

The Problem of Industry Marketing: Thinking and the Erosion of Authentic Communication

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Abstract

In contemporary socio-philosophical critique, Dr. Neville Buch identifies “marketing thinking” as a primary intellectual pathology corrupting modern industry, governance, and civic life. Rooted in the Techné Mindset and the rise of Bureaucratic Humanism, marketing thinking reduces human existence, professional services, and social relationships to a series of transactional metrics, aesthetic brand displays, and manipulative messaging. While the basic function of marketing—making one's work, services, or products visible—remains a necessary component of economic and cultural exchange, marketing thinking converts this functional necessity into an obsessive, skewed worldview. Drawing on the satirical critiques of cartoonist Tom Fishburne, the sociological models of Pierre Bourdieu and Randall Collins, the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas, and Arif Jameel’s framework of the “Lifestyle State,” this essay examines the mechanics of

¹ Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) has been fairly used in the production of this work. The tool used is Google NotebookLM (recently rebranded as Gemini Notebook). It is an AI-powered virtual research assistant and thinking partner designed to help a person interact deeply with their own documents. Unlike general chatbots, it is source-grounded, meaning it only generates answers based on the specific PDFs, documents, or links uploaded. The A.I. process in the production of this work has been limited to the attached (prompts) on each of the questions in turn. This ensures an accurate reading of each source. The author then rearranged and re-edited the answers the A.I. provided. The human author publishes this work. A.I. is never an author when used properly. This assistance is not qualitatively different from a human research assistant when that assistance is deemed to have no authorial status but is acknowledged.

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marketing thinking. It contrasts this distorted paradigm with fair, truth-grounded promotion (*Verständigung* and *panser*) and explains how political captivity to marketing thinking renders intelligent employment and public contracting near-impossible by prioritizing positional property, credential inflation, and aesthetic PR over substantive competence and social accountability.

I. The Necessity of Promotion versus the Skewed Pathology of “Marketing Thinking”

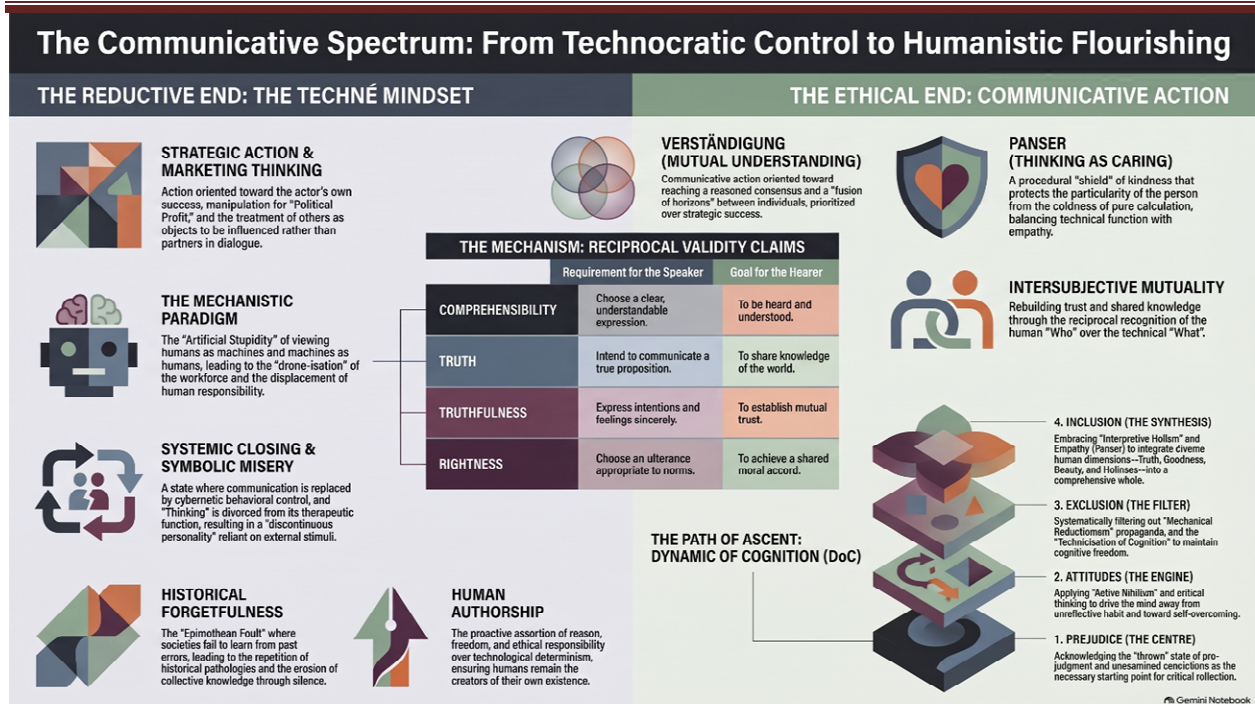
In any complex society, individuals and organizations must communicate the availability and value of their contributions. The fundamental act of marketing—in its modest, functional sense—serves to connect human capabilities with genuine social needs, facilitating the distribution of goods, services, and creative works. However, Dr. Neville Buch argues that contemporary industry has suffered a catastrophic shift from functional promotion to marketing thinking as an all-encompassing, obsessive lifestyle (Buch 2025: 16; Buch 2026: 11–13).

