

Welcome!

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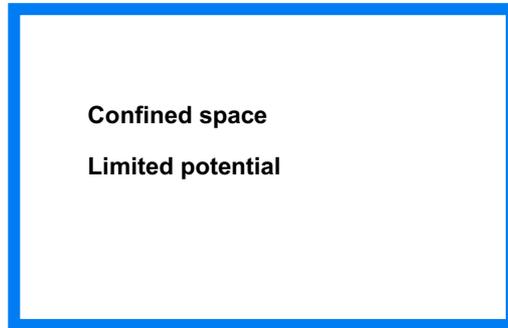
Anthropological knowledge is based on the researcher **sharing time and space** with the people he or she wants to understand, establishing relationships with them and thereby **experiencing life from their perspective**. The anthropologist follows people, **reflects upon what is being told**, returns with new questions and adjusts the insights accordingly. The method is **open, flexible and grasps the unexpected**.

TINE TJØRNHØJ-THOMSEN, DANISH ANTHROPOLOGIST



Ethnography boxed in to a confined “present” space, with limited value to a detached “future”

”The present”



”The future”



Ethnography boxed in to a confined “present” space, with limited value to a detached “future”

”The present”



”The future”



KEY QUESTION FOR TODAY

How might we expand the perception of the 'nature of change', explore "the present" and what is all around, rather than zooming in on "futures" through the limited lense of time?

KEY POINT OF VIEW

By being truly curious about the circumstances, nuances and interactions in the present, we discover that change is everywhere, while not everything changes.

And as ethnographers, we have a key role to play in pointing out what is valuable to hold on to, and what we need to let go of, to build desirable, and sustainable futures.

We want to share our point of views, reflections and experiences in the making!

We want to discuss with you!

We want to learn from you and get smarter together!



What's Next versus What's Valuable: Ethnography in a Future-Focused World

1

Looking ahead? Look around!

Identify and invest in the values most likely not to change

2

What's the rush?

Technologies might change fast, whereas human needs might not. Innovation is not just about seeing what's new, but seeing what's there in new ways

3

Stay in the trouble!

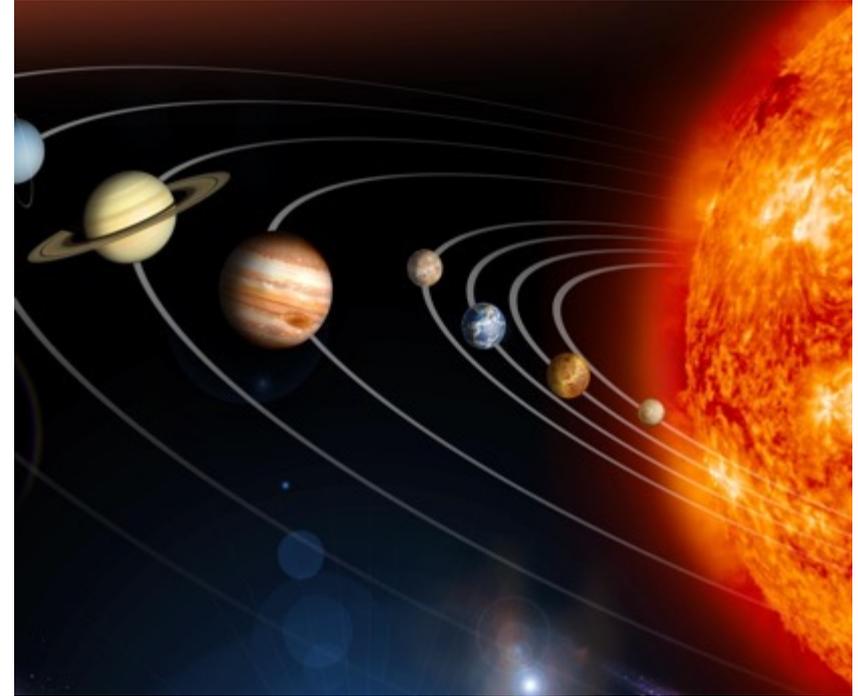
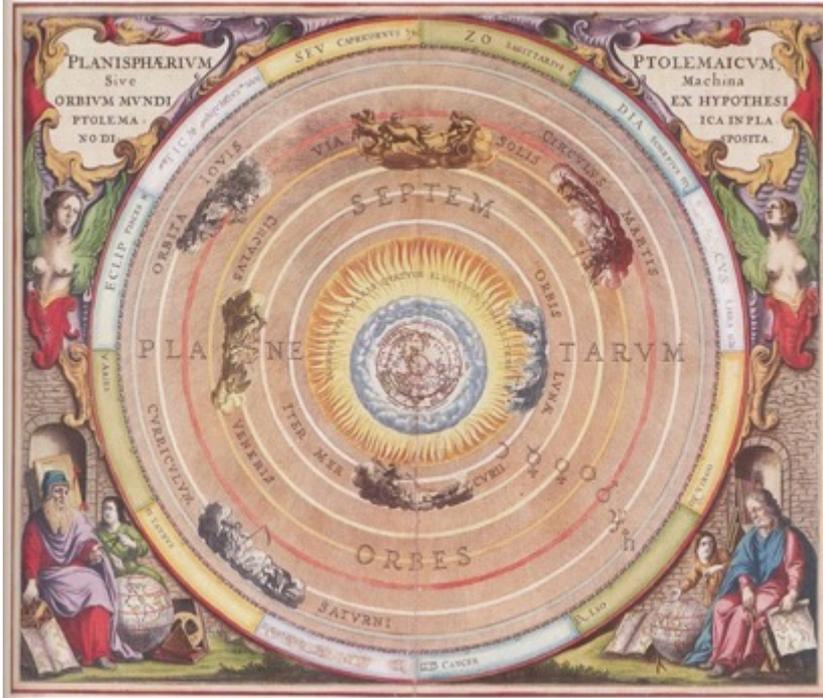
Embracing the ethnographer's ability to uncover nuances of the present to spark positive change and set direction for desirable, sustainable futures

1.

