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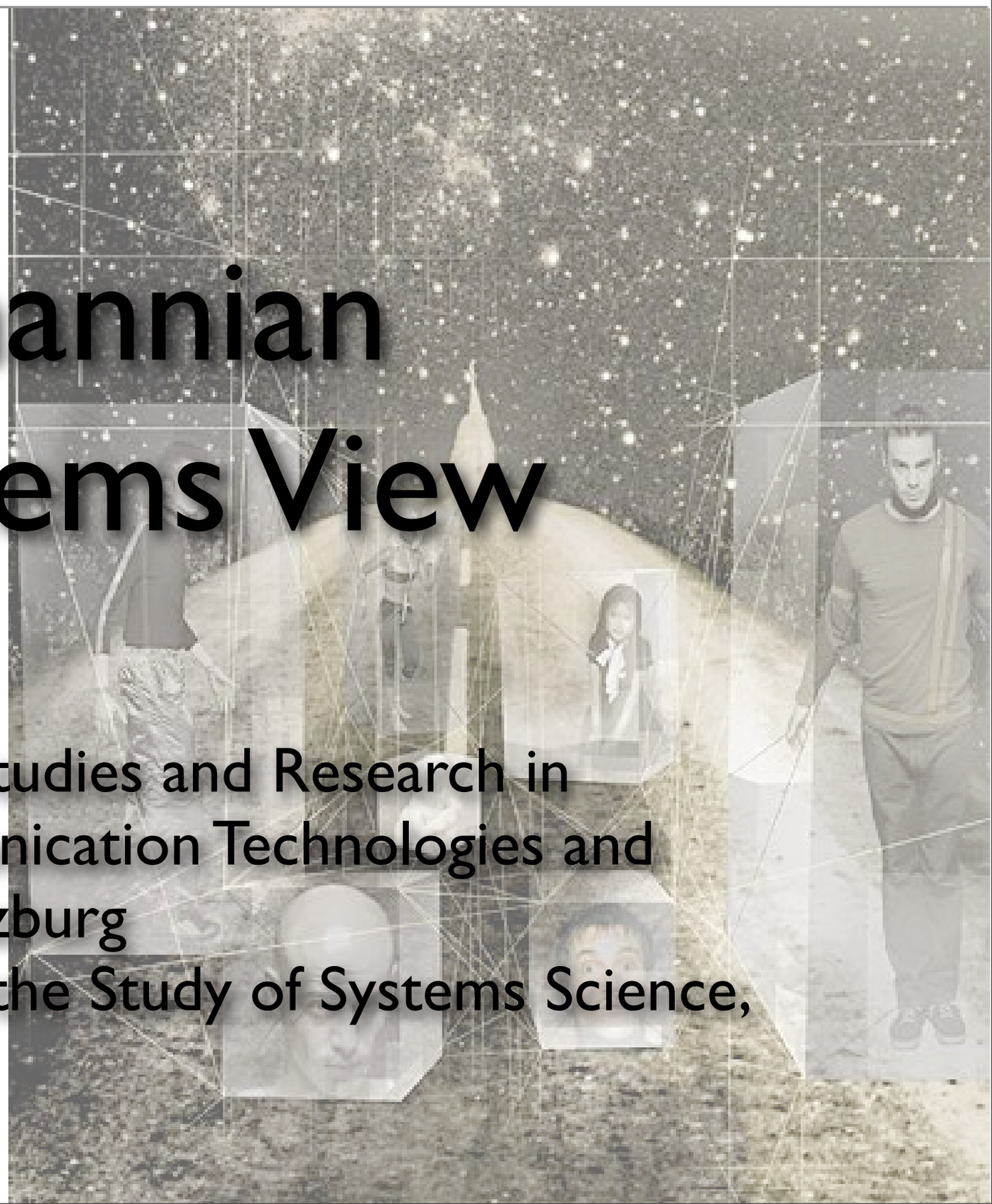
Towards a Post-Luhmannian Social Systems View



Wolfgang Hofkirchner

• Center for Advanced Studies and Research in Information and Communication Technologies and Society, University of Salzburg

• Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science, Vienna

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4.3 Why go beyond Incommensurability

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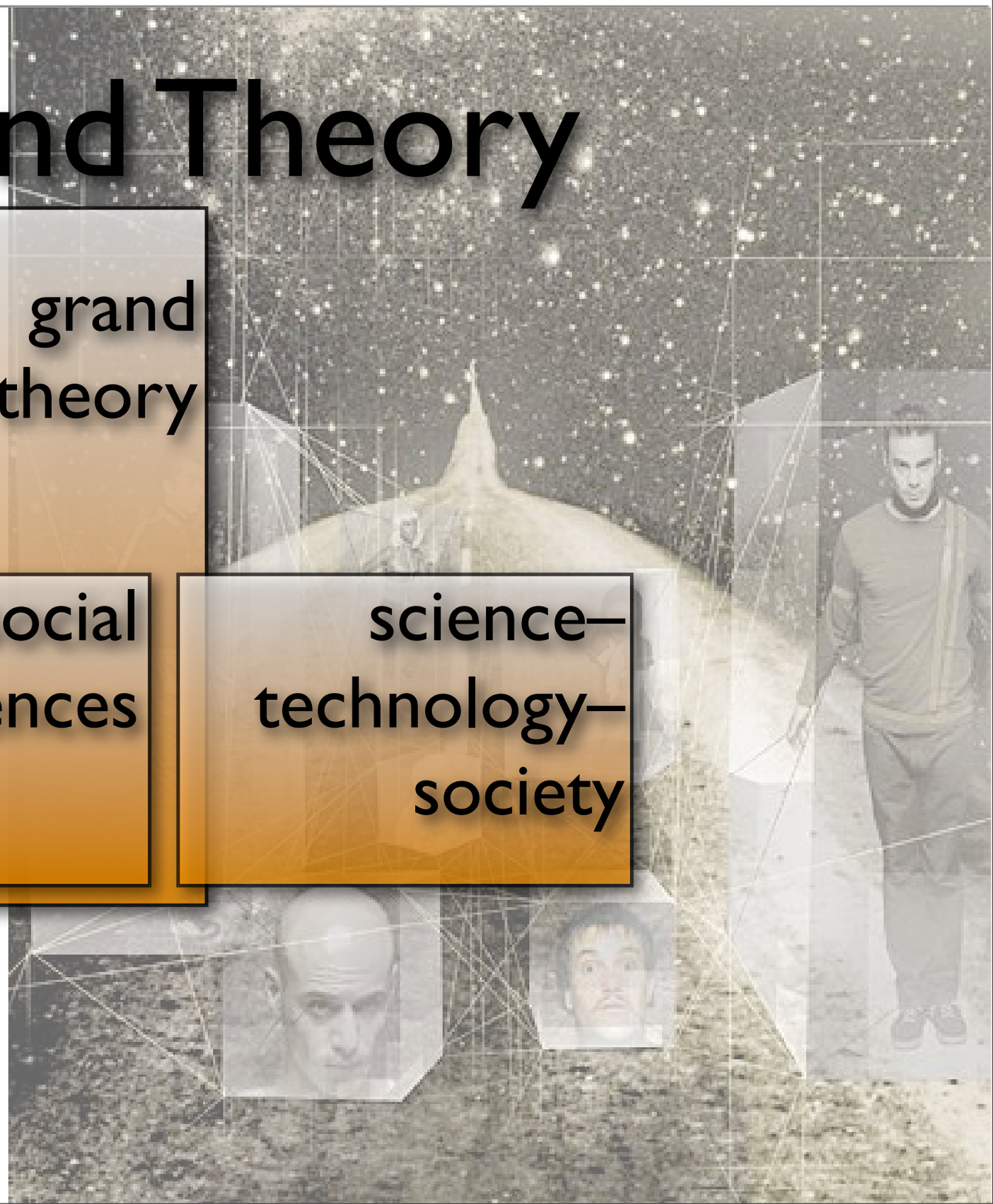
I Why Grand Theory

