



Challenging the boundaries of knowledge: Application of a “queer-indisciplinary” approach in a storytelling design course

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the need for inclusive and interdisciplinary educational methods has become increasingly important, especially for addressing complex social and cultural issues. In advanced communication design, particularly immersive storytelling, there is a growing demand for approaches that overcome knowledge fragmentation and transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. In this sense, “indisciplinary” questions the nature and usefulness of disciplinary boundaries specifically in the context of solutions to complex challenges. Queer theory, in fact, provides a framework for rejecting rigid categories. By challenging conventional frameworks, “queering” invites diverse perspectives and explores “not-yet” ways of teaching and engaging with the future. The “queer-indisciplinary” methodology presented in this paper focuses on deconstructing and hybridizing skills, in an effort to challenge disciplinary boundaries and promote experiential learning free from strict disciplinary boundaries, supporting innovation and creativity by specifically intertwining Design, Performing Art, Social Sciences, and Digital Technology (DASD). The DASD seminars examined in this study were designed specifically to facilitate students’ design of disruptive communications as part of the indisciplinary queering process to foster critical futures thinking and disrupt hegemonic disciplinary structures. The DASD seminars demonstrated that the “queer-indisciplinary” approach not only fostered an inclusive understanding of knowledge but also developed essential skills for addressing contemporary challenges in immersive storytelling design, blending multiple perspectives to enhance innovation and creativity.

1. Introduction: expanding horizons in immersive storytelling design to tackle contemporary challenges

This paper introduces “queer-indisciplinary” understood as a critical questioning of disciplinary boundaries and as an overarching theoretical framework to foster alternative approaches to education and future-oriented design thinking. “Queer-indisciplinary” challenges rigid disciplinary boundaries, embraces fluidity and hybridity, and promotes alternative ways of knowing, doing, and learning. By destabilizing normative structures in education and research, it seeks to foster inclusive, critical, and future-oriented thinking. This approach provides a lens for integrating diverse disciplines and methods, encouraging students to explore uncertainty, experiment across fields, and address complex societal challenges in creative and transformative ways. In the context of communication design, “queer-indisciplinary” offers a foundation for developing innovative pedagogical approaches that prepare students to tackle multifaceted societal issues, as it guides the development of skills and mindsets needed to navigate complex societal challenges. A central aspect of this process is the ability to ‘make the ordinary strange,’ through practices of queering and weirding

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(Bell et al., 2005) which deconstruct established perceptions and allow for the imagination of radically different scenarios, especially for engaging with what Dator (2022), Sardar and Sweeney (2016), and Sweeney (2017) describe as conditions of “global weirding,” where uncertainty, contested values, high stakes, and urgent decisions define the horizon of futures inquiry. By foregrounding fluidity, hybridity, and critical care, this framework positions design education as simultaneously an epistemic and ethical endeavor, equipping learners to navigate uncertain futures while enabling them to design immersive storytelling experiences capable of disrupting dominant narratives, fostering alternative imaginaries, and opening spaces for more inclusive and transformative engagement. This contribution also aligns with what has been described in recent literature as the “*experiential turn*” in social sciences and education (Schoeller & Thorgeirsdottir, 2019; Candy & Dunagan, 2016). The experiential turn emphasizes embodied, participatory, and practice-based modes of inquiry, underscoring the value of immersion and lived experience in the production of knowledge. In design and futures studies, this turn has been consolidated through the emergence of the *Experiential Futures* framework (Candy & Dunagan, 2017; Dunagan et al., 2019; Engeler & Schultz, 2019), which makes alternative futures tangible through immersive, speculative, and performative interventions. Such work demonstrates the epistemic and pedagogical potential of designing futures as lived encounters rather than abstract scenarios. By situating the queer-indisciplinary approach in this trajectory, the present study extends the experiential paradigm by introducing critical perspectives from queer theory, thereby foregrounding the destabilization of normative assumptions within experiential design education.

1.1. Communication design and the premise for “queer-indisciplinary” experimentation

The role of communication design is in fact becoming increasingly pivotal in addressing the complex challenges of the society (Grimaldi, 2020). Recent advancements have, in fact, transformed communication design into a tool not just for message transmission but for facilitating understanding and driving solutions to social, environmental, and cultural issues, thereby generating tangible community impacts and supporting decision-making processes (Chirico & Gaggioli, 2023). In particular, within communication design, a dedicated focus on immersive storytelling design is emerging (Kerrison, 2022). Given its recent development and innovative approach, immersive storytelling design could be considered both an emerging discipline within communication design and a tool used to deal with complex societal concerns, foster understanding, and drive solutions. The concept of immersion in storytelling is a well-researched and widely debated term, frequently contested and defined differently across various media and disciplines (Polydorou, 2024). However, one of the most frequently cited statements on immersive communication design is Murray’s definition (1997), which describes it as the sensation of being fully surrounded by an alternate reality, akin to plunging into water, where the setting and the content capture complete attention and engages entire perceptual system. Hence, immersive storytelling, by enveloping audiences in engaging narratives, fosters emotional connections and active participation, enhancing retention and comprehension through multisensory interaction (Triberti et al., 2017).

When approached from a queer perspective, this practice is not limited to eliciting empathy or engagement, but becomes an opportunity to destabilize dominant epistemologies, to create alternative narratives, and to open up spaces where the future can be imagined beyond linear and normative logics (Yekani et al., 2016).

1.2. The need to combine disciplines for impactful immersive storytelling design

To effectively tackle contemporary challenges, the success of immersive communication design increasingly depends on its integration with other disciplines and tools, which augments its capacity to create lasting societal impacts (Waisbord, 2019) and effectively face the most pressing issues of contemporary society (Dalai et al., 2018). However, in communication design, there is a notable gap in how students are prepared for the complex, interdisciplinary hurdles of contemporary issues (Cezzar, 2020). While technical training in tools and software is emphasized, students often lack the necessary methodological and conceptual frameworks needed to engage deeply with societal problems. Several studies point to the importance of integrating disciplines like social sciences, technology, and the arts into the communication design curriculum (Burke, 2020). Technologies like Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are considered important drivers for offering distinctive opportunities to transport audiences into critical social contexts, fostering empathy and understanding beyond the capabilities of traditional methods (Arcagni, 2020). As Gibbons et al. (1994) argue, many contemporary problems are inherently complex and demand multifaceted, integrated approaches that draw upon multiple fields of study. Despite the clear need for cross-disciplinary education, no comprehensive courses or curricula currently exist in communication design that meaningfully integrate and combine these diverse areas to effectively deal with modern-day challenges (Norman, 2020). While it is essential to build upon established approaches that connect different disciplines, such as interdisciplinarity,

Table 1

Key aspect and limitation of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary.

