

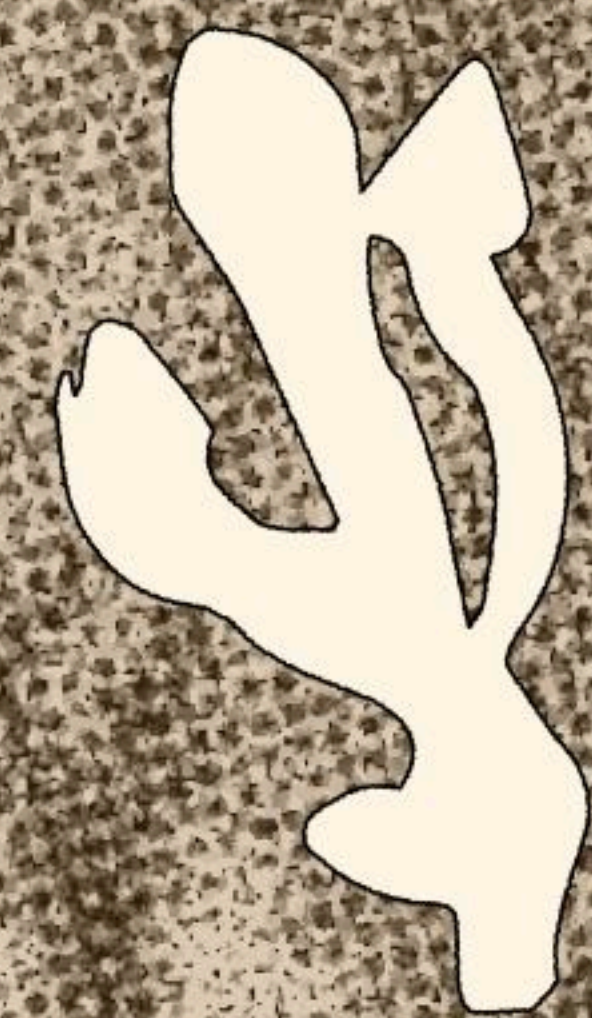
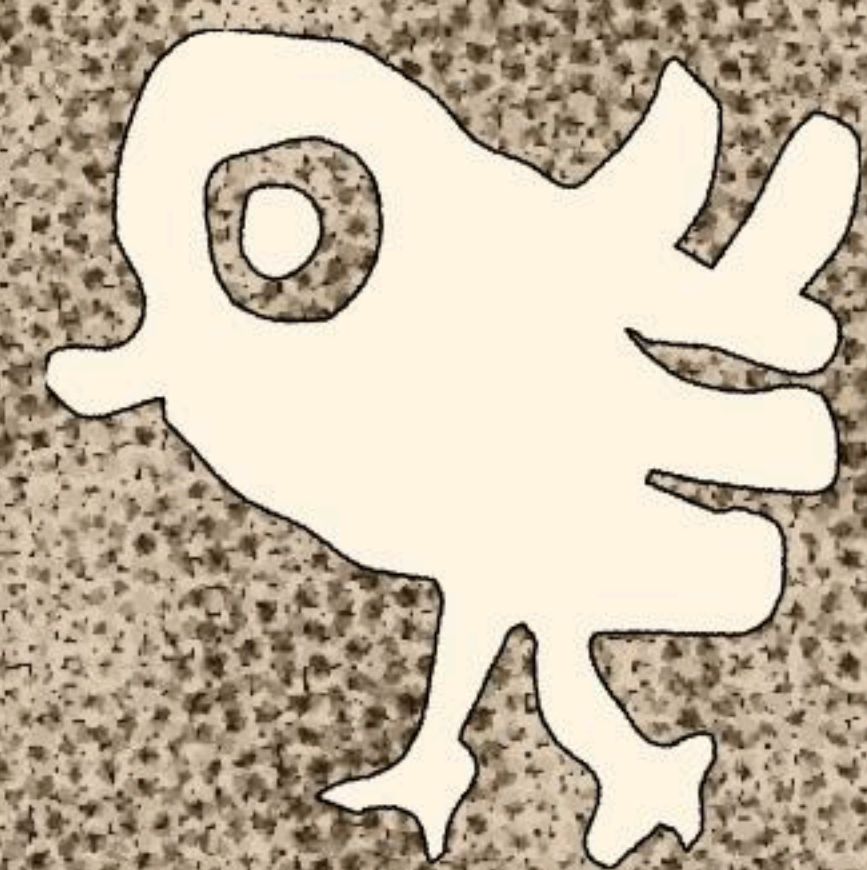
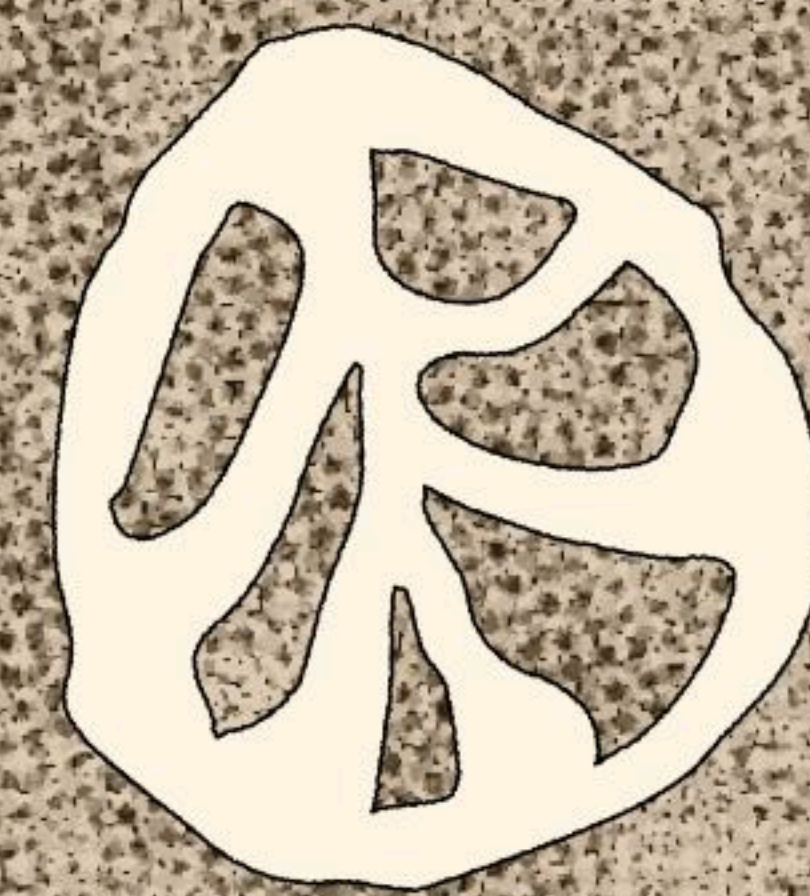
FROM ASH To ASHES

Ecological Citizenship · Tree Narratives in Urban Glasgow

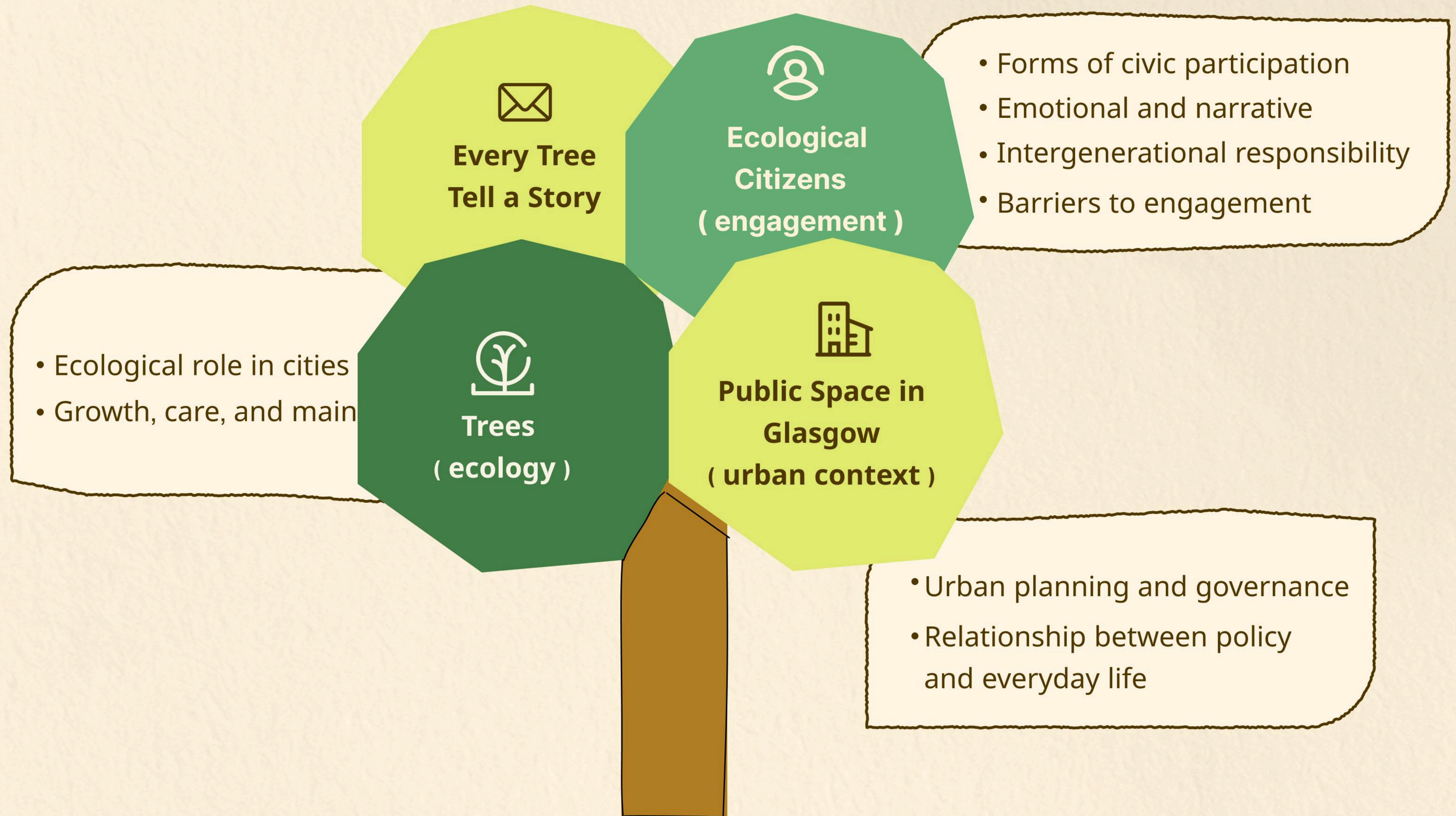
GROUP 1

GROUP MEMBERS:

GAO YIFEI / SHEN XUANYI / SHI YULING
XU JINJIE / PIAO XIANGMEI

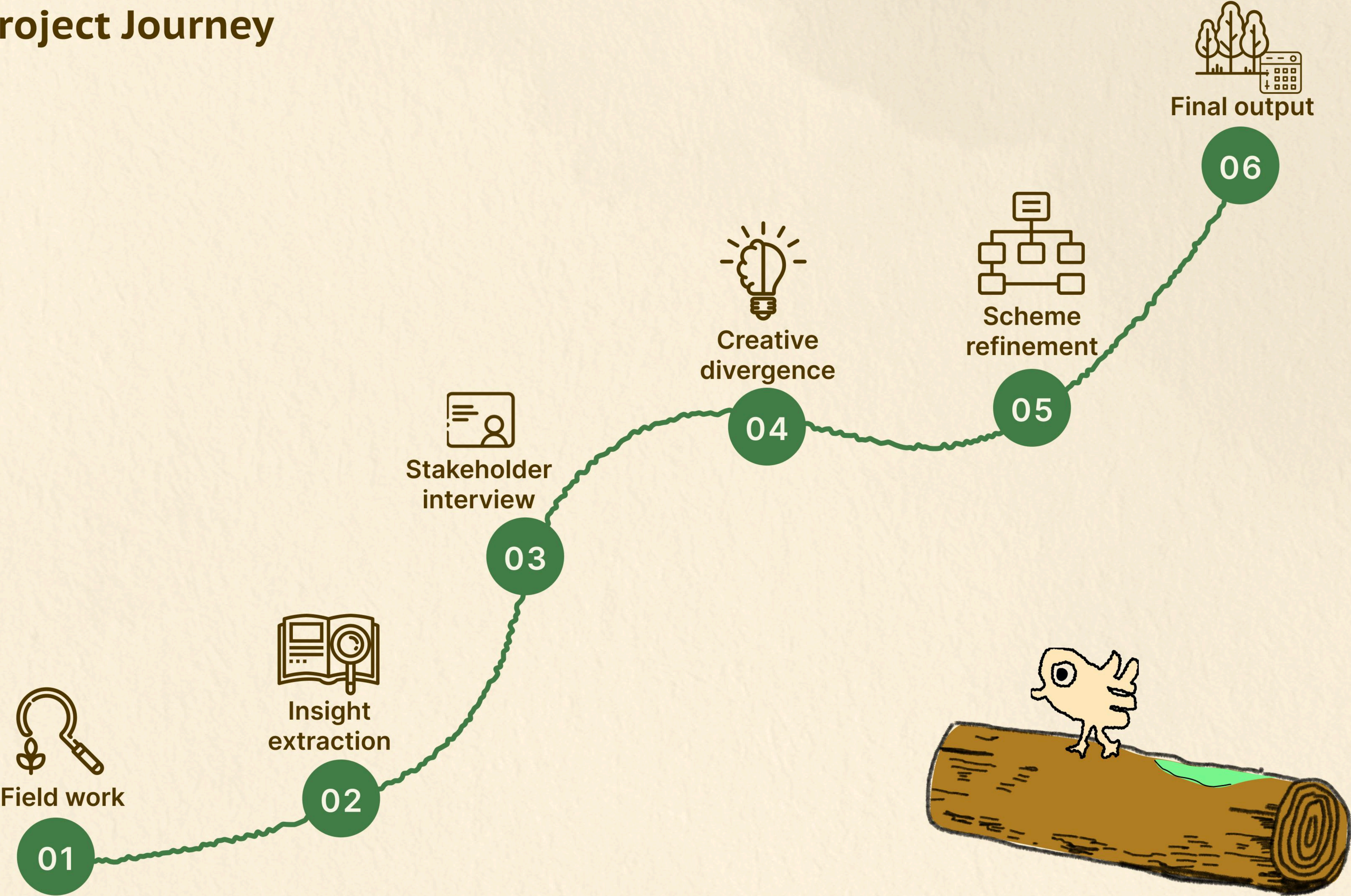


Understanding the Brief

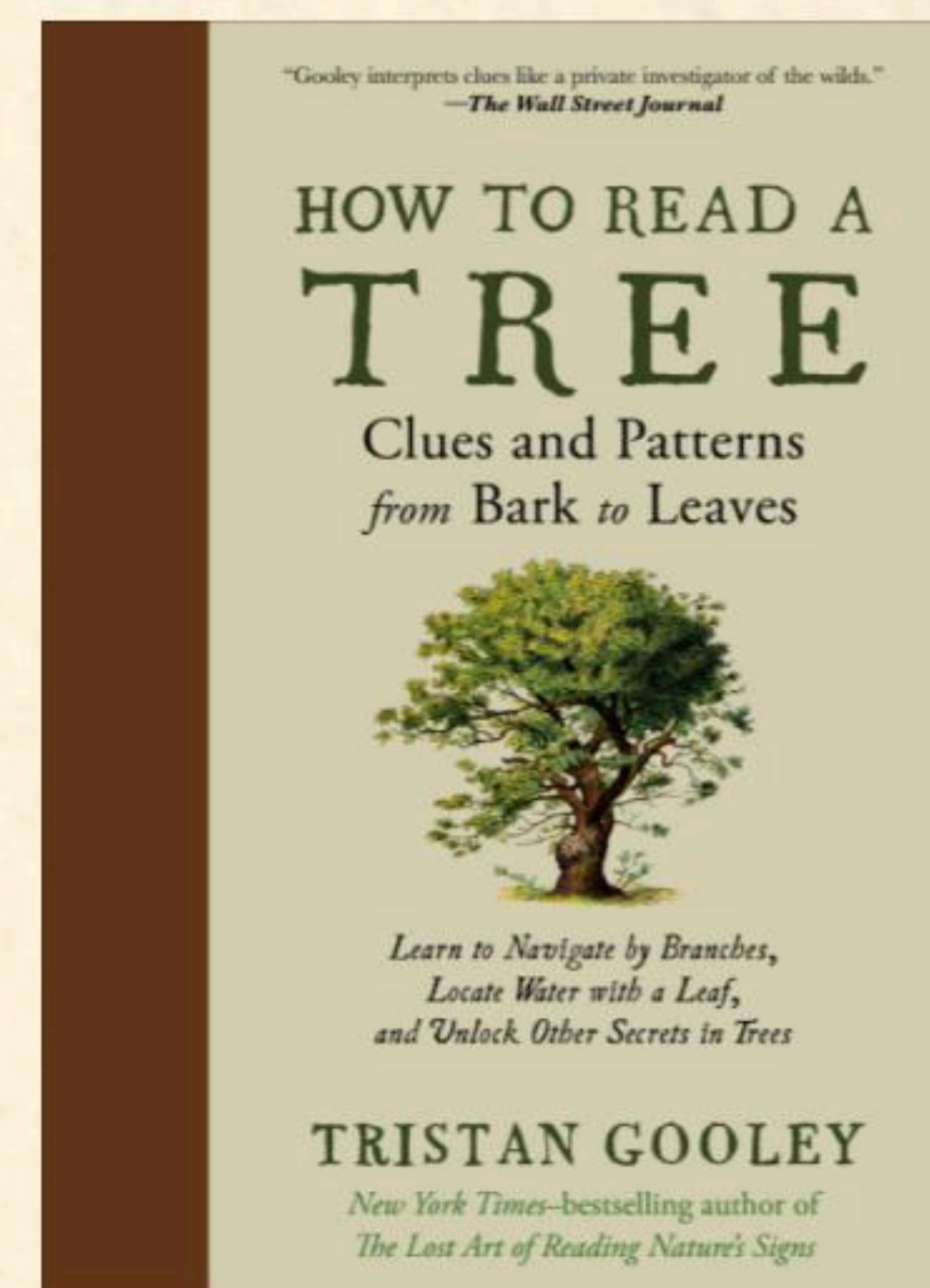


**How might we cultivate meaningful relationships
between citizens and trees in Glasgow?**

Project Journey



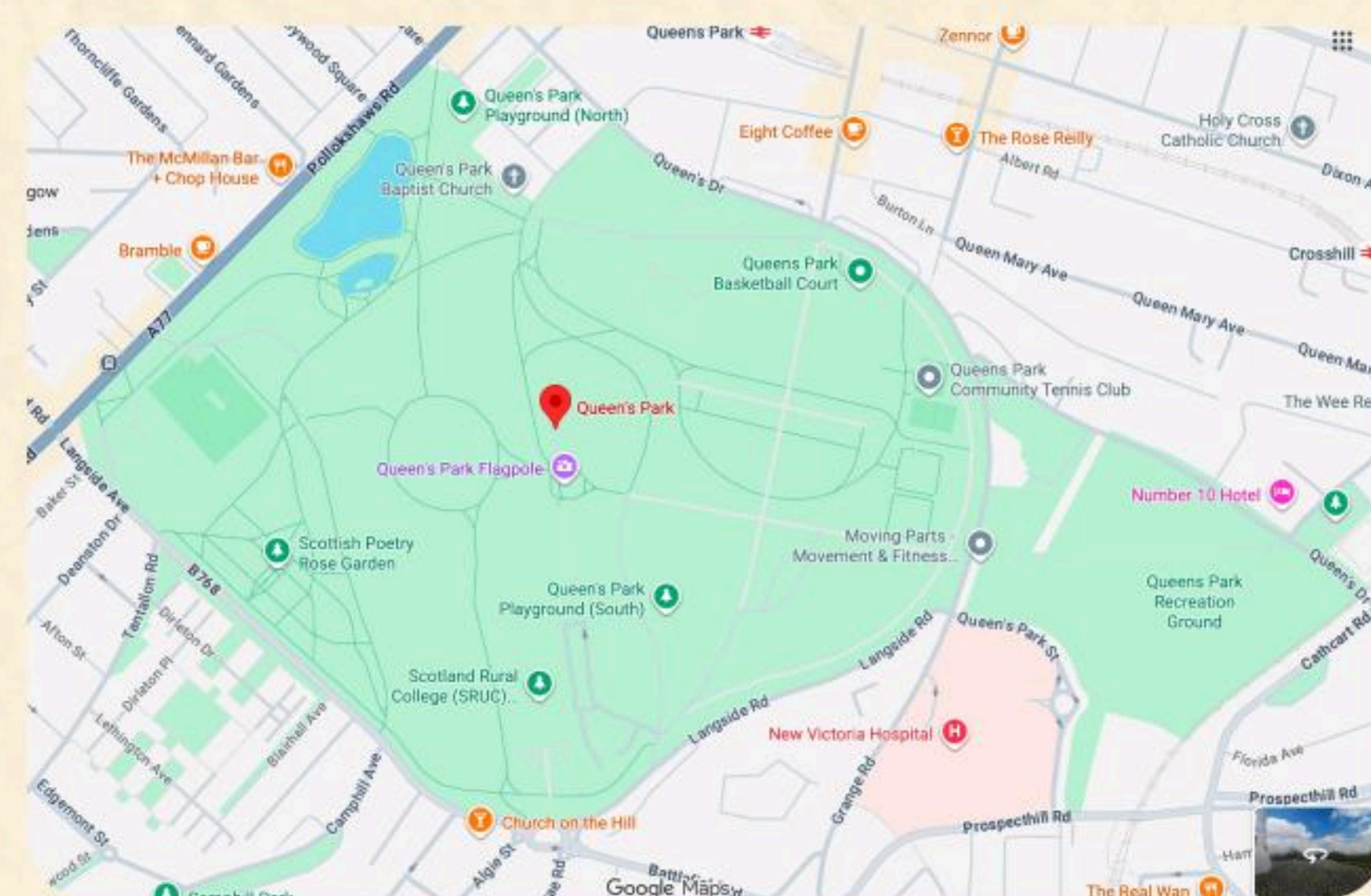
Desk research/Field work - From Observations to Key Insights



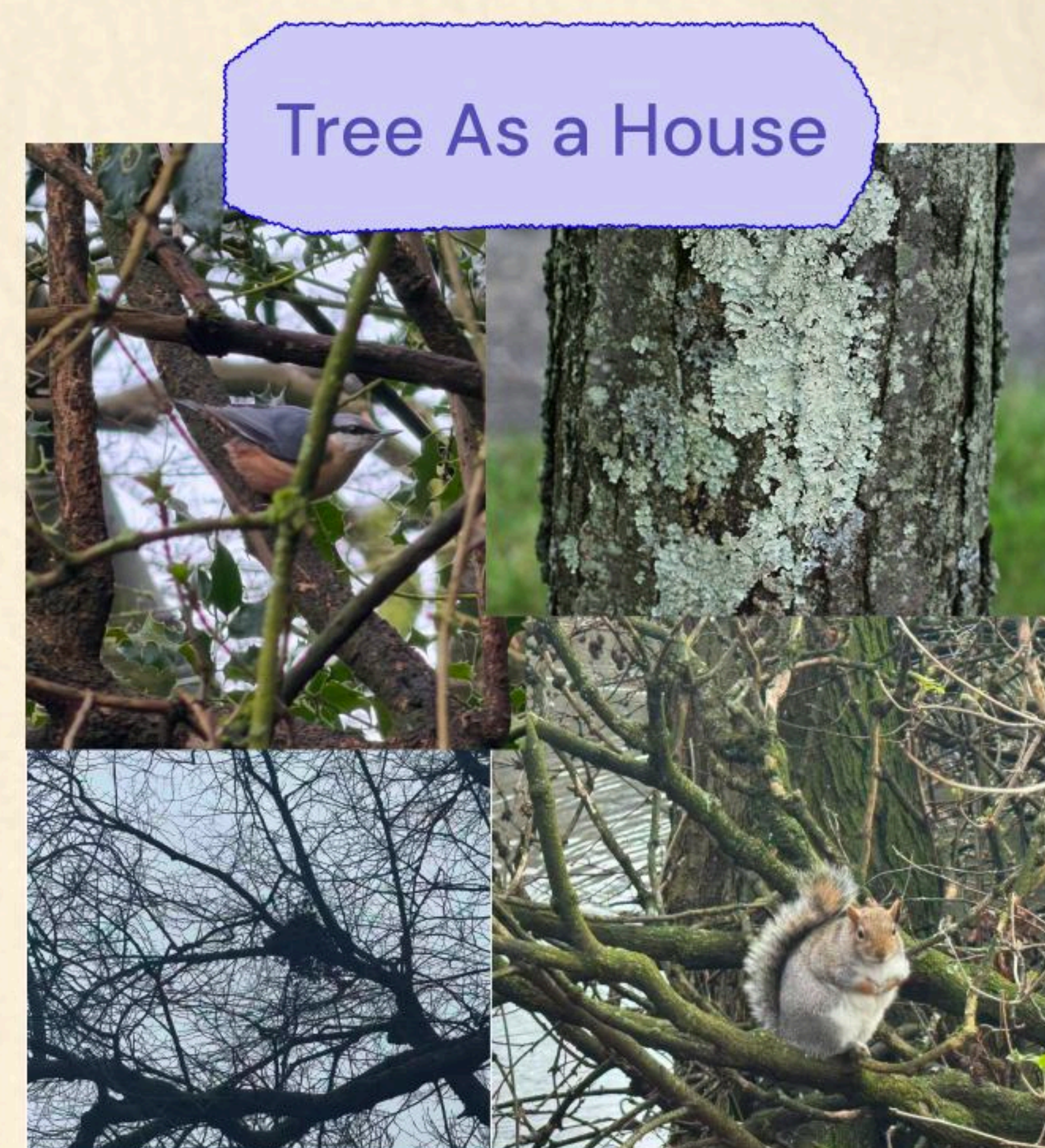
Visible Indicators

Superficial

Desk Research: Tool Book



Field Work: Queen's Park



Support the structure of an entire ecosystem



Growth History & Health Condition



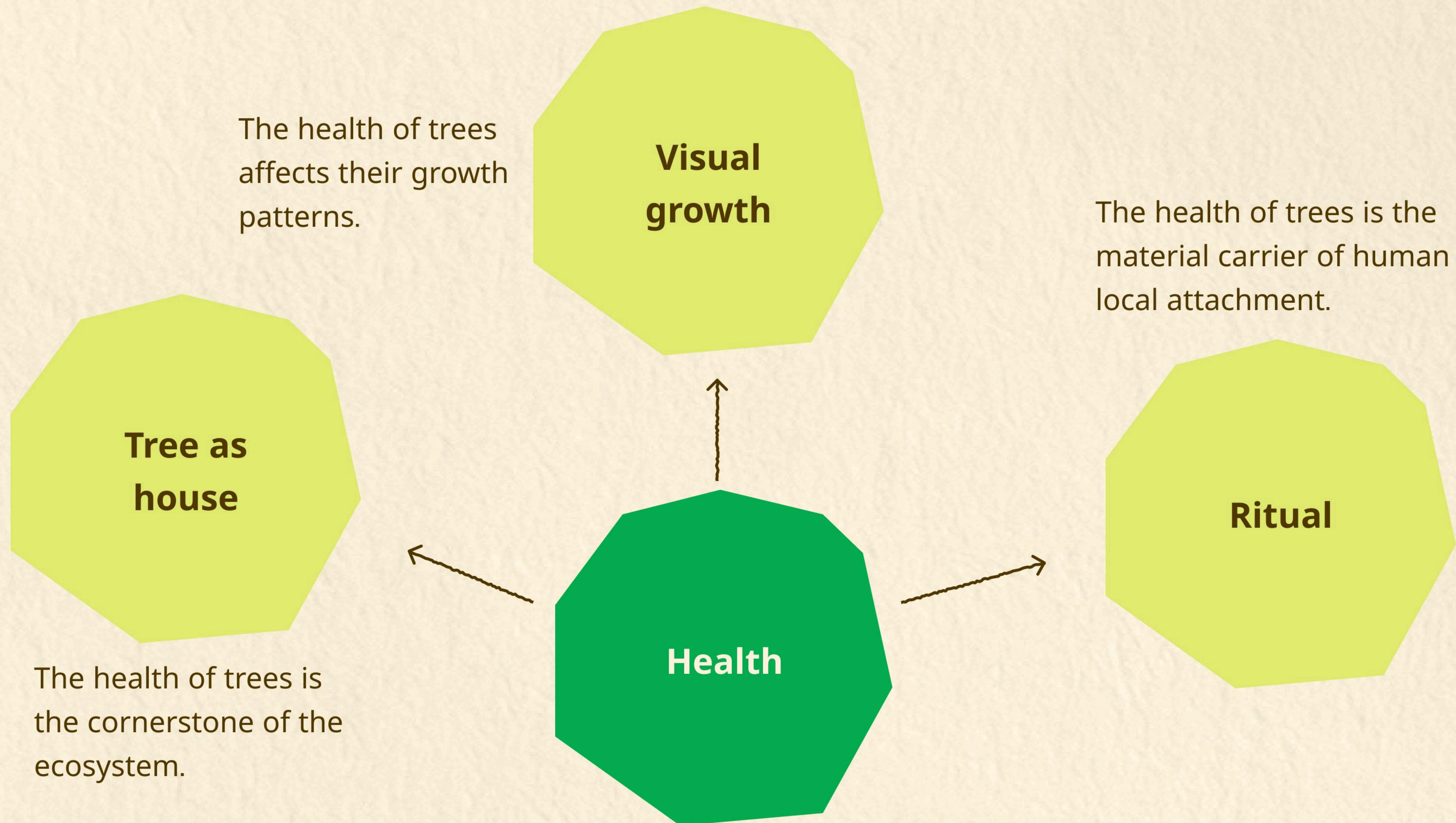
Navigation & Environmental Clues



Memorial carrier

These insights shifted our design focus from observing trees to designing human-tree relationships.

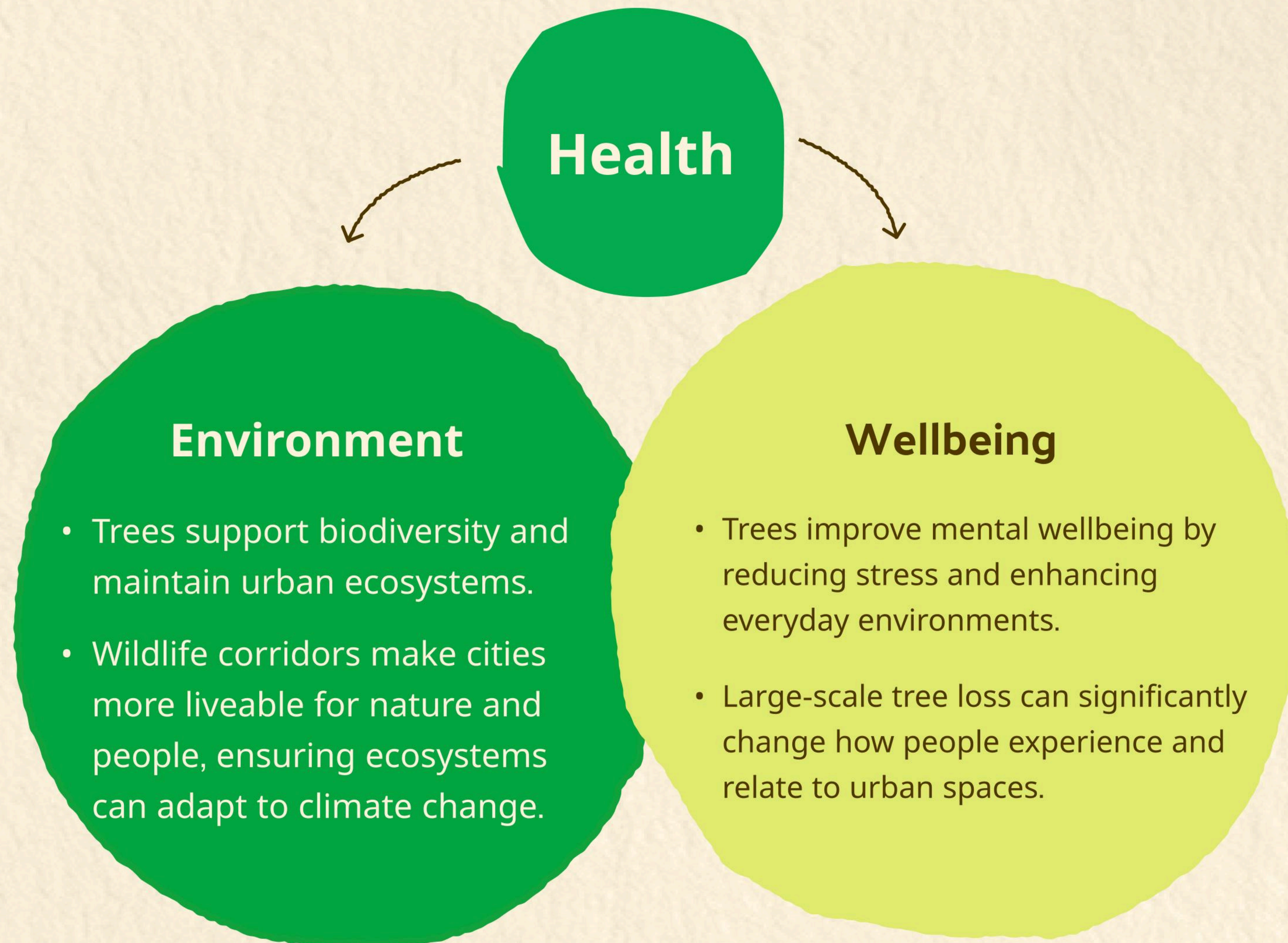
Narrow Design Strategy: Tree Health



Health – The Intersection of Four Insights

The importance of tree health

The health of trees has an indirect impact on the health of citizens.



When trees decline, these environmental, social, and emotional benefits are also lost.

