

# Sustainability-oriented social learning in hybrid learning configurations

Establishing Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development in the Czech Republic

Arjen E.J. Wals

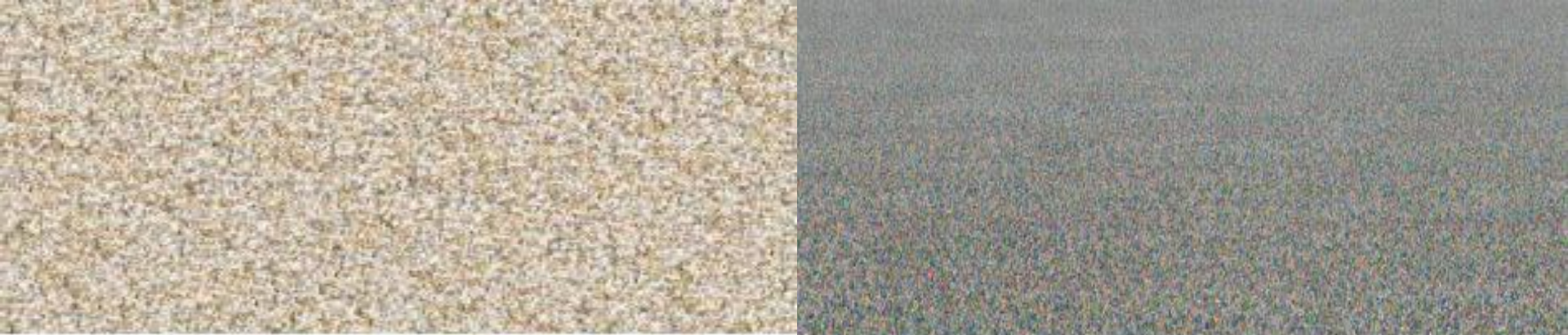


# Today

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1. Unsustainability & urgency
2. Social Learning our way out?
3. Creating vital transition centre's





60.000/5sec

2.000.000/5min [www.chrisjordan.com](http://www.chrisjordan.com)













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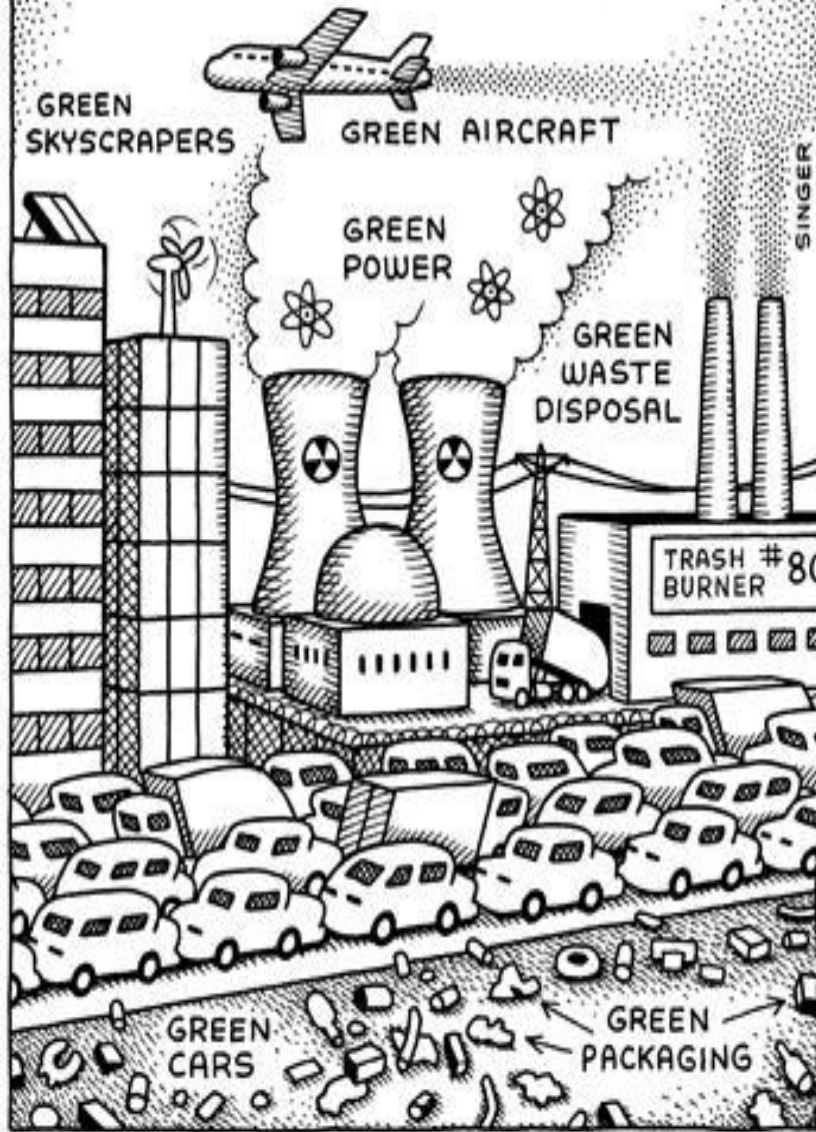
# TOGETHER WE CAN SAVE OUR PLANET

...AND SO WE IN  
THE EXTREMELY RICH  
NATIONS AGREE TO FIND  
AN ENVIRONMENTALLY  
FRIENDLY WAY TO  
CARRY ON BEING  
EXTREMELY  
RICH...

...IF YOU IN  
THE EXTREMELY  
POOR NATIONS AGREE  
TO FIND AN  
ENVIRONMENTALLY  
FRIENDLY WAY TO  
CARRY ON BEING  
EXTREMELY  
POOR.



