

# TOWARD SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

The role of time in organizing with  
nature

February 19, 2025

Miriam Feuls

Assistant Professor at the Department of Organization and Co-  
Director of the Centre for Organization and Time



# Project: Making distant futures actionable (2021-2025)

*How do companies translate distant-future goals into innovative*

*solutions?*  
Core team



COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL  
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN



**Majken Schultz**  
Professor  
Principal investigator,  
'Actionable Futures' -  
project



**Tor Hernes**  
Professor  
Co-Principal investigator &  
Director, Centre for  
Organization and Time

novo  
nordisk  
fonden



**Miriam Feuls**  
Assistant Professor,  
PhD (University of the  
Arts Berlin)



**Sunny Mosangzi Xu**  
Postdoc,  
PhD (University of  
Copenhagen)



**Jonathan Feddersen**  
Postdoc,  
PhD (Copenhagen  
Business School)

## International collaborators



**Juliane Reinecke**  
Professor of  
Organization Studies,  
Saïd Business School,  
Oxford, UK



**Raghu Garud**  
Professor of  
Management and  
Organization,  
Pennsylvania State,  
USA



**Daniel Nyberg**  
Professor of  
Management,  
University of  
Queensland, Australia

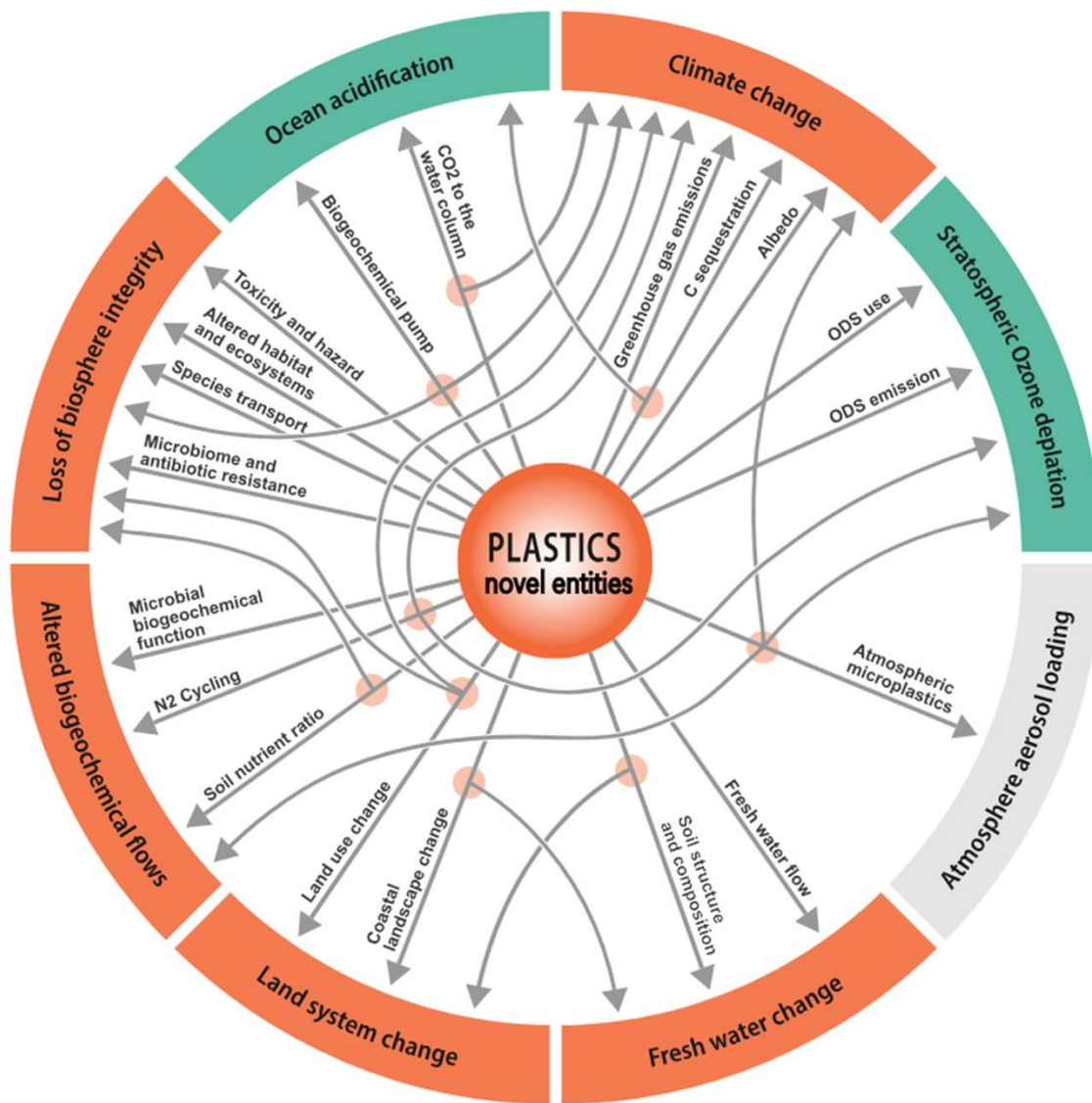


**Tima Bansal**  
Professor of Strategy,  
Ivey Business School,  
Canada & MIT,  
Boston, USA



**Jennifer Howard-Grenville**  
Diageo Professor in  
Organisation Studies,  
