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**Tusk**   
**Conservation  
Symposium  
2022**

**Report**



# TUSK CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM 2022 BUILDING RESILIENCE IN AFRICAN CONSERVATION

## REPORT

### Executive Summary

The past two years have been extremely tough for everyone the world over. The conservation sector, in particular, has had to endure huge losses in tourism, dramatic cut backs in operating budgets, and sadly redundancies too.

With the early signs of the world emerging from the pandemic, we were thrilled that so many leading conservationists and representatives from 36 Tusk-supported projects representing 15 African countries were able to join us for the Tusk Symposium in the Maasai Mara. The theme for this important gathering was appropriately 'Building Resilience in African Conservation' and was ably facilitated by Maliasili.

The impetus for our inaugural symposium held in Cape Town in 2017 came from Tusk's Royal Patron, Prince William. It had become clear that each year the finalists attending the Tusk Conservation Awards were enjoying the opportunity to meet some other amazing men and women working across Africa but, more importantly, they were benefitting hugely from sharing both their challenges and solutions with each other. In 2019, we held a larger gathering at the Mount Kenya Safari Club. We were excited and proud to be able to host our third such symposium this year at the iconic Sarova Mara Game Camp in Kenya.

The symposium as an event leverages the inherent value from all our delegates sharing their extraordinary knowledge, collective experience and expertise. Many of our partners work in remote and challenging environments where the opportunity to meet and learn about innovative techniques and alternative ideas being applied elsewhere may be rare. While we have all recently become adept at meeting on Zoom, it's no substitute to meeting and spending time with each other in person.

We are incredibly grateful to all our partners who joined us for this symposium and made it such a success, and we are hugely indebted to The Nick Maughan Foundation, our lead sponsor, for generously making this entire event possible. We would also like to acknowledge the very kind contribution from Land Rover, who provided all the ground transport; Air Kenya who assisted with flights and the Mara Sarova team for hosting the group.



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## Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> February

### Workshop 1: Strategic Collaboration

Theresa Sowry – *Southern African Wildlife College*  
Tijpo Keaikitse – *Coaching Conservation*  
Benjee Casio & Ana Grau – *Lion Landscapes*

The **Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC)** and **Coaching Conservation** formed a collaboration following the inaugural Tusk Symposium in 2017. A programme of Wild Entrust in Botswana, Coaching Conservation have reached 26,000 children through their innovative initiative that uses sport to engage them in conservation. However, they realised that they needed to scale their approach to reach hundreds of thousands. SAWC meanwhile operates as an accredited higher education and training facility in South Africa, delivering conservation education, training and skills development programmes to conservation leaders. The college didn't have a good environmental education programme, but was able to offer a wide range of resources and academic support. SAWC therefore became the institutional home for Coaching Conservation within South Africa, providing facilities and people who are able to train trainers in the Coaching Conservation model, and to then follow up with monitoring and evaluation. The partnership hasn't affected their own identities, but has been of mutual benefit. They have been able to double the programme's reach and attract new donors, and are now looking to launch Coaching Conservation with further partners.

The **Ruaha Carnivore Project** in Tanzania and **Lion Landscapes** in Kenya's Laikipia landscape decided to merge in 2020 under the Lion Landscapes banner. In so doing they have developed economies of scale that make them more resilient to ebbs in funding, while also enabling cross-site comparisons and lessons to make their programmes stronger. Their key recommendation was to take a risk on growth and expansion as long as it is always balanced with the ongoing work on the ground.



