

## Growing into what?

### On the (un-)disciplined socialisation of young researchers in transdisciplinary research

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#### *Risky entanglements? Contemporary research cultures imagined and practised - Growing into research*

The past decades have witnessed a growing debate claiming that complex societal problems like climate change call for new forms of knowledge that transcend the disciplinary structure of science. Problem-formulation and -solving strategies should be opened up: Collaboration between participants from both science and society should assure the social robustness of the knowledge produced and the solutions would be adapted to the specificities of their context of application. 'Transdisciplinarity' is the notion widely employed to capture this mode of knowledge production. Researchers are thus expected to show a high capacity to work in teams and to engage with non-scientific actors.

Yet simultaneously with such opening-up processes of the research system we can also witness closing-down mechanisms. The most obvious are the omnipresent highly normative auditing processes such as assessment exercises that strongly focus on individual performance and disciplinary indicators such as disciplinary publications and impact factors. This goes hand in hand with increasingly temporalised career structures and the corresponding need for the individual researchers to constantly take care that sufficient capital (e.g. first author publications) is accumulate in order to assure their individual career progression.

This tension between the need for collective and inclusive work on the one hand, and the focus on individual performance in terms of disciplinary quality criteria on the other is particularly challenging early stage researchers. This challenge within the context of transdisciplinarity is double: to manage the tension between collective work and individual career perspectives and to do so without being able to build on a relatively stable set of values, norms and practices, as within disciplines.

In our contribution we aim to address the question how young researchers struggle with these conflicting demands and pressures. To do so, we have carried out research in a PhD program in an Austrian university working on sustainability issues from a transdisciplinary perspective. Coming from different disciplinary backgrounds the PhD's are confronted with and socialised into a research area that is not only located across disciplines, but also is meant to include extra-scientific actors. They face questions such as what 'being a researcher' means in such a context, what their competences actually are and how such hybrid-positions relate to classical governance structures in academic institutions, as auditing, specific career models, etc.

We are thus interested in understanding how these young researchers conceptualise and inhabit their *epistemic living spaces*, and how they perceive and experience their room for manoeuvre – epistemologically, institutionally and socially. This cannot go without understanding the specificities of transdisciplinarity as a *knowledge regime* and the kind of normative and structural frames this imposes on young researchers. By that we mean to investigate how the institutions and people involved in transdisciplinary research, the guiding myths and ideologies which form the basis of such an epistemic approach, but also forms of resistance against it impact on the way these young researchers live and work in the respective academic environment.

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