

Publication date: Available online 8 November 2014

Source:Futures

Author(s): Merritt Polk

Transdisciplinary research is often promoted as a mode of knowledge production that is effective in addressing and solving current sustainability challenges. This effectiveness stems from its closeness to practice-based/situated expertise and real-life problem contexts. This article presents and tests one approach within transdisciplinary research, which specifically focuses on increasing the participation of actors from outside of academic in knowledge production processes, called transdisciplinary (TD) co-production. The framework for TD co-production focused on five focal areas (inclusion, collaboration, integration, usability, and reflexivity) in three research phases (Formulate, Generate, Evaluate). This paper tests and evaluates the use of this framework in five research projects. The results discuss how the focal areas and research phases dealt with many crucial issues in transdisciplinary knowledge production. They stimulated a high level of stakeholder participation and commitment to the research processes, and promoted knowledge integration and reflexive learning across diverse sectors and disciplines. The approach, however, came up against a number of practical barriers stemming primarily from institutional, organizational and cognitive differences of the participating organizations. While TD co-production increased the usability of the results in terms of their relevance and accessibility, it paradoxically did not ensure their anchoring in respective institutional and political contexts where societal change occurs.

[Read Full Article](#)