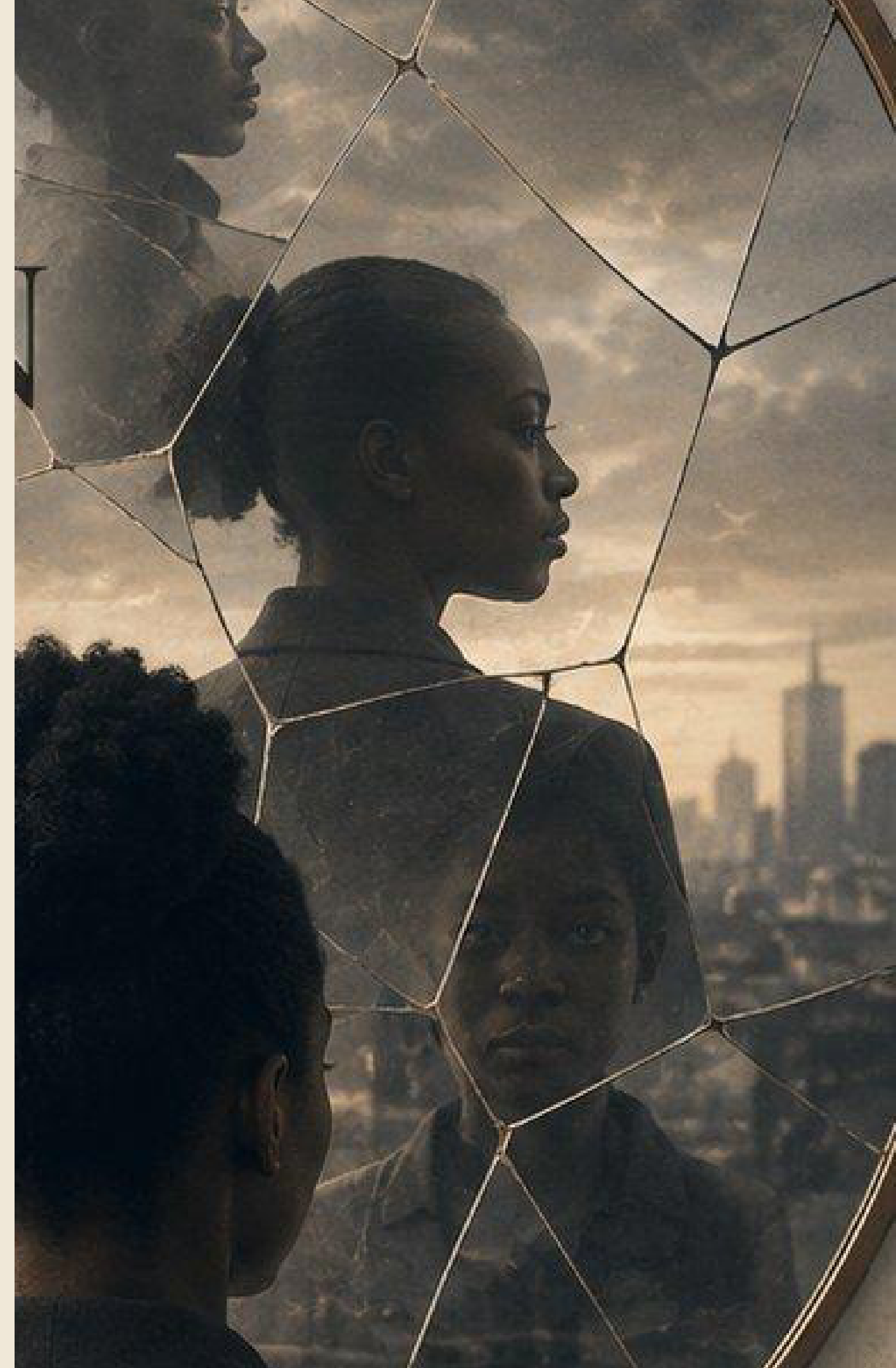


THE NAIROBI GATHERING · 12 OCTOBER 2026

The Naming of a Condition

A short reflection prepared for those
considering this conversation — on the
frameworks we use to see, and the cost of
seeing through the wrong ones.

