



Tree as Living Site of Memory

MDes Design Innovation and Citizenship

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Team 4

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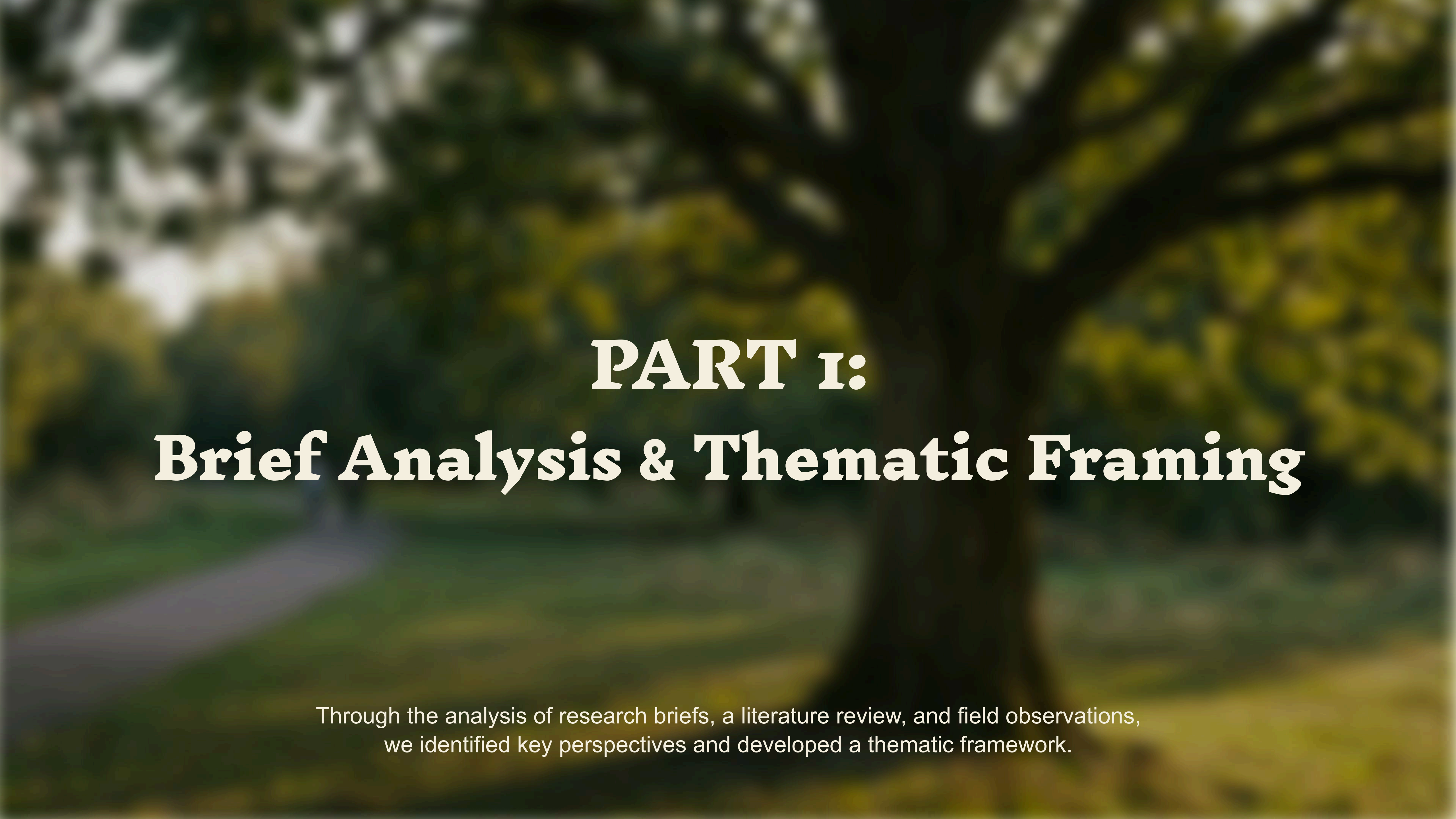
Stakeholder Research & Proposal Development

Through stakeholder mapping, case study analysis, interviews, and stakeholder engagement, the research iterated the project framework and developed the project proposal.

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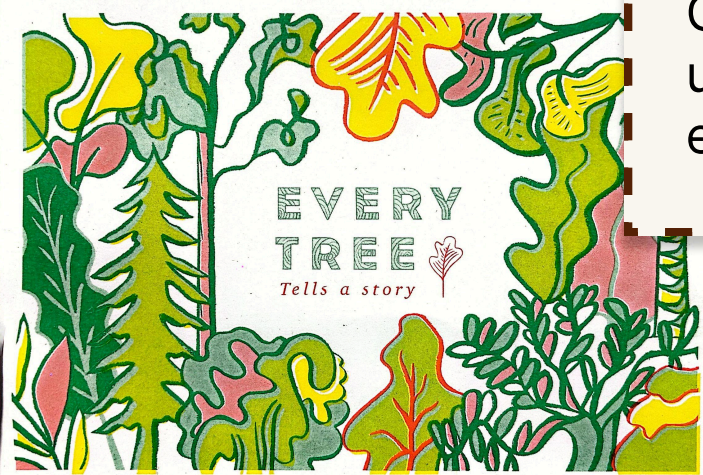
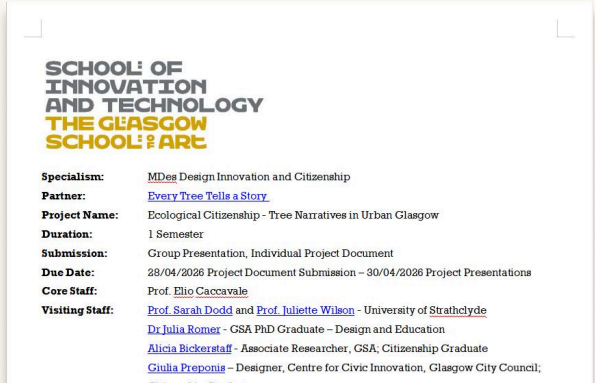


PART I:

Brief Analysis & Thematic Framing

Through the analysis of research briefs, a literature review, and field observations, we identified key perspectives and developed a thematic framework.

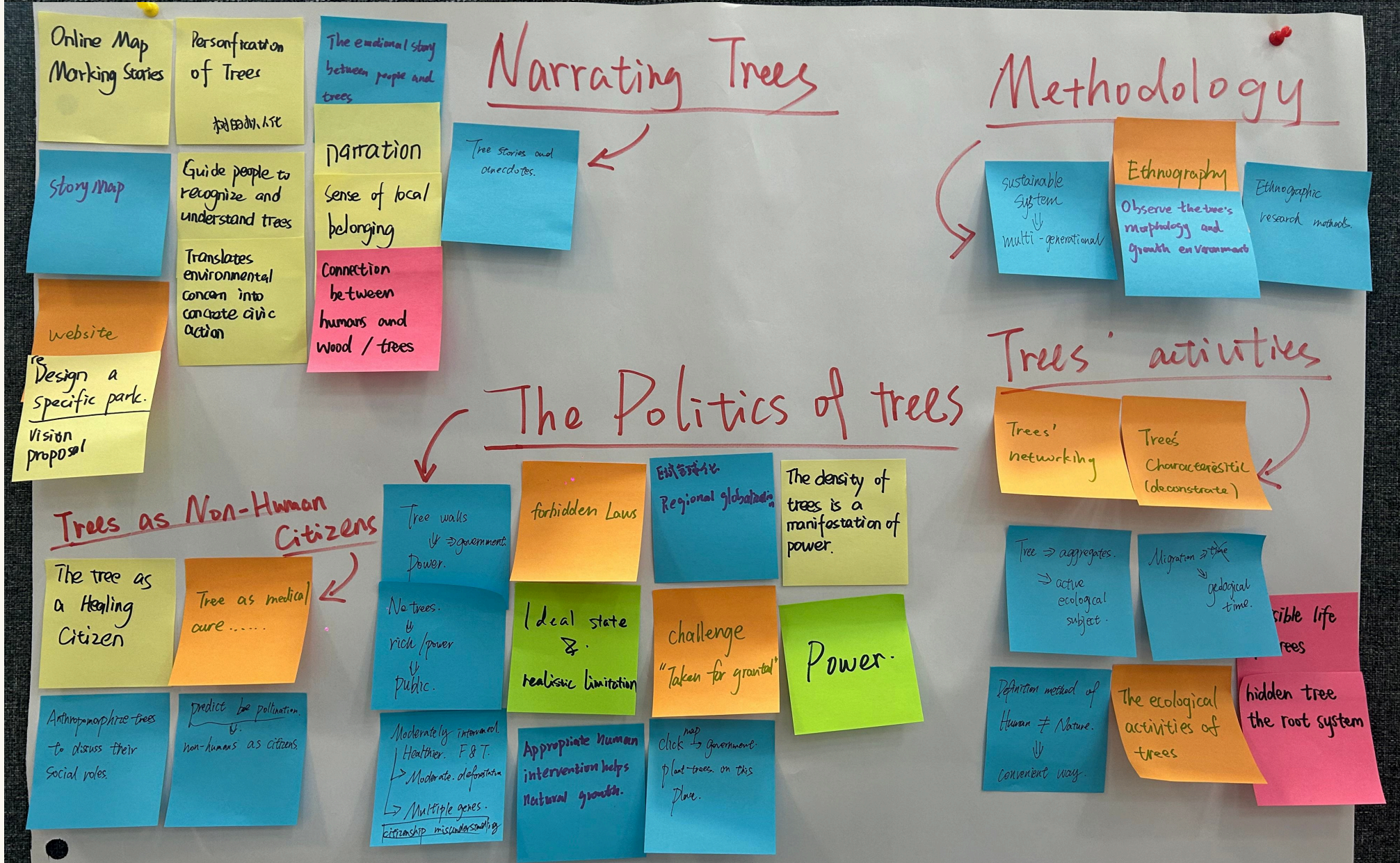
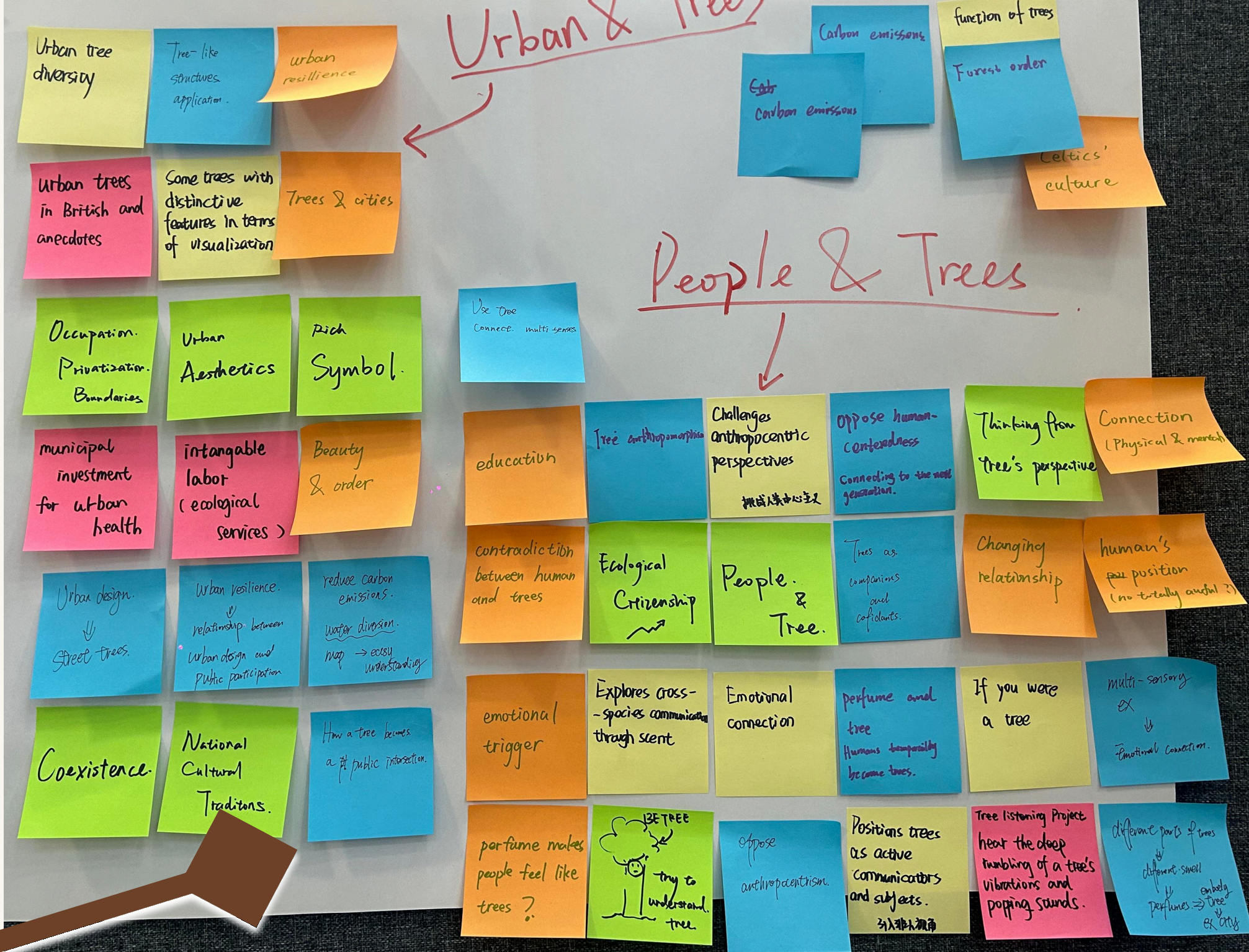
Understanding the Brief



