

Where do skills reside?

A commentary on the Malmon project's transdisciplinary insights into MSR farming and the surrounding AKIS

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Outlook on Agriculture

Impact Factor: **2.6**
5-Year Impact Factor: **3.2** Journal

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Special Issue: Skill and deskilling in an uncertain agricultural world

Guest Editor: James Sumberg | Guest Editor: Dominic Glover



A set of perspectives and reflections on skilling and deskilling in agriculture

- **Introduction: 'Skill and Deskilling in an Uncertain Agricultural World'** by Dominic Glover and James Sumberg
- **'Skill Talk: The Struggle over Agricultural Decision-Making'** by Glenn Davis Stone
- **'Towards a Theory of Agrarian Skilling: Or, Why Farmer Knowledge Does Not Stop at the Edge of the Field'** by Marcus Taylor and Suhas Bhasme
- **'Skilling and Social Reproduction'** by Andrew Flachs, José Becerra, Fionna Fahey and Patricia Mathu
- **'Agricultural Skill Development in Neoliberal Contexts: Deskilling, or Skills' Subsumption?'** by Trent Brown
- **'Digitalisation and Skills in Agriculture'** by Thomas Daum
- **'The Garden as Resistance: Horticultural Skill and Human Potential Behind Bars'** by Sarah E. Cramer
- **'Rethinking rigor, knowledge hierarchies, and deskilled data collectors: An agenda for skilling research in global development'** by Tim McLellan and Ben Eyre

- Skills, techniques, knowledge, and decision-making
 - ‘Techniques mediate dialectically between knowledge and matter’ (Bray, 2013: 179).
- Shift in focus from *skills* to *skilling*
- and from there to the *skilling process*, the *skills ecosystem*, and the *networks of relations* within which skills exist, are practised, are produced, refreshed and renewed
- Technography and its concept of **distributed cognition** within a task group across time and space; and within a community of practice
- Where skills are knowledge-practices of learning and decision-making performed through a network of relations.
 - Which can include sensors, drones, algorithms; it’s a network that includes *nonhumans* alongside humans



*“Skill may be understood as a feature of **production processes** (i.e. techniques, tasks, operations, transformations, and production chains); of **communities of practice** (i.e. task groups, occupations, professions); or of **technological cultures** (i.e. social, political and economic institutions). In fact, it is linked to **all three**.”*

Glover and Sumberg, introductory paper; emphasis added

Skills in transdisciplinary research—Insights from the Malmon projects

- How our assumptions, beliefs, conventions get in the way of seeing.
- Unlearning
- Sensing and feeling
- Sensitisation to a different way of learning
- Horizontal collaboration between scientists and farmers, fishers, and others...

Skills in transdisciplinary research—Insights from the Malmon projects

- Connecting the **field** to the **lab** and the **library**
- Connecting **practice** and **theory**
- Connecting **cognition** and **action**
- Connecting **diagnosis** to **innovation** via **experimentation**

Know-
how

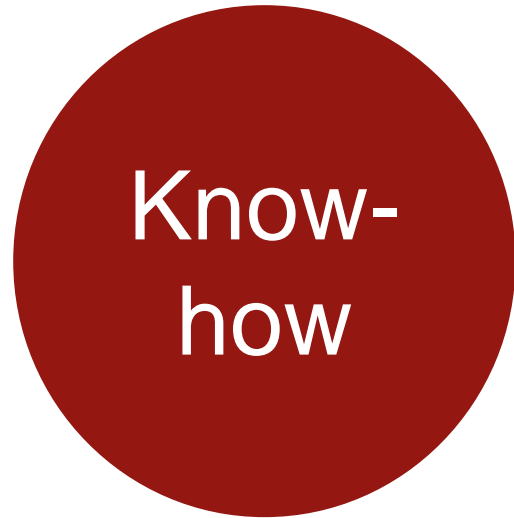
Know-
what

Know-
why

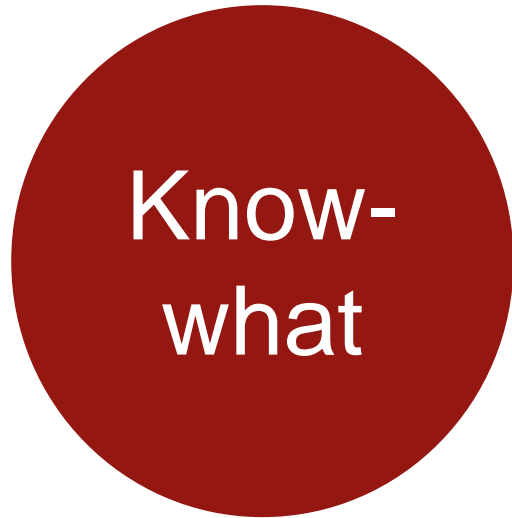
Know-
when

Know-
who

[Technique]



Practitioner	Scientist
How to transplant	How to set up sensors, instruments, take readings



[Technical Options]

Practitioner	Scientist
Which method to establish the crop? (choosing among techniques; transplanting, broadcasting, dibbling, etc.)	Which experimental design and how to adapt it to this site? (choosing among experimental designs)

[Timing]



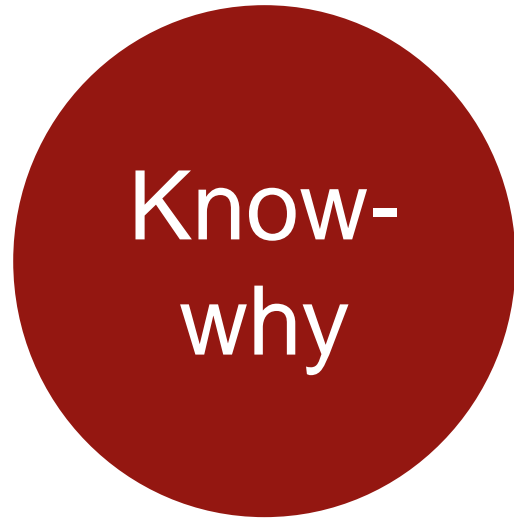
Practitioner	Scientist
When to transplant?	When to take readings?
When to repair the dike?	When to collate the data?

[Social relations]



Practitioner	Scientist
How to get my working party in the field?	How to recruit field technicians, how to train them.
Who has tools, resources, knowledge?	How to negotiate FPIC and navigate community approval

[Theory, reasoning]



Practitioner	Scientist
How to get my working party in the field?	How to recruit field technicians, how to train them.
Who has tools, resources, knowledge?	How to negotiate FPIC and navigate community approval

**How to persuade funders, policy-makers,
decision-makers that co-produced knowledge
is credible and authoritative?**

Thank you!

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