Nottingham Trent University

Addressing Sustainability Challenges through Social Sciences

Dr Glenn Williams, Department of Psychology

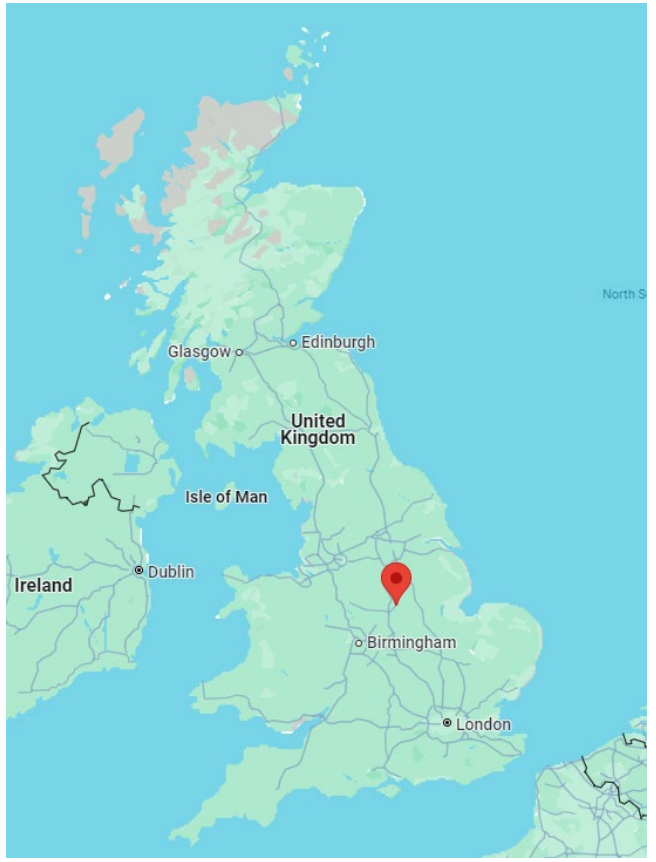
Dr Jonathan Gorry, Department of Social and Political Sciences

11/10/2024

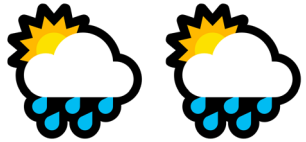
Hello from Nottingham, United Kingdom

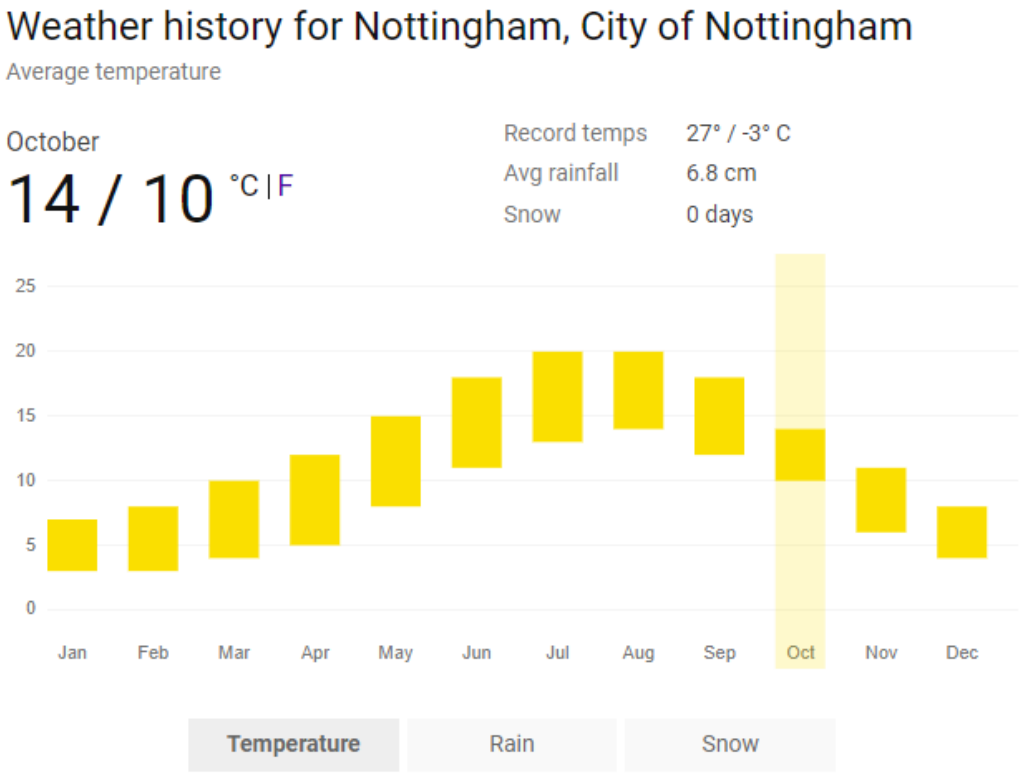
Where is Nottingham Trent University?

