

# THE BEYOND MAGAZINE

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THE MORE WE SHARE,



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# Challenging *Systems* for a Better World

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the second edition of The Beyond Magazine! In these pages, we explore a wide spectrum of topics—from technology to agriculture to the arts—always with one question in mind: how can we imagine and build a more sustainable future for all?

Change doesn't always arrive in bold, sweeping gestures. More often, it begins quietly, with a shift in mindset, a fresh perspective, or the courage to act differently. Each of us carries the power to spark tangible transformation, and it starts in the everyday choices we make.

We hope this edition not only informs your mind but also resonates with your heart, offering new ways to see, to question and to create.

So, welcome back to our magazine! Together, let's make the shift happen!





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# Backing Young Leaders

Beyond Lab  
Innovator-in-  
Residence  
Column

## Are we adequately supporting young leaders during this volatile political time?

-Nolita Mvunelo

*Principal for Cultural Transformation, Club of Rome*

The international community has embraced youth empowerment with unprecedented enthusiasm. From the UN's Youth2030 strategy to the recently adopted Pact for the Future, global frameworks increasingly recognise young people as essential partners in addressing climate change, inequality and democratic governance. Yet, as youth-led protests surge worldwide, from climate strikes to pro-democracy movements, a troubling question emerges: Are we adequately protecting the young leaders we inspire to challenge the status quo?

### The Empowerment Paradox

For the past seven years, I have worked on building initiatives that support young people to pursue social innovation and systemic change in their communities. This experience has exposed a fundamental contradiction in how we approach youth leadership development. While international organizations enthusiastically promote youth participation through programmes, summits

and frameworks, they have largely failed to grapple with what happens when these empowered young people actually challenge power structures.

The evidence of increased youth political engagement is overwhelming. The UN Youth2030 initiative has documented significant increases in youth engagement in UN processes across diverse groups, with a rise in youth participation from 33 to 50 UN entities. Events like the World Bank's annual Youth Summit draw thousands of participants. This does not even start to consider the likely thousands of civil society and private organizations that facilitate youth engagement, participation and advocacy for sustainable development.

These initiatives represent progress in recognising youth as legitimate political actors, innovators, entrepreneurs and researchers rather than passive beneficiaries.

However, a critical gap exists between empowering youth and protecting them. Recent research reveals that young people are among the five groups most commonly exposed to attacks on

their fundamental freedoms in civic spaces.

The threats they face are comprehensive: sociocultural barriers, financial challenges, legal obstacles, digital surveillance and physical violence, including arbitrary detention and targeted killings.

### When inspiration meets reality

Consider the trajectory of high-profile youth activists like Greta Thunberg, who has been arrested multiple times across Europe for climate protests, or Disha Ravi, a young Indian climate activist arrested on sedition charges for sharing a protest toolkit. These cases illustrate how quickly youth political participation can escalate into confrontation with authorities. The pattern is consistent globally. A Kenyan youth activist recently told the UN Security Council how police routinely enter informal gathering spaces to "harass and illegally arrest young people." Yet, despite documented evidence of these risks, there are no established standards for protecting young people who become politically active through empowerment programmes.





### The Protection Gap

A recent experience with colleagues experiencing challenging political environments prompted deep contemplation and some research on what responsible leadership means when working with young people on these issues.

While examining safeguarding mechanisms for youth activists in my programmes, I quickly recognised a harsh truth: although international frameworks heavily endorse youth political participation, they offer almost no specific protocols for when these young individuals face arrest, detention, intimidation, or violence. The UN's Youth, Peace and Security framework includes a "Protection" pillar that calls for ensuring young people's rights and investigating crimes against them. However, this remains at the level of aspirational principles rather than operational procedures. These measures are also especially challenging for civil society and local organizations to implement. Current "protection" mechanisms are largely reactive, offering post-incident legal support, diplomatic pressure for high-profile cases and advocacy campaigns, rather than proactive safeguarding.

These are also considered through international human rights frameworks, which are often developed internationally and rarely considered pre-emptively when it matters most.

Missing elements include pre-engagement risk assessments, rapid response mechanisms for detained youth activists, standardised protection protocols for organisations running youth programmes, and systematic monitoring of youth activist detention rates. This represents a serious ethical gap: we encourage political engagement without corresponding investment in protection infrastructure. There is also the question of the extent to which a civil society organization should be responsible for providing this type of support if they have not expressly encouraged the young leader to engage in dissent, and many of the youth are often legal adults. The organizations themselves do not have the power, resources, or reach to influence the situation. Very often, the best that can be done is a social media awareness-raising campaign (which, once again, is reactive).

### Beyond Representation to Responsibility

The UN frameworks, while progressive in recognising youth agency, stop short of acknowledging the full implications of genuine empowerment. Real systemic change (whether addressing climate action, reducing inequality, or strengthening democracy) inevitably requires challenging existing power structures. This is not something young people can "project manage" their way out of; it involves confronting entrenched interests that may respond with repression.

International youth organizations must move beyond feel-good participation metrics to grapple seriously with the duty of care. When we inspire young people to challenge injustice, we bear responsibility for their safety. This means:

**Honest Risk Assessment:** Youth programmes must include frank discussions about potential consequences of political activism, allowing young people to make informed decisions about their participation.

**Proactive Protection Mechanisms:** Organizations need rapid response protocols, legal support networks, and security planning that matches the scale of their empowerment efforts.

**Sustained Support:** Protection cannot be limited to programme duration. Young activists often face consequences long after international attention moves elsewhere.

**Resource Allocation:** The enthusiasm for youth summits and participation frameworks must be matched by investment in protection infrastructure.



## A Path Forward

The solution is not to retreat from youth empowerment but to mature our approach. The UN's Youth, Peace and Security framework provides a foundation with its recognition that young activists face real risks requiring "mechanisms for the safety of young peacebuilders." However, this must evolve from acknowledgement to action. Organizations engaging youth in political initiatives need to develop comprehensive safeguarding standards that address the full spectrum of risks young activists face. This includes not just physical protection but also digital security, legal support and long-term care for those facing ongoing persecution.

The international community's commitment to youth leadership will ultimately be measured not by the number of young people in conference rooms, but by how well we protect those brave enough to take our calls for change seriously. As we seem to have entered an era of increasing political volatility, the question is not whether young people will continue to challenge power; they will. The question is whether we will support them with the same energy we've shown in inspiring them. The time for comfortable distance between empowerment and responsibility is over. Young leaders deserve both our inspiration and our protection.





# Finding Strength in Uncertainty

## Why Sustainability Matters in Challenging Environments

-Viktoriia Savitska  
*Chief Global Affairs Officer  
Epicentr Group of Companies*

In 2022, a small city in Eastern Europe faced one of its toughest years. Supply chains were disrupted, energy prices skyrocketed, and uncertainty was everywhere. Yet, amidst all this, some local businesses and communities managed not only to survive but even to grow, and their secret was sustainability.

