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Chapter 23
Towards an increasing institutionalization of inner development goals: From individual to culture and system transformation

Abstract: The Global Leadership for Sustainable Development (GLSD) is the first international capacity-building program based on the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) framework. It supports leaders in developing transformative capacities and skills, and integrating the IDGs into their organizational processes, policies, strategies, and operations, with the ultimate aim to accelerate action towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and build vital networks for culture and system transformation. The first pilot capacity-building program was implemented in 2023; it included high-level decision makers from government, the private sector, civil society, and academia involved in implementing the SDGs in Albania, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Rwanda, and Zambia. In this chapter, we: (1) present how the pilot capacity-building program came about; (2) describe its evaluation process and outcomes; and (3) summarize related key learnings regarding how sustainability leadership and education can become a vehicle for transformation. Based on our results, we provide guidance for designing and assessing sustainability leadership and education programs, which have also guided the second round of GLSD capacity development. We highlight how personal development can support culture and system change, if certain principles are in place. The focus needs to shift from individual education, towards empowering participants to jointly challenge unsustainable social paradigms and systematically mainstream the consideration of inner dimensions and capacities into existing cultures, organizational mechanisms, and structures.

Keywords: capacity building, capacity development, climate leadership, transformational learning, leadership education, sustainability education, transformative capacities, transformative skills, institutionalization, mainstreaming, policy integration, culture change, systems transformation, mindsets, paradigms, worldviews, monitoring and evaluation

Introduction

Little progress has been made since the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were launched in 2015. The dominant policy approaches have failed to generate action at anywhere near the rate, scale, or depth that is needed (IPCC, 2022a, 2022b). This is

largely due to the fact that sustainability challenges have generally been framed as external threats or crises (Leichenko & O'Brien, 2020). Hence, we try to address them with external, primarily technical measures, simply because how we define problems automatically determines our responses (Wamsler & Bristow, 2022). This approach has, in turn, narrowed opportunities for deeper change that tackles the root causes of today's polycrisis (Filho & McCrea, 2018; Wamsler et al., 2021).

A crucial dimension is thus missing from current policy approaches: our inner lives and inner capacities (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2020a, 2021). We have missed asking how we can address the root causes of today's polycrisis and nurture the inner capacities and skills necessary to work effectively together to respond to increasing societal threats (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2020a, 2021).

The Inner Development Goals (IDGs) framework was a response to this insight. The IDGs are a communication tool that advocates for increased consideration of inner, transformative capacities and skills to help accelerate work towards sustainability and regeneration. The framework was co-designed by thousands of experts, practitioners, and scientists (IDGs, 2021) and is linked to other scientific models, such as the inner-outer transformation model (Wamsler et al., 2021).

Global Leadership for Sustainable Development (GLSD) is the first capacity-building program that is based on the IDG framework. It was developed under the IDG initiative and with a range of partners. The program aims to support leaders to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. More specifically, it helps leaders to build vital networks for culture and system transformation through developing inner capacities and skills, and integrate the IDGs into organizational processes, policies, strategies, and operations. A pilot program was launched in 2023. It included high-level decision makers from government, the private sector, civil society, and academia who were involved in implementing the SDGs in Albania, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Rwanda, and Zambia.

A mixed-methods analysis was used to evaluate the GLSD program and its effects on participants' sustainability work. The findings led to the identification of a number of key learnings for future programs that aim to support integrative inner-outer transformation (Rupprecht & Wamsler, 2023; Wamsler, Janss, & Bell, 2023; see also Table 23.1 for a description of the field).

In the following section, we present the origins of the pilot capacity-building program ("The backstory: How the GLSD capacity-building program came about"). Then, we describe the evaluation process and outcomes ("The results: Evaluation process and outcomes of the GLSD"), summarize the key learnings, and describe how they have been adopted in subsequent programs ("Key learnings and essentials for accelerating culture and system change"). We show how sustainability leadership and education can become a vehicle for transformation – if certain key elements or principles are in place. Our results provide guidance for designing and assessing sustainability leadership and education programs, and set a precedent that other training institutions could follow or learn from.

The backstory: How the GLSD capacity-building program came about

Like the IDG framework, the GLSD program has been a collective effort. It has involved close cooperation between academics, leadership experts, and sustainability specialists. The aim of this collaborative effort was to translate the IDG framework, and associated tools, into an engaging and co-creative learning journey.

The story of the GLSD started in 2021, the year when the IDG framework was created, and before the development of the IDG toolkit. In the spring of 2021, the Inner Green Deal piloted a ten-week international Climate Leadership Program (CLP), which was designed, conducted, and assessed in close cooperation with Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS). The program integrated inner and outer dimensions of transformation (Wamsler et al., 2021) and was one of the first of its kind to be run internationally, within private and public institutions. The EU's training institute offered the CLP to staff working for a range of EU institutions, and in the same year it was included in their standard learning package.

CLP participants included a number of leadership experts and facilitators, notably Jan Artem Henriksson (now executive director of the IDG initiative) and Åsa Jarskog (now director for global cooperation of the IDG initiative). Both were familiar with the program through their work with LUCSUS, which had been a formal IDG partner since the very beginning. During the action lab, as part of the CLP program, Jan and Åsa decided to build on their shared leadership development experience and apply insights from the program to the IDGs and related initiatives. Their idea, the GLSD, was born.

Around the same time, other capacity-building initiatives were developed that built on the work of the Inner Green Deal and associated research. Examples include the Mindfulness-Based Sustainable Transformation course, the associated train-the-trainer program, and the first Conscious Food Systems Leadership Program, run by the UNDP and the Conscious Food Systems Alliance (Wamsler et al., 2022). These initiatives sought to integrate knowledge and learning from the previous program(s) and associated scientific assessments (e.g., Ramstetter et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2023). At the same time, all these programs decided to adopt the IDGs as an important communication tool and became part of the associated movement of actors who are pushing for a new, more relational narrative that challenges current unsustainable views, practices, and structures.

