



Exploring “*Civilizational Overshoot*”

CACOR

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Will Modern Civilization be the Death of us?

Envisioning Tomorrow's Earth

William E. Rees, PhD

University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC

The Global Picture: 'Overshoot'

**Ecological &
Civilizational
Overshoot**



2016 human eco-footprint:
20.5 billion hectares (2.6 gha/cap)

2016 global biocapacity:
12.2 billion hectares (1.7 gha/cap)

= 68% OVERSHOOT

Everyone is
competing with
everyone else for the
shrinking bio-capacity
of Earth.

Data source: Global Footprint network

Humans are consuming/dissipating/displacing other species, ecosystems, soils, etc., faster than nature can regenerate and dumping wastes beyond nature's capacity to assimilate.

MTI Cultures Cannot See a Way Out



What is your aim in philosophy? To
show the fly the way out of the
fly-bottle.

— Ludwig Wittgenstein —

Philosophical Investigations pt. 1, sec. 309 (1953)



The Global Picture: 'Overshoot'

**Ecological &
Civilizational
Overshoot**

**We do not
yet know it.**

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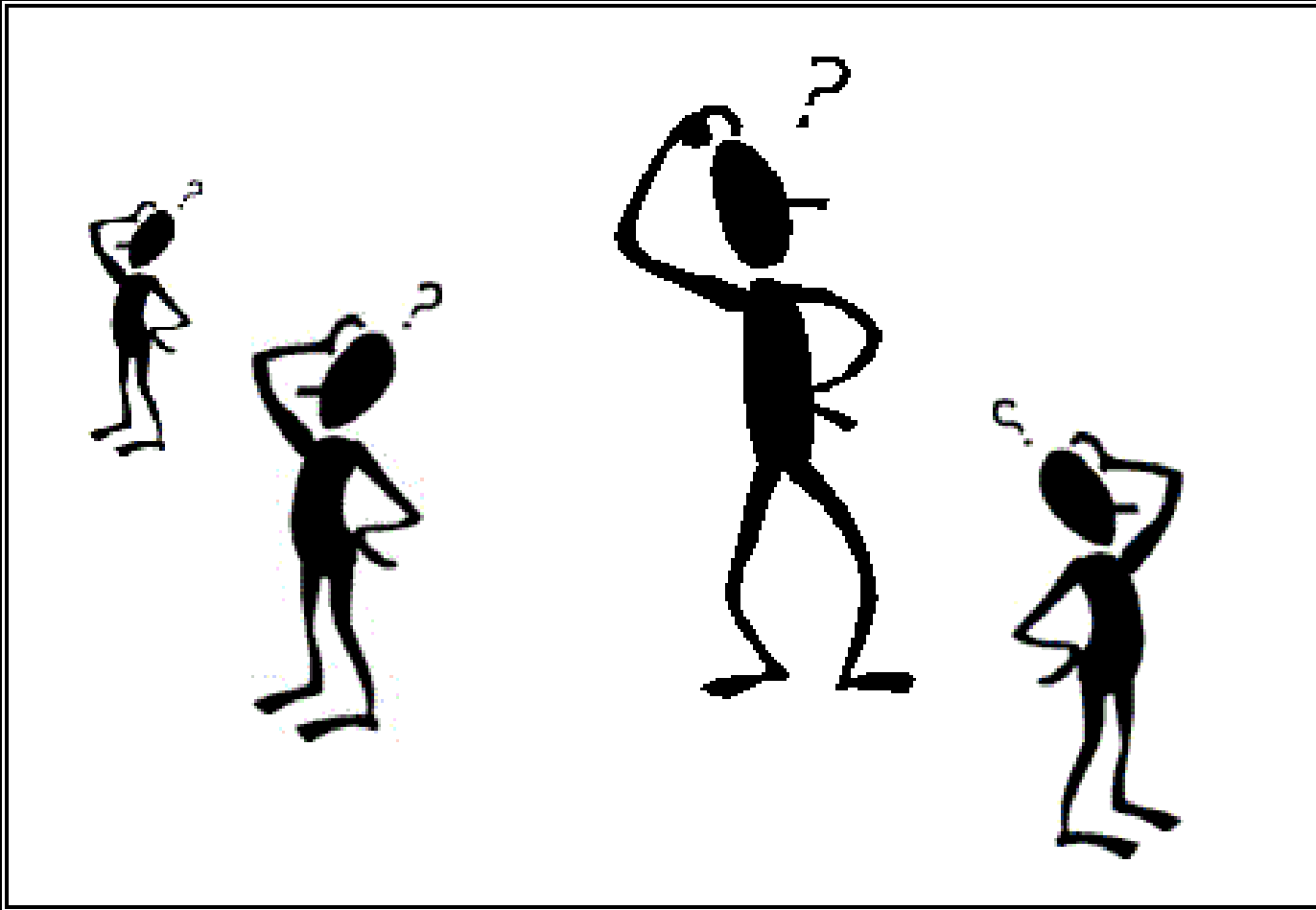
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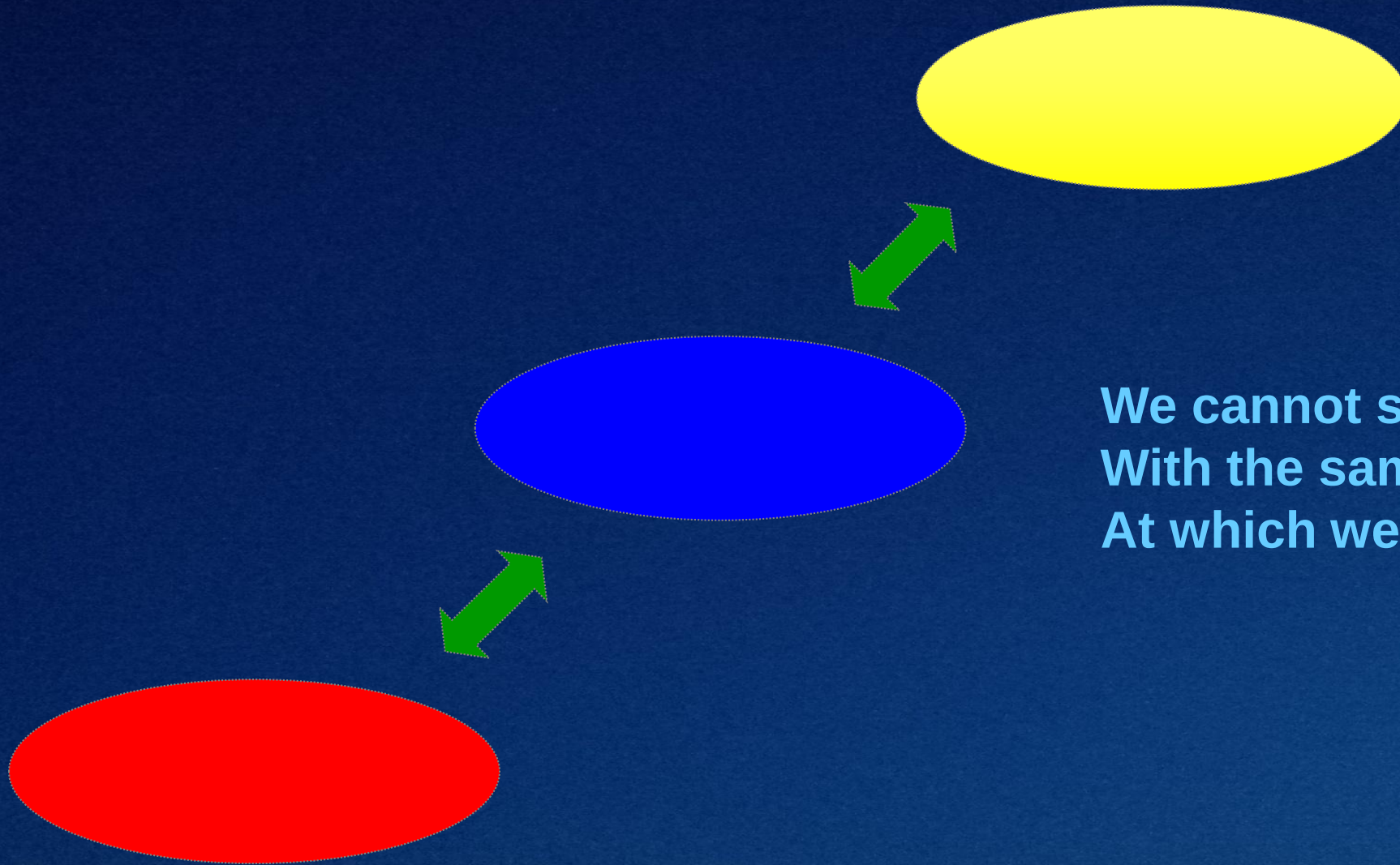
How to Overcome Our MTI Blindness?



