SHAPE

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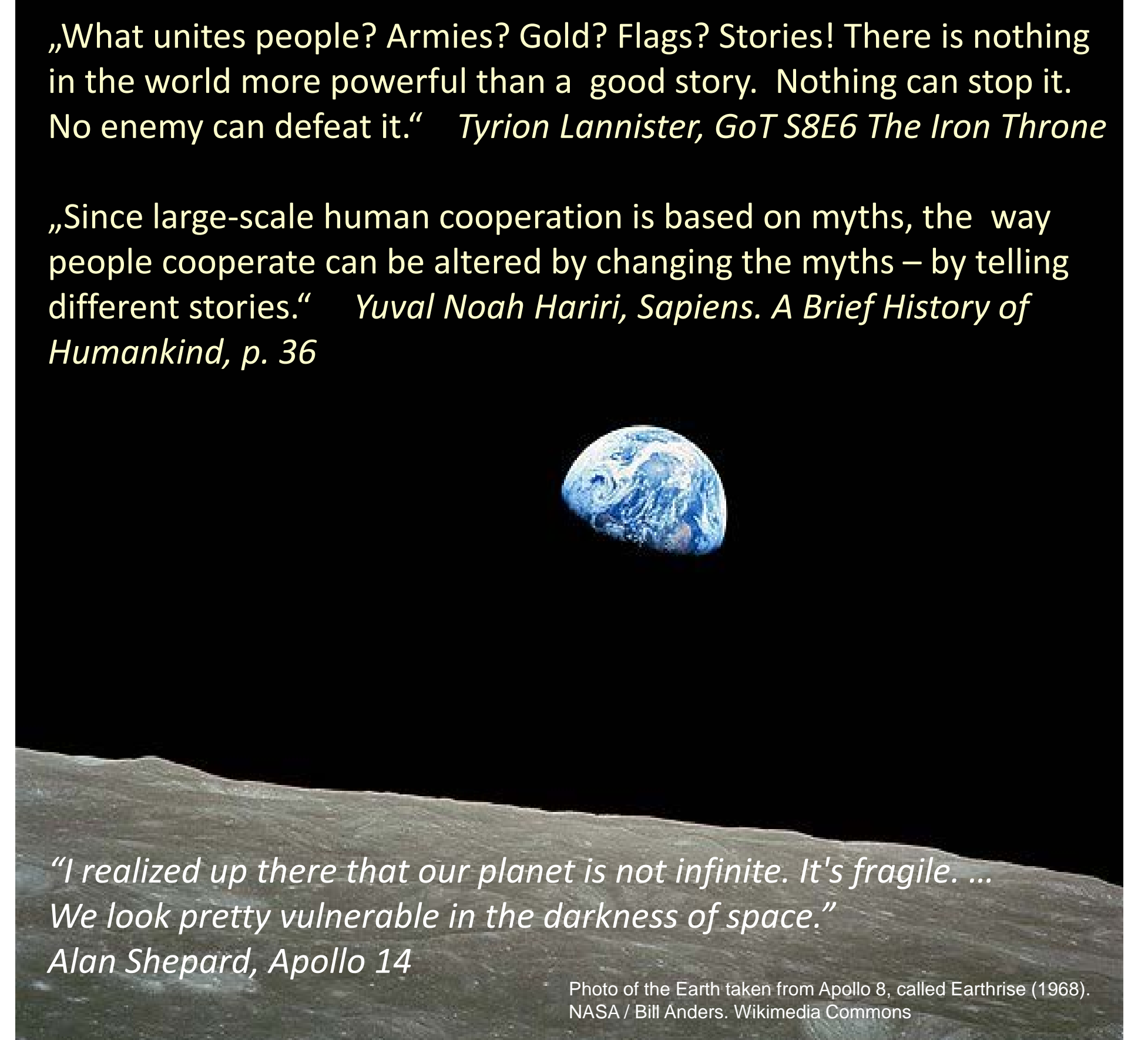
New Narratives For Sustainable Development

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THE POWER OF NARRATIVES

Narratives are a powerful tool for **public communication of sustainable development**. The "Spaceship Earth" narrative facilitated the concepts of global environmental change as a threat to humanity, planetary boundaries and the need for sustainable development (SD). Narratives are also an important tool in **scenario building**: they structure the space of possible futures, facilitate integration across disciplines and scales, and allow stakeholders to connect to scenarios.

