



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Where leaders learn

Can Monitoring and Evaluation *Advance our Education, Advocacy and Action?*



NRF | National
Research
Foundation

Community of Practice

Can Monitoring and Evaluation *Advance our Education, Advocacy and Action?*

A reflective question posed as part of an NRF CoP Project of the Environmental Learning Research Centre at Rhodes University - **Towards Transformative Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in Landscapes**



EEASA 2023
Conference

18-22 September, 2023
Gauteng,
South Africa



WESSA

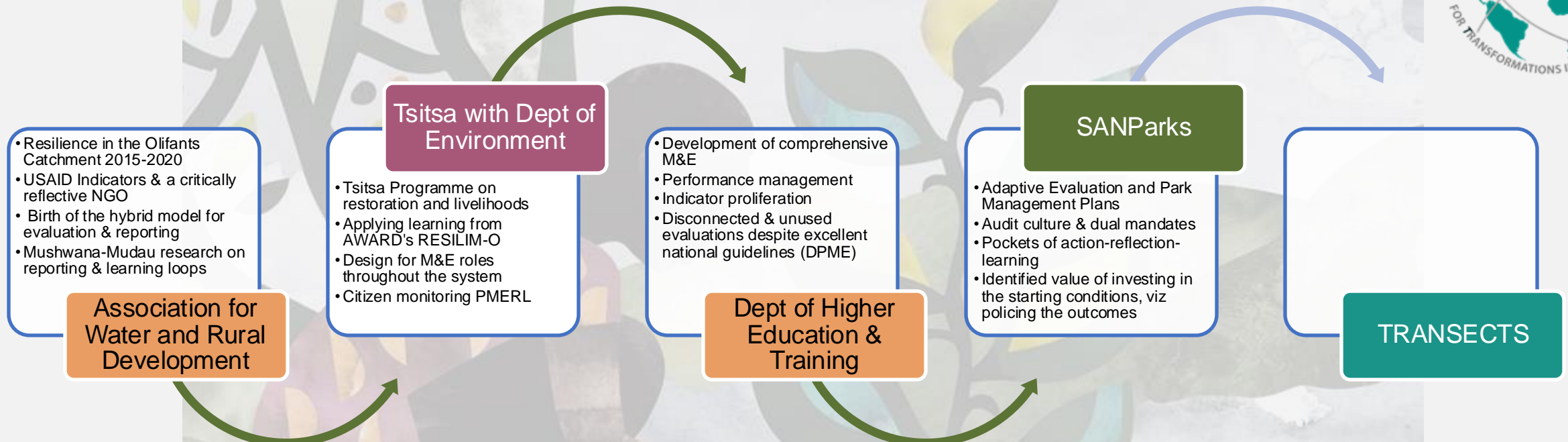
Education, Advocacy and Actions to Advance ERD in Southern Africa



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Where leaders learn

Co-Construction over time of an M&E Framework that supports Learning in/about/for ESD



ELRC has worked with partners over five-year period on the Co-Construction of frameworks for Participatory M&E and Learning in Complex Landscapes



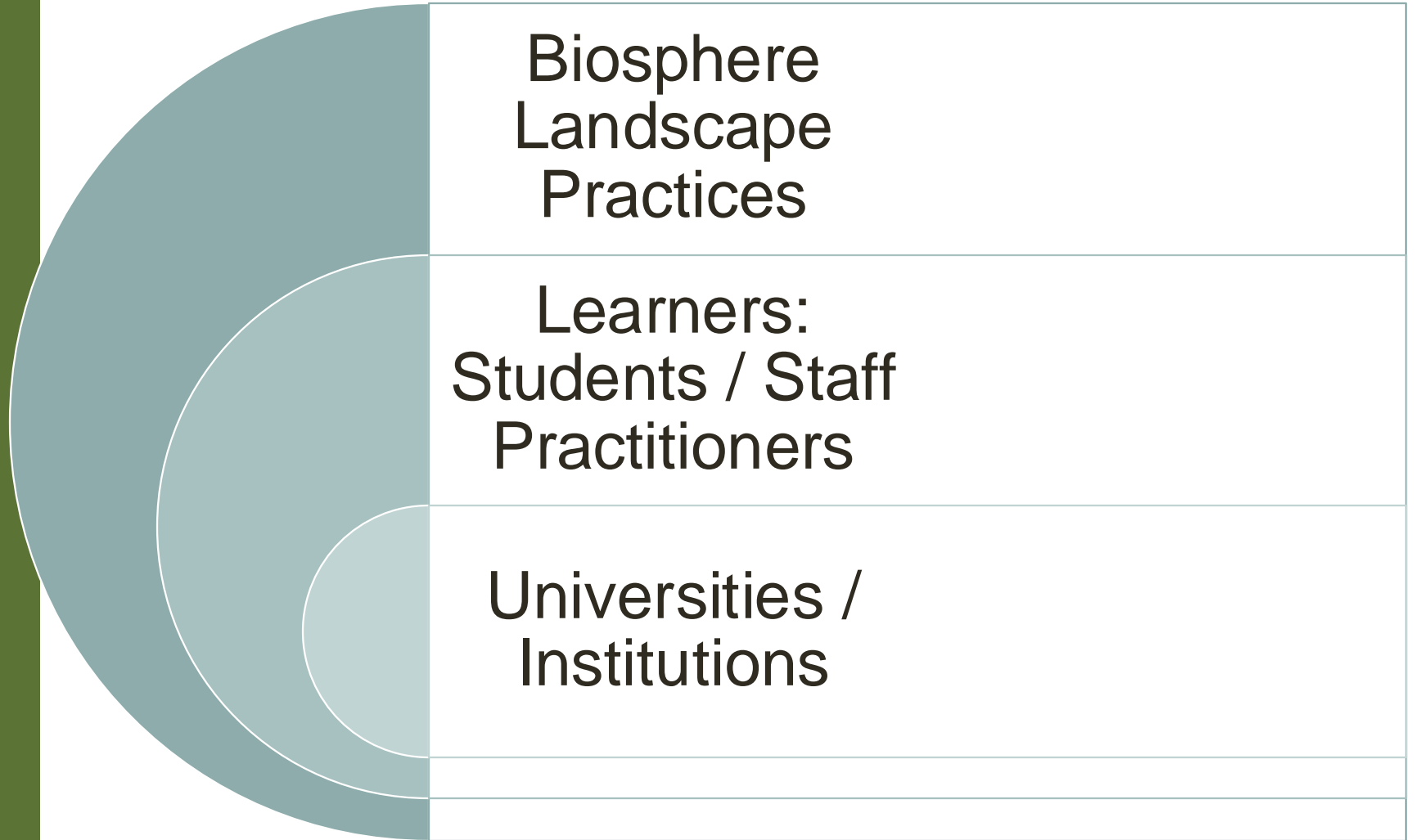
- A 6-year programme
- Three continents
- UNESCO Biospheres
- Transdisciplinary research & teaching