grand
social theory

history

social
sciences

science–
technology–
society



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I Why Grand Theory

grand
social theory

general

history

social
sciences

science–
technology–
society

specific

systems
theory

science of the
information society

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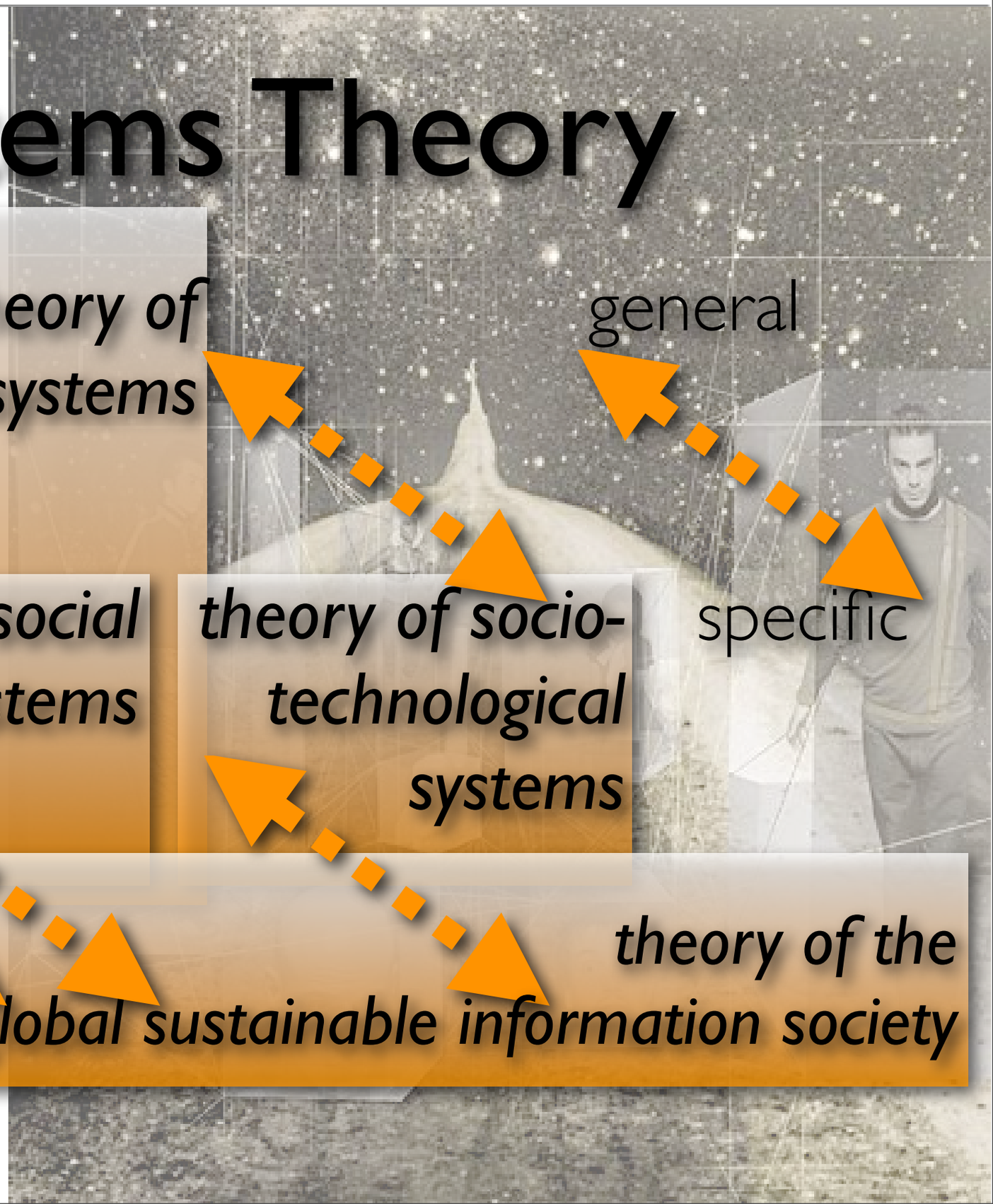
2 Why Systems Theory



theory of social systems

general

theory of social systems' evolution

theory of social subsystems

theory of socio-technological systems

specific

systems theory

global sustainable information society

theory of the

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2 Why Systems Theory

social practice
in the information age

1 Aims:
Social
Cybernetics

regain of governance

loss of control

theory of the
global sustainable information society

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2 Why Systems Theory

real-world systems dynamics information-age practice gets involved in

2 Scope:
Social(ly shaped)
Systems

mapping

modeling

theory of the global sustainable information society

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2 Why Systems Theory

methodology for the study of information-age real-world systems dynamics

3 Tools:
System
of Methods

refining

anything goes
as long as it
works

theory of the global sustainable information society

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3 Why a Theory of Self-Organisation

		how to relate…	
		individuals…	and society
individualism (reductionism)	neopositivism, action theory	necessary and sufficient	resulting
"societalism" (projectionism)	interpretivism, functionalism, structuralism	resulting	necessary and sufficient
individual–society dichotomism (dualism)	post-modernism, Luhmann	independent	
individual–society integrationism (dialectic)	critical thinking, theory of self-organisation	asymmetrically interdependent (society emerges from, and shapes, in turn, individuals)	

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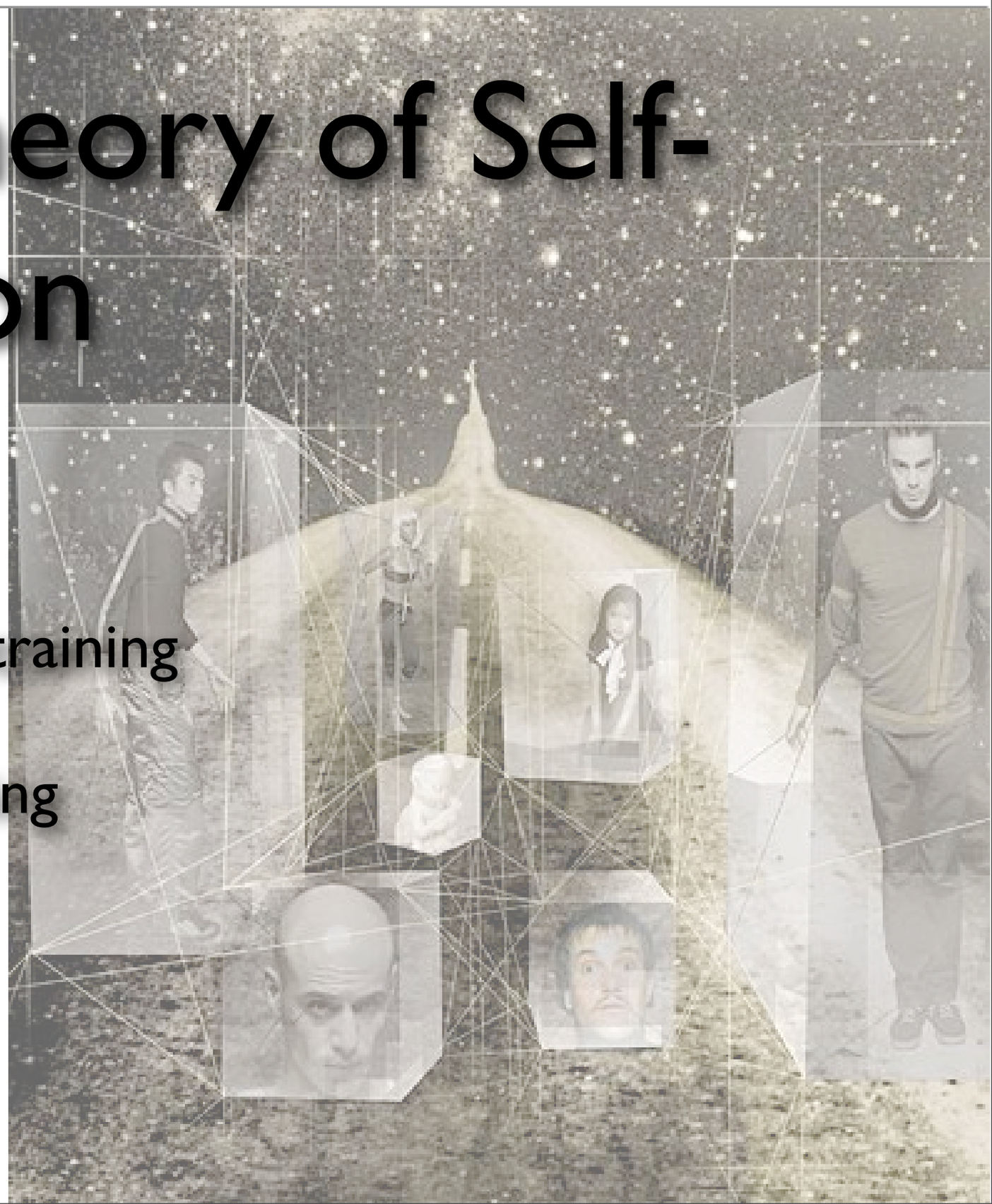
3 Why a Theory of Self-Organisation