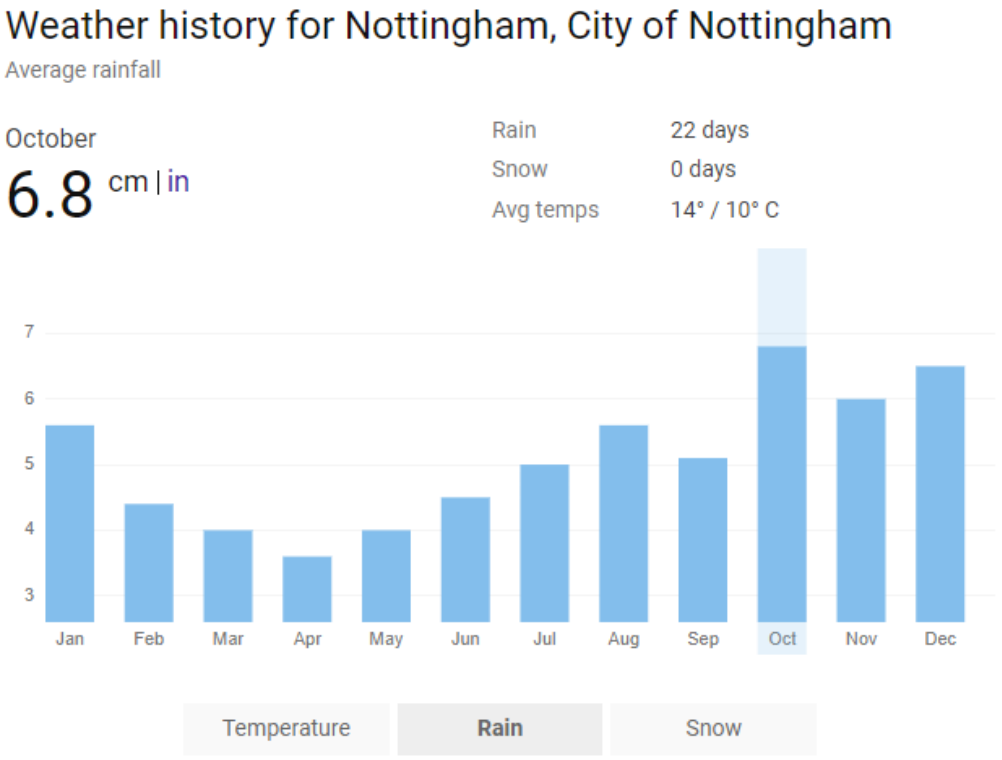
- We are in the middle of the United Kingdom
  - 1 hour 45 minutes from London (by train)
  - Robin Hood country
  - Home of world-famous Premier League Team Nottingham Forest FC!



How rainy is Nottingham?







