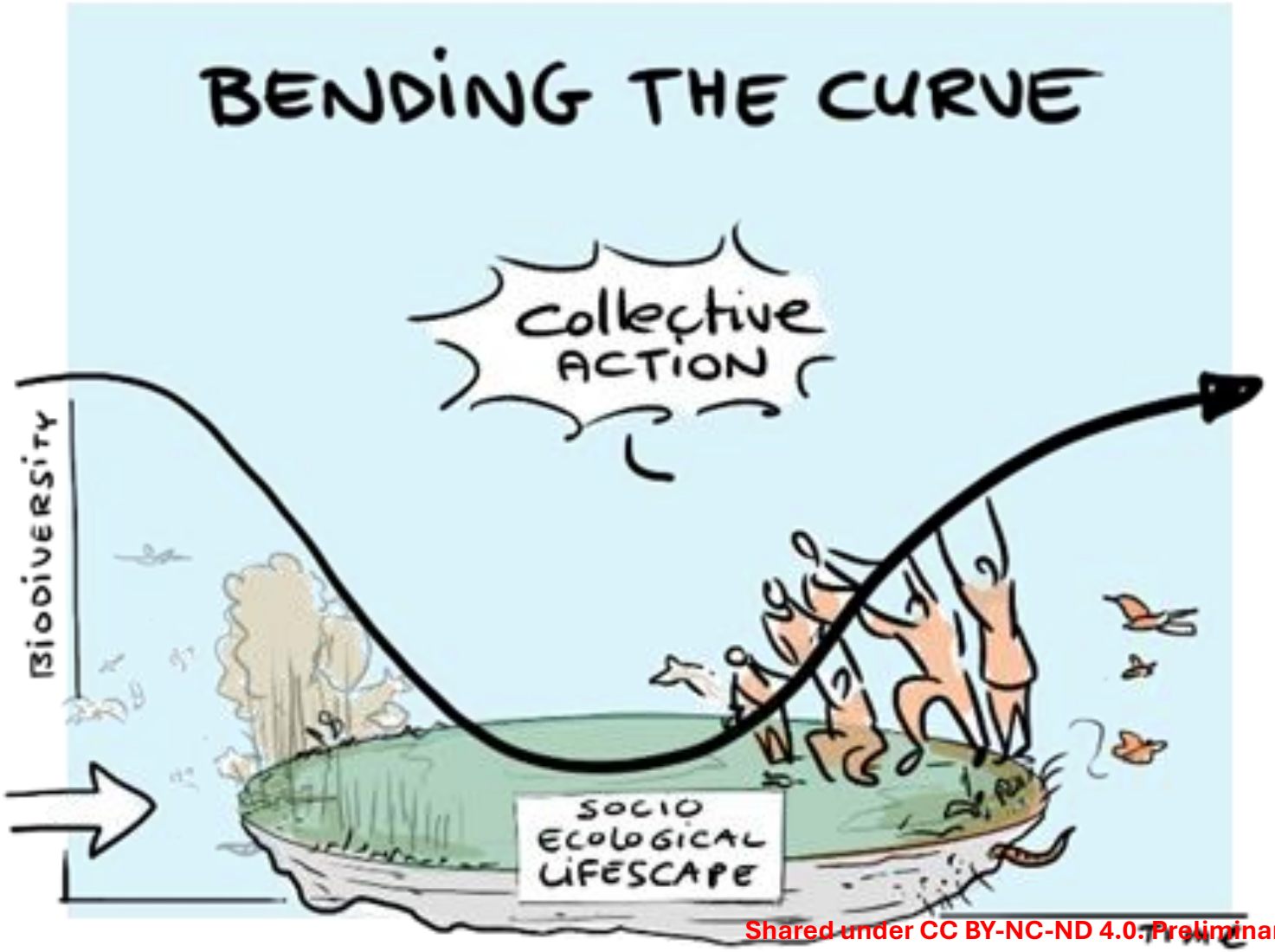

CurveBend

ISiS colloquium 24-02-2026

Riyan van den Born

Kornelis Walma

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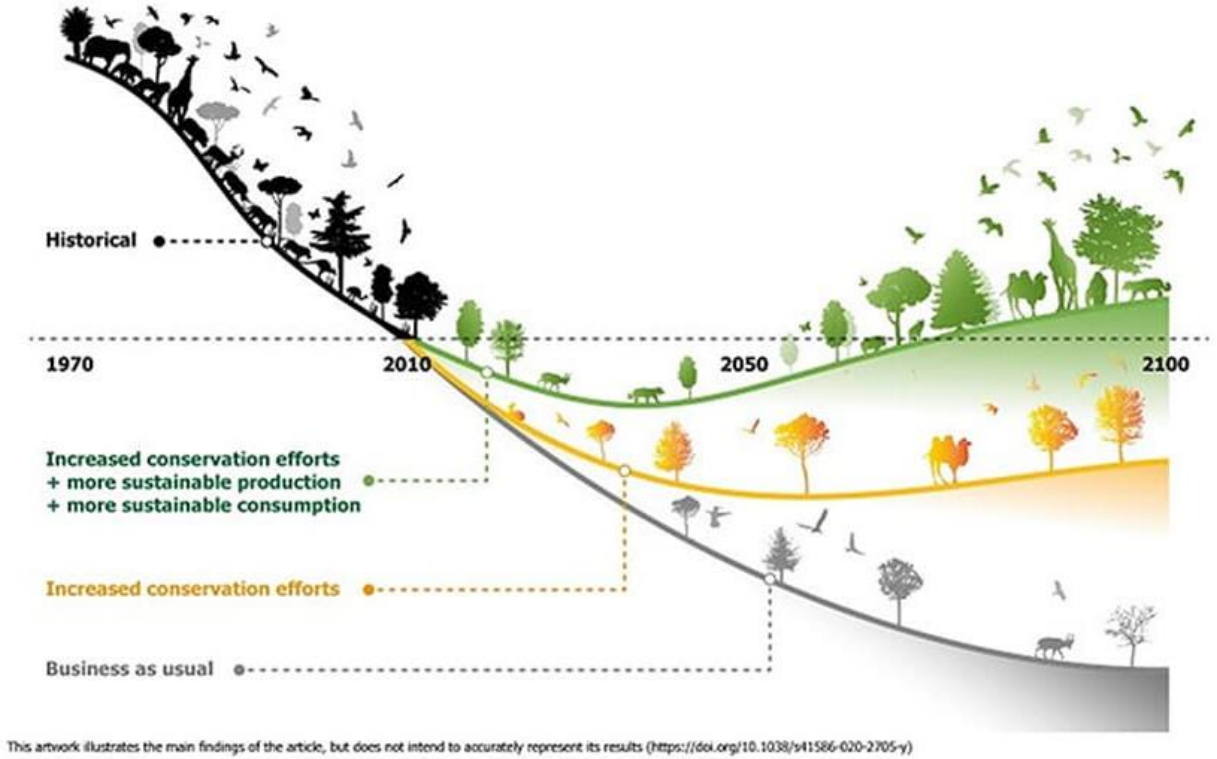

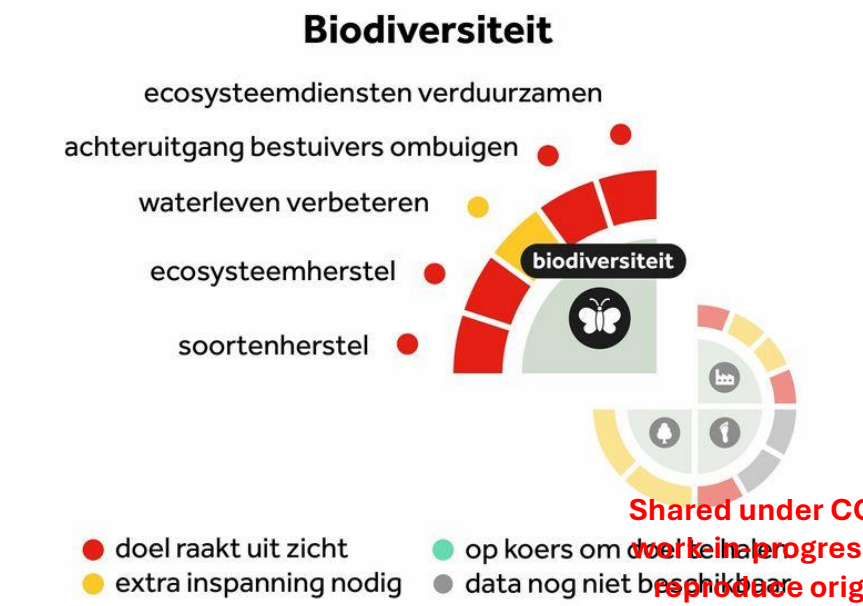

Context: the biodiversity crisis

- Despite broad awareness and international targets, global biodiversity continues to decline rapidly (IPBES)
- Moving beyond the “business as usual“ to bend the curve through transformative change in production and consumption
- The Dutch reality: intensive agriculture in an extreme anthropogenic biosphere where most ecological targets get out of sight further

