

# Working Papers on University Reform

Working Paper 40:



## Education for Sustainability

Report of conference discussions and proposals for educational development

Susan Wright

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

CENTRE FOR  
HIGHER  
EDUCATION  
FUTURES

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## ***Working Papers on University Reform Series Editor: Susan Wright***

This working papers series is published by the Centre for Higher Education Futures (CHEF) at the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University. The series brings together work in progress in Denmark and among an international network of scholars involved in research on universities and higher education.

The current paper comes from an invitation from the ARTS faculty at Aarhus University to explore how to develop education for sustainability across the faculty. The process started with a conference to discuss how staff and students could draw on the results of a seed project for the 'Circle U' European University Alliance called 'Conceptualising and operationalising sustainable education'. This working paper reflects on the conference discussion about how to develop a 'sustainability paradigm' for educational development.

Other papers in this working paper series are derived from previous projects:

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- 'University Reform, Globalisation and Europeanisation' (URGE), an EU Marie Skłodowska-Curie IRSES knowledge-exchange project
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**Education for Sustainability.  
Report of conference discussions and  
proposals for educational  
development**

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# 1. The Conference

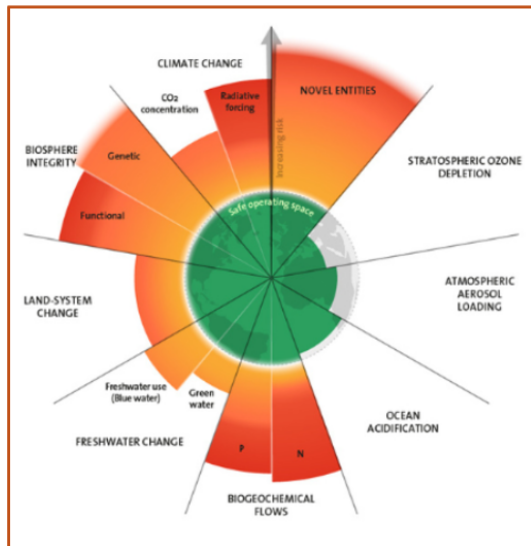
The conference was organised by the Centre for Higher Education Futures and the Centre for Environmental Humanities. It was held on 3 May 2024 and attended by 20 people at DPU, AU, 10 people by video link at DPU, Emdrup and 13 people online globally.

The aims of the conference were:

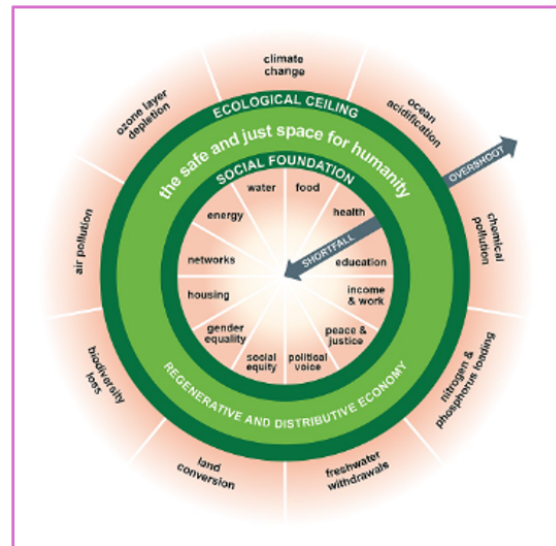
- To present the Circle U report ‘Conceptualising and Operationalising Sustainable Education’ (Cini et al. 2023) and discuss what sustainable education might mean in a Danish context and how it might be operationalised at AU
- To hear about inspiring initiatives developed by students (Humboldt University and Maastricht University) and staff (Aarhus University and University College Copenhagen, KP).
- To assemble key national stakeholders to reflect on the event and discuss with participating academics and students how to envision future developments and turn them into action.