Looking ahead?
Look around!

EPIC SUMMIT

Who is at the center? And what needs to change?



Context is key to identify the human problems worth solving within and beyond the business problems

Business problems are often symptoms of human problems, a shift in perspective enables us to explore true innovation potential. The context is key to reframe challenges into something worthwhile solving.





In an uncertain world, the safe bet
to futures is to explore, identify
and invest in what will most likely
not change.



MAERSK

BUSINESS PROBLEM:

How do we extend our offerings
beyond ocean?

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MAERSK

HUMAN PROBLEM

What is important in the everyday life of a logistics manager in a large corporation?



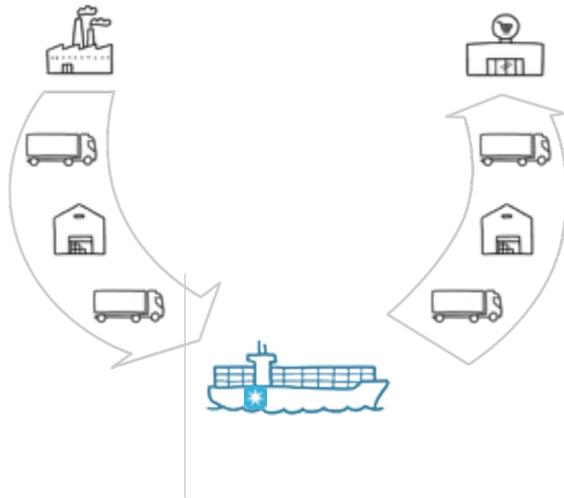
KEY INSIGHT

What became apparent in the research, was that the world view of the customers was different from the one at Maersk. In order to realise a future strategy, what was needed was a change in the contextual, contemporary relationships.



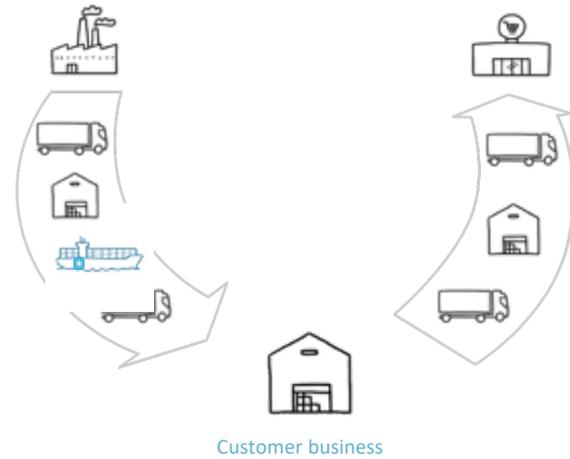
INSIGHT

MAERSK PERSPECTIVE



VS

CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE



LEARNING

The innovation potential in this sense lies in the ability to identify what values will most likely *not change* and how to hold on to the persistent truths when setting off to achieve new future goals.

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Interviewer: “What’s going to change in the next 10 years?”

Bezos: “That’s an interesting question. And a very common one. I get asked it a lot. But I almost never get the question ‘What’s not going to change in the next 10 years?’ And I submit to you that that second question is actually the more important of the two — because you can build a business strategy around the things that are stable in time.

In our retail business, we know that customers want low prices, and I know that’s going to be true 10 years from now. They want fast delivery; they want vast selection. It’s impossible to imagine a future 10 years from now where a customer comes up and says, “Jeff, I love Amazon; I just wish the prices were a little higher.” “I love Amazon; I just wish you’d deliver a little more slowly.” Impossible.”

