In Dialogue

Transgressive Knowing:

Lying Down with the Trouble[1]

Oliver Koenig, Megan Seneque, Bayo Akomolafe, Ioan Fazey, Dylan McGarry,
Injairu Kulundu-Bolus, Fiona McKenzie, Michelle Proyer

Context

Over the years since JASC's inception, the Editorial Team has had many conversations around the topic of research and what we mean by it. In particular, as we read, review, and dialogue about a wide range of submissions that come our way, we are continually called to reflect on and clarify what we mean by *transformative research*. The journal itself arises from recognition of the need for a new *research paradigm* to respond to the intersecting crises that we experience and a desire to provide a platform to support its emergence. Many of the contributions to the first six issues of the journal reflect this commitment to giving life to research approaches that are more inclusive, just, and equitable, and to giving expression to the pluriverse and world-making (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018; Kotharti et al., 2019; Rose, 2011). Our understanding of transformative research, and its properties and boundaries, has deepened through our ongoing dialogue with the articles submitted to JASC, and with each other. We felt the time was right to broaden and expand this conversation, so

---

[1] With apologies to Donna Haraway (see Haraway, 2016).

JASC editor-in-chief, Oliver Koenig, and Associate Editor, Megan Seneque, invited into dialogue a small group of individuals deeply immersed in exploring research and praxis paradigms that respond ethically, critically, and creatively to the intersecting crises of our time. Together, the group set out to explore the integrity of *research* and *practice*, their critical entanglement and co-dependence, and the nature of practices that enable worlds to be created in certain ways. The intention was for the contours of transformative research paradigms (ontological, political, epistemological, social, ethical) to emerge from co-inquiry. Thus, the dialogue itself was a lived experience of the kind of world-making practice(s) that are characteristic of transformative research.

World-making and the Pluriverse

World-making (or worlding) is an active ontological process. The notion of world-making reminds us that we are in a constant state of becoming as we bring forth worlds of action and meaning. We are, all of us living beings, engaged in world making (or unmaking).

In the practice of 'worlding', changing course will involve "….a practice of a world in many worlds, or what we call a pluriverse. Heterogenous worlds coming together as a political ecology of practices, negotiating their difficult being together in heterogeneity" (de la Cadena & Blaser 2018, p.4). This idea of the pluriverse challenges the dominant, modern worldview that promotes a singular, homogeneous reality. Instead, the pluriverse emphasizes a multitude of diverse, interrelated realities shaped by different social, cultural, and ecological practices. It represents a shift from a focus on uniform global development to recognizing and valuing diverse local and Indigenous perspectives, advocating for a world where many worlds fit, each with its unique way of being and interacting. It is a practice of world-making - of becoming - of creating right now the foundations of the worlds we want to see come to fruition in the future (Kotharti et al., 2019, p. xxxiii).

Participating in the Dialogue

Bayo Akomolafe
Philosopher, writer, activist, professor of psychology, and Executive Director of the Emergence Network.

Iaon Fazey
Professor of Social Dimensions of Environment and Change, Department of Environment and Geography, York University.

Injairu Kulundu-Bolus
Senior Practitioner interested in fugitive ways of regenerating a lived practice of

decolonial love and a paradigm of peace with the Environmental Learning Research Centre, Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa, and beyond.

Dylan McGarry
Senior Researcher at the Environmental Learning Research Centre (ELRC), Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa; Senior Research Fellow for the T-learning Research School and Founder of the Institute of Uncanny Justness.

Fiona McKenzie
Director of Orange Compass and known for her systems thinking expertise and facilitation of systems transformation initiatives in diverse contexts globally.

Michelle Proyer
Professor of Inclusive Education, currently transitioning from University of Vienna to University of Luxembourg.Affiliation, role etc

Dialogue Facilitators

Oliver Koenig
Professor for Inclusive Education and Inclusion Management at the Bertha von Suttner University in St. Pölten.

Megan Seneque
Associate with the Presencing Institute and Research Associate with the Susanna Wesley Foundation at Roehampton University, London.

Landing in Relationship

Megan: It is so good to have everyone here. Oliver and I are also conscious of the fact that some of you have not met one another. So it would be really good if you could briefly say who you are, the country where you find yourself, the context that is shaping you and that you're shaping, so that we can land ourselves in relationship with one another. And then maybe what sparked in you from the invitation when we first offered it?

You all know that I'm Megan, that I'm a South African living in Australia. I said to Dylan that I still pine when I see photographs of northern Zululand. So I know that my country is actually still South Africa, and I feel utterly at ease and at home in Australia and elsewhere in the world, I suppose. Delighted to be here and to be exploring these lines of inquiry with you.

Dylan: I'm Dylan McGarry. I prefer to be called Dyl, and I come from KwaZulu-Natal, where I was born. However, I've lived for quite some time in Makhanda, formerly known as Grahamstown. I'm currently at the Environmental Learning Research Centre at the University, which is presently known as Rhodes.

What really excited me about this was the idea of playing with words and how they help us carve new pathways. I'm fascinated by the concept of how words are like spelling, and casting spells, considering they share etymological roots. It's intriguing to think about the magic, power, and responsibility inherent in our

practice of creating words. This, along with the extraordinary panel, sparked my excitement.

Admittedly, I had feelings of imposter syndrome before coming, wondering, "Oh, no, do they really need me?" So, I'm very honored and grateful to be here, and I want to express my thanks for this opportunity.

Injairu: My name is Injairu, and it's very, very nice to meet you all. I am originally from Kenya. I am also based in the Eastern Cape, in Makhanda, a place from which many of my biggest learnings about the continent have come. It feels like a rich and potent space to think and breathe into the questions we're asking.

About the invitation, I must say, for me, it's a bit challenging. When we center words *research* and *transformative research*, I find it suddenly difficult to articulate what I feel. These words that are so laden with meaning that pre-empt my arrival. There's something about the messiness of that and trying to navigate my way into the conversation that is tricky and interesting.

Fiona: So, hello, my name is Fiona McKenzie. I grew up on a farm in rural outback Australia and still pine for that place. My academic background is in human geography, but I see myself more as a practitioner. Like you, when I encounter the term *research*, I question if it truly encapsulates what I want to express. And Dylan, your mention of imposter syndrome resonates with me too.

Perhaps none of us would have turned up if we'd let our imposter syndrome take over. What really excited me about this was the focus on sharing lived experiences. That's an area I feel confident speaking about, even if there are other topics I might not be as well-versed in. So, I'm really looking forward to hearing and learning from others as well.

Ioan: I can come in. It's nice to meet you all, and it's especially good to see some old friends I haven't seen in a long time. So, my name is Ioan. I currently reside in York and work at the University of York in the UK. Like others have already mentioned, the term *transformative research* always intrigues me for various reasons. I'm really looking forward to delving into that topic. What particularly excited me was the offer, or the invitation, to share experiences rather than just cognitive personas or similar concepts. So, it's great to be here, and I'm grateful for the invitation.

Bayo: So, my name is Bayo Akomolafe, and I'm currently in Chennai, India. It's great to meet you all. I've seen some familiar faces here. Dylan, what you mentioned about spelling is really intriguing; that concept will stay with me for a while. Thank you for sharing that piece of magic.

Regarding my interactions with the term *transformative research*, I find there's an itchiness to it, a kind of restlessness. It's as if research alone isn't sufficient and now needs to be qualified as transformative. In film theory, there's a concept called the establishing shot, where a director pans across a landscape at the beginning of a movie. This technique is used to build the plot and establish

location and character. There's a sense in modernity that assumes all the information we need about the world is captured in this establishing shot, as if a first glance is enough to dissect the world. This presupposes that we can stand apart and remain sterile, outside of the world's influence.