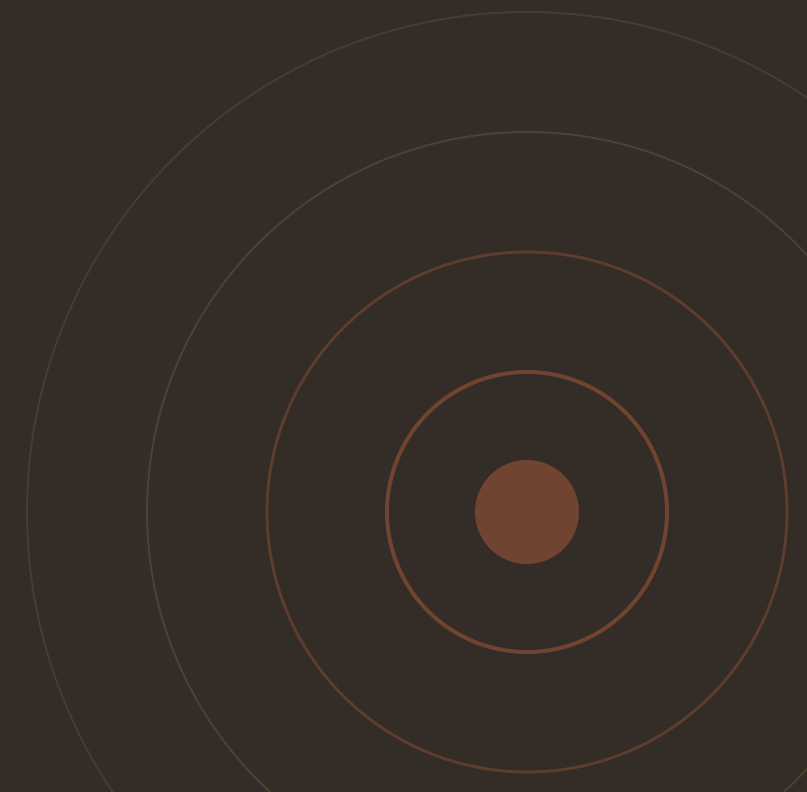
SEEING MORE ACCURATELY · ACTING MORE WISELY · BUILDING WHAT LASTS



“

*What cannot be named cannot be
examined.*

*What cannot be examined cannot be
changed.*



WHAT WE MEAN

A Borrowed Mirror

Borrowed Mirrors describes the condition that arises when individuals, organisations, institutions, or nations evaluate themselves through frameworks that were not designed for their context — frameworks that cannot accurately perceive how value, legitimacy, capability, or coherence are created within it.

A borrowed mirror still reflects. It simply reflects a distorted image — and the distortion is mistaken for the truth.

A PATTERN WE CAN NO LONGER IGNORE

Why Now

O1 EFFORT IS NOT THE SHORTFALL

Serious resources meet problems we understand well, yet the outcomes we seek stay out of reach.

