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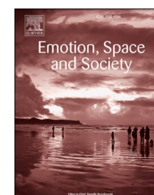

Listening to place, practising relationality: Embodying six emergent protocols for collaborative relational geographies

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ABSTRACT

There is increasing interest within geography around the composition and interdependence of human and environmental dynamics and relational onto-epistemologies. Such interest prompts us to consider questions around respect, power and collaboration, and how we might enact relations across sometimes vast and incommensurable differences as academics and as/with community members. In this paper, we document six protocols which emerged within the Not Lone Wolf network to enable this careful work: Emplacement, Listening, Weaving, Discomfort, Grieving, and Resting. These protocols are material practices that are mindful of the diversity of stakes, opinions and positionalities we hold, and which enable us to navigate through our relations. This paper argues for the importance of attending to such protocols which can shape the doing(s) of relational geographies. It offers possible orientations for geographers and social scientists to experiment with while doing relational geographies.

1. Introduction

> Respect is the main thing. I tell you what. That is the best thing of the lot. Respect, shown for the land and the people together. It is so strong. Because that is what the Old Fellas used to do. They used to show respect (Uncle Bud Marshall, Gumbaynggirr Elder)

There are protocols for starting our working together, protocols for continuing, protocols for listening, for writing and for reading. By protocols, we mean particular ways of working together respectfully and with care, not formal rules or procedures which are predetermined externally, but approaches and understandings which are constantly emerging. Our protocols manifest our specific emplacements, our positionalities, and they must also weave together, coming into being relationally in those spaces between us through the connections we tend. Tending is an ongoing process: protocols are always both emplaced and in relation; they are always emergent, always enacted; necessarily tentative yet connected through, as Uncle Bud says, respect for land and people together. Uncle Bud is a Waambung man of the Baga baga bari on Gumbaynggirr Country. Uncle Bud is a senior Traditional Custodian who has shared knowledge and wisdom with many people, especially young people, both near home and internationally (Marshall et al., 2022; A. Smith et al., 2022a, 2022b). Uncle Bud is woven into our network as an Elder, guide, Uncle, leader, mentor and friend.

In writing this paper, we share some of the protocols we use together

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within the Not Lone Wolf (NLW) network. The NLW network started taking shape in the beginnings of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 when Kate, Sandie, Sarah and Lara put out an initial invitation to a range of human geographers and community researchers, in Australia and elsewhere, to come together for a three-day online symposium in May 2021.[1] The desire came in realising academic researchers have never done research in isolation. Myriad relationships with human and non-human beings not only shape, but enable our research. They remind us that being a researcher is not the task of a Lone Wolf - an imaginary, able-bodied, typically cis male academic, individual and individualised (Armenti, 2003; Benschop and Brouns, 2003; Brown and Leigh, 2020; Cupples and Kindon, 2003), and that there are multiple legitimate and incredibly valuable ways of doing academic research relationally. The symposium was a key step in a broader process of connecting existing discussions and practices around a range of research relationships that push back against, reimagine or refuse academic boundaries that reify the Lone Wolf - thus the symposium and continuing network was called Not Lone Wolf.

Central to our project is how the network conceive of and enact relationality - the ways in which everything is always in relationship with everything else (Bawaka Country et al., 2016). The past decades have seen an increasing interest within the social sciences and geography around relationality and the composition and interdependence of human and environmental dynamics and relational onto-epistemologies (for example, see Greenhough, 2014; Isaacs, 2020; Mol and Law, 2002; Tynan, 2021), often drawing on seemingly Western concepts such as Actor-Network Theory, Non-Representational Theory and (new) Materialism. While relationality and collaboration have been widely discussed within this work and, indeed, widely lauded, there are important, albeit often dismissed, questions around respect, power and collaboration that must be addressed. This requires a recognition of the ongoing (neo)colonial relations of knowledge production within which these ideas and understandings are articulated (Hunt 2014; Noxolo 2017; Liboiron 2021; McKittrick 2021); and where and how they might be, and have long been, articulated and practiced differently (Todd 2016; Hirsch and Jones 2001; Bawaka Country et al., 2016; 2019). Our knowledges, work and connections are never devoid of preceding/ongoing relation or diverse place-based sovereignties (Todd, 2016; Chao and Enari 2021; Wright and Tofa, 2021). They prompt us to consider the challenges, dangers and missteps we need to look out for when seeking to acknowledge and work relationally. We ask how do we enact relations across sometimes vast and incommensurable differences, whilst recognising that not everything can or should be shared (Liboiron 2021; McKittrick 2021).

Practising relationality extends into our citational politics; who and how we cite knowledges (see Todd, 2016 and our Protocol 4). In approaching this careful work, we privilege Indigenous epistemologies-ontologies-axiologies which have centred relationality for all time. We do this by introducing Indigenous scholars positionalities/relations and using gender neutral terms (they/them) when we are able to (see O'Sullivan, 2021; Carlson and Farrelly, 2023; Faulkhead et al., 2023). We also acknowledge the work of Western scholars who have more recently embraced relational citational processes (see Mott and Cockayne, 2017).

Relationality means understanding that more-than-humans come into being not as separated entities but relationally, as kin, with responsibilities to each other (Bawaka Country et al., 2016). Relationality is always a way of being connected which comes not only with insights but also obligations: "relationality is not a new metaphor to be reaped for academic gain, but a practice bound with responsibilities with kin and Country" (Tynan, 2021, p. 598). Pairebeenne Trawlwoolway scholar Lauren Tynan reflects on how relationality is not (nor should it be) easily learnt through established academic modes: connections are at the forefront of understandings of self where "[i]ntroductions serve to find connections within a relational reality where everyone and everything is related" (Tynan, 2021, p. 601). For Tynan, "relationality is learnt from stories, watching our Old People yarn or sitting with Country – relationality is seldom learnt from academic journal articles" (Tynan, 2021, p. 597). We learn to understand the world relationally in a multiplicity of ways, from innate knowing and being, to unravelling ways of knowing and creating new entanglements.

