Dialectical thinking and text analysis: Application to the topic of the green economy

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Agenda

Presentation

- Two policy documents on Green Economy
- The analytical framework
- Comparative analysis of dialectical thought forms
- Key concepts in the discourse on Green Economy
- Absences in the discourse on Green Economy
- Better thinking for sustainability
- Conclusion

Discussion

- Dialectical text analysis
- Dialectical text production
- Extension of CDF

Two policy documents on Green Economy

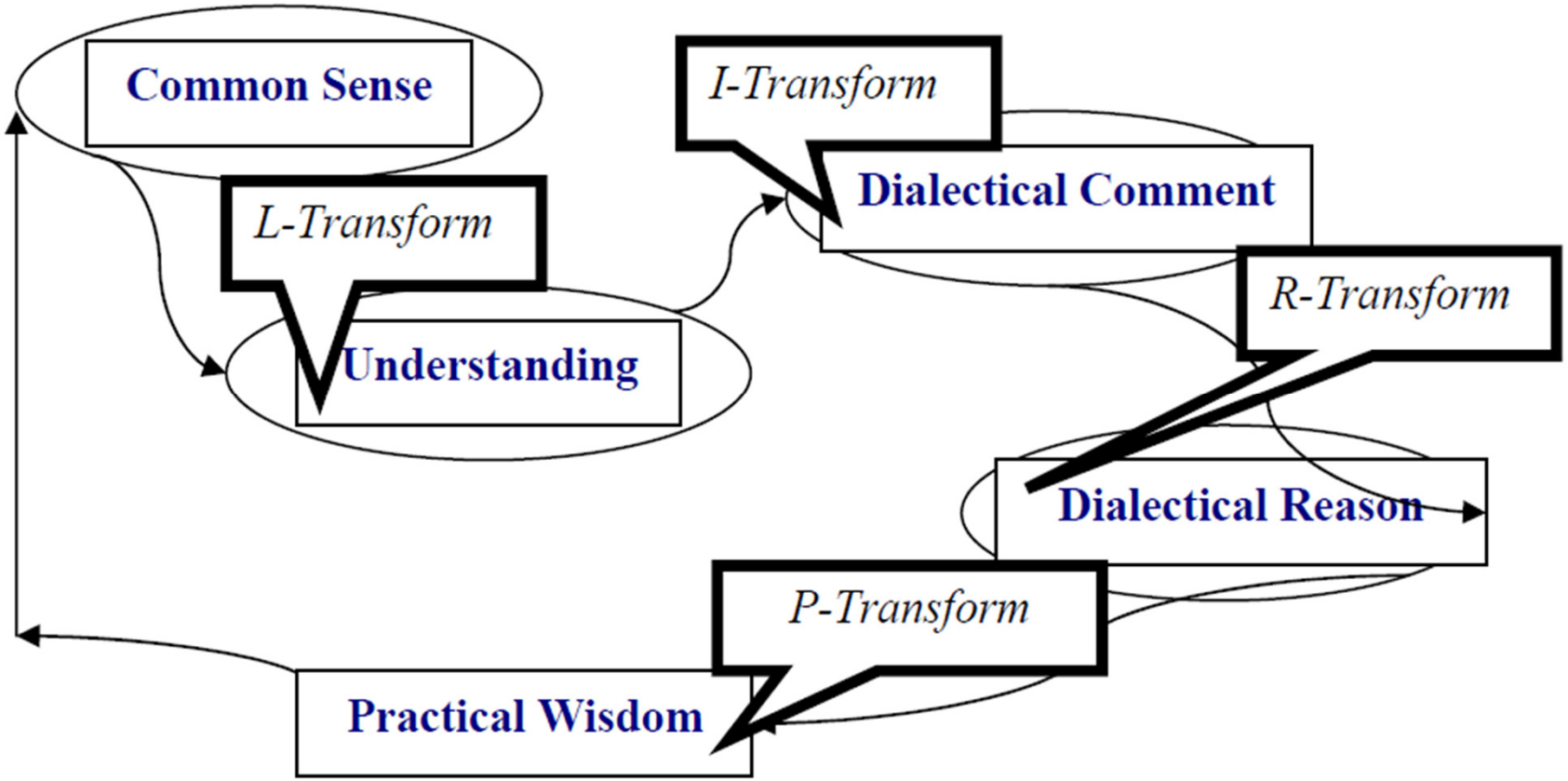
- European Commission (EC) (2011): Rio+20: towards the green economy and better governance.
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2011): Towards a green economy. A synthesis for policy makers.

