Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

MASTER'S THESIS

EGArt: Economics and Administration of Arts and Culture

Innovation as situated practice in cultural organisations

How can practice-based and videographic research contribute to the understanding of innovation processes in cultural organisations?

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Academic Year: 2025-2026

To those who walked beside me,

and to the dreams that kept pulling me forward.

For who I was when this journey began, for who I am today,

and for the person I will still be chasing tomorrow.

Some destinations are only beginnings seen from the other side.

Keep on chasing.

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Introduction

«*What's the most resilient parasite?*

[…]

A bacteria? A virus?

[…]

An intestinal worm?

[…]

An idea.

[…]

Resilient, highly contagious. Once an idea's taken hold in the brain it's almost impossible to eradicate. A person can cover it up, ignore it – but it stays there.»[1]

I. The circulation of an idea

I begin with the way ideas take root, circulate and reshape the spaces into which they are introduced. When an idea gains institutional relevance, it rarely remains confined to abstract speculation but instead settles into professional vocabularies, directs policy agendas, reorganises administrative routines and establishes the criteria through which institutional success is recognised. In contemporary cultural organisations, innovation stands out for the authority it has acquired, its broad circulation and the legitimacy it is accorded.

The vocabulary of innovation now runs through cultural management, museum studies, public policy, digital initiatives and regional development, and cultural institutions are continuously encouraged to innovate. They are urged to revise their curatorial programmes, forms of public participation, economic structures, archival systems and digital presence, and within this administrative discourse I read innovation as a term that already implies a positive judgement. The act of presenting an initiative as innovative is enough to suggest relevance and progressive thinking. Conversely, a perceived reluctance to innovate produces anxiety, suggesting inertia, obsolescence or a failure to respond to the demands of contemporary public life.

For me, this acceptance raises a conceptual difficulty: innovation is invoked to describe almost every form of institutional change, with the result that its analytical boundaries become indistinct. The term is

[1] C. NOLAN, *Inception: the shooting script*, Insight Editions, San Rafael, CA 2010. pp. 24-25

applied with equal ease to the acquisition of interactive software, the commission of iconic architecture, the introduction of participatory workshops, the restructuring of municipal funding and the automated classification of collections. When the term covers such different activities, I find its meaning difficult to pin down, even as that meaning is taken for granted.

Innovation can then become an administrative reflex that celebrates novelty while leaving the social relations, material conditions, professional compromises and historical tensions of institutional transformation unexamined.

II. The institutional reality of cultural organisations

I examine these tensions in museums and cultural organisations, where they become particularly visible. Their work combines the conservation and interpretation of culture with public responsibility, organisational survival and changing forms of social participation. These organisations have developed within particular political, material and symbolic environments, and the meaning of innovation shifts as it encounters those environments.

Historically, the museum has operated as an authoritative space of classification and visual regulation. Architectural layouts, arrangements and display devices have shaped what can be seen. During recent decades, these foundations of institutional authority have been repeatedly questioned and cultural organisations have been asked to reconsider their public purpose and to move away from paternalistic models of transmission towards participatory platforms and community spaces. They are expected to open their collections, engage diverse publics, address contested histories, contribute to territorial regeneration and adapt to pervasive digital environments. These expectations place cultural organisations under continuous pressure because they must safeguard tangible and intangible heritage for the future while demonstrating public engagement in the present.

In approaching a museum or gallery, I cannot reduce change to the installation of a digital interface, the launch of an online platform or the publication of a strategic vision because every initiative encounters the physical properties of the exhibition space, the material vulnerability of objects, the professional habits of curators and conservators, the expectations of visitors and the ethical responsibilities of the public sphere. Innovation takes shape through these encounters, including the delays, adjustments and compromises that official accounts frequently compress or omit.

My starting point for this thesis was the difficulty of innovation: models, discourses, practices, technologies, spaces and institutional expectations come into contact without fully coinciding. Innovation carries its history into institutional life, where it becomes entangled with material conditions, forms of experience and processes of mediation and where it develops through ordinary routines and situated decisions as much as through declared strategies.

This is why I pay attention to the ways in which the ambition for change is interpreted, enacted, resisted and revised within the fabric of cultural work.

III. Practical inquiry, moving images and the Research Question

The problem I address in this thesis arises from the distance between the ways innovation is commonly formulated and the ways it is experienced and produced within cultural organisations.

Mainstream accounts of innovation, largely derived from management theory, economics, and technological disciplines, frequently rely on assumptions of linearity and control. From this perspective, problems are expected to be isolated, interventions planned systematically and institutional change directed towards identifiable outcomes. Yet the daily life of cultural organisations unfolds amid competing values, inherited structures and consequences that cannot always be anticipated: this makes the institutional reality of innovation more provisional than its strategic language often suggests.

When innovation is studied primarily through retrospective interviews, performance metrics, policy documents or completed projects, this situated dimension can remain difficult to access because such approaches record the official rhetoric of innovation, the finished exhibition, the published strategy or the functioning application but are less able to hold the tacit understandings, embodied gestures, material resistances, informal discussions and practical adjustments through which those visible outcomes are produced. My concern is with the position from which I examine innovation and the forms of knowledge that the research method allows to emerge.

If innovation in cultural organisations is a collective accomplishment sustained through the texture of everyday practice, I need to consider research methods that can approach those conditions as they unfold. Practical and mediated forms of inquiry may offer ways to observe how institutional change becomes perceptible. This leads me to the question that guides the thesis:

> *"How can practice-based and videographic research contribute to the understanding of innovation processes in cultural organisations?"*

The question brings two problems into relation: it asks how innovation changes when it is approached as a situated institutional practice rather than as an abstract strategic mandate, and it also asks what scholarly research can learn when the researcher works through creative, reflective and videographic practice, using audiovisual form to analyse aspects of organisational life that propositional language alone may not fully recognise. To address this question, I combine historical and conceptual analysis with practice-based research, videographic research and comparative case-study inquiry.

I work across these approaches because innovation carries a conceptual history and circulates as an institutional expectation while its effects become tangible through decisions, encounters, spaces and forms of mediation. Moving across these registers allows me to examine the relation between discourse and practice without assuming their correspondence in advance.

Videographic research opens a related possibility through moving images and sound. In the thesis, I investigate how choices of framing, duration, rhythm and montage may make temporal and spatial relations available for comparison and reconsideration.

Within this methodological architecture, the associated video essay forms an integral part of the inquiry: its function exceeds that of a visual summary, an appendix or a communicative extension of arguments established elsewhere. Through the organisation of relations among images, sounds, voices, gestures, spaces and institutional discourses, I use the video essay to create a space in which institutional discourse and situated practice can be held together, compared and reconsidered.

IV. The movement of the inquiry

I follow innovation across different scales of analysis, from the historical construction of the concept and its gradual translation into organisational language to the specific institutional conditions of cultural organisations. From there the focus shifts from innovation as an object of analysis to the methodological question of how situated practice may participate in knowledge production and then to the possibilities introduced by videographic inquiry. In the final stage, I bring these trajectories into contact with selected cultural organisations and the associated audiovisual work.

Across this movement I follow innovation from the vocabularies that give it institutional force into the practices through which it is enacted and encountered, and I also examine what becomes available when practice and audiovisual form enter the research process itself.

I develop this question gradually in the chapters that follow, allowing the relation between innovation, cultural organisation and videographic inquiry to emerge through the work of the thesis rather than as a conclusion announced in advance.

1. A genealogy of innovation

1.1 Origins of innovation

1.1.1 The contemporary fascination and the need for problematisation

> *«Innovation is a word used to express our concept of change, or rather a specific type of change. Innovation is change that is human-made and deliberate, as contrasted to that made by God, nature or chance.»*[2]

In contemporary discourse, the concept of innovation is universally celebrated. The word appears throughout the vocabulary of policymakers, industry leaders and academics, where its value is rarely questioned. Innovation is currently perceived as inherently positive, desirable, and inextricably linked to human progress, creativity, and sustained economic growth. This fascination with the new interests me because innovation is offered as an answer to a wide range of socioeconomic problems. In this discourse, the word has come to stand for the aspirations of modern society[3]. Its positive connotations are established enough that a lack of innovativeness invites criticism, while innovation itself is presented as necessary for survival and advancement.

However, this uniformly celebratory understanding of innovation is a relatively recent historical construction. The concept is neither a timeless category of human thought nor a self-evident truth that has always denoted positive advancement. To understand how innovation became central to contemporary organisational thinking, I question its current usage and reconstruct the history of the meanings associated with it. I follow this genealogy of innovation to show that the term was not always understood positively. By setting aside contemporary assumptions about the word, I can approach innovation as a historically contingent construct that carries multiple, often conflicting, historical layers of meaning simultaneously.

To examine these historical layers, I adopt a genealogical approach. A genealogy, rather than merely seeking the absolute origins of a word, studies descent by investigating the details, accidents, forces, and struggles that accompany every conceptual beginning and its subsequent solidification in public discourse[4]. From this perspective, a word is a marker of the social understanding of the world, and tracing its semantic shifts reveals changes in societal values. Innovation is not a natural category with a stable essence; rather, it is historically constructed through discourses and representations. The history I reconstruct here is fundamentally a history of meanings rather than a history of innovations themselves. Through this genealogical lens, the trajectory of innovation reveals a complex process wherein a concept

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[2] B. GODIN, *Innovation contested: the idea of innovation over the centuries* (Routledge studies in social and political thought 98), Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, New York London 2015, p. 2
[3] *Ivi,* p. 5
[4] *Ivi,* pp. 6/7

originally denoting subversive political change and religious heresy was gradually rehabilitated, operationalised, and ultimately transformed into a central economic virtue of the modern era.

1.1.2 From imitation to invention

The historical trajectory of innovation as a concept of human creativity and change can be understood through a fundamental conceptual sequence progressing from imitation to invention, and ultimately to innovation. To understand the emergence of innovation, I first examine the historical primacy of imitation. In classical antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages, imitation was not perceived as a pejorative act of mere copying, but rather as a highly productive and legitimate practice. Grounded in the Greek concept of mimesis, the prevailing view held that practical arts imitate nature, and that the artist or craftsman extracts the form of the natural world and imposes it upon an artificial medium. In this account, imitation was valued as a practice requiring skill, judgement, and imagination. It was understood as a literary and artistic mechanism for the production of difference, where Renaissance humanist writers, for example, used ancient authors as models not to plagiarise, but to enrich the existing tradition through creative copying and selective borrowing[5]. In trade and early consumer goods, imitation was similarly valued because it provided the broader population with access to semi-luxuries and introduced improvements in quality and design. Imitation was therefore a respected method of learning, adaptation, and incremental refinement.

As the cultural value placed on individual origin and authorship began to shift, the concept of invention gradually separated from imitation. In classical rhetoric, invention originally meant the discovery of valid arguments, but by the fourteenth century, it came to be associated with finding or discovering knowledge in the sciences. Over time, the meaning of invention expanded from merely finding what already existed in nature to the active making, constructing, and fabricating of entirely new things. This shift was influenced by the Renaissance artisans and alchemists who began to view their craft not just as an imitative mirror of nature, but as a creative force capable of producing novel combinations that surpassed nature itself. Consequently, the figure of the inventor emerged as an individual of genius possessing superior creative powers. As this new ideal of originality took hold, particularly from the mid-eighteenth century onward, imitation was increasingly downgraded and regarded as mere copying, while originality became the definitive criterion for real invention[6]. The establishment of patent laws institutionalised this shift by legally defining technological invention through the criteria of novelty and priority, giving legal form to the cultural transition from the collaborative practice of imitation to the celebrated act of individual invention.

[5] *Ivi,* pp. 9/10
[6] *Ivi,* pp. 11-13

1.1.3 Innovation as subversion and heresy

Despite the rising status of invention, the concept of innovation remained distinct and was treated with suspicion. While innovativeness or the act of creating novelty was increasingly accepted in the realms of science and poetry, the specific concept of innovation remained anchored in a pejorative political context. The origins of the concept can be traced to the ancient Greek word kainotomia, derived from kainos (new) and the radical tom (cut or cutting). Its earliest recorded usages pertained to concrete, physical actions, such as "*making new cuttings*" in silver mines[7].

Subsequent Greek philosophers gave this metaphor of cutting fresh paths a negative political meaning: the introduction of change into the established order. Plato fiercely resisted innovation in education and culture, arguing that

> *«When the programme of games is prescribed and secures that the same children always play the same games and delight in the same toys in the same way and under the same conditions, it allows the real and serious laws also to remain undisturbed; but when these games vary and suffer innovations . . . [children] have no fixed and acknowledged standard of propriety and impropriety. (Laws VII: 797b)»*[8]

Aristotle similarly warned that even a small, seemingly insignificant change could gradually lead to the total subversion of the constitution[9]. To the ancient Greeks, innovation was synonymous with political upheaval, sedition, and the subversive overthrow of the established order.

This legacy of suspicion was inherited and amplified during the Reformation. While the Latin term innovo had briefly enjoyed a positive spiritual connotation in the early Christian Vulgate, where it represented the renewal of the soul, the religious and political turmoil of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries returned the concept to its pejorative Greek roots. During this era, innovation became the secularised term for heresy. It functioned as a powerful linguistic weapon used by defenders of orthodoxy to condemn any deviation from established religious doctrine or state authority. The intense fear of change was codified in law, most notably when Edward VI of England issued a royal proclamation in 1548 strictly forbidding any person of his private mind or fantasy to *«omitte, leave doune, change, alter or innovate any order, Rite or Ceremonie in the Church»*[10]. In these discourses, innovation was unlawful, violent, and the result of a sinister design driven by selfish motives aiming to subvert the common good.

I find this early modern ambivalence towards change in Francis Bacon's essay *Of Innovations* (1625), which approaches innovation with caution. Bacon acknowledges the inevitability of change, observing

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[7] *Ivi,* pp. 19/20
[8] *Ivi,* p. 24
[9] *Ivi,* pp. 25-27
[10] *Ivi,* p. 75

that *«time is the greatest innovator»*[11]. He concedes that failing to apply new remedies guarantees new evils. Yet, Bacon remains deeply wary of the disruptive nature of human-led change, noting that all innovations, which he describes as the births of time, are at first illshapen. Because new things do not integrate smoothly with established customs, Bacon warns that innovations trouble society by their inconformity. To mitigate this inherent turbulence, Bacon advises a strategy of extreme prudence and gradualism. He argues that men should follow the example of time itself, which *«innovateth greatly, but quietly, by degrees scarce to be perceived»*[12]. I read Bacon's essay as historical evidence of this caution: innovation required justification and gradual implementation because it could fracture the social order.

1.1.4 Semantic rehabilitation and the economic turn

The transformation of innovation from a suspected vice into a celebrated virtue required a change in the value attached to the term, a process that unfolded gradually throughout the nineteenth century. This era, characterised by the Industrial Revolution and a fundamental shift in the conception of time towards a future-oriented perspective, saw the concept of innovation stripped of its heretical and subversive connotations. Thinkers began to perceive structural changes as natural, inevitable, and ultimately beneficial. During this period, the arguments deployed by the opponents of innovation, which relied heavily on appeals to tradition and the fear of violent revolution, were systematically dismantled by utilitarian thinkers.

Jeremy Bentham played an important role in this change of meaning. In his *Book of Fallacies (1824)*, Bentham directly attacked the use of the word innovation as a linguistic weapon of conservative oppression. He argued that the cry of innovation was a fallacy of danger used by those with sinister interests to repress discussion and excite alarm[13]. Bentham pointed out the logical absurdity of condemning all new things, noting that

> *«[t]o say all new things are bad, is as much as to say all things are bad, or, at any event, at their commencement; for of all the old things ever seen or heard of, there is not one that was not once new. Whatever is now establishment was once innovation. (Bentham, 1824: 144)»*[14]

By demonstrating that the horror of innovation was an irrational prejudice, Bentham helped to shift the term from a dyslogistic category to a neutral, and eventually eulogistic, one. The concept was redefined around the principle of utility. Innovation came to be understood no longer as an arbitrary disruption of custom, but as the practical application of human ingenuity intended to produce benefit, advantage, and

[11] F. BACON, *The Essays of Francis Bacon*, ed. M. A. SCOTT, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1908, p. 109
[12] *Ivi,* p. 110
[13] B. GODIN, *Innovation contested,* cit., pp. 148/149
[14] *Ivi,* p. 149

happiness. Consequently, the term migrated from the spheres of political and religious conflict into the domains of the useful arts, mechanics, and science.

This semantic rehabilitation prepared the ground for a broader conceptual shift linking innovation to progress, and subsequently linking progress to economic development. As the Industrial Revolution progressed, the concept of innovation became increasingly associated with the tangible improvements in material conditions and productivity that characterised the era. The focus on utility paved the way for innovation to be understood as an instrument for achieving social and material advancement. This understanding connected the philosophical idea of human betterment with the practical realities of industrial production, gradually linking innovation to economic growth.

I follow this transition into the work of Joseph Schumpeter, where innovation loses its historical association with political subversion and becomes the central engine of capitalist economic development. Schumpeter's *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung* focused entirely on the nature and causes of development as such, changing the terms of economic analysis. Schumpeter conceived of economic development not as a smooth, gradual evolution, but as the active rupture of existing patterns of economic relationships. In this framework, *«the agent of change is the path-breaking entrepreneur who, aided by the elasticity of the cash and credit system, is able at discontinuous intervals to wrest control of productive factors from their normal uses and reassemble them in novel combinations»*[15].

For this genealogy, Schumpeter's distinction between innovation and invention is important. Godin reproduces Freeman's formulation of this distinction:

> *«"An invention is an idea, a sketch or a model for a new or improved device, product, process or system… An innovation in the economic sense is accomplished only with the first commercial transaction"»*[16].

With this economic definition, I reach the final step in the sequence: imitation was the learning of the past, invention was the intellectual creation of the new, and innovation became the successful, practical application of that creation for economic gain.

The history I have traced complicates the contemporary perception of innovation as natural and universally positive. Following this genealogy, I have shown that the term emerged as a highly contested category, its meaning shaped by the shifting societal anxieties and aspirations of different eras. The journey of the concept from the Greek *kainotomia* and the Latin *innovo*, through the strict prohibitions of the Reformation, the cautious prudence of Francis Bacon, and the semantic rehabilitation of the utilitarian philosophers, demonstrates that innovation is not a stable or self-evident concept. It was only through a long process of discursive redefinition that the concept was stripped of its association with

[15] Lord Robbins, *The Theory of Economic Development in the History of Economic Thought*, Macmillan and Co LTD, London 1968, p. 16

[16] B. GODIN, *Innovation contested,* cit., p. 264

societal ruin and aligned instead with the application of invention, utility, and progress. Today, the concept carries the weight of this final economic turn, serving as a marker of commercial success. However, acknowledging this history reveals that contemporary associations between innovation, technology, and economic growth represent only one historical configuration among many. Innovation remains a historically contingent and fundamentally contested concept, its meaning continuously negotiated in public discourse.

Having traced these changes in meaning, I now examine how innovation entered administrative practice and came to be understood as a structured organisational process.

1.2 Innovation as organisational process

In the previous section, I traced a history in which innovation is neither a natural phenomenon nor a timeless category. It is, rather, a contingent concept whose meaning has shifted from political subversion to technological progress and economic necessity. The culmination of this historical semantic shift occurred in the early twentieth century, most notably through the theoretical interventions of Joseph Schumpeter, who positioned innovation not as a dangerous deviation from established norms, but as the fundamental engine of economic development and capitalist renewal. Once innovation was linked to economic survival, growth and market competitiveness, modern institutions faced a practical problem. If innovation was the primary mechanism of progress, it could no longer be left to chance, isolated flashes of genius, or unpredictable historical accidents. It had to be systematically produced.

This shift was deeply influenced by the broad acceptance of the Schumpeterian paradigm. Once innovation was established not merely as a periodic disruption but as the very engine of continuous economic development, organisations faced the practical challenge of sustaining this process. If market survival depended on the continuous introduction of the new, firms could no longer rely on external shocks or uncoordinated moments of individual creativity. They increasingly sought ways to reproduce and sustain innovative activity internally as a reliable, ongoing function. I therefore read this as a shift in the question being asked: it was no longer sufficient to understand the macro-economic role of innovation; the focus turned to managing the micro-environmental conditions under which innovation could reliably emerge and thrive within the boundaries of the firm.

This imperative changed both how innovation was understood and how organisations sought to achieve it. Innovation was progressively transformed from an exogenous historical event into an endogenous organisational process. For twentieth-century management and organisational theory, the question became how innovation could be intentionally generated, captured, and guided within the boundaries of the firm. Organisations increasingly came to believe that the disruptive force of the new could be structured and reproduced through deliberate strategic design. The historical and economic concept of innovation was thus translated into an operational paradigm. In this section, I trace how innovation came

to be treated as governable, moving from an abstract economic imperative to a set of manageable structures, communication processes, and measurable variables.

1.2.1 The structural preconditions of novelty

The attempt to manage innovation required organisations to reconsider how they were designed. For much of the early industrial era, the dominant organisational models were highly formalised, predicated on efficiency, routine, and the strict hierarchical division of labour. However, as the economic environment became increasingly defined by the necessity of technological and commercial change, these rigid structures proved inadequate for the continuous generation of novelty. The focus of organisational theory thus shifted towards identifying the internal conditions and organisational forms that could support, rather than suppress, innovative activity.

I examine this transition through *Burns and Stalker*'s distinction between mechanistic and organic systems of management. The mechanistic system, characterised by specialised tasks, precise definitions of rights and obligations, and hierarchical command, was highly effective in stable environmental conditions, functioning appropriately when *«the problems and tasks facing the concern as a whole are broken down into specialisms»*[17], and when the primary goal was the efficient execution of known procedures. Yet, when confronted with the demand for continuous innovation, the mechanistic structure revealed its limitations. It was designed to resist deviation, the very characteristic that historically defined innovation. To intentionally produce innovation, the organisation itself had to mirror the fluidity and adaptability of the changing economic landscape.

Consequently, the organic system of management emerged as the structural ideal for the innovative organisation. In an organic system, tasks are not rigidly defined but are continuously adjusted and redefined through interaction reflecting a state where *«jobs lose much of their formal definition»*[18]. Communication resembles lateral consultation rather than vertical command, and commitment to the broader goals of the enterprise supersedes loyalty to narrow bureaucratic functions. By identifying the organic system as the necessary precondition for adaptation to changing environments, the understanding of innovation expanded. Innovation was no longer understood merely as the introduction of a new technical device or product; it was increasingly conceived as a property of the organisational structure itself.

I read this structural perspective as a change in how innovation could be understood. It moved the locus of creativity away from the isolated inventor and placed it within the social and political relations of the organisation. If the correct structural conditions could be cultivated, the theory implied, the organisation would naturally exhibit an innovative capacity. The focus on organic flexibility, lateral communication, and the reduction of rigid status structures represented an attempt to organise work around the

[17] T. BURNS – G.M. STALKER, *The Management of Innovation*, Tavistock Publications 1961, p. 5
[18] *Ivi,* p. 6

unpredictability of innovation. Therefore, the management of innovation became synonymous with the design of adaptive organisational forms. By linking the external circumstances of the market directly to internal working organisations and political systems, innovation was firmly established as an ongoing organisational requirement rather than a discrete event.

1.2.2 Innovation as communicative process and social contagion

While structural theories addressed the internal architecture necessary for generating novelty, managing innovation also required attention to another dimension. The next question I consider is how a new idea, once generated or introduced, takes root and spreads. If innovation was to be treated as a strategic objective, its trajectory through an organisation and a broader social environment had to be conceptualised as a logical, observable, and ultimately influenceable sequence of events. This requirement led to the conceptualisation of innovation not merely as a structural output, but as a dynamic process of communication and social learning over time.

Rogers develops this understanding of innovation as a process in *Diffusion of Innovations*. His focus on adoption treats the diffusion of innovations as a communicative process and a form of social change[19]. In this framework, *«an innovation is simply an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption»*[20]. The objective validity or absolute novelty of the idea became secondary to its perceived newness and its subsequent journey through communication channels.

This perspective distinguishes four elements of the diffusion process: the innovation itself, the communication channels through which it travels, the time over which the process unfolds, and the social system in which it is embedded[21]. I read this division into constituent parts as a departure from the historical mystique surrounding innovation. It was no longer a sudden rupture in the established order, but a gradual, sequential process that could be mapped, tracked, and potentially accelerated.

The introduction of time as a core element was particularly transformative for organisational thinking. Innovation was conceptualised as an "innovation-decision process" spanning from initial knowledge of a new idea to forming an attitude toward it, making a decision to adopt or reject it, implementing the new idea, and finally confirming the decision[22]. Mapping the process over time provided a basis for managerial intervention. If innovation was a multi-stage process, organisations could design specific communication strategies and interventions tailored to each phase. By classifying individuals and units into adopter categories based on their relative speed of adoption, the social system itself was rendered predictable. The spread of novelty was no longer seen as chaotic but was understood to follow observable patterns of social modelling and learning.

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[19] E.M. ROGERS, *Diffusion of innovations*, Free press, New York 1983, p. 6
[20] *Ivi,* p. 11
[21] *Ivi,* p. 10
[22] *Ivi,* p. 20

Innovation therefore became linked to the management of information and communication. It was transformed into a problem of overcoming uncertainty. In this theoretical model, a new technology or practice represents a source of uncertainty, and the diffusion process is essentially an information-seeking and information-processing activity designed to reduce that uncertainty. Framing innovation in terms of uncertainty reduction, communication channels, and systemic openness gave organisations terms and methods for facilitating the spread of new practices. The subversive and historically threatening nature of the new was systematically integrated into strategic communication planning.

1.2.3 The quantifiable organisation and the illusion of control

The next step I examine is the attempt to quantify the causes and effects of innovation after defining it as a structural property and a communicative process. If innovation was an organisational imperative that depended on specific structures and processes, then it must be possible to isolate the exact variables that determine an organisation's innovative capacity. As the field of organisational studies consolidated, innovation was firmly established as an autonomous field of research and a measurable dependent variable.

Damanpour's meta-analysis of the organisational determinants of innovation[23] gives me a way to examine how this field of empirical research became established. Through this consolidation, organisational innovation became an established object of empirical investigation that could be systematically compared across different contexts, from manufacturing firms to public agencies. The focus narrowed to examining how specific, quantifiable organisational characteristics either facilitated or inhibited the adoption of new technical and administrative ideas. Innovation was no longer a philosophical problem or a historical shift; it was a phenomenon to be correlated with structural variables such as specialisation, functional differentiation, professionalisation, internal communication, and vertical differentiation.

I see this quantitative turn as a further rationalisation of the concept: the complex social reality of an organisation was translated into measurable dimensions. For instance, the capacity for innovation was statistically linked to the degree of internal communication, understood as communication among organisational units or groups and measured through integration mechanisms, including the number of committees and how often they meet. Similarly, vertical differentiation, representing the number of hierarchical levels, was treated as a variable that could be adjusted to optimise innovative output[24]. I read the assumption underlying this managerial use of variables as deterministic: it suggests that an optimal organisational configuration could be discovered and would reliably produce innovation.

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[23] F. DAMANPOUR, *Organizational Innovation: A Meta-Analysis of Effects of Determinants and Moderators*, «The Academy of Management Journal» 34/3 (1991), Academy of Management, Rutgers University 555-590

[24] *Ivi,* p. 590

This approach treated the organisation as a complex but fundamentally knowable system. By adjusting the levers of centralisation, altering the complexity of the task environment, or modifying the formalisation of rules, managers believed they could direct the rate and success of innovation. I see the consolidation of these determinants through meta-analysis as providing a scientific basis for this managerial ambition. It suggested that the chaotic, often serendipitous nature of creating something new could be effectively aligned with the rational logic of organisational design.

In this paradigm, innovation became a standard metric of organisational effectiveness. The historical anxiety surrounding the disruption caused by the new was largely replaced by an anxiety over failing to innovate quickly enough or efficiently enough. The negative historical associations of the concept gave way to its status as a normative good in corporate and institutional management. To be innovative was to be structurally sound, well-communicated, and statistically optimised.

1.2.4 The limits of the managed paradigm

The transformation of innovation from a contested historical concept into a strategic organisational process was an intellectual and practical achievement. Organisational theory successfully made innovation governable by mapping the structural preconditions for adaptation, conceptualising the social diffusion of novelty, and quantifying the determinants of innovative capacity. These frameworks gave managers, policymakers and institutions ways to pursue economic and technological advancement deliberately. Innovation was transformed into a reproducible methodology.

My concern with this paradigm is the set of assumptions on which it rests: a preference for order, predictability and control. The dominant frameworks of organisational innovation assumed that the environment, while changing, was ultimately legible. They assumed that the boundaries of the organisation were relatively clear, that the goals of innovation were universally shared, and that the outcomes of the innovation process could be evaluated through standard metrics of efficiency and effectiveness. The underlying epistemology remained deeply functionalist, treating the organisation as a bounded system processing inputs to generate innovative outputs.

By rendering innovation manageable, these theories inevitably reduced its complexity. They tended to treat innovation as a linear process that could be steered from the top down, provided the correct organic structures and communication channels were in place. Yet, this structured approach to managing the new struggles when confronted with problems that defy clear definition, environments that are radically unstable, and challenges that cross multiple institutional boundaries. As organisations increasingly face issues that cannot be resolved through the mere adjustment of internal variables or the linear diffusion of new technologies, the limits of the managed innovation paradigm begin to surface.

The assumption that innovation can be extensively planned and reliably managed reveals itself as a historically specific framework, one that relies heavily on predictability and stability. This reliance leads

me to examine how organisations deal with systemic unpredictability and the emergence of wicked problems.

1.3 Wicked problems and complexity

So far, I have approached innovation as a historical construct and traced its rationalisation during the twentieth century into a set of manageable organisational processes. Theories of organisational innovation were largely predicated on the assumption that the environment, while dynamic, was fundamentally knowable, and that the generation and implementation of novelty could be structured, quantified, and controlled by management. However, as organisations increasingly grapple with challenges that defy clear definition and environments characterised by radical instability, the limits of these managed paradigms become apparent. I now examine what happens when the imperative to innovate encounters systemic complexity, demonstrating that many contemporary challenges exceed the assumptions of traditional, linear problem-solving models. Examining the nature of "*wicked problems*" and the dynamics of complex systems makes clear why innovation must increasingly be understood not merely as a process of finding solutions, but as a practice of working through uncertainty.

> *«To what extent are we morally responsible to inform the manager in what respect our 'solutions' have failed to tame his wicked problems?»*[25]

1.3.1 The limits of linear problem solving

Traditional approaches to innovation and organisational planning are generally based on a linear, sequential model of problem solving. As Rittel and Webber observe[26], this classical paradigm, rooted in the cognitive and occupational styles of science and engineering, assumes that a project can be divided into distinct phases: first, one understands the problem; then, one gathers information; next, one synthesises that information and formulates a solution; and finally, one implements it. This approach relies heavily on the concept of efficiency, treating planning as a process of designing problem-solutions that can be installed as cheaply and effectively as possible.

This linear model works well for what Rittel and Webber term "tame" or "benign" problems. Tame problems, such as solving a mathematical equation or determining the chemical structure of a compound, have clear missions. An exhaustive formulation of the problem can be stated containing all the information needed by the problem-solver, and there are definitive criteria for determining whether or

[25] C.W. CHURCHMAN, *Guest Editorial: Wicked Problems*, «Management Science» 14/4 (1967), INFORMS, University of California, Berkeley B141-B142

[26] H. W. J. RITTEL – M. M. WEBBER, *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning*, «Policy Sciences» 4/2 (1973), Springer, Amsterdam 155-169

not the problem has been solved[27]. The "one-best answer" is possible, and the solution can be objectively evaluated as either correct or false.

The difficulty, as I see it, lies in assuming that social and organisational challenges behave like tame problems. As the scope of innovation expands beyond the development of technical devices to encompass broad social and policy issues, the linear model breaks down. The problems that planners and innovators increasingly face are not definable, separable, or resolvable through definitive, objective answers. They are inherently different from the problems that scientists and engineers have traditionally focused upon. These are what Rittel and Webber identify as "*wicked problems*": problems whose complexity makes them resistant to standard analytical techniques[28].

1.3.2 The nature of wicked problems

I use the concept of the wicked problem to understand why contemporary innovation challenges often frustrate traditional management approaches. The properties of these problems change what it means to understand a problem and work towards a solution.

First, there is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem. «*The information needed to understand the problem depends upon one's idea for solving it*»[29]. Because every specification of the problem is simultaneously a specification of the direction of the treatment, understanding and resolving the problem happen together. To find the problem is essentially the same thing as finding the solution. Therefore, the linear sequence of "first understand, then solve" is impossible; the formulation of a wicked problem is the problem itself.

Consequently, *«wicked problems have no stopping rule»*[30]. Because the process of solving the problem is identical to the process of understanding it, and because there are no definitive criteria for sufficient understanding, the innovator can always try to do better. The work is terminated not for reasons inherent to the logic of the problem, but for external considerations such as a lack of time, money, or patience.

Solutions to wicked problems cannot be judged as objectively true or false, but only as good or bad. Pluralistic societies consist of diverse stakeholders with competing interests and values; assessments of proposed solutions will inevitably differ according to these different ideological positions. There is no objective measure of the "public good," and no scientific procedure can determine the single "correct" explanation for a wicked problem. The choice of explanation is arbitrary in a logical sense, guided instead by the analyst's worldview and the action-prospects available to them.

For me, this subjectivity also raises an ethical question about wicked problems. As Churchman notes, those who attempt to "tame" a wicked problem by artificially carving off a piece of it and finding a rational, feasible solution to that isolated fragment are engaged in deception. By presenting a partial

[27] *Ivi,* pp. 160/161
[28] *Ivi,* p. 160
[29] *Ivi,* p. 161
[30] *Ivi,* p. 162

solution as if it addresses the whole, they mask the enduring "wickedness" of the situation: *«whoever attempts to tame a part of a wicked problem, but not the whole, is morally wrong»*[31]. The moral responsibility of the professional, Churchman argues, is not merely to offer technical fixes, but to avoid deceiving the manager or the public into believing that a highly dangerous and complex issue has been safely resolved when it has not.