In this paper, we attend to the notion of protocols as a way of thinking through the how of relationality. We draw on our processes, discussions and practices, being guided by our learnings, emergent relationships, and by our mis-steps. As we work relationally, we acknowledge that our experiences, our knowledges, and our beings, are emplaced: they have links to places and are created with and through these places, with and by other beings including non-humans and ancestors. As we speak of respectful protocols, then, a centering of prior knowledge, of prior connection, is fundamental. This is an acknowledgement of the diverse and more-than-human sovereignties, the belongings of land, sea, animals and sky that stand as the 'polar opposite' of terra nullius that continues to propel settler colonialism in Australia (Akama et al., 2017; Behrendt, 2003; Nicoll, 2002; Todd, 2016; Wright and Tofa, 2021).

Before moving on and elaborating on our emergent protocols, will tend a little more to this notion of protocols: what do we mean as we speak of respectful and careful protocols for collaboration? For Noah Theriault, Tim Leduc, Audra Mitchell, June Rubis and Norma Jacobs Gaehowako, Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the Creatures Collective, protocols are the ways that, together, we might "contribute to the remaking of relationships that foster more-than-human accountability, reciprocity, and capacities for resistance" (Theriault et al., 2020, p. 893). Respect is the basis of working together in good relationship through awareness and practice of protocols. And good relationships not just with other humans but also with human and non-human ancestors of all genders and expressions, and with more-than-human kin (Awāsis, 2021).

Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte, Tsalagi/Oglala Lakota scholar Joseph Brewer, and Jay Johnson share that protocols are "attitudes about how to approach the world" (Whyte et al., 2016, p. 26). Indeed, Hawai'ian scholar Kekuhi Keali'ikanaka'oleohailani, shared that protocols, underpinned by stewardship and caretaking, are "an attitude or the manner in which one approaches each and every element in our space" (cited in Whyte et al., 2016). Uncle Bud elaborates on this as he talks about what underpins working together in good relationship. He speaks of the continuity of stories, the need to respect these, to support them and to listen to the messages they send. Without good relationship, in the absence of protocols and emplacement, there is nothing. He says:

> There are a lot of stories around this area and they have been getting ruined. There is nothing being said about it … It is a really strong thing to our ancestors, to the old people. I just listen to the old people. They tell you not to do this, you don't do it … Once that dies out, you'll have nothing.

These messages are about what not to do, and also what to do. It is important, always, to listen, to attend to Country and ancestors, to the messages of seasons, birds and water and all beings (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Hughes and Barlo, 2021). Uncle Bud continues:

[1] NLW network emerged from a lineage of collaboration and friendships over time, including the Creatures Collective, the Bawaka Collective led by Bawaka Country, Yandaarra led by Uncle Bud Marshall, Aunty Shaa Smith and their daughter Neeyan Smith, and the Yanama Budyari Gumada Collective led by Aunty Corina Norman and Uncle Lex Dadd, with a focus on the diverse relationalities around research. In 2019, there was an Aotearoa gathering with First Nation Folks from Turtle Island, Darug Ngurra, Gumbaynggirr Country, Bawaka Country along with members from the Creatures Collective. Prior to the Aotearoa gathering, a constellation of people from the NLW network met up in person on several occasions in various parts of the world over the years.

It's so strong, following in the footsteps of ancestors. I'd like to see that done with everyone, for everyone to bring the connection. It's magic, following in the footsteps of the old fellas. I want people to know things about what's here, what's there.

In this paper, we turn to what this relational work might look like in an academic context. Specifically, we outline six emergent protocols that have been crucial to our collective and collaborative sharing and working-across-difference within the NLW network: Emplacement, Listening, Weaving, Discomfort, Grieving, and Resting.

As you read on, we encourage you to read with attention to difference. The sections have been written by different subgroups of authors with different intentions and positionalities, and have been shared in a way that aims to destabilise a unifying, lone-wolf academic voice. In doing so, we follow and acknowledge recent efforts to write collectively (Fisher et al., 2015; Potter et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2023). We shape the paper around opportunities to stop, engage, reflect, listen; the paper is not designed to be read linearly or to take place only in the mind, but in embodied, relational ways. We invite slow reading and reflection, understanding that while this diversity within our format asks more of the reader, it is an enactment of the very protocols of relationality that we share, of the importance of attending to protocols that respect and support difference.

Through the piece, we invite you to consider the potential for generative relational work and to consider the ways that such work requires refusals, pulling back from the incessant calls to higher productivity, and from pressures to practise and perform Lone Wolf, hoard power and carry on. Instead, we hope to invite emergent, tentative and collaborative relational practices. Such practices may leave us unsettled, possibly discomforted, yet, we hope, might support a leaning in towards uncertainty, towards more relational, non-violent, respectful and meaningful geographical practice.

The six protocols we identify are by no means the limits of the practices included, they are not static and are not intended to feel finished or foreclosed. Each protocol contains multiple approaches and all are interdependent, mutually inclusive and emergent. It is our aim to offer these as possible orientations for geographers and social scientists to experiment with while doing relational geographies. At this time, when many geographers and geography students are becoming more aware of, and engaged with, questions around how to navigate difference non-violently, these protocols and our experiences of them may be of use.

