

# Sustainability Literate Leadership

The Sustainability Society  
28<sup>th</sup> November 2012

**Sara Parkin**  
Founder Director

[www.forumforthefuture.org.uk](http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk)

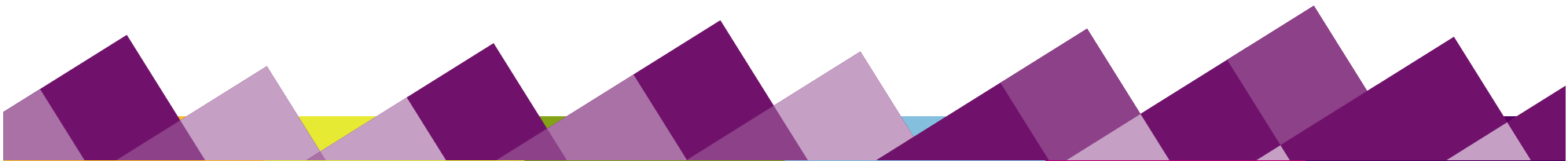
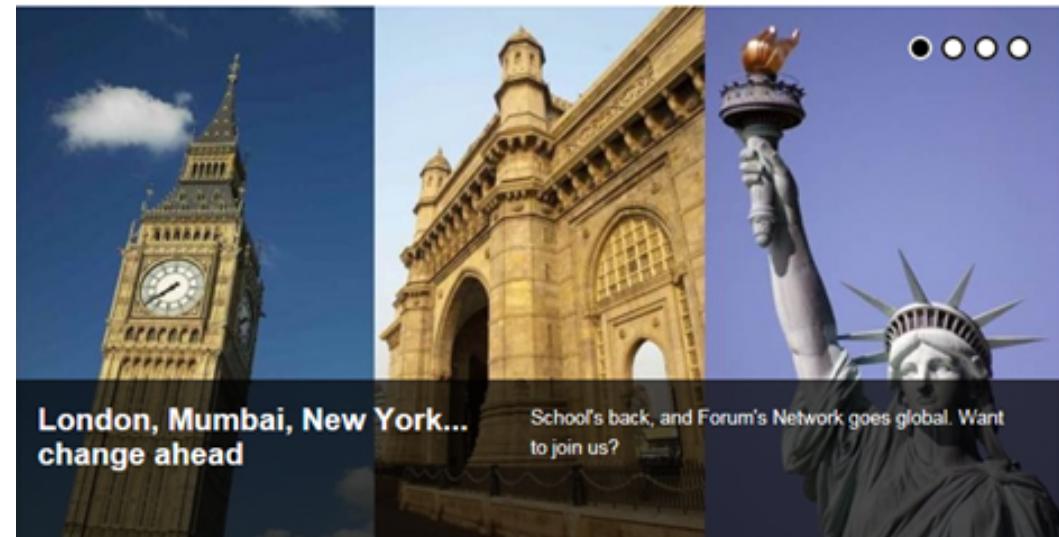


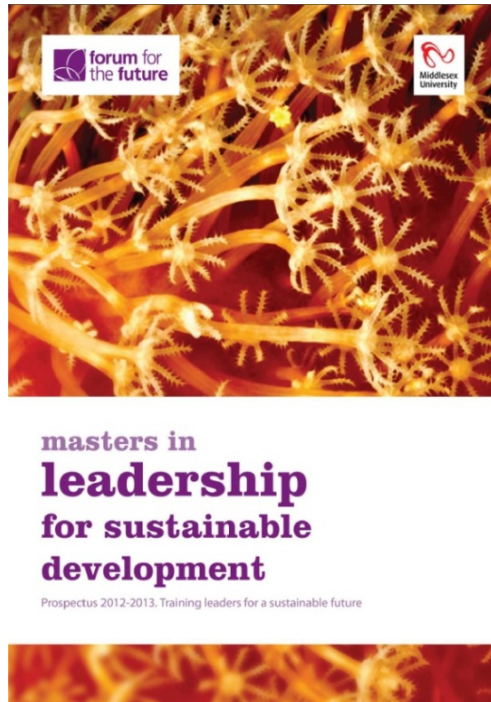
Photo, Sara Parkin



## who are we?

Forum for the Future is a global sustainability non-profit that works with leaders and creates collaborations to tackle tricky global issues.





we also develop future leaders and publish *Green Futures*



# our network



# SUSTAINABILITY LITERATE LEADERSHIP KNOWS:

**WHY?**

it matters

**WHAT?**

has to be done

**HOW?**

to get started and take right things to scale



**WHY?** Does it matter

WHAT  
DIFFERENCE  
HAS  
20 (OR 40)  
YEARS MADE?



# WHY? Trends over last 40 years

		1972 1 <sup>st</sup> Earth Summit	1992 2 <sup>nd</sup> Earth Summit	2012 4 <sup>th</sup> Earth Summit
↑	<b>Population</b>	<b>3.7 billion</b>	<b>5.3 billion</b>	<b>7 billion</b>
↓	<b>Water scarcity</b> People without access World Bank	not comparable	not comparable	<b>1.4 billion</b> (2008)
↓	<b>Hungry people</b> FAO	<b>878 million</b> (26%)	<b>848 million</b> (16%)	<b>850 million</b> (13%)
↓	<b>Arable land</b> Hectares per person FAO	<b>0.31</b>	<b>0.26</b>	<b>0.21</b>
↑	<b>Electricity demand</b> KwH per person World Bank	<b>1300</b>	<b>2100</b>	<b>2800</b>
↑	<b>CO2 emissions</b> metric tonnes per person World Bank	<b>4.18</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>4.8</b>
↓	<b>Forest cover</b> global hectares, FAO Originally: 6.2 bill	<b>4.9 billion</b>	<b>4.2 billion</b>	<b>3.7 billion</b> (30% all land)
?	<b>Global Economy</b>	<b>GDP \$2 trillion</b> DOW 1000	<b>GDP \$22 trillion</b> DOW 3301	<b>GDP \$63 trillion</b> DOW 13,250



# WHY? The same, yet different

## SAME

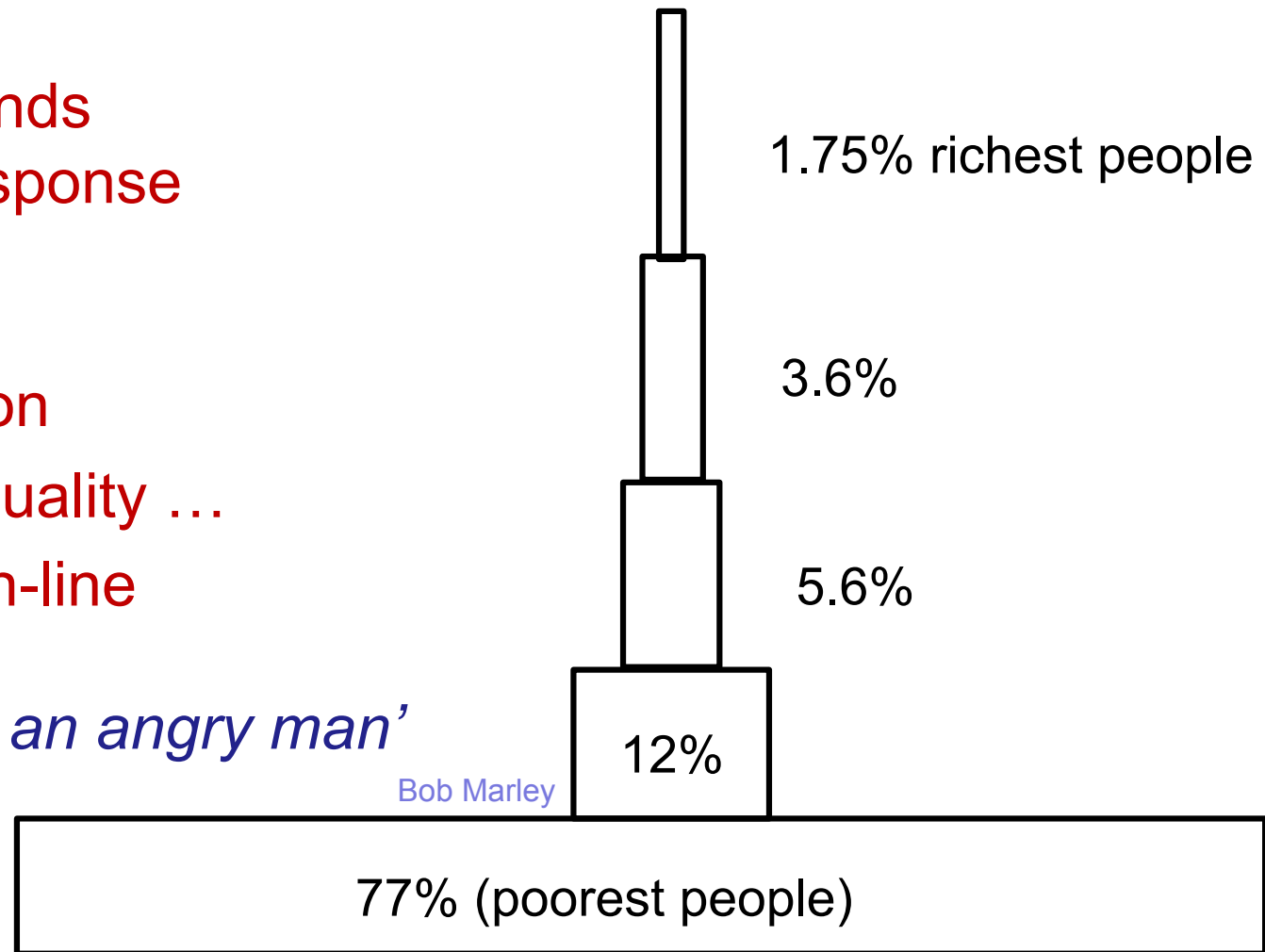
- unchecked trends
- inadequate response