1.3.3 Systems thinking and interconnected complexity

The difficulty of dealing with wicked problems is compounded by the fact that they exist within complex, interconnected networks. Every wicked problem can be considered a symptom of another *«"higher level" problem»*[32], and there is no natural level at which a problem must be settled. To address this interconnectedness, I turn from linear analysis to systems thinking, a perspective that views the world not as a collection of isolated events, but as a web of interacting structures and feedback loops.

> *«A system isn't just any old collection of things. A system is an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something. […] A system must consist of three kinds of things: elements, interconnections, and a function or purpose.»*[33]

In Meadows's account, a system, to a large extent, causes its own behaviour[34]. While outside forces may trigger a response, the nature of that response is dictated by the system's internal structure: its interlocking stocks, flows, and feedback loops.

These internal structures render system behaviour inherently non-linear and difficult to predict. Meadows details how feedback loops, mechanisms where a change in a stock affects the flows into or out of that same stock, can amplify actions into exponential growth or sudden collapse (reinforcing loops), or suppress actions to maintain stability (balancing loops)[35]. Because these loops often involve delays and shifting dominance, an intervention intended to solve a problem may not yield immediate results, or it may trigger a latent feedback loop that drives the system in an entirely unexpected direction. The system's internal dynamics therefore often challenge the expectation that a specific intervention will produce a proportional and predictable outcome.

When innovators intervene in these complex systems, they frequently encounter resistance. Because multiple actors within the system are pulling the system's state toward different, often inconsistent goals, any new policy or innovation that moves the system in one direction will provoke other actors to double their efforts to pull it back. This phenomenon, which Meadows terms "policy resistance", explains why

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[31] C.W. CHURCHMAN, *Guest Editorial: Wicked Problems,* cit., p. B142
[32] H. W. J. RITTEL – M. M. WEBBER, *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,* cit., p. 165
[33] D.H. MEADOWS, *Thinking in systems: a primer*, Earthscan, London 2009, p. 11
[34] *Ivi,* p. 2
[35] *Ivi,* pp. 25/26

energetic efforts to solve problems often produce non-results, leaving the system stuck in an undesirable pattern[36].

The interconnections within a system also mean that interventions often produce unintended consequences. As Rittel and Webber argue, *«any solution, after being implemented, will generate waves of consequences over an extended - virtually an unbounded - period of time»*[37]. Because the half-lives of these consequences are long, and because there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error without penalty, every attempt to reverse a decision or correct undesired outcomes poses a new set of wicked problems. The assumption of separability, the belief that the desirable impacts of a technological innovation can be achieved without experiencing its undesirable effects, is frequently proven wrong.

Meadows further explains that systems surprise us because of *«what Nobel Prize–winning economist Herbert Simon calls bounded rationality»*[38]. Individuals within a system make reasonable decisions based on the imperfect, delayed information they possess about their immediate, local circumstances. They do not have perfect information about the distant parts of the system, nor do they often foresee the systemic impacts of their actions. Consequently, actors pursuing their own short-term, rational best interests can produce aggregate results that are disastrous for the system as a whole. This account of bounded rationality explains why replacing an individual actor rarely changes the system's behaviour; the new actor will simply experience the same information flows, incentives, and constraints that governed the previous actor.

1.3.4 The need for new modes of inquiry

I take the presence of wicked problems within complex systems as a reason to question the limits of the linear innovation paradigm in contemporary society. If problems cannot be definitively formulated, if solutions are not true or false but subject to pluralistic value judgments, and if every intervention generates a wave of irreversible and often unintended consequences, then innovation can no longer be viewed merely as a sequential process of problem-definition followed by problem-solution. The cognitive and occupational styles refined during the industrial era, which relied on the paradigm of applied science to diagnose and resolve problems definitively, struggle when confronted with the realities of open, interconnected societal systems.

This leaves me looking for other modes of inquiry that can work with indeterminacy. Buchanan suggests that design theory offers a lens for understanding how professionals confront problems that lack a definitive formulation. He notes that the challenges addressed by designers are inherently *«"indeterminate" and "wicked"»*[39] precisely because design has no fixed subject matter of its own. Unlike the natural sciences, which seek to understand the necessary structures of existing phenomena,

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[36] *Ivi,* p. 112
[37] H. W. J. RITTEL – M. M. WEBBER, *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,* cit., p. 163
[38] D.H. MEADOWS, *Thinking in systems,* cit., p. 106
[39] R. BUCHANAN, *Wicked Problems in Design Thinking*, «Design Issues» 8/2 (1992) 5-21, p. 16

design is concerned with the particular, with conceiving and planning what does not yet exist within specific, concrete circumstances. The designer does not begin with an undetermined subject waiting to be made determinate through scientific laws, but with a quasi-subject matter, a messy set of problems and issues, that must be actively shaped into a working hypothesis[40].

Buchanan argues that when confronting wicked problems, the initial and perhaps most critical task is not calculating a solution, but structuring the problem space itself. This involves identifying the perspectives of diverse participants, understanding their conflicting values, and integrating knowledge from various fields to frame an intervention. The challenge is not to eliminate uncertainty, which systems thinking and the theory of wicked problems have shown to be impossible, but to develop disciplines of practical reasoning capable of operating within it[41].

My argument so far is that traditional, linear frameworks for managing innovation, while still valuable for addressing "*tame*" problems within stable parameters, are fundamentally insufficient for navigating the complex, contested, and evolving nature of wicked problems. When interventions continuously reshape the situations they seek to address, and when outcomes cannot be reliably predicted by isolating variables, the foundational assumptions of the managed innovation paradigm are tested. This leaves me with an unresolved theoretical question: what kinds of approaches can operate effectively when problems cannot be fully defined, when outcomes cannot be reliably predicted, and when interventions continuously reshape the situations they seek to address?

1.4 Design thinking as a mode of inquiry

> *«A common discipline of design thinking - more than the particular products created by that discipline today - is changing our culture, not only in its external manifestations but in its internal character.»*[42]

In the preceding section, I examined why many of the challenges facing contemporary organisations are structurally "*wicked*". These are problems embedded in complex, interconnected systems where interventions continually reshape the environment, where multiple stakeholders hold conflicting values, and where the boundaries of the problem itself are difficult to define. In such contexts, the assumptions underlying traditional, linear models of managed innovation, which rely on predictability, clear problem definition, and the sequential execution of solutions, are fundamentally challenged. If innovation cannot simply be a process of calculating the optimal means to a predefined end, a different mode of inquiry is required. I now examine how design emerged as an intellectual and practical response to these conditions

[40] *Ivi,* p. 17
[41] *Ivi,* p. 16
[42] *Ivi,* p. 21

of indeterminacy, evolving from a specialised profession into a broader epistemology of practice. Through the foundations of design thinking, I outline an approach to innovation concerned with how problems are framed under conditions of uncertainty, as well as with how they are solved.

1.4.1 The science of the artificial

I begin with Herbert Simon's expansion of design beyond its traditional association with architecture and industrial product creation. Simon proposed that the dominant scientific paradigms, which are primarily concerned with understanding the natural world as it is, are insufficient for addressing the "artificial" world: the world created by human beings. He argued that the proper study of mankind includes the science of design, which he defined broadly as the process of devising courses of action aimed at *«changing existing situations into preferred ones»*[43].

In this view, design is not merely the embellishment of physical objects, but the intellectual activity shared by all professions, from engineering and medicine to business and social policy, that are concerned with making and planning. Simon sought to establish a rigorous, formal basis for this activity, aiming to construct a "*science of design*" that could stand alongside the natural sciences[44]. He suggested that while the natural sciences analyse the necessary properties of existing phenomena, the sciences of the artificial must focus on synthesis and the contingent: how an "inner environment" (the artefact or system being designed) can be adapted to an "outer environment" (the context in which it operates) to achieve specific goals.

Simon's framework provided an intellectual justification for treating design as a generalisable discipline of problem solving and decision making. However, his approach remained heavily influenced by the paradigm of bounded rationality and optimisation methods. While he acknowledged that real-world problems require "satisficing" (finding a good enough solution) rather than perfect optimisation, his science of design still largely presupposed a situation where the parameters of the problem, the available alternatives, and the criteria for success could be reasonably well-defined in advance[45]. I find the difficulty of this formulation, also addressed by subsequent theorists, at the point where wicked problems begin: when the very definition of the "preferred situation" is highly contested and the criteria for evaluating solutions are unknown.

1.4.2 Design as inquiry into indeterminacy

To examine how design works with complexity, I move beyond Simon's framework of problem solving to consider inquiry into indeterminate situations. Richard Buchanan connects these questions by linking design thinking to the challenge of wicked problems. Buchanan argues that the problems designers face

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[43] H.A. SIMON, *The sciences of the artificial*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 2008, p. 111
[44] *Ivi,* p. 4
[45] *Ivi,* pp. 28-30

are inherently "indeterminate" because design *«has no natural subject matter of its own»*[46]; its subject matter is universally applicable but must be newly discovered and formed in each specific application. Unlike the natural sciences, which investigate the determinate properties of what already exists, design deals with the particular and the possible, with conceiving what does not yet exist. Therefore, the designer does not start with a bounded problem waiting for a solution. Instead, they begin with a messy, undefined "quasi-subject matter" located within concrete circumstances. Buchanan suggests that the initial, and perhaps most crucial, act of design is using conceptual "placements" to frame this messy reality into a working hypothesis.

This reframing changes the focus of innovation. If problems are wicked, the primary task is not to follow a linear problem-solving procedure, but to actively structure the problem space. Innovation, through a design lens, becomes an argumentative and communicative process of integrating diverse knowledge and conflicting values to propose a new synthesis. Buchanan's analysis suggests that design thinking is not merely a technical skill, but a new "liberal art" of technological culture: a discipline of integrative thinking capable of connecting fragmented specialised knowledge to address the complex problems of daily life. This positions design not as a method for finding the "true" answer, but as a practice of rhetorical invention and practical reasoning in the face of uncertainty.

1.4.3 Reflection-in-action and professional knowledge

Understanding design as engagement with indeterminate situations leads me to question the dominant epistemology of professional practice, which Donald Schön termed "*Technical Rationality*"[47]. Technical Rationality assumes that professional competence consists of the application of established scientific theories and techniques to well-defined instrumental problems. Schön pointed out that while this model functions well on the "high, hard ground" where problems are clear and manageable, it fails in the "swampy lowlands" of real-world practice, which are characterised by complexity, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict.

Schön observed that competent practitioners, whether architects, managers, or psychotherapists, frequently encounter situations that fall outside the bounds of standard theories. When confronted with the unique or the unexpected, they do not simply apply a rule; they engage in what he called "reflection-in-action"[48]. This is a process of thinking about what one is doing while doing it, surfacing tacit knowledge, and conducting on-the-spot experiments to reshape the situation.

In this model, the practitioner approaches a unique situation by seeing it as something familiar from their repertoire of past experiences, using this as a generative metaphor to impose an initial frame. They then make moves to change the situation, and listen to the situation's "back-talk", the unintended

[46] R. BUCHANAN, *Wicked Problems in Design Thinking,* cit., p. 16
[47] D.A. SCHÖN, *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*, Basic Books, New York 2009, p. 21
[48] *Ivi,* p. 42

consequences and new phenomena that emerge. Through this "*reflective conversation*"[49] with the materials of the situation, the practitioner continually reframes the problem, invents new strategies, and evaluates their interventions not by their adherence to abstract theory, but by their ability to bring coherence to the specific context and keep the inquiry moving forward. I read Schön's work as reframing innovation from the linear application of expert knowledge to an iterative, artistic process of framing and experimenting within the uncertain conditions of practice.

1.4.4 Designerly ways of knowing

I develop this account of design as a distinct way of engaging with the world through the concept of "*designerly ways of knowing*". Nigel Cross argues that design possesses its own intellectual culture, separate from both the sciences and the humanities. While the sciences are concerned with the "true" (how the world is) and the humanities with the "just" (human values and experience), design is fundamentally concerned with the "appropriate", with how things ought to be to serve human purposes. This way of knowing involves specific forms of thought and knowledge. Design knowledge is inherent in the activity of designing itself, in the artefacts that are created, and in the processes of bringing them into being. It relies heavily on constructive, rather than merely analytic, thinking. Cross highlights that designers are particularly adept at using non-verbal codes and models, sketches, diagrams, and prototypes, to translate abstract requirements into concrete forms and to explore the implications of tentative solutions[50].

This designerly cognition is highly solution-focused. Rather than engaging in exhaustive problem analysis before attempting a solution (as a purely scientific approach might dictate), designers frequently use the rapid generation of preliminary solutions (conjectures) as a means to explore and define the problem itself. The prototype or sketch acts as a cognitive tool, a way of externalising thought to provoke new understandings of the problem's constraints and possibilities. For my argument, Cross's account of design as a rigorous discipline with its own way of knowing supports the view that navigating complex innovation challenges requires forms of knowledge and practice that cannot be reduced to the scientific method or traditional management techniques. I therefore understand design thinking as more than a procedure: it is a way of producing and organising knowledge, in which understanding develops through iterative cycles of framing, experimentation, and reflection[51].

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[49] *Ivi,* p. 76
[50] N. CROSS, *Designerly Ways of Knowing: Design Discipline versus Design Science*, «Design Issues» 17/3 (2001), The MIT Press, 49-55, pp. 53/54
[51] *Ivi,* pp. 54/55

1.4.5 The persistent challenge of management

> *«The new liberal art of design thinking is turning to the modality of impossibility. It points, for example, toward the impossibility of rigid boundaries between industrial design, engineering, and marketing. It points toward the impossibility of relying on any one of the sciences (natural, social, or humanistic) for adequate solutions to what are the inherently wicked problems of design thinking. Finally it points toward something that is often forgotten, that what many people call "impossible" may actually only be a limitation of imagination that can be overcome by better design thinking.»*[52]

The theoretical trajectory from Simon's science of the artificial, through Buchanan's integration of wicked problems, to Schön's reflection-in-action and Cross's designerly ways of knowing, gives me an account of design thinking as a response to the problem of knowing under conditions of complexity. It offers a framework for innovation that accepts indeterminacy, prioritises problem-framing, and relies on iterative experimentation and reflective practice rather than linear calculation. In environments where traditional management approaches falter because the "problem" is a moving target, design thinking provides a language and a rationale for navigating uncertainty.

However, while design thinking offers a theoretical alternative for inquiry in complex situations, acknowledging its epistemological value does not automatically resolve the practical realities of managing innovation within modern organisations. Design thinking, with its emphasis on ambiguity, iterative reframing, and the reflective judgement of the practitioner, frequently sits in tension with the structural imperatives of the very organisations seeking to employ it. If design thinking requires an embrace of the unknown and a tolerance for emergent outcomes, how does this interact with the dominant corporate demands for predictability, scalability, and measurable return on investment?

This friction between wicked problems and established business structures leads me to examine the limits and contradictions of mainstream innovation frameworks, including the place they give to design thinking.

1.5 Limits of mainstream innovation frameworks

In the preceding sections, I reconstructed the historical trajectory of innovation to show that it is neither a natural phenomenon nor a timeless category. Innovation has been progressively rationalised, from a term of political subversion into an economic imperative, and finally into an endogenous organisational process intended to guarantee growth and competitive advantage. This genealogy also showed that linear models of managed innovation inevitably falter when confronted with "*wicked problems*" embedded in complex systems. In response to this indeterminacy, design thinking emerged not merely as a set of

[52] R. BUCHANAN, *Wicked Problems in Design Thinking,* cit., pp. 20/21

problem-solving techniques, but as a distinct mode of inquiry through which problems can be framed and uncertainty explored. However, while design thinking offers a robust alternative to Technical Rationality, translating it into organisational practice frequently exposes deep structural frictions.

In this concluding section, I broaden the discussion to examine the assumptions that frequently underpin contemporary, mainstream innovation discourse. My purpose is not to reject the necessity of innovation or the value of design thinking, or to argue against technological development itself. I want to make the assumptions behind these approaches available for reflection. Mainstream frameworks often operate upon a set of unexamined premises: that innovation is an inherently universal good, that technological change is the primary driver of human history, and that the continuous introduction of novelty is the sole measure of progress. By exploring the limitations of these assumptions, I argue that innovation must be understood not as an autonomous force, but as a situated practice deeply embedded within broader socio-technical and historical contexts.

1.5.1 The assumption of technological determinism

I begin by examining the assumption that technological innovation drives historical and social change. In contemporary discourse, complex social phenomena, from the structure of the labour force to the nature of interpersonal communication, are frequently explained as the direct, inevitable results of new technologies. This perspective, often termed "technological determinism", posits technology as an independent, autonomous force that imposes its dictates upon society.

In Robert Heilbroner's formulation of the problem, technological determinism suggests a sequence where *«the steam-mill follows the hand-mill not by chance but because it is the next 'stage' in a technical conquest of nature»*[53]. In this view, particularly when analysing the dynamics of capitalism, the introduction of new machinery translates into calculable economic stimuli, which in turn systematically reshape social and organisational structures. However, as Heilbroner himself later acknowledged, even this heuristic formulation must account for "soft" elements, recognising that technological change is responsive to social direction and must be compatible with existing social conditions.

Treating technology as an autonomous prime mover severely oversimplifies the historical process. Critics of technological determinism argue that the theory falters by masking the ways in which social, political, and cultural forces shape technology itself[54].

As Sally Wyatt observes, the "hard" determinist view, which imputes agency directly to technology and treats its development as an inescapable necessity, ignores the reality that technological development is

[53] M.R. SMITH – L. MARX, *Does technology drive history? the dilemma of technological determinism*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.) London 1994, p. 55

[54] *Ivi,* pp. 60-62

a social activity. The very direction of technological advance is responsive to social direction, cultural values, and political choices[55].

Bruce Bimber further clarifies that what often passes for the technological determination of history is, in fact, the determination of history by specific social norms or unintended consequences. The assertion that a technology "demands" a specific social configuration frequently obscures the human agency involved in designing and implementing that technology. Technologies do not emerge in a vacuum; they are artefacts imbued with the values and priorities of their creators and sponsors[56]. I therefore approach technological innovation through the reciprocal relationship between technology and society, rather than as an external force driving society forward: a relationship in which the technical and the social are mutually constituted within complex socio-technical systems.

1.5.2 The innovation delusion and the neglect of maintenance

The deterministic assumption that technological change is synonymous with social progress leads me to a second limitation of mainstream frameworks: the uncritical valorisation of novelty. In The *Innovation Delusion*, Lee Vinsel and Andrew L. Russell argue that contemporary culture has become fixated on «*innovation-speak, a breathless dialect of word salad that trumpets the importance of innovation while turning that term into an overused buzzword*»[57], while ignoring the mundane, essential work that sustains existing systems.

This ideology of continuous change often treats innovation as an inherent good, regardless of its actual utility or its long-term consequences. Vinsel and Russell highlight that the imperative to "disrupt" existing markets and "move fast and break things" (a mantra popularised in Silicon Valley) may function as a viable strategy for digital startups, but it is frequently disastrous when applied to physical infrastructure, public institutions, or complex social systems. The obsession with innovation often serves as a proxy for avoiding difficult political or structural reforms, offering the illusion that deep-seated social problems can be resolved through technological fixes[58].

One consequence of this "innovation delusion" is the systematic devaluation of maintenance, care, and repair. While the creation of the new is celebrated and highly compensated, the labour required to preserve and sustain the human-built world is often rendered invisible and assigned low social status. Mainstream innovation frameworks, by focusing exclusively on the genesis and diffusion of new technologies, fail to account for the reality that the vast majority of technological engagement involves using and maintaining existing artefacts and infrastructures.

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[55] E.J. HACKETT – SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL STUDIES OF SCIENCE (ed.), *The handbook of science and technology studies* (The MIT Press Series), The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 2008, pp. 165-176

[56] M.R. SMITH – L. MARX, *Does technology drive history?,* cit., pp. 80-85

[57] L. VINSEL, *The Innovation Delusion: How Our Obsession with the New Has Disrupted the Work That Matters Most*, Crown/Archetype, 2020, p. 13

[58] *Ivi,* pp. 10/11

This neglect distorts how organisational and social life are understood, extending beyond a simple oversight. The deterioration of physical infrastructure, the vulnerabilities exposed by deferred maintenance, and the ecological consequences of a *«throwaway culture»*[59] all point to the limits of an ideology that privileges growth and novelty over sustainability and care. By obscuring the vital role of maintainers, from mechanics and sanitation workers to caregivers and IT support staff, the dominant innovation narrative fails to capture the essential activities that ensure the ongoing viability of complex systems.

1.5.3 The simplification of design thinking

I also question how mainstream innovation frameworks absorb and simplify alternative modes of inquiry, including design thinking. As Section 1.4 established, design thinking emerged as a response to the problem of knowing in indeterminate situations, emphasising active problem framing, reflective practice, and the generation of knowledge through iterative experimentation.

However, as design thinking has been increasingly integrated into managerial and corporate contexts, it has often been reduced from a complex mode of inquiry into a standardised, procedural toolkit. The potential of design to produce knowledge, its capacity to actively structure problem spaces and reframe wicked problems through "practical reasoning", is frequently diluted when it is forced to conform to the dominant corporate demands for predictability, scalability, and rapid return on investment[60].

When design thinking is repackaged as a simple recipe for generating innovative products, it risks losing its core critical capacity. The iterative, reflective conversation with the materials of a situation is often replaced by a superficial focus on "ideation" and "user-centricity", which may fail to engage with the deeper structural or ethical dimensions of the problem space. This instrumentalisation of design thinking highlights a recurring tension: the attempt to manage innovation by formalising its processes often strips those very processes of their ability to engage with true complexity. For me, the challenge extends beyond adopting design methods to developing the reflective judgement needed to work with the uncertainty and contestation of socio-technical interventions.

1.5.4 Innovation as situated practice

In this chapter, I have traced the genealogy of innovation and its transformation from a concept of historical subversion into the central operational paradigm of modern organisations. I have argued that while the drive to manage and systematise the production of novelty has yielded powerful organisational frameworks, these linear models struggle in the face of systemic complexity and the wicked nature of contemporary problems. While design thinking offers an alternative way of knowing, its integration into

[59] *Ivi,* p. 220
[60] D.A. SCHÖN, *The reflective practitioner,* cit., p. 327

mainstream practice remains fraught with tension, often resulting in its simplification into a procedural toolkit.

The limitations explored in this final section, the assumptions of technological determinism, the ideological valorisation of novelty over maintenance, and the simplification of complex inquiry, bring me to a central point: innovation is not a neutral, autonomous, or universally positive force. The history I have traced shows that the dominant innovation narratives are partial and contingent, favouring specific forms of economic and technological rationalisation while frequently obscuring vital practices of care and maintenance. Innovation cannot be reduced merely to technological advancement, nor can it be managed entirely through standardised frameworks.

I therefore understand innovation as a situated socio-cultural phenomenon. Its meaning, value, and consequences are continuously negotiated within specific historical, economic, and political contexts. Technologies do not drive history in isolation; they are deeply entangled with human agency, social structures, and cultural values. The consequences of innovation are shaped not only by the intentions of designers and managers but also by the invisible labour of maintainers, the complexities of implementation, and the enduring realities of the natural environment.

Recognising these limits does not negate the necessity of innovation. It leads me towards a more reflexive and expansive approach: one that acknowledges the friction between the imperative to create the new and the necessity of sustaining the existing. It demands an understanding that the meaning of any intervention cannot be fully captured by universal models or strategic intent. Rather than relying on abstract frameworks alone, I need to examine how new practices and artefacts are interpreted, negotiated, and maintained within the concrete institutional and social environments where they take root.

I turn next to cultural organisations to examine these dynamics, as they operate at the intersection of social, symbolic, technological, and institutional forms of innovation.

2. Innovation in cultural organisations: institutional transformations and changing practices

2.1 The museum as institutional device

2.1.1 The museum beyond neutrality

To investigate innovation within cultural organisations, I first need to question the idea that these institutions are unproblematic, static or naturally occurring. In popular and administrative discourse, the museum is frequently conceptualised as a neutral, timeless container of cultural heritage, an objective space where material artefacts are preserved and allowed to communicate their inherent truths directly to the visitor. By questioning this perception, I can approach the museum as a specific institutional device whose activities and purposes are contested. This re-examination is central to what Vergo calls "*the new museology*": the study of museums needs to ask what they are for, as well as how their technical methods work. For much of its history, the study of these institutions has taken their existence as unproblematic, focusing instead on practical techniques of collection management and conservation. In this account, collecting always involves political, ideological or aesthetic choices that need to be examined. Analysing the underlying, often unspoken aims, policies, and power relations that govern the museum reveals the institution not as a transparent window onto the past, but as an active participant in the social and political production of knowledge. Without reconsidering their role in society, museums risk becoming isolated from the living culture they aim to represent. Vergo's image of museums as living fossils captures what is at stake in that separation[61].

2.1.2 Knowledge, classification and museological rationality

I examine this isolation through the museum's systems of classification and spatial ordering, which reinforce it through choices that are far from neutral. Hooper-Greenhill argues that traditional museum histories have searched for origins and a continuous tradition, giving priority to similarities over differences. This linear account of progress obscures the specific political, cultural, economic and ideological relations that distinguish museums in different historical settings[62]. This erasure matters to my argument because what is accepted as knowledge in a museum depends on its historical conditions; it is not an absolute, objective truth. As Hooper-Greenhill explains, the professional, cultural and ideological practices through which museums take shape rely on a structure of rationality that is too often accepted without question. Following her questions, I ask what knowing means in museums, what they accept as knowledge and what makes their ways of organising that knowledge appear rational. These systems of classification, ordering and framing function as active instruments of control. Far from

[61] P. VERGO (ed.), *The New museology*, Reaktion Books, London 1989, pp. 2-4
[62] E. HOOPER-GREENHILL, *Museums and the shaping of knowledge* (Heritage), Routledge; New York 1992, p. 8

merely reflecting natural categories, these systems determine which objects are gathered, how they are grouped and how they are made visible. The museum's implicit teaching operates through these spatial and taxonomic arrangements, which systematically enable some ways of knowing while preventing others. Their classifications are not inherent in the objects: as Hooper-Greenhill observes, the same material object would be classified differently within different disciplines and sets of practices[63]. The power to classify is the power to define reality, and in doing so the museum establishes a relation in which

> «*power relations within museums and galleries are skewed towards the collecting subject who makes decisions in relation to space, time, and visibility; in other words as to what may be viewed, how it should be seen, and when this is possible*»[64].

This skewed power relation is physically and discursively enacted through the making of exhibitions. Vergo's observation that objects often communicate very little to visitors without interpretation challenges the assumption that exhibits can simply be left to speak for themselves. Their presence alone does not ensure that their significance is understood[65]. To make them speak, the museum places them within a narrative. The exhibition context gives objects meanings beyond those they already carry as cultural artefacts or objects of aesthetic contemplation. Within a particular visual and textual space, material things are transformed in the way Vergo describes:

> «*they become not merely works of art or tokens of a certain culture or society, but elements of a narrative, forming part of a thread of discourse which is itself one element in a more complex web of meanings*»[66].

The apparently neutral display case is, therefore, an active technology of representation, producing specific, politically and historically situated meanings under the guise of an objective, unmediated vision of the past.

2.1.3 The exhibitionary complex and institutional power

I place this transformation of material things into vehicles of situated, authorised discourse within the history of what Tony Bennett calls "*the exhibitionary complex*". Emerging alongside the carceral archipelago described by Michel Foucault, the institutions of the exhibitionary complex organised a new set of power-knowledge relations in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, while the

[63] *Ivi,* pp. 3-6
[64] *Ivi,* p. 7
[65] P. VERGO (ed.), *The New museology,* cit., p. 49
[66] *Ivi,* p. 46

penitentiary sought to maintain order by withdrawing the deviant body from public view, these public spaces brought objects and bodies out of enclosed, private domains and into increasingly open arenas. In Bennett's account, their public arrangement allowed the messages of power to be inscribed in displays and circulated through society. By opening their doors to the general public, museums and international exhibitions did not dismantle the disciplinary power of the state; rather, they transformed its modality, reversing «*the orientations of the disciplinary apparatuses in seeking to render the forces and principles of order visible to the populace - transformed, here, into a people, a citizenry - rather than vice versa*»[67]. The museum is understood within this framework as a cultural technology concerned with the moral and cultural regulation of the population. Through

> «*the provision of object lessons in power - the power to command and arrange things and bodies for public display - they sought to allow the people, and en masse rather than individually, to know rather than be known, to become the subjects rather than the objects of knowledge*»[68].

The rhetoric of power was «*made manifest not in its ability to inflict pain but by its ability to organize and co-ordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order*»[69]. When the citizen entered the museum he was invited to identify with the coordinating power of capital and the nation-state, «*interiorizing its gaze as a principle of self-surveillance and, hence, self-regulation*»[70]. This self-regulation was facilitated by the physical architecture and visual layout of the exhibitionary complex, where the development of viewing galleries, rotunda and elevated vantage points ensured that the public became part of the show. The visitor was placed in a position where they could «*see and be seen, to survey yet always be under surveillance, the object of an unknown but controlling look*»[71]. The exhibitionary complex

> «*perfected a self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged, in which the crowd comes to commune with and regulate itself through interiorizing the ideal and ordered view of itself as seen from the controlling vision of power - a site of sight accessible to all*»[72].

This self-monitoring system was structurally aligned with the development and circulation of new scholarly disciplines, such as history, biology, art history and anthropology «*and their discursive*

[67] T. BENNETT, *THE EXHIBITIONARY COMPLEX*, «New Formations»/4 (1988), p. 76
[68] *Ivi,* p. 76
[69] *Ivi,* p. 80
[70] *Ivi,* p. 76
[71] *Ivi,* p. 81
[72] *Ivi,* p. 82

formations (the past, evolution, aesthetics, man)»[73] as well as with the development of new technologies of vision. Each of these disciplines «*aimed at the representation of a type and its insertion in a developmental sequence for display to a public*»[74]. By arranging objects and peoples into evolutionary or chronological series, the museum constructed an order organised through time. Bennett describes this order as totalising: it represented all things and peoples through their historical interactions and presented its public as a unified body. In constructing a collective "we", this representation erased divisions within the body politic[75]. The public was invited to view itself as the ultimate realisation and beneficiary of the long, progressive march of civilisation.

2.1.4 Cultural legitimacy and social distinction

I now turn to the enduring social division masked by this representation of the national citizenry as a collective "we". The claim that the museum is a universally accessible, democratic space is systematically contradicted by the reality of museum visiting. In The Love of Art, Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel connect the uncritical celebration of the museum's openness with a religious understanding of art. This belief accommodates both defenders of tradition and modernisers, while presenting access to culture through the language of salvation and grace. Within this charismatic view, aesthetic appreciation appears as a natural gift. Artistic vision, or the ability to recognise what matters in a work, is consequently reserved for a supposedly gifted few, as though the capacity to see were bestowed rather than acquired[76]. Through the depiction of artistic appreciation as a matter of pure, unmediated grace, the dominant cultural narrative systematically hides the social and educational conditions of its acquisition. If aesthetic appreciation cannot be learned, this ideology leaves teaching with the task of awakening a capacity presumed to lie dormant in some people. Visitors can then believe that the work itself has enough persuasive power to attract and retain those already endowed with the right sensibility. No account of the learning behind that sensibility is required[77]. This illusion allows the privileged to treat their socially acquired cultural advantages as natural virtues, thereby legitimised by a false ontology of innate taste. Against this belief, Bourdieu and Darbel's statistical evidence identifies access to cultural works as a privilege of the cultivated class. Its legitimacy is preserved because exclusion appears to result from people's own decisions not to participate. The apparent openness of the museum is a powerful mechanism of social exclusion, working precisely through the self-exclusion of those who lack the necessary cultural resources. The desire to participate in culture develops through participation itself: the more that need is satisfied, the more it grows. Conversely, people who do not participate may have

[73] *Ivi,* p. 73
[74] *Ivi,* p. 88
[75] *Ivi,* p. 92
[76] P. BOURDIEU – A. DARBEL – D. SCHNAPPER, *The love of art: European art museums and their public*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK 1991, p.1
[77] *Ivi,* pp. 2-3

no awareness of what is absent from their experience[78]. Comprehending this self-exclusion requires recognising that the proper deciphering of museum objects, particularly in art museums, requires a highly specialised "*artistic competence*". In their account, competence depends on mastering the means available for understanding works of art, including the interpretative frameworks through which artistic capital can be acquired. Without these frameworks, the untrained visitor cannot perceive the work in its specifically artistic dimension. A specifically aesthetic reading treats the work as a signifier referring to itself: it identifies distinctive stylistic features by relating them to the other works within the same class, rather than to purposes outside that artistic field. This specialised aesthetic code stands in sharp contrast to the "functionalist" taste of the working classes. Bourdieu and Darbel describe this habitus through the inseparability of refusal and inability to distinguish aesthetic pleasure from gratification. From this position, an image is expected to perform a function, even if that function is simply to signify something[79]. Lacking the academic code necessary to decontextualise the work of art and view it as a pure play of forms, the untrained visitor is confronted with an intimidating, silent environment where the objects refuse to speak. The

> «*charismatic ideology, which makes an encounter with a work of art the occasion of a descent of grace (charisma), provides the privileged with the most 'indisputable' justification for their cultural privilege, while making them forget that the perception of the work of art is necessarily informed and therefore learnt*»[80].

I read this unequal competence as an effect of the educational system, which produces and sanctions it, rather than as a natural difference. The acquisition of the cultivated habitus «*can only proceed through a slow familiarization*»[81] within the family, which means that children of different classes enter the school system with wildly unequal levels of cultural capital. Instead of correcting these initial inequalities, the traditional school system «*only has to let the objective mechanisms of cultural diffusion run their course* [...] *for initial inequalities to be intensified and for the transmission of cultural capital to be legitimated by its sanction*»[82]. Socio-demographic variables «*show that the school system, which simply sees all pupils as being equal in rights and duties, usually does no more than intensify and sanction initial cultural inequalities*»[83]. The museum, presenting its displays as universally accessible while offering no help in their decipherment, acts as a secondary school, confirming and naturalising these educational and class-based divisions.