2. Protocol 1: Emplacement

The network who co-write this are many. AM Kanngieser is a settler-coloniser and first generation Australian of German descent. They have lived for many years on the unceded lands of the Woiwurrung Wurundjeri and Bunurong Boonwurrung peoples of the East Kulin nations. Filipa Soares is from Portugal and is currently based in Lisbon, after having lived for a few years in the United Kingdom, trying to juggle chronic illness with academic precarity. June Rubis is a Bidayuh-Filipino woman from Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo and is based temporarily on unceded Gadigal lands on a fixed-term contract. Corrinne Sullivan is a Wiradjuri scholar living and working carefully and respectfully on the unceded lands of the Dharug people. Marnie Graham is a non-Indigenous Australian who lives and works on Dharug Ngurra. Miriam Williams lives on the unceded land of the Dharug and Gundungurra peoples. She has European ancestry with her grandparents on her mother's side coming to Australia as refugees in the 1950s. Joseph Palis was born in central Philippines and works in Metro Manila but is always transient. Fabri Blacklock is Uncle Bud's niece. Her mob are the Nucoorilma/Ngarabal people from Tingha and Glen Innes and the Biripi people from Dingo Creek near Taree on the mid north coast, NSW. Lauren Tynan is a Pairebeenne Trawlwoolway woman from lutruwita/Trouwerner/Tasmania who was raised and currently lives on Awabakal and Worimi Countries. Lara Daley is a settler-coloniser with Irish, Scottish, English and Danish ancestry who lives and works on unceded Awabakal, Worimi and Gumbaynggirr Countries. Author 8 is Author 15's niece. Her mob are the Nucoorilma/Ngarabal people from Tingha and Glen Innes and the Biripi people from Dingo Creek near Taree on the mid north coast, NSW. Beth Greenhough is a white English woman living and working in Southern England. Sandie Suchet-Pearson was born in South Africa and is a non-Indigenous migrant to the place now known as Australia with Jewish European ancestry. She has grown up and lives and works on un-ceded Dharug Ngurra. Sarah Wright is a yiraali (whitefella, settler-coloniser) with English, Welsh and Irish ancestry, who lives on Gumbaynggirr Country with her family by Bindaaray Uruung, the long river, the Bellinger. Kate Lloyd is a settler-coloniser with Welsh and English ancestry currently living and working on unceded Dharug Ngurra. Uncle Bud Marshall is a Gumbaynggirr Elder and Custodian from Nambucca Heads. He is guided by his Grandfather, whose spirit is a guardian and teacher, reminding him of respect and limits (Marshall et al., 2022).

As we follow our emergent protocols, the complex differences in the ways we are all emplaced/displaced must always be respected. Emplacement acknowledges the power of place/land/Country to situate us individually and relationally; to sit together. As Kombu-merri person Aunty Mary Graham (2008, p. 183) says, "the land is the great teacher; it not only teaches us how to relate to it, but to each other". For Yandaarra, a Gumbaynggirr-led research collaboration led by Aunty Shaa Smith with Uncle Bud and Neeyan Smith, research must be a matter of "re-creating, rebinding, remaking protocols as we honour Elders and custodians, human and non-human, past, present and future. Our inter-cultural collaboration requires us to know our place and histories" (A. Smith et al., 2020, p. 942). This means respectfully coming from one's place, not overstepping or claiming what is not ours; it means reaching out to connect but not overtaking or appropriating. These protocols are living protocols (A. Smith et al., 2020, 2021; Theriault et al., 2020): "living not just in the sense that they are vitally alive, responsive, and regenerative, but also in the sense that we aim to actively live them by supporting those who enact and (re)make them" (Theriault et al., 2020, p. 893).

Differences in emplacement are something to be respected, to be embraced rather than erased. And there are mistakes. Respecting and tending to the pain of mistakes, of disagreement and hurt, of trauma and the enduring violences of colonialism, of racialized, patriarchal capitalism, is an important part of our protocols (A. Smith et al., 2020). This is part of a process of learning and healing. As Yandaarra says:

> We feel that it is important that we don't stop when things get hard. The reality is that it is a colonised world, there are no easy answers. But we can help each other get through. We can work so that people can start understanding what these protocols look like, what their process of learning will include. (A. Smith et al., 2020, p. 17, p. 17)

Neeyan, Aunty Shaa's daughter and a leader of Yandaarra, further elaborates:

> Sitting in that place of being – trusted; loved; no judgement. When you are acknowledging the ancestors and there is a feeling of judgement or trauma it has a place. It has a place in the acknowledgement – let's go with that, let's sit with that, the broken place. It is sacred. It needs to be held as sacred. Calling that ancestor in, for a white person say, that ancestor is going to guide you in that learning whatever it is – shame. That is the guidance that needs to go through. (Neeyan Smith in A. Smith et al., 2020, p. 17, p. 17)

There have been many instances of wisdom being shared around protocols and emplacement, about ways of working together and the processes that need to be tended. We acknowledge and honour this thinking and all we have learnt from mentors, family, ancestors and Country (Gay'wu Group of Women, 2019; Mooney et al., 2018; A. Smith et al., 2022a; Tynan, 2021). For the special edition on *Living Protocols* in

Social and Cultural Geography (Theriault et al., 2020, p. 898), this powerfully means beginning with a Thanksgiving address from the territories of the Neutral/Attawandaron, Anishaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples, the 'Words That Come Before All Else' offered, in that piece, by Norma Jacobs Gaehowako (Ancestral Women Holding the Canoe), the Elder-in-Residence at Wilfrid Laurier University on the Six Nations Haldimand Tract (Ontario, Canada). In doing this, we are reminded our lives depend on others to be 'good and full'. For Sākihitowin Awāsis (2021), ichifAnishinaabe niizh manidoo (two-spirit) of the Waa-bizheshi Dodem (Pine Marten Clan), working with Anishnaabe protocols may be understood as a matter of rights, responsibility, relationality, and reciprocity. These protocols are based in respecting the deep interrelatedness of peoples and the land; living interrelatedness engenders an ethics that can guide interactions with both human and nonhuman kin (Awāsis, 2021, p. 11. See also Daigle, 2016; Rose-Redwood et al., 2020; Tynan, 2021). For Bawaka Country et al. (2016), deep relationship is spoken of as co-becoming: the ways that people and Country, the land, seas, skies and the many beings that co-become there, actually emerge together.