## 2. What is sustainability?

While there are several, often contested, definitions of sustainability, people attending the conference broadly agreed that it involves bringing together questions of environment and inequality. Humboldt University students’ presentation included the slide below. On the left, Stockholm Resilience Centre has defined sustainability as the ability of the planet to live within nine categories of its resource boundaries. Orange indicates the extent to which the planet is using its resources unsustainably. The diagram on the right represents Oxford economist, Kate Raworth’s model of sustainability, called ‘doughnut economics’. She defines sustainability as a way of living on the planet that not only does not deplete the natural resources on which life depends, but also produces and distributes enough material resources for everyone to live comfortably and happily. To achieve a sustainable economy, environment and society involves living within the limits of the green doughnut. This means the



The Planetary Boundaries 2023 (Stockholm Resilience Centre)



Doughnut economic model (Kate Raworth 2017)

HU students' slide of representations of (un)sustainability

excessive use of nine environmental categories in the outer pink area has to be reduced, while shortages and unequal access to the twelve categories of goods and services in the inner pink 'zone of deprivation' have to be resolved.

### 3. What kind of transition is needed?

Ever since the 1987 Brundtland Report for the UN, there has been agreement that sustainability involves the three intertwined spheres of the economy, environment and society. More recently, this has been referred to as the need to combine a 'green



'Three Pillars of Sustainability' Brundtland Report 1987  
Source: <https://www.gevme.com/en/blog/the-three-pillars-of-sustainability/>

Refers to all countries

- Environment – protect the planet's eco systems, conserving natural resources, minimizing pollution and waste
- Economic growth - opportunities open to all and not at the expense of future generations
- Social - equality, cohesion and peace, social justice and equal opportunity. Access to food, shelter, education, healthcare and cultural opportunities.

transition’ focused on the environment and the economy, with a ‘just transition’ focused on society.

For example, the 2015 Paris Agreement not only set goals for the ‘green transition’ but stressed in its preamble: ‘the imperative of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities’ (United Nations 2015).<sup>1</sup>

This vision of the transition is captured in the phrase “Zero Carbon, Zero Poverty”. Both in relations between the global north and global south and within the unequal societies of the global north, the question is how to shift from high- to low-carbon development paths, while ensuring no one is left behind.

Cities are to play an important role in this ‘Green + Just’ transition. Aarhus is one of the EU’s ‘100 climate-neutral cities’ acting as ‘an experimentation and innovation hub to develop solutions for European cities to become climate-neutral by 2050’ and ‘all the while ensuring decarbonisation efforts are equitable and contribute to the well-being of European communities’.<sup>2</sup>

Copenhagen is one of the ‘C40 Cities’, a global network of leading cities whose mayors are committed to a ‘green and just transition’. They claim by ‘investing in climate solutions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and keep global heating below 1.5°C, city leaders can mitigate climate breakdown and deliver health benefits, create jobs and tackle systemic inequality’.<sup>3</sup>

To achieve these goals, the Climate Neutral Cities and C40 Cities websites emphasise the need to involve local, regional and national authorities, businesses and investors as well as citizens. However, they make no mention of the role of universities or education in providing the research and expertise that would seem to have a crucial role to play in the Green + Just transition.

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<sup>1</sup> The EU’s Green Deal focuses on technology and the economy. There is little mention of society or education and universities are only referred to four times (EC 2019).

<sup>2</sup> <https://aarhus.dk/english/go-green-with-aarhus-climate-sustainability/100-climate-neutral-cities>. <https://netzerocities.eu/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.c40.org/what-we-do/green-just-transition/>.



In the Danish context, the importance of university research for the Green Transition has been increasingly recognized. For example, the Independent Research Council of Denmark has established green specific funding calls, and private funders have similarly prioritized green-focused enquiries. While technical and natural science research continues to be the most prominent, recognition of the importance of social science and humanities research is increasing. In 2022, the Deans of humanities/arts at six Danish Universities produced a report, *Sustainable Behaviour. Four missions for the Humanities' contribution to the green transition*.<sup>4</sup> While the deans emphasized education as one of their four priority areas, concrete plans to support higher education initiatives tied to sustainability remain underdeveloped. With this strategic foundation, it is an excellent time to build a strong supportive infrastructure for this key program area.

## **4. What are the features of 'education for sustainability'?**

Kaur and Wright presented the COSE report 'Conceptualising and Operationalising Sustainable Education'. This traced how the United Nations and especially UNESCO had developed a clear argument that education for sustainability should have two, connected dimensions: knowledge about what's happening in the world; and the ability to bring about change. This is exemplified by a statement on UNESCO's current website:

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) gives learners of all ages the knowledge, skills, values and agency to address interconnected global challenges including climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources, and inequality. It empowers learners of all ages to make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change society and care for the planet. ESD is a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education. It enhances the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral dimensions of learning and encompasses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself.  
(<https://www.unesco.org/en/education-sustainable-development/need-know> Accessed: 05/02/2024).