“Nothing
good ever
came out of
a blind
spot.”

Louise Penny
Kingdom of the Blind
2018

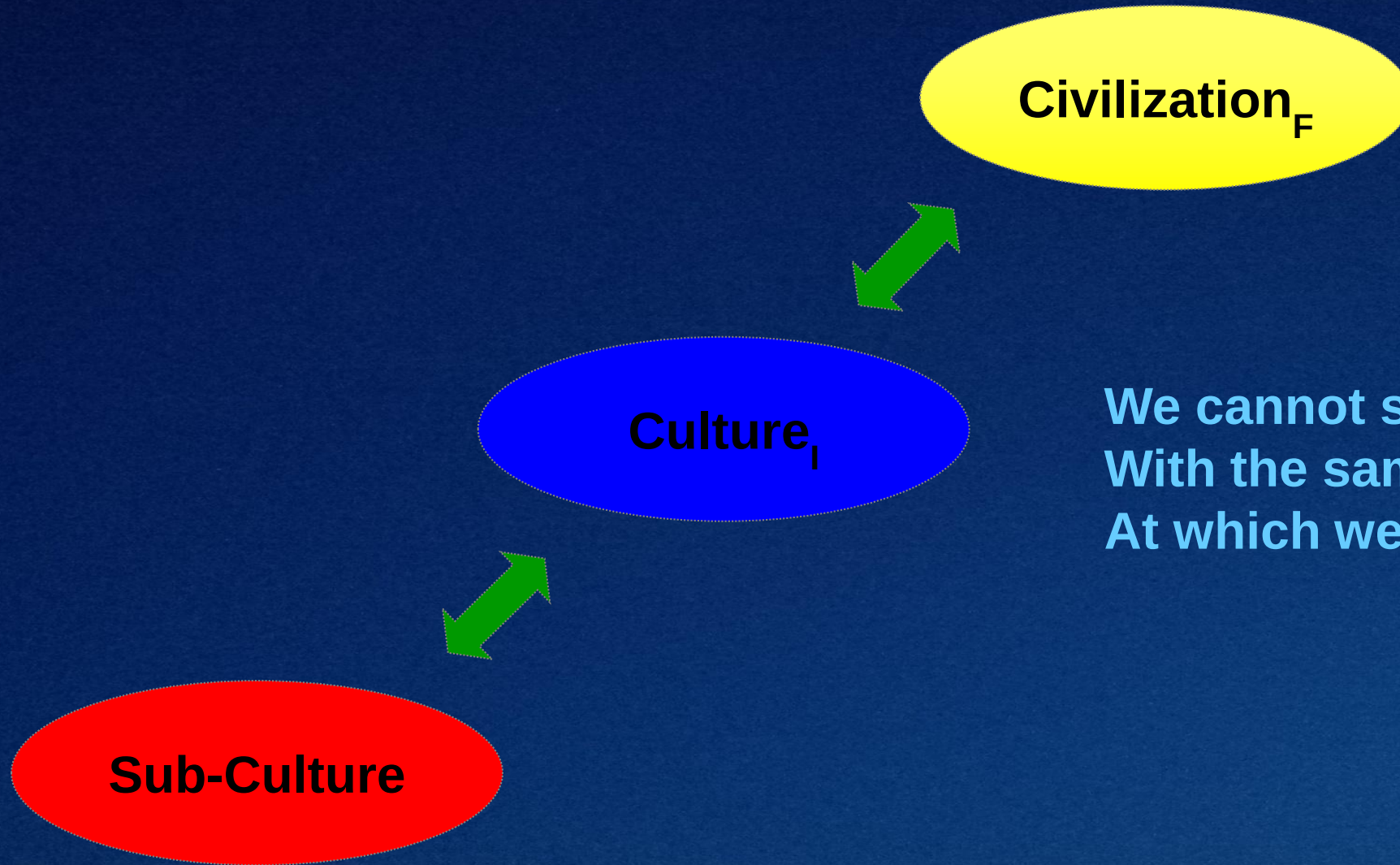
See Better: From a Higher Level of Generality



We cannot solve problems
With the same level of thinking
At which we created them.

Albert Einstein

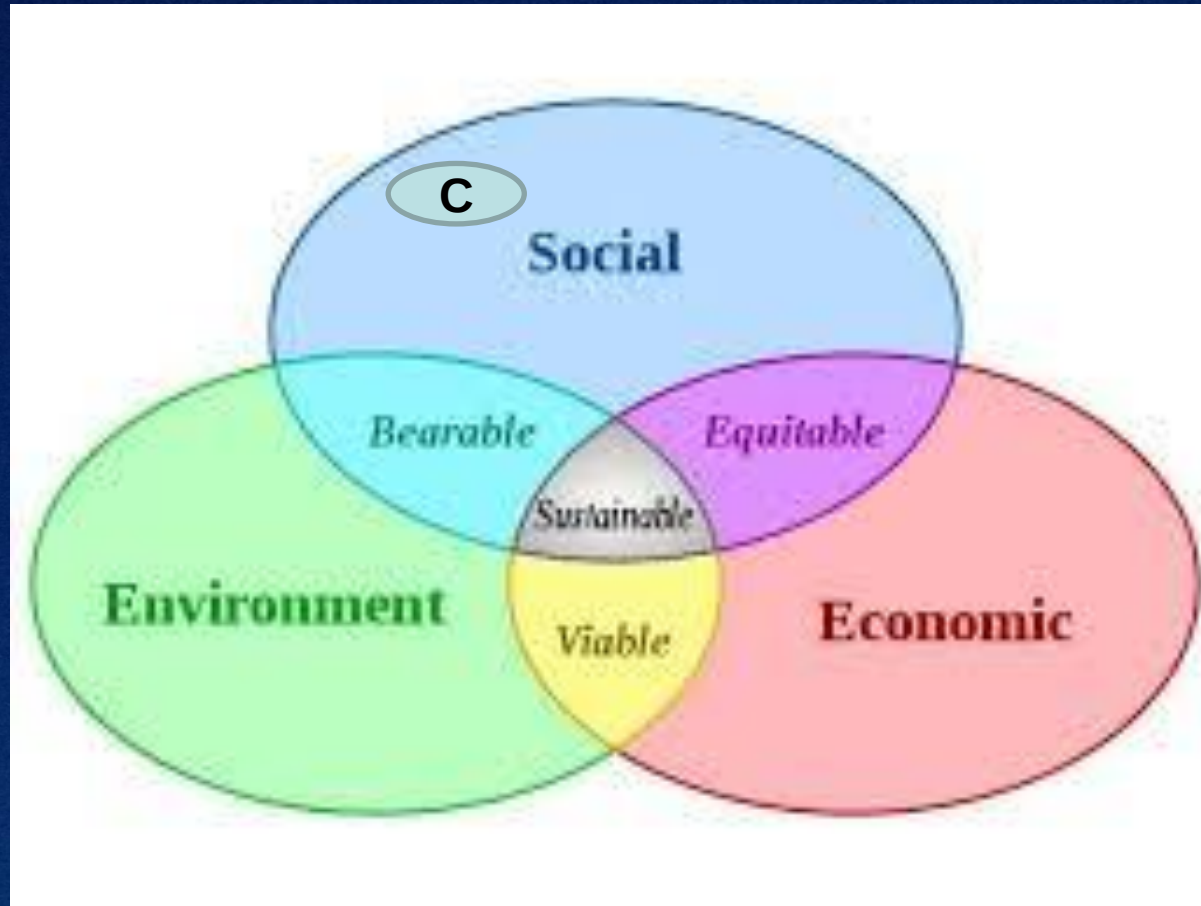
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Dominant use of 'Culture'



Approved use of 'Society'/'Culture'



What Bill and I Mean by 'Culture,'



**In a socially constructed world,
it's all culture
within a form of civilization!**

A Culture₁ — Makes sense *for* and *of* us

In what a culture produces, whether it is art, philosophy, military strategy or political and economic development, there are no accidents; everything a culture produces is equally a symbol of that culture.