Unpacking the TRANSECTS Programme's M&E framework

Prof Eureta Rosenberg
TRANSECTS Country Co-Director
Rhodes University
Environmental Learning Research Centre

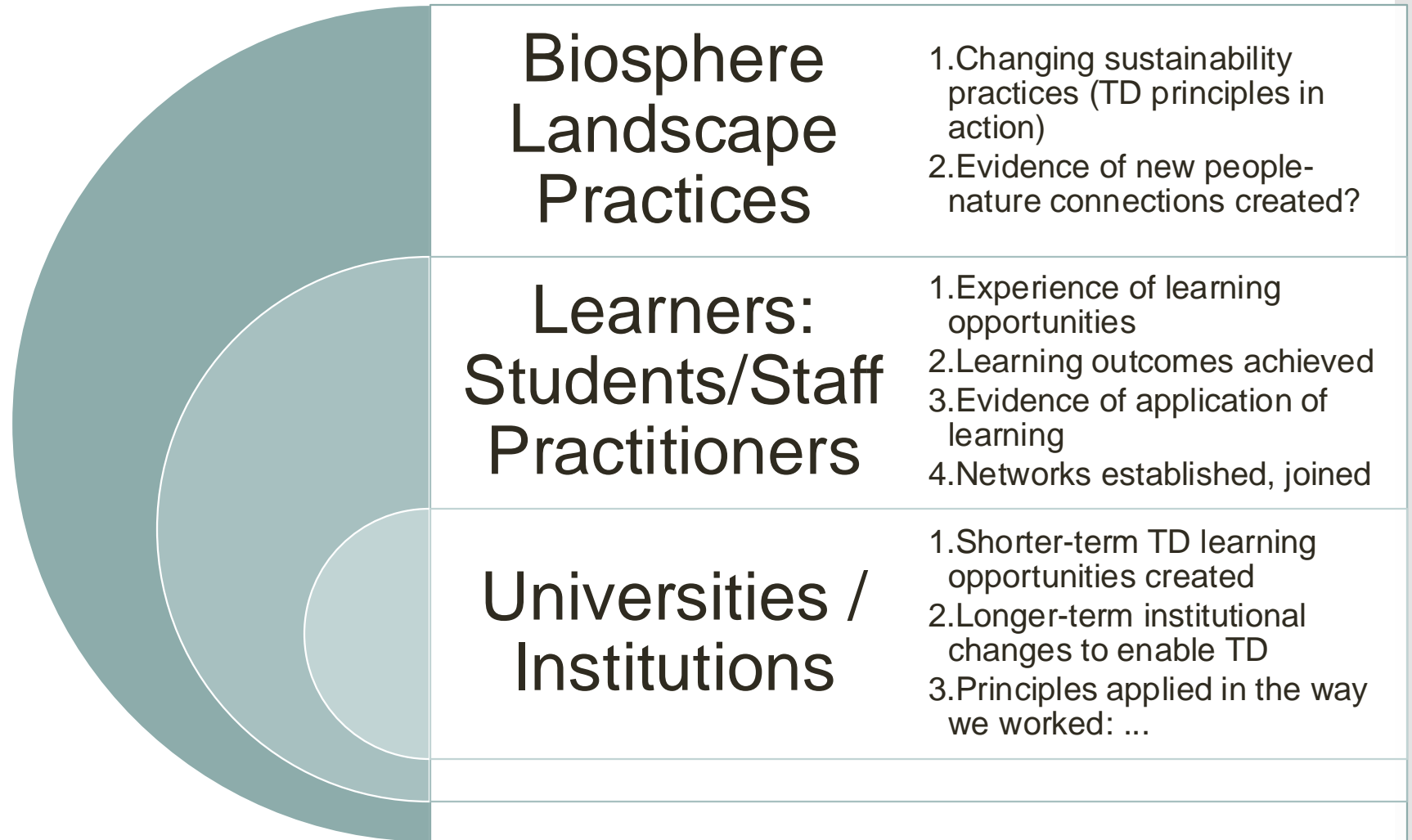
E.Rosenberg@ru.ac.za

From the
TRANSECTS
proposal we
identified 3
Domains of
Change:

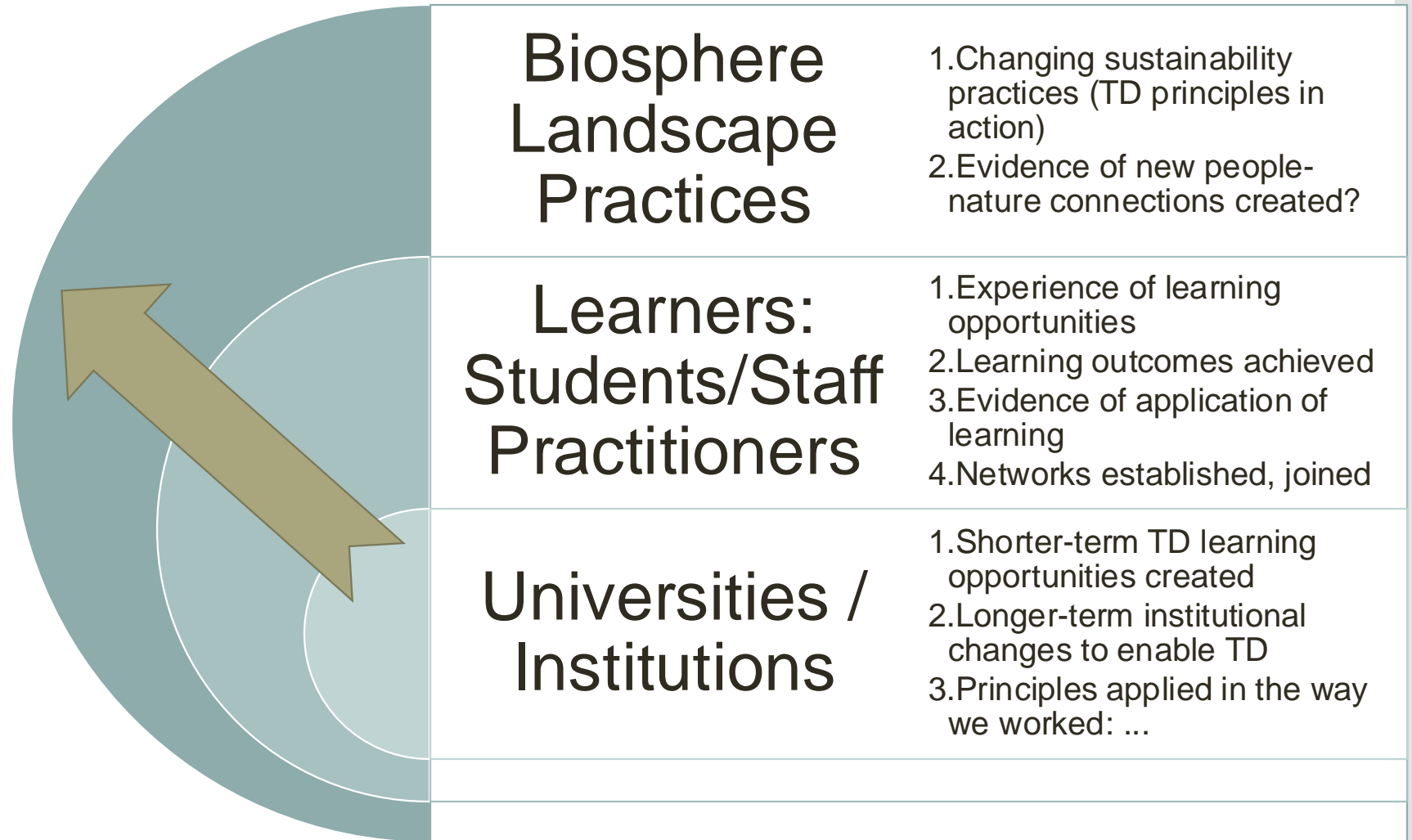


The Change we
Want:

TRANSECTS' 3
Domains of
Change



TRANSECTS
ToC: 3 Change
Domains and the
change pathway
between them:

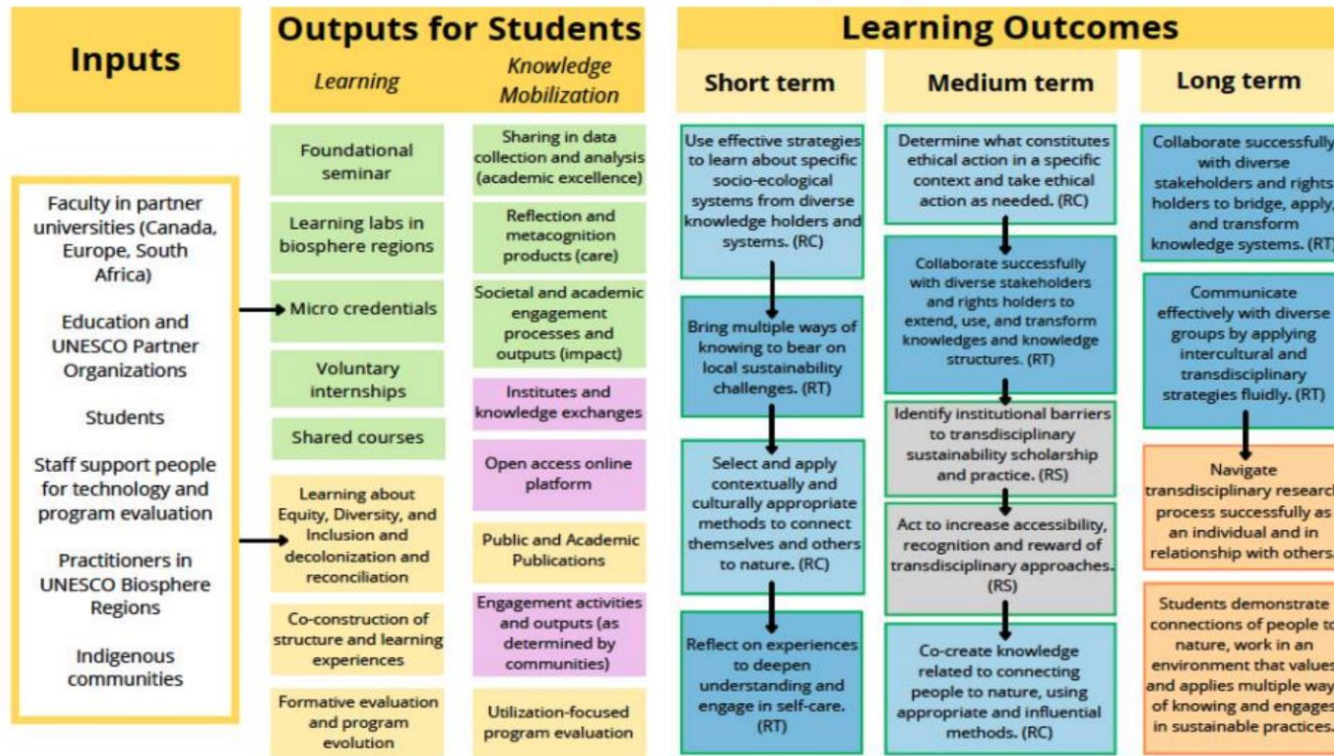


From the proposal:

TRANSECTS



TRANSECTS Student Learning Logic Model



Assumptions

- Transdisciplinary, intercultural collaborations, particularly those invested in transformative changes, require ongoing processes for collaborative decision making, collective data review, evaluation, and program revision.
- Transformative change in graduate sustainability education requires us to address at least 3 leverage points: *Reconnecting* people to nature (RC); *Rethinking* how to create and use knowledge (RT); and *Restructuring* institutions (RS).
- Traditional and novel forms of instruction and knowledge mobilization will require adaptations as we learn how to best meet desired program outcomes.
- Student learning about transdisciplinarity and sustainability is negotiated with others in context, and requires self-care, social /contextual and scientific understanding, skills, and processes.

