
How to Create the Process

The journey, not the destination matters... T.S. Eliot

A transdisciplinary learning environment is learner-driven and allows participants to experience and experiment with a transdisciplinary process. Where the participants will end up at the end cannot be completely defined because they have the space and freedom to try different things. Some ideas will work and others will not, but through experimentation creativity is engaged.

Iterative Process

Learning iteratively is how we learn naturally. In a transdisciplinary approach, when handling wicked problems, learning iteratively is the only way forward. Because transdisciplinary research deals with complex and unsolvable (wicked) problems, every attempt to answer such an issue is prone to bringing about new or unforeseen consequences. Its complexity relates to many diverging factors. It concerns different and often conflicting desires from stakeholders and appears to evolve organically together with whatever approach is decided upon, generating new issues that need to be tackled. Therefore, the problem needs to be regularly revisited, re-analysed, re-framed and the plan of action rethought in iterative processes.

The iterative process can be confusing and frustrating because a big part of the learning process is about the unknown. This is for all participants, both students, teachers, researchers, and societal partners.

Learning by Doing

To learn more about the challenge and develop the transversal skills needed to tackle real-life issues, the program should guide participants through one or two iterations. The approach to addressing wicked problems fits closely to the human learning process as described by Kolb's theory of experiential learning (Learning by Doing). We learn a lot by continuously establishing thoughts, putting those ideas into action and then reflecting upon them. That reflection leads to deeper insights and new ideas, which can then be put into action again and reflected upon, starting another cycle or iteration anew. Reflecting on what we do ourselves follows the iterative approach to the wicked problem of life. Missing in Kolb's theory is, however, the need for other actors to co-create a new type of knowledge.