At the end of 2022, the GLSD program was launched with the support of the Templeton World Charity Foundation. The foundation fully funded the participation of over 100 sustainability leaders from six countries, and an in-person kick-off event in Rwanda, with representatives from all countries. The online program was first run between February and April 2023, facilitated by Åsa Jarskog (from the IDGs) and Jeroen Janss (from the Inner Green Deal). It was the first of its kind, and scientifically supported and evaluated by Professor Christine Wamsler, LUCSUS.

The close collaboration between the IDG initiative, LUCSUS, and the Inner Green Deal led to important scientific advancements in the field of inner-outer transformation, which has continuously enriched diverse courses and educational programs worldwide. Progress has included, amongst other things: the use of the inner-outer transformation model for designing, monitoring, and evaluation (Wamsler et al., 2021); the identification of key elements and principles to ensure transformation across individual, collective, and systems levels (Wamsler et al., 2024); and the development of ways to systematically institutionalize the consideration of integrative measures that link inner and outer dimensions.

The pilot GLSD program was completed in 2023, and results were presented at the IDG summit in October 2023 (Rupprecht & Wamsler, 2023; Wamsler, Janss, & Bell, 2023). The successful completion of the pilot enabled the launch of a second GLSD in March 2024 (as we write this article), with a greater focus on institutionalization at organizational and inter-organizational levels.

The results: Evaluation process and outcomes of the GLSD

The results of the analysis of the first GLSD found high levels of impact and satisfaction among leaders from government, the private sector, civil society, and academia. The five key results are summarized below.[1]

Key Result 1: Integration of inner and outer transformation for sustainability

The IDG framework proved highly relevant in supporting human flourishing and sustainability work across individual, collective, and systems levels. Participants demonstrated a significant increase in action taking for sustainability. Following the program, 95% of participants reported actively engaging in more SDGs and related actions. In particular, the "Partnerships" goal, relevant to all of the other SDGs, received a significant boost from participation in the program (+22%). The same applied to "Good Health and Wellbeing" and "Sustainable Cities and Communities" (both +22%).

Encouragingly, the results showed a large, post-training increase in the integration of inner dimensions into sustainability-related work processes. By the end of the program, on average, 63% of participants had initiated some, or substantial changes

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[1] This section presents adapted text extracts from Rupprecht and Wamsler (2023) and Wamsler, Janss, and Bell (2023).

in, for example, their organization's strategic priorities, learning and development activities, and stakeholder and project management approaches (see Figure 23.1).
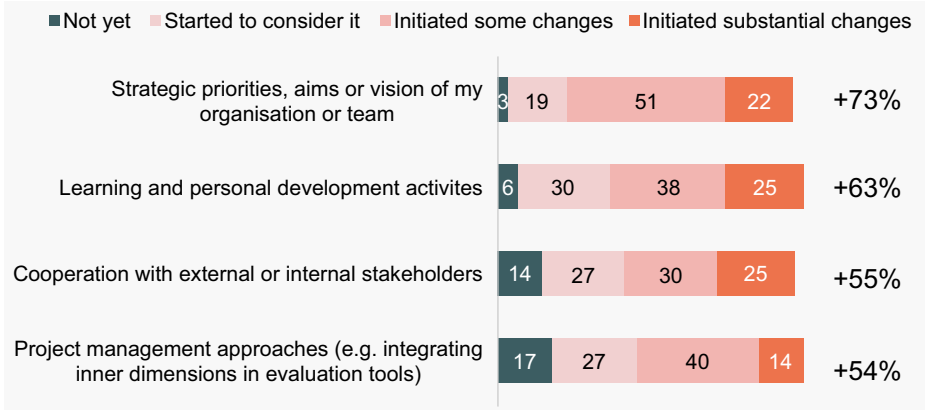

Figure 23.1: Change in integrating inner dimensions into organizational work processes that supported human flourishing and sustainability work across individual, collective, and systems levels. Source: Wamsler et al. (2023).

Key Result 2: Strengthening of inner capacities and skills

All learning activities were found to be impactful, and all of the 23 capacities and skills (e.g., self-awareness, connectedness, and inner compass) were reported as strengthened by some participants (nine each, on average; see Figure 23.2). Participants also expressed strengthened feelings of hope and collective agency, which are crucial to sustaining action.

In addition, the analyses showed that changes in IDGs were highly interrelated: improvements in certain qualities were consistently accompanied by improvements in others.

Key Result 3: Nurturing a foundational mindset of connection for sustainability

The roots of today's sustainability crises lie in a culturally entrenched mindset of separation from others and from nature – even from ourselves (our thoughts, emotions, and bodily feelings; Ives et al., 2023; Rosa, 2021; Scott et al., 2021; Wamsler et al., 2020a; Wamsler & Bristow, 2022). Cultivating a sense of reconnection is thus a vital foundation for sustainability work, as illustrated by the inner-outer transformation model (Wamsler et al., 2021; see Figure 23.5).
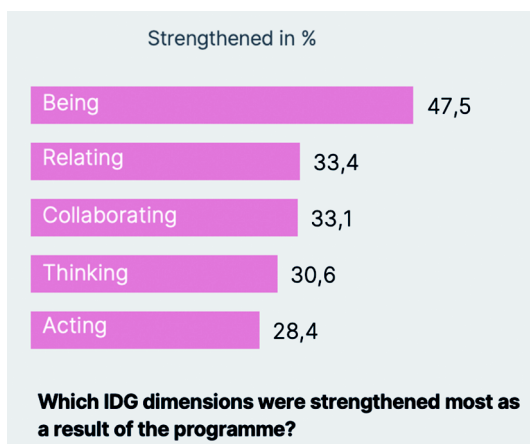
Strengthened in %

Being — 47,5
Relating — 33,4
Collaborating — 33,1
Thinking — 30,6
Acting — 28,4

Which IDG dimensions were strengthened most as a result of the programme?

Figure 23.2: IDGs that were strengthened most as a result of the program. Source: Wamsler et al. (2023).

Against this background, the assessment of the qualitative data indicated that the GLSD program influenced participants' relationship to self, others, and nature in ways that underpin greater connectedness and action taking for sustainability across sectors and scales.

