

About finding a tool that fits my approach: A reflection on transdisciplinarity

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As a generalist, I have worn many hats in my life, from being a Young Fair Trade Advocate and Finance Coordinator, an adventure kids camp leader and language coach, to ultimately also a TISE student and class representative. Driven by my motivation to better understand complex systems, collaboration and our role in shaping a just and equitable future, I started TISE, not yet knowing the role transdisciplinarity would take in my own journey. Exploring the concept through our Design Thinking projects provided me with a methodological toolbox for something I had intuitively applied in practice until then: incorporating diverse stakeholders in projects, embracing ambiguity, and co-creating processes.

Transdisciplinarity fascinates me because it offers both: a solid academic methodology and real-world applicability and flexibility. Previously, I often struggled with the disconnect between research and practitioners' problems. TISE gave me a space where I wasn't only allowed but actually encouraged to think the two together. Through the TFRT and different workshops, I filled my transdisciplinarity toolbox with hardware like Causal Loop Diagrams and Innovation Systems and software like how to manage co-creative processes and engage stakeholders. My master thesis brought all learnings together as I employed a transdisciplinary approach to solve the real-world challenge of how public policies can foster regenerative business models. Through my two practical partners, the Doughnut Economic Action Lab and the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, I had high practitioner co-leadership. The three Expert Round Tables constituting my core data collection showed the fruitfulness of transdisciplinarity in action. Instead of collecting isolated expert perspectives, the stakeholders were able to build on each other's thoughts and co-develop ideas and recommendations. Throughout the research, I embraced the reflexivity of transdisciplinarity and continuously reviewed and shaped my methodology, which was sometimes challenging but extremely helpful when operating in a complex and uncertain space. Being able to situate my research within lived experiences and using the outcomes of my thesis for a new module of the Wellbeing Economy Policy Design course made my research meaningful to me.

IN CHALLENGING TIMES, WE NEED DISCOURSE MORE THAN EVER. BETWEEN PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT OPINIONS, BETWEEN SILOED RESEARCH AND BETWEEN ACADEMIA, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PUBLIC. TRANSDISCIPLINARITY OFFERS AN AVENUE INTO THAT

Anna Weber is passionate about transdisciplinary solutions for regenerative businesses. Having worked at the World Fair Trade Organization and being a TISE graduate shaped her perspectives on designing fair and resilient systems that prioritise people and planet.

Currently, she works at the Purpose Foundation, promoting steward-ownership as a solution for businesses to stay self-determined and mission-oriented. She co-develops research and learning materials with the Doughnut Economic Action Lab.

