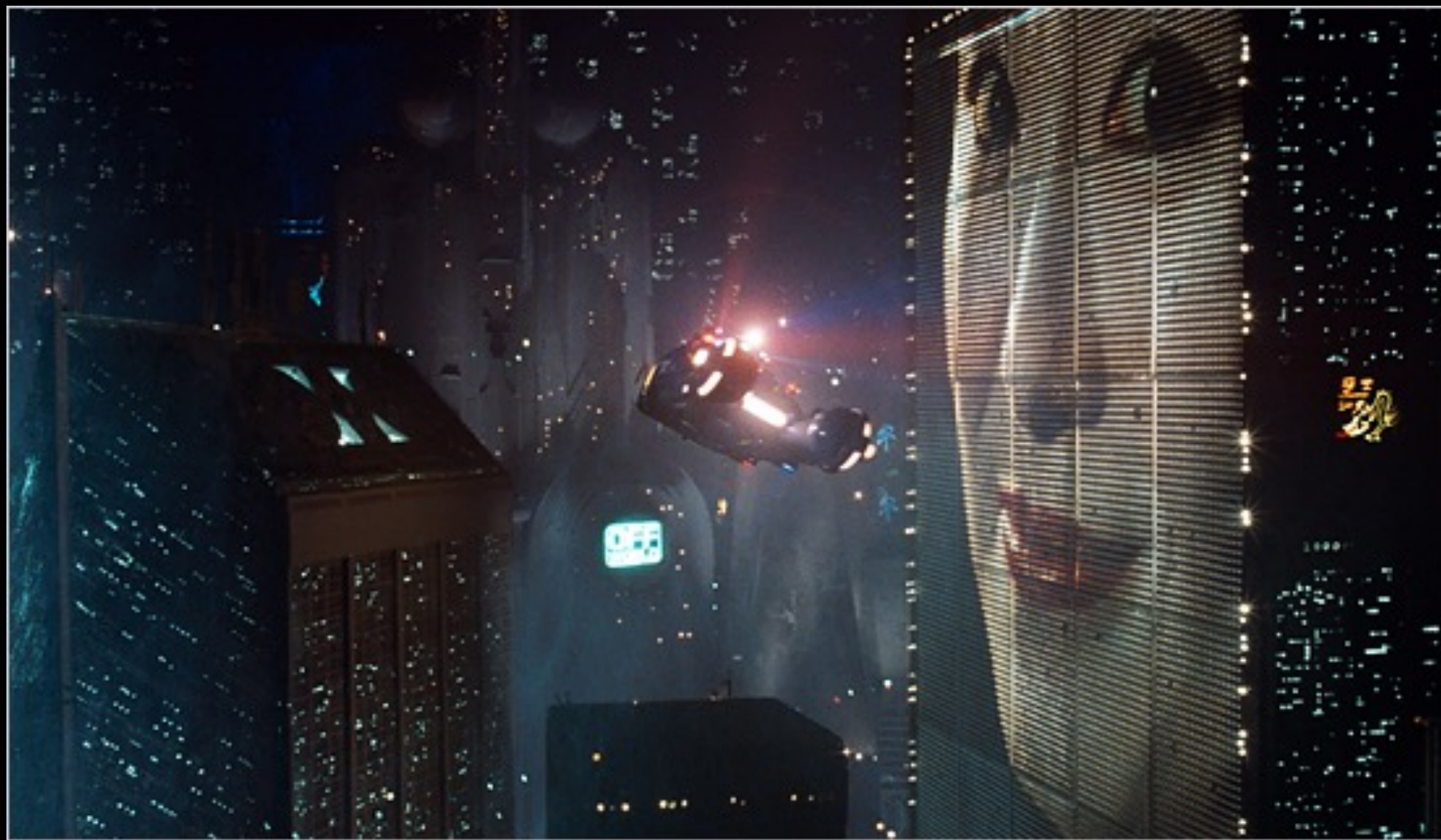
by a vision of the future that has  
been implanted in our minds

What is that vision?













**BLADE RUNNER**

**2049**



THE INSPIRATION FOR *BLADE RUNNER*

**DO ANDROIDS  
DREAM OF  
ELECTRIC  
SHEEP?**



"A KIND OF  
PULP-FICTION  
KAFKA,  
A PROPHET."