Goodenough, A. & Waite, S. (2020) Wellbeing from Woodland: A Critical Exploration of Links Between Trees and Human Health. 1st ed. 2020. [Online]. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Stakeholder Map

We classified the stakeholders into four categories

- **Business**
- **Community Groups**
- **Authorities**
- **Experts**

Refined stakeholder focus



We chose these organisations for the reason that



Stakeholder Analysis



Primary mission: Mobilizing volunteers to actively participate in practical activities,Core mission is “Connecting people with green spaces”.
When to establish: 1959
Range of activity: UK-wide



Paul Barclay

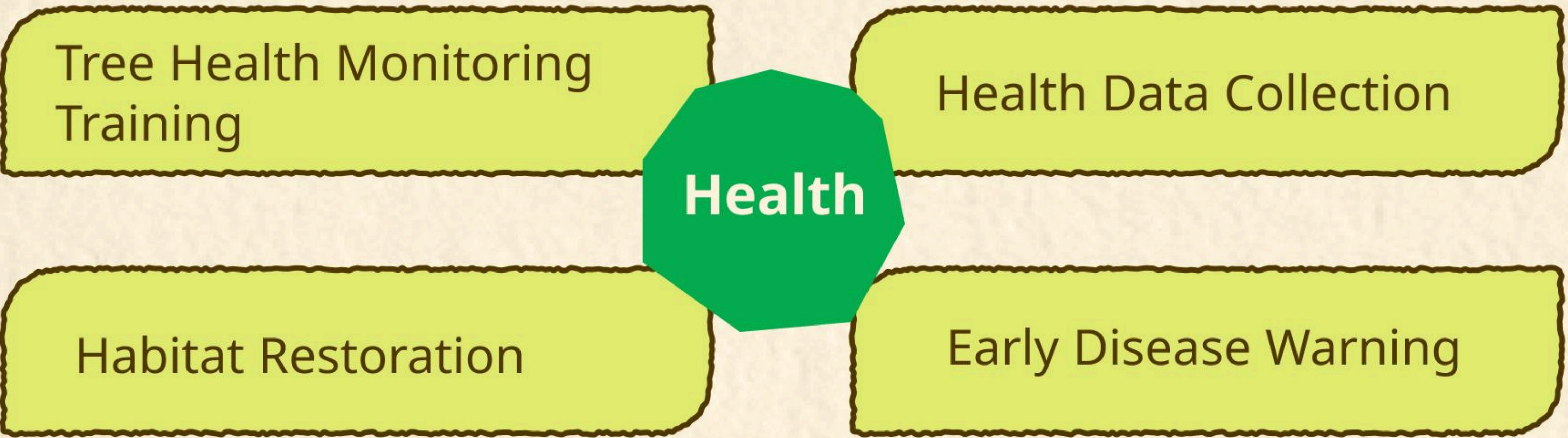
Role:An Activity Coordinator or Project Officer for TCV Scotland

Area of Activity:
Cumbernauld area

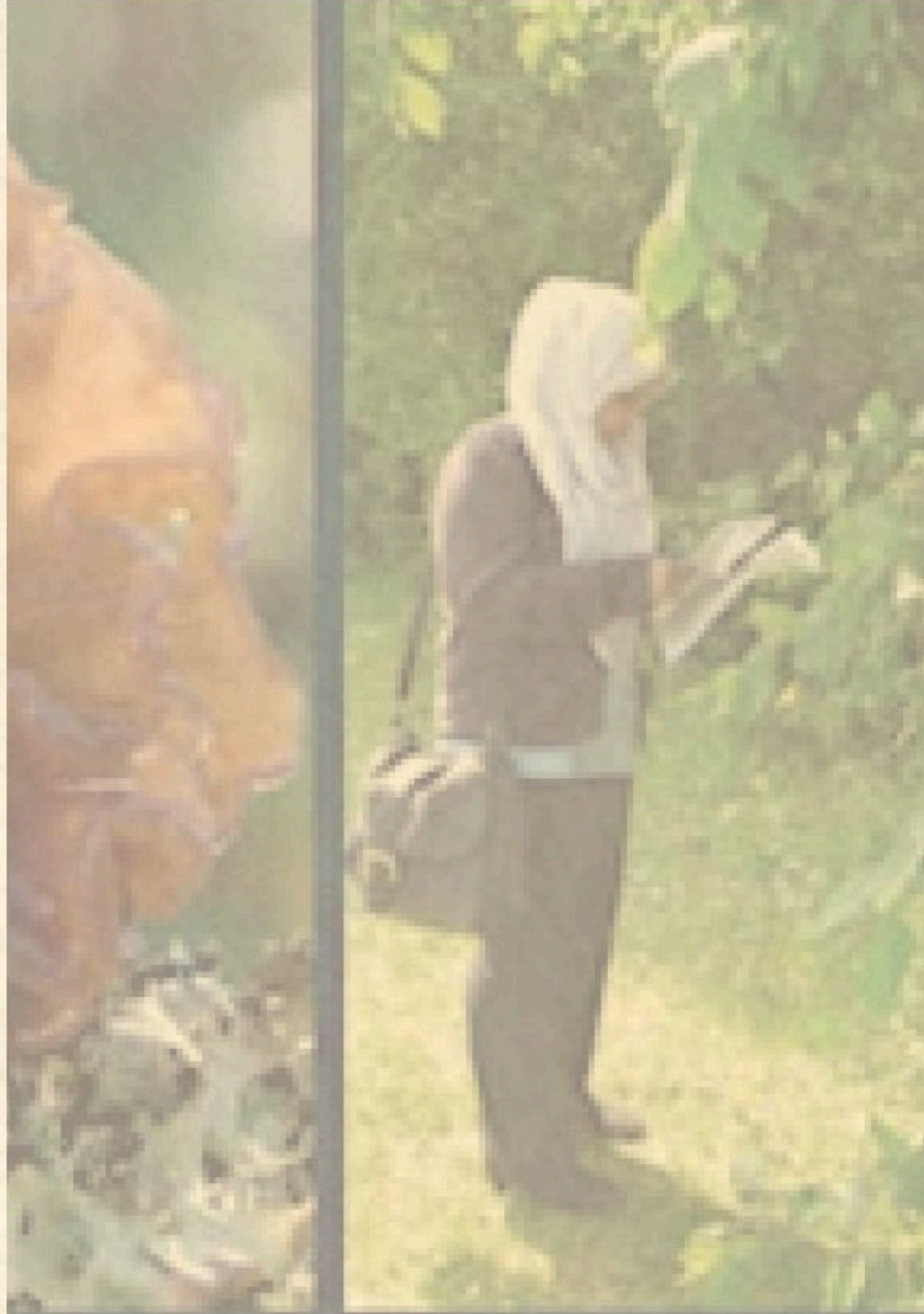
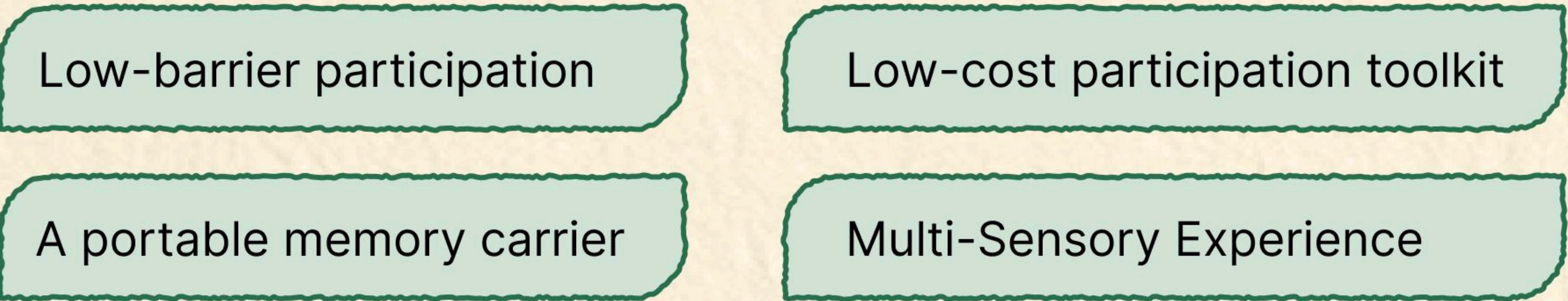
Core Work: Popularise scientific knowledge about trees. Organise volunteer activities.



Workshop classification



What we can learn?



interview & key insights

Ash Dieback has become the biggest challenge in recent years, with around 30% of ash trees already showing symptoms.

It is irreversible, and most ash trees in Scotland are expected to **disappear** within the next decade.



The economic cost of removal, the emotional impact of widespread tree loss, and the ecological damage to forests must all be considered.

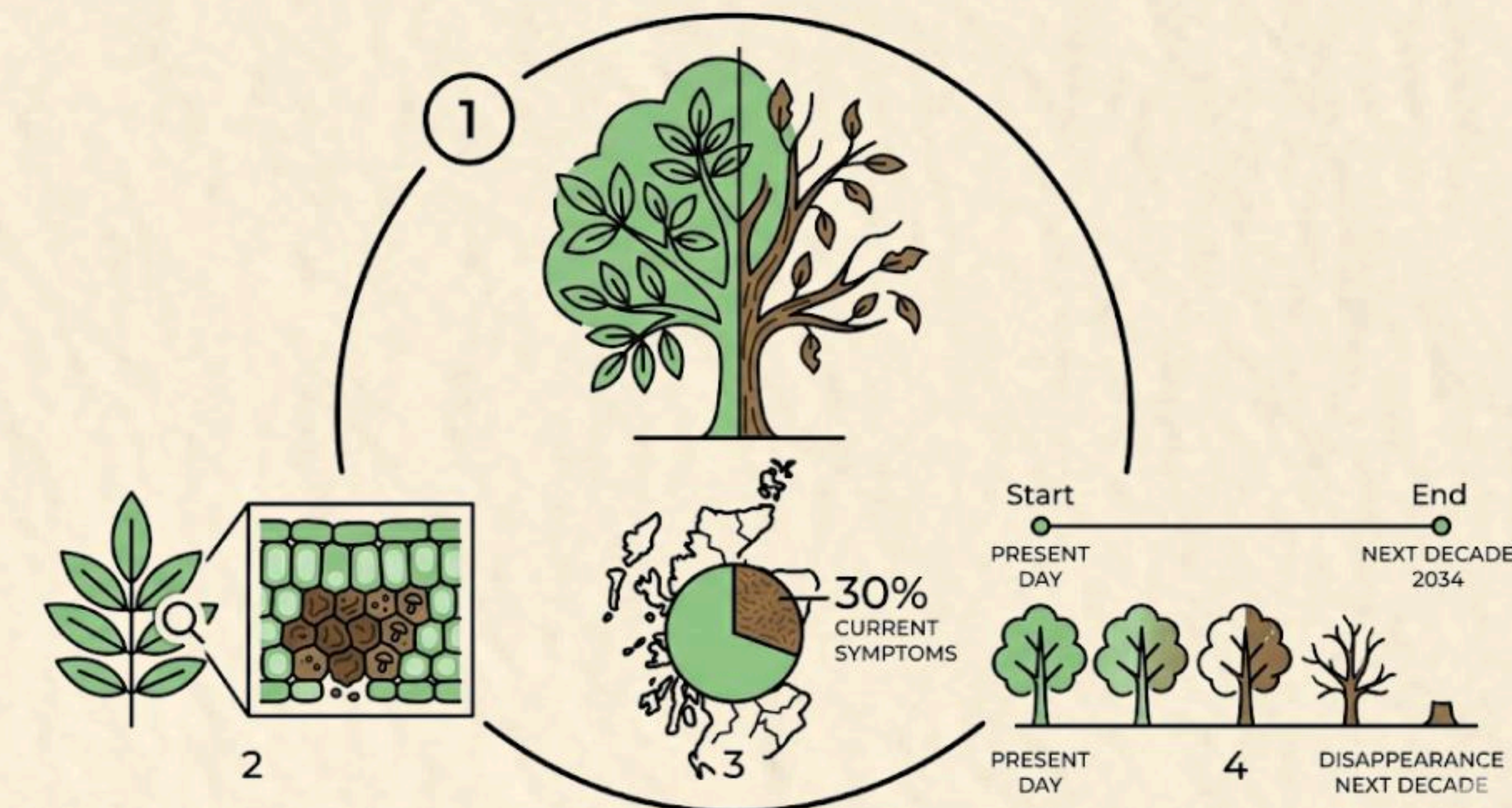


The key is to monitor and record, while also beginning to plant alternative tree species.



● Realize the problem - Ash dieback

The most urgent/serious threat to local trees



● The severity of the problem

What does ash dieback mean for the government/citizens?



Economic loss: Removing these dead trees will require a huge amount of money.

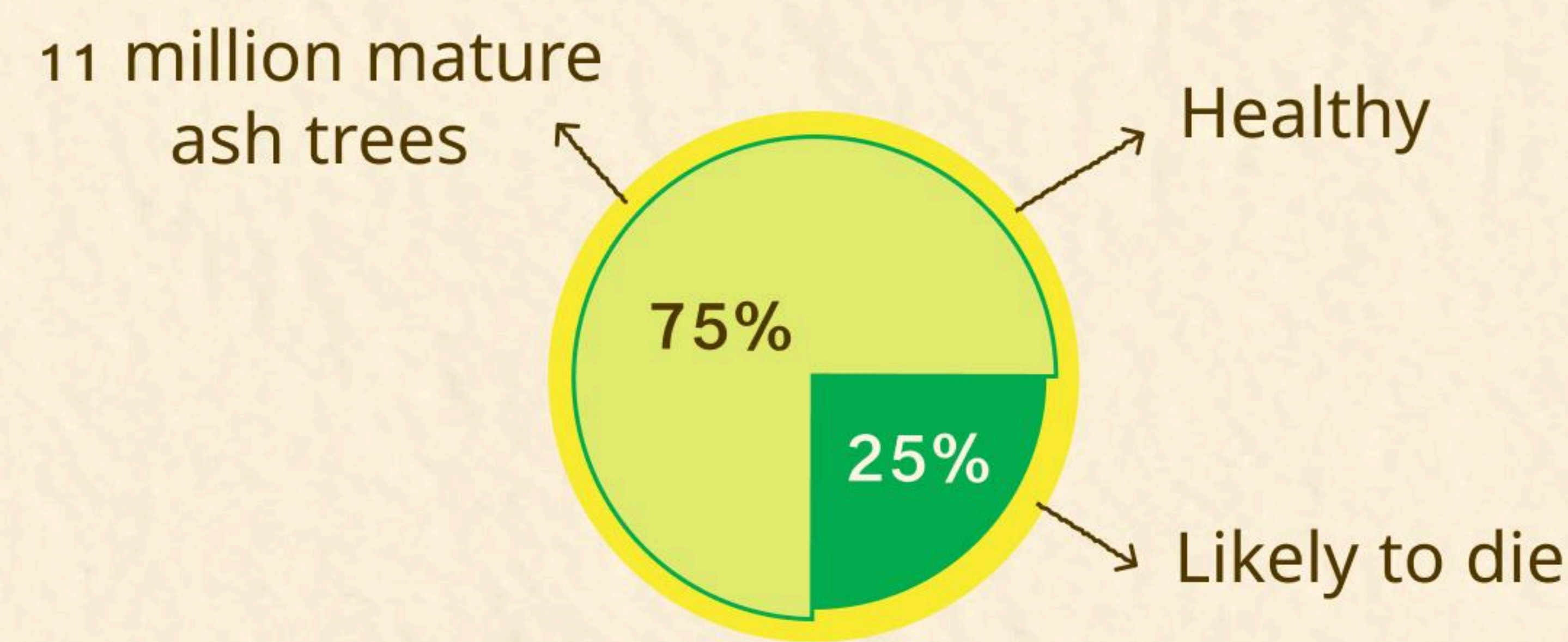
Emotional harm to citizens: Emotional bond, upset

● Find solutions for citizen participation

Secondary Research of Dieback

Raw ecological data often fails to resonate. However, ‘Health’ creates an instinctive emotional bond, transforming a biological crisis into a shared community journey.

Security threat



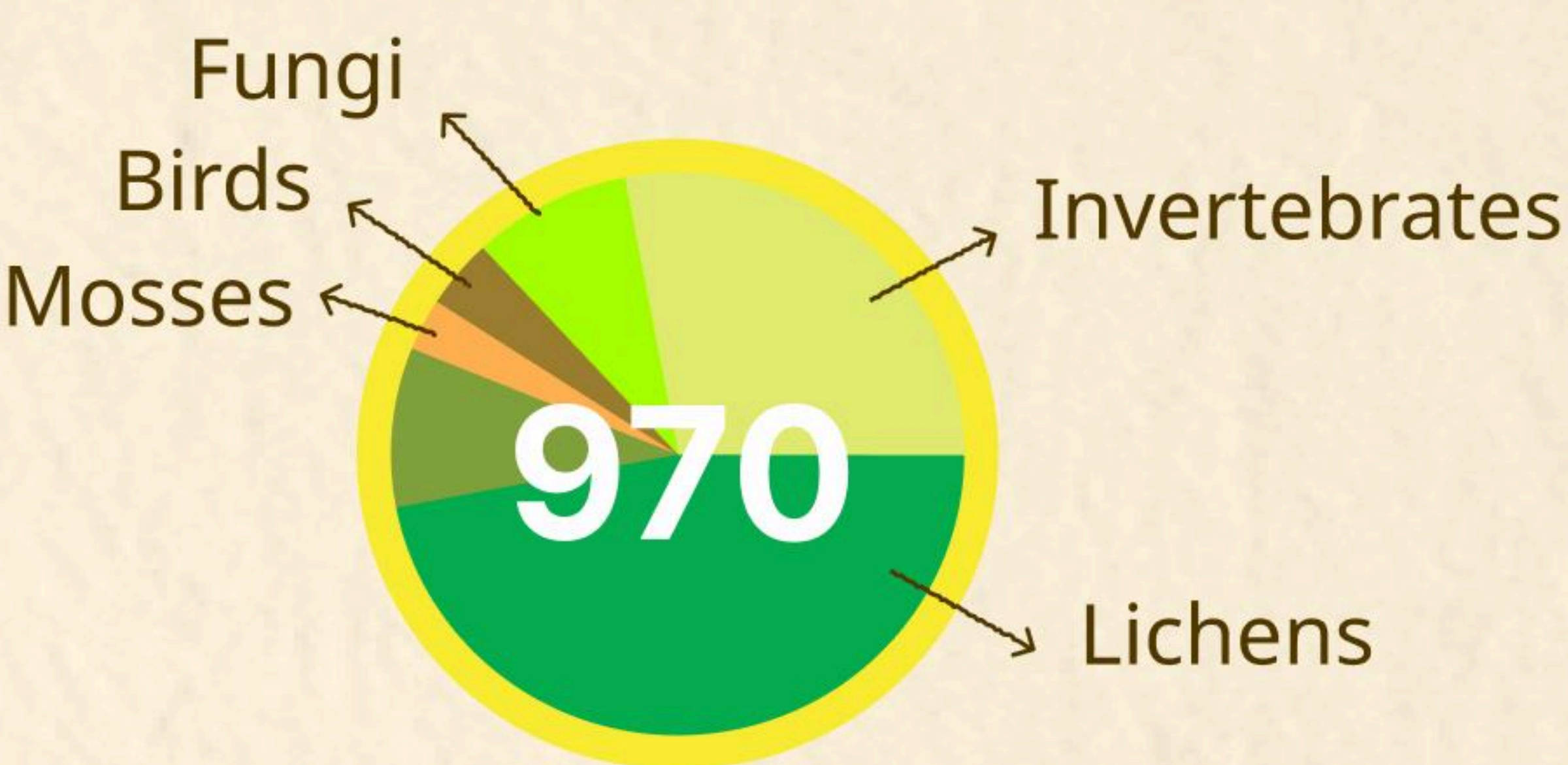
Ash dieback makes trees brittle, hollow and prone to collapse, posing a serious safety risk to residential areas and public spaces.

