

Welcome

to RSEC18 Conference

**Complexity in Research:
Researcher–Participant Dynamic Interactions**

3 July 2025

9:00 - 16:30

University House,
LS2 9JR



Morning Session Presenters

- **Reflections on insider/outsider positions in participatory educational research.**

Carolyn Bradley, PGR, School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds

- **Navigating Insider-Outsider Positionality: Reflections on Researching Mature Students' Access to Higher Education.**

Janith Jayatilake Kankanamalage, PGR, School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds

- **A Messy Interrelated Ecology: Situating Researcher in the Rhizome of Research.**

Samuel Lee, PGR, School of Education, University of Leeds

- **Developing best practice guidelines for research with the bereaved: Practitioner perspectives.**

Elizabeth Fair, PGR, School of Music, University of Leeds

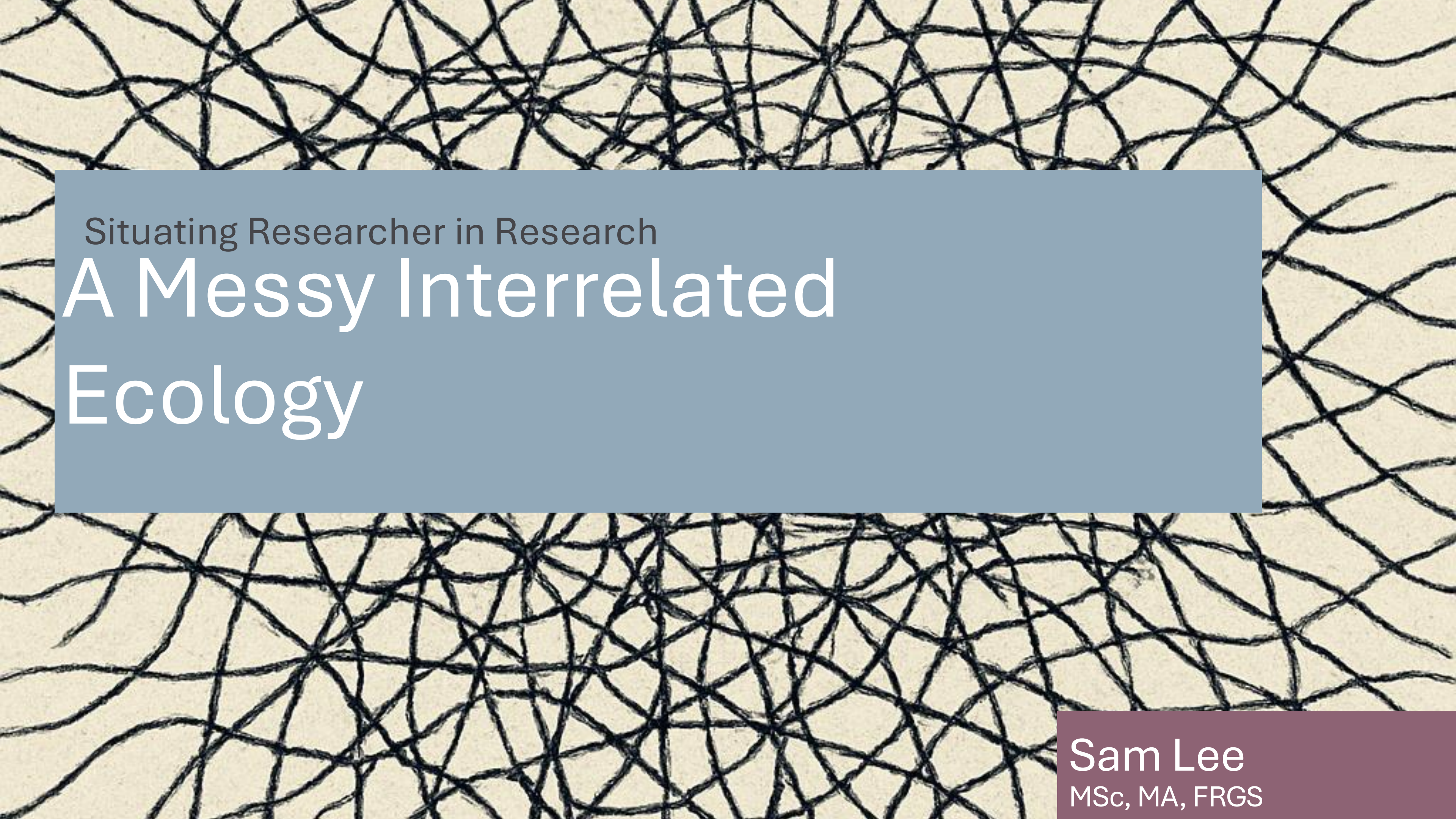
- **Lived Experience and Its Influence on the Researcher-Participant Connection.**