- JEFF BEZOS, AMAZON

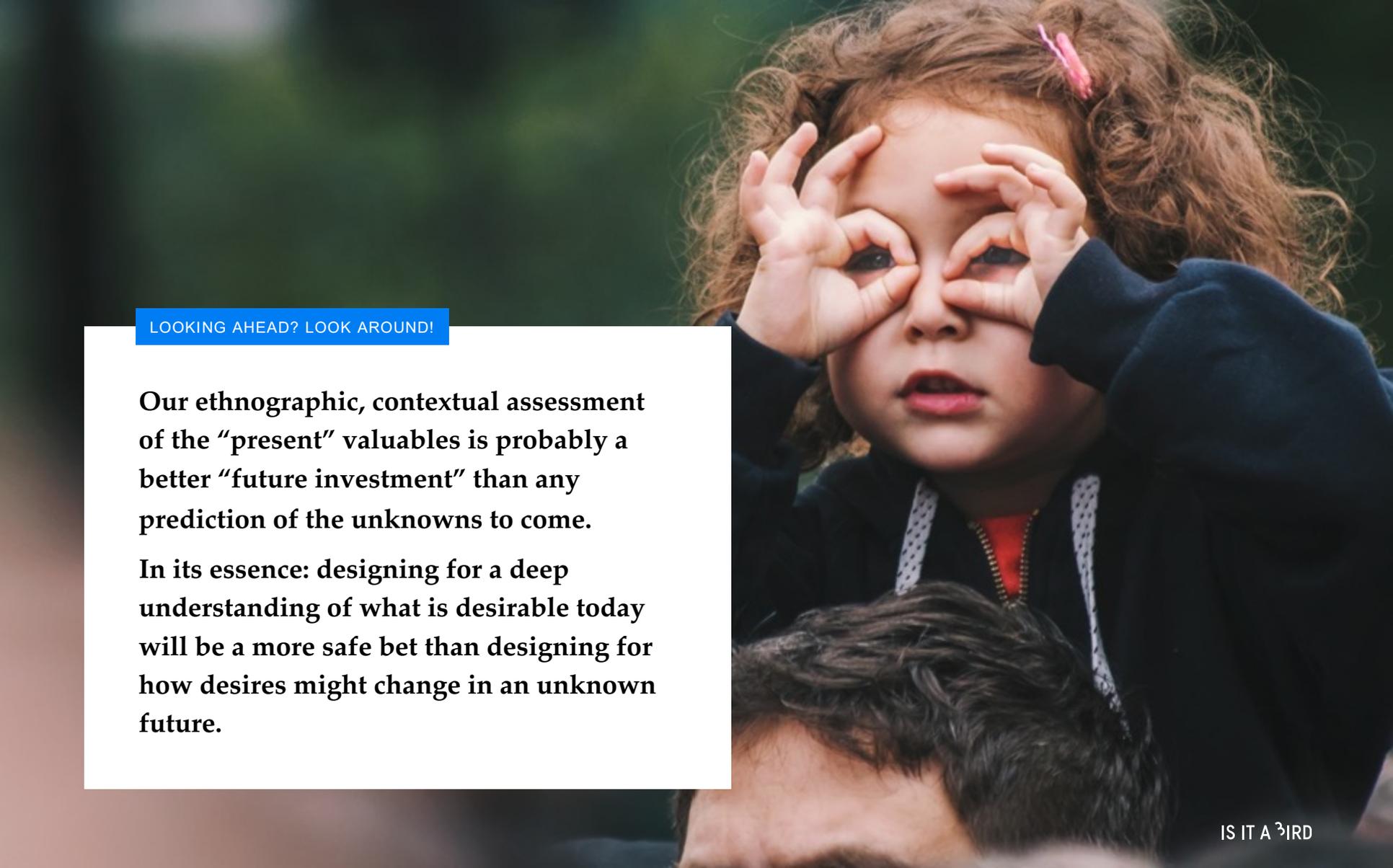
happily
ever
after

?

REFLECTION

What is actually next? It seems convenient to shift focus to **new problems**, rather than investing the time in coming up with **new solutions** to the problems we are dealing with already.

Maybe the main risk to deal with, is being run over by competitors who solve the same, consistent human problems, only better

A young child with curly brown hair, wearing a dark blue jacket, is covering their eyes with their hands. The child's expression is one of curiosity or concern. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The overall mood is contemplative and focused on the child's perspective.

LOOKING AHEAD? LOOK AROUND!

Our ethnographic, contextual assessment of the “present” valuables is probably a better “future investment” than any prediction of the unknowns to come.

In its essence: designing for a deep understanding of what is desirable today will be a more safe bet than designing for how desires might change in an unknown future.

1.

How do you as ethnographers experience being positioned in a confined space of “the present”?

How do you convince colleagues and clients of the strategic and future potential of the ethnographic approach?

2.

What's the rush?

WHAT'S THE RUSH?

Technologies change fast, but human needs do not - A shift in perspective from how to why ensures future relevancy



A woman with grey hair, wearing a patterned top and a light-colored scarf, stands in a room. She is looking upwards and to the left with a thoughtful expression. She is holding a small, light-colored rectangular box in her hands. The room features a white door with a jacket hanging on it, a wooden cabinet on the left, and a dark chest of drawers on the right with decorative items on top. The lighting is soft and indoor.

KEY QUESTION

How can VELUX ensure relevance in a digital future?

Business problems are often symptoms of human problems; a shift from *what* to *why* enables us to explore future potentials



Business problem

How can we improve our smart home technology to win the market for smart home solutions



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Business problem

How can we improve our smart home technology to win the market for smart home solutions



Human problem

What does home mean to people in different cultural settings and how does smart solutions fit in?



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Business problem

How can we improve our smart home technology to win the market for smart home solutions



Human problem

What does home mean to people in different cultural settings and how does smart solutions fit in?

Reframed business problem

How can we develop technologies that give homeowners a sense of **control** and help them **maintain and take care** of their home?



WHAT'S THE RUSH?

Technologies change fast, but human needs do not (necessarily)

People will, also in the future of their life at home, want to have a sense of control.

The future we can imagine, in engineering and technological terms, is not necessarily **the future which is desirable to live in**.

Change is everywhere in the home setting, but the ethnographer offers a careful perspective on what is changed, and what stays the same. And being aware of which changes are deliberate and which should be avoided.





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Interaction between humans and robotics entail clashes between expectations and practice. Between imaginations of the future and the realities in context.