APPROACH	KEY ASPECT	LIMITATION
Multidisciplinary	Involves studying a research topic in several disciplines at the same time.	Coordination across disciplines can result in fragmented solutions, limiting the ability to address interconnected societal challenges
Interdisciplinary	Focuses on the transfer of methods and knowledge among disciplines.	The need for intense collaboration and reconciling methodological differences can hinder adaptive responses to rapidly evolving complex issues.
Transdisciplinary	Goes beyond disciplines, integrating and synthesizing knowledge for complex problem-solving.	While it offers deep integration, it demands substantial resources and coordination, making it challenging to implement in fast-changing, urgent contexts.

multidisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity, it is equally crucial to recognize and transcend their limitations (Nicolescu, 2014). While multidisciplinarity analyzes themes from multiple disciplines, offering complementary perspectives (Sivakumar, 2018; Fiore & Salas, 2007), interdisciplinary research integrates knowledge across fields to foster innovation and collaboration, focusing on problems beyond disciplinary boundaries (Razzaq et al., 2013; Popper, 1963; The National Academy of Sciences, 2004). Transdisciplinary research, as described by Dennison (2017), instead explores intricate issues through integrated skills. According to Steelman et al. (2015), despite their value in responding to contemporary complexity, these paradigms face inherent concerns in managing the uncertainty and fluidity of future scenarios. Their emphasis on integration within or across established disciplines risks reinforcing existing boundaries and fails to critically engage with deeply rooted systems of thought, limiting their potential to address emerging and dynamic issues (Table 1). In contrast, a queer-undisciplinary approach creates spaces that actively foreground historically marginalized perspectives including queer, feminist, crip, and Indigenous viewpoints (Kafer, 2013; Brooks et al., 2021; López & Coello, 2020) and promotes a radical reconceptualization of temporality, understood not as a linear progression but as a discontinuous, open, and entangled process (Loewen Walker, 2014). This approach allows futures to be explored from fluid, ephemeral vantage points, deeply informed by the identities and experiences of those participating in design practices (Dator, 2022). To effectively address dynamic societal challenges, an open, flexible framework that fosters undisciplined thinking is therefore essential.

2. Indisciplinarity as border thinking: shaping education to stimulate future perspectives

Indisciplinarity questions the nature and usefulness of disciplinary boundaries. It is this focus on creating opportunities for “border thinking” that is especially appropriate for students of communication design, with the aim of fostering critical, flexible, and future-oriented approaches to problem-solving, encouraging experimentation across disciplines, and preparing students to navigate complex societal challenges with breakthrough mindset. In this context, the concern is not solely methodological but fundamentally ethical: education must be conceived as embedding responsibility and care as constitutive practices, foregrounding the ways in which design decisions configure communities, condition futures, and delimit possibilities for life (Adam & Groves, 2011). In communication design, where the focus is on crafting resonating experiences that stimulate engagement, experiential education emerges in fact as fundamental element in equipping future communicators with the skills needed to navigate and respond to complex societal issues. For this reason, the training of students must emphasize the ability to “move beyond” the past, driven by the pressing need to confront emerging global challenges (economic, social, and cultural).

2.1. Cultivating reflective and future-oriented communication designers

This aspect requires not only the integration of increasingly used advanced technological tools and innovative communication strategies but also the cultivation of “critical consciousness” (Freire, 2021). Such awareness is essential for students to first develop their understanding of these complexities, enabling them to craft messages that inspire awareness and transformative action among their audiences. Building on this aspect, a new communicative language that requires critical engagement to avoid being reduced to mere technological spectacle should be embraced (Chirico & Gaggioli, 2023). Immersive storytelling, by leveraging tools like Extended Reality (XR), holds immense potential for creating impactful narratives. However, without a critical framework, it risks becoming merely a vehicle for superficial experiences that prioritize technological novelty over meaningful content. To address this, a fluid critical approach becomes essential, fostering collaboration among social sciences, technology, performative arts, and communication studies. This convergence ensures that immersive storytelling should not only innovative but also deeply reflective and capable of addressing complex societal issues through a critical lens. Building on this aspect, it is crucial to foster specific training environments that support innovation, critical thinking, and adaptability to the temporal context, encouraging future communication designers to cultivate a reflective mindset, not only for addressing immediate matters but also for shaping thoughtful, future-oriented solutions through innovative tools (Brown, 2009; Kimbell, 2011).

2.2. Indisciplinarity: moving beyond rigid categorization

Therefore, it becomes essential to transcend the rigid categorizations imposed by traditional and frontal teaching, embracing fluidity, uncertainty, and complexity. Hence, “indisciplinarity” - which could be defined as a form of border thinking that integrates diverse, often divergent approaches - becomes crucial for addressing urgent social, cultural, and environmental concerns. Comanducci (2018) highlights in fact that the undisciplinedness is an emancipatory process that challenges academic structures, promoting reflective practice and active participation. Branca Falabella Fabrício (2017) discusses this concept, particularly focusing on “pensamento de fronteira” (border thinking) and “transgressão” (transgression), which go beyond mere disciplinary collaboration to transform how knowledge is constructed and shared. Anzaldúa (1987) reimagines borders as spaces of transformation rather than division, developing the concept of “mestiza consciousness”, unique identity formed by navigating multiple cultures and challenging binary understandings. This idea aligns with “indisciplinarity” critique of rigid structures, positioning the “mestiza” as a hybrid concept which embodies cultural and identity multiplicity while offering a framework for dismantling oppression and amplifying marginalized voices. In this sense, “indisciplinarity” shares common ground with post-structuralism, particularly in its rejection of rigid structures of knowledge, but it differs in its approach. While post-structuralism emphasizes the fluidity and instability of meaning and knowledge viewing truth as a relative and ever-evolving concept (Harcourt, 2007), this contribution focuses on the transformation of knowledge structures through the integration of distinct and often contrasting approaches of diverse disciplines. In this context, post-structuralism is understood as a theoretical framework that deconstructs and dismantles traditional notions of knowledge

(Williams, 2014), whereas the “indisciplinary” perspective goes beyond mere critical analysis, proposing practical action that merges and constructs new forms of understanding. This perspective, challenging disciplinary boundaries, also interrogates power and identity hierarchies, aiming for a more inclusive and transformative understanding of reality. As such, this approach encourages a critical examination of cultural and social norms, questioning established hierarchies (Miles, 2016), and is further supported by Mitchell (Purgar, 2016), who emphasizes the need for undisciplined thinking to tackle contemporary challenges. Pop (2021) similarly stresses the importance of challenging conventional academic norms to foster deeper critical thinking. While often linked with transdisciplinarity, the term “indisciplinary” serves as a more radical challenge, seeking to destabilize boundaries and open spaces for new thinking and design practices.

