

Surviving Vesuvius: Eruption, research and the nature of my thesis.

What is the nature of disruption in research?

Why do theorists tell us it can be a sign of advancement and how do we productively fail and recover on the journey through our thesis?



Back in 2000 Gerhard Kleining & Harald Witt suggested that disruption in research may be a sign that your inquiry is actually working. They argued that an effective researcher must be able to reframe questions and productively renegotiate what has been hitherto imagined.

But disruption is not a thing most of us like. In truth much of our formative education has been predicated on ensuring stability and being as risk averse as possible. This is why we traditionally review and frame our theses so scrupulously. However, knowledge is

not safe and research is not stable. As we reach forward into the unknown we must be able to take risks, fail and then productively recover. It is the only way that you and your research will reach beyond competence.

So this address is about you and your journey. In a way you might think of it as an arm around your shoulder. It talks about some of the things we don't openly discuss, like why PhDs are called 'Divorce degrees' [and what you can do about it]. It draws on research to outline some of the things that appear to work and other things that traditionally set your thesis journey up for trouble. None of these discussions appear in the promotion material or course descriptors of your degree, but they may raise their heads in your lived experience as you seek to develop a quality thesis.