I think now the world is demanding something different from us. It's asking us to move, to travel, to lose our stability. In the invitation to not just transform research but to transform the researcher, I hear a call to action. That's what resonates with me. Thank you.

Michelle: If it's okay, I'll follow up. My name is Michelle. I'm really happy to be here. It was Oliver who invited me, and he taught me a lot about some of you and your collaborations so far. After listening to all of you, I've become quite excited. Like many others, I find myself questioning whether I'm the right person to be here. Initially, I had a few things I wanted to say, but now, after hearing your contributions, I've circled back to one particular question.

Currently, I'm based at the University of Vienna. I've had the great pleasure of working extensively with Oliver, sharing parts of our educational journey and now our academic careers. What resonated with me just now is a question that has been troubling me: the language we use to describe sustainability, which is a topic I'm presently engaged with. The idea that everyone needs to be involved in sustainability actually makes me quite unhappy. We have a lot of interesting regulations and papers related to this, but it seems like no one really understands what it means to have everyone involved. This issue probably represents many of the other challenges I'm facing in my work, particularly in making sense of meanings across different languages. I work closely with colleagues from Thailand, and we use a method to create meaning in a translingual way, which is really exciting. It also aids in understanding and addressing some elements I feel are missing in research, like detailed accounts, which I might talk more about later if it's of interest. But when we discuss these broad terms and who should be involved, sometimes I feel like they only make sense to a few people. Perhaps no one truly knows what they mean. This is something I wanted to bring to the table as a starting point. Thank you so much.

Co-inhabiting the Borderlands of Theory and Praxis

Oliver: Thank you all, and thank you, Megan, for kicking us off. It's a pleasure and honor to be with you all. So, I'm Oliver. I have the privilege of serving in the Editorial Team of the Journal of Awareness-Based Systems Change, and for its inception period, I have been serving as its editor-in-chief. This title has never really sat right with me as it has been, and I guess will continue to be, a truly collective endeavor.

Many of the things we prepared and hoped the invitation would spark and ignite have already been present in this first round of introductions. Yet, when it comes to providing the frame for our time together, I would like to spend three to four minutes to reiterate a little bit about the intentionality behind us coming

together in this way. Since I'm a bit nervous as well I'll stick to what I've prepared and written out.

I am deeply delighted and humbled to, together with Megan, have been able to invite and now host this dialogue session. Ever since we have co-initiated the journal, the sense that there are different threads, inter- and intra-secting globally, of a larger whole that is co-attempting to stretch the (largely) man-made boundaries of what is constituted as valid and helpful, has only become clearer. As with other emergent discourses and practices, definitions of transformative research are currently abundant and can be found across fields such as social sciences, the humanities, technology, engineering, and many more. Common to these definitions is an intent to depart from or transgress established forms of knowledge generation, reaching new understandings of the nature and ways of dealing with and in the intersecting crises and ruptures of our time. This includes moving away from the long-esteemed neutrality of researchers and the knowledge produced, embracing ethico-onto-epistemological forms of response-ability as coined by new materialist scholars like Donna Haraway and Karen Barad. Today, we do not intend to level this plurality of approaches. Rather, we embrace the notion of the pluriverse, a world of many worlds, and seek to dive into the becoming of these emergent fields and our becoming with them by sharing examples and experiences of our transformative and transgressive research practices. In doing so, we hope the contours—ontological, political, social, et cetera, of transformative research paradigms will emerge from our co-inquiry. Our dialogue aims to be a lived experience of the world-making practices characteristic of transformative research.

New Materialism

New materialism is a modern approach that emerged around the year 2000, emphasizing the significant role of physical matter in fields such as philosophy and feminism. It challenges the traditional focus on language and culture's influence over reality. According to this theory, matter itself—ranging from human bodies to technology—actively shapes and interacts with our world. Thinkers like Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2023) argue that matter is not a passive backdrop for human activities but an active force that both influences and is influenced by social and cultural dynamics. New materialism encourages a deeper exploration of how matter as an active force can help us understand power relations and social structures, moving beyond views that prioritize human perspectives and cultural constructs.

Each of us co-inhabits a variety of spaces in the borderlands of theory and praxis. Megan and I have held dialogues about our experiences of co-inhabiting such spaces, which, especially when difference is present and openly invited, we often feel to be an inhibiting space filled with what appears as conflicting demands and

positionalities. We have come to see these spaces as mirrors of deeper structural issues and regimes of violence. We discussed ways to lean into that space, feeling the schism, the pulls and pushes within us, and how important and liberating it is when something is able to crack-open and groups can arrive at a common understanding that honors the critical inter- and intra-dependence and mutual, inseparable entanglement of these aspects. We talked about how these same dynamics have, and are still, playing out within ourselves. We talked about the hegemonic power of performativity, of performance anxiety, and the obviously endemic feeling of imposterism—the ultimate disempowerment being the internalization of these expectations, even when unclear. We explored liberating pathways, relations, and spaces/sanctuaries that enable us to give ourselves permission to value and attend to other ways of being/doing/knowing which, in turn, significantly impact our world-making abilities, our abilities to be in and make sense of the world and our role/s in it. These are the issues we would like to dive in with you together.

I'll stick to that here and would really enjoy us kicking off with anything that has been sparked. We will try to see how this shared space evolves together with us.

Bayo: Good introduction, brother.

Sandpits and Paint Pots: Making Knowledges Together

Fiona: I'm jumping into the breach. Maybe this will be my only bit of wisdom to offer in the whole conversation and I'm giving away all my good stuff straight away. I was struck by the idea of the lived experience and what transformative research really means. In preparing for today, I reflected on when I felt it was most transformative, and I thought maybe I'd just share a story, if that's a useful starting point. The story I have is about a day. Well, it was part of a whole process, but a particular day, where, as part of a research project, we did 'futuring with four-year-olds.' The team went all around Australia. We went to early learning centers and we ran futuring processes and we spent a whole lot of time trying to construct these processes, building on everything we'd learnt to date about early childhood and reflexive futuring. Earlier, we'd spoken to foresight specialists, asking, "Have you ever done this with four-year-olds?" and everyone said, "No, twelve is the youngest," etc. So we were in unchartered territory. Turning up to this early childhood center, the children were—it was highly unstructured. They were just beautifully free, running around doing whatever they wanted, curiosity-driven.

I thought, "Okay, I just have to be with that." And it forced me in so many ways to let go of all the constraints I had. In the end, I went and sat in the sandpit and set up some mud pits and this sort of thing. Then I set up a paint station. I just started painting. One by one, all the children started coming over, and I just asked questions. Some of the questions we had were around, "Do you want to draw a picture of your most special places or special people?" or "What would be your best day ever?" and this sort of thing. What was really amazing was how

substantive the content they created was. They created drawings of families and nature,—they drew elaborate maps to Cookie Monster's Cave, for example, or one child who felt they didn't have much family instead drew what they called 'a road to somewhere.' All these different things came out and led to amazing insights around what they were valuing around care and connection and just this yearning to be free of this yard that they were in. This work was being fed into other processes, including into policy work by the federal government. And it really highlighted how, essentially, the policy direction that early childhood has been taking in Australia is going in almost exactly the opposite direction to everything that was yearned for in these paintings, drawings, and conversations. When I got home at the end of the day, my partner said, "Do you realize you've got paint handprints on your back?" I was surprised; I hadn't realized it. All of that made me think about what I wish transformative research was—the becoming.