2.3. *Envisioning future through queer theory*

When combined with queer theory, the “indisciplinary” framework could offer a significant departure from traditional methods of envisioning the future. Fleener and Coble (2022) describe queer futuring as a process that disrupts normative structures and challenges fixed categories of thought, offering alternative ways of knowing, being, and acting. By emphasizing fluidity and complexity, queer futuring not only could redefine future studies but also reshape how communication design responds to society’s pressing needs. “Queering the future” is more than an academic exercise: it could be considered as a call to action, creating spaces for underrepresented and alternative viewpoints that have been historically excluded from mainstream discourse, such as those within queer communities (Brooks et al., 2021; Kafer, 2013). In this scenario, communication design could serve as tool for social justice and activism, engaging audiences in ways that address historical oppressions and contribute to transformative societal change (Frascara et al., 1997). Therefore, embracing queer methodologies allows designers to challenge dominant knowledge paradigms and foster embodied practices (Barad, 2007). As Fleener (2020) notes, queer futuring advocates for the decolonization of knowledge, transcending hegemonic, categorical thinking to create new forms of advocacy that prioritize collaboration over domination. This approach redefines expertise not as mastery within a single domain but as the ability to synthesize and navigate across multiple fields, addressing the complex, interdisciplinary challenges of our time. By critiquing the notion of fixed knowledge territories, it promotes an open approach that deconstructs and reorganizes boundaries, facilitating expressive and interpretative dialogue on critical issues (Muñoz, 2019; Drucker, 2009). For this reason, by combining the paradigm-breaking component with a fluid approach, it is possible to describe the “queer-indisciplinary” framework as a space of convergence and turbulence, where innovation thrives, boundaries are liberated, and a dynamic form of expertise is fostered, adaptable and responsive to a rapidly changing world. “Queer” in this context refers to the idea of a future that is open to radical transformation, free from rigid, dominant methodologies. As noted by Offord (2024), the queer pedagogical encounter in the educational field is an evolving project crucial for promoting an approach that embraces diversity and intersectionality while challenging fixed definitions and societal normativity. Furthermore, the path forward is not singular; it embraces a multiplicity of approaches to knowledge and action, offering alternative and possible futures (Westbrook, 2023).

3. Creating indisciplinary approaches to transgress. Experimental methods

In line with the context outlined, the challenge of pursuing an educational path in communication design, particularly in immersive storytelling, that adheres to a “queer-indisciplinary” framework has been acknowledged. Therefore, a fluid and queer system that questions disciplinary boundaries and remains adaptable has been experimentally adopted. To achieve this, it was necessary to implement deconstruction actions that enabled openness to new competencies. This openness facilitated a paradigm shift, which is crucial for designing effective, disruptive, and empathetic communication by eliminating sectoral segmentation and moving towards an approach that no longer distinguished among disciplinary boundaries. The destabilization that students experienced during the seminar, especially when engaging with altered forms of embodiment, reflects what Bell et al. (2005) define as “making the ordinary strange”, resonating concurrently with the conditions of “global weirding” described by Dator (2022) and Sweeney (2017), where uncertainty and contested values constitute fertile ground for rethinking futures. The course intentionally placed in fact students in such unsettling scenarios to foster the capacity to navigate ambiguity and design speculative, transformative narratives.

3.1. *Addressing complexity through integrated experiences*

This perspective is vital to effectively address the social and environmental emergencies that transcend sectoral barriers, as it is crucial for communication designers to embrace an integrated vision that combines knowledge and approaches from diverse fields. This model was designed to enable students to design experiences that reflected the complexity and interconnectivity of the real world, making these engagements more meaningful and capable of stimulating reflection and personal transformation. Such experiences should actively engage participants, leaving a lasting impression that solidifies memories and lessons learned for long-term retention. In this context, the innovative process illustrated by the UNHCR Innovation (2017) represented an initial attempt to envision innovation within an open and fluid framework, where, especially in response to emergencies, it proved to be a chaotic and complex process. The complexity arose from the fact that it often occurred in emergency or crisis situations, where conditions were constantly evolving and demanded ongoing adaptability and flexibility. In line with Illich (1971), in fact, learning would no longer be confined to the constraints of standardized curricula but would become more attuned to the lived experiences of individuals, thus creating opportunities for a more authentic and practical form of knowledge acquisition.

3.2. Deschooling for social complexity

In this regard, a framework aligned with Illich's vision of deschooling was applied, emphasizing experiential learning over formal, top-down instruction. Moving away from traditional educational structures encourages dynamic learning that values experiential knowledge and adapts to a constantly evolving landscape. In the "queer-indisciplinary" experiment, students were in fact immersed in experimental lectures centered around raising awareness of the LGBTQIA+ community. This experience mirrored [Kumashiro's approach \(2002\)](#) as it invited students to engage critically with both content and methodology, encouraging reflection on social justice issues in a way that is far removed from traditional, top-down forms of learning, fostering a more nuanced understanding of complex social and cultural challenges.

3.3. Communication design course: a fertile ground for experimenting with "queer-indisciplinary" approach

Within the Design Sustainability Lab, a design research-focused unit within the Department of Architecture and Design at a public university in Italy, research and case studies have highlighted the need for flexible and adaptive approaches to foster proactive student engagement with contemporary challenges of "liquid" society ([Bovo, 2022](#)) with each discipline contributing effectively based on its unique characteristics. The department has explicitly emphasized the importance of disciplinary collaboration, fostering the integration of diverse perspectives and methodologies within the program and supporting, even recognizing with higher final grades, the development of interdisciplinary theses. This approach is designed to prepare students to navigate complex professional contexts beyond the program. Grounded in research, methods, and tools of communication design, this approach moves beyond rigid models, adopting an innovative yet structured methodology that reflects the fluidity of reality: it aims to be dynamic, capable of adapting and evolving in response to continuously changing variables, thereby facilitating learning processes and active participation through a reflective approach. According to [Pinar \(1975\)](#), in the educational field, a reflective approach can be adopted through four main stages: the regressive (reconsidering and understanding past experiences), the progressive (directing one's gaze toward the future and imagining new possibilities), the analytical (integrating past, present, and future by examining their interconnections), and the synthetic (constructing a comprehensive educational vision through the role of a catalyst). Interpreted through the lens of "queer-indisciplinary", these stages actively challenge normative and linear frameworks of educational experience, highlighting temporal discontinuities and the contingent, transformative reconfiguration of knowledge. The regressive and progressive phases foreground the fragmentary character of memory and the openness of possible futures, destabilizing conventional expectations of a coherent past-future trajectory. The analytical and synthetic phases operate transversally, connecting insights across temporal and disciplinary boundaries in ways that exceed established curricular norms. In this way, Pinar's *currere* (2004) exemplifies a "queer-indisciplinary" approach, as it disrupts fixed curricular structures and cultivates alternative, inclusive, and self-transformative modes of educational becoming. This kind of contribution could lead students to engage deeply with their educational experiences, reassemble them to find meaning ([Baszile, 2017](#)), and sketch the relations among school knowledge, life-history, and intellectual development in ways that might function self-transformatively ([Pinar et al., 2008](#); [Reynolds et al., 2008](#)).

