

Practitioners Pioneering Ideas at the Convergence of International Conservation and Development Practice

Launch of a Trans-Disciplinary Working Table

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Why Is This a Groundbreaking Funding Appeal?

A highly selective group of award-winning practitioners, each a luminary in their field, has joined together in a unique and quite extraordinary partnership with the potential to bring transformative change to international conservation and development practice, and with it, inspire the next generation of practitioners. We are working to test and refine a truly “big idea,” one with breakthrough potential. We seek a visionary *founding* funding partner, whether a venture philanthropist, an impact investor, a private foundation or an institutional donor, who shares an appetite for catalytic change, big thinking, original work, experimentation, and an entrepreneurial spirit. We are change-makers seeking a change-maker.

What’s the “Big Idea”?

There’s a pressing case for bringing bold change to conservation and development practice, for throwing off the conventional pressures that for too long have constrained our imaginations, slowed innovation, and bottled up our more creative aspirations. To agitate the best thinking and impulse across our fields, we must be willing to renew and rethink what isn’t working, and to smartly evolve our disciplines into something courageously transcendent of field, brand and benefactor.

To ignite systemic, enduring change at large enough scale, and at a pace commensurate with the challenges rapidly expanding around us, we must conserve *and* develop. And while our disciplines have flirted with modest partnerships in recent years, calls for our “integration” remain fundamentally cautious and only marginally realized. In too many cases, we continue to develop in ways unmoored to the environment, and conserve without heeding humanity’s call, destining short-term outcomes with long-term costs.

We have a vital obligation to look at what is possible at the deep convergence of our fields, and at the powerful change it can produce and inspire. To not do so – to not aspire to close the gaps between our disciplines and bring our work and designs into greater balance – leaves too much that is too important and too consequential unchallenged. It should be our ambition, and our habit, to unleash creative work from the constraints of conventional expectations demanding our approach match an easy and predictable “identity.” And it should be our practice to engage each other blind to “Discipline,” not in limited and cautious ways, but with healthy challenge to presumptive paradigms. We can do so

credibly, respectful of disciplinary expertise and responsible to its teachings, without our perspectives and contributions – or our ambitions – hostage to them.

We have yet to impact to our potential, and yet it's within our reach. We can re-imagine an approach to what we do that unites our disciplines in cause *and* accountability, elevates the dialogue between us, resists adherence to stale methodologies and metrics, replaces tired terminology, and keeps our focus at once visionary and strategic. Instead of speaking of our “complementarity,” our “linkages,” and our “combined evidence base,” we can lift the conversation between us from one of timidity and tactics to one of unifying vision and common strategy across our fields. We can subjugate concern for “identity” to concern for impact.

In doing so, we can turn over the practical, field-focused insights sitting untapped at the true convergence of our talents, expertise and imagination, insights with the potential to positively transform how we work and what we achieve. No matter our core discipline, we can re-anchor to a vision and a strategy that transcends field and brand, and we can reshape our fields into a singularly impactful, and enduring, practice.

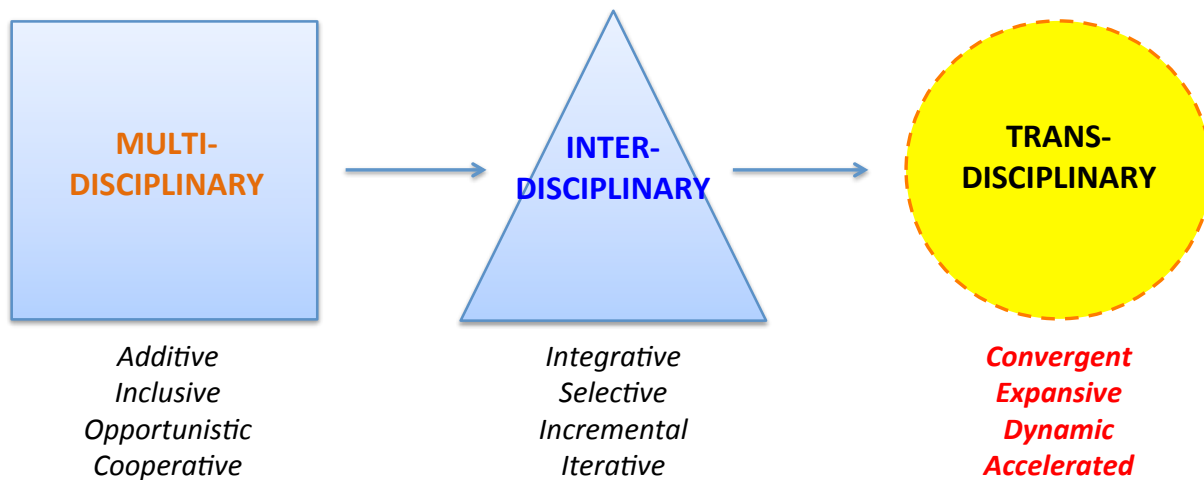
We aspire to do this by launching an appeal for work that is **trans-disciplinary**, in outlook, in aspiration, and in design.