# THE MAGIC OF MARKETING





# Who knows? Who cares?

- Deepwater horizon
- Nuclear radiation in Japan
- Increased infertility in men
- Calcium supplements for women
- Runaway (?) climate change
- Organic – sustainable – for all?
- Paper or plastic?
- ....

*'We are drowning in information  
while starving for wisdom' E.O. Wilson,  
1998, p. 300)*



# Post-normalism

- Complexity
- Uncertainty and indeterminacy
- Contestation and controversy – extinction of ‘truth’
- Shallowness and hyper-connectivity – erosion of meaning
- Emergence - reflexivity



THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

# COLLAPSE

HOW SOCIETIES CHOOSE  
TO FAIL OR SUCCEED

# JARED DIAMOND

author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning  
*GUNS, GERMS, and STEEL*





# An ESD Lens

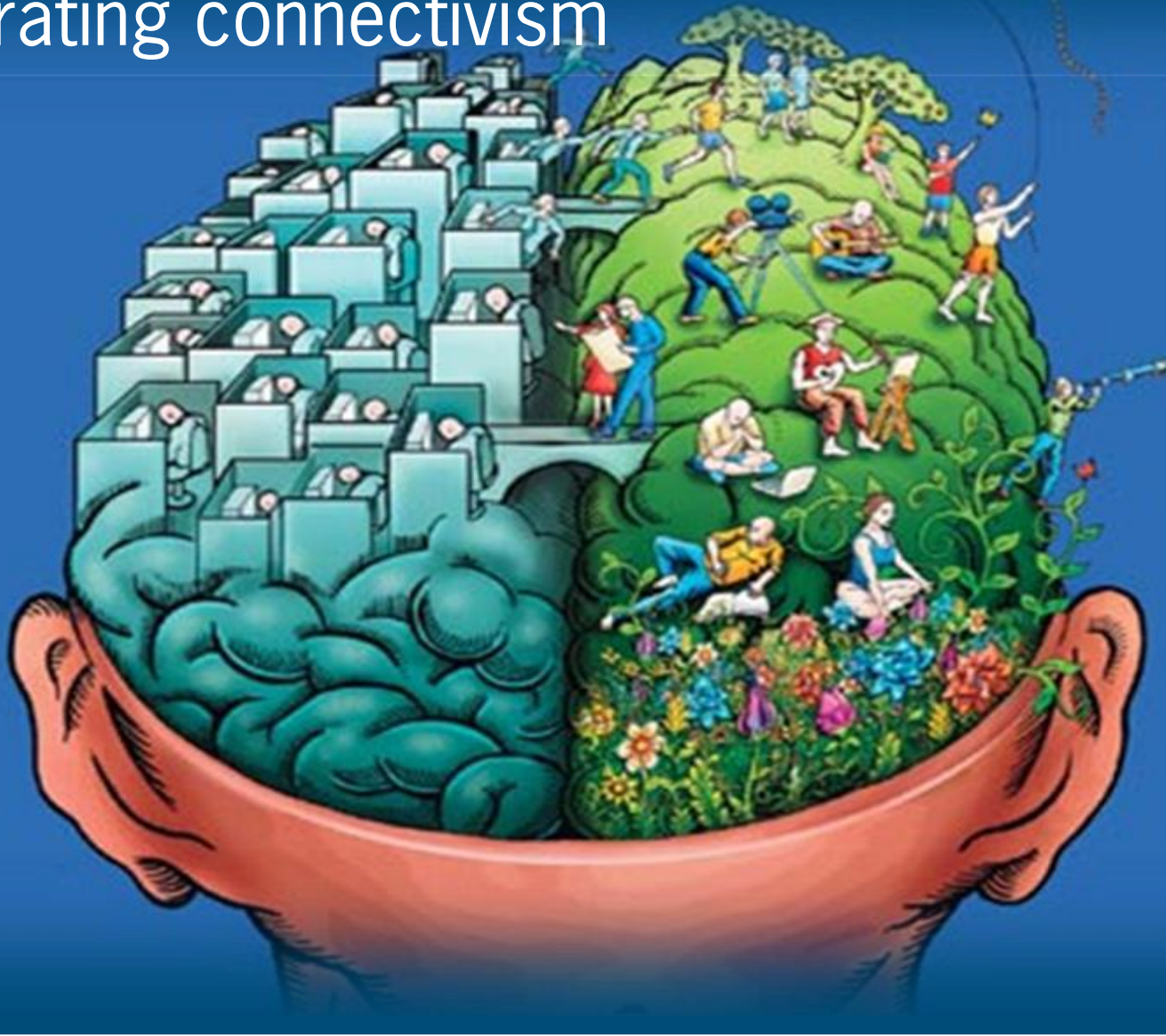
- **Integrative** – not only the ecological and the environmental, not only the present, not only the local, not only the human world
- **Critical** - questioning continuous economic growth and consumerism and associated lifestyles
- **Transformative** – exploration of alternative lifestyles (e.g. ‘voluntary simplicity’), values and systems that break from existing ones that are inherently unsustainable

