

Placing people in time

David John Kenkel

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DOCTORAL THESIS

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Adams (1995), in her illuminating book on time, argued that outside of the (relatively new) linearity of modernity and science, most peoples and living systems do not experience the passage of time as unidirectional, but rather, as multiple, spiralling, interwoven cycles. Cycles that often involve departures and returns.

The theme of cycles of departures and returns has certainly been powerful in the experience of undertaking this work. I am left with a growing and repeating sense of deep gratitude for the places and peoples that have supported me in undertaking this PhD. My mother's love and commitment to both place and people and her profound curiosity about what might enable better ways to live continuously returned to me as I thought and struggled my way through this work. I see those cycles of love and curiosity repeating in the lives of my children and I am deeply grateful for the inspiration and support they have generously provided me. Thank you, Rea and Rowan!

I am deeply blessed to have been able to write this work in the same locality I grew up in on the Whenua (land) of Te Kawerau ā Maki and to have had a supportive and loving partner for all those many years, including these last years in undertaking the large task of a PhD. Thank you, Annette, our life together has been a blessing for me. In what looks to be an increasingly difficult global future I know that I am very lucky, and I do not take this luck for granted. I also need to thank my large, extended family who have been most graciously tolerant of my eccentricities and absences as my thinking has developed through this work.

People who were there at the beginning and are again very present for me as I finish: David Epston, who has always been an inspiration; my dear friend, Kay O'Connor, who

introduced me to the notion of whimsical academia; David Jones who, for 30 years, has been both a loving source of challenge and inspiration for new thinking. Many thanks also to my dear friend, Ian Hyslop, for all the Guinness, encouragement, and wise conversation.

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Where I departed from in 2005 after completing a master's and where I have now returned to in completing this PhD cycle back to the question of what manner/s of subjectivity might allow us to live with more grace between each other and the places that we hope will cherish us? The progression of this work has not changed the question, merely deepened my understanding of its criticality for our shared futures. At the last, and much as at the beginning, I am left with a deep curiosity about what enables the development and maintenance of reverence. Reverence for each other and reverence for the places we belong to.

David Kenkel

ABSTRACT

In this work I am interested in exploring the putative nature of future subjects /persons in politico-social community able to live in ways allowing a reciprocally sustaining relationship between people and place over time. A starting premise of the work is that a range of environmental and societal predicaments will need to be managed in future decades. The work draws on a range of theoretical traditions, including social constructionist views of the self and positivist research on the environmental challenges the future will bring. A critical grounded theory abductive approach is used to explore possibilities that may emerge from the discursive human relationship with what seems likely to be an increasingly difficult future environmental and societal reality. Following a critical theory tradition, a central tenet of the work is a critical stance towards the global socio-economic influence of neo-liberalism on capacity to shift away from endless growth capitalism and the concomitant rapid degradation of the environment. The work is not hopeful about halting or fixing environmental or societal degradation. Instead, and in alignment with Guattari's (1989) call for needed new subjective ecologies of the social, mental and the environmental, hope is explored through new possibilities for subjectivity likely to emerge in consequence of the potential predicaments the future will bring.

RESUMEN

En este trabajo me ha interesado explorar la supuesta naturaleza en la comunidad político-social de los futuros sujetos/personas capaces de vivir de manera que permita una relación recíprocamente sostenible entre las personas y el lugar a lo largo del tiempo. Una premisa inicial del trabajo es que en las próximas décadas habrá que gestionar una serie de premisas ambientales y sociales. El trabajo se basa en una variedad de tradiciones teóricas, incluyendo visiones construccionistas sociales del yo e investigación positivista sobre los desafíos ambientales que el futuro traerá. Se utiliza un enfoque crítico de teoría fundamentada abductiva para explorar las posibilidades que pueden surgir de la relación discursiva humana con lo que parece ser una realidad ambiental y social futura cada vez más difícil. Siguiendo una tradición de teoría crítica, un principio central del trabajo es una postura crítica hacia la influencia socioeconómica global del neoliberalismo en la capacidad de alejarse del capitalismo de crecimiento interminable y la consiguiente degradación rápida del medio ambiente. El trabajo no espera detener o solucionar la degradación ambiental o social. En cambio, y en consonancia con la llamada de Guattari (1989) a nuevas ecologías subjetivas necesarias de lo social, mental y ambiental, se explora esa esperanza a través de nuevas posibilidades de subjetividad que probablemente surgirán como consecuencia de los posibles escenarios que el futuro traerá.

RESUM

En aquest treball m'ha interessat explorar la suposada naturalesa a la comunitat polític-social dels futurs subjectes/persones capaces de viure de manera que permeti una relació recíprocament sostenible entre les persones i el lloc al llarg del temps. Una premisa inicial del treball és que en les pròximes dècades hauran de gestionar-se una sèrie de premisses ambientals i socials. El treball es basa en una varietat de tradicions teòriques, incloent visions constructivistes socials del jo i recerca positivista sobre els reptes ambientals que el futur portarà. S'utilitza un enfocament crític de teoria fonamentada abductiva per explorar les possibilitats que poden sorgir de la relació discursiva humana amb el que sembla ser una realitat ambiental i social futura cada vegada més difícil. Seguint una tradició de teoria crítica, un principi central del treball és una postura crítica cap a la influència socioeconòmica global del neoliberalisme en la capacitat d'allunyar-se del capitalisme de creixement interminable i la conseqüent degradació ràpida del medi ambient. El treball no espera aturar o solucionar la degradació ambiental o social. En canvi, i en consonància amb la crida de Guattari (1989) a noves ecologies subjectives necessàries del social, mental i ambiental, s'explora aquesta esperança a través de noves possibilitats de subjectivitat que probablement sorgiran com a conseqüència dels possibles escenaris que el futur portarà.

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Musing on Values and Hopes- a Prelude

Histories

In 2005 I decided to respond to the desperate story the results of my master's thesis were telling me by looking for more hopeful stories. The shift toward a search for more hopeful stories happened as I was in the final stages of completing the thesis in 2005. My master's thesis delved into the murky world of the pernicious influence of neo-liberalism¹ on children's sense of self and the future. I was interested in how dominant socio-political ideologies take root in how young people understand themselves and conduct their lives. I was particularly interested in how discourses of individual future success operate as vectors of instruction for ideals of how the self should approach passage through life (Kenkel, 2005). In retrospect, I found this ugly work involving frightening personal insights.

Completing this work, I was shaken to realise that what I was seeing was the enactment writ small in young children's lives, hopes and ambitions of an economic philosophy that is

¹ For the purposes of early clarification, neo-liberalism can be understood to be an actively hegemonic ideology that has been the dominant political, economic, (and increasingly social) paradigm for the last 30 years in the West. As Saad-Filho and Johnston state: "...it is fundamentally a new social order" (2005, p. 9). Initially proposed as a perfect recipe for creating collective well-being through the interaction of entrepreneurial self-interested individuals within an unrestrained market, it is increasingly apparent that neo-liberal policies in fact operate instead as a global enabling device to funnel resources to a smaller and smaller proportion of the world's population. Further chapters will explore neo-liberalism in more depth.

(arguably) destructive of the living world.² I was particularly struck at the time by what is implied for societies' broader capacity to plan ahead when collective social good is understood to be best served by individuals embracing personal greed. When this combines with neo-liberalism's (considered as a relatively coherent story of the subject) overinflated assessment of the individual ability to create desired futures with little reference to structural context, a very particular kind of limited imaginative capacity becomes embodied as commonplace (Rose, 1998; 1999).

In my opinion (then and now) it is not an imagination well equipped to manage the collective need for individuals to put aside personal greed for the sake of future generations. I saw then – all too clearly – a recipe for an imaginatively crippled generation at the time when we (as a global society) needed a generation capable of a soaring transpersonal vision. This was a frightening insight. Seeing a recipe for crippling the imagination of a generation I began to wonder what the recipe for enabling imagination might be? In 2005, I began to wonder what the recipe might be for producing people able to better manage planning our planetary way out of the catastrophe that potentially confronts us. In the subsequent years, my thinking has shifted away from what might be the recipe for the nature of the subject able to fix the problems we face, toward the humbler question of; what might the nature of people in future be, who are better able than we are now to live in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place? The work of this thesis now looks for hope amongst the cracks and shaded places of our societies. It looks

² Neo-liberal policies and approaches are increasingly understood to be fundamentally incompatible with the kinds of shifts in attitude, policy, and behaviour needed if there is to be any hope of avoiding the worst effects of a global ecological catastrophe. Further chapters will explore the relationship in more depth.

toward what people might be like in future, who might do better than we do now and where amongst the ‘now’ the origins of these folks might be.

Loving Place

For me, loving a place – as I do my home – is not a passive experience, it involves active obligations. It involves the duty to notice when something is wrong and to do one’s best to fix the wrong. I also find that passionately loving where I am from makes it easier for me to imagine that other places are also worth loving and equally deserve a duty of care.

As my mother (Catherine Kenkel, nee Stephen) explained to me when I was much younger; an advantage of having an abiding sense of home in beloved places is that your body and mind learn young that place can and should be loved. Knowing this in ways that are visceral, thoughtful, and practical means that, as you move through life, you are then more likely to understand that new places you encounter also deserve love and care. My mother cared passionately about human-wellbeing and believed (as do I) that being able to cherish place makes it more likely that people will be able to cherish each other. My mother believed that the ability to cherish was something that, once learned, could and should be applied to both one’s environment and the inhabitants of that environment. Born in 1920, my mother came earlier than most to the now reasonably common idea that social justice and care of the environment need to be intimately interwoven if either is to be effective.

As this story goes on, I will talk more about my mother. The story this thesis attempts to tell circles about the nagging question that has teased me since 2005 and only in 2012 emerged in words small enough to make sense if said in one sentence:

The question is:

“What kind of people might do better in the future than we presently do at living in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place over time?”

I am interested in this question because as an environmentalist, social activist, and lover of place, I do not think we do well at this now.

And time is running out for us to learn how. Many others agree that the environmental situation is dire, and that action needs to be taken soon if the environmental decline is not to become irrevocable (Bender, 2003; Emmett, 2013; Hansen, 2010). Increasingly people are recognising that the current discourses around the issues of climate change and its ‘fixes’ are not doing service to the crisis that needs attending to. Paul Kingsnorth, in discussing the Dark Mountain manifesto, summarises this beginning shift as “perhaps we do not have issues to fix so much as predicaments to endure” (2009, p. 5).

The question of what manner of self, personhood, or subject³ might do better living in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place over time has an added urgency because it is so

³ *Subject* is a term I often use in preference to terms such as *person* or *self*. Subject, is both specific and slippery as a concept. Within post-structural thought, the word subject carries specific and multi-layered meanings. Implicit in the word is the notion that persons are subject to forces and productive discourses persons are determined to be persons by the nature of the discourses that they are subject to in detailing what personhood is. To put this simply; we are created as persons by the forces that tell us what persons are. We are made as subjects in relation to these forces. Discourses both position and constitute subjects. The use of the word subject does not imply a deterministic view of human nature, nor a view that people are the passive subjects of forces. Subjects are active, that is they are in active interpretative play with multiple discourses and forces. For instance, when the question of agency arises, subjects can be thought of as active free agents and at the same time as subject to the performance of freedom in alignment with a particular conception of freedom (Butler, 1997; Gergen, 1995; Henriques et al., 1998; Parker, 1999) (Kenkel, 2005, p. 14).

starkly juxtaposed against the current dominant global order of neo-liberal capitalism. As this thesis will explore in some detail, neo-liberal – or late modern – capitalism as cultural mode and set of instructions for personhood/subject appears poorly equipped to enable modes of life gifted at stewarding or cherishing the earth (Ife, 2013).

Throughout this work I argue that “certainly we need to ‘do’ differently, but as importantly: we need to ‘be’ differently”. There are liberating possibilities created for the subject as ‘different’ when a social constructionist epistemological lens informs approach. Possibilities (arguably) for a variety of new forms of subject–other agency relationship are made possible when subjectivity is understood as a mutable construction in flexible dialogue with context, other and circumstantial contingencies (Gergen, 2015). Enabling exploration of future possibilities for new performances of subjectivity and agency are why I lean on a social constructionist approach to making sense of self/subject throughout this work. However, I take this position with some cautions. Cushman’s (1995) analysis of the self/subject as a policed phenomenon according to shifting idealised and politicised social norms also underpins much of my thinking. Butler’s (1997) understanding of how freedom and individual autonomy as a performed notion is much constrained (if not actually *prescribed*) by socially determined parameters of how freedom is currently understood, also influences my position.

The writings of both Butler and Cushman operate for me as cautionary challenges. Their thinking gives the sorts of needed constraints that argue against me too emphatically embracing the idea that personal individual choice as to how subjectivity is performed is possible in the historical epoch we are approaching. The epoch we are now living in is that of

the Anthropocene⁴; with its all too likely accompanying extinction events and likely catastrophic effects on human civilisation. Sadly, the Anthropocene is likely to be a time in which personal choice for individuals who are not amongst the wealthy and lucky will be deeply limited (Emmett, 2013). Critical grounded theory (Belfrage & Hauf, 2015, 2017) offers a methodological and theoretical pathway for the consideration of subjectivity against the reality of severe disruption to the global ecosystem against a backdrop of political and economic systems with little capacity to halt the drivers of the Anthropocene.

Moving back to the basic questions I ask in the research – “People living in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place over time” – is admittedly a complicated and awkward phrase. Like most such awkward new phrases it has a history of musing, reading, and thinking and grew from old roots. The hope for the sentence is to bring together in one phrase separate discourses that, woven together, build a picture or story more complex than each discourse alone can tell. The phrase also seeks in a small way to tell a utopian story of what might be possible for us people now, about how we could live with each other, live with nature, and manage our traversing of time.

Most utopian stories are not just about new worlds or societies they are also descriptions of who it is that lives in those worlds. Many utopian tales (I am thinking here of authors such as Ursula Le-Guinn or Kim Stanley Robinson) delve deeply into the inner lives of the people of imagined societies. The unfolding of an imagined society then becomes a description of how

⁴ The Anthropocene is generally understood to mean the current epoch or era of earth’s history defined by the actions of humanity as the most significant contributor to ecological and physical changes to the global environment. The Anthropocene sits within a geological era called the Holocene that commenced some 12,000 years ago when the last major ice age ended (Kolbert, 2014).

people live as a reflection of the deeply held understandings of how those people normally think about themselves, each other, the world and what they think is ordinarily proper and right – what the author Seed defines as a: “historically alternative wishful construct” (2011, p. 73). This could be described as creating worlds that are extraordinary to us by letting the logics of other ways to be ordinary and normal unfold into imagined practices of living (Le Guin, 1985; Robinson, 1992, 1993, 1996). Authors such as Hassler and Wilcox (1997) argued that science fiction provides an important device for contemporary society to explore future possibilities for how societies might function and in doing so gain new insights into current society.

So, my questioning sentence that imagines – “Future People living in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place-over-time who do better at stewarding the earth than we do now” – does not just seek to describe a way of living. It is also implicitly interested in what these as-yet-unknown people might consider so ordinary and natural that their way of life is to them a sensible inevitability.

I did a great deal of thinking, reading and imaginings about the question before commencing the research. Some of the imaginings were might what be normal and ordinary for these future people/s seeing as ordinary living inside a sort of web of mutual care with place that makes the performance of self (Goffman, 1959) difficult to imagine as separate from that reciprocal relationship. I would imagine such people also might not think their duty of care started when they were born or finishes when they die. Quite possibly such people might imagine that both their obligations and entitlements are part of generations of place and human interactions involving timeframes much longer than individual lives.

Two points of my imagined normality that might be rather radical to the modern sensibility are, firstly, the implied notions of equality of value and rights between people and

the places they live and that sustain them. And secondly, the extent to which the self might quite ordinarily make sense of itself as co-extensive with the environment and having obligations that extend rather further into the past and future than we now commonly imagine them.

Within this fantasy schema of the placed person, place or landscape might be considered not as an object to garden into the kind of calculated submission that means food production can be sustained over time. Typically, in my experience of conversations about sustainability, the story is still one of instrumentality; that while gentle in tone, and more cognisant of generational timeframes, it is still a story of creating submission to human wants. A story of multiple strategies for inducing place to conduct itself in ways that primarily benefit human beings.

Instead, within my fantasy schema, the relations between humans and place might weave a multi-generational story of mutual cherishing and obligations. Expressed in what are likely to be both the practical languages of food that sustains and shared human words and actions showing regard and reverence for the needs and rhythms of place. The above were only my pre-research utopian speculations about what future peoples living in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place-over-time might imagine themselves to be in relation with the places that sustain them. There is, some basis suggestive of accuracy to these musings in what is known of past and present hunter-gatherer people's relationship with self, other life and time and place (Boehm, 2012; Sanders, cited in Bender, 2003).

Values That Drive the Work

At its simplest scenario, we are getting close to killing or maiming the planet's capacity to sustain the sorts of complex beautiful ecosystems that we like to take walks in, watch on television and that we like to imagine will keep feeding us. As Lear puts it:

...every culture is a “gamble played with nature” – in the sense that it depends on the continued availability of environmental resources, and on challenges that it can continue to negotiate. (2006, p. 25)

It seems likely that we have overextended our societal play and are about to lose the biggest gamble of all. We are close many irreversible things happening as a direct result of what ‘we’, the big collective global ‘we’ of the west, are doing. We appear poor at global stewardship. (Chapter Three explores in more detail the current environmental context).

In Regard to Approach

This is a musing and storytelling thesis; it aims to daydream and speculate and has much to do with anticipating, hoping, desiring, yearning, imagining, remembering, and playing with the kinds of thinking where new possibilities can emerge from combining simple old combinations and asking simple questions. As I will describe some musings are not just mine, they are family musings that cover generations. In writing this I will at times aim as best I can to range through time and speak of different decades and centuries.

I think that like all stories this is not just mine to tell – stories are not owned – if anything perhaps they own themselves. If my experience is anything to go by, stories can certainly speak with their own independent voices that at times have little to do with the intentions of authors (Foxwell et al., 2020). This story is rhizomical in its spread, with roots sunk deeply into the past of my family and shoots of hope reaching into the future. In many ways this story is the result of the meetings of the wisdom of the old and the young. I am referring to the passions,

ideas and hopes of my daughter and my mother. In a sense, I have been merely the interested listener, who in taking their gifts and attempting to hold them with reverence, has then watched with fascination as the ideas, passions and hopes have changed and expanded.

The notion of a genesis of flow-through rather than the singular grasp of ownership is one reason I am attracted to social constructionism and the works of Guattari (1989). The thesis aims to be hopeful. Not hopeful in the sense of imagining that some sudden change will overwhelm the multiple business-as-usual forces currently destroying our environment; but rather that I am full of hope about what people may be like in future living amongst the as-yet unknown detritus of what our current business as usual creates for them.

The story I seek to tell is also a story told against the backdrop of how the self/subject can be shaped by political forces. I am critical of how many current policies have sought to shape how people understand the world and shape how people make sense of themselves in that world. In some senses my push for hope and my search for a wiser shaped future self (or mode/s of subjectivity) is driven not just by worry, but also an activist's anger at what over 30 years of neo-liberal hegemonic ascendance has done to New Zealand, people and the world.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION – RESPECT, COURTESY AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THESIS

As explained: this thesis is about place and people's relationship with place. It seems only sensible that to live in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place means to actively treat the place you live in with respect. I am then interested in what the active nature of that respect might be like and what thoughts and understandings might underpin it.

I suspected when I started this project that this kind of active respect for place may more resemble how courteous people treat each other, than how we now might commonly think of respect for place. So, in talking about respect for place I do not mean just the kind of respect that is covetous or even admiring for what our environment offers us. The sort of respect I am referring to is more like the courtesy that in the best of circumstances people show in how they relate to others. In my own personal encounters with courteous people, I've found they display active recognition of, and consideration for, the experience of the other. At the most basic level, I think that to be courteous is to simply be considerate of the needs and desires of another entity. Such a consideration depends on recognition that others have interests and concerns that are equal to our own and that are as important to them as ours are to us. This may sound like *odd-talk* in the middle of talking about place; raising questions such as: How can landscape or place have its own concerns and interests? How can these concerns and interests be equal to our own?

Some argue that this kind of odd-talk about place is strange to Western ears only because cultural discourses of separation from place and usage of place have gained more authority and volume in recent centuries than quieter discourses of belonging, interdependence and reverence (Bender, 2003; Lopez, 1986). I am talking about courtesy and place because in writing this

work I wish to be as courteous as I can be toward place because place is the important other character in this story.

Green Bay

Green Bay, the suburb of Auckland where I lived as a child and now live in again, is a relatively new area of European settlement. It is traced with skeins of pre-European pathways, the signs of old dwelling places and dotted with shell midden mounds. Green Bay sits in the foothills of the densely forested Waitakere ranges. A large part of the ranges is national parkland and regarded as one of the great treasures of the region. Green Bay is geographically unique in that it straddles the part of New Zealand where the eastern and Western ocean harbours come close together and the entire country narrows to less than 2 kilometres. In spring sky-streams of migratory seabirds mark the changing of the tides as they fly between the two harbours to feed on tidally exposed sandbanks. Both land and sea are very fertile in this region with farming and commercial fishing featuring prominently in local histories. Areas nearby are also characterised by deep reserves of clay that previously supported a thriving ceramics industry. Green Bay was always a place of both borders and journeying. I live on Portage Rd, so named because it marks the pathway once used by the indigenous peoples of this area to portage canoes from one ocean harbour to another. Histories indicate that it was used by many Iwi (tribes), such as Tainui, Ngati-Kawarau a maki, and Ngati-whatua but seldom permanently claimed by any one group. For me the landscape has always spoken strongly of interstices and meetings. Like most landscapes, Green Bay is a palimpsest of histories and peoples, often the layering is hidden – here, it is evocatively evident.

My home is 200 meters from the Manukau Harbour at a point very close to where houses end and bush-clad cliffs of sandstone dip down to meet the sea. The Manukau Harbour is the

Western harbour of Auckland and in this part of New Zealand, ‘west’ carries connotations for both peoples and landscape of a nature both darker and wilder than the east. People from West Auckland are known for being fiercely parochial. In earlier European settlement times Green Bay was a lightly inhabited fishing and farming outpost of Auckland city. It then became one of the many quasi-urban places where rural Māori – primarily Ngāpuhi from north of Auckland – came to live in the great population shift of Māori from country to city of the 1940s to 1960s. In the late 1960s, Green Bay became a planned suburb of family dwellings and shopping centres and schools were built.

My family has been here since before the urbanization and we remain loosely connected to networks of other Green Bay families from that time. I have not always lived here. For many years I lived in other parts of New Zealand and then overseas. In writing this I realised that my decision thirty years ago to return to Green Bay reflected a rich braiding of informing discourses. These were discourses such as post-structural notions of the authority of local knowledge resonating alongside personally held beliefs in the criticality of regarding place as sacred not as commodity. I was also strongly influenced by ecological writings and the Māori traditions I grew up alongside, both of which accent in different ways how the self is co-extensive with landscape.

What perhaps allowed these notions to speak to me with such power was my mother’s belief that there are rich gifts to be found in consciously cherishing the known place over time. For me now, one of these gifts of place has been the slow development of the thinking that underpins what I now wish to study. I have found that thoughts on the criticality of cherishing place grow well and do best while one is actively engaged in the business of cherishing. In a very real sense, I am informed by place and in future study and research I intend to listen hard to what my beloved place has to tell me.

Personal and Familial Contexts of the Question

For me the question – or more accurately, my abiding and growing curiosity – is something boundaried, placed and defined by my family’s traditions, my wise daughter’s laughter, and my writing of this in a physical and spiritual location of many borders layered with many histories and traces of habitation. The generative juxtaposition that sparked my interest involved three things:

First, my master’s research about the instantiation of political norms of the subject in children via discourses of the future; Second, my then-teen daughter’s ironic amusement at an American TV teen sitcom that ended with the moral homily that the solution to pollution is for individuals to take individual responsibility for actions such as picking up rubbish; Third, a familial and personal commitment to love of place, social activism and a place-based environmentalism.

Context Of Family: Inspiration from Two Generations

My Daughter

Rea’s re-telling of the sitcom episode came toward the end of completing my master’s thesis (Rea Kenkel, personal communication, 2005). At that time, I was firming up my conclusions about the enabling of subjects’ capacities to collectively plan for a more sustainable future. Her story sparked a new sense of curiosity about what may have been equally disabled or subjugated in terms of the human imaginative relationship with time. Because my daughter’s input has been so important, I think it worth describing in some detail:

In 2005, my daughter came to me both amused and angry after watching an American sitcom based on the lives of an ordinary family with teen daughters. The specific sitcom episode

described a young woman's responses to a school project on the question of how to solve the problem of pollution. In essence, the ending homily of the episode consisted of an assertion of the importance of individual responsibility for creating change and encouraged individuals to take charge of how they wanted the world to be by actions such as picking up street litter.

My daughter, now 33 was, and is, an acute thinker and went on to study political science, art history and more latterly humanity's relationship with food and place. We have recently discussed the outrage she felt at 15 and how important a spur that has been to my thinking. What follows is a reconstructed analysis of her experience that day. At 15 when she saw this episode, she was already aware of the way media is an effective instrumentality of instruction for the performance of self in our societies. Her response to the episode was complex.

First, she was acutely aware of the absurdity of the notion that individuals undertaking actions such as picking up litter were likely to be effective in addressing the magnitude of the global problems we face. It seemed to her a vast over-estimation of the power of individual choice to the point of encouraging people to be delusional about the capacity of individual efficacy to affect the future.

Second, she noted what was made so conspicuous by its absence. The absence was any acknowledgement that pollution is not a function of individual action but rather a broader global expression of late-modern capitalism's preference for externalizing the costs of an economic system based on endless progress and consumption. Put simply, she saw that the episode positioned both culpability for the problems and responsibility for the solutions on to the slim shoulders of individuals without any mention of the huge transpersonal social and economic forces that create pollution as an inevitability of the logics of markets. She saw this

transfer of responsibility as deeply wrong, and as wounding of both the individuals persuaded into such weighty responsibility and the future likelihood of collective action for change.

I think the point she was making is that if planning for our future is built on the de-contextualised foundation of individual responses to notions of culpability and responsibility then plans will be fractured, individualized and ill-designed to take care of the needs of the broader collective. My daughter's insights stayed with me and inspired me to become increasingly interested in a new question: "What manner of making sense of the self in relation to the future might better enable the sorts of broad imagination able to plan for collective good in the long term?"

I became more interested in the socially braided relationships between place, time, responsibility siting, self, and care of the other. This text is a consequence of that interest. I include the next sections that I hope will enrich the meaning of what I write by providing an underpinning foundation that locates the text in a story of care and place.

My Mother

My family's history of activism and thought is particularly present as I write. My mother, Catherine Kenkel nee Stephen, the source of so much of my commitment to social justice and environmentalism and an inspiration for this work (or an inspirer of this work) died in April 2012.

I believe it important to speak briefly to my mother's experience of relationship with place and how it informs my thinking on the topic. My mother emigrated from England to New Zealand in 1938 at the age of 18 and subsequently lived in New Zealand until her death. My question of how we might better live in reciprocally sustaining ways with place is mindful of a very thoughtful struggle she described to me. This struggle was a conscious project she

undertook as a young woman to create a new relationship of love and care of place in an unfamiliar environment. To explain further: much of my mother's experience of childhood was informed by her profound love of the unique specificities of the natural world of the English countryside.

As a young woman then coming to New Zealand, and amongst the disjunction of encountering a new and alien place, she chose to begin a conscious and deliberate process of learning to love how nature presented itself in the new context of New Zealand. With effort, and over time, she came to see and love the beauty of New Zealand's subtropical richness for itself, and not as a dark grotesque parody of her beloved green English countryside. She told me it took her 20 years of struggle to accomplish this. As I write, I am acutely curious to know what my mother did to so re-attune her vision. Unfortunately, with her death the time to ask has passed. I do know my mother was profoundly aware of the importance of cherished place in the lives of people and perhaps knowing this explains why she made a choice to find ways to embrace a new place with love. My mother was a scholar, deeply interested in the well-being of people and intensely curious as to the social conditions that best encourage us to care for each other. Conversations with her in her last years suggested that the evolution of her thought over a lifetime had led her to believe that love and care of people and place are (or can be) somewhat synergistically intertwined phenomena.

I believe my mother was saying that the capacity to care for place can strengthen the capacity to care for people and that thereby both modes of care are made stronger if they are present in how life is conducted. From our many conversations, I am very sure that she believed that there is nothing more important than care and love of people, and she was interested in any idea or perspective that better enabled people to live generously together. My mother was a

utopian (as am I) and in many senses undertaking this doctorate is to continue her path. I am very pleased to do so.

A Dream That Has Inhabited My Family for Over 70 Years

This is the re-telling of a dream (or nightmare) of the future my mother experienced when she was 18 and under anaesthetic for a dental procedure. She had this dream in 1938. She last told me this dream when she was nearly 80, in the late 1990s. I had heard her speak of it before, in my childhood. It was somehow a dream that resonated in her life and now resonates in mine. This is my best memory of what she told. I am telling this dream as if in her voice.

1938 – I was on a wide flat plain with very little to see other than scrubby patches of grass growing between stretches of rough sand and broken rock. It was very quiet with no sound or sight of birds, animals or insects. Even the wind seemed muted. The sky was grey and very still; it was different from any sky I had seen before and gave me an odd feeling – somehow the greyness did not look like clouds but instead like the colour of the sky itself. I did not like to look at it – I couldn't see the sun. Looking around me I saw what I took to be a hill in the distance and not knowing what else to do or where else to go I began to walk toward it. As I came closer, I saw that what I had taken to be a hill was like an old castle or building that had crumbled into a mound. There were openings into the hill, and I saw a few people sitting and standing around these openings. I never did find out whether it was a mound made by these people, or an old, ruined building, or a hill that they had dug into to find shelter. I am not sure they knew themselves. Over one of the entrances was a metal plaque stamped with the roman numerals for 14000 AD so I knew these people had been there a very long time and that I was in a very distant future. The people did not seem surprised to see me – but neither were they welcoming. I greeted them and a few of them answered quietly. All the time I was there I

never saw them do much. They seemed a very quiet people with not much energy or emotion; I knew they were not interested in me or where I had come from. They seemed like people that were born tired. They were odd-looking people to me, smaller than me and thin. Their legs and arms looked somehow brittle and stick-like and they were dressed in very dull worn clothes of no particular colour. They gave me a meal which was like a bland porridge made of grass seeds. That was all I ever saw there to eat. I knew in my dream that something terrible had happened in their past and I asked them about it. One of the older people told me that everything had died. I asked when, and how, and they shrugged – answering, “a long time ago – maybe a poison in the air”. That was all they would say about that. I knew, as you do in dreams, that they were right, almost everything else was dead with just them and the grass left alive.

Only one other thing happened there before I left or woke up, and it was the only time I saw any of those people excited or angry. I saw a young girl dressed unlike everyone else and went over to see what she was doing. She was wearing a costume of yellow and black stripes – she was leaning forward with her hands held up by her head as if they were pretend insect antennae and walking around the hill through the grass making a buzzing noise. I asked her what she was doing. She did not reply about what she was doing, but to my surprise instead stated that “she was a bee”. I was confused and asked her again what she was doing. She again told me that she was not doing anything, “she was a bee”. I thought this absurd and laughed and said you are not a bee, you’re a human being just pretending to be a bee – angrily and in tears she exclaimed in a loud voice – “I am a bee” – “I am a bee”!

I realised as she said this, that of course all the real bees had died long ago, and she had to be a bee – because if she was not – then there were no bees in the world and that this would be intolerable and beyond bearing. I understood then that she was doing something very brave

and important in keeping alive something precious that could now live in no other way than through her ‘being’ of the bee. I felt very ashamed for laughing at her and I apologised to her.

Coming to Now Again: 2023

My mother experienced this dream or vision just before the Second World War started and I can only guess at what terrifying echoes of that conflict my mother’s dream also reflected. I do know that the memory of that empty world and a young girl’s determination to give up herself so that bees could still be in the world somehow embodied for my mother both great sadness and determination. I think now this dream was part of what inspired my mother’s life-long determination to always think hard about the right ways of being in the world, and *to* the world. Growing up around that sort of determination meant some of it rubbed off on me. Or to language it another way – her musings on the world are mine too now. I like that I am partly telling her story and I think I am also asking the kind of questions she would have liked.

An Academic History of My Interest – Written in a Different Register

My previous MA research was on time and the politicised child subject. My interest was initially sparked by one of those mundane encounters with the ordinary that through some trick of light, or mood, suddenly reveals itself to be noteworthy. My encounter happened as I was walking down the corridor of the institution that I sometimes teach in and I saw a poster advertising education with smiling young people and the caption – “The future is in your hands”.

What a very odd idea I thought! – How peculiar to imagine that children have the individual ability or resources to determine their own futures. In retrospect, I think the studies I had been undertaking in political economy somehow meshed in that moment with my practical experience as a therapist specialising in work with severely economically

disadvantaged families and children. I began to be very curious about this story of individuals being able to control their futures. I began to wonder about its prevalence, its effects on children's sense of self and its history. I undertook some quick historical research into policy and education documents. It took very little delving to discover that the increasing prevalence of the story of the individual's ability to create their own desired future via their own efforts marched in tidy lockstep with the rise of neo-liberal ideology as the dominant political paradigm in both New Zealand and much of the rest of the world.

I became fascinated by the ways discourses of the future are used as modes of instruction for the conduct or performance of the self in alignment with the interests of political ideologies. I was interested in how the subject's relationship with notions of autonomy and responsibility for future outcome were positioned by these discourses against the passage of subject through time. My research interests fitted well with a discourse analysis and governmentality approach (Foucault, 1988, 1991; Rose, 1998, 1999). In the research I focused on children's engagement with widely available normative social processes that favour the production of a subject strongly informed by neo-liberal norms (Kenkel, 2005). I looked at education policy and practice and examined media. I also looked at the role of the psy-discourses (Parker, 1999) as they are embodied in the practices of those who counsel children.

A Moment of Insight

While visiting student counsellors as part of my professional teaching role, I experienced a stark moment of insight about the invasive inescapable prevalence for children of instructional stories about how to conduct self/subject through time. To provide some context: this epiphany occurred while sitting in the waiting room of a school counselling unit; the school itself located in a poor neighbourhood with a school demographic predominantly

made up of the children of new migrants and refugees. Bored with waiting, I looked around the room for reading material or distraction and was struck that every poster on the wall and every magazine available to read was career focused toward individually choosing to become a successful educated and working self in the future. I was struck that even the places that purport to offer current sanctuary “in-the-now” to children struggling with personal pain and the effects of structural inequities were saturated with instructions for the successful conduct of the individual self through time according to a neo-liberal template. This was a template for the subject (it seemed to me) obsessed with the notion that future success is primarily contingent on individual effort. It became apparent to me at that moment that this glittering story of individual success as consequence of individual effort effectively masked the other set of truths obvious in such grim waiting rooms. These were the subjugated truths that the agonies of children and their potential future resolutions are not usually a function of individual choice but rather of social and contextual positioning and macro-scale decisions about resourcing.

My master’s thesis was de-constructive work. I picked apart the diverse array of processes that aimed to convince children that the world is a naturally competitive field and that success in the world is primarily a de-contextualised function of individual effort. Undertaking this enquiry meant, inevitably, to wonder about what was shadowed, hidden, or subjugated by discourses that seemed to promote as ideal a very particular *self-full* and outcome-driven approach to the challenge of the self’s negotiation of time. I also became aware that as certain kinds of capacities and skills were encouraged to the foreground by these discourses, others were rendered less valuable and visible.

My conclusion was that this neo-liberal preference seemed to be for a subject that overwhelmingly perceives life outcomes as a product of individual effort and will, instead of context or history (Kenkel, 2005). This preferred mode of personhood represents a subject with

(what my bias would describe as) an inflated sense of their own capacity to control and own an individual future through their own efforts. If a collective future of general well-being is considered at all, it is considered to be a function or outcome of many individuals taking charge of their own futures rather than a matter of people being responsible for each other's well-being. It seemed to me at the time that what was under continuous construction was a lived ideal of subjectivity that both strangely overestimates and underestimates the capacity of human agency to control events. What seemed overestimated was the capacity for the individual to control the future; what was underestimated was the need, possibility, or capacity for collective transpersonal action to have agency in the world.

I was also intrigued by strictures defining the boundaries of the imaginable. How were people encouraged to use imagination about the future and the self? And what was discouraged in terms of imaging the self into the future? My analysis suggested that notions of individual success and well-being formed a key instructional mode of transmission regarding the proper alignment of imaging the self into the future. In unpacking these temporal, imaginative strictures it seemed an individual future of well-being as a function of individual effort was an easy, imaginative accomplishment much encouraged. However, a future of collective well-being as a function of collective effort requiring individual self-sacrifice was harder to imagine with little to encourage such a direction of thought.

In my estimation – at that time – this was not a mode of preferred imaginative subjectivity well-capacitised to develop skills of collective or selfless action. It seemed rather a subject inclined by institutional nurture toward selfishness and short-sightedness. In terms of my environmental interests and passions, I believed at that time (and still do believe), we can ill-afford selfishness and short-sightedness given how dire the global environmental situation has become.

As described, the question for me then developed into *not*: “How can we do better in planning for our future?”

But instead:

“What nature of person might we need to be to be able to plan well? What sort of personhood might be able to imaginatively put aside the individual self, sufficiently as to conceive of a future of collective well-being?” And: What sort of personhood can plan with others for the achievement of a global equilibrium that allows a collective well-being?” These increasingly seemed critical questions to me, and this doctorate is an effort to explore these questions.

I chose to explore these questions about the nature (or character) of personhood in the future using the conceit of asking people – now – to think about a future in which people are doing better than we do now in regard to relation with place, and then to imagine what might be normal and ordinary for people that is not normal and ordinary now?

My question was about subjectivity and underpinned by social constructionist notions that hold the self to be considerably more fluid in its constitution than the psy-discourses (Parker, 1999) of late modernity might allow for Cushman’s work (1995) influenced me in considering the extent to which norms of the idealised healthy self through history reflect political forces to a much greater extent than any universal truisms about human personality, character, or subjectivity. In the research I was interested in what could be discovered, or more accurately *speculated*, about how future normalities/norms regarding place, self, other relations might then dictate actions very different from the idealised economic and socio-personal conduct of Western late-modern capitalist societies in the early 21st century.

CHAPTER TWO: INITIAL DISCUSSION OF METHODOLOGY LEADING INTO METHOD

As discussed in depth in Chapter 5, the methodological approach was critical grounded theory which, with a social justice twist, draws on a similar iterative coding approach to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory still (arguably) has influential antecedents in an inductive approach. Differently (and why I chose it), critical grounded theory also draws on an iterative coding approach while deductively adopting the initial premise that social structural inequity and imbalances of power are inevitable, typically harmful, and it is the duty of the researcher to acknowledge and work with these iniquitous realities (Belfrage & Hauf, 2015, 2017).

The methodological approach first involved multiple readings of the research data. I chose to do this organically rather than using a computerised approach. This was then followed by the development of five codes – which might be thought of as repeated themes that seemed apparent after many close readings.

These were then subdivided into 44 Sub-Codes attached to the five codes (these Sub-Codes were almost entirely derived from respondent statements). All codes and Sub-Codes were used to interrogate the data in multiple iterations. After an exhaustive examination of the data, four Meta-Codes became apparent which again were used to interrogate the data. The Meta-Codes might be imagined as the beginnings of a coherent narrative bringing diverse aspects of the respondent data into the beginnings of a story. After this multiply complex iterative process, five streams (or narrative stories) became apparent to me as the researcher. It is those streams that I have used to inform a narrative styled discussion in Chapter 6 which concludes with a whimsical dialogical theatre of the mind. I chose a whimsical theatrical

approach to the final stage of the thesis for two reasons. First: both the data and significant reading I have done began to reify as actual speaking subjects in my imagination. This is perhaps similar to the process many authors of fiction experience where their characters become real and expressive of opinions that may differ from those of the author (Foxwell et al., 2020). It seemed only respectful to give these subjects a voice and I found an interesting and informative conceit in placing them in dialogical relation with each other. Second: I followed the advice of a friend and mentor that, sometimes the best way to take a topic seriously, is to approach it whimsically (personal communication, Dr Kay O'Connor, 2000).

Method

Walliman (2010) described “Building up a sample by beginning with a core of known people or elements and increasing it by adding new people or elements given by members of the original sample” (Walliman, 2010, p. 221). The ease of attracting participants via anonymous E-media was appealing in its simplicity, and as further described, the risk of gaining participants with a pre-existing set of assumptions regarding the topic in some senses worked to my advantage. As later explained, the demographic I hoped to attract were people with some interest in environmental issues and the future, but not necessarily those who held the topic as a core central interest or profession. As further described, I invited potential anonymised participants to forward a link to the survey to others they thought might be also interested in participating. Given that much of the sharing of the invitation was done by media such as Facebook, it seems likely that both those with a specific interest in the environment and those only peripherally interested would have an opportunity to sight the invitation via Facebook sharing.

E-questionnaires have definite limitations. As Walliman states: “Internet questionnaires are the cheapest and least time-consuming method of delivery” (Walliman, 2010, p. 111). He goes on to add: “Although it is easy to get blanket coverage by random delivery, response rates tend to be very low, and it is difficult to know how representative the sample will be” (Walliman, 2010, p. 111). However, notwithstanding these concerns about breadth of representative sample, after considerable thought and reading I chose to use this approach to recruit participants for the research. Initial ideas of using face-to-face focus groups were discarded when it occurred to me that the people most likely to invest time and energy in a physical face-to-face meeting were those with a pre-existing strong commitment to environmental issues. While honouring those activists committed to climate and environmental justice, I wished to hear opinions and thoughts from a broader platform than those who might be described as “already in the know”.

I accepted that the approach I used to recruitment was very likely to have attracted people with some predilection toward interest in environmental issues and the future. The nature of the questions themselves and of the informational website I set up was unlikely to intrigue people with no interest in environmental matters. However, there seemed a good likelihood that by casting the net so widely via a broad invitation on e-media (and asking people to share it widely) I might attract people for whom an interest in environmental issues was a peripheral interest rather than a central one. Basically, I wanted participants to come to the questions of: “How might we be different in the future?” to have a degree of freshness, rather than the sorts of well-thought-through perspectives that I found amongst the environmental activists with whom I first spoke while planning my approach. I did not want respondents with an already well considered position, instead, I wanted respondents who might approach my

questions as new questions. Paraphrasing David Epston: “the best questions to ask are those to which you do not know the answers” (personal communication, 2005).

My concern was that if I had limited my respondents to those already active in the environment field, I was likely to already know (or suspect) what the answers would be. I was hoping to avoid the familiar tropes about the need for people to behave more sustainably, and other well-worn homilies about environmental sensitivity. From my perspective, these do not begin to answer my question about how the nature of the self/subject may be different in a future facing environmental predicaments caused by our current actions. The approach of using this recruitment approach has borne delightful and surprising fruit.

The answers were not those I would have expected. Further chapters will expand on the surprising results that occurred. In preview, the biggest surprise to me as researcher, was that, while my questions focused on how people might be different in the future regarding a reciprocally sustaining relationship with place, the bulk of the answers were not only concerned with relationship with place but equally (or more) concerned with how people’s relationship with self/subject and other people would be different. I expected tales of better integration into landscape, instead what I got were warm and hopeful stories of different ways of being and doing self, other and community, and a to-be-longed-for celebration of the value of relationally rich lives. What does need to be acknowledged (in terms of limitations of the study) is the relatively small number of respondents (28 fully completed the questions and 6 only partially or incompletely completed the questions) and the lack of a degree of variability in responses. A larger number and more outlying perspectives would have strengthened the work. That said I was surprised in how similar the concerns and opinions of respondents were and the focus on community in addition to relationship with place was also surprising.

Detailed Practical Description of Approach to Finding Participants

The first invitation to participate follows below: This invitation was disseminated widely in mid-to-late 2015 and early 2016 – through Facebook, email and several websites with an environmental focus. I consistently asked people to share the invite and pass on the request to participate in the research. In original formatting it included pictures. All invitations included hyper-links to a website designed to give more information about the research project. All invitations also included a direct hyper-link to the survey site/questions. I used Survey Monkey as a known provider.

While I am now concluding this doctorate through Blanquerna University, at the time of disseminating the research questions I included a hyper-link to the homepage of the Taos Institute website. I did this so potential participants could, if they wished, reassure themselves that the research was being undertaken/sponsored in association with a legitimate institution involved with post-graduate education. The research survey approach ensured anonymity over respondent details and was conducted in alignment with ethical standards and protocols appropriate to doctorate-level research as described in Chapter 3. The website, in alignment with critical grounded theory made very explicit my pre-suppositions. This follows the assertion of Belfrage and Hauf (2015), that there are *no* neutral positions to ask questions from, so integrity demands that existing pre-suppositions are made apparent.

As the following chart indicates, there was an initial spike of replies in response to my first invitation in June 2015, with a smaller but not insubstantial number of respondents participating after shorter invitations were posted as replies/comments to on-line articles and posts about environmental issues. I ceased placing invitations to take part in the survey in early 2016. Overall, I received 34 responses, these ranging from brief to fulsome. Length of response

to each of the four questions I asked varied from one or two sentences to lengthy paragraphs. A total of 28 of the responses seemed coherent and to the point. Six responses were incomplete, and, seemed to either be very brief, or somewhat off topic. While not ignoring the six somewhat short and off-topic responses, my primary relationship with the data has been with the 28 that seemed to me the most cogent. In terms of limitations of the research, a larger number of respondents would have been ideal and perhaps then been of a less homogenous nature in tone. I was very struck on first reading respondent material how similar the expressed concerns and aspirations were and this may not have been the case with a larger number of respondents.

N.B.: it needs to be noted that my PhD project commenced via the Taos Institute with Taos matching me with a supervisor from the University of Calgary. The sponsoring university I was enrolled with was Tilburg University which took a less prominent or visible role than Taos. Subsequently, the sponsoring university I am now enrolled with, and now supervised by, is Blanquerna University Ramon Llull. This enrolment happened late in the journey when approximately 75% of the thesis had been completed, including a relatively complete draft of Chapter 5 where the CGT coding process was undertaken. For the sake of veracity, I have not amended the research questions I created to name Blanquerna University Ramon Llull as at that time I was not enrolled with them. At the time of designing the research questions the Taos Institute seemed the critical party I had a relationship with, and the questions merely reflect this.

Figure 1

Research Respondents Over Time

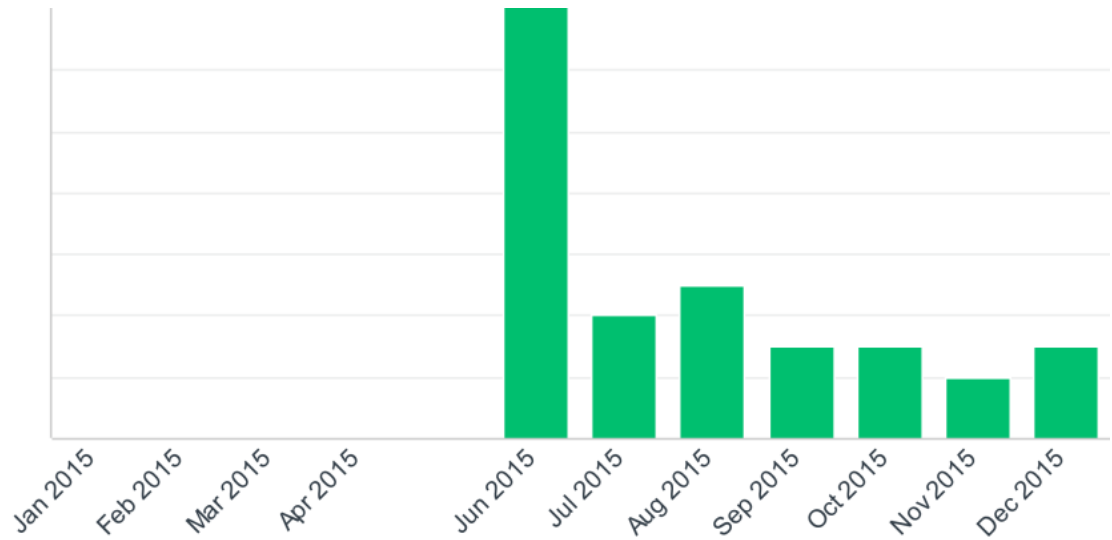


Figure 2

Initial Invitation to Participate in Survey

Researching our Descendants

Take part in a short on-line creative research project about people, human nature, optimism, the wounded environment and the future.

This research is part of a PhD project through the Taos Institute.

(Without pictures)

Researching our Descendants

Take part in a short on-line creative research project about people, human nature, optimism, the wounded environment and the future.

This research is part of a PhD project through the Taos Institute.

More detailed information about the project and the current state of the global environment can be found at placingpeopleintime.com.