Clare Copley, PGR, School of Education, University of Leeds

Samuel Lee

PGR, School of Education,
University of Leeds

**A Messy Interrelated
Ecology: Situating
Researcher in the
Rhizome of Research**

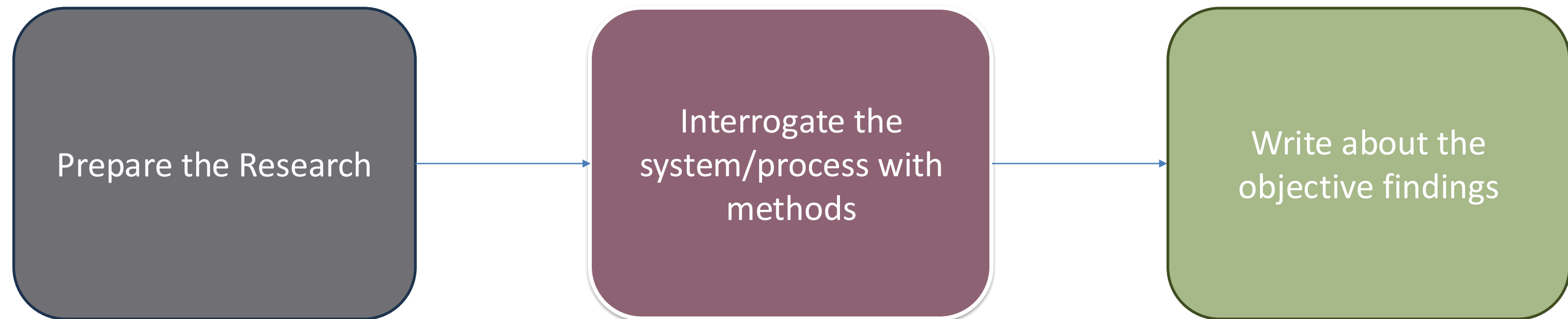


Situating Researcher in Research