Key Result 4: Increased trust lowers eco-anxiety, unlocking sustainability action

Interestingly, the analysis also showed that increased trust in humanity, post-training, lessened the undermining effect of eco-anxiety, while in turn, lowered anxiety was related to taking increased action at work. This is a crucial outcome, since anxiety around humanity's capacity to cope with climate and other crises is on the rise (Hickman et al., 2021; Ogunbode et al., 2022; Wamsler, 2020; Wullenkord & Ojala, 2023) and a significant proportion of participants linked this worry to underperformance at work.

Key Result 5: Program quality and satisfaction

Participants also reported very high levels of satisfaction with the program and its delivery with respect to key objectives, and 97% said they would recommend it. As one participant noted: "This program should be for every human on the planet."

The success of the first GLSD program led to support for further programs, and the inclusion of new countries (the 2024 GLSD 2.0 was split in two: a Spanish-language program for Latin America, and an English-language program for Europe, Africa, and Asia).

The opportunity to extend the program was also used to reflect on the evaluation's outcomes, possible improvements, and what, ultimately, should be the focus of programs that link inner and outer transformation for sustainability. Discussions with participants and the GLSD program team (facilitators, donors, and researchers) highlighted that out of all of the outcomes, the most valuable and impactful one was Key Result 1. Key Result 1 refers to the integration and institutionalization of inner and outer change for sustainability, and related changes that were initiated across individual, collective, and systems levels. Emergent research on inner-outer transformation had been increasingly calling for more attention to be paid to these aspects (IPBES, 2024; IPCC, 2022a, 2022b; Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2020a, 2021; Wamsler & Osberg, 2022).

GLSD 2.0 was launched in March 2024 and incorporated the outcomes and new understanding presented above. Accordingly, in GLSD 2.0 participants are asked to join the program in teams with colleagues, and work and experiment from the very start of the program with integrating inner and outer change in their organizations, and advancing the ecosystem of relevant organizations to create a field of change.

Key learnings and essentials for accelerating culture and system change

Findings from the GLSD and Inner Green Deal programs (Mindfulness-Based Sustainable Transformation, CLP, those for the EU and UNDP), have advanced knowledge on the complex intersection between sustainability, inner development, and transformation, from the individual to the global level. In addition, they provide insights that can be used to design leadership and education programs to accelerate work towards the SDGs. They can be summarized as follows:[2]

Leadership courses that aim to accelerate sustainability transformation must support participants in addressing the impacts, drivers, and causes of today's polycrisis through integrative approaches that link inner and outer dimensions of transformation across sectors and levels. This, in turn, requires providing: (1) a comprehensive understanding of the nature of today's polycrisis in a complex, constantly changing world, and one's role in it; (2) safe spaces and holistic methods for exploring inner dimensions and nurturing transformative capacities on a continuous basis; (3) practical guidance on how to design and implement integrative measures that address individual, behavioral, culture, and system change (and associated power structures) in

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2 This section of the chapter is adapted from Wamsler et al. (2023), with input from Rupprecht & Wamsler (2023) and other program evaluations conducted by the Contemplative Sustainable Futures Program at LUCSUS (www.contemplative-sustainable-futures.com).

combination; and (4) ensuring quality education through the explicit consideration of ethics, the role of facilitators, and adequate monitoring and evaluation (see Figure 23.3). Together, these four essentials, or key ingredients, can support individual, collective, and planetary well-being, flourishing, and regeneration by covering all aspects of inner-outer transformation (ontology, epistemology, praxis, ethics) as identified in Ives et al. (2023). In the following, we describe the four essentials in more detail.
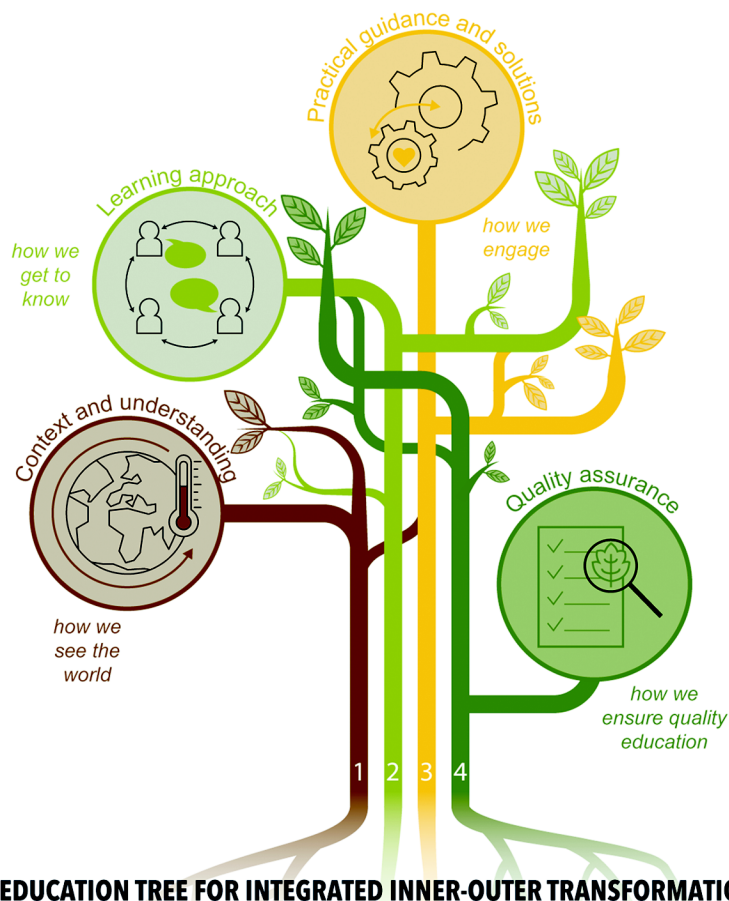

EDUCATION TREE FOR INTEGRATED INNER-OUTER TRANSFORMATION

Figure 23.3: Education tree for integrated inner-outer transformation. Adapted from Wamsler et al. (2024). The figure visualizes the four essential pieces for holistic learning and understanding to accelerate sustainability and transformation. They involve: (1) how we see the world; (2) how we get to know; (3) how we engage; and (4) how we ensure quality and equity considerations across all aspects. Together, they support well-being, flourishing, and regeneration across scales—by covering all of the key contributions of inner-outer transformation.

