ESD - from Theory to Practice

Sustainability in Erasmus+: Towards the green transition.

Dr. Antje Brock

2021

Line of Argument

1. **Context**

2. **What is ESD?**

3. **Why we need an Update /timely readjustment of ESD**

4. **Didactical implications**

5. **Discussion**

1. **Context: (E)SD is mature for mainstream**

- Sustainable development accepted by majorities (at level of general principles, not concerning concrete solutions) within few last years

- Megatrend which defines the future for decades to come

- -> What does that deep shift mean for ESD?

General environmental/sustainability awareness: „Umweltbewusstseinsstudie"(UBA 2019, 2021, $n = 2.000$)

- Most important topics: before pandemic 2019: Nr.1 Environmental and climate protection
- 2021: Social justice Nr. 3, environment and climate Nr. 4 (after educational and health system)
- Stated lack of action of responsible sectors: industry, economy; policy
- Stated gap between own awareness and action

2. What is ESD?

„[U]rgent action is needed to address the dramatic interrelated challenges the world is facing, in particular, the climate crisis, mass loss of biodiversity, pollution, pandemic diseases, extreme poverty and inequalities, violent conflicts, and other environmental, social and economic crises that endanger life on our planet. We believe that the urgency of these challenges, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, requires a fundamental transformation that sets us on the path of sustainable development based on more just, inclusive, caring and peaceful relationships with each other and with nature.“(Berlin Declaration 2021)
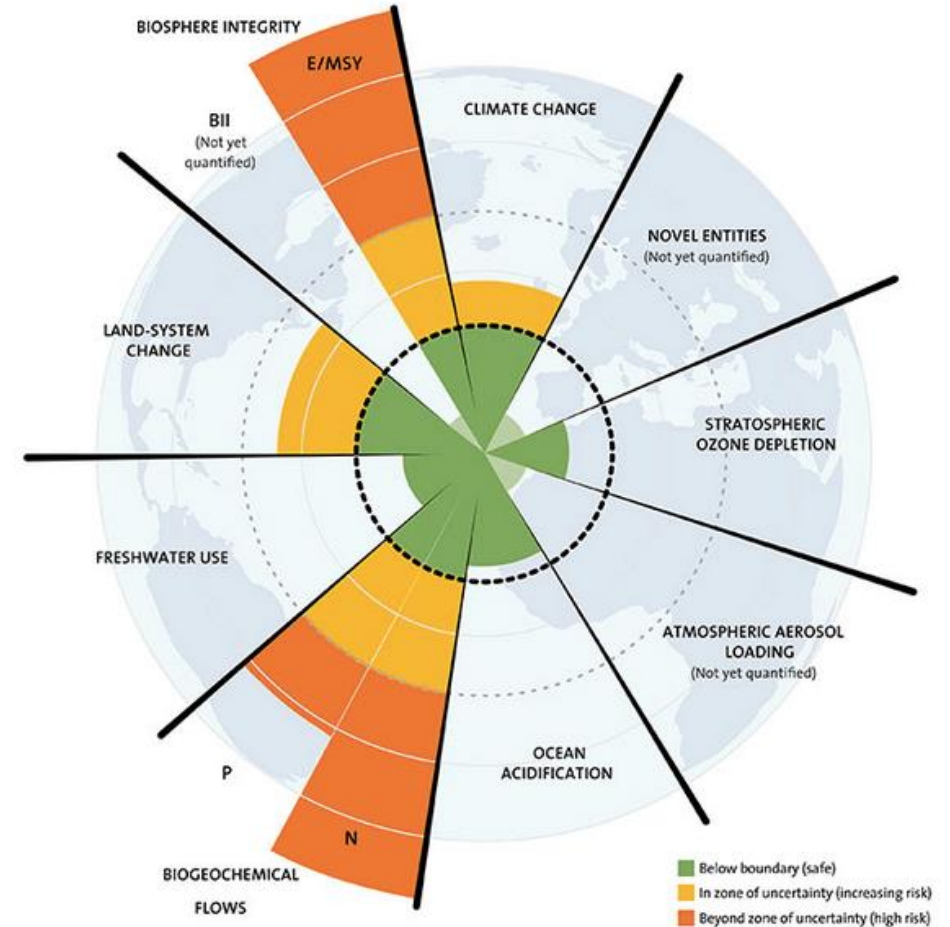
2. What is ESD?

