



Partnering for Change: Link Research to Societal Challenges

Video Transcript

Why transdisciplinary research?

[Tobias Buser] To be able to address complex societal challenges and to contribute to the common good, I think it is important to cooperate with scientists, decision-makers, and affected people in order to integrate their rich knowledge, discuss strategies, and explore pathways towards solutions.

As coordinators of this course, td-net Director Theres Paulsen and myself would like to hear from all educators. What are the main reasons for you to engage in transdisciplinary research?

[Prof. Dr. Jakob Zinsstag] Working on health care for pastoralists and their animals in Africa could not be done without engaging with communities and authorities in the joint identification of research and development priorities, the discussion of research results, the design of interventions, and their assessment. Transdisciplinary work creates legitimation and ownership of the involved actors and leads to results scientists working alone could never achieve.

[PD. Dr. Flurina Schneider] I work with transdisciplinary approaches as I want to contribute to social learning for sustainability transformations. Transdisciplinarity means to combine rigorous scientific thinking and analysis with the lived experiences and knowledge of the actors involved. Thereby, meaningful knowledge and practices can emerge.

[Dr. Christian Pohl] For me, transdisciplinary research is a means to an end. The end I use it for is sustainable development. The means is collaboration within science and with society to co-produce knowledge and practices that promote sustainable development.

[Prof. Dr. Susan Thieme] I engage in transdisciplinary research to build bridges between people with different types of knowledge and expertise. We challenge currently existing power relations in the way research is often designed, implemented, and evaluated. Transdisciplinary research involves a diversity of methods, analytical scales, and societal actors. It is not easy at all to integrate those different perspectives, but that's great because it pushes you and your colleagues to think out of the box, to be self-reflective and transparent. For me, transdisciplinary research is a societal learning process, eventually contributing to problem-solving and transformation.

[Prof. Dr. Stephan Rist] For me, transdisciplinary research allows bringing together social and natural sciences with the manifold people holding otherwise generated forms of knowledge, like social



movements or indigenous and citizen communities. Through this transdisciplinary research contributes to an emancipatory, sustainable development, meaning to liberate humans and nature from the impositions of currently dominating forms of capitalist generation and distribution of wealth.

[Dr. Didier Wernli] When you work on global challenges, such as antimicrobial resistance, it is very important to understand both the natural and social drivers. This requires collaboration between the social and natural sciences. In addition, it is very important to engage with other actors, including international organisations, so that scientific knowledge is translated into practice and actionable policies.

[Caroline Näther] At our institute, we engage in transdisciplinary research as it changes the concept of experts. Expertise is contributed not only by specialists and researchers brought in from outside. Also, people involved at a local level are experts in their own day-to-day lives. This means for the support of change processes that it is not only a learning process locally, but that researchers or experts involved are also on an ongoing learning curve.