

**Encountering transdisciplinarity as knowledge regime:
On the possibilities and limits of socialising early stage researchers into hybrid
knowledge contexts**

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Changing forms of university-society relationship

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Over recent years numerous analyses have pointed at changing modes of knowledge production. All of them draw our attention to the need of rendering classical disciplinary boundaries less rigid and of becoming more responsive to societal concerns, thus including broader spectrums of knowledge and experiences in the problem formulation and search for solutions. This collaboration between different knowledge agents – from science and civil society – is often captured by the notion of „transdisciplinarity“.

Yet while most statements about this change in knowledge production remain normative/descriptive, we know little about the practices of such hybrid knowledge producing enterprises and about the challenges this poses to researchers in particular in university environments. In this contribution we address this lacuna and in particular look at what it means for early stage researchers. Concretely we investigate a cohort of PhD candidates of a doctoral programme in an Austrian university expected to work on sustainability issues from a transdisciplinary perspective.

Two concepts will be central for our analysis. First, the concept of *epistemic living spaces*, which draws the attention to the complex ways in which researchers conceptualise their room for manoeuvre – epistemologically, institutionally and socially. Second, we introduce the notion of *transdisciplinary knowledge regimes*. This notion attracts attention to people involved and their guiding myths and ideologies both about knowledge and its production. It alerts us to the prescriptive sides of knowledge production, i.e., to what combinations of knowledge forms and ways or collaborations are expected. Finally, we look at contestation of this form of knowledge politics in particular in university contexts.

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