<p>Why the research?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because accelerating ecological disaster and our destructive ‘business-as-usual’ culture seems unstoppable. • Because we face some hard predicaments in the coming years. So who will / can we become to face those predicaments? • Because we need new stories more than we need new machines. • Because if we think hard enough about what the future may require us to be, we can apply some of that thinking now. 	<p>About the research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The questions are interested in the nature of future people who might (by choice, necessity, or both) do better than we do now at sustaining and being sustained by the places we live in. • The research is biased because it doesn’t assume that if we keep on doing what we do now, but with better appliances, the future will work out fine. • The project aims to create new stories of who people can be. By taking part you become one of the authors. 	<p>Your involvement at this stage would mean you answering (in any way you like) four anonymous questions at the following site: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2FG3BV2 most people find it takes about 20 to 30 minutes.</p> <p>Refining the stories. The next stage would mean you providing e-contact details at the secure site placingpeopleintime.com so you can be involved (if you want to be) in further developing the stories and themes that emerge.</p>
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INVOLVE OTHERS: Please pass the word about this project. The more people involved the richer the stories will be.

As is apparent, I made no attempt in my initial invitation to disguise my position (derived from literature and my own thinking) that first: hard times are coming, and second:

that a business-as-usual techno-fix approach sited in a capitalist/ endless growth paradigm was unlikely to offer actual solutions to the problems the future will face. As Jessop (2009) suggested, new pathways and possibilities frequently emerge from the co-causal dialogue between the real crisis (in this instance, the likelihood of environmental calamity) and the discursive response. Following both Jessop's thinking, and that of Belfrage and Hauf (2015), it seemed important to me that the blunt reality of likely future predicaments was made overt for potential participants. This commitment to an overt stating of position was done not simply because the creative dialogue between crisis and the discursive subject seemed most likely to produce rich research material, but also because I wanted to be personally transparent about my pre-existing deductions and pre-suppositions.

I do not believe it is appropriate for the academic world to be silent or discreet about what is well understood to be coming. In taking this 'overt-from-the-outset' position about possible future collapse, I joined what was a minority academic approach. As Bendell (2018) argued, it was relatively uncommon at that time for academic writing to commence from the overt premise that a degree of societal and environmental collapse is almost inevitable at this historical juncture. This reticence seems odd given that most experts on the environment well understand this to be the case. Chapters Three and Four discuss the coming environmental and social predicaments in considerable depth.

The critical grounded theory (CGT) approach espoused by Belfrage and Hauf (2017) also shows good fit with the approach I took. They argued that it is vital to be overt about the typically iniquitous discursive and physical conditions within which the potential grounded-in-reality responses take place. I am also drawn to the social justice approach inherent in CGT. What has increasingly become apparent to me is that the environmental predicaments we face will not be, simply unjust in their disproportionate effects on the already poor and marginalised,

but have also been unjust in their economic, political and social genesis. As a social and environmental activist, I did not wish my research approach to disguise this likely inequity of impact and its driving histories. What follows are a range of abbreviated invitations to participate – typically these were individually tailored to attach to online face-book posts, URL links and articles where subject matter included the environment:

Figure 3

Survey Invitation A

Can you take a few minutes to answer a short online [survey?](#)

Click the link below to get started now -

[Placing people in time - coaxing whispers of hope from the future](#)

The research is interested in how future generations are likely to respond to environmental predicaments.

You can find out more at [placingpeopleintime.com](#). The research is part of a PhD project through the [Taos Institute](#).

Figure 4

Survey Invitation B

RESEARCHING OUR DESCENDANTS:

You are warmly invited to take part in a short [survey](#) about people, the wounded environment and the future. You can access the questions at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/?sm=qjM%2bIK6%2f6ARzCqVr%2bDg2g%3d%3d>

The questionnaire is part of a research project driven by concerns about accelerating ecological disaster and a destructive 'business-as-usual' neo-liberal global culture. The research is interested in who we might become in response to the environmental predicaments our descendants are likely to face in the generations that follow us.

You can find out more about at [placingpeopleintime.com](#). The research is part of a PhD project through the [Taos Institute](#).

Figure 5*Survey Invitation C*

Can you take a few minutes to answer a short online [survey?](#)

Click the link below to get started now - it's quick and easy:

[Placing people in time - coaxing whispers of hope from the future](#)

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/?sm=qjM%2blKe6%2f6ARzCqVr%2bDg2g%3d%3d>

The survey is part of a research project driven by concerns about accelerating ecological problems and a destructive 'business-as-usual' neo-liberal global culture. The research is interested in how future generations are likely to respond to environmental predicaments. You can find out more at [placingpeopleintime.com](#). The research is part of a PhD project through the [Taos Institute](#).

Figure 6

*Survey**Invitation**D*

Can you take a few minutes to answer a short online [survey?](#)

Click the link below to get started now - it's quick and easy:

[Placing people in time - coaxing whispers of hope from the future](#)

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/?sm=qjM%2blKe6%2f6ARzCqVr%2bDg2g%3d%3d>

The research is interested in how future generations are likely to respond to environmental predicaments. You can find out more at [placingpeopleintime.com](#). The research is part of a PhD project through the [Taos Institute](#).

Figure 7

Survey Invitation E

Very interesting - This has some real resonance with the research I'm doing that's interested in how future generations are likely to respond to environmental predicaments.

Can you take a few minutes to answer a short online [survey?](#)

Click the link below to get started now - it's quick and easy:

[Placing people in time - coaxing whispers of hope from the future](#)

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/?sm=qjM%2blKe6%2f6ARzCqVr%2bDg2g%3d%3d>

You can find out more at [placingpeopleintime.com](#). The research is part of a PhD project through the [Taos Institute](#).

(Response to specific article posted as a comment)

The Website

What follows are 12 pages from the website I designed. While the pages are presented here as a list of pages, this is not how they would have been experienced by visitors to the website. As is usual for an interactive website, the material and information were not presented in linear form; visitors to the site were able to move around the pages as they wished via internal hyper-links, with no suggested order to follow. Hyper-links to other potentially useful informational sites or articles were also included in the text. A range of visual materials were also incorporated into the website. The rhetorical style deliberately varies, including blatant requests for visitors to complete the questionnaire; more chatty and anecdotal styles; informational context about the current state of the environment; information about myself, history and context; and a somewhat more formal summary of the research project and its background. Pictures and other formatting have been removed for ease of reading. I established the website because as I developed the research questions, I was not satisfied with the minimal information about the drivers for the research I was able to give in either the invitations to participate, or at the survey monkey questionnaire site. I found there was a challenging balance between an evocative brief invitation, and a flood of rhetoric that might potentially put people off. The website was an attempt to better manage this balance.

Personally, it also seemed to me that the somewhat outré nature of the questions I was asking and the epistemological pre-suppositions informing those questions required more explanation than I could give in a simple invitation to take part in research. In a sense, the website was intended as an act of courtesy for those who might want to know more about the drivers for the research and its purposes. Arguably, from an inductive research position

providing information about the pre-suppositions underpinning the research could be risking bias creation. As later explained in detail, the critical grounded theory approach I used asserts that all research is inherently deductive and hence a clear articulation of pre-existing assumptions and theories is considered both ethical and necessary for effective research (Belfrage & Hauf, 2015, 2017).

Much of the tone taken in the website material is blunt, particularly in terms of establishing an initial cautious dissensus regarding discourses of progress and hope that I speak to in more depth in Chapters Three and Four. This was intentional, as I did not wish potential participants to view this research project as another attempt to optimistically green-wash the future (Loewenstein, 2015). A central contention of this thesis is that regarding the future, humanity, and the planet, we do not so much have issues to resolve, rather, we have predicaments to face (Hine & Kingsnorth, 2009). My curiosity being not about how issues will be resolved but rather the nature of those who will face and manage these coming predicaments. As described, I wished to be as explicit as possible about my position from the onset. The website went live in early 2015 and was disestablished in late 2016. This spanned the period during which I could sensibly expect that people might reasonably be expected to respond given that I stopped posting invitations to participate in early 2016.

Figure 8

Website for Recruiting Participants

Page One:

HOME / FACE PAGE OF WEBSITE

I want you to take part in a short [on-line creative research](#) project about people, human nature, optimism, [the wounded environment](#) and the future.

- **THE RESEARCH** - is a response to the [looming environmental predicaments](#) facing the world and a concern that who we are now is not doing well at facing and managing these predicaments.
- **THE QUESTIONS** - are about the future and what people's relationship with place might be like in that future.
- **BLEAKLY INTRIGUING** - People have found the questions intriguing and thought provoking – albeit with an edge that is either bleak or honest depending on your perspective.
- **THE RESEARCH IS BIASED** - because it doesn't presume that how humanity presently behaves will result in a happy future for the world or its peoples; human and otherwise. The questions are also biased because they assume we need to do better than we do now.
- **INSULTING** - This project is a direct insult to a major social theme of our (Western) societies; that if we only keep on doing what we do now but with better appliances the future will work out fine.
- **THE OPTIMISM** - of the project is not that we can halt all the world's ecological declines - (sorry for much it may be too late) - but that our future response to the disasters all indications suggest are coming may re-create us as wiser and kinder peoples than we seem to be right now.
- **RESEARCH HOPES** - Believing that we are wise when we are provoked to be and seeing no site of access to the future self-other than we now who are creating that future - I have decided to ask as many people as possible - 'who will we be in future that does better than we do now?' Your answers together will I think tell a rich story that I will try then to share with as many people as are interested. This research could be called the mining of hope at a fearful time, or it could be called the invocation of an avatar of our wisest ambitions. Whatever it is called it is a utopian project and will be a tale that can have no ending other than the hopes implicit in its beginnings.

I'd like you to be part of it.

You can go straight to [the four research questions](#) - Or - please look around the site if you want more information on the project - its background - or useful links

Page Two

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

About the research and what it hopes to do:

The data being sought by the questions asked are not facts; but rather part of what is hoped to be a multi-authored story that uses today's hopes and ambitions for future generations as a way to tell a story about who our descendants might be. This is a new kind of story-making research where the answer is yes and yes - to the questions of; - is this research a process of discovery? - or creation?

The research is unashamedly a utopian project and like all utopian projects can have no ending other than the hopes and ambitions implicit in its beginnings. If you do take part, it is your hopes that will give grammar to this story and the wisest of your ambitions for your descendants will be the many pens that trace out the tale.

How the project started

Beginnings are important – perhaps especially when the ends aren't known. So how and why did this project come about? At a practical level it is a somewhat optimistic and future orientated continuation of my [previous not so optimistic research](#). My previous research looked at how Western societies over the last 30 years encouraged children to be in the world in ways that suited the dominant politics of the time. Held up against the worlds pressing need for sensible stewardship - conclusions were frankly depressing. Neo-liberalism as a mode of personal conduct does not it seems well-equip people with abilities such as trans-personal thinking, care for the collective need and capacities for multi-generational planning. Short sighted self-interest seemed rather more the order of the day.

Some years of dwelling on how schooling seemed designed to produce the exact opposite of what the world needs - made me rather glum! Until I was provoked into optimism by the dreams,

amusements and questions of two very clever women separated in age by exactly seventy years but oddly alike in spirit (My mother and my daughter).

I then became interested in what could nurture human capacity for trans-personal thinking, care for the collective need and far-sighted multi-generational planning? Despite extensive reading amongst a fury of opinion, the jury is still out on that question. I then decided that if the present could not answer such questions, then the time had come to ask the future.

Believing that we are wise when we are provoked to be and seeing no site of access to the future self-other than we now who are creating that future - I have decided to ask as many people as possible - 'who will we be in future that does better than we do now?'

Your answers together will I think tell a rich story that I will try then to share with as many people as are interested.

This research could be called the mining of hope at a fearful time, or it could be called it the invocation of an avatar of our wisest ambitions. Whatever it is called it is a utopian project and will be a tale that can have no ending other than the hopes implicit in its beginnings.

I'd like you to be part of it.

Page Three

WHY THE RESEARCH

This research is happening because I - (like many other people) - am extremely worried about accelerating ecological degradation combined with the destructive ['business-as-usual' globalised consumer culture that right now seems unstoppable.](#)

I think humanity and the world will face some very hard predicaments in the coming decades and I am interested in how our future selves will face these predicaments. I'm interested in who we will become when necessity requires us to manage the looming hard realities of resource depletion and ecological catastrophe that we in the west are currently (just) able to turn a cultural blind eye to. Possibly if we think hard enough about what the future may require us to be; we can apply some of that thinking now; or at least use it as one thread to inform the many debates going on throughout the world about how to manage difficulties we all face.

A MORE ACADEMIC DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Placing people in time - Coaxing whispers of hope from the future

At its simplest this thesis proposes that the parlous state of the global environment suggests that collectively 'we' are failing at stewardship of place. Who we are now is not doing well. The thesis then asks the question:

Who might we need to 'be' in future to do better than we do now?

Specifically, I am interested in the natures of future subjects who are better enabled than we are currently at living in 'reciprocally sustaining relationship between people and place over time.'

To background the enquiry:

Our era has created grave anthropogenic threat to earth's well-being. That the increasing threat is a direct consequence of human behaviour and can only be mitigated by human behaviour is now well understood (Mann & Kump, 2009). The question of why collective action on these issues is slow to occur is also increasingly recognised as a troubling concern (Bender, 2003; Dodds, 2012). Arguably the global pre-eminence of neo-liberal capitalist ideologies of the individuated-self have diminished our collective capacities for acting wisely in solidarity (Guattari, 1989; Ife, 2006; Kenkel, 2005). Hence in this work I argue a primary factor in our collective failures of stewardship is not a matter of 'what we are doing' but more a matter of 'who' our current shared social and economic systems are encouraging or forming us to be. Following this, what then becomes a critical question is: 'what might be the nature and socio-genesis of the 'who' that can do better in the future?'

Being concerned with the nature and genesis of persons and possibilities as yet unmet, the research is necessarily a utopian project. It is utopian in that it will use optimism and hope as epistemological organising devices to seek amongst the fragments of the present for the shape of a future wiser self that is better enabled than we are now. I recognise, and am not dismayed, that like all utopian projects this will be a story-tale whose windings and endings will only be made possible by the hopes implicit in its beginnings.

At a practical level it is envisaged that the research will involve surveys conducted via E-media,

combined with key informant interviews and/or focus groups.

The following three (initial draft) future focused imaginative questions have been piloted with already intriguing results:

If you think toward a future where people do better than we do now, where people are more enabled in what they 'know' and 'be' to live well in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place over time.

Then:

- 1. What do you think our descendants might 'know' and 'be' that we don't now ordinarily know and be?*
- 2. What do you imagine will, or may, have happened so that these ways of 'knowing and being' are ordinary and normal for the people of that time?*
- 3. What hints, glimmers and moments of these ways of knowing and being do you see now? And, where do you see them?*

A possible fourth question may be:

- 4. If our descendants could hear these questions and our answers to them - and then were able to ask questions of us – what do you imagine they would ask?*

As one organising frame, the enquiry will use the relational notion of interdependent ecologies of the mind, the social and the environmental, to create breadth of enquiry and analysis (Guattari, 1989). I am also exploring the notion of ecologies of time to add needed depth. The research will be strongly informed by conceptions of the subject as rhizomal rather than individual, collective - or indeed - corporally contained. Hence of great interest are partial and occasional emergences into the social realm spilling forth from sites inclusive of - (but not limited to) - individual action, collective assemblages of reproach concern and action, discourses of conduct and what some now call internet-memes.

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N.B. The referencing protocol on the website loosely followed APA 6 as that was what was being used in 2015.

Page Five

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

David Kenkel is a New Zealand Pakeha. - (Person of European ancestry) - He comes from a family who have been obsessed with interlinked questions of social justice and environmental concern for some generations now. He doesn't see this research as his own - but more a matter of fumbling into words and questions a refrain that plays along his family line. He lives by choice where he grew up and holds strong views about the importance of revering place by knowing it over time. He was a clumsy late comer to academia and is doing this research through the Taos Institute because they were the only people he talked to who seemed able to seriously entertain the whimsy of his proposed approach.

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WORRIES

The worries that drive the researcher and some thoughts on future people:

Like many people I am extremely worried about human created global warming and accelerating ecological degradation. I also worry about the business-as-usual gap between what we know about what harms the environment and what we do to stop that harm.

One of a number of unpalatable truths haunting the teen years of this century is that our continuation of business-as-usual means much of humanity and most of the planet's ecosystems face catastrophe in the not-too-distant future. Present evidence is that we are not changing what we do fast enough to halt some very big, very frightening global phenomena that once started we may be powerless to stop. For me – one of the scariest haunts of this decade – is the knowledge that - unless we are very lucky – or something changes very soon – big bad irreversible changes are coming, and our descendants will have to somehow live with those changes. They will live in a world rather different than our world now and it is likely to be a poorer and harder world in many ways.

If you wonder about the truth of what I'm outlining here – I suggest do your own research. It takes about 2 hours on the net to become conversant with the situation.

A lot of reading and talking to people suggests to me that the current problem does not seem to be with 'knowing what 'needs-to-be-done'; it seems to be more to do with 'who-we-are' that aren't doing what needs to be done. It's a problem of how our current natures as people engage – and don't engage – with the difficult collective necessity of living in less planet wrecking ways and in ways that nurture that which nurtures us.

In essence –

Who we are now is not doing so well at stewardship of place, so - I am interested in the people of the future who may do better than we do now. They are (after all is said and done) the people who will have found ways (I hope) to live amongst the predicaments we are now busy creating for them.

These will be people whose ways of living and ways of being will have been sculpted by their responses to environmental predicaments that we are only now beginning to glimpse the beginnings of. They will live amongst our worries made real. I am very interested in what they will have learnt and who they will have become.

I am deeply interested in what might be ordinary for them that is perhaps not ordinary for us now and in what might seem sensible to them that is perhaps not seen as sensible to us now. I want to know how their relationships with place, others and themselves may differ from how we conduct those relationships now. I think they may have a great deal to teach us if we are only daring enough

to ask and humble enough to listen.

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BRIEF INVITATION TO TAKE PART

Researching our Descendants

Take part in a short [on-line creative research](#) project about people, human nature, optimism, the wounded environment and the future.

This research is part of a PhD project through the [Taos Institute](#).

More detailed information about the project and the current state of the global environment can be found at [placingpeopleintime.com](#).

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Why the research?

Why the research?

- **Because** accelerating ecological disaster and our destructive ‘business-as-usual’ culture seems unstoppable.
- **Because** we face some hard predicaments in the coming years. So who will / can we become to face those predicaments?
- **Because** we need new stories more than we need new machines.
- **Because** if we think hard enough about what the future may require us to be, we can apply some of that thinking now.

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ABOUT THE RESEARCH AND A REQUEST TO TAKE PART

The questions are interested in the nature of future people who might (by choice, necessity, or both) do better than we do now at sustaining and being sustained by the places we live in.

The research is biased because it doesn’t assume that if we keep on doing what we do now, but with better appliances, the future will work out fine.

The project aims to create new stories of who people can be. By taking part you become one of the authors.

Your involvement at this stage would mean you answering (in any way you like) four anonymous questions at the following site: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2FG3BV2> **most people find it takes** about 20 to 30 minutes.

Refining the stories. The next stage would mean you providing e-contact details at the secure site placingpeopleintime.com so you can be involved (if you want to be) in further developing the stories and themes that emerge.

INVOLVE OTHERS: Please pass the word about this project. The more people involved the richer the stories will be.

The time commitment for taking part in the research is minimal and your privacy protected. The project is future focused and flips the usual way time is often thought by aiming to have the future inform the present, rather than the present inform the future. The research is part of a PhD project through the [Taos institute](#). The questions are interested in the nature of future people who might – by choice – necessity – or both – do better than we mostly do now at sustaining and being sustained by the many places we live in. The research questions imagine human nature as a more flexible and creative response-to-circumstance than many now consider it.

Your involvement at this stage would mean you answering (in any way you like) the four anonymous questions at the [following site](#):

Most people find it takes about 20 to 30 minutes to answer the questions.

Then – if you are interested – and able to provide an [E-contact](#) – you could take further part at a later stage by seeing and commenting anonymously on thinking, themes and text that emerges from the answers of many people. If you do want to take part in the second stage – (and I would very much like you to) – you will be sent a link later in 2015. You can skip to the questions now – or – read some of the other posts on this site to get more background on the project and the current state of the worlds environment.

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USEFUL LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION

INFORMATIVE LINKS

These sites may be useful for giving a broader perspective on both the environmental predicaments we face and the socio-political context of our times.

- [A Primer on Neo-liberalism](#) Global issues 2010 – A very useful and comprehensive overview
- [Books of the decade in eco- cultural theory](#) - A list of this last decade's most important books examining humanities cultural relationships with anthropogenic climate change and the environment. These are all books that fit within the broader definition of eco-critique.

- [Capitalism and the destruction of life on Earth](#): Six theses on saving the humans
- Climate Change 2014: [Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability](#) 5th assessment report - IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)
- [Dire Predictions](#): Understanding Global Warming. Michael Mann. An informative Vimeo on global warming – this vimeo summarises the 2009 book of the same title.
- [Forget Shorter Showers](#): Why Personal Change Does Not Equal Political Change.
- [Futurity](#) - Narratives of the future. David Kenkel - 2005 Masters thesis - An exploration of how tropes of the future have been used to embed neo-liberal norms of conduct and perception into children's experience of the self. The precursor to the placing-people-in-time research project.
- [Global Warming Time Bomb](#): Actions Needed to Avert Disaster - James Hansen
- How Stuff Works - [What is the greenhouse effect?](#)
- [Inequality, global change and the sustainability of civilisation](#) - 2000. While dated - this excellent article explores issues that are now in the mid-teens of the century becoming ever more urgent.
- IPSO – (international programme on the state of the ocean) [2013 State of the oceans report](#) – an overview of the current impact of human activity on the world's oceans.
- [Neo-liberalism defined](#) – A brief definition of neo-liberalism
- Planetary Boundaries: [Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity](#) - Ecology and Society 2014 Full article
- Planetary Boundaries article / summary - [The Guardian](#) Rate of environmental degradation puts life on Earth at risk, say scientists
- Real climate – [climate science from climate scientists](#) - Recommended list of climate change books with reviews (2005 to 2011)
- [The Story of Stuff](#) - originally released in December 2007, is a 20-minute, fast-paced, fact-filled look at the underside of our production and consumption patterns.
- The [Dark Mountain Project](#) and [Manifesto](#) - The Dark Mountain Project is a network of writers, artists and thinkers who have stopped believing the stories our civilisation tells itself.

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COURTESY OF PLACE



In attempting this work I wish to be as courteous as I can be toward place because place is the important other character in this story. So, in the interests of starting as I mean to go on, and in the interests of courtesy, I would like to briefly introduce the reader to where I live and where the majority of this work is and will be written.

Green Bay

Green Bay, the suburb of Auckland where I lived as a child and now reside in again as an adult, is a relatively new area of European settlement. It is a place traced with skeins of pre-European pathways, the signs of old dwelling places and dotted with shell midden mounds. Green Bay sits in the foothills of the densely forested Waitakere ranges. A large part of the ranges are now national parkland and regarded as one of the great treasures of the region.

Green Bay is geographically unique in that it straddles the part of New Zealand where the eastern and western ocean harbours come close together and the country narrows to less than 2 kilometres. In spring, sky-rivers of migratory seabirds mark the changing of the tides as they fly between the two harbours, to feed on tidally exposed sandbanks.

Both land and sea are very fertile in this region with farming and commercial fishing featuring prominently in local histories. Areas nearby are also characterised by deep reserves of clay that previously supported a thriving ceramics industry.

Green Bay was always a place of both borders and journeying. I live on Portage Rd, so named because it marks the pathway once used by the indigenous tribes of this area to portage canoes from one ocean harbour to another. Histories indicate that it was used by many Iwi, such as Ngati-Kawarau a maki, Tainui and Ngati-whatua but seldom permanently claimed by any one group. For me the landscape has always spoken strongly of interstices and meetings. Like most landscapes, Green Bay is a palimpsest of histories and peoples, often the layering is hidden - here, it is evocatively evident.

My home is two hundred meters from the Manukau harbour at a point very close to where houses end and bush clad cliffs of sandstone dip down to meet the sea. The Manukau harbour is the Western harbour of Auckland and in this part of New Zealand 'west' carries connotations for both peoples and landscape of a nature both darker and wilder than the east. People from west Auckland

are known for being somewhat fiercely parochial.

In earlier European settlement times Green Bay was a lightly inhabited fishing and farming outpost of Auckland city. It then became one of the many quasi-urban places where rural Maori – primarily Ngapuhi from North of Auckland - came to live in the great population shift of Maori from country to city of the 1940s to 60's. In the late 1960's Green Bay became a planned suburb of family dwellings and shopping centres and schools were built.

My family has been here since before the urbanization and we remain loosely connected to networks of other Green Bay families from that time. I have not always lived here. For many years I lived in other parts of New Zealand and then overseas. In writing this I realised that my decision twenty-one years ago to return to Green Bay reflected a very rich braiding of informing discourses and notions. These were discourses such as post-structural notions of the authority of local knowledge resonating alongside personally held beliefs in the criticality of regarding place as sacred not commodity. I was also strongly influenced by ecological writings and the Māori traditions I grew up alongside, both of which accent in different ways the how the self is co-extensive with landscape.

What perhaps allowed these notions to speak to me with such power was my mother's belief that there are rich gifts to be found in consciously cherishing the known place over time. For me now, one of these gifts of place has been the slow development of the thinking that underpins what I now wish to study. I have found that thoughts on the criticality of cherishing place grow well and do best while one is actively engaged in the business of cherishing. In a very real sense, I am informed by place and in future study and research I intend to listen hard to what my local loved place has to tell me.

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UNSUSTAINABLE ADAPTIONS

"It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society"

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Much of the world now lives in ways that cannot further sustain the places and eco-systems that sustain us. We are on the edge of a global bankruptcy of place and time. Most of us are educated and adapted so that living and being in un-sustainable ways are understood as the normal, natural, inevitable, and only way of things.

The world will change because of what we do now; the future is unlikely to be an easier world and will demand new things of our descendants.

This research has little optimism that we can stop the decline in time - but great optimism that people are collectively wise in response to hard circumstance.

The project seeks to explore the nature of those future persons who by needing to manage the world we leave them will have learnt to live and be in ways that do better at embracing a reciprocally sustaining peoples relationship between people and place.

The Research Questions Asked and Background Thinking as to Question Design

The following (*italicised*) are the survey introduction and questions. As described earlier, information was given about the Taos Institute, me as a PhD student and the intentions of the research. A statement regarding anonymity and safe data storage was also given on the Survey Monkey site along with a link to the website for those wanting more information about the research as a project. The survey finished with an optional question asking for basic demographic data (which I have not used).

The four questions were open ended, i.e., each question asked for a narrative statement in reply. Respondents were not limited as to length of reply and as described, the length of reply to each question varied from a few sentences to long paragraphs.

TEXT FROM SURVEY MONKEY SITE

Thank you for taking part in this project of collective imagination.

Your responses are fully anonymous (unless you choose to leave contact details for the next phase, in which case your responses to this survey will be anonymized)

Your completion of this survey is taken as your consent to participate.

You can find out more about the project and / or leave contact details if you would like to be involved in the next phase at: <http://placingpeopleintime.com/>

The following questions ask about what people might be like in the future. The hope is that woven together our answers will tell a future story rich enough to be useful for us today.

While there are no right or wrong ways to answer the questions, they are designed with four considerations or requirements in mind.

As Walliman (2010) pointed out:

Focusing a research study on a set of propositions, rather than on a hypothesis, allows the study to concentrate on relationships between events, without having to comply with the rigorous characteristics required of hypotheses. The first proposition is a statement of a situation, which is then followed with further propositions that point out factors or events that are related to it and ends with one that indicates a conclusion that could be drawn from these interrelationships. (p. 35)

The first two following (italicised) points that I make before introducing the actual questions operate as propositions that I am asking the participant to agree with, or at least consider. The third and fourth (italicised) points, are more of a broader, and somewhat poetic, description of my research intentions – including the explicit statement about optimism and a future human capacity to respond creatively to predicaments.

Optimism and future creative responses to predicaments were included because I did not particularly want responses that took the position that everything is going to be horrible in future and we are all going to simply die. I have no sensible reason for disagreeing with this very logical (albeit extreme) extension of current trends into the future. The possibility of human extinction in the relatively near future is well argued by some authors, for instance, Baker and McPherson (2014). However, in my opinion, human extinction and the near total destruction of the planetary ecosystem would be no fun to research or write about and do not reflect my own position on the matter. Hence, I made explicit appeal to optimism and future creativity as a precursor to beginning to answer the questions. As will be discussed further, I did not have a particular hypothesis in mind as to what the research would reveal. I did, and still do hold well formed (and I believe, well-founded beliefs) that humanity does not so much face a set of future crises but, rather, we face future predicaments primarily of our own making. The full extent of the predicaments will obviously be better known to our descendants than ourselves.

(The four considerations or requirements in mind):

Firstly: A willingness to consider that right now we are not doing as well as is needed in caretaking the global environment.

Secondly: Some understanding that our descendants will inherit environmental predicaments we have created.

Thirdly: The optimism to imagine that our descendants will respond creatively to these predicaments by finding new and better ways of being and doing in the world.

Fourthly: A willingness for your answers to form part of a broader collective story

Question one:

If you think toward a future where people do better than we do now, where people are more able in what they 'know' and 'be' to live well in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place, then:

1. What do you think our descendants might 'know' and 'be' that we don't now ordinarily know and be?

Question two:

What do you imagine will, or may, have happened so that these ways of 'knowing and being' are ordinary and normal for the people of that time?

Question three:

What glimpses or signs of these ways of knowing and being do you see now? And, where do you see them?

Question four:

If our descendants could hear these questions and our answers to them – and then were able to ask questions of us – what do you imagine they would ask?

Question five: (optional)

It would be very much appreciated if you could tell us a little bit about yourself.

Method and Methodology

I am mindful of Gergen's (2015) notion that research that investigates the nature of the future is inevitably productive of what that future might be and is best undertaken with that productivity at the forefront of any discussion about the project. Hence, in further discussing methodology, then moving into method and with the notion of the inherent productivity of questions in mind, it seems important that time is taken to unpack the thinking, rationales and perspectives that underpinned the framing for the questions and the questions themselves. These thoughts, rationales and perspectives form a braiding of discourses that I hope allowed the framing and questions to have coherent flow. However, this imposition of coherence onto a swirling of (at times) contradictory discourses and epistemologies was undertaken with the goal of attaining sufficient linearity to allow comprehension for the reader rather than to create a single epistemological position.

The linear and coherent nature of the framing and the questions does not aim to create consistency of thought about the immensely, complex, and perhaps fundamentally unknowable question of what the natures of future subjectivities will engage with the detritus of our civilisations. The epistemologies and discourses underpinning the framing and the questions derive from different periods of my life, the influence of sometimes quite disparate authors and people and various episodes of bemused epiphanies linked to contexts of work and home life, family, current affairs, and a growing awareness of the socio/environmental tragedy we will (all too likely) face in the future. As discussed in Chapter One, my thinking has changed since

I began thinking about the project in 2010. As I have described, in 2010 I was interested in the capacity for transpersonal planning attending to collective need versus planning considered as strategizing for personal success and satiation within a capitalist and consumer society. In a sense I was optimistic that if we understood better what enabled the capacity for wise, long-term thinking then we could enact this now and halt, or at least significantly mitigate harm to our shared environment. When I interrogate the me of 2010, I find a desire to create an effective moral homily; a homily of sufficient strength to offer a small pathway back to a world in which unstoppable, runaway climate change and accelerating eco-degradation has not happened and will not happen. My focus has changed over the 13 years since this project commenced – and the wistful optimism of 2010 has been largely supplanted by a hard-won and painful understanding that there seems currently little that can be done to stop the accelerating damage.

I am now less interested in what enables transpersonal planning as a potential template for informing how we might fix current crises – (as I no longer believe most of the crises are fixable). Instead, my thinking has shifted toward how our descendants might relate wisely to place, self/subject and, other selves/subjects surviving as best they can amongst the environmental and societal predicaments our current societies are producing for them. It is a very different form of optimism. And, when I use Guattari's (1989) notion of examining the intersection of ecologies of the social, the mental and environmental, then I find myself adopting an attitude of almost inevitability to the difficult environmental and societal challenges our descendants will face. My curiosity is now more focused on how we as a species will react in our societies and in our sense-of-selves/subject toward what will be a different (and likely harsher) physical world to that of the present.

The question of how we might relate-wisely rather than how-might-we-fix is a humbler question, but less dogged by the progressive metaphor that insists on an imagined capacity for human ingenuity to fix all problems. Authors such as Bender (2003) argued that it is this progressive discourse that sits at the heart of the situation we now find ourselves in and as a citizen of a late modern capitalist society I find myself in a position of resistance to discourses of progress and personal growth that have been extraordinarily normative in how I have personally made meaning through much of my own life. The blunt and somewhat contradictory statements of my introduction to the survey questions reflect both my increasing desire to resist the progressive metaphor, the shift in my thinking over the years and continuing ambiguities of hope and optimism:

While there are no right or wrong ways to answer the questions, they are designed with four considerations or requirements in mind:

Firstly: A willingness to consider that right now we are not doing as well as is needed in caretaking the global environment.

Secondly: Some understanding that our descendants will inherit environmental predicaments we have created.

These statements reflect a growing certainty that our descendants will face environmental and social predicaments we have created and an unwillingness on my part to pretend otherwise. The statements also fit well with Belfrage and Hauf's (2015 and 2017) assertions that a dialogical relationship between physical conditions and the discursive production of meaning offers a broader set of result possibilities than adherence to either solely the investigation of physical conditions, or the investigation of the production of meaning.

The earlier sentence that states:

The following questions ask about what people might be like in the future. The hope is that woven together our answers will tell a future story rich enough to be useful for us today.

In some senses, this is a direct contradiction of the notion that there is very little we can do now and is inconsistent with a discourse of hopelessness or the inevitability of environmental damage. I do not see this kind of inconsistency as problematic but rather as allowing for a richer weaving of possibilities by refusing to locate the questions in a single point of reference. I believe having such admitted ambiguity in the opening statements is also only appropriate given the multiple complex braiding of discourses of the social, the mental and the environmental that will no doubt weave together what constitutes both our, and our descendants', futures.

Part of my thinking in designing the questions was to make as apparent as possible the epistemology of self-place and other that drove the research. Hence the use of clumsy phrases such as “reciprocally sustaining relationship between people and place”; rather than more common language that might have said something like “how can we be more sustainable?” Also, the use of words such as *know* and *be* linked to the possibility of ways of knowing and being that are uncommon now but that may be common in future. My aim was twofold in using these phrases.

Firstly, to accent the post-structural/social constructionist notion that what the human subject *knows and Be's* has a large degree of plasticity and that what is considered normal and ordinary ways of knowing and being in the self-other-place relationship shifts significantly

through time. In positing the nature of subjectivity (or self) as extraordinarily fluid and subject to change, particularly in terms of what is policed as ideal, I was influenced by Cushman's (1995) work on how political ideologies determine and police what is considered the ideal, or normal, subjectivity in reference to the interests of those ideologies. The work of Nikolas Rose (1998, 1999) on governmentality and the production of the neo-liberal subject also influenced my thinking in recognising that the late modern, neo-liberal ideal of subjectivity is an artefact constructed with considerable effort by ideologically driven forces whose interests may not necessarily align with the well-being of the environment, or the bulk of the planet's human population (Callahan, 1999; Mayer, 2016).

Secondly, in using words such as *know* and *be* I wished to make it apparent that I was equally – if not more – interested in that which guides conduct than conduct itself. As discussed in Chapter One, it became apparent to me that addressing the ecological problems facing the world is not to do with knowing what needs to be done but rather, of being the kinds of subjectivity (or selves) to whom undertaking the necessary actions is simply the practical extrapolation of what seems normal, ordinary, and sensible. Perhaps another way of saying this is that I was more interested in what determines logics of action than the actions themselves. I think underpinning some of my thinking in using the admittedly convoluted phrasing of my first question was a notion that I have heard several times in discussion with David Epston (personal communication, 2000) of finding ways to make the ordinary, extraordinary. My speculation was that in asking about what might seem “ordinary and normal in the future that is not ordinary and normal now” the norms of being and doing of today could also be cast into stark enough relief as to be examined as extraordinary.

It seemed to me that one cannot ask people to imagine what norms might be ordinary and normal in the future without inherently asking for a re-examination of the norms that are ordinary today. I hoped for this to be a *troubling* question and feedback from several people I discussed the questions with did confirm that it was indeed troubling. Some of my thinking was driven by a long personal history of using narrative and social constructionist approaches where a fundamental tenet is the use of language to create a climate favourable to the re-consideration of certainties and limiting conceptual maps. Part of the reason that I included the fourth question (*asking what people future might ask of us if they could read these questions and the answers*) was again an attempt to cast into stark relief the norms of being and doing *now*. In a sense, this echoes the process in narrative therapy of creating an outsider witness (Carr, 1998). In this instance what was aimed for was a story from the future able to be the *critical other* speaking *now* toward our present certainties. Some sociologists (e.g., Mathewman, West-Newman, & Curtis, 2013) have described our current societies as haunted by absences. Haunted by the unacknowledged *others*, the suppression of whose truths, and sometimes even existence, is one of the foundation blocks upon which the success of a capitalist society is built; this particularly the case in colonised countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada. A large part of the work of such sociologists then being to become archaeologists of these absences.

In the instance of my research, I sought (and seek) to create a degree of deliberate haunting, not by the silenced inhabitants of yesterday or those pushed to the margins of today's society, but by those in the future who will be impacted by what we do now. What I have aimed for in this work might be considered an archaeology of the future self; in undertaking such an archaeology I have found anything, which reifies, or solidifies that putative self is useful. Asking what future people might ask of us if they could read our questions and the answers did

seem to provide a solidifying process encouraging myself and research respondents to create an imaginary ontological template from which the future subject could speak. To put it simply; my experience for myself (and others) has been that I am much more likely to conceive of an imagined future subject as complex, possessing theory of mind, and own unique perspective if I am asked to consider “so what does this person think of me?” What also inspired me to ask questions aiming for the creation of an imagined future subject who might critique the self of now as an “extraordinary way of being” was a playful written exercise I undertook at the very beginning of the PhD journey. In this exercise I wrote a fictional story that described the reactions of a group of young students some un-knowable time into our future to reading my (imaginary) completed PhD. Writing of their bemusement, pity, and generosity of understanding toward early 21st century norms of self-other and place created for me a fascinating critical space from which to view how we *be* today. The characters in this future story also became real to me in ways that I do not think would have happened if I had not undertaken this exercise. The story was subsequently published in the 2014 *Dark Mountain* short story collection (Dark Mountain, pp. 175–185).

The first iteration of how the questions might be framed was developed in 2011. This was well before I commenced a PhD. This was when I began to play with the phrase “reciprocally sustaining relationship between people and place” (RSRBP&P).

What I was aiming for in this admittedly clumsy phrase was a way to gently allude to the notion that people, and place are not separate entities but rather can instead be considered as if coextensive or rhizomic beings (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 1996, 2010). The use of the word *reciprocity* operates (for me in this instance) as an allusion toward a partial description of how an organism might function that is not contained within one site, skin, or temporal

location (in conversation, David Jones, 1993). In retrospect, it is apparent that what I was attempting to do in developing such a phrase was to conduct an act of partial rhetorical dissensus against an individualising story of the self that my previous research (Kenkel, 2005) indicated had reached significant (albeit of course partial) penetration into how a large proportion of the Western world at least, were encouraged to both conduct self and make sense of self. As discussed in other chapters, this is a discourse of the self which has been characterised as strongly boundaried and individuated, unitary, and fixed and understanding future outcome as primarily a function of a capacity for individual choice and action. This subject (Kenkel, 2005; Rose, 1998, 1999) is also a highly relational self, but transactionally relational in reference to a purported competitive market model of society and the world rather than a self that might understand itself as interdependent or co-extensive with place and other. If this self/subject conducts itself in full subjectification to the analects of neo-liberalism, then seeking transactional advantage informed by self-interest is understood as virtuous in reference to the market (Fitzsimons, 2002). The market understood, not as metaphor, but as a reflection of the true nature of the social and physical world that contains no exteriority. Nothing is exterior to the market because everything is a market. Personal virtue within the ethics of behaviour is determined by market fitness rather than other value sets because, within this tautology, other value sets claiming market exteriority are merely part of the market that do not admit to their transactional function in the marketplace (Apple, 1991; Kenkel, 2005; Rose, 1998,1999).

The ideas of Deleuze and Guattari on becoming, transitional flow and rhizomical thinking also strongly informed my approach in attempting to find a phrase or description that could hold – even in vague approximate manner – the notion of human subject and place as inherently inseparable (1977). The discourse of the self as rhizomical, partial in any one

temporal iteration and as much inherently *inhabited by landscape* as being an *inhabitant of landscape* is not a common one amongst Western peoples I personally find. I had encountered the notion of the rhizomical self in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari (1977, 1996, 2010) and vividly described (although not named as such explicitly) in the writings of Barry Lopez in his book, *Arctic Dreams* (1986). I am deeply grateful to my friend and colleague, David Jones, for many fruitful discussions about the ways in which subjectivity may operate as a multi-bodied articulation across time, place, and identity as an enfolded exteriority of shared social forces rather than a bounded phenomenon contained within the single self or skin.

The use of the phrase “reciprocally sustaining relationship between people and place” aimed to be a midway point that might allow potential respondents to engage with the notion of the rhizomical self without drowning them in a flood of polemic about the Western conception of the self as a cultural artefact failing to take account of our co-extensivity with landscape and place. As described, I also wanted to avoid mundane phrases such as “living sustainably” which, as some authors (Emmett, 2013; Roberts, 2015; R. Smith, 2013) have argued, have been extensively co-opted by the capitalist green movement.

It had become clear to me (and my initial pilot questions somewhat confirmed my thinking) that the target of my questions should be about *how* and *who-to-be* – not what to do. I was curious about norms of the future subject but with a particular kind of twist loosely deriving from post-structural and social constructionist approaches that holds that norms are both normative and constitutive (Butler, 1997; Henriques et al., 1998).

In developing the questions, I was also informed in my thinking by one of my favourite utopian authors, Ursula Le Guin (1986). Le Guin clearly uses the *doing* and *being* of her

characters to not just tell a tale but also explore the landscapes of self/subject formed by requirements and forces different from those of late modern capitalist modernity. Plot and narrative become devices to explore what different logics of actions might flow from epistemological relationships with self-other and place that are different from our own. In using the phrase “reciprocally sustaining relationship between people and place” I was attempting to contain in one short phrase a series of complex notions about a mutual relationship between the human subject and the environment through which it is constituted and sustained and reciprocally sustains and constitutes. In developing the phrase, I was also influenced by ideas of mutuality’s of “continuous becoming” that underpin some of the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1977). I aimed to make possible the consideration of a relationship so inextricably intertwined that subject/place could be considered as coextensive to an extent that (had we the language) we might describe as being one phenomenon. I wanted to avoid potentially binarizing and dividing language that constitutes subject as separate from environment. There are also other echoes of Guattari’s (1989) work in his descriptions of subjectivity in such ways that refuse to countenance a binary between constitutive forces and the constituted subject. I am very taken with the breadth of his perspective on this, and, aware of the challenge of speaking of things as singular phenomena when the nature of my linguistic tradition is to create the plural and the binary.

CHAPTER THREE: CONTEXTUALISING THE ENQUIRY

Hope, Progress, The Environment and Neo-liberalism

This chapter will briefly examine the problem of hope and the progress discourse, and briefly elucidate the environmental challenges facing the world. The likelihood of societal and environmental collapse will also be touched on. The backdrop to this research is the threat of harmful anthropogenic change and the looming environmental and societal global catastrophe we face if the gap of action between what needs to be done and what is being done is not rapidly closed. As briefly described, current socio-political trends suggest that this gap is unlikely to close before irreparable harm is done (Bendell, 2018; Bender, 2003; Emmett, 2013; Hansen, 2010; Jamail, 2019). Hence, I do not aim to convince the reader that bad times are imminent; but rather to presume that a disastrous future (to varying extents) is coming for much of the world and to move forward with this as a foundational assumption of the work. Following the notion of retroduction (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017) (where a dialogue between the discursive and the real world allows new meanings and possibilities to emerge), it seems critical that a chapter be given over to outlining the physical realities currently facing the world. While a primary purpose of this research is to explore new possibilities for subjectivity, this cannot be done with integrity without detailing both the physical predicaments the world faces and what appear to be the primary drivers of these unfolding predicaments.

In addition to examining the problem of cultural memes of hope and progress, this chapter will briefly explore socio-political drivers of the coming environmental predicaments and move on to briefly outline what is currently known about the state of the environment and what is predicted to happen next. The descriptive backdrop of the environmental challenges

the world faces aims to provide a context for the work and allow a platform of dialogue between what is known and what can be speculated about relative to future norms of the subject.

To stress the point, details about the environmental tragedies we potentially face have been much written about elsewhere and the broader aim of this thesis is not to convince the reader that we and our descendants face harsh environmental predicaments but rather to speculate about what people in the future may become in relating to, and managing, such possible predicaments.

The Problem of Hope

Thoughts On the Dangers Of Cultural Memes Of Hope And Progress

In his work on deep adaption and navigating climate tragedy, Bendell makes the following statement about the appropriateness of academics bluntly naming the likelihood that civilisation will face collapse in the near term. I personally find Bendell's work inspiring.

I am aware that some people consider statements from academics that we now face inevitable near-term social collapse to be irresponsible due to the potential impact that may have on the motivation or mental health of people reading such statements. My research and engagement in dialogue on this topic, some of which I will outline in this paper, leads me to conclude the exact opposite. It is a responsible act to communicate this analysis now and invite people to support each other, myself included, in exploring the implications, including the psychological and spiritual implications. (2018, p. 4)

Before moving further into exploring late-modern capitalism's link with environmental challenges and the likelihood of collapse I want to acknowledge that this topic is a difficult one

and one that is not frequently named in a blunt fashion. As Bendell's work explores, there is little currently published within academia commencing from the overt premise that collapse of some form is almost inevitable. Bendell poses the question of how can communities and individuals begin to face the grief and fear of what the future holds when that dire (possible) future is seldom named as such?

For myself, I have found it is not possible to research and write about parlous future possibilities without at times engaging with thoughts and emotions of sadness and outrage. Like Bendell (2018) and Hine and Kingsnorth (2009), I am becoming increasingly convinced there is a need for societies to begin facing some hard likelihoods and that this will require collective fortitude, a turning away from unwarranted hope and the consequential experience of hurt and fear when considering the future.

I also want to acknowledge that in asking the reader to embrace the central premise of what seems an increasingly likely unstoppable bad future sufficiently as to make the work sensible to the reader, I am asking the reader too, to embrace hurtful considerations. As discussed further in Chapter four (which explores ethics) undertaking this work has required me to engage with future possibilities that are hurtful to consider. While the entire thesis is in some senses an act of dissensus against unhelpful notions of hope, some moments have required me to personally and productively resist discourses of optimism and hope. I have needed to take a position of dissent to the beguilingly hopeful notion that somehow everything will turn out all right in the future; that a clever techno-fix will solve the CO² problem; that new (or old) approaches to agriculture will mean that everybody is fed despite unpredictable weather patterns and the accelerating worldwide decline of available water and fertile soil.

Personally, and outside of the more formal stories of academic literature, I have found that to resist unrealistic discourses of hope and optimism and to publicly discuss such resistance and what fruits such resistance might bear, seems to place one outside the preferred temporal management norms of late modern capitalist Western society. Over the period of writing this work I have found this resistance productive of new possibilities for consideration of the future. These are different ways of ‘considering’ that are exterior to the binaries of unwarranted hope or nihilistic despair. Aligned with the thinking of activists/poets such as Hakim Bey (1991) these are considerations that cherish the current moment and known and loved places. These are considerations that reject the likelihood that lifestyles will remain as they are at present and speculate about alternative and humbler modes. These have been considerations of what it might mean to accept and adapt to a future very different from what our current hyper-consumer, growth-oriented cultures continue to promise.

However, these new possibilities of consideration are painfully arrived at and seem to sit at an abrasive angle with modernity’s preferred modes of managing the present/future relationship. From what I have experienced in discussing this work in a range of forum, ‘hope’ in particular is seen as an essential ingredient for survival, with its stated absence somehow understood to automatically correlate with despair and nihilism. I have been told in some number of political and community forums that to publicly discuss difficult futures in ways that do not hold out much hope that they can be averted is a dangerous act that could do harm.

Following Bendell (2018), I do not believe this, but my experience of this *policing-instruction* is suggestive to me of the powerful grip discourses of optimism, hope and progress have over the Western world’s imagination and collective mechanisms of intelligibility. Personally, I found that to stand outside such discourses, or worse in active resistance to them, is to somewhat risk being perceived as the aberrant and potentially dangerous other.

As Kingsnorth and Hine (2009) and Bender (2003) pointed out, Western cultures tend to adhere to the cultural norms of modernity and in consequence tend to have a besotted preoccupation with the anticipated fruits of progress as the sensible answer to potential and actual ills. In a sense, the belief that technological progress will eventually resolve all the challenges we face operates as a discourse that underpins not just much current environmental policy but also how the public is encouraged to make sense of the future.

Kingsnorth and Hine also argued that the twin spells of hope and progress cast a very particular glamour over how modernity-inspired cultures negotiate their current relationship with potential future problems. The glamour of hope meaning that an honest, (and potentially painful), appraisal of what may face our descendants tends to be subjugated in the practice of our culture's daily lives by a dominant story of what I would now describe as unwarranted optimism. Hope becomes a lens to view the future with, a necessary spur to the efforts purportedly needed to create that future in desirable ways, and a silencing device for other stories of how we might contemplate and plan for difficult futures.