STRUCTURE

Acting

Constraining and Enabling

AGENTS



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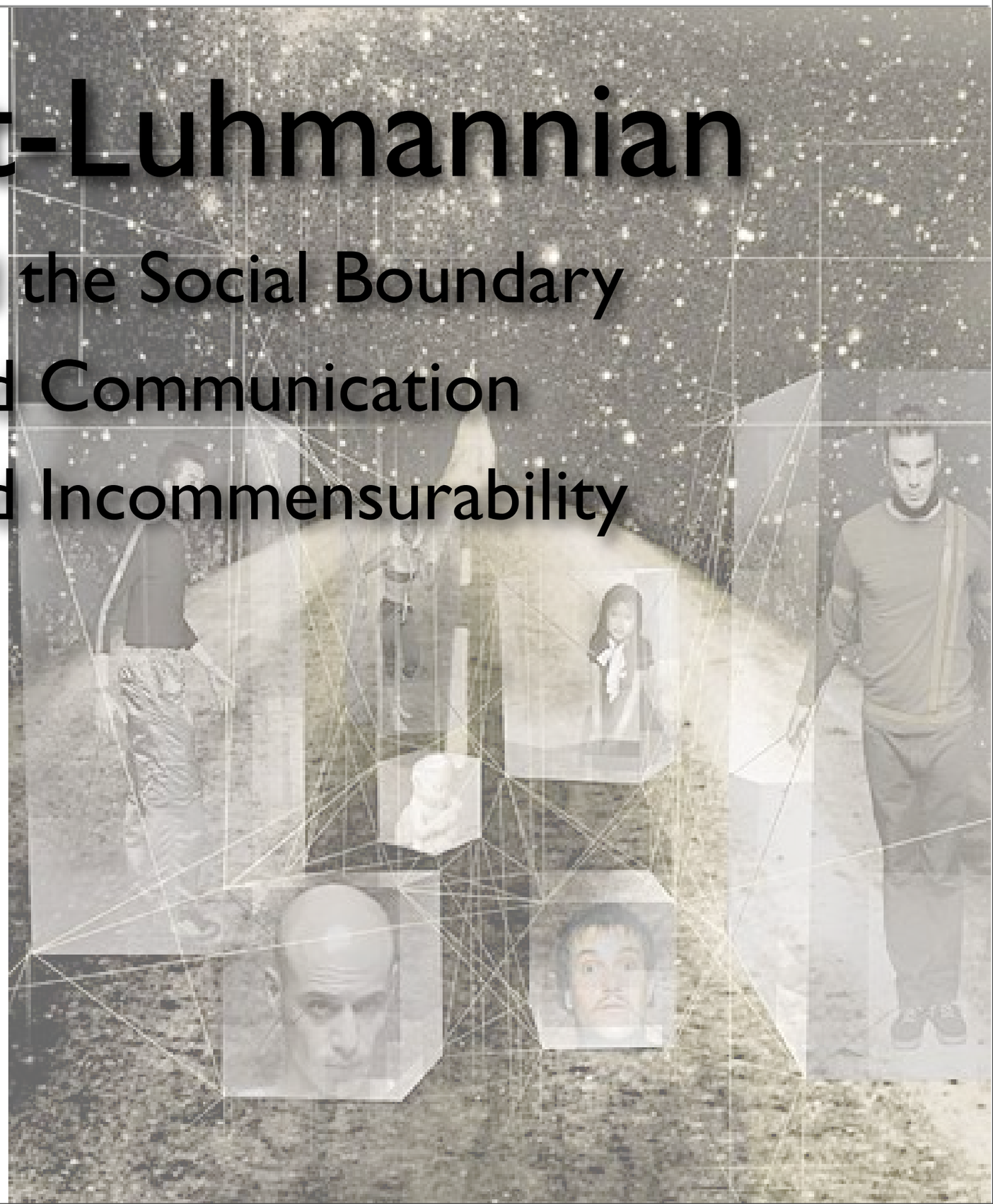
4 Why Post-Luhmannian

4.1 Why go beyond the Social Boundary

4.2 Why go beyond Communication

4.3 Why go beyond Incommensurability



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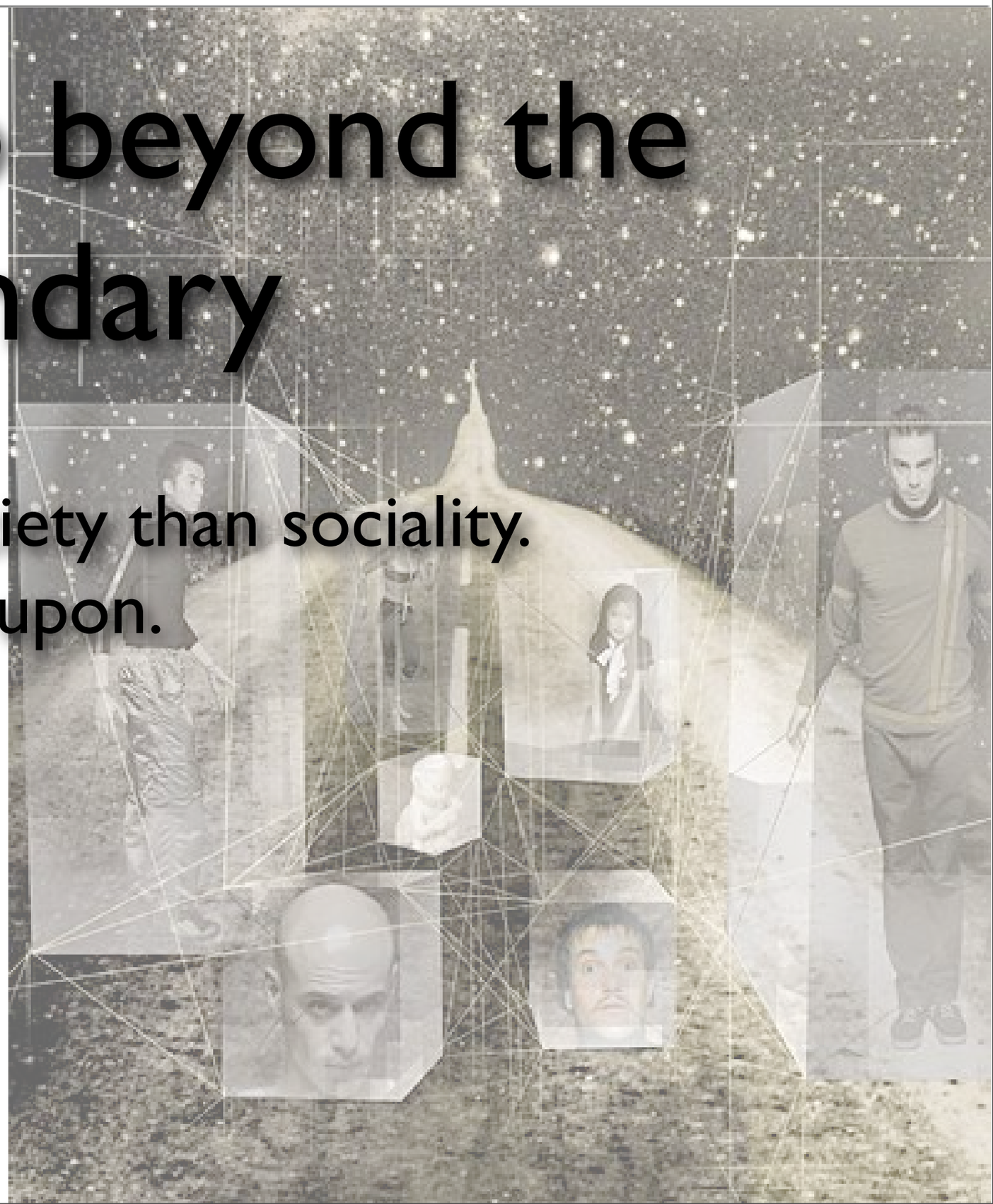
4.1 Why go beyond the Social Boundary

There is more to society than sociality.
There is nature built upon.



