The Sacred in Nearby Nature
vocabulary, principles, & evidence

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cities are centers of . . . .

sustainability
entrepreneurship

arts
culture

innovation
talent

Population Trends

> 80% of U.S. population lives in urban areas

> 50% of global population is urban

lives of . . . .

stress,
challenge,
need,
angst

Restorative Nature
need to get away from the city?

Ascending the Giants

Portland, Oregon

Civic Sacred :: Background

- Sacred – often implied, often felt, rarely discussed
- Local, public discourse & projects – sacred can introduce tension or disconnect
- What is an extended, expanded vocabulary of sacred?

The Nature Sacred Project

- Open Spaces – Sacred Spaces
- garden benches - journal entries
- national projects – integrated design/research
- Nature Sacred

reconnecting
to nature
in the city

restoration
mindfulness
healing

design for
co-benefits

urban systems integration

neighborhood
social cohesion

environmental
education &
social learning

water, energy & sacred

healing spaces

Legacy Hospitals, Portland OR

a language of sacred for public discussions

Design, Nature & Space	Sensations in Nature Space	Experiences or Behaviors Within	Initial Personal Outcomes	Carry-Over Beyond Space & Visit	Community & Culture
• beauty • compatibility • comfort • safety • fascination • refuge • dedicated • designed	• sun brightness • warmth • water coolness • calm • episodes • peaceful	• meditation • reflection • contemplate • immersion • w/loved ones • reverance • drawn in	• serenity • calm • cleansing • mindfulness • inspiration • restored • lifted up • revitalized	• mind/body reset • self-discovery • creative • lifted up • refreshed • connected	• memorial • stories • friendship • secular/ spiritual • ceremony place • sharing differences

