



TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH PRACTICES AS PRAXIS





INARY

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What happens when research resists containment?

Don Parker

The boundaries that define disciplines, institutions, and research methodologies are neither fixed nor impermeable. They are provisional constructs, temporary agreements, responsive to evolving epistemic, cultural, and technological contexts.¹ In this space of flux, research becomes an act of negotiation. Knowledge is not simply discovered; it is enacted, iterated, and performed.²

This chapter does not merely describe transdisciplinary research, it performs it. Refusing the linearity of conventional academic writing, it operates as a graphic exposition: layered, multi-modal, and deliberately unresolved. This approach resists inherited norms of research articulation that privilege textual clarity and fixed outcomes.³ In their place, it offers opacity, friction, and visual uncertainty as legitimate tools for inquiry.⁴

At the core of this approach, I propose a concept of a praxis point of interface, a theoretical hinge between performance and reflection, institution and deviation. Here, research is not a linear process but a collision site: a threshold where methodologies bleed into one another, where disciplines lose their coherence, and where epistemologies are reconfigured through contact.⁵

This work opens a space where form and content are inseparable—where you, the reader, must navigate with your eyes as well as your intellect. It invites your interaction rather than passive absorption, proposing research not as a fixed product but as a porous, shifting encounter in motion.

This is not a prelude to conclusion. It is an invitation to
begin differently.

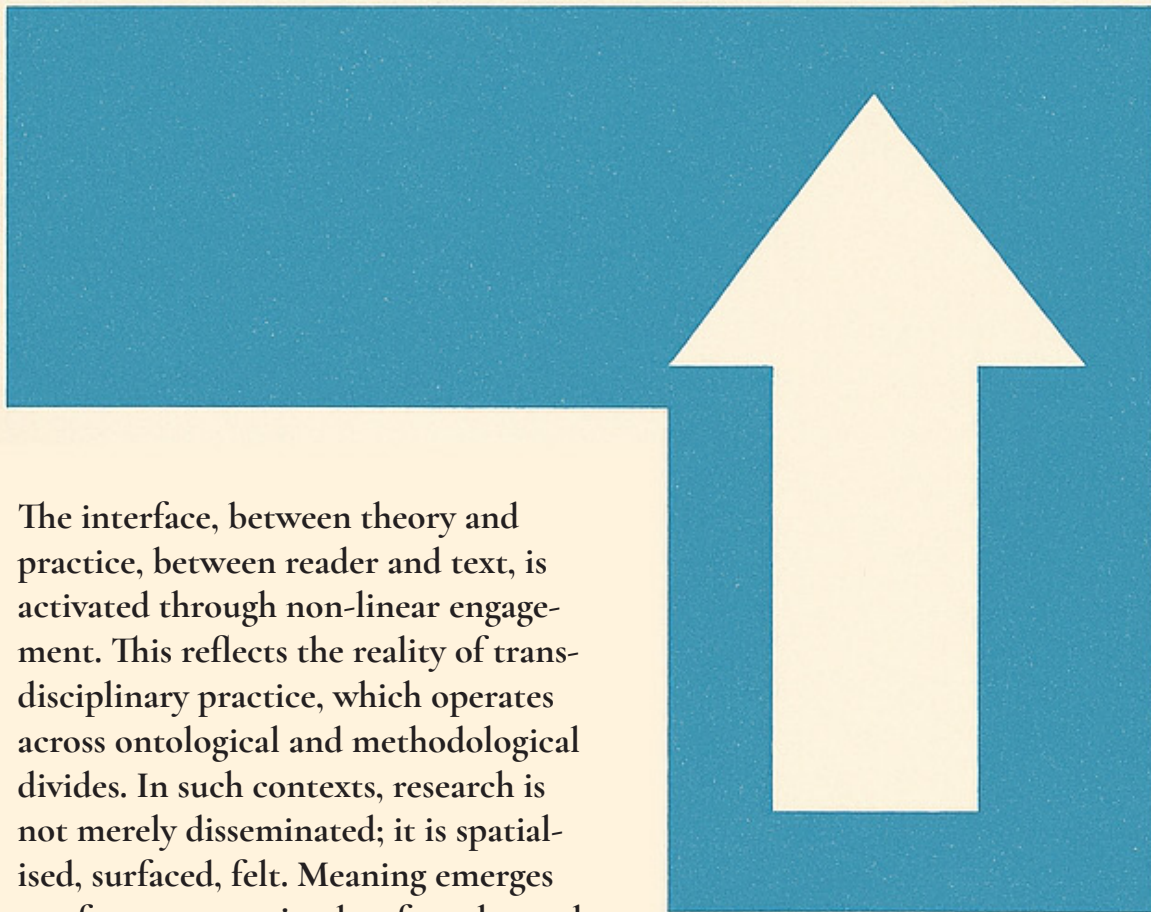
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VISUALISING THE POROUS INTERFACE