At the risk of oversimplifying what in lived experience are nuanced and often contradictory processes (Beck, 1993), a typical late-modern response to a looming crisis might be: One: That hope must be protected because it is the fuel that inspires change and progress. And two: Hence a threat to hope is a threat to the possibility of successful progress to overcome difficulties. Arguably, a practical effect of these twin discourses means that facing future dangers does not entail detailed consideration of the actual real-life impact of these coming dangers, but, is rather understood as the galvanising phase of developing creative processes to defang the coming monsters. Horrid futures, (no matter how likely) become not phenomena deserving of thoughtful contemplation that might lead to acceptance or adaption. Instead, unpleasant possibilities, (even when all evidence points to their likely occurrence in the near to

mid future) become the spur to fight those possibilities, rather than inevitabilities to be accepted and managed.

In discussing responses to future environmental catastrophes, Smith (D. Smith, 2014) cites Kingsnorth's and Hine's (2009) distinction between a *problem* which can be solved, and a *predicament* which must be somehow endured. Asserting the need for art and literature to engage boldly with humanity's relationship with our current and future environmental predicaments, Kingsnorth and Hine (2009) argued that the time has come for a shift away from frenetic searches for solutions. They believe there may be much to gain and learn from finding the courage and capacity to simply face and comprehend at the human scale the environmental predicaments we face. As Lynch stated:

The problem with hoping for a technological solution to climate change is that it is often insufficiently critical of the ways of life that wreaked havoc on the rest of nature. It is easier to hope for a wild geoengineering solution than face the reality that billions of people need to change their daily habits in order to lessen the immense suffering appearing on the horizon. This hope cruelly prevents us from confronting the deep structural challenge of rethinking the way that some humans relate to nature. Obviously not all people experience this world in the same way, and it is a further tragedy that those who have contributed the least to climate change will be among those who experience its consequences earliest. (2017, p. 3)

He went on to add:

Rather than investing in technological salvations that will allow us to prolong a way of life that is destroying the rest of nature, we can embrace pessimism. In

abandoning hope that one way of life will continue, we open up a space for alternative hopes. (2017, p. 5)

My personal hope no longer resides in averting catastrophe. My hope now resides in speculating about, anticipating and working toward the future societal kindness, wisdom and decency that may develop in response to catastrophe and how we (now) may contribute to these new developments. As Fritz's (1996) extensive research on community responses post-disaster made clear, the typical response of communities to shared tragedy is not a descent into savagery and self-interest, but rather an increase in connection, collectivity and commitment to care of each other.

Clarifying The Critiques

A Brief Description of Neo-Liberalism

Neo-liberalism can be understood to be an actively hegemonic ideology that has been the dominant political, economic (and increasingly social) paradigm for over the last 40 years in the West. As Saad-Filho and Johnston stated: "...it is fundamentally a new social order" (2005, p. 9). Initially proposed as a perfect recipe for creating collective well-being through the interaction of entrepreneurial self-interested individuals within an unrestrained market it is increasingly apparent that neo-liberal policies in fact operate instead as a global enabling device to funnel resources to a small proportion of the world's population (Piketty & Goldhammer, 2014).

Neo-liberal policies and approaches such as extensive privatisation, adherence to an endless growth model and the tendency to view matters of public good as individual issues as

best served by the market have come under increasing critique in the second decade of the 21st century; particularly concerning global increases in wealth inequity (Piketty & Goldhammer, 2014; Rashbrooke, 2015). These policies and practices are also often understood to be fundamentally incompatible with the kinds of shifts in attitude, policy, and behaviour needed if there is to be any hope of avoiding the worst effects of a global ecological catastrophe (Loewenstein, 2015; R. Smith, 2013; Winship, 2016).

Martinez and Garcia (1997), writing for South American activists in the late 1990s, offer the following somewhat simplistic, but refreshingly pithy and critical, description of some of the key features of neo-liberalism:

The main points of neo-liberalism include:

1. **THE RULE OF THE MARKET.** Liberating "free" enterprise or private enterprise from any bonds imposed by the government (the state) no matter how much social damage this causes. Greater openness to international trade and investment, as in NAFTA. Reduce wages by de-unionizing workers and eliminating workers' rights that had been won over many years of struggle. No more price controls. All in all, total freedom of movement for capital, goods and services. To convince us this is good for us, they say "an unregulated market is the best way to increase economic growth, which will ultimately benefit everyone." It's like Reagan's "supply-side" and "trickle-down" economics -- but somehow the wealth didn't trickle down very much.

2. **CUTTING PUBLIC EXPENDITURE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES** like education and health care. **REDUCING THE SAFETY-NET FOR THE POOR**, and even maintenance of roads, bridges, water supply – again in the name

of reducing government's role. Of course, they don't oppose government subsidies and tax benefits for business.

3. **DEREGULATION.** Reduce government regulation of everything that could diminish profits, including protecting the environment and safety on the job.

4. **PRIVATIZATION.** Sell state-owned enterprises, goods and services to private investors. This includes banks, key industries, railroads, toll highways, electricity, schools, hospitals and even fresh water. Although usually done in the name of greater efficiency, which is often needed, privatization has mainly had the effect of concentrating wealth even more in a few hands and making the public pay even more for its needs.

5. **ELIMINATING THE CONCEPT OF "THE PUBLIC GOOD" or "COMMUNITY"** and replacing it with "individual responsibility." Pressuring the poorest people in a society to find solutions to their lack of health care, education and social security all by themselves -- then blaming them, if they fail, as "lazy."

(p. 1)

Other authors make the argument that neo-liberalism can be considered as a project and involves the attempted marketisation of everything. In particular, the penetration of the market model into the social sphere. If something is not a market now, then it should be made so. In addition, the project has aimed (with some success) to reshape not just economies but how the ordinary person makes sense of both themselves and the world. The world being conceived of as a competitive field, with the human subject conceived of not as inherently cooperative and collaborative, but rather, inherently competitive, and self-interested. This is sometimes described as the creation of the neo-liberal subject: hyper-individualised, hyper-responsibilised

and understanding as only common sense that success or failure in the world is a function of individual effort rather than reflecting context, history or social positioning (Harvey, 2013; Kenkel, 2005; Loewenstein, 2015; Mayer, 2016; Rose, 1998, 1999; Sugarman, 2015).

The penetration of these ideas into social and economic spheres and their hegemonic success over the last forty or more years is no accident but rather has involved deliberate and sustained effort to disseminate and normalise neo-liberal norms to politicians, policy makers and the public, alike. In 1999, it was estimated that conservative think-tanks active in disseminating neo-liberal ideas had been funded to the tune of approximately \$US1 billion between 1990 and 1999 (Callahan, 1999). There is no reason to presume funding decreased in the subsequent decades. Mayer (2016) argued that right-wing think-tanks grew both in number and influence after the turn of the 21st century. The large investment of money and effort rather stresses the point that the cementing of discourses as simply common-sense in the public and private spheres operates to major advantage to some small and (perhaps already rich) section of society.

Regarding the Environment, Neo-Liberalism and Subjectivity

In 2023 we humans face predicaments at both local and global levels. The next century will almost certainly be one of war, massive population dislocation and shrinking resources juxtaposed against an increasing global population. Factor in increasingly erratic weather patterns, accelerating sea rise, the eminent collapse of fisheries worldwide, and a decline in fertile soil and available water, and we have a recipe for global ecological collapse and disruption on a scale that has not yet been seen in human history (Beddington, 2008, 2015). Much as I would like to believe that this unpalatable future can be warded off or blunted by current actions, this seems unlikely at this point and dominant social and economic orthodoxies

play a key role in constraining possibilities for change. The current relationship between human peoples and the places and eco-systems that sustain us might be better described as the rapacious harvesting of a rapidly depleting resource rather than reciprocal relationships of courtesy, care and thought for the future.

If you consider the human-caused environmental catastrophes that are facing the world, it would be fair to say we (the human species) are not doing well at creating reciprocally sustaining relations between people and the non-human world. The policies of neo-liberal capitalism have been (and continue to be) centrally complicit in keeping the gap open between what we know needs to be done and what is done. What some argue interlocks with this collective dis-ease in our natural world relations are our relations with each other and ourselves. I have previously argued the collective Western nations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (EOCD) bloc have been flattered into an alarmingly inflated understanding of the power of individual agency to control individual futures with a corresponding shrinkage of capacity for attention to the collective servicing of collective need. As Le Grange stated:

The “environmental crisis” is not just humanity’s relationship with nature that has gone wrong but also a crisis of human-human relations and a crisis of self. (2005, p. 42)

The discourse that individual effort is sufficient to enable the individual to entrepreneur his or her way into their perfect desired future is powerful under neo-liberal conditions (Apple, 1991; Aschoff, 2015; Kenkel, 2005; Rose, 1998,1999). Limitations of resource, context and circumstance are little considered within a tautologically closed loop that conflates individual life outcomes, self-interest, and personal effort in an ever-tightening entanglement of causal

explanation. Within this instructional discourse for personhood there is little room for the notion of collective effort against forces so large that individuals are powerless (Klein, as cited in Winship, 2016).

Some authors (Bender, 2003; R. Smith, 2013) have argued that the over 30-year global dominance of endless growth capitalism combined with the neo-liberal promotion of individual self-interest and the centrality of the bounded, and autonomous, choosing, individual as ideal citizen has provided a poor collective thought platform for comprehension of shared predicaments such as our collapsing global ecosystems. As Gregory Bateson stated on the link between conceptions of the self/subject as individual and the environmental crisis: “to limit our notion of self to the region within our skin is basic to the planetary ecological crisis in which we find ourselves.” (Bateson, 1970 as cited in Bender, 2003, p. 103)

As argued (Kenkel, 2005), decades of the domination of the political-economies of late-modern global capitalism have reified in the West’s collective performances of self/subject, society and environment behaviours that diminish capacity to think and act outside the needs and desires of narrow individual self-interest. What also appears diminished is the capacity of citizens of neo-liberal regimes to comprehend concerns in solidarity with others. Rashbrooke refers to this as the *growing empathy gap* (2015).

Referring to the prevalence and social authority of the neo-liberal discourse, Bourdieu suggested that the neo-liberal market discourse is not currently just one explanatory discourse amongst many, but rather a “‘strong discourse’ in the same way psychiatry is a strong discourse in an asylum” (as cited in Phoenix, 2003, p. 3). The strongly influential meta-narrative is particularly hostile to collective approaches to managing shared concerns (Allison, 2019) and this is problematic in a time where (arguably) broad-scale collective action regarding the

environment is more needed than ever before. In discussing the extraordinarily well funded and message-focused networks of libertarian think-tanks and lobbyists Melanie Klein (as cited in Winship, 2016) described:

– a very planned and concerted campaign to change the ideas that govern our societies. The Koch brothers set out to change the values, to change the core ideas that people believed in.

And there is no progressive equivalent of taking ideas seriously. So, we've got lots of funding for campaigns for people working on all kinds of different areas but a metanarrative, like the Charles Koch metanarrative – and he's said it explicitly – is that he is challenging collectivism, he is challenging the idea that when people get together they can do good. And he is putting forward the worldview that we're all very familiar with that if you free the individual to pursue their self-interest that will actually benefit the majority. So, you need to attack everything that is collective, whether it's labour rights or whether it's public health care or whether it's regulatory action. All of this falls under the metanarrative of an attack on collectivism. (p. 4)

Richard Smith succinctly described the global situation as: “The world’s climate scientists tell us we’re facing a planetary emergency” (2013, p. 2). Policies of endless growth, and the popular promotion of a marketized hyper-individualization of responsibility (with minimalised collective perspective) seem inadequate to the task of collectively managing or preventing a collective difficult future.

In addition, in the face of the growing evidence pointing to a likely worldwide societal and ecological collapse in the near-term future (Beddington, 2008, 2015; Motesharrei et al., 2014). The apparent inability of the global institutions of capitalism to shift away from a

dangerous endless growth model does little to inspire hope that the situation is able to be controlled by ordinary people. The situation is made worse by the promotion of excessive lifestyles of consumption as the truest epitome of personal success with large global institutions continuing to promote this ideal and service its manufactured desires despite the cost of ecological degradation and increasing resource depletion.

As some have argued (Ife, 2013; R. Smith, 2013), the institutions and systems that champion discourses of rapacious over-consumption as an ideal cannot be easily swayed by ordinary people because they are not in service to democracy, instead they are in service to creating profit for a relatively small number of beneficiaries (Aschoff, 2015; OXFAM, 2015, 2019).

Describing the accelerating increase in atmospheric concentration of CO² as: “It feels like the inevitable march toward disaster,” Raymo (a scientist at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, a unit of Columbia University) captures the sense of despair that very easily accompanies such a grand scale of angst (as cited in R. Smith, 2013, p. 1).

Adding to the challenge, the societal consequence of following neo-liberal policies has meant an increasing gap between poor and rich in OECD countries in ways not seen for generations (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2009; Picketty & Goldhammer, 2014). Countries like New Zealand (where I live) once renowned for egalitarianism are now starkly stratified (Rashbrooke, 2015). Never has so much of the world been owned by so few (OXFAM, 2015). Ecologies of both environment and society are being frayed by global capitalism (Guattari, 1989; Ife, 2013).

Unfortunately, the increasing evidence that, following the social and economic policies of neo-liberal capitalism are damaging the world does not much impact on the internal logic of

neo-liberal capitalism. As Meyer (2004) pointed out, neo-liberalism as an applied philosophy tends to revere its own tropes (such as the market as best metaphor for everything) as revealed truths rather than contestable logics. As Harvey (2013) also made clear, there is a relentless logic to late modern capitalism that provides one solution to problems, the solution of growth and expansion. Late-modern capitalism as a political philosophy tends to see barriers to expansion as problems to be circumvented rather than natural limits to be accepted (Harvey, 2013).

To further outline the problem; a broad consensus of agreement is emerging that the universal human adoption of humbler lifestyles of far less consumption is the only practical solution to climate change and increasing ecological damage. Typically, this might mean the whole-sale adoption of life-patterns such as repairing not replacing consumer goods, eating primarily local foods and a whole-population shift to public or shared transport options. Houses would become smaller and use much less energy, frugality and minimalism not consumption would re-emerge as virtuous social discourses. Travel by high-carbon footprint methods such as car and aircraft would become as exotic as they are now normal. Arguably, it is not techno-fixes that are needed – it is fixes of the way we live. To halt the damage, we need to contract, not expand.

Unfortunately, the solutions to global ecological problems promoted by global capital tend to automatically follow instead the logics of expansion; find new markets, increase their consumption levels and get excited about the new markets in green technology that are opening up (R. Smith, 2103). This is not a philosophy that has room for the humble “use-less” message. There are several problems here. Arguably, dangerous over-consumption, resource squandering and degrading the living world to fuel more over-consumption will not be restrained by creating new markets. The solution of doing more of the same harder but with a

green product tinge is demonstrably not a viable solution (Aschoff, 2015; D. Smith, 2014). Also, the multinational mining, oil and gas companies that profit by creating and then servicing new markets will not easily be restrained in their dangerous activities by the votes of ordinary citizens or the protests of small nation states. Multi-nationals are not structured to be accountable to democratic societies; instead, they are accountable to profit-seeking shareholders. A multi-national's first and primary duty of care is to a profit margin, not people or the environment (Ife, 2013). The concerns of non-shareholder human beings are only real in-as-much as they effect profit margins. The current track-record of multinationals suggests the concerns of the environment come a very distant second to profit compliance. The environmental regulations of developed nation states tend to lower profit margins. The global response of multi-nationals has generally been to develop workarounds to such regulations while simultaneously putting significant lobbying effort into repealing or restraining environmental regulation (Haidt, 2012). Regarding neo-liberalism; Harvey stated:

[We can] interpret neo-liberalization either as a utopian project [q.v. Hayek, Friedman, the Chicago Boys, and other members of the neo-liberal thought collective] to realize a theoretical design for the reorganization of international capitalism or as a political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites.... Neo-liberalization has not been very effective in revitalizing global capital accumulation, but it has succeeded remarkably well in restoring, or in some instances (as in Russia and China) creating, the power of an economic elite. The theoretical utopianism of neo-liberal argument has, I conclude, primarily worked as a system of justification and legitimation for whatever needed to be done to achieve this goal. (Harvey, 2013, p. 19)

Harvey went on to add:

[The Neo-liberal State] appears to be either a transitional or an unstable political form. At the heart of the problem lies a burgeoning disparity between the declared public aims of neo-liberalism—the well-being of all—and its actual consequences—the restoration of class power. (p. 79)

The 2019 OXFAM report (public good or private wealth) seems to corroborate Harvey's point that neo-liberalism can be viewed as primarily a device for funnelling wealth and resources to the already wealthy. The report makes for disturbing reading.

ANOTHER BUMPER YEAR FOR BILLIONAIRES

It is 10 years since the financial crisis that shook our world and caused enormous suffering. In that time, the fortunes of the richest have risen dramatically:

- In the 10 years since the financial crisis, the number of billionaires has nearly doubled.
- The wealth of the world's billionaires increased by \$900bn in the last year alone, or \$2.5bn a day. Meanwhile the wealth of the poorest half of humanity, 3.8 billion people fell by 11%.
- Billionaires now have more wealth than ever before. Between 2017 and 2018, a new billionaire was created every two days.
- Wealth is becoming even more concentrated – last year, 26 people owned the same as the 3.8 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity, down from 43 people the year before. (OXFAM, 2019, p. 28)

A key point made in the report is that most of the major institutions of the world and the majority of governments in fact actively support this state of inequality with the very wealthy and corporations paying less tax, and the poor paying more. We live in a time where changes induced by human beings threaten in the short- to medium-term human and eco-system well-being on a grand scale. What is also under threat is human capacity (and resources) to maintain a functioning, technologically able interlocking set of civilizations.

In the longer term, we potentially face a planetary phase shift from a global equilibrium able to sustain agriculture at most latitudes to one that will be significantly less friendly to human life. We teeter on the edge of unstoppable positive cycles of climate change that would over centuries shift the world from its present lush condition to what scientists such as Lovelock (2006, 2009) and Hansen (2009) argued will be a future with a much harsher and drier planetary equilibrium with life contracted toward the poles. The period between the present of a wet lush, species-rich, fertile world and a future dry, hot, species-poor and relatively barren world is an interregnum that does not easily bear thinking about. During this interregnum, much of humanity might die. In the shorter term, we very likely face a future of widespread famine, and societal and eco-system collapse.

Again, It is important to stress that this is not science fiction, but rather predictions based on a developing and increasingly well-founded scientific consensus (Archer, 2007; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2018; Mann & Kump, 2009).

In addition to climate change, a growing scientific consensus indicates there are other major issues facing us (Archer, 2007). Unsustainable practices of agriculture and aquaculture and world-wide patterns of increasing eco-system degradation also signal the magnitude of the risk the world faces. The global increase in wealth disparity between richest and poorest and

the commitment of many of our largest global institutions to maintaining this unfortunate state paints a frame of human indifference and human suffering around the parlous state of our environment (Ife, 2013; Saad-Filho & Johnston, 2005). Even a cursory examination of any of these areas equally makes the point that we have for some time needed to do better in our stewardship and care of each other and what sustains us.

Events Moving Rapidly

When I first began to consider this project in 2010, I tended to imagine that the difficult future I was speaking of was some distant almost theoretical event not something that might happen in my lifetime or my children's lifetime. I spoke cautiously and tentatively. While I experienced occasional stabs of intense emotion while thinking of a possible difficult future, I paid little attention to these as signifiers of anything important.

It is now 2023 and in the brief period since 2010 both my visceral responses to the project and the nature of the public and scientific discourses have shifted. This shift roughly coincided with the March 2015 global CO² rise to 400 ppm (Hansen et al., 2016) – this being the highest level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere since the Pliocene 4 million years ago when global temperature averages were 3 to 5°C higher and sea level between 5 to 40m higher than today (R. Smith, 2013).

Echoing in more erudite terms my own growing upset; many reputable researchers are now abandoning the cautious tentative words of even 6 years ago and clearly stating that it would require a miracle for us not to see a 4°C rise in global temperatures in the coming decades (Hansen et al., 2016; Roberts, 2015). The 2018 IPCC report asserts that unless major change happens before 2030 a significant rise in global temperatures is inevitable (IPCC, 2018).

To be clear: a 4°C rise in global temperatures will force devastating changes to the ecosphere such as to make almost inevitable a large drop in global population through the vectors of famine, war, dislocation, and disease.

Resource Depletion, Accelerating Climate Change and Societal Collapse. The survival of civilisations and the well-being of their supporting environments are inextricably interlinked with some arguing this is more the case today than ever before. For example, without a complex and highly mechanised delivery structure, petrol-chemical dependent agriculture at the industrial scale, a relatively stable climate, abundant water and reliable soil fertility the supermarkets of the west would empty of food in days (Barber, 2014). As Barber argued, this linkage between our survival and a complex, fragile and increasingly threatened food-producing and delivery infrastructure is arguably less visible to the average citizens of Western civilisations than at any previous time in history (2014).

Currently 40% of the planets land surface is used for food cultivation to feed a 2017 global population of 7.5 billion people with 1 in 9 people lacking sufficient food to lead a healthy active life and 1 in 10 lacking access to clean water (Food Security Information Network, 2017). Sustaining current rates of food production is reliant on the precarious base of: a stable climate, unlimited access to fresh water, a petrochemical-based industrial approach to agriculture and soil productivity remaining constant. Unfortunately, soil fertility is in decline worldwide, water availability is also declining rapidly due to both emptying aquifers and glacial retreat and the climate is becoming increasingly unstable worldwide (Emmett, 2013). Adding to the unfortunate picture is the approaching collapse of the world's fisheries with 53% of fisheries fully exploited, 32% over exploited and many commercial fish species have declined to the point of threat of extinction. Worldwide Fund for Nature, (WWF). 2015).

The world's population continues to grow by approximately 80 million a year with much of that growth in countries worst effected by climate change, soil degradation and water shortages (Emmett, 2014). The current physical and policy trajectories suggest there is little chance of us being able to feed everybody in the coming decades. The kinds of growing disparities of income and wealth distribution that Piketty and Goldhammer (2014) described will become physicalized in terms of those able to have sufficient resources to live and those who do not.

History instructs that societies that over-shoot the carrying capacity of their resource base in almost all cases collapse to varying degrees dependent on what responses to shortage and threat their internal governing structures make possible (Diamond, 2005). Our current situation is the first threatened collapse that is global in scale rather than regional (Motesharrei et al. (2014). Human and Nature Dynamics, (HANDY)⁵ report).

The HANDY report describes in detail the current risk of what they termed the non-recoverable collapse of global civilisation. Drawing lessons from the collapse of previous civilisations the authors describe current wealth inequality as an exacerbating risk factor likely to mean the collapse is more rapid and severe than it might otherwise be. They explained that much of the world's resources are currently controlled by an elite minority whose wealth will insulate them from the initial and even medium-term effects of a degrading global environment.

⁵ The extremely comprehensive Handy report was undertaken in 2014 by the School of Public Policy and Department of Mathematics, University of Maryland; National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC), the Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, the Institute of Global Environment and Society (IGES) and the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Science and Institute of Physical Science and Technology, University of Maryland.

Because this minority control, not just a disproportionate percentage of the world's resources, but also have disproportionate political influence over global climate policy, change is unlikely to be implemented at the rate of a more egalitarian society where effects are equally experienced by all (Motesharrei et al., 2014).

In effect, what the report describes is that while global business-as-usual will create a catastrophic experience for a large proportion of humanity, business-as-usual will continue for some time to work to the advantage of those that control, own, and manage much of the world's resources and who will hence be poorly motivated to initiate change. What lends credence to the HANDY report is the United Kingdom Government (2008) report by John Beddington, Chief Science advisor to the UK Government titled "Food, Energy, Water and the Climate: 'A Perfect Storm of Global Events?'". This report describes a collision of increasing need, decreasing food production and global disruption from climate change meaning the likelihood of a major crisis threatening the viability of a coherent global civilisation by approximately 2030.

Beddington made a number of urgent recommendations in the 2008 report that, in the main, have not been implemented. Beddington stated at a 2015 seminar that, "When I talked in 2008 about the perfect storm, I hoped things would improve. I have to say they have not. If anything, they are more challenging and more difficult" (Beddington, 2015, p. 1). It is important to stress that the HANDY report and the Beddington report are not the work of wild-eyed Green activists, but instead have been produced by reputable teams of mainstream researchers.

What I am describing is a bleak picture of today's world, but sadly an accurate one according to the many people who have made the brave effort to look hard at what is happening

in the world. (Bendell, 2018; Bender, 2003; Dodds, 2012; Emmett, 2013; Guattari, 1999; Hines & Kingsnorth, 2009). I am describing these bleak difficult things because it is important to me that the foundation of this work is based in harsh truths and the great risks we face as well as utopian hopes and dreams.

The Next Chapter Explores Ethics

Using the metaphor of the research data painting a rather beautiful optimistic picture of human nature contained within a frame that is ugly and frightening, then the following chapter has two linked intentions: First, to engage with this optimistic view, how it was attained and whether this was done ethically. Second, as important (and inseparably to my mind) speculations are made on how the uglier framing context might be related to ethically and appropriately. In research considering a discursive optimistic story of how humans might respond to difficult futures, that consideration must (I believe) also encompass the extraordinarily painful realities that frame the possibility of that optimistic outcome.

CHAPTER FOUR: ETHICS

“Moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity”.

(Oxford Dictionary)

This chapter has a number of aims: First, to set some context from which to consider the ethics and morality of the research project itself. Second, to speculate about what may be ethically appropriate as responses to the broader context of the Anthropocene and catastrophes of humanity's own making. Rather than restricting the review of literature to one chapter I follow a grounded theory tradition of weaving exploration of literature through the body of the work (Charmaz, 2014). I use the ethics chapter to canvass a range of literature relevant to broader questions of ethics and the project. In addition to this broader exploration, the chapter also addresses more ordinary questions about the ways in which the research project has been conducted per academic ethical standards appropriate to a PhD level research project. In writing this chapter I lean on Hine and Kingsnorth's (2009) assertion that what is needed, more than a purely scientific response to the environmental predicaments we face is a human one – including the engagement of art, literature and emotion. In alignment with their assertion, this means that my responses and thoughts to questions of ethics are human ones, necessarily including emotion, allegory and sometimes visceral responses of outrage and upset. What writing this chapter clarified for me is that (in my opinion) it would be unethical to attempt anything that resembles a dispassionate tone in considering the sorts of coming dilemmas described in the last chapter. In parts of this chapter, I use more traditional questions that are often asked about ethical research as starting platforms for broader ranging discussion. In doing so, I traverse a range of literature relevant to the topic.

Personally I found this section difficult to write and conversely, proportionally fruitful, in terms of the thinking that I necessarily engaged with to do so. Being asked to engage with ethics was a very useful device (albeit uncomfortable) to clarify the relationship between academic notions of research ethics, and the ethics of how one might sensibly contemplate collapse and destruction. Such collapse and destruction likely meaning the destructions of ecosystems, very likely the (at least partial) collapse of the interlocked civilisations of the developed and developing world and the possible death or forced migrations of a large proportion of populations living in the parts of the globe most affected by climate change and resource deprivation.

Thoughts on Ethics

I consider this an ethical project; certainly, it is taken up with concerns about general moral conduct regarding how people live in the world. The project is also to do with being socially just in a sense that is larger than simply human rights and is perhaps more eco-centric than anthro-centric; echoing (amongst many others) Aldo Leopold's 1949 call for the need for an ethic of care to the land not just as a mechanism that supports us, but as an entity in its own right of which we are simply one part (Leopold, 1949).

What disturbs me is that much is understood about how this trajectory toward a difficult future could be blunted, if not stopped, and the extent to which this understanding is not acted on. In essence, what would be required is the immediate cessation of fossil fuel use for anything other than essential purposes, and a social shift towards an ethos of sufficiency rather than excessive consumption and growth. However, this would require the dismantling of the current global economic system which is (arguably) primarily designed to funnel wealth and resources upward to a small elite who have been very successful in persuading the world that what is in

their interests is in the interests of all (Harvey, 2013). As described in the previous chapter, there seems little appetite for such dismantlement, rather, the current systems seem to be becoming even more entrenched (Picketty & Goldhammer, 2014). I personally find this sad and enraging. I am unsure what the correct ethical position is to take when facing the very real possibility of the collapse of the civilisation to which I belong and the death of many of its citizens (including risk to my own descendants). I find myself angry at a global socio-political system that seems so clearly unable to undertake the necessary steps to shift us from our current trajectory toward catastrophe. I think in this instance anger is an appropriate moral and ethical response.

Anger: “ a strong feeling of displeasure and belligerence aroused by a wrong; wrath; ire.”
(Dictionary.com)

Ethics and This Research

In further exploring ethics, I use this quote below because it obliquely captures a challenge this research faces. The conundrum is how to be obedient to the rules of academia regarding ethical research while the backdrop to the research itself is the almost (as described) inevitable likelihood of a near- to mid-term global catastrophe.

There is not a politician on earth wants to tell his or her constituents, "We've probably already blown our chance to avoid substantial suffering, but if we work really hard and devote our lives to the cause, we can somewhat reduce the even worse suffering that awaits our grandchildren." [crowd roars]

To be the one insisting that, no, things are not okay, things are heading toward disaster, is uncomfortable in any social milieu — especially since, in most people's experience, those wailing about the end of the world are always wrong and frequently crazy. Who

wants to put on the poster-boards, go out to the street corner, and rant? Yet here we are. The fact is, on our current trajectory, in the absence of substantial new climate policy, we are heading for up to 4°C and maybe higher by the end of the century. That will be, on any clear reading of the available evidence, catastrophic. We are headed for disaster – slowly, yes, but surely.

(Roberts, 2015, pp. 6, 7)

These are hard things to consider and undertaking this research project has meant considering hard things on a near daily basis. I find it is challenging to be polite in my academic conduct when I am often instead inclined to rage or weep. I find the cognitive dissonance created by approaching the subject matter as if all was right with the world (as evidenced in my opinion by the academy's persistent grip on the production of knowledge) while knowing that things are, in truth, terribly wrong is difficult. These are not in my opinion knowledge forms or discourses that can easily co-exist in the same narrative. I cannot imagine one discursive practice or epistemological position broad enough to encompass the formal judicious steps of academic research and the awfulness of considering near-future environmental and social catastrophic collapse.

Hence, I argue for a refusal of consistency, a refusal to attempt to speak in the same measured tones to sub-topics of the project that by their nature and import rightly evoke very different responses. I argue that to behave ethically towards this project requires me to speak with not just one voice. From not just one epistemological position, but several, including the personal, eco-critique approaches and what is known about the approaching anthropogenic catastrophe.

What is required is not just a recital of the technics of ethical due diligence in research, nor a passionate polemic about our failure to stop the coming anthropogenic environmental global disaster, nor a simple wail of grief. Instead, perhaps what is needed is a series of illustrative discussions and vignettes of different registers of style that taken together may traverse important questions about the ethics of this research. One way I have approached this is to use a follow-up to the ending formal discussion of results with a somewhat more narrative whimsical theoretical salon of discussion. This seemed a fruitful end method to capture a range of perspectives in dialogue.

Engaging With an Entanglement of Ethics

There are three aspects to the ethics of this project that I find, if I attempt to untangle, immediately re-tangle themselves in compelling ways – it is as if they refuse to be considered separately. Attempts at disaggregating have failed and I find that failure compellingly instructive. Each aspect tells a partial, incomplete, and yet important story. In referencing these three entanglements; I will consider them somewhat separately but also let the points of joining occur as they will.

The first entangled aspect is the ethical conduct of this research. This is an aspect quite commonly considered when any academic research is undertaken. Such ethical concern attends to areas such as avoidance of deception, truthfulness, rigour of methodology and avoidance of harm. These are of course important topics to canvass when any research is conducted.

The second entangled aspect involve the ethical or moral concerns cast into our present by the future shadow of the threatened anthropogenic catastrophe. For me, as for many other activists and scientists involved in this area, these ethical and moral concerns are experienced

as much at a visceral level of outrage and pain as they are as intellectual considerations (Thomas, 2014).

The third entanglement is the touchy question of whether it is ethical to invite people into a conjoint construction of meaning that requires facing (even if only briefly) the prospect of a future potential catastrophe? Put simply: In asking questions at this historic juncture – is it moral or immoral? ethical or unethical? or perhaps simply gauche? to refute optimism but, instead, state starkly that bad times are likely coming for our world and many of our descendants? Bendell (2018) spoke well to this consideration, arguing for an academic duty to give people the overt information they need to consider a difficult future. I find myself in agreement with his assertion. Regarding these entangled aspects of the ethical conduct of this research, questions I have canvassed are:

The Ethics of The Human Relation with Place

Examining the ethics of how this research is conducted raises for me other ethical questions regarding the topic of the human relationship between place and person. I might describe some of these questions as driven by an ethic of the sort of outrage that inspires both pain and a fiery indignation. What George Sand described as one of the most passionate forms of love expressed in her often-cited statement that:

Humanity is outraged in me and with me. We must not dissimulate nor try to forget this indignation which is one of the most passionate forms of love. (Gustave & Sand, 2002, p. 228)

This is an outrage that arises for me (and others) simply because to look hard at humanity's current record of global stewardship generates the sorts of visceral responses of outrage, pain and sadness that lead to asking questions of a moral nature. Thomas (2014)

commented that climate scientists are often personally anguished by what they know and are increasingly impassioned to act. I find this unsurprising as it echoes my own experience of visceral responses driving a desire for change and a desire to find other more moral stories of humanity's relationship with place to replace the stories of endless growth global capitalism. Following this search for different and more moral stories, this research is an ethical response to our (late-modern capitalist humanity) inadequate environmental conduct and optimistically seeks seeds of change and hope by asking how people may do better in the future in this regard. This does not, however, mean that this work is not also haunted and driven by a painful awareness of what we are now losing, what in the near future we are likely to lose, and humanities culpability in the catastrophe. In the *Dark Mountain* un-civilisation manifesto Kingsnorth and Hine asserted that:

We are the first generations born into a new and unprecedented age — the age of ecocide. To name it thus is not to presume the outcome, but simply to describe a process which is underway. (2009, p. 5)

As previously discussed in examining hope, Kingsnorth and Hine argued that it is time for our cultures to face this painful, shared predicament rather than remain clinging to the hope that the cornucopia of progress will rescue us from calamities. An ethical question emerges. In a global culture where mention of environmental harm seems almost inevitably accompanied by the analgesics of promised progress and fix, is it then ethical to simply point out (as my research questions do) that there is every likelihood the next few generations will face environmental catastrophes that we cannot fix and that it may be too late to stop. Is it ethical to ask people to stand against anaesthetising cultural norms and face likelihoods that are painful to think about?

Is The Research Sufficiently Valuable to Justify Participation?

As earlier mentioned, this thesis is a utopian project. The worthiness of the research, particularly given its entirely speculative nature in the face of real anthropogenically driven environmental problems is a difficult question to answer outside of the realm of opinion.

The question of worthiness is made harder because the type of research I am conducting which, put plainly, seeks to use the lens of the present to explore the nature and habits of an imaginary humanity in the future (who do better than we do now) is unusual and has few precedents outside of fiction. The research is an admitted interrogation of ideas that must remain fantasy because the veracity of the data could only be established by the ‘wait a few generations and see for yourself’, approach. Hence how speculative fantasy is value-weighted and its perceived role in how we conduct our passage to an unknowable future becomes an important point.

For myself, the very lack of any possibility of establishing the veracity of who we may be in future makes the questions even more critical to ask. The answers to such questions about a future where life is (imaginatively) made real not by our physical presence but by our hopes for what our descendants may be, become a reflection of our best ambitions in ways that are both intimate in their vision and transpersonal in their scale. As such, I believe they carry a potential moral authority that (like utopian fiction) may be useful in our present day.

I find it a compelling idea that we can potentially learn from generations not yet born if only we can find the right ways to listen. So, given the impossibility of ever establishing veracity – practically, I can only address the question of worthiness through opinion and allegory. One approach may be to consider the important social role of utopian thinking and storytelling. Utopian literature can be both a passionate expression of collective hopes expressed by individual authors; and a practical social device for the articulation of new

possibilities for living. I personally believe utopian literature speaks from the interstitial social space between largely unspoken social fears, concerns and hopes and a society's practical consideration of policies on how best to live.

In further considering any form of utopian thought, it is important to keep in mind that utopian thinking is always a consideration of how things might be better and thus always in some sense reflects a critique or dis-ease on the part of the author about current conditions. Utopian fiction is typically the imaginative extrapolation of a reversed shadow of what is concerning about the world now; just as dystopian fiction is usually the imaginary extension of a current concern toward a plausible and usually unpleasant conclusion. The best utopian authors are intensely concerned with the social and political (and more recently, environmental) concerns of the day; Kim Stanley Robinson is often cited as an exemplar of a utopian author (1992; 1993; 1996). The 2010 film *Avatar* is also an example of an eco-utopian vision of how intelligent social beings might live well with their world. The story made more compelling by its setting against hints of earth as ecologically ruined and earth's society a dystopia of governance by corporation (Cameron, 2010).

O'Donnell (2009), citing Galston (1980) argued:

Utopian thought performs three related political functions. First, it guides our deliberation, whether in devising courses of action or in choosing among exogenously defined alternatives with which we are confronted. Second, it justifies our actions; the grounds of action are reasons that others ought to accept and—given openness and the freedom to reflect—can be led to accept. Third, it serves as the basis for the evaluation of existing institutions and practices. The *locus classicus* is the *Republic*, in which the

completed ideal is deployed in Plato's memorable critique of imperfect regimes. (O'Donnel, 2009, p. 1)

Certainly, the link between a growing awareness of what is not right leading to the beginnings of utopian speculation fits my personal experience. As described, my previous research (Kenkel, 2005) was concerned with how neo-liberal ideologies of the self-become instantiated in children's perceptions' of self and behaviour toward self, other, future and world. Again, as described earlier, in undertaking this study I became uncomfortably aware that I was uncovering a powerful story of how neo-liberal education policies and practices operated as instructions for personhood. In a sense, I charted a depressing dystopian story of how institutions central to society (such as educational facilities) systematically encouraged young people to be self-interested individuals, encouraged to an attachment to the idea that the competitive short-term entrepreneurship of their own individual futures is the best possible way to contribute to the collective well-being.

From these unhappy foundations of speculative knowledge of, how not to be if we want to save the planet, began to emerge my deeply felt curiosity about: so, who then who do we need to be? And following this curiosity, what sorts of social and environmental forces might produce such people? I became deeply interested in the question of both what nature of persons might do better than we do now; and secondly, what processes might produce such persons as ordinary? It is from those uncomfortable grounds that this current work emerged, and I believe it is clearly in line with the call for utopian thought that does not deny the predicaments facing the world but instead attempts to foreshadow a better and more life-enhancing engagement with those predicaments.

Inevitably this means imaging not just new societies but some sketch of the nature of their inhabitants. I agree with Laurie's assertion (2015) that, in our difficult times it is critical that we begin to reinvent utopian thought. In describing this need for utopian thinking amongst late-stage capitalism's plethora of real and imagined dystopias Penny Laurie (2015) used the evocative phrase "caught as we are between the rich and the rising seas" (p. 2) to describe the sense of hopelessness that silences not dreams of utopias but their storying into the mainstream. I find both her call for utopian thinking as a necessary bridge into a better future and her recognition of the challenge of storying hope in the face of so many looming potential catastrophes inspiring. Laurie suggested that where almost every television or newspaper headline could easily become the plot for a new dystopian novel (p. 2) that dreaming of a better world has not become less common; but rather, that amongst the flood of dystopian thought actively imagining a world in which society might do better than we do now has become less commonly *speaking-able* in mainstream media. The growth in "prepper literature" (Onion, 2016) is one example of this media flooding of dystopian literature and consequent subjugation of alternative stories of how we might live better with each other and the world⁶

Are Academic Ethics Anthropomorphic? And Even Further Anthropomorphising

⁶ N.B: Prepper literature might be characterised as novels and instruction manuals describing how to survive in a harsh, post-collapse world. These are not stories of a better society in the face of shared challenge; instead they are usually stories of individual and small group survival in what is portrayed as a harshly competitive world. In general, prepper literature is fiercely anti-collective in tone, with people who in a post-catastrophe world advocate a collective approach to survival sometimes being described as Sheeple. Unprepared fools unable to recognise that the only person you can rely on in a disaster is yourself or close family and friends (Onion, 2016).

Points to consider: Research ethics tend to be anthropocentric, by this I mean they are generally concerned with the impact of events and actions on human beings. Ethics of the human–environment interface traverse a number of perspectives; Strong, anthropocentric positions view harm to the environment as problematic primarily to do with consequential impacts on human well-being; both considered from a practical basis of access to resources and good living conditions and from a more aesthetic position that might decry what some call the de-naturing of society and the purported physical, emotional and spiritual impact on humanity of disconnection from the wild (Israel & Wolf, 2016). Weaker anthropocentric ethical and rights positions on the environment do hold that some aspects of the non-human world should be considered inherently valuable for their own sake and deserving of rights in consequence of that value (Bunting, 2015). Moving further toward an eco-centric rather than an anthropocentric view of rights is the broad movement toward *nature rights* where ecosystems are understood as intrinsically having rights irrespective of their function in serving human good either materially or aesthetically (Burdon, 2010; Leopold, 1949; IUCN World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law, 2016).

Regarding the history of people–environment ethics; seminal Western thinkers, such as John Locke (2010, writing in 1689) did much to lay the foundation on which the current property-owning global capitalism is built. Locke argued that a natural resource is valuable because it can be used, and that property and usage are interlinked and coextensive. While not often thought of as an ethicist, the imperative that appears to underpin Locke’s work sees the human usage of natural resources as a moral good and perhaps conversely, a failure to utilise natural resources as a failure of moral will. Locke argued that the protection of right of ownership was a necessary prerequisite to a good society. It is clear that Locke understood human people as being the only creatures to whom questions of ethics might apply. Nature was

understood as something separate from humanity with the commodity value of nature existing only in so much as it contributed to the well-being of humans.

From different perspectives, a range of authors have argued that it is the commodification of nature with the attendant perception of humanity as separate from nature that is a central driver of predicaments we face today (Bender, 2003; Kingsnorth & Hine, 2009; Leopold, 1949). As Bender argued, the discourse that the human self/subject naturally understands itself as the centre of all concerns; with the environment considered as a separate entity primarily valued as it is able to serve human well-being has (arguably) become a central trope of the cultures of late modernity (Bender, 2003).

The trope is not just a norm but is also powerfully normative and instructive in how people and societies are encouraged to conduct their affairs (R. Smith, 2013). While of course there are positions of resistance to this instructive trope they tend to be social outliers such as followers of deep ecology (Naess, 2009) with mainstream green approaches typically taking what might be called a soft anthropocentric approach advocating simply more care in how the commodity of the environment is aesthetically appreciated, used, and maintained. As Cushman (1995) argued, there is a strong tendency for all epochs and cultures to see their own norms of the self/subject as being a-historical, a-cultural and typically to possess social mechanisms to police and re-enforce these norms.

In my opinion, we appear to now be in an era that typically places the human self at the centre of concerns as simply a reflection of how human nature supposedly operates. Questions of ethical behaviour will then simply flow as logics of actions from that understanding of what is then supposed to be normal and ordinary and in part these logics of action will operate to

police these norms. My personal observation is that ethics via the academy operate quite effectively to police anthropocentric norms.

While an anthropocentric perspective on human life and the environment has become so normative that it can hard to imagine any other way – there is some evidence at least this has not always been the gold standard of human experience. Hunter-gatherer communities quite commonly understand humans as being merely one type of person amongst a densely inhabited inter-connected web of life rife with reciprocal rights and obligations and clear codes of ethical behaviour (Bender, 2003; Boehm, 2012; Poirier, 2005). Within that worldview, ethics play a large part; however, duty of care is as likely be owed to a place or nonhuman entity as it is to another human being. Such cultures might be described as using an eco-centric⁷ rather than anthropocentric understanding of the self. I, along with others, such as proponents of the deep ecology movement (Naess, 2009) would argue that there is great value in exploring and using the ethics of an eco-centric position to determine the ethics of our behaviour. For the purposes of this project, I argue the utility of a position of some degree of dissensus to anthropocentrism – a considered, wilful refusal to explore ethics solely from an anthropocentric position and a wilful insistence on exploring other possibilities.

Refusing an anthropogenic position on ethics and considering an eco-centric one might then imagine travelling quietly through a forest and humbly asking a representative grove for advice on protecting individual privacy and confidentiality relative to reducing harm. From that position, I am not entirely sure the question makes sense; certainly, the notions of

⁷ Eco-centrism, defined as an ecology rather than humanity being central to all concerns and humans understanding themselves as merely part of that ecology (Bunting, 2015).

individuality and separateness that seem to me inherent to the idea of privacy might be quite bewildering and require some extensive effort to explain what these terms refer to. While the notion of asking a grove for ethical advice may seem absurd, quaint, or bizarre, the reaction is perhaps simply a reflection of an anthropocentric position so solidified into normativity that the word sketch of an academic humbly asking ethical advice of a non-human living system seems odd at best.

I think it worth suggesting that for a great part of human history; including perhaps our future history; the converse would apply – it would seem extremely odd for an academic or thinker to restrict themselves to consultations solely with humans on matters of ethics.

My personal experience is that one measure of the power of a social norm, is the extent to which overt dissensus to that norm creates a subjective sense of exposure, vulnerability, and fear of ridicule. By that measure to step into an eco-centric position as an academic is to challenge a powerful norm. I find it interesting that as someone (who in some localities of my life) wishes to be taken seriously as an academic that it takes courage to put down in writing the fact that indeed I do take a strongly eco-centric position in how I approach the ethics and behaviour of this project. It is informatively frightening to say that when I begin to doubt the validity of this project, it is often not fellow humans I turn to, but instead the living places that I experience myself as interwoven with. I do ask questions of those places; I do explore ethics there; although I do not at this point know how to quantify or describe the nature of the voices that reply, I can state that the answers have been wise, thought provoking, and useful.

Does The Research Avoid Deception

I believe the research does avoid deception although I have fallen somewhat short of my initial stated goals. Regarding intent, I have asked people to undertake an imaginative

written exercise speculating on how people may be different in a future time where people do better than they do now at living in a reciprocally sustaining relationship with place. As described, the recruitment of participants was via anonymous online requests disseminated through email and social media (such as Facebook) asking that people take part in the research and pass on to others the link to the survey site if they wished to. The request to participate was repeated a number of times; in particular by linking (via comments and shares) the request to other peoples posted Facebook articles on environmental issues. Generally, such linked requests provoked a spike in participation rates. Hence, rather than a selected group of participants the method relied on an anonymous approach with some likelihood that at least some of the latter participants share the characteristic of reading Facebook posts about environmental issues. I stated at the survey site that what people answer will form part of a larger collective story about what people may be like in the future that will be developed in this thesis in response to what they say. However, this was not exactly how the final iteration of the research process eventuated.

I had initially hoped to use an E-media interpretation of Patti Lathers' (1991) approach to data analysis where initial data is commented on by a subset of respondents with that commentary serving to enrich and refine an emerging analysis. The method was chosen because for my stated purpose of creating or collating a collective story; it seemed to offer the best balance of anonymity for the individual and the sorts of partial de-centring of ownership/authorship that I hoped to achieve. The practicalities of attracting a sub-set of respondents proved difficult – so I instead adopted an approach that used a single iteration of response to analysis.

Is The Conflation Of 'We' With Notions of Culpability Ethical?

Questions that I speculate about are what stories of courage, resistance and unwilling co-option are silenced by using the word *we*? Is there a breadth of sensitivity to the potential for harm? How cognisant and balanced is the research in displaying awareness that culture, gender and epistemologies of meaning creation are differentially privileged and that to ask or tell from one perspective inevitably risks the silencing of other perspectives? These are all important questions; but they are not – in my opinion – questions that stand outside the broader intent of the research to explore the nature and ways of being of future peoples who might do better than we do now in having reciprocally sustaining relationship with place.

The Ethics of Care Over Time and Place

Arguably one of the great ethical struggles of our era is acknowledging the duty of recognition and redress the descendants of colonising peoples and nations owe to those indigenous peoples who suffer now because of what the ancestors of colonisers did to theirs. This ethical struggle acknowledges that the enabling of modernity's expanding technological and social footprint took place to the cost of indigenous cultures all over the world (Lu, 2017). This ethical struggle must include the notion that a debt of harm not recognised back then; can and should be recognised and redressed now (Lu, 2018). In a sense, this kind of struggle requires a temporal elasticity of the imagination that views questions of harm, culpability and redress as inescapably echoing through the generations. It does not allow the shrugging off of responsibility for the actions of one's ancestors. It requires that the generations who are currently privileged by the rapacious actions of their ancestral cultures make the effort to understand the current pain and harm of the descendants of those cultures whose uninvited loss was their gain (Hajik, 2016). This is an ethical work of the imagination that is on-going all over the world; it is not a task that can be neatly resolved and – in my opinion – is not a task easily

conducted under neo-liberal conditions with typical assertion that all individuals are responsible for the entrepreneurship of their own destiny irrespective of history.

