



Transdisciplinary Research Its Nature and Value for Society

A public lecture series

held from 13 December 2023 to 29 February 2024

Aula 107, Stabile Piazzetta, Via Violino 11, Manno



Programme

Research in different domains can be radically different in outcome and purpose, but there is remarkable potential across domains for sharing skills, practices, conventions and language. In recognition of this, researchers are increasingly working beyond disciplinary boundaries, forming new partnerships and teams and engaging a wide range of methodological approaches. This lecture series engages with the latest developments in working across disciplines. Insights from five speakers will capture the scope for and implications of transdisciplinary research (TDR). The final session will be a roundtable discussion dedicated to the principles of TDR learning and teaching and the institutional conditions underpinning those principles.

TDR, sometimes referred to as mission-oriented research, is characterized by three features: (i) the research process involves co-production of knowledge combining academic (across scientific disciplines) and non-academic actors (practice partners and stakeholders), (ii) it aims to address societal challenges (exemplified prominently in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations), and (iii) it involves the implementation of research results. This series will articulate the prospects and limits of TDR for furthering knowledge, as well as its implications for education and for policy.

Wednesday 13 December 2023, 17:00-18:30

The Nature of Transdisciplinary Research and Its Value for Society

Christoph Kueffer

Christoph Kueffer is professor of urban ecology at the University of Applied Sciences of Eastern Switzerland, co-director of the Center for Environmental Justice and Sustainable Futures at Franklin University in Lugano, and a lecturer at the ETH Zurich. He is president of the td-net of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences and co-leader of the working group 'Environmental Humanities' of the Swiss Academic Society for Environmental Research and Ecology (saguf).

Abstract Transdisciplinary research is increasingly considered of central importance to academia and all scientific cultures – natural, social, cultural sciences, engineering, the arts – by decision makers at national and international levels. This talk will give an overview of what transdisciplinarity is and why it is important for the future of academia and society. In short, it will explain why socially and scientifically robust and effective mission-oriented research has to be inter- and transdisciplinary. It will also introduce some of the tools that are available to support transdisciplinary research. Switzerland has for decades been a stronghold of scholarship about transdisciplinarity; among others thanks to the td-net (<https://transdisciplinarity.ch>).

Thursday 25 January 2024, 17:00-18:30

Pathways to Transdisciplinary Research for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Bianca Vienni-Baptista

Bianca Vienni-Baptista, holds a PhD in Cultural Studies and a Habilitation (Venia Legendi) on the anthropology of science and technology from ETH Zurich. She is group leader and lecturer at the Transdisciplinarity Lab (Department of Environmental Systems Science, ETH Zurich). Her research focuses on the study of inter- and transdisciplinary knowledge production processes. As a result, she is interested in methods and tools, as well as concepts and theories, as means of achieving transformative and developmental change. Together with her team, she investigates the specific conditions for transdisciplinary research and implements participatory co-production processes for sustainable development.

Abstract The challenge of including the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) in a more meaningful way in research and innovation policy and funding initiatives is not new, yet it has surely acquired more urgency in these crisis-ridden times. Finding sustainable solutions to the social, cultural, political, economic, and health challenges we currently face demands that we do things differently, that we work collaboratively and that we embrace transdisciplinary research — across and between all disciplines — like never before. The AHSS have important things to say about every aspect of human existence. This talk will present key issues and pathways for fostering transdisciplinary research focusing on the participation of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. It provides concrete guidance on the opportunities that transdisciplinarity offers to co-create art-science collaborations and introduce some resources available to orient teams in designing and implementing such collaborations.

Thursday 8 February 2024, 17:00-18:30

TDR Partnerships: Situated Knowledge, Diversity and Inclusion

Andrea Zimmermann

Andrea Zimmermann is senior researcher at the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies (IZFG) at the University of Bern. She is project leader of the research project 'Gender and diversity monitoring in the Swiss cultural sector', which started in August 2022. The project is a collaboration between Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Center for Social Research (CSR) and the IZFG. Together with Dominique Grisard (CSR), she launched 'art of intervention' in 2018, a platform for numerous collaborations with cultural institutions to foster exchange between academia, art and public discourse. She previously worked as a dramaturge at the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus.

Abstract Inter- and transdisciplinarity are starting points for feminist knowledge production and research in the field of gender studies. Transdisciplinary research asks constantly for the critical re-evaluation of seemingly given terms, concepts and perspectives and makes visible the construction of disciplinary knowledge, its boundaries and exclusions. In that way new tools and methods emerge. This talk will explore how the coalition with feminist epistemologies allows for a reflection on knowledge production in relation to power regimes in the field of theatre: How do feminist epistemologies take into account the situatedness of knowledge? How does the perspective of gender contribute to important insights, and why is intersectionality of ground-breaking importance for analysis and transformative critique of the status quo?