The project brief asked us to explore how design can support ecological citizenship through Glasgow's urban trees, and how trees might be understood through narration, participation, lived experience, and human-non-human relationships.

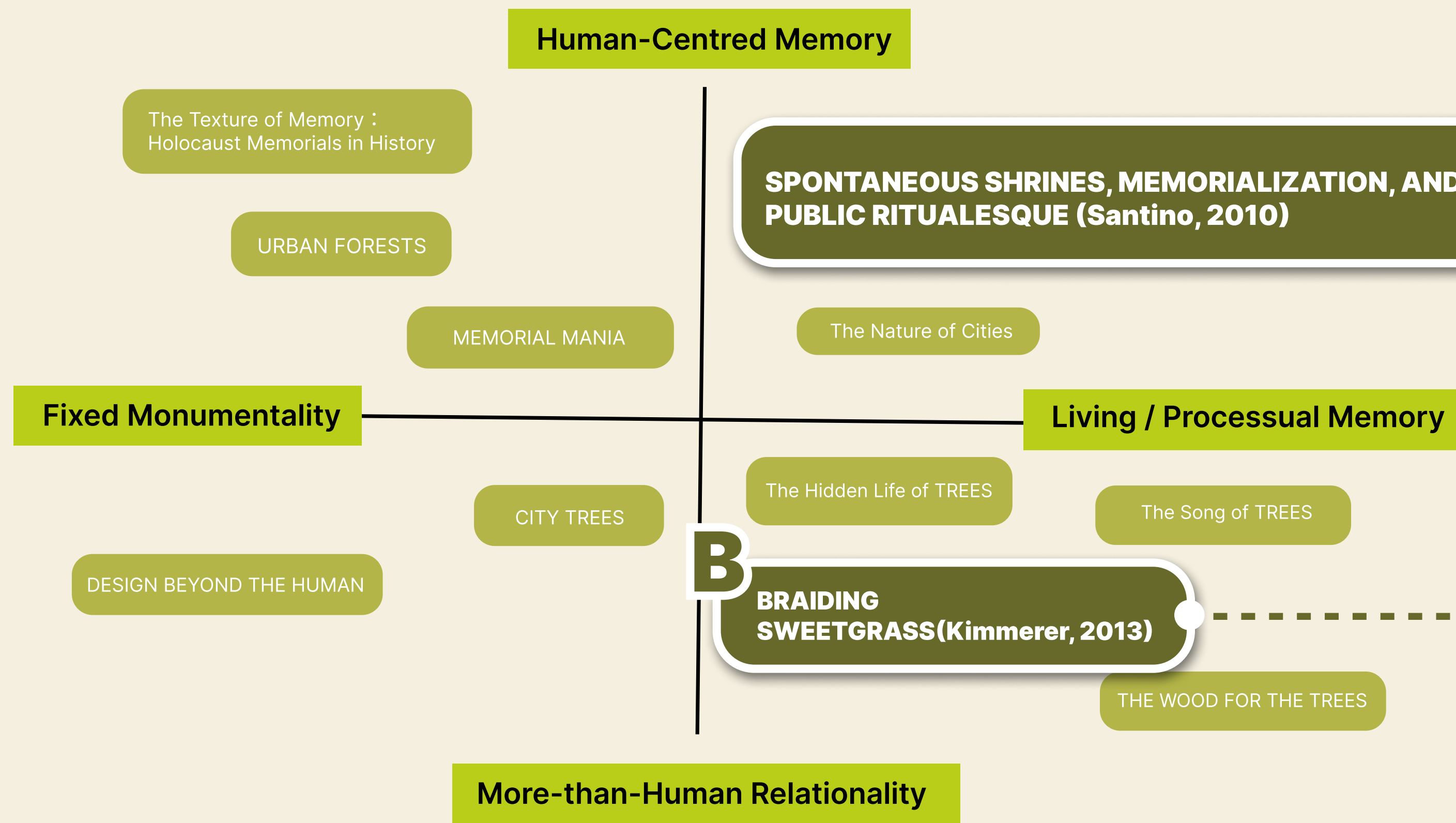
Summary of Key Perspectives

- Glasgow Urban & Trees
- Every Tree Tells a Story Project
(90% of people cherish memories of people and moments from the past through trees.)
- People & Trees
- Narrating Trees
- The Politics of Trees
- Trees activities



