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Transdisciplinary education: A leverage point to foster transformative change for biodiversity conservation.

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Transdisciplinary education: A leverage point to foster transformative change for biodiversity conservation

INSIGHTS FROM A SUMMER SCHOOL

Sara Atienza; Camille Calicis; Sebastian Candiago; Nicolas Dendoncker; Jomme Desair; Thomas Fickel; Eirik Finne; Christine Frison; Maria Haense; Malte Hinsch; Tyler Kulfan; Joy Kumagai; Oleksandr Mialyk; Maximilian Nawrath; Fiona Nevzati; Carla Washbourne; Thea Wübbelmann



"a way of self-transformation oriented towards knowledge of the self, the unity of knowledge, and the creation of a new art of living in the society" - Nicolescu (2005)

BACKGROUND

Every year, the "Alternet Summer School" takes place in Peyresq, a small sparsely populated village in the French Alps. The Summer School 2021 was held under the topic of "Transformation pathways to foster biodiversity and human wellbeing". The 23 participants came from 20 different countries with backgrounds spanning from geography over social sciences and architecture to law, communication and natural sciences. Likewise, the 7 organizers and 19 speakers had different academic and research backgrounds. Besides lectures and field trips, the participants developed a project in a self-organizing and dynamic group work using different methods and perspectives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1: What elements distinguish the summerschool as "transdisciplinary education"?
- RQ2: How does transdisciplinary education, lead to transformative change for biodiversity conservation?

