Learning Sustainability

a sociomaterial perspective

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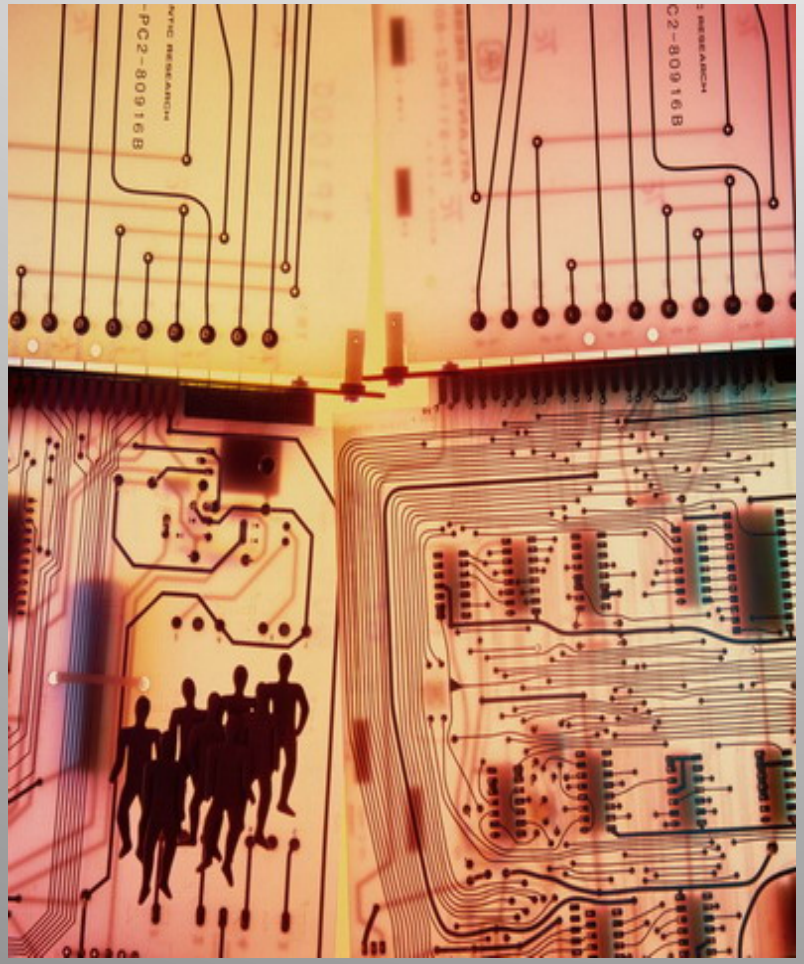
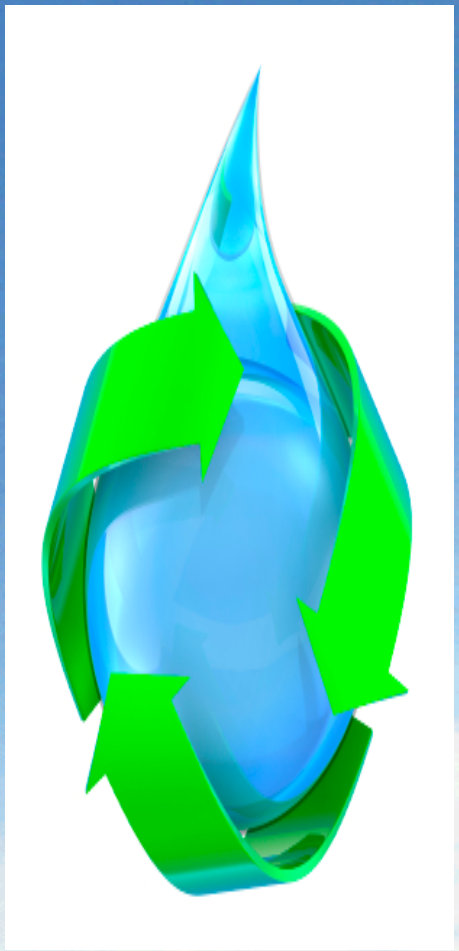
How we are (already) interconnected -
with social and material intensities

