

The offerings and challenges of transdisciplinarity for evaluation

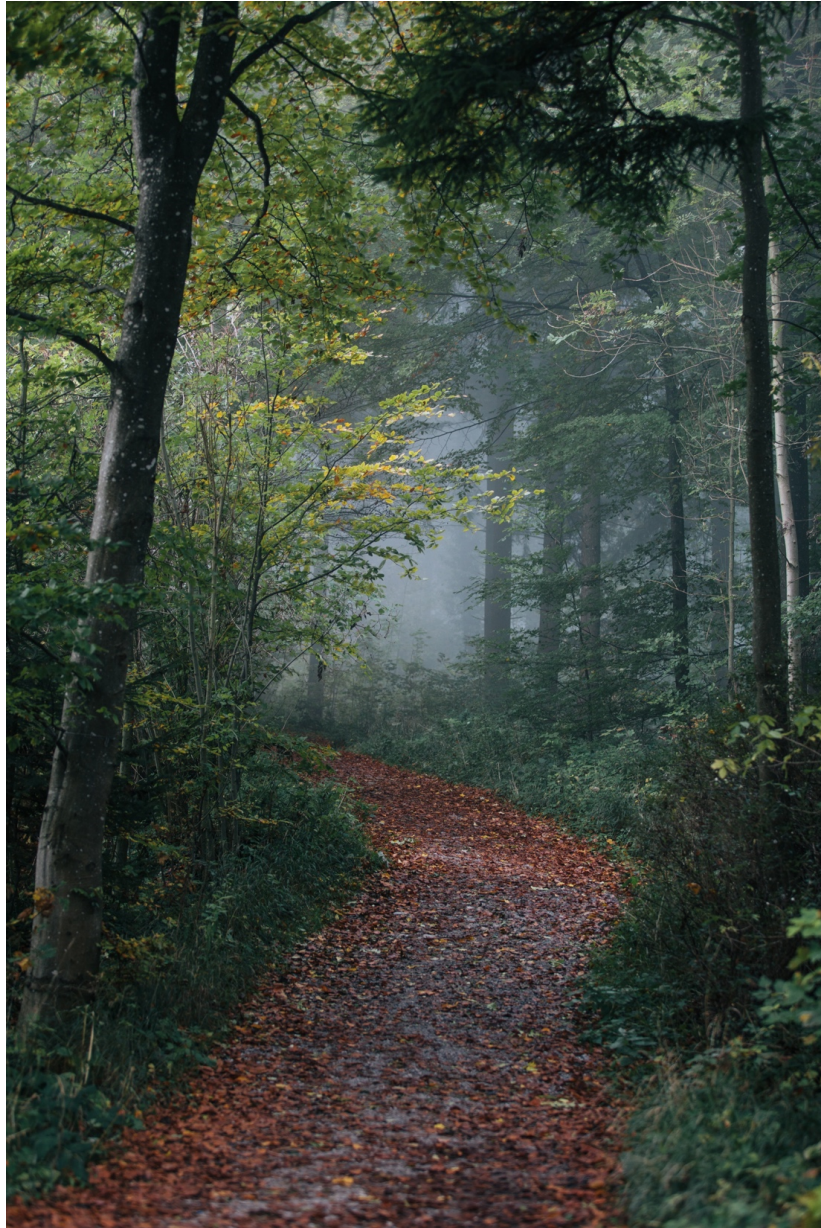


Dr Keren Winterford

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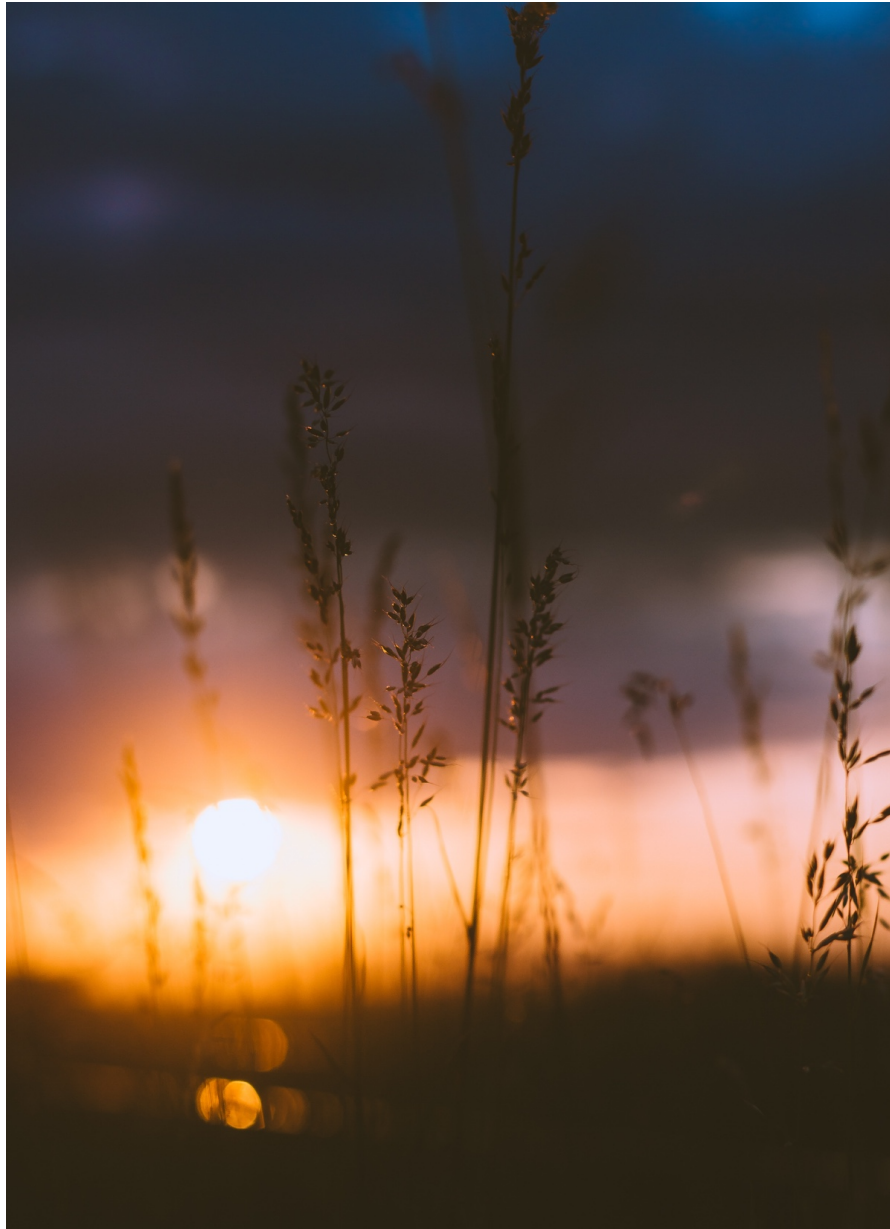


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Why this topic? Why me?

- *Creating change towards sustainable futures*
...the mission of the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology (ISF-UTS)
- Transdisciplinary research and practice
- I live and work in the real world – applied research and practice
- Evaluation is core to my practice



What is transdisciplinarity?

- It is not...