1 Literature Review I

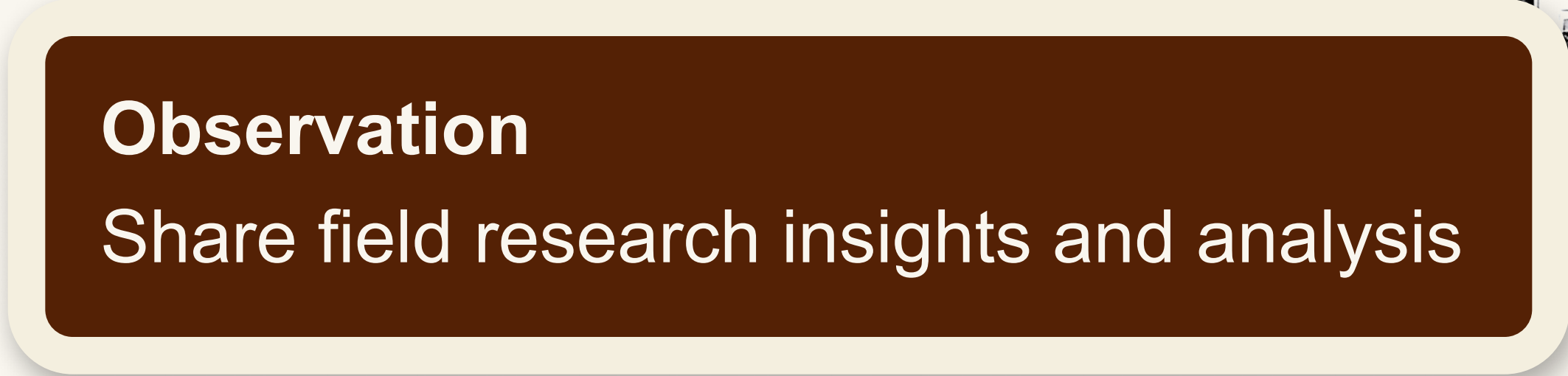
2 Key Argument



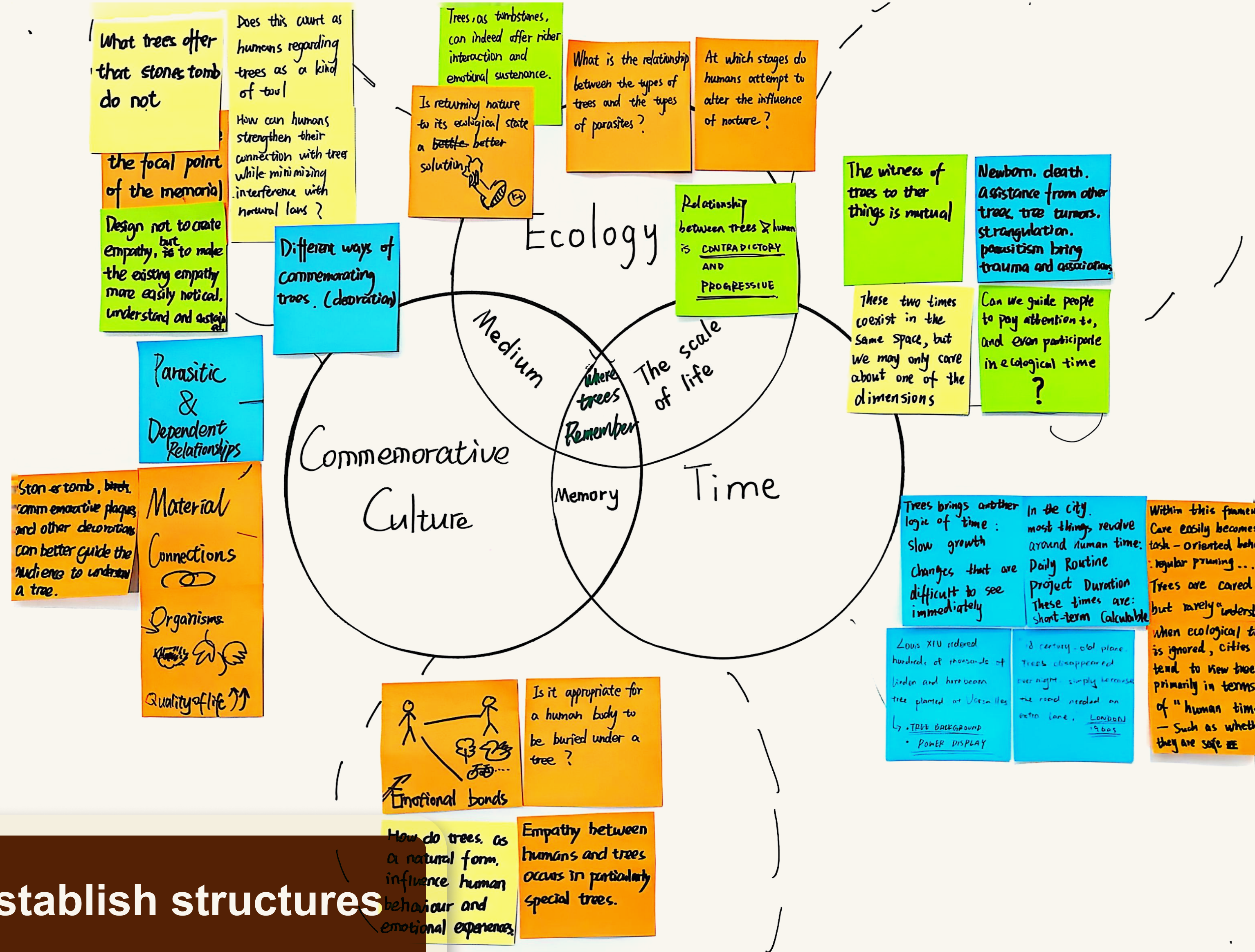
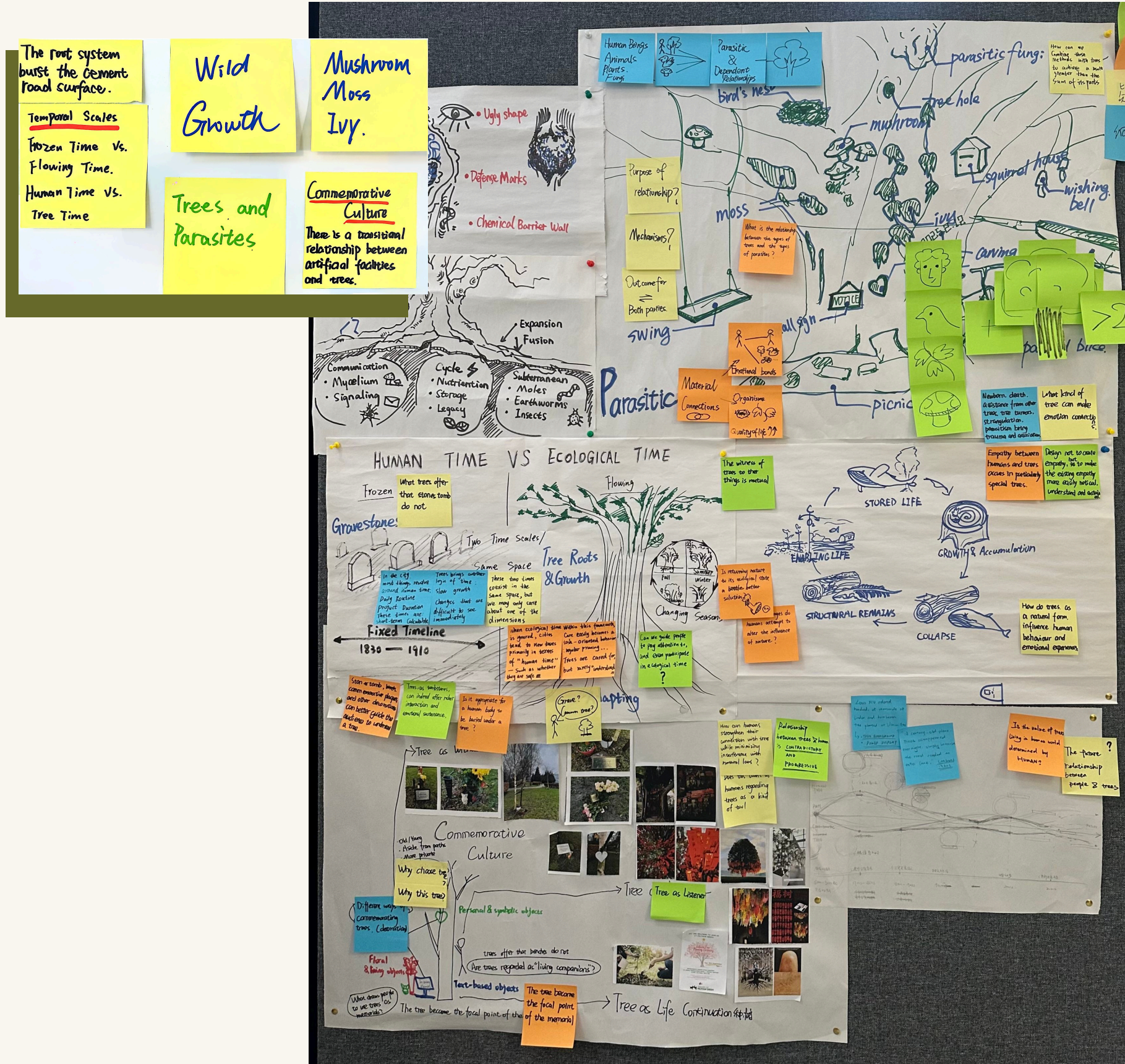
Temporary memorials that appear spontaneously at sites of disaster or violence.

The human-plant relationship ought not to be framed as a subject-object or resource-based dynamic

Instead, plants should be acknowledged as active agents and partners in an ecological relationship grounded in reciprocity, responsibility, and mutual care.

