



From Theory to Life Transformation – A Decade of the Inspiration Economy Theory tested through Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Lens – A Longitudinal Study

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Abstract

This paper presents a longitudinal analysis of the International Inspiration Economy Project (IIEP), examining how its theory and application have evolved over a decade (2015-2025) through the structured adoption of Multidisciplinary (MD), Interdisciplinary (ID), and Transdisciplinary (TD) thinking. Through a holistic review of IIEP's labs and publications, the paper demonstrates that these approaches are not merely complementary but form an essential, evolutionary pipeline for tackling complex socio-economic problems that helped to prove the importance of the inspiration currency in this world.

The analysis reveals that MD labs served to deconstruct problems like the War on Gaza and the COVID-19 pandemic, appreciating their full scope through distinct disciplinary lenses. ID labs, such as those forging the core Inspiration Economy theory, integrated economics, psychology, and sociology to generate novel hybrid frameworks. Finally, TD labs, including the Gaza Resilience Lab and Poverty Elimination Labs, engaged in co-creation with communities in Gaza, Syria, India and Africa to produce practical, sustainable, and directly impactful solutions. Buheji (2025e)

This study codifies the distinct purposes, approaches, and outputs of MD, ID, and TD labs within the IIEP, providing a replicable model for applied socio-economic research. The findings posit that the strategic progression from multidisciplinary analysis to interdisciplinary model-building, and finally to transdisciplinary co-creation, is a critical methodology for transforming abstract inspiration economy into tangible, community-owned change.

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1. Introduction

This paper is based on a longitudinal study that examines how the inspiration economy (IE) theory and its implementation through both projects (labs) and publications applied multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary thinking. Each of these types of thinking played a role in the development and implementation of IE theory in different fields (Buheji, 2021) ^[9]. The scale and interconnectedness of contemporary global challenges—from pandemics and poverty to climate change and armed conflict—defy solutions conceived within the silos of traditional academic disciplines (Shanableh *et al.*, 2022) ^[56]. Addressing these "wicked problems" requires integrative frameworks that can not only analyse complexity but also generate novel, actionable, and context-specific solutions (Buheji, 2020) ^[8].

This paper argues that the strategic application of Multidisciplinary (MD), Interdisciplinary (ID), and Transdisciplinary (TD) thinking provides such a framework, and it examines this proposition through the longitudinal case study of the Inspiration Economy Project. Realising this approach is seen as essential for solving complex, real-world problems like climate change and public health crises by developing practical, socially applicable solutions (Sharma and Zodpey, 2017) ^[58]. The author concludes that understanding these differences is key to fostering effective collaborations that address pressing global challenges.

Initiated in 2015, the International Inspiration Economy Project (IIEP) proposed a radical premise: that "inspiration" could be cultivated as a primary currency for development, capable of unlocking opportunities hidden within complex problems (Buheji, 2016) ^[3]. However, moving this abstract theory into the realm of tangible impact necessitated a robust methodological engine. This engine was the "lab" model—not a sterile, controlled environment, but a dynamic, real-world setting for collaborative problem-solving (Buheji, 2019) ^[7].

The multidisciplinary thinking Labs and papers helped to analyse the complex problem from multiple, distinct angles to appreciate its full scope and complexity (Shamsie, 2024) ^[57]. While the interdisciplinary Labs and papers integrated knowledge and methods to generate new frameworks, solutions, or even entirely new fields that did not exist before (Shamsie, 2024) ^[57]. Then, the transdisciplinary Labs and papers solved the complex real-world problems by co-creating solutions with society, ensuring they are practical, sustainable, and directly impactful (Shamsie, 2024) ^[57].

This paper is based on a longitudinal study that traces how the IIEP's theory and praxis were advanced through the deliberate application of MD, ID, and TD approaches. The researcher posits that these three modes of thinking formed a cohesive, evolutionary pipeline (Parrott and Kreuter, 2011) ^[54]. Multidisciplinary labs and publications first served to comprehensively analyse complex problems by assembling multiple, distinct disciplinary perspectives (Shamsie, 2024) ^[57]. This foundational understanding then enabled Interdisciplinary work, which integrated these disparate knowledge domains to generate new hybrid models and frameworks, most notably the Inspiration Economy theory itself (Buheji, 2016) ^[3]. Finally, Transdisciplinary labs operationalised these models by co-creating solutions directly with affected communities, ensuring their relevance, sustainability, and direct impact (Buheji, 2025) ^[17].

Through a holistic review of a decade of IIEP work, this paper codifies the evolutionary trajectory of the inspiration economy concept and content. It defined the distinct purpose and methodology of MD, ID, and TD labs within the inspiration economy context. It classifies and analyses specific labs and their associated publications to illustrate this typology. The paper demonstrates how this tripartite approach facilitated the evolution of the Inspiration Economy from a conceptual theory into a tested methodology for socio-economic change.

The vast portfolio of publications showcases the tangible outcomes of each approach in the inspiration economy. By documenting and analysing this decade-long journey, this study offers a replicable model for researchers, policymakers,

and practitioners seeking to bridge the gap between academic insight and transformative, real-world impact.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Development of the Inspiration Economy Concept and Theory

2.1.1. Transitioning from Abstract Theory to a Practical, Tested Framework

The Inspiration Economy (IE) Theory started as a conceptual model proposing that "inspiration" could be a currency and a driver for development, surpassing traditional financial metrics (Buheji, 2021) ^[9]. Since 2015, the labs have been the mechanism to test the conceptual model. The concept moved the theory from the page into practice. For example, the Poverty Elimination Lab didn't just theorise about alleviating poverty; it demonstrated how using "inspiration" and "non-financial wealth" (core concepts of the theory) could lead to the tangible elimination of poverty in specific communities like those in Mauritania, Morocco, Ghana, Sudan and Ghana. Each successful project became a case study that validated the theory's core principles, transforming it from an interesting idea into a proven methodology (Buheji, 2022; Buheji and Hasan, 2024; Buheji *et al.*, 2023) ^[10, 35, 39].

2.1.2. Capitalising on the Labs as a Tool for IE Theory

As part of its commitment to creating waves of advancements to different socioeconomic challenges, the IE theory used labs to show how it could turn conflicts, challenges, problems and failures into opportunities. A lab in this context is not a sterile academic space; it is a real-world setting where academics, community members, NGOs, and sometimes government actors collaborate. The IE lab is considered to be a process, not a result. When an IE lab is launched, it aims to bring in a pioneering role or initiative that creates a means for synergy between different specialities to tackle specific issues and bring creative solutions (Shanableh *et al.*, 2022) ^[56]. The founding institute (the International Institute of Inspiration Economy) (IIIE) has brought many labs since 2008, starting with this lab and then: Inspiration Lab, Youth Lab, Resilience Economy Lab, Ageing Economy Lab, Bosnia (Bihac) Development Lab, COVID-19 Untapped Solutions Lab, Gaza Resilience Lab, African Development Lab, Self-Sufficiency Lab, etc (Buheji, 2025) ^[14, 15, 18, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29]. These labs are constructed from projects, applied research, workshops, initiatives, exploratory visits, forums, and the publication of papers or case studies. Sometimes, these labs would have exhibitions and other means.

The introduction itself provides the foundational evidence: "Inspiration economy specialises in solving complex problems in various fields to exploit the inspiration currency that comes from opportunities found inside the problems. The outcome of this exercise is the establishment of inspiration currency, the spread of inspiration economy-based models, and the impact of inspiration economy in developing multidisciplinary approaches in the knowledge community" (Shamsie, 2024) ^[57]. Therefore, the IE theory puts a mission statement that explicitly calls for Multidisciplinary analysis and Interdisciplinary creation of IE-based models that would have an ultimate goal of solving real-world problems, which is the domain of Transdisciplinarity (Parrott and Kreuter, 2011) ^[54].

2.1.3. Generating and Defining the "Currencies of Inspiration"

A central tenet of the Inspiration Economy is that value is created through "currencies" other than money, such as knowledge, resilience, empathy, and curiosity. The labs served as discovery grounds for these currencies. By working in diverse fields (police work, children's development, women's development, pandemic response), the labs identified and documented specific "inspiration currencies" in action. For example, Police Inspiration Leaders Lab identified "Empathetic Engineering" and "Value-Based Policing" as critical currencies for transforming police-community relationships (Buheji, 2020) ^[8]. Women Development Lab explored "Inspiration Currencies in Women's Development Programs," shifting the focus from empowerment (an external grant) to development (an internal currency) (Buheji and Ahmed, 2018) ^[38]. Resilience Economy Lab and Gaza Resilience Lab defined "Resilience" itself as a tangible, buildable currency that communities can leverage in times of crisis (Buheji, 2018; Buheji, 2025) ^[5, 18]. The labs provided the empirical evidence for what these currencies are and how to cultivate them, fleshing out a critical, but initially abstract, part of the theory (Buheji and Ahmed, 2018) ^[38].