Cambridge Judge  
Business School, UK





**Figure 2. Plastics pollution impacts on all planetary boundaries**

Plastics as a novel entity has cross-interactions with Earth system components affecting all other planetary boundaries. ODS, ozone-depleting substances.

Breached planetary boundaries are shown in orange, boundaries in green are not assessed as breached, and light gray denotes unquantified boundaries.

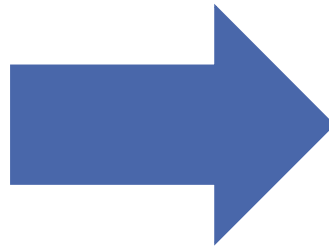
Villarrubia-Gómez et al., Plastics pollution exacerbates the impacts of all planetary boundaries, *One Earth* (2024),  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2024.10.017>



# Setting “distant-future” goals

Organizations have often operated with 3-5-year horizons in their strategies, roadmaps, and other planning activities.

Exogenous demands such as climate change but also considering future generations oblige organizations to develop and sustain goals that extend decades into the future.



# Challenge 1: short-termism vs. long-termism

## Quarterly Earnings Report



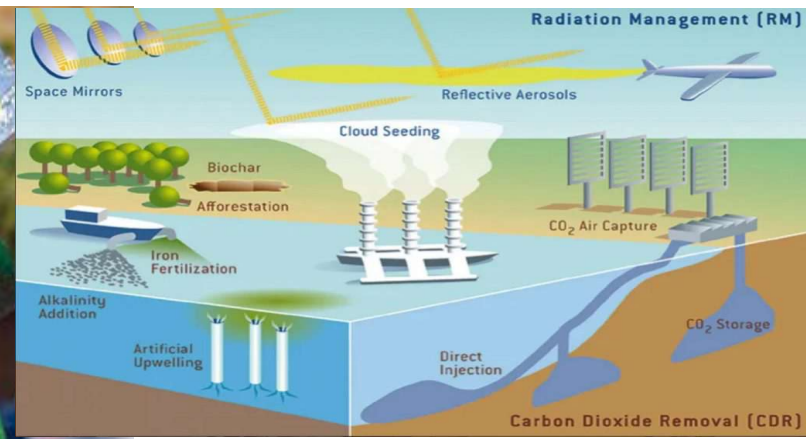
### Short-termism:

Focus on short-term results at the expense of long-term interests and long-term valuation may trap organizations in "short-termism".



### Greenwashing:

Lack of engagement in the future and action. Organizations are falling into "greenwashing".

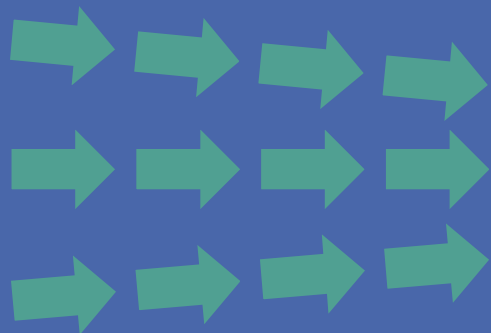


### Long-termism:

Focus on technological solutions that are not yet deployed. Organizations can get stuck in unrealistic imaginaries.

