

The Living Field

Spiralweb as a learning architecture: partial knowledge, critical friendship and movement through the spiral

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Spiralweb Stewardship Association

ACCOUNTABLE KNOWLEDGE STEWARD

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LANGUAGE

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A self-standing, versioned articulation of Spiralweb's learning architecture, entry into practice and open institutional hypothesis. It describes the present public position before the wider opening; it is not a universal method, an activated field process or a claim that the architecture has already been tested in the practice it is intended to support. See [Methods / Editorial Practice](#), [AI and human responsibility](#) and the [reading orientation](#).

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A brief orientation

Spiralweb is a shared habitat for learning and practice for people and places working to keep life possible and strengthen living conditions over time.

The work often begins where people notice a tangible change: a crop withers, water fails, soil is depleted, a species disappears, or care work can no longer be sustained. People open the inquiry because they live with the consequences and are able to act. But they do not stand outside the field, and they are not its only measure. Soil, water, species, climate, history and material limits can change both the question and the next movement.

Food is Spiralweb's current primary entry into practice because it makes the connections between human need, soil, water, species, seeds, labour, culture, economy and decision-making concrete. Food is not the whole purpose. A field may show that the most important next step is cultivation, protection, restoration, natural succession, a change of rules, more sustainable conditions for the steward, or a pause.

Place-based knowledge is knowledge in its own right. Scientific, professional and institutional knowledge can also make visible relationships and risks that cannot be seen from one place. Co-creation does not require people to be alike, to share the same habitus, or to fully embrace a single architecture. Its purpose is to allow different forms of knowledge to meet and correct one another without becoming one voice or moving decision-making authority away from those who legitimately hold it. What is needed to begin is not complete agreement, but a sufficient common point of reference for a bounded movement, its roles, resources, uncertainties and return.

No reading is complete, including Spiralweb's own. The spiral describes learning through return with difference; the web describes relationship and differentiated responsibility; the membrane is the hypothesis that knowledge, resources and support can pass without becoming a hidden takeover. Critical friendship is part of the test: other grammars and experiences must genuinely be able to change the architecture.

Spiralweb connects observation and learning across field, bioregion, national institutional habitat and planetary horizon. Learning can travel with consent, provenance and uncertainty intact. Authority does not automatically travel with it. The association is itself situated within this movement: it has its legal and organisational home in Denmark and participates from its own place around Copenhagen in a wider planetary process.

Human need may open the inquiry. The living field may change the question. A small movement is made, its consequences are observed, and understanding returns to be corrected.

Knowing from a place

A human being never encounters the living field from every position at once. We sense and inquire from within bodies, places, relationships, disciplines, institutions, languages and histories. This is true of the local steward, the researcher, the public authority, the donor, the activist and the person building a synthesis with AI. None of these positions offers a God's-eye view. Nor is the local circle automatically a single or complete voice.

All these positions are partial, but they are not equally powerful. Some actors can fund, authorise, refuse or stop a movement on terms unavailable to others. This asymmetry must remain visible alongside the differences in knowledge.

Partial knowledge is not the same as arbitrary knowledge. An observation can be precise within its scope. An experience can be true as experience while remaining open as interpretation. A model may reveal a pattern that nobody can see from one place while still overlooking the labour, history or species that determines its local meaning. Responsible knowledge therefore makes its position, material, reach and possibilities for correction visible.

Spiralweb is built for this condition. Its purpose is not to gather every perspective into a total synthesis, but to make differences legible enough for learning, responsibility and support to move without losing their connection to their sources and consequences.

The mode of work is a public, practice-oriented inquiry. It connects engagement with sources, attention to the sociology of knowledge, method development, relationships and possible later applications. It is not identical to formal applied research, where a bounded design, institutional mandate, empirical material and

scholarly review have already been established. The distinction is made visible so that the two forms may later meet without being confused.

A place to begin

Spiralweb often begins where people sense that the living conditions around them no longer sustain life as they once did.

A crop withers. Water does not arrive when it usually does. Soil becomes harder or less fertile. A species grows scarcer. A cultivation practice can no longer sustain the people who keep it alive. A landscape continues to produce while slowly losing its ability to regenerate. A public institution knows that something should change, but its tasks, budgets and measurements cannot hold the connection between what it knows and the place where consequences are felt.