Northrop Frye

Cultures, are Systems

All these phenomena are not simply blemishes – they are... outputs. These unpleasing threats to all we hold most dear are products of a system so organized as to produce them – to produce them, and not their contraries.

They are not accidental;
and they are not mistakes.

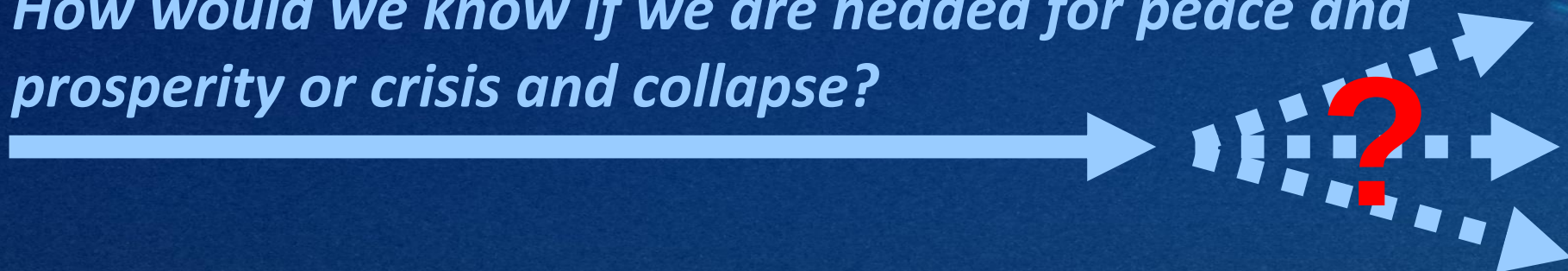
Stafford Beer

Cultures are Path Dependent

Every culture makes an unconscious bet that the way it construes reality actually has an adequate grasp on reality; that what it takes as knowledge can be trusted with one's life.

*Yet we now know that whole cultures can live by mythic systems that get it wrong enough for the culture to go onto **ecological/cultural overshoot**; that when they do, they collapse.*

How would we know if we are headed for peace and prosperity or crisis and collapse?



Uses of 'Civilization'

'civilization_G' as = "the whole of humanity."



'civilization_O' as in "those who live in towns."



'civilization_P' as = geography, e.g. "Eastern" or "Western"



'civilization_C' as = 'culture_I', e.g. "Chinese" or "British"

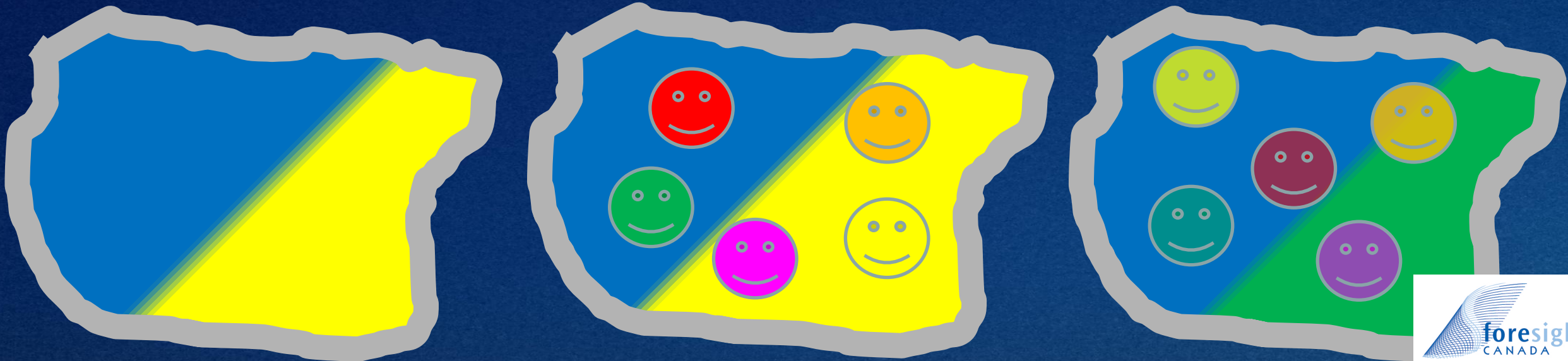


'civilization_F' as = in a form of civilization_F, e.g. indigenous.



Form of Civilization_F

A civilization_F is a shared human way of knowing/
experiencing/being in reality and being human, the core
paradigm of which is fundamentally different from the core
paradigm of a different form of civilization_F.



Core Paradigm Civilization_F

Predominantly, those who share a civilization_F unconsciously share the ways they know, **imagine**, think things through and **conduct themselves** regarding:

- The nature of reality.
- The nature and power of human persons.
- The relationship of persons to reality.