External Factors

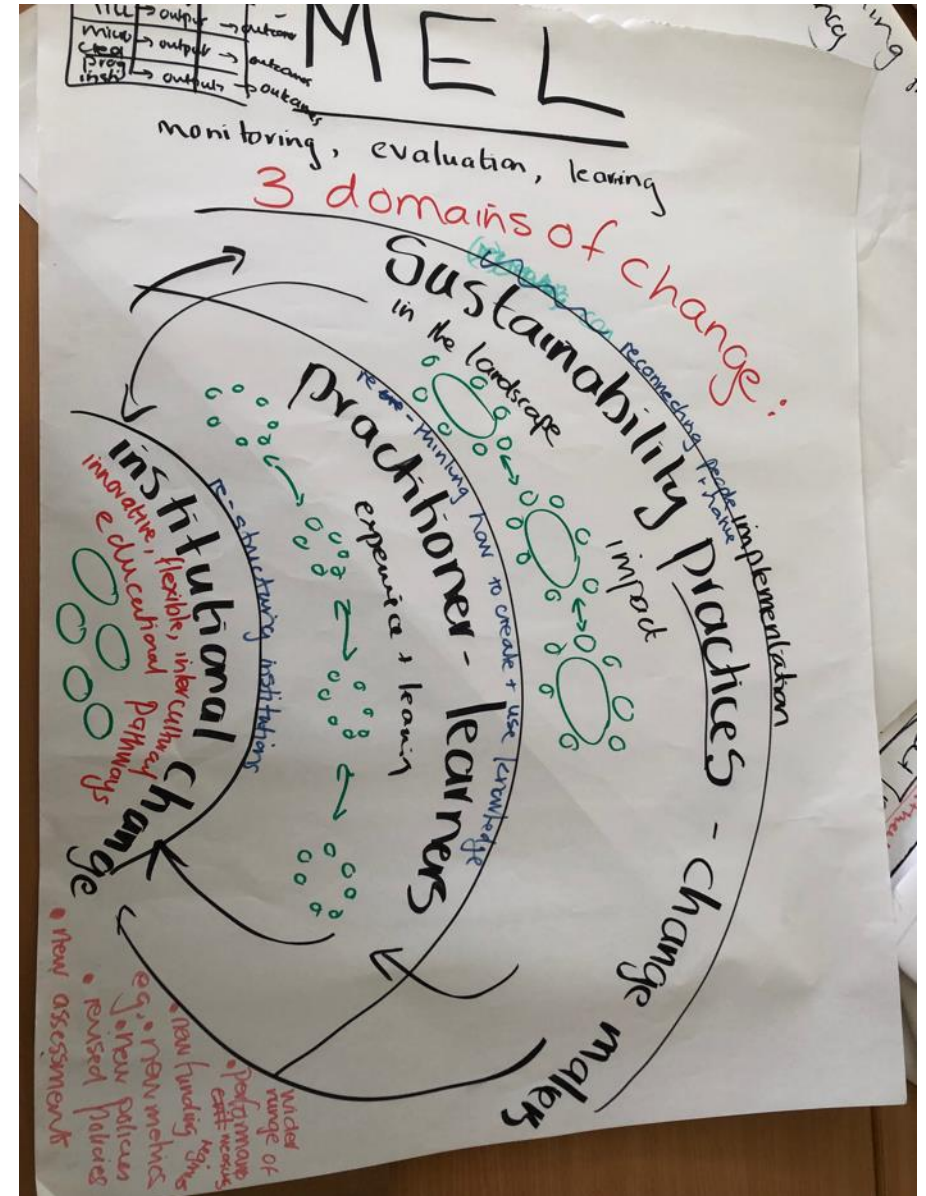
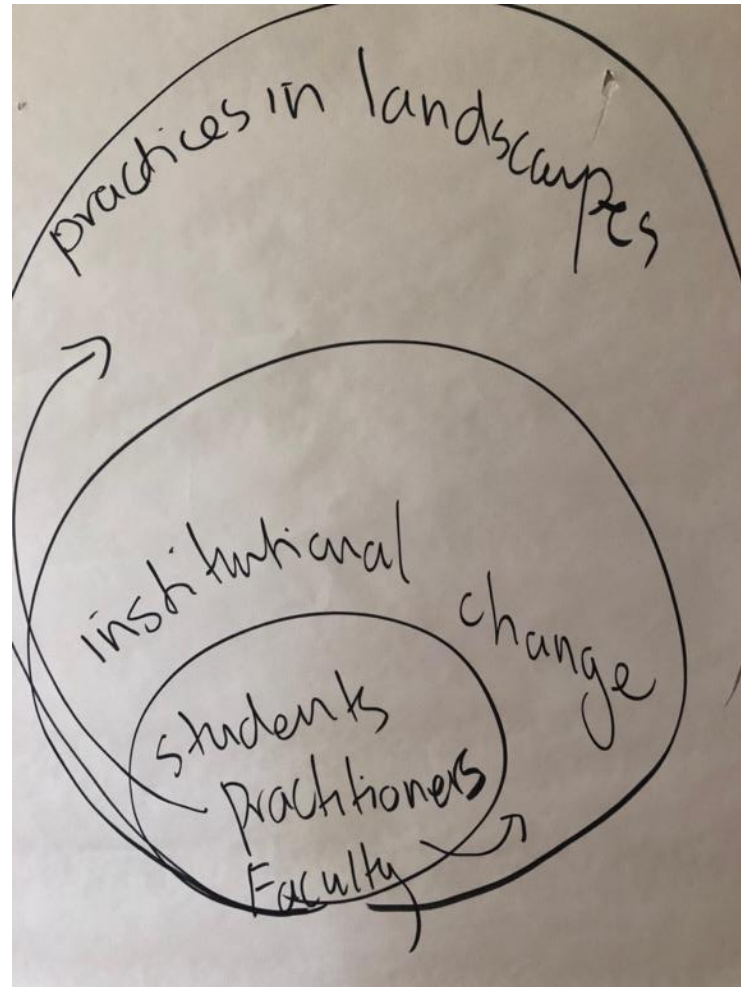
- Policies and processes of universities, Biosphere Regions, and other organizational partners
- COVID 19 responses

Key

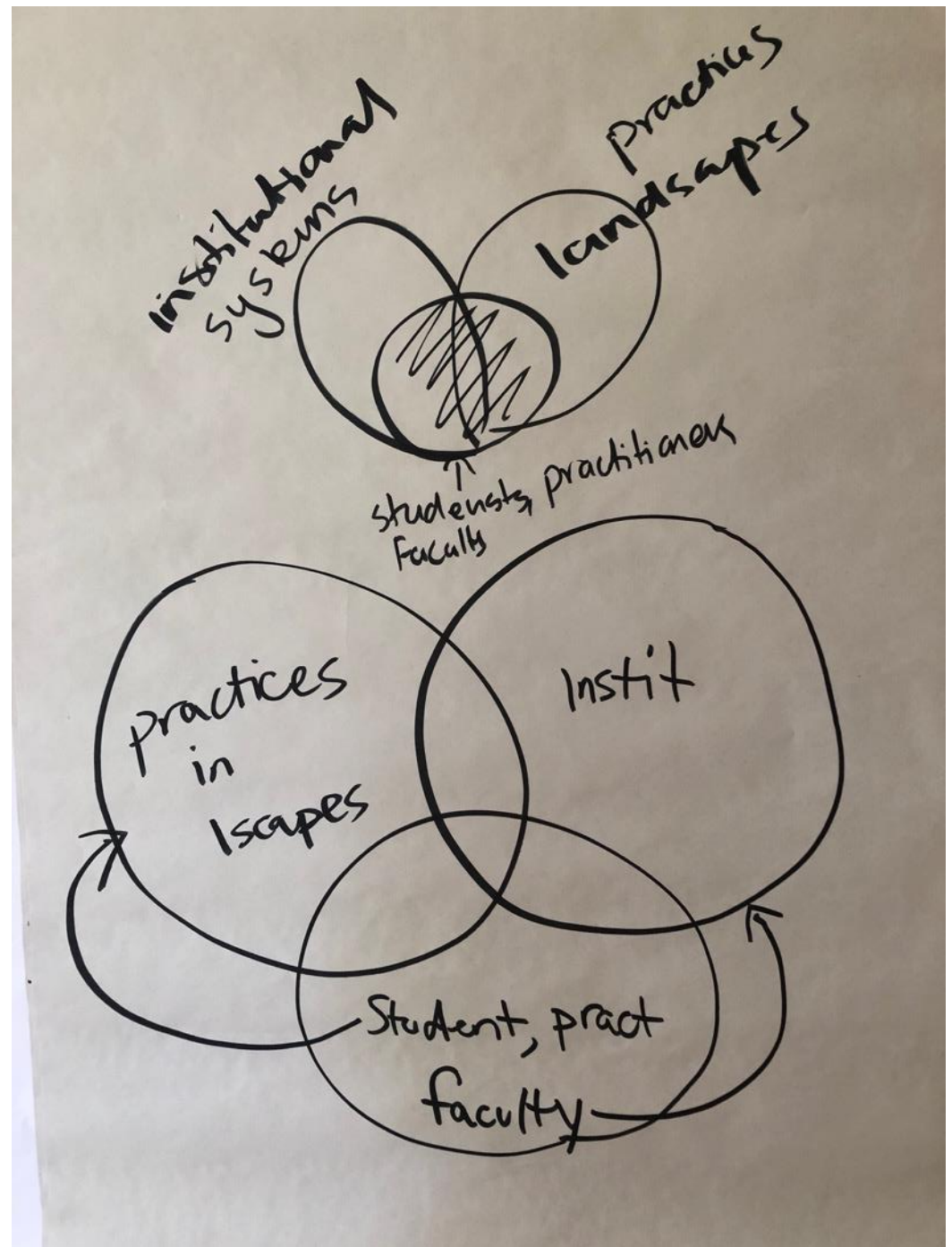
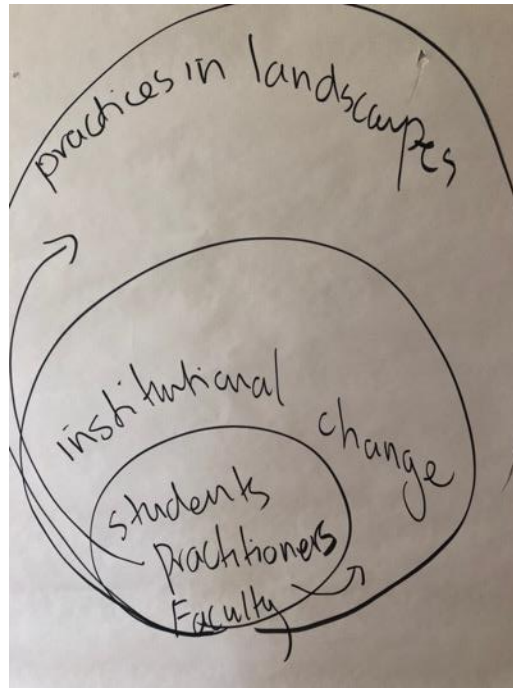
Students	Reconnecting outcome (RC)
Students and Faculty	Rethinking outcome (RT)
Students, faculty and partners	Restructuring outcome (RS)
	Outcome from all three parts