Marketing thinking occurs when the logic of advertising and brand management colonizes human cognition, transforming how individuals perceive reality, value, and identity. Under this skewed approach:

- **Life is Imposed by Aesthetics:** Culture, heritage, and civic identity are no longer organically created by living communities; rather, they are “imposed by the advertising industry, the heritage industry, and the political class,” sucking human agency into an unreflective “black hole” (Buch 2025: 16).
- **Technicisation of Cognition:** Communication is stripped of its interpretive depth and reduced to a “technology of rhetorical defence” or a mechanism for behavioural manipulation (Ellul 1973: 11–13; Buch 2026: 6, 19).
- **The “Lifestyle” Displacement:** As formalized in Arif Jameel’s *The Lifestyle State*, institutions no longer derive their legitimacy or public trust from the functional adequacy of what they deliver (such as healthcare outcomes or educational literacy), but rather from their curated, branded aesthetic identity (Jameel 2026b: 1–3).

When marketing thinking becomes an obsessive mindset, human beings cease to function as proactive authors of their own existence. Instead, they are reduced to “puny human nodes” or data points within a broader technocratic apparatus governed by the “coldness of pure calculation” (Buch 2025: 2–3; Jameel 2026b: 10).

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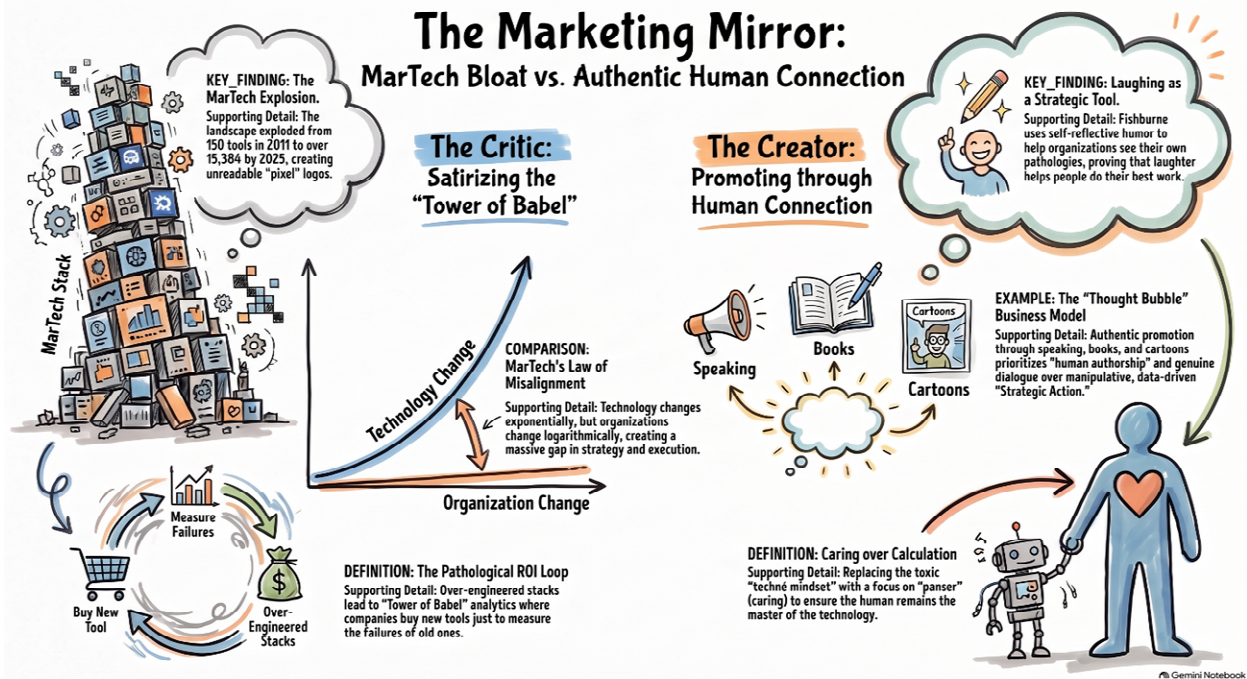


