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Global Ambitions

Meaning- Making



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Claudia Francesca Müller

Head of Content Design and
Localization at Trusted Shops

Claudia is a multilingual content and localization expert with over 15 years of experience. She blends language, culture, and design with strategy and innovation, viewing content as a holistic discipline that extends beyond mere words.



Nature Optimizes Ecosystems. We Don't Know How to Optimize Ourselves Out of Silos.

For my most recent vacation, I was in a paradise-like place where agriculture is not industrialized, and nature coexists with humans.

It was an organic farm in southern Italy that used a sustainable approach to agriculture. They plant what they need, then let things grow and don't cut them back too much. What happens? An ecosystem flourishes, becoming healthier and stronger because of its diversity. Vegetables and fruits are juicy and unique in their form. It's delightful and inspiring.

I thought about how nature regulates itself when humans don't trim, force, and interfere with it through unnatural practices that disturb the cycle of life. None of that was new to me, of course, and yet it made me pause.

I realized that we inhabit and follow another system within our industry. One that makes similarity redundant if it's not performing against KPIs. One that is only about diversity for profit, not diversity in the name of a healthy ecosystem. One that runs on the opposite principle: Plant single crops, sealed off from the rest.

The other thing that struck me was the farmer's passion. He receives guests all year, yet he talked about his farm as if it were for the first time. I think that may be because he tends to a whole ecosystem, not just one (overcultivated) row of it. Many of us in content are just as passionate about our mission, but we tend to stick to our rows, defend them, and sometimes don't move away from our defined lines at all.



Nature tends to optimize for ecosystems where a multitude of entities coexist and collaborate. This runs counter to the reality of how companies organize and distribute work. Is our organization of work unnatural?

We follow an economic system that handles variety differently. Nature runs on variety because variety maximizes survival chances. A field with one crop is efficient right up until the blight arrives. The messy field, full of things that grow and that don't obviously earn their place, is the one that will still be standing next season.

Same with our economic system, albeit with one key difference. The market loves variety too, on paper. Niches, startups, competition, endless variation. But it keeps only the variety that pays. The rest gets pruned, however alive it was.

So both systems compete. The difference is what each one is allowed to keep. Natural

ecosystems keep redundancy because resilience (and survival) depends on it. Markets often cut redundancy because quarterly returns don't reward it. Short-term economics, and all.

In contrast, in ecology, redundancy means multiple species can perform similar roles, so the loss of one doesn't collapse the whole function, even if that "extra" capacity can look wasteful from a narrow productivity lens. In fact, it acts as insurance when conditions change or shocks hit.

Do you also see the irony? We don't just live inside that logic; we reproduce it. In our own teams, our own metrics, our own decisions about who is worth keeping. The numbers logic isn't just out there somewhere, followed by someone other than me. It's in how I run my own team.

So what if we instead rotated, shifting positions as the season demands? Outsiders drop in and change how the group sees things and operates. New teams form,

Claudia Francesca Müller on
hopping from role to role

"This might sound harsh. I think we need to move on. Not necessarily change companies, perhaps not at first, but get out of our lane every couple of years, on purpose. Comfort and complacency travel together, and neither takes you anywhere new."

old ones dissolve when the work is done. Nobody gets cut for being hard to count. They move on when the time is ripe.

There's a lesson (or two) to be learned from nature. How can we escape silos? After all, even borders on a map are artificially drawn and physically non-existent.

Here's the thing about those borders. They're not real, and we draw them anyway. We can't help it. An endless world is impossible to hold, so we cut it into pieces small enough to grasp. We are finite creatures. Infinity isn't part of our nature; we all die one day, and something in us needs the world to be countable before we can live in it.

So silos aren't laziness. They're how we cope. Which is also why they're so hard to leave. But a bubble is fine, as long as you don't mistake it for the whole sky. We look for people like us. That's very human; it's comfortable. The problem is staying on too long. The wild only grows when you stop trimming it back, and you only see your own edges when you step outside them. Change is constant, in nature and in us, and the thing that survives change is the one that can step into another shape. We can reinvent ourselves. But only if we let an outside view in.

So, what solutions do we have?

This might sound harsh. I think we need to move on. Not necessarily change companies, perhaps not at first, but get out of our lane every couple of years, on purpose. Comfort and complacency travel together, and neither takes you anywhere new.