The analytical framework: CDF

According to Laske, cognition in a broad sense comprises three human faculties:

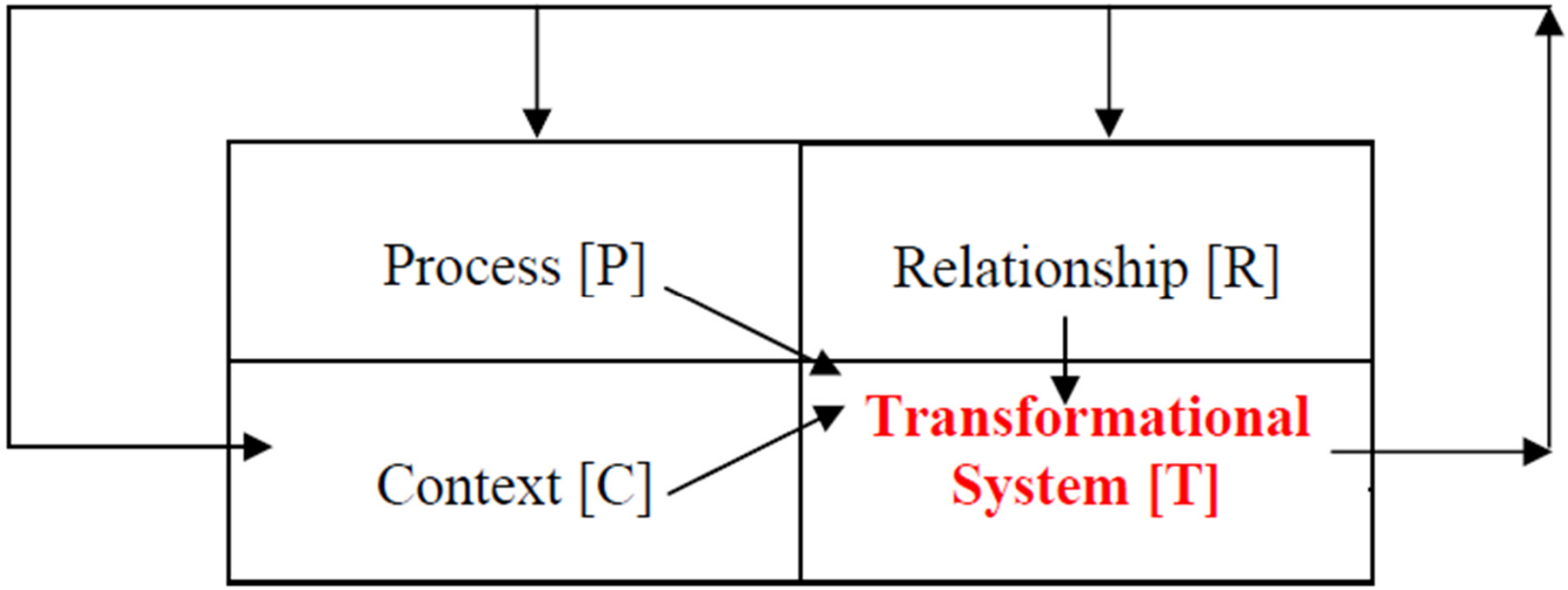
- **Meaning making is "social-emotional"**, having to do with the issue of "what should I do and for whom?"
- **Sense Making is "cognitive"** and deals with truth, having to do with "what can I know and what are the limits of my knowing?"
- **Judgement is "epistemic"** in the sense of reflective judgment, and has to do with "how far is the world that I am confronted with uncertain?" (Laske, 2010b, 5)