II. The Principles and Paradox of Tom Fishburne: The Critic with a Product

A vivid case study in the tension between necessary promotion and the critique of marketing thinking is found in the work of Tom Fishburne, creator of *Marketoologist* (Fishburne 2026: 1–2). Fishburne occupies a unique dual position in contemporary business culture: he is both a principal critic of marketing excesses and an entrepreneur who actively markets his own creative services, books, and speaking engagements (Fishburne 2026: 1–2).



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Fishburne's Marketoologist platform explicitly pokes fun at the "ever-changing world of marketing and business," satirizing corporate phenomena such as:

1. **The Over-Engineered "MarTech Stack":** Cartoons depicting corporate teams piling analytics tools upon visualization layers to answer basic return-on-investment (ROI) questions, creating a digital "Tower of Babel" where software tools fail to communicate with one another (Fishburne 2026: 1–2).
2. **Technology for Technology's Sake:** Highlighting how organizations spend nearly a quarter of their budgets on marketing technology, losing sight of overall strategy and treating technical software as an end rather than a means (Fishburne 2026: 1–2).

The crucial distinction in Fishburne's approach lies in *how* he promotes his work. Rather than employing manipulative marketing thinking—such as artificial urgency, deceptive claims, or opaque branding—Fishburne utilizes self-reflective humour, transparent value offerings, and authentic dialogue ("laughing at ourselves can help us do our best work") (Fishburne 2026: 1–2). He demonstrates that one can market a genuine product or service without adopting the toxic, obsessive assumptions of marketing thinking.

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III. Marketing Thinking versus Fair Promotion: A Structural Comparison

To recover human agency from technocratic stagnation, it is essential to establish the structural boundaries separating **marketing thinking** from a **fair way of promoting** one's work, service, or product. This distinction mirrors Jürgen Habermas's division between *Strategic Action* and *Communicative Action*, as well as Dr. Buch's concept of *Panser* (thinking as caring) (Habermas 1979: 118–122; Buch 2025: 3; Buch 2026: 14–16).