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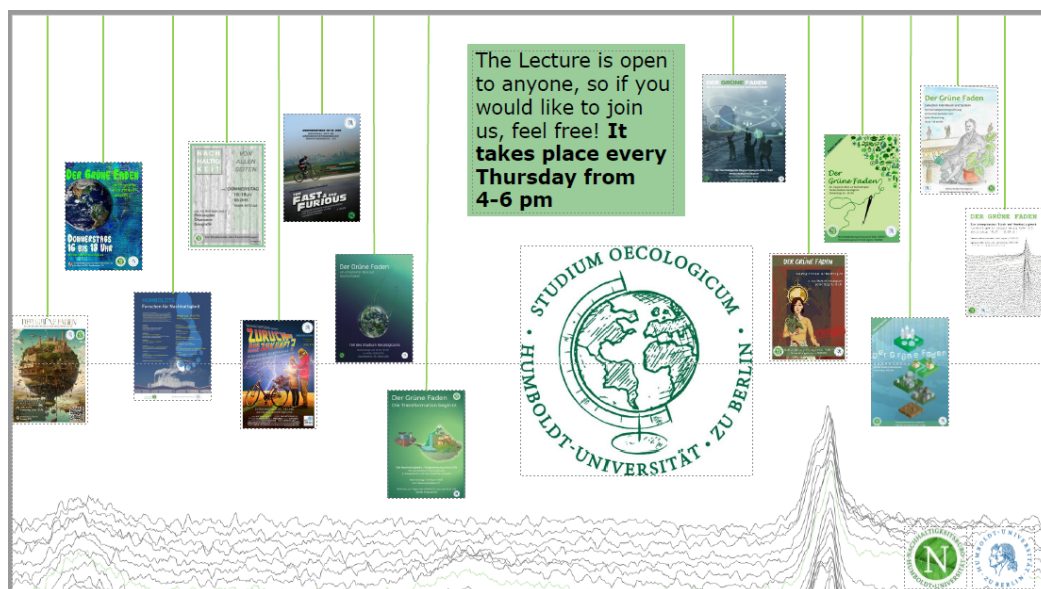
<sup>4</sup> [Sustainable Behavior - UK\\_020922.pdf \(au.dk\)](#)

## 4.1 Knowledge about what's happening in the world

How can students gain the scientific and disciplinary knowledge needed to understand the problems facing the planet and the challenges involved in the green and just transitions?

From Brundtland Report to Doughnut Economics, the emphasis is on a *holistic understanding of the interacting spheres of the environment, economy and society*. The conference discussed whether gaining such a holistic view meant getting rid of disciplines. The counter argument was made that disciplinary knowledge is crucial, but a university's map of learning or individual programme design should locate a student's discipline in a wider range of fields of study so that they appreciate how other disciplines think and how to engage in constructive conversations and collaborations.

The students from Humboldt University (HU) provided an excellent example. All degree programmes at HU require students to take between 10 and 30 ECTS in General Studies modules outside their discipline. As one of those modules, the students' Sustainability Office, which has been going for over 10 years, has developed the Studium Oecologicum. The module is in two sections. First, a lecture series



HU students' slide of posters advertising the Studium Oecologicum lecture series from recent years

attracts over 100 students from a full range of disciplines and the lectures are by an equally wide range of academics and others engaged in environmental research (5 ECTS). Second, in a seminar, students gain the skills for working in interdisciplinary groups to formulate projects designed to enhance sustainability, gain institutional support and manage their implementation (5 ECTS). One of the projects is always to design the lecture series for the following year.

This module is managed by two student assistants and taught by students (peer-to-peer teaching), with a professor legitimising the assessment methods and signing for the ECTS. Each year generates a new cohort of enthusiastic students who join the Sustainability Office as voluntary activists and develop further projects geared to sustainable transformation of the university, the city and society.

