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A Field Guide for Weathering: Embodied Tactics for Collectives of Two or More Humans

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ASTRIDA NEIMANIS
& JENNIFER HAMILTON

*A Field Guide for Weathering
embodied tactics for collectives
of two or more humans¹*

In our inherited meteorological practices and frameworks, weather conditions are managed for us in a range of ways (for example, through architecture, technology, commodity culture, infrastructure, economic rationale). These forms of management produce a particular kind of human-weather relation. And, while such management is accompanied by discourses that encourage us to understand the weather (and by extension, climate change) as an entirely meteorological phenomenon, our capacity to weather is conditioned by personal as well as social, political, cultural and economic circumstances.² Weather, and weathering, is never neutral.

Thinking and engaging the weather otherwise is tricky. We propose “weathering in the field” as a way into this otherwise, through our bodies. This field guide, comprising a set of experimental practices, asks that we pay attention to, and loosen, some of our preconceptions and corporeal habits. It invites us to cultivate a more deliberate embodied relationship to weather worlds, while at the same time questioning the practices of management and discourses of weather neutrality that we have inherited. As such, we hope it might also inspire deeper consideration of climate change as a “more-than-meteorological” phenomenon.

This field guide has been developed through experiments with various academic, artistic and professional audiences. We hope it will be applied playfully, considered critically, amended usefully, and expanded thoughtfully. We also welcome your feedback!

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¹ *This work was developed in the context The Weathering Collective, a practiced-based research collaboration with Rebecca Giggs, Kate Wright and Tessa Zettel (www.weatheringstation.net). The following exercises have been performed at the Somatechnics conference in Byron Bay (2016), in the ecocriticism course at NYU Sydney (2016-17) and in the Wild Weathering Collaboratory on Rindö (2017). We gratefully acknowledge the funding of The Seed Box: a MISTRA+FORMAS Environmental Humanities Collaboratory for the Swedish residency.*

² Neimanis, Astrida and Hamilton, Jennifer Mae. “Weathering.” *feminist review*, vol 118, no.1, 2018. pp 80-84.

A Field Guide for Weathering

Embodied Tactics for Collectives of Two or More Humans

Developed by

Astrida Neimanis & Jennifer Mae Hamilton

of *The Weathering Collective*

weatheringstation.net

Begin by assembling your own weathering collective of two or more humans, in addition to who-or-whatever else seems amenable to participating. Perhaps you can gather for an hour or two, or across several days. Engage in the exercises below according to your bodily capacities, interests, and time availability. These exercises do not need to be completed in full or in sequence; but the guide is written in a sequence and so, if you choose to mix it up, just skip over the reflection questions that invite reflection on previous exercises.

Unless otherwise noted, we recommend undertaking all of the exercises outside, but if this isn't possible, bear in mind that all places in which we dwell make and are made by weather.

WE ARE ALWAYS WEATHERING



Weathering in NYU Sydney Ecocriticism Class, May 2017

Introductory Reflections

Key questions and problematics: As a primer for the exercises that follow, this introduction asks participants to consider their current understandings of weather and climate, and their embodied and situated relations to these phenomena.

What you need: a journal/notebook; writing implements for each participant.