## Challenge 2: solutions are not yet in existence

*“What is behind the number 2050? Because now, we put the first five-year plan ... **Everything in between**, we have no clue what’s going to happen ... **What’s in this gray zone?**”*



GRAY ZONE



## Challenge 3: putting distant futures into action



Picture: Jonathan Feddersen

Picture: Markus Spiske  
(<https://rebellion.global/blog/2020/08/31/act-now-extinction-rebellion-demands/>)



## Challenge 4: nature's time

How do we deal with nonlinear and complex temporal dynamics such as tipping points and planetary boundaries?





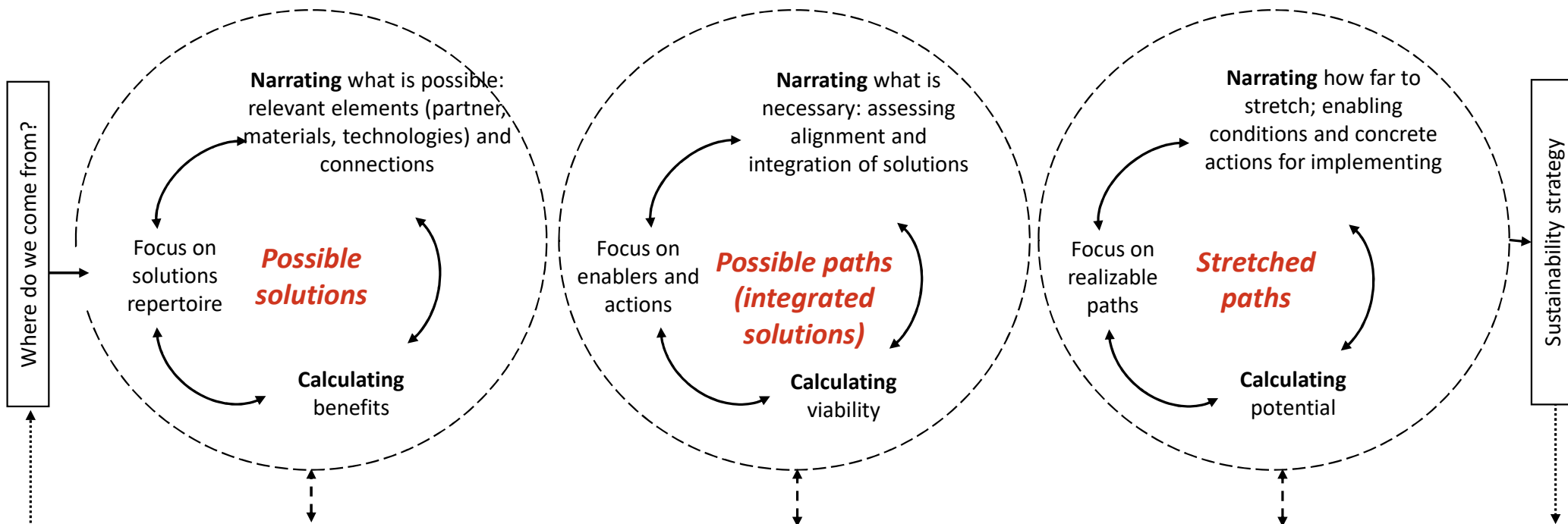
# Challenge 5: developing local solutions to a global problem

local needs vs. global economic forces



<https://www.ipbes.net/nexus/media-release>

# Developing a course of action toward sustainable futures



# Developing a course of action toward sustainable futures



Setting climate goals and imagining the way toward achieving those goals, including the intermediate steps and resources needed to realize them – now and in the future



An ongoing, iterative, and collaborative (intra- and inter-organizational) process that allows for balancing imagination and realizability



Overcoming short- and long-term dualism by interweaving solutions into multiple paths toward the future