O2 CONFIDENCE IS DECLINING

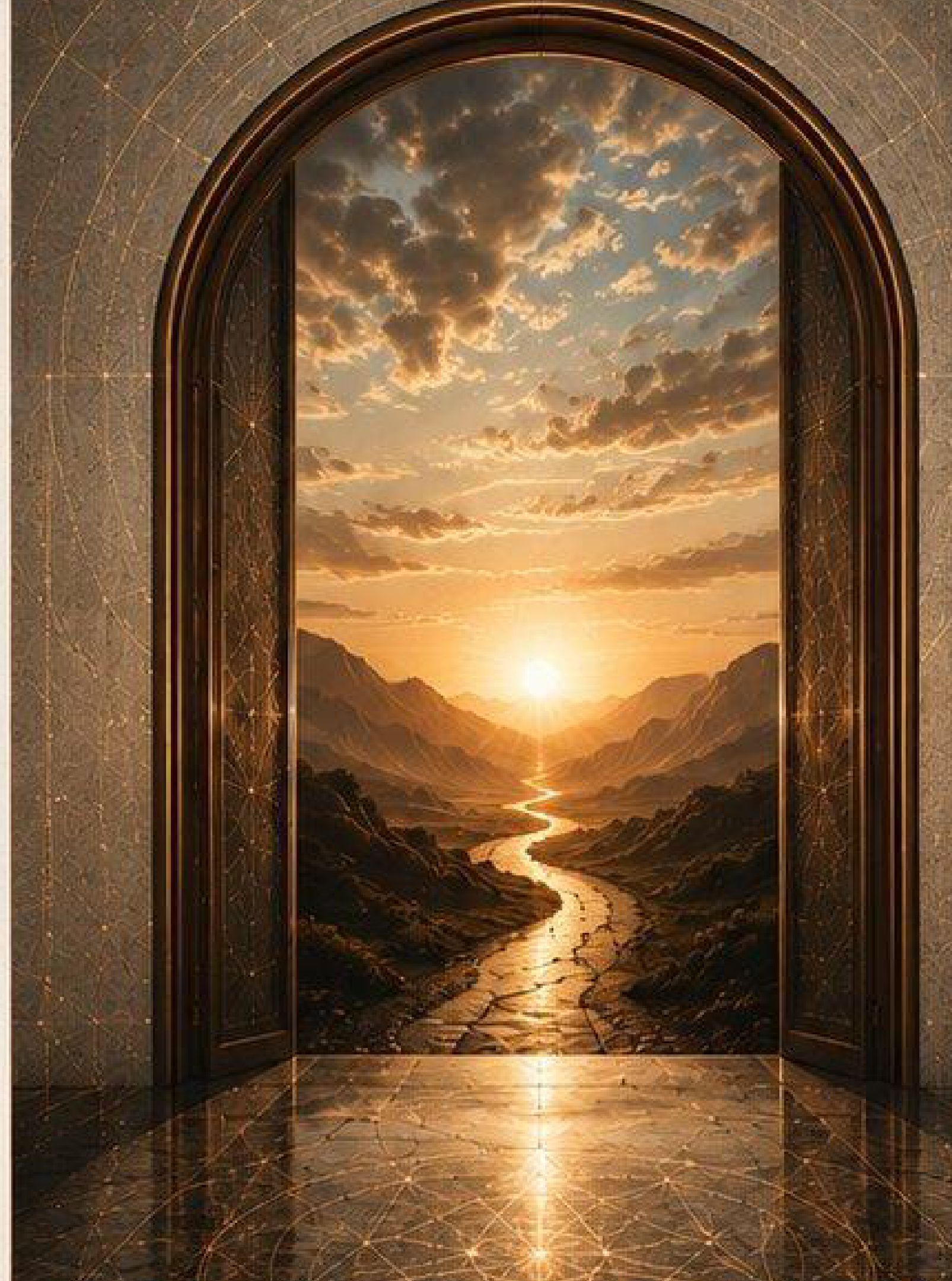
More complexity to absorb, more mistrust to navigate, more reforms carried out faithfully and still disappointed.

O3 A PATTERN ACROSS FIELDS

Sound intentions meet resistance and diminishing returns. The cause is subtler than effort or design.

O4 AN OPPORTUNITY, NOT A CRISIS

What we must add is the capacity for recognition — to see more accurately what our frameworks cannot.



THE QUESTION WE OVERLOOK

A failure of recognition

What if some failures begin earlier — as failures of recognition? What if we are working with frameworks that cannot accurately perceive what is happening in the contexts we are trying to understand?

The next era of progress may belong less to those who can act than to those who can see.

