

Higher Education in Times of Climate Urgency, Polarization and Psychic Numbing - Navigating Bildung and Activism

October 20th 2020 – University Alliance for Sustainability Conference

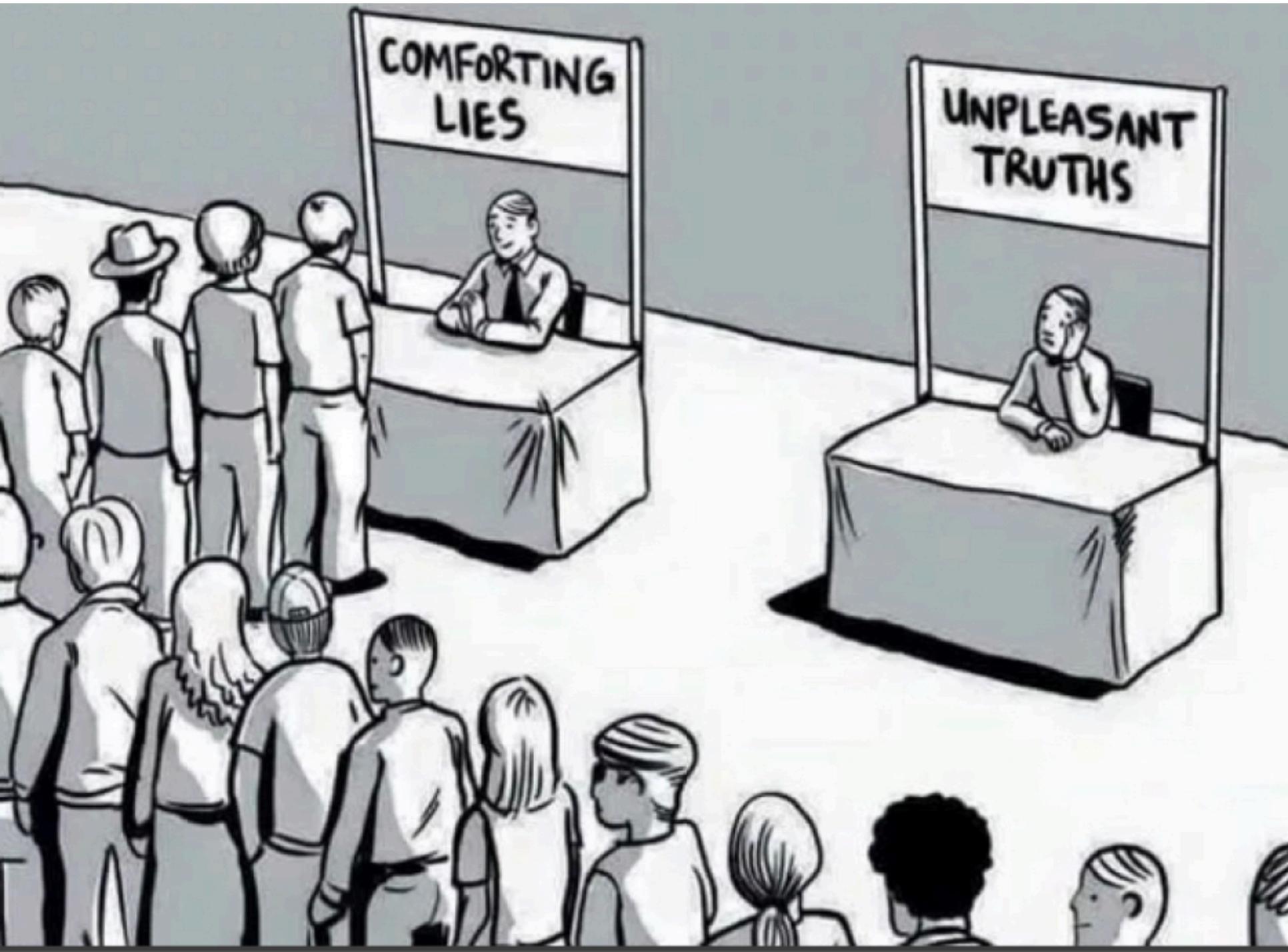
Arjen Wals







“I’m sorry, Jeannie, your answer was correct, but Kevin shouted his incorrect answer over yours, so he gets the points.”