I think it's where the researched becomes the researcher, and they are the contributor. In all the projects we do, it's very much about taking on the role where the participant is the researcher. Where research escapes its confines. Just like those paintings, it's almost like changing the frame or redefining the problem space. Maybe this project or others might have been centered on education, but it went into a whole piece around the built environment, nature, and space. It escapes those initial confines; we don't restrict it to a problem space just because that's a discipline or a field. It grows wings.

This is part of a broader approach we take, which is that evidence must be convergent. We don't wait for formal academic evidence only. We weigh equally evidence from the field, from families, and First Nations perspectives.[2] We try to converge all those together. We aim to honour that knowledge is generated through many different systems and at many different scales. That is another piece.

Finally, I think the word research is being liberated, so it's not owned just by researchers, academia, or others. When I was thinking about where I felt I've had to step most outside of or do research in a different way and have been most beautifully surprised by it, I think of that day. It was quite profound in everything that day represented, from sitting there with the paint pots in a sandpit and trying to deconstruct, but also just the open-mindedness and everything that was there with those young people, to the handprints on my back. That's what I would like to see as becoming, Oliver.

Dylan: That's so beautiful, Fiona. Thank you. There's so much in that and it's sparkling and bubbling up for me. When Bayo was talking about how research needs to be transformed, it made me think of how research is just storytelling

---

[2] See McKenzie & Millar (2022); McKenzie et al. (2023).

and sophisticated and rigorous "story listening," weighted more on the listening than on carefully thinking about the storytelling. Your story also shows this kind of intimacy and tactile-ness of making knowledge together. I've written elsewhere, about this longing for "tactile-theories."[3]

Injairu and I have been exploring how to democratize research through a "call and response" process. It's about calling and responding in the same way that the traditions of singing in South Africa and Southern Africa are through call and response singing. We've written a paper around that on living, learning, and leading into transgressive research,[4] and we open that with the idea of this practice of singing, and calling and responding, which opens up a kind of 'collaborative-becoming' practice. It's ongoing, it's iterative, but at the same time, we're transformed in it. The music plays in us and shapes us. Our shared mentor Prof Heila Lotz-Sisitka, often shares the story that *Ben Okri* talks about the double-sided axe; that which you cut with also cuts you, and in the research, or the call and response, or the call and response, one can't help but be transformed by it, and changed in it. If one is not available for that change, then what kind of knowledge are we making and what kind of atrophies are we just setting in place?

The final thing that really jumped out for me is our work on the Tarot of Transgressive Research.[5] We've been involved in the Transgressive Learning[6] research network, trying to think about the needs for boundary crossing and how part of that call and response allows you to jump over things and across things and find entrances and exits between knowledges. In the tarot project, we looked at how researchers are having to rename themselves (co-conspirers, Indigenous allies, responsible participants, etc.). We're practitioners, we're more pracademics than anything. We've been mapping those ways in which researchers are changing their names and querying what the role of a researcher is, which I find really exciting.

Anthro-Milling and the Death Cycle: Lying Down with the Trouble

Bayo: I'd also like to add my coin in this. Well, I've screwed up my metaphors now! I'm not sure if I shared this with Megan the last time we spoke, but I'm very intrigued with an entomological phenomenon involving ants in a spiral. I

---

[3] See McGarry (2022).

[4] See Kulundu et al. (2020).

[5] See Temper et al. (2019).

[6] See https://transgressivelearning.org/

don't know if anyone has heard about this, ants going around in a circle. It's called a death spiral. Ants secrete pheromones and their pheromone trails. Sometimes, at least from our anthropological perspectives, an accident occurs. The pheromones loop on themselves and they go around in a circle. These circles have been observed to be as big as a stadium. Just ants marching in a circle for days in rain, sunshine, snow, whatever. They just keep going around for days. Another name for it is ant milling. Ant milling. And I often joke that they have motivational speakers urging them to keep on going, that they can make it, you can do it if you try or persist or something. They keep going round, hoping to arrive home, but they keep going round and they die in a circle. That's why it's called a death spiral. All of them infected by this trance just die. Does that remind you of something else? I'm sure it does. Us anthro-milling is what I call it. It's like there is a sense in which we keep going round and round, and something about this speaks to some of the habituated forms of knowledge-making and co-sensing that have innovated modern civilization, deeply.

I will use a phrase of a brutal humanism, the sense that we can stay still and just photographically capture the world around us. Right. This is the space where there is a lot of upheaval of sorts, inviting us to notice that knowledge is not capture. There is something deeply colonial and troubling about the idea of knowledge as capture—cognitive capture, even. *Knowledge is proprioceptive.* We have to move in order for the world to move alongside. There's no capture here. There's no stable image. Right? We move along with the world, right. And, in the words of Chinua Achebe,[7] Nigerian novelist, there is no moving the world. We have to move with the world at its own pace. So I guess what I'm trying to invite here, offer here, is this idea of knowledge as proprioceptive and leaning into what my brother Dylan just shared a while ago about the transgressions and transgressive knowledge. Black studies have, for a long time, situated knowing and knowledge in tandem with post-humanist, material, eco-critical, and feminist ideations of knowledge as fugitive. Alex Moulton[8] would speak about fugitive study, right? That is, outside of the circles of convergence that the university uses as its surplus value, offering credits in order to situate knowledge in that way. Outside of that seems to be the transgression.

The idea that knowledge cannot be centrally humanist. It may not even be tied so intricately with awareness. Maybe there is a sense in which not knowing is part of, at some molecular level, what knowing involves, or what research involves. The handprint on the back, Fiona, feels quite right. Like there's no way to articulate, or codify, or archive that, right? So what escapes the archive? What

---

[7] See Achebe (2002) https://artafricamagazine.org/a-luta-continua-the-world-is-dancing-a-masquerade-chinua-achebe-interviewed-by-ulli-beier/

[8] See Gross-Wyrtzen & Moulton (2023).

escapes the system? What spills away from the choreography of higher education feels to me like the call to transform research, to tether our understandings of the world in assemblages and firmaments that are beyond the human. Maybe the last thing I'll share, in keeping with Fiona's beautiful beginning, is this short story about what I think about as transformative research. I have an autistic son, and when he was three or four years old, he had a moment. We don't call it a meltdown. I'm a trained psychologist, but my wife has forbidden the use of terminologies like meltdown. We call it something like "the passing of a wild god." It's cumbersome, but it's quite appropriate to our situation here. So my son experienced that in a shopping mall in huge Chennai and I'm quite easily embarrassed in public, especially in India. There are racial dimensions to it as well. But I didn't want to be the Black guy who was having a screaming child next to him.

I tried my very best to cool him down, which was a horrible idea. I tried to persuade him to get to somewhere safe so I could address this, and it wasn't working. I was failing miserably. My wife, who is 10,000 times more intelligent and grounded than I'll ever be, saw what was happening. She made a beeline to me and said, "You know what? I think you should step away from this, and I'll handle this." So I walked away with my tail between my legs. She said nothing to my son, absolutely nothing. She did not try to persuade him or offer him hope. She just stayed next to him on the floor, lying down next to him on the floor, just a spectacular and scandalous disappointment to consumer politics right there in the middle of a shopping mall with a billion people looking. She just stayed right there, and people were walking around, wondering what was happening. My son was screaming, and she just stayed quiet. I looked from a few feet away and reminded myself that this is the politics I'm looking for. It has to be an autistic politics. It has to meander away, losing one's way in order to build new solidarities and strange new alliances with the more-than-human world, because we're stuck in that anthro-milling circle. Just wanted to add that.

