

# The Historical dimension of social and research processes and the issue of transdisciplinarity in sustainability and well-being indicators

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## Abstract

The communication is about the challenges of sustainability principle and transdisciplinarity in terms of integrating communities and diversity into our epistemological systems on which the indicators we use are based. Sustainability and transdisciplinarity are taken here as strong radical in meaning and not diluted as it happens too often in discussion of convenience.

Accordingly, the present contribution is mostly methodological (even if some theoretical and ontological discussions are necessary). It is a reflection on how to use transdisciplinarity for sustainability and for its indicators, including those fundamentally related to the issue of well-being.

Additionally, the proposal integrates the questions on why, how and what to produce in our economic-technological-social-eco systems with such theoretical framework as the circular economy and the model of the doughnut

In this contribution the interdisciplinarity focuses on the problem of time or history when integrating the knowledge bases of different disciplines (and researchers) and a variegated array of practitioners.

The building blocks are constituted by institutions, culture, transdisciplinarity, and communitarian well-being.

First, institutions as systems of rules are considered as the feature of social systems that relates individuals, groups, and society. They regulate social interactions.

Second, the cultural dimension is often neglected on two counts: first in mainstream social sciences such as economics, statistics, engineering, physics, and the like; second, it is neglected especially for groups such as marginalized and indigenous communities or individuals. Beyond the traditional understanding of anthropology and sociology, the cultural dimension has to do with questions of value, worldview, ingrained attitudes, meaning and purpose in life and groups and communities.

Third, transdisciplinarity is not just a combination of disciplines or disciplinary knowledge. It implies two critical levels. On the one hand, it requires a change in methods and theories beyond the traditional bounds of disciplines. On the other hand, it necessitates the use of different methods (e.g., mixed methods) for undertaking more thoroughly the issues at hand.

There is a third aspect of transdisciplinarity is the composition of different social spaces and cultures. A fourth aspect is the time dimension of transdisciplinarity, because of the evolution of the relations

between disciplines, methods, theories, and ontologies. To clarify the methodology, it is important to insist that the research is based on the integration of various indicators in rural and urban areas, contrasting the information available. Additionally, the context of social and economic actors is reinterpreted, following some indigenous methodologies to grasp the different and complex world views of people of different cultures living in different places. This approach is based on research experience in Africa, Latin America, and Europe.

Fourth, wellbeing is characterized by its general meaning and its relation not just to individuals but also to groups and communities. The definition of wellbeing must be interpreted by the communities and not just experts and central authorities.

Finally, there is the problem of the context of research in which interdisciplinary endeavors are inserted. In this regard, we consider the historical dimension through social history, life stories and trajectories. In other words, the process view of social reality is a research tool to look at phenomena and discuss quantitative and qualitative indicators.