3.4. DASD disciplines: rationale for selection

Based on the recognized need for disciplinary collaboration, the approach draws on the notion of "queer-indisciplinary", which frames hybridization as a strategy for disrupting conventional boundaries and enabling new forms of communicative design. Within this perspective, four main pillars -Design, Performing Arts, Social Sciences, and Digital Technology (DASD)- were identified as the foundation for constructing immersive storytelling experiences. Participants, namely third-year undergraduate students in Communication Design, shared a common preparation but had uneven familiarity with these areas: theoretical exposure to social sciences, practical experience with digital technologies, and little engagement with performing arts. Integrating these diverse perspectives was considered essential for fostering self-transformation and developing a "disruptive communication vein". In this context, Extended Reality (XR) was introduced as a tool capable of transcending traditional boundaries and enhancing immersion ([Gaggioli, 2015](#)), increasingly present in education ([Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018](#)). A deliberately simple form—VR 3DoF with 360° video— was adopted to facilitate transformative narrative design ([D'Ascenzi et al., 2024](#)). Performing arts, though distant from digital technology, contribute through emotional engagement and role-playing, cultivating empathy and identification processes ([Dixon, 2006](#)). Social sciences provide interpretive frameworks for behavioural transformation, from altered mental states ([Grof, 2000](#)) to radical "quantum change" ([Miller & De Baca, 2001](#)). Finally, communication design orchestrates this interdisciplinary exchange, integrating insights into cohesive transformative experiences and anticipating future scenarios. The DASD constitutes the theoretical core of interdisciplinary integration, fostering an unconventional mode of communicative design grounded in critical thinking. Digital technology, particularly immersive media, was included not for its prominence but because it epitomizes the need for critical scrutiny in an era of digital saturation ([Renjith, 2017](#)). Immersive tools such as VR acquire pedagogical value only when situated within meaningful, tangible frameworks that encourage students to interrogate their utility for transformative learning. This approach foregrounds the paradox between technologically saturated virtual environments and the demand for authentic, embodied experiences, positioning such tension as a productive challenge. Within this framework, the integration of digital technology with performative arts and social sciences enables communication design students to explore the intersections of technology, analogy, and embodied practice, thereby constructing experiences oriented toward profound transformation.

3.5. DASD: a “Queer-Indisciplinary” approach between Pinar’s educational vision and afrofuturism

The DASD approach embodies a “queer-indisciplinary” approach, challenging rigid curricular structures and fostering inclusive, self-reflective, and alternative pathways of educational development. In line with Pinar’s framework (2004), this orientation enables a multidimensional understanding of learning. Specifically, the regressive moment—centered on reinterpreting the past—resonates with the role of the social sciences in DASD, providing cultural depth and contextual understanding. The progressive moment—directed toward the future—aligns with digital technologies, which open new avenues for immersive interaction. The analytical moment—integrating past, present, and future—finds correspondence in the performing arts, inviting participants to engage cognitively and emotionally with human experience. Finally, the synthetic moment—constructing a comprehensive educational vision—parallels design practice, which assembles insights from multiple disciplines into transformative communication strategies. While DASD draws inspiration from Afrofuturism (Yaszek, 2006), which uses storytelling, art, and music to imagine liberatory futures, it emerges from distinct South European cultural, philosophical, and historical contexts. Whereas Afrofuturism directly addresses Black liberation narratives, DASD approach adopts in fact a broader social justice perspective, mobilizing interdisciplinary practices to cultivate critical learning and disruptive communication design. Within this framework, theatre plays a uniquely disruptive role: its deconstructive nature resists fixed boundaries, creating liminal spaces where participants can question norms, experiment with identities, and recognize the interconnectedness of human experience. In this sense, theatre - and the DASD model more broadly - serves as a catalyst for systemic change, enabling designers to address complex societal challenges while fostering inclusive, diverse, and future-oriented communication design. The queer-undisciplinary approach adopted in DASD resonated with Kafer’s (2013) and Loewen Walker’s (2014) reconceptualization of temporality as discontinuous and entangled. Students’ engagement with ephemeral, sensorial practices - such as blindfolded theatre or virtual embodiment - created fluid temporal vantage points that enabled them to imagine futures grounded in marginalized perspectives rather than in linear trajectories.

4. Exploring the methodology in practice: the seminar “The Body I Am (Not)”

Building on the theoretical premises of the “queer-indisciplinary” approach, particularly through the DASD framework, the study then focused on translating these concepts into practice and evaluating their potential within an educational context through a dedicated seminar. Although the seminar’s framework embraced an evolving, adaptable process rather than a rigid application of pre-existing theory in the classroom, the theoretical methodology significantly informed its practical implementation.

4.1. The context of the seminar

A purposeful seminar has thus been developed within the course of Design III, Communication, Channel B, at the University of Florence. The goal of the course is to explore the latest trends in Communication Design, with a particular focus on Transformative and Immersive Storytelling Design (D’Ascenzi et al., 2024), through the “queer-indisciplinary approach”. Furthermore, the specific objective of the course is to train future storytelling designers to adopt a provocative and experimental mindset, and be prepared to challenge themselves by exploring themes that may initially feel distant from their own experiences. The context was provided by a class of undergraduate students enrolled in the Bachelor’s program in Design, specifically those specializing in Communication Design. The underlying problem being addressed was the recurring limitation observed among communication design students: many exhibit high technical proficiency but yet they often demonstrate limited critical reflexivity. When offered guidance or feedback, these students can default to following instructions literally, which tends to constrain their creative capacities and reduce the potential for original, transformative problem-solving. The seminar thus sought to challenge this tendency by employing “queer-indisciplinary” methods, encouraging students to critically interrogate assumptions, question conventional frameworks and expand their imaginative horizons. Through this process, the seminar encourages students to move beyond a prescriptive, execution-focused approach and, in turn, to explore and design non-normative narratives that foster critical reflection by challenging rigid conventions.

4.2. The core focus of the seminar

In this perspective, the programmatic purpose of the seminar was framed around a central question: *Can the application of a “queer-indisciplinary” approach—structured through the DASD framework (Design, Performing Arts, Social Sciences, Digital Technology) - encourage designers to move beyond pre-established pathways, enabling them to create disruptive and non-normative experiences?* The formulation of this question reflects a broader ambition: to employ the queer dimension as a methodological and epistemic disruption capable of unsettling fixed categories, challenging rigid conventions, and opening spaces for new forms of imagination. While LGBTQIA+ themes were explored in the seminar, they were not positioned as the primary object of evaluation. Instead, they served as generative entry points—provocations that encouraged participants to interrogate assumptions and engage with both personal and cultural biases. The study’s primary aim was not in fact to “test” LGBTQIA+ content per se, but to mobilize these themes as a lens for exploring how queer-indisciplinary and queer-futuring can broaden students’ imaginative capacities, allowing them to envision futures that disrupt conventional disciplinary frameworks and social norms. In this context, the seminar explicitly focuses on engaging students in open discussions, particularly on sensitive topics and specifically on the non-acceptance of the body. The definition of the seminar process was to firstly create a safe yet inspiring environment where students can confront their biases, broaden their perspectives, and develop critical empathy through reflective dialogue and experiential learning. As part of this experimental process, the students themselves became “subjects” in an educational journey that was intentionally thought-provoking. The seminar’s components aim to engage

students in reflecting on future perspectives related to new communication methods and advanced digital tools through a provocative process that disrupts normative structures. Across the experimentation of the four pillars of DASD, students have had the opportunity to learn the importance of critical immersive communication via an educational approach aimed at facilitating first-hand experimentation with the “queer interdisciplinary” framework in practice. In response to this, students are asked to design unconventional immersive experiences (XR and/or performative) as a form of validation of “queer-indisciplinary” approach with the intention of creating spaces of resistance, imagination, and transformation, where conventional categories of knowledge, identity, and communication are disrupted and reconfigured.

