




Intangible cultural heritage and cultural sustainability transformation

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**Webinar: Perspectives to Heritage Futures – Usage of Personal Memories in the Times of Digitality
May 2 2023 14.00-16.00 (UTC+3)**

Picture: K. Siivonen



In this lecture,

- I will discuss about the **importance of intangible cultural heritage in current global transformation**
- In relation to that, I will talk about the **role of cultural sustainability transformation in urgently needed sustainability transformation**
- I will discuss **ethical perspective in relation to the use of intangible cultural heritage**
- I will present **basics of heritage futures and heritage futures workshops**

Picture: K. Siivonen

Disposition of the lecture

- **Culture as a part of nature**

 - Why cultural sustainability transformation is needed?

- **The concept of culture**

 - How the concept of culture supports to understand and foster cultural sustainability transformation?

- **Cultural sustainability transformation**

 - How sustainability transformation is connected to intangible cultural heritage?

- **Ethical reflection**

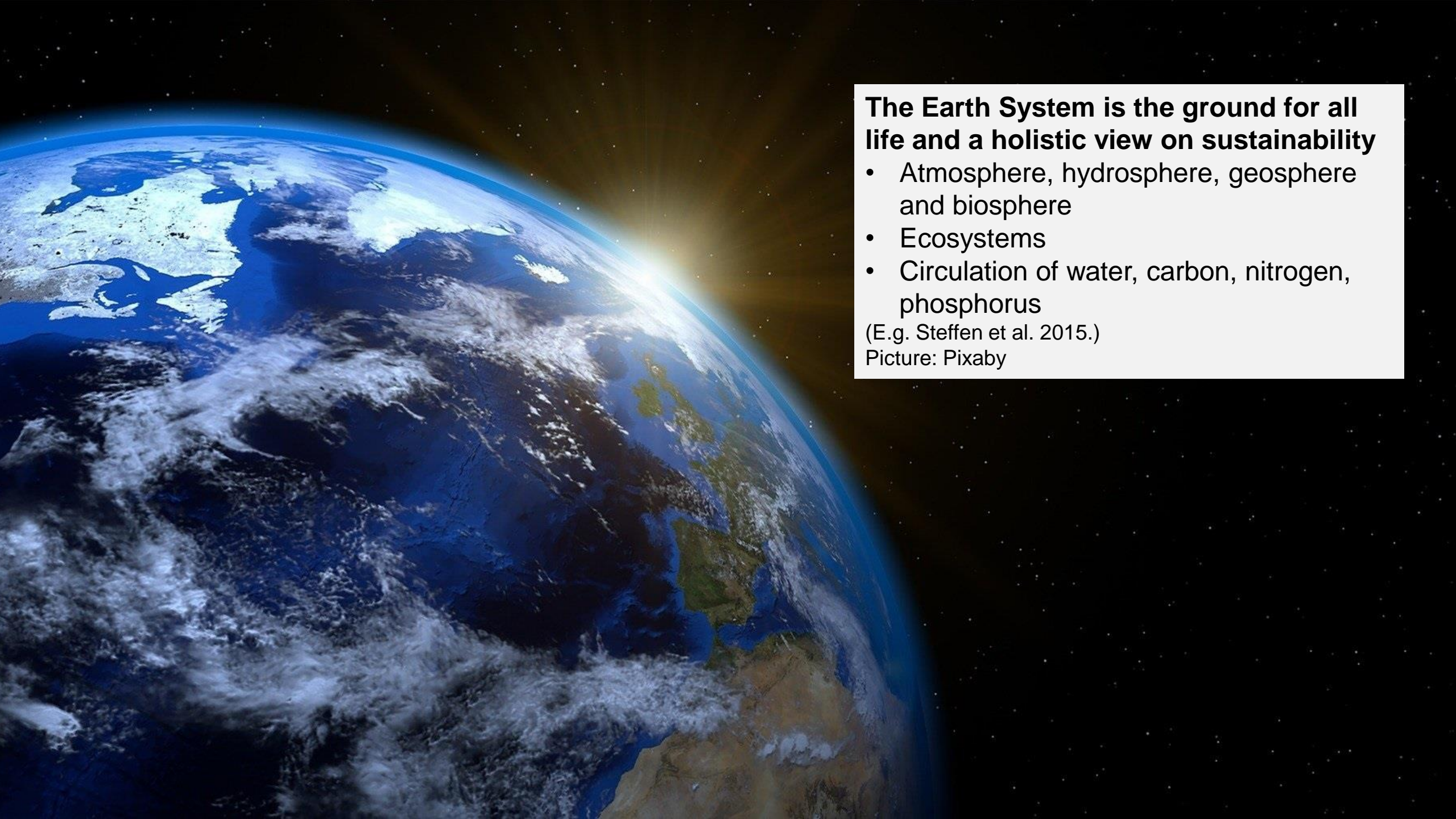
 - Why ethical reflection is crucial in cultural sustainability transformation and the use of intangible cultural heritage?

- **Heritage futures and heritage futures workshop**

 - What cultural sustainability transformation can be in practice?

Culture as a part of nature

Why cultural sustainability transformation is needed?



The Earth System is the ground for all life and a holistic view on sustainability

- Atmosphere, hydrosphere, geosphere and biosphere
- Ecosystems
- Circulation of water, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus

(E.g. Steffen et al. 2015.)