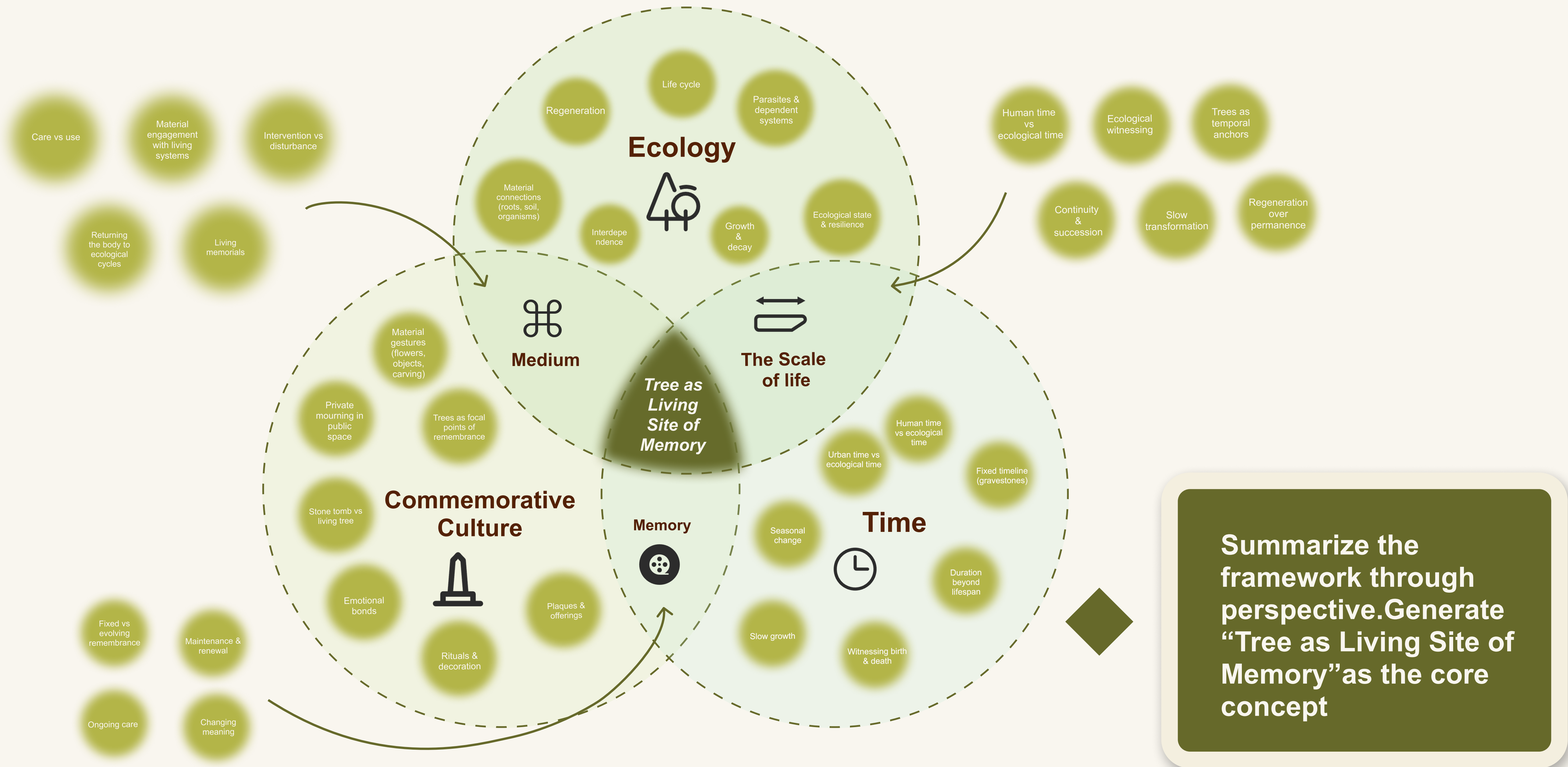


Visualized perspective

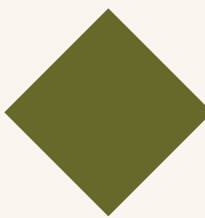


Visualize perspectives and establish structures

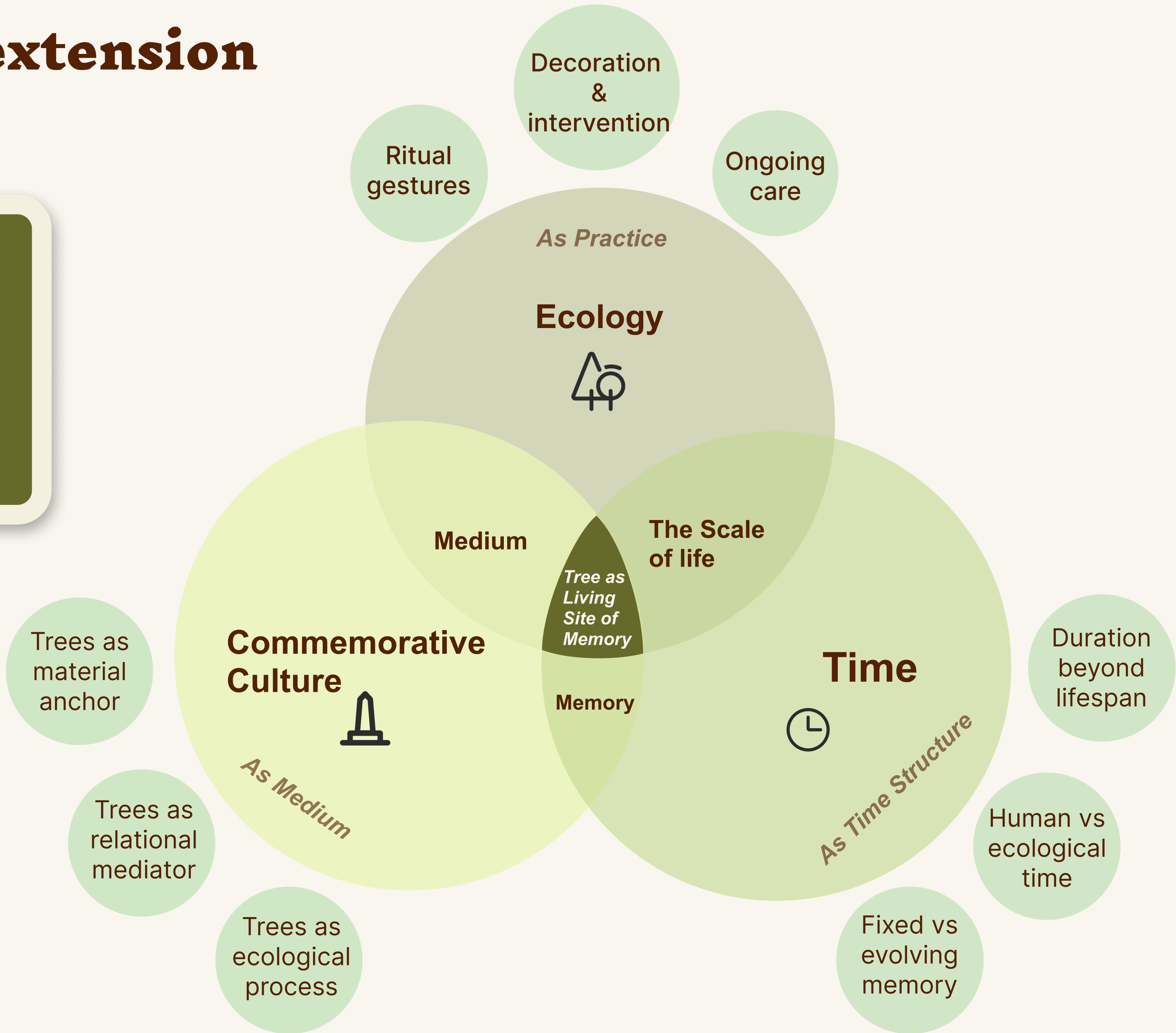
Thematic framework establishment



Thematic framework extension



The project investigates how memory transforms when embedded in ecological systems rather than fixed monuments.



Exploratory Process

Critical Questions

Exist

- Are trees witnesses or participants?
- Is memory located in the object or in the relationship?

Ethical

- Should trees be regarded as tombstones?
- What happens when the tree dies?

Spatial

- Where is the boundary between private memorabilia and public domain?

Time

- Does ecological growth reshape remembrance?
- Can memory exist without permanence?



PART 2:

Stakeholder Research & Proposal Development

Through stakeholder mapping, case study analysis, interviews, and stakeholder engagement, the research iterated the project framework and developed the project proposal.

