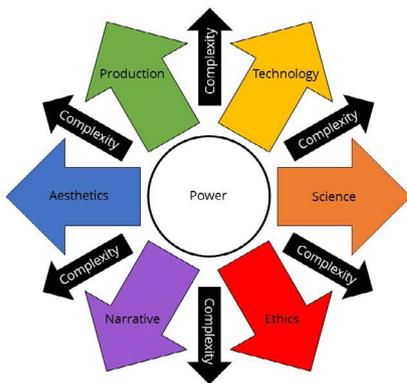


A Nordic Bildung Food for Thought Paper

THE BILDUNG ROSE

3 pages version
By Lene Rachel Andersen

The Bildung Rose is an educational model for connecting our inner worlds to the society in which we grow up. Understanding the relationship between self and society is crucial because as society becomes more complex, we too must change in order to survive and thrive. According to the model, societies evolve, grow and become more complex across seven domains: 1) production; 2) technology; 3) knowledge/science; 4) ethics; 5) narrative; 6) aesthetics, and 7) power.



The Bildung Rose allows us to map the relationship between self and society in a way that orients us toward the well-being and flourishing of both. The society that surrounds us defines what we need to know and what we can know; more complex societies put more complex demands on us, and also offer more diversity. The increasing complexity within societies has its own dynamics, and our individual Bildung must keep up if we are to be able to understand our society and how it evolves, i.e. if society is to make sense to us and we are to be active citizens.

As each domain refines its knowledge, skills and mode of operation and becomes a sub-system with its own sub-sub-systems, there is a 'centrifugal' force moving the domains apart and enlarging the knowledge pool in society. In the six petal domains, there is a potential for antagonism towards how the non-neighboring sub-systems work and think. This is what the West saw during the Renaissance: science tore itself

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Nordic Bildung is a metamodern think tank. We take a systems perspective on global development and create models that can help people grasp the complexity of the 21st century.

Nordic Bildung Food for Thought Papers bring science, philosophy and societal urgencies together. We aim to combine advanced thinking with plain language and hope to spark informed conversations and creative thinking. We write and publish the papers because we want to see more decision making around the globe based on systems thinking and Bildung.

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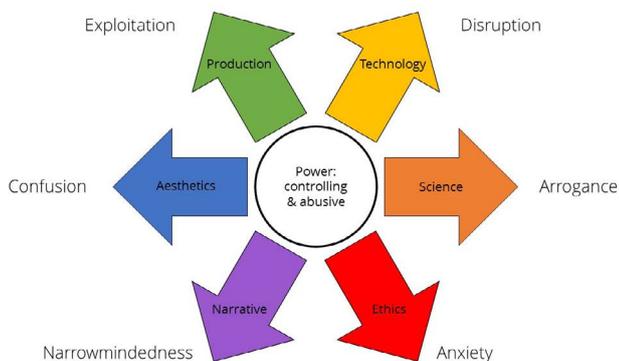
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loose from narrative (religious dogma) and became a sub-system of its own.

The specialization and diversification of the domains/sub-systems and the increase in complexity in each sub-system is generally an advantage to society. It means a greater diversity of output, higher quality of the contributions of each domain to society and better use of resources.

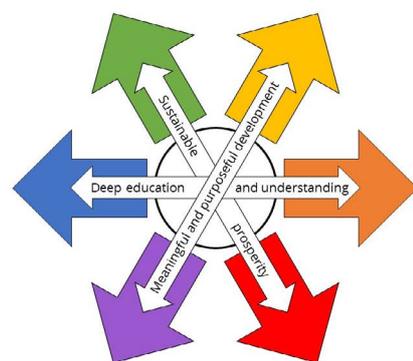
Specialization and diversification may also have the opposite consequences, though, if the increased complexity in a sub-system does not match the development in the rest of society, each sub-system has the potential of growing in a way that creates a problematic imbalance:

- **production** can become abusive and exploitative,
- **technology** can disrupt societal structures and institutions,
- **science** can become arrogant and can undermine the narratives holding society together,
- **ethics** can undermine the moral values represented by narrative and cause anxiety,
- **narrative** can become narrow-minded and prevent necessary development, and it can evolve into religious and/or political ideology that becomes dogmatic and totalitarian when it cannot tolerate contradicting isms,
- **aesthetics** can become art that tears the symbolic fabric apart and causes confusion,
- **power** may be abusive and controlling. It may also be hijacked by one or two of the other domains, by which it will become abusive and controlling on behalf of those domains.