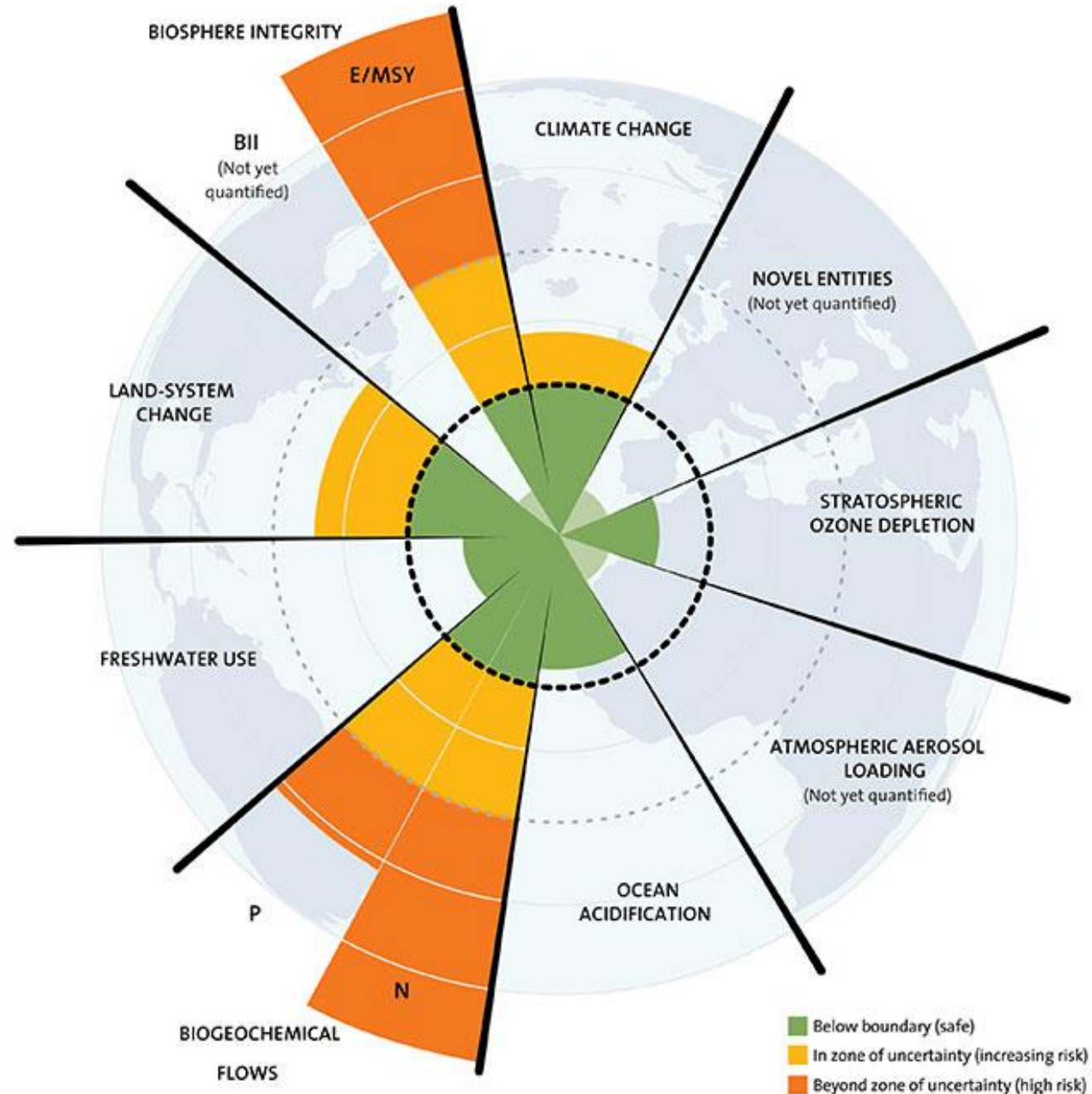
Picture: Pixaby

Sustainability transformation is needed, because on the era of Anthropocene human impact on the Earth is alarming

- Biodiversity loss and climate change are biggest threats
- Circulations of phosphorus and nitrogen are alarming (fertilization)
- Land-system change is increasing risk

Source: Steffen et al. 2015; Stockholm Resilience Centre,

<https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/plenary-boundaries.html>



Cultural sustainability transformation is needed because human beings are a part of the Earth System both physically, mentally and culturally

(Siivonen 2022.)

Picture: Pixaby



- Circulation of water, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus is going through us human beings, as all living beings
- We are a part of biosphere
- We are a part of local and global ecosystems
- We have an impact on atmosphere, hydrosphere, geosphere and biosphere
- Our shared habits to eat, travel, dwell and in general act, as well our worldviews and habits to make sense of the world – **that is culture – have an impact on all of this**