METHODS

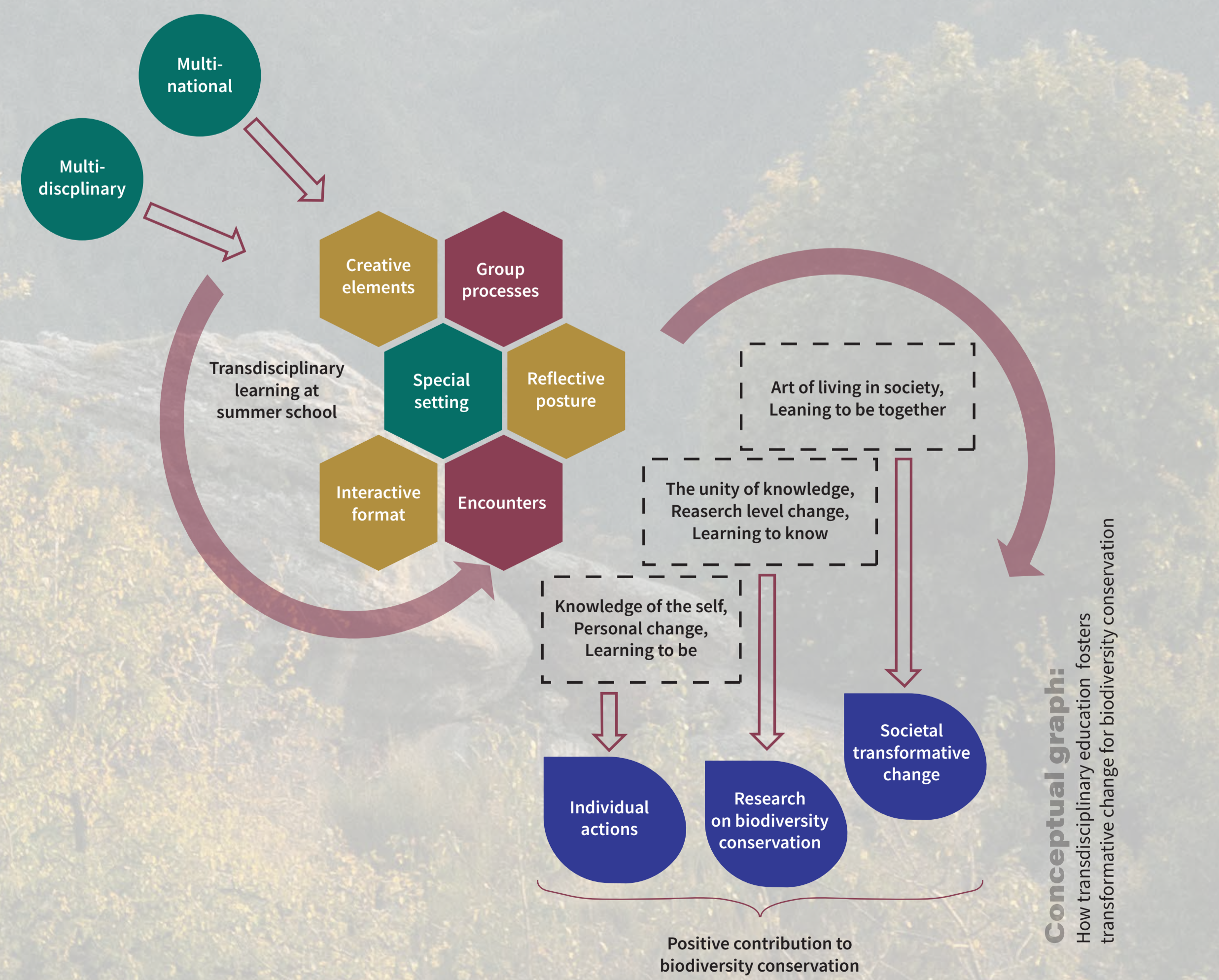
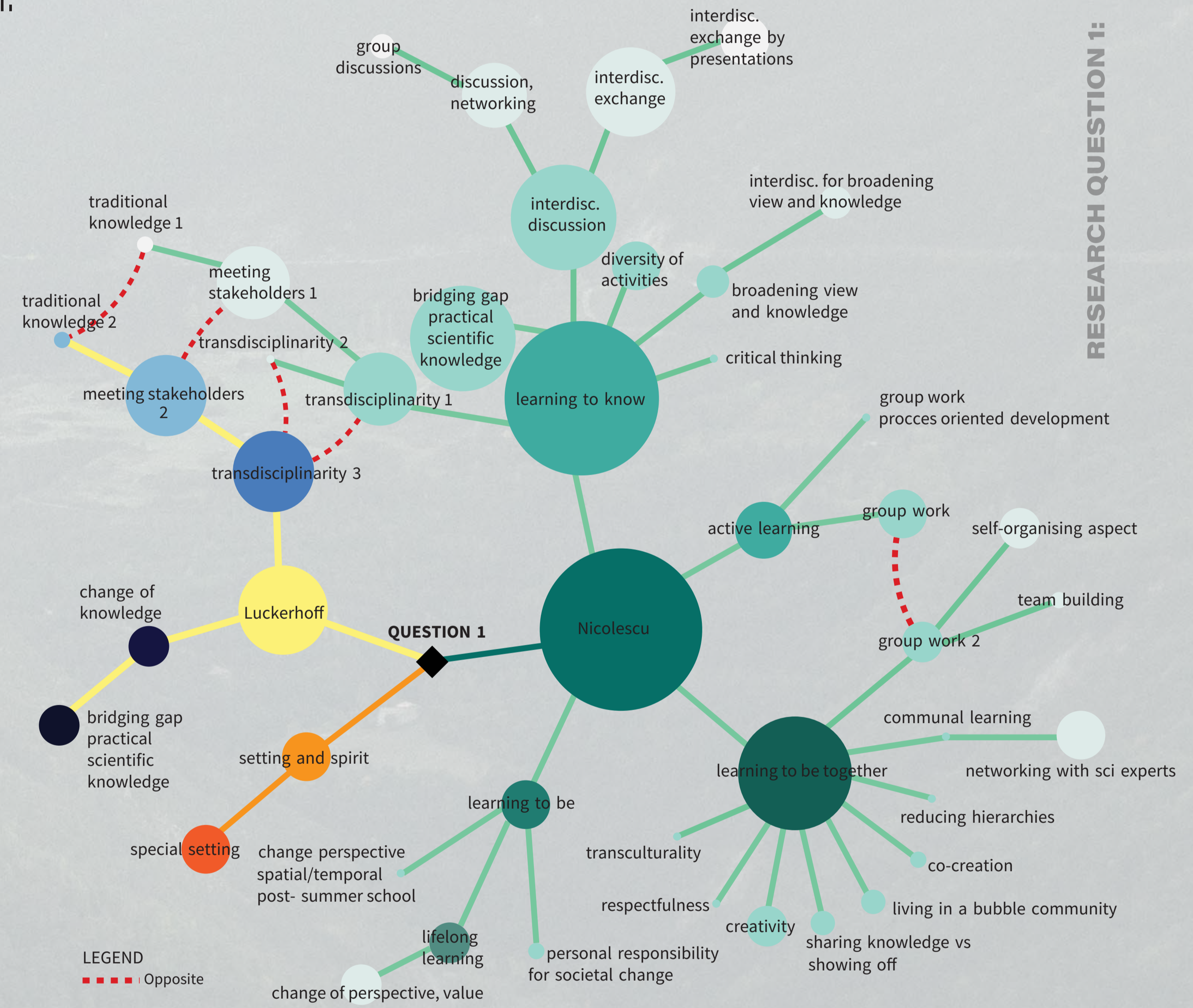
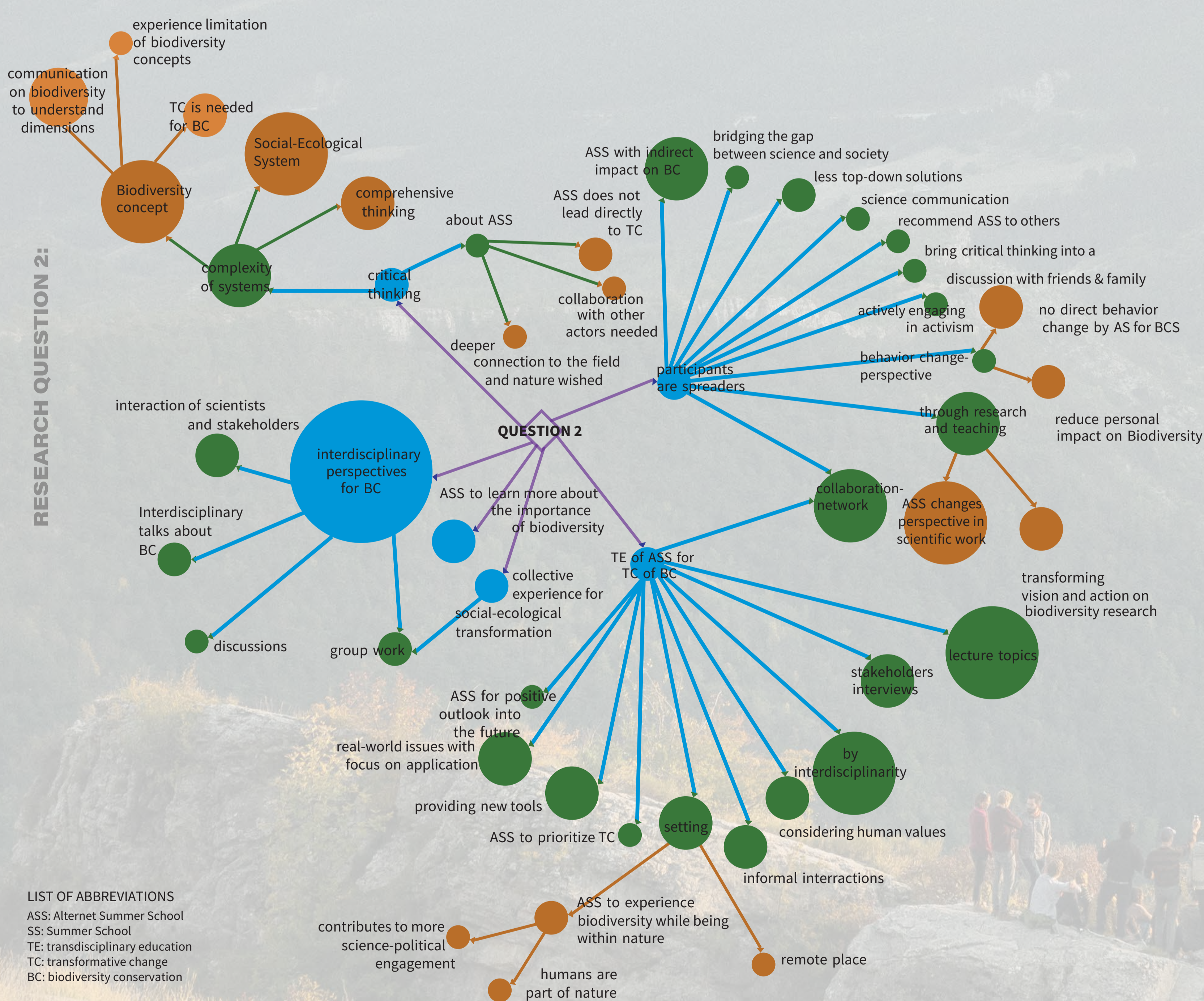
We did a survey among the participants and organizers using the ASS 2021 as a case study to answer the above research question. We received 26 answers, including 7 answers from organizers and 19 from participants. The data was coded in NVivo following an inductive approach. Accordingly, the participants and organizers were analyzed separately in order to identify differences and possible improvements of the summerschool or transdisciplinary education in general.

RESULTS

"The summerschool is like a butterfly, beautiful in its uniqueness, easily discarded as unimportant in the grand scheme of things but capable of contributing to a storm when integrated in the dynamic system"

"I guess I am using a decaffeinated version of "transformative change" here since a "fundamental, system-wide reorganization" did not take place, and has not taken place since the AltSS [Alternet Summer School]. But what matters for me is the trend, the path that has been open, the ideas that are germinating in us and that will acquire a form if we water them enough"

Yes, the summerschool was transdisciplinary education and can contribute to biodiversity conservation through direct effects: reported behavioral change; and indirect effect: increased and better transdisciplinary research on biodiversity conservation and contribution to a system-wide change that is happening.



THE REAL IMPACT

The impact of the ASS cannot be quantified and relies on self-reported transformative changes. More robust findings could be distilled from sequential surveys following a cohort of graduates through time or by investigating multiple cohorts at the same time.

WAYS FORWARD

- Fostering the transdisciplinary elements;
- Monitoring the personal and professional development of alumni after the summerschool to have a clearer understanding of the impact.