The assumption is that robots are efficiency tools and that this very much fuels the dream about the future usage.

This assumption is more imaginative than most engineers will probably acknowledge.

Whereas the belief is that robots are efficiency tools, most of them are unprofitable. An example is self-driving cars: the imagination fuels the dream. The adaption to reality follows.

We are wasting our efforts if we do not focus on connecting the imagination and the reality.

**- EXTRACTS FROM LECTURE WITH CATHRINE HASSE,
DANISH ANTHROPOLOGIST**



The ethnographer can act as the “alignment experts” between engineering imaginations and human realities

What shapes visions of the future?

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Future needs lie beyond what we can imagine today and being visionary requires us to focus on technological advancement.

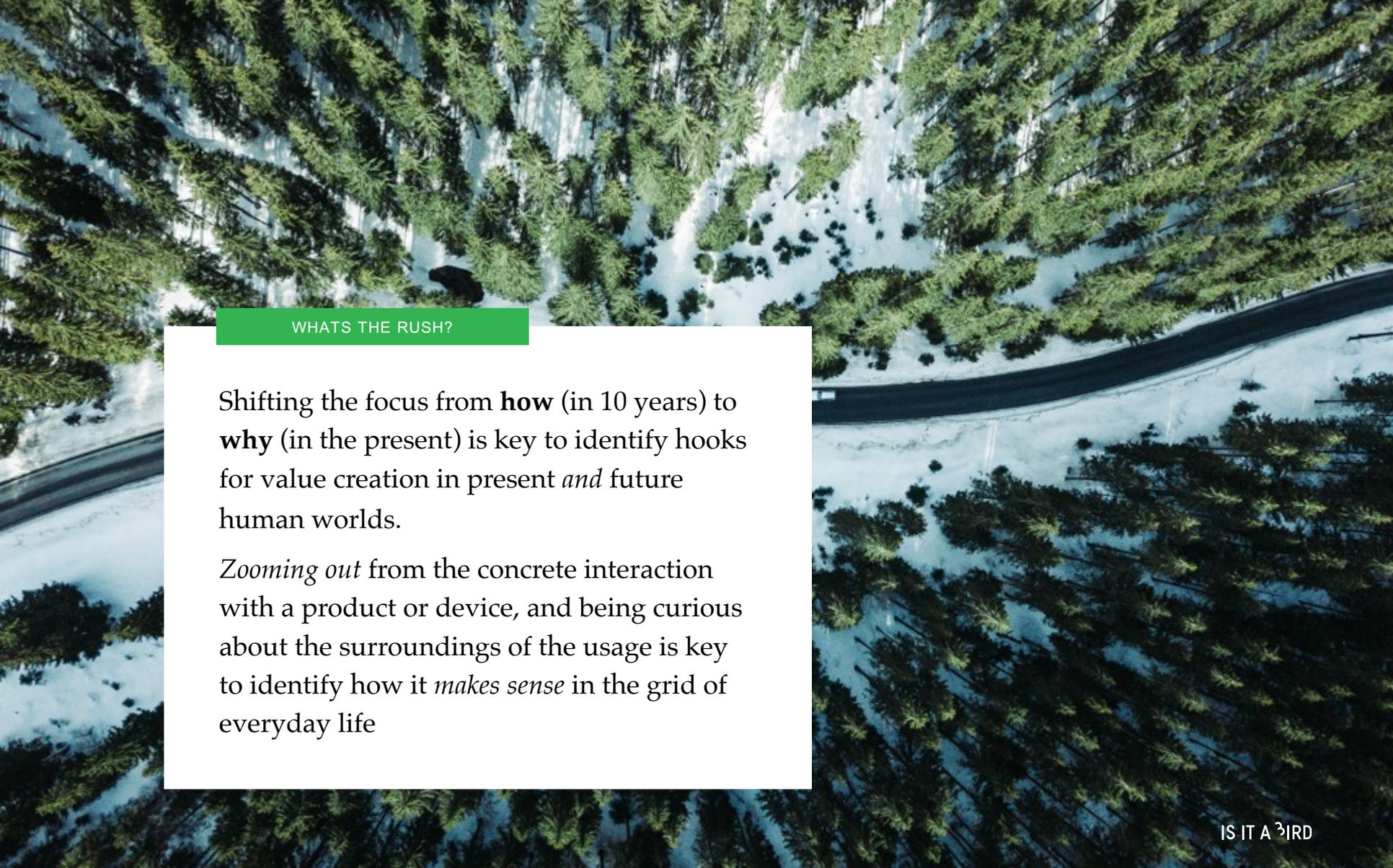
- Big interest in the promises of data sharing and digitalisation as a means to give everyone access and thereby knowledge about data
- Hypothesis that more data is a benefit for everyone



INCREASED VALUE

Being visionary is daring to be ambitious about how we solve the needs of patients, both those known and unknown to the organisation.

- How does increasing digital encounters change, challenge or increase trust between HCP and patient?
- How can data help to create agency for a patient meeting the health care system?
- Can data support patients wish to 'be seen'?

An aerial photograph of a dense evergreen forest covered in snow. A paved road curves through the trees, with a few cars visible. The perspective is from directly above, looking down on the landscape.

WHAT'S THE RUSH?

Shifting the focus from **how** (in 10 years) to **why** (in the present) is key to identify hooks for value creation in present *and* future human worlds.

