



Designing in Transition:
Towards Intimacy in Ecological Uncertainty

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Practice

... events out of my walk in TWS

Design for becoming

theorise temporality

Moving backwards of TWS - outcome of practice.
made to move forwards.

The things we do

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Memories of the future!

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Designing in transition

Towards intimacy in ecological uncertainty

become type

Kirsten Moegerlein

Memory to not making work in future making

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- honoring
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many as material in becoming

"remember"

Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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Kirsten Moegerlein
09/09/2019

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Abstract

Title Designing in Transition:
Towards intimacy in ecological uncertainty

Abstract This PhD traces my attempts to re-orient my design practice from visual communication design to a more expanded participatory practice that supports intimacy in ecological uncertainty. At the inception of this research I was deeply unsettled by the global ecological crisis and searching for a way to respond through design. I joined a small fledgling community called The Weekly Service, that was exploring what it means to be human in these times of transition through storytelling and curatorial practices. After two years of close collaboration with community members and a core team, I developed a deeply relational practice concerned with emergent social processes. However, rather than focus on the outcome of this transition (the expanded participatory practice), this research attempts to reveal the messy, and sometimes painful, process of transition, what I refer to as *designing in transition*.

Many agree that design is an important vehicle for catalysing and supporting transition towards more sustainable futures (see for example Escobar 2018, Fry 2012, Irwin 2015, Manzini 2015b). Transition towards more sustainable futures necessitates different ways of designing and new postures and mindsets (du Plessis 2015, Irwin 2015). Increasingly, it is being argued that this requires the ontological reorientation of design and designers towards more relationally attuned ways of being-knowing-&-doing (Akama 2015, Escobar 2018, Fry 2012, Irwin 2015, Light et al. 2017). This research contributes to these emerging discussions, by elucidating my own experience of how ontological transitions are lived in practice.

Over the course of two years, I developed a practice-orientated methodology for documenting and analysing transitions. This methodology draws on an amalgamation of Participatory Design and Design Anthropology approaches, which enabled me to travel along with others as we attempted to cultivate communal intimacy or relational ways of being-knowing-&-doing. Through written and drawn accounts I highlight how transition is an embodied, emotional and affective experience, that emerges through the relationships that we form with others, the things we make together, and the manner in which we travel together. In doing so, I suggest that these transitional times call for a greater recognition of how designers might adapt or develop methods that could enable and reveal the ontological transitions underway in their own practice. I offer this in the hope that it might also support others who are just starting their own journey towards redirecting / expanding their practice.

Introduction

If you are reading this dissertation, you are likely well aware that climate change is set to shape the course of the 21st century and innumerable centuries to come. Unruly storms, wildfires and melting glaciers are converging in alarming ways to unsettle and unseat the once perceived certainty that industrial civilisation had secured a pathway for humanity's progress. This myth, from which only a small percentage of the world's inhabitants have benefited from, is crumbling, as extractive regimes push the world's capacity to its regenerative limit (IPCC 2018). This crisis not only concerns present generations but also the multitudes of generations to come. It concerns not only the fate of humans but the fate of all species and the life systems that make up the intricate web of life on Earth. It is a crisis that may have induced shock when you first faced its enormity. Tsing and colleagues (2017) capture this shock well:

The hubris of conquerors and corporations makes it uncertain what we can bequeath to our next generations, human and not human. The enormity of our dilemma leaves scientists, writers, artists, and scholars in shock. How can we best use our research to stem the tide of ruination? (1)

My own experience of grappling with this crisis marks the beginning and impetus of this PhD research through design practice. At the inception of this research my design practice was foundationally visual. I am steeped in the skills and processes that enable me to visually communicate concepts and ideas that resonate as feelings or affective tonalities. However, as a visual communication designer I have felt ill-equipped to know how to 'stem the tide of ruination'. A positive sense of frustration therefore, propels this research inquiry forward in search of an expanded practice. To further my research inquiry, I joined a grassroots community called The Weekly Service, which was started by Cameron Elliott and Henry Churchill in September 2015. The Weekly Service is a curated secular gathering run on Saturday mornings where people share stories, listen to music, pause for reflection and engage in conversation. The Weekly Service arose out of a broad acknowledgement that we are living through a time of significant change and through gathering, Henry and Cam sought to provide a space for dialogue and deeper discussion surrounding these shifts (to be described in more detail in *Chapter 1*).

Across the duration of May 2016 to June 2018, I worked closely with three others (Henry, Cam and Caro) as an embedded design researcher to develop The Weekly Service, where I was tightly woven into and strongly affected by the work we did together.

Note to reader: The green text within this dissertation is derived from reflective notes written during this research. As the dissertation progresses, the green text begins to reflect the body of wisdom that emerges as a result of my longitudinal engagement through practice.

How can I begin to describe the stories and people that have filled my last year with a richness I didn't know was missing? Tales etched with heartache. Tales of being human, shared in-person with delicate vulnerability, in a small amphitheatre in Thornbury, Melbourne. (December 2016)

Through our participatory practice we sought to involve and design with people that were looking for connection and meaning in urban pockets of Melbourne. Much of our work can be understood as aligning people with complementary resources in the joint project of co-producing and prototyping the weekly gatherings which we referred to as a 'Service'. This description is resonant with the notion of infrastructuring, a theoretical term that emerged from the work of Star and Ruhleder (1996). I take up the notion of infrastructuring to help situate the work of The Weekly Service in conversation with Participatory Design.

Through the case study of The Weekly Service, I foreground my own transition as a designer – from a practice of visual communication design towards an expanded practice. Rather than focus on the point of destination (the expanded participatory practice) I shed light on the process of transition, or what I refer to as *designing in transition*. This approach stems from a recognition that we exist within an impasse (Berlant 2011, Beuret 2015) and a time of transition, where what we need to redesign is ourselves (Fry 2012) and our ways of relating to the world and each other (Escobar 2018). Within this dissertation, I do not shy away from the difficulties inherent in transition. I take up Light's (2018) call to write Participatory Design differently and draw inspiration from the field of Autoethnography (Holman Jones et al. 2013), in an attempt to reveal the personal transition that was required of me as I shifted my practice from a modern / colonial world-view towards a more relational ontology.

The Weekly Service became the site of transition for my design practice. As I worked as an embedded designer researcher, I felt supported to take risks and grow with others, who were also open to shifting their world-views. While I am optimistic that different ontological possibilities for design exist, following the anthropologist Arturo Escobar (2018), I suggest that this work involves a kind of 'internal cultural healing' (14). My search for an expanded practice and engagement with the ecological crisis was at times confronting and saddening. It would therefore be naive to suggest that this work is easy. It challenged me to unlearn aspects of my design training and my own cultural inheritance, which privileges individualism and an ideology of separateness, above and over relational ways of being. Throughout this dissertation I provide a sense of what is involved in designing

in transition, where transition is not a smooth process, but full of unexpected false starts, bumps and surprises.

As a result of this research through practice, I have reoriented my visual skills as a designer, towards recognising how visual communication design can enable poetic forms of improvisation and modes of sense-making that are helpful within transitional (and collaborative) design contexts. I also developed approaches to infrastructuring along with others that were tailored towards ongoing alignments between people at The Weekly Service. These include: an invitational stance (see *Chapter 5*) and warming-up atmospheres (see *Chapter 6*). I reflect on how these practices helped me to grow attuned to the more intangible aspects of collaborative design, where difficult to categorise phenomena such as atmospheres shape how communities emerge over time and how I intervened with others through design.

I also found drawing to be a helpful practice throughout this research and especially in the final stages. Drawing became a means of tuning into the relational dimensions of my practice transitions. The particular style of drawing I developed has resonances with autoethnography and it provided me with a means to way-find and inquire into tense situations and complex relational dynamics (see *Chapter 8*). By way of conclusion, at the close of this dissertation I arc back to the positive sense of frustration that propelled this inquiry, and I speak directly to my former self and to other designers in transition, through notes and a hand-drawn landscape that encloses some signposts along the transitional journey.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter I provide background context to this research which frames the field of inquiry. I also describe the structure of this dissertation and contextualise this written submission in relation to the examination exhibition / presentation.

(i) Design(er) in transition

In 2014, I left my job as an in-house visual communication designer, at a point when I had begun to fundamentally question my practice and role in perpetuating unsustainable consumption through design. I wasn't satisfied with the graphic campaigns I was creating. They didn't appear to invite participation or open up a means for interaction or inquiry. The kind of design practice I longed for was open-scripted, inclusive and thought provoking, and aimed at cultivating dialogue.

Visual communication design has been slow to develop itself into a critical practice. It sits at the nexus between the imperatives of cultural expression, capital and technological development. As design researcher Lisa Grocott (2012) notes, it is not a practice recognised for generating artefacts that ask questions. With the rise of the digital age, big data and the service economy, visual communication design has shown it's capacity for continual reinvention, much like neoliberalism itself. Within this context, visual communication often promises a clean new world, devoid of messiness (Lavin, 2001). The majority of visual communication design therefore, continues to serve neoliberal agendas (Julier 2013), despite the attempts of a growing number of practitioners and researchers determined to reorient it towards a more critical and socially engaged practice (Akama 2008, Frascara 2006, Fuad-Luke 2009, Gothe 2015, Grocott 2012, Gwilt & Williams 2011, Haslem 2011). Attempts have been made to develop a more mature understanding of the role of visual communication design in collaborative settings. Sanders & Stappers (2008) position the role of visual tools as amongst those that are important in collaborative design. Gwilt and Williams (2011) posit that within research contexts, visual communication designers can be 'key investigators, to stimulate dialogue, elicit opinion and reveal insights' (82). However, the interpersonal dimensions of collaboration in visual communication design are still largely under-researched (Goth 2015).

Despite these advances and the need for further research into visual communication design, in the early stages of this PhD, I had determined that reorientating my practice towards addressing the ecological crisis would require a shift in my practice – away from visual forms as the end product of design and towards more open-ended processes of making with others. I had imagined that my newly expanded practice would be less material, more relational and more systemic. As will become evident, my understanding of the importance of visual communication design within collaborative settings, and my drawing skills in particular, shifted as this research progressed.¹ This led to a more nuanced understanding of the importance of visual skills as a means to make sense of and way-find within transitional contexts. I take up these points later on in the dissertation (see *Chapter 8 – Drawing*).

¹In this research, I view 'visual communication design' as a practice that critically probes an area of curiosity through visual inquiry. I view 'drawing' as a specific way of doing this, that I explore further in Chapter 8.

To return to the beginning of this research, I decided to explore my concerns surrounding the unsustainability of design practice further, by attending a 5-week course run by design theorist and philosopher Tony Fry, at the *Studio of the Edge of the World*. Tony Fry has continually attempted to reveal the unsustainable nature of much of contemporary design practice (see for example his trilogy of books (Fry 2009, 2010,

2012) related to design's 'defuturing' capacities). The course that I attended was titled '*Seeing Unsettlement/Intercultural Learning*'. According to Fry (2016), our current human condition is best described as one of 'unsettlement'. Fry writes, at its most basic unsettlement is a 'disturbance/disruption in the current dominant modes of humanity's being-in-the world as they are experienced and enacted individually and collectively' (ibid, 1). The complexities of climate change, resource shortages and intensifying conflicts are just some of the emergent themes in a world characterised by unsettlement. So too are the psychological states of foreboding and nihilism, that contribute to a perceived lack of agency. The following quotes by Fry (2012) offer a sense of the tone of the course:

We underestimate the extent to which we impose – that is, stamp – our self on virtually everything. The trace of our presence, the scars of our actions, the heritage of our neglect can be seen in every extant environment on the planet. (59)

We have a choice: we can ignore the likelihood that huge numbers of human beings are going to die because of the forces of defuturing which we humans have ourselves brought into being, or we can confront it and find an ethical position from which to view the situation and act. (203)

During the course I became disoriented and found it increasingly difficult to engage through design practice, for fear of perpetuating further unsustainability. I was incredibly confronted by the course content and the destructive capacities of mankind that it shone a light on. I came to a point of impasse and within it I hit on my own deeper despair surrounding the ecological crisis; a point that precipitated a departure from carrying on as before.

The course feels apocalyptic. Collapse is never mentioned, but it's whispered in-between sermons. The unwinding of the 'myth of progress' happens slowly at first. Images press in, as the ropes that once held my world in place begin to unravel – gated settlements for the rich, a wedding photo depicting a man whose face is so damaged by a bomb blast it's almost unrecognisably human... – the unwinding, piece by piece. And then suddenly, there is no rope left. Everything is thrown into question. I feel naive and unsettled to my core. People talk about shifts in world-view. For example, designer and academic Terry Irwin (2012) writes, that 'most importantly...the greatest potential to design sweeping change lies in shifting paradigms (world-views) and lifestyles; what we believe/care about influences how we perceive problems and this in turn determines how we set about solving them' (II).

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I feel a sense of dread and defeatedness about where I'm at. My previous occupation with particular ideas feels like a waste of time. I turn away from the horror of the past, towards the horror of what is to come, and in some small way work toward something of value. I feel like I can't really address the question of what is my work because I'm confused, hurt and feel betrayed. (March 15, 2016)

These words point to the upheaval that a deep engagement with climate change can evoke. This was a time of significant free fall and existential questioning, that was simultaneously professional and deeply personal. Different possibilities were emerging for me, such as a greater sense of responsibility and political engagement through design practice, which might fit alongside a redesigned life.

Increasingly, researchers are coming to understand that negotiating climate change is a complex process of grappling with denial, fear, anger, or grief over what has already been lost and the anticipation of future uncertainty and change (see for example the excellent *'Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss'*, eds. Cunsolo & Landman 2017). It can raise deeply ethical and overwhelming questions surrounding our responsibility to future generations and the more-than-human world (Feldman & Hart 2018, Gardiner 2013, Jones et al. 2012, Stokols et al. 2009). Attempts to engage and inform publics about climate change have historically been centred around scientific facts (Burke et al. 2018). More recent studies within social science have highlighted the socio-cultural and psychic dimensions of the issue suggesting that an awareness of the 'facts' does not necessarily translate into behaviour change (Norgaard 2011).

The difficulty of facing uncomfortable emotions and the relative public silence surrounding climate change led sociologist Kari Norgaard (2011) to coin the term 'socially organised denial'. She describes socially organised denial as 'the process by which individuals collectively distance themselves from information because of norms of emotion, conversation, and attention and by which they use an existing cultural repertoire of strategies in the process' (9). This begs the question, '*could it be that people won't deal with the climate change issue until they have a way to deal with the emotions that come along with it?*' (Andre 2011, 2, quoted in Kretz 2017, 259). Some attempts are being made to describe and acknowledge the difficult emotions associated with climate change. The philosopher Glenn Albrecht uses the neologism 'solastalgia' to name the sense of homesickness that results from distressing changes to one's environment. The term stemmed from his observations surrounding the chronic distress that many residents of the upper

Hunter Valley in New South Wales were experiencing in the early 2000s, as a result of detrimental changes to their environment through open-cut coal mining and a prolonged drought (Albrecht 2012). His insights reveal, that wrestling with climate change can be a lonely process, especially when people don't have environments that are conducive to expressing particular feelings or the language to describe what they are experiencing. This can mean that people become further isolated in their anger, grief and frustration (Kretz 2017).

At the time of my upheaval, I drew courage from the work of Nicholas Beuret (2015) to contextualise my own experience. His PhD thesis, titled '*Organising against the end of the world: the praxis of ecological catastrophe*', discusses how environmental activism has reached an impasse in contemporary times. Drawing on the work of political theorist Lauren Berlant, in particular *Cruel Optimism* (2011), Beuret (2015) writes:

Impasse is a moment where existing strategies and tactics no longer work while new strategies or tactics have not been invented. It is what Lauren Berlant calls a situation (2011, 4) designating "a time of dithering". A moment of impasse is not framed by existing social narratives, fantasies or imaginaries and is thus a moment without orientation. (4)

The notion of impasse resonated for me on a personal, professional and a broader political level. For Beuret, the environmental impasse is characterised by the inability of liberalism to deliver on its promise of progress, whereby 'the breakdown in liberal praxis is the outcome of a number of conjoined processes including the political activity of those people excluded from full participation within liberal democracy and the breakdown of socio-economic progress as a historical tendency' (10). He points to how disempowerment is closely connected to how environmental problems are constituted, and the kinds of hope (or lack thereof) this affords. While Beuret speaks to the impasse of environmental activism and the lack of collective agency in the UK, his observations translate well to an Australian context. Across the years of 2007 to 2018 the Australian political landscape was preoccupied with what has been dubbed the 'climate wars'. This 11 year period has been marked by 'a torturous series of back flips and U-turns on energy and climate change policy' (Fanner 2018, np).

Climate change is a complex issue, that resists representation (Morton 2013). Its consequences reach into the social, economic and political dimensions of everyday life across the globe in uneven and distributed ways (Kossoff 2015). As dire climate warnings echo across social media and the nightly news, calls to 'fix' problems grow – Fix it! Fix what? – Fix the tide of environmental destruction! Fix the political system that

benefits from extractivism! Fix the unending greed of those who seek to profit! Fix those who benefit from such systems! Questions prompt answers. The accelerated rhythms of modern society increasingly ask designers (and other problem solvers) to act now and fast and in doing so they speak the language of innovation or 'solutionism' (Morozov 2013). Sustainability, whether in the form of goals or solutions, often comes pre-packaged, which overrides our ability to 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway 2016) of these times. As Shove and colleagues (2012) note, sustainability is not a question about reaching an end state, but about supporting change in less resource intensive directions. More profoundly however, we can say that sustainability is a life-long project of learning how to live in concert with what enables 'being to be' (Fry 2012).

While well intentioned, many attempts to respond to the present ecological crisis, can be said to arise from a modern / colonial imaginary and a belief that humans can control the trajectory of Earth's climate (Fry 2012). Underpinning this imaginary is a view that humans are separate from nature and can manipulate or manage their environments to meet their growing needs (Escobar 2018, Mathews 2005, Plumwood 2002). Earth is not conceived here as a living relation, rather it is more readily understood as a resource to be exploited (Vazquez 2017). The modern / colonial imaginary, which has come to dominate much of our thinking and designing (Schultz et al. 2018), is not able to appropriately diagnose or respond to the present unravelling of relations that we are witnessing through climate change (Fry 2012), primarily because it does not value these relationships intrinsically on their own terms (Escobar 2018).

Within design discourse, a growing number of design practitioners and theorists are attempting to grapple with and develop different strategies, tactics and ways of designing that move beyond a modern / colonial imaginary. Such approaches include but are not limited to Ecological Design, Design for Social Innovation, Meta Design, Transition Design and Ontological Design (see *Figure 1* for my attempt at mapping these emergent design domains, within a broader ecology). What these design approaches have in common is that they share a commitment to reorient design practice towards re-imagining (or protecting) ways of living that recognise our interdependency upon and embeddedness within ecological systems (Akama 2015, Escobar 2018, Fry 2012, Irwin 2015, Manzini 2015a & 2015b, Wood 2013). For example, within Autonomous Design, designing is conceived as a communal activity orientated towards protecting and cultivating relationally attuned ways of being (Escobar 2018). In many cases, these new design

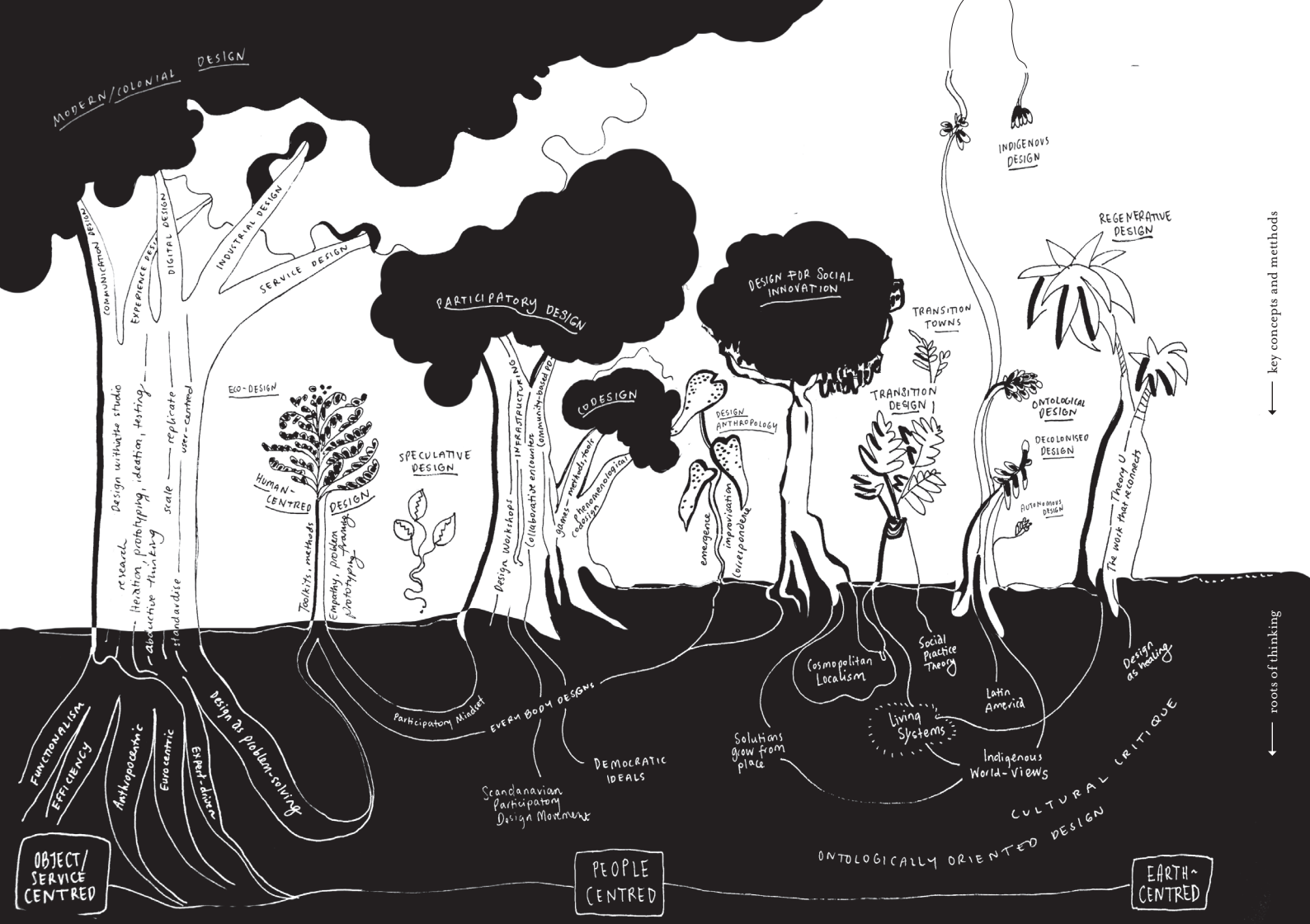


Figure 1: Illustrated map of existing and emerging design disciplines

The height of the trees indicates the age of the discourse. The breadth of the tree canopy indicates influence. The roots indicate ideology, and connections between emerging domains.

discourses also acknowledge that design is not the exclusive domain for designers, but rather that ‘everybody designs’ (Manzini 2015a, Meroni 2007). This in turn, contributes to reshaping the roles that designers play.

One promising framework for design-led societal transition, developed by Terry Irwin and colleagues (2015) at Carnegie Mellon University, is the Transition Design Framework (Figure 2). It outlines four key ‘mutually reinforcing and co-evolving areas of knowledge, action, and self-reflection’ (232). The four areas are: visions for transition; theories of change; mindset and posture; new ways of designing. In order to cultivate the conditions for transition, Irwin argues that designers should adopt a holistic world-view that acknowledges that humans cannot ‘control’ living systems, as a mechanistic metaphor for the world would suggest. Rather the world metaphor is taken to be:

The world as a living organism. Within a ‘whole’ parts are self-organising, interdependent, and mutually influencing and reinforcing and co-evolving. (236)

A glimpse of what this might look and feel like, is offered through the work of collaborative designer Hannah du Plessis (2015). Du Plessis

states that designing in transitional contexts, means working towards change in often unscripted ways, where the design ‘client’ is ‘the emerging intelligence or the unborn future of the ecosystem in which we are working’ (6). This also involves designing with a belief that ‘life has a tendency, an urge to evolve and reconfigure itself in a way that is true and life affirming’ (ibid). While it’s less clear how designers might adopt this ‘living organism’ metaphor, the suggestion that designers should seek to unsettle modern / colonial models of design more broadly, is echoed by many other design practitioners and theorists (see for example Akama 2017, Escobar 2018, Fry 2012, Light et al. 2017, Schultz et al. 2018, Vazquez 2017).

The Transition Design Framework provides a meta-level map that showcases how designers might begin to think about co-evolving different aspects of their design practice. This map was a helpful starting point for me as I sought to transition my practice at the inception of this PhD.

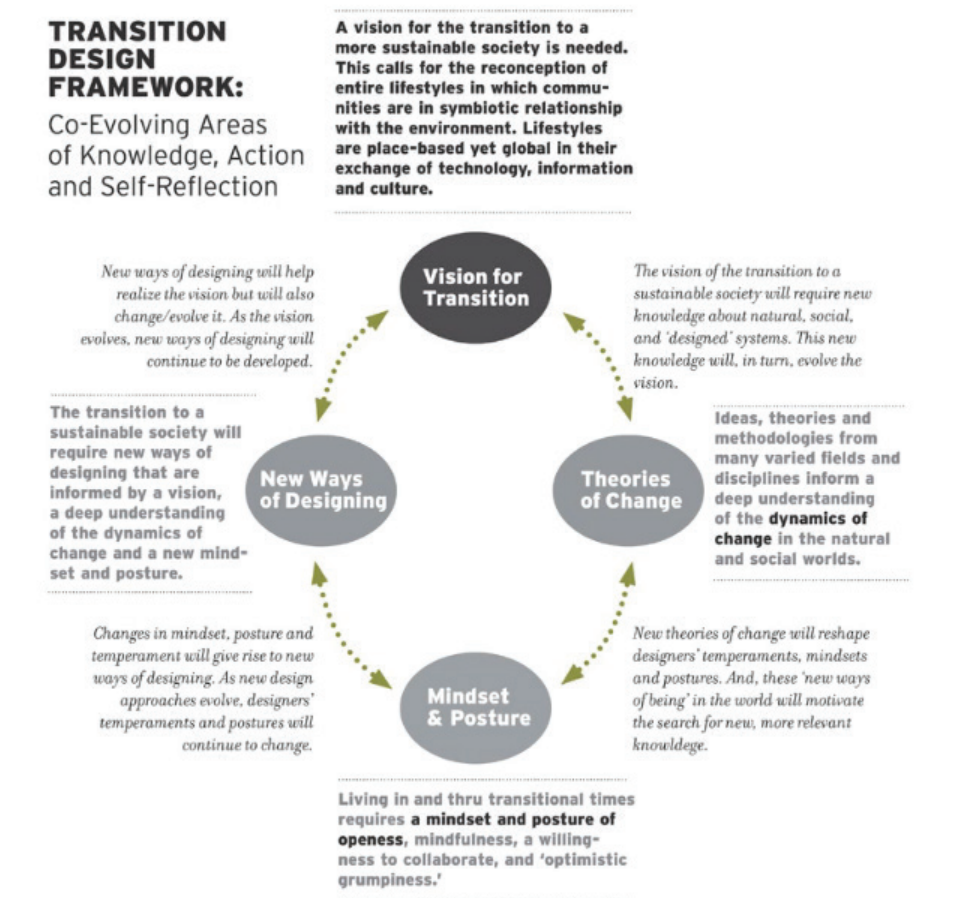


Figure 2: Transition Design Framework (Irwin 2015)

While I applaud the way Transition Design seeks to re-frame design practice, I am simultaneously aware of the complexity involved in re-orientating design ontologically. At the inception of this PhD, I sensed that there was (and still is) a dialogue missing from within the design community surrounding how best to face and respond to the ecological crisis *alongside* others. As someone seeking to grapple with the ecological crisis, and redirect my practice in response to it, I was also longing to read of how other designers were dealing with their inner experiences – their fears, anger, and futility – and how this influenced and impacted their approach and manner in which they designed (a few researchers have begun to speak more directly to this gap, see for example Light et al. 2017 or du Plessis 2016).

As a discipline, design still tends to undervalue relational and inner work, above and over, methods, tools, and material outcomes. Awareness of the relational expertise that is needed to work alongside others on complex issues and the challenges therein, has been steadily growing in design (Agid 2016, Akama 2015, Akama and Yee 2016, Dindler and Iversen 2014, Emilson et al. 2014, Light and Akama 2018, Vaughan 2018). However, only a few authors discuss how we might redesign ourselves within transitional times (du Plessis 2015, Escobar 2018, Fry 2012, Wahl 2016) and not all are design practitioners themselves. Furthermore, at times there appears to be a lack of support or recognition within design discourse that transition is sometimes traumatic, painful or overwhelming. While the expansion of the purpose of design excites me, I have often wondered about the effect of the increased pressure being placed on designers to deliver solutions to environmental and social problems, as design rapidly expands from a focus on objects to the design of services, policy, and systemic change.

Within this dissertation, I approach this gap by foregrounding my own practice transitions from visual communication design towards an expanded participatory practice. Rather than focus on the point of destination (the expanded participatory practice) I shed light on the process of transition, what I refer to as *designing in transition*. I detail how my practice transitioned through my relationships and encounters with others at The Weekly Service where I worked as an embedded design researcher towards the cultivation of (communal) intimacy in ecological uncertainty. While the connection between the cultivation of intimacy and the broader ecological crisis may seem somewhat distant, I suggest that in an environment where loneliness and anxiety about the future is on the rise, communities can support and deepen people's capacities to collaborate in transitional times. Participatory Designer Ann Light and her colleagues (2017), echo this view:

We are not only dealing with runaway resource consumption; we are dealing with fear on a huge scale at a time when there is a need for global leadership to handle both the physical and cultural aspects of global change. Robust and inclusive community is always desirable but never more than now, when there will be no Ark for the rank and file and, if divided, no solace either. Communities need a way to acknowledge these difficulties and still work together to meet unprecedented circumstances. (2)

By focusing on *designing in transition*, this dissertation doesn't offer a recipe of methods, but a trace of my own transitions, which draws on methodologies within Participatory Design and Design Anthropology (to be discussed in *Chapter 2 – Methodological approach*). In doing so, I seek to provide a practice-orientated methodology for documenting and analysing transitions in practice that are concerned with ways of designing and ways of orientating oneself in relation to others and the broader ecological crisis.

(ii) Structure of this dissertation

This dissertation unfolds as follows:

Part I – Setting up the research:

Part I of this dissertation outlines the context for the research (The Weekly Service) and the methodological approach. In *Chapter 1: Research Context* – I introduce The Weekly Service as the site of this research. The Weekly Service arises in the context of the changing nature of spirituality in contemporary times, the rise of social isolation in many Western cities and political inaction surrounding the ecological crisis. The Weekly Service was started in Melbourne by Henry Churchill and Cameron Elliott, and over 100 Services were run across the duration of this research. A Service is a 90 minute event run on a Saturday at 11am, which centres around a personal story told from lived experience, which is mediated by silence, music, singing and conversation. Within this chapter, I also discuss how storytelling functions as an important medium for exploring alternative futures and I situate the practice of storytelling in relation to other transition narratives. As a white, well-educated, mid-30s woman, I consider myself similar to others who attended. I take into account that privilege plays a role in why people attend The Weekly Service and what that means for re-storying what it means to be human, where we often must begin from an acceptance of our complicity in the same stories and systems we seek to change. This chapter is relatively short, as I discuss The Weekly Service in more detail throughout the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Methodological Approach – As an embedded design researcher, I immersed myself in the work of The Weekly Service. I travelled along with others, and moved my inquiry forward. The methodological approach of this research is a combination of Design Anthropology (DA) and Participatory Design (PD). I acknowledge and discuss how I was situated as an embedded design researcher, within a core team, where I held significant power as one of the directors of the organisation. Within this context, reflective practice was key to my ability to create some critical distance to analyse and interpret the work that was unfolding. To document and analyse my transition in practice I employ four reflective practice methods: (1) Autoethnography (2) Drawing (3) Interviewing (4) Analysis.

Part 2 – Making transition happen:

Part 2 of this dissertation is concerned with how I first joined The Weekly Service as a visual communication designer in search of an expanded practice. In *Chapter 3 – Beginning*, I discuss how I created The Monthly Feast (a monthly curated meal), which enabled me to join in the rhythm of The Weekly Service and nourish myself back to health following the despair I had encountered at *The Studio at the Edge of the World*. In this early phase, I had preconceived ideas about what collaborative design might or should look like. In *Chapter 4 – Unlearning*, I discuss how I thought that collaborative design for transitions might involve initiating projects that catalysed action towards sustainable futures. I was keen to make transition happen. However, it didn't appear to me that The Weekly Service members were interested in the same issues as I was. Furthermore, I hit several dead ends when I tried to introduce a structured design process into the core team's work flow. Slowing down, synthesising and generating solutions seemed to rub up against the improvisatory ways in which our work flowed. Through these experiences, I began to open up to the possibility that designing didn't need to be about problem-solving, rather it could be a means to reorient how we relate to others in transitional times.

Part 3 – Designing conditions for transition:

Part 3 of this dissertation marks a shift in my practice from making transition happen *for* others to making transition happen *with* others. Within the two chapters discussed here, I introduce the importance of alignment to the work of infrastructuring in communal contexts. Each chapter is concerned with a different approach to cultivating alignment between people through invitations (*Chapter 5*) and atmospheres (*Chapter 6*). In *Chapter 5 – Invitations*, I highlight how I used my visual communication design skills to frame invitations that others could take forward. I introduce four invitational tactics that worked relatively

well to bring people together towards the co-production of the Service. I also highlight how the work of The Weekly Service was orientated towards intimacy and how this shaped the nature of the invitations that the core team extended. In *Chapter 6 – Atmospheres*, I describe how temperature appeared to be relevant to the atmospheres of The Weekly Service and generative of dialogue and long-term relationships. I discuss how I started to intervene in atmospheres in the moment, in addition to the preparatory warm-up practices that were developed by myself and others. Through my attunement to atmosphere and my attempts to influence how atmospheres emerged, I developed a less linear understanding of change.

Part 4 – Designing in transition:

Finally, in Part 4 I move towards a deeper recognition of the relational dynamics of transition and the challenges involved in learning how to infrastructure together. In *Chapter 7 – Rupture*, I focus on a rupture that occurred within the relational field of The Weekly Service and the turbulence that it generated within myself and others. I discuss how my practice matured during this period of time, including how I integrated understandings of conflict, power and the invisibility of care into my practice. To navigate this period of turbulence I turned to drawing as an autoethnographic practice. In *Chapter 8 – Drawing*, I discuss this practice in more detail, including how I grew more aware not only of the interpersonal dynamics of transition, but also the intrapersonal dynamics – the inner dynamics that I experienced within myself. This enabled me to move forward having recognised how I held power through the invitations and atmospheres that I had sought to influence. Drawing therefore became a means for me to way-find, within a mesh-work of complex relations.

Conclusion – In the conclusion I trace back to the positive sense of frustration that propelled this research. I describe how I've come to understand *designing in transition* as an important way of framing the relational work of designing with others in contexts of transition. I highlight the role that design research can play in bringing to light the uneven process of transition, where visual design skills in particular, offer a trace of shifts in perspective and approach. I also suggest that autoethnographic drawing & writing is an important method for transition, that can reveal the more invisible aspects of ontological change and offer design researchers a means by which to live through transitions and engage others in moving an inquiry forward. The conclusion contains a hand-drawn landscape of my search for an expanded practice, along with some notes to designers in transition (and my former self), offered as a gesture of support.

(iii) Components of this submission

I present this dissertation along with an exhibition of work that offered traces of the experiential and participatory nature of the practices associated with *designing in transition*. A performative presentation to examiners and the public accompanied this exhibition. This presentation attempted to highlight the sensory, affective and emotional aspects of the practice that I discuss here, which remain difficult to convey entirely through writing. I encourage the reader to listen to one or more of the following Weekly Service stories to contextualise the writing in this dissertation.

Recommended listening:

[*Longing for Home*](#)

by Aseel Hamarneh
20mins

[*We don't do grief in our family*](#)

by Kiri Bear
20mins

Part I | Setting up the research

Part I of this dissertation contains two chapters. *Chapter 1* outlines the context for the research (The Weekly Service). *Chapter 2* discusses the methodological approach.

Chapter 1 – Research Context

The Weekly Service

Duration of research: May 2016 – June 2018

1.1 What is The Weekly Service?

The Weekly Service is a 90 minute curated gathering that occurs at 11am on a Saturday morning, at rotating venues around Melbourne, in which people are invited to experience a sense of intimacy in an urban environment. A Service centres around a personal story shared from lived experience, that often enfold global and local concerns. The story is nested within a sequence of elements, such as moments of silence, conversation, music and singing. The gathering is led by a volunteer curator. The Weekly Service was started in September 2015, by Cameron Elliott and Henry Churchill. As Henry explains:

‘After 6 months of deliberation, Cam, the other co-founder, and I, started The Weekly Service in September 2015. We both had separate epiphanies at different times, then realised we were thinking the same thing at a BBQ in late 2014. Neither of us align with the mainstream faiths (although think faith itself can be beautiful and inclusive), but we both love the idea of Church: the ritual, the music, the community, the space to think about important concepts like benevolence, gratitude and grace.

Cam and I also found that we were aligned in our outlook of the world: that humans can evolve from the reductionist, consuming culture that dominates our thinking (said from a place of non-judgement. We’re aware how much we consume and reduce things ourselves – we’re working on it). There are negative reasons to want change, such as climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss and generally living in a system that converts nature into bits of paper to buy things that don’t make us happy. But there’s also a positive, exciting aspect to change, which is to know humans have the potential to re-imagine and conceive of new and beautiful ways of living.’

In 2015, a small number of people attended on a weekly basis (I was one of them) with numbers rising to 70+ across 2017-2018. In 2016 a membership subscription was introduced to build a community around the weekly gathering and provide financial support. Membership grew from ~15 people to ~70 across the duration of this research. Member retreats were convened at different times of the year, in order to deepen a sense of community and the capacity to collaborate together towards the co-production of the Service.



Figure 3: Singing a song at the end of a Service

1.2 Who attends The Weekly Service?

The Weekly Service typically assembles those who fall under a range of labels – ‘activist’, ‘hipster’, ‘hippy’, ‘entrepreneur’, ‘environmentalist’, ‘seeker’ – each in their own way united by their inclinations that other worlds are possible. By and large, people hear about The Weekly Service through their friends, through word of mouth, or online. As such, the attendees are often like-minded and from a similar cultural background. They are also relatively attuned to the unsettling forces of modernity (late industrial capitalism, climate change and it’s turbulent atmospheres) and simultaneously the possibility of other ways of being. As a white, middle-class and educated young woman, I considered myself to be similar to those that were a part of The Weekly Service (although the age-range and interests of those involved diversified over time). While the similarities I shared with others at The Weekly Service may have made it difficult at times to reflect on the cultural ideas or practices that I at times took for granted, it did enable me access to conversations and shared understandings that result from being a member of a group.