It's an idea whose time has come, and one that is a powerful manifestation of our collective obligation to work with a single purpose – to protect and preserve human and wild in balance, in all its forms, no matter our setting or scale, and in a manner and pace in keeping with our challenge.

What's Missing in Our Practice Now?

Today's interdisciplinary models celebrate a cautious and carefully scoped “intersection” of our interests and capacities. They leave each of our disciplines still at the center of our own working models, beholden to a binary paradigm keeping our fields mostly briefing and working apart. So much more is possible, and so much more inventive is urgently needed.

Rather than see today's interdisciplinary approach – and our allegiance to the “integrated programming” and “integrated research” rooted within it – as an inflection point in an evolutionary process for our fields, too many are celebrating it as the goal line, as evidence of optimal organizational sophistication and programmatic impact. *It's at least possible that it's neither, and that it represents instead an important step inviting a more courageous and more promising evolution to a fuller joining of our interests and capabilities.* It's this fuller joining, a deep convergence of disciplines, that needs our discerning and accelerated attention if we are to meet our task, and our potential.



Where Can I Find the Ideas Behind the “Big Idea”?

More background to the genesis and scope of a call for trans-disciplinarity can be found in the article **“Pioneering Ideas in Strategy and Design at the Convergence of International Conservation and Development Practice: A Practitioner’s Case for Working Differently”** by Executive Strategist and Field Advisor, Elizabeth Walker. It presents a trans-disciplinary vision that unites our fields behind a common strategy. It makes a case for why such change is necessary for a more enduring impact, and may well be essential to the long-term viability of the conservation and development movements themselves. It introduces an illustrative strategic framework that can be shared across fields and organizations as a new kind of umbrella paradigm, helping to break the binary and encourage designs and partnerships that thoughtfully transcend discipline. It candidly explores the potential and promise of its application in practice, and the possible consequence of its use to our organizations and our fields. The article is available at www.transcenddiscipline.com/resources.

Has Any Fieldwork Been Done to Test the Idea?

Ms. Walker undertook privately funded, preliminary fieldwork in 2016 with three leading practitioners and their organizations, each of whom is now a founding member of the Working Table. It was a “Proof-of-Concept” effort looking at the viability of institutionalizing a trans-disciplinary vision. The work yielded enthusiastic interest and exciting promise, ultimately inaugurating a groundbreaking partnership.

Why Launch A Working Table?

With any new idea, our foremost task is to rigorously trial and document the change it evokes on the ground and within our organizations, and through that exploration, to shape and refine its future scope and direction – a “Proof-of-Impact” to follow “Proof-of-Concept.” The Working Table brings together world-class practitioners with the vision, credibility, experience, and impact across disciplines to do just this. It’s a remarkable field-based collaboration that will critically examine and showcase the impact of a trans-disciplinary approach in practice. It harnesses an extraordinary combination of voices, expertise, and reputation, leaders with vigorous curiosity, enterprising spirit, and an eagerness to inspire change and energize conversation within and across our fields.