COMFORTING
LIES

UNPLEASANT
TRUTHS



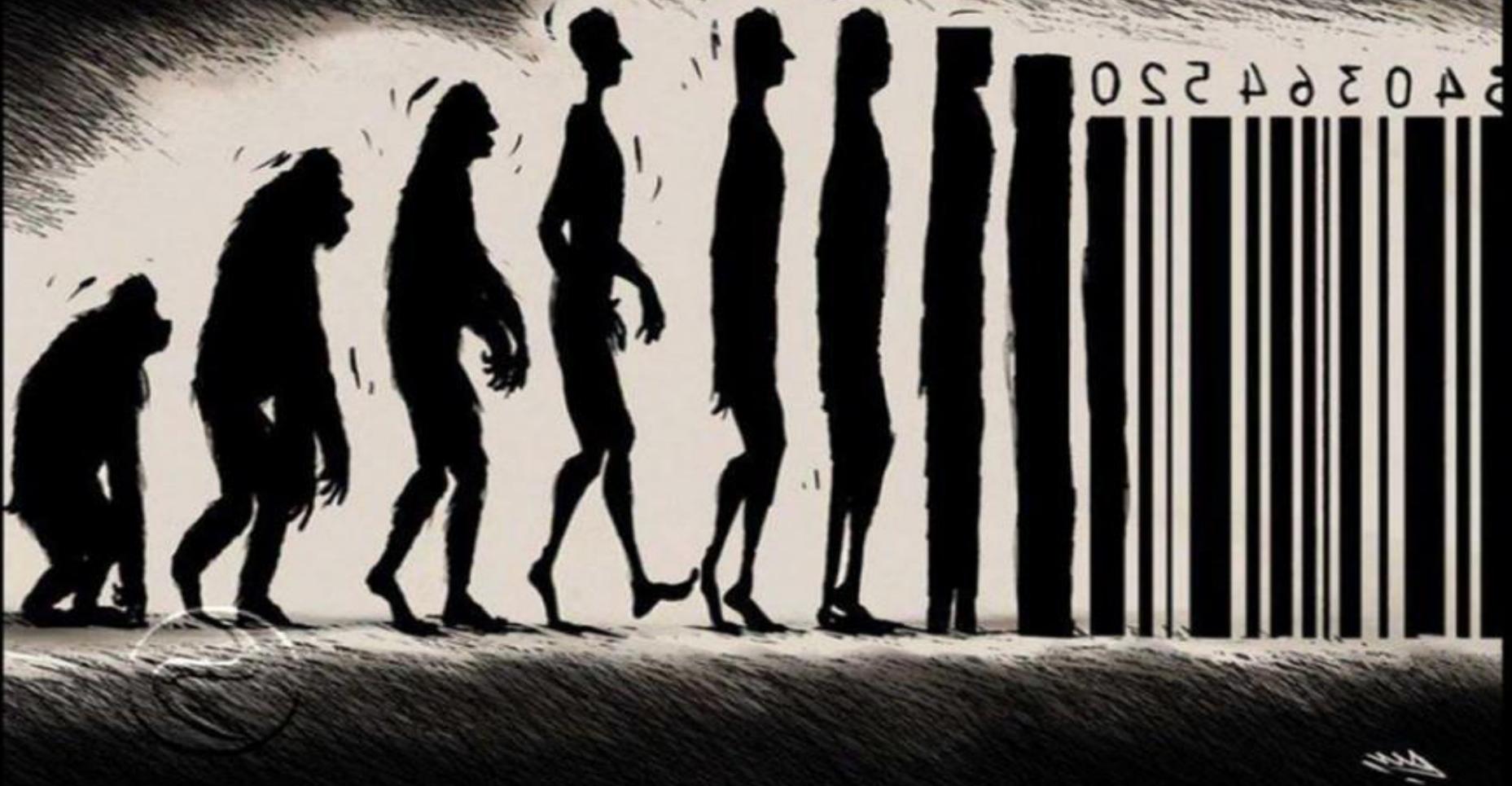
THE TECHNOLOGY THAT CONNECTS US ALSO CONTROLS US

TRAILER ▶

WATCH NOW | **NETFLIX**

THE DILEMMA

Never before have a handful of tech designers had such control over the way billions of us think, act, and live our lives.



Environmental Melancholia

PSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLORATIONS

By listening more deeply and focusing on invitation, versus persuasion and fear-based appeals, we can build deeper coalitions and collaborations that cross political and ideological boundaries (Renee Lertzman, 2015)

