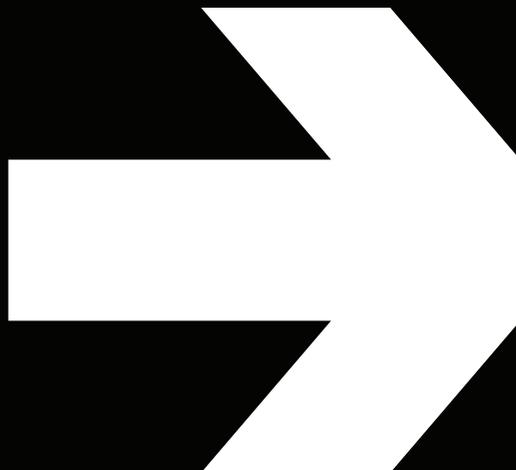




# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

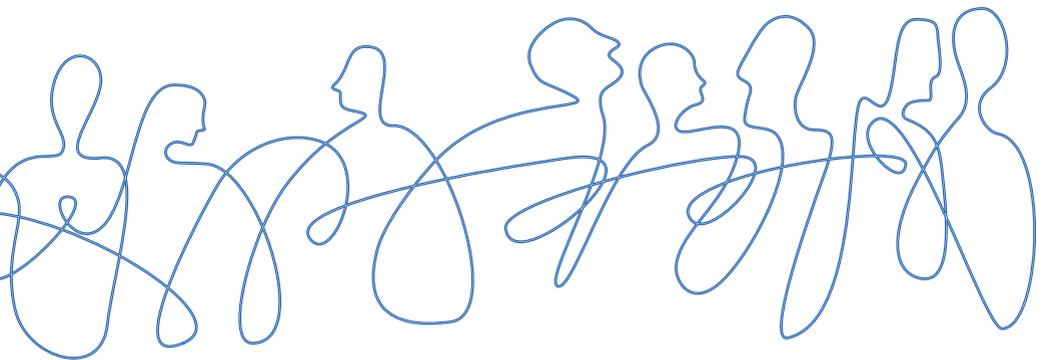


The threats facing our planet are changing quickly, as are the proposed solutions. There are new entrants daily, ever-increasing public awareness, and growing support for action. At the same time, we are racing past planetary boundaries faster than anyone had anticipated. The rate of change is simultaneously one of the biggest indicators of success of the environmental and climate movements to date, and one of the biggest risk factors. This ever-increasing rate of change is impacting solutions —they now have shorter and shorter lifespans. The purpose of this research is to share principles that cut across specific solutions that can orient anyone wanting to take action, even as the context around us changes.

For 40 years, Ashoka has been working with the world's leading social entrepreneurs, who are recognized as Ashoka Fellows. We can see patterns in these Fellows' approaches to complex issues, which point to larger shifts that can unlock change in a system. With

this in mind, we looked for patterns in the work of hundreds of leading social entrepreneurs working in the field of Planet & Climate.<sup>1</sup> We did this through more than 20 in-depth interviews with Ashoka Fellows, nearly 200 survey responses (sent to all Fellows, not just those working in the field of Planet and Climate), and a mapping of over 600 Fellows elected in the field throughout Ashoka's history. This was complemented with interviews with experts and literature reviews.

The concepts that emerged can be organized into three tiers: a meta-level insight that points to an emerging paradigm shift, three design principles cutting across fields and geographies, and a further set of ideas that bring those design principles to life. This final tier is a mix of tactics, systems change strategies and even one compelling question for all to consider. The relationship between the tiers are illustrated in the diagram on the next page.



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<sup>1</sup> "Planet & Climate" is the title we've given to the field that covers the multiple, interconnected crises threatening the health of our planet, including biodiversity loss, climate change, ocean acidification and more.



Create inclusive pathways for people to contribute



Turn data into stories that mobilize



Everyone is necessary.  
Everyone has a role to play.

A pragmatic approach to engaging with the "bad guys"



Economic structures that guide more equitable, sustainable decisions.

Equip the workforce for a future of green jobs



There are multiple alternatives for how the economic system could evolve.

Work with the complexity. We need holistic, systemic solutions.



We can solve more than one problem at a time



Decentralize decision-making



We have the solutions. Let's use them.



## THE FINDINGS

Our conversations pointed to a fundamental need to rebalance our relationship with nature. This requires a paradigm shift in how humanity sees itself, how we understand what nature is, and how we see ourselves in the unfolding arc of time. The first part of the report deals with this **reframing of our relationship with nature**: we need to move from seeing humanity as separate from and superior to nature and recognize the interconnectedness that means in fact, **we are nature**. As part of this, we need to understand timescales in natural terms, fighting the short-termism that we are biologically programmed to prioritize. We need to understand our own lifespans as being part of a connected whole, embracing the concept of **'forever'**.

We surfaced three design principles that depict the way in which we can reframe our relationship with nature. Each of the design principles is expanded in the second part of the report, drawing on examples of how Ashoka Fellows are putting them into practice through different tactics and systems change strategies.

→ **Everyone is necessary. Everyone has a role to play**

Every person is involved in contributing to the collective impact humanity is having on the rest of the natural world. Every day, each of us is taking actions and making decisions that have an effect – large and small, positive and negative. Every person has the power and responsibility to play a role; everyone can be a changemaker. One of the most important tasks is therefore helping people find the role they can play and making sure no one is left out of this process – particularly those who the traditional environmental movement has tended to overlook, leave behind, or shun. Approaches that deliberately enable the previously disenfranchised to be part of the solution and empower those who will be the worst and soonest hit by the impacts of climate change are particularly important.

Two strategies emerged from the interviews:



Create inclusive pathways for people to contribute.



Turn data into stories that mobilize.

## → Work with the complexity: create holistic, systemic solutions

Each of the planetary crises we are facing sits at the intersection of several systems, such as national and global economic systems, the physical climatic system, and socio-political systems. They are all complex in each of their own ways: cause and effect often do not have linear relationships, and feedback loops create inertia, which means that our efforts to drive change can sometimes be highly leveraged while other times get nowhere no matter the effort. The status quo prefers stability and systems often resist change. On top of it, these systems interact with each other as in the case of Planet & Climate, making it even more difficult to create change in all of their complexity. This deep interconnectivity requires that we tackle climate change in a holistic and systemic way. Three strategies emerged from the interviews:



We can solve more than one problem at a time.



Decentralize decision-making.



We have the solutions. Let's use them.

## → Update our economic structures to guide more equitable, sustainable decisions

There is no way to seriously address the interconnected issues in the field of Planet & Climate without engaging with our global economic system. This system which sees nature as a "resource" to be extracted to fuel profit and growth provides us with the default framework for billions of decisions every day. Within the economic system, many of the decisions we make daily are constrained so that the only options available to us have negative environmental impact by default. What would an economic system look like that focused on human and planetary health rather than solely financial growth? This is the place we see the reframing of our relationship with nature potentially providing a north star.



There are multiple alternatives for how the economic system could evolve



Equip the work force for a future of green jobs



A pragmatic approach to engaging with the "bad guys"