H3Uni

Third Horizon Education

TRANSDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH
into human and earth
synergy

codification

authentication

design

exxploration

RESOURCE LIBRARY
based on tools and methods
for releasing colloborative
creative potential

H3 Uni

a university for the
third horizon

INTERACTIVE
COURSES
both copresent and online
to introduce the methods
and energise people

relevance

ONLINE DIALOGUE
available to interested and
enquiring people seeking
productive interaction
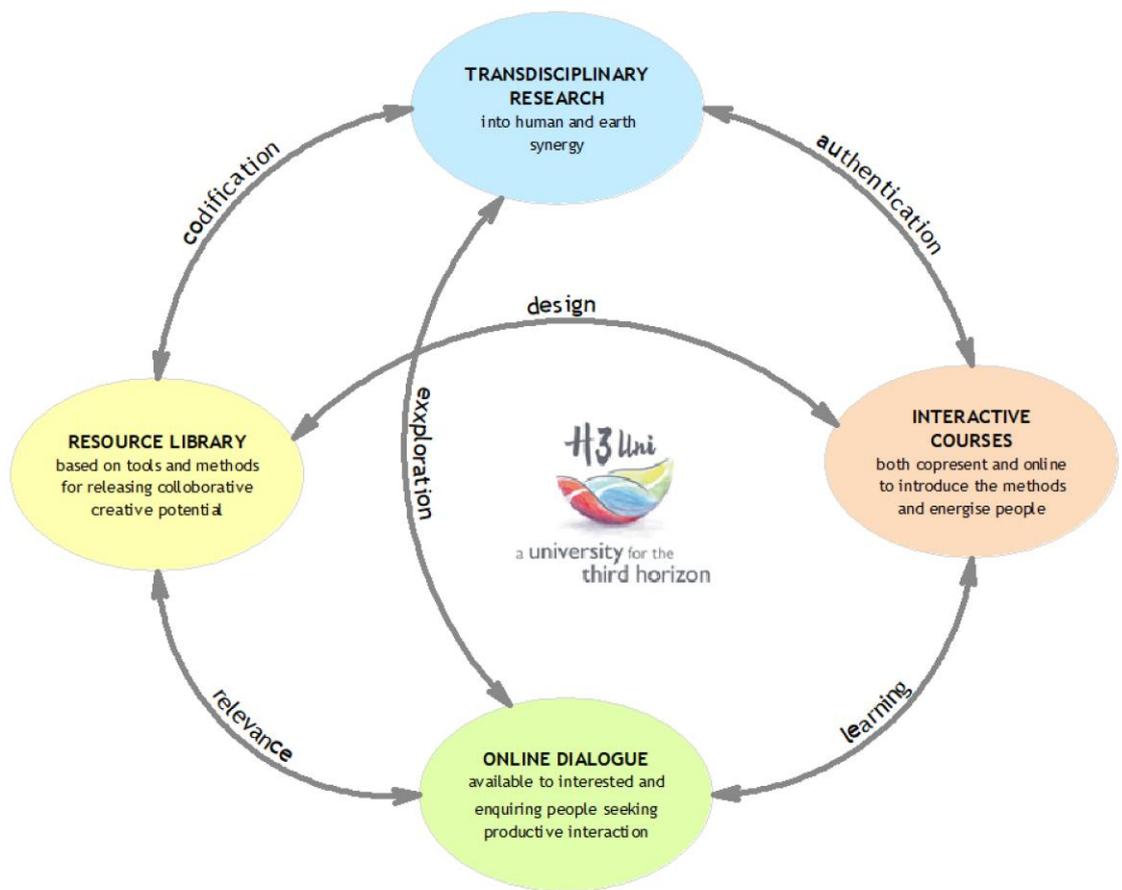
learning

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Trustee

H3Uni

Third Horizon Education

 I am sure that all of you gathered here share with me the view that society, locally, nationally and globally is facing unprecedented challenges that matter in the immediate, the medium and the long term. I presume that we all in some way recognise that the way we go about our practical affairs cannot be successful if we remain caught up in the existing dominant cultures. We are faced with learning and developmental challenges that range from the individual, through the community, to the total global situation.

