Transdisciplinary Consumerism

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Abstract

This paper suggests that ‘the future of consumerism’ can be re-envisioned with a transdisciplinary (TD) methodology; that is, *transdisciplinary consumerism*. To develop this new idea, the paper first discusses the concept of consumerism, drawing on Leslie Sklair’s innovative idea, the *culture-ideology of consumerism*. This term refers to the phenomenon of excessive, above-subsistence consumption that is perpetuated by corporations in order to ensure the continuance and dominance of capitalistic consumerism. Second, the idea of transdisciplinarity as conceived by Professor Dr. Basarab Nicolescu (Paris) is discussed. A *transdisciplinary methodology* offers fresh and innovative new notions of reality (ontology), logic and knowledge (epistemology). There are multiple levels of reality whose interface is mediated by a hidden third dynamic. People striving to solve the complex problems facing humanity employ inclusive logic and problem solve in the fertile space at the borders between divergent yet concerned entities. The knowledge they co-create to solve these problems is complex, emergent, cross-fertilized and embodied. Using the two concepts of a culture-ideology of consumerism and Nicolescuian trandisciplinarity, the paper concludes with inaugural thoughts on the character of transdisciplinary consumerism. This paper offers the idea of transdisciplinarity as a powerful approach for disrupting the hegemony of capitalistic consumerism, creating a space for the transformation of consumerism, leading to the emergence of transdisciplinary consumerism. The future of consumerism may well be the *culture-ideology of transdisciplinary consumerism*. 
“It is now almost commonplace to label contemporary society, east or west, north or south, rich or poor, ‘consumerist’” (Skilair, 1995, p. 504); that is, a consumer culture informed by the ideology of consumerism (discussed below). Sklair characterizes contemporary consumerism as “capitalistic consumerism” (p. 500). This conference partially concerns itself with “the future of consumerism.” This could mean ‘does it have a future’ or it could mean ‘can its character change in the future,’ away from capitalism. Pursuant to the latter, Kozinets and Handelman (2004) acknowledge the emergence of a radical consumer movement focused on fundamentally changing the current ideology and culture of consumerism. In that spirit, this paper suggests that ‘the future of consumerism’ can be re-envisioned with a transdisciplinary (TD) methodology; that is, transdisciplinary consumerism.

To develop this new idea, the paper first discusses the concept of consumerism, drawing on Sklair’s (1991, 1994) innovative concept of the culture-ideology of consumerism. Second, the idea of transdisciplinarity as conceived by Basarab Nicolescu is discussed followed, thirdly, with some inaugural thoughts on the character of transdisciplinary consumerism.

**Consumerism Ideology**

Consumerism is an ideology with an attendant belief system while consumption is marketplace behaviour informed by this ideology (McGregor, 2007, 2013). An ideology is a set of values and beliefs, often unquestioned, that is held by a social group (Ady, 2000), e.g., consumers. Ideologies function as prepackaged units of how to interpret the world, ideas that spread, often unchallenged (Jost, Ledgerwood, & Hardin, 2008). These ideas can affect people’s motivation and alter the course of their actions (West, 2011). Sklair (2010, p. 136) describes the ideology of consumerism as “a set of beliefs and values, integral but not exclusive to the system of capitalist globalization, intended to make people believe that human worth is best ensured and happiness is best achieved in terms of our consumption and possessions.”

Gabriel and Lang (1995) recognize that as an ideology, consumerism means different things to different people, in different contexts. First, consumerism is the essence of the good life and a vehicle for freedom, power and happiness. Consumers have the ability to choose and enjoy material objects and experiences. Second, consumerism supplements work, religion and politics as the main mechanism by which social status and distinction are achieved. Displays of all of the goods accumulated gain prestige and envy - the ideology of conspicuous consumption. Third, consumerism is the pursuit of ever higher standards of living thereby justifying global development and capitalism via trade and internationalism of the marketplace.