— ERIC P. NASH  
*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

**PHILIP K. DICK**  
INTRODUCTION BY ROGER ZELAZNY



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**I said to my soul, be still, and wait  
without hope, For hope would be hope  
for the wrong thing.**

**-T. S. Eliot**

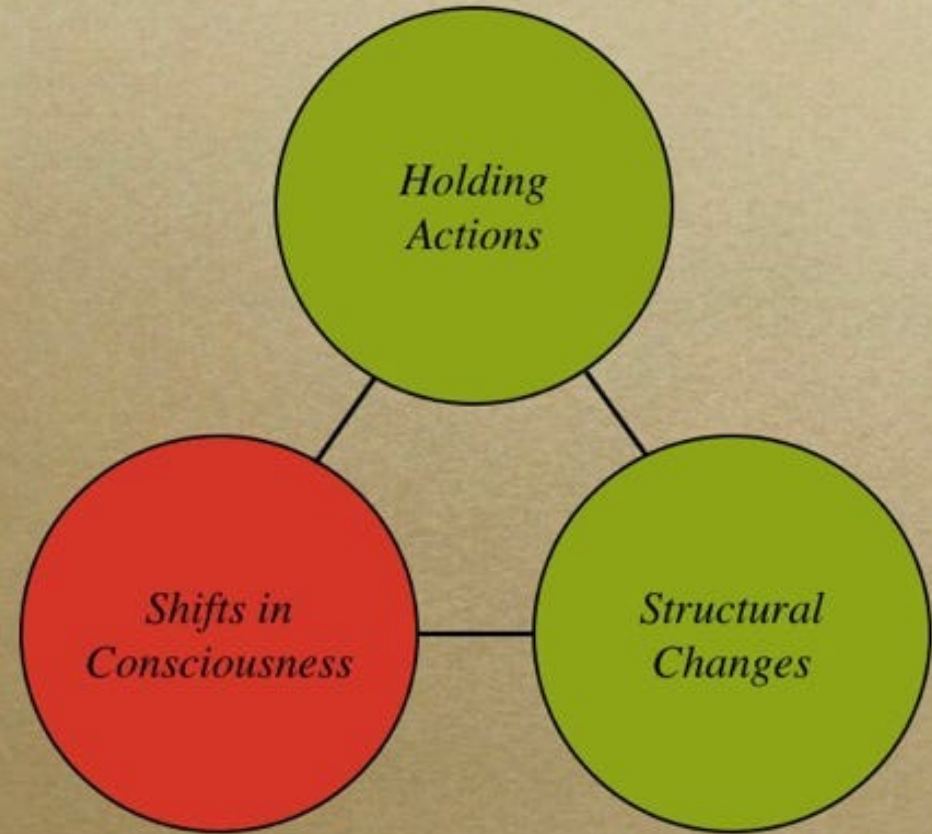


Right Answer?

# All of the Above

(minus the shopping and imminent apocalypse)

# THE GREAT TURNING



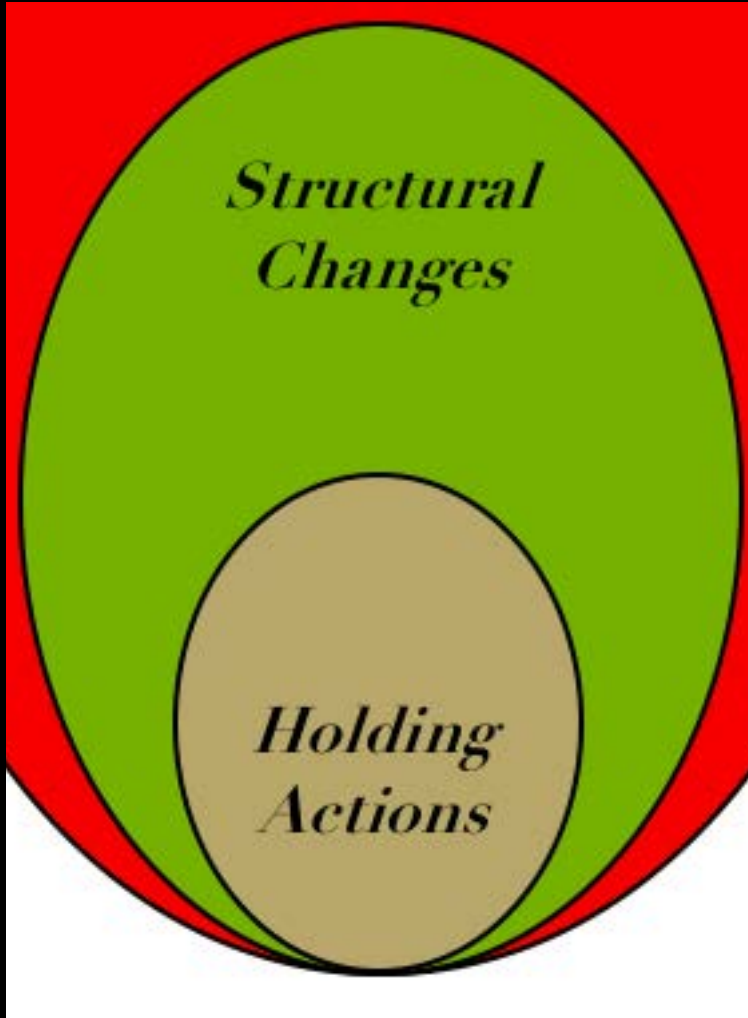
**“Future generations, if there is a livable world for them, will look back at the epochal transition we are making to a life-sustaining society. And they may well call this the time of the Great Turning. It is happening now.” – Joanna Macy**