Environmental Melancholia

Psychoanalytic dimensions of
engagement

Renee Lertzman



WAGENINGEN UR
For quality of life



Norwegian University
of Life Sciences

PERSON *of the* YEAR TIME



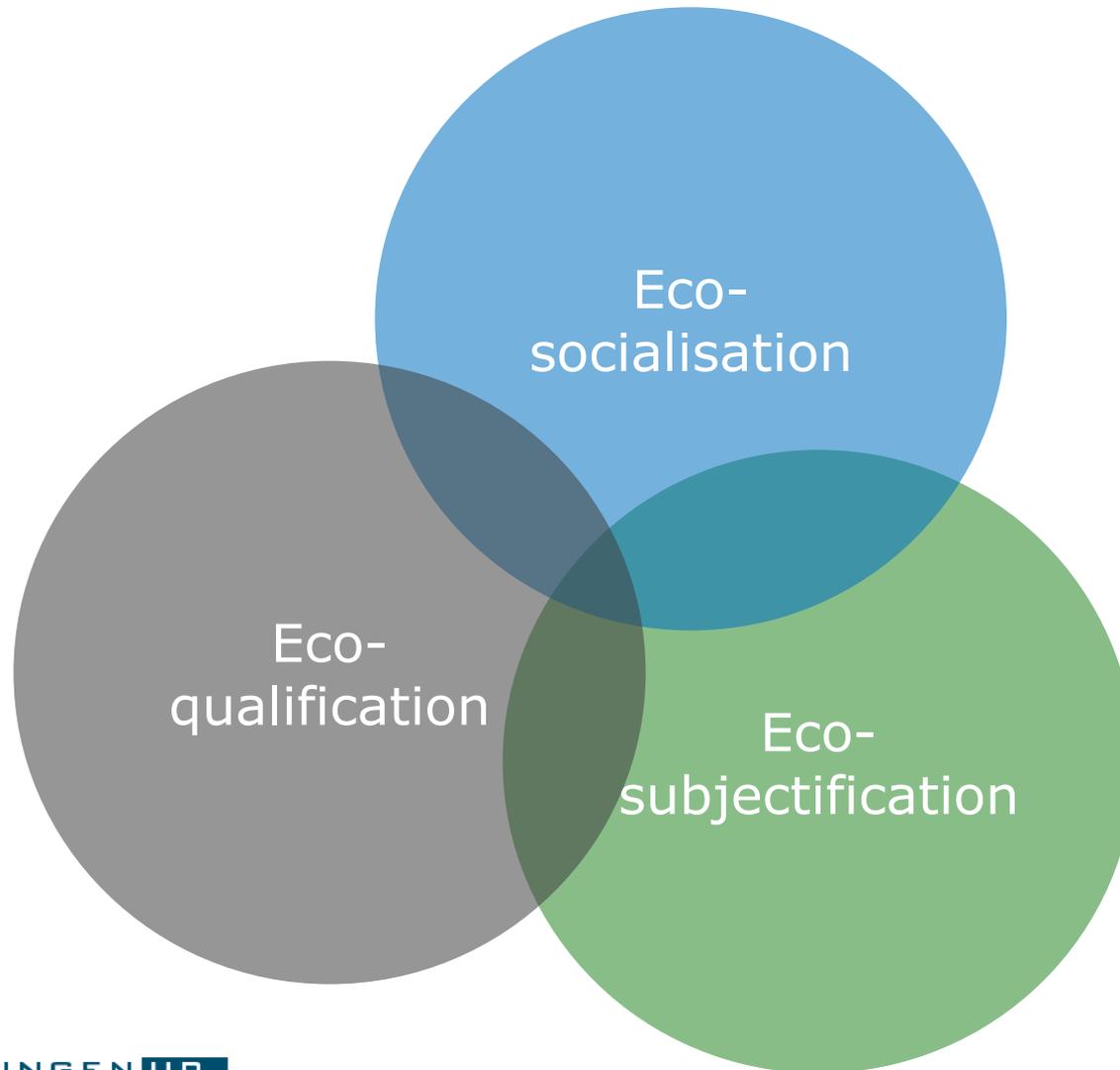
**GRETA
THUNBERG**

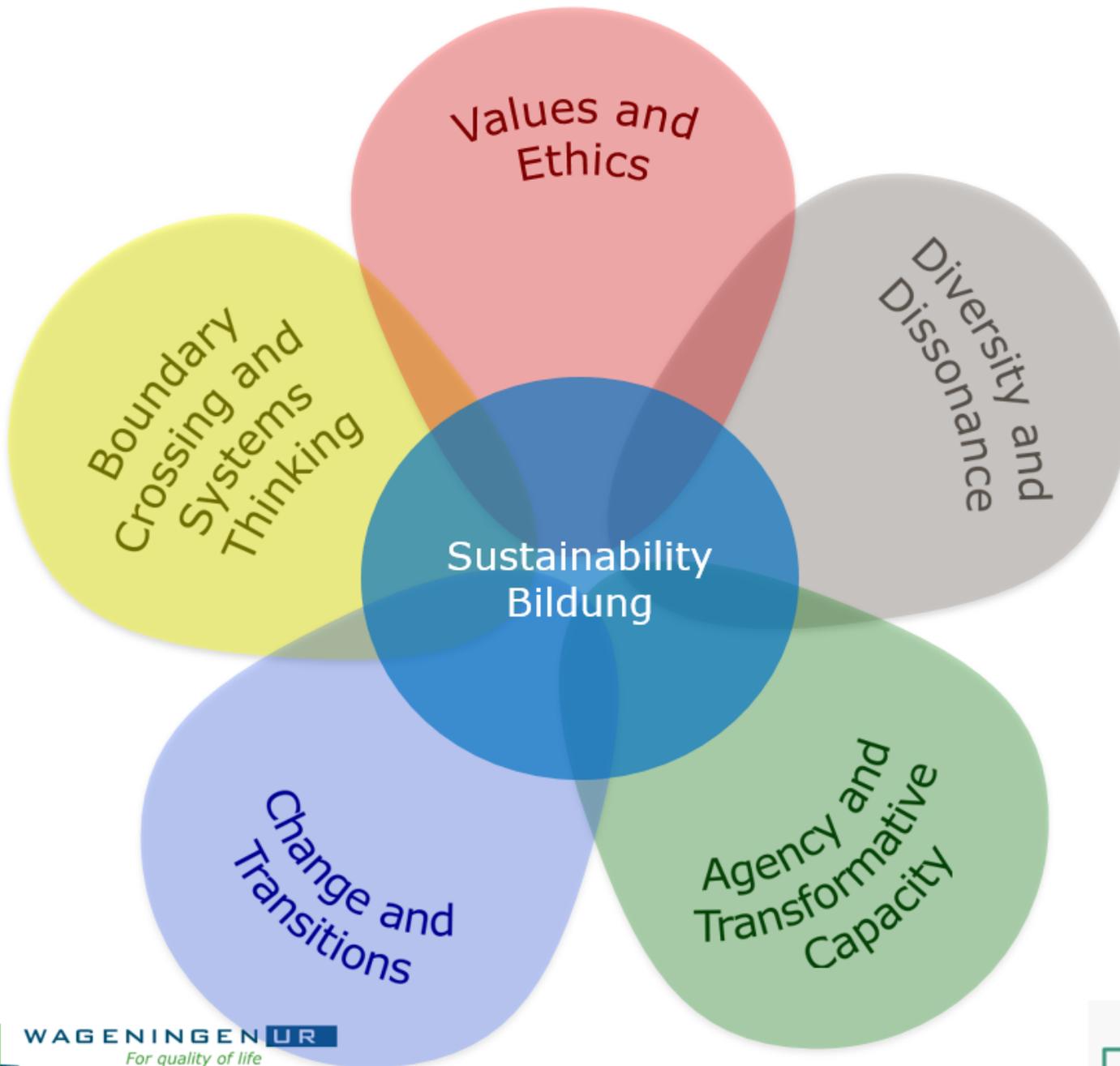