NTU

We are really proud of our awards

Nottingham Trent University

The Queen's Anniversary Prizes for Higher and Further Education

QS STARS™ RATING SYSTEM

UI GreenMetric World University Rankings — 2nd most sustainable university 2023

Objectives

- Understand about sustainability and sustainability challenges
- Learn how to apply social science approaches in practice
- Apply concepts to a real-world challenge

Opportunity to develop

- Whatever the outcome, this is an opportunity to develop your skills in:
  - Problem-solving
  - Teamwork
  - Pitching to an organisation
  - Digital skills
  - Presentation skills

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Overview of the 17 SDGs
  - *The Sustainable Development Goals are a call for action by all countries… to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection*
    - United Nations

Purpose of SDGs

- In 2000 UN introduced Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with ambitious aim to eradicate poverty and boost prospects of the world's poorest people
- In 2015 these 'targets' were replaced by 17 SDGs to meet the social, political, and economic challenges facing our world but also broadened to include improving access to education and measures to protect the environment
- These attempts are important, worthy, and certainly encourage us to think what 'sustainability' looks like and the many forms it takes in day-to-day living
- Today, however, the world's governments are faced with increasing geopolitical developments (e.g. war in the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan) and 'ear-marked' budgets for SDGs are being slashed or redeployed to domestic issues like immigration, refugees, and military security
- This makes a real challenge harder.

NTU

Introduction to NTU Sustainability Challenge

- The ask:
  - Use one or more United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) as a starting point
  - Consider a real-world (Kenya-Africa) situation or issue and a possible solution
  - Ask yourself: Is this SDG achievable? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why? What progress has been made?

- Possible situation or issue:
  - Climate change (drought, flooding, habitat loss, economic impact, food security etc.)
  - Education and/or Technology ('digital poverty', AI, cybercrime etc.)
  - Impact of tourism (environmental, social, cultural)
  - Health and Well-being
  - Violence (structural, personal, political)
    - You can choose your own example/issue

NTU

Nottingham Trent University

Join at:
vevox.app

ID:
193-015-091

What sustainability issue matters to you? Insert one or two words please

19 / 19

Three subject areas

- International Relations
- Sociology
- Psychology
  - *Within your group explain how communities in Kenya could help to overcome this issue using approaches from one of the following fields of study*

- Each relates to a Bachelor's course at Nottingham Trent University

Introduction to NTU Sustainability Challenge

- Choose one major sustainability challenge facing the world right now

- Within your group explain how communities in Kenya could help to overcome this issue using approaches from one of the following fields of study:
  - **International Relations, Sociology, or Psychology.**

International Relations Approach:

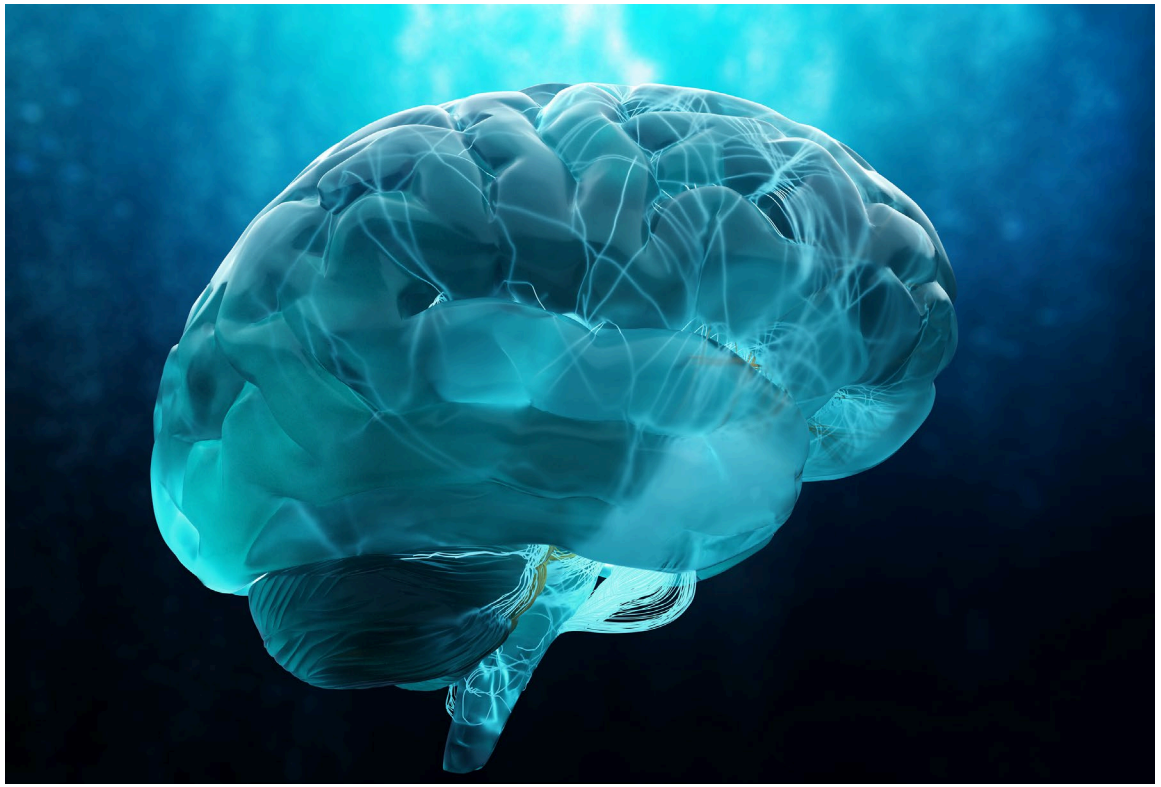
- International Relations
  - The world of the future is globalised. Our planet is shared, our economy is interconnected, and the challenges we face demand co-operation, but international politics remains divided.
  - This is the fundamental problem that we must unravel, by confronting the critical issues we face as global citizens: from war and conflict, to climate change, global poverty, gender violence, and racial injustice.