„What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags? Stories! There is nothing in the world more powerful than a good story. Nothing can stop it. No enemy can defeat it." *Tyrion Lannister, GoT S8E6 The Iron Throne*

„Since large-scale human cooperation is based on myths, the way people cooperate can be altered by changing the myths – by telling different stories." *Yuval Noah Hariri, Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind, p. 36*

"I realized up there that our planet is not infinite. It's fragile. … We look pretty vulnerable in the darkness of space."
Alan Shepard, Apollo 14

Photo of the Earth taken from Apollo 8, called Earthrise (1968). NASA / Bill Anders. Wikimedia Commons

THE SHAPE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (SD) NARRATIVES

There is a lack of **holistic SD narratives** in climate change and SD research. SSP1 – the most sustainable SSP narrative – is too narrowly focused on climate change.

The new SD narratives developed in the SHAPE project combine a unique set of features that distinguishes them from SSP1: They are **target-seeking**, aligned with the **full SDG agenda**, **co-developed** with stakeholders, and use **different paradigms** to identify alternative routes to sustainable development.

Objective: **Extend existing SSP framework and underpin analysis of sustainable development pathways (SDPs) with IAMs**.
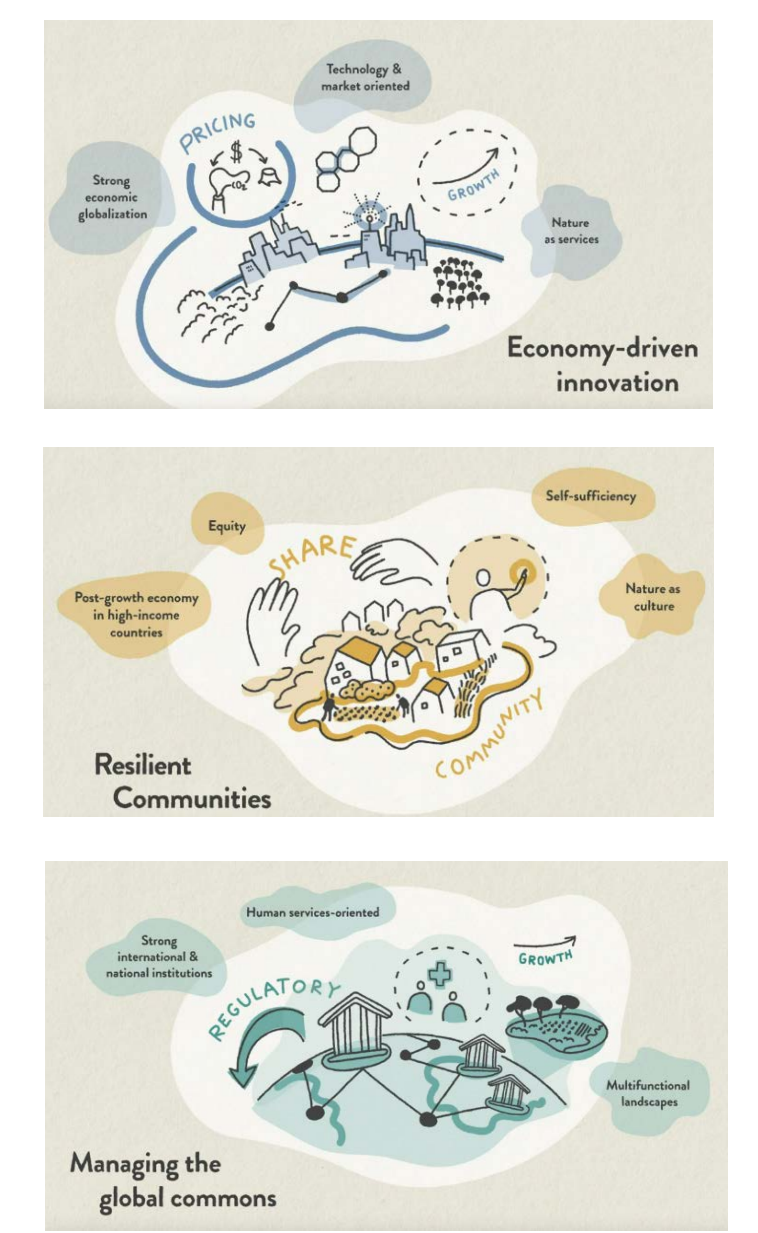
Economy driven innovation (EI) towards sustainable development: In this world, liberal, functional, and global world views become prevalent. Societies embrace innovation, efficiency, global action and equal rights as key elements to depart from current unsustainable trends and drive the transition towards sustainable development.