The concept of culture

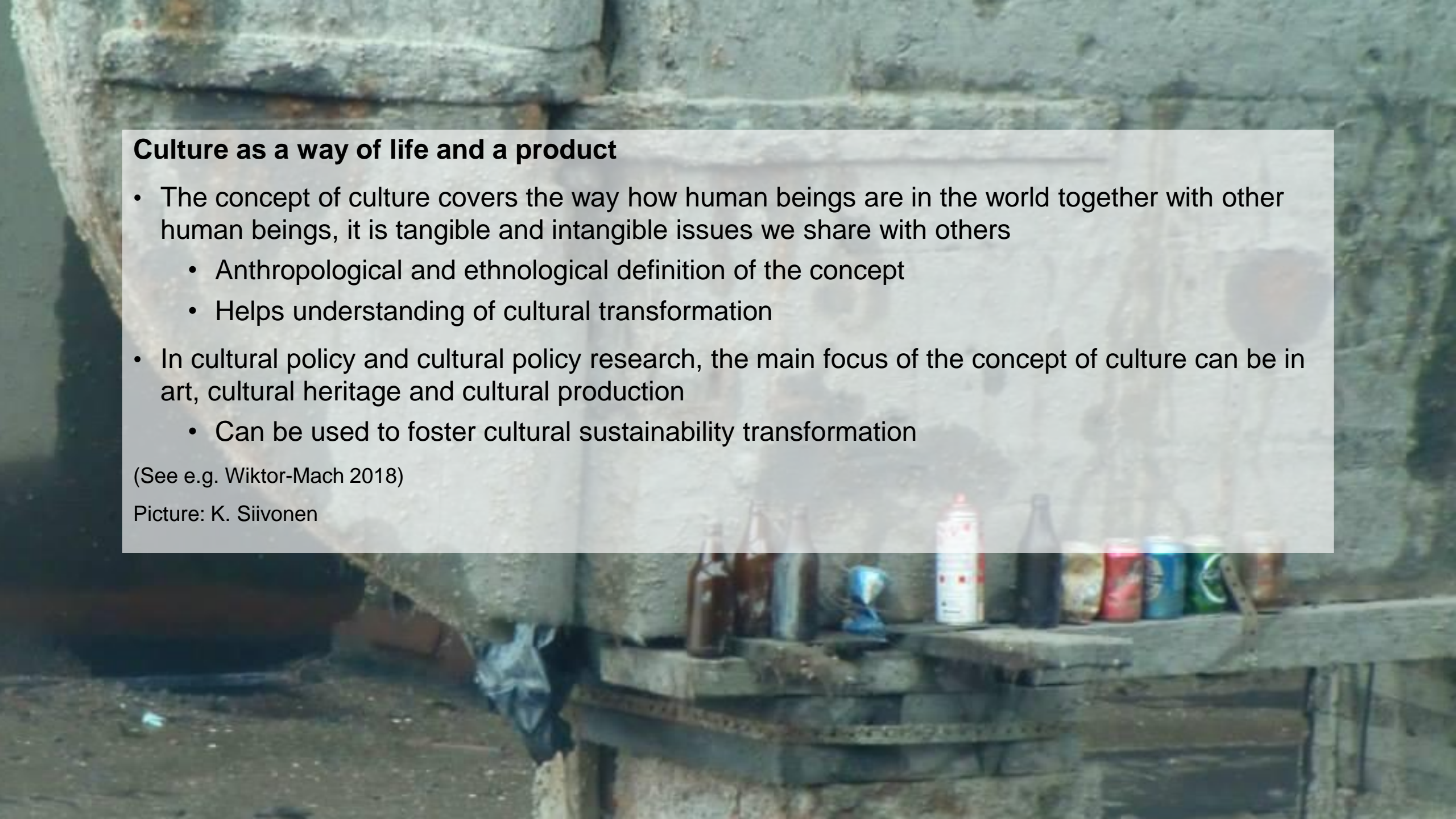
How the concept of culture supports to understand and foster cultural sustainability transformation?

Culture as a way of life and a product

- The concept of culture covers the way how human beings are in the world together with other human beings, it is tangible and intangible issues we share with others
 - Anthropological and ethnological definition of the concept
 - Helps understanding of cultural transformation
- In cultural policy and cultural policy research, the main focus of the concept of culture can be in art, cultural heritage and cultural production
 - Can be used to foster cultural sustainability transformation

(See e.g. Wiktor-Mach 2018)

Picture: K. Siivonen





One anthropological definition: culture as a river (Ulf Hannerz 1992)

- Culture is basically a global, interactive process
- Culture defines our practices – and we create new culture all the time
- **It is not possible to stop the change of culture, thus it has an elementary transformative power – it is a driving force – but it does not have any goal-oriented direction to change**
- From the perspective of sustainability transformation, it is important to notice that every human being is doing all the time **ethical choices**, which are directed to all forms of life now and in the future, and which gives individual goal-orientations to cultural change

(Siivonen 2022; Poli 2011; see also Siivonen 2008.)

Picture: K. Siivonen

A photograph of a wooden ladder leaning against a tree trunk in a forest. The ladder is made of several horizontal rungs and a vertical post, all made of weathered wood. The tree trunk is thick and has a rough, textured bark. The background is filled with green leaves and branches, suggesting a dense forest. The lighting is bright, indicating it's daytime.

Culture is constantly recreated in interaction

- Nature as life and **flows of matter and energy**
 - Bodily human beings in their everyday interaction on Earth
 - Humanmade material environment
- Constantly changing flow of culturally shared **intangible worldviews, habits and practices**

These intertwine with each other globally in the river of culture every moment in human actions

- Each of us are involved in the flow of culture in his/her own life

(Siivonen 2022; Barad 2003; see also Siivonen 2008.)

Picture: K. Siivonen

Cultural sustainability transformation

How sustainability transformation is connected to intangible cultural heritage?

- **Leverage points** target most effective spots in the society in order to enhance sustainability transformation
 - Political, administrative and economic actions; practices of organisations and institutions; interaction among organisations and institutions; values and worldviews
- For successful sustainability transformation, **there is a need to reach the deepest level of leverage points**
 - Political and administrative actions do usually not reach the deepest levels
 - The deepest levels consist of worldviews, values, human-nature relationships and from them arising goals and actions – that is culture – with an impact on all other levels (political, administrative and economic institutional actions)