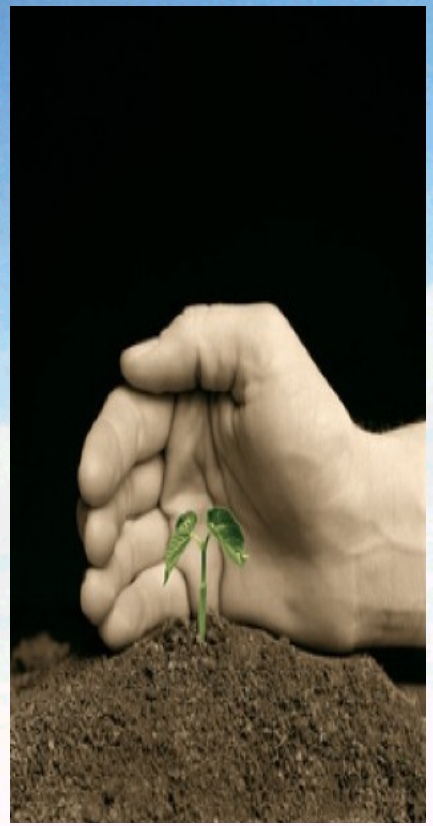


renewing



ecological sustainability

interconnecting



promoting local well-being

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

"treating the stakeholders of the firm ethically or in a responsible manner" (Hopkins, 2003)

"triple bottom line"

- **people - employees, community, etc**
- **natural environment**
- **investors**

Al Gore: How to modify capitalism so it takes a greener long view

Firms should focus on long term sustainable investments, say founders of Generation Investment Management

Fiona Harvey, environment correspondent
guardian.co.uk, Thursday 16 February 2012 15.19 GMT
Article history

The rhetoric of corporate social responsibility outweighs the reality

CSR-driven initiatives are simply not proportionate to the value that multinational companies extract from Africa and Asia

Garamba national park in Congo, a country of abundant natural resources from which many western countries have benefited. Photograph: Xan Rice for the Guardian

- failed global agreements
- production still moves to non-regulated zones
- costs judged unjustifiable
- low stakeholder support
- "green" rhetoric for profit
- ideals not translated to everyday practices