Zooming out from the concrete interaction with a product or device, and being curious about the surroundings of the usage is key to identify how it *makes sense* in the grid of everyday life

2.

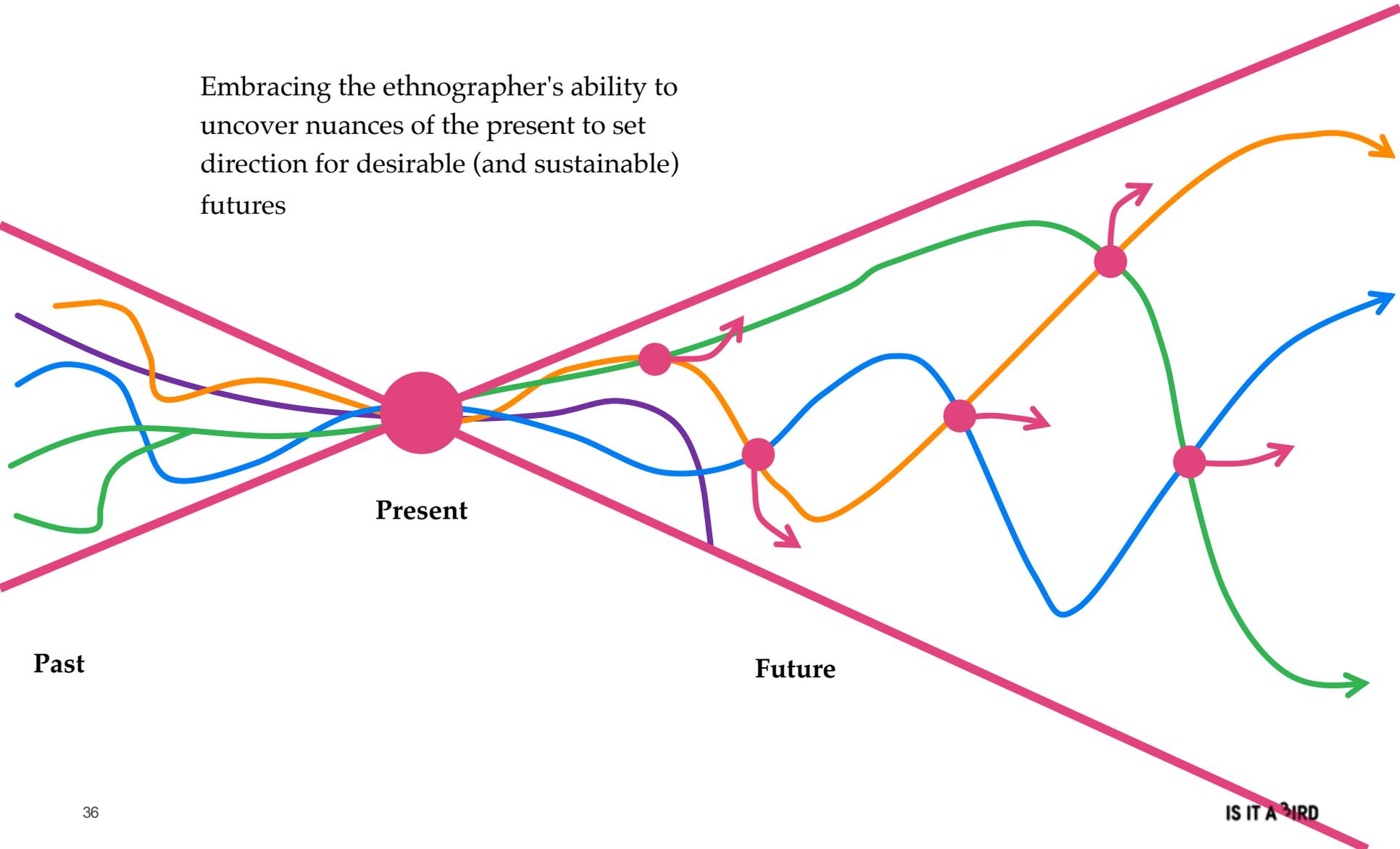
How does the notion of “alignment experts” between engineering imaginations and human realities resonate with the roles you are in?

What experiences and learnings do you have acting as the “alignment experts” challenging speeds of change?

3.

Stay in the trouble!

Embracing the ethnographer's ability to uncover nuances of the present to set direction for desirable (and sustainable) futures



Past

Present

Future

“

“To me it seems obvious, that we must learn to stay with the trouble. (...) We cannot control the future, and we cannot come up with big solutions from a position in the future. The big solutions are the wrong way to go about it.

Elon Musk who wants to create life on other planets, and Bill Gates, who talk about the big technological solutions have exposed how the old progressive dream about new worlds is desperate and denying the reality.

Instead, we need to work together to repair the damages, and create a vision of a present and a future which is still possible. Forget about the big futures. Let's stay in the trouble. The person who stays in the trouble does not look away, or up, but explores the surroundings and lives with them”.

