

Nature-based Solutions: working together

An update from NetworkNature and the NbS Cluster Task Forces







The NbS Cluster Task Forces (TF) are working with a growing portfolio of EU Horizon projects that focus on nature-based solutions.

Our Task Forces have been working on new outputs and representing the NbS community at event across Europe and globally, including the recent United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP16) in Colombia. We collaborate on six impactful areas of nature-based solutions, seeking to share best practice, learn from each other and co-create new tools and resources to help our community achieve impact.



Working together through the Task Forces we can:

- Create common messages for NbS and facilitate knowledge sharing, development and synthesis to amplify project findings, dissemination and exploitation.
- → Enable meaningful synergies to combine efforts and save resources around common areas of interests and work to address gaps for NbS design, creation and implementation.
- → Build long-lasting collaborations and strengthen networks between diverse EU NbS projects, partners and other stakeholders across a wide range of disciplines and professions
- → Maximize impact for mainstreaming NbS.

There are six NbS Task Forces: five coordinated by NetworkNature and one by NbSEduWorld:

- → Task Force 1: Data and Knowledge Sharing.

 Helping projects with data-related challenges
 and working to improve how data on NbS and
 biodiversity is collected, standardised and shared.
- → Task Force 2: Integrated Assessment Framework.
 Facilitating the exchange of knowledge and
 expertise on NbS assessment and evaluation,
 to promote standardised approaches measuring the
 multiple benefits of NbS.
- → Task Force 3: Governance, Business Models and Financial Mechanisms. Focusing on mobilising finance and investments, creating business models and supporting enterprises and entrepreneurs.
- → Task Force 4: NbS Communicators.

 Using strategic communication, resource sharing and advocacy efforts to elevate awareness and exchange valuable insights around NbS.
- → Task Force 5: Education.

 Transforming education into a powerful force for positive environmental action, ensuring a more sustainable and harmonious future.
- → Task Force 6: Co-creation and Governance. Co-creation and co-governance for nature-based solutions.





Laure-Lou Tremblay

IEEP

In September, NetworkNature published a report analysing policy needs and gaps in relation to the deployment of NbS in the EU.

The report, based on 26 interviews with policy experts and on policy screening of 48 EU and international policies, found that existing policy frameworks are not conducive enough to the uptake of NbS, and that the potential of NbS to answer societal challenges is not fully exploited.

Only 35% of policies reviewed explicitly mention NbS. The NetworkNature report proposes a series of coordinated steps to unlock the potential of NbS. The EU must ensure policies coherently integrate and align NbS across all relevant sectors, setting clear, enforceable targets for NbS adoption, along with budgets that enable action.

There is a need to break down silos, increase research and innovation on NbS, and foster collaboration among stakeholders. National governments, cities, the private sector, researchers, educators and civil society must come together to design, plan, implement, and monitor NbS projects.

In parallel, the business case for NbS must be sharpened, with more evidence needed to quantify NbS positive outcomes, including the non-monetary benefits typically overlooked by traditional (grey) solutions.

Download the report **here.**







Adriana Duarte

ICLEI

NbS Task Force 3 was represented at COP16 through a session held in the EU Pavilion titled "Bridging Global Perspectives on Transformative Change towards a Nature-Positive Economy." The outcomes of this session will complement TF3's efforts in drafting the publication "Accelerating the Uptake of Nature-based Solutions in the Nature-Positive Economy," scheduled for release in 2025.

Speakers from EU projects Invest4Nature, GoNaturePositive! and NetworkNature came together to share diverse perspectives—including valuable insights from the Global South—to explore the understanding around the Nature-Positive Economy.

Case studies from China and Colombia highlighted locally adapted approaches to NbS. The insights and discussions from the session will directly inform TF3's upcoming publication, further strengthening the case for a nature-positive economy as a key driver of transformative change—cultivating a future with more abundant nature than exists today, advancing biodiversity, creating jobs, fostering nature-positive value chains, and encouraging behavioural change worldwide.



Seven new Horizon Europe projects are about to join the NetworkNature NbS Task Forces, enriching the network with fresh perspectives and innovative approaches. These projects showcase the diversity and potential of NbS to tackle critical challenges, from climate resilience to biodiversity restoration and sustainable investment.