# Science as community



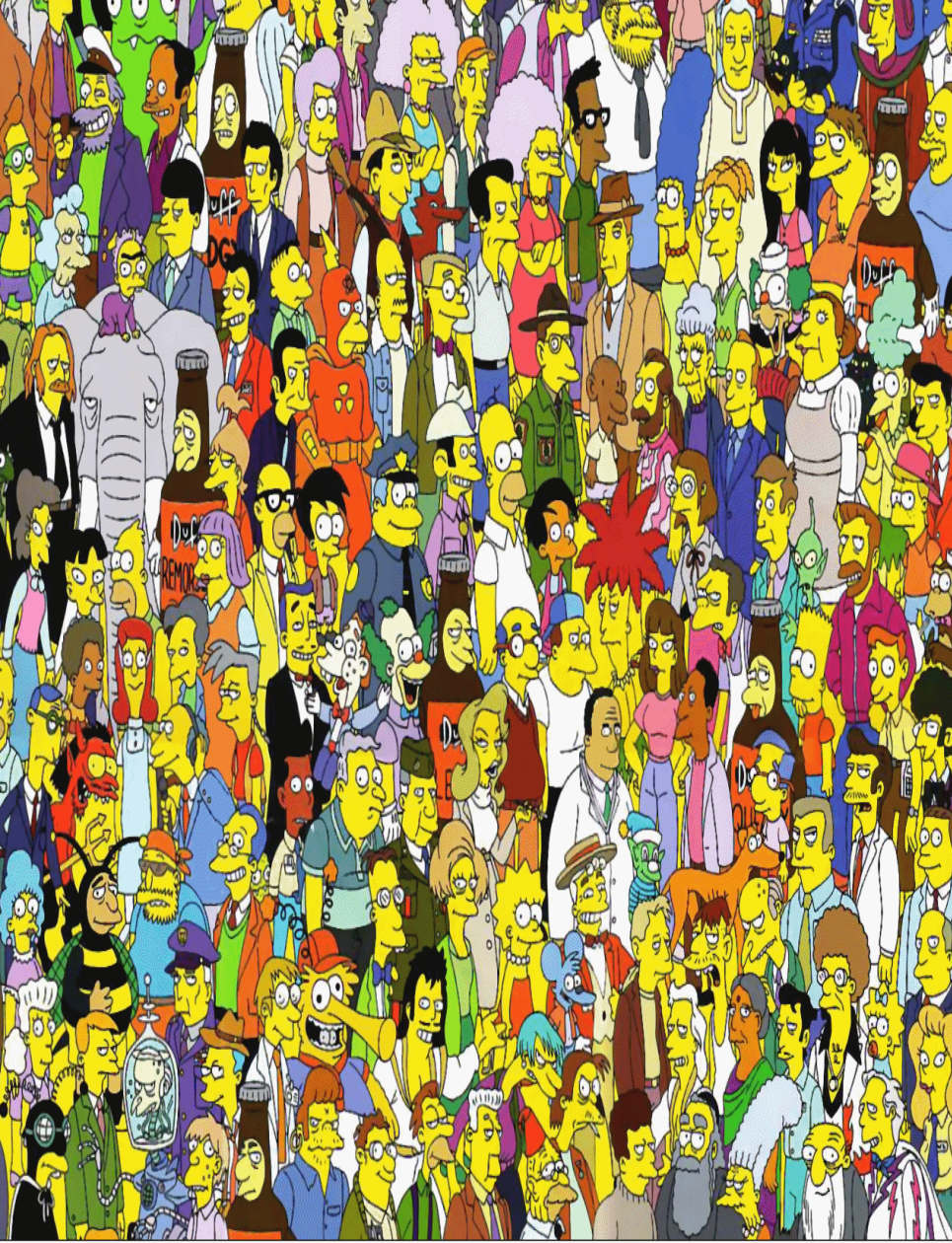


# Accelerating connectivism



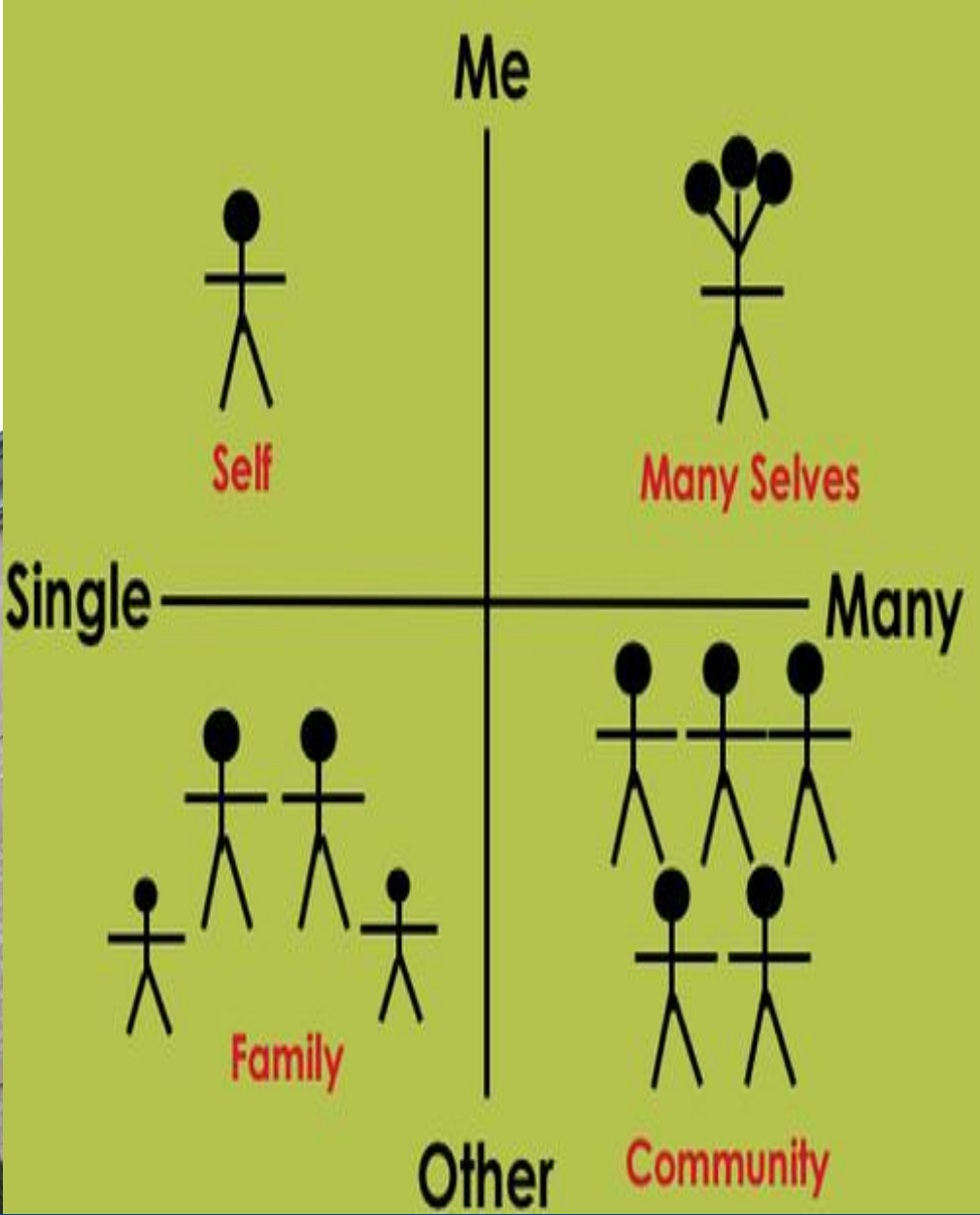






# THE DIFFERENCE

HOW THE POWER OF DIVERSITY  
CREATES BETTER GROUPS, FIRMS,  
SCHOOLS, AND SOCIETIES





# Some characteristics of the learning

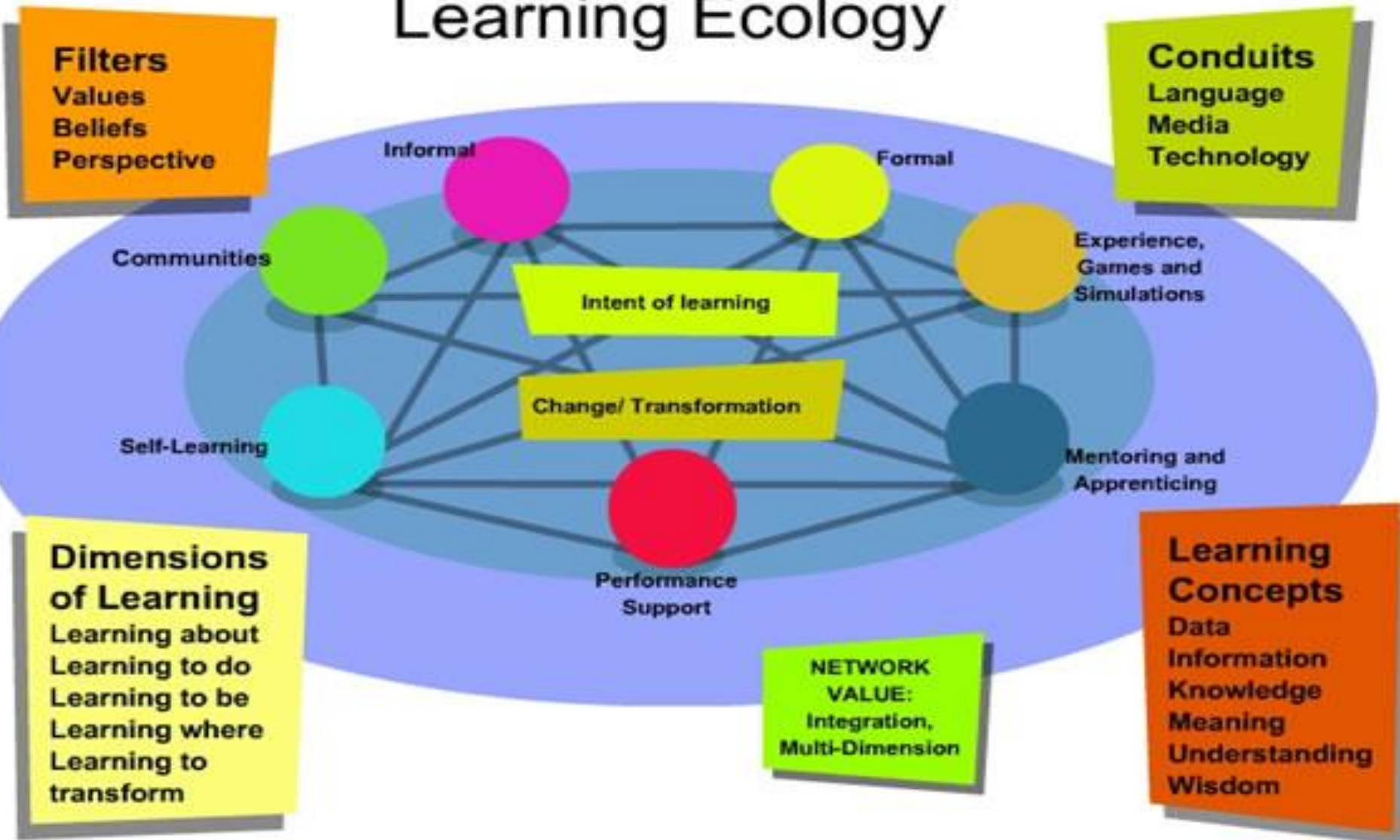
- It's about learning from each other...
- And we learn more in heterogeneous groups than in homogenous groups because...
- Unexpected 'tensions' and commonalities can lead to creativity and energy especially when...
- There is sufficient social cohesion to allow diversity between actors to become constructive to facilitate...
- Joint meaning and sense making.
- It is crucial to develop joint ownership of both the learning processes taking place and the actions in which they result.

# Social learning

- a collaborative, emergent learning process that hinges on the simultaneous cultivation of ‘difference’ and social cohesion in order to create joint ownership, unleash creativity and the kind of dynamic and energy needed to break with existing patterns, routines or systems.