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[78] *Ivi,* p. 37
[79] *Ivi,* pp. 39-40
[80] *Ivi,* p. 54
[81] *Ivi,* p. 65
[82] *Ivi,* p. 70
[83] *Ivi,* p. 68

2.1.5 Towards institutional transformation

Approaching the museum as an institutional device whose purposes and practices are contested changes how I understand cultural transformation. I cannot reduce a meaningful attempt at innovation within these spaces to the adoption of standardised and linear managerial frameworks. To optimise or manage the museum without questioning its underlying, exclusionary rationality is to remain trapped within the limits of the managed paradigm. If the museum is a site where power and knowledge are continuously organised to construct specific representations of civilisation, to shape the authority of the state and to produce social distinction, then genuine transformation requires a radical, reflexive dismantling of the very power structures, of the epistemological assumptions and of the class divisions that have historically defined the institution. Recognising that «*present-day museums and galleries* [are] *not the only form in which museums can exist, but merely the form which the play of various powers has permitted to emerge*»[84] leads me to focus on the artistic and critical practices that have sought to systematically challenge the physical and discursive boundaries of the museum, exposing its hidden curriculum and seeking to open up new, democratic possibilities for cultural practice.

2.2 From institutional authority to participatory museums

2.2.1 The crisis of the traditional museum

In the late twentieth century the classical museological paradigm faced a structural challenge to its institutional legitimacy. Critics and public audiences began dismantling the «*falsely aristocratic conception of the arrangement of works of art*»[85] that had historically dictated the spatial and conceptual layout of these spaces. Operating on the assumption that preserving material culture represented an unproblematic civic good, the traditional museum relied on a posture of neutrality. This stance masked the reality that «*the very act of collecting has a political or ideological or aesthetic dimension*»[86], a dimension structurally bound to broader configurations of power. With the emergence of critical theory and post-custodial social movements, maintaining the «*systematic erasure*»[87] of these ideological foundations became impossible. Exposing these obscured frameworks revealed that the traditional museum was not a neutral container of universal truths but an active site of class-based exclusion. Treating the institution as a silent vault ignored the sociological reality that «*access to cultural works is the privilege of the cultivated class*»[88]. Preservation and display lost their status as self-evident public goods when researchers demonstrated how the museum's internal organisation and educational defaults functioned to «*intensify and sanction initial cultural inequalities*»[89]. These critiques forced a

[84] E. HOOPER-GREENHILL, *Museums and the shaping of knowledge,* cit., pp. 8/9
[85] N. BOURRIAUD, *Relational Aesthetics*, tr. Simon Pleasance e Woods Fronza, Les Presses du Rèel 2002, p. 15
[86] P. VERGO (ed.), *The New museology,* cit., p. 2
[87] E. HOOPER-GREENHILL, *Museums and the shaping of knowledge,* cit., p. 8
[88] P. BOURDIEU – A. DARBEL – D. SCHNAPPER, *The love of art,* cit., p. 37
[89] *Ivi,* p. 68

fundamental reassessment of the museum's public role, prompting a shift from its historical legacy as a «*patrician institution of elite culture*»[90] toward an organisational model capable of active engagement with diverse publics. I therefore read a purely preservationist mandate as an ideological choice, rather than a natural duty: it separated the institution from the living culture it claimed to represent[91]. This legitimacy deficit grew as audiences rejected the uncritical celebration of the museum's openness, exposing universal accessibility as a structural illusion. Collections maintenance alone could not resolve systemic barriers to access. The mechanism of self-exclusion discussed above helps me understand why formal openness could coexist with persistent barriers to participation. Institutional survival thus depended on moving beyond the unilateral transmission of cultural authority toward a comprehensive reorganisation of the museum-public relationship. I understand this as an institutional realignment that went beyond a change in communication technologies. The erosion of paternalistic authority necessitated collaborative and interactive administrative frameworks, in order to establish the organisational conditions for participatory museology.

2.2.2 Participation and the reconfiguration of the museum–visitor relationship

The emergence of participatory museology marked an effort to restructure «*the traditional relationship between the art object, the artist and the audience*»[92], redefining the organisational boundaries of curatorial authority. In Simon's account, the museum becomes a platform connecting visitors in different roles: creating and distributing content, using it, criticising it and collaborating with others. This changes their position as passive consumers of historical narratives prepared for them. I locate innovation here in the design of relationships, extending beyond the development of individual exhibits. In Simon's formulation, a participatory cultural institution is structured so that «*visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content*»[93]. Moving away from the «*passive process of presenter-spectator*»[94] establishes a multidirectional dialogue. This dialogue changes the institution's administrative identity: «*instead of being 'about' something or 'for' someone, participatory institutions are created and managed 'with' visitors*»[95]. This shift demands that participation be integrated directly into display and collection policies, operating as a structured, «*ongoing or long-term project with an unclear beginning and end*»[96]. It resists being marginalised as a secondary public relations exercise or dismissed as a casual «*fun activity*»[97]. This structural transition cannot be uncritically equated with

[90] C. BISHOP – D. PERJOVSCHI, *Radical museology or, «what's contemporary» in museums of contemporary art?*, Koenig Books, London 2014, p. 5
[91] P. VERGO (ed.), *The New museology,* cit., p. 3
[92] C. BISHOP, *Artificial hells: participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*, Verso Books, London ; New York 2012, p. 2
[93] N. SIMON, *The participatory museum*, Museum 2.0, Santa Cruz 2010, p. II
[94] C. BISHOP, *Artificial hells,* cit., p. 11
[95] N. SIMON, *The participatory museum,* cit., p. III
[96] C. BISHOP, *Artificial hells,* cit., p. 2
[97] N. SIMON, *The participatory museum,* cit., p. 16

democratisation. Critics caution that a superficial adoption of participatory rhetoric can obscure new forms of social control and economic instrumentalisation. As Bishop notes, contemporary cultural discourse often operates under the assumption that «*collaborative practice is perceived to offer an automatic counter-model of social unity, regardless of its actual politics*»[98]. If reduced to mechanical or procedural tasks, participatory initiatives risk reproducing the very socio-economic dynamics they claim to disrupt. When the «*goal of participatory techniques*»[99] is just about activating visitors within rigid, pre-designed boundaries, «*the individual has shifted from a passive and purely repetitive status to the minimum activity dictated to him by market forces*»[100]. Participation can then become what Bishop calls «*soft social engineering*»[101]: visitors' labour validates institutional metrics while their capacity to act remains limited. To avoid this co-optation, institutions require an ongoing, reflexive critique of administrative practices. Reconfiguring the visitor-museum relationship is not about the deployment of user-friendly software or interactive kiosks but about reorganising institutional identity and decision-making. For me, organisational innovation therefore has to reach curatorial power structures and cannot stop at superficial outreach.

2.2.3 Museums, communities and social responsibility

The redefinition of museums as civic institutions placed community engagement and social responsibility at the centre of organisational strategy. This reorientation occurred as critics warned that «*the future of the public museum, able to represent the interests of the ninety-nine percent rather than to consolidate private privilege, has never seemed bleaker*»[102]. In response, progressive administrators aimed to reposition their institutions as «*platforms and values*»[103] for public dialogue, using their physical spaces to represent marginalised histories. In Bishop's account, these museums resist market-driven cultural narratives by drawing on a wide range of artefacts to connect art with particular histories of wider relevance. The museum acts politically through these choices. It seeks to represent the interests and histories of groups that have been marginalised or oppressed, rather than those of a privileged elite. Visual production becomes a means of encouraging a historical and political position in relation to those groups. I understand this as a change in the organisational decisions about which histories deserve preservation, extending beyond the curatorial programme alone. In order to fulfil this social responsibility a structural reconfiguration of interactive frameworks is required. Simon observes that genuine community engagement demands moving beyond paternalistic models of project design. In basic contributory projects «*the institution requests content and the participants supply it, subject to*

[98] C. BISHOP, *Artificial hells,* cit., p. 12
[99] N. SIMON, *The participatory museum,* cit., p. III
[100] C. BISHOP, *Artificial hells,* cit., *citing Bourriaud*, p. 11
[101] *Ivi,* p. 5
[102] C. BISHOP – D. PERJOVSCHI, *Radical museology or, «what's contemporary» in museums of contemporary art?,* cit., p. 6
[103] N. SIMON, *The participatory museum,* cit., p. 105

institutional rules». Although useful in order to diversify collection inputs, this model preserves traditional curatorial hierarchies and leaves the underlying distribution of organisational power untouched. In contrast to this model, co-creative frameworks require that «*participants' goals and preferred working styles are just as important as those of the staff*»[104]. By aligning institutional workflows with community aspirations, these initiatives generate deep "*learning value*", "*social value*" and "*work value*", reconfiguring the museum from a static repository into a collaborative social ecosystem. This realignment also creates friction within the organisation. Ceding curatorial authority often destabilises traditional professional identities, as participatory processes «*are disruptive to the ways that museum staff members and trustees perceive the image, stature, and content of the institution*»[105]. When «*institutional and participant perspectives about what is valuable diverge*»[106], institutions are tempted to neutralise controversial community content. If community involvement is sanitised to avoid tension, the rhetoric of social responsibility degenerates into a corporate branding strategy. I therefore see civic responsibility as requiring an ongoing and contested reorganisation of institutional priorities, rather than a smooth managerial transition.

2.2.4 Radical museology

These internal frictions lead me to argue that a simple expansion of public programming or a superficial deployment of participatory toolkits cannot achieve genuine organisational innovation. The temporal and historical frameworks governing display must be reconfigured. Bishop argues that contemporary art museums are increasingly paralysed by "*presentism*" which she defines as «*the condition of taking our current moment as the horizon and destination of our thinking*»[107]. Under these pressures, historical collections are either sidelined in favour of immediate sensation or displayed without context, mirroring global capital's rapid circulation and loss of historical memory. Against this presentist paradigm, radical museology approaches the "*contemporary*" not as a stylistic label or a chronological period, but as a critical "*methodology*". In this model, the contemporary operates as a dialectical method: «*scouring the past for the origins of our present historical moment, which in turn is the determining motivation for our interest in the past*»[108]. Through an «*anachronic action that seeks to reboot the future through the unexpected appearance of a relevant past*»[109], progressive institutions challenge the linear, evolutionary taxonomies of traditional curatorial practice. By rejecting the traditional layout of the exhibitionary complex, which historically «*aimed at the representation of a type and its insertion in a developmental*

[104] N. SIMON, *The participatory museum,* cit., p. 187
[105] *Ivi,* p. 324
[106] *Ivi,* p. 282
[107] C. BISHOP – D. PERJOVSCHI, *Radical museology or, «what's contemporary» in museums of contemporary art?,* cit., p. 6
[108] *Ivi,* p. 56
[109] *Ivi,* p. 61

sequence»[110], these spaces experiment with "*polychronic*" modes of display. The juxtaposition of historical and contemporary works exposes the political structures, colonial legacies and economic forces which shape current crises. The display case is no longer treated as a neutral container but is treated as a critical tool that «*mobilize*[s] *the world of visual production*»[111] to challenge dominant narratives and prompt institutions to reflect on their own practices.

2.2.5 The paradoxes of the democratic shift

The evolution from institutional authority to participatory and radical museologies represents an epistemological and organisational reorientation of the museum. In the account I have developed here, the classical museum model, conceived as a neutral, objective container of universal truths, rested on organisational structures complicit in state power, imperialist classification, and class-based exclusion. The emergence of the "*new museology*" and the "*participatory*" turn sought to restructure these power dynamics, transforming the visitor from a passive spectator of authorised narratives into an active collaborator in the co-creation of knowledge.

I find several structural paradoxes in this transition. An uncritical embrace of participation as an automatic remedy for social exclusion often overlooks how easily collaborative practices can be co-opted by administrative and market forces. When reduced to a standardised, procedural toolkit, participation risks degenerating into a form of «*soft social engineering*»[112] that utilises public labour while leaving the core curatorial and financial power structures of the institution untouched. A persistent demand for measurable outcomes, scalability, and predictability within contemporary cultural management clashes with the open-ended, ambiguous, and politically contested nature of genuine community engagement. This friction reinforces my argument that innovation within cultural organisations is a relational and institutional challenge that cannot be resolved through standardised frameworks or superficial public relations. If the museum needs to function as a genuine civic space, it must operate as a flexible "*platform*" where the boundaries of authority are continuously negotiated and where organisational identities are reshaped in dialogue with diverse communities. To work with these complexities and institutional frictions, cultural professionals need a reflexive, designerly and critical mode of inquiry, shifting the focus of innovation from the management of cultural objects to the transformation of institutional relationships.

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[110] T. BENNETT, *THE EXHIBITIONARY COMPLEX,* cit., p. 88
[111] C. BISHOP – D. PERJOVSCHI, *Radical museology or, «what's contemporary» in museums of contemporary art?,* cit., p. 6
[112] C. BISHOP, *Artificial hells,* cit., p. 5

2.3 Innovation, branding and cultural regeneration

2.3.1 Culture beyond the museum: territorial innovation

To examine the contemporary museum, I now move beyond the architectural perimeter of the individual institution. The progressive evolution of these organisations from authoritative spaces of cultural preservation into active, participatory nodes marks a major reconfiguration of regional urban dynamics. This shift highlights how «*the economy and art* […] *exist as separate spheres of human interest*»[113] which are nevertheless increasingly brought into alignment within regional policy frameworks. Contemporary cultural entities expand their practices directly into the surrounding spatial fabric. I take this expansion of networks as further evidence that organisational innovation is fundamentally a matter of changing institutional relationships and public alignment. Through this outward reorientation, culture ceases to function as a luxury asset and instead integrates directly with regional economic development. This reorientation places the cultural organisation at the very centre of what may be termed a territorial innovation network. Within this network, value is produced across different sites, since the modern «*imagination has become a collective, social fact*»[114] capable of generating diverse alternative viewpoints. The individual navigating these landscapes gives meaning to them, building an understanding of larger formations from local experience. An important fact of the world we live in today is that many persons live in such «*imagined worlds*»[115] and thus are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the official configurations of authority. To explore these dynamics, I consider how «*cultural capital* [is][…] *an asset which embodies, stores or provides cultural value in addition to whatever economic value it may possess*»[116]. Innovation is redefined as a situated, relational process that links the physical layout of the city with the symbolic and economic performance of its principal institution. It thereby connects different processes of regional value creation, shifting public policy from selective assistance to an open exchange of resources.

As museums immerse themselves in these wider territorial dynamics, their operational models become linked with regional governance. Municipalities increasingly recognise that institutional innovation must be understood as an ongoing series of spatial and administrative transformations. This structural integration repositions the museum as a primary asset within regional policy frameworks, laying the groundwork for culture to serve as a driver of city development. This development means that urban change is no longer dictated solely by physical infrastructure investments. It is driven by the complex symbolic capital generated by participatory cultural systems. The structural alignment between municipal authority and museum practice converts local heritage into an active economic agent, connecting cultural preservation with the wider process of urban regeneration.

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[113] C.D. THROSBY, *Economics and culture*, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge 2004, p. XI

[114] A. APPADURAI, *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization* (Public worlds v. 1), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minn 1996, p. 5

[115] *Ivi,* pp. 33-35

[116] C.D. THROSBY, *Economics and culture,* cit., p. 46

2.3.2 Cultural regeneration and the Bilbao Effect

I examine the integration of cultural policy into municipal planning through its prominent historical precedent in the urban transformation of the Basque region. The global dissemination of the Bilbao Effect represents an influential but often simplified model of cultural regeneration. Municipalities worldwide regularly attempt to copy this phenomenon, seeking instant post-industrial recovery without evaluating the specific structural conditions required for success. This simplified reading overlooks the fact that the Basque government did not build a modern art museum merely to acquire an isolated monument. The decision to «*spend $228.3 million on a modern art museum*»[117] was a deliberate, risky manoeuvre embedded within a comprehensive, multi-sectoral city facelift designed to reverse severe industrial decay.

The extraordinary capacity of this infrastructure project to draw an «*average of 800,000 non-Basque visitors a year*»[118] has distorted the expectations of urban planners. Many regional authorities build spectacular cultural spaces under the false assumption that signature architecture automatically guarantees socio-economic reactivation. This uncritical reliance on physical spectacles often fails because it detaches the building from its surrounding urban network. In Bilbao, the museum was the final piece of an integrated plan that included a new subway line, comprehensive water clean-up systems, and advanced technology parks. Without this systemic investment, isolated iconic structures are vulnerable to financial failure, as demonstrated by copycat schemes that collapsed into bankruptcy shortly after opening. I connect this reduction of urban complexity to an architectural formula with Belfiore and Bennett's critique of how evidence is ranked for its perceived quality and usefulness[119]. In municipal planning, this prioritises short-term visibility over long-term structural viability.

The costs of these projects require considerable fiscal caution. Plaza points to the very high expense of signature architecture, often draining scarce public capital away from essential welfare sectors such as education and healthcare. The widespread failure of several iconic museums to attract their projected audiences reflects Plaza's warning that impact studies often overestimate the number of visitors a future building will attract[120]. These distorted forecasts occur because consultants isolate the museum from the actual cultural habits of the local population. When an urban project prioritises international prestige over local institutional integration, the structure risks becoming an alien object within the city. I therefore understand regional activation as requiring an ongoing dialogue between physical forms and the lived experiences of the community. This dialogue reframes urban branding, transforming it from a superficial marketing exercise into a complex process through which cities reconstruct their identities within the global cultural economy.

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[117] B. PLAZA, *The Bilbao Effect (Guggenheim Museum Bilbao)*, «Museum News» 86/5 (2007), American Association of Museums, p. 2

[118] *Ivi,* p. 2

[119] E. BELFIORE – O. BENNETT, *The social impact of the arts: an intellectual history*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2008, pp. 5/6

[120] B. PLAZA, *The Bilbao Effect (Guggenheim Museum Bilbao),* cit., p. 3

2.3.3 Branding, identity and the global cultural economy

As post-industrial cities adjust to the pressures of global competition, they increasingly use their cultural assets to construct promotional brands. This strategic deployment of culture reshapes how municipalities articulate their historical identities to attract international capital. This process, however, places regional identities within what Appadurai describes as a tension between cultural homogenisation and heterogenisation[121]. To maintain global competitive advantage, cities must project unique local symbols, yet they must present these symbols through standardised cosmopolitan aesthetics to remain legible to international tourists. This commercial translation risks flattening the very historical complexity that makes the region unique, turning authentic local heritage into a polished, superficial brand.

For cultural organisations, this tension affects both their symbolic role and their everyday operations. When a museum is repositioned as a primary vehicle for city marketing, its exhibitions are often tailored to satisfy global consumer expectations over local civic needs. This commercial alignment reflects a deeper systemic transformation characterised by the modern «*fetishism of the consumer*»[122]. Within this promotional framework, the authentic and diverse practices of the locals are masked by a carefully curated image of metropolitan sophistication. The city brand functions as a corporate mask, presenting an artificial consensus that obscures real social contradictions and uneven development. The museum becomes a key instrument in this symbolic staging, using its cultural prestige to certify the municipality as a triumphant «*hallmark of maturity*»[123] within global networks, while potentially marginalising the historical narratives of its own community.

In this sense, the contemporary museum must operate as a complex mediator between local historical identities and global visibility circuits. This involves working within a fluid global cultural economy, driven by the «*mobile and unforeseeable relationship between mass-mediated events and migratory audiences*»[124]. This continuous oscillation between local groundedness and global legibility defines the core challenge of post-industrial cultural management as it exposes the organisation to severe internal friction, particularly when the metrics used to evaluate institutional success are dictating a complete surrender of cultural autonomy to corporate and political interests.

2.3.4 The instrumentalisation of culture

The alignment of cultural practice with city marketing and economic reactivation exposes organisations to structural tensions. Under the pressure of evidence-based policy frameworks, museums are increasingly forced to justify public outlays by meeting non-cultural targets. I understand this demand as an instrumentalisation of culture, where the value of an organisation is measured primarily through its contribution to external political agendas. When an institution reduces its operational logic to

[121] A. APPADURAI, *Modernity at large,* cit., p. 32
[122] *Ivi,* p. 41
[123] E. BELFIORE – O. BENNETT, *The social impact of the arts,* cit., p. 3
[124] A. APPADURAI, *Modernity at large,* cit., p. 4

economic metrics, it risks losing touch with its unique purpose, ignoring the reality that the arts are «*intrinsically valuable before they are instrumentally so*»[125]. This instrumentalism evaluates culture solely as an administrative mechanism for property value appreciation or tourism growth.

This administrative framework creates a sharp conflict between short-term quantifiable targets and long-term cultural preservation. The organic ways through which culture integrates into public life cannot be captured by rigid indicators. When public policy evaluates a museum's success primarily through visitor numbers or tax revenues, it distorts the conditions under which the institution operates. This focus encourages a market-oriented budgeting system that prioritises popular blockbusters over critical, innovative, or non-commercial programming. This commercial pressure undermines the critical capacity of the organisation, converting a site of civic dialogue into a space of passive entertainment. To counteract this trend, contemporary research must adopt an ecological perspective, recognising that «*cultural diversity* [is] *important in maintaining cultural systems*»[126] over extended historical periods. Cultural sustainability requires that organisations preserve their unique symbolic spaces, resisting the administrative pressure to convert multi-layered historical narratives into simple, easily measurable policy outputs.

To understand how culture generates value indirectly and over time, I move beyond measures of individual transactions to the concept of «*ecologie culturali*»[127]. This framework demonstrates that the real impact of an organisation spreads across society through complex, non-linear spillovers that cannot be tracked on a corporate balance sheet. Culture operates as an underlying infrastructure that conditions how citizens think, interact, and work within their environment, and when public policy reduces this complex relational ecosystem to a passive instrument for economic growth, it destroys the very social fabric that underpins the territory. I therefore resist this administrative reduction and approach cultural innovation as a situated, open-ended process that alters the symbolic and relational dynamics of the entire community.

2.3.5 Towards networked cultural ecosystems

Having approached innovation as a relational, networked and open-ended process within a territorial ecosystem, I now consider how cultural value also takes shape through non-physical connections. As the physical nodes of the territory intersect with fluid global networks, the traditional territorial ecosystem scales into open digital environments, where the concept of «*imagination as a social practice*»[128] extends beyond a single geographical setting. This extension of the cultural ecosystem shifts the central analytical thread from localised urban regeneration projects to open digital networks,

[125] E. BELFIORE – O. BENNETT, *The social impact of the arts,* cit., *citing Purnell (2007),* p. 7
[126] C.D. THROSBY, *Economics and culture,* cit., p. 57
[127] P.L. SACCO – E. TETI, *Cultura 3.0: un nuovo paradigma di creazione del valore*, «Economia & management: la rivista della Scuola di Direzione Aziendale dell'Università L. Bocconi» 1 (2017), Milano, p. 81
[128] A. APPADURAI, *Modernity at large,* cit., p. 31

bringing me to the «*Culture 3.0: A New Paradigm of Value Creation*»[129] framework. Within this open platform environment, the boundaries between the physical museum, the city brand and the global audience dissolve into an integrated digital matrix.

When an institution opens its platforms to public collaboration, it stimulates a deep cognitive restructuring across the community. This process functions as a «*ginnastica cognitivo-motivazionale*»[130], enabling citizens to engage with unfamiliar ideas, alternative viewpoints and complex historical narratives. This cognitive exercise expands human capabilities, fostering an innovative social climate that directly enhances the region. I therefore locate organisational innovation in the qualitative transformation of public relationships rather than in simple quantitative growth. Through the prioritisation of these relational dynamics, the museum reclaims its position as a vital space for civic development, demonstrating that the «*globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization*»[131] when anchored by robust local practices.

As the globalisation of culture continuously exacerbates the internal politics of majoritarianism and homogenisation, the contemporary museum must reposition itself to address the shifting requirements of an increasingly mobile interactive system. Modernity now seems more practical and less pedagogic, more experiential and less disciplinary than in previous institutional configurations, as mass mediation and transnational mobilisation have effectively broken the historical monopoly of autonomous nation-states over the project of social engineering. This shift transforms the meaning of innovation within cultural organisations, shifting the focus from the static preservation of physical assets to the active coordination of fluid, transnational networks. This transformation redefines the museum as a networked ecosystem in which value creation extends beyond local geography while remaining shaped by it. In the following section, I examine how the spread of open digital platforms further changes the boundaries of public culture and introduces new forms of mediation.

2.4 Digital transformation, platformisation and AI in cultural organisations

2.4.1 Digital transformation beyond digitisation

I approach digital transformation through changes in the institutional conditions under which cultural value is produced, mediated and experienced, rather than primarily through the adoption of technologies. Analysing the evolution of innovation within cultural organisations requires me to question the historical assumption that technological adoption is merely an instrumental upgrade. Early museum computing concentrated almost exclusively on back-end database management and digital cataloguing, treating technology as a neutral tool for archival preservation. In this paradigm, as Ross Parry notes, «*today museums are reliant on new technology to manage their collections. They collect digital as well as*

[129] P.L. SACCO – E. TETI, *Cultura 3.0: un nuovo paradigma di creazione del valore,* cit.
[130] *Ivi,* p. 88
[131] A. APPADURAI, *Modernity at large,* cit., p. 42

material objects»[132]. This instrumental perspective reduced innovation to technical operations that left institutional authority intact, conceptualising the digital as an auxiliary gallery or an electronic inventory rather than an active organisational context.

The transition from archival operations to a deep-rooted organisational reorientation marks the threshold of digital transformation. This process is distinct from digitisation, which denotes the technical migration of content from analogue to digital formats. Digital transformation represents a shift in how cultural institutions construct meaning, manage knowledge and organise labour. To understand this shift, I start from the fact that the digital is no longer a localised set of practices. «*Digital heritage (as an area of practice and as a subject of study) does not exist in one single place*»[133]. Because digital practices are distributed across the whole institution, they reshape every part of organisational life, challenging the traditional separation between curatorial expertise, visitor relations and administrative governance.

Understanding the museum as an active agent within a mediatised landscape redefines the status of both the institution and its collection. Cultural organisations do not merely employ media; they take institutional form through them. Kirsten Drotner, Vince Dziekan, Ross Parry, and Kim Christian Schrøder articulate this condition by demonstrating that contemporary cultural institutions operate within a pervasive media ecology. They observe that «*museums today find themselves within a mediatised society, where everyday life is conducted in a data-full and technology-rich context*»[134]. In this light, digital transformation is not an external force acting upon a passive institution: «*they present a uniquely media-centred environment, in which communicative media is a constitutive property of their organisation and of the visitor experience*»[135]. Media technologies are part of the museum's organisation, altering how institutional authority is performed and how public engagement is structured. The integration of communicative media into the core of the museum's identity challenges the linear, transmitter-to-receiver model of cultural transmission. Historically, the museum functioned as an authoritative broadcasting device, projecting curated knowledge to a receptive but largely silent public. In a mediatised landscape, communication becomes a multi-directional, networked process of co-creation. Mediation is recognised as the primary site where cultural meaning and institutional value are contested. Public engagement is therefore transformed from a passive act of viewing into a complex, mediated dialogue that continuously redefines the boundaries of the museum.

I understand organisational innovation here as an ongoing process of connection and adaptation to a mediatised social world. It can no longer be treated as an occasional disruption driven by the acquisition of new hardware. This perspective shifts the focus of cultural management from the technological artefact to the organisational practices that emerge around it, and it requires an examination of how staff

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[132] R. PARRY (ed.), *Museums in a digital age* (Leicester readers in museum studies), Routledge, London ; New York 2010

[133] *Ivi*

[134] K. DROTNER ET AL. (ed.), *The Routledge handbook of museums, media and communication* (Routledge International Handbooks), Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London New York 2019, p. 2

[135] *Ivi,* p. I

members negotiate their roles, how curatorial decisions are made within distributed networks and how institutional governance adapts to fluid communication channels. In this context, the digital is an environmental condition that requires a continuous, reflexive rewriting of institutional practices and reciprocal values.

2.4.2 Platformisation and the reorganisation of cultural organisations

I now consider how platformisation directs this reorganisation of cultural institutions. As their organisational processes become integrated into proprietary digital ecosystems, the conditions under which the public sphere operates are also reorganised. Rather than acting as neutral hosts, platforms function as active organisational forces. As José van Dijck, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal observe, a «*"platform" is a programmable digital architecture designed to organize interactions between users*»[136]. When cultural institutions migrate their collections, events, and educational programmes to these environments, they subject their public mission to the infrastructural imperatives of private enterprises.

As public institutions migrate their communication and engagement activities to external spaces, they must confront the institutional realities of the platform society. This societal shift is characterised by the dominance of a small number of global technology corporations that control the basic infrastructure of online life. Van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal define this condition by stating that

> «*the term [platform society] refers to a society in which social and economic traffic is increasingly channeled by an (overwhelmingly corporate) global online platform ecosystem that is driven by algorithms and fueled by data*»[137].

For the museum, operating within this ecosystem means that visibility, public engagement and communication are no longer governed solely by curatorial priorities. They are mediated by an external and commercial infrastructure that prioritises engagement metrics, algorithmic optimisation, and corporate capital accumulation over cultural significance and democratic access.

This transformation operates through the three interrelated mechanisms of datafication, commodification, and selection, which dictate how platforms govern social interactions. These mechanisms do not merely support digital communication; they actively produce the social spaces in which institutions operate. Platforms «*do not reflect the social: they produce the social structures we live in*»[138]. For cultural organisations, this means that the transition to platform environments is a process

[136] J. van DIJCK – T. POELL – M. de WAAL, *The platform society*, Oxford University Press, New York 2018, p. 13
[137] *Ivi,* p. 13
[138] *Ivi,* p. 11

that actively restructures how cultural assets are valued, how public engagement is quantified and how curatorial content is distributed.
Under the regime of datafication, the qualitative richness of aesthetic engagement is translated into standardised metrics to satisfy infrastructural requirements.

> «*"Datafication" refers to the ability of networked platforms to render into data many aspects of the world that have never been quantified before.* […] *As platforms matured, technology companies gradually transformed into data firms, turning data into prime resources*»[139].

In the context of the museum, datafication transforms the subjective, embodied experience of the visitor into a stream of behavioural data, likes, shares and dwell time. Cultural organisations are increasingly pressured to align their curatorial decisions and public programming with these metrics, using them as proxies for success and innovation. This dependence on metrics reorganises institutional governance, as strategic planning becomes dependent on data analytics that are designed to optimise platform engagement rather than support deep cultural mediation.
At the same time, the mechanism of selection shifts the power of cultural curation from the professional expertise of the curator to the automated algorithms of private platforms. Selection within platform ecosystems is not a neutral act of sorting content; it is an active curatorial intervention. Van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal observe that selection is the mechanism by which platforms curate, rank and filter content, determining what is visible and what is hidden[140]. When a museum shares its digital collection on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube, its visibility is determined by algorithmic sorting mechanisms designed to maximise user attention. To remain visible, cultural organisations must tailor their interpretive narratives, visual styles, and institutional voices to the preferences of these algorithms. This algorithmic dependency compromises the institutional autonomy of the museum, forcing it to negotiate its public mission within a highly marketised attention economy. This tension reveals a conflict between the public values of cultural heritage and the commercial imperatives of platform capitalism.
Cultural organisations are mandated to preserve, interpret and provide democratic access to diverse cultural histories. However, the platform ecosystem operates on a logic of monetisation and commodification, where user attention is converted into advertising revenue. Within this framework, «*a platform society is not a given but a dynamically evolving societal arrangement where public values are constantly shaped by different actors*»[141]. When museums rely on these proprietary infrastructures, they risk compromising their public trust as their educational and curatorial content is packaged alongside targeted advertisements and commercial content, commodifying the cultural experience.

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[139] *Ivi,* pp. 46/47
[140] *Ivi,* p. 56
[141] *Ivi,* p. 38

For me, negotiating public values within proprietary environments reveals a vulnerability in the governance of cultural heritage. The data generated by museum visitors is captured and monetised by tech giants, while the museum is left dependent on proprietary tools to reach its own audience. This reliance redefines the nature of institutional innovation as it becomes a reactive task of technical compliance, where success is measured by the ability of the organisation to adapt its assets and narratives to the volatile requirements of external platform infrastructures.

2.4.3 Artificial Intelligence and curatorial authority

The integration of AI into cultural institutions extends this reorganisation of infrastructure and brings curatorial authority into direct contact with algorithmic governance. In recent years, the deployment of machine learning algorithms for collection management, automated archiving and interactive visitor guides has been presented as a leading example of museum innovation. To question the technological determinism surrounding automated curation, I need to examine the material conditions of computational systems. I draw here on Joanna Zylinska's critique, in which she argues that the task of criticism is to continue «*cutting through the smoke and mirrors surrounding the AI hype, with its machinic visions and warped dreams*»[142]. Rather than viewing artificial intelligence as an autonomous agent of neutral technological progress, Zylinska urges scholars and practitioners to examine the political, economic and aesthetic interests that drive the deployment of these technologies.

AI-driven systems are often presented as objective, highly efficient solutions for organising large collections of cultural data, promising to democratise interpretation by removing human bias. This narrative, however, conceals the limitations of machine learning systems. Zylinska explicitly states that she wants to «*interrogate the philosophical assumptions and cultural blind spots behind the current AI discourse and the promises it entails, especially as this discourse relates to image making, art and so-called creativity more broadly*»[143]. When cultural organisations adopt AI for cataloguing or visual analysis, they are adopting an infrastructure that actively structures what can be seen, classified and understood within the collection, thereby changing the practices through which the museum produces knowledge.