- TRANSLATION FROM INTERVIEW WITH **DONNA HARAWAY**,
DK NEWSPAPER “INFORMATION”

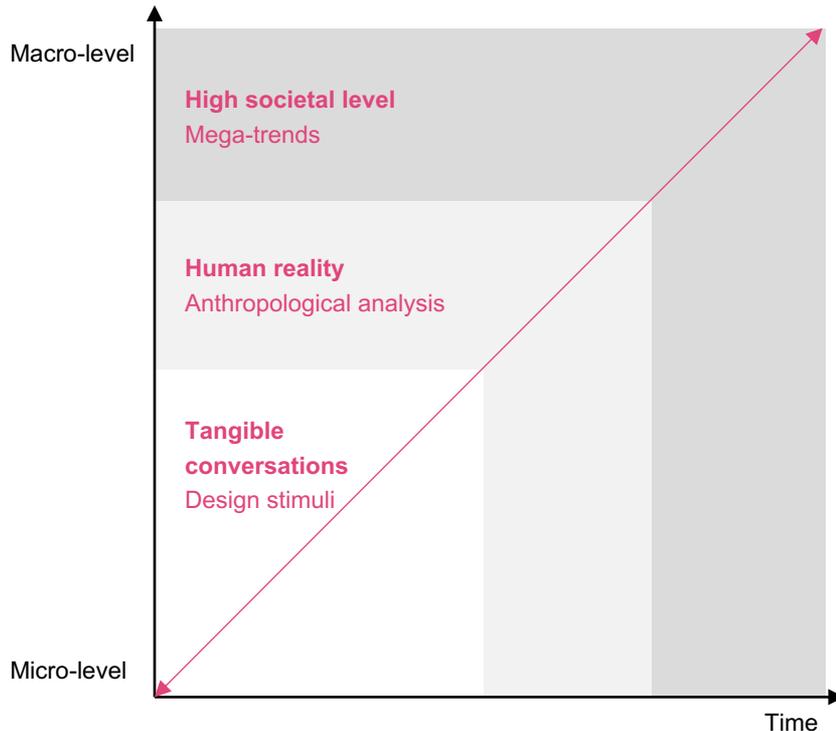


POINT OF VIEW

The ethnographic approach offers a tool for
how to stay in the trouble!

It prompts us to embed ourselves in the mess of
the present. And with this as the starting point,
explore, identify and enable desirable change
towards sustainable futures.

Identifying future needs and desires by linking the micro and macro levels we can investigate today



Our ability to develop directional insights for future human needs and desires depend on the the lenses with which we explore the nuances of the present. We believe that:

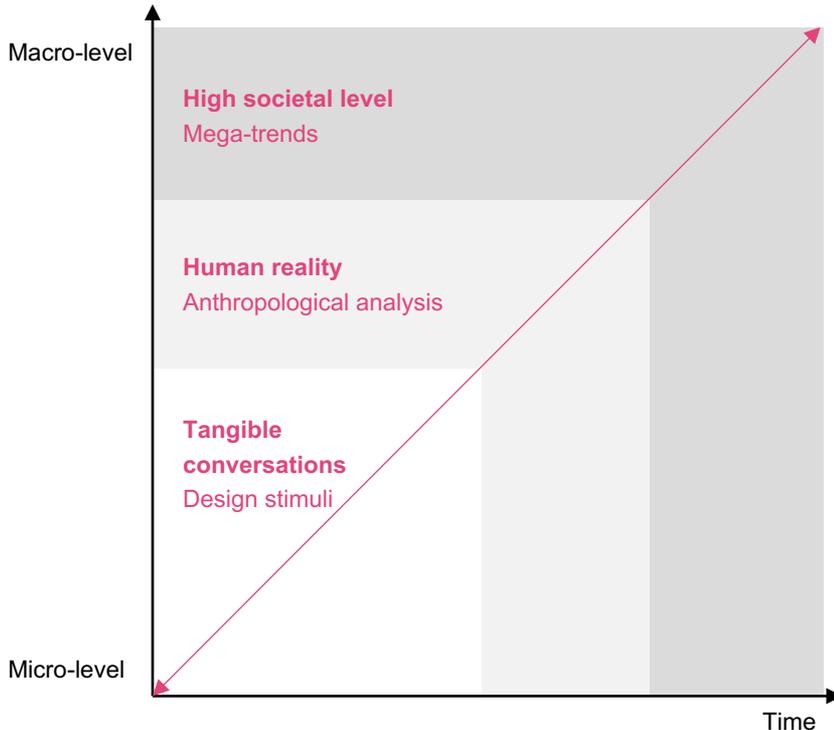
“The future is already here – it is just not very evenly distributed”

– William Gibson

Our approach to future studies builds on an exploration of the present, by linking the micro and macro level contexts of the human experience.

It is our framework for helping our clients stay in the trouble and navigate there way with an eye on both the current messiness and the emerging futures.

We cover all levels to create a solid picture of what is consistent and what is changing in what is emerging



We zoom in on the specifics to identify the universal, and we stand still to be present in order to see how things are moving and connected around us.