Sociology Approach

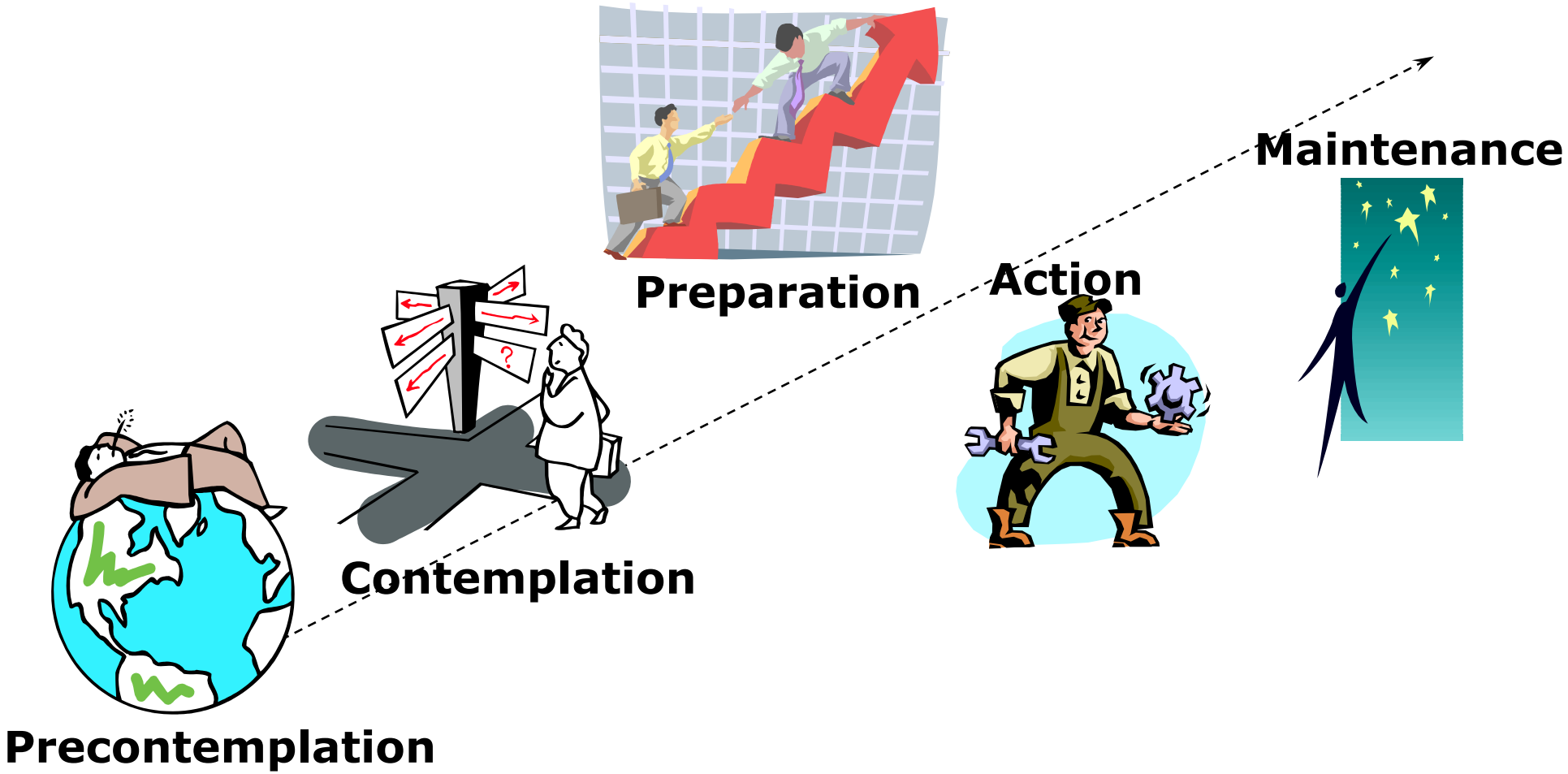
- Society is rapidly changing. Our multicultural and diverse world is becoming increasingly complex - bringing about challenges and problems that we, as sociologists, seek to tackle.
- It is not a discipline confined to the university classroom but one that applies to public good, benefiting communities and wider society.