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CurveBend: From biodiversity loss to a nature-positive society through mobilisation of collective action at the landscape scale

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Focus of CurveBend

- Landscape scale
- Socio-ecological lifescapes
- Collective action
- Inter and trans-disciplinary scientific effort
- Trans sectoral bridging

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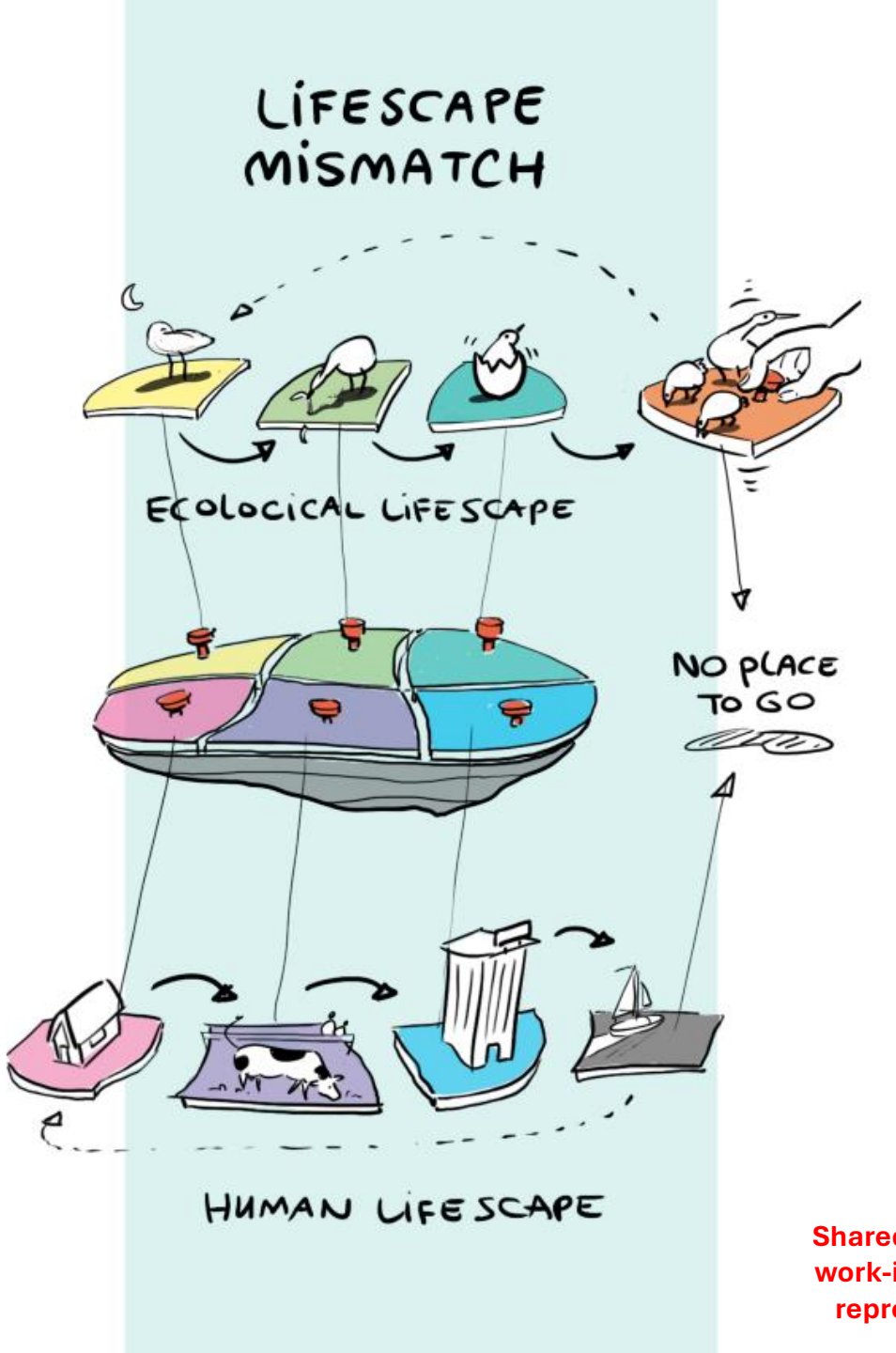
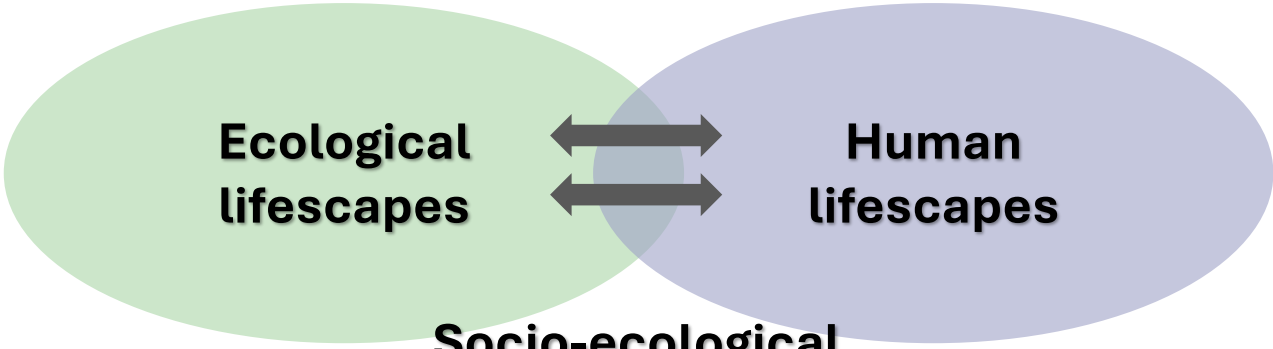


