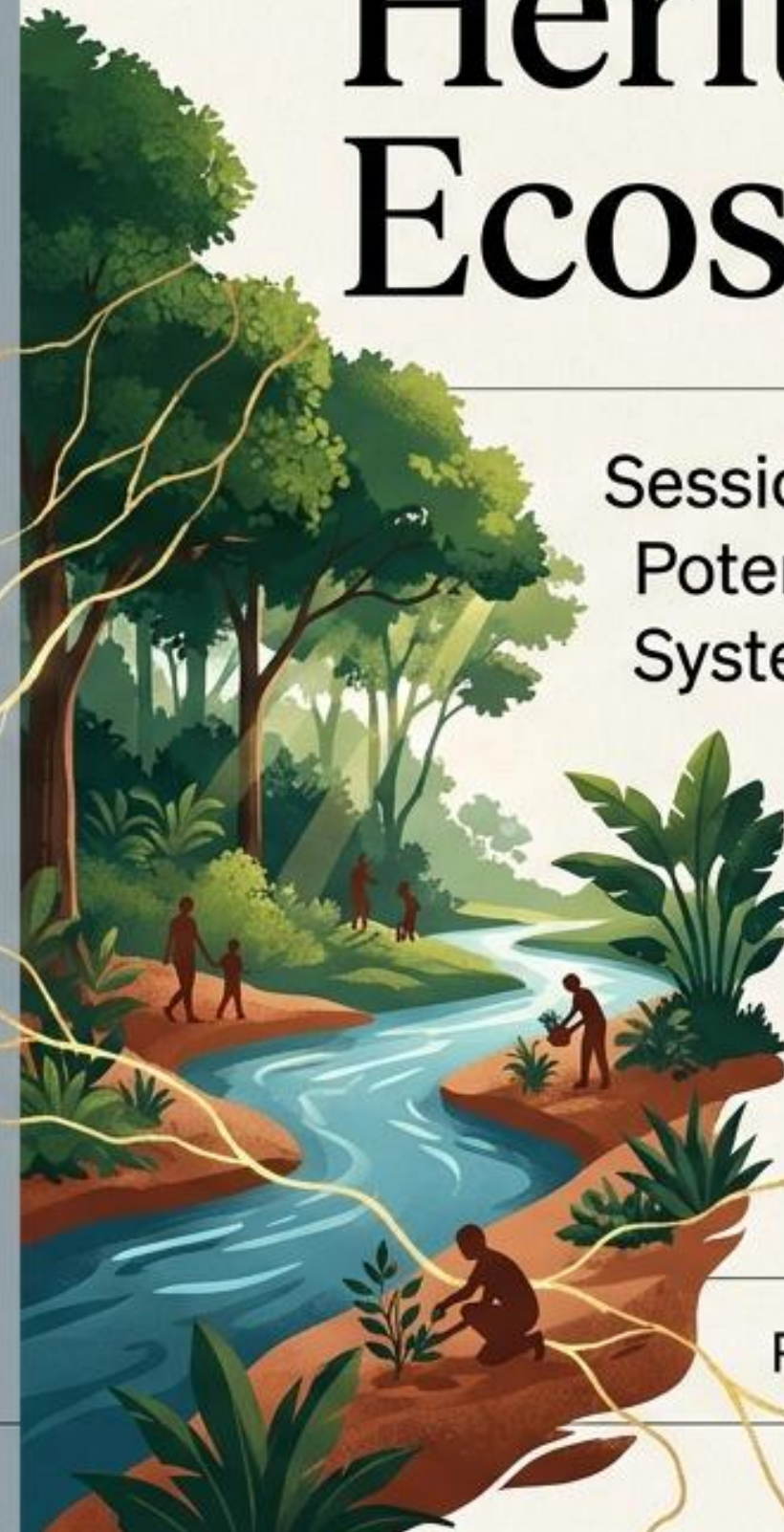