The scale is huge and the time is urgent



Over the next twenty years, Scotland is expected to lose 50-75% of its mature ash trees.

Threats to the ecosystem



As a key native species, ash supports over 900 species, 45 of which depend entirely on it - its widespread loss would trigger a cascade of ecological breakdown.

Despite the severity of ecological and safety risks, public engagement remains limited.

Reference

Defra (2019) Ash tree research strategy: Evidence summaries. Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/>

Glasgow City Council (2025) Glasgow’s Ash Dieback. 20 May. Available at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/>

The Tree Council (2022) Ash Dieback: Action Plan Toolkit for Scotland. Available at: <https://treecouncil.org.uk/>

The Awareness–Action Gap

Rethinking the Problem



Key Findings:

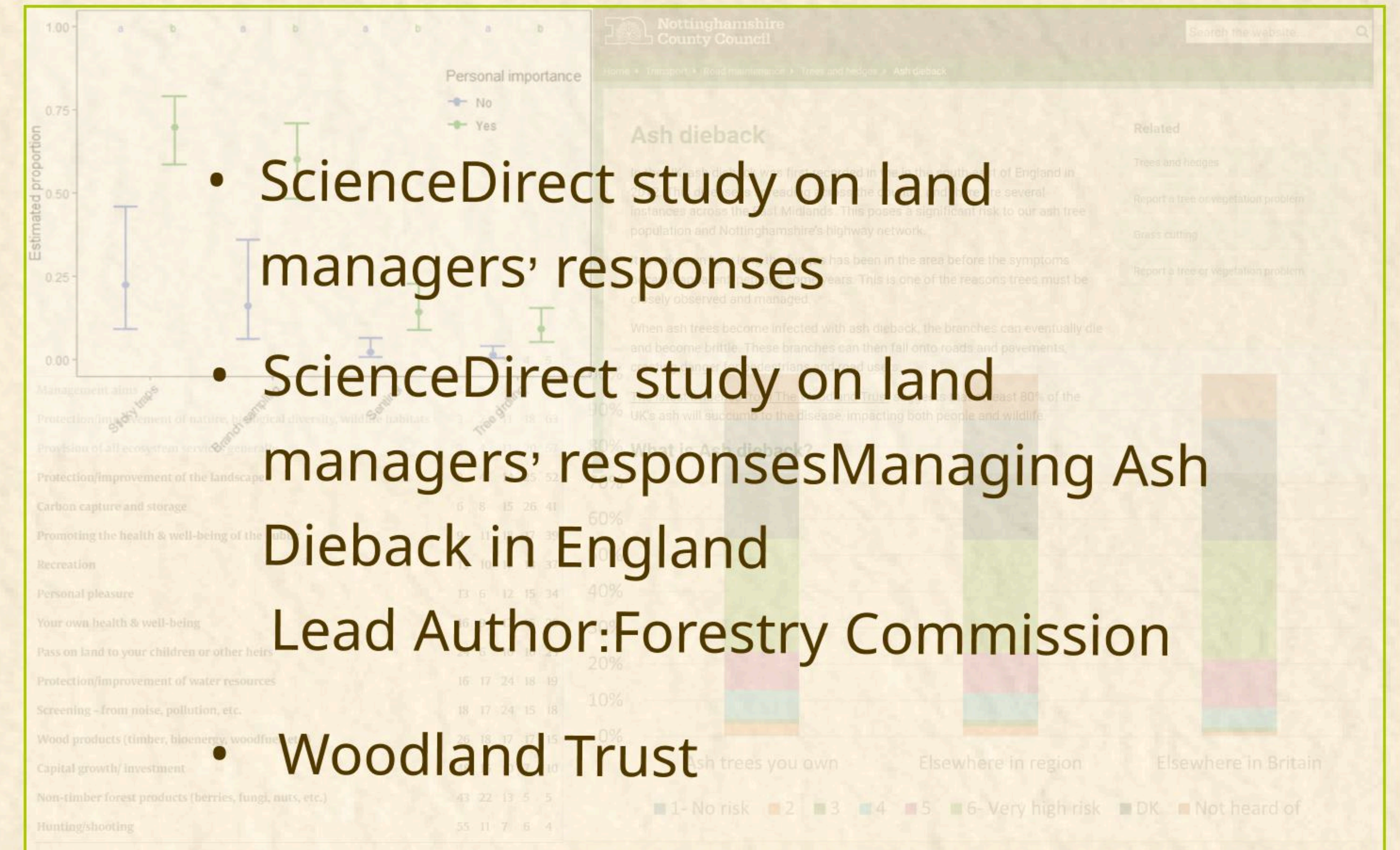
While awareness is relatively high, public engagement and perceived influence remain extremely low.

Critical Shift

The key issue is not awareness, but the lack of meaningful and actionable engagement. This shifts our design focus from providing information to creating engaging, experiential interactions with tree health. This reveals a **need to design for engagement, not just information.**

Reference

Ash trees in Great Britain: How might land-managers respond to a new threat? (2025) Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tfp.2025.100915>

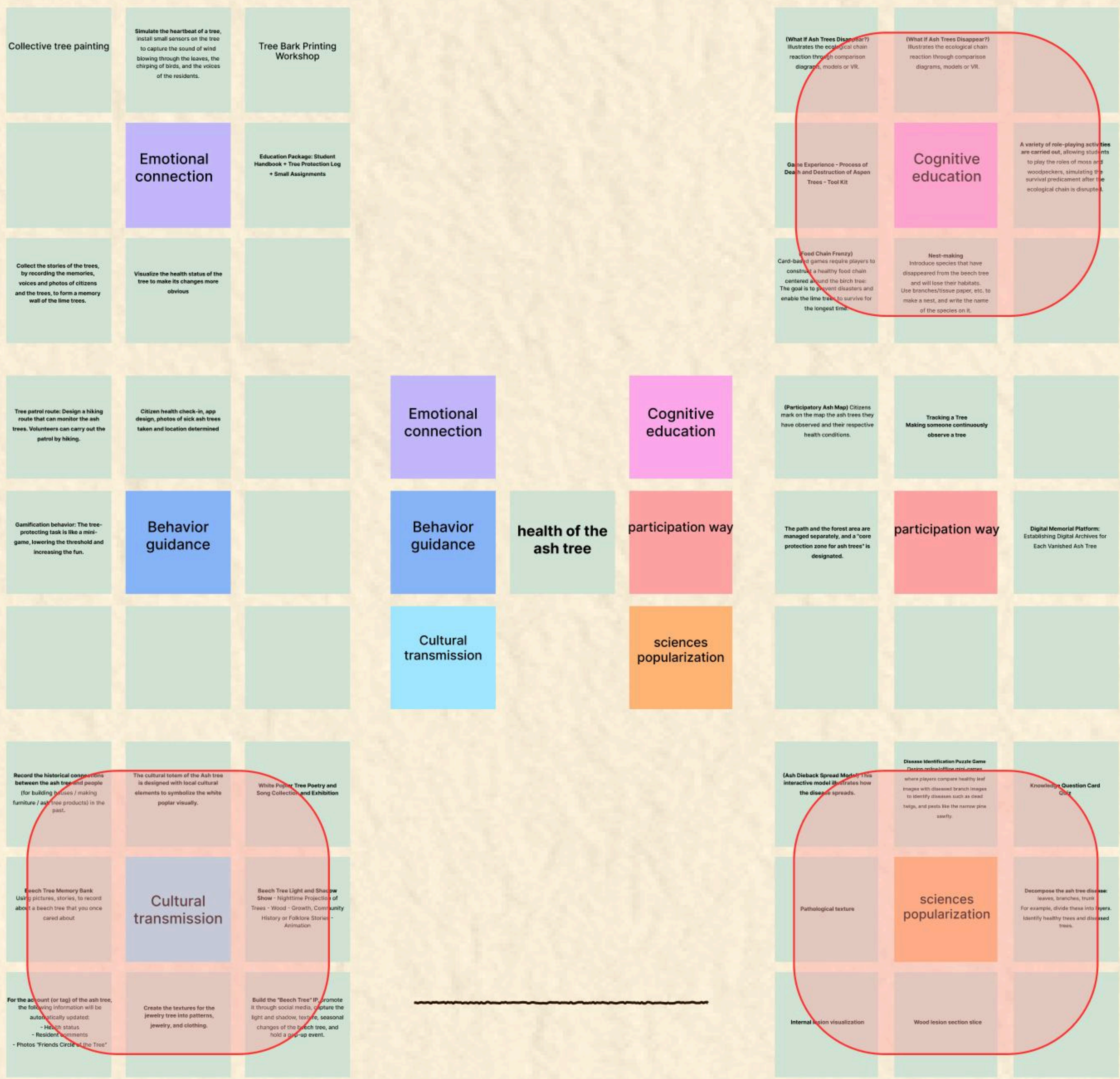


**How might we turn awareness into
meaningful public engagement?**

Three Directions for Engagement

Lotus Blossom Technique: A structured ideation framework that systematically deconstructs a central theme into multiple layers of sub-concepts, fostering a holistic expansion of design possibilities.

Ideation Process (Lotus Diagram)



- Cognitive Awareness
- Scientific Understanding
- Emotional & Cultural Connection

These three directions address different aspects of engagement: understanding, knowing, and feeling.

Concepts Exploration and iteration

Five initial explorations were made, based on ‘health’, and also incorporated other insights.

Tree Language

This project explores ash dieback disease by translating its visual traces—such as the textures found in affected tree trunks and leaves—into a unique typographic system.

Each “tree character” is derived from these diseased textures and represents a word, such as a verb, noun, or adjective. In this way, the visual language of decay becomes a medium for human language.

Tree character → A word

adj.

n.

v.

a sentence

Generate sentences—messages addressed to trees

Project process

The workshop takes place in park environments where ash trees grow. Participants engage with the trees through “tree language” and compose messages addressed to them.

Invasion of Ash Dieback

Simulate the invasion of a virus into a poplar tree. By answering questions about citizen science knowledge, the more correct your answers are, the faster the tree will die. Reverse education can better awaken the public's awareness of the crisis.

Players take on the role of the villainous pathogen and invade to infect the ash trees.

Many ash tree markers are set on the map, allowing players to click and select.

After clicking, a pop-up with citizen science knowledge about the ash tree can be selected.

Choosing a severe mode of infection can exacerbate the infection.

Infections can be classified as mild, moderate and severe, each corresponding to a different color.

As the game progresses, we gradually infect more and more ash trees.

As the answering of questions continued, the scene gradually became terrifying.

The game ends when all the ash trees are infected.

Health

Emotional & Cultural Connection

Scientific Understanding

Visualization Workshop

PART1: Seeing the Visible

In the first phase, participants explore outdoors, identify ash trees they perceive as “sick,” and document visible signs such as leaf spots, discoloration, and branch condition.

Make participants realize that what they are seeing is only the “surface result” of the disease, not its origin.

PART2 : Invisible

Cross-section of ash tree Visual expression

The project transforms invisible tree decay into a visible, participatory experience through observation and hands-on simulation, aiming to raise awareness of ash dieback and encourage public engagement in ecological understanding and monitoring.

ASH DIEBACK DISEASE STORYBOARD

PART 1 **PART 2** **Summarize**

Visual growth&Health

Woodworking Craft Workshop

This workshop uses a fun and engaging DIY wooden craft activity to help participants learn about:

What ash trees are

What ash dieback is and how it affects them

How we can build a more caring relationship with the natural world

This all-ages workshop invites everyone to learn about nature, spark creativity, and experience a sense of calm and healing through hands-on wooden craft making.

We will combine these symbolic materials with the ash tree bark or the base.

Handcrafted products & The symbolic meaning of the plant materials in the material package

Project process

After the workshop, participants take home a beautifully made, meaningful magnet, while also building a gentler connection with nature, paying more attention to nearby trees, and feeling a stronger care for their local environment.

Ritual&Health

Interactive installation of building blocks

The main body of the tower: The “trunk” of the tower, built from colorless wooden blocks, represents the ash tree trunk.

Ecological element blocks: Colored blocks (representing birds, insects, moss, etc.).

Interactive Rules
Participants remove colorless blocks to simulate ash dieback. The tower stays stable at first, then becomes unstable as more blocks are removed, and eventually collapses, causing the colored blocks representing dependent organisms to fall and illustrating ecosystem collapse.

ACT 1: SETTING UP THE “ASH NETWORK” TREE

Ash Network Trunk (Plain Blocks)
Each Plain Block Supports its Specific Diversity Partner

ACT 2: VISUALIZING THE “INTERVIEW” CONNECTION

Integrated Diversity Blocks (Diversity Partners)
Stack Wobbles, but Diversity is Still Attached (temporarily)

ACT 3: “INTERVIEWING” THE TRUNK FOR STABILITY

You can ONLY pull one plain trunk block (temporarily)
Healthy Trunk (one concrete core)
Diseased Trunk (loose concrete core)

ACT 4: THE DELAYED “WOBBLE” & SIMULATED RISK

Stack Wobbles, but Diversity is Still Attached (temporarily)

ACT 5: COMPARING STABILITY & DIVERSITY LOSS

HEALTHY TREE (Integrated Diversity Blocks)
DISEASED TREE (Plain Blocks)

ACT 6: THE ECOSYSTEM COLLAPSE & REFLECTION

Reflecting & Acting for the Forest / The Green Guardians Reflection Journal

Tree as house&Health

Scientific Understanding

Emotional & Cultural Connection

Cognitive Awareness

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Tree as house&Health

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ACT 2: VISUALIZING THE "INTERVIEW" CONNECTION

ACT 3: INTERVIEWING THE "THINK FOR STABILITY"