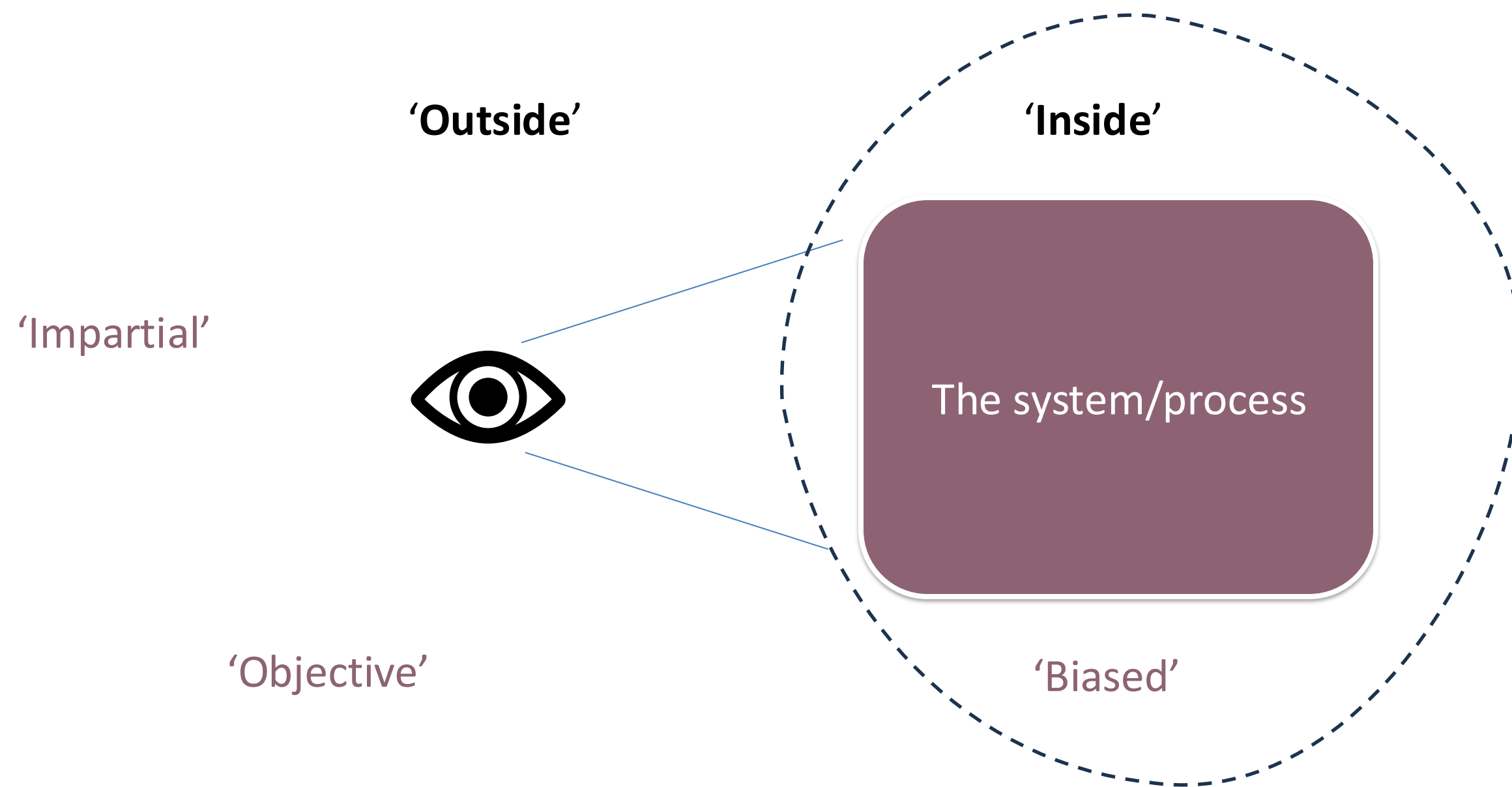
A Messy Interrelated Ecology

Sam Lee
MSc, MA, FRGS

How do we conceptualise research?



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Where does this come from?

(*Men of Progress* by Christian Schussele (1824-1879))

