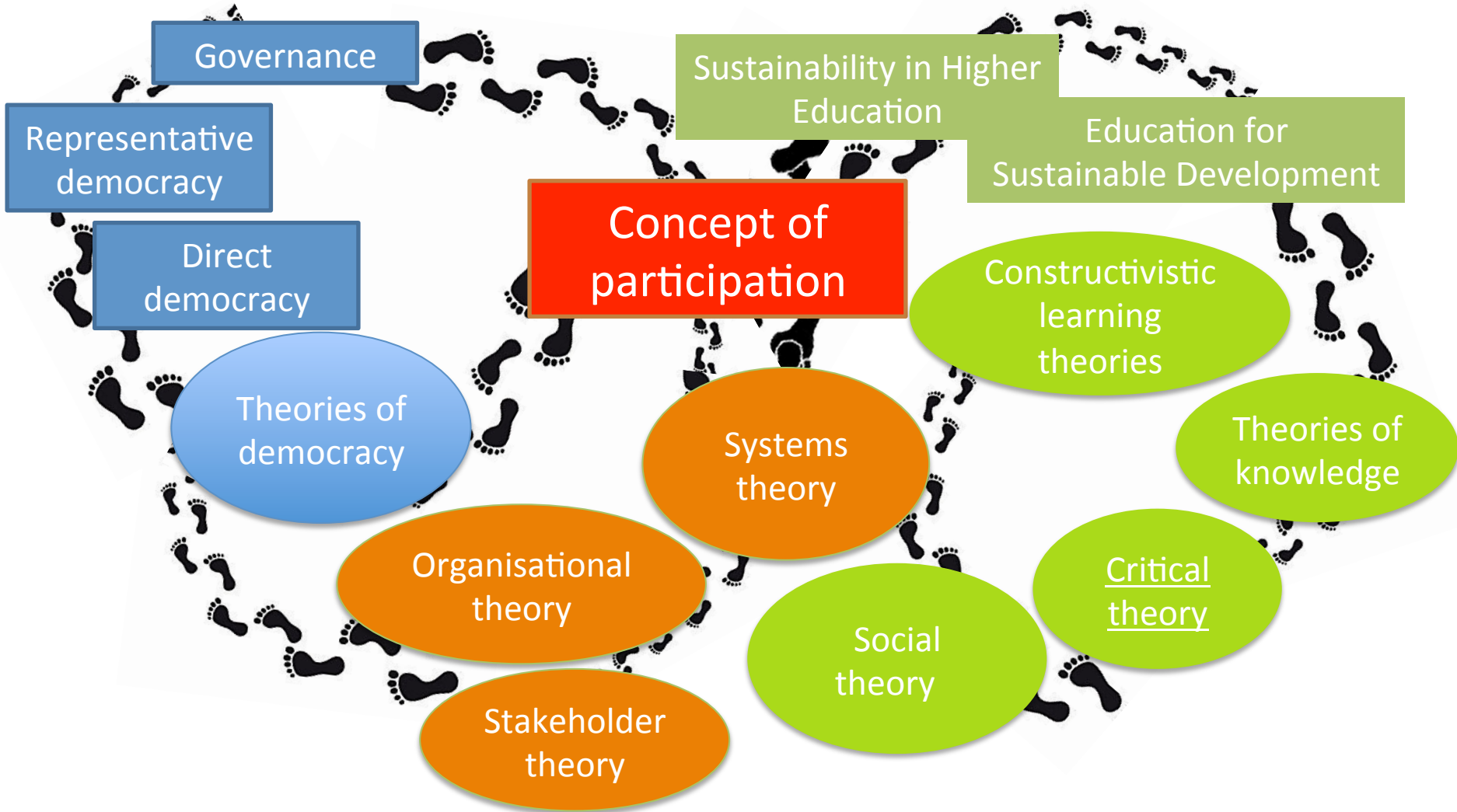# Investigating participation

- Sustainability **declarations**
- Improving **operations** *(e.g. Environmental management systems / Green Buildings etc.)*

➔ *often top-down strategies, or a mix, and sometimes also bottom-up*

Participation and related theories to higher education for sustainable development