## **4.2 Ability to bring about change**

The above example from Humbolt University points to some of the skills students need to bring about change. Most notably, they have well-honed techniques for *project management*, from designing and pitching projects to tracking their progress. Some of their projects have been very ambitious, like the ‘Mensa Revolution’ where they collaborated with other higher education institutions across Berlin and now all canteens provide vegetarian and vegan meals with only 2% meat and fish options. The students have described two other features that are essential to keeping the Sustainability Office’s voluntary activities going: *forming a convivial group* through fun and inclusiveness in group decision making, which creates a sense of being in a safe community and sustains their energy and commitment; and generating a sense of *‘Wirkmächtigkeit’* or the capacity to envision change in society and feel empowered to take individual and collective action to bring it about and care for the planet.

The COSE project interviewed academics experimenting with ways to equip students to bring about change, and several referred to a different *dynamic between teachers and students*. One explained that environmental, social and economic challenges are for the next generation to solve, so students should take part in defining them. This means that rather than just being ‘involved’ in their education, *students should be*

*active partners* (Cini et al. 2023: 35) or as others put it, co-creators in a more mutual construction of knowledge.

Several also described *engaging students in an embodied way with their surroundings*. A professor of international development has students walking around the campus and the town, mapping infrastructures and analysing their sustainability. They then explore the ethical and political issues involved in social interventions designed to bring alternative ways of living into being (Schwittay 2021). Another academic described her resistance to education that is just in the head, or as she put it, ‘education that has no feet’. She made enormous floor maps of the locality and had students, residents and politicians walk about, talk to each other and explore the area. She asked,

How does education cultivate an extreme lack of knowledge about the world and extreme incuriosity to know more about it? We focus on buzzwords like sustainability but know nothing about the local sewage system. Cities cover it up, as they cover up brooks and rivers. They spray to make animals go away....then we forget, or imagine these things are not there. You walk in a street in Paris and don't listen to the rumbling beneath your feet. How can we peel back the layers of activity beneath the asphalt? We are a long way from the actual workings of a city because we have hidden them away. (Cini et al. 2023: 37)

With a similar intention to connect critical thinking to embodied experience, Swanson and Messick's conference presentation described their course Environmental Humanities: Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet. This explored environmental challenges facing the planet and experienced locally; questioned what knowledge and skills should be included in humanities education; and used a hands-on project to help reflect on environmental humanities in action. The latter involved the two teachers' collaboration as an academic and a gardener and involved the students planning and growing plants, getting their hands dirty, harvesting the results, and feasting on the resulting ‘strange salad’.

Some COSE interviewees raised ‘*systems thinking*’ as an important ability for making change. This involves grasping the complexity of environmental systems, and their intertwining with equally complex economic and social systems. It also involves seeing how small or local activities connect with wider ecologies or systems of

governance. One interviewee (Cini et al. 2023: 38) uses the university as a site for getting the students to explore how they are positioned within an institution. How does the institution shape their expectations, educational practices, and ways of performing being a student? Are there institutional constraints on their becoming ‘active learners’ and, as suggested above, engaging with lecturers in a mutual construction of knowledge? If so, what room for manoeuvre can they find for negotiating change and shaping the institution? She calls this becoming ‘politically reflexive practitioners’ – a capacity they can take into the workplace or community, to think about the world they want to live in and how they can help make that come about (Wright 2004).

The ability to deal with *uncertainty* and an increasingly unpredictable and conflictual world was also a crucial ability mentioned by interviewees. Most obviously, it is unknown what will happen with weather patterns and climate change. But many issues are unstable and unpredictable. They are referred to as ‘*wild*’ *problems* because the ways they are defined and acted upon now may change radically and repeatedly in the future, requiring new knowledge and new ways of thinking. What kind of education is needed to equip students to deal with a wild future?