Human cognitive development



(Laske, 2009, 129)

Dialectical Thought Forms I



(Laske, 2009, 172)

Dialectical Thought Forms II

- **Process [P]** – unceasing change in how things emerge into being and vanish into non-being.
- **Context [C]** – stable configurations that appear as a stratified "big picture" momentarily able to withstand unceasing change.
- **Relationship [R]** – unity in diversity that shows how what is different is different only relative to a shared commonality that includes all differences;
- **Transformation [T]** – equilibrium created in thought and action by integrating different, even opposing, systems, as a hallmark of human agency

(Laske, 2009, 224)

The four quadrants of integral theory

	interior	exterior
individual	**Experience** "Why I do what I do" Areas studied "I", subjective realities, i.e. self and consciousness, invisible states of mind, psychological development, mental models, emotions, will UL	**Behaviour** "What I do" Areas studied "It", objective realities, i.e. brain and organism, visible biological features, degrees of activation of the various bodily systems UR
collective	LL **Culture** "Why we do what we do" Areas studies "We", intersubjective realities, i.e. culture and worldview, invisible webs of culture, communication, relationships, norms, boundaries, customs	LR **Systems** "What we do" Areas studied "Its", interobjective realities, i.e. social systems and environment, visible societal structures, economic systems, political orders, natural resource management

(Brown, 2005a, 11)

Comparative analysis of dialectical thought forms

Comparison of important indices of dialectical thinking

EC 2011		UNEP 2011
(7+21+3+4) = 35	Total	(7+4+5+6) = 22
(7+17+3+4) = 31	Total Fluidity	(4+4+5+6) = 19
(31 out of 84) = 37%	Fluidity Index	(19 out of 84) = 23%
35/6900 = 0.5 %	Frequency Index	22/5530 = 0.4 %
17 out of 28 = 60%	Diversity Index	14 out of 28 = 50%
[22, 55, 10; 13 (%)]	Cognitive Score	[21, 21, 26; 32 (%)]
13%	System Thinking Index	32%
10:21	Discrepancy Index	9:10

Key concepts: Green Economy I

"Regulatory instruments will play an important role in greening the economy both nationally and internationally. Regulatory instruments should be combined with market-based instruments (such as taxes, tradable permits and environmental subsidies) which are flexible and cost-effective tools that can help achieve combined economic, social and environmental objectives. Fiscal reforms that shift tax burdens from labour to environmental impacts and energy can create win-win outcomes for employment and the environment. Cap and trade systems, such as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, have proven to be effective markets instruments. Other effective schemes include fiscal incentives for SMEs, water charges, ecotaxes, and feed-in tariffs. Payments for ecosystem services are already being applied in some countries and reflected in ongoing negotiations on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD)."

[EC 2011: p8; #18] - context thought form TF10

Key concepts: Green Economy II

"Subsidies that have public-good characteristics or positive externalities can be a powerful enabler for a transition to a green economy. Green subsidies, such as price support measures, tax incentives, direct grants and loan support, may be used for a number of reasons: (a) to act quickly in order to avoid locking in unsustainable assets and systems, or of losing valuable natural capital that people depend on for their livelihoods; (b) to ensure the realization of green infrastructure and technologies, especially those with substantial nonfinancial benefits or financial benefits that are difficult for private actors to capture; and (c) to foster green infant industries, as part of a strategy to build comparative advantage and drive long-term employment and growth."

[UNEP 2011: p28, #05] - process thought form TF05

Key concepts: Green Economy III

"Subsidy reform is possible if done with careful attention to the poorest communities. Removing subsidies is challenging given the vested interests in their maintenance, but there are numerous examples of countries that have undertaken reform processes […]. Subsidies are sometimes justified with the argument that they benefit low-income households, but unless the aid is targeted, the majority of the spending often flows to higher-income households. That said, subsidy reform will often lead to increases in the prices of subsidized goods. Although low-income groups typically benefit from only a small share of subsidies, they spend a larger proportion of their income on basic goods, including food, water and energy, and can be disproportionately affected if subsidies for these goods are removed. Given this, a gradual reform strategy with short-term support measures is required. Such a reform strategy could include, among other things, the use of targeted consumption subsidies to poor households or the redirection of funds into high-priority areas for public spending, such as health care or education."