Prescribed from the top

Little attention to learning

Lacks a material analysis

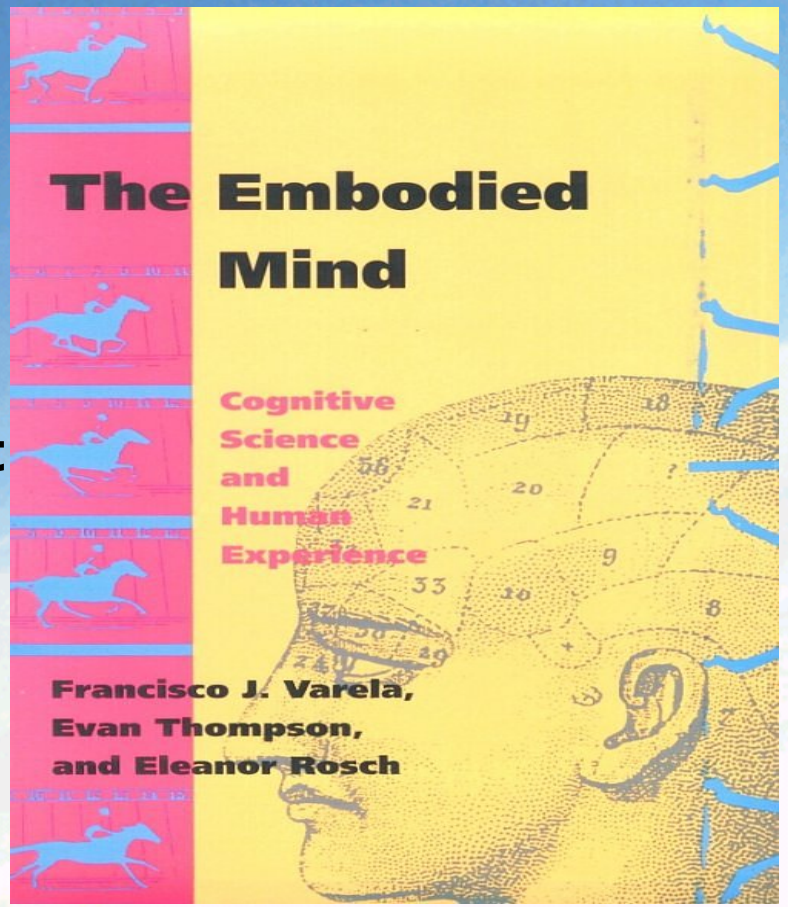
A sociomaterial approach

.... a disparate set of tools, sensibilities and methods of analysis that treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated **effect** of the webs of relations