Rupture, Witnessing and Coming to Our Senses

Injairu: I'm feeling myself reverberate from all of what's being offered here. This idea of stepping away from. I'm going to try and get to the heart of something that I've been sitting with ever since this invitation came, which feels like part of the story that came for me when you asked about ritual and world building. I kept thinking, what comes to mind? For me, around things that break the choreography and open up a different kind of politics, what came to mind is a wedding that I went to in Kenya. Weddings, of course, are rituals we are very familiar with. This was an invitation we got from our neighbor. She said they're inviting a bride into their home, and they would love for everybody in the community to come, to stand as the family of the groom, while welcoming the bride. We all know how to play this role. Everybody went to their stations and looked for beautiful big outfits. There's also a particular kind of pride that comes with being the family of the groom. If marriage could be construed as a zero-sum

game—in a patriarchal society—it's mostly the family of the groom who feel like they are winning. It's a funny thing because even the musician at the wedding was composing music, trying to tease the bride, saying, "Take your time, my dear. Take your time, my dear. We are the winners. Welcome home."

But this was a very interesting moment because we all knew the choreography of a wedding invitation, but what ensued was something really spectacular and different. As soon as we got into the space, to cut a long story short, the father of the groom stepped forward in front of his son and asked him for forgiveness. He said, "Please forgive me for anything that I ever said or anything I've ever done to you that has had an impact on you, consciously or subconsciously. Any words that have landed, any time that I hit you, any resentment, any pain I unintentionally caused you, please, please forgive me." The father, this huge stature of a man, fell to his knees and cried at his son's feet to ask for forgiveness. Then the mother came and said, "My son, please forgive us for anything we ever did that has not sat well with you, any hidden resentments, anything you thought we needed you to be. Please, please forgive us." We were all sitting there in a circle. It was a very interesting space because we all came for this wedding, thinking we knew what our role was going to be. And then we had this completely deconstructed moment where a sense of intergenerational transmissions, the parents humbly came to a space of thinking, "Okay, our role as parents, we've had difficult moments. And we want to ask for the space for that to be cleansed and cleared for you. So that when you step into this space with your bride, with your hopes, that you're cleared of all of that."

It was such an emotional crack, an emotional crack in all the status and stuff that we do and all the choreography that we know. It completely changed who we were in that moment and what we were witnessing. We were all there to open up a new trajectory for this young couple, and her family was there too. All the protocols and everything just got completely smashed in that moment. I felt like there was something so powerfully transgressive about that moment. I feel like when we talk about transgressive research, transformative research, I long for the moments where things really flip the script in that way. Just happen in a way that it changes what we think we're doing. I think, for me, this links with these wonderful moments that you're speaking about, Fiona, and even the incidents that you're speaking about in the mall, Bayo—that it holds something of this kind of rupture.

Ioan: Maybe I could come in at this point. It's been great to hear all of your experiences and your thoughts. There's so much complementarity in that as well. What I'm loving is the different words we're using from the different contexts we've got, but also the complementarity in all of that. I had the privilege of listening first, so I'm going to try and summarize where I think I've got to in this conversation and listening to you all. The first is to take us back to why we are having this conversation. I think we're having this conversation because we're frustrated with the conventional modes of what we might call research. I'm not even sure I like the word research at all anymore. In a sense, then, we could

think about operating research in a world of transformation. The world is transforming. The old patterns are no longer suitable for what is happening around us. In that world, we can think of research in broadly three terms. We could be doing research on transformation, research for transformation, or we could be doing transformative research.

Research on transformation brings in the conceptual foundations that underpin most of traditional science, social science, and so on, which is that we stand from the outside looking in. So that's observing the transformation and trying to infer something from that. The second, research for transformation, might be where I see a lot of transdisciplinary researchers. They try to support action in some form by changing what their role is as a researcher, becoming a facilitator. I do quite a lot of that work as well. It can be very helpful. But what I'm hearing is that we're talking about something quite different, which is this real sense of where the researcher is what is transformed, that then allows something else to then happen and take shape around it.

Let's put that into context then. If we think about our dominant modes, let's call them formal knowledge institutions—universities, research institutes, that sort of thing—they're part of the world around us, part of the old pattern problem. That's been mentioned in terms of talking about certain forms of education that might bring. As researchers, we operate in ways that mean we are usually just re-producing these kinds of institutions and how they function, leading to the same kinds of more traditional modes of research. It goes back to the milling of the ants idea expressed earlier. So somehow, we have to step out of it. What I find in universities is that we are tied into it, and it's very hard to disentangle from it. It's almost impossible, I think. Given that Universities represent a particular mode of understanding about what constitutes knowledge and how we know, then I don't think these formal institutions—like universities—will survive in their current form. That is, because they represent an old pattern that is increasingly less fit for our fast changing world.

So what then—for me—is really key is that our universities don't capture the wider realities and ways people relate to and experience the world. You can make of that of what you like, but there might be multiple realities from different cultures and different experiences and very different ways one might experience the world, such as the experience of time or change. For example, some might understand that there can be *futures* in our present or multiple quantum dimensions. This completely changes how one walks in, or navigates, the world around them. What are the realities for the ants—mentioned earlier—for example. What are the realities of non-humans as well as humans? Universities don't seem to be able to capture the essence of those wider realities and the opportunities they bring for supporting transformational changes for individuals and society.

If I summarize what I'm then hearing from others, the transformative research is then a process of enabling a researcher—and again, I don't like the word

researcher in that, but I don't have a better word at the moment—to transform, to be transformed themselves. To me this includes building opportunities to experience these multiple realities and radically shift one's experience of how you can *be* in the world.

We heard that in Fiona's explanation of her experience, the child when they're unleashed, when they're just being children, for example, and some of the other experiences you all talked about. So, something about this way of being and this experiencing of these multiple realities. What I'm hearing from that, as well, is that it has a deep *experiential* component. It's not a cognitive process in the normal academic sense that we have in universities. For me, learning to be differently in the world through experiencing different realities is a felt process.

This is what I call "coming back to our senses." As you develop capacity to explore further different realities, then you also learn to come to that as a whole synaesthetic feeling—a multi-sensorial experience—within a wider set of connections that are around us. It's beyond being cognitive. If we're just relying on the cognitive, we're not going to think our way out of the challenges we now face in the world. We have to come back to our senses and be much more than just a cognitive being.

For me, also, what I'm hearing and picking up is this notion that it a personal transformation then is ultimately an identity shift, an existential shift. In a world undergoing transformation, questions arise such as "Who am I at the end of the world as we know it?" or "How can I experience a different set of realities that continue to dramatically reshape how I operate and be in the world?" There's an element of going beyond cognitive, a felt sense, being able to experience the multiple realities beyond our confines of what we are and who we think we are.

What does this then mean for universities? The notion of the transformation for a researcher—a shift stimulated by powerful transformational experiences that lead to changes in sense of identity and purpose—then have to permeate, somehow, into our formal systems and structures of which we're a part. There are no easy answers here, except to recognize that we all have a role to play in this.