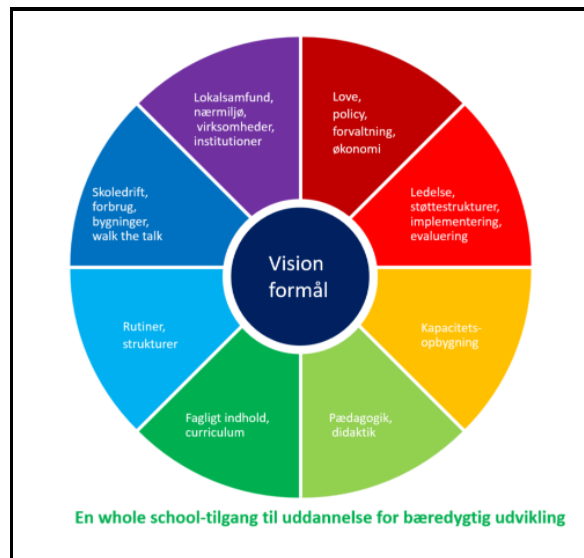
In sum, the COSE research revealed that there were three ways that academics and students connected the two dimensions of knowledge about what’s happening in the world, and the ability to bring about change. Some heavily emphasised one dimension over the other, or even to the exclusion of the other. Some interviewees combined the two dimensions and called their approach sustainability or education for sustainable development. Others did combine them, just rejected the label ‘sustainability’ as their aim was not to sustain the status quo, but rather develop radical alternatives.

## **5. What are the barriers to developing education for sustainability?**

### **5.1 Management and governance structures need to sustain initiatives**

Although COSE's interviewees described the considerable thought and energy they had invested in educational initiatives, they did not believe the institution would sustain these developments. Rather they would 'die' when the academic moved in their career or student initiators graduated. For example, in *Creative Universities*, Schwittay described the three years of research about design thinking, experiential learning, open-ended and iterative enquiry, and critical hope that lay behind her developing a 'critical-creative' approach to education for sustainable development and radically transforming her courses. However, her bottom-up initiative had little influence over the institution's top-down strategy to transform the university's education. While her pro-vice chancellor's 'Pedagogical Revolution' invited academics to initiate change, Schwittay's ideas of creative pedagogy were dismissed as potentially off-putting to some students and staff (Schwittay 2021: 11). Her example makes clear that the distances that university reforms have created between university managers, academics and students limit the ability of creative ideas from below to travel within, or transform, the organisation.

Katrine Madsen's conference presentation made a similar point. Starting in 2016, at University College Copenhagen, colleagues developing the professional practice of pre-school and social educators had established a Green Campus group in collaboration with Teachers for Future and the Green Student Movement.



Rathje's diagram of a Whole-School Approach to Education for Sustainable Development  
(from Madsen's slide)

Drawing on Rathje's (2023: 51) whole-institution approach to sustainable development, they involved administrators and the canteen as well as colleagues and students and developed experimental forms of 'open learning' where the definition and goals of a course are not pre-set, but are negotiated by participants. This meant both teachers and students had to engage with multiple ways of knowing and learning and the insecurity of changing knowledge as they dealt with the complexity, 'unstable ground' and urgency of environmental and social change. But, as she pointed out, the unsupported work of 'fiery souls' is not sustainable long term, so they approached their leadership. Later on the 'Green Transition' became part of the University College's strategy, but she was doubtful whether this top-down strategy would connect with, let alone support or sustain the initiatives of the Green Campus Group.

The COSE research found only four examples where bottom-up initiatives had been sustained over generations of cohorts or had been spread within the institution. At the conference, the presentation by the chair of Maastricht University students' Green Office provided a fifth example. Starting from student initiatives in 2010, the Green Office brings together student-led green initiatives from across the university with institutional resources, and links to NGOs, civic and municipal authorities. For the first 6 years the students' initiative struggled for recognition, but it now has formalised relations with the university, including premises and funding for 7 student assistants. They form the Sustainability Task Force and coordinate projects aiming

- ❖ King's College, London – co-creation between students and staff, student involvement in SDG curriculum mapping (60 students mapping 1,000 modules), supported by the university
- ❖ University of Oslo – SHE (*Sustainable Healthcare Education - Centre of Excellence in Education*) offering opportunities for students to serve as student leaders in courses and active partners or co-researchers in ongoing projects, given national support and funding
- ❖ Aarhus University – Student movement for sustainable education met with support from Ministry of Education and Science establishing working groups to explore how to introduce sustainable education at every level from pre-school to higher education.
- ❖ Humboldt University – Students with a history of activism over 15 years, which had led to the Rector and Senate agreeing to the students' demand that the university be carbon neutral by 2030.