With this co-becoming, with relationships, with emplacements and with gifts comes the need to actively nourish and respond. This is in Bawaka Country's *response-ability as*, which points to the need to take respect seriously - relating, belonging and knowing your place, cultivating our abilities to respond respectfully through/as relation (Bawaka Country et al., 2019); it is in Awāsis's (2021) notion of responsibility and reciprocity; it is part of living as an embodiment of gratitude-through-relation. To respond, not as some kind of transactional quid pro quo, but in ways that might allow us to be true to the deep, complex, emotional and lively intra-actions that make us, all of us, in our radically different ways (Bawaka Country et al., 2022).

And so, we end this section with an invitation to you, reader, to pause in your reading, to sit with your own emplacement, your multiple, more-than-human connections. We invite you to follow Aunty Shaa Smith's words adapted from the teaching notes associated with her book (A. Smith et al., 2022c):

> *Aunty Shaa suggests that you sit quietly, preferably in a place where you can see, touch and hear Country. Coming to acknowledge a place and its connections is important. It is important to acknowledge that this always was and always will be Aboriginal Land and to acknowledge Elders past, present and future. We invite you to sit with this, breathing and attending to the complex relations you have with your place and the Ancestors. Aunty Shaa says that our Ancestors, our Elders of the past are still here in the now. They are not gone but they keep guiding us. Part of respecting them is believing that the Ancestors are still walking. The learnings they passed down keep us strong.*
>
> *Aunty Shaa says that, for her, an acknowledgement is about finding the place in your heart where you can say hello to the Country that you are living on and learning with. As you breathe, sit with your connection. Greet Country, the lizard and the tree. You might grow the relationship by coming back over time. Hello lizard? you might say. 'Have you got a story for me today, tree or waterhole or lizard?' It may not have a story for you - until one day it might. In this way, you can come into a place of harmony where you can then practice love for each other and all living things, a place where we can practice sharing, a place where you look after each other and respect each other. We are celebrating life, life is important.* (Aunty Shaa, Gumbaynggirr Storyholder)

3. Protocol 2: Listening

Aunty Shaa invites you to sit quietly and here we focus our writing on active listening. At this point in your reading set aside 10 min to listen. Close your eyes and get comfortable. Take a few deep breaths. Begin to notice your body and how it is feeling; trace up from your toes to the top of your head. As you do this, tune into the sounds/vibrations of your body: your breath, stomach gurgles, ringing in your ears. Stay with this awareness for 2 min. Next, bring your attention to the sounds/vibrations in the room you are in: electronic sounds, the creaking of furniture, the presence of people or animals. Stay with this awareness for 2 min. Now, bring your attention to the sounds/vibrations outside of the room: people, the weather, traffic. Stay with this awareness for 2 min. Finally, bring your attention to the entire sonic/vibrational field: your body, your immediate surroundings, and beyond. Notice if there are rhythms to the sounds/vibrations, how they interact, their proximity and distance, speed and volume. Stay with this awareness for 2 min. When you are done, bring your attention back to your breath and take four deep breaths. Open your eyes and stretch.

The protocol of listening is generative. The listening practice that we practised during the NLW meetings and symposium moves listening from an automatic and unconscious sensing of the world to an intentional engagement with the complexities and nuances of being in place. Over the past decades, geographic attention to listening has moved beyond ideas of listening as universal, to show how listening is encultured and geographically specific, shaped by social, political and economic forces (Kanngieser, 2012). At the same time, scholars emphasise how listening capacities and positionalities are influenced by affective and emotional exchanges, by embodiments (including D/deafness and disability) and relationships (Duffy et al., 2016; Kanngieser and Todd, 2020; Nóżka, 2021). This includes a decentering of listening as an activity exclusively between the voice and the ear, to the vibrational aspects that allow for inclusion of non-human and more-than-human perceptibilities (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Gallagher et al., 2017; Gay'wu Group of Women, 2019). Such approaches expand listening to what settler scholar AM Kanngieser and Métis scholar Zoe Todd call practices of "sensing, attunement, and noticing" (Kanngieser and Todd, 2020, p. 390).

Expansive listening aligns with Indigenous and First Nations' approaches to relational listening with place, seeing human and non-human life as interdependent, and these perspectives actively shape how NLW came together. The above listening exercise was incorporated into gatherings to ground us where we were. Grounding through listening is integral to what Nauiyu Elder, activist, educator and artist Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann (1988) speaks of as *dadirri* or deep listening,[2] what Bundajung scholar Judy Atkinson calls 'listening from the heart' (2002, p. 19), and what Bawaka Country et al., 2016 enact when they centre co-becoming. This corresponds to attunement, which as Kanngieser and Todd explain, "means to bring into tune, to find resonances or moments of intersection" (2020, p. 390). Listening from this perspective necessitates a careful cultivation of relation and acceptance of non-relation.

Listening is a practice to understand how each of us is in place and what we bring when we interpret and create knowledge. Xwélméxw (Stó:lō) philosopher Dylan Robinson writes that an understanding of listening positionality can help to deconstruct normative assumptions underpinning settler-coloniser narratives by showing settler positionality itself as "a stratified and intersectional process" (Robinson, 2020, p. 39). For Robinson, listening that oscillates across layers of positionality can "begin through detailing very specific aspects of one's positionality

[2] Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann (1988) writes that "The word, concept and spiritual practice that is dadirri is from the Ngan'gikurunggurr and Ngen'giwumirri languages of the Aboriginal peoples of the Daly River region (Northern Territory, Australia) … dadirri is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us … It is something like what you call "contemplation". When I experience dadirri, I am made whole again. I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness". There is a deep spirituality to this practice; that Ungunmerr has identified it as "special quality, a unique gift of the Aboriginal people" (Ungunmerr-Baumann, 1988).

and then identifying the ways in which those aspects allow or foreclose upon certain ways of looking, kinds of touch, or listening" (Robinson, 2020, p. 60–61). Particularly in the context of listening to places, this configuration of listening as self-reflexive is crucial given the significant diversities in identities, experiences and locations of the NLW network. For the network to share a common intention, we have had to be unrelentingly sensitive to where convergences and divergences lie, without trying to assimilate or equivocate these, but always foregrounding our interdependencies.