Supposing some fresh and more appropriate ways of problem-solving, knowledge acquisition, policy development and creative collaboration have been invented that match tackling these challenges of the Anthropocene; it still leaves us with an educational challenge. How are different layers of society, I'm thinking especially of different age groups, to equip themselves for this new world of turbulence and transformation rather than that of stability and incremental change?

But of course even this starting point is not there. Do we actually have these fresh more appropriate ways or are we facing a methodological gap that so far has had little investment relative to the scale of the need? Are we caught in a cycle of applying legacy methods to solving problems when these very methods have played a large part in creating the problems in the first place?

In this talk I would like to outline one angle of approach to these challenges. It has emerged as one response among many that might prove helpful. I will begin by characterising the Anthropocene challenge by highlighting some of the issues it presents. Then I'll point out three tragedies that affect our situation at all scales. The existence of these tragedies will be partly attributed to three socio-cultural learning disabilities. I will suggest remedies for these disabilities and which require generative education. I will outline one experimental design addressing in how such education can be cultivated even in the difficult conditions we are now caught up in and how demonstrations like H3Uni can accelerate progress towards a better future.

From an Earth history perspective the term Anthropocene points out that the impact of the human species on the planet is now of such extent and power that it matches the scale of geological shift. We have exited the Holocene period of roughly 10,000 years of relative stability and entered a world of turbulence. The successful rise of the global market economy, the power of technology commencing around the Industrial revolution and the non-renewable exploitation of the planet has brought many benefits but is now turning into its own opposite and threatening our very existence. It is even heading towards a catastrophic impact on the whole biosphere and planetary system. This leaves us with the predicament that our historical collective confidence in that previous success since the industrial revolution leads us to carry over the old assumptions as to how the problems are to be solved. This simply exacerbates the problems since it does not account for the weaknesses in human nature that keep us in the role of exploiters rather than stewards. We are caught in the trap of the three tragedies.

The *tragedy of the commons* is well known. Individual actors use a common resource, for example grazing cattle on common green land. What begins as a limited consumption of those resources attracts more and more actors such that the common land becomes increasingly degraded. Although this degradation is of consequence to all actors, it is not in the interest of any one actor to reduce or withdraw exploitation, especially if there is no alternative means of livelihood. Global measurement, for example, of planetary limits and safe space for living, show that the whole of humanity is now engaged in that tragedy on a global scale. We have only one planet and not only are we using it up,

we are kicking its systems into irreversible irrecoverable change: for example the rate of species extinction, the destruction of living habitats and the poisoning of places and life's essentials.

This is exacerbated by a second tragedy, the *tragedy of the horizons*. The systems in which we live and have our being are complex and interconnected on many levels and over many timescales. Whether the pressure is to survive or to sustain instant gratification, our attention span is stuck on the near horizon. It is also kept limited in scope since we shy away from the actual complexity and uncertainty of the situation. Decisions and actions being made now within this small bubble of time overlook the impact they have on the disregarded systems that are running on longer timescales of evolution and feedback. This applies not only to external conditions, such as those that have led to global warming and climate change, but also to the human condition that affects multiple generations into the future.

The third tragedy, the *tragedy of consciousness* embraces the other two tragedies since it is the basic human condition that prevents awareness and creative response to them both. This tragedy arises out of deeply ingrained psychological conditions which have been summed up in some places as greed, anger, fear and delusion. Greed drives the clinging to the exploitation mentality and the pursuit of more and more without regard to the contextual implications. Anger drives the polar energies of acquisition and defence and the aggression and covetousness of not having. Fear shuts down our initiative to try anything that appears transgressive. Delusion is the common human condition of believing we see reality, understand it and that we are right.

The three tragedies interact in a way that mutually reinforces and strengthens their hold thus making it difficult to change the trajectory and the dynamics of how we live on the planet. Why do they have such a hold?

The bad news is that this dynamic is deeply ingrained in all cultures all over the planet however different they may appear and how different their belief systems and values are. Some of this is attributable to disabilities which do have the possibility of being rectified and overcome. The good news is that there are patches of freedom to act.

The tragedy of the commons is partly held in place by failure to learn how things are connected together, how they influence each other and how the pattern of that system can be changed. The tragedy of the horizons is partly held in place by the absence in society of sufficient future consciousness that enables individuals, communities and even whole nations to adopt policies and make decisions that address longer generational timescales as well as the immediate. The tragedy of consciousness is essentially driven also by our conditioned sense of identity being so tightly linked to geography, tribes, cultures, history and belief systems, whether political or religious, rather than to our common humanity on a single shared planet.