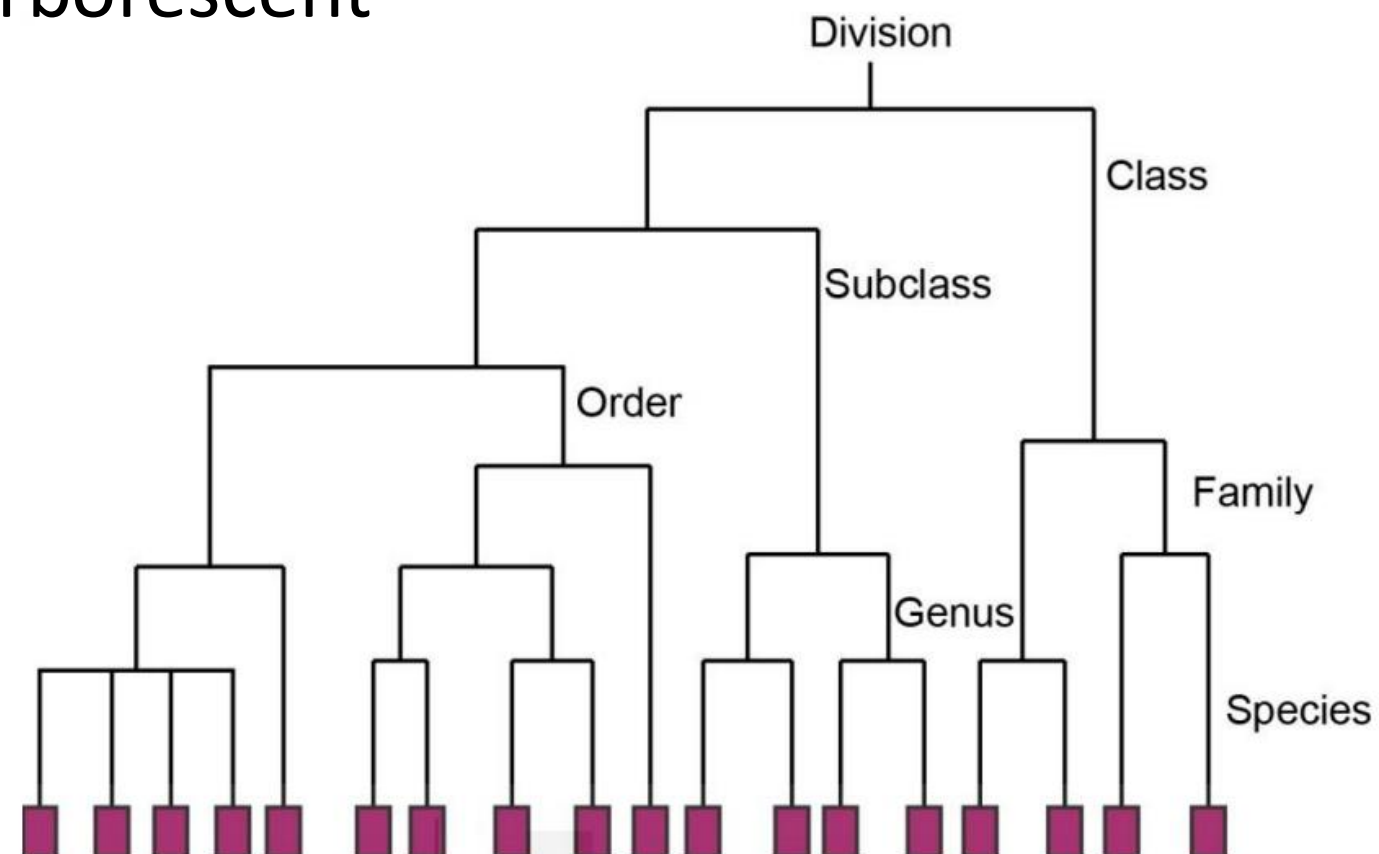
Enlightenment

- Enlightenment Era 1685-1815AD (very ish)
- Followed the 'scientific revolution'
- A new focus on 'objective' measurement
- First mass produced printed materials
- Growing literacy
- Distinct Categorisation - 'essentialism'