Psychology Approach

- The human being; the workings of the brain; the processes and mechanisms of human thinking, feeling and behaviour; and how psychologists, psychological research and therapy can make a tangible and positive difference to people's lives and society.



Examples of applying psychology – how to b bring about change with the Stages of Change model (Prochaska et al., 2008)



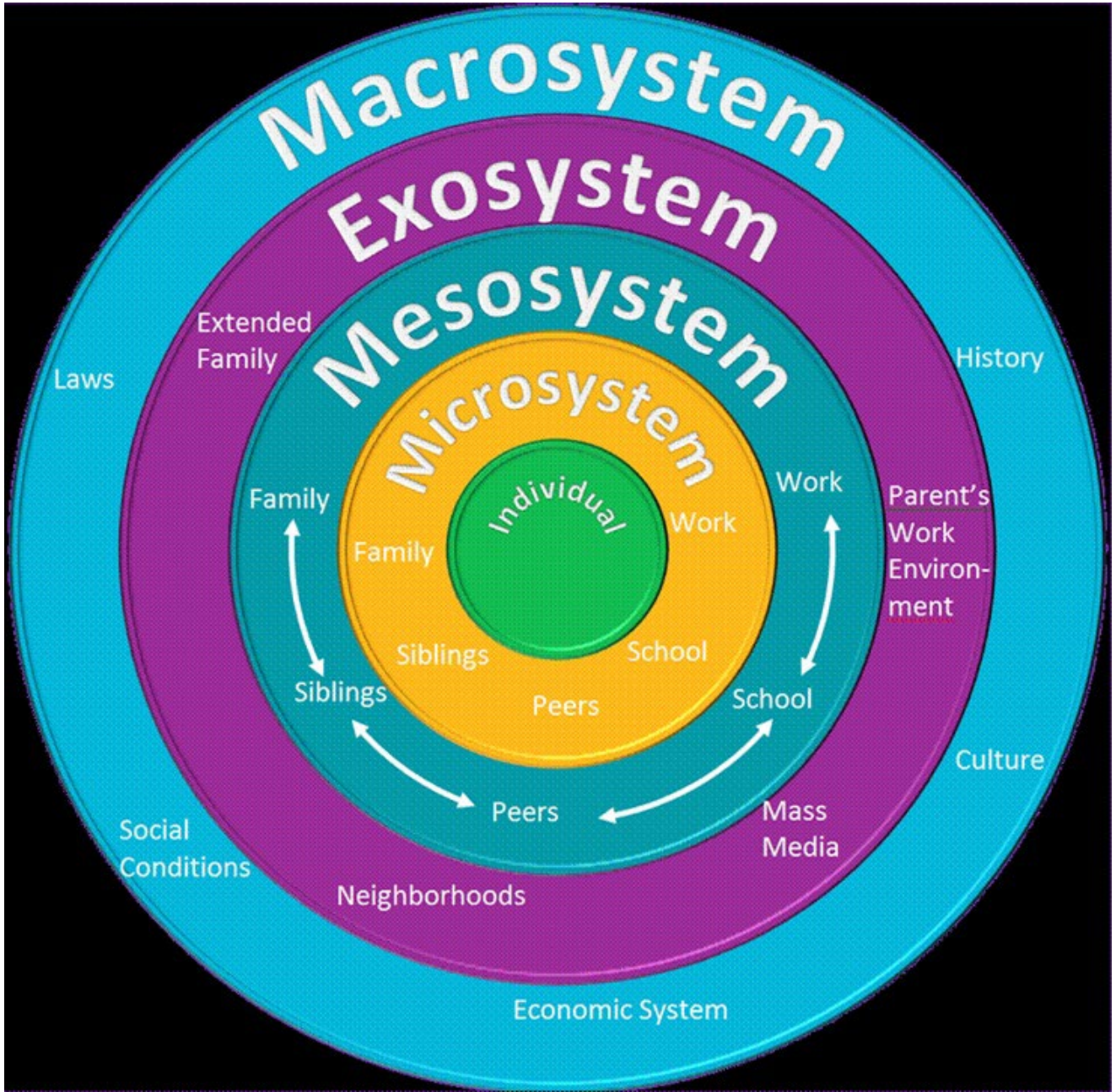
Steps for **Achieving** Change (adapted from Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010)