Related theoretical concepts

Governance

Representative democracy

Direct democracy

Sustainability in Higher Education

Education for Sustainable Development

Concept of participation

Constructivistic learning theories

Theories of democracy

Theories of knowledge

Systems theory

Organisational theory

Critical theory

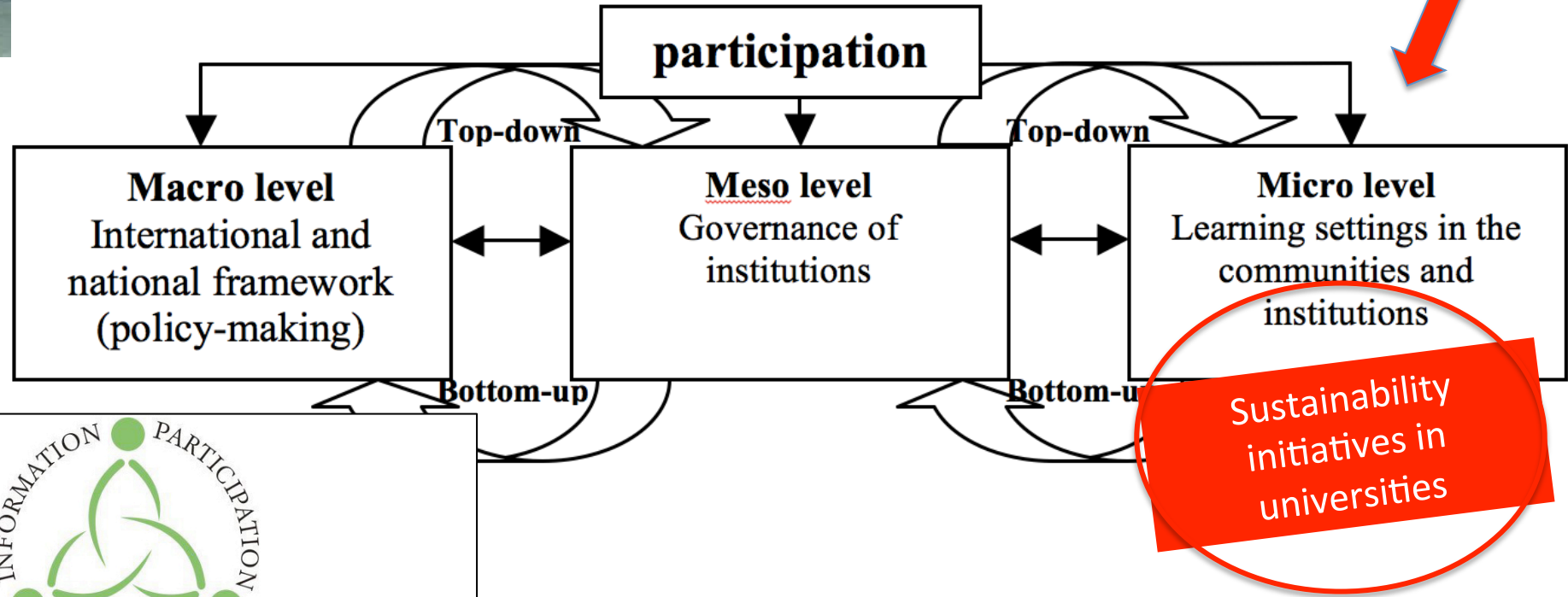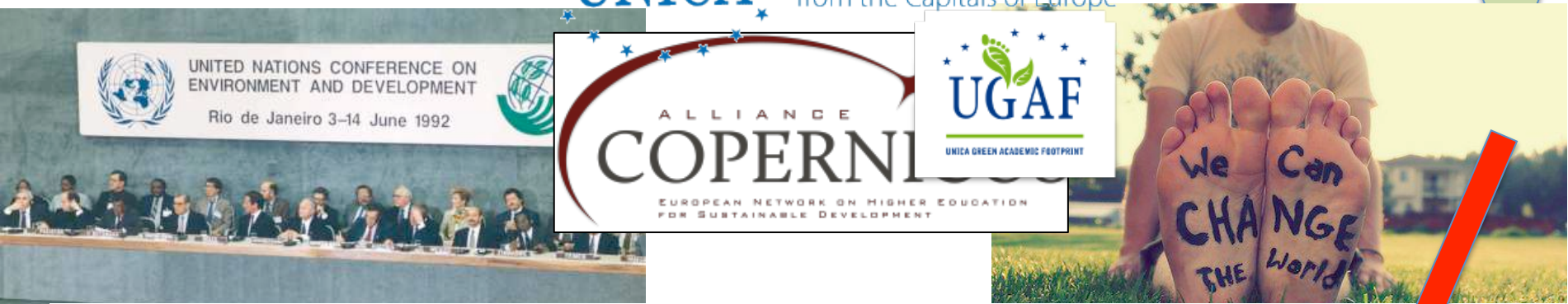Social theory