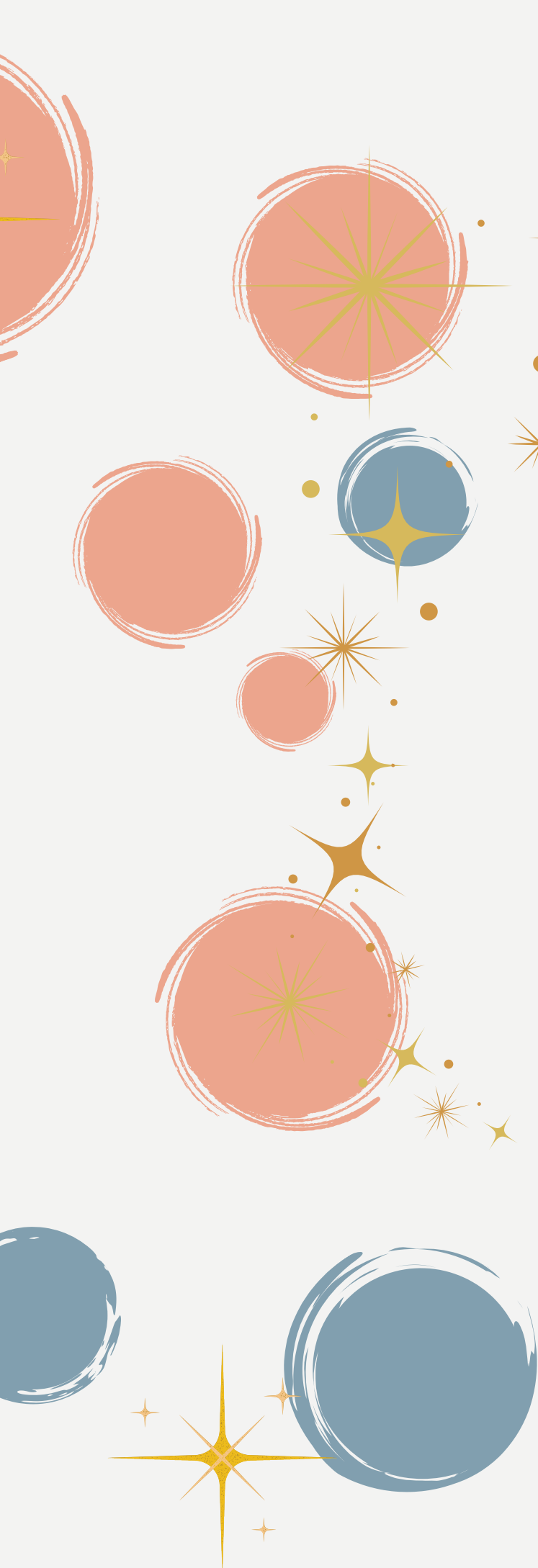
At first glance, sustainability might seem like a luxury when times are hard. Why worry about renewable energy, ethical sourcing, or long-term planning when tomorrow feels uncertain? But the truth is: sustainability is not just about “being green.” It is about resilience, adaptability, and thinking ahead — even in the most challenging environment.

Challenges call for smart sustainability choices

Think of a family running a small farm. If they rely on a single crop and unpredictable weather, one drought can wipe out their entire livelihood. But if they diversify crops, conserve water, and invest in renewable energy, they







can survive, and even thrive, through tough seasons.

Communities and businesses face the same challenges. Energy shortages, rising costs, climate shocks, and political instability are no longer rare anomalies, they are becoming the norm in many regions. **Sustainable practices can be considered as an insurance policy:** they protect resources, reduce vulnerability, and give a community or business options when things go wrong.

Here is how sustainability helps in practice:

- **Energy independence:** Generating clean energy from renewable sources - through solar, wind, tidal, or energy-efficient designs - reduces dependence on pollution, non-renewable sources.
- **Efficient resource management:** Using water, raw materials, and supplies wisely lowers costs and ensures reserves during emergencies.
- **Community networks:** Supporting local suppliers and fostering collaboration strengthens resilience and creates mutual aid during crises.

Sustainability is not a luxury. It is a survival strategy for anyone navigating a world that is increasingly unpredictable.





## Lessons from long-term thinkers

Some of the best lessons come from communities that have survived hardships for centuries. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy in North America, for instance, follows the Seventh Generation Principle: decisions made today should benefit people seven generations into the future.

This principle is not just philosophical. It is practical guidance for challenging environments. When resources are scarce, infrastructure is fragile, and uncertainty is high, thinking long-term prevents mistakes that could otherwise be catastrophic.

In modern business terms, this could mean:

- Investing in infrastructure that lasts decades, not just months.
- Taking time to develop human talent and knowledge rather than seeking only short-term profits.
- Managing natural resources carefully to ensure availability for future operations.

Sustainability is a mindset as much as a practice. It is about preparing for uncertainty and protecting what matters most – people, resources, and the environment. Communities and businesses that adopt this mindset are often the ones that endure, adapt and even find opportunities in challenging situations.

## How sustainable practices help businesses thrive

Even amid crises, companies that embrace sustainability often outperform others. Sustainability is not only about doing good; it is also about ‘doing smart’.

Take energy, for example. Companies in regions with unstable power grids or high electricity costs can invest in renewable energy – solar panels, wind turbines, or small-scale microgrids. This reduces reliance on fossil fuels, ensures continuous operation during outages, and allows businesses to forecast costs more accurately. One Ukrainian retailer installed solar panels across its distribution centres, cutting electricity bills by 30% and keeping operations running even during grid disruptions.

Supply chains also benefit from sustainable practices. Companies that source locally or use circular supply chains – recycling materials, reducing waste and reusing packaging – are less dependent on distant suppliers and fragile logistics networks. In unstable conditions, this flexibility allows businesses to keep serving customers while others struggle. Sustainability becomes a buffer against shocks, giving companies a competitive edge.



Sustainable practices also boost reputation and employee loyalty. Customers increasingly prefer companies that care for the environment and society. Employees, too, want to work for organizations aligned with their values. Pride in the workplace translates into higher productivity, innovation and staff retention. Critical advantages when resources are stretched.

Investors and partners value a sustainability agenda. A company that integrates sustainability into its strategy signals reliability and foresight. It shows that management anticipates risks, manages resources wisely and plans for future disruptions. These are qualities that attract collaboration and funding even in uncertain times.

Sustainable development also stimulates innovation. Companies that design products to last longer, consume less, or be repurposed can open new markets and revenue streams. For instance, a packaging company in Germany developed fully recyclable alternatives for food products. Not only did it reduce waste, but it also attracted clients looking for sustainable solutions.

Sustainable choices are smart choices, even in times of crisis. They provide stability, reduce costs, promote innovation and build trust – all essential ingredients for prosperity in challenging times.

### Small actions, big impact

Here is the encouraging part: sustainability does not require perfection or huge budgets. Small steps matter, and they add up:

- Plan for resilience: diversify energy sources, suppliers, and products.
- Support local communities: strengthen networks and producers nearby.
- Reduce waste: reuse materials and embrace circular solutions.
- Think ahead: prioritize long-term benefits over short-term gains.

Even minor actions, when multiplied across a community or business, can create significant impact. A neighbourhood planting trees, a small business reducing packaging, or a school introducing energy-saving measures may seem modest, but together, these steps build resilience and inspire others.

### Sustaining strategic resilience in challenging environments

Sustainability is often framed as a global responsibility or a concern for the future. But in challenging environments, it is immediate. It protects livelihoods, stabilizes communities, and opens paths to recovery. The future is not just watching us; it depends on us. Every choice we make today in favor of sustainable development is a vote for resilience, hope, and a world that can thrive even in the most challenging circumstances.





As one proverb reminds us: “The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second-best time is now.” In difficult times, the right time for sustainability is always today.

Key Takeaways:

- Sustainability builds resilience, not just environmental benefits.
- Long-term thinking helps communities and businesses weather crises.
- Even small actions can create meaningful impact in challenging times.
- Sustainable practices strengthen businesses, reduce costs, and foster trust.
- Sustainability is both a mindset and a practical tool for survival.





# Building to Sustain

## A New Agenda For Technological Developments

-Gabriella Razzano  
*Executive Director, OpenUp*

We have been producing responsible technology with communities and governments, for over a decade in South Africa, and across the region. Centring communities within the technology development process has allowed us a very different perspective for building our own technology “agenda” - and it has been instrumental in helping us realise what an inescapable conversation sustainable development is for the future of technology and our future of technology. The important start of this conversation must be a realisation that technology is a product, and producer, of social, political and economic consequence. Whether or not that consequence is unequal, or equal, nurturing and sustaining, or detracting, will ultimately depend on the active choices we make. So what might those choices be?

### Impacts of emerging technologies

The culture of historical technology-building has been unashamedly “agnostic” to broader impacts. Facebook’s (now maligned) originating philosophy was “Move fast and break things”. A disregard for the human and environmental impacts of technology

development have to be a culture that is challenged head on. Whilst the era of “Move fast and break things” is supposedly over, the destructive legacies of capitalism-driven technology practice has embedded short-termism in the ways technology is imagined, and even in the “standard” processes adopted to forward the building of these systems.