What Are the Goals of the Working Table?

The Working Table will set itself to four primary goals:

- 1.** To trial and document, and where possible quantify, the change in ground impact that's observed when an organization adopts a trans-disciplinary outlook, and designs or modifies its work through use of a trans-disciplinary strategic framework
- 2.** To invigorate, and amplify, the important conversation needed around the case for trans-disciplinary practice, contributing experiential learning, inquiry, reflection, critique and original authorship
- 3.** To explore, and propose, promising mechanisms by which practitioners, funders and researchers can contribute in meaningful ways to a trans-disciplinary movement and to its realization (and testing) in practice
- 4.** To join our voices together thru digital, regional and international platforms in a clarion call for work that constructively and imaginatively challenges entrenched conventional paradigms prejudicing and impeding outcomes

What Will the Working Table's Output Be?

The Working Table's written output may take the form of a compendium of case studies, or it may take the form of a collective position or a set of recommendations based on experiential trial and observation, or perhaps both. Working Table members will also offer presentations and engagements at international and scientific forums that invite and inspire interest and contribution from a wide community of practitioners, funders and scholars, as well as the public. When possible, we may also consider opportunities or requests to provide participatory briefings or "trainings" to organizations, universities, funders or practitioners interested in a deeper exposure to the work and ideas. Regardless of form or format, it will be a body of work and engagement that is accessible, honest, thorough, discerning and reflective. Its value will be in its impact on the ground, on the direction of our practice, and on the imagination and work of our colleagues.

Who is the Target Audience?

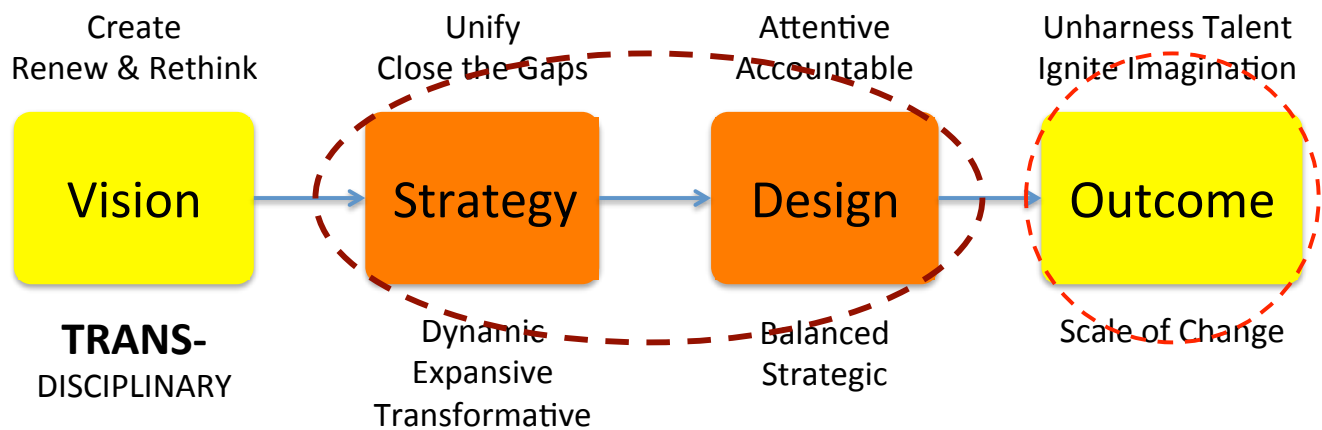
The Working Table is a partnership of leading practitioners who see the potential for opening what may be a watershed frontier in our practice. This is not a research effort, as such, and nor are researchers the primary audience. It is an action effort. While we expect the work to interest and impact a wide community, including funders, boards, theorists and scholars, our target audience is the practitioner, and its metric is positively transformative, and recognizable, ground impact.

How Is the Working Table Envisioned to Work?