1. Start with inputs – staff offer training to students; students, staff, practitioners are positioned as inputs
2. From there – we get outputs e.g. courses, learning labs, papers ...
3. And lastly, these result in outcomes – learning, new practices.

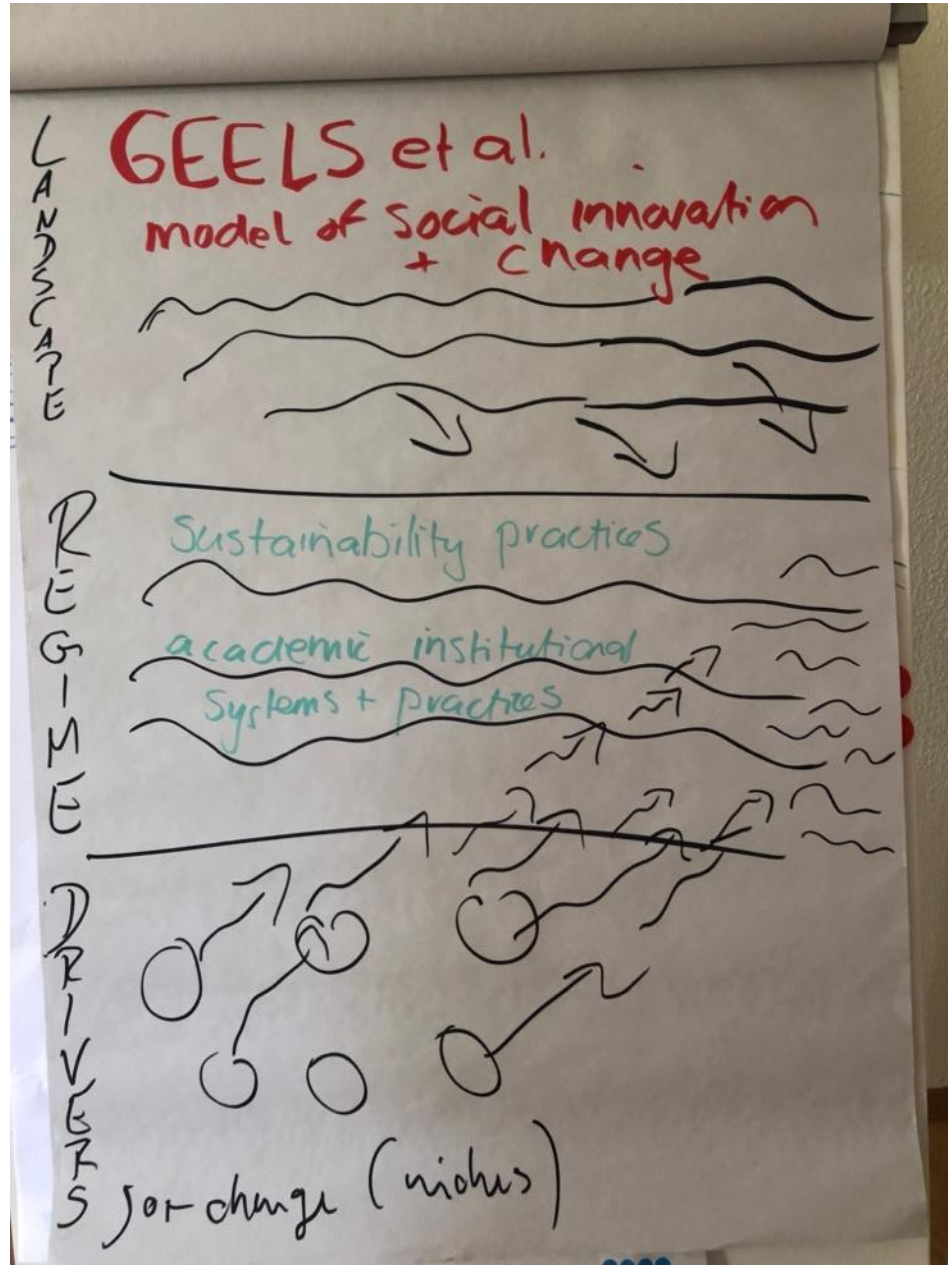
But what is the pathway of change? Where does it start? How does it happen?



This is how the
TRANSECTS
partners
worked on the
Programme's
Theory of
Change (ToC)



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the
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Towards a theory of change for TRANSECTs

If students, Faculty and practitioners (in biosphere contexts) gain new knowledge and are inspired and supported in TD (transdisciplinary) research and engagement, then ...