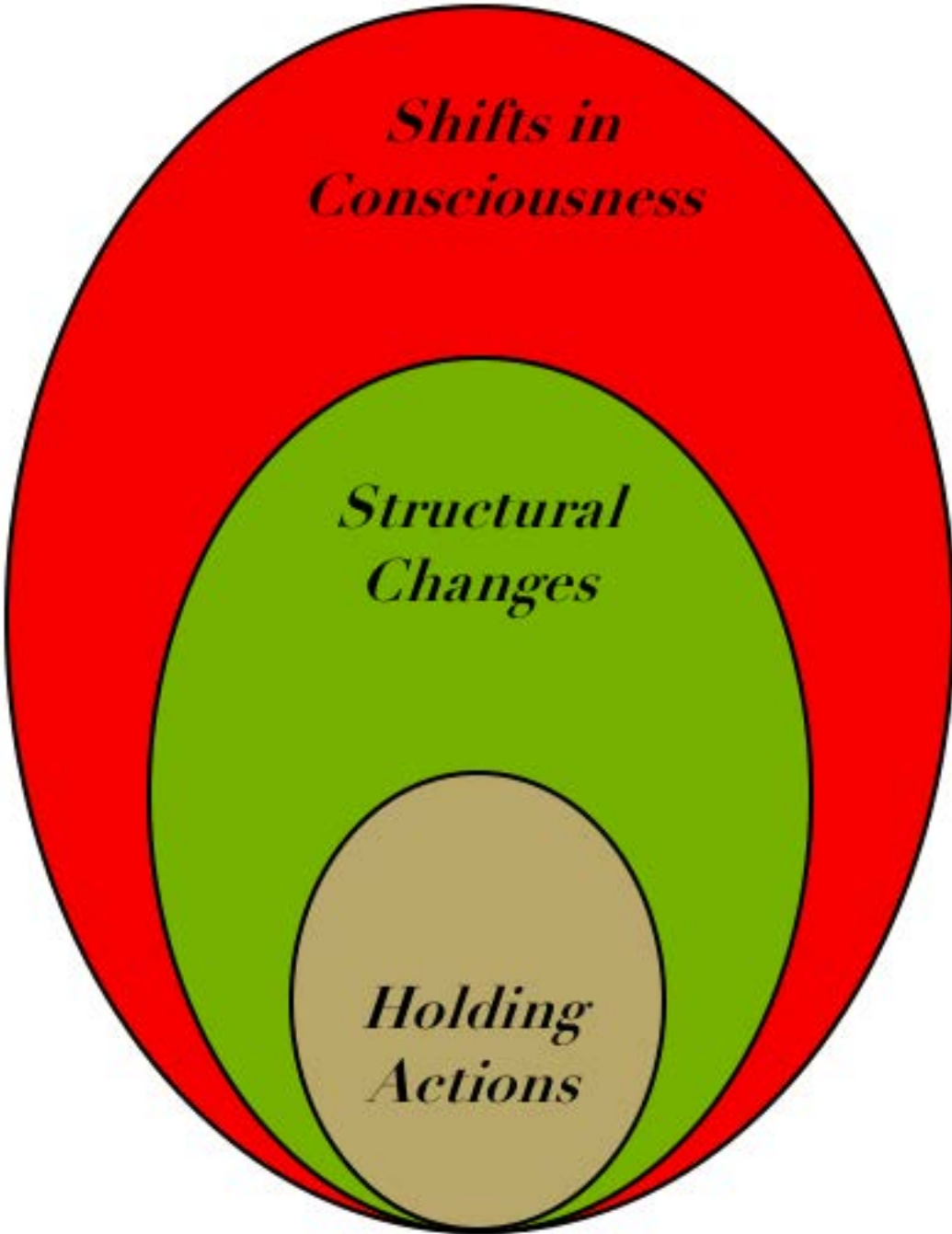
# Sustainability Curriculum Integration for the Great Turning

1. Actions to slow the damage to Earth and its beings;
2. Analysis and transformation of the foundations of our common life;
3. A fundamental shift in worldview and values (i.e., getting off track)