- → <u>Nature-3B</u>: Integrates nature into the financial decision-making of central banks, investment benchmarks, and bond issuers.
- → BIO-CAPITAL: Pioneers innovative financial solutions and geospatial analytics to mobilize investments for biodiversity protection and restoration.
- → **GENESIS:** Demonstrates NbS to enhance the climate resilience of critical water infrastructure.
- → SpongeWorks: Evaluates and applies sponge measures at landscape scales, enhancing water retention across interconnected soil, groundwater, and surface water systems.
- → NATURE-DEMO: Collects, categorizes, and evaluates NbS for the climate resilience of critical infrastructure, assessing technical, environmental, economic, legal, and social dimensions.
- → Med-IREN: Explores climate-proofing critical Mediterranean infrastructure by integrating NbS for improved risk management and resilience to climate extremes.
- → DRYAD: Develops and implements NbS tailored to Mediterranean agrosilvopastoral systems, fostering climate resilience in vulnerable regions.

The Commission has updated its <u>visual of</u> **NbS projects** to include the above projects.

In addition, the updated visual also highlights five representative projects in soil and forest management: **NbSoil**, **AGROSUS**, **CANALLS**, **ForestPaths**, and **TRANSFORMIT**. While these projects are not actively participating in the NbS Task Forces, their outputs promise to enrich the broader NetworkNature community.

We invite all members of the NbS community to explore these new projects and the updated NbS projects visual!

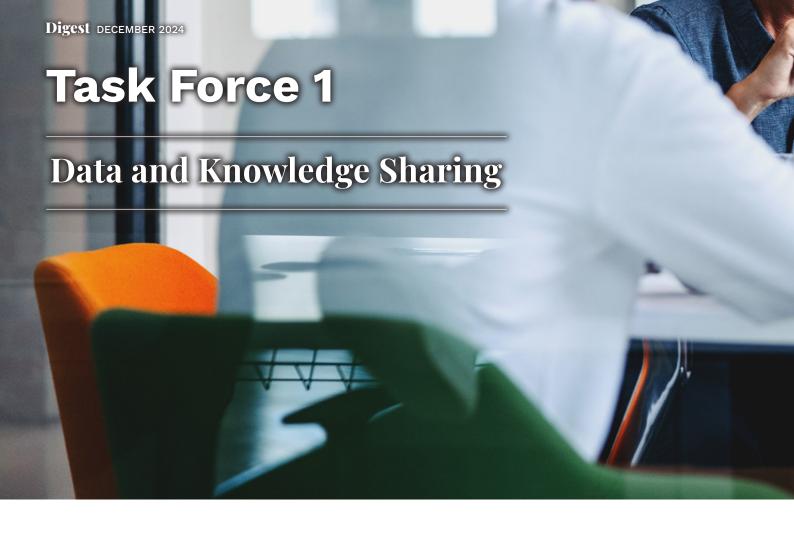


The 11th Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is taking place on 10-16 December 2024, in Windhoek, Namibia. The plenary is to consider two pivotal assessment reports before they are made public in December:

- → The Nexus Assessment, which explores the interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss, water management, food security, human health, and climate change.
- The Transformative Change Assessment, providing insights into the systemic changes needed for sustainability.

To mark this occasion, the Commission has released a brochure highlighting a curated selection of EU-funded "nexus" projects. These projects deliver cutting-edge scientific knowledge, actionable solutions, and case studies that underline the critical connections between protecting and restoring biodiversity and addressing challenges in water, food systems, health, and climate resilience.



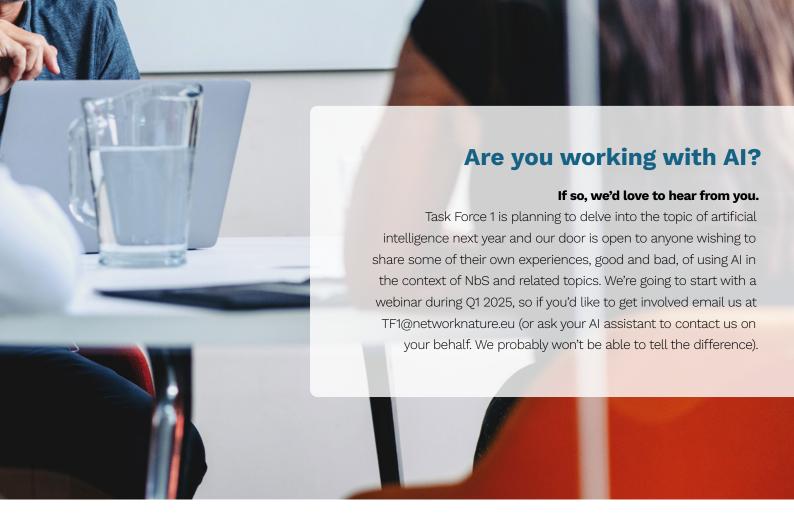


Task Force 1 Hackathon takes on the wicked problem of data standardisation.