As well, consumerism is the misplaced belief (the myth) that people will be gratified by consuming. In this sense, consumerism is an acceptance of consumption as a way to self-development, self-realization and self-fulfilment (McGregor, 2010). In a consumer society, people’s identity is tied to what they consume (Marcuse, 1964). Finally, consumerism is "economically manifested in the chronic purchasing of goods and services, with little attention to their true need, durability, origin of the product or the environmental consequences of manufacture and disposal" (Verdant.net, ca. 2010, web citation).

The ideology of consumerism is played out in a consumer culture. Hoebel (1966) describes culture as an integrated system of learned behavior patterns, which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not a result of biological inheritance. A consumer culture, by definition then, is an integrated system of learned behaviour patterns (norms, values, beliefs) pursuant to consumption behaviour in the marketplace. A consumer culture is evident when “the majority of consumers avidly desire (and some noticeable portion pursue, acquire and display) goods and services that are valued for nonutilitarian reasons” (Belk, 1988, p. 105).

This behaviour is exacerbated by the fact that, in a consumer culture, people tend to aspire for a standard of living they have not yet achieved, entrenching a gap of expectations that
constitutes unsatisfiable consumer want (Belk, 1988; McGregor, 2010; Sklair, 2002).

**The Culture-Ideology of Consumerism**

“The role of consumption and the ideology of consumerism are key elements in modern global cultures and societies” (Hinkins, 2007, p. 44). The consumerism ideology shapes the assumptions that consumers hold about power relationships, preferred market dynamics, presumed rights and responsibilities, and how people make sense of their role as a consumer (McGregor, 2010). As a way to illustrate the power of the consumerist ideology in a consumer culture, Sklair (1994) tenders the idea of the culture-ideology of consumerism. Following the conventions of hyphenated words, where two or more adjectives before a noun act as one idea (Turner, ca. 2006), this term links the adjectives of culture and ideology into a new single concept, culture-ideology, and attaches the new concept to the noun, consumerism. Sklair explains that the culture-ideology of consumerism “is a coherent set of practices, attitudes and values… that encourages ever-expanding consumption of consumer goods (1994, p. 260). Kozinets and Handelman (2004) aptly describe this new concept as “the mutually reinforcing integration [emphasis added] of consumer culture and consumerist ideology” (p. 691). This new concept posits that a consumer culture is an ideological culture.

For clarification, not all cultures are ideological, wherein cultural practices reinforce the ideology and the ideology (belief system) reinforces the cultural practices (Carvalho, 2007; Sklair, 2010). However, the consumer culture, which draws people unwittingly into the web of market relations (Kline, 2007; Schneiderman, 1998), is an ideological culture that reinforces the cultural practices of consumption. For further clarification, an ideological culture refers to communities of ideas, values and preferences, with the term culture pointing to the socially constructed nature of ideologies (Carvalho, 2007). The ideological culture of consumerism is hegemonic at the global level. Schneiderman (1998, p. 218) refers to the “global practice of consumerism” and Sklair describes “consumerism [as] the most successful ideology of all time” (1997, p. 531).

The intent of the culture-ideology of consumerism (i.e., the integration of a consumer culture and the consumerism ideology) is to “keep people spending, to keep shops selling, to keep goods moving, to keep demands for services growing” (Sprague, 2009, p. 503). Without this momentum, the global capitalistic system cannot sustain itself. Sklair (1991, 1995) theorizes that the culture-ideology of consumerism is one of three spheres of the global system, the other two being the economic and political spheres. Each of (a) culture (consumer culture and consumerist ideology), (b) economic (transnational corporations) and (c) political spheres comprise the current character of capitalistic globalization.