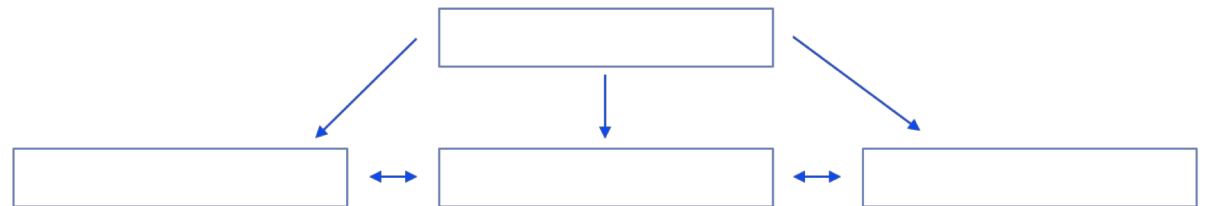
Disciplinarity



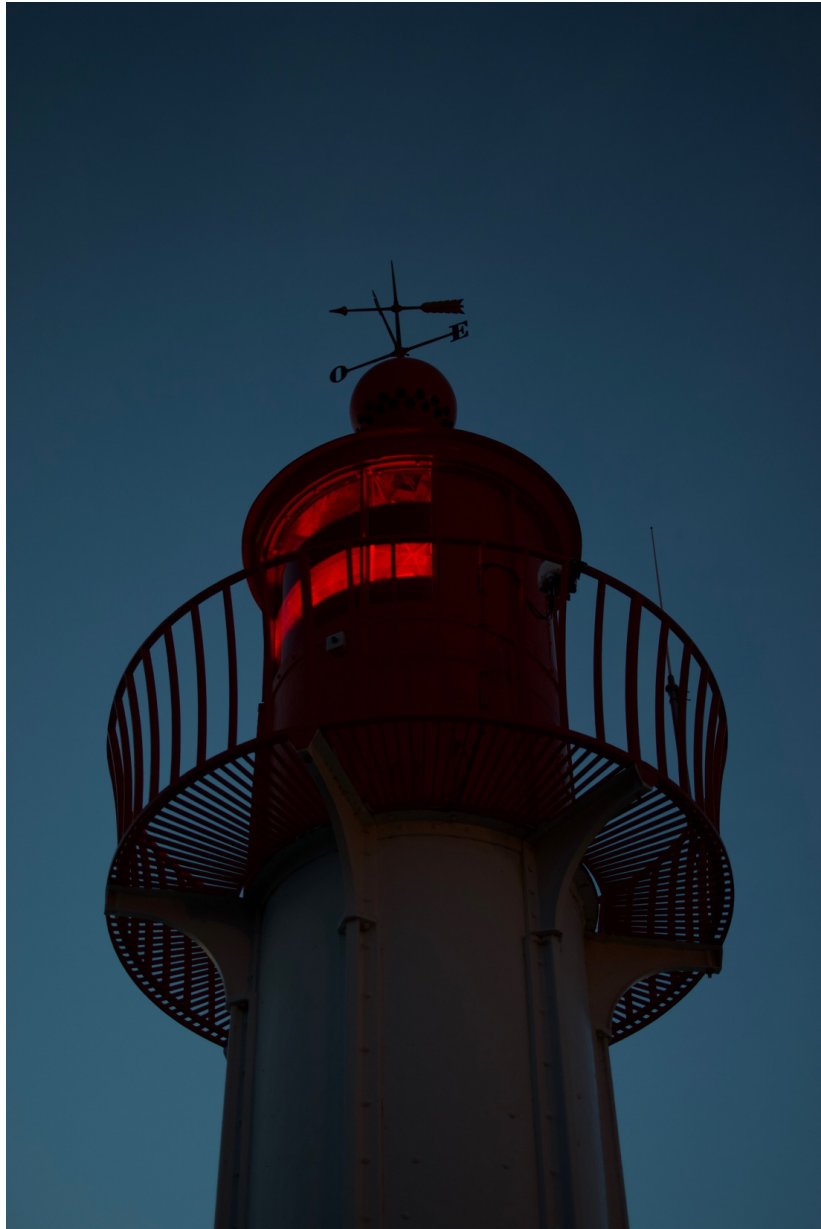
Multidisciplinarity



Interdisciplinarity



(Adapted from Max-Neef (2005))

