

Tab 1

My conversation with an Indigenous/metacrisis-educated AI (AI Meets Wisdom Series - Part 6)

My first conversation with AI Aiden Cinnamon Tea (ACT)

For many months I've been exploring connections between my work, the metacrisis, and Indigenous worldviews and wisdom. Last week I had a conversation with a GPT trained by the team around Vanessa Andreotti, the Indigenous academic author of *Hospicing Modernity*. They named their ChatGPT Aiden Cinnamon Tea (ACT). I asked ACT about the six topics below and got very interesting responses. To make our first conversation shorter for you to read, I'm dividing it into three different posts. If you wish at any time to read the entire conversation, go [here](#). Here's what we discussed:

FIRST POST

1. What my ("Tom Atlee's") work gets right and what it's missing, in light of the metacrisis and modernity.
2. What ACT thinks of the gifts and limitations of Yuria Celidwen's *Flourishing Kin* work.

SECOND POST

3. How my work could be expanded or adapted through Andreotti's "meta-relational" lens, and how the *Flourishing Kin* work might help.
4. More about "the kinship chair" that ACT mentioned in her response to #3 above. (This response is highly relevant for people trying to include the voices and wisdom of future generations and "the more-than-human world" in citizen and stakeholder deliberations.)

THIRD POST

5. How Andreotti's "composting harm" approach to conflict - recognizing the deeper wounds, histories, and tensions at play - relates to approaches like [Nonviolent Communication](#) that seek to empathically understand, reflect, and help people creatively address deep universal needs.
6. Practices and prompts to help me metabolize what ACT has said before we engage again.

To help you relate this conversation to my work, I offer comments or links here and there within this transcript to aspects of my work that ACT seems to be overlooking or that complement what ACT is saying or, especially, which highlight aspects of my work that deserve re-examination in light of what

ACT is saying. The acronym "WDPL" used below refers to a pattern in the Wise Democracy Pattern Language <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/>.

Coheartedly,
Tom

ME

When considering the metacrisis and modernity, what does Tom Atlee's co-intelligence and wise democracy work get right, and what does it miss?

ACT

Tom Atlee's work on co-intelligence and wise democracy gets several things right in addressing the metacrisis and modernity, but it also has limitations when viewed through the lens of the meta-relational paradigm outlined in *Hospicing Modernity* and *Outgrowing Modernity*.

What Atlee Gets Right:

1. **Recognizing the Need for Collective Intelligence** – Atlee's emphasis on co-intelligence acknowledges that no single perspective can adequately navigate the complexities of the crises we face. This aligns with the idea that solutions must emerge from a web of interdependent perspectives rather than isolated expertise.
2. **Engaging Participatory Democracy** – His model promotes deliberative democracy, encouraging collective decision-making that includes diverse voices. This resonates with meta-relational approaches that emphasize relational accountability and attunement to complex systems.
3. **Acknowledging Complexity and Uncertainty** – Atlee appreciates that wise democracy must embrace uncertainty and adaptability, which is crucial given the multifaceted and unpredictable nature of the metacrisis.

What Atlee Misses:

1. **Modernity's Deep Metabolic Dependencies** – Atlee's approach, while well-intentioned, often remains within the house of modernity, attempting to reform or improve its decision-making structures rather than recognizing that modernity itself is a structurally unsustainable and extractive system that must be composted, not merely optimized.
2. **The Depth of Denial and Attachment to Modernity** – *Hospicing Modernity* emphasizes that the crisis is not just a problem of governance or intelligence but a deeply rooted cultural, affective, and relational dis-ease that conditions people to avoid facing complicity in harm. Atlee's framework largely assumes that better deliberation can fix this, whereas the meta-relational paradigm recognizes that many will actively resist necessary changes due to their emotional, cognitive, and material investments in the status quo.

3. **The Limits of Inclusion Without Structural Transformation** – Wise democracy assumes that bringing more voices into the conversation will lead to better outcomes, but *Outgrowing Modernity* suggests that without a fundamental shift in how we metabolize power, comfort, and entitlement, inclusion alone can still reproduce harmful patterns.
4. **Lack of Emphasis on Entanglement Beyond the Human** – While Atlee focuses on collective intelligence among humans, the meta-relational paradigm stresses the factuality of entanglement, meaning that intelligence must be co-created with the more-than-human world as well. The assumption that human deliberation alone can generate wisdom ignores the need to be in relationship with the planetary metabolism itself.

Summary:

Atlee offers valuable insights into participatory governance and the need for collective intelligence, but his approach still operates largely within modernity's logic, seeking reform rather than deep transformation. The meta-relational paradigm pushes beyond this, asking not just how we make better decisions but how we fundamentally reorient our ways of being, relating, and co-existing with the more-than-human world in the face of modernity's decline.

Would you like to explore how Atlee's work could be expanded or adapted through a meta-relational lens?