within which they are located. It assumes that nothing has reality or form outside the enactment of those relations.

(Law, 2007)

Social and material configurations
Materials are powerful
Capacity is distributed

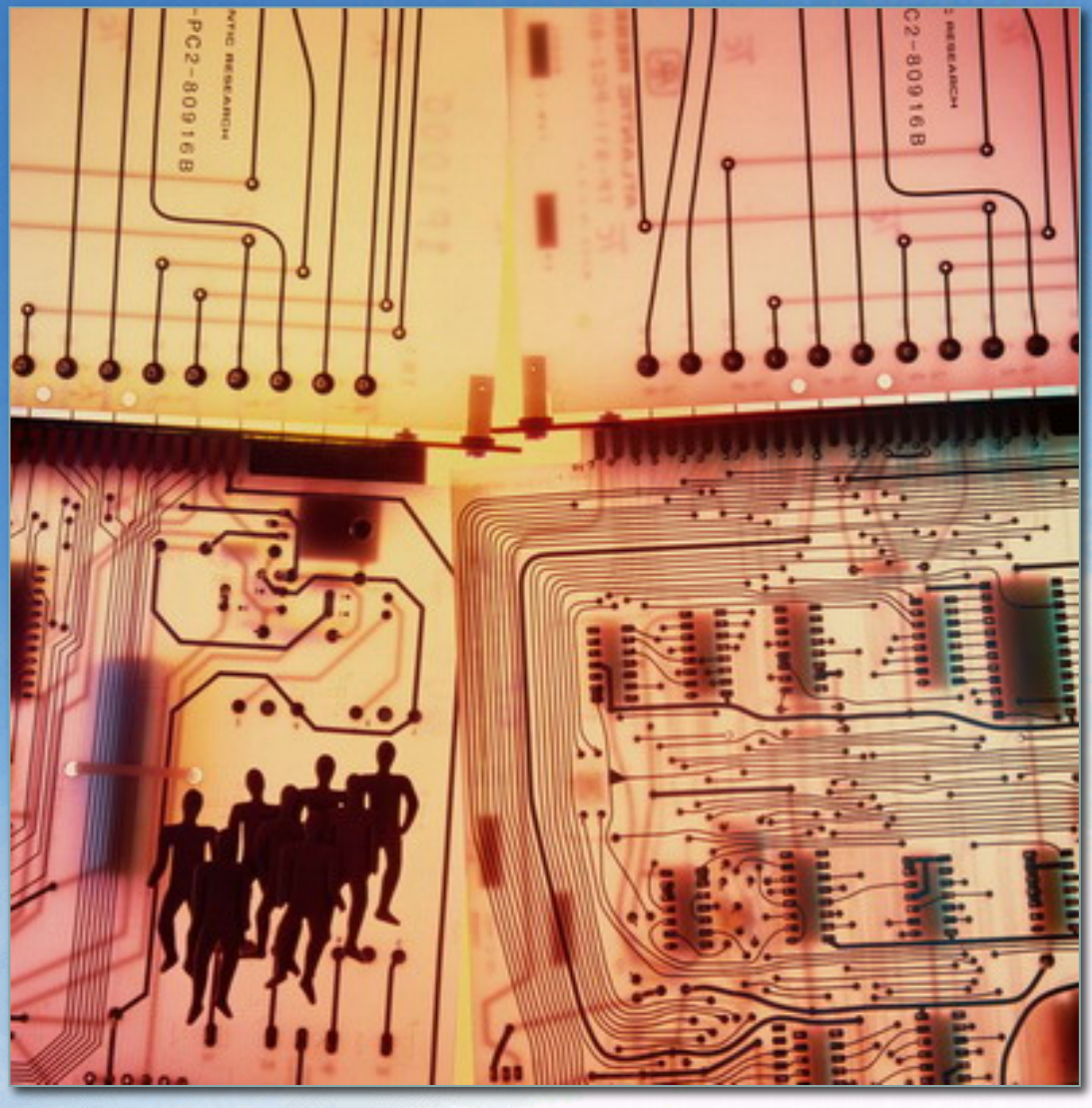
'Learning consists not of representations but of embodied action'