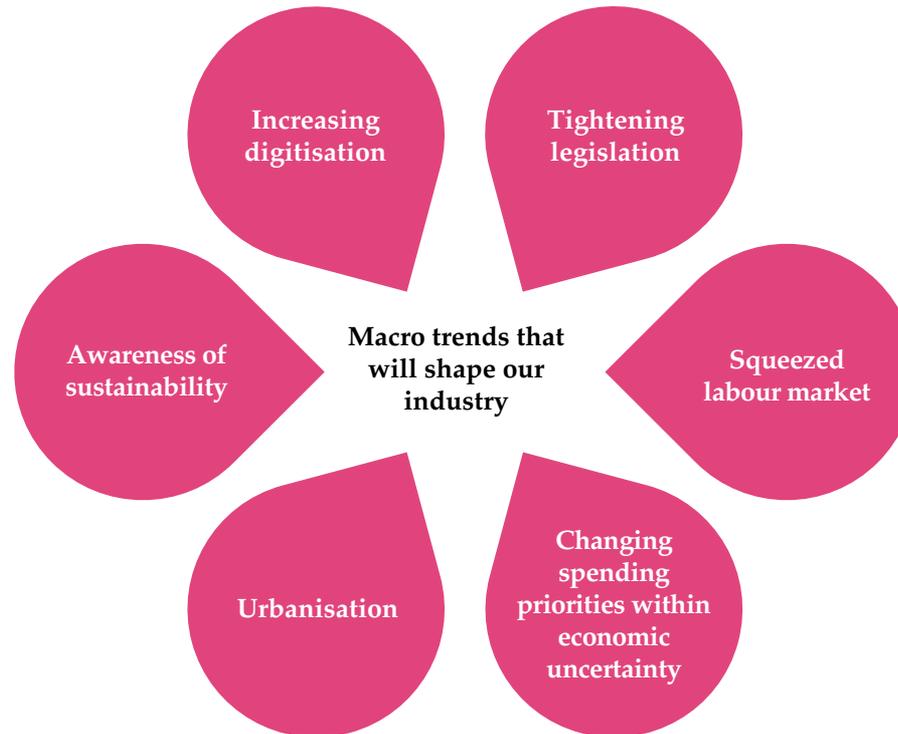
We want to acknowledge the dynamics between people and objects, people and people, and people, structural environments and discourses.

The framework enables us to facilitate tangible conversations without missing out on the bigger picture. Zooming in and dwelling on the details and zooming back out to see how the dots are connected.

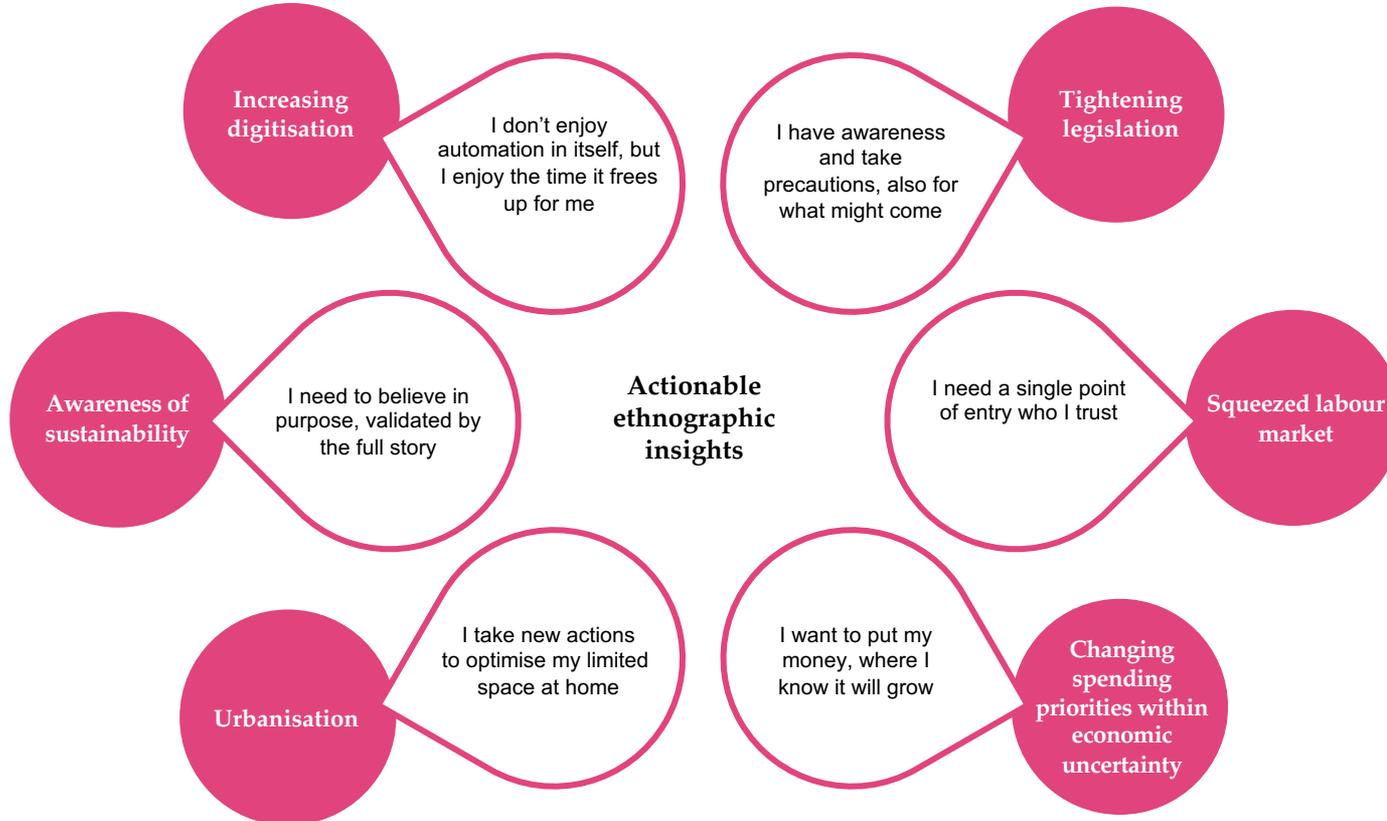
POINT OF VIEW

The ethnographer detects the connections and relationship between moving parts in the present across the tangible and the abstract. It helps to operationalize what is otherwise abstract, and define principles and guiding insights to what what is specific.