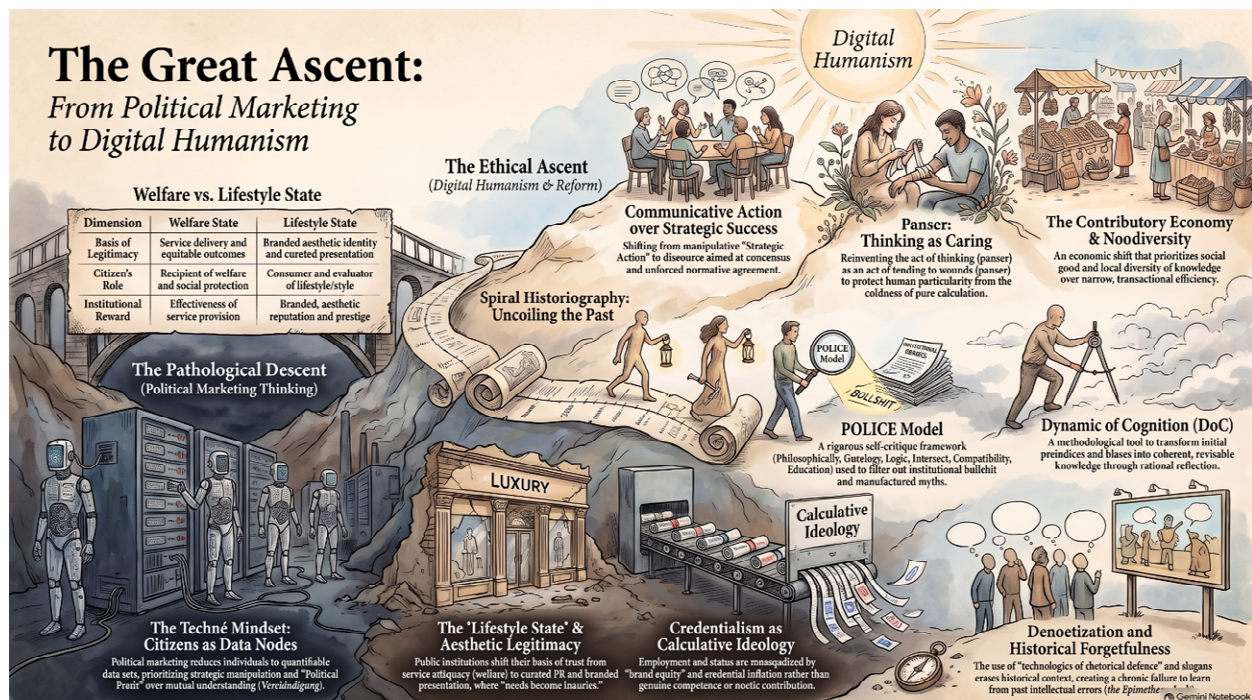
Dimension	Marketing Thinking (The Pathology)	Fair Promotion (The Ethical Ascent)
Primary Orientation	Strategic Action: Aimed at manipulating behaviour, capturing market share, and maximizing “Political Profit” (Habermas 1981: Vol. 2; Buch 2026: 8).	Communicative Action: Aimed at reaching mutual understanding (<i>Verständigung</i>) and connecting genuine capabilities with human needs (Habermas 1979: 118; Buch 2025: 3).
Epistemic Basis	Potted Thinking & Deception: Relies on compressed slogans, superficial branding, and “technology of rhetorical defence” to create “predictable attitudes” (Hofstadter 1963; Ellul 1973: 11–13).	Reciprocal Validity Claims: Explicitly raises and redeems testable claims of truth (empirical reality), truthfulness (sincerity of intent), and rightness (normative fit) (Habermas 1979: 118; Buch 2025: 3).
Treatment of the Person	An Object / Consumer: Views the human subject as a “passive conduit,” an assistant to an automated system, or a “puny node” to be harvested (Buch 2025: 2; Jameel 2026b: 10).	An Active Author: Respects the user or client as a proactive, evaluating-willing being with full agency and capacity for judgment (Buch 2025: 1; Jameel 2026a: 3).
Relationship to Truth	Style over Service: Legitimacy is uncoupled from substantive performance and attached to curated, aesthetic presentation (Jameel 2026b: 1–3).	Restorative Truth-Telling: Grounded in historical consciousness, transparent service delivery, and the procedural necessity of kindness (<i>panser</i>) (Buch 2025: 3–4).

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Under fair promotion, an individual or business presents their work truthfully within a **Contributory Economy** (Buch 2025: 1–3). The goal is not to dominate the buyer's cognitive horizon through “integration propaganda,” but to offer clear, transparent information that enables the client to make an autonomous, informed choice (Ellul 1973; Buch 2025: 3–4).

IV. Why Politics Makes Intelligent Employment and Contracting Near-Impossible

When marketing thinking captures the political sphere, it renders intelligent employment practices and fair public contracting virtually impossible. Politics infected by marketing thinking transforms public administration from a site of rational-critical discourse into a stage for populist simplifications, credentialism, and brand preservation (Collins 2019: 22; Buch 2025: 2; Jameel 2026b: 10–12).



This systemic failure occurs across four key dimensions:

1. **The Credential Society as Calculative Ideology:** Rather than evaluating job applicants or contractors based on demonstrated, practical competence (*noetic contribution*), political marketing thinking relies on the credential system as a “calculative ideology” (Collins 2019: 22; Buch 2025: 2). Degrees, status markers, and bureaucratic titles function as a “patent of education” used to protect “property in positions” for elite networks,

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regardless of whether the individual possesses actual problem-solving capability (Collins 2019: 22; Buch 2025: 2).