## DIFFERENT

- wide recognition
- exploding inequality ...
- ... all visible on-line

*'A hungry man is an angry man'*

Bob Marley



Percent of people it takes to generate 20% of global income Milanovic (2011)







*“Okay – it’s agreed; we announce – ‘to do nothing is not an option!’ then we wait and see how things pan out...”*

**THE MAIN  
QUESTION:**

**WHY**

**insufficient  
change in last 40  
years?**



# four possible answers

*the crisis is in implementation*

Kofi Annan 2002

*Implementation is the key*

Ban Ki Moon 2012



# WHY? Implementation barriers

## 1. Problems framed as environmental

- when about human/social behaviours
- Seen as competition environmental and human welfare

## 2. Ignorance

- of basic biology and physics (and psychology/sociology)
- of systemic nature of problems



# WHY? Implementation barriers

## 3. Failure of leadership

- sustainability illiterate, lacks imagination
- untrained, esp. decision-making in complex and uncertain situations
- terrified of losing control

## 4. Capture of governance systems

- institutional structures and processes out of date
- incoherent policies, illogical theories
- power misused/corrupt



# WHAT? has to be done

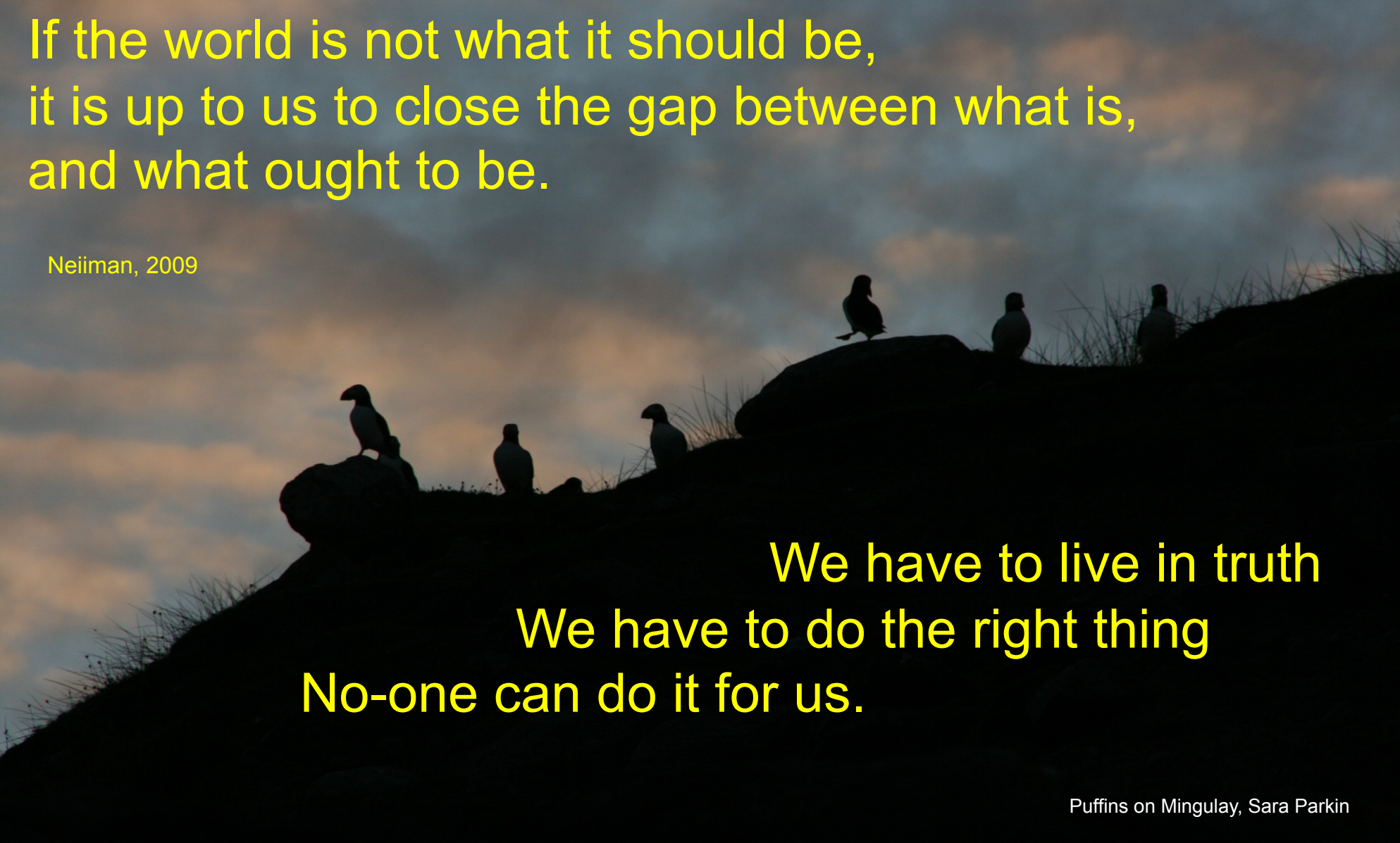
**personal responsibility to intervene**  
**right diagnosis of nature and scale of challenge**



# WHAT? A question of personal morality

If the world is not what it should be,  
it is up to us to close the gap between what is,  
and what ought to be.

Neiiman, 2009



We have to live in truth  
We have to do the right thing  
No-one can do it for us.