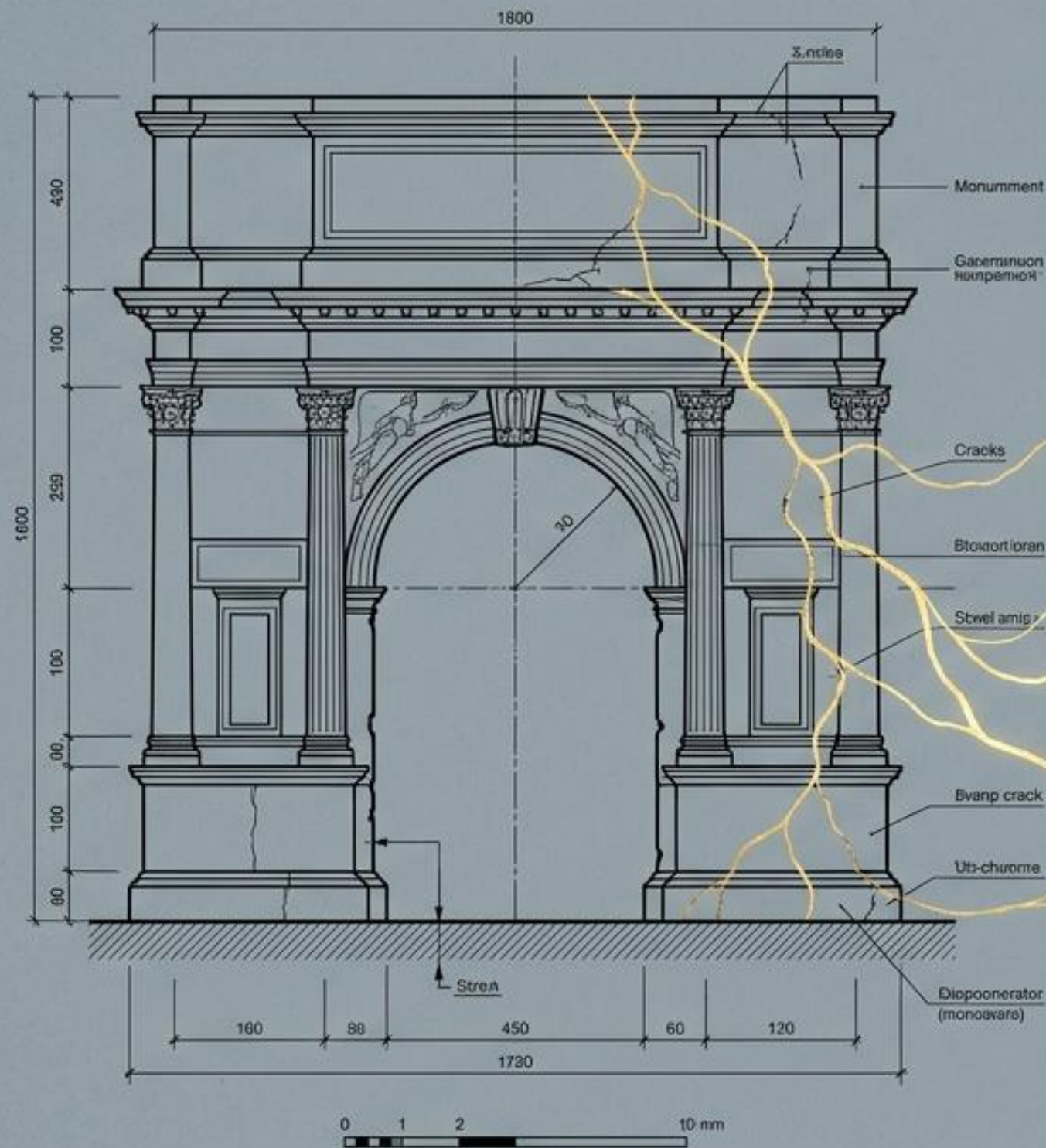