Task Force 1 has doggedly continued its pursuit of 'data nirvana' in search of a ways to tackle the wicked problem of data standardisation. Fact is, we know that NbS can be used to tackle societal challenges in practical ways; but the evidence to support this – and importantly encourage political and economic investment in NbS – is lacking. Individual projects and demonstration cases do good work in collecting data on the impact of NbS, but often do so using non-standardised methods, resulting in data that can't be collated and compared at scale to build an evidence-based for NbS at EU level.

It's a classically 'wicked problem': the more you try to solve it, the more difficult and complex it becomes. But where's the fun in doing easy things, right!?

As part of ongoing work to develop standardised data templates for priority NbS indicators, the TF1 team hosted a hackathon event between 4-15 November this year. The event focused on using an 'agile sprint' format over a two week period, during which teams comprising representatives from TFs 1-3 and the European Commission worked together in identifying barriers and possible solutions to data standardisation, focusing on a shortlist of 6 NbS indicators.

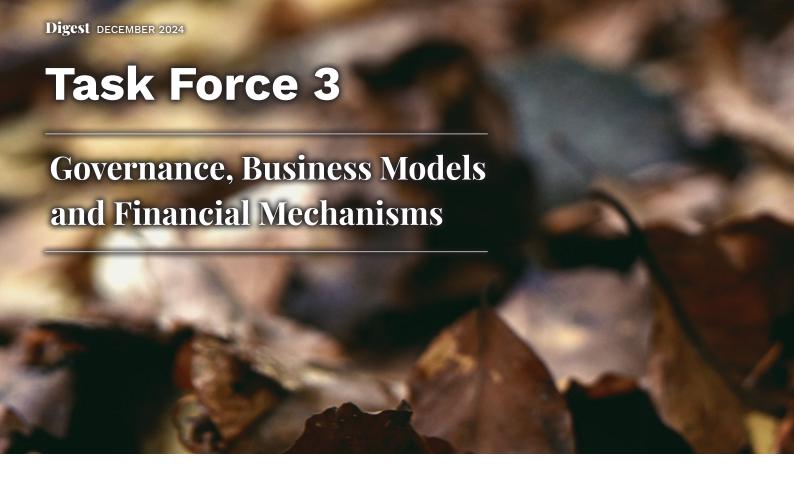


Were we succesful?

Well no, not exactly. Wicked problems aren't just wicked in name only. But we learned a lot to inform the next stage of this work. Some key takeaways:

- → There's a need for a separate process to shortlist appropriate priority indicators for which data templates will be created. We're collaborating closely with TF2 on this and their help with the Hackathon and that of TF3 too was super useful. We plan to set up a working group across TFs 1-3 to continue this collaboration going forwards.
- → The task of developing standardised data templates is challenging, but there's a lot of interest in this topic and some big gains to be had from even a little progress. During the hackathon feedback session, participants felt that "significant first steps" had been made; that "everyone now understands the problem"; and "ways to optimise the process" had been identified. A useful start and some great lessons learned.

A big thanks to everyone who participated! Next year's hackathon will be an in-person event as part of the NetworkNature annual gathering. And we'll be continuing our work on data standardisation after the holidays.



