

# Dancing on the shoulders of giants

Citation for published version (APA):

Baker-Friesen, A. R. W. (2021). *Dancing on the shoulders of giants: an action inquiry into the navigation of organisational transformation for sustainability in the university*. [Doctoral Thesis, Maastricht University]. GreenThesis. <https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20211027ab>

## Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/2021

## DOI:

[10.26481/dis.20211027ab](https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20211027ab)

## Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

## Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

[Link to publication](#)

## General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

If the publication is distributed under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license above, please follow below link for the End User Agreement:

[www.umlib.nl/taverne-license](http://www.umlib.nl/taverne-license)

## Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at:

[repository@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:repository@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

providing details and we will investigate your claim.

## PROPOSITIONS

### PROPOSITIONS FROM PART A

- 1. Radical human transformation of the ecosphere justifies an equally radical transformation of organised human life.*
- 2. There is a clear moral and pragmatic imperative for universities to navigate therapeutic transformations towards sustainability.*
- 3. Action research, as a vehicle and paradigm of inquiry, helps gauge and effectuate universities' organisational transformation for sustainability.*
- 4. An integrated metatheory of transformation allows a deeper appreciation of the rules of the game: integrate multiple theoretical lenses to diagnose and navigate the potential and type of systemic transformation required to meet the ends of sustainability.*
- 5. Deep-seated obstacles to organisational transformation are rooted in collective cognitive 'intelligence' or mental models embodied in the culture of how an institution works, i.e. simplifying heuristics and systematic biases, norms and value systems.*
- 6. With roots in how ecosystems work, the organisation-as-organism analogy is a helpful way to perceive interconnectivity and perform more comprehensive diagnoses of organisational-social environments; planned interventions can then be in greater accord with the reality of the system to limit the negative impact caused by dysfunctional and pathological management patterns.*
- 7. Organisational diagnostics should eventually require the same level of clinical experience and expertise as a doctor or therapist: a rigorous, systematic and holistic understanding of various pathologies and their diagnoses and prognoses from the standpoint of the organisation-organism analogy.*

### PROPOSITIONS FROM PART B

- 8. Organisational transformation of a system for sustainability evolves it towards a state of higher resilience, responsiveness and purposefulness, in synchronicity with its socio-ecological surroundings, in bursts of rapid, discontinuous change that punctuate the initial dynamic equilibrium or system state.*
- 9. Rapid and discontinuous change over most or all domains of organisational activity is, over time, interspersed with relatively calmer periods of organisational development that are also important to build a foundation that avoids 'slipping back'.*
- 10. Small changes in strategies, structures, and power distributions often do not accumulate to produce organisational transformation. However, if consistently applied, ownership is shared and implementation is mediated in deliberation, they may culminate in long-term organisational development.*
- 11. Significant 'environmental' changes and chief executive officer succession are key opportunities or catalysts of organisational transformations, often knocked-on or triggered by a shock to the system from surrounding institutional and policy architecture.*