THE POWER
OF YOUTH

a day ago



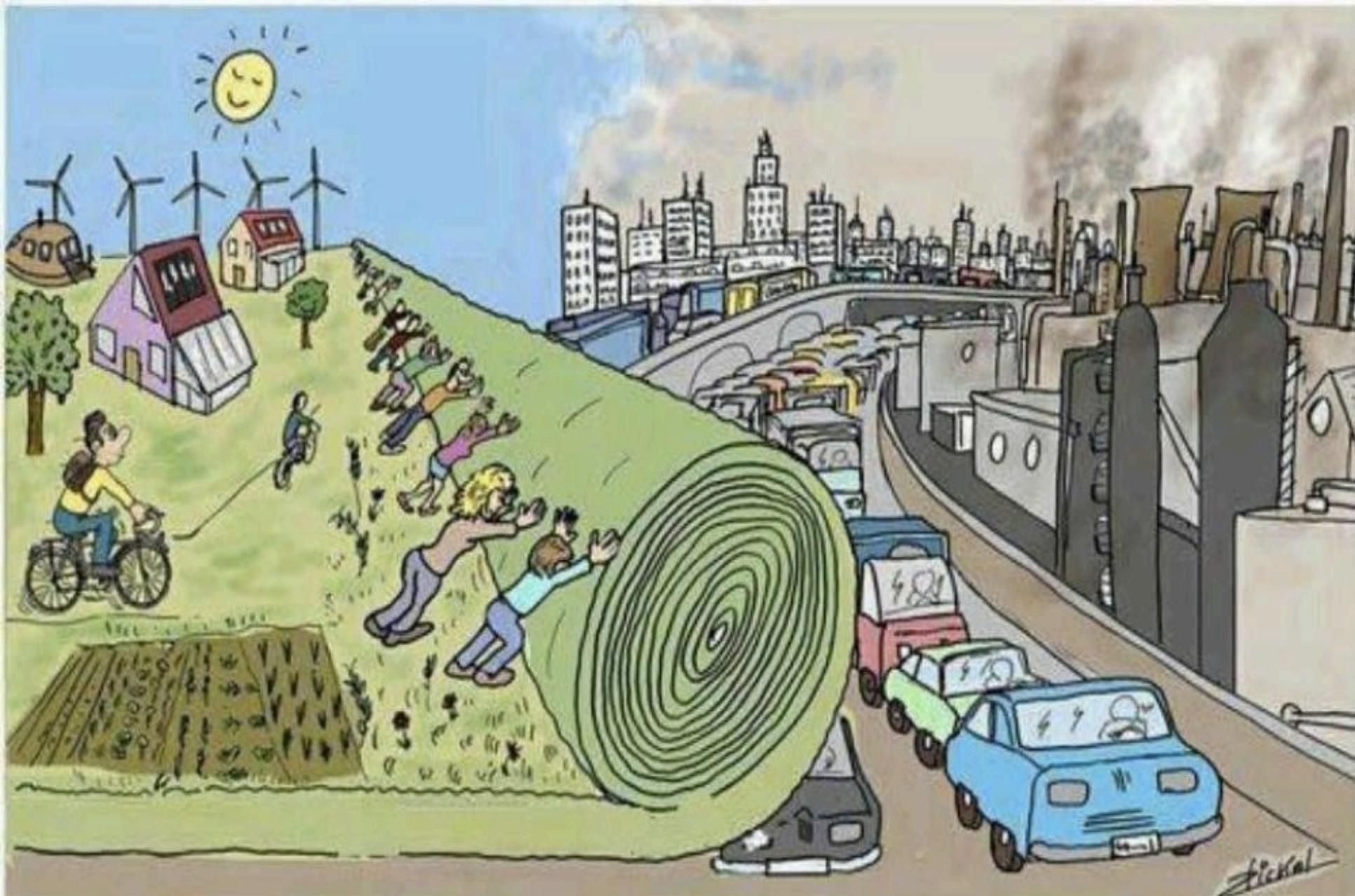
What is education for? (modified after Biesta, 2012)