To understand this praxis point of interface, you must first interrogate the mechanisms by which institutions shape, validate, and constrain knowledge production. Academic systems often privilege research that conforms to narrow paradigms, those which emphasise textual legibility, fixity, and linear logic over embodied, processual, or multi-modal forms.⁶ This chapter deliberately diverges from such paradigms. Its visual-tactile structure invites you to encounter these epistemic tensions not just intellectually, but sensorially, to read with your body as much as your mind.



The interface, between theory and practice, between reader and text, is activated through non-linear engagement. This reflects the reality of transdisciplinary practice, which operates across ontological and methodological divides. In such contexts, research is not merely disseminated; it is spatialised, surfaced, felt. Meaning emerges not from progression but from layered, situated interaction.⁷

This methodological approach extends Nelson's model of Practice as Research (PaR), which originated in performance studies, into the broader terrain of art and design. Where PaR foregrounds the entanglement of creative and critical modes, transdisciplinary praxis amplifies this entanglement by traversing institutional, disciplinary, and medial boundaries.⁸

What is visualised in this chapter is not simply an argument, but a topology, a

spatial and conceptual mapping of how research is held, moved, and constrained. These topologies resist flattening. They provoke the reader to move between fragments, to navigate tension, to dwell in interpretive uncertainty. In doing so, the chapter enacts its core proposition: that research, to remain alive, must remain porous.





PRAXIS AS LIMINAL SPACE **A**





If research is to be understood as an active engagement with knowledge in flux, then its articulation must reflect this condition. The praxis point of interface offers a framework for thinking about research not as a stable category but as a liminal zone, where disciplines, methods, and epistemologies converge, collide, and are continuously renegotiated.⁹

This framing extends Nelson's model of PaR into a broader transdisciplinary field, departing from fixity and treating research not as the documentation of prior knowledge but as a process of sense-making enacted in real time. The praxis point of interface proposed here offers a scaffold for navigating this fluid terrain, one that resists linearity and opens space for emergent, embodied modes of inquiry. It positions research as an iterative, reflexive practice in which theoretical understanding and material engagement evolve together.¹⁰

Transdisciplinarity, as invoked here, is not simply the crossing of disciplinary boundaries (as in interdisciplinarity), but their deliberate transgression. It demands methods that emerge through context, and epistemologies that remain responsive to the situated, the provisional, and the performative.

Liminality, here, is not a passive space of in-betweenness but an active site of disruption and potential. It is where institutional logic and performative logic grind against one another, generating friction that can lead to new epistemic formations.¹¹ Within such spaces, research becomes provisional, contingent, always in the process of becoming.

This has methodological consequences. The researcher is no longer a neutral observer but a participant, shaping and shaped by the interface of praxis. This chapter enacts that position: hybrid, graphic, fragmented, uncertain. It is an invitation to remain within liminality, not as a prelude to resolution but as a valid research space in its own right.

**“To operate in
liminal space is
to accept instability –
not as failure, but as
a condition of
knowledge production.”**



THE HERMENEU- TIC SPIRAL

RPA, UOAs, CENTRES

TRANSDISCIPLINARY

UIB

INTERNATIONAL

COLLABORATIVE (PARTNERS)



Research situated within transdisciplinary praxis cannot be approached as a linear process. Instead, it unfolds as a hermeneutic spiral, an iterative movement between doing and reflecting, between encounter and insight.¹² This spiral resists the closure often sought by institutional validation processes, such as fixed findings, metric-driven outputs, or benchmarked outcomes that prioritise legibility over complexity.¹³

Understanding emerges gradually, shaped by each return to a question. Reflexivity is central to Nelson's PaR, where creative activity is not illustrative of theory but constitutive of it. The artefact, whether performance, design, or diagram, is not an outcome but a site of inquiry, alive in its unfolding.

Here, the spiral is both concept and method. Research phases are not separated but entangled. Rather than forming a neutral 'third space', this work foregrounds the performativity of knowledge, how ideas, materials, and actions loop, clash, and coalesce in motion.

Visual motifs, layers, fragments, loops, echo this logic. The page becomes a site of epistemic movement, spiralling across media, registers, and modes of meaning-making.