Essential 1: A comprehensive understanding of today's polycrisis and our role in it

Analyses of the different programs made it clear that participants' starting points, and the challenges they encounter during the courses, are often a reflection of modern society's dominant social paradigm (e.g., self-centered individualism, dualist thinking, techno-optimism, overwhelm, exhaustion, and stress; Kilbourne, Beckmann, & Thelen, 2002; Scott et al., 2021). It is crucial to make related aspects explicit if we seek to accelerate the uptake of participants' learning into their work contexts, which may operate under related norms.

Our assumptions about the nature of reality shape how problems are defined and understood, and the mental models or theories of how change comes about. They influence how we understand our own agency to support change, and how and why each of us matters in responding to global crises. Providing related information is thus crucial and requires understanding the following key aspects that relate to the ontological dimension of inner-outer transformation for sustainability:
– the nature of today's societal crises;
– the nature of the complex systems involved; and
– the associated mind-sustainability nexus.

The resultant theory of change (latent human potential, the interdependence of inner/outer and individual/collective/system phenomena) is contrary to current mainstream thinking (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler & Bristow, 2022). Providing related understanding is thus essential.

There is mounting evidence that today's societal crises have one common denominator, or root cause: they are a reflection of an inner human crisis of disconnection, separation, or alienation from self, others, and nature, which is itself grounded in modern society's social paradigm and associated life forms (Rosa, 2021). This paradigm is based on the understanding that our thinking mind is separate from our feelings and bodily emotions, that we are all separate from each other, that some humans are superior to others, and that we humans are separate and superior to the rest of the natural world (Scott et al., 2021). Addressing sustainability crises thus requires a shift away from these exploitative paradigms to more relational and regenerative ones (Böhme, 2023; Walsh, Böhme, & Wamsler, 2021; West et al., 2020).

The shift involves engaging in complex systems, both individually and collectively (see the second point listed above). Engaging in complex systems is, however, challenging, because they are fundamentally unlike machines (and thus contrasting modern society's dominant social narrative). Complexity research indicates that complex systems undergo a self-organization process that ultimately shapes the state they are in, and which emerges from relationship patterns within the system (Slingo et al., 2008). Consequently, system transformation concerns changing relationship patterns,

and requires addressing the human, inner dimensions that influence the quality of these relationships and help people to (re)connect.

Addressing such dimensions requires, in turn, an in-depth understanding of the mind-sustainability nexus (the third aspect listed above). Related research shows that this nexus is fourfold, with the mind being: (1) a root cause, or driver of today's crises (see the first point above); (2) a victim of these crises (e.g., seen in increasing levels of eco-anxiety); and (3) a barrier for adequate action (e.g., due to cognitive biases and a related increase in polarization); which together result in (4) a vicious cycle of deteriorating individual, societal, and planetary well-being (Wamsler & Bristow, 2022; see Figure 23.4). At the same time, research reports that humans possess the innate capacity for deep conscious connection (Hunecke, 2018; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Scott et al., 2021), which can help to reverse this vicious cycle and start a virtuous cycle that supports flourishing across all scales (Figure 23.4).

Taken together, the described aspects provide an understanding of how and why each of us matters in responding to today's polycrisis. They illustrate the need to move from an understanding of people being "agents to be changed" to being "change agents". They also show that tapping into this potential is about supporting human capacities and conditions for (re)connection. Such capacities are called transformative capacities, or Inner Development Goals, and they have been systematized in emergent research into five broad clusters (Inner Development Goals, 2021, 2022; Wamsler et al., 2020a, 2021; see Essential 2).

Essential 2: Integrative methods for exploring inner dimensions and nurturing transformative capacities

The understanding presented under Essential 1 means that change cannot be approached using the same mindsets and conceptions of knowledge that underpin it. It necessitates a different approach to epistemology (i.e., the inclusion of different kinds of knowledge systems, different approaches to knowledge development, how we come to know) and weaving together diverse perspectives (see Figure 23.3).

Sustainability leadership and education thus rely upon the following aspects that relate to the epistemological dimension of inner-outer transformation:

– a balanced mix of methods that support holistic learning and (re)connection (through cultivating cognitive, social, emotional, relational, and ethical capacities/ qualities); which, in turn, requires
– the adjustment of methods for inner development to the context of sustainability;
– the consideration of the foundational role of mindfulness- and compassion-based methods; and
– a process that supports repeated, regular, and continuous practice, together with communities of practice, to foster fields of change.
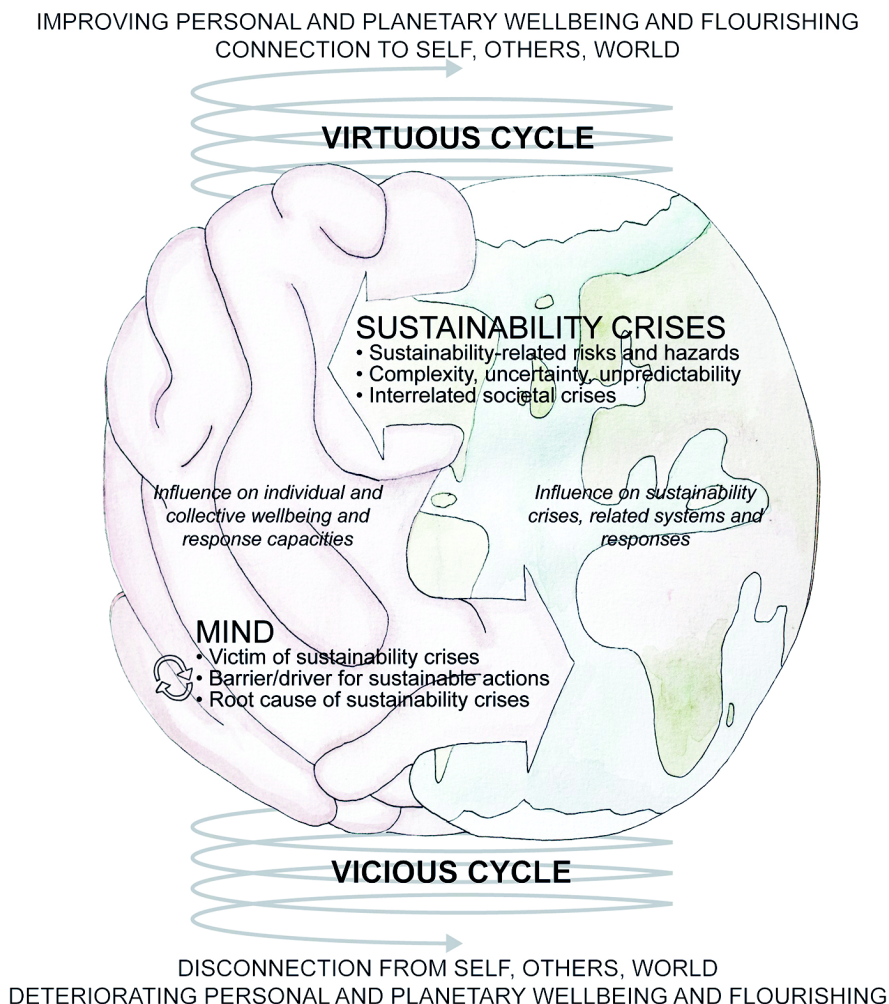
IMPROVING PERSONAL AND PLANETARY WELLBEING AND FLOURISHING
CONNECTION TO SELF, OTHERS, WORLD

VIRTUOUS CYCLE

SUSTAINABILITY CRISES
• Sustainability-related risks and hazards
• Complexity, uncertainty, unpredictability
• Interrelated societal crises

*Influence on individual and
collective wellbeing and
response capacities*

*Influence on sustainability
crises, related systems and
responses*

MIND
• Victim of sustainability crises
• Barrier/driver for sustainable actions
• Root cause of sustainability crises

VICIOUS CYCLE

DISCONNECTION FROM SELF, OTHERS, WORLD
DETERIORATING PERSONAL AND PLANETARY WELLBEING AND FLOURISHING

Figure 23.4: The intersection of mind and sustainability. Source: Adapted from Wamsler & Bristow (2022), cf. Janss et al. (2023), Wamsler (2022).

Based on a comprehensive understanding of how, and why, each of us matters in responding to societal crises (Essential 1), sustainability education and leadership require applying methods that, in combination, can support holistic learning (CCCE, 2019) and restore the connection to self, others, and nature in an integrative way.

Increasing scientific evidence shows that humans possess the innate capacity for deep conscious connection, and that it can be restored or strengthened through certain methods, and throughout our lifetime (CCCE, 2019; Hunecke, 2018; Scott et al., 2021; Waldinger & Schulz, 2023). In the context of sustainability, this involves nourishing all clusters of transformative capacities and addressing all facets of the mind-

sustainability nexus (see Essential 1). Applied in such a way, these actions can become a vehicle for transformation across individual, collective, and systems levels. Restoring conscious connection increases not only personal resilience amid adversity, but also our chances of addressing the root causes of today's sustainability crises and mobilizing change.

Relevant methods include contemplative, psychological, cognitive-behavioral, and ethical communication and learning approaches, and creating safe (and brave) spaces to allow related engagement and reflection (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Mar et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2020a). In this context, our results also support other studies that indicate the foundational role of mindfulness and compassion practices (CCCE, 2019; Wamsler, 2018; Wamsler et al., 2018). If we trace the roots of the climate crisis through a culturally entrenched story of separateness (Essential 1), the relevance of mindfulness and compassion becomes obvious, as both can foster fundamental aspects of connection, and thus revert from a vicious to a virtuous cycle of individual, collective, and planetary well-being (Wamsler, 2018; Wamsler & Bristow 2022).

At the same time, our analyses of the different programs showed that engaging in inner and outer dimensions, or on IDGs and SDGs separately, misses the point, and highlights the importance of adapting methods for inner development to the context of sustainability. Other research confirms that we should not assume that methods for inner development automatically, or quickly, translate into sustainability advocacy, and action on a broader scale (Scott et al., 2021; Wamsler, 2019; Wamsler et al., 2021).

Against this background, our research shows how mindfulness-based approaches can be oriented towards sustainability. Similar to the way they have been adapted to the context of stress and depression, in the form of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; Grossman et al., 2004; Woods et al., 2021) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT; Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2012), our research provided guiding principles for (developing the concept of) mindfulness-based sustainable transformation (Mindfulness-Based Sustainable Transformation). The latter involves linking mindfulness more closely to compassion, nature-based approaches, and reflection practices (such as reflective dyads) that proved to be particularly relevant in developing more relational perspectives, beliefs, and engagement (Ramstetter et al., 2023; Kok & Singer, 2017). In addition, there is a need to build (back) normative mindfulness ethics that were stripped away when the approach was popularized for the Western context, as they are crucial for the context of sustainability and associated intrinsic, universal values (Stanley, 2012; Walsh, 2016).

Finally, our research demonstrates that inner-outer transformation is a continuous process. Thus, processes must be in place to help participants engage regularly and continuously in the offered methods and practices both throughout the program and after it ends. In particular, when participants come from different organizations or communities, targeted efforts are required to sustain momentum. The establishment of communities of practice, study groups, and book circles are concrete exam-

ples of measures that can help participants to keep their practices and engagement alive (Stuckey & Smith, 2004).