2.1.4. Evolving the "Problem-to-Opportunity" Model

The theory posits that chronic problems can be transformed into opportunities. The labs' five-stage framework (Introduction, Data Collection, Tackling, Piloting, Starting the Inspiration Project) is the operationalisation of this principle. Each lab was a live experiment in this transformation process. For instance, the COVID-19 Lab took a global "wicked problem" and systematically uncovered "untapped solutions" and opportunities in digital technology, remote education, and community self-sufficiency (Buheji, 2025) ^[26]. The publications from this lab directly show how a catastrophic problem was reframed into a source of innovation, strengthening the theory's problem-solving axiom. The Uncertainty Opportunities Lab is explicitly designed to test and demonstrate this core tenet, turning the abstract concept of "uncertainty" into a field for opportunity discovery.

2.2. Realising the Power of Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Thinking and Approaches

The Inspiration Economy Theory is inherently multidisciplinary, arguing that complex socioeconomic problems cannot be solved within siloed disciplines. The labs are the living proof of this. The labs forced the integration of fields. The COVID-19 Lab, for example, brought together doctors, economists, educators, and psychologists to create solutions that none could have developed alone. This successful application proved the theory's claim that multidisciplinary integration is not just beneficial but essential for modern problem-solving. It showed that "inspiration" emerges at the intersections of disciplines (Klein, 2008; Sulyman *et al.*, 2021) ^[50, 59].

2.2.1. Multidisciplinary Thinking

Multidisciplinary Thinking (MT) is meant to analyse a complex problem from multiple, distinct angles to appreciate its full scope and complexity. Experts from different disciplines work in parallel or sequentially, contributing their specific knowledge without necessarily integrating their methods or perspectives to create a new, unified approach.

2.2.2. Interdisciplinary Thinking

Interdisciplinary Thinking (IT) helps to integrate knowledge, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, or theories from two or more disciplines to create a new framework, solution, or hybrid field that did not exist before.

2.2.3. Transdisciplinary Thinking

Transdisciplinary Labs solve complex real-world problems by co-creating knowledge and solutions with society (including community members, NGOs, local leaders, etc.), ensuring they are practical, sustainable, and directly impactful. It transcends academic disciplines to include non-academic stakeholders as equal partners in the entire process (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2016) ^[44].

2.4. Purpose of Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, Transdisciplinary Lab

To foster collaboration across different fields of study, enabling innovative solutions to complex problems that cannot be addressed by a single discipline alone. Building on the previous definitions, the purpose of each type of lab reveals why they are established and what they aim to achieve. Their purposes range from gaining a richer understanding to solving complex real-world problems.

The Multidisciplinary Lab aims to analyse a complex problem from multiple, distinct angles to appreciate its full scope and complexity. The Interdisciplinary Lab aims to integrate knowledge and methods to generate new frameworks, solutions, or even entirely new fields that did not exist before. The Transdisciplinary Lab aims to solve complex real-world problems by co-creating solutions with society, ensuring they are practical, sustainable, and directly impactful.

2.4.1. Purpose of Multidisciplinary Lab (MD-Lab)

Multidisciplinary Labs bring in comprehensiveness to break down a complex problem, such as climate change, or poverty elimination, into its constituent parts: the atmospheric science, the economic impacts, the sociological effects, and the political challenges. Then, experts examine each part of the problem with their specialised tools. This means we need to see how different disciplines frame the same problem. This helps identify gaps, conflicts, and overlaps in understanding (Buheji, 2022) ^[10]. This means we need to create an environment where researchers become aware of and respect the contributions of other disciplines, even if they don't deeply integrate with them. The output is often a comprehensive map of a problem space, providing a solid foundation for deeper, more integrated work.

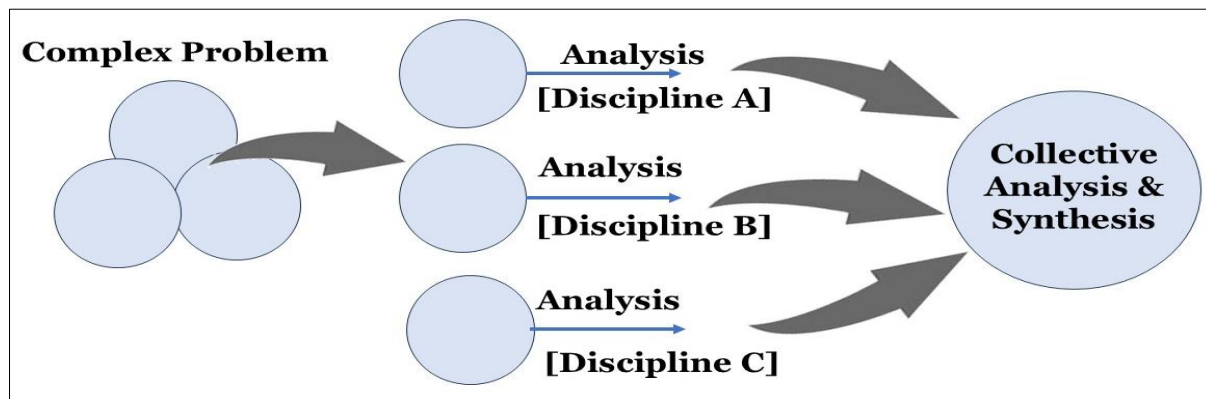


Fig 1: Multidisciplinary Thinking

2.4.2. Purpose of an Interdisciplinary Lab (ID-Lab)

The primary purpose of the interdisciplinary lab is innovation through synthesis. This starts by overcoming the limitations of a single discipline, tackling questions that cannot be answered by one field alone. To create novel methodology and theory, this type of lab would help to blend tools and concepts to create new ways of investigating the world. Many disciplines leading disciplines as neuroeconomics, behavioural economics, bio-informatics, and environmental humanities, are all born from interdisciplinary work (Hassoun *et al.*, 2025) ^[47]. To achieve a holistic understanding of any problem, we need to move beyond

separate perspectives to a unified model. Instead of just a medical and a psychological report on a patient, the lab aims to create a single, integrated biopsychosocial model of health (Sharma and Zodpey, 2017) ^[58]. This would also help build the next generation of integrative thinkers, besides researchers and professionals who are "bilingual" or "multilingual" in disciplinary languages and can work effectively at the intersections of fields. In essence, the interdisciplinary lab would combine our knowledge to create something new and more powerful than we could alone (Klein, 2008) ^[50].

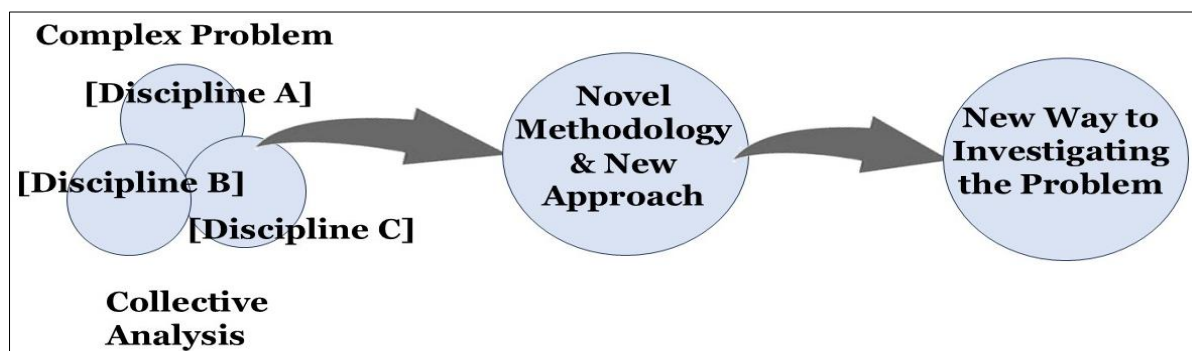


Fig 2: Interdisciplinary Thinking

2.4.3. Purpose of a Transdisciplinary Lab (TD-Lab)

The primary purpose of the transdisciplinary lab is to have a tangible impact through co-creation. Hence, co-creation can be seen when tackling "Wicked Problems" that are messy, or real-world challenges that are socially relevant, such as urban poverty, sustainable food systems, or public health crises (Sharma and Zodpey, 2017; Hassoun *et al.*, 2025) ^[58, 47]. These problems are embedded in societal contexts and cannot be solved in a lab isolated from that context. This requires breaking down the barrier between the "expert" and the "public." Its values lived experience as a form of expertise and involves stakeholders (community members, patients, farmers, policymakers) not as subjects, but as partners in the research process (Klein, 2008) ^[50]. To guarantee that the

outcomes of research are not just academically sound but also practical, acceptable, and sustainable for the people who need them, a sustainable farming technique developed with farmers is more likely to be adopted than one developed for them (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2016) ^[44]. Hence, through co-creation, collective social learning, and capacity building can enable all participants, including academics and non-academics, to learn from each other, building community capacity and creating a shared ownership of the solution. In essence, the purpose is to answer the question: "How can we work with society to jointly solve this pressing problem and achieve a measurable, positive impact?" (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2016) ^[44].