Four examples of student- and/or academic-led initiatives supported by university structures and top-down commitment (Cini et al. 2023: 43).

for transitions to sustainability in teaching, research, and university operations. The idea of the Green Office has now been replicated by students in 51 other universities in 9 countries. Each of the Green Offices in this network shares six main characteristics but they adapt them to local contexts, and now universities have formalised support for the Green Offices in three different ways. This is an example of overcoming the first barrier of a lack of appropriate university leadership; it demonstrates *the need for management and governance structures that support, spread and sustain student- and teacher-led initiatives.*

## **5.2 Higher education is itself not sustainable**

Both the COSE literature review and interviews highlighted how universities are themselves located within the growth paradigm that is arguably at the heart of current global problems. This is characterised by a competitive system for funding ever-increasing revenues; the use of metrics for measuring predetermined learning outputs and research performance; and the rise of managerialism and decline of shared governance. Schwittay noted how little time academics have to do the research and thinking necessary to rebuild their pedagogy 'when teaching loads are increasing, when core modules with mandatory content need to be taught, when fixed learning



outcomes ask for conformity and when conventional modes of assessment are the norm' (2021: 5). Interviewees also explained how the effects of this system on their daily work constrained the time to think and to work with colleagues to generate initiatives, let alone sustain them.

We have to manage so many more grants and more administrative responsibilities, to be present in the classroom, in a supervision, to a colleague, in a meeting, to a current situation, to people and on email. How can you respond to all these things at once? It makes it difficult to do the work of building a community, because that requires generosity and generosity requires surplus energy.

(Academic, Anthropology, Denmark).

Students also referred to the way the current higher-education system pressured them to graduate on time and focus on entering the labour market. If, as one interviewee put it, 'students see education only as a period of their lives that needs to be shorter and shorter', they limit their ability to learn the skills they need to be active citizens.

Education is not only about teaching students things so that they can get a job afterwards. Education is about spending time in an institution where you learn a subject, but you also learn how knowledge is produced and you learn the ability to think critically and to develop yourself as a person so that when you are ready to go into the world and get a job, you also have the ability to think critically and participate in democracy.

(Student, Leader of the Student Parliament, Norway)

### **5.3 Constraints of the growth paradigm**

The final session assembled panellists representing organisations that could help universities develop education for sustainability:

- Janus Porsild Hansen, Education and Outreach Team, Novo Nordisk Foundation. NNF is turning its attention to sustainability and social dimensions of the green transition
- Rune Baastrup, Director, Democracy X, which provides a bridge between technical and social research and citizens. Through participatory methods, they engage people in shared action on climate and other issues

- Signe Tolstrup Mathiesen, Coordinator, Education for Sustainable Development (Uddannelse Bærdygtig Udvikling, UBU). This is a partnership of 80 organisations devoted to education for sustainability across the whole spectrum of education, including higher education. UBU has received government financing for the next 4 years
- Michael Paulsen, Leader of Elite Centre for Understanding Human Relationships with the Environment, University of Southern Denmark (SDU).

The discussion started with Michael Paulsen explaining that his centre is focusing on developing ‘ecoliteracy’ in the educational system with the aim of fostering the collective capacity to make life-friendly systems and society.<sup>5</sup> He warned against relying on university strategies for change – his university’s strategy to become a green university had only lasted three years; now it has been replaced by a strategy for SDU to be ranked as a good university. Instead, he envisaged transforming institutions through critical analysis leading to small critical practices in a ‘step-by-step mosaic of change’.

Other contributions built on the need for social transformation. The science of climate change or the need to change eating habits was widely known but not having sufficient effect. They emphasised the urgency, and the question was how to achieve widespread social and behavioural change. They raised questions like, how to coordinate the scattered initiatives on education for sustainability and how to get universities to team up together to educate change agents, or as one put it, how to change the ‘inertia’ of universities. They recognised that change would take time and their strategies had ‘to be in for the long haul’, but one said, ‘to be long term you have to be large, think about scalability, and focus on the growth potential from the start’. Another added, ‘How to achieve the public systems change that we need? How to accelerate social learning and achieve social tipping points into radical change?’ Or, as a third put it, ‘We need a theory of change, where the role of the university is to hold a space for agency and actions for change’.