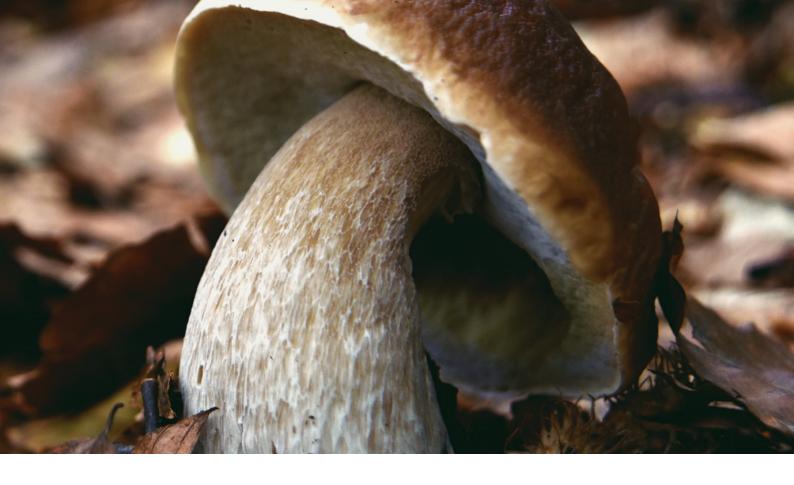
Task Force 3 reassessed its structure and themes.

TF3 has conducted two rounds of consultations with TF3 members.

In the first round the title "Business Models, Financial Mechanisms and the Nature Positive Economy" was finalised. In the second round of consultations, current gaps in the workstream structure were identified. Based on this the title, description, objectives and seven themes were finalised.

Below is the restructured list of themes for TF3:

- → Theme 1: Mapping of Financing instruments and business models
- → Theme 2: Economic valuation of benefits of NbS
- → Theme 3: Policy and regulation impacting on financing of NbS
- → Theme 4: Activating business engagement in the nature-positive economy
- → Theme 5: The role of technology / FinTech in increasing investment in nature
- → **Theme 6:** Engaging citizens in the NPE to influence consumer behaviour, political decisions, financing and investment in NbS
- → Theme 7: Exploring opportunities for synergies with broader climate change and biodiversity initiatives in relation to financing and investment in nature



TF3's Behind-the-Scenes Efforts for the EC Expert Publication

TF3 has been working behind the scenes on the recent update of the EC Expert Publication: The Vital Role of NbS in the Nature-Positive Economy.

The scoping document submitted by TF3 to inform the report provided feedback from economic policy makers on:

- 1 The rationale for accelerating Nature-based Solutions
- 2 Significant roadblocks and enablers driving NbS
- **3** Policy measures required for local, national, and international transition.

Each theme facilitator was asked to circulate this scoping document to economic policy makers to gather additional feedback, which was then reviewed collectively by the TF3 team.

The report is now available **here.**





Task Force 4 (TF4), made up of your intrepid Horizon project (and select Missions!) communicators, has been hard at work identifying cross-project synergies and Peer2Peer learning opportunities.

Since March, we have:

- → Published over 40 newsbits featuring over 15 TF4 member projects
- → Distributed 9 monthly digests, featuring 50 project mentions
- → Launched our NetworkNatureReads Campaigns, publishing 7 interviews and totalling 20 project mentions
- → Piloted our Peer2Peer learning series with a session on data gaps and inclusion, led by DivAirCity.
- → Lay the groundwork for a composite NbS Communication toolkit
- → Drafted a Welcome Kit outlining TF4 resources and opportunities

A highlight has been the NetworkNature Reads Campaign, to which TF4 members are encouraged to contribute. Launched on **Earth Day**, #NetworkNatureReads is inspired by **#ReadingRainbow** and the #NewYorkTimes **#ByTheBook** series, both of which spread a love of reading by highlighting standout books and the people who love them. Our goal is to do the same, but with a #naturebasedsolutions flavor.



Every month, we will feature one book selected by a NetworkNature member.

Why? Because literature widens perspectives and can foster connection between human and environmental communities. It's also a great vehicle for humanising our projects and the people who work on them! What is more, **this opportunity is open to members of all NetworkNature TFs (and projects)**, not just those involved in TF4.

Troubleshooting and comparing communications approaches has also become a core component of our conversations. A lingering question that we will continue to explore as a task force is the future of Horizon projects on social media, in particular Twitter/X. James of Oppla reported that engagement on X is decreasing steadily, and that Oppla has taken the decision to leave the platform and focus instead on LinkedIn and Instagram. Should others do the same?

Over the next six months, our TF will consider the pros and cons of divesting from X in our projects and acquisitions, and consider alternatives. The first step has been creating a Linkedin TF4 group, similar to the one we use for Twitter/X. This is important, as some projects (dare I say early adopters, or rather, dis-adopters?) have already opted out of the platform (I'm looking at you, GoNaturePositive!). We look forward to updating you on our progress in the next TF digest!