Thursday 15 February 2024, 17:00-18:30

Science-Policy Engagement as a Core Task of ETH Zurich

Benedikt Knüsel

Benedikt Knüsel is Head of Science-Policy Interface in the Office of Knowledge Transfer and Corporate Relations at ETH Zurich. Before joining ETH in his current role, he worked as a policy advisor at the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation. He holds a PhD in philosophy of climate science from ETH Zurich and a master's degree in environmental systems and policy from ETH Zurich.

Abstract Scientific evidence should be an important foundation for policymaking in response to complex societal challenges, ranging from sustainable development to artificial intelligence and antibiotic resistance. However, the exchange between academic researchers and policymakers requires mutual trust and understanding. For this, scientists need to conduct interdisciplinary research and consider policymakers' perspectives and particularly their scope of action in all stages of research projects. In his talk, Benedikt Knüsel outlines why ETH Zurich sees this type of engagement as part of its core mission, and how the university aims to strengthen science-policy interactions based on these principles.

Wednesday 21 February 2024, 17:00-18:30

Building Structures for TDR: Opportunities and Challenges

Susan Thieme

Susan Thieme is Professor of Geography and Critical Sustainability Studies at the University of Bern, founder and co-leader of the mLAB, Current Executive Director of Institute of Geography of the University of Bern (GIUB), and a Member of the Scientific Committee of td-net.

Abstract The aim of transdisciplinary research is to integrate knowledge from different fields of practice. In institutionalized contexts such as universities or universities of arts and applied sciences, however, forms of knowledge tend to be hierarchicalized. To challenge and transform existing ways of knowledge production, the mLAB (<https://mlab.unibe.ch/>) was established in the Institute of Geography at the University of Bern in 2017. The mLAB sees itself as an experimental space where researchers, students, and people with an artistic background can develop, test and reflect on new forms of transdisciplinary collaboration and co-creation. This presentation will consider the opportunities and challenges that arise when a critical take on transdisciplinarity is actively integrated into research and teaching and research results are increasingly made visible in different public spheres.

Thursday 29 February 2024, 17:00-18:30

Teaching and Learning TDR Competences at SUPSI

Roundtable with Gertrude Hirsch Hadorn, Emanuele Carpanzano, Magda Ramadan and Gian Luca Di Tanna

Abstract Once the goals and principles of TDR are understood and endorsed by the SUPSI community, its next step will be translating them into practice. Essential in this process will be to recognize that TDR requires a specific mindset and methods for understanding the complexity of real-world problems and for integrating relevant academic and non-academic TDR actors in providing knowledge for problem-solving. Creating novel learning units facilitates the acquisition of TDR competences. Opportunities and challenges that the new learning structures may create for SUPSI's organization will also be discussed.

Participants

Gertrude Hirsch Hadorn is a philosopher and a Professor emeritus at the Department of Environmental Systems Science at ETH Zurich. She acted as founding President of the Network for Transdisciplinary Research (td-net) of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences. Together with the team and the scientific advisory board of td-net, she published the Handbook of Transdisciplinary Research (Springer 2008).

Emanuele Carpanzano is professor and director of research, development and knowledge transfer at SUPSI. He has a PhD in Computer Science and Industrial Automation Engineering from Politecnico di Milano. He previously worked for the National Research Council and the University of Bergamo in Italy. His scientific activities are in the field of production systems and value chains engineering, with specific focus on digitalization and human aspects.

Magda Ramadan is head of the BA and MA programmes at the Department of Education and Learning / University of Teacher Education at SUPSI. She works as a lecturer in Educational Sciences and is a member of the SUPSI working group in Transdisciplinary Research. Magda Ramadan holds a MA in pedagogy with a focus on psychology and an MA in Family and Community Mediation from the Catholic University of Milan.

Gian Luca Di Tanna is Professor of BioStatistics and Health Economics and Head of Research at the Department of Business Economics, Health and Social Care (DEASS) of SUPSI. Additionally, he is Professorial Fellow of The George Institute for Global Health and the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. He has held academic positions at the Queen Mary University of London, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the University of Birmingham and at the Sapienza University of Rome and previously worked for the US-biotech Amgen. His main areas of research are on statistical methods in randomized clinical trials and observational research with a specific interest on Bayesian methods, evidence synthesis/meta-analysis and their use to inform new studies and health economic evaluations.

Insight from the field of design will be provided by a student actively working in research.

Moderator

Hubert Eiholzer is head of research and vice-director of the Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana_University of Music at SUPSI. He holds a Diplôme d'Enseignement de Piano from the Conservatory of Fribourg and a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Oxford.

Registration

For organisational purposes, please register
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