ACT 4: THE DELAYED "WOBBLE" & SIMULATED RISK

ACT 5: COMPARING STABILITY & DIVERSITY LOSS

ACT 6: THE ECOSYSTEM COLLAPSE & REFLECTION

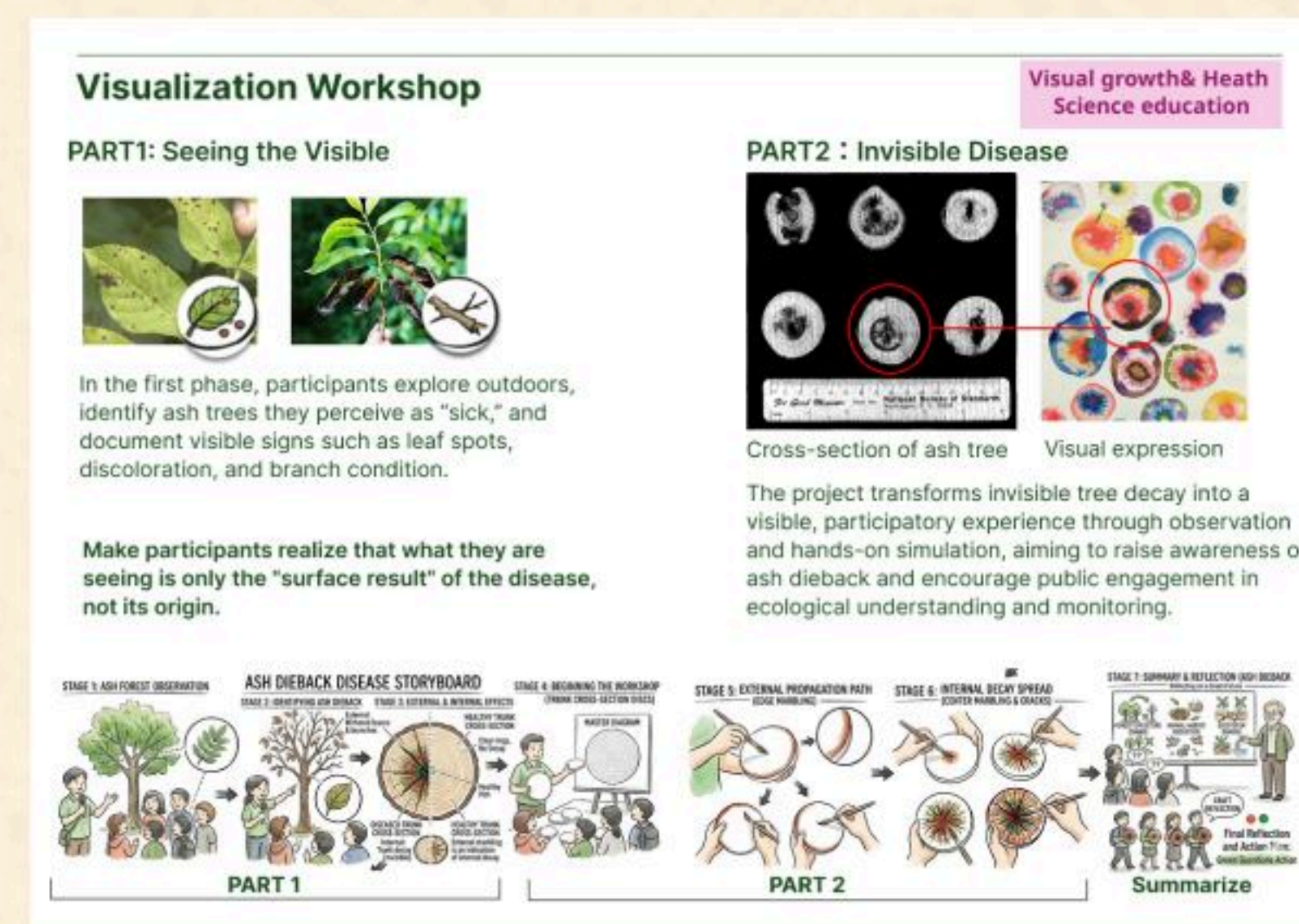
Tree as house&Health

Scientific Understanding

Emotional & Cultural Connection

Cognitive Awareness

Exploring Initial Concepts & Their Limitations



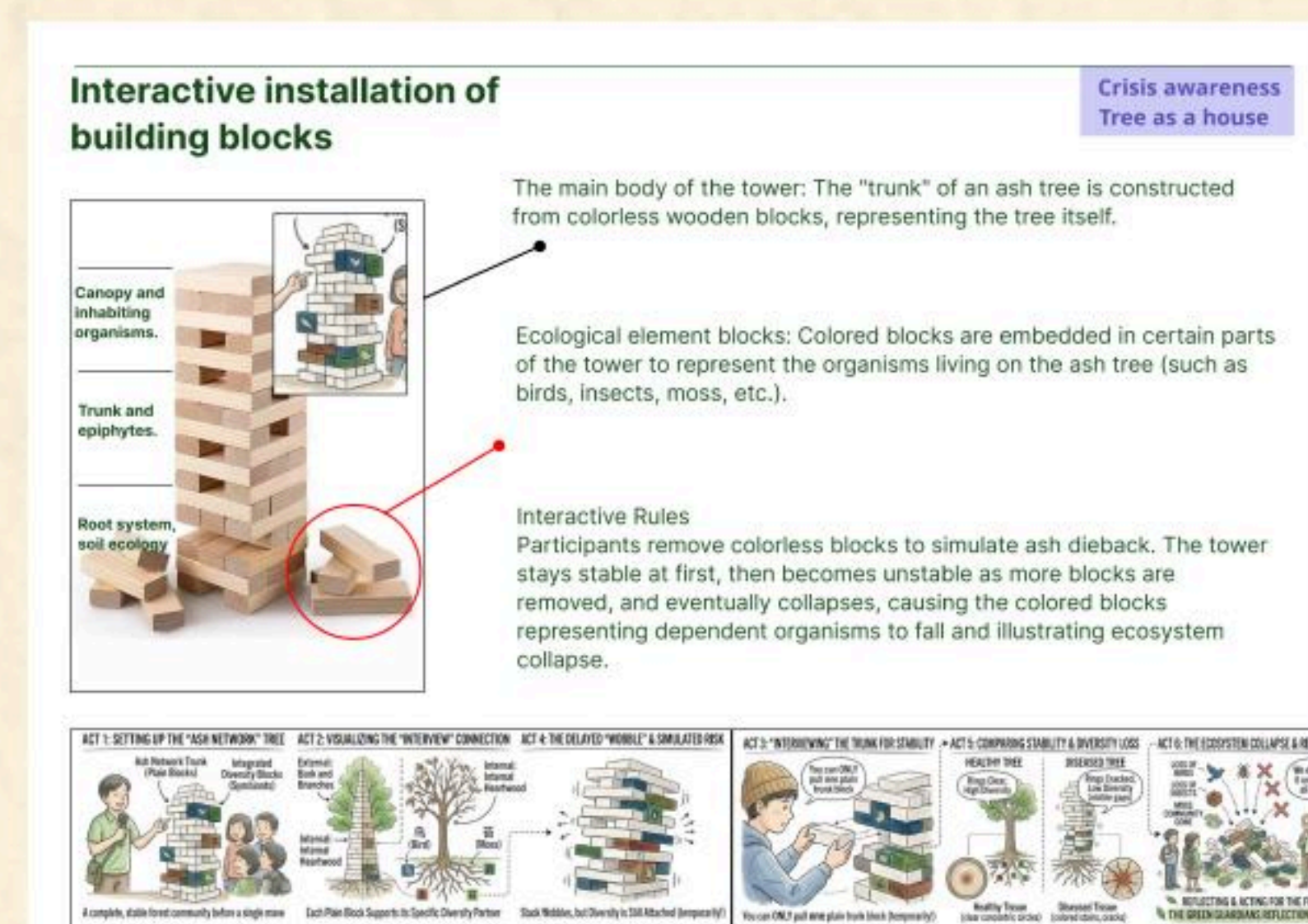
Observes visible symptoms and visualises the hidden internal process of ash dieback.

- Too directive experience process



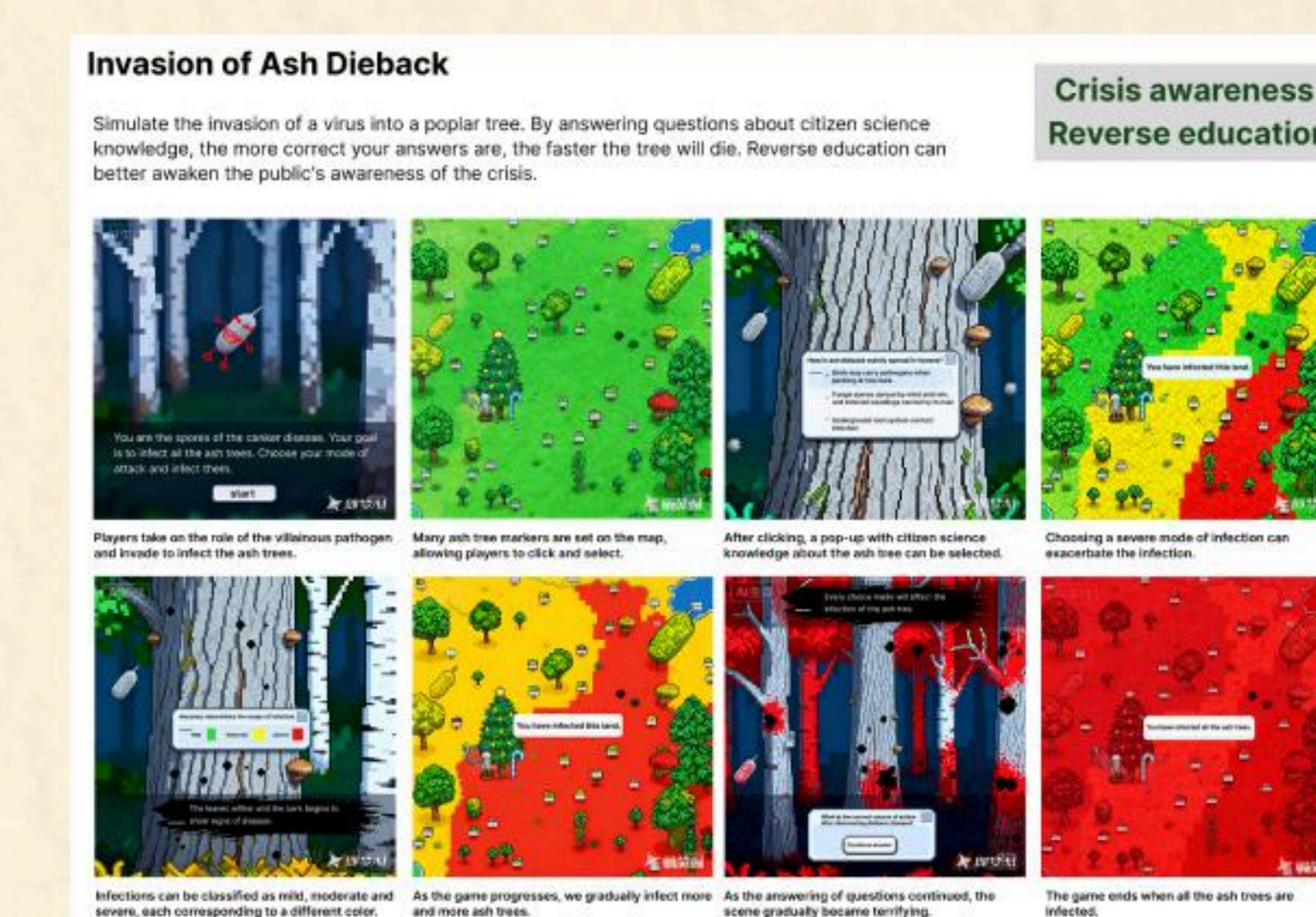
Uses hands-on woodworking with ash wood to build emotional connection and raise awareness.

- Weak connection to ash dieback concept
- Focus on craft over awareness



Uses a block tower to show how removing the tree's core leads to ecosystem collapse.

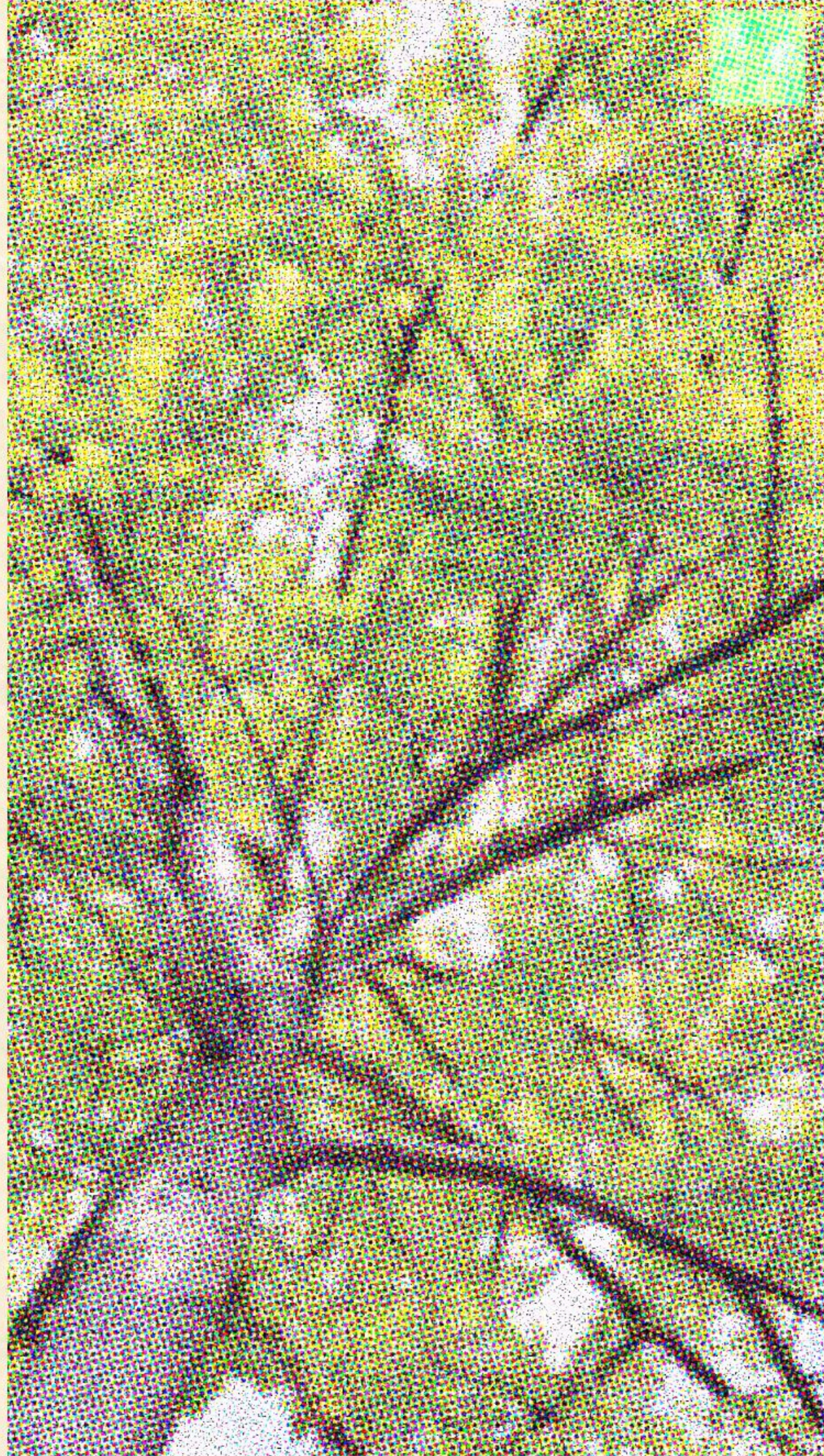
- Lacks originality as it is adapted from an existing concept.



Uses a game-based simulation to visualise the spread of ash dieback and raise crisis awareness.

- Focus on gameplay may weaken educational depth
- Requires digital access, limiting participation