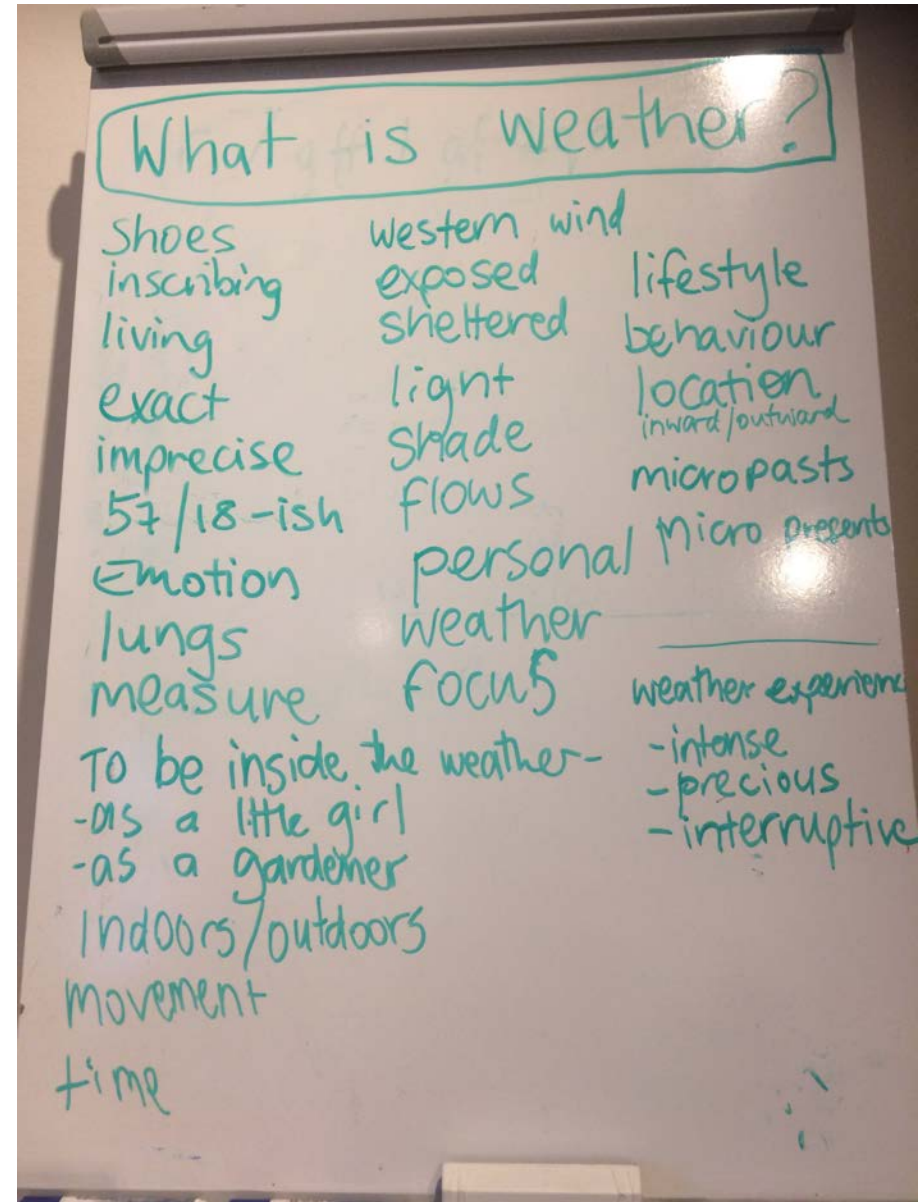
How to play: Read and respond to the questions below:

- What is climate change for you?
- What is weather for you?
- Notice the ambient weather conditions today. Is climate change here? How? Where?

Discussion and reflection: Share your responses. What key questions or concerns emerge that you might return to, upon completion of the weathering tactics?



"What is weather?" brainstorm and opening discussions from Rindö 2017.



"What is weather?" brainstorm and opening discussions from Rindö 2017.

1. Weather Mapping, Through the Body

PART A: WEATHERING “LUCKY DIP”

Key questions and problematics: What is weather? How do we understand weather—according to which bodily sensoria, cultural frames, temporal and spatial scales? How might our understanding of weather shift if we loosen and interrupt its quotidian frames of reference?

What you need: index cards (or small pieces of paper), envelopes, a vessel for holding envelopes, a journal (or paper), and writing implements for each participant. You should allocate at least 15 minutes for this exercise, but 30–60 minutes is ideal. Allow time at the end to share and debrief.