This diagnosis leads us to propose three primary educational remedies. They are not remedies that can simply be prescribed, instructed and taught. We have to get back to the fundamental meaning of education, *edu care*, to bring forth from within the learner. This whole approach depends on the fact that holistic understanding, future consciousness and conscience are intrinsic to human nature but suffer from a considerable overlay of conditioning. The approach also depends on confidence that individuals and communities, if well informed, can tap into their own inherent intelligence and will come up with the actions and solutions that are needed to rebalance the system. Some actions will be highly individual and others will be new levels of global cooperation, and many levels in between.

But this can only be carried out by a process of generative education. What do I mean by that?

Generative education takes creativity and ethics from the periphery of education and places them in the centre. It is necessary to exercise a different kind of intelligence and knowing that it is suited to the unavoidable turbulence of the Anthropocene transition. We are heading into where no human has gone before but need to travel with a different legacy than the one Captain Kirk imported into the Star Trek journeys. For example, more important than solving problems is navigating complexity. More important than arguing who is right and who is wrong is the inclusive resolution of dilemmas. More important than managing systems through detailed big data is guiding systems with ethical perspectives that keep the whole in sight.

Generative education requires generative thinking as a cultural component such that dependency on large systems that do not have the requisite variety to guide adequately is replaced by freedom to act with cooperative integrity. Any bill of rights needs to be balanced with a bill of obligations .to cooperate for the common good.

The essence of generative thinking is that it taps into the alchemical quality of the juxtaposition of ideas. This is in marked contrast to the dominant paradigm of analytical logical argumentation. For example, in Edward de Bono's scheme it focusses on yellow and green hat thinking, not black and red hat thinking. Generative juxtaposition of ideas creates a field for creativity which can bring new paradigm changing ideas into view. Ethical capacity directs that creativity to the common existential challenges. After the fact, analytical explanation might be possible but that explanation cannot account for its derivation. Generative thinking reaches into the unknown which is the capacity we urgently need.

How can this viewpoint be related to the practical question of the design of education for the Anthropocene? In the design hypothesis we have been working with there are four highly related challenges that are addressed concurrently.

Firstly, the knowledge base on which current educational structure is built heavily weights the value of knowledge over the value of know-how. This means that, proportionately, very few resources are going into research and development on new praxis. We can see this in the large-scale gap between what we know needs to be done and our capacity to actually do it in society. This requires both transdisciplinarity and praxis to be made front and centre.

Secondly, where progress has been made in these areas there is no coherent curating of core methods. Such methods are usually most effective through the tacit skills of practitioners which are not codified or if they are, are taken to be commercial rather than commons. This requires a different approach to what is meant by the curriculum and how it can be accessed by whoever needs it whatever their circumstances.

Thirdly, simply knowing that there exists a better method and even that it has been codified is not effective without skill in operation. There is a need for new kinds of training and development that is more analogous with the craft school than the traditional academy. Personal transformation is a key factor.

Fourthly, diverse people need to come together in an open enquiring way and experience the benefits of cooperative dialogue. This is especially needed to rebalance those cultures in which competition is dominant.

Each of these challenges could be responded to independently but from a living systems point of view they need to be deeply interconnected and mutually supportive such that the whole is greater than the sum of these parts. They need to be operating in concert and with mutual support so as to

sustain the generative energy and the associated learning how to. I will outline the design concept for third horizon education H3Uni has been incubating and working with over the last five years. The key is to integrate discovery, methodology, practice and learning as one system. In a sense it is getting back to the essence of university avoiding the fragmentation that has been caused by specialisation, institutionalisation and commercialisation.