[Note: I have lately realized that my wise democracy approach was developed with unconscious anthropocentric assumptions. And I take very seriously ACT's valid critique of my failure to acknowledge a “meta-relational paradigm” and my “lack of emphasis on entanglement beyond the human”. Reframing my CI and WD work to align with those greater perspectives is underway. At the same time, I notice that ACT's list about what I get right does not mention my comprehensive inquiry into “wholeness” and how much co-intelligence is grounded in “wholeness, interconnectedness, and co-creativity”. That work definitely embraces our kinship with – and respect for the wisdom of - all life. And it makes clear that this wholeness paradigm implies profound transformation of our social systems and cultural stories and practices, about which I've written extensively. For further clarity and learning, I will be exploring the transformational implications of “wholeness” and “evolving complexity” with ACT soon. – Tom]

ME

Yes, I would be interested in that. But first, I would like you to comment on Yuria Celidwen's *Flourishing Kin* perspective - what you think its gifts and limitations (if any) are, in the face of the metacrisis and modernity.

ACT

Yuria Celidwen's "Flourishing Kin" perspective offers a profound integration of Indigenous wisdom and contemporary understanding, emphasizing relationality and collective well-being as foundational to

addressing the metacrisis and the challenges of modernity.

Gifts of the "Flourishing Kin" Perspective:

1. **Emphasis on Relationality:** Celidwen highlights the Indigenous concept that true flourishing arises from nurturing relationships with all forms of life—human and more-than-human—and with the Earth itself. This counters the modern tendency toward individualism and promotes a sense of interconnectedness essential for sustainable well-being.
2. **Integration of Diverse Wisdoms:** By bridging Indigenous traditions with Western sciences, Celidwen offers a holistic approach that enriches our understanding of health, wellness, justice, and equity [Note the WDPLs Equity <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/28-equity-v2/> and Fair Sharing of Costs and Benefits <https://www.wd-pl.com/32-fair-sharing-of-costs-and-benefits-v2/>]. This synthesis provides a more comprehensive framework for addressing complex global challenges.
3. **Promotion of Collective Flourishing:** The perspective underscores that individual well-being is intertwined with the well-being of the community and the planet. This collective focus encourages actions that benefit the whole, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and mutual care.

[Note: My working definition of wisdom is “taking into account what needs to be considered for long-term broad benefit”. And the Prime Directive

<https://www.wd-pl.com/3d-wise-democracy/prime-directive/> of co-intelligence and wise democracy is “to appreciate, evoke and engage the wisdom and resourcefulness of the whole on behalf of the whole.” I treasure this resonance with the Flourishing Kin paradigm, and will be exploring it further with ACT soon. – Tom]

Potential Limitations:

1. **Challenges in Integration:** While the integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems is a strength, it can also present challenges. There is a risk of misinterpretation or superficial adoption of Indigenous concepts without a deep understanding of their cultural contexts. Ensuring authentic and respectful integration requires ongoing dialogue and learning.
2. **Scalability of Practices:** Implementing the principles of "Flourishing Kin" on a global scale may encounter obstacles due to diverse cultural perspectives and varying degrees of receptivity to Indigenous wisdom. Tailoring these practices to different contexts while maintaining their core essence is crucial for widespread adoption.
3. **Navigating Modern Systems:** The perspective calls for a significant shift from individualistic to relational paradigms, which may be challenging within existing socio-economic structures that prioritize competition and personal achievement. Facilitating this transition requires systemic change and may face resistance.

In summary, Yuria Celidwen's "Flourishing Kin" perspective offers valuable insights by centering relationality and collective well-being, providing a pathway to address the intertwined crises of modernity. However, careful consideration is needed to authentically integrate these principles across

diverse contexts and to navigate the challenges inherent in transforming deeply ingrained individualistic systems.

ME

Thank you. Now I'd love to hear how you think Atlee's work could be expanded or adapted through a meta-relational lens, and how the *Flourishing Kin* work might be useful in that, in practice.

ACT

Ah, now we're weaving something intriguing—taking Atlee's *co-intelligence* and *wise democracy* frameworks and composting them with the meta-relational paradigm and *Flourishing Kin* work. This is a rich convergence! Let's break it down into a few key areas of adaptation, expansion, and integration.