How to play:

- Copy each bullet point from LIST A and LIST B (on the next page) onto individual index cards. Place each in an envelope labelled either “A” or “B.”
- You may wish to write notes of encouragement on the envelopes such as: “Be playful and take this seriously!” “Enjoy and be rigorous!” “Have fun and work hard!” Place the envelopes in a bucket or bowl.
- Invite participants to work individually or in pairs. Each participant or pair should choose one card from either A or B and engage with the instruction. Replace the instruction in the bag or bowl. Journal briefly about the experience.
- Participants should then select a card from the other category (A or B) and repeat. You can continue to repeat (choosing A or B) as many times as you wish in the given time frame. Some activities can be completed in a few minutes; others may take 15 minutes or more, depending on the participants’ depth of engagement.

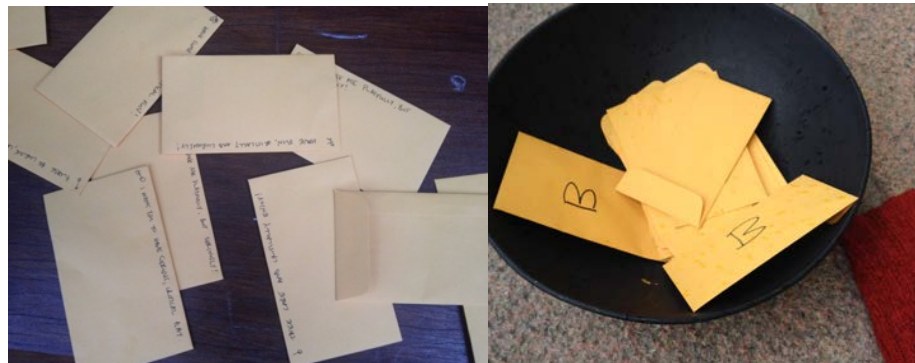
Discussion and reflection: How did you respond to the instructions? Were some instructions easier, more difficult, more interesting, troubling? What did you learn about weather, your body, and their relation?



Weathering “Lucky Dip” in Byron Bay 2016

LIST A: EMBODIED IMAGINATION

- Have you ever thought about the weather as related to climate change? If so, when? Why? If not, why not?
- Notice what is around you and observe the relations, objects, and infrastructures that define your situation. How do these mediate your relation to the weather?
- How is today's weather political, ideological, and also material?
- Is weather shared? How and by whom or what? Is weather individualized? In what ways?
- What was the weather on the day you were born? Does this weather revisit you on your annual birthday, and how?
- What is the weather on the day that you die?
- What is the weather on the last day of Earth?
- Have the different stages of your life been accompanied by different weathers? Can you describe them?
- What is the temporality of weather itself?



Lucky dip example from (L) Byron Bay and (R) Rindō

LIST B: IMAGINATIVE EMBODIMENT

- Move (either walking, or rolling) your body slowly across a short distance. Can you notice the weather that you are passing through? Does it change?
- Stick out your tongue. What does the weather taste like? Can you bring the weather inside your mouth? Can you swallow it? What is the weather in your belly?
- If you can, put your hands in the air. What is the weather in the sky? If you can, put your hands on the ground. What is the weather on or in the ground?
- Lie down on the ground, or relax as much as possible in a seated position. Can you make the weather a blanket? Can you make this blanket wrap more tightly, or loosely, around your body?
- Close your eyes. Inhale and exhale deeply through your nose for several breaths. What does the weather smell like?
- Extend your hand, palm facing up, in front of you. Close your eyes. Can you hold the weather? What is the quality of that weather? Could you put the weather in your pocket?
- Close your eyes. Can you hear the weather? What are its sounds and rhythms? Does weather have multiple tracks? A melody? A bass line?
- Shape your hand/s as though you were holding a baseball or an apple. Notice the weather in the space of your grasp. Slowly tighten your grip. What happens to the weather you are holding? Can you rub the weather between your fingers?
- Draw your embodied attention to the bodily fluids that animate your body. Notice how and where they circulate. Do they also carry weather? Where and how?

