

# Charter of Transdisciplinarity

(adopted at the First World Congress of Transdisciplinarity, Convento da Arrábida,

Portugal, November 2-6, 1994)

## Preamble

Whereas, the present proliferation of academic and non-academic disciplines is leading to an exponential increase of knowledge which makes a global view of the human being impossible;

Whereas, only a form of intelligence capable of grasping the cosmic dimension of the present conflicts is able to confront the complexity of our world and the present challenge of the spiritual and material self-destruction of the human species;

Whereas, life on earth is seriously threatened by the triumph of a techno-science that obeys only the terrible logic of productivity for productivity's sake;

Whereas, the present rupture between increasingly quantitative knowledge and increasingly impoverished inner identity is leading to the rise of a new brand of obscurantism with incalculable social and personal consequences;

Whereas, an historically unprecedented growth of knowledge is increasing the inequality between those who have and those who do not, thus engendering increasing inequality within and between the different nations of our planet;

Whereas, at the same time, hope is the counterpart of all the afore-mentioned challenges, a hope that this extraordinary development of knowledge could eventually lead to an evolution not unlike the development of primates into human beings;

Therefore, in consideration of all the above, the participants of the First World Congress of Transdisciplinarity (Convento da Arrábida, Portugal, November 2-7, 1994) have adopted the present Charter, which comprises the fundamental principles of the community of transdisciplinary researchers, and constitutes a personal moral commitment, without any legal or institutional constraint, on the part of everyone who signs this *Charter*.

## Article 1 :

Any attempt to reduce the human being by formally defining what a human being is and subjecting the human being to reductive analyses within a framework of formal structures, no matter what they are, is incompatible with the transdisciplinary vision.

## Article 2 :

The recognition of the existence of different levels of reality governed by different types of logic is inherent in the transdisciplinary attitude. Any attempt to reduce reality to a single level governed by a single form of logic does not lie within the scope of transdisciplinarity.

## Article 3 :

Transdisciplinarity complements disciplinary approaches. It occasions the emergence of new data and new interactions from out of the encounter between disciplines. It offers us a new vision of nature and reality. Transdisciplinarity does not strive for mastery of several disciplines but aims to open all disciplines to that which they share and to that which lies beyond them.

## Article 4 :

The keystone of transdisciplinarity is the semantic and practical unification of the meanings that *traverse* and *lay beyond* different disciplines. It presupposes an open-minded rationality by re-examining the concepts of "definition" and "objectivity." An excess of formalism, rigidity of definitions and a claim to total objectivity, entailing the exclusion of the subject, can only have a life-negating effect.

**Article 5 :**

The transdisciplinary vision is resolutely open insofar as it goes beyond the field of the exact sciences and demands their dialogue and their reconciliation with the humanities and the social sciences, as well as with art, literature, poetry and spiritual experience.

**Article 6 :**

In comparison with interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary, transdisciplinarity is multireferential and multidimensional. While taking account of the various approaches to time and history, transdisciplinarity does not exclude a transhistorical horizon.

**Article 7 :**

Transdisciplinarity constitutes neither a new religion, nor a new philosophy, nor a new metaphysics, nor a science of sciences.

**Article 8 :**

The dignity of the human being is of both planetary and cosmic dimensions. The appearance of human beings on Earth is one of the stages in the history of the Universe. The recognition of the Earth as our home is one of the imperatives of transdisciplinarity. Every human being is entitled to a nationality, but as an inhabitant of the Earth is also a transnational being. The acknowledgement by international law of this twofold belonging, to a nation and to the Earth, is one of the goals of transdisciplinary research.

**Article 9 :**

Transdisciplinarity leads to an open attitude towards myths and religions, and also towards those who respect them in a transdisciplinary spirit.

**Article 10 :**

No single culture is privileged over any other culture. The transdisciplinary approach is inherently transcultural.

**Article 11 :**

Authentic education cannot value abstraction over other forms of knowledge. It must teach contextual, concrete and global approaches. Transdisciplinary education revalues the role of intuition, imagination, sensibility and the body in the transmission of knowledge.

**Article 12 :**

The development of a transdisciplinary economy is based on the postulate that the economy must serve the human being and not the reverse.

**Article 13 :**

The transdisciplinary ethic rejects any attitude that refuses dialogue and discussion, regardless of whether the origin of this attitude is ideological, scientific, religious, economic, political or philosophical. Shared knowledge should lead to a shared understanding based on an absolute *respect* for the collective and individual Otherness united by our common life on one and the same Earth.

**Article 14 :**

*Rigor*, *openness*, and *tolerance* are the fundamental characteristics of the transdisciplinary attitude and vision. *Rigor* in argument, taking into account all existing data, is the best defense against possible distortions. *Openness* involves an acceptance of the unknown, the unexpected and the unforeseeable. *Tolerance* implies acknowledging the right to ideas and truths opposed to our own.

**Article final :**

The present *Charter of Transdisciplinarity* was adopted by the participants of the first World Congress of Transdisciplinarity, with no claim to any authority other than that of their own work and activity.

In accordance with procedures to be agreed upon by transdisciplinary-minded persons of all countries, this *Charter* is open to the signature of anyone who is interested in promoting progressive national, international and transnational measures to ensure the application of these Articles in everyday life.

**Convento da Arrábida, 6th November 1994**, *Editorial Committee*, Lima de Freitas, Edgar Morin and Basarab Nicolescu, International Center for Transdisciplinary Research. <http://perso.club-internet.fr/nicol/ciret/> - last modified January 24, 2002