„[C]onfident that education is a powerful enabler of positive change of mindsets and worldviews and that it can support the integration of all dimensions of sustainable development, of economy, society and the environment, ensuring that development trajectories are not exclusively orientated towards economic growth to the detriment of the planet, but towards the well-being of all within planetary boundaries". Berlin Declaration (2021)

With the advisory support of:

German Commission for UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries/the-nine-planetary-boundaries.html

2. What is ESD?

ESD as „foundation for the required transformation, **providing everyone** with the **knowledge, skills, values and attitudes** to become **change agents** for sustainable development. ESD enables learners to develop their **cognitive** and **non-cognitive skills**, such as **critical thinking** and competences for **collaboration, problem solving**, coping with **complexity and risk**, building **resilience**, thinking **systemically and creatively**, and empowering them to **take responsible action** as citizens, fulfilling their right to **quality education**". Berlin Declaration (2021)

2. What is ESD?

„Implement ESD with joint emphasis on the cognitive skills, **social and emotional learning**, and **action competences** for the **individual** and **societal** dimensions of **transformation**, promoting individual behavioural change for sustainable development, equality and respect for human rights as well as **fundamental structural and cultural changes** at the **systemic level** of **economies and societies**, and also promoting the required **political action** to bring about these changes"

Berlin Declaration (2021)

Interrelatedness and Priority action areas

The UN „recognized **ESD** an integral element of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) and a **key enabler of all the other SDGs**"
(UNESCO General conference, 2019, p. 1)

KEY INDICATORS TO MONITOR THE PROGRESS OF *ESD FOR 2030*

Policy

Extent to which legal frameworks and policies are in place to promote ESD.

Learning environment

Extent to which learning environment promotes ESD and its whole-institution approach.

Educators

Extent to which educators are trained to be able to teach ESD and apply whole-institution approaches to ESD in learning situations.
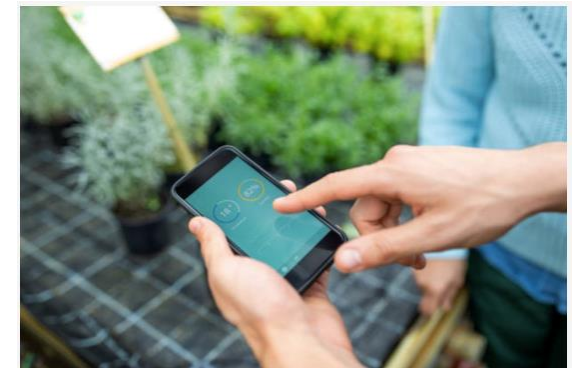
Youth

Extent to which youth are engaged in ESD.