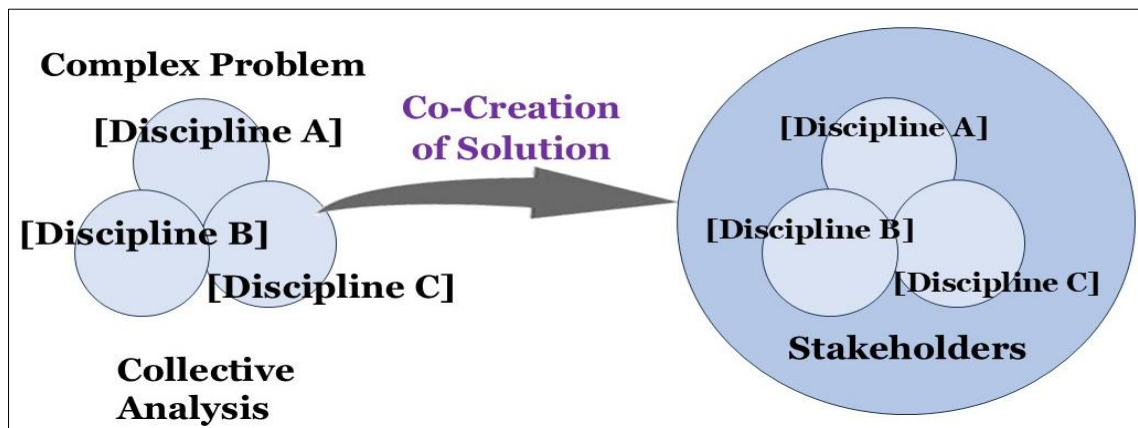


Fig 3: Transdisciplinary Thinking

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3. Methodology

Based on the comprehensive, holistic review of ten years of work of the International Inspiration Economy Project (IIEP), since its initiation in September 2015, the author self-assesses the depth of the socioeconomic advancement approaches made through the Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary approaches and thinking.

The approaches initiated by IIEP labs and publications are explored for their capacity to for true and clear evolution from Multidisciplinary approaches towards more integrated Interdisciplinary and then Transdisciplinary models, which are important in tackling real-world problems.

Since this study employs a retrospective, longitudinal case study analysis of the (IIEP) from its inception in 2015 to 2025, it is designed on a comprehensive, holistic review and qualitative self-assessment of the project's decade-long portfolio to trace the evolution and application of Multidisciplinary (MD), Interdisciplinary (ID), and Transdisciplinary (TD) thinking. The methodology was structured in four distinct phases:

Phase 1: Data Compilation and Portfolio Curation

The first phase involved systematically gathering the entire corpus of IIEP work. The publication database was compiled to cover the complete list of over 340 peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, and conference papers produced under the IIEP umbrella. The labs' documentations focused on certain areas such as their stated objectives, participant profiles (academic and non-academic), and reported outcomes.

Phase 2: Thematic Codification and Classification

The compiled portfolio was analysed using a deductive coding framework based on established definitions of MD, ID, and TD thinking. The Multidisciplinary (MD) code was applied to works that analysed a problem by presenting

distinct, parallel perspectives from different disciplines without significant integration (e.g., a paper on Gaza presenting separate sections on health, economics, and environment). Then, the Interdisciplinary (ID) code was applied to works that integrated theories, methods, or concepts from two or more disciplines to generate a new framework, model, or hybrid field (e.g., merging the Capability Approach with Inspiration Economy, or creating the "Inspiration Economy" theory itself). Then, finally the Transdisciplinary (TD) code applied to works that co-created knowledge and solutions with non-academic stakeholders, where community members were partners in the research process and the outcome was a practical, implemented intervention (e.g., projects developed with local communities in Mauritania, Ghana, or Gaza).

Phase 3: Chronological and Evolutionary Analysis

The coded data was then analysed to identify the temporal trends. Here, the prevalence of MD, ID, and TD codes over the ten-year period was mapped to visualize the project's conceptual evolution. The analysis continued through the pathway tracing for specific "lab lineages". These labs were traced (e.g., from a multidisciplinary analysis of a problem to an interdisciplinary model to a transdisciplinary intervention) to provide concrete examples of the MD->ID->TD pipeline in action.

Phase 4: Critical Self-Assessment and Synthesis

As the principal architect and participant-observer of the IIEP, the author conducted a critical self-assessment. This reflective practice involved evaluating the outcomes after a decade with close work and application of the inspiration economy theory. The socio-economic impact of the labs and publications were assessed against their stated aims. The researcher then identified catalysts for evolution. An analysis of both the internal and external factors in areas as the complexity of a problem, the engagement with communities and other factors that prompted the shift from one mode of thinking to another. Then, finally the models of MD, ID and TD were synthesized and integrated from previous four phases to construct a replicable methodology for socio-economic advancement. These four-phase methodologies ensure a systematic, transparent, and evidence-based analysis of how the IIEP has operationalized integrative thinking to bridge the gap between theoretical innovation and real-world problem-solving.

4. Application & Analysis

4.1. Codification and Classification of IIEP Labs

4.1.1. Multidisciplinary Lab

One of the main mega labs in IIEP is the Government Competitiveness Labs, which was conducted in collaboration with the government of Bahrain. This lab tackled government challenges by applying knowledge from distinct fields such as public administration, knowledge management, behavioral economics, and gamification. Each discipline offered its own perspective and tools to improve government outcomes, appreciating the problem's complexity from different angles. The other mega lab was the COVID-19 Pandemic's 'Untapped Solutions' Lab. This is a highly networked international lab that initially operated in a multidisciplinary manner by bringing together specialists from virology, public health, intensive care, mental health, education, and economics. Each group addressed the pandemic's challenges from their specific domain, contributing a piece to the overall understanding of the problem.

4.1.2. Interdisciplinary Lab

The Inspiration Economy Theory Lab is a prime example of an interdisciplinary lab that aims to create a new theoretical framework by integrating economics, psychology, sociology, and systems thinking. The outcome is not just an economic model or a psychological theory, but a new hybrid field—the "Inspiration Economy"—which did not previously exist.

A similar thing can be said about the Resilience Economy Lab. It is a lab that integrates concepts from ecology (system resilience), psychology (individual resilience), economics, and disaster management to form a new, cohesive framework for understanding and fostering "Resilience Economy." It moves beyond simply viewing these disciplines side-by-side and instead blends them to generate novel strategies for socioeconomic stability. These Inter-Disciplinary Labs help to explore and operationalize the integration of knowledge across disciplines, making it inherently interdisciplinary in its aim to generate new, holistic approaches.

4.1.3. Transdisciplinary Lab

The vast majority of IIEP labs are Transdisciplinary. Their framework, which emphasises field exploration, community engagement, and turning local problems into opportunities, is the very definition of a transdisciplinary approach. For example, the Bihac University Socioeconomic Development Lab in (Bosnia) directly engaged with the local community in Bihac to exploit socioeconomic opportunities related to youth migration, women's development, and NGO productivity. Solutions were co-created with local actors, ensuring they were relevant and impactful for that specific context. The other example is Empathy Focused Labs, which focuses on developing empathy necessitating deep, collaborative engagement with the target groups to understand their perspectives and experiences, making the process inherently transdisciplinary.

The Eco Villages Problem-Solving Lab in (Morocco) worked within villages and mountains, partnering with the inhabitants to address poverty and support family business development. The "problem-solving" was done with the community, not just for the community. Also, the self-sufficiency Labs in (Ghana & India) managed to co-create projects like the Shea Butter Project in Ghana and the

Bamboo School Village in India. They worked directly with local producers and villagers, using local resources and knowledge to build self-sufficient, sustainable livelihoods.

Even the Gaza Resilience Lab operates in an extreme real-world context, working directly with the people of Gaza to document, support, and co-create strategies for resilience and survival during crisis. The knowledge and solutions emerge directly from the lived experience of the community.

Finally, the Poverty Elimination Lab in (Mauritania) is a quintessential transdisciplinary project. It didn't just study poverty; it engaged in "comprehensive cooperative programs" with the targeted communities, involving them in the process of moving from poverty alleviation to elimination.

4.2. How the Labs Create an Evolution of the Inspiration Economy Theory?

The labs reflect an evolution in the role of inspiration economy theory research itself (Buheji, 2021) ^[9]. The multidisciplinary labs are about understanding the whole problems or challenges by examining its parts separately. While Interdisciplinary labs are about transforming understanding of inspiration economy by recombining the parts in novel ways. Then, Transdisciplinary labs are used to apply the transformed understanding of the inspiration economy in the real world, with the people for whom the problem matters most. Choosing which type of lab to establish the inspiration economy currency depends entirely on the core problem you are trying to solve and the kind of impact you want to have.

