

A close-up photograph of a tree branch. In the upper left, a brown bud is visible on a dark branch. Below it, several bright green, serrated leaves are in focus. The background is a soft-focus green and grey, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

# Cultural sustainability transformation

Katriina Siivonen

PhD, Adjunct Professor, University Lecturer  
Finland Futures Research Centre, University of Turku  
katriina.siivonen@utu.fi

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**Sustainable new ways of life, business models, and social renewal for the future**

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Photo: K. Siivonen

# A need for transformation

- Ecological problems are decreasing resilience of our living environments and destroying prerequisites for well-being (Steffen et al. 2015)
- Leverage points for systemic sustainability transformation
- Need to operate on the deepest levels of them in order to reach the transformation (Abson et al. 2017; Meadows 1999)
- Policy interventions typically does not address the deep level leverage points, and thus fails in their target of sustainability transformation (Abson et al. 2017)

# The changing power of culture

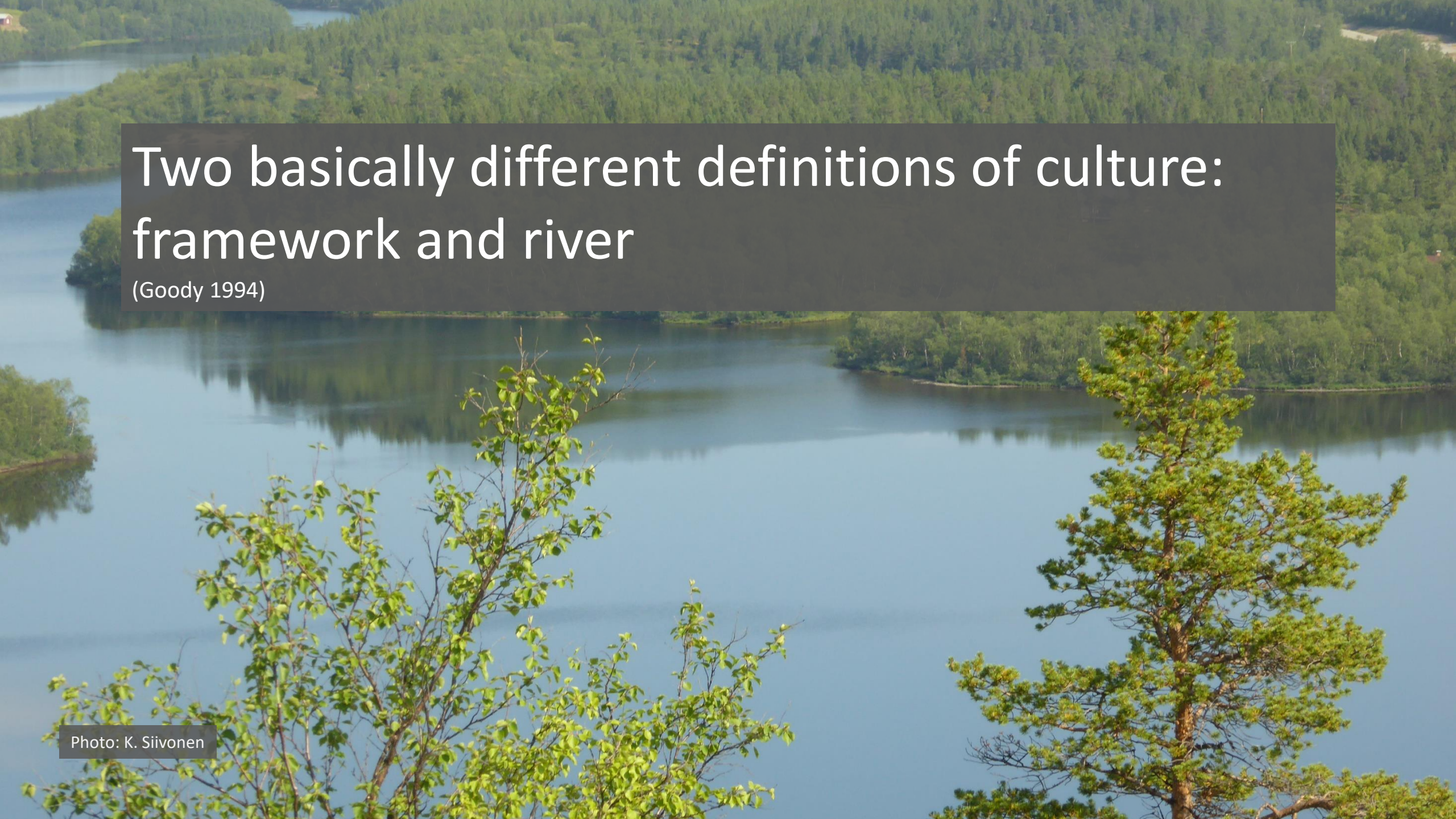
- The deepest level of leverage points consists of worldviews, human-nature relationships, and from them arising goals, actions, habits, and practices (see Abson et al. 2017)
  - These are basic cultural expressions
  - As cultural expressions, they define and are defined by human everyday life
- As a part of global sustainability transformation, we need cultural sustainability transformation (see Huttunen et al. 2021)
  - Worldviews, human-nature relationships, knowledge, skills, actions, habits and practices belongs to intangible culture
  - In instrumental use in social, economic and political contexts, these are defined as **intangible cultural heritage (ICH)**
  - Culture and cultural heritage have an impact everywhere in the society