Puffins on Mingulay, Sara Parkin

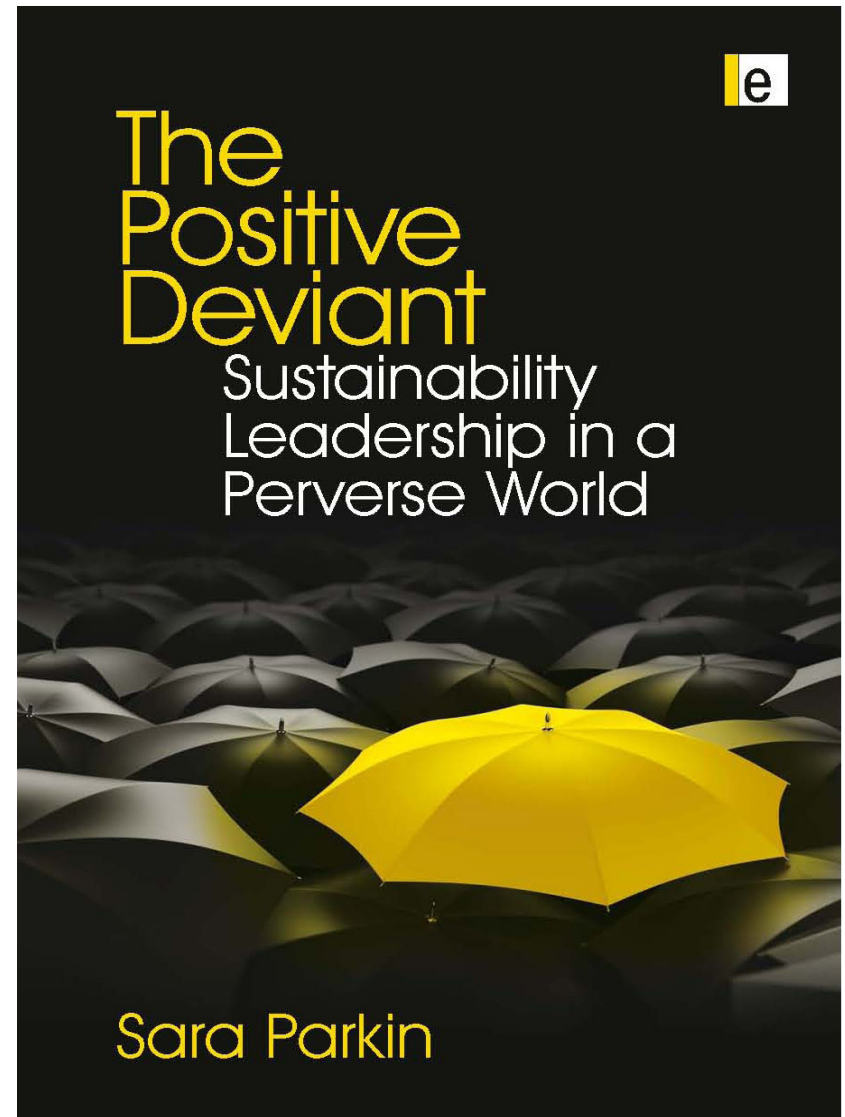
## WHAT? Be part of the change you seek

### ***Positive Deviant:***

A person who does the right thing for sustainability, *despite* being surrounded by the wrong institutional structures or processes and by stubbornly uncooperative people

### ***Perverse:***

Obstinately in the wrong; wrongheaded; against the evidence; turned aside from the truth  
(Chambers Dictionary)