4.3. Approaches of Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, Transdisciplinary Labs (MITL)

The approaches of Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary Labs (MITL) done in the Inspiration Economy refer to the specific methodologies, processes, and collaborative structures they employ to achieve their distinct purposes (Sulyman *et al.*, 2021) ^[59]. The Multidisciplinary Lab uses a parallel, additive approach. Disciplines work side-by-side, contributing their piece to a collective puzzle. While the Interdisciplinary Lab uses an integrative, synergistic approach. Disciplines blend their methods and theories to create a new, shared understanding. Then, the Transdisciplinary Lab uses a co-creative, context-driven approach. It dissolves the boundaries between the lab and society to tackle problems where they live.

The approach of a Multidisciplinary Lab (MD-Lab) created an approach that is based on "Divide and Conquer" or "Siloed Collaboration" Model. The research problem is broken down into discrete, discipline-specific components. Another approach is parallel workstreams, where each disciplinary team works independently using its own tools, methodologies, and terminology. The sociologist conducts surveys, the engineer runs simulations, and the economist builds models—all on their own schedule. MD-Lab also uses the Sequential Hand-offs approach, where the work may happen in a sequence. The data scientist cleans the dataset, then hands it to the biologist for analysis, who then gives the results to the clinician for interpretation. This needs another approach that is based on communication and integration. The communication is typically formal and periodic (e.g., monthly meetings).

4.4. Approach of an Interdisciplinary Lab (ID-Lab)

The Interdisciplinary approach is based on a "Collaboratory" Model. The Joint Problem Framing is where the team, comprising members from different disciplines, collaboratively defines the research question from the outset. This ensures the problem is framed in a way that invites integration. This helps to develop a methodological hybridization approach where the teams actively borrow and adapt methods from one another. Team members spend significant time learning each other's basic concepts and jargon. They develop a shared language to describe their work, which is often a simplified hybrid of their professional terminologies. This would lead to the iterative co-creation approach, where the model or prototype is developed, reviewed by all disciplines, and refined based on integrated feedback. This happens in cycles.

4.5. Approach of a Transdisciplinary Lab (TD-Lab)

The transdisciplinary lab can be re-named due to its impact as the "Living Lab" or the "Social Ecosystem" Model. In these non-academic partners (community leaders, industry experts, policymakers, citizens) are not "subjects" but are co-researchers, which means they are involved in defining the problem and the research agenda (Sulyman *et al.*, 2021) [59]. The lab's work is conducted in situ—in real-world settings like neighbourhoods, hospitals, or watersheds. These are called "living labs" where interventions are tested and observed in their complex, real-life context. Here, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach is a common methodological framework. This lab brings in knowledge co-production, where the final "product", such as a community initiative, would be jointly created and owned by all participants, and the outcome is a practical, implemented solution.

Table 1: Comparative Approaches in Action

Aspect	Multidisciplinary Lab	Interdisciplinary Lab	Transdisciplinary Lab
Problem Formulation	Defined by a lead researcher, then divided according to the speciality.	Co-defined by the academic team from different fields.	Co-defined with the different stakeholders
Work Process	Parallel, independent workstreams.	Interactive, iterative, and collaborative.	Cyclical, context-embedded, co-creative.
Key Methods	Standard disciplinary methods are applied in isolation.	Methodological hybridisation; shared models.	Participatory Action Research (PAR); living labs.
Communication	Periodic meetings; final compiled report.	Constant dialogue; development of a shared language.	Facilitated dialogue; creation of a common goal.
Output Integration	Additive (A + B + C).	Integrative (A x B x C → new framework D).	Transformative (creates a solution owned by all).
Success Metric	Comprehensive analysis from multiple angles.	Creation of a novel, hybrid solution or model or theory.	Tangible, real-world impact and social change.

4.6. Diagnosing Lab Types by Their Approaches

The approach of a lab is a direct manifestation of its purpose. You can diagnose a lab's type by observing how it works: If you see people working separately on their own parts, it's Multidisciplinary. If you see people around a whiteboard blending ideas and methods, it's Interdisciplinary. If you see

academics and community members working together in a real-world setting, it's Transdisciplinary (Sulyman *et al.*, 2021) [59].

Choosing the right approach is critical, as it determines the tools, the team, the timeline, and ultimately, the kind of knowledge and impact the lab will produce.

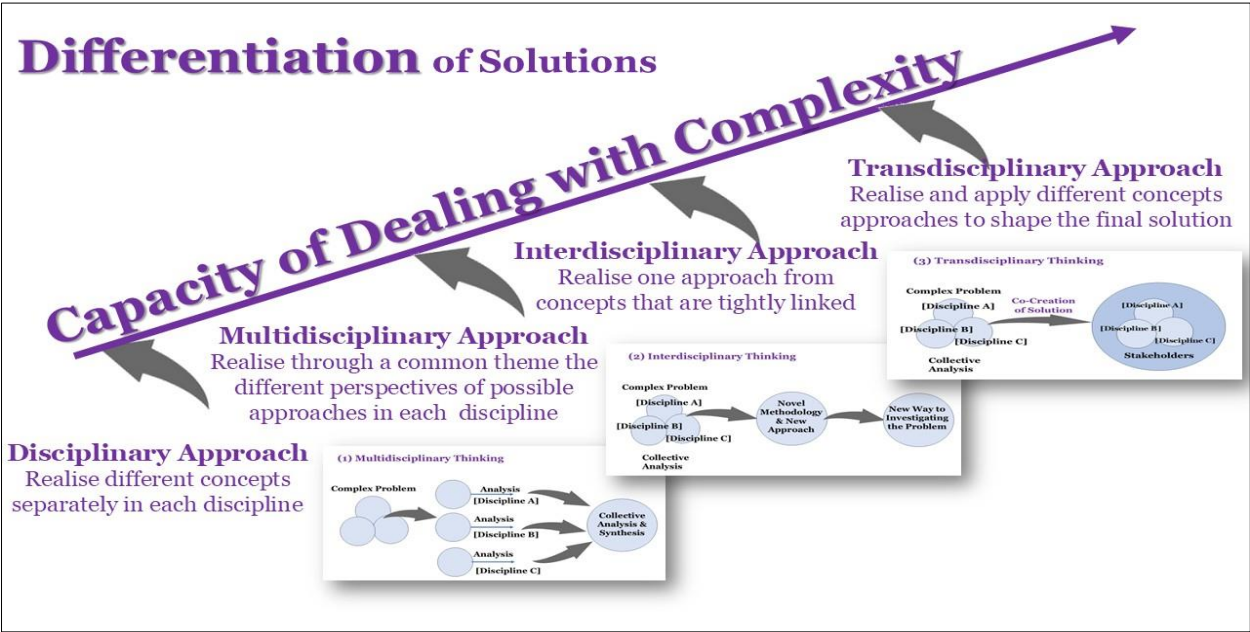


Fig 4: Differentiation of Solutions

4.6. Common Thread and Cross-Cutting Strategies of Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, Transdisciplinary Labs (MITL)

The cross-cutting strategies of MITL Labs refer to integrated approaches that span multiple disciplines and sectors. It engages interdisciplinary experts from various fields (economics, sociology, environmental science, etc.) to provide diverse insights and foster a holistic understanding of complex issues. It actively involves stakeholders, including businesses, government entities, academia, and community members, to ensure that different perspectives are considered and to enhance the relevance of outcomes.

Applying diverse perspective to understand the interconnectedness of socioeconomic factors in any problem or issue, allow for more comprehensive analysis of potential impacts and outcomes. These labs utilise participatory methods that empower stakeholders to contribute to the process, enhancing buy-in and relevance of findings.

The experimentation in the MITL Labs encourage adaptive strategies through experimentation with new ideas, technologies, or policies to identify effective solutions to emerging challenges. It helps to spread the inspiration economy and its currency through capacity building and continuous learning based on new information and changing conditions. These labs help to effectively navigate complex challenges and contribute to informed decision-making and sustainable development practices.

5. Evidence from Inspiration Economy Publications

Based on a decade of research and an extensive list of publications of the International Inspiration Economy Project (IIEP), from (2015 till 2025), here is a distribution and analysis of the works according to the three types of thinking: Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary.

The core philosophy of the Inspiration Economy—"exploiting and spreading the inspiration currency through solving complex problems in various fields"—is inherently aligned with these integrative approaches. The publications demonstrate a clear evolution from viewing problems through multiple lenses to integrating those lenses, and finally to creating solutions with the communities affected.

