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There Is a Me in Us and We: Understanding Selfishness in Transdisciplinary Collaborations Among Design Students to Facilitate Sustainability Outcomes

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There Is a Me in Us and We

Understanding Selfishness in Transdisciplinary Collaborations Among Design Students to Facilitate Sustainability Outcomes

Wan-Ching Yang | 2021

Background
For the sake of achieving sustainability on a macro and long-term scale, transdisciplinary collaboration is essential and inevitable. However, there exist challenges in bringing sustainability into a multidisciplinary team, particularly with disciplines that do not necessarily involve sustainability as their consideration in design development. Additionally, perceptions about sustainability are primarily bound with altruistic notions and intentions, which can easily be taken in a way that goes against an individual's 'selfish' psychological nature.

Summary of the Map
This visualization is developed as part of a study on the understanding of selfishness in individuals in transdisciplinary collaboration among design students. This research aims to reveal the manifestation of selfishness in students' transdisciplinary collaborations and its impact on the

overall development of sustainable practices. Driven mainly by selfishness, superiority and biases pose substantial obstacles to sustainability realization by influencing team dynamics. Each diagram in this visualization demonstrates the phenomena that undermine key qualities for decent transdisciplinary collaboration where design is involved. These qualities include epistemology, trust and respect, communication, knowledge transfer, and the ability to persist through ambiguity.