Resilient communities (RC) achieving sustainable development: This world develops towards community oriented world views, emphasizing solidarity and wellbeing. Societies emphasize regional diversity, transcend the capitalist economy model and rely on equitable sharing of resources and economic wealth to ensure sustainable development.

Managing the global commons (MC) to ensure sustainable development: In this world, global norms and the perception of global citizenship become prevalent. States and global institutions orchestrate the transition towards sustainable development, including an increased focus on human services and decreased emphasis of material consumption.

Local solutions (LS) towards sustainable development: In this world, states become regional centers of authority and pursue regional approaches to sustainable development. They rely on public good provision, demand management and resource efficiency to provide for all within environmental boundaries.

Green and social market transition (GS) towards sustainable development: In this world, societies adopt global norms to coordinate the transition towards sustainable development, relying on non-state actors as well as state actors and global institutions. This includes transitioning to a service-oriented and well regulated economy and environmental-friendly technologies.
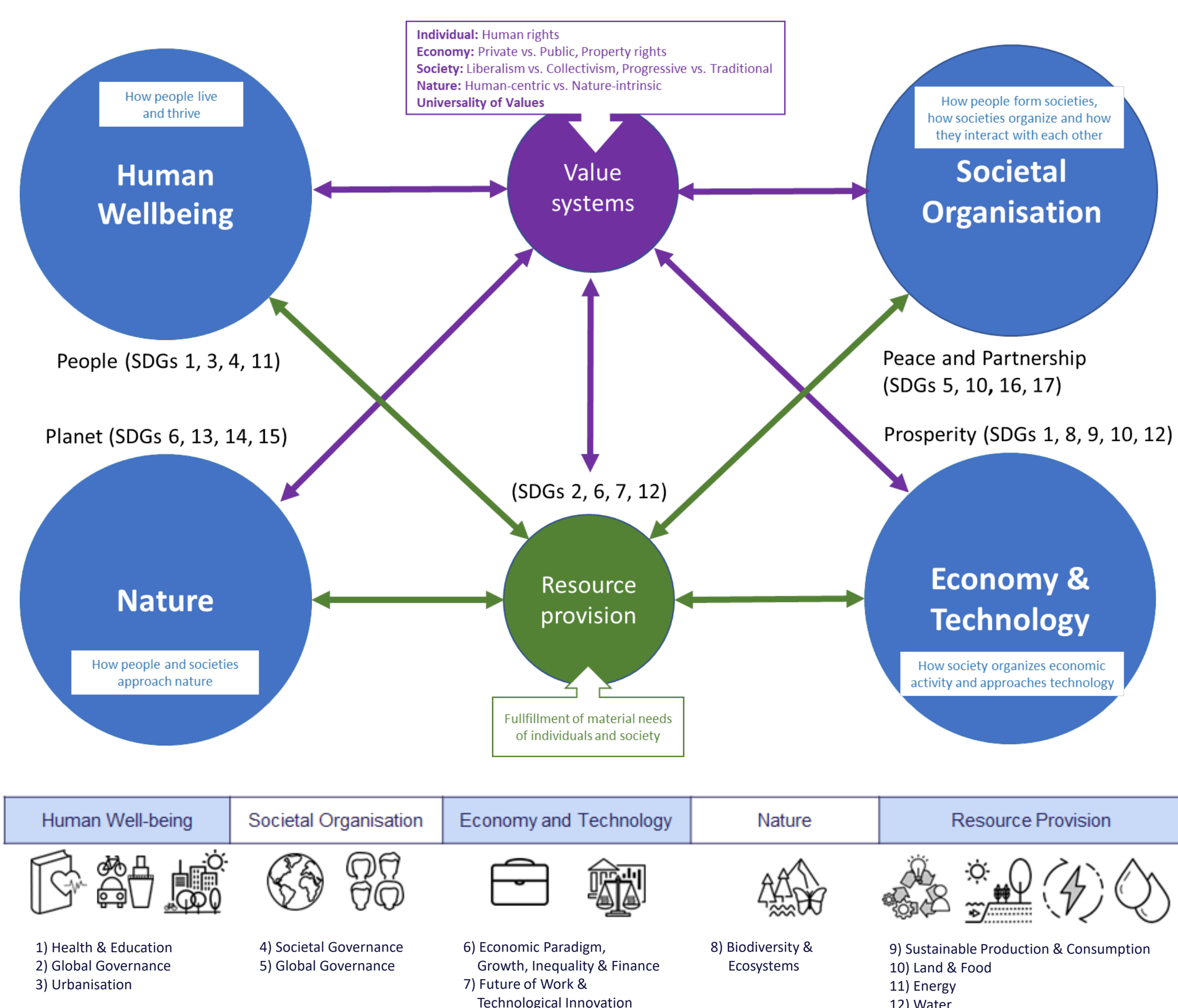
Illustrations by Elsa Wikander / Azote