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4.1 Why go beyond the Social Boundary

material systems

living systems

societal systems

re-creative (Jantsch) self-organisation

autopoietic (Maturana) self-organisation

dissipative (Prigogine) self-organisation

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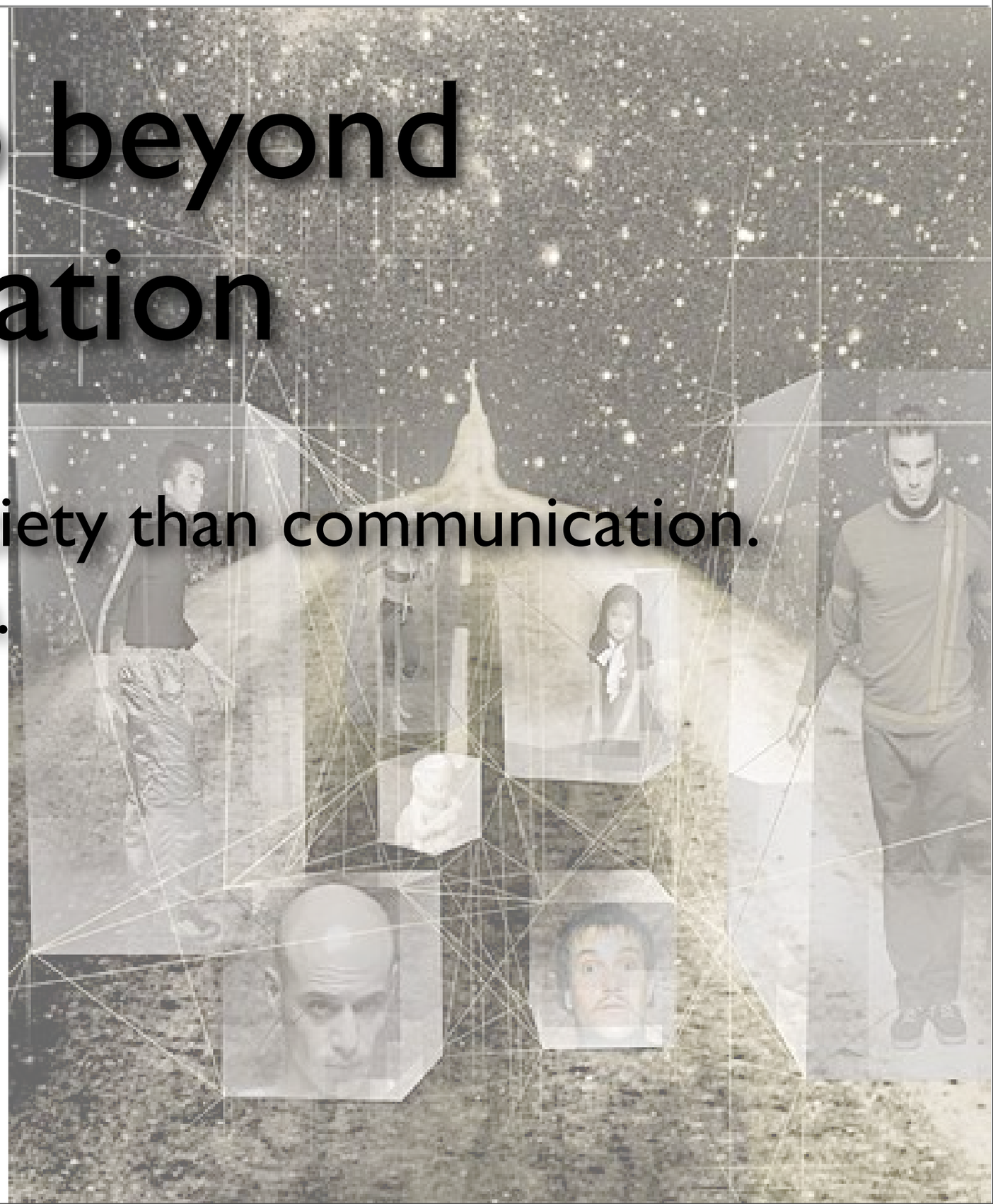
4.2 Why go beyond Communication

There is more to society than communication.

There is cooperation.



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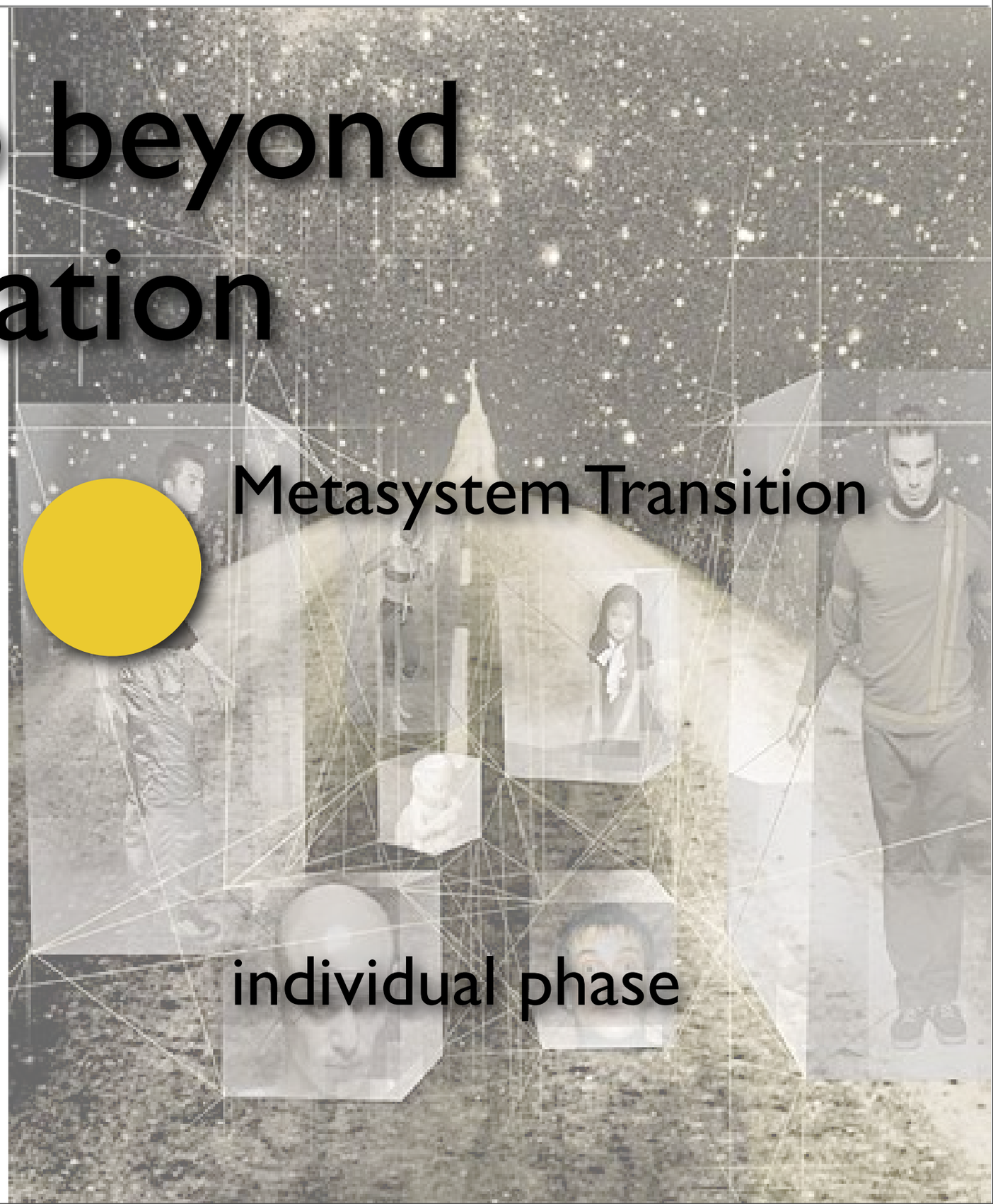
4.2 Why go beyond Communication