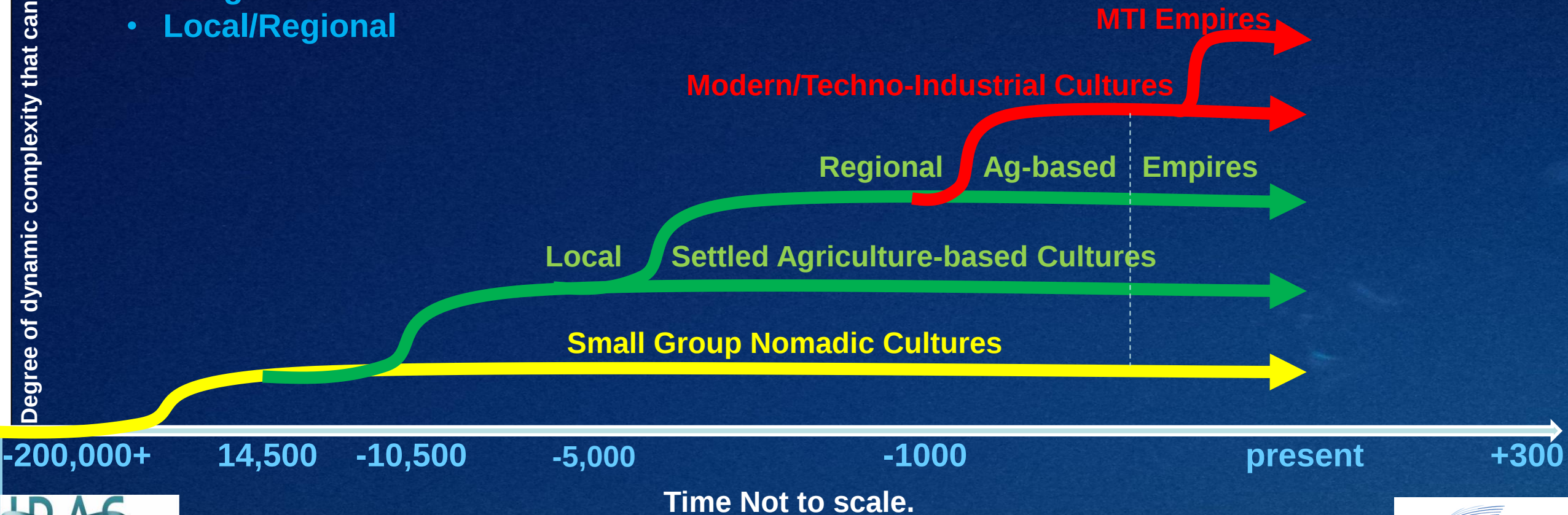
Each civilization_F is one possible way of “*doing the human as beings on the Earth.*”

The trajectory of history changes when a new civilization_F emerges!

3 Forms of Civilization_F Today

- Optional
- Unconscious
- Long Time
- Local/Regional

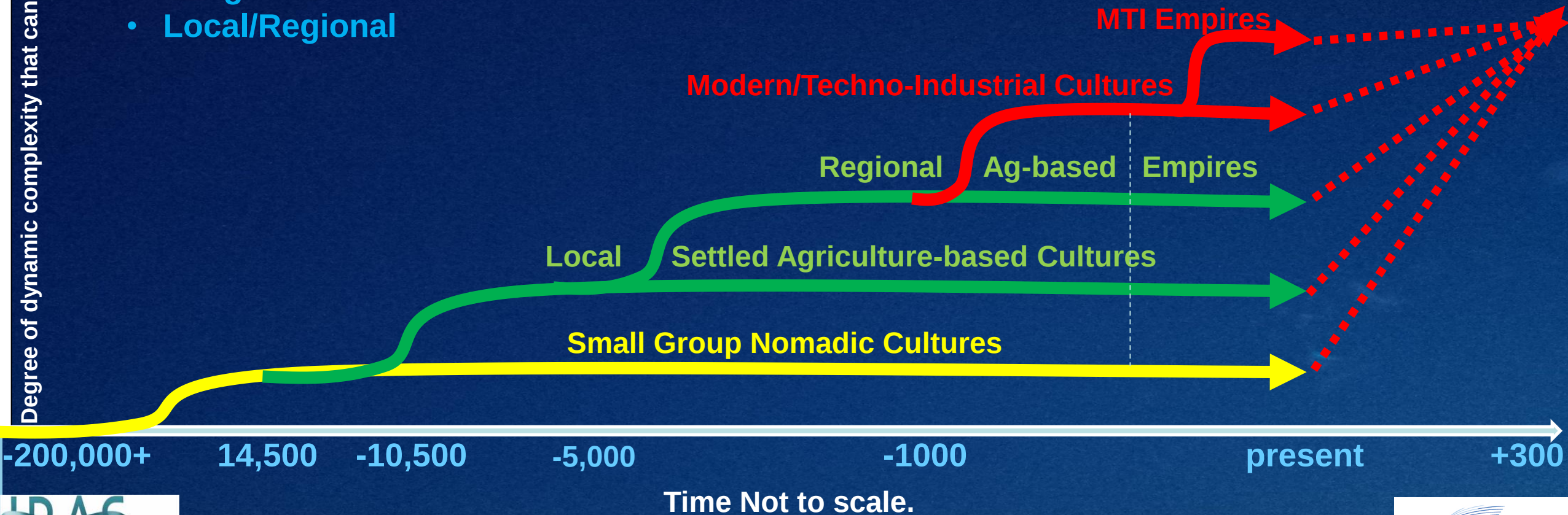
Degree of dynamic complexity that can be coped with.



