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Co-creation and evaluation of transformative biodiversity-centric pathways for Europe: Opportunities and tensions in combining qualitative and quantitative data using a nexus approach

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Transformative change is essential to secure a liveable future for people and nature. Co-creating transformative biodiversity-centric pathways can help inspire action, but doing so effectively requires two major advances to capture the complexity and plurality of change. First, nexus approaches highlight the foundational role of biodiversity in supporting desirable outcomes by leveraging synergies and addressing trade-offs between multiple sectors and priorities. Second, transdisciplinary approaches weave together the diverse disciplines, perspectives and stakes implicated in change, offering an enriched understanding to inform actionable outcomes.

In this presentation, we share insights from the BIONEXT project, which co-created and evaluated *Nature Futures* visions and pathways for Europe using a nexus approach. Our approach combined participant engagement through co-creation workshops with mixed methods approaches spanning qualitative social science methods and integrated modelling. We focus on methodological innovation and reflexive learning, illustrating how specific research choices shaped both process and outcomes. These include: (1) how we used the Nature Futures Framework and nexus approaches to underpin vision and pathway co-creation; (2) how we combined qualitative and quantitative methods – through expert and stakeholder judgments alongside integrated modelling – to evaluate the extent to which pathways achieve the visions ; and (3) how iterative engagement enabled researchers and participants to enrich and elevate the ambition of the pathways, yielding more transformative insights.

Through these reflections, we identify key tensions in using transdisciplinary futures approaches for biodiversity centric scenarios: between inspiring radicality and transformative potential while maintaining feasibility and actionability; between offering an enriched picture through knowledge integration while maintaining the integrity of diverse stakeholder and disciplinary perspectives; and between embracing complexity via the nexus approach while synthesising coherent, policy-relevant outputs.

We demonstrate how adopting a transdisciplinary nexus approach within futures processes offered novel and potentially transformative insights, while also surfacing new challenges that demand reflexivity, humility and an openness to adapt and learn. We hope our presentation inspires further methodological innovation that embraces complexity and plurality of transformative change, ultimately informing more ambitious and inclusive biodiversity action.

