

From Silos to Systems: Networked Innovation for Sustainable Innovation Success

Deb Wojcik, PhD

**IRI Innovators Summit
May 7, 2026**

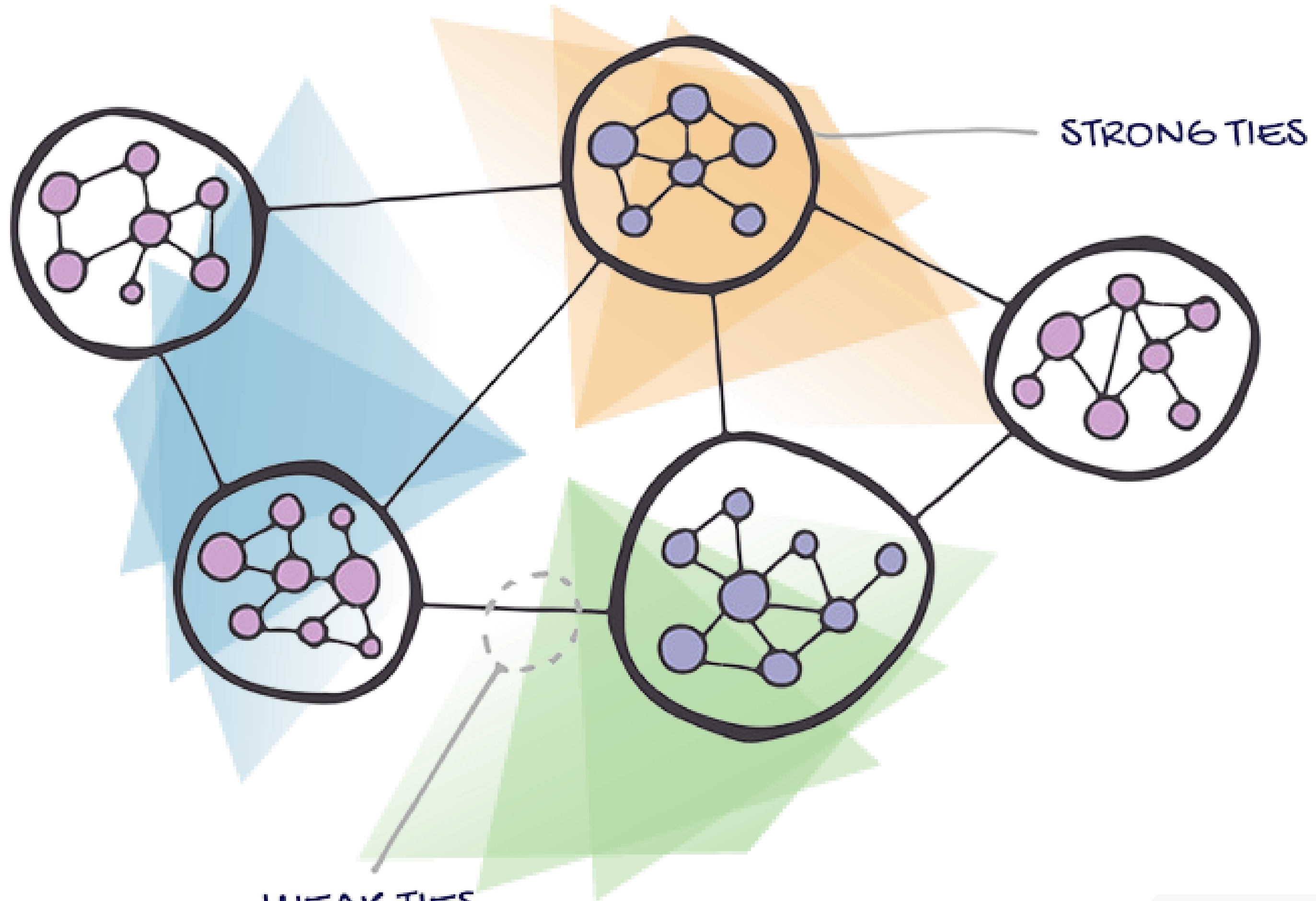




**How can we work together to
accelerate innovation?**

Networked Innovation Concepts

- Advantages of homophily vs. diversity
- Innovation accelerates when networks...
 - Span sectors
 - Include “unusual suspects”
 - Have intentional brokers
- Innovation is often a network phenomenon, not a firm-level activity