I feel I've been fortunate to fall into and actively explore these different multiple realities. I've been engaging with shamanic practice for over 20 years and have been fortunate to work within many different cultures over this time, including in Australia—as I look in this conversation to our Australian colleagues—my practice has helped me engage in the experience of multiple realities out there. As an example, shamanic practice has two fundamental principles. The first is that everything has consciousness, whether it be a stone, the sky, the wind, an animal, whatever, it all has consciousness. In simple terms, that just means that everything is made of energy. We are not separate from that. We are part of it. The practice is then about honoring that consciousness and learning to engage with it, beyond a sense of self, beyond one's own reality that one creates. This

opens up—in a multi-sensorial way—our ability to let go of a sense of self and experience how we are a within a wider *whole*. The second underlying principle is that there are multiple realities out there that you can open up to and engage, and start to sense things in very different ways, including the other beings and consciousness that we may or may not be normally aware of. This is a process of opening one's sense of these other ways of understanding and being. For me it helps because I don't have to use my cognitive thinking and it gets me into feeling and sensing in a completely different way. That is liberating, and helps shape and reshape one's sense of identity or purpose in the world.

Deconstructing Certainties: Words and World-Making

Megan: There's something profound about not knowing for me. My early academic career was as an applied linguist, and that's when I learned how words are world-making and playing with language. We think we have such certainty with words and language, but we often don't know what we're talking about. I'm happy to improvise, even with the imposter syndrome, because when we create with language and understand how we look for certainty in language, we need to actually deconstruct our notions of certainty. This includes, as you were saying, the acknowledgment of multiple realities. We don't want to acknowledge multiple realities; we love our certainties, which we often construct through language. For me, being in South Africa, being exposed to multiple languages, living in France for nine years, and sometimes not knowing what on earth people were talking about, I felt quite happy with that because we often don't know what we're talking about. And it's just as well. The exploratory nature of this conversation is precisely what Oliver and I were trying to create.

My baptism of fire as an applied linguist was being shoved into a medical faculty and told to sort out (second language) students' language problems. To teach students academic literacy so they could fit in at the Nelson Mandela School of Medicine (where Steve Biko studied): an all-Black faculty in an all-white university. That's when I learned to fiddle with everything. The moment I shifted from "solving the problem of under-prepared/disadvantaged students" and engaged with staff in curriculum transformation, and deconstructed curriculum knowledge in a problem-based program (where people were not able to teach their discipline-based knowledge), we created a learning environment. Staff had to understand that most of the students had consulted traditional healers, *Sangomas*, shaping their worldview. Yes, they were going to become doctors. Why did they then have to dismiss lived experience? That just opened my eyes, and the 15 specialists I was working with went on a journey where they said, "My God, I thought I knew how to teach. I realized I've had absolutely no idea what it means to enable people to learn." It wasn't a relativist understanding of knowledge. It was understanding how you come to know and engage with the knowledge-making process, the meaning-making, sense-making process that is transformative. Everyone was transformed. In the early '90s, that was my experience. You can dismantle, deconstruct things that appear to be deeply

certain. A lot of it is fiddling with language, being very intentional and playful at the same time with language. Words are world-making.

> **Sangomas**
>
> Sangomas are highly respected traditional healers and practitioners of traditional African medicine in Southern Africa. They fulfill different social and political roles in the community like divination, healing physical, emotional, and spiritual illnesses, directing birth or death rituals, finding lost cattle, protecting warriors, counteracting witchcraft and narrating the history, cosmology, and concepts of their tradition.

Fugitivity

Bayo: Can I piggy back here Megan? My point here is about something you said about the shamans, Megan, with the people that you worked with. The Yoruba healers and priests would say that knowledge isn't just something neat, it's to be met by the world in return. If there is a sense of mutuality here, it's to meet, but it's also to be met. It's to encounter and be encountered. Or as Barad would put it, it's how bodies introduce themselves to each other, right? How the mouth introduces itself to food. It doesn't even require consciousness for knowledge to be a thing.

Maybe I'll just tag a few points along to this consideration, that qualitative research has actually done some good work in situating the researcher as part of the research. So that doesn't feel new to explore. Qualitative research, of course, is deeply suspicious of every objective account of reality, as if it were outside of our formulations and constructions, to some extent, and I think it constructs this as critical reflexivity, bringing the researcher into the research process.

But to some extent, that doesn't also feel enough for the moment we're in—my brother was talking about, the end of the world as we know it. That doesn't feel adequate to the world, because critical reflexivity can still leave us navel-gazing, still stuck on ourselves and our processes. There's something that feels deeply shamanic, that bursts you out of the vortices of the self, of dissociation, that seems implied in what we mean by transgressive. And I just love the terms transgressive, even to transformational, because transformation has been used ad nauseum. So critical reflexivity feels like a way to go, but it doesn't also feel enough. I think this is why Elizabeth St. Pierre[9] has been articulating post-

---

[9] See St. Pierre (2021).

qualitative research. That's another thing to consider alongside what we're talking about.

But the other part is inclusivity—it is also to be bracketed right there. There is a lot of work around including and inclusion. I know my siblings here have spoken about sustainability and inclusion, but across the Global South specifically, I think there is a sense in which we think about inclusion as populating already extant fields of reality. We're populating already baseline realities, dragging people into a gentrified, gilded space where the only politics is one of access. So we can only bring you in. There's nothing else to be done outside of this circle. There is a sense of just giving you a seat at the table. This is where power is situated. As much as we need representation and diversity, even though the idea of diversity and equity and inclusion has been hijacked by Google and giant corporations, and they have departments for that, as much as we need that, there's a sense that we need to explore, we need to roam away from that convergence to which the shibboleth is inclusion.

Maybe the last point I'll make is I'm very privileged to be part of unlearning communities around the world and consider myself a public intellectual in this, where I'm testing, along with others, this idea of the transgressive or what I call post-activism or ontological fugitivity or sensorial mutiny. The aesthetics of the words is around breaking away from the plantation of knowing that has been endemic to the human or the anthropos. We have this course called *We Will Dance With Mountains*.[10] Part of the course has been this hybridized approach, a very thorough line of pedagogy, running through it for three months, a thousand to two thousand people, and online.

For six years we've been doing this. Recently we started to feel that the conference format is dying, and I'm not sure if everyone else is feeling that. But there are even some papers exploring how Zoom is becoming really exhausting. There's this frontal assault that is debilitating, and people are no longer able to learn. It seems this way. So I started to explore the idea of the carnivalesque. There's a lot of Caribbean writing and literature around para-pedagogies, right? The sidling knowledges, the sideways. I call it crustacean complicities, pardon me, because the crustacean, the crab, walks sideways. So what are the other ways, the sidling logics that are invested with energy that we can explore?

So next year, we are simultaneously in six geopolitical zones around the world. We are running carnivals at the same time for a month, where people will cook on the streets, where grandmothers will tell stories, where priests and healers will meet people. It's our way of responding to the crisis of racial injustice and climate chaos. But the idea is, are there other fungal networks that we can stimulate and ignite? It's not about preaching to power as if power were some

---

[10] See https://www.dancingwithmountains.com/

stable thing, but it's about sitting with and within the cracks and listening with big ears to what the world wants to tell us and learn with us.

Of Shamans and Sangomas: Making as Tactile Theorizing

Dylan: I desperately want to say something and I'll be quick. I'm very grateful that the shamanic thought or that Sangomas have entered this conversation. I've just come back from two weeks of performing our latest play for Empatheatre,[11] and we've been working for the last two years with a group of 13 young activists, six of whom are young Sangomas and one, Mbali, is a sixth-generation prophetess. In this project they are facing and transgressing issues experienced by displaced communities up and down KwaZulu Natal, who were forcibly removed from their land during apartheid for conservation, mining, tourism, or agriculture, and they've won a land claim to go back to their land. But there's now fortress conservation there, so they actually can't access it. There's a lot of corruption and power, and new monarchies were set up by the colonial government while the original monarchies are living in poverty. It's a very complex, messy situation. Added to it is that these young Sangomas, in the process of Ayothwasa,[12] all experienced sexual violence from their Sangoma teachers, so it's no longer safe to go to some of their elders in their community. There's also human trafficking up there that's got really bad and is conflated with the muti trade,[13] which is a medicine trade, but in northern KZN it sometimes involves human body parts. It's quite dangerous up there. So this young group has been trying to realise and remake the traditions of initiating as a Sangoma, because it's no longer safe to do it the traditional way.