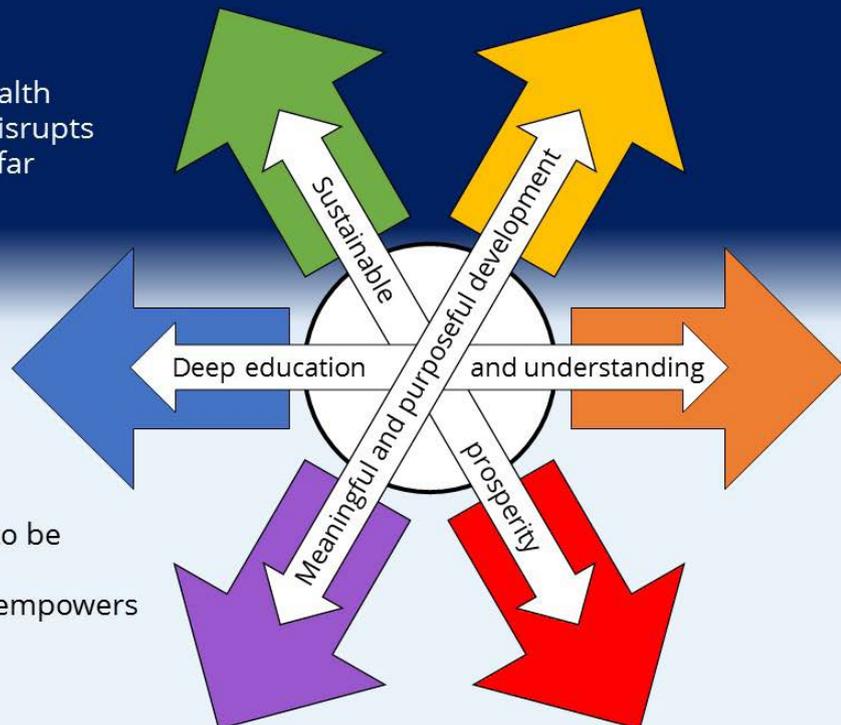
If, on the other hand, people want to contribute to the balanced, stable and peaceful development of society, they must reach out to that which is 'across the aisle' from where they are already engaged. This is the primary purpose of the view afforded by the Bildung Rose as a metaphor for society: By using the Bildung Rose as a guiding tool, it is easy to see how collaboration across the aisle may benefit everybody:

- When production has ethics, and ethics deliberately assists commerce and production, they can produce sustainable prosperity.
- When narrative (particularly in the shape of religion) recognizes that the world and human ingenuity evolve, then narrative must evolve as well and it must update its moral norms according to the ethics that allow us to handle unfamiliar situations, which in their turn is what technology brings about. Technology similarly has to pay attention to the narratives and norms that allow people to collaborate and compete peacefully. Together, narrative and tech can create meaningful and purposeful development aligned with ethically updated norms.
- When science and aesthetics (pop-culture as well as the arts) collaborate, they can produce understanding; they can produce the education that touches and teaches at the same time, and which allows us to acquire the necessary knowledge to solve society's problems.



Societies therefore need to invest in all domains and people need Bildung related to all domains in order for both people and society to thrive and flourish. This is not how things currently work, though:

- Concrete / What is
- Feeds the body
- Creates material wealth
- Disenfranchises & disrupts
- Non-sustainable so far
- Funding abundant



- Spirit / What ought to be
- Feeds the mind
- Creates meaning & empowers
- Connects
- Highly sustainable
- Funding lacking

When the political power sustains and actively supports and promotes all domains, when power is distributed across society as freedom and responsibility in all domains, i.e. when power becomes more complex by decentralization, and when decision makers in all do-

ains serve society through their domain and collaborating across the aisle, then the inhabitants can enjoy sustainable prosperity, deep understanding, meaning, and a sense of purpose. In short: enlightenment and empowerment; Bildung.

Full 21 pages version incl. sources:

<http://nordicbildung.org/food-for-thought-papers/the-bildung-rose>

Lene Rachel Andersen



Lene Rachel Andersen is an economist, author, futurist, and Bildung activist. After studying business economy for three years, she studied theology. During her studies, she wrote entertainment for Danish television until she decided to quit theology, become a fulltime writer and focus on technological development, big history and the future of humanity.

Since 2005, Andersen has written 15 books and she has received two Danish democracy awards: Ebbe Kløvedal-Reich Democracy Baton (2007) and Døssing Prisen, the Danish librarians' democracy prize (2012). Among her books are [The Nordic Secret](#) (2017), co-written by Tomas Björkman, and [Metamodernity](#) (2019).

Andersen is one of the co-founders of the Copenhagen based think tank [Nordic Bildung](#), and she is a [full member of the Club of Rome](#). Andersen is also the initiator of [European Bildung Day](#) and one of the initiators of the [European Bildung Network](#).