Steps	**Aim**	**People**	**Tasks**	**Who will do it?**	**When to do it?**
1. Pre-contemplation	Create awareness	Allies to the change	Inform others	Choose effective people	Decide on right time to sensitise
2. Contemplation	Create need for change	Allies and possible allies	Look for specific problems and spread information	Credible people in organisation	Have time to create momentum for change
3. Preparation	Specific goals and areas to be changed	Those with influence and credibility	Get data about problem and devise plan	Internal or external consultants	Have clear timetable for prep. phase

Steps for **Achieving** Change (adapted from Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010)

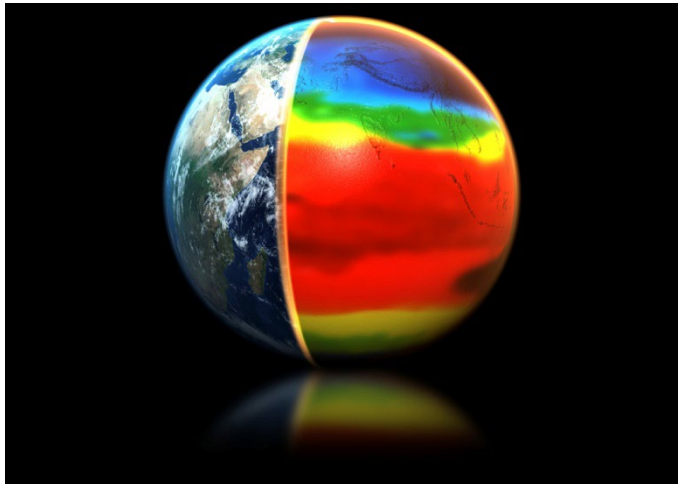
Steps	**Aim**	**People**	**Tasks**	**Who will do it?**	**When to do it?**
Action	Do the most effective interventions first	Everyone affected by the proposed change	Many tasks linked to the changes	Involve multiple agents of change	Decide ahead of time on this. Too much time lag will reduce credibility of change
Maintenance	Put in place systems to sustain the change	Everyone affected by the change	Have activities to institutionalise the change	As many people as possible	Have change-sustaininga ctivities at regular intervals

The Ecology of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)



The Ecological Metaphor

- Interdependence (e.g. micro-, meso-, macro-levels)
- Cycling of Resources (e.g. having sustainable social support systems – both formally and informally)
- Adaptation (e.g. coping with changes to the eco-system such as cuts to funding of essential services)
- Succession (e.g. having a long-term perspective – evolutions to available social systems and networks of support)



Nelson & Prilleltensky (2010)

