



The Me–We–World (MWW) Method Note

A Relational Design Framework Beyond Moralism and Control

Purpose of this document

This Method Note clarifies the methodological foundations of Me–We–World (MWW). It is written to address a recurring misunderstanding in contemporary system discourse: that ethical frameworks necessarily operate as moral instruction or behavioural correction.

MWW explicitly rejects this premise.

This document positions MWW as a **relational design methodology** concerned with the **conditions of participation** within socio-technical systems, rather than with normative prescriptions for behaviour or outcomes.

1. What MWW is *not*

To avoid ambiguity, it is important to state clearly what MWW does **not** attempt to do.

MWW is not:

- a moral framework aimed at improving individual behaviour
- a value system imposed on existing roles
- a governance model
- a solution-oriented design toolkit
- a human-centric ideology that places humanity above ecological or systemic limits

Any reading of MWW along these lines misunderstands both its intent and its structure.

2. The core assumption: systems precede behaviour

MWW starts from a systemic and ontological premise:

Human behaviour is not primary; it emerges from relational, technical and institutional conditions.

Within hierarchical systems, roles, incentives and risks are structurally defined. Appeals to awareness, responsibility or ethics *inside* these constraints cannot meaningfully alter system dynamics. In this sense, critiques of moralism within system architecture are correct.

However, rejecting ethics entirely risks leaving **ontological assumptions** unexamined—particularly assumptions about control, hierarchy and technical necessity.

MWW intervenes precisely at this level.

3. Ethics as a design condition, not a moral demand

In MWW, ethics is not understood as:

- a set of norms
- a call to “do better”
- a corrective to system failure

Ethics is understood as a **design condition**: the set of preconditions that allow human participation without reducing individuals to instruments, functions or data points.

This reframing aligns with:

- Heidegger’s critique of technological enframing
- Meadows’ identification of paradigms as high-leverage intervention points
- Bateson’s relational epistemology
- Oudemans’ rejection of anthropocentric mastery

Ethics, in this sense, does not compete with system architecture. It **conditions** it.

4. STUART: relational preconditions for participation

MWW operationalises this position through the STUART compass:

- **Safety** – participation without disproportionate risk
- **Trust** – relational continuity without coercion
- **Understanding** – sensemaking without premature causal closure
- **Awareness** – reflexivity without instrumentalisation
- **Relaxation** – sustained agency without chronic activation
- **Togetherness** – coordination without erasure of difference

STUART does not prescribe behaviour.

It articulates **minimum relational conditions** under which participation remains possible.

When these conditions collapse, systems may continue to function—but they do so by degrading human presence into compliance, optimisation or withdrawal.

5. The Five-Step Relational Design Method

MWW translates its ontological position into practice through a five-step relational method. The method is recursive and non-linear; it supports ethical feedback rather than problem-solving.

Step 1 – Human Conditions (pre)

Sensing the relational field before defining the problem.

Participants attune to emotional climate, ethical tension and relational safety using the STUART compass.

Step 2 – Human Perspectives

Exploring systemic plurality across ecological, social, technological and institutional dimensions.

Contradictions are held rather than resolved.

Step 3 – Human Actions I

Articulating emerging meanings, narratives and tensions.

Language functions as anticipation, not explanation.

Step 4 – Human Actions II

Prototyping meaning rather than solutions.

Scenarios remain provisional, reversible and situated.

Step 5 – Human Conditions (post)

Reflective evaluation through ethical feedback rather than performance metrics.

The question is not “what worked,” but “what shifted.”

6. Relation to technology and AI

MWW does not reject technology.

It rejects the **unexamined dominance of technical rationality**.

AI and digital systems can function within MWW as:

- reflective instruments
- narrative mirrors

- pattern amplifiers

They are explicitly *not* treated as decision-makers or arbiters of meaning. Human presence remains relational, embodied and situated.

7. Hierarchy, nature and human imagination

MWW acknowledges that hierarchy exists in natural and social systems. It does not seek to abolish hierarchy as such.

What it questions is the **assumption that hierarchy implies total control or unlimited mastery.**

Human imagination—our capacity to symbolise, model and intervene—does not grant exemption from ecological or systemic limits. Confusing imagination with omnipotence is a hallmark of Anthropocene thinking and technological hubris.

MWW positions human beings **within** nature, not above it.

8. Why MWW is not moralism

Moralism operates by:

- prescribing behaviour
- assigning blame
- demanding compliance

MWW operates by:

- altering conditions
- expanding perceptual space
- enabling relational feedback

This distinction is foundational.

MWW does not attempt to improve people.
It attempts to prevent systems from erasing people.

9. Use cases

The MWW Method is applicable in:

- system design and architecture
- futures and anticipation practices
- policy prototyping
- organisational reflection
- artistic and cultural inquiry
- AI-human interaction design

It is particularly relevant where:

- causal explanations are contested
- power asymmetries are present
- ethical tension cannot be resolved through rules

10. Closing position

Me–We–World is not a framework for fixing systems.
It is a framework for **remaining human within them**.

It does not offer solutions.

It offers conditions.