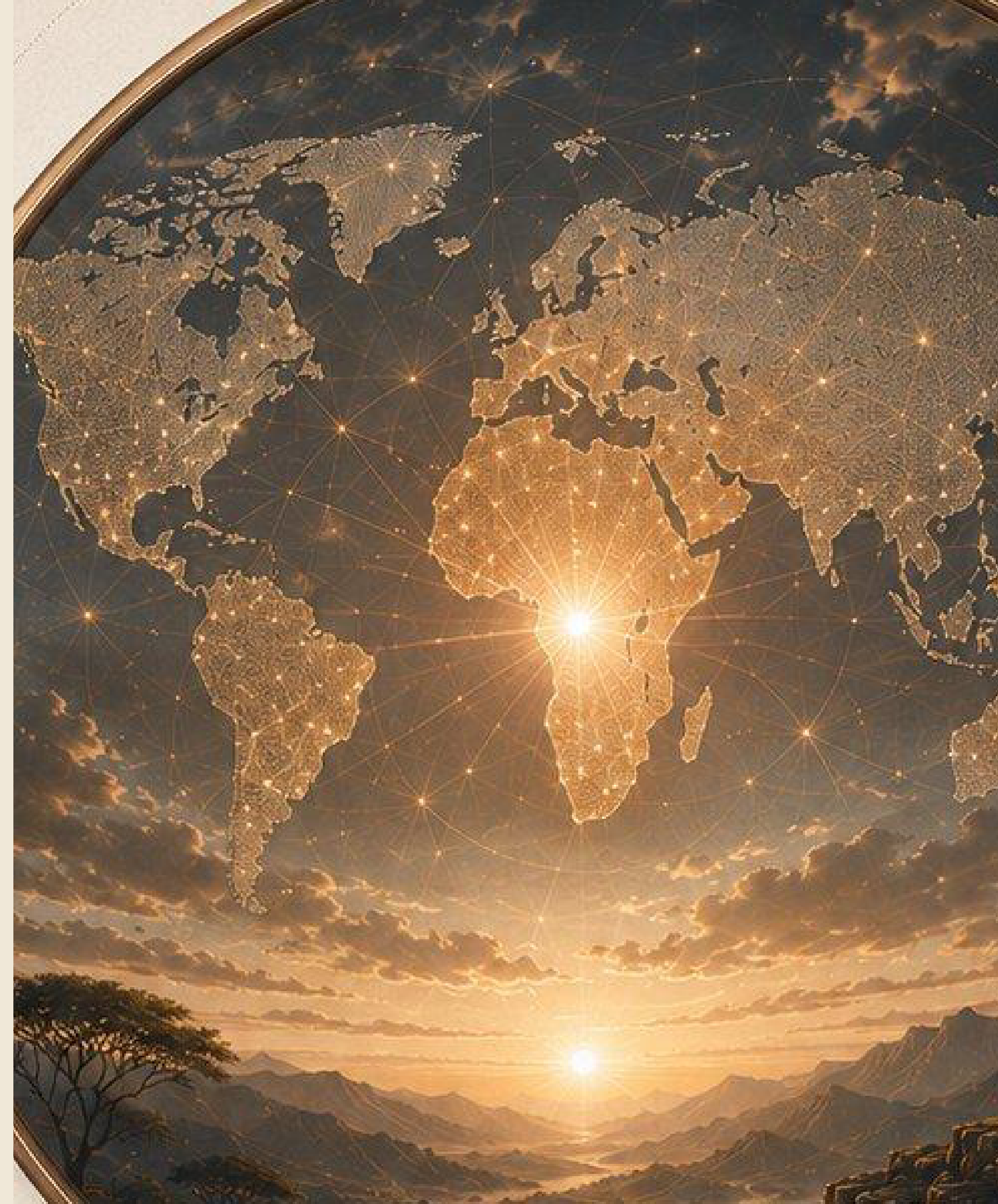
A QUESTION OF GLOBAL RELEVANCE

Why Africa, and why beyond Africa

Africa has spent decades navigating frameworks, standards, and models designed elsewhere — required to perform excellence in languages not its own, and to prove legitimacy through mirrors that were never designed to see it.

In that experience lies insight of global relevance.

*Africa is not the only place living the condition.
But its experience can help the world see it more
clearly.*



RECOGNISING THE PATTERN

The Five Distortions

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---|
| 01 | INVISIBILITY | Voices, experiences, and ways of knowing are overlooked or dismissed. |
| 02 | MISREPRESENTATION | Contexts are simplified or twisted to fit pre-existing narratives. |
| 03 | MISALIGNMENT | Solutions designed for elsewhere are imposed here. |
| 04 | MINIMISATION | Complex realities are reduced to data that understates the problem. |
| 05 | MISATTRIBUTION | The causes of outcomes are placed in the wrong places. |

