

Some Thoughts and Materials about Sustainable Development and Transformative Learning in Higher Education

Handout for session SE50-TR01 on “What should higher education institutions be doing to advance sustainability research?”

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www.cde.unibe.ch, www.bne.unibe.ch, www.copernicus.org

This is the dominant institutional reality in Higher Education



... with **clear perspectives** and corresponding perceptions of the Other:

Natural
science
perspective

Social science
perspective

Actors'
perspectives



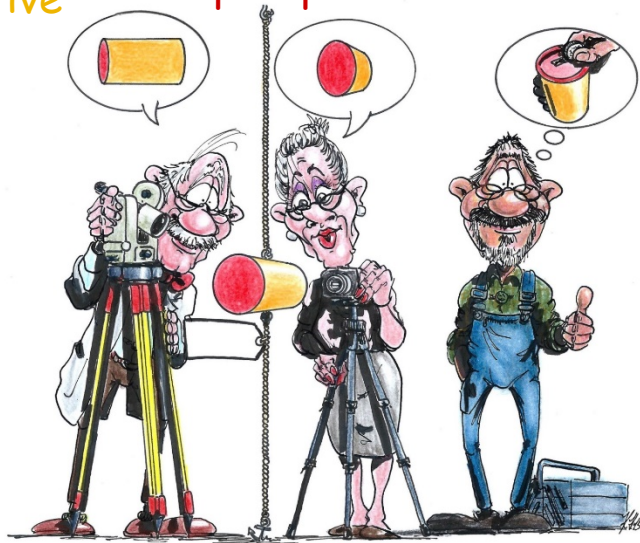
...but the knowledge developed is **not appropriate** for sustainable development and does not lead to transformation

Changes begin when you start doing inter- and transdisciplinary work together...

Natural
science
perspective

Social
science
perspective

Actors'
perspective



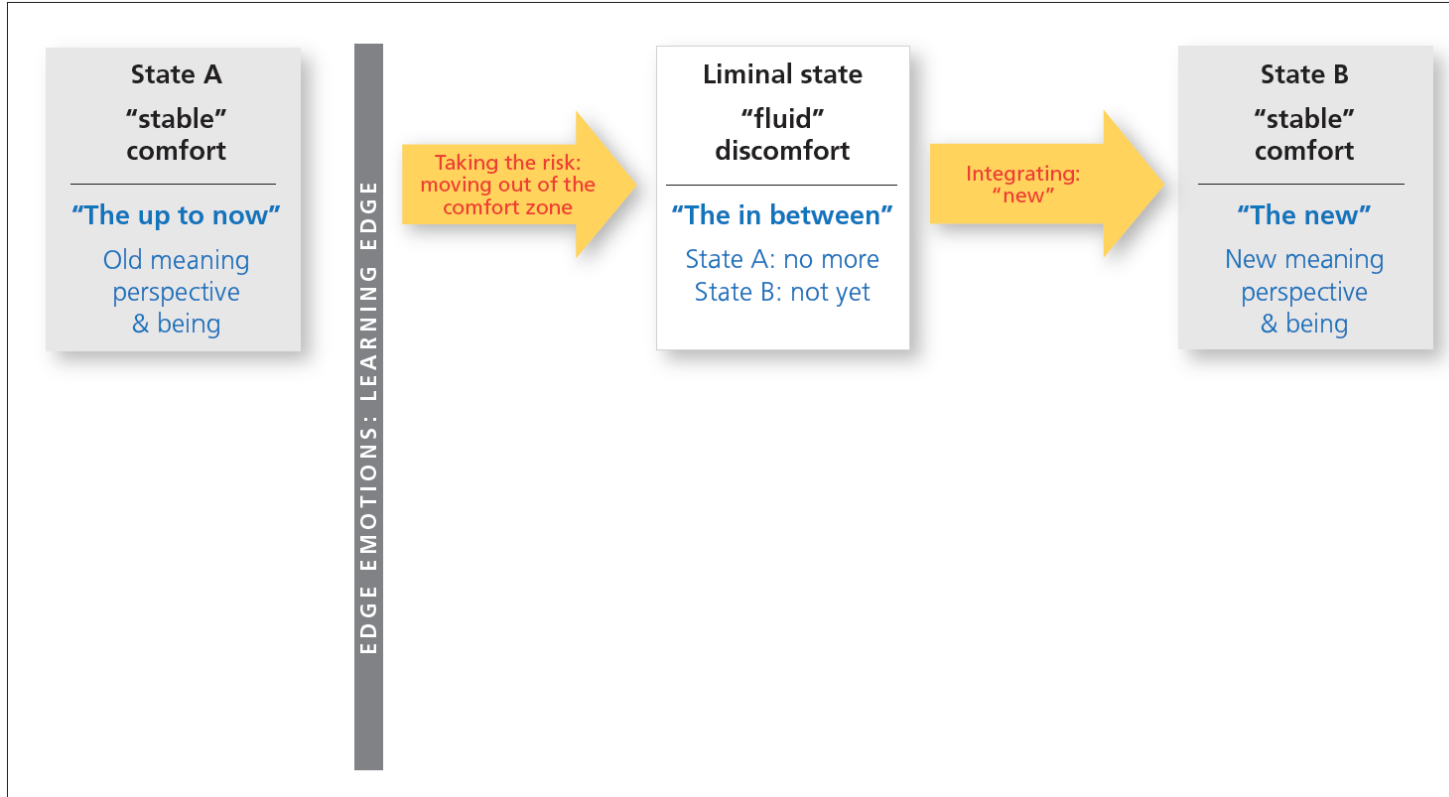
...this can lead to
transformative learning (and
sometimes to changed
behaviour)