Promotion and Communicating the Message: Lessons from Research

- Messages should not be laden with statistics - be **colourful** and **memorable**
- The **communicator** needs to be expert, trustworthy and likeable
- Strong arguments to be put at **beginning** or **end** of communication
- The message should have a clearly defined **course of action**

From Daniel O'Keefe (2002)

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY

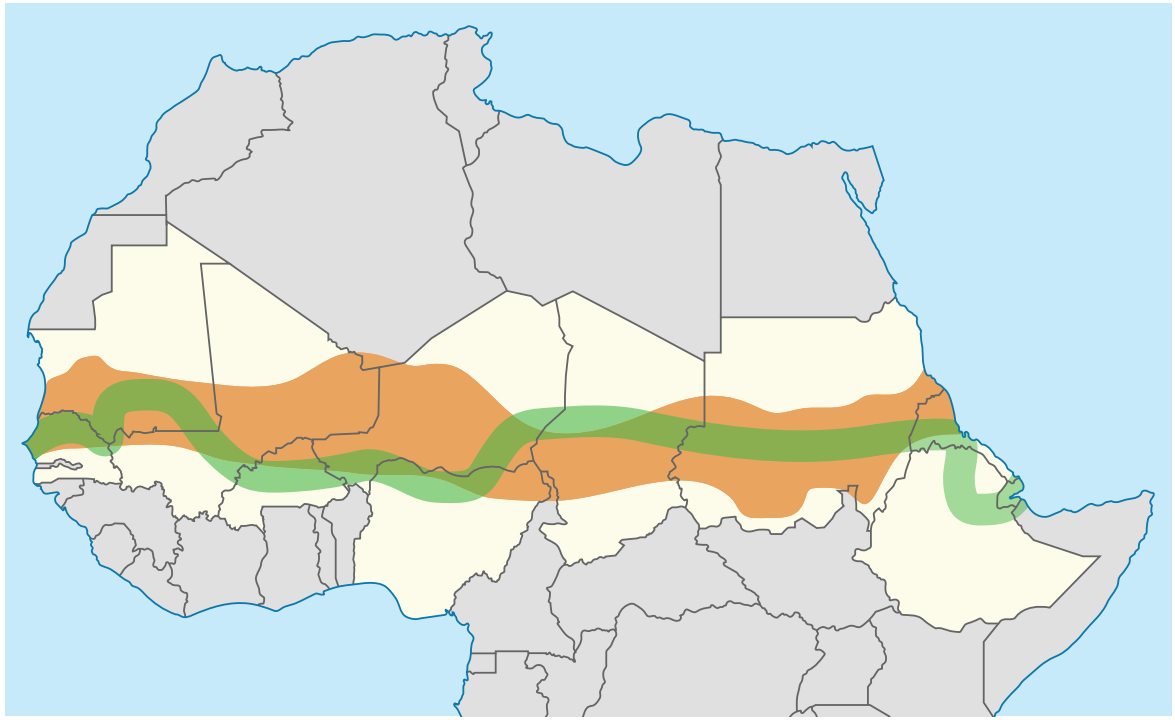
Real-World Example: The Great Green Wall

- The problem
  - Climate change and short-term land management practices
  - Farmable land in decline
- Response to
  - Food security
  - Nurturing natural resources
- Project under threat

Photo: UNCCD

Real-World Example: The Great Green Wall

- To sustain the project
  - International Relations
    - How would countries cooperate across borders?
  - Sociology
    - How might communities understand the project?
  - Psychology
    - How might psychologist encourage a conservation mindset?



CC BY-SA 4.0

Timeline: NTU Sustainability Challenge

- 10 October 2024
  - Attend online virtual session
- Form teams of 3
- 31 October 2024
  - Deadline submit a video of not more than 3 minutes
- 21 November 2024
  - Notified if shortlisted
- January 2025
  - Final Presentation (notify the shortlisted teams)

Conclusion and Next Steps

- NTU Sustainability Challenge
  - International Relations, Sociology, or Psychology
  - Real World example

- 31 October
  - Deadline submit a video of not more than 3 minutes
  - Instructions to follow!

Any questions

Nottingham Trent University

Thank you