Listening relies on an awareness of sometimes fraught social and environmental dynamics as they play out and change moment to moment. As the NLW network came together, we practised becoming less attached to things being one way or another, with a greater attention to understanding of the mutability of relation. This means navigating disagreement and contrasting desires and needs, and prioritising renegotiation. Listening can support multiple ways of knowing and being together without domination of one over another. But this is conditional on each listener making a commitment to self-reflexivity; to being present to oneself and to each other, to the places each inhabits and comes from and the differential legacies each carries. Listening, when done intentionally and with an honesty of one's own listening positionality, can help us understand how we are implicated in each other and the places we live, work and are a part of.

4. Protocol 3: Weaving

Woven throughout our NLW symposium was a weaving circle which we nurtured as a breathing and connecting space to allow us to both physically weave – by creating objects that carry the knowledges and relationships formed in the symposium – and also weave our conversations and reflections from the previous sessions. As you read about this third protocol, you are invited to weave your own experiences and reflections with ours, you may even wish to pick up some materials and weave something yourself.[3] The weaving circle was an invitation to gather, and in so doing, to enact connection to Country and culture as alternative ways of being an academic. As a practice, weaving brings different agencies, qualities, energies, materials and possibilities to a meeting place. As our eyes are drawn away from screens to coax needles and twine around raffia and string, we learn that weaving is not a distraction, it is not something that happens alongside the more serious business of academic discussion. Rather, the stories shared shape baskets, while the baskets in turn shape the stories shared.

Weaving is a reflective practice. It enables the weavers to be present and available to each other in different modes, thereby acknowledging the different ways people are. Weaving activates a type of learning that is timeless (Bishop, 2022). In some ways, weaving makes us more present, whilst also recognising that sitting still is not the only way of being attentive. Weaving challenges us to "give up sureness, linearity, progressive narratives and the arrow of certainty, and to be attentive to small things, place, specificity and affect" (Fisher et al., 2015, p. 23). We chose weaving circles as one way to enact our relationality, to enable us to come together without assuming prior knowledge of the process, as a way of valuing difference through sharing stories and knowledge. Lauren Tynan (2021, pers. comms.) provides an account of how the practice of weaving enables this:

> This is the first ever basket I made [Fig. 1] and I want to show you because your weaving will not look the same as mine …. We all have our beautiful and unique styles of weaving and that is the magic of it, so it doesn't matter how your weaving looks … all loose and has gaps and the beautiful light pours through … that's certainly how mine started and I love it today …

These weaving sessions were places to enable co-becoming and belonging as we spent time stitching relations and connections across difference. Such practices acknowledge people, places and their complexity, and enable us to become entangled in situated relations. Weaving does not seek to iron out difference in disciplined prose, "using strict time frames, restrictive academic writing styles, hierarchical notions of expertise and colonial discourses of 'discovery', 'finding the gap' and 'collecting data'" (Tynan, 2021, p. 599). Nor does it seek to homogenise participants into a single form or format, defined by the exclusions of its other. Weaving refuses the creation of hierarchical divides (e.g., oppressed/oppressor, victim/perpetrator, etc.) (Lorde, 2019). Instead, it enables (and respects) the different properties, of people, materials, skills, knowledges and stories, and the different obligations they carry with them, to each other, to kin, to Country. As Bama scholar Tyson Yunkaporta (2019, p. 269) says, "culture is not what your hands touch or make, it's what moves your hands"; our weaving is a relational process of connection, stitching our diverse knowledges and shared relationalities into the baskets. Rather than focusing on the basket, the output (as is often prized in academia), weaving focuses on the process, what 'moves' our hands and connects us together.

For the NLW network, weaving sessions are always open to unexpected transformations, embedding families and the spirituality and agency of nonhuman elements in, of and as place. As the NLW invitation noted: "You are welcome and encouraged to bring other important human and non-human beings to these sessions to not only shape, but enable our relationship building (sharing our animals, plants, kids, cooking, medicines during this time could be nurturing)".

As we weave we grapple with the question of how we might become 'people who belong together well', if not forever, then at least for the present moment. This question prompts us to ponder how we might weave or entangle ourselves in ways which pay attention to how we are

Fig. 1. Lauren's first woven raffia basket.

[3] How to weave a basket with Tjanpi Desert Weavershttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5w3G1Qx_1Y.

embedded *within* a relational network, rather that responsible to something external from us -our *response-abilities as* (Bawaka Country et al., 2019). Such response-abilities are purposive and mindful of our obligations to contribute to collective goals whilst remaining attentive to boundaries and exclusions. Being response-able prompts us to listen (even when things are hard to hear) and to be willing to turn away. As we come together through the sharing of stories of our experiences in academia, sometimes distressing and sometimes care-full, we are all too aware of the danger of falling apart– of unravelling:

> I'm quite discerning when choosing the piece of raffia that's going to be my weaver because some pieces of raffia are, you know, really broken and that's fine in the filler end, it doesn't matter they sort of squirrel out at the end and get a bit weak. (Lauren Tynan, 2021, pers. comms.)

Not everything can be woven in. Some threads remain loose and out of place. Some remain broken and others tie in at the end. Here we are reminded of the writings of Eva Giraud, for whom the paradox of relationality is found in precisely this struggle to accommodate things that are resistant to being in relation, including forms of politics that actively oppose particular relations (Giraud, 2019, p. 7). For them, Western relational scholarship is postpolitical in its refusal to commit to one thing or another, to make choices: "nothing is what trouble looks like" (Giraud, 2019, p. 122).

Weaving is all about making choices. The choice of one thread over another, one stitch over another, to pull something tight or remain with the looseness:

> I like to choose a piece of raffia that's quite thin at the beginning so I know it's going to be sturdy and go through the needle and then it sort of doesn't matter what happens at the end it all sort of ties in. (Lauren Tynan, 2021, pers. comms.)

The materials might also make the choices for the weaver. One particular piece of raffia catching the weaver's eye, its texture taking the basket in a different direction. The weaver may have expected a certain outcome and be ever so surprised at what emerges in the end.