I believe the business of acknowledgement and redress to be an enormously important task; and a task that many activists and theorists are now beginning to extend into the future by asking hard questions about what current actions will mean for future peoples. Representatively, Hansen, one of the original scientists/activists who first brought global warming to public attention is particularly eloquent in his book *Storms of my Grandchildren* regarding the question of what we owe our descendants (2010).

In the data-gathering survey I asked a final question: “If our descendants could hear these questions and our answers to them – and then were able to ask questions of us – what do you imagine they would ask?”

This question relates directly to this kind of temporal debt loading or time-shifted obligation that one might owe to those are not yet born. I ask people to consider what their descendants would make of what they have replied to the survey. While not initially intended as such; I have realised this question cuts directly to the heart of how might those to whom we owe a debt; or have an obligation to, view our current behaviour. At least one respondent stated that this was a painful question to consider. This question requires people to view themselves through the eyes of those whom their actions have harmed or will harm. I think it no less powerful for the fact that they are eyes belonging to those as yet unborn and harm which is only in the beginning stages of taking place.

Cultural and Social Sensitivity

Interests of brevity meant that in designing the research questions I made an introductory statement that “we now are not doing as well as we should in stewarding our

planet”. I am acutely aware that in saying *we* in such a universalising manner there is a very real risk of indigenous persons understanding my critique of global stewardship as positioning them as equally culpable for the effects of the globalised juggernaut of consumer capitalism that is currently damaging so much of our eco-sphere. In effect, by the use of the word *we*, I am constructing them as choice-able in terms of participation in eco-cide.

I argue this is problematic in three ways: First, to construct indigenous persons as historically choice-able in histories which we are now acutely aware are stories of ruthless suppression and domination by fair means and foul of the Western colonial powers (Hajik, 2016; Tuhiwa Smith, 1999). Second, it ignores histories of outrage and protest by indigenous groups against the social destruction and harm to place that accompanied colonising capitalisms attempted (and often forced) commodification of as much as possible (Bender, 2003). Third, the use of the word *we* is colonising of how people constitute self/subject. To de-territorialise the many singularities of self’s practice with the use of the word *we* implies individual choice, it implies an individual autonomy that may sit antagonistically with cultural more collective epistemologies of the subject that hold that the smallest divisible unit of humanity is not the individual.

These concerns were particularly brought to my attention by a comment from a Māori commentator to early (pre-commencement of the PhD) pilot discussions about the questions I was considering using. He simply raised the point by using a rather well-worn whakatauki (saying or proverb), “What do you mean *we*, white man?”. Juxtaposed against his question is my awareness that much of the countervailing ethos against the destructive forces of globalisation inhabiting my thesis draws on not just Western thinkers but indigenous epistemologies of the centrality of place.

How Have I Responded to These Concerns? Not by amending my questions or removing the word *we*; but by attempting to clearly acknowledge through the work the culpability for our current bleak situation as the consequence of an aggressive Western epistemology leveraged through capitalist/colonialist epistemologies and accompanying logics of action. It also needs acknowledging (in my opinion) that the typically Western self-perception I hold of myself as a choosing individual is built on the back of the stripping of choice from others. My capacity to have voice is haunted by the very many, both through history and today whose voices have been stripped away. Citing Lyotard (1984), this is a profound injustice, and also not the kind of conflict of legitimating terms of reference that can be neatly or quickly resolved. Again, citing Lyotard: while conflicts cannot always be resolved equitably, an important ethical position, particularly for those who are in a privileged position; is to at least have the courage to speak the unspeakable. In this instance, openly acknowledging that my capacity to choose to write this thesis is built on histories of oppression too long unacknowledged. At a more mundane level, it is important to acknowledge that this work is being conducted by a middle-class male of European descent. This means occupying a position of privileged access to resources and life choices. The story that is too-often unspoken is that this sort of privilege comes only at the cost of the suffering of other cultures and ethnicities over much time and in many places. Centuries of ruthless resource exploitation, oppression and colonisation is the backdrop to modernity that goes too-frequently unmentioned (Ife, 2013). Forcing other cultures to commodify their beloved places while simultaneously promoting individualising self-practices that rip at community bonds of mutuality and connection is one of the many evils of colonisation insufficiently acknowledged by the primary benefactors of colonisation (Lopez, 1986). Returning to the use of the word *we* – it needs to be stated that the *we* that is not doing well by the world that I so often mention in this work is not a homogenised level playing field of *we* as subjects. Within the West too, *we* is a heterogeneity of culture,

class, gender, sexuality and subjectivity with staggering disparities of agency and history. The pathways that have led to our current conditions had only a few eager travellers of certain classes and groups with much of the world's population forced to walk paths not of their choosing, in great pain, and often with bitter reluctance.

Privacy and Confidentiality

In protecting privacy and confidentiality I have followed standard research procedures of assuring people that their privacy and confidentiality will be protected and that the responses are anonymized. Because I used an anonymous survey system, I have no ability to determine which responses were written by individual respondents. All the original data is kept on a site that is password protected. The laptops used to analyse the data are also password protected. As discussed in depth with my first supervisor (Dr Dan Wulff of the University of Calgary and affiliated with the Taos Centre) I have fulfilled all ethical research requirements requested by my previous supervisor and the Taos Institute. This included fulfilling the expected criteria for the protection of individual privacy and confidentiality. I am left with some thoughts on the primacy of confidentiality and privacy in academic research – particularly when looking at a topic underpinned by the potential for such a great deal of collective harm.

Thoughts on Privacy and Confidentiality. Protecting privacy and confidentiality for individuals generally means aligning the ethics of the research approach with some notion of individual stories/information as owned by individual selves/subjects. Such individual stories/information are then understood as needing to be guarded in the best interests of the individual. I do wonder in such an alignment toward the interests of the individual (of what must be guarded) to what extent are other possible discourses of a more collective and rhizomical-self/subject obscured, oppressed or silenced?

Arguably it is only in some cultures and perhaps only in more recent historical times that stories, opinions, information, and resources are primarily conceived of as belonging to individual subjects (Diamond, 2012; NoiseCat, 2017; Poirier, 2005; Tomasello, 2016). Much of the literature I have looked at regarding our current capacity to manage the environment suggests that we are fundamentally handicapped by the promotion of the subject as hyper-individuated, boundaried, self-interested, and entitled (by legislated right) to ownership of individual resources, including one's own ideas, thoughts, and stories. As some authors have argued, such a notion of the self (Bender, 2003; Ife, 2013; Kenkel, 2005; Naess, 2009) does not up-skill people at the sorts of 'putting oneself to the side' capacity for trans-personal multigenerational planning needed to minimise consumption. Arguably, this notion of self as inherently entitled to 'ownership' does not encourage the types of social policy approaches that might allow the wholesale reduction in possession acquisition needed if the worst eco-disasters are to be avoided. While it may seem controversial to suggest it – I would argue that the future will need people who think less of themselves, not more, do not experience themselves as separate and boundaried from the environment; and perhaps, are less interested in their rights to individual privacy and ownership and more interested in the well-being of the shared story of our collective environment. I am left wondering if the inordinate respect given to individual rights though the modern era and particularly the latter half of the 20th century and early 21st century has meant the enabling of some collective harm?

A Personal Story. My colleague and wise friend Dr Kay O'Connor once described an interaction with her elderly Irish mother in the later years of her mother's life. In describing to her mother a slightly controversial choice she had recently made, Kay made the somewhat flippant remark "that it was her life". Kay's mother at once pinned Kay with the sort of

motherly glare that informs children (of any age) that they are in grievous error. Kay's mother went on to state in vehement tone:

I never want to hear you say anything so stupid ever again! – Of course, it's not your life; most of it belongs to other people! (personal communication, 2000)

Kay's mother's words act for me as a powerful statement of dissensus against a late modern story of the ideal of subjectivity that life's choices can and should be made in reference to an interiority of individuated desire rather than the rhizomal network of connections and obligations within which most human lives take place. I have come to wonder if similar might be said in regard to the private or individual ownership of stories and information.

The Ethics Of Asking Gauche Questions

Questions are reflective of the biases, mindset, epistemology, and assumptions about the nature of the world held by the asker of the questions. Arguably (and taking a social constructionist view) questions are also productive (Bruner, 1990). Questions can be considered as tropes operating to reproduce the biases, mindsets, epistemologies, and assumptions about the nature of the world – is it then right to ask questions that one is relatively certain will produce types of consideration likely to be discomfiting?

How do questions produce? To make sense of a question requires the recipient of that question to use cognitive processes/or/mechanisms of intelligibility. A question is like a meme; it necessarily reflects an ontological position and to grapple with that question necessarily requires a degree of adoption of the meme; this will always be partial of course, and reflective

of receiving ontological position, however; to grapple with a question is to be changed by it and requires the recipient to adopt the norms of the question sufficiently as to answer the question (Bruner, 1986).

Put simply; to answer a question I must first to some extent understand it; to understand it I must create a sufficiently complex mental model of the question to allow a conceptual platform of consideration and response. In the case of the four questions the survey asks, these questions make very clear statements about the world and self/subject. The survey questions make an optimistic and possibly unjustified assumption about the human capacity to successfully change in response to different conditions. The introduction to the four questions clearly assumes that the environmental condition of the world is likely to get significantly worse; the statement is bluntly made that there is every likelihood our descendants will face predicaments of our making. I am clear in my questions and in the statements that prefigure the questions, that the parlous state of the global environment is caused by human behaviour and activity. I use the word *we* in talking about human stewardship of the world; when more properly and accurately I could have spoken of the very small percentage of the human race who have a firm grip on the levers of economy, business, trading, and media. Literature suggests that personal discomfort and sadness is a common response for those who spend time researching or examining the current state of the world's environment (Thomas, 2014). To put it succinctly: to stare too hard at what is known about what people are doing to the world tends to evoke sadness and outrage and risks despair.

I have been relieved to find out that I am not alone in this response. Climate scientists apparently do not sleep well. They suffer high rates of depression and burnout and, like Cassandra of Greek myth, struggle with the ongoing nightmare of having the gift of prophecy accompanied by the curse that no one will believe them. For me personally (and I can only

speculate, others too), a common product of a relationship with this kind of difficult knowing is the sort of moral outrage that wounds, then outrages and then radicalises. What arises then is the tricky question of the morality, or ethics, of asking the kinds of questions I do. Questions that are underpinned by basic pre-suppositions inviting conjoint meaning creation for those who engage with the questions. The sorts of meaning creation that risks the visceral painful experience described above. To put it again simply: to engage with the questions I ask sufficiently as to be able to answer them requires that people need to create a meaning set that includes considering that we have done permanent irreparable harm to the world – that quite likely cannot be fixed – and that our descendants will very likely live amongst the ashes of our destructive failure to take adequate action. Is it then ethical to confront people with questions that evoke awful possibilities (that seem increasingly certain to happen) that are painful to consider? When I hold up this ethical question of asking questions forcing consideration of painful possibilities, which may cause not just hurt but also the sorts of outrage that drives activism, action and perhaps may even inspire hope, I find myself torn.

Gergen (2015) spoke well to the ways that conjoint meaning can fail to take place; simply by the process of denial, of refusal to hear. I know for myself that denial is one of the responses I often want to have when I find myself in dialogue with the texts; research and memes that make it clear that in many instances we are in a situation of ‘too-little-too-late’, in reversing anthropogenic damage. When I ask myself questions about intent of the research questions – I am answered that my questions were designed to find glimmers of hope; however, it is hope that can only really be sighted concurrently with also glimpsing painful possibilities. I find myself in the anthropocentric position of thinking that it is deeply unfair to put people in the position of considering such painful matters; and also from an eco-centric position (that includes humanity as part of the ecosphere) that it is deeply unfair not to insist that people

consider these painful matters. I have no answers to the questions of asking gauche and troubling questions; what I am left with is simply a hope that the process of seeking hopeful possibilities amongst desperate predicaments is, while painful, worthwhile.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CODING PROCESS

Analysing the data

Personal positioning is a challenge in undertaking this kind of coding process, I chose critical grounded theory (CGT), as it seems the best fit with my own personal perspectives. CGT allowing both a commitment to both a critical theory approach and a post-structural understanding of subjectivity. I am at heart a social and environmental activist with a commitment to both social justice and holding a fluid understanding of subjectivity. The coding process itself is complex, involving multiple iterations of examining data against coding, data against the coding and sub-coding and the subsequent development of Meta-Codes and informative narrative threads. The biggest challenge was to ensure that my own pre-suppositions do not drive the process, and equally are not ignored as narrative data. Hence, I have thoroughly explored the data provided by respondents, attempting at all points to restrain my enthusiasm for that which I agree with, and allow the material to speak for itself. (For instance, the 44 Sub-Codes are all statements/paraphrases of respondent replies.) My own position regarding the socio/political dimension and what is likely to happen in the future of course inhabits my analysis. That said, I am not alone in this analysis. While the data are significantly limited to only 34 respondents, a very common thread was a critique of neo-liberal ideology and the impacts of late modern capitalism on society and the environment. As Bruner (1986;1990) describes, data cannot be separated from the meaning derived from the reading of that data and this is clearly the case in terms of my relationship and interpretation of the data as researcher. Critical grounded theory and the attendant multiple iterations of coding provides a brake on the too abrupt crystallisation of data into meaning that suits the perspective of the reader / author. That said it is clear (particularly in chapter six) that my relationship with the data (with attendant pre-conceptions) drives how I have analysed and presented findings. The

ideas of Belfrage, & Hauf. (2015; 2017) on maintaining an abductive tone that resists definitive conclusion in favour of what seems reasonable and possible have been of great assistance in scaffolding the concluding chapter six. The aim has been that the material presented both adheres faithfully to respondent data and allowing the (abductive) conclusions to represent my relationship with the data. The concluding chapter (six) does not present definitive conclusions but instead represents my own position of cautious speculations from a range of positions with the aim to intrigue and invite further speculation rather than provide answers.

As mentioned in Chapter two a limitation of the research is the low number of respondents and the fact that most respondents replied in 2015/2016. Eight years is not a long period. However, given the climatic and environmental conditions of 2023, it appears climatic and environmental problems are increasingly more severe, frequent globally and becoming a predicament affecting more people globally. My country (New Zealand) has this year suffered floods and storms that have not been experienced in such magnitude for 250 years. It would be fascinating to see responses by new respondents now. I am very interested in conducting further research as environmental problems and societal responses to those problems accelerates. The aspirations and hopes for the future of ordinary people exposed to worsening conditions seems to me an important area of research and I would like to be part of this.

Regarding the Research/Methodological Process

Three different epistemological positions background my enquiry and require some initial exploration to outline how the approach to the data can incorporate all three and avoid the appearance of naïve contradiction.

First: a fluid, post-structural, and social constructionist view of the self that is not in particular reference to a universal constitutive metanarrative of subjectivity (Henriques et al., 1998). As a range of authors variously describe, societal (and subsequently internalised) norms for performing subjectivity are more commonly the product of subjectivating societal truth regimes than they are of any universal a-historical or a-cultural truths about what constitutes the ‘real’ or ‘true’ nature of humanity. Many of the authors I cite would view any universalising truth claims about what constitutes the healthy, normal, or ordinary subjectivity as simply representing truth claims by power-knowledge regimes that represent contesting (and hence contestable) sectional interests (Butler, 1997; Cushman, 1995; Foucault, 1991; Kenkel, 2005; Parker, 1999; Rose, 1998, 1999; Sugarman, 2015). My interest then becomes what new and surprising possibilities for subjectivity might occur in response to the very different social and environmental conditions that the future is likely to present us with.

Second: this fluid view of the self is juxtaposed against a realist position about the coming environmental and societal predicaments (as described in Chapters Three and Four). The position taken, and the research drawn upon regarding environmental change are primarily informed by positivist research. While I am intrigued by our potential relationships with the coming changes and what these may produce in relation to different modes of subjectivity, I also take the position that the approaching potential environmental and societal calamities will be real and involve undeniable physical events. The juxtaposition of intrigue with both the discursive and the likely physical reality of what may be coming aligns with the concern of cultural political economy (CPE) approaches with the semiotics of meaning production in co-causal relation with physical conditions (Belfrage & Hauf, 2015).

What is also signalled by this double intrigue is the methodological challenge of utilising a post-structural discursive approach to subjectivity, while also acknowledging a harsh

external reality. This then forms the contextual backdrop for this fluid discursive production of meaning. If the measure of rigour is considered consistency of approach, then using two parallel, but distinctly separate, truth regimes methodologically could be problematic. A pathway through this apparent contradiction is offered by a critical grounded theory approach (CGT) (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017) (which will be explored further in this chapter). As I have argued throughout this work, consistency itself is problematic when exploring this research question and CGT offers a methodology able to usefully encompass apparent inconsistencies.

Regarding the physical dimension (and, as argued in previous chapters) what the economic, socio-political and environmental policies and practices of today unleash into the future will determine the physical environments our descendants must inhabit and adapt to. Karl Marx's famous (variously translated) quote seems particularly apropos in capturing this conundrum of self as agentive and fluid in potential, but only in-as-much-as that capacity to choose, act and be is performed in conditions pre-set by history: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past..." (Marx, 1851, p. 1).

Third: the work is also grounded in a critical theory (CT) perspective. In this instance, and following the broad tradition of CT, this can be taken to mean that the aim of CT is not simply a critique of late modern capitalism, neo-liberalism, and instrumental environmental/societal consequences; but also, an effort to actively explore alternative possibilities (Jessop, 2009). Hence the utility of a CGT which, while drawing on theorists such as Charmaz (2014) also embraces the notion of an embedded commitment to social justice as backdrop to the research.

Grounded Theory and Critical Grounded Theory

As Charmaz stated: “the pragmatist foundations [of GT] encourage us to construct an interpretive rendering of the worlds we study rather than an external reporting of events and statements” (2014, p. 339). As Charmaz’s (2014) work made clear, research is fundamentally relational. Data collection, the analysis of data, and any theoretical position hence induced cannot usefully be separated from either the researcher’s active relational production of meaning through time regarding these intertwined processes, or the shifting platforms of context, history and literature that underpin that creation of meaning. In terms of rigour, purity of approach becomes less important than the active recognition and articulation of the fluid and complex relationships through which meaning is formed. As an evolving approach, grounded theory, particularly in a recent iteration as CGT (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017), allows me to legitimately draw on sources as disparate as the fluidity of social constructionism, hard science sources and my own history and critical political thinking as it has evolved through encounters with both literature and experience.

Belfrage and Hauf’s (2017) work on CGT adds a useful layer to the evolving paradigm of grounded theory. They offer a cautious critique of the claim that grounded theory is primarily inductive in its creation of theory in response to experience. Claiming that inductive processes are somewhat inevitably built from preformed and pre-existing epistemological positions they argue two key points:

First, that epistemological positions from which inductive processes arise are inevitably formed from pre-existing theories, and hence integrity requires that these foundational deductions or positions be named as such as part of any research process — in

this instance, the role of late-modern capitalism in enabling (or driving) the move toward environmental disaster.

Second, arguing the need for a political and critical analysis to always be included in the research process, they state that the semiotic production of theory and meaning derived from experience unavoidably takes place within a context including fixed (real) physical and social conditions. These fixed conditions of the physical, social, economic (and environmental in the case of this work) require more than the simple derivation of meaning from experience but must also include methods for critique of the ideological genesis and effects of unavoidable existing current physical and societal conditions. In Chapters Three and Four I have aimed to make clear my critique of the impact of late-modern capitalism on our (likely) coming predicaments.

Why I am attracted to using CGT in my approach is that it does not need me to rhetorically step away from a political and cultural (and moral) analysis that lays a degree of culpability for our current physical and socio-economic conditions (and the future catastrophes likely to arise from them) at the feet of the neo-liberal revolution of the last 30 to 40 years. I am also attracted by the inherent refusal of CGT to refuse the lure of a simple consistency of research outcome and insist on maintaining a tentative (abductive) tone in conclusions. As argued in other chapters, a moral position of some dissensus to consistency is appropriate when considering questions about the future performance of human subjectivity held against the possibility of the mass death of both ecosystems and a large proportion of the human species supported by those eco-systems.

As Belfrage and Hauf state:

In CGT, the choice of research problem is explicitly driven by moral and/or social concerns in an ambition to produce critical knowledge to enable social emancipation. The researcher sees herself not as a disinterested observer but as an active member of a society ridden with social antagonisms and relations of exploitation, domination and exclusion, the explanation of which is a precondition for changing them. The research process therefore starts with critical observations or experiences of a social problem, of an issue or a process that she wishes to explain, because she recognizes the need for social change and wonders what inhibits it. (2017, p. 9)

In addition, and drawing on cultural political economy (which underpins the critical aspect of CGT), Belfrage and Hauf (2015) accented the role of crisis in facilitating the creation of new pathways of meaning. Using the term *retroduction*, they advocate a CGT methodology of a gentle dialectic or thoughtful abductive approach. This can be thought of as the effort to find plausible meaning and explanation through dialogue between real conditions that inhabit a physical exteriority beyond the production of meaning from socio/political and environmental conditions, and the semiotic meaning production in causal response to, and in relation to, those real conditions.

The CGT methodology of gentle questioning between undeniable physical realities and the discursive production of meaning in response to those realities sits comfortably with the thrust of enquiry of this thesis. I ask about the nature of a putative future subjectivity that arises in large part in response to an imminent and very real crisis of the societal and physical environment. The crisis (no matter how considered), is external to the discursive as evidenced by significant and accelerating changes in the global environment. I am then interested in pathways of meaning and instruction for personhood able to be constructed from the impact of

these events (such as radical climate change and societal/ecological collapse). As Belfrage and Hauf argued about crisis:

Crises bring their own forms of social organization and may, apart from begetting painful socio-economic adjustment, also conjure up opportunities for learning and transformative, path-breaking action and thus the shaping of new paths of development. Here, from a constructionist perspective, sense- and meaning-making are fundamental processes. Crises thus display, in accordance with a critical realist position, an intensified interplay between the extra-discursive and the discursive that serve to shape organizational developments. (2017, p. 3)

Jessop (2009) also eloquently described the creative possibilities inherent to the discursive relationship with crisis:

First, even in normal times, there is continuing *variation* as actors deliberately or unintentionally redefine the sites, subjects, and stakes of action and articulate and experiment with innovative strategies, tactics, projects and visions. This is even more likely during crises as various forms of disorientation stimulate alternative discourses and practices rooted in old and new semiotic systems and practical routines. Diverse economic, political, and socio-cultural narratives may intersect as they seek to give meaning to current problems by construing them in terms of past failures and future possibilities. While many visions will invoke, repeat, or remix established genres, discourses, and styles; others may develop, if only partially, a “poetry for the future” that resonates with new potentialities. (p. 19, citing Marx, 1996, pp. 32–34)

Such gentle dialectic of enquiry between the irrefutable changes the world is currently experiencing projected into the future, against a curiosity about the nature of people’s living in

that future closely fits with the CGT coding process I use. Respondent replies also align with this recognition of multiple possible pathways for the performance of self and community in response to physical predicaments. As will be discussed further, perhaps the strongest dominant theme emerging from respondent responses is the notion that crises will precipitate significant changes in how people live and how people make sense of self/subject, other, community and the environment.

What also acts as a backdrop to my use of CGT and my desire to be as explicit and transparent as possible regarding the drivers of how I approach both research and analysis, is the challenge made by Deleuze and Guattari (1996) that all writings about subjectivity are inevitably statements of aesthetic preferences and hence operate as productive of subjectivity. Following Deleuze and Guattari, it seems best that these aesthetic preferences bluntly foreground the work rather than being silent in consequence of academic rhetorical conventions. Hence in Chapter Six I have deliberately evoked an aesthetic range of dialogues / narratives (albeit imaginary) expressing positions from aesthetic positions that have become apparent (or seemed imaginatively reified to me) through this work.

In Chapter Two (the section on method, and to a lesser extent methodology), I aimed for detailed transparency and a clear articulation of the epistemological positions, pre-existing deductions, and personal experiences that determined my choice of method, methodology and research questions. The website, described in Chapter Two, also sets out a clear set of statements outlining my position. CGT, bringing together as it does, two quite different approaches to meaning making is also not without its detractors. Mjoset (2005) described pressures potentially created by what can seem inherently contradictory epistemological positions between critical theory and grounded theory. These potential problematics need to be acknowledged in how my practical relationship with data and analysis is undertaken.

Mjoset pointed out that critical theory praxis is inherently driven by an activist epistemology, drawing on a deductive understanding of pre-existing social concerns and inhabited in any research endeavour by a desire to attend to, and address, those concerns. He suggested that the most natural home of critical theory practice and research are the social movements (and in this case) environmental movements advocating for change. Mjoset went on to add that the grounded theory research position of allowing theory to emerge from a purportedly deduction free space using a coded analysis of experience is more at home in the sorts of social science spaces not driven by a pre-existing impetus for social change. As described, my perspective on the research is informed by a pre-existing political and personal sense of outrage and a desire to attend to that which I find concerning. Responding to Mjoset's provocation, I do not approach this research from a social science space untouched by the difficulties the world faces (and will potentially face in future), but rather, from an activist space and a desire to speak up as best I can for a more just and equitable future amongst the environmental and social detritus current eco-policies and practices seem likely to create in our future. Clearly, I am in the activist space and this needs to be continually acknowledged if the analysis is to maintain coherence.

Arguably, the biggest chasm between critical theory and grounded theory is the presence and absence of a pre-existing 'conflict theory' perspective holding that social stratification produces inevitable inequities. Following the hard data predictions, this stratification seems likely in future to involve the global and (perhaps) local physicalisation of these inequities in terms of who will, and who will not, survive potential coming calamities. In the case of critical theory, the recognition and exploration of the impacts of inequity imposes some moral duty of action upon the critical theory researcher (Mathewman et al., 2013). This moral call to action fits with my pre-existing deductions.

Social emancipation forms a key discourse in the epistemology of critical theory to the extent that the act of discovery and the act to address that which is discovered are so closely linked that they could be understood as behaving co-extensively and inhabiting each other. While grounded theory is also a powerful tool for social good, it is not to the same extent inhabited by an inherent call to action.

Mjoset (2005) described the tension of using critical grounded theory as placing the CGT researcher in a position of “cross pressure” (p. 3). Mjoset made a valid critique and one which I experience when I consider the disjunctive space of the raw experience of pre-existing fears and concerns about the future against a purported capacity of grounded theory to offer a solely inductive process of meaning creation. What adds to this cross pressure is a critical theory approach that draws its moral authority for action from recognising inequitable social and physical realities when juxtaposed against the GT constructionist turn with its accent on the discursive and semiotic production of meaning (potentially) minus the possibility of a physical exteriority to discourse (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017; Charmaz, 2014).

Hense and McFerran (2016) bluntly stated that the participatory research paradigm (which draws on critical theory) acknowledges an external reality within which the subjective experience occurs, (while at the extreme) purist constructionist approaches to grounded theory view “reality as infinite mental constructions” (p. 409). They did not view this divergence as problematic but rather as operating as an opportunity for an enriching dialogue between two research paradigms that both value reflexivity and mutually understand all events and experience as embedded in context – no matter how that context is construed. They make the interesting speculation that constructionism as a research paradigm is beginning to conceive of an external reality but does not yet have a fully developed framework within which to articulate this. Hense and McFerran offer CGT as an evolving dialogical site within which the research

paradigms of critical theory and constructionism can both further develop and enrich each other's capacity.

These criticisms are arguably not without merit. To summarise the challenges: Mjoset's notion of cross pressure, the presence (or absence) of a social justice imperative, and a divergent understanding of the possibility of an actual fixed reality. Following Hense and McFerran's view that both research paradigms are continuously evolving and have much to offer each other if dialogue between the two positions is maintained throughout the research process, I would assert that CGT is very well suited as a methodology to creatively explore the data that have arisen in consequence of my pre-existing relationship with the subject and the material that arises from respondent answers.

There are obvious tensions between worldviews that first (in extreme form) posit no extra-discursive reality, against second, a worldview holding that fixed material conditions exist with corresponding social and environmental inequities that the researcher is morally obliged to address. To manage these tensions to advantage the research, requires:

First, a clear acknowledgement of the epistemological differences, convergences and the potential for mutual bewilderment.

Second, a willingness to inhabit and use the interstitial space between these two ontological positions. This requires researcher comfort with ambiguity and a position of dissensus toward calls for consistency, with, in addition, a favouring of an abductive approach that does not seek truth forms but, rather, asks the humbler question: What here is the most likely or reasonable?

At a practical level this requires a clear articulation throughout the work (including the coding process) that the data is understood as both prefigured by, and inhabited by, a moral

dimension with an implicit call to action (albeit in this instance, the imagined actions of an imagined future). Again, practically, the effective use of the two paradigms as one research methodology will mean allowing the relationship between the realities of accelerating climate change and environmental devastation to dialogically backdrop the range of discursive possibilities and pathways of subjectivity that emerge from the research. Personally, I believe using CGT opens exciting possibilities that would not be available if I used either pure grounded theory or pure critical theory.

Using the pre-existing platform of recognising the moral wrongs of endless growth capitalism and accelerating environmental damage alongside a flexible constructivist platform such as the more recent iterations of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) also fits closely with the initial intentions that drove the research and question design. As described in earlier chapters, a recognition of clear predicaments facing the world combined with a post-structural view of the subject as fluid and strongly shaped by social, political, and environmental forces underpinned my initial curiosity.

To summarise my initial curiosity in short form: if the neo-liberal project has encouraged the formation of a story of subjectivity ill-equipped to either halt, face, or manage the coming predicaments (as my 2005 master's thesis explored) then my question became: what forms of subjectivity might be better enabled to live in ways less damaging to the world? And what social and material forces would act upon them to produce these new modes of subjectivity?

CGT offers a format for exploring questions of human subjectivity presumed fluid and mutable against a physical backdrop of harsh material change presumed (at this point) as almost unavoidable. In a sense, my research curiosity has always inhabited an interstitial position of a

post-structural view of the self, combined with a thoroughly positivist understanding that the physical conditions of the world are changing. CGT offers an excellent fit with both my initial position and the evolution of my thinking as this work has progressed.

Outline of Coding Process

I have found the coding an interesting process. What I have done is read many times through the approximately 6,000 words of respondent data and from that then subsequently developed five categories (codes). The five initial codes reflected oft-repeated broad themes with Sub-Codes under each category (44 Sub-Codes in total). The Sub-Codes are either direct quotes or lines from the data or a paraphrasing of these. The 44 Sub-Codes pick up on subtleties and details within the five initial codes. These were developed to allow me a practical way to interrogate the data in more depth than five broad themes (or codes). Because the data responses read – to me – as a series of coherent connected narratives rather than distinct aphorisms separated by question, I chose not to regard the answers to the separate questions as separate pieces of data, but rather used all the answers given by respondents as one body of text. This has meant using 109 separate respondent statements, each of which might speak to any or all the four research questions asked.

One of the aspects this approach has made apparent is that the nature of the questions I asked allowed for quite complex arguments to be made in a range of different ways that are more easily read as one text rather than answers to separate questions. It was particularly useful to have one category of codes and then Sub-Codes that looked at what was abhorred / disliked in the present, seen as a current problem, and that which will fall (speculatively) away and be replaced – I called these C codes. This specific category of (C) code – and then the related more detailed subcodes – reflected both frequently repeated themes within the raw data and also

echoed my own pre-existing position that neo-liberalism, the capitalist endless growth model and excessive consumption are problematic. As discussed, my view of the ideologies of late modern capitalism as problematic prefigured and informed the work of coding and aligns with Belfrage and Hauf's (2017) position that inductive thinking can only take place from a position that includes – and ideally acknowledges – pre-existing deductions.

The C categories of code and Sub-Codes operated very usefully to buttress the sorts of arguments that might be described as: “so this is the good of what it will be like in future because this is what is so bad about now”. I found it useful to look at that which was abhorred/disliked juxtaposed with and against that which was desired and hoped for and this seemed a clear fit with a CGT approach which interrogates discursive possibilities with, and against, a material reality, in this instance, the current societal and environmental problems associated with neo-liberal capitalism, hyper-individualism and excessive consumption. I found that the story of the material and social conditions which are abhorred contained, in some senses, a discursive story of that which is potentially precious, just as the story of that which is precious tended to contain the story of that which is to be abhorred.

It was also particularly interesting to look at where more than one Sub-Code applied to a statement, and this brought forward some surprises. One of the more interesting things to emerge out of this is the extent to which what could be seen as different ontological positions seemed conflated to the extent of being co-extensive. For instance, the view that people will live more collectively in the future and gain satisfaction from relationship rather than accrual of goods or financial success is so clearly associated with the perception that people in the future will make sense of themselves as connected to, and part of, a local and broader global ecosystem for which they hold some responsibility/duty of care as to appear to be one ontological position.

Hence, what appeared on the surface to be two ontological positions (social collectivity and interdependence with ecosystems), in fact seemed in the data to operate as one. I also did the simple task of counting how many times each Sub-Code appears. The most frequently repeated Sub-Codes are those suggesting that very little will change about human nature and how people live with each other and the environment until there has been a catastrophic collapse or crisis of some sort. This aligns with Jessop's (2009) and Belfrage and Hauf's (2017) suggestion that new possibilities for meaning often emerge in response to crisis.

Other strongly represented Sub-Codes revolve around a shift to a more collective way of life, a shift towards satisfaction in life being achieved from relational engagement, a sense of identification with the environment, and a dislike of neo-liberalism, consumerism, capitalism, and the current power of financial elites. As I will explore later in the coding process, these linked Sub-Codes operate as a beginning narrative from which four Meta-Codes subsequently emerged. The Sub-Codes had a degree of repetition in terms of underpinning themes and sentiments. This repetition proved useful in allowing narratives to emerge from the coding process. The notion of *retroduction* as a dialogue between the physicality of a different and difficult environment in the future against creative stories of what may emerge in response and in dialogue with that changed environment has also been very useful in making sense of the data (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017).

The table below outlines the stages of the coding process and shows specific tables for coding:

Table 1

Stages of Coding

First five codes

Table 1, Codes and Sub-Codes
Order of frequency of Sub-Code occurrence and co-occurrence
Listing of Sub-Codes within individual respondent statements
Sub-Codes placed against respondent statements
Table 2, Examples of linked and aligned Sub-Codes
Description of four Meta-Codes
Table 3, Meta-Code 1: Linking Meta-Codes to Sub-Codes and directly to narrative data
Table 4, Meta-Code 2: Linking Meta-Codes to Sub-Codes and directly to narrative data
Table 5, Meta-Code 3: Linking Meta-Codes to Sub-Codes and directly to narrative data
Meta-Code 4 and linkage to narrative data
Five emergent narrative threads from the coded data

Brief Description of Coding Analysis Approach

As described, the initial approach was simply to read and reread the respondent data. I chose not to separate the raw data by question, as it seemed to me that the responses to the different questions in some senses operated as an opportunity for my analysis of the respondent data to buttress arguments through a degree of repetition. This could be thought of as coming at the same phenomena and making the same points – but from different angles.

Reading the data as one document (consisting of 109 statements) allowed me to gain a general sense of the intentions and aspirations of the respondents. As stated previously, it would have been ideal to have had a larger number of respondents and for the data to be more current. Particularly as climatic conditions continue to worsen. There is a degree of homogeneity to the responses I received that surprised me. This may not have been the case with a larger number of respondents allowing a wider and more varying range of opinion. This is a definition limitation of this study.

The next step was to develop five primary codes or categories. The five primary codes arose as interplay between a close reading of the data and my own pre-existing suppositions. I was very aware of the relationship between the realities of a potentially much-changed world against a range of discursive imaginings about how people are likely to be different in the future. This theme of a changed self and community in consequence of, and in relation to, very different physical conditions from today was perhaps the most dominant thread through the data. This dominant theme fitted and with both literature, my own presuppositions and speculations about how norms of subjectivity might shift in response to future harsher environmental conditions, and to wide-ranging dialogues I've had with many people through the course of this work. A pre-existing supposition/speculation I had was that a response to environmental predicaments would be a shift towards communal and collective modes of living and thinking. The respondent data seemed to bear out my pre-existing supposition, at least to

the extent that many (if not most) respondents seemed to share much the same view. I had expected to see rather more material on relationship with place; however, what the data made evident was that respondents in general seemed to view a more interconnected and interdependent relationship with place as co-extensive with more collective modes of life and making sense of self/subject and other.

While the five primary codes are clearly influenced by pre-existing suppositions of mine, they also strongly reflect the data itself. Codes A, B and C allowed for an interplay between new notions of the self and community, future factors likely to create new norms, and current ideological, political and social structure concerns disliked by respondents. As mentioned, code C was particularly useful in revealing utopian imaginings that might arise as rejection of that which is abhorred/disliked. Codes D and E were included as a reflection of the initial questions I asked. Code D in particular (which asked: “If our descendants could hear these questions and our answers to them – and then were able to ask questions of us – what do you imagine they would ask?”) operated very effectively to allow me to see how imagined chastisement and commentary from the future revealed a distaste for current conditions and operated as a segue into new imaginings. Code E (which inquired as to where the future could be seen in the present) was perhaps the least evident in the data; however, again, it did reveal a range of utopian narratives that link future imaginings with the respondent’s perspectives on current conditions.

Before further exploring the coding process and as a reminder of the deductions and political pre-suppositions that drove the research questions, I include here the research questions and the precursor information on the Survey Monkey site given prior to asking the survey questions. The questions and pre-cursor comments in particular, I believe make transparent to the reader that the research is inhabited by sets of pre-suppositions. This initial

transparency aligns with the use of a CGT approach that makes explicit pre-existing deductions, a recognition of a physical and societal dimension and a moral position regarding the impact of real conditions. In a sense, I ask potential respondents to align with these pre-suppositions as a condition for taking part in the research. As described in Chapter Two, while a broad enquiry approach was used to attract participants, the target for research was not a randomised sample of citizenry, but rather people already holding some concern about the future predicaments that seem very likely to soon face the world.

Figure 9

Survey Questions

PRECURSOR COMMENTS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS FROM THE SURVEY SITE:

The following questions ask about what people might be like in the future. The hope is that woven together our answers will tell a future story rich enough to be useful for us today.

While there are no right or wrong ways to answer the questions, they are designed with four considerations or requirements in mind:

- **Firstly:** A willingness to consider that right now we are not doing as well as is needed in caretaking the global environment.
- **Secondly:** Some understanding that our descendants will inherit environmental predicaments we have created.
- **Thirdly:** The optimism to imagine that our descendants will respond creatively to these predicaments by finding new and better ways of being and doing in the world.
- **Fourthly:** A willingness for your answers to form part of a broader collective story

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Question one:

If you think toward a future where people do better than we do now, where people are more able in what they ‘know’ and ‘be’ to live well in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place, then:

1. What do you think our descendants might ‘know’ and ‘be’ that we don't now ordinarily know and be?

Question two:

2. What do you imagine will, or may, have happened so that these ways of ‘knowing and being’ are ordinary and normal for the people of that time?

Question three:

3. What glimpses or signs of these ways of knowing and being do you see now? And, where do you see them?

Question four:

4. If our descendants could hear these questions and our answers to them – and then were able to ask questions of us – what do you imagine they would ask?

Question five: (optional)

5. It would be very much appreciated if you could tell us a little bit about yourself.

Primary Five Codes

A – community and the new self

B – drivers of change and the new ordinaries

C – The “anti’s”, things that are abhorred, cause the current problems, and will fall away as change happens

D – the future looking back at us

E – where the future lives in the present

As described, these five categories reflected both the nature of the research questions I asked, my own pre-existing suppositions and were also themes that seemed to persistently re-occur through the 109 respondent statements. I was particularly overt about the political underpinnings, or pre-existing deductions I hold in Category C. I did not need to add additional material of my own (or paraphrase) in developing Category C, as enough explicit statements existed within the raw data for me to draw Sub-Codes.

I then reread the material and developed a subsequent 44 Sub-Codes deriving from the first five codes. These Sub-Codes were either drawn from specific sentences in the respondent data or were my best effort at paraphrasing and condensing commonly expressed themes and ideas. As stated, Category C was drawn from the data and supported my own prior deductions about the political and social underpinnings of our current and future predicaments. What became apparent from a close reading of the data was that my own pre-suppositions and concerns are of course not solely my own, but rather, thoughtful discourses of worry, hope,

sadness, and anger shared by many others. Hence, in a sense, my pre-existing pre-suppositions are not individual pre-suppositions but instead express (albeit in words I have used) a growing new social narrative of dis-ease with existing political, economic and ecological conditions and what these bode for our futures.

Classical grounded theory (GT) was often concerned with problematic tensions between emergence versus forcing, asserting that theory should emerge via a completed (saturated) process of coding data rather than being tainted by pre-existing deductions (Boychuck & Morgan, 2004). The emphasis on a solely inductive process of theory development was a theoretical cornerstone of GT and awaited the social constructionist turn for acknowledgement that meaning creation is inevitably a relational productive process of dialogue between pre-existing discursive regimes and their encounter with data through the coding process (Charmaz, 2014). Viewing grounded theory approaches as an evolving field (as Hense and McFerran (2016) advocate), CGT might be understood as a new iteration of grounded theory that codes data while also explicitly including the dialogue between data, physical and inequitable social realities and transparently acknowledged pre-existing deductions – (often containing a moral imperative). In a sense, CGT involves a three-way dialogue between real conditions, critical pre-existing suppositions about the condition of the world and the data. Theory (including new discursive possibilities) emerges as a practical consequence of this three-way dialogue via the subjective nexus of the researchers. In this instance, the discursive being the new possibilities that may emerge because of what the future brings us.

In creating the five primary codes and subsequent 44 Sub-Codes, I remained cognisant of the risk of forcing or pre-empting meaning from the data at this early stage and in consequence aimed in code and Sub-Code creation for a transparent epistemological platform

that, while not denying my own political and moral position, primarily reflected the aspirations and ideas in the data. At a personal level, while I often found myself cheering with enthusiasm at respondent statements or nodding in agreement, I worked hard (particularly in developing Sub-Codes) to not extend these small assemblages of enunciation further than the words and aspirations inherent in the text. At a practical level this meant restraining my urge to indulge in brief form polemics about current conditions I personally deplore and restrain my enthusiasm to wax short-form lyrical about utopian aspirations.

The Sub-Codes were derived at by sifting through the data to find sentences (or create succinct paraphrasing/summaries) that fit with the primary five codes. Other than a few statements that I found confusing (for instance one about television that I have not been able to make sense of) all the respondent data aligned with the 44 Sub-Codes, often in fact aligning with more than one. Simply put, the process of developing Sub-Codes meant an extensive re-reading of material looking for sentences, pieces of paragraphs (and sometimes whole short paragraphs which I summarised) that conceptually mapped against the five primary codes I developed. As described, the primary codes combine my own pre-developed suppositions with both ideas that had not occurred to me and material that fitted with my pre-suppositions drawn from respondent statements. None of the primary codes take an outlier position that is distant from the respondent statements. There was a surprising degree of homogeneity in respondent replies, and this identifies a limit of the research and hence – in my opinion – is an argument for further and broader research in future. All the primary codes and Sub-Codes align with frequently repeated themes from the respondent statements, including those that were a clear fit with what I had already supposed. What seemed somewhat unavoidable and, in fact proved very useful, was a degree of repetition in the Sub-Codes. I chose to create Sub-Codes that were somewhat repetitive with the intent that these could subsequently be reduced. What emerged

through the subsequent overall coding process was the extent to which repetition (or descriptions of very similar memes in slightly different ways) was useful in identifying and clarifying the narratives that began to emerge from the coding process.

Code categories

A – community and the new self (10 Sub-Codes)

B – drivers of change and the new ordinaries (14 Sub-Codes)

C – the anti’s – things that are abhorred, cause the current problems and will fall away as change happens (10 Sub-Codes)

D – the future looking back at us (6 Sub-Codes)

E – where the future lives in the present (4 Sub-Codes)

As stated, the Sub-Codes did include a degree of overlap and repetition, particularly in terms of Codes A and B. As described, the C Codes offered a particularly useful perceptual platform as often the aspirations expressed in A and B, were rendered starker in meaning by their antithesis as expressed in the C codes.

For example, the following two (*italicised*) statements could be seen as aspirational descriptions of the future relationship with place, self, community, and time. Both statements would fit within the A code (**community and the new self**) and the B code (**drivers of change and the new ordinaries**).

How to respectfully and collectively make decisions and use power while reducing privilege and recognising that being the majority isn't the same as being right.

In this future I see a re-prioritisation of the things we already know, but don't seem to act on: that we are social, interconnected creatures, that we need each other, that community is both necessary and sufficient - again, this comes from an acceptance of place and pace that is vastly at odds with our current, global, fast paced, consumer culture. We must learn to go slow, to be considered, kind and loving - to each other, and to the earth.

The statements become more evocative in terms of aspirational description when contrasted with the following five (italicised) statements which all show a clear fit with Code C (**The anti's – things that are abhorred, cause the current problems and will fall away as change happens**)

Their focus will not be on consumption and competition but on making the most of life together. They will be on average much happier than we are now because they will understand that accumulating money and things don't create happiness, rather supporting each other and making time to enjoy each other's company, learning and creating will make them happy.

Disillusionment with neo liberalism, technology, and slippery superficial relationships.

Crises in human relations.

The collapse of capitalism and patriarchy which together subjugate and oppress the people allows for the redistribution of resources...each according to their abilities and each according to their needs.

There will have been a large cultural shift (which has already started). More and more people will realise that the dominant current way of living (massive consumption, working really hard and competing to support said massive consumption, creating huge inequality by concentrating wealth into the hands of a few, while destroying the wellbeing of our place) is not creating wellbeing for most people. By trying new things that their friends have discovered and shared, they will discover what's really important to them, and change their behaviour accordingly. As this grassroots cultural shift grows, it will influence what is portrayed in popular media, which will increase the spread of the new culture until it replaces the current norms.

Why did we wait so long before we acted. how come we didn't involve more people. Why didn't we put all our energy into working for change right now - why were we so caught up ourselves in the capitalist illusions of paid work and rewards of a pitiful wage increase now and then.

The first two statements above (fitting with codes A and B) are aspirational and sketch a picture of how people might live differently in the future; they are stories of what is wanted. The next five statements (fitting with code C) are primarily stories of what is *not* wanted. The juxtaposition of desired versus abhorred or disliked allows a richer complexity of meaning to begin emerging for me as reader. Even at this early stage of coding, by positioning statements against each other of that which is wanted, against statements of that which is disliked, themes began to become apparent.

The 5 primary codes and 44 Sub-Codes used are as follows, as described, Sub-Codes are either wording drawn from respondent data, or a summarisation/paraphrase.

Table 2*Codes and Sub-Codes*

Code A - Community and the new self.	Code B - Drivers of change and the new ordinarys.	Code C - The Anti's - things that are abhorred, cause the current problems and will fall away as change happens.	Code D - The future looking back at us.	Code E - where the future lives in the present.
<p>Sub-codes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Valuing connected relationships 2. Resource sharing and support as ethos 3. Collectivity in living and decision-making 4. Contentment, happiness and fun derived relationally 5. Personal humility and humbler lifestyles 6. Women and indigenous peoples held in honour 7. Equality and egalitarianism at the local level 8. Smaller selves - Individuals seen as positioned by context – and interdependent rather than independent 9. Relational skills of care and empathy highly valued virtues 10. Responsible for web of life 	<p>Sub-codes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Major loss and collapse as driver for new consciousness and new cultural norms 2. New ordinarys - spreading cultural norms of collectivity and connection 3. Connection - shift of consciousness - common cause and common interest / shared values recognised 4. Living locally is a virtue 5. The local voice of ordinary people growing in political influence 6. Sensitivity to the needs of place, and responsibility for care of place, locally and globally these understood as intrinsically interconnected 7. Communities and individuals in general much wiser about the environment and our relationship with it 8. Personal and collective identification with the environment as normal 9. Wellbeing a function of collective effort not individual effort. 10. Food production more local and more hands-on 11. Food producing skills common and valued 12. Not in control of everything 13. Humans part of ecosystem – Everything connected 14. Eco centric – sentience not just human 	<p>Sub-codes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Money as a source of personal satisfaction to be replaced by satisfaction derived relationally 2. Widespread norms of selfishness and narrow self-interest to be replaced by a cultural shift toward collective emotional intelligence with the focus on sustainability for all 3. Neoliberalism, and the endless growth model of capitalism 4. Conspicuous consumption, careless wastefulness 5. Resource inequality, 6. A narrow short-term self-interested individualised perspective to be replaced with the common collective understanding of the need for stewardship and care 7. Competition as a cultural norm 8. Beliefs in the human capacity to control events in the future to be replaced with a capacity to go with the ways of the world at the pace of the world 9. Regarding the environment as a commodity, to be replaced with a collective understanding and set of actions of stewardship, connection and identification with the environment 10. The economic and social dominance of rich elites 	<p>Sub-codes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anger and sadness at our current behaviour 2. Disbelief that our thinking was so short-term and ignored long-term consequences 3. Disbelief that we were so slow to act 4. Outrage that we do not better control our governments 5. Outrage that we allowed the elites and neoliberals to control the world 6. Forgiveness and understanding 	<p>Sub-codes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the political wisdoms and organising of our youth 2. In the Internet communities 3. Spread amongst many organised groups 4. Amongst indigenous peoples and our histories

After developing the five primary codes and 44 Sub-Codes I again went through the data (which consists of approximately 6,000 words of text as 109 statements) and firstly placed a sub-coding number (frequently more than one number), next to each of the 109 individual statements. Some statements were not used initially, and I returned to these later as the coding condensed into 4 Meta-Codes. Wishing to maintain an organic and relational approach through the emerging coding process I did not use software and instead relied on multiple readings, thought memos, and manual coding. The four Meta-Codes warrant some early explanation. The process of developing the Meta-Codes occurred in consequence of mapping Sub-Codes against the data in a range of iterations such that I began to see emerging narratives. Each of the Meta-Codes is one sentence that aims to capture in short form an underpinning set of narratives (which I describe in a short paragraph). I was then able to map the Meta-Codes against both the Sub-Codes and the raw data. I was aware at that point that I was at risk of seeing the Sub-Codes as data in and of themselves and somewhat at risk of losing sight of the stories told by the respondent data, so, to check the validity of the Meta-Codes I mapped them against a version of the respondent data that did not contain any reference to Sub-Codes. This proved useful in refreshing my view and checking the validity of the Meta-Codes in terms of their capacity to contain, (or carry) the key narratives that I had begun to see emerging. The development of the four Meta-Codes was the point in the coding process where what I was researching became more than simply my pre-suppositions in a position of interrogation of the raw respondent data. The change involved a shift where the meaning-making I was undertaking in relation to the data became central to the research process. This might be most easily described as when meaning making began to be a conceptual collaboration between the raw data, the stories or narratives I was creating in relation to that data and pre-suppositions I had

held about both discursive and material possibilities alongside new and intriguing possibilities emerging from that conceptual collaboration.