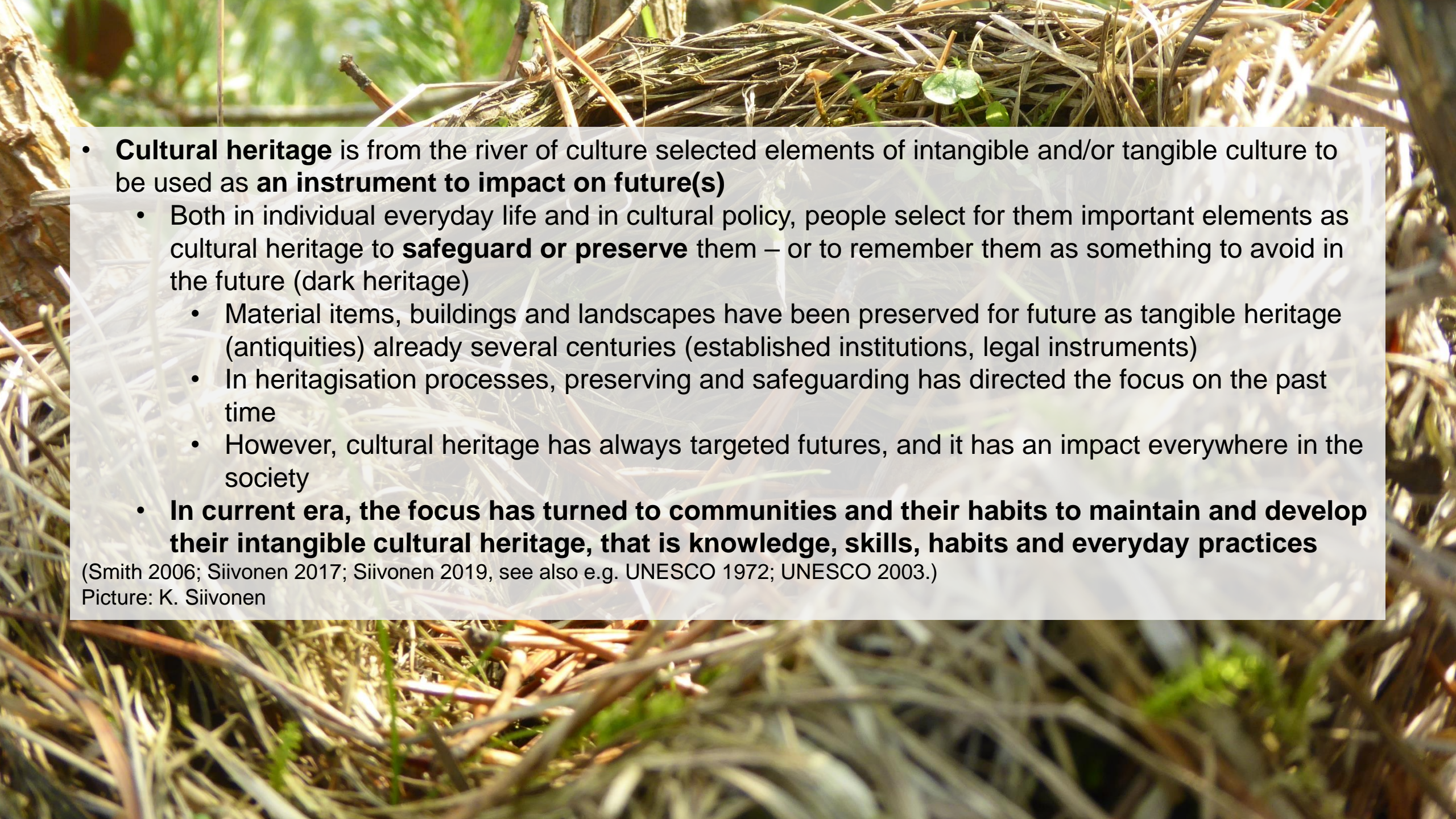
(Abson ym. 2017; Meadows 1999)

- **The deepest level leverage points consist of intangible cultural expressions**, which are in every moment in connection to the natural and human made material world, and in which we need a goal-oriented change
- **Cultural sustainability transformation – with intangible cultural elements as driving forces – is crucial for the success of the global and local (glocal) sustainability transformation**

(Siivonen 2022; Siivonen et al. 2022; see also e.g. Huttunen et al. 2021)

