

Beyond Borders

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Borders create boundaries imposed by geographical features, such as oceans or terrain, or by political entities, such as governments. Borders are also linguistic or cultural and delimit one entity from another. Julie Thompson Klein did not recognize borders; rather, she recognized many boundaries, especially in academia, and worked toward expanding collaborations, borrowing among disciplines, and encouraging cross-fertilization between perspectives and worldviews, among numerous other ways of embracing interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work. Julie received national and international recognition for her work, which included mapping what she called “interdisciplinary campus cultures.” Her contribution to the scientific community crosscut many disciplines and diverse fields of knowledge, from the digital humanities to the sustainability sciences. Her contributions in the form of her seminal work at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) workshop in 1972 impacted teaching, research, and policy.

In her latest book, *Beyond Interdisciplinarity: Boundary Work, Collaboration and Communication* (Klein, 2021a), Julie displays her in-depth understanding of the meaning of borders in inter- and transdisciplinary research and teaching, advocating for heterogeneity to re-signify the collaboration among various sectors. Her book examines inter- and transdisciplinary boundary work across sectors of the academy, government, industry, and communities in the Global North and Global South, providing examples from a worldwide perspective. Julie was able to understand the complexities of the field in different settings and to build on these for a wide audience of scholars, educators, students, and administrators, as well as members of professional organizations, policy bodies, and funding agencies.

The last project Julie and I worked on involved coediting the book *Institutionalizing Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity: Collaboration Across Cultures and Communities* (Vienni-Baptista & Klein, 2022). Like many challenging projects, the book was the outcome of a shared process of reflection, discussion, and elaboration with Julie. We envisioned it several years ago when we started exchanging ideas regarding our common interests. I still recall the moment I decided to approach Julie at an International Conference of Transdisciplinarity in Basel to ask whether she could spare a few minutes to listen to my thoughts. She immediately encouraged me, and we began rethinking what institutionalizing processes imply and how to foster them. After that

first conversation and some shared publications and conferences, we began designing the volume.

From early on, we selected and invited authors from around the world to write cases on interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary institutionalizing processes. The task involved supporting the authors' participation in cross-case comparisons and analyzing their cases using a set of guiding questions. Julie embraced the idea of having representatives from all over the world, and we worked hard to achieve this goal. We reunited fifteen cases and then conducted a comparative analysis with Professor Danilo Streck (University of Caxias do Sul, Brazil) to design a heuristic framework for administrators and researchers seeking to institutionalize interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research and teaching in higher education. The project involved almost four years of intensive work and countless exchanges. To learn from the case comparisons, Julie crossed cultural and linguistic boundaries while guiding the process with patience and kindness. In fact, Julie crossed all boundaries. She pursued the most complete account of cases that would give voice to silent scholars or practitioners whose work was not always taken into consideration in the Global South and North. When the book was published, thanks to Julie's commitment, we created a community of practice that was interested in the topic of the institutionalization of inter- and transdisciplinarity with colleagues who had been involved with the book.

Julie also contributed extensively to consolidating many communities, among which we count the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS); the Science of Team Science (INSciTS); the transdisciplinary community in Switzerland (td-net); and, more recently, the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinary Research and Education (ITD Alliance). Julie thrived at enlarging and consolidating the community and was an active advocate for crossing national and international borders in seeking a more plural understanding of inter- and transdisciplinary research and teaching. Julie was an associate scholar at the Transdisciplinarity Lab (ETH Zürich) and a founder and editor-in-chief of the *Global Social Challenges Journal* (Bristol University Press). As part of her work for the journal, Julie promoted and helped gather a diverse group of editors who honored her pursuit of giving voice to the silent, especially those coming from marginalized contexts. She also contributed to cross-sectoral interdisciplinarity by offering advice and capacity-building workshops in many Latin American countries.

This brief recollection shows that informal conversations and academic generosity are forces that can make a difference when striving for change. Over the years, Julie accompanied me and other junior scholars as we moved beyond boundaries and explored interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary initiatives. This involved leaving our comfort zones as we strived to achieve a global understanding of differences and nuances of cross-disciplinary initiatives. Julie's hallmark was embodying collaborative boundary-crossing

efforts. She always found the inner epistemological connections of our work and tried to enlarge these intersections by highlighting their relevance to the inter- and transdisciplinary fields. Her many contributions to recent books and journals are pathways through which to navigate the field of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and teaching. These contributions' impact in diverse international contexts is an excellent example of how Julie crossed boundaries in many more ways than I can account for here.

Over the years that I had the privilege of working with Julie, I was honored to be her friend and mentee. Her generosity in working with scholars from all over the world not only demonstrates how to go beyond borders but also constitutes her legacy to the inter- and transdisciplinary communities.

Biographical Note

Bianca Vienni-Baptista, PhD, is Group Leader of “Cultural Studies of Science” (CSTS) and lecturer at the Transdisciplinarity Lab, in the Department of Environmental Systems Science (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Switzerland). She works in the field of anthropology of science within Science, Technology and Society Studies (STS), focusing in particular on the study of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge production processes. As a result, Bianca is interested in methods and tools as well as concepts and theories as means of achieving transformative and developmental change. Her research focuses on the specific conditions for inter- and transdisciplinary research and on the production and social use of knowledge in different countries, including the role of universities and other institutions. Her team also applies transdisciplinary methods and co-designs stakeholder engagement plans for sustainable innovations. She can be contacted at bianca.vienni@usys.ethz.ch. For more visit <https://csts.ethz.ch>.

References

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