Macro trends often rule the narrative of knowing futures, but can be hard to act upon



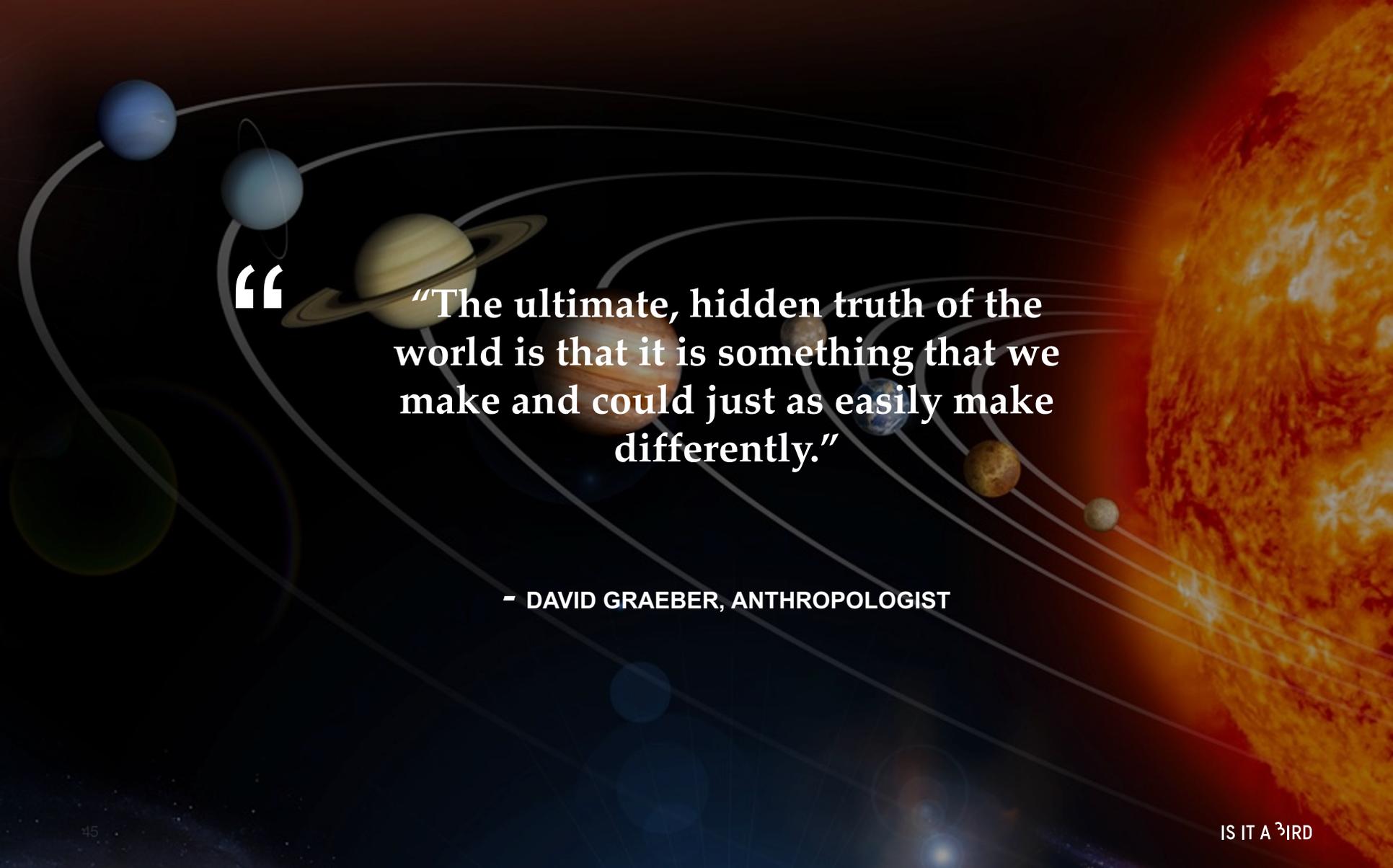
Ethnography helps to operationalise abstract macro trends through insights and design principles



3.

What, in your experience, is the potential of applying ethnographic thinking to sustainable change?

What are the potentials and barriers for “staying in the trouble” in your professional position?



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“The ultimate, hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we make and could just as easily make differently.”

- DAVID GRAEBER, ANTHROPOLOGIST

3 break out rooms, 3 topics for you to dive into in conversation with your peers to explore...

1 ...The potential of ethnography and strategy:

How do you as ethnographers experience being positioned in a confined space of “the present”?

How do you convince colleagues and clients of the strategic and future potential of applying an ethnographic approach?

2 ...The potential of ethnography in engineered futures:

How does the notion of “alignment experts” between engineering imaginations and human realities resonate with the roles you are in?

What experiences and learnings do you have acting as the “alignment experts” challenging speeds of change?

3 ... The potential of ethnography and sustainability

What, in your experience, is the potential of applying ethnographic thinking in relation to sustainable futures?

What are the potentials and barriers for “staying in the trouble” in your professional position?



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