Community

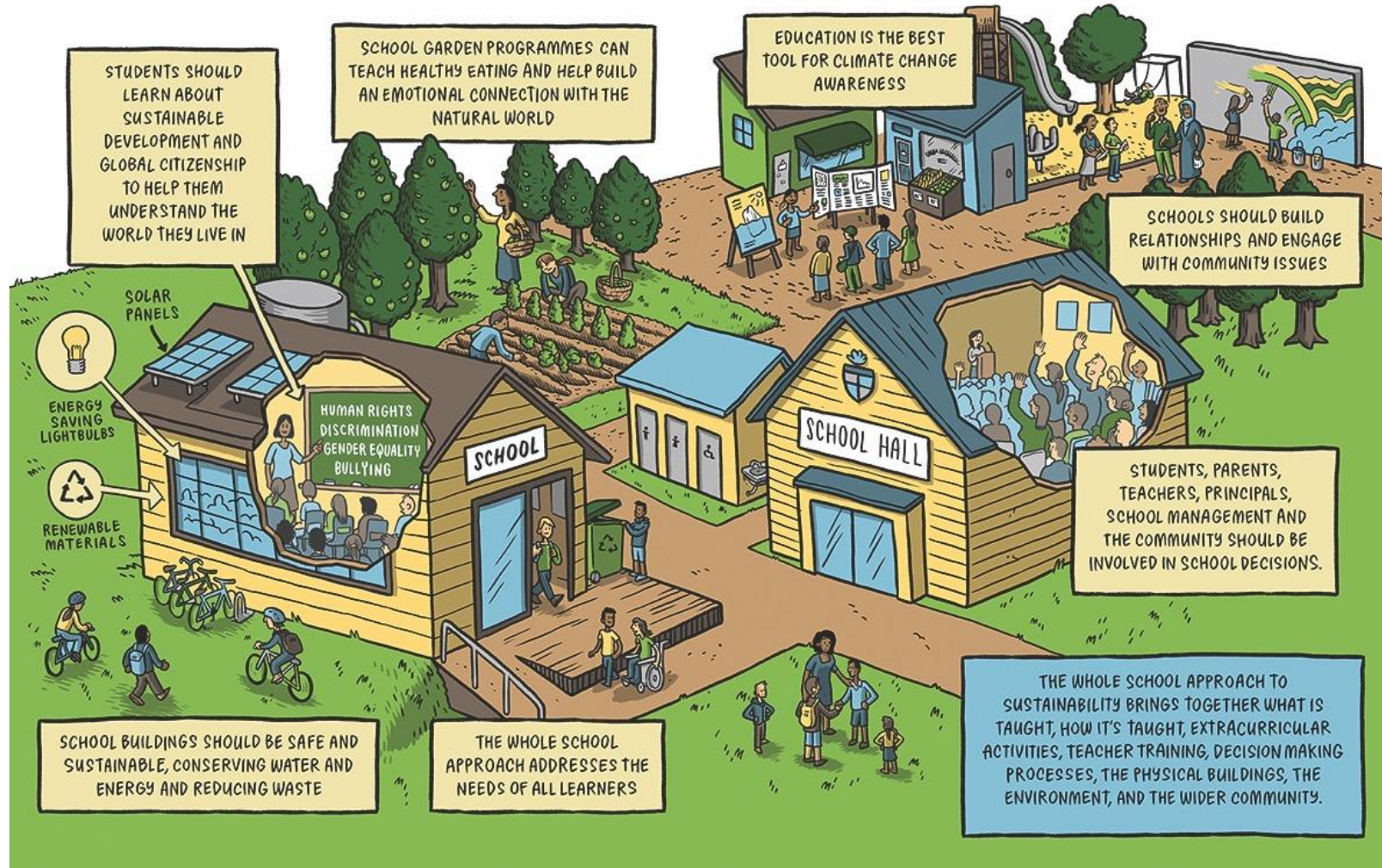Extent to which ESD is promoted in local communities.

Progress of country initiatives:

Extent to which *ESD for 2030* is implemented in countries around the world.
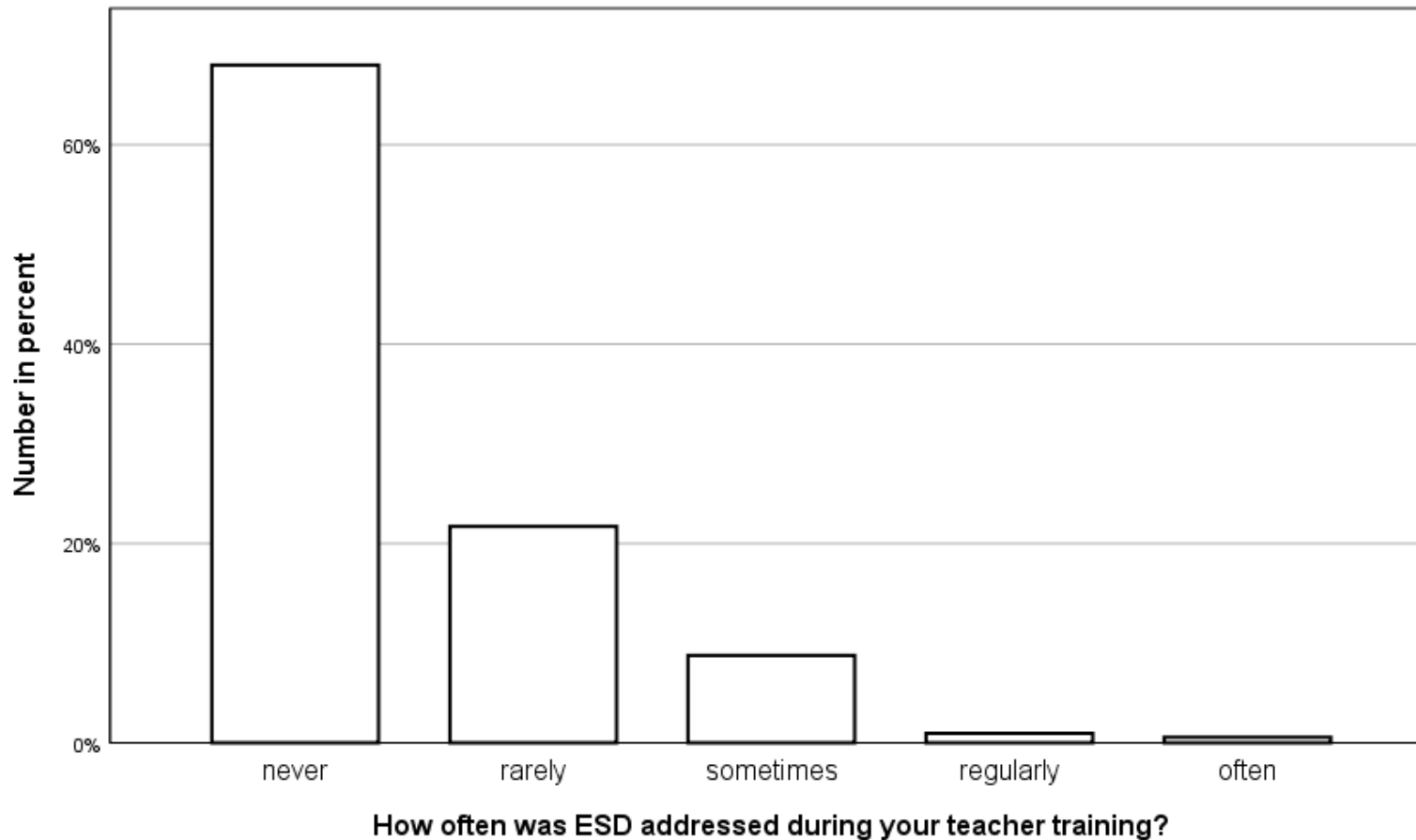
Whole institution approach