From ash to ashes

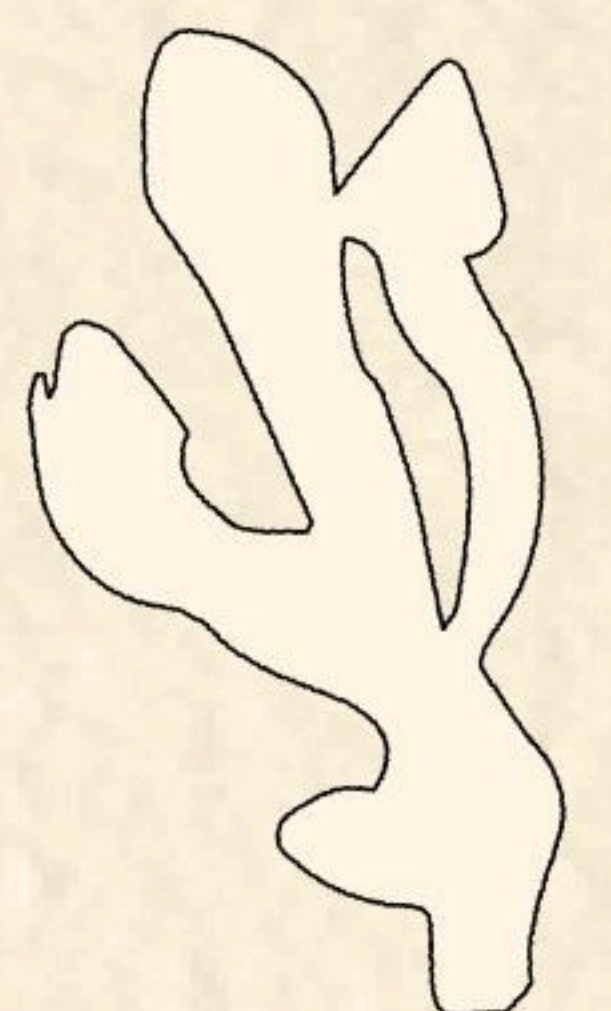
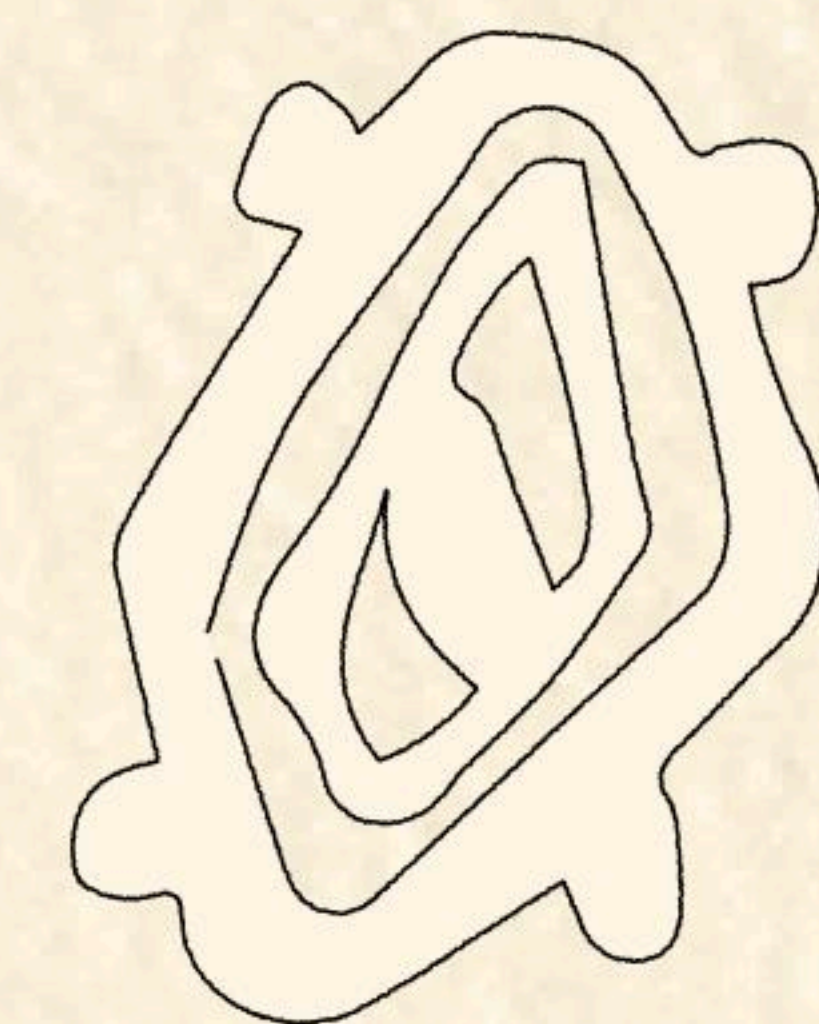
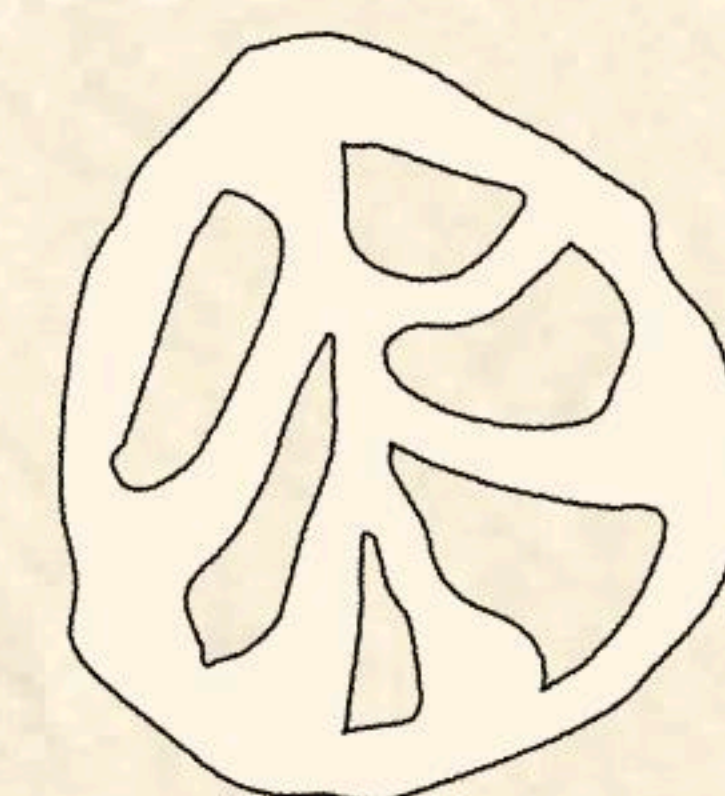
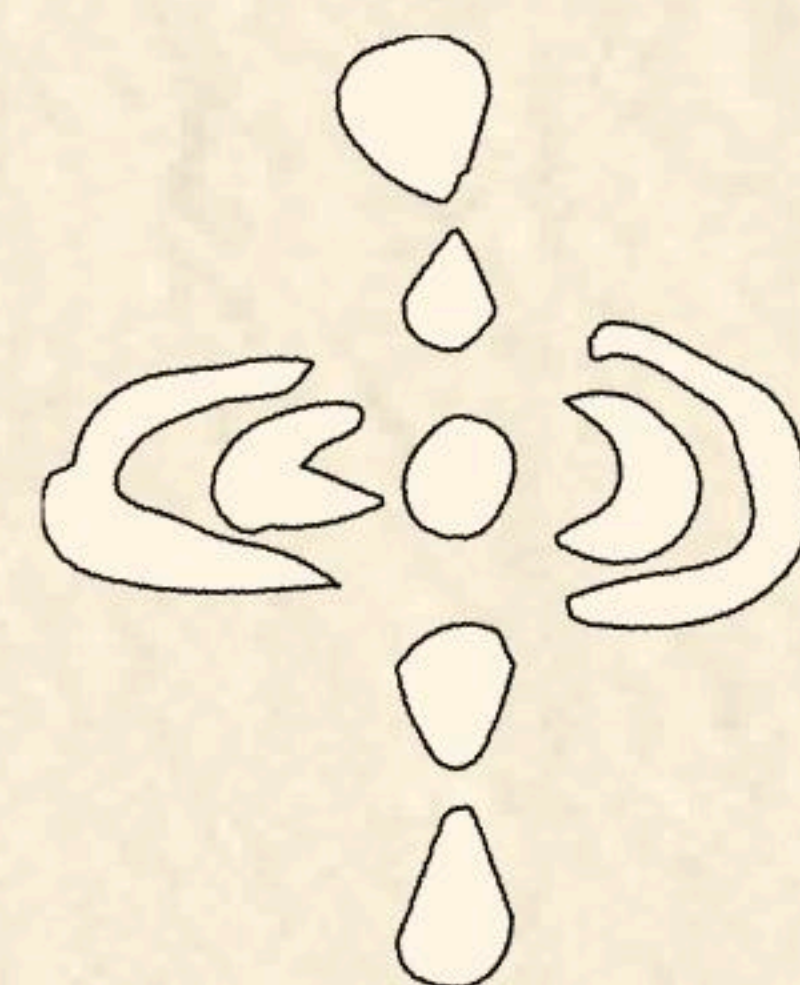
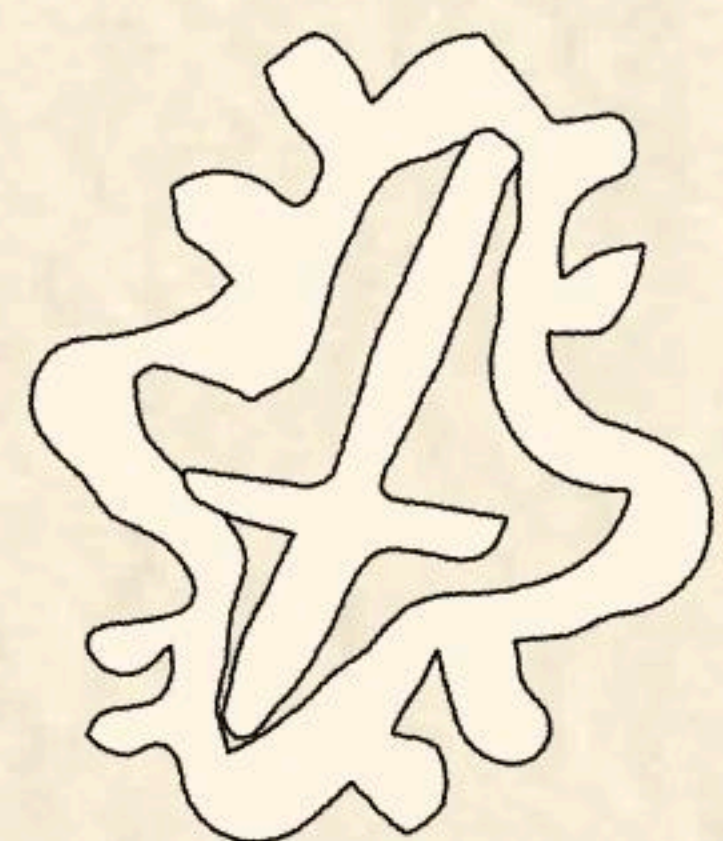


Final Concept

We designed a visual-and-sound experience that helps citizens recognise ash dieback through a set of symbolic cues.

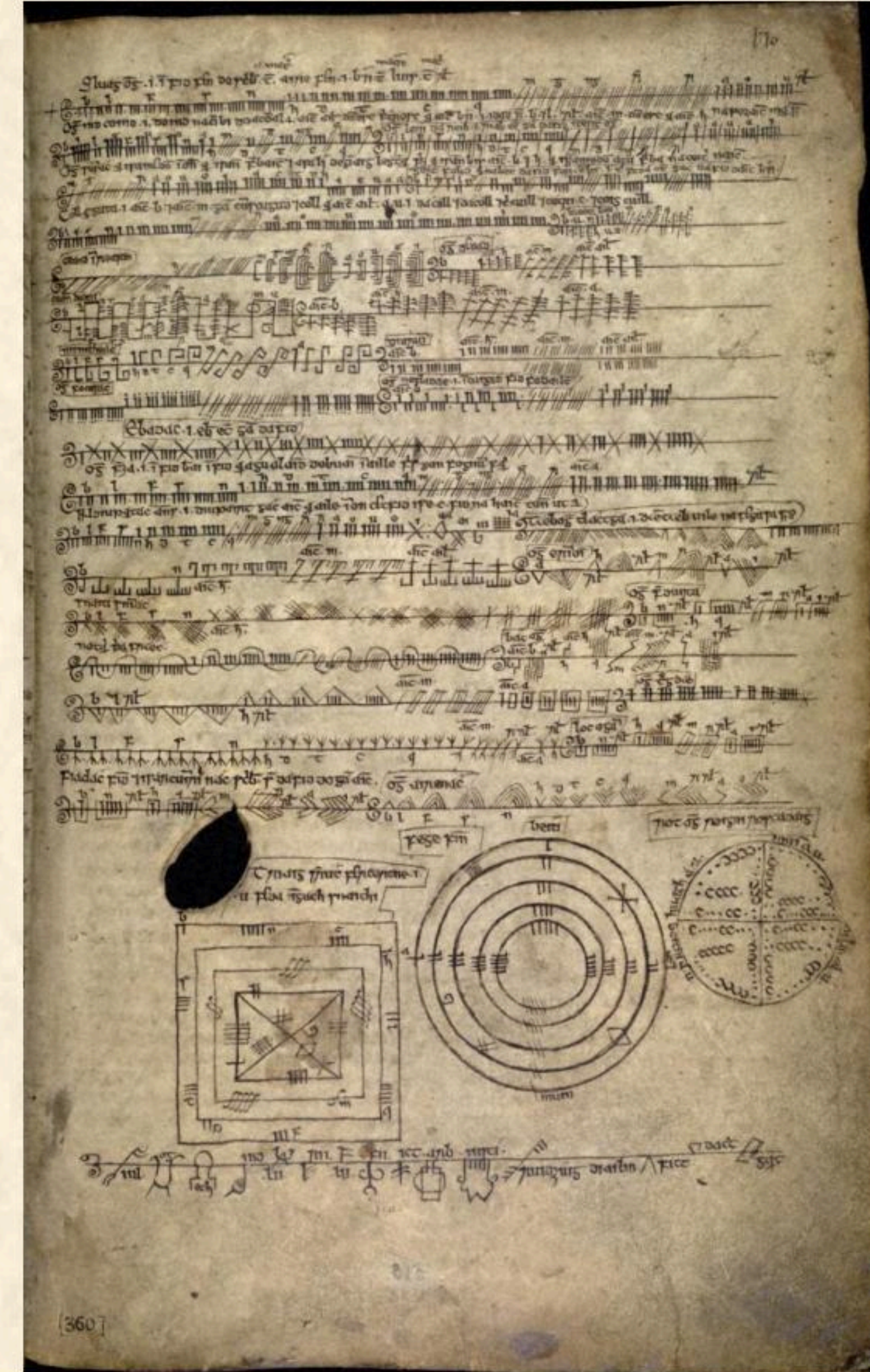
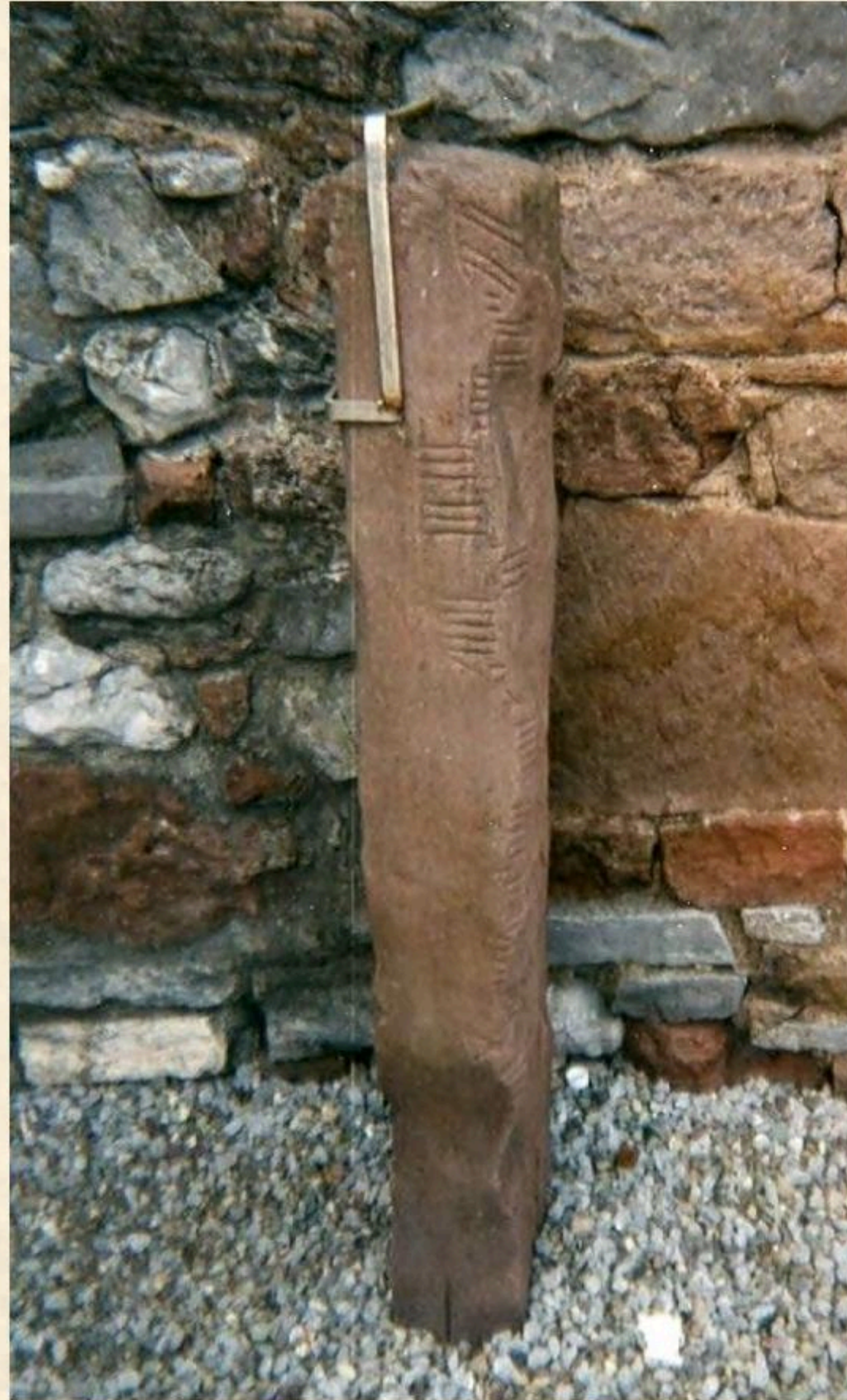
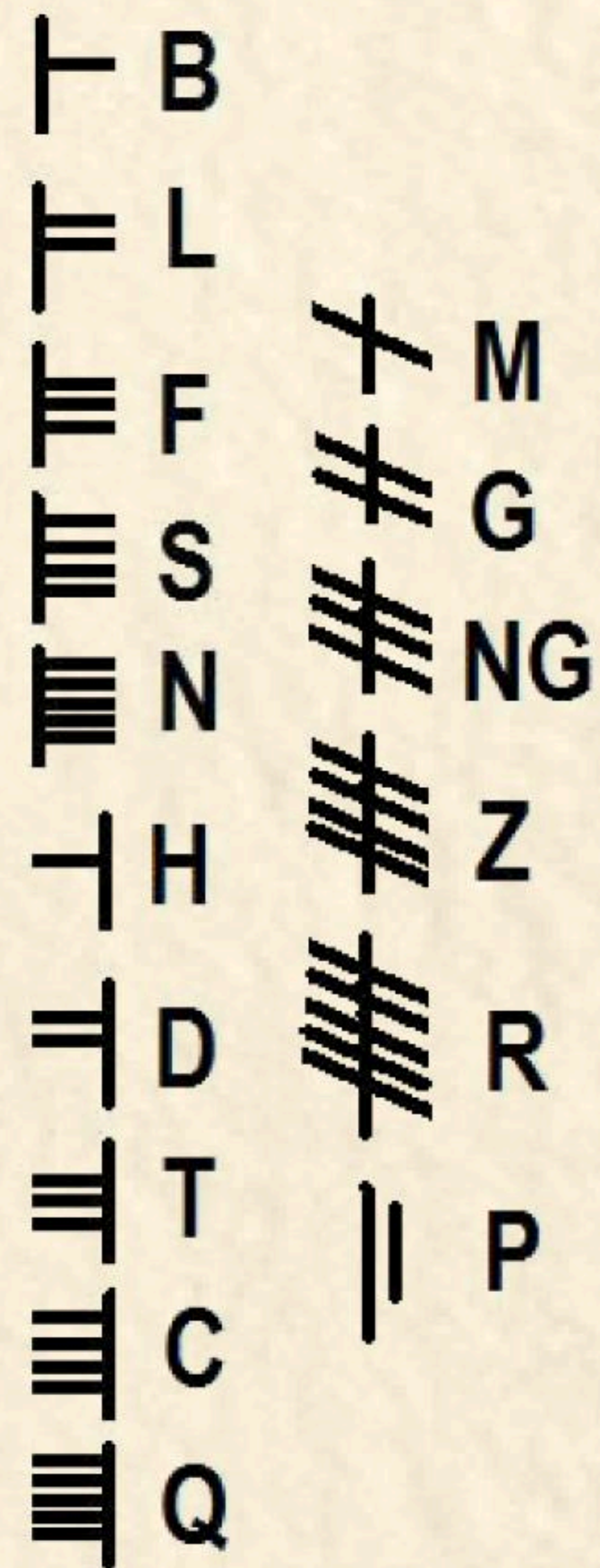
What can the participants obtain?

- Recognise ash dieback symptoms using visual symbols
- Turn observations into sound
- Keep a replayable memory of the tree



Inspiration & References

Inspiration from Ogham



What is Ogham?

Ogham is an ancient alphabet traditionally carved on stone or wood, often used as boundary markers or memorials. Each letter is associated with a specific tree, reflecting how the Celts understood trees as a symbolic language. Through Ogham, trees were seen as sacred, living entities that carry meaning, energy, and nature's wisdom.

How we use symbols in our project?

- Transforming tree conditions into symbols
- Using symbols as carriers of tree information
- Encouraging people to read, explore, and listen to trees



Symbols Design

We extracted the most distinctive features from every part of an ash tree affected by dieback - and turned them into simple, recognisable visual symbols.

To make the experience more engaging, we also added common natural elements that invite curiosity and playful exploration.