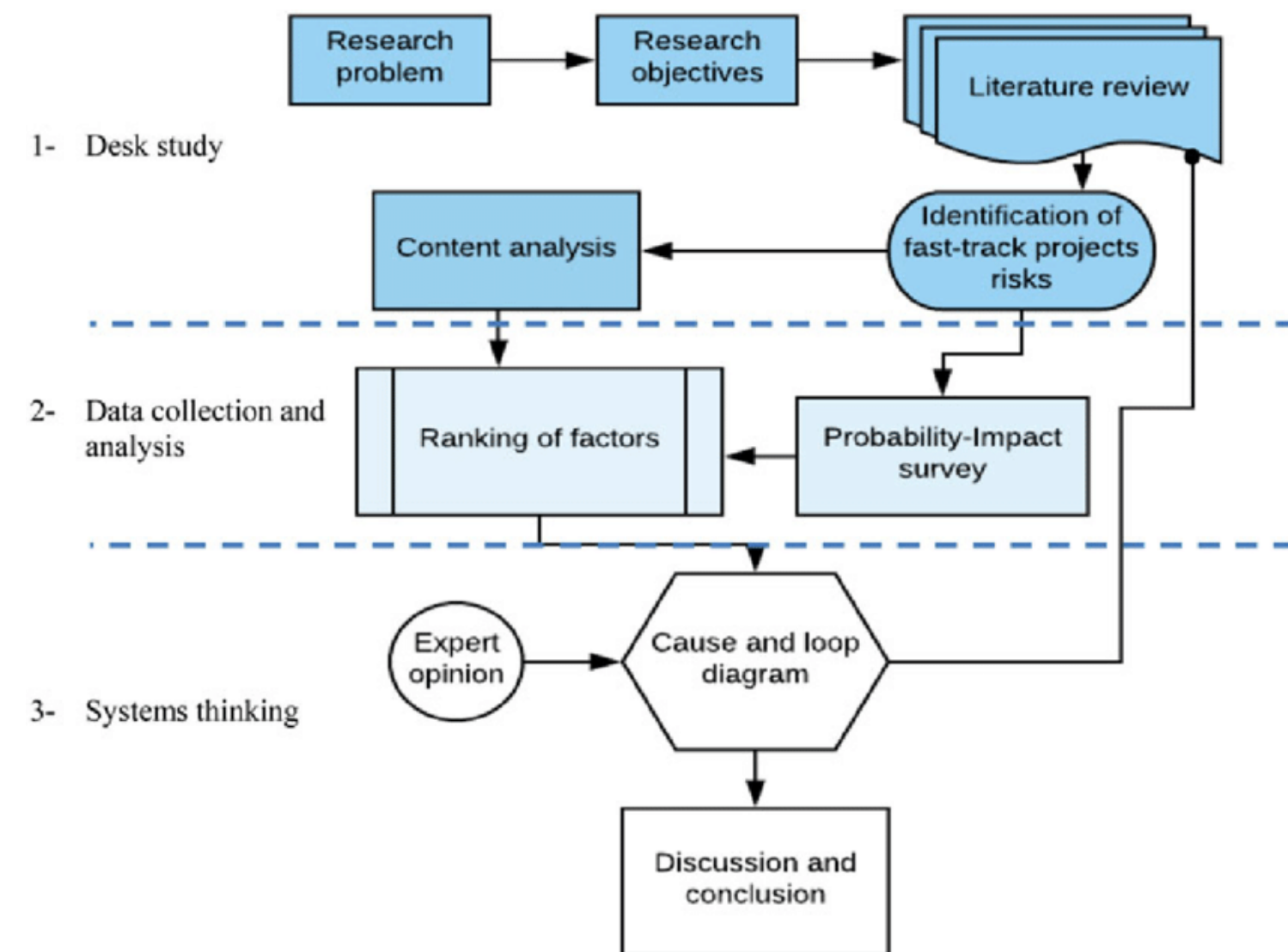
Enlightenment

- Categorisation is key to our discussion of paradigm
- Hierarchical
- Branchlike structures
- 'Arborescent'



Why does this matter?

- Positivism seeps into everything
- Discrete categories with defined edges
- Arborescent structures to our thinking



Researcher Reflexivity

- Our preconceived ideas, biases, notions have an impact
- Reflexivity seeks to account for these biases and include this in the narrative.
- There is a big problem though...
- Reflexivity assumes our impacts (tendrils) are known or knowable

The Rhizome

- The rhizome is a concept in post-structuralism which can be described as an interrelated network with no preferential direction.
- The Rhizome can be used as a way of conceptualising the world around us.
- An intricate series of connections between 'nodes'
- Decentralised (no power direction)

Our research looks like this

Where does it 'start'?
Where does it 'end'?
Where do we 'interact' with it?
Where are the 'edges'?