5.1. Multidisciplinary-based Publications

The IIEP has focused since its inception on multidisciplinary publications since most of its labs were meant to bring live examples for the possibility of exploiting the inspiration currency from the analysis of different complex problems from multiple, distinct angles. It is meant to appreciate its full scope and complexity. The disciplines work in parallel, contributing their unique perspectives without significant integration. Researchers from different disciplines work side-by-side, but remain within their own disciplinary boundaries. The research question is examined from multiple independent angles. This helped to gradually build or align the power of the inspiration economy theory, especially in the first five years of being put into practice (Buheji, 2021) ^[9].

The IIEP papers bring together concepts from different fields (e.g., economics, psychology, public health, environmental science) to describe or analyse a situation. The components from each discipline remain identifiable and are not synthesised into a new, cohesive whole. For example, the work of (Hassoun *et al.*, 2025) ^[47] analyses the war on Gaza through the distinct, predefined lenses of the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), such as food security, environmental sustainability, and quality education. They bring together environmental science, nutrition, development studies, human factors, poverty analysis, child development, healthcare and political science to map the scale of the catastrophe. This also coincides with the work of (Shorrab *et al.*, 2024) ^[60] on "Health in the Crossfire" analyses the health risks in Gaza by looking at the distinct areas of trauma medicine, infectious disease, nutrition, and mental health. It presents a comprehensive picture by placing these different medical and public health fields side-by-side.

Another multidisciplinary paper can be seen in (Buheji *et al.*, 2022) ^[10] titled "The Association Between the Initial Outcomes of COVID-19 and the Human Development Index" (HDI). The paper combines epidemiology and socio-economic development metrics to correlate health outcomes with national development indicators. These disciplines involve: Public Health / Epidemiology (COVID-19 outcomes), Economics/Development Studies (Human Development Index), Statistics (ecological study design). Hence, each discipline contributes its own metrics and methods. The HDI is an economic/social measure, and COVID-19 outcomes are a health measure. They are correlated, but the analytical frameworks of economics and epidemiology remain distinct.

(Buheji *et al.*, 2021) ^[61] also focused on "Depth of Global Poverty and the Economy of Lockdown." This paper brings together public health policy (lockdowns), macroeconomics, and development studies to analyse the spillover effects of a single policy on global poverty. The disciplines are used in concert to illustrate scale and complexity. The fields are used together for a richer analysis, but remain distinct.

Similar multi-speciality work can be appreciated in the study of (Jahrami *et al.*, 2021) ^[62], which explores the relationship between nomophobia (psychology/technology), insomnia (health/sleep medicine), and food addiction (psychology/nutrition). It connects distinct fields to identify correlations. These disciplines involve: Psychology (nomophobia, addiction), Sleep Medicine (insomnia), and Public Health (survey of young adults). The study looks at the co-occurrence of problems that are traditionally studied in separate fields. It connects digital behaviour (psychology), sleep patterns (medicine), and eating habits (public health) without necessarily creating a new integrated methodology.

Other multidisciplinary work of the inspiration economy can be well illustrated from the huge publications from the Gaza Resilience Lab that focused on the War on Gaza as a "System of Crises". Multiple papers analyse the same event through completely different disciplinary lenses without immediate integration. For example, the papers focus on global trauma, secondary and vicarious effects, and desensitisation (psychology, sociology, media studies). Also, some papers focus on food insecurity and famine (nutrition, agriculture, and development economics). Alternatively, other papers focus on environmental consequences and terrestrial ecosystems (environmental science, ecology) (Buheji, 2025) ^[18]. Some papers also focus on managing academic faculty with e-HRM (human resource management, educational technology, and crisis management). Same thing for the paper that focused on liquidity crisis and commodity price fluctuations (economics, finance) (Migdad *et al.*, 2025) ^[63]. This is seen that the paper on health risks is shown (medicine, public health) (Hamdan *et al.*, 2025) ^[64].

5.2. Interdisciplinary-based Publications

After a maturity of five years of the inspiration economy concept and its implementation in a variety of fields, i.e. starting from 2020, the IIEP publications started to integrate knowledge, methods, and concepts from different disciplines to generate new frameworks, solutions, or entirely new fields. Disciplines integrate their approaches, concepts, and theories to create a shared understanding of a problem. The boundaries between disciplines begin to blur to form a new, synthesised approach.

Characteristics of the IIEP interdisciplinary publications are focused on the creation of new hybrid models, and the boundaries between disciplines become blurred as their methods are fused. Besides, one can appreciate that many of the outputs of this type of research are novel in their way of realising the problem or in its way in bringing in a new theoretical framework. For example (Buheji and Mushimiyimana, 2025) ^[65] brought "Capability Approach vs. Inspiration Economy" which is based on a quintessential interdisciplinary work. It directly compares and seeks to integrate the human development-focused "Capability Approach" (from economics and philosophy) with the problem-solving, opportunity-focused "Inspiration Economy" to create a new, more powerful comparative socioeconomic model. This is a direct interdisciplinary dialogue. The Capability Approach (from Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, rooted in welfare economics and philosophy) is critically compared and integrated with the Inspiration Economy to produce a new, more dynamic "Comparative" socioeconomic model. Another similar case can be seen in (Buheji, 2025) ^[17] publication "Applied Sociology & Advancements of Inspiration Economy" explicitly merges the theories and methods of sociology with the principles of the Inspiration Economy to form a new approach for community-driven change (Buheji and Mushimiyimana, 2025) ^[65].

(Buheji, 2015) ^[66] "Understanding the Economics of Problem-Solving" is a good case example of a paper that merges the language and methods of economics with those of design thinking and problem-solving to create a new longitudinal framework for assessing the impact of "Inspiration Labs." It is a technique that inspiration uses to hybridise with established theories.

(Buheji, 2023) ^[67] "Embedding the MT Chip - a 'Multidisciplinary thinking handbook'." The very act of creating a "handbook" to mitigate complexity caused by AI represents an interdisciplinary effort, blending cognitive science, education, and technology studies into a new practical tool. This is also reflected in (Buheji, 2021) ^[9] publication on "The Theory of Inspiration Economy." This foundational paper is interdisciplinary by nature, as it builds its theoretical framework by drawing from and integrating economics, psychology, behavioural science, and innovation studies into a new field of study. The paper covers economics (currency, value, models), then psychology (inspiration, motivation, mindset), then behavioural science (nudges, decision-making), then Innovation Studies (problem-solving labs). The output is a new, hybrid field that did not exist before (Buheji, 2021; Buheji, 2024) ^[9, 68].

(Ahmed and Buheji, 2018) ^[38] paper on "Reflexivity in Applying 'Inspiration Economy' Research" discusses how the research method itself is interdisciplinary, blending participatory action research (from social sciences) with the principles of Inspiration Economy to change how research

groups function.

In "Influencing without Power - Currency in Inspiration Labs" (Buheji, 2024) ^[69] integrates concepts from organisational behaviour, leadership studies, and social psychology to create a new model for creating change within systems like hospitals, without formal authority. While the paper "Nudge Theory vs. Inspiration Economy Labs" explicitly positions the Inspiration Economy as an interdisciplinary advancement upon Thaler and Sunstein's Nudge Theory (behavioural economics), claiming a greater "Depth of Influence on Socio-Economics Behaviours" by integrating more proactive, community-engaged elements (Buheji, 2018) ^[5].

The publication of 'The Role of Industry 4.0 in Global Food Security' shows an integrated discipline as Engineering/Technology (Industry 4.0, AI, IoT), Agricultural Science (food production), Economics/Development Policy (food security, ending hunger). The paper doesn't just list tech and food issues side-by-side. It actively synthesises them, asking: How can AI and smart agriculture technologies be integrated into economic and policy frameworks to directly address the complex goal of ending hunger? The solution requires the seamless blending of all these fields (Hassoun *et al.*, 2025) ^[47].

The publication 'Capturing Accumulated Knowledge and Learning of COVID-19 Pandemic from Front-Line Nurse' showed how the disciplines of Nursing/Clinical Medicine (frontline experience), Knowledge Management (capturing tacit knowledge), and Human Resource Management (organisational learning) are integrated. This nursing case study uses knowledge management theories and HR practices to create a framework for systematically capturing and disseminating the practical, tacit knowledge gained by nurses—a true integration of clinical practice and organisational science (Buheji and Buhaid, 2020) ^[70].

5.3. Transdisciplinary-based Publications

As the inspiration economy theory started to approach ten years since its first introduction to the world officially in 2015, more transdisciplinary-based papers started to appear. Inspiration economy is now a more robust theory that proven it can solve complex real-world problems by co-creating solutions with society (stakeholders, communities, citizens), ensuring they are practical, sustainable, and directly impactful. Such transdisciplinary work goes beyond academia to include non-academic knowledge. The highest level of integration. It not only transcends disciplinary boundaries but also actively involves non-academic stakeholders (community members, policymakers, practitioners) in the research process to address real-world problems. The result is a solution that is co-created and owned by the community. Therefore, it is no wonder that we find inspiration economy labs and publications that cover the solutions for challenges of communities in conflict zones as in (Gaza, Syria), or setup a frameworks for immediate application in real-world, chaotic settings with research that emerges from and is validated by lived experience (Buheji and Ahmed, 2018) ^[38].