Stakeholder Landscape

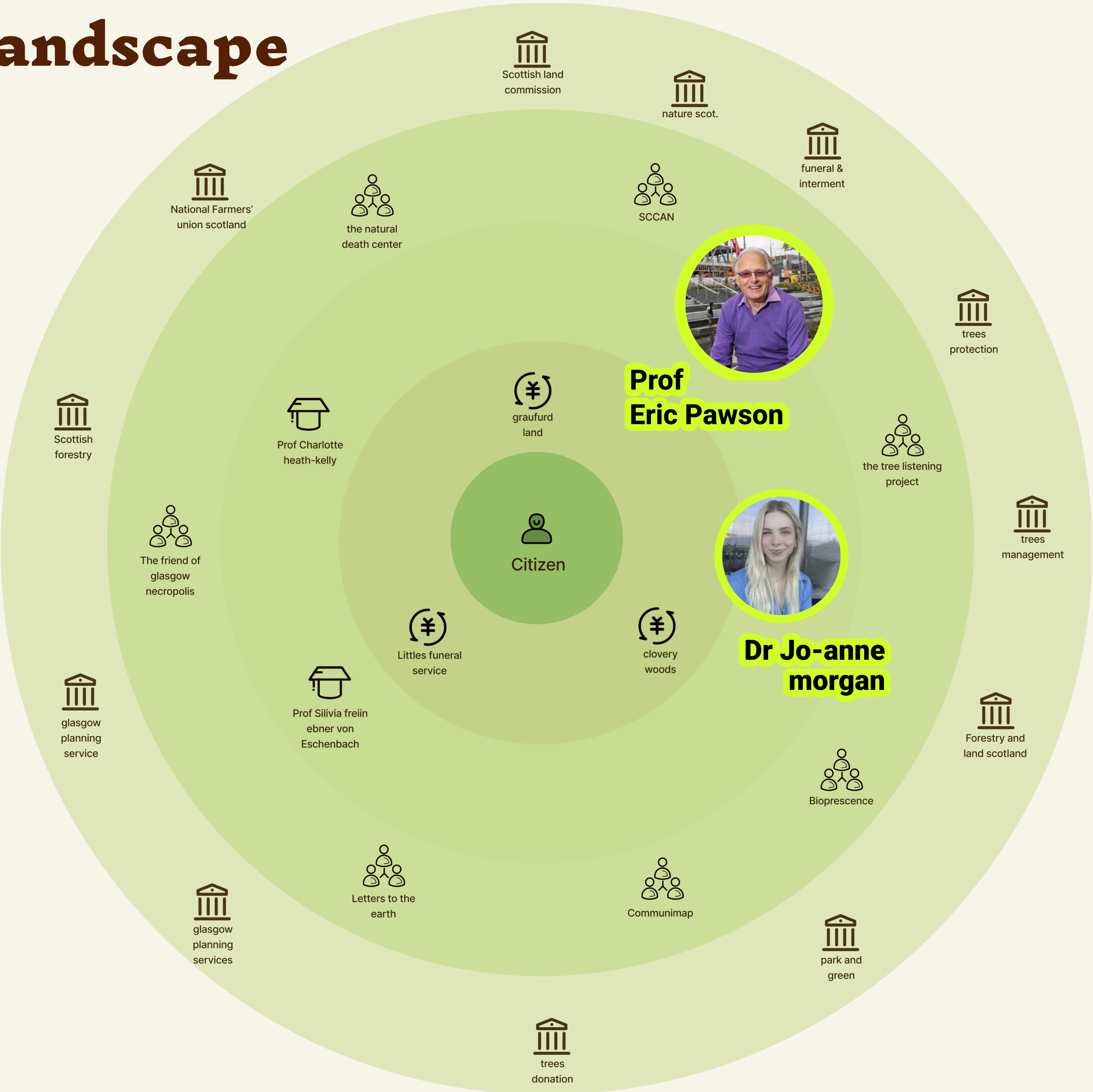


Personal

Mourners
Visitors
Potential user



Academic



Organization



Business



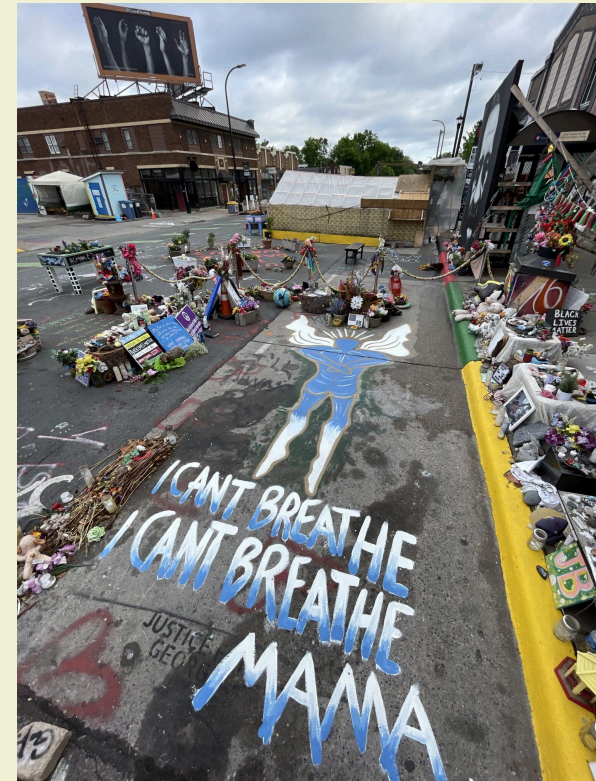
Government





► Issues

- The establishment of World War I memorial trees is essentially a centralized act of remembrance. However, the daily maintenance of these trees is decentralized or even neglected.
- Commemoration is institutionalized, but care is scattered or even ignored.



“No-one had overall responsibility for looking after the trees.”

Ideal State:

Trees and tombstones commemorate soldiers, martyrs, and those who sacrificed their lives for the nation, symbolizing high regard, gratitude, and remembrance.

Reality:

Trees die, there's no replacement policy, responsibility is unclear, and maintenance is inadequate.



Greendyke St, Saltmarket, Glasgow G1 5DB

Identified Issue:



Conflict 1: When nothing is wrong, family members and the government dispute the ownership of the tree.



Conflict 2: When the tree suffers damage or illness, both sides shift responsibility and argue that the other should be in charge of maintenance.



Conflict 3: The memorial items placed by family members are considered non-compliant by the government (no prior notice was given).



Conflict 4: How should the tree be handled when it conflicts with urban planning?

► Opportunities

They are highly sacred in symbolism, but practically lack continuous care.



Interview Summary

● Two Elderly Women with Dogs

Profile: Two elderly women visit the park daily. One documents a tree's seasonal changes and values its beauty and meaning.

Attitude: They see trees as emotionally meaningful and symbolic. Trees act as living memories, connecting time, personal experience, and everyday observation.



● Molly's Owner Couple

Profile: A loving couple who regularly visit the park with their dog Molly and enjoy the relaxed, natural atmosphere of the park.

Attitude: They are friendly and cooperative, and are happy to share their daily experiences in the park, providing real-life insights for our research on public spaces and memorial trees.



● Park Tree Planter

Profile: A professional park planter responsible for tree planting and daily maintenance, with rich practical experience in horticulture.

Attitude: He focuses more on the technical and functional aspects of trees rather than their memorial meanings, offering a professional maintenance perspective for the project.



1

Emotions come from daily interaction. High-frequency interaction points should be designed instead of relying only on symbolic meaning.

2

It is difficult to translate emotions into actions. It is necessary to establish a long-term mechanism to turn the initial attachment into continuous participation.

3

The definition of maintenance responsibility is vague. It is necessary to clarify the distribution of responsibilities between individuals, communities and officials.

4

Lack of end-of-life planning. The design should cover the whole life cycle and clarify the transformation and treatment after the death of trees.

Conclusion:

Memorial trees do not fail because people don't care, but because there is no designed system that supports repeated interaction, distributed care, and lifecycle continuity.

1 Power

How to mediate conflicts between the government and citizens

2 Care

We should refocus on "maintenance infrastructures".
Should the memorial tree be included in the city's maintenance system?
If not, how can it survive?

3 Symbolism

Can forgetting be understood not as the failure of memory, but as an essential phase that allows memory to stay alive and regenerative within a counter-monumental framework?

Whos Responsible?

4 Relationality

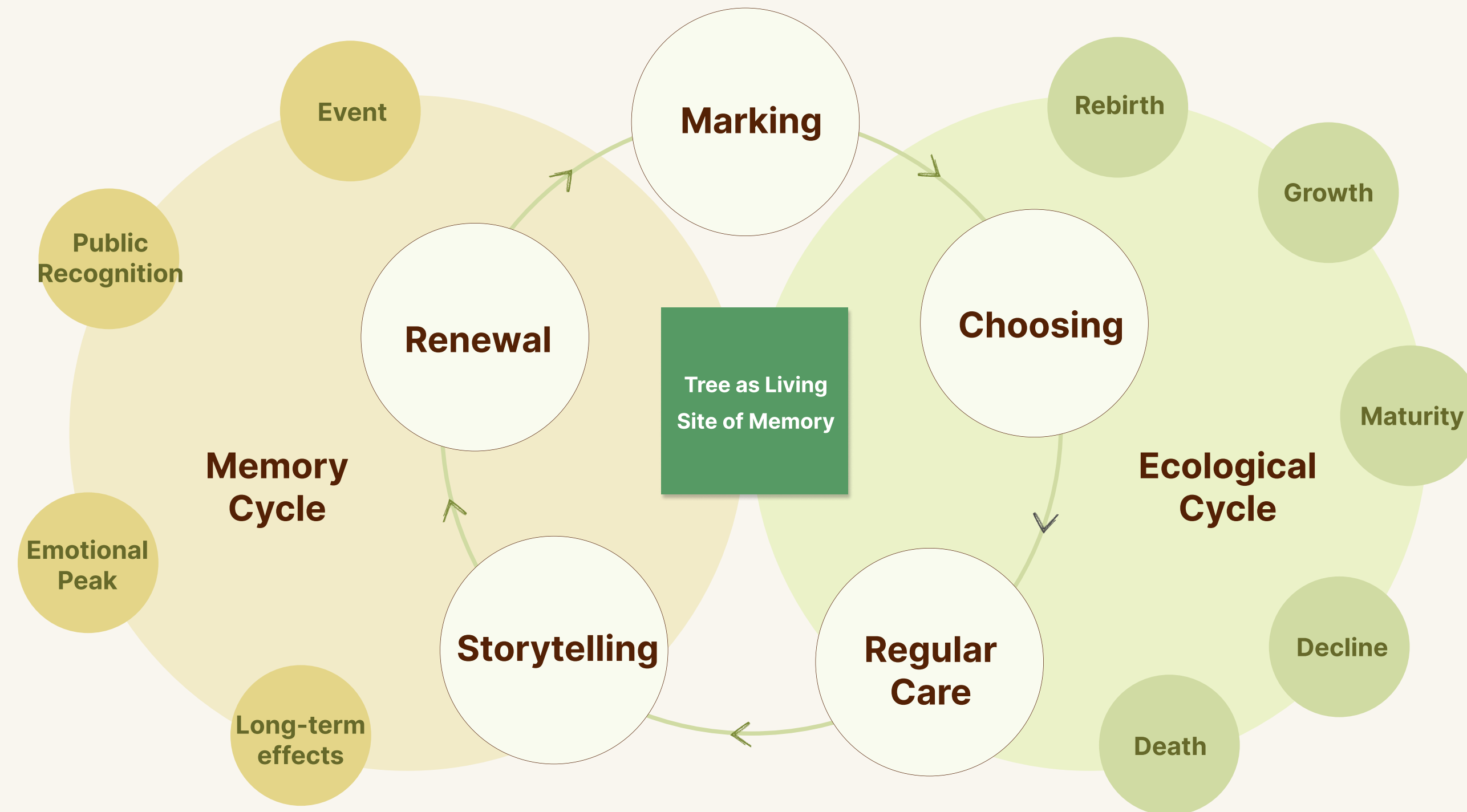
Living Memorials
"SUSTAINABLE
Commemoration"

"The vitality of a memorial lies not in its physical grandeur, but in the ongoing social practices—such as interaction, care, and protest—that Keep memory 'alive' in public space.

Living memorial sites are healing spaces formed by the convergence of nature, society, symbolism, and action.

Research framework

A memorial tree = Life + Symbol + Infrastructure + Emotional trigger



When the commemorated subject is a living being, memorialisation is no longer a one-time symbolic act —it becomes an ongoing network of care.

Project Proposal

Tree as Living Site of Memory

1."Making it easier for people to have repeated contact with trees"

2.A care system can be implemented

3.A system that 'allows for varying levels of participation'