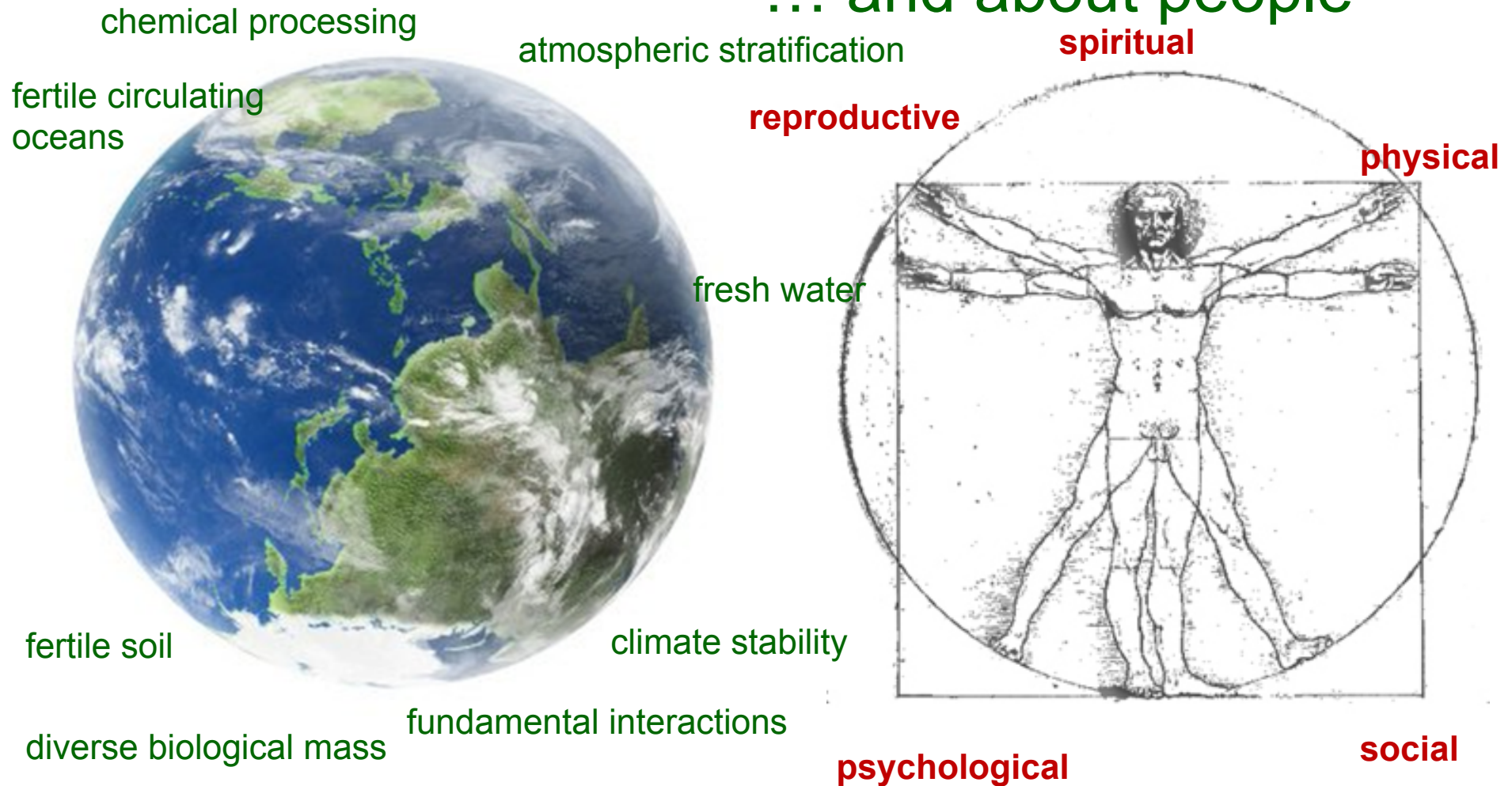


**WHAT? Diagnose the challenge correctly**





# WHAT? The problem is systemic ... ... and about people



*‘the purpose of life, is life itself’*

James Hutton 1795

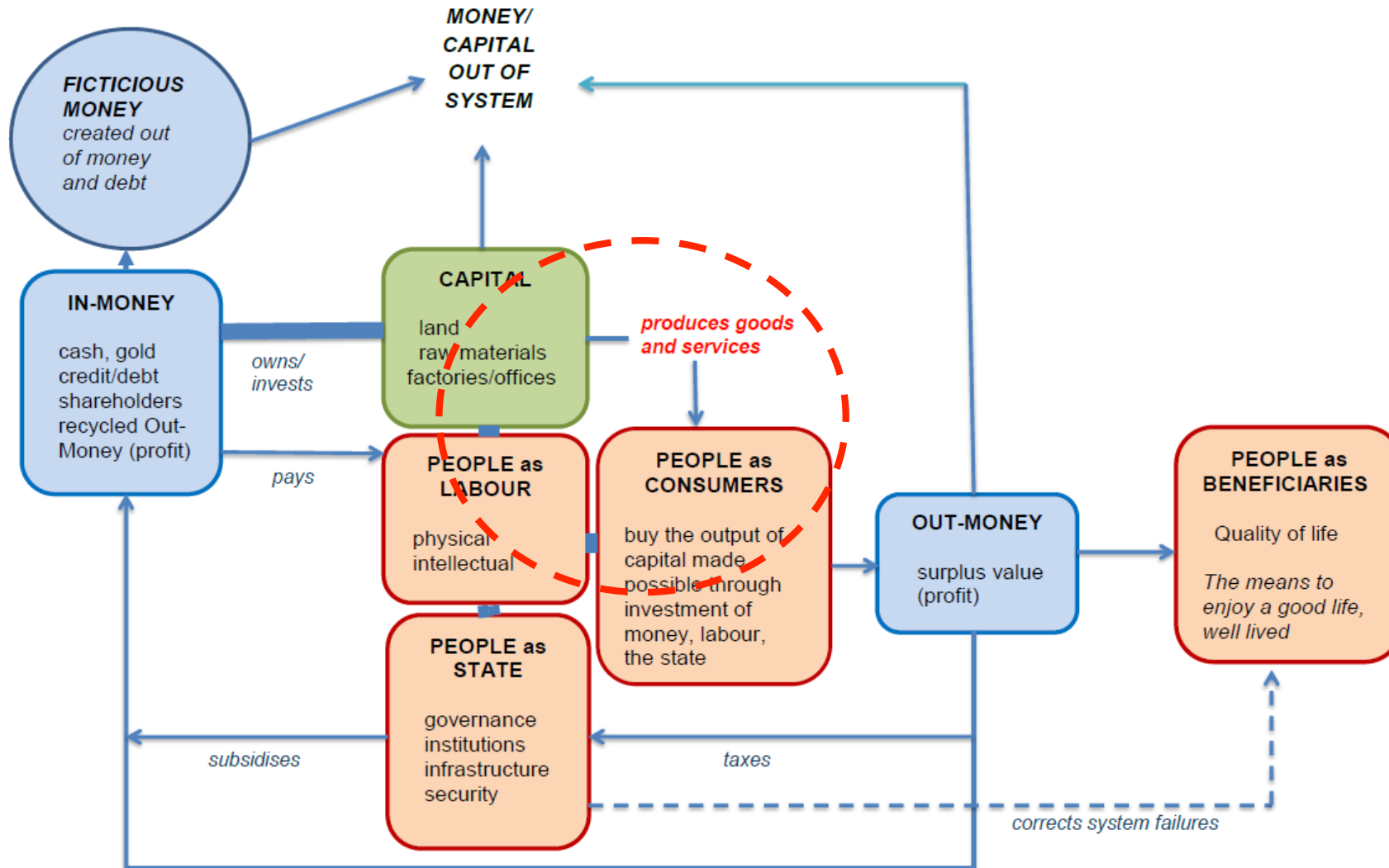
*‘the purpose of life: to flourish or to consume?’*

Tim Jackson, 2006

Leonardo da Vinci



# WHAT? Current normality in crisis



# WHAT? The necessary transition

**B**

## New paradigm/new normality

Built through shift to **one**  
**conceptual framework** that  
provides new anomaly-free logic

## Current paradigm/normality

Progress is by accretion of  
facts, theories, policy, and  
practices that 'fit'

*transformation*

**A**

*crisis –  
in thinking,  
in world view*

## Anomalies accumulate

- current model/theories don't fit observed phenomenon
- new theories emerge – some incomplete
- *Status quo* assumptions challenged (new questions asked)

*revolution –  
in thinking,  
in world view*



# HOW? Get started – with scale in mind

accept big change will happen  
find a compass and some key navigational tools  
remember the golden rules of change  
sell a positive attractive agenda



# HOW? The scale of challenge

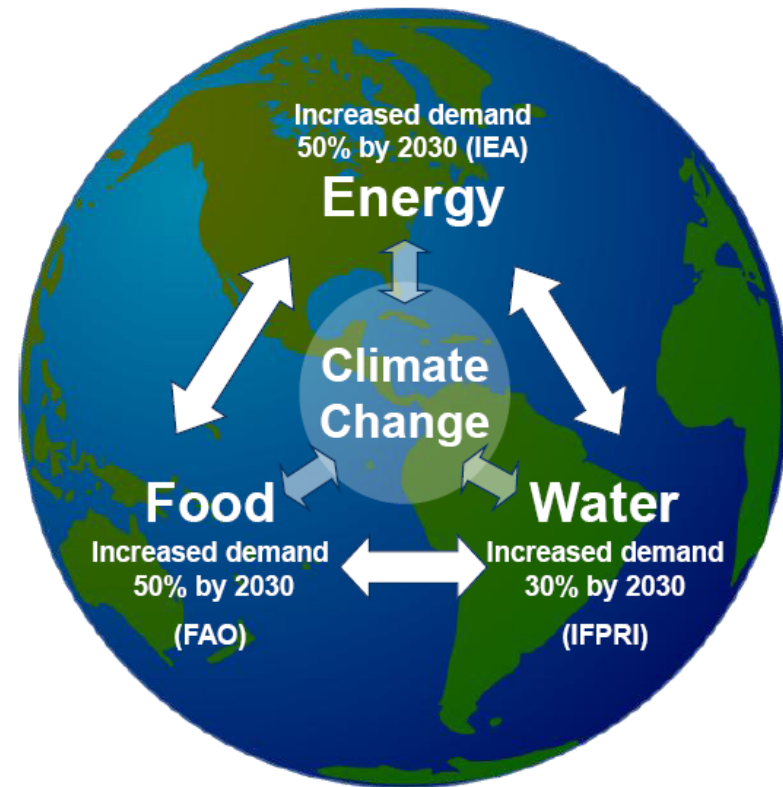
## Growing demand side

human population (UN 2010 revision)

(billion)

high medium low

1946			2.2
1972		3.6	
2012			7.0
<b>2050</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>8.1</b>
<b>2100</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>6.1</b>



## The 'Perfect Storm'

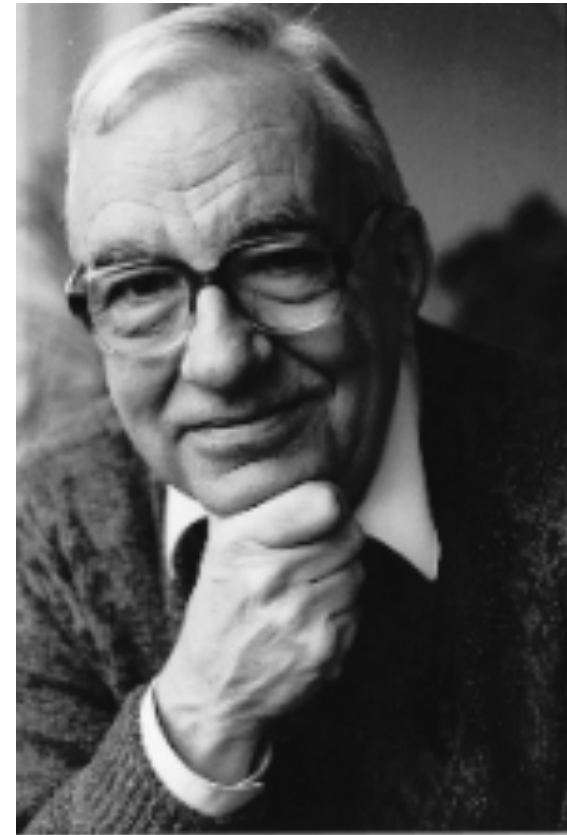
(UK Government Chief Scientist,  
John Beddington, 2009)



# HOW? Set your compass for where you want to end up

*‘ where would we get to  
if everyone said  
where would we get to  
and no one went  
to have a look  
where we’d get to  
if we went’*

Kurt Marti



Kurt Marti, Swiss theologian and philosopher



# HOW? Work out what resilience means

*n. elastic, the ability to absorb shocks and bounce back/remain strong and fundamentally unchanged*

## ... and be ready to work with uncertainty

**Aleatory:** (can't know) unpredictable, 'Black Swans'

**Epistemic:** (don't know) but 'possible futures' techniques increase preparedness (resilience)



# HOW? Business as very different

Meadows *et al* were not the first to question the central logic of capitalism ... growth

Smith, Mill, Marx, Keynes, Schumpeter, all anticipated that their 'regime for capital' would reach an impasse

\* Meadows et al (1972) *Limits to Growth* (London, Earth Island Press) see also Turner, G M (2008) 'A comparison of *The Limits to Growth* with 30 years of reality' in *Global Environmental Change*, no18, p397-411