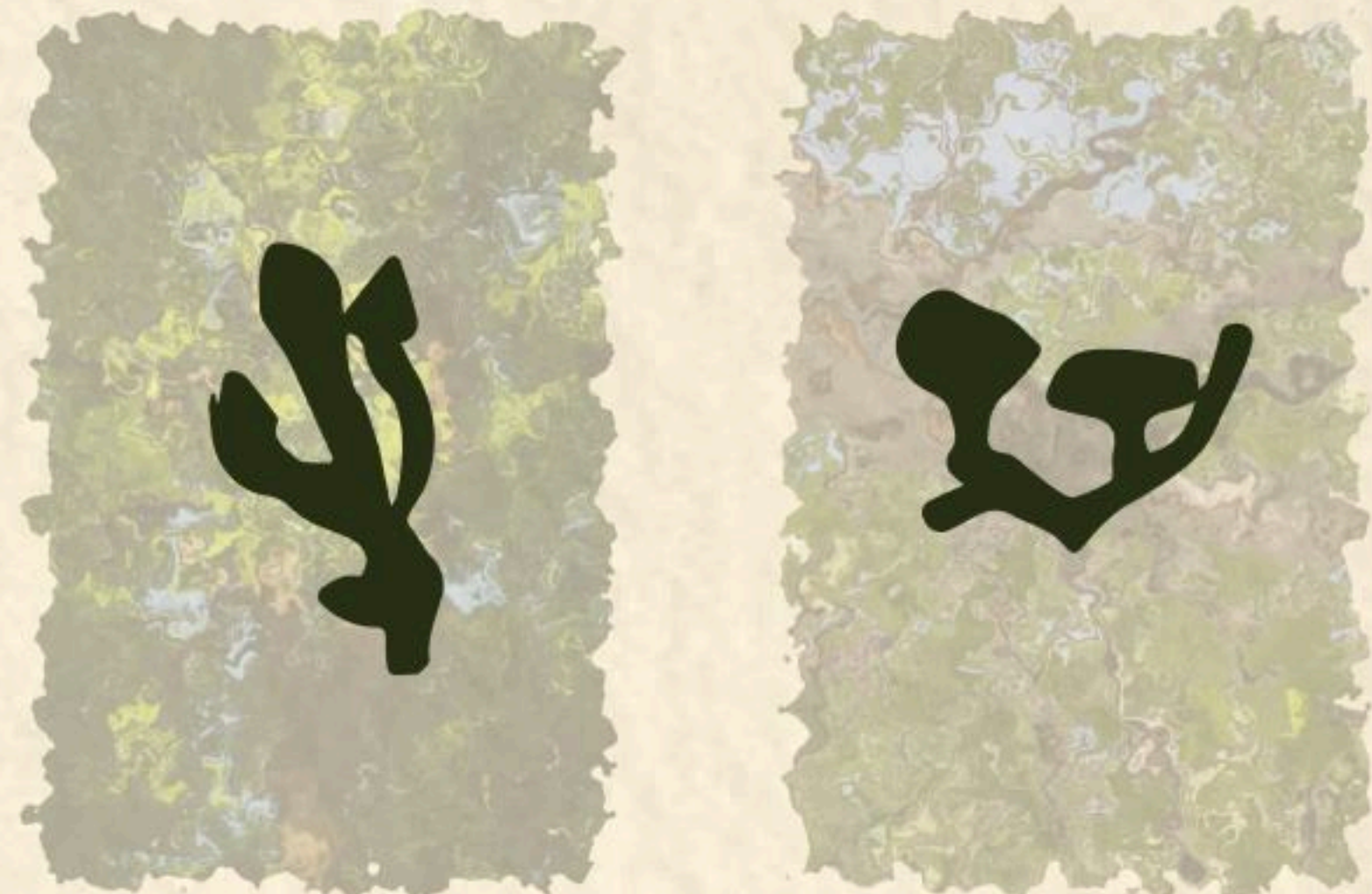
Leaves (healthy/unhealthy)



Fungis (healthy/unhealthy)



Branch (healthy/unhealthy)



Fruitage



River



Trunk (healthy/unhealthy)



Creature



Bark (healthy/unhealthy)



Creature



Sound Synthesis: Prototyping the Auditory Narrative

Inspiration



Tree Concert - Turning a Tree's Life into Music

‘Tree Concert’ project transformed a hundred-year-old chestnut tree into a real musician. The creaking of the branches and the rustling of the leaves also become part of the music.

Why Sound as a Medium?

Emotional & Universal

Sound goes beyond language and creates direct emotional engagement.

Memorable & Durable

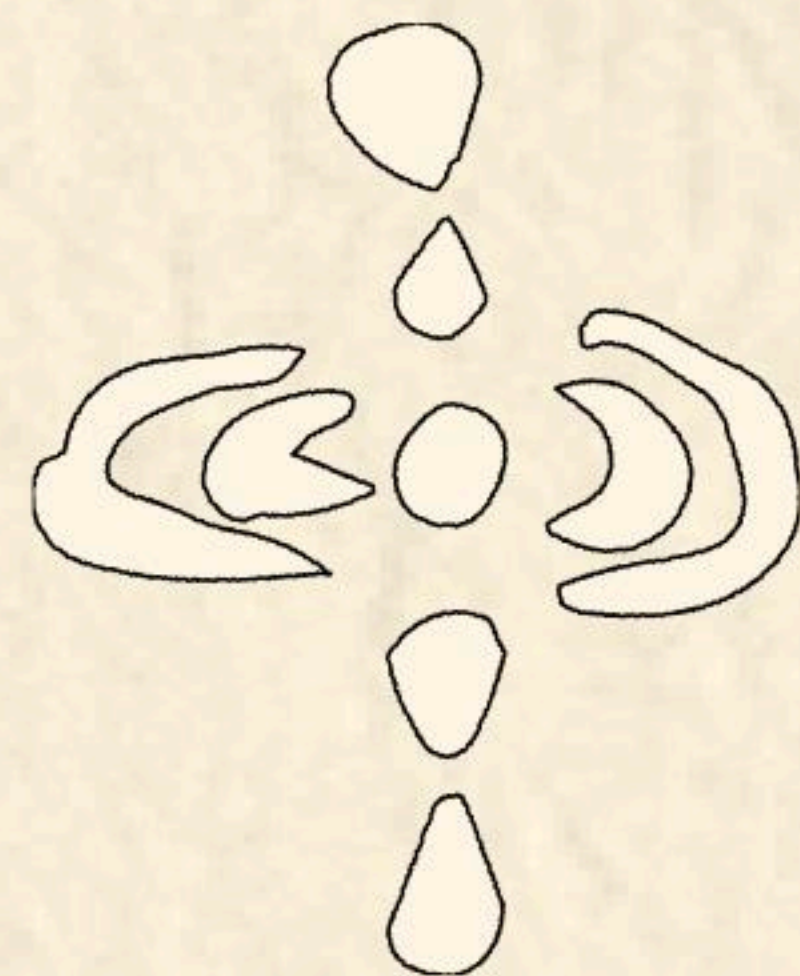
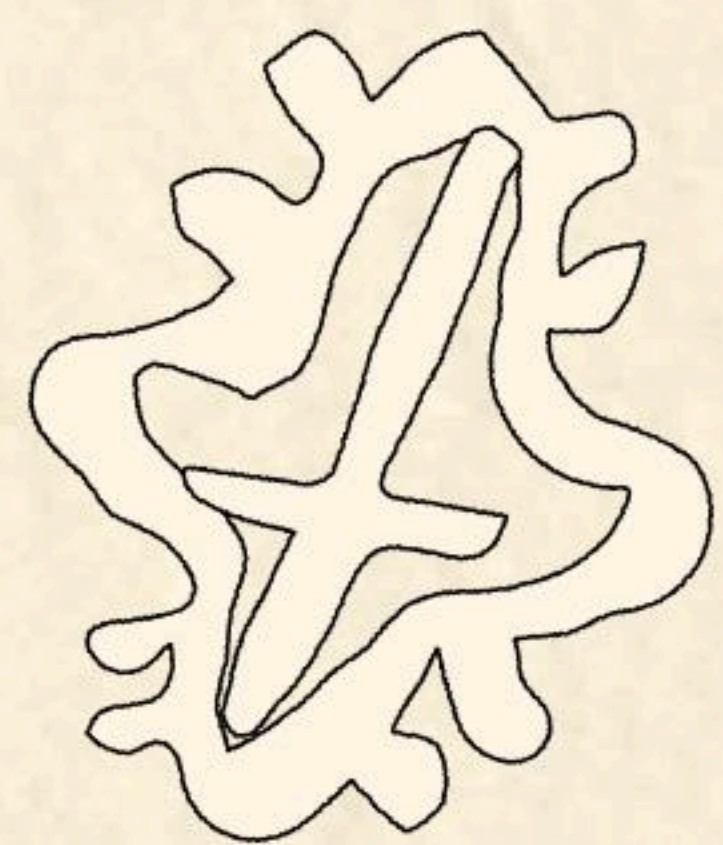
Sound can preserve and communicate invisible changes over time.

Natural & Intuitive

Trees already produce sound through wind and movement.

Final Concept

This project translates ash dieback into visual symbols and sound, making invisible tree conditions easier to understand. Participants observe trees, record findings, and create music based on what they discover—allowing them to “listen” to tree health. Through this process, it builds emotional connections with nature and creates memorable outcomes such as sonic postcards.



Service Ecosystem: Orchestrating the Intervention

Context

Location - Cumbernauld



Ecological resources

Half the town is parks/reserves; ash trees (ash dieback observation)

A need for promotion

hope to attract local residents or tourists from other places to this nature reserve through interesting participation activities.

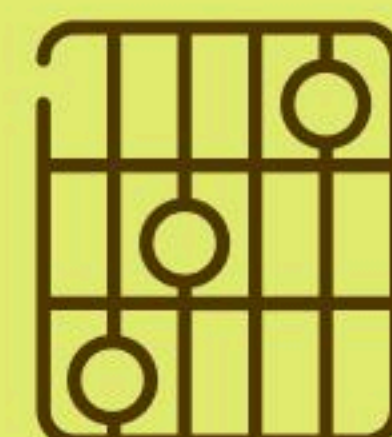


Lack of an entry point for "first-time" participation

System

Tools & Technology

MIDI Pads



Recordable Postcard



Cooperation partner & Support



TCV

Venue
Safety
patrols
Community
trust



Sound Lab

MIDI Pads
electronic music
production
guidance
possible technical
training



Eventbrite

Registration
management

People

People



Facilitator

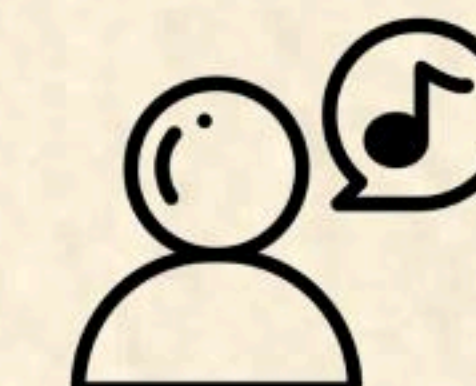
- Distribute the brochures
- Guide the flow
- safety boundaries



Tech assistant

- MIDI Pad setup

Participants



Eco-Conscious Explorers: Individuals with a genuine interest in ecological issues and the future of local biodiversity.

Curious Creators: Those who are intrigued by the process of music-making but may feel intimidated by traditional instruments.

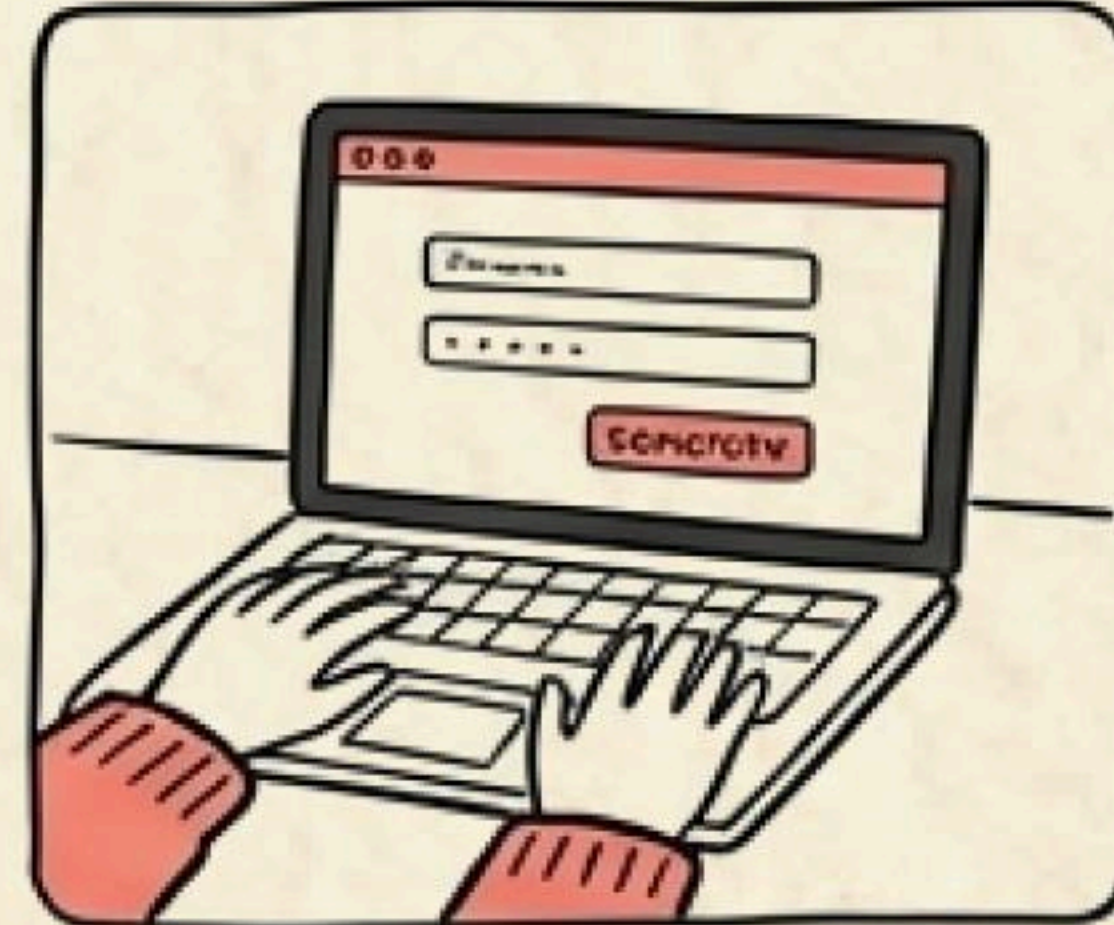
Experience Seekers: People who enjoy novel, sensory-driven experiences and seek meaningful ways to connect with their surroundings.

Storyboard

1 Registration Phase



Attract sign-ups



Make an appointment



Receive time & location

2 Preparation Phase(meeting point)



Arrive at meeting point



Hand out booklets



3 Activity Phase (in the forest)

40~50min



Attract sign-ups



Stick the corresponding symbol onto a blank grid on the last page



Write down feelings and notes in the booklet.



4 Music Making(meeting point) 10-20 min

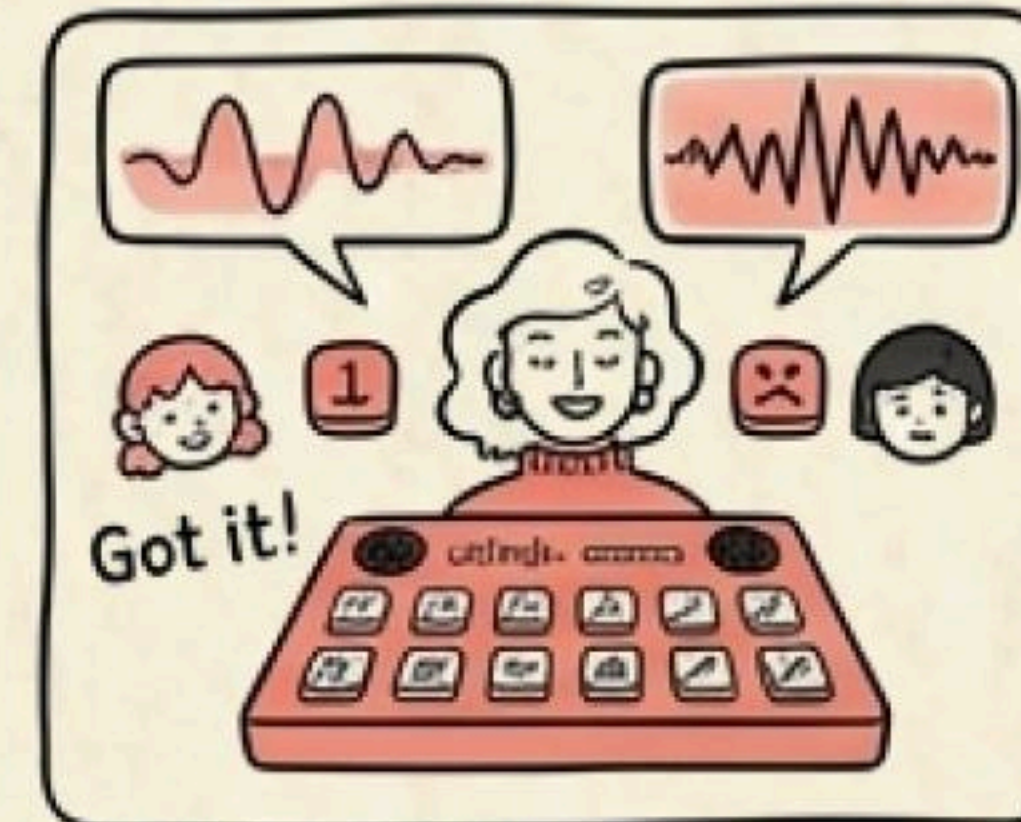
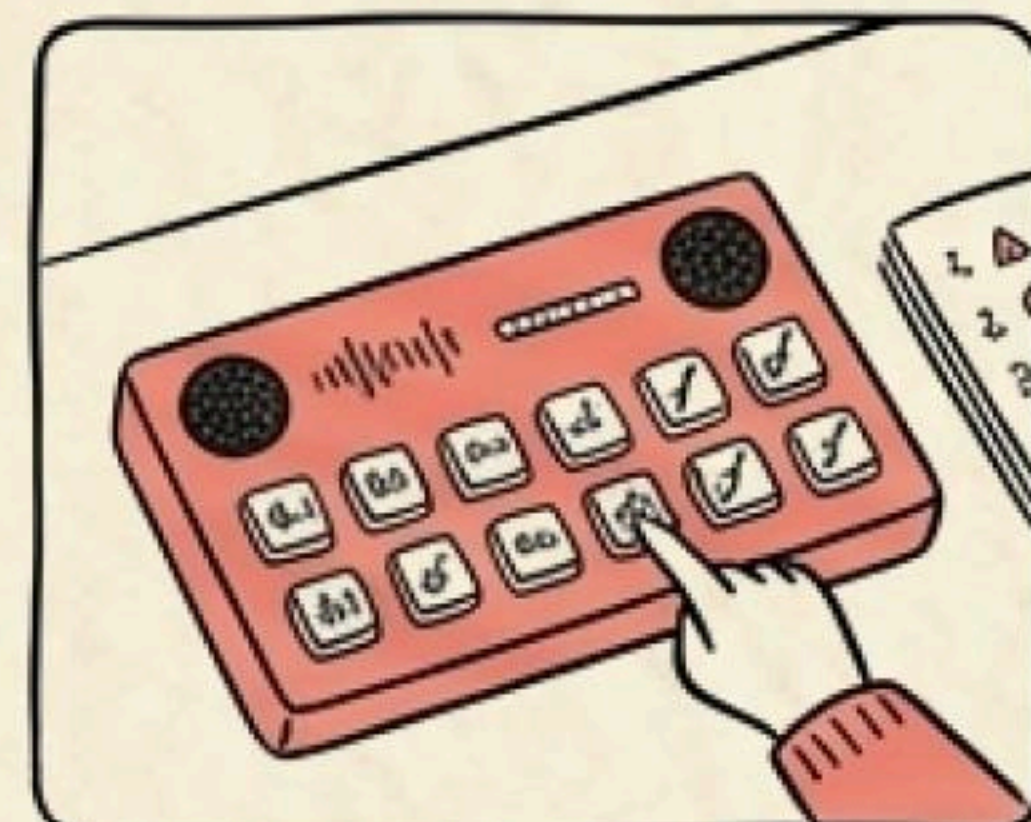
Keep/Share