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<sup>5</sup> Centre for Understanding Human Relationships with the Environment, SDU [New Elite Centre recommends a higher ecoliteracy into schools - SDU](#)

While this talk about creating a model or educational approach that could be scaled up, with accelerated growth until it reached tipping points, was trying to envisage ways to generate widespread social transformation, from the audience Professor of Anthropology, Anna Tsing pointed out that this is the discourse of the very growth paradigm that lies behind the problems facing the world. She said it is the responsibility of our generation to put a break on this focus on growth, acceleration and tipping points and on treating carbon and toxins [she could also have mentioned loss of biodiversity, negative health effects and inequalities] as externalities. Instead of focusing on common ideas that can be scaled up, we need good ideas. To take sustainability seriously, she argued, we need to remember that it was the excitement of ideas that make a difference that brought us into the university in the first place, and we need an approach to education based on a heterogeneity of good ideas, degrowth and non-scalability.

## **6. A ‘sustainability paradigm’ for developing education for sustainability**

The above, final discussion concretised the question that had been running through the conference: how to formulate a method for developing education for sustainability that was itself based on a sustainability paradigm? As Tsing put it, one based on good ideas, heterogeneity, degrowth and non-scalability; or as Paulsen envisaged, ‘a step-by-step mosaic of change’ based on many sites of critical thinking and experimental practices. During the different conference sessions, other participants had also offered insights and experiences that provide the ingredients for such an approach.

In summary, the conference had identified that education for sustainability would:

- combine the two facets:
  - knowledge about what’s happening in the world (scientific or disciplinary knowledge)
  - the ability to bring about change (social, organizational, activist skills).
- be aware of the need for a holistic approach to interacting environmental, economic and social spheres (some form of inter-disciplinarity) in a context of ‘wild’ problems

- encourage students, academics and staff to foster a heterogeneity and diversity of ideas and practices, addressing the characteristics above but appropriate to the context of their own discipline, institution and sphere of action
- share ideas and experiences and spread them horizontally like mycorrhizal networks, without scaling up bottom-up initiatives to try and reach tipping points, or imposing strategies from the top down
- take a whole-system approach, seeing how small and detailed activities relate to larger organisational, environmental or social systems; and engaging in whole-institution change, including systems of management and governance
- combine urgency with awareness that consistent development needs to be sustained over the long term.

## **7. How to turn the sustainability paradigm into action at faculty level?**

Sue Wright is tasked with starting the process of developing education for sustainability across the ARTS faculty at Aarhus University by the end of 2024. Here, ideas from the conference about how to engage in educational development within a sustainability paradigm are drawn together into a programme for action:

### **7.1 Identify existing initiatives**

- a. Identify the numerous, often isolated, heterogeneous sustainable-education initiatives in which students, academics and staff are already engaged. These include both formal educational courses and other activities on campus (e.g. students' movements; AU garden)
- b. Bring the students, academics and staff involved in these initiatives into contact with each other to exchange ideas and experience, and mobilise mutual support and excitement.

- c. Use an intermediate organisation (not part of the university’s decision-making structure) to foster these exchanges between individual initiatives.<sup>6</sup> An example from the conference is SDU’s centre for eco literacy, and examples from AU would be the Centre for Higher Education Futures (CHEF) working with the Centre for Environmental Humanities (CEH) and possibly iClimate.
- d. Map other organisations that can support the transition to education for sustainability and involve them in refining and if possible, funding, a programme of educational development. Examples include:
- National organisations (Novo Nordisk Foundation, Uddannelse for Bæredygtig Uddannelse (UBU), EHJUSTICE, Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse, Pro-Deans’ Environmental Humanities on a Mission)
  - Kommunes and industries (e.g. fashion industry) and NGOs (e.g. Mellemløst Samvirke) that are calling for graduates knowledgeable about sustainability and how to navigate the issues.
  - Research centres (mentioned above) and individual researchers specialising education for sustainable development (AU, KU, KP, VIA)



Slide of Wright’s initial mapping of organisations relevant to sustainable education

<sup>6</sup> This was the advice of Jeppe Læssøe, Emeritus Professor of education with vast experience of participatory education and sustainability, whose input helped shape the work of the UBU section on higher education.