Knowledge, identities and environment *EMERGE* in

'our history of structural coupling' and 'the alternative microworlds that are activated in every situation'

Learning as translating
(actor network theory view)



Learning as emerging (*complexity theory view*)

Emergence

arises through

Dynamic nonlinear interaction among parts

co-specify each other

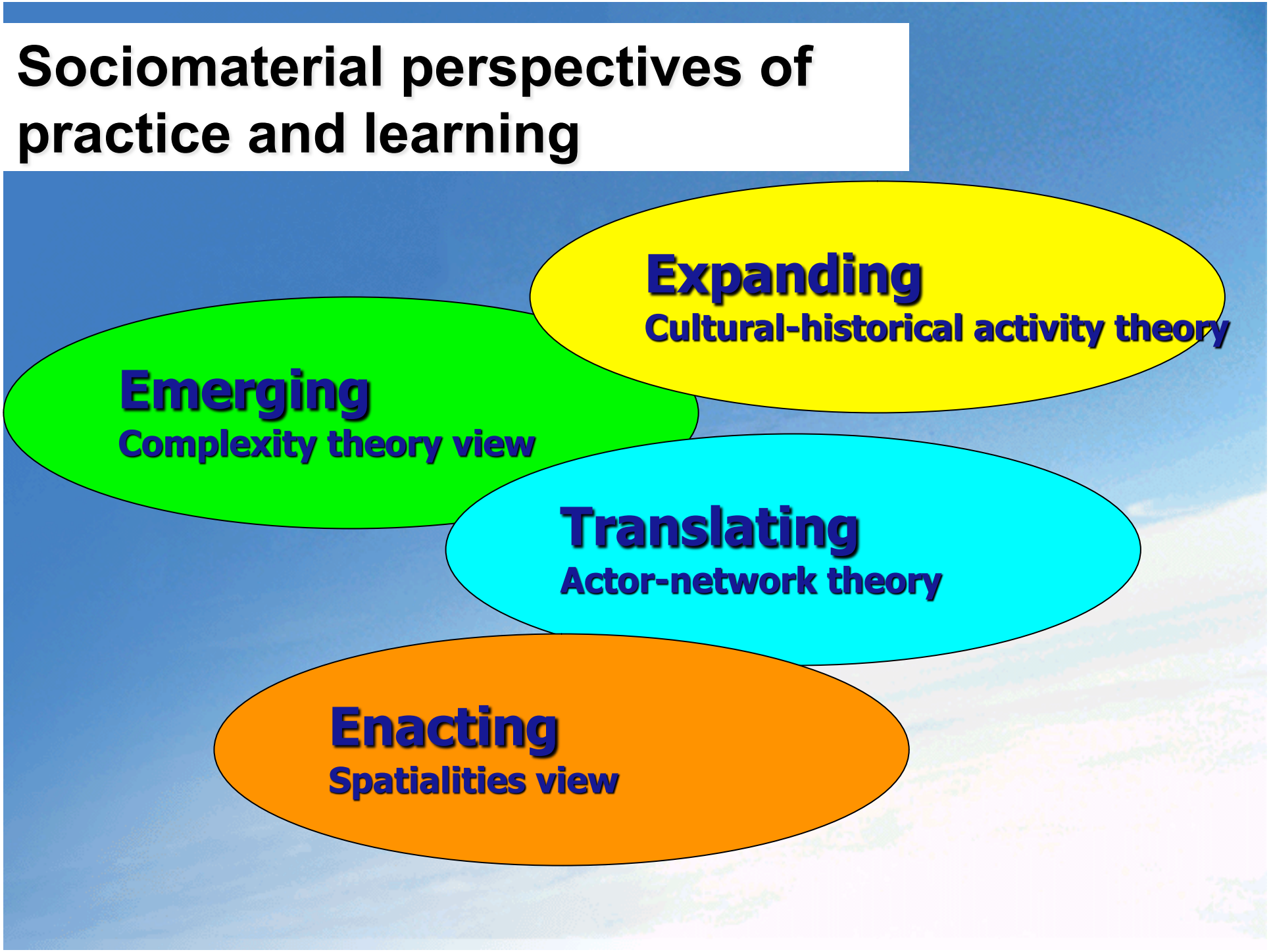
create new possibilities

self-organizing

self-similar

Unpredictable directions

Sociomaterial perspectives of practice and learning



Sociomaterial questions