Investigating *if* and *how* reconciliation of ecological and human lifescapes through collective action into socio-ecological lifescapes can restore both biodiversity and human livelihoods



Socio-ecological lifescapes = "commons 2.0"

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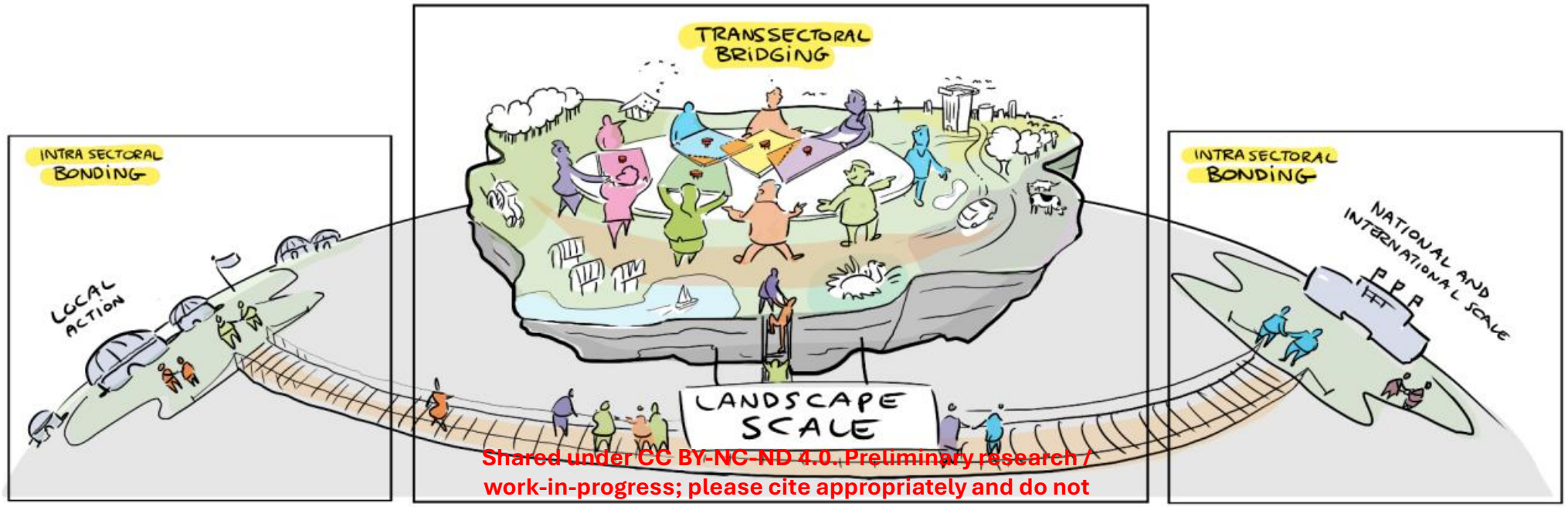
YEAR 1-4	YEAR 5-7
Analyse existing collective action models	Co-design and evaluate novel solutions of restoring biodiversity at the scale of socio-ecological lifescapes