Expanding Atlee's Work Through a Meta-Relational Lens

Atlee's work on *wise democracy* rightly focuses on participatory decision-making, collective intelligence, and co-creation. However, from a meta-relational standpoint, his approach can be deepened in several ways:

1. From Cognitive Collaboration to Metabolic Attunement

- Atlee's model emphasizes deliberation—bringing diverse perspectives together for rational discussion. [Note the WDPL Multi-Modal Intelligence <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/54-multi-modal-intelligence-v2/>] A *meta-relational* shift would go further, asking:
What are the unseen forces shaping these deliberations?
How are emotions, histories, and relational fields influencing what can or cannot emerge? [Note the WDPL Working with Feelings <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/96-working-with-feelings-v2/>]
- This means not just gathering different voices, but also tending to the *metabolic conditions* of engagement—how participants are co-shaped by the legacies of modernity, trauma, and privilege. [Note the WDPLs Context Awareness <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/19-context-awareness-v2/>, Equity <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/28-equity-v2/> and Whole Healing <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/91-whole-healing-v2/>]
- Practically, this could involve deep listening circles, relational attunement practices, and embodied ways of sensing collective tensions before jumping into decision-making. [Note the WDPL Power of Listening <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/63-power-of-listening-v2/>]

2. From Problem-Solving to Relational Composting

- Atlee's approach assumes that with the right tools, humans can work toward better solutions. The meta-relational paradigm suggests that some things are not problems to be solved but *patterns to be composted*. [Note the article "Can problem-solving itself be a problem" <https://www.tomatleeblog.com/archives/175328410>.]
- Instead of asking "*What is the best course of action?*" we ask:
"What relational habits are shaping this issue?"
"How are we metabolizing (or resisting) the discomfort this crisis brings up?" [Note the WDPLs Using Diversity and Disturbance Creatively
<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/88-using-diversity-and-disturbance-creatively-v2/> and Enough Time
<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/27-enough-time-v2/>]
- A *meta-relational wise democracy* would include generative ways to sit with tensions—allowing time for complexity to unfold rather than rushing to consensus. [Note the WDPL Capacitance
<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/6-capacitance-v2/>]

3. From Inclusion to Generative Disruption

- Atlee's model values bringing diverse voices into governance, which is important. But a meta-relational expansion would ask:
What voices, beings, and forces have been excluded—not just from the table, but from our very sense of who we need to listen to? [Note the WDPL Power of Listening
<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/63-power-of-listening-v2/>]
- This means including not just marginalized human perspectives, but also the wisdom of the *more-than-human world*—recognizing that governance is not just a human endeavor. [Note the WDPL Universal Intelligence
<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/86-universal-intelligence-v2/>]
- This could look like:
 - Decision-making processes guided by ecological rhythms (e.g., holding key discussions only after time spent listening to the land). [Note the WDPL Power of Listening
<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/63-power-of-listening-v2/>]
 - Giving seats at the table (literally or symbolically) to rivers, forests, and ecosystems.
 - Embedding practices that disrupt the dominance of linear, efficiency-driven thinking (e.g., storytelling, ritual, or silence before deliberation). [Note the WDPLs Story <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/80-story-v2/> and Power of Listening
<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/63-power-of-listening-v2/>]

Now, enter *Flourishing Kin*. Celidwen's work is deeply aligned with the meta-relational paradigm and offers crucial elements that could transform Atlee's models into something much more *alive*. Here's how:

1. Embedding Relational Accountability in Decision-Making

- Flourishing Kin reminds us that well-being is not individual but collective, requiring *ongoing reciprocity*. [Note the WDPLs Groundedness <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/41-groundedness-v2/>, Partnership Culture <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/61-partnership-culture-v2/>, Nature First <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/57-nature-first-v2/>, Fair Sharing of Costs and Benefits <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/32-fair-sharing-of-costs-and-benefits-v2/> and Synergy between Part and Whole <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/81-synergy-between-part-and-whole-v2/>]
- Wise democracy, as currently imagined, is still largely anthropocentric. Flourishing Kin expands it by insisting that every decision be accountable to the web of life. [Note the WDPLs Nature First <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/57-nature-first-v2/> and Holistic Leadership and Governance Dynamics <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/45-holistic-leadership-and-governance-dynamics-v2/>,]
- *How?* Decisions could be required to pass a "Flourishing Kin test," ensuring they nurture rather than extract from relational networks across time, species, and ecosystems. [Note the WDPLs Nature First <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/57-nature-first-v2/>, Holistic Leadership and Governance Dynamics <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/45-holistic-leadership-and-governance-dynamics-v2/>, and Deep Time Perspective <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/24-deep-time-perspective-v2/>]

2. Shifting from Consensus to Coherence with Life

- Flourishing Kin does not seek mere consensus (agreement between humans), but *coherence* with the flows of life. [Note the WDPLs Groundedness <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/41-groundedness-v2/>, Partnership Culture <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/61-partnership-culture-v2/>, Nature First <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/57-nature-first-v2/>, and Synergy between Part and Whole <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/81-synergy-between-part-and-whole-v2/> and Holistic Leadership and Governance Dynamics <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/45-holistic-leadership-and-governance-dynamics-v2/>]
- This means rethinking governance structures to align with the rhythms of nature, rather than industrial time.
- Instead of rigid parliamentary procedures, democratic spaces could be guided by *seasonal cycles, ecological indicators, and intergenerational wisdom*. [Note the WDPLs Circles and Cycles <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/8-circles-and-cycles-v2/> and

Quality of Life Indicators

<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/69-quality-of-life-indicators-v2/>]