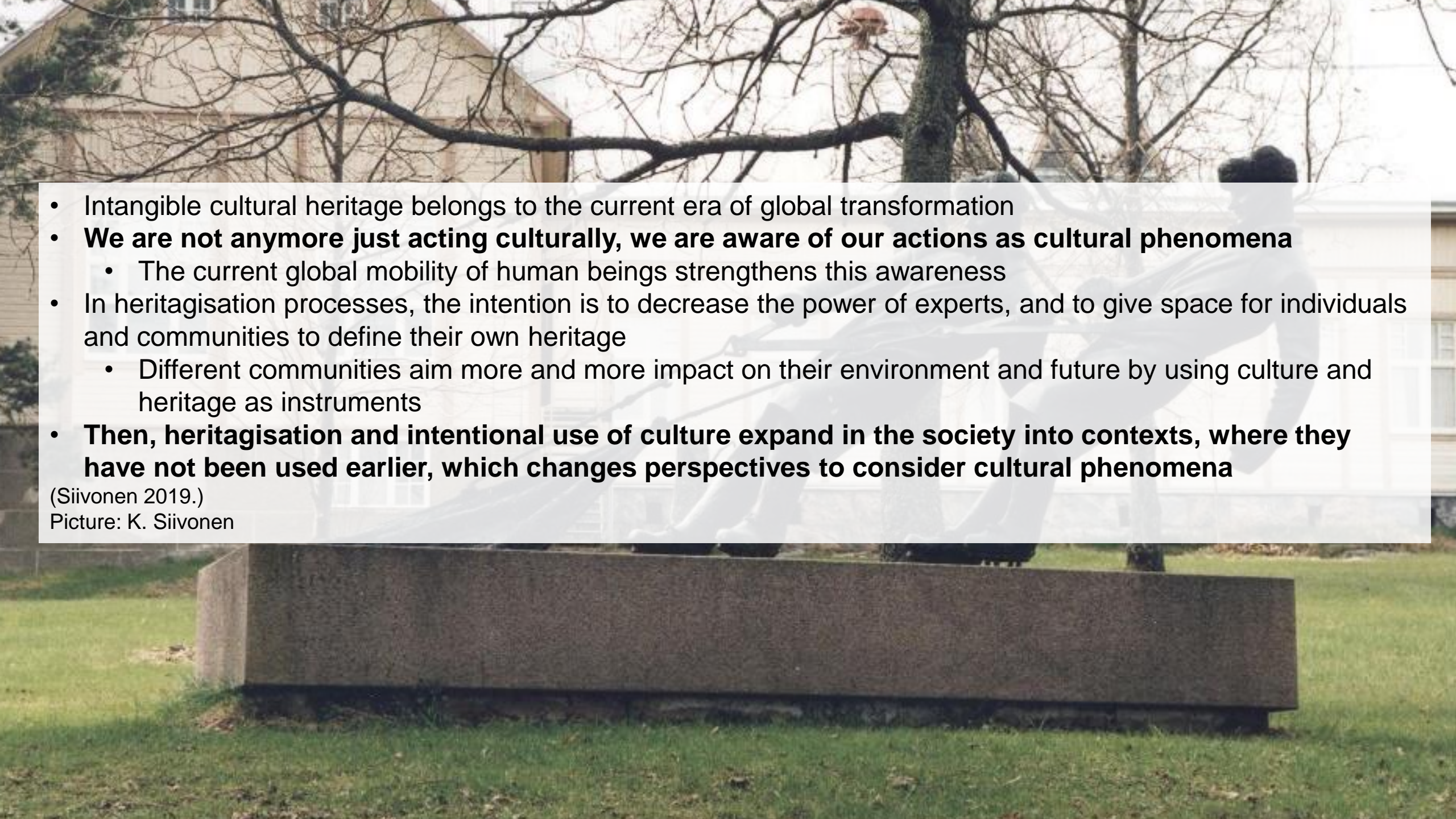
Picture: K. Siivonen



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- **Cultural heritage** is from the river of culture selected elements of intangible and/or tangible culture to be used as **an instrument to impact on future(s)**
 - Both in individual everyday life and in cultural policy, people select for them important elements as cultural heritage to **safeguard or preserve** them – or to remember them as something to avoid in the future (dark heritage)
 - Material items, buildings and landscapes have been preserved for future as tangible heritage (antiquities) already several centuries (established institutions, legal instruments)
 - In heritagisation processes, preserving and safeguarding has directed the focus on the past time
 - However, cultural heritage has always targeted futures, and it has an impact everywhere in the society
 - **In current era, the focus has turned to communities and their habits to maintain and develop their intangible cultural heritage, that is knowledge, skills, habits and everyday practices**

(Smith 2006; Siivonen 2017; Siivonen 2019, see also e.g. UNESCO 1972; UNESCO 2003.)

Picture: K. Siivonen


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- Intangible cultural heritage belongs to the current era of global transformation
 - **We are not anymore just acting culturally, we are aware of our actions as cultural phenomena**
 - The current global mobility of human beings strengthens this awareness
 - In heritagisation processes, the intention is to decrease the power of experts, and to give space for individuals and communities to define their own heritage
 - Different communities aim more and more impact on their environment and future by using culture and heritage as instruments
 - **Then, heritagisation and intentional use of culture expand in the society into contexts, where they have not been used earlier, which changes perspectives to consider cultural phenomena**

(Siivonen 2019.)