Eight propositions for transformative learning and teaching (TLT)

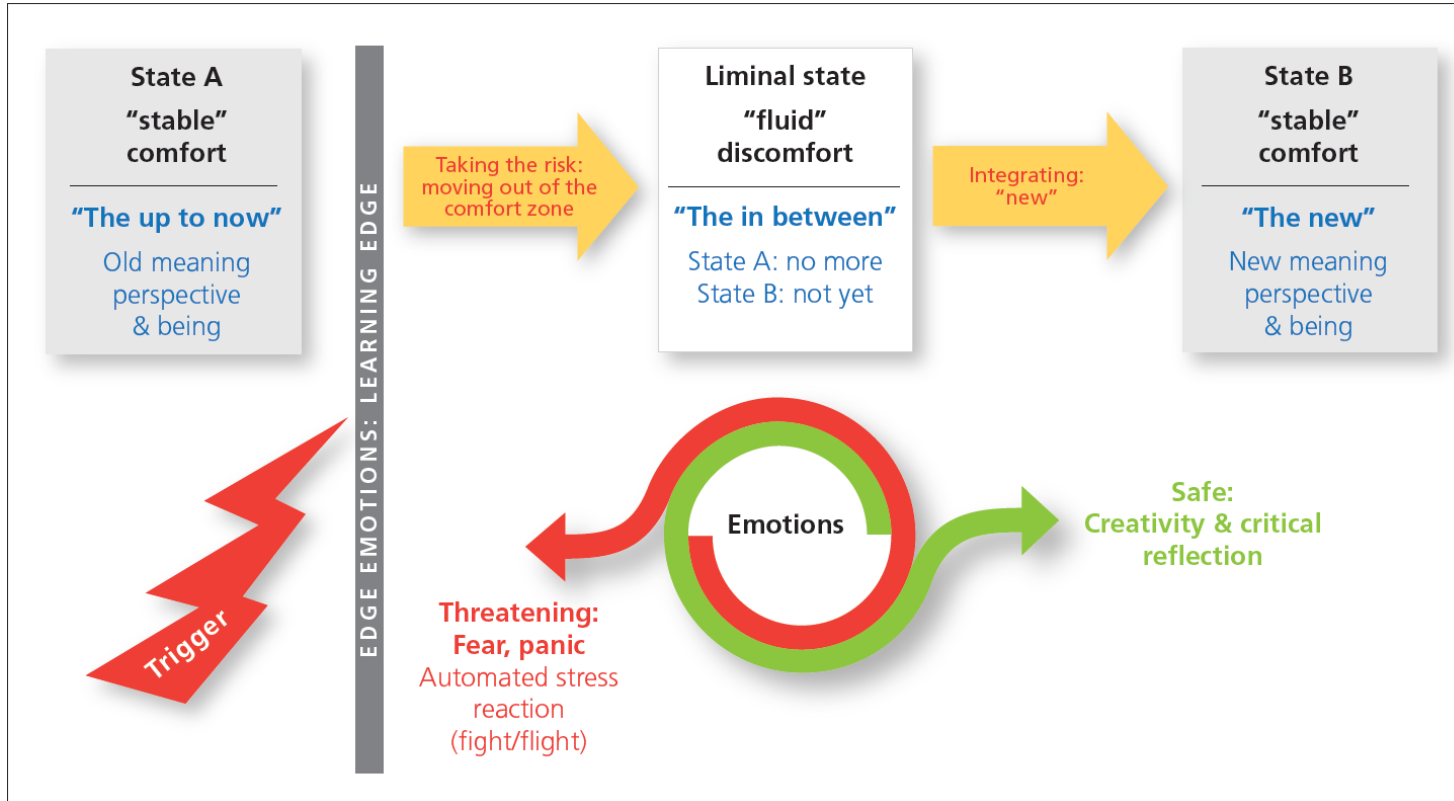
1. Higher education has **fundamental potential** for TLT.
2. Sustainability requires **value-oriented** TLT.
3. Sustainability-oriented TLT in higher education requires a **reflexive examination** of normativity.
4. **Emotions** require targeted attention in sustainability-oriented TLT in higher education.
5. Normativity and emotionality constitute **challenges for science-based** university teaching.
6. **Safe** teaching-and-learning arrangements are needed to facilitate TLT processes.
7. It is necessary to **professionalize** sustainability-oriented TLT and clarify relations with established university pedagogy.
8. **Further research** on sustainability-oriented TLT in higher education is needed.

Source: Bornemann et al 2020: [Sustainability-Oriented Transformative Learning and Teaching in Higher Education \(saguf.ch\)](https://www.saguf.ch)

Transformative Learning as a process



What it requires...



Source:
Förster et al 2019:
[Transformative teaching in Higher Education for Sustainable Development: facing the challenges](#)

Edge Emotions according to Mälkki and Green

Edge emotions: “the **experiential dimensions of challenges to one’s meaning perspective**” (2014).

With Berger (2004), they highlight “the moving nature of the boundary between knowing and not knowing. The **fluidity of that boundary** is what is most troubling for the learner, as it involves the **loss of a point of orientation.**”

They argue: “traditional education considers itself to be an **epistemological enterprise**, whereas transformational learning is **ontological** in nature”.

Buddhist aphorism (Chögyam Trungpa): “You should feel grateful whenever you’re disappointed or frustrated because it means that you are getting news from reality.”

Source:

Mälkki, K. and L. Green (2014). "Navigational aids the phenomenology of transformative learning." *Journal of Transformative Education* 12(1): 5–24.

Further interesting sources on transformative learning:
<https://visionautik.de/product/a-transformative-edge-knowledge-inspiration-and-experiences-for-educators-of-adults>
<https://legacy17.org/ont/>