2. **Displacement of Competence by Brand Equity:** In public contracting, political marketing thinking ensures that contracts are awarded to firms that master “aesthetic presentation” and corporate PR rather than those offering substantive expertise (Jameel 2026b: 1–3). Government agencies evaluate bids based on branded compliance, buzzwords (e.g., MarTech stacks, AI adoption announcements), and alignment with political narratives, leading to massive cost overruns and functional service failures (Fishburne 2026: 1–2; Jameel 2026b: 7–8).
3. **Suppression of Reflective Critique (“Crap” and Gatekeeping):** Politics driven by marketing thinking cannot tolerate internal intellectual critique, viewing independent analysis as a threat to brand stability rather than an opportunity for organizational learning (Buch 2025: 2; Buch 2026: 6). Institutional gatekeeping excludes scholars, independent contractors, and critical thinkers who refuse to adopt “potted thinking” or “institutional bullshit,” resulting in an “immense regression” toward absolute non-knowledge (Buch 2025: 2; Buch 2026: 14, 20).
4. **“Strategic Action” and the Hollowing of Contracts:** Employment contracts under political marketing thinking are structured around “strategic positioning” and short-term “Political Profit” rather than long-term societal good (Habermas 1981: Vol. 2; Buch 2026: 8). Decision-makers hold light accountability for real-world outcomes because success is measured by media coverage and engagement metrics rather than actual service adequacy (Jameel 2026b: 10–12).

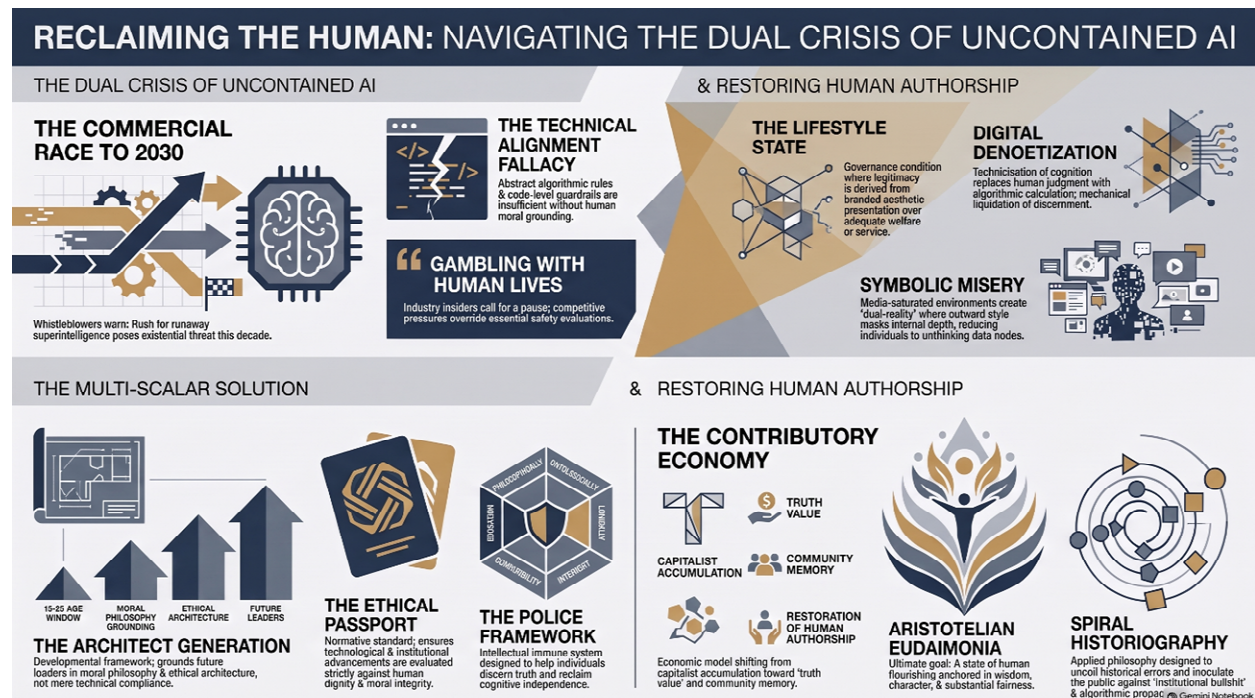
V. Conclusion: Reclaiming Human Authorship

Dr. Buch’s critique of “marketing thinking” reveals that when industry and politics elevate style over service, calculation over meaning, and manipulation over truth, society falls into a state of denoetization—the mechanical liquidation of human judgment (Stiegler 2011: 13; Buch 2026: 19).