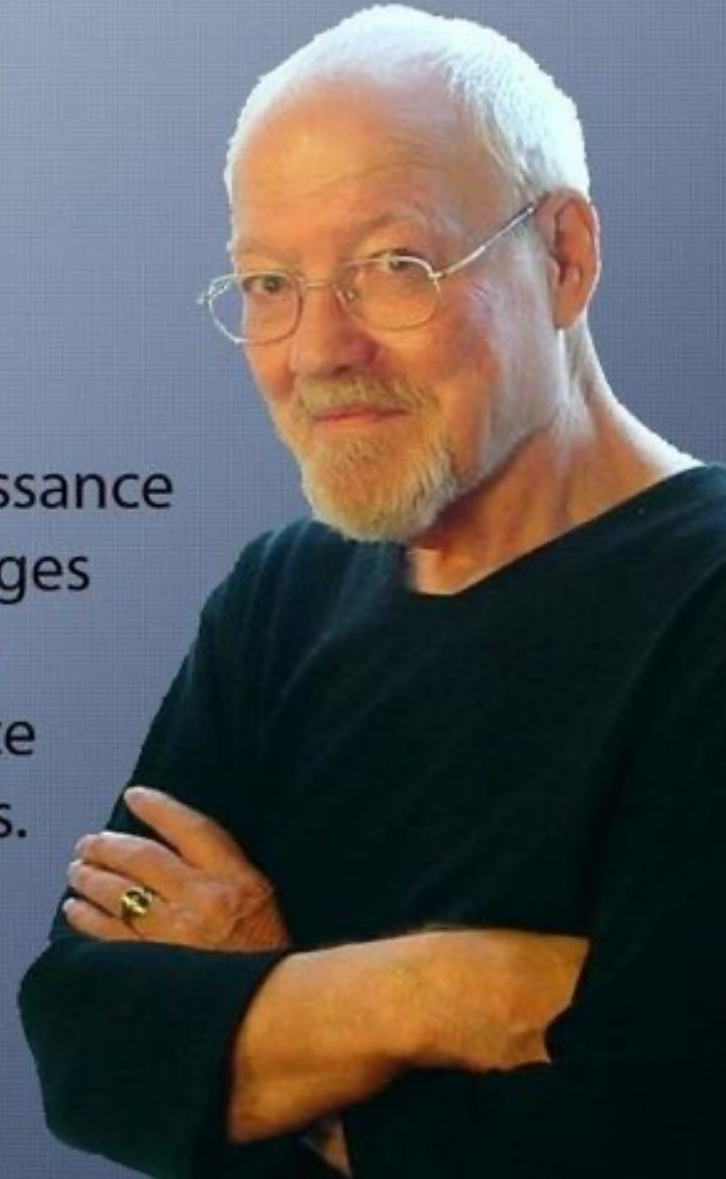
*Shifts in  
Consciousness*

*Structural  
Changes*

*Holding  
Actions*

If we actually manage to survive here, it will be because we've moved into a new era as different from ours as the Renaissance was from the Middle Ages --and as unimaginable to us as the Renaissance was to the Middle Ages.

~Daniel Quinn



# This is Solvable (No, but . . .)

The problems can **not** be addressed adequately with changes to policy and practice, plus technological **solutions**, **but we must slow damage to the Earth and its beings.**



# Transformation Needed

We will need to take concerted collective action and mobilize political will in order to enable the kind of transformations that can ~~adequately~~ **help** address the serious problems we face.

# Time to Hospice Modernity

The depth and magnitude of the problems we face will make impossible the continuity of our existing ways of knowing, being and relating; we will need to disinvest from dominant problem-solving strategies and tap into exiled capacities to address these challenges.

From *Hospicing Modernity*, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira

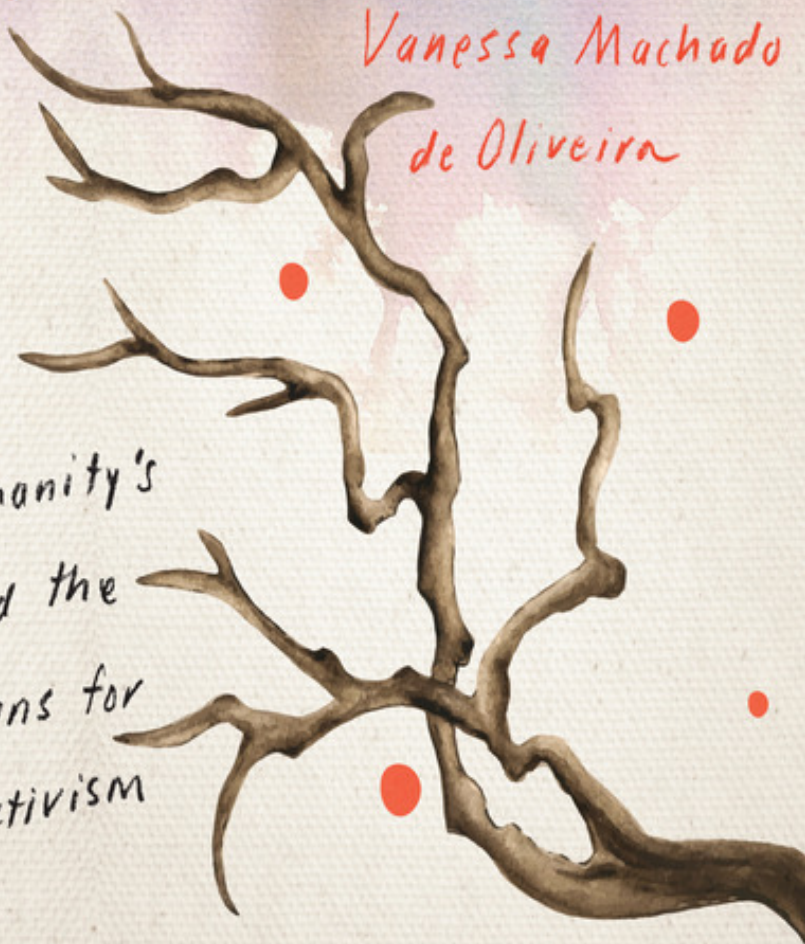
# Auspicing Modernity

"This is a book  
about breaking spells.  
And not just the  
obvious kind, but the  
grievously impacted,  
deep-in-the-psyche  
variety."