The Sacred in Nearby Nature

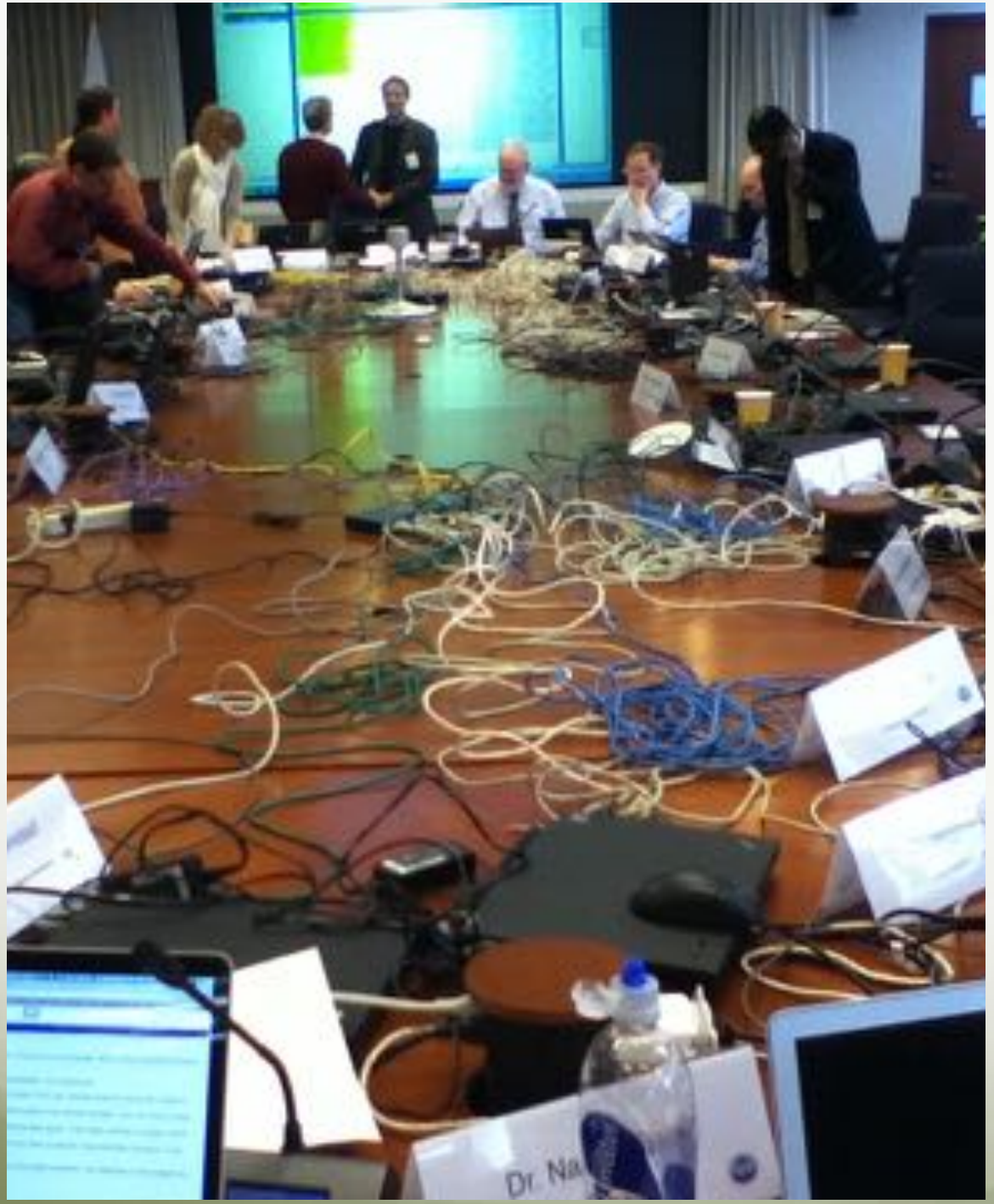
science & civic sacred connections

Nature and Mindfulness

focus
soft fascination
undirected attention

Attention Restoration Theory, Kapan & Kaplan

credit: Michael Hellgren



busyness

multi-tasking

‘out of balance’

Mindfulness/Meditation Training

- meta analysis; clinical/non situations
- focus on moment-to-moment experience and mental awareness
- more veridical perception (reality check)
- reduce negative affect
- improve vitality and coping
- medical symptoms & sensory pain

Grossman et al. 2004. Mindfulness-Based Health Benefits. Journal of Psychosomatic Research

Mindfulness/Meditation Training

- healthy workplace employees
- 8 week mindfulness training
- brain electrical activity – positive affect
- brain activation – reduce stress event response
- more antibodies after influenza vaccine = better immune function

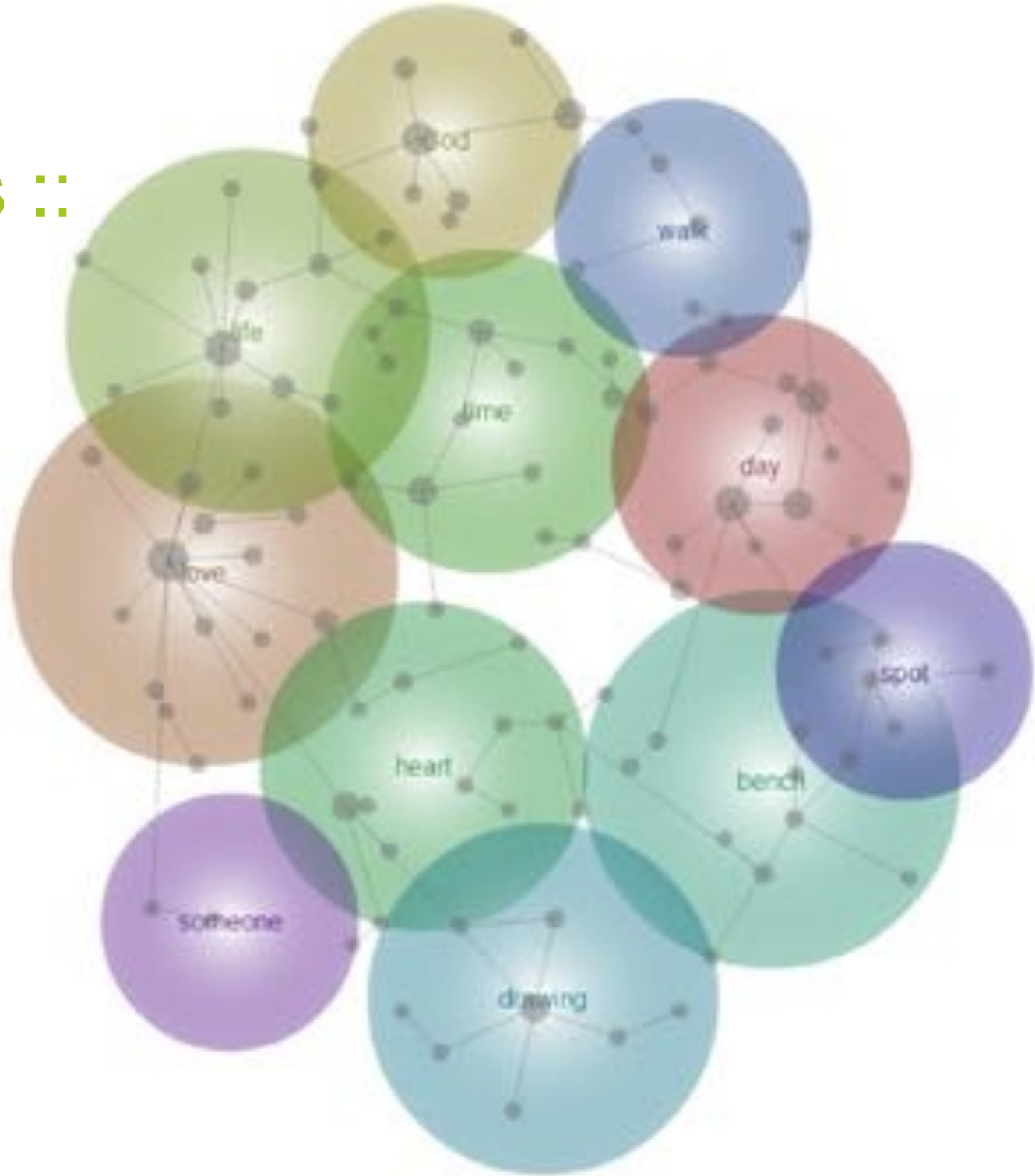
Davidson et al. 2003. Alterations in Brain and Immune Function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation. Psychosomatic Medicine