Figure 4: Small group conversation at a Service

1.3 The context of The Weekly Service

The Weekly Service emerges in the context of the weakening of organised religion in contemporary times. What might be termed the 'spiritual infrastructures' of the Christian world, which were once unquestionable, appear to be losing their foothold (Sherwood 2018). People with no religious affiliation, who are colloquially referred to as 'none's', are on the rise (Pew Research Center 2012). In Australia, according to the 2016 census over 30% of the population declare that they have 'no religion' (Bouma 2018). Australian teenagers exhibit a higher response rate of 'no religion' reaching just over 50%. However, 'none's' are not necessarily atheist or lack interest in spirituality (ibid). These statistics speak to the bricolage of spiritual formats that are emerging (such as The Weekly Service), to meet the needs of people who don't align to a particular faith.

The Weekly Service also emerges amidst the rise of loneliness and social fragmentation in many Western cities. Loneliness is increasingly becoming a concern of many Western nations. In Australia, the *Australian Coalition to End Loneliness* was formed in late 2017, to address the wide ranging effects of this public health concern. In early 2018 Britain appointed its first Minister for Loneliness, indicating that even the stoic British mentality of 'keeping a stiff upper lip' is not holding in the face of weakening social traditions. According to the Australian Lifeline survey conducted in 2016, over 80% of 3,100 respondents surveyed said that the feeling of loneliness was increasing in Australia. Two-thirds of respondents said they 'often feel lonely', suggesting that aspects of modern culture are fostering pockets of severe and more generalised isolation (Families Australia 2018).

Finally, growing ecological concerns, were also frequently cited as an underlying reason for people's attendance. This



Figure 5: Post-gathering socialising

was often made apparent through member's responses to the question, why did you join The Weekly Service?

- (1) 'what the f**k, we're doing as a species, making sense of that'
- (2) 'transition is a lonely process'
- (3) 'a place to appreciate the sadness and grief'
- (4) 'I am craving depth'
- (5) 'the insincerity of the world has dimmed a bit through participation'

Part of the way that the ecological crisis was repeatedly acknowledged was through a Statement of Context (in addition to an Acknowledgement of Country), which was developed by sustainability advocate Matt Wicking. It was read out by the curator at the beginning of every Service:

'I would like to draw our attention to the particular moment that we meet. We gather at a time when humanity is having an unprecedented impact on our planet. We acknowledge this context at the start of this gathering as a reminder that what we talk about and how we are in the world matters. Our actions affect other people and other species - those living now, as well as generations to come, those here and those overseas.'

1.4 Exploring possibilities through stories

The Weekly Service recognises the need for revised forms of culture and connection. Henry and Cam, sought to frame the Weekly Service as an opportunity to re-story what it means to be human, through intimate tales told from lived experience. Here 'stories invite us not to describe the world as it is, but instead to move and live into the world with others to try to shape a future together' (Holman Jones et al. 2013, 669). As Henry remarks, sharing a story at the Service:

'...is about showing our whole selves. It's not the kind of performance with Powerpoint, but something that's very real and human. It could be ugly and dark and sad and tragic, or it can be happy, beautiful or all of the above. Like, just the whole human story.'

The Weekly Service frames these transitional times as a period of being in-between stories, where:

'We are witnessing the end of the old story of the world - a story of separation from ourselves, each other and the planet. A new story of reunion and



Figure 6: Storytelling at a Service
‘The mystery of the Self’, Trevor Paton.

connection is emerging. Our mission is to help write this new story by offering the experiences and information people need to reimagine a life filled with more meaning, love, gratitude, compassion, awe and connection. We believe that if more people are deeply connected to themselves, each other and nature, this planet and all its inhabitants will thrive.’ (theweeklyservice.org)

For some readers, this paragraph may come across as naive, possibly blindly optimistic. The idea of a ‘new story’ of connection (or inter-being) is derived from gift economy advocate Charles Eisenstein’s (2013) work, but not limited to his thinking. It can be found in many transition narratives including system’s thinker Joanna Macy’s (2004) ‘Great Turning’, and ecotheologian Thomas Berry’s (1999) ‘The Great Work’. It’s also central to Buddhist Philosophy, and discussed by Buddhist practitioners such as Thich Nhat Hanh (2008). In a similar vein, environmentalist Paul Hawken (2007) puts forward the idea that a planet-wide immune system is emerging from the multitude of organisations working for social and environmental justice. As biologist and regenerative cultures expert Daniel C. Wahl (2016) writes:

‘As the limits of the perspective of separation become more and more evident and as we find ourselves surrounded by examples of breakdown, despair and suffering that its cultural dominance is causing, we are beginning to look for viable alternatives, different ways of being-in-the-world.’ (25)

In this context, Berry (1999) suggests that:

‘The historical mission of our time is to reinvent the human – at the species level, with critical reflection,

with the community of life systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience.’ (159)

The Weekly Service seeks to participate in a very small way in this work, through story, critical reflection and contemplation.

1.5 Acknowledging privilege and positionality

The relatively privileged position of those who organised and attended the Service, was often made present through an acknowledgement of our own complicity within the same systems we sought to reform (Lopes 2017). Through the process of coming together to weave possibilities for other ways of being, we also explored how we might engage in an ‘internal cultural healing’ (Escobar 2018) that tentatively acknowledges that ‘we have all been harmed’ through colonialism (Chung 2019, Sepie 2018). Following feminist economic geographers Gibson-Graham (2007), I suggest that this means viewing change as a reciprocal process:

‘If to change ourselves is to change our worlds, and the relation is reciprocal, then the project of history making is never a distant one but always right here, on the borders of our sensing, thinking, feeling, moving bodies.’ (127)

The Weekly Service exists in an ecosystem of other organisations seeking to dive deeper into the questions of how we (as ‘moderns’) might remake ourselves and our ways of being together. Similar organisations include *On Being*, *The Centre for Courage and Renewal*, *Dumbo Feather* and *The School of Life*. These organisations, similarly do not position inner work as separate from systemic change, but view both as necessary pathways that are interrelated.

1.6 A final note

Re-appropriating existing practices raises important questions about the extent to which change is possible – when the same modern institutions and practices that are being critiqued through this research, form the very foundations upon which I/we were attempting to build. Organised religion has perpetuated many of the divisions that lie at the heart of the ecological crisis (Plumwood 2002). While this lies out of the scope of this PhD to discuss in great detail, I suggest that wrestling with the histories of our institutions is part of the work of these transitional times. This involves recognising that we can never start anew, but we are always building from an installed base (Star and Ruhleder 1996).

Chapter 2 – Methodological approach

When I applied to do this PhD, I brought with me 4 years of professional visual communication design experience and 3 years of experience in design research. In many ways, my practice shifted as a result of joining in with the activities of The Weekly Service, but I also possessed a desire to redirect my design practice towards addressing ecological concerns and expanding into participatory domains. As such the research site became a kind of sandpit for my practice transitions and reflections, whereby I engaged in critical reflection about practice while being engaged in practice (Vaughan 2017).

2.1 Design experiments to move the inquiry forward

To initiate my practice-based inquiry, I drew from Eva Brandt and colleagues (2011), collaborative design methodological framework which emphasises the core role that design experiments play in design research. Within this framework, a dialectic relationship between a ‘program’ and ‘experiments’ help to drive the research inquiry forward. A program is described by Brandt and colleagues as the ‘provisional knowledge regime’ (ibid, 19). Programs can take the form of a manifesto that communicate an attitude or position and that captures core research issues, intentions and approaches. Experiments, on the other hand, are seen as ‘material manifestations which exhibit a dialectic relationship with the program’ (Jönsson 2014, 18). Experiments are not a way to test the program, rather they set up an exchange of ideas between what is more concrete (the experiments) and what is more abstract (the program). As Brandt and colleagues (2011) note:

...the program and the experiment is dialectic, and it is in the interdependency of the two where the important knowledge is gained that moves the object of design forward during an iterative process. (32)

I found this methodology to be a helpful way to initially frame my research investigation as an ongoing series of experiments. When I applied to do a PhD, my research proposal was focused on exploring the possibilities present in ritual, as a means to collectively perform or enact more ecologically viable futures in the present. My research question was: *‘How might new rituals be co-designed in order to help communities ‘rehearse the future’ and transition toward more sustainable ways of living?’* ‘Rehearsing the future’ is a term that I borrowed from Design Anthropologist Joachim Halse and colleagues (2010), that seeks to describe a performative practice of simulating and acting out possible scenarios with stakeholders in Design Anthropology contexts. The initial program for this research was centred around the idea that rituals could be co-designed to help people negotiate social and ecological challenges through experiences that touch them deeply,

where ritual was defined as ‘...a process of articulation through which we repeatedly make sense of the world and our being in it’ (Moegerlein 2016).



Figure 7: The first The Monthly Feast
Titled ‘A new beginning’



Figure 8: The second The Monthly Feast
Titled ‘A authentic desire’

The first experiment (or ritual) I conducted with The Weekly Service was The Monthly Feast (discussed further in *Chapter 3 – Beginning*). I proposed to explore the ways that food might afford a chance to digest ideas and deepen a sense of connection between people who attended the Service. I applied for ethics approval and received permission to move my inquiry into food forward (Appendix A). Through this experiment, I sought to devise a project which could speak back to the program I had developed through my reading of the literature on ritual, design and transitions. After three feasts, my enthusiasm for the project waned as I realised that the core team of The Weekly Service (Cam, Henry and Caro) saw it as my project, and not necessarily something they wanted to work on. As I wanted to collaborate with them, I shifted my research focus to the work of The Weekly Service more broadly. This move necessitated that I amend my ethics proposal, to include the development of the Service and a deeper focus on collaboration with the core team. I discussed this with Cam, Henry and Caro and together we agreed that I would work as an embedded design researcher within The Weekly Service across the duration of my PhD (see Appendix B for participant consent form). It was understood that I would study and document our evolving practice and the transitions that were taking place within my own understanding of design practice.

As the research progressed, it became increasingly more difficult to persist with the methodological framework that I began with. I found that it was hard to determine when an experiment was ‘finished’ and the next one began. Being situated in the emergent evolution of The Weekly Service meant that it was difficult to draw boundaries around experiments, as various ideas were often being tested out at the same time and they were affecting each other. This necessitated a shift in my methodological approach, to be aligned with Design Anthropology (DA) and then also Participatory Design (PD).

2.2 Moving forward with others by drawing on DA & PD

Design Anthropology (DA) is an involved anthropology, that seeks to correspond with the lives of others, through interventions that engage with people’s hopes and longings, that directly influence activities in the present and what people come to anticipate or imagine into the future. DA is centrally concerned with how futures emerge ongoingly, through the social (re)production of daily life (Ehn, Nilsson and Topgaard 2014). For Design Anthropologists, Gatt and Ingold (2013)

DA's interventional stance constitutes an 'anthropology by means of design', whereby the researcher 'moves forward with people in tandem with their desires and aspirations rather than looking back over times past' (132). Rather than aiming for specific solutions or outcomes, DA is concerned with performing ways of knowing through collaborative and material entanglements. DA therefore supports ongoing questioning and improvisatory interventions, that are concerned with how particular futures might emerge at specific sites, constituting possible alternatives to dominant perspectives.

DA married well with how I was situated within The Weekly Service, as an embedded design researcher. I worked intensively within a core team, consisting of Cam, Caro and Henry, who each brought skills from their own backgrounds in fields, such as evaluation, music, business development, strategic design and innovation. Our collaboration was initially anchored by a weekly meet-up at a city cafe in North Melbourne. My participation in these meetings was limited to begin with, as I was learning to appreciate the scope of discussion that had been ongoing between Cam, Henry and Caro for the four months prior. Central to this engagement was the intimacy of being involved in each others lives, and attending to how The Weekly Service was contributing in positive or negative ways towards what we each wanted to grow. Through those initial conversations, we built our capacity to make sense of what was emerging and develop the sociality which would continue to deepen our capacity to work together. In this ongoingly emergent environment, I produced materials that enabled me to document and reflect upon what was happening (to be discussed later in this chapter).



Figure 9: A core team meeting
With (left to right) Cam, myself,
Henry & Caro from September 2016.

Within the core team, our working approach prioritised collective knowledge and the different and varied experiences of Cam, Henry, Caro and myself. As we worked we adapted existing tools and processes to facilitate knowledge production. For example, we regularly started our meetings with a check-in using a framework that allowed us to acknowledge how we were feeling physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. Through processes like this, we sought to validate our 'whole' humanness and build closer bonds, while also acknowledging how those more invisible aspects of our experience influenced how we collaborated. For example, if I was having a difficult time coping with the uncertainty of the ecological crisis, then I could share that and also notice how this might influence how I perceived that The Weekly Service was not 'doing enough'. By bringing emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical aspects of our experience into awareness, we were more conscious of how these same aspects were influencing or driving our ways of designing as a core team.

Over the course of this research over 100 Services were held. As a core team, we learnt and developed the Service through reflection-in-action (Schön 1983) and improvisation. Improvisation is a concept that has been developed within Anthropology (Hallam and Ingold 2007), Design Anthropology (Halse 2013, Hurtado 2018, Rolfstam & Buur 2012) and within design literature more broadly (Binder et al. 2011, Schön 1983). Gatt and Ingold (2013) suggest that design is not so much about innovation but improvisation, which requires ‘flexibility and foresight’ and highlights the ‘capacity of inhabitants to respond with precision to the ever-changing circumstances of their lives’ (136). Improvisation is not about creating entirely new things, but about ‘keeping life going’, by responding to the continual changing conditions of one’s environment (Hallam and Ingold 2007). This definition deliberately re-frames designing as something that everyone does and it captures how the core team worked to continuously improve and evolve the Service.

Over time and as our work progressed, the core team turned towards developing long-term relationships with people who frequently attended the Services we ran. Many of these people chose to become members of The Weekly Service. As a core team, we cultivated collaborative capacities and trust by gathering in people’s homes over dinner, across cups of coffee, at picnics, and at member retreats (with 40+ people) which we held every 3 months. Sometimes these activities occurred 1:1 where we were involved in the mutual discovery of other’s interests and the potential for collaboration, on a project or a role that they might like to play (Emilson et al. 2014). I use the notion of infrastructuring (explored in more detail in *Part 3 & 4* of this dissertation) to describe how the core team sought to build long-term relationships and ongoingly align people, spaces, and technologies towards the emergence of new practices, such as co-producing the Service, shaping the evolution of membership and The Weekly Service more broadly. I briefly outline here, why infrastructuring is relevant to the work of The Weekly Service in relation to how the concept has been used in Participatory Design.

Infrastructuring can be considered as a framework for thinking about design activities in more emergent terms (Karasti and Syrjänen 2004, Marttila & Botero 2017). In Participatory Design (PD), infrastructuring has been used to describe the long-term work of ‘aligning humans and non-human actors (technologies, resources, spaces) towards the emergence of new practices’ (Seravalli 2018, 3). Infrastructuring therefore, is a term used to describe the ongoing work of making and sustaining infrastructures. The use of the gerund, seeks to emphasise the processual nature of infrastructures, rather than their tangible manifestations.

Many designers who have been concerned with infrastructures and infrastructuring in design, have largely worked within the field of information technologies. Within this field, designers are often required to negotiate nebulous and immaterial emergent digital infrastructures with groups of people, often over extended periods of time (Karasti, Baker, Millerband 2010). Information systems researchers, Star and Ruhleder (1996) describe the experience of designing a large-scale information infrastructure metaphorically as, 'like building the boat you're on while designing the navigation system and being in a highly competitive boat race with a constantly shifting finishing line' (112). This evocative image carries with it the uncertainties imbued in designing emergently. For Star and Ruhleder (1996) infrastructures are made up of socio-material relationships that are often complex, concerned with power and continually changing. In other words, infrastructures never stand apart from the people who design, maintain and use them (Star and Bowker 2002).

In more recent Participatory Design research, designers are increasingly working within local contexts to infrastructure outcomes that involve technology, but are not necessarily configured around an information technology project. For example, Hillgren and colleagues (2011) consider how living labs might be conceived of as a way of infrastructuring, aimed towards the assembling of heterogeneous 'publics' where designers are involved in playing a 'matchmaker' role within and across communities. Likewise, Participatory Designer Shana Agid's (2016) work, reveals the ways in which local activism seeks to agitate against large-scale infrastructures such as the prison-industrial-complex, and re-imagine local infrastructures that are orientated towards increasing well-being and the capacities for enacting self-determination. These projects highlight how Participatory Design activities are now often taking place outside of formal work environments and within situations where relationships are forged through shared commitments across extended time-frames (le Dantec and DiSalvo 2013, Saad-Sulonen et al. 2018).

Within this research, infrastructuring is a helpful concept to capture how the core team of The Weekly Service attempted to align people towards the emergence of shared practices and the tensions that emerged as a result. Here alignment is not so much concerned with clicking people into place, but more akin to how a flock of birds might fly together, where ongoing acts enable a group to move and stay together. Infrastructuring is also a useful concept as it enables me to talk about The Weekly Service as a social-material configuration that was always in formation. As a concept however, infrastructuring also

has limits. The term lacks specificity (Lee and Schmidt 2018) and it isn't well equipped to be able to account for the many nuanced ways in which people relate to one another, which influences what they are able to design together. In this research therefore, I don't attempt to build on infrastructuring as a concept, rather I draw on it to help structure my analysis of the work of The Weekly Service and my own practice transitions.

2.3 Situating myself within The Weekly Service

Across the duration of this research I worked within a core team, that shifted through three arrangements:

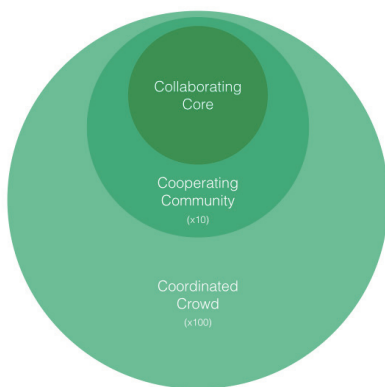


Figure 10: 3Cs model of collaboration

| Arrangement 1 | Arrangement 2 | Arrangement 3 |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| May – Nov 2016 | Dec 2016 – Dec 2017 | Jan – June 2018 |
| Cam | Cam | Caro |
| Henry | Henry | Kirsty |
| Caro | Kirsty | & 3 TWS members |
| Kirsty | | |

The notion of a collaborative core team (shortened to core team over time) was introduced by a friend and member of The Weekly Service, in the early phases of the organisation's development. The idea of a collaborative core stems from a model of collaboration called the 3C's model (Elliott 2007) (see *Figure 10*). In the 3C's model of collaboration, a collaborative core is nested within a cooperating community and a coordinated crowd which increases in scale x10 for each grouping. The collaborative core refers to those people who collectively create processes and outcomes that reflect the input of all contributors. The 3Cs model is a way of understanding the different roles people play in any collective activity and how people move in and out of these layers over time. At the first Weekly Service members retreat in Spring 2016, we collectively identified that myself, Cam, Caro and Henry were the collaborative core team and the members were part of the cooperating community. The audiences that attended on a weekly basis were assumed to be the coordinated crowd.

Within this collaborative environment, I brought my skills of visual communication design and my interest in design approaches that were conducive to working in emergent ways within communal contexts. In the early stages of our collaboration, I helped the team to contextualise our work within the emerging discipline of Transition Design, which provided a framework for understanding the work of The Weekly Service as an attempt to discover new mindsets and ways of designing with others. On other occasions I facilitated sense-making processes and brought diagrams to discuss with the core team. In my capacity

as a researcher, I often focused the core team's attention on evolving our understanding of what we were doing. This approach aligns with how analysis and intervention are part of the process of constructing knowledge in DA, whereby 'agendas for change, modes of engagement and critical reflection' (Smith and Otto 2016, 20) are deeply entangled.

As this research progressed, my stake in The Weekly Service grew. Cam, Henry and I became the three directors of The Weekly Service in early 2017 when we registered the organisation as a business. This meant that in addition to holding power as a design researcher, I also held power within the emergent member community as one of the leaders. My position as embedded design researcher and director, afforded me access to the intimate and complex workings of The Weekly Service, across all levels of finance, membership, the weekly running of the Service, as well as ongoing in depth conversations about the direction of the organisation. My position also afforded me insight into how power effects and shapes collaboration in practice. In mid-2017, tensions emerged surrounding the organisation's future and the core team's control over decision-making processes. Throughout this period, I found that my position within The Weekly Service and the power I held, became part of the focus of my research. In *Part 4* of this dissertation I reflect on how designing is always in some way related to one's agency and position in the group relative to others. Or to put it another way, designing with others is only made possible from a position of situatedness (Suchman 2011). Designing in transitional contexts, also comes with added anxieties and uncertainties, which can contribute to relational dynamics that exacerbate dualities in mindset and posture. These issues are discussed further in *Part 4*.

At end of 2017 the arrangement of the core team shifted in large part due to personal financial pressures. Henry resigned from being a director, Cam stepped back to take a break, and Caro stepped back into the core team. Along with my help and the help of other members, we worked to support the running of the Service for the first half of 2018. At the end of 2018 the core team dissolved as Caro could no longer sustain her commitment and through conversations between Cam, myself and Caro, we felt that the timing was ripe for a shift towards a community-led model. Across the summer of 2019 a communal governance structure was established. The critical insights that are discussed in this dissertation, stem largely from the events that occurred between 2016–2017, however some insights also came from the later stages. My ongoing participation in the core team during 2018, helped to solidify my transitions in practice and the learnings presented in the final part of this dissertation.

Being situated within the Weekly Service as an embedded design researcher and director, shaped what I came to know through this research. This research is therefore generative of knowledge that is deeply situated, where I understand designing to be a way of acting and travelling with others, and also a way of expressing commitment to the evolution of the community I grew to be a part of. Throughout this dissertation, I express a deep level of commitment to The Weekly Service that extends beyond this research (I continue to be involved in the community and the running of the Service). This commitment involved working with and alongside others in respectful and transparent ways. This was not always straightforward, nor did my understanding of ethics end, with the approval of my ethics proposal. Rather, I understood ethics as an ongoing relational activity, that involves negotiating a complex set of relationships, within a community that was ever-evolving. Being sensitive to the relational dynamics of research, is referred to in autoethnography as 'relational ethics'. In '*Telling secrets, revealing lives: Relational ethics in research with intimate others*' Ellis (2007) positions relational ethics as a third kind of ethics, in addition to procedural ethics (the kind mandated by an institution) and ethics in practice or situational ethics (the unpredictable, often subtle, ethically important moments that come up in the field). Following Slattery and Rapp (2003) she describes relational ethics as 'doing what is necessary to be 'true to one's character and responsible for one's actions and their consequences on others' (Slattery and Rapp 2003, quoted in Ellis 2007, 4). This takes maturity and a deep level of sensitivity to others concerns, while maintaining the integrity and inquiry of one's research project. These are important considerations for anyone attempting to undertake longitudinal participatory research.

2.4 Reflective practice

Because of my embeddedness, it was important that I developed reflective practices that enabled me to be reflexive and achieve critical distance. This was a necessary part of developing knowledge that might be carried forward, beyond the site of research. Here I discuss four research methods: (1) Autoethnography (2) Drawing (3) Interviewing and (4) Analysis.

2.4.1 Autoethnography

Autoethnography emerged through my research as a form of reflective practice, and a means to make sense of and document the rich and often complicated experiences of being embedded within The Weekly Service. Autoethnography is a research method and approach that is at home with particular situated accounts, that reveal and negotiate

relationships with others (Ellis 2007). As Autoethnography researcher Carolyn Ellis states:

As a genre of writing and research, autoethnographic starts with personal experiences and studies “us” in relationships and situations. Doing autoethnography involves a back-and-forth movement between experiencing a vulnerable self and observing and revealing the broader context of experience. (14)

Autoethnography emerged within social science as a research approach that enables insider knowledge about a phenomenon to be revealed. Personal experience becomes the ‘data’ to explore cultural practices, where the focus is on the study of the self in relationships with others (Holman Jones et al. 2013). Researchers have used autoethnography in circumstances that are personally challenging or difficult. Carolyn Ellis (1996) writes extensively about caring for her mother in ‘*Maternal Connections*’ when she can no longer care for herself. Ashlee Cunsolo (2017) writes of feeling bereft after having encountered the stories of Inuit people and their grief surrounding the changes to their environments and the corollary loss of culture. In my own case, autoethnography formed a part of the way that I grappled with my emotions surrounding the unfolding ecological crisis, which enabled me to carry on through design practice. In this way autoethnography was a way to write through challenging, uncertain or painful experiences as a means to process them, but also to enact and give voice (and hope) to how things could be otherwise (Anderson and Glass-Coffin 2013).

In step with other autoethnographic writing, I use a first-person narrative throughout this dissertation to describe and analyse the experiences I had while collaborating with the core team and the broader Weekly Service community. To bring my own intuitive observations and insights into the foreground, I chose to feature some of my writing in green. This green text stems from reflective notes written throughout the research. At times these green notes intersect with my own drawings which became increasingly autoethnographic. Including these notes within the dissertation afforded possibilities for more direct transfer of the insights gained. The green text allowed me to channel a different voice, one that was perhaps more assertive, but also quite vulnerable. In other words, the green notes appeared to me to enable a different voice to punctuate the text in a more direct way, allowing the reader access to a vulnerable interior. I found that through this small design intervention, I was able to give myself permission to speak more directly to my internal experience, surrounding what was emerging within the context of practice and research. These notes also

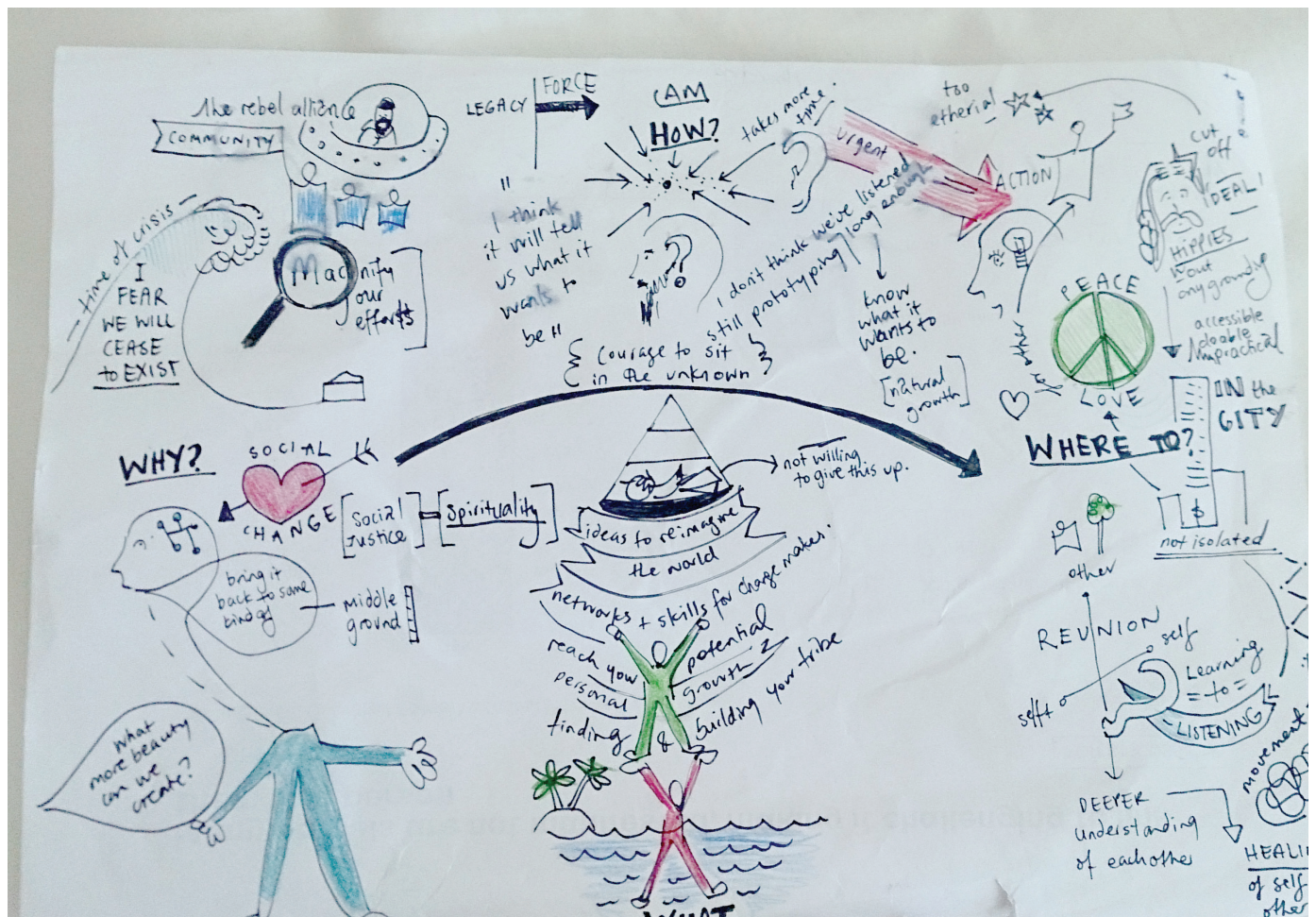
helped me to capture the affective, sensory, emotional and atmospheric dimensions of my experiences of being involved in the work of The Weekly Service.

Finally, autoethnography was an appropriate choice of method for the cultural environment that I was situated within. One of the tenants of autoethnography is vulnerability with purpose (Holman Jones et al. 2013). Through the expression of stories and written experiences that get to the heart of the challenges, complex emotions and uncertainties of being a living / breathing subject, autoethnographers often call their readers into relationship. This relationship between reader and writer is quite similar to the kind of relationship between the storytellers and the audiences that attended The Weekly Service. The stories that were shared at the Service often took on an autoethnographic tone, where people would express their vulnerability with purpose. Through conversation and discussion audiences were called into exchange, to be touched, moved and to reciprocate with their own lived experiences. In this way, I sought to continue this engagement through my research, by choosing to reveal my vulnerable self through my writing as I underwent transition.

2.4.2 Drawing

Drawing was an important part of my reflective practice. This took a number of different forms. I made hand-drawn notes of Services, meetings and interviews. I also drew diagrams and mind-maps that helped me to evolve my understanding of the work of The Weekly Service. In this way, the drawings I made acted like artefacts of orientation, or timestamps that pointed to what I was seeking to understand at particular moments. I used drawing as both a means of reflection and as a way to participate in the ongoing activities of The Weekly Service. The first time I drew was in the lead up to a core team meeting centred around strategy, in September of 2016. I sat with each member of the core team, and drew their responses to my questions surrounding the: Why? What? Where to? How? of The Weekly Service. As I listened I sketched images on top of a template that I'd prepared, which featured a black arrow indicating the direction of time. While the template itself was rather rudimentary, it revealed interesting aspects of what was going on at the time. I remember registering with surprise when Cam talked about how he didn't know how The Weekly Service might evolve and that '*it will tell us what it wants to become*' (see *Figure II*). The drawing acted as an occasion for Cam and I to acknowledge this shift in his thinking and what was emerging for him in that moment. When I drew Caro's vision, I became more closely attuned to her sense of beauty and the importance she placed on it. On the other hand Henry put his drawing in a 'special place' and then

Figure 11: Drawing out TWS's mission and vision
 Visual notes from my conversation with Cam (Sept, 2016).



lost it. The treasuring of this image, showed me that drawing could be a valuable way to participate in the ongoing activities of The Weekly Service. While the drawings were not used in the team meeting, they helped me to intervene in and better understand the differences and similarities between us.

As the research progressed so did the way in which I engaged through drawing. In many cases, my attempts to understand and map what I thought was emerging through the shared practices would fall short of the actual situation. The complexity drew me in further and often resisted articulation. As design researcher Ednie-Brown (2017) writes, it's sometimes the 'things that I have trouble articulating and understanding in words' that are the same things that 'I feel compelled to write' in order to 'get closer' (132). Rather than inquire through writing, I often felt compelled to draw in order to get closer to what I couldn't articulate. Given my own background in visual communication design, drawing came easily as an ongoing method for documenting my observations and experiences. However, at times my ability to construct images also got in the way. I had to unlearn the propensity

I had as a visual communication designer to create smooth lines that covered over messiness. Interestingly, the manner in which I created visuals also loosened up and became more fluid as the research progressed, which seems to suggest that my mark-making was in part influenced by what I was being exposed to (see *Figure 12 & 13*).

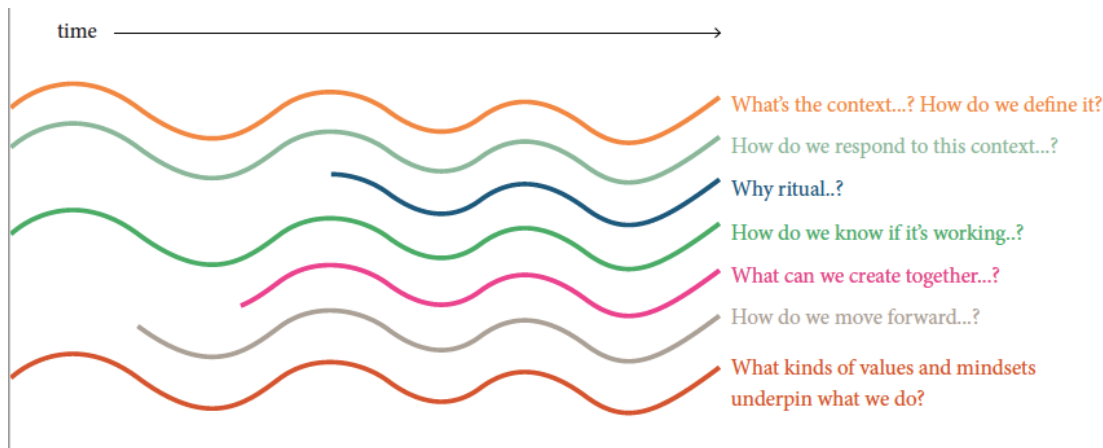
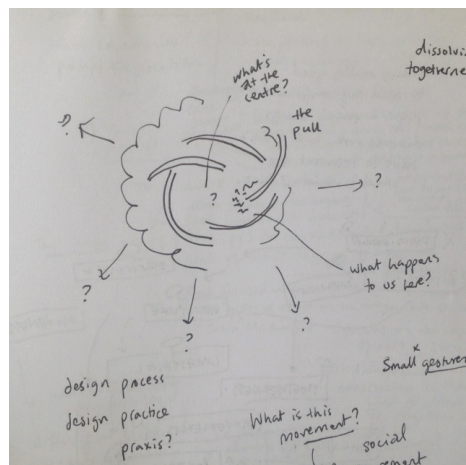


Figure 12: Lines of inquiry
A diagram plotting the core team's inquiry. The linear and rather smooth lines, sit in contrast to the image underneath (June, 2016).

Figure 13: The pull inwards
A drawing trying to understand how the dynamics of how people get pulled into the Service (December, 2016).



Through the work of Anthropologists such as Wendy Gunn (2009) and Tim Ingold (2010, 2015), the knowledge generating capacities of drawing have become more visible. More recently, drawing has been advocated for as an ethnographic practice by several anthropologists (Boserman 2019, Causey 2017, Ramos 2015). Visual and performative modes are also entering autoethnography as many creative practitioners take up autoethnography as a method and as more social science practitioners begin to embrace other forms of representation to make sense of and convey experience (Bartleet 2013, Guillemin and Westall 2008). In step with these developments in other fields, I suggest that drawing is a fruitful methodology that can enable design researchers to document and reflect on the contingent circumstances in which they find themselves. My own use of drawing within this research seeks to highlight the potential for it as a method to illuminate the interpersonal (relations with others) and intrapersonal (relationship

with oneself) dynamics of transition, where drawing moves a field of inquiry forward within a collaborative environment.

2.4.3 Interviewing

Interviewing was an important method to contextualise and situate my own experiences alongside others. Within this research, interviewing is conceived as a way of collectively reflecting in action (Robertson and Simonsen 2012) whereby co-participant's responses help to deepen insights into the topic of inquiry (Bryman 2001). Throughout the course of my work with the core team and The Weekly Service members, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 participants and participated in innumerable reflective conversations. I also conducted group interviews with the core team using drawings to help make sense of particular dynamics and situations. Additionally, I regularly shared my own research insights and sought input from the core team who validated or challenged my assumptions.

The interviews that I conducted were loosely structured, and centred around what drew people to The Weekly Service, including what memorable or 'sticky' fragments remained with them. I referred to sticky fragments as those fragments that remained stuck in thought or memory, due to them being unresolved, or significant given past experience. Participants were provided with a chance to reflect on and dive deeper into their experiences of working and dwelling within The Weekly Service ecosystem. These interviews acted as collective sense-making opportunities, where my own assumptions and experiences were placed alongside others. In this way, I did not sit at a distance as we discussed The Weekly Service, but rather I was engaged in negotiating my own vulnerable self in conversation with the relationships that had grown up around me. These conversations deeply enriched my perspective on the work and my understanding of what it meant to be a part of The Weekly Service from multiple perspectives.

As reflective conversations would routinely take place within the core team and the member group, I took an opportunistic approach to when and how I interviewed, an approach that is commonly referred to as ethnographic interviewing (Sage Encyclopedia, 2017). I recorded conversations (with informed consent) that were naturally beginning to arc towards and approach fragments of experience that were significant to why someone was involved in The Weekly Service or what they believed it was about. Sometimes these conversations took place in small groups, at other times it was just me and the interviewee chatting as we walked or sat sharing a meal.

In early drafts of this dissertation, the interviews featured heavily as evidence of the impact of The Weekly Service. Over time the role of the interviews shifted, towards validating and legitimising the harder to see transitions in my understanding of design practice, where relationality was not only the means through which designing was made possible, but also the motivation for and outcome of design activities. The interviews continually revealed that relationships at The Weekly Service were not built on an instrumental premise, but were seen by members as the ongoing purpose of weekly gathering. As one member that I interviewed noted:

'We've got more people than ever before on the planet but we don't have communities...my experience of community is like a garden, it is something that needs tending, and that's why the Weekly Service is such a good infrastructure for that, because that coming together once a week, somebody shares a story, it's the perfect ritual/rhythm to start crystallising a really strong community around, and exploring and discovering what our mutual human need is for community.'

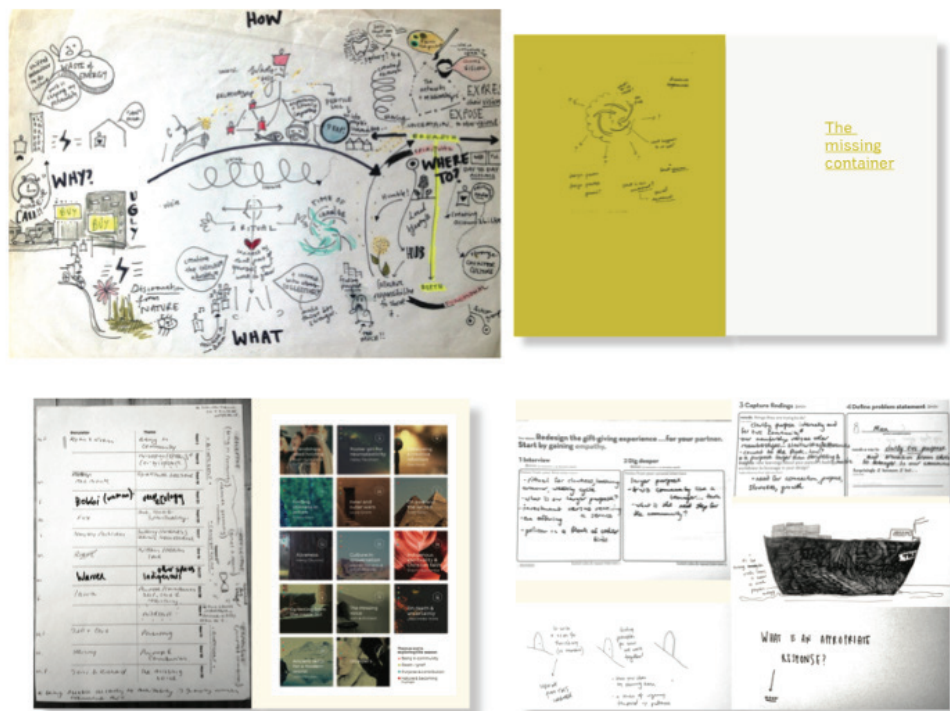
The premise that relationality might be both the vehicle for and the main outcome of design practice is relatively underdeveloped within design literature. As such, the interviews functioned to anchor the research within this relational domain and acted as a continual reminder of what the work was about.