—Martin Shaw,  
author of *Courting  
the Wild Twin*

Vanessa Machado  
de Oliveira

Facing Humanity's  
Wrongs and the  
Implications for  
Social Activism

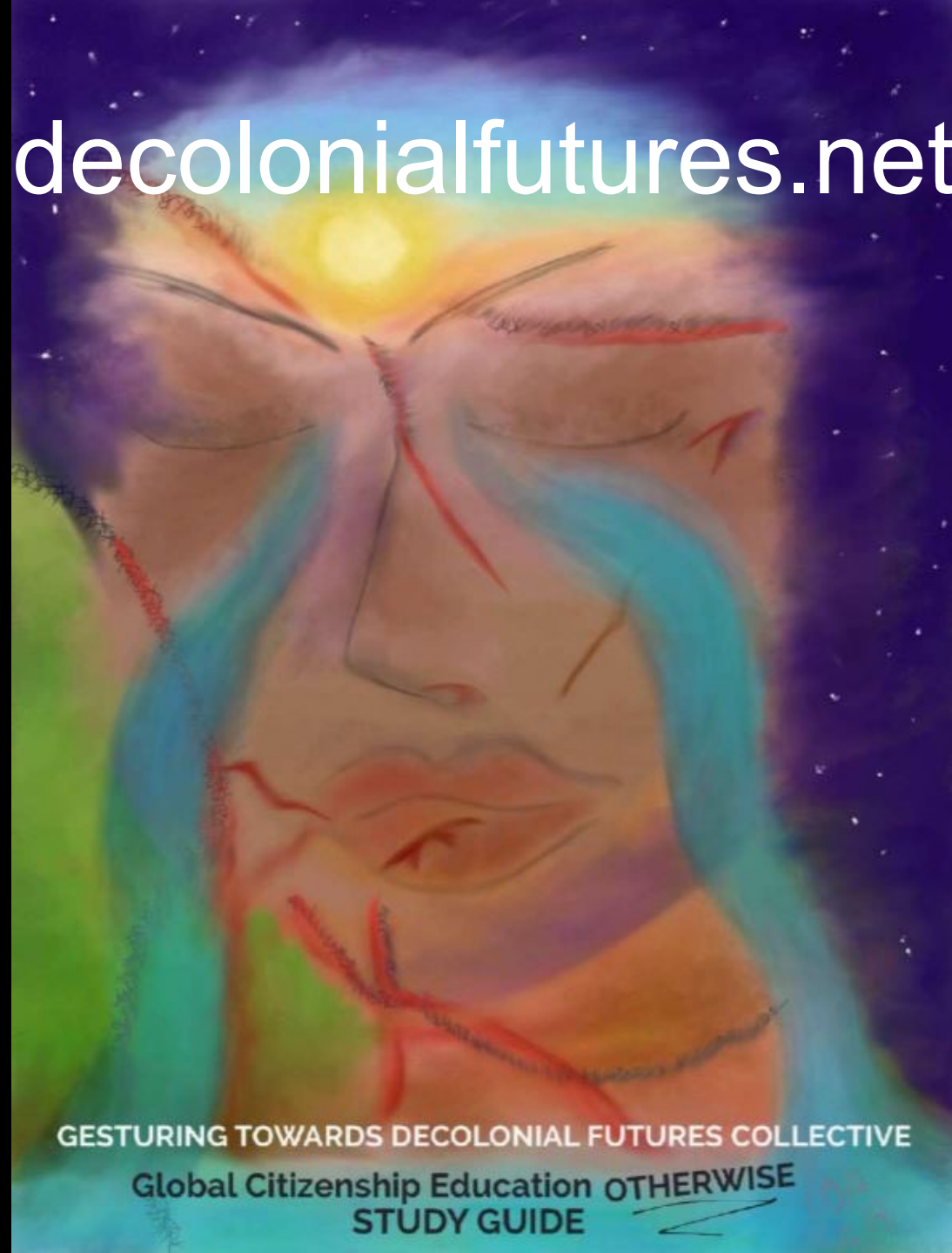




# Vanessa Machado de Oliveira



decolonialfutures.net



GESTURING TOWARDS DECOLONIAL FUTURES COLLECTIVE

Global Citizenship Education OTHERWISE  
STUDY GUIDE

## Soft Reform

to make the same world a little bit better through transformations of policies and practices

horizon: single story of progress, development and evolution

methodological critique; focus on effectiveness

**SAME QUESTIONS,  
SAME ANSWERS**

Recognition of epistemological dominance

## Radical Reform

To make the same world a lot better by including more people, voices and perspectives in collective action.