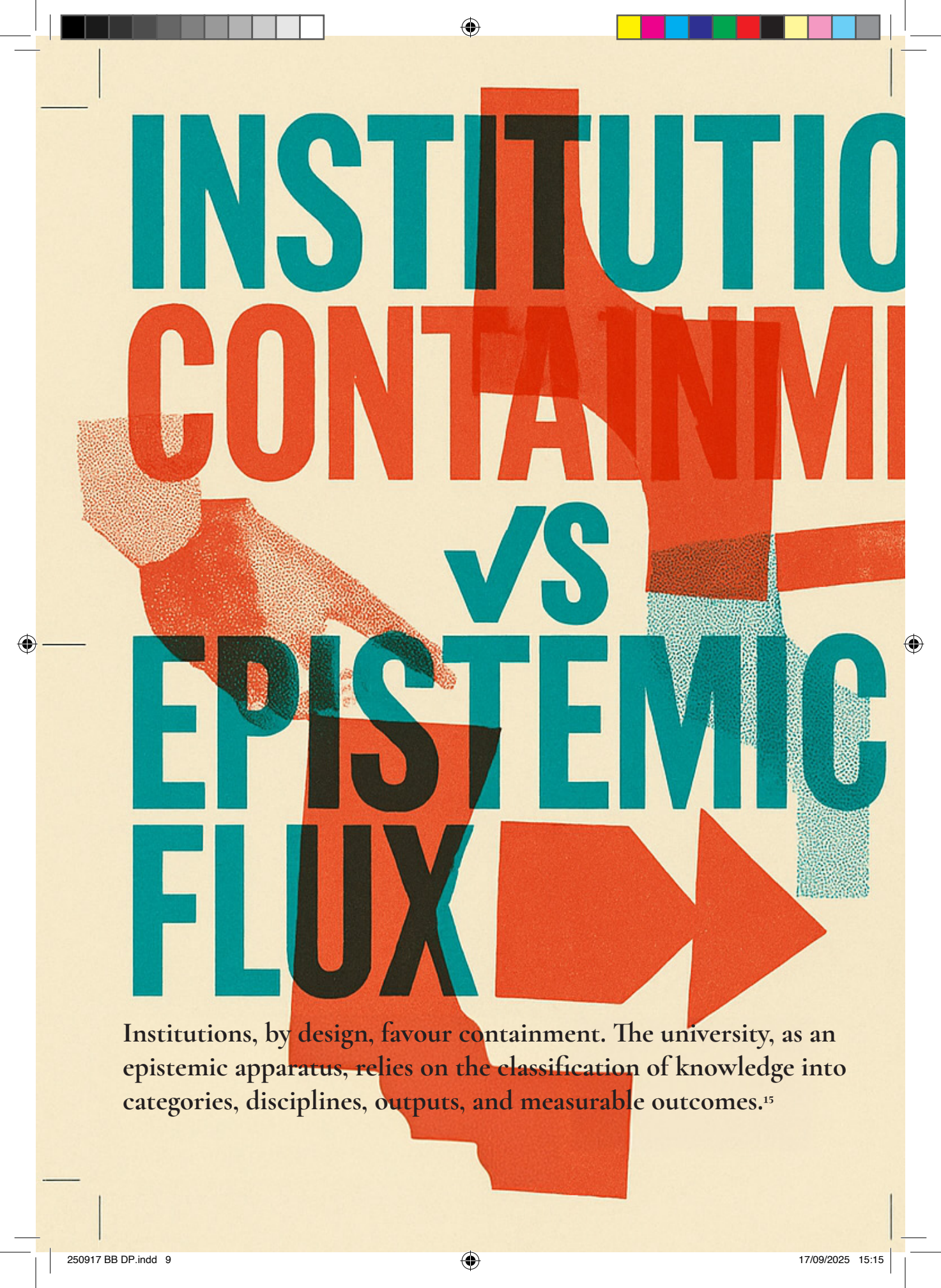
This rethinks research temporality. Understanding is not delivered as conclusion but accumulated across encounters. Meaning is negotiated, not extracted, always provisional, always becoming.¹⁴



**Meaning is
not extracted;
it is
negotiated in
motion.**

To institutions accustomed to linear logics and fixed research pathways, this may appear incoherent. Yet the spiral is not a detour, it is the method. Research becomes circling: always approaching, never arriving. The movement is the work, navigating closed structures, slipping between borders, opening new ground for praxis to take root.