The Working Table will launch through a series of "rolling engagements" between Ms. Walker, who will "anchor" the table, and each of the founding core table members. These individualized engagements will combine distance and on-site work over the course of a year to trial adoption of a trans-disciplinary approach to strategy and design. Ms. Walker

may engage on-site with Working Table members three to four times within the launch year, to set strategy and design on a modified course, consolidate and refine direction, evaluate outcomes, and turn over learning and ideas together.

Working Table members will initiate or refine project design through use of an innovative strategic framework that challenges a dynamic balance of discipline and consideration. Through the prism of this work, and in keeping with a trans-disciplinary vision, their organizations may also look with Ms. Walker at areas where associated change to broader strategy, leadership, staffing or growth may improve or accelerate outcomes.



Each Working Table member will trial and showcase change to their individual portfolio of work, considerate of their organization’s unique profile and reach; and each will also engage across the Working Table with other members to share experience, lines of inquiry, concerns, limitations, and outcomes – all in service to strengthening each other’s impact, enriching the collective output, and deepening the experiential contributions the Working Table can make to consideration of trans-disciplinary practice. In essence, the Working Table will work both “vertically” and “horizontally.” Its members may collaborate with each other through distance or periodic on-site work as may be possible, and helpful, to the exchange of ideas and to the pace of our work and experimentation.

How Might Other Practitioners and Scholars Get Involved?

It’s possible that, in time, the Working Table will be in a position to offer a unique and impactful opportunity for other practitioners and scholars to engage with its members on-site in ways that directly test, advance and embody a trans-disciplinary vision in practice. It would be one that seeks to “apply” inventive practice and research in a trans-disciplinary spirit, and in likelihood, may combine a practitioner-in-residence program with one of applied research. Such a “Field School” would bring practice leaders and academics together in innovative ways that would aim to dramatically expand the range and application of work and inquiry for immediate relevance, perhaps through a rotation of work or fellowship with Working Table members. It would encourage work and scholarship that doesn’t just cross disciplines but seeks to transcend them.

Might the Working Table Expand?

The Working Table is launching in no small part with a vision to build the next wave of ideas behind trans-disciplinarity together, and in anticipation that a trans-disciplinary movement that galvanizes our fields and funders can be near at hand. In that same inclusive spirit, an eventual expansion of the Working Table is anticipated. Inquiries and expressions of interest are very welcome.

What Does The Work Promise and Risk?

The launch of a trans-disciplinary Practitioners' Working Table represents an invitation to our fields to reshape our practice together, to re-fix our sights and our designs to a balanced strategy we can proudly share and one that reflects a vision of our fields as more than simply a collection of specialized organizations and practitioners. It is an invitation to our fields to revolutionize our perspectives and our approach, and one that shows exciting potential to accelerate our ability to lead and achieve change at greater scale, faster pace, and with more enduring outcomes.

Opening a new frontier in our practice or any for that matter, particularly one that boldly dissolves walls between us, will never be without its controversy, but we can strive to inspire change, not conflict. We can seek to invigorate conversation, not settle a debate.

For our scholars, a trans-disciplinary examination invites a more playful and creative dialogue. For our donors, it invites a refreshing opportunity to realign funding scope and vision. For our organizations, it invites an inspiring and healthy challenge. For our practitioners, it invites real and liberating discovery.

Who Are the Founding Members of the Working Table?

Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, DVM/Uganda



In the legacy of the late Dian Fossey, Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka is one of the leading conservationists and scientists working to save the critically endangered mountain gorillas of East Africa. She is the Founder and CEO of **Conservation Through Public Health** (<http://www.ctph.org>), a grassroots nonprofit working to protect mountain gorillas across their ranges in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Her work to understand and reduce disease transmission between human and gorilla populations and improve the quality of care and support available to communities living in proximity to protected areas has earned her worldwide notoriety. With training from the University of London's Royal Veterinary College, she established the first veterinary unit within the Uganda Wildlife Authority in the 1990s and pioneered the first wildlife translocations in her native country of Uganda. She has been recognized with numerous awards from Africa to the US, including the San Diego Zoo's "Conservation in Action Award," the prestigious Ashoka

Fellowship, and most recently CEO Communications Africa's Most Influential Women in Business and Government Award. A powerful speaker on the interconnectedness of all species and the human links to our most endangered wildlife, she has been featured in documentaries on BBC, National Geographic, and Animal Planet.