Research and stakeholder engagement will be undertaken in new ways, with knowledge co-creation and the valuing of diverse ways of knowing

Nature will be valued and sustainably managed / stronger people-nature connections will be evident

If students, practitioners and staff participate in TRANSECTs learning and networking opportunities, then ...

They will gain & produce knowledge about TD research & stakeholder engagement

They will be inspired and supported to value diverse ways of knowing and co-create sustainability

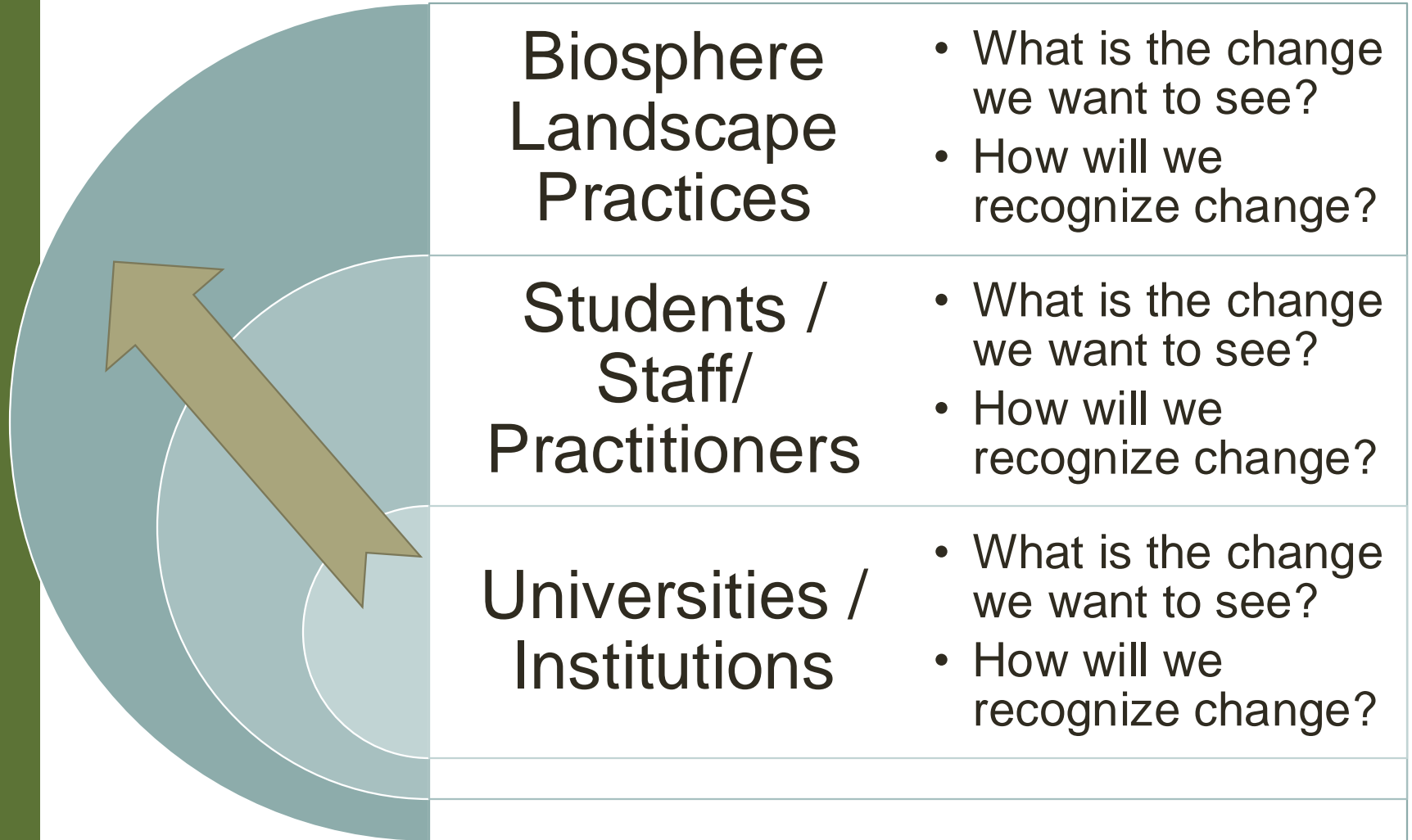
If TRANSECTs partners meet, share, co-develop and engage (communicate) in principled ways, then ...

New learning opportunities for TD research & engagement will be created (learning labs, courses, mini-conferences, networks)

Longer-term institutional changes to enable, assess and reward TD research and education will be created in partner universities

How to use a ToC in M&E?

The ToC guides us on *What* and *How* to Monitor and Evaluate



First M&E Findings: Surprise!

We evaluated the students' and staff's experiences in the 2nd Learning Lab in Germany and found that:

1. Students were confused about the task – what where they meant to research?
2. Students thought the Lab was not *transdisciplinary*
3. Students felt inadequately supported by the mentors
4. Staff and mentors were also confused about the brief, and about how it should be decided / by whom
5. Mentors felt they *did* adequately support students

TRANSECTS



TRANSDISCIPLINARY INTERNATIONAL LEARNING LABORATORY

12th - 16th December 2022 (online based
foundational course) &
9th January - 17th March 2023 (on-site
foundational course and research)

Background photo: Gerrit Fricke, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/4637660>

**WHERE:
SCHORFHEIDE-CHORIN BIOSPHERE
RESERVE, GERMANY**

TRANSDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION COLLABORATION



How the Winter TILL unfolded:

Students were given Disciplinary Type Research questions:

- What are the various forest management approaches in the BR?
- What is the current condition of forests under each ownership type in the BR?
- How do the forest owners facilitate nature conservation?
- How is climate change impacting on the various forest types in the BR?
- What is the role of the society in the management of the forests?
- What are relationships among the forest owners, the management of the BR, and the society?



Poster climate change (GER and ENG).pdf



Poster forest assessment.pdf



Poster forest management (GER and ENG).pdf



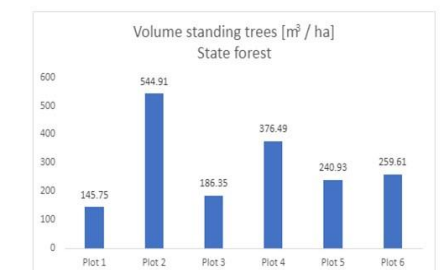
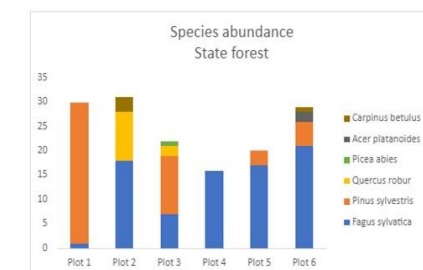
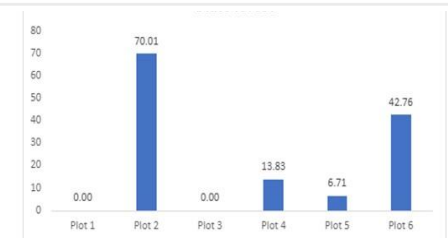
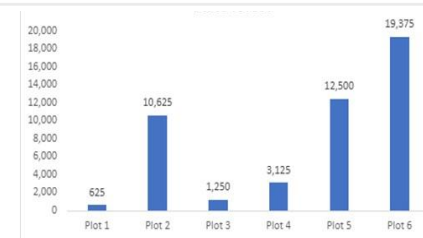
Poster nature conservation (GER and ENG).pdf



Poster relationships and interactions (GER and ENG).pdf



Poster Role of society (GER and ENG).pdf



How a transdisciplinary learning lab *could* have been approached?