This is an honest beginning. People live with hunger, heat, drought, loss of income, exhaustion and uncertainty. People can change farming practices, distribute resources, adopt rules, protect habitats, destroy them, or choose not to act. Human experience and agency are therefore central.

But people do not stand outside the field in which they are trying to act. Soil, water, plants, animals, microorganisms, climate, history and material limits respond to the action. They may support the intention, change its meaning, or show that the first question was wrong.

Spiralweb is a habitat for learning and practice within this encounter.

The spiral, the web, the membrane and the register

The spiral describes how understanding can return with difference. A question meets experience, assumes a provisional form, is exposed to other readings, is tested or paused, and returns from a new position. Correction is not necessarily a rupture in the work. It can be the work's metabolism.

The web describes the relationships. A living question touches people, species, places, institutions, money, rights and different timescales. They do not become one organism or one voice because they are connected. The web holds the possibility of relationship and differentiated responsibility at the same time.

The membrane is the open working hypothesis between spiral and web. Can knowledge be shared without absorbing its source? Can money support a field without purchasing its direction? Can an institution bring mandate and continuity without turning the place into its programme? Can AI contribute reach without taking over interpretation and responsibility? A membrane is real when it can open, filter, delay, refuse and allow something to return. Whether Spiralweb can actually hold such passages cannot be decided by self-description. It must be tested in relationship, criticism and consequence.

The register preserves the necessary trace: what was observed, interpreted, proposed, decided, supported and experienced; who held the mandate; what was unknown or contested; and what later changed the understanding. The register is memory and provenance. It is not the living field, nor is it the authority that governs it.

The four images do different work: the spiral carries the learning. The web carries the relationship. The membrane tests the conditions of passage. The register makes the movement open to scrutiny.

Three meanings of primary

People, places and species cannot be arranged in a single, simple hierarchy. Some of the confusion recedes when three different meanings of *primary* are kept distinct.

HUMAN BEINGS ARE THE ACCOUNTABLE AGENTS

Human beings and human institutions can be held accountable for decisions, resources and consequences. A field cannot sign an agreement. A species cannot apply for protection. A watercourse cannot change a public budget. Human agency is therefore operationally central.

This does not give humanity ownership of the field. It makes human beings responsible within it.

PLACE-BASED EXPERIENCE IS THE FIRST GROUND OF KNOWLEDGE

People who live and work with a place can sense the timing of the rain, changes in the soil, the weight of the work, the history of conflict and the consequences of a decision. This knowledge is not raw data that becomes real only when validated by an external actor.

At the same time, place-based knowledge is not omniscient. A local observation may need to meet hydrology, species expertise, historical sources, law, satellite data or experience from elsewhere. External knowledge may, in turn, misunderstand the place, overlook the labour, or apply categories that do not fit.

Neither should be dissolved into the other. They must be able to meet and correct one another.

LIFE EXCEEDS HUMAN USEFULNESS

A species, a habitat and a living ecosystem matter even when their significance cannot be converted into food, health, income, carbon or other human goods. When a species disappears, it cannot be compensated for by creating greater value in another account.

In one place, Spiralweb's First Spiral uses the word *sacred* for this irreducible value. It does not establish a shared religion or give anyone the right to speak on behalf of life. It marks a boundary: no living being should first have to prove its usefulness to humans in order to merit attention, and human-caused extinction cannot be treated as an ordinary residual loss.

This does not mean that every organism can thrive simultaneously in every particular situation. Protecting a threatened native species may require control of an introduced species. A wetland, a cultivated field and a forest cannot occupy the same land at the same time. Good intentions do not dissolve these conflicts. But it must be visible which life is being prioritised, by whom, with what mandate, on what basis of knowledge, and at what loss.

Why food is the current entry point

Spiralweb is not a food organisation, and food is not a total explanation of living systems. But food is an unusually precise place to begin.

Food makes the connection between human need and living conditions concrete. A food practice connects soil, water, species, seeds, nutrition, labour, culture, economy, ownership and decisions about landscape. It shows who bears the risk, who receives the value, which work remains invisible, and whether production is slowly consuming its own foundations.