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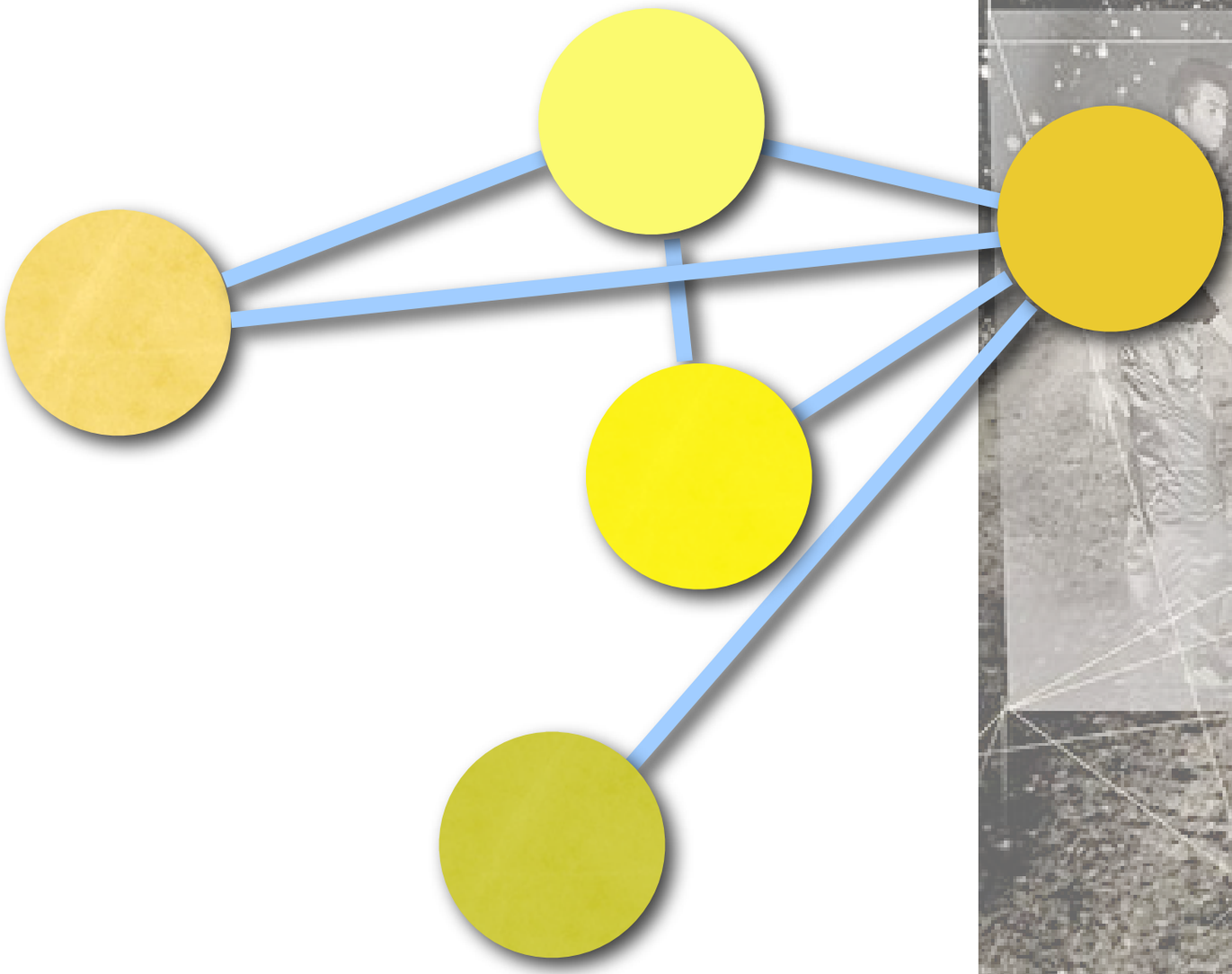
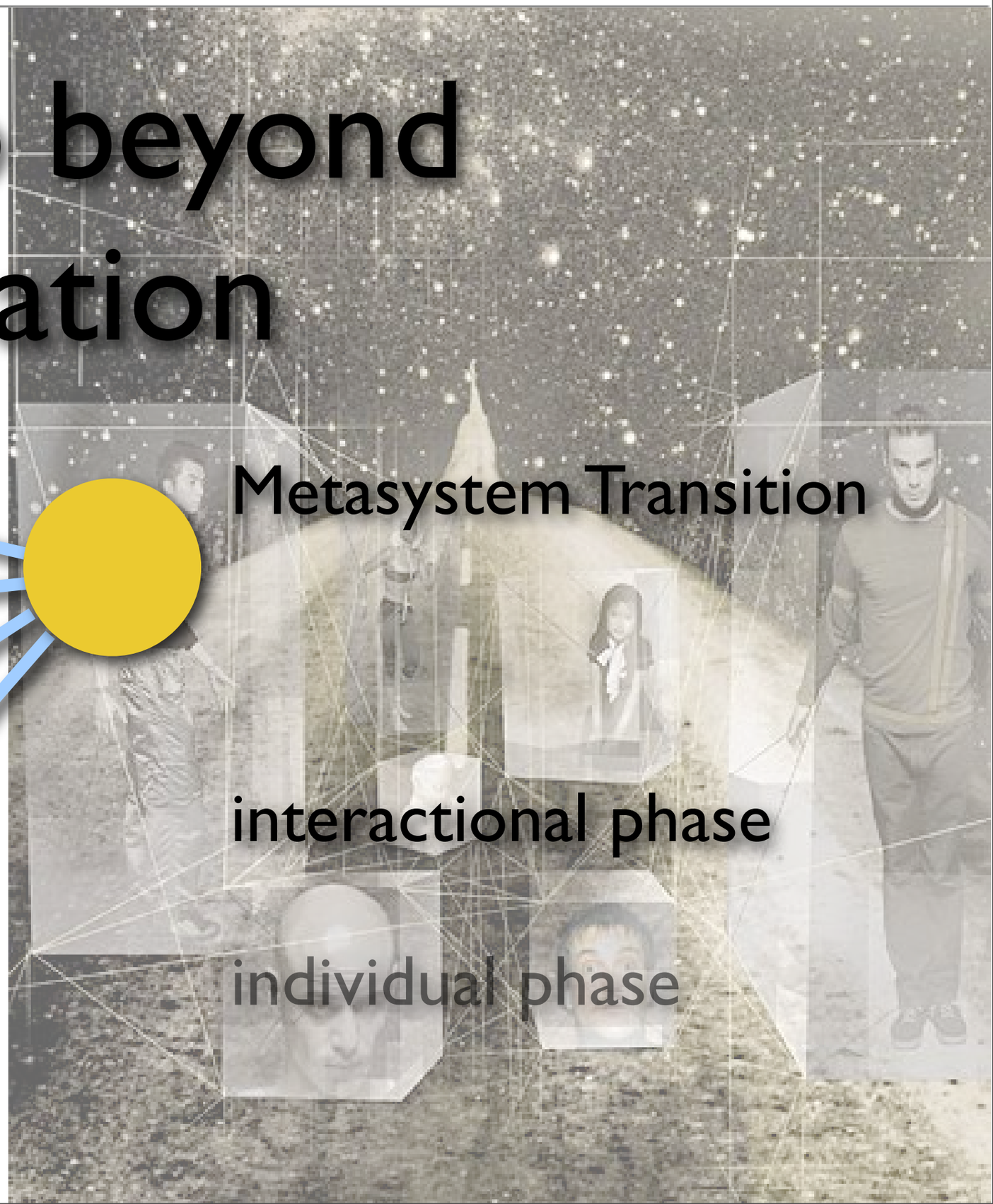
4.2 Why go beyond Communication





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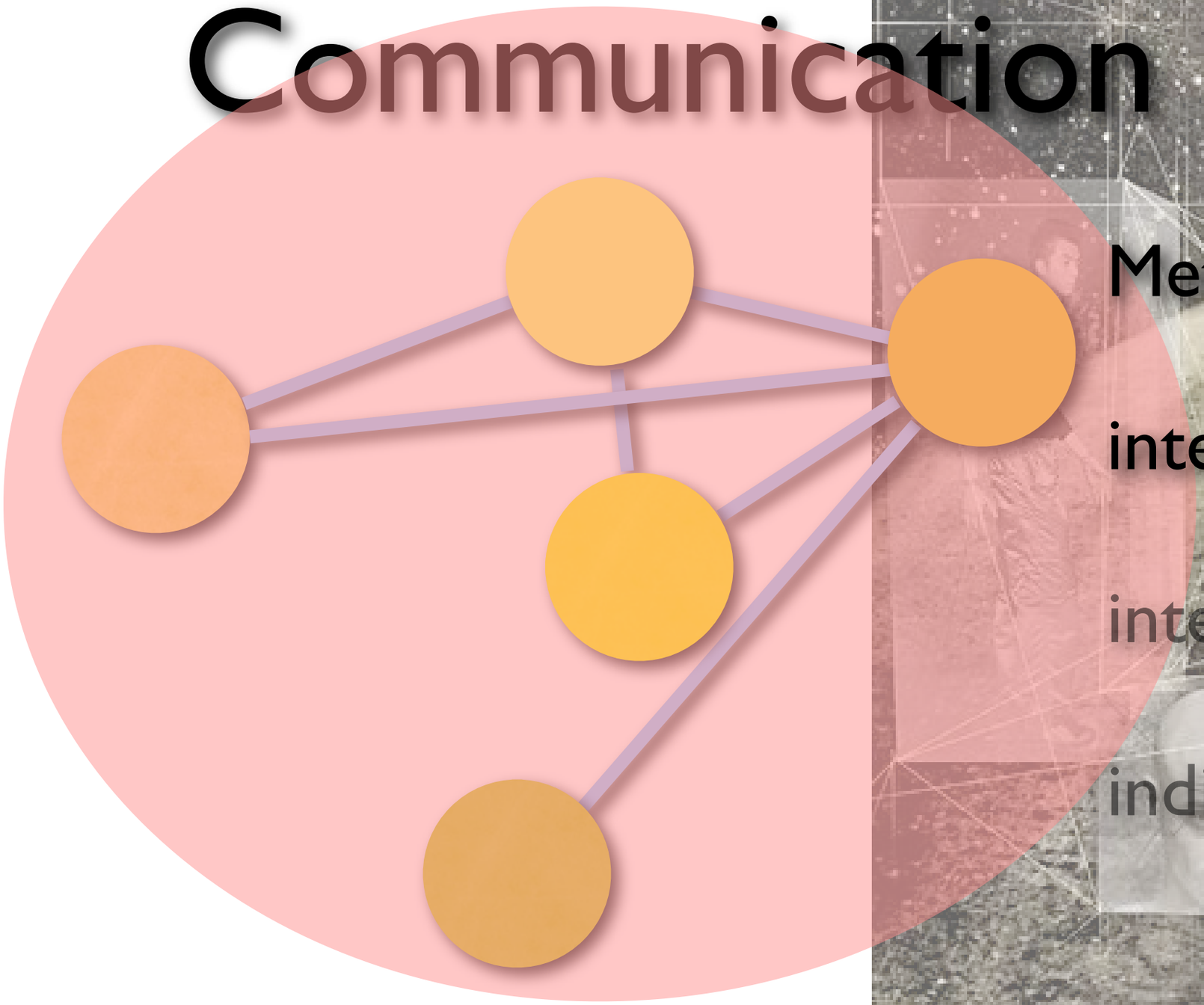
4.2 Why go beyond Communication