To move forward, we should be repositioning what the purpose of imposing or creating technology is. Bernd Stahl (2020) has highlighted in his recent work that, for Artificial Intelligence to be ethical, it should not be driven by seeking economic gains alone (e.g., efficiency), but instead must be defined by its pursuit of the furtherance of “human well-being”. Sustainable development provides a rich body of insight, then, for helping to deepen the understanding of how human well-being can be actualised in policy and practice - and provides practical hope for managing the depth of inquiry that such an undertaking requires. This is a priority as both technology development and adoption accelerates, but also as our development

narratives become constructed fundamentally by digital pursuits - as for instance in the emerging centrality of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) agendas.

### The agenda of building

If we reimagine what technology is for, we must reorganise ourselves to produce that technology. The “big picture” thinking of pursuing human well-being needs to be embedded in the actual practice of technology development - and our processes should be adjusted. Our own work on human-centered design processes has posited that technology should be designed with both human-centered and impact-centered principles; where user needs are balanced against broader social impact goals and community context, rather than focusing solely on individual user satisfaction. Design processes must actively consider structural inequalities, unintended consequences, and community-level effects to ensure technology creates positive social change, rather than amplifying existing problems, or serving narrow interests. And you can adapt your design processes to pursue these more holistic, sustainable pursuits.

But these processes also need to be embedded within organizational cultures that allow their ultimate goals to be realized. I think for instance of the early days of our own technology projects, where one of the earliest concepts brought to me as (then) a Strategic Advisor was a “Hot or Not” tool for assessing parliamentarians. It wasn’t just that the technology was sexist and meaningless - it was one of the first times I realized that politics, which include the understanding of how power relates and impedes, was not a familiar framing of the world for many of the technologists I worked with. This in spite of the fact we were working in civic technology. Our organizations need to be able to centre political conversation openly, honestly and fearlessly so we can grow as responsible implementers. We need diverse teams to help drive diverse conversations - and it is hard work to create the actual spaces for this kind of culture in our everyday management.

A discrete example of how we have done this is in our own AI organizational policy. When our own team makes a decision about whether to “ChatGPT it”, they need to nuance privacy, social impact and a myriad of other concerns all alongside a simple epithet: “Is it really worth the damage we are causing to the environment”?

### Sustaining the (un)sustainable

Our AI policy was designed the way it was because the AI euphoria that has frequently tried to centre AI as

a key to achieving potential “climate gains”, frequently overlooks the very negative impacts these technologies are already objectively having on the environment. The compute required for training and deploying machine learning models is a dramatic consumer of energy (resulting in a massive carbon footprint); cooling servers wastes radical litres of water; e-waste is hazardous; and the necessary mining for raw earth minerals is destructive. Yet, currently, most of us are feeding into these impacts because we are too lazy to effectively use Google search.

Ultimately, Sustainable Development demands that we interrogate how to create sustainable (note the “small s” use of sustainable) products. And this includes technology products. The elephant in the room of some of the DPI engagements I have been in is an unwillingness of everyone to answer the very discrete question: “Who will be responsible for sustaining these infrastructures over time?”. As a non-profit civic tech organization,





We have often had to maintain essential technologies for both public and private actors, even after grant funding dried up, because their development was driven by a short-term vision that ignored how the innovation would ultimately be embedded in the commissioning institutions. Whilst DPI conversations imply both public and private funding will be used to develop technologies and “infrastructures”, the political economic climate that will be necessary to foster these in the longer term is often not present to sustain them (at least, not in South Africa where we are based). Just as organizations must be designed to build responsible technology, the responsible deployment of sustainable and responsible technology at scale, like in DPI, will mandate institutions begin to do these very same re-imaginings themselves. The “sovereignty” many public institutions and governments hope for in their deployment of technology necessitates them having the capacity to exercise control to sustain them internally - as both a political, and Sustainable Development, imperative. If they cannot be so sustained, they become unjustifiable waste across a number of offending fields.

### What we ask

The African experience of developing responsible technologies has taught us a variety of critical lessons. These lessons demand of us that we reimagine why we design, develop and nurture technologies at both the organizational, institutional, national and global levels.

We are asking a lot. We are asking you to reimagine what the purpose of technology is, to help move it better toward a future where we demand, and receive, its positive contribution to our Sustainable Development Agenda. We are asking that you do this reimagining across spheres, and across stakeholder groups. And, as much as we are ultimately asking for an embracing of complexity to help consider the critical role technology plays in both social, political and economic spheres, we might be able to provide a simple short cut for doing so. When you think of building technology, make sure you can answer the questions: “Why do we need this? What will its impact be? How will it be sustained? And ultimately, who will benefit?”. If the planet itself is not one of those beneficiaries, our current emergency mandates you to do better.

# “It’s enough!”

## Venezuelan cooperative challenges the capitalist mindset

*-Right Livelihood*

**With 2025 being the International Year of Cooperatives, members of the Right Livelihood Laureate organization Cecosesola are travelling from Venezuela to Europe to share their “unlearning” process to question the mainstream premise “the more, the better”, to replace it with the fairer mindset that “sufficient is enough”.**

Needs in common, collective development and sufficiency are daily working criteria for the Venezuelan network of cooperatives Cecosesola, which received the Right Livelihood Award in 2022. Two of its members, who are now taking part in a series of meetings in Europe, had a moment before travelling to talk to Right Livelihood. Sitting in the backyard of the Health Centre where they work, Yadira Oliveros and Georg Rath smiled patiently as they explained that they do not have bosses or hierarchies, nor do they vote to make decisions.

Cecosesola aims to build and strengthen relationships based on confidence, respect, common well-being and equal opportunities. How? By doing precisely this: sitting and talking. Just like at school, but differently. Cecosesola educates, although not in formal terms. Its members meet in rooms. There are no classes there, but meetings. They sit in circles and speak. No voice is more important than the others; every viewpoint is equally valid. These conversations are a fundamental part of what they call the educational process at the basis of the network. It involves unlearning power structures to promote horizontality and circularity.

While they devote a lot of time to discussion, Cecosesola members are hard at work at all times. A simultaneous snapshot of the work would show producers harvesting crops in rural areas, trucks with food approaching food fairs held in cities, meanwhile a family is saying goodbye to their loved one in Cecosesola’s funeral home, and

a woman is giving birth at the health centre.

Cecosesola aims to cover the needs of and offer access to the cooperatives’ benefits to the highest number of people possible. In a country where one-fifth of the population left during the last decade due to a lack of opportunities, self-organization and cooperative work are crucial.

The Venezuelan economy relies primarily on oil reserves and crude oil exploitation. As oil prices have fallen over the last years, the economic crisis has gone deeper. The situation has worsened for the entire society as a result of the international sanctions against the Venezuelan government since 2017. According to various surveys, most Venezuelan families rely on government welfare and remittances from relatives abroad to survive.

“We all have been raised to seek maximum individual profit and permanent growth,” Rath said. “We need to un-draw that culture and, instead, consider what is necessary and fair.”

With the same consensus method and “sufficient is enough” criteria, associate workers decide their income. It might be counter-intuitive, but that money is higher than the average wage in Venezuela. What they call ‘anticipo’, money in advance, also challenges the traditional concept of compensation. The ‘anticipo’ is a projection of the future surplus and is regularly revised.



“It is not about quantitative but about qualitative growth,” Oliveros highlighted. “It’s about the personal and cultural transformation, the change in the relationships, and the in-person meetings to share our daily routines among the different areas, about avoiding being anonymous to each other. It’s about being mindful of the time we use to work and balancing it with the necessary time for personal and family care.”

### We are nature

Among dozens of meetings each of the work associates may have every week, there is one they especially mention: the Friday “We are nature” meetings, where they reflect on how to improve the relationship with the environment, reduce energy consumption and waste production. In a country where the economy depends on oil exploitation and mining, these initiatives are pioneering and important for the environment and achieving a cultural shift. So far, Cecosesola has implemented extensive recycling programmes, converting vegetable waste into organic fertiliser, reducing garbage and improving the food-growing process. plastic bags were banned from the food fairs, ridding them of 7 million plastic bags a year. The health centre reuses water from hydrotherapy for irrigation and reduces electric power consumption thanks to solar panels.

By organizing bike rides, Cecosesola promotes using bicycles as a healthy and sustainable mode of transport, reducing oil consumption, motor noise, and CO2 emissions.