Essential 3: Practical guidance on how to design and implement integrative measures for individual, behavioral, culture, and system change

The results of our research make it clear that inner-outer transformation is not a purely introspective exercise that is an alternative or complement to tangible, practical change. In fact, our research shows that understanding and experiencing how and why each of us matter, and nourishing transformative capacities through different methods and practices (Essentials 1 and 2), is insufficient to adequately translate participants' learning into concrete measures across sectors and scales. Our findings indicate that explicit guidance is required on how to design and implement integrative approaches that link inner and outer dimensions of sustainability across sectors and scales, which relates to the praxis dimension of inner-outer transformation (cf. Ives et al., 2023). It involves:

– a collaborative, action-oriented platform for the continuous application of learning to participants' organizations and wider work contexts;
– practical knowledge on how the consideration of human, inner dimensions can be systematically institutionalized/mainstreamed into organizations and organizational ecosystems; and
– the combination of solution-oriented, critical and creative approaches to sustain related engagement.

To avoid an inner-outer dichotomy and dualism, inner work has to go hand in hand with its continuous application to the work context, not only in the final program modules. This important result emerged from both the CLP and the GLSP program (e.g., Rupprecht & Wamsler, 2023), and it has been increasingly considered in subsequent programs (such as the GLSP 2.0 and the Mindfulness-Based Sustainable Transformation course). Participants are now asked to reflect on work-related needs, challenges, and potentials from the beginning of the courses.

Translating learning to participants' work contexts requires specific knowledge and skills regarding how to work with others to systematically integrate/mainstream the consideration of sustainability and associated inner dimensions within existing organizational mechanisms and structures. Whilst linking individual, behavioral, culture, and system change is crucial for supporting transformation, integrative approaches were rarely featured in participants' reported projects and engagement. Isolated changes in organizations' strategic priorities, aims or visions, working structures, communication, project management approaches, staff development, monitoring, evaluation, or human and financial resource allocation is not sufficient and, therefore, guid-

ance on how to design and implement integrative measures across sectors and scales is essential.

Finally, methods that can support a combination of critical and problem-solving approaches (that focus on adequately responding to problems, and what has to be fixed) with more creative approaches (that focus on tapping into people's inner potential and realizing sustainability imaginaries) are, in this context, key to sustaining engagement and transformation (Fritz, 1989; IPBES, 2024; Senge, 1999, 2006; Sharma, 2017).

Essential 4: Quality education through the consideration of differences, ethics, adequate facilitation, monitoring, and evaluation

To adequately implement Essentials 1–3, it is crucial that quality and ethical considerations are taken into account. This involves the following aspects that cut across the ontological, epistemological, and praxis dimensions of inner-outer transformation:
–   the embodied experience of the trainer(s) regarding, for example, relational pedagogies and ethics;
–   the consideration of contextual and individual differences, fostering inclusivity and intercultural learning; and
–   adequate program monitoring and evaluation (including relational, learner-focused, and collaborative approaches).

Our results support research which indicates that trainers themselves play a key role in participants' learning (Mezirow, 2018). The ability to move beyond traditional, teacher-centric pedagogy, towards relational, dialogic, human-centered methods, invite different perspectives, and give a sense of the complexity without overwhelming or confusing participants, is important. Facilitators who lack extensive experience with the offered methods, or an in-depth understanding of today's polycrisis, might do more harm than good to individual well-being and sustainability agendas. Personal burnout, reinforcing either-or propositions in inner-outer work, or preserving business as usual through "fix-it" and "fix-others" approaches that reinforce current unsustainable paradigms are concrete examples (Bentz, O'Brien, & Scoville-Simonds, 2022).

Our results also show that learning is highly personal, multifaceted, and contextual. Offering a diversity of methods and entry points for exploring inner-outer transformation is thus crucial, together with continuously improving and decolonizing pedagogy to foster inclusivity and intercultural learning.

Finally, our research studies also highlight how challenging it is to assess and evaluate leadership and education programs that involve both inner and outer transformation, and distil what contributed to the success of a program. They indicate that current monitoring and evaluation approaches must be adjusted to take account of a

more comprehensive understanding of today's sustainability crises, and the associated theories of change (see Essential 1). The presented approach, based on the inner-outer transformation model and related mainstreaming theory, has proved to be valuable in shedding light on the complexities at play (Figure 23.5; Wamsler et al., 2021;
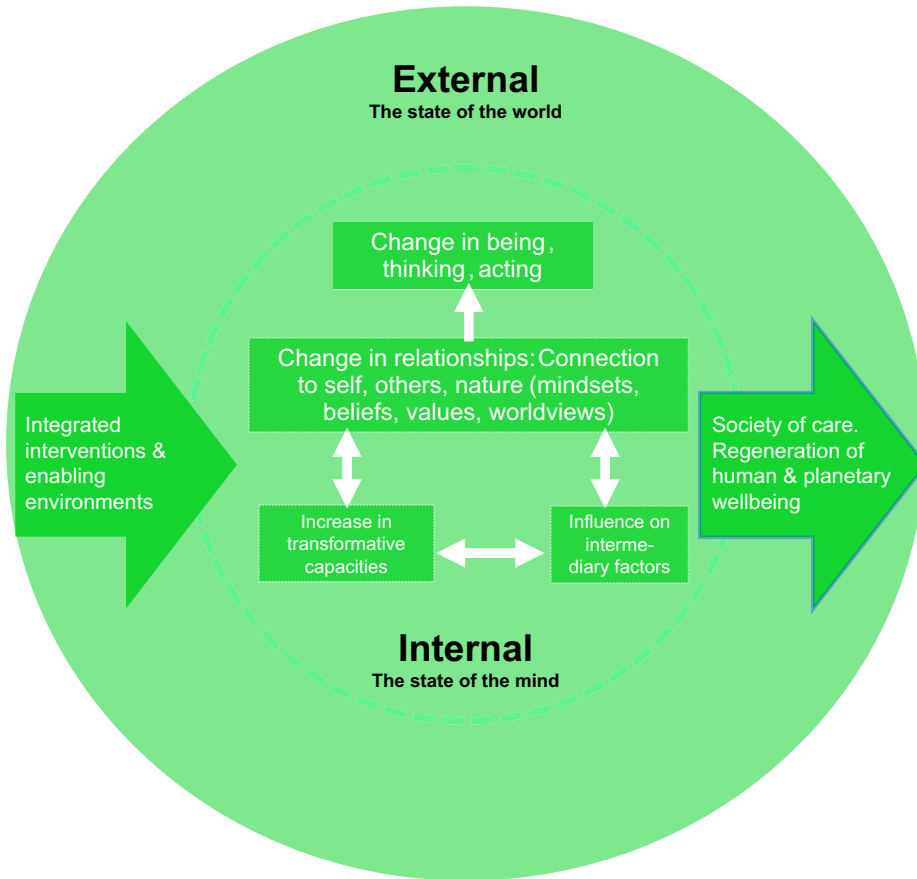

