

# Five Reflective Questions for Integrative Leadership in Inter- and Transdisciplinary Contexts

*Lisa Deutsch & Sabine Hoffmann*

## What is the purpose?

Inter- and transdisciplinary (ITD) integration is a “multidimensional interactive process” (Pohl et al., 2021, p. 18) which entails several challenges. The five reflective questions can support leaders of ITD projects or programs in better understanding the challenges they experience in meetings or workshops, and in recognizing their own leadership strategies to address them (or not). By assigning explicit time for reflection and considering different integration dimensions, ITD leaders can strengthen their integrative leadership strategies to advance integration in future meetings or workshops.

## How does it work?

Start by writing down what is reflected upon (e.g. meeting, workshop, informal corridor conversation, phone call, etc.). Then go ahead by asking yourself the following questions and considering the dimensions of integration and integrative leadership on page two:

1. *What went well / what was difficult?*
2. *What could have caused X to go well / Y to be difficult?*
3. *What are your lessons learned regarding integration in general and your integrative leadership strategies in particular?*
4. *What does this mean for the next integrative steps in your project or program?*
5. *What are you still wondering about?*

## Recommendations for use

- Take about 20-30 min time and apply the questions ideally shortly after relevant formal or informal interactions (e.g. team meetings, workshops, etc.).
- Look at your notes from the last meeting, workshop etc. prior to the next meeting, workshop. This helps you to remember the lessons learned and to apply them in the next one.
- When co-leading integration, reflect first individually and then compare notes. This has proved to produce more and complementary insights.



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Source: Own elaboration based on Pohl et al. 2021

## Dimensions of integration

- **Cognitive dimension:** bridging different discipline-, field-, or organization-specific approaches/terminologies/logics, identifying synergies and interfaces between different disciplines, fields, organisations involved, ...
- **Social dimension:** creating a group identity, finding complementary team roles, socializing beyond meetings, adapting working routines, strengthening social-interactive competencies of team members, harmonizing differing expectations and needs of team members,...
- **Emotional dimension:** creating a positive and respectful atmosphere, treating each other with mutual appreciation, enjoying learning from each other,...

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Deutsch et al. 2021: Leading inter- and transdisciplinary research: Lessons from applying theories of change to a strategic research program



Pohl et al. 2021: Conceptualising transdisciplinary integration as a multidimensional interactive process

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