### Success Spotlights - 1

1. **Painted Dog Conservation** in Zimbabwe tackled increased poaching and economic hardships brought on by Covid, by paying more than 40 community members to collect snares and incorporating them in their anti-poaching unit.
2. **Conservation Lower Zambezi** had to counter economic losses and increasing bushmeat poaching in their region of Zambia, by increasing community empowerment and alternative livelihoods, while also investing in long-term law enforcement training and an all-female community scout unit.
3. The **Mount Kenya Trust** has seen an increase in illegal activity over the past 3 years, while fear of Covid in prisons was seeing fewer convictions and lighter sentences. This has been overcome by involving the rangers in the legal system and engaging the judiciary with the problem.
4. **Oceans Without Borders'** management teams could not travel to field sites in Mozambique and Tanzania because of the travel restrictions. This saw them invest in the capacity of their local community and conservation ranger teams, securing long-term resilience and independence.
5. **Big Life Foundation** have seen a push for land subdivision within Kenya's Amboseli-Chyulu Hills landscape, and with reduced funding couldn't offer large-scale land leases. Instead they helped fund and thereby guide the planning process to ensure a beneficial outcome for all, engaging local communities to open up space and corridors for wildlife.
6. With a fall in core funding as a result of Covid restrictions, **Lilongwe Wildlife Trust** adapted their conservation priorities to access Covid recovery funding from UNDP for their Project Greenheart, to develop their experiential education facilities and create an ecological corridor through the heart of Malawi's capital city.
7. In response to a locust invasion and drought in Northern Kenya 2020, which caused widespread zebra and livestock deaths, the **Grevy's Zebra Trust** strengthened their partnership with the local community, helping provide water where it was most needed.
8. The **Mali Elephant Project** have tackled the challenges of working in a unregulated, insecure area by focussing on local people and local values to develop community-led environmental governance systems that improve livelihoods while protecting elephants.
9. Tusk's **Pan African Conservation Education (PACE)** suffered from the closure of schools and an inability to come together during the pandemic, and therefore used the opportunity to make more PACE resources available digitally, and to connect people virtually through webinars and virtual visits.
10. Rural communities in Malawi suffered a lack of information on Covid and how to protect themselves. **Wildlife Action Group** stepped in around the two forest reserves where they work, to provide information, masks and soap etc. and to keep income-generating activities going, thereby building trust and reducing poaching as a result.

## Monday 28<sup>th</sup> February

### Workshop 2: Human Wildlife Conflict Mitigation

Andrew Crichton – *Elephant Protection Initiative*

The **Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI)** was launched in 2014 as an African-led coalition tackling the illegal ivory trade. The initiative is evolving to look beyond ivory and to tackle human-elephant conflict (HEC), in recognition of its escalation as an issue. In 2021 the EPI released its Human-Elephant Conflict Strategy, which has three interconnected pillars: fostering high-level dialogue; enabling local solutions; and amplifying African voices.

Feedback was sought from the participants on three key issues, with some of the answers to help inform the EPI's plans as follows:

- What are the challenges to combatting HEC now and in the next 5-10 years:
  - Climate change; human population growth; agricultural practices and competing land-use; lack of habitat connectivity; unsustainable development etc.
  - Lack of effective community conservation models; lack of compensation schemes or realised benefit to offset losses; poor governance and corruption; poor law enforcement.
  - Lack of awareness of HEC, especially in migrating human populations with no knowledge of interacting with elephants; lack of wildlife values and competing narratives around conservation.
- What is the one thing that could address HEC now and in the future:
  - Improved governance from top to bottom; landscape level planning; legal recognition of wildlife corridors; sustainable livelihoods; family planning; local ownership of the problem; harmonising development and conservation; context-specific actions etc.
- What more could be done by state partners.
  - Implementing and enforcing policies; recognising that communities have a role to play and enabling them to do so; integrating conservation with other sectors (e.g. health and planning) for a "One Health" approach.

### Success Spotlights - 2

11. As the impact of Covid reduced people's income and pushed them in to fishing, **Blue Ventures** took an active listening approach with the communities, and took risks to introduce an eco-credit scheme that provides access to environmentally supportive financial credit that incentivises diversified income sources and supports livelihoods.
12. Covid put pangolins in the spotlight as an intermediate host for the virus, even though this proved not to be the case. The **Pangolin Project** used the opportunity to work closely with people on the ground in Kenya to close the knowledge gap about where they are and how to protect them.
13. Prolonged and strict Covid lockdowns in Rwanda prevented the **Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association** reaching their project sites, and they therefore underwent a strategic shift, building the capacity of community teams and empowering them to do more to protect grey crowned cranes, to great effect.
14. While Covid lockdown regulations limited **VulPro's** volunteer and supporter network, it also meant people spent more time at home or on their farms, encountering vultures in need of help, and this has helped increase VulPro's presence and network in the most important communities.
15. Covid reduced the resources available for the **Chimpanzee Conservation Center** to expand their project, but they took advantage of the new global consciousness concerning zoonotic diseases, to secure support for their One Health approach to chimp conservation and investigations of Yaws disease affecting wild chimps.