# Learning Ecology



**Connectivism: Process of creating network**

# Situation in The Netherlands

- The new Dutch EE/ESD-Policy Framework seeks to create linkages between schools, NGO's, businesses and neighbourhoods by supporting the creation of 'vital coalition' centring around topical environmental themes



# Policy tools

## Policy themes

climate

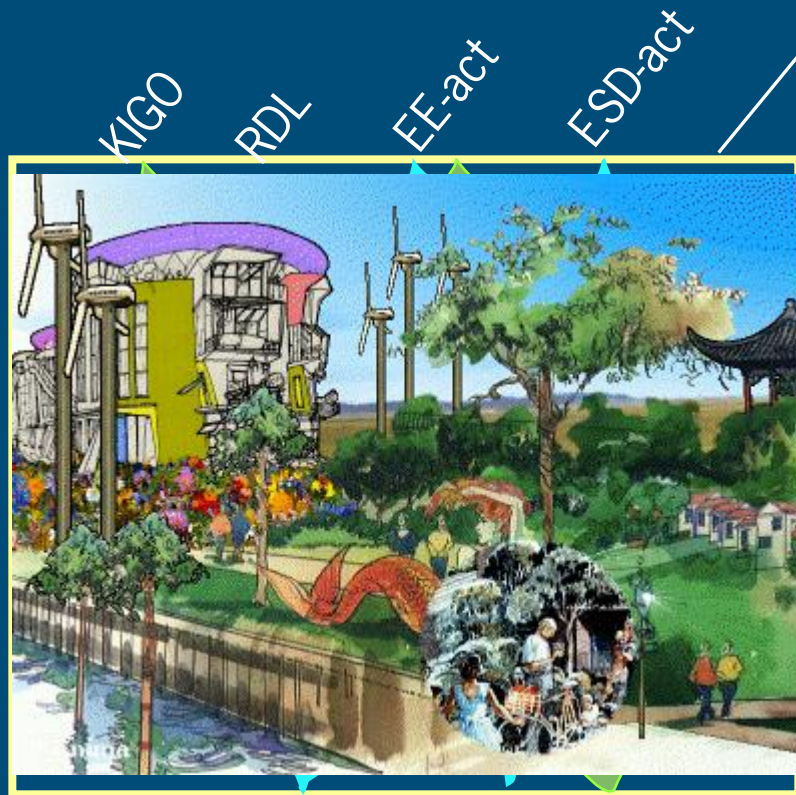
mobility

animal well-being

obesity

energy

biodiversity



## Societal actors

Sport clubs

Schools

Colleges

Local government

Garden centers

Restaurants

Elderly homes

ICT  
School as  
society

Service  
learning

Multi-  
culturalism

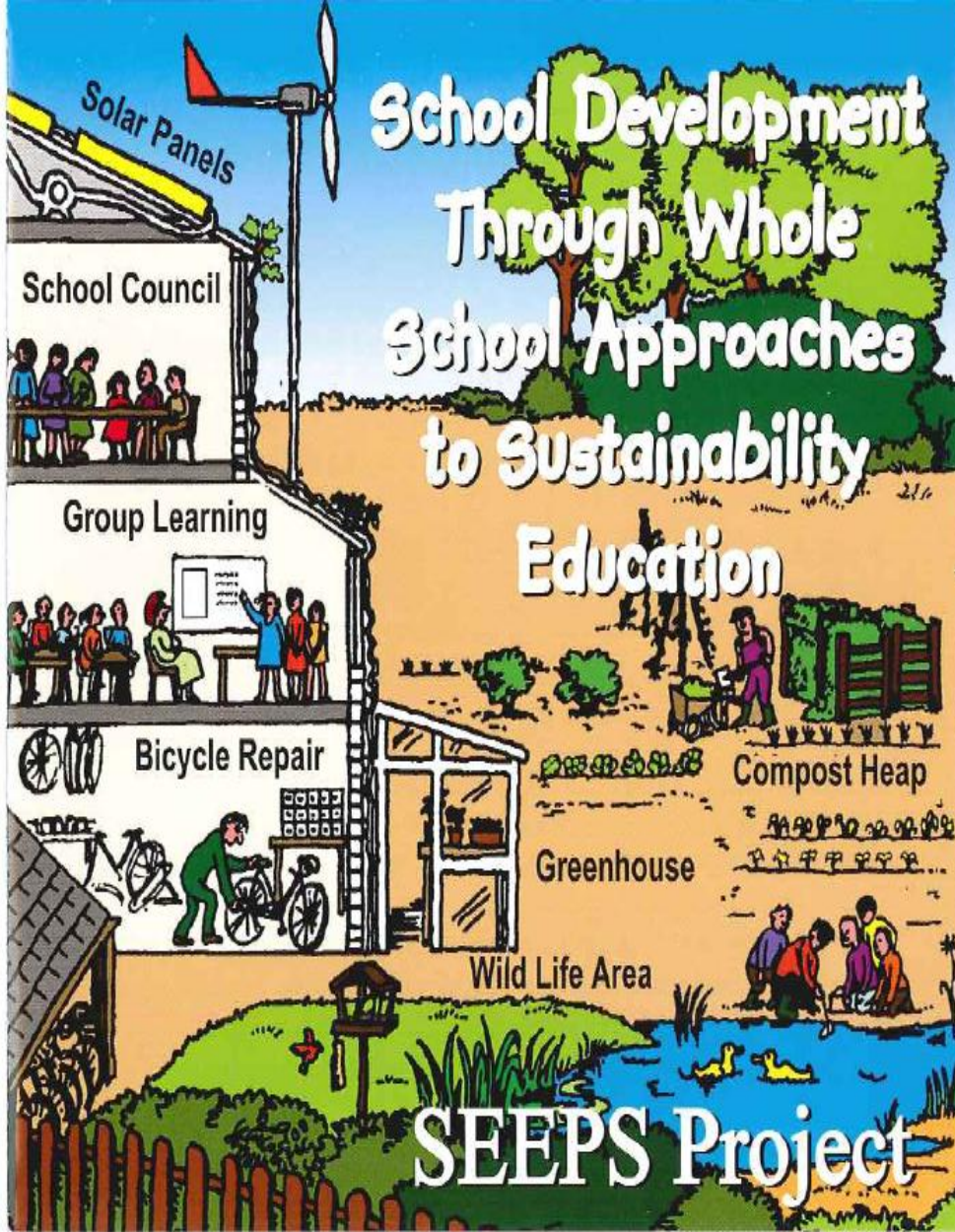
## Societal trends



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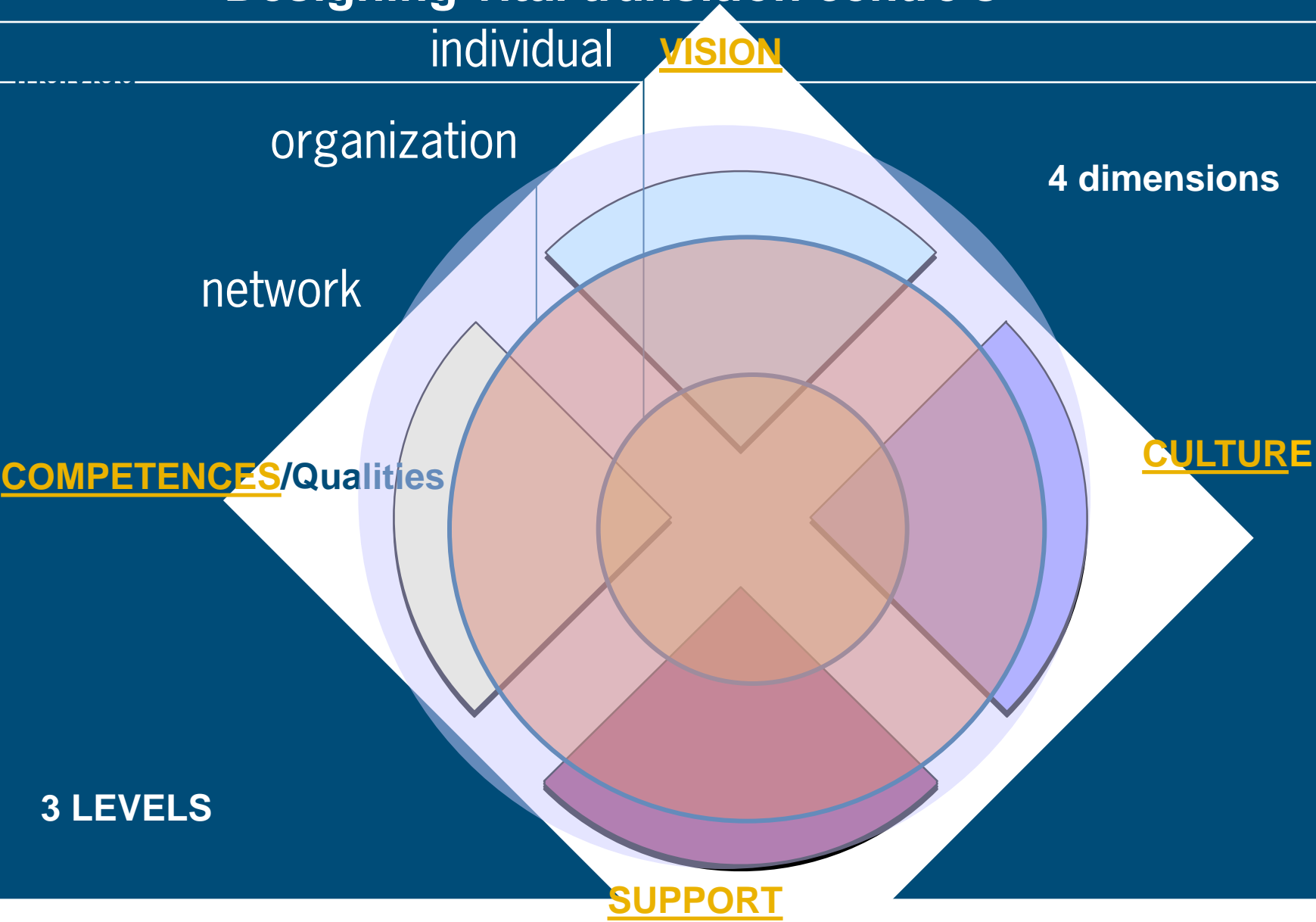
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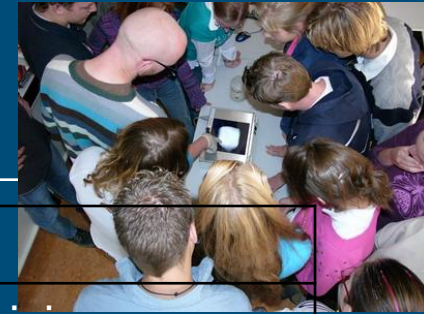




# Designing vital transition centre's



# VISION



Level	Principles
Individuals	Actively involved in creating a joint vision
Organizations	Have an explicit view with respect to linking with outside groups
	Stimulate and values the active participation of employees in determining mission and vision of the organization and the networks in which the organization participates
	Are willing to adapt and revise their vision as a result of emerging insights and changes in society
Network	Has on open, safe atmosphere and creates time and space for the development of a mutually supported vision



# CULTURE

Level	Principles
Individuals	Change oriented
	Willing to cross boundaries
	Willing to share knowledge/experience
Organisaties	External orientation
	Bottom up - horizontal
Network	Is open and dynamic
	All relevant stakeholders involved
	Change-oriented
	'Learning atmosphere'
	Is open and safe (allowed to make mistakes)