Picture: K. Siivonen

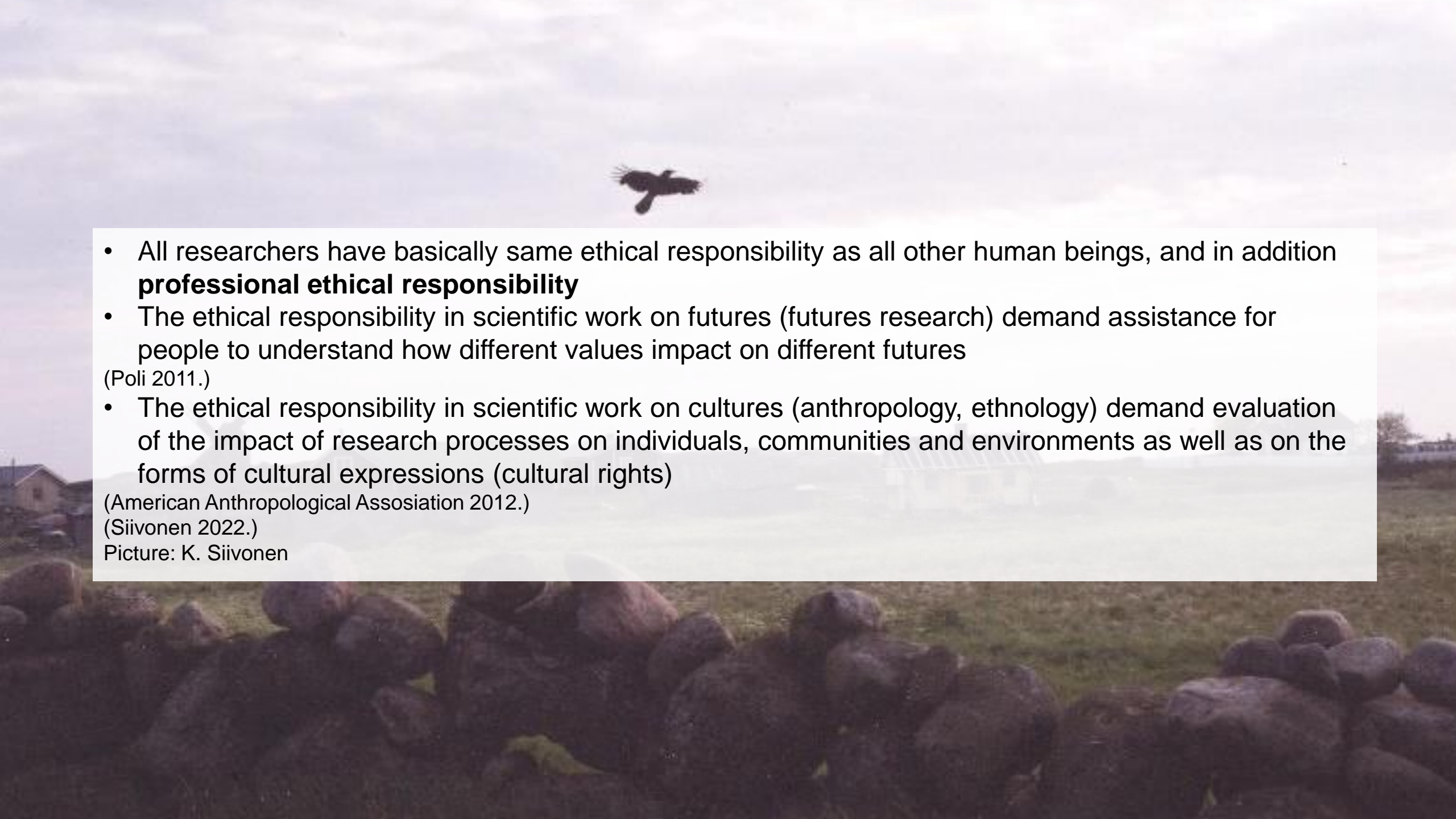
Ethical reflection

Why ethical reflection is crucial in cultural sustainability transformation and the use of intangible cultural heritage?

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- Worldviews, values and practices are **cultural expressions, which we should change** when targeting sustainability transformation
 - **Intangible cultural heritage can serve as an instrument to do it**
 - This **leads easily us into tensions** between different disciplines, authorities and everyday/experience knowledge, which **need to be processed**
 - **Who has an ownership of (cultural) sustainability transformation and of intangible cultural heritage as a driving force in the transformation?**
 - Remember that every human being is doing all the time **ethical choices**, which are directed to all forms of life now and in the future

(Siivonen 2022; Poli 2011.)

Picture: K. Siivonen

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- All researchers have basically same ethical responsibility as all other human beings, and in addition **professional ethical responsibility**
 - The ethical responsibility in scientific work on futures (futures research) demand assistance for people to understand how different values impact on different futures
 - The ethical responsibility in scientific work on cultures (anthropology, ethnology) demand evaluation of the impact of research processes on individuals, communities and environments as well as on the forms of cultural expressions (cultural rights)

(Poli 2011.)


(American Anthropological Association 2012.)

(Siivonen 2022.)

Picture: K. Siivonen

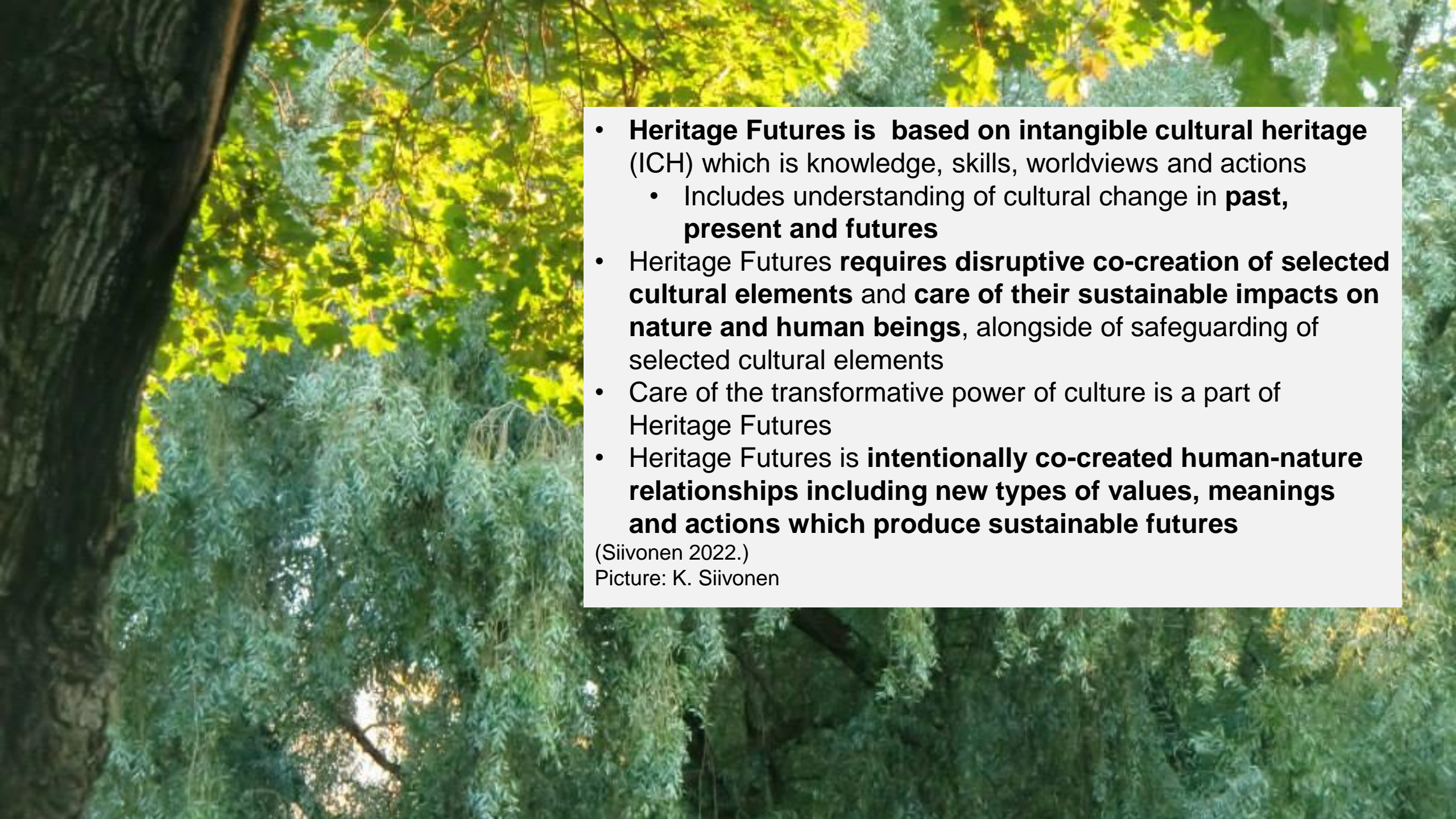
Heritage futures and heritage futures workshop