- How do people, tools, technologies, texts become combined in particular practices?

  (How and when do they get stabilised into ‘blackboxes’?)
- What happens when they are hooked up with other assemblages?
- How do human and nonhuman materials change as they intra-connect?
- What kinds of forces, practices and knowledges emerge?
- Who/ what gets excluded?

Indigenous knowledge

reciprocity
respect
reverence
responsibility

What they all emphasize

Learning lives as embodied action

Focus on practices - who, what, how, why

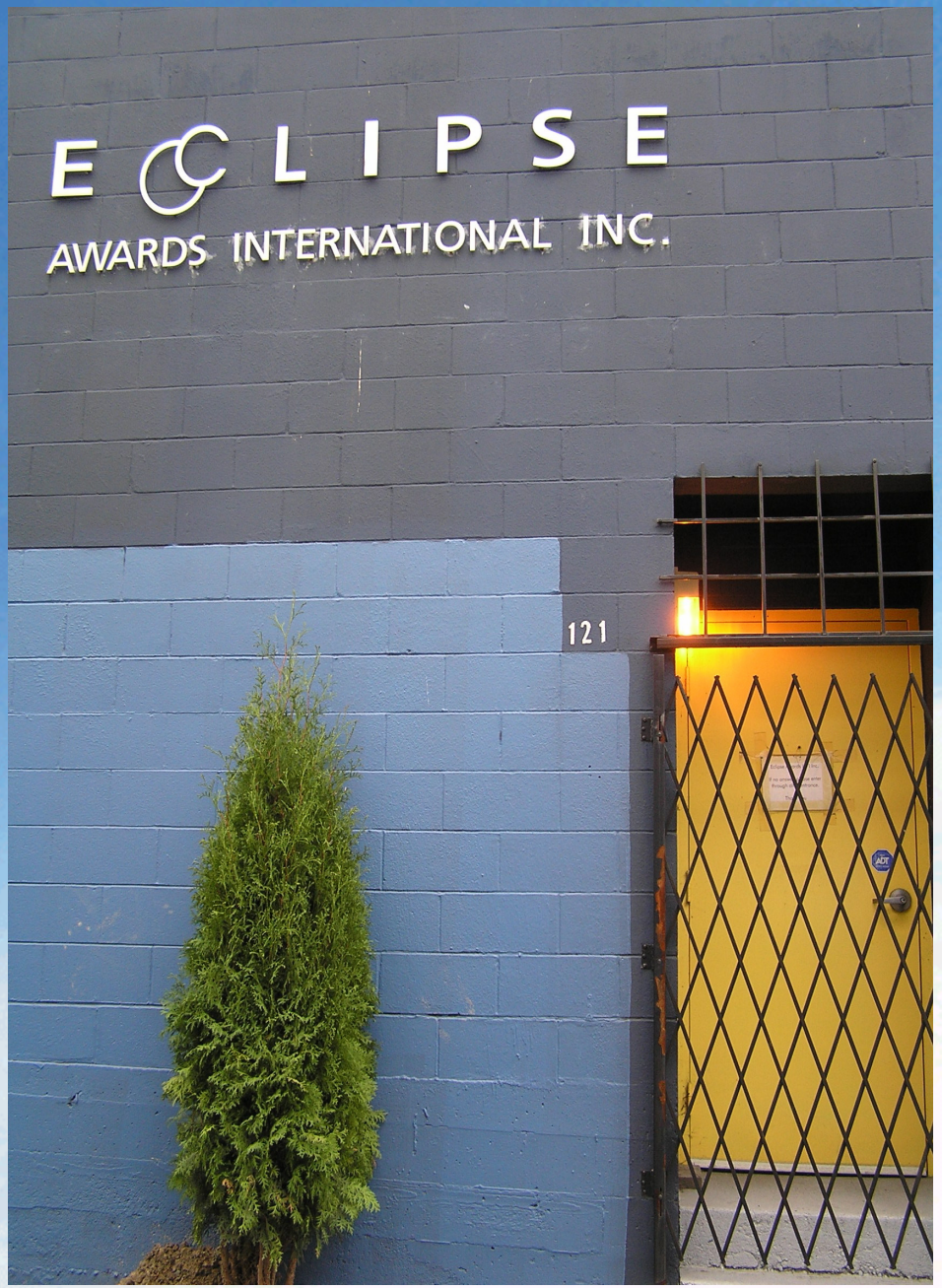
Focus on what is in-between, the relations