Each time we begin a new basket, we make a different set of choices. We also accept that weaving invites in our more-than-human relatives who make choices for us; embedding their knowledges into the basket, their lessons for us to learn, carry and gift to others. Some patterns may be repeated many times and gain traction that way, others might be engaged with more fleetingly or even rejected. Still, others are refused outright. In their work on writing difference differently, Lesley Instone describes the need of weaving to be "constantly knotted and reknotted, woven and rewoven to keep a particular shape. It is only in the weaving and reweaving of gathered objects that the container, the account we tell, emerges" (Fisher et al., 2015, p. 22). To weave things together takes work, and, metaphorically through other forms of art and writing, carries monetary costs; material and environmental costs (Lorde, 2019), emotional costs and/or political costs. Tynan further explains: "relationality is about connection, to Peoples and Country, but connection to Country is not always rosy either" (2021, p. 5990). Weaving can be painful; sometimes it hurts.

5. Protocol 4: Discomfort

We turn now to a protocol of discomfort which underpins some challenging aspects of relational practice, where reflection leads sometimes to disconcerting, yet also crucial, places. Discomfort is relationality as the disruption and interruption of exclusionary, violent practices, norms and attachments. We begin with an exercise:

Locate the reference list of a recent journal article or book chapter you wrote (or the work of someone you admire if you are yet to publish). Using different colours highlight all the references by: Women of colour; Indigenous people; Racial minorities; People with disabilities; Non-binary/trans people; Early Career Researchers; Post-graduate students. This may require doing some extra research too.

Did the above exercise make you uncomfortable? Have you previously thought about who the authors are of the work you are engaging with and citing? Are there swathes of scholarship that you are not engaging with, or did not even know about? Does this mean that you are complicit, or stuck, in the standardisation of apparent 'success' in the academy – and therefore have a hand in determining who and what can be successful, whose work is being recognised/amplified/promoted/given value? Such engagement may provoke visceral and uncomfortable responses – perhaps a sick feeling in your gut, perhaps an 'aha' or 'oh no' moment, a sense of embarrassment or perhaps remorse. This is a process of self-examination we have practised ourselves and ask our readers to critically engage with in their practices and processes.

Here we discuss discomfort not as an entirely individual emotion, but as a social, cultural and political effect/affect that is part of the (re) production and conservation of Western colonial structures and practices within the academy. We are always writing, thinking and reading relationally. The consequences of discipline(d) attachment towards specific Western knowledges must be engaged and interrupted in sensitive yet critical ways. The experience of discomfort can be a compelling yet challenging emotion to prompt this. Centring discomfort in academic processes aims to elicit a broad, inclusive and rich dynamic to unsettle and disrupt Western colonial structures and practices, and to consciously make room for the diverse, rich, dynamic knowledges which have been silenced, marginalised, and denigrated in and by academia for far too long (Sullivan et al., 2020; Todd, 2016).

The inclusion of and engagement with a multiplicity of research approaches and positions is critical for challenging and undermining power relations, particularly in disciplines where knowledge production has historically (and presently) been (re)produced from limited yet dominant Western knowledge bases (L. Smith, 2012). Currently, "geography remains overwhelmingly dominated by white, male, cisnormative-heterosexual voices and by a narrow set of epistemological approaches" (Mott and Cockayne, 2017, p. 955; Noxolo 2017). Therefore, a process of critical examination of one's own complicity in such processes seeks to decolonise and dismantle the affects and limits of Western dominance in research and research practices (Kwaymullina, 2016; C. Smith et al., 2020; Sullivan, 2020).

This process of examining our/your own work as a practice privileging particular relationalities over others may be unsettling, uncomfortable and/or painful. But we ask ourselves/you to sit with this discomfort, to hold to it and indeed lean into it. To forge through this to an open-ended point of reflexivity to recognise ourselves/yourself as always having a relationship with your work, and to further the relationality between what you produce, how you produce it, and who you produce it with (Tynan, 2020; Tynan and Bishop, 2023). This relationality compels and cultivates a *'pedagogy of discomfort'* - a process that requires questioning, listening and responding (Zembylas, 2018). Firstly, with ourselves as a foundation in which to identify and understand our own shortcomings and gaps in knowledge (re)production. From here it is then possible to (re)align and immerse in meaningful, contextualised, and deep conversations. This engagement shifts perspectives and frames of reference/s with the expectation of responsible and ethical orientation to the relationships of work practices and knowledge production. Such an endeavour is a 'call to action' to challenge the structures and systems of privilege and to arouse a decolonisation of Western knowledge practices. These actions will necessarily always remain in process, as an examination and destabilisation of power, a perpetual fostering of discomfort, and a nurturing of the relationships that we build and maintain in this work.

6. Protocol 5: Grieving

Grieving takes multiple forms beyond the loss of human beings. Loss of Country, culture, language, and animals often manifests as grief. In our relations as a network and in our symposium we have tried to hold

some of our grief together, as the fifth protocol of relationality.

In the early 21st century there is much to grieve. Grief is a key part of relationality. The overwhelming loss of life from pandemics and disease, a changing climate, global extinction crisis, and disasters abound as the impacts of ongoing colonisation and extractivism continue to intensify and expand (Davis and Todd, 2017; A. Smith et al., 2021; Liboiron 2021). These losses are everywhere; they are both global and personal. They are also situated, with violences and losses experienced differentially and in relation to histories and presents of systematic exclusion, abuse, exploitation, and dispossession. Indeed, there are important differences in grief and grievances among our NLW network as we each have differing positionalities, community connections, and live within differing political contexts. Collective grief stands alongside the grief we hold in our everyday lives - when our loved-ones die, our hearts get broken, relationships end, lives change in dramatic and unexpected ways, expectations are not met. And yet, despite these realities, death and grief seem to be written - and spoken - out of our academic lives. Where is the space for our grieving? How do we talk about death in a culture that fears death's very existence? In this section we call grief into the room and ask you to sit with this unavoidable experience to not shy away from this destiny we will all eventually endure, to learn from what others might have to share with you in navigating this experience.