Figure 23.5: The inner-outer transformation model. It provides a roadmap for research, policy, and practice at the interface between inner development, culture, and system change. The model explains how internal and external change processes are interconnected and identifies five clusters of transformative capacities – awareness, insight, connection, purpose and agency—that can be seen as a kind of the scientific counterpart of the IDG framework. Please note that the classification into internal and external, which marks the boundary between what is "inside" (a subject) and what is "outside" (a subject) is artificial and applied for simplicity. Internal dimensions, such as our individual and collective mindsets, values, beliefs, worldviews, and paradigms are, for instance, inter-subjective (e.g., socially defined) and qualities/capacities are enacted (e.g., cultivated and expressed in relationship to other subjects and the world at large). The continuum of sustainability outcomes relates to all levels of change (mindsets/consciousness, culture, behavior, systems), and the associated spheres of transformation (practices, structures, views; cf., IPBES, 2024). Source: Simplified illustration, adapted from Wamsler et al. (2021).

Wamsler & Osberg, 2022). In fact, our analyses showed that changes in relationships were a good proxy for inner-outer transformation and action taking across scales.

Evaluation approaches need to assess what must be changed. Following on from the presented essentials and their inherent logic, the focus should thus be on assessing the quality of relationships and associated integrative approaches and initiatives (across individual, collective, and systems levels) that "rattle" unsustainable social norms, cultures, political systems and structures, whilst concurrently moving from an understanding of people being "agents to be changed" to being "change agents". Accordingly, our studies illustrate that related methods must identify both changes in narratives and levels of mainstreaming across sectors and scales.

At the same time, further research is needed to address the limitations of the reported studies. In particular, longitudinal studies are needed to monitor long-term impacts and change, to better understand how people absorb, internalize, and subsequently integrate new insights into their work and wider context, and what can be done to further support this process.

Conclusions

In this chapter we focused on programs that aim to nourish inner development to support culture and system change and accelerate work towards the SDGs. As a growing number of such programs and courses are being offered to diverse audiences, in and outside academia, it has been high time to critically evaluate their potential to contribute to sustainability outcomes across different scales. Our research addressed this gap.

Our results identified several key elements, or principles, that need to be considered when designing sustainability leadership and education programs that aim to support integrative inner-outer transformation (see Table 23.1 for a description of the field). They are:

– **Context and understanding – how we see the world**: The provision of a comprehensive understanding of the entangled nature of today's sustainability crises in a complex, constantly changing world, and one's role in it. Related transformative capacities of learners and educators include, for instance, interdependency, complexity, and systems thinking.
– **Learning approach – how we get to know**: The ongoing cultivation of safe and brave spaces, and integrative methods for exploring inner dimensions and nurturing transformative capacities. Related transformative capacities of learners and educators include, for instance, presence, self-reflection, compassion, and perspective-taking.
– **Practical guidance and solutions – how we engage**: Practical guidance on how to design and implement integrative measures that link inner and outer dimen-

sions across individual, behavioral, culture, and system change. Related transformational capacities of learners and educators include, for instance, emotional regulation, intrinsic value orientation, sense of agency, co-creation, creativity, active hope, and the courage to act.

– **Quality control – how we ensure quality and ethical considerations across all aspects**: Ensure that quality education is provided through the explicit consideration of ethics, the role of facilitators, and adequate monitoring and evaluation. Related transformational capacities of learners and educators include, for instance, humility, integrity, and equitable thinking.

Together, these four essentials or key ingredients support individual, collective, and, by extension, planetary well-being, flourishing, and regeneration, as they cover all aspects of inner-outer transformation (ontology, epistemology, praxis, ethics; cf. Ives et al., 2023). Self-awareness, personal growth, and the capacity for compassion and service on behalf of the common good become the ultimate goals.

Altogether, our research shows how sustainability leadership and learning can become a vehicle for transformation across scales. It demonstrates that this can be achieved by adapting and combining inner development methods and practices in ways that help participants to challenge current unsustainable social paradigms, and understand how they can systematically mainstream and institutionalize the consideration of human, inner dimensions of sustainability into existing cultures, mechanisms, and structures.

Our findings advance knowledge on the complex intersection between sustainability, inner development, and transformation, and set a precedent that other training institutions could follow or learn from. As we write this chapter (2024), a new edition of the GLSD program is being launched and implemented. While past years have seen important progress, broader and deeper culture and system transformation is needed.

Unfortunately, the current landscape has changed as a result of geopolitical tension and conflicts, electoral changes, and social-economic stagnation (Janss et al., 2023). At the same time, amidst the many challenges we are facing lies an opportunity for growth. Crises can serve as catalysts for transformation, prompting us to adapt and evolve. It is crucial that we capitalize on the current polycrisis to strengthen our collective sustainability efforts through inner development. We need to enhance our ability to be introspective, think critically, foster meaningful connections, collaborate effectively, and take purposeful action. By embracing inner development, and knowing how to integrate inner and outer dimensions of transformation across sectors and scales, we can navigate these turbulent times, and emerge stronger and more resilient in our pursuit of a regenerative future.

Table 23.1: Summary description of the field of inner transformation for sustainability, which can also be denominated as integrated inner-outer transformation or existential sustainability. Note that a comprehensive understanding of this field is key for adequately supporting IDGs for accelerating SDGs.