Developing Transformative Skills

- **Openness**
To meet situations, people, others' and own thoughts and feelings with openness, presence and acceptance.
- **Perspective-seeking**
To seek and bring in more perspectives for a larger understanding of myself, others and the whole.
- **Sense making**
To see and understand the bigger and deeper patterns and my role in the world we create together.
- **Developing an inner compass**
To navigate myself and the world with insight based on what is really important to me and have the courage and willingness to act on this.
- **Compassion**
To see and meet myself and others with warmth, caring, humility and integrity.



Urban Living Labs

A living lab
way of working



AMS

AMSTERDAM
INSTITUTE FOR
ADVANCED
METROPOLITAN
SOLUTIONS

Living-Labs for Sustainable Development (LL4SD)s are:

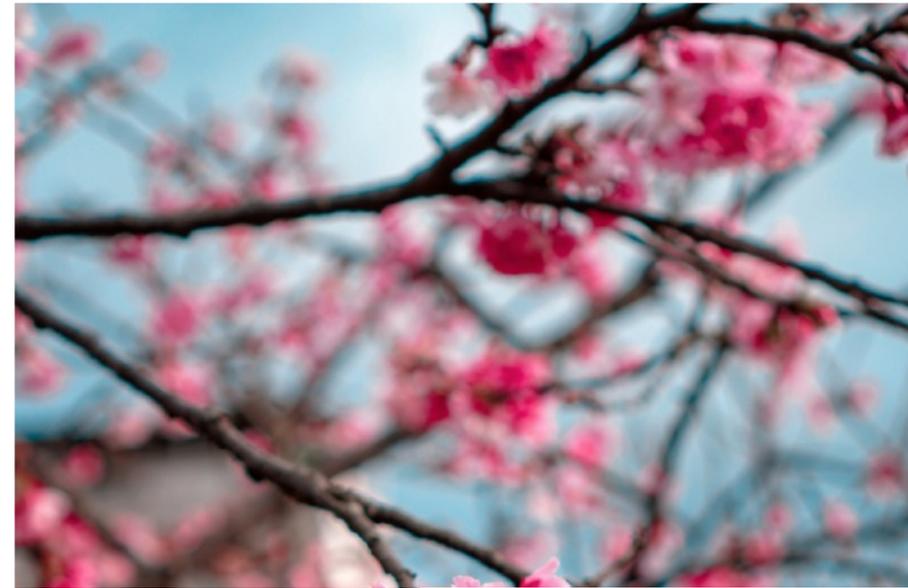
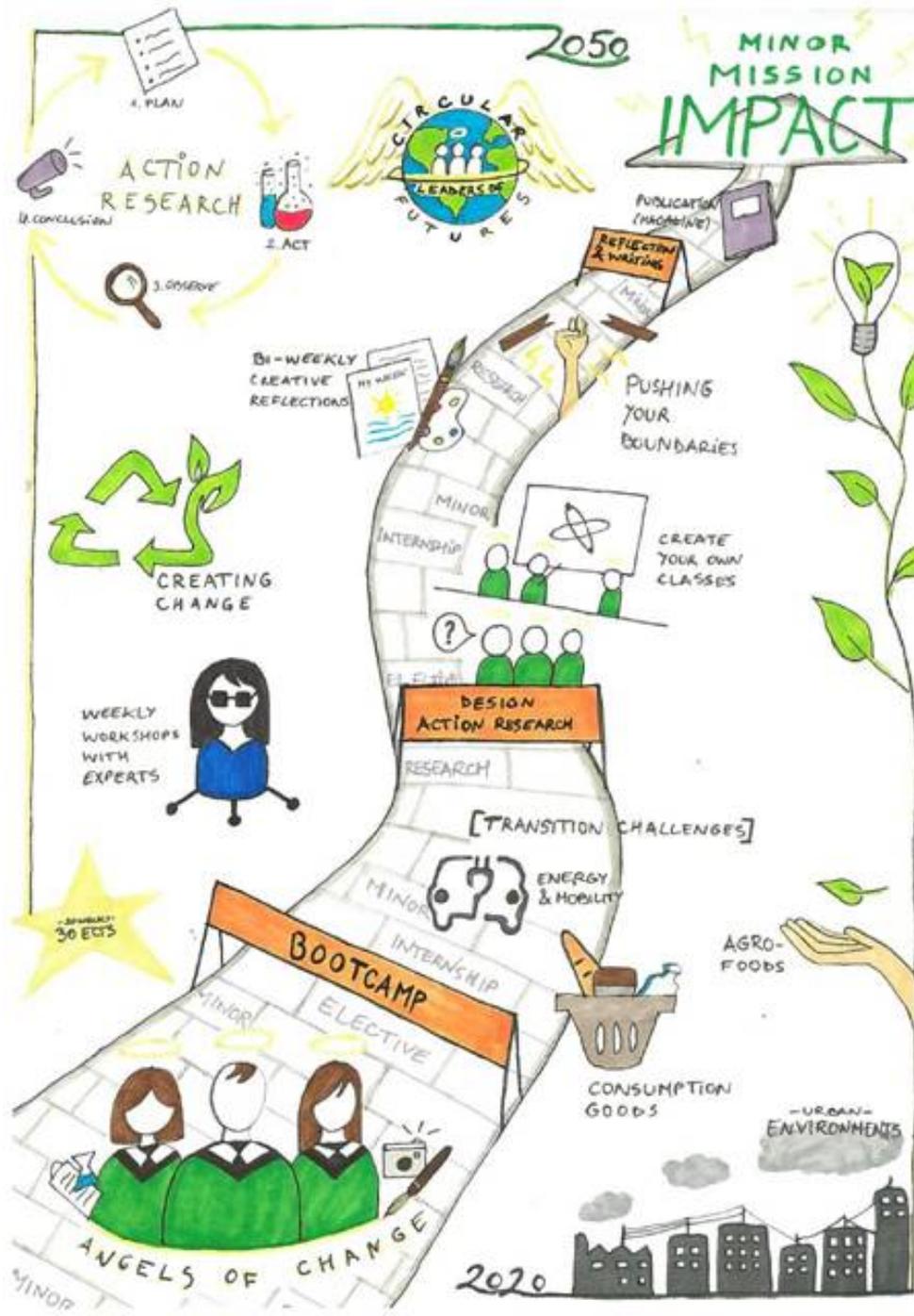
experimental, often temporary, “ecologies of learning” that engage multiple stakeholders in the co-creation, testing and evaluating of solutions to sustainability challenges in a real-world setting.

Towards Regenerative Learning Ecologies in Higher Education — Blossoming Cherries