Approaching AI as cultural infrastructure allows me to reconsider machinic creativity and curatorial authority. In discussions of AI-driven curation, there is a tendency to treat the machine as an independent, innovative agent capable of generating novel interpretations or curating exhibitions without human intervention. This perspective is a mischaracterisation of AI logic. Zylinska describes machine learning as a process «*which is not the kind of learning premised on understanding, but which rather involves being trained in making quicker and more accurate decisions on the basis of analysing*

[142] J. ZYLINSKA, *AI art: machine visions and warped dreams* (Media, art, write, now), Open Humanities Press, London 2020, p. 152
[143] *Ivi,* p. 19

extremely large data sets»[144]. Curation is a situated, interpretive practice that requires contextual understanding, historical reflexivity, and ethical responsibility. The use of algorithmic systems does not remove the need for contextual judgement and curatorial responsibility. When an AI system curates or categorises an archive, it executes statistical procedures based on its training, since «*much of what passes off for AI today is really a product of coupling big data with statistical analysis*»[145].

The datasets used to train AI are never neutral; they are historical products that reflect the biases, power dynamics and inequalities of the societies in which they were compiled. I find Zylinska's formulation useful here: «*new AI is therefore first and foremost a sophisticated agent of pattern recognition*»[146]. When a museum uses pre-trained visual recognition models to analyse and tag its collections, it introduces these historical biases into its archive. Delegating classification and interpretive tagging to AI systems automates and conceals human biases behind a facade of technical objectivity. «*A deeper problem lies in the very idea of organising the world according to supposedly representative data sets and having decisions made on their basis, in advance and supposedly objectively*»[147]. This process risks reifying colonial, gendered, and class-based classifications, embedding them into the permanent digital infrastructure of the museum and undermining the institution's efforts to decolonise and diversify its archives.

This automated classification of culture aligns closely with the broader transformation of visual culture under computational systems. Hito Steyerl addresses this condition by examining how digital infrastructures reconfigure perception, visibility, and institutional space. I connect her analysis to the contemporary museum through her description of a future of "*neurocurating*" in which «*paintings will surveil their audience via facial recognition and eye tracking to check whether the paintings are popular enough or whether anyone is behaving suspiciously*»[148]. Under this regime, the cultural object is no longer only interpreted by the institution: it is also enrolled in systems of surveillance, prediction and behavioural measurement. When AI systems are used to analyse, tag and sort cultural assets, they treat these assets as modular data points to be optimised for circulation. This functionalist logic reduces the historical and aesthetic specificity of the cultural object to its quantitative parameters.

The fragmentation of representation described by Steyerl highlights the political stakes of automated image circulation. Digital networks segment perception through systems of filtering and probabilistic selection, and Steyerl writes that «*vision loses importance and is replaced by filtering, decrypting, and pattern recognition*»[149]. When AI algorithms are deployed to personalise visitor experiences or recommend specific collection items, they reinforce this fragmentation. Showing visitors only what the algorithm predicts they will enjoy based on historical data can construct personalised paths that may

[144] *Ivi,* p. 24
[145] *Ivi,* p. 25
[146] *Ivi,* p. 25
[147] *Ivi,* p. 91
[148] H. STEYERL, *Duty free art*, Verso, London ; New York 2017, p. 2
[149] *Ivi,* p. 48

limit exposure to diverse, challenging, or counter-narrative cultural works, undermining the civic mission of the museum, which is to provide a shared, public space for dialogue and confrontation with different histories and perspectives.

Rather than democratising access, the delegation of interpretive authority to machine learning systems risks reifying existing power dynamics, transforming the museum into a node within a broader technological and economic infrastructure. Steyerl's analysis of computational photography is useful beyond photography itself because it identifies the political form of algorithmic mediation: «*computational photography is therefore inherently political — not in content but form*»[150]. I extend this argument to computational curation: its politics lie in the rules through which visibility, access and relevance are produced. «*This network is not neutral. It has rules and norms hardwired into its platforms*»[151]. Innovation, under this computational regime, is often reduced to the technical task of optimising collection data for integration into these networks. The museum's curatorial authority is partially surrendered to automated categorisation systems, while its public responsibility is compromised by reliance on proprietary algorithmic infrastructures.

The sensory separation and interpretive fragmentation induced by algorithmic systems expose a limitation of purely computational cultural mediation. When automated curation and specialised content feeds isolate the visitor within personalised computational paths, they risk alienating the public from a shared, sensory and bodily encounter with cultural objects. To resist this automated isolation, the contemporary institution must reconnect algorithmic flows with the physical somatic reality of the gallery. To consider technological circulation together with bodily presence, I turn to a theoretical account of spatial movement and emotional travel. This brings me to the spatial and sensory dynamics of the hybrid cultural organisation.

2.4.4 Towards hybrid cultural organisations

In a hybrid cultural organisation, the virtual and the physical exist in a continuous, mediated dialogue: the boundary between the material space of the gallery and the virtual space of the platform has dissolved, creating a mediated landscape where physical architectures and digital networks are intertwined. Innovation, in this context, cannot be managed as an isolated project or a technological add-on; it must be understood as an emergent, interactive practice that occurs across physical, digital and social contexts, transforming how cultural institutions produce knowledge and engage with their publics.

To analyse this hybrid organisation, I need an account that connects physical spaces with virtual trajectories. I draw on Giuliana Bruno's discussion of this convergence, which explores the affective and emotional dimensions of movement across media. Her work explicitly moves film theory from vision toward spatial experience, stating that «*the atlas is not a map merely of spaces but of movements:*

[150] *Ivi,* p. 33
[151] *Ivi,* p. 34

a set of journeys within cultural movements, which includes movement within and through historical trajectories»[152]. Applying this logic of movement to the hybrid museum, I consider how mobile interfaces, digital overlays and networked mediation transform the visitor's path into an exploration of physical and virtual terrains.

This multi-layered navigation actively redefines the exhibition space. Bruno's theory of the haptic helps explain this transformation. For Bruno, the haptic, or sense of touch, concerns reciprocal contact between people and their environment, both containing and extending the interface through which communication occurs. When a visitor uses a mobile interface or responds to algorithmic suggestions while walking through a gallery, their spatial path connects the immediate architecture of the exhibition with wider networks of representation. This physical and digital navigation is fundamentally embodied. In her account, the haptic participates in forming geographic and cultural space and, through this process, in shaping the spatial arts themselves[153].

The hybrid museum can be understood as a site where media, architecture and movement produce forms of affective knowledge. The formulation that «*motion, indeed, produces emotion and that, correlatively, emotion contains a movement*»[154] allows the visitor's trajectory to be read as a cognitive and emotional route through institutional space. This is particularly important for cultural organisations because spatial pathways are never neutral: they organise attention, memory and interpretive possibility. When cultural organisations construct these pathways, they design the cognitive and affective routes through which the public encounters history.

In a hybrid setting, innovation cannot be managed as a top-down technological implementation. It emerges instead as a situated practice through which museum staff and visitors navigate, adapt, and rewrite interfaces. Bruno's discussion of the gallery and museum is especially relevant here, since she describes «*that hybrid interface between the map, the wall, and the screen*»[155]. I use this formulation to connect physical exhibition design with digital mediation: the hybrid cultural organisation is defined by the interaction between spatial movement, screen-based mediation, institutional memory and embodied experience.

To examine how these reciprocal interactions unfold in the museum's daily life, I shift from broad theories of the digital towards the observation of situated interactions. The hybrid organisation must be studied through the practices by which people move, select, touch, view, interpret and respond within mediated institutional environments. This brings me to innovation as a localised, lived institutional practice rather than as a purely technological transformation.

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[152] G. BRUNO, *Atlas of emotion: journeys in art, architecture, and film*, Verso, New York 2018, p. 7
[153] *Ivi,* p. 6
[154] *Ivi,* p. 7
[155] *Ivi,* p. 12

2.5 Innovation as situated institutional practice

2.5.1 The fallacy of linear innovation

The approaches I have examined reveal a persistent tendency in cultural management to treat innovation as a linear process directed from above. Within mainstream organisational discourse, innovation is often conceptualised as a strategic decision formulated by executive leadership and then implemented through policies, exhibition protocols, digital platforms, or specialised software. This instrumental model assumes that change can be planned, managed and executed with predictable outcomes. By reducing the museum to a passive recipient of managerial directives, such perspectives overlook the social and professional negotiations that characterise daily collections management, exhibition curation, public mediation, and heritage preservation. The cultural institution continuously reinterprets and modifies pre-defined strategies through situated professional action.

I connect this critique of linear implementation with Donald Schön's challenge to technical rationality in professional life. Schön defines technical rationality as a model in which professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving through the application of scientific theory and technique. This model becomes inadequate when practice is marked by uncertainty, conflicting values and unstable situations. Schön captures this limitation through a well-known spatial image:

> «*In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution*»[156].

I recognise these swampy lowlands in cultural organisations, where professional challenges rarely appear as neat technical puzzles. They emerge instead as ambiguous, value-laden situations involving competing public expectations, scarce resources, conservation constraints, political pressures and contested historical narratives.

When cultural institutions rely exclusively on formal blueprints or external technological solutions, they underestimate the professional judgement required to navigate these situations. A strategic plan to adopt a digital archive, introduce participatory curation, or redesign visitor mediation cannot anticipate all the local contingencies that arise during implementation. In these moments, formal procedures remain necessary but insufficient. Schön argues that in reflective practice, «*the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique*»[157]. This capacity to work through confusion is the condition through which situated learning and institutional change become possible.

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[156] D.A. SCHÖN, *The reflective practitioner,* cit., p. 42
[157] *Ivi,* p. 68

To understand innovation as a situated institutional phenomenon, I move from the strategic plan to the everyday actions of the professionals who work in the museum. Innovation is enacted through practical adjustments, interpretive decisions and material negotiations on the gallery floor, in storage rooms, in education departments, in digital workflows and in meetings where institutional priorities are translated into workable forms. The most significant transformations in museum practice often emerge from tacit knowledge, improvisation and localised adaptation. From this perspective, the cultural organisation appears less as a rigid bureaucratic structure and more as an evolving texture of practices.

2.5.2 Organisations as textures of practices

Moving from a structural view to a practice-based perspective changes how I approach cultural organisations. Alongside the institution as a stable entity with fixed boundaries, roles and procedures, I need to consider the ongoing work through which it is organised. Silvia Gherardi's practice-based approach helps me make this shift. She argues that «*to assume a practice point of view is therefore to develop a conception of the organization as a texture or web of practices which extend internally and externally to the organization*»[158]. Within this framework, the museum is a provisional and historically situated configuration of practices that must be continuously performed, maintained and adjusted.

A practice is a knowledgeable, collective doing sustained by social relations, material arrangements, professional standards and institutional histories. I use Gherardi's formulation to locate innovation in cultural organisations within the ordinary work through which institutions reproduce themselves. Practices are «*loci – spatial and temporal – in which working, organizing, innovating or reproducing occurs*»[159]. When curators arrange an exhibition, conservators restore an object, mediators guide a school group, or archivists adapt a cataloguing protocol, they participate in practices that carry specific histories, values, criteria and standards of competence.

The sociomaterial character of these practices is central to how cultural organisations operate and change. Human action is never detached from the material world. It is entangled with objects, spatial layouts, technological interfaces, labels, databases, contracts, conservation requirements, funding documents, and architectural constraints. In this sense, institutional innovation occurs through the reconfiguration of connections among people, objects, spaces, technologies and discourses. Gherardi describes this dynamic through the notion of texture, explaining that her concern is «*to determine how connection-in-action comes about, how associations are established, maintained and changed among the elements of a partially given form*»[160]. Applying this account to the museum, I locate innovation in the moments when existing connections are reworked and new ones are stabilised in practice.

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[158] S. GHERARDI, *How to Conduct a Practice-based Study: Problems and Methods*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK 2012, p. 2
[159] *Ivi,* p. 2
[160] *Ivi,* p. 158

Organisational change takes on a different meaning within this perspective. Innovation is generated from within practice as professionals respond to the contradictions, constraints and opportunities of their daily work. Each time a museum worker adapts a display strategy to the sensitivity of an object, modifies an educational activity in response to a public, or negotiates the use of a digital tool within existing workflows, institutional knowledge is being produced.
Innovation is a collective negotiation of the sociomaterial relations that constitute the everyday life of the museum.

2.5.3 Situated knowing and organisational action

A practice-based perspective also changes where I look for knowledge. Traditional managerial discourse often treats knowledge as an explicit asset that can be captured, stored and transferred through reports, databases and policy documents. Within a practice-oriented framework, knowing is inseparable from doing: it is enacted in specific situations, through bodies, tools, materials, spaces and shared professional repertoires. Gherardi makes this point clearly when she writes that knowledge is not limited to statements or formal codification, since «*practising is knowing-in-practice, whether or not the subject is aware of it*»[161]. In museum work this kind of knowing appears in the curator's sense of visual balance, the conservator's tactile recognition of fragility, the educator's reading of a group's attention and the technician's practical understanding of exhibition constraints.
This understanding resonates with Schön's concept of knowing-in-action. For Schön, competent practitioners often know more than they can explicitly formulate. He locates tacit knowing in patterns of action and in the practitioner's feel for the materials being handled. The knowledge involved is present in the action itself, even when the practitioner cannot give a full verbal account of it[162]. This matters for cultural management because many decisive aspects of museum innovation are embedded in the situated competence through which professionals interpret materials, publics, spaces and institutional constraints.
When a practitioner encounters a situation that does not conform to familiar routines, knowing-in-action may become reflection-in-action. The professional frames the situation, tests possible responses and revises their understanding through action. Schön emphasises that «*in real-world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as givens*»[163]. Problems must first be constructed from problematic situations: this process of framing determines what will count as relevant, what will be treated as an obstacle and what forms of action become thinkable.
Through reflection-in-action, the practitioner enters into a reciprocal relationship with the situation. The environment responds through constraints, failures, resistances, affordances and unexpected effects.

[161] *Ivi,* p. 205
[162] D.A. SCHÖN, *The reflective practitioner,* cit., p. 49
[163] *Ivi,* p. 49

Schön describes this dynamic in his discussion of design practice: «*he shapes the situation, in accordance with his initial appreciation of it, the situation 'talks back,' and he responds to the situation's back-talk*»[164]. In museum work, this back-talk may come from the physical fragility of an artefact, the spatial limitations of a gallery, the reactions of visitors, the technical constraints of a digital interface, or the ethical implications of a curatorial choice. I locate situated institutional innovation in the moments when these responses lead practitioners to reframe the situation and develop new ways of curating, mediating, preserving and organising.

2.5.4 Designerly ways of knowing in cultural organisations

The situated and reflective nature of professional action in cultural organisations requires a mode of reasoning that differs from both scientific analysis and critical interpretation. Scientific rationality tends to analyse existing phenomena. Humanistic interpretation examines meaning, context and representation. Museum work requires constructive reasoning: the capacity to give form to new arrangements, experiences, routes, displays, interfaces and institutional processes. I draw on Nigel Cross's work on design knowledge because he treats design as a specific intellectual culture rather than as a derivative application of science.

Cross argues that design should be studied «*on its own terms, and within its own rigorous culture*»[165]. This point applies to cultural management because much museum innovation takes place through activities that are neither purely analytical nor purely interpretive. Exhibition-making, public programming, digital mediation and visitor experience design all require the construction of new possibilities because they involve the transformation of knowledge into spatial, material, sensory and organisational form.

Cross's distinction between science and design clarifies this constructive dimension: in his discussion of design research, he cites the formulation that «*science is analytic; design is constructive*»[166]. Cross's own argument develops this distinction by emphasising that design has a specific relation to the artificial world. «*What designers especially know about is the 'artificial world' - the human-made world of artifacts*»[167]. Their distinctive competence lies in proposing additions to and changes within that world. In museums, this artificial world includes exhibitions, displays, pathways, labels, digital interfaces, workshops, archives and institutional procedures: cultural professionals work within this world by modifying its forms and relations.

Bringing Cross's perspective together with Gherardi's practice-based view, I see designerly knowing as distributed across the texture of museum practice. When curators conceptualise a new exhibition layout, educators develop participatory tools, conservators negotiate display conditions, or administrators

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[164] *Ivi,* p. 79
[165] N. CROSS, *Designerly Ways of Knowing: Design Discipline versus Design Science,* cit., p. 54
[166] *Ivi, citing Gregory (1966),* p. 51
[167] *Ivi,* p. 54

redesign workflows, they engage in constructive knowledge production. This process unfolds through sketches, models, prototypes, spatial tests, conversations, adjustments and situated reflection. Design knowledge includes forms of knowledge «*gained through making and reflecting upon the making of those artifacts*»[168]. Innovation in cultural organisations depends on practical acts of making, testing and revising within specific institutional conditions.

This designerly mode of reasoning is essential because cultural organisations frequently face ill-defined problems. They rarely seek a single optimal solution. They must instead construct workable responses that balance public relevance, scholarly rigour, conservation needs, accessibility, financial limits, institutional identity and ethical responsibility. I understand innovation here as a constructive institutional performance: it takes shape as museum workers collectively negotiate the material, spatial, technological and social constraints of their everyday practice.

2.5.5 The collective and contested accomplishment of innovation

To understand how situated knowing, sociomaterial practices and designerly reasoning unfold within institutions, I need to examine museum work as it is carried out. Sharon Macdonald's ethnography of the Science Museum in London offers a perspective on this work because it shows exhibition-making as a complex, negotiated process rather than the straightforward execution of a curatorial vision. Her study challenges the external image of the museum as a unified institution and reveals the professional tensions, material constraints, bureaucratic procedures, and interpretive struggles that shape cultural production.

Macdonald explicitly frames her research around the production of an exhibition, noting that her «*own beginning point was 'the exhibition'»* and that she followed the many actors involved as the exhibition was «*"negotiated into being"*»[169]. This formulation helps me specify the argument I am developing. It indicates that exhibitions are produced through negotiations among heterogeneous actors, including curators, designers, educators, managers, sponsors, visitors, artefacts, spatial arrangements and institutional protocols.

This perspective complicates simple accounts of cultural production. An ethnographic approach can provide «*a fuller account of the nature and complexities of production: of the disjunctions, disagreements and 'surprise outcomes' involved in cultural production*»[170]. At this level of empirical detail, institutional innovation becomes visible. New exhibitions, public programmes and digital initiatives are often shaped by compromises, delays, failed prototypes, interpretive disagreements, funding constraints and material resistances. These elements are part of the process through which institutional change is produced.

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[168] *Ivi,* p. 55
[169] S. MACDONALD, *Behind the scenes at the Science Museum* (Materializing culture), Berg, Oxford ; New York 2002, p. 7
[170] *Ivi,* p. 8

Macdonald's analysis avoids attributing cultural products to a single authorial source. «*Agency and authorship – the social allocation of agency – are contested and negotiated in ways which have consequences for the nature of the cultural product and for some of the ways in which it will be interpreted*»[171]. In the context of museum innovation, this means that the final form of an exhibition or institutional project must be understood as the outcome of distributed and contested practice.

I connect this empirical account with the broader practice-based argument. Innovation is a collective organisational accomplishment enacted through material-discursive practices, professional negotiations and situated decisions. It is produced through tensions and compromises on the museum floor, in project meetings, in conservation discussions, in interactions with audiences and in the use and adaptation of infrastructures. To study innovation in these terms, I cannot rely only on detached audits, strategic documents or post-hoc interviews. I need to engage with the situated, material and often untidy conditions of everyday institutional life.

2.5.6 Towards Chapter Three

In this chapter, I have questioned the assumption that innovation in cultural organisations can be understood solely as an instrumental strategy or a technical implementation. Through the analysis of the museum's transformation from an institution of cultural authority to a mediatised, platformised, and algorithmically mediated environment, I have argued that digital transformation reorganises the conditions through which cultural value is produced, negotiated and experienced. My final step has been to locate innovation within situated institutional practices rather than in abstract plans, commercial platforms, or computational systems alone.

If innovation is an ongoing, collective achievement enacted through everyday museum practices, then I cannot adequately study it through methods that remain detached from those practices. Quantitative surveys, administrative audits and retrospective managerial interviews may provide useful information, but they remain limited in their capacity to observe tacit knowing-in-action, the back-talk of materials and spaces and the contested negotiations that occur behind the scenes of cultural production. These methods tend to remain on Schön's high ground of technical rationality, while the swampy lowlands of actual institutional practice remain insufficiently examined.

This limitation sets a requirement for my method: I need to move from distant analysis of organisational structures and strategic outputs towards close empirical engagement with practices as they unfold. In studying cultural innovation, I need to observe embodied, sensory, material and discursive interactions within institutional settings. I need to examine how practitioners frame problems, negotiate constraints, respond to situated contingencies, and generate knowledge through action.

[171] *Ivi,* p. 8

The arguments I have developed across the first two chapters leave me with a methodological challenge: if innovation is produced through practice, then research must be capable of studying practice from within its own conditions of emergence.

In the next chapter, I address this challenge by developing the methodological framework of practice-based research and by asking how practice itself can generate academic knowledge.

3. Practice-based research and knowledge production

3.1 Disentangling practice, professional skill and academic research

3.1.1 From situated practice to the problem of inquiry

In the previous chapter, I argued that innovation in cultural organisations is a situated, collective, sociomaterial, historically conditioned, and contested institutional accomplishment. By analysing cultural organisations as textures of practices, I showed that novelty does not originate from isolated strategic mandates or exogenous technological shocks. Novelty emerges through situated action, professional judgement, organisational routines, material arrangements, and ongoing reflection within specific institutional settings. This frame establishes that practice constitutes the primary site where organisational innovation takes form, is negotiated, and is sustained over time.

If innovation is generated through situated practice, research must determine how practice can be investigated from within the conditions through which it emerges. Conceptualising practice as an organisational phenomenon leaves open the question of how practice itself can operate as a mode of inquiry. I now move from practice as an object of organisational analysis to practice as a possible methodology for generating academic knowledge. Addressing this transition requires a better understanding of the distinction between practice as the object of research, practice as a component of the research process, and practice as a generative means through which academic knowledge is produced.

When practice is treated as an object of research, practical activities, routines, and material arrangements become the phenomena to be investigated, regardless of the researcher's degree of participation. Practice assumes a different function when participation in practical activity contributes directly to the generation of the research claim.

When practice enters the research process, practical activities provide empirical material or experimental settings for scholarly examination.

When practice serves as a means of knowledge generation, practical action itself becomes the instrument through which inquiry is initiated, conducted, and brought to articulation.

Once innovation is understood as situated action, the critical question becomes epistemological: under what conditions can professional, creative, curatorial, or organisational practice operate as a legitimate form of academic inquiry? I use this chapter to establish criteria for determining when practical activity ceases to be an unreflective professional routine or private exploration and becomes a public contribution to scholarly knowledge.

3.1.2 Practice and academic research

I begin by distinguishing academic research from everyday professional practice. Professional competence in the cultural sector involves advanced skill, practical problem-solving, aesthetic

judgement, and continuous reflection. Curators, media producers, project managers, and arts administrators regularly engage in rigorous investigation, testing new exhibition formats, experimenting with digital media, and adapting organisational strategies to shifting institutional conditions. These activities involve high levels of intellectual effort and creative experimentation, but professional competence and practitioner experimentation do not automatically constitute academic research.
The distinction between everyday professional investigation and academic inquiry resides in the purpose, organisation, documentation, and communicability of the activity. Candy's guide addresses practice-based doctoral research in the creative arts; I draw on it here to clarify when my own practical work can count as inquiry.

> «*Searching for new understandings and seeking out new techniques for realising ideas is a substantial part of everyday practice. However, this kind of research is, for the most part, directed towards the individual's particular goals of the time rather than seeking to add to our shared store of knowledge in a more general sense.*»[172]

While professional practice involves systematic searching and technical experimentation, its primary orientation remains bound to immediate practical outcomes, project-specific requirements, or personal skill acquisition. The knowledge generated through professional practice often remains tacit, embedded in the practitioner's repertoire or embodied in a specific organisational output.
In order to establish epistemological legitimacy within an academic context, inquiry must move beyond private practitioner discovery. «*Research is not the same as practice and must be differentiated clearly if it is to have any meaning*»[173].
For this thesis, I take an explicit orientation toward public, transferable knowledge as a requirement of academic inquiry. While everyday professional practice resolves immediate operational or artistic challenges, academic research requires an explicit research problem, contextualisation within existing scholarly literature, methodological intentionality, systematic documentation, and openness to critical examination by a broader research community. Michael Biggs and Daniela Büchler articulate this distinction saying that in academic research: «*one is concerned to find out about something that nobody knows, and will result in a contribution to knowledge and understanding*»[174].
They emphasise that academic legitimacy depends on the production of a contribution to a shared body of knowledge rather than acquiring knowledge that is novel only to the individual practitioner.

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[172] L. CANDY, *Practice Based Research: A Guide*, CCS Report 2006-V1.0, Creativity & Cognition Studios, University of Technology, Sydney, November 2006, p. 2
[173] L. CANDY – E. EDMONDS, *Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts*, «Leonardo» 51/1 (2018), MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA 63-69, p. 64
[174] M. BIGGS – H. KARLSSON – STIFTELSEN RIKSBANKENS JUBILEUMSFOND (ed.), *The Routledge companion to research in the arts* (Routledge companions), Routledge, London 2012, p. 86

This distinction between professional skill and academic research does not imply that professional practice is intellectually inferior or methodologically deficient. Everyday professional inquiry aims to produce a specific practical outcome or personal capability. Academic research aims to produce articulated, challengeable knowledge that can be shared, examined, and built upon by others.

3.1.3 Research into, for and through art and design

A foundational distinction for the examination of the relationship between practical activity and academic inquiry was formulated by Christopher Frayling in 1993[175]. His essay responds to debates about the place of research in art and design education at the Royal College of Art. Frayling introduced a tripartite taxonomy distinguishing between *research into art and design*, *research for art and design*, and *research through art and design*. I use this classification to clarify how practical action intersects with scholarly investigation.

Research into art and design represents the most established tradition within the academy. This category encompasses historical, theoretical, aesthetic, sociological, and institutional analyses that treat artistic or design practices, materials, artefacts, or organisations as objects of study. Research into art and design relies on established scholarly methodologies from the humanities and social sciences, maintaining a clear distance between the researcher and the object of investigation.

Research for art and design refers to investigation undertaken to support the creation of an artefact, exhibition, or practical outcome. This category includes preparatory reference gathering, technical experimentation with materials or software, historical background reading, and visual studies conducted by practitioners to inform their work. Research for art and design describes an activity: «*where the goal is not primarily communicable knowledge in the sense of verbal communication, but in the sense of visual or iconic or imagistic communication*»[176]. In this category, the cognitive work and preparatory findings remain embodied within the final practical outcome and this type of research does not automatically fulfil the criteria for academic research, because the underlying inquiry remains implicit within the artefact rather than explicitly articulated for scholarly examination.

Research through art and design establishes a direct role for practical activity within the research process. In this category, practical action serves as a primary vehicle of inquiry. Research through art and design includes material research, technology customisation, and action research where studio or organisational experimentation generates new knowledge. Practical action within this category becomes research only when the process is systematically documented and communicated. «*For an activity to count in either sense as research the subject or object of research must exist outside the person or persons doing the searching. And the person must be able to tell someone about it*»[177].

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[175] C. FRAYLING, *Research in Art and Design*, «Royal College of Art Research Papers» 1/1 (1993), Royal College of Art, London; UK
[176] *Ivi,* p. 5
[177] *Ivi,* p. 1

Practice does not automatically constitute research through the mere act of making or doing because academic inquiry requires an object of study that extends beyond individual experience, accompanied by an explicit capacity to communicate the research process and its findings to others.
Although Frayling's taxonomy historically opened the debate on research through practice, I treat it as an initial analytical map rather than a final or universally accepted classification. Not every practical or creative project constitutes research: practical activity becomes academic inquiry only when it satisfies explicit methodological conditions.

3.1.4 From private discovery to public knowledge

Practice becomes academic inquiry through a defined set of epistemological and methodological conditions. Everyday professional practice, creative experimentation, and skill acquisition remain bounded by immediate practical goals and personal understanding. To operate as academic inquiry, practical action must be structured through an explicit or progressively clarified research question, an intentional contextual framing, a justified methodology, systematic documentation, identifiable evidence, critical reflection, and a clear contribution to knowledge beyond the individual researcher.
«*That new knowledge is expected to have two characteristics: it is shared and it can be verified or challenged*»[178]: Candy highlights that academic research must produce findings that can be communicated to a wider community in a form that permits critical examination. When knowledge remains locked within personal intuition or implicit professional habit, peers cannot evaluate its validity, trace its development, or test its claims. In this sense public communication and systematic documentation are necessary conditions to transform private discovery into scholarly knowledge.
Academic inquiry requires that the outcomes of research possess significance beyond the specific project or immediate institutional setting: «*for something to be perceived as public research, as distinct from gathering information of personal value, we expect it to produce something insightful, useful or, indeed, groundbreaking*»[179].
The threshold for public research involves the production of insights that enhance the understanding of a broader research community. The core elements of academic research are defined through «*possession of a question and an answer, the presence of something corresponding to the term 'knowledge', a method that connected the answers in a meaningful way to the questions that were asked, and an audience for whom all this would have significance*»[180]. In this sense it requires an articulated structure that links problem, method, evidence, and audience within a shared framework.
In humanities and social science research, public and transferable knowledge means that the research process, evidence, material arrangements, and theoretical arguments are articulated with sufficient

[178] L. CANDY, *Practice Based Research: A Guide,* cit., p. 5
[179] L. CANDY – E. EDMONDS, *Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts,* cit., p. 64
[180] M. BIGGS – H. KARLSSON – STIFTELSEN RIKSBANKENS JUBILEUMSFOND (ed.), *The Routledge companion to research in the arts,* cit., p. 86

clarity for informed researchers to interpret, evaluate, challenge, or adapt them to other settings. This is why transferability depends on transparent documentation and methodological self-consciousness that allows others to trace how conclusions were reached and how practical action contributed to those conclusions.

3.2 Typologies and methodological paradigms of practice-related inquiry

3.2.1 Terms, lineages and contexts

Establishing the conditions that distinguish academic inquiry from professional practice does not resolve the terminological instability of practice-related research. *Practice-Based Research*, *Practice-Led Research*, *Practice-as-Research*, and *Artistic Research* all recognise that practical activity can participate in scholarly inquiry but they assign different functions to the practical process, the artefact, written articulation, and the final contribution to knowledge. I distinguish these overlapping approaches without assuming that the field possesses a stable or universally accepted taxonomy.

These formulations acquired particular prominence within different disciplinary and institutional contexts. *Practice-Based Research* and *Practice-Led Research* became especially visible within British and Australian debates around research in design, creative arts, and digital media. *Practice-as-Research* developed a strong methodological presence within theatre, performance, and related live arts traditions, where the temporal and embodied character of practice raised specific questions concerning evidence and documentation. *Artistic Research* acquired particular institutional importance within European art academies and conservatoires as artistic practices entered postgraduate and doctoral research structures. These lineages indicate tendencies, not exclusive geographical or disciplinary divisions. Contemporary practice-related research extends across a much wider range of professional and academic fields.

The Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research documents the use of practice-based approaches across creative practice, education, healthcare, technology, and other professional contexts, even if it recognises substantial variation in the research strategies within them[181]. What matters is whether practice operates primarily as a context for investigation, as a methodological process, as a source of evidence, as an indispensable research outcome, or through a combination of these functions. I read the terminology analysed below as a set of historically situated methodological traditions because their differences determine how research claims are produced and communicated.

3.2.2 Practice-based and practice-led research

I draw on Linda Candy's distinction between *Practice-Based Research* and *Practice-Led Research*, which concerns the relationship between practical activity, research outcome, and contribution to

[181] C. VEAR (ed.), *The Routledge international handbook of practice-based research* (Routledge international handbooks), Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY 2022

knowledge: «*if a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-based*»[182]. In this sense *Practice-Based Research* assigns the practical outcome a necessary position within the research configuration. Creative works may include objects, performances, exhibitions, designs, or digital media, and their significance cannot be fully reconstructed through textual description alone.

«*Practice-Based Research is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice*»[183]. Practice participates directly in the inquiry, while its outcomes provide evidence through which the contribution can be apprehended. Written articulation still maintains a crucial role because it establishes the research context, identifies the contribution, and explains the relationship between the practical process and the questions being investigated, while the practical and discursive dimensions perform different functions within the same research structure.

Practice-Led Research shifts the emphasis from the epistemic status of the artefact toward the understanding of practice itself. «*If the research leads primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-led*»[184]. Here, practical engagement still informs the research process, but the principal contribution may concern working methods, organisational procedures, creative strategies, or other dimensions of professional practice: this knowledge can be articulated through conceptual models, methodological frameworks, guidelines, or textual analysis without requiring a creative artefact as an indispensable component of the final contribution.

Practice-Led Research is illustrated through the example of a curator investigating exhibition-making practices in order to identify more effective approaches and subsequently develop new practice[185]. In that case, the practical domain provides both the site and the subject of inquiry, while the contribution primarily concerns an enhanced understanding of curatorial practice. A Practice-Based configuration would assign a stronger function to the produced artefact or practical outcome itself.

Research and practice operate as «*interdependent and complementary processes*»[186] and the distinction between the two activities remains important because practical experimentation alone does not establish the conditions of academic research, while research conducted through practice cannot be separated from the practical processes through which its questions and findings develop.

When the practical outcome is necessary to understand the research contribution, practice assumes a stronger epistemic role than it does in research whose principal outcome is knowledge about practice.

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[182] L. CANDY, *Practice Based Research: A Guide,* cit., p. 1
[183] *Ivi,* p. 1
[184] *Ivi,* p. 1
[185] L. CANDY – E. EDMONDS, *Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts,* cit., pp. 64/65
[186] *Ivi,* p. 63

3.2.3 Practice-as-Research

Practice-as-Research develops this issue by placing praxis at the centre of the methodological architecture. Robin Nelson's formulation emerged from theatre and performance research, although the second edition of *Practice as Research in the Arts (and Beyond)*[187] explicitly extends the approach beyond those origins. Its central concern is the possibility that practical activity can operate as a primary mode of investigation and provide substantive evidence for a research claim.

Nelson defines praxis as intelligent practice in which theory and practical activity are intertwined: «*a praxis (process or product) is characteristically submitted as primary and substantial evidence of the research inquiry*»[188]. The practical process has a stronger role than that of illustration or application because discovery may occur through doing itself, as choices, encounters, difficulties, and emergent possibilities expose dimensions of the research problem that would remain inaccessible through theoretical analysis alone.