When you, Bayo, saw your wife lie with your son and thought about autistic knowledge guiding us, and Erin Manning's work around the *anarchive,*[14] what I

---

[11] Empatheatre is a research-based theatre-making methodology. See https://www.empatheatre.com/

[12] Ayothwasa is the Zulu term used to encapsulate a suite of processes that are unique; however, for some traditional healers or diviner initiates ukuthwasa requires a spiritual journey, much like a hero's journey. Yet its path is not predictable or easily described, and is shrouded in much secrecy and mystery. Usually, the initiate is believed to travel under the water, often taken there by their ancestors (Bernard, 2003; McGarry, 2023).

[13] For further discussion, see https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2008/BP011HumanTraffickingfortheRemovalofOrgans.pdf

[14] "The anarchive is not something "we" do. It is something that catches experience in the making. It is something that catches us in our own becoming." See http://erinmovement.com/goat-island-anarchive

love about what she offers us is that making is a form of thinking, a form of theorizing.[15]

Working with and watching—*wit(h)nessing*—these young people make this play, create tactile theories of their lives, re- telling and surfacing the last 200 years of history from their perspective, in their own language, being with the trouble of that place, I see their brave stepping out of, or rupturing of the anthromill. Becoming fugitive from the 'white-mans' telling of their history. What you were describing Bayo, about these new communities, these carnivals. We've been doing something similar, in last two weeks touring this play, with over 2000 audience members who've experienced displacement, and then these post-show tribunals after the play. People just don't leave after the show. They stay for up to two hours after, just discussing, sharing, offering testimonies, storytelling. There's a new kind of—well, not new, I think it's quite ancient—a return to realizing that cultures are never static and that traditions of storytelling and place-making have always been there. Of course there are dangers of romanticizing shamanic practice, as something wild and lost far away, but actually these practices are always under constant construction, making in their time, never based on an opening shot, always iterative.

In *!Xam, San* and *Khoi Khoi* tradition, it's called a *dwaal* story, a wandering story, which always continues, and iteratively expands. It's never ending. It's actually Afrikaans, but it's a creolization of Dutch, Flemish, Malay, and some San/Khoi Khoi words created by enslaved peoples in the Cape Colony. So a dwaal is this idea of a wandering but I also like how it sounds like the English to "dwell"—dwelling in our wandering stories.

It also reminds me of *Vikalp Sangam*[16] or confluence of alternatives in India, which was so transgressive, creating "containers of care"[17] containers to be together for things, but they were always making something. The thing we've missed, as Ioan said, about getting out of the cognitive in shamanic work, is that no matter what shaman you meet, the line between artists and shamans is blurry; they're always making something. What are we making? What is the tactile theory that we can feel and touch, like that paint handprint on our back? What marks is it leaving in the world? On one side, we're escaping the spiral, but we must also remember the ways in which some communities are starting to spiral because they've been poisoned by other systems. Like these young people can no longer trust their shamans. They've had to create their own shamanic

---

[15] See Manning (2016).

[16] See https://vikalpsangam.org/

[17] See Martin (2022).

practice, initiate each other, and build a whole new social tissue. Watching what young people are doing in situations like that is so full of opportunity.

The Production of Knowledge: A Graveyard of Findings

Ioan: Thanks, Dylan. I really liked that excellent explanation of your experience. It's a powerful story to tell about how we're trying to escape one element, but we can't just go back to the old. What it made me think about was this: it's a bit of a cliche, but in research, we're often thinking about the production of knowledge. That's the usual assumed purpose—that we have to generate more knowledge— when actually what we need now in the world is much more wisdom about how to act. Again, it's a bit of a cliche, but if you go back to Aristotle 2000 years ago, he gave us a really clear indication of that with his explanation of *practical wisdom*. This includes epistemic knowledge, the abstract cognitive stuff that massively dominates our universities. Plus, there's techne, which is an embodied forms of knowledge. An example is driving a car or riding a bicycle, which involves an embodied knowledge which you don't have to think about. It's not conscious. Then in addition to episteme and techne, there is phronesis, the knowledge about what makes a good or right end. One can drive a car for nefarious or very honourable ends. Those three things—episteme, techne and phronesis—together make practical wisdom or a wise person.[18] I think your example, Dylan, is the search for a way to practice and find wisdom in that combination of things, all those three kinds of knowledge, ways of knowing.

I think that comes back again to the existential shift that we're looking for, the sense of identity and purpose of what we're doing. Is it about the production of ever more knowledge about social and biophysical phenomena, or is it about the wisdom about how to act in a world? And that, to me, is a fundamental and powerful distinction.

Michelle: First of all, I really wanted to thank you because this morning when I got up, I really thought that this would not be a good day. But I'm really moved because I cannot remember the last time when we were sharing so openly, and people were so open to sharing stories and experiences. I found this thought really freeing, that it's not about coming to terms with something. I think sometimes in this ratio of productivity, and there was a lot of talk now about products, it's so interesting what we assume as being products. Someone said they even don't like the word research anymore. I thought it was really fascinating because I would totally agree. I don't like what research has become, seeing this especially with emerging or young researchers, where whatever the words are that are being used are mostly just not matching these bright people.

---

[18] See Caniglia et al. (2023).

It's so hard to hear from some of them, "I would love to do research, I would love to have an academic career, but I don't want to have it in this context. I don't want to adhere to these feelings of having to constantly feel like not being enough, not meeting criteria, not being sure where I'll be in half a year because there's this project and that project, and we never have time to really follow up and make sense of the projects that are there."

Bayo, you also mentioned the end of the conference. I'm mentioning this because you said, it's always this graveyard of findings. We have these Erasmus projects, for example, within the European Community. You have a high number of projects, they call them intellectual outputs, which in itself is already a really fascinating thing. They are just being uploaded somewhere and they are available. But still, somehow, for me, it's kind of a graveyard. You have to have those meetings, they are called multiplier events, transnational project meetings, you have to provide lists and stuff, and sometimes I just really wonder where is the life in that? People are engaged for those three days, but what happens then? It's a framework we have to feed into. I guess most of us don't want to but we know we don't have much of an alternative. So it was really nice to actually know that it's probably okay not to come to those terms and thinking beyond is just really liberating for me.

Now, discussing what is a valid product and how can we actually work with these, and how can we celebrate these? I really like the carnival idea a lot. Also, what Dylan said about the stories or the sharings of these young people. I mean, we don't have the tools to celebrate those or to make them available and add to our critique about what is going on. Sometimes I think our ways of communicating to the world are so limited. Even if journal outputs are open access, they might not be available to many people, given gaps in availability to the internet. I mean, we know all that. And the question, who owns those products in the end? I think it's coming back to this terminology of intellectual outputs. It's so important to consider what is a valid product.