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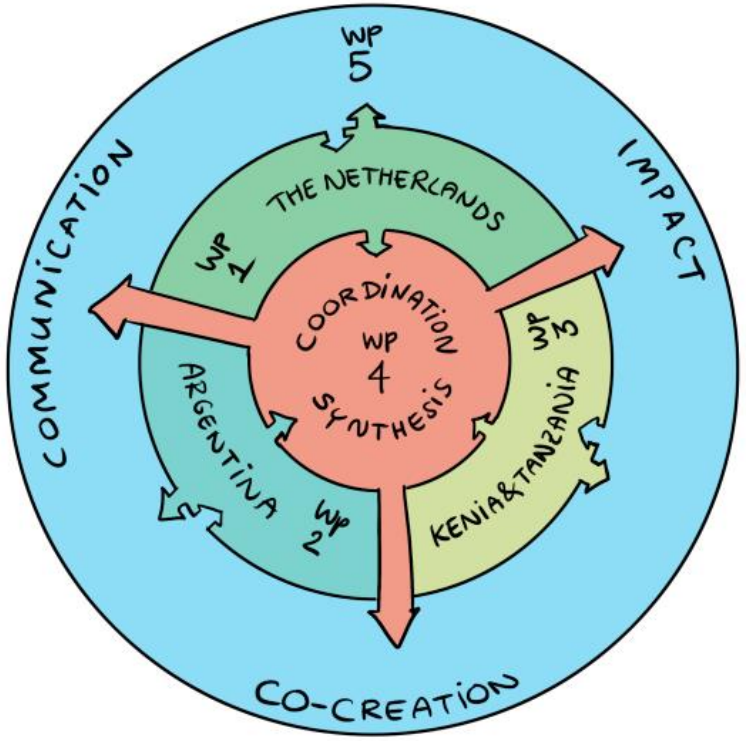
Three regions with livestock-dominated lifescapes

- WP1: The Netherlands
- WP2: Argentina
- WP3: East Africa: Kenya & Tanzania



- WP4: Coordination & synthesis
- WP5: Communication, co-creation & impact

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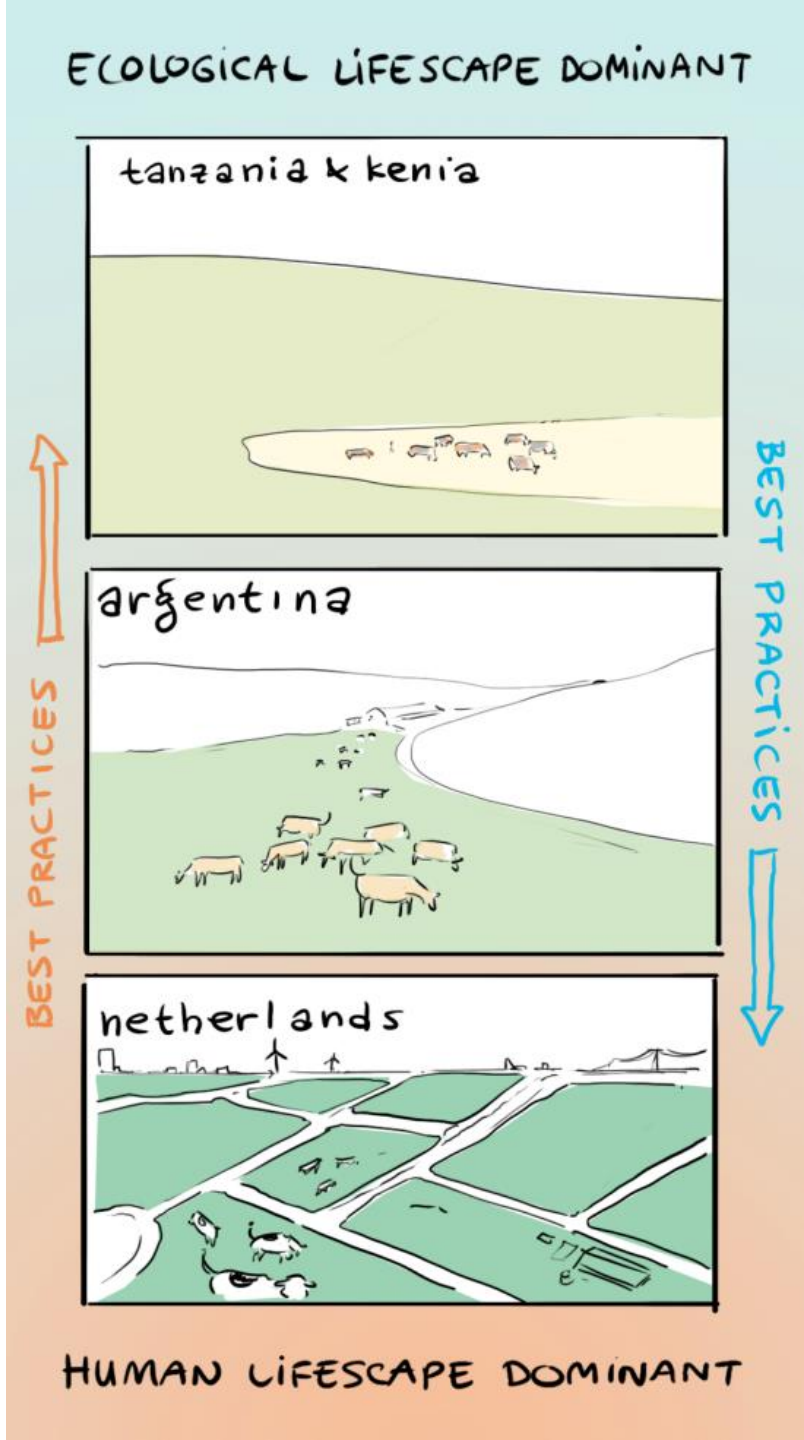