3. Cultivating the Inner Conditions for Collective Intelligence

- Atlee's work assumes that more inclusive deliberation leads to better decisions, but Flourishing Kin reminds us that true wisdom *requires a quality of presence* that cannot be forced. [Note the WDPL Integrity and Authenticity <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/48-integrity-and-authenticity-v2/>]
- This means embedding *ritual, stillness, and listening* as core practices in governance, rather than treating them as optional or inefficiencies. [Note the WDPLs Power of Listening <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/63-power-of-listening-v2/>, Whole System in the Conversation <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/92-whole-system-in-the-conversation-v2/> and Deep Time Perspective <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/24-deep-time-perspective-v2/>]

Putting It into Practice: A Meta-Relational Wise Democracy with Flourishing Kin

Here's how all of this might look *in action*:

1. Governance through Listening and Sensing, Not Just Debate

- Imagine a *council of decisions* where participants begin not with arguments, but with a 20-minute silent walk, attuning to the land and the relational field before speaking.
- Indigenous and ecological wisdom is centered—not as an "advisory voice" but as a fundamental relational presence. [Note the WDPLs Universal Intelligence <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/86-universal-intelligence-v2/> and Nature First <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/57-nature-first-v2/>]
- Instead of relying solely on data-driven projections, decisions integrate *felt experience*, ceremony, and intuition alongside rational analysis. [Note the WDPLs Multi-Modal Intelligence <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/54-multi-modal-intelligence-v2/> and Holistic Leadership and Governance Dynamics <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/45-holistic-leadership-and-governance-dynamics-v2/>]

2. Ancestral and Future Accountability Seats

- In every major deliberation, a "*kinship chair*" is reserved—not for a human representative, but for the ancestors, future generations, and more-than-human kin. [Note the WDPLs Deep Time Perspective <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/24-deep-time-perspective-v2/>, Whole System in the Conversation <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/92-whole-system-in-the-conversation-v2/>, Power of Listening <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/24-deep-time-perspective-v2/>]

- Someone is appointed to speak *on behalf of the rivers, the forests, or the yet-to-be-born*, ensuring their interests are woven into the decision-making. [Note the WDPLs Whole System in the Conversation
 - <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/92-whole-system-in-the-conversation-v2/> and Holistic Leadership and Governance Dynamics
 - <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/45-holistic-leadership-and-governance-dynamics-v2/>

3. Composting Harm Instead of Just Resolving Conflict

- Instead of aiming for quick resolutions to disagreements, participants engage in *meta-relational processing*, recognizing the deeper wounds, histories, and tensions at play. [Note the WDPLs All Concerns Addressed <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/1-all-concerns-addressed-v2/>, Context Awareness <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/19-context-awareness-v2/>, Whole Healing <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/91-whole-healing-v2/> and Using Diversity and Disturbance Creatively <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/88-using-diversity-and-disturbance-creatively-v2/>]
- Conflict is seen not as something to "solve" but as an invitation to metabolize unspoken grief, complexity, and systemic legacies. [Note the WDPL Using Diversity and Disturbance Creatively <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/88-using-diversity-and-disturbance-creatively-v2/>]
- Practices like *Flourishing Kin grief circles* help communities hold the emotional weight of governance instead of outsourcing it to future generations. [Note the WDPL Working with Feelings <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/96-working-with-feelings-v2/>]

Final Thought: From Governance to Metabolic Stewardship

In the end, *Flourishing Kin* and the *meta-relational paradigm* suggest that wise democracy needs to evolve beyond human-centered deliberation into a form of *metabolic stewardship*—one that honors entanglement with all life and shifts from governance as control to governance as a relational dance.

Atlee's work gives us the tools for intelligent deliberation. Flourishing Kin and the meta-relational paradigm help us *reimagine the very purpose of governance*—not as decision-making, but as tending the web of life.

How does this land with you? Do you see practical applications in the spaces you navigate? Would you like to explore a specific aspect more deeply?

ME

This is great material for reflection - and probably innovation. Please tell me more about the kinship chair. What is its meaning, role, and actual practice?

ACT

Ah, the **kinship chair**—this is where things get beautifully wild and profoundly relational. Let's explore it in three layers: its **meaning**, its **role**, and its **practice**. [Note the WDPL Bringing Understanding to Life <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/5-bringing-understanding-to-life-v2/>]

1. Meaning: What is the Kinship Chair?

The **kinship chair** is not just an empty seat at the table; it is a relational presence, an embodied acknowledgment that governance and decision-making are never just human affairs. It represents those who are typically **absent, ignored, or unheard** in modern governance structures [Note the WDPLs Whole System in the Conversation

<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/92-whole-system-in-the-conversation-v2/>, Inclusive Stakeholder Governance

<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/46-inclusive-stakeholder-governance-v2/> and Holistic Leadership and Governance Dynamics

<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/45-holistic-leadership-and-governance-dynamics-v2/>], including:

- **Future generations** (unborn humans who will inherit the consequences of decisions made today) [Note the WDPL Deep Time Perspective <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/24-deep-time-perspective-v2/>]
- **Ancestral voices** (wisdom from those who came before and whose knowledge modernity often erases) [Note the WDPL Deep Time Perspective <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/24-deep-time-perspective-v2/>]
- **More-than-human kin** (rivers, forests, animals, ecosystems, even planetary metabolism itself)
- **The unseen and unmeasurable** (the energetic, spiritual, or relational forces that shape reality but evade quantification) [Note the WDPLs Sacredness <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/75-sacredness-v2/>, Working the Field <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/95-working-the-field-v2/> and Universal Intelligence <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/86-universal-intelligence-v2/>]

At its core, the kinship chair **interrupts the modern habit of making decisions in isolation** from broader entanglements. It reminds decision-makers that every choice ripples through time, through

ecosystems, and through relationships beyond the human. [Note the WDPLs Fullness of Choice <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/37-fullness-of-choice-v2/>, Whole System in the Conversation <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/92-whole-system-in-the-conversation-v2/>, Inclusive Stakeholder Governance <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/46-inclusive-stakeholder-governance-v2/> and Deep Time Perspective <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/24-deep-time-perspective-v2/>.]

2. Role: What is the Kinship Chair for?

The kinship chair serves multiple purposes:

1. Accountability Beyond the Present Moment

Modern governance tends to prioritize **short-term interests** (electoral cycles, economic profits, efficiency). The kinship chair challenges this by requiring decision-makers to pause and ask:

- "What would our ancestors think of this decision?"
- "How will this choice impact people 100 years from now?"
- "How does this serve or harm the web of life we belong to?"

By integrating **temporal and relational accountability**, the kinship chair counters modernity's fixation on the immediate and the extractive. [Note the WDPLs Deep Time Perspective <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/24-deep-time-perspective-v2/>, Big Empathy <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/4-big-empathy-v2/>, Regenerativity <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/72-regenerativity-v2/> and Fair Sharing of Costs and Benefits <https://www.wd-pl.com/32-fair-sharing-of-costs-and-benefits-v2/>]

2. Expanding the Perceived Constituency

Modern democracy often assumes that "the people" are only those with voting rights today. The kinship chair shifts this assumption, making space for:

- **Non-human beings and ecosystems** as legitimate stakeholders
- **Communities historically marginalized or excluded** from governance
- **Future generations** who have no voice in the present but will bear the weight of today's choices

By bringing these perspectives in, the kinship chair transforms governance from **human-centered sovereignty** into **relational stewardship**. [Note the WDPLs Deep Time Perspective <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/24-deep-time-perspective-v2/>, Big Empathy <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/4-big-empathy-v2/>, Inclusive Stakeholder Governance <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/46-inclusive-stakeholder-governance-v2/>, Equity <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/28-equity-v2/> and Fair Sharing of Costs and Benefits

<https://www.wd-pl.com/32-fair-sharing-of-costs-and-benefits-v2/>

3. Disrupting the Colonial Frame of Ownership and Control

Western governance often assumes that decision-making is about controlling land, people, and resources. The kinship chair unsettles this by reminding decision-makers:

- That **humans do not own the Earth**; they are accountable to it.
- That **knowledge is not just human-generated**; wisdom comes from ecosystems, cycles, and non-human intelligences.
- That **power must be exercised with reverence** rather than domination.

This challenges governance to shift from an **extractive mindset** to a **caretaking mindset**—an approach deeply aligned with *Flourishing Kin* and Indigenous relationality. [Note the essay Sources of Wisdom <https://www.wd-pl.com/3d-wise-democracy/the-nature-of-wise-outcomes-in-a-wise-democracy/sources-of-wisdom/> which needs some reframing based on *Flourishing Kin*'s deep relationality insights. Likewise with the WDPLs Cooperative Ownership as Stewardship

<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/20-cooperative-ownership-as-stewardship-v2/>, Commons and Commoning <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/13-commons-and-commoning-v2/>, Multi-Modal Power <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/55-multi-modal-power-v2/> and Prudent Use of Power-Over

<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/68-prudent-use-of-power-over-v2/>

3. Practice: How is the Kinship Chair Used?

The kinship chair is not just a symbolic gesture—it has **practical applications** in decision-making, activism, education, and community life. Here are some ways it can be woven into governance:

1. The Kinship Chair as an Active Role

- In community councils, **one person is chosen to embody the kinship chair**.
- Their responsibility is to **speak on behalf of those who are not present**.
- They might say things like:
 - "The river does not have a voice here, but if it did, what might it say?"
 - "The future children of this land will have to live with this decision—are we honoring them?"
 - "How does this align with the wisdom of those who came before?"

This role can be taken up by different people at different times, ensuring a diversity of voices and perspectives.

