



A Place For Innovation

Cultivating campuses,
districts, cities and regions

TD Research



The belief that innovation thrives near universities once drove major investments in technology parks and industrial clusters, aiming to spark collaboration and economic growth. But the real benefits of proximity to other innovators are more complex. While deep tech firms capitalise from nearby research labs, access to graduates often has a greater impact and is less dependent on university location—with universities being just one of many talent sources.

Innovation ecosystems flourish through shared culture, place, and local norms—yet fostering them is challenging. Attempts to replicate models like Silicon Valley often fall short without its unique mix of history, geography, collaboration and other sliding door moments. Many hubs struggle due to unclear strategy and limited resources, making them ripe for a new approach—one that brings together diverse disciplines, mindsets and tools.

So, how might we create a cohesive, encompassing ‘blueprint’ that cultivates and fosters places of innovation?

Project Overview

This series of transdisciplinary research projects explores how innovation and entrepreneurship emerge in specific places—ranging from campuses and precincts to cities and states. Using a complex systems approach, each project examines the ecosystem’s history, current state, and future trajectory through desktop analysis, interviews, and visualisations. The goal is to support innovators, policymakers, and communities by emphasising inclusivity and ensuring marginalised groups are considered—not displaced. In partnership with government and private organisations, the team identifies opportunities, actions, and resources to guide ecosystems toward their envisioned futures, and co-designs experiments—such as time-bound events, targeted grants, or new spaces and services—to help shift the system in positive ways.

Our Impact

This research is driving more effective policymaking by helping custodians of places—whether startups, universities, governments, innovation hubs and more—understand how their local context enables or inhibits innovation. Rather than applying one-size-fits-all solutions, it shows why lessons from one ecosystem must be adapted before being implemented elsewhere. Poorly planned interventions risk wasting investment, deepening inequalities, and creating friction. In contrast, this work has enabled the transdisciplinary research team to develop their own unique methodology, supporting decision-makers with a robust framework to evaluate existing environments, proposed plans, and past policies. Through partnerships with public and private organisations, the team is actively shaping innovation strategies across precincts, suburbs, cities, regions and more—ensuring interventions are inclusive, evidence-based, and tailored to local needs.

Work with us

We deliver a wide range of research projects for public and private sector partners seeking research expertise and support in overcoming their complex challenges using our unique transdisciplinary (TD) methodology. To find out how TD Research can help you and your organisation, please email - TDRsearch@uts.edu.au

PROJECT PARTNERS

We have supported and continue to work with a range of industry partners across this research area such as: The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), The Greater Cities Commission (GCC), The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), Investment NSW, Georges River Council, The Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATNU) and The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

RESEARCH TEAM

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