Description of the theory

Inner transformation for sustainability is an emergent field of research, education, and practice (Ives et al., 2023). The aim is to support integrative approaches that link inner and outer dimensions of transformation across sectors and levels to, consequently, enhance individual, collective, and planetary well-being, regeneration, and flourishing (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021). *Inner dimensions* are defined as individual and collective mindsets, beliefs, values, worldviews, and associated inner capacities/ qualities (cognitive, emotional, relational). The concept recognizes that inner and outer dimensions are never separate, but are co-created (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021). On this basis, inner transformation involves changes in the sphere of human inner dimensions and refers to all kinds of actions at individual, collective, and systems levels that support integrative changes in views, structures, and practices, which address the impacts, drivers, and causes of today's polycrisis, including biodiversity loss (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021).

    The field of inner transformation addresses unsustainable narratives and paradigms of separation (alienation from self, others, nature) that underlie today's polycrisis. They are an integral element of modern life forms, and they are reflected in modern societies' culture, the institutional and political landscape, and associated power structures (Ives et al., 2023; Walsh et al., 2021; Wamsler et al., 2021; Wamsler & Bristow, 2022; West et al., 2024). Inner transformation is thus about enabling intra- and inter-generational, human- and nonhuman relationships, and ways of connecting to self, others, and the world in ways that support integrative action taking across sectors and scales (Ives et al., 2023). Related research, practice, and education recognize: (1) the interdependence of inner and outer phenomena across individual, collective, and systems levels (and associated views, practices, and structures); (2) the potential that is latent within every human to enable transformative change; (3) the need to address inner dimensions across all levels; (4) the possibility to generate inner, transformative capacities/qualities through intentional practices; and (5) the need to include diverse perspectives and expand associated knowledge systems (including indigenous and local) for sustainability (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021). Related key theories and conceptualizations include the IMAGINE framework, integral theory, the three spheres of transformation, the inner-outer transformation model, clusters of transformative capacities/qualities, the mind-sustainability nexus, and the framework for contemplative scientific inquiry, practice, and education (Ives et al., 2020, 2023; O'Brien & Sygna, 2013; Wamsler et al., 2021, 2022).

Summary of how intentional transformative change occurs cont.)

Inner transformation addresses deep leverage points and involves measures and methods that can support more relational and regenerative views, practices, and structures (Ives et al., 2023; Walsh et al., 2021; Wamsler et al., 2021; West et al., 2020). Change is mobilized through integrative measures that link inner and outer dimensions of transformation across sectors and levels (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021). There are complementary ways to activate such integration in order to, ultimately, address mindsets, behavior, culture, and system change in combination (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021, 2022; Wamsler & Bristow, 2022).

Table 23.1 (continued)

Summary of how intentional transformative change occurs cont.)

Measures at individual and collective levels include linking "outer" approaches with activities that help people tap into their inner potential, discover their internalized messages of separation, superiority, and instrumentalization, develop alternative approaches, and create fields of change (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021; Wamsler & Bristow, 2022). This can, for instance, be supported through appropriate working environments, communities of practice, social movements, aesthetics, and transformative leadership and education (Wamsler et al., 2021, 2022). The latter involves holistic, contemplative, psychological, cognitive-behavioral, and ethical learning approaches (e.g., worldview journeys, mindfulness-, arts-, and nature-based methods) that nurture transformative capacities/qualities (e.g., self-reflection, intrinsic value orientation, compassion, individual and collective agency) (Hedlund-de Witt et al., 2014; Scott et al., 2021; Wamsler, 2018; Wamsler et al., 2018, 2021, 2022; Wamsler & Bristow, 2022).

Measures at system level aim to mainstream the consideration of inner dimensions into institutional and political systems to foster more integrative approaches (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021). This institutionalization entails modifying organizations' vision statements, policies, regulations, working structures, and tools for project management, resource allocation, communication, monitoring, and evaluation (Ives et al., 2023; Scott et al., 2021; Wamsler et al., 2020b, 2021; Wamsler & Bristow, 2022).

From an ethical standpoint, it is crucial to highlight that inner transformation is not about saying that we need to fix other people's views. This would turn them into objects to be changed, rather than seeing them as agents of change (Ives et al., 2023; Scott et al., 2021; Wamsler et al., 2021). Instead, it is about creating integrative measures, spaces, and conditions that nurture a culture of inner development, mutual support, and engagement. Building on a foundation of shared universal values and interconnection, the aim is, ultimately, to rattle unsustainable norms and systems (Bentz et al., 2022; Ives et al., 2023; Leichenko & O'Brien, 2020; Wamsler et al., 2020, 2021).

Inner transformation is a dynamic field. It has attracted professionals from many disciplines and domains, and is thus conceptualized using various terms (e.g., inner-outer transformation, inner transition, existential resilience, existential sustainability) (Ives et al., 2023; Wamsler et al., 2021). Actors include governmental, UN, private, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations, educational bodies, citizen groups, and local and indigenous communities (see all previous references).

Source: IPBES (2024), Annex of Chapter 3.

Reflection questions

Based on the presented chapter, we invite you to reflect on the following questions:
1. To what extent have the leadership and capacity development courses you have participated in considered the presented four essentials for integrated inner-outer transformation?
2. What has been missing, and why do you think this has been the case?
3. In your view, what are the root causes of today's polycrisis, and what does that tell you about your role for culture and system transformation?
4. What is it that we need to learn, individually and collectively, to emerge stronger and more resilient from this polycrisis?

5. Reflecting on a person who you admire and who has had a positive impact on sustainability, directly or indirectly, which inner capacities did that person embody?
6. How could you nurture these in yourself, and how could you offer conditions to nurture them collectively at your workplace?
7. To what extent does your organization implement measures that integrate inner and outer dimensions of transformation across sectors and scales?
8. Which operational mechanisms, structures, and tools would need to be modified to better institutionalize the consideration of inner dimensions, and make it a standard procedure?
9. What does moving from an understanding of people being "agents to be changed" to being "change agents" mean for the way we educate and address today's polycrisis?
10. What is the one thing from this chapter that you are most curious to explore, try out, or improve over the next weeks or months?

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