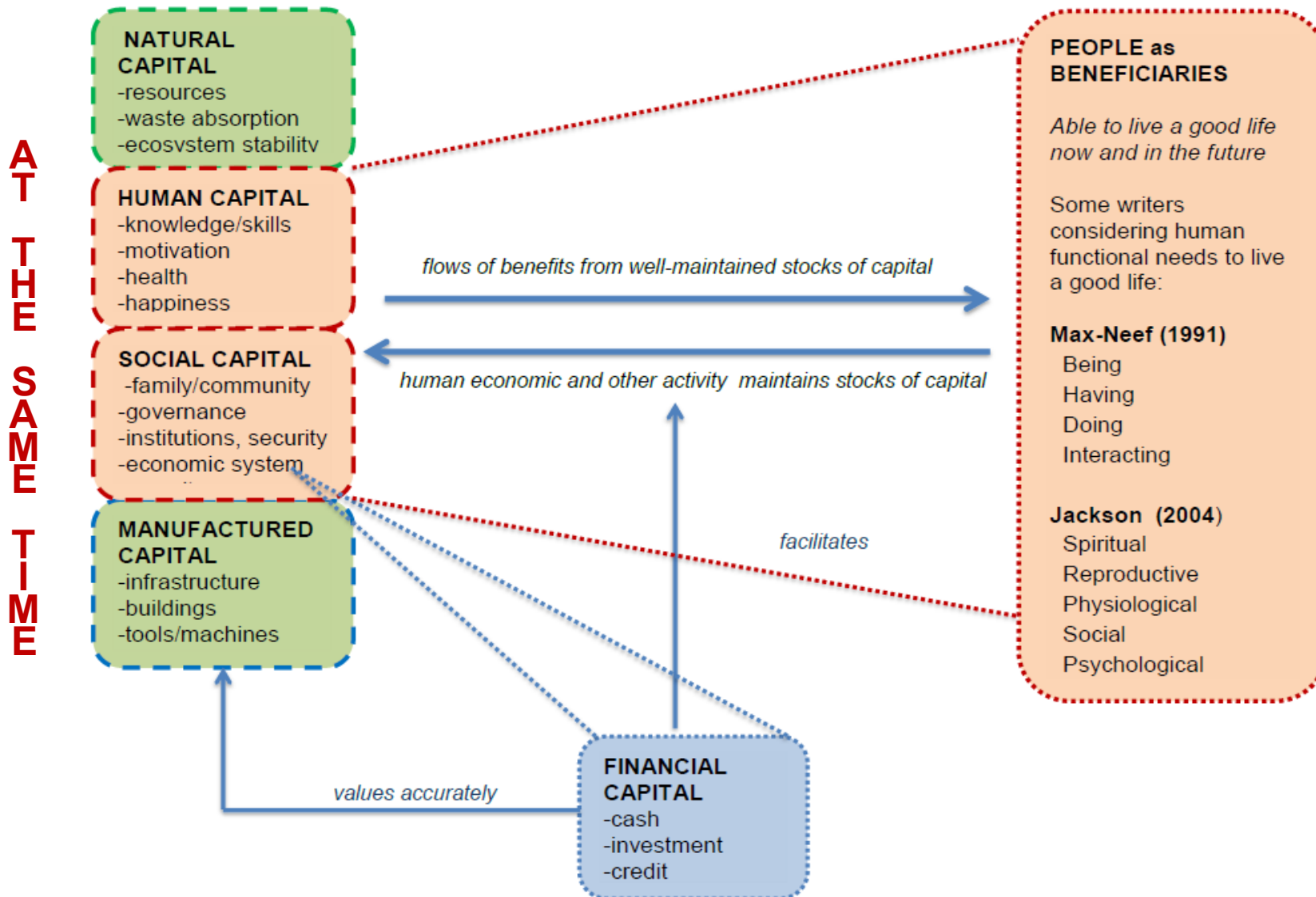
## REGIMES FOR CAPITAL

**Adam Smith** describes the system as reaching a plateau, where the accumulation of riches will be "complete", bringing about a deep and lengthy decline. **John Stuart Mill** expects the momentary arrival of a "stationary state" when accumulation will cease and capitalism will become the staging ground for a kind of associationalist socialism. **Marx** anticipates a sequence of worsening crises produced by the internal contradictions of accumulation ... **Keynes** thought the future would require a "somewhat comprehensive socialization of investment"; **Schumpeter** thought it would evolve into a managerial socialism.

Heilbroner, R. L. (1985), *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism* (New York & London, W. W Norton), 143-4



# HOW? Imagine a new economic logic



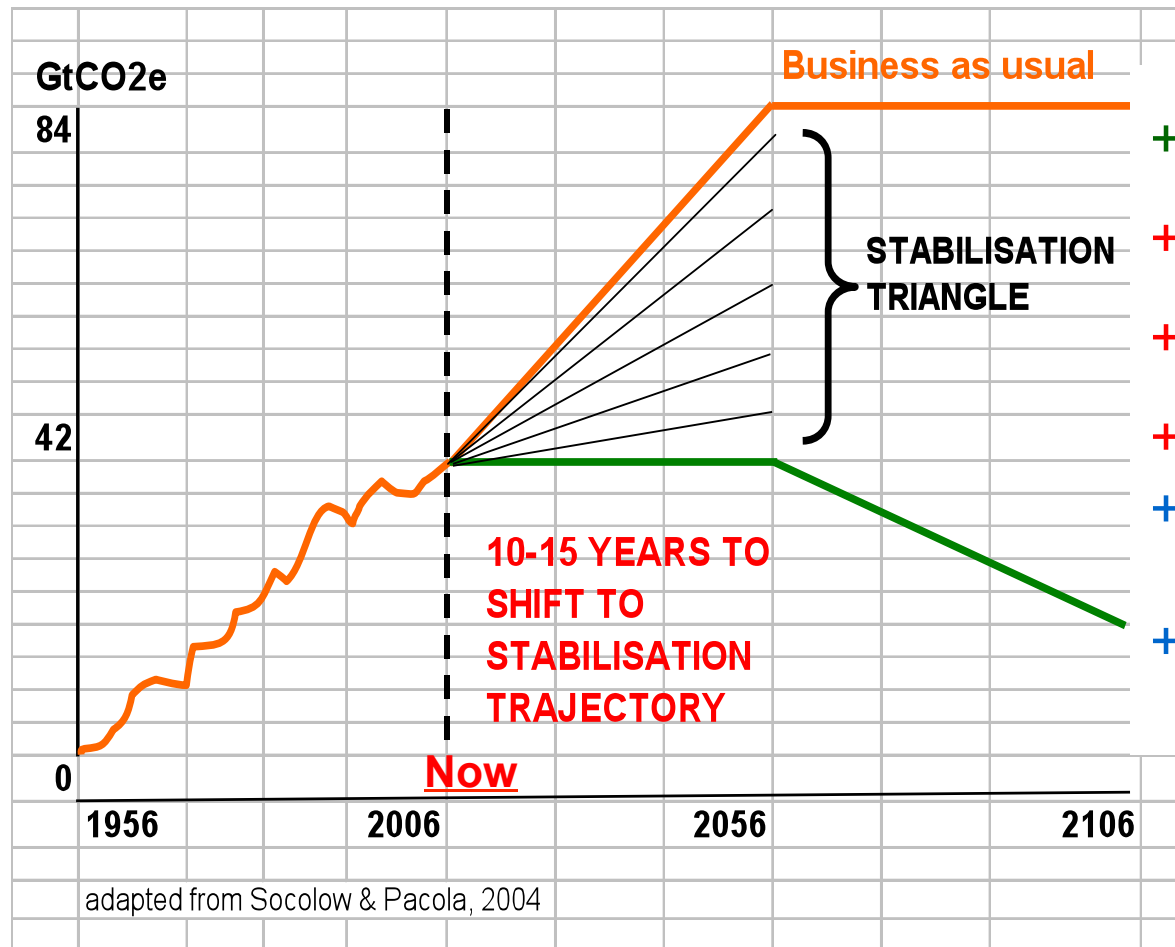
## HOW? An argument hard to refute

*“I am for growing natural human, social, manufactured and financial capital, and I am against growing global warming, species extinction, poverty, poor health, inequality, conflict and corruption”*

Senator Christine Milne, Leader of the  
Australian Greens, National Press Club 26  
September 2012



# HOW? A 'broader canvas' leads to more and better solutions



- + Build natural capital
- + Build human capital
- + Build social capital
- + Lower birth rates
- + Use FEWER resources
- + Be ultra-efficient in what you do use