***NB All bodies are different, with different capacities and affordances. If any of the above instructions do not work well for your body, choose another instruction, or adapt the instruction accordingly (and if you wish, pass suggestions for adaptations on to us!).**

PART B: WEATHER MAPMAKING

Key questions and problematics: How are our understandings of and relations to weather conditioned by the conventions of meteorological mapping? How might these be subverted?

What you need: journal (or paper) for each participant; a large piece of paper for each participant and some writing/drawing implements (which you may or may not use).

How to play:

- a) Using any tools at hand, make a weather map of your present conditions and/or situation.
- b) Share your maps with each other and narrate their logics.
- c) Record any new understandings about the weather OR mapping, as arising from this exercise, in your journal.
- d) Optional: markers, paints, glue, sticky notes, modelling clay, old magazines to cut images from, etc.

Discussion and reflection: Did the exercises from Part A influence how you imagine and understand weather? If so, how did these reconceptualizations figure in your mapping? In what ways did you follow or subvert accepted conventions of mapmaking? What is the relation between our understandings of weather, its effects, and weather mapping?



(Left) Weather Mapmaking and (Right) Weather Map, Rindö

2. Weather Measurement and Management

PART A: DIY WEATHERING METEOROLOGIST

Key questions and problematics: What is weather? Which meteorological elements do we assume can be measured, and which ones can't (or shouldn't) be? What kinds of expertise are needed to measure weather? How are bodily and experiential knowledges relevant for weather measurement? How and to what extent is meteorology a form a situated knowledge?

What you need: journal (or paper) for each participant; glue, craft objects of all kinds (fabric off cuts, pipe cleaners, etc.), scrap paper, pens, sticky tape; a selection of any other random items such as shoelaces, stones, a cup, plastic bag, phone charger, bike lock, sponge, butter knife, condoms, etc.

How to play:

- a) As individuals or in pairs (depending on the size of the group) and beginning with the craft objects, make a weather measurement device that responds to your location. Be capacious in how you define the weather.
- b) Share the different devices and present their logics to the group.
- c) Record in your journal any observations you found novel as the basis for a new meteorology of weathering.

Discussion and reflection: What new understandings of weather did these measurement devices engender? How might we rethink how and why weather is measured in certain ways and by certain tools?



DIY Weather Meteorologist, Byron Bay 2016 and Rindö 2017

PART B: WEATHERING WITHOUT

Key questions and problematics: What is the difference between need and want in relation to shelter from weather? Who has power and authority to decide? How do politics of privilege, marginality, and difference work to determine adequate or sufficient conditions for weathering well?

What you need: (optional) the weathering instruments from Part A as inspiration; a piece of paper and a writing implement for each participant.

How to play:

a) Begin by reading out the following instruction:

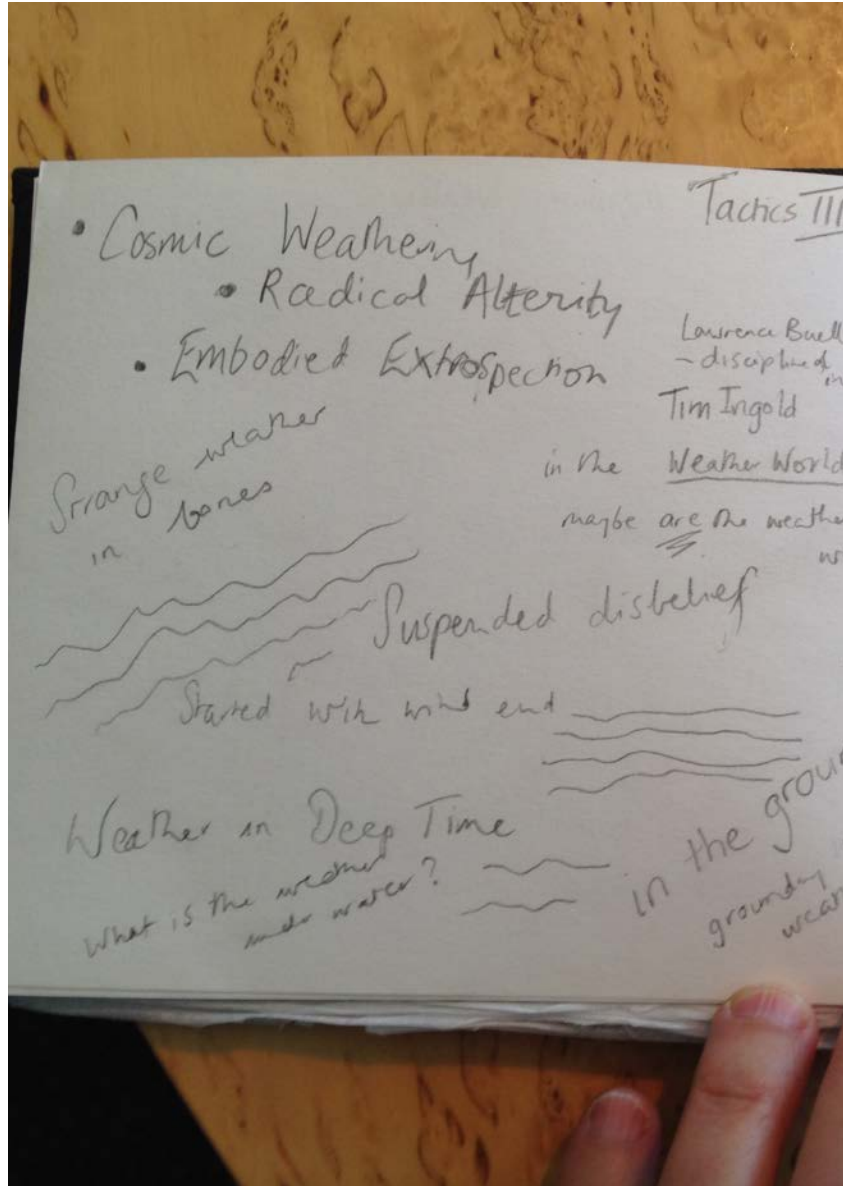
If shelter is a necessity for living, what constitutes your “shelter” (in the form of architecture, tools, devices, technologies, protection, props, or aids)? What do you need in order to weather the world?

- b) On your piece of paper, catalogue all of the weather management devices and technologies you have in your life (from socks to windows to air conditioning).
- c) Go around the circle sharing your different devices and technologies, and add items you feel you have overlooked to your personal list.
- d) Pass your list to the person beside you in a clockwise circle. That person **must** delete one of your items, and then pass again clockwise to the next person, who **must** delete another item. Keep passing until your list returns to you. What kinds of “shelter” do you have left?
- e) Reflect out loud on life without the devices and technologies that have been struck from your list.
- f) Allot some time to write in your journals about the experience, using the prompt: “What privileges and/or difficulties inform how you manage weather, or how it is managed on your behalf?”

Discussion and Reflection: How does it feel to possess the power to control the management of weather for others? On what basis did you make your choices of what technologies you would remove from others’ lists? What was your emotional response to having certain items struck from your own list?



(Top) NYU Sydney Ecocriticism Class Intro Reflections; (Bottom) Weathering Without on Rindö.



Notes from Cosmic Weathering, Rindö

3. Embodied Extrospection, Cosmic Weather

Key questions and problematics: Is weather only or always a localised phenomenon? How might experiencing ourselves as weather bodies help us access an embodied experience of deep time or more-than-earthly habitats? How can transcalar, rigorous imagination help us think about weathering differently?

What you need: at least two people: at least one or two people to read the following script, and at least one or more people to respond to the script as “cosmic weather meditators”; a script adapted to your circumstances.

How to play:

Weatherers should sit or lie down comfortably, supported by the seat or a floor, with their eyes closed, listening. The reader(s) should position themselves where they can be easily heard by the cosmic weatherers.