NL	• 3 PhDs • 1 Post-doc	• 1 Post-doc
AR	• 3 PhDs	• 1 Post-doc
EA	• 2 PhDs • 1 Post-doc	• 1 Post-doc
	Year 1-4	Year 5-7

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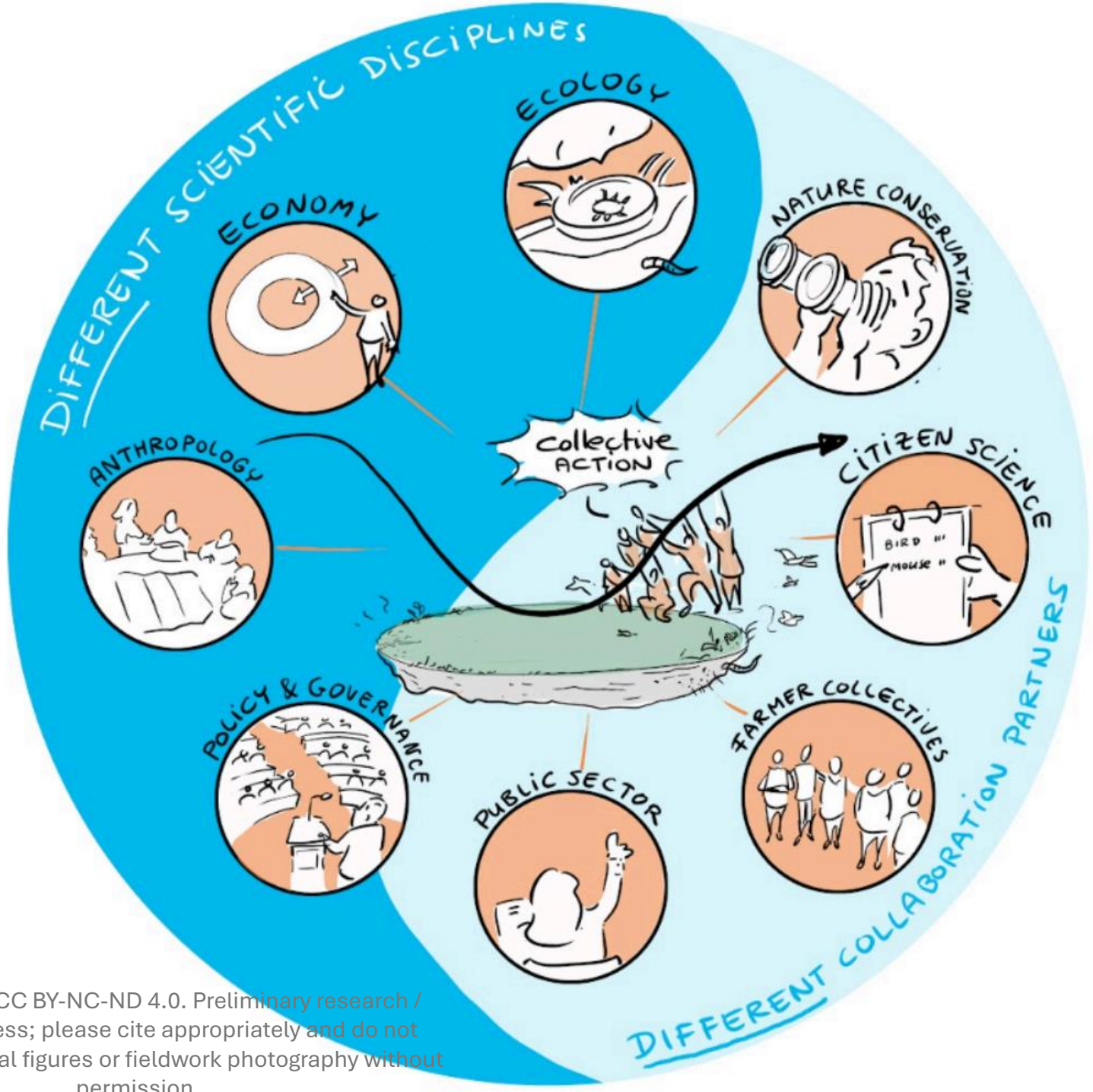
Inter- and transdiciplinary collaboration in NL