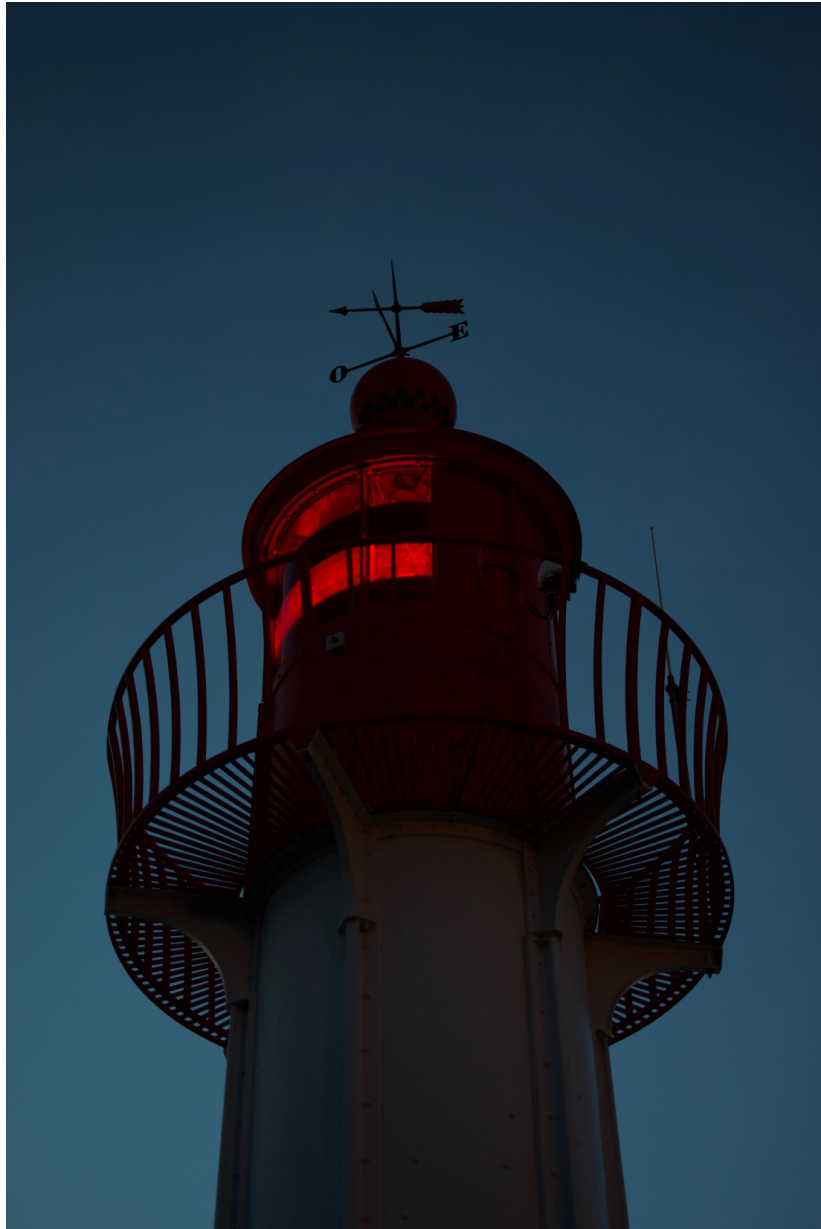


What is transdisciplinarity (TD)?

TD transcends disciplinary fields to achieve **transformation** by aiming to:

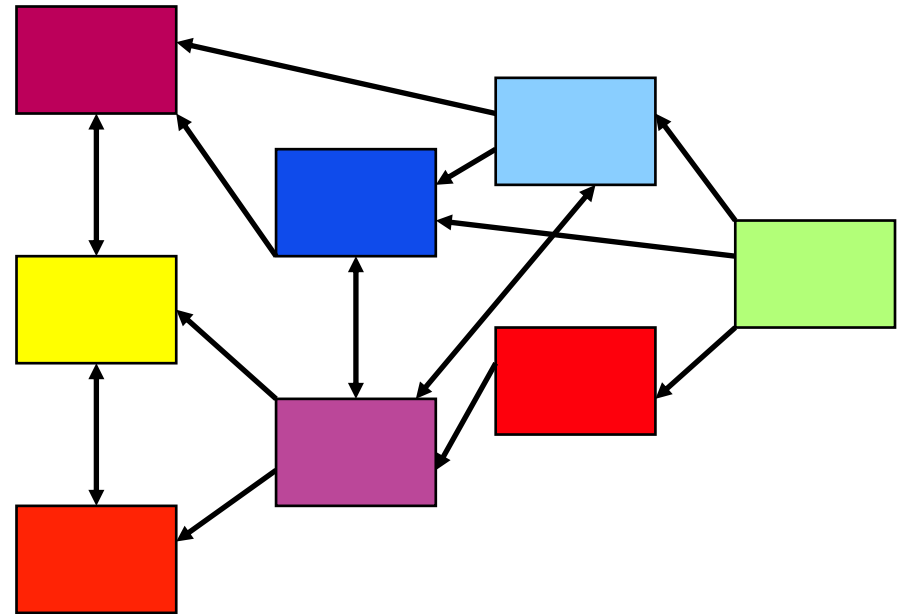
- Integrate epistemologies and knowledge perspectives
- Integrate theory and practice
= evolving methodologies
- Integrate the researcher as a key partner/collaborator

