

## The APHELEIA Conference Series 2025



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### Speaker: Nuno Guimarães da Costa



Nuno Guimaraes da Costa is Secretary General of Apheleia, having served in UNESCO's work group for the establishment of MOST – BRIDGES Sustainability Science Coalition. He is a full professor at Excelia Business School in the Strategy Department and senior advisor to the Dean on issues related to societal impact. Nuno holds an HDR from IAE Paris 1 - Université Panthéon Sorbonne, France, a doctorate in organisational psychology, a research master and a MBA from the Nova School of Business and Economics, Portugal.

He is particularly interested in transdisciplinary research that addresses concrete complex societal problems. He is associate editor of *Business and Society Review* and sits on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Education in Ethics*. He has been a guest editor of several academic journals, including *Business & Society*, and the *Journal of Cleaner Production*. He has published in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business & Society*, *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *Organisational Dynamics*, *European Management Review*, *Revue de l'Organisation Responsable*, and *Culture and Organisation*, among others. He has also published several chapters in management-related books.

## **“Transdisciplinary collaborations for sustainable solutions”**

In its Guidelines on Sustainable Science in Research and Education, UNESCO called for “new holistic approaches to research on ‘wicked problems’” (UNESCO, 2017:1). These are multi-dimensional complex situations characterized by inter-dependent variables affecting different actors to different degrees, and which solution is not apparent and is seldom definitive. The combination of growing environmental, social, and economic pressures, aggravated by recent military and political events, multiplies these instances while raising the demands for sustainable *solutions*. However, these are often approached from disciplinary perspectives, each one digging deep into particular aspects of the whole problem, but most often missing its systemic, complex nature. Fragmented approaches are likely to render fragmented, unsustainable solutions.

Transdisciplinary research collaborations seem better suited to address life-world problems (Jahn et al., 2012), which do not have a disciplinary cause and certainly will not have disciplinary consequences. The collaboration of different actors – including representatives from government agencies, NGOs, local communities, private and public companies – who have a variety of perspectives and disciplinary knowledge; are aware of the complexity and the interdependency between problems, their causes and effects; and bridge academic and non-academic expertise, favours the necessary problem-triggered and solution-oriented approach.

In this conference, I will be delving into some of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological aspects of transdisciplinary research, including the need for boundary objects, the roles and responsibilities of different partners, and the facilitating conditions for successful collaborations. The challenges and difficulties associated to such collaborations will be a central part of the discussion., which will be illustrated by different examples.

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