Regarding the 44 Sub-Codes and the first iterations of coding the respondent statements where more than one Sub-Code applied were particularly fruitful in seeing linkages and themes emerging. Often the multiple Sub-Codes operated as somewhat like the development of an argument/position – a narrative begins to emerge from the codes themselves. Typically, the building blocks of these overlapping narratives in miniature include:

- What is not working and hateful and harmful now;
- What events may create or force change;
- How life and common understandings will be different in the future in terms of the ideal self, definitions of a successful or good life, community, relationship with the environment and lifestyle;
- How those in the future that are different than we are now will regard us.

What was also particularly useful in examining the places where multiple Sub-Codes applied to statements was gaining insight into the places where what might in other circumstances have been seen as separate ontological positions being joined in the fashion of: “if this is so – then of course, automatically, this also is so”.

For instance (as described), the regularity with which an increased understanding of connected interdependent responsibility for the broader environment was associated with a more collective approach to life and the valuing of relational richness and collectivity rather than financial reward suggests that it is not two ontological positions but rather could better be considered one.

After examining the places where multiple Sub-Codes applied, I went through the rather simpler process of counting how many times each Sub-Code applied in the 6,000-word document. This count gave me a sense of the extent to which themes and ideas were shared (or not) by most respondents. Again, having repetitive/overlapping Sub-Codes made this process useful for the next stage of condensing the primary codes and Sub-Codes into a smaller number of four Meta-Codes.

In general, I found a degree of similarity between respondent answers. The same themes repeatedly re-occurred, albeit expressed differently. There were few outlier answers other than incomplete sentences, a comment about a self-improvement programme known as the forum and a reference to television.

I also created a table where I plotted each respondent answer against the 44 Sub-Codes; in this table I allowed statements to be multiply repeated in terms of fits with a number of Sub-Codes. This again was useful in gaining a broader sense of the narratives that were potentially emerging from the data. I found moving between identifying codes and Sub-Codes within the data and then using the Sub-Codes as a device to reshape and re-examine the data useful in making more visible coherent and persistent themes that re-occurred throughout the data.

Again, the retroductive notion of a relational dialectic between a difficult set of physical circumstances in the future with the creative discursive possibilities for self and community that may flow from that relationship was a very useful conceptual backdrop in making sense of the data. For ease of reading, I have italicised all respondent data and left my commentary as ordinary text.

Frequency Of Sub-Code Occurrence and Sub-Code Co-Occurrences

What follows is firstly the frequency of Sub-Code occurrence and then examples of linked themes from the data. Linked themes are places where more than one Sub-Code applied to a respondent's statement. Identifying these Sub-Code co-occurrences and provisionally considering these as operating as coherent statements was particularly useful in beginning to take coding to the next stage.

Order of frequency of Sub-Code occurrence in the respondent data:

Table 3

Order of frequency of Sub-Code occurrence in the respondent data

Thirteen to seven occurrences		
Major loss and collapse as driver for new consciousness and new cultural norms	B1	13
Neo-liberalism, and the endless growth model of capitalism	C3	10
Connection - shift of consciousness - common cause and common interest/shared values recognised	B3	7
Money as a source of personal satisfaction to be replaced by satisfaction derived relationally	C1	7
Anger and sadness at our current behaviour	D1	7
Six to four occurrences		
Collectivity in living and decision-making	A3	6
Disbelief that our thinking was so short-term and ignored long-term consequences	D2	6

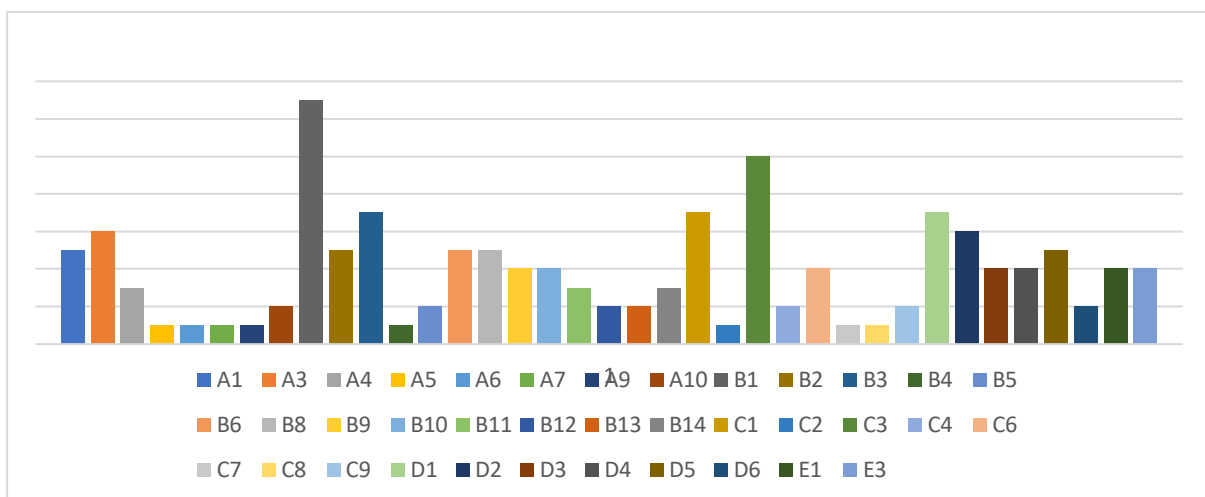
Valuing connected relationships	A1	5
New ordinaries - spreading cultural norms of collectivity and connection	B2	5
Sensitivity to the needs of place, and responsibility for care of place, locally and globally these understood as intrinsically interconnected	B6	5
Personal and collective identification with the environment as normal	B8	5
Outrage that we allowed the elites and neo-liberals to control the world	D5	5
Wellbeing a function of collective effort not individual effort.	B9	4
Food production more local and more hands-on	B10	4
A narrow short-term self-interested – individualised perspective to be replaced with the Common collective understanding of the need for stewardship and care	C6	4
Disbelief that we were so slow to act	D4	4
Outrage that we do not better control our governments	D3	4
In the political wisdoms and organising of our youth	E1	4
Spread amongst many organised groups	E3	4
Three to two occurrences		
Contentment, happiness and fun derived relationally	A4	3
Food producing skills common and valued	B11	3

Eco centric – sentience not just human	B14	3
Responsible for web of life	A10	2
The local voice of ordinary people growing in political influence	B5	2
Not in control of everything	B12	2
Humans part of ecosystem. Everything connected	B13	2
Conspicuous consumption, careless wastefulness	C4	2
Regarding the environment as a commodity, to be replaced with a collective understanding and set of actions of stewardship, connection and identification with the environment	C9	2
Forgiveness and understanding	D6	2
One occurrence		
Personal humility and humbler lifestyles	A5	1
Women and indigenous peoples held in honour	A6	1
Equality and egalitarianism at the local level	A7	1
Relational skills of care and empathy highly valued virtues	A9	1
Living locally is a virtue	B4	1

Widespread norms of selfishness and narrow self-interest to be replaced by a cultural shift toward collective emotional intelligence with the focus on sustainability for all	C2	1
Competition as a cultural norm	C7	1
Beliefs in the human capacity to control events in the future to be replaced with a capacity to go with the ways of the world at the pace of the world	C8	1

Figure 10

Order of frequency of Sub-Code occurrence in the respondent data



Initial Reflections

The intent of noting the frequency of sub-coding occurrence was not to attain an early conclusion. Rather it simply proved useful in clarifying and strengthening my beginning impression of the possibility of a coherent narrative emerging. At this early stage of the coding process I was careful to not confuse frequency of Sub-Code occurrence with anything that might be thought of as a quantifiable or conclusive result. The risk I was aware of was to allow

my own pre-suppositions to run ahead of the data and become misleading relation to what I hoped to see create a crystallisation into certainty that would taint the further coding process.

Sub-Codes Within Individual Respondent Statements

What follows are examples of how different themes (expressed as Sub-Codes) were linked within individual respondent statements. Each of the 109 statements were re-read and fore fronted with the question of which Sub-Codes fitted with each statement. Undertaking this tranche of the coding process was again a useful part of allowing a narrative to emerge. To demonstrate these themes (linked Sub-Codes), I have included examples.

B1– E4

Major loss and collapse as driver for new consciousness and new cultural norms

Amongst indigenous peoples and our histories

A1 – A3 – B12

Valuing connected relationships

Collectivity in living and decision-making

Not in control of everything

A4 – A5

Contentment, happiness and fun derived relationally

Personal humility and humbler lifestyles

A3 – A6

Collectivity in living and decision-making

Women and indigenous peoples held in honour

A3 – C10

Collectivity in living and decision-making

The economic and social dominance of rich elites

A6 – C1

Women and indigenous peoples held in honour

Money as a source of personal satisfaction to be replaced by satisfaction derived relationally

B6 – B7 – B8

Sensitivity to the needs of place, and responsibility for care of place, locally and globally these understood as intrinsically interconnected

Communities and individuals in general much wiser about the environment and our relationship with it

Personal and collective identification with the environment as normal

A1 – A3 – A4

Valuing connected relationships

Collectivity in living and decision-making

Contentment, happiness and fun derived relationally

A8 – C6 – C8 – C9

Smaller selves – Individuals seen as positioned by context – and interdependent rather than independent.

A narrow short-term self-interested individualised perspective to be replaced with the common collective understanding of the need for stewardship and care.

Beliefs in the human capacity to control events in the future to be replaced with a capacity to go with the ways of the world at the pace of the world.

Regarding the environment as a commodity, to be replaced with a collective understanding and set of actions of stewardship, connection and identification with the environment.

Second Stage

Sub-Codes Placed Against Respondent Statements

The next tranche of the coding process shows a range of examples where Sub-Codes were simply placed against 109 statements.

The 11 examples shown below are a few of multiple other statements expressing near identical sentiments and attracting similar Sub-Codes. I undertook this stage of the coding process to revisit early impressions regarding the emergence of linked themes and potential emerging narratives. Again, what interested me here was the extent to which that which is desired (expressed in the A and B codes) are juxtaposed in evocative fashion against the C codes (that which is abhorred and disliked). The contrast makes for a complex set of narratives buttressed (or supported) from different positions.

Respondent data are italicised:

I imagine a future where our descendants don't live with the same detachment relationship to 'place' that we have now...that they see it as an extension of 'self' **Sub-Code (B8)**

They would know that the reason that each person is the way they are simply due to luck and not due to some birth right that makes them better or worse than anyone else. This would mean that people are not born to have more or less than others but rather to work together and with their environment in order to make a sustainable and satisfying life for all. Even though everybody has different qualities people would acknowledge that they are still equal in importance to everyone else. This would mean that any exploitation of another or the environment would be experienced as an exploitation of themselves and therefore not in the value system that people carried and acted upon. **Sub-Codes (C6 – C8 – C9 – A8)**

That it's possible and vital to progress in terms of technology and scientific advancement - but if all of the power is concentrated in the 'hands of a few' - self-interest on a massive scale is a risk to all aspects of human/planetary survival. As a result of near and real disasters because of this, new systems have been put in place that straddle the world and enable vast numbers of people in all social economic sectors to contribute to debates and decision making that no longer 'destroy and take' but help keep balance - distributing wealth and debt more equitably. Our descendants know that this is their responsibility. **(Sub-Codes A3 – B5 – C10)**

They would be: - able to put their opinions to one side in place of what works for all - they would be willing to give up their need to defend themselves from the views of others -They would be able and willing to adopt a 'we' versus 'I' mentality -They would be able

to seek fulfilment in contribution rather than in meeting immediate needs and satisfying wants. (Sub-Codes B2 – B3 – B9)

'Better' is a subjective term and I'm not sure what you mean by this. Better at what? Looking after the planet, leading more meaningful lives? What they might know as a result of the consequences of our actions how fragile the planet is and that we have to stop thinking we can control everything. (Sub-Codes B6 – B7 – B8 – B12)

How to be at peace with the world around them - not raging against it but operating within its limits: to have a conscious knowledge of their local ecology and the rhythms and processes that sustain them within it. This involves a degree of respect and the understanding that all things have sentience - not human sentience, but knowledge and value of their own kind. In this future I see a re-prioritisation of the things we already know, but don't seem to act on: that we are social, interconnected creatures, that we need each other, that community is both necessary and sufficient - again, this comes from an acceptance of place and pace that is vastly at odds with our current, global, fast paced, consumer culture. We must learn to go slow, to be considered, kind and loving - to each other, and to the earth. (Sub-Codes B13 – B14 – C7 – C9)

Disillusionment with neo liberalism, technology and slippery superficial relationships. Crises in human relations. (Sub-Code C3)

History shows us that people come together in this way in times of crisis e.g., war. I would therefore think that the only reason people might reached these ways of knowing and being would be due to a major and long enough lasting crisis, which brought people to the brink of death, that they drew together with shared values. (Sub-Codes B1 – B3)

Crises which force people out of a concern for the narrow self -Emergency: people knowing that if they do not take different actions and perspectives that there will be no escaping dire consequences -participation in education which stretches people to give up their right/wrong mentalities. (Sub-Codes B2 – C2)

I envision a slow, insidious collapse of capitalism, perhaps involving a degree of calamity that it is not easy to consider - but one that perhaps may be necessary in the transition to a new world. In this process of collapse, the growth of seeds planted many years ago: permaculture, worker cooperatives, transition towns, eco villages etc - places exploring this new relationship with nature and each other. So, what will have happened? People will, in increasing numbers, have lost faith with the old / existing narrative of society's progress and begun to seek out alternatives - with the resonance of these growing stronger as more and more of the things we have previously assumed to be true are revealed for the illusions they are. There is no telling the future, such a transition could take many forms, some far uglier than others. In my efforts and optimism, I hope to avoid the worst of these, a slow descent over a sudden drop and the huge human and environmental cost it would take. (Sub-Codes B1 – E2)

Why did you let it go on for so long that it was almost irretrievable and so many people suffered - when you had to know that such unbridled greed was wrong? Why did you not heed warnings that went on for a very long time? Did you know the long-term consequences but still held onto short term thinking? How was it to feel so powerless and out of control that you could only concentrate on the wellbeing of your immediate family / surroundings? Were you part of the beginning of the groundswell towards concern for planetary/human sustainability - if not, what stopped you? (Sub-Codes C6 – D1 – D2)

Initial Thoughts on Placing of Sub-Codes Against Statements

The simple placing of Sub-Codes against statements allowed me to begin to see emerging narrative patterns (or strong repeated themes). This beginning sense of emerging narratives was assisted by viewing both the frequency of occurrence and Sub-Code co-occurrence, as detailed above. The frequency of Sub-Code occurrence also allowed me to have some beginning sense of the weighting of the Sub-Codes in terms of repetition and how this strengthened emerging narratives. I read this repetition and useful Sub-Code co-occurrence as reflective of the number of respondents who adhered to the sentiment expressed in the Sub-Codes. This also allowed me to begin thinking about the similarity of some of Sub-Codes and whether this might be best understood as supporting emergent sentiments or themes expressed by a large number of respondents. It was from this position of viewing strongly supported themes that I was able to begin the tentative and speculative process of condensing Codes and Sub-Codes into four Meta-Codes and the subsequent five narratives. Exploring Sub-Code co-occurrence was also the beginning of starting to see that some of the positions were not held separately but rather seemed to operate as single sentiments or single ontological positions. The C codes were particularly useful in identifying these ostensibly separate sentiments that on closer examination seemingly operate as singular positions.

Second Round of Coding

After the initial coding shown above, I created a table where all 109 statements from the text were placed against the codes – the reverse of the initial coding undertaken where I placed Sub-Codes against the respondent statements.

This second process of coding involved repetition of statements against the five codes and operated to check my first impressions of the coding results by reversing the order of

reading and accenting where respondent statements fitted against multiple codes and Sub-Codes. Undertaking this second process of coding again assisted me in discovering emerging themes and narratives within the body of respondent data. It may not have been necessary to undertake this somewhat repetitive process; however, undertaking this second coding process allowed me to check my first impressions and assisted in seeing the beginnings of larger narratives.

By first sub-coding against the data and then coding the data against the codes and Sub-Codes I was aiming for some degree of subjective confirmation of my initial impressions. That said, I was also cautious of forcing the data and coming to (even tentative) conclusions ahead of what the overall coding process might make possible. Alongside strengthening early impressions, this repetitive process of sub-coding against the data and then coding the data against the codes and Sub-Codes was intended to operate as a brake against a too early crystallisation of my relationship with the data into any degree of certainty about emerging meanings and narratives. Additionally, this repetitive process proved useful in developing the next iteration of coding.

This second coding process was particularly useful for exploring the C code category of Sub-Codes. (*Code C – The Anti's – things that are abhorred, cause the current problems, and will fall away as change happens*)

The respondent statements that link to the C category of Code and Sub-Codes seemed to clearly operate as statements of dissensus with current socio-economic and cultural conditions. In this position of dissensus with current conditions there often seemed to be signals of new pathways and possibilities for how the performance of individual subjectivity, community, and relationship with place might be conducted in the future. Examining the

presence of multiple Sub-Codes in statements allowed me to ‘firm-up’ this impression of a narrative that might be described as: “This is what I do not like about our current situation, who we are now and how we behave now, and, in both outraged and optimistic relation to this, this is what I imagine we may be and do in future.”

Example Table

The following are again examples only. I have included new examples (some of which repeat in the coding and sub-coding categories) to make more visible the fit of the data with the coding and sub-coding. For reading ease, I have not repeated the text of the Sub-Codes in this table:

Table 4

Examples of Codes

<p><u>A Codes- Community and the new self:</u></p>	<p><i>The collapse of capitalism and patriarchy which together subjugate and oppose the people allows for the redistribution of resources...each according to their abilities and each according to their needs. (A2 – C3)</i></p> <p><i>How to respectfully and collectively making decisions and use power while reducing privilege and recognising that being the majority isn't the same as being right (A3)</i></p> <p><i>They will know that everything is connected and that everything they</i></p>
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	<p><i>do ultimately impacts our collective wellbeing for better or worse. Because they understand this, they will perceive that it is their responsibility to be good custodians of the world. They will take pride in improving our collective wellbeing by their actions, and actions that decrease our collective wellbeing will be socially unacceptable. Their focus will not be on consumption and competition but on making the most of life together. They will be on average much happier than we are now because they will understand that accumulating money and things don't create happiness, rather supporting each other and making time to enjoy each other's company, learning and creating will make them happy. (A4 – B2 – B13 – C1)</i></p> <p><i>Know the value and intimacy that a place can have. Have the same kind of emotional attachment to a place. (A1 – B8)</i></p>
<p><u>B - Drivers of change and the new ordinaries</u></p>	<p><i>Wars, resulting in massive expenditure, death and movement of refugee people around the world became unsustainable. There was a series of global financial collapses. In a climate of worldwide and extreme concern, enough of the powerful people began coming up with alternatives and listened to other's ideas / plans 'for human / planetary survival. The ordinary people now had some forms of voice and control. Lives became at the same time, simpler and more sophisticated - all lives became geared towards developing emotional</i></p>

intelligence with a strong focus on sustainability for all. Within generations, this attitude was embedded in human cultures and normal. (B1 – B3 – B5 – C2)

Petroleum restrictions / limits / lack and corporate suffocation of alternative fuel for mobility; realization that living really locally is ok; growing more food at home; less preoccupation with earning lots and getting ahead financially - and the structures that allowed that kind of 'big living will be 1. Restricted to a power grabbing elite, and 2. Will be seen as a waste of a life (B10 – C1 – C10)

They will know that everything is connected and that everything they do ultimately impacts our collective wellbeing for better or worse. Because they understand this, they will perceive that it is their responsibility to be good custodians of the world. They will take pride in improving our collective wellbeing by their actions, and actions that decrease our collective wellbeing will be socially unacceptable. Their focus will not be on consumption and competition but on making the most of life together. They will be on average much happier than we are now because they will understand that accumulating money and things don't create happiness, rather supporting each other and making time to enjoy each other's company, learning and creating will make them happy. (B2 – B13 – A4 – C1)

	<p><i>They might actually understand we are all just one living organism and be more aware of our impact on earth. (B6 – B7– B8)</i></p>
<p><u>C- The Anti's - things that are abhorred, cause the current problems and will fall away as change happens</u></p> <p>1.</p>	<p><i>That economic growth is not the driving force of a good life. They will have a far wider set of measures such as health, levels of participation, levels of creativity, environmental improvement and other measures of wellbeing. they will show they care about others in many different ways. Giving in many different ways will be a core value. (C1)</i></p> <p><i>Why did we wait so long before we acted. How come we didn't? Involve more people. Why didn't we put all our energy into working for change right now - why were we so caught up ourselves in the capitalist illusions of paid work and rewards of a pitiful wage increase now and then. (C3 – D5)</i></p> <p><i>The collapse of capitalism and patriarchy which together subjugate and oppose the people allows for the redistribution of resources...each according to their abilities and each according to their needs. (C3 – A2)</i></p> <p><i>That we are all interdependent on the planet and each other. That there is joy and beauty in variation. That limitless growth is impossible and destructive. That there is a difference between</i></p>

liberation and choice. (C3 – B6)

They will know that everything is connected and that everything they do ultimately impacts our collective wellbeing for better or worse. Because they understand this, they will perceive that it is their responsibility to be good custodians of the world. They will take pride in improving our collective wellbeing by their actions, and actions that decrease our collective wellbeing will be socially unacceptable. Their focus will not be on consumption and competition but on making the most of life together. They will be on average much happier than we are now because they will understand that accumulating money and things don't create happiness, rather supporting each other and making time to enjoy each other's company, learning and creating will make them happy. (C1 – A4 – B2 – B13)

How to be at peace with the world around them –not raging against it but operating within its limits: to have a conscious knowledge of their local ecology and the rhythms and processes that sustain them within it. This involves a degree of respect and the understanding that all things have sentience - not human sentience, but knowledge and value of their own kind. In this future I see a re-prioritisation of the things we already know, but don't seem to act on: that we are social, interconnected creatures, that we need each other, that community is both necessary and sufficient - again, this comes from an acceptance

	<p><i>of place and pace that is vastly at odds with our current, global, fast paced, consumer culture. We must learn to go slow, to be considered, kind and loving - to each other, and to the earth. (C7 – C9 – B13 – B14)</i></p> <p><i>Poor, they will be and know a poverty that we yet do not know. they will also be richer than we have had to be, rich in terms of knowing how to reuse, regrow and repair their world. rich in the knowing how they can grow food. they will be richer in knowing how to grow protein, to forage and be self-sufficient. They will know and be enriched by sharing the little they have with their communities and will need to know how to protect themselves and their communities from the foraging of others. (C1 – C4 – C6)</i></p>
<p><u>D- The future looking back at us:</u></p>	<p><i>Why were those in a position to prevent it so blind to impending environmental catastrophe and why were those that knew about it unable to prevent it? (D3 – D4)</i></p> <p><i>What the f**k were you thinking you selfish bunch of idiots (D1 – D3)</i></p> <p><i>Why did we wait so long before we acted. how come we didn't? involve more people. Why didn't we put all our energy into working for change right now - why were we so caught up ourselves in the capitalist illusions of paid work and rewards of a pitiful wage</i></p>

	<i>increase now and then. (D5 – C3)</i>
<u>E - where the future lives in the present:</u>	<i>Kotare (an activist education center) will be fully funded and will have generated many other community education groups! I think things may have to go very wrong and impact on more people than just the poor to make people think about changing - a combination of deep capitalist crisis and climate change impacts - or maybe (on a good day) our younger generation (the children and teenagers of now) get so sick of what is going wrong that they work at turning things around - different structures, organizing, engaging with people and talking across issues. Unions supporting environmentalists, anti-violence campaigners and anti TPPA groups etc. (E4 – C3)</i>

Emergence of Four Meta-Codes

After exploring frequency of Sub-Code occurrence and co-occurrence of Sub-Codes that emerged from the coding of respondent data above, four Meta-Codes began to appear. These were drawn in large part from linking Sub-Codes that seemed to express much the same sentiment - (and were often used together) - and then examining which other groupings of Sub-Codes primarily aligned with these in respondent statements. Following a CGT approach, I was also aware of the extent to which emerging themes in the respondent data aligned with my own pre-existing deductions. For instance, concerns about endless growth neo-liberal capitalism and a re-valuing of relationship, connection, and collectivity. I had become sufficiently familiar

with the respondent data and my own relationship with that material that the underpinning more complex stories seemed ready to be explored. I was also at a point where I was not sure what more could be usefully extracted from the respondent data by re-using the five codes and 44 Sub-Codes. Hence, it seemed time to re-examine the data using four Meta-Codes, each of which contained a larger or more complex narrative that enfolded repeated sub-coding themes into a larger or more complex set of meanings. I followed Belfrage and Hauf's (2017) CGT assertion that irrespective of pre-held deductions (such as my own determination of the causative role of neo-liberalism in environmental collapse) conclusion should not too readily crystallise into theory or definitive position. Hence, the Meta-Codes I developed remain a tentative or abductive articulation of narratives that emerged from the initial coding process.

Examples of multiply linked (or aligned) Sub-Codes that I used to develop the 4 Meta-Codes are as follows. I have removed coding identifiers to better let the narratives speak for themselves:

ONE:

- Connection – shift of consciousness – common cause and common interest/shared values. Recognised collectivity in living and decision-making.
- Valuing connected relationships.
- New ordinaries – spreading cultural norms of collectivity and connection.
- Wellbeing a function of collective effort not individual effort.
- Money as a source of personal satisfaction to be replaced by satisfaction derived relationally.
- A narrow, short-term, self-interested, individualised perspective to be replaced with the common collective understanding of the need for stewardship and care.
- Contentment, happiness and fun derived relationally.
- Regarding the environment as a commodity, to be replaced with a collective understanding and set of actions of stewardship, connection and identification with the environment.
- Widespread norms of selfishness and narrow self-interest to be replaced by a cultural shift toward collective emotional intelligence with the focus on sustainability for all.
- Relational skills of care and empathy highly valued virtues.

Similar frequently co-occurring Sub-Codes are as follows:

TWO:

- Sensitivity to the needs of place, and responsibility for care of place, locally and globally these understood as intrinsically interconnected.
- Personal and collective identification with the environment as normal.
- Responsible for web of life.
- Humans part of ecosystem. Everything connected.
- Beliefs in the human capacity to control events in the future to be replaced with a capacity to go with the ways of the world at the pace of the world.
- Eco-centric – sentience not just human.

The next set of oft-repeated Sub-Codes support the above with an accent on drivers of change and that which is abhorred/disliked.

THREE:

- Major loss and collapse as driver for new consciousness and new cultural norms.
- Neo-liberalism, and the endless growth model of capitalism.
- Connection – shift of consciousness – common cause and common interest/shared values recognised.
- Money as a source of personal satisfaction to be replaced by satisfaction derived relationally.
- Anger and sadness at our current behaviour.
- Disbelief that our thinking was so short-term and ignored long-term consequences.
- Outrage that we allowed the elites and neo-liberals to control the world.
- Wellbeing a function of collective effort not individual effort.
- Food production more local and more hands-on.
- A narrow, short-term, self-interested, individualised perspective to be replaced with the common collective understanding of the need for stewardship and care.
- Outrage that we do not better control our governments.
- The local voice of ordinary people growing in political influence.
- Not in control of everything.
- Equality and egalitarianism at the local level.
- Living locally is a virtue

Explanation of Shift from Coding to Sub-Coding to Four Meta-Codes

The coding process using the five codes and 44 Sub-Codes involved an iterative process of comparing data against the codes and Sub-Codes and then comparing codes and Sub-Codes against the data. While repetitive, this iterative process allowed me to develop a growing sense of overarching themes and their relationship to my pre-existing deductions which include both that which I currently abhor and (unsurprisingly) my own hopes for the future. From this I was able to develop four Meta-Codes. The table below briefly outlines the process followed. A similar iterative process comparing the Sub-Codes against the four Meta-Codes, and then the four Meta-Codes against the data and the data against the four Meta-Codes was then again

followed. This was useful in making sure that I had not allowed the codes, Sub-Codes, or Meta-Codes to become, in-of-themselves, data. It was useful to go back to the un-coded respondent data and re-examine it in terms of fit with the four Meta-Codes with a particular consideration in mind of how close (or disparate) was the data from my own pre-existing deductive musings and tentative conclusions. One outcome from this iterative and layered examination was a realisation that (unsurprisingly in retrospect), my own concerns and hopes are not solely my own but reflect a growing shared dis-ease with the current business-as-usual status quo accompanied by the shadowed utopian future hopes that arise from this dis-ease. From this final sequence of the coding process, I was able to develop five themes or threads as will be discussed later in the chapter.

Table of coding and sub-coding:

Table 5

Table of coding and sub-coding

First five codes	These arose after multiple readings of the respondent statements and in consideration of 'fit' or 'non-fit' my pre-existing deductions
Example respondent	This operated to check fit of the 5 codes with respondent

statements fitted against the five code categories	statements and operated as a brake against too early crystallization into meaning / conclusion.
Table of five primary codes and 44 Sub-Codes	After checking fit it seemed apparent that a fine-grained coding required multiple Sub-Codes. These Sub-Codes were wordings taken from respondent data and deliberately included overlap in terms of meaning and themes.
Frequency of Sub-Code occurrence and Sub-Code co-occurrence in respondent statements	This operated to gain a sense of frequency of themes and allowed the beginning of a sense of how different themes linked together in the data.
Sub-Codes within individual respondent statements	This iterative process operated as a check of initial impressions
Sub-Codes placed against respondent statements	Again – this iterative process allowed a more thorough check of initial impressions
Table of respondent statements placed against the five codes with co-occurring Sub-Codes noted	Again – this process enabled a check of my sense of emerging themes and in particular, the linkages of what could appear disparate statements into coherent larger narratives of meaning
Examples of multiply evident and aligned Sub-Codes used to develop the four Meta-Codes	This process simply listed the commonly occurring Sub-Codes and their aligned Sub-Codes to begin the process of condensing meaning into 4 coherent and more complex Meta-Codes. At this point there seemed little more to be gained from re-working the codes and Sub-Codes
Development of the four Meta-Codes	4 Meta-Codes (as sentences each with a descriptive paragraph) were developed

The Four Meta-Codes

The four Meta-Codes are attempts to capture in four sentences (and accompanying explanatory narratives) more complex themes and stories than were possible using five codes and 44 Sub-Codes. I paid particular attention to the ways in which what a surface reading would suggest are different ontological positions, such as living collectively, and a strong sense of identification with the environment, in the texts demonstrated themselves to be more complex constructions of meaning. These more complex constructions seemed to me to be better expressed in entirely new language. What follows are the first three Meta-Codes, each with an explanatory narrative that typically references back to Sub-Code co-occurrence. Meta-Code 4 (**collapse and loss precede change**) is in somewhat of a standalone category in that it seemed to be the foundational assumption on which almost all other narratives were built. The notion that collapse and loss will precede change was the most commonly occurring theme found in the respondent data.

The First Meta-Code Is As Follows:

META-CODE 1 – Shared stewardship – living with greater happiness collectively connected to other and place.

The underpinning narrative:

META-CODE 1 – Happiness relates to relational engagement with collective ways of living understood as normal with this then equated with a sense of connection and responsibility for the environment. Money is not considered as a source of happiness and individual control over individual fates is less accented. Resource sharing is common, and sustainability is seen as undertaken collectively rather than individually.

META-CODE 2 – Self interdependent with others and the world, the Individual ‘I’ is smaller and less powerful than the collective ‘we’ connected and committed to our nurturing world.

Underpinning narrative:

META-CODE 2 – this Meta-Code might be seen as more to do with a humbler and smaller sense of self with less belief in the capacity to control the world and more interest in moving at the pace of the world. An interesting aspect of this is that the smaller less in control sense of self again seems associated with connection and identification with the environment. Where this Meta-Code aligns with the first one is again the accent on a relational and collective approach to life.

META-CODE 3 – Just as we share in creating our food – we make our decisions here together remembering to listen to and honour the wisdom of the world.

Underpinning narrative:

META-CODE 3 is a shift away from current economic and political modes of decision-making particularly capitalism and neo-liberalism and the dominance of a rich elite and what this infers for resource allocation. The shift is towards a more locally based, de-centred approach to how communities conduct their decision-making. Accompanying this is a shift towards the local and hands-on production of food. The discourse that consistently seems to accompany this is the notion that the living world has intrinsic worth, and humanity is only part of a web of connection.

As explained, I created (or saw) these first three Meta-Codes in part because it became apparent that there was a great deal of co-occurrence of themes in the initial 44 Sub-Codes. I also wanted to collapse and make better use of the thesis/antithesis made possible by the comparison of codes A and B with Code C.

As described, what was particularly striking was the need for a new category of Meta-Code when it became apparent that what my initial coding represented as separate ontologies or sets of understandings could better be seen as inherently one set of understandings or ontology.

The prevalence of types of Sub-Code co-concurrence – that is (for instance), statements that conflated collectivity at a social level with a sense of interdependence with the environment, strongly suggested to me that what I had initially identified as separate ontologies in fact operate in the larger text of raw data as singular narratives. As described, the most striking example of this was the extent to which aspirations of collectivity and connectedness between people consistently co-occur with an understanding that people would in the future have a greater sense of identification with and responsibility for the environment. These were typically not written as separate phenomena but instead seemed to operate like the beginnings of coherent power/knowledge regimes, or put more simply, stories of what people are, could be and how they might better live in relation with each other, themselves, and the environment at a local and global level.

The initial practical approach to reducing the five codes and C44 Sub-Codes to four Meta-Codes involved charting the three first new Meta-Codes against the initial 44 Sub-Codes. I then went on to locate the three new Meta-Codes against the raw data again. I did this because I was concerned that I was beginning to see the Sub-Codes themselves as data and wanted to

reassure myself that my three new Meta-Codes fitted with some rigour with the narratives emerging from the respondent data itself.

The Fourth Meta-Code

I have not expanded on the notion that collapse is understood as a prerequisite for change. There seemed no need for an underpinning narrative as the Meta-Code 4 sentence itself seems sufficiently narratively evocative as to need no further expansion – **collapse and loss precede change**. Meta-Code 4 seems a thread that is dominant through the data (and was the most repeated code) hence I think this needs to be considered as a somewhat separate Meta-Code. Or, perhaps more accurately, a foundational Meta-Code that underpins the other narratives and to which the speculative and aspirational stories of self/subject, community, and connection stand in relation to. If the raw data and the meaning that arises from the coding and sub-coding is understood as telling a story, then the story very frequently commenced with: “things will become very bad – and then – change will happen”.

I am calling this number 4 Meta-Code:

Meta-Code 4 – Collapse and Loss Precede Change. As stated, Sub-Code B1, *major loss and collapse as driver for new consciousness and new cultural norms*, was the most repeated Sub-Code in the data and seems to reflect a commonly held belief or understanding by respondents (and myself) that change will only occur after some degree of catastrophe. Respondents frequently referred to this as after catastrophe people will wake up, and/or a new consciousness will emerge. I will explore this oft-repeated notion further in the Chapter 6 discussion section.

Meta-Code 4 is perhaps the clearest example of the utility of the CGT retroductive notion that a dialogue between the physical world and the fluidity of new pathways and

possibilities in relation to that physical reality creates rich possibilities for data analysis. Some degree of collapse and loss are the reality that the bulk of literature (as explored in Chapters Three and Four) suggests is almost an inevitability at this point.

Collapse and loss are, of course, not without a political dimension and provides much material for a critical theory informed perspective on current socio-political processes which privilege some and marginalise others with an environmentally degraded future operating as the main “externality-of-cost” (Harvey, 2013). Arguably, this is a form of time-bound externalising-of-cost allowing more of the world’s current wealth to accrue to a smaller number of people with potentially catastrophic future consequences. This socio-political dimension is evident in both literature and the respondent data (taken as a perceptual foreshadowing). This dimension of future realities and their meaningful intrusion into current perceptions warrants examination. This examination might usefully question how what precedes/drives future collapse is perceived and made sense of in the present and the multitude of possible pathways for subjectivity and modes of living that might arise in response to the perception of a near-term future, politically haunted ecological and societal crash.

An early example of a retroductive dialogue emerging from the whole of the data and a critical theory informed analysis of collapse and loss might be the speculation that increasingly people (as at least represented by respondents) have an acute awareness of the role of endless growth capitalism in the coming catastrophes. The discursive element arising from this critical awareness seemed overwhelmingly to be imaginative responses about future life that are the antithesis of the story that late-stage capitalism and neo-liberalism tells of who the self is, how the self might best behave, what is the nature of community, and what is the appropriate relationship for humanity to have with the environment. In a sense, that which is abhorred and understood to be driving the pathway to disaster becomes an important instructor

in not just how not to be; but in what new modes of living and being are needed so as to do better in the future. These considerations will be further explored in the discussion chapter (Chapter 6).

Thoughts About The Four Meta-Codes

A concern I had was that in acting upon the Sub-Codes as holding validity separate from the raw data itself is that I may have in some senses forced the raw respondent data to provide meanings that are not necessarily inherent to the data. (Irrespective that I was very careful in creating the 44 Sub-Codes to use wording close to the respondent texts, or I used paraphrasing.) I was worried that I was losing touch with the data by referencing primarily to the Sub-Codes in my search for meaning.

Hence, in addition to creating (or seeing) four new sets of narratives from the Sub-Codes I also first cross-referenced the four new emerging Meta-Codes (or narratives) back to the Sub-Codes to see what emerged. Immediately after this I used the raw respondent data itself to site the new Meta-Codes against. I was beginning to see the story emerging from the coding process, particularly (as mentioned in Sub-Code co-occurrence) and I wanted to be sure that this same story also emerged from the data itself without the framing mechanism of the 44 Sub-Codes.

To avoid this risk of being captured by the sub-coding I went back to the raw data blind (without referring to the codes or Sub-Codes). I did this using a version of the raw data that had not been coded and I simply aimed to see what resonated most closely with the four new Meta-Codes. This, in a sense, meant coding from the beginning again from a new basis of looking for four larger blocks of meaning. As I have done throughout – rather than using

individual sentences, or parts of the respondent's statements – I used respondent statements in their entirety.

Linking the Four Meta-Codes to Sub-Codes and Then Directly To Narrative

What the following table aims to show are some examples of the way in which the Sub-Codes (and the co-occurrences of Sub-Codes) create validity for the four new Meta-Code codes. After the table linking the Meta-Codes to the Sub-Codes codes there immediately follows example narrative statements from the text linked to the four new Meta-Codes.

This linking of statements from the raw data against the four Meta-Code codes support and align with the narratives and meanings that emerged from the first iteration of coding and sub-coding. To put this more simply, the same stories continued to be told. To assist the reader (in what can seem tediously repetitive processes of coding) I have removed some of the Sub-Code identifiers for ease of reading.

In the following table I am using the Sub-Codes to interrogate fit with **Meta-Code 1**.

Meta-Code 1. Shared stewardship – living with greater happiness collectively connected to other and place.

The underpinning narrative: Happiness relates to relational engagement with collective ways of living understood as normal with this then equated with a sense of connection and responsibility for the environment. Money is not considered as a source of happiness and individual control over individual fates is less accented. Resource sharing is common, and sustainability is seen as undertaken collectively rather than individually.

Co-occurring Sub-Codes are included in this table to better allow the narrative to be seen. The example table does not include the full range of Sub-Codes.

Table 6

Sub-Code occurrences and narrative

Sub-Code Co-occurrences in text	Emerging narrative from Sub-Code co-occurrences with Meta-Code 1: Shared stewardship - living with greater happiness collectively connected to other and place.
A3 – A4 – B12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collectivity in living and decision-making. • Contentment, happiness and fun derived relationally. • Not in control of everything
C3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neo-liberalism, and the endless growth model of capitalism
A1– B1– B12– A4– B5– C10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major loss and collapse as driver for new consciousness and new cultural norms. • Not in control of everything • Valuing connected relationships • The local voice of ordinary people growing in political influence • The economic and social dominance of rich elites
A1– A3– A5– B10– B11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing connected relationships • Collectivity in living and decision-making • Personal humility and humbler lifestyles • Food production more local and more hands-on • Food producing skills common and valued
A2– B3– B9– B13– C1– C2– C3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource sharing and support as ethos, • Connection - shift of consciousness - common cause and common interest / shared values recognised. • Wellbeing a function of collective effort not individual effort • Humans part of ecosystem – Everything connected. • Money as a source of personal satisfaction to be replaced by satisfaction derived relationally. • Widespread norms of selfishness and narrow self-interest to be replaced by a cultural shift toward collective emotional

	<p>intelligence with the focus on sustainability for all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neo-liberalism, and the endless growth model of capitalism.
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Narrative statements from text dislocated from the five codes and 44 Sub-Codes:

In what follows I identify statements within the respondent data itself that show good fit with Meta-Code 1 (and to an extent with the other Meta-Codes).

No attempt is made to align with Sub-Codes and in a sense these sections operate as an opportunity to blind check the Meta-Code codes fit with the raw data. The following are examples only.

As described, this Meta-Code is:

Meta-Code 1: Shared stewardship – living with greater happiness collectively connected to other and place.

Underpinning narrative: Happiness relates to relational engagement with collective ways of living understood as normal with this then equated with a sense of connection and responsibility for the environment. Money is not considered as a source of happiness and individual control over individual fates is less accented. Resource sharing is common, and sustainability is seen as undertaken collectively rather than individually.

META-CODE 1 – META-CODE 2 – How to have simple uncomplicated fun. to not do for the sake of doing. To be in communion.

META-CODE 1 – META-CODE 2 – That economic growth is not the driving force of a good life. They will have a far wider set of measures such as health, levels of participation, levels of creativity, environmental improvement and other measures of wellbeing. they will show they care about others in many different ways. Giving in many

different ways will be a core value. I could even imagine violence being rare. Indigenous people's sovereignty will be recognised and celebrated. People won't experience war or economic exploitation or dispossession.

META-CODE 1 – They might actually understand we are all just one living organism and be more aware of our impact on earth

META-CODE 1 – I imagine a future where our descendants don't live with the same detachment relationship to 'place' that we have now...that they see it as an extension of 'self'

META-CODE 1 – They will know that everything on this planet is connected and comes and returns to the same energy. They will no longer be concerned for money and the accumulation of wealth/things. Instead they will endeavour to improve themselves and others as one collective.

META-CODE 1 – They will know that everything is connected and that everything they do ultimately impacts our collective wellbeing for better or worse. Because they understand this, they will perceive that it is their responsibility to be good custodians of the world. They will take pride in improving our collective wellbeing by their actions, and actions that decrease our collective wellbeing will be socially unacceptable. Their focus will not be on consumption and competition but on making the most of life together. They will be on average much happier than we are now because they will understand that accumulating money and things don't create happiness, rather supporting each other and making time to enjoy each other's company, learning and creating will make them happy.

META-CODE 1 – There will have been a large cultural shift (which has already started). More and more people will realise that the dominant current way of living (massive consumption, working really hard and competing to support said massive consumption, creating huge inequality by concentrating wealth into the hands of a few, while destroying the wellbeing of our place is not creating wellbeing for most people. By trying new things that their friends have discovered and shared, they will discover what's really important to them, and change their behaviour accordingly. As this grassroots cultural shift grows, it will influence what is portrayed in popular media, which will increase the spread of the new culture until it replaces the current norms.

META-CODE 1 – Why are you taking so long to change? Why were some people so resistant to change? Why did people keep doing some things long after it was established that they were really bad for people's collective wellbeing?

Meta-Code 2. Self-interdependent with others and the world, the Individual 'I' is smaller and less powerful than the collective 'we' connected and committed to our nurturing world.

Underpinning narrative: This second Meta-Code might be seen as more to do with a humbler and smaller sense of self with less belief in the capacity to control the world and more interest in moving at the pace of the world. An interesting aspect of this is that the smaller less in control sense of self again seems associated with connection and identification with the environment. Where this Meta-Code aligns with the first Meta-Code is again the accent on a relational and collective approach to life.

Again, I have followed a protocol of first aligning META-CODE 2 with Sub-Codes; followed by a separate section aligning Meta-Code 2 simply against the raw data. This operating as a check of fit for emerging narratives. A representative range is shown.

Table 7

Sub-Code co-occurrences and narratives

Sub-Code Co-occurrences in text	- Emerging narrative from Sub-Code co-occurrences with Meta-Code 2. Self-interdependent with others and the world, the Individual ‘I’ is smaller and less powerful than the collective ‘we’ connected and committed to our nurturing world. Underpinning Narrative: This second Meta-Code might be seen as more to do with a humbler and smaller sense of self with less belief in the capacity to control the world and more interest in moving at the pace of the world. An interesting aspect of this is that the smaller less in control sense of self again seems associated with connection and identification with the environment. Where this Meta-Code aligns with the first Meta-Code is again the accent on a relational and collective approach to life.
A4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contentment, happiness and fun derived relationally
A3– C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collectivity in living and decision-making • Money as a source of personal satisfaction to be replaced by satisfaction derived relationally
C6 – C8 – C9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow short-term self-interested individualized perspective to be replaced with the common collective understanding of the need for stewardship and care • Beliefs in the human capacity to control events in the future to be replaced with a capacity to go with the ways of the world at the pace of the world. • Regarding the environment as a commodity, to be replaced with a collective understanding and set of actions of stewardship, connection and identification with the environment.
A1– A3– B6– B7– B8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing connected relationships • Collectivity in living and decision-making • sensitivity to the needs of place, and responsibility for care of

	<p>place, locally and globally these understood as intrinsically interconnected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and individuals in general much wiser about the environment and our relationship with it • Personal and collective identification with the environment as
B13– B14– C9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humans part of ecosystem – Everything connected. • Eco centric – sentience not just human • Regarding the environment as a commodity, to be replaced with a collective understanding and set of actions of stewardship, connection and identification with the environment.
A8– C6– C9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller selves - Individuals seen as positioned by context – and interdependent rather than independent • A narrow short-term self-interested individualized perspective to be replaced with the common collective understanding of the need for stewardship and care • Regarding the environment as a commodity, to be replaced with a collective understanding and set of actions of stewardship, connection and identification with the environment. •

Statements from respondent texts that show fit with META-CODE 2:

META-CODE 2 – Self interdependent with others and the world, the Individual ‘I’ is smaller and less powerful than the collective ‘we’ connected and committed to our nurturing world.

Underpinning narrative: This Meta-Code might be seen as more to do with a humbler and smaller sense of self with less belief in the capacity to control the world and more interest in moving at the pace of the world. An interesting aspect of this is that the smaller less in control sense of self again seems associated with connection and identification with the environment. Where this Meta-Code aligns with Meta-Code 1 is again the accent on a relational collective approach to life.

Examples as follows:

META-CODE 2– They might know that appreciating and utilizing what the close environment makes available to them is what life is about. This would include finding satisfaction through engaging in relationships with those people in close proximity and working together and using each person’s strengths for the common good. They would know that the reason that each person is the way they are simply due to luck and not due to some birth right that makes them better or worse than anyone else. This would mean that people are not born to have more or less than others but rather to work together and with their environment in order to make a sustainable and satisfying life for all. Even though everybody has different qualities people would acknowledge that they are still equal in importance to everyone else. This would mean that any exploitation of another or the environment would be experienced as an exploitation of themselves and therefore not in the value system that people carried and acted upon.

META-CODE 2 – They would be: able to put their opinions to one side in place of what works for all -they would be willing to give up their need to defend themselves from the views of others -They would be able and willing to adopt a 'we' versus 'i' mentality - They would be able to seek fulfilment in contribution rather than in meeting immediate needs and satisfying wants

META-CODE 2– 'Better' is a subjective term and I'm not sure what you mean by this. Better at what? Looking after the planet, leading more meaningful lives? What they might know as a result of the consequences of our actions how fragile the planet is and that we have to stop thinking we can control everything.