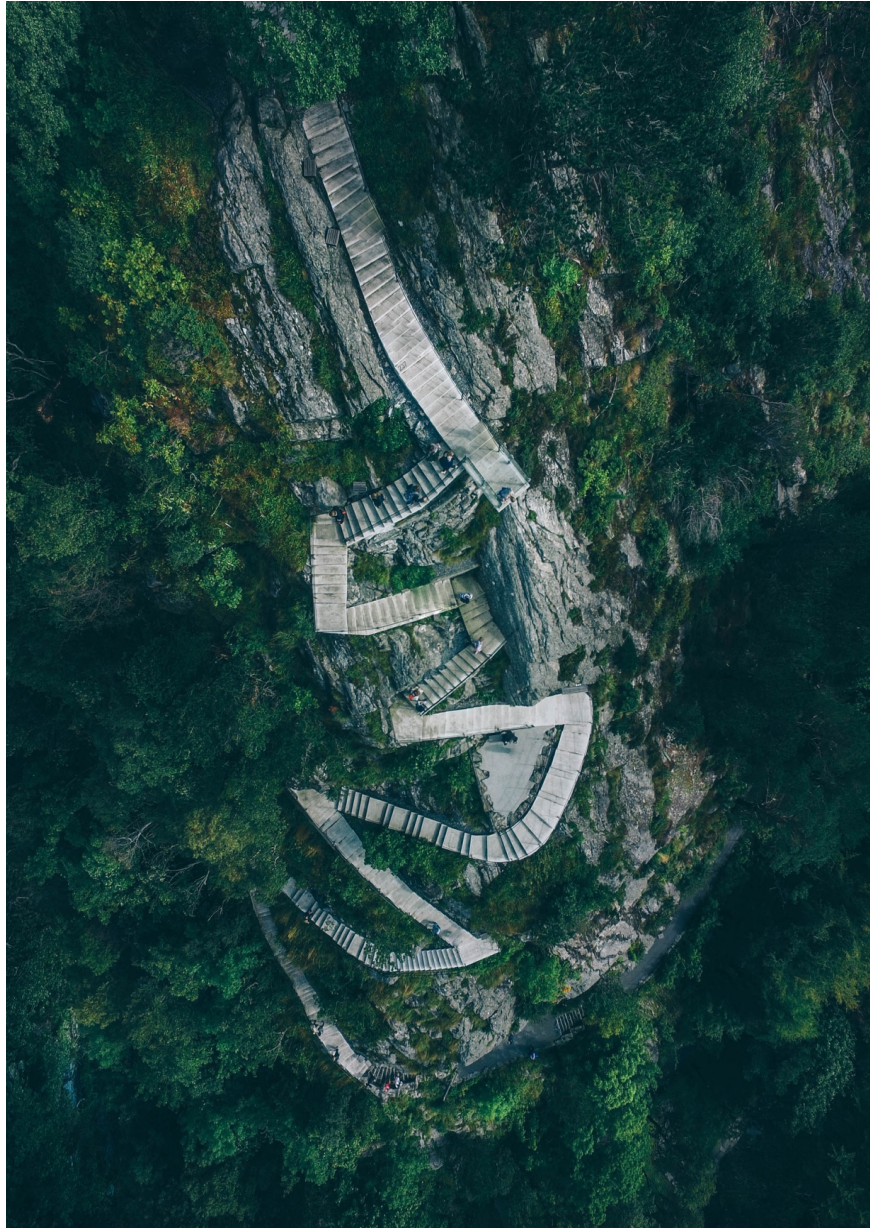
New knowledge (theory and practice) is created by engaging in the complexity of real world situations with a range of relevant and diverse partners



What is transdisciplinarity (TD)?

TD





Why transdisciplinarity (TD)?

It is way...

- of bringing more perspectives on big, intractable problems
 - ✓ See more of the picture at once
 - ✓ Collaborate and cooperate to integrate different knowledge sources
- to orient the research towards impact through engagement with the specific context and testing of specific solutions
 - ✓ To make informed decisions
- to increase the ownership, accountability and legitimacy of the research and its proposed solutions
- To complement disciplinary research – which provides essential knowledge, methods and tools