Nelson treats *PaR* as a research configuration in which practical activity is accompanied by documentation and complementary writing. This relationship is particularly important because «*though I insist that a research inquiry can be evident in the practice, it is not typically self-evident*»[189]. Practice may carry and demonstrate research insights without guaranteeing that their significance will be immediately legible as research and this distinction is crucial to avoid an equation between creative production and academic inquiry. A practical work may contain several possible lines of investigation, while its artistic or professional significance can extend considerably beyond the research problem being addressed. In Nelson's model, practical evidence and complementary articulation form parts of the same methodological configuration.

I read this position in tension with Candy and Edmonds because their account warns against terminology that makes research and practice appear interchangeable, since it can obscure the additional requirements attached to research claims[190]. Nelson approaches the same problem from a different direction: he seeks to demonstrate that methodologically organised praxis can itself function as primary evidence within an academic inquiry. The difference concerns emphasis: Candy and Edmonds protect the analytical distinction between practice and research; Nelson investigates the conditions under which praxis acquires a constitutive role within the research process.

The distinction is significant because the practical component cannot be treated as secondary documentation of an argument formed elsewhere. *Practice-as-Research* provides a framework to understand how a practical process may participate actively in the investigation while remaining embedded within a broader structure of contextualisation, documentation, and critical articulation.

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[187] R. NELSON, *Practice as research in the arts (and beyond): principles, processes, contexts, achievements*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland 2022
[188] *Ivi*, p. 48
[189] *Ivi,* p. 40
[190] L. CANDY – E. EDMONDS, *Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts,* cit., p. 64

3.2.4 Artistic research and the methodological position of the thesis

Artistic Research develops a related methodological position from the intersection of artistic practice and academic inquiry. Henk Borgdorff locates its specificity in the centrality of art practice to the research process. His account distinguishes research that examines art as an object, research undertaken in support of artistic production, and research conducted in and through artistic practice: «*artistic practice is not only the result of the research, but also its methodological vehicle, when the research unfolds in and through the acts of creating and performing*»[191].

The significance of this formulation becomes clearer when Borgdorff identifies the multiple functions assumed by artistic practice. «*The distinctiveness of artistic research* […] *derives from the paramount place that artistic practice occupies as the subject, context, method, and outcome of the research*»[192]. These dimensions establish a framework in which artistic processes can constitute the phenomenon under investigation, the means through which investigation proceeds, the environment in which significance is produced, and part of the resulting contribution.

Borgdorff explicitly defends methodological pluralism, allowing *Artistic Research* to draw on approaches from the humanities, social sciences, science, and technology while maintaining artistic practice at the centre of the inquiry. *Artistic Research* enters academia through an expanded research configuration rather than through the rejection of established forms of scholarship. Critical reflection, contextualisation, and documentation remain integral to its academic articulation.

«*Artistic practices do not stand on their own; they are always situated and embedded*»[193]. Their meaning develops through relationships with historical, cultural, social, economic, and discursive environments. In this sense *Artistic Research* can address questions whose significance extends beyond the internal dynamics of artistic production. Borgdorff explicitly recognises research that connects artistic practice to transdisciplinary contexts and to wider social or cultural concerns. This wide perspective corrects any interpretation of *Artistic Research* as a framework restricted to autonomous artistic creation.

For my study, the limits of this approach derive from the object of inquiry. I investigate innovation processes within cultural organisations: my empirical and theoretical focus includes institutional practices, organisational relations, curatorial processes, and forms of mediation whose scope extends beyond artistic practice as such. *Artistic Research* offers an important account of inquiry conducted through creative practice, while its disciplinary centre does not coincide completely with the broader problem pursued here. I formulate the methodological position of this thesis by bringing these traditions together.

Practice-Based Research provides the broadest framework because the practical and videographic component participates in the research process and contributes directly to the research output.

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[191] H. BORGDORFF, *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (LUP Academic Ser), Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2013, p. 147

[192] *Ivi,* p. 147

[193] *Ivi,* p. 165

Practice-as-Research clarifies how praxis can operate as a mode of investigation and as substantive evidence.

Artistic Research provides a framework to understand better the academic role of creative media practice and its situated relation to wider contexts.

Practice-Led Research remains a useful comparative category to separate this configuration from inquiries whose principal contribution consists in articulated knowledge about practice.

Their combination responds to the particular structure of the research question: innovation is investigated as a situated organisational process, while practical engagement provides one of the means through which that process can become perceptible and analytically available. In this sense the videographic artefact acquires methodological significance within the inquiry.

If practical activity can function as a mode of inquiry, what kind of knowledge does it generate, and how can that knowledge become available for scholarly examination?

3.3 Knowledge production: tacit, embodied, material and experiential knowing

3.3.1 Beyond propositional knowledge

The methodological legitimacy established in the preceding sections for practice-based inquiry raises a fundamental question: if practical activity can function as a mode of scholarly research, what kind of knowledge does it generate, and how can that knowledge become available for academic examination? Most of the definitions of academic research have often been structured around requirements associated with propositional knowledge, including explicit communication, argumentation, and the justification of claims. Niedderer approaches this problem through philosophical debates about what counts as knowledge in creative and practice-based research, observing that «*current notions of research are intrinsically related to the notion of propositional knowledge because of matters of logic and communication*»[194]. This orientation creates a specific difficulty for practice-based inquiry because important aspects of practical knowing emerge through action, perception, and experience before they acquire an explicitly discursive form.

Clarifying this difficulty requires a distinction between several forms of knowledge without treating them as mutually exclusive categories. In this sense, Niedderer differentiates propositional, procedural, and experiential knowledge. *Propositional knowledge* concerns what can be formulated as claims about something; *procedural knowledge* concerns knowing how to perform an activity or achieve an outcome; *experiential knowledge* develops through perceptual and sensory acquaintance with the world. *Procedural knowledge* cannot simply be equated with tacit knowledge, since parts of a procedure can often be expressed through instructions or conceptual explanation. In a similar way, *experiential*

[194] C. VEAR (ed.), *The Routledge international handbook of practice-based research,* cit., *Niedderer,* p. 248

knowledge should be distinguished from experience itself: an experience provides perceptual material from which knowledge may develop, while its significance depends on recognition and interpretation.
This model complicates the apparent division between explicit language and practical knowing. Niedderer argues that propositional knowledge can contain tacit dimensions, while procedural and experiential forms can include content that becomes conceptually explicit. Consequently, the categories of propositional and non-propositional knowledge cannot be mapped directly onto explicit and tacit knowledge. «*These concepts overlay one another orthogonally*»[195]: a proposition acquires meaning through experiential understanding, just as practical experience can contain elements that become available for conceptual articulation.
Practice-based research requires a broader framework without abandoning *propositional knowledge* because its methodological significance derives from the interaction between forms of knowing that are articulated in a discursive way and forms that develop through practical engagement. The question I pursue here is how action can participate in the generation of knowledge while remaining connected to the conceptual demands of academic research.

3.3.2 Tacit knowing

Michael Polanyi provides the foundational account of a form of knowing whose operation exceeds complete explicit specification. I draw on this philosophical account of knowing to examine the role of attention in practical judgement. His argument begins from the simple observation that «*we can know more than we can tell*»[196]. This statement describes an important characteristic of perception and skilled action because human beings routinely recognise, discriminate, and respond to situations while relying on particulars that they cannot exhaustively enumerate at the moment in which the judgement occurs.
Then, he illustrates this structure through the recognition of a familiar face: a person can identify one face among many while remaining unable to specify precisely which individual features make recognition possible. We can compare this process to those that operate in skilled activities, where attention is directed towards the task being performed while numerous subsidiary cues continue to guide action. *Tacit knowing* involves a relation between two terms, the proximal and the distal: the first consists of particulars upon which the knower relies, while the second is the object or meaning towards which attention is directed. As he writes, «*we know the first term only by relying on our awareness of it for attending to the second*»[197].
This distinction helps explain why practical competence cannot always be reconstructed as an exhaustive sequence of explicit instructions because the practitioner may respond to small differences in a situation through perceptual discriminations accumulated through previous engagement and such

[195] *Ivi,* p. 247
[196] M. POLANYI, *The tacit dimension*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1966, p. 4
[197] *Ivi,* p. 10

particulars remain operative without becoming the focal object of conscious attention. *Tacit knowing* concerns the organisation of attention and meaning within practice rather than a vague appeal to intuition.

In adopting a practice-based approach, I do not take tacitness as an exemption from academic articulation. Ingold later challenges a restrictive interpretation of Polanyi on this point: while accepting the importance of tacit knowing, he argues that forms of practical knowledge can be expressed through modalities other than complete formal specification because «*we can tell of what we know through practice and experience*»[198] and telling may take place through demonstration, gesture, performance, description, or other forms that direct attention towards features of practice.

Practical knowledge can contain tacit dimensions without becoming immune to scrutiny, and an inability to formulate every operative judgement during action does not validate the practitioner's interpretation by itself. In this sense the significance of *tacit knowing* becomes clearer when attention shifts from the individual knower to the techniques through which practical knowledge is trained, transmitted, and developed.

3.3.3 Knowledge in and through the body

Ben Spatz extends the discussion of tacit knowing by locating knowledge within embodied technique. His account develops from theatre and performance studies through bodily practices including actor training and yoga; I use it here to clarify how practical knowing can be learned and investigated. His analysis addresses the tendency to understand the body primarily as the site where intellectual intentions are executed. Spatz proposes an epistemology in which practical capacities are themselves organised by knowledge and the central argument of *What a Body Can Do* is that «*technique is knowledge that structures practice*»[199].

Technique, in this formulation, has a broader meaning than technical proficiency or virtuosity because it consists of reliable pathways through which bodies engage particular situations: these pathways can be learned and transmitted, while remaining open to variation and development. «*Embodied practice is epistemic. It is structured by and productive of knowledge*»[200]. *Practical knowledge* exists neither solely as an internal mental representation nor solely as an individual bodily capacity: it develops through socially transmitted practices and material engagement.

This account prevents embodiment from being romanticised as an ineffable domain beyond analysis. Technique is transmissible and it passes between practitioners through forms of training that may involve demonstration, verbal instruction, imitation, correction, repetition, and physical adjustment. The

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[198] T. INGOLD, *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*, Routledge, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon 2013, p. 109

[199] B. SPATZ, *What a body can do: technique as knowledge, practice as research*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon New York 2015, p. 1

[200] *Ivi,* p. 26

knowledge involved may remain unnamed while still possessing enough consistency to circulate between individuals and communities. In this sense embodied knowing can have a history and can be modified through practical investigation.

Spatz distinguishes this transmission of existing technique from the development of new technique: training enables a practitioner to acquire pathways that already exist within a field of practice, while research explores and extends those pathways. «*Training alone is not sufficient to understand the epistemic workings of technique*»[201] because technique develops through the relation between training and research, where research concerns «*the development of new technique through processes of investigation and exploration*»[202]. This distinction parallels the demarcation established in Section 3.1 between individual acquisition and a broader contribution to knowledge. A technique can be new to the person learning it without being new to the relevant community and so research acquires a stronger sense when practical investigation produces a development whose novelty extends beyond the individual practitioner.

This argument allows Spatz to formulate the connection between embodied knowledge and research directly: «*If technique is knowledge, then practice can be research*»[203]. Practice acquires a research function when it investigates the possibilities of a field of technique and develops knowledge within it, and embodied action becomes relevant to practice-based inquiry because perception and judgement can themselves be trained and transformed through the research process.

3.3.4 Thinking through making

The epistemology of practice extends beyond embodied capacity into the relations established during making. Tim Ingold develops this position through an account of knowing grounded in attentive participation. His inquiry connects anthropology with archaeology, art and architecture through the question of learning by making. In *Making*, knowledge grows through involvement with the world and through a willingness to follow what practical engagement reveals. The methodological implication is captured in his description of an "*art of inquiry*", where the course of thought develops alongside practical and observational engagement: making becomes investigatory because the practitioner remains responsive to what unfolds during the process.

This response is central to Ingold's concept of correspondence. Correspondence differs from an encounter between already fixed entities because both practitioner and material remain involved in processes of movement and formation: it describes an ongoing relation in which attention and action develop alongside the transformations of what is being worked with. Ingold later summarises the character of this relation: «*to correspond with the world, in short, is not to describe it, or to represent*

[201] *Ivi,* p. 60
[202] *Ivi,* pp. 60/61
[203] *Ivi,* p. 61

it, but to answer to it»[204]. Making consequently involves a form of inquiry in which understanding develops through sustained responsiveness to the conditions encountered in practice.

Barbara Bolt then offers a related account from within artistic practice: her concept of *material thinking* addresses the knowledge produced through handling tools, media, and processes. Her discussion draws on painting and drawing, read through Heidegger's account of handling. Drawing on her own studio experience, she argues that practical involvement can expose assumptions that remain invisible at the level of conceptual planning. «*We come to know the world theoretically only after we have come to understand it through handling*»[205] and the function of practice resides here in what becomes apparent through the act of working with materials.

Material thinking describes more than the application of an existing idea because practical involvement may redirect the process as the properties of tools and materials become consequential for what can be done and understood. «*Material thinking is the logic of practice*»[206] and her account attributes a form of "*intelligence*" to materials and processes, but this language is best understood through the responsiveness that practical engagement requires: the material does not need to be treated as a cognitive subject for its properties to affect the development of a new inquiry.

Both Ingold and Bolt locate knowledge within a relation that develops during making, and their arguments resist a model in which practical activity simply executes a theoretical proposition already complete before the work begins. In this sense, a research question may be refined when the practical process encounters resistance or exposes possibilities that could not be fully anticipated.

This matters for my inquiry because innovation understood as situated practice cannot always be reconstructed from formal intentions alone and *practice-based* engagement can reveal how a process changes while it is being enacted, provided that the resulting experience subsequently becomes available for critical examination.

3.3.5 Experience as inquiry

Tacit knowing, *embodied technique*, and *material engagement* converge in the problem of experience. Practical inquiry necessarily places the researcher in situations where knowledge develops through perception and involvement, but experience requires a careful distinction. Experiencing something does not in itself establish a research finding. Niedderer's account of experiential knowledge emphasises precisely this issue: sensory acquaintance provides a necessary basis for knowledge, while interpretation allows the researcher to recognise what an experience means and connect it to conceptual understanding. *Experiential knowing* emerges through the relation between situated perception and the interpretation of what has been perceived.

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[204] T. INGOLD, *Making,* cit., p. 108

[205] B. BOLT – E. BARRETT (ed.), *Practice as research: approaches to creative arts enquiry*, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London, England 2019, citing Heidegger, p. 30

[206] *Ivi,* p. 30

In this inquiry, I do not treat subjective perception as sufficient research evidence: an experience can be personally significant without generating a contribution to knowledge. Its research significance develops when the experience discloses something relevant to the inquiry and when the researcher can establish the relation between what was encountered and the problem under investigation.

In her introduction to a volume on studio-based enquiry in the creative arts, Barrett develops this argument, arguing that «*the innovative and critical potential of practice-based research lies in its capacity to generate personally situated knowledge*»[207]. Situatedness here identifies the conditions through which knowledge is produced and practical inquiry occurs from within a specific relation to its materials, processes, and context. Participation can provide access to perceptual and practical dimensions of an activity that may be difficult to reconstruct through external description alone.

The value of situated experience remains dependent on critical interpretation and practical involvement can disclose particularities that become analytically significant through subsequent articulation[208]. This position converges with Niedderer's insistence that experiential, procedural, and propositional knowledge remain interconnected. It returns to Ingold's argument that practical knowledge may be told without being translated exhaustively into formal propositions and experience becomes research material through the meanings that can be identified within it and through its capacity to reshape the inquiry that is being developed.

Practical knowledge interacts with propositional thought: tacit orientation structures what can be perceived during action, embodied technique provides learned pathways through which action becomes knowledgeable, making exposes the practitioner to material conditions that can redirect understanding, and experience provides situated access to the effects and implications of these encounters. Conceptual articulation remains part of this process because it enables the researcher to identify what practical engagement has disclosed and to connect that insight to the research question.

If such forms of knowing are to become available for academic examination, the inquiry requires methods capable of documenting their emergence and critically articulating their relation to the research problem. The methodological question shifts from the forms of knowledge that practice can generate to the procedures through which the practitioner-researcher can make those processes traceable without reducing them to retrospective testimony.

3.4 Reflexivity, documentation and practitioner-researcher positionality

3.4.1 The situated researcher

Recognising tacit, embodied, material, and experiential knowing as relevant creates a methodological problem. Practical knowledge may emerge through situated action while remaining only partially articulated once the event has passed. In this sense academic inquiry must establish how the conditions

[207] *Ivi,* p. 2
[208] *Ivi,* pp. 2-5

under which such knowledge develops can remain accessible for later examination. The problem is that practical activity must leave sufficient evidence of its development for the relation between experience, interpretation, and research claim to be reconstructed.

This requires me to consider my own position within the research process. *Practice-based research* makes the researcher's relation to the practical process consequential because acts of participation, observation, selection, and interpretation are performed from a particular position. Griffiths captures this condition in her account of arts-based and practice-based research, where «*the self is inescapable, because the person creating, responding to, working on, developing or evaluating performances, artefacts and practices is central to those activities*»[209]. The researcher's presence forms part of the conditions through which research material is produced and understood.

The degree of participation varies considerably between research designs: a practitioner-researcher can operate within the practice being studied, collaborate with other practitioners, move between participation and observation, or engage practically with only particular stages of a wider process. «*It is not necessary to be a participant, but in some cases being a participant is the only way to understand some of the subtleties of a research context*»[210]: participation provides forms of contextual access that are more difficult to reconstruct through external observation alone, while familiarity with a setting can simultaneously influence what is noticed, normalised, or left unquestioned.

To examine these conditions, I distinguish participation, perspective, positionality, and subjectivity. Participation concerns the researcher's practical involvement in the activity or setting under investigation. Perspective identifies the conditions that influence what the researcher is able to perceive and how those perceptions acquire meaning. Positionality has a more specifically social and political dimension because it refers to the location occupied by the researcher within institutional structures and relationships. Personal and professional relationships are considered among the conditions that may shape the inquiry and subjectivity appears as relational and situated, formed through encounters with particular people, practices, and environments.

«*Nobody can be transparent to themselves*»[211]: researchers remain only partially aware of the assumptions and social conditions that orient their interpretations and methodological responsibility rests on the identification of those aspects of position and perspective that are relevant to the research process and making their possible influence available for examination. The practical relation to the field must itself become an object of methodological attention.

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[209] M. BIGGS – H. KARLSSON – STIFTELSEN RIKSBANKENS JUBILEUMSFOND (ed.), *The Routledge companion to research in the arts,* cit., p. 185

[210] *Ivi,* p. 182

[211] *Ivi,* p. 184

3.4.2 From practical reflection to critical self-interrogation

Professional practice involves forms of reflection that occur during and after action and *practice-based research* extends this discussion because it requires a more differentiated account of when reflection occurs and what function it performs within an inquiry. Candy describes creative reflective practice as «*a multi-layered phenomenon that depends on the activity in hand and the particular situation of practice*»[212]. Reflection changes according to the stage of the process, the activity being undertaken, and the practical problem confronting the practitioner and she identifies several reflective temporalities that extend beyond the conventional distinction between *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. One of these is *reflection-for-action*, which «*precedes action in the present moment as part of the intensive preparation required for certain kinds of actions*»[213]. Previous experience is reconsidered before a new practical decision is made. *Reflection-at-a-distance* is a later return to practice after some separation from the immediate process, allowing previous actions and outcomes to be reconsidered from a changed temporal position. Reflective work can occur throughout the research process as practical decisions are prepared, enacted, revisited, and reinterpreted.

Reflexivity introduces a concern because reflection can remain focused on the practical task: what worked, which decision should follow, or how an outcome might be improved. Reflexivity directs attention towards the conditions through which the researcher produces an interpretation. Griffiths associates reflective practice with a relational self changing through time and place, while reflexivity places stronger emphasis on the researcher's perspectives and positionality within a social and political context[214]. Reflexive inquiry asks how assumptions, institutional relationships, professional roles, and prior expectations have entered the production of the research account.

I use this distinction to keep reflexivity from becoming an exercise in introspection. A record of personal reactions may provide useful material, yet its methodological significance arises when those reactions are analysed in relation to the conditions that produced them. An unexpected response to an institutional encounter, for example, can lead the researcher to reconsider expectations brought into the situation, the position occupied within the interaction, and the interpretative framework through which the event was initially understood but reflexivity becomes productive when this reconsideration alters or qualifies an emerging research claim.

Interpretation formed during an event may be modified after later experiences or after the researcher encounters documentation that exposes aspects of the process previously overlooked. Reflexivity operates iteratively: its purpose is to keep the relationship between practitioner, research process, and interpretation open to revision and the practical event alone cannot support this work if its relevant conditions leave no accessible trace.

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[212] C. VEAR (ed.), *The Routledge international handbook of practice-based research,* cit., p. 417
[213] *Ivi,* p. 418
[214] M. BIGGS – H. KARLSSON – STIFTELSEN RIKSBANKENS JUBILEUMSFOND (ed.), *The Routledge companion to research in the arts,* cit., pp. 184/185

This is why I connect reflexivity with documentary strategies that allow aspects of practice to be examined again.

3.4.3 Documenting practice

Documentation creates records through which particular moments, decisions, and changes can be revisited after the immediate practical situation has passed: these records do not preserve practice in its entirety and their methodological value lies in the production of traces that enable later comparison, interpretation, and critical reconsideration.

Gray and Malins develop documentation as an integral element of practice-based inquiry. Written for postgraduate researchers in art and design, their guide informs my use of documentation to revisit practical decisions. They give particular importance to the reflective journal because practical knowing is dynamic and requires methods responsive to change. «*'Knowing' about professional practice is dynamic and demands a complementary method of capturing that dynamism which is flexible, responsive, improvisational, reflexive*»[215]. The journal can serve as a continuing repository for information generated throughout a project, bringing together records of practical development with later reflection and its research function distinguishes such a journal from an informal personal diary.

Gray and Malins describe a reflective journal as capable of containing activity logs, work in progress, contextual material, evaluations, visual records, and information concerning changes in the pace or direction of the research. The medium itself can vary from written diaries to sketchbooks, photography, audio, video, visualisation, and records derived directly from practice, but what matters is that the documentation remains connected to the research questions and preserves enough contextual information for later analysis.

Different documentary forms make different aspects of practice accessible.

Photography can record material configurations and spatial relations, although the image acquires greater evidential value when the researcher identifies its context and analytical relevance. Gray and Malins emphasise annotation, including information concerning what has been recorded, where and when it occurred, and why the image matters to the inquiry[216]. A visual record becomes useful through its relationship to an articulated research problem.

Video extends this capacity to temporal processes: Gray and Malins describe it as capable of recording movement, sound, interaction, and qualities that unfold over time, while repeated playback permits close examination of events after their occurrence. Yet, they recognise that «*all images are socially and technically constructed*»[217]. Camera position, recording duration, framing, and decisions about when

[215] C. GRAY, *Visualizing research: a guide to the research process in art and design*, Routledge, London 2016, p. 59
[216] *Ivi,* pp. 107-110
[217] *Ivi,* p. 107

recording begins or ends already shape what becomes available for later examination and subsequent selection can modify the relationship between recorded material and the event from which it emerged.
The value of audiovisual documentation derives from repeatability and analytical access rather than from transparent reproduction: a recording can reveal background activity or temporal relations that escaped attention during the practical event, while the record itself remains a situated construction.
Haseman emphasises the methodological diversity required when research proceeds through practice. His manifesto proposes a performative research paradigm in response to the methodological needs of arts, media and design practitioners. Practice-led researchers have employed «*interviews, reflective dialogue techniques, journals, observation methods, practice trails, personal experience, and expert and peer review methods*»[218] to complement their practical work and documentary procedures can combine written, visual, sonic, observational, and practice-specific traces according to what the research process makes necessary.
Documentation creates the conditions for return.
A practical episode can be reconsidered alongside earlier and later events, and an interpretation can be tested against records produced at different moments in the inquiry. Traceability develops through this capacity to revisit the process, while the interpretation of those traces still depends upon the researcher who produced and selected them.

3.4.4 From personal experience to research evidence

The methodological relevance of positionality, reflexivity, and documentation converges around a central distinction between personal experience and research evidence: practice-based inquiry draws extensively on the practitioner's own encounters, decisions, and responses, but their academic significance depends on how those experiences are connected to an explicit research problem and how the process of interpretation is made available to others.
Griffiths locates this distinction in the researcher's attempt to make relevant values, positionality, and personal relationships explicit while acknowledging that such an account will always remain incomplete. This effort distinguishes autoethnography and reflective action research from autobiography or the writing of a journal[219]. First-person material becomes significant through the critical relation established between personal experience and the contexts in which it occurred.
Writing from sound art practice and through an account of his own research and everyday life, Findlay-Walsh describes autoethnography as research employing «*critically engaged, autobiographical writing as a primary research method and presentational form*»[220] and the emphasis on critical engagement

[218] B. HASEMAN, *A Manifesto for Performative Research*, «Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy» 118 (2006), p. 8
[219] M. BIGGS – H. KARLSSON – STIFTELSEN RIKSBANKENS JUBILEUMSFOND (ed.), *The Routledge companion to research in the arts,* cit., p. 185
[220] C. VEAR (ed.), *The Routledge international handbook of practice-based research,* cit., p. 493

differentiates the method from simple recollection because personal experience becomes a site through which wider cultural and social conditions can be investigated.

The significance of this model extends beyond writing: autoethnographic approaches may incorporate forms of graphing that include audio and video recording, photography, performance, and other practical media and these forms can retain different aspects of lived experience and allow subsequent encounters with material generated during the research process.

Their use remains governed by the same methodological requirement: first-person material must be related critically to the context and question under investigation.

Reflexive articulation also develops over time because autoethnographic reflexivity is a «*longer-term, iterative, layered and staged process of writing, interpreting and rewriting the self*»[221]. The temporal distance between an event and its later interpretation can become methodologically productive: a record made during practice may acquire a different significance after subsequent events change the researcher's understanding of the problem and returning to earlier traces permits these interpretative changes to be identified.

The possibility of reinterpretation is particularly important for practice-based inquiry because the practitioner cannot be expected to understand the full significance of an event while it occurs. Documentation preserves selected conditions of the encounter and, later, reflexive work places that record in relation to subsequent experience and theoretical interpretation. Findlay-Walsh's conclusion describes autoethnography as «*the reflexive storying and sharing of culturally situated personal experience*»[222] and emphasises processes of writing, editing, and re-writing alongside critical context and framing.

From these accounts, I derive a methodological principle that extends beyond autoethnography: practice-based research achieves traceability when the researcher identifies the conditions of their involvement, subjects interpretation to reflexive reconsideration and generates records that permit significant aspects of practice to be revisited.

Audiovisual and other practice-generated records can provide access to moments of organisational and experiential activity that may resist complete reconstruction through retrospective description: such records remain part of a broader documentary and reflexive process.

Traceability establishes the conditions under which practical experience can enter scholarly argument, yet it does not determine the quality of the resulting research claim. A documented and reflexively articulated process can still produce weak evidence or an insufficient contribution.

[221] *Ivi,* p. 506
[222] *Ivi,* p. 508

3.5 Towards videographic inquiry

3.5.1 From traceability to rigour

Methodological traceability makes the development of a practice-based inquiry accessible to examination, yet extensive documentation and reflexive articulation cannot by themselves establish research quality. A practical process may be carefully recorded while remaining conceptually weak, and a detailed account of professional experience may offer little beyond the understanding acquired by the individual practitioner. Traceability provides access to the process through which a claim emerged, but rigour concerns the grounds on which that claim can be recognised and assessed as an academic contribution.

The need for explicit criteria becomes important in a field whose boundaries have historically been established partly through institutional precedent. The debate concerns how research in the creative and cultural industries relates to wider academic standards. Biggs and Büchler identify a methodological difficulty in attempts to define *Practice-Based Research* by the collection of projects already recognised under that label. If those examples are used to determine what qualifies as *Practice-Based Research*, the classification on which the analysis depends has already assumed the answer. «*This describes a circular argument that is bound to reinforce the status quo. We call this the Circularity Problem*»[223].

Biggs and Büchler organise the generic conditions of research around the relationship between a question, a response, a method, knowledge, and an audience. For my purposes, their importance lies in the relations they establish rather than in the number of criteria proposed. A method acquires methodological relevance through the research question it addresses and through the kind of response that can be meaningful within a particular field. An artefact or practical procedure possesses no intrinsic academic status because its research function derives from its position within an articulated inquiry.

The concept of audience introduces an additional level of accountability and I distinguish a specialist academic audience, capable of judging the relevance of questions and methods within a particular field, from the wider academic community in which that specialist audience is situated. Specialist communities «*are not in a position to decide definitions unilaterally*»[224]: practice-specific judgements remain dependent on expertise, while the criteria through which a field recognises research must remain defensible within wider academic conventions.

This is the basis of what the authors call the *Situated Position*. Biggs and Büchler present their additional practice-specific criteria, describing them as issues or indicators whose relation to more general academic criteria still requires development: rigour depends on a defensible relation between the demands of a practice and the broader expectations through which academic research becomes cumulative and examinable. The question shifts from the identification of criteria to determining how quality should be understood when the forms of research differ substantially across fields.

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[223] M. BIGGS – D. BUCHLER, *Eight criteria for practice-based research in the creative and cultural industries*, «Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education» 7/1 (2008) 5-18, p. 7

[224] *Ivi,* p. 12

3.5.2 Originality, contribution and disciplinary relevance

The evaluation of *Practice-Based Research* requires criteria responsive to the form of its inquiry while preserving comparability with academic research. Biggs and Karlsson describe the difficulty of defining quality through two related claims: quality is relative and situated[225]. Relative quality has no absolute standard independent of application, while situated quality derives its relevant factors from the context and subject in which judgement takes place.

Relativity in this sense does not make evaluation arbitrary: it recognises that the significance of a method or outcome depends on what the research is intended to accomplish. Because of that, an evaluative procedure appropriate to one field may reveal little about a different form of inquiry. Biggs and Karlsson argue for assessment developed in relation to the needs of artistic research itself and at the same time, they reject a model in which arts-based research becomes incomparable with the rest of academia. The flexibility required by creative outputs «*should not preclude a strong and explicit connection between evaluation in artistic research and evaluation in other academic subjects*»[226]. I take this balance as a starting point for considering originality.

Within professional practice, novelty may refer to the introduction of a new technique, an unfamiliar aesthetic solution, or an outcome that is new within a specific institutional context. Academic originality concerns the contribution made in relation to an existing field of knowledge and Biggs and Büchler connect this directly to the cumulative character of research: dissemination allows outcomes to be compared with what already exists and makes originality assessable[227]. What is new to an individual practitioner remains personal development until its significance can be established in relation to a broader community.

Artistic or professional quality and research quality can intersect without becoming equivalent categories and the practical quality of an artefact determines whether a particular phenomenon can be explored effectively or whether an intended research situation can be produced. Its aesthetic sophistication, institutional prestige, or technical novelty does not establish an academic contribution by itself.

The evaluative question concerns the function of the practical activity within the inquiry and the contribution that emerges through it: this preserves the specificity of *Practice-Based Research* while keeping its claims connected to shared scholarly expectations. It also raises a further question for me. Once I accept the artefact as potentially central to the contribution, I need to determine what research work it can perform and how that contribution becomes identifiable to others.

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[225] M. BIGGS – H. KARLSSON – STIFTELSEN RIKSBANKENS JUBILEUMSFOND (ed.), *The Routledge companion to research in the arts,* cit., pp. 414/415

[226] *Ivi,* p. 411

[227] M. BIGGS – D. BÜCHLER, *Eight criteria for practice-based research in the creative and cultural industries,* cit., p. 16

3.5.3 The artefact and the problem of self-sufficiency

The status of the artefact constitutes one of the most persistent tensions within *Practice-Based Research*. Practical or artistic outputs themselves embody the research knowledge generated through making. Such a position gives appropriate weight to practice, yet it creates difficulties once the contribution must be identified, shared, and subjected to scholarly examination because the meaning of an artefact may remain open to several interpretations, and the experience it produces for an audience does not necessarily specify the research claim that motivated its production.

Writing specifically about visual arts research, Scrivener developed one of the strongest critiques of artefact self-sufficiency in his 2002 essay *The Art Object Does Not Embody a Form of Knowledge* where he retains his scepticism toward the description of the principal cognitive function of an artwork as knowledge communication, but gives greater emphasis to what artworks can generate. He proposes that art offers apprehensions, ways of seeing that provide possible orientations towards situations whose significance is not exhausted by pre-existing knowledge. On this basis, he defines research in artistic creation as «*original creation undertaken in order to generate novel apprehension*»[228].

The concept of novelty remains crucial when the researcher aims to generate apprehensions that are culturally novel, rather than merely new to the practitioner or to an individual observer. This distinction reconnects artistic practice to the demarcation between personal discovery and academic contribution. The artefact may generate a new way of apprehending an issue, but the research claim concerns the identifiable novelty and significance of that apprehension within a wider context.

Scrivener's position remains critical of the equation between artwork and knowledge. He concludes that researchers should focus on «*defining the goals and norms of the activity that we choose to call arts research*»[229] instead of attempting to justify the art object as a form of knowledge. This does not make the artefact methodologically secondary, but places greater responsibility on the research configuration through which its epistemic contribution is specified.

Candy and Edmonds approach the same issue: for them, artefact generation can be integral to the research process and to the generation of new knowledge. «*New knowledge generated by research, whether practice-based or not, is expected to have two characteristics: first that it is shared and second that it can be verified or challenged*»[230]. The challenge concerns the passage from an artefact capable of generating experience or practical understanding to a research contribution whose specific novelty can be recognised by others.