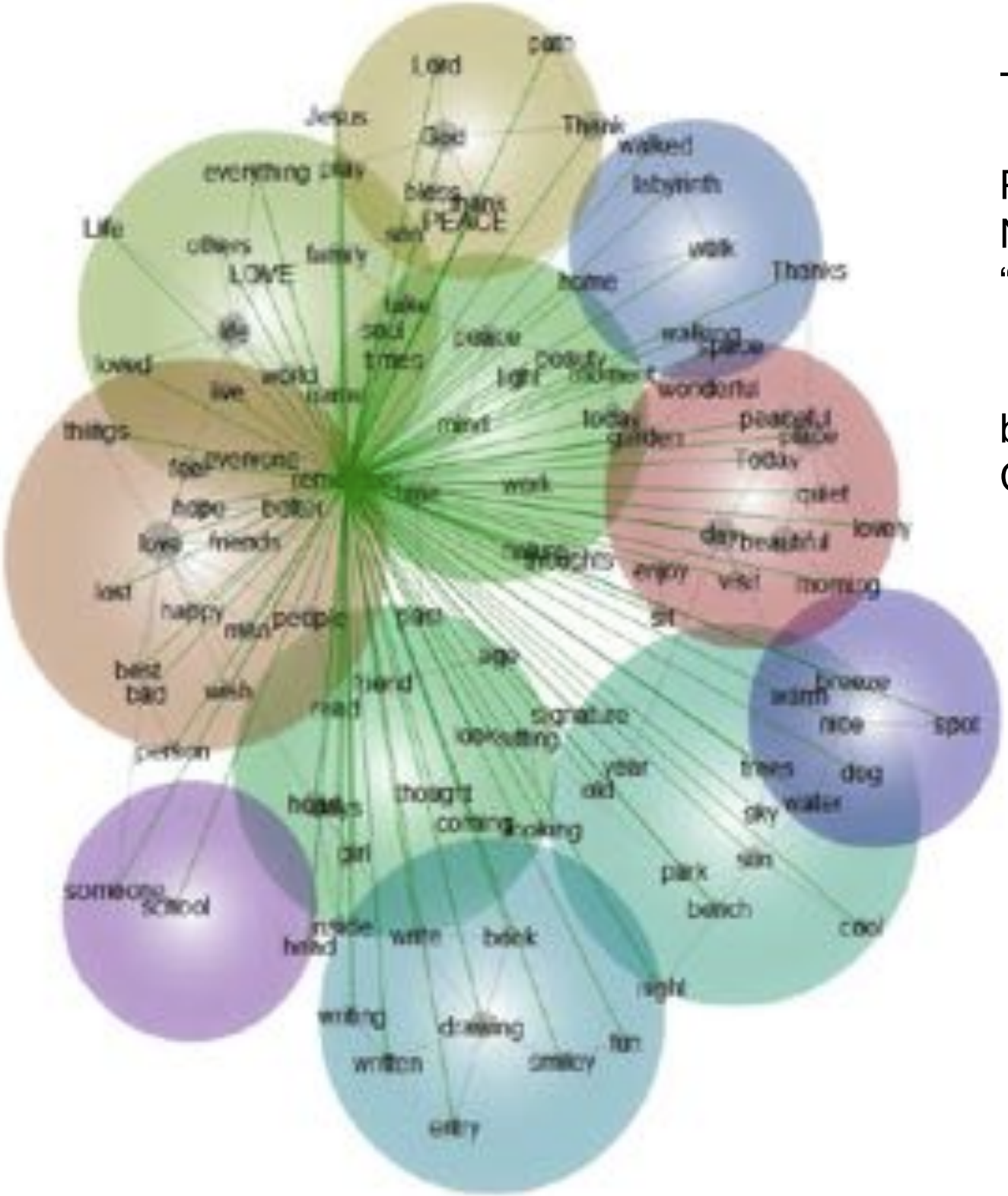
Nature Sacred :: bench journals

> 10 years
> 100 gardens
> 10,000 journal entries

mindfulness :: journal analysis

Tidball et al. 2012. Preliminary Analysis of Nature Sacred “Book & Bench” texts using unsupervised semantic mapping of natural language. Cornell (University) Civic Ecology Lab.