Being Met by Other Worlds

Injairu: Yeah, I'm digesting, metabolizing a lot. I feel like I'm not sure I have words for what's being gathered here in me, the feeling of it. To do the kind of work that has the courage to veer off and be met in other ways, it almost feels like the subject of the conversation can often be what we're doing. But for me, I'm sitting with the visceral feeling in my body of the pain and the stripping and the shedding skins of the deprogramming work that allows us to step into and be met by these other worlds. I guess it's got to do with the unlearning. When you were speaking about these young Sangomas now teaching themselves, creating other initiatives, creating other rites of passage for them to belong, I'm struck by the beauty and the fragility of that space. It feels very tender, breaking open…what it takes to break open, and to really appreciate the seductiveness of the death march that still continues.

This is a big part of the work—we're being worked open in a way, and I just wanted to honor the way it feels in the body. It's not a safe space, and we can be so easily entrained to want to be received by the exact same systems that can never see or conceive of this weird other way of being. The courage, like that image of your partner laying next to her son, the courage to stay. I want to stay with that and talk more about being in that narrow space. So when we speak about the researcher being transformed in ways that we change what the subject is, it feels important to just sit with this shivering thing that we're doing.

Oliver: This is so beautiful, Injairu, and everyone. Thank you deeply. The sheer synchronicity of threads woven together in so many different expressions from so many different cultural backgrounds. Maybe to add one piece into that assemblage, connecting a bit to what Bayo mentioned about the field of inclusion, this idea of populating these baseline realities, the shibboleths of inclusion.

When I look at my own biography up until now, it has always been about spaces and places and gatherings of people labeled as populating the margins where I felt at home, where I felt at ease with laying off my mask and just being. The endeavor I'm working on and becoming with currently is this idea or this notion of trying to not deconstruct but to invert inclusion. It's in these other spaces, these subaltern spaces, places populated by freaks, by crips, where so much about these qualities, Ioan, that you talked about—techne, phronesis, episteme— are lived and embodied. So much can be learned when we are the ones who get re-invited to that table and are afforded the opportunities to partake in the inverting of these dynamics. I'm currently fascinated by a range of concepts to reimagine time, of crip time or cripping-time, of subtle shifts in our perception of time, of being together, about attending to and being curious about what will emerge in such spaces. Together with a group of self-advocates we are currently giving ourselves the permission of engaging in what nowadays is often framed as slow-research, of taking time to getting to know one another, of attending to every emerging issue with utmost care and attentiveness. And the amazing thing of it never feeling like time that is lost, time that is not spent effectively, but rather like something is being built up and being held collectively. So much that I heard today and that I got inspired by is making me think about where and how we can make these ephemeral acts visible, these feeling qualities, these being qualities, these qualities of solidarity truly lived.

Crip time and Cripping Time

Crip time and cripping time are two non-normative concepts to alter relationships to linear, chronological time, development, and progress, based on the lived realities and experiences of people with disability and chronic illness. Crip time acknowledges and accommodates the unique time-related needs arising from these conditions, such as additional time required for daily tasks due to mobility challenges or fatigue. Cripping time takes this further by actively reshaping conventional timelines and

schedules to prioritize these needs, rather than trying to fit disabled bodies into a rigid, ableist time structure (Kafer, 2013). Committing to crip time based on radical care can significantly impact both individuals and academic communities. For researchers, particularly those engaged in reworlding research, embracing crip time allows for a more inclusive and realistic exploration of human experiences. It challenges the fast-paced, productivity-focused norms of neoliberal-capitalist societies and academia by emphasizing the importance of rest, personal well-being, taking-time, and the rejection of ableist pressures. Such a commitment holds the potential to not only transform research practices but also to promote broader cultural shifts towards recognizing and valuing diverse experiences of time and of being in and making worlds.

Breaking the Trance: Post-Humanist Imaginations

Bayo: Maybe I'll just offer some thoughts that are springing up. I was just thinking about the milling again and one of the ways that I often explore how the trance is broken, because my work is along the lines of other scholars that I respect, is how to create emancipation openings within enclosures. I'm quite intrigued by that, which calls upon post-humanist imaginations.

The ants rarely break out of the trance. They hardly ever do. But there's been one way observed for ants to break out, and that's by infection. An ant is infected by a fungus called Cordyceps unilateralis, which invades the ant's body and hybridizes it, so it's no longer an ant and it's no longer fungus. It's something in between, not quite nameable. Because of that, the ant strays away from whatever trance it's in. It breaks away from its circle because it's no longer an ant, and then it goes somewhere and creates this Lovecraftian art, with monstrous forms sprouting out of its head.

This reminds me that we're not doing art, we *are* the art form of other critters. This is an invitation to be the art, being syncopated by the world in this way. I think this is especially meaningful to say because, at some level, we are all here, maybe, as Ioan pointed out, also because the prospects of AI technologies like Sora and ChatGPT are similarly modifying the space of intellectual work and art and deepening the idea of knowledge products. My sister Michelle was speaking to that a while ago, that it has to look a certain way to be considered knowledge, coalescing around the sense of the master sense.

I call it the plantation sense, where visuality is the chief sense of modern civilization. Everything is coalescing and convening here with Apple Vision Pro and all of that. I wonder about the changes and transformations already taking place that force us to revisit not just who the researcher is, but the morality that informs research and what already is implied in what we do when we say we're exploring what's real. I think right now, reality is a distraction, and maybe it's time to depart and to formulate new ethical sensibilities, other ways of being in the world, while accepting that we have never been the masters of intelligence.

That is summarily implied when we say, that's artificial intelligence and we are the natural intelligences. I think there is a sense we have to face our hubris in noticing that no, we don't have intelligence, and intelligence is a post-humanist territoriality that enlists bodies of all kinds. And we have never been the owners of this quality, so we are at a loss. We are like the children in ritual who return home and there's no one to receive them. We have to create, like the young Sangomas, and I'm really happy to be creating alongside you.

Fiona: There's so much in that question of intelligence. I think the AI question is just that. It happened the other day for a project where there's a way I like to go through and work through my interviews and transcripts, and do all the sense-making and creating, and someone said to me, "Just whack it into ChatGPT." That orientation to product—knowledge as product, as opposed to process—loses the creating which is found in the doing. I wonder if that means we have a moral obligation to really be thinking much more deeply about how we're framing intelligence and artificial intelligence, but also the idea that intelligence isn't only a human domain either. So there's all of that and there is a piece as well about departing realities. There's something really in that breaking away, that breaking from trance. I love the idea of infection. I'm looking for the wild gods I think, so it's something in this conversation that's really liberating. But I think there are some really serious challenges here. As I said before, a lot of this is not welcome. There is a lot of resistance. We are a couple of little ants. So how do we do that infecting that we need to do, or is it immunization maybe? I don't know. It's more of a question. I just feel a little bit troubled as well. I've really loved this conversation, but I also feel a bit troubled by it, too.

Ioan: I think for me, my natural modernist tendency is to go back and say, well, okay, what do I do with this, if anything? Do I need to do anything? I think that comes back to me in the reality that we are in a massive change. And I regularly, probably about eight times a day, ask myself, how can I support the systemic changes that we need, rather than just stand and watch. And I don't know the answer to that. I continuously verge between wanting to act in some way and then also going, well, this is what it is. So, is it then about how one transforms oneself to just become part of the shift? A lot of Indigenous cultures will say we're in the 'great culling.' And we know that to create something new, we have to allow things to die first. So, at what level does one simply accept that we are just in the collapse of the old system?

For me, this conversation has been helpful because I think it's actually added to my sense that our current knowledge, formal knowledge institutions, are not going to make it. They're increasingly becoming irrelevant. I was talking last year to a CEO of quite a large philanthropic organization whose trustees say, "don't touch the universities with a ten-foot barge pole because we are not interested in action". The costs for me operating through a University to do research are astronomical. When we put a bid together its super expensive. So this raises questions about—in a world of massive change—is our University-based, expensive research inappropriate and even unethical, and partly because

what we are often doing is perpetuating and reinforcing the systems that aren't working. By doing research in our current form, are we just propping institutions up that are going to eventually fail?