Artefacts may constitute the core of the new knowledge generated by a *practice-based* project, while the precision with which that knowledge is communicated through the artefact remains open to debate and multiple observers can attribute different forms of novelty to the same work, including meanings

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[228] S. SCRIVENER, *The art object does not embody a form of knowledge*, «Working Papers in Art and Design» 2 (2002), Coventry University, UK, p. 12

[229] *Ivi,* p. 13

[230] M. BIGGS – H. KARLSSON – STIFTELSEN RIKSBANKENS JUBILEUMSFOND (ed.), *The Routledge companion to research in the arts,* cit., p. 121

that were not part of the research inquiry. A «*parallel means of communication*»[231] exposes the precise nature of the contribution and clarifies its relationship to the artefact. I therefore understand the artefact as neither an autonomous research proposition nor a dispensable illustration. Its role must be established within the particular inquiry. In some projects it may make an experiential or material dimension of the research available in a way that prose cannot reproduce.

Academic articulation has to identify why that dimension matters, how it was generated, and where the resulting contribution is located.

3.5.4 Complementarity, contextualisation and research communication

The term *exegesis* is commonly used in practice-based research to identify an accompanying written component, although its form and status vary substantially between institutions and disciplines: its methodological importance lies in the function it performs within the research configuration. Critical articulation locates the practice within a field, identifies the problem under investigation, and specifies how the practical process relates to the contribution that is claimed.

Tacit, embodied, material, and experiential dimensions of practical knowing cannot always be exhausted through propositional description and requiring the written component to contain everything of epistemic value would therefore undermine the rationale for including practice in the research design. Critical articulation operates at a different level, making explicit the relationships that may remain indeterminate when encountering the artefact alone.

Candy, Edmonds, and Vear acknowledge that artefacts may carry the core of the new knowledge generated by research, while communicating that knowledge requires a parallel form that makes the contribution identifiable. They state that «*the textual element is vital in completing the contribution to knowledge that the artefact may, in its core, represent*»[232]: this formulation reflects the context of formal academic research, in which the work must be situated and its contribution made explicit.

In using this model, I do not assume that prose possesses exclusive access to research meaning because the same discussion allows for text to operate alongside other documentary media, and *Practice-Based Research* itself is characterised by outputs whose functions differ according to the medium and field concerned. Written argument provides conceptual and methodological articulation, while the practical component can retain forms of evidence and experience that do not need to be duplicated discursively.

Candy and Edmonds also show that the conceptual framework that surrounds a practical inquiry can evolve through the research process: their examples include interactive digital artworks developed through encounters with audiences in an exhibition setting; the theoretical frameworks guide practical work, while observations arising from practice modify those frameworks and shape further iterations[233].

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[231] C. VEAR (ed.), *The Routledge international handbook of practice-based research,* cit., p. 29

[232] *Ivi,* p. 202

[233] M. BIGGS – H. KARLSSON – STIFTELSEN RIKSBANKENS JUBILEUMSFOND (ed.), *The Routledge companion to research in the arts,* cit., pp. 120-136

The written component records more than a justification applied to an already completed artefact: it can make visible the changing relation between practice and conceptual understanding through which the inquiry developed.

Researchers using non-textual or non-linguistic components must establish «*a necessary and sufficient role for such parts in their research*»[234] and this provides an important test for the methodological status of the practical artefact. Its inclusion becomes justified when removing it would alter or diminish the research contribution. A merely illustrative image could be omitted without changing the substance of the inquiry; a practice-generated artefact carrying an essential experiential or material dimension cannot be removed without loss.

The resulting model distributes the contribution across forms that perform different research functions. Critical articulation provides context and establishes the grounds on which the contribution can be examined: the artefact participates through the practical, perceptual, or experiential dimensions that make its presence methodologically necessary and evaluation concerns the relation among these components and the research problem they address.

I give the videographic component this role before examining its medium-specific capacities: the video essay is a constitutive research output whose relationship with the written thesis is complementary. It is neither supporting documentation nor an illustration produced after the analytical work has been completed.

3.5.5 From practice-based research to screenic inquiry

Once a practical medium becomes constitutive of a research design, its material and operational characteristics acquire methodological significance. The medium influences what can be encountered through practice and how aspects of that encounter can be made available to others. In a research architecture involving moving images, this requires attention to the screen as more than the final location at which an already completed argument is displayed.

De Rosa and Strauven provide a useful threshold for this shift through their analysis of screenic orientation: their essay examines screen space in the passage from production, where the screen functions as a work surface, to reception, where it operates as a display surface. Their starting point is the museum exhibition dispositif, and their examples examine how horizontal and vertical surfaces reorganise bodily gestures and viewing positions. This movement involves changes in usage and in the spatial relations through which the screen is approached and screenic reorientation «*implies a pragmatic*

[234] M. BIGGS – D. BÜCHLER, *Eight criteria for practice-based research in the creative and cultural industries,* cit., p. 13

shift based upon a reconfiguration of the patterns of use and of the space involved»[235]. Changes in use also affect the conceptualisation of the device, «*therefore also implying an epistemological shift*»[236].

Screen media cannot be reduced to abstract carriers of representational content because production and reception occur through specific arrangements of surfaces, bodies, and uses. In this frame, gesturality refers to performative acts and to «*the situatedness of the human body*»[237] and the screenic dispositif includes the spatial organisation within which a viewer or user encounters the image.

I adapt this spatial account to consider how editing and viewing organise access to my research materials; the research function is my methodological extension of their argument. If media practice participates directly in inquiry, the ways in which the screen is operated and experienced may affect what becomes available for investigation: the screen can function within production as a practical surface through which material is organised and reworked, and as the surface through which the resulting research output is encountered.

The argument I have developed in this chapter supports a qualified account of practice as academic research because practical activity becomes epistemically productive when it is organised through an identifiable inquiry and situated in relation to existing knowledge. Its insights can emerge through forms of knowing embedded in action and experience, while reflexive and documentary procedures make the development of those insights traceable. Throughout this process, the resulting contribution must remain examinable within an academic community, and where an artefact carries an indispensable part of that contribution, its relation to the research claim requires explicit articulation.

I consider this architecture especially relevant to the study of innovation within cultural organisations because, if innovation emerges through situated organisational practices, an inquiry capable of engaging practical processes can encounter dimensions of change that remain difficult to reconstruct solely through formal managerial accounts. *Practice-Based Research* provides the general conditions through which such engagement can contribute to academic knowledge and its value lies in the structured relationship between practical inquiry and the research problem, rather than in practice serving as evidence of innovation by itself.

This methodological position also determines how I use the videographic component of the thesis. The moving-image artefact forms part of the research process and research output, while the written thesis provides conceptual and contextual articulation around that practice. Their complementarity establishes the legitimacy of the configuration at the general level.

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[235] M. DE ROSA – W. STRAUVEN, *Screenic (Re)orientations: Desktop, Tabletop, Tablet, Booklet, Touchscreen, Etc.*, in S. SAETHER – S.T. BULL, *Screen Space Reconfigured*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2020, pp. 231–262, p. 235

[236] *Ivi,* p. 235

[237] *Ivi,* p. 235

4. Videographic research as method

4.1 From audiovisual object to videographic inquiry

In the previous chapter, I established the conditions under which practical activity can participate in academic inquiry and positioned the videographic artefact as a constitutive component of both the research process and its output. This leaves a problem unresolved: once practical production has entered the research configuration, it remains necessary to determine what analytical work moving images and sounds can perform within it. I now move from the general legitimacy of practice-based inquiry to the specific operations through which audiovisual form may contribute to investigation. The first step is to distinguish working with audiovisual material from the description, illustration and documentation of it, before determining when such work acquires the status of videographic research.

4.1.1 Working with the audiovisual object

Film and media scholarship has historically faced a material disparity between its objects and its principal means of analysis. Lavik revisits this problem within debates on the digital transformation of academic film and television criticism. As recalled through Raymond Bellour's formulation of the "*unattainable text*", literary criticism benefits from «*the undivided conformity of the object of study and the means of study, in the absolute material coincidence between language and language*»[238]. Film criticism traditionally lacked such correspondence. Unable to reproduce the temporal and audiovisual form of its object within print, it depended on transcription, description, and ekphrasis, «*playing on an absent object*»[239].

Frame enlargements partially altered this condition because they allowed particular aspects of composition and mise-en-scène to be examined directly but their analytical reach remained limited by the temporality of the medium. Still images «*can merely hint at some of the key characteristics of film as a temporal art form: camera movement, blocking, editing, and so on*»[240]. Movement, performance, duration, editing, and sound continued to require reconstruction through language or the reader's memory of the work.

The increasing availability of films in digital formats, together with accessible editing technologies, altered the practical conditions under which audiovisual material could be studied. Lavik describes this development as a new «*material equivalence between film and film criticism*»[241], since both can exist as media files but this equivalence remains partial since some works are unavailable digitally and digitisation may alter aspects of the original image and sound. The relevant methodological change lies in the possibility to import, extract, replay, slow, compare and re-organise audiovisual material within

[238] E. LAVIK, *The Video Essay: The Future of Academic Film and Television Criticism?*, 2 luglio 2012, p. 2
[239] *Ivi,* p. 2
[240] *Ivi,* p. 2
[241] *Ivi,* p. 2

the analytical process. Keathley approaches these possibilities through the relation between cinephilia and emerging forms of video criticism. Digital technologies enable scholars «*to write using the very materials that constitute their object of study: moving images and sounds*»[242].

This possibility recalls Alexandre Astruc's earlier conception of the caméra-stylo. Rascaroli revisits this proposal within her historical and theoretical discussion of the essay film. Cinema could become a form through which abstract thought might be expressed with a flexibility associated with writing, to the point that «*the film-maker/author writes with his camera as a writer writes with his pen*»[243]. Digital technologies provide the practical conditions for audiovisual materials to enter the analytical process directly. Whether their manipulation constitutes criticism depends on the work those operations perform within the inquiry.

4.1.2 From illustration to videographic criticism

Direct access to audiovisual material does not alter the logic of scholarly argument by itself because moving images can be inserted into an analytical presentation while the argument remains entirely organised elsewhere: clips provide quotation, evidence, or demonstration for propositions whose interpretative structure has already been established through verbal discourse. The question I ask is when audiovisual material begins to participate in producing the interpretation.

Keathley and Mittell develop this position through workshops in which film and media scholars learn criticism by re-editing their objects of study. With videographic work, the separation between an audiovisual object and written criticism no longer needs to remain intact because «*analysis must always be conducted, to some extent, on the object's terms: that is, using its material — moving images and sounds — as well as (sometimes) some supplementary explanatory language*»[244]. This formulation identifies a change in the distribution of analytical work between language and audiovisual material.

Videographic criticism is on a continuum between explanatory and more poetically organised approaches: «*Images and sounds — even when carefully and creatively manipulated in support of an argument — are subordinated to explanatory language*»[245] but such work can still constitute rigorous audiovisual criticism even when its analytical logic remains principally verbal, with moving images functioning as closely coordinated evidence. More associative approaches shift a greater share of the interpretative work toward the arrangement of audiovisual material itself.

I do not take reduced verbal explanation as a sign of stronger scholarship. Lavik's objection helps clarify why this distinction should not become a hierarchy. His model of academic audiovisual criticism

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[242] C. KEATHLEY, *La Caméra-Stylo*, in A. CLAYTON – A. KLEVAN, *The language and style of film criticism*, Routledge, London 2011, 176-191, p. 179

[243] L. RASCAROLI, *The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments*, «Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media» 49/2 (2008), Wayne State University Press 24-47, quoting Astruc, p. 28

[244] C. KEATHLEY – J. MITTELL – C. GRANT, *The Videographic Essay*, 2019, ch.2 - Scholarship in Sound & Image: A Pedagogical Essay

[245] C. KEATHLEY, *La Caméra-Stylo,* cit., p. 181

maintains that «*it is still text – whether written or spoken – which does the heavy lifting in opening its author's mind to us*»[246]: he resists treating "*show, don't tell*" as a methodological principle for audiovisual scholarship.

The opposite reduction is equally problematic: audiovisual material becomes dispensable when it functions only as decoration around an argument that would remain unchanged without it. Faden's account of "*critical media*", quoted by Lavik, includes practices of «*using moving images to engage and critique themselves; moving images illustrating theory; or even moving images revealing the labor of their own construction*»[247].

I locate the beginning of videographic criticism where selection, arrangement, manipulation, or comparison contributes to the interpretative relation constructed and this leaves open a further distinction: a work can perform audiovisual criticism without the process through which it was made functioning as research.

4.1.3 When videographic practice becomes research

The distinction between videographic criticism and videographic research becomes clearer when attention shifts from the finished video to the process through which the inquiry develops. Catherine Grant describes this transition through her own move toward audiovisual scholarship. Her account brings film and media studies into dialogue with practice-based approaches from the creative arts. Working videographically «*did not simply mean taking up a more engaging medium in which to 'showcase' my previously produced critical work*»[248]. The change concerned the research process itself. The works she identifies as performative research did not attempt to translate earlier written scholarship into video, but «*explored and worked through their related research enquiries anew – audiovisually as well as 'essayistically'*»[249] and the form develops «*within the editing process itself*»[250].

Figure 1 - Kevin B. Lee, Transformers: The Premake (2014). The desktop becomes a visible site for organising and examining found audiovisual material.

[246] E. LAVIK, *The Video Essay: The Future of Academic Film and Television Criticism?,* cit., p. 8
[247] *Ivi,* p. 5
[248] C. GRANT, *The audiovisual essay as performative research*, (2016), Amsterdam University Press, p. 255
[249] *Ivi,* p. 257
[250] *Ivi, quoting Alvarez Lopez and Martin,* p. 257

Editing can enter the inquiry before an argument has acquired its final form as developed in Keathley and Mittell's videographic pedagogy: one of their guiding principles is that «*formal parameters lead to content discoveries*»[251]. The authors found that such procedures «*reveal something about your object that would be hard to discover through more typical analytical means*»[252]: the arrangement of images and sounds creates conditions under which previously unnoticed relations can become perceptible. In this framework, discovery through editing and academic research remain distinct: a formal experiment may alter perception or produce an unexpected association without generating a defensible scholarly claim.

The workshop participants' subsequent roundtable offers reflections from within this developing community of film and media scholars. Working videographically changed Jaap Kooijman's perception of the source material: «*working with audiovisual material in this way would actually change the way I look at the material*»[253]. Patrick Keating similarly describes moments in which «*a split screen reveals a hidden connection*»[254] and locates analytical surprise within the practical construction of the video rather than exclusively in prior conceptual analysis. These reflections indicate that the medium can modify the conditions under which researchers encounter their material.

Lavik draws on Johansen's work to consider how media shape scholarly thinking. Anders Johansen's observation that «*the medium is a means of investigation*»[255] suggests that different modes of articulation may orient attention toward different properties of the same material. In Lavik's discussion, words, images, and sounds participate in thinking as well as in communicating ideas already formed. Videographic practice becomes relevant to research when audiovisual operations participate in this process of investigation and allow an initial interpretation to be tested, complicated, or revised through work with the material.

An unexpected relation produced through editing is not academically significant simply because it emerged through practice: its relevance depends on its connection to the research question, its contextualisation within an existing field of knowledge, and the possibility of examining how the practical operation contributed to the resulting claim. In this thesis, I understand videographic research as an inquiry in which audiovisual operations participate directly in the generation, testing, editing and articulation of knowledge relevant to the research problem.

4.1.4 Defining the methodological threshold

I use these distinctions to establish the methodological vocabulary of this thesis.

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[251] C. KEATHLEY – J. MITTELL – C. GRANT, *The Videographic Essay, ch.2 - Scholarship in Sound & Image: A Pedagogical Essay,* cit.
[252] *Ivi*
[253] *Ivi, ch.5 - Becoming Videographic Critics: A Roundtable Conversation*
[254] *Ivi*
[255] E. LAVIK, *The Video Essay: The Future of Academic Film and Television Criticism?,* cit., p. 10

Audiovisual documentation records selected traces of events, actions, spaces, or interactions that can later become research material and its epistemic function depends on the procedures through which those records are contextualised and analysed.

Audiovisual illustration has a different function: it renders an argument, observation, or concept perceptible through moving images and sounds while leaving the analytical structure substantially independent from the audiovisual operation.

Videographic criticism assigns a more active function to the medium as long as selection, temporal reorganisation, juxtaposition, graphic intervention, or sound-image relations contribute to the construction of an interpretation of the material under examination. A heavily narrated essay may perform videographic criticism when its audiovisual evidence is structurally involved in the argument, while a formally elaborate video may remain illustrative if its manipulation produces no analytically relevant relation.

Videographic research adds a processual condition: audiovisual practice participates in the inquiry itself when the operations performed during filming, selection, comparison, or editing contribute to the emergence or revision of knowledge related to the research question and the finished audiovisual work may retain an indispensable part of the resulting contribution. Grant describes this relation in strong terms when she argues that accompanying words cannot «*replace or stand in for a key part of the 'original knowledge' that the audiovisual essays themselves generate because that knowledge is connected to the force and effect of a creative production*»[256].

I ask whether and how these methodological capacities can be adapted to a different research problem: the investigation of innovation as situated practice within cultural organisations. Such an adaptation cannot be assumed in advance because moving from the analysis of existing media objects to organisational practices changes the conditions under which audiovisual material is produced, selected, and interpreted. What the literature establishes at this stage is a more limited proposition: audiovisual practice can function as inquiry when operations within the medium contribute to the research process itself. The next question concerns the form of that contribution: if moving images and sounds can participate in inquiry, it remains necessary to determine how audiovisual configurations can organise analytical relations and produce academically examinable knowledge.

4.2 Audiovisual knowledge and analytical form

4.2.1 Relational meaning and the problem of audiovisual thought

How can moving images and sounds organise relations that perform analytical work and remain open to scholarly examination?

[256] C. GRANT, *The audiovisual essay as performative research,* cit., p. 262

Cinema does not possess cognition independently of the researcher, nor does an image become analytical simply because it appears within a scholarly context. The issue concerns how audiovisual configurations can organise materials so that relations, differences, correspondences, and tensions become available for interpretation.

Within the dialectical tradition of Soviet montage, Sergei Eisenstein provides an influential formulation of this relational production of meaning. His account of montage rejects the understanding of the shot as a self-contained element subsequently connected to others, defining it instead as a «*montage cell*»[257]: montage is conceived through the interaction of fragments and characterised through "*collision*" and "*conflict*".

«*From the collision of two given factors arises a concept*»[258]: in this sense juxtaposition can produce a relation whose significance exceeds the information carried by either fragment in isolation. Eisenstein also identifies conflict within the frame itself, indicating that audiovisual elements can acquire analytical significance through the relations into which they are placed. This dialectical formulation represents a specific theory of montage and cannot serve as a general explanation of audiovisual reasoning: its relevance lies more in the theory that formal arrangement can contribute to conceptual production. Rascaroli approaches this question from essay film studies, asking how cinematic form can itself organise thought. Although the essay film has frequently been approached as a cinema organised around verbal commentary, «*its argumentation is not limited to spoken or written text*»[259]. Its specificity involves «*the multiplication of the levels of signification*»[260], with the verbal operating as one among several forms of intelligence.

Images, sounds, movement, duration, and their mutual organisation can contribute to the construction of an interpretation. Rascaroli locates much of this activity in disjunction, arguing that the gaps opened between juxtaposed or interacting elements are central to how essayistic cinema thinks. The analytical question concerns the relation between elements as much as their individual content and once this relation becomes the focus, the space between audiovisual components acquires methodological significance.

4.2.2 The production of analytical relations

Within Soviet documentary cinema and his project of non-acted filmmaking, Dziga Vertov offers an early model in which montage extends beyond the final arrangement of recorded shots: «*every kino-eye production is subject to montage from the moment the theme is chosen until the film's release in its*

[257] S. EISENSTEIN – J. LEYDA, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Trade & Reference Publishers, Boston 2014, p. 37
[258] *Ivi,* p. 37
[259] L. RASCAROLI, *How the essay film thinks*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY 2017, p. 7
[260] *Ivi,* p. 7

completed form»[261]. Montage is related to thematic selection, observation, organisation of documentary material, and the subsequent ordering of footage. At the central editing stage, the continuous rearrangement of material produces «*a visual equation, a visual formula, as it were*»[262]. The mathematical metaphor describes an effort to organise heterogeneous recorded materials into a meaningful audiovisual relation.

The theory of intervals makes this relational logic more precise: the film-object is constructed upon "*intervals*", understood as "*the movement between shots*" and «*the visual correlation of shots with one another*»[263]. These correlations involve changes in scale, perspective, movement, light, recording speed, and duration and the author-editor must consider relations between adjacent shots as well as the position of each shot within the larger configuration, reducing this multiplicity of intervals to an organisation capable of expressing the selected theme[264]. Montage concerns the structured relation among materials across time, rather than the cut understood as an isolated technical event.

Rascaroli's point of view, developed through Deleuze's philosophy of cinema, is useful because it prevents the interval concept from becoming a universal model of the space between images when she characterises its function as «*mostly rhythmic and aesthetic*»[265] before distinguishing it from Deleuze's later concept of the "*interstice*". The "*interstice*" emerges where established links between images are disrupted and it can occur «*between two visual images, between two sound images, between the sound and the visual*»[266]. Attention shifts from association toward the difference produced between elements and Deleuze describes this dissociative logic as the «*method of BETWEEN*»[267].

Vertov's *interval* and Deleuze's *interstice* identify different forms of relational organisation: the first one emphasises correlation and rhythmic construction; the second one foregrounds disjunction and the productive difference between heterogeneous materials. I draw on these cinematic accounts to think through the arrangement of organisational footage, keeping their distinct theoretical premises in view. I find them useful for videographic inquiry because analytical significance may be organised in the relations that connect, separate or place audiovisual elements in tension. Such relations can occur across successive images, between simultaneously displayed materials, and between visual and sonic tracks that also unfold through time: in this sense, the duration assigned to each element and the temporal structure connecting them affect what can be perceived.

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[261] D. VERTOV – A. MICHELSON – K. O'BRIEN, *Kino-eye: the writings of Dziga Vertov*, University of California Press, Berkeley (Calif.) Los Angeles London 1984, p. XXIX
[262] *Ivi,* p. 90
[263] *Ivi,* p. 90
[264] *Ivi,* pp. 90-91
[265] L. RASCAROLI, *How the essay film thinks,* cit., p. 9
[266] *Ivi,* p. 9
[267] *Ivi,* p. 10

4.2.3 Rhythm, duration and perceptual organisation

The point at which an image appears, the length of time it remains available, the movement contained within it, and its relation to surrounding images and sounds condition the way a comparison or difference can be apprehended.

In *Cutting Rhythms*, Karen Pearlman approaches film editing through bodily intuition and choreography. Timing, pacing, and trajectory phrasing are tools through which editors shape rhythm.

Timing concerns «*choosing a frame, choosing duration, and choosing the placement of the shot*»[268] and these apparently small decisions can alter the relation produced between images. Moving a cut by a single frame can change whether a character appears to respond to another character's look or to the beginning of a smile: «*a world of different meanings can unfold*»[269] from this minimal temporal adjustment.

Duration is similarly relational because the perceived length of a shot depends partly on the duration and density of the shots surrounding it.

Trajectory phrasing extends the analysis from duration to movement and energy. It is the process of «*joining together the movement trajectories found in different shots with particular attention to the shaping of the flow of energy between them*»[270]. For the editor, this involves «*the shaping of flows of movement energy and direction by choices of takes and cuts*»[271] and such decisions condition the perceptual form through which movement is encountered.

Timing and rhythm can contribute to analysis by determining how long a relation remains observable, when a difference becomes perceptible, and how movements are aligned or separated. I use Pearlman's vocabulary to examine the time available for observing organisational gestures and spaces, extending a model developed for film editing.

Catherine Grant's *Carnal Locomotive* provides a practice-based example of this temporal reorganisation. Drawing on phenomenological film theory, she examines her bodily response to a crowded-train sequence in René Clément's *Le Jour et l'heure*. She began without knowing what she would say or do with the Clément sequence. Starting from a bodily response and a tentative cognitive intuition, she slowed a one-minute sequence to four minutes and twenty seconds and then introduced «*temporal adjustments to create, or intensify, particular rhymes and shared or contrasting rhythms between the sound and the image tracks*»[272].

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[268] K. PEARLMAN, *Cutting rhythms: shaping the film edit*, Focal Press/Elsevier, Amsterdam Boston 2009, p. 44
[269] *Ivi,* p. 45
[270] *Ivi,* p. 52
[271] *Ivi,* p. 55
[272] C. GRANT, *Film studies in the groove? Rhythmising perception in Carnal Locomotive*, (2015), Amsterdam University Press, p. 87

Figure 2 - Catherine Grant, Carnal Locomotive (2015). A frame from the reworked train sequence in Le Jour et l'heure (René Clément, 1963).

These operations reorganised the conditions through which the sequence could be examined.

My interest in this example lies in the connection between temporal manipulation and attention. Slowing, synchronising, and adjusting duration can foreground relations that are less evident when the material is encountered at its original speed but the resulting response cannot by itself constitute a scholarly claim. It becomes relevant to research when the relation made perceptible through temporal organisation can be articulated in connection with the research problem and examined within the wider context of research.

4.2.4 From audiovisual relations to scholarly argument

The question of scholarly argument becomes more concrete when relational and temporal organisation are examined in videographic practice. Grant's comparative work approaches these questions through intertextual film studies and the relations among existing films. In *True Likeness*, sequential montage places passages from *Peeping Tom* and *Code Unknown* into precise relations and the resulting comparison makes similarities perceptible in a form that prose would have to reconstruct in a descriptive way. Montage allows the researcher «*not just to know this, but also to experience it*»[273] and Grant consequently describes the work as the production of new phenomenological and epistemological evidence through the audiovisual comparison itself.

In her split-screen studies, different sequences remain visible at the same time, allowing correspondences and differences in movement, duration, gesture, and composition to be inspected as they unfold. One of these experiments is designed to present «*not only evidence for, but also an experience of*»[274] a visual similarity even if evidence and experience should remain analytically distinct: the capacity to experience a correspondence does not authenticate the interpretation but it can expose the relation on which the interpretation depends and allow that relation to become available for examination.

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[273] C. GRANT, *Deja viewing?: videographic experiments in intertextual film studies*, «Mediascape : UCLA's Journal of Cinema and Media Studies» (2013), p. 3

[274] *Ivi,* p. 4

Selection and manipulation remain constitutive of this process because «*even the simplest sequence selection and certainly the simplest montage are forms of argument*»[275]. The researcher determines which materials enter the comparison, how long they remain visible, whether they are sequential or simultaneous, and how image and sound are reorganised and the scholarly value of the process depends on the adequacy of those decisions to the claim being advanced. Because of that videographic works must «*stand or fall on the cogency of their audiovisual evidence*»[276].

A videographic argument does not require every analytical relation to be translated into an equivalent verbal proposition but it must make the relation sufficiently legible to be inspected, questioned, and situated within the research problem. Grant describes the viewing process enabled by comparative videography as one of «*live co-research, or participant observation*»[277]: her formulation should not imply that viewers become equivalent to the researcher who produced the inquiry, yet it identifies the comparative activity afforded by the medium because viewers can attend to the materials presented and assess the correspondences on which the interpretation has been constructed.

In *Dissolves of Passion*, Grant uses compilation as another form of analytical organisation as she gathers instances of a repeated formal device from *Brief Encounter* and reorganises them according to predetermined parameters. Then, she describes this type of exploration as a possible methodology for academic research and the resulting work as a form of «*material thinking*»[278].

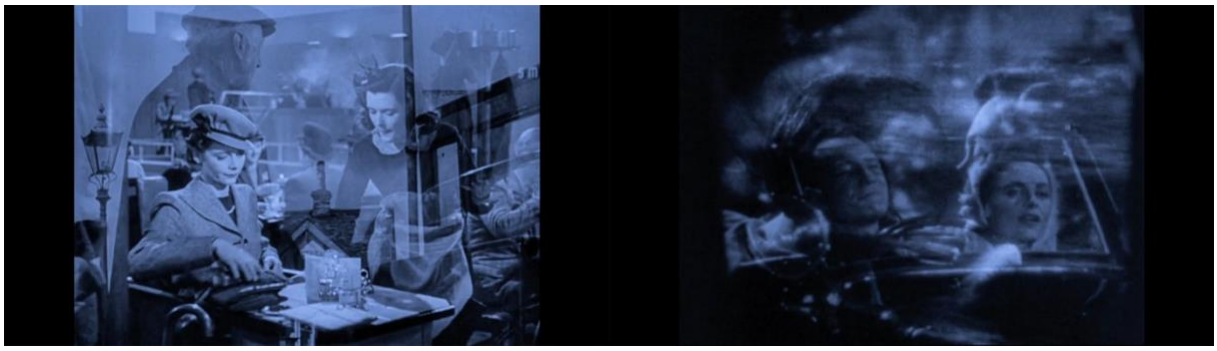

Figure 3 - Catherine Grant, Dissolves of Passion. Two frames from the compilation of dissolves in Brief Encounter (David Lean, 1945), shown here in sequence.

Features dispersed throughout a source can be concentrated within a single temporal configuration, allowing recurrence, variation, and pattern to become available for comparison and the analytical function lies in the relation produced among the collected materials and in the interpretation that this reorganised material makes possible.

I understand audiovisual argumentation as the deliberate organisation of moving images and sounds into relations that render an interpretation perceptible and open to critical examination. What matters is whether audiovisual form contributes to the construction and examination of the claim through the

[275] *Ivi,* p. 7
[276] *Ivi,* p. 7
[277] *Ivi,* p. 7
[278] C. KEATHLEY – J. MITTELL – C. GRANT, *The Videographic Essay, ch.3 - Dissolves of Passion,* cit.

evidence it organises. These possibilities suggest a possible relevance to the investigation of innovation in cultural organisations.

Previous chapters have conceptualised innovation as situated and processual, emerging through relations among practices, actors, material arrangements, institutional conditions, and temporal developments. I cannot assume that videographic inquiry can make these relations available on the basis of literature developed primarily through the study of audiovisual objects. I therefore treat this as a problem to be tested through the methodological configuration of the thesis.

4.3 Montage, framing, selection and comparison as research operations

4.3.1 Selection

Audiovisual configurations can contribute to analysis when moving images and sounds are organised into relations that make an interpretation perceptible and open to examination. This capacity raises a practical question concerning how those relations are constructed. Filming and editing involve decisions about what enters the audiovisual field, what remains outside it, and which elements are placed into relation. These decisions participate in the definition of what becomes available for analysis.

Selection is an initial operation through which an analytical field is constructed. Bordwell approaches film interpretation as an inferential activity, drawing here on Gombrich's work on art and perception. Perception itself involves what Gombrich calls «*the beholder's share*»[279], which consists in «*selecting and structuring the perceptual field*»[280]: the perceiver identifies cues and organises them through conceptual and inferential structures. In this sense, «*meanings are not found but made*»[281].

Construction does not imply that interpretation is unrestricted. Bordwell's account depends on materials and perceptual cues that constrain the meanings that can be produced from them. Different selections may foreground different properties of the same material, but they remain answerable to what has been selected. This means that the extraction of a fragment from a larger audiovisual field makes certain details analytically salient while leaving others outside the resulting configuration.

Catherine Grant makes the consequence of selection explicit in her discussion of videographic scholarship: «*even the simplest sequence selection and certainly the simplest montage are forms of argument*»[282]. Selection places material in a position from which it can function as evidence within an interpretation and a sequence gains relevance through its relation to a research problem and to the wider material from which it has been extracted.

This distinction matters for my inquiry as I move beyond the analysis of existing films. The literature considered here establishes a methodological principle that can inform the later inquiry: audiovisual

[279] D. BORDWELL, *Making meaning: inference and rhetoric in the interpretation of cinema* (Harvard film studies), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass 1989, quoting Gombrich, p. 3
[280] *Ivi,* p. 3
[281] *Ivi,* p. 3
[282] C. GRANT, *Deja viewing?: videographic experiments in intertextual film studies,* cit., p. 7

evidence cannot be treated as though it entered the research configuration without intervention. The choice of what to retain, compare, or exclude shapes the analytical field while remaining accountable to the material from which the selection derives. Once selected, that material must also be bounded and positioned for perception and this introduces the problem of framing.

4.3.2 Framing

Framing establishes the conditions under which selected material becomes visible as it determines viewpoint, spatial boundaries, scale, and the relation between what occupies the foreground and what remains peripheral or excluded. Reframing during editing can further alter these relations by cropping, resizing, or repositioning existing material.

Grant's *Interplay* provides a useful example of framing as an operation within videographic inquiry because her reworking of existing cinematic representations of childhood draws attention to «*moving double-framings that abound in all these (and other) films about children and play, framings which indeed work cinematically to contain, enable and release the children's mobilities*»[283]. The practical reorganisation of audiovisual material directs attention toward spatial and kinetic relations that were not initially the explicit object of the inquiry. The work responds to Annette Kuhn's studies of childhood and cinematic space, including their use of Winnicott's psychoanalytic account of play. In this sense framing participates in the definition of the phenomenon that can be inspected.

Figure 4 - Catherine Grant, Interplay (2015). Comparative framing of childhood and cinematic space.

Grant also extends framing beyond the visible edge of the image using an existing recording «*as an auditory frame for the images*»[284]. The example is relevant because it shows that the boundaries of an audiovisual interpretation can be established through sound as well as through visual composition and that a soundtrack may orient the way images are grouped and perceived even when it does not alter their visual content. In my thesis, this example informs attention to framing; the psychoanalytic reading remains attached to the films reworked by Grant and their representations of childhood.

[283] C. GRANT, *Interplay: (Re)Finding and (Re)Framing Cinematic Experience, Film Space, and the Child's World*, dicembre 2015
[284] *Ivi*

I distinguish image framing from the wider organisation of the screen on which audiovisual material is produced and encountered. De Rosa and Strauven develop this account through screen studies, examining bodily orientation and screen use in media art installations and related practices. Their analysis concerns the viewer's bodily position in an exhibition environment; I extend this spatial question here to the organisation of material within an editing or viewing interface. The concept of the *screenic dispositif* provides a framework for this second level when it is understood as «*the setting or spatial organization as well as the aspects pertaining to the spectator, such as his or her position in relation to the image*»[285]. The screen is situated within an environment that conditions how the image becomes accessible and a screen arrangement contributes to the conditions under which selected materials can be inspected: resizing two sequences, placing them side by side, separating them across screens, or organising them within a particular display changes the perceptual relation available to the viewer and framing operates both within the image and through the arrangement in which the audiovisual material is presented.