2.4.4 Analysis

In order to analyse and make sense of the infrastructuring practice I observed and participated in at The Weekly Service, I assembled the various sketches, diagrams, notes, writing and readings into four saddle stitched books (see *Figure 14*). Ordering the material in this way helped me to see 'the whole picture' of The Weekly Service's and my work. By using my hands to flick through the pages, I was able to more readily discover connections and patterns that would come to form threads in my final narrative. By enmeshing my writings, notes, visuals and photographs together in one place, I was also able to better appreciate how these various modes of expression elucidated different aspects of my understanding.

The books amplified the 'back talk' of my practice (Schön 1983, Tonkinwise 2007). They enabled me to listen to the writing, as well as the images. I made notes in the books, marking out points of interest and relevance for further analysis. These traces of analysis were easy to revisit over time, as sense making accrued at its own pace (Smith 2018). Despite the various improvisatory practices I developed along the way

Figure 14: The 4th book of analysis
 Four books were made to assist with analysis. This is the fourth book in the series and it is titled: 'The Missing Container'. It details reflections on the final stages of being immersed with the core team of The Weekly Service.



to help me 'do analysis', I still found the process very challenging and I hit several road blocks. Analysis was made difficult because of the emergent and collaborative nature of my engagement with The Weekly Service and the innumerable events and moments that had shaped what I had come to learn. However, it was also made difficult because of the personal changes that I was undergoing. When our world-view begins to change, analytical frames also need to shift to accommodate these changes. A breakthrough moment occurred when I began to work with infrastructuring as an analytical framework to understand the transitions of my own practice, the practice of the core team, and the community that emerged through our work. I introduce key aspects of infrastructuring that help to frame my inquiry as this dissertation progresses.

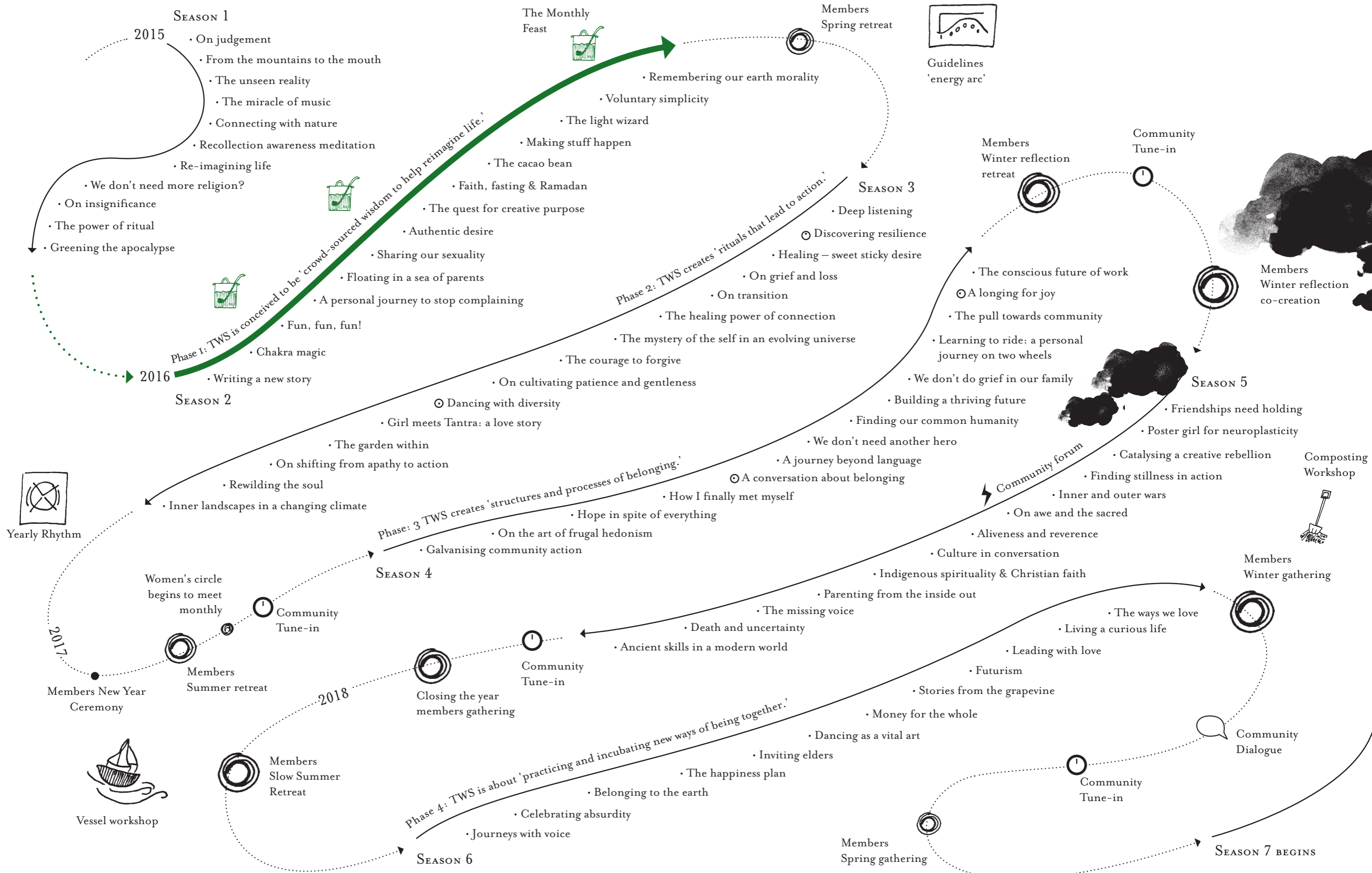
I have chosen to write this dissertation as a story of the research, where the subject (primarily myself) is situated in transition within a community of relations. This subject-centred narrative may seem somewhat paradoxical to the goals of the research, which is reaching for a relational ontology where subject-centred narratives tend to break down. However, in order to leave behind a particular way of seeing or knowing, perhaps we first must inhabit and fully understand its limitations. From this perspective, I look forward to exploring and experimenting with other forms of writing into the future, which are less attached to representative modes of storytelling, and more in keeping with the improvisatory and collaborative practices that I write about here.

Part 2 | Making transition happen

At the beginning of this research, I held contradictory beliefs about design and its role in change. On the one hand I wanted to believe that design could make transition happen. This wasn't influenced by any one theory, but rather an amalgamation of enthusiastic cries from designers, to become more involved in social, political and environmental issues. I absorbed this enthusiasm with a fervour that can only be described as religious. Simultaneously, I was struggling to integrate my learnings of being a part of *The Studio at the Edge of the World*, and the despair I had encountered surrounding the immense complexity and challenges associated with how we might 'redesign ourselves'. What was revealed to me (captured here in *Part 2*), is that it can be challenging to let go of preconceived ideas of what designing is or might be in collaborative settings, when these ideas appear to provide a sense of certainty. A series of false starts highlighted to me that I needed to let go of what I thought design was, in order to better align myself with the work of the core team. I was negotiating not only a shift in my practice towards collaboration, but also a shift towards different ways of approaching the ecological crisis that moved beyond problem-solving.

Part 2 contains two chapters: *Beginning & Unlearning* and a timeline of activity is shown overleaf – the green lines show when *Part 2* begins and ends.

Timeline of Activity



Chapter 3 – Beginning

Regularly attending the The Weekly Service in late 2015, meant a reworking of my Saturday morning routine. Rather than organising to catch up with friends or do house chores, I would take the tram up High Street to the co-working venue where the Service was held. On the way I'd watch the movement of people as they went about their morning business through the dusty window panes of the tram windows. Sometimes I'd ride my bike, beads of sweat dripping down my neck as I arrived flustered and a little late. At times, simply knowing that the Service was happening provided a reassuring feeling, regardless of whether I could attend or not. It appeared that the Service was something on a human scale that I could grab a hold of; a rhythm of re/connection that enabled me to tune into my own feelings and to a sense of community. How can I begin to describe why this mattered to me – this longing for something that I didn't know was missing?

Perhaps the answer to this question lies in my curiosity with the warmly furnished Greek club a few doors down. Where men sit around tables, their cards and banter hang like smoke in the air and the only sliver of technology can be felt in the flickering of fluros above. Their gatherings take place within a rhythm alongside The Weekly Service, but they seem to dwell in a different world. Their talk is thickly accented. There's a familiarity between them that appears impenetrable. Years of associational life live in that room. A few doors down our rhythm feels more like an imitation. A kind of performance of associational life, or at least a *longing* for it.

Those of us who attended the Service in those early days grew closer. Not necessarily because we knew each other, but because we were seemingly aware that we were a part of something that was emerging and we were drawn into its rhythm. Familiar faces were seen on repeat visits and connections between people strengthened. Each Service seemed to matter because it spoke to the next. It spoke in ways that suggested that the Service (and what it seemed to stand for) would continue. But it also mattered because it might fail or fall over. There is a strange kind of delight that one takes in seeing things fail. In some way I was drawn into participating to see if the Service would indeed carry on.

As Escobar (2018) writes, for 'those of us who live in delocalised and intensely liberal worlds of middle-class urban modernity, the historical imperative is clearly that of re-communalising and reterritorializing' (200). His comments stem from a nuanced reading of modernity's patriarchal alchemical forces, which (paradoxically in the name of creation or innovation) carve a pathway of destruction that debases

people's spirituality and connection to a living Earth. Many of us have lost a sense of what this means. The communal has been discarded in the rush towards misplaced freedoms – of individualised career goals, travel and a comfortable lifestyle. Civic engagement practitioner Peter Block (2008), refers to the absence of community within modern societies, as 'so widespread that we might say we are living in an age of isolation' (1).

We are broken into pieces. (ibid, 2)

In late 2015, there was also something else in the air. Amidst news of the sixth mass extinction, I was attuned to the despairing and fearful atmospheres surrounding the ecological crisis, which Beuret (2015) aptly describes as being at an anxiety-fuelled impasse. Potential seemed to lie in the substrate and sediments of these accrued feelings. As I gathered with others at The Weekly Service, these feelings began to move, to swim and circle amongst us every Saturday at 11am. I can recall one of the first Services I attended:

The theme of the day is 'insignificance' and Cam is recounting a memory of walking on a beach. In his story he allows the waves to wash over his thoughts and his concerns about the world – as his feet make impressions in the sand, his anxiety over the future recedes. Together we were lulled into a space of listening as Cam's voice undulates across the passage of his story. As Cam speaks, I stare at the image of a default computer desktop, projected on the back of the amphitheatre's screen – snow-capped mountains are bathed in pink and orange hues from a setting sun, underscored by a slight hum of the projector. The virtual image and Cam's story provide an appropriate backdrop. It's beautiful artifice remind me of Timothy Morton's (2013) words that 'for beauty to work, there must be a surface capable of receiving the wound' (205). Sitting here amongst strangers, there is room for the feelings that are haunting me. Finally, I am momentarily at home with my grief. Cam continues his story by asking a series of questions:

In all likelihood within one hundred years no one will remember your name or your life. It is a sobering thought. If you are anything like me you are probably squirming in your seat right now trying to push that frightening thought out of your mind. Why is that? I believe the question we should be asking ourselves is not 'how can I leave my mark', but rather, 'how can I make peace with my insignificance'?

As I listen to others discuss the story, I grow restless and shift my body to accommodate the movement of feelings within me. I become aware that a small storm is brewing inside me and I grip tightly onto my tongue, not wanting to slice the calm atmosphere that had accrued. Unable to withhold the words rising in my throat, an ill-formed plea tumbles out of my mouth

– ‘...but isn’t this the most significant time we’ve ever experienced? Aren’t we the last generation that can affect the course of global warming...?’ I know my face is contorted, the heat rising in my neck. Cam tries to clarify. He seems to tense in recognition at my words. A member of the audience speaks to the paradox inherent in the urgency of this moment and the insignificance inherent in all individual action in the present. His response diffuses my outburst. The discussion moves on. The swirl of intensity doesn’t leave me, rather it settles in my stomach – a small flame that will prompt me to act. In several months, I’ll approach Cam and seek to join the fold. (November 2015)

3.1 A recipe for uncertain times

I first began my research with The Weekly Service in May 2016, by offering to cook a monthly meal, which I called The Monthly Feast. The Monthly Feast was a simple soup cooked and curated by myself. It followed the Service and was thematically tied to the story of that day. Cooking a monthly meal enabled me to join with the existing rhythm of The Weekly Service in a way that was additive and in step with what was already gathering momentum.

The knife slices into the flesh of a large butternut pumpkin that I carried from the market to my car. Each was weighed in full as I talked to the grocery owner. Each sculpted form different from the next. They now lay decimated across my kitchen bench. The knife handle under my thumb slowly eats away at my flesh, the trace of repetitive movement, a kind of sacrifice made visible. It’s May, and Autumn is in full swing. I am preparing for the second Monthly Feast, a curated meal incorporating poetical elements such as story, visual design, objects and playful interaction. (May 2016)

To position this experiment in relation to my PhD research, I employed the metaphor of a ‘recipe for uncertain times’ to frame both the experience of being in-between practices and the broader context out of which this research arises. My use of the word recipe was somewhat ironic, as it spoke to my desire for a recipe that might adequately address the broader situation at hand, while also acknowledging that no one method or practice would be sufficient to meet the complexity of the ecological crisis. For The Monthly Feast, I made recipe cards, which leveraged my visual and aesthetic skills (see *Figure 20*). The recipes contained ingredients like spices and vegetables, but also qualities like courage. My visual skills acted like a bridge into the sensory domain of food. I wove together arrangements of colour, stories, and textures of food in careful ways, that sought to draw audiences into a deeper conversation over a meal.



Figure 16: Serving soup



Figure 15: Table decorations



Figure 17: Food preparation



Figure 18: Ingredients that corresponded with the chakras



Figure 19: The space & setup for the feast



Figure 20: Soup and recipe card

Figure 15-21: Images of the first Monthly Feast. The first feast was centred around 'a new beginning'. People were invited to add key ingredients that correlated to the seven chakras, which linked to Service's story for that day. The recipe card included a small packet (see right) of tomato seeds, which I'd dried and saved for the feast.



Figure 21: Packet of seeds saved from the tomatoes used in the soup

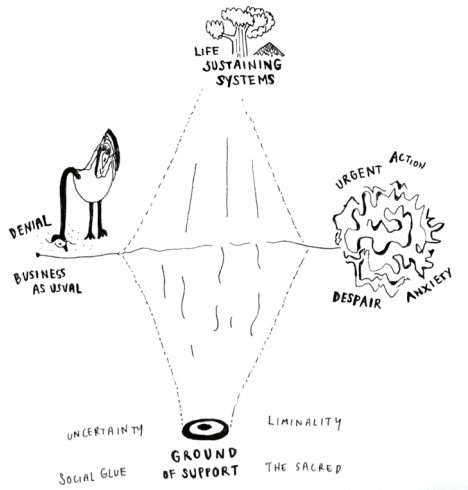


Figure 22: Searching for a ground of support

A drawing depicting how I was attempting to create a ground of support for a life sustaining practice.

Cooking thus featured at the beginning of this PhD as a vehicle for reflection and the site where a new and appropriate design practice might emerge. The actual more truthful picture however, was that I had grown timid and fearful that my design moves might inadvertently perpetuate ‘unsustainability’. I chose to offer to cook in part because of the despair and paralysis I encountered during the *Studio at the Edge of the World*. I had lost a sense of what my design practice was or might be in ‘the age of unsettlement’. I was unsure of the materials of my design practice and so I turned to food as a medium to design with, a familiar everyday medium which I associated with nourishment (see *Figure 22*).

The pumpkin skins are patterned – it’s delightful to the eye. I lose myself occasionally staring at them, and I wonder what purpose design has, given the beauty of their skins. I question what need there is to add to this already in-flux world? Might it be something to do with arranging or composing? Can I find a way to be in partnership with happenings, rather than attempting to gain control over them? And deeper still, where are the edges of my understanding of design? Where do I need to travel in order to unlearn what no longer serves ...?

I am searching for a ground of support. A way to nourish myself and my practice so that I can extend this care to others. A way to work within the ‘already material realm’, that is enchanting, evocative, and atmospheric. (May 2016)



Figure 23: Conflict kitchen in Pittsburgh

In an attempt to escape what I perceived to be the limitations of my own discipline of visual communication design, I looked to cooking, as a means to join in with The Weekly Service. I was drawn to examples of interaction design and participatory-based practices, which I have always felt an affinity with. Works like Conflict Kitchen – a restaurant based in Pittsburgh that only serves food from countries that the US is in conflict with (*Figure 23*), and Eating Design – an ongoing exploration by Marije Vogelzang that facilitates strange and unusual interactions such as Slow Cafe – a restaurant where guests are served food quickly or slowly depending on the food miles that the food has incurred.

These projects are not exhibits that represent alternative modes of relating, rather they are compelling for me because they offer a means to try on and rehearse actual ‘ways of living and models of action’ (Bourriaud 2002, 113) that might nudge or rub up against pre-existing ways of being. Their aims are kindred with the aims of Design for Social Innovation, which seeks to ‘simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships and collaborations’ (Murray et al. 2010, 3). But further to this, they ignite within me the possibility of a cultural imagination, a sense of symbolism and poetry coming

together, to create meaningful interactions that are invested with care. Through The Monthly Feast I sought to accentuate beauty via a simple communal meal in ways that I felt were in step with The Weekly Service's ethos. I invested care and poetry in small details like gifting the seeds of the first feast, to cultivate a sense of intimacy and warmth across time spans.

I also noticed how I grew attuned to a different kind of temporality through cooking. In the lead up to the Feast, my days were centred around visiting markets, speaking with grocery store owners and lifting heavy boxes from my car to my kitchen. Long hours were spent chopping and cooking. My activities were in step with the seasons of the vegetables that I was handling; their timing of ripeness was a necessary component of my planning. I spent time reading about the history of foods – their origins and movements across the globe – which anchored me further into a different temporal mode. Engaging through this rhythm provided me with a structure wherein I could improvise a passage forwards. It also reconnected me with parts of myself that I had forgotten. In my designerly search for newness, I had rushed past the close to hand materials that can make life meaningful. Sharing food and stories. Good conversation. Singing together. These are materials for a cultural remaking. As psychotherapist and philosopher Felix Guattari (2000) writes, what we need to develop is 'micropolitical and microsocial practices, new solidarities, a new gentleness' (51). In the early phases of this research, cooking was both a micropolitical and social practice that reconnected me with a sense of hopefulness.

Unexpectedly, The Monthly Feast only lasted three months. I had intended to continue my explorations of cooking, however several circumstances arose that meant this became less appealing over time. The first reason was that I felt unfamiliar using food as my materials to design with. Not being a chef or a particularly accomplished cook, I wasn't intimately connected to how flavours might contrast or helpfully balance each other out. This limited my capacity to experiment with ingredients, and revealed to me that I already had materials which I was more familiar with as a visual designer. Secondly, the feast seemed to rub up against the flow of the Service. It was difficult to transition people from one space into another and the space itself was ill-suited to eating. The third and most significant reason, was that the core team, who I wanted to collaborate with, saw The Monthly Feast as my project, and not necessarily something that they wanted to get involved in. In setting up The Monthly Feast, I had successfully performed the role of 'trigger', a role that Manzini and Rizzo (2011) advocate for

designers to play in Design for Social Innovation contexts, where designers use their creativity to 'make things happen' (211). Strangely, I felt uncomfortable with the perceived freedom of this role. The project felt somewhat unhinged, too dependent on my authorial voice, and not adequately situated within a context where relationships shape and constrain what might happen next. I intuited that in order to grow a practice for transitional times, I would need to also grow the capacity to travel with others. After three months of working on The Monthly Feast, I allowed myself to be pulled into the workings of the core team of The Weekly Service. I say pulled, because it carries with it a sense of force that has an inevitability about it. When we work alongside others, our obligation to them can strengthen over time, tying us to their trajectories and the mutual exploration of whatever is emerging through and between us.

Chapter 4 – Unlearning

In the following chapter, I trace a series of false starts that constituted the early phase of working within the core team and the member community. These false starts highlighted to me that I had preconceived ideas about the role a designer might play within a collaborative context. I also made assumptions about others and their interest or willingness to participate in transition towards more sustainable futures. As I began to unlearn aspects of what I perceived designing to be, I leaned into the idea that transition needn't be about solving problems, but could be concerned with reorienting how we relate to others and the broader ecological crisis that is unfolding. I suggest that this reorientation speaks to a deeper ontological shift that entails unlearning what we regularly do, but also what we think we are meant to be doing. Through this early phase I embraced a more improvisational understanding of design; characterised by open-endedness and attunement to the situations in which we find ourselves.

4.1 Life is like a festival, but for whom?

When I joined the core team of The Weekly Service it was June of 2016. We were rolling out our second season of weekly events and 20-30 people were attending the service. We were focused on building audience numbers and encouraging more storytellers to step forward. Henry, Cam and Caro were curating on a weekly basis and the core team met every week to discuss and review the Service. I understood these conversations as reflection-in-action (Schön 1983) where we sought to better understand what constituted a successful Service. As I was establishing myself within the core team, I was simultaneously finding my way within the member group who numbered about 15 at the time. Membership was designed to encourage commitment through financial means and to quite literally place value on what was being made. In addition to this financial commitment, members would begin to give considerable amounts of their time voluntarily to activities, such as hosting, curating, storytelling, working groups, co-creating gatherings and developing seasonal content. The invitation to membership was deliberately open to anybody who wanted to join. People signed up via The Weekly Service website, often after attending one or more Services.

Initially, the intention of the member group was unclear to me. However, I sensed that it might offer opportunities for action that moved beyond the scope of the Service. I can recall one of the first times we gathered together as a group in June, 2016. About nine of us were seated in an oddly shaped circle in Caro's living room:

We began by introducing ourselves and something we were passionate about. A recurring theme was 'nature', mentioned so many times that we joked that it was a prerequisite for being involved in The Weekly Service. I wondered whether people, including myself, were simply nervous and keen to belong. We were invited to brainstorm activities that we would like to participate in together, beyond the Service. The list included group singing, cooking, hiking and other activities such as a book club. People resonated with the idea that we were trying to create an atmosphere similar to that of a festival, but situated in the context of everyday life, where one might experience joy, connection and fulfilment through the activities they're engaged in. The group left energised and excited. (June 2016)

My reaction to the brainstorming evening with members was unexpectedly one of frustration and impatience. I realised that I wanted to move beyond stories and conversation and to begin to 'work on something' together. The 'something' in my mind, was the challenge I associated with re-conceiving our resource-rich lifestyles so that we might find ways to reduce our impact on the environment and design a more equitable (and joyful) future. I was eager to get on with it and begin the process of making something together that was an appropriate response to the situation as I viewed it.

I chose to withhold this view within the brainstorming session. I was attuned to the movement of the group and to its enthusiasm. I was aware of my frustration and sensed that if I spoke it might come across as harsh or critical. Instead, I chose to follow up with the core team the next day via email stating tentatively that I didn't feel like the solutions we dreamed up were grounded in a realistic context:

I've written something this morning in an attempt to capture some thoughts after last night. I experienced excitement last night, but upon reflection there was also a gnawing frustration. I wanted to share it.

Last night, I witnessed myself creating things that I want to see in the world – good things, great things. But I also caught myself thinking shouldn't a vision for the future be informed by certain common understandings? Understandings of the present / and what might be coming (in all its complexity!) and the nature of the problems at hand? – ie. there will be massive amounts of migration due to climate change – how might the weekly service address this? Or we are probably going to experience food shortages in the future, what can we do about this as a community?

When we create we always create within an expanded present. A present that forecloses both how we view the past and how we view the future. I've been wondering this morning what futures and pasts were present last night in our group? (Kirsty, Personal correspondence June, 2016)

In my mind at the time, the member group was insufficiently educated on ‘the problem’. I lamented that if only we were all on the same page, then we could direct our creative potential towards solving something of significance. I wondered what had we failed to do? Should we have explored ‘the problem’ together? Should we, the leaders, have more carefully framed the discussion? What methods could we have employed to invite solutions that were contextually grounded? What might have happened to the energy in the room had I steered the group towards my concerns? Behind these questions, lay the residue of my own paralysis. I was haunted by Fry’s notion of unsettlement, and the dire need for significant change – what could festivities do to assist? I wondered whether my motivation was in part spurred on by a desire to mitigate my own anxiety surrounding my ability to respond. This was not something that I wanted to burden the group with. Nor was it likely to generate the kind of enthusiasm that is so vital to social change movements that are based on participatory models of finance and volunteered time (Brown & Pickerill 2009, Klepto 2004, Routledge 2012).

Cam responded, ‘you aren’t alone in your feelings’ and through email he recounted his own coming to terms with the points I raised:

‘I spent most of my 20s and early 30s angry at the world, feeling let down by leaders and wanting to tear it all down. A couple of years ago I realised that this was the approach of most social change organisations and their doom and gloom approach hasn’t worked (thanks for the reminder yesterday Henry). So I started thinking about other ways we could have impact and my investigations eventually led to The Weekly Service. I don’t want TWS to be naive to the hard realities but neither do I want TWS to become bogged down in cynicism and defeatism. I think there is a fine balance to walk - ‘grumpy optimism’ perhaps. To acknowledge the darkness and offer a brighter alternative. To paint the vision we want to live in.’ (Cam, personal correspondence June, 2016)

Like Cam, I also intuited that there was indeed a fine balance to walk. I was less sure about how to do this and so at the time I parked my desire to make things happen, in an effort to travel along with the core team. In private, I secretly fretted over whether I’d chosen the right community to work with and wondered about what this might mean for my research into design and transitions.

I am worried that TWS is a panacea to the world’s ills. A refuge from the storm. A place to hide, a place to be seen and be heard, and become complacent. I’m devising other research projects. Pretending

to my supervisors that I'm simply re-framing my research, when the undercurrents of my worry centre around whether this gathering, this group, is 'doing enough'. I am a designer. I am action-orientated. I am not coping with all this talking and all this feeling. Maybe we will create projects. Maybe this new group of members who are joining now, are the ones who will make projects happen. Maybe we need to cultivate the ground a little more, to build enough trust so that we can work together. (June 2016)

As winter edged in, in 2016, attendance at The Weekly Service was lower than usual: '*...the initial buzz is starting to fade*' (Henry, Personal correspondence, June 6, 2016). It was decided that the core team should break from running the Service. Organising a weekly event for six months had an effect. The core team was tired. Growing the infrastructure of The Weekly Service had quite literally worn us out. As Winter enveloped us, we took time out to prepare for a re-launch of the Service in Spring.

As Star and colleagues (Star and Bowker 2002, Star and Ruhleder 1996) remind us, infrastructures are typically thought of as static, immovable structures like road networks or large public buildings, that support particular 'doings', however this covers over the relational quality of infrastructures and the continual maintenance work that enables them to be sustained. Infrastructures are made up of socio-material relationships that are often complex and continually changing, which emerge in practice connected to activities and structures (Star and Ruhleder 1996). Infrastructures therefore, never stand apart from the people who design, maintain and use them (Star and Bowker 2002) and they are vulnerable to breakdown (Star and Ruhleder 1996). In our case, running a weekly event required the ongoing presence and thoughtfulness of the core team. The core team's time was invested into organising the storytellers and the curatorial elements for each Service. Further effort was invested into defining and imagining what The Weekly Service might become and cultivating long-term relationships with members so that greater collaboration might become possible. As tiredness set in we decided to regroup, reflect on the work of 30+ services thus far and work towards a more sustainable rhythm.

4.2 Breakdown as an opportunity for design

At the time, breaking the weekly rhythm of The Weekly Service felt a little like a design failure to me. Perhaps, because on principle and in step with the name, I believed that regardless of who and how many people showed up, the Service should be held weekly. As Participatory Designer Anna Seravalli (2012) notes, the role of the designer in community contexts, is primarily to keep infrastructuring processes

going. Continuity is important to community confidence when growing an infrastructure (Karasti and Baker 2008). If I'd given myself more pause for thought, I probably would have suggested a redesign based on principle, so that a stripped back version could be run weekly. Yet in this instance, the energy and momentum of the core team felt more important and necessary to cultivate. In other words, it was through my attunement to the less tangible aspects of the situation that meant that I withheld my ideas, and once again capitulated. I also intuited that a breakdown might offer an opportunity for design. As Escobar (2017) notes:

...a breakdown is not something negative but provides the space of possibility for action – creating domains where new conversations can take place. Breakdowns can be anticipated to a certain extent, but they mostly arise in practice, calling for a back-and-forth between design and experience. (115)

In the break period, the team (myself included), conducted 1:1 interviews with members and attendees of the Service surrounding what people's needs were in relation to the Service, including suggestions and desires moving forward. The interviews attempted to both review the Service as it was and open into exploratory territories pertaining to what it could become. Our interviews yielded insights surrounding four themes that covered the design of the service, community growth and depth, financial sustainability and communications. I took the opportunity to introduce the double-diamond approach common to 'design thinking' frameworks, in order to frame key problems and create solutions based open the insights that we had gathered. The doubled diamond approach structures design into two stages of divergent and convergent thinking. It was first developed by the British Design Council in 2005 and popularised through the broader uptake of design thinking in the fields of business and innovation.

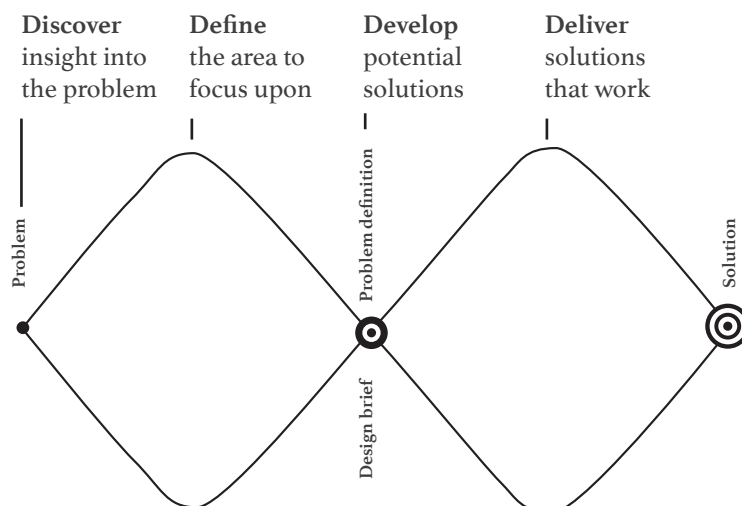


Figure 24: Double-diamond design process
Redrawn here and based on the Design Council's 2005 framework.

I assigned each of the core team to a particular ‘problem area’ roughly aligned according to the areas that we gravitated to when we worked. We each wrote up a problem statement to share with the group. Having assigned myself to the design of the Service, I derived from the interviews that attendees liked the ‘eclectic nature of the ideas’, ‘the exploratory process’, that ‘there’s no answer’, and how it was a ‘relief to feel normal...when we shared’. Others commented that the speakers are inconsistent, ‘they sometimes lecture’ and that ‘there’s no clear end’ to the Service. I drafted a problem statement to capture a sense of the design challenge:

People come to the service for different reasons and they have different priorities. Our research revealed that people come to learn, connect, and seek stillness. Many come for a combination of these. In addition to the differences expressed as to why people come, differences also emerged regarding a preference in engagement (passive or active) and delivery style (spontaneous/informal/emergent or structured/planned/etc). Further to this we were advised to dial up the aesthetic moments in the Service, making them richer and more conducive to connection.

How might we tweak the design and delivery of The Weekly Service to facilitate a richer sense of connection to self, others and the new story, that balances people’s diverse need and interests?

Cam, Caro and Henry also drafted problem statements for their areas. There was however, a sense of mixed enthusiasm as we proceeded towards the task of devising solutions. Slowing down, synthesising and developing ideas required time and focus, and it rubbed against the improvisatory ways in which we commonly worked. The personal toll that precipitated the breakdown also wasn’t foregrounded in our research, in part because the people that we interviewed (i.e.. members) were not aware of it. This prompted Cam to email the core team:

‘I fell into a heap on Saturday - absolutely exhausted from trying to fit too much into a week and it has caught up with me. I think we need to figure out how to make TWS more personally sustainable for ourselves. That is a bigger priority for me than the research and design work (which are definitely important) we are pursuing at the moment. I think the approach is through empowering our members and others on our radar to take a more active role in running the organisation.’ (Cam, Personal Correspondence, July 2016)

Cam’s email was enough to unravel the structured double diamond design process that I had instigated. As the problem statements were shelved, the centrality of improvisation to our work became apparent to me. I saw how the double diamond framework seemed to ask us

to fix the present in a such as way, so as to enable it to be framed as a problem. But the present situation that we were engaging with was always changing. The Service felt and looked different depending on who was curating. The member group was always changing as members joined and others left. The broader political and ecological context that we were attempting to open up and respond to, was also always in flux. In other words, it was difficult to hit pause on the present and chart a course towards a desirable future-state, because the present wouldn't stay long enough to be changed (Akama et al. 2018).

4.3 Design as improvisation

In contrast to the double diamond process, design in an improvisatory mode is characterised by open-ended time frames, where action is underpinned by the desire to improve aspects of what one is working on through iterative changes in concert with others (Gatt and Ingold 2013). This reconfigures designing not as a process of problem-solving but as a process that is concerned with continually responding to and adapting one's ways of being-knowing-&-doing in the situations and contexts in which one works (Halse 2013). At The Weekly Service this seemed to cultivate the emergence of more relationally attuned ways of being over-time. We used our creative capacities to gesture forth visions of a more beautiful world, by sharing musical skills, poetry or by paying close attention to how a space was decorated and people were welcomed. Improvisations were made in an additive way, that built on what had been done previously, with an eye towards how that could be further enhanced. When we improvised together in this way, we tended to become inspired by one another's contributions, which would encourage further cycles of improvisation.

This improvisatory mode, sat in contrast to my design training and my perception of the role of an embedded designer in community settings. Problem-solving has a long history in design thought and practice. Herbert Simon's (1996) oft quoted definition: '[e]veryone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones', points to how design is a process of creating solutions within problematic presents. The social scientist Donald Schön (1983) brings a more nuanced reading to this process by suggesting that rather than set out to solve a problem, designers 'set' the problem through exploration, observation, and prior experience. Design as a problem-solving process is also commonly used as a way of framing how collaborative design unfolds. Ezio Manzini (2015b) defines designing with communities as a process where 'design experts collaborate with active groups of people in making a given solution more accessible and more capable of lasting well into the future' (60).

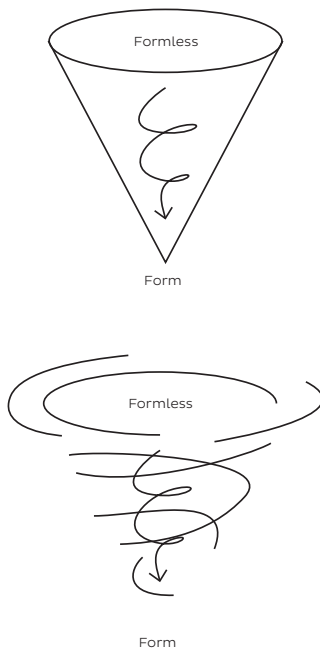


Figure 25: Practice transitions
 Above: How I previously conceived my practice as a process of form-giving. Below: How I perceived the work of The Weekly Service as being open-ended and fluid.

When I reflected further on my desire for a structured design process, I came to see it as an attempt to create order while building my own credibility as a ‘designer’ within the core team, through the use of a recognisable ‘designerly’ framework. By drawing upon an existing framework, I tried to appear knowledgeable and capable of steering us through uncertainty towards potential solutions. This is also what I thought a designer in collaborative settings should be doing. A small diagram (*Figure 25*) I drew at the time, indicates my perception of the increase in fluidity within the work of The Weekly Service (image bottom) when compared with the more directed movement of the design process that I was familiar with (image top). From my own professional experience, I understood visual communication (especially identity design) to be more commonly about fixing things in place through processes of form-giving, so as to create assurance and a sense of know-ability across time. In my reflections I wrote ‘...because our team is so well equipped I don’t feel like I quite know what my role is.’ I wondered whether it had something to do with materiality, given my design background, ‘I sense that my role is in the materiality of what we’re doing, and transforming that and working with that?’ However, discovering the ‘materiality’ of what we were making was part of the challenge. In this fluidity where everything was moving, I was out of my depth and it was unsettling and intriguing to watch myself as I floundered, searching for a focus.

Through my work with The Weekly Service, I began to understand that resisting the urge to problem-solve is an important design strategy in transitional times. In addition to the notion that the present doesn’t stay long enough to be changed, problem-solving can function as an avoidance strategy for feeling or grieving. As philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler (2006) writes, when grieving is feared, quickly designed solutions to remedy painful situations can perpetuate a fantasy of the world as orderly and devoid of suffering. In other words, problem-solving might actually be a recipe for perpetuating the status quo, especially if the solutions that are devised stem from the same mindsets that created them.

In December of 2016, through a partnership with Climates, these ideas were further solidified through practice when I helped to curate an event titled ‘*Inner landscapes in a changing climate*’. The event was framed around how we might share our experiences of these troubling times, where it remains difficult to know what to do – how to be and how to act. We planned the event carefully, so that people would first be greeted and then led into a room with chairs seated in a circle. The event was designed to provide space for people to talk about how



Figure 26: Inner landscapes in a changing climate event

they were feeling. Three storytellers led us into a discussion. Each touched on their own challenges and feelings about climate change. I sat silently in the middle of the room and drew at this event, while Henry facilitated and Cam played music. Being in the middle of the room was an intense experience. I positioned myself there, because I intuited that some point of focus (other than the conversation) would be needed to allow people's feelings to swim around the space. Many people voiced strong emotions, such as a loss of hope. Some people also found the emotional expressions uncomfortable, preferring to speak in a more intellectual way about the issue and what might be done. This event highlighted to me how the ecological crisis can provoke strong responses and the importance of airing these feelings in group contexts. Furthermore, it was through events such as this one that I was ongoingly reminded that the ecological crisis was a very real concern of those that attended The Weekly Service, even if it wasn't voiced as openly and frequently as I would have liked. It provided further evidence that there is a need for inclusive spaces, where people can disclose how they are feeling in these transitional times.