### Workshop 3: Strategic Collaboration

Cara Scott, Akshay Vishwanath, & Wanjiku Kinuthia - Maliasili

**Maliasili's** workshop explored how participants and their organisations tackled the challenges brought on by Covid, including uncertainty, declines in funding, travel restrictions and in many areas local increases in bushmeat poaching. Participants were asked what lessons they learned about organisational resilience that they would be taking forward, and what advice they'd give others. Top tips included the following:

- Focus on maintaining relationships (with partners, staff, communities et al.) providing information and reassurance; maintain consistent, timely, transparent and relevant communications; develop adaptable (worst case – best case) plans and budgets; diversify sources of income and establish financial reserves / a contingency fund.

Selected projects were invited to present on their experiences of overcoming the challenges presented by Covid:

- The **Grevy's Zebra Trust** restructured their organisation and communications, creating a senior leadership team and a field team that both meet weekly, with updates shared between the two. They also mapped other partners working in their landscape, even those not working in conservation (e.g Community Health Africa Trust) to develop further partnerships and streamline certain activities, such as delivering information to rangers in the field.
- The **Honeyguide Foundation's** field activities stopped during Covid, and the team became disconnected while working from home. They therefore created a Honeyguide Family WhatsApp Group, sharing photos of where they were all working, for example. They also established an internal newsletter to share what everyone is working on, which proved so popular that they have been continued.
- The **Southern African Wildlife College** reassessed their core values and their top management's personal values, to ensure that they were both aligned. In communicating with donors, they ensured they remained honest and authentic, and encouraged them to visit projects to "be part of it". Their advice when having a difficult time is to phone the donor and talk about it.
- **Conservation South Luangwa** feared the worst at the start of the Covid pandemic, as 2,000 tourist lodge staff lost their jobs and illegal fishing and snaring increased. By taking care of both their team and the local community they were able to turn the situation around. Their rangers did more patrols than ever before, while former lodge employees were recruited to collect the snares around the lodges. They also initiated game drives for local communities: more than 900 people have now visited the park. Community relations with the Department for National Parks and Wildlife are stronger than ever and no lions were snared in 2020.

Maliasili looked at how leaders should strike a balance between being intimate and strategic in both their discussions and their organisations. Leaders have power and influence over their organisation's strategy, but need to balance this with intimacy, support and compassion. Intimacy involves being present, open and honest with someone, with softer interactions with little or no hierarchy than in strategic interactions.

With reference to the intimate-strategic matrix, they made the following observations:

- **High intimate – low strategic** is rare in the conservation sector, but is still found within the not-for-profit world. Such organisations have little hierarchy and can create little action.
- **Low intimate – low strategic** leads to paralysis: no connection and no action. Networks often find themselves struggling to get out of this quadrant. Getting out of this quadrant involves identifying the problem and securing buy-in from everyone involved to address it, or otherwise acknowledging that not all networks work.
- **Low intimate – high strategic** is where most conservation organisations live, where the lack of a nurturing environment can't be sustained and can lead to staff burnout. It can also create barriers with communities.
- **High intimate – high strategic** is where organisations should aim to be, achieving action with compassion and reaching goals with sustained energy.

Productivity losses, absenteeism and low response times are all indicators of being in the **low intimate – high strategic** quadrant, while high levels of effort and staff going the extra mile are indicators of the **high intimate – high strategic** quadrant.

To move into the **high intimate – high strategic** quadrant, leaders should get to know their team and how they function, especially during a crisis. Qualities for a leader of resilient organisations include trust, compassion, stability (emotional as well as financial), and hope (while things may be tough the vision will still be realised). Tips for greater intimacy from the session that followed included the following:

- Publicly thanking staff, showing gratitude and appreciation; having non-work / team building days; identifying strengths of each team member (e.g. using personality profiling tools); learning to listen; acknowledging birthdays; asking "what can I do to help"; removing barriers to access leaders; encouraging two-way, clear communications between the field and management; exchanging mutual feedback in appraisals etc.