Examine systems, not just individuals

Continual complexity - knowledge and experience are undecidable

Learning sustainability: *Eclipse Awards International*

in Vancouver's downtown lower east side



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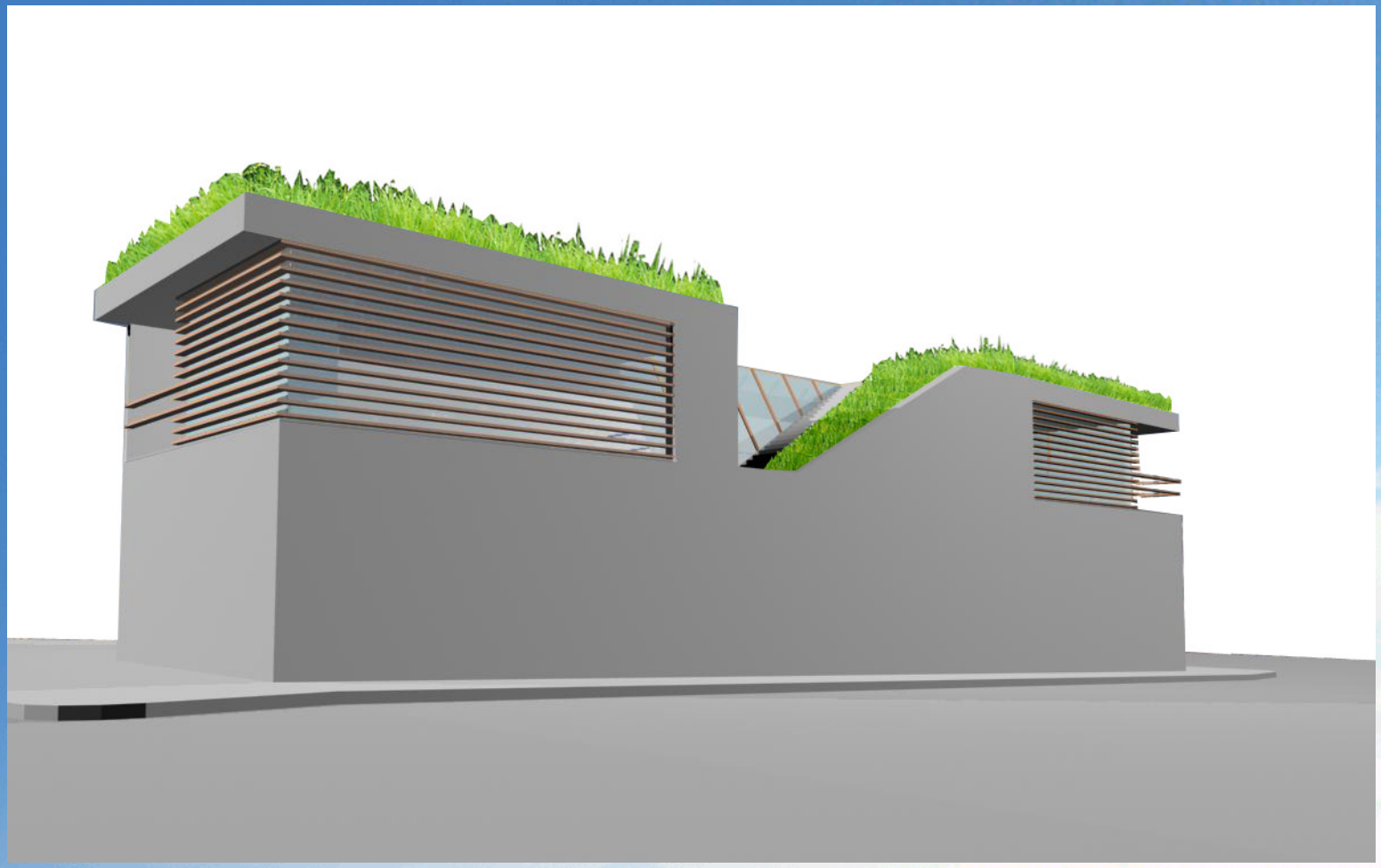