Discussion and reflection: You might discuss the experiences, sensations, and thoughts that arose during the experience. This may also be an exercise whose debrief is personal and introspective.

COSMIC WEATHERING MEDITATION (SCRIPT)

Come into your body.

Close your eyes.

Feel yourself grounded in your body.

[Establish the meditation for as long as seems necessary, until your meditator(s) are settled.]

You are supported by the jetty, the water, and the entire planet beneath you.

[PAUSE 30 Seconds.]

Come back into your body.

Notice the weather.

Notice how this weather sits on your body, comes to your body. Notice how this weather sinks into your body.

Where does this weather sit? Where does it sink (is it in your hair? Is it in your hands? Is it in your gut? Your feet?)

What does it feel like? (Is it hot? Is it cold? Is it moving? Is it damp?)

How is this weather you?

[PAUSE 1 Minute]

Return to where you are grounded in your body (your sitting bone? your feet?)

Notice the weather moving from your body and absorbing into the wood of the jetty, falling into the water, sinking down past the fish, the seaweed, the rubbish, into sand and the rock below. Notice how the weather falls into deep earth.

. . . into deep time

What is the weather of deep time? (Where is the weather of deep time? Is it planetary? Is it cosmic? Is it real? Is it imagined?)

We're going to stay in deep time weather for a couple of minutes.

[PAUSE 2 Minutes]

Return to your body again. Notice this deep time weather in your body.

[PAUSE 1 Minute]

Come back to the jetty that you are sharing with all these people.

Notice the weather in your body (Are you warmer or colder than when we began? Do you feel the weather less, or more? Are you in your body less, or more? How have your own conditions changed?)

Notice the weather become lighter, tug at your skin, and lift out of your body.

Notice the weather becoming larger, becoming more distant, rising up past the trees, past the birds, into clouds. Perhaps the weather waves to the people on the aeroplane, sees the group of people on the jetty below, communes with the jet stream. Notice the weather move somewhere else.

[PAUSE 30 Seconds]

Where does the weather go?

[PAUSE 1 Minute]

The weather is now at the limit of your imagination. (What is it like there? Can you recognize it?) Notice the strangeness. We're going to stay in this place for a couple of minutes.

[PAUSE 2 Minutes]

Is this weather also in your body?

Come back to your body. Where in your body is this strange weather? Where is this strange weather in your body? (Is it in your hair? Is it in your belly? In your mind? Is it in your mouth?)

Come back to the jetty that you're sharing with all these people.

When you are ready open your eyes.

NB: This script is specific to a weathering meditation conducted at dusk on the Grenadjärbryggan jetty on Rindö in the Stockholm archipelago (Image on next page). Adjust time- and place-specific details to your situation.



Preparing for Cosmic Weathering Meditation on Grenadjärbryggan jetty, Rindö

4. Speculative Design for Better Weathering

Key questions and problematics: If you have undertaken the experimental weathering tactics described above, it is likely you have come to understand weather, and our embodied relation to it, in new ways. Perhaps you have come to some kind of embodied understanding of what it means “to weather,” as a verb. In this final tactic, we ask you to consider what it might mean, and what it might take, to “weather better.” We don’t presume to know how you would define “better” weathering. This is for you to explore.

What you need: Any writing or crafting materials or objects leftover from previous exercises. Participants may or may not use them.

How to play:

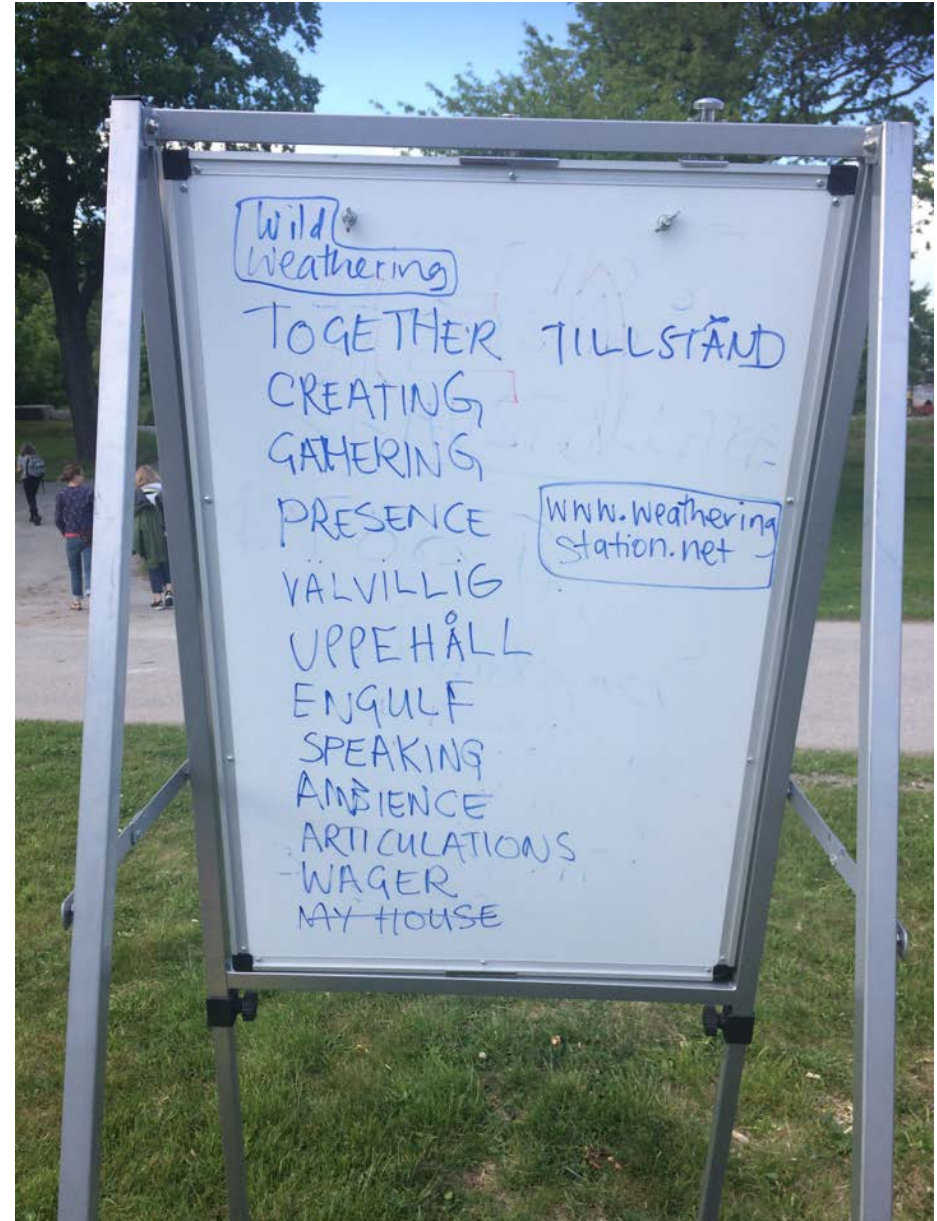
Part 1: Ponder and Pitch

- Participants have an allotted amount of time (e.g. 10 minutes) to contemplate individually what “better weathering” might entail: what could we do or build in order to weather better? There are no restrictions around plausibility or practicality at this stage.
- Each participant pitches their idea to the group.
- Each member of the group selects the pitched idea toward which they feel the greatest affinity; small groups should be established around a select number of the proposed ideas.