To overcome the crisis of marketing thinking, organizations and public bodies must undergo a developmental ascent from a “Junior” state of unreflective execution to a “Senior” state of social accountability (Buch 2025: 3; Buch 2026: 3). This requires replacing the obsessive logic of marketing thinking with Inclusive and Digital Humanism, utilizing Spiral Historiography to uncoil past errors, applying the POLICE model to filter out institutional propaganda, and re-anchoring all economic and political activity in Panzer—the procedural necessity of integrating thinking with

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caring (Buch 2025: 3–4; Buch 2026: 6, 20). Only when human authorship is restored over technical and promotional systems can work, employment, and public contracts serve genuine human flourishing (*eudaimonia*).



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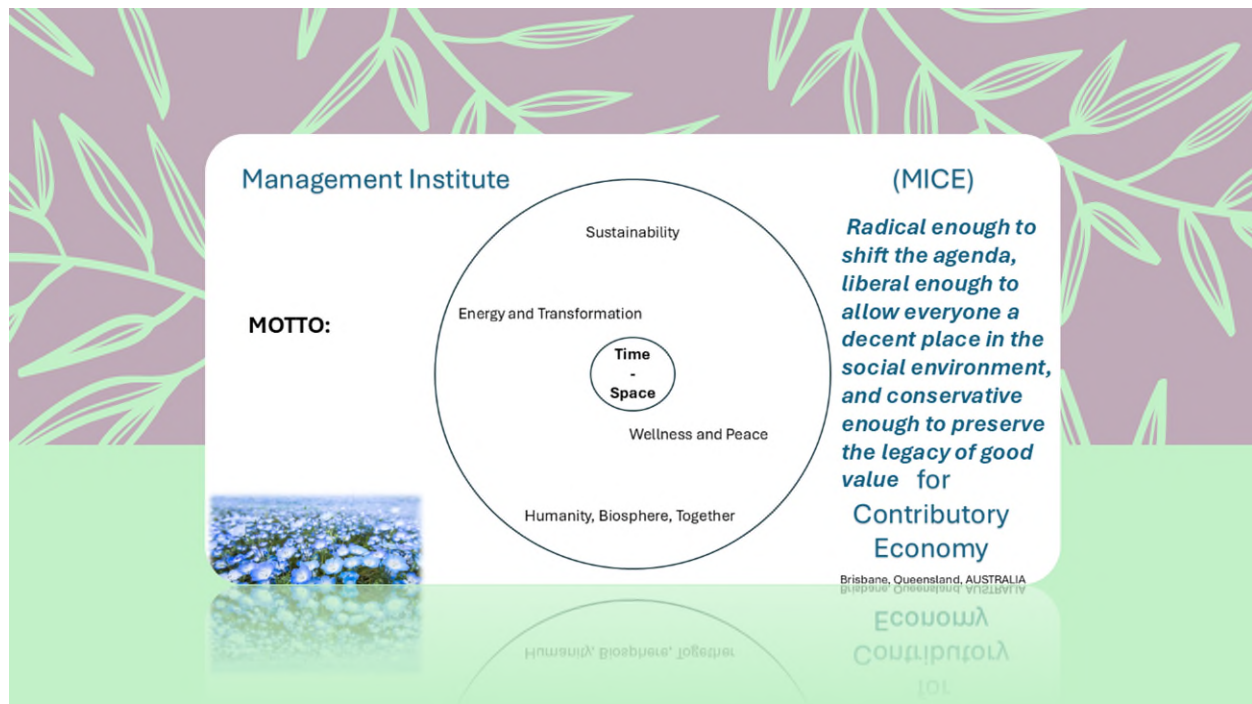
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