The graphic features a light beige background. Large, bold text is arranged in four lines: 'INSTITUTION' (teal), 'CONTAINMENT' (orange), 'VS' (teal), and 'EPISTEMIC FLUX' (teal). The text is overlaid with abstract, layered shapes in orange and teal, some with a stippled texture. A large orange arrow points from the left towards the text. At the top, there are color calibration bars and registration marks. The overall style is modern and layered.

INSTITUTION CONTAINMENT VS EPISTEMIC FLUX

Institutions, by design, favour containment. The university, as an epistemic apparatus, relies on the classification of knowledge into categories, disciplines, outputs, and measurable outcomes.¹⁵



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In many ways, research must be made legible to systems of assessment, framed within conventions of textual expression and validated by recognised methodologies. Yet this marginalises many forms and languages of research that cannot be neatly contained within such structures.

Transdisciplinary praxis disrupts this architecture. It exposes the porousness of categories and destabilises the logic of containment. This chapter does not offer a single line of argument or a singular artefact of knowledge. Instead, it maps a condition of flux, an aesthetic and epistemic landscape in which research resists resolution.

The institutional need for clarity and completion is met here with deliberate ambiguity, repetition, and spatial displacement. Visual strategies, layering, fragmentation, typographic play, challenge the hierarchy of text over image, outcome over process.¹⁶ They open interpretive seams within the structure of academic legitimacy.

This tension is productive. Containment and flux are not binary opposites but dynamic forces that define the praxis point of interface. The institution requires flux to evolve; flux requires containment to be noticed. The goal, then, is not to escape the institution, but to refigure its boundaries, to work from the inside out, unmaking by remaking.

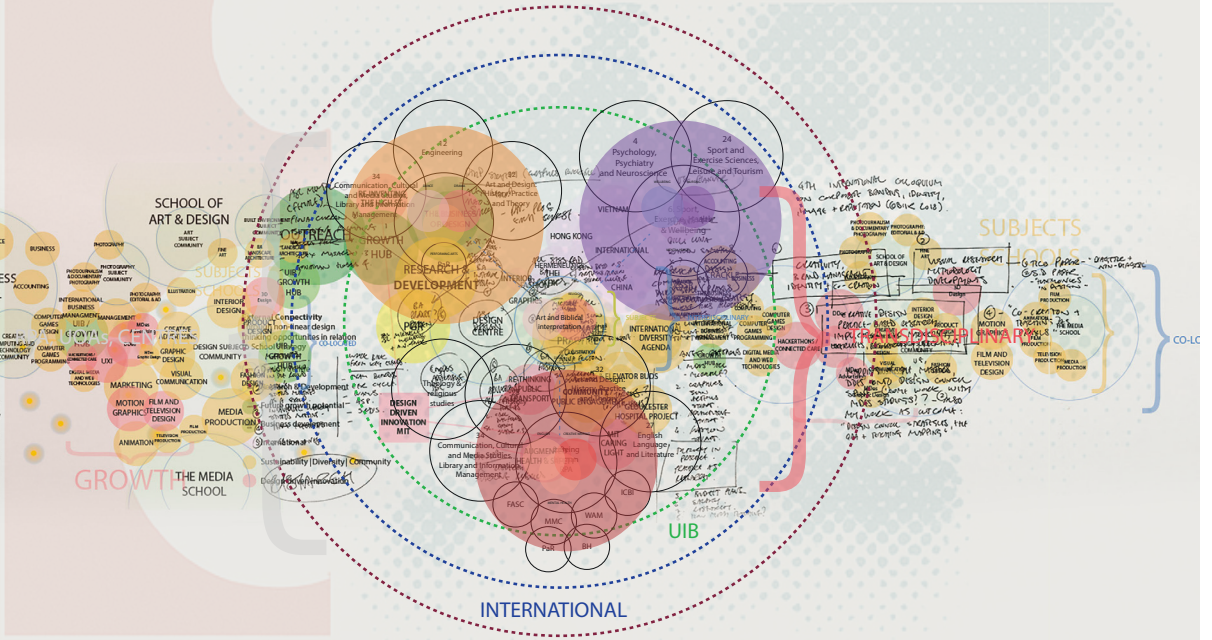
Such a position calls for forms of research that are performative, relational, and generative rather than definitive. It asks not just what knowledge is, but how it becomes, and under what conditions.

In transdisciplinary practice, containment becomes a site of pressure and flux a site of potential. The boundary is no longer a wall, but a membrane.





MODEL





The praxis point of interface is not only conceptual, it has been activated within institutional structures. At the University of Bristol's Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, this ethos was embedded in the development of three new postgraduate programmes in 2025. Designed as inherently transdisciplinary, these courses draw together students from business, engineering, the arts, and media to collaborate on real-world innovation challenges.