Need a reminder of how TF4 is directly supporting project communications?

Look no further, we've got you covered:

- → Editorial calendar with regular newsbit contributions from TF4 members
- → Branded Canva Card promotional pack shared with TF4 members
- → Peer2Peer learning opportunities
- → TF4 Monthly Digest
- → NetworkNature Reads Features



Task Force 5 on education launched in January 2024, and focuses on integrating nature-based solutions at all levels of education.

Led by Trinity College Dublin on behalf of NbS EduWORLD (nbseduworld.eu), this task force has established a collaborative European network dedicated to advancing NbS education for lifelong learning. Its primary goals include fostering a community of educators, researchers, and policymakers who are committed to incorporating NbS in curricula across Europe, enhancing environmental awareness and problem-solving among students and teachers alike.

The Task Force's objectives are threefold:

Community Engagement and Outreach:

This includes creating partnerships with educational institutions and environmental organizations to raise awareness through hands-on events and workshops.

Curriculum integration:

The task force aims to embed NbS across different educational disciplines, helping students understand ecosystem interdependencies and environmental challenges.

Educational resources development:

The group produces interactive materials such as lesson plans and multimedia content to make learning about NbS accessible and engaging for a wide range of students.

We are working to build competencyfocused initiatives, hoping to establish long-term changes in environmental education practices throughout Europe.

The Task Force provides funding opportunities for our members to create educational resources. Recent funding initiatives run through the Task Force are leading to novel education material and approaches being developed.

If you would like to join the conversation, become a member, or just to find out more please get in touch with our Taskforce Lead - Dr. Conor Dowling (conor.dowling@tcd.ie).



Task Force 6 is leading an initiative to enhance inclusive co-creation in NbS, with a focus on engaging hard-to-reach stakeholders.

Key activities include:

- → Survey on Fostering Inclusive Engagement in NbS: successfully shared and now providing valuable insights, currently being analyzed to guide next steps.
- → Background document: in development, this document will introduce key concepts, analytical frameworks, and focus areas to address challenges highlighted by the survey.
- → **Workshop:** planned for early 2025, this event will build on findings from the survey and background report.
- → Final summary document: this comprehensive document will expand on the initial background report, integrating reflections from the workshop.

Targeting public administrators, private sector practitioners and researchers, this initiative aims to improve engagement practices, establish standardized methods, and promote more inclusive NbS implementation.

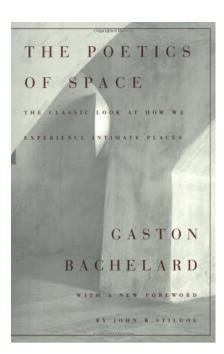
The Poetics of Space (in Time)

What is NetworkNature Reads?

#NetworkNatureReads is inspired by #ReadingRainbow and the #NewYorkTimes #ByTheBook series, both of which spread a love of reading by highlighting standout books and the people who love them. Our goal is to do the same, but with a #naturebasedsolutions flavor. Every month, we will feature one book selected by a NetworkNature member. We believe that literature widens perspectives and can foster connection between human and environmental communities. Read **The Great Sea** by Uvavnuk if you aren't sure what we mean.

This month's interviewee is Dimitra Xidous, a poet and researcher committed to exploring links between the built environment and well-being.

Want to feature a book on NetworkNature Reads? Contact hello@networknature.eu to find out how!



Book:The Poetics of Space by Gaston Bachelard

Tell us about yourself! What role do nature and reading play in your life?

I could begin anywhere, but for starters: I am a poet, and also, I am a researcher. In 2011, I moved to Ireland to spend a year writing poetry. I wanted to give myself time, and the undivided attention that establishing and deepening an artistic practice demands. In the time since, I have published two poetry collections, several essays, and, with the support of a 2019 Markievicz award, a collaboration with poets Kimberly Campanello and Annemarie Ni Churreain is due to be published by The Salvage Press before the end of this year (something that has been a long time coming, and for which I am very excited!).

All at the same time, I am a researcher in **Trinity College Dublin** (splitting my time between TrinityHaus, in the School of Engineering and the Centre for Social Innovation, in The Business School).

