



Voices of the Community - a Collection of Statements on Implementation

The statements were collected in the context of the 3rd td-conference „Implementation in Inter- and Transdisciplinary Research, Practice and Teaching“ and appear in no particular order.

From an Inter- and Transdisciplinarity perspective, we define the multidimensional concept of “implementation” as a dynamic process of embedding research results in the life-world. We consider implementation in action as a co-productive, non-linear, non-hierarchical and reverse process of translation, which involves a new integration of theories, methods and practices of teaching and research across and beyond scientific disciplines and paradigms in order to describe, analyze and understand the complexity of theoretical and practical questions in various fields. This dynamic process finds its full expression across a new dialogue between academic and non-academic networks and actors so as to identify complex problems, develop research questions and elaborate solutions in everyday practices and concrete situations.

Frédéric Darbellay
Institut Universitaire Kurt Bösch, Sion

The word implementation has multiple meanings in German: “praktische Anwendung”, “Umsetzung”, “Einführung” are just a few of them. In our work on health of humans and animals we aim at effective large scale application of interventions for which we have evidence for their efficacy. Specifically, some disease can only be controlled if a large proportion of individuals are vaccinated or treated. Hence implementation means the application or use of an intervention by a large fraction of the population, across gender and social classes, making such an intervention “equity effective”. Outcomes to measure the effect of implementation are for example a declining incidence of a particular disease, but also a permanent adoption of a particular preventive behaviour. In our experience, implementation, requires a transdisciplinary process involving communities and authorities to negotiate a best possible contextual adaptation.

Jakob Zinsstag
Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Basel

Transdisciplinary research tries to link problems of society with the scientific knowledge, a concern that necessarily leads to the question of implementation. In the context of Intervention Research we don't understand implementation in a technical way, in the sense that scientific results could directly be transferred into action by practice partners, but as a process of different steps in our problem-oriented work. Our interdisciplinary teams invite people concerned to participate in the research process (implementation of a mixed community). To discuss the generated hypotheses we build up a communication structure to create shared knowledge (implementation of structures). Finally we organize a process of decision making (but we don't participate in it) with the aim of reaching a conclusion within the social system concerned.

Larissa Krainer
Institut für Interventionsforschung und Kulturelle Nachhaltigkeit
Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt

Implementation means that research results are put to use. In my view it is central to understand implementation not as a linear process (first research, then implementation) but as the result of long-term research collaborations and reciprocal knowledge exchange between knowledge producers and users.

Christoph Küffer
Institute of Integrative Biology, ETH Zürich

Implementation is a joint process. Due to the complexity of problems, no single person can implement alone. During implementation processes learning loops can enrich the research results by adding context. Thus, implementation is not about transferring knowledge from research to practice but about mutual learning. Implementation is social learning. It has the character of real-world experiments for researchers – learning about the context of application. However, the governance of our research systems focuses primarily on the production of knowledge instead of its contextualization, application or societal relevance. Thus, engaging in implementation processes, pilot projects or putting this knowledge to test in societal practices are less attractive. (Also, implementation is not a game – it costs real money and concerns real world problems). Implementation is an experiment. It's in the nature of experiments that these can fail. So, allow yourself to fail – or die trying (and learn from it!).

Kirsten Hollaender
Programme Office Foundation Knowledge for Climate, Utrecht

In a context related to policy, I believe that „implementation“ is a complex, dynamic process which puts policy into effect. The process is part of a continuum that encompasses the design, execution, and evaluation of a course of action. It is affected by a variety of interrelated factors including power, decision-making, and capacity to act. The implementation process is influenced by the action and/or inaction of the ideas, interests, and institutions that may be affected by the proposed policy.

Ruth J. E. Jones
Canadian Academy of the Arts

It is a little funny that td-net chooses „implementation of transdisciplinary research“ as conference title and not „implementation by transdisciplinary processes“. For me, and I guess for most researchers who have practical experience in transdisciplinary research (and not only on the meta-level-debate), transdisciplinary processes are a means to overcome the old implementation- or outreach-problem. In transdisciplinary processes, implementation starts from the very beginning, as those, who are responsible for social and/or physical changes participate in capacity building by mutual learning among science and society from the first day of a transdisciplinary project.

Roland W. Scholz
Institute for Environmental Decisions IED, ETH Zürich

I am coming from a design background where problem solving of complex social, ecological or even political problems is increasingly becoming our job (not just making nice and functional things). Implementation within the context of transdisciplinarity for me means materialisation of an idea - will the end result be a model, system or experience. In the best case scenario it means fruitful synthesis of often multiple theories and practices.

Zane Berzina
Textile and Surface Design Department, Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weissensee

Implementing research hypotheses is – besides e.g. coherence (i.e. freedom from contradictory claims) – the most important way of validating them. Implementation under stated conditions allows to make reasonable claims in terms of predictability. In turn, successful implementation, i.e. fulfilment of previously agreed upon expectations is a gate-opener of transdisciplinary co-operation, implementation being the ground on which otherwise divergent interests may meet. It contributes to create trust and therefore stimulate interest in research. Implementation is not synonymous with success. A common focus on implementation allows for failure to be transformed into a learning experience.

Thomas Bearth
University of Zurich