

In Lewis Carroll's 'Through the Looking-Glass,' the Red Queen says to Alice, 'It takes all the running you can do to stay in the same place.' This is the essence of the Red Queen hypothesis, which points to the need for continuous collective adaptation. And what if, by going against others, which is what anticonformity is all about, you could help achieve a common goal and accelerate collective adaptation to the multiple challenges our society is facing? This is the question that the TRANSCEND project aims to answer.

There is no need to convince anyone that collective adaptation is needed now more than ever. Its importance in the face of pandemics and wars has become painfully clear in recent years. Moreover, the digital age, climate change, the rise of social media and the rapid development of artificial intelligence are accelerating the pace of change every day, and we must find a way to adapt. Science can help, but it requires a truly transdisciplinary approach, which is still rare. The main problem is communication difficulties between different disciplines. As a result, most research on collective adaptation falls into one of two categories: either purely conceptual, with no translation into quantitative research, or vice versa - quantitative work, often in mathematics, physics or computer science, without taking into account knowledge from the social sciences. The TRANSCEND project aims to fill this gap by combining knowledge from the cognitive and social sciences with methods used by mathematicians and physicists within the theory of complex systems.

So why are we interested in anticonformity? First, anticonformity is an extremely complex type of social response, arising for many reasons and taking different forms that are not yet fully understood. Second, its role in the context of collective adaptation seems non-trivial, because the effects of anticonformity can be both positive and negative. Which will prevail in the context of collective change, the negative or the positive aspect, is likely to depend on many factors, and it is the identification of these factors that we will be concerned with. It may turn out that you do have to run, but not always in the same direction as others.