It will hurt. We know this from experience. In many of our lives, death and grief have pummelled our hearts and changed us forever. For some of us, so many of our family members have been lost that we know what it is like to live for years with the changing face of grief. In our experiences, grief can catch hold of you at any time, when you least expect it. Sitting on the bus, waiting in line at the supermarket, talking to a friend - grief doesn't announce itself, until it does. And in that moment, grief can transport you back to huge emotions, so enormous you can barely function. Sometimes we want to bury these feelings from others, but we have learned to embrace them. Is it okay to wear your grief on the outside? Sara C. Motta, a proud mestiza salvaje of Colombia Chibcha, Polish Jewish and Celtic lineages, shares how the co-creation of spaces of vulnerability in struggle and the racialized and feminised communities they work in relation with has allowed for "unlearning containment, and expressing and learning to sense grief and disappointment" and that in a politicised context "offer [s] the grounds of possibility for both our speaking and being/existing" (Motta, 2018, p. 66).

Indeed, we too want to greatly value these turbulent feelings. Grief has connected us to life in surprising ways, and grief has gifted us in building empathy – both for those people close to us and those on the other side of the world; for dying coral reefs and the tiny beings that compose them; to all beings, everywhere.

Certainly, one thing we can tell you about the experience of grief, that many of you may know, is that in the early stages you can be overwhelmed by deeply stressful administration. No one tells you about that bit. In the case of death, for example, accounts must be closed, debts paid up, forms filled, government agencies conferred with, temporary passwords obtained, houses cleared, goods divided. And then there is organising a funeral. So much sad and unexpected work. Choosing the clothes your loved one will be laid to rest in is a strange experience. Answering your dead loved-ones' phone to tell people they have died is an unforgettable experience. These experiences and the many other grief-filled ones that follow change you forever - we are never the same after experiencing immense grief.

This is what we have learned from our own grief. We have also learned that shying away from others' grief is not helpful to the griever. If you have not experienced enormous personal grief yourself, you might feel embarrassed, upset or perplexed by others' grief. What might it mean to refuse to ignore others' grief in the spaces of academia? To sit and share in the uncertainty, to build greater empathy in our projects and practices? The importance of expressing grief in relating to ourselves, each other and Country continues to be lived and honoured in diverse Indigenous contexts where many of our network live and work in so-called Australia. The Yolngu-led, Gay'wu Group of Women, write how Yolngu cry milkarri together as women, singing songspirals (also known as songlines), that is a song, map, ceremony, guide, and more than this too (Gay'wu Group of Women, 2019, p. xvi). Their collective share that crying milkarri in grief and in joy remakes Country, its relations and connections in both life and death:

> Women cry milkarri to guide our loved ones, living and dead. We cry milkarri to greet the dawn, to make the new day. We remake ourselves and Country, we gather the clouds. We cry milkarri in grief, bittersweet, with love, to heal.
>
> Milkarri's healing sound, its intensity straight from our heart, from our love and grief. Our tears. Women keen the tears of milkarri for what is there. We keen milkarri for Country, for all our beautiful Countries, both Dhuwa and Yirritja. (Gay'wu Group of Women, 2019, p. 255)

In our own contexts, from our own places, we are trying to learn to honour our own grieving to remake ourselves and our connections. We hope that through our grief, through loss, through deaths in whatever form they take, we can keep ourselves open to new feelings and ideas, to glimmers of hope. Grieving can involve a productive examination of the source of our losses. As Lesley Head opines: "[I]t is important to find ways to carry our grief into hopeful environmental engagements. This means probing exactly what we are grieving for" (Head, 2016, p. 54, p. 54). Head proposes that within the hurt and the pain, a space for careful reflection might be created to transform our losses into hopeful futures. Yet the fundamentally important and universal feelings and experiences of grieving have been shut down, erased, and silenced within academia. As human geographers who try to understand human relationships to environments, this silencing is not only unhelpful for better understanding our world and how we live in it, but neglectful. For grief can teach us new lessons, connect us to life, build empathy with other beings, whether they are in our everyday lives or not. That is an opportunity for connection that, in a world of unbelievable loss, we cannot ignore.

7. Protocol 6: Resting

7.1. This section was written between the intermittent times of rest

As we write, two years have passed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout these disruptive times, expectations and pressures to be 'productive' persisted. So did the lingering feelings of guilt amongst those unable to concentrate and/or write – at all or 'enough'. Yet who is able to conceptualise, write and conduct business-as-usual amid a global pandemic, particularly those of us with caring responsibilities and/or living under already-precarious conditions of many sorts (living conditions, income, employment, disabilities, etc.)?

7.2. We're exhausted

COVID-19 arrived amidst growing calls to attend to the exclusionary effects of normative academic timescapes – neoliberal, Western-centric, ableist notions of linear time – on bodies and selves (Meyerhoff and Noterman, 2017; Mountz et al., 2015; Shahjahan, 2015). In this final protocol, we want to bring rest (often forgotten, neglected, looked down upon) to the fore as a protocol and response to these calls.

7.3. Use the first 20 s upon waking up to make restful intentions, to make time for rest

Rest means different things for different people. Here, we follow the steps of others that have considered rest as a vehicle for racial, social and disability justice, as resistance. We are inspired by and acknowledge the foundational work of Audre Lorde (2017) on self-care as deeply political, for personal and community survival, particularly for Black women;

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's (2018) *Care Work*, which centres on disabled queer and trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; and the work of Tricia Hersey, who founded *The Nap Ministry*[4] in 2016, a movement that examines the liberating power of naps. Hersey explicitly describes rest as a spiritual, collective practice, a racial and social justice issue, and an intentional honouring of ancestral resistance.