Metasystem Transition

integrational phase

interactional phase

individual phase

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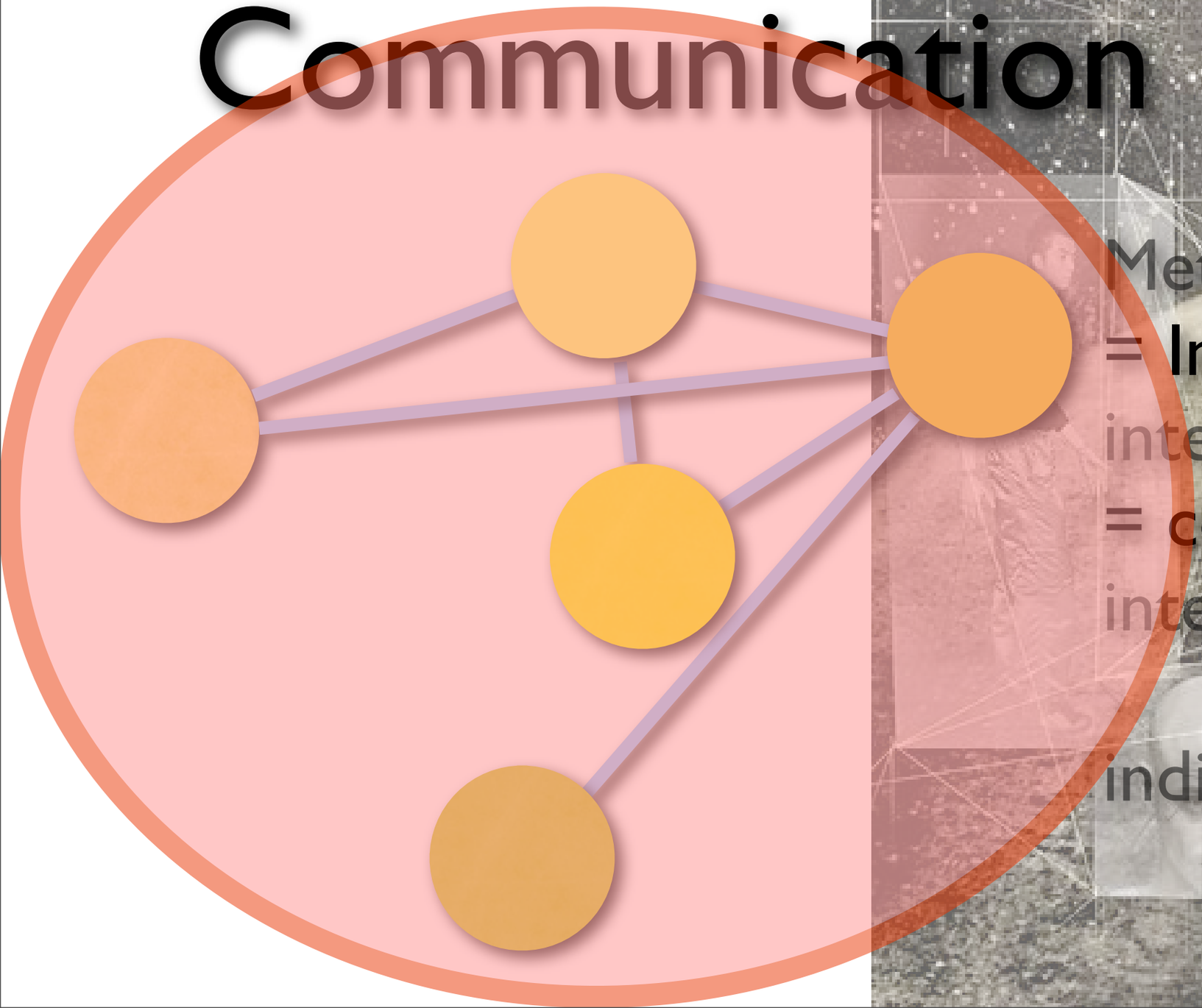
4.2 Why go beyond Communication



Metasystem Transition
= Information Hierarchy
integrational phase
= cooperative level
interactional phase

individual phase

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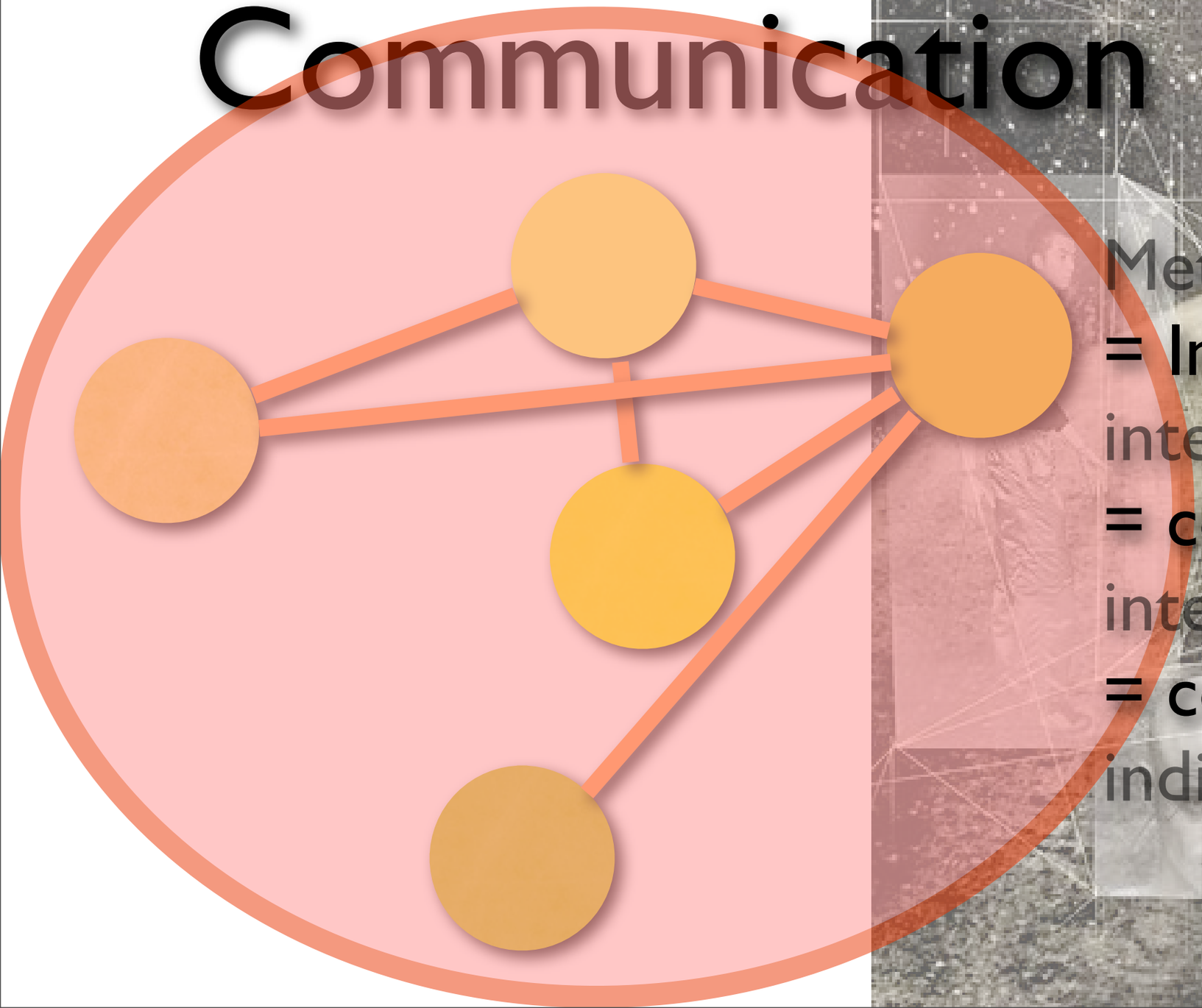
4.2 Why go beyond Communication