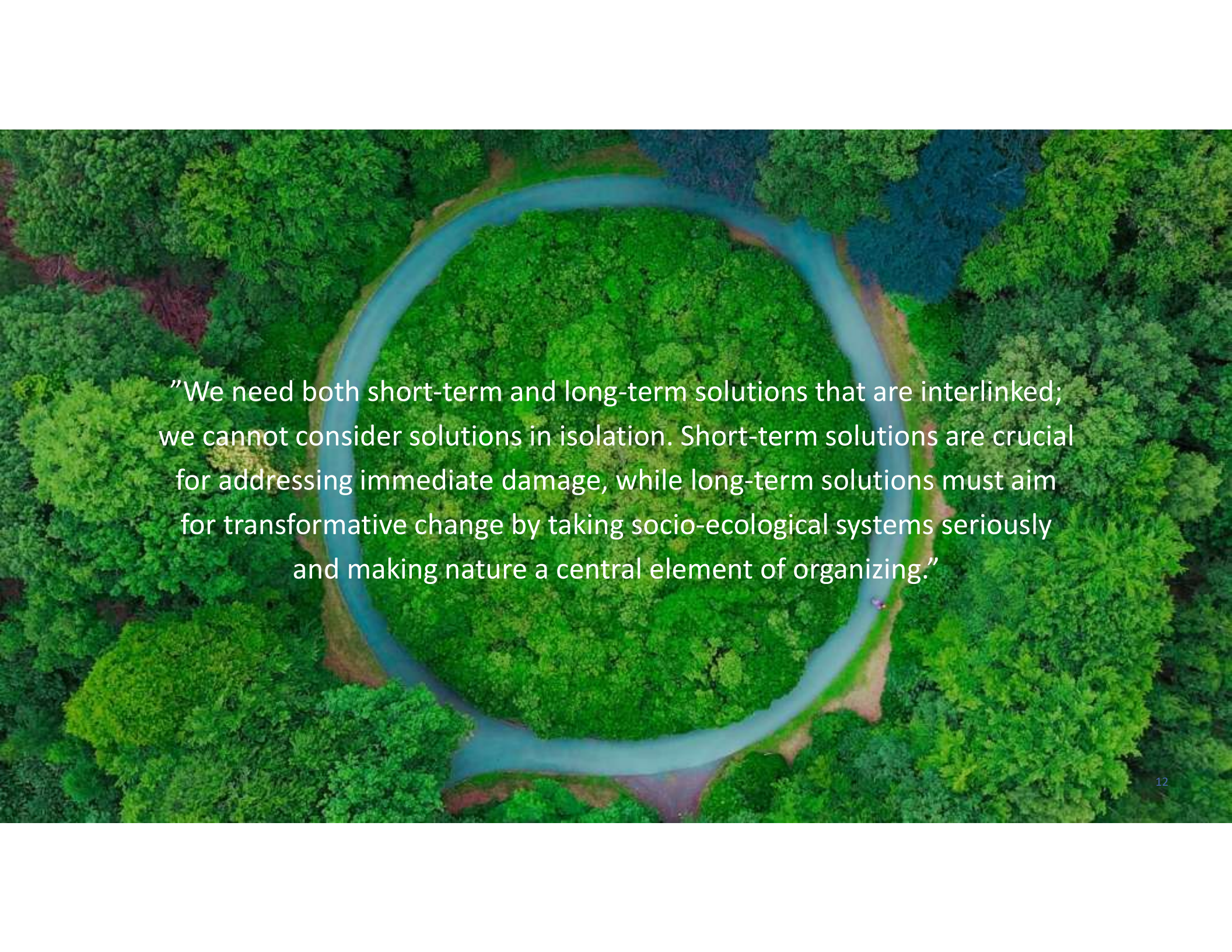


Need for flexibility to explore the possibilities of alternative solutions (course correction)



Need for a governance structure to support decision-making (e.g., ensuring climate goals and environmental needs are met) and clarify roles and responsibilities



An aerial photograph of a lush green forest. A circular clearing is visible in the center, surrounded by a dense canopy of trees. A light-colored, winding path or road curves around the perimeter of the clearing. The overall scene is vibrant and natural.

"We need both short-term and long-term solutions that are interlinked; we cannot consider solutions in isolation. Short-term solutions are crucial for addressing immediate damage, while long-term solutions must aim for transformative change by taking socio-ecological systems seriously and making nature a central element of organizing."





# Thank you for your attention.

Miriam Fruk  
COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL  
Centre for Organization and Time  
Department of Organization  
Kilevej 14A  
DK-2000 Frederiksberg

Please send any questions or comments to: [mfe.ioa@cbs.dk](mailto:mfe.ioa@cbs.dk)