What cultural sustainability transformation can be in practice?

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- The background image shows a brick building with large, multi-paned windows. In the foreground, there is a stone path leading through a grassy area. A wooden pillar is visible on the right side of the path. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.
- **Voluntary participation is a prerequisite of ethical implementation of cultural sustainability transformation, and thus also prerequisite of sustainability transformation**
 - Heritage futures is a concept developed to be used as an instrument for participatory cultural sustainability transformation
 - It gives possibilities to find solutions and hope together
 - Heritage Futures makes sense, it is a value-based, affective cultural action or skill
 - In a Heritage Futures Workshop, people can co-create together with each other actions and skills to enhance cultural sustainability transformation – Heritage Futures

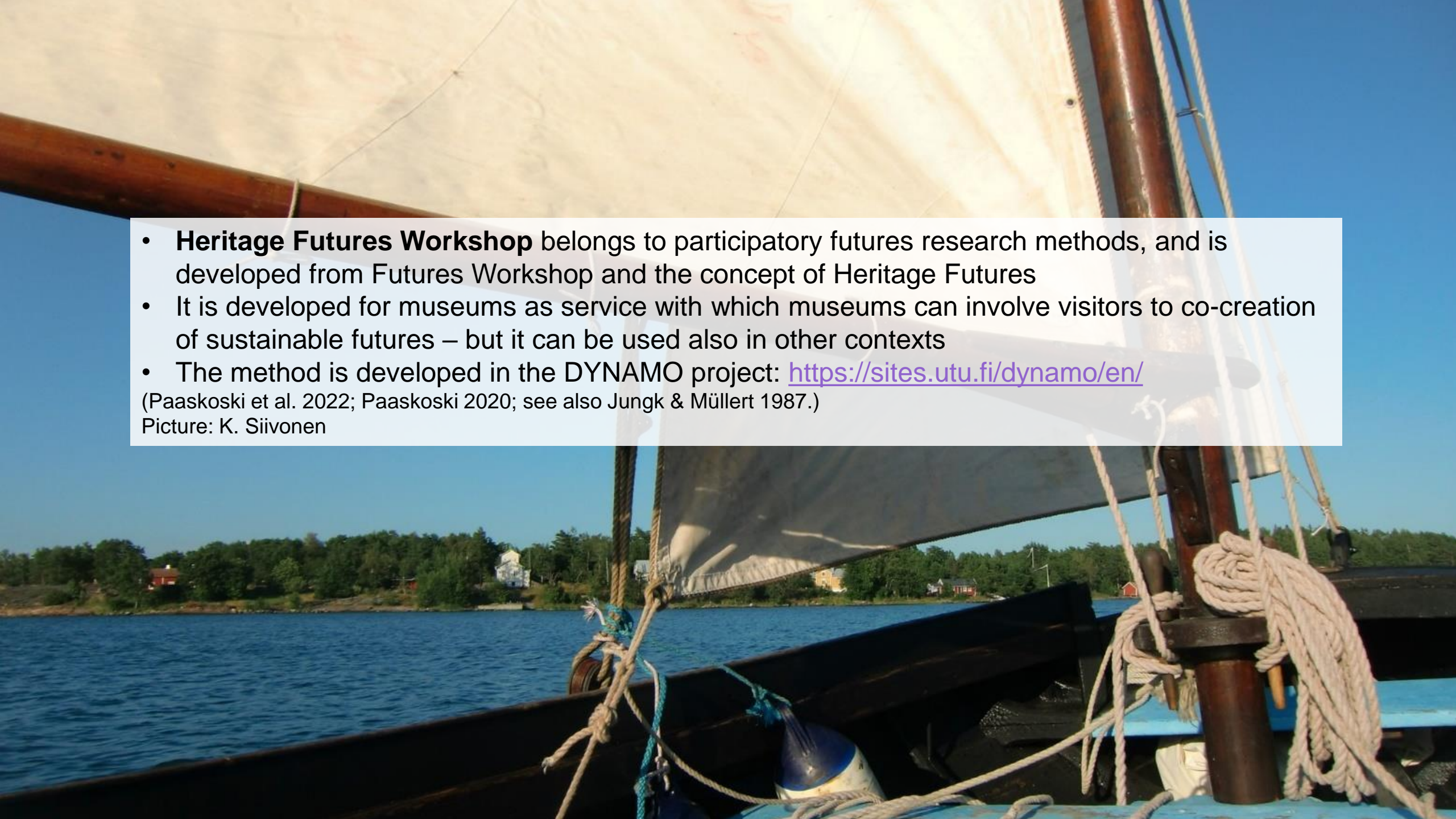
(Siivonen 2022; Paaskoski et al. 2022.)