ESD and teacher training (incl. Vocational training)

Which role did ESD play in your teacher training at the university? (2018)

(Brock & Grund, 2018)

ESD – Status Quo (2018) vs. ideal

	De-facto (2018)*	Desired**
Total:	9,04%	33,56%
Pupils:	**10,27%**	**34,86%**
Teacher (incl. Voc. training)	**15,5%**	**43,2%**
Pupils all-day schools:	14,85%	36,68%
Students:	8,34%	33,56%
Apprentices:	8,61%	31,41%

*"In approximately how many percent of your current total class/study time at your educational institution do you see clear references to SD?"

„In an **ideal educational institution that completely corresponds with your vision: How many percent of your total class/study time would show clear references to SD?"
(0% = no references, 100% =clear references during whole study time)

(Brock & Grund, 2018; Grund & Brock, 2018)
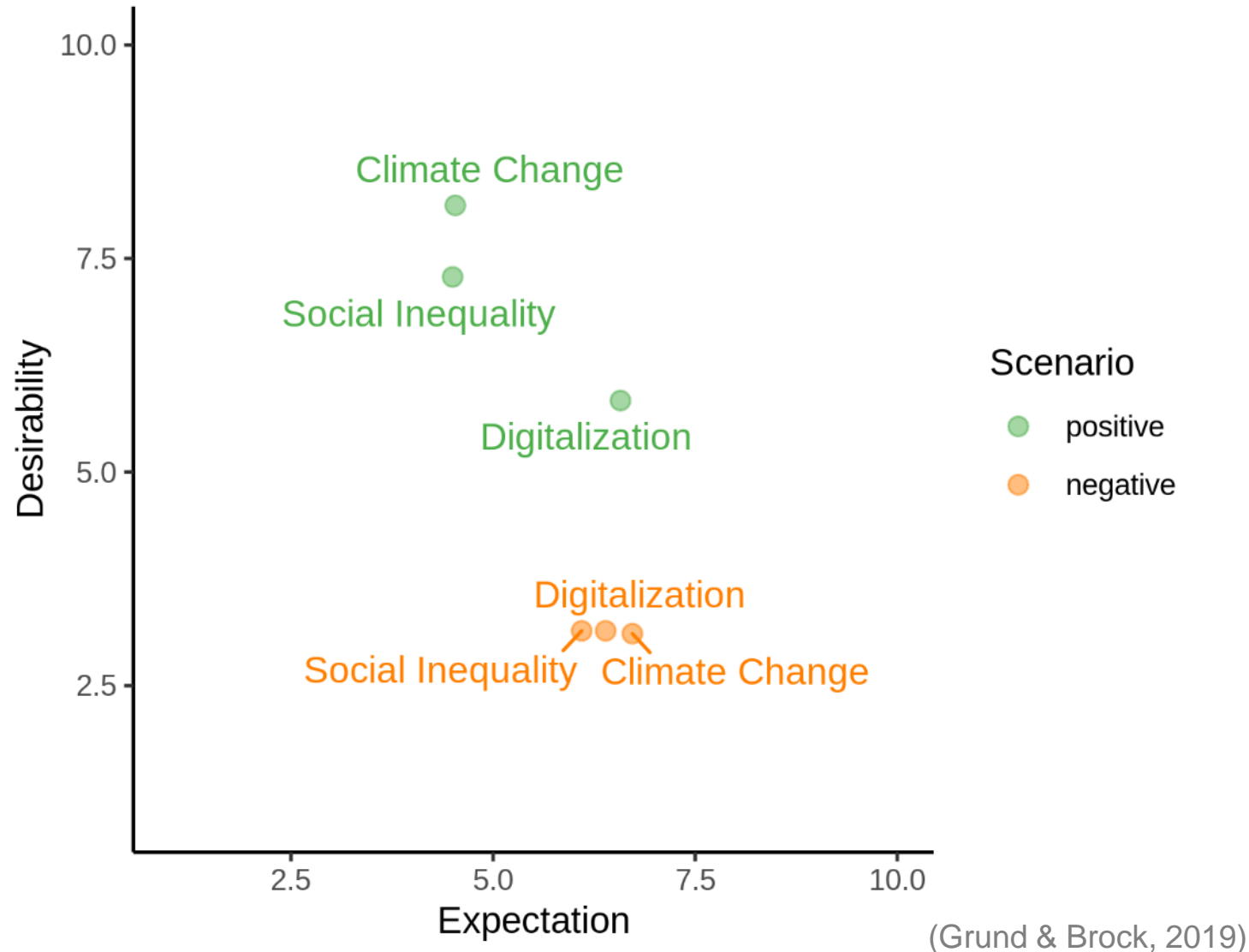
3. Need for updating/ adjusting ESD?