This noun-and-verb means going beyond or against the temporalities of late capitalism that privilege "productivity, capacity, self-sufficiency, independence, achievement" (Kafer, 2021, p. 421). It means disrupting Euro-Western engrained ontological dualisms (e.g., body-mind) and challenging the negative connotation of laziness-as-lethargy. This is what Riyad Shahjahan proposes when advocating for 'laziness' as "a transformational heuristic device in the neoliberal academy" (2015, p. 481). The term laziness is used provocatively to prompt interrogation of the negative colonial connotations attached to it. It means "being at peace with 'not doing' or 'not being productive,' living in the present, and deprivileging the *need for a result* with the passage of time (…) *re-embody[ing] our bodies or reconnect[ing] to our bodies*" (Shahjahan, 2015, p. 489). Shahjahan's concept of the "lazy academic" is further developed by Ryan Gildersleeve, who conceptualises the "*academicus otiosus*—a lazy academic and methodological artist" (2018, p. 694) as a political response to neoliberal ascriptions of being/becoming based on labour and productivity. For him, "lazy behind-the-scenes in/activities" (Gildersleeve, 2018, p. 694) can engender creativity and resistance, be it reading or writing a poem, staring out the window, taking a walk, tasting fruit, doing yoga, drawing circles. Throughout the NLW symposium, lazy in/activities were central - listening, weaving and counter-weaving (e.g., writing, reading, drawing, painting, doing nothing). We also created breathing and resting spacetimes between sessions, instead of successive and long blocks.

Some argue that laziness might only be available to a privileged few, likely the Lone Wolves. But it means survival for some people, often those rendered invisible in academia, such as the disabled/chronically ill (Brown and Leigh, 2020), as some of us are. Being disabled/chronically ill entails a radically different relationship with and experience of time - we live in "crip time":

> [Crip time] forces us to take breaks, even when we don't want to, even when we want to keep going, to move ahead. It insists that we listen to our bodyminds *so* closely, *so* attentively, in a culture that tells us to divide the two and push the body away from us while also pushing it beyond its limits. (Samuels, 2017, para. 11; see also Kafer, 2021; Samuels and Freeman, 2021)

Although it has been reduced to slowness, often pejoratively, or a mere extension of normative time, crip time is much more than that. It might unfold into new solidarities and forms of relationality, new practices of time, yet unimagined imaginaries (Kafer, 2021; Samuels and Freeman, 2021).

Being 'lazy', resting, living in crip time, however we might call it, means being flexible, being gentle with ourselves. Listening to the rhythms of our bodyminds, for personal and community care.

Take a pause. How will you res(is)t?

8. Conclusion

In this paper we have presented six protocols that have emerged through our coming together and which we have envisaged to navigate the complex dynamics involved in our collaboration across significant differences of place, race, gender, class, employment (un)stability, age and (dis)ability. Geographers are becoming more attuned to the importance of building and sustaining good relations to (and with) others, humans and non-humans, to create strong support systems and to enact ways of being beyond the individualistic and competitive imperatives of Western academia. None of the ideas presented in this paper are unique to us but draw upon vast and ongoing lineages of practice led by Indigenous, Black, brown, disabled, often economically minoritised communities, advocates, and scholars. It is our contention that for geographers to prioritise mutually supportive relationships, we must inherently change our ways of relating and engage with diverse onto-epistemologies. This is not an abstract exercise, but rather very material attempts to co-exist differently.

For this, we must begin with our relations to place. All places have Custodians, webs of relationships and histories; as such, we can never be disembodied or dis-emplaced in our working, yarning, writing together. To begin with place, and to foreground its importance, is to fundamentally trouble the Anglo-European colonial separation of humans from the environments we inhabit (Graham, 2009). The drive of colonial capitalism toward separation and individuation shapes what Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun (2001) identify as white supremacy culture, which deeply anchors academic life. Through these protocols we have tried to find ways to negotiate and refuse where we can the injunctions to work harder, produce more, hoard power and opportunities and elevate the idea of the singular, lone wolf scholar.

Given we began this paper by grounding ourselves in our emplacements, our relations, responsibilities, and entanglements, we want to close this paper by clearly articulating what we want to disentangle ourselves from. We are not compelled by models of academic work that privilege formal, linear accounts of research that are simultaneously displaced from the contexts within which they emerge and transplanted into long lists of citations. This scholarship, which we have all been trained in, prioritises fast, resource hungry and arguably waste-full forms of work driven by indices and other metrics; a "consumerist research … which can be processed, packaged and marketed" (Tynan, 2020, p. 164). Oftentimes this comprises relatively comfortable scholarship that is unencumbered by its position within its ivory tower. There is little at stake. It is disconnected, disembedded and gives no space nor time to kin, family, people, love, care, grief or rest.

As we continue to develop our ways of being together, we will continue to ask: how can we abrogate the demands the neoliberal university places on us? Refusal has long been a key theme in Indigenous scholarship (Kanngieser 2022; Kanngieser and Beuret, 2017; Simpson, 2014; Tuck and Yang, 2014; Tynan and Bishop, 2019), where limits may be imposed in response to deep commitments to community (Simpson, 2007; Tynan and Bishop, 2023), and a recognition of "what must be kept out of reach" (Tuck and Yang, 2014, p. 811). We follow the idea of refusal as a doing; it "needs a disposition of attentiveness, listening, curiosity and noticing, an attunement" (Kanngieser, 2022).

Refusal is therefore not only an act of being-against, but also an invitation to return, unsettled, discomforted (Kanngieser, 2022), with a different sense of what constitutes meaningful, valuable scholarship. It allows us to think from other vantage points and to inquire where possibilities lie to move around dialectical thought toward more liberatory pathways. In the end, we might not know where or how our protocols land. Perhaps, as often happens, it is a matter of hindsight. It is our hope that by continuing to move in these ways, however, we may connect to colleagues within our discipline and outside of it that are also committed to being accountable to the choices we make, as academics, as knowledge makers and as a wider interdependent community.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

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[4] https://thenapministry.wordpress.com/.

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