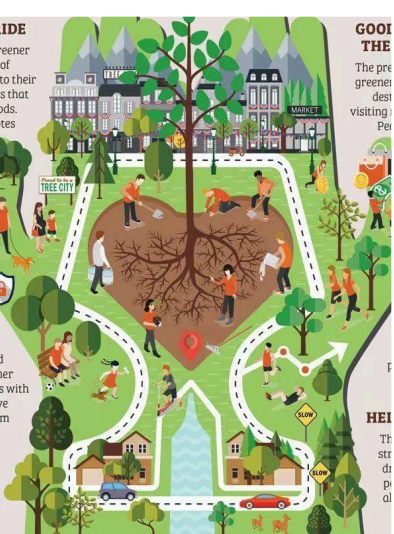
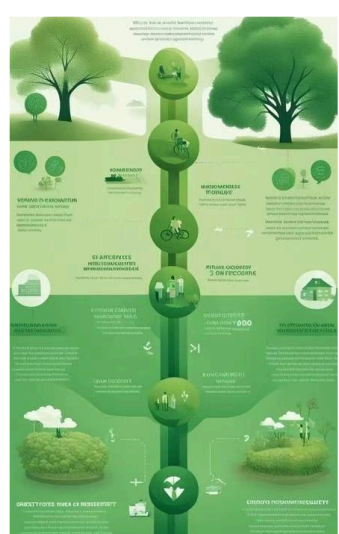
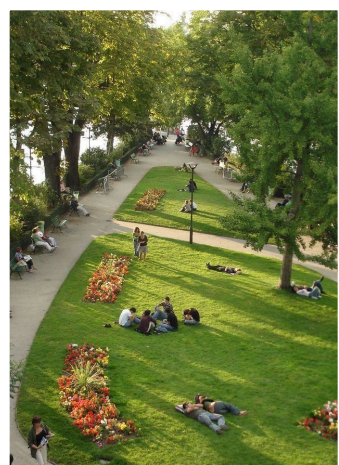
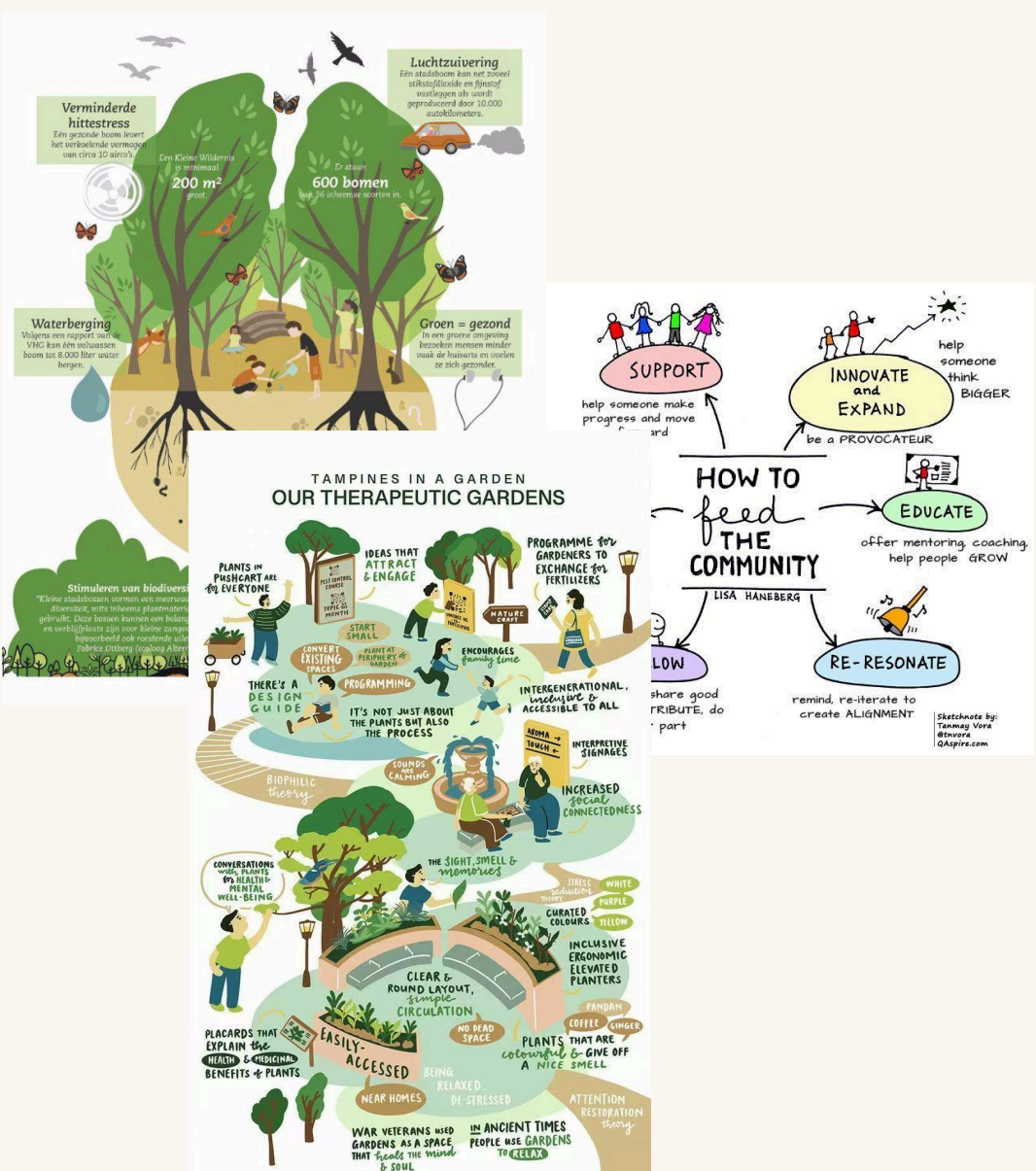
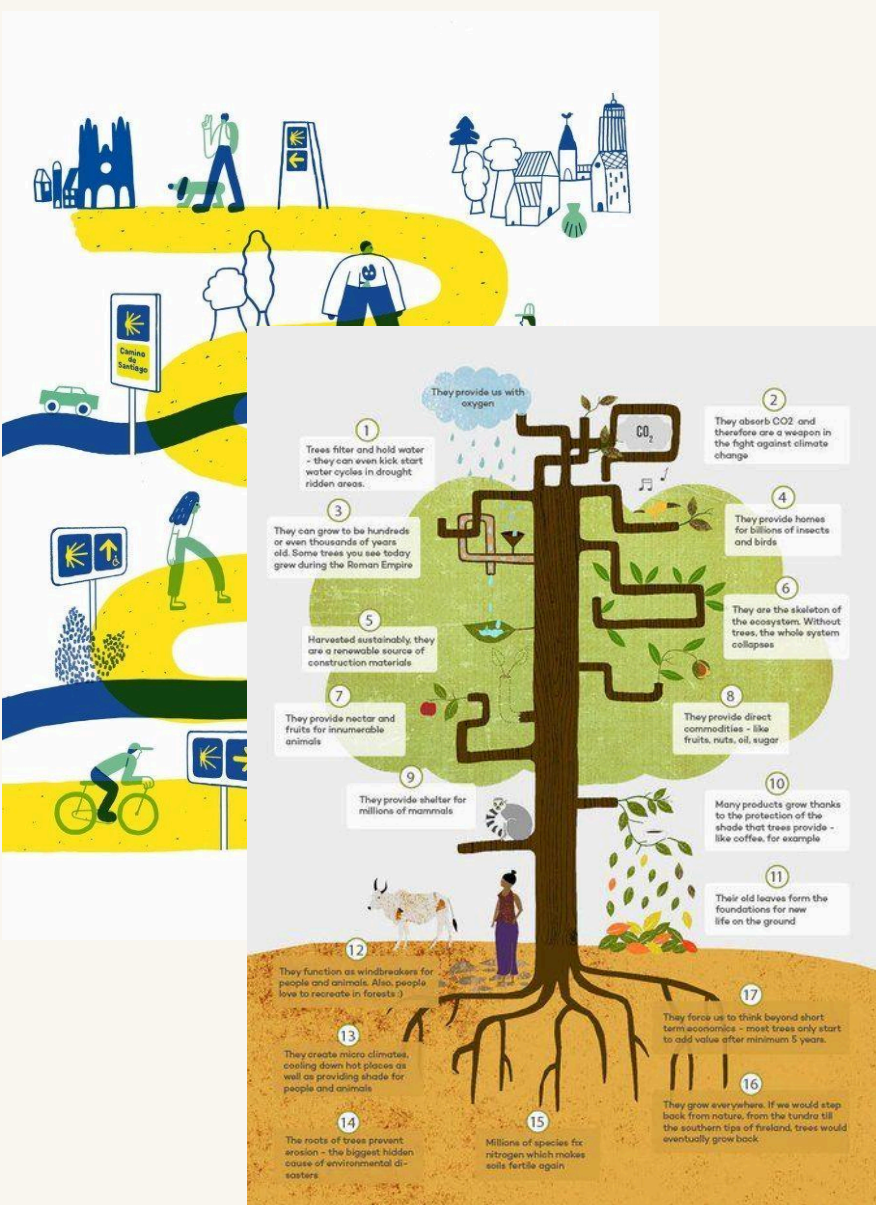
4.Tree Death Protocol