# Ethical reflection

- A normative goal:
  - Cultural sustainability transformation requires changes in cultural expressions
- Respect for human rights:
  - “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as [...] political or other opinion” (United Nations 1948)
- Ethics in cultural research:
  - Respect for the diversity of human beings, communities, different cultural expressions, and for rights of human beings to their own cultural expressions (AAA 2012.)
  - These expressions are e.g. worldviews and political or other opinions as well as different practices and habits based on them

# Ethical solutions

- All human beings, including researchers, have a responsibility to safeguard the future of nature and human life
- Futures researchers' professional responsibility lies in the support given to people to
  - "become aware of the values that guide their actions through the consequences that may arise from them"
- (Poli 2011, 409 and passim.)
- When combining cultural heritage research, futures research, and sustainability science for co-creation of cultural sustainability transformation, there is a need to find a balance between different ethical standpoints of them (Siivonen 2022, forthcoming.)



# Two basically different definitions of culture: framework and river

(Goody 1994)

Photo: K. Siivonen

# Framework

- Relatively stable, contextual structure which gives a framework to social activities (Geertz 1957)
  - Cultural sustainability is preservation and safeguarding of cultureS and cultural elements belonging to these cultureS
  - E.g. cultural rights of indigenous people

# River

- A global social process, in which culture is constantly renewed and co-created in interaction
  - between human beings and
  - between human beings and their tangible and intangible environment (human-made and nature) (Hannerz 1992)
    - Cultural sustainability is safeguarding of the living process and the transformative power of culture
    - Culture is seen as a part of nature
    - (Siivonen 2008; 2017; 2018; 2022 forthcoming)



# Inclusion and participation

- The core of cultural sustainability can be seen as the right of people to take part in and have an impact on the own culture – culture as framework – or on the cultural change in the own cultural environment – culture as river – together with other people
- However, this does not guarantee the direction of the cultural change towards sustainability of any dimension
  - Safeguarding of cultural heritage can support resilience of people and communities
- In spite of this, the possibility to take part and have an impact can be seen as a condition of cultural sustainability transformation
- (Siivonen 2017; 2008.)

# Heritage Futures

- Heritage Futures is based on intangible cultural heritage (ICH): worldviews, knowledge, skills, actions, habits and practices
  - Can be formed and used as a means to co-direct cultural transformation towards a more sustainable world in a participatory process
- Heritage Futures requires disruptive co-creation of selected cultural elements and care of their sustainable impacts on nature and human beings  
(Siivonen 2019; 2020; 2022 forthcoming)
  - Care of the transformative power of culture is a part of Heritage Futures
- Heritage Futures are intentionally co-created human-nature relationships including new types of meanings and actions which produce sustainable futures
- For more information: <https://sites.utu.fi/dynamo/en/>

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**Thank you!**

katriina.siivonen@utu.fi

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