Heritage Ecosystems

Session 9: Possibilities and Potentials for an Inclusive Systems Approach

PAOLO MOTTA | APRIL 2026



When we isolate the structure, we lose the life.

The Achievement

Over six decades, heritage studies have advanced through intense specialization. We have successfully utilized updated technologies and saved information to rebuild and restore physical structures with remarkable success.



The Limitation

However, this compartmentalization has created artificial boundaries. We have isolated the monument from its context, treating heritage as a static asset rather than a living participant in a broader environment.

While tangible patrimony can often be rebuilt, the dangers regarding intangible and natural elements are far more severe. Once disconnected from their physical anchors, their loss is mostly definitive.

Expanding the Frame: The Gunma Declaration

Adopted January 11, 2025, in Takasaki, Japan
(Tomioka Silk Mill 10th Anniversary Symposium)

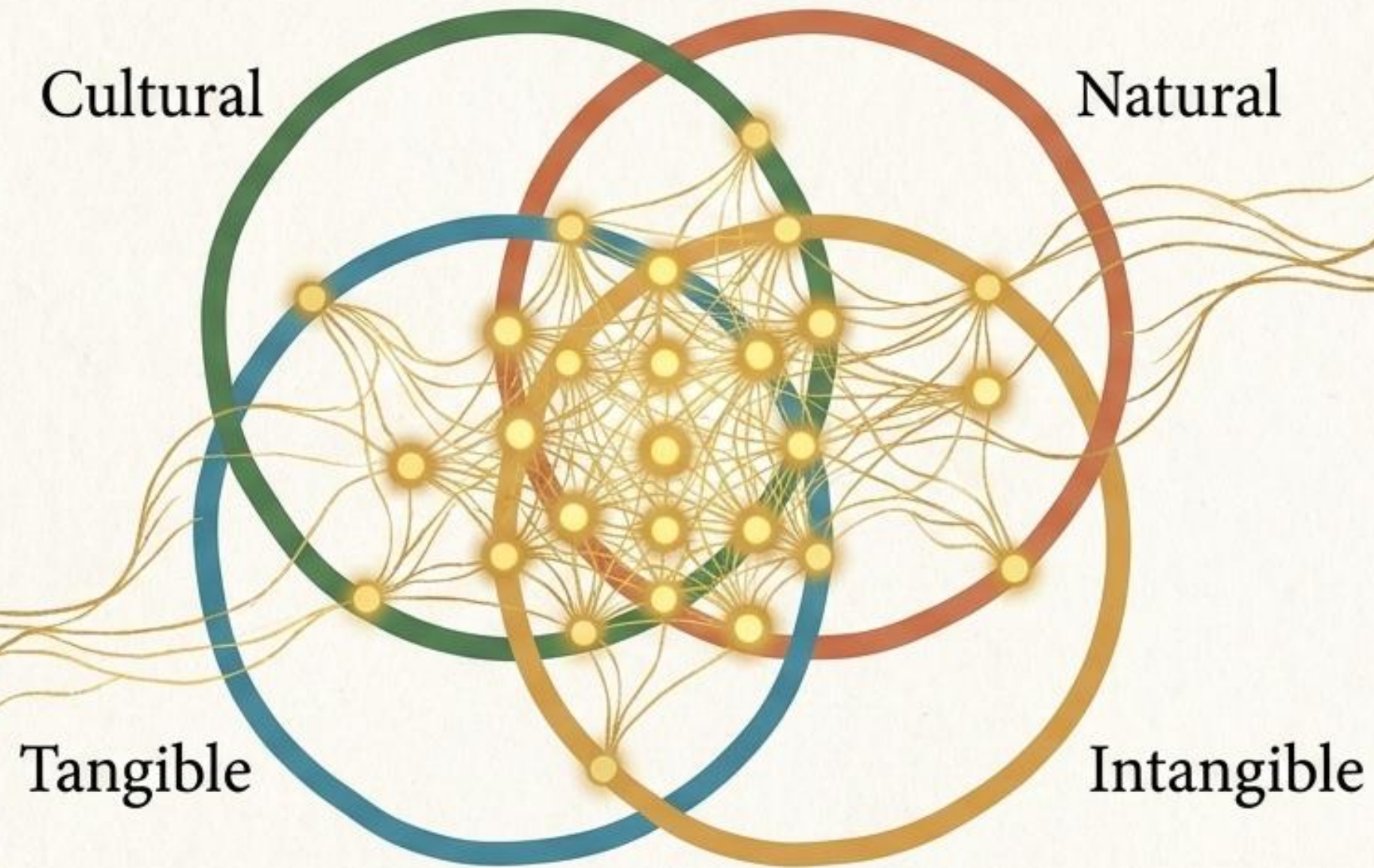
“Heritage is a dynamic network of people, institutions, places, technologies, and practices.”

Reflecting on 30 years since the Nara Document, the declaration proposes a vital evolution of authenticity through an ecosystem lens.