Return to the meeting point



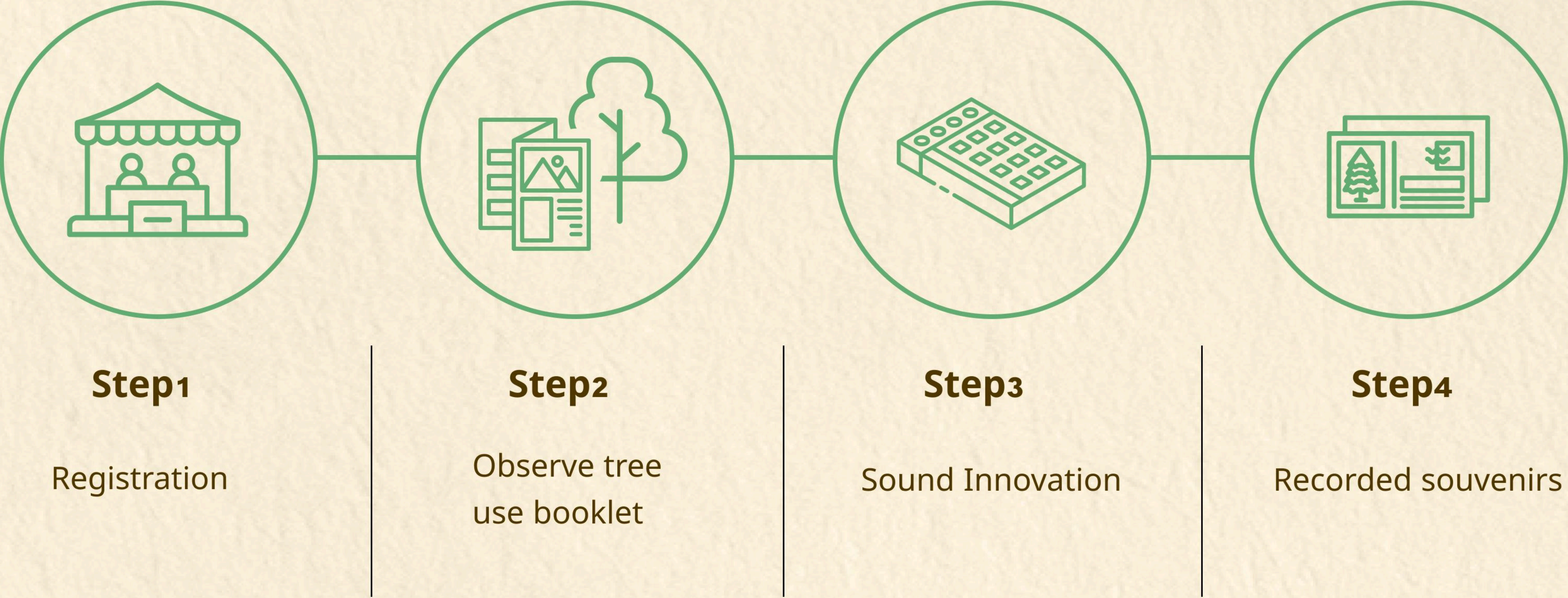
Press the button according to the symbols you see, and you can create a piece of sound.



Record the sound on a postcard and take it away as a souvenir.



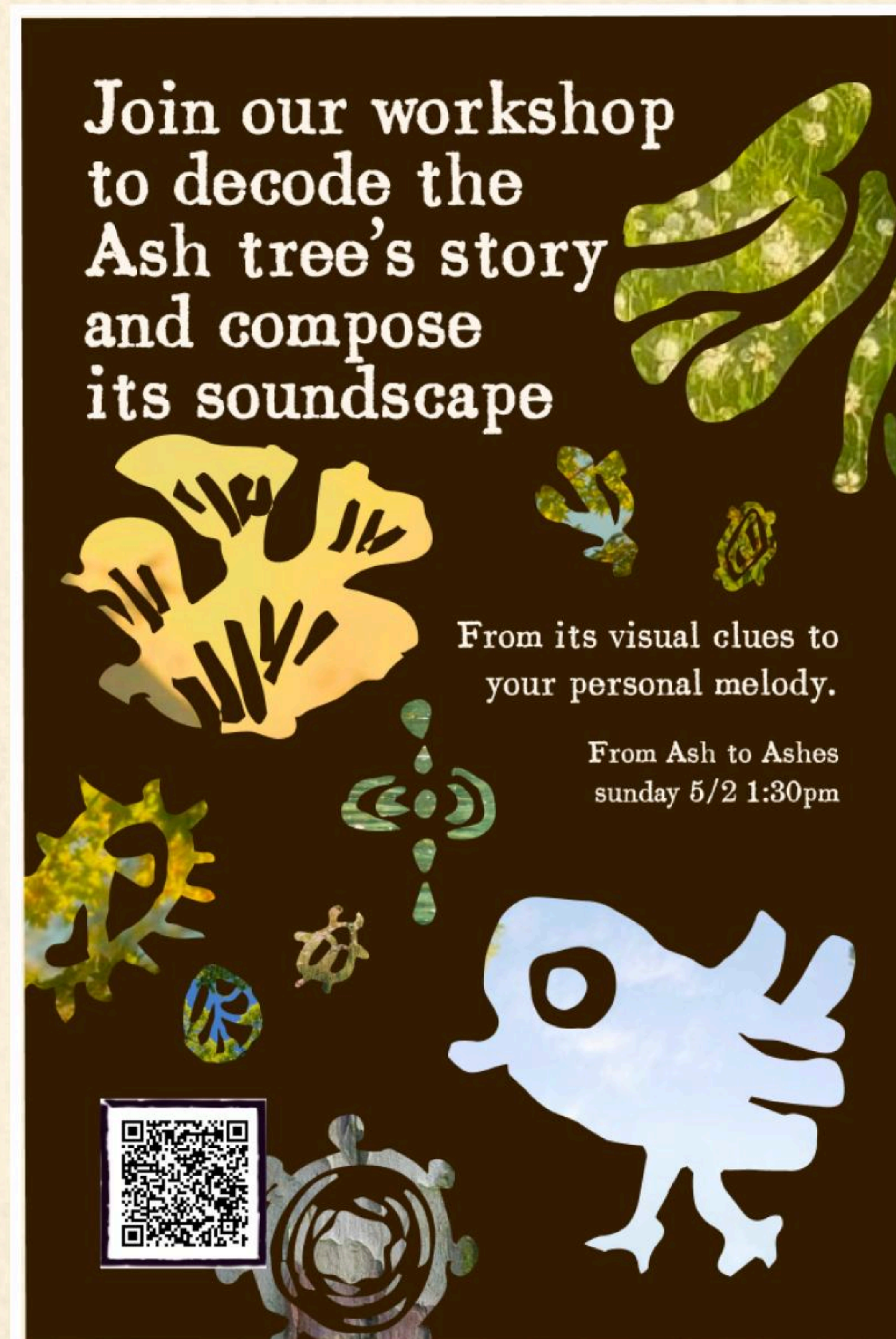
Project Steps



Step1

Registration

We produced posters to attract the public to sign up for participation.



Step2

Use the booklet

Forest Wood Ash Map

Locate the position of the white poplar trees by referring to the booklet map



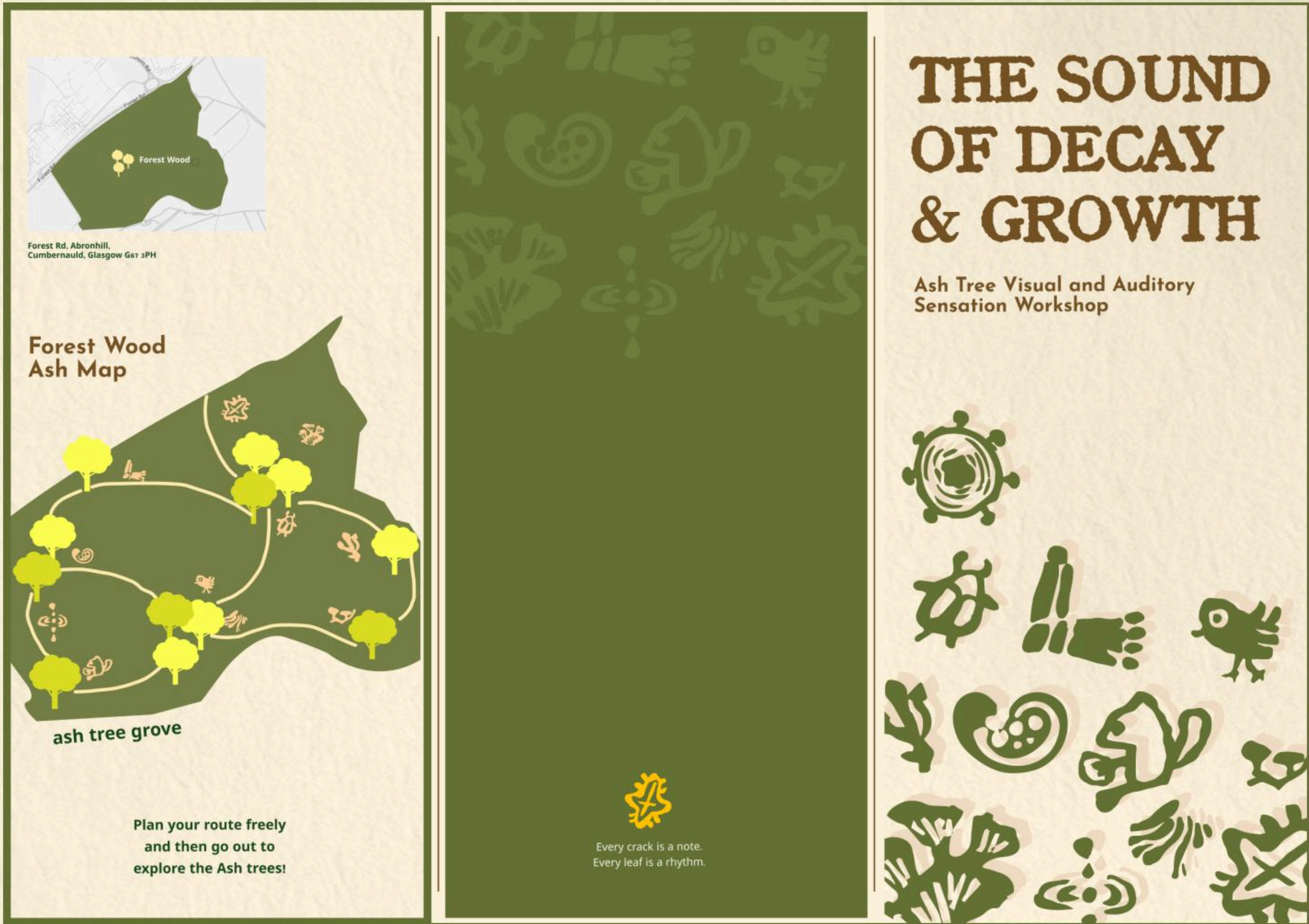
Symbol Origins

Based on the meaning of each symbol, search in the white poplar tree and its surroundings



Recording

Paste the observed symbol stickers onto the blank area to prove that this situation has been observed.



Step3

Sound innovation

Music pad

Return to the registration site to participate in the "Sound Innovation" event. Use the music pad to strike the symbols you have observed and create your own sounds.



Step4

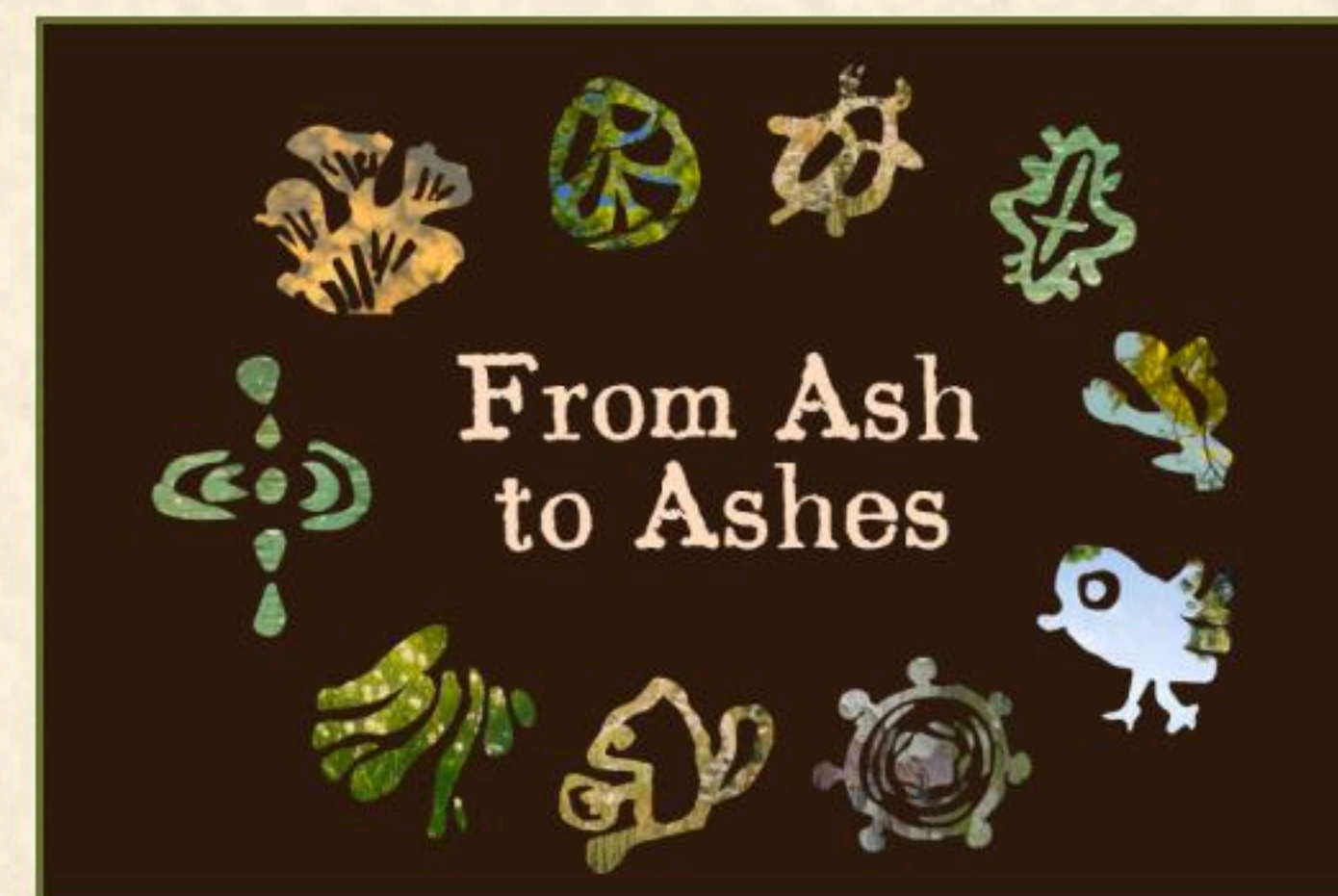
Recorded souvenirs

Postcard

The finished sound piece can be recorded and saved onto the postcard as a keepsake.

Video Link

<https://youtu.be/djglyCwttHE>





End