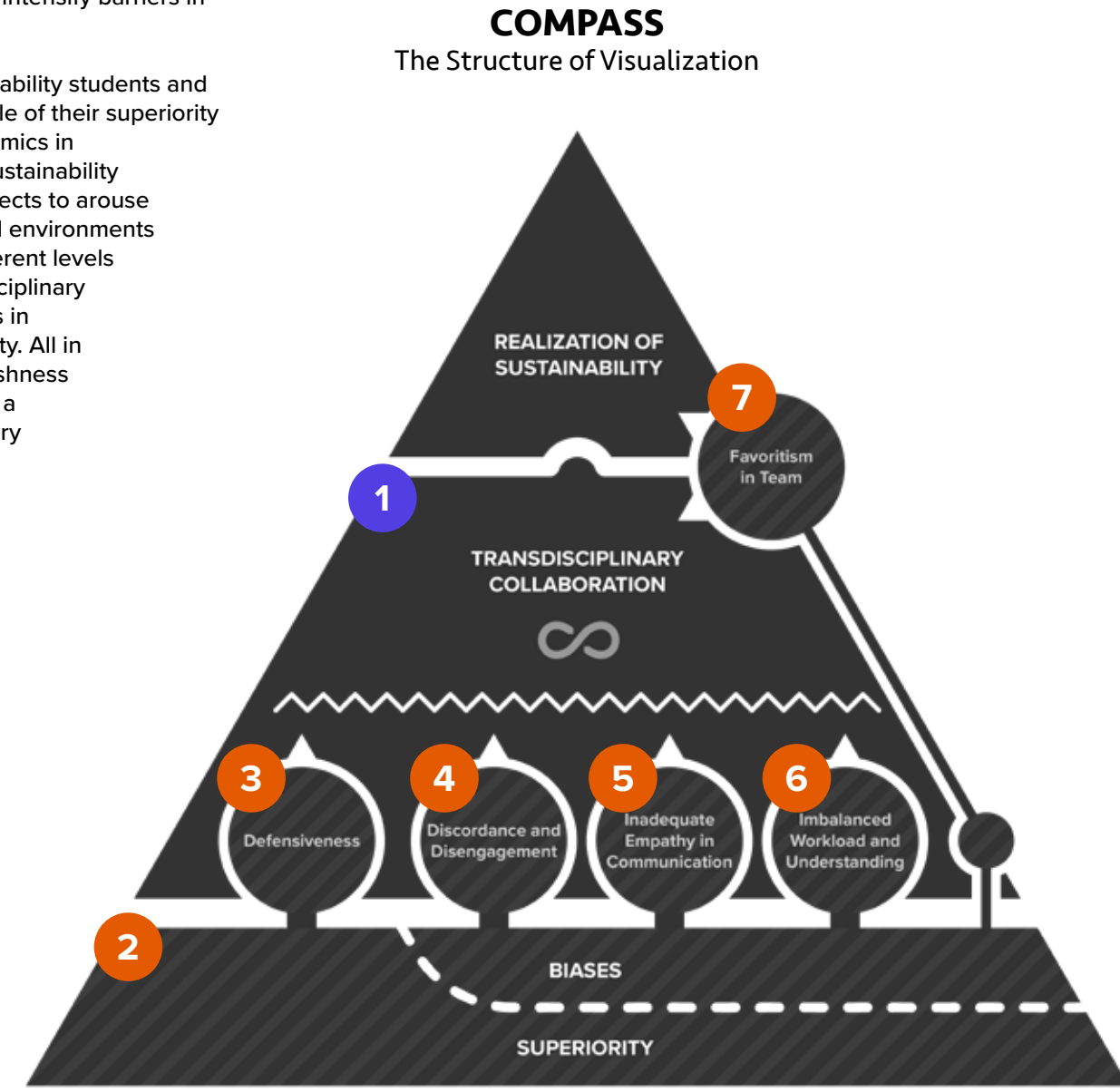
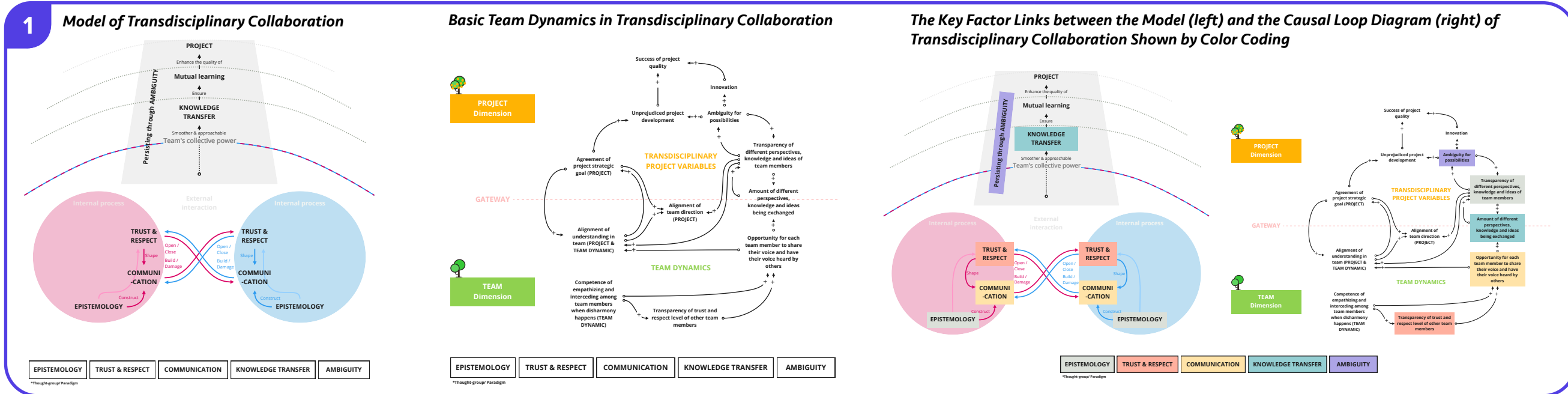
Insights and Expectations
The visualization is synthesized based on the understanding of selfishness through an evolutionary psychology perspective after conducting nine in-depth interviews with students and practitioners dedicated to sustainability in their respective disciplines. The diagrams highlight that there is no difference between students who do or do not focus on sustainability in terms of the superiority and biases

(pertaining to themselves and their respective disciplines) in transdisciplinary collaborations. In other words, both types of students are highly likely to set and intensify barriers in achieving sustainability.

The insight is a reminder for sustainability students and practitioners to acknowledge the role of their superiority and biases as a part of system dynamics in transdisciplinary collaboration for sustainability outcomes. The visualization set expects to arouse mentors and learners in educational environments to think about decisive shifts at different levels that can be initiated during transdisciplinary projects to influence team dynamics in design development for sustainability. All in all, this is a call for recognizing selfishness as an unignorable driving force and a potential strategy for transdisciplinary collaborations.



MACRO
COLLECTIVE
INDIVIDUAL



Premise:
Sustainability achievement needs collaboration success

Needs for collaboration:
From communication and trust, to knowledge transfer and project outcomes (1)

Phenomena and driving forces that undermine the potential for collaboration:
Individual Superiority and Biases (2) take multiple forms in a team (3-7)

Review through the lens of evolutionary psychology