All stakeholders identify a sustainability problem that has to be resolved through multiple disciplines and stakeholders' engagement. A **“Learning Lab”** question may have been:

“How can the different stakeholders - forest owners, BR managers and other members of society - work together to set common management goals for the Biosphere Reserve in the light of climate change?”

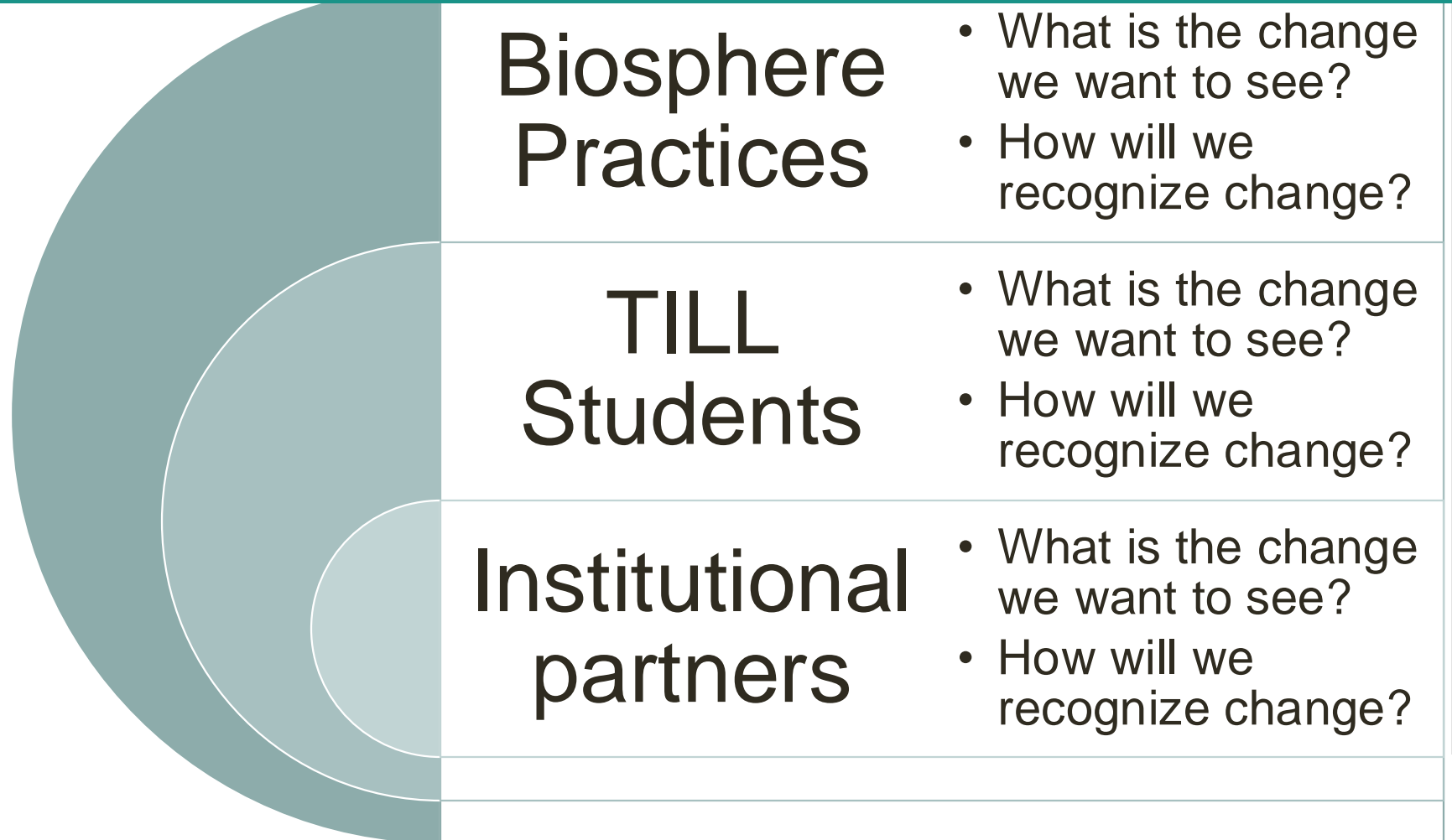


Upon reflection on these M&E findings, the TRANSECTS partners realised that

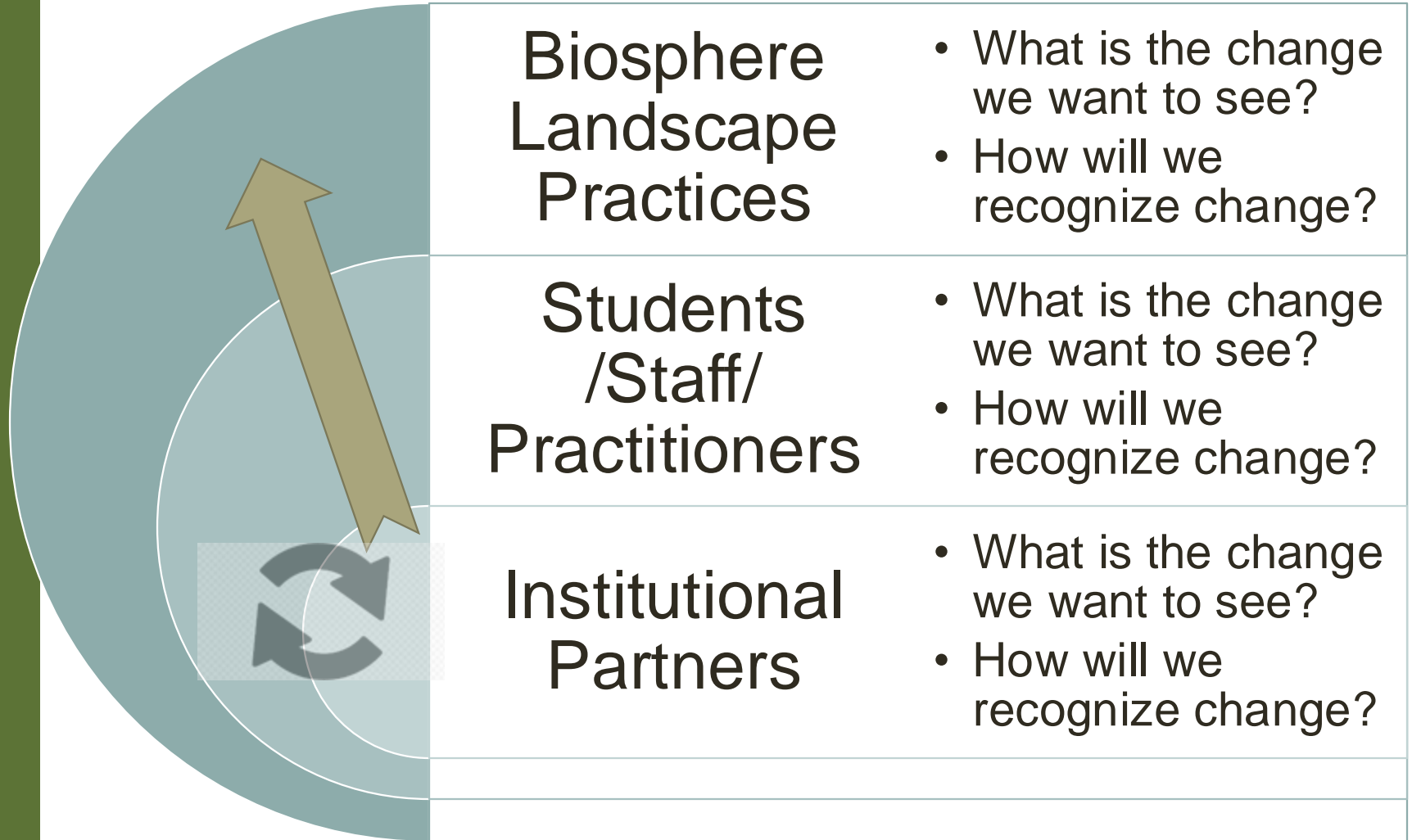
The institutional partners setting up the TILL had *different* understandings of what a *transdisciplinary* Learning Lab is:

Some were approaching the TILL like a disciplinary (Geography or Forestry) field school, where research assistants or consultants collect data to answer a given question

And where students did not need much support from mentors



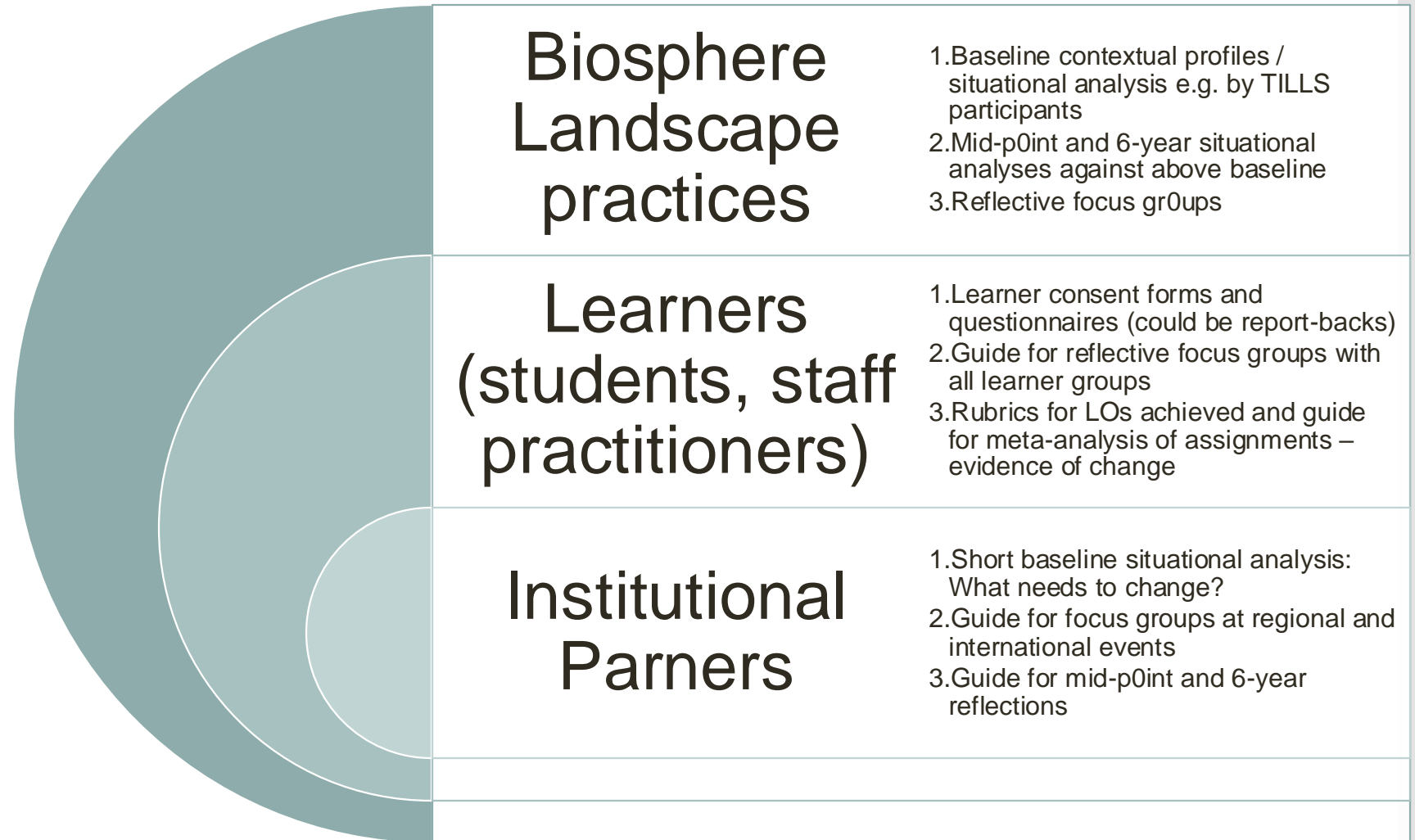
This means
TRANSECTS
has to re-think its
ToC - pathway(s)
of change
between the 3
Domains of
Change



How did we discover this? **Joint (Meta) Reflection**

Instruments for the 3 Domains of Change

We started using these instruments to evaluate the first two TILLS (learning labs) in 2022 & 2023



On the Focus group & Interview Data **Especially the contradictions in the data**

How can Monitoring & Evaluation *Advance Education, Advocacy and Action?*

Participatory
Monitoring,
Reporting,
Evaluation &
Reflection
Supporting
Learning

Monitor

- **Participatory monitoring & reporting** (generating the data)
- Tracking an agreed-upon, realistic set of indicators (based on ToC)

Evaluate

- Informing a choice of **evaluative case studies**
- On selected programme aspects, **undertaken collaboratively**

Synthesize

- Synthesis of findings and **shared critical reflections**
- **Drawing joint conclusions** on what works, and why

Review

- Leads to a **collective review of the Theory of Change (ToC)**
- And co-refinement of a realistic # of indicators to track