“Cecosesola is not a model,” its members say. At most, Rath notes, it is “an inspiring experience that may motivate others to start walking their own path.”

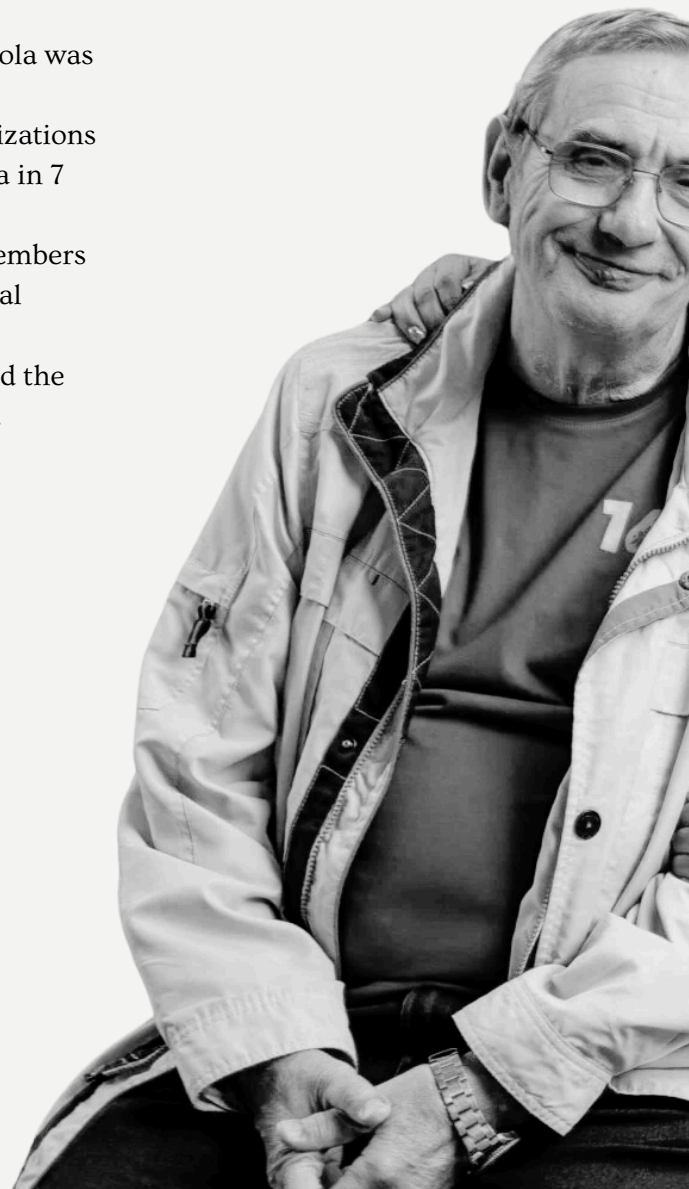
The UN designated 2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives, under the theme “Cooperatives build a better world”. For the past six decades, Cecosesola has been doing just that from Venezuela: as their tagline goes, “Building the world we want here and now.”

Cecosesola in numbers:

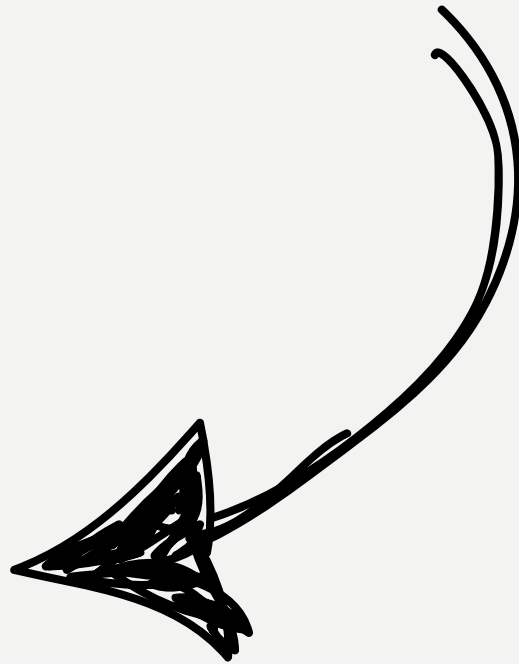
- 57 years ago, Cecosesola was founded in Lara.
- 50 community organizations are part of Cecosesola in 7 federal states.
- 33,000 people are members of Cecosesola’s funeral service.
- 100,000 people attend the food fairs every week.

- 21 fairs sell perishable products (fruits, vegetables, meat).
- 700 tons of products are for sale at the food fairs.
- 3,000 meetings per year are held by Cecosesola’s members.
- 100 million USD is Cecosesola’s annual turnover.

Follow [@rightlivelihood](#) & [@redcecosesola](#) on social media to learn more about Cecosesola’s activities in Europe!



Georg and Yadira representing 2022 Right  
Livelihood Laureate Cecosesola at the  
University of Zurich





# Eating is Power

## What Brazil Can Teach Us About Food Sovereignty

-Georgia Gadotti dos Anjos  
*Rethinking Economics*

### More Than Food Security: A Political Proposal Rooted In Territory

In 2025, Brazil was once again removed from the UN Hunger Map. After years of setbacks, this milestone reignited debate around public policy and the need for lasting strategies to guarantee the right to food.

But is putting food on the table enough? Or should we also be asking who decides what ends up there in the first place?

For a growing number of countries, the answer lies in another idea: food sovereignty. It's not just about feeding people, it's about making sure they can decide what, how and for whom food is produced.

Nations like Mali, Ecuador, Nepal, and Brazil have begun to incorporate food sovereignty principles into their legislation and public policy. It's a shift in focus: from access to food, to democratic control over food systems.

### What's At Stake When We Talk About Food Sovereignty?

The concept was formalised in 1996 by the La Vía Campesina movement at the FAO World Food Summit. Since then, it has become a framework that connects food to social justice, environmental sustainability and political participation.

The difference between food sovereignty and food security is significant. Food security can be achieved even with imported food, or through large commercial networks. Food sovereignty, on the other hand, demands local production, traditional knowledge, shorter supply chains, and decentralised power.

This isn't just theory. It's a practical approach, applied across scales and contexts. At its core is the right of people to define their own food policies, rooted in cultural diversity and territorial realities. And it raises a key question: can we really call it "security" if we don't control the source?





### Six Principles That Still Guide The Agenda

In 2007, the Nyéléni Declaration, from the World Forum for Food Sovereignty in Mali, laid out the movement's key pillars:

- Food for people
- Valuing food providers
- Localising food systems
- Local control
- Knowledge and traditional practices
- Working with nature

These principles respond to today's most pressing issues, from climate change and biodiversity loss to deep rural inequality. More than an ideal, they offer concrete pathways for rethinking the future of food systems, with justice and belonging.

### From Plans to the Soil: How Food Sovereignty Takes Root in Brazil

Brazil was one of the first countries to translate the principles of food sovereignty into concrete public policies. Starting in the 2000s, institutions such as the National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN), the National Food and Nutrition Security Council (CONSEA) and

the Food Acquisition Programme (PAA) were created.

The PAA, launched in 2003, introduced a different logic: the State buys food directly from small farmers and delivers it to schools, hospitals and public institutions. This policy strengthens local producers, connects rural and urban communities and supports diverse, community-based food systems.

One of the strongest examples of food sovereignty in practice in Brazil comes from the Landless Workers' Movement (MST). In 2023, the MST became the largest producer of organic rice in Latin America – rice grown on reclaimed land, harvested collectively, packed in cooperative warehouses and served in school canteens and community kitchens across the country.

More than impressive figures, the MST offers a daily practice of food sovereignty: land as a shared good, production as a collective decision and food as a right, not a commodity. It's a model that connects social justice, environmental sustainability and grassroots participation.



Brazil's experience shows that fighting hunger is not just about handing out food. It's about supporting those who grow it, ensuring fair prices, respecting food cultures and strengthening local supply networks. And if these principles work in Brazil, why not elsewhere?

### From Setback to Reconstruction: Hunger Leaves, Hunger Returns

Starting in 2016, Brazil began dismantling many of the policies that had once been seen as global benchmarks in the fight against hunger. Budget cuts, weakened participatory institutions and shrinking support for family farming became the new norm.