Bas van den Berg

Oct 7 · 14 min read ★

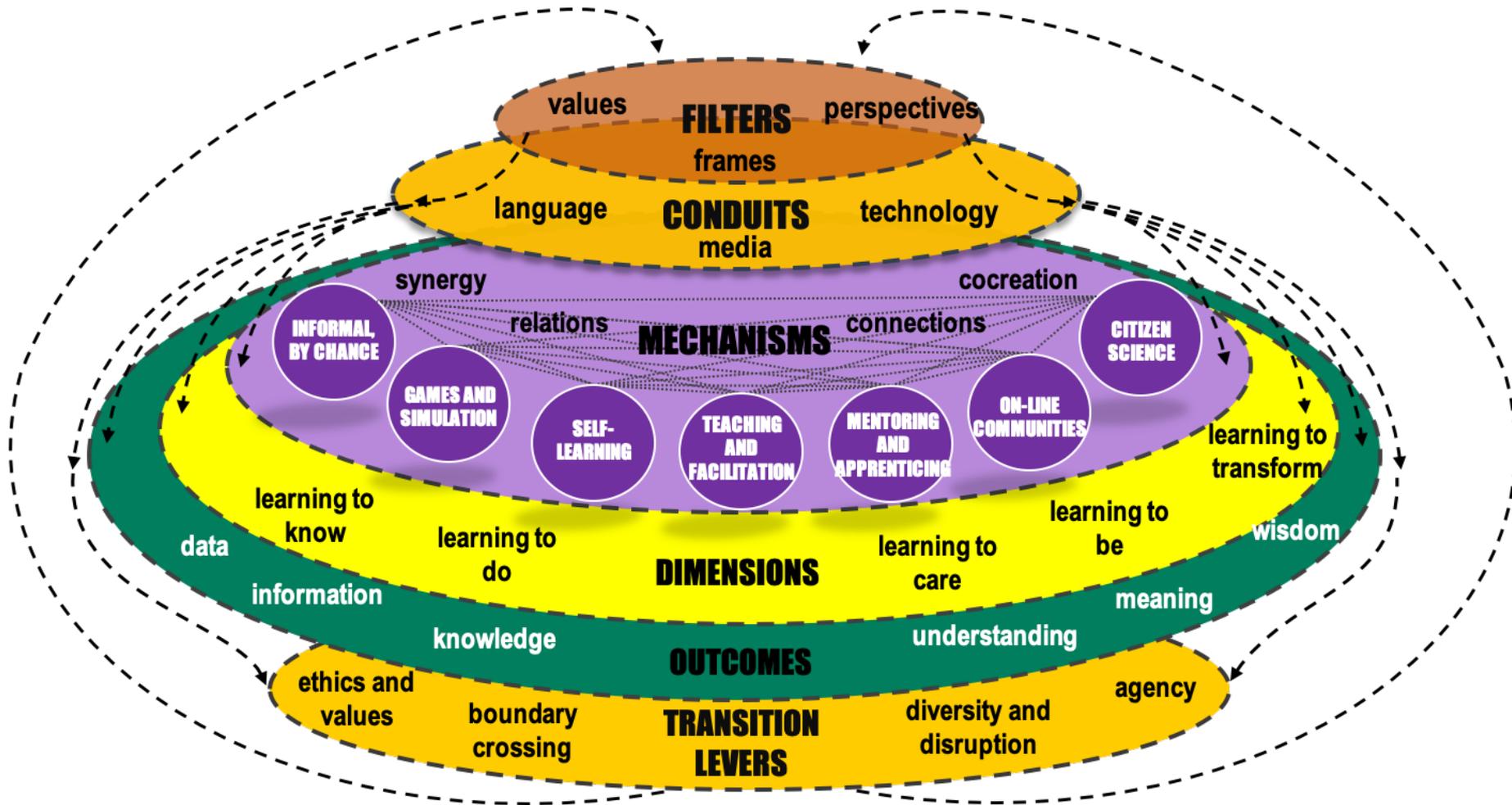


Source:

<https://www.dehaagsehogeschool.nl/onderzoek/kenniscentra/details/kenniscentrum-mission-zero>



Creating Ecologies of Learning for Sustainability (Wals, 2019, based on Siemens 2015)



Sustainability is not just something to learn, it's something to live!

STUDENTS SHOULD LEARN ABOUT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THE WORLD THEY LIVE IN

SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAMMES CAN TEACH HEALTHY EATING AND HELP BUILD AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

EDUCATION IS THE BEST TOOL FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS

SCHOOLS SHOULD BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY ISSUES

STUDENTS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND THE COMMUNITY SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN SCHOOL DECISIONS.

THE WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY BRINGS TOGETHER WHAT IS TAUGHT, HOW IT'S TAUGHT, EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, TEACHER TRAINING, DECISION MAKING PROCESSES, THE PHYSICAL BUILDINGS, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS SHOULD BE SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE, CONSERVING WATER AND ENERGY AND REDUCING WASTE

THE WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH ADDRESSES THE NEEDS OF ALL LEARNERS