Beyond Reflexivity

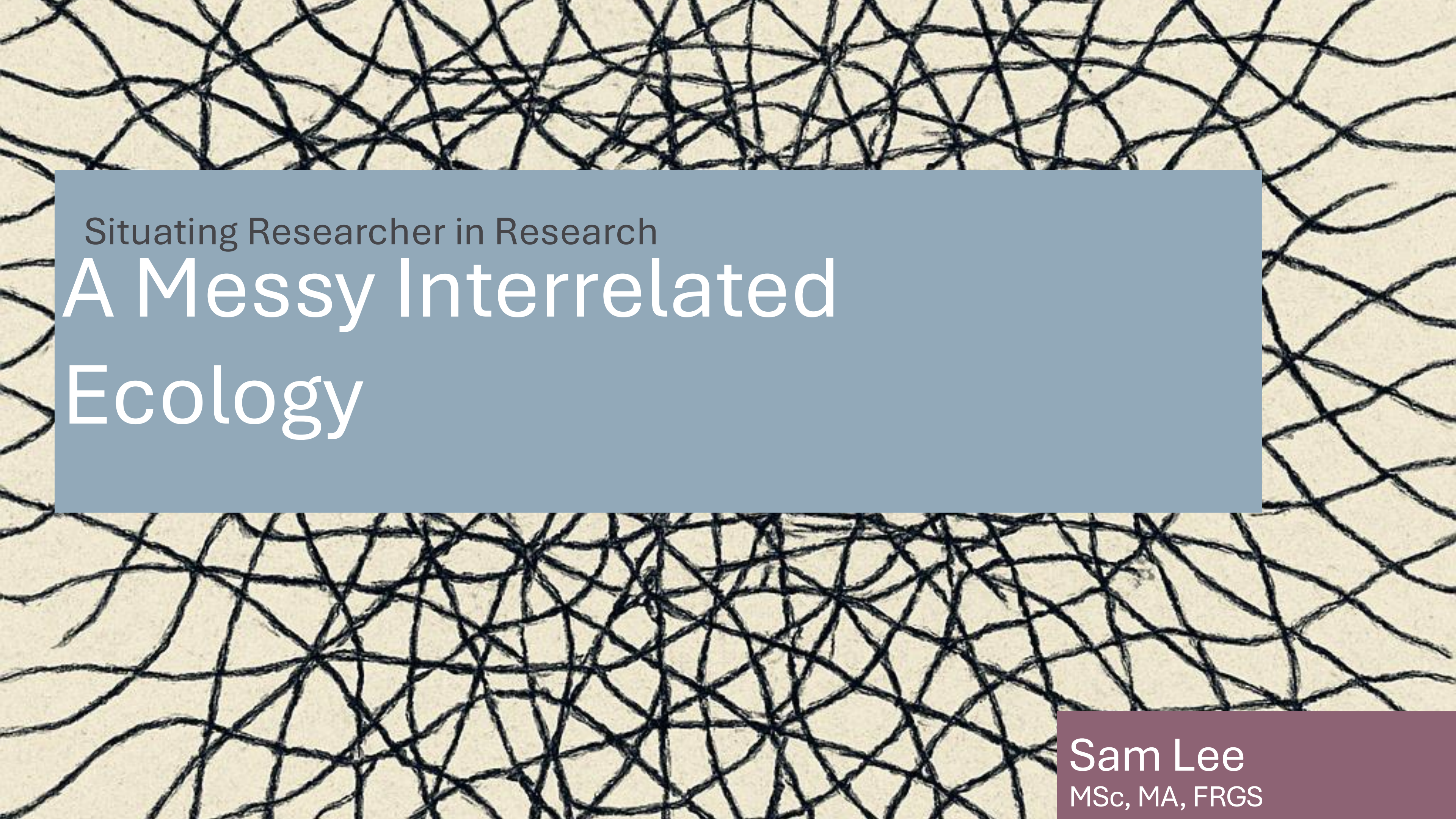
- If our impact, biases, tendrils are unknown how can we 'account' for them?
- Situating Researcher in Research is like identifying (and isolating) a strand of the rhizome
- It touches thousands of nodes and connects to (conceivably) every other node.
- Removing or ignoring these connections creates a false impression of arborescent structure

Beyond Reflexivity

So what?

- It's a reminder that all models are simplifications
- I don't aim to be 'objective' – I'm not, I can't be.
- I don't try to define the 'edges' (boundaries) of my system – there are no edges.
- I don't pretend my impact on the system is zero – it's not possible for it to be zero.
- I try to explore the complex messy ecology and explain as I perceive it.

And then hope my external examiner is a
philosopher...



Situating Researcher in Research

A Messy Interrelated Ecology

Sam Lee
MSc, MA, FRGS

We hope you found the sessions
insightful and the discussions enriching.
To help us improve future events, we'd
really appreciate your feedback.

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Thank You
for Your
Participation
in This
Year's
Conference

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*The Organising Committee,
RSEC18 Conference...*