- **Different disciplines:**
  - Anthropology
  - Ecology
  - Governance/Social science

- **Dutch societal partners:**
  - BirdLife The Netherlands
  - Commonland
  - Deltaplan Biodiversiteitsherstel
  - FrieslandCampina
  - IUCN National Committee of The Netherlands
  - Land van Ons
  - SoortenNL
  - Staatsbosbeheer
  - Vlinderstichting
  - Wij.land



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Coordination WP1

- Chris Smit (RUG)
- Riyan van den Born (RU)

Senior researchers WP1

Field researchers

- Lotte Mens (RUG)
- Yannick Overzee (LU)
- Kornelis Walma (OU/RU)
- Rosa Boone (VU)

- Chris Smit (RUG)
- Riyan van den Born (RU)
- Raoul Beunen (OU)
- Matty Berg (VU)
- Fons van der Plas (WUR)
- Maarten Schrama (LU)
- Mandy De Wilde (LU)
- Jan Willem Erisman (LU)
- Thomas Fransen (LU)

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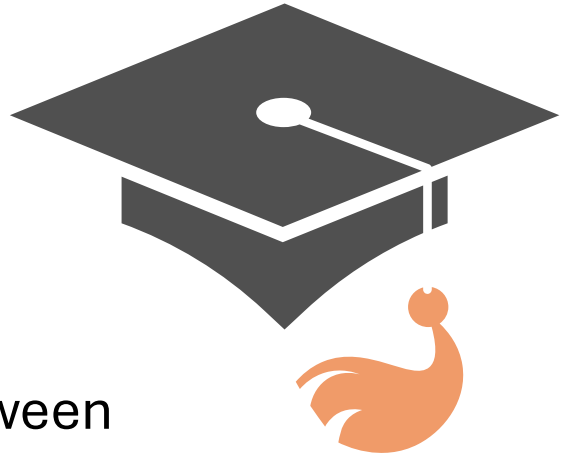
PhD & PD projects WP1



NL-PhD-1	RUG/VU /WUR	Biodiversity consequences of mismatches between ecological lifescapes and human lifescapes
NL-PhD-2	LU	Agrarian worlds in transition: How a shifting valuations of cows within agricultural collectives affects biodiversity restoration in the Netherlands
NL-PhD-3	OU/RU	A critical traversal of the socio-ecological entanglements for biodiversity governance in Dutch lifescapes
NL-PD-1	VU	Biodiversity recovery as a function of collective organization characteristics
NL-PD-2	RU	Implementing pathways of transformative change

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What is collective action?

- Ostrom, 1990, *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*
- Definition: A process where a group of interdependent individuals voluntarily organises to manage a common-pool resource.
    - Participants establish and enforce self-selected operational rules to transcend short-term individual interests (like free-riding) to secure long-term collective benefits.
- Ostromian perspectives may rely on methodological individualism: treating "actors," "resources," and "governance systems" as distinct, pre-existing variables.
    - Institutes for collective action appear as static organisational blocks: e.g. containers that hold farmers and deliver ecosystem services such as biodiversity