The culture-ideology of consumerism term refers to the phenomenon of excessive, above-subsistence consumption, previously the purview of the rich, transforming into a global phenomenon experienced by the masses (Sklair, 2012). The primacy of consumption (egged on by the tenets of a consumer culture and the consumerist ideology’s belief system) cannot be dismissed; consumption has become the moment in the ‘circuit of capital’, instead of merely one moment, relative to the primacy of production (see Schneiderman, 1998). “The culture-ideology of global capitalistic consumerism is the fundamental value [and belief] system that keeps the system intact” (Sklair, 1997, pp. 532-533). “Without consumerism, the rationale for continuous capitalistic accumulation dissolves” (Sklair, 2002, p. 116); hence, the need to perpetuate the power of the culture-ideology of consumerism.

So entrenched is its power that “no social movement appears even remotely likely to overthrow … the culture-ideology of consumerism” (Sklair, 1997, p. 534). However, Sklair (2009) also recognizes the potential for the gradual elimination of the culture-ideology of consumerism, something that must happen if we hope to map out a different future for humanity, based on a different consumerism. We must find a way to challenge the hegemony.
of the culture-ideology of consumerism (Skłair, 1997). Indeed, he maintains that capitalistic globalization cannot prevent counter-hegemonic challenges (2009). To that end, he advocates disrupting the smooth running of the global, capitalistic system (which inculcates the culture-ideology of consumerism) and finding ways to globalize these disruptions, spreading them worldwide (1997). This paper offers the idea of transdisciplinarity as a powerful approach for disrupting the hegemony of capitalistic consumerism, creating a space for the transformation of consumerism, leading to the emergence of transdisciplinary consumerism.

In an effort to capture the rhythm inherent in the emergence of transformations, Simcea (2012) coins the term *cadence of decadence*; that is, decadence (decline) has a discernable rhythm (cadence), leading to a transformation. She explains that the word cadence (rhythmic rise and fall) "hints at a pattern in these transformations, a repetitive, continuous *character* [emphasis added]" (p.1). Decadence (de-cadence) refers to decay or decline. She declares (p.1) that the cadence of decadence, “the rhythm of decay,” is deeply informed by the culture-ideology of consumerism. The cadence of decadence is a powerful metaphor for the process of disrupting capitalistic consumerism perpetuated by the culture-ideology of consumerism. This disruption can lead to 'a change in the character of consumerism,' perhaps to transdisciplinary consumerism, with a focus on the *cadence of emergence* (the rhythm of complex co-creation).

**Nicolescuian Transdisciplinarity**

According to Higgins-Desbiolles (2010), the culture-ideology of consumerism is a global social phenomenon that crosses borders; it is the driving force behind contemporary, capitalistic globalization. She observes that of all of the value systems that could be fostered around the world, the belief and value systems attached to the ideology of consumerism have become the ones most promoted. Around the world, people are relentlessly prompted to satisfy their needs through consuming (Skłair, 2002). Unfortunately, the culture-ideology of consumerism connotes a system of values and practices corrosive of social life and democratic practices (see Landau, 2002; Schneiderman, 1998). The future of humanity does not bode well if it is these values that are crossing borders at a global level. “We must consciously move away from this value system to one that is less damaging” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010, p. 116). Transdisciplinarity offers a way to reframe the border-crossing aspect of the culture-ideology of consumerism, a way to reconceptualize “the great project of global consumerism” (Skłair, 2002, p. 196).

Indeed, *trans* means to work at the borders, involving both crisscrossing back and forth (zigzagging) and actually moving beyond borders (transcending); this as opposed to confining things within the security of familiar and long ensconced boundaries, perhaps building bridges for temporary crossings. Because the concept of transdisciplinary pays special attention to what happens at the *borders*, it is a powerful approach to reframe capitalistic consumerism so that the border-crossing aspect of the consumerist ideology can be challenged and reoriented, thus disrupting global capitalism.