Video on the SHAPE narratives:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7phE16HifmI

CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVES

The **SD space was structured in 12 dimensions** that cover the 2030 Agenda's "5 Ps", and in which sustainable development can proceed in different paradigmatic ways (see Figure below).

The **different branches of the dimensions were then combined** in various ways to arrive at a set of five holistic SD narratives (see Table to the right and narrative abstracts).

Co-design: Scientists and stakeholders discussed choices of dimensions and branches as well as their combination into SD narratives.

Individual: Human rights
Economy: Private vs. Public, Property rights
Society: Liberalism vs. Collectivism, Progressive vs. Traditional
Nature: Human-centric vs. Nature-intrinsic
Universality of Values

How people live and thrive — **Human Wellbeing**

How people form societies, how they interact with each other — **Societal Organisation**

Value systems

People (SDGs 1, 3, 4, 11)

Peace and Partnership (SDGs 5, 10, 16, 17)

Planet (SDGs 6, 13, 14, 15)

Prosperity (SDGs 1, 8, 9, 10, 12)

(SDGs 2, 6, 7, 12)

Nature — How people and societies approach nature

Resource provision

Economy & Technology — How society organizes economic activity and approaches technology

Fulfillment of material needs of individuals and society

Human Well-being	Societal Organisation	Economy and Technology	Nature	Resource Provision
1) Health & Education 2) Global Governance 3) Urbanisation	4) Societal Governance 5) Global Governance	6) Economic Paradigm, Growth, Inequality & Finance 7) Future of Work & Technological Innovation	8) Biodiversity & Ecosystems	9) Sustainable Production & Consumption 10) Land & Food 11) Energy 12) Water