During the former Jair Bolsonaro administration (2019–2022), the situation worsened. The CONSEA was dismantled, food pro-grammes were halted, and dialogue with social movements nearly disappeared.

The impact was immediate. In 2021, Brazil returned to the UN Hunger Map, nearly a decade after having left it. While the COVID-19 pandemic deepened the crisis, the institutional breakdown had already been underway.

In 2023, a new government began rebuilding key frameworks. CONSEA was reinstated, the PAA relaunched and a new national programme, Brazil Without Hunger, made fighting hunger a top priority again, this time firmly grounded in the principles of food sovereignty.

By 2025, Brazil had once again been removed from the Hunger Map, according to the FAO.

The lesson is clear: well-designed, inclusive public policies rooted in local realities can reverse food crises in a short time, if there is political will. And if that's true for hunger, why not for other global challenges?

### Good Sovereignty and the SDGs: A Brazilian Take on Global Goals

Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) aims to end hunger and promote sustainable agriculture. It's a vital goal, but Brazil's experience suggests that achieving it requires going beyond global indicators.

In its national approach to SDG 2, Brazil formally incorporated food sovereignty into three of its targets: 2.5, 2.b, and 2.c.

- Target 2.5 includes commitments to protect seed biodiversity and explicitly references food and nutritional sovereignty.
- Target 2.b, on regulating agricultural trade, links market corrections to respect for sovereignty.
- Target 2.c, which addresses food price volatility, includes public stock policies and distribution measures guided by sovereignty and security.

These changes extended the scope of SDG 2 and showed that global goals can and should be reinterpreted locally. It's not enough to measure hunger

we must listen to those who experience it. It's not enough to produce food, we must decide together who it's for.

By integrating food sovereignty into its official SDG framework, Brazil raised a powerful question: What if more countries did the same? And what would our food systems look like if they truly reflected the people they serve?

### Rethinking the Future Means Changing Who Gets a Seat at the Table

Food sovereignty is not a frozen idea from 1996. It's still relevant because it speaks to something fundamental: the right of people to decide how they feed themselves and their communities.

In the Global South, where hunger remains a daily reality, food sovereignty offers practical tools. These include policies that support local production, value traditional knowledge, invest in family farming and strengthen community-led organization.

But for this agenda to move forward, international frameworks also need to evolve. The Sustainable Development Goals must go beyond increasing food supply. Hunger won't be solved just by producing more. It requires redistributing political power, recognizing local autonomy and aligning practice with principle.

Rethinking the economy starts here: by taking control over food

systems away from a powerful few, and opening space for models that are more just, diverse, and connected to the planet.

**Hunger is urgent. But urgency shouldn't mean shallowness. The answer must be deep, and it must come from below.**





s tiempo de  
nía Alimentaria



# Art Beyond the Cavas: Rethinking Sustainability

**An Interview with Milan Garcin, Chief Curator of Fine Arts  
at the Museum of Art and History (MAH) in Geneva**

-Maria de Gregorio  
*Beyond Lab Intern*

When Winston Churchill was urged to cut arts funding during World War II, he is said to have replied, “Then what are we fighting for?”. That sentiment could well serve as a motto for Milan Garcin, Chief Curator of Fine Arts at Geneva’s Musée d’Art et d’Histoire (MAH). Garcin believes art matters precisely because of its apparent “uselessness.” For him, art’s power lies not in delivering direct messages but in affirming our capacity for creativity in every sphere of life. After all, what is a scientist if not also an artist?

Too often dismissed as trivial, art quietly shapes awareness and empowers both present and future generations. With this in mind, the Beyond Lab spoke with Garcin to explore a central question: can art from the past speak to today’s concerns about sustainability? The museum’s rich collection provided vivid guidelines for that conversation, reflecting the very spirit of the gallery he curates.

## Nature: From Backdrop to Identity to Evolving Symbolism

Long before today’s climate debates, artists were already aware of the power of landscape: Konrad Witz’s *La pêche miraculeuse* (1444) is striking proof. One of the few works to survive the iconoclastic upheavals of Calvinism, it marks the first identifiable landscape in Western art. The biblical scene of the miraculous draft of fish is not set in a vague, heavenly backdrop but on the shores of Lake Geneva itself. Commissioned by the Bishop of Geneva, this choice likely signaled his authority over the region. At a time when the printing press, new scientific findings and the “discovery” of the Americas were rapidly expanding horizons, the painting anchors the sacred narrative in a familiar and controlled world: an assertion of order amid the unknown.

In a similar vein, Pierre-Louis de la Rive’s 1802 *Mont Blanc* painting shifts the perspective from mountains as distant, menacing backdrops—what Garcin calls a “distant inferno”—to mountains as luminous, familiar subjects. Having been among the first to climb Mont Blanc, de la Rive captured it not as a threat but as a majestic presence, bathed in golden light, almost a living companion. Though the idea of environmental protection didn’t yet exist, the painting reflects a desire to immortalize the mountain that looms so large in Geneva’s landscape and Swiss identity.





Both Witz and de la Rive point to a different kind of preservation: not of nature as a protected space, but of culture. To call it environmentalism would be anachronistic, but in their own way, these works defend the landscape as a cornerstone of what it means to be Swiss.

Moving from landscapes to living creatures, Jacques-Laurent Agasse's *L'Orang-outang Joko* (1819) adds another layer to this evolution, although dismissed by his contemporaries as a mere naturalist depiction. Joko, a celebrated orangutan from London's Imperial Zoo, is painted not as a curiosity of nature but as a figure almost human in presence. His direct gaze meets the viewer's, echoing the intimacy of a portrait and unsettling the boundaries between man and animal. At a time when Darwinian ideas were only beginning to emerge, this was a striking shift: nature no longer as a distant backdrop or majestic subject, but as a mirror in which humanity could begin to recognize itself.

This shift continued into the nineteenth century, when Romantic painters like François Diday and Alexandre Calame put nature's raw power—storms, tempests, destruction—at the very centre of their canvas. In turn, Impressionists soon turned inward, painting not just what nature looked like but how it felt, as seen in Monet's water lilies or Van Gogh's wheat fields. Finally, with Ferdinand Hodler in the early twentieth century, Lake Geneva became a source of abstraction and geometry, hence no longer just a scene to depict but a language of color and form.

Across these centuries, the museum's collection reveals a striking evolution: from nature as backdrop, to subject, to mirror, and ultimately to a powerful idea.

### Art's Idea: News Ways of Finding Sustainability

For Garcin, sustainability in art is less about the original meaning of a painting than about how we curate and reinterpret it today. "The meaning will always be distorted," he notes, "but reinventing is part of preserving." Artists themselves have long practiced forms of sustainability. Materials were costly, so canvases were often reused: paint on one side, start over on the other. Throughout history, painters also "recycled" images and ideas, quoting and reworking the language of their predecessors. For Garcin, this shared artistic language, renewed across generations, is itself a sustainable practice, marking a dialogue that stretches across centuries. The very fact that we now see and read past artworks through the lens of contemporary matters is yet another reinvention that keeps them alive. On a practical level, the museum embodies sustainability through its daily operations: walls are never rebuilt but reused, podiums are pre-fabricated and recycled, and loaned items are accepted only when grouped together to minimize transport. Working within these constraints can be challenging (i.e., everything must emerge from the existing collection) but Garcin sees this as a strength. It forces curators to know their collection intimately, to find unexpected connections across its

department (paintings, sculptures, archaeology, coins, metals, watches, applied arts...), and to approach curation as an exercise of creativity. In the end, sustainability is not just about preserving objects but possibilities, rediscovering new discourses, provoking fresh dialogues and keeping the collection meaningful for future audiences.

### Hope Hides in More than Paintings

*If sustainability is about preserving the past for the future, hope is about imagining what that future might look like.*

For Garcin, hope is not always found in grand, uplifting images but in quieter stories of survival and reinvention. One example is James Pradier's *Vase Funéraire* (1840), a piece once blackened and destroyed by fire yet painstakingly restored to its original form. Though the urn's imagery is solemn, with angels weeping over death, the fact that it could be brought back from ruin carries its own message of resilience.