I propose that the culture-ideology of consumerism comes with an inherently exclusive logic, narrow notions of reality, constrained appreciations for what kind of knowledge is required to solve problems, and a restricted set of values. Respectively, the culture-ideology of consumerism (a) perpetuates the logic of the market (an exclusive logic that ignores life); (b) assumes there is one level of reality (the physical reality, materialism); (c) draws on knowledge stemming from linear, causal and dualistic thinking; and, (d) perpetuates market-based values inculcated in a culture of consumption (e.g., profit, individualism, self-interest, competition, scarcity, growth, materialism, efficiency, and technological progress) (see Collin, 2004; McGregor, 2010, 2013).

Transdisciplinarity as envisioned by Basarab Nicolescu provides a way to totally reframe these tenets of capitalistic consumerism. He tenders different notions of logic, reality and knowledge (see Figure 1) based on the new sciences of chaos theory, quantum physics and
living systems theory (rather than the hegemonic Newtonian, empirical, positivistic sciences) (Nicolescu, 2012). As each of these pillars (axioms) of Nicolescuian transdisciplinarity is explained in the following text, inspirations for transdisciplinary consumerism are shared - the consumerism of the future.

Integrating Multiple Realities

Newtonian science presumes there is only one level of reality (the physical which can be seen, tasted, heard, and touched). This assumption is manifested in a consumer culture through excessive materialism (the accumulation of material (physical) goods and the purchase of physical consumer experiences and services). People live to see, taste, hear and touch consumer goods and services; they get their identity and sense of well-being from this materialism. The Newtonian notion of physical reality is the ideological cornerstone of capitalist consumerism.

Rejecting the premise that there is only one material reality, Nicolescu (1985) worked out that there are multiple Levels of Reality that are accessible to humans, due to the existence of multiple levels of human perception. Nicolescu (2006) believes it is essential to seek multiple perspectives on any human problem because the intent is to integrate many levels of truth while generating new TD knowledge. To that end, his approach to transdisciplinarity embraces at least 10 different realities organized along three Levels of Reality (see Figure 2).

Figure 1 Three axioms of Nicolescuian transdisciplinarity

![Figure 1 Three axioms of Nicolescuian transdisciplinarity](image)

Figure 2 Three Levels of Reality

![Figure 2 Three Levels of Reality](image)
In more detail, level one is the internal world of humans, where consciousness flows (awareness, perceptions, understandings) - the TD-Subject (comprising political, social, historical, and individual realities). Level two is the external world of humans where information, facts and existing knowledge flows - the TD-Object (comprising environmental, economic, and cosmic/planetary realities). The third level is called the mediating level, the Hidden Third, the intuitive zone of non-resistance to others’ worldviews. This level comprises three realities: culture and art, religions, and spiritualities. Peoples’ experiences, intuitions, images, insights, interpretations, descriptions, representations, and formulas meet on this third level (Nicolescu, 1985, 2002).

Nicolescu (1985, 2006) places a lot of credence on level three, based on the quantum notion of the Hidden Third. He needed a concept to accommodate people resisting other people’s world views, and a way to allow for the integration of these world views, leading to the co-creation and emergence of new, embodied TD knowledge. For him, the Hidden Third is a quantum way to represent people coping with their resistance to shifting perspectives and world views. If people can overcome their resistance to differences or contradictions, it frees them to cross into the zone of non-resistance, the vacuum, to others’ points of view. The Hidden Third is a way to conceive of people moving to a place where they become open to others’ perspectives, ideologies, value premises and belief systems, inherently letting go of aspects of how they currently know the world. In this quantum vacuum (not empty, but rich with potential), new transdisciplinary knowledge can emerge, using the Logic of the Included Middle.

Replacing Market Logic with Logic of Included Middle

The “consumer culture operates with a certain logic that... redefines traditional moral and political values [to such an extent that people are] unwittingly alienated by the moral relativism associated with free-market, consumer capitalism” (Kline, 2007, p.2). The consumer society and consumerism ideology shaped by market logic represent a “materialistic civilization that replaces the idea of the ‘citizen’ with the ‘consumer’ [and consequently] cannot concern itself with the long-term viability of life on earth” (Landau, 2002, p.2). The culture-ideology of consumerism operates using the exclusive logic of the market. This is evident in people’s ability to disconnect from the consequences of their purchase decisions because of the perceived and real distance between them and those who labour to make consumer products and deliver services. The modern science logic of exclusion assumes that the space between objects or people is empty, flat, static and void of life (much like the space between the balls on a billiard table).