	Economy-driven innovation	Resilient communities	Managing the global commons	Local solutions	Green & social market transition
Societal Governance	**Economy driven:** key role of market actors/solutions, efficiency	**Society driven:** key role of societal networks, solidarity	**Politically driven:** strong statehood and good governance	**Politically driven:** strong statehood and good governance	**Society driven:** key role of societal networks, solidarity
Global Governance	**Convergent Liberal World:** strong globalization, multilateralism, efficiency	**Divergent Glocality:** weak globalization, polycentric decision making, local action	**Convergent Cosmopolitan Global Society:** strong social globalization based on universal human values, multilateralism, solidarity	**Divergent Glocality:** weak globalization, polycentric decision making, local action	**Convergent Liberal World:** strong globalization, multilateralism, efficiency
Economic Paradigm, Growth, Inequality & Finance	**Innovation driven:** Market economy aligned with societal goals, rapid growth and convergence between regions, social security for those in need	**Solidarity driven:** focus on covering needs, provision of public goods, redistribution of wealth, post-growth future	**Service driven:** focus on wellbeing, valuation of social work, moderate growth, strong convergence between regions, universal access to services	**Solidarity driven:** focus on covering needs, provision of public goods, redistribution of wealth, post-growth future	**Service driven:** focus on wellbeing, valuation of social work, moderate growth, strong convergence between regions, universal access to services
Future of Work & Technological Innovation	**Symbiosis:** rapid digitalization, pervasive human-machine interaction, high technological progress, open data society	**Deceleration:** new digital skepticism, technological progress is slowed to allow societies to adapt organically	**Homecoming:** workplace emphasises human skills and interactions, automation of routine tasks, expansion of human services	**Deceleration:** new digital skepticism, technological progress is slowed to allow societies to adapt organically	**Homecoming:** workplace emphasises human skills and interactions, automation of routine tasks, expansion of human services
Urbanization	**Tech cities:** high urbanization, predominance of metros and large cities, compact urban form.	**Distributed cities:** Settlements centered on local communities. Small to medium cities thrive.	**Green cities:** urban development driven by local institutions and governance, high urbanization.	**Green cities:** urban development driven by local institutions and governance, high urbanization.	**Tech cities:** high urbanization, predominance of metros and large cities, compact urban form.
Mobility	**SciFi Mobility:** autonomous electric vehicles and freight transport, high-speed intercity travel, constant long distance travel due to digital alternatives	**Sustainable Lifestyles:** public and local transport, car sharing, focus on local markets decreases long-distance freight transport	**Green Mobility:** full (direct and indirect) electrification of all transport. Reduced long-distance travel.	**Green Mobility:** full (direct and indirect) electrification of all transport. Reduced long-distance travel.	**SciFi Mobility:** autonomous electric vehicles and freight transport, high-speed intercity travel, constant long distance travel due to digital alternatives
Sustainable Production & Consumption	**A bright High-Tech Future:** "green growth" extrapolation of current trends, large efficiency gains, cradle-to-cradle material usage, heavy use of digital technologies	**Sharing for the World:** high degree of self-sufficiency, personal interaction and social participation valued higher than comfort and status, sharing of goods & services	**Sharing the Global Commons:** regional and global institutions regulate fair and sustainable production and consumption.	**Caring for the World:** high degree of self-sufficiency, personal interaction and social participation valued higher than comfort and status, sharing of goods & services	**A bright High-Tech Future:** "green growth" extrapolation of current trends, large efficiency gains, cradle-to-cradle material usage, heavy use of digital technologies
Land & Food	**Sparing:** intensification & efficiency, largely privately driven, landless food production, genetic engineering	**Caring:** intensification change, shift to plant-based diets, low waste. Focus on local & organic agriculture	**Sharing:** mixing managed/natural land, biodiversity-based practices, strong institutions, focus on whole-system efficiency	**Sharing:** mixing managed/natural land, biodiversity-based practices, strong institutions, focus on whole-system efficiency	**Sparing:** intensification & efficiency, largely privately driven, landless food production, genetic engineering
Energy	**Market Supply:** increased supply of clean energy, benefits from economies of scale, globalized markets and centralized distribution networks	**Energy Communities:** reduced energy demand through behavioural change, overcoming producer/consumer split, decentralized energy system	**Flexible Electrification:** interconnected energy systems optimizing supply & demand, high electrification from renewables, focus on end-use efficiency and system flexibility.	**Energy Communities:** reduced energy demand through behavioural change, overcoming producer/consumer split, decentralized energy system	**Flexible Electrification:** interconnected energy systems optimizing supply & demand, high electrification from renewables, focus on end-use efficiency and system flexibility.
Water	**Water Innovation:** well-regulated water markets, increased supply (incl. desalination) and efficient water use.	**Low Tech:** community based and decentralized water supply and sanitation infrastructure. Reduced demand based on sufficiency, reuse and behavioural change.	**Regional Water Partnerships:** water resources management at basin level, transboundary water institutions. Reduced demand based on sufficiency & recycling.	**Regional Water Partnerships:** water resources management at basin level, transboundary water institutions. Reduced demand based on sufficiency & recycling.	**Regional Water Partnerships:** water resources management at basin level, transboundary water institutions. Reduced demand based on sufficiency & recycling.
Health & Education	**Market-driven innovations:** Education valued as basis for economic and personal freedom, technology driven transfer of knowledge. High tech progress in health system, personalized medicine and health advice.	**Holistic approach:** Education valued as a means to personal development, valuation of local knowledge and lifelong learning. Health system focused on prevention and public health.	**Global programs:** Universal access to health care and education as a human right and means of social development. Focus on combating major global health problems by transfer of technology, knowledge and personnel.	**Holistic approach:** Education valued as a means to personal development, valuation of local knowledge and lifelong learning. Health system focused on prevention and public health.	**Global programs:** Universal access to health care and education as a human right and means of social development. Focus on combating major global health problems by transfer of technology, knowledge and personnel.
Nature (Biodiversity & Ecosystems)	**Symbiosis:** Human centric value of nature. Widespread use of nature adjusted to sustainable levels. Ecosystem health supported in an integrated manner.	**Sufficiency and Co-existence:** Nature has intrinsic value, source of identity for local communities, co-existence of humans and nature, moderate and traditional use of natural resources.	**Global Efficient Safeguarding:** Global nature protection universally valued. Focus on strong institutions and governance, conflict and epidemic prevention. Large areas with no exploitation.	**Sufficiency and Co-existence:** Nature has intrinsic value, source of identity for local communities, co-existence of humans and nature, moderate and traditional use of natural resources.	**Global Efficient Safeguarding:** Global nature protection universally valued. Focus on strong institutions and governance, conflict and epidemic prevention. Large areas with no exploitation.