

## **Workshop Protocol: *Inner Development as a Catalyst for Sustainability in Higher Education* (B11, 14:00-15:00 h)**

### **Contributors:**

Anna Lena Lewis, Centre for Development & Environment (CDE), University of Bern ([anna.lewis@unibe.ch](mailto:anna.lewis@unibe.ch))

Niels Rot, Rflect ([niels.rot@rflect.ch](mailto:niels.rot@rflect.ch))

Melanie Studer, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne ([melanie.studer@epfl.ch](mailto:melanie.studer@epfl.ch))

### **Fellow Contributors:**

Roland Tormey, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne

Isabelle Providoli, Centre for Development & Environment (CDE), University of Bern

### **Welcome and introduction**

Melanie Studer welcomes the participants.  
Short introduction of the workshop leaders.

### **Sociometrics**

Niels Rot asks a series of questions and asks the participants to position themselves in the room according to their estimation, or level of agreement. The following questions were asked:

- I'm here because I am curious about the topic of Inner Development vs. I'm here because I am already convinced Inner Development is much needed.
- Would you say you already understand how Inner Development can be fostered?
- Who already integrates some form of Inner Development into their teaching?
- How much % of your fellow faculty understands the need for Inner Development?

### **The 7th generation**

Melanie Studer explains the exercise (see [here](#) for a detailed description). Participants sit in two lines facing each other. One line imagines they are seven generations in the future (e.g. in 2223), having survived the crises of the past era, while the other "younger" line continues to think from a present-day perspective (e.g. in 2023). The younger line interviews (through the voice of Melanie Studer) their distant elders, asking three different questions.:

- *Ancestor, I greet you. It's so amazing to see your face, because all my life I have heard stories from teachers and grandparents about the time you are living. Some of the things I've heard I find hard to believe, so I'd like to check them out with you. They say that in your time there are a few people richer than the richest ancient kings, while billions of people are without enough food or shelter or clean water. They tell us that in your time bombs are being made that can blow up whole cities. We know about that, but they say you know*

*about it too, right when the bombs are being made. They tell us that whole species of animals and plants are going extinct. We know about that, too, because gone is gone. But they tell us you know about that while it's happening. Is that true?... And if it is true, what's that like for you?*

- *Ancestor, I greet you. When we in our generation find water we can drink and soil that's safe to grow food, it is thanks to the work you and your friends are doing on our behalf. It must be hard for you, especially at the beginning, standing up for beings you haven't met and will never meet. So I want to ask you this question: What inspired you to start on this path? And what were the first steps you took?*
- *Ancestor, I greet you. We know you did not stop with those first steps. There are stories and songs about what you and your friends are doing to leave us a livable world. What they don't tell us, and what I would really like to know, is where you find the strength to do this. Where do you find the power to keep on going for the sake of life, despite all the obstacles and discouragements? Can you tell me?*

The current generation has two minutes to answer each question. The 7th generation listens.

After each question, the participants of the 7th generation move to the right, (so that they sit opposite a new participant) for the next question.

For the last round the 7th generation answers the following question (while the present generation listens):

- *Now, you of the 7th generation, it is your turn to talk. You have been listening to three ancestors speak of their experience of Great Turning. As you listened, thoughts and feelings arose in you. Now is your chance to speak them. What is in your heart to say to the one before you? Very soon this person will be returning right into the midst of that darkness and travail. What words do you have for him or her?*

### **Reflection on exercise**

Participants come back to the circle in the plenary.

Melanie Studer summarizes the exercise with how we feel it contributes to inner dimensions: active hope, active listening, long-term thinking, imagination, compassion, empathy, imagination, individual and collective resilience and dealing with uncertainty.

Anna Lewis invites participants to reflect on their experience during the exercise using the following questions and - if desired - to share their thoughts with the group

- What emotions came up in the course of this exercise?
- How did it feel to tell the story to your descendants, or to hear the story from your ancestors?
- What surprised you?
- How did the 7 generations timeframe help you get new insights?

*See picture gallery below.*

Niels Rot explains another activity in groups around three topics was planned but due to the time constraints, it will be skipped. He however explains the topics that would have been discussed, namely (1): opportunities & best practices to integrate inner development in Higher Education, (2) support needed and ideas to mainstream inner development at your institution, (3): Communication and storytelling for inner development. The participants agree that they would like to receive further information about the topics and the projects mentioned at the beginning of the workshop (agreement of sharing the email addresses).

*See picture gallery below.*

### **Wrap-up/reflection question circle**

“What is one thing you are already doing or are planning on doing with regard to inner development at your university the 7th generation will thank you for?”

Each participant shares their answers.

Closing words

**Picture gallery:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/1otQ1W4QNCQb1d1j7>

### **Additional information / resources**

**Project** “[Transforming Higher Education for Sustainability by Fostering Inner Dimensions of Learners](#)” (funded by Movetia, 2022-2024): The project aims to link universities in Switzerland, Europe and the US that are pioneering teaching and learning approaches focusing on inner dimensions of learners to promote inner transformation for sustainability. The partners will jointly develop a toolkit with teaching and learning approaches that promote students’ sustainability competences. The toolkit aims to inspire lecturers at Higher Education Institutions in Switzerland and beyond to integrate innovative teaching-and-learning approaches in their university teaching and thus contribute to transforming Higher Education towards sustainability.

**Rflect:** Rflect is supported by the Migros Pioneer Fund to design a tool that could bring inner development to all Swiss students in a high-quality, scalable, and cost-effective way. You can find more information on [www.rflect.ch](http://www.rflect.ch), and please reach out to Niels if you’d like to see a demo or learn more. Rflect will have 25 programs in the coming autumn semester with 750+ learners, and we’d love to add more!

**Work that Reconnects & The 7th generation method:** Information on Joanna Macy’s “work that reconnects” can be found on her [website](#). The method “The 7th generation” is described [here](#).

You can find everything on the **Inner Development Goals** here: <https://www.innerdevelopmentgoals.org/> as well as an interesting teaching toolbox developed by a network of Dutch universities here: <https://transitionmakers.nl>