What

Navigating Transdisciplinarity: Embracing Collaboration, Confronting Challenges, and Cultivating Equality

Transdisciplinarity in general, and transdisciplinary education specifically, encompasses various interpretations (Klein, 2018). The common denominator revolves around the nature of its collaborations. In transdisciplinary settings: academic, educational, and non-educational partners join forces in learning, working, and researching (Klein, 2018; Visscher, 2023).

This diverse group of transdisciplinary participants is bounded by the issue in which they are involved. Transdisciplinarity is by its very nature about involvement in complex societal issues where there is no clear solution and working method to arrive at that solution. These types of problems are commonly referred to as wicked problems (Williams, 2022). Because straightforward definitions and solutions are lacking for these types of problems, transdisciplinarity arrives as a new working method.

Transdisciplinarity can be understood as a metatheory, a new kind of knowledge. It adopts different methodologies from different disciplines to transform and transcend them. It ensures the emergence of new concepts and approaches related to the wicked problem at hand. As these problems are always grounded in the real world, transdisciplinarity serves society through its innovative outcomes (Mokiy, 2019).

The third feature of transdisciplinarity distinguished here, relates to the form of involvement. With transdisciplinarity, all partners work together based on equality. There is no single way to define the mutual relations, as everyone should be learning together to generate new knowledge and innovative idea (Visscher, 2023). So: "there are no transdisciplinary experts, only transdisciplinary practitioners".

It is not necessary to note that these characteristics create important challenges when approaching transdisciplinarity from an education perspective. That is exactly why TRAIL is developed, providing extensive guidelines and insights on the practical effects and challenges of transdisciplinary education.

Inter-, or transdisciplinary: a common confusion.

Academic literature and dialogues with experts underscore the absence of a shared understanding of transdisciplinarity. Particularly the distinction with interdisciplinary collaboration and education formats is often unclear. Where both approaches strive towards the integration of different types of knowledge, transdisciplinarity distinguishes itself by the involvement of non-academic or educational stakeholders as equal participants in the same project. The diversity of perspectives, 'types of knowledge' is higher, and the problem at hand tends to be more complex. As the complexity increases, so do the challenges and learning opportunities in transdisciplinary education.