

Facilitating Learning in View of More Sustainable Agri-food, Mobility, and Energy Practices

Katrien Van Poeck & Leif Östman

European Conference on Educational Research – Glasgow – 25 August 2023

Learning in view of sustainability transitions

The screenshot shows the ScienceDirect website interface. At the top left is the ScienceDirect logo. To the right are links for 'Journals & Books', a search icon, a help icon, and buttons for 'Register' and 'Sign in'. Below this is a blue banner for the journal 'Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions'. The banner includes a cover image on the left, the journal title in the center, and CiteScore (11.2) and Impact Factor (9.680) metrics on the right. Below the banner is a navigation bar with links for 'Articles & Issues', 'About', 'Publish', and 'Order journal'. The main content area features the article title 'Learning in sustainability transitions' and its editors: Barbara Van Mierlo, Johannes Halbe, Geeske Scholz, P.J. Beers, and Joanne Vinke-de Kruijf. The last update is noted as 20 April 2020.

**Lack of conceptual clarity
&
weak empirical knowledge base
for progressing our understanding
of learning in sustainability
transitions**

Learning in view of sustainability transitions

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Original Research Paper

Opening up the black box of learning-by-doing in sustainability transitions



Katrien Van Poeck^{a,*}, Leif Östman^b, Thomas Block^c

Explorative review of literature
+ conceptual framework

Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions 39 (2021) 155–172



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Research article

Learning to find a way out of non-sustainable systems



Katrien Van Poeck^{a,b,*}, Leif Östman^b

WHAT is learned
+ what is the transition potential

HOW is learning facilitated
→ guidance for improving
learning processes

Facilitating Learning in View of
More Sustainable Agri-food,
Mobility, and Energy Practices

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Disclaimer...

- Normativity, open-endedness and long-term character of sustainability transitions (STs) (Köhler et al. 2019; Geels 2020)
 - **Impossible** to predict how micro learning practices today will directly and certainly affect long-term, macro societal transitions
- What *is* possible?
 - Identify – in contemporary observable practices – **interventions** that have the potential to **influence, accelerate** or **reorient** STs

Facilitating learning in view of STs

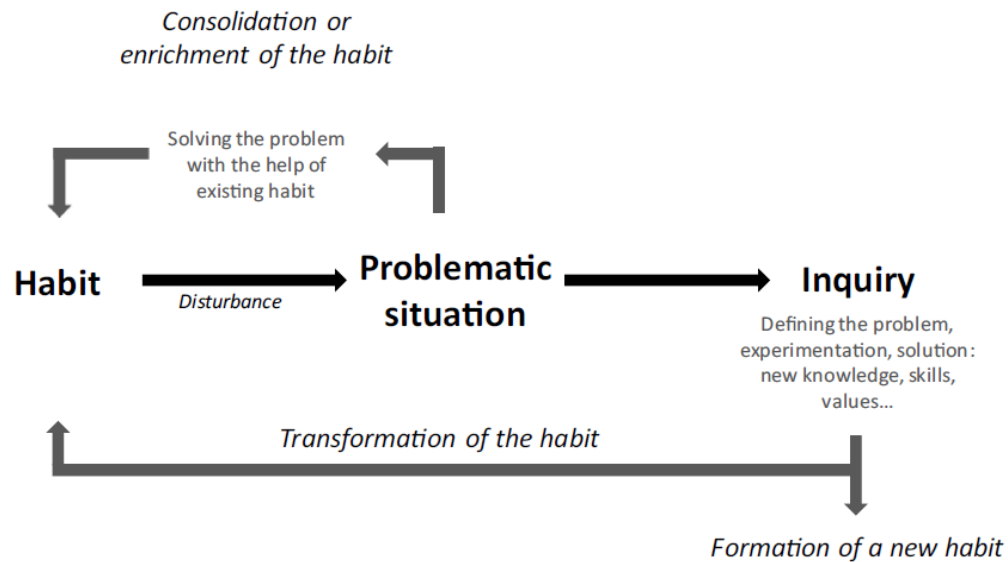
- How can **facilitators' work** help participants to jointly develop pathways towards a more sustainable world?
 - developing mature alternatives for non-sustainable practices
 - overcoming path dependencies
 - ...
- Requires well-considered planning and design in the **preparation** of the learning process as well as careful interventions in the actual **performance**

Theoretical background

We combine and integrate a dramaturgical, transactional, and didactical approach:

- **Dramaturgical** analysis (Hajer 2005; Yuana et al. 2020): focus on what a setting *does* to a practice – ‘scripting’, ‘staging’ & ‘performance’
- **Transactional** perspective (Dewey and Bentley 1949/1991): capture what settings do with people + what people do with settings simultaneously and reciprocally
- **Didactic** research (Östman et al 2019a,b): gaining insight in what facilitators do and how this affects what the participants learn

Dramaturgy of facilitating learning processes



‘Learning’ something involves an ability

- to master the **selective attentiveness** (putting relevant objects in the world in focus)
- to fruitfully **act upon the object** in focus to achieve ‘scripted’ goals

→ ‘**privileging**’ (Wertsch 1998): process of inclusion and exclusion that steers learning towards certain outcomes

Facilitating learning = governing the privileging process in connection to a purpose

→ Develop a specific attentiveness

→ Engage in a specific activity

Analytical procedure

- Step 1: **identifying/describing preparatory work** of facilitators in view of scripting and staging a setting (documents, interviews and transcripts of observations)
- Step 2: **investigating learning in action** with the help of Practical Epistemology Analysis ('high resolution analysis' of transcripts of observations)
- Step 3: **revealing the impact of facilitators' actions**: facilitator move analysis

Variety of interventions in action

= 'Facilitator moves' ('teacher moves')

Adding moves	Directing moves		Deepening moves	
	Confirming	Reorienting	Generating	Judging
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Generalising▪ Specifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Comparative▪ Testing

A pilot study: learning a way out of non-sustainable agri-food practices

- Workshops: creating scenarios for short food supply chain initiatives (SFSC) – B2B: producers to restaurants, schools, hospitals, retail...
 - Funded by city of Ghent (BE)
 - Variety of participants: farmers, chefs, retailers, civil servants...
 - Development of 3 scenarios: farmers network, knowledge platform, **distribution platform**
 - 1 to be funded as a pilot experiment
- A *glimpse* into some findings...





Excerpt 1: How to encourage more producers and consumers to work with SFSC

Situation:

Fred, chef in a top-end restaurant, argues – again and again – that it is a matter of emphasising the high quality of products and of being proud to work with them

*Gaby, a dairy farmer, says that Fred's argument does not hold in the case of milk since the convenience of pre-packaged, sterilised milk is more attractive for customers than higher quality fresh milk with limited shelf life – she faces a **problematic situation***

Fred continues to repeatedly raise the argument of quality and pride and he takes a lot of space in the discussion

Selective attentiveness: focus on obstacles and on Gaby's company

– Facilitator: And so, apart from that – because you [Fred and Anna] have now indicated that in the catering industry it can grow and that it is more evident there to cook with products coming from the short chain – but are there other **obstacles** for **your** company [Gaby] to fully switch to the short chain? ...

Reorienting move

– Fred: [interrupts] If it would become attractive, in fact the purchase would become very constant.



Excerpt 1: How to encourage more producers and consumers to work with SFSC

- **Facilitator: Yes, so that's a point you've made, but I wondered if there were any other, well doubts that [Gaby] experiences about switching to the short chain. Or reasons to say we are going to fully commit to it?**
- Gaby: I don't know... yes, yes it is not that easy to organise that you know. Because you already have to run a **busy** company so it all adds on. I think, when it is up and running that it is not so... but it is indeed the **start-up phase**...
- **Facilitator: A period where you have to do a lot of things in parallel?**
- Anna: Is it also the logistics, the transportation actually, that is difficult? Or also looking for-
- Gaby: [interrupts] Gosh, all kinds of things. We just started to work with personnel. It is not so easy to just start to do that. Those are all such **things that you know nothing about**.

Reorienting move



Excerpt 2: How to match the different expectations on the supply and demand side?

Situation:

*Realising that the vegetables that would be delivered to the distribution platform by the farmers would come straight from the field and not be processed, John, a cook in a kitchen of an elderly home who is used to work with convenience food, faces a **problematic situation**: the specificity of the supply does not match his particular needs*

- John: I don't even have the space in my kitchen where I can peel potatoes. I don't have that anymore. I no longer have a space where I can process my vegetables. I did have that 20 years ago.
- Eric: Yes yes yes yes I understand that.
- John: For example, 20 years ago apples were peeled with four people ... Now this would cost [too much] That is no longer possible. That all disappeared right. ...
- Eric: Yes, that is what I mean by stepping back in time. If you only...
- John: But you can't do that anymore, you can't reverse that ... That's not possible.



Excerpt 2: How to match the different expectations on the supply and demand side?

- William: Not entirely, but there are some opportunities.
- John: There are certainly some opportunities. There are some products that are certainly not a problem. For example salad, chicory and so on. That's not too much work. But it's about those other things.
- **Facilitator: And what opportunities do you see in it? ...**
- William: **I know a farmer** who says: ... I have an **agreement with two hospitals** that I deliver to and all my harvest goes there and I have a much better price
- Eric: But is that also processed in the hospital, that entire harvest?
- William: He **works with a factory to peel** it. ... but I am just saying: **that peeling could for example be included in that distribution platform.**

Specifying move

Specific activity: specify opportunities

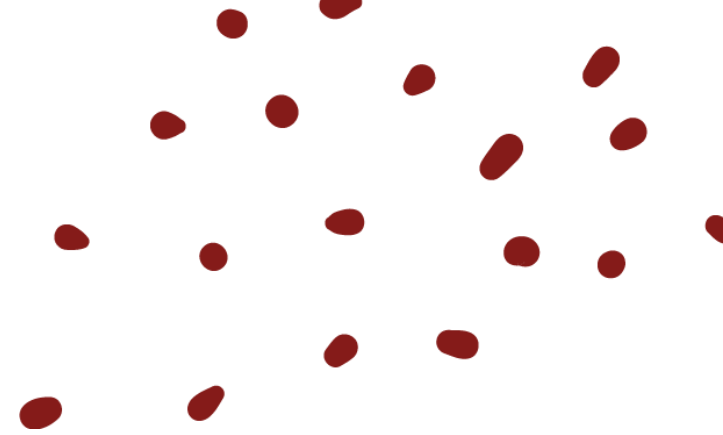
Conclusions

- A **methodology** that allows to investigate the effect of facilitators' work on the outcome of learning processes in view of STs → empirically grounded **knowledge on how to fruitfully facilitate learning** in view of STs (in preparation and performance)
- Crucial for facilitators:
 - Being aware of ongoing privileging and consciously **govern** these
 - **Anticipating** the performance already in the planning
 - Performing well-considered interventions (**'facilitator moves'**)
 - Building-in **check-points** to explore participants' response to actions

Conclusions

- Facilitating learning in view of STs **≠ a matter of effectively changing participants' thinking and acting towards predetermined outcomes**
- Nevertheless: it does require **careful and well-considered planning and steering** in the pursuit of helping the participants to jointly develop promising pathways towards a more sustainable world

Thank you!



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