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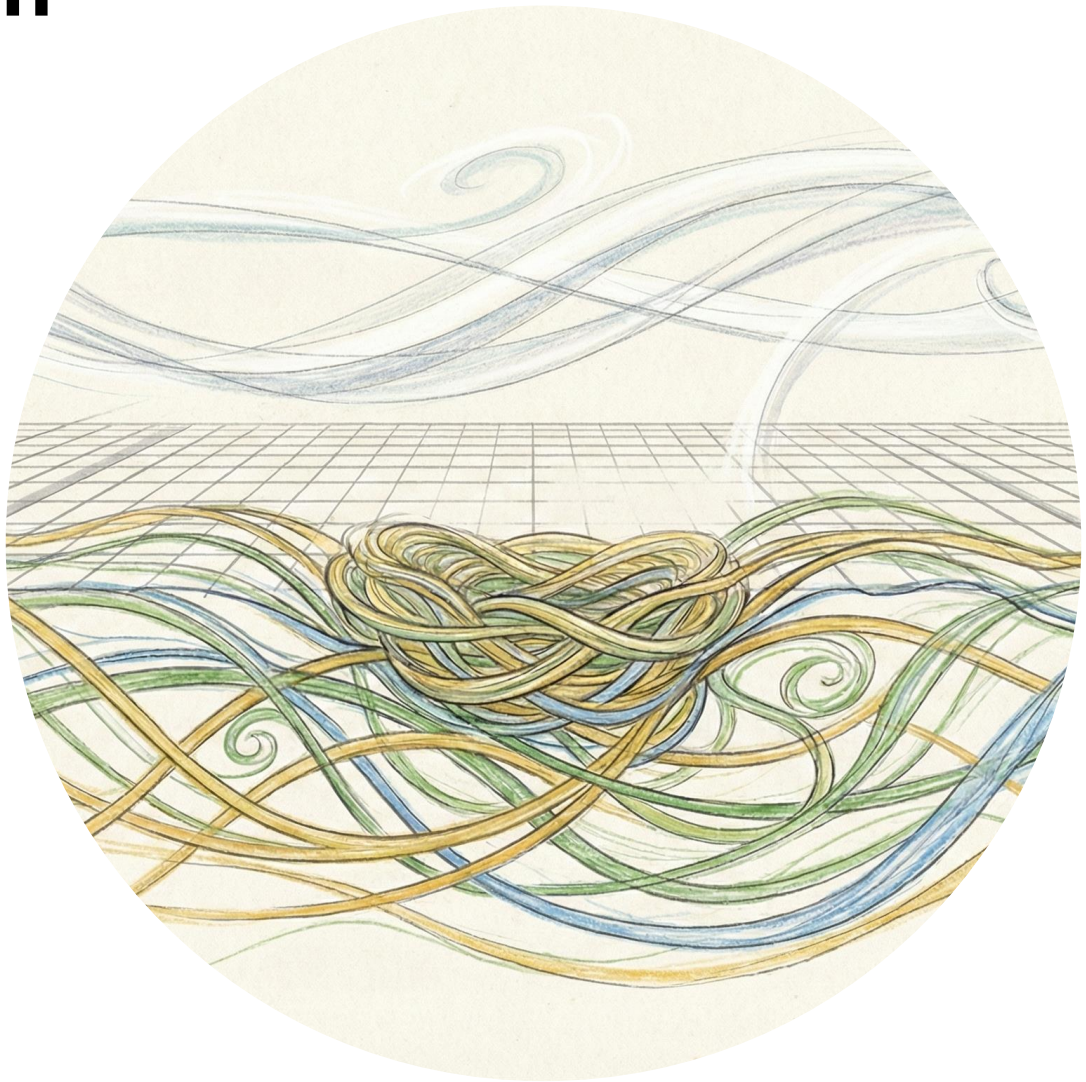
A processual-relational view on collective action

- Collective action is an ongoing, precarious accomplishment: a continually enacted configuration of practices, relations, and material-ecological engagements
- It is the temporal, material, and performative knotting of human and more-than-human relationships and trajectories ("**lines of becoming**"): farmers, meadow birds, policy plans, water levels etcetera entangle and affect one another (Ingold, 2011).
- **Intra-action** (Barad, 2007): actors do not precede their encounter; instead, the 'farmer' and the 'biodiversity' are mutually constituted through the very rhythm of the lifescape
  - It is in the texture of this knotting where the actual work of restoration happens



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Ingold, T. (2011). *Being alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. Routledge
Barad, K. (2007). Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning. Duke University Press.

To be continued…

On the governance of collective action for biodiversity in the Netherlands:

21 april 2026 ISiS Colloquium

Thank you for your attention

Questions?

More on CurveBend: https://curvebend.org/

CurveBend



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