Tidball et al. 2012

Preliminary Analysis of Nature Sacred "Book & Bench" journal entries

by Cornell University's Civic Ecology Lab

Place and Design

creating sacred spaces

respite, restoration, mindfulness

Design Elements

Portal

Path

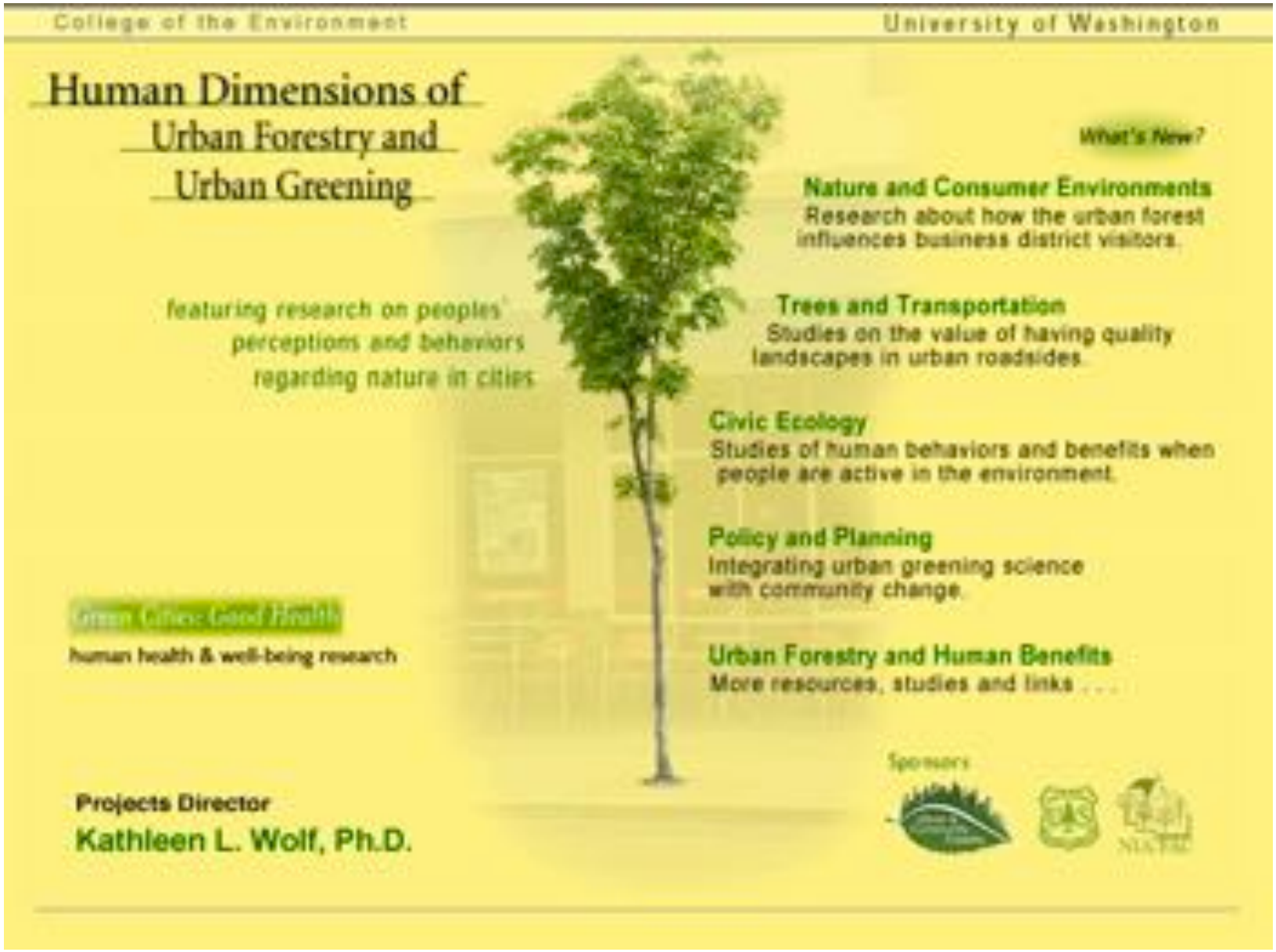
Destination

Surround

portal :: path :: surround :: destination

portal :: path :: surround :: destination

Closing & Summary

- sacred has a place in public spaces?
- many expressions – not just faith-based
- evidence of benefit – more urgent for life balance
- respite - mindfulness – restoration
- design and place-making

www.naturewithin.info