META-CODE 2 – How to be at peace with the world around them - not raging against it, but operating within its limits: to have a conscious knowledge of their local ecology

and the rhythms and processes that sustain them within it. This involves a degree of respect and the understanding that all things have sentience - not human sentience, but knowledge and value of their own kind. In this future I see a re-prioritisation of the things we already know, but don't seem to act on: that we are social, interconnected creatures, that we need each other, that community is both necessary and sufficient - again, this comes from an acceptance of place and pace that is vastly at odds with our current, global, fast paced, consumer culture. We must learn to go slow, to be considered, kind and loving - to each other, and to the earth.

META-CODE 2 – That we are all interdependent on the planet and each other. That there is joy and beauty in variation. That limitless growth is impossible and destructive. That there is a difference between liberation and choice.

META-CODE 2 – They might know that they are part of a web of humanity stretching from past to future and across the globe. They might be responsible for the integrity of that web.

META-CODE 2 – All the most advanced colony animals work together in a hive. all giving and receiving their due. our culture seems to have an aspect in that certain individual or group, that acts like cancer, and seeks uncontrollable growth way beyond its needs. I am hoping as we reach for the stars, that something intervenes to remove this aspect of our society. no other lifeform has this.

Meta-Code 3. Just as we share in creating our food – we make our decisions here together remembering to listen to and honour the wisdom of the world.

Underpinning narrative:

Meta-Code 3 - is a shift away from current economic and political modes of decision-making, particularly capitalism and neo-liberalism and the dominance of a rich elite and what this infers for resource allocation. The shift is toward a more locally based de-centred approach to how communities conduct their decision-making. Accompanying this is a shift towards the local and hands-on production of food. The discourse that consistently seems to accompany this is the notion that the living world has intrinsic worth, and humanity is only part of a web of connection.

Again, the process followed is first a check of META-CODE 3 against the Sub-Codes followed by comparing META-CODE 3 against the raw data. An example range is shown here:

Table 8

Emerging narrative from code co-occurrences

Code Co-occurrences in text	Emerging narrative from code co-occurrences with Meta-Code 3: Just as we share in creating our food - we make our decisions here together remembering to listen to and honour the wisdom of the world
A2– B1– B3– B5– B2– B6– C3– C4 – C10– D5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major loss and collapse as driver for new consciousness and new cultural norms. • New ordinaries - spreading cultural norms of collectivity and connection. • Connection - shift of consciousness - common cause and common interest / shared values recognized. • Living locally is a virtue.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local voice of ordinary people growing in political influence.
C1– C4– C6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money as a source of personal satisfaction to be replaced by satisfaction derived relationally. • Conspicuous consumption, careless wastefulness. • A narrow short-term self-interested individualised perspective to be replaced with the common collective understanding of the need for stewardship and care.
A3– B5– C1– C3– C4– C10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collectivity in living and decision-making. • The local voice of ordinary people growing in political influence. • Money as a source of personal satisfaction to be replaced by satisfaction derived relationally. • Neo-liberalism, and the endless growth model of capitalism. • Conspicuous consumption, careless wastefulness. • The economic and social dominance of rich elites.
A4– B11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contentment, happiness and fun derived relationally. • Food producing skills common and valued.
B13– C7– C9– D5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humans part of ecosystem – Everything connected. • Competition as a cultural norm. • Regarding the environment as a commodity, to be replaced with a collective understanding and set of actions of stewardship, connection, and identification with the environment. • Outrage that we allowed the elites and neo-liberals to control the world.
B14– C3– D1– D5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eco centric – sentience not just human. • Neo-liberalism, and the endless growth model of capitalism. • Anger and sadness at our current behavior. • Outrage that we allowed the elites and neo-liberals to control the world.

Meta-Code 4. I Have not linked Meta-Code 4 with the Sub-Codes as this seems somewhat inherent to the whole body of text supplied by respondents. Question that emerge about this Meta-Code is its prevalence in terms used such as ‘people waking up’ and finding

‘a new consciousness’, these will be further explored in the Chapter 6 discussion. This was also one of the few categories of code that referenced to sections of respondent data where respondents used a different tense. On at least one occasion a respondent spoke from the future as the present looking back in describing collapse.

A larger example range is shown to demonstrate.

META-CODE 4 – collapse and loss precede change

META-CODE 4 – We appear to be at a middle to late stage of our civilisation. It is difficult to see beyond declining order based on declining commitment to the ideals that have shaped our civilisation. (Yeats, the centre will not hold). Increasing authoritarianism will be a response. There will be a declining population and competition for resources. In this situation our descendants will relearn and know the value of survival. They will be more resourceful, those that survive. Sorry to be so bleak.

META-CODE 4 – A massive cull of the population, with only the ones truly prepared and connected to the earth making it through.

META-CODE 4 – History shows us that people come together in this way in times of crisis e.g., war. I would therefore think that the only reason people might reached these ways of knowing and being would be due to a major and long enough lasting crisis, which brought people to the brink of death, that they drew together with shared values.

META-CODE 4 – Continued chaos would cry out for another way. Currently, cultures with money do not have to know what else is going on, they do not have to share resources. Climate change will put more of us in the same boat, people will see a need for change that they don't see now.

META-CODE 4 – Cataclysmic events will cause a spontaneous raising of the consciousness, we will suddenly be able to communicate with each other on a spiritual level as well as everything on the planet. We will know we are not alone but are all connected in a very real, visceral way.

META-CODE 4 – The people of our time will need to awaken...if we don't, we won't survive.

META-CODE 4 and META-CODE 3 – Wars, resulting in massive expenditure, death and movement of refugee people around the world became unsustainable. There was a series of global financial collapse. In a climate of worldwide and extreme concern, enough of the powerful people began coming up with alternatives and listened to other's ideas/plans 'for human/planetary survival. The ordinary people now had some forms of voice and control. Lives became at the same time, simpler and more sophisticated - all lives became geared towards developing emotional intelligence with a strong focus on sustainability for all. Within generations, this attitude was embedded in human cultures and normal.

META-CODE 4 – META-CODE 2 – Crises which force people out of a concern for the narrow self - Emergency: people knowing that if they do not take different actions and perspectives that there will be no escaping dire consequences -participation in education which stretches people to give up their right/wrong mentalities.

META-CODE 4 – A number of bad things will happen to the poor in many countries and to the less poor in places like North America. I am somewhat pessimistic but foresee such events as major flooding in South India, major storms in the USA and mass migration to countries perceived to be safer. Finally, the light bulb will be turned on

and the rich states (e.g. OECD countries) and the large states (India and China) will accept as 'normal thinking' that we cannot continue to burn and produce carbon at the present rate.

META-CODE 4 – Probably quite a few crises of huge proportions that destroy large numbers of people or places. A change in government thinking and policy.

META-CODE 4 and META-CODE 1 - I envision a slow, insidious collapse of capitalism, perhaps involving a degree of calamity that it is not easy to consider - but one that perhaps may be necessary in the transition to a new world. In this process of collapse, the growth of seeds planted many years ago: permaculture, worker cooperatives, transition towns, eco villages etc - places exploring this new relationship with nature and each other. So what will have happened? People will, in increasing numbers, have lost faith with the old/existing narrative of society's progress and begun to seek out alternatives - with the resonance of these growing stronger as more and more of the things we have previously assumed to be true are revealed for the illusions they are. There is no telling the future, such a transition could take many forms, some far uglier than others. In my efforts and optimism, I hope to avoid the worst of these, a slow descent over a sudden drop and the huge human and environmental cost it would take

META-CODE 4-- Climate change and overpopulation will have led to a serious threat of extinction and actual extinction of human communities through wars and starvation. This will engender both competitive self-interest and recognition of common interest. It is to be hoped that the latter takes control in ways that are sustainable.

META-CODE 4 – Why did you let it go on for so long that it was almost irretrievable and so many people suffered - when you had to know that such unbridled greed was wrong? Why did you not heed warnings that went on for a very long time? Did you know the long-term consequences but still held onto short term thinking? How was it to feel so powerless and out of control that you could only concentrate on the wellbeing of your immediate family/surroundings? Were you part of the beginning of the groundswell towards concern for planetary/human sustainability - if not, what stopped you?

META-CODE 4 – What a tough question. It pains me - but how could they not ask what we did to help halt the environmental catastrophe, in the ruins of which they will live, and why we didn't do more. But I would hope that part of their philosophy would be one of acceptance and acknowledging that there is no going back, no matter how nice it would be to - anger being, in the words of the Bhudda, like taking poison and hoping someone else will die. So perhaps they would have no questions, only understanding that what is done is done and that they will have to go forward with what they have.

Thoughts and the Emergence of Five Threads from the Data

What follows are five threads or sets of themes that emerged for me when I read the data and then juxtaposed my reading against both the initial five codes, the 44 Sub-Codes and then the four Meta-Code and narratives that emerged. These threads are of course not the data itself; they represent my ephemeral set of emergences in response to my encountering the text, my iterations of coding and the reading of a great deal of political, philosophical and environmental literature. The accuracy of Belfrage and Haufs' (2017) statement that grounded theory benefits from the overt inclusion of the writer's previous deductive positions and the

incorporation of a political analysis has become ever clearer to me through the coding process. The five threads also represent somewhat of a recursive loop. My initial response to the data, in relation to my own analysis somewhat resembled the outcome the CGT coding process arrived at. The coding process has been extremely valuable, particularly in ensuring that the data is not forced, and that my initial intuitive leap resonates with the thinking of a range of other people. As previously stated, it would be a valuable and interesting exercise to replicate this research with a broader range of people, particularly given that climate catastrophes are now appearing to be endemic and frequent in ways that they perhaps were not in 2016. As is, the study is limited by the relatively small number of respondents and the lack of much variability in responses given.

My personal position is that a researcher's failure to identify which sections of society benefit, (or the converse) from the instrumentalities of dominant ideologies is simply to side with the oppressor. My position is a good fit with the assertions of both Belfrage and Hauf (2017) and Jessops (2009) that research should commence from a moral position of identifying oppression and actively seeking counters and antidotes to that oppression. In this instance, the oppression potentially involves the likely destruction of a great deal of the natural world and the resource base upon which much of humanity depends for life in service to an economic and political system operating in benefit to only a small proportion of the human species. These are not small matters of morality. Rather they are (in my opinion) the great ethical and practical challenges of our age.

I have attempted through the entire work to make my position on this clear. Also referencing back to Deleuze and Guatarri's (1977) call for writings on subjects to be honest expressions of aesthetic preferences as all such writings are potentially productive of subjectivity, I have, admittedly, aimed to create aesthetic space for a subject who holds the

analects and actions of neo-liberal capitalism in disdain. Such a subject also holding dear notions that collectivity, community and connection to the environment are essential aspects of human well-being. This is apparent in both the development of the research questions I asked, the five codes, 44 Sub-Codes, four Meta-Codes and the five themes that follow. While this story of the subject is one that I personally resonate with, and one that fits with pre-existing deductions of mine, it is also strongly supported by the raw data provided by respondents.

The five threads/themes also reference back to my social constructionist position that the nature of the human subject is significantly more mutable than some would consider it. The threads (or themes) reflect my position that the primary question is not what people need to 'do' in response to environmental predicaments but rather how will they differ in who they 'be', such that doing what is needed is simply the natural and obvious thing to do.

At this point, the data coding is beginning to reconnect to both literature and the notion that I have argued throughout this work that it is well known what needs to be done regarding environmental degradation and potential catastrophes, the problem being that what needs to be done does not logically flow from the dictats or self-template of a neo-liberal subjectivity. Hence my continued interest in what kinds of subject might be able to be different enough so that sustainability and connection with place and other are simply reflections of what seems common-sense and ordinary in terms of ontologies of selfhood.

Therefore, perhaps the threads that follow humanise the data in ways that are unwarranted other than in my desire to meet and speak with these putative future subjects whose existence as 'subjects' relies on the flimsy platform of answers given by respondents, an iteration of coding process and my imaginative tendency to turn data into stories of the living subject.

Further Thoughts

Following a CGT approach; it was important to ground perception in what deductive pre-suppositions drove the initial questions and then (in dialogical relationship with respondent data) shaped development of the initial five codes, the 44 Sub-Codes, the four Meta-Code codes and then the final five threads/themes.

What follows next is a repeat of the four Meta-Codes (and their underpinning narratives) that emerged from my relationship with: raw respondent data, five initial codes, 44 Sub-Codes and their interplay with a significant critical history of reading, thinking and lived experience. My intent is that these three layers of coding offer with integrity a condensed series of answers to the initial research questions I asked and offer validity to the following five streams/themes/threads (or narratives of the subject/s) that subsequently follow.

META-CODE 1 – Shared stewardship – living with greater happiness collectively connected to other and place.

Underpinning narrative: Happiness relates to relational engagement with collective ways of living understood as normal with this then equated with a sense of connection and responsibility for the environment. Money is not considered as a source of happiness and individual control over individual fates is less accented. Resource sharing is common, and sustainability is seen as undertaken collectively rather than individually.

META-CODE 2 – Self interdependent with others and the world, the Individual ‘I’ is smaller and less powerful than the collective ‘we’ connected and committed to our nurturing world.

Underpinning narrative: This Meta-Code might be seen as more to do with a humbler and smaller sense of self with less belief in the capacity to control the world and more interest in moving at the pace of the world. An interesting aspect of this is that the smaller less in control sense of self again seems associated with connection and identification with the environment. Where this Meta-Code aligns with the first one is again the accent on a relational and collective approach to life.

META-CODE 3 – Just as we share in creating our food - we make our decisions here together remembering to listen to and honour the wisdom of the world

Underpinning Narrative: Meta-Code 3 is a shift away from current economic and political modes of decision-making particularly capitalism and neo-liberalism and the dominance of a rich elite and what this infers for resource allocation. The shift is toward a towards a more locally based, de-centred approach to how communities conduct their decision-making. Accompanying this is a shift towards the local and hands-on production of food. The discourse that consistently seems to accompany this is the notion that the living world has intrinsic worth and humanity is only part of a web of connection.

META-CODE 4 – collapse and loss precede change

Underpinning narrative: As described, I have not much expanded on the notion that collapse is understood as a prerequisite for change. This seems a thread that is dominant through the data (and was the most repeated code) hence I think this perhaps needs to be considered as a somewhat separate foundational meta-narrative. If the raw data and the meaning that arises

from the coding and sub coding process is understood as telling a story, then (as described) the story very frequently commenced with “things will become very bad – and then, change will happen”.

There is no complex narrative I can yet see that underpins Meta-Code 4. As stated, it was the most repeated Sub-Code in the data and seems to reflect a commonly held belief by respondents (and myself) that change will only occur after some degree of catastrophe. As described, respondents frequently referred to this as, after catastrophe people will wake up, and/or a new consciousness will emerge.

Meta-Code 4 is perhaps the clearest example of the utility of the CGT retroductive notion that a dialogue between a changing socio/political physical world and the fluidity of new discursive pathways and possibilities in relation to that socio/political physical world creates rich possibilities for analysis and new perspectives. This is valuable in the research process. At the practical level of lived experience, what is also of real interest is the extent to which new pathways, possibilities and life options are likely to emerge in the dialogical relationship between the discursive and actual crisis. Crisis and creativity and the potential for the new seems somewhat coextensive. The CGT coding process has affirmed for me how important it is to examine the role of crisis - (and the perception of crisis) - in creating new imaginaries of what may be possible.

Threads

Thread One. *People will not generally change much until environmental catastrophes become frequent. Change will involve a shift in consciousness and awareness both driven by reactions to catastrophe and drawing on multi-sourced current knowledges about different*

ways to live. There will be a general rejection of the endless growth model of capitalism and neo-liberal capitalism in particular. While shifts toward brutal political tyranny are likely in response to famine and resource scarcity; equally likely, and probably occurring at the same time, are cultural and political shifts toward more collective, egalitarian, and environmentally aware ways of life.

Thread Two. *Taking better care of place strongly equates with taking better care of each other, both in how people behave and in the social, community and political systems they live by. People will live more communally, make decisions at the level of local community, and will more typically strive to give and participate in collective community endeavours rather than striving for personal gain. Financial / resource wealth inequality will be commonly seen as harmful and will be actively disliked and contested. An ethos of being in the world at the world's pace rather than doing to the world will be common.*

Thread Three. *People in the future will, as a common understanding, have a much greater sense of their interdependence with the environment and see themselves as connected parts of ecosystems not separate from them. This was also expressed as people physically living more simply while also being more educated and aware. People will be less individually self-interested and self-involved and more other and outer focused and aware. They will be happier and more content with what they have. This was also described as being poor in material goods but wealthy in relational connection. They will be good at having fun. They will live in communities that deliberately practice and value collective decision making. Giving will be a core value and being good at considering the needs of 'We' ahead of the needs of 'I' will be a respected ability. Satisfaction in life will come more from relationships and connection to place and people rather than striving for gain. People will generally feel a connection to place and*

value this. People will generally hold a sense of interdependence with and responsibility for the well-being of the global web of life.

Thread Four. *Glimpses of the above have been seen in many places, particularly amongst the young who do not believe in the current socio-economic systems we live by; and in social, environmental, cultural and political groups and movements that provide alternatives to late-modern consumer society. There is hope for the future in these glimpses and they are likely to operate as informing seeds of change for that future; the general wide-spread access to knowledge and ideas made possible by the internet will assist in spreading these seeds and new ways of thinking and being.*

Thread Five. *Our descendants will chastise us for why we did not act in time and why our lives were taken up with activities and aspirations that from their perspective seem meaningless and harmful. They may understand and forgive us.*

Further consideration of the coding results, tentative theoretical framing and links to literature will be undertaken in Chapter 6 which is given over to discussion.

CHAPTER SIX: BACKGROUND TO DISCUSSION

Inspirations For Storying the Data as Subject and Character

I am mindful that qualitative research always has the researcher's narrative central to the sense that is made of the material (Banister et al, 1994, p. 2). Arguably, I am constituting the data itself by creating a story about it (which, in part) emerges through the coding process undertaken in Chapter Five and comes to narrative fruition in the following chapter. I am also mindful that my own responses to the research data (and the similarities in respondent data to texts on community development and the hunter-gatherer characteristics that I will further describe), reflect a palimpsest laid down over significant time and embodying many encounters with place, people, and text. As such it is clearly a narrative construction. As several authors argue, when undertaking qualitative research, this rich layer of responses also needs to be understood as data in any attempt to make meaning from research (Andrews et al., 2013; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1997).

In my case, I have spent much of my life as a storyteller, with a storyteller's predilection to see character and plot arise spontaneously out of all sorts of apparently mundane encounters. As someone who also has a background in policy analysis exploring the impact of ideologically driven policies impacts on lived experience, this has particularly been the case when considering ideologies and their influence on mechanisms of intelligibility. Or put more simply, ideologies that encourage people to make sense of self, behaviour, other and world in alignment with those ideologies. As described, in my master's thesis I was particularly interested in the mechanisms of intelligibility subjects/people use to navigate passage through time via idealised – and politicised – norms of successful subjectivity and relationship with place and context. I am very influenced by governmentality frameworks which explore how

forms of social organisation seek to produce people in such ways that who they are, what they understand about themselves and what they decide to do reproduce the ideas, ideals, and goals of those social forms (Foucault, 1991; Kenkel, 2005; Rose, 1998, 1999). The respondent data, my coding of this data and my relationship with these texts suggests to me vivid tales of ideologies of self, other and place that are (for me) a productive story of subjectivity and how people might understand the appropriate and - (purportedly)- normal conduct of self through life.

A Narrative Approach to the Reification of Ideologies as Subjects

Aschoff (2015) described ideology as the inescapable set of parameters through which subjects negotiate life and self's trajectory through life. As Aschoff argued:

Ideology is the “descriptive vocabulary of day-to-day existence, through which people make rough sense of the social reality that they live and create from day to day.” But it is not, as philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek argues, something we can discover and remove from our field of vision, only to reveal the true, nonideological world. Ideology is the world itself, inhabiting and structuring all the spaces in which we live and think. (Aschoff, 2015, pp. 163–167)

The following discussion section of analysis will seek to explore the experience of subjectivating alignment with four ideologies; one of which (the future one) is of my design and drawn from my relationship with the writings of respondents of the research. The other three subjectivities represent reasonably strongly articulated cultural stories of character and how to conduct ‘self-in-life’. These three known cultural stories of character are: community

development, hunter-gatherer studies, and neo-liberalism. I will at times juxtapose attitudes, value positions, and ideologies to render the data starker in contrast.

The venue in which these four reifications of ideology-characters reside and dialogue in is my imagination: informed by a good deal of reading, thinking and discussion. Analytical rigour is reliant on my capacity to cleave as faithfully as possible to the large amount of material that has been written and spoken about the (three at the current time) ideologies. This material provides me with reasonably clear parameters regarding what passions, convictions, and opinions these ideologies (imagined as subjects) are likely to hold. Another reason I am using this admittedly unusual approach to analysis as a backdrop to discussion is because previous experience suggests to me that to understand an ideology it is best to try and imagine the lived experience and nature of a person who lives and breathes it. I can think of no better way of doing this than speaking of that imagining as a subject: a person, who lives and understands self, other and world according to those analects. As Apple (1990) suggested: “the first thing to ask about an ideology is not what is false about it, but what is true. What are its connections to lived experience” (p. 8). Regarding the neo-liberal ascendance, he goes on to add: “What has been accomplished has been a successful translation of an economic doctrine into the language of experience, moral imperative and common sense” (1990, p. 8).

As a range of authors have argued, various ideologies have been successful in creating and disseminating norms of subjectivity to which a proportion of populations have lived in at least some degree of subjectivated allegiance (Apple, 1991; Aschoff, 2015; Butler, 1997; Cushman, 1995; Foucault, 1988, 1991; Rose 1998, 1999). My approach of humanising ideologies in discussion is a logical narrative extension of this governmental notion of ideologies as constitutive of subject, both productive and reproductive in steering subject

conduct and mechanisms of intelligibility of the subject in passage through time, society, and environment. Developing a Gramscian (1971) position in a new age of media, Aschoff (2015) argued for the role of stories as ideological devices to maintain the social, political, and economic status quo. Aschoff asserted that the maintenance and reproduction of ideologies requires more than the promotion of political ideals – it also requires recipes for how to conduct the self. In a sense, as much as ideology is a political position, it is also a set of instructions for how to be, it is a prescriptive template for how best to be a successful human subjectivity. Aschoff was interested in ideological stories and how these stories are promoted. Aschoff puts forward the notion that encouraging people to adopt parameters for actively living an ideology requires storytelling prophets: people able to tell compelling and persuasive stories that support the truths of any given ideology and how-to live-in accordance with those truths. Aschoff identifies Oprah Winfrey as one such prophet of neo-liberal ideology. Oprah tells a wide range of stories. Commonly these are stories of individual determination, effort, and inner qualities overcoming hardship to create for themselves the successful lives of their dreams. What is absent from Oprah's stories is a structural analysis examining what it is that might create the sorts of hardships people need to overcome. In asserting the power of the individual self to obtain hoped for futures (seemingly irrespective of circumstance) Oprah (the storyteller) operates as a powerful mechanism of legitimation for the culture and ideal self of neo-liberalism.

What I find fascinating about such storytelling is that the narratives are seldom dry recitals of facts. Instead, they tend to offer a wide-ranging series of human exemplars. The stories personalise and give human face to the nature of individual character that a neo-liberal cultural regime requires to maintain its hegemonic grip. One could argue that these are the kinds of personal characteristics that enable thriving within a neo-liberal regime. However, the

unfortunate economic counter to an argument for attributes and effort equalling thriving is that no matter how fervent a personal belief a subject may have in the power and capacity of individual choice and will; the dry statistics suggest that for most people upward wealth mobility will remain a dream (Aschoff, 2015; Piketty, 2014; Rashbrooke, 2015).

As Aschoff argued, these inspirational stories of how to conduct subjectivity in alignment with neo-liberal ideology operate not to the benefit of the obedient individual, but rather to the benefit of the neo-liberal truth regime itself. As Aschoff asserts, Ideologies are never just political stories they are also stories (and usually contesting stories) about human nature. As I have briefly described, for this project I am imagining four subjects that arise – or can be created – from my relationship with text, description and a complex personal history and relationship with theory and literature.

Fragile Research

This research project is fragile research because by necessity it must use stories of the present to try and uncover future stories. The goal is to gain glimpses and understandings of something that does not yet exist using the only mechanism of view available; that of our present understandings. Metaphorically, it might be thought of as using old maps to seek for new territory or peering into mirrors hoping to see something other than a reflection of what we already know. For this fragile newness to emerge as something other than the confirmation of pre-existing epistemological certainties requires some deliberate suspension of the more ordinary modes of rendering enunciations into common-sense meaning. To accomplish this, some new strategies are required and that is why I use Bey's (1991) notion of a temporary autonomous zone (TAZ) as a personal thought backdrop that celebrates ephemera. Dialogically juxtaposing the data as imagined subjects against the kind of characters that might be imagined

inhabiting the complex discursive regimes of neo-liberalism, community development, and a range of character studies of hunter-gatherer societies, has proved a fruitful tool in taking the grounded theory coding process to new and interesting places. Exploring the coded data and five streams from the three positions offered by Guattari's (1989) challenge of the new needed braided ecologies of the mental, the social and the environmental offers interesting possibilities and some potential risks. In particular, the risk of crystallising what can only really be an ephemeral analysis into any degree of certainty of conclusion. I am then interested in the question of how singular enunciations can avoid being pulled into the rhetoric of justification for universalising metanarratives.

How Can Narratives be Respected According to their Own Terms of Reference?

“I am happy to speak, but the problem I worry about is it is your ears that will tell my story” (personal communication with a Pasifika woman asked to describe aspects of her life to a Palangi (European) audience (2000).

As stated, a commitment of this projects approach is to value the partial and local, and, while aiming for coherence, avoid the tendency for an over attachment to consistency to subjugate and silence the different voice. This commitment to inconsistency is important because the project seeks ways of being and doing in the world that are not yet ordinary; that exist only as potential; as partial and imaginary fragments. For the data this creates the risk of simply becoming a device for confirming pre-existing knowledge forms in the process of the data's reification as completed text. This is a genuine risk (in my opinion) given that a central aim of this project is to explore new notions of different modes of subjectivity. It would defeat the purpose of the project if all that occurred was for new reference points that might emerge to merely confirm pre-existing certainties. Following Guattari (1989) there is arguably a

tension between the demand of academia that a consistent narrative be produced against a series of partial and fractured statements whose value, I would assert is in the new points of reference that may emerge from them. My aim being that holding a cautious position of dissensus to consistency stands against the tendency of modernity to hold that nothing is to be understood on its own terms alone. I would argue, as did Guattari (1989) that the partial and temporary nature of singular emergences signals (within much of the framework of modern research practice) a deficit only correctable by the insertion of these emergences into a larger (often academic) narrative of meaning. The partial being then only valid when rendered into a larger permanency; or the coordinates of the local only comprehensible when mapped onto a larger, more universalising, text and the ephemeral only understood as being able to speak 'sensibly' when sequenced into a temporal narrative offering durability across legitimised truth regimes.

My personal use of Beys' (1991) notion of a TAZ in the discussion is intended as a thought mechanism to resist collapsing what can only be understood as the imaginary story of subjects living in an imagined future into any semblance of definitive conclusion. The whimsical discussion post-scriptum that uses the theatrical conceit of a salon of four imaginary characters in dialogue aims to extend into the mechanics of data analysis Bruner's (1986) assertion that research data is constituted solely in storied relationship. I am also extending the logics of the text analogy toward a position that makes overt that the material this thesis grapples with cannot be separated from my engagement with the material. The aim is for discussion to present a series of unfinished possibilities, of unfinished and unfinishable stories.

My hope in taking the overt position of humanising (from my own epistemological position) the data is that the reader, too, will be able to explicitly and transparently re-author the texts in their reading of them. My wish is not to persuade the reader of any argument or

position regarding the research, but rather, to create a context where the readers encounter with the material will allow the potential to produce a diversity of useful meanings. An additional argument for adopting the *odd* approach of refuting conclusion in discussion and creating speaking characters as a post scriptum of the data analysis is the potential alignment of doing so with Deleuze and Guattari's (1995) call for transparency about productive aesthetic preferences. As previously mentioned, they argued that all writings about subjects are acts of assertion expressing aesthetic preferences about subjectivity and that all such assertions are in consequence functionally productive and constitutive of subjectivity. Hence, to write about subjects is to unavoidably assert an aesthetic position with, potentially at least, subjectivating influence on the social performance of subjectivity. Hence, they argue all writings about subjects should be written in such ways that the author's aesthetic preferences are laid bare. My aim of resisting conclusion (and the creation of speaking characters) is, I argue, a creative way to make overt my aesthetic preferences. My thinking on the matter of creative dissensus and the nomadic practice of tracing creative lines of escape from oppressive truth regimes aligns with Guattari's (1989) work on the three braided ecologies of the mental, the social and the environmental. In this work, Guattari makes the call for a new aesthetic of the subject able to better resist the homogenising and commodifying effects of global capitalism.

Guattari argues that the risks are great if such new aesthetics of subjectivity do not emerge. He states in "Ecosophy the 3 ecologies": "there is at least a risk that there will be no more human history unless humanity undertakes a radical reconsideration of itself" (1989, p. 13). Other authors agree that the eco-challenges we face are not simply environmental but are to do with the nature and manner of conduct of the late modern self's relationship with self, other and place.

Citing again Lefebvre's use of Guattari's ideas to critique the impact of capitalism on the African experience of self, other and environment, Lefebvre speaks succinctly to the nature of the crisis and the loci of concern. "The 'environmental crisis' is not just humanity's relationship with nature that has gone wrong but also a crisis of human-human relations and a crisis of self" (Lefebvre, 2005, p. 42).

Following these notions of a needed new praxis of the subject; my intention in making meaning of the data collected is to hold closely to the notion of valuing enunciations for their own sake, to practise dissensus toward calls to delimit data in the direction of homogenising meta-narratives of the self and to use the intersection point of ecologies of the mental, social and environmental to consider what new possibilities and stories of the self may emerge. In attempting analysis using a persistently tentative tone followed with the post scriptum conceit of a theatre I have found what I consider a useful nomadic praxis. Such praxis aligns with both Deleuze and Guattari's (1977) notion of tracing creative lines of flight to the exterior of rigid strata of meaning and Belfrage and Hauf's (2017) call for an abductive and tentative tone. A tentative tone, a refusal to reach conclusion and a series of dialogues allows tensions, outrages, and moments of bemused silence to reveal creative partial possibilities for different modes of subjectivity.

Further Travels Towards Insurrections Not Revolutions

The temporary autonomous zone (TAZ) is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area - (of land, of time, of imagination) - and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/else-when, before the State can crush it. (Bey, 1991, p. 70)

In exploring possibilities for strengthening the partial and ephemeral voice; I am attracted to the writings of Hakim Bey (1991). Bey examined some hundreds of years of the histories of pirate utopias as what he describes as TAZs. These zones, often complete with (extraordinary for the times) egalitarian charters for conduct were sometimes ship based; but also occurred at the physical and political fringes of the efforts of the Western colonising powers to assert colonial authority. The citizens of such zones clearly understood that their residence was temporary and their charters for conduct recognised, and often celebrated, the temporary nature of their occupation. These piratical temporary citizens clearly understood that their very presence on the fringes of the so-called civilised world would quickly invite the disciplining and regulating forces of the colonising powers. Hence, their approach to communal life and conduct was profoundly driven by a knowledge that permanence offers no greater sweetness in life than the temporary; and, that the value of a moment is not to be judged by its endurance but by its quality of experience. The intriguing aspect of these zones for me as a researcher of the imaginary is the aesthetic position the denizens of these TAZs took of leveraging the partial and temporary nature of occupation into its own set of celebratory terms, meanings, and life practices. The very temporary nature of the zones (that externally signalled a need for regulation into a larger construction of meaning by the colonising forces of the day) was used by these rascally inhabitants as the means to construct utopias defined, in large part, by their ephemeral condition.

What I also find particularly useful in the notion of the TAZ is its deliberate refusal to conflate value with permanency. Bey's notion of the TAZ teases apart revolution from insurrection and advocates; not the revolutionary frontal assault on the monoliths of modern practice; but rather the nomadic insurrection, the temporary accosting of some aspect of oppressive late-modern truth forms. Creating a TAZ is a tactic to carve out an ephemeral space

from amongst the continually opening cracks revealed by a close examination of late-modern practice to allow some new and temporary form of freedom, that, by the nature of its temporary freedom, is fully aware that soon the monolith will shift and so with it the possibility of shelter in those particular temporary lacunae.

I like the idea of imaginary voices from the future being nomadic insurrectionists – unattached to holding a space for any longer than is required to speak some partial possibility before disappearance and a transformed re-emergence at the next likely spot. It is a voiced story that refuses reification into the permanent in favour of a position of always becoming. To my mind it is an extraordinarily useful nomadic framework to use in discussing and articulating what these voices from the future have to say. Deleuze and Guattari argued that the linguistic incapacity of rigid strata (or meaning-making truth regimes) to ever fully capture life's quixotic fluxing nature means lines of flight are continually revealed to the exterior of even the most monolithic strata. Deleuze and Guattari also argued that truth regimes (or what they would call rigid strata) are always inadequate to the task of fully capturing experience and it is this inadequacy that creates breaks, flux, ruptures, and tracks that lead to new possibilities of description. Nomadic practice as Deleuze and Guattari asserted, is the art of attention to points of rupture and the tracking of the creative lines of escape such ruptures reveal without grasping so hard to any new line as to force it to solidify into a new rigid strata or totalising truth regime.

The stories I encourage the data to tell (or that the data have encouraged me to tell) are attempts to ride such ruptures and cracks without holding too hard to any new possibilities that emerge. In a sense, I am aiming to avoid the way I analyse the data operating as a mechanism for crystallising newness into rigid meaning. In the instance of this research, nomadic practice involves holding conclusions lightly, being committed to a musing tone, refusing to seek

consistency, generosity toward incompatible positions and an attitude of conscious dissensus toward the pull of the academic discourse toward constituting the partial as inherently part of any universalising meta-narrative. The bulk of the discussion uses the conceit of four modes of subjectivity seen through Guattari's challenge of three braided ecologies. As a thought experiment, I also created an additional fictional 'salon dialogue' of debating characters as a post-discussion backdrop to data analysis. I found this an intriguing way to conceptually move some way toward the goal of nomadic practice. I owe this extremely useful notion of a theatre of the mind of contesting points of view to my partner Annette. One day after listening to me (once again trying to articulate my thinking), she laughingly suggested that given how real the subjects seemed to me that it was a pity I couldn't simply programme four androids and simply sit back and watch them squabble (Annette McKone, in conversation, 2016). So, in fictional form, that is exactly what I did!

As Bruner (1986) asserted regarding the text analogy⁸ as used in social research:

It is not that we initially have a body of data, the facts, and we then must construct a story or theory to account for them. Instead...the narrative structures we construct are

⁸ The text analogy was developed as a mechanism to make sense of the manner in which the ascription of meaning of an event or experience is able to survive across time. That is, experience is organised into meaning subsequent to the moment of experience and continues to be organised afresh in the light of new experience. The text analogy proposes that to be made into sense, experience must be storied and that these accounts or stories of experience can be considered as like texts around which people organise their stock of lived experiences. Hence the meaning of past events is determined by the current, or even future directed interpretation of a story of the past. People then interact around texts, or stories that create meaning and each new reading of the text or interaction with the text involves a new interpretation of the text and hence a rewriting of it (Bruner, 1986; Gergen, 1991, 1995; Geertz, 1986) (Kenkel, 2005, p.18).

not secondary narratives about data but primary narratives that establish what is to count as data. New narratives yield new vocabularies, syntax and meaning in our ethnographic accounts; they define what constitute the data of those accounts (p. 143).

Bruner's assertion that the data is that which is constructed and constituted in relationship, and that all encounters with text involved rewriting of those texts, fits with my aim that the work adopt some strategies (or attitudes) of dissensus to the tendency to create certainty.

Discovering The Research Results as Delightful Surprise

When I created the research questions, I expected responses about people's relationship with place. What I had not expected, and what came as a delightful surprise, was a great deal of material about the nature of the self/subject and how people might differently relate to each other in daily life and in the conduct of society. These were aspirational stories of character, personhood, and community. I also had not expected the emerging partial stories of character and personhood to seem so familiar to me. I realised that I had encountered similar stories before and in two places that I had not particularly expected to link with the research. The material resonated with, firstly, what is known about the character, morality, and ways of being together of hunter-gatherer groups (Bender, 2003; Boehm, 2012). These groups are often described as a window into deep time. In other words, they are living now as all our ancestors once lived. The second area of familiarity was community development (Ife, 2013). When I interrogated what I knew of New Zealand community development theory and practices for discourses of preferred personhood, another character story was revealed. This aspirational community development character story was instructive of self, other and environmental conduct and held some similarities to what we know of the kinds of 'character' members of hunter-gatherer groups aspire to be and aim for their children to be. In a sense, in the same way

that hunter-gatherer studies indicate an ideal of personhood (to which typically hunter-gatherers aspire) so, too, do the aspirations and ideals of community development reveal a story of character, and so, too do the aspirations and ideals of the future peoples described by the research respondents.

I realised that community development, hunter-gatherer character studies and imagined stories of a future self-drawn from respondent data (while unsurprisingly having differences) are also inhabited by powerful stories of how to be human that share some similarities. When considered as ideologies they sculpt instructive templates for the performance of subjectivity. The stories and instructive templates for selfhood drawn from neo-liberal theory and practice operate almost as a counter-story or negative template to the first three stories of self. As such, the neo-liberal story of self/subject is instructive and enlightening in the contrasts and mutual bewilderments it provides.

Background About Community Development and My Personal Involvement

For some years I have both taught community development theory and practice at a tertiary level and been involved in local community development initiatives. As a broad field, community development is not easy to characterise in any singular or universal manner. However, there are several shared principles, or characteristics that most proponents of community development would follow to a greater or lesser extent. The International Association for Community Development provides one limited definition:

Community development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and

empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings. (2016)

The following list of principles and approaches are drawn from the work of Jim Ife (2013) and I use them as community development teaching material:

1. Principle of connecting global and local; Recognizing that community is necessary for people to achieve their full humanity⁹; Possessing ways to analyse oppression and injustice;
2. Principles of ecological sustainability, balance, holism, diversity, equilibrium; Principles of social justice and human rights
3. Principles honouring change from below, bottom-up development and local knowledge; Centrality of Citizen participation/local democracy.
4. Principles of recognising the importance of integrity of process, cooperative empowerment and conscientisation.

What could be added to this is that community development does not exist in a political vacuum. In many ways in its current form in New Zealand it is both an act of resistance and response to the way that globalisation and late-modern capitalism have fractured and

⁹ One of the more attractive attributes of community development (in my opinion), is the way in which its practice speaks to the question of the balance between the actual potential for agency of the individual versus social forces/institutions which choose and act both upon and on behalf of sections of society. One of the aspects that seems to be inherent to community development practice and theory, (although I have not seen this much theorised), is that the individual subject is understood as possessing agency but primarily in relation to solidarity with other individuals thus forming a community able to respond from a locally informed position of choice toward broader social forces. The notion that community is necessary for people to achieve their full humanity expresses this concept that without a community of others our ability to choose and take action and our very humanity itself is diminished.

individuated communities. It is also a response to both the environmental devastation that accompanies free reign laissez-faire capitalism and the systematic dismantling of social welfare safety nets throughout the Western world. Community development in New Zealand tends (in my experience) to be underpinned by a structural analysis approach accompanied with an awareness of the relationship between the environment and community well-being. The passions and aspirations of community development workers tend (again, in my experience) to be driven by an awareness of injustice and inequality and an equally acute desire to assist communities to rediscover connection, belonging, solidarity and a sense of local voice having influence in the world in the face of shared troubles. For clarity, I am primarily limiting my descriptions of community development to my own experience and the writings of one exemplar and seminal author: Jim Ife (2013). He is a thinker, writer, and activist I greatly admire and for me, he captures the best of the spirit of community development.

Regarding character studies of hunter-gatherer communities, this has become an area of significant academic interest in part because intriguingly similarities in ideals of character and behaviour are evident in almost all the hundreds of communities that have been studied. The implication being that the similarities are inherent human characteristics that we may all potentially share and as such, these communities may have a great deal to teach us about the parameters of the nature of the self/subject, and human social and environmental conduct.

Some Characteristics of Community Development

When I consider community development as an ideology; that is as a lived set of beliefs and practices about social, individual, and environmental conduct, I notice strong themes of character (Ife, 2013). Using the conceit of considering these characteristics as a template for a subject, I might then describe the subject as follows:

Committed to an egalitarian approach to decision-making; acutely aware of the importance of belonging and social connection; valuing relationships; sensitive to power relations and committed to fomenting inclusive social structures that avoid dominating and oppressive behaviours; acutely aware of the interconnection between people and their environment; good at having fun and taking real pleasure out of collaborative work with others. While not denying individuality; holding that a collective (rather than individualised) view of what constitutes the normal and healthy sense of self is preferred.

Some Characteristics of Hunter-Gatherers

Characteristics of hunter-gatherers that emerge from the studies, and again, using the conceit of considering these characteristics as a template for a subjectivity, I might then describe the emerging subject as follows:

Aware of the interdependence between people and the environment; egalitarian and inclusive in terms of groups making decisions; good at having collective fun; acutely aware that belonging, and good relationships are critical to well-being and survival; socially humble when it comes to personal achievement; profoundly committed to sharing needed resources; acutely aware of others in the group and prone to spending a great deal of time talking about other people; warm and kind toward children with much time given over to inculcating moral behaviour. Behaviours that a hunter gatherer subject would consider immoral and socially dangerous include failing to share food (particularly meat), attempts to dominate others; self-aggrandisement, or excessive boasting about accomplishments (Boehm, 2012; Diamond, 2012; Tomasello, 2016).

As a counterpoint to these two stories of the self it is useful to consider the ideal character of what is sometimes called the neo-liberal subject (Rose, 1988,1999) As discussed in Chapter 3, these ideals of the subject have been widely promoted.

Some Characteristics of The Neo-Liberal Subject

This is a subject sometimes described as the result of a project (Rose, 1988,1999). This is an ideal of the self/subject described as both natural citizen and primary entrepreneurial creator of a purported utopia of independently minded, self-reliant, robustly self-interested individuals. These individuals connected by chosen interactions in a social and economic space (the market). Altruism is conceived as a function of self-interested behaviour in what is purported to be the natural world understood as a competitive field (Apple, 1991; Aschoff, 2015; Harvey, 2013; Kenkel, 2005). This is the subject and natural citizen of what Fukuyama (1992) described (post the collapse of the Soviet Union) as ‘the end of history’. Fukuyama (in retrospect perhaps rather naively) proposed an imagined neo-liberal and liberal democratic future epoch so perfect in its balance of market and democracy as to be able to permanently deliver all needs and function as an everlasting cornucopia for humanity. The neo-liberal subject might be thought of as:

...an autonomous chooser, highly individuated, self-interested with the loci for control, choice and causal responsibility for life outcome understood as internal rather than a matter of exterior circumstances or context. Understanding itself as an ongoing progressive self-improvement project the neo-liberal subject conceives of the self as choosing freely in every aspect other than refusing to make sense of the self as not in charge of its own destiny. The tautological loop of neo-liberal ideology of the self does

not easily allow for the possibility of life outcome being a function of exterior forces (Kenkel, 2005).

Thoughts

If I then take up Guattari's challenge of the three braided ecologies of the mental, the social, and the environmental¹⁰ as important for the articulation of new and needed modes of

¹⁰ Carroli offers the following somewhat complex explanation of the three ecologies and Guattari's hope for a radical transformation (2010, p. 3):

Mental ecology – drawing on ideas of the 'clinical session', he presents considerations of the pre-objectal and pre-personal, the fragment, the 'included middle'; radically decentre social struggle and ways of coming to one's own psyche; grasping points of rupture of denotation, connection and signification; promotion of innovatory practices; expansion of alternative experiences centred around a respect for singularity; continuous production of an autonomising subjectivity that can articulate itself appropriately in relation to the rest of society; agencies and dispositives that will simultaneously analyse and produce subjectivity.

Social ecology – concerns the development of affective and pragmatic cathexis in human groups of differing sizes; corresponds to a specifically qualitative reorganisations of primary subjectivity as it relates to mental ecology; favour processual semiotics (diagrammatic rather than iconic i.e. it can escape from itself to constitute discursive chains directly in touch with the referent); challenge to transition from mass media to post-media; reterritorialising the family; assemblages; group Eros principles.

Environmental ecology – anything is possible; national equilibriums will be increasingly reliant on human intervention e.g. regulation of carbon, machine ecology; much more than the simple defence of nature; creation of new living species; needs new stories of permanent recreation to replace the narrative of biblical genesis.

In summary, Carroli states:

"Rather than remaining subject, in periphery, to the seductive efficiency of economy competition, we must reappropriate Universes of value, so that processes of singularisation can rediscover their consistency. We need new social and aesthetic practices, new practices of the Self in relation to the other, to the foreign, the strange – a whole programme that seems far removed from current concerns. And yet, ultimately, we will only escape from the major crises of our era through the articulation of

- A nascent subjectivity
- A constantly mutating socius

subjectivity then possibilities arise. Can these three ecologies operate as terms of enquiry where the four imagined subjectivities interrogate each other and the texts and stories that have arisen from my research? Can these three ecologies operate as terms of reference to guide the discussion? Could they be interlocked terrains within which discussion might take place? Might they look for points of connection? Might they look for elements of the fantastic and different? Might they look for that which they adamantly oppose? or points of mutual non-comprehension? Places where dialogue falters?

As I have described, I am drawn to Deleuze and Guattari's (1977) suggestion that all monolithic structures of thought and ideology reveal their inadequacy of description to capture the quixotic and complex nature of lived experience. As argued, they suggest that no matter how large, or apparently universal in scope, all description is necessarily inadequate, and any close examination will always reveal cracks, flaws, ruptures, and these can then be traced to the exterior of any given monolithic truth structure. Undertaking this form of nomadic practice, this tracing of what the imprints of an in-adequate description create allows new possibilities of description to emerge. They describe this nomadic form of practice as "tracing creative lines of flight" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977).

Four Imagined Subjectivities within Linked Terrains

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- An environment in the process of being reinvented" (p. 45)

What follows are four imaginings of subjectivity considered through, firstly, the ecology of the mental, then the social and lastly, a broader merged discussion of the environmental. A range of literature is drawn on to support these narrative imaginings.

Ecologies Of the Mental: The Neo-Liberal Subject

When discussing freedom, Han (2017) pointed out that, under neo-liberal conditions, the individual subject is isolated, understanding her/his self as entrepreneur of her or his own fate with all relationships primarily transactional. Han argued this conception of freedom for the individual forms a subjectivating tyranny that does not allow an exteriority to the notion that the self can, and should, continually labour its way into stories of success primarily defined by acquisition. In alignment with Han, critical psychologist Papadopoulos (2004) argued that constitutive social institutions of late modernity seem to no longer act on subjects as separate individuals but rather act on them as if they were “assemblages of capacities” (p. 8). The discourse of self-hood then encouraged toward a view of personal identity as “bounded commodity” for success in the social and economic marketplace.

Under this discursive regime, the self/subject becomes a progressive enterprise of self-labour toward continual increased capacity to succeed in a purported competitive world. Han argued that freedom and happiness for the self become, not a function of friendship or connection but rather the self's relation to self in terms of movement toward measures of success. Han argued that prior to the neo-liberal hegemony, exploitation might have been considered a consequence of systemic and structural inequity which the individual or group could contest. This pre-neo-liberal political and social analysis allowed for the possibility of challenge and rebellion both individual and in solidarity with others against exploitative forces that diminished well-being or constrained life outcomes. Han argued that, under neo-liberal

conditions (that hold all life outcomes as a function of individual effort), this possibility of challenging external exploitation is removed from self-world view and is replaced by a discourse of self-exploitation. It is no longer the masters (or owners of means of production) that exploit us to their benefit; instead, we exploit ourselves in seeking benefit for self, and life outcomes become a measure of our ability and willingness to successfully (or not) exploit our own individual capacities. He makes a chilling point: “Now, under the neo-liberal regime of auto-exploitation, people are turning their aggression against themselves. This auto-aggressivity means that the exploited are not inclined to revolution so much as depression” (p. 6).

As both Hans and Papadopoulos argued (described in Chapter 3), under this mental regime, the subject is isolated. Perhaps understanding relationships with others and the physical world primarily in terms of what helps or hinders the entrepreneurialising of self as a success-focused project. This is a subject under the thrall of discourses of personal autonomy that site causation of life’s success or failure as a function of individual effort. As explored throughout the thesis, I argue that this story of the self is not one particularly well fitted to living in any degree of harmony with the environment and the community. What I would add to this (as a personal note) is my sadness at the pain experienced by so many young people (Kenkel, 2005) who have been inculcated with the view that success and failure is entirely to do with individual effort. Those who then find their lives less than a story of shining success are somewhat forced into postures of self-blame and loathing. In my view this is an agonising epidemic that is likely to affect more and more of the world’s populations as rhetoric’s of individual responsibility for success come in to ever-harsher conflict with the difficult physical and social realities explored throughout this thesis.

As described in earlier chapters, the ideas espoused by the Jefferson School (an American institute promoting libertarian and neo-liberal ideas) through Edith Packer (2004) (a psychologist) draw a very clear picture of the mental interiority of the successful neo-liberal subject. Packer defines the following values and attitudes as essential for individuals to function well in a free (neo-liberal) society.