4.3. *Theme of the seminar*

The theme of the seminar was carefully selected to exemplify the processes of future thinking and queer interdisciplinarity for the students. On this basis, it was decided that to focus the seminar on a highly relevant contemporary social issue: the (non) acceptance of one's body, aptly named “The Body I am (Not)”. This topic has been carefully chosen since it resonates deeply in today's society, where media and digital platforms play a crucial role in shaping body image and influencing the acceptance of one's body. In this context, in fact, students are encouraged to explore the subject by selecting their own lens of inquiry, based on their personal preferences and experiences. The decision to focus on the theme of bodily (non) acceptance is driven not only by its social relevance but also by the intention to provoke discussion. In particular, this choice has been made lying by the fact that, generally in immersive storytelling design experiences, due to the use of VR headsets, the user's physical body becomes invisible, opening up interesting perspectives on the concept of embodiment and the dynamics of identification with another's body. In this way, students are encouraged to reflect on how the absence or alteration of the physical body can destabilize and subvert gender expectations, creating a space where participants can experience a form of embodiment free from normative constraints that often define and limit the expression of the embodied self, through analog and virtual immersive storytelling design experiences. While dissociating from one's own body may seem negative, it actually enhances detachment from physical self-awareness and fosters a deeper connection with the body depicted in the video: through the use of 360° video, the character's perspective becomes the viewer's primary viewpoint, enabling full immersion into their experience. This immersion occurs in both virtual reality and analog experiences. In virtual reality, the visual perspective adjusts according to the selected point of view, while in analog experiences, the visual field is deliberately obstructed to encourage imagination and identification with another body. In both instances, visual dissociation was introduced to demonstrate to students how, when critically designed and thoughtfully implemented, it can foster empathy and immersion in the character's experience, precisely by enabling a disconnection from one's own body and thereby enhancing perspective-taking.

4.4. *The involvement of DASD in the seminar*

To facilitate active learning for the participating students (approximately 60), experiential and practical meetings were organized on themes corresponding to the three disciplines that, alongside Design—the central focus of the communication course—are part of the Transformative & Immersive Storytelling Design. Specifically, the meetings addressed:

4.4.1. *Practical involvement of social sciences*

A lecture dedicated to LGBTQIA+ issues was conducted in collaboration with the association The Shade, part of the Benefit Corporation Underdog, a cultural centre in Florence that serves as “a reference for all individuals seeking a space to express themselves without fear of judgment. From the experience of our events arises the desire to share our vision of entertainment, safer spaces, and inclusivity with a wider audience”. This workshop featured lectures, personal stories, and artistic activities within a combined framework of informational methods based on interactive and experiential approaches to tackle such complex and multifaceted topics. The proposed setup enabled students not only to receive information but also to participate actively and proactively. The personal stories greatly enriched the students' experiences, allowing them to listen to and explore the challenges of disseminating and understanding LGBTQIA+ issues. Students were exposed to the direct experiences of invited speakers through personal narratives and slam poetry, providing a powerful platform for deeply engaging emotional sharing. This segment of the seminar focused on educating students and future designers about the importance of inclusive language, fostering sensitivity to the topic and promoting awareness. The variety of proposed activities encouraged students to reflect on LGBTQIA+ community and engage in open and profound dialogues about complex subjects, supported by the anonymous collection of questions that stimulated discussion and significantly contributed to understanding the topic, including in the context of body acceptance. The society The Shade made a highly significant contribution through the innovative blending of personal narrative, performance art, and lectures. This part of the seminar represented an important step toward creating a university environment that is as sensitive as possible to LGBTQIA+ themes and all related aspects of embodied communication, in connection with the seminar's theme of liberating bodies from gender norms, which, in turn, aimed at raising awareness and empowering the designers of tomorrow. In order to stimulate a learning experience that transcends the mere delivery of information and fosters critical engagement, the seminar emphasized interactive and experiential learning approaches. This kind of strategy ensured that students actively engaged with the material, participated in meaningful discussions, and reflected on their own perspectives, rather than passively receiving information. The blend of personal stories and artistic expression encouraged students to envision futures where marginalized voices are central to societal transformation. Participants shared their reflections on how inclusive practices and empathetic narratives could redefine societal norms, paving the way for more equitable and sensitive communication design approaches.

4.4.2. *Practical involvement of performing art, theatre*

The second experiential session explored the realm of immersive theatre, offering students the opportunity to experience a unique form of theatrical performance. In collaboration with LST teatro, a theatrical company active for nearly twenty years and dedicated to researching new communicative languages and artistic expressions, an experience was designed to encourage a thoughtful approach to the idea of “immersion”, questioning the common association of immersion solely with virtual experiences. Students were immersed in a sensory theatrical performance, experiencing it with their eyes covered, a limitation aimed at enhancing their imagination through the stimulation of senses other than sight, such as the auditory, olfactory and haptic senses. This decision to blindfold the participants was particularly innovative, as it removed any potential preoccupation with their own physicality, inviting them to focus entirely on the narrative’s exploration of body perception. A specific LGBTQIA+ monologue was carefully selected for the session - a section from “Eve” by [Clifford and Goode \(2017\)](#) - addressing themes of body non-acceptance. Based on this text, an immersive experience was designed, incorporating sensory stimuli such as soundscapes—both didactic and emotional—to aid in immersing the participants. Additionally, tactile elements were introduced, representing physical gestures that occurred against the protagonist, and olfactory stimuli, which recreated the environments experienced by the protagonist. The narrative itself, focused on the happiness of finding one’s identity despite initial struggles with body perception, directly engaged with themes of body acceptance and the often-contradictory societal expectations placed on our physical form. By removing the visual perception of their bodies, students were invited to reconsider their understanding of embodiment, suggesting that identity and self-worth go beyond physical appearance. In this way, the performance created a contestatory position toward traditional views of the body, highlighting how the body, often objectified or scrutinized, can be reimagined and understood differently through the lens of emotional and sensory experience. This specific method was designed to introduce students to new communicative and immersive languages, distinct from those traditionally associated with the virtual world and design. It was an experiment meant to expand perception, demonstrating that immersion can occur in multiple ways, even outside virtual environments. This aspect encouraged students to engage not only as spectators but, more importantly, as future storytelling designers, emphasize the value of a critical approach to new advanced communicative languages. The exercise invited students to question traditional views of embodiment and explore the possibilities of redefining identity beyond physical appearance. Participants discussed how such approaches could inspire future designs that prioritize emotional and sensory engagement over visual representation, fostering more empathetic narratives.