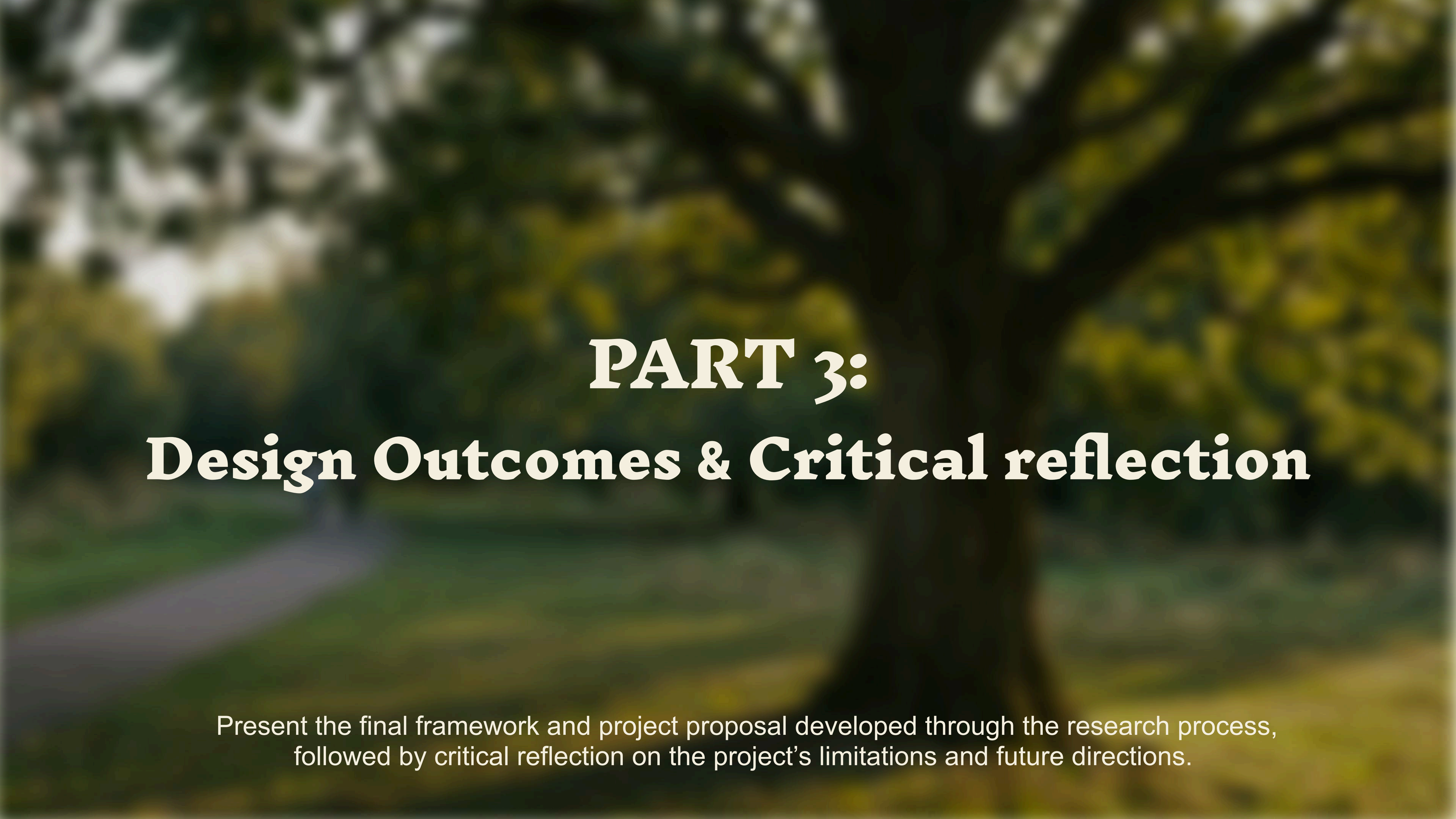
Keyword:
From meaning → to encounter

Keywords:
From permanence → to lifecycle design

Keywords:
from universal → to layered participation

Keywords:
From permanence → to lifecycle design





PART 3:

Design Outcomes & Critical reflection

Present the final framework and project proposal developed through the research process, followed by critical reflection on the project's limitations and future directions.

“Tree as Living Site of Memory”

The word memory is shaped by the surface of living trees themselves, expressing the idea that remembrance grows with ecological time and landscape.



MEMORY



Tree as Living Site of Memory creates shared places of remembrance where memory continues to live with trees in everyday public space.

Implementation Site



Why Glasgow Green ?

1. Everyday public use

The park is already part of **daily urban life**, making it suitable for a memorial system based on **repeated encounter** rather than isolated visitation.

2. Trees within shared landscape

Its **tree-filled open landscape** supports the idea of remembrance embedded in **public green space** rather than separated into a closed memorial setting.

3. Potential for return and participation

The site can support **ceremonies, seasonal activities, quiet visits**, and **long-term care**, which are central to the proposal.

Storyboard

1



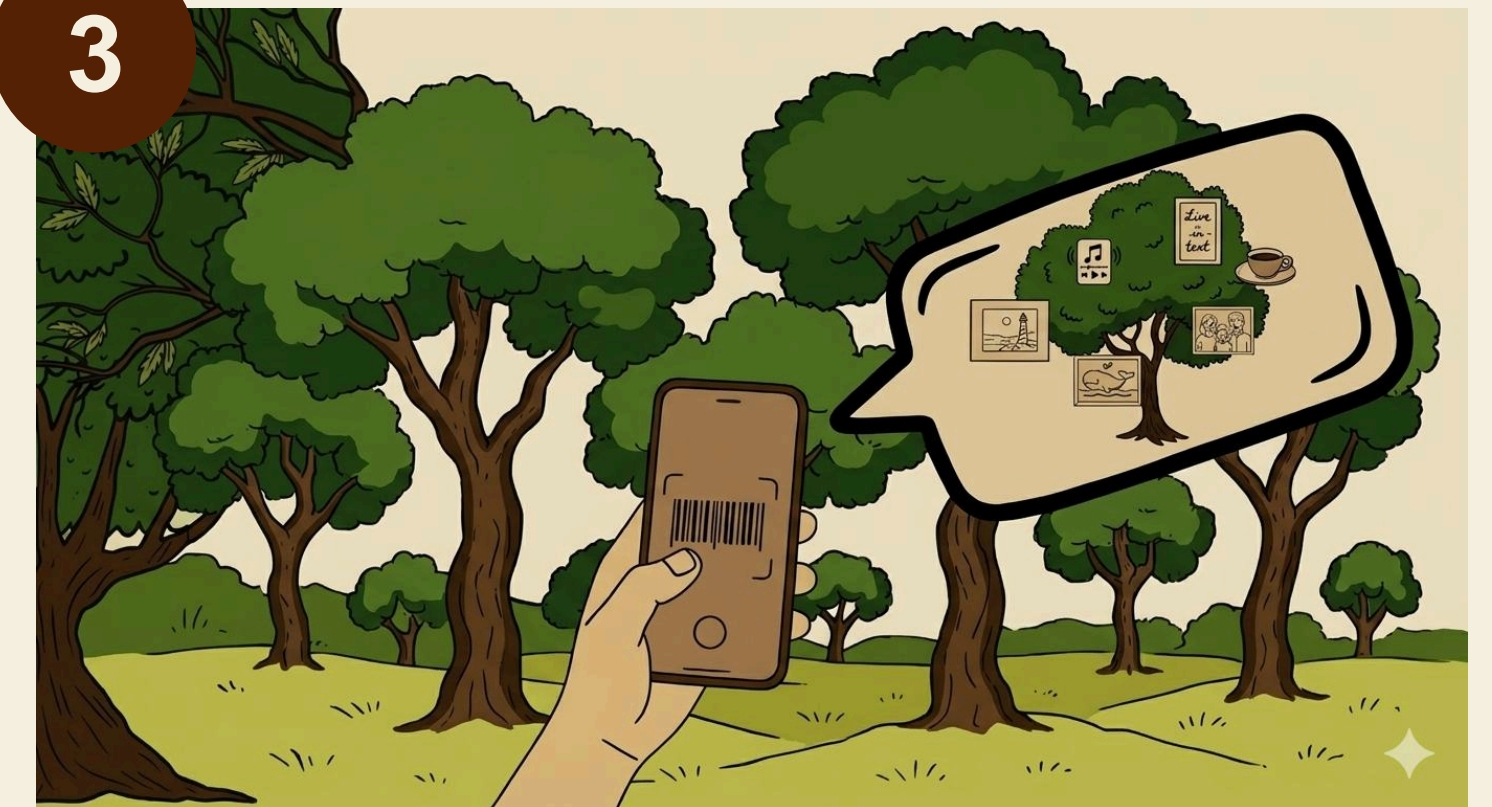
The user explores the website and discovers memorial trees created by others, viewing shared stories, images, and memories connected to each tree.

2



Users can sign the adoption agreement online and invite multiple family members to participate, creating a personalised care plan.

3



Using mobile technology, view digital memorials whilst standing next to the trees in person, and bring vivid memories of the past to life whenever and wherever you are.

4



Users can take part in a simple tree-planting ceremony, complete the digital adoption process, and keep an eye on the tree's progress.

5



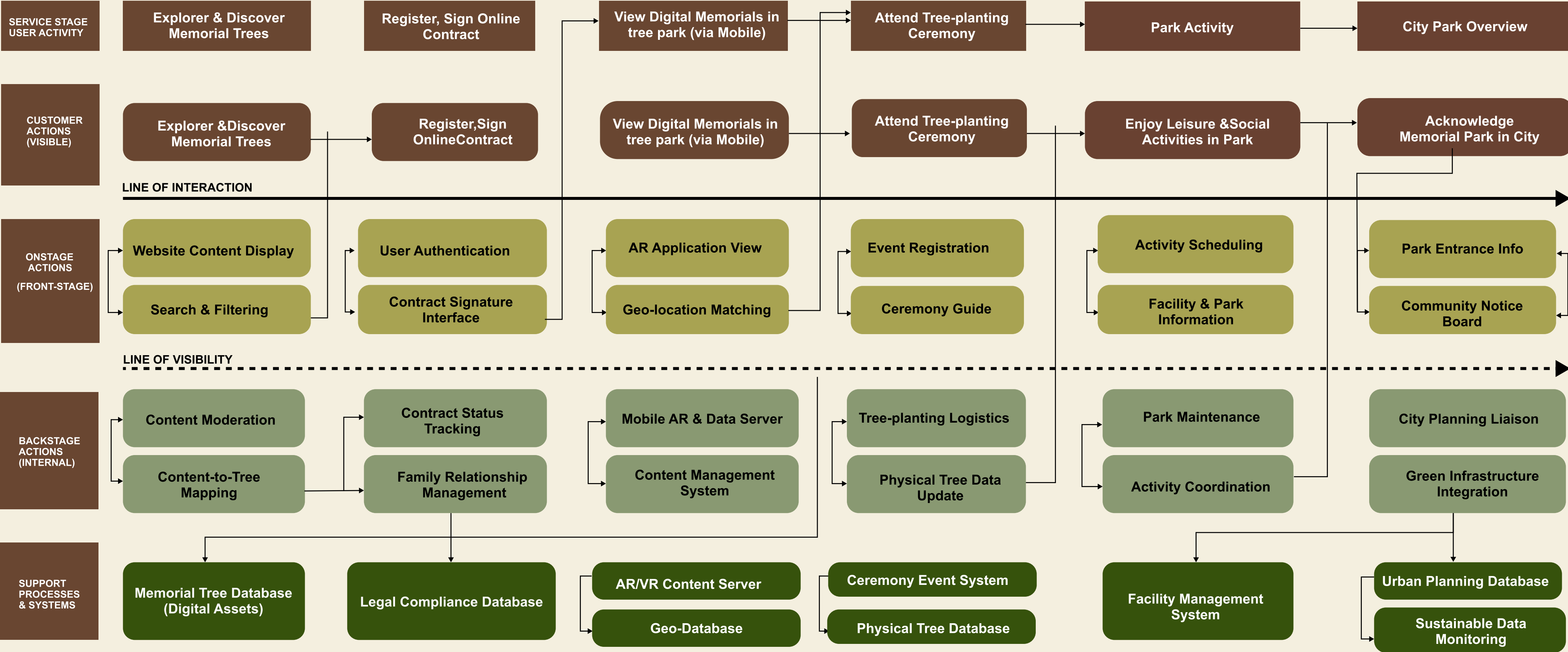
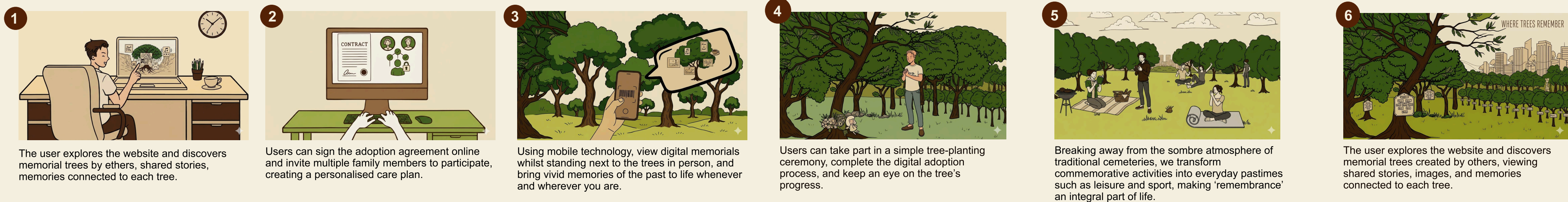
Breaking away from the sombre atmosphere of traditional cemeteries, we transform commemorative activities into everyday pastimes such as leisure and sport, making 'remembrance' an integral part of life.