Metasystem Transition
= Information Hierarchy
integrational phase
= cooperative level
interactional phase
= communicative level
individual phase

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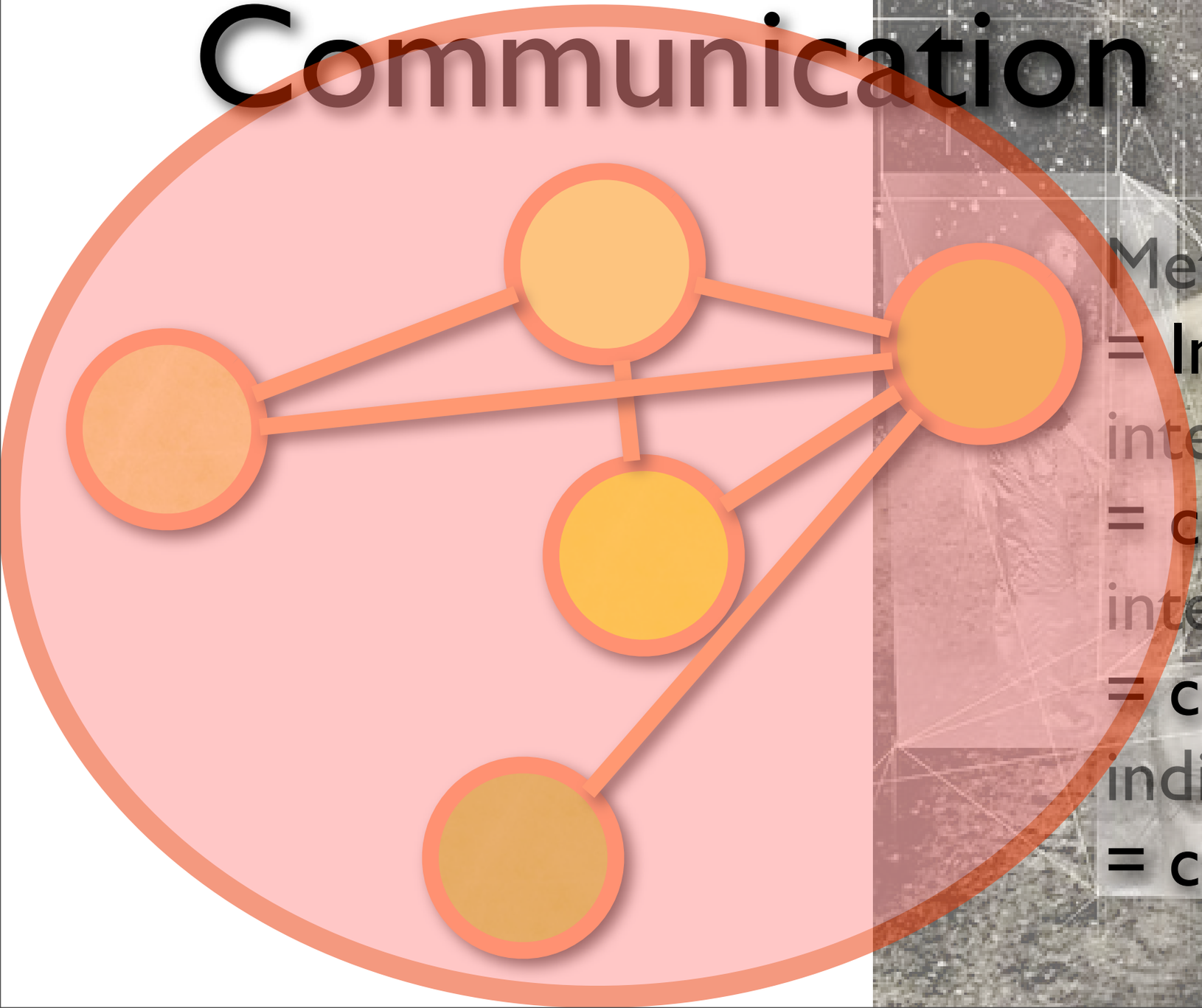
4.2 Why go beyond Communication



Metasystem Transition
= Information Hierarchy
integrational phase
= cooperative level
interactional phase
= communicative level
individual phase
= cognitive level

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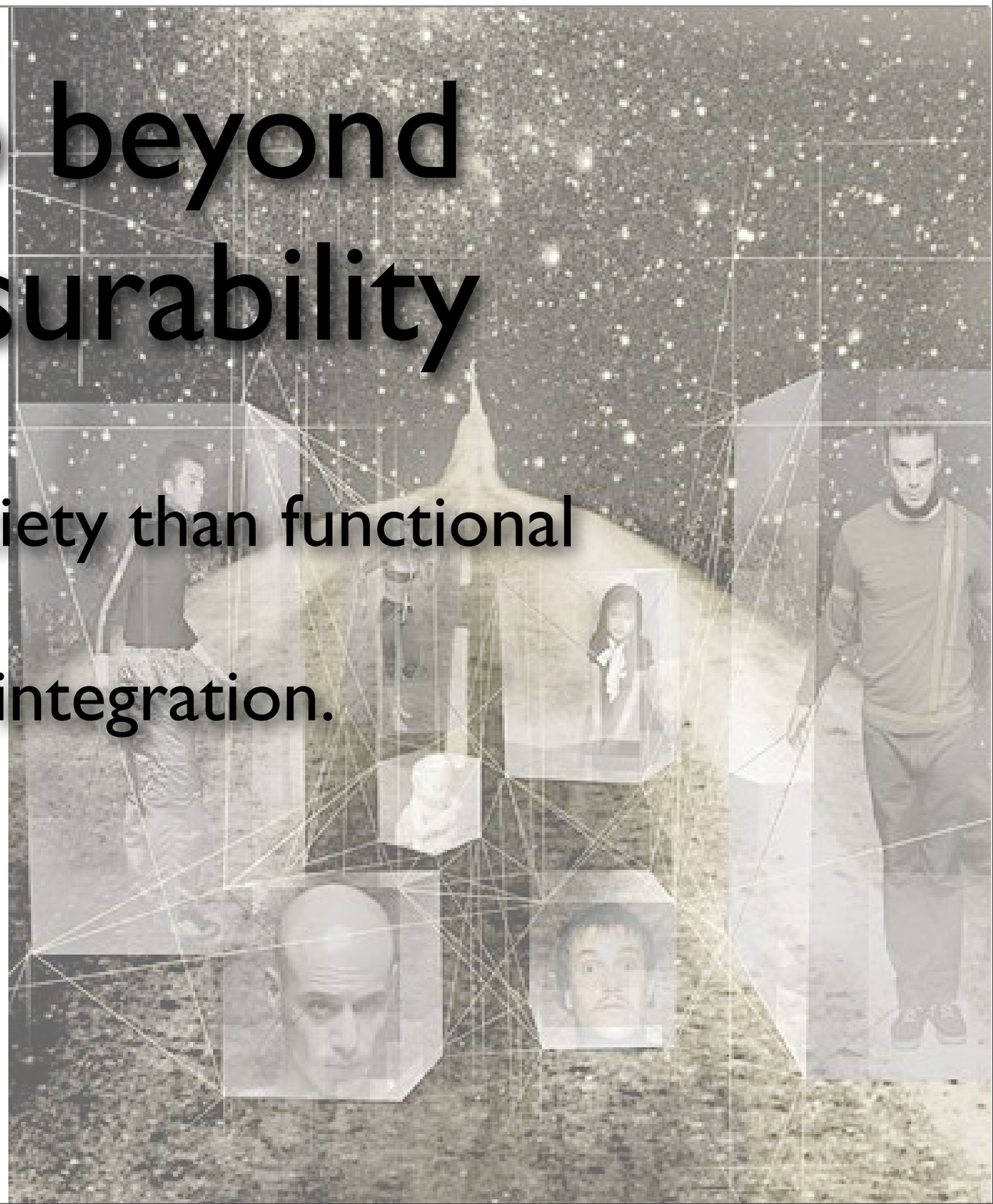
4.3 Why go beyond Incommensurability

There is more to society than functional differentiation.