The Logic of the Included Middle draws on inclusive logic, which enables people to imagine that the space between things is alive, dynamic, in flux, moving and perpetually changing. It is in this fertile middle space that transdisciplinary manifests itself (see Figure 3). Transdisciplinarity has people stepping through the zones of non-resistance (away from one worldview or one notion of reality toward others) onto a fertile, moving floor of the included middle, where, together, they generate new TD intelligence and knowledge. When people from different disciplines and sectors come in contact with each other and are motivated, an energizing force is generated - a synergy is created. This synergy leads to the generation of embodied knowledge created from the energy emanating from intellectual fusion (McGregor, 2004). The strength and potentialities that emerge from these intellectual encounters are life-giving and transformative. The logic of the included middle requires people to create a space for dialogue and knowledge generation. In this space, attempts are made to reconcile different logics (realities) for the sake of solving complex problems facing humanity. The mediating effect of the Hidden Third creates a permanent possibility for the evolution of complex new TD knowledge.
Re-envisioning Knowledge as Complex and Emergent

Capitalistic consumerist knowledge can be described as “excesses of disembodied, abstracted knowledge, short-circuited knowledge reduced to what is deemed instrumentally efficient” (Kagan, 2012, p. 89). Solving complex, wicked problems that are alive by using abstract, short-circuited, disembodied knowledge will not work; to that end, transdisciplinarity assumes that knowledge is open and alive because the problems the knowledge addresses are alive, emerging from the life world (Nicolescu, 2005). Nicolescu (2002, 2008) posits that TD knowledge is based on cross-fertilization, and is characterized by embodiment, complexity and emergence (see McGregor, 2011) (see Figure 4). Horlick-Jones and Sime (2004) coined the phrase border-work to refer to the intellectual work that occurs when people living on the borders engage in knowledge generation to address complex problem solving. Transdisciplinary “knowledge is forever open” (Nicolescu, 2005, p. 7), emergent, in progress and in-formation, meaning it cannot help but be complex.

Transdisciplinarity draws its notion of complexity and emergence from the new sciences of chaos theory, quantum physics, living systems theory and complexity theory. From this perspective, transdisciplinarity holds that the process of emergence comes into being as people pass through the zone of non-resistance (become open to many realities) and enter the fertile middle ground to problem solve using the logic of inclusion. Emergence refers to novel qualities,
properties, patterns and structures that appear from relatively simple interactions among people, qualities that did not exist when presented in isolation. These new qualities are layered in arrangements of increased complexity (Morin, 1999, 2005; Nicolescu, 2008). Emergence means problem solvers would assume that the problem(s) they are addressing continually change as people try to jointly solve them. Each problem (e.g., excessive consumption) is a rich weave of societal structures and functions. Original perceptions of the problem are left behind, transformed, even transcended, as new understandings of the problem take shape and as synergistic energy is generated during the intellectual border-work, via intellectual fusion. TD knowledge is embodied, becomes a part of everyone who co-creates it by using the logic of the included middle as they move through the zone of non-resistance to share consciousness and information (along multiple Levels of Reality), mediated by the Hidden Third.