The Paradigm Shift: From Capital to Heritage

	Traditional Conservation	Heritage Ecosystem
Defining the Asset.	Static monuments and isolated physical sites.	A continuous, interconnected system of tangible and intangible assets.
Focus of Preservation.	Cultural artifacts and human-built structures.	Cultural, natural, tangible, and intangible elements combined.
Primary Governance.	Compartmentalized, expert-led, top-down management.	Community-focused, collaborative local-to-global continuity.

The Anatomy of a Heritage Ecosystem

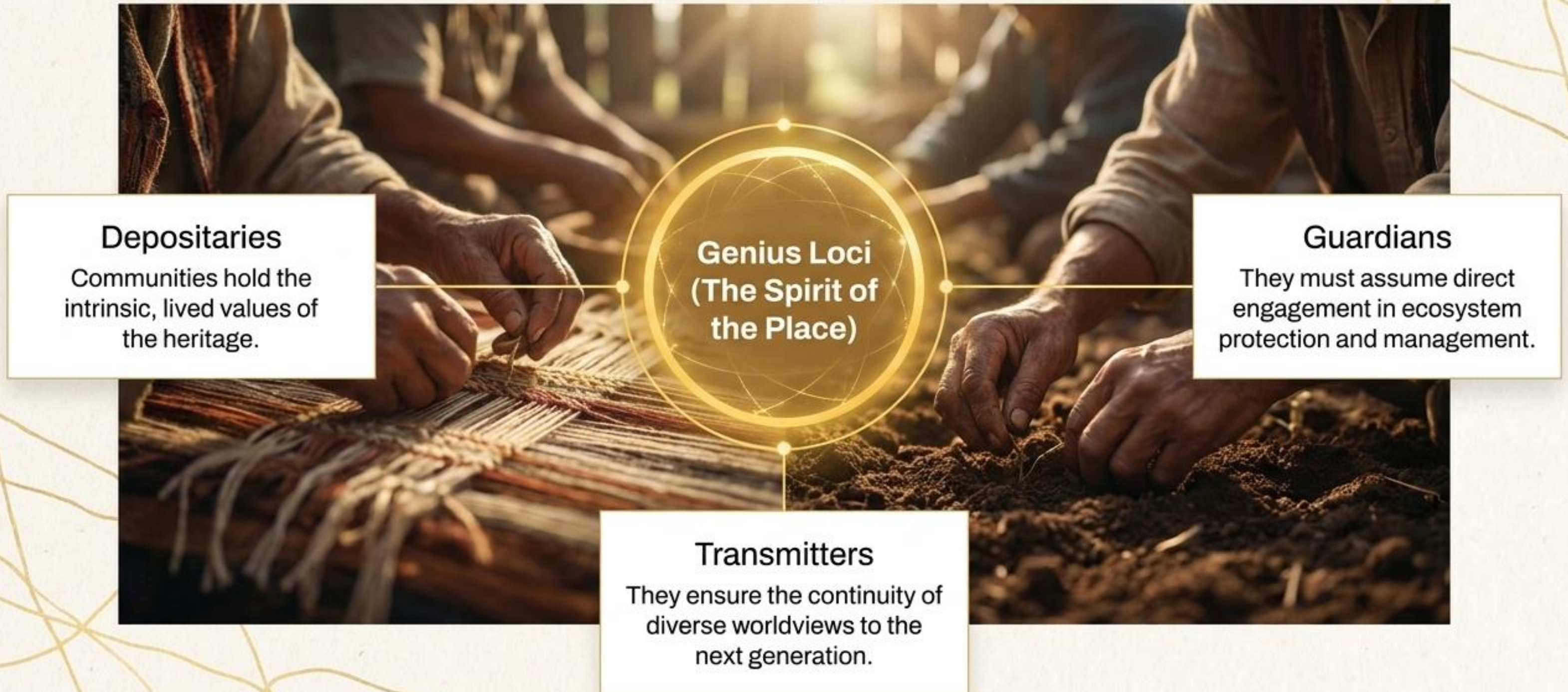


“The significance of linking these components within and across related disciplines has not yet been pursued to its full potential. To achieve authenticity, the boundaries must dissolve.”

Expanding the definition of the 'Rights-Holder'.



The Community as Guardians of the 'Genius Loci'.



The *Pagus* Initiative: Resettling smaller settlements.