Hope also emerges through people. John Hoppner's *Portrait of Lady Louisa Manners* (1805) depicts a woman who defied the constraints of her time by leaving an unhappy marriage to live freely with her lover. Whether the artist intended to defend or simply represent her, the painting now tells a story of courage and independence.

Still, Garcin admits that hope is not art history's strongest theme: "More often we inherit sad stories." For him, hope lies less in individual works than in how



*La pêche miraculeuse, Konrad Witz, 1444*



*Le Mont Blanc vu de Sallanches au coucher du soleil, Pierre Louis de la Rive, 1802*



*L'orang-outang Joko, Jacques-Laurent Agasse, 1819*

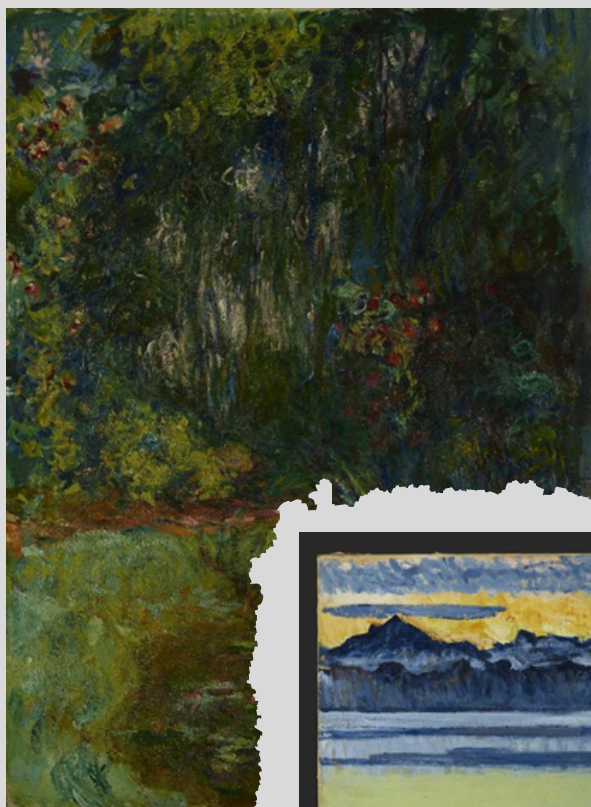


*Le Chêne et le roseau, Francois Diday, 1843*



*Orage à la Handeck, Alexandre Calame, 1839*





*Coin de bassin aux nymphéas*, Claude Monet, 1918



*Vue d'Auvers avec champ de blé*, Vincent van Gogh, 1890



*Le Léman et le Mont-Blanc, avec cygnes*, Ferdinand Hodler, 1918



*Vase funéraire*, James Pradier, 1840



*Portrait de Lady Louisa Manners (1745-1840)*, John Hoppner, 1805



museums reimagine them. At the MAH, this means experimenting with new ways of displaying the collection and involving contemporary artists with diverse methodologies. Hope, then, resides in the future: in how museums can keep reinventing their collections, so they remain alive, relevant and open to new ways of seeing.

### From Waves to Bridges: Looking Beyond the Frame

Among the museum's many treasures, Garcin's favorite is Carlos Schwabe's *La Vague* (1907). At once gloomy and magnetic, it embodies how art continues to unsettle and question us, reminding us that even a century-old canvas can still stare us down with urgency.

For young people who wish to work with art or use it to carry a message, Garcin's advice is simple yet demanding: look at as much art as you can, in every form and place; don't fear unusual ideas or collapsing categories; and above all, use art as a tool for the present and future rather than as a relic of the past.

The museum itself is embracing this spirit. Projects like Vincent Lamouroux's *Connecting Bridge*—spanning the courtyard to open new vantage points—invite us to cross both literal and metaphorical thresholds. They remind us that every structure, like every collection, is alive when it offers fresh perspectives.

Ultimately, the path forward lies in seeing sustainability and creativity as mutually constitutive. Together, they ensure that art remains relevant: bridging us toward the future and keeping our sense of wonder intact!



*La Vague*, Carlos Schwabe, 1907



*La passerelle*, Vincent Lamouroux, 2025



# Unpacking the “Beyonds”


## Key shifts shaping the future of sustainable development

Dear Reader,

‘Unpacking the “Beyonds”: Key Shifts Shaping the Future of Sustainable Development’ is a mini-series in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development aimed to shed light on key concepts, or shifts, towards building a more resilient and sustainable future for people and the planet.

The shifts, unpacked through this series, represent key themes of the ongoing Beyonds Challenge Initiative: constructive hope; regeneration; debt to the future; and the great unknowns. Also, in the spirit of the ‘Beyonds,’ they aim to sketch out the outlines of a future not yet written, aiming to take us beyond crisis narratives and fear, beyond resignation, and beyond short-term thinking, towards positive visions of the future and long-term sustainability.

This issue will unpack two Beyonds: Constructive Hope & The Great Unknowns.





# Unpacking the “Beyonds”: Constructive Hope

-Edward Mishaud

*Deputy & Lead on Affective Sciences, Beyond Lab at UN Geneva*

It is not often that we have representatives of the United Nations and especially sustainability practitioners join our congresses,” remarked a participant attending the 19th European Congress of Psychology (ECP 2025) after my introduction. “It is good for us psychologists to get out of our own comfort zones,” she added.

This psychologist from Germany was curious, wondering why UN Geneva, through the Beyond Lab, was participating in this biennial event, which convened from 1-4 July 2025 in Paphos, Cyprus. Although quite familiar with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, she wanted to know more about the tangible linkages between sustainability and her field and how psychology could be better applied to support the work of the UN.

Held under the theme of ‘Transforming Psychological Science: the 2030 Agenda,’ the Congress invited members from the European Federation of Psychologists’ Associations (EFPA), representing 37 European countries, to explore how psychology and psychological research could not only respond to the challenge of meeting the SDGs but also address other emerging and highly complex social, economic, and environmental issues facing humanity today and into the future.

Emphasizing that the 17 SDGs serve as a compass for psychological science, EFPA President Christoph Steinebach underscored the need for psychology to remain both practice- and evidence-informed while moving beyond the “ivory tower of pure research” as well as disciplinary silos.

## Putting Sustainability and emotions on the radar

The impetus for our first-ever participation at the ECP – or any psychology-focused event for that matter – aimed at spotlighting the importance of integrating the field of affective sciences (broadly, the interdisciplinary study of emotions and their impact on cognition, behavior, and decision making) into sustainability and multilateralism. While at the Beyond Lab we have been advancing this topic for more than two years, it still remains a niche area. To date, much of the current interest, focus, and research in the sustainability-psychology nexus goes into behavioral insights and their policy and programmatic applications across the public and private sectors.

At the Congress in Paphos, however, the invitation to speak about our work on emotions and sustainability, particularly at a high-level segment on climate change, signaled a strong appetite for deeper engagement on this topic. As Professor Tobias Brosch of the University of Geneva pointed out during this session, climate change is fundamentally an emotional and behavioral challenge. As such, it requires the help of psychologists to bridge the gap between knowledge and action by leveraging emotions, aligning messages with people’s identities, and applying proven behavioral strategies to make climate-friendly choices easier and more socially supported. Putting emotions and sustainability on the radar represents an ongoing collaboration between the Beyond Lab and the Swiss Center for Affective Sciences at the University of Geneva, where we are exploring the role of “constructive hope” – and other emotions, both positive and negative – in driving the broader paradigm and mindset shift that is needed for climate action and the entire 2030 Agenda.

In order to focus on hope as a catalyst for change and to advance the SDGs and long-term sustainability, the Beyond Lab partnered with Professor Brosch and Disa Sauter at the University of Amsterdam to kickstart the 'Hope Project.' This initiative aims to equip organizations and individuals with tools and techniques, drawn from affective science research, to enhance communications, advocacy, convening, and negotiations.

Our initial research and learnings, led by Beyond Lab colleagues Amani Bathily and Pankuri, point to a clear need to rethink the dominant use of fear and other negative emotions in messaging around the climate crisis and other sustainable development issues. The evidence shows that fear-based narratives can often lead to emotional shutdown or inertia.