1. There is a problem/challenge, created by a success of past sustainability-related education

SD becomes mainstream
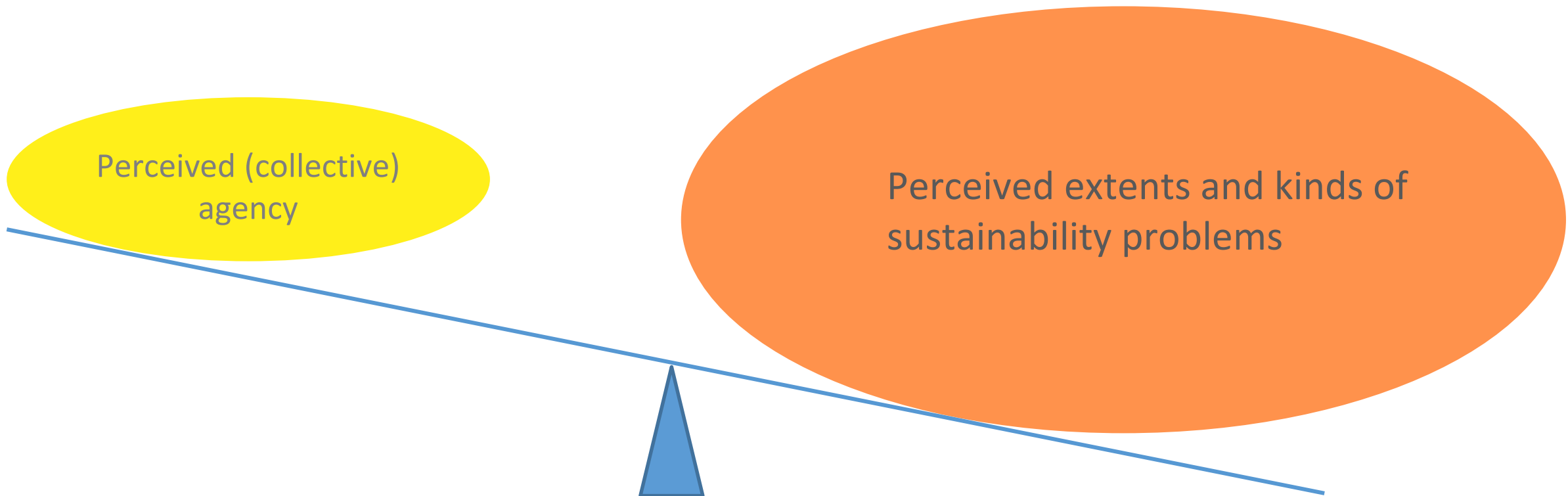

Motivation and well-being?

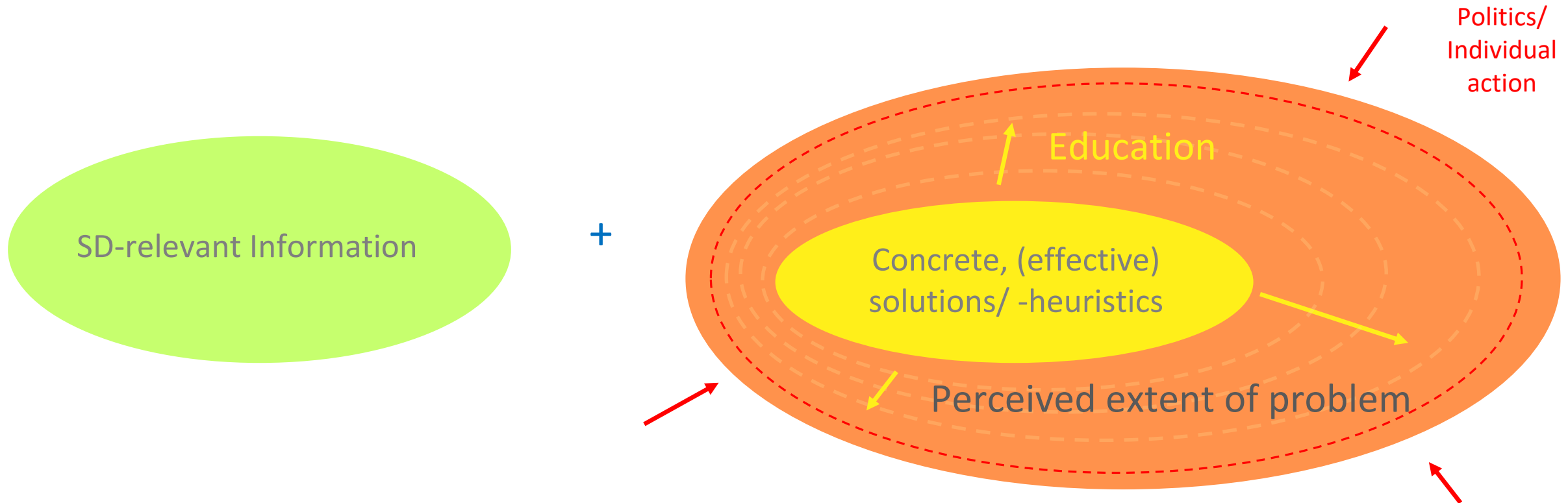# Hope concerning the global future?

(Grund & Brock, 2019)

2018:

- **75%** of the sample are **pessimistic** about the global future

- Lower probability of positive socio-ecological futures → lower well-being

- LCA: 50% of the sample are „**sustainability-affine but disillusioned**"

Problem size-Agency-Gap

Perceived (collective) agency

Perceived extents and kinds of sustainability problems

Update of ESD – One core task: Decreasing Problem size-Agency-Gap

SD-relevant Information

+

Politics/
Individual
action

Education

Concrete, (effective)
solutions/ -heuristics

Perceived extent of problem

Double-checking underlying assumptions about co-creators of SD

Critically reflecting – and counterbalancing – **underlying assumptions** of the image of man/educands: well-being, mental state of individuals

Image of athletic, robust mental state   Low well-being – mental overload

ESD towards desirable futures – how to?

| Downplaying | Conveying realistic view and effective possibilities for action | Catastrophizing |

Didactical attitude

Reaction Educands

(Ojala 2017)

| Denial, Distancing, belittlement, distraction, cynicism | Getting stuck in „hyper-activation"of concern/ fear, pessimism, fatalism |

Implications for ESD - Didactical balancing act

- Conveying extent and quality of SD-challenges – fostering individual and collective **agency**

- „**Problem-agency- fit**"→ proportional to opportunities for change

- But: Differentiation **who should be transformed first** (**children**/young people vs. **decision makers**)

- Point in time and intensity of **blend of emotions**: (uplifting vs. tough, contemplative vs. action-motivating etc.)

More Pull, less Push

- „The value of **incentives energizes behavior**: no drive that "pushes" is required because the **goal is "pulling"** the acting **individual**." (Beckmann, Heckhausen 2018)

- -> **Expectancy and incentive** drive **motivation**

More Pull, less Push
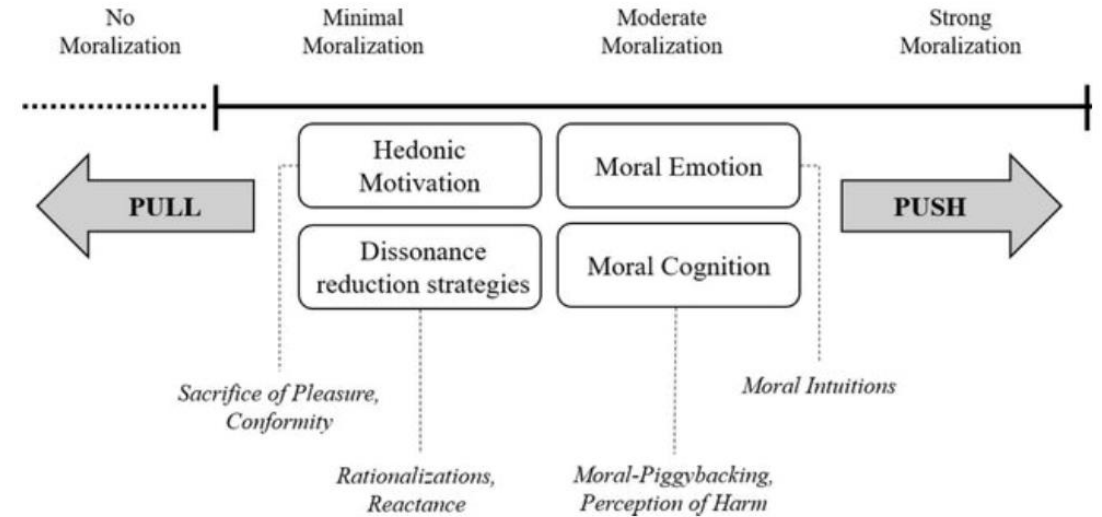
Feinberg et al. 2019

# One type of pull: Fostering emotionally resonant relations with the world

- „ There is a distinct **lack of** magic and enchantment (this does not refer to the supernatural type of magic, simply those **powerful 'awe and wonder' experiences** that drew us into our subject—the 'wow' factor) coupled with a lack of holism that makes the overall experience **memorable and life enhancing**."(Dyer 2007:394)

- Experiences: Vague, but strong perception of **meaningfulness**, self-sufficient, memorable, can point towards existential level

Fostering emotionally resonant relations with the world

- Relevance of **positive initiations** for Bildungs-processes: underestimated & under-researched (Walsh et al. 2020; Bethelmy & Corraliza 2019)

- Relevance of emotions within Transformative Learning is underestimated (Taylor, 2001; Buttigieg & Calleja, 2020)

Connectednes with nature
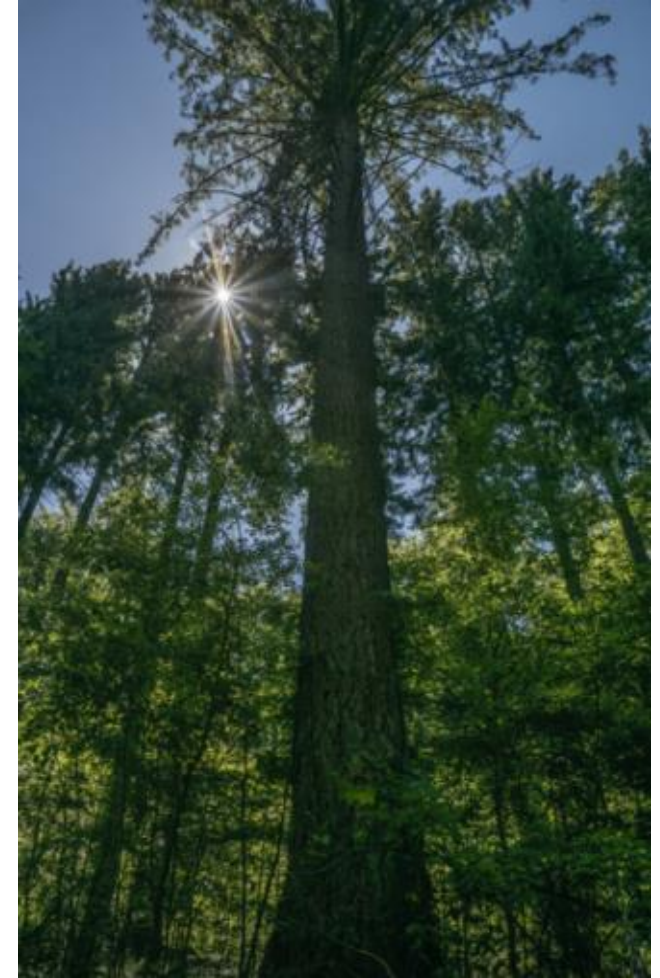
Connectedness with nature

Connectedness with places

Connectedness with people

Didactical Implications

- Less push doesn't mean feel good-ESD

- Focus on **„we",** „supportive collective", constructive social bonds

- Kindle sense of **mattering**

- Addressing educands as co-creators of SD-transition presupposes and fosters **trust and agency**

- Reliefing and empowering dimension of **existential topics**

Guiding question: How to shape memorable, meaningful, educational experiences that foster connectedness?

