

Learning to see the system: Reflections on transdisciplinary practice

CHIARA MIOZZO

From the moment I first encountered transdisciplinarity in the description of the methodology used in the TISE Master, it almost felt like a systematisation of an obvious need: the need to connect rather than separate, to build networks and break down silos in the knowledge-making process. In many ways, this way of thinking had always felt like my most natural tendency. Nevertheless, it remains a demanding approach, as it continuously challenges one's assumptions, disciplinary comfort zones, and ways of framing problems.

Our approach to transdisciplinarity did not begin with our final project. It emerged through collaborative work, exchanges with peers from different backgrounds, and engagement with real-world problems where no single discipline, dataset, or perspective could provide sufficient answers. What transdisciplinarity offered was not simply the integration of knowledge, but an invitation to dialogue, between academic fields, between science and practice, and between different ways of understanding reality. It is also an invitation for each actor to avoid positioning themselves as the sole knower of a field, and instead to recognise themselves as one important piece of a larger puzzle.

Being part of a larger puzzle naturally shifts attention from isolated questions to the system as a whole and to the constellation of actors involved. A transdisciplinary process therefore forces you to widen the perspective before narrowing it: to understand interdependencies, incentives, institutional constraints, and practical realities before responsibly zooming in on specific aspects. While research often tends toward a rapid narrowing of scope, transdisciplinarity insists on this initial opening. In this sense, it cultivates a form of intellectual humility on accepting complexity, uncertainty, and partial knowledge as necessary starting points rather than obstacles.

This systemic perspective becomes tangible in practice when working in heterogeneous teams. Collaborating across disciplines and with practitioners made visible how knowledge is shaped by diverse skills, experiences, and viewpoints, and evaluated not only by academic rigor but also by social relevance, usability, and governance dynamics – both positive and negative. Scientists and practitioners alike were pushed to “decenter” their expertise: to translate, question, and reframe it so that it could become meaningful for others in the system. This process was sometimes uncomfortable, but deeply productive.

Personally, these transdisciplinary experiences became the foundation for my subsequent academic trajectory. The practical challenges raised by stakeholders during the project sparked my interest in the legal and governance dimensions of data sharing. This interest was further developed, building on our [IFRI project](#) on the role of data analytics and big data for Austrian medtech SMEs, through a thesis focused on the European Health Data Space. These experiences strengthened my awareness of how technical innovation, regulatory frameworks, and societal needs intersect, and how essential it is to approach such questions from a systemic and integrative perspective.

TO ME, TRANSDISCIPLINARITY IS ULTIMATELY NOT ONLY A METHODOLOGY, BUT A POSTURE: AN OPENNESS TO DIALOGUE, A WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE ACROSS BOUNDARIES, AND A COMMITMENT TO PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE THAT MATTERS BEYOND ACADEMIC CIRCLES. ESPECIALLY IN A WORLD FACING INCREASINGLY COMPLEX AND INTERCONNECTED CHALLENGES, THIS POSTURE IS ESSENTIAL TO CULTIVATE.

Chiara Miozzo is a transdisciplinary researcher with a background in economics and art management and an MSc in TISE, currently pursuing a PhD in EU Law. Her work explores how data governance, technology, and policy interact to support the use of data analytics in disaster risk management, bridging EU data law and disaster law through a legal and transdisciplinary approach.