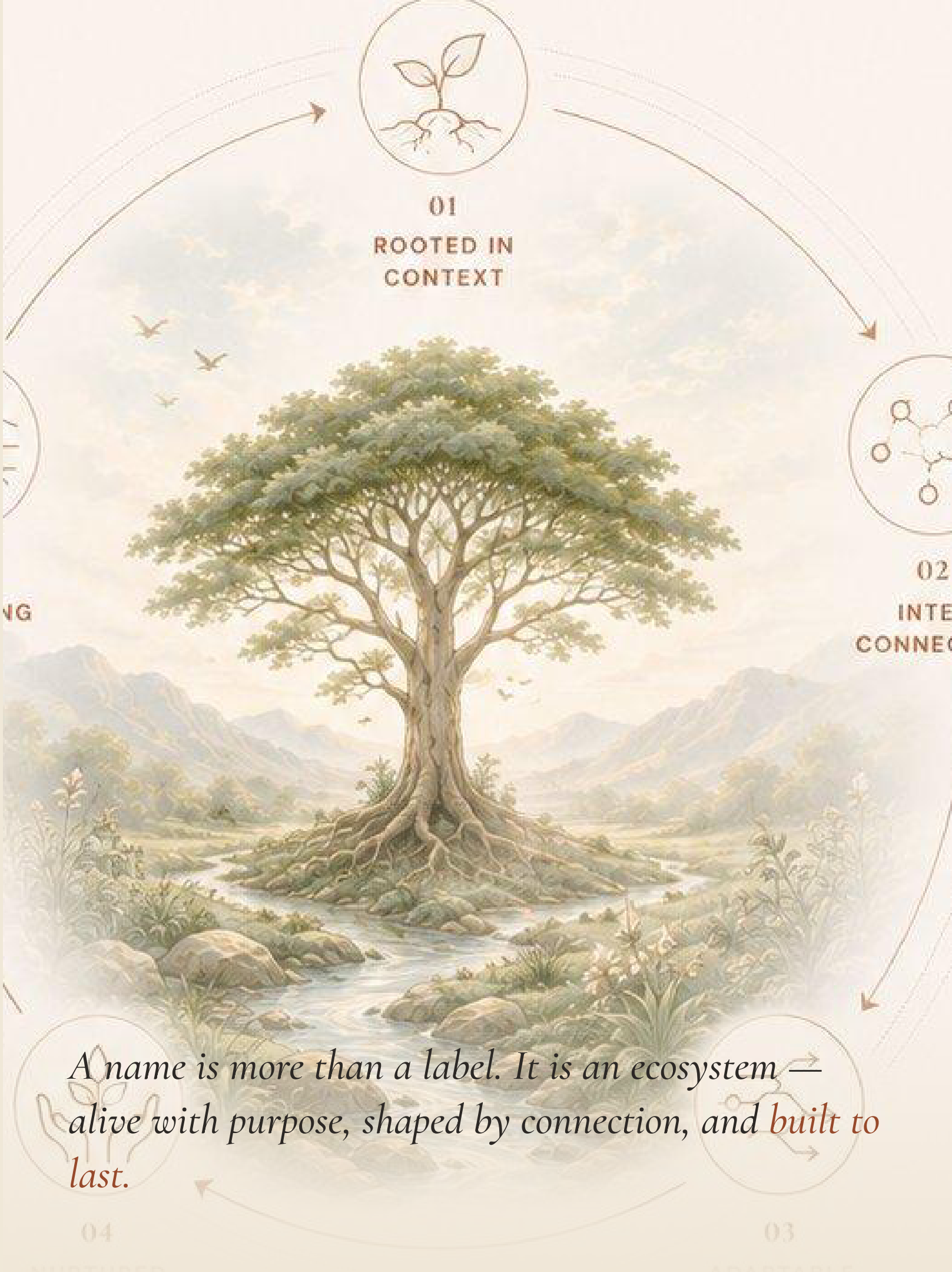


*Distortion is not always a lie. Often it is simply a reflection from the **wrong angle**.*

NAMES LIVE IN SYSTEMS — THEY GROW, ADAPT, AND SUSTAIN

From a Book to an Ecosystem

01	ROOTED IN CONTEXT	Grounded in the realities of where they are used.
02	INTERCONNECTED	Strength drawn from the relationships it builds.
03	ADAPTABLE	Holds meaning while leaving space for change.
04	NURTURED	With care and inclusive participation, it flourishes.
05	SUSTAINING	It endures, and keeps generating value and meaning.





COLLABORATIVE · REFLECTIVE · ACTION-ORIENTED

Format & Participation

HOW WE WILL GATHER

Opening & framing

Guided conversations

Small group dialogues

Reflections & synthesis

Pathways forward

PARTICIPATION PRINCIPLES

Listen with respect

Share with openness

Challenge with care

Build on each other's ideas

Stay focused on the future we build

The strength of this gathering lies not in one voice, but in the clarity we create together.



AN ACCOMPANYING NOTE TO THE INVITATION

The Nairobi Gathering

12 October 2026



See
MORE ACCURATELY



Act
MORE WISELY



Build
WHAT LASTS

Once you can name a borrowed mirror, you can begin to ask the only questions that matter.

Whose reflection is this instrument designed to show? And what would it take to see ourselves clearly?