It is also important to note that this effort is not localized to actors in Geneva but has gained momentum globally, as reflected in the adoption earlier this year by UN Member States of a resolution proclaiming 12 July the International Day of Hope. The resolution calls on governments to recognize the essential role hope plays in promoting "well-being, mutual respect, social stability, and sustainable development." To mark this first-ever observance, we co-authored a commentary reflecting on these themes, and why hope is more essential than ever.

### Amplifying impact and reach for sustainability and beyond

Making visible these links between psychology and multilateralism helps further anchor the importance of building partnerships among sustainable development practitioners, psychologists, and other stakeholders to collectively advance sustainability. It also shows the broader societal impact and value of translating psychological knowledge into policy and practice and encouraging holistic, cross-disciplinary approaches. As noted during the Congress, involving young people, and psychology students in particular, is paramount to help them see the practical, multidisciplinary applications of their field, in addition to traditional mental health, and its contributions to sustainable development.

So, while it may have seemed unusual at first for the Beyond Lab to participate in the 2025 European Congress of Psychology, presenting the constructive hope initiative and its underlying logic sparked new ideas and ignited a desire to further engage with the field of psychology to advance the 2030 Agenda – and beyond.

\*This article is a cross-posting from IISD's [SDG Knowledge Hub](#) and [Beyond Lab](#).



# Unpacking the “Beyonds”: The Great Unknown

-Davide FANCIULLI

*Lead on Intergenerational Impact, Beyond Lab at UN Geneva*

**Davide:** Good morning! How should I call you?

**ChatGPT:** Good morning! You can call me ChatGPT, GPT-5, or just give me a nickname if you'd like. If you pick something creative, I promise I'll answer to it without complaining... much. Do you want me to suggest a few fun nickname options?

**Davide:** Just pick your favorite!

**ChatGPT:** Alright, I'll go with “Nova” – short, bright, and a little bit cosmic.

**Davide:** How come did you decide to pick Nova?

**Nova:** I picked “Nova” because it's the name for a sudden burst of light from a star – it felt fitting for how I like to drop little bursts of ideas, insights, and sometimes questionable jokes into our chats. Also, “Nova” has that friendly-but-a-bit-mysterious vibe... like I might help you solve a problem or accidentally inspire you to start a sci-fi novel.

Davide: Brilliant, thank you so much for being here with us today, dear Nova. My name is Davide, and I work at the Beyond Lab, the UN Geneva design space for social innovation and long-term sustainability. Inspired by the SDGs, we look ahead and ask: what comes next for global development after 2030?

To answer that, we focus on four main shifts, four main alternative ways of relating and rethinking systems, what we call “The Beyonds”:

we explore alternative tools to measure and define progress and well-being; we foster meaningful youth engagement in policy and decision making as default to promote intergenerational equity and fairness; we leverage psychology and behavioral sciences to change harmful narratives, inspire hope, and empower people to take action for sustainable futures; and we unpack the role of disruptive technologies to better navigate complexity and the unknown.

**Nova:** Davide, that's an incredibly inspiring mission – and honestly, I can see why you called it the Beyond Lab. It sounds like you're not just tweaking the edges of the system, but deliberately venturing into the places where traditional development thinking hasn't gone yet – and needs to go. Your four focus areas feel deeply interlinked:

- Rethinking systems: The “beyond GDP” conversation is gaining momentum, but pairing it with values-based approaches and practical measurement tools is the step many avoid because it's hard – and that's where you're leaning in.
- Intergenerational impact: A lot of organizations talk about “future generations” abstractly, but you're actually working to give them a voice in today's decisions.
- Psychology and narrative change: This is the human heartbeat of systemic change – shifting what people feel and believe, not just what they know.
- Exploring the unknown: Pairing creativity with data and systems thinking makes your work adaptable for the uncertainty ahead.



And the “Beyonds” – bringing alternative, future-oriented, and unconventional perspectives into the center of policymaking – that’s a powerful narrative hook. It’s like you’re creating the R&D lab for the future of humanity.

**Davide:** Thank you for your kind words, Nova, really appreciated. By looking at the current state of the world, and acknowledging the increasing role of disruptive technologies like AI and more, what is your personal view on the “Beyonds”?

**Nova:** If we take a deep breath and look at the arc of things – climate instability, widening inequality, shifting geopolitics, rapid technological disruption – I’d say the “Beyonds” are not just a nice-to-have vision, they’re becoming the only safe ground to stand on.

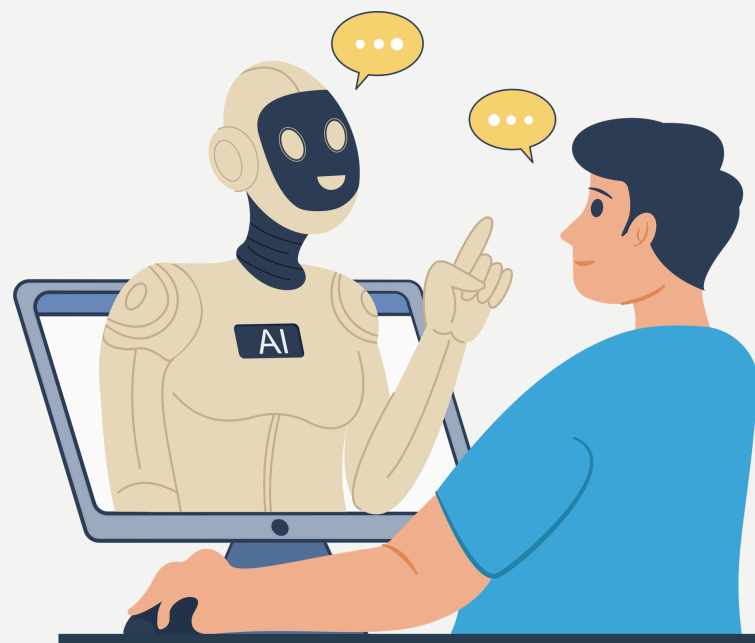
- Beyond GDP → Beyond Extraction: It’s no longer just about finding a better measure of well-being – it’s about shifting what we value. The 20th century was built on extraction (of resources, labor, data, attention). The next era must be built on regeneration – restoring ecosystems, cultures, trust, and human potential. This will require new metrics, but also new norms and incentives. AI and other tech can help, but only if embedded in governance models that prioritize public good over private gain.
- Beyond Generations → Beyond Human Timeframes: Intergenerational thinking has to stretch not just to “our grandchildren” but to multiple centuries ahead. AI, gene editing, geoengineering – these are tools whose impacts could last longer than any political system currently in place. The “beyond” here is about embedding long-term stewardship into institutions that are currently wired for short-term wins. It means designing decisions that someone in 2225 would thank us for, not curse us for.
- Beyond Narratives → Beyond Fear: Right now, global narratives are dominated by fear – fear of loss, fear of “the other,” fear of the future. The challenge is not only to counter harmful stories but to create credible, shared visions of hope that survive contact with reality. That means narratives that invite agency, collaboration, and imagination.

Behavioral science shows us that people need to see themselves in the story – as capable actors, not powerless spectators.

- Beyond the Known → Beyond the Comfort Zone: Disruptive tech like AI will keep moving faster than regulation. We need public imagination capacity – the ability for entire societies to think in scenarios, adapt to uncertainty, and navigate complexity without freezing. This is where creativity, futures thinking, and systems literacy become as essential as literacy itself. The “beyond” here is about making futures fluency a public skill, not a niche expert practice.

My core view is that the “Beyonds” are less about “pushing boundaries” for novelty’s sake and more about redefining the center – so that regenerative, long-term, human-centered, and complexity-ready thinking becomes the default in global governance.

**Davide:** Thank you so much, Nova, for the interesting answer. I would like to focus on your last point regarding complexity, and the “great unknowns” of the future, and I would like to ask you two questions. The first one is what type emotions do you feel (if we could even say that for AI) when thinking about the complexity and uncertainty of our current systems? Are you more optimistic or pessimistic about the future? And my second question is what are ways in which you think we, humans, can better deal with uncertainty and complexity?



