

ANCHORING TRANSDISCIPLINARITY THROUGH A NETWORK OF NETWORKS*

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The main motivations for building a Transdisciplinary Network of Networks (TNN) are the following:

1. The transdisciplinary research and action had a spectacular development in the last ten years in many countries of the world. However, for an outsider, this development seems plagued by fragmentation due to the great diversity of approaches, giving the feeling that transdisciplinarity is just a fashionable umbrella for something without a given identity as transdisciplinarians use definitions of transdisciplinarity that seem contradictory.
2. There is a very serious obstacle of language. In general, English-speaking people do not read works in French, German, Portuguese, or Spanish (I limit myself, for the moment, to these four major languages). German-speaking people do not read works in French, Portuguese, or Spanish. French-speaking people do not read works in German, Portuguese, or Spanish. Portuguese or Spanish-speaking people do not read works in German.
3. Due to the problem of definitions and languages, transdisciplinarians ignore relevant works for themselves. The transdisciplinary movement would be much stronger and better recognized by university, political, and social authorities and actors if the different approaches were to act in a unified way.
4. Due to the fragmentation of the transdisciplinary movement, the objective evaluation of the transdisciplinary research today is practically impossible. The evaluation of transdisciplinary research in a disciplinary way leads to the destruction

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of the potentialities of transdisciplinarity. The evaluation of transdisciplinary research has to be done in a transdisciplinary, internationally-valid way.

Conditions for a good functioning of a TNN:

1. The TNN does not have to have a geographical location but just a location in cyberspace. The internet site could be hosted by a university or a NGO.
2. The TNN has to be independent of all the participating networks while still ensuring their interaction.
3. Responsibility for the TNN must be shared equally among representatives of the participating networks.

What are, in my opinion, the minimal priorities of a TNN?

1. Form a database of major transdisciplinary texts (articles and, if possible, books) available in English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish.
2. Establish the compatibility of different definitions of transdisciplinarity via research. This cannot be done by using the classical, binary logic—that of “yes” and “no”—of absolute truth and absolute falseness. For example, for somebody using the Zürich definition (say A), my own definition appears as non-A. The included middle logic, asserting that there is a third T that is at the same time A and non-A, allows us to discover this compatibility. T is simply situated in the context of general laws (in the case of natural systems) or general rules and norms (in the case of social systems) different from those of A and non-A. It is therefore possible to unify the transdisciplinary movement while still keeping autonomous its various transdisciplinary approaches.
3. Organize international workshops for training the trainers. The transdisciplinary training of transdisciplinary trainers is one of the major paradoxes in transdisciplinarity: one cannot form somebody if he or she is not first formed. This paradox could be overcome by an initial self-training meeting with the participation of people active in different transdisciplinary approaches.
4. Organize periodic workshops for training in transdisciplinarity for
 - teachers in higher education and scientific researchers;
 - university and research authorities;
 - social workers;
 - economy and industry leaders;

- policy-makers;
- medical practitioners;
- administrative practitioners;
- mass-media journalists; and
- NGO leaders.

The trainers should represent all the transdisciplinary approaches.

5. Initiate a publicity campaign in order to form and identify the market of transdisciplinary competencies.

Of course, the ideas presented here are just a preliminary sketch submitted for general debate.

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