Resettlement

Encouraging smaller communities to return to and thrive in their original towns and village settlements.



Preservation

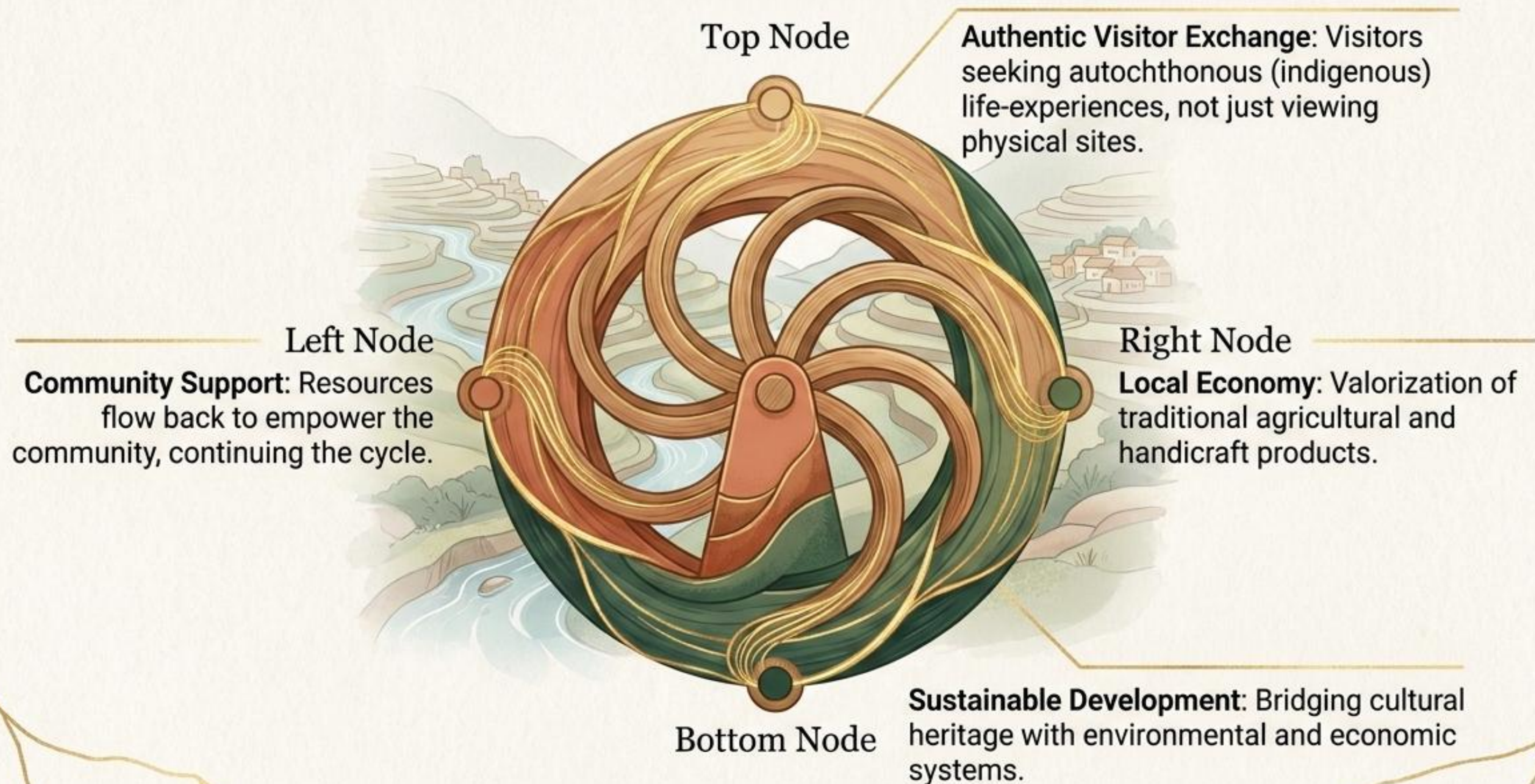
Securing the overarching patrimony, specifically the highly vulnerable intangible values of local traditions and natural assets.



Direct Management

Elevating the community to active decision-makers in all heritage governance, shifting from passive residents to active ecosystem managers.

Cultural Tourism as an Ecosystem Driver



The Gunma Action Pillars



Community Empowerment:

Ensuring local community engagement in all heritage decision-making and transmission.