**Application of Transdisciplinarity to Consumerism**

Consumerism is an ideology that deeply shapes people’s actions in their role as consumers. The ideology of consumerism predicated on Nicolescuian transdisciplinarity would be concerned with the common good, the human condition, environmental integrity and the wicked problems associated with their interface with modern day consumerism (to reflect the interconnectedness of everything and everyone). Transdisciplinarity would help those challenging capitalistic consumerism to envision consumer knowledge as emergent and complex, focused on moral obligations and shared, joint responsibly for the world and each other. Rather than just static facts and information, consumers would be taught to value relationships and to look for patterns of like minded or divergent thinking, patterns that can challenge the dominant economic paradigm shaping the world right now. In this context, everything is *in-formation*, changing due to the synergy (energy) created when people jointly problem solve or ponder the nuances and complexities of what it means to be a socially responsible consumer in the 21st century. The complex consumer knowledge that is created is alive, forever changing, never static (McGregor, 2004, 2011).

Within this dynamic consumer-knowledge creation process, notions of what counts as consumer reality would expand from just the economic sphere to include many others spheres of reality often marginalized in conventional consumerism: political, historical, social, ecological, spiritual, cultural and aesthetic. People would appreciate that solutions to the wicked problems exacerbated by modern consumption are best solved by a meeting of the minds at the borders between these many spheres of reality. New notions of order and chaos would be respected. Instead of understanding chaos as disorder, people would see chaos as order emerging. In the midst of the tensions inherent in dealing with complex issues along many levels of reality, order and new insights are always emerging. A new respect would be gained for fluctuations, tensions, uncertainties and disturbances, appreciating that novel solutions to modern day consumer dilemmas will emerge from the chaos (McGregor, 2004, 2011).

The logic that informs this chaotic problem solving is called inclusive logic, different from the old science, market logic of exclusion. The latter assumes that the space between things is flat, static, empty and dead. From this stance, people can readily assume there is no link between consumers’ behaviour to protect their self interest and the impact on invisible, distanced others. The logic of inclusion assumes the opposite, that the space between things is alive, in flux and deeply dynamic. It is within this space that dynamic change and evolution occur. Consumers would learn to be inclusive during their purchase decisions, ever mindful of others, the larger human condition, and planetary integrity. They would be socialized to believe that their notion of what is true about ‘being a consumer’ holds until they encounter views informed by other realities. As consumers worked to problem solve together, a community of consumer-citizens would be created that is part of something bigger than themselves.

Consumer knowledge would be seen as an open, emergent complex structure;
consumer realities would comprise a range of spheres beyond economics and the sheer accumulation of physical, material goods; inclusive logic for problem solving would replace exclusionary market logic. These are all trademarks of a transdisciplinary approach to consumerism. This approach provides a profoundly rich repertoire of philosophical, ideological and paradigmatic orientations for 21st century transdisciplinary consumerism.

Discussion and Conclusion

Over the last half century, many regions of the world have been transformed into a consumer society, maybe not on the scale witnessed in the Western world but nonetheless it has happened, and continues to happen (Aburawa, 2012). Given that capitalistic consumerism gives rise to consumerist expectations that cannot be satisfied within the foreseeable future for billions of people (Sklair, 2002), yet people aspire to emulate lifestyles informed by this ideology (Schneiderman, 1998), something must be done now. “The implications of the spread of the ‘culture-ideology of consumerism’...is a social change of truly global significance” (Sklair, 1995, p. 505). “Consumption in economically vigorous regions [of the world] has increased in volume and variety to such degrees that living, thriving, suffering, and dying are more independently connected to the acquiring, owning, and disposing of products than in any other historical era” (Mick, Pettigrew, Pechmann, & Ozanne, 2012, p.3).

Under the current model of capitalistic, corporate-led globalization, there is a huge divide between the haves and have nots, between humans and non-humans, between the present and the future, which is totally disconnected from the past. Respectively, these examples represent dualistic thinking - haves, humans, the present (detached objectivity) versus have nots, non-humans and the future (engaged subjectivity). Conventional thinking posits that people inherently resist integrating subjective and objective thinking because of the prominence of dualistic thinking. Transdisciplinarity acknowledges these two sites as zones of resistance; only through resisting the duality can people bring together subjective (embodied, conscious realities) and objective (abstract, detached realities). Both consciousness and abstract are respected but their integration is the strength of the transdisciplinary approach (see Nicolescu, 2011).