So the question then is, what do I do with this and how do I personally take responsibility for, and ownership of the problem? I think it's confirmed and added to my sense that there's a limit to what I'm going to be able to do in the current institutions that I'm in, and that just means I have to accelerate my focus on other activities that I feel are meaningful. The other thing it has reminded me to do is to try and bring my senses more into some of the conversations I can help lead, despite the very busy world of being a senior manager in a department with a large workload. This conversation has just reiterated that we are living in a weird and crazy world of continued efforts to keep a sinking boat afloat. What are we doing? What's our purpose? We're not stopping to step back and say, why are we doing what we're doing? We're doing it just to sustain the systems that are increasingly no longer working.

Oliver: Thank you. Looking back at our time together, I won't even try to synthesize. Ioan, thank you for having done that; that was great. I feel deep gratitude for our time together.

Megan: I express my deep gratitude to all of you for accepting the invitation. In preparing for today, Oliver and I went into our usual inductive process of, "Well, of course, we're not going to define transformative research. Who would, and who would want to?" So we said, "Well, how are we going to work it inductively?" What are these emergent phenomena that we're seeking to uncover through our (research) practices? How do we not productize them? How do we not domesticate them? How do we not appropriate them? How do we not colonize them in turn, but call them something else? I fully appreciate the provocations that we've offered to one another.

References

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning.* Duke university Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv12101zq

Bernard, P. S. (2003). Ecological implications of water spirit beliefs in Southern Africa: The need to protect knowledge, nature, and resource rights. *USDA Forest Service Proc. RMS*, *27*, 148–153. https://media.tracks4africa.co.za/users/files/w386028_1755.pdf

Braidotti, R. (2023). Affirmative ethics, new materialism and the posthuman convergence. In G. di Capua, & L. Oosterbeek (Eds.), *Bridges to global ethics: Geoethics at the confluence of humanities and sciences* (pp. 93–108). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-22223-8_7

Caniglia, G., Freeth, R., Lüderitz, C., Leventon, J., West, S. P., John, B., Peukert, D., Lang, D. J., von Wehrden, H., Martín-López, B., Fazey, I., Russo, F., von Wirth, T., Schlüter, M., & Vogel, C. (2023). Practical wisdom and virtue ethics for knowledge co-production in sustainability science. *Nature Sustainability*, *6*(5), 493–501. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-022-01040-1

De la Cadena, M., & Blaser, M. (2018). *A world of many worlds*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478004318-001

Gross-Wyrtzen, L., & Moulton, A. A. (2023). Toward 'fugivity' as method'. An introduction to the Special Issue. *ACME, 22*(5), 1258–1272. https://doi.org/10.7202/1107308ar

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11cw25q

Kafer, A. (2013). *Feminist, queer, crip*. Indiana University Press.

Kothari, A., Salleh, A., Escobar, A., Demaria, F., & Acosta, A. (2019). Crisis as opportunity: Finding pluriversal paths. In E. Klein, & C. E. Morreo (Eds.), *Postdevelopment in practice* (pp. 100-116). Routledge.

Kulundu, I., McGarry, D. K., & Lotz-Sisitka, H. (2020). Think piece: Learning, living and leading into transgression–A reflection on decolonial praxis in a neoliberal world. *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education*, *36,* 111–130. 10.4314/sajee.v36i1.14.

Manning, E. (2016). Ten propositions for research-creation. In N. Colin, & S, Sachsenmaier (Eds.), *Collaboration in performance practice: Premises, workings and failures* (pp. 133–141). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137462466

Martin, A. (2022). Tidal pools as containers of care. *Ellipses Journal of Creative research*, *4.* https://ellipses2022.webflow.io/article/tidal-pools-as-containers-of-care

McGarry, D. (2022). Suitably strange: Re-imagining learning, scholar-activism, and justice. *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*, *10*(1), 93–115. https://doi.org/10.14426/cristal.v10i1.511

McGarry, D. (2023). When ancestors are included in ocean decision-and meaning-making. In T, Shefer, V. Bozalek, & N. Romano (Eds.), *Hydrofeminist thinking with oceans* (pp. 15–32). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003355199-2

McKenzie, F., & Miller, E. (2022). *Systems mapping report: Mapping the systems that influence early childhood development outcomes*. https://www.earlyyearscatalyst.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/EYC-Document-System-Mapping-Report-Aug-2022.pdf

McKenzie, F., Millar, E., Rogers, S., O'Sullivan, S., Martin, R., Machuca-Sierra, M., Enticott, Z., Barkley, E., Peterson, H., Moore, T., Fry, R., & Heery, L. (2023). *Evidence for action in the early years system: Assessing system leverage points.* Orange Compass, Centre for Community Child Health, Clear Horizon and Social Enterprise Finance Australia for the Early Years Catalyst. https://www.earlyyearscatalyst.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2-of-6-E4A-The-Approach.pdf

Rose, D. B. (2011). *Wild dog dreaming: Love and extinction*. University of Virginia Press.

St. Pierre, E. A. (2021). Why post qualitative inquiry? *Qualitative Inquiry, 27*(2), 163–166. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800420931142

Temper, L., McGarry, D., & Weber, L. (2019). From academic to political rigour: Insights from the 'Tarot' of transgressive research. *Ecological Economics*, *164*, 106379. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2019.106379

Further Reading from Dialogue Participants

Fazey, I., Bunse, L., Msika, J., Pinke, M., Preedy, K., Evely, A. C., Lambert, E., Hastings, E., Morris, S., & Reed, M. S. (2014). Evaluating knowledge exchange in interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder research. *Global Environmental Change, 25*, 204–220. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2013.12.012

Fazey, I., Hughes, C., Schäpke, N. A., Leicester, G., Eyre, L., Goldstein, B. E., Hodgson, A., Mason-Jones, A. J., Moser, S. C., & Reed, M. S. (2021). Renewing universities in our climate emergency: Stewarding system change and transformation. *Frontiers in Sustainability*, *2*. https://doi.org/10.3389/frsus.2021.677904

Fazey, I., Schäpke, N., Caniglia, G., Patterson, J., Hultman, J., van Mierlo, B., Säwe, F., Wiek, A., Wittmayer, J., Aldunce, P., Al Waer, H., Battacharya, N., Bradbury, H., Carmen, E., Colvin, J., Cvitanovic, C., D'Souza, M., Gopel, M., Goldstein, B., … Wyborn, C. (2018). Ten essentials for action-oriented and second order energy transitions, transformations and climate change research. *Energy Research & Social Science*, *40*, 54–70. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2017.11.026

Heigl, J., Müller, M., Gotling, N., & Proyer, M. (2022). Justice, what a dream!—Mapping intersections of sustainability and inclusion. *Sustainability*, *14*(9), 5636. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14095636

Kulundu-Bolus, I. (2023). On regenerative african futures: Sovereignty, becoming human, death, and forgiveness as fertile paradoxes for decolonial soul work. *Journal of Awareness-Based Systems Change*, *3*(2), 11–22. https://doi.org/10.47061/jasc.v3i2.6945

Kulundu- Bolus, I. (in press). Eclipsing the conditioning of colonial modernity: Soul-based learning as a practice of living mythology in transgressive learning. *NORRAG Special Issue 10: Education for Societal Transformation: Alternatives for a Just Future.*