

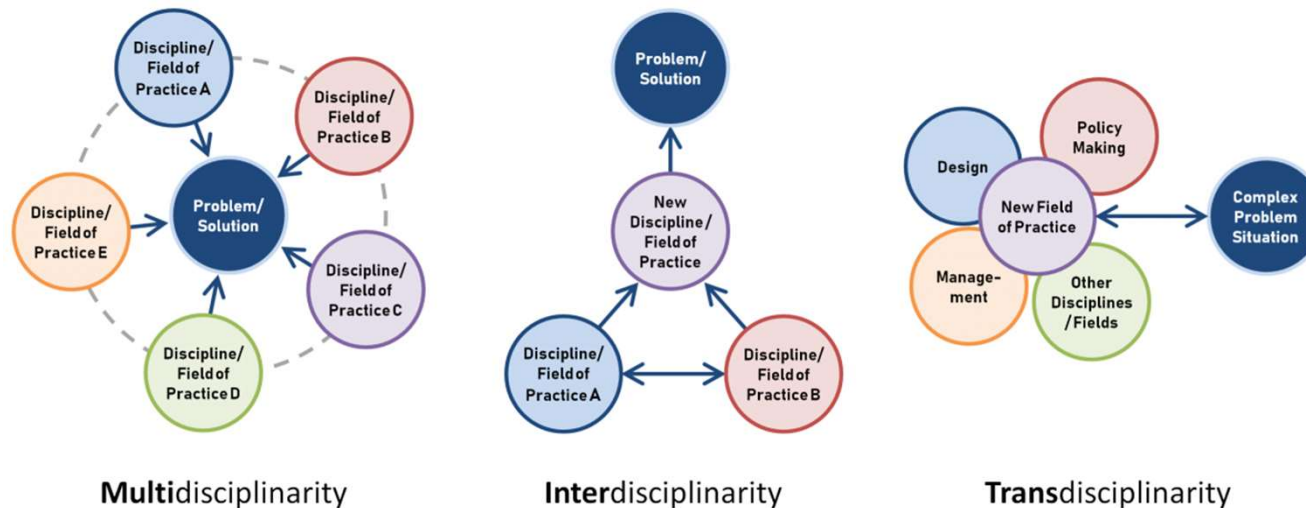
How to Organize Transdisciplinary Innovation Projects: A Case Study

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Society faces diverse 'wicked problems'; these require **transdisciplinary approaches**, beyond multi- and inter-disciplinary (McPhee et al., 2018)



However, people tend to **underestimate the difficulties** of transdisciplinary work. As if simply putting diverse people in a project will do the trick.

Context: We work in a multi-year, transdisciplinary project: 12 people with diverse backgrounds, on a ‘wicked problem’; promote wisdom in policy making (energy, transport, surveillance) ([Wise Policy Making](#), 2019-2022)

Research goals: To better understand transdisciplinary innovation **from within** and **over a period of time**; and to contribute to methodologies that can help to promote and facilitate transdisciplinary innovation

Orientation: We draw from **systems theory** and **organizational learning** (Senge, 1990; Argyris, 1999; Agazarian, 2005), and elements of **Theory U** (Scharmer, 2018), in both conducting and studying this project

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Our first, tentative findings, from observation and journaling (1/2)

- **System approach:** Our project team is a ‘social system’; our goal: to develop methods and tools to promote wisdom in policy making
- **Goal orientation:** We are learning to distinguish between ‘functional’ behaviour (towards that goal) and ‘personal’ behaviour
- **Differences:** Quality of the project team’s work develops over time through recognizing, acknowledging and integrating differences
- **Openness:** When the social system is open to differences, information can be explored and transformed into new knowledge

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Our first, tentative findings, from observation and journaling (2/2)

- **Context:** e.g., enabling and restraining forces; the challenge is to make these forces productive, ‘functional’ (towards goal)
- **Craftmanship**, e.g., curiosity, creativity, awareness, presence, and **reflexivity** (address process and relationships; ‘functional’)
- **Growth:** e.g., project team members learn over-time in face to face meetings (and can fall back to ‘survival’, e.g., in virtual meetings)
- ... (to be continued; research in progress)