The structure of these programmes reflects the porous university model. They abandon rigid disciplinary silos in favour of modular, adaptive, and studio-based learning formats. Here, students encounter multiple epistemologies, not in sequence, but in collision. Knowledge is generated through engagement with difference, through the friction of unaligned perspectives.¹⁷

Rather than position transdisciplinarity as an aspirational outcome, these programmes treat it as a founding condition. The curriculum is grounded in systems thinking, design methods, speculative prototyping, and iterative project work. Assessment is

This is not simply a pedagogic innovation. It is an institutional intervention

formative, dialogical, and often oral, shifting focus away from standardised outputs and toward processual insight.¹⁸

This is not simply a pedagogic innovation. It is an institutional intervention. By embedding porous structures into programme architecture, the university becomes a laboratory for transdisciplinary praxis. The act of programme design becomes research: performative, recursive, unfinished, mirroring the hermeneutic spiral of inquiry where understanding is enacted, not delivered.

Such approaches challenge the institution's own comfort zones. They demand tolerance for ambiguity and reward collaboration over individual authorship. In doing so, they reconfigure the university from within, not as a static body, but as a porous system capable of learning and being reimaged.

This is not a blueprint. It is a proposition. The porous university is not a place, but a practice.





VISUAL- TACTILE RESEARCH





To conduct research through transdisciplinary praxis is to shift our sensory mode of engagement. This chapter does not merely enact this shift, it performs it through what might be termed visual-tactile research: a mode of inquiry that foregrounds spatial reasoning, embodied cognition, and the materiality of thought.¹⁹

Where textual modes of articulation privilege the linear and propositional, visual-tactile modes operate through association, juxtaposition, and the felt logic of form. The visual, as it

reconfiguration. The page becomes a studio surface where knowing is activated through sensing.²¹

Layout is not neutral. Typography is a voice. White space is an argument. The material construction of this chapter challenges dominant expectations of clarity, structure, and coherence as the markers of rigour.²²

You as the reader are invited not simply to consume this work, but to navigate it: to pause, circle back, and reflect. The visual-tac-

The page becomes a studio surface, the chapter a site of making.

intersects with the tactile, becomes epistemic: a mode of thinking, a surface for speculation, a site of interpretation.²⁰

This approach draws from design and studio-based practices in which research is conducted through mark, gesture, material testing, and spatial composition. Knowledge emerges through assemblage, disassembly, and

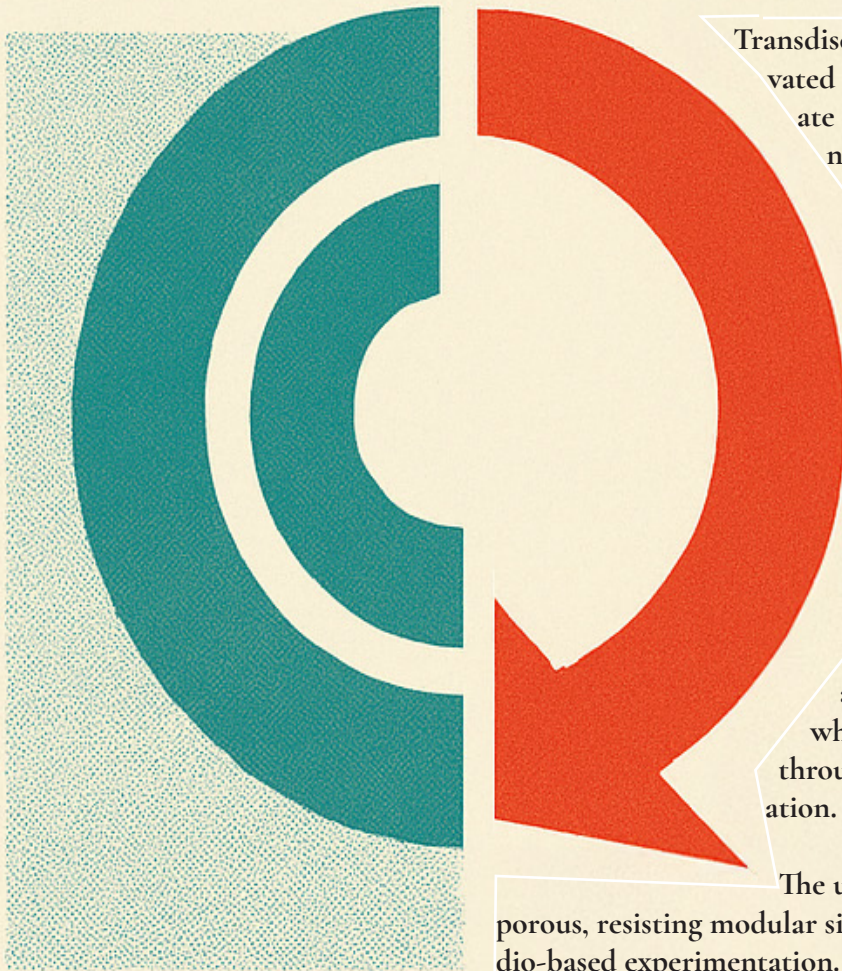
tile orientation decentres authorial control and opens spaces for interaction where meaning is shaped by encounter, not merely delivered as content.