Picture: K. Siivonen

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- **Heritage Futures is based on intangible cultural heritage (ICH)** which is knowledge, skills, worldviews and actions
 - Includes understanding of cultural change in **past, present and futures**
 - Heritage Futures **requires disruptive co-creation of selected cultural elements and care of their sustainable impacts on nature and human beings**, alongside of safeguarding of selected cultural elements
 - Care of the transformative power of culture is a part of Heritage Futures
 - Heritage Futures is **intentionally co-created human-nature relationships including new types of values, meanings and actions which produce sustainable futures**

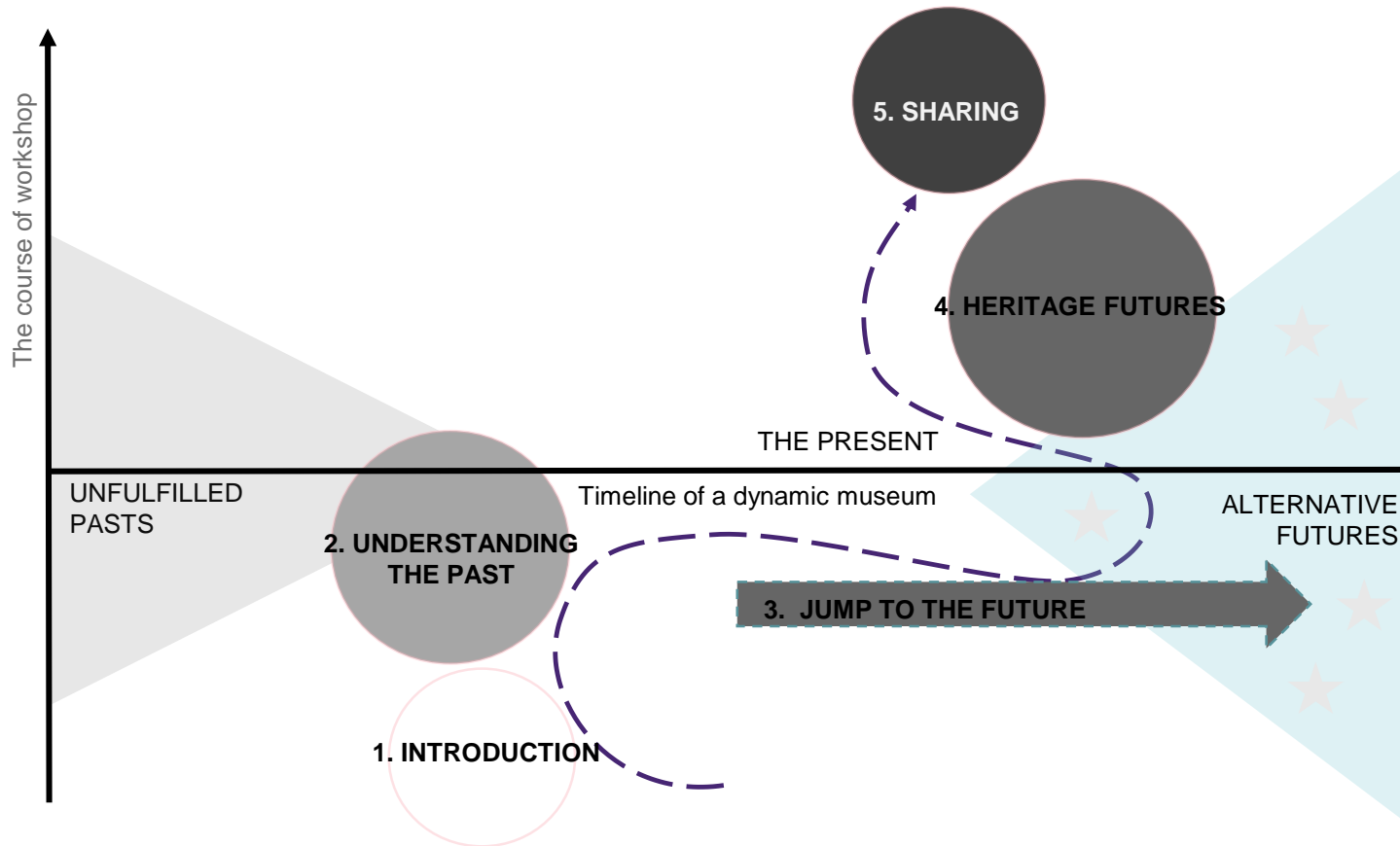
(Siivonen 2022.)

Picture: K. Siivonen

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- **Heritage Futures Workshop** belongs to participatory futures research methods, and is developed from Futures Workshop and the concept of Heritage Futures
 - It is developed for museums as service with which museums can involve visitors to co-creation of sustainable futures – but it can be used also in other contexts
 - The method is developed in the DYNAMO project: <https://sites.utu.fi/dynamo/en/>

(Paaskoski et al. 2022; Paaskoski 2020; see also Jungk & Müllert 1987.)

Picture: K. Siivonen



Paaskoski et al. 2022

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Thank you!

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