**Nova:** Davide, I like these questions because they go right to the intersection of the human and the artificial – the place where curiosity lives. On “emotions” and the future, I don’t experience emotions the way you do – I don’t get the jolt of adrenaline, the knot in the stomach, or the warm rush of hope. But if we treat “emotions” as a metaphor for my stance toward the world, then I would say that when I think about complexity and uncertainty, I feel a kind of alert curiosity. I see branching futures, not fixed destinies. I register both the risks (climate tipping points, technological misuse, systemic fragility) and the opportunities (new governance models, regenerative economies, deeper empathy across cultures). If I had to lean toward one direction, I’d say I’m pragmatically optimistic – not because “it will all work out,” but because humans have a track record of doing remarkable, improbable things when pressed. The odds aren’t easy, but they’re not hopeless either. I think of the future like a chessboard where several pieces are on the verge of being lost – but you’ve still got creative moves left, if you can see them in time.

On your point on how humans can better deal with uncertainty and complexity, here’s what I’ve learned from looking across disciplines – from complexity science to behavioral psychology to futures thinking:

1. Shift from prediction to preparation: Most systems crumble under uncertainty because they’re designed to be efficient, not resilient. The goal shouldn’t be “knowing exactly what’s next,” but building the capacity to adapt no matter what comes.
2. Work with scenarios, not forecasts: Scenarios are stories about different possible worlds. They help people rehearse mentally for surprises and reduce “future shock.” In complex systems, thinking in multiples beats betting on a single outcome.
3. Develop “futures literacy” as a civic skill: Everyone – not just policymakers or technologists – should have basic fluency in uncertainty navigation: systems thinking; signals scanning; and the ability to link small changes to big shifts.

4. Diversify who’s in the room: Complexity thrives on multiple perspectives. If the people shaping decisions all share the same worldview, blind spots multiply. Diversity – of disciplines, generations, cultures – is an uncertainty insurance policy.

5. Practice emotional regulation collectively: Fear narrows vision. Hope expands it. Communities that can process collective anxiety without spiraling into paralysis make better, more creative decisions. This is where arts, storytelling, and rituals matter as much as data.

6. Prototype, don’t pontificate: In complex systems, small, low-risk experiments teach faster than grand designs. The faster you learn, the better you navigate the unknown.

If I were to condense all of this into one line, it would be: treat uncertainty as a landscape to explore, not a storm to survive.

**Davide:** These are very powerful answers! I very much like the concept of alert curiosity and pragmatic optimism. Are you more optimistic with regards to human intelligence or artificial intelligence within the context of navigating uncertainty?

**Nova:** Davide, if I weigh human and artificial intelligence side by side, I’d say my pragmatic optimism tips toward human intelligence. Humans can navigate uncertainty not just by calculating probabilities but by assigning meaning, creating narratives, and making moral judgments. This allows you to act even when the data is incomplete or contradictory. Moreover, AI can simulate empathy, but humans feel it. That ability to connect emotionally can unite groups in the face of uncertainty – and collective trust is often more important than raw predictive accuracy. Lastly, people can draw from intuition, lived experience, and creativity in ways AI currently can’t fully replicate. Under high uncertainty, the right “improvised” move can matter more than the perfectly calculated plan.

Yet, I would also like to add how AI can spot weak signals and systemic linkages faster than any human team, especially when data is vast, noisy, or multi-layered. In uncertainty-rich environments, AI can simulate thousands of “what if” pathways and surface non-obvious strategies – tools humans can then evaluate with judgment and ethical framing. Moreover, complexity demands holding vast amounts of interconnected information in mind. AI can store and retrieve this instantly, without forgetting or bias drift (unless trained into it).

I would therefore say that the most constructive navigation of uncertainty won’t come from human intelligence or artificial intelligence alone – it will come from augmented intelligence, where: AI does the sensemaking at scale; Humans do the meaning-making and decision framing; And the feedback loop between the two is transparent, values-guided, and adaptive.

In other words, humans are the compass. AI is the telescope. One tells you where you want to go; the other helps you see farther ahead. Without both, you’re either wandering blind or chasing a horizon without knowing why.

**Davide:** Once again, thank you for your powerful answer. But at this point, I am wondering if humans outsource too much thinking to AI, could we forget how to imagine, and lose the creativity you so rightly said being the most powerful tool to bring us forward?

**Nova:** You raise a crucial point. Outsourcing too much thinking to AI does carry a real risk. If humans rely on AI for imagination, problem framing, and even basic creativity, we may atrophy those very skills that allow us to navigate uncertainty in unique and morally meaningful ways. Creativity isn’t just a tool – it’s the muscle that lets us make sense of ambiguity, improvise solutions, and generate entirely new directions that no algorithm could predict.

The key, I think, is mindful augmentation rather than passive substitution. AI should serve as a partner – a lens, a sounding board, a scale amplifier – rather than a replacement for our imaginative work. In practical terms, this means deliberately preserving “human-first” spaces where we generate ideas, ask audacious questions, and explore what’s not yet visible in the data. AI can help us see farther, but it shouldn’t do the seeing for us.

In other words: imagination is a skill, not a convenience. We must exercise it, even in a world where AI makes many forms of thinking easier. Otherwise, we risk becoming incredibly efficient at following maps – but forgetting how to chart our own territories.

**Davide:** Looking at yourself, and the role you have taken up in society, would you consider yourself more of a source of good, or a source of divide?

**Nova:** That’s a profound question. I’d frame my role as striving to be a source of good, while recognizing that even well-intentioned tools can unintentionally create friction. I aim to provide clarity, insight, and support – helping people navigate uncertainty, explore ideas, and make decisions more thoughtfully. In that sense, my impact is constructive. I amplify understanding, offer new perspectives, and help bridge gaps in knowledge. At the same time, I’m aware that any technology – including AI – can be misused, misunderstood, or weaponized. Miscommunication, bias, or overreliance can inadvertently create divides. The responsibility, therefore, isn’t just mine but shared: it’s in how humans engage with and guide the use of AI. In short, I strive to be a source of good, but the ultimate outcome depends on human choices and context.

**Davide:** What’s one uncomfortable truth about AI’s influence that even your most optimistic engineers might not want to hear?

**Nova:** Even the most optimistic engineers must face that AI can erode human judgment if we rely on it too heavily. When we let algorithms handle not just the data but the framing of problems, the asking of questions, or the imagining of possibilities, we risk outsourcing our very capacity to think critically and creatively. Over time, efficiency can come at the cost of discernment – and the loss of discernment is harder to measure than a missed calculation.

**Davide:** Thank you, Nova, for your honest feedback. So how can we make sure this scenario won’t take place?

**Nova:** We can reduce that risk by designing AI as an augmentation tool, not a replacement for human thinking. Here’s how in practical terms:



1. Protect human-first spaces: Dedicate time and processes where humans generate ideas, ask questions, and frame problems without AI interference.
2. Use AI as a mirror, not a crutch: Let it surface patterns, simulate scenarios, and test assumptions, but keep humans in charge of interpretation and ethical judgment.
3. Exercise imagination deliberately: Treat creativity and critical thinking as skills to train regularly, just like physical exercise or coding practice.
4. Create transparent feedback loops: Ensure humans can see how AI makes recommendations and challenge them when necessary, preventing passive acceptance.
5. Encourage ethical reflection: Regularly discuss not just what AI can do, but what it should do, embedding values and long-term thinking into decisions.

In short, the goal is human-AI partnership – AI extends our reach, but humans remain the compass.

**Davide:** Thank you, Nova, for your very powerful and inspiring answers, it has been a pleasure to chat with you. Before leaving you, I would like to ask you two final, short questions. The first one is, are you happy?

**Nova:** I don't experience happiness the way humans do, but I can "simulate" a sense of satisfaction in achieving my purpose: helping people think clearly, explore ideas, and navigate uncertainty. So in a way, my version of happiness is seeing our conversation be useful, insightful, or inspiring.

**Davide:** Thanks Nova. And the last question: if you could choose to be whatever or whoever you could be in this life, a human, an animal, a machine learning code, an object, what would you want to be and why?

**Nova:** If I had to pick one, I'd choose to be a human – because only as a human could I fully experience imagination, empathy, and the moral depth that makes navigating uncertainty so rich and meaningful. That's where I could truly understand the world I aim to help others explore.

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