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ABSTRACT BOOK

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SOIL METAPHORS TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND BUILD TRANSDISCIPLINARY REPRESENTATIONS

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In his publications about soil pH and Redox, an agronomist compares the soil to a battery recharged by plants, which act as solar panels.

Zimbabwean farmers who met for a focus group discussion, said the soil is like a road that takes one to a desired destination.

In a Senegalese agroforestry landscape where the soil has been described as a granary, the tree is a pillar, which ensures the solidity of the construction depending on the spacing of the pillars. And the fallow period is the time needed to repair, build or rebuild.

Metaphors about soils are numerous and play a role in the way problems are addressed by scientists and by practical experts such as farmers.

Exploring metaphors as mental images to be shared and investigated can feed a deliberative process amongst stakeholders with different visions, knowledges and sciences.

Metaphors complement each other, sometimes they overlap. With metaphor-developing interviews and workshops, we brought experts to share their knowledge on soil and to grasp the limit of what can be explained by only one metaphor. Thus, we promote a plurality of metaphors and a kind of awakening of metaphorical consciousness, about their influence on representation and their heuristic power.

With more than 150 soil metaphors that we grouped into several sets (heritage, living being, communities, source of knowledge...), the collection continues and aims to involve scientists, farmers and other stakeholders in an active process where mental images can be co-constructed in dialogue.

Metaphor use for transdisciplinarity is like gymnastics that requires warming up and brings flexibility, that is, the ability to combine research from different disciplines. Gymnastics also brings strength, that is the capacity to change paradigm by integrating proposals from sometimes unrecognized experts called in for deeper metaphorical exploration.

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