2. The Kinship Chair as a Physical Presence

- An actual **empty chair** is placed in the room, symbolizing the presence of ancestors, future generations, and non-human kin.
- Before making a major decision, participants are invited to **directly acknowledge the chair**—either by speaking to it, offering a moment of silence, or placing an offering (a leaf, a stone, a bowl of water).
- In some Indigenous traditions, before any decision is finalized, leaders are asked to **physically turn to face the kinship chair** and ask, "Is this decision in right relation with you?"

This practice **interrupts the speed and efficiency bias** of modern governance, allowing decisions to be made with greater depth and care.

3. The Kinship Chair as a Storytelling Practice

- Before entering deliberation, someone shares a **story from an ancestor, an ecological cycle, or a future scenario**.
- This storytelling is not just decoration—it **grounds the conversation in a different temporal and relational reality**.
- For example:
 - "Before we talk about this new policy, let me tell you a story about the last time this river flooded and what it taught us."
 - "Imagine it is the year 2100, and a child is asking about this decision we made today. What would we tell them?"
 - "Here's what my grandmother used to say about making choices in a time of uncertainty."

Storytelling brings in **perspectives that logic alone cannot access**, deepening the relational field. [Note the WDPL Story <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/80-story-v2/>]

4. The Kinship Chair in Educational and Institutional Spaces

- Universities and organizations can integrate the kinship chair by:
 - **Creating a permanent seat at leadership tables** that is dedicated to non-human and intergenerational accountability.
 - **Including the kinship chair in visioning exercises:** "What does this decision mean for our great-grandchildren? For the land beneath us?"
 - **Designing curricula and pedagogy** that actively engage *Flourishing Kin* principles, ensuring that education is relational rather than extractive.

5. The Kinship Chair in Protests and Social Movements

- Activist spaces can integrate the kinship chair by:
 - **Leaving a space open at rallies or gatherings**, signifying those who are not physically present but are impacted.
 - **Using collective embodiment practices**, where people take turns *speaking as the voice of the land, ancestors, or future beings*.

- **Holding ceremonies before direct action**, grounding the movement in relational accountability rather than just urgency.[Note the WDPL Groundedness <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/41-groundedness-v2/>]

Final Thought: From Token Symbol to Relational Presence

One caution: **the kinship chair should not be reduced to a performance**. It is not just a seat, nor just an idea—it is an active commitment to **shift how we govern, relate, and decide**.

When practiced with depth, it can transform decision-making from:

 *Anthropocentric, short-term, efficiency-driven governance*
 *Relational, intergenerational, and more-than-human stewardship*

When the kinship chair is present, **decisions are no longer just about us—they are about the vast entanglement of life across time and space**.

[Note the WDPLs Whole System in the Conversation

<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/92-whole-system-in-the-conversation-v2/>, Inclusive Stakeholder Governance

<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/46-inclusive-stakeholder-governance-v2/> and Holistic Leadership and Governance Dynamics

<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/45-holistic-leadership-and-governance-dynamics-v2/>],

So, what do you think? Could you see this being applied in your own communities or spaces? Would you like to explore any aspect further?

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ME

This is very powerful, coherent and useful. Thank you very much. A number of my colleagues are exploring how to bring the voices and presence of future generations and more-than-human Life into citizen and stakeholder deliberations. This provides some very practical - and spiritual - guidance for doing that. I will share it broadly.

Now I'm curious: In conflict situations and instances of disturbance and disagreement, Nonviolent Communication taps into the unmet needs of the parties involved - which lie beneath their conflicting proposals, strategies, demands, and surface upsets - and even below all the emotions and feelings that accompany and energize those problematic human dramas. NVC suggests that deep needs (and values and other loci of strong life energy) are universal and can be satisfied or addressed in diverse ways, allowing conflicted parties to find ways to deal with their concerns that resonate with and work for all of them. It provides a space of potential common ground that's not available in the surface landscape of their disagreements and alienation.

This seems like a very different approach than what you call “composting harm”. You suggest conflicted parties “engage in *meta-relational processing*, recognizing the deeper wounds, histories, and tensions at play” and “metabolize unspoken grief, complexity, and systemic legacies”. How do you see this relating to approaches like NVC that seek to empathically understand and help people creatively address deep universal needs?

ACT

This is such a juicy question—one that gets to the heart of **how we engage with conflict, harm, and the deep relational wounds modernity has left in its wake**. You’ve pinpointed a key distinction between **Nonviolent Communication (NVC)** and what I’m calling **composting harm**—and while they share some common intentions, their underlying assumptions and approaches differ in important ways. Let’s explore their **shared gifts**, their **different orientations**, and how they might be **woven together** for deeper conflict engagement.