[UNEP 2011: p30, #11] - relationship thought form TF20

Key concepts: Governance I

"Command and control measures may offer the lowest-cost solution in some cases. While market-based instruments have a well-deserved reputation for efficiency, in some situations command and control measures may offer the lowest-cost solution. For example, there may be no market instrument that can efficiently ensure the elimination of bottom-trawling in fisheries, and the cost-effectiveness of regulation may be preferable where there are opportunities to regulate an industry upstream – such as oil extraction and refining – that can have knock-on effects throughout the supply chain. Depending on the situation, command and control measures can be administratively easier to implement and may pose fewer political challenges. In the short term, for example, it may be easier to establish new energy-efficiency standards and remove obstacles in the planning-permission process of renewable energy projects than to establish a carbon market and eliminate fossil-fuel subsidies."

[UNEP 2012: p28, #02] - context thought form TF13

Key concepts: Governance II

"International environmental agreements can facilitate and stimulate a transition to a green economy. For instance, multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), which establish the legal and institutional frameworks for addressing global environmental challenges, can play a significant role promoting green economic activity. The Montreal Protocol on the Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which is widely considered to be one of the most successful MEAs, is a case in point. The Protocol led to the development of an entire industry focused on the replacement and phase out of ozone-depleting substances. Of course, the MEA with the most potential to influence the transition to a green economy is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC's Kyoto Protocol has already stimulated growth in a number of economic sectors, such as renewable energy generation and energy efficient technologies, in order to address greenhouse gas emissions. At a global level, the renewal of a post-Kyoto framework for carbon will be the single most significant factor in determining the speed and scale of the transition to a green economy."

[UNEP 2011: p33, #19] - transformation thought form TF25

Absences in the discourse on Green Economy

The left side taboo

- only one topic in the lower left quadrant: education and training
- no other topic in the left quadrants: i.e. world views, value systems or aspects of social justice and equity

Leverage points for Green Economy

- predominantly about parameters, structures and rules,
- only rarely about goals and paradigm shifts

Talking about power

- silent on the concept of power relations and human agency
- question of 'who dominates and governs whom'

Better thinking for sustainability

Thinking without presuppositions

- different ways to construct and legitimise reality
- mutual recognition of the Other
- willingness to listen, to inquire, and to change ones own position

Stakeholder dialogue and transformation

- quality of decisions is a result of dialectical thinking
- illuminating and transformational thought forms
- policy documents as a result of a ongoing dialogue

Dialectical thinking in politics

- meaning of politics is to create freedom
- rethink the key concepts that govern the structure of our markets
- introduce concepts as care, precaution, conservation, sufficiency

Discussion: Text analysis and production

Dialectical text analysis

- Possibly, discuss specific text excerpts and scoring
- Discuss methodology
- Exchange of experiences of participants in working with dialectics and different texts
- Applying dialectical text analysis to different texts
- Benefits and opportunities of working with texts (added value)

Dialectical text production

- Potential of using dialectical thinking in groups to produce joint texts: e.g. Using thought forms to develop strategy papers
- Practising writing as a collective exercise
- Applying dialectical commentary
- Exploring developmental potential of contradictions to rethink, illuminate, remediate

Discussion: Conclusion on the CDF framework

At the moment CDF is normally used in interviews to assess hidden cognitive or social-emotional dimensions of individuals, especially business leaders.

Further development of CDF in three dimensions:

- **from interviews to texts or discourse**: We can use dialectical thought forms to analyse any spoken or written text.
- **from individuals to groups**: We can use CDF to assess not only individuals, but also groups and their thoughts, values and feelings.
- **from assessment to transformation**: We can use dialectical thought forms not only to assess, but also to transform thinking.