# COMPETENCES/QUALITIES



Level	Principles
Individual	Actively seeking new connections and personal networks
	Self-learners
	Can share their knowledge with different audiences
	Introspective, reflexive, self-critique
Organizational	Continuous attention for professional development (HRD)
	Seeking particular 'cross-boundary' competences when hiring new people
Network	Individuals and organizations participate on the base of their core competences
	Combined, all competences are present to make network successful
	Provides space for competence development within the network



# SUPPORT



Level	Principles
Individuals	Share new knowledge and experiences with colleagues
	Request and get support from colleague's when needed
Organizational	Offer support for co-workers/employees to experiment, to learn, to develop (time, money, positive feedback, trust)
	Support exchange of explicit knowledge and the articulation of tacit knowledge both internally and externally
Network	Organizes appropriate ICT support for the exchange of knowledge and experience both internally and externally

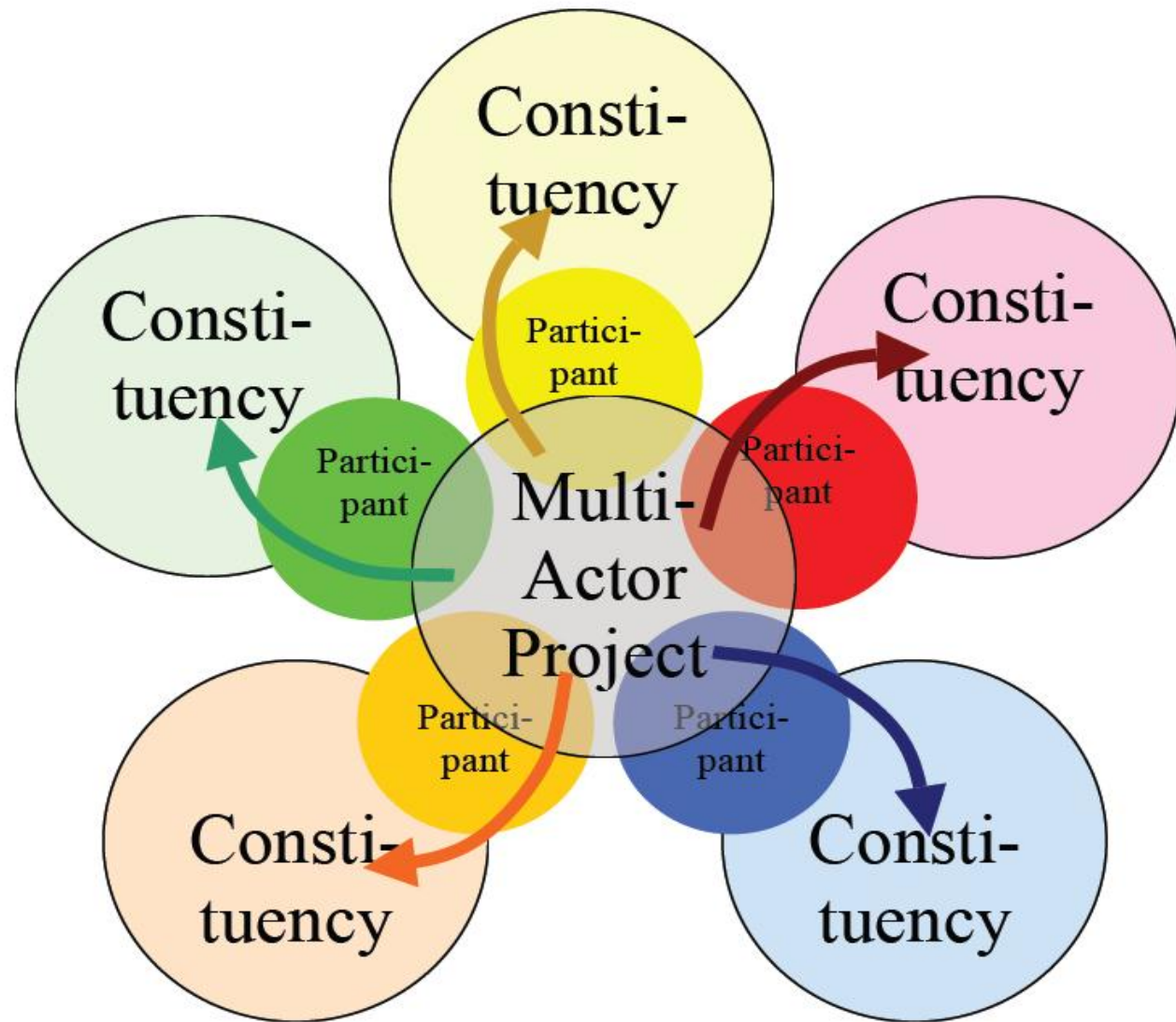


Figure 1. Multi-actor innovation project form network links via project members



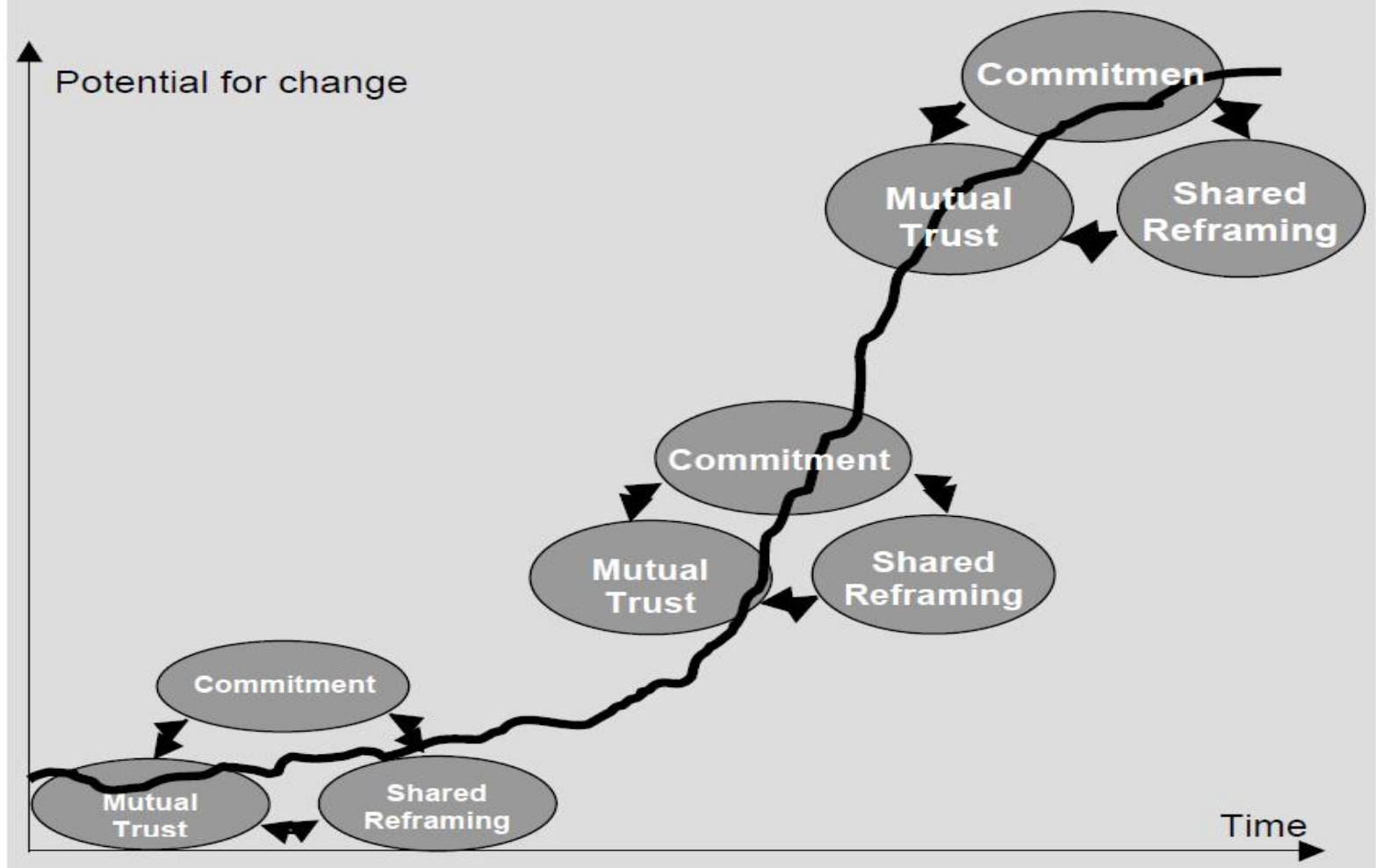


Figure 2. Social learning as the dynamic interplay of shared reframing, mutual trust and commitment. Successful social learning can generate an increased

# Concluding remarks

- Sustainability-oriented SL requires/develops new competencies – both for/in the participants and for/in those facilitating such learning.
- Blurring the boundaries between institutional and community-based learning is essential (a call for blended learning and the hybridization of knowledge creation)
- Critical thinking, diversity and deep democracy are essential components of sustainability-oriented learning.
- Culture, Competence, Vision and Support provide offer a way of looking and hybridity at different levels (individual, group, network, ...)
- Sustainability-oriented SL requires a rethinking of the role of science in society – mainly a shift from science as commodity to science as community.



Thank you!



	<b>Science as commodity</b>	<b>Science as community</b>