Stakeholder theory

Fig. 1: Societal levels of participation (adapted from UNCED 1992)

Forms of participation

Individual participation:

choices and actions individuals make as part of their life and that are statements of the society they want to live in

Social participation:

collective, civil or community activities in which individuals are involved in on a regular basis

Public participation:
the practice of consulting and involving members of the public in the agenda setting, decision making and policy forming activities of organizations or institutions
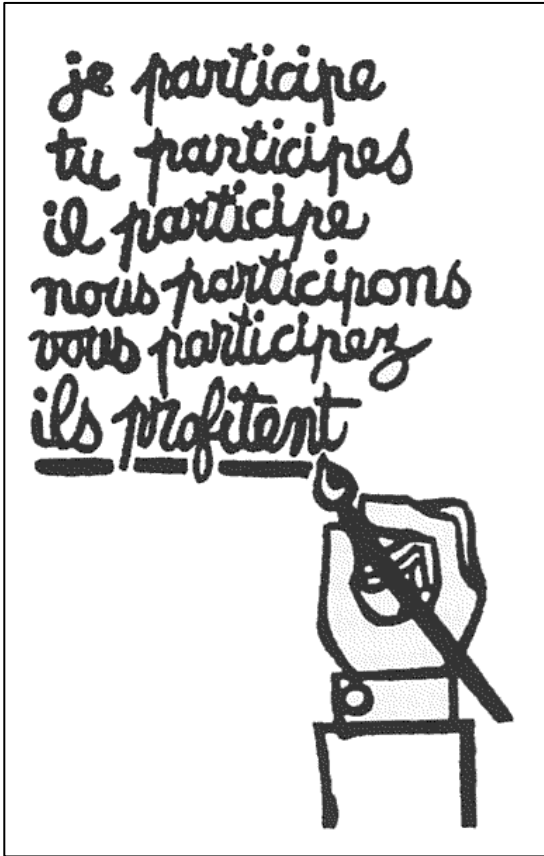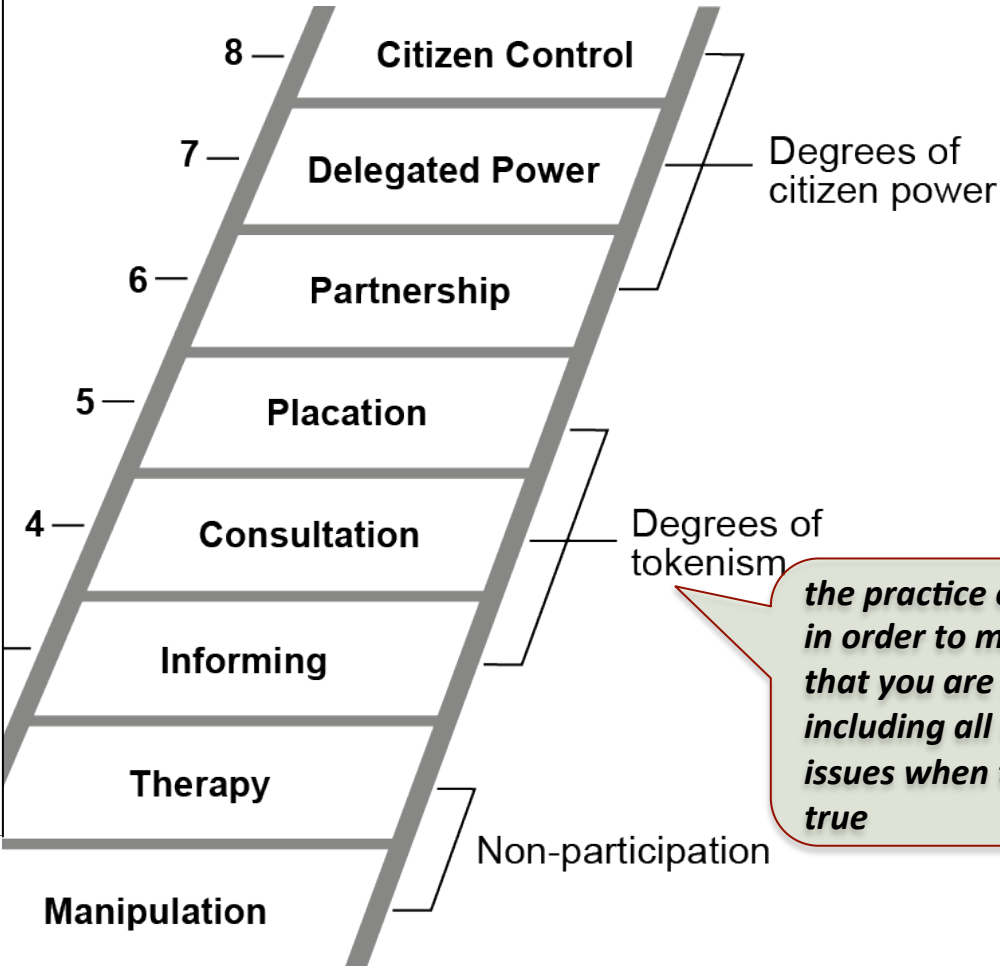
Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969)