Official MTI “Globalization” Project

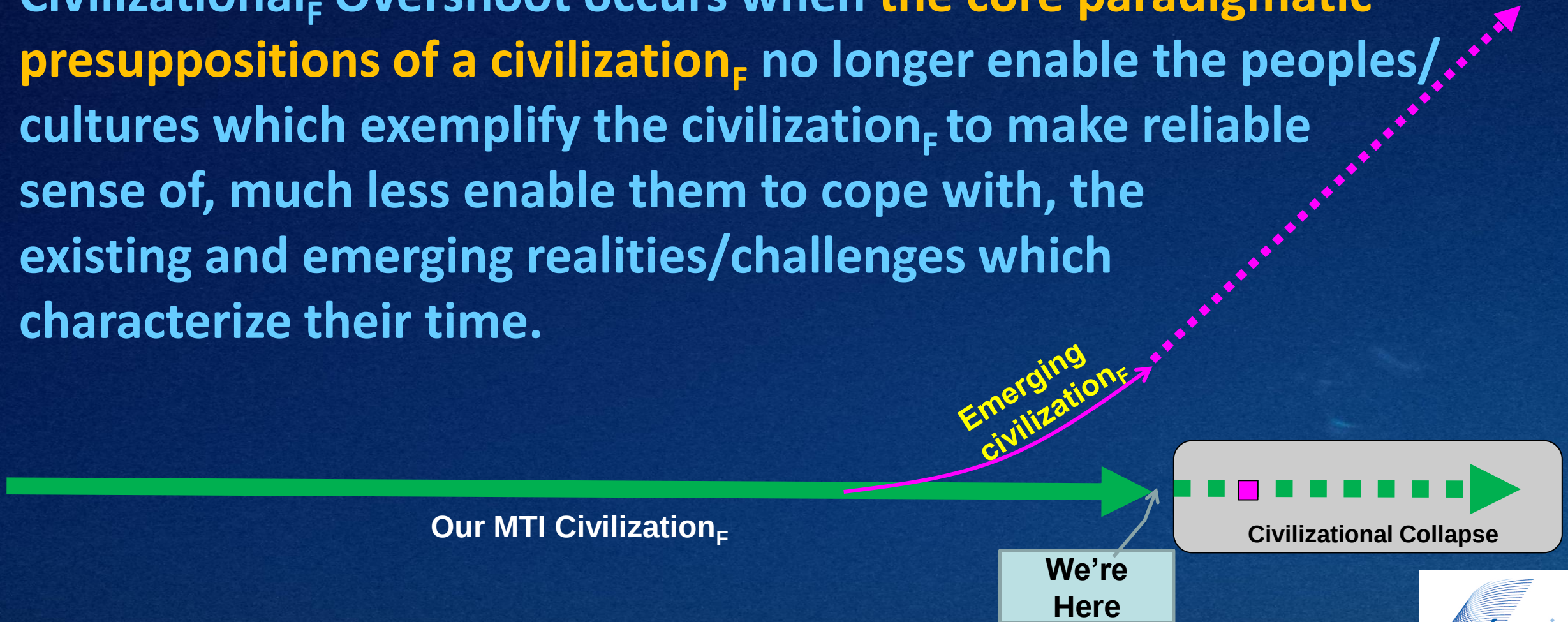
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Civilizational_F Overshoot

Civilizational_F Overshoot occurs when **the core paradigmatic presuppositions of a civilization_F** no longer enable the peoples/cultures which exemplify the civilization_F to make reliable sense of, much less enable them to cope with, the existing and emerging realities/challenges which characterize their time.



Bill's Conclusion and Reasoning

1. We must transcend techno-modernism and catalyze a *personal-to-civilizational change, transition, transformation* to a way of being on Earth in which humans live spiritually satisfying lives more equitably within the means of nature.
2. *Unwittingly*, we are destroying the biosphere on which we depend for life.
3. “The means by which we apprehend reality determines the reality that we apprehend.”
4. Our MTI way of apprehending reality does not “get” reality.”
5. Our MTI way of apprehending reality does not “get” the fact that it does not “get” reality. We are culture-trapped; in cultural overshoot.
6. We are in ecological *and civilizational* overshoot