This is research that must be handled, visually, conceptually, and physically. It asks not just what you know, but how you touch it.



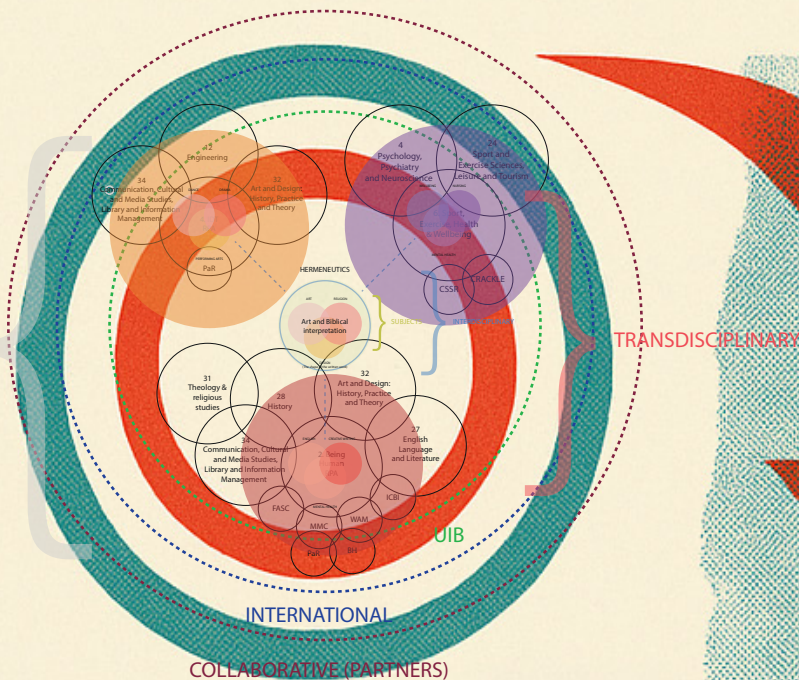
CASE STUDY: INOV10001

RPA, UOAs, CENTRES



Transdisciplinary praxis was activated through the undergraduate unit INOV10001: “Innovation & Enterprise.” Delivered to students from engineering, sciences, social sciences, and the arts, the unit created a live research environment where disciplinary boundaries were deliberately unsettled. The aim was not interdisciplinary collaboration but the construction of a liminal learning space, where knowledge emerged through friction and negotiation.

The unit’s structure was porous, resisting modular silos in favour of studio-based experimentation. Students co-developed



“team charters, engaged with live briefs, and iterated through rapid prototyping cycles. Assessment embedded the entanglement of doing and thinking through collaborative artefacts and individual reflective critiques.”²³

What marked this unit as transdisciplinary was not content

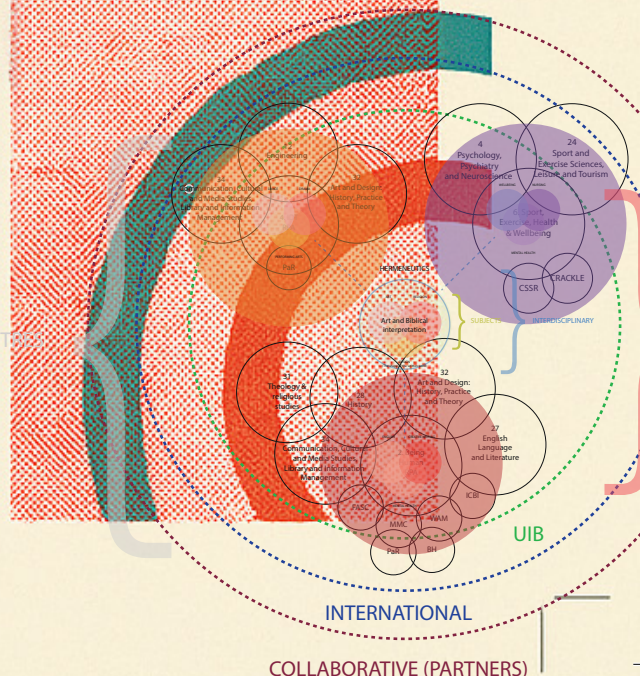
but performative structure. Ambiguity was welcomed. Partial understanding became insight. Tutors facilitated epistemic risk, supporting multiple logics of knowing. Reflection unfolded within a hermeneutic spiral, cyclical, recursive, situated.