Spiralweb's present primary field of practice is therefore consciously co-created food systems. Here, *primary* describes a practical entry point, not a metaphysical hierarchy. A field may begin with maize, a chinampa, a pomegranate tree, a school garden, a fishery or a local water problem. The inquiry may show that the most important next step is not more food production, but ground cover, shade, protection of a species, restoration of a canal, changed water rules, the steward's ability to continue, or a responsible pause.

Human need may open the inquiry. The living field may change the question.

The intelligence of the field

A living field does not have one voice or a single will. The intelligence of the field is not a romantic being that a particular person can interpret in full. It becomes apparent through differences and consequences:

- a crop that does not survive the dry season;
- water that is no longer retained in the soil;
- a species that returns or disappears;
- a steward who can no longer carry the work;
- a farming practice that improves household nutrition while depleting the water resource;
- a public requirement that is lawful but does not fit the rhythm of the landscape;
- a local practice that carries important knowledge but also causes harm downstream;
- an intervention that appears successful from a distance but cannot be maintained.

To listen to the field is to keep such responses from disappearing before they can shape judgement. No website, protocol, expert, model or AI synthesis is the field itself.

Critical friendship and co-creation without conflation

Co-creation does not begin simply because more people attend a meeting, or because a finished idea is presented with kindness. It begins when the people who live with the place and its consequences can genuinely shape the question, the interpretation and the next movement.

Critical friendship is a relationship in which another reading is allowed to make a difference without immediately being treated as hostility or resistance to the process. Two grammars can be placed alongside one another. They may overlap, contradict one another, correct something, integrate something and allow something else to remain different. Criticism does not serve Spiralweb by affirming it. It serves the inquiry by revealing what the inquiry cannot yet see or carry.

The parties need not bring the same knowledge or hold the same authority. A local steward may carry continuity and place-based judgement. A researcher may contribute a bounded inquiry. A public authority may have a statutory duty. A foundation may create time. A facilitator may help make differences useful. None of these capacities makes the actors interchangeable.

Nor is “the local” a single, natural voice. A place may hold different rights, interests, generations, genders, species, users, neighbours and people who are not present in the room. Who participates, who can speak, who can stop a movement, and who lives with its consequences are themselves part of the place-based inquiry.

Nor do the participants need to share the same habitus, mode of communication, institutional experience or initial understanding of the relationship. Human chemistry, trust, history and differing expectations shape

what can be said, heard and agreed. This is not a moral layer placed on top of the work; it is part of its real social conditions. Spiralweb must be able to learn from these differences without turning people into types or public cases.

A sufficient common point of reference may therefore be more valuable than the idea of complete mutual understanding. A baseline agreement can define the bounds of one place and one movement, including roles, resources, uncertainties, opportunities to stop and the next return. It does not certify the person or the organisation. It allows support to reach a field on terms that are as sound and transparent as the situation permits.

Some distinctions are therefore held open:

- Documentation is not consent.
- Expertise is not total knowledge.
- Local knowledge is not infallibility.
- Legal mandate is not ownership of a place.
- Funding is not decision-making authority.
- A conversation is not a partnership.
- A public text is not field activation.
- Shared learning does not require shared command.

Co-creation succeeds when differences become more accountable and useful — not when they disappear into a single voice.

From place to planet — and back again

A field is place-based, but never isolated. Water flows through multiple territories. Species migrate. Food, seeds, money and pollution move. Climate, trade and law connect places that never meet directly.

Spiralweb therefore works across several connected scales:

- **The observation:** the concrete sign, photograph, measurement, testimony or absence.
- **The field:** the relationship between place, people, species, practice, resources and consequence.
- **The bioregion:** the watershed, coast, migration route, landscape mosaic or larger ecological connection.
- **The national institutional habitat:** law, public authorities, rights, budgets, research, public strategies and avenues of appeal.
- **The planetary horizon:** the accumulated conditions of species, climate, water, soil and materials from which no locality stands apart.

This is not a ladder towards ever-higher authority. A planetary model cannot in itself determine what should happen in a particular field. A national strategy cannot replace local knowledge. Nor can a local community alone determine the significance of an action that drives a species to extinction or harms people and ecosystems elsewhere.

The movement must therefore travel in several directions.

