

## CRA Oceans workshop: Meeting the Challenges of Transdisciplinary Sustainability Research

The CRA Oceans Program coordination recently organized a workshop on Meeting the Challenges of Transdisciplinary Sustainability Research. We were fortunate to have Esther Turnhout and Josie Chambers (both well credentialed cutting-edge sustainability transdisciplinary scholars) as workshop designers and facilitators. A key focus of the workshop was to engage in reflective discussion around the different archetypal roles we adopt in conducting transdisciplinarity research and how these roles have implications for power relations, researcher control and inclusivity of research participants, as well as – ultimately – research outcomes and impact. The roles adopted by researchers that were discussed included: ‘woodpecker’ (focusing critical perspectives); ‘hero’ (predeterminer of problem and solutions); ‘host’ (creator of participative space for others); ‘genie’ (‘on tap’ academic advocate – can be with different societal partners) (See Chambers et al. 2022). It was observed that we tend (and need) to move among these roles through different stages of transdisciplinary research practice and as we do, there will be implications for the collaborative knowledge/action dynamics (between academic and societal partners).

A key reflection was that there are dangers if these archetypal roles are adopted too rigidly. For example, researching with marginalized actors may entail decentering unreflective forms of scientific knowledge to include local and indigenous knowledges, but attention also needs to be paid to cultivating trusting relations with powerholders (e.g., institutional actors) whose engagement and cooperation may be required to support change. Also, predetermining what the research problem is to be solved and its solution is likely to reduce the participative space for others. We also discussed that there are vastly different views among researchers and societal actors about what sustainability transformations might mean and imply, as well as, how they might come about. Therefore, it was stressed that it was important to unpack and make transparent such assumptions in project contexts.

A heartfelt thank you to Ester and Josie for making themselves available for this workshop and sharing their considerable expertise and insights with us.

The Video Clip of the Workshop is available on the following link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bm4pmXZn-U>

Important Documents:

- [Transdisciplinarity in Ocean Research](#)
- [Transdisciplinarity in Ocean Research](#)
- [Six modes of co-production for sustainability](#)

CRA Oceans Coordination Team

