

# TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN AN INTERCULTURAL ORIENTATION

## AGENDA SETTING WORKSHOP

September 11–13, 2018, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg and Arizona State University

### OUTLINE

This Workshop aims to create a space for joint exploration of how transdisciplinary research and sustainability can be researched, understood and transformed. It is based on the hypothesis that both concepts, transdisciplinarity and sustainability, are strongly informed by western thinkers, researchers and policy makers, and accordingly, framed dominantly by western world-views. As there is no escape from a certain situatedness and (researcher) positionality, a polylog is needed, where explorations and analysis of the concepts and according practices are realized in community. Our understanding of a polylog is based on intercultural philosophy and follows the minimal rule, formulated by Franz Wimmer:

“Wherever possible, look for transcultural overlapping of philosophical concepts, since it is probable that well-founded theses have developed in more than one cultural tradition” (Wimmer 2004, p. 67, own translation).

This agenda setting workshop shall be the starting point for developing an international research agenda on transdisciplinary research and sustainability. We envision the formation of an intercultural research consortium that critically explores and contributes to consolidating transdisciplinary research and sustainability/ sustainability practices, emphasising differences in how these concepts and associated practises are formed and informed in different world regions, under different socio-cultural, economic, political, historical and geographical conditions. The main objective of this workshop is to learn in an intercultural group how to explore within an intercultural orientation, to identify appropriate questions that help practice a culturally sensitive look at transdisciplinary research and sustainability and to work with hegemonies within discourse and policies. Methodological and conceptual questions with deep cultural, historical and political roots shall be approached during this event to encourage not only a valuable common understanding of this field and its richness but also to draw upon critical questions. Interwoven challenges and potentials of working on the edges of diverse spheres (academic and non-academic) shall be faced and creative common ways shall be traced. On a more practical level we shall identify formats for achieving continuous exchange and comparative research.

The CCP research team, a consortium of researchers from the Methodology Centre, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Sustainability, is organizing the Agenda Setting Workshop. The CCP project, entitled 'Complexity or Control? Paradigms for Sustainable Development', has an overall objective to contribute to consolidating epistemological and methodological foundations of transdisciplinary sustainability research. It became obvious during the research project that there was a need to tackle the challenges arising from the co-existence of different socio-cultural (research) traditions, political and economic conditions. In cooperation with Latin American partners, we have undertaken several activities that offered important learning opportunities in intercultural settings. In 2017 we organized the International Transdisciplinary Conference in cooperation with the Swiss td-net, looking at transdisciplinary research and teaching as intercultural endeavours. With the Agenda Setting workshop we want to take a next step in learning how to collaborate and develop research agendas in intercultural teams and to start building an intercultural research consortium. We will benefit from the co-presence of participants and trainers from different world regions taking part in the Td Summer School 2018. CCP is funded by the Ministry of Science and Culture of the Federal State Lower Saxony and the Volkswagen Foundation.

#### PRELIMINARY OVERALL QUESTIONS

The following question should be considered as a starting point for an exchange and collaborative (re)formulation of questions to address during the workshop.

- How can we address transdisciplinary research and sustainability within an intercultural team? And, subsequently, how can we develop critical explorations and intercultural as well as comparative research spaces?
- How are different discourses and practices around the universal political principle of sustainability, as declared by the UN, formed in different socio-cultural contexts and world regions, as well as economic, political and geographic conditions? And, as a corollary, are there hybrid forms that incorporate and transform the principle of sustainability? And are there forms of resistance?
- Where, and in which languages, is the notion of transdisciplinarity used in scientific and public discourses? How is the concept of transdisciplinarity informed in different socio-cultural contexts and world regions? Are there other concepts that address similar practices of transdisciplinary research? (here, an iterative process and mapping of the semantics of transdisciplinarity and similar practices will be necessary as there is neither a fixed starting point nor a centre).

#### ORGANIZERS

Ulli Vilsmaier, Esther Meyer, Maria De Eguia Huerta

## PROGRAM OUTLINE

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018

18:00h – 20:00h Evening Event – Getting to Know Each other: people, places, institutions and experiences

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018

- 09:00h – 10:30h Getting on board // presenting the CCP-project and preparatory work
- 10:30h – 11:00h Coffee Break
- 11:00h – 13:00h Developing our common objectives
- 13:00h – 14:00h Lunch Break
- 14:00h – 16:00h Concept work: Transdisciplinarity, transdisciplinary research, sustainability (individual, groupwork)
- 16:00h – 16:30h Coffee Break
- 16:30h – 18:00h Concept work: Transdisciplinarity, transdisciplinary research, sustainability (plenary)
- after-work walk

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> September

- 09:00h – 10:30 h The ‘universal political principle of sustainability’ in the world
- 10:30h – 11:00h Coffee Break
- 11:00h – 13:00h Transdisciplinarity
- 13:00h – 14:00h Lunch Break
- 14:00h – 16:00h Exploring forms of ongoing exchange and collaborative research: Agreeing on priorities
- 16:00h – 16:30h Coffee Break
- 16:30h – 17:30h Closing

## VENUE

The Workshop will take place on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the Central Building, Main Campus of the Leuphana University Lüneburg (Universitätsallee 1, 21335 Lüneburg).

We will meet on 11.09.18 at 18h at the entrance of the Central Building.

## CONTACT

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