Over the last decade, I've been involved in projects that interrogate the role of the built environment in supporting health and well-being across the lifespan. Focussed on the neighbourhood scale, projects have been in the area of dwellings, hospitals, long-term care settings, and, more recently, nature-based solutions (NbS). As a researcher, I have zeroed in on how lived experience shapes and frames our understanding of space(s) and place(s).

In all of this, the role of language (both its technical components and its emotional aspects) is of deep concern.

I have read my entire life. One of my favourite opening lines to a novel is "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice." At 14, I encountered Leonard Cohen for the first (but not the last!) time, and through him, Federico Garcia Lorca (and through Lorca, duende).

When it comes to nature, my relationship in and to it is wrapped up in a childhood split between cozy Canadian autumns and deep winter snow, and then, with a move to Greece, a shift of experience. I remember olive groves, and fig trees, and (most importantly) orange trees that no longer exist, except in my mind – my grief for those trees that no longer exist is vast. As time has moved on, and I have settled into adulthood, I have found myself describing my relationship to and with nature as 'clumsy'. I have a great story of myself that involves a 20km hike in New Zealand's north island in flip-flops (I was so stupid – and so lucky nothing bad happened to me!).

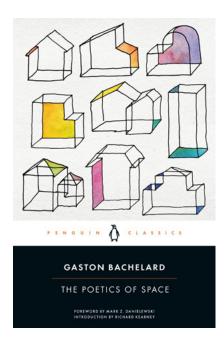
Which book did you pick and why?

I have picked Gaston Bachelard's 'The Poetics of Space'. I love to hold this book in my hands. Thinking of this book, I have always imagined my reading (the embodied experience of my reading) as mirror (a mirror that stretches across and back into time) to Bachelard's writing – my eyes running down a page (now) bring to mind (which is to say, it is easy to imagine) the movement and action of his hands writing things into existence (then). With this in mind, my reading of 'The Poetics of Space' has been framed not so much by the 'order of things' – as presented in the structured table of contents – but rather, as a function of my mood and desire, across space and time.

Over the last several years, sitting on planes (and always in a window seat), I have read as I pleased, and it suited me to read and experience it this way – so disconnected, so out of touch, and so out of order while in transit, from one place to another. Bachelard's elegant writings on the phenomenology of roundness, nests, and the miniature, and so much more, all zero in and out on how we experience space(s), and the function of language (and by extension, the role of poets) in helping us 'see' into (and also out of) the world.

Can you share a specific moment from the book that resonates with you personally? How does it connect to your work with Nature-based Solutions projects?

Because I find myself thinking a lot about time – in both horizontal (meaning: durational) and vertical (meaning: deep) terms – I have returned, most recently, to re-reading the 'Intimate Immensity' chapter. Time is everywhere in 'The Poetics of Space' and for me, this passage resonates, not only for how it treats time (to and from a point of perspective – 'with-me / with-us') but also time (expanded) beyond the point of it/the self/this perspective, in order to acknowledge the 'before-me / before-us'. Look at this!:



"But who knows the temporal dimensions of the forest? History is not enough. We should have to know how the forest experiences its great age; why in the great reign of the imagination, there are no young forests. I myself can only meditate upon things in my own country, having learned the dialectics of fields and woods from my unforgettable friend, Gaston Roupnel. In the vast world of the non-I, the non-I of fields is not the same as the non-I of forests. The forest is a beforeme, before-us, whereas for fields and meadows, my dreams and recollections accompany all the different phases of tilling and harvesting. When the dialectics of the I and the non-I grow more flexible, I feel that fields and meadows are with me, in the with-me, with-us. But forests reign in the past. I know, for instance, that my grandfather got lost in a certain wood. I was told this, and I have not forgotten it. It happened in a past before I was born. My oldest memories, therefore, are a hundred years old, or perhaps a bit more."

There is so much to get excited about here and then, unravel. I love the idea that within each of us there exist memories that are older than us, that are beforeus, and yet, also, because Bachelard is making pointed effort to draw a line of connection between himself and his grandfather, these memories are also part-of-us, in so far as we (can and should) imagine ourselves not apart from time, in neither the horizontal nor vertical dimension; yes, I think this is the point being made here, and it has real implications for place-making, and more precisely, how we think and go about the processes of long-term stewardship in fostering and making sense of place, over time. His noting of things having happened 'before he was born' speaks to the value of knowledge that is already in existence and gets passed down and along family (and by extension, community) lines over time. With time, we come to know things, we come to know them intimately; over time, I have come to see intimacy as a necessary and fundamental aspect of long-term stewardship.