Transition towards a relational ontology can be incredibly challenging for those of us who are more familiar with keeping problems at a distance through analytical modes of understanding and problem-solving. If designers want to concern themselves with transition towards more holistic or relationally orientated world-views, then we must also grapple with what this entails from a *felt* experience. Being more relationally attuned also means feeling the effects of the colonial / modern world-view. A shift in world-view entails mourning not only what 'we have lost, but also what we have destroyed' (Menning 2017, 40). In other words, 'to be conscious in the world today is to be aware of vast suffering and unprecedented peril' (Macy and Brown 2014, 21). Put more simply, 'pain is the price of consciousness' (Noorgard 2011, 59). Through my work with The Weekly Service I began to explore how I might create processes and relational spaces that validated difficult emotions and encouraged group sense-making. This shifted my understanding of design, from a process associated with solving problems to a process concerned with reorienting how we relate to each other and the broader ecological crisis through improvisation.

4.4 In summary

In summary, this chapter reveals that in the early phases of this research I held assumptions surrounding how I might participate in doing collaborative design with the core team and the members of The Weekly Service. When I joined the core team, I held a desire to 'do something' about the ecological crisis, by initiating projects that

might address the complicity I felt towards my role in perpetuating the problems I was aware of. I tried to assert myself as a designer within the core team through recognisable frameworks. When this failed to produce the results I had anticipated it would, I noticed how I felt further unsettled and less sure of what constituted the materials of my practice. Over time, and through conversations, I became further attuned to how the work of The Weekly Service progressed in improvisatory ways, rather than through a structured design as problem-solving process. This was a significant shift in my understanding of design.

In this chapter, I have also taken stock of how I was approaching the ecological crisis as I worked with others at The Weekly Service. In the early phases of this research I made assumptions about people's lack of willingness to care about climate change. These assumptions were continuously revealed to be incorrect. Through sustained experiments I began to open up ways of approaching the ecological crisis that appeared to be generative of further conversation. These attempts highlighted how emotive climate change is as an issue and the ongoing ways in which people's emotional needs remain relatively unmet. Creating spaces in which it's possible to share our experiences together, prioritises people's experiences in the present. Here, design becomes the means through which we can begin to engage with difficult issues that are unfolding in our midst and create supportive environments that foster further engagement.

Part 3 | Designing conditions for transition

Within *Part 3* of this dissertation, I describe and reflect upon how I worked with other members of the core team to bring people together, through ongoing acts of alignment towards the co-production of The Weekly Service. As Participatory Designers Marttila & Botero (2017) assert, ‘when doing infrastructuring, a lot of design work turns towards creating a continuous alignment between different communities and between ways of doing things’ (see also Björgvinsson et al. 2010, 2012). Infrastructuring therefore concerns ongoing acts that seek to bring people, spaces, technologies into alignment, while maintaining a tentative, flexible and open stance towards what might emerge.

I understand alignment as the continuous process of bringing people together and travelling along with them. Ongoing acts of alignment are acts that help to build relationships so that people can improvise together towards the emergence of shared practices. The word alignment can feel quite instrumental – it seems to communicate a clicking into place. A non-instrumental analogy that I use for alignment is to consider how a flock of birds might fly together. The flock is always responding to the movements of each bird and the circumstances of the weather as they travel together. Alignment therefore concerns not only how we relate and what that enables us to make together, but it also concerns orientation and movement. This doesn’t mean that we need to be oriented towards a goal or destination that might be reached in the future. Orientation can also be a tentative, flexible and open stance towards what might emerge. Here, I introduce two ways of approaching alignment: invitations (*Chapter 5*) and atmospheres (*Chapter 6*).

Throughout Part 3, I trace how I began to find a way to design *with* others, that leveraged and extended my existing visual communication design practice. I suggest that this approach is concerned with making transition happen *with* others, rather than attempting to make transition happen *for* others.

Chapter 5 – Invitations

In the following chapter, I suggest that the practice of invitation is an important method for initiating alignments between people in grassroots community contexts. Within The Weekly Service it formed a core part of our work, as we routinely invited people to attend the events we ran. Each Service attracted between 20-80 people weekly. While some people regularly attended the Service, often about a quarter of the people in attendance were new. Across my involvement, over 100 Services were held and 1000+ people attended. Waves of people from various communities within Melbourne came and then moved on. Different stories drew in different types of people. This meant that the cohort of people who attended was always shifting and changing, on the basis of the invitations that were made, and the uptake of those different invitations at different moments.

Design researchers are strangely silent when it comes to the practice of invitation. Participatory Designers Lindström and Ståhl (2016) suggest that invitations are an understudied tactic of design research. This may be because within PD, attention has traditionally been orientated towards how participation is invited within workplace contexts, where people are expected to show up as part of their obligation as an employee. As PD moves beyond the workplace and into contexts that are more communal and unbounded (DiSalvo et al. 2012) attention has shifted to how long-term PD activities can be re-framed as a means through which publics are assembled around ‘matters of concern’ (Latour 2004, le Dantec & DiSalvo 2013). In this context, Lindström and Ståhl (2016) suggest that the practice of invitation is one that might allow the co-articulations of issues to be explored through public engagements. While their work is helpful to understand how invitations might enable further exploration of issues, they do not explore in detail how the practice of invitation might constitute a means through which alignments between people and ways of doing things are ongoingly initiated.

In this chapter I explore how invitations can bring people together in transitional times. The practice of crafting invitations need not be overly complex. It can be quite simple. However, there are three reasons why invitations are slightly more complex in transitional times. Firstly, when we embark on transition towards different modes of being-knowing-&-doing, we step into change as a living process (Meroni and Sangiorgi 2011) where the destination is unknown, because the destination cannot be pre-determined from within the existing mindset that we are attempting to transform. This means that the change that is occurring involves a reflective awakening of our capacities to respond to the challenges of these times, both inwardly and outwardly.

Secondly, we must extend invitations within an environment that will often be oriented towards socially organised denial (this was the case at The Weekly Service even despite the heightened awareness of the ecological crisis). This means that careful framing is needed in order to avoid causing people to shut down or close off. In this context, there can be no assurance that a better world will be made possible through the work of transition. Thirdly, transition of this sort is always voluntary and cannot be mandated through persuasion or subtle manipulation. Within community contexts, people always have the right to refuse an invitation with no consequences for not accepting it. These three factors were tacitly understood by those of us who worked within the core team. I suggest that they need to be taken into account when inviting people into processes of transition more broadly.

5.1 *Invitations as doorways*

I first explored the practice of invitation when crafting event banners for the Service. I worked to enhance the visual sensibility of the event invitations of the Service, which I referred to as doorways (see *Figure 27*):

A doorway is a simple yet complex structure. It needs to speak to one's intended audience, and be framed carefully to entice interest. The banners I created were not simply images. Rather, like a doorway, they sought to open something – when I selected them, I knew that there had to be a hole, there had to be something missing. (December 2016)

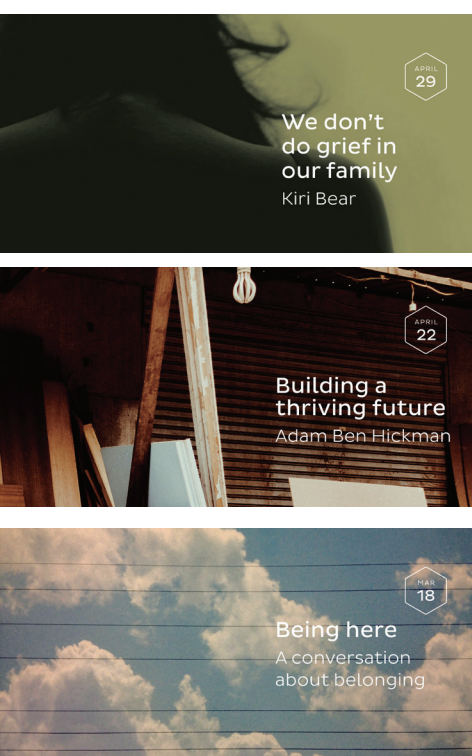


Figure 27: Event banners

A doorway provides a simple but useful analogy for invitation. For a doorway to work well there needs to be a frame. For cognitive scientists, frames are the unconscious structures that guide thinking, which are activated through language and imagery. As George Lakoff (2010), a cognitive linguist and philosopher writes, ‘all of our knowledge makes use of frames, and every word is defined through the frames it neurally activates’ (71). Frames-circuits are also closely connected to emotional regions of the brain. This can help us to recognise how ‘emotions are vital (living) aspects of who we are and of our situational engagement with the world’ (Smith et al. 2009, 10). Making use of frames then is unavoidable, if we are using language and imagery, which much of design work does. However, we can also attend to what kinds of frames we evoke and what kinds of ways of being this might encourage. A small adjustment in one’s use of language can have a big effect. In conjunction, a sense of spaciousness is also important to the notion of a doorway. Invitations that ‘spark, and are built on, curiosity’ (Lindström and Ståhl 2016, 186) are important to engaging people in joining in the co-articulation of issues and experiences. Space can be evoked through a friction between image and language, or by not giving everything

away through the invitation. Space is needed to enable us to listen to what remains unresolved within ourselves, or what questions we are asking. When invitations are overly framed, then we have to mould ourselves to fit through the door. Within my practice, I use the concept of a doorway to understand how invitations need to be well structured in order for people to be able to receive them and take them forward. As people take invitations forward, they can deepen their relationships and their capacities to collaborate with others.

5.2 An open-ended invitation

An open-ended invitation to collaborate was embedded within The Weekly Service from early on. Henry and Cam would routinely invite anyone who was interested to get involved by sharing a story or helping to develop the Service. Indeed, it was in part because of these ongoing invitations that I first shared a short story at the Service and then got more involved through the Monthly Feast. As the Service developed and the member group grew, it became important to consider how this open-ended invitation could be structured in ways that might bring greater clarity to the task of collaboration. At the first member retreat, a session was run to invite members to take greater ownership of the Service. It became apparent that this invitation was too open and not well framed:

I lie on the floor receiving the words of Henry, who is inviting the small community of members to own the entity/organisation that has grown up around us. We are seated in a circle, within a room warmed by a fireplace on a property in the country. It's Saturday morning and it's the first time we've been on a retreat together. Henry describes the principles that we (the core team) have spent time developing and the situation as he now sees it: that The Weekly Service is something that can be run by anybody if they align with the stated principles. The plan has been worked out through numerous conversations within the core team of four, which I've been privy to. The plan seeks to engage members (of which there are around 15) to consider running the Thornbury Service, freeing up the core team to scale and grow the organisation beyond the original site. There is a vacuum of silence in the group, as people absorb this invitation. In the silence, I find myself feeling uncomfortable. My body tenses up. The tension in my body speaks, when voicing my concerns feels too contentious. A member of the group is attuned to the discomfort in my body. I know this because he references it, before he begins to ask questions and unpick the assumptions that sit under the plan. His questions appear to encourage other people to join in and express their reservations. The unpicking of the plan is a halting experience. The energy invested in its vision is slowly deflated and redirected towards slower organic growth and continued leadership from the core team. I witness the effect it has on Henry, who is confronted with this resistance and redirection, but who listens and registers their concerns. (September 2016)

Caro, Henry, Cam and I, took time to reflect on the retreat, in our next weekly meeting. The discussion centred mostly around the ‘plan’ and how it had been received. The meeting minutes point to a recognition that we held assumptions surrounding what would encourage a sense of ownership and participation. Henry had time to digest the response to the plan: *‘I thought that people wanted to be in the collaborative core. It was a misunderstanding. I tend to underestimate my importance.’* And it was a *‘misunderstanding of community. It was a bit jarring’*. We interpreted the push back from the members, to mean that our involvement in the design and delivery of the Service was still desired. Many months later, Cam would read this situation as a sign that members wanted to be passive, while another member would recount this differently, saying that we (the core team) lacked the clarity that was needed in order to invite others in. While it was not entirely clear at the time what would be required to grow and scale the Service, we shared a sense that *‘... we’re at the centre of something that is a ‘thing’...there’s a lot of power in that.’* We were learning that *‘too much space...creates confusion’*, *‘collaboration doesn’t mean chaos’* (Meeting minutes, Sept 2016).

Sitting with these reflections, I was made aware that the core team had travelled too far along into an imagined future, to the point where it had become difficult to bring others with us. Our invitation was on the one hand quite open, and on the other hand it was overly framed on the basis of a trajectory that we had already worked out. This was an occasion of misalignment through invitation. Within this context it’s important to note how:

Coming together is an always ambiguous process. It is disjointed and filled with stops and starts. If you try to locate the group, it is never quite where it is supposed to be. (Pratt 2012, 183)

Having ‘failed’ to anticipate the kind of invitation that would be needed in order to cultivate members’ interest towards becoming responsible for Service sites (let alone understand if there was a desire amongst members to do so), we turned to developing invitations that would enable members to contribute in small ways towards the delivery of the Service.

While there were pragmatic reasons why the core team wanted to invite participation in the co-production of the Service (as discussed previously the core team was tired and looking for ways to make The Weekly Service more sustainable), we also derived great joy from running the Service and found it to be an incredibly supportive way to bring about change in our own ways of being-knowing-&-doing.

The core team therefore sought to create alignments between people because it was necessary to the ongoing continuation of the Service. However, we also believed in what we were doing and held out hope that others would also enjoy and benefit from being involved, as we had. For example, in the early days of the Service as a curator, Henry would often update the audience on changes in his personal life. The twists and turns of his life commentary provided some comedic relief at the beginning of the Service, but it was also very enlivening to watch someone take risks and try and make changes in their life. As Henry notes:

‘..the experience [of curating the Service] for me has been a life changer, quite literally... being part of the collab core of Thornbury helped me leave my job, meet some of the best people on earth, dived into fascinating topics, given me confidence to set up other projects...’ (Henry, personal communication 2016)

Similarly, for Caro, meaning was found in curating themes that were of significance for her. Curating became a way to explore themes that were unresolved or alive in her own life. This included questions surrounding what it means to be a parent, how patriarchy is maintained in contemporary life and how to live or make a home in a country that’s not your birthplace. Rather than seeking out these topics she commented how *‘those topics found me, it wasn’t really conscious but it happened.’* She noted how:

‘I was working in a way that I was open to having those topics exposed and let other people in, and weaving through my own process and their own process. Those Services felt more meaningful to me and had a bigger impact on the audience.’

Additionally for Cam, curating offered an opportunity to move beyond how lonely one can feel (especially as a man) when there’s no place to express one’s emotions. For Cam, being involved in The Weekly Service facilitated a feeling of normality, where one finds that others also experience difficulty, shame, anger, etc. He noted how it took him time to grow comfortable with curating:

‘I had to let go of this idea that I’m weird in some way. I’m weird to be doing this kind of stuff, weird to be singing with people, talking about my feelings as a man, weird to be hosting conversations. All those things that society tells me there’s something broken with me as a man if I want to be doing that kind of stuff.’

My own interest in involving others, stemmed from a desire to see people discover their creative expression and agency through curating, storytelling, and more broadly through the co-creation of The Weekly Service. This stemmed from my own experience of how I felt that the Weekly Service was something on a human scale that I could grab a hold of and seek to influence, in a broader context where disempowerment and despair seemed prevalent. I found that curating offered me the chance to begin to author my own understanding of the context of these times, by making connections between the story of the day, the broader ecological context and the conversations that occurred.

5.3 Invitational tactics

From mid-2016 to early 2017, the core team set up processes that enabled and supported the co-production of the Service and the broader evolution of the organisation. In the following section I discuss four tactics for invitation: (1) roles, (2) visual score, (3) open programming, and (4) rhythm. I carry forward the idea of a doorway where careful framing and a sense of spaciousness are key elements of a well crafted invitation. These four tactics helped to orient the core team's and members' actions towards co-producing the Service. However, the intimate nature of our relations also contributed substantially to the success of these invitations. I discuss this in the final section of this chapter.

5.3.1 Invitation through roles

The first small move towards inviting participation in the co-production of the Service occurred through the creation of Service delivery roles. Through her own involvement in curating, Caro had intuited that more roles (rather than fewer roles) would enable people to join in co-production. She reflected that she was always more drawn to bringing people in – *'I don't know how to play music - I had to find someone else who could do it. It was nice to bring in other people.'* Up until that point, a curator was often responsible for leading the meditation, the group sing-a-long at the end, and facilitating the discussion. The new roles included: a meditation lead, musician, hustler, and helper. I visualised these using icons that drew on the branding of The Weekly Service (see *Figure 28*) and this visual was shared with members in Spring of 2016.

The different roles importantly accounted for different styles of participation (those who wanted to be up the front and those who preferred to be in the background) and also levels of time commitment. In this way, the roles were well-framed enough to enable people to accept the invitation with an understanding of what was expected of

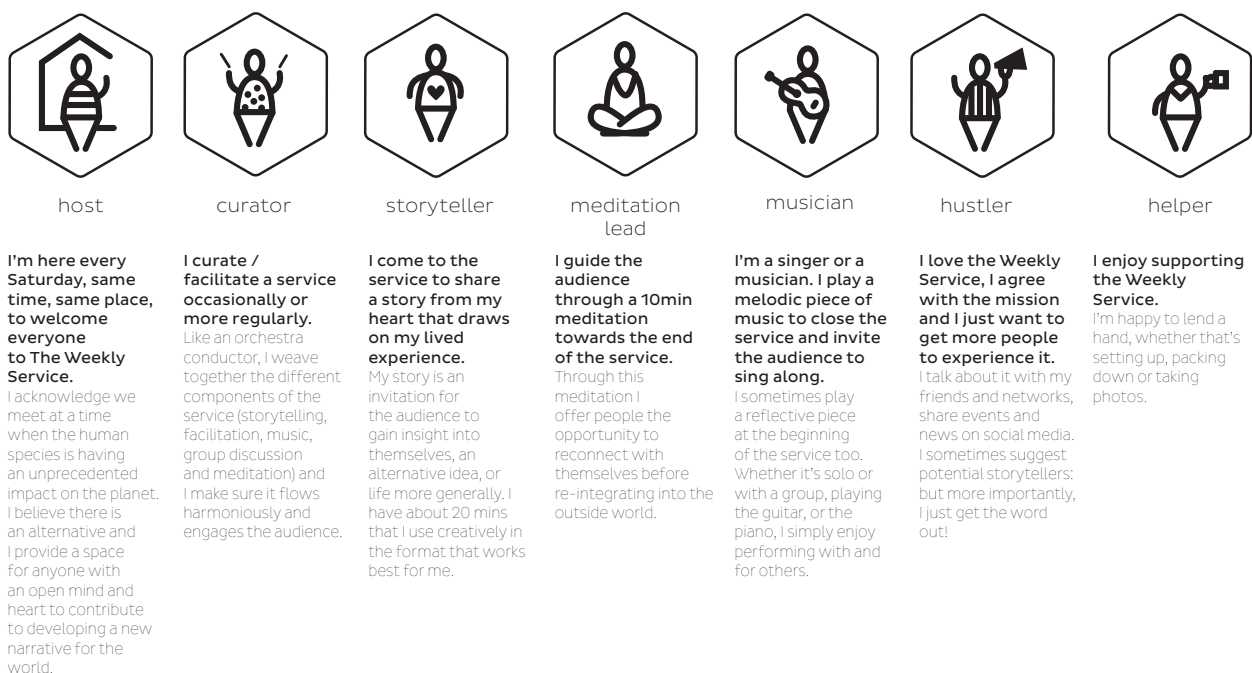
them. The visual that I made portrayed the roles as fun and the text evoked a sense of what it might be like to inhabit a role. Additionally some of the roles such as hustler and helper worked to acknowledge and validate the roles that people were already playing.

To make space for people to step into these roles, the core team stepped into the role of host. The host provided a bookend to the Service and support which lightened the responsibility of the other roles. As an act of alignment, the invitation to take up a role brought people together at a moment when members were wanting to get involved (following the member retreat) but were unsure of what that might mean. In other words this particular invitation was also timely, as it was in step with the momentum of the member group and their willingness to contribute. For Caro this moment created clarity and signified a shift towards collaboration:

'...having those roles clearly articulated was helpful to transitioning towards a communal effort. The community was stronger so you knew you could call on them, and it became the community's purpose. It shifted...from consuming to creating it all together.'

Members began to not only 'use' the Service, but also to co-produce it at a point when there was sufficient interest and energy.

Figure 28: Service delivery roles



5.3.2 *Invitation through visual score*

While the roles provided greater clarity, some aspects surrounding the co-production of the Service needed further elaboration. The second invitational approach sought to create more clarity surrounding the practice of curation. A visual template of the Service was created to aid first-time curators. When designing the template, I tuned into my bodily experience of being at the Service. This enabled me to map the rough sequence of elements that usually occurred at the Service and draw an ‘energy arc’ to communicate the more intangible experience of attending (see *Figures 29-31*). The ‘energy arc’ was an attempt to capture the way in which the Service appeared to move or transport people through a kind of rhythm of intensity. Following Langer (1953), Ingold observes that ‘the essence of rhythm lies in the successive building up and resolution of tension, on the principle that every resolution is itself a preparation for the next building-up’ (1993, 160). This description marries well with the way in which the ‘energy arc’ carries with it a sense of flow in the build up of intensity in moments, followed by a release.

I observed how the template proved helpful for new curators. As one curator mentioned, *‘the template was like training wheels that gave one a good sense of security’*. He commented that it was:

‘Incredibly helpful for me – that’s my design brain, it likes to see a pre-existing piece of work, before I can see what’s possible beyond it.’

People began to work together in interesting ways, by elaborating or tweaking the format of the Service and the sensory experience that surrounded it. Curators would go ‘off script’ and add their own flavour to the Acknowledgements of Country and Statement of Context or rearrange the structure of elements. At times, this worried the core team who wanted to ensure a particular standard or quality was maintained, however for the most part, the improvisatory interventions of curators were welcomed and seen as an opportunity rather than a threat (Ingold 2012). For most curators the template was a tool that complimented their tacit knowledge, formed through many hours of watching what other curators did. As one curator stated, she spent a year *‘soaking up how everyone else had done it’* before stepping forward with her own ideas of how she’d like to do it.

As an act of alignment, the template created continuity between those who curated, but it also allowed for undulations in rhythm according to each curator’s approach and touch. Rather than fixing the Service into a particular format, the visual template appeared to

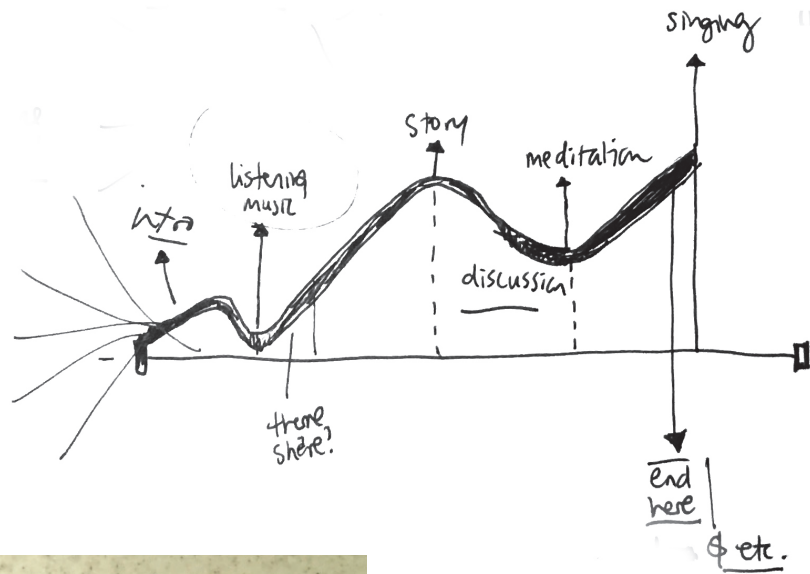


Figure 29: Initial sketch of the energy arc

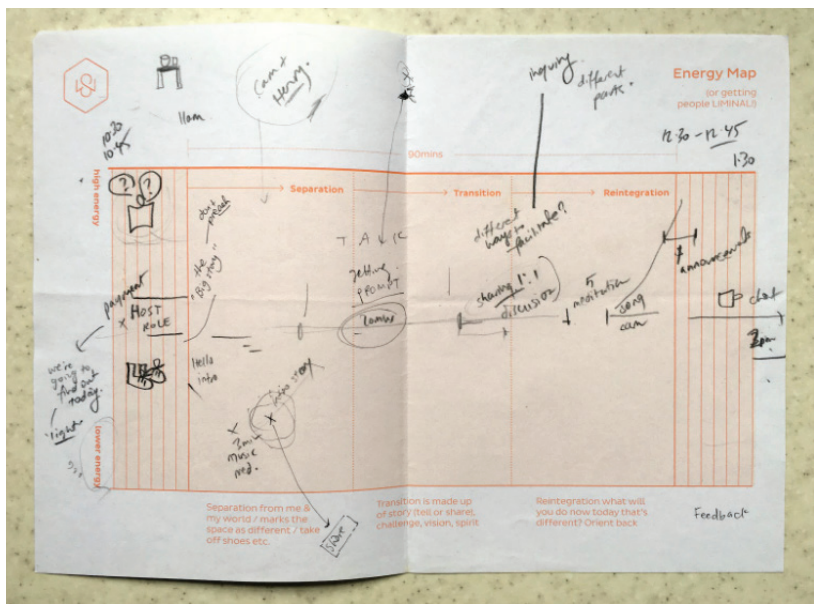


Figure 30: Mapping the phases of the service
This map was enlarged for a workshop that I ran with members at the Spring retreat in 2016. I used movable coupons to represent the sequence of the elements of Service. It was here that we first discussed the Service template and codesigned and agreed upon the Service format as a group.

Service structure

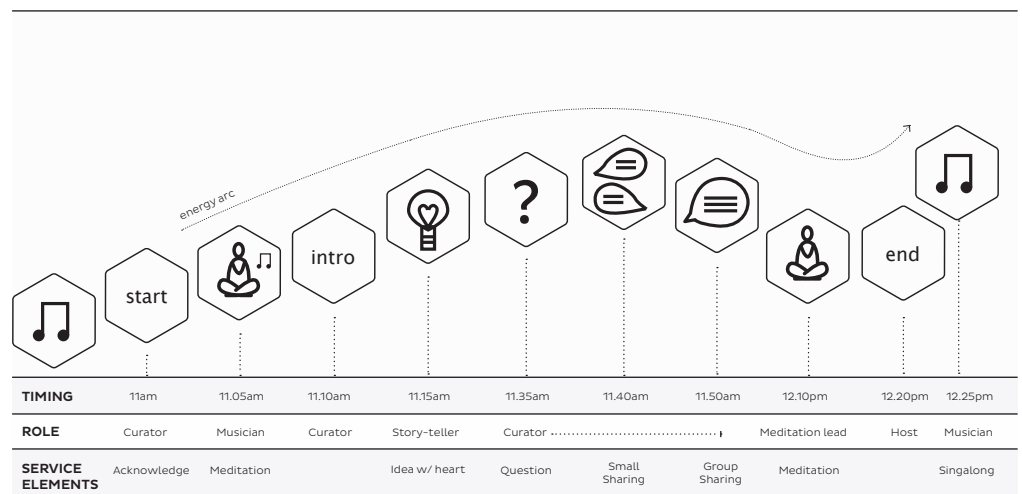


Figure 31: Service template
This template was used in The Weekly Service guidelines for storytellers and curators.

provide opportunities for improvisation. I came to view the template as similar to a score, commonly associated with music notation. Cultural Anthropologist Karin Barber (2007) writes, that ‘playing a piece of music from a score’ involves improvisation and is ‘undoubtedly generative’ (32). As musicians play together, they read from a script but also adjust what they are doing in an attempt to harmonise or move together. This creates constructive tensions between familiarity and novelty. By viewing the ‘energy arc’ as a score, I was able to recognise that my visual communication design practice could be concerned with design *for* improvisation.

5.3.3 Invitation through open programming

The third approach, was concerned with inviting Weekly Service members and members of the public to participate in open programming processes. An open program was established so that people could suggest themes and put forward potential storytellers. This was an important part of the way in which we sought to ensure a multiplicity of voices were involved in shaping the content that we co-produced. More importantly, it enabled audiences to begin to take ownership over the themes and stories that were shared and discussed, including how transition in these times was framed and contextualised.



Figure 32: The Tune-in promotional image

We created an event to initiate the open programming process, which we called the Tune-in. The Tune-in was an event that was developed by myself, Henry and another member across the summer of 2017. The design of the Tune-in was influenced by our interest in Theory U. Theory U is a framework that proposes a methodology for shifting the awareness of groups from being ego-centric to eco-centric, where the future becomes something that can be sensed as an emergent form of knowing in the present:

...we can sense, feel, and actualize by shifting the inner place from which we operate. It is a future that in those moments of disruption begins to presence itself through us. (Scharmer and Kaufer 2013, 2)

The aim of the Tune-in is implied in its name – the event sought to enable people to attune to what was emergent for them in order to develop and co-create content for the upcoming season. Through this process, people were guided towards articulating a ‘burning question’ that they were sitting with (see *Figure 33*). At the end of the Tune-in people were offered the opportunity to put themselves forward as a storyteller or curator for the upcoming season. The Tune-in provided a space for deeper listening, where people were able to articulate what was concerning, exciting, or soothing them.

The 30+ burning questions:

1. What is it to truly listen – how can forgiveness help us see and live common ground?
2. Do I still have a direction, even without a passion?
3. What does it mean to be a man and what role do men have to play in the feminist movement?
4. How should we live in honour of the earth and the universe?
5. How do we bring the consciousness, vulnerability and sovereignty to being in groups that allow us to resist and transcend our old pattern of being in groups?
6. What do we need as a community to learn/unlearn to hear and be with the otherness of the other?
7. How can I, in an environment that is often unconscious and fearful, live everyday honouring and seeing the world as the miracle that it is?
8. In an unprecedented context for our and most other species, who or how or what are we to be and become?
9. How do I make space for myself to grow a calm space for focus on what benefits me without distraction?
10. How do we contribute without burning out? Finding authentic purpose and making a living from it?
11. How can I acknowledge partnership, aliveness, self respect, resilience and beauty in my life and create more?
12. What are boundaries, how do we set them and uphold them?
13. How to remember to honour a person in death in face of unresolved feelings and trauma and in the face of other's drama?
14. How can we as a community address the powerful disenfranchisement of the soul self that occurs as a result of child abuse?
15. How do we, as a species, stop doing what we've always done?
16. How do we as a society become comfortable with death and resolve our issues with death?
17. What even is faith? For others, for myself?
18. How can I trust myself to take care of myself and make myself available/vulnerable/ready to be supported/loved by my friends/community?
19. How do I earn a livelihood that gives me and others energy whilst feeding and supporting my family?
20. How do we create 'healing' spaces for reconciliation?
21. If there is a crisis in meaning and purpose it means many of us are living without it. How do we live without it? Why is meaning so important? What is it that we have to face if we don't use meaning as a defence?
22. How do I get generosity/charity/giving into my job & day to day? What is it? What does it look like?
23. What barriers do we have to let go of/ what do we have to do in ourselves/society to live in a fully conscious, connected way, in tune with life purpose and nature?
24. What is the capacity of the human heart? What stops us from being generous? What moves inside us when we pass a homeless person on the street - and why do we not follow that instinct of care?
25. What is my burning question?
26. Who are we truly (part of family, society, part of humanity, part of earth...)?
27. How do we feel safe? Anchored to a larger community with a strong/unwavering sense of belonging?
28. Where does anxiety come from? Where does your anxiety come from?
29. What is The Weekly Service?
30. Will we be able to use love, trust, time as currency rather than paper?
32. How can I be both broken & whole, in community?

Figure 33: 30+ burning questions

These questions emerged from the first Tune-in. Around 35 people attended. A mixture of members and non-members attended.

Through this gentle process, the Tune-in didn't reveal opinions as such, but rather common points of resonance and tonalities of feeling that might offer pathways for further exploration. This also contributed to a greater sense of ownership amongst those who participated and strengthened the feeling of collaboration. At one Tune-in, a prominent theme centred around how we might collectively move forward together, given the many challenges that the world is facing. In another Tune-in many voiced their questions surrounding what it means to be human in these times.

The emergent themes from the Tune-in were collected and a call-out for stories was made via social media and the monthly newsletter. As a member group we used members retreats to vote and create a short-list of the stories, which we work-shopped into a program. This opened up discussion surrounding the kinds of stories that were appropriate to weaving a 'new story'. On one occasion in a workshop that I ran with Caro, we worked in small groups to prepare a program. One group structured the season into three phases: receptive, reflective, and expansive (see *Figure 34*) which created a narrative arc to the season. Within this workshop we also discussed why one person might be selected over another, or how we might deal with particularly heavy themes across a season. A set of principles were co-created to guide the programming process. Over time, open programming became an important process for enabling the member group in particular, to begin to take responsibility and ownership over how stories might affect others and how they contributed to shaping a 'new story' of transition. This 'new story' was never defined concretely, rather it was through open programming that we negotiated what we meant by that. Through ongoing discussion we developed our capacity to collaborate with each other.

One way in which open programming emerged as both a limitation and a strength, was that we largely invited participation within our known networks. Storytellers were frequently recruited from within a mesh-work of existing relations, where people stepped into the role of curator in order to support someone they knew. This often created a special kind of chemistry within Services, whereby an audience felt affected not only by the storyteller, but could also witness the mutual regard that lay between storyteller and curator. However, this relational approach to programming also limited the diversity of experiences that were shared, to the known networks of those involved; who were mostly politically progressive, educated and white. While there were definitely exceptions to the rule – where serendipitous connections provided a platform for a broader range of experiences in terms of



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| <p>SEPT 2 Friendships need holding Ryan Hubbard & Robin Parkin</p> | <p>SEPT 9 Poster girl for neuroplasticity Haley Peckham</p> | <p>SEPT 16 Catalysing a creative rebellion Abe Nouk</p> | <p>SEPT 23 Finding stillness in action Bobbi Allan</p> |
| <p>SEPT 30 Inner and outer wars Laura Grant</p> | <p>OCT 7 On awe and the sacred Todd Gillen</p> | <p>OCT 14 Money for the Whole</p> | <p>OCT 21 Culture in conversation Warren Roberts & Anton Rivette</p> |
| <p>OCT 28 Indigenous spirituality & Christian faith Sherry Balcombe</p> | <p>NOV 4 On parenting</p> | <p>NOV 11 The missing voice Joni & Richard</p> | <p>NOV 18 On death & uncertainty Jess Innes-Irons</p> |
| <p>NOV 25 Ancient skills for a modern world Josh McLean</p> | <p>DEC 2 On elders</p> | <p>Themes we're exploring this season</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being in community ● Death / grief ● Purpose & contribution ● Nature & becoming human | |

Figure 35: Weekly Service Spring Program 2017

cultural background, age and belief – the very personal way in which we tended to invite people to be part of a Service, limited who could come along and share. The consequence of this was that less plural views were shared and discussed.

As an act of alignment, open programming (which included the Tune-in, voting and programming stories & curators) invited people into shaping and taking responsibility for what stories and themes were prioritised and explored, and how these might be framed and positioned as potential pathways for transition. Through a deeper engagement with the co-creation of the content, we sought to collectively own and take responsibility for how we were pursuing, exploring and contextualising transition. However, through our invitational approach we also were restricted by who we knew and therefore the outlooks and perspectives that were shared were at times, representative of a relatively homogeneous group.

5.3.4 Invitation through rhythm

The fourth tactic the core team developed was to nest all the invitations within a yearly rhythm (see *Figure 36*). The yearly rhythm can be understood as a cycle of invitations to attend the seasons of the Service across Autumn and Spring, and to participate in open programming, reflective periods, and rest. To design the rhythm, Henry and I tossed ideas back and forth as I sketched the calendar on a notepad. The symmetry felt important, as did the periods of reflection and open programming which emerged as ideal bookends to the seasons. We also designed in rest periods, which was part of our ongoing attempt to discover a more sustainable rhythm. The circular diagram communicated a sense of cyclical over linear time, in a way that suggested that the rhythm would be repeated. While the yearly rhythm was ignored at times when we were busy – highlighting that our patterns and culture of working was resistant to periods of ‘rest’ if the situation demanded it – it seemed to provide a sense of predictability.

By nesting the Service and the member’s rhythms within a yearly cycle, we attempted to create scales of meaning connected to the seasons and a cyclical notion of time, that we could collectively enact together. The yearly rhythm also sought to acknowledge some of the other rhythms that had emerged from within The Weekly Service member group. A women’s circle was set up in early 2017. The women’s circle met monthly, following a circle of trust process (Palmer 2014), whereby members of the circle are invited to check-in and speak about matters that are close to their heart. A monthly concert also arose, centred around the idea that all people can sing, dance, share stories and

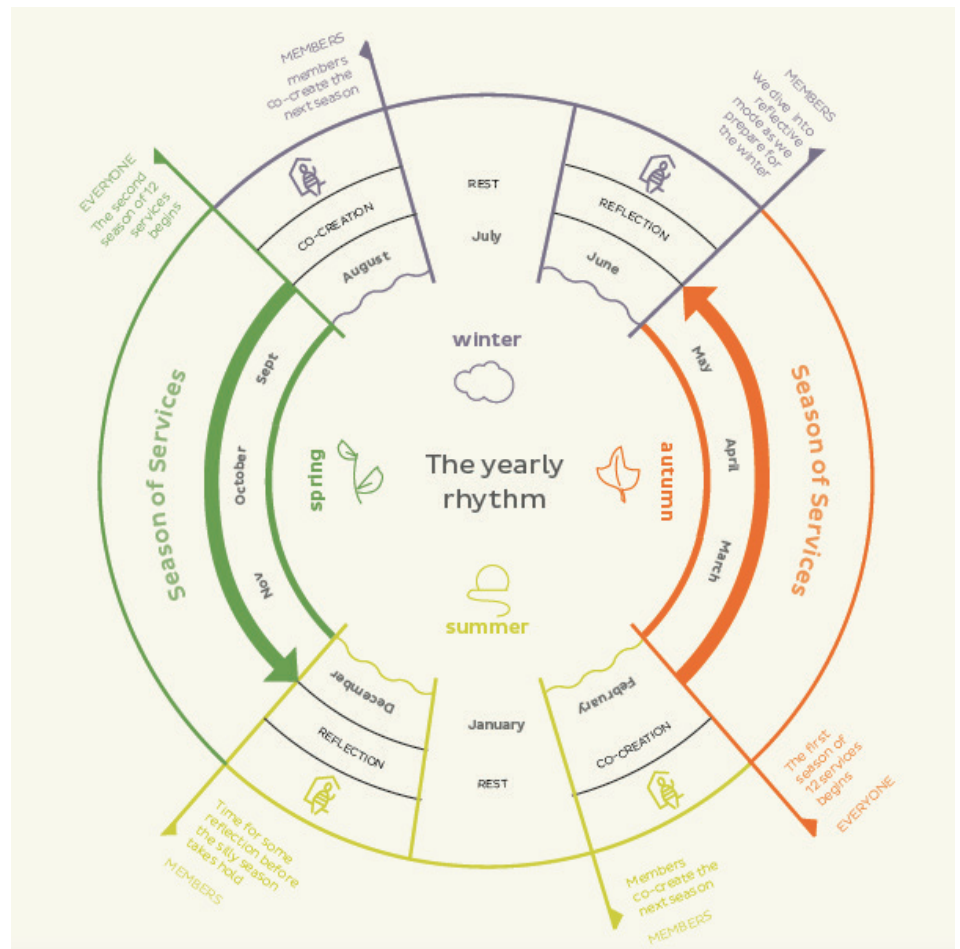


Figure 36: The yearly rhythm

poetry. The following year a men’s circle emerged and met fortnightly. More activities were added to the yearly rhythm as it evolved over time. As an act of alignment, the yearly rhythm was an important tactic that provided a way of signalling and structuring how we travelled together as a community throughout different times of the year.