# HOW? Adopt some 'system' tools



# HOW? two navigational tools to future proof decisions made today

1. Five capitals framework

1 new perspectives

3. Future scenarios

2 better strategy

3 risk management

4 safer decision-making

5 creativity & innovation



# FORUM: Five capitals framework

STOCKS OF CAPITALS/ RESOURCES	In the way you run your operations	In the products and/or services you provide	In the communities where you have influence
NATURAL	1	2	3
HUMAN	4	5	6
SOCIAL	7	8	9
MANUFACTURED	10	11	12
FINANCE	13	14	15



# FORUM: Sustainable Economy Framework

Helps you have a *good enough* idea about what good would look like:

Partners:

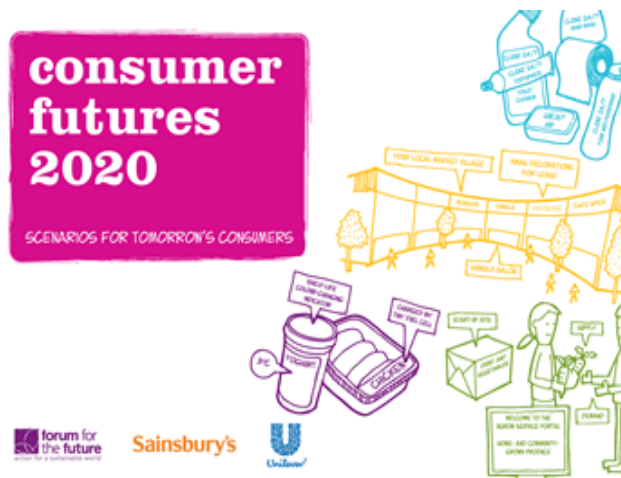
Aviva Investors

Technology Strategy Board

<http://www.forumforthefuture.org/project/framework-sustainable-economy/overview>

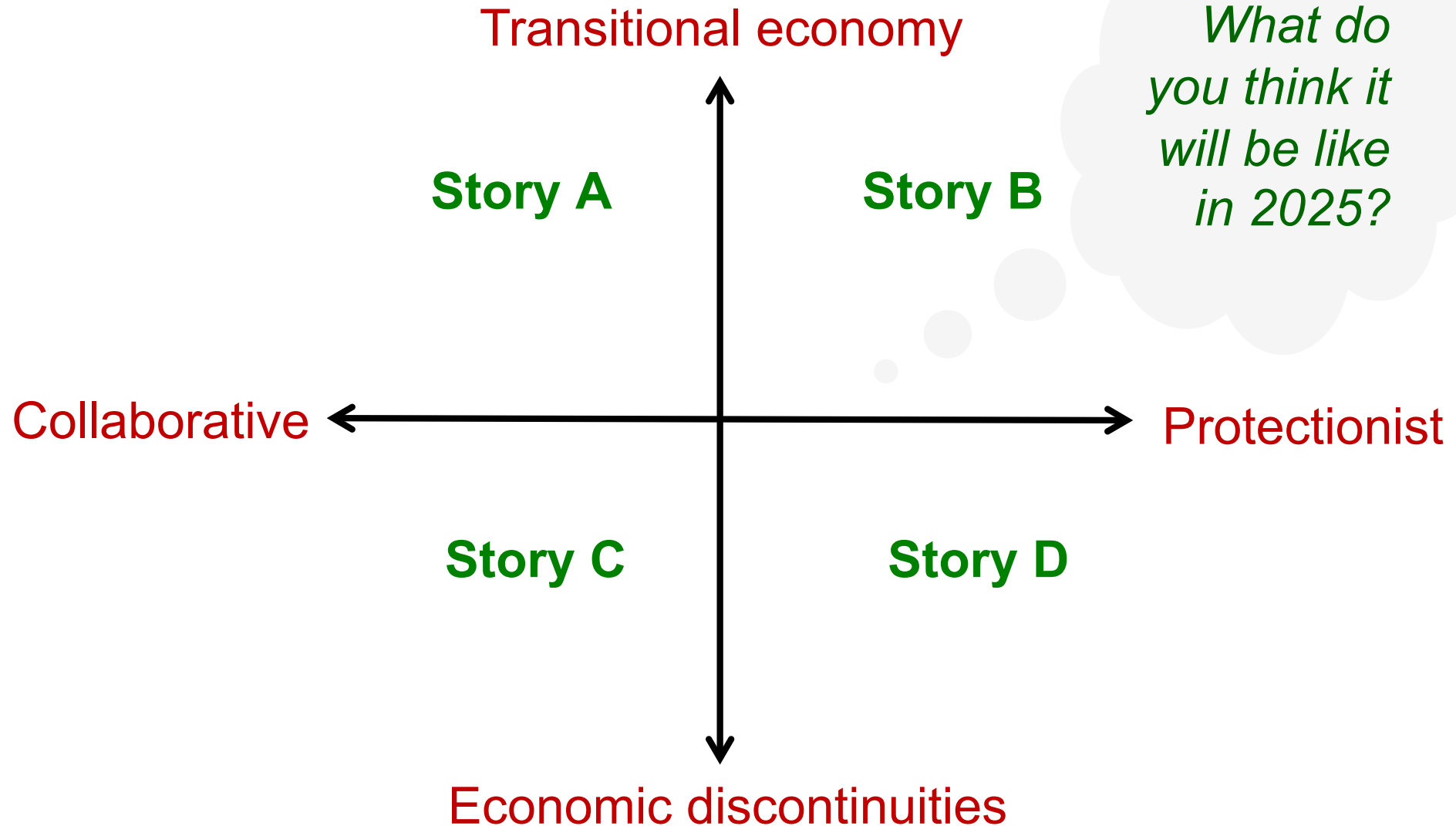


# FORUM: Scenarios



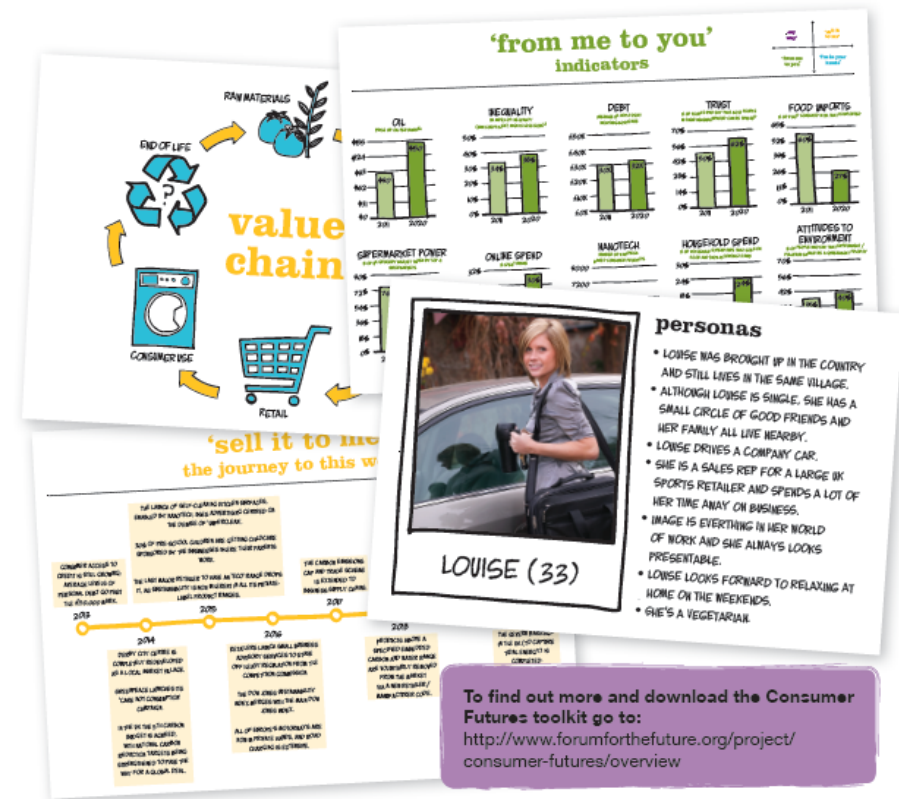


# SCENARIOS: many futures



# FORUM: Futures toolkit

- > free for all to access and use
- > guidelines for how to use the scenarios
- > posters for workshops
- > storyboards, products and services for each scenario
- > generic tools: personas & value chain thinking



To find out more and download the Consumer Futures toolkit go to:  
<http://www.forumforthefuture.org/project/consumer-futures/overview>

