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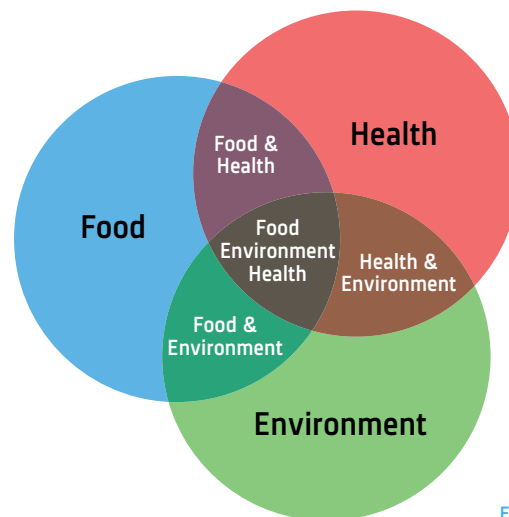
td-net toolbox
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Venn diagram tool

A diagram for forming groups around joint topics based on participants' background, expertise, and interest.

What is the venn diagram tool?	The venn diagram tool provides a structure to clarify each participant's expertise (e.g. background, interest, discipline) in relation to joint topics of interest. The tool consists of three or more circles indicating topics that overlap. Based on their expertise and interests, participants are allocated to a circle or to an overlap area. Applied to a heterogeneous group of people, this tool serves to: 1) Show the diversity and distribution of participants' expertise; 2) Cluster participants around joint topics.
Why should it be applied?	Co-production of knowledge brings together a variety of participants with individual backgrounds, interests and expertise. The venn diagram tool makes participants aware of each other's expertise for and interest in joint topics. It allows participants to either self-organise into smaller groups, or moderators to form groups in a transparent process.
When should it be applied?	The venn diagram tool is suited for a first workshop of a joint project in order to get to know each other and to identify topics for knowledge co-production.
How does it work?	1) The moderator clarifies with the participants or the leaders of the project what topics should be integrated (e.g. food, health and the environment). 2) The moderator prepares the venn diagram. 3) The moderator explains the venn diagram to the participants, e.g. in a meeting or at the beginning of a workshop, before the participants are ready to break out into groups. It can be printed out or drawn on a large piece of paper, or one can project the image on the screen. It is important to keep in mind how the participants' inputs can be integrated into the image (during the meeting or workshop) when deciding which medium to use. 4) Supported by the moderator, the participants one by one place themselves within the venn diagram, using either an image or post-it representing each of them. Each participant shortly presents his/her background and explains in what area of the venn diagram (s)he is interested and why. 5) After everyone has been placed, the moderator asks the participants in view of the venn diagram to suggest joint topics and groups for knowledge co-production. If heterogeneity of teams (e.g. in terms of gender, race, seniority, discipline) is required or other composition criteria apply, participants are asked to suggest respective changes. This clustering can be done by moving the images or post-its around, or by marking directly onto the venn diagram.

How are thought styles bridged?	The venn diagram tool requires the moderator and the participants to explicitly acknowledge the different thought styles that are present as they place themselves within a "landscape" of topics and explain what expertise they can contribute. The venn diagram further explicitly tries to find shared interest between participants by providing a physical space where overlap and commonalities become visible.
What's the output/outcome?	A main outcome is a set of joint topics and groups of participants that are interested to further frame the topics for co-production of knowledge. A secondary outcome is that people are more aware of the different backgrounds, interest and expertise in the room, where they are relative to them and where overlaps are possible.
Who participates in what role?	It is helpful to appoint a moderator to support the process. The participants are, however, key in representing themselves on the venn diagram.
What do I need to prepare?	Post-its, large printout of venn diagram, markers; Or laptop and projector.
When not to use the method?	The venn diagram tool is suitable for medium sized groups (10-30 participants) and not for smaller or larger ones.
Where can I learn more?	There is no publication on the venn diagram tool as a method so far. Check the online profile on www.transdisciplinarity.ch/toolbox for updated resources (e.g. most recent publications, experience reports, videos, links).

SDGs: The International Sustainable Development Goals of the UN

In this publication, the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences make most notably a contribution to SDGs 4, 16, 17:

> sustainabledevelopment.un.org
> eda.admin.ch/agenda2030/en/home/agenda-2030/die-17-ziele-fuer-eine-nachhaltige-entwicklung.html

This publication is part of a series of tools and methods compiled in the td-net toolbox for co-producing knowledge. All profiles are identically structured and accessible online.