Here I have outlined four invitational approaches that proved successful as tactics to begin to align people towards the co-production of the Service. The roles created a structure for people to dip their toe in and try their hand at co-production. The visual score provided a template for further improvisations on the part of curators. The process of open programming deepened the capacity to sense into what was emerging and enabled shared responsibility for crafting the content. And the yearly rhythm nested these invitations into a cycle, that provided a sense of continuity. The invitations that we shaped as a core team, sought to enable opportunities for people to travel alongside each other – in ways that might enable a shared recognition of the ups and downs of change. This recognises how when we transition towards other ways of being-knowing-&-doing we need practices that enable us

to explore possibilities with others. In the case of the Weekly Service these practices were concerned with curating, storytelling, open programming and shaping the culture of an emergent community. More broadly, these invitations appeared to provide enough structure to support collaboration while remaining flexible and open enough to enable different levels of contribution and further improvisations. To develop the notion of invitation a little further, I turn now to a discussion of its relational dimensions.

5.4 Towards an invitational stance

In the final section of this chapter, I consider the ways in which the practice of invitation continuously revealed how the core team was situated within a mesh-work of relations. Here I use the word stance to indicate that an invitation is not separate from the person who invites. To return to the door analogy, we can suggest that doors are not usually wide open, awaiting entry. People regularly stand in them to greet their guests. This helps us to recognise how invitations are political (Lindström and Ståhl 2016) – as they are always extended by someone who is never value-neutral and always uniquely positioned in relation to others. Through intimate exchanges at the Service, people frequently revealed aspects of themselves that might ordinarily remain hidden from view. This cultivated connections between people in relatively short periods of time. The willingness of others to accept invitations, arose out of this intimacy. Our relations were therefore ongoingly structured through intimacy, and the invitations that were extended by the core team, existed within this field of relationality.

To situate this approach in conversation with design literature, I draw from Akama and Yee's (2016) exploration of the philosophy of Thomas Kasulis (2002), who is a scholar of Asian Philosophy. Kasulis proposes that different world-views either foreground integrity or intimacy, which shapes ways of being-knowing-&-doing. Integrity and intimacy are orientations that 'describe recursive cultural patterns that determine different ways of relating' (Akama and Yee 2016, 4). Akama and Yee suggest that an intimacy orientation in design, tends to favour interdependence that 'seeks to discover the overlaps that are already there' (5). This assertion, stems from Kasulis' (2002) view that intimate relations are more than connections that one makes, rather they are actually 'part of what we are or have become' (37). But in order to become intimate with others we 'must choose to make ourselves available to intimate relations' (31).

Akama and Yee (2016) note how an intimacy orientation differs from a Eurocentric model of design, which tends to foreground *integrity* and the rights of autonomous individuals where:

...knowledge is rhetorically and persuasively presented in rational, impersonal, and publicly contestable ways. Design knowledge, process and methods are imagined as universal so it can move easily between places and people, and this explains why various versions of the Double Diamond and Stanford d-school models are commonly used. (5)

We can see how much design practice is influenced by this thinking (including my own), especially in relation to design's drive towards innovation, where design methods are replicated and used in contexts that ignore the cultural practices and nuanced ways of relating that will always shape what gets made. Increasingly, researchers are seeking to more strongly write themselves into their design research (Agid 2016, Akama & Prendiville 2013, Clarke et al. 2016, Light 2018) highlighting how designing always takes place in situated and uniquely relational ways that cannot be reduced to a framework or a set of principles.

As a designer undergoing transition, I notice how I am often trying to move towards an intimacy orientation. On the one hand I'm bound by an integrity orientation through my own training and upbringing, while at the same time I'm able to recognise the relational contexts in which I work, which demands a different kind of orientation. I can't deny that I find the intimacy perspective frustrating and frightening. It requires so much patience, to respectfully work with and alongside others. Perhaps I'm not seeking to replace an integrity orientation with an intimacy orientation, but to find ways to move between the two, and be cognisant of both.
(August 2019)

Through an integrity lens, we could view the invitational tactics that I have outlined here as a series of tried and tested methods that could easily be applied elsewhere. However, by foregrounding intimacy it becomes apparent that the invitations that were extended by the core team, were deeply related to the particular ways of relating that had accrued over time and how we were positioned within the community. Through an intimacy lens, adopting an invitational stance is one way in which we can honor and respect relationships. It conveys that others are a part of who we are becoming and also central to what we are making together. This means accepting that we cannot predict or control how people choose to take an invite forward. Rather, we can join with others as they improvise. Additionally, an invitational stance also means always accepting that people might refuse an invite, where there are no consequences for those that do not accept.

It's important to note that not everyone within The Weekly Service held the same power when it came to inviting. Who was able to invite and what was on the table for discussion was largely framed by the core team across the duration of this research. In their own collaborative PD practice, Lindström and Ståhl (2016) highlight how invitations can problematically frame issues, before people are involved in their co-articulation. They suggest that 'inventive co-articulations of issues primarily take place when there is friction between the invitation and the response to it' (195). Lindström and Ståhl's work points to the politics of invitation, that importantly acknowledges 'what may be inventive for those doing the inviting may not be inventive for those responding and vice versa' (196). In other words, who gets to invite and on what basis, shapes what we might come to know, be and do together.

Building on Lindström and Ståhl's work, I suggest that the relational dimensions of invitation can help us to recognise how processes of designing are always situated and dependent on others to accept or rework the invitations that have been extended. As our work progressed, I grew aware that I held power in my capacity to initiate things through invitation, something which wasn't as apparent to me in the early phases of the research. As an embedded design researcher and a director, I tended to act swiftly to extend invitations. My capacity to invite was therefore intertwined with my position in the group. In contrast, members would often ask permission from the core team to extend an invite. While members may have had less power to extend invites, they also possessed the power to refuse or ignore the invites of the core team. It was therefore through the practice of invitation, that I was constantly reminded of the way in which we (as a community) were relationally bound to one another in our shared attempts to keep the Service going. In *Part 4* of this dissertation I will discuss how the practice of invitation became more political as the member group grew increasingly involved in co-production.

5.5 In summary

To summarise, within this chapter I suggested that the notion of a doorway is a helpful analogy to describe how invitations need a frame and a sense of spaciousness in order to work well. This helps us to recognise how invitations might be accepted and taken forward by others, beyond what we might have originally conceived. I outlined four invitational tactics that worked relatively well in the early stages of co-producing the Service. However, I also recognised how the willingness of others to get involved arose out of the intimacy that had accrued. In this regard, Kasulis' integrity / intimacy framework, helped

me to better understand how intimacy was foregrounded through the work of The Weekly Service.

I suggested that an invitational stance is important to communal infrastructuring. Within The Weekly Service this stance was built upon a willingness to share intimacy and nurture relationships into the future. I was able to incorporate an invitational stance into my design practice, and shift my thinking about design, from an emphasis on methods to ways of *being* with others. Additionally, I argued that within The Weekly Service invitations were always extended by people who were already situated within relational mesh-works. In other words, invitations are both limited and made possible by existing relations. They are therefore always concerned with power to some degree, but also with what we perceive to be possible within the relational mesh-works that we inhabit.

Finally, I found that my visual skills could be leveraged to craft doorways, that took the form of visual banners, events, processes and rhythms. In this environment, it appeared that my visual communication design skills were concerned with designing *for* improvisation. In other words, I understood that visual communication design could play an important role in collaborative contexts where improvisation was desired. Furthermore, I discovered that it was by first working visually with the analogy of the doorway, that I was able to apply my insights to other contexts and applications. In this way, my visual skills were the means through which I expanded my design practice.

Chapter 6 – Atmospheres

In this chapter I turn to atmospheres, and build on insights from the previous chapter surrounding how people can be brought together in transitional times, towards the emergence of shared practices. When we get together and share our lived experiences with others, we share more than just words, we share and create atmospheres. We know atmospheres to be important, primarily because we feel them to be, but pinpointing where and how they arise or how we might influence them is no easy task (Böhme 2013). Atmospheres, like infrastructures, exist between things. They emerge through relationships. Atmosphere is ‘a connective factor, linking people, places and things together in often unpredictable ways’ (Bille et al. 2014, 33). Atmospheres are not static, they emerge ongoingly in everyday life (Sumartojo and Pink 2019), and consequently, they are part of the way in which our experiences of the world are configured in the present.

After Abe finishes sharing his story, Sylvia invites us to reflect in small groups or pairs surrounding what Abe’s story provoked in us and what role gratitude plays in our lives. For 8 mins we descend into conversation. The noise of 30 plus people speaking simultaneously fills the amphitheatre. The energy of conversation is felt immediately. It pulses through the room. I share with the man beside me, the nature of our conversation is lost in my notes, but a mutual reverie for Abe’s words is shared. It’s hard to talk over the noise in the room, so we lean in closer to hear each other.

When we gather back in as a group we’re invited to share our thoughts. A long pause falls over the audience. A lone courageous voice speaks first, offering thanks. Another person reflects on how he now feels he better understands and empathises with some of the people he works with. There is less audience participation than usual. People seem shy or less able to articulate how they feel. A few more voices make explicit the sense of reverence that has filled the room.

To close the Service a song is sung. Unexpectedly, Abe begins to cry, followed by Sylvia and other members of the audience. Singing together seems to allow for a fuller embodiment of the feelings that were present before, but which now swim around the room, heightened by the rise and fall of voices. My own voice chokes up, and I have to mumble the words rather than sing them. Loss seems to become present in a new way as the song carries feeling around the room. (September 2017)

Abe’s story, silences, visible tears, the rise and fall of voices – these elements are difficult to categorise, but they mingle together in my experience and seem to infuse the room with an atmosphere that I sense to be shared with others. This is the power of atmospheres. They can create shared experiences that ripple out in unexpected ways. Atmospheres often enfold affect, emotion and sensation together (Edensor 2012). According to Human Geographer Angharad Closs

Figure 37: Abe's Service



Figure 38: A celebratory moment
My Dad turned to me after the Service
and said that he had rediscovered that
he enjoyed writing poetry!



Figure 39: Ringing bells to signal the
beginning of the Service



Figure 40: Small group conversation



Figure 42: Sylvia as curator (left) and Abe as storyteller (right)



Figure 41: Live piano played to accompany
the group singing

Stephens (2015), atmospheres play a role in bringing collectives into being. She writes that ‘the concept of atmospheres leads us to think about how collectives come together and disperse’ as well as those ‘surges of emotion or passion and their contagious qualities’ (100-101). Atmospheres have a potency which can draw people, spaces, and technologies together, deepening the capacity for intimacy and the potential for future collaboration.

6.1 The feeling in the room

The atmosphere of The Weekly Service was frequently referred to as ‘a feeling in the room’. For example, upon discovering The Weekly Service one attendee said:

I can't remember how I learned about, or what led me to attend the small secular gathering at Nest Co-working Space in Thornbury. But I do remember walking out thinking, I just found the thing I didn't even know I was looking for. Over time I came to understand that this "thing" was a space where I could be among people who were asking similar questions to me—questions about why we live the way we do, where we've come from and who we want to be. I immediately liked the feeling in the room; thoughtful, easy and open, and everyone seemed so willing to connect with one another. No weird, stumbling, should-I-talk-to-this-person-or-not vibes. This space was exactly what it should be: spacious.'

For others, there was a sense of the kinds of qualities that constituted a Weekly Service atmosphere, as Henry reflects:

I've always found with The Weekly Service that it was successful when that space is kind and forgiving. If it is a bit judgey or intellectual, it creates a divide, where people feel inferior to the person at the front.'

Over time, my work with the Weekly Service necessitated that I further acknowledge this changeable feeling in the room and the embodied and performative aspects of the transition that was underway in my practice. As I began to curate, I noticed how I attended closely to the conditions that might enable generative dialogue, and then the in-the-moment-adjustments that I made to my plans, that were responsive to what was arising during a Service. Sometimes these in-the-moment adjustments occurred when I was supporting new curators:

The air is thick and full of feeling. Josh has made us laugh, he's poked fun at his hair-brained ideas, that began while ice-fishing in Lapland – a place so quiet that you can hear the sound of a snow flake when it comes to rest on your shoulder. He asks us what crafts lie within our ancestry and where we might direct our artistic energy. A person with Russian ancestry talks about their desire to make sauerkraut. Giggles. A lump in my throat makes

me aware that my longing to be an artist threatens another take-over, that might ruin my chances of finishing this PhD. Swallowing hard, I take in the beauty around me. People seem to be touched by the process. There is a sense of ritual. Suddenly, I can feel that we are moving towards a close, and there's a window to act. I climb down from my position at the back of the amphitheater, towards Adrian who is curating on the day. I say quietly, but assertively, I think there's quite a bit of emotion in the room and suggest we do a quick pop-corn around, of words. He takes in my suggestion, looks unsure at first, and then directs the group towards articulating a feeling. Pop - pop - pop - crackle. Single words are uttered forth, painting the room full. Painting it with experience. One person breaks the pattern with an involuntary rush of enthusiasm 'can I break the rules? ...how do we DO MORE OF THIS?' She seems to speak for all of us. (December 2017)

Facilitation is increasingly becoming a core competency of designers (Akama and Ivanka 2010, Manzini 2015a, Wahl and Baxter 2008). As Akama (2014) notes, facilitation entails reading the atmosphere in a room, in ways that are intuitive and embodied. In this way, 'facilitation, like designing, is an iterative process, learning from past engagements and understandings, adjusting and re-adjusting what one does in relation to others' (179). The idea that warmth was crucial to curating the Service, occurred after reflecting on key atmospheric moments, such as the one recounted below. As this fragment of experience indicates, I became more acutely aware of the importance of a warm atmosphere through its absence.

The Service has finished and I'm trying to round up the masses to move to the park. Hayden offers to buy some food – great. It's a stressful exercise going against the flow of energy. People are immersed in conversation. Some are ready to leave. I'm the only one who knows where the park is. Everyone is asking me questions. I finally manage to lead a small group across to the park. Leaving the noise of Nest is a relief. But the park isn't intimate. It's open and very obviously a public space.

Hayden arrives with the food. Other people trickle in. We're sitting in a circle. I know I'm supposed to say something, but I can't. I know I'm supposed to warm up the space and ceremoniously bring us together – but I'm frozen. 'It's just a picnic' I think, 'would it be weird if I address the group?' Fiona says invitingly 'so this is the first picnic isn't it Kirst?' I speak about the intention but it sounds ridiculous. I feel cynical and protective. Not at all open. I'm too attuned to where the group is at – how they're feeling. I mention Andy's project and ask him to explain it. He's not as warm as he usually is – I assume it's because I haven't warmed the space up. Did I fill it with my fear and nervousness? We splinter off into smaller conversations. There's more awkwardness. Tim arrives late and sits on his own – we invite him into our conversation. The picnic fails to produce the kind of atmosphere that penetrates TWS. (March 2017)

Warmth is key to cultivating a sense of community and connection between people. Most cultures have a long history of practices that acknowledge the importance of heat in communal life. Social rituals often involve the exchange of heat through tea, coffee and food. Interestingly, psychology research has shown that the feeling of physical warmth is closely connected to social warmth (Inagaki & Human 2019, Williams & Bargh 2008). Studies demonstrate how people often use practices such as bathing or having longer showers to compensate for a lack of social warmth in their lives (Bargh and Shalev 2012). In one study of how intimacy is performed in Japanese homes, the Social Anthropologist Inge Daniels (2015) looked at how intimacy was created through bathing, co-sleeping and eating practices. Here warmth is felt directly through digestion, absorption of heated liquids and contact with others. Within urban modern life, social warmth is often accessed through digital platforms. However due to the close sensory connection between physical and social warmth, there will always be the need to meet in person and experience being in the same room together.

Warmth also has a history of being important to many religious communities. Christians have traditionally embraced the idea of 'agape love' through the embodiment of Jesus. Agape love is a way of 'being attuned to what matters' and to 'a joyful overflowing care for every human being' (Dreyfus and Kelly 2011, 112). Likewise within Buddhist practice, it is said that the full realisation of groundlessness cannot occur if there is no warmth (Valera et al. 1993). As Buddhist Monk Suryacitta (2015) states, 'mindfulness is like the sun – it melts and heals what it shines upon' (17). Here warmth is the atmosphere in which awareness grows and realisations can occur. The Weekly Service attempted to embrace these traditions, without drawing on a specific framework of ethical or religious thought. While the weight of tradition can be restrictive, it also lends authority to particular atmospheres and practices. Being unhinged from a formal doctrine or text, meant that the manner in which we related and gathered at The Weekly Service became important. In other words, warmth provided evidence of shared values. It became a key ingredient – it was embedded in how we related. In this way, the presence of a warm atmosphere became associated (in my mind and others) with The Weekly Service and vice versa.

In addition, I also suggest that a warm atmosphere was desired by those who attended The Weekly Service because of the larger forces at work as a result of climate change, which can render people cold, unable to feel and connect. As tides rise higher, the anxieties of the modern age

can compound, leaving little room for hope for what might emerge. The term atmosphere, is of course meteorological in origin, and is used to describe the thin layer of air which protects life on Earth. It was in the 18th century that it came to mean a mood that is ‘in the air’ (Böhme 2013). Since that time a raft of ‘affective and sensory engineers’ (Edensor and Sumartojo 2015) have sought to talk about atmosphere as something that can be both felt and staged. However, as the Anthropologist Mikkel Bille and his colleagues (2015) write, focusing on atmospheres means acknowledging that the meteorological and spatial experience of affect and materiality ‘should most often not be seen as distinct, but rather as feeding on each other’ (36). By acknowledging that the physical and affective dimensions of atmospheres have never been separate (Ingold 2012, McCormack 2008, Sloterdijk 2005) we can recognise that the current ecological crisis is both an unsettling of the larger forces of air, wind, and water currents and our psycho-social selves (Ballard et al. 2019, Guattari 2000).



Coming together as a group at The Weekly Service, was a process of tuning into something that was hard to name, and continuously shifting in tone and texture. The Anthropologist, Kathleen Stewart (2010) writes, that atmospheric attunement is like a sixth sense, ‘it turns a potentiality into a threshold to the real’ (4). Stewart’s description of a sixth sense seems to capture the elusive way in which atmospheres entice our involvement and infuse our lives, sometimes abruptly. In the following section I discuss the preparatory practices that I and others engaged in to warm up the atmosphere of the Service. It’s important to note that in this context, atmosphere cannot be designed as such. Rather, in their book titled, ‘*Atmospheres and the Experiential World: Theory and Methods*’ (2019), Human Geographer Shanti Sumartojo and Anthropologist Sarah Pink, suggest that designers can only ever ‘make the things, processes or environments that are a part of how atmospheres configure in our experience’ (120).



6.2 *Infrastructuring alignment through warming-up practices*

As discussed previously, infrastructuring is commonly understood within PD as a process of aligning actors towards emergent practices. Here I highlight how alignment between people can occur through the cultivation of atmospheres that deliberately attempt to impart ways of being. Warm-up activities are commonly used in design workshops to influence how people relate. Most of the time this involves short activities that ‘break the ice’, enabling people to interact and relate more freely with one another. Collaborative Designer Mette Eriksen (2012) refers to a warm-up as ‘mainly about leaving the everyday and getting in the mood’ (313) for collaborative design. Within The Weekly Service, the warm-up practices were designed to foster a generative



Figure 43: Warm touches

space for dialogue. In atmospheric terms, these practices could also be considered as ‘forms of address’ that invite attunement (Sumartojo and Pink 2019, 121).

In the following section I discuss the warming-up practices in relation to the senses of touch, sight and sound. While the senses are separated out below I acknowledge that they cannot be isolated, rather more accurately we can say that we dwell in multi-sensory worlds (Pink 2015).

6.2.1 *‘A warm space’ – touch*

Bodily warmth was created at the Service through the material and spatial affordances of the chosen venue and the offering of food, hot tea and coffee. The primary venue where the Service was held was relatively small. This meant that people needed to negotiate others’ bodies in close proximity. Around 40 people could sit or stand comfortably, but when the Service was busy, people would have to press up against others in order to fit. It wasn’t apparent that this was something that people liked, until we proposed to move to another venue. The proposed space was much larger, and in addition to it being an actual Church (something which a number of people resisted) the building was described as ‘cold, lacking in warmth and intimacy’ (See *Figure 45*). As people introduced themselves to relative strangers, they clutched steaming hot mugs. Conversation was interspersed with hugs between those who were acquainted. These aspects provided sensory heat to the gatherings that cultivated a sense of intimacy and a warm space.



6.2.1 *‘Seeing care used properly’ – sight*

Visual warmth was created at the Service through the use of candles, lamps and flowers to help set a tone of intimacy. This resembles practices used in Danish homes to create a sense of cosiness, safety and security – captured in the word ‘hygge’ (Bille 2015). Hygge is constituted through soft or warm lighting that can ‘impart a certain sense of place that influences the way people behave and feel’ (ibid, 56). It is also cultivated through the kind of sociality that people engage in, where a lightness is expected and performed. This includes not taking over the conversation and refraining from heavy topics that might dampen the mood (Linnet 2011). In contrast, elaborate flower and plant arrangements at The Weekly Service appeared to support the difficult and darker emotions that were expressed and shared. In some ways, these arrangements are better reflected through mourning practices. Flowers were arranged to greet people on arrival. Sometimes quite elaborate arrangements of plants were clustered around the speaker’s chairs.



Figure 44: Visual warmth

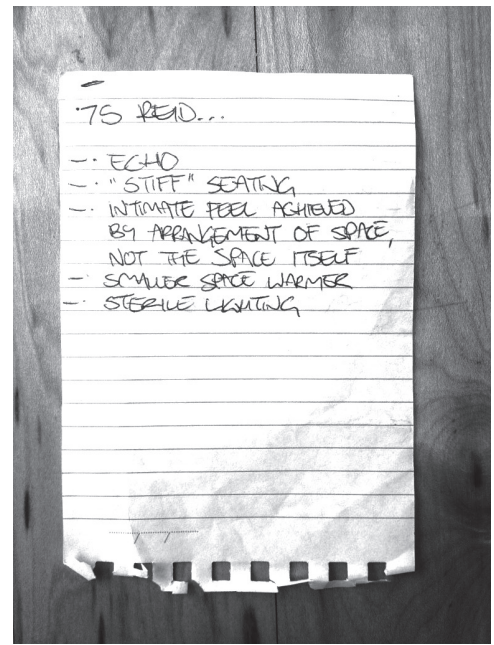
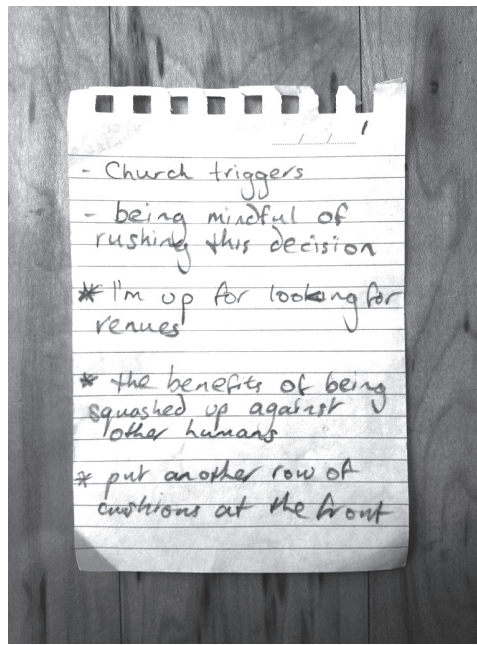
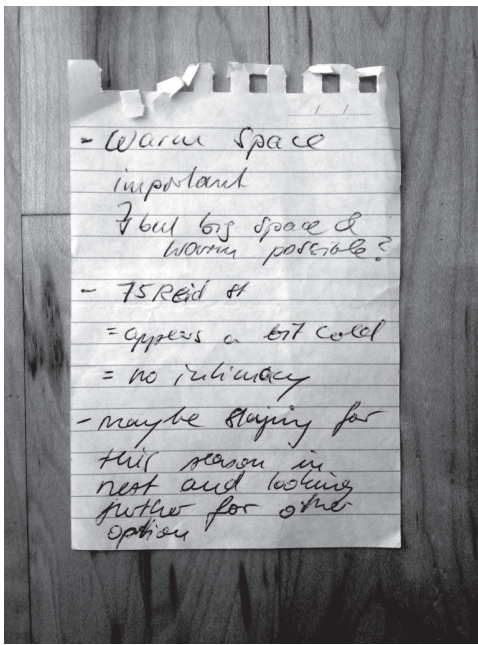


Figure 45: Feedback about the proposed Church venue



Figure 46: Notes of sensory warmth



These practices were described by one member as ‘seeing care used properly’. Care was conveyed and communicated at the Service via small acts that fostered the flourishing of relations (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017). More broadly I suggest that these many small acts contributed to the cultivation of an ‘infrastructure of care’. I discuss this more in *Chapter 7*, and draw on how care is understood as an affective and ethical practice by Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), who’s work is situated at the intersection of feminist thought, care ethics and Science and Technology Studies.

6.2.3 ‘Carrying feeling around the room’ – sound



Figure 47: Listening to music

Warmth was generated through moments of meditative silence, listening to music, poetry and heart-warming stories. Such stories, as already highlighted, were commonly intimate tales. Across the first year of my involvement, I heard people tell stories of their desire for forgiveness, their difficulties with their masculinity, the tightness in their stomach at the realisation that ‘mum is drunk again’. These expressions of vulnerability at the Service were both generative of, and dependent upon, warmth. Audiences were frequently praised for being ‘warm’. This was often made explicit in hindsight, when audience members reciprocated with their own expressions of vulnerability, prompted by questions that invited reflection. Through carefully crafted questions, audiences were invited to join in conversation in small groups. The questions would often generate a sense of intimacy, before opening into a larger group discussion.

Other sound-based elements involved listening to music together and singing in unison at the end of the Service. Synchronicity in communal singing involves sharing the inhale of breath, pitch and timing, and through the regulation of people’s physiological rhythms. The synchronisation of singing together is said to facilitate cohesion in large groups, as people connect with and feel the presence of others they may not know personally (Pearce et al. 2015). Singing may have evolved as a mechanism for social bonding, and is responsible for the release of neuropeptides which are reported to lift one’s mood (ibid). While at first I found the group sing-a-long a little awkward, I was also surprised by the joyful feeling that would flood my body as I sang. It was often a moment wherein the feelings that had built up during the Service were carried around the room.

6.3 *The generativity of warming-up practices*

Following on from these warming up activities, audiences were invited into a group dialogue centred around the story/theme of the day. Here dialogue is much more than verbal exchange (Bohm 1996), as design researcher and convener of Slow Research Lab, Caroline Strauss (2016), states:

...[dialogue] is a dynamic third space of engagement, a conscious field of potentiality within which a multiplicity of meanings may be generated and new horizons become visible. (16)

On one occasion Cam suggested that at times the group dialogue at The Weekly Service felt like '*an organism coming to know itself*'. To use a music analogy once more, Barber (2007) suggests that in ensemble, work players can 'arrive at a kind of unanimity, an ability to function not as a collection of individuals but as something approaching an organism' (33). This is resonant with the idea that at deeper levels, dialogue can be seen as a deeply creative and improvisatory process (Bohm 1996) which privileges listening as much as speaking. In the generative space that dialogue creates, we can become open to being changed by what we are saying and hearing (du Plessis 2015).

At the Service, people seemed to be able to express themselves more honestly. Conversations sometimes took on a confessional tone, that was both surprising, enlivening and revealing. For philosopher Marina Garcés (2012), honesty is not a smooth process but rather a violent movement that breaks our immunity and neutralisation. It unsettles the roles people play as 'consumers, spectators or specialists' (5). Garcés notes how honesty is like 'an ice-axe to the frozen sea within us' (ibid). Here she is not simply referring to 'us' as individuals but to the possibility of 'the field of an us' (ibid), the field in which we might discover what binds us or what we mutually yearn for. On occasion however, this field of potentiality did not materialise. Even despite a curator's best efforts to turn an audience towards an exploratory dialogue of the theme/story at hand, people would sometimes direct questions back to the storyteller which would limit the capacity for audience members to involve themselves in the story. The set of warming-up practices sought to impart ways of being, whereby such a space of dialogue was more likely, however it was never assured that it would happen.

When I interviewed members about the impact the Service had on them, I was reminded again of the strong feelings that can be evoked. People seemed to actively embrace the atmospheres of the Service in

order to tune into their feelings. In doing so they contributed to co-constituting the atmospheres that emerged, highlighting how people's bodies are woven into the fabric of the world, 'at once both perceiver and producer' of the environments in which we dwell (Ingold 2011, 12). I jotted down a list of words as I spoke with one member:

*'I cried for the first time in a long time'
'TWS is a space for me to connect with my emotions and connect with others,
a space to learn those skills'
'a sense of warmth, and being cared for'
'in a sped up world people are moving fast and in their heads more than
in their bodies which is a recipe [for] moving away from connection and
emotion'.*

Similarly, when I talked with Caro I noted how moments within the Service moved her, and seemed to be generative of insight:

*'Opening up that box in me'
'Really unsettled when I closed my eyes'
'I've got that deep sadness in me'
'I don't really indulge in sadness'*

Henry, spoke also of the deeply affective experience of attending the Service:

*'There's so much sadness and grief that we don't connect to'
'Breaking down, fracturing, opening up'
'What that evokes within you, so so powerful'
'Stops you in your tracks'*

6.4 The trace of an evolving perception

To interrogate the atmospheres of the Service further, I drew while I sat in the audience as a participant. The abstract visual landscapes that emerged (Figure 48-50), were not an attempt to capture what was collectively known – rather I was attempting to register traces of what is usually rather elusive: the felt experience of being immersed in a changing atmosphere. In this sense, I understood this method as a means to 'generate understanding that is tacitly felt or articulated about a certain thing or experience' (Akama and Prendiville 2013, 34). Drawing here is figured as the 'trace of an evolving perception' rather than the 'geometric projection of an image' (Gatt and Ingold 2013, 130), which proceeded with hesitancy, in uncertainty and towards an unknown image; a characteristic that the Architect Juhani Pallasmaa (2009) maintains is central to the act of designing itself.

The pain and anger of never being recognised sits underneath the storyteller's words. It hurts to listen. It is hard to listen. There is so much pain that lies there unspoken. I try and stay present as I draw. Heavy lines and heavy thoughts. The weight of history lies on the page.

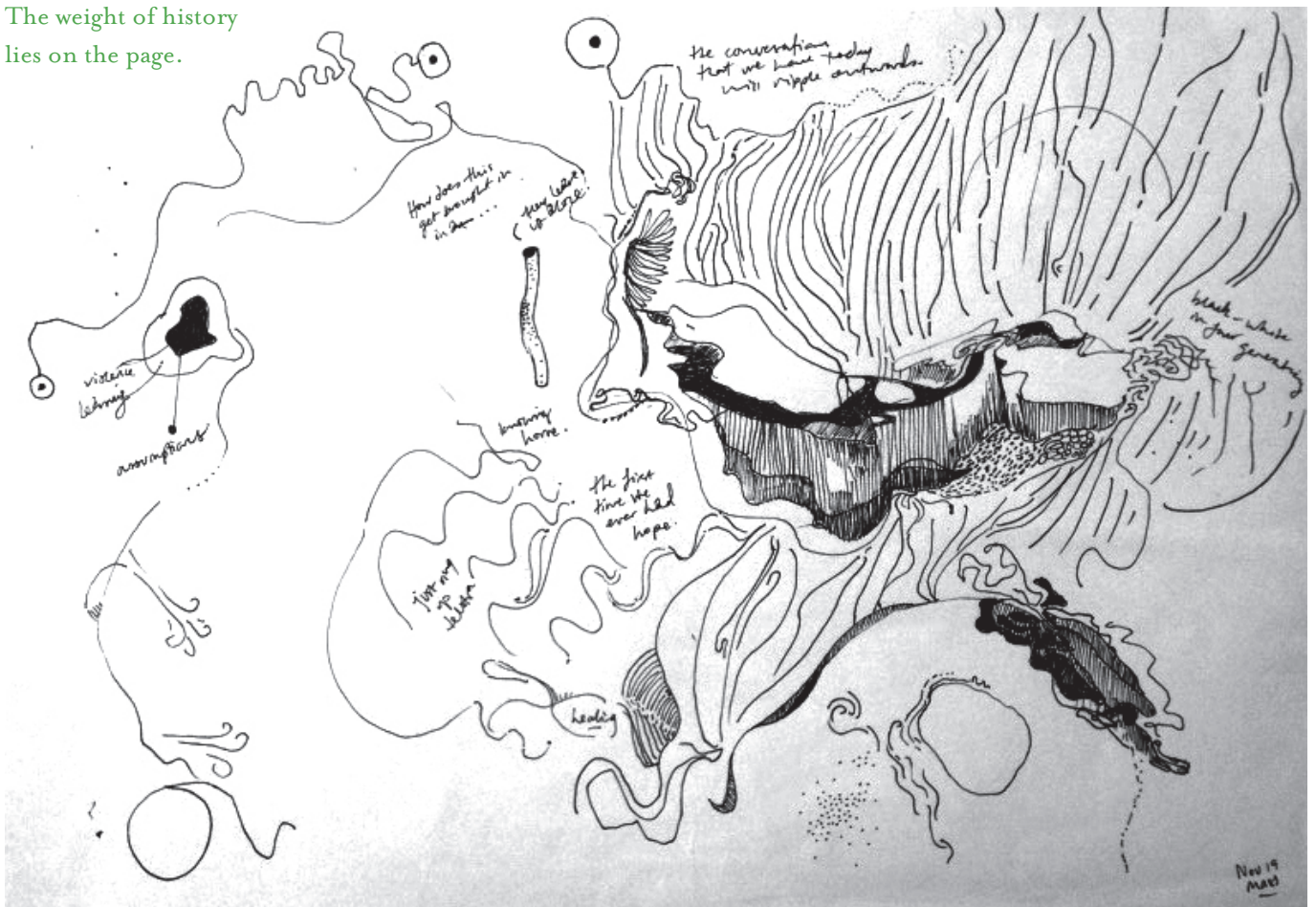


Figure 48: Atmospheric trace #1

Through line, shape and texture I traced the sensations, feelings and impressions that registered in my experience. These drawings are difficult to decipher. Here I was not so concerned with how my traces might be instrumentalised through design, rather I was primarily interested in what would emerge if I simply registered the shifts in intensity through mark-making.

Open. Warm. Yellow
 in feeling. Felt healing.
 Questions weren't answered
 directly by the storyteller.
 Through example, through
 story, he planted little seeds
 that became lines, which
 became a woven thing.



Together it formed
 a simple message –
 as different cultures we
 must be in relationship...
 if we're talking with each
 other then we'll know what
 to do next. The affect was
 pronounced.
 It washed over us.

Figure 49: Atmospheric trace #2

In reconnecting with a different style of mark-making, I was able to sense into the subtleties of my own experience and create traces that offered a way into interrogating atmospheres. It was through my own drawings at the Service that I came to notice how undulations in temperature and small moments of tension were always present within the events we ran. While drawing, I was particularly attuned to how the Service would rarely follow the path of intensity that I had laid out in the 'energy arc' of the Service template, as discussed in *Chapter 5*. There was certainly a kind of rhythm, or a build-up of atmospheric intensity in certain moments, but it did not neatly follow an orderly route.

Three people speaking about parenting. Something is not lining up for me. It feels forced, or it doesn't flow. There's a sense of judgement in the air. Are they worried that we'll judge them? At the end, one storyteller starts to make more connections between things.

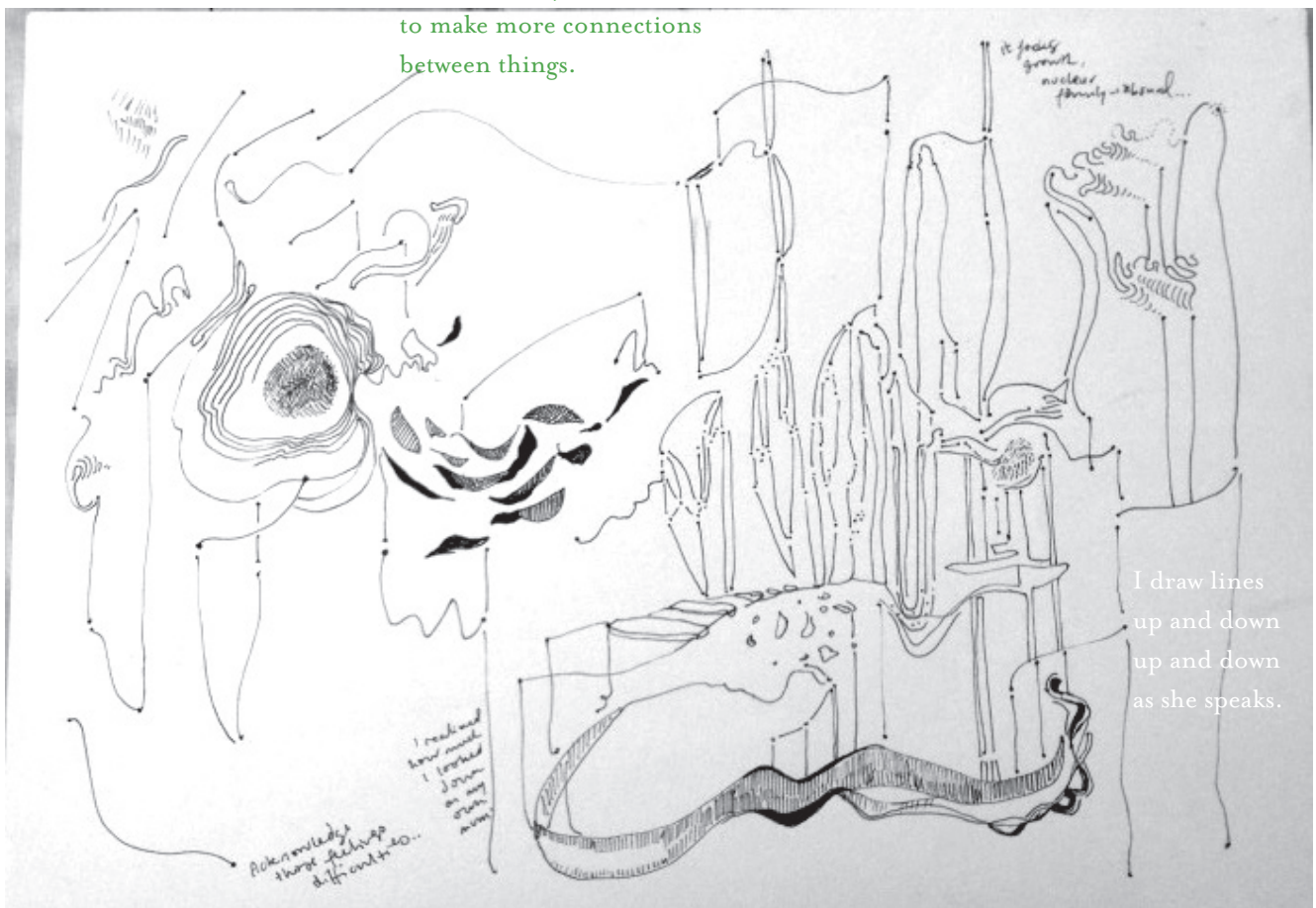


Figure 50: Atmospheric trace #3

6.5 The generativity of warmth for long-term relations

The atmospheres of the Service appeared to contribute to the forming of relations over time and to strengthening the intimacy orientation that I discussed in the previous chapter. As an act of alignment atmospheres can reveal how we share resonances of feeling with others. Atmospheres can create ripples through people's lives, affecting how they relate to the people, things and places in which they dwell. At member retreats, which were held over whole weekends, a warm atmosphere would often accrue and then continue to travel into the future within people's memories. The philosopher and social theorist Brian Massumi (2015) has described atmospheres as having a 'surplus of unacted out potential that is collectively felt' (57). This unacted out potential was often collectively felt following on from retreats, when members would often post reflections that would enable the group to continue the process of evoking and remembering the atmospheres that had accrued:

'I'm sick today. Feeling down after arduous hours at work. There's a huge line at the supermarket and the fluorescent lights are burning their way into the back of my eyeballs, causing my head to throb. I let my hair down to relieve the pressure. I still haven't washed it, and the knots that fall over my ears let free the scents of the weekend they had entangled: fresh pine, clean country rain, wood fire smoke, composting toilet musk, wet dog, pig, sheep, horse and goat, steam halos of innumerable cups of tea. A woman jostles in the line behind me and I turn, my nose brushing my hair and catching a subtle array of body odours: dance floor sweat, tree climbing sweat, nervous sweat, erotic sweat, and the perfumed remainder of hugs given in welcome, in commiseration, in compassion, in the throes of joy, for celebration, in farewell, and for no reason at all. In my checkout conveyerbelt reverie I reach absent-mindedly for a lock of hair and bring it to my nostrils, catching the most delicate wisps of tears brought on by wide open spaces, by a thousand small acts of care, by sublime piano, by frustration, by exhaustion, by innumerable sticky fragments, and by one long om. I lock eyes with the cashier, who is smiling patiently at me.' (August, 2017)

In being willing to be affected, and be altered by our experiences, as members we were often moved into states of feeling. As feminist scholar Sara Ahmed (2014) notes this is a contagious happening:

When we 'pick up' a feeling we can pick each other up. We are laughing together, we might face each other; our bodies shaking; we are shaken together, mirroring each other. When I stop laughing, I withdraw from this bodily intimacy. (17)



Figure 51: Member retreat August, 2017

Humanities scholar Ann Gibbs (2001), also captures this contagion well when she writes that '[b]odies can catch feelings as easily as catch fire...they resonate from one body to another, evoking tenderness, inciting shame, igniting rage, exciting fear' (np). Within the member community, this process appeared to be generative of small and large acts of generosity and care. People's gifts were shared in the form of stories, songs, poems, performances, food, and jokes that built over time, and created further cycles of generosity. Ingold (2015) describes this as a poetic cycle where:

...the living being, swimming in the atmospheric medium, alternately forges ahead along its lines of propulsion, and pulls up behind in its absorption of the medium. Inhaling the atmosphere as it breathes the air, on the outward breath of exhalation it weaves its lines of speech, song, story and handwriting into the fabric of the world. (88)

Member retreats were not simply about cultivating alignments between people, but also about investing in future relationships. With each gathering, the anticipated attunement of warmth seemed to work forwards in a continuous cycle, increasing the chance of it being enacted into the future. As Human Geographer Tim Edensor (2012) notes, 'atmospheric attunement...is frequently anticipated attunement' (III4). In other words, as members we would arrive to our gatherings anticipating warmth, which shaped what we came to experience.