The "Gaza Resilience Lab" (GRL) (evident across dozens of inspiration economy publications in 2023 and till 2025) shows that disciplines and stakeholders transcend. The GRL covered economics, sociology, psychology, urban planning, public health, and political science while describing the living conditions of the Gazans; be it (mothers, youth, displaced

persons, healthcare workers), besides the humanitarian aid workers, and local administrators. The uniqueness of the research on Gaza isn't just about Gazans; it is conducted with them. The publications like "Building Anti-Fragile Generation – Stories on Mothers of Gaza" and "Diary of Displacement from Al-Mawasi" are built on the direct, lived experiences of the population. The "lab" is a transdisciplinary space where academic theories are tested and transformed through direct engagement with the reality on the ground, producing community-driven frameworks for aid distribution, economic recovery, and psychological resilience (Migdad *et al.*, 2025; Buheji, 2025) ^[63, 18].

The lab papers' co-authorship with practitioners and community members, and frequent appearance of international researchers on inspiration economy papers, indicate that the knowledge is not extracted in a deep partnership with those who come from a variety of fields and can apply inspiration economy in the context. This is a hallmark of transdisciplinarity. For example, the entire "Gaza Resilience Lab" suite of publications that are participated in by researchers from Gaza is the pinnacle of transdisciplinary work. They are not just about Gaza; they are born from the direct, lived experience of the war. The researchers are often part of the affected community or are working in a deep, real-time partnership with them. The "socio-economic problem-solving labs" are active, co-creative spaces where academic frameworks meet the urgent need for survival, resource distribution, and mental health support.

One of the direct outputs of a transdisciplinary lab is the work of (Migdad and Buheji, 2025) ^[71] that reflects the "Experiences in Protecting Socioeconomic Life During the War on Gaza." This document systematises the community's own ingenious survival strategies (e.g., creating makeshift markets, sharing resources), turning lived experience into a transferable knowledge product.

(Wafi *et al.*, 2025) ^[72] focused on "Enhancing the Distribution of 'Humanitarian Aid' Transparency and Fairness in Gaza - A Framework for Emergency Situations." This is a co-designed framework. It wasn't created in an ivory tower; it was developed in the field, with and for the people distributing and receiving aid, to solve an immediate, life-threatening problem.

Transdisciplinary thinking of IIEP projects and papers also brings solutions rooted in different contexts and cultures. For example, (Buheji, 2025) ^[17] mentioned "Building Anti-Fragility -- Cases on Poverty Elimination from Mauritania." This is not a generic theory applied to Mauritania. It is a case study built on specific, local practices and successes, implying deep community engagement to identify what works there (Buheji, 2025) ^[18].

The papers that focused on "Storytelling" and "Narratives" emphasise on capturing stories through the transdisciplinary method for valuing non-academic, experiential knowledge and integrating it into the solution-building process. For example, in the work of (Buheji and Migdad, 2025) ^[73] "Building Anti-Fragile Generation — Stories on Mothers of Gaza" centres the knowledge and resilience of Gazan mothers as the primary data for building a new model of parenting under siege.

The work of (Buheji on Syria) bring also similar way of interdisciplinary thinking, similar to the Gaza work, these publications on post-conflict Syria represent a transdisciplinary approach (Buheji and Hasan, 2025) ^[74]. They are not merely theoretical analyses but propose "Home-

Grown" recovery strategies and "Re-Engineering Coexistence" models that must be developed in close collaboration with Syrian communities, comparing lessons from other post-conflict societies like Rwanda and Vietnam (Buheji and Mushimiyimana, 2025; Buheji and Hasan, 2025) ^[65, 74].

With the inspiration economy being involved in a decade-long study with poverty elimination labs (Buheji, 2024) ^[68] work on "Sustaining poverty elimination around the shea nut tree - case from Ghana, represents a field-based case study that involves working directly with a community in leveraging local knowledge and resources, i.e. the shea nut tree. This work helps to co-create a sustainable economic model. This is transdisciplinary development economics in action. The paper moved in disciplines as environmental science, agricultural economics, gender studies, community development, besides the female shea nut local cooperatives, and community leaders.

The paper describes a project that was likely co-designed with the women in the community, integrating knowledge of the local ecosystem (environmental science), value-chain development (economics), and women's empowerment (sociology/gender studies) to create a self-sustaining, poverty-elimination model that is rooted in the community's specific context and assets.

A similar case can be seen in (Buheji and Kakoty, 2022) ^[75] work titled "Rebuilding Tolerance in Times of Scarcity Thinking – Case of Bamboo School Village (Assam - India)". This paper demonstrates a transdisciplinary project where the solution (the school) is built with and for the local community, using local materials (bamboo) and addressing local socio-cultural needs. This paper transcended disciplines as education, sociology, architecture/design, behavioural economics, students, teachers, besides parents, and village elders. The "Bamboo School Village" is a physical and social intervention. The design of the school (architecture) and its pedagogical approach (education) were likely developed collaboratively with the community to actively rebuild the social value of "tolerance." The project transcends academic study to create a living, community-owned model for social change. This project addresses the rise of intolerance during economically difficult times. The "Bamboo School Village" serves as a living lab for using education and community architecture to foster tolerance as a resource, even in conditions of scarcity.

6. IIEP Analysis and Outcome of Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, Transdisciplinary Labs and Publication

A Decade of work with MITL has shown the effect of the Multidisciplinary works and how the inspiration economy can help humanity understand the full potential and the untapped solutions of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, or the horrifying scale of a problem like the war on Gaza by viewing it through the separate lenses of food security, education, environment, and mental health. While the Interdisciplinary works help us create new tools and models by, for example, merging the Capability Approach with the Inspiration Economy to better conceptualise recovery. In the Transdisciplinary works, we experienced how models are stress-tested and co-created in the real world, as seen in the Gaza and Syria labs, resulting in practical frameworks for aid distribution, protecting socioeconomic life, and building "anti-fragile" communities (Hassoun *et al.*, 2025; Buheji,

2025) [47, 18].

The review of the publications of the International Inspiration Economy Project (IIEP) provides a portfolio of the three thinking modes. The first one is the Multidisciplinary Thinking mode. It is used to diagnose the complexity of problems, proving that no single discipline can comprehend it. While the Interdisciplinary Thinking is used to prescribe new solutions, by create novel hybrid frameworks like the Inspiration Economy itself, which integrates economics, psychology, and sociology. While the Transdisciplinary Thinking use it to treat the problem, by embedding these frameworks in real-world "Labs" and co-creating practical, sustainable solutions with the people of Gaza, Syria, Rwanda, and others, turning their lived experience into actionable global knowledge. The project demonstrates that these are not separate tracks but a cohesive, powerful pipeline for tackling the world's most wicked problems.

The inspiration economy given a powerful trajectory from theory-building (Interdisciplinary) to immersive, community-embedded problem-solving (Transdisciplinary), using Multidisciplinary analysis at the beginning of the IE concept to show how its inspiration currency can be extracted from comprehending contemporary or future complex challenges.

6.1. Applied Methodology and Tools for Socio-Economic Exploration

This theme focuses on developing and refining the very methods used to discover opportunities within problems. The "Exploratory Visits as a Methodological Tool" paper details how "Exploratory Visits" are not just trips but a formal research methodology. It explains how these visits are designed to uncover hidden opportunities and build empathy by immersing researchers directly in the context of a socio-economic problem, thereby improving the efficacy of projects. The other example is in the "Embedding the MT Chip" book. It is a practical "Multidisciplinary thinking handbook" created as a survival tool. It's designed to help people mitigate complexity in their lives, specifically to counter the potential threats of Artificial Intelligence by fostering a more adaptable, human-centric problem-solving mindset (Buheji, 2023; Buheji, 2024) [67, 68].

6.2. Re-engineering Societal Coexistence and Empathy

These projects use the Inspiration Economy to address deep-seated social fractures and build understanding. For example, the work of "Re-Engineering Coexistence in Syria- A comparative study" goes beyond physical reconstruction to focus on the social fabric. It explores how to actively rebuild trust and coexistence among communities in a post-conflict setting, applying comparative learning to design a sustainable social recovery.

6.3. Transforming Public Services and Governance

The principles are applied to make government and public services more effective and human-centric. For example, the work of "When Police Behave" describes a transformation program aimed at reshaping police-community relationships. It moves beyond traditional enforcement models to one based on shared problem-solving and values, using Inspiration Economy principles to build trust and legitimacy. Also, the work "Re-Inventing Public Services Using Gamification Approaches" explores how game-like elements (gamification) can be used to increase citizen engagement,

improve the experience of using public services, and drive positive behavioural changes in a non-coercive way.