## **7.2 Build on existing initiatives and expertise**

- a. With the support of the pro-dean, generate a faculty wide debate about inspiring ideas, practical considerations and organisational constraints involved in developing education for a green transition and equitable future. Create a working group of students, academics and staff from each institute to develop these ideas for discussion with leadership and outside organisations, and present the results in an ARTS-wide conference.(Consider whether DPU could be commissioned to design and run this for the faculty, or whether to approach We Do Democracy or Democracy X).
- b. The working group could involve the following steps:
  - Presenting and adding to the mapping to create a shared understanding of current initiatives in education for sustainability across ARTS faculty
  - Share ideas for students' current needs and all participants' aspirations for sustainable education, bringing together all the skills across the faculty that contribute to education for (e.g. the prefigurative power of theatre – staging sustainable education).<sup>7</sup>
  - Discuss ways to combine the facets of sustainable education
    - i. Disciplinary knowledge about problems facing the planet (how to combine depth of knowledge of one discipline with familiarity, and an ability to engage with, other disciplines across the interacting spheres of environment, economy and society?)
    - ii. Abilities to bring about change (e.g. *wirkmächtigkeit*, collaboration between students and with teachers, project management, systems thinking, dealing with wicked problems, uncertain futures, changing contexts and job markets)

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<sup>7</sup> This could also draw on work on discourses about the 'Mission for the Humanities' in universities that are currently being developed separately by Humanities' Pro-Deans for research and the Green Youth Movement.

- Work out ways to achieve these ideas in practice, for discussion with Pro-dean e.g.
  - i. Student-led teaching (inspired by Humboldt and Maastricht Universities)
  - ii. Using existing optional courses and making them available across the faculty
  - iii. Exploring whether current changes to candidate education can be an opportunity to develop faculty-wide modules on sustainability.
- Formulate a ‘bottom up’ strategy that builds on the ideas and energies of students, staff and academics, that aims to equip students to work for a green and just transition, and that is supported by the leadership.

### **7.3 Institutional developments**

- a. Develop a faculty-wide annual fund for small grants for academics and students to devote time to developing educational initiatives for sustainability (inviting them to engage with but not be confined by the features of education for sustainability identified above). Each project to use disciplinary research methods to design, record, analyse and report their project’s process and outcomes. Disseminate succinct reports horizontally among academics and students to inspire new proposals, using skills in humanities to adapt ideas to new contexts, and to form a community of practice. Decanate to celebrate the results annually.<sup>8</sup>
- b. Work through educational committees at programme, institute and faculty levels to see how they identify opportunities and challenges for supporting and spreading disciplinary, pedagogic and didactic approaches to sustainable education over the next 5 years.

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<sup>8</sup> This model is based on Wright’s successful experience of running a discipline- and research-based programme of educational development as Director of the UK’s Centre for Learning and Teaching – Sociology, Anthropology and Politics (C-SAP) .

- c. Institutionalise the position of an educationalist to sustain these educational and institutional developments (a and b above) across the faculty (DPU has several appropriate people).
- d. Draw on university resources, including Centre for Education Development, to work out how to link bottom-up initiatives to university systems and management. Without imposing top-down strategies, how to find ways for leadership to sustain the spread of students' and academics' initiatives?<sup>9</sup> (CED could also use and disseminate ARTS faculty's experience of sustainable education across the university in the adjunkt pædagogikum).
- e. Support students if they develop plans e.g. for a Sustainability Office (inspired by Humboldt and Maastricht Universities).
- f. Draw on the academic capacities of the Centre for Environmental Humanities to support the development of course content and facilitate research-based teaching that explicitly integrates arts/humanities thinking within interdisciplinary instruction.
- g. Using a whole-sector approach, identify any changes in the government's funding or governance of higher education that needs changing to achieve the transformation to education for sustainability.

The aim of this process is to develop a bottom-up strategy for sustainable education (green and just transition) that responds to the needs, ideas and initiatives of students, academics and staff and that is supported, facilitated (and owned) by the leadership. It works mainly by using and tweaking existing institutional structures and identifying any institutional changes needed to sustain these developments in the longer term.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, this could draw on CED's work on entrepreneurial education (Shumar and Robinson 2018 and 2019).



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