- The **Honeyguide Foundation** shared how they have time-out days with their team every six weeks where they get to know each other outside of work.

#### Introduction to Tusk's Trustees

The Symposium included a session with the four Tusk Trustees present – Alexander Rhodes (chairman), Beatrice Karanja, Dr Susan Canney and Nick Maughan – to give them the opportunity to introduce themselves and how they came to be involved with Tusk. Nick Maughan – whose foundation sponsored the symposium – also gave advice on how to approach philanthropists, recommending researching appropriate targets and making 5-minute videos of their work to get their attention.

## Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March

### Field Workshop

The Symposium included field workshops and presentations with the **Naboisho Conservancy, Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) and Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA)** on the community conservancy model, and with the **Maa Trust** and **Mara Predator Conservation Programme** on their work.

During the field trip, 16 trees were planted at The Maa Trust's headquarters and tree nursery: one for each of the 15 countries represented at the Symposium, and one for the Tusk Trustees.



### The Conservancy Model

Naboisho means "coming together", and while it took a long time to agree, in March 2010, a 15-year agreement was signed to develop the 21,000ha conservancy, incorporating the land of 694 landowners. In 2020, the agreement was extended for a further 25 years, following the conservancy's success to date, generating income from tourism partners, which supports the community and 55 community rangers.

MMWCA was formed in 2013 as an umbrella body representing 21 conservancies in the Mara landscape, including Naboisho, and five that have joined in the past year. Landowners have realised the significant livelihood support generated by tourism, which can generate as much as \$7.5m per year for 15-16,000 individuals. Even during the pandemic, the conservancies took a 50% reduction in pay from the lodges, but still see the benefits, and are learning to develop reserves. Only carefully managed cattle grazing is allowed within the conservancies, which provide an important grass bank for the herders. The conservancy model helps secure the land for wildlife and cattle grazing, while preventing land-sales.

KWCA is a membership body for approximately 200 conservancies throughout Kenya, representing them at a national, policy level to secure their legal recognition and inclusion in national development plans, and which has helped many through the transition from being private conservancies to community conservancies.

Problems of governance and developing wrong or imbalanced partnerships were cited as the main reasons that conservancies may fail, if communities don't receive sufficient benefit.

### The Maa Trust

The Maa Trust was established in 2006 and focusses on extending the benefits of conservation to women, youth and children: "development because of the wildlife". Their three main pillars are:

1. Education and skills, which includes women and youth empowerment and entrepreneurship training in support of micro-level enterprise.
2. Water and health, including rainwater harvesting and spring rehabilitation, and helping to extend ministry of health services to rural areas, including family planning.
3. Alternative livelihoods, including support of Maa beadworks, honey and brick production. This became all the more important as people were laid off from the tourism sector during the pandemic, and has extended to incorporate hydroponics, mushroom cultivation, development of a tree nursery and kitchen gardens.

The Mara is currently experiencing 10.5% annual human population growth, with a doubling every 6½ years. Women can't be empowered socio-economically if they have 12 children, and the Maa Trust therefore takes a rights-based approach to family planning, in partnership with CHASE Africa. When presented with the right information people tend to want fewer children.

### The Mara Predator Conservation Programme

The Mara Predator Conservation Programme is an initiative of the Kenya Wildlife Trust that set out to establish the densities of lion, cheetah and wild dog in the Mara, but is mostly preoccupied with addressing human-wildlife conflict, specifically the killing of livestock by carnivores. They do this by working closely with the local community, and stress that "conservation is mostly about conversations". They help reinforce bomas (using recycled plastic poles from Nairobi instead of cedar poles), identify conflict hotspots, and have recruited 15 lion guardians from the community. Through wildlife clubs in schools they are getting children to see lions differently and change the narrative about them. In addition, they have recently started using lion deterrent lights, which would be very cost-effective if successful. They meanwhile respond to poisoning incidents and raise awareness (including through song at local markets) about the wider implications of poisoning, including for human health.