<b>Research orientation</b>	<i>Science for Impact Factors</i> Strong emphasis on publication targets to be met by publishing in ISI journals preferably with a high Impact Factor	<i>Science for Impact</i> Strong emphasis on societal relevance targets to be met by positive feedback by extended peers that include those who are to benefit from the research
<b>Educational orientation</b>	<i>Efficiency</i> Students are viewed from an economic perspective as clients, input, throughput and output, who need to get their diploma's within the time allocated at minimal costs  <i>Instrumental</i> – transfer of pre-determined and relatively fixed outcomes	<i>Authenticity</i> Students are viewed from a human development perspective as citizens who want to develop themselves and want to engage in meaningful learning around authentic issues that cannot be lectured  <i>Emancipatory</i> – high degrees of self-determination, space for transformation and co-created and emergent outcomes
<b>Business orientation</b>	<i>Focus on continuous growth</i> The university wants to or is forced to (as governments withdraw public money) to get more money out of the market. Faculty get acquisition/ 'billable days' targets. Growth of private institutions.	<i>Focus on dynamic quality</i> The university invests in community relations and community outreach seeking to become indispensable and an integral part of the community which in return is willing to support the university.
<b>Epistemological orientation</b>	<i>Empirical rationalism</i> Finding an objective truth. Establishing causality. Single truth exists and can be known. Maximize predictability, management and control. Minimize uncertainty.	<i>Socio constructivism</i> Co-creation of knowledge, inter-subjectively validated. Pluralist. Not one single 'truth' but many subject to interpretation. Uncertainty as a given. Facts and values are inseparable.
<b>Type of knowledge generated</b>	<i>Scientific and technical knowledge</i> that can (allegedly) be generalized across contexts to inform attempts by various social actors to predict, control, and/or intervene for specific instrumental ends	<i>Phronesis: ethically practical knowledge</i> that is indispensable for the work of making context specific value judgments about ends and means.

Source: Peters & Webb, in press

Learning and knowing in pursuit of sustainability: concepts and tools for trans-disciplinary EER.  
In: Krasny & Dillon (Eds) ' Transboundary Environmental Education Research' Frankfurt – Springer.