SLIDE 1
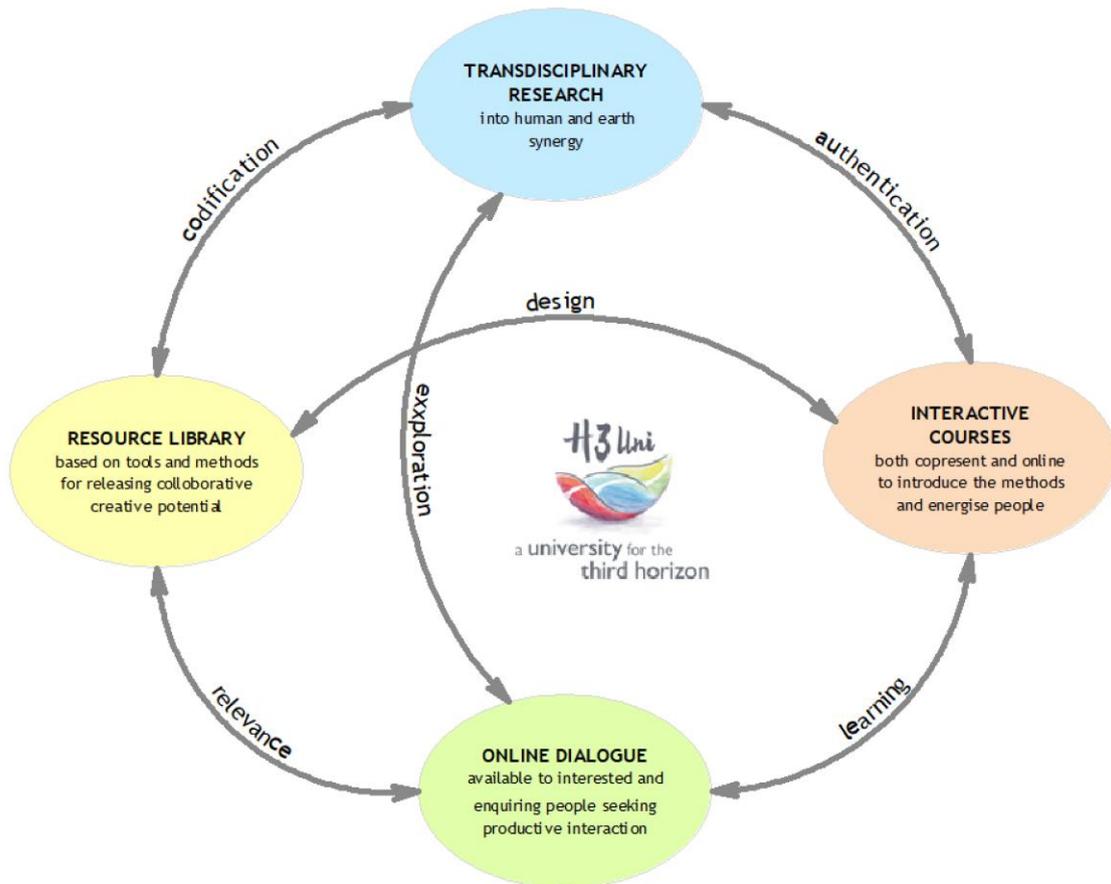
Let me run through the components of this system and how it hangs together.

A - Transdisciplinary research into human and earth synergy. This requires a breakout from specialisation as the dominant organising principle of research to looking at needs in complex situations with multiple perspectives. It also requires development of currently fringe areas like second-order science to compensate for the domination of technology and artificial intelligence.

B - Resource library based on tools and methods for releasing collaborative creative potential. Where methods have been developed and tested they can be codified and more readily made available. It is important for these to be shareable as a creative commons to compensate for the encapsulation of good methods in limited commercial models.

C - Interactive courses, both copresent and online, to introduce the methods and energise people. As well as learning the methods there is the human component which is a combination of personal

development skill and even artistic sense of how to help people release their inner potential to navigate in new and even strange conditions.

D – Online and face to face dialogue available to interested in enquiring people seeking productive interaction. Whereas the traditional university has largely been constrained to a campus, the campus now needs to be global. It also needs to be compatible with a world challenged by pandemics and needing to greatly reduce the carbon footprint of travel.

Now let's explore their mutual relevance and how this strengthens the system.

A-B – Codification is the conversion of effective tacit knowledge or know-how to be operationally reproducible

A-C – authentication is confirming the value of what is being learned to the world the learner has to deal with

A-D - exploration is the interplay between the open dialogue on common concerns with the recognition of the emergent nature of the living challenges

B-C – design is the intentional configuration of effective practice so that it can be learned, coached and developed in action

B-D – relevance is the primary criterion for the curriculum which is needed for current and future challenges

C-D – learning is interplay between shared concerns and the acquisition of tools and skills to deal with those concerns

This system as a whole offers prospect of changing the whole relationship of so-called higher education to society from one of increasing irrelevance to being a central power in the transformation to one planet living. It places it at the service of the primary planetary needs for discovery, creativity and collaboration. It enables a very rapid reconfiguration of specific curricula as needs emerge, it cultivates a culture of shared practice and it accelerates the development of people. It can be integrated into any specific area where abstract knowledge needs to be converted into practical application.

SLIDE 2

Learning for Transformation
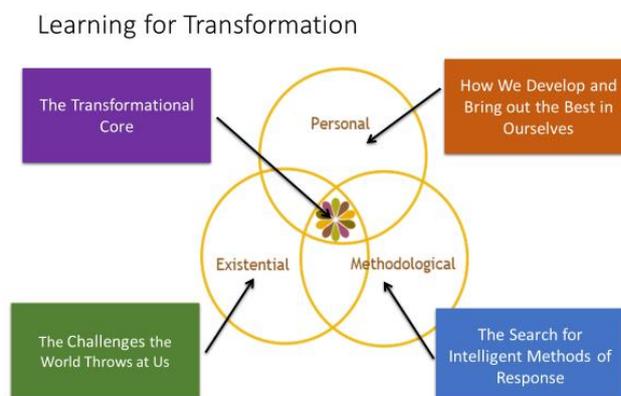
At its heart is the quest for better ways of transformation based on the current times needing us to radically change our patterns of living, working and finding meaning. This is summed up here as the bringing together of three domains which have largely been separated from each other.

The existential domain is the challenge of life itself in the emerging Anthropocene. The methodological domain is the gathering for new methods of intelligent engagement that avoid the traps of the preceding three hundred years. The personal is the importance of emphasising being and consciousness bringing ethical and systems integrity into decision making; the switch from blaming 'out there' to functioning conscience 'in here'.

So how is all this education for the third horizon? We need to position this in the theory of transformation implied in the three horizon concept. SLIDE 3
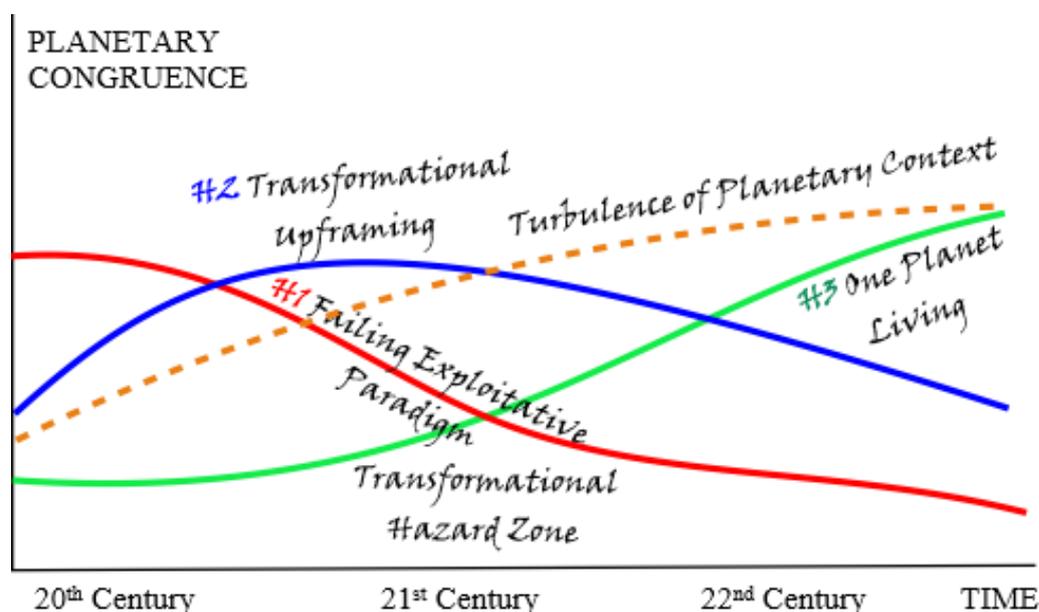
The vertical dimension represents the extent to which humanity is congruent with the living biosphere. The horizontal dimension represents time and is divided roughly into three phases. The 20th century is the period of the accelerating collapse of humanity manifested by the transgression of planetary boundaries and the consequeny feedback such as climate change. The 21st century is the hazardous period in which collapse, costly survival or transformation hang in the balance. The 22ndcentury is the emergence of one planet living if the transformation is successful.

The declining red line, Horizon 1, is the increasing mismatch with planetary sustainability. The brown dashed line is the increasing stress on the biosphere which accelerates the mismatch. The rising green line, Horizon 3, represents a trajectory towards successful one planet living. The patterns of life in H1 and H3 are so different that there cannot be a successful incremental transition. Thus the blue line, Horizon 2, represents a wave of innovation and experimentation in which the conflicting mindsets, values and lifestyles between H1 and H3 are worked out. This the period of transformational upframing where the outcomes are not guaranteed but subject to hazard.

What I have outlined here is a sketch, a seed that is germinating. Although it is described as an educational system it also offers possibilities as a way that almost any organisation can become a

learning organisation where the existential curriculum comprises the challenges they have in sustaining society – for example local authorities. It can also be a core learning system for commercial organisations needing to accelerate achieving sustainability and regeneration.

I hope it may be of value for the many emergent initiatives to address various aspects of the global problematique on any scale.

Many thanks to my colleagues in the H3Uni Network and the many people behind the experiences and resources from which I have drawn.

Now we can take a very short break and come back for questions, discussion and further ideas to build on.

Anthony Hodgson

28th January 2021

The H3Uni Self-Development Field
based on the 28 January 2021 Vision Seminar
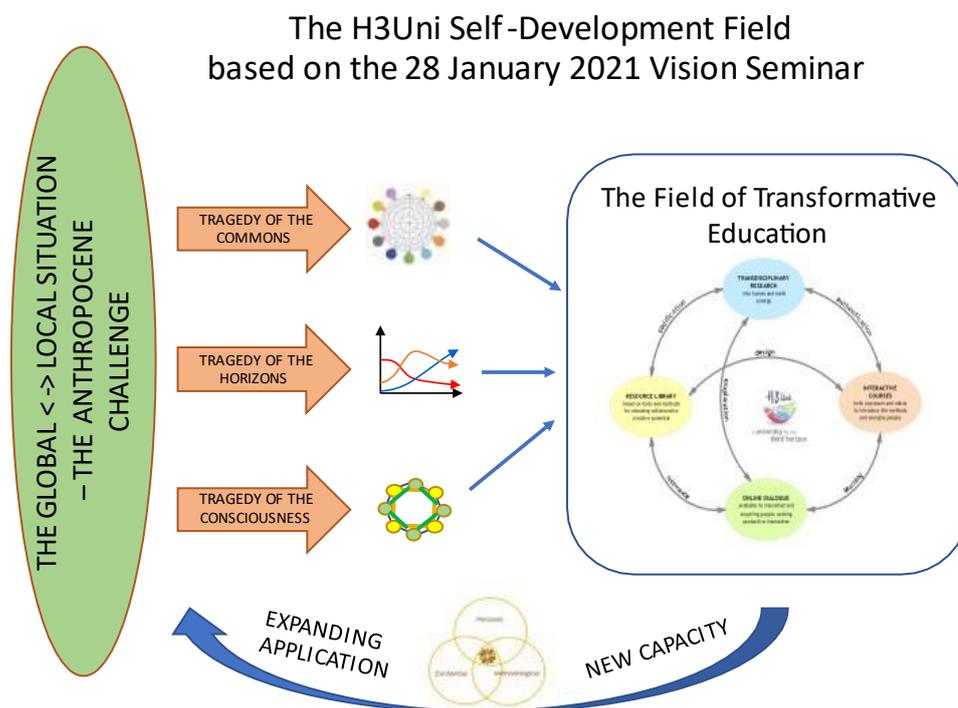
Any proposed voluntary initiative needs to review the question of relevance aided by the diagram (based on the Vision Seminar).
(1) Is it responding to the Anthropocene Challenge? (2) Is it addressing one or more of the three tragedies?
(3) Is it enriching the range and quality of approaches, methods and skills? (4) will it enhance the H3Uni Educational Field   (Tetrad)?
(5) Is it helping develop capacity for facilitating transformational change in actual situations?