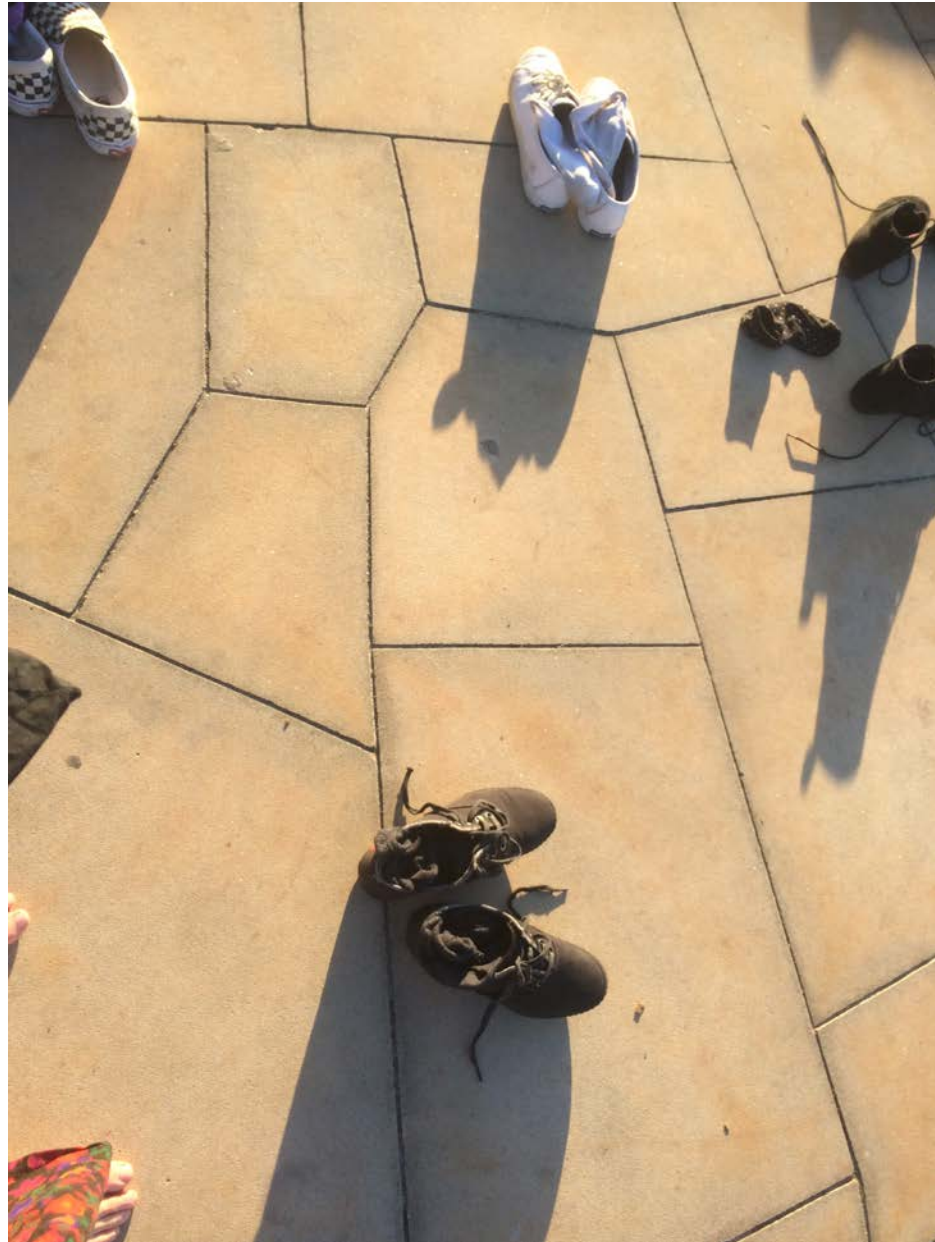
Part 2: Design

- As a group, come up with a detailed plan for how this proposition could be planned, implemented, built, etc. Be as specific as possible.
- Present designs to the group and discuss.

Discussion and reflection: Do any of the proposals seem viable? Why or why not? How close or how far do the proposals stay to accepted understandings of “weather”? How might these proposals be significant or instructive in our responses to climate change?



Summary Words for Speculative Design on Rindö



Weathering without shoes, NYU Sydney

We welcome your suggestions for amendments and additions to these tactics!

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