Didactical Implications

- Focus on imagining **realistic, but desirable futures** for young people, systematically supporting them (Hicks 2014)

  - **Future(s)-workshops** (Zukunftswerkstätten) (Jungk, Müllert 1987, Lauttamäki 2014)
  - Backcasting

- Designing „classical" elements in attractive and timely manner (excursions, exchanges etc.)

- "**Emotionally literate classrooms"/ecxhange contexts** (Cefai 2014)

- Didactics of „**controversial issues**",

  - Topics which can evoke strong emotions, conflicting explanations, interests, values -> potential to polarize (Kerr/Huddleston 2015, Pace 2019)

Discussion

- Which **experiences** with sustainable development-related bildungs-processes felt **meaningful** and **resonating** for the educands? Which factors made it meaningful?

- How could such an **„updated" ESD** which emphsizes pull-factors and agency **be fostered by structural circumstances** (facilities, time, which groups, new cooperation partners etc.)?

Literature

- Berlin Declaration, adopted by Participating organizations of the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, hosted by UNESCO Comission (2021): See: https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/esdfor2030-berlin-declaration-en.pdf

- Bethelmy & Corraliza (2019). Transcendence and Sublime Experience in Nature: Awe and Inspiring Energy. Front Psychol, 10, 509.

- Buttigieg & Calleja, 2020 : Bildung and Transformative Learning Theory: Two Peas in a Pod? See: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1541344620971673?casa_token=k2sSsmM1JCcAAAAA%3AXJxf4KBK_T9zRUrzsqB1MbfKOni0fTg7Ij5ZIJ0bYIIqMr5S2z_9cAY3kvpQvoYTDuQnSr1jC-uE

- Brock, Grund (2018): Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung in Lehr-Lernsettings-Quantitative Studie des nationalen Monitorings-Befragung von LehrerInnen. Executive Summary. See: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328960201_Bildung_fur_nachhaltige_Entwicklung_in_Lehr-Lernsettings-Quantitative_Studie_des_nationalen_Monitorings-Befragung_von_LehrerInnen_Executive_Summary

- Dyer (2007): Inspiration, Enchantment and a Sense of Wonder … Can a New Paradigm in Education Bring Nature and Culture Together Again? See: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13527250701351106

- Feinberg et al. (2019): Understanding the process of moralization: How eating meat becomes a moral issue. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 117(1), 50–72.

Literature

- Grund, Brock (2018): Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung in Lehr-Lernsettings – Quantitative Studie des nationalen Monitorings – Befragung junger Menschen. Executive Summary. See: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328957682_Bildung_fur_nachhaltige_Entwicklung_in_Lehr-Lernsettings_-_Quantitative_Studie_des_nationalen_Monitorings_-_Befragung_junger_Menschen_Executive_Summary

- Grund, Brock (2019): Why We Should Empty Pandora's Box to Create a Sustainable Future: Hope, Sustainability and Its Implications for Education.See: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331042169_Why_We_Should_Empty_Pandora's_Box_to_Create_a_Sustainable_Future_Hope_Sustainability_and_Its_Implications_for_Education

- UNESCO General conference (2019): See: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370215.locale=en

- Umweltbundesamt (UBA) (2019/2021): See: https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/themen/nachhaltigkeit-strategien-internationales/umweltbewusstsein-in-deutschland

- Taylor (2001): Transformative learning theory: a neurobiological perspective of the role of emotions and unconscious ways of knowing. See: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02601370110036064?casa_token=pPcnmu8EBywAAAAA:H7bRUOvV6uMmo5qLKoClHMDxkIdRhYR-DNBFwObMNi4NyNNQff2tFmicxLSMX5p8tfvA2tdmlGA5

- Walsh et al (2020). Transformative education: towards a relational, justice-oriented approach to sustainability. International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, 21(7), 1587-1606.