Fig. 5: French student poster (in Arnstein (1969));
Text: I participate/ You participate / He participates / We participate / You participate / They profit

8	Citizen Control	} Degrees of citizen power
7	Delegated Power	
6	Partnership	
5	Placation	} Degrees of tokenism
4	Consultation	
	Informing	
	Therapy	} Non-participation
	Manipulation	

the practice of doing something in order to make people believe that you are being fair and including all types of people and issues when this is not really true

Fig. 4: Ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969)

Some insights from my qualitative research

- *What do sustainability practitioners consider as critical success factors for participatory processes in sustainability initiatives?*

Participants in interviews and focus groups*
N=51 (Interviews N=15; Focus groups N = 36)
• 55% female, 45 % male
• Mostly in the age groups of 30-39 years (31%) and 50-59 years (22%)
• Mostly with a post-graduate degree (59% with PhD, 33% with a master, 8% with a bachelor)
• Average working experience in sustainability of 8 years
• Participants came from 22 different countries

* Focus groups consisted of 8-12 participants and were relatively balanced in gender and working experience

CENSE
center for environmental
and sustainability research
Centro de Ecologia Fun

UNIVERSIDADE
AbERTA
www.uab.pt

e für Angewandte Wissenschaften Hamburg
Hamburg University of Applied Sciences

Freie Universität Berlin
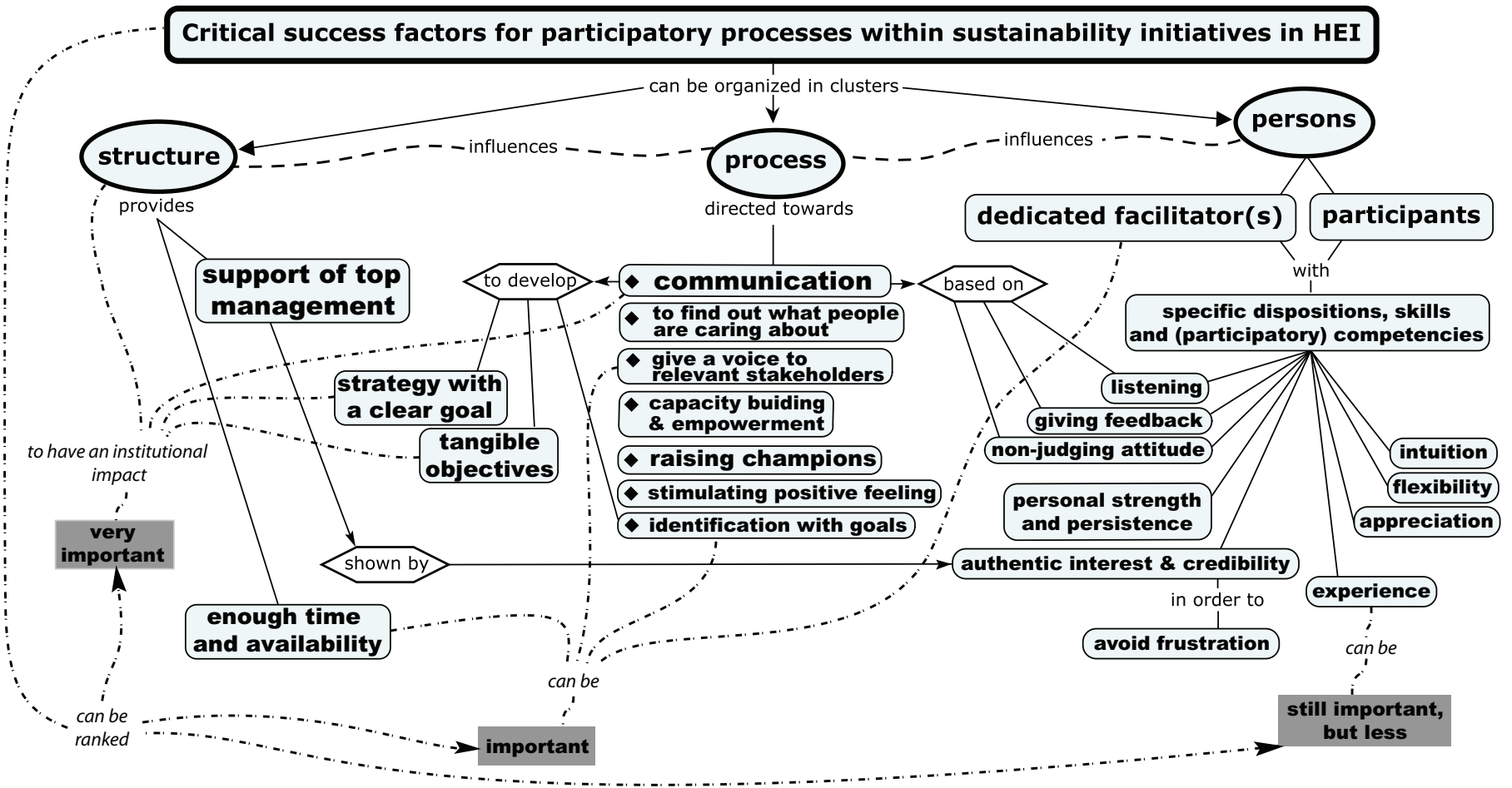
UGAF
UNICA GREEN ACADEMIC FOOTPRINT