A willingness on the part of the individual to accept responsibility for his own life; An acceptance that the self is unique and special; A belief that the self is worthy of good things and happiness and hence is entitled to seek after good things and happiness; An adventurous attitude that believes the world and reality to be attainable, comprehensible and conquerable; An understanding that the locus of control over events in one's life is internal not external. This means two things: current circumstances are understood to be a function of past choices – and, the individual is in control of the choices that determine their future; A respectful attitude to others that holds them to be more likely rational and decent rather than malicious. (p. 5)

Packer also stated that those who adhere to values that see the self as impoverished of choice – or who do not take full personal responsibility for their lives, are unfit to function in a free society and in need of psychological help (Kenkel, 2005, p. 54). She puts it eloquently in her statement: “The essential psychological requirement of a free society is the willingness on the part of the individual to accept responsibility for his life” (p. 4).

This view of the subject (perhaps because it is so oft-heard) can seem unremarkable and fits well with what (in describing the late-modern governing of self) Ian Parker (1999) described as the generosity of the psy-discourses in ‘giving themselves away everywhere’. By

this, Parker meant that the capitalist individualising and responsabilising nature of the psy-discourses and their story of how to conduct self-world-other are relentlessly unavoidable unless all contact with the late-modern world is somehow avoided.

Imagining A Meeting with This Subject

So, what would this subject be like if you were to meet her or him in the street and hold a conversation? I suspect he or she would seem very familiar and ordinary to most citizens of Western democracies. He or she would be likely to present as confident about their own abilities and not in the least shy about discussing their successes. These successes they would believe to be the appropriate reward for their own personal hard work. Very likely this person would be studying or engaged in some processes of self-improvement with a goal-orientated eye to doing even better in future. Their view of you would likely be somewhat informed by value assessments aiming to determine how you might hinder or assist their movement toward further personal success. Could you be a useful contact? Are you someone who would be good to know? If the subject was your work colleague, then very likely they would understand you as somewhat automatically a competitor for position or status. They would probably be very interested and sympathetic about anything you might have to say about your own efforts to improve yourself or attain success in the world. If, however you showed signs of blaming the system for your troubles or attributed your failure to attain success to circumstances outside of your control you would probably be dismissed as someone unwilling to take responsibility for their own life. Politically and socially, the subject would be opposed to the sorts of policies that are designed to redistribute resources to those in need. They will be a firm believer in the power of hard work and strategic thinking to overcome all odds and would be likely to regard most welfare recipients as losers and scroungers undeserving of assistance. Ownership would matter to the subject; the right for the individual to possess at an individual level everything from

property to their own body and destiny would be something that needed to be fiercely defended. While the subject might have a large network of friends and families, they would view themselves very much as independent with no need to be reliant on the assistance of others. As parents, they would very likely encourage their children to view themselves as special and unique and able to accomplish anything they put their minds to with enough hard work – the end goal of parenting being to launch into the world a young adult fully able to be independent with firm goals towards achieving success in life.

What I am describing here is not a particularly unusual story of personhood, I suspect we see aspects of it every day in social media, sites of education and amongst our own families and circle of friends. That said, it is in many ways a new story of how to be human and, as I have attempted to describe through the thesis, one that has been constituted at significant effort.

The Community Development Subject

There has not been much literature written about what manner of subjectivity inhabits the interstices of community development practice and thinking. That said, a good deal can be extrapolated from both the aspirations of community development and what it positions as abhorrent and needing to be challenged. What is continuously evident in Ife's (2013) work is a story of the self-lived-in engagement with others. In describing his work this has been characterised as taking the position that it is only in community that people are fully human. Rather than making sense of themselves as independent the subject would probably more likely relate to the self as interdependent.

As Ife stated in describing key principles of Community development:

At a general level, there are some community development principles that apply universally and can be seen to be necessary in any approach to community development, whatever the cultural, social or political context. These are the subjects of earlier chapters, namely: *the idea and experience of community as being necessary for people to achieve their full humanity* the principles of ecological sustainability, diversity, holism, balance, *interdependence* and so on the principles of social justice and human rights, including an analysis of oppression (e.g. class, gender, race/ethnicity) the principles of change from below, bottom-up development, valuing local knowledge and skills and so on, and the principles of the importance and integrity of process, consciousness-raising, empowerment, participation and cooperation (emphases added). (Ife, 2013, p. 472)

If I am to imagine a template for subjectivity, thought, and identity arising from community development theory and practice then that identity could be understood as primarily relational. There is no suggestion that individuality is not valued, however, individual autonomy is understood as achievable in connection with others rather than being an individuated function. The discourse of the self as an individuated autonomous chooser that saturates the neo-liberal subjectivity is less present, with a greater awareness that individual choice is all too often thoroughly constrained by circumstance. Ife continuously returns to the idea that empowerment (with what that implies for capacity for agency) is a function of collective solidarity not individual action. Choice, autonomy, and the capacity to control future events are understood as much more likely to be achievable by collectives of people in solidarity than individuals alone. The causal loci of control shift from the interiority of the 'I' toward the 'we'.

As Ife stated:

The Enlightenment defined humanity in terms of the autonomous human subject. The individual was at the centre of the Enlightenment world: it was individual achievement that was important and celebrated, it was the individual who was to be educated, fed, clothed and housed, it was the individual who was employed in industry, it was the individual -(usually a man) - who was paid for their labour, it was the individual who had a relationship with the state in the political philosophy of Hobbes and Locke, and it was the individual who had moral responsibility in the ethical world of Kant. *This individualism inevitably weakens more collective understandings of humanity and the human ideal, which are at the heart of our ideas of 'community'* [emphasis added].
(Ife, 2013, p. 2042)

This subjectivity is likely to hold a strong, conscious awareness of the impact of iniquitous social structures on individuals and community. Strongly politically orientated, the individual subject is continuously on the lookout for opportunities to establish solidarity with others in the face of shared troubles. Acutely aware of the global political and social movements such as globalisation and late-modern-capitalism that have fractured community, the subject is perhaps someone who could be understood as in part defined by what they resist.

Imagining The Subject

Where are you likely to meet this character? Perhaps at a union meeting? Perhaps at a community event considering some troubles or challenges faced by a group of people. How will they strike you? I suspect they will be interested in who you are, where you come from and what experiences and challenges you might have in common.

Understanding themselves as interdependent rather than independent they will be keen to establish a connection and very likely also keen to introduce you to other like-minded people. A consummate and intentional networker, this subject will be interested in what you have to offer, not in terms of their personal success, but rather as part of a collective move toward bettering people's situations. The subject is rather likely to be optimistic and hopeful in tone with a great belief that people working together can accomplish much. They will be hopeful about the agentive possibility for groups of people to create better futures for themselves and each other. They may strike you as overly earnest, and perhaps overly involved in the troubles of others. If you are someone whose life has collided with a set of difficult circumstances impacting many, then you will probably be very grateful for their earnest belief that collective struggle equals collective empowerment. This subject is a believer in local democracy and while likely to be well educated, informed (and even opinionated) will adopt a personal attitude of allowing a consensus opinion to emerge before action is taken. They are unlikely to be interested in being a dominant leader at a personal level and will perhaps take satisfaction in watching and assisting others into positions of temporary authority when communities face challenges. They are likely to regard you as someone with an automatic interest in the well-being of others if circumstances can be so arranged as to allow this natural (to them) human tendency to emerge. They are very likely to believe that a decent human society is one that takes care of its most vulnerable members and that we are all responsible for each other. Politically and socially, they will tend to lean toward a collectivist approach and are unlikely to be a big fan of excessive personal aggrandizement or the clumping of what they would see as the resources of the common into the hands of the few.

This is an interesting subjectivity to consider; it is a character perhaps characterised by consciously adopted strategies of resistance to a hyper individualized social and political order. A social and political order that finds offensive the belief that people are inherently communal in nature and that happiness and well-being are best accomplished by attendance to collective need rather than individual desire.

The Hunter-Gatherer Subjectivity

Boehm's (2012) undertook a meta-study of hunter gatherer character. Boehm studied anthropological writings about approximately 150 communities who lived in environments as diverse as Arctic, to tropical, to desert. These were (and are) communities characterised by a number of shared practical features: They are not reliant on agriculture as a food source but instead use hunting and gathering as primary sources of sustenance. Generally, they live in small groups of between 20 to 40, with usually about a third of the members being close relatives, with other members of the group being of the same culture but originating from neighbouring bands.

Typically, these groups are somewhat nomadic with seasonal movement to different sites dependent on food sources. Unlike agricultural societies who usually store grain at the least, usually these groups have little means of storing food long-term and are dependent on the catch or the gathering of the day for sustenance. All these groups have at times in their histories faced periods of shared privation and hardship.

One of the reasons that these groups are considered so significant in terms of study of character and lifestyle is that they represent a way of life that was ordinary for most of humanity between the time we assumed our current physical form (and suite of mental abilities) and the

beginnings of agriculture. This is a period Boehm estimates to be at a minimum, 35,000 years. Hence, studying these cultures is what might be described as a window into deep time. A way of seeing now who we perhaps all were once.

Characteristics shared by all the groups studied include an egalitarian social structure with a deep dislike of dominating or bullying behaviour. What Boehm describes as big-noting, boasting or self-aggrandizement are seen as potentially dangerous behaviours likely to lead to attempts to dominate others. Signs of egoistic self-promoting behaviour attract significant sanctions up to and including capital punishment for adults, with a great deal of parenting effort going into encouraging children to demonstrate personal humility and a capacity to share. An ability to work hard with others while demonstrating humility about personal achievement (such as a hunting success) are universally admired characteristics. The worst behaviours are selfishness, in particular, a failure to share meat which is a critical food source for many of these groups.

Citing a comment from an older member of a hunter-gatherer group talking about young hunters, Boehm (2012) stated:

When a young man kills much meat, he comes to think of himself as a chief or a big man, and he thinks of the rest of us as his servants or inferiors. We can't accept this. We refuse one who boasts, for someday his pride will make him kill somebody. So, we always speak of his meat as worthless. In this way we cool his heart and make him gentle. [Boehm goes on to add] Thus, even though the successful hunter's chest may be quietly swelling with pride, he'll shape his words very humbly, and his egalitarian

peers, all too ready to put him down with ridicule, will approve his self-effacement and respect him both as a hunter and as a person of humility. (p. 43)

Repeated selfish behaviour (such as refusing to share meat) again can lead to group sanctions including ostracising and leading up to (in the worst cases) capital punishment. While acutely aware of their interdependence, these subjects are also much taken up with attention to individual reputation. Gossiping about other group members is continuous and well-informed. Perhaps unsurprisingly the case with small groups of people living together in very close proximity over a lifetime. Boehm paints a very clear picture of strongly moral peoples much aware of their obligations to each other with a well-constructed internal sense of conscience buttressed by sophisticated processes of education, and efficient and effective group sanctions for individuals who abrogate the moral and behavioural codes of the group. While intergroup violence is not unheard of, interpersonal behaviour within groups tends toward the kind, warm and generous with an underbelly of fierce gossip. A great deal of pleasure is taken in communal activities such as sharing out and eating meat. The parenting style tends towards supportive and encouraging with physical punishment of children uncommon. Children are often encouraged (through storytelling and sometimes teasing) to consider a range of moral dilemmas to reinforce norms of selflessness and sharing and the personal and individual challenges that may be involved in living according to these norms.

As Boehm stated:

Salient are strictures to be generous both within the family and to group members who are not family. For nomadic modern hunter-gatherers who are strongly egalitarian, we may add being humble in demeanour and avoiding aggressive domination to their

particular list of desirables, along with being truthful with other group members, being cooperative and respectful of others, being fair in “business dealings,” and being pro-socially inclined in general. (p. 35)

Regarding how self/subject is made sense of in hunter-gatherer communities (describing an indigenous Australian group) Poirier (2005) described a complex and fundamentally relational notion of the individual as a nexus rather than a bounded individual. A self inextricably woven into and (perhaps conceived of) as constituted by relations with place, the non-human world, others, and ancestry:

The Aboriginal person is not thought to be “individual,” that is an indivisible and bounded unity, but is seen rather as a composite of intrinsic and reciprocal relationships among people, places, and ancestors; the person, human and non-human, in short, is a node within a nexus of relationships. These relationships are intrinsic rather than extrinsic and account for the individual and divisible quality of the person. (p. 119)

This is a very different view of the subject than the tightly bounded hyper-individualised, self-created project notion of the self of neo-liberalism, and distinctly different from the community development subject I have imagined in terms of the self inextricably bound to/constituted by relation with place, and nonhuman world and ancestry. The community development subject expressing what might be considered a passionate preference for the self as constituted in community rather than an intrinsic understanding that this is necessarily the case. I am interested in the resonance with Guittari’s (1989) oft-cited description of the subject as a nexus understood as an enfolded exteriority of social forces (that do not preclude the

possibility of agency); the difference perhaps being one of intimacy, with Guattari outlining a compelling case for a different view of the constitution of the subject, whereas Poirier describes a lived experience of rhizomal subjectivity.

Imagining Meeting the Subject

If we were to stray off the beaten agricultural path so far as to spend time with a hunter-gatherer subject, we would probably be first struck by their kindness and firm adherence to a generous moral code. Citing Leacock (1969) Boehms (2012) described the response of a hunter involved in the Canadian fur trade when questioned about the personal cost of sharing food with two other very hungry hunters encountered in the wilderness:

Leacock accompanies her informant Thomas on a hunting trip, and while they are far afield, they encounter two men, known to them slightly, who are very hungry. Thomas gives these acquaintances all of his flour and lard, and Leacock's quoted description makes clear that Thomas spoke considerable English:

“This meant returning to the post sooner than he had planned, thereby reducing his possible catch of furs. I probed to see whether there was some slight annoyance or reluctance involved, or at least some expectation of a return at some later date. This was one of the very rare times Thomas lost patience with me, and he said with deep, if suppressed anger, “suppose now, not to give them flour, lard—just dead inside.” More revealing than the incident itself were the finality of his tone and the inference of my utter inhumanity in raising questions about his action. (p. 219)

What seems apparent is that this is a story of a subject who would behave with integrity and generosity toward you, while very likely be quick to be appalled at behaviours indicating selfishness or unwillingness to behave generously to others. Boehm related another story of a researcher who lived for some years with an Inuit group who deeply offended the sensibilities of her hosts to the point of being socially avoided for some months by firstly expressing angry emotions, and secondly asserting a complaint to outsiders without first consulting the group as to whether this was appropriate. The point being that the overt expression of anger was seen as potentially leading to behaviours dangerous to the well-being of the group, and secondly that, while a complaint may have been justified, its expression by her as an individual rather than in solidarity with the group indicated a tendency to ride roughshod over the opinions of others, and to dominate and big-note herself. What I find striking about this story of the subject is the extent to which firstly norms of generosity, kindness and humility are so strongly internalised and expressed in behaviour toward others. And, secondly, the extent to which an abrogation of those norms is seen as a dangerous aberration needing firm and forceful management. This subject might also be confused or alarmed if you were to introduce yourself in ways that did not primarily reference relational connections but rather focused on yourself as an independent individual.

Respondent Voices as Subject

In considering the ecology of the mental as it emerges from the respondent data it is perhaps easiest to allow the final fruits of the coding process to speak somewhat for themselves and to then use individual respondent statements to scaffold the material. I have italicised sections of the threads that seem particularly salient. When considering Guattari's challenge of the need for new forms of subjectivity derived from braided new ecologies of the mental, social and environmental then it is in the respondent voices that I see the clearest conflation of the

three. It seems apparent that the stories emerging from the respondent data see these three ecologies as primarily coextensive.

Threads Revisited

Thread One

People will not generally change much until environmental catastrophes become frequent. Change will involve a shift in consciousness and awareness both driven by reactions to catastrophe and drawing on multi-sourced current knowledge's about different ways to live. There will be a general rejection of the endless growth model of capitalism and neo-liberal capitalism in particular. While shifts toward brutal political tyranny are likely in response to famine and resource scarcity; equally likely, and probably occurring at the same time, are cultural and political shifts toward more collective, egalitarian and environmentally aware ways of life.

Thread Two

Taking better care of place strongly equates with taking better care of each other, both in how people behave and in the social, community and political systems they live by. People will live more communally, make decisions at the level of local community, and will more typically strive to give and participate in collective community endeavours rather than striving for personal gain. Financial / resource wealth inequality will be commonly seen as harmful and will be actively disliked and contested. An ethos of being in the world at the world's pace rather than doing to the world will be common.

Thread Three

People in the future will, as a common understanding, have a much greater sense of their interdependence with the environment and see themselves as connected parts of ecosystems not separate from them. This was also expressed as people physically living more simply while also being more educated and aware. People will be less individually self-interested and self-involved and more other and outer focused and aware. They will be happier and more content with what they have. This was also described as being poor in material goods but wealthy in relational connection. They will be good at having fun. They will live in communities that deliberately practice and value collective decision making. Giving will be a core value and being good at considering the needs of 'We' ahead of the needs of 'I' will be a respected ability. Satisfaction in life will come more from relationships and connection to place and people rather than striving for gain. People will generally feel a connection to place and value this. People will generally hold a sense of interdependence with and responsibility for the well-being of the global web of life.

Thread Four

Glimpses of the above have been seen in many places, particularly amongst the young who do not believe in the current socio-economic systems we live by; and in social, environmental, cultural and political groups and movements that provide alternatives to late-modern consumer society. There is, I believe, hope for the future in these glimpses and they are likely to operate as informing seeds of change for that future; the general wide-spread access to knowledge and ideas made possible by the internet may assist in spreading these seeds and new ways of thinking and being.

Thread Five

Our descendants will chastise us for why we did not act in time and why our lives were taken up with activities and aspirations that from their perspective seem meaningless and harmful. They may understand and forgive us.

Quotations

What follows are a selection of direct quotes from the respondent data. I have italicised segments of the respondent answers that seem particularly salient to the ecology of the mental:

I imagine a future where our descendants don't live with the same detachment relationship to 'place' that we have now...that they see it as an extension of 'self'

They would be: - able to put their opinions to one side in place of what works for all - they would be willing to give up their need to defend themselves from the views of others -They would be able and willing to adopt a 'we' versus 'i' mentality -They would be able to seek fulfilment in contribution rather than in meeting immediate needs and satisfying wants.

How to be at peace with the world around them - not raging against it but operating within its limits: to have a conscious knowledge of their local ecology and the rhythms and processes that sustain them within it. This involves a degree of respect and the understanding that all things have sentience - not human sentience, but knowledge and value of their own kind. In this future I see a re-prioritisation of the things we already know, but don't seem to act on: that we are social, interconnected creatures, that we need each other, that community is both necessary and sufficient - again, this comes from an acceptance of place and pace that is vastly at odds with our current, global, fast

paced, consumer culture. We must learn to go slow, to be considered, kind and loving - to each other, and to the earth.

They might know that they are a part of the entire web of humanity from past to future and across the globe. They might be responsible for the integrity of this web in whatever ways they can.

...crises which force people out of a concern for the narrow self -Emergency: people knowing that if they do not take different actions and perspectives that there will be no escaping dire consequences -participation in education which stretches people to give up their right/wrong mentalities.

What a tough question. It pains me - but how could they not ask what we did to help halt the environmental catastrophe, in the ruins of which they will live, and why we didn't do more. *But I would hope that part of their philosophy would be one of acceptance and acknowledging that there is no going back, no matter how nice it would be to - anger being, in the words of the Bhudda, like taking poison and hoping someone else will die.* So perhaps they would have no questions, only understanding that what is done is done and that they will have to go forward with what they have.

That economic growth is not the driving force of a good life. They will have a far wider set of measures such as health, levels of participation, levels of creativity, environmental improvement and other measures of wellbeing. they will show they care about others in many different ways. *Giving in many different ways will be a core value. I could even imagine violence being rare.* Indigenous people's sovereignty will be recognised and celebrated. People won't experience war or economic exploitation or dispossession.

They might actually understand we are all just one living organism and be more aware of our impact on earth.

The interior mental world of those in the future who do better than we do now in living in reciprocally sustaining relationship with place is of course entirely a matter of speculation. I am intrigued that utopian as respondent answers are a strong theme that seems to emerge is that subjectivity at an individual level seems even more constituted by a social relationship and an interdependence with the environment than is apparent in the hunter-gatherer and community development subjectivities I have speculated about. What I find particularly fascinating about the respondent answers is the so-frequent focus on communal life as inherent to how individual subjectivity is constituted. The respondent data do seem to rather suggest that, as Fritz (1996) argued, the default response of peoples facing challenging times is to cherish community and the capacity for the individual subject to subsume itself (and perhaps re-discover itself) in a collective identity. While the worst crises threatened by coming environmental changes have not yet been experienced by much of the Western world this does somewhat suggest a pre-figurative response (Boggs,1977). Boggs argued for a political and social strategy of behaving *now* as if an egalitarian utopia had been already achieved. It is interesting to speculate (even from the limited data I have from a relatively small number of respondents) that rather than picturing a dystopian world of aggressive individual competition amongst peoples facing deeply challenging times; Instead, the vision is of the individual-self becoming somewhat smaller and operating in service to collective need. Arguably, the data can be read as suggesting that from the perception of most respondents, individual safety and well-being is to be found in the care and cherishing of the other. This aspect of the research results is all the more striking given that at no point in the research questions (or in the material I

provided as informational background) did I suggest that my interest was in the nature of community.

When Belfrage and Hauf's (2017) assertion is considered, that CGT might be characterised as a gentle dialogue between the real world and the discursive, a possibility seems to emerge: That is, that a possibility to be considered is that an inherent tendency of peoples facing threat is for the individual subject to consider ways of cherishing and strengthening collective bonds rather than simply striving for individual well-being. This does rather move away from a post-structural position as reality and the nature of the self as infinitely plastic and shows some fit with Gergen's (2015) notion that we are primarily relational in how our identities are constructed. While not ignoring the sculpting processes of social pressures, Boehm (2012) argued for an innate human capacity for morality. An inherent capacity for both shame and guilt accompanied by pleasure in successfully living according to the moral norms of the group as an evolved predisposition – a predisposition evolved through many thousands of years as offering the best reproductive survival strategy. Boehm made a compelling case, and the neo-liberal view of the self as self-interested and inherently competitive notwithstanding; it is hard to argue against what the research seems to indicate at this point: that in the face of shared threat groups of people do (and perhaps will) behave toward each other with a great deal of care and decency. As discussed earlier, I used the examples of the community development subject, and hunter-gatherer character studies because they seem to so clearly resonate with the image of the subject that was emerging from my research. My own opinion of the neo-liberal subject (as discussed in earlier chapters) is that this is an aberrant story of selfhood that has been promulgated and constructed via significant effort, to benefit a few only; and is not a particularly good fit with what is known of how people actually behave when facing real environmental challenge rather than the travails of late-modern capitalism.

After some discussion thoughts, the next section will move on to exploring ecologies of the social.

Discussion Thoughts on Mental Ecologies

Boehm (2012) argued an internalised self-reflective conscience and innate morality policed by the social group is natural to the human condition, this (to an extent) aligns with Gergen's (2015) assertion that the human condition is primarily a relational one. To recap, in his meta-study of more than a hundred hunter-gatherer communities, Boehm asserts that hunter-gatherers are a gossiping peoples much concerned with reputation. Sharing behaviour and a lack of bullying and self-aggrandising behaviours (confirmed by social reputation) operating as pro-survival traits for the group on whom individual survival depends – hence becoming, over thousands of generations, sought-after traits at a biological reproductive level. Boehm argued these traits became innate when people lived in small groups and (to an extent) continued through as biologically innate tendencies into subsequent agricultural communities. Boehm acknowledges more self-interested behavioural strategies do (somewhat) advantage peoples from large group agricultural societies able to create, maintain and essentially control an excess of stored food. That said, he made the point that these are relatively new ways of living when the length of human history is considered. In simple summary, those through our early histories that were unable to insufficiently restrain individual impulses of domination and self-interested behaviours (that cost the well-being of the social group) were somewhat weeded out of history. Mechanisms of social control varied from outright capital punishment for those perceived to be the most dangerous, to exile and more commonly, group chastisement. Accompanying these were typically strong regimes of storied morality instruction for young people accenting the wrongness of self-aggrandizement, failing to share, or bullying behaviours. Boehm's meta-study of hunter-gatherer communities indicates these are consistent

norms of behaviour and “aspired to” behaviour. Boehm argued for an intense dislike of selfish, bullying and dominating behaviours combined with a capacity for small groups to effectively chastise and restrain selfish-interested, self-aggrandising and non-sharing behaviours (and critically), the capacity for individuals to internalise these moral standards, as pro-survival attributes honed through the larger part of human history. The aspirations and stories of imagined subjectivity emerging from the respondent data also echo a shift toward sharing behaviours being praiseworthy and a refiguring of individual subjectivity such that care for collective need plays a significantly important role. If we are to consider the three subjectivities of hunter-gatherer studies, the more self-conscious aspirations of community development and the picture that emerges from respondent data, then the neo-liberal subjectivity stands in startling contrast.

Ecologies of the Social

The research data imagined as a subject perhaps speaks most directly to: ‘this is how society will be’ and, as previously stated, the data imagined as subject is the site where ecologies of the mental, social and environmental seem most actively coextensive. The other three subjects I imagine present a little more of a challenge when a social ecology is discussed. Hence, considering how the other three ideologies (imagined as subjects) make sense of, and relate to, society and the social sphere will necessarily rely on both imaginative extrapolation and literature that speaks (often tangentially) to the topic. There is not a great deal of literature that answers the question: ‘how do these ideologies understand society’? There is though, considerable possibility for beginning to sensibly answer the question by examining the aspirations, ideals, and actions toward individuals in society undertaken by neo-liberalism, community development, and hunter-gatherer cultures.

Neo-liberalism

Han made the bold statement: “As the entrepreneur of its own self, the neo-liberal subject has no capacity for relationships with others that might be free of purpose” (2017, p. 2). He, along with many critical authors (Apple, 1991; Harvey, 2013; Mayer, 2016; Saad-Filho & Johnston, 2005) argued that neo-liberal institutions (such as think-tanks) have put (and continue to put) considerable energy and resources into shifting both how individuals conceive of themselves and of how society is conceived of more generally. Along with other writers, the authors mentioned above might be best described as holding a position that is critical of neo-liberalism as a political and social philosophy. I am admittedly in this critical camp of thinkers. My own work (Kenkel, 2005) clearly indicated that children’s education underwent considerable re-purposing in a neo-liberal direction in promoting a vision (or ideal) of the self-in-society in the time frame between the early 1960s and the late 1990s. In my view, and as argued at the time, this re-purposing of education was deleterious to the well-being of a cohesive society. This deleterious impact became starkly evident to me when mission statements and other education literature from the 1960s and the late 1990s were compared against each other. I did this comparison with this question in mind: “what social capacities for collective action against collective troubles were enabled? or, constrained?” It is not hard to find authors who stand outside the paradigms of neo-liberalism and offer persuasive critiques of the deleterious impact of neo-liberalism on both society and how society is conceived of. What is considerably harder to find are authors from the interiority of the neo-liberal paradigm who firstly self-identify as neo-liberal, and secondly speak cogently to their understanding of society. In what follows I draw on both voices critical of neo-liberal theory and practice and the writings of authors and think tanks who are generally identified as pro the sorts of policies and practices typically identified as being within the neo-liberal camp. These are policies and

practices such as (to name a few) promoting the market and encouraging views of the self that promote individual responsibility and entrepreneurship while actively discouraging collectivist social practices such as unionism and comprehensive state welfare and health provision.

Hayek (1944, 1960) as cited by Boudreaux (2014) describes Hayek's vision of society as robustly interactive within a market framework of supply and demand driven by a vision of the individual as innately self-interested and in consequence of the actions of that self-interest creating a complex and flexible economy and society serving the well-being of all. As Boudreaux stated regarding the superiority of the market when compared to human planning and intervention:

What exactly is this social institution that coordinates the choices and actions of so many people, each with different slices of knowledge and information, into an overall pattern of activities that works so remarkably well? The answer is voluntary exchange, or markets that are based on private property rights and freedom of contract. That is, for individuals to be able to exchange in markets (sell and buy) they must feel confident in the security both of their own property and that of those they exchange with, as well as in the legal system (contracts) within which they operate. And the prices that emerge on these markets through thousands, even millions of exchanges, are the crucial signals that guide us every day to make those economic choices that result in the complex and highly productive economy that we too often take for granted. Market prices, as we'll see in the next section, guide each of us to act as if we know about—and as if we care about—the preferences and well-being of millions of strangers (p.10).

According to Boudreaux, Hayek did not posit an uncaring society, but rather entertained a vision of the social as happier and best served by unrestrained market activity. His view of the ideal individual within that society is someone who, through active attention to maximising their own individual well-being, inadvertently creates the conditions in which all can thrive. In exploring Hayek's work, Boudreaux makes an interesting distinction between appropriate behaviour toward the small group versus the large group. He suggests that while altruism and generosity are appropriate and (according to him) innate impulses within the smaller family group, such actions of generosity and altruism towards any larger group of unknown strangers are both unnatural and very likely to damage the capacity of a market-based society to deliver broader well-being. Referencing Hayek, Boudreaux argued that collectivist actions toward artificial and interventionist redistribution of goods and monies weaken both the market and the entrepreneurial capacity of those assisted. Again, referencing Hayek, Boudreaux is adamantly opposed to any policies or practices that do not have the individual as central but instead target collective well-being. A central tenet of this perspective on the social is the insistence on the rights of the individual to own property.

Boudreaux is an influential member of the Fraser institution, ranked amongst the top 20 of the world's most influential policy think tanks (McGann, 2021). What I personally find fascinating about his analysis of Hayek's work is that he is clearly not arguing for a crueller or more selfish world. Rather the arguments he developed have a moral tone pleading against any slippage from a market orientated economy and society. In ending his book, he asserts that movement toward placing the collective need ahead of the individual right to freely participate in the market and live in a world of robustly defended property rights presents a clear and present danger to the greater social well-being of humanity.

Arguing the case for the immorality of collectivist initiatives (such as American Medicare and the push for a minimum wage). Allison (2019) made the following points:

To win the battle of ideas, conservatives must fight on philosophical grounds, explaining why these policies are immoral. They must make the case based on ethics rather than economics because the latter is downstream from the former. It is only a matter of time before a purely economic or logical argument loses to a moral or emotional one. In practice this means explaining why the fundamental principle of collectivism underlying these socialist proposals is immoral: It violates the individual rights upon which societal progress and happiness are based. Collectivism is backed by compulsion, where one side wins and the other loses, rather than voluntary trade for mutual benefit. One of the most compelling moral arguments in favor of the free market is that it is the system most conducive to allowing people to pursue their dreams and creativity, which — for the overwhelming majority of people — manifest themselves through professional work. In work, this creative pursuit is known as entrepreneurship. It is responsible for raising human society and living standards. Yet it is possible only to the degree that markets are free. Why? Because in order to innovate — by definition — you must be free to disagree. (p. 1)

Allison is the former president of the Cato Institute, anecdotally described as one of the most influential think-tanks in the world.

What Would It Be Like to Live In This Social World of Neo-Liberalism?

Speaking personally, this section is hard to write imaginatively as so many of the notions I attempt to describe are the daily experience of my social experience through media,

fiction, and interactions with other members of society. The social norms of neo-liberalism are inescapable (in my opinion) and to speak from the ‘inside–outside’ presents a real challenge when it is not easy for me to encounter any social site without these norms being either actively promulgated or resisted in some fashion.

I suspect, to live happily in the social world of neo-liberalism is very much as life is lived today by many moderately affluent members of many Western societies. I imagine people would be proud of their own hard work and not shy of displaying the rewards they believe they have gained because of their hard work. As an individual in this society, you would be well connected to many other individuals and families who share a similar status to your own. You are likely to be kind and generous at a personal level and perhaps even involved in some form of charity giving. However, you, like almost everyone you know are likely to hold in some disdain those who are either less successful than you are, or who are not actively striving for their own betterment. Common memes that will likely circulate amongst your social group are stories of the unfair advantage given to persons from ethnic and minority groups who are not willing to take individual responsibility for undertaking the hard work and effort needed to succeed in a modern market society. Your cohort will be particularly annoyed by scholarships, grants, and employment policies that supposedly advantage those who have not personally worked for their own success. A discourse common in your social milieu will be the notion that unearned advantage as a result of government policy simply creates laziness, lack of motivation and promotes self-pity. As a social group, you will have little emotional resonance or empathy with notions of structural inequity as a consequence of class, colonisation and racism creating ongoing disadvantage. Ideas of inherited privilege as a consequence of being a member of the dominant group in society will particularly annoy you and your friends as this

will be seen to directly counter the fervent belief that individuals, flourish (or not) through their own efforts.

If by some chance you are someone who is not receiving significantly more than the average wage, you and your not-so-successful cohort are likely to be somewhat ashamed of yourselves and cite your lack of success in individual flaws that can be corrected with enough hard work. You will hear many exhortations to believe in yourself and that anybody can succeed with enough effort. Speculatively, and extending Han's (2017) argument; there will likely be an increased sense of painful dissonance for that sector of society struggling under worsening environmental conditions who are strongly influenced by the ever-present neo-liberal social messaging about individual success being primarily a function of individual effort. As Hans argued, under neo-liberal social conditions revolution becomes an impossibility whereas depression and self-blame become almost an inevitability. Again speculatively, this is likely to affect ever-broadening sectors of society in future as environmental and societal conditions worsen.

Community Development and The Social Ecology

As a broad ethos, community development promotes the empowerment of individuals and society through solidarity and shared effort (Ife, 2013). As Ife stated, full humanity is not achievable by individual effort but only in community and a recognition of interdependence. My own interpretation of Ife's work might suggest that he does not see the individual as the smallest divisible unit of humanity but instead the family and community. A strong theme that runs through community development literature (as exemplified by Ife) is that connected and consciously interdependent communities with a capacity to articulate common concerns and collectively resolve those concerns are the 'naturally' happiest social spaces. Again,

referencing Ife and a range of other community development theorists the construction of the social is primarily relational, sharing some commonalities with hunter-gatherer understandings that the dominant individual voice is less useful and less favoured than the voice of solidarity of experience and collectively developed understandings (Ife, 2017; Chile, 2007; Wright et al., 2011). This is sometimes phrased as a strong preference for solutions arising from below (local) rather than being imposed from above (distant). Typically, community development approaches draw on the principle of subsidiarity; that is, that recognition of problems and the development of solutions to those problems should happen as close as possible to where problems occur. The perceived necessity of a social justice perspective as an approach (and its frequent absence in policy and practice) is a thread that weaves through the community development social space.

What Might it Be Like to Live in A Community Development Ecology?

In writing to the question of what life might be like in a social ecology deeply influenced by a community development ethos, I am (admittedly) relying significantly more on my own experience than in other sections I have written to. A good deal of my professional and personal life is spent in these spaces; hence, it seems only sensible to use my own perspective as well as literature.

Experience suggests to me that one spends an awful lot of time going to meetings! And, that slow inclusive deliberation is favoured over the implementation of rapid-fire decisions or solutions. Community development often moves at the pace of the slowest in a social group. Generally, there is a great deal of care taken to make sure that no voice is left behind or excluded. In practice, this means a great deal of time spent validating lived experience and allowing both description and solution to arise because of a shared understanding of shared

travails (Ife, 2013). There is a particular kind of courtesy you might observe in a community development social space, a patience that aims to ensure that all voices are heard. Net-working and keeping abreast of useful contacts and other groups is constant. An effect of this is that while local and geographic communities have their own unique flavour, they are in continuous connection and relation with other groups. Interdependence within the local community is a socially sought norm, but this is not separate from connection with other local groups and initiatives. There is usually a keen willingness to learn from the experience of others, so the broader knowledge base of the local community group is held collectively with other communities.

Community development can be considered an activist space; holding a generally keen awareness of the ever-present inequities inherent to a world dominated by *laissez faire* capitalism and experiencing the current impacts of histories of dispossession and colonisation. There is usually a sense of co-extensive permeability with other like-minded social settings, so rather than being characterised by rigid boundaries, community development social spaces are somewhat fluid in their identity construction often maintaining strong allegiances with other groups around the world sharing similar histories and experiences. Speaking entirely from my own experience, there is often an optimistic hopeful tone in such community development social spaces that arises from a sense of shared purpose and shared capacity. As a very in-the-moment example; in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (and just prior to writing this section) I was in a Zoom community meeting discussing (amongst other things) the ongoing local need for better food security in our local area. The outcome was that we are exploring setting up a seed bank and seedling consortium controlled by local people in our community rather than by commercial purveyors of vegetable seeds. The discussion was wide-ranging, rich, optimistic in tone and drew on many other examples from both my country and around

the world. Covering (amongst many other things) questions of tenancy transience in a country that does not have particularly good laws to support long-term tenancy for renters. Options from other communities were explored, including known cooperatives that provide materials, practical support and advice for those in short-term tenancy arrangements to develop raised vegetable gardening beds on wheels that can be moved. I offer this rather personal to (my community) story as an example of the interdependent and optimistic tone that can develop when local communities face a shared trouble and begin the process of developing shared solutions.

Hunter-Gatherer Groups and Social Ecology

The hunter-gatherer world is irredeemably and unavoidably social and relational. As Boehm (2012), Poirier (2005) and Tomasello (2016) pointed out, the survival of the individual is inextricably linked to the well-being of the group. Hence, actions and behaviours that are seen to threaten the well-being of the group are ferociously policed, up to and including capital punishment. What accompanies this ferocious policing of adults is a great deal of attention to raising children in such ways that their internalised morality and outward behaviour fits with the moral and behavioural norms of the hunter-gatherer group. This would include (at the least) personal humility, a respectful and attentive demeanour with others in the group, personal generosity and the avoidance of dominating and self-aggrandising behaviours. As described, an unwillingness to share resources needed for the survival of the whole group (such as meat) is perhaps the worst character flaw attracting sanctions for repeat offenders up to and including death. The social world of the hunter-gatherer group also includes a great deal of conversation (gossip) about the behaviour of others in the group. Speculatively, in many late modern societies, it is quite possible for people to present one social face at the place of employment and yet behave quite differently behind the closed doors of their own home. In hunter-gatherer

societies there are no closed doors, there is very little opportunity to disguise character traits or behaviours (either praiseworthy or likely to attract social sanction) from the group. Gossipy verbal evaluation of each other's behavioural traits is constant. And, speculatively, this makes a great deal of sense when knowing the character of the other is likely to be a key factor in predicting how their behaviour will impact on the well-being of all. Poirier (2005) also pointed out that to a greater extent than most societies, in hunter-gather society the social as genesis of the self extends beyond the human world. The constitutive social context in which life takes place, and the human person emerges is a nexus of living human peoples, place, myth, species of revered tree or animal, ancestors, and the spirit world.

What Might It Be Like to Live in The Social Ecology of A Hunter-Gatherer Community?

Speaking as a citizen of a highly individuated society, I find it an imaginative struggle to speculate about what it must be like to be a true native denizen of this social ecology. I need to fall back on a less challenging imaginative task, that is, to imagine what it might be like for myself, or somebody else from my social milieu to engage with this different form of society. In doing so I use both speculative imaginings and literature.

Speaking personally, it seems appropriate to start with an anecdote. A friend and colleague related to me the experience of a New Zealand couple who spent a year living on a very small, very isolated Pacific Island with a comparatively tiny population. While technically not a hunter-gatherer community (as they were not nomadic, practised agriculture and had significant contact with the rest of the world), they shared some characteristics with hunter-gatherers in being a small group of people who are highly interdependent, and physically dependent on each other for daily survival in a reasonably harsh environment. My friend related the story of the couple being approached by an older respected member of the community with

firstly, an apology and secondly the earnest and heartfelt request to know what it was that the community had done to offend them.

The couple were deeply puzzled as they knew of no offence. After much cautious discussion they realised that some time earlier (during a discussion with each other while out strolling), they had walked past members of the local community without verbally or visually greeting or acknowledging their presence. This had caused great distress amongst the community and much discussion. The logical conclusion for this group being that the failure of guests to acknowledge and greet could only be in consequence of a powerful grievance requiring an apology. When I listened to this anecdote, I was much struck by the needed sensitivity to social minutiae necessary for small-group community well-being in an isolated and difficult environment (C. Moore, personal communication, 2018). I suspect that in hunter-gatherer communities worldwide, such sensitivity and thoughtfulness to the meaning of minutiae of social engagement would equally apply and that anyone parachuted in from a late modern Western society would be at constant risk of clumsy breaches of the needs of a delicately and carefully balanced social ecology.

To Speculate Further About Life in a Hunter-Gatherer Community

I suspect for a citizen of a late modern society with a strong sense of right to privacy and self-determined direction it might at times seem both stiflingly difficult due to lack of privacy and confinement in the network of obligations you would need to live within that supersede your desires as an individual. You might have a sense of being continuously watched and talked about and occasionally long for anonymity. You would probably be impressed at how much fun and humorous interaction people seem to have, even during times of what (for you) might be experienced as hardship (Boehm, 2012; Diamond, 2012; Lopez, 1986;

Tomasello, 2016). It might only become visible to you over time how acutely aware group members are of each other's states and moods. And the extent to which the use of ribaldry, humour and 'putting the best face forward' in difficult circumstances is both an admired and encouraged skill plus a strategy for maintaining group purpose and cohesion. New to the social ecology, you might find it personally challenging to be constantly reminded in ways subtle and unsubtle about behavioural flaws such as your expressing anger, failing to greet, or even appearing to boast. You might also find it difficult and constraining to operate within a web of obligations, not just to do with human peoples, but including local traditions of animus of place, ancestry, and the sanctity of certain other living creatures. You might also be humbled at the generosity shown towards yourself and begin to review your own life and history in terms of previous kindnesses and selfishness.

Respondent Voices, Social Ecology, and Initial Thoughts and Excitements

As previously described, at no point in the research-data gathering process was there mention of community. Questions and material provided revolved around place and new ways of being in relation to those places. Hence, it was with excitement and surprise that I saw overwhelmingly stories of the social and community as perhaps the most dominant narratives within the respondent voices. Two intertwined characteristics of these narratives appear frequently. Firstly, the reconfiguration of operations of power within the social, particularly in terms of how decisions are made and the reduction of authority of hegemonic regimes of capitalism and neo-liberalism. Secondly, a resizing of subjectivity toward a more rhizomal or co-extensive relation with both the social and the environment. Belonging and connection that traverse the social and environmental seeming to be central motifs of these imagined societies of the future. A third strand could be described as a re-moralisation of the subject within the social ecology of the future. A re-moralisation involving a social cathexis toward the virtues

and pleasures of connection, giving and generosity and away from enjoyment of personal ownership or achievement. It was in the data from the respondent voices that I saw the most coextensive ecological intertwining and braiding of the social, the mental and the environmental. As described in the coding process, a social story of a much more collective approach to subjectivity and an interdependent and coextensive relationship with place characterised a great deal of the material. The views of society expressed in respondent data fits clearly with Fritz's (1996) work exploring community response to disaster and catastrophe as creating new recognitions of the value of connection, mutual support, solidarity and a valorising of collective wellbeing (1996). In considering the ecology of the social indicated by the respondent data it is perhaps useful to briefly return to the coding process. Albeit, at some risk of forcing the data if I consider Sub-Code C (The Anti's – things that are abhorred, cause the current problems and will fall away as change happens) and, Sub-Code D (The future looking back at us) then what emerges is a strong societal moral story of repulsion toward attitudes of selfishness and self-aggrandizement.

Speculatively, future societies may praise and encourage generosity, kindness, and ability to work well with others as virtues. Conversely, selfishness, attempts to be socially dominant or return to non-local decision-making approaches may be understood as the new character flaws. Again, speculatively, just as under the social conditions in which hunter-gatherer groups survive, the future policing and management of these character flaws could possibly be harsh. Quite some number of the respondents indicated that future societies would live with a strong and outraged memory of what our generations have bequeathed to them. Again speculatively, it would be surprising if a degree of guarding against the re-emergence of the sorts of social traits those in future might understand to have so harshly damaged their world did not form a feature of the ecologies of future societies. Moving back to Belfrage and

Hauf's (2017) call for a dialectic between physical realities and the discursive production of meaning, it seems important to think about, not just the environmental conditions our descendants are likely to inherit, but also, what has been speculated about what socio/political forms theorists have predicted for the future. These of course will not be singular but rather likely to represent a range of forms fashioned by nation states and other institutions in response to some degree of ecological and societal collapse. One theorist, (Neale, 2019), suggested that in response to environmental breakdown a new brutality of fascism will emerge centred around nation states to maintain the authority, control, and lifestyles of their leaders. Other theorists (such as Fritz, 1996) suggest a new valuing of connection, solidarity, and interdependent support by small-scale local communities in the face of catastrophe. In different geopolitical circumstances both seem likely and perhaps may occur co-extensively. Citing my own work exploring the roles of social work and community development in the future I sound a note of caution:

In considering a future of societal and ecological collapse to an extent which we do not yet know, I would imagine, (and that is all anyone can do at this point), that a range of possibilities will coexist. Firstly, there will undoubtedly be massive movement of population from areas insufficiently resourced to support their populations, and this is likely to involve a convulsion of warfare and struggle globally. Secondly, it seems very likely there will also be well defended technological enclaves that support the descendants / recipients of those who have benefited from the last 30 years of neo-liberal policies. Thirdly, it seems quite possible that there will be many communities who operate with a large degree of autonomous self-sufficiency subsequent to state partial or complete collapse. Fourthly, there also exists the

possibility of tyrannical governmental forms with new forms of imposed inequality (Kenkel, 2020, p. 13)

Speculating About the Social Ecology of The Future

How might it be different to live amongst these kinds of future community that may need to be responsive to diverse geo-political situations? Unlike the imagined hunter-gatherer and community development subjectivities there seems a more conscious awareness of the impacts and risks of past actions and ideologies. Speculatively, and as explored through the coding process, there may be a strong sense of an aberrant history and the need to survive amongst the physical and social detritus of past mistakes. The forms of moral codes driving hunter-gatherer communities toward collective survival, which in some senses this story of the future social ecology resemble, may be also overlaid with a brutal sense of histories wanting to be never repeated. Again, speculatively, I am not sure that the current zeitgeist of the West is much attuned to the possibility of future social groups inhabited by a deep anger and sense of shame and regret for the actions of their ancestors. Certainly, this is a metaphorical theme somewhat inherent to the Judaeo-Christian tradition of a fall from grace, but, in this instance, we might begin to imagine societies where this fall from grace is not metaphorical but instead the physicalised experience of life in environments once opulent and then become ruthless and harsh. I do not think that the discursively imagined ecologies of the social in the future can be separated from the harsh realities that hard science data indicate they will take place in. Belfrage and Hauf's (2017) call for a dialectic between discursive possibilities for societies against physical realities whose challenges we can only imagine seem particularly apropos in considering the social ecologies of the future.

What follows are accented/italicised sections of the five threads that speak to possible new social ecologies:

Threads

Thread One

People will not generally change much until environmental catastrophes become frequent. Change will involve a shift in consciousness and awareness both driven by reactions to catastrophe and drawing on multi-sourced current knowledges about different ways to live. There will be a general rejection of the endless growth model of capitalism and neo-liberal capitalism in particular. While shifts toward brutal political tyranny are likely in response to famine and resource scarcity; equally likely, and probably occurring at the same time, are cultural and political shifts toward more collective, egalitarian and environmentally aware ways of life. (My emphases)

Thread Two

Taking better care of place strongly equates with taking better care of each other, both in how people behave and in the social, community and political systems they live by. People will live more communally, make decisions at the level of local community, and will more typically strive to give and participate in collective community endeavours rather than striving for personal gain. Financial / resource wealth inequality will be commonly seen as harmful and will be actively disliked and contested. An ethos of being in the world at the world's pace rather than doing to the world will be common. (My emphases)

Thread Three

People in the future will, as a common understanding, have a much greater sense of their interdependence with the environment and see themselves as connected parts of ecosystems not separate from them. This was also expressed as people physically living more simply while also being more educated and aware. People will be less individually self-interested and self-involved and more other and outer focused and aware. They will be happier and more content with what they have. This was also described as being poor in material goods but wealthy in relational connection. They will be good at having fun. They will live in communities that deliberately practice and value collective decision making. Giving will be a core value and being good at considering the needs of 'We' ahead of the needs of 'I' will be a respected ability. Satisfaction in life will come more from relationships and connection to place and people rather than striving for gain. People will generally feel a connection to place and value this. People will generally hold a sense of interdependence with and responsibility for the well-being of the global web of life. (My emphases)

Thread Four

Glimpses of the above have been seen in many places, particularly amongst the young who do not believe in the current socio-economic systems we live by; *and in social, environmental, cultural and political groups and movements that provide alternatives to late-modern consumer society.* There is hope for the future in these glimpses and they are likely to operate as informing seeds of change for that future; the general wide-spread access to knowledge and ideas made possible by the internet will assist in spreading these seeds and new ways of thinking and being. (My emphases)

Thread Five

Our descendants will chastise us for why we did not act in time and why our lives were taken up with activities and aspirations that from their perspective seem meaningless and harmful.

They may understand and forgive us.