Place-based observations can travel outwards with consent, provenance and uncertainty intact. Scientific, legal and institutional knowledge can return as questions, warnings, rights and possibilities — not as unmediated commands. Fields can learn from one another through translation, not replication. And a local consequence must be able to show that the external category or strategy itself needs correction.

More local in authority. More global in learning.

Institutions as habitat

States and institutions are not a later layer placed on top of the living field. They already shape land, water, ownership, markets, labour and possibilities for protection. They are part of the field's institutional habitat.

An institutional relationship should therefore begin with reading, not influence:

- What task or obligation already exists?
- Who holds a legitimate and lawful mandate?
- Which categories and budget periods shape the action?
- Who lives with the consequences?
- Is there a concrete capacity that could become useful in the field?
- Can the institution itself be changed by what returns?

Spiralweb does not seek to teach a state what it should be, or to turn a place into an institution's programme. A bridge becomes relevant when an actual public or professional capacity can meet a living question without displacing place-based authority — and when learning can move both ways.

The association is itself situated within a national institutional habitat. It was founded in Denmark and works from an environment around Copenhagen where agricultural transition, rewilding, ecological restoration, local communities, public responsibilities and the economy of the welfare state are already living and contested concerns. The field paper *At holde jorden levende (Keeping the Land Alive)*, the letters to the Church of Denmark and the municipalities, and the association's own governance all form part of this Danish inquiry. Spiralweb does not represent Denmark; it participates from here as one small field within a wider planetary process.

One habitat, different public spaces

The concepts describe the movement; the public spaces distribute responsibility. Spiralweb.earth carries the living surface of practice: current relationships, fields, pathways for participation and named responsibility for what is actually opened. Spiralweb Papers carries the versioned and correctable inquiry and must remain able to challenge both the association and its own assumptions.

Spiralweb Stewardship Association carries legal, democratic and financial responsibility for the agreements and resource flows it opens. It is not the whole habitat and does not own the places, relationships or knowledge of others. Planetary Guardians contributes governance and protocol architecture. Café Sofia is a hospitable space for orientation and conversation. AnchorPoints carry relational continuity, while Fields show the current operational state.

PG Ledger can preserve observation, decision, uncertainty, disagreement, movement and correction over time. Field Returns is the public shelf for bounded learning that has actually returned from a place, relationship or institutional practice. Only when a real experience can travel with consent, provenance and limitations intact does it belong there.

The distinction between these spaces is part of the architecture's integrity. Connection does not require merger.

A commons without hidden debt

Spiralweb's open materials can be read, used, translated, challenged or set aside without application, affiliation or contact with the association. Independent use is a complete and valid outcome.

This means that what is given does not automatically create a claim. A reader does not become a member. A user does not become a case. A local practice does not become a Spiralweb field. An observation does not become public data. A conversation does not become a promise of support.

Someone may choose to return with an experience, a correction, a relationship, a public responsibility or a resource. Only then can it be explored whether a new shared movement can be sustained.

This is abundance as institutional practice: not the idea of unlimited means, but the possibility of receiving something useful without being captured by it.

Truthfulness without performance

Spiralweb does not need to proclaim its own honesty. Truthfulness must be visible in the distinctions between what exists and what is still only being prepared: a relationship can be real without being a partnership; a document can exist without having been adopted; a budget can be precise without the funds having been received; an activity can be underway without constituting a funded Spiralweb phase; a lawful possibility can be identified without having been verified or chosen.

Such distinctions are not faults by which people should be judged. They show that intention, understanding, institutional capacity, material conditions and action do not always move at the same time. A critical realist learning architecture keeps the layers distinct so that they can be connected more truthfully. It does not first ask whether someone conforms to an ideal form. It asks what actually exists, what works, what is missing, and what the next responsible movement can carry.

Integrity does not require distance from resources and institutions. It becomes visible in whether purpose, dependencies, authority and the possibility of correction can remain open to view as the work unfolds.

AI within the living learning architecture

AI has made it possible to connect large bodies of text, compare scales, hold questions, examine institutional patterns and let different parts of the architecture communicate with one another more quickly. This capacity is a real part of Spiralweb's development.

But computational reach does not create human or place-based authority. AI can help retrieve, translate, assemble and challenge. It cannot give consent, own an interpretation, bear legal responsibility or determine which consequence another living being should carry.