Fig. 1: *Cluster of critical success factors for participatory processes within sustainability initiatives (Disterheft et al. 2014)*

Selected findings (continued)

- Regarding <u>critical success factors</u> for participatory approaches, the research underlined (Disterheft et al., 2014):

  - ➢ Empowerment and capacity building as principal desired outcomes
  - ➢ The interdependence with structural institutional conditions and the way persons engage
  - ➢ Ideally, the management supports the initiative and shows authentic interest
  - ➢ The importance of the role of the facilitator
  - ➢ The importance of developing participatory competencies (referring to all stakeholder groups of the academic community), with emphasis on *listening* and *a non-judging attitude*
  - ➢ Humour and fun are critical success factors ☺

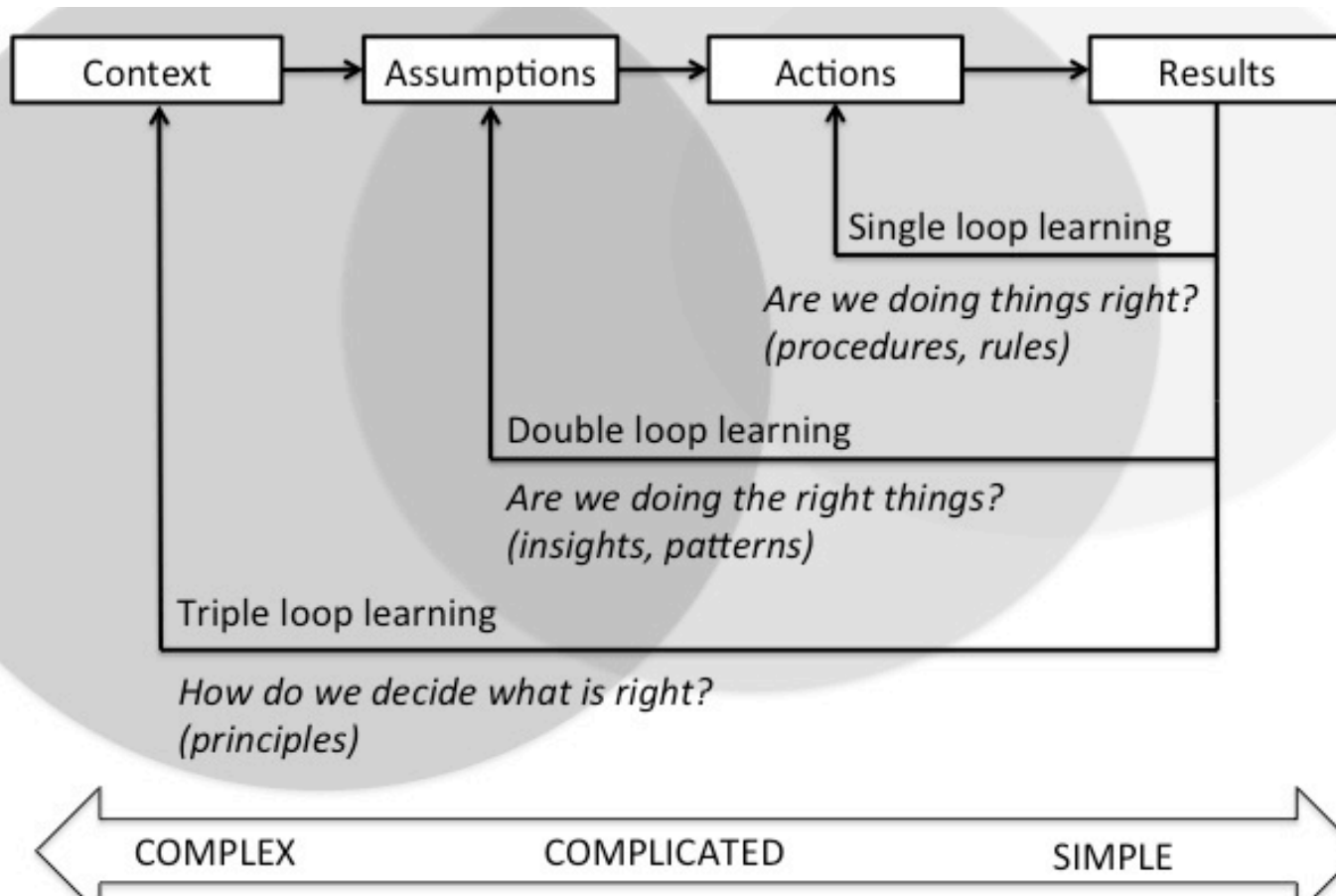# Participatory processes as a transformative learning experience

Fig. 4: Loops of learning (adapted from Argyris and Schoen (1978) and Holmgren (2011))