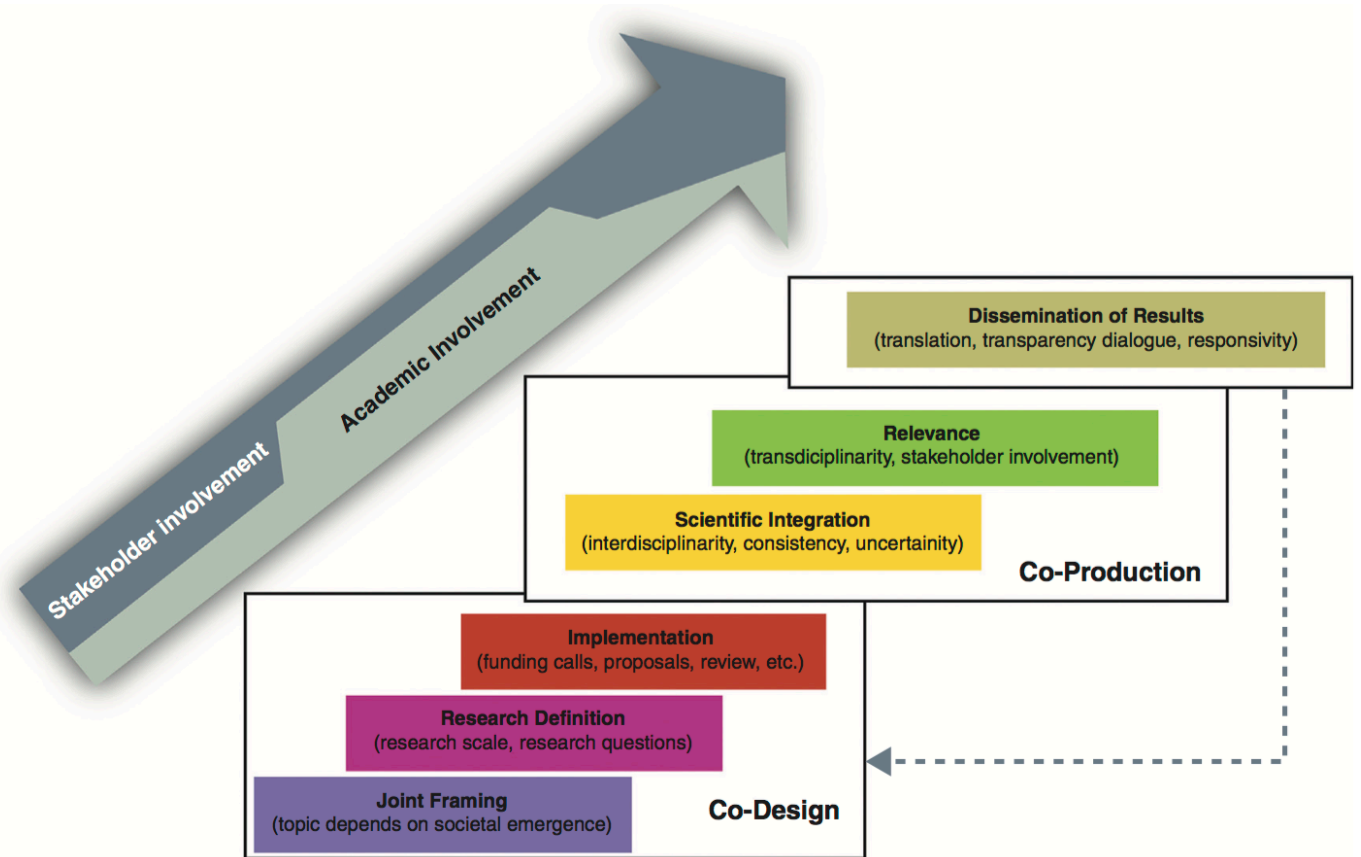


The offerings and challenges of TD for evaluation

1. Recognise and respond to complexity, in order to contribute to, create change
2. Engagement, integration and creation of knowledge
3. Collaboration with a range of relevant partners
?? what does this mean to the 'independent evaluator'
✓ Developmental evaluation...
4. Reflexivity



How to do it?



Mauser et al. (2013)

Co-design – who needs to be in the room?

- What disciplinary perspectives are relevant program/project?
- What stakeholder groups are involved in the program/project?
- Are there any strategic or political considerations about who to involve?

For evaluation:

- Who decides the Evaluation Terms of Reference ??
- Who confirms the Evaluation Plan ??
- ✓ Multi-stakeholder Evaluation Advisory Groups



Co-production – how will you work together?

- What practices and activities will you use to bring participants together?
- How will you integrate knowledge from different perspectives?
- How will you overcome power and hierarchy differences?

For evaluation:

- Who is engaged in information sharing and making sense?
 - How does the evaluation practice evolve through the learning about the situation?
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- ✓ Participatory sense-making workshops (i.e. participatory outcome mapping)
 - ✓ Future focused
 - ✓ Iterative cycles of learning



Co-dissemination – who are the audiences?