The Conclusion We (MTI) Do Not Yet See

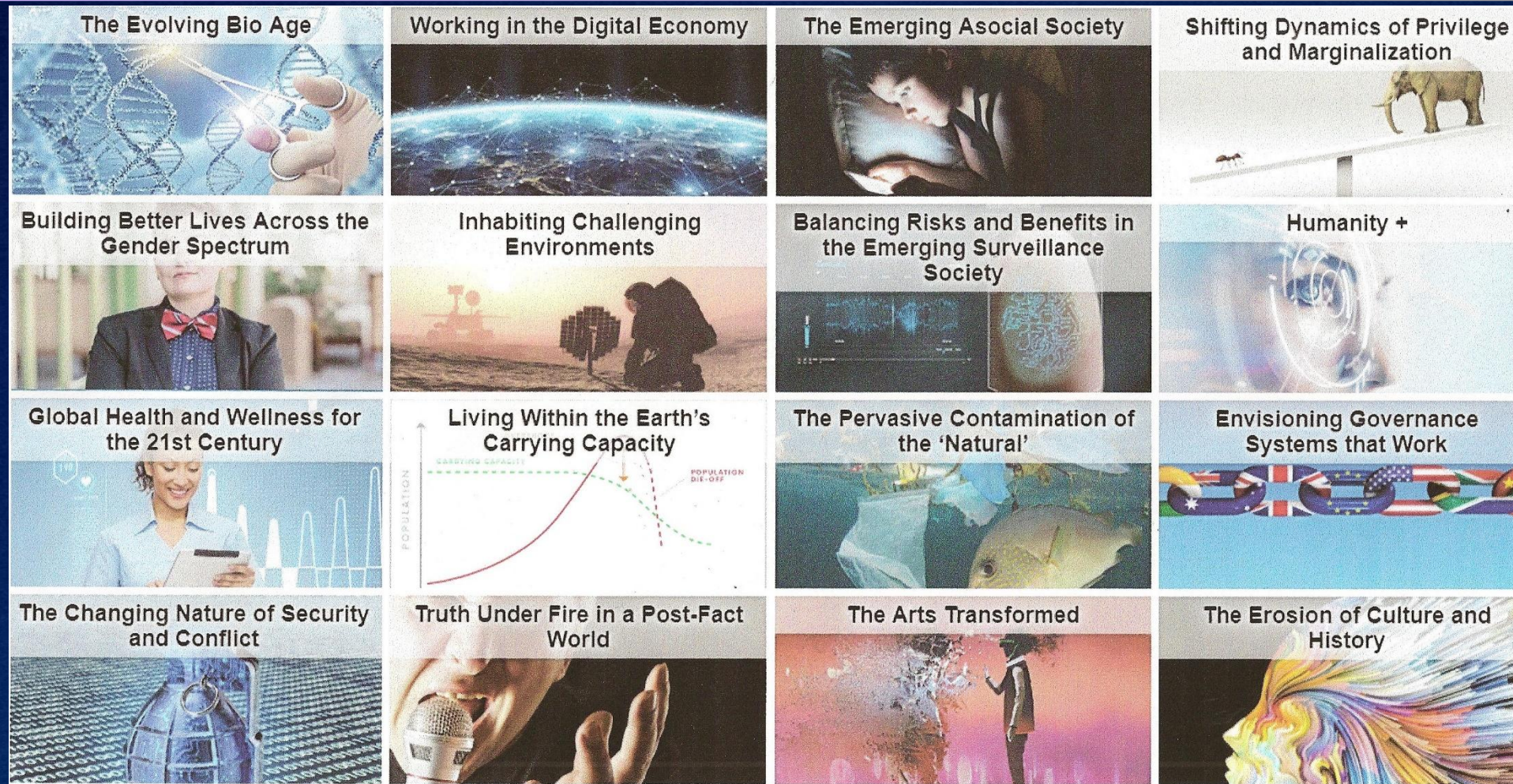
MTI cultures have no long-term future.

We need a **new culture** beyond MTI.

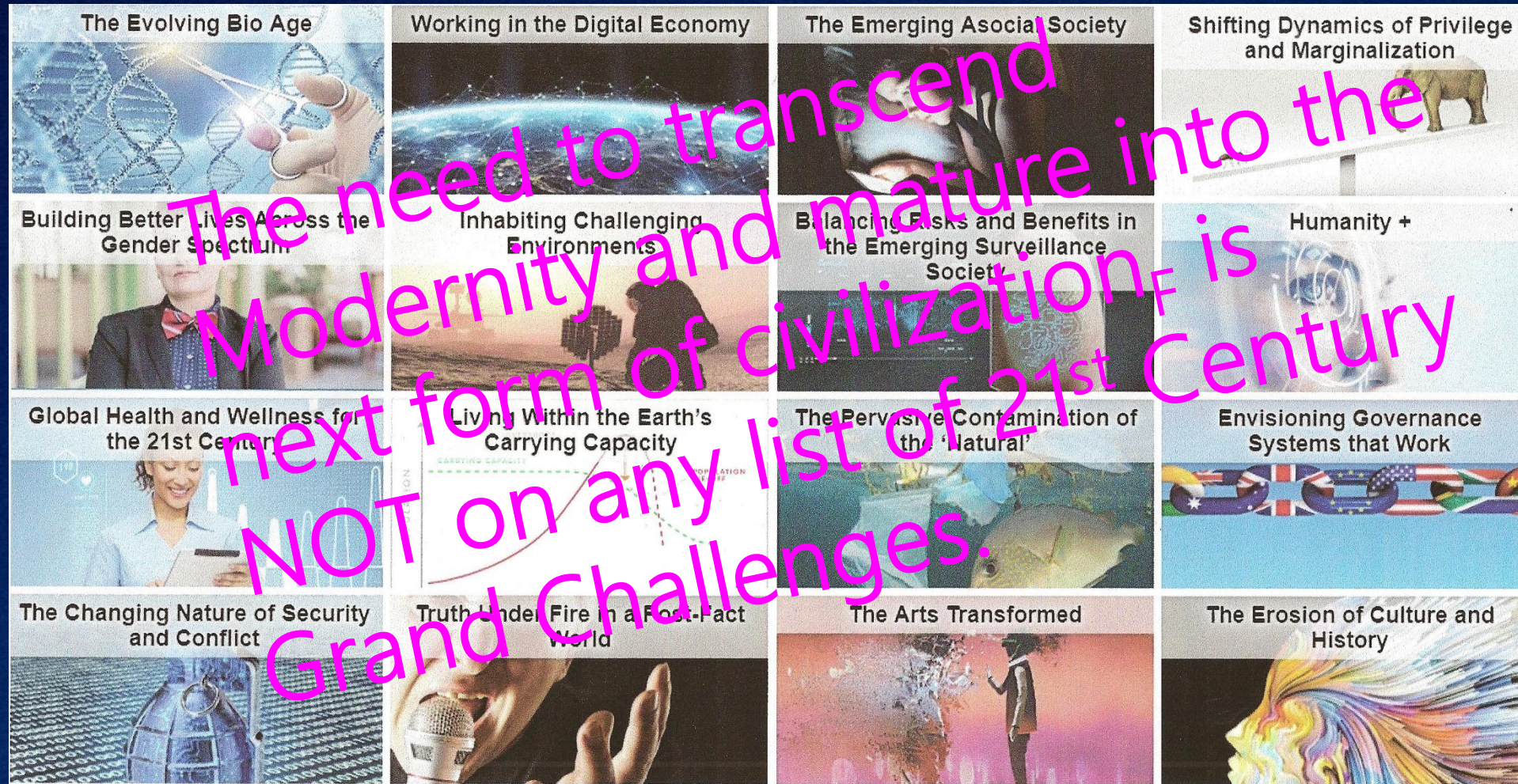
We need the next civilization_F.