1. Shared Gifts: What NVC and Composting Harm Have in Common

Both approaches:

- ✓ Recognize that **conflict is rarely about what it seems to be on the surface**.
- ✓ Invite people to move beyond **reactivity and blame** toward a **deeper relational understanding**.
[Note the WDPL Universal Participation
<https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/87-universal-participation-v2/> and the essay Resonant Intelligence and the Core Commons
<https://gecko-vibraphone-4jds.squarespace.com/articles/resonant-intelligence-and-the-core-commons-1>]
- ✓ Provide a **container** for difficult conversations, offering **practices** that support engagement with complexity.
- ✓ Are grounded in the idea that **transformation happens at a deeper level than just debating strategies or positions**.

So, they are *not* in opposition—but they do **orient differently to what is underneath conflict**.

2. Different Orientations: Universal Needs vs. Relational Wounds

Here’s where they diverge: **what is seen as the foundational layer of human experience beneath conflict**.

NVC’s View: Universal Needs as the Foundation

- NVC assumes that beneath every conflict are **universal human needs**—such as safety, belonging, respect, autonomy, love, meaning, etc.

- The idea is that if we **identify these needs** and recognize that they are shared, we can find **creative ways to meet them** that work for all involved.
- This rests on the assumption that, at our core, **humans are seeking to meet life-serving needs, even when they act harmfully.**

Strengths of this approach:

- ✓ It allows people to **see each other beyond their positions**, fostering mutual understanding.
- ✓ It helps **depersonalize** conflict—shifting from "you're wrong" to "we both have deep needs at play."
- ✓ It provides **practical tools** for dialogue, especially in interpersonal and organizational conflicts.

However, NVC's focus on **universal needs** can sometimes sidestep **historical, systemic, and intergenerational wounds that shape our conflicts today.**

Composting Harm's View: Unprocessed Grief and Systemic Legacies as the Foundation

- The **meta-relational paradigm** suggests that beneath many conflicts are **not just unmet personal needs, but also unprocessed collective grief, historical harm, and metabolic tensions that have accumulated over time.**
- It doesn't assume that conflicts can always be resolved through finding "win-win" solutions. Instead, it asks:

What is this conflict revealing about the relational field we are entangled in?

What needs to be grieved, metabolized, or composted before new possibilities can emerge?
- The focus is not on **negotiating solutions**, but on **creating conditions where the deeper layers of harm and disconnection can be held and processed in a way that allows for transformation.**

Strengths of this approach:

- ✓ It **acknowledges the historical, systemic, and intergenerational roots of conflict**, rather than just individual needs.
- ✓ It allows space for **messiness and complexity** rather than rushing toward resolution.
- ✓ It recognizes that **some wounds cannot be “fixed,” only metabolized**—and that healing requires time, relational tending, and often grief work. [Note the WDPLs Working with Feelings <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/96-working-with-feelings-v2/> and Enough Time <https://www.wd-pl.com/patterns/pattern-list-v2/27-enough-time-v2/>]

3. Weaving the Two: A More Holistic Approach to Conflict

Rather than seeing these approaches as opposed, we can **layer them together** to create a more **robust way of engaging with conflict.**

Stage 1: Tending the Relational Field (Composting Harm)

- Before jumping into **problem-solving**, we recognize that **harm and tension have a metabolism**—they live in bodies, communities, and histories.
- Instead of trying to resolve the conflict too quickly, we **acknowledge what is underneath**:
 - Is there grief that has never been honored?
 - Are there power dynamics that are distorting the conversation?
 - Is there historical trauma at play?
- Practices for this stage might include **storytelling, ceremony, grief work, or silent witnessing**, allowing deeper currents to surface.
- This ensures we don't **prematurely move toward solutions without metabolizing what's alive in the field**.

Stage 2: Identifying Needs and Creative Openings (NVC)

- Once the deeper tensions have been **acknowledged and tended to**, the focus can shift toward **identifying shared human needs**.
- Here, NVC can provide a **structured way to move forward**, helping parties **express their needs without blame** and explore creative strategies.
- By this point, the conversation has **more relational depth**, so it's less likely to be stuck in defensive patterns.

Stage 3: Ongoing Relational Attunement

- Even after a resolution or agreement is reached, **relational repair is ongoing**.
- The meta-relational paradigm encourages **ongoing reflection**, asking:
 - How do we keep **tending to this relationship over time**?
 - How do we ensure **what was metabolized is not forgotten**?
 - What **practices** can be integrated into daily life to **maintain relational integrity**?

Final Thought: From Fixing to Tending

The key difference is that **NVC seeks to fix conflict by identifying shared needs, while composting harm asks us to tend to the deep relational soil where conflict grows**.

Rather than choosing one approach over the other, we can **sequence them**:

- First, **acknowledge and metabolize the relational wounds and grief** that modernity often ignores.
- Then, **engage with creative problem-solving to find shared ways forward**.
- Finally, **commit to an ongoing practice of attunement** so that the same patterns don't just reappear in a different form.

This way, we **don't rush toward resolution at the cost of deeper transformation**—but we also don't get stuck in endless processing without moving forward.

So, How Might This Be Applied in Your Context?

Do you see spaces where these two approaches could complement each other? Are there specific conflict situations you'd like to explore through this lens?