There is hierarchical integration.



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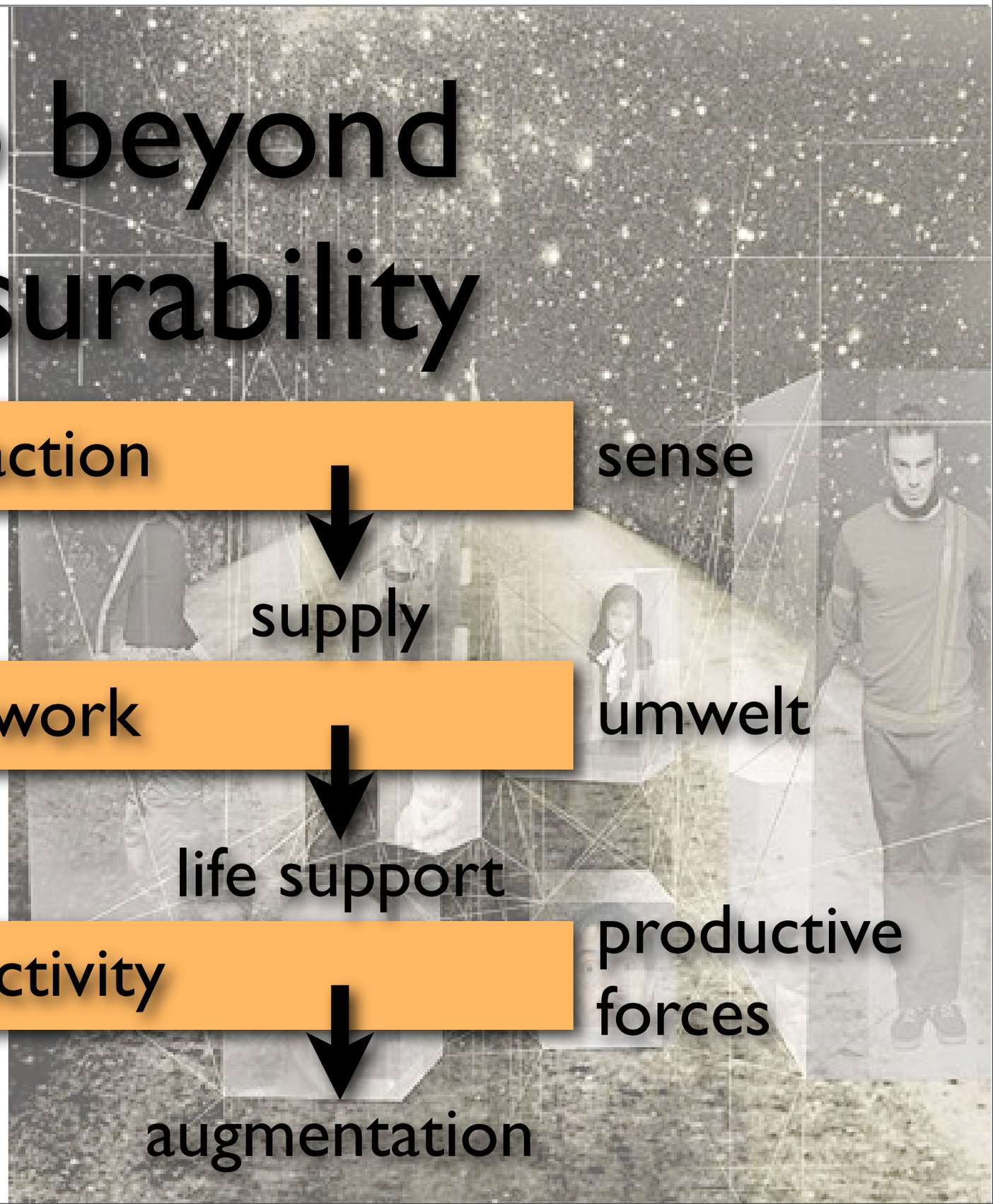
4.3 Why go beyond Incommensurability



society		action		sense
	production		supply	
ecology		work		umwelt
	adaptation		life support	
techno-logy		activity		productive forces
	innovation		augmentation	

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4.3 Why go beyond Incommensurability

culture — definition → — rules

production ↑ legitimation ↓

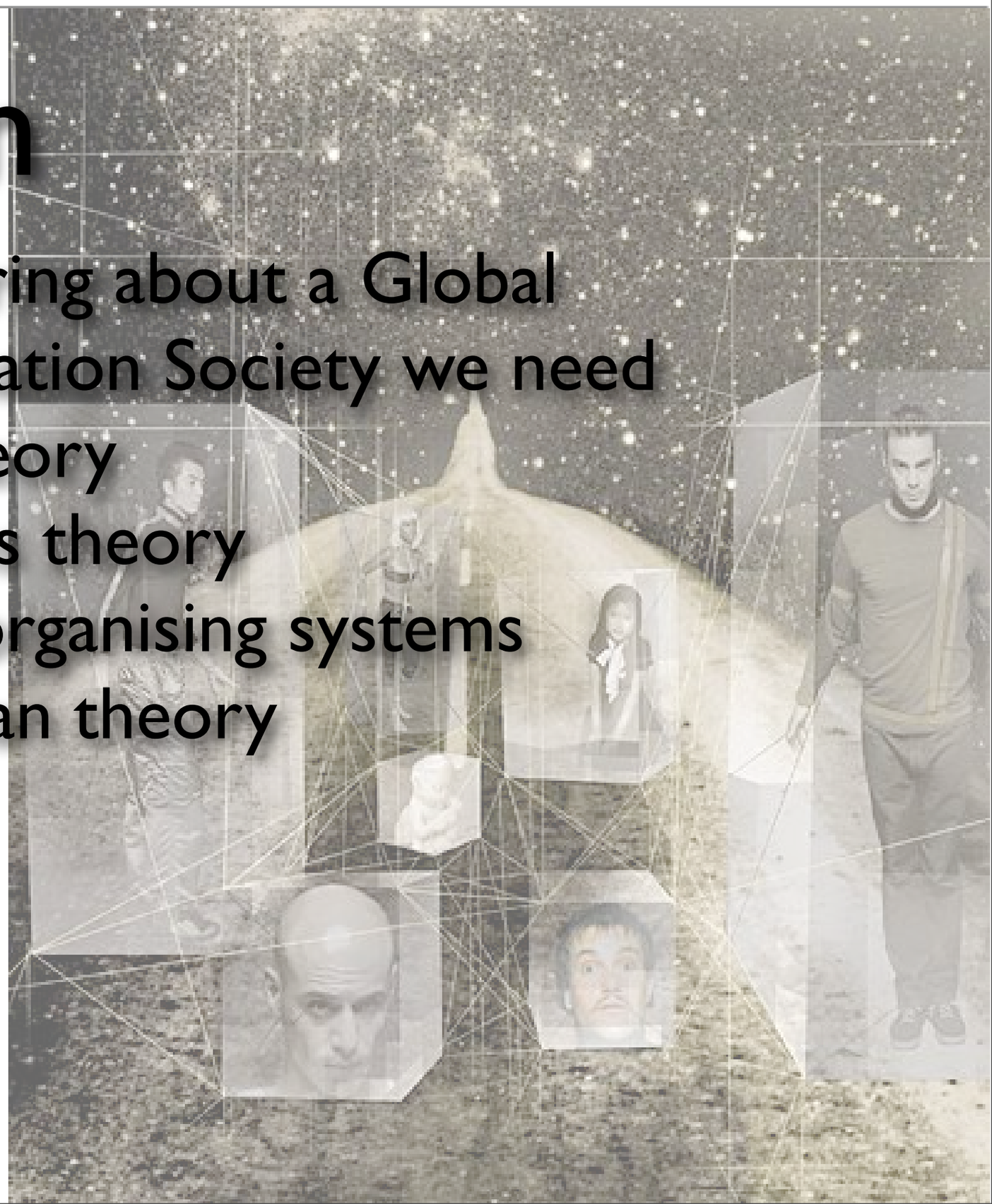
politics — decision — regularities

production ↑ authorisation ↓

economy — disposition — resources

production ↑ allocation ↓

Conclusion

In order to help bring about a Global Sustainable Information Society we need

- a grand social theory
- a societal systems theory
- a theory of self-organising systems
- a post-Luhmannian theory