From a culture-ideology of consumerism perspective, capitalistic consumerism depends upon people not making connections between their conscience and their penchant for accumulating material goods and services. Keeping these two separate (maintaining dualistic thinking) is the mainstay of capitalistic consumerism; dissociate consciousness from materialism. For the sake of argument, TD-Subject (consciousness, awareness) can be equated with Marcuse’s (1964) basic needs of humanity while physical materialism (TD-Object) can be equated with false needs; neither the two shall meet. Indeed, Sklair (2009) observes that “capitalistic globalization systematically blurs the difference between basic [true] and false needs” (p. 528). This blurred vision leads to consumers blindly pursuing a materialistic lifestyle, regardless of the human and environmental consequences. “False needs are unnecessary needs... To meet false needs we repress our genuine needs and the real needs of others. We perform unneeded labor, miss opportunities to enjoy life, and deprive others of their basic needs” (Chernus, ca. 1993, p. 1). Marcuse (1964) further explains that false needs are superimposed upon people by those who benefit from the repression of true needs. It is only false needs that are promoted by modern consumerism (Schneiderman, 1998); hence, perpetuating the consumer culture and the attendant ideology of consumerism.

In this context, in order to get consumers to pursue false needs, the ideology of the market and of the culture-ideology of consumerism assume a naturalized, central role in capitalistic consumerism. Consumerism informed by transdisciplinary thinking would be a powerful challenge to the hegemony of capitalistic consumerism. The former eschews dualism, disembodied knowledge, exclusionary logic, and narrow notions of reality. It embraces emergent, embodied and complex knowledge; inclusive logic; and, the integration of as many
perspectives and knowledges as possible. The intent is to understand the world (Nicolescu, 1985) and to solve the wicked problems facing humanity, including but not limited to: uneven wealth and income distribution; inequality and inequity; insecurity and injustices; human aggression and violence; unsustainability; and, imbalanced development. Alarmingly, all of these wicked problems are exacerbated by capitalistic consumerism (McGregor, 2010).

Transdisciplinarity provides a means to disrupt the capitalistic system and replace it with a counter culture-ideology focused on resisting the rigid distinction between TD-Object (materialism) and TD-Subject (consciousness), while respecting the power of integrating multiple perspectives to address the fallout of capitalistic consumerism (see Heisenberg, 1998). Since the future of the capitalistic system depends upon meeting false needs (Chernus, ca. 1993), the challenge is to create another economic system, one that places humanity and the environment (true needs) before profit, wealth, materialism and individualism, and growth (false needs). These alternatives to capitalistic consumerism have much to gain from Nicolescuian transdisciplinarity. The future of consumerism may well be the culture-ideology of transdisciplinary consumerism.

On a closing note, "every society is engaged in the never completed enterprise of building a humanly meaningful world" (Berger, 1967, p. 27). This process leads to a nomos, the commonsense, taken for granted ordering of the world and one’s experiences in that world. Cover (1982) argues that people’s moral sense is rooted in the nomos, in the narratives from which they draw conclusions about their world and by which they locate themselves in relation to others. Compellingly, one could thus speak of the nomos of the culture-ideology of consumerism, wherein people uncritically live their consumer lives in isolation from others and nature, taking for granted the tenets of a consumer culture. To shake people up, to get them to stand back and critically examine the nomos of their consumer culture, transdisciplinary scholars can focus on the “ensemble of nomological connections” between the levels of reality, regions where there is overlap, crisscrossing and adjustments of people’s ordering of their worlds as they encounter other world views (see Heisenberg, 1998; Nicolescu, 2011). In this space, transdisciplinary consumerism can evolve via the cadence of emergence and the rhythm of co-creation, complexity, inclusive logic and the integration of multiple realities.

References


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