Laly Lichtenfeld, Ph.D./Tanzania



Dr. Laly Lichtenfeld is a woman with a passion for Africa and for conservation. Residing in Tanzania, Laly is Co-Founder and Executive Director of the **African People & Wildlife Fund** (<http://www.afrpw.org>), an internationally recognized nonprofit dedicated to helping rural communities conserve and benefit from their wildlife and natural resources. Laly first traveled to the continent with the National Outdoor Leadership School in 1992. Moved by the remarkable wildlife, cultures and landscapes of East Africa, she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to evaluate a community-based conservation project in southern Kenya. Laly went on to receive her Ph.D. from Yale University for novel research combining wildlife ecology and social ecology in an interdisciplinary study of human-lion relationships, interactions and conflicts on the Maasai Steppe of Northern Tanzania. Today, with 20 years of on-the-ground experience in East African wildlife conservation, Laly specializes in human-wildlife conflict prevention, species conservation focusing on lions and other big cats, community empowerment and engagement in natural resource management, conservation education, and the development of conservation incentives for rural people. Laly is a Distinguished Alumni of the Yale Tropical Resources Institute, a National Geographic Explorer and six-time National Geographic Big Cats Initiative grantee, and an invited member of the Clinton Global Initiative.

Tom Lalampaa, MBA/Kenya



Mr. Tom Lalampaa is COO and Chief Programmes Officer with **Northern Rangelands Trust** (<http://www.nrt-kenya.org>), a pioneering umbrella organization supporting 27 community conservancies across ten counties in Kenya. He serves as well as the Chairman of the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association. Tom is a Samburu who could have followed in the pastoralist footsteps of his family and neighbors but, with the support of his entire community, completed a BA, MA and MBA at the University of Nairobi. Tom serves

as the Vice Chairman of the Wildlife Security Task Force formed by the Government of Kenya to recommend improvements to wildlife security. He has testified before the US Congress and, in September 2013, was awarded the inaugural Tusk Award for Conservation in Africa, presented by The Patron His Royal Highness The Duke of Cambridge at a ceremony in London. The award recognized his outstanding contribution to northern Kenya's communities and wildlife.

Elizabeth Walker, M.A./United States



Ms. Elizabeth Walker is a seasoned field practitioner with 23 years' experience leading strategy, programming, and funding portfolios for international conservation, humanitarian, and development entities. She has held appointments across government, public, and private sectors, including as Executive Advisor, Vice President of Global Programs, Chief Operating Officer, and Executive Director. She works independently as an Executive Strategist and Field Advisor, supporting organizations and field teams with high-impact improvements to leadership, strategy, and on-the-ground performance. She has worked with Fauna & Flora International, Counterpart International, CARE, International Rescue Committee, PLAN, Relief International, and USAID. She has directed human rights investigations for the US State Department, served in Geneva as a UN Senior Policy Advisor, and been appointed expert advisor on civil-military affairs to the US Department of Defense. She is a frequently invited speaker at international forums, recognized for her original contributions at the convergence of disciplines. She is the author of **"Pioneering Ideas in Strategy and Design at the Convergence of International Conservation and Development Practice: A Practitioner's Case for Working Differently,"** a groundbreaking examination and appeal for trans-disciplinary practice (available at www.transcenddiscipline.com). She has worked in nearly 40 countries on five continents, behind conflict lines, across borders, in refugee camps and internally displaced settlements, within protected areas and conservancies, and in the aftermath of disasters. She holds degrees with honors from Harvard University, the Tufts School of Nutrition Science and Policy, and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Elizabeth is the creative force behind formation of the Working Table and is "anchoring" its work.

Whom Can I Contact for More Information?

Ms. Walker can be contacted via email at eswalker@transcenddiscipline.com or at eswalker@post.harvard.edu, or she can be reached through www.linkedin.com/in/ewalkerglobal/.