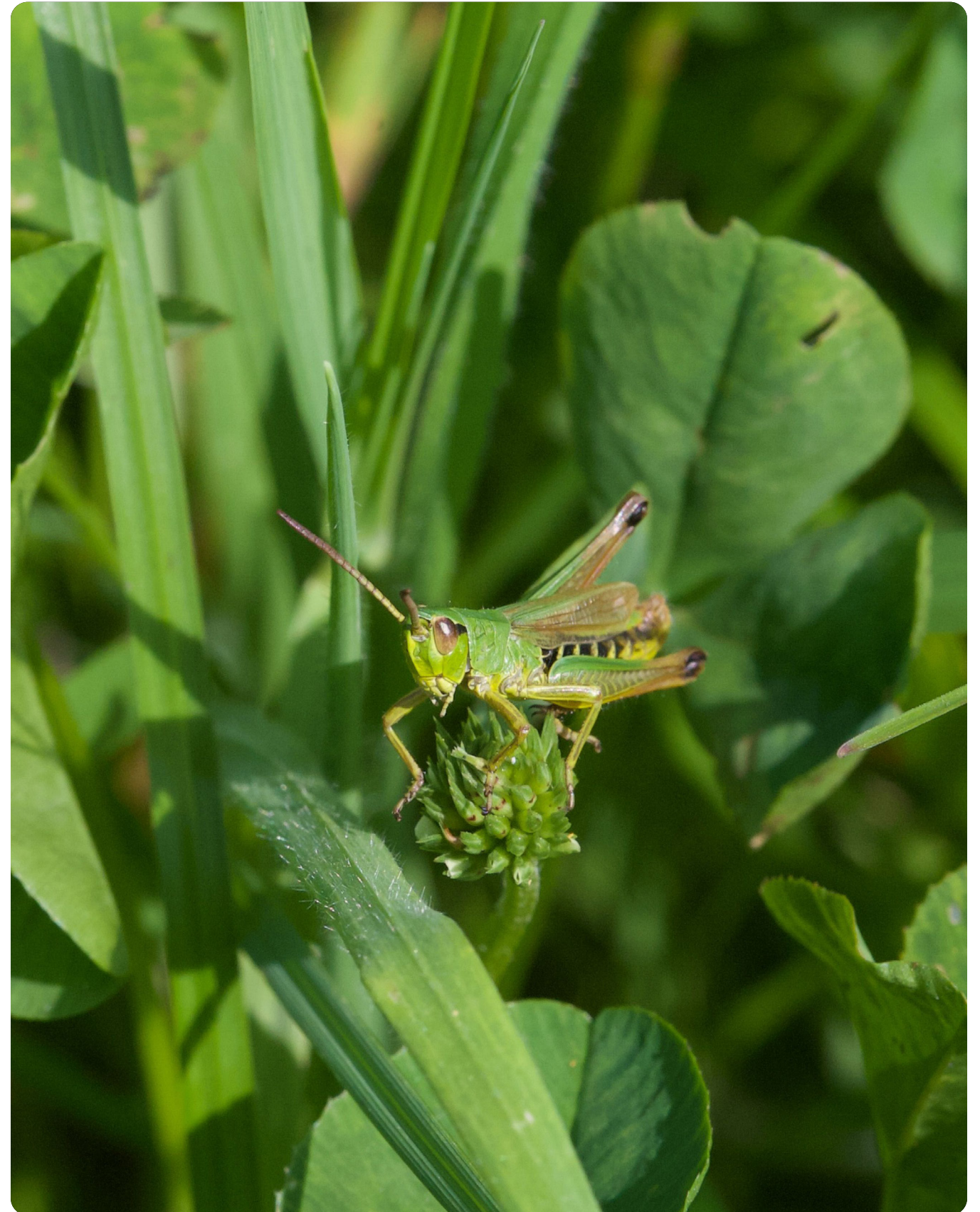
Localization is one content discipline among many. Content, design, marketing, social, visuals, video, and engineering — we're all part of one system serving a product. See the whole system, and you can do better work inside your own corner of it. If the

economic system doesn't apply nature's law on diversity, let's purposefully become diverse, versatile, and agile. Let's all become Hoppers.

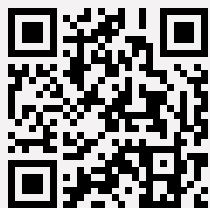
I'm stealing this from a Pixar movie I have seen with my daughter. In this adventure, Mabel enters a robotic beaver and can now speak to real beavers. This totally changes her perspective.

Imagine we could just hop into being engineers, sales representatives, or CFOs for a while and learn their way of thinking. I believe we would look at our work totally differently. People who leap into another field for a while, not to switch careers, but to come back with the focus on what actually matters. Perhaps then we spend less time and energy defending our silos, naming them, renaming our roles, and redrawing the lines around what we do.

The future of our work is constant change: fluid, collaborative, blurred at the edges. So maybe the farmer had it right all along. He doesn't trim, he doesn't protect his rows. He tends the whole farm and lets it grow wild. What would our content ecosystem look like if we did the same?



Meaning found and meaning made. We never stop looking for it.



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Editor-in-Chief: **Gabriel Karandyšovský**

Copyediting & review: **Mimi Moore**

Additional review & executive producers: **Stephanie Harris-Yee & Libor Šafář**

Visual design & production: **B tým**

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Meaning

Noun /'mē-niŋ/

1. a: the thing one intends to convey especially by language
b: the thing that is conveyed especially by language
2. something meant or intended
3. significant quality
especially: implication of a hidden or special significance
4. a: the logical connotation of a word or phrase
b: the logical denotation or extension of a word or phrase

*As defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary