



A Colourful Meadow

Multiple identities in land-based education and life sciences

Dr. Rudy Richardson

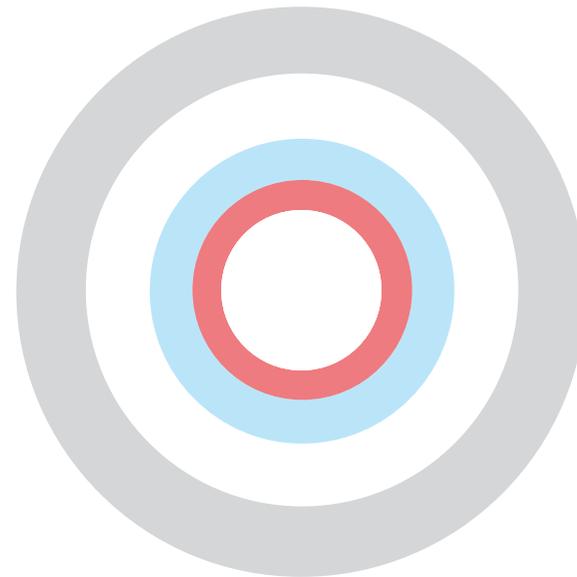
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“By analogy with biodiversity which is thought to be essential to the long-term survival of life on earth, it can be argued that cultural diversity may also be vital for the long-term survival of humanity; and that the conservation of indigenous cultures may be as important to humankind as the conservation of species and ecosystems is to life in general.”

(UNESCO, Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001)



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Part 1

The ecology of cultural diversity

1. Introduction

1.1 'Nice and warm, lovely tan'

Jules de Palm was appointed as the chairman of a committee in the Netherlands which was established to handle the supervision of doctoral candidates from Curaçao living in the Netherlands.

During his visits to Curaçao from 1949 to the early 60s which were for the purpose of education, high-level civil service and recruiting mentors for the supervision of doctoral candidates from Curaçao, De Palm once provided the following advice: "Oh, and another important piece of advice: you'd best avoid saying things like 'nice and warm' and 'lovely tan'. We can't stand that. After all these years I still find it grating. We don't enjoy 'warm' at all and we don't care about that wonderful sun. We'd rather sit in the shade. 'Nice and tanned' sounds like bullying to us: in our society, the lighter your skin, the better. Someone is only complimented on their complexion if they are light. Even photographers are encouraged to overexpose their shots: someone with dark skin will then appear much lighter" (de Palm, 1990, pp. 69-70).

1.2 Cultural diversity in the Netherlands

De Palm's stories since 1949 teach us that cultural diversity in the Netherlands is not something from the last 10 or 20 years and that the misconceptions, too, about the cultural backgrounds of the different ethnic groups in the Netherlands have historical roots. Due to globalisation, internationalisation and the increase in migration flows, the Netherlands has become increasingly diverse within the last few decades (Shadid, 2002).

Ethnically, the population of the Netherlands has changed, because people from different backgrounds have settled in our country and *culturally* it has changed because the many different customs and traditions of these groups have begun to be included in the characteristics of our country. To encapsulate both this ethnical and cultural dimension I will follow Taylor Cox Jr. (1993) and Roosevelt Thomas (1991) by using the term 'cultural diversity'. This cultural diversity can be found in figures on the development of the Dutch population. Currently, around 20 per cent of the population is 'migrant'¹ and this figure is expected to rise to 29 per cent by 2050 (CBS, 2010). The term 'migrant' is used by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) to refer to populations that have not originated in the Netherlands and have a foreign background. It literally means: 'emerging from another soil'. CBS makes a

¹ In the Netherlands, the debate on integration has focused on so-called 'non-western allochthons',¹ mostly comprised of Muslim immigrants from the former 'guest labour countries' of Morocco and Turkey as well as their descendants. This article is critical of the use of the category 'allochthon' and its counterpart 'autochthon' (officially defined as individuals with parents born in the Netherlands) as they create social distinctions that reinforce 'othering' along ethnic lines (for elaboration see Yanow & van der Haar, 2013). I instead use the terms 'migrant men' and 'migrant women' to refer to the subjects of Dutch integration policies (see also Roggeband, 2010). I acknowledge that the term 'migrant' is not accurate internationally as it excludes the children of immigrants included in the government's definition of 'allochthon', but it at least intends to avoid the reproduction of the 'othering' discourse in the Dutch context (Roggeband, 2010). <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277539513001295>

distinction between 'Western' and 'non-Western migrants'. Non-Western migrants originated from one of the countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia (excluding Indonesia and Japan) or Turkey (CBS, 2010).

When one speaks of cultural diversity, they are usually referring to diversity caused by the increase of this group of non-Western migrants in the Netherlands. For the time being I will use the term non-Western migrants, as this way it is possible to examine the increase of cultural diversity in the Netherlands on the basis of data from CBS. However, my preference is to use the term 'persons of colour' and I hope to have explained why by the end of the first part of this address.

1.3 Improvement of the position of non-Western migrants in the Netherlands

The number of non-Western migrants is increasing across the Netherlands, especially in the big cities and in Flevoland (Forum, 2010). The consequence of this increase in cultural diversity is that our environment - art, music, literature, food & eating habits, and daily interactions - is becoming visibly more diverse.

In addition, non-Western migrants are doing gradually better in the Netherlands. The second generation has a lower labour market gap in comparison to the autochthonous population than that of the first generation (CBS, 2010). They also have a higher chance of finding work, a higher average income and are more often financially independent than the first generation (CBS, 2010). The second generation of non-Western migrants is also less likely to bring a partner into the Netherlands from their country of origin. Due to the economic crisis in 2009, the labour market gap of non-Western migrant young people (20 per cent unemployment) compared to autochthonous young people (9 per cent unemployment) increased a little again. However, the second generation of non-Western migrants is more likely to consider themselves Dutch than the first generation.

1.4 Cultural diversity in education

What about the visibility of non-Western migrants in education?

Improvement can also be seen in education. The second generation of non-Western migrants is performing particularly well in education and has acquired a socio-economic position that is better than the first generation. It is clear that non-Western migrant young people are mainly located in the big cities and that already 14 per cent of students in primary and secondary education are of non-Western descent (Jettinghoff, Chitan, & Grootshoote, 2010).

This cultural diversification is a lot lower in the teaching profession, with 3.1 per cent in primary education and 4.7 per cent in secondary education. It is striking that land-based education and life sciences, with regards to the participation of non-Western migrants, lags far behind. This goes for both students and teachers in these groups. At the comprehensive Regional Education Centres (vmbo and mbo), for example, no less than 27 per cent of students are non-Western migrants, while at the Agrarian Education Centres this is less than one per cent (Council for Rural Areas, 2009).

1.5 Possible causes for lag of land-based education and life sciences

The question is why is land-based education and life sciences lagging behind with regard to the participation of non-Western migrants. The following reasons are presented as possible causes (Council for Rural Areas, 2009; Ait Moha & Schenkels, 2010; Jettinghoff, Chitan, & Grootshoote, 2010).

- Land-based education and life sciences does not have a positive image among non-Western migrants (unclear what it entails, results in poorly paid job, etc.).
- The search behaviour of non-Western migrants (unfamiliar with the 'land-based' sector, non-Western migrants are more focused on business services, the leisure sector and government).
- The lack of urgency at the institutions to devote attention to attracting non-Western migrants (there have been initiatives, but they were mostly small-scale. No large-scale initiatives had been enacted until 2008 with Kies Kleur in Groen (choose colour in green)).
- The discussion of the approaches to diversity policy at land-based education and life sciences institutions has stagnated (Target group policy? General policy? Do nothing?).
- The quality of the connection between the various groups (administrators, professionals, non-Western migrant students, etc.) making accessibility difficult for non-Western migrants (the extent to which there is a safe study-work environment).

1.6 The research group

To gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of cultural diversity in land-based education and life sciences Stoas Wageningen | Vilentum University of Applied Sciences, with the help of funding from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, has set up a research group. This research group aims to make land-based education and life sciences more attractive for persons of colour through research and other initiatives. The name of this research group is: 'Ecology of cultural diversity in land-based education and life sciences'. In this address, I would like to share with you my thoughts about the topical focus of this research group through:

1. reflecting on the concept of ecology and applying this concept to social relationships between people and their environment;
2. demonstrating that unsustainable social relationships exist in society;
3. showing which basic forms of cultural diversity perpetuate these unsustainable relationships, such as the monolithic basic form and multiculturalism;
4. demonstrating which transformative knowledge is needed to achieve sustainable social relationships between cultural groups;
5. demonstrating which transformative basic forms of cultural diversity can perpetuate these sustainable relationships, such as transculturalism.

These are the topics of the first part of my address. In the second part I will introduce you to a number of research initiatives regarding how these basic forms of cultural diversity and sustainable social relationships between cultural groups in land-based education and life sciences can be developed.

2. Ecology, social relationships and basic forms of cultural diversity

2.1 Human ecology

The German zoologist and philosopher Ernst Haeckel first introduced the term ‘ecology’ in 1866. Ecology is the science that studies the interaction between living organisms and their environment. The concept of ecology emphasises the ‘coherence of things’ (Sterling, 2009). The following quote from *The Savage Mind* by Claude Levi-Strauss (2009) about the Negritos, a group of Pygmies in the Philippines, is typical of this interactive approach:

“Another characteristic of Negrito life, a characteristic which strikingly demarcates them from the surrounding Christian lowlanders, is their inexhaustible knowledge of the plant and animal kingdoms. This lore includes not only a specific recognition of a phenomenal number of plants, birds, animals, and insects, but also includes a knowledge of the habits and behaviour of each. The Negrito is an intrinsic part of his environment, and what is still more important, continually studies his surroundings. Many times I have seen a Negrito, who, when not being certain of the identification of a particular plant, will taste the fruit, smell the leaves, break and examine the stem, comment upon its habitat, and only after all of this, pronounce whether he did or did not know the plant.”

In Chicago in 1920 the famous ‘Chicago school of sociology’ was founded, also known as the ‘Ecological school’. The basic principles of ecology, the relationships between plants and animals and their environment, were developed by the predecessors of this Chicago School (Thomas, Park, Burgess) to understand the relationship between humankind and its environment. It is there that the study of *human ecology* was created: the study of the mutual relationship between humans and their environment. Human behaviour, according to the Chicago School, is influenced by social and physical environmental factors. An individual develops in a certain environment and in that environment phenomena and structures are the result of the social interactions between those individuals. This means the environment is a synthesis of social interactions and, as such, results in a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. Theodorson (1961, p. 29) offers the following definition of human ecology:

“Human ecology is, fundamentally, an attempt to investigate the processes by which the biotic balance and the social equilibrium are maintained once they are achieved and the processes by which, when the biotic balance and the social equilibrium are disturbed, the transition is made from one relatively stable order to another.”

These basic principles were developed later at the Chicago School of Sociology by George Herbert Mead and his students (including Anselm Strauss, Ervin Goffman, and Herbert Blumer) into ‘symbolic interactionism’ (Morse, Stern, Corbin, Bowers, Charmaz & Clarke, 2009). Symbolic interactionism studies the “natural social world of interacting individuals” (Wester, 1986, p. 29). Meaning and interaction play a central role in symbolic interactionism, in the following way (Wester, 196, pp. 30-31):

- people respond to social objects on the basis of the meaning these objects have to them (physical objects, people, organisations, situations, ideals, etc.);

- this meaning is derived or generated from the social interaction people have with their fellow humans;
- this meaning is used and modified through an interpretative process with the things around us.

The conclusion, therefore, is that ‘human ecology’ is concerned with the way in which people give meaning to the world around them through social interaction with others. Meaning is a social product, rather than the product of individual processes. Interaction with people is symbolic, as it is aimed at objects that have meaning for people and allocating meaning is an *interpretative process*. Kortweg emphasises this symbolic interactionism: “a form of collaborative meaning making (sense making)” (Frijters, 2006, p. 3), giving meaning to the world around us and simultaneously shaping it.

This concludes my clarification of the concept of ‘human ecology’ and its elaboration into symbolic interactionism. This approach will allow me to analyse what this means for the social relationships between different cultural groups. I will first demonstrate that this is characterised by unsustainable social relationships between people in society in general.

2.2 Unsustainable social relationships

The Chinese philosopher Tu Wei Ming (2008) shows that in the modern world the principle of interdependence in the ecological system is violated. This also goes for the relationships between people and between people and their environment.

In this regard, Wei Ming (2008) speaks of a disharmonious connection between people and nature resulting in ‘unsustainable’ connections. There is globalisation and individualisation; openness is the norm and individuals can only count on themselves. Nothing is made to last anymore and the rules are constantly changing. As a result of the ongoing technological and scientific advances that are increasingly harder to keep track of, the conditions and characteristics of society itself are changing. In this way, people have become detached from traditional social relationships and to an increasing degree are required to plan and organise their lives *themselves*. The German sociologist Beck (1992) characterises such a society as a ‘risk society’. Characteristic of the risks in that society is that it can affect anyone anywhere and that it has become a fundamental part of our life. Those affected will have problems and must figure out how to get out of them. After all, individualisation has resulted in being seen as personally responsible for how you live your own life. Moreover, people worldwide are confronted with simultaneous and diverse crises:

“These are not separate crises: an environmental crisis, a development crisis, an energy crisis. They are all one. But we still think of them as separate – we often fail to see connections and patterns” (World Commission on Environmental and Development, 1987 in Sterling 2009, p. 16).

Typically, there is little to no insight into the *interrelationship* and *interdependence* of these crises and these are dealt with in primarily instrumental terms. Instead of taking a fundamental and transformative perspective on society, we mainly see ‘crisis management’ taking place. As a result of the lack of insight into the interrelationship and interdependence

of these crises, the social relationships between people and between people and their environment are primarily characterised by uncertainty and insecurity and can be regarded as unsustainable (Sterling, 2009).

I will further relate this to the social relationships between cultural groups in society. I distinguish between two basic forms of cultural diversity that result in unsustainable cultural groups, the monolithic basic form and multiculturalism.

2.3 The monolithic organisation

In accordance with Taylor Cox Jr. (1993), I will call the first basic form the monolithic basic form. A monolith is a geological feature consisting of a single stone or rock. This basic form represents a culture in which a group of 'equals' in terms of gender, origin, sexual orientation or generation is predominant. The result is a strongly hierarchical culture in which the communication is unilaterally imposed from above, open communication about differences is hardly possible and the non-equal groups are barely taken seriously or not at all (Knegtmans, 2010). Furthermore, the non-equal groups are seen as backward (Glastra, 1999; Musschenga & Koster, 2011). According to this view, for instance, a group of a certain ethnic or religious background dominates how society is structured and the non-equal groups are often perceived as a threat to the status quo. The dominant groups have a strong ethnocentric attitude; a positive stance towards the norms and values of their own group coupled with a negative stance regarding the non-equal groups (Scheepers & Eisinga, 1986). A psychological explanation of this attitude is given, among others, by Byrne (1971) in the 'Similarity-Attraction Theory'. The greater the similarity between people, the greater the attraction between them. People are drawn to others with the same personal characteristics and attitudes, because these confirm their own norms and values through social validation (Van Oudenhoven, 2008). The dominant group also feels threatened by people who have a different world view (Solomon, Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1991). Critical reflection by the dominant group regarding its own behaviour is rare in the monolithic basic form and the world is divided into an 'us' and 'them'. The rise of populist political movements in Europe can be seen as an expression of the existence of the monolithic basic form. The danger of a monolithic culture in organisations is illustrated in the 'jungle metaphor' (see Knegtmans, 2010, p. 26) by Susanne Stolten, chair of the Dutch Association of Board Members and Supervisory Board Members:

"If you, for example, take elephants out of the ecosystem, the bush will become completely overgrown to the point where animals can no longer pass through. Each animal there contributes to the whole. Why wouldn't this principle apply to the corporate jungle as well? An ecosystem simply does not thrive in a monoculture. To stay in this metaphor: the challenge is to involve not just the mastodons, but also the rest of the animal kingdom."



2.4 Multiculturalism

The second basic form of cultural diversity that perpetuates unsustainable social relationships between cultural groups is multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a "socio-political movement in which the societal and political inclusion of various cultural and ethnical groups is attempted, by recognising the individuality of these groups within certain limits" (van Leeuwen, 2003, p. 15). It is about how to respond to the ethnical and cultural diversity in society. Here, recognition of human equality and political recognition of cultural diversity go hand in hand. We can define two perspectives on multiculturalism: the social justice perspective and the culturalisation perspective.

The social justice perspective

In the first perspective on multiculturalism, social justice plays a central role. This perspective was particularly prevalent in the early sixties in the US. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 required that effort be put into ensuring equal representation of women and African Americans in institutions in American society (Musschenga & Koster, 2011). This involved a phenomenon called 'affirmative action'. This policy strives on the one hand to tackle the "serious social evil of discrimination, which is an offence to justice", and on the other as "compensation for the injustice done to them and their group in the past" (Musschenga & Koster, 2011, p. 9). This view was also expressed in US politics, especially through the American Civil Rights Movements with famous activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Jesse Jackson. In the Netherlands this phenomenon also gained recognition as 'positive discrimination' (positieve discriminatie) earlier this century, as described in the SAMEN (Employment of Minorities Promotion) act in 2004. The social justice perspective makes it clear that the social disadvantage of certain groups of people is the motivation for involving these groups more in society.

Acculturation perspective

The second perspective on multiculturalism is much more about learning to deal with cultural diversity as a good preparation for the daily dealings with various groups in society (Musschenga & Koster, 2011). This perspective is most similar to what Glastra (1999) calls acculturation, focusing on cultural differences as collective cultural differences. People of the dominant cultural group are not only held accountable for their behaviour regarding other cultural groups, but are also expected to take an interest in the other groups' culture with the objective of cultivating an understanding of their values and norms. In this perspective, conflicts between different cultural groups are seen as the result of cultural differences between those groups and the solution therefore lies in obtaining knowledge of the other groups' cultural background and traditions: "he who excels at decoding and is conscious of his own values and norms and those of others, will make fewer mistakes" (Glastra, 1999, p. 41).



2.5 Criticism on the monolithic basic form and multiculturalism

In social interactions between people, the monolithic basic form results in a great deal of social exclusion for many cultural groups. The monolithic basic form strongly reduces cultural diversity to a single culture in which one particular dominant group is the cultural medium. Other cultural groups are ignored or excluded as cultural media: it is the perspective of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. It should be clear, in the light of the increase of cultural diversity in society, that this basic form impedes the development of sustainable social relationships between different cultural groups.

The problem of both perspectives on multiculturalism lies in the underlying perception of cultural differences as *collective* cultural differences. The world is divided in terms of cultural *categories* or *dimensions*. The categories of Dutch social psychologist Hofstede (2000) are famous in this regard: a culture of a country is characterised as individualist or collectivist, feminine or masculine, traditional or modern and with higher or lower perceived power distance. Culture is thus experienced as the entirety of global categories. On this basis the behaviour of large groups of people can be understood. In a criticism of this view of culture, Shadid (2002) states: “[...] these categorisations of culture are no more than simplistic and ideal-typical constructions that do not do justice to the societal reality of the world’s diverse cultures, thus this has an adverse impact on intercultural interactions.” On a related note, Ghorasi (2006) describes a type of categorical thinking: “in which the general is elevated to the essence and the concrete to secondary or non-existent” (Musschenga & Koster, 2011, p. 17). In addition, multiculturalism emphasises the *coexistence* of more or less isolated collective cultures. Wolfgang Welsch (1999, p. 196) summarised the criticism of multiculturalism as follows:

“Multiculturalism proceeds from the existence of clearly distinguished, in themselves homogeneous cultures [...] within one and the same state community.”

The cultural identity of individuals is attributed to one particular cultural group on the basis of frequently observed physical characteristics and/or limited biographical information, as if variation and differences did not exist within that group:

“Every culture is supposed to mould the whole life of the people concerned and of its individuals, making every act and every object an unmistakable instance of precisely this culture” (Welsch, 1999, p. 194).

An example of such an over-categorisation can be found in Ghorasi’s article (2006, p. 28, on the basis of an anecdote by Ulrich Beck):

“A black man in Germany is asked: ‘Where are you from?’

He answers: ‘From Munich.’

Q: ‘And your parents?’

A: ‘Also from Munich.’

Q: ‘And where were they born?’

A: ‘My mother was born in Munich.’

Q: ‘And your father?’

A: ‘In Ghana...’

Q: ‘Ah, so you’re from Ghana.’”

From this perspective, multiculturalism is *distinctive* rather than *connecting* (Welsch, 1999, p. 195). It disregards the principles of human ecology, in which the active and creative allocation of meaning in the social interaction between people of different cultural groups plays a central role in a certain physical and social environment. This also disregards the possible variations *within* a particular collectively defined culture. Amartya Sen (2006) calls the categorisation of people into individual, homogenous, simple and overarching characteristics a profound and dramatic *misunderstanding*, and in his book demonstrates how this view often *results* in conflicts rather than *offering insight* into them, and is even the most important source of global conflicts.

Both the monolithic basic form and multiculturalism are inadequate views for developing sustainable social relations between cultural groups in society. Where the monolithic basic form represents a clear ‘us’ versus ‘them’ relationship, multiculturalism fails in its over-categorisation of cultural identities of people in society.

Below, I will first address the question of what kind of knowledge we need to make the transition to a basic form of cultural diversity that I do consider sustainable for the social relationships between cultural groups. To conclude this first part, I will further develop this basic form below.

2.6 Transformative knowledge for sustainable social relationships

A philosophical movement that reflects critically on the relationship between people and their environment and on realising sustainable social relationships is called ‘the new Confucianism’. The new Confucianism is a Chinese philosophy that has taken hold especially amongst Chinese intellectuals since 1958 in response to the publication of the ‘New Confucian Manifesto’. The core of this philosophy is that there are four dimensions to human flourishing (Wei Ming, March 2011):

1. The ‘Self’: the focal point for the integration of body and mind. This mainly involves self-development.
2. The interaction between the ‘Self’ and the ‘Community’: the reciprocity between the self-development and the surroundings (family, neighbourhood, city, country, planet).
3. The relationship between ‘Self’ and ‘Nature’: the organic connection between self-development and the earth (“The earth is the proper home for our body, heart, mind, soul and spirit” [Wei-Ming, 2008]).
4. The relationship between the ‘Self’ and the ‘Supernatural’: the human spirit and the importance of God(s) and heaven.

According to New Confucianism, only along these four dimensions of human experience is it possible to restore the relationship between people and between people and their environment. Only then can we speak of sustainable social relationships (Wei Ming, 2008). The core idea of Confucianism is to fundamentally change the core values of our social relationships. According to New Confucianism, the core values that form the basis for unsustainable

relationships are unlimited freedom, rationality, equality, individuality and individual dignity and a lack of spiritualism. To achieve sustainable relationships between people, New Confucianism strives for values such as sympathy, empathy, compassion, responsibility, social harmony, and justice. Achieving sustainable relationships is not a question of replacing one set of values with another set. On the contrary, it is about a dialogue between different values. It concerns the development of an AND-AND orientation to values instead of the OR-OR orientation that is still predominant in the Western world and that is referred to by Wei Ming (Tegenlicht, March 2011) as the politicisation of values. The vision of New Confucianism can be characterised as a normative interpretation developed by 'human ecologists'.

Stephen Sterling, Professor of Sustainability Education, explicitly describes an ecological vision in which social relationships can be achieved in society between individuals. He speaks of a 'transformative ecological paradigm'. The core of Sterling's argument (2006) is that through the development of an ecological attitude people are better capable of reflecting on themselves, the relationship between themselves and others and on the relationship between themselves and the world around them. This requires the development of an ecologically humanitarian way of thinking, in which a shift occurs from instrumental values to intrinsic values. Instrumental values represent the preservation of society and the opportunity for criticism-free socialisation in modern society, while intrinsic values focus more on the development of human potential and promoting social change.

Sterling (2006) also emphasises that the possibilities for realising a sustainable and harmonious society lie in the dialogue between the instrumental and intrinsic values. An important aspect here, according to Sterling (2009), is that in this transformation process, diversity in the cultural, economic, social and biological sense becomes an important and worthy value.

Thus, New Confucianism and Stephen Sterling provide us with the necessary knowledge for creating sustainable social relationships between different cultural groups in society. With this knowledge it is possible to make a transition from the monolithic basic form and multiculturalism to a new basic form that reflects these sustainable relationships between cultural groups. I call this basic form 'transculturalism'.

2.7 Transculturalism

To gain a better insight into a person's cultural identity, Welsch (1999) introduced the concept of 'transculturalism', where 'trans' carries the meaning of 'reciprocity' and 'drawing near to one another' (Dumasy, 2002).

Transculturalism is characterised first and foremost by the idea that modern cultures have become internally diverse and more complex. Secondly, this diversity and complexity means that cultures are mixed, penetrate one another and arise out of each other. This does not stop at the border of a particular country or national culture, but crosses these borders. Thirdly, we see that cultures are characterised by hybridisation. Each culture is intrinsically linked to other cultures and aspects of each culture can be found again in the cultural

practices of people in other cultural environments (Welsch, pp. 197-198). Therefore, we can speak of merging cultural practices that work to create new cultural practices (Musschenga & Koster, 2011). Human cultural identity is shaped by the interactions with people from other cultures, that have also shaped their identity through their interactions with other cultures. Forming a cultural identity in this view is not a process that is static, isolated or generally able to be categorised, but is instead a dynamic, interactive process between individuals and their environment. In transculturalism, culture is seen much more as a phenomenon that is produced or modified through interactive processes. Interactive processes, thus, are both the result and driving force of cultural change (Shadid, 2002) and the interpersonal relationships play a central role as a source of accepting and appreciating cultural differences between people. The core of human identity in modern society according to Welsch (1999) is that it is pluralistic, and in their social interactions with others and their environment people are faced with the task of integrating different cultural components instead of denying them (Welsch, 1999, p. 199). Amartya Sen (2006) describes the plurality of the human identity as follows:

"The hope of harmony in the contemporary world lies to a great extent in a clear understanding of the pluralities of human identity, and in the appreciation that they cut each other and work against a sharp separation along one single line of impenetrable division."

The Argentine sociologist Néstor Garcia Canclini (2005) develops this motto in various fields (art, music, customs and traditions) and on different levels in Latin America. In his book *Hybrid Cultures*, Canclini describes socio-cultural processes in Latin America in which structures and practices, previously existing separately from one another, are connected with each other and from which new structures and practices can then flow. In cultural encounters between different cultural groups, connections are established between different cultural practices and this creates the opportunity, also in Latin America, for creating new practices in those interactions. Therefore, culture and cultural identity are once again created by the actions of individuals. The added value of Canclini's work (2005) in this regard lies primarily in the idea that hybridisation is not a process that takes place in a vacuum, but is a cultural-historical process: a 'history of mixing'. Only through a cultural-historical analysis of the way in which language, music, art, literature and traditions are created and also actively produced or reproduced, is it possible to understand what the content of these processes is and how these were created. Canclini demonstrates this through the concept of 'Spanglish':

"Spanglish is a language that originated in the Latino communities in the US and an intense debate has arisen regarding whether this language may be used or taught at universities. This language has already been included in official dictionaries. Canclini is surprised about the short-sightedness of this debate, as if English and Spanish were not embedded and a product of Arabic, Latin and pre-Colombian languages. If this cultural-historical mixing is not analysed and involved in the discussion, understanding the language and the influence of that language on the social interactions such as those found in the US, is impossible."

2.8 Conclusion

In the first part of my address, I applied the concept of 'human ecology' by the Chicago School of Sociology to the social relationships between cultural groups.

I have found that the social relationships in society can be characterised as unsustainable social relationships and have applied this to cultural groups based on two basic forms of cultural diversity, namely the monolithic basic form and multiculturalism. Additionally, I presented transformative knowledge in the form of New Confucianism and the transformative ecological paradigm in order to transform the social relationships between people in society into sustainable social relationships. I have developed this further into a basic form for cultural diversity that represents the said sustainable relationships, namely transculturalism. Transculturalism equips us with the perspective to understand cultural diversity around us, find our place in it and also communicate with others about it. It enables us to see ourselves and others in pluralistic terms and thus opens the path toward new connections with others and the world around us. For the nature of these connections, New Confucianism and the transformative ecological paradigm provide substantive foundations. Transculturalism also enables us to experience and approach the complexity of culture and identity formation in such a way that the cultural dignity of ourselves, others and our relation to others is preserved. This increases the chance of developing social relationships between cultural groups in society and with the environment, and of achieving the 'colourful meadow' in society in general and in land-based education and life sciences.

In the second part of my address, I would like to present a number of research initiatives with the aim of developing sustainable social relationships between cultural groups in land-based education and life sciences, and thus develop the basic form of transculturalism.



Part 2

Research into cultural diversity in land-based education and life sciences



3. Introduction

3.1 Introduction

In this second part, I present a number of opportunities for research and other initiatives which I hope to set in motion in land-based education and life sciences in the next four years. These research and initiatives can be categorised into three themes: research and initiatives surrounding the diversity climate, research and initiatives surrounding *value orientations* regarding the land-based sector and research and initiatives surrounding *cross-cultural competencies*. Each of the research projects and initiatives have the following core topics (see: Dumasy, 2002):

- An analysis of *attitudes and the behaviour* of persons of colour: How can I understand the attitudes and behaviour of those involved? Which environmental or personal factors play a role in this? What are my expectations regarding this?
- An analysis of the way in which *these attitudes and behaviour can be handled*: What are the possible solutions? Which cultural priorities play a part? What sort of consideration should be made? How do other colleagues or schools deal with it?
- What *pedagogical skills* can be used: Which pedagogical skills in the area of communication, supervision and teaching can be put into practice?

Before I present the research and initiatives, I would like to talk a little about the underlying research design and the underlying statutory, social-pedagogical framework in which the research and the initiatives take place.

3.2 Research design

The research design includes *practical research*. This is a form of research in which the objective is to contribute to an intervention to change an existing practice.

In short, it is about solving a problem. This involves interventions in relation to policy that has been implemented by local, regional, national and international authorities, or by the management of profit and non-profit organisations (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007, p. 46). Which different types of practical research (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007) will be used in the research themes and in the initiatives is dependent on the circumstances and the objective.

The objective of all the research and initiatives, and with it the connecting mechanism between the research and initiatives, is to especially use those methods and techniques that are characterised by action (Ponte, 2009) and transformative intervention (Engeström, 2008). This does not mean that there is no room for empirical research within the clusters. Data and results that can be generated through this type of research are useful in the preparation of practical action and transformation. 'Practice' means educational institutes in land-based education and life sciences, professional practice (green companies and social organisations) and centres of expertise (such as Kies Kleur in Groen). The focus of the research as a whole is that those participating in the research are not only the object of observation

and perception, but are also key players in developing insights and implementing, changing and transforming knowledge in practice and of practice.

Such research will not only result in knowledge and insights, but also in concrete products and designs for possible solutions to practical problems. An example of the latter would be a new curriculum implemented at an educational institution. In this sense, practical research is a type of *participatory action research* (Reason & Bradbury, 2006).

3.3 Active citizenship and social integration

A address by the Council for Education (2007) states that education has three main functions, namely qualification, selection/allocation and socialisation.

The Council for Education states that the school must fulfil all three functions. In theory, the *socialisation function* is increasing in prominence, as demonstrated for instance in the active citizenship and social integration act (Wet Actief Burgerschap en Sociale Integratie, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science [OCW], 2006). Promoting *citizenship and integration* is important; the act highlights the decreased involvement between citizens and between citizens and government. The primary education board at OCW defines the concept of active citizenship as follows: 'Active citizenship is the ability and desire to participate in society. Citizenship is about diversity, acceptance and tolerance. It also requires reflection on one's own actions, a respectful attitude and a contribution to the care for the environment.'

For educational institutions the statutory citizenship commission *obligates* them to devote attention in their education to active citizenship and social integration. In this context, society expects a great deal from education, because it is one of the few socialising institutions which, due to Dutch legislation on compulsory schooling, is able to influence all young people. The Education Inspectorate has monitored school attendance since 2006. The commission to schools to promote active citizenship and social integration has been laid out in the sectoral laws for primary and secondary education (WPO8.3, WVO17) and the expertise centres (WEC11.3):

"Education:

- assumes students will grow up in a pluralistic society;
- is aimed at promoting active citizenship and social integration;
- is aimed at students acquiring knowledge of and becoming acquainted with different backgrounds and the cultures of their peers."

Active citizenship and social integration are not new concepts, instead it is a new way of looking at the socialisation responsibility of schools. This educational responsibility of the school is primarily societal. It is aimed at the involvement of citizens in designing their environment, taking responsibility for it, participating and contributing to society and handling cultural diversity.

For that reason, schools must take these aspects into account when formulating their core objectives. In summary, three domains play a central role in citizenship formation (www.slo.nl):

- Democracy - knowledge about the democratic system and political decision making; democratic action and basic societal values.
- Participation - knowledge about the basic values and possibilities for participation and the skills and attitudes needed to actively participate at school and in society.
- Identity - exploring one's own identity and that of others; what are one's personal values in life and how does one realise them?

Thus, the pedagogical task of schools is not implemented in *addition* to their primary process, but is an essential element of it. The task of education is therefore also to provide a broad and balanced orientation to people and society. Students must also gain some insight into the relationships with their personal and societal surroundings. This calls for explicit attention on topics such as (www.nvww.nl):

- knowing and dealing with personal and others' norms and values;
- recognising and dealing with differences between cultures and genders;
- the relationship between people and nature and the concept of sustainable development;
- acting as a democratic citizen in a multicultural society and also internationally.

Thus far I have discussed the statutory social-pedagogical framework for the research initiatives. I will now use this framework to structure my research initiatives in the context of cultural diversity in land-based education and life sciences. Here we see a concrete link with part 1 of my address, namely 'human ecology' and the development of social relationships. Citizens are expected to, in their social interaction with others, actively take responsibility for shaping their environment. Concepts such as cultural diversity, acceptance, tolerance, self-reflection and a respectful attitude are the anchors for social interactions.

4. Research and initiatives

4.1 Research into the diversity climate

Taylor Cox Jr. (1993) provided the foundation for research into the diversity climate of organisations. He introduced the 'Interactive Model of Cultural Diversity' in order to detect the *diversity climate* in an organisation. The core idea of this model is that the combination of factors at the individual level (personality characteristics, background characteristics), factors at the intergroup level (cultural differences, perceived threat) and factors at the organisational level (organisation culture, diversity policy) make up the diversity climate of an organisation.

I will introduce a similar study within land-based education and life sciences. After all, research has shown that persons of colour consider it important to feel at home and integrated into organisations and in particular not to feel discriminated against or treated unequally (Cox Jr., 1993; Intelligence Group, 2007). Therefore, it is of paramount importance to grasp the nature of the organisational context in which persons of colour will be integrated. Research into the nature of this organisational context is called *diversity climate research*.

This research into the diversity climate of institutions of land-based education and life sciences will be used in three ways. Firstly, the *diversity policy* of an educational institution will be studied. This first involves an analysis of the educational institution's different policy documents in relation to striving for diversity in its ranks (for example, quantitative objectives in the form of target figures, the reasons for choosing these and the vision for the future).

Second, this involves research into the *multicultural attitudes* and *acculturation strategies* of participants in an educational institution. The *multicultural attitude* is described as the attitude towards multiculturalism (Berry & Kalin, 1987; Berry, Poortinga, Segal, & Daren, 1992). A positive attitude towards multiculturalism can lead to improved relationships between different cultural groups within an educational institution, while a negative attitude can lead to a deterioration of the relationships between these groups and thereby be a source of conflict. *Acculturation* is described by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) in terms of processes arising from the contact between groups or individuals of different cultural backgrounds in an organisation. This contact can lead to drastic changes in the cultural patterns in an organisation. For both the multicultural attitude and acculturation strategy the research within the educational institution will search for explanations based on factors at the individual, intergroup and organisational level.

Here, the research into the diversity climate is an empirical study that uses existing insights from previous research in the area of national and international research into multiculturalism (Berry & Kalin, 1987; Berry, Poortinga, Segal, & Daren, 1992; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000; Bosman, Richardson, & Soeters, 2007; Schalk-Soekar, 2007; Van de Vijver, Breugelmans, & Schalk-Soekar, 2008; Savelkoul, Scheepers, Tolsma & Hagendoorn, 2010; Richardson, Op den Buijs, & Van der Zee, 2011). Third, in order to begin developing knowledge within various organisations about and for educational and professional practice based on the results of the empirical study into the diversity climate, it is important to ascertain which development trajectory can be used in the organisation to stimulate

closer interaction between persons of colour and others. This trajectory reflects the ideas of developing transculturalism such as I presented earlier, as well as developing transcultural connections within land-based education and life sciences institutions. The core idea of this trajectory is that learning in teams is an important condition for implementing improvements to the diversity climate within an organisation (Meerman & Van Putten, 2006; Meerman, Spierings, Segers, & Bay, 2009). Many experiences from research often remain implicit and are rather infrequently discussed with colleagues.

The development trajectory aims to teach participants how to deal with dilemmas that arise in daily work and learn to make choices on the basis of personal experiences and opinions. Furthermore, the aim is that these experiences and choices find their way to formal meetings within the organisation, allowing for structural measures to be taken with the goal of improving the diversity climate.

The chosen work method within the development trajectory is in line with the experiences gained in the research group 'Gedifferentieerd HRM' (differentiated HRM) headed by Martha Meerman at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (Meerman, Spierings, Segers, & Bay, 2009).

The intention is to start the study into the diversity climate at a single organisation (educational institution) and then to include as many educational institutions in the land-based sector as possible. In this way, in addition to an analysis of substantive differences and similarities between the diversity climate of educational institutions, an analysis can also be made regarding whether these differences and similarities may have to do with factors like region, nature (religious or otherwise) of the educational institution, size of the educational institution, level of the educational institution, etc. On behalf of the research group of Stoas University of Applied Sciences, Cecile Verhoeven is the driving force behind this study.

4.2 Research into value orientations regarding the land-based sector

The second research theme involves research and initiatives centred around value orientations regarding the land-based sector.

At the start of my address, I indicated that possible causes for the limited participation of persons of colour could be linked to the image of the institutions and the search behaviour of persons of colour. Research into the discrepancy between the image problem of land-based education and life sciences and the search behaviour of persons of colour was carried out by Motivaction (Ait Moha & Schenkels, 2010). This study has so far not provided any in-depth insight into the underlying value constructions which persons of colour adhere to with regards to the land-based sector. The Motivaction study has also not yielded any insight into the effect that the value orientations of stakeholders in land-based education and life sciences have on persons of colour. The following questions remain to be answered:

1. Which values does land-based education and life sciences use when targeting persons of colour?
2. What are the similarities and differences of the values that persons of colour use in their orientation towards land-based education and life sciences?
3. In what way can the results of this comparison be further developed into initiatives that enhance mutual involvement?

The research theme 'value orientations regarding the land-based sector' is addressed in two ways. First, a series of *Socratic dialogues* will be held with representatives of groups of persons of colour and stakeholders in land-based education and life sciences. This Socratic dialogue is a type of discourse in which participants in a certain situation have the possibility to critically analyse the arguments they use to justify their actions in specific situations (Verweij & Becker, 2006). In this Socratic dialogue, experiences and opinions in relation to the land-based sector are shared and deepened. The structure of the dialogue is such that it provides insight into the personal values and consciousness with regard to the land-based sector. Simultaneously, in the dialogue these values are compared with those of others, thereby generating insight into the values of others. In short, the Socratic dialogue is characterised by the exploration of the 'moral dimension of actions' (Verweij & Becker, 2006, p. 336). The objective of this dialogue is to discover value orientations in addition to ascertaining the reason as to why participants adhere to certain values. Thus, the Socratic dialogue creates something of a free space for interaction and dialogue. Through the Socratic dialogue, in line with the views of transculturalism, a connection is made between the cultural orientations of different individuals and groups in land-based education and life sciences.

In line with the information gathered through the Socratic dialogue, *practical initiatives* can be developed in land-based education and life sciences to connect the different value orientations of persons of colour, both individually and in groups. An example from outside land-based education and life sciences is the project 'Playing for Success' by the KPC group. This initiative places students in secondary education who have a learning deficit in language, maths or ICT together in a learning centre in a different environment: a football stadium. In this new learning environment, a climate is created for mutual exchange and positive identity development in the social relationships between persons of colour, with attention to aspects like independence, motivation and self-confidence. The success of 'Playing for Success' is demonstrated by the fact that municipalities, professionals from the educational field and football clubs such as Feyenoord, FC Zwolle, FC Groningen and Heracles have opened or will open such learning centres. In land-based education and life sciences and in collaboration with the land-based sector, such initiatives can also play an important role in bringing about a transcultural connection between students of different groups of persons of colour. A unique possibility here, in my opinion, lies in the cross-curricular theme 'Nature and Environmental Education' (NME). The cross-curricular element is found in the way Nature, Environment and Society are discussed in conjunction with each other (Margadant, 1997 and 1998). Educational practice has shown us, however, that NME is divided up into courses such as biology, chemistry, geography, history, economics and health and care. In order to ensure that the consistency and core element of the NME course is maintained, to connect students with different cultural orientations and to bring the course back to a 'natural environment', 'natural learning centres' could be created within NME (a green company, a green external environment) and successful meetings could be initiated. Here it is of particular importance that the education sector collaborates with the government and the land-based sector. Research regarding such initiatives entails regular monitoring of the initiative with the aim of strengthening the transcultural elements within the initiative and bringing together the value orientations of persons of colour. In this way, such initiatives can develop into 'Change Laboratories' for the development of sustainable social relationships

between persons of colour and other individuals in society. A practical example of an initiative in which the Socratic dialogue was combined with successful meetings can be found in the work of Dumasy (2002):

In described research - after having laid a theoretical foundation - all kinds of assignments were carried out, such as speaking with a migrant, visiting a mosque and analysing case studies in order to find personal solutions to intercultural problems. A particularly educational research programme regarding sport identity has been conducted by researchers from the research group 'bewegen, school en sport' (exercise, school and sports) in the multifunctional building Nieuw-Welgelegen in the Utrecht neighbourhood of Kanaleneiland. This five-storey building, surrounded by sports fields within walking distance of the Utrecht Central Station, houses a school for secondary vocational education (mbo), one for preparatory vocational education (vmbo) and five sports clubs. Here, the students have held Socratic dialogues with the predominantly migrant students and have prepared sport workshops. The central theme is not the dialogues, but the ability to empathise with others. In 2010/2011, some 120 sports students from Zwolle came into contact with a migrant world that they did not know back home. Their learning process was documented in a portfolio. The evaluations of both the Utrecht-based students and those from the sports school demonstrate the positive added value of such interactions. The attention for personal development and individuality of exercise is thus enriched with transcultural encounters which provide a glimpse into each other's worlds enabling them to appreciate them and especially learn from them.

4.3 The cross-cultural competencies

In the transcultural basic form, a balance is sought between the different cultural orientations of individuals and groups, where this balance is anchored, so to speak, in the individual's identity. This allows sustainable social relationships to develop within a safe working and learning climate for different persons of colour in a land-based education and life sciences institution.

In the interactions in a land-based education and life sciences institution, explicit attention can be devoted to this through the development of cross-cultural competencies for professionals (administrators and teachers), students and pupils in land-based education and life sciences (Van Oudenhoven, 2008; Magala, 2005). Magala (2005, p. 204) defines these cross-cultural competencies as:

"The ability to detect, understand and exploit cross-cultural differences manifested in all processes of organising and in all managerial activities. Cross-cultural competence allows for successful bridging of differences in identifying, naming, prioritising, and implementing values."

Developing these competencies in land-based education and life sciences is researched from an interactive perspective, i.e. the focus is on:

- the way in which cross-cultural competencies are produced or reproduced in the interactions in classroom situations;
- the way in which cross-cultural competencies are produced or reproduced in the interactions between teachers;
- the way in which cross-cultural competencies are produced or reproduced in the interactions between teachers and students;

- the way in which these interactions contribute to the development of a transcultural basic form.

This focus is not only on educational institutions that are already culturally diverse, but also on institutions which are not yet so. After all, in relation to active citizenship, it is also important to prepare the people involved in these kinds of institutions for working and learning in a multicultural environment. Due to the changing social environment, it is indeed not inconceivable that through their work activities, professionals, students and teachers will end up in a different cultural setting (national or international) than they were used to up to that point. Furthermore, there is a significant chance that students, in a future phase of their education, will be trained in a multicultural environment.

How do we view these interactions? The guiding principle for the research into the development of cross-cultural competencies in land-based education and life sciences is the concept of multicultural effectiveness (Van der Zee & Oudenhoven, 2000; Van Oudenhoven, 2008). This is more than just "being able to achieve a good sense of psychological well-being in a cultural environment," but also "successfully functioning within that environment" (Van Oudenhoven, 2008, p. 77). On the basis of their research and literature study, Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee developed an instrument in which five factors are key (Van Oudenhoven, 2008):

1. Flexibility - people's ability to adapt their behaviour to new and unknown situations;
2. Emotional stability - people's ability to remain calm in stressful situations;
3. Social initiative - people's ability to actively approach a social situation and take initiative in that situation;
4. Cultural empathy - people's ability to identify with the feelings, thoughts and behaviour of people with a different cultural background and identity;
5. Open mindedness - people's ability to approach those with a different cultural background and who have different values and norms than the own group in an unprejudiced and open manner.

The interesting thing about these factors is that they appear to be valid *regardless* of the specific culture of the person involved. In this sense these are cross-cultural factors.

How should we view interactions? The research on the development of cross-cultural competencies in interactions in land-based education and life sciences is used as follows. First, through empirical research. In order to gain insight into the state-of-affairs of the cross-cultural competencies within an educational institution, Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee's model is used. The five abovementioned factors are measured and, on this basis, it is possible to develop 'cross-cultural profiles' at the personal, group or institutional level. Comparing the educational institutions together results in an overview of differences and similarities between these cross-cultural profiles on the basis of a number of background characteristics (region, size of schools, religious status, etc.).

However, this still provides insufficient insight into the manner in which cross-cultural competencies in interactions develop within a certain institution. It also provides insufficient opportunities for educational practice to be able to influence such interactions. Second,

interactions in the classroom and in the educational institution are analysed using the results from the empirical research. ‘Morally critical situations’ (Radstake, 2009; Maes, 2010) can be used as a tool here. These are situations in which people portray morally critical behaviour. This means: “behaviour contrary to the moral values and that as such can affect another’s wellbeing and integrity” (Maes, 2010, p. 5). The moral values refer to values that clarify how people interact with each other and their environment. An analysis of such situations from the perspective of cultural diversity starts with the collection of morally critical situations in land-based education and life sciences. With the help of factors from Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven’s model, situations can be studied more closely and cross-cultural interaction patterns can be developed. Through Socratic dialogues, those involved can reflect on the pattern on the basis of the questions I suggested in the introduction to part II. Within the Stoas research group, Stan Frijters is already carrying out PhD research devoted to studying cross-cultural competencies in land-based education and life sciences. This research has some overlap with research into the value orientations within NME.

What product could be developed on the basis of the interaction analyses? On the basis of the results of the analysis of the interaction patterns, reflection can begin in order to find a way to process these into a product, for instance a training, course or module. The ambition of the research group is to sustainably implement such a training, course or module within the Stoas curriculum, at least, and possibly in collaborations with other universities of applied sciences, for instance with the research group ‘Lesgeven in de Multiculturele School’ (teaching in a multicultural school) led by Maaïke Hajer from the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences.

4.4 Conclusion

In the second part of this address, I explained which research initiatives I strive to develop within the research group ‘Ecology of cultural diversity’.

I expanded on the general statutory, pedagogical framework on the basis of a law, the *Wet actiefburgerschap en Sociale Integratie* (active citizenship and social integration). The research and initiatives can be categorised into three themes: research and initiatives surrounding the diversity climate, value orientations and cross-cultural competencies. Each theme involves practical research, i.e. the participants in professional and educational practice also work on coming up with and initiating practice-based and practice-oriented solutions. For this reason, the themes as much as possible include a combination of empirical research and practical initiatives to develop a particular solution in practice.

The ultimate goal of the research and initiatives is to anchor transculturalism in land-based education and life sciences and to further develop it so that persons of colour become more involved with each other and a safe and nurturing study and work environment can be created at land-based and life sciences institutions.

4.5 Acknowledgements

I have come to the end of my address. This address is the result of research that I conducted and completed with an open mind and willingness to change direction. It is the result of many social interactions with the people I met in the course of the last few years.

I would like to name the most important institutions and people, and I hope I have not left anyone out. First, I would like to thank the Executive Board of the Aeres Group and the management of the Stoas Wageningen | Vilentum University of Applied Sciences for placing their confidence in me. I will do everything in my power to make the next four years a success. My colleagues at Stoas University of Applied Sciences and the Netherlands Defence Academy for the pleasant atmosphere and support throughout the years. A special word of thanks goes out to Madelon de Beus, my colleagues in the research group and my fellow researchers Manon Ruijters and Frank de Jong. Thank you for your feedback during the writing of this address and I look forward to creating a smooth running unit with you and putting Stoas research firmly on the map. Toon van der Ven, thank you for your support and the pleasant conversations we had while I was writing this address.

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Jasper, my sounding board, pub buddy, travel companion, babysitter and all-round great friend. Best of luck with your new job in Colombia which holds its own risk. We are all very proud of what you are doing and have done. Aunt Gerrie van Rosmalen, who guided me to my first introduction to the land-based sector, in Nuland in the early seventies at ‘farmer’ Jan van Lent’s. I wish to thank my father for everything he has accomplished in all those years. And mother ... mom ... I am very proud that after all your health challenges in recent years you are still here to experience this. I hope you will be with us for many years yet. We are all very happy you are doing well now.

My children Gaia and Camille. I am very pleased that the co-parenting with Irene is going well and when we see each other we very much enjoy our activities together. You are healthy, loving and happy. I hope it stays that way because nothing means more to me.

Finally, this. Stoas University of Applied Sciences was built on the ground of the RKVW Wilhelmina football club. I played at this club from age 6 to 18, and it is here that my roots in ecology sprouted. I thank everyone who has contributed to this throughout all those years.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is all I have to say.

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