Neither form of framing determines the interpretation in advance. They delimit and organise attention and their methodological significance becomes clearer once selected and framed materials are brought into relation through montage and comparison.

4.3.3 Montage

In videographic research, the significance of montage lies in the conditions it constructs for examining materials together.

Grant's comparative experiments offer several ways to organise these conditions, including sequential juxtaposition, synchronous split screens, resizing, temporal alignment, and alterations to the soundtrack. Sequential comparison places materials one after another and the relationship between them develops through succession and depends partly on the viewer's memory of what preceded the current image. Simultaneous comparison changes this condition by showing different materials within the same temporal field. In *Garden of Forking Paths?*, Grant uses equal-sized split screens to place two versions of a sequence in synchronous relation, allowing correspondences and differences to be followed while both remain available for inspection.

«*In sequential montage the meaning of each new image is determined by the context of what has gone before. Simultaneous images interact upon each other at the same time*»[286]. Simultaneous presentation is associated specifically with the capacity to establish «*comparisons and relationships*»[287] and the methodological difference concerns the conditions under which comparison takes place. Simultaneous

[285] M. DE ROSA – W. STRAUVEN, *Screenic (Re)orientations,* cit., p. 236
[286] C. GRANT, *Deja viewing?: videographic experiments in intertextual film studies,* cit., *quoting Perrin,* p. 7
[287] *Ivi, quoting Perrin,* p. 7

presentation reduces the dependence on recollection and allows differences in movement, timing, gesture, or spatial organisation to be examined while they unfold.

The apparent immediacy of such comparisons should not obscure their constructed character: each configuration depends on decisions concerning selection, starting and ending points, duration, screen size, alignment, and sound.

Figure 5 - Catherine Grant, Garden of Forking Paths? (2012). Simultaneous comparison of the sound and silent versions of Blackmail (Alfred Hitchcock, 1929).

Grant explicitly acknowledges the problem of «*authorial manipulation*»[288] when discussing comparative work in which she altered the speed and soundtrack of one source in order to produce a synchronous relation where the resulting comparison is produced under specified conditions rather than being an unmediated replay of an original relation.

I keep perceptual similarity and interpretative significance distinct because they are different claims. A split screen may establish that two gestures or spatial configurations resemble one another but the visible correspondence does not establish by itself that one caused the other, that an institutional connection exists between them, or that the materials are conceptually equivalent. Montage can make a relation available for inspection but the significance assigned to that relation still requires contextual and theoretical justification.

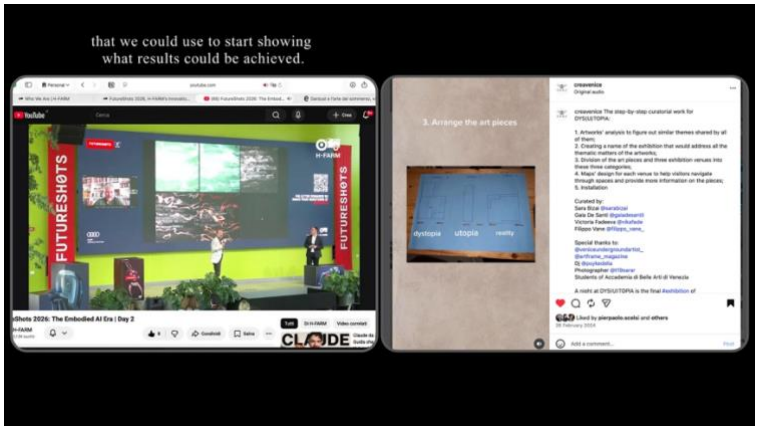

Figure 6 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026). A FutureShots presentation and an exhibition layout at CREA are placed in simultaneous comparison. Their juxtaposition does not establish organisational equivalence.

[288] *Ivi,* p. 6

Grant locates videographic analysis within the same problem faced by written criticism: audiovisual material cannot simply be replayed neutrally, because selection and arrangement already establish a perspective and a comparative configuration becomes academically useful when viewers can inspect the displayed materials and assess whether the proposed relation supports the interpretation advanced.

4.3.4 Repetition, temporal manipulation and sound-image relation

The point of reference here is Mulvey's work on cinematic spectatorship and the possibilities of delayed viewing. Videographic inquiry can modify the temporal conditions under which material is encountered. Keathley's discussion of digital criticism draws on Mulvey's account of operations including «*freeze frame, scan, slow motion, as well as random access of scenes and infinite replayability*»[289]: procedures that allow an audiovisual event to be revisited under conditions different from those of its original temporal flow.

Repeated playback allows brief movements or transitions to be inspected several times; slowing redistributes attention across a longer duration and may make fleeting details easier to follow; freeze frames temporarily remove an image from movement, while repetition can foreground recurrence and variation.

Mulvey describes this analytical potential through «*the delay in time during which some detail has lain dormant, as it were, waiting to be noticed*»[290] but such language should not be taken to mean that manipulation uncovers a hidden truth residing transparently within the source because delay and repetition change the conditions under which the material is perceived.

Grant's *The Vertigo of Anagnorisis* makes this intervention explicit: in order to produce a synchronous comparison, she slowed a sequence from *Vertigo* from 1:28.5 to 2:35.8 and "*altered or muted most of the audio track*"[291]. All these changes make a particular comparison possible, but the audiovisual relation no longer reproduces the source sequence under its original temporal and sonic conditions. The evidential value of the resulting comparison concerns a relation constructed through declared manipulation.

This distinction is central to the use of temporal transformation as a research operation because a slowed gesture may become easier to compare with another gesture, yet the altered duration is partly produced by the researcher. I therefore need to distinguish properties observable in the source from effects introduced by the analytical procedure.

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[289] C. KEATHLEY, *La Caméra-Stylo,* cit., p. 176
[290] *Ivi, quoting Mulvey,* p. 176
[291] C. GRANT, *Deja viewing?: videographic experiments in intertextual film studies,* cit., p. 6

Figure 7 - Catherine Grant, The Vertigo of Anagnorisis (2012). A comparison constructed through temporal adjustment of material from Vertigo and The Empire Strikes Back.

Sound introduces the same requirement: muting one track can reduce the influence of verbal or musical cues and redirect attention toward visual movement or spatial organisation; retaining one soundtrack while removing another changes the balance of a comparison; replacing or synchronising sound may produce an interpretative relation that did not exist in the source configuration.

Grant's use of an «*auditory frame*» in *Interplay* demonstrates that sonic organisation can determine how visual material is grouped and encountered[292] and in this sense sound is part of the analytical construction and not a secondary layer applied to an otherwise complete visual argument.

Selection, framing, comparison, temporal transformation, and sound-image reorganisation rarely occur independently in videographic practice. A comparative sequence may simultaneously require extraction, reframing, retiming, resizing, and alteration of sound but what makes these interventions methodologically relevant is the relation they establish with the inquiry and the extent to which their effects remain available for examination.

For my empirical work, this means that decisions that concern what is recorded, how material is delimited, which fragments are retained, how they are compared, and whether their temporal or sonic form is altered are consequential for the evidence the videographic inquiry will produce.

Once audiovisual evidence is understood as selected, framed, temporally organised, and technically mediated, a further problem emerges: the materials subjected to these operations frequently concern movement, bodies, spaces, sounds, and situated encounters.

Because of that, the methodological question shifts from the construction of audiovisual evidence to the forms of experience that audiovisual mediation may make available for inquiry, together with the limits imposed by that mediation.

[292] C. GRANT, *Interplay: (Re)Finding and (Re)Framing Cinematic Experience, Film Space, and the Child's World,* cit.

4.4 Experience, embodiment and audiovisual mediation

4.4.1 Mediated experience

The construction of audiovisual evidence through selection, framing, comparison, temporal transformation, and sound-image organisation also shapes the conditions under which that evidence is encountered. Videographic inquiry involves an experiential dimension alongside its analytical operations. For this discussion, I distinguish evidence from perception, experience, interpretation, and affect.

Evidence refers to audiovisual material positioned within an inquiry; perception concerns the sensory encounter with that material; experience develops temporally through engagement with the audiovisual configuration; interpretation assigns significance to perceived relations; affect concerns the intensities and responses that may accompany this encounter.

One of the medium-specific capacities of videographic research lies in its capacity to make certain analytical relations available in temporal and perceptual form. In *Beyond Tautology?*, Grant develops this argument alongside a videographic study of Fish Tank, drawing on Bion's psychoanalytic account of emotional containment. Grant's «*sensuous methodologies*» open phenomenological possibilities for time-based media studies by allowing viewers to encounter sequential or simultaneous juxtapositions of moving images and sounds as they unfold. A relation between materials can become available in this way before the viewer reconstructs it verbally. Drawing on her earlier account in *Deja Viewing*, she describes this active comparison as a form of co-research or participant observation: viewers can feel the relations enacted by the videos as well as understand them conceptually[293].

The viewer encounters a relation that has already been produced through selection and formal organisation and what becomes available is an opportunity to inspect and assess that relation while it unfolds even if the vividness of the audiovisual encounter cannot remove the mediation through which it was constructed.

Perception and interpretation involve active organisation, since «*"the beholder's share" consists in selecting and structuring the perceptual field*»[294] and «*meanings are not found but made*»[295].

The experience produced by videographic work remains shaped by formal decisions, technical conditions, and interpretative activity on both sides of the screen: audiovisual mediation can organise perceptual access to evidence, but it does not eliminate the processes through which that evidence acquires meaning.

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[293] C. GRANT, *Beyond Tautology? Audio-Visual Film Criticism*, «Film Criticism» 40/1 (2016), p. 2
[294] D. BORDWELL, *Making meaning,* cit., p. 3
[295] *Ivi,* p. 3

4.4.2 Affect, sensation and audiovisual knowledge

Practitioner reflections collected in *Becoming Videographic Critics* reveal substantial uncertainty over the role that feeling and sensory intensity should play within scholarship: Neepa Majumdar describes wanting «*to convey a feeling, rather than make an argument*»[296], even when that feeling remained supported by existing concepts and arguments. Kristen Warner similarly recalls constructing «*a kind of sensorama via videographic criticism*»[297] around the "*affect and resonance*" underlying an argument first delivered orally, while acknowledging that the audiovisual piece did not, in her view, reach its fullest potential without access to that argument.

The uncertainty is explicit in Melanie Kohnen's question of whether «*sometimes, affect and resonance is enough*»[298], to which she answers that it can be. Her example remains open-ended, inviting different responses instead of fixing a single interpretation.

Derek Long identifies a related capacity in videographic criticism: written analysis can abstract an object from the material qualities that made it compelling, while videographic work may preserve some of that «*material interest/pleasure*»[299] within the critical encounter. Patrick Keating, on the other hand, makes the dependence on audiovisual form especially clear in relation to music: «*really, a different track can change the whole thing—affect, argument, everything*»[300].

An audiovisual work does not become academically persuasive because it produces intensity, pleasure, discomfort, or emotional involvement even if such effects may be relevant to an inquiry, but they require interpretation in relation to the object and research question.

Grant brings Haseman's creative-arts research paradigm into dialogue with critical film and media studies. The idea of performative research helps clarify this conditional status: drawing on Haseman, Grant treats symbolic materials as performative, capable of generating effects through their enactment. In this sense audiovisual materials function in «*evidential, argumentative, but also evocative and affecting ways*»[301]. The coexistence of these functions matters more than any attempt to identify affect as a separate category of evidence. Affect becomes methodologically relevant when the audiovisual configuration makes a perceptual or experiential relation available that bears on the inquiry and can subsequently be examined. The scholarly value, then, depends on how that relation is articulated and assessed, rather than on the intensity of the response alone.

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[296] C. KEATHLEY – J. MITTELL – C. GRANT, *The Videographic Essay, ch.5 - Becoming Videographic Critics: A Roundtable Conversation,* cit.
[297] *Ivi*
[298] *Ivi*
[299] *Ivi*
[300] *Ivi*
[301] C. GRANT, *The audiovisual essay as performative research,* cit., p. 258

4.4.3 Sound, voice and listening

The audiovisual character of videographic research requires sound to be treated as part of the analytical configuration because spoken commentary, dialogue, ambient sound, music, and silence contribute to the conditions under which images are encountered and voice is particularly revealing because academic language changes when it becomes recorded performance.

Keathley and Mittell approach this problem through voiceover exercises in their film and media workshops. Voiceover cannot be approached as though it were simply written prose transferred to another channel: in live academic contexts, listeners often attend to propositional content despite the manner of delivery, yet in a videographic essay that separates the voice from the speaker's visible body, «*the quality of the vocal delivery is immediately conspicuous*»[302]. Vocal performance contributes materially to the audiovisual argument through pace, accent, intonation, emphasis, and the relation established with images and sounds.

In his self-reflexive video essay on academic film and television criticism, Garwood asks whether the performative qualities of video are compatible with a self-contained and lucid academic argument: his work responds by allowing explanatory and performative elements to interact within the same configuration and the borders between different approaches are consequently «*best perceived as porous ones, allowing for productive interchange and cross-influence*»[303].

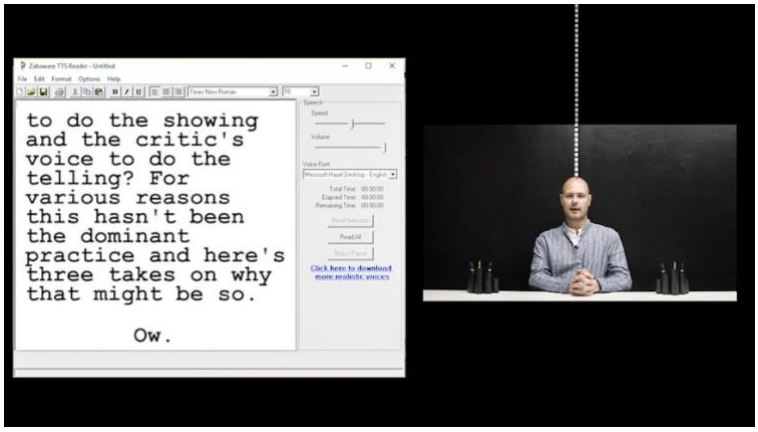

Figure 8 - Ian Garwood, The Place of Voiceover in Academic Audiovisual Film and Television Criticism (2016). The author's onscreen presence enters the graphic organisation of the argument.

Grant's analysis of Garwood makes the consequences of this interaction more concrete: his audiovisual essay combines representations of research activity with an investigation of voiceover, using the research interface itself in evidential, argumentative, evocative, and affecting ways. The manipulation of his own voice eventually becomes part of the argument when Garwood performs a recognition and reversal of his own position within an unequal audiovisual economy by muting his spoken performance

[302] C. KEATHLEY – J. MITTELL – C. GRANT, *The Videographic Essay,* ch. 2*, Scholarship in Sound & Image: A Pedagogical Essay,* cit.
[303] I. GARWOOD, *The Place of Voiceover in Academic Audiovisual Film and Television Criticism*, 04.12.2016, p. 2

and replacing it with an automated female voice, generating what Grant calls an «*uncanny acoustic masquerade*»[304].

Sound here participates in the argument through its organisation: muting, substitution, vocal performance, and juxtaposition alter the position from which the researcher is heard and the relations through which the visual material is interpreted. Listening remains mediated by recording, microphone characteristics, editing, mixing, and playback. Sonic traces therefore cannot provide direct access to presence, but their organisation can make particular relations of voice, position, rhythm, or acoustic difference available for analysis.

4.4.4 Bodies, spaces, viewing

Videographic practice can also incorporate the circumstances in which viewing and research occur and this possibility becomes especially visible when practitioners introduce original footage and place their own position in relation to the audiovisual object within the work.

Lee and Faden's dialogue concerns how videographic film criticism can include the critic's own viewing situation. Kevin B. Lee describes an early experiment as an attempt at «*watching myself watching*»[305]: by filming himself while viewing *And God Created Woman*, with the film reflected in his glasses, the image registered his awareness of how the film positioned him as a viewer. For Lee, shooting original material can extend the videographic essay beyond the film itself into everyday life, including the space in which viewing occurs and the viewer's experience outside the screen. He understands this active engagement as a means of «*'enacting' cinema*»[306]. These reflections show that audiovisual production can make the researcher's relation to an object part of what is investigated. Faden develops a related proposition when discussing exercises in which the form of the video mimics or performs aspects of its subject and the research act can include an enacted encounter with formal or spatial conditions rather than remaining external to them.

Grant's discussion of *Being Bowie* provides a more extensive example of embodied practice that enters an audiovisual inquiry. Grant situates its contribution in star and fandom studies; my interest here is in how the researcher's embodied engagement becomes part of an audiovisual investigation. Brooker undertook a year-long process of re-enactment intended to enter Bowie's «*cultural framework; to experience some of what he experienced, to engage with his influences and see if it gave […] insight into his creative output at various times*»[307] and the resulting work uses a mosaic form corresponding to Brooker's understanding of Bowie as a «*mosaic figure*»[308], while incorporating diverse materials into a

[304] C. GRANT, *The audiovisual essay as performative research,* cit., p. 258
[305] C. KEATHLEY – J. MITTELL – C. GRANT, *The Videographic Essay, ch.4 - In Dialogue: Eric Faden and Kevin B. Lee,* cit.
[306] *Ivi*
[307] C. GRANT, *The audiovisual essay as performative research,* cit., p. 260
[308] *Ivi,* p. 260

collage assembled as the research developed. Grant identifies this «*method-filmmaking*»[309] as a significant part of the audiovisual research process, through which documentation develops into a more essayistic and experimental form.

Figure 9 - Will Brooker and Rebecca Hughes, Being Bowie (2016). The researcher's embodied engagement forms part of the audiovisual inquiry.

In each case, bodily or spatial presence enters the audiovisual work through mediation: the body becomes a recorded and framed trace; the environment is delimited by the camera; movement is organised; the researcher's position is reconstructed through editing and the value of these practices lies in their capacity to make relations among viewer, body, camera, screen, and environment available for examination.

4.4.5 From audiovisual experience to situated organisational inquiry

The literature considered here develops predominantly within film and media studies, where videographic inquiry commonly operates on existing audiovisual objects or on the researcher's relation to them: to use these methods in research on cultural organisations, I need to qualify the transfer. I cannot assume their usefulness for investigating situated practice from their effectiveness in film criticism.

Innovation in cultural organisations has been conceptualised as a situated process emerging through organisational practices and relations among actors, material arrangements, institutional conditions, and temporal developments: if videographic methods can organise relations involving movement, spatial organisation, duration, sound, and embodied interaction, they may offer a way to examine selected dimensions of such practices that are difficult to reconstruct through description alone.

The relevant methodological principle is mediated access: recording produces selected audiovisual traces conditioned by camera position, framing, duration, sound recording, and the circumstances in which filming occurs. Editing reorganises those traces, while viewing the resulting product constitutes another interpretative situation.

What videographic research makes available is a constructed relation to a situated activity.

[309] *Ivi,* p. 261

Relations among movement, space, interaction, material arrangements, and sound may become perceptible through recording and videographic organisation, yet their significance cannot be inferred from visibility alone: a gesture can be observed without its organisational meaning being self-evident; spatial proximity can be made visible without establishing the nature of the relation between the people involved. Audiovisual evidence can contribute to inquiry precisely because it retains and reorganises such relations, while their interpretation continues to require contextual and theoretical articulation.

Research produced through moving images cannot always be separated from the effects created by its form: the works Grant examines «*perform, they accomplish, they do what they say they do*»[310] and their written statements can situate them within scholarly traditions, yet Grant argues that these words cannot replace a key part of the original knowledge generated audiovisually because that knowledge forms «*an integral part of 'the force and effect of a creative production'*»[311].

In this sense, videographic research can contribute to situated organisational inquiry, because its contribution lies in the construction of audiovisual conditions through which selected spatial, temporal, bodily, and sonic relations can become perceptible, organised, and available for scholarly examination.

The remaining issue concerns how these capacities coexist: filming can generate research material, editing can function as a process of investigation, and the completed audiovisual configuration can carry part of the resulting contribution but establishing how these functions combine requires the definition of the video essay simultaneously as a research device and as a research output.

4.5 The video essay as research device and research output

4.5.1 Research architecture

Audiovisual evidence has emerged as a constructed and mediated configuration whose significance depends on the operations through which it is produced and on the form in which it becomes available for examination: the resulting experience remains mediated by the formal and technical decisions that organise it and, taken together, these capacities define the methodological position of the video essay within the present thesis.

I use the term *video essay* functionally to identify an audiovisual form that participates in the development of the inquiry and retains part of the resulting contribution in its completed configuration. All these functions correspond to two related methodological positions: as a *research device*, videographic practice participates in the investigation while material is recorded, selected, replayed, compared, reorganised, and edited; as a *research output*, the completed video essay makes the analytical relations produced through that process available to scholarly examination in audiovisual form.

I distinguish these functions without reducing them to production and subsequent presentation, since relations developed experimentally during editing may become constitutive elements of the final work.

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[310] *Ivi,* p. 261
[311] *Ivi,* p. 262

A comparison that modifies an initial interpretation during production may later remain within the completed video as evidence through which that interpretation can be assessed and, in this sense, the video essay connects the practical development of the inquiry with the form through which part of its contribution is articulated.

4.5.2 The video essay as research device

The video essay works as a research device before a finished audiovisual work exists because its methodological role develops when audiovisual operations intervene in the inquiry itself, allowing material to be revisited under different conditions and interpretations to develop through practical engagement.

Grant's account of *Carnal Locomotive* provides a clear example. A strong response to a film sequence led her to bring the material into her editing programme. At that stage, she had not determined what she would say or do with it. Her starting point was a bodily response accompanied by a tentative cognitive intuition, which was developed through practical experimentation with the sequence[312].

Editing provided the conditions for this initial intuition to acquire a more precise form: she trimmed the sequence, replaced its soundtrack, altered its duration, and introduced further «*temporal adjustments to create, or intensify, particular rhymes and shared or contrasting rhythms*»[313] between image and sound. The significance of these operations lies in their position within the development of the inquiry because the audiovisual configuration was not executed from a fully specified argument and formal decisions participated in the determination of which relations became salient and how the material could subsequently be understood.

A comparable process appears in *Interplay* when Grant describes how reworking and replaying audiovisual elements enabled her to rediscover a dimension of the scholarship she was examining through both practical engagement and an external perspective[314]. Reorganisation of existing material became part of the interpretative process and the practical intervention produced a different encounter with the object and contributed to the formulation of the resulting interpretation.

I carry De Rosa and Strauven's distinction between work surface and display surface into the design of my own inquiry. I use the notion of the *work surface* to describe the operative role of the screen as a space in which research materials can be arranged, transformed, and tested through audiovisual practice and the editing interface does not produce analysis autonomously because its research function depends on the relation between the material, the research problem, the practical operations performed on it, and the interpretation developed through those operations.

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[312] C. GRANT, *Film studies in the groove?,* cit., pp. 86/87
[313] *Ivi,* p. 87
[314] C. GRANT, *Interplay: (Re)Finding and (Re)Framing Cinematic Experience, Film Space, and the Child's World,* cit.

Figure 10 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026), "PRACTICE" sequence. The editing interface makes the arrangement of image and sound tracks visible within the completed video essay.

Describing the video essay as a research device identifies a specific role for videographic practice within the research process. Recording may produce documentation, and isolated editing procedures may remain exploratory but the device becomes methodologically consequential when those operations participate in the investigation of the research problem and modify the knowledge that is being developed.

The video essay in this sense is already part of the inquiry while it is being made.

4.5.3 The video essay as research output

The completed video essay occupies a different position within the same research architecture: formal relations developed during production can remain active within the submitted audiovisual configuration, where they become available to a viewer. Duration, movement, simultaneity, montage, sound, and spatial organisation can form part of the way a research claim is encountered and assessed and reception should not be understood as the transmission of an intact meaning from researcher to viewer.

Grounded in existential phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty's account of embodied perception, Sobchack's phenomenological account of film experience is useful here because it treats audiovisual perception as a mediated relation in which the viewer participates in constituting significance and her formulation is deliberately paradoxical: «*watching a film is both a direct and mediated experience of direct experience as mediation*»[315]. The viewer encounters moving images and sounds perceptually while remaining situated outside the experience represented and organised by them.

Applied cautiously to videographic research, this account clarifies the status of the finished work as the video essay can organise evidence so that temporal developments, comparisons, movements, and sonic relations are encountered directly in audiovisual form, while the interpretation of those relations remains open to scrutiny and what is made available is a mediated research configuration whose material organisation shapes the conditions of examination.

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[315] V. SOBCHACK, *The address of the eye: a phenomenology of film experience*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J Oxford 1992, p. 10

In *Surface*, which brings film and media studies into dialogue with art and architecture, Bruno reinforces the material dimension of mediation by placing the medium in a condition of «"*betweenness" and […] becoming*»[316]: as an intertwining material through which impressions are conveyed, «*a medium is a living environment of expression, transmission, and storage*»[317]. The screen can be approached, in this sense, as part of the material conditions through which the audiovisual contribution takes form.

Bruno also conceptualises the surface as a site of mediation and projection, directing attention away from an understanding of the image as detached from its support and environment.

De Rosa and Strauven's *display surface* provides a counterpart to the operative role of the work surface[318]: during production, audiovisual materials are handled and reorganised on the screen as work surface. In reception, the resulting arrangement is encountered through a display surface and the distinction does not separate two unrelated phases. Yet, the relations developed through the first can persist within the second. Here I use their distinction to connect the conditions of making and viewing the video essay, without equating those functions with a physical rotation of the screen.

I regard the video essay as a research output when this audiovisual organisation carries a necessary part of the contribution and its role does not depend on the offer of a more attractive presentation of findings. The relevant criterion concerns whether the completed configuration preserves relations whose research function depends on their audiovisual form and makes those relations available for critical examination.

4.5.4 Complementarity: the transition to videographic inquiry

The dual status of the video essay clarifies its relationship with the written component of the thesis: the general practice-based framework has already established that different components of a research project may perform differentiated functions when their relationship is explicit and the contribution remains examinable. The medium-specific analysis developed here makes it possible to specify that distribution of functions for videographic inquiry.

In the written thesis, I provide the conceptual and theoretical framework within which the audiovisual investigation becomes intelligible as research. This establishes methodological traceability, situates the inquiry within existing scholarship, articulates the research problem, and clarifies the limits of the claims advanced. The video essay, on the other hand, organises selected dimensions of the inquiry through moving images and sounds, allowing temporal development, spatial relation, comparison, movement, and sonic organisation to participate in the research contribution in their audiovisual form.

Complementarity in this context does not imply that each component contains a complete equivalent of the other: written analysis can describe and interpret audiovisual phenomena, while the video essay can

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[316] G. BRUNO, *Surface: matters of aesthetics, materiality, and media*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. London 2014, p. 5

[317] *Ivi,* p. 5

[318] M. DE ROSA – W. STRAUVEN, *Screenic (Re)orientations,* cit., pp. 235-243

incorporate verbal and textual argument and their methodological distinction concerns the work assigned to each medium within the research architecture.

Requiring the written thesis to reproduce every audiovisual relation discursively would diminish the reason for the existence of the videographic part. Treating the video as an illustration of the written argument would remove its role from the production of knowledge.

The continuity between device and output is decisive: during production, videographic operations provide a space in which material can be explored and interpretations can change; in the completed work, some of the relations produced through those operations remain available as evidence and the research process and the research output are connected through the audiovisual form itself. This continuity distinguishes the video essay adopted here from supplementary documentation or a visual summary of research conducted elsewhere.

I therefore position the video essay within both parts of this research architecture: it operates as a *research device* when audiovisual practice participates in the investigation and as a *research output* when the resulting configuration retains analytically relevant relations in a form that can be encountered and examined.

The question now concerns how recording, selection, audiovisual analysis, and editing operate within the investigation of innovation in cultural organisations, and what forms of knowledge emerge through their interaction.

5. Innovation in practice: case studies and videographic inquiry

5.1 Three cases

«*Our mission is to drive innovation with purpose*»[319]

I now turn to the empirical stage of the research. *H-FARM/FutureShots*, *Recontemporary*, and *CREA - Cantieri del Contemporaneo* offered three different positions from which to approach the same question. They differ considerably in scale, institutional identity, location, activities and in the type of access available during the research. Their relevance to the thesis derives partly from these differences because they establish a field in which innovation can be encountered across cultural, creative, educational and technological contexts while remaining connected to the central concern of the thesis.

Developed within comparative and international education and informed by multi-sited ethnography, Bartlett and Vavrus's comparative case study approach provides a useful methodological reference here as their model questions approaches that treat cases as entirely self-contained units and proposes comparison as a process capable of following a phenomenon across different sites and scales. They describe the comparative case study as a «*heuristic*», emphasising both comparison and the possibility of «*tracing across*» contexts[320]. I adopt this principle in a limited form because the purpose of the comparison is to keep the three cases in relation while preserving the conditions that make each encounter specific.

H-FARM provided the most explicit encounter with innovation as a declared organisational objective. Founded in 2005 and located in Roncade, it connects education, entrepreneurship, consultancy, technological development and other innovation-oriented activities within the same ecosystem. Its current institutional presentation places innovation at the centre of its mission while repeatedly associating technological transformation with people, talent, education and responsibility[321].

FutureShots made this position especially relevant to the research. The 2026 edition, centred on embodied artificial intelligence, brought together discussions concerning robotics, automation, work, education, design, health, entrepreneurship and emerging technologies. The programme approaches the future as something already capable of shaping decisions in the present and, in this context, several contributions also complicate the assumption that technological novelty provides sufficient direction by itself. Questions of judgement, responsibility, adaptability, human experience and the identification of meaningful problems remain present throughout the programme[322].

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[319] H-FARM, *WHO*, in https://www.h-farm.com/en/who

[320] L. BARTLETT – F. VAVRUS, *Comparative Case Studies: An Innovative Approach*, «Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education (NJCIE)» 1/1 (2017), p. 6

[321] H-FARM, *WHO,* cit.

[322] H-FARM, *FutureShots 2026 - The Embodied AI Era*, in https://futureshots.h-farm.com/en/2026

H-FARM became important to the inquiry because innovation could be encountered while it was being explicitly named, discussed, anticipated and given possible directions and *FutureShots* provided a concentrated environment in which actors from different professional fields reflected on technologies whose consequences remain open. The future, in this context, becomes something organisations can prepare for without being able to know it in advance.

My access to *H-FARM* developed primarily through public *FutureShots* recordings, institutional audiovisual material, programme texts and the organisation's own presentations. The case entered the research substantially through materials already prepared for public circulation.

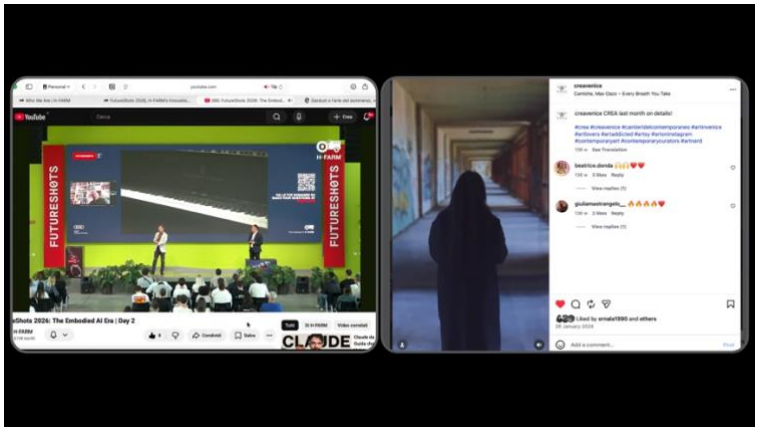

Figure 11 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026). Publicly circulated material from FutureShots and CREA is encountered through different platform interfaces.

The material allows me to examine how *H-FARM* formulates and publicly discusses innovation, while other dimensions of its everyday organisational life remain outside the scope of the inquiry.

Recontemporary offered a substantially different position. Founded in Turin in 2018 and currently operating as *Recontemporary Foundation ETS*, the organisation describes itself as the first independent Italian space exclusively dedicated to new media art. Its activities connect exhibitions, education, research, artists, digital technologies and public encounters[323]. The moving image is part of the organisation's cultural identity as well as the medium through which much of its programme takes form.

The configuration of the space became particularly relevant to the research. *Recontemporary* explicitly distances itself from the conventional dark and isolated viewing environment as its street-level space remains visually connected to the outside and is conceived around informal and accessible conditions of encounter. The screen exists within a wider spatial situation in which viewing can coexist with movement, conversation and exchange[324].

Within the video essay, this characteristic gradually gave *Recontemporary* another function: both audiovisual trajectories pass through *REC*, leave it and later return. It became an interval within the structure of the work, a point through which the two paths could approach one another without having

[323] RECONTEMPORARY, *About - The Foundation*, in https://recontemporary.com/en/about-en/
[324] RECONTEMPORARY, *About - Space*, in https://recontemporary.com/en/about-en/#space

to coincide. This role emerged from the way the material began to function in relation to the other two sites.

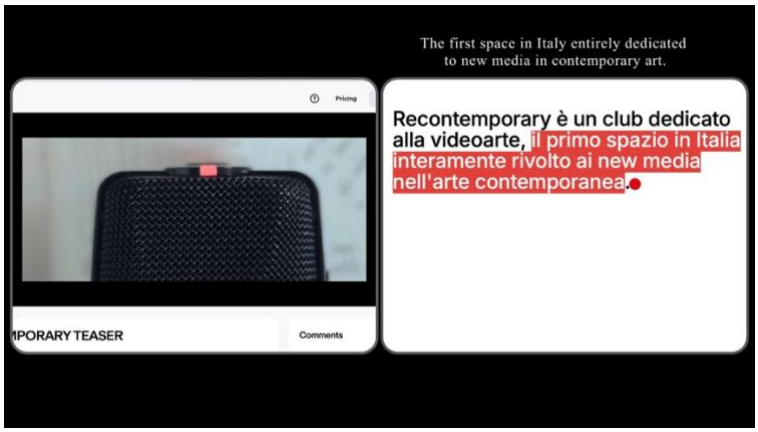

Figure 12 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026). Recontemporary's teaser trailer of the space is placed beside its institutional description of its commitment to new media art.