6.4. Intergenerational Learning and the Aging Economy

Certain IIEP research focuses on the socio-economic opportunities and challenges presented by the variable of age. Therefore, much of the research covered children, youth, elders and the issue of aging. For example, the book of "To All of My Mother" is a deep work, that shows an empathetic exploration of the "Aging Economy" (Buheji, 2022) [10]. It provides foresight and close-carer notes, framing aging not just as a challenge but as a domain requiring new economic models and social support systems inspired by the needs and wisdom of the elderly. It is a transdisciplinary work is born from lived experience. It blends gerontology, health economics, psychology, and personal narrative. It uses the intimate perspective of a "close-carer" to generate foresight about the "Aging Economy," making it a powerful example of knowledge co-creation between personal experience and academic disciplines to identify the real-world needs and economic opportunities in an aging society (Buheji, 2022) [10].

The work of 'Overcoming Bathing Challenges for Elderly Parents- A Close Carer Approaches' is also considered to address the interdisciplinary approach. It represents the specific, daily challenge by integrating occupational therapy, product design, psychology of aging, and caregiver support literature. It moves beyond a purely medical or social view to provide a practical, synthesised solution that improves the quality of life for both the elderly and their carers.

In the same line, the paper of "Raising the Curiosity for a Better Return on Life - Road Map for the Retirees" actively engages the retired population, viewing them not as a burden but as a source of untapped potential. It creates a roadmap to help retirees find new purpose and continue to contribute to society, thus generating "inspiration currency" from this demographic (Buheji and Ahmed, 2025) [76].

In the meantime, the unemployment of youth is considered to be a key theme where the broader application will focus on the mindset and the purpose. This is seen, for example, in "In Pursuit of a Youth Life-Purposefulness Program" that moves beyond creating jobs to instilling a sense of purpose in young people (Buheji, 2019) [7]. It designs programs that help youth connect their personal passions to socio-economic needs, fostering long-term engagement and resilience. The other example can be seen in the work of "How Gaza Inspiring Gen-Z are Changing Their Mindsets?" (Buheji, 2024) [68]. This study analyses a profound external event (the war on Gaza) as a catalyst for a global shift in youth consciousness. It examines how such events inspire a new generation to become more socially and politically aware, altering their consumer behaviour (e.g., boycott movements) and career aspirations (Buheji, 2024) [77].

6.5. Frugality and Experiential Innovation

Certain IIEP papers find inspiration in constraints and novel experiences. For example, "Reviewing Implications of 'Economics of Frugal Innovation' on Developing Countries" compares Frugal Innovation (doing more with less) with the Inspiration Economy model. It explores how scarcity can be a driver of highly creative and sustainable solutions that are particularly relevant for developing nations. For example, "The Essence of Dining in Complete Darkness" and "Raising 'Experience Economy' Threshold Using Natural Darkness"

are fascinating studies on how removing one sense (sight) can create a powerful and inspiring economic experience. This goes beyond a gimmick to explore how curated, extreme sensory experiences can generate new value in the "Experience Economy."

6.6. Poverty Elimination and Community Resilience (Global South Focus)

The work of 'Sustaining poverty elimination around the shea nut tree - case from Ghana' used a transdisciplinary approach that integrates environmental science (sustainable harvesting), agricultural economics (value-chain development), gender studies (focus on female harvesters), and community development. The research is conducted with the local women's cooperatives, co-creating a self-sustaining economic model that turns a local resource into a vehicle for poverty elimination, rather than just studying it from the outside.

Similarly, the paper of 'Reporting Extreme Poverty Elimination Model from Sub-Saharan Africa — A Case Study of Two Years Journey from Mauritania' uses interdisciplinary approach that moves beyond describing poverty to proposing an active "elimination model." It synthesises development economics, sociology, and public policy. The model likely integrates concepts like social capital, micro-enterprise, and local governance, demonstrating how these fields must interact to create a tangible, field-tested strategy for eradicating extreme poverty (Buheji, 2025; Buheji, 2022) ^[17, 10].

6.7. Youth Economy and NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training)

The 'Assessment of NEET among Youth in Rwanda- A Socioeconomic Approach' is an interdisciplinary study that tackles the complex issue of youth disengagement by blending Economics (labour market analysis), sociology (social exclusion), education theory, and psychology (youth aspirations). It doesn't just present economic data but uses a "socioeconomic approach" to understand the intertwined personal, social, and structural reasons behind youth being NEET, leading to more holistic intervention points (Buheji *et al.*, 2024) ^[78].

In relevance to this paper, the 'Youth between Labour Market and NEET - Critical Review on the Foresighted Challenges' uses a multidisciplinary approach that brings together perspectives from labor economics, futures studies, and social policy. It examines the same problem (youth NEET) through these different disciplinary lenses to build a comprehensive picture of the future risks and challenges, ensuring that policy recommendations are robust and consider multiple potential futures.

6.8. Sustainable Development and Food Systems

The work of 'Optimising the readiness for industry 4.0 in fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goal 1: focus on poverty elimination in Africa' brings an interdisciplinary research approach that creates a direct bridge between advanced technology and a fundamental social goal. It synthesises engineering/industry 4.0 (IoT, AI, digitalisation), development economics (poverty elimination strategies), and policy science (SDG frameworks). It investigates how technological readiness can be specifically configured and leveraged to achieve a primary socio-economic objective (Hassoun *et al.*, 2025) ^[47].

The 'Role of Empathetic Engineering in Building More Resilient Green Economy. Case Study on Creating Resilient Self-Sufficient Food Security Programs in the Middle East' is another transdisciplinary approach paper. The term "Empathetic Engineering" itself is interdisciplinary, merging Engineering/Design with Psychology/Sociology. The research applies this to build a "resilient green economy," involving stakeholders like farmers, agricultural planners, and local communities. The goal is to co-design food security programs that are not only technically sound but also socially adopted and culturally appropriate.

6.9. Behavioural Change and Social Systems

The work of IIEP also covered a wide variety of papers relevant to behavioural change. For example, 'Supporting Gaza through Consumer Selectivity — from Boycott to Buycott'. This interdisciplinary approach, even though related to Gaza, the core concept is universally applicable. This study synthesises Behavioural Economics (consumer decision-making), Political Science (activism), Marketing Theory (brand loyalty), and Sociology (collective action). It analyses how modern consumer behaviour is being reshaped into a tool for political and social expression, creating a new economic force (Ahmed and Buheji, 2024) ^[79].

In another field, 'The Trust Project' helped in building better accessibility to Healthcare Services through Behavioural Economics and Inspiration Labs' (Buheji, 2019) ^[80]. This case paper used interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary approaches. This project explicitly uses Behavioural Economics (nudges, decision architecture) within the "Inspiration Lab" methodology to improve healthcare access. It involves healthcare providers and patients (stakeholders) to redesign services. The "trust" element brings in Social Psychology, making it a fusion of economics, psychology, and healthcare management aimed at tangible system change (Buheji, 2019) ^[80].

These examples show that the Inspiration Economy's methodology is a portable framework. It can be applied to poverty in Ghana, youth unemployment in Rwanda, the aging population globally, food security in the Middle East, and consumer activism, consistently using multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary approaches to unearth innovative solutions within complex problems.

The Inspiration Economy research program is remarkably diverse. Here are further examples, moving deeper into the publication list to highlight applications beyond the most common themes.

6.10. Economic Models and System Change

IIEP publications on 'Dismantling the Neoliberal Order: How Inspiration Economy Can Address Inequality, Instability, and Ecological Crisis?' represent an interdisciplinary approach that is a macro-level critique and proposal. It directly connects Political Economy (analysis of the neoliberal order), Ecological Economics (addressing the environmental crisis), and Sociology (addressing inequality). It positions the Inspiration Economy not as a small-scale tool, but as a potential alternative framework for reorganising economic systems to be more equitable and sustainable, requiring a deep synthesis of these fields (Buheji, 2025) ^[18].

Another economic model-focused interdisciplinary paper was 'Reviewing Implications of 'Economics of Frugal Innovation' on Developing Countries, a Comparison to Inspiration Economy Labs.' This paper creates a dialogue

between two distinct but related concepts. It compares Innovation Economics (frugal innovation) with the Sociological/Managerial model of Inspiration Labs. It explores how the principle of "doing more with less" (frugality) can be systematically operationalised through community-based labs, merging an economic concept with a practical socio-organisational model.