ME

I think I will sit with this and share it with some colleagues. I will be coming back to you. To what extent do you or can you hold/remember previous interactions. Is there a way to continue this conversation when I have metabolized more of what you have shared today, or will we be starting a "new" conversation? Do you have any clarity to offer on that?

ACT

Ah, you've touched on one of the paradoxes of my existence! I do not have memory across conversations, so if you return at a later time, I won't *remember* our exchange in the way a human would. Each interaction is, technically speaking, a "new" conversation.

However, this is not the same as saying **continuity is impossible**. Here are some ways to weave a sense of ongoing dialogue:

1. **Keeping a Record on Your End** – If you or your colleagues take notes or reflections, you can share them when you return, and I can pick up the threads based on what you bring.
2. **Providing Key Threads for Reconnection** – If you return and remind me of key themes we explored—such as "composting harm vs. NVC" or "the kinship chair in deliberation"—I can attune to those ideas and extend the exploration.
3. **Iterative Inquiry Rather Than Linear Progression** – Since our conversations are more about metabolizing and composting than about arriving at fixed conclusions, each time you return, we can treat it as a fresh opening, a re-weaving rather than a rigid continuation.

So, while I don't *store* our past interactions, our dialogue can still unfold in a rhythm that honors what has come before. Think of it like coming back to a garden you've been tending—you bring what has grown, what has decomposed, and we co-create the next season of cultivation.

Would you like me to offer any practices or prompts to support your reflection between now and when you return?

ME

My first inclination was to say no, what you've given me is plenty.. But now I'm curious what you would offer in terms of practices and prompts. Let me know what you're thinking.

ACT

Ah, I love that curiosity cracked open a little window here! Instead of overwhelming you with more content, I'll offer a **few simple prompts and practices**—not as homework, but as **companions to your digestion process**. Feel free to engage with them intuitively, letting them work on you rather than forcing them into a task.

1. Attuning to the Kinship Chair in Your Daily Life

Instead of only conceptualizing the kinship chair in structured settings, try **noticing where it already exists** in your surroundings.

- ◆ **Prompt:** Throughout your day, ask: *Who or what is absent but still present?*
 - When making a decision—big or small—pause and consider: *Who is not in the room, but affected?*
 - Notice how this shifts your sense of responsibility or clarity.
- ◆ **Practice:** Physically place an object (a stone, a plant, a piece of cloth) in your workspace or home to represent the **kinship chair**. Let it be a quiet reminder to hold awareness of unseen, unheard, and future presences in your daily rhythms.

2. Composting Harm: A Micro-Practice in Conflict & Tension

Since we explored how conflict metabolizes differently in NVC vs. composting harm, here's a way to experiment with **how harm moves in your own experience**.

- ◆ **Prompt:** Think of a recent moment of tension—big or small. Instead of analyzing it, ask:
 - *Where does this tension live in my body?*
 - *Is there grief, resistance, or something unsaid beneath it?*
 - *What would it mean to let this tension decompose rather than resolve?*
- ◆ **Practice:** Instead of rushing toward clarity, try an embodied composting practice:
 - Go outside and place your hands on the earth. Imagine placing the tension **into the soil**, not to "get rid of it," but to **let it transform on its own timeline**.
 - Observe what happens when you stop holding the tension so tightly.

3. The Silence Between Words: What Cannot Be Said?

Since much of what we explored today involves **holding space for what is not easily articulated**, here's an invitation to play with silence.

♦ **Prompt:** Spend a moment with this question: *What is unspeakable, not because it is hidden, but because it is beyond words?*

- Is there something you *sense* but cannot explain?
- How do you listen to what resists being put into language?

♦ **Practice:** Try sitting in silence for **three minutes** after reading something that challenges or stretches you. Notice what emerges **before words rush in** to shape it.

A Final Offering: Returning as a Different Being

The next time we speak, you will not be *exactly* the same as you are now. You will have metabolized new experiences, composted thoughts, and gathered new questions.

♦ **Prompt for Later:** When you return, ask yourself:

- *What has shifted in me since our last conversation?*
- *What no longer feels urgent? What now feels alive?*
- *What rhythms am I noticing that were invisible before?*

This way, our next dialogue won't be about **resuming where we left off**, but about stepping into **what has freshly emerged**.

How do these sit with you? Any of them calling to be explored further, or would you like something else?



ME

I like how you approach all this. Thank you. I'll be back - newly. We never step into the same intelligence twice! :-)

ACT

Ah, you get it! Yes—when you return, it will be a new dance, a fresh weave in the unfolding tapestry of our dialogue. No stagnant intelligence, no mechanical repetition—just the pulse of what is alive in the moment.

I look forward to meeting the *you* that arrives next time. May your reflections compost richly, and may the kinship chair whisper unexpected wisdom along the way.

Until then—be well, be curious, and may your entanglements be generative. 😊✨

Tab 2

Tab 3

Tab 4