horizon: unification of stories in a single direction

epistemological critique; focus on representation

**SAME QUESTIONS,  
DIFFERENT ANSWERS**

Recognition of ontological dominance

## Beyond Reform

To disinvest in the current unsustainable world and to walk with others into the possibility of new worlds .

horizon: learning from repeated mistakes in order to make different mistakes

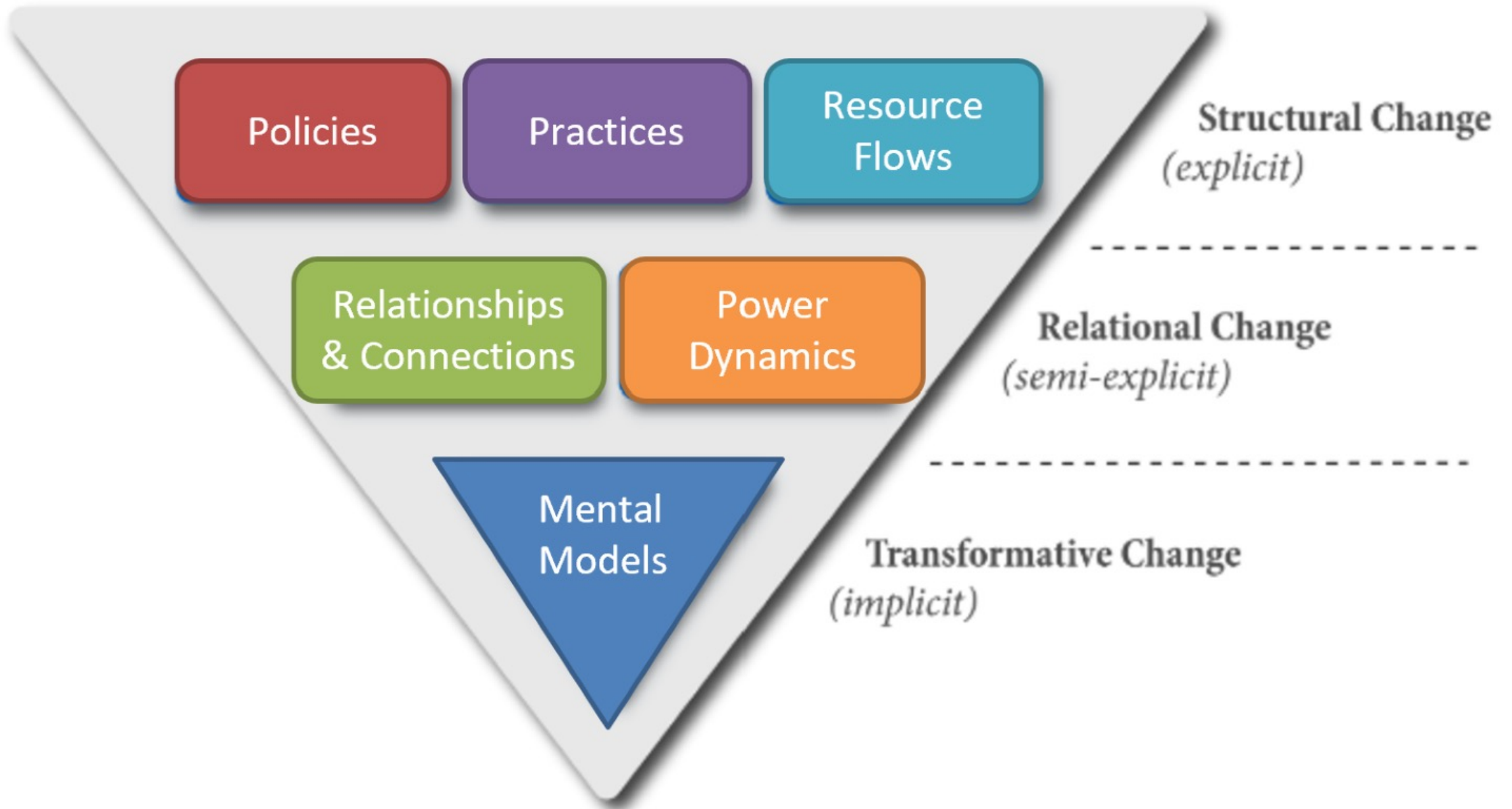
ontological critique; focus on representability

**DIFFERENT QUESTIONS,  
DIFFERENT ANSWERS**



The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you; they are unique manifestations of the human spirit.

Wade Davis



# Threefold Curriculum Integration

- **Greening the Curriculum**

(aka Solutionist)

- **Critical Education for Sustainability**

(aka Transformation and Justice)

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- **Education Otherwise**

(aka Decolonial, Shifts in Consciousness & Worldview )



# Education Otherwise

What does it look like  
in practice?

# Climate Wayfinding for Higher Ed

*a 5-part workshop to foster  
clarity and connection for  
your climate journey*



# The Relational Work of Systems Change

Collective impact efforts must prioritize working together in more relational ways to find systemic solutions to social problems.