<http://www.forumforthefuture.org/our-work/hub/futures-diagnosis>



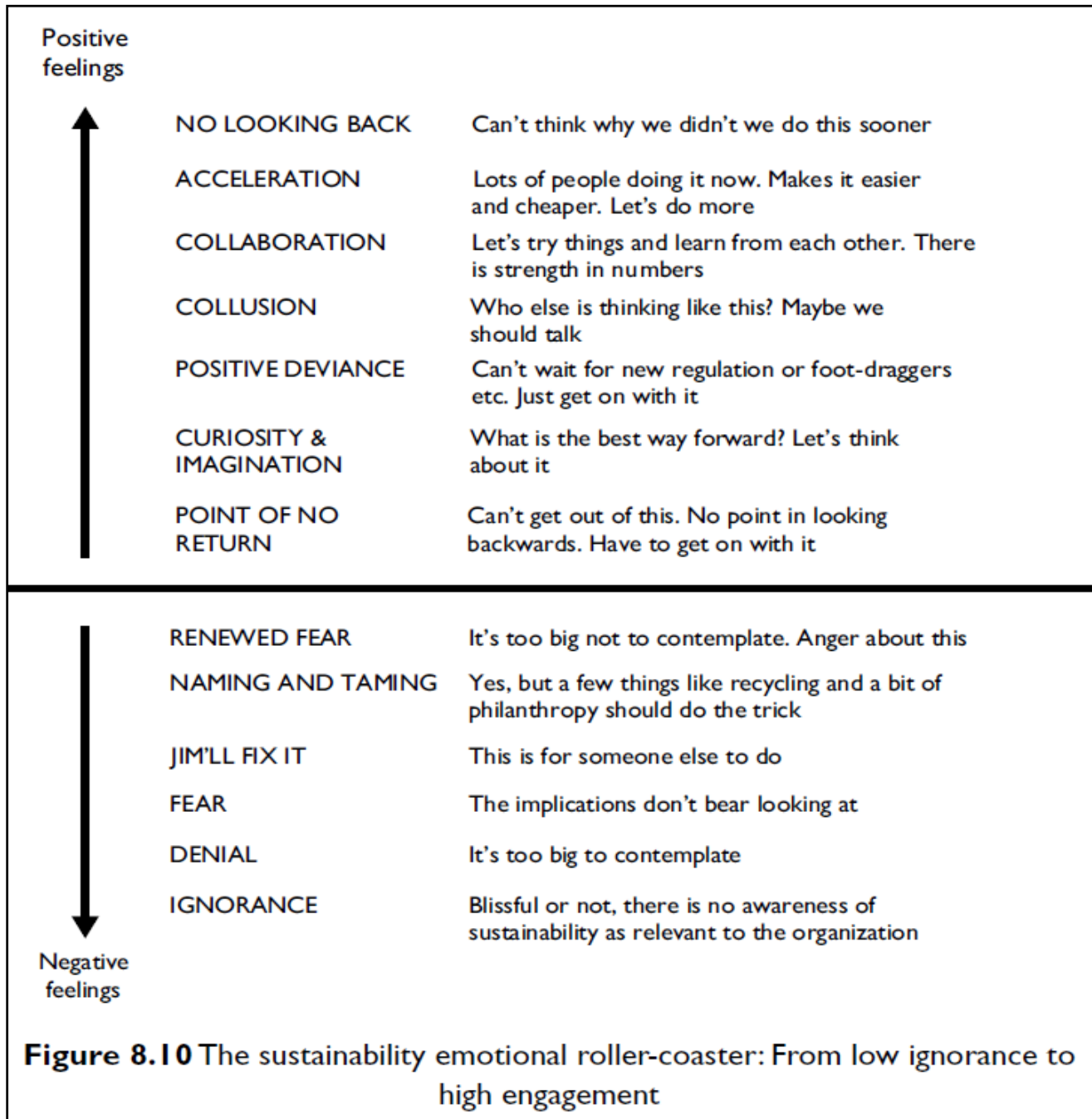
## HOW? Work with the golden rules of change

1. The reason why different behaviour is necessary is understood
2. The necessary knowledge and skills for changing behaviour are there
3. Systems are in place so that right behaviour is recognised, reinforced, rewarded

*“change has no constituency”*

Niccolò Machiavelli

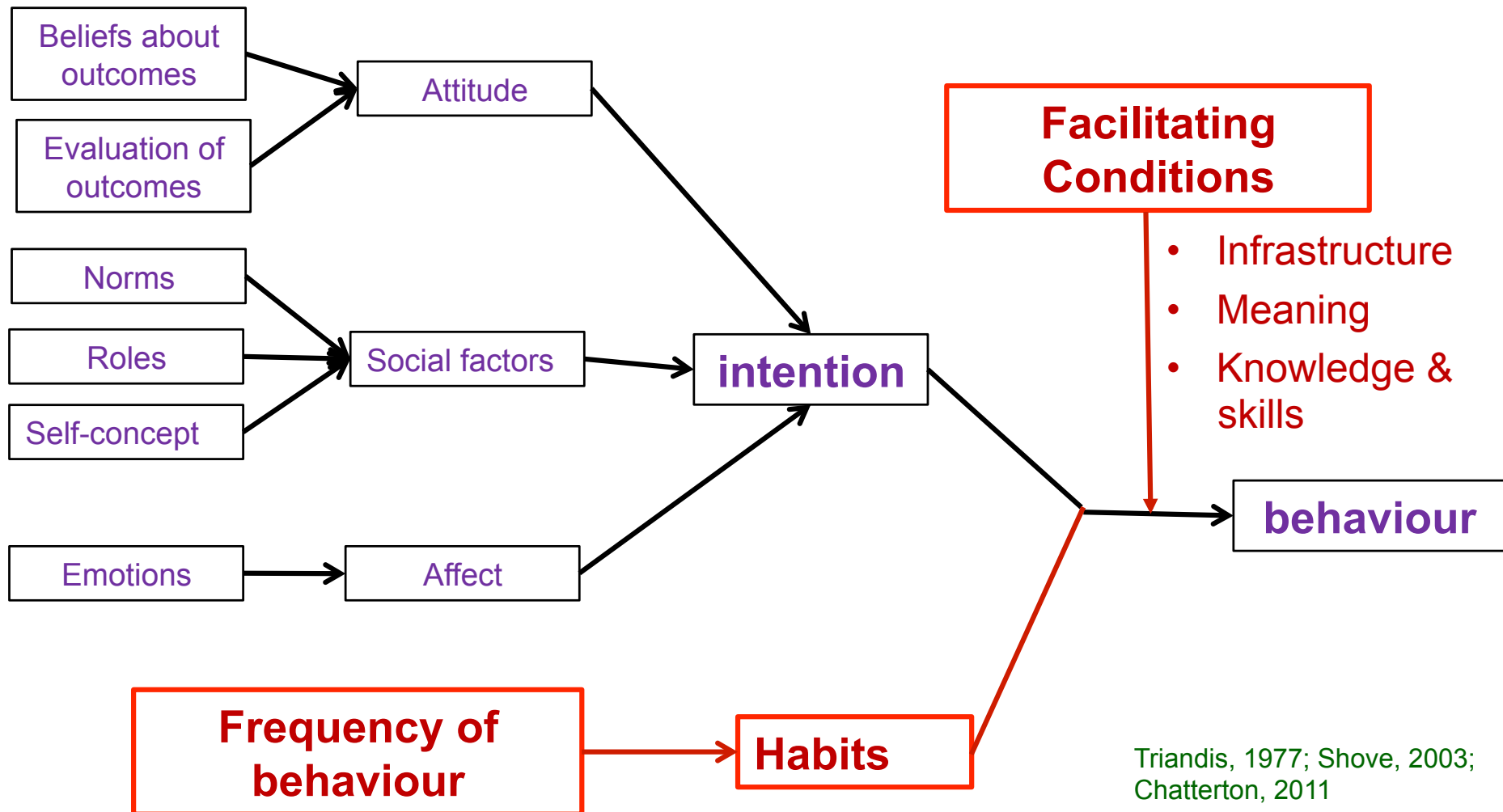




**HOW?**  
 Helping others get to point of no return

Psychology 101

# HOW? Make doing the right thing easy ...



Triandis, 1977; Shove, 2003;  
Chatterton, 2011

HOW? Tell a good story

*Sell the SIZZLE!*



# HOW? Learn from the professionals



**NESPRESSO**

*Coca-Cola*

*acer*

**Atos**

**DOW**

 **GE**





**Panasonic**

*P&G*

**SAMSUNG**

**VISA**

*Selling desire*

*Selling association*



# HOW? Two sides to every story \*

## WHAT OTHERS GET

- order and meaning
- belonging
- status
- agency
- no cognitive dissonance
- truth
- justice

