

Peerage and Judgment

How transdisciplinary collaborations recognize contributions without a consensus of meaning

Jakob Lundgren

Department of Philosophy, Linguistics and Theory of science

Academic dissertation in theory of science, to be publicly defended, by due permission of the dean of the Faculty of Arts at University of Gothenburg, on January 13, 2023, at 1 p.m., Lecture Hall J222, Humanisten, Renströmsgatan 6, Göteborg. Opponent: Professor Edward Hackett, Institute of Sustainability and Innovation, Arizona State University.

Abstract

Title: *Peerage and Judgment. How transdisciplinary collaborations recognize contributions without a consensus of meaning*

Author: Jakob Lundgren

Language: English, with a Swedish summary

Department: Department of Philosophy, Linguistics and Theory of science, University of Gothenburg, Box 200, S E - 4 05 30 Göteborg

ISBN 978-91-8069-081-2 (print)

ISBN 978-91-8069-082-9 (digital)

Keywords: Transdisciplinarity; Epistemic peerage; Judgment of scientific quality; Boundary work; Boundary-crossing in science; Peer-review

This thesis concerns judgments of quality and belonging in transdisciplinary research (TD). TD includes academics from various disciplines and is open to participation from non-academics. It typically aims to address societal problems and is argued to produce knowledge that is more nuanced than traditional disciplinary research due to the plurality of perspectives included. The focus of this thesis is on the dynamics underlying judgments made by TD collaborations where members recognize each other as epistemic peers despite different conceptions of what it means for science to be good.

To investigate these dynamics, I adopt a middle perspective that connects theoretical and empirical investigations. This middle-level theory illuminates two issues surrounding epistemic peerage in TD. The first issue concerns the coordination of the demarcation of a TD collaboration and the collaboration across boundaries within the collaboration. Boundaries are drawn towards an outside of non-peers while the peers within the collaboration maintain a multiplicity of understandings. Central is that those within the collaboration cannot have world-views that are so different as to prevent them from recognizing each other as peers, while also not so similar that there can be no substantial exchanges across borders. I show how the investigated cases use hub-and-spoke concepts to coordinate demarcation and collaboration.

The second issue concerns which issues are kept open and closed for discussion within a TD collaboration. The aims of TD of production of nuanced knowledge with societal relevance and inclusive practices require an openness to discuss matters that would in other circumstances be considered closed facts. At the same time a certain amount of closedness is required to stabilize the collaboration. The cases in this thesis show how the question of which issues are kept open and closed is affected by the institutional environment of TD collaborations.