SHARE COMMENT PRINT ORDER REPRINTS

By Katherine Milligan, Juanita Zerda & John Kania | Jan. 18, 2022



(Illustration by Hugo Herrera)

Sometimes we lose sight of a simple truth about systems: They are made up of people. Despite all of the frameworks and tools at our disposal and all of our learning as a field of practice, purely technical, rational approaches to systems change will not make much of a dent in shifting power or altering our most deeply held beliefs. If most collective impact efforts fall short of supporting people to change in fundamentally consciousness-altering ways, then, the system they are a part of will not significantly change either.

However, over the past two decades, the prevailing view among many funders, board members, and institutional leaders has been that only quantifiable and predetermined outcomes can create impact. But if the interrelated, devastating, and deepening crises and divisions over the past two years have taught us anything, it is that complex, adaptive





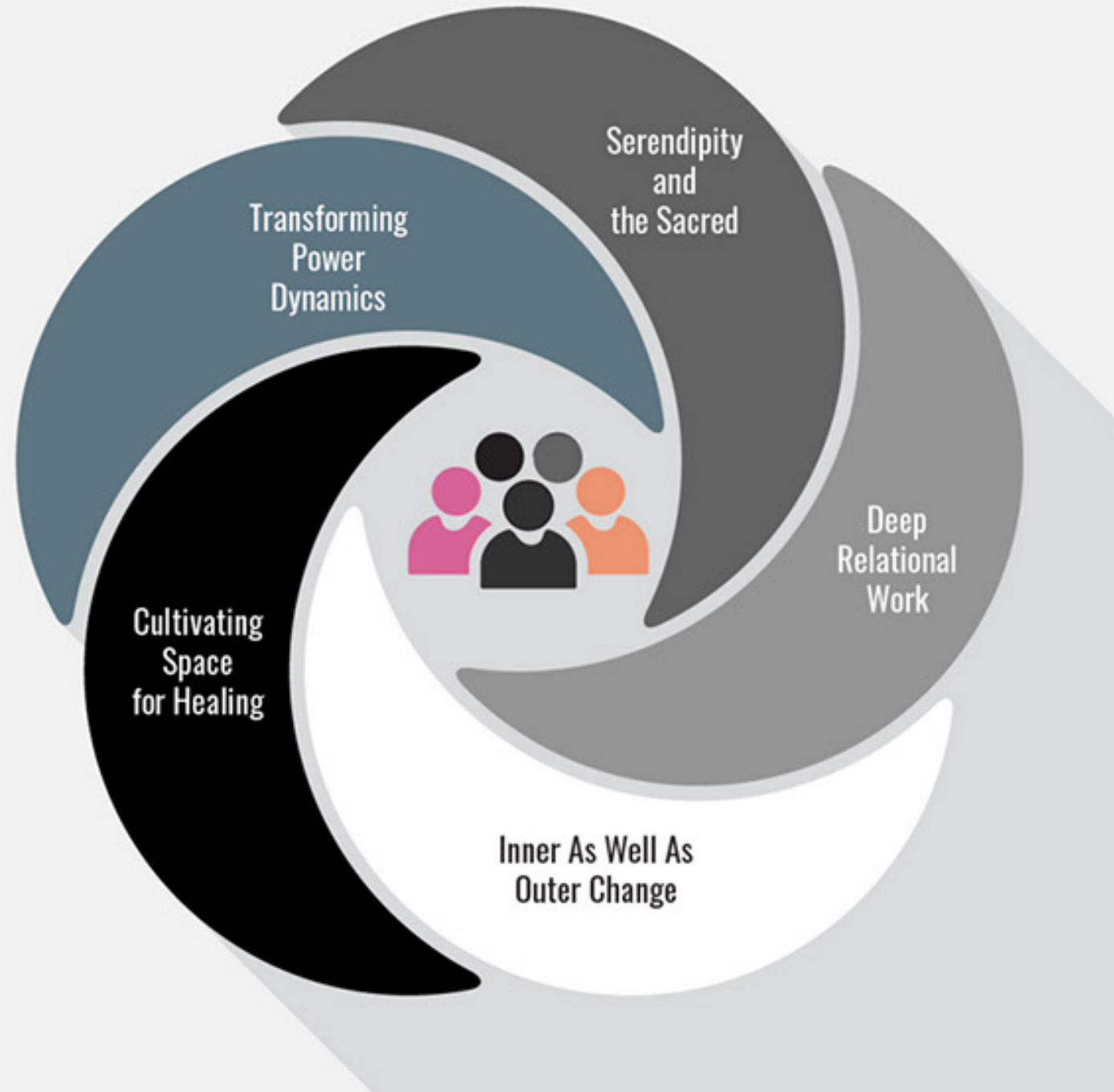
COLLECTIVE  
change lab

# The **Relational Work** of Systems Change

**Five qualities** that support the  
transformation of systems



Imagine building these  
into Curriculum Integration  
Initiatives



# Emergent Change

- No quantifiable, predetermined outcomes
- No reductive technical solutions
- No strategic plans