Atmospheres also remind us that we cannot stand apart from the work of designing with others. Through my immersive involvement in the atmospheres that were co-produced, I recognised how my own beliefs and perceptions about myself and my place in the world, were radically caught up in the work. This was made particularly apparent during an honouring ceremony that was facilitated by a member, at the member's summer retreat in 2017.

When I sat down in front of everyone, Caro stood up to honor me. I've since forgotten what she said, and the majority of the words that were said after. But I haven't forgotten the feeling. I felt energised in a way that is difficult to describe. A pressure in my chest, rays of invisible warmth coming towards me. It is hard to write about this experience. I am not at ease with writing about love and this exercise opened the floodgates to it. Being up in front of the group I felt very vulnerable. The myth of separation, was momentarily shattered. I felt like I was intimately connected to and a part of the larger group. Later I reflected on how this was the most uncomfortable part. To believe that these people might

actually like me, were there supporting me, and it was only I who was holding onto limiting beliefs about my place in the world and my capacity to belong. (January 2017)

As this account indicates, my experience of warmth was not necessarily comfortable. It challenged me to let go of stale ideas, about myself and others. Transition had become a lived experience and it felt simultaneously uncomfortable and enlivening. As social practice artist Jeanne van Heeswijk (2016) states, participating in an emergent collective process requires:

...letting go of our own subjectivity or breaking something of ourselves to allow other things to connect to us. It is a collective learning process in which we all have to let go of some of our ideas and our ideals in order to understand what it is that WE need. (46)

The experience of being honoured, delivered new recognition surrounding my position in the group, along with a migraine that forced me to bed early. The interdependent nature of ‘me’ and the ‘group’ chafed against my notions of freedom and individuality. My embeddedness was a product of many sticky moments, that had woven me into relation with others over time. As such, I was situated, affecting others and being affected through what we were making together, where ‘...emotion and practice are intertwined in an ongoing working out of togetherness’ (Pratt 2012, 183).

6.6 The world-making potential of atmospheres

Being immersed in the atmospheres of the Service on a weekly basis, revealed my previously held assumptions surrounding how change happens through design. I grew increasingly attentive to the possibility that atmospheres were the means through which we might redesign ourselves by reorienting how we related within the realm of the present. Or to quote Participatory Design Thomas Binder (2016), I understood my attempts to influence atmospheres as a way to ‘enchant the realm of the present’ (275). When we are immersed in atmospheres that enchant us, we open to forces that might ordinarily seem inert from a modern / colonial world-view. As Bille and colleagues (2014) remind us, ‘atmospheres work as a way of encountering other cosmologies and repertoires beyond our common sense experience of the world’ (36). This might include messages from ancestors, the more-than-human realm, myths, synchronicities in experience, or spiritual intuitions which might orientate us towards feeling like we are cooperating with life as it moves through us (Mathews 2005).

Experiences of this kind are important to transitioning our world-view, as our capacity to be attentive to both form and formless entities opens into larger dimensions of the same reality (Bishop 2017). As Puig de la Bellacasa (2016) notes, the mostly invisible infrastructures of our ecological world ‘only lives and works well if we humans work and live with proper attention’ (8). In other words, how we attend in the present to those relatively invisible workings that support life, is paramount to our ability to carry on.

One particular moment at a member retreat in June 2018, helped me to draw out these inclinations further. Caro and I were down to run a workshop called ‘ritual marketplace’. The intention of the workshop was to codesign rituals as a member group for the coming Winter break. Rather than proceed with our plan, we devised an improvisatory performance that sought to reorient the group, helping us to reconnect with how we might enchant the realm of the present. The moment that I recount is fleeting and rather intangible, but it evidences the no less important in-the-moment aspects of collaborating with others, which shape what happens next.

It’s Sunday morning of our Winter Members Gathering, and our workshop will be the final activity of the weekend. We are exhausted and we’re not the only ones. The previous day’s activities were rich, but they have wrung me out emotionally and physically. Our group of 40+ members spent time engaged in reweaving our stories of the past. It brought up old wounds and shone light on the fractures that each of us lives with. Caro and I have a detailed workshop plan of what we’re going to do. The plan involves reflecting on the rituals we might like to make together as a community and an activity with clay to encourage ideation. But both of us sense that it’s not going to work. I am attuned to the tiredness and the lack of energy in the group. My desire is to bring us back into the present. Conversely, Caro had just witnessed someone remark on how comfortable everyone seems with each other and that ‘it takes a lot to get to this stage’. She is attuned to harvesting this feeling in a spontaneous way – rather than sitting in a circle to generate ideas that we might enact in the future.

We set up a ritual market place on the North East side of the house, exactly where the sun was at that moment. We have 10 minutes before the workshop begins. We improvise, speaking out aloud what we are doing. ‘I’m going to set up a stage.’ ‘We can announce that the market is open.’ We toss ideas around and add to each other’s suggestions. Caro makes a sign ‘Ritual, what for?’ I like the sign’s pointedness. I set up a series of logs and lumps of clay. I make a circle around our ‘stage’ with white wool and we invite people to join us.

We are silent. We use silence to announce that this is a performance. People shuffle their feet, and mutter 'what is going on?'. I ceremoniously light some incense and Caro announces: 'the ritual marketplace is open'. We give no further instructions. Caro picks up a lump of clay and begins to make something. Then, she picks up two feathers and starts to brush them together. Slowly each person takes a lump of clay and moves to sit on the logs off to the side, and they begin to make something. They work in silence. The sun streams down and bird calls infuse the quiet workings of clay. I move around the space offering Kangaroo poo, as if it were a sacred element. People giggle.



Figure 52: Clay offerings

After 20 minutes we announce: 'the ritual marketplace is closing'. Creations of intricate beauty are placed atop the logs. These are our shrines, an ode towards what lies between and within us. An expression that all is not lost. I pretend to close invisible curtains. We are having fun playing make-believe. The mood is very different now. It's light and playful. I watch as people seem to express themselves even more freely. (June 2018)



Within my account, both Caro and I read the atmosphere differently, highlighting that atmospheric attunement is an incredibly subjective process. However, it was in our ability to improvise together (worked out over many previous moments) that meant that we could intervene in shifting or enhancing the potential that we both sensed was present. Had we focused on the creation of community rituals, we may have created a shared sense of excitement and responsibility surrounding how we wanted to spend time together across the Winter break. However, engaging through design in this way would have shifted our attention to a future moment that we needed to work towards. In other words, we would have deferred enchantment and possibility. Instead we sought to enchant the realm of the present, by inviting the group to improvise along with us.

Within uncertain ecological times, developing our capacity to spontaneously cultivate attentiveness and intimacy in the present is important. It can act as a reminder of the resources that lie within and between us, that help us to resist fear or destructive behaviours that might cause further harm. Sumartojo and Pink (2019) suggest that the intentional cultivation of atmospheres can be a way of talking to the future:

The future shimmers in the imagination at such events, as participants emphasise not only what they want people after them to remember, but also that these things should be remembered in terms of particular moods and feelings. It is a way of talking to the future and telling imagined others what we think is important and what we want them to think is important. (124)

Following Sumartojo and Pink, I suggest that participating in shaping atmospheres is a way of saying – *look see, this is how the world could be*. Within The Weekly Service, this meant that we often sought to perform what we perceived to be possible in the present, rather than working towards a vision of a distant future. This temporal reorientation, increased my sense of agency and empowerment within the present, as it provided a way to act within the broader impasse that I introduced early on in this dissertation. It also importantly required attunement and effort. As the Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2003) reminds us, moods are a labour and practice. Like the warming-up practices and in-the-moments adjustments shared here, Hochschild shows in her work with flight attendants that atmosphere is not something that emerges organically, rather it is worked at – it requires emotional labour to be maintained (Hochschild 2003, 115; quoted in Ahmed 2014, 21). However, there is also an unpredictability to atmospheres that means that they cannot be controlled. As Sumartojo and Pink (2019) note:

Atmosphere is precarious in the sense that it demonstrates the potential for small or large change at any moment; it can carry a charge of emotion and affective intensity that might momentarily overwhelm or seduce. (119)

The unpredictable nature of atmospheres, seems to reflect how they are considered rather untrustworthy within modernity (Dreyfus and Kelly 2011). Böhme (2013) writes that in the history of European ontology, atmosphere has ‘no secure ontological status’ (2) because it lies between subject and object. In this way atmospheres challenge our Cartesian notions of division through their indeterminate nature (Böhme 1993, Anderson 2009), where atmosphere is the co-presence of object and subject and is never fully defined or completed. Atmospheres therefore resist categorisation and remind us that our actions are part and parcel of the world transforming itself (Ingold, 1993). They can help us to think differently about transition in these uncertain times and open us up to non-linear processes of change, where what is being changed is us and our ability to relate and attend to the worlds in which we dwell.

From what I’ve come to understand, atmospheres can call us back to ourselves and others at a time when we may otherwise flee or freeze. They can work as an important means through which infrastructuring occurs in grassroots community contexts. As Sociologist and Urban Planner Jean–Paul Thibaud (2013) notes:

Ambiances bring to life the world around us; they make it truly inhabitable and conjure up extremely sensitive aspects of our human condition. What would a world devoid of ambiance be like? Simply asking the question makes it clear that now more than ever we need to nurture this vital aspect of living space and living together. (283)

Atmospheres can also offer a way of thinking about how change happens in non-linear ways, which opens up potential in the present. By attuning to their unfolding and our participation in their shaping, atmospheres make visible how transition is an emergent and embodied process, which we cannot stand outside of.

6.7 In summary

In this chapter I have introduced atmosphere as an important dimension of communal infrastructuring where ongoing alignments are desired. I discussed how atmosphere was commonly described as a ‘feeling in the room’ and why this was especially important in the context of The Weekly Service, as it provided evidence of shared values and cultivated a sense of intimacy. When this feeling was absent, I noticed how atmospheres could be said to have a temperature, and

that The Weekly Service appeared to aim towards a sense of warmth, because it arises out of spiritual traditions that value warmth and also seeks to respond to the fearful and despairing atmospheres that are accruing as a result of climate change. I identified three warming-up practices centred around the senses: touch, sight, and sound. I then discussed how warmth was generative of dialogue and relationships that developed over the long-term within the member group.

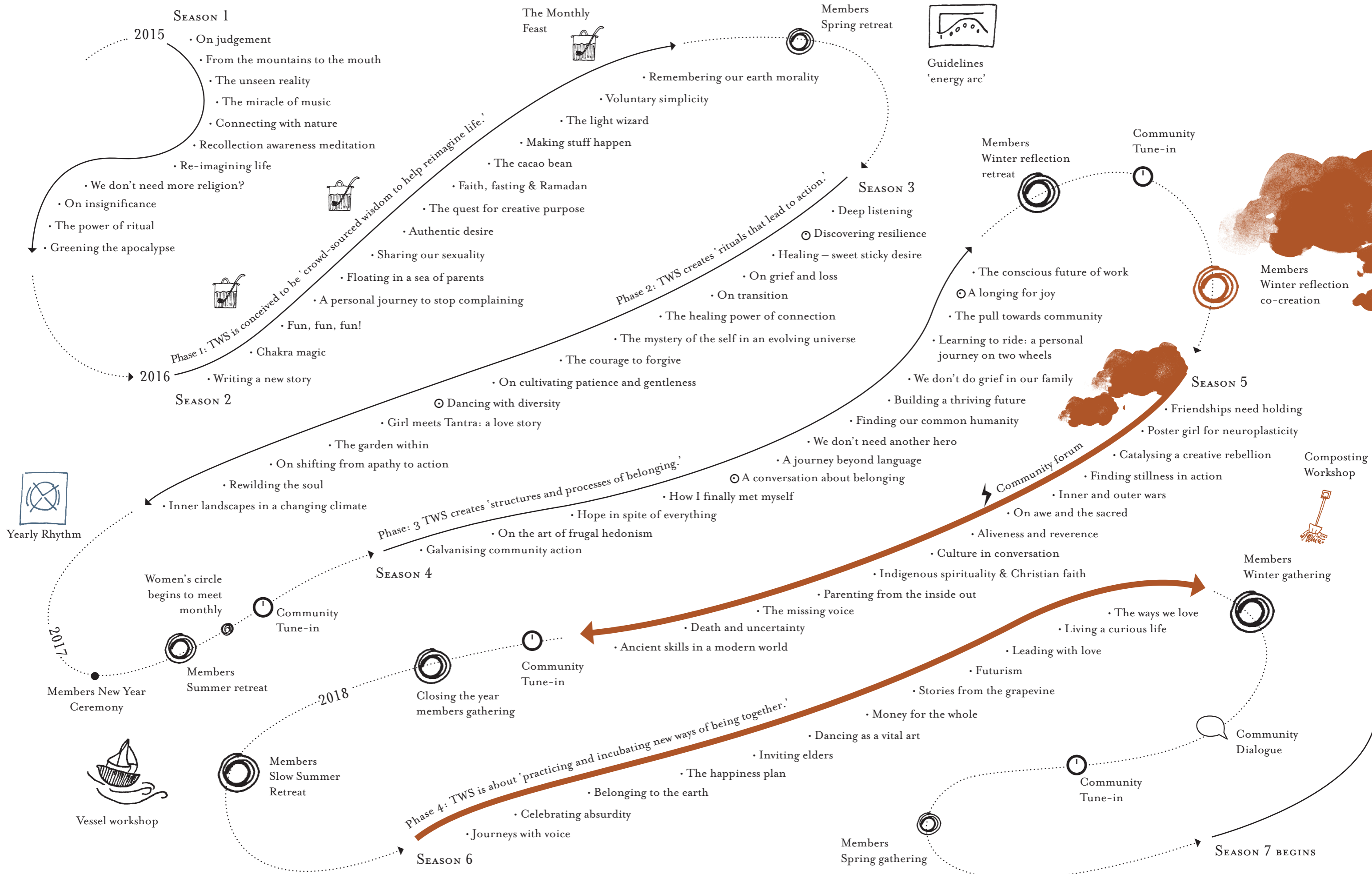
Furthermore, through my attunement to atmosphere I understood how my design practice is temporarily located in the flow of the present, as atmospheres shift and change and I attempt to influence how they might be carried forward. By observing, drawing and participating in the generativity of atmospheres, I also noted how the infrastructuring work of the core team, appeared to be concerned with mood maintenance. These moods (or atmospheres) were never stable, they undulated in temperature, reminding me that we cannot fix atmospheres in place.

Throughout this period of research, I became aware of how the atmospheres I was immersed in, were affecting me in transformative ways. In *Part 4* I turn towards the tensions that emerged within the member group during 2017 and how these further reveal the relational dimensions of transition.

Part 4 | Designing in transition

In Part 4 I move towards a deeper recognition of the relational dynamics of transition and the challenges involved in learning how to infrastructure communally. During this phase of the research, the core team and others had been improvising with infrastructuring alignments through invitations and atmospheres for over 1,5 years. We were starting to feel like what we were making together was working. 60-70 people were now regularly attending the Service and membership had risen from 40 to 70 members. However, the second half of 2017 would rupture our sense of ease and force the core team to continually re-orient our practice amidst much confusion. In *Chapter 7 – Rupture*, I focus on this turbulence and the learnings that I gleaned as my design practice matured towards embracing tension, acknowledging power dynamics and the politics of care. In *Chapter 8 – Drawing*, I discuss how I found myself reconstituting my own design practice, and surprisingly, using drawing as an autoethnographic method, to navigate my way through. This led to a new understanding of drawing as way-finding, which I discuss at the close of this chapter.

Timeline of Activity



Chapter 7 – Rupture

As introduced in *Part 3*, coming together as a group and co-producing the Service required that we learn how to cultivate and sustain relationships. This also included negotiating tension and the steps that were taken to resolving or working through it with others. As collaborative designer Mark Elliott (2019) notes, ‘by coming together around a shared purpose...we generate tensions in order to resolve them’ (np). It can be an affirming process to resolve tension with others. However, tension can also create fractures in relationships that don’t heal or recover, leaving traces or doubts about our capacity to collaborate with others into the future. In this chapter I turn towards a rupture that occurred within the relational field of The Weekly Service and the turbulence that it generated within myself and others. I draw on Anthropologist Hannah Knox’s (2017) notion of rupture, as an affective intervention in the ongoing work of infrastructures. I discuss how my practice matured during this phase of the research, as I wrestled with how to embrace tension and acknowledge my own position of power. I also highlight how this rupture revealed the emotional labour inherent in much of the core team’s work – which was often concerned with caring *for* and *with* others. More broadly this chapter seeks to acknowledge the complexities inherent in infrastructuring care in uncertain ecological times.

7.1 Building a boat while sailing it

By improvising and adding to the ongoing sociomaterial processes involved in co-producing the Service, members began to participate in infrastructuring alongside the core team. In the participatory shaping of bottom-up infrastructure, ‘social actors are required to learn *how to infrastructure*’ (Crabu and Magaudda 2018, 156 their emphasis). Community-based infrastructuring therefore often blurs the distinction between ‘users’ and ‘designers’ (Seravalli 2012). As Participatory Designers, le Dantec and DiSalvo (2013) make apparent, this extends the process of design:

Infrastructuring, then, is the work of creating socio-technical resources that intentionally enable adoption and appropriation beyond the initial scope of the design, a process that might include participants not present during the initial design. (247)

In the summer of 2017, a working group of members formed to develop a more viable business model for The Weekly Service, that would pay for some of the core team’s work. The working group determined that the membership would need to reach 120 people by the end of 2017, in order to raise enough money for a part-time role. This model was pitched as a replicable formula, that would enable other Weekly

Services to be set up in different cities, to meet the demand that was becoming visible through ongoing email requests from people in Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Geelong, London, Berlin etc. who wanted the Service ‘in their town’. The working group’s decisions (of which I was a part) set the course of The Weekly Service in a particular direction. The vessel gathered speed as more members joined. Across the months of January to June 2017, membership grew from 40 to ~70.

As the Service became increasingly co-produced, members began to identify additional elements or elaborations that might entice further enrolment of audiences and potential members, such as the addition of welcomers at the front door, lunches to follow the Service, and project ideas like the painting of a public mural, themed dinners and the possibility of a community project hub. These additions, can be seen as improvisations that stemmed from the invitations and atmospheres that the core team ongoingly tended to. As Caro once noted:

‘It’s amazing to see all the different spaces that are being created. You can definitely influence support and nurture, but I couldn’t agree that there’s someone...[drifts off, pause]...the vision is being edited by the group.’ (Caro, reflective discussion 2018)

The process of working on The Weekly Service during this period of time is well captured in Star and Ruhleder’s (1996) analogy of infrastructuring as building a boat while sailing it. The ill-defined nature of membership was both its strength and its weakness. The financial framing complicated the core team’s relationship with members. Rather than approach people solely as fellow collaborators in infrastructuring processes, I found myself seeking to satisfy the needs of members in a customer-provider relationship, while also trying to build the structures which might meet those needs. Additionally, as we began to learn how to infrastructure together, bigger questions surrounding the future of The Weekly Service arose. As a result, this period became characterised by turbulence, uncertainty and tension. Participatory Designers, Crabu and Magauida (2018), suggest that conflict is common in early stages of grassroots infrastructuring, where different parties with different motivations, will seek to join in infrastructuring and contest what has gone before. Alignments between people are never stable, they are always in flux, and always open to rupture.



Figure 53: Helping to steer the ship Mapping and grouping the activities of the core team

7.2 Shifting temperatures

As 2017 progressed, it became apparent that the temperature of the group was becoming stifling for some members, suggesting that warmth can create stagnation. At the member gathering in August 2017,

some members advocated for more open disagreement and sharing of power. The Weekly Service's warm atmosphere was characterised as being 'too nice' which was viewed by some as inhibiting or glossing over the political or power dynamics and the degree to which the co-creation of the organisation (not just the content) was possible. These criticisms are similar to those that are directed at 'hygge', also commonly identified as 'cosy'. Danish Anthropologist, Jeppe Trolle Linnet (2011), writes that the Danish preoccupation with hygge invites a form of national self-criticism, stemming from a belief that cosiness is akin to 'naivety' or like 'a sleeping child who does not face up to the world' (33). At the time, I had been quite invested in the accrued atmosphere of warmth, which I associated more with kindness than niceness, for the potential it held as a generative force for transition. I was unsure where dissent might lead and what it would generate. Here I recount one experience in which I registered an atmospheric shift quite acutely:

I am seated on a cushion in the corner of a large circle. It's Saturday morning. Yesterday we worked solidly for a few frantic hours to make the makeshift barn that we're now sitting in, hospitable for the 40 something members who are gathered. It's August. Light streams through dusty windows, and turns the wooden floor boards a honey colour. We are here for the Spring co-creation member retreat held at Holyburton Farm, a delightfully ramshackle sensory explosion of mud, dust, goat milk turned sour, gumboots piled up, and rolling hills of high grass and gnarled trees.

Cam falters a little as he tries to explain the schedule, his brow furrowed. There are many blank spaces on the whiteboard that we're now seeking to fill. But it's the ones that are filled that draws a response from the member behind me. Something is wrong.

It's

like a

has gone off
in the
corner
of the room

A silent implosion. Mike is visibly changed, his face contorted slightly with anger and frustration. He remarks to those near him that he thought that we were co-creating the future of The Weekly Service not merely the upcoming season of content. Only myself and one other hear him. I immediately realise that he's referring to the filled in spaces – the already 'designed' agenda – and his disappointment that this is not up for discussion. Full of shame, I mutter 'sorry Mike.' I don't know what to say. I feel all wrong.

Cam invites us to write down how we'd like to spend our time on large coloured pieces of paper. I am being cheerful, in that way that I do when I don't know how to handle a situation. I'm all shook up inside. My body feels like it's been next to the heart of something cataclysmic. Mike writes on his blue piece of paper 'the dark side of TWS'. We all put our papers in the middle of the room. People giggle a little when they read the dark side. We're then invited to place bright coloured dots and vote for our top three. Three bright pink dots sit on 'the dark side of TWS' – they have been placed there by the three hands who sat in the implosion – but it's not enough to make it onto the schedule. Petting and cuddling animals gets the most votes. (August 2017)



In this account we see in Mike, someone who resists the mood of the collective and becomes a kind of lightning bolt that attempts to shed light on the power dynamics that lie at the heart of The Weekly Service. Mike's resistance to attune to the collective mood (one that was conducive to petting animals), is viewed here as a statement, a refusal to act in accordance with another's design. As Ahmed (2014) explains, attunement is a 'technique for occupying space, of claiming a room as one's own' (22). His response arose in the context of not feeling invited into co-creating the future of The Weekly Service. The affect of his reaction is felt viscerally in my account as a quickening of heat in the form of an implosion, which spread beyond this moment creating turbulence for weeks to come. Tension in the form of rapid heat, can be understood as an affective rupture (Knox 2017) in the ongoing maintenance of infrastructures. Ruptures also remind us that infrastructures can never be fixed, they are always in a process of emerging (Star and Ruhleder 1996).

The turbulence that unfolded revealed plural and conflicting understandings surrounding what The Weekly Service was or could become, and who had a say in the making of its future. For some members the tension remained insignificant to their participation and

interest in the Service. Multiple perspectives on what membership entailed emerged and the degree to which members were willing to give over trust to the core team to 'do the right thing' differed. However, what was most pronounced was how this turbulence entered into the core team dynamics. Reflection on these dynamics was only possible many months after. The following snippets sat within a longer reflective conversation that I initiated with the core team in mid-2018. They point to the different positions and the tensions that were felt and experienced.

Henry: '...we get a bit of bad feedback and we all have different opinions, we speak to loads of people, which adds turbulence, which makes people feel unsafe. I feel like I might be on a different route. Part of it is going through this process and feeling how unhealthy it is. The thing can be damaging in some ways.'

Caro: 'I find it quite interesting to reflect on all the emotional needs that TWS creates...or maybe not creates, but exposes. What I find hard about being in a leadership position...I find myself responsible for people's emotional safety. I feel like there is a group responsibility. But I don't think there is a structure set up for that yet.'

Cam: '...some stuff was said publicly that was mirroring some stuff that was being said in the shadows, and we focused on it, and maybe we focused on it too much, but if we didn't focus on it we would have lost people. I feel like it's a dangerous path to go down, to say that the people who speak up and dissent are the minority and we should ignore them. And that I think has caused tension between me and Henry.'

Kirsty: 'I really felt like it was something that was needed...to surface tension after the retreat, people were talking to me about that...In the lead up we (the core team) were on email, and I feel like something got torn in that email chain, whilst I recognise that there needed to be a group space to air the tension I feel like...I also felt that maybe in being in service of the larger group we weren't in service of our smaller group. We tore us apart a bit. For me that's the crux of the hurt...'

Henry: 'I found it really really difficult. And I definitely questioned the shadows. Questioned how we went about it. I feel like the way we responded created a huge amount of turbulence and an unsafe environment.'

During the second half of 2017, questions continued to circle surrounding who owns The Weekly Service and who gets to make decisions. In my view, confusion about what ownership meant exacerbated the situation. On paper, as the appointed directors of the company, we were clearly the ‘owners’ of The Weekly Service. However, I sensed that what some members wanted was the ability to shape how The Weekly Service evolved through their participation in the infrastructuring work. As le Dantec and DiSalvo (2013) note, within community contexts ‘the work of ownership in infrastructuring is not the ownership of the material product *itself* so much as the ownership of shaping future attachments by way of a *relationship* to the material product’ (258, their emphasis). This means resisting viewing ownership as solely a claim to property (either intellectual or material). In fact, this notion of ownership is ill-suited to The Weekly Service, as what was being made was never stable or fixed and was always reliant on the volunteered time of others. The potential that lay in opening up a conversation surrounding what might constitute ownership in the context of The Weekly Service appeared to be missed at this point in time, partly because the conditions didn’t appear ripe for the conversation. An analogy was made that the organisation was going through a teenage-hood phase, full of uncertainty about who it might become. In this environment, I wedged myself between people and carried messages to the core team. I was very uncomfortably entangled.

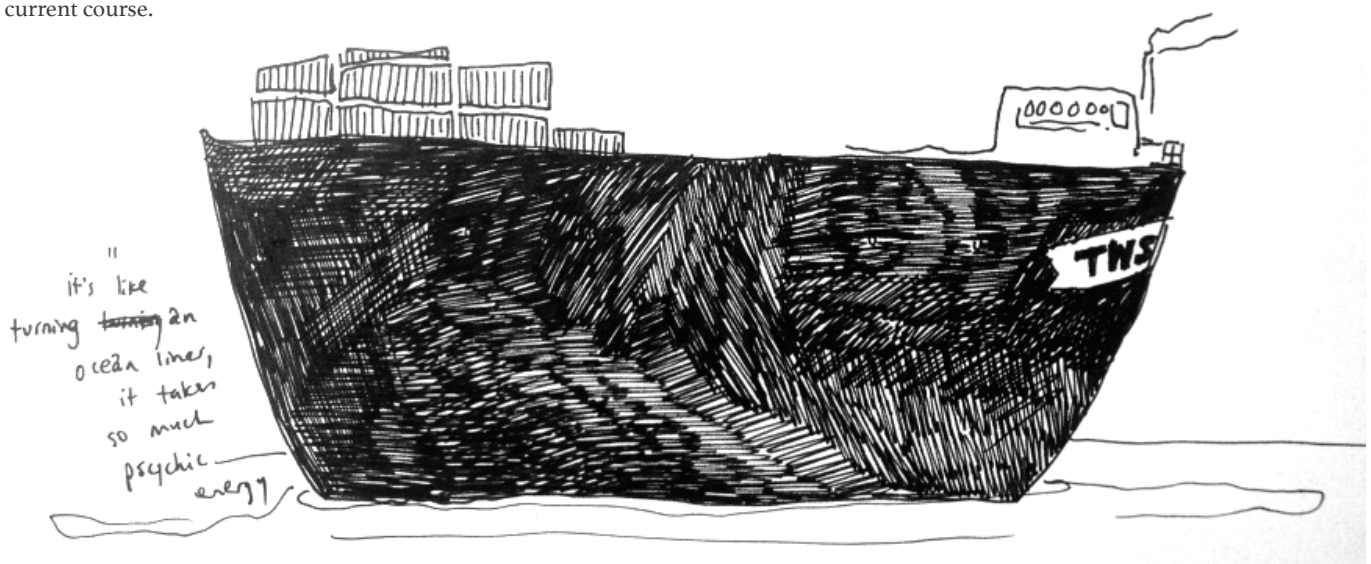
As a core team, we initiated different activities and processes to respond to the turbulence. These responses emerged in an organic fashion. Cam, drawing on his interest in conflict processes, initiated a more in depth community forum to air and discuss the issues. This approach created tension between Henry, Cam and I, as we disagreed on how best to respond. The forum created a space in which the lid on tension could be lifted. This forum succeeded in enabling past resentments to be expressed, revealing the ways in which the core team had unknowingly devalued the efforts of others and held power unconsciously by attempting to take too much responsibility for facilitating processes within the member group. It also contributed to further damaging some relationships. In conjunction with this forum, Henry reinstated the monthly meet-up and invited Mike to run the first meeting. Henry also instigated a working group to review the recent members retreat and documented the history of The Weekly Service. This document provided a kind of road map, which outlined more transparently how The Weekly Service had evolved and possible directions for its future.

What did I do? In the lead up to the community forum I tried to create spaces where we could listen to each other, first with some of the female Weekly Service members and then separately with Cam and Henry. More generally however, I felt quite a significant sense of loss. I had the persistent feeling that I/we had lost something that I couldn't quite name. Was it that we had snapped back into a subject-orientated world-view that is mostly concerned with individuals, their positions and opinions? Were we now so concerned with individual autonomy that we couldn't attune to the textures and quality of the field that lay between us? On some deeper level I understood that the subtleties of feeling left out or unwelcome had motivated Mike's criticisms and the resultant turbulence. However, I could not comprehend the force of his reaction. My own emotional response also seemed disproportionate to the events themselves.

Post retreat – I continue to try and remain open and it costs me. It sears and burns in my stomach. I'm so tired. And enlivened. I talk to Mike on Monday. I make my way to see him so that I don't shut down, so that I don't fix my and his position into oppositional sides. He's surprisingly empathetic towards the core team. He said 'I can see how it must be hard for you as well.' (September, 2017)

Interestingly, Ahmed (2014) characterises tension as the loss of a previous atmospheric attunement. Ahmed writes that we often search for an explanation for this loss by attributing it to 'someone or something' (26). In tense situations, she suggests that particular readings will begin to 'take hold' and shared feelings will be directed towards the identified cause. The obvious implication here is that people can seek to resolve tense atmospheres by scapegoating others, rather than viewing relational or political dynamics as the cause of

Figure 54: Illustrating criticisms of TWS
My drawing of how TWS was conceived as an ocean liner that took a lot of energy to redirect from its current course.



discontent. Rather than choose to locate the cause of tension within individuals, I sought to understand what had happened by drawing it out. I discuss my methodological explorations in the next chapter – *Chapter 8: Drawing*. Within this chapter, I show how I came to understand ruptures as a generative force. Ruptures can reveal the power dynamics within local infrastructures, including how our ability to exercise our power locally is related to the larger-scale infrastructures we might seek to resist. Furthermore, I understood how the ‘care work’ of the core team was made invisible as a consequence of creating a working infrastructure. These insights did not emerge immediately, rather they arose over time.

7.3 Ruptures as a generative force

Ruptures remind us that we cannot control what happens when we are doing infrastructuring work with others. Knox (2017) relates to ruptures as affective interventions in infrastructures that can create a space for opportunities. It is her term that I borrow for the title of this chapter. While her discussion centres around physical infrastructures (in particular the road-building efforts of a small community within Peru), ruptures can easily apply to the relational fabric of a group or community. The word also speaks aptly to a sense of imploding heat, or a shift in temperature. For Knox, the concept of rupture extends the idea of breakdown that has been present in infrastructuring literature since its early development (Star and Ruhleder 1996). The relative invisibility of infrastructural work is well stressed by Star and colleagues, who suggest that infrastructures remain invisible until breakdowns occur. This is because infrastructures tend to sink into our lives – they become embedded into our ways of being-knowing-&-doing, once they have been learnt through membership. Knox suggests that ruptures build on the idea of breakdown, and re-frame it as an opportunity to incorporate ‘more positive forms of existential rupture brought about by infrastructural form’ (374). In other words, ruptures are a generative force, that while potentially uncomfortable, also create opportunities for other things to emerge.

7.3.1 Embracing ruptures as a part of working with others

It would have been unusual if there was no tension within The Weekly Service. The rupture that occurred reminded me that tension is always a part of working with others. By embracing ruptures, we can begin to notice how they contribute positively to what unfolds within groups (Akama et al. 2018). Participatory Design is a discipline that is well versed in tension, conflict and power relations (Agid 2018, Hillgren et al. 2011, le Dantec and Disalvo 2013). PD has long recognised that heterogeneous participation is needed in any effort to build more just

and caring worlds (Ehn 1988, Greenbaum 1993). This means that we will invariably encounter conflict and tension when working with people with diverse perspectives on current issues surrounding how future(s) might unfold. Drawing on the work of political theorist Chantal Mouffe (2000), many PD practitioners have embraced the notion of agonism over antagonism. For Participatory Designers, Björgvinsson and colleagues (2012), this means shifting:

...from conflict between enemies to constructive controversies among adversaries who have opposing matters of concern but also accept other views as legitimate. These activities are usually full of passion, imagination and engagement. As such, they are more like creative innovations than rational decision-making processes. (129)

This view takes into account the respectful and also lively ways in which we can disagree, that usher forth imaginative engagements and responses. Within The Weekly Service, unique and novel ways of processing tension were developed by members as a consequence of the conflict that was experienced in 2017. An elemental ritual was run by Mike at the first reinstated member meeting, which contributed to healing relations. A ‘composting’ session was designed by members to surface frustration that had accrued in 2018 and a community dialogue was initiated to attempt to create more space for disagreement. These efforts were by no means perfect, but they signalled a shift towards embracing tension as part of being in community. Eventually they would also lead to a shift in governance structure.

As Akama and colleagues (2018) suggest ‘by starting from the premise that uncertainty is always present and always disruptive’ we can consider how we might ‘divert the consequences of disruption so that it can be harnessed in generative ways’ (60). This need not discount that ruptures can deeply affect us and also cause harm. However, if we’re able to work in generative ways with tension then fresh perspectives can emerge. As a member once remarked:

‘Things can get stuck or stagnant, you need stirring up, like a snow globe, things need shaking up, once it settles you get a bit of perspective on things.’

By giving space and air to uncomfortable experiences, ruptures can build resilience, where time is spent digesting differences as we simultaneously move forward together. As we work through conflict within our communities, we can grow our ability to relate with others in tense situations and our capacity to continue to collaborate. The danger however, is that by placing too much attention on resolving

tension we can become overly self-referential and absorbed in group dynamics. This may inhibit a group's ability to cultivate a shared purpose beyond themselves. This point was also expressed by some members of The Weekly Service.

7.3.2 Power and positionality

Ruptures can also help to reveal the power dynamics within infrastructures. An awareness of how infrastructures are concerned with power lies at the heart of Susan Leigh Star's thinking on infrastructuring (Puig de la Bellacasa 2016). Star's work is rooted in an understanding of the dynamic and relational nature of infrastructures, which seeks to push against the 'organising and categorising capacities of dominant systems of power' (Agid 2016, 81). In particular Star and Ruhleder (1996) note how infrastructuring can standardise membership in ways that benefit some people over others. These concerns are resonant with PD research, which tends to embrace infrastructuring as a political project (see for example, Karasti 2014, le Dantec and DiSalvo 2013, Marttila et al. 2014). As Agid (2016) proposes:

To do infrastructuring, then, is to design, reveal, challenge, or theorize systems and structures with people while foregrounding their dynamic and socio-material contexts in that process. (81)

One can easily point to how infrastructures are used as demonstrations of national power and ideological progress (Larkin 2013). In our current moment, the issue of climate change intersects with powerful large-scale infrastructures that threaten the habitability of the Earth. This can lead to a sense of disempowerment, or an anxiety fuelled impasse (Beuret 2015), which I referred to at the beginning of this dissertation. It's very difficult to know how to respond to climate change – what is being asked of us? How can we identify what to do or what to work towards when the landscape keeps changing and when the forces that we're working against appear to be so powerful? When we gather together in times of impasse and uncertainty, the purpose of any group needs to be held lightly, as it will undoubtedly shift in response to changing circumstances.

