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# Real-world learning opportunities in sustainability – From classroom into the real-world

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Katja Brundiers,  
Community-University Liaison  
for SOS & DCDC

# Imagine...



... what might happen if students were regularly **assigned actual sustainability problems** that were brought to higher education by cities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other institutions.

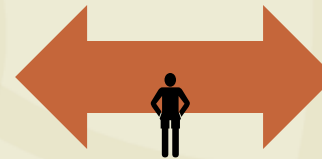
If classroom exercises produced **workable contributions** to solutions, students would understand they can have a **positive impact** on the world **through their academic learning**.

Most of our higher education institutions include somewhere in their mission statements **goals for preparing students** to help create a better society, yet this ideal is often not fully implemented. (Science, Rowe, 2007:324)

# Real-world learning experiences in sustainability



- **What:** to bring students in contact with real-world problems and with community partners/stakeholders; to link theory/practice
- **Where:**
  - Outreach activities
  - Courses
  - Research projects
- **How:**
  - **Bringing The World In:** Guest lectures and panels
  - **Visiting The World:** Fieldtrips, participant observation
  - **Simulating The World:** Role plays, collaborative discussions
  - **Engaging With the World:** Transacademic collaboration

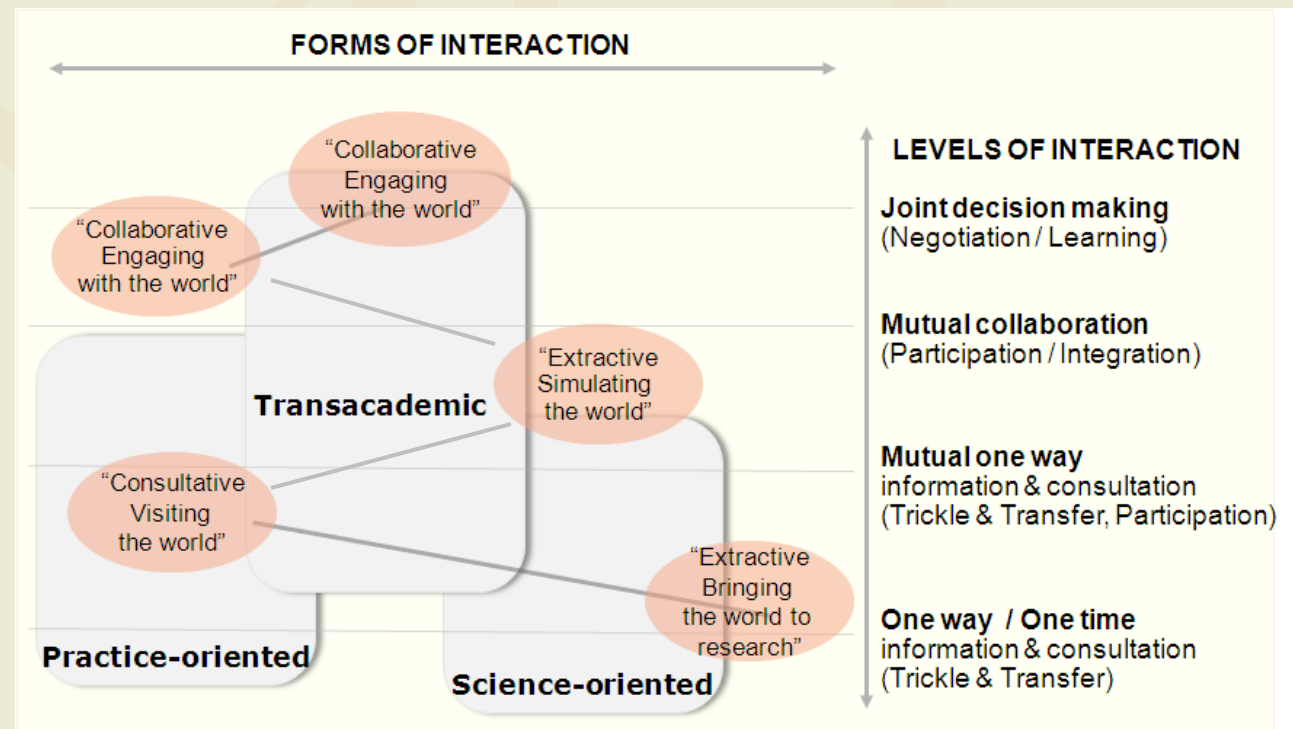


# What does 'Engagement' mean?



Explore purpose & needs, negotiate & jointly decide on approach

		Consideration of use?	
		No	Yes
Quest for fundamental understanding?	Yes	Pure basic research (Bohr)	Use-inspired basic research (Pasteur)
	No	Butterfly studies (...)	Pure applied research (Edison)



Stokes, 1997

Adapted, Brundiers, Wiek, Redman, in press

# Examples

working together with **undergraduate** students



- **Sustainable Governance, Dr. Abigail York:**

- State Drought Monitoring Program: Enhance Community Engagement
- 65 undergraduate students (in teams)
- ADWR Community Water Planning; AZ Cooperative Extension
- **Collaboration:** joint problem identification, work, and solution approaches

- **Sustainable Food Systems, Dr. Hallie Eakin:**

- 65 undergraduate students (in teams)
- Community partners: farmers, community gardens, individuals (backyards); stores (grocery, convenience, farmers markets)
- **Engagement:** guest speakers, panel discussion, empirical research

# Examples

working together with **graduate** students



- **The Future of Agriculture and Water in Arizona, Dr. Rimjhim Aggarwal:**
  - 12 graduate students
  - 25 community partners: farmers, policy advisers, planners, water managers, NGOs, researchers. Roles ranged from explorer, advisor, or collaborator.
  - **Engagement:** guest lectures, fieldtrips, panels, public forums
- **Phoenix Visioning Project, Dr. Arnim Wiek & Dr. Cynthia Selin:**
  - Contribution to the Management Plan of the City of PHX
  - 20 graduate students (in teams)
  - City of Phoenix Planning Department
  - **Collaboration:** joint leadership among faculty and head of department; long term project; engagement with experts, public etc. various forms.