Despite the shortness of this passage, the passage of time expressed is significant. Bachelard does beautiful, gentle work in establishing the spatial dimensions of (deep) time (and the inter-relationships in and among things). Nothing is static; change is constant. Urban spaces, buildings, and the living (human and nonhuman) things that inhabit them are always growing, ageing, changing, and evolving over time. So, it isn't hard to imagine the oldest helping to make sense of the places in which we dwell and aim to live good, meaningful lives. Implicit in this passage, and indeed much of what makes 'The Poetics of Space' such a pleasure, for me, is that everything is connected to everything else. For me, the consideration of time in these ways is necessary for the kind of transformative change we imagine and aspire to achieve via naturebased solutions.

In what ways do you see the themes or lessons from the book aligning with the goals of conservation and the challenges we face in combating biodiversity loss today?

To draw a line between the past of this book (first published in 1958, 13 years after the end of World War II) and some present-day thinking that centres around how our values shape our understanding(s) and influence our relationship(s) to and with nature, there are interesting parallels in thinking between 'The Poetics of Space' and the work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

The IPBES values assessment provides a useful way of framing our relationship(s) to nature:

"living from nature emphasizes nature's capacity to provide resources for sustaining livelihoods, needs and wants of people, such as food and material goods; living with nature has a focus on life 'other than human' such as the intrinsic right of fish in a river to thrive independently of human needs; living in nature refers to the importance of nature as the setting for peoples' sense of place and identify; and finally, living as nature sees the natural world as a physical, mental, and spiritual part of oneself".

Returning to the passage on the temporal dimensions of forests, I want to show some thinking – reflecting on how each line (or part of) might align with one or more ways of thinking and relating to nature (it may not be perfect, and each line of thinking is a springboard into deeper writing!):

"But who knows the temporal dimensions of the forest? (living in / living as). History is not enough (living from). We should have to know how the forest experiences its great age (living from / living with / living in / living as); why in the great reign of the imagination, there are no young forests. I myself can only meditate upon things in my own country (living in), having learned the dialectics of fields and woods (living with) from my unforgettable friend, Gaston Roupnel.

In the vast world of the non-I (living with), the non-I of fields is not the same as the non-I of forests (living with). The forest is a before-me, before-us (living with / living as), whereas for fields and meadows, my dreams and recollections accompany all the different phases of tilling and harvesting (living from / living in). When the dialectics of the I and the non-I grow more flexible, I feel that fields and meadows are with me, in the with-me, with-us (a shift from living from and in, to living with). But forests reign in the past (living in). I know, for instance, that my grandfather got lost in a certain wood (living in). I was told this, and I have not forgotten it (living in). It happened in a past (living in) before I was born (living as). My oldest memories (living in), therefore, are a hundred years old, or perhaps a bit more (living as)."

Both the researcher and poet in me are satisfied (for now). I have attempted to draw things together – to make and perhaps also, to reinforce a point: I like the IPBES values typology (and I have used it to better understand the ways in which tangible and intangible elements of the world are gathered (into), carried (within), and expressed (out) of each of us as part of workshops that I have run where we explore our relationship and reflect on our connections to nature with / in time). In all of this, (and, here, I repeat myself, in order to come full circle) the role of language (both its technical components and its emotional aspects) is of deep concern. Over time. I have laboured to draw the poetic gaze and research gaze together, into a collective 'way of being and seeing' in and with the world; for me, the function of (and the need for) both is crucial for doing good work towards addressing current challenges (of diversity loss, among others), and beyond (how better to live as part of nature, instead of separate from).

If you were recommending this book to a colleague or a friend within the conservation community, what key takeaway or message would you highlight?

Spending time with this book is to reflect deeply about the 'inside' and the 'outside' of things, the distinction and the dissolution between the interior (sense of being) and the exterior (relationship in and with the natural world) with and in time; in a manner of speaking, everything comes from nothing, and, having come from nothing, everything then, is connected to everything else – all it takes is a small shift in perspective (the tiniest one you can possibly imagine), and all the world transforms.

Related Projects

UNPplus, NbS EduWORLD



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