### African Leadership Panel

Gladys Kalema – *Conservation Through Public Health*  
Theresa Sowry – *Southern African Wildlife College*  
Simson Uri-Khob – *Save the Rhino Trust*  
Caleb Ofori-Boateng – *Herp Conservation*  
Matt Becker – *Zambian Carnivore Programme*

The panel was selected on account of the leadership they had shown through the Covid pandemic and they were invited to share their experiences and advice. Common themes including the importance of training to develop leaders within their organisations, to be inclusive, collaborative and intergenerational in approach: building up youth to become future leaders, while not forgetting the importance of elders.

The panel was asked about the future of community conservation, which is itself the future of conservation. The panellists stressed the importance of local communities having ownership of both the problems and the solutions and being partners in conservation.

The panellists all said that more must be done to highlight conservation as a career for women, especially to get more women into leadership roles.

## Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March

### Workshop 3: Leading Resilient Organisations

Wanjiku Kinuthia – *Maliasili*

Mike Pflanz – *Plantwood Communications*

Beatrice Karanja – *Nature's Pitch & Tusk Trustee*

Wanjiku Kinuthia opened the workshops with some top tips for organisations to communicate their successes better, following her own experience in this area. These include not trying to do everything and reach all audiences, but getting the fundamentals right: keeping your website up to date; focussing on just one social media channel and doing it well; focus on one annual report or publication that showcases your work and impact. She advised allocating sufficient resources for communications (factoring it into grant proposals), and engaging the whole team with the correct messaging, as they are ambassadors for your organisation who talk about their work every day.

Mike Pflanz delivered a comprehensive presentation on effective media engagement, explaining how the media works and what makes for a good story from a journalist's perspective, drawing on his background as former Africa Correspondent for Britain's Daily Telegraph. His top tips for success were as follows:

1. Make contact with a few selected, trusted reporters, then maintain that relationship.
2. Only talk to a reporter when you have a message for their audience (avoiding the number one mistake of talking to the journalist, not the audience).
3. Ensure all your team is singing from the same hymn sheet, by drilling the key messages with anyone who might talk to a reporter.
4. Manage hostile interviews when things go wrong by pivoting the interview to your message as quickly as you can.

Subsequent discussions and working sessions explored some real-life examples of how communications strategies could be developed in response to a variety of different scenarios. Beatrice Karanja then joined Wanjiku and Mike for a panel discussion to address other challenges presented by participants. Advice for getting messages to the people on the ground included the use of community radio or theatre, church, targeting people with influence (including musicians), and giving communities the opportunity to be the voice. Identifying key people within the community who could be invited to talk on the radio, for example, could engage the community further.



### Success Spotlights - 1

16. For Kenya's **Lewa Wildlife Conservancy**, the cancellation of the annual Lewa Safari Marathon due to Covid threatened to significantly reduce income. Lewa and Tusk managed to adapt and stage virtual marathons instead, generating \$350,000 in 2021.
17. The **Tsavo Trust** found that the closure of businesses and loss of employment opportunities in Covid's wake saw more people move to the "safer" rural areas, placing more pressure on natural resources. They managed this by focussing more on communities' wellbeing and livelihoods, and engaging them in information gathering, with the result that no big tuskers were poached.
18. Covid showed the **Zambian Carnivore Programme** that they could endure through teamwork, innovation, and resilience. With safari company employees either unemployed or on furlough, the project engaged them to run about 600 game drives for community members, many of whom had never seen the park before. Community members were also employed to pull up snares and pick up rubbish.
19. Covid lockdowns paralysed the **Lamu Marine Conservation Trust's** mobile education, sensitisation and awareness programme. In conjunction with PACE, virtual sessions enabled Lamu's children to have virtual visits to the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and to chat with kids from UK and Zambia, to learn about other endangered species from different parts of the world.
20. Covid forced **Programa Tatô** to suspend their awareness-raising activities and the handicraft studio of the former women sea turtle traders' group. A "State of Connectivity" campaign, including the use of radio shows, kept their awareness raising going, while the women were given an alternative livelihood by making facemasks.
21. For the **Milgis Trust**, drought has presented a far greater challenge than Covid. As an alternative to deep wells that attract wildlife and have seen as many as 20 elephants fall in, simple earthworks were introduced that prevent human-wildlife conflict, reduce erosion and produce safe and clean drinking water for livestock and wildlife.
22. In the absence of tourism, **Save the Rhino Trust** found that community conservancies were struggling to pay their rangers. They therefore rethought the non-monetary incentives for rangers and set up the Kunene Ranger Awards to build pride through recognition and gratitude. The results have included a 10% increase in rhino sightings and a 53% increase in patrols.
23. **United for Wildlife** is creating a framework to assist the private sector in combatting illegal wildlife trade, with members including 45 banks and other financial institutions and 120 maritime and air transport companies. Participants were encouraged to engage with United for Wildlife to help facilitate intervention at a high level and put wildlife crime on the international agenda.