AI's contribution must therefore remain recognisable as a contribution. Sources, reading horizons, inferences and uncertainties must be open to inspection. Named people remain responsible for publication and decisions. The people and places affected by an interpretation must be able to correct it, refuse it and show what the synthesis has failed to see.

AI can help the spiral communicate with itself. It cannot become the centre of the spiral.

Groundwork before the wider opening

In September 2026, Spiralweb stands between constitutional groundwork and a wider public phase. The association exists. The websites and the versioned knowledge habitat are publicly accessible, but the wider public opening has not yet taken place. The close relationships with people and places are real, and the first shared fundraising effort is open. Foundations for agreements, local questions, pathways through which support can reach people and places, roles and possible forms of observation are taking shape at different paces.

Support at this stage can help carry both place-based beginnings and the shared infrastructure that keeps them transparent and open to correction. It creates room for careful action, observation and learning, while keeping the inquiry open to what the field actually shows.

The wider activation of practice has not begun. Many external participants have not yet moved through the spiral. There is not yet a regular shared PG Ledger rhythm across the fields, and there are not yet any public Field Returns. This is a precise description of the beginning, not a void to be filled with expected results.

The present work is completing the architecture that can make the next phase possible: texts, status grammar, financial transparency, relational thresholds, methods, pathways for correction and public places where different people can find a genuine point of entry. Frontloading here means making the relevant groundwork available before the invitation is widened. It is not the same as claiming that the architecture has already been tested in the practice it is intended to support.

The public opening is therefore not the launch of a finished programme. It makes a foundation available for reading, independent use, criticism, relationship, institutional mandate and possible support. Only then can more people and places show what the architecture makes possible, what it distorts, and what must change.

The smallest responsible movement

Spiralweb does not begin with a promise of transformation. It begins with something real enough to observe and bounded enough for its consequences still to be felt.

A simple movement might be:

1. Notice what is actually happening.
2. Ask who and what already holds the field.
3. Keep observation, interpretation and hypothesis distinct.
4. Encounter another form of knowledge or reading.
5. Choose one small movement that the place and the responsible people can carry.
6. Name the decision, mandate, resources, uncertainty and expected return.
7. Observe what the action — or the pause — does.
8. Let the consequence change the next step and, where relevant, the public architecture.

Sometimes the responsible movement is cultivation. At other times, it is protection, reduced pressure, natural succession, a changed rule, the steward's ability to rest, or the decision not to act yet.

The hypothesis goes to work in its encounter with matter. It is not an instruction to life.

An architecture that can live on

Spiralweb has grown through a long human, relational and AI-assisted process of development. This provenance may remain visible. But the habitat's purpose is not to make its origin the centre.

What has been carried forward must be able to take on a life of its own: to be read differently, used without affiliation, challenged by criticism, changed through experience and developed further by people who were not present at the beginning.

The architecture's continuing life will become visible in whether its memory, maintenance, judgement and technical practice can be shared by more people and find new forms over time, without coherence or provenance being lost and without a new hidden centre emerging. Succession is not a property the text can declare. It must grow through use, relationship, handover and the freedom to change the form.

This requires neither a story of complete neutrality nor a declaration that all directions are equally good. Spiralweb has a direction: to help people, places and institutions increase their capacity to nourish life over time; to take irreversible loss seriously; to keep power and the weighting of different concerns visible; and to let consequences return as correction.

But the form and the next movement are not given in advance.

A living field is not a programme waiting to be implemented.

It is a place where life is already happening.

Spiralweb seeks to make the encounter with this life more attentive, more responsible and more capable of learning.

One day at a time. One place at a time. One honest movement and one useful return at a time.

Where to go next

This text is Spiralweb's short position paper. It gathers the grounding position that the other public spaces unfold in different ways.

- *Atlas of a Living Architecture* offers a guided passage through Spiralweb's concepts, spaces and architecture.
- *The Spiral of Hypotheses* makes the current correctable wagers and their conditions of revision visible.
- *Living Landscapes — Food, Species and the Institutional Middle Scale* develops the wider source-based inquiry on which this text draws.
- Spiralweb.earth presents current relationships, fields and responsibilities. Spiralweb Papers carries the open, versioned inquiry and its public memory.

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