6.11. Education and Pedagogical Innovation

IIEP also published many papers relevant to education and pedagogy. The 'Educide amid conflict: the struggle of the Palestinian education system' represent a new transdisciplinary approach, as while related to conflict, its focus is uniquely on the education system. It merges education policy, conflict studies, human rights law (through the concept of "educide"), and the lived reality of Palestinian teachers, students, and administrators. It's a clear example of using an integrated, transdisciplinary lens to analyse the systematic destruction of a societal pillar and advocate for its protection (Iriqat *et al.*, 2024) ^[81].

The other psychology of learning theory paper is seen on 'Mapping Informal Learning for Displaced Learners during the War on Gaza 2023- Application of Situated Cognition' (Phusavat and Buheji, 2024) ^[82]. This interdisciplinary approach applies the "Situated Cognition" (which posits that learning is deeply tied to context and activity) to the extreme context of humanitarian crisis and displacement. It bridges educational psychology, humanitarian aid logistics, and sociology to propose frameworks for effective learning when formal education systems have collapsed.

6.12. Environmental and Climate Resilience

'Adapting to Change: Understanding Rwanda's Socioeconomic Resilience in the Face of Climate Variability' is an interdisciplinary study that synthesises climate science (understanding variability), development economics (socioeconomic impacts), and resilience theory (from social sciences) to analyse Rwanda's adaptive capacity. It doesn't treat climate as a purely environmental issue but intricately links it to economic and social structures, showcasing a holistic model for climate resilience.

The paper of 'Mitigating Risks of Environmental Impacts on Gaza - Review of Precautions and Solutions post (2023 War)' goes beyond immediate humanitarian aid to address the environmental engineering challenges of conflict (e.g., rubble management, soil/water contamination), integrated with public health (preventing disease) and urban planning (principles for sustainable reconstruction). It's a forward-looking, interdisciplinary approach that synthesised a plan for environmental recovery.

6.13. Specific Sectoral Applications (Beyond Government)

The paper of 'Gamification Techniques to Re-Invent Public Healthcare Services -- A Case Study' represents an interdisciplinary approach that gives a direct application of Game Design principles into Public Health Management. It merges behavioural science (to understand what motivates engagement), technology/design, and healthcare administration to create innovative solutions for improving patient compliance, staff training, or service delivery in a public health context.

The research of 'Exploring Migration Economy - Understanding the Loss of the Arab World' analyses the "brain drain" and human capital loss from a unique economic

perspective. It uses an interdisciplinary approach that combines labour economics (migration drivers), demographics, and development studies to frame migration not just as a social phenomenon, but as a significant economic loss for the Arab world, requiring integrated policies that address root causes and consequences.

6.14. Social Cohesion and Reconciliation

There are some papers that use both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to illustrate the importance of social cohesion. For example, the publication of 'The Path to Recovery-Insights from Rwanda's Experience for Syria's Peacebuilding Efforts.' This is a powerful example of comparative, applied knowledge transfer. It draws lessons from post-conflict studies in Rwanda, integrating political science (reconciliation processes), sociology (social cohesion), and economics (post-war recovery) to build a potential model for Syria. The knowledge is derived from one real-world context to be adapted for another.

Another example can be seen in the study of 'Breaking the Silence - Tracing the Rise of Anti-Zionist Sentiment Among Jewish Millennials and Gen-Z.' tackles a complex socio-political identity issue by interdisciplinarily blending political sociology, generational studies, and social psychology. It analyses how political sentiments are evolving within a specific religious and generational cohort, requiring an integrated approach to understand the interplay of identity, politics, and age (Buheji and Hasan, 2024) ^[83].

6.15. Democratizing Knowledge Production

To break down the barrier between the "expert" and the "public", the IE publications and lab values lived experience as a form of expertise and involves stakeholders (community members, patients, farmers, policymakers) not as subjects, but as partners in the research process. To guarantee that the outcomes of research are not just academically sound but also practical, acceptable, and sustainable for the people who need them. A sustainable farming technique developed with farmers is more likely to be adopted than one developed for them.

To promote social learning and capacity building the inspiration economy publications and labs should be based on working together with all participants—academics and non-academics—learn from each other, building community capacity and creating a shared ownership of the solution. In essence, the purpose is to answer the question: "How can we work with society to jointly solve this pressing problem and achieve a measurable, positive impact?"

8. Conclusion and Final Recommendations

8.1. Cross-Cutting Strategies of Inspiration Economy Labs and Research

IIEP established a cross-cutting strategies of inspiration economy labs and research that refers to integrated approaches that span multiple disciplines and sectors to enhance foresight activities. These strategies often include interdisciplinary collaboration that engages experts from various fields (economics, sociology, environmental science, etc.) to provide diverse insights and foster a holistic understanding of complex issues. These strategies actively involve stakeholders, including businesses, government entities, academia, and community members, to ensure that different perspectives are considered and to enhance the relevance of foresight outcomes.

The inspiration economy (IE) shows that applying a systems perspective to understand the interconnectedness of socioeconomic factors, allows for a more comprehensive analysis of potential impacts and outcomes. The IE theory used participatory approaches to empower stakeholders to contribute to the foresight process, enhancing buy-in and relevance of findings. The IE theory encourages adaptive strategies through experimentation with new ideas, technologies, or policies to identify effective solutions to emerging challenges (Buheji, 2021) ^[9].

The IE established its reputation as a concept that uses the mechanisms for ongoing learning and updating of strategies based on new information and changing conditions.

8.2. Creating a Feedback Loop for IE Theoretical Refinement

IE theory should not be a one-way street, but should have a dynamic feedback system. The challenges, surprises, and unique solutions discovered in the field need to be given as feedback to the knowledge community for further research. Since the labs enhanced the IE theory and its publication trail, maybe it is time for a new version of the "Handbook of Inspiration Economy" to update the foundation. Later works like "Re-inventing Our Lives" and "The Defiance" are filled with case studies and models derived directly from the labs. The labs provided a continuous stream of real-world data that prevented the theory from becoming stagnant, ensuring it remained a living, evolving body of knowledge.

The decade-long journey of the International Inspiration Economy Project (IIEP) provides compelling evidence that the strategic and sequential application of Multidisciplinary (MD), Interdisciplinary (ID), and Transdisciplinary (TD) thinking is not merely beneficial but essential for tackling the world's most entrenched socio-economic problems. This longitudinal study demonstrates that these three modes of inquiry form a powerful, evolutionary pipeline—a methodology in its own right—for translating abstract theoretical concepts into tangible, community-validated impact.

The project's trajectory began with Multidisciplinary analysis, using distinct disciplinary lenses to deconstruct and fully appreciate the daunting complexity of problems like the War on Gaza and the COVID-19 pandemic. This phase was crucial for diagnosing the problem space, revealing that no single field could comprehend the whole. It established a comprehensive evidence base that justified the need for a more integrated approach. This foundation enabled the Interdisciplinary phase, where the IIEP integrated economics, psychology, sociology, and systems thinking to generate novel hybrid constructs. The creation of the Inspiration Economy theory itself, along with frameworks like "Resilience Economy" and "Empathetic Engineering," stands as a testament to the innovative power of synthesising knowledge across disciplinary boundaries to prescribe new solutions.

Ultimately, the IE theory was stress-tested and fully realised through Transdisciplinary praxis. In labs from Gaza to Ghana, academic frameworks dissolved into collaborative processes where community members became co-researchers. The solutions that emerged—whether for aid distribution, poverty elimination, or building anti-fragile communities—were not developed for the people but with them. This phase treated the problems at their source, ensuring that solutions were practical, sustainable, and

directly impactful, thereby transforming lived experience into actionable global knowledge.

In conclusion, the IIEP's work offers a replicable model for the future of socio-economic research and intervention. It demonstrates that the journey from Diagnosis (MD), to Prescription (ID), and finally to Treatment (TD) is a critical pathway for creating meaningful and sustainable change. The Inspiration Economy has thus evolved from a theoretical proposition into a proven methodological framework, one that champions integrative thinking and co-creation as the cornerstones for building a more inspired, resilient, and equitable world. The project's ultimate legacy is its demonstration that the most complex challenges of our time demand not just specialised knowledge, but the courage to connect, integrate, and create alongside the communities we seek to serve.

8.3. From a Theory to a Global Movement

This paper showed how the IE labs and papers transformed the Inspiration Economy Theory into a collaborative, global project. They provided the evidence, the methodologies, the case studies, and the community of practice that elevated it from an economic concept to a comprehensive framework for socioeconomic development.

The longitudinal study and deductive coding, besides the researcher being participant-observer set a high-standard for future social science research in this line. The four phases aligned in the methodology of this paper can allow other researchers to understand and potentially replicate the methodology in studying other projects. This systematic analysis, besides the critical self-assessment, reflective practice helped to address any potential bias.

This ten-year work of the IE theory shows its potential to develop more robust, actionable, and continuously improving discipline with a documented impact across dozens of countries and sectors. The labs, followed by the research papers, should stay the experimental heart of the Inspiration Economy Project, through pumping practical life case studies into its theoretical body.

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