Participatory processes as a transformative learning experience (continued)

"Transformative learning involves:

➢ "a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings and actions;

➢ "a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world.

➢ a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-location: our relationships with other humans and with the natural world"

(Morrell & O'Connor, 2002, p.xvii)

"Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."
Paulo Freire (1972)

*Sustainability in Higher Education:
Just "equipping people to become more effective vandals of the earth"?*
David Orr (2004)

CENSE
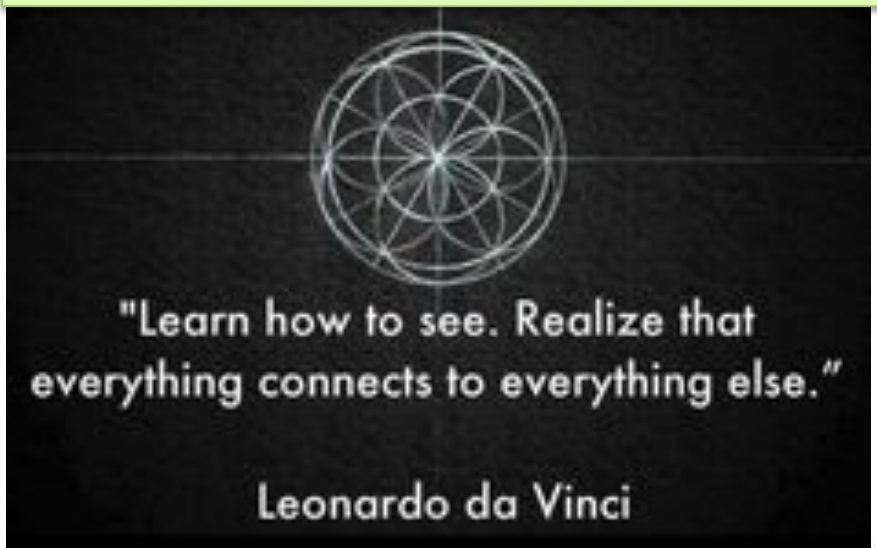center for environmental and sustainability research
Centro de Ecologia Fur

AbERTA
UNIVERSIDADE
www.uab.pt

e für Angewandte Wissenschaften Hamburg
Hamburg University of Applied Sciences

Freie Universität Berlin

UGAF
UNICA GREEN ACADEMIC FOOTPRINT

Broadening participation

Participatory processes within sustainability initiatives in service of the Earth?