6

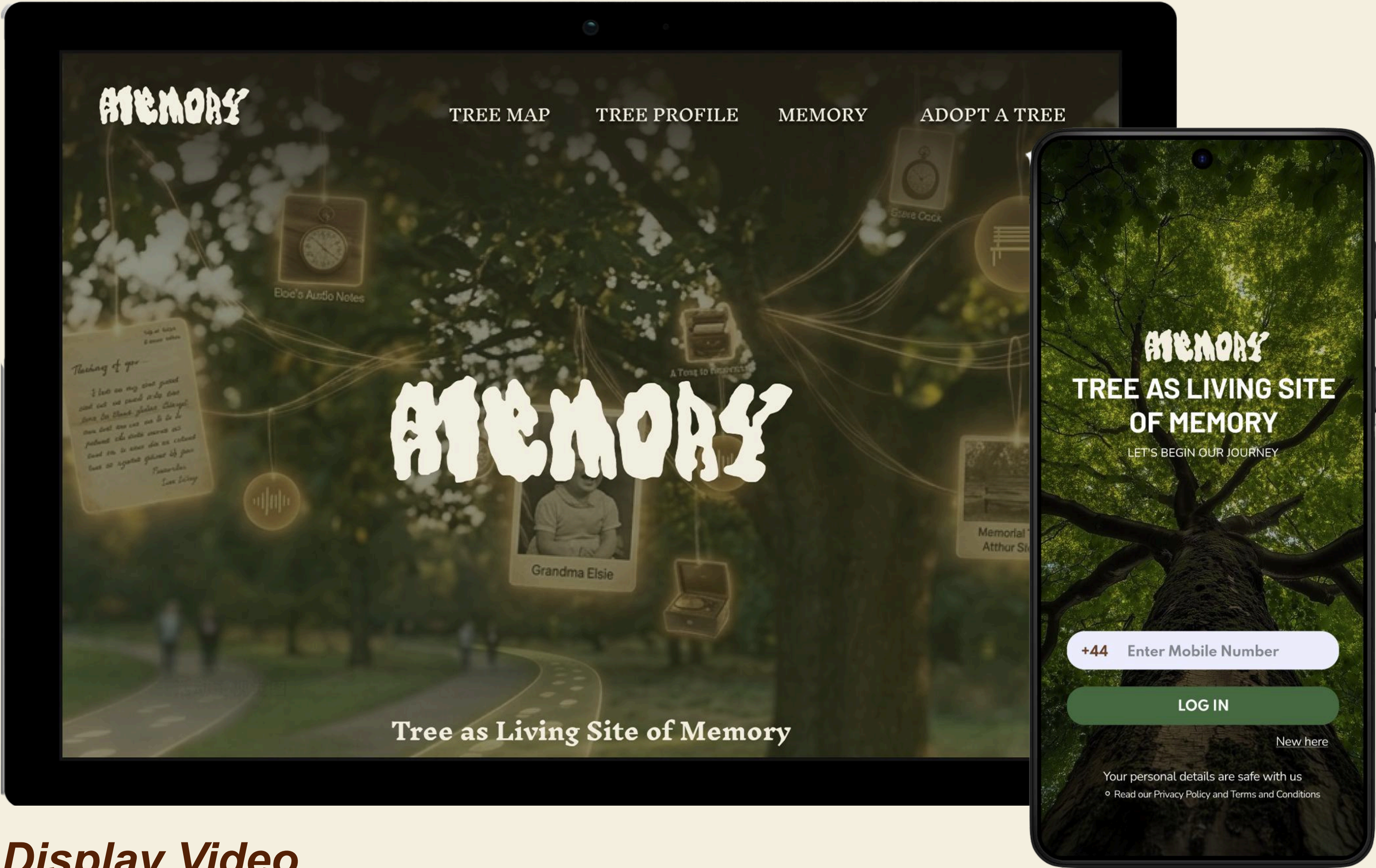


The project could develop into a dedicated memorial park integrated within the city's green infrastructure system.

Service Blueprint



Prototype Display



Display Video

Critical Reflection

How remembrance might exist within ecological time while respecting the agency of living landscapes.

Risk of Institutionalisation

Formalising memorial trees may unintentionally standardise personal grief that is usually informal and individual.

Temporal Acceptance of Living Memorials

Some people may find it difficult to accept memory that changes over time with living trees.

Ecological ethics

Using living trees as memorials raises questions about whether symbolic meanings might override their ecological value.

Governance Complexity

Shared responsibility between authorities, communities, and organisations may be difficult to coordinate in practice.

Participation Uncertainty

Long-term participation cannot be assumed and depends on sustained community engagement and institutional support.

Future plan



The project proposes not only a new memorial service, but a new spatial model for how remembrance can be integrated into urban ecological and social care networks.

Phase 1 Prototype Memorial Landscape



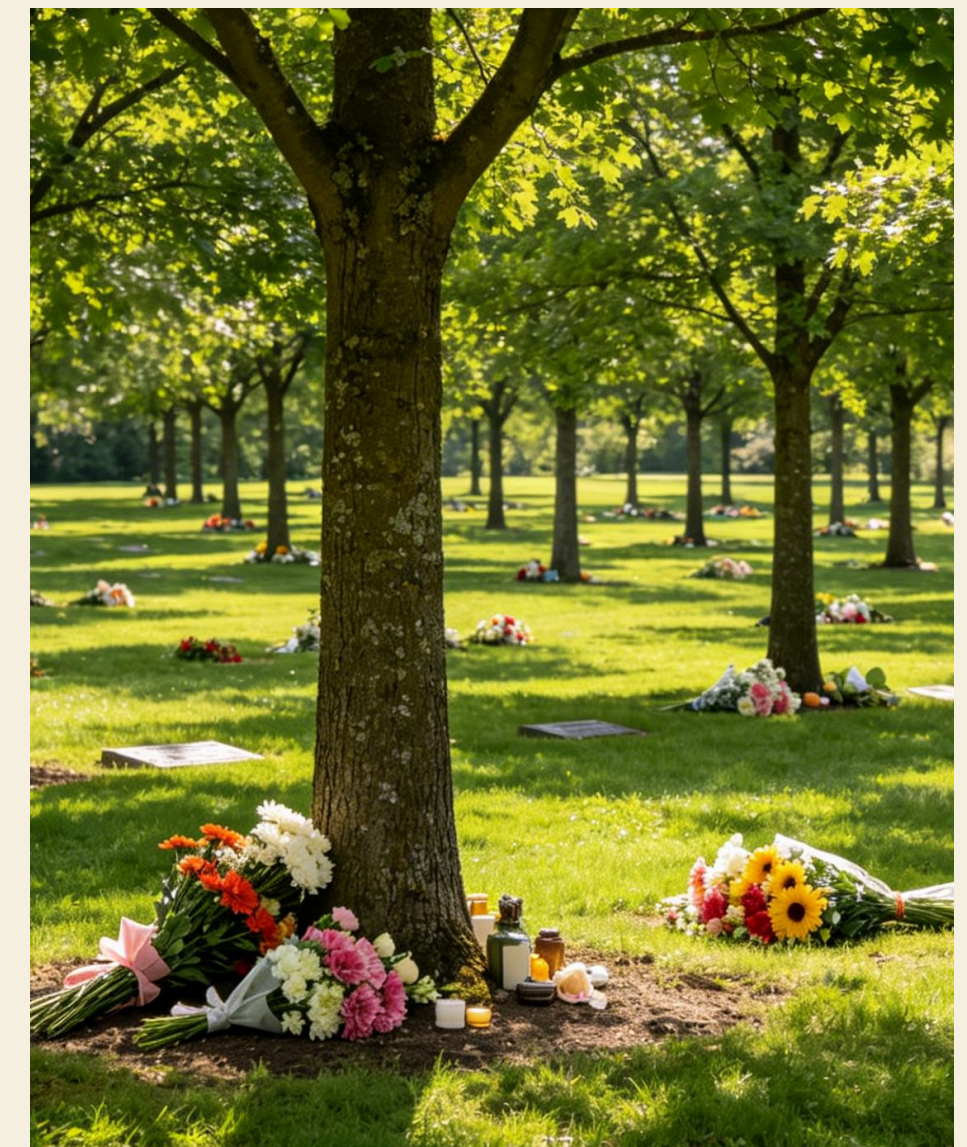
A pilot memorial tree zone within existing public green space

Phase 2 Governance Maturity



Partnerships with government, organisations, and communities

Phase 3 Urban Infrastructure



Integration into urban green infrastructure as a recognised memorial system

A photograph of a dense forest canopy. Sunlight filters through the green leaves, creating a dappled light effect. Dark, thick tree branches are visible, crisscrossing the frame. The overall tone is natural and serene.

Thank you for listening