Some initiatives such as Slow Cities and Transition Towns seem to have been able to establish replicable models that can spread between locations and provide a common cause that people can rally around. These models enable people to exercise their power at a local level, while participating in a broader network of change. The work of The Weekly Service is much less tangible by comparison. It potentially provides a complimentary regenerative and nurturing space to these more materially outcome-oriented models. Conversely, through

comparisons like this, I find that I want to challenge myself to rethink what constitutes transition in these times. Perhaps it's better to do away with binary notions of inner and outer social change work and simply acknowledge that they are interrelated (du Plessis 2015). Other policy platforms and social movements such as The Green New Deal and Extinction Rebellion have more recently garnered significant support. However all organising efforts experience ruptures and uncertainties surrounding their effectiveness, despite having clear rallying calls or replicable models. As one recent advocate of Transition Towns commented, the network has not managed to effect the large-scale transition it desired and has paid little attention to the inner dimensions of transition (Giangrande 2018).

Any local resistance to harmful large-scale infrastructures, needs to be sustained over the long-term – often beyond the scope of individual lifetimes (Agid 2016). As such, infrastructuring activities also need to be generative of hope, as well as offering people something that they can begin to influence and shape. Within local infrastructures, power is present and manifest in how we are able to act or express our view relative to others (Marttila and Botero 2017). As I initially expressed, The Weekly Service was something on a human scale that I could grab a hold of. This led to a gradual empowerment of my ability to continue to engage with climate change as an issue, rather than fall into despair. Critical to this work is an understanding of how power is related to one's positionality in a given context, which includes one's race, gender, class and so forth, and the prior history, relationships and knowledge that is accrued through working with others (Suchman 2002). These factors are not fixed, as they will always change depending on who we are working with and how that affects how we experience and exercise power. This means viewing power as contextual and contingent, where our task (as designers or leaders) is to become more aware of our position in relation to others, and what differentiates us – rather than choosing to simply ignore this (Lorde 1984).

Within the core team across 2017, I was working as a young woman, with the two male co-founders of the organisation. While I held the title of director, I was situated differently to the co-founders in relation to The Weekly Service's development. I had not been involved in starting The Weekly Service and I had no prior business experience. These factors contributed to an imbalance of power amongst us. During the period of prolonged tension, my position as a researcher was perceived by one member of the core team, as compromising my ability to be clear-headed about how I assumed the role of director. This criticism was levelled at me when I sought to advocate for more

collaborative and potentially uncertain forms of governance, above and over assuming control. Conversely, in other moments when there was more trust between us, I exercised considerable power through my visual communication design skills, where I was able to effectively persuade the core team to adopt particular ideas. This suggests that certain conditions, were more conducive to my ability to exercise my power.

By taking into account how we are located and accountable in the work we do with others (Agid 2016, Suchman 2002), we can begin to notice how people in local contexts exercise power differently. In the context of The Weekly Service, members sought to reshape relationships through processes that disrupted, revealed and challenged the evolution of The Weekly Service. The example of the rupture I offer in this chapter was one such occasion where a challenge was made to open up the agenda for more open conversation. This event revealed to me how the core team's capacity to set the agenda through invitations and the tone of atmospheres was part of the way that we held power. These strategies (which I discussed in *Chapter 5* and *6*) cultivated our ability to improvise and relate as a community. This ability to improvise and relate was also helpful when working through tension as it arose. To quote Mark Elliott (2019) once again, 'by coming together around a shared purpose...we generate tensions in order to resolve them' (np).

Within local infrastructuring, people are entangled in 'performing multiple identities during their active involvement in collaborative settings' (Crabu and Magaudda 2018, 170). In other words, power dynamics shift and change as the work proceeds and people perform different roles and take up different positions. As members of the core team we were often negotiating our role within the community and the power that we held. In the lead up to the rupture we had intended to open up a discussion surrounding our role as a core team within The Weekly Service. We felt unsure about what our role was within the community and we were keen to explore this further as a group. This decision was re-evaluated as the date of the retreat grew closer. In its place a briefing was delivered to the member group about how we were going as a community / organisation and what loose plans the core team had for the future. The decision to brief the community emerged when I was away on leave. It grew from a concern for how an open-ended conversation might create unnecessary uncertainty and confusion amongst members. It also arose from a commitment to the sustainable financial model that we were attempting to pursue, in order to raise enough money to create a replicable model.

Through an example such as this, I seek to highlight how the core team was not necessarily blind to the power we held. Rather we were constantly negotiating how we held power, through the dynamics of our working relationship, within the context of our broader lives and in conversation with the wider ecological uncertainties. Following Agid (2016) I suggest that within infrastructuring our 'positions are dynamically situated, in constant movement in relationship to the multiple infrastructures in and through which we and others work together' (81). As a condition of my involvement in the core team, I often sought to intervene in ways that I hoped would be generative. This meant at times withholding my view or refraining from acting and then learning through experience how I might act differently next time.

Within this research, I suggest that when designers engage in local infrastructuring work, above and over politically correct positions or moralistically detached stances, we need to foster 'a love for the world, the pleasures of friendliness, trust conviviality, and companionable connection' (Gibson-Graham 2007, 6). This speaks to similar positions held within PD, where ethics are enacted and worked out through ongoing conversations and situations, rather than abstractly applied frameworks (Light and Akama 2018). Working with our sleeves rolled up, we can begin to see that power dynamics are always shaping how we collaborate with others. It is in the messiness of collaboration, that Agid (2018) suggests that we pay 'attention to the contradictions, differences, and open questions that emerge and become part of designing together in these complex contexts' (17).

7.3.3 The invisible work of care

One final insight emerged as a result of the rupture that occurred. This insight relates to the paradox that lies at the heart of PD and infrastructures, and how care work is relatively devalued in Western societies. I suggest that it was through the core team's and members' successful attempts to create a working (and caring) infrastructure, that we also concealed the labour and maintenance work required to develop it. At the same time, it was through infrastructural imperfections and ruptures, that we were called into relationship with members, to recognise and care for what we were making together. This paradox lies at the heart of PD and infrastructures. Neumann and Star 1996 write that '...good working infrastructure is transparent to use, yet good PD makes the problematics of use visible' (231). In other words, people joined The Weekly Service because it offered them a way to connect with other similarly minded people. Not all members saw the need to help or support the co-production of the Service and

the core team decided early on that we didn't want to mandate this as a condition of membership (on top of the financial commitment). However, this meant that much of the infrastructuring work was invisible to members who chose not to get involved. I want to briefly unpack this here, as it speaks to the broader ecological crisis that we are facing.

The infrastructuring work of The Weekly Service is concerned with creating a caring community that might foster and enable diverse improvisatory responses to the unfolding ecological crisis. Care is undervalued as infrastructural work within much of Western society. This means that it is further hidden from view. Many feminist scholars have highlighted the tenuous circumstances in which (mostly) women and marginalised groups are forced to do care work, either as part of their paid employment or as unpaid labour (for an excellent summary of the 'ethics of care' see Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) '*Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*', 1-24). Within The Weekly Service, much of the core team's work was designed to nurture relationships or to care for the relational fabric of the group. This was mostly directed towards 'supporting flourishing relations' (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017) by tending to atmospheres and convening events. However, at times it resembled caring *for* others in their times of distress through listening, comforting and offering support. These negotiations were made more visible as our work progressed, revealing the ways in which our infrastructuring created dependencies and commitments (le Dantec and DiSalvo 2013).

As Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) notes, caring for something also means creating cuts. The many acts of care that enabled the continuation of The Weekly Service created cuts within our own lives, including our ability to sustain ourselves financially, sustain other relationships and commitments beyond the community itself. As Light and Akama (2014) have argued, the infrastructuring of caring relations can create spaces 'for others to reflect, make mistakes, learn and debate' where Participatory Designers can 'support people in caring and changing their environment as they might wish' (160). However, the amount of time and the emotional energy required to sustain communities of care, should not be underestimated. In the case of The Weekly Service, the absence of monetary resources meant that the ongoing care work of the core team could not be maintained. This research seeks to evidence the labour of care as a core aspect of the work of The Weekly Service. Across 2017–2018 the sustainable financial model that the core team and members had envisaged, never materialised. Rather a more participatory model based on volunteered time was worked out. This

necessitated that the core team dissolve, allowing for the emergence of a more communal governance structure (with its own inherent challenges) in 2019.

I want to draw attention to how the labour of care is a part of any regenerative effort to nurture relationships in these uncertain ecological times – especially in the early phases of growing an infrastructure, where the burden of care rests on a few people. In light of recent reports and suggestions that societal collapse as a result of climate change is more likely than previously thought¹, communities of care will be ongoingly necessary into the future (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, Light and Akama 2014). It's important to develop a non-innocent understanding of what this entails or to 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway 2016) of care in these times, including how labour – of the body and emotions – are a part of how communities are sustained and cultivated. This involves recognising the power and position of those who choose or are forced into care work, and how care is devalued more broadly within Western society.

7.4 In summary

In summary, I suggested in this chapter that ruptures can serve as a reminder that tension and conflict is part of doing infrastructuring with others. As Weekly Service members grew increasingly involved in co-producing the Service, they also developed the capacity to influence how the Weekly Service evolved. I discussed how this period of time is well characterised through Star and Ruhleder's analogy of 'building a boat while sailing it'. I relayed how a shift in temperature, ruptured the fabric of our relations, creating significant turbulence within the core team and testing the community's ability to resolve tension. These events deepened my understanding of how my power was connected to my position within the core team and the wider member group. I reflected on how my design skills both inhibited and enabled me to exercise my power in different moments. In doing so, I also discussed how local infrastructuring can enable us to empower ourselves towards contesting large-scale infrastructures, but that any long-term effort towards creating change needs to consider how things like hope, a love for the world, or companionship might help to sustain infrastructuring.

In the last section, I suggested that infrastructures of care are essential to our ability to meet the challenges of these times. I highlighted how the infrastructure we grew supported people in their explorations of difficult themes, where deeper emotional needs were exposed, and long-term caring relations were fostered. I drew attention to the paradox inherent in PD and infrastructures, where '...good working infrastructure is transparent to use, yet good PD makes the

¹ See for example the widely downloaded paper by Jem Bendell (2018) titled '*Deep Adaptation: A Map for navigating climate tragedy*', which coincided with the emergence of *Extinction Rebellion* in the UK.

problematics of use visible' (Neumann and Star 1996, 231). I elaborated on this paradox within the context of The Weekly Service, by highlighting how care work is often devalued within modern societies. Despite the recognition of the need to create more caring societies (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017), care work is often hidden or remains relatively invisible (even in contexts such as The Weekly Service). Care as an affective and ethical practice, is a labour. Like power, it is often unevenly distributed amongst people. This means that as designers we must approach care with eyes wide open and continue to reveal the labour and power dynamics that are part of doing infrastructural work, including who cares, how and when.

Chapter 8 – Drawing

To navigate the period of turbulence that I discussed in the previous chapter, I turned to drawing. Drawing became a means for me to process and attune to the dimensions of collaboration that I was finding difficult. The images I made seemed to capture the fragmented nature of our social relations. Through the practice of drawing I grew more aware not only of the interpersonal dynamics of transition, but also the intrapersonal dynamics – the inner dynamics that I experienced within myself. I also was better able to account for and own how I had contributed to the dynamics that unfolded. Within this chapter, I suggest that drawing in this way can be considered autoethnographic, as it enabled me to meet and listen to the dynamics of the situation on a deeper level. In the final section of this chapter I discuss how I brought some of my drawings to the core team, which supported our ability to find a way forward. I propose drawing as a tactic for wayfinding, in situations where there is no clear answer as to how to proceed.



Figure 55: Drawing in action

8.1 *Drawing in a sea of collectivity*

Drawing has been a mainstay of my design practice. When studying visual communication design as an undergraduate, drawing was a way to discover ideas on a page. When I worked as an in-house designer and then as a freelancer, drawing was a way to discover the essence of an idea in ways that touched or moved people. Throughout my Masters Research, drawing became a way of knowing and being that was generative of understandings that were tacitly felt (Akama and Prendiville 2013). There is no predicting exactly what will happen when drawing free-hand. And while we can suggest that the blank page is never empty – ‘the page is peopled with habit: habits of seeing, habits of feeling, habits of gesture’ (Higgin 2016, 5) – there is an unknown quality to drawing, a kind of revelation that occurs when something appears on the page that was neither within the intention of the observer or the scene being observed. As Akama and Prendiville (2013) note ‘the act of drawing is an alchemical process where lines and surfaces join people together in imagination and communication’ (34). Drawing is an intermediary space, in which we might come to know things differently.

When I began drawing, I first mapped the voices of others (*Figure 56*), before realising that I needed to tune into my own inner terrain in order to make sense of the dynamics at play. Creative practitioner Marc Higgin (2016) suggests that our impulse is to speedily make sense of what is occurring, whereas drawing can enable us to ‘slow down the speed of habit in order to feel and think otherwise’ (6). By slowing down through drawing, I realised that the loss that I was experiencing was connected to a perception that the social fabric that we had collectively woven had been torn through, fracturing trust in the group.

Each occupies his own island and position. I shrink away from these discussions. I feel ill-equipped. I am losing myself in this complexity.

Aug 8, 2012

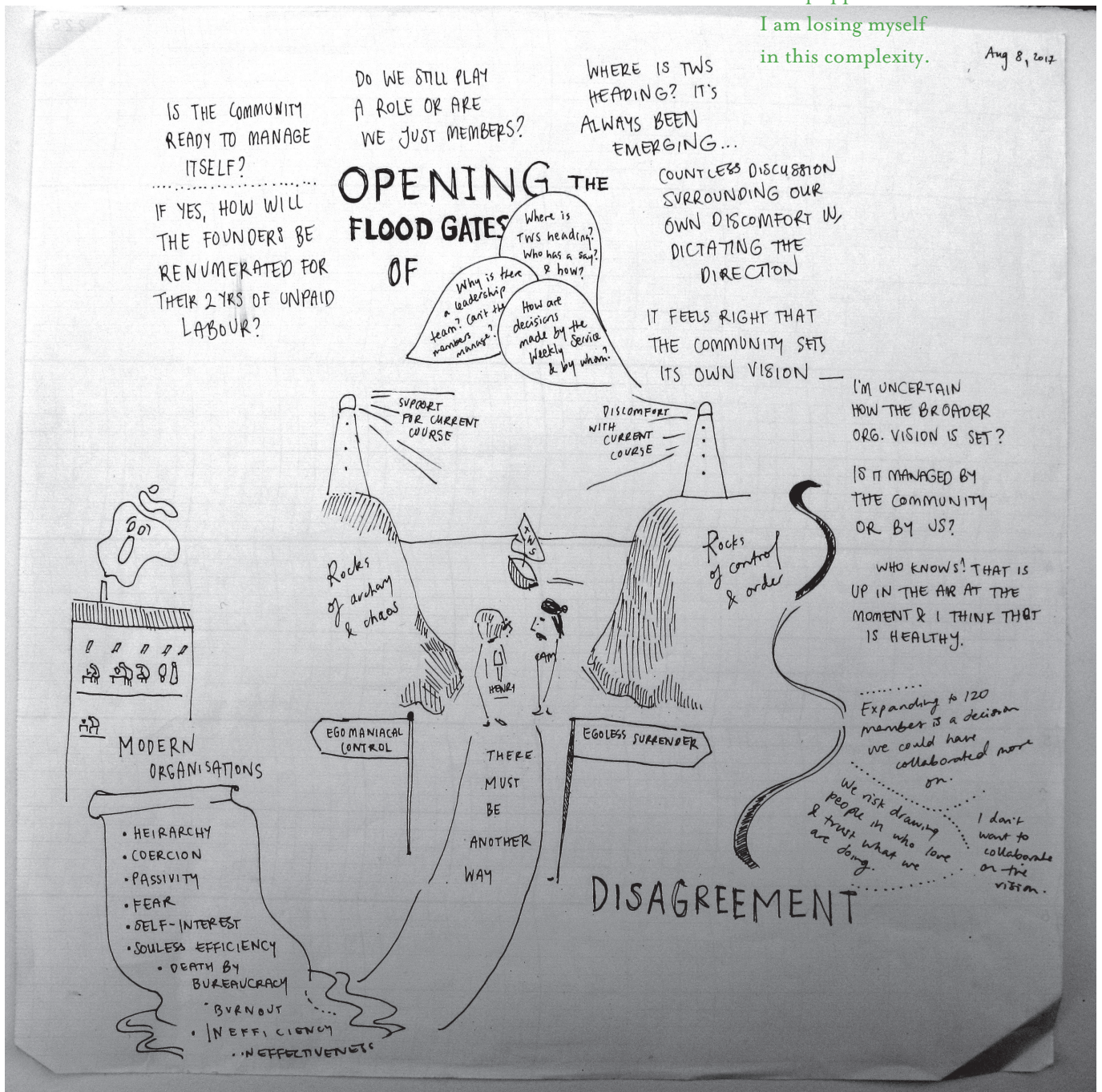


Figure 56: Mapping disagreement
Here I mapped the voices of others.

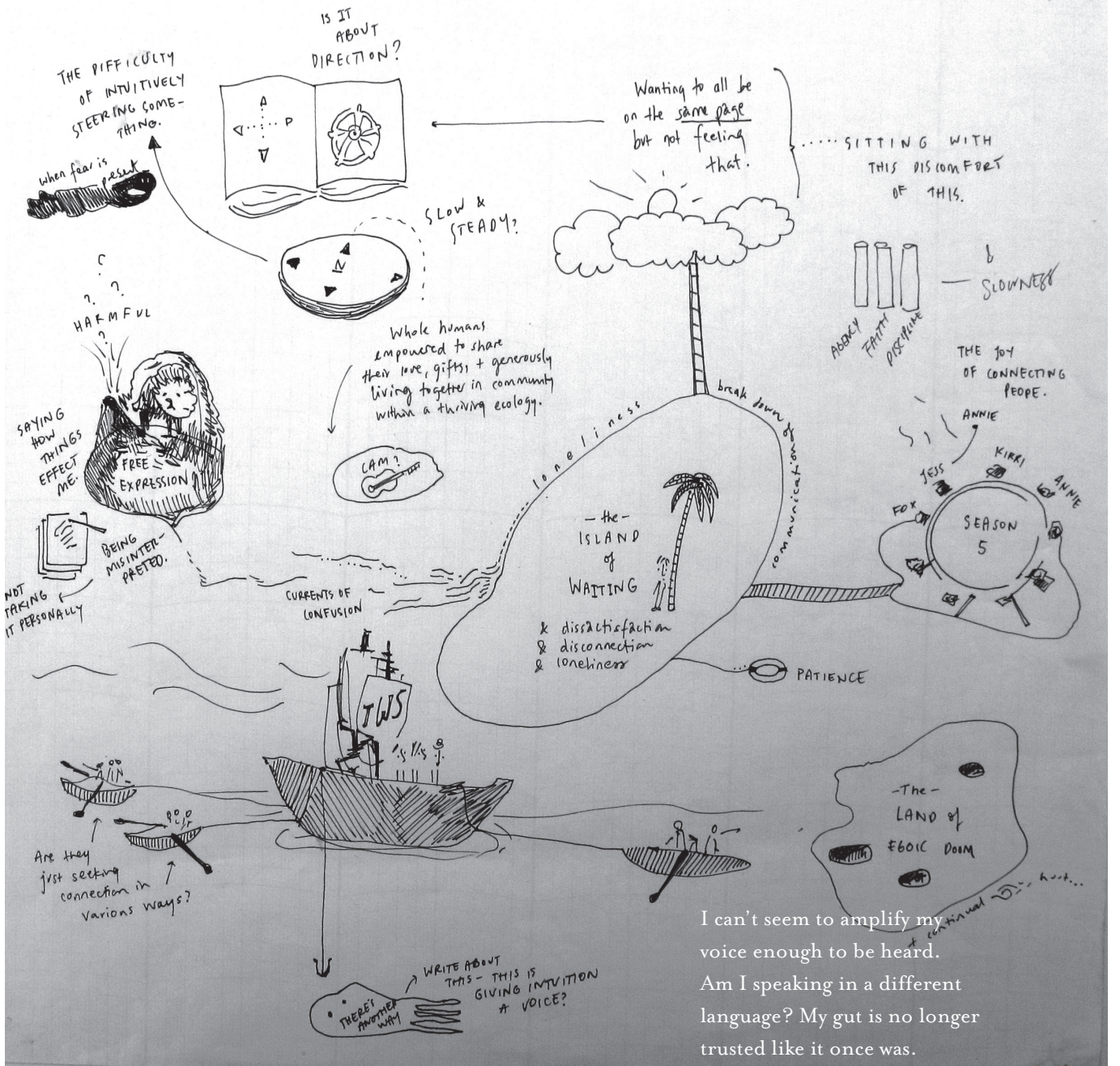


Figure 57: Mapping / the island of waiting
I begin to map my inner terrain.

I can't seem to amplify my voice enough to be heard.
Am I speaking in a different language? My gut is no longer trusted like it once was.

The space where decisions used to emerge between us has vanished.



The metaphor of a vessel, previously used in a workshop I ran to explore our collective context, was carried through into my sense-making. As I drew, I wrote down titles like 'island of waiting & dissatisfaction & disconnection & loneliness' and 'island of egoic doom'. I was trying to capture the slippery slivers of my experience that surrounded my involvement with the community I'd become a part of. I used images to symbolise fluid things like loneliness, tiredness, an uncertain journey or differing perspectives.

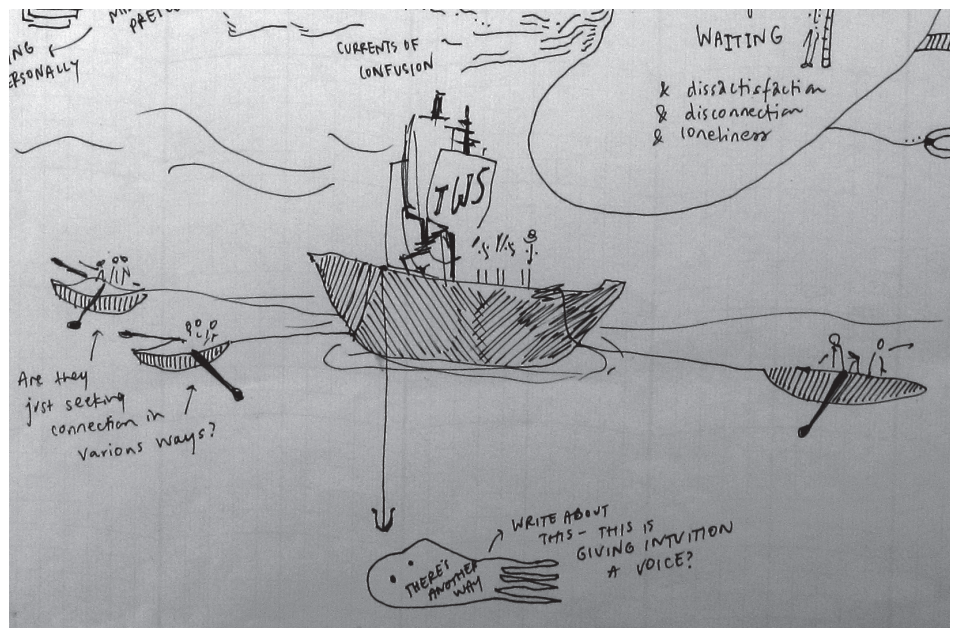
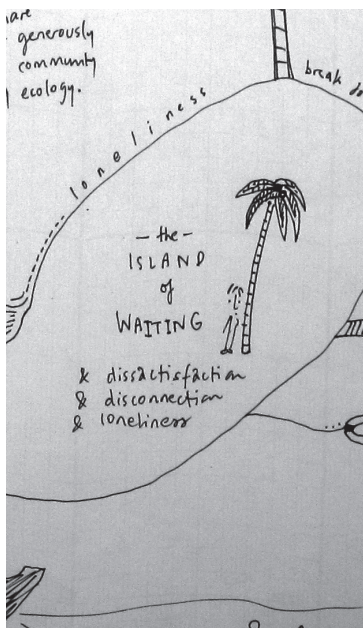


Figure 58: Detail of drawings

Drawing helped me to reconnect with my subjective experience while being immersed and entangled in a community of relations. In this sea of collectivity, drawing became my anchor. I discovered that when I was engaged in a regular practice of drawing I could see myself more clearly. I came to think of drawing in this way as similar to the autoethnographic accounts that I had been using to document moments of learning and insight. Within autoethnography the 'gaze turns inward toward the self while maintaining the outward gaze' (Tedlock 2013, 358). This process can create a lifeline and a 'way into and through the questions and mysteries that hover' (Poulos 2013, 475) at the edges of our conscious experience. When drawing, I could find the thread of my own thoughts. I could put myself into the picture. Drawing therefore helped me to be reflexive and to situate my own participation alongside others. It became a space for an embodied examination of the relational field – what was present, what was hoped for and what had been lost.

I'm tired. The joy is leaving.
 It feels dark and heavy.
 I'm entangled in a web
 of people. I feel nervous.
 Unsure of where the next
 criticism will come from.
 Relationships with some
 people have broken down.

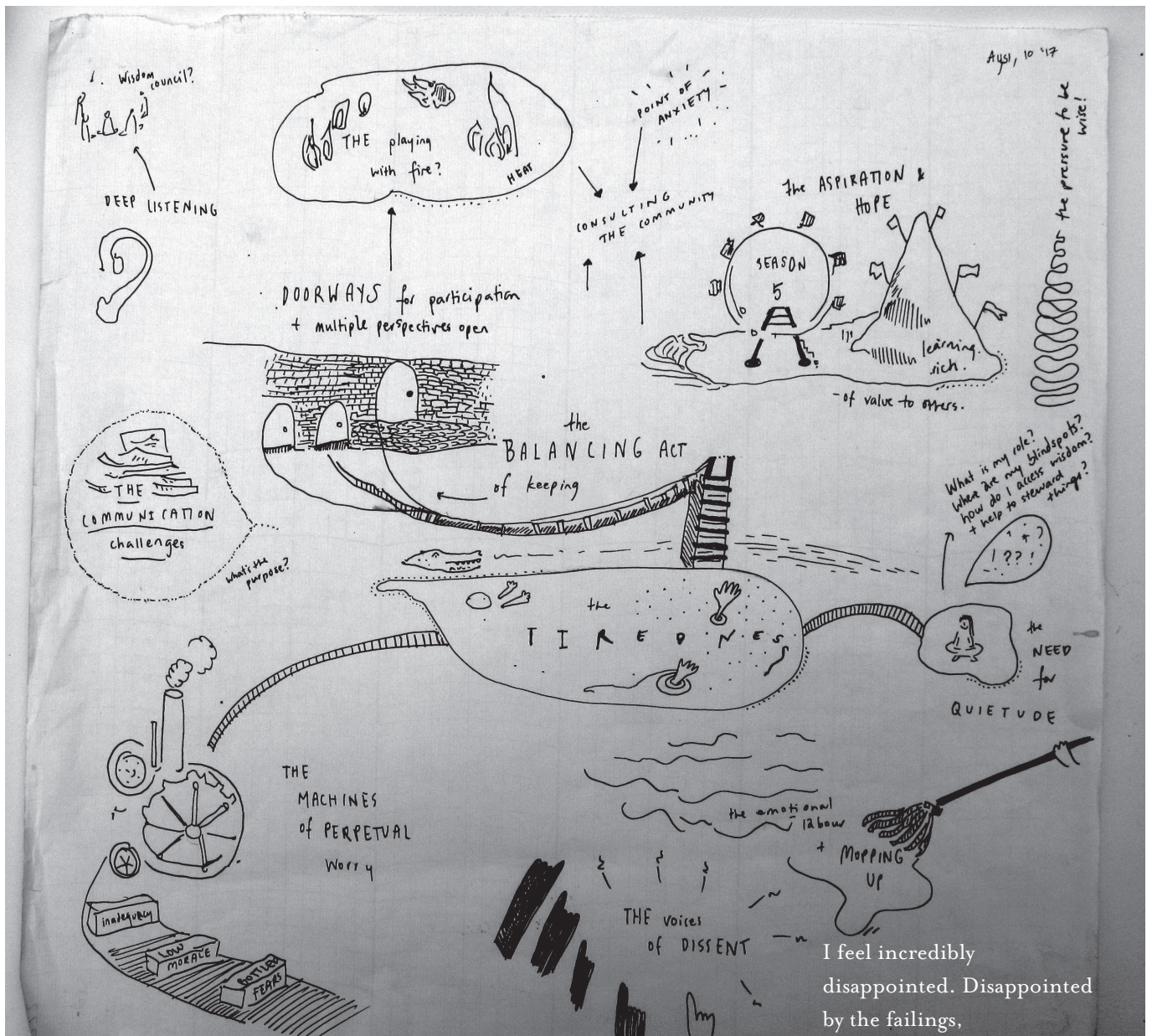


Figure 59: Mapping / the island of tiredness

8.2 *Drawing as autoethnography*

Being a visual person, drawing came more easily to me as a form of autoethnographic practice. In contrast to my written reflections, drawing afforded possibilities for achronological impressions that resisted a linear format. I could use the space and layout on the page to emphasise peripheral feelings and central ideas. I watched as my hand revealed my experiences through imagery, words and metaphor. The pictures I drew took on a life of their own. They began to speak back to me, a characteristic that Schön describes as ‘back talk’ (1983).

They said ‘you’re really tired’.
They said ‘slow down and take time to soak this in’
They said ‘you’ve been learning so much’
They said ‘I know it hurts, it’s ok for it to hurt’

Through this dialogic exchange I became aware that I had reached the edge of my relational expertise (Dindler and Iversen 2014). As a designer I was seeking to develop and learn from the situation I was in. Over time I recognised that Mike’s criticisms had inflamed my own cynicism and perception that the work of The Weekly Service was naive.

How fragile my hope and belief in a kinder world was!

Simultaneously, I grew aware that the kind and warm ways of relating that we had cultivated were fragile and that they had also hidden or concealed other aspects, like the capacity to disagree. I acknowledged that the same forces that I sought to transition away from, such as a desire for control, a need for certainty, or the desire for influence, existed within myself and the community I had grown to be a part of. This was an important realisation that kept me from determining that The Weekly Service was somehow unique or special when compared to other communities. What was also being ruptured was my illusion that I could somehow protect others from harm. In my position as a leader I felt responsible for people’s emotional states, something which Caro also noted in her own comments during our reflection on 2017. This highlights how the infrastructuring work of The Weekly Service was concerned with caring *for* others. Not everyone in the core team felt this responsibility in the same way, and some refused to accept that what we were doing was caring for others’ emotional needs. The rupture in our relations was a difficult lesson in transition. Through ruptures we can recognise that all human relations are tenuous and vulnerable to fracture. These insights deepened my commitment to sustaining relationships through difficult times.

Furthermore, through my reflections and drawings, I was also trying to articulate my 'body of wisdom'. This body of wisdom spoke quietly. It seemed to be linked to my position as a woman within a context where rupture was largely being framed and interpreted by male voices. My body of wisdom was connected to process, listening, gut, intuition, uncertainty, and trust. This island of wisdom sat in contrast to *What's your opinion? Island* – a place that I felt pushed into as a leader within the core team. Mapping these territories enabled me to occupy different landscapes within my internal space. In doing so I painted in the hoped for places that I longed to dwell. I kept them alive in my imagination. I intuited that this would be important for the future of my design practice. I hoped that they might become places that others could recognise over time.

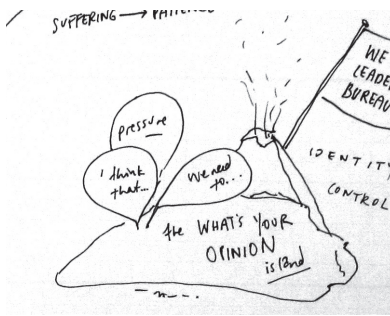


Figure 61: Mapping / what's your opinion island

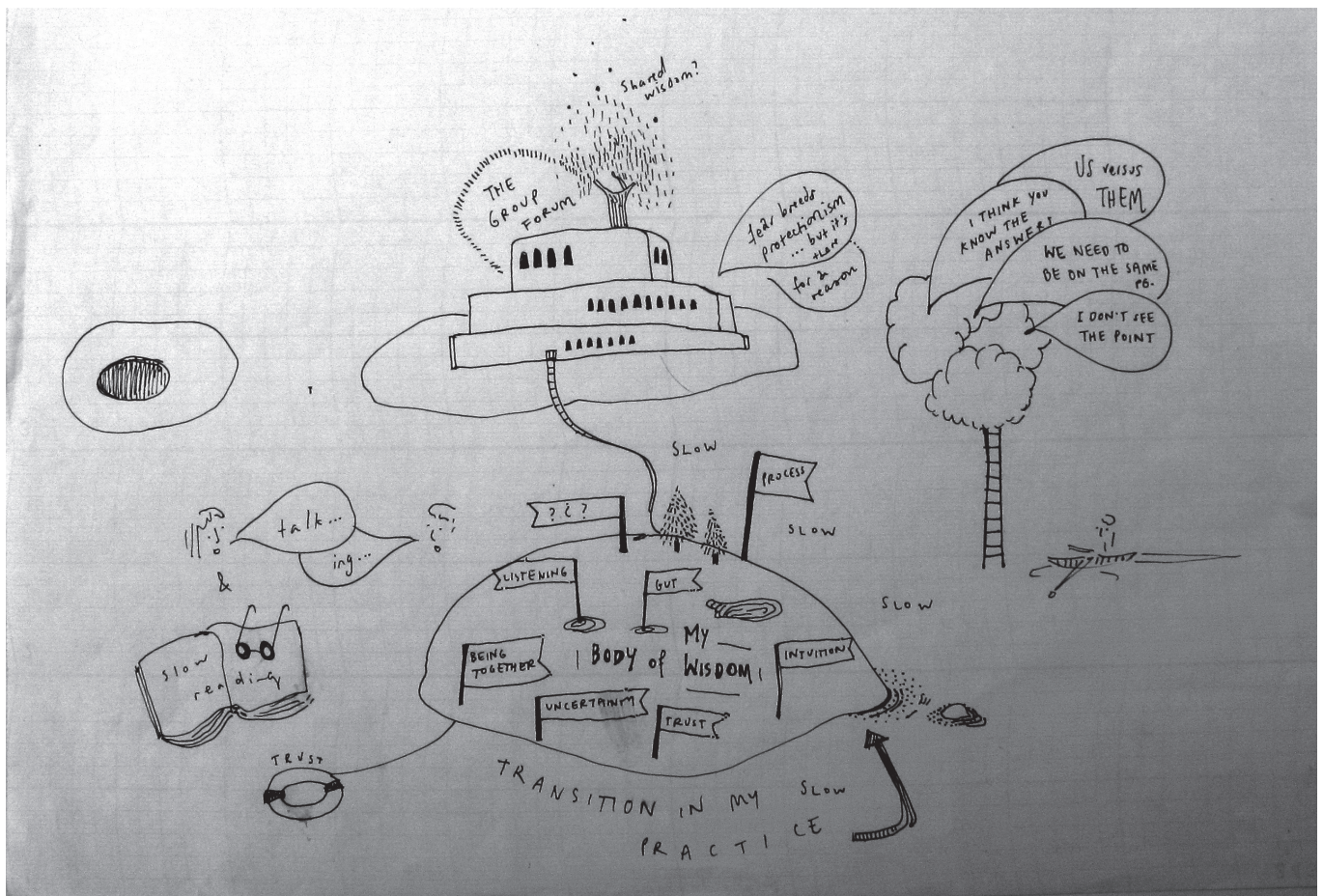


Figure 62: Mapping / my body of wisdom



Figure 63: Mapping / my inner community of selves

These drawings allowed me a freedom and a spaciousness that prose did not. They acted as ‘permission to immerse in the organic, juicy, and embodied ways of thinking, knowing, writing, and being’ (Metta 2013, 495) that needn’t make sense to others. Like the messy texts of autoethnographers, my drawings reflected the embodied and reflexive impulses that are characteristic of an ongoing attempt to remain authentically present to one’s own experience. They helped me to acknowledge that we cannot suppress disagreement on the way to a kinder future. Rather we must find ways to dwell in the in-between spaces and integrate what is emerging into our collective understanding. Including what has been repressed and ignored with ourselves. As we seek to move beyond old defensive patterns of relating and lean into different ways of being-knowing-&-doing, old doubts, wounds and vulnerabilities can surface. Being gentle with ourselves and others is important in this context. This is not easy work.

Importantly, autoethnography can also enable us to take greater responsibility for our own actions. Through drawing, I understood that my own invitational stance and desire for warmth may have contributed to creating further turbulence within the core team and suppressing the tensions that were brewing. At times my invitations for people to get involved were too open and rubbed against the reality of how we worked as a core team, potentially creating confusion and muddying the clarity of the work. This was captured through my illustration depicting ‘the balancing act of keeping doorways for participation open’ which I associated with ‘playing with fire’ (see Figure 64). This over-willingness to invite people in, highlighted to myself and others that I was still new to holding power, and perhaps unaware that I held it, or that I preferred to give it away, rather than use power responsibly. Additionally, early on in 2017 I had also tried to make light of the growing dissent within the member group, as I did not feel equipped to know how to deal with it. This was exacerbated by the relatively unconscious ways that I held power through my ability to influence the tone of atmospheres at the events that the core team convened.