Technology Integration:

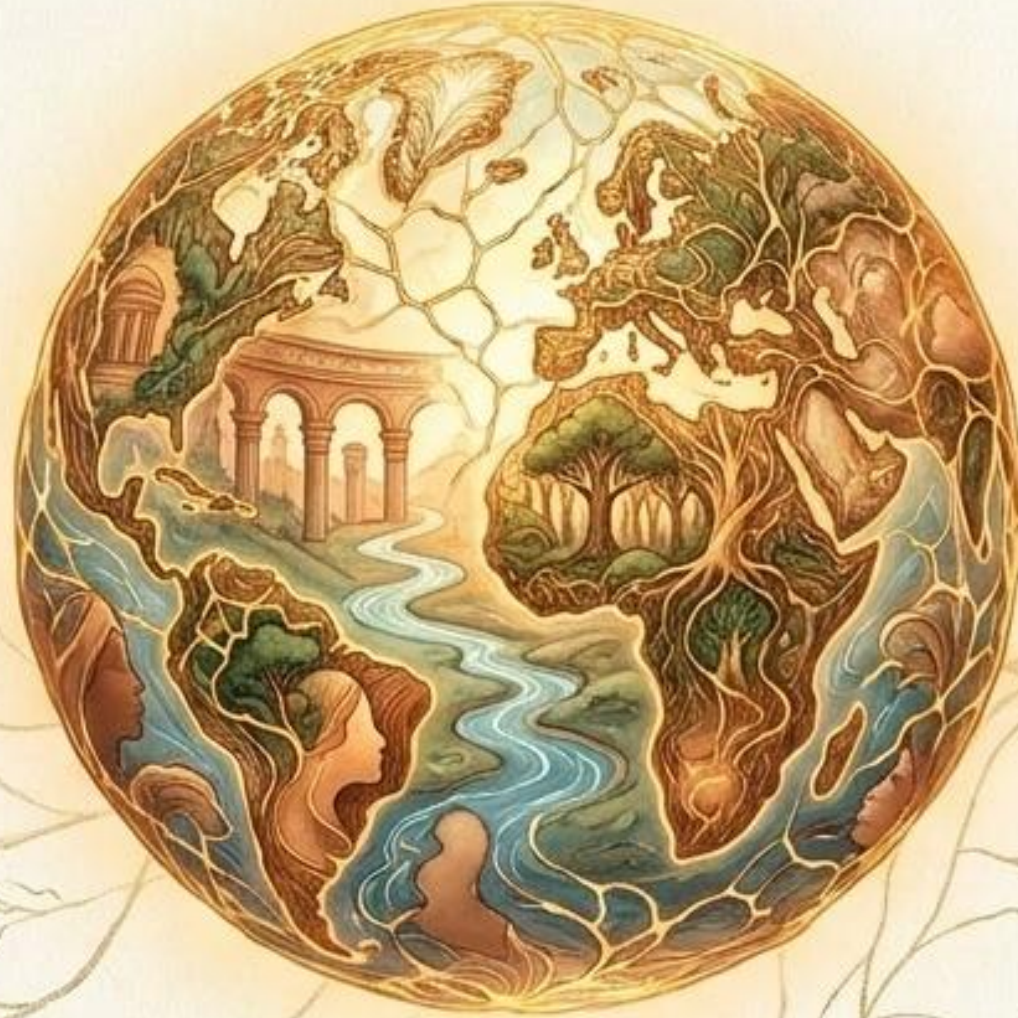
Leveraging new tools to connect heritage with society and deeply enhance interpretation.



Sustainability:

Ensuring heritage actively contributes to local economic development and environmental resilience.

The Unicum: Heritage as a living organism.



Heritage is a global issue encompassing the entire planet—environment, nature, fauna, and humanity. It is not a collection of isolated assets, but a unicum closely interconnected with intangible and natural components. Only a multi-disciplinary ecosystem approach can preserve its true complexity and authenticity.

Framing the Dialogue

How will we move beyond institutional boundaries to embrace the interconnections between cultural, natural, tangible, and intangible?

In what ways can rights-holders beyond humans—our rivers, our animals, our future generations—be represented in your decision-making?

How does the ecosystem approach ultimately advance our understanding of heritage authenticity?