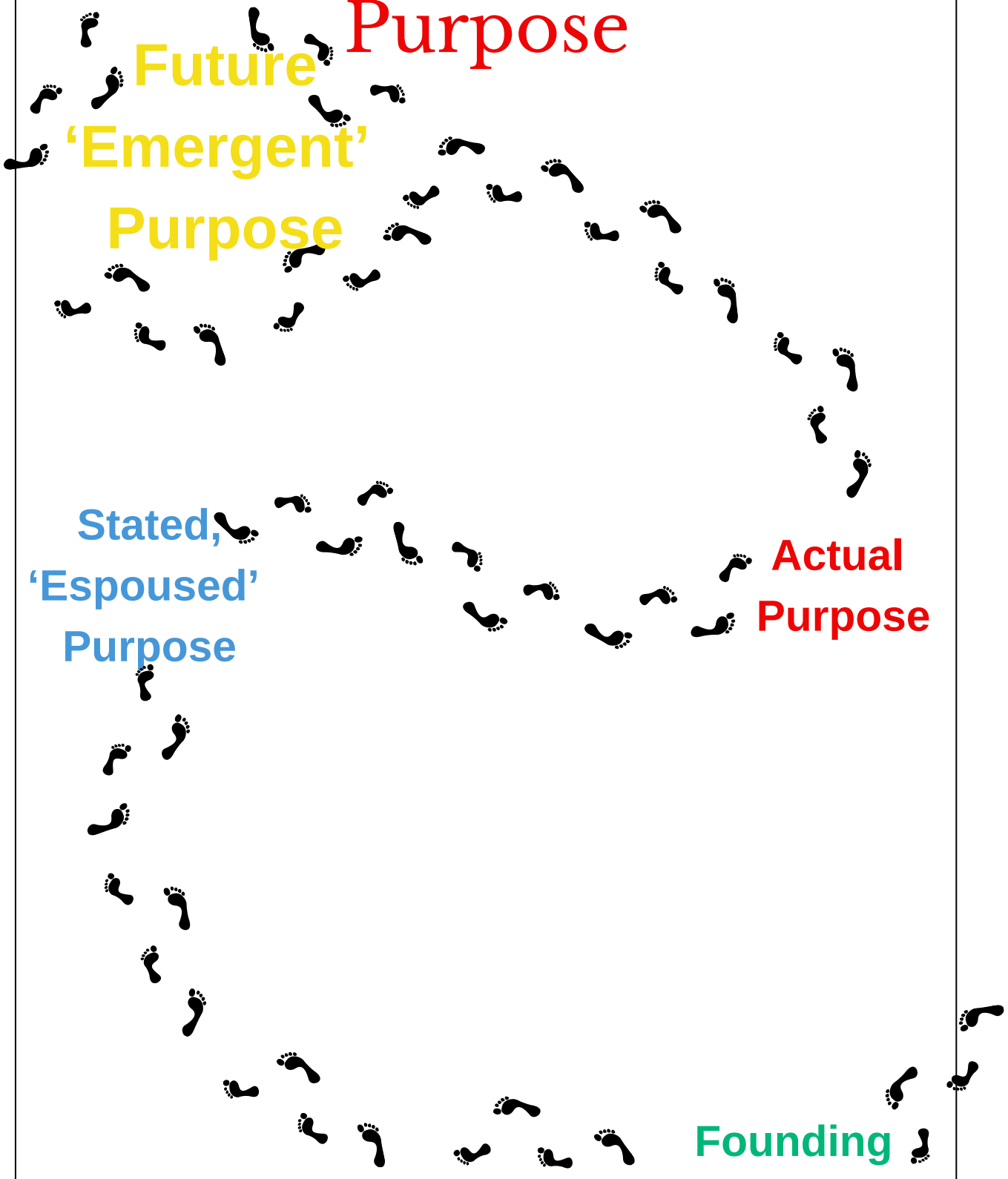
With

Past, Present and Future Purpose



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‘Tuning-in’ To Purpose

“Organisations have a life and a sense of direction of their own. Instead of trying to predict and control the future, members of the organisation are invited to listen in and understand what the organisation wants to become, what purpose it wants to serve.”

– Fredric Laloux, Reinventing Organisations

Honouring the past to unlock the future

In a world that’s constantly changing, and changing so fast, the *value* that businesses contribute to the wider ecosystems they exist within, must also continue to evolve.

Organisations don’t exist within a vacuum, but within a complex and interconnected web of stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, employees – but also other often hidden contributors, such as environmental and economic players. It is within this broad and sometimes overlooked context, that Organisational Purpose must be surfaced, discerned, discovered and articulated… rather than invented, or constructed – *It is the most resonant, most energising answer to the question of why an organisation exists.* In this reality, organisations must be mindful of two contrasting pitfalls that it can be easy to fall into:

·If organisations **fail to evolve**, they will become obsolete, stuck in the past by holding too tightly to founding expressions of organisational purpose that are no longer relevant to present and future stakeholders.

·Or if an organisation **fails to honour its history**, by forgetting its founding principles and origin story, it can become disconnected from an anchoring identity that can help guide it forwards.

‘Contrived’ purpose statements that fail to honour the past and wider stakeholder interests will not energise staff or resonate with customers.

So how do we get there?

1. Co-discernment - purpose must be collectively surfaced through multiple viewpoints to be truly resonant and authentic;
2. Create the conditions for dialogue - for this, the conditions for dialogue must be carefully cultivated, enabling those with the task of stewarding the organisation’s purpose to share their collective wisdom and insight.
3. Develop awareness of wider stakeholder needs - The purpose must be examined from an ‘Outside-in and Future-back’* way of seeing – we need to explore purpose through the eyes of different stakeholders to help team members to connect the organisation’s “why” with the wider world.

*See ‘Reinventing Organisations’, (Laloux, 2014) *
*To borrow Peter Hawkins’s phrase

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