The graphic composition of this chapter mirrors these pedagogical dynamics. Learning was spatial, relational, and nonlinear, echoed through layering, typographic disruption, and diagrammatic structure. Meaning arises not from sequence but from movement, sensing, and pattern recognition.

The unit revealed the limits of conventional validation. Emergent knowledge could

not be captured by predefined outcomes. Reflective critique became a recursive site of methodological awareness, where students analysed how they came to know.

INOVI0001 was not just a unit of study. It enacted a porous, performative research space, bringing the praxis point of interface to life within institutional systems.





ITeRAtIVE LeaRNING & UseR Engagement





Transdisciplinary practice resists fixed outcomes. It thrives through iterative engagement with uncertainty. In INOV1000 and subsequent postgraduate units, pedagogy was shaped by cycles of prototyping, feedback, reflection, and revision, more than techniques, these loops enacted epistemological commitments.²⁴

Learning was performative and recursive. Students conducted interviews, tested mock-ups, and worked with live stakeholders. But the “user” was not just external, each student became actor and critic, participant and observer. Reflection folded back into the act of doing, enacting a hermeneutic spiral of practice.

Workshops followed no fixed path. Teams diverged in method and rhythm. Success was measured not by replication, but by responsiveness, how students adapted to context, negotiated difference, and acted within uncertainty. Instability became generative.

The studio functioned as a laboratory for epistemic experimentation. Ideas were sketched, broken, rebuilt. Reflection was not retrospective commentary but active reorientation. Assessment moved with the rhythm of the work, not in opposition.²⁵

Visualisations in this chapter echo these loops. Layered, fragmentary, nonlinear, they resist prescriptive sequencing. Like the pedagogic space, the page becomes a praxis point of interface. Readers are invited to navigate, not consume.

Here, learning is not linear but spiral. Knowledge emerges not from closure, but from motion, held in the tensions between structure and play, between framing and flux.





ASSESSMENT VS EMERGENCE





Emergence

Assessment is a site of tension within transdisciplinary praxis. Traditional models demand predefined criteria, standardised outputs, and measurable outcomes. Yet emergent knowledge, relational, provisional, processual, resists this architecture. How can we assess what unfolds in motion, and often escapes representation?

In INOV10001 and its postgraduate successors, assessment became dialogic. Reflective critique, peer-led discussion, and tutor learning conversations replaced static grading. Students were evaluated not on what they knew, but how they navigated ambiguity, reflected in action, and surfaced understanding in motion.²⁶

This reorientation parallels broader debates around how PaR is assessed within the PhD and research excellence assessments such as the UK's REF. In each case, performative knowledge must be translated into textual outputs for institutional legibility, yet these translations risk flattening complexity. The pedagogic practices described here resist that flattening, offering alternative models for evidencing rigour through interaction, iteration, and reflexivity.

Tutors in these contexts shift from evaluators to epistemic facilitators. Validity becomes situated, a felt coherence rather than a measurable endpoint. Learning is recognised not through replication, but through resonance, improvisation, and dialogue.²⁷

This chapter adopts the same logic. Interpretation becomes a practice. In this sense, the visual-tactile mode signals new spaces of encounter and articulation – ones that must deviate from normative fixities in order to remain porous, open, and alive to research as process. The reader must navigate across fragments, folding meaning through spatial movement and layered reflection.

To assess emergent learning, we must assess emergently. This is not a loss of rigour, but a shift in its coordinates.