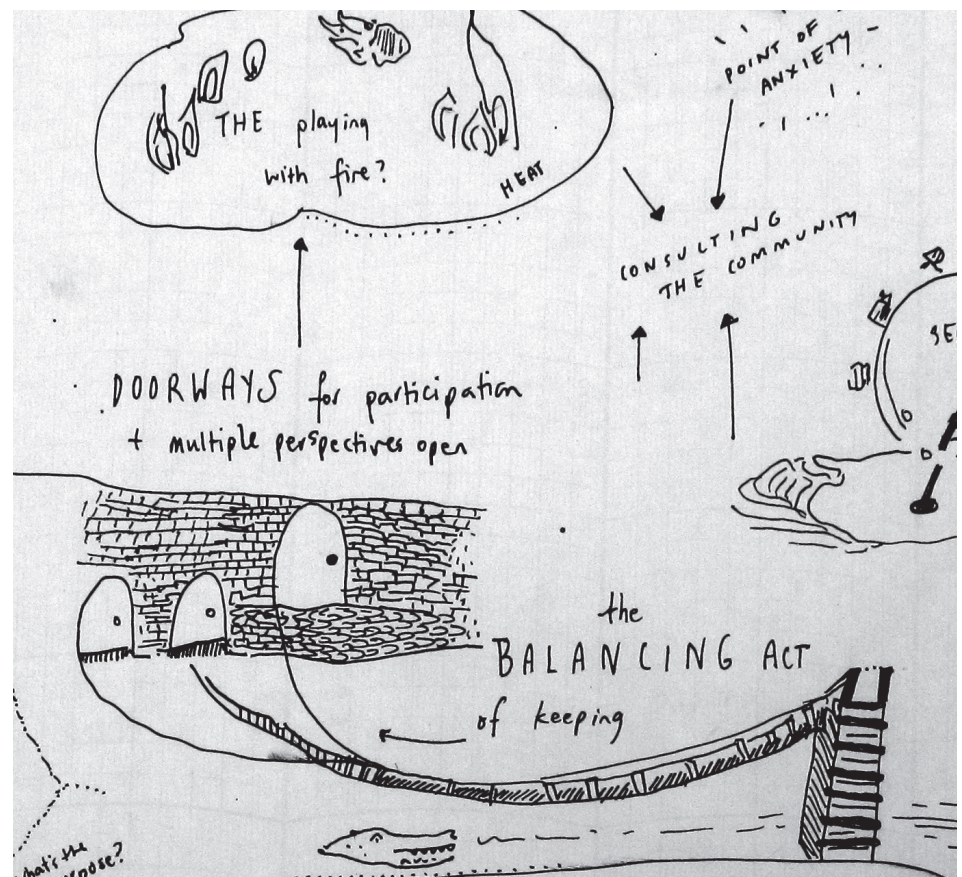


Figure 64: The balancing act of keeping multiple doorways for participation open

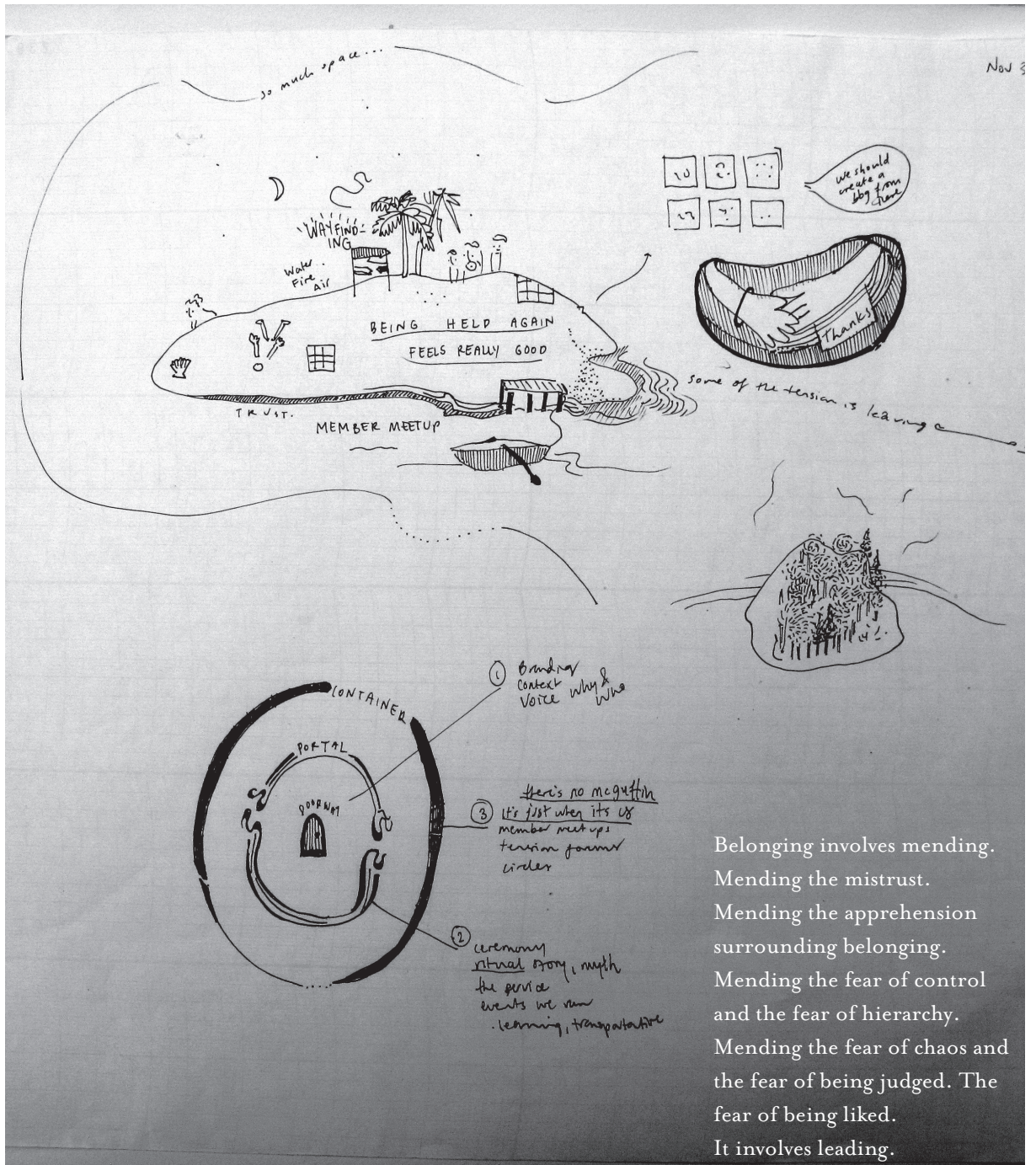


Figure 65: Mapping / the member meetup

Belonging involves mending.
 Mending the mistrust.
 Mending the apprehension
 surrounding belonging.
 Mending the fear of control
 and the fear of hierarchy.
 Mending the fear of chaos and
 the fear of being judged. The
 fear of being liked.
 It involves leading.

And now following. Within
 this field it's hard to know
 where I end and others begin.
 Our stories are intertwined,
 shifting each other, shaping
 each other. We are complicit
 now, in trying to muddle
 through. It's only just
 beginning.

8.3 Drawing as way-finding

Six months later, in mid-2018, the core team met to discuss the future of our engagements and commitment to The Weekly Service. I brought some of my drawings to the core team to help scaffold our conversations. The first drawing was a fluidly drawn map of the events that unfolded (Figure 66). As we engaged with this map Caro pointed out that something was missing. I had left out aspects of our personal lives, including the financial pressure that the Henry and Cam were under during 2017 as they both anticipated the arrival of children. In another instance, the map was pointed to and questions were posed: ‘Was this just a lot of human drama?’ In this regard, the map helped us to reveal aspects of our feelings towards what had unfolded during 2017, which made space for different perspectives.



Figure 66: Reflective map of 2017

are responsible for finding the grain of world's becoming and bending it towards their purpose. This entails balancing one's attunement to what is emerging or arising in contexts of practice and what ourselves or others might desire, in order to find a way through the present that cultivates greater possibilities towards desirable futures.

I noticed how some drawings seemed to lend themselves to way-finding more than others. Some drawings seemed to create further tension, as they closed off improvisation by being too overworked (See *Figure 69*). Thus, unfinished or loosely articulated ideas, were important to the practice of drawing as way-finding. Here drawing features as a mode of orientation, which probes possible pathways by intervening in the emerging present. As Paul Klee (1966) reminds us, drawing is not a material interpretation of 'real life', rather it is a

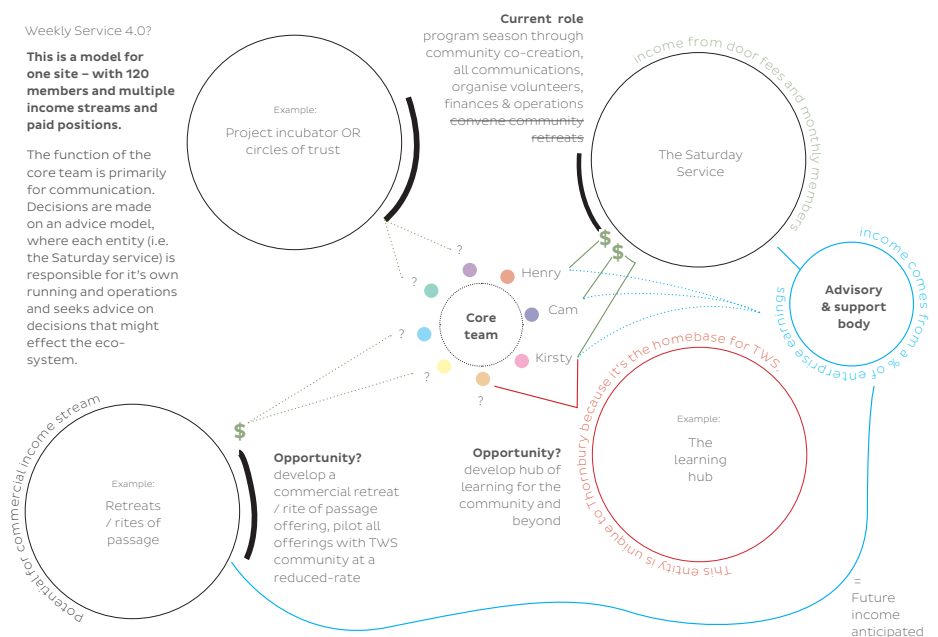


Figure 69: Proposed plan for the future of TWS

means to explore the 'coming to life' of a line on a page (31). However, most importantly, I suggest that without the insights disclosed by the more autoethnographic drawing, the transformative shift in how I understood the role of drawing as way-finding would not have surfaced.

8.4 In summary

I suggest that it was through autoethnographic drawing that I was able to tune into my own experience and the interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics of the situation. By slowing down and drawing my way through this difficult period of time, I was able to better understand what had happened and how I had contributed to shaping the dynamics that had caused the rupture. I developed a more mature

understanding of the ways in which invitations and atmospheres involve power dynamics that were to a certain degree unconsciously embedded in my practice and that of the core team. These drawings were not intended for a wider audience, but when they were brought to the core team, they provided a means to collectively make sense of what had unfolded and cast forwards into the future. These insights point to the powerful role drawing can play in making sense of complex relational dynamics, especially when relationality is central to what is being made and not simply the means through which designing occurs. In other words, drawing is an important method in transitional contexts, where transition is primarily concerned with the relational dynamics of those involved.

Conclusion

In the final chapter of this thesis I arc back to the positive sense of frustration that propelled this research. At the beginning of this PhD I was looking for ways of practicing that might enable me to travel with others, through these transitional times, that could open up ways of being-knowing-&-doing differently. In the following chapter I put forward what I now know, as a result of having done this research. I propose the idea of *designing in transition*, as a way of articulating the practice-oriented methodology that emerged out of my engagements with The Weekly Service. In doing so, I suggest that these transitional times call for a greater recognition of how designers might adapt or develop methods that could enable and reveal the ontological transitions underway in their own practice.

This conclusion contains a hand-drawn map of my search for an expanded practice, along with notes to designers in transition. I offer these final insights in the hope that they might also speak to others who are seeking to redirect / expand their practice within these transitional times.

Designing in Transition

Transition (*noun*)

the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.

The above definition of transition has a smoothness – a kind of implied movement from one thing to another, that masks the reality of transition in practice. In contrast, in this research I have attempted to depict the winding and messy aspects of ontological transitions. I have traced the key insights that emerged through my search for an expanded practice. This has not enabled me to discover solutions to the ecological crisis that we are facing, rather it has provided me with a way of reorientating my practice and travelling with others, in the pursuit of different ways of being-knowing-&-doing. In doing so, this PhD research seeks to provide a practice-orientated methodology for documenting and analysing transitions in practice that are concerned with ways of designing and ways of orientating oneself in relation to others and the broader ecological crisis. I refer to this process of transition as *designing in transition*.

Improvisation, collaboration and care have emerged as important concepts to this participatory research concerned with transition. These concepts have created a way of articulating my participatory design practice and clarifying the kind of future research I wish to engage in. Climate change is irrevocably changing our lived experience of being in community. It is important to move forward with concepts that offer researchers and designers ways of interrogating the kinds of futures they make with others. Improvisation offers a way of acknowledging the open-ended ways in which designing takes place, which lies beyond the role of design professionals. Care critically engages with relationality, dynamics of power and positionality in relation to the politics of participatory practice. Collaboration is of course wrapped up in both of these, but a more mature understanding of collaboration emerged through this research, where the notion of rupture is seen as a necessary aspect of transition. These concepts invite critical inquiry without stalling movement or action. They are able to include the messier aspects of working with others.

Designing and researching with others in contexts of transition, requires that as researchers we are able to reflect upon the kinds of approaches and methods that are appropriate to studying emerging

phenomena. The anthropologists Otto and Smith (2016), comment that within social science these methods are underdeveloped. Design practitioners tend towards a level of comfort with uncertainty and emergence, as these are often present within the design process itself. While there are movements towards a greater acknowledgement of uncertainty and emergence within DA research (Akama et al 2018), I suggest that further research is warranted in transitional contexts where these states manifest in the lives of others. Or in other words, DA offers a way of exploring the lived experience of emergence and uncertainty within transitional contexts.

This research reflects DA's relational and interventionist stance, as a mode of inquiry that is practice-orientated and committed to travelling along with others, in our joint efforts to shape how transitions might unfold in the present. It also draws on the theory of infrastructuring, to situate this longitudinal research within the discipline of Participatory Design. In combination with these approaches, I used four methods (autoethnography, drawing, interviewing and analysis) in an attempt to track and trace what was emerging within the context of The Weekly Service and my understanding of design practice. This led to a new appreciation of the subtle, but none-the-less impactful, phenomena and practices that influence participatory practice.

The nature of longitudinal research is such that, we can study these subtleties as they emerge and change over time, giving a wider perspective to how a relational design practice that is attuned to social processes, can be conceived and understood. As an analytical frame, infrastructuring acknowledges the open-ended, relational and ongoing aspects of design work. This was particularly helpful in my own case, where the longitudinal design work I engaged in didn't fit neatly into a series of design methods, workshops or tools. Infrastructuring however, does not account for the minor instances that often shape what emerges in contexts of practice. It was here that interviewing, drawing and autoethnography offered a way to continually trace, and later interrogate, the complexities of being part of an ever evolving community. In particular I suggest that the visual skills of designers could play a vital role in painting richer and more nuanced pictures of how we transition together towards ways of being-knowing-&-doing differently. I look forward to engaging in research in the future, within this arena.

In the remainder of this final chapter, I present a visual landscape of my search for an expanded practice. Within this landscape I discuss some of the terrain I traversed along the way, and the insights that were gleaned through the research process.

Designing in Transition

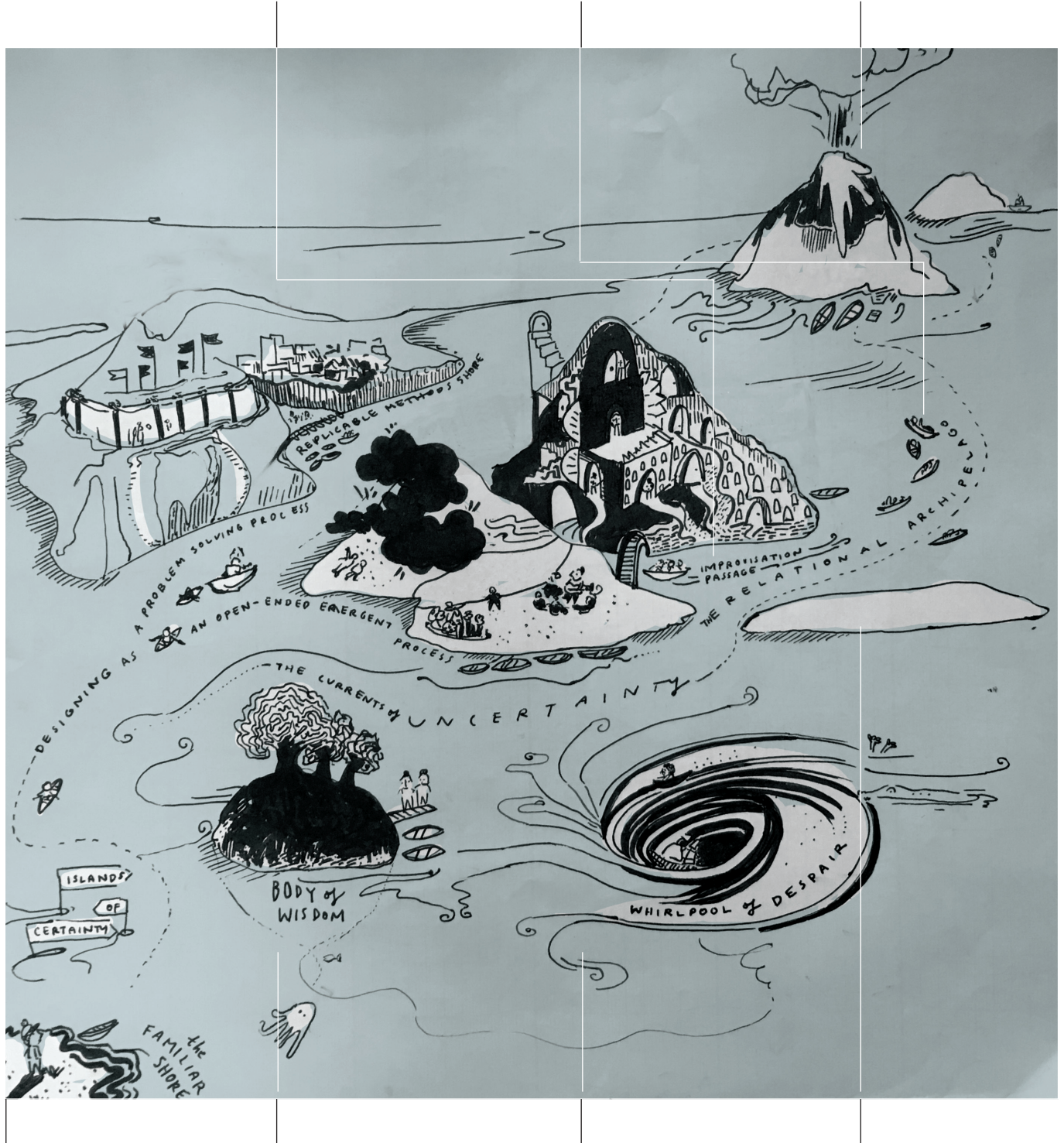
Mapping the landscape of a search for an expanded practice.

05/ Intimacy is cultivated between people through ongoing acts of alignment that enable us to improvise within uncertain ecological times.

06/ The relational archipelago offers a view of transition that is relational and embodied, and grows through our encounters with others and the worlds in which we dwell.

07/ Ruptures remind us that tension is a painful but necessary process that helps us to recognise what has been ignored or suppressed.

Figure 70: Mapping the landscape of a search for an expanded practice



01/ A positive sense of frustration propelled this inquiry forwards. I set off from the familiar shores of visual communication design in search of an expanded practice.

02/ My own body of wisdom grew and evolved over time. I easily overlooked it in favour of other's frameworks and ideas before returning at a later time.

03/ Meeting despair necessitated a deeper transition in thought and practice. It helped me to realise that I cannot transition my practice without help and support from others.

04/ This unnamed island is a reminder that we will always get lost or reach an impasse when undergoing transition. It is here that we come to know our own resilience and capacity to carry on.

The familiar shores of visual communication design

Notes to a designer in transition #1

You already have a practice. It might be visual communication design. It might be industrial design. Do not rush to replace these skills with others. Do not dematerialise your practice all too readily. And if you do, notice how you may feel adrift. Notice what materiality means to you. What does it enable you to know and do?

A positive sense of frustration propelled this inquiry forwards. I set off from familiar shores of visual communication design in search of an expanded practice. I had a desire for a participatory practice that would enable me to travel with others in these transitional times. As I reached for other modes of practice, I assumed that whatever it was that I was transitioning towards, would require a dematerialisation of my practice. Over time however, my visual skills became central to my capacity to navigate and design the conditions for transition. They would help me to discover ways of aligning people towards the emergence of different ways of being-knowing-&-doing. Within *Chapter 5*, I discussed how I used my visual skills to craft invitations that were well framed and spacious enough to enable further improvisation. Three of the four invitational tactics highlighted in this thesis (roles, visual score, rhythm) were highly visual artefacts that supported greater involvement in the shaping of The Weekly Service. The success of these visuals was also dependent on the specific relationality that had accrued between people, including who was extending the invitation. The visuals that I made therefore cannot be detached from the situations and relationality out of which they arose. This research demonstrates the supportive role that visual communication designers can play within grassroots infrastructuring contexts. Visual communication design can create clarity and continuity within infrastructuring processes, while supporting other people's improvisatory actions.

Furthermore, this research demonstrates the potency of drawing as a process of way-finding in collaborative and transitional contexts. Drawing became an anchor as my investigations took me deeper into the relational dynamics of transition. I would come to appreciate the central, but sometimes hidden, nature of my visual practice – it's those things that one does almost automatically that are the hardest to see. I situated the drawings I developed in the later stages of this research in dialogue with autoethnography. Autoethnography supports researchers to begin with personal experience and study 'us' in relationships and situations (Ellis 2007). Drawing offers a potent means by which to bring to the foreground half-formed hunches, intuitions, and tentative

The familiar
shores of visual
communication design



inclinations surrounding interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics. During the period of tension at The Weekly Service, drawing enabled me to create 'back-and-forth movement between experiencing a vulnerable self and observing and revealing the broader context of experience' (Ellis 2007, 14). Engaging with autoethnography through drawing contributed to a much deeper appreciation of the complexities of transition as a relational process of change.

My body of wisdom

Notes to a designer in transition #2

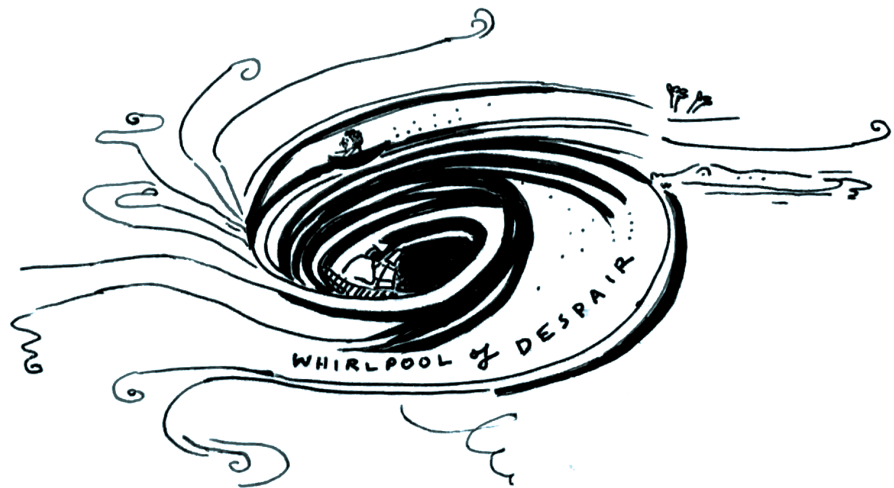
As you turn towards the difficulties of these transitional times, do not underestimate how much fear surrounds this issue. In an environment in which predictions surrounding climate change are increasingly quite dire, uncertainty will likely provoke reactive thinking and polarised politics in yourself and others you work with. The idea of the end of modernity is not easy to grapple with. It can induce a type of fright, that is deeply unsettling. Understand that what is being asked of you is not outward solutions, but ontological change. Resist the desire to move on, towards 'action'. The ever evolving rhythms of your inquiry will be generative of meanings and forms in time. Do not presume to know what they will be. Direct your energy and attention to the process of keeping the inquiry going. This is all that is being asked of you, to sustain the inquiry, to sustain the rhythm, this is the art of *designing in transition*.

My Body of Wisdom



As we grow our capacity to travel along with others and learn to design with them, our tacit understandings of participatory practice deepen and strengthen over time. This tacit knowing is sometimes hard to articulate. My own body of wisdom grew as I practiced designing over the course of this research. I refer to this as a body of wisdom, because it was through embodied encounters that I grew more adept at attuning to my surroundings and the kinds of interventions that might support transitions. However, in the early phases of this research I was drawn to more dominant frameworks and ideas (such as design as problem solving). I initially made assumptions about my role as a designer in collaborative settings and other's willingness to tackle the ecological crisis. I integrated a deeper understanding of how socially organised denial (Norgaard 2011) functions within social situations through events such as *'Inner landscapes in a changing climate'*, and I understood that coming together within an impasse is *'a fine balance to walk'*. I tempered my anxiety with patience and a sense of what might be possible within the context of The Weekly Service.

Coming together within uncertain ecological times requires us to suspend judgement and resist acting quickly by trying to solve or move somewhere other than the present. It's my view that as designers we must allow our understanding of design to emerge from within the contexts in which we find ourselves, rather than by employing established frameworks. This does not mean reinventing design anew each time, but rather paying attention to how designing is going on and adapting and evolving our practice to align with others who we are working with.



The whirlpool
of despair

The whirlpool of despair

Notes to a designer in transition #3

Any engagement with ontology is an engagement with belief. Prepare to have your beliefs tested, shattered and then reformed. This may entail coming to terms with your own unmet grief as you reconnect with parts of yourself that you may have forgotten in the rush towards progress. This is not a linear process, you will return here again and again. You will need to develop the capacity to critique the modern / colonial imaginary. This will help you to sustain your engagement with the ecological crisis and to find ways to bring people along with you.

A deeper understanding of the losses surrounding climate change and the potential scale of future loss, can often trigger strong emotional responses, such as despair. Encountering despair necessitated a deeper transition in my thinking and practice. It helped me to realise that I cannot transition my practice or world-view without help and support from others. Encounters with despair remind us that transition is a process that is neither straightforward nor smooth, and at times it is genuinely painful. If design wants to concern itself with transitions, then as designers we must begin to understand the lived implications of what that word means and how we might create infrastructures and ways of infrastructuring that support it. Transition towards new mindsets / ways of being are hard fought for. They do not come easily. They require patience, gentleness and a kindness towards ourselves and others, as we unlearn much of what we've been taught to value. This requires different understandings of who we might become, and ways of designing that can nurture forth these possibilities.

The unnamed island

Notes to a designer in transition #4

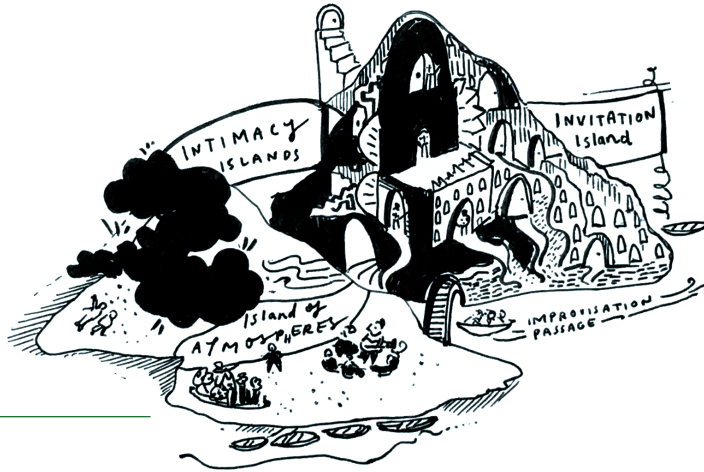
When you are lost or at the limit, you may not know where you are or why you are drawing / photographing / writing / cooking, but leave a trace for your future self, who will look from a different vantage point. You may notice how your ability to see changes. As your perspective shifts, the lines you weave into the fabric of the world will also. At times, it will be the traces themselves that help you to recognise that change is underway. Traces can make ontological change visible, when there's little tangible evidence of the change. As you become ever more attuned to your traces, you may find that they become devices of orientation that can help you to move forwards – way-finders on the path to an unknown future.

It is highly likely that we will get lost or arrive at an impasse when designing in transition. It is here that we come to know our own resilience and capacity to carry on. I first arrived at this unnamed island after the despair that I had encountered through *The Studio at the Edge of the World*. Through cooking *The Monthly Feast*, I developed recipes for uncertain times that provided me with a way to move beyond impasse. Through the practice of cooking I was able to reconnect with a sense of hopefulness. I noticed how in my despair, the simple practice of cooking for others became a micro-social and political practice.



The unnamed island

I also returned here when tension and conflict unfolded within *The Weekly Service*. Once again I had to find a way through. I rediscovered drawing during this phase of the research, as a means to authentically move through the sometimes painful aspects of being in relation to others.



Intimacy

An intimacy orientation

Notes to a designer in transition #5

You will learn how to bring people into alignment through your capacity to invite. Collaboration needs structure, but you will learn through trial and error as to how much. Leave gaps for others to fill. Infrastructuring is, as Star and Ruhleder (1996) comment, like building a boat with others, while sailing it. However, on this journey you won't know where you're sailing, other than it will be different from the shore you left behind and that you are part of what is being changed. In this environment it's vitally important that you enjoy the journey (as you may never arrive). You will learn that sustaining the cultivation of other life paths in practice, requires joy and care. Here atmospheres can be helpful. As elemental forces, atmospheres can fill us with wonder and energy that enables us to sacrifice a dominant ontology for the unknown. Through osmosis we can become re-enchanted with the world, in all its mystery, particularity, beauty and darkness. Atmospheres are alive with possibility and ever-changing, like the world itself. Stay attuned to this phenomena, it has something to teach you. Your practice may emerge from a greater attunement to it.

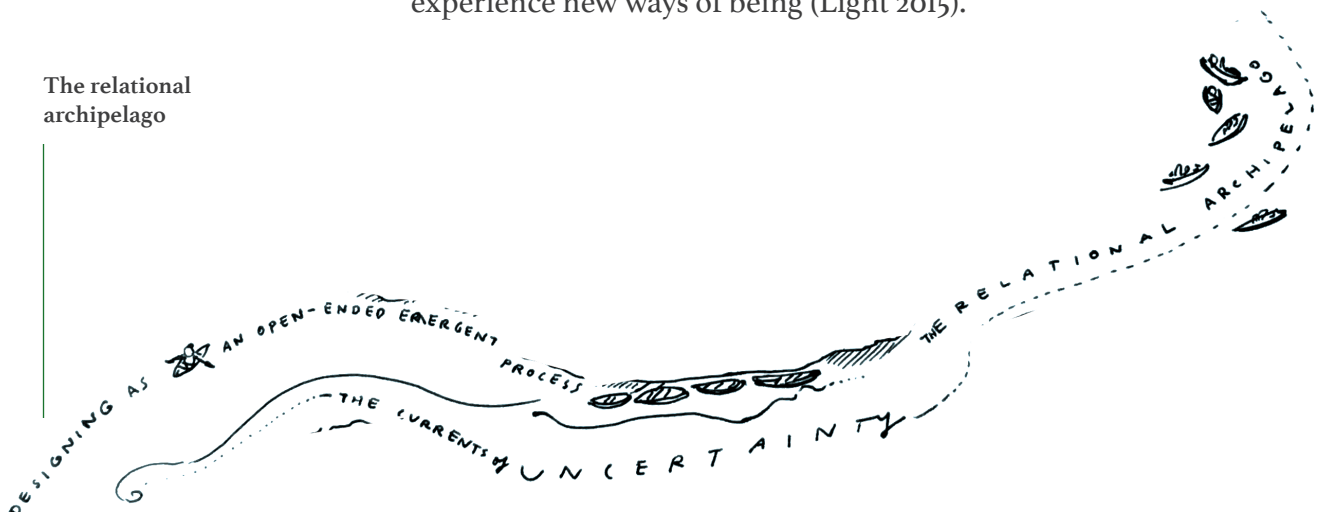
Designing in transition requires that we learn how to bring people together in transitional times through ongoing acts of alignment. In this research I situated the work of The Weekly Service in conversation with Participatory Design and Design Anthropology concepts and methods, namely, infrastructuring as a process of ongoing acts of alignment and design as improvisation. Both infrastructuring and improvisation are helpful in recognising the emergent and open-ended ways in which design takes place in communal contexts. Furthermore, I acknowledged the intimacy orientation of our work, by drawing on Thomas Kasulis' (2002) framework. By foregrounding intimacy, I was able to analyse and lend credibility to the situated and relational ways in which the core team worked to align people within The Weekly Service.

The relational archipelago

Notes to a designer in transition #6

To enable an opening into other ways of being-knowing-&-doing, you must be open to being in an intimate exchange with yourself, others and the more-than-human world. You cannot do this work alone (repeat x5). Your inquiry will grow roots as you improvise. You are growing an infrastructure with others, in which you will transform yourself.

The relational archipelago offers a broader view of transition that is relational and embodied, and grows through our encounters with others and the worlds in which we dwell. The cultivation of relations is relatively intangible, ongoing and never completed (Light and Akama 2014). When designing in transition, people engage in a mutual transformation towards unknown possibilities. I echo many others, who suggest that designers cannot sit outside the encounters or infrastructures they seek to create (Agid 2016, Akama & Prendiville 2013, du Plessis 2015, Meroni & Sangiorgi 2011, Suchman 2002). Throughout this dissertation I have reflected on the ways in which I was caught up in the movement of transition and experienced the challenges of coming into contact with despair and being a part of an ever evolving community of relations. This research therefore suggests that it is through our interventions that we can come to learn about and experience new ways of being (Light 2015).



Furthermore, I propose that by viewing transition as a process of reorientating the way we relate to ourselves, others and the places where we dwell, what constitutes design also changes. Through this research I seek to demonstrate how infrastructuring might enable groups to improvise towards more relationally attuned ways of being-knowing-&-doing. This means viewing change as a reciprocal process, that happens on the 'borders of our sensing, thinking, feeling, moving bodies' (Gibson-Graham 2007, 127).

7.

Rupture



Rupture

Notes to a designer in transition #7

The art of designing in transition involves transforming and working in careful ways with one's own inheritances, perspectives and life-orientations in the company of others. Remember, it takes courage to care, (*and sometimes ruptures*) to be altered.

Finally, ruptures remind us that tension is a sometimes painful but necessary part of grassroots infrastructuring that helps us to recognise the power dynamics within communities. Tension is always a part of group process and it provides possibilities for further improvisation and creativity as we learn to become more capable at sustaining relationships through difficult and conflicting times. Furthermore, ruptures also help us to see that processes of transition cannot be controlled – transitions unfold in unexpected ways that grow our capacity to attend to whatever is emerging.

More broadly, I suggest that in uncertain ecological times we (particularly in the West) are experiencing a rupture of previously held certainties on a massive scale. As the relational fabric that once held our worlds together begins to unravel, we must not shy away from contesting the deeply destructive capacities of large-scale infrastructures. Conversely, we must not lose sight of our capacity to cultivate regenerative relations and heal in the aftermath of rupture and tension. A broader recognition of rupture as the underlying social and psychic condition (or atmosphere), is helpful to keep in mind when cultivating communities of care. I bring a compassionate lens to the struggle and inherently difficult task that many of us face in trying to work out how best to respond to what appears to be an often 'depressing and frightening world' (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017). At the completion of this research, I remain deeply committed to infrastructuring care, however I also acknowledge the degree of (emotional) labour involved in this practice.

A final note

It's been a privilege to work within an emergent community as an embedded design researcher and to travel alongside others, as we collectively negotiated our responses (and responsibilities) within these transitional times.

Designing in transition is not an easy practice. At times, it can appear like the ground has been pulled from underneath you. In this context, it's not grand gestures that are needed, but an ability to stay with the uncertainty of being in the unknown and present to the possibilities that lie between us. When ontological transitions are underway we cannot predetermine the destination, but by attending to the quality of how we relate and orient ourselves within our worlds, we can begin to sniff out potential pathways.

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Appendix A



College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN)
College of Design and Social Context
NH&MRC Code: EC00237

Notice of Approval

Date: **27 May 2016**

Project number: **CHEAN A 0000020113-04/16**

Project title: **Co-designing rituals for transitional times**

Risk classification: **Low risk**

Chief investigator: **Dr Yoko Akama**

Status: **Approved**

Approval period: From: **27 May 2016** To: **05 July 2018**

The following documents have been reviewed and approved:

| Title | Version | Date |
|--|---------|------------|
| Risk Assessment and Application form | 1 | 12.05.2016 |
| Participant Information and Consent Form | 1 | 12.05.2016 |

The above application has been approved by the RMIT University CHEAN as it meets the requirements of the *National statement on ethical conduct in human research* (NH&MRC, 2007).

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of chief investigator

It is the responsibility of the above chief investigator to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by CHEAN. Approval is valid only whilst the chief investigator holds a position at RMIT University.

2. Amendments

Approval must be sought from CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project. To apply for an amendment use the request for amendment form, which is available on the HREC website and submitted to the CHEAN secretary. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.

3. Adverse events

You should notify the CHEAN immediately (within 24 hours) of any serious or unanticipated adverse effects of their research on participants, and unforeseen events that might affect the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Annual reports

Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. Annual reports must be submitted by the anniversary of approval of the project for each full year of the project. If the project is of less than 12 months duration then a final report only is required.

5. Final report

A final report must be provided within six months of the end of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

6. Monitoring

Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by the CHEAN at any time.

7. Retention and storage of data

The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data according to the requirements of the *Australian code for the responsible conduct of research* (section 2) and relevant RMIT policies.

8. Special conditions of approval

Nil.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title above.



College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN)
College of Design and Social Context
NH&MRC Code: EC00237

Professor Joseph Siracusa
Deputy Chairperson
RMIT DSC CHEAN A

cc: Ms Suzana Kovacevic (Ethics Officer/CHEAN secretary), Kirsten Moegerlein



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Participant Information

Title: Co-designing Rituals for Transitional Times

Investigators:

Kirsten Moegerlein

Assoc Prof. Yoko Akama

Prof. Sarah Pink

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask the investigator.

Who is involved in this research?

This project is led by Kirsten Moegerlein, (with supervision from Associate Professor Yoko Akama and Professor Sarah Pink) who will be analysing the research and developing academic publications based on this work. The project is approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.

Why have you been approached?

You have been approached because you have attended the Weekly Service or you contribute to the evolution of The Weekly Service in some form.

What is the project about?

This project is concerned with how weekly curated events can facilitate meaningful dialogue surrounding the social and ecological challenges we face.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Share your experiences surrounding your involvement with The Weekly Service.
2. Discuss your thoughts and feelings on a particular topic (ie. climate change, community, connection to nature).
3. Participate in sense-making activities with the researchers to stimulate further dialogue and discussion.

What are the possible risks or disadvantages?

There are no risks associated with this research. However, if you have any food allergies you think may cause you harm please let the researchers know before participating. If you have any concerns about your participation in this project then you should contact the research for further advice, the RMIT Ethics Officer (details below) for a confidential discussion.

What are the benefits associated with participation?

By participating in this research you will help to build an understanding of how community events can be used to stimulate dialogue and discussion surrounding the social and ecological crisis we face.

What will happen to the information you provide?

Everything recorded will be treated confidentially and not used for any purpose outside of the research. The research data will be kept under locked conditions at RMIT University or on encrypted hard drives for security. All archived data associated with this project will be destroyed after 10 years of the projects end. If you wish we will provide you with copies of video recordings and photographs we have made of you and will also send you copies of articles in which we discuss the research we have done with you (in English), by

email, for your comments, before their publication, for a 28-day period. Information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) a court order is produced, or (3) you provide the researchers with permission.

We will produce academic publications based on the research and present the research at conferences. We will only include the video recordings and photographs in publications or show them at conferences or on our own website with your permission.

What are your rights as a participant?

- The right to withdraw from participation at any time.
- The right to request that any recording cease.
- The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase risk to you.
- The right to have any questions answered at anytime.

Whom should I contact if I have questions?

Please feel free to email Kirsten Moegerlein if you have any questions or concerns, or if you would like to discuss any aspects of this research.

Thank you very much for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Kirsten Moegerlein, BA (Hons), MA
Phd Student at RMIT
School of Media and Communication

Supervisory team:

Associate Professor Yoko Akama
Professor Sarah Pink

If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001. Tel: (03) 9925 2251 or email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au