4.4.3. *Practical involvement of digital technology*

The final experiential session focused on an interactive lesson in virtual technology, offering the opportunity to engage oneself in an immersive experience created by Margherita Landi and Agnese Lanza, choreographers and dancers responsible for Peaceful Places project, which won the prestigious “Auggie Awards USA 2021” in the Best Art or Film category. The project investigates human affectivity through embracing, utilizing virtual reality. While not directly related to LGBTQIA+ themes, the goal of the project is to capture and transfer the energy generated by human contact into one’s own body, allowing users to assimilate and personalize these experiences to open up to others without creating physical barriers. In this sense, the VR exercise articulated a contestatory position with regard to the body by challenging traditional notions of corporeal boundaries and interactions. By transferring affectivity through virtual space, the exercise pushed participants to reconsider the ways in which the body can be experienced, not solely through physicality but also through emotional resonance and virtual extension. This shift in focus highlighted the potential for the digital experience to disrupt fixed conceptions of the body, suggesting that physical proximity is not the only way to foster connection and intimacy. Margherita Landi, a choreographer and PhD candidate in Performance at Portsmouth University, led the session, initially emphasizing the physical experience and then the virtual one, inviting participants to replicate some of her simple movements before donning the headset, facilitating a smoother transition from the physical world to the virtual one, and reducing the separation between human experience and technological interaction. Although virtual reality was at the heart of the session, Landi’s research primarily sought to bridge the gap between the physical and digital realms. This method blurred the boundaries between body and machine, demonstrating how technology can enhance, rather than replace, the physical experience. The session’s overarching theme was to demonstrate the depth of immersion possible with virtual reality, which is achieved through 360 videos and cinematic technologies distinct from mere digital reconstruction. Such immersive experience allowed students to reconsider the traditional limits of corporeality, opening new perspectives on how the body can be engaged and understood within both physical and virtual spaces. Through this exercise, the seminar invited participants to reflect critically on the interconnection between body and technology, and how our perceptions of both can be expanded and challenged. Thus, the VR experience not only provided an immersive journey into human connection but also encouraged students to consider how virtual spaces can contest conventional ideas of embodiment, opening up a new realm of possibilities for how we understand and experience the body, both in the digital world and in reality. The exercise highlighted virtual environments’ ability to transcend physical limits, redefining embodiment and inspiring students to envision technology as a bridge for deeper emotional connections and integration of physical and digital realms. Students reflected on the potential for VR to create transformative experiences, emphasizing the importance of designing future virtual spaces that prioritize emotional depth, envisioning new ways to experience and understand embodiment.

4.5. *Assessing the impact of the seminar*

At the conclusion of the seminar, students were asked to provide feedback on the educational experience they had undergone, especially with the aim in understanding the actual impact of the application of the “queer-indisciplinary” method. Direct observations of changes in students’ attitudes and design practices, reflected in the quality and originality of their final projects, suggest a significant impact of the approach on their creative processes. The qualitative evaluation was conducted directly by the author, an adjunct

lecturer in transmedia design with expertise in teaching and research in performative and immersive storytelling design. The author had previously supervised the same students in more traditional exercises, which had typically demonstrated lower levels of creativity and a more limited ability to move beyond conventional frameworks. This longitudinal point of comparison provided a grounded basis for assessing the outcomes of the present experiment, underscoring the extent to which the queer-indisciplinary approach fostered a qualitative leap in both originality and the capacity to articulate unconventional visions. These qualitative observations were systematically complemented by structured open-mic feedback sessions and a targeted questionnaire, which together provided both reflective and measurable insights into the transformative potential of the “queer-indisciplinary” framework. The decision not to conduct a pre-assessment was based on the seminar’s pedagogical approach, which prioritized fostering an open, fluid, and immersive learning experience over comparing students’ pre-existing knowledge or attitudes. By not establishing baseline expectations, the seminar allowed in fact for a more organic exploration of the topics at hand, giving students the freedom to approach the material without the constraints of predefined ideas. Instead, the seminar adopted a continuous feedback loop through direct student reflections, informal discussions, and post-assessments, allowing the educational impact to emerge naturally from the students’ lived experiences and interactions within the seminar. The post-assessment was designed to capture students’ insights, emphasizing their evolving journey rather than measuring progress against predefined benchmarks. This approach culminated at the conclusion of each practical experience (social sciences, theatre, and digital technologies), where direct dialogues with students provided a platform for reflection on how these exercises inspired them to think about alternative futures, challenge traditional notions of the future, and design disruptive immersive communication. In general, the seminar methodology and theme inspired students to question normative structures and envision futures where collaboration across disciplines creates novel solutions. By exploring DASD, students engaged with concepts that challenge conventional boundaries, fostering imaginative thinking about how to address societal challenges in innovative ways. This methodological choice resonates with the “queer-indisciplinary” perspective itself by refusing rigid pre/post comparisons and instead privileging fluid, situated forms of feedback, the assessment mirrors the epistemic stance of the seminar.

4.6. “Open-mic” feedback

For the experiment, aligning with a free-schemes approach, it was decided to implement what could be described as an “open-mic” feedback model, where participants were invited to share their opinions spontaneously throughout the duration of the seminar. Participation in the “open mic” feedback sessions involved nearly the entire class: only a small number of students chose not to share their reflections. Despite the large cohort size, the data collection process was in fact made more inclusive through an itinerant approach, in which the instructor moved among desks and engaged with small discussion groups that had formed naturally around the classroom. This format created a more informal setting and encouraged even those students who are typically more reticent or reserved to voice their perspectives, in a sort of communicative “bubble”: on one hand, students were physically close to the instructor and felt able to speak with a certain degree of confidence; on the other, their voices were still audible to the entire class. In this way, spontaneity was preserved while also ensuring a broad representativeness of the class’s experiences and perceptions. Owing to this approach, students freely expressed that the seminar encouraged them to imagine futures beyond traditional frameworks. For example, during the social sciences session, many students remarked how the focus on LGBTQIA+ issues opened their eyes to the necessity of designing communication strategies by thinking about futures where narration is more fluid and adaptable, allowing for the expression of diverse identities without the constraints of rigid categories. One student shared, “It made me realize how much room there is for rethinking identity, and how communication design can be a tool to help reshape societal norms”. In the theatre experience, which allowed them to experience body perception without the distraction of visual identity, students sparked reflections on the fluidity of gender and the ways in which we could disrupt normative conceptions of self and other. A comment from one participant was, “The performance made me think about how much we limit ourselves by associating identity with physical appearance. This experience helped me imagine a world where we could experience others’ lives without any of those limitations”. The digital technology session, using VR to explore emotional connection and physical boundaries, prompted students to reconsider the role of technology in fostering human relationships. Many were inspired by how VR could challenge fixed ideas of embodiment and create new spaces for connection. One student stated, “I never thought technology could help me feel more connected to others. It makes me think about how we can design experiences that bring people together emotionally, not just physically”. These reflections demonstrate that the exercises not only deepened students’ understanding of their subjects but also expanded their imaginations about future design possibilities, where disciplines’ collaboration and innovative design can tackle complex, socially relevant concerns. By engaging with topics that challenge traditional norms, students were inspired to think critically about how their future roles as designers could help shape a more compassionate, dynamic, and thoughtful world. From a “queer-indisciplinary” perspective, the open-mic method queers traditional hierarchies, validating plural, embodied, and affective ways of knowing. Students’ reflections on fluid identities, body–self decoupling, and technology as affective medium signal epistemic displacement, showing their ability to inhabit non-normative positions and imagine alternative futures, consistent with the goals of the approach.