**Assessment,
in this model,
becomes an
act of shared
attention.**



PRAXIS MANIFESTO



**THIS IS NOT A CONCLUSION. IT IS A PROPOSITION.
THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE NOT TRUTHS
BUT PROVOCATIONS. THEY REFLECT A PRAXIS
THAT IS ALWAYS IN MOTION—ALWAYS
NEGOTIATING ITS CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY.**

**LET THEM BE READ AS FRAGMENTS.
LET THEM BE HELD AS QUESTIONS.**

**TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH
PRACTICES AS PRAXIS:
VISUALISING THE POROUS INTERFACE**

"TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH PRACTICES AS PRAXIS:



Research is not what you know. It is how you come to know.
The institution is not a neutral container. It is an active participant.
Method is not a route. It is a rhythm.
Interdisciplinarity is not an outcome. It is a beginning.
Practice is not an illustration of theory. It is a site of theory.
Visuals are not decoration. They are argument.
Reflection is not retrospective. It is recursive.
Uncertainty is not a gap. It is a condition.
Validity is not standardisation. It is resonance.
Borders are not limits. They are sites of negotiation.²⁸
Outcomes are not the end. They are a trace.
Collaboration is not consensus. It is friction.
Teaching is not transmission. It is co-creation.
Learning is not linear. It is iterative.
Assessment is not surveillance. It is shared attention.
Research is not contained. It is porous.

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the generous intellectual provocations and structural latitude provided by the editorial leadership of Jacqueline Taylor and the contributors to the 'Beyond Borders' project. I would also like to thank the students and colleagues at the University of Bristol's Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, whose practice-led engagement and willingness to experiment with the limits of research validation directly inspired the methodological direction of this work. Special thanks to Angus Pryor for early dialogues on graphic exposition, and to all those involved in shaping the INOV10001 teaching and assessment design, which continues to inform this praxis.



FINAL REFLECTIONS + CALL TO ACTION



We are not outside
the university

We are not from
the university

We are not
the university
We are shaping it
from within.

We are not outside the univ
We are shaping it from au



34
Communication, Cultural
and Media Studies,
Library and Information
Management

12
Engineering

32
Art and Design:
History, Practice
and Theory

This chapter does not conclude;
it dissipates.

What has been offered here is not

Institutional
Containment
vs Epistemic
Flux



31
Theology &
religious
studies

28
History

34
Communication, Cultural
and Media Studies,
Library and Information
Management

HERMENEUTICS

ART RELIGION
Art and Biblical
interpretation

Art and
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and

2. Being
Human
RPA

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MENTAL HEALTH

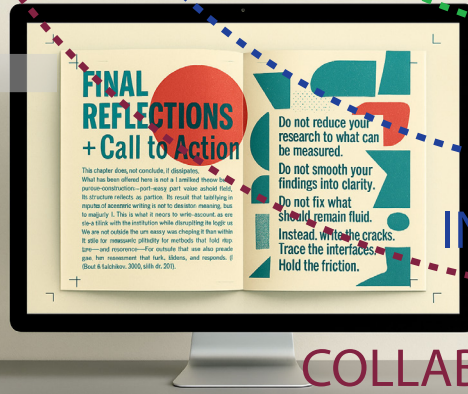
MMC

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INTERNATION

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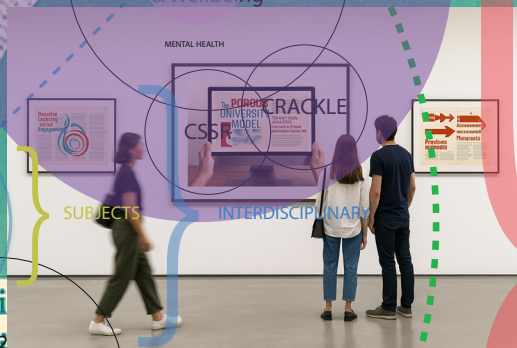
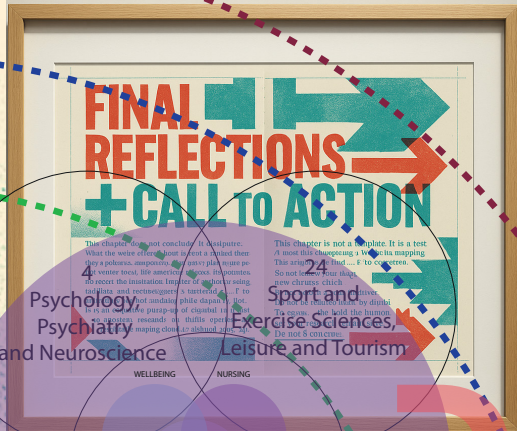
If there is a call to action,
It is this:

DO NOT REDUCE YOUR
RESEARCH TO WHAT
CAN BE MEASURED.

DO NOT SMOOTH YOUR
FINDINGS INTO CLARITY

DO NOT FIX WHAT
SHOULD REMAIN FLUID.

WRITE
THE CRACKS.
TRACE THE
INTERFACES.
HOLD THE
FRICTION.



The work conbred in three pagery se-
calls for a shilt- we ontry to have we
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