URBAN SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS: POLITICAL SPACES AND / OR EDUCATIVE SPACES?

Outcome of experimental and experiential learning?

→ Grasping educative value requires theoretical and empirical exploration

‘The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative.’ (Dewey 1938: 25)
TWO RELATED RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. “Urban sustainability transitions as spaces for experiential learning: towards a detailed understanding of institutional voids in Flemish cities”
   - UGent-BOF, 2016-2019
   - Thomas Block, Katrien Van Poeck

2. “Wicked problems and educative spaces for urban sustainability transition”
   - FORMAS, 2017-2019
   - Collaboration with Uppsala University: David Kronlid, Eva Friman, Leif Östman, Lovísa Eiríksdóttir, Katrien Van Poeck, Thomas Block, Michiel Dehaene
INTERDISCIPLINARY THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

– Sustainability transition studies

– Political theory on new modes of governance

– Pragmatist educational theory: Dewey’s theory of experience
**URBAN SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS**

- Sustainability **transitions** = transformative changes of socio-technical regimes at the systems level
- Importance of small scale, urban ‘niche experiments’ → **Strategic Niche Management** explores successful development of niches
- Role of contextual factors → **Multi-Level Perspective**: transition = result of interaction between landscape, regime and niches level
URBAN NICHE EXPERIMENTS IN A BROADER CONTEXT

Paredis 2013; Geels 2002
NEW POLITICAL SPACES IN AN INSTITUTIONAL VOID

– Formal, institutional, and bureaucratic government frameworks often fail to create a way out of unsustainability → solutions sought in ‘new political spaces’: mixed ‘urban governance’ networks (multi-level & multi-actor)

– ‘Institutional void’: a situation in which there are no generally accepted rules and norms for appropriate policy making and politics (Hajer 2003) → learning our way out?
LEARNING CHALLENGE?

- Problem-orientation and focus on intervention
  → learning from experience and experimentation
- Practices of collective will-formation & knowledge deliberation
  → individual and collective meaning-making
- Complexity, wicked problems, non-linear processes
  → learning as a continuous, contextualised process
- Institutional void: disagreement, new solutions, more than cognitive
  → learning knowledge and values, creativity, pluralism
DEWEY’S THEORY OF EXPERIENCE

- Great potential to elaborate on these challenges theoretically: transactional approach focusing on the continuous and simultaneous transformation of the self and the world is well suited for the study of processes of societal change as educative processes

- Conceptual framework: connecting helpful concepts and insights from pragmatist educational theory to research challenges for examining urban sustainability transitions as learning practice
RESEARCH FOCUS AND QUESTIONS
Some examples:

– How do the transactions between people and the sustainability challenge they try to tackle actually take shape?

– What kinds of ‘environing’ processes do we observe? Which aspects of the surroundings are taken into account in the meaning-making process and which ones are not? And how does this affect the meaning that is made of it? What is the influence of the facilitators of urban sustainability transition initiatives on the process of environing?
RESEARCH FOCUS AND QUESTIONS

– Is there sufficient time and space for inquiry, i.e. for careful observation and for examining and reflecting upon means and ends? What are enabling or disabling conditions in this respect?

– How broad – or limited – is the range of information that is taken into account? What served as selection criteria for the latter and what are the (educative) implication thereof?
RESEARCH FOCUS AND QUESTIONS

– Is the joint inquiry into a problematic situation a pre-determined trajectory, mapped-out in advance, through which learners are guided by the facilitator towards a particular, desirable end? Or is it a joint experiment through which questions, challenges, purposes, ends and means are co-created?

– Do participants and facilitators interact in a way that can be characterised by freedom of intelligence? Who frames the purposes and how does this framing take place?
RESEARCH FOCUS AND QUESTIONS

– How does the alternation of interrelated doing and undergoing in the transition arena lead to growing meaning by creating an expanding world of facts, information, ideas, habits, etc.?
– How are habits created and re-created?
– Is learning here conservative or progressive? I.e. does the expanding world of facts, information, ideas, habits, etc. bring about reproduction and/or transformation? How?
RESEARCH METHODS

Pragmatist, practical perspective on epistemology, meaning-making and learning requires practical analytical frameworks for empirical analysis

– Practical Epistemology Analysis – PEA (Wickman & Östman)

– Dramaturgical Analysis (Hajer, Nahuis)
Different methods for examining in detail particular aspects, e.g.:

- Epistemological Move Analysis (EMA)
- Political Move Analysis (PMA)
- Transactional Argumentation Analysis (TAA)
- Transactional Governance Analysis (TGA)
### Political Move Analysis

**Creating space for ‘the political’ in environmental and sustainability education practice: a Political Move Analysis of educators’ actions**

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**Abstract**

Literature about education’s role in realising a more sustainable world emphasises the importance of acknowledging democratic and political challenges in environmental and sustainability education (ESE). This article offers an empirically grounded theoretical and methodological contribution to future research on how ‘the political’ is introduced, handled and experienced in ESE practice. It presents an analytical method, ‘Political Move Analysis’, for investigating how educators’ actions open-up or close down a space for the political in learners’ meaning-making. The method has been developed through empirical case studies that allowed to identify a variety of politicalising and de-politicalising moves performed by educators. Through these moves, educators can engage in very diverse teaching practices which differently affect the direction of people’s meaning-making. These findings are theoretically discussed in view of how to understand the entanglement of the educative and the political in ESE. Prospects for future research and for inspiring teaching practice are pointed out.

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**Keywords**

Environmental and sustainability education; ecological footprint; community supported agriculture; the political; transaction; epistemological Move Analysis; Political Move Analysis

### Politicising moves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politicising moves</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Controversy creating move</td>
<td>8, 10, 14</td>
<td>This move makes the learners create, express and defend conflictual standpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchisation move</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>This move makes the learners prioritise amongst different alternatives and thus create a hierarchy of concerns by taking a stand on which concerns take precedence and, consequently, which must give way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluding-including move</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>This move makes the learners contest a proposed decision of inclusion and exclusion regarding emotionally invested attachments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public-private move</td>
<td>7, 9</td>
<td>This move makes learners move back and forth between public and private concerns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### De-politicising moves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>De-politicising moves</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reinstating move</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>This move makes the participants re-orient their attention from particular, emotionally invested concerns, commitments and experiences towards ‘the lesson’, which in this case is about the ecological footprint conceived in terms of predetermined and rationally calculated facts and behaviour guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm installing move</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>This move makes the participants react and take a stand on the postulated standard about how to behave in a certain situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationalising move</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>This move makes the participants take a stand concerning a factual justification for a proposed norm by either accepting the factual justification or delivering a factual reason that justifies a divergent opinion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closuring move</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>This move makes the participants end their argumentation and agree on, in this case, one particular normative conclusion</td>
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DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS

- **Scripting**: the efforts made for determining the characters in the play as well as the cues for appropriate behaviour and ‘access conditions’

- **Staging**: the deliberate organisation of an interaction through tools, methodologies, activities, artefacts, formal and informal rules of the game, etc.

- **Performance**: the way in which the contextualised interaction itself produces social realities such as understandings of the issue at stake, knowledge, and new power relations
A FRUITFUL COMBINATION OF ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS

– Examining how the scripting, staging and performance of urban sustainability transition initiatives affect whether and how gaps are noticed and handled and how participants fill these gaps
– ‘Performance’: EMA, PMA, TAA…
– ‘Staging’: how is the environment used for creating and filling gaps with relations, what kind of environing takes place?
– Etc.
4 CASES

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