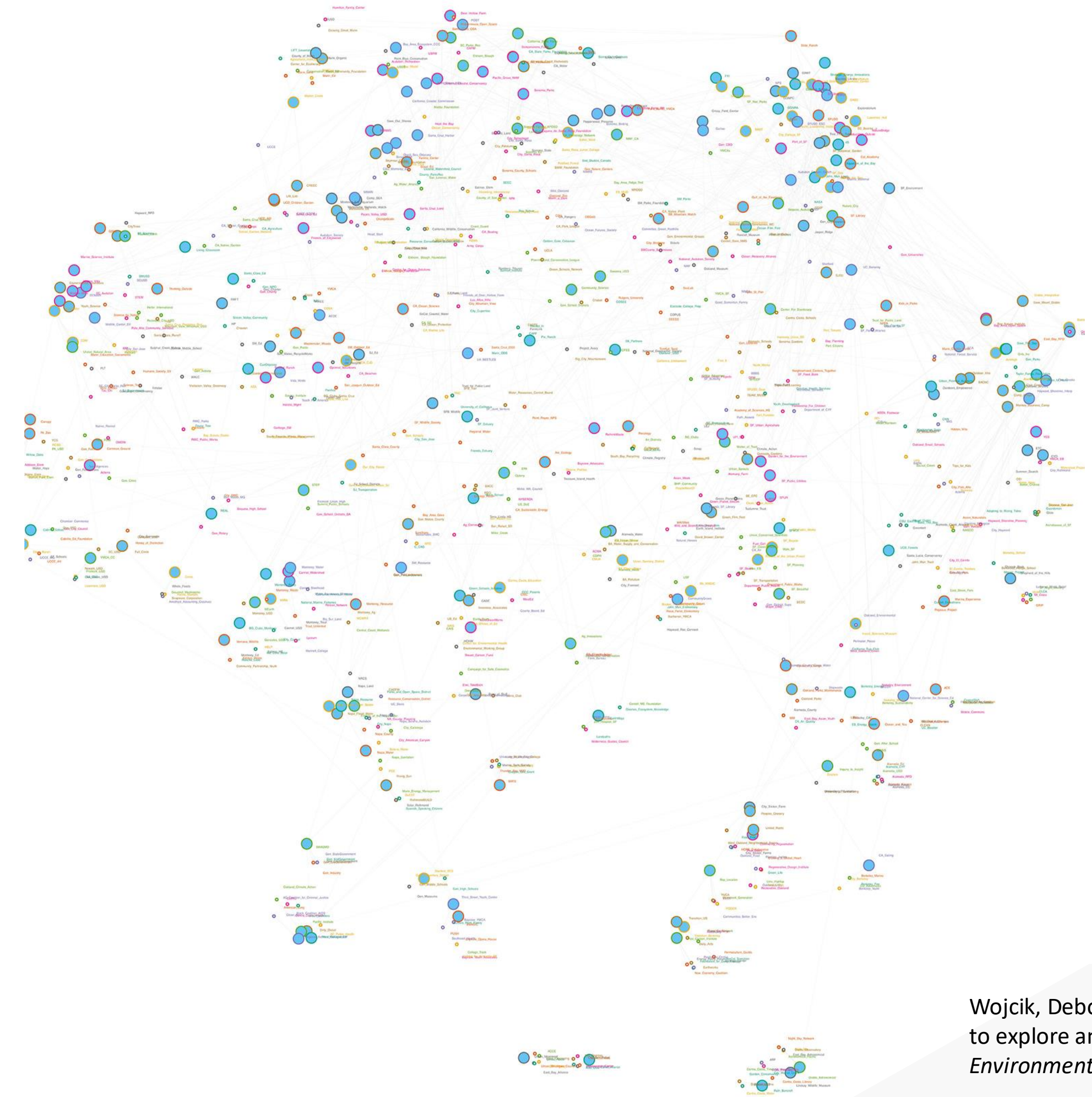
STRONG TIES

WEAK TIES

THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MEMBERS OF SEPARATE GROUPS



RESEARCH TRIANGLE
CLEANTECH CLUSTER™



Networks are often more extensive than you think... and may include some unusual suspects.

Wojcik, Deborah J., Nicole M. Ardoin, and Rachelle K. Gould. "Using social network analysis to explore and expand our understanding of a robust environmental learning landscape." *Environmental Education Research* 27.9 (2021): 1263-1283.

Triple Helix

Model of Collaboration



Case Study



RESEARCH TRIANGLE
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Case Study

Panasonic Tesla Battery Partnership



Your Turn!

On the worksheet provided, map...

1. Your *personal* innovation network
2. Your *intra*-organizational innovation network
3. Your *inter*-organizational innovation network
4. Who's *missing*?

Discussion

**With the person next to you,
then with the full group, share...**

1. What surprised you about your networks?
2. What types of actors are missing from your networks?
3. Where are your networks too closed?
4. What new connections could be made?

Practical Strategies

1. Facilitate opportunities for more bridging ties – intentional “collision spaces”
2. Map out and think strategically about how to enhance your networks
3. Engage unlikely partners – adjacent industries, NGOs, policymakers, who else?...
4. Act as a network broker – bring together different ideas and resources
5. Balance trust building and novelty

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