

Foreword

Wolfgang Hofkirchner

*ICT&S, University of Salzburg
Sigmund-Haffner-Gasse 18, A-5020 Salzburg
phone: ++43 662 8044 4821
fax: ++43 662 6389 4800
e-mail: wolfgang.hofkirchner@sbg.ac.at*

From 5 to 9 July 2006 the Gatherings in Biosemiotics 6 took place in Salzburg (see <http://www.biosemiotics2006.org>). On 4 July a Preprogramme was organised at the Center for Advanced Studies and Research in Information and Communication Technologies and Society (ICT&S Center) at the University of Salzburg. The title of the Preprogramme was “Biosemiotics in Transdisciplinary Contexts” – a meaningful title.

Transdisciplinarity is something that differs from mere interdisciplinarity. While an interdiscipline is an interaction of at least two different disciplines without necessarily entailing a change of these disciplines but possibly leaving them as they are, what I propose to call “transdiscipline” is the added value that may arise from such an interaction: it is a field in its own right – with a unique selling proposition that is due to the synergetic effects of the interaction. Biosemiotics is on the way of becoming a transdiscipline like that. In crossing biology and semiotics – and it is noteworthy that in the case in question a science, namely, a natural science, a so-to-say “hard” science, and a humanity, a social science, a cultural science, an often disrespected “soft” science cross their borders – the emerging field of biosemiotics is heading for a generalisation of the concepts that originate from the participating disciplines. Biosemiotics is not a new, specific field of semiotics without fundamentally changing traditional semiotics. It is part of the overarching trend towards greater permeability of the borders between the disciplines, reaching out for unity of knowledge through the diversity of disciplines.

Selected contributions of the Gatherings as well as the Preprogramme are published here. They underwent a peer review process. Matthias Schafranek, PhD student at the ICT&S Center, served as guest editor of this special issue of tripleC. Besides, proceedings are published by Günther Witzany with Umweb.