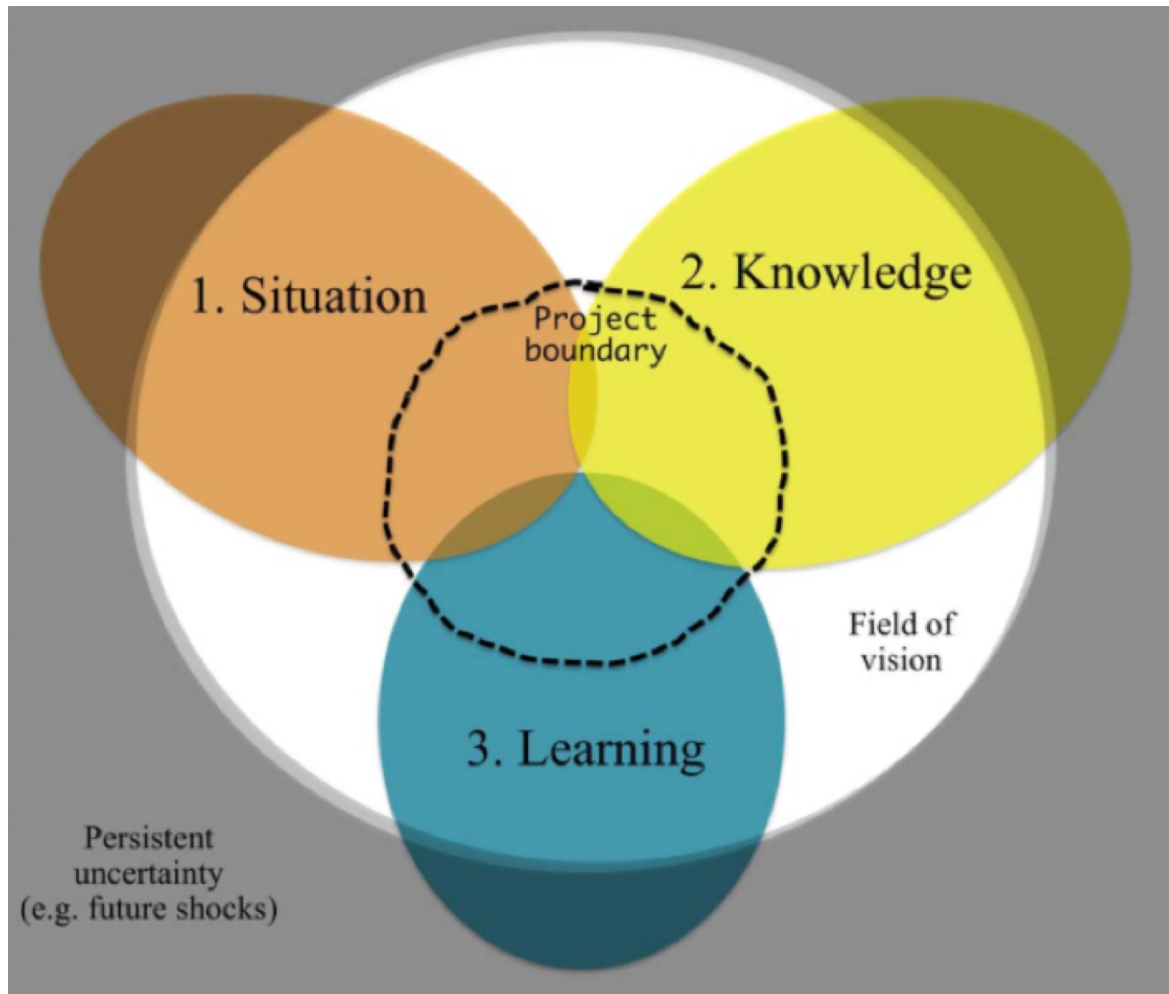
- Who do you need to reach for your evaluation to have impact?
- How will you reach them? Who will do it? What channels will you use?
- What do you want them to do?