We must **transcend** the MTI form of civilization_F that now dominates the Earth and has already colonized our future. And this at every scale from personal to civilizational_F.

We Moderns are "*Civilization_F Trapped*"



We are Blind to Civilizational_F Transcendence



CSER



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF
EXISTENTIAL RISK

We are dedicated to the study and
mitigation of risks that could lead to
human extinction or civilisational
collapse

We MTIs Don't Get the Irony (or the threat)

Our MTI efforts to “save the future” now use and utterly trust and depend on the fitness of the very ways of knowing, being and living that got us into the complex, living messes that now threaten our future, i.e. our Modern Techno-industrial ways of knowing, seeing, thinking and living.

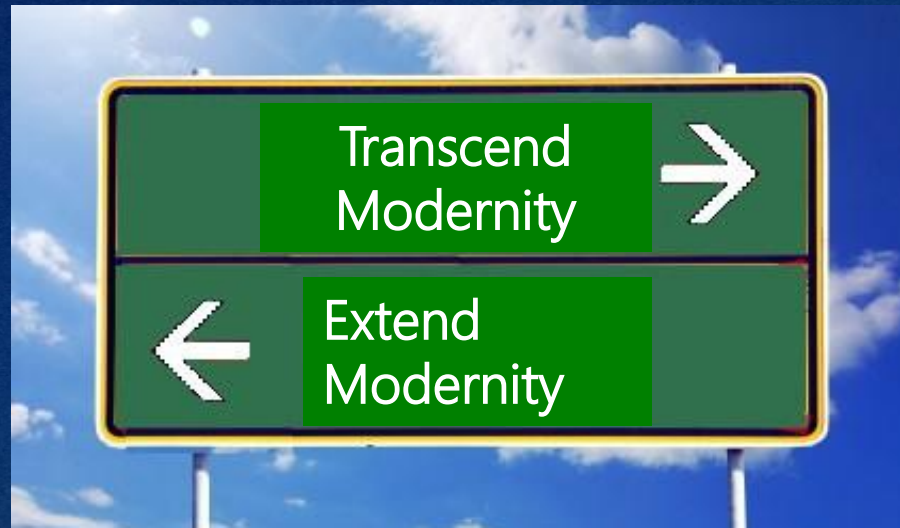
As of today, we who are MTI peoples are NOT seeking to transcend or escape from our MTI form of civilization.

Rather, we are seeking to improve and extend the life of MTI cultures by making them to be global, equitable and sustainable, e.g. UN SDGs.

Our Core Work in the 21st Century:

1. Learn to know, **imagine**, **think through** and **respond to** the actual situation we MTI's are in.
2. Let go of and out-grow our MTI identities at every scale.
3. Commit to the ^{new} work consciously co-creating the next form of human civilization_F by nurturing into resilient being "**consciously co-creative persons and cultures**".

- Optional
- Unconscious
- Long Time
- Local/Regional



- Required
- Conscious
- Rapid
- Scalable

FC's Judgment

**This hypothesis is worth
investing in, developing and testing.**

(Rinse and repeat...)

A wide-angle photograph of a snowy, mountainous landscape. In the foreground, a tall, dark stone cairn stands on the right side. The ground is covered in snow with scattered dark rocks. In the background, a range of snow-capped mountains stretches across the horizon under a clear blue sky.

Over to YOU!

Our Future **is** in Our Hands, Minds, Hearts and Spirits

Thank You!

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Your Invitation to Participate

We welcome your comments and/or questions.
Send an email with “Comment” in the Re line to:
RubenNelson@shaw.ca

If you wish to be added to the email list for the new
Personal-to-Civilizational Transcendence Program
send an email with “email list” in the Re line to:
RubenNelson@shaw.ca

If you wish to participate in the program send a
note to Ruben. **RubenNelson@shaw.ca**

Civilizational_F Possibilities