4.7. Quantitative feedback

To assess the impact and level of innovation, a questionnaire was administered to gauge students’ opinions. The questionnaire was specifically structured to evaluate students’ perspectives on the applied approach and their overall learning experience. The questionnaire, too, was designed in alignment with the “queer-indisciplinary” framework. Instead of assessing conventional notions of performance or skill acquisition, it asked students to evaluate their experience through dimensions of disruption, hybridity, and transformative potential, consistent with the aims of the DASD framework. Specifically,

Perceived novelty: This parameter has been chosen since novelty is central to the “queer-indisciplinary” approach, which aims to destabilize established categories and question traditional models. As argued by Comanducci (2018) and Fabrício (2017), indisciplinary functions as *border thinking*, enabling productive disorientation that opens new spaces for reflection and design.

Interest in alternating traditional and unconventional experiences: the DASD model does not reject tradition but places design in dialogue with performance, social sciences, and digital tools in unconventional way. Following Anzaldúa's (1987) *mestiza consciousness*, this alternation embodies a queer crossing of boundaries.

Overall appreciation of the “queer-indisciplinary” approach: This item measures the perceived effectiveness of integrating the four DASD pillars while creating a queer space that deconstructs disciplinary rigidity. It reflects whether the method is experienced not only as technical learning but also as transformative education (Illich, 1971; Freire, 2021)

Impact on designing the final experience (sensory engagement): Attention to sensory engagement aligns with Murray (1997) and Triberti et al. (2017), who link immersion to retention and involvement. It indicates whether students shifted from message-oriented design to transformative experience-making.

Confidence in remembering the experience: Experiential learning theories (Pinar, 2004; Baszile, 2017) emphasize that memorable, dissonant experiences can produce *quantum change* (Miller & De Baca, 2001). Students' confidence in remembering the seminar thus serves as an indirect measure of its transformative potential.

Perceived usefulness of integrating disciplines outside of design: At the core of DASD lies disciplinary hybridity: design as orchestrator, performance as empathic activator, social sciences as critical catalyst, and digital technologies as immersive lab. Evaluating usefulness reveals whether students recognized indisciplinary as a break from design's self-referentiality (Cezzar, 2020; Gibbons et al., 1994).

Engagement and impact of Performing Art, Social Sciences, and Digital Technology: This item specifies which DASD pillars had the greatest impact. Theatre as liminal space (Dixon, 2006), social sciences as transformative tools (Grof, 2000), and digital technologies as critical immersive language (Renjith, 2017) are examined in relation to students' engagement.

Overall impact on communication design thinking (open question): Finally, the open item reflects the generative and non-prescriptive nature of the queer-indisciplinary approach. Communication design, seen as world-making (Frascara et al., 1997; Chirico & Gaggioli, 2023), is interrogated in its capacity to be reshaped by experience, inviting speculative, non-normative futures (Fleener & Coble, 2022; Muñoz, 2019).

The seminar aimed to assess how students perceived and assimilated concepts through unconventional teaching practices based on practical and interactive experiences from various disciplinary fields, as well as traditional teaching methods. Students were asked to evaluate whether, and to what extent, this learning enriched their understanding and contributed to a greater memorability of the

Table 2
Summary table of students' feedback.

QUESTION/TOPIC	QUEER-INDISCIPLINARY ASSESSMENT	PERCENTAGE RESPONSE	CRITICAL INSIGHTS
Perceived novelty of the teaching method (level of unusualness)	Productive disorientation challenging traditional models.	96,6 % highly rated (69 % as 5, 27,6 % as 4) 3.4 % rated it as 3	The seminar was perceived as radically different, validating the queer-indisciplinary aim of disrupting normative teaching formats and fostering critical awareness.
Interest in alternating traditional and unconventional experiences	Creative tension between conventional and unconventional practices.	96,6 % highly rated (69 % as 5, 27,6 % rated it as 4)	Students recognized value in crossing between stability and disruption, showing openness to a hybrid pedagogy that queers disciplinary boundaries.
Overall appreciation of the “queer-indisciplinary” approach	Transformative integration of the DASD pillars	89,7 % high appreciation (37.9 % rated it as 5, 51.7 % rated it as 4) 10.3 % rated it as 3	The approach was seen as transformative and generative, though some hesitation suggests that further scaffolding may be needed to fully embrace indisciplinary.
Impact on designing the final experience (sensory engagement)	Immersive and multisensory engagement.	86,2 % high impact (24.1 % rated it as 5, 62.1 % rated it as 4, 13,8 % as 3)	Sensory immersion strongly shaped design outcomes, confirming that embodied and affective engagement enhances critical experimentation beyond normative communication design.
Confidence in remembering the experience	Memorable, dissonant learning as transformative potential.	72.4 % confident, 27.6 % uncertain	Memorability was high, indicating the disruptive quality of the experience; uncertainty highlights the experimental risk of queer pedagogies that resist standardization.
Perceived usefulness of integrating disciplines outside of design	Value of hybrid practices beyond design's self-referentiality.	100 % found it useful (38,8 % as 4, 61,2 % as 5)	Full recognition of cross-disciplinary integration validates the queer-indisciplinary claim that design gains meaning when it destabilizes its own insularity.
Engagement and impact of Performing Art, Social Sciences, and Digital Technology	Distinct contributions of performance, social sciences, and digital tools.	Performing Art: 58.6 %, Social Sciences: 27.6 % Digital Technology (VR): 13.8 %	Performing Arts emerged as the strongest driver of queer disruption and identity exploration; Social Sciences supported critical inclusivity; Digital Technology was less impactful, suggesting novelty alone is insufficient without critical framing.
Overall impact on communication design thinking (open question)	Speculative and non-normative reimagining of communication design	Majority felt more engaged with the content	The seminar encouraged students to reimagine design as a queer, non-normative, and speculative practice, opening new trajectories beyond conventional problem-solving.

information acquired. Quantitative feedback confirmed these qualitative observations as reported in Table 2.