**+ mission enjoyable!**

## HOW YOU DO IT

- consistency
- feelings and emotions
- pictures more than words
- partner with trusted others
- inclusive
- factually correct
- guilt-free

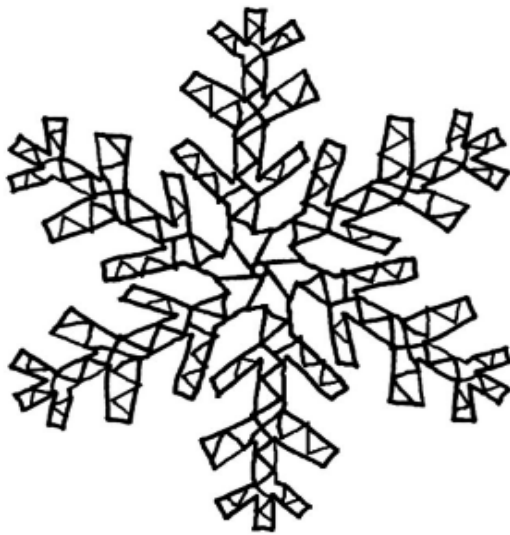
**+ mission possible!**

\* For more see [www.futerra.co.uk](http://www.futerra.co.uk)





# HOW? Develop your own capacity



develop habits of thought  
adopt principles of practice

intervene to most effect

measure what you want people to do

learn from others

practice subversion

Remember leadership is the gamechanger



# HOW? Develop 'habits' of thought

## Resilience

*Am I adding to or undermining ecological resilience?*

## Relationships

*Am I increasing or breaking down relationships?*

## Reflection

*Have I considered and learnt from past actions?*

## Reverence

*Am I remembering nature is powerful and largely beyond our comprehension?*

## HOW? Adopt principles of practice:

Be

*ubuntu*

Practice

positive deviance

Exercise

compassion

Think

in systems, about resilience

Plan

outcomes and strategies

Distil

wisdom from data deluge

Mobilise

imagination, in yourself, others



# HOW? Intervene for most effect

## 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY PROBLEMS

TAME

WICKED

CRITICAL



Grint, 2005



**sustainable  
shipping  
initiative**  
the case for action



owners  
charterers  
insurers  
regulators  
financiers  
conservationists

**Forge innovative partnerships**

## HOW? Measure what people do

- **contribution to sustainability**

(contribution to building stocks of capital)

Thousands of blooming flowers

- **ubiquity**

(in organisation,  
across faculties/departments)

- **influence**

(significance of effort to change others)



# HOW? Learn from others



# HOW? Learn from others and get strategic and subversive

Niccolò Machiavelli



*'[climate] scientists  
must acknowledge  
that they are in a  
street fight'*

*Nature* **464**, 141 (11 March 2010) | doi:  
10.1038/464141a; Published online 10 March  
2010



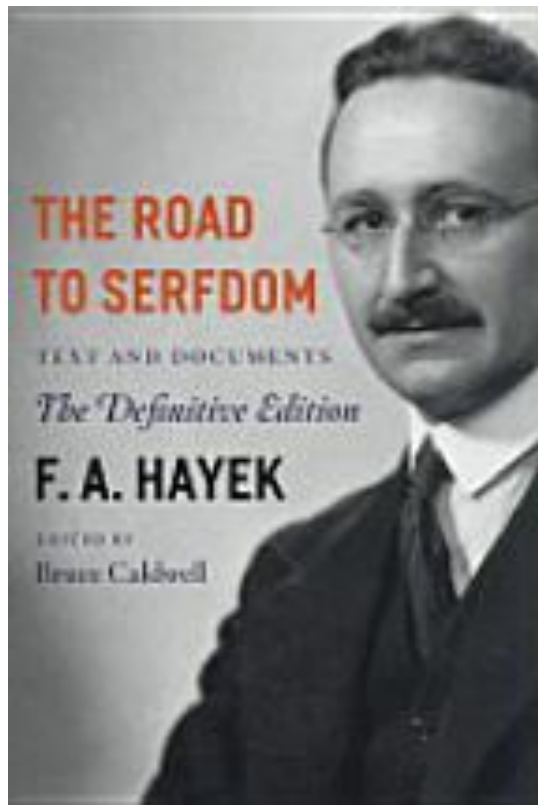
Sun Tzu  
*The Art of War*





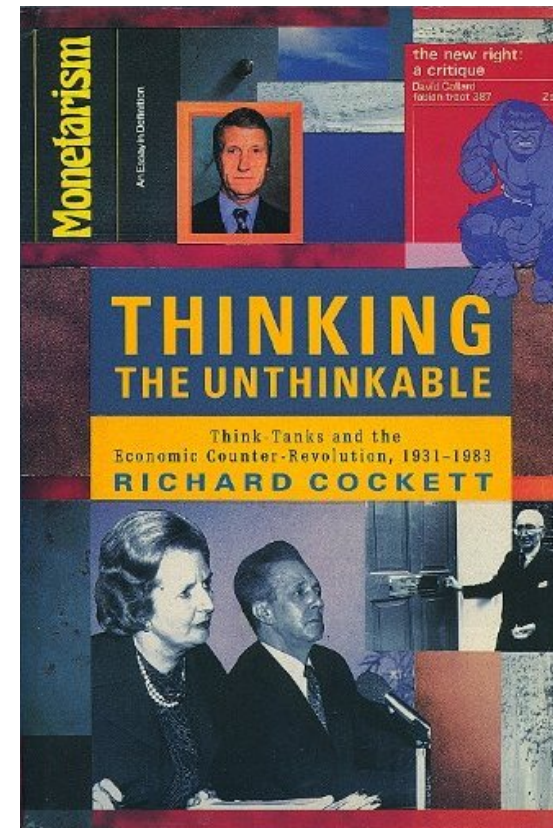
# HOW? Learn from others

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*'post-Keynesian counter-revolutionaries engaged in a world war that would affect billions of people'*

Samuel Brittan



Using guerrilla warfare tactics  
*'we are like freedom fighters'*

F A Hayek

[www.montpelerin.org](http://www.montpelerin.org)



## HOW? Learn from others

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*‘Each of us can make a difference, and together accomplish what might seem impossible ...*

*... be like a hummingbird’*

**Wangari Maathai 1940-2011** [www.greenbeltmovement.org](http://www.greenbeltmovement.org)



# HOW? Learn from others

## Wisdom



Elinor Ostrom (1933-2012)

### Effective governance systems for 'common pool' resources

- Clear boundaries and membership
- Congruent (locally appropriate) rules
- Collective choice arenas (places and process for decision-making)
- Monitoring systems
- Graduated sanctions to punish rule breaking
- Conflict resolution mechanisms
- Recognised rights to organise
- 'Nested' units or enterprises (each obeys rules set higher up)

Governing the Commons (1990)



## HOW? Leadership is *the* game changer

*“The hallmarks of tomorrow will be scarcity – of land, water, oil, food and ‘air-space’ for GHG ... Three lessons are ours to be learnt from the 20<sup>th</sup> century:*

- leadership matters*
- economic volatility introduces a major risk factor*
- geopolitical rivalries trigger discontinuities more than does technological change*

*And the greatest of these is leadership... no trend is immutable, and ... timely and well informed intervention can decrease the likelihood and severity of negative developments and increase the likelihood of positive ones.”*

US National Intelligence Council (2008)



# THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

*Do the right thing. It will gratify  
some and astonish the rest!*

Mark Twain

**Sara Parkin |**

[s.parkin@forumforthefuture.org](mailto:s.parkin@forumforthefuture.org) |

[forumforthefuture.org](http://forumforthefuture.org) |

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