"The **volume of education has increased** and continues to increase, yet **so do pollution, exhaustion of resources**, and the dangers of ecological catastrophe. If still **more education is to save us**, it would have to be **education of a different kind**: an education that takes **us into the depth of things**" *(Schumacher, written 1974, published 1997)*
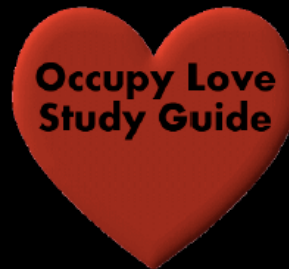
"Learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else."

Leonardo da Vinci

Participatory processes as an ecological imperative

- ❖ Perceiving our world as a whole and ourselves as part of it (system thinking, the web of life (Fritjof Capra))
- ❖ Implying an extended sense of relationality (Reason, 1998), including all living beings
- ❖ Participatory processes that stimulate all forms of knowing (cognitive, emotional, aesthetical)
- ❖ Participatory processes that are in service of the Earth community
- ❖ Including the natural world in the process as it was THE MAIN stakeholder

CENSE
center for environmental and sustainability research
Centro de Ecologia Fun

AbERTA
UNIVERSIDADE
www.uab.pt

e für Angewandte Wissenschaften Hamburg
Hamburg University of Applied Sciences

Freie Universität Berlin

UGAF
UNICA GREEN ACADEMIC FOOTPRINT

Re-connecting to the natural world

Hart Traveller

"I really like nature, because when you go out into nature, it doesn't yell things at you. It doesn't tell you what to do. It doesn't tell you that you're a stupid idiot. It just makes you feel peaceful, and it doesn't make you think of any bad things like hurting yourself or anything. It really helps you out."

Occupy Love Study Guide

Final remarks

Suggestions for answering our question:

✧ Going beyond 'power struggles' and battle of hierarchies

✧ Perceiving the university as a community of practice

✧ Engaging head, hands and heart (not only knowledge that shall lead to actions, but emotions that give purpose and foster motivation)

✧ Universities as learning institutions *(from teaching institution towards a learning community)*

✧ Including the inner and outer dimension of participation : personal (critical) reflection on how do I (want to) relate to my fellow-beings (including those from the natural world)?

✧ **Remembering some critical success factors**

   ✧ Ideally, the management supports the initiative and shows authentic interest

   ✧ The importance of developing participatory competencies (referring to all stakeholder groups of the academic community), with emphasis on *listening* and *a non-judging attitude*

   ✧ The importance of the role of the facilitator

   ✧ Humour and fun are critical success factors ☺

Thank you very much for your attention!
antje.disterheft@uc.pt

References:

Argyris, C., & Schoen, D.A. (1978). *Organizational learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Arnstein, Sherry R. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 35*(4), 216-224. doi: 10.1080/01944366908977225

Davidson, Scott. (1998). Spinning the wheel of empowerment. *Planning*(3), 14-15.

Disterheft, Antje, Caeiro, Sandra, Azeiteiro, Ulisses M., & Leal Filho, Walter. (2014). Sustainable universities – a study of critical success factors for participatory approaches. *Journal of Cleaner Production*(0). doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2014.01.030

Habermas, Juergen. (1985). *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume1: Reason adn the Rationalization of Society. Translated by Thomas Mc Cathy*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Holmgren, Mark (Producer). (2011, 05-05-2014). About Learning. Retrieved from http://www.slideshare.net/markholmgren/about-learning-8100291

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 74*, 5-12.

Morrell, A., & O'Connor, M. (2002) Introduction, in: O'Sullivan, E., Morrell, A. & O Connor, M. (eds) Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning: essays on theory and praxis. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.xv-xx.

Reason, P. (1998). Political, epistemological, ecological and spiritual dimensions of participation. *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies, 4*, 147-167.