SDG 1: NO POVERTY

SDG 2: ZERO HUNGER

SDG 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

SDG 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

SDG 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

SDG 14: LIFE BELOW WATER

SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND

SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

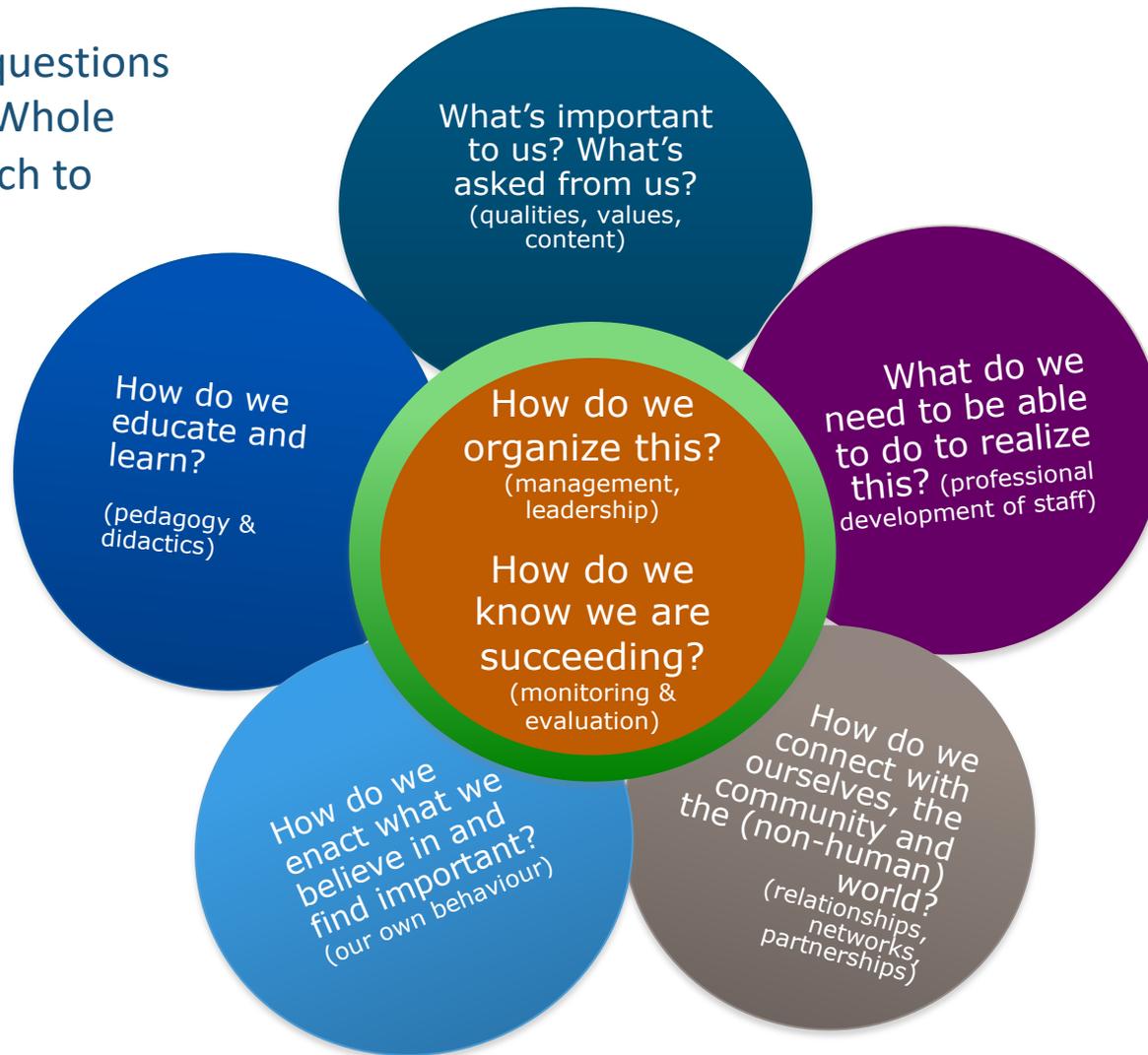
SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Labels in image: SOLAR PANELS, ENERGY SAVING LIGHTBULBS, RENEWABLE MATERIALS, HUMAN RIGHTS, DISCRIMINATION, GENDER EQUALITY, BULLYING, SCHOOL HALL

UNESCO, 2016 /GEM2016 Report

Using starting questions to reflect on a Whole System Approach to Sustainability

Arjen Wals, Sept. 2020



Key Points

- We need to break the logic of efficiency, growth, innovation and accountability: it is killing the spaces for transition and the freedom to learn, dialogue and explore in more relational ways.
- A more radical response – no longer ‘add-on’ or even building-in – a whole system redesign, is necessary that allows for a critical relational way of teaching, learning and investigating.
- Working with niches in universities (sit-spots, foodforests, but also Xtinction rebellion, F4Fdays, BLF-matter – critical groups rising – mindfulness, veganism, quest for meaning and justice, etc.) Students are self-organising – which is great – but where is the university in all this?
- A culture of fear and polarization needs to make way for a pedagogy of hope and concrete utopia’s that energize and inspire.

Key Questions

- How can systemic and transitional forms of education for sustainability best be designed, organised, supported and evaluated?
- How can universities and the key actors within them, become more relational? (connecting to place, people, other species and matter) What does a more relational pedagogy entail/require?
- How can ICT and 'small data' support learners in investigating sustainability issues (role of 'civic science')
- How can universities connect with transition niches and vice versa?

Questions...?



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Source: Banksy