Crucially, the questionnaire results confirm the impact of the seminar from a “queer-indisciplinary” perspective. By evaluating dimensions such as novelty, alternation of experiences, memorability, cross-disciplinary integration, and sensory engagement, the survey moved beyond conventional performance metrics toward indicators of productive disorientation and boundary-crossing. High ratings in the perceived usefulness of integrating non-design disciplines (100 %) and the value of unconventional teaching methods (96.6 %) suggest that students not only engaged with the content but also validated the core principles of the “queer-indisciplinary” approach: disruption, hybridity, and transgression of established pathways foster transformative and enduring design experiences. Feedback from both questionnaires and open discussion expressed strong appreciation for the seminar’s ability to foster critical reflection on the future, particularly in relation to new communicative languages within communication design. During the open discussion, many highlighted how the “queer-indisciplinary” approach inspired them to envision a future characterized by the dismantling of rigid structures and traditional norms, stimulating perspectives for addressing complex social and cultural challenges. Such data highlights an intriguing paradox: the seminar’s design was driven by the intention to address the critical use of advanced digital communication design, aiming to stimulate innovation and reflection through the use of cutting-edge tools like VR. What is interesting is the fact that the VR component was less appreciated by participants compared to the more traditional disciplines of performing art and social sciences. Moreover, this aspect suggests that during the seminar, it became evident that pushing the boundaries with advanced technology doesn’t resonate with students unless the communication design experience is embodied and combined with performance and social science engagement in order to obtain a more tangible experience. In conclusion, the outlined approach underscores the transformative potential of “queer-indisciplinary” methodology and experiential learning as a foundation for innovative communication design education. By integrating diverse fields and challenging traditional frameworks, the seminar empowered students to think critically and creatively about their roles as designers in shaping forward-thinking futures. The design of the exercises and their content were intentionally crafted to explore marginalities, fluidity, and unconventional perspectives, encouraging students to move beyond conventional labels and embrace new ways of thinking. As such, as reported in the feedback obtained, it offers a compelling model for reimagining education in communication design, fostering a generation of designers prepared to address the evolving challenges of a dynamic and interconnected world (Figs. 1–3).

5. Conclusion

This contribution aims to highlight the effectiveness of the “queer-indisciplinary” approach as an innovative teaching methodology in the field of immersive storytelling design capable of challenging traditional conventions and promoting an inclusive and multidimensional education. The proposed model is distinguished by its ability to transcend disciplinary boundaries and traditional norms, fostering a fluid integration of diverse perspectives. By employing the term “queer” in a methodological context, the emphasis is placed on the importance of practices that challenge conventions, thereby creating innovative and inclusive learning spaces. The seminar “The Body I am (Not)” provided a practical context in which students actively experienced the benefits of experiential learning and disciplinary contamination. Through activities spanning social sciences, performing art, and digital technology, students had the opportunity to engage with these themes, overcoming the limitations of traditional lecture-based instruction. The final evaluation of the seminar by students indicated that the “queer-indisciplinary” method enriched their understanding and stimulated greater awareness of gender issues, sensitivity toward the experiences of others, and a lasting impact on memory and overall educational experience. Specifically, the seminar demonstrated how queer practices, aimed at making the ordinary extraordinary, transformed design education into both an epistemic and ethical endeavor. Exposing students to uncertain and ambiguous scenarios -such as blindfolded theatre or virtual embodiment experiences- enhanced their capacity to navigate contested values and envision radically different futures. Similarly, the critical interrogation of dominant epistemologies enabled students to question normative assumptions about the body and identity, opening narrative spaces beyond linear or prescriptive logics. The queer-indisciplinary framework encouraged students to experiment from marginal and temporally entangled perspectives, generating ephemeral and fluid experiences



Fig. 1. Experimentation teaching at the course @author's credits.

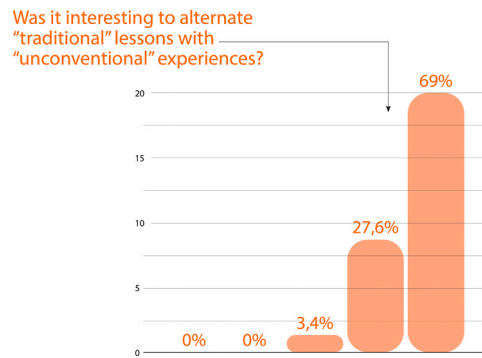


Fig. 2. Students' feedback on the interest generated by unconventional learning experiences during the course @ author's credits.

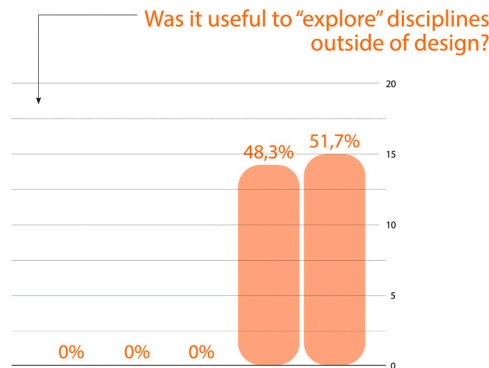


Fig. 3. Students' feedback on how the course helped them transcend traditional boundaries of design disciplines @author's credits.

that resonated with their own identities and design practices. Finally, the seminar highlighted how indisciplinarity fosters “border thinking” not only as a methodological tool but also as an ethical stance, prompting students to recognize how design decisions shape communities, influence futures, and delimit possibilities for life. In dialogue with existing works on Experiential Futures, the queer-indisciplinary framework presented here both resonates with and expands upon prior work. This study emphasizes in fact the importance of embodied, immersive, and participatory engagements as catalysts for learning and critical reflection. However, its distinctive contribution lies in the integration of queer and sensitive pedagogical strategies, which explicitly contest normative boundaries of identity, temporality, and knowledge. By queering experiential design education, this approach advances futures studies by adding a critical layer of reflexivity: one that destabilizes hegemonic epistemologies and foregrounds marginalized perspectives. In doing so, it contributes to the ongoing development of experiential methodologies while simultaneously widening their ethical and political horizon. However, despite the positive outcomes of the seminar and the effectiveness of the “queer-indisciplinary” approach, it is essential to simultaneously acknowledge certain limitations. The limited temporal dimension of the seminar, tied to the duration of the course (three months), imposed constraints on depth of exploration; a longer period would have allowed for more extensive engagement and critical reflection. Additionally, while the sample of 60 students is substantial, it limits the generalizability of the results, which would require further educational applications. To address these limitations and build upon what has been learned, future developments are necessary. It would be beneficial to consider organizing a longer and more structured educational program that integrates the “queer-indisciplinary” model across various courses, allowing students to explore topics in greater depth and apply knowledge in practical, real-world contexts. Furthermore, conducting longitudinal studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how this approach influences students' skills and perceptions over time, helping to assess the lasting impact of the method and to identify areas requiring further development for the application of queer educational practices. A further point of reflection concerns the transferability of this approach beyond formal educational contexts. The practices developed in the seminar show significant potential for application in professional and organizational settings. For example, queer-indisciplinary methods could be employed in co-design workshops or creative laboratories for innovation teams, where the ability to imagine alternative scenarios and unconventional solutions is especially crucial. The combination of performance, social sciences, and immersive technologies can stimulate participants to critically interrogate dominant paradigms and cultivate a culture of critical innovation. In this sense, the approach is not limited to serving as a pedagogical resource but can also function as a strategic lever to support transformative processes in institutional, corporate, and community contexts, fostering design practices capable of questioning entrenched norms and opening spaces for more inclusive and plural futures. In summary, although the “queer-indisciplinary” approach has demonstrated its potential, there are significant opportunities for expanding and deepening both research and teaching practice, thereby contributing to

a more inclusive and conscious education.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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