For evaluation:

- What is the collective practice of all stakeholders involved – not just evaluators
 - What is the contribution of new knowledge?
- ✓ Consider multiple spaces and multiple actors to influence change beyond the program/project boundary



The TD outcome spaces framework



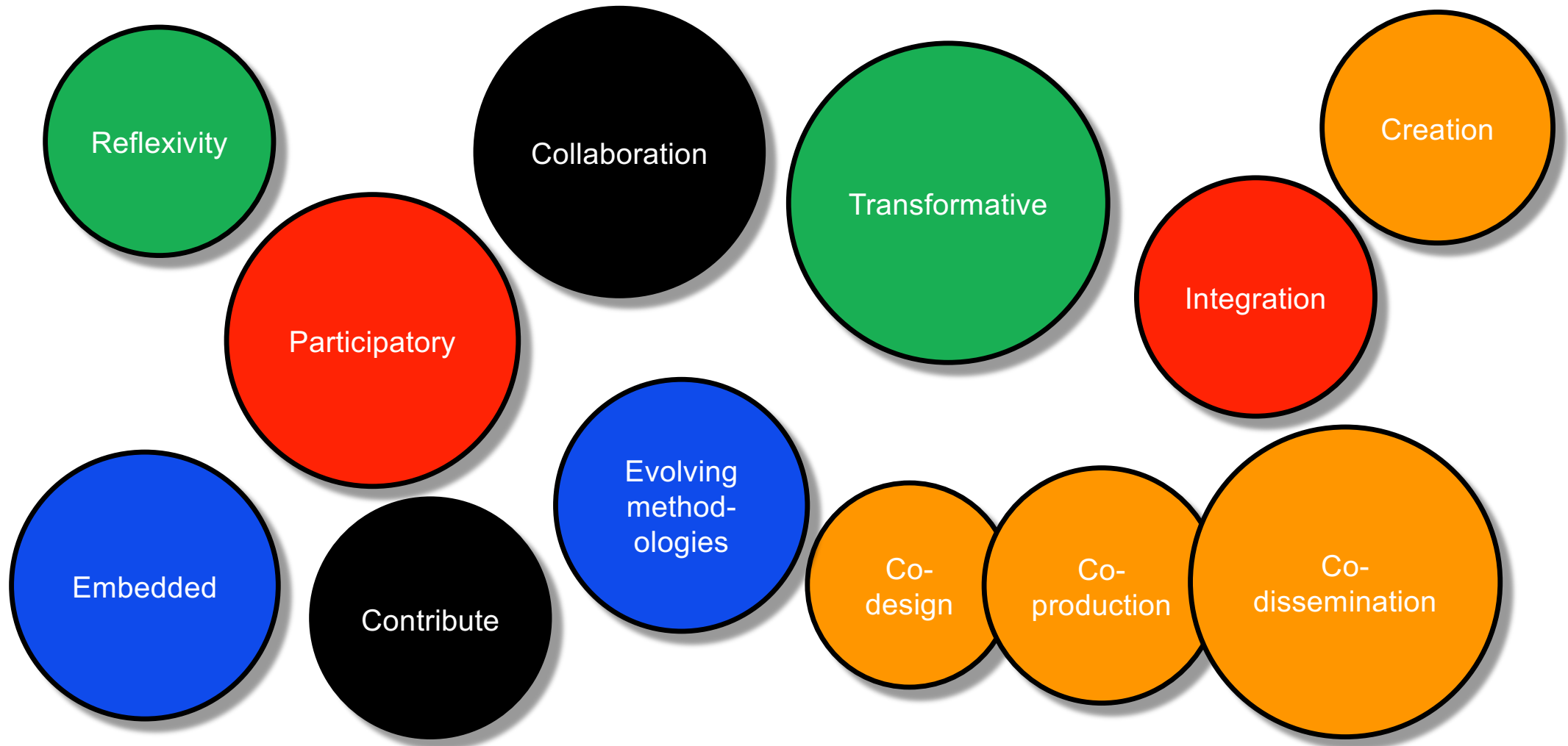
Mitchell, Cordell and Fam (2016)

PREFERRED TD OUTCOMES

1. An improvement within the '**situation**' or field of inquiry
2. The generation of relevant **stocks and flows of knowledge**, including scholarly knowledge and other societal knowledge forms, and making those insights accessible and meaningful to researchers, participants and beneficiaries
3. Mutual and **transformational learning** by researchers and research participants to increase the likelihood of persistent change



Language of evaluation informed by transdisciplinarity



Thanks!

keren.winterford@uts.edu.au

<https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/institute-sustainable-futures>

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