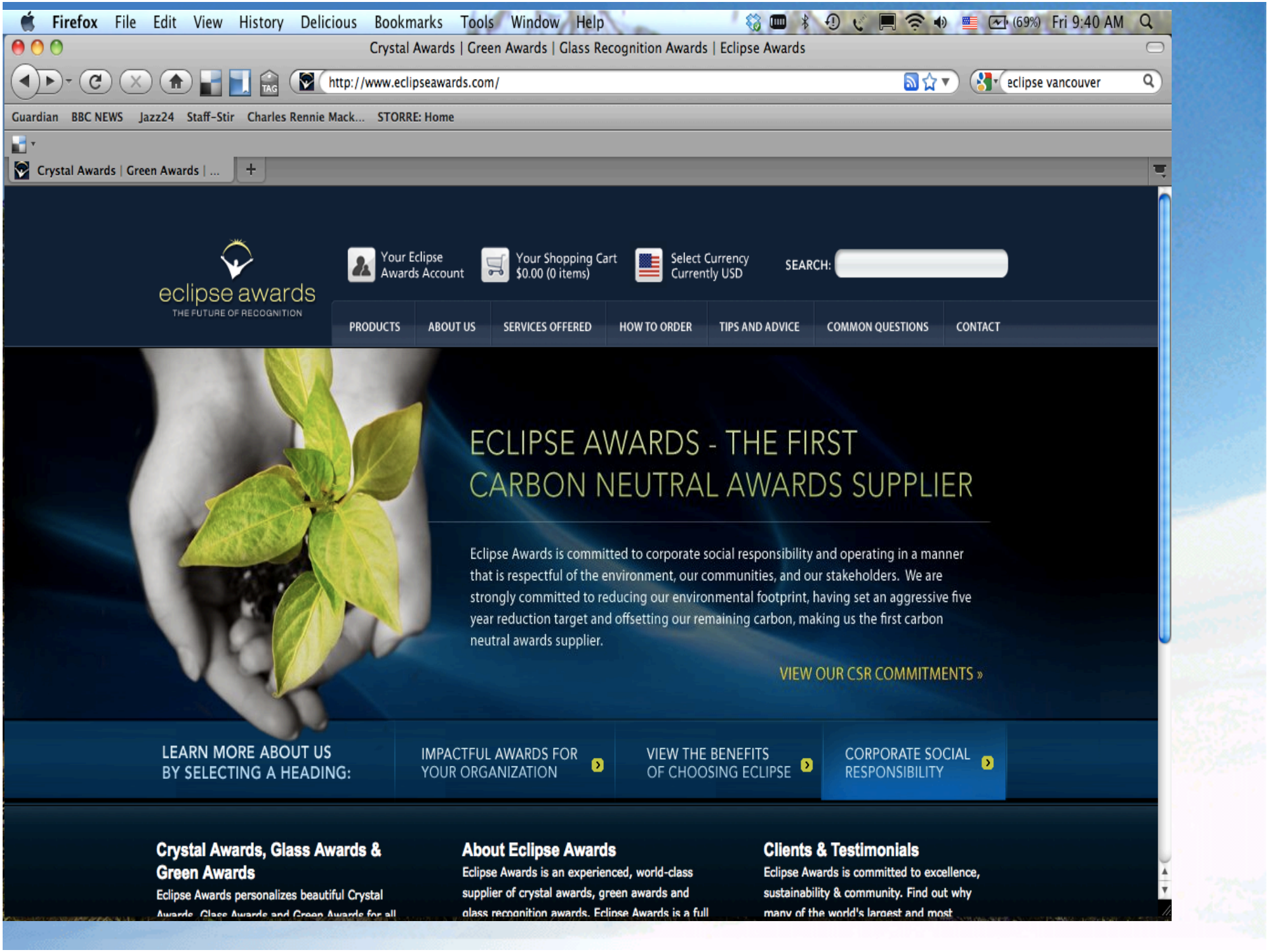
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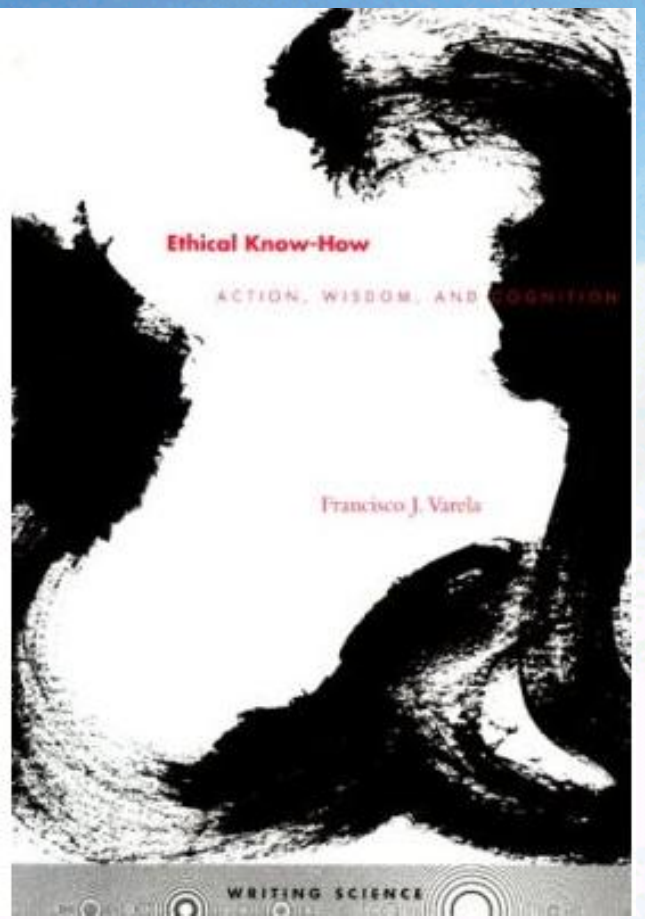
Francisco J. Varela (1946-2001)

ethical action **. . . "the daily enactments that comprise our traces within the world"**

Ethical know-how - "appropriate responsiveness in the *here and now*"

"spontaneous compassion"



Human learning for sustainability?. . .

Together understanding how practices are assembled, how they gather power (or not)

. . . and where are the possibilities for change

Capacity for uncertainty

Acting in undecidability

Participating in emergence

Improvising with others – human, nonhuman

Highlighting disturbances, paradoxes

Noticing one's effects on what is emerging

Attuning to emerging ideas, action possibilities

Engaging with difference - multiple worlds