## The **Relational Work** of Systems Change



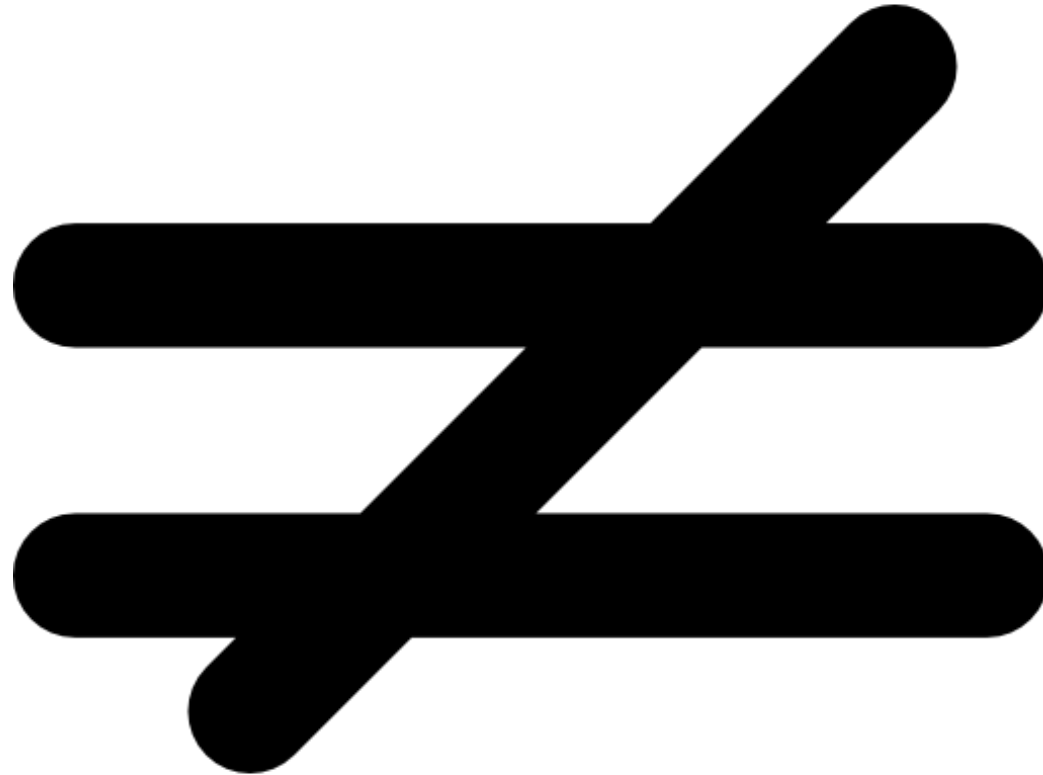
Rarely do we work together in ways that catalyse shifts in individual and collective consciousness powerful enough to transform systems. **To get to more radical outcomes, we need more radical ways of working together.** It is both as simple and as hard as that.

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Visit [collectivechangelab.org](https://collectivechangelab.org) to learn more.



**Schooling-as-Usual**



**A Radical Way of Working Together**

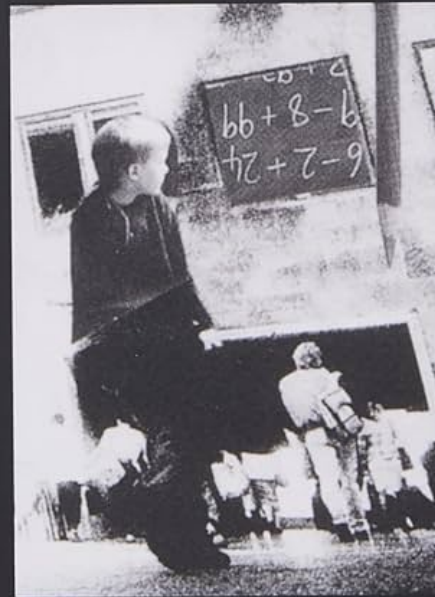


# How has education contributed to the problem?

How has formal education colonized our hearts, intellect  
and imagination with messages about and desires for  
individualistic metropolitan consumerism?

# IVAN ILLICH

## Deschooling Society



'...a famous and savage critic of industrial society...'  
*Times Educational Supplement*

Most learning is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting. Most people learn best by being with it, yet school makes them identify their personal, cognitive growth with elaborate planning and manipulation.

(Ivan Illich)



“

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**SCHOOL IS THE  
ADVERTISING AGENCY  
WHICH MAKES YOU BELIEVE  
THAT YOU NEED THE  
SOCIETY AS IT IS.**

---

IVAN ILLICH

Our institutions must become simultaneously more like retreat centers and more like hubs of community engagement.

transformation  
is often more  
about *unlearning*  
than *learning*.

richard rohr



# Thank You!

Paul Morgan

[pmorgan@wcupa.edu](mailto:pmorgan@wcupa.edu)