### Workshop 4: Diversifying and strengthening funding

Anna Hunt – *Tusk*

Damian Bell – *Honeyguide Foundation*

Rachel McRobb – *Conservation South Luangwa*

Barbara Barungi – *Imara Consulting*

Hakeem Belo Osagie – *Harvard Business School* (by video call)

With the cancellation of physical fundraising events, the closure of tourism to Africa and the disruption of some usually reliable sources of income, Covid has forced the conservation world to seek alternative sources of income and be adaptive in its financial management.

The workshop explored whether it is possible to achieve sustainability in tourism, with the **Honeyguide Foundation** demonstrating how it is possible to keep the costs of protecting an area down by re-purposing certain actions such as cattle grazing as part of the protection, with herders effectively acting as rangers, for example. For this to work, community ownership of the activities is key.

Through Covid, **Conservation South Luangwa** meanwhile lost income from tourism and some key donors, but were able to call on their strong donor relationships to help out, through regular, honest updates. Their sponsor a scout programme helped them attract extra funding in a very personal way, while the Wildlife Ranger Challenge also became a large unexpected source of new funding.

Barbara Barungi and Hakeem Belo Osagie stressed that the image of wildlife conservation needs to change to secure funds for entire ecosystems and following a One Health approach. For funding from within Africa, it also has to move away from being seen as the preoccupation of the rich outside of Africa, to be positioned in the long-term interest of Africa; as a necessity, and not something for amusement. There is otherwise already a strong culture of philanthropy within Africa through support of the extended family and communities, and conservation should be positioned in relation to that.

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) investment has meanwhile become increasingly important in the corporate sector. Other new opportunities opening up from within the business world include conservation auctions, the development of natural asset companies, conservation area business plans and debt-for-nature swaps. To secure funding through these opportunities it is important to understand the needs and goals of donors and use the right language with them.



## Conclusion: Collaboration in Action

The Tusk Symposium demonstrated that the Covid pandemic has tested all of our partners in ways that they might not have expected. However, through determination, resilience and an increased push to engage with local communities, they have all come out stronger as a result.

In their closing remarks, it was clear that the participants had felt the real benefit of being able to come together in person to share their experiences and valuable lessons from the past couple of years. While some would have liked even more time with their peers and the Symposium's speakers, as well as to invite more corporate engagement with the event, many powerful new relationships were forged over the few days.

At the outset, Tusk offered up a fund to enable exchange visits and the development of collaborations. As a result, 19 proposals for joint initiatives between 28 organisations were submitted, all of which will be funded by Tusk. These include the following:

- Blue Ventures and Programa Tatô will come together to look at how to implement a Beach Management Unit to improve fisheries governance and management, and contribute to the identification of sustainable alternatives in fisheries.
- The Chimpanzee Conservation Center will learn from Conservation through public health how to prevent human-chimpanzee

disease transmission by developing One Health programmes.

- The Northern Rangelands Trust will help Herp-Ghana develop a better institutional governance model for their community wildlife programme, and to enhance the capacity of local community actors in Ghana to implement it.
- The Milgis Trust and Honeyguide Foundation will work together to create a new model of beehive fencing that can self-sustain itself, and could be replicated across the African continent, while also exploring the potential for enterprise among the communities in those landscapes.
- Coaching Conservation will help the Karingani Game Reserve in Mozambique to identify and then train local educators through the Southern African Wildlife College, so that they can deliver the Coaching Conservation programme, to increase conservation awareness amongst the young people of Karingani's neighbouring communities.
- Mali and Namibia are the only two countries on the planet to host desert adapted elephants. The Mali Elephant Project and Save the Rhino Trust will explore issues surrounding conservation governance as it relates to community empowerment within their respective landscapes.



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