CREA - Cantieri del Contemporaneo offered a third configuration. Located on the Giudecca within the *Consorzio Cantieristica Minore Veneziana*, *CREA* has developed contemporary exhibition spaces alongside artisan workshops and other activities already established within the site. Its institutional account describes a process that developed progressively through collaboration with local artisans and through the adaptation of spaces that had fallen out of use.[325]

My encounter with *CREA* also included original footage recorded within the site. Moving through the spaces made the proximity between different activities particularly evident. Exhibition environments, workshops, objects, architecture and traces of existing functions remain close to one another. Contemporary cultural activity has entered an environment whose previous uses continue to be present. *CREA* gave me a way of approaching change through its relation to an existing context. The case directs attention towards what can happen when cultural activity develops through a place that already carries other functions and histories and its relevance lies partly in this coexistence and in the gradual process through which new uses have been accommodated.

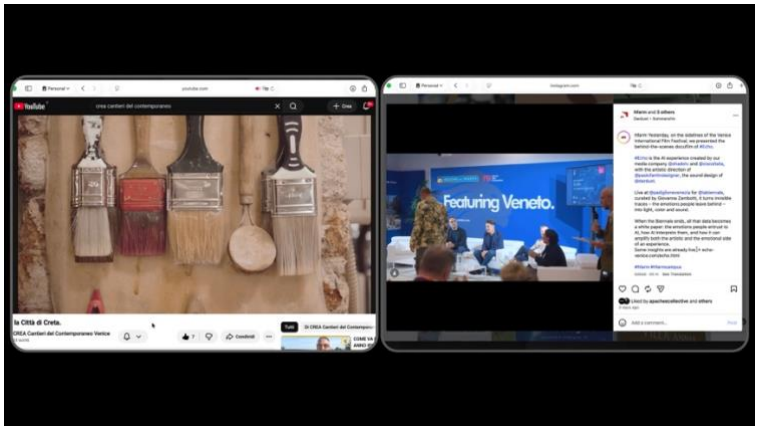

Figure 13 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026). Tool imagery in CREA's publicly circulated video is juxtaposed with material from a public discussion linked to H-FARM.

[325] CREA VENICE, *About Us*, in https://www.creavenice.com/about

The three cases entered the inquiry under different conditions: *H-FARM/FutureShots* provided access to an environment in which possible futures and emerging technologies are deliberately placed under discussion; *Recontemporary* brought the research closer to the organisation of encounters around audiovisual media; *CREA* foregrounded the relation between cultural activity, continuity and the material conditions of an existing place.
These positions overlap in several ways, yet their differences prevented innovation from settling into a single organisational meaning.
By comparing them, I can return to the question under changing conditions.
Innovation may involve preparing for developments whose consequences remain uncertain.
It may become perceptible through decisions concerning the mediation of contemporary cultural forms.
It may also emerge gradually as existing environments acquire new possibilities of use.
The cases provided material through which these variations could remain in contact without requiring them to become equivalent.

«*Spaces created alongside, never overlapping, the artisan shops*»[326]

5.2 Making the video essay

«*Moving away from the classic dark and isolated setup,*
the idea is to create informal and welcoming spaces»[327]

Chapter 4 established the methodological conditions under which audiovisual practice can participate in research. I now ask a more concrete question: what happened when I put those possibilities into practice?
I did not conceive the video essay as the visual translation of an argument already completed in writing.
Its structure developed as I selected, compared, repositioned and reconsidered the materials.
The final architecture is organised around two simultaneous trajectories:

Left track: H-FARM → Recontemporary → "PRACTICE" → Recontemporary → CREA
Right track: CREA → Recontemporary → "PRACTICE" → Recontemporary → H-FARM

H-FARM appears first on one side of the screen and *CREA* on the other. Both trajectories subsequently encounter *Recontemporary* before reaching the central "PRACTICE" sequence. After this interruption, the split-screen returns and each track proceeds towards the site from which the other began.

[326] *Ivi*
[327] RECONTEMPORARY, About - Space, cit.

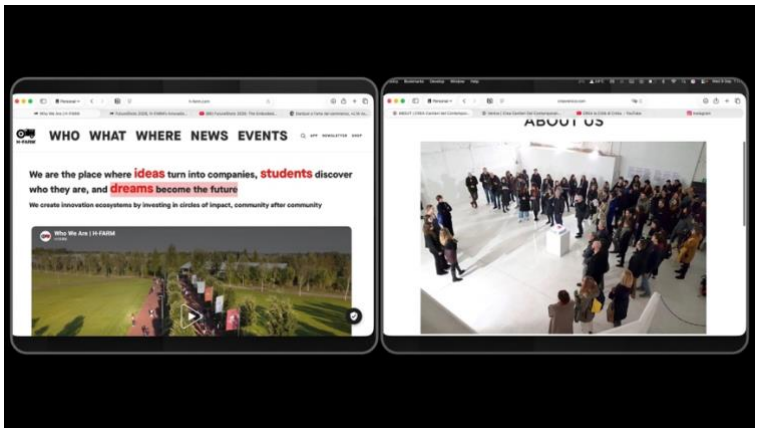

Figure 14 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026). Institutional self-presentations of H-FARM and CREA establish the two initial positions of the split-screen inquiry.

The structure is formally symmetrical even though the materials and forms of access are not. This difference became increasingly important during editing because placing two images beside one another immediately creates an invitation to perceive correspondence, opposition or resemblance.

I found Rascaroli's account of essayistic thought through gaps, disjunction and the interstice useful at this stage because her analysis locates part of the essay film's capacity for thought in the relations opened between audiovisual elements rather than in the autonomous meaning of each component[328]. I draw on this account of essay cinema to reflect on my montage of organisational materials. For this research, the relevance of the interstice became practical because the split screen worked most productively when a relation could remain open long enough to be examined.

Some associations survived this process; others became less convincing once the materials around them were allowed more space.

The first selections were inevitably influenced by the conceptual framework I brought into the editing process. *H-FARM* initially drew my attention towards the explicit vocabulary of innovation and future-oriented transformation developed in the first chapters of the thesis. *CREA* foregrounded questions of place, continuity and situated practice. *Recontemporary* directed attention towards mediation and audiovisual encounter. Editing gradually made these first associations less stable because each case contained dimensions that exceeded the role I had initially imagined for it.

Returning to the *H-FARM* material, for example, made the coexistence of technological anticipation and human-centred concerns increasingly visible. *FutureShots* provided numerous discussions of emerging technologies, while the same material repeatedly returned to questions of human judgement, responsibility, education, experience and the consequences of technological choices. *CREA* and *Recontemporary* underwent comparable shifts as repeated viewing displaced some of my first assumptions about what each organisation would contribute to the inquiry.

This is where the central "*PRACTICE"* sequence acquired its function.

[328] L. RASCAROLI, *How the essay film thinks,* cit., pp. 7-10

During the two-channel sections the viewer principally encounters the materials and the relations created among them. "*PRACTICE"* temporarily interrupts this configuration and redirects attention towards the process through which those relations have been constructed. The editing interface becomes visible and actions that usually disappear behind the completed audiovisual work enter the work itself.

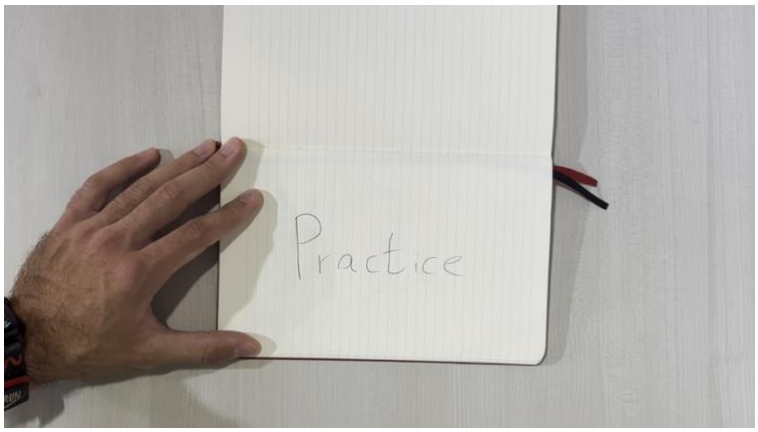

Figure 15 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026), "PRACTICE" sequence. The author's hand and notebook enter the audiovisual configuration at its central interruption.

De Rosa and Strauven's distinction between the screen as work surface and display surface provides a useful connection with the methodological argument developed in the previous chapter because their analysis considers the screen according to the practices and spatial arrangements through which it is used, showing how a change in usage can correspond to both a pragmatic and epistemological reorientation[329]. Their examples include media art installations and mixed-media performances, where screen orientation is connected to bodily gesture. Their discussion of desktop cinema also considers the computer interface as a stage where authorial gestures can become visible; I draw on this aspect to describe the role of "*PRACTICE*". In this project, the editing interface became the surface on which materials that arrived there under different conditions could first be made directly comparable. Clips could be moved, resized, shortened, returned to an earlier position or separated again.

"PRACTICE" exposes a limited part of this process. The sequence does not offer transparent access to every decision made during the research because showing a timeline cannot make an audiovisual inquiry automatically accountable. It does, however, make one condition of the research perceptible: the relations encountered elsewhere in the video depend upon acts of selection and arrangement.

The first-person voice-over responds to the same condition. In her introduction to a curated collection, Galibert-Laîné situates desktop cinema within debates on embodiment and researcher positionality. I draw on Galibert-Laîné's discussion of embodied videographic practices because she connects subjective audiovisual forms with the positionality of the researcher and her analysis emphasises that desktop-based and adjacent practices can register thought processes and affective relations surrounding

[329] M. DE ROSA – W. STRAUVEN, *Screenic (Re)orientations,* cit.

the screen, while personal forms of enunciation may provide a means of reflecting on the researcher's position within the inquiry[330].

The first person in the video essay registers the fact that looking, selecting and interpreting occur from somewhere.

The voice becomes most explicit about this around the *"PRACTICE"* sequence: "*I choose where to begin. That choice leaves something outside. For a while, I can mistake the shape I give these materials for a shape they already had.*"

The subsequent intervention reduces the same issue to a simple editing gesture: "*I can leave this as it is. I can move it, and risk changing my mind.*"

The simplicity of the formulation is deliberate because much of the methodological problem became tangible through decisions of this kind.

Moving a fragment could alter the relation it appeared to establish; extending another sequence could weaken an association that initially seemed convincing; returning material to its previous position could reveal how strongly an interpretation depended on the organisation I had imposed upon it.

Toraldo, Islam, and Mangia's work on video research in organisation studies provides an important connection here because their concept of elusive knowledges concerns tacit, aesthetic and embodied dimensions of organisational life that can remain difficult to articulate within research methods centred primarily on verbal or textual representation and they argue that the multimodal qualities of video can provide a scaffold through which such forms of knowing become available to academic inquiry[331].

Their emphasis is on translating such knowledge into discursive and textual forms. Their methodological discussion distinguishes video as data, as support for triangulation, and as a reflective artefact, illustrated through qualitative organisational research.

In this thesis, I give the audiovisual component a somewhat different final role because some of the relations generated through editing are articulated in the written chapter, while others remain more directly available within the completed audiovisual configuration. This distinction follows the complementary research architecture established in *Chapter 4*. The written component contextualises the process and specifies the claims that can reasonably be drawn from it. The video essay preserves selected relations in the form through which they were developed.

After "*PRACTICE"*, the split-screen configuration returns. The trajectories encounter *Recontemporary* again and continue towards opposite destinations. This second passage does not simply repeat the first because, by this point, the work has exposed part of its own construction and the material is encountered after the viewer has been shown something of the process through which comparison is taking place.

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[330] C. GALIBERT-LAÎNÉ, *Sitting, standing, dancing with our screens: An introduction*, June, 25th, 2024

[331] M.L. TORALDO – G. ISLAM – G. MANGIA, *Modes of Knowing: Video Research and the Problem of Elusive Knowledges*, «Organizational Research Methods» 21/2 (2018)

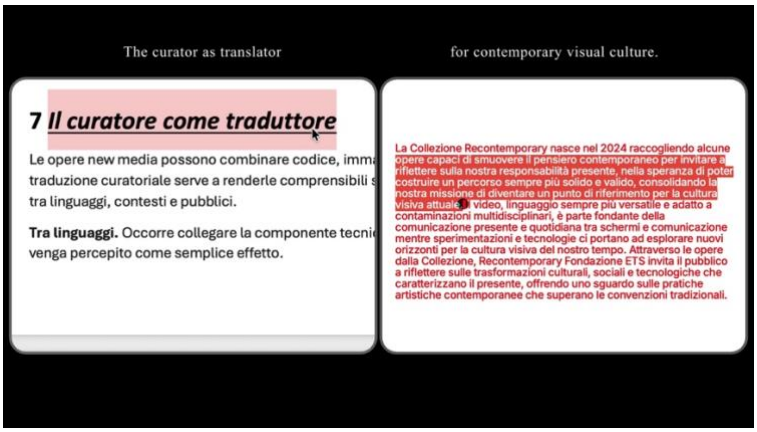

Figure 16 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026). "The curator as translator" note and Recontemporary's collection statement are brought into relation after "PRACTICE".

The same was true for me during editing. Returning to a clip rarely meant encountering exactly the same material again. A fragment initially selected for one reason could later become important for another and repetition became part of the analytical process as much as part of the final structure.

I return here to Grant's account of the audiovisual essay as performative research because her argument gives methodological significance to audiovisual practices that actively participate in the production of knowledge through their own material operations. Her examples come from film and media scholarship, including experiments with voiceover and embodied re-enactment. She stresses the idea that written statements cannot necessarily replace the part of the knowledge generated through audiovisual production itself[332].

The video essay became most useful when it complicated the positions with which I entered the process and its contribution did not depend on confirming the theoretical framework developed in previous chapters. It created a practical environment in which that framework could encounter materials whose relations were not always predictable in advance.

«*Video […] is a fundamental part of contemporary communication, existing between screens and dialogue*»[333]

5.3 What the videographic inquiry makes visible

«*A path almost spontaneously born, organic to the place that hosts us and its needs*»[334]

The videographic inquiry did not produce three competing models of innovation.

[332] C. GRANT, *The audiovisual essay as performative research,* cit., pp. 261/262
[333] RECONTEMPORARY, *Recontemporary Collection*, in https://recontemporary.com/en/recontemporary-collection/
[334] CREA VENICE, About Us, cit.

I gradually became more aware of how differently change can become perceptible according to the conditions in which it is approached.

At the beginning of the thesis, innovation appeared primarily as a concept with an unusual capacity to circulate. The same term can move through management, public policy, technological development, education, cultural production and institutional communication while retaining an apparently stable positive value.

Working with the three cases allowed me to remain for longer with some of the situations to which the term becomes attached, rather than following it across additional discourses.

H-FARM made this particularly clear because innovation is explicitly part of its institutional identity. *FutureShots* approaches technologies and possible futures as subjects that can already be discussed, tested and prepared for in the present. The 2026 programme repeatedly asks what happens as artificial intelligence moves beyond the screen and enters physical environments, professional practices, education, design and everyday life[335]. Innovation here acquires a strongly anticipatory dimension because it concerns the capacity to work with transformations whose final consequences remain uncertain.

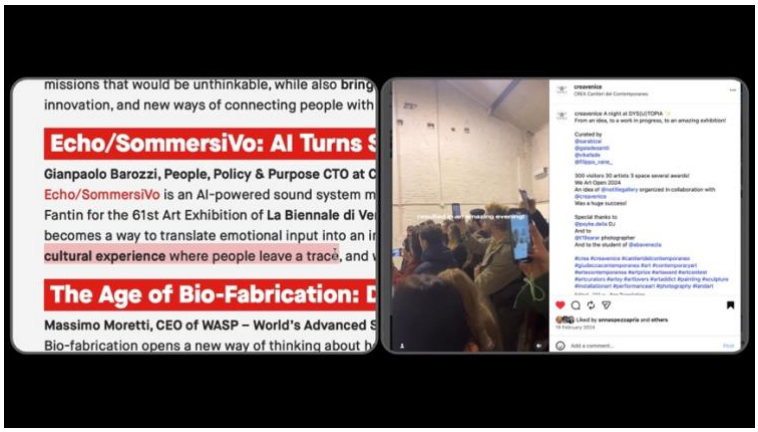

Figure 17 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026). A FutureShots programme entry is juxtaposed with audiovisual documentation of a public event at CREA.

The material also complicated my initial understanding of this position. Discussions of artificial intelligence and automation frequently coexist with questions about human judgement, responsibility, experience and adaptability. The description of *Ready for Any Possible Future*, for example, presents AI as a resource whose value remains dependent on reasoning and decision-making, while stressing the need to question existing knowledge and develop resilient methods. Future-oriented innovation therefore appears as an active process of preparation whose direction remains open.

This made *H-FARM* relevant to the thesis beyond the frequency with which innovation appears in its vocabulary because it provided a context in which uncertainty itself becomes something an organisation can work with and possible futures are brought into the present through discussion, education,

[335] H-FARM, *FutureShots 2026 - The Embodied AI Era,* cit.

experimentation and the construction of scenarios. The case makes visible a deliberate attempt to orient action towards transformations that are still taking shape.

CREA introduced a different relation with time. Its institutional history is closely connected to an existing site and to activities that continue within it. Contemporary cultural spaces have developed alongside artisan workshops, and *CREA* presents this development as a gradual process connected to the needs and possibilities of the place[336].

The footage provides only partial access to the organisational processes involved, yet it makes coexistence particularly perceptible as different functions remain close without becoming indistinguishable. Contemporary cultural activity has acquired space inside an environment whose earlier uses continue to shape its identity and possibilities, and this changed the question I was asking. Change does not always need to appear through the replacement of an existing arrangement: at CREA it can also be approached through addition, reuse, negotiation and continuity. New cultural activity develops through conditions it has inherited and those conditions continue to affect what can happen within the site. The case gives a concrete form to the account of situated practice developed earlier in the thesis, where organisational change emerged through ongoing relations with specific contexts rather than through an abstract model applied from outside.

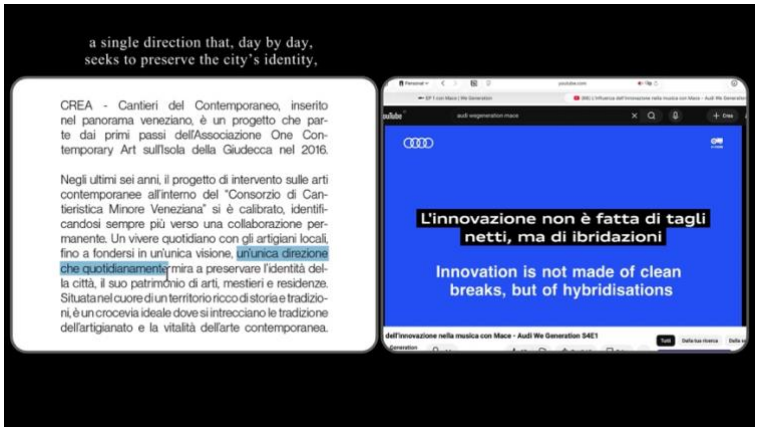

Figure 18 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026). CREA's account of continuity is juxtaposed with a statement on innovation and hybridisation from an Audi WeGeneration/H-FARM video about innovation in the music sector.

Recontemporary complicated this distinction further as its field is explicitly contemporary and technologically mediated, while its institutional presentation gives comparable importance to accessibility, participation, research and dialogue[337].

Within the video essay, this made REC particularly suited to the function it gradually assumed. Its repeated appearance between the two trajectories brought mediation itself into view. Works have been selected and positioned; spaces have been configured; conditions of viewing have been decided. These choices affect how audiovisual culture can be encountered and how long a visitor can remain with it.

Taken together, the cases changed the way I understood the central term of the thesis.

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[336] CREA VENICE, *About Us,* cit.
[337] RECONTEMPORARY, *About - The Foundation,* cit.

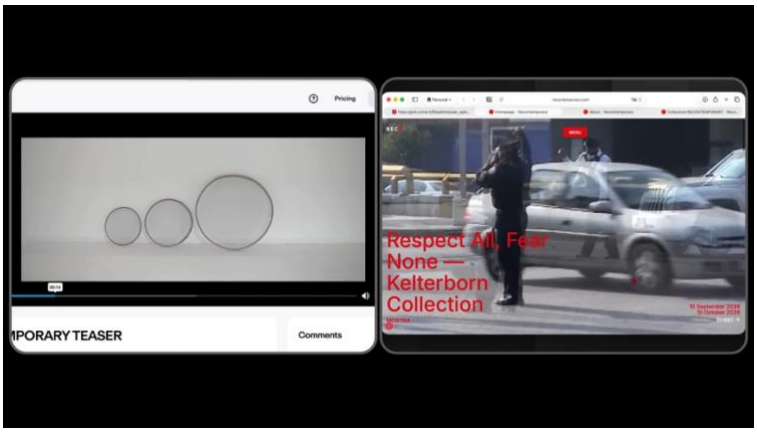

Figure 19 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026). Recontemporary is revisited through its audiovisual and web materials within the two-channel arrangement.

At *H-FARM*, innovation becomes especially visible through anticipation and preparation for possible futures. *CREA* draws attention towards processes of adaptation and coexistence within an inherited environment. *Recontemporary* foregrounds mediation and the organisation of encounters around contemporary audiovisual culture. At the same time, each organisation exceeds the position it occupies within this particular inquiry. *H-FARM* also depends on mediation and adaptation; *CREA* necessarily projects possible futures for its site and *Recontemporary* continuously adapts its activities and technologies. Their analytical usefulness lies in making particular dimensions of change easier to perceive while preventing those dimensions from being mistaken for complete definitions of innovation. The videographic comparison contributed to this understanding because it allowed the cases to remain perceptually present to one another. The split screen repeatedly generated possible connections through simultaneity and, while some became productive during the process, others lost their initial relevance after further editing. Comparison itself consequently became part of the research problem.

Audiovisual proximity can be persuasive. Two images placed beside one another may immediately suggest resemblance, opposition, continuity or difference. Yet the appearance of a perceptual connection does not establish its organisational significance. Working with the materials made that limitation tangible. I repeatedly encountered moments in which a visual relation initially appeared convincing because of the arrangement I had produced. Giving the material more time, changing the surrounding images or returning to its original context could alter that impression.

The voice-over gradually responds to this problem: "*A resemblance asks something of me. It offers a connection, and makes it easy to forget the distance. I want to keep that distance within reach.*"

And then again: "*There is a point when a connection becomes too easy to believe. I need to loosen it.*"

These passages describe one of the clearest methodological outcomes of the process. Videographic inquiry generated connections while also providing a practical environment in which those connections could be reconsidered; editing produced relations and repeatedly exposed their constructed character.

The same process affected the way institutional sources entered the research. The websites and programme texts of *H-FARM*, *Recontemporary*, and *CREA* provide access to the ways in which the

organisations describe their activities, values, spaces and intentions, and I treated these materials as part of the empirical encounter rather than as descriptions to be either accepted or disproved by the images. At times, the audiovisual material reinforced aspects of the institutional description. In other moments, it redirected attention towards something that the written material placed less prominently and the movement between these forms of evidence became more useful than an attempt to establish which offered the more authentic account.

Toraldo, Islam, and Mangia's discussion of elusive knowledge is particularly relevant because their argument suggests that video can direct attention towards dimensions of organisational activity that remain difficult to articulate exclusively through verbal accounts[338]. Within this inquiry, the contribution of videographic practice often began precisely there, where a relation could become noticeable before I had determined exactly what claim, if any, it could support.

Visibility cannot establish a research finding by itself because seeing material differently after montage opens an analytical question; it does not complete the interpretation.

The main insight I draw from this chapter concerns the relation between innovation and context: across the three cases, the concept became increasingly difficult to detach from the particular arrangements through which change becomes possible and meaningful.

H-FARM shows how an organisation can engage deliberately with futures that remain uncertain and construct spaces in which emerging transformations are already discussed and explored. *CREA* shows how new cultural activity can develop through an existing environment while remaining in contact with practices and identities embedded within it. *Recontemporary* draws attention to the conditions under which contemporary audiovisual culture becomes accessible and to the organisational work involved in shaping those encounters. Each case expands the question in a different direction, but none provides a final definition.

The video essay works according to a similar logic: its two trajectories begin from different positions, pass through common points, and eventually exchange destinations. *H-FARM* and *CREA* function as two ends of a movement and *Recontemporary* appears repeatedly within that movement.

"PRACTICE" interrupts it by making my own operations temporarily visible.

The resulting structure allows different approaches to change to coexist within the same audiovisual field while keeping their differences available to perception. This is also why the final movement returns to *H-FARM* and *CREA*. The return does not restore the position from which the chapter began because the material has passed through the other cases and through the process of its own construction.

As the voice-over says: "*I can hold these encounters together for a while. Their lives continue beyond the time I give them. Innovation remains attached to those lives, however easily the word travels.*"

[338] M.L. TORALDO – G. ISLAM – G. MANGIA, *Modes of Knowing,* cit.

The limits of the inquiry are contained in that formulation: the video essay works with fragments of organisations whose activities exceed the duration of the research and the material selected for the final work, but its contribution is specific.
It creates a form in which selected encounters can be held together, reorganised, revisited and examined through the same audiovisual operations that participated in their interpretation.

"*Preparing for the future means learning to work with tools, systems, and scenarios that are still being shaped.*"[339]

Placed here, the sentence occupies a different position from the H-FARM statement that opened the chapter. Preparing for change can involve emerging technologies and future scenarios. The path through the other cases has also brought questions of place, mediation, continuity, interpretation and the researcher's own decisions into the same field.
The word innovation remains. What can be heard within it has changed.

5.4 How to access the video essay

The video essay developed alongside this research can be accessed through the QR code and direct link provided below.
The video essay should be encountered as part of the research itself because completing it changed my relationship with the research question.
Working across *H-FARM*, *Recontemporary*, and *CREA* did not lead me towards a preferred model of innovation because each case contributed differently to the inquiry and resisted being reduced to the role I had first imagined for it. Editing the three together made the boundaries between those positions less stable.
The written thesis and the video essay reach this point as complementary parts of the same research process: the video retains relations whose significance depends on duration, juxtaposition, repetition, and audiovisual form; the written component establishes the context within which those relations can be interpreted and examined.

[339] H-FARM, *FutureShots 2026 - The Embodied AI Era,* cit.

A Simple Idea – Video Essay

Author

Filippo Vane

Year

2026

Duration

08:52

Format

Dual-channel videographic essay; 16:9

Research Contexts

H-FARM / FutureShots

Recontemporary

CREA – Cantieri del Contemporaneo

Description

A Simple Idea is the videographic component of this research and forms an integral part of the thesis. Its dual-channel structure brings institutional discourses of innovation into relation with situated practices, spaces and forms of mediation. Two audiovisual trajectories move in opposite directions before meeting around the central notion of PRACTICE, which functions as a structural pivot and as a point of methodological reflection. Selection, juxtaposition, repetition, duration and montage operate here as research procedures through which the video essay functions as both a research device and a research output.

Watch the Video Essay

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFHoWh9B79A

Conclusion

This thesis began with an idea that had already become difficult to question: innovation.

The word appeared everywhere, across management, cultural policy, technology, museums and institutional communication. It carried an almost automatic positive value, while its meaning became increasingly difficult to locate.

What initially interested me was precisely this tension, because innovation seemed able to move very easily from one context to another, while the actual processes through which organisations change appeared much less simple.

I began by tracing how innovation had acquired its present authority, then followed its promises into the changing roles and practices of cultural organisations. Across the first two chapters, this moved my attention towards the situations in which change takes place. The third helped me understand when practical work can produce knowledge that others can examine. In the fourth, I explored how working with moving images and sound could make such an inquiry possible.

After following the concept through its historical development, its managerial uses and its translation into cultural organisations, I finish this research less interested in fixing a final definition of innovation because what matters more to me now is how the word acquires meaning under particular conditions. Within cultural organisations, change takes place through spaces that already have histories, professional habits that cannot simply be replaced, technologies that need to be interpreted and adapted and people who constantly negotiate what can realistically be done: innovation becomes meaningful through practice. It develops through decisions, adjustments, compromises, experiments and forms of continuity that are often much less visible than the language used to describe them.

I can now return to the question that guided the thesis: how can practice-based and videographic research contribute to the understanding of innovation processes in cultural organisations? I found them useful because making the video essay allowed me to reconsider the material and my first interpretations. My practical decisions became part of the inquiry, while writing helped me explain how those decisions affected the claims I could make. Through selection, duration, juxtaposition, repetition, sound and montage, materials that emerged under different conditions can be placed in relation and reconsidered, and the video essay became useful because these relations did not remain fixed. They could be tested, weakened, displaced and sometimes abandoned.

In the fifth chapter, I put this approach to work in *A Simple Idea*, bringing public recordings and institutional texts into relation with footage I had recorded. The split screen brought *H-FARM/FutureShots* and *CREA* into comparison through two paths passing through *Recontemporary* before exchanging destinations. This let me compare how change was described with how spaces were used and presented. At the centre, "*PRACTICE*" showed the editing interface; together with my voice-over, it made my role in constructing those comparisons visible.

One distinction became increasingly important while editing: making a relation visible and understanding that relation are not the same operation. Two images placed beside one another can appear immediately connected; a rhythm can strengthen that impression; a sound can make the relation feel even more convincing. Yet none of this guarantees that the organisational connection suggested by the montage is meaningful. Sometimes extending a clip weakened an interpretation that had initially seemed obvious. Moving another fragment elsewhere could produce a completely different reading. Returning to the original context could make an elegant comparison suddenly feel too simple.

The videographic process gave me a space in which connections could emerge, while also forcing me to question the connections I was producing myself; this is precisely where the distinction between the video essay as research device and research output became concrete for me. During editing, the timeline functioned as a place where I could think through the materials, while the final video preserves some of the relations that survived that process and allows them to remain available through audiovisual form. The written thesis cannot reproduce everything that happens through simultaneity, rhythm or sound, just as the video cannot independently provide all the contextual and methodological explanation necessary to assess those relations: their value lies in the way the two components remain connected while performing different parts of the research.

The three organisations involved in the inquiry also became progressively harder to contain within the positions from which I had initially approached them. *H-FARM/FutureShots* made innovation particularly visible as anticipation, as an attempt to prepare for technological and social transformations whose consequences remain uncertain. *CREA* directed attention towards adaptation, coexistence and the possibilities that emerge when new cultural activity enters a place already shaped by other uses. *Recontemporary* made mediation especially visible, drawing attention to the ways spaces, technologies and curatorial choices organise encounters with audiovisual culture. Yet none of these positions was sufficient on its own and each case continually moved beyond the role I had first given it. This is what the video essay helped me understand: innovation acquired meaning through the conditions of each place.

My relationship with these places was also different, and this difference has been part of the research from the beginning. *H-FARM* entered my experience first through a summer workshop and later through my participation as a spectator at *FutureShots* over two consecutive editions. My encounter with *Recontemporary* developed from a conference at *Ca' Foscari* and continued through three days spent with the organisation in Turin during a workshop on digital curation. *CREA* has accompanied a much longer part of my academic and professional path: first through the *Minor* in *Artistic Management*, then through an internship, and later through the co-curation of two exhibitions and two performance programmes.

These experiences inevitably shaped what I was able to see and the questions I brought with me, and they also made it increasingly difficult to imagine the researcher as someone standing outside the situations being studied. I did not encounter the three organisations from the same distance, with the

same amount of material or through the same kind of involvement. The videographic process made this asymmetry more visible rather than removing it. In editing, I became more aware of how my previous experiences, expectations and choices affected what I selected and what I allowed to remain outside the frame.

For this reason, one of the most important changes produced by the thesis concerns my own position within the research. I began by trying to identify and compare different manifestations of innovation. During the process, I became increasingly attentive to how comparison itself was being constructed. Choosing where a sequence begins already produces an interpretation. Deciding how long an image remains visible affects what can be noticed within it. Placing two fragments together proposes a relation before that relation has necessarily been understood. At some point, the editing timeline stopped feeling like the final stage in which I assembled an argument and became part of the place where the argument was still being formed.

The research remains limited by the conditions under which these encounters occurred, and the three organisations were accessed in very different ways. The audiovisual material represents fragments of institutional lives that continue well beyond the duration of this project because much of what happens inside an organisation remains outside what the camera records, and what enters the frame is already shaped by position, timing and selection. Videographic research does not overcome these limits. What it can do is make some of those conditions easier to recognise and allow selected relations to remain open to further examination.

For me, this has also changed the meaning of innovation itself. I no longer find the concept most interesting when it identifies something radically new; its significance becomes clearer when attention moves towards the relations that allow change to take form: between an organisation and its history, between technologies and the people who work with them, between institutional ambitions and practical possibilities, between what is imagined and what can actually be sustained.

Innovation can involve anticipation, adaptation, mediation and experimentation, but it can also involve maintaining something while changing the way it is used, and the cases examined here suggest that its meaning cannot be separated from the particular lives of the organisations through which it passes.

The word innovation remains. What can be heard within it has changed.

Ideas travel easily. They enter vocabularies, strategies and imaginaries of the future, sometimes becoming so familiar that their assumptions disappear from view. Practice slows that movement down. It gives an idea somewhere to encounter resistance, history, judgement, uncertainty and other people. In doing so, practice can transform the idea as much as the idea transforms practice.

«*The smallest idea [...]*
a simple little thought that changes everything...»[340]

Figure 20 - Filippo Vane, A Simple Idea (2026). Closing frame of the dual-channel video essay.

[340] C. NOLAN, *Inception,* cit., p. 195

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