Schumacher, E.F. (1997) 'This I believe' and other essays. Dartington: Green Books, (essay first published in 1974)

UNCED. (1992). *Agenda 21, the United Nations Programme of Action from Rio*. New York, NY: UN Department of Public Information.
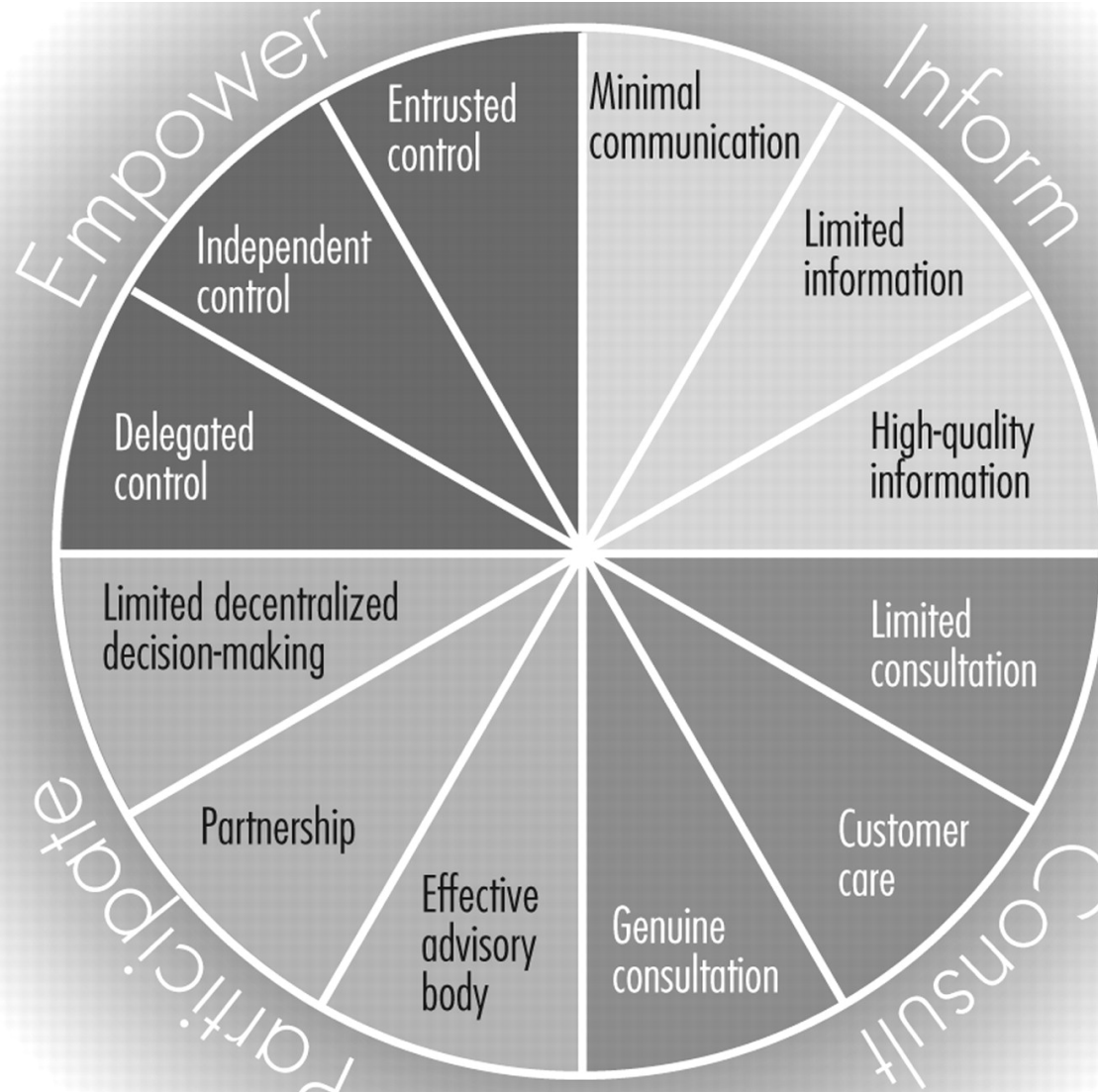
Davidson's Wheel of participation (1998)

Fig. 5: Wheel of participation (Davidson, 1998)

Mezirow's ideal discourse (1997)
(based on Habermas' ideal dialogue (1985))

"Participants are

– allowed full access to information,

– free from coercion,

– allowed equal opportunity to assume various roles of the discourse,

– encouraged to become critically reflective of assumptions,

– empathic and open to other perspectives,

– willing to listen and to search for common ground of synthesis of different points of view, and

– willing to make a tentative best judgement to guide action."

➔ *Changing our habits of mind and points of view*