Raw Responses

The following are extracts from the raw respondent data that seem supportive of the notion of a very different ecological praxis of society, the individual subject and relationship with place I have italicised sections that seem particularly salient:

Petroleum restrictions/limits/lack and corporate suffocation of alternative fuel for mobility; realisation that living really locally is ok; growing more food at home; less preoccupation with earning lots and getting ahead financially - and the structures that allowed that kind of 'big living will be 1. restricted to a power grabbing elite, and 2. will be seen as a waste of a life.

The collapse of capitalism and patriarchy which together subjugate and oppose the people allows for the redistribution of resources...each according to their abilities and each according to their need.

How to respectfully and collectively making decisions and use power while reducing privilege and recognising that being the majority isn't the same as being right.

Groups which are finding more subtle and nuanced ways to "do" consensus.

That economic growth is not the driving force of a good life. They will have a far wider set of measures such as health, levels of participation, levels of creativity,

environmental improvement and other measures of wellbeing. they will show they care about others in many different ways. *Giving in many different ways will be a core value.* I could even imagine violence being rare. Indigenous people's sovereignty will be recognised and celebrated. People won't experience war or economic exploitation or dispossession.

They might know that appreciating and utilizing what the close environment makes available to them is what life is about. *This would include finding satisfaction through engaging in relationships with those people in close proximity and working together and using each persons strengths for the common good.* They would know that the reason that each person is the way they are simply due to luck and not due to some birth right that makes them better or worse than anyone else. This would mean that people are not born to have more or less than others but rather to work together and with their environment in order to make a sustainable and satisfying life for all. Even though everybody has different qualities people would acknowledge that they are still equal in importance to everyone else. *This would mean that any exploitation of another or the environment would be experienced as an exploitation of themselves and therefore not in the value system that people carried and acted upon.*

History shows us that people come together in this way in times of crisis e.g., war. I would therefore think that the only reason people might reached these ways of knowing and being would be due *to a major and long enough lasting crisis, which brought people to the brink of death, that they drew together with shared values.*

They will know that everything on this planet is connected and comes and returns to the same energy. *They will no longer be concerned for money and the accumulation of wealth/things. Instead they will endeavour to improve themselves and others as one collective.*

That it's possible and vital to progress in terms of technology and scientific advancement - *but if all of the power is concentrated in the 'hands of a few' - self interest on a massive scale is a risk to all aspects of human/planetary survival. As a result of near and real disasters because of this, new systems have been put in place that straddle the world and enable vast numbers of people in all social economic sectors to contribute to debates and decision making that no longer 'destroy and take' but help keep balance - distributing wealth and debt more equitably.* Our descendants know that this is their responsibility.

Wars, resulting in massive expenditure, death and movement of refugee people around the world became unsustainable. There was a series of global financial collapse. In a climate of worldwide and extreme concern, enough of the powerful people began coming up with alternatives and listened to others ideas/plans for human/planetary survival. *The ordinary people now had some forms of voice and control. Lives became at the same time, simpler and more sophisticated - all lives became geared towards developing emotional intelligence with a strong focus on sustainability for all.* Within generations, this attitude was embedded in human cultures and normal.

They would be:

– able to put their opinions to one side in place of what works for all –willing to give up their need to defend themselves from the views of others – able and willing to adopt a 'We' versus I' mentality – able to seek fulfilment in contribution rather than in meeting immediate needs and satisfying wants -understand that crises force people out of a concern for the narrow self –know that if they do not take different actions and perspectives that there will be no escaping dire consequences –participate in education which stretches people to give up their right/wrong mentalities.

How to be at peace with the world around them – not raging against it, but operating within its limits: to have a conscious knowledge of their local ecology and the rhythms and processes that sustain them within it. This involves a degree of respect and the understanding that all things have sentience – not human sentience, but knowledge and value of their own kind. *In this future I see a re-prioritisation of the things we already know, but don't seem to act on: that we are social, interconnected creatures, that we need each other, that community is both necessary and sufficient - again, this comes from an acceptance of place and pace that is vastly at odds with our current, global, fast paced, consumer culture.* We must learn to go slow, to be considered, kind and loving - to each other, and to the earth.

I envision a slow, insidious collapse of capitalism, perhaps involving a degree of calamity that it is not easy to consider - but one that perhaps may be necessary in the transition to a new world. In this process of collapse, the growth of seeds planted many years ago: permaculture, worker cooperatives, transition towns, eco villages etc - places exploring this new relationship with nature and each other. *So what will have happened? People will, in increasing numbers, have lost faith with the old/existing*

narrative of society's progress and begun to seek out alternatives - with the resonance of these growing stronger as more and more of the things we have previously assumed to be true are revealed for the illusions they are. There is no telling the future, such a transition could take many forms, some far uglier than others. In my efforts and optimism I hope to avoid the worst of these, a slow descent over a sudden drop and the huge human and environmental cost it would take.

Charles Eisenstein writes incredibly eloquently about this transition in his book: *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Knows is Possible - and there are many places where this consciousness is on the rise, including but not limited to: the Transition Towns movement; eco villages / permaculture practitioners, village cooperatives such as Marinaleda in Spain (and many others in Italy, Portugal and Spain - places where the decline of capitalism is further progressed and the "need" is more apparent). Also of interest are the developments in Bolivia and Peru and their constitutional recognition of the rights of nature and the established goal of buen vivir or living well - over living better. So in short, there are many glimpses of these ways of knowing and being, in the pockets of indigenous wisdom that have survived colonialism, in the efforts of those already feeling the pinch of collapse and in the efforts of those anticipating it. These groups are pioneers, laying the path for others to follow. Their resonance will only increase.*

They will know that everything is connected and that everything they do ultimately impacts our collective wellbeing for better or worse. Because they understand this, they will perceive that it is their responsibility to be good custodians of the world. They will take pride in improving our collective wellbeing by their actions, and actions that

decrease our collective wellbeing will be socially unacceptable. Their focus will not be on consumption and competition but on making the most of life together. They will be on average much happier than we are now because they will understand that accumulating money and things don't create happiness, rather supporting each other and making time to enjoy each other's company, learning and creating will make them happy.

There will have been a large cultural shift (which has already started). *More and more people will realise that the dominant current way of living (massive consumption, working really hard and competing to support said massive consumption, creating huge inequality by concentrating wealth into the hands of a few, while destroying the wellbeing of our place) is not creating wellbeing for most people.* By trying new things that their friends have discovered and shared, they will discover what's really important to them, and change their behaviour accordingly. As this grassroots cultural shift grows, it will influence what is portrayed in popular media, which will increase the spread of the new culture until it replaces the current norms.

That we are all interdependent on the planet and each other. That there is joy and beauty in variation. That limitless growth is impossible and destructive. That there is a difference between liberation and choice.

They might know that they are a part of the entire web of humanity from past to future and across the globe. They might be responsible for the integrity of this web in whatever ways they can.

Ecologies Of the Environment and Moving into Final Discussion

In what follows, rather than separating stories of subjectivity and their relation to ecologies of the environment I will, instead, draw on what seems the most disparate of positions and most striking of similarities to allow tentative speculations to emerge from the collisions of the imagined discursive and the extra discursive realities the future seems likely to bring.

Property and Ownership

In discussing what environmental discursive possibilities might emerge from the dialogue between physical reality and the discursive it is (arguably) important to bring John Locke back into the picture. As CGT asserts (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017), a key component to making sense of data is the critical theory recognition that interactions take place within an unequal playing field. A field characterised by iniquitous relationships and structured frames of reference (usually backed by force of law) that advantage some to the disadvantage of others. The history of modernity and colonisation in much of the world is one of a massive transfer of control of land, water, and resources. This transfer generally from the hands of societies who might be characterised as having a collective relation of belonging to place (Noisecat, 2017) to societies with enforceable governmental structures constituting place and resources as individually and (corporate) ownable property (Locke, 2010; Pilon, 2017). Hence, this physical and legally enforced reality forms a necessary backdrop to any discussion of what in future may emerge in terms of new ecologies of the environment. John Locke writing in 1679 AD argued for a series of natural rights: life and self-preservation; liberty, understood as the natural ownership of one's own self and person. And lastly, property: that which is acquired through labour by the individual from the commons, or natural world. The role of government is primarily the protection of property rights as the essential underpinnings of individual life and

liberty (Locke, 2010). In my opinion, in most recent discussions of neo-liberalism what is perhaps given the least critical attention is this initial core concept of property ownership as the bedrock foundation upon which the ideological apparatus is built. A relatively small number of authors do identify the hegemonic and normative role that the right to the ownership of property plays in our current (and likely) future environmental predicaments (Bender, 2003; Jamail, 2019; Naess, 2009; Noisecat, 2017; R. Smith 2013).

An argument in favour of a 21st century interpretation of Locke's principles is offered by Pilon. Pilon is writing in the influential Cato Institute's Handbook for Policy Makers 8th edition. Pilon's argument makes clear the absolute centrality of the right to property ownership for the function of society's operating under capitalist conditions:

Property: The Foundation of All Rights: It is no accident that a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to justice for all protects property rights. Property is the foundation of every right we have, including the right to be free. Every right claim, after all, is a claim to something—either a defensive claim to keep what one is: even Property Rights and the Constitution holding or an offensive claim to something someone else is holding. John Locke, the philosophical father of the American Revolution and the inspiration for Thomas Jefferson when he drafted the Declaration of Independence, stated the issue simply: “Lives, Liberties, and Estates, which I call by the general Name, Property.” And James Madison, the principal author of the Constitution, echoed those thoughts when he wrote, “as a man is said to have a right to his property, he may be equally said to have a property in his rights.” Much moral and legal confusion would be avoided if we understood that all of our rights—all of the things to which we are “entitled”—can be reduced to property. That would enable

us to separate genuine rights— things to which we hold title—from specious “rights”—things to which other people hold title, which we may want for ourselves. It was the genius of the old common law, grounded in reason and custom, that it grasped that point. And the common law judges understood a pair of corollaries as well: property, broadly conceived, separates one individual from another; and individuals are independent or free to the extent that they have sole or exclusive dominion over what they hold. Indeed, Americans go to work every day to acquire property just so they can be independent. (2017, pp. 174–175)

As described earlier, the libertarian American Cato Institute is understood to be one the world’s most influential think-tanks, they are passionate advocates for the rights of the individual and the moral and physical dangers of any form of collectivism (Allison, 2019). I include the ideas of Locke because the current geopolitical system of economic and social governance relies heavily on the right of ownership as cornerstone to a capitalist global market. As argued throughout this work, global capitalism and its latest iteration, neo-liberalism, has not provided a cornucopia of well-being to all but has rather placed us in the current position of facing the increasing likelihood of global societal and environmental collapse. Examining the role of a global shift toward the propertied commodification of land and the concomitant environmental predicaments we face; Julian Brave NoiseCat, a Canadian indigenous writer of the Tsq’escenemc Secwepemc people makes the following statement in a short but powerful piece written for The Guardian:

While indigenous values, beliefs and practices are as diverse as indigenous people themselves, they find common roots in a relationship to land and water radically different from the notion of property. For indigenous people, land and water are

regarded as sacred, living relatives, ancestors, places of origin or any combination of the above. (Noisecat, 2017. p.1)

The epistemological distance between the positions espoused by Noisecat and Pilon is large. Such a gulf of subjective ecologies of the environment are not just representative of very different relations between ecologies of the mental and social and environment but also reflect a gulf of differences of power and relative influence. As many authors point out, ownership and control of the world's resources over the last thirty years has undergone a condensing process with more and more of the world resources owned by smaller and smaller numbers of people. Needless to say, these 'owners' of the world resources are not hunter-gatherer communities, nor I imagine are they those groupings that might describe themselves as community developers (Harvey, 2013; Lu, 2018; Mayer, 2016; OXFAM, 2018; Pickett & Wilson, 2009; Pikety & Goldhammer, 2014; Rashbrooke, 2015; R. Smith, 2013). Instead, typically those in the very top brackets of global wealth and property ownership are the descendants of those already privileged by a capitalist society profoundly wedded to the sanctity of right to ownership of property and actively hostile to the notion that collective well-being is best served by collective action (Allison, 2019; Mayer, 2016). Amongst this kind of disparity of both ideologies of the subject and control of physical resources and the global levers of power there seems little likelihood of dialogues of mutuality and respect. Using Belfrage and Hauf's (2017) notion of a dialectic between the political and physical realities and discursive pathways and possibilities that may emerge, what seems more likely than a revolution of subjectivity is instead more akin to Beys' (1991) notion of a series of TAZs of discursive insurrections. Following the stories inherent to the respondent data I can imagine a series of temporary and partial new stories of new possibilities for subjectivity across the braided landscapes of the mental, the social, and the environmental. Partial

insurrectional stories operating within a terrain still overwhelmingly dominated by support for individual property rights as unassailable social norm. The tension between Neale's (2019) vision of a new crystallisation of state fascist power and Fritz's (1996) vision of communities celebrating collectively and in solidarity perhaps begins to capture the sorts of fractured political and sociological landscapes our descendants are likely to necessarily inhabit and need to manage.

Many of the respondent voices imagine such insurrections taken to a wistful, imagined, happy fruition. In considering community development in speculating about subjectivities of the environment there is not extensive discussion in the literature of the disestablishment of property ownership (Ife, 2013). However, a consistent theme that runs through the literature (and my imaginings) of what nature of subjectivity could be constituted by this partially formed ideology is the frequent iteration of a desire for control of local resources to be returned into the hands of local peoples. Alongside this is the recognition that aspirations for a more socially just and equitable society will wither without attention to the needs of the environment both locally and globally.

Within the respondent data, the coding's (and my fantasy of subjectivities that arise from these) there is also not a great deal of direct talk about a movement away from ownership of property. I can only speculate that at this point in time for a large proportion of Western peoples, (outside of those adhering to a purist Marxist framework) the conflation of liberty, life's self-preservation and the ownership of property has attained the status of a largely unquestioned mental and social hegemony. That said, within the respondent data (and without here repeating already seen material) there are consistent and repeated themes of a dislike of neo-liberal capitalism, consumer societies of ownership, the prevalence of self-interest that is

seen to accompany neo-liberalism and a devout hope for more collectivist approaches to living. As I have discussed in this chapter, it is in the respondent data that I see the closest weavings of the mental, social and environmental in terms of how subjectivity may be undertaken. Alongside the likelihood of some form of collapse precipitating change, a thread that wove through the data was that the environment would be understood as coextensive with both the social and the mental performance of subjectivity.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

The study is limited in two ways: first, a relatively small sample group was drawn on. Hence, extrapolating any generalities or conclusions of how it is imagined people in future may conduct themselves in better alignment with living reciprocally sustaining relationships with place can necessarily only be tentative. The conclusions that result from my relationship with the respondent data, the coding process, literature, and subsequent analysis are therefore tentative in tone.

Second, because the research is grounded, not in lived experience, but rather, respondent speculations and imaginings, the work can only operate as a speculative think-piece rather than offering anything conclusive. CGT has been useful as an approach in arguing for the utility of an abductive and tentative tone.

Possibilities for Future Research

Possible areas are in Community Development and Social Work and how these professions may engage with a profoundly different future. I am also interested in how current communities and community organisations may begin to engage with, and plan for,

unpalatable future likelihoods. Reviewing and refreshing post-development theory in the light of the Anthropocene also offers some real possibilities, as might an exploration of how located communities develop reverence for place over time.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In trying to summate without crystallising into singularities of meaning, I find Beys' (1991) work particularly useful in rejecting a monolithic assault on current subjectivities of the individual and the social and the environmental. It is attractive but unrealistic to imagine a convulsive struggle between a neo-liberal story of subjectivity (and its consequential effects on our shared environs) and some beautiful new singular utopian vision of how the self/subject and society might function in relation with place. Bey's thinking and Guattari's call for new modes of subjectivity that do not align into singular stories of performance are of great use in resisting the call to monolithic and totalising conclusions. The work of Esteva and Prakash (1998) (which sits within the broad tradition of post-development theory) also reject the notion of singular solutions to global challenges. They rather argue for the emergence and acknowledgment of locally based solutions rooted in a diversity of place, culture, and notion of subjectivity. Often described as a position of resistance to an OECD imposition of a homogenising development model on non-Western countries, post-development theory can also be considered as a passionate call for a multiplicity of possibilities for relation with place, resources, and community and how subjectivity is constructed, governed, and policed. Following this multipronged dissensus towards consistency of subjectivity and approach to both global and local challenges, I imagine a future fractured landscape with multiple, partial, and very different emergences of dissensus to neo-liberal stories of the subject, and ephemeral sites of eruption of new ways of conducting subjectivity in relation to others and place. The future is likely to be one of multiple insurrections at multiple sites with perhaps some slow gathering of consensuses of purpose over time. Bendell's (2018) thoughts on necessary relinquishments are also of use. Bendell suggested that one of the challenges that societies moving into an uncertain future

face (of diminished resources and some degree of societal collapse) is to develop societal processes allowing reconciling with that which may be lost. Bendell argued for a considered and relational relinquishment. While this kind of new relationship with that which is no longer possible under changing future conditions will of course include the physical; Bendell also argued that just as critical is a relinquishment of certainty. A relinquishment of the stable comforting sense that next year (or decade) will much resemble this year, and, that one's children will inherit a world not dissimilar to our own in terms of access to the plethora of goods and services made available by globally connected (and rapacious) economic networks of resource extraction and trade. Bendell argued for a future of uncertainty, and the lack of certainty also suggests that a monolithic revolution against the current status quo is less likely (and perhaps less useful) than site-specific insurrections against fluid changing conditions that may vary greatly across the globe. While relinquishment is not a phrase that much occurs in the respondent data (or my coding). A recognition that certain ways of living, thinking, and being self in society will need to be put aside runs through both the respondent data and my relationship with it.

Drawing on Claridge's (2018) description of social capital in community development, one might imagine the discovery of new possibilities for ecologies of the mental the social and environmental emerging in singular and similar communities bridging across to other communities, with the linking capacity to find ways of speaking some truth to power in what may be overwhelmingly brutal circumstances. In considering a future in which my descendants will hopefully remain alive, I am much heartened by the work of Fritz (1996), one of the authors who speaks against a story of the human subject in community as naturally competitive and vicious. I am also drawn to the work of Jessop (2009) in his assertion that

material challenges in the physical and social world inevitably create new discursive possibilities.

What Have I Learnt in Conducting This Research?

While much might be added, the following quote from one of the respondents somewhat captures the breadth of the story and paints a very likely picture of what the future may bring:

I envision a slow, insidious collapse of capitalism, perhaps involving a degree of calamity that it is not easy to consider - but one that perhaps may be necessary in the transition to a new world. In this process of collapse, the growth of seeds planted many years ago: permaculture, worker cooperatives, transition towns, eco villages etc - places exploring this new relationship with nature and each other. So what will have happened? People will, in increasing numbers, have lost faith with the old/existing narrative of society's progress and begun to seek out alternatives - with the resonance of these growing stronger as more and more of the things we have previously assumed to be true are revealed for the illusions they are. There is no telling the future, such a transition could take many forms, some far uglier than others. In my efforts and optimism I hope to avoid the worst of these, a slow descent over a sudden drop and the huge human and environmental cost it would take.

One of the experiences I have had using a critical ground theory coding approach is that new insights continue to emerge. As Bruner (1986) alluded to, every new reading of a text is, in essence, a new writing of that text. I have certainly found that to be the case in re-reading the coding process and the fantasies of subjectivity that emerged as a discussion

platform. Guattari's call for new braided modes of subjectivity intertwining the mental, the social, and the environmental continues to resonate; perhaps even more powerfully as the sorts of speculations made when he wrote the three ecologies over 30 years ago are now reified in a 2023 world of pandemics and catastrophic climate events. What I am struck by in concluding this work (that had not occurred to me so strongly until a recent re-read of the material) is that it is, in essence, a morality tale. Discursive moral responses, drawing on old and new ideologies all attempting to find the moral path against an increasingly frightening, and increasingly hard to deny potentially harsh future reality. It seems likely that this is not the first time in human history that the development of a moral approach to subjects' relation with place and each other has occurred. A range of authors have argued that many indigenous groups and extant and historic hunter-gatherer communities operate by moral codes of character meaning that place and other living creatures are related to with a degree of reverence and a performance of subjectivity as coextensive with historical and current landscapes and their living inhabitants (Bender, 2003; Diamond, 2012; Lopez, 1986.; Naess, 2009; NoiseCat, 2017; Poirier, 2005; Wright et al., 2011).

As NoiseCat (2017) pointed out, these are relationships that abrogate against a sense of ownership and entitlement to exploit place. Juxtaposed against this is the growing consensus amongst palaeontologists that the historic extinction of megafauna (large easy to hunt mammals and birds) occurred in at least two continents and many islands almost immediately after the arrival of humanity in those places (Sandom et al., 2014; Smith, Elliott Smith, Lyons, & Payne, 2018; Smith, Elliott Smith, Lyons, Payne, & Villaseñor, 2019). This brutal history of extinctions does not suggest an immediate reverence by newly arrived humanity for place and its inhabitants. As these authors point out, humanity has a long history of significantly altering ecosystems and then having to subsequently live within those altered

ecosystems. As Belfrage and Hauf (2017) suggested, a CGT approach supports an abductive and tentative tone, rather than definitive conclusions.

It seems a sensible place to leave this work with a conundrum rather than a conclusion. The conundrum being that humanity has a history of ‘first-encounter’ destructive relation with place, with what one might guess to be a slow multi-generational attainment of the sorts of reverence and place/subjectivity co-extensivity allowing a lasting reciprocally sustaining relation between people and place. The topical (and future) conundrum that emerges is whether this capacity for reverence for place is possible at a global scale, rather than a product of long-term inhabitation of the known locality. To stretch the metaphor, global capital, over the last centuries (and accelerating in the last 30–40 years) has appeared to approach the global environment with the similar rapacious hunger shown by early humanity in newly encountering continents packed with easy-to-catch, large, edible animals. A major curiosity I am left with is how (and whether?) human subjects might in future develop a trans-local reverence? Respondent data gives some hints of what that combined local and global reverence might look like. How such trans-local reverence will be attained other than through mass encounter with tragedy is more difficult to ascertain and perhaps forms the key question that arises from the research.

To finish, and again using an abductive and tentative tone that refutes definitive conclusion I include, a short series of unfinished dialogical vignette theatre pieces. These pieces are designed, not to answer questions, but rather to raise questions and highlight collisions of mutual bewilderment. These brief theatre pieces are backdropped by perhaps the most frightening possible future predicaments that humanity has ever faced. There is perhaps no single appropriate way to attend to these grievous matters. If there is an appropriate way

to respond, I do not know it, and no literature I have encountered offers a simple or clear pathway. In this instance, I have (as an entirely personal choice and as a storyteller) rather than presenting a despairing polemic, used a short whimsical theatre piece to finish the work.

An Imaginary Theatre- a Playful Narrative Ending

To introduce the four characters:

First:

The neo-liberal subject, much written to and speculated about, (Rose, 1988,1999). Often described as the product of a project. Both celebrated and maligned as both natural citizen and primary entrepreneurial creator of a utopia of independent-minded, self-reliant, robustly self-interested individuals connected by chosen interactions in a social and economic space (the market) that conceives altruism as a function of self-interested behaviour in a competitive field (Harvey, 2013). We shall call this subject **NEO** – (short for neo-liberal).

Second:

The hunter-gatherer subject: Whom literature paints as collective in orientation, living in small groups of between 20 to 50 and of remarkably similar character across the many societies that have been studied (Boehm, 2012; Diamond, 2012; Tomasello, 2016). Egalitarian. Valuing generosity, and sternly deploring and policing dominating behaviour and a failure to share essentials such as meat. Skilled at humour and having fun, gaining much pleasure from relationships and aware of their interdependent relationship with both other humans and the surrounding environment. Kind to children and much concerned with their proper moral development. Literature suggests that this subject is similar in nature to what all

human peoples were like prior to agriculture. We will call this subject **PAL** – short for Palaeolithic.

Third:

The sort of character that might be imagined as emerging from the aspirations of community development as a practice and discipline. An initial sketch might have this person as committed to collective well-being and decision-making, sensitive to power relations and egalitarian by assertive preference, aware of their interdependent relationship with others and the environment and attuned to the ways in which large forces impact at the small-scale of communities (Ife, 2103). We will call this character **CED** – short for community development.

Fourth:

This character we will call **DATA**; being the collective voice of research results to date. DATA refuses consistency and sometimes speaks as one voice and at other times as many.

The First Meeting

Introducing our four characters DATA, NEO, CED, PAL and WIM (short for Whimsy) their host and convener of what seems likely to be an increasingly fractious series

of meetings. WIM is the author of this piece, and it is their imagination that provides the theatrical backdrop in which our dialogues take place.

Portentously – Signs of unruliness appeared at even the first meeting.

“Why DATA as a name?” Complained the assembled voice of the research respondents! “I’m not some sort of pasty-faced android on a dated *Star Trek* television series! Nor am I a dry collection of facts, damn it! Rather I am the considered, serious and thoughtful responses of 34 people that you have bullied into some sort of some sort of literary pretentious mimicry of a singular and unified voice from the future. Which is of course perfectly ridiculous! I scarcely know why I should even bother to try and participate.”

“And why NEO as a name!?! More boring and ridiculously obvious references to science fiction.” Complained the imaginary neo-liberal subject. “The very notion that you can jam the complexity of the market with its infinitely subtle and beautiful wisdoms on the best functioning of humanity into some sort of tawdry story of subjectivity: with, no doubt all sorts of insulting slurs including wounding words such as selfish, individualistic and hyper-responsibilised! If it wasn’t for the fact that I’m trapped here by your imagination I would not countenance even beginning to utter a single word! By the way, are we being paid and if so at what rate? – And also by the way – is there a KPI (Key Performance Indicator) rubric in place allowing leverage for future bonuses against – what, at even first glance, appear to be my three rather pathetic competitors?”

CED – (considered as a voice of aspiration that might emerge from the diversity of texts about what community development is, should be and should do) was a little less strident although considerably more pointed (and wordy) in his critique.

“Have you considered that this kind of enforced consultation – where strangers are forced into proximity with your (not our!) assumptions of a commonality of shared experience is in fact an example of top-down development?” asked CED.

“I believe I’ve heard you say that this kind of practice is the antithesis of the values you have previously stated you adhere to. What sort of methodology is it that does not follow good practice in terms of, at the very least (!) allowing voices to emerge from below rather than being dragged out from above? (Ife, 2013).

PAL, short for paleo (the story of character that emerges from studies of hunter-gatherer communities) had been following the dialogue (or rather the sequences of polemics) with great interest. “You all do talk rather a lot” PAL said in between chortles. “Perhaps your heads are a bit too big – I bet your mothers had a rough time and some sore sex bits when you lot were born!” with PAL then collapsing into further giggles. WIN noted for future reference that hunter-gatherers value humour greatly – commonly use teasing to shrink the large headed and usually aren’t afraid to talk about sex (Boehm, 2012).

Attempting to appear stern but in fact sounding rather weak – “Umm – well! Yes!” said WIM short for ‘whimsy’ the facilitator of this imaginary salon of the absurd.

“Let me explain why you have all been invited here.”

“Please do!” asserted the quorum.

Pleased to see even this momentary sign of unity amongst the group, even if it was a unity of irritation, WIM rather pompously began to explain.

“I’ve brought you here today - or rather imagined you here today - as a way of exploring some of the ideas about what people might be like in future who do better than we do now in living in ways that are reciprocally sustaining between people and place. Any questions?”

WIM’s statement was met with puzzled looks and a bemused silence. Trying again they said: “Let me put that another way. I brought you together so you could talk to each other. I wanted to find out what you would say if I imagined you as characters that might have ideas of their own.”

“Well of course we have ideas of our own!” Stated CED, NEO and DATA in rather indignant tones. PAL seemed a little puzzled, asking, “do you mean thinking’s that are just inside my head? That doesn’t seem right somehow?”

“Don’t be so ridiculous!” shouted NEO at PAL, “of course you have ideas inside your own head! Your failure to take personal responsibility for what you think and the way you witter on about collectivity is why you spent 100,000 years scratching fleas in the bush instead of having the guts to entrepreneur your way into a decent civilisation.”

“And DATA! you’re just as bad!” NEO continued: “you’ve turned your back on the very essence of civilisation, the right of the individual to strive against nature and others and reap the rewards of being a winner! It’s the winners and those that dare to dream big that make things better for everyone; unless the talents of entrepreneurs are rewarded, the human future will be a bleak mediocrity!”

“Yeah right!” exclaimed CED cynically, “By the time this gets published everyone will know that all NEOs talk of brave individuals striving in the marketplace making things better for us all is absolute nonsense. That sort of talk is merely a hegemonic mask for cementing into place a system that funnels all the worlds resources into a smaller and smaller number of hands. Haven’t you ever read Piketty (2013)” CED demanded. “Or – for goodness’s sake! Harvey (2005) on Neo-liberalism’s history! – it makes it perfectly clear!”

Looking quietly furious, it was clear that DATA was also about to erupt into the fray. “NEO! Everything you say seems to forget about other people!” shouted DATA. “All your striving and entrepreneuring sounds like a recipe for loneliness. When you’ve done all that winning what would you do? Buy friends? Because everything you say makes you sound like someone, I don’t want to be a friend with. The saddest part is it sounds like you like being lonely! And by the way – the essence of your civilisation is what nearly killed us. Neo-liberalism is a dirty word in our time. We are not so stupid as to think that nature is something to strive against. What you say doesn’t even make sense! We are nature and nature is us, everybody knows that! And by the way I like being mediocre! People from your time think too much of themselves.”

“Oh dear,” thought WIM, “my plan is already working all too well,” while also noting with interest NEO’s preference for pithy bold statements and CED’s rather annoying tendency to lean on a longwinded combination of outrage and academia.

Interrupting hurriedly, rather loudly just as DATA was drawing breath for another round WIM said:

“Well, I’m glad you are all so certain you have ideas! And that you are so keen to share them with each other. (Although we may need to have some conversations about ground rules.)” WIM muttered rather more quietly. “PAL I’ll be happy to talk with you later about whether it’s possible for ideas to live in only one person’s head; but for now, I just wanted to say welcome to all four of you.”

Striding to the imaginary podium, WIM went on, “This is a big day for me – I’ve been meeting you on paper, and through journals and articles for such a long time that it seems like I know you all very well. The strange fact is the more I read you, the more you seemed to read me back and take on a life of your own; particularly in the ways you’d squabble and disagree with each other.”

For a while this was my little secret – that my notions of neo-liberalism, community development, stories of Paleolithic character, and the material I got back from my survey seemed to be developing rather loud personalities of their own. It was quite alarming really, it did not seem to fit with what I knew of how academics are supposed to analyse, or even think about data and literature reviews. So, I kept quiet about your existence and instead went round muttering about things like qualitative methodologies, critical grounded theory, auto-ethnography and discourse analysis. I don’t think anybody was very impressed!

Then my clever partner Annette one day laughingly suggested that I should find androids and programme them with your personalities and then let them have at each other. What a good idea, I thought! So, in the absence of programmable androids, I have decided to see what happens when I deliberately adopt the pretence of you as four characters with your

own quirks, norms and passionate inclinations and let you have at each other in the theatre of my own imagination.

What do you all think?

Predictably the answers resembled more a cacophony than anything particularly sensible.

A Dialogue About Time

“Welcome back folks,” said WIM trying to look cheerful but in fact rather dreading what he suspected would be another fractious meeting. The group grudgingly assembled.

“I came across this interesting phrase,” said Wim, “the tyranny of the short-term” (Loewenstein, 2015). “Basically, what this person is arguing,” said WIM, “is that this most recent variation of capitalism is so obsessed with maximising profits above all else that it will always go for the short-term gain rather than the less profitable long-term good. The implications being not only that environmental degradation is not factored in as a consideration, but a global ecological crash will be seen as simply revealing new opportunities for further short-term gain.

“Of course!” Snorted NEO; and went on to explain, “that is because capitalism in its most perfect form – i.e., as we have it now. is simply an unclouded mirror of individual human nature with all the ‘collective good’ ethical nonsense of liberal humanism stripped away. What capitalism makes possible is for human nature to express itself. What is finally possible is the liberation of the natural tendency for individuals (and corporations I must admit) to

maximise their own self-interests as the first duty to themselves without burdensome obligations to some theoretical notion of the larger Good. What neo-liberal capitalism recognises is that the world is naturally a competitive field, and we are the natural inhabitants of that field. So, course we are competitive, of course we always want to have the best for ourselves!

“It’s stupid to call it selfish or dangerous, it’s simply human nature. It is not capitalism harming the planet its simply people doing what comes naturally to them. They don’t call it the law of the jungle for nothing! It is natural for there to be winners and losers, if you put 10 people on a desert island human nature means that the smartest and strongest will end up taking the best of what is available while those not so strong will have to make do with what’s left. It will be the same if the environment does change; the competent and the strong will do well; the weaker will be pushed to one side. That’s how evolution works, and climate change won’t change evolution.”

Seeming very affronted, CED jumped into the conversation saying: “That business of people being naturally competitive and aggressive is nonsense! Aggressively competitive behaviour reflects either oppressive social structures or the self-serving rhetoric of a small elite. Human beings have a deep need for belonging and connection and we do best when we live in ways that allow us to share what we have with others and to act collectively on our shared concerns. We are a collective species, and our natures reflect this.”

“No wonder you community developers are always poor!” sneered NEO! “Your talk of collective wellbeing is just another way for you to refuse to take responsibility for taking charge of your own lives.”

CED responded hotly: “You may have spent billions of dollars trying to convince the world that your twisted view of human nature is correct, but more and more of us are realising that your stories about humans as natural entrepreneurs is simply a way for the already rich to steal more and more of the world’s resources. It’s rubbish!”

DATA rather diffidently interjected: “Well most of us who live in the future seem to feel that living collectively is a more natural way to live. In fact, a large proportion of us seem to think it will make us happier. A lot of us look back on neo-liberalism as having been a dangerous mistake; especially the idea that the strong and the ruthless deserve more resources than other people. The way we live in the future we are very careful to share, and we try not to have too many bosses.”

NEO sighed and said:” Well that future sounds implausible to me – you can guarantee that if things get tough in future it won’t be the carers and sharers who survive; it will be people like me who are brave enough to grab the best for ourselves and hang on to it!”

Listening with interest, WIM noted that NEO had rather neatly sidestepped the question of short-term gain versus long-term good. WIM wondered if it was that NEO wouldn’t address the topic directly because it was too difficult and potentially embarrassing. Or was it more a matter that NEO *couldn’t* address the topic because it literally made no sense within their frame of reference?

Being prone to distraction, WIM began to muse to about what it must be like to live within a worldview that automatically presupposed that any question of long-term collective good could only be answered by reference to short-term individual striving for gain. To WIM it seemed a peculiarly truncated causal time-scape, but it certainly did fit with what WIM

knew about how neo-liberal capitalism had been approaching managing the world's ecological predicaments.

Interrupting WIM's ponderings – WIM noticed with alarm that PAL was rising to their feet with a thunderous yet dignified expression on their face.

Pointing directly at NEO (while unusually for PAL) gazing NEO directly in the eye. PAL began to speak in a calm tone but obviously upset and furious manner:

PAL said “NEO I have some difficult things to say to you.

“I have heard your words, on selfishness, competing with others, taking the best for yourself, and always seeking to be the winner and the boss. I have to tell you that if you were a child of my people, we would all be very ashamed and asking ourselves what we had done wrong in raising you. If you were an adult of our people and spoke in these ways, we would send you apart to be alone and think hard about your place amongst us. If you returned and still spoke in such ways, we would kill you as a great danger to us all. We would be very sad to do this, but we would know the necessity.

“If you were a stranger and came among us speaking such lies, especially around our children, then despite the demands of hospitality some of us would shame ourselves for the good of the group and take you into the forest, strangle you quickly and bury your body where nobody could find it.”

With a shaking voice and tears running down their face, PAL concluded, “NEO I am sorry to be the one who must say these things.”

An appalled silence settled over the group. NEO looking frightened for their life; muttered “PAL I took you for a wimp, but I guess I was wrong.” Nobody else knew quite what to say.

WIM hurriedly closed the meeting.

Reflecting later: WIM remembered that the two greatest breaches of the behavioural, or moral norms of hunter-gatherers are to refuse to share; particularly needed food resources such as meat. And to persistently seek to dominate or to be the boss. WIM also remembered that hunter-gatherer groups enforced their norms ruthlessly through storytelling, group teasing, escalating to isolation and execution if behaviour does not change (Boehm, 2012). WIM considered that hunter-gatherer communities used capital punishment rather more frequently than later agricultural societies. WIM wondered what this might mean for the enforcement of social norms in the future when once again much of humanity will be facing difficult predicaments and a harsh environment?

Considering Guattari’s call for three interlinked ecologies leading to new modes of subjectivity WIM muttered to themselves, “Well that certainly tells some pretty strong stories about the social ecology! Two very different stories indeed! and not much to bridge them other than contempt on the one hand, and a perception of extreme danger on the other.” WIM speculated that possibly the liberal humanist call for celebration and acceptance of diversity of thought might not much apply to either the far past or the future. Perhaps Lenin was right, WIM wondered. Remembering Lenin’s famous saying: “we should always ask whom a freedom under consideration serves “.

Perhaps allowing the freedom for people to behave and speak in selfish and self-interested ways won't survive the next few centuries be thought? I wonder what that will be like. I wonder what those people will be like.

I think I'll ask the group about happiness next, he said to himself. That should be a safe topic! (Little did WIM know!)

Happiness

After some time setting up the theatre and making sure there were comfortable chairs, squatting places and an appropriate array of nibbles, drinks and stimulants, WIM greeted the others.

“Thank you for agreeing to meet again,” said WIM. “I was hoping we could talk about happiness today I'm not quite sure if that means what it means to be happy? Or what is required in life to be happy at least some of the time? It's a bit of a vague question I know. So maybe it's a question about well-being? And possibly what creates well-being? I'm sorry the subject isn't more specific, but I am really interested in your thoughts.”

Not looking particularly happy about talking about the subject the group grumblingly agreed to give it some consideration.

“Who would like to start?” asked WIM?

I will start!” Burst in PAL.

“I know about happiness!” PAL exclaimed. “Happiness is having lots to eat and lots to share so that everybody has lots to eat. It’s knowing that people think well of you because you’ve done well. It’s watching the babies be fat and happy and playing with them and making them laugh. It’s about dancing together, and sex, and funny jokes. It’s about working hard with others and catching something big or doing something well together. It’s about the way we grin at each other when we know we’ve done that!

“On a more serious note,” PAL went on to add, “Happiness is also about those lovely days when you just know and remember that you are part of the family of the forest, the plants, and the animals.

“That’s all!” PAL said. “Happiness is easy!”

“Thanks PAL,” said WIM. “That’s very clear. I noticed that most of what you talk about is about doing things with or for other people. You didn’t say anything about having nice things for yourself? Is there anything that you could have that could make you happier do you think?”

PAL seemed a little puzzled by the question but was game enough to give it some thought. After a long pause PAL said: “Well, I guess if we could have lots to eat all the time that would make us even happier. But what can you do?! There are always going to be times when there is not enough, and we all have to put up with that together. Staying cheerful and nice to be around when times are difficult is one of the things that makes other people think well of you and that’s important! So maybe always having enough to eat wouldn’t make me happier? But it does make me sad when the children and the old people are hungry. So, the answer is I’m not sure?” PAL finished by saying “WIM, you ask some really hard questions!”

The others had been listening in fascinated silence. What PAL had said had given them much to think about and they were all rather uncomfortably reviewing their own ideas of happiness through the lens of PALs very clear ideas.

NEO rather cautiously said, “Well I’m willing to go next, but I’d really appreciate it PAL if this time you don’t tell me I’m at risk of getting killed for what I say. ” Smiling amiably, PAL said: “It’s okay NEO, I promise that today I won’t say anything to you about you being killed – I will squeeze my lips so no words can come out.” Everybody laughed, albeit in a slightly uneasy fashion.

Still speaking rather cautiously, NEO continued.

“Well, I have a rather different view of happiness – I think it comes from the courage to work hard and really commit yourself to a goal and succeed in achieving that goal. It’s about having the strength as an individual to take responsibility for your own life and work hard enough and smart enough to make that life turn out good. It’s very satisfying to succeed and gain the benefits of success like a good car, a great house, and an attractive partner. Happiness is at the end of the day being proud of yourself and proud of your own success.”

PAL looked rather puzzled – and quite noticeably had their lips firmly pressed together. The others looked very thoughtful. After a pause, WIM thanked NEO, and said: “That’s also very clear; and I notice that other than an attractive partner there is not much mention of other people. Anything you’d like comment about that NEO?”

Glancing nervously at PAL – and beginning to speak in a slow hesitant manner NEO replied, “I don’t want people to think that I’m unkind and don’t care about people; of course, other people are important.

“I give quite large donations to this great tax-deductible charity that works teaching kids about the importance of self-esteem and taking charge of their own destinies. Most of the kids haven’t had much exposure to responsible adults, so sometimes I even go along and give inspirational talks about how anyone can succeed if they try hard enough. They haven’t seen much success because their parents mostly rely on government handouts rather than standing on their own two feet.

“So, I think other people are important for lots of reasons. Firstly, other people give you something to measure yourself against. How can you know how well you are doing if you can’t compare yourself to others? How could you compete in the market if there were no other people to create a market?

“Personally, I also think people can learn from each other, and, because I am a great believer in continuous self-improvement; constant learning is very important. I think other people teach us by operating as both examples of how not to do things. (Like depend on benefits!). And teach us by inspiring us with their example. When I hear stories about big success stories it inspires me to believe in myself and work even harder. Spending a weekend at a success-focused seminar hearing stories of achievement and surrounded by other motivated go-getters is better than Prozac! That’s why I go and give talks to those kids. They need to see and hear examples of how an independent spirit motivated to work hard can

always create success! Those kids need to know that the future is in their own hands! I seized my future, and they can too!”

The longer NEO had spoken, the more animated NEO HAD become – sitting up straighter and meeting the eyes of the other group members boldly. NEO finished by saying “Well! What do you think of that PAL? Still think I should be killed?”

Pressing lips together with one hand, eyes crinkled in amusement, PAL shook their head and gestured with their other hand that it was somebody else’s turn speak.

DATA spoke next (and for the readers benefit it may be important to know that today DATA decided to speak as *we* – not *I*).

DATA commenced by saying, “PAL a very great deal of what you said about happiness we agree with. We’re clear that working with others and having good relationships will in the future create happiness more than just gaining material things. In fact, a lot of us think owning too much or trying to be dominant will be seen as morally wrong in the future. We also agree that having fun, working together and sharing is important. Many of us feel that in the future we will all have a much stronger conscious sense of connection and interdependence with place, other people, and the global environment. We are not sure if that’s about happiness or not? But it does seem important. We think that’s what you might mean by the happy days when you feel like the trees, the plants and the animals are family. Quite frankly we’re still struggling to work it out.”

DATA went on to say, “NEO, we wanted to thank you for speaking so honestly, and it’s good to hear your thoughts. It’s great to hear that you care about children as a number of

us felt that taking better care of kids will in the future be very important and a great source of happiness. We are sorry to say that the way you talk about yourself as so important and so central to everything is the opposite of what at least some of us think.

“We think that in the future the I (or self/subject) will be smaller, and that putting the needs of other people first and thinking and acting collectively will be both the common way of doing things and a source of great satisfaction to people.” Speaking to the group, DATA went on to say: “We’re deeply puzzled about where NEO got his ideas about happiness from; as the way of life he is describing seem, to us at least, a recipe for loneliness and unhappiness.”

NEO found himself wanting to reply; but didn’t quite know what to say or how to start. Some of the things that DATA was saying made sense, but others seemed completely nonsensical. NEO wondered: “How can happiness possibly exist if it doesn’t involve the self being central and its desires being satisfied?” Much of what DATA was saying sounded like defeat and weakness to NEO and the sorts of things that the unsuccessful say to themselves to justify their failures.

With somewhat gritted teeth, NEO did manage to exclaim:

” The progress that’s made the world what it is today wasn’t driven by collectives, its due to the hard work and inspiration of strong motivated individuals who rose above the pack!”

CED chipped in: “Well NEO that’s the problem really. Progress hasn’t delivered a fairer or better world. Instead, progress has created a world where a very few people are

extremely rich, and no doubt happy! While ordinary people struggle at best; while we're taught by an array of governmental and hegemonic forces to blame ourselves for our failure to be like the super-rich and beautiful on television!

“Progress has made people unhappy and lonely and that's why I believe that collective action, more sharing and working together to claim back our neighbourhoods and lives is a better recipe for happiness than fighting every day to succeed in a hyper-individualised capitalist rat race!”

WIM sighed to himself and thought, as well as being prone to a polemic rant – CED does rather forget about things like preventing cholera epidemics, the convenience of cars and phones and all the other benefits progress and science has brought us. I do wish less of his thinking was about resistance and rather more about alternative ways to be.

NEO was somewhat dumbfounded by CED's words and felt himself to be the outsider amongst this group. “I'm not sure I want to keep talking to you lot,” NEO was heard to mutter. “Your ideas are dangerous.”

WIM politely thanked the group for their willingness to talk and began the slightly complicated business of disentangling from his imaginary consultants. PAL interrupted by saying they wanted to thank NEO for his bravery in speaking and assure him that there will be no more talk of killing.

After the others had left, WIM thought: Well, they all made their positions extraordinarily clear – and a very good fit with the literature they were too! Happiness was a

good thing to ask about – it led directly into the territory of subjectivity in a way that I think Guattari, (1997) with his call for new modes of subjectivity would have appreciated.

WIM mused that, in terms of the three ecologies of the social, the mental and environmental, today had delved quite deeply into the social and the mental. WIM was appreciative again of Guattari's refusal to binarise the constituted from the constitutive when discussing the nature of subjectivity.

WIM wondered if a refusal to binarise self/other might similarly be useful. PAL certainly seemed to find it very challenging to consider happiness for the self-outside of a framework inclusive of the other. Chuckling, WIM thought "PAL would certainly fail the personality tests if PAL applied for a management job these days! Talk about co-dependency and blurred boundaries!"

I wonder what it's like for DATA and CED to be around such clearly articulated but mutually incomprehensible positions he thought? If, as Butler (1997) suggested, resisting a power is to be prone to reproducing it, then I wonder to what extent neo-liberalism is reproduced in DATA and CED's subjectivities? Particularly given how much of their thinking is about resisting neo-liberalism. I wonder what they might draw from PALs obvious bewilderment in terms of creating frames of reference that are exterior to neo-liberalism and not merely a refusal of its norms and subjectivating demands?

I'll ask them next time, WIM decided! After all, it's my brain they are using so they can hardly refuse! and! I won't have to take time to explain all the words and concepts I use because they can always look into my memory for translations.

This should be fun, WIM thought!

As WIM began to close the theatre for the night (involving thoughts of food and practicalities rather than talking with mental companions), a last thought occurred. NEO is the odd one out here WIM thought; and it's odd how strongly NEO's views on how to be happy contradict what is known about what created a good life and moral contentment/happiness for our ancestors and by extension us now too (Boehm, 2012; Diamond, 2012; Tomasello, 2016).

I wonder what the cost is of maintaining a belief in the self as so vigorously individually boundaried and supposedly independently autonomous WIM wondered? I wonder how hard it is to live inside that understanding of the self. I should ask NEO about that he thought. I'm not too sure he will understand the question though, WIM speculated.

Next time will be interesting was WIM's last thought on the subject.

Place

Unusually, DATA convened the next meeting. Once they had all settled, DATA exclaimed: "I thought this whole process was to talk about relationships with place? Well, there's been very little of that so far and I'm not happy!"

Very much on the back-foot, WIM interjected with "Umm! – Yes. What a good idea! Does everybody else agree that it might be useful to talk about place?"

"I suppose so," they grumbly agreed – with NEO already looking somewhat resigned to their role as the outlier in the group. PAL looking a little puzzled, leaned over to

NEO and whispered, “What does WIM mean by place?” “I’ll try and explain later” said NEO, “But you might not like what I say - so no death threats, okay?” “Don’t worry, NEO” said PAL with a giggle. “I promise I’ll restrain myself.”

“So, DATA, would you like to start?” asked WIM.

“I would be pleased to start,” said DATA. DATA went on to say, “We think that place is very important, and when we define it as the area from which we draw our food and nourishment it is particularly important that we cherish it. We will know in a way that we suspect you 21st-century people can’t, that our very lives depend on treating the earth well.” As they spoke, DATA became louder and more passionate. Climbing to their feet, DATA added: “We’re also a lot smarter than you are at seeing the connections between us taking care of one place and taking care of the well-being of the larger world. We’re also not stupid enough to think that we’re separate from our environment! We know we are not, and we also know that you lot in the 21st century mostly thought you were! Some of us are still angry about that. Some of us have forgiven you. We’ve also worked out: because it’s obvious!” By this time, DATA was practically spitting with rage “that the way you behave toward the environment and the way you behave toward people can’t be made separate! So, if you treat the environment like crap; then no matter how nice you pretend to be to other people you’re not a good person! You can’t be cruel to land and kind to people!”

Taking a deep breath and obviously struggling to contain his emotion, DATA resumed his seat and finished by saying in a much quieter voice, “You lot need to remember that the things we have learnt about how to live well with place and each other have come at a terrible cost. Our history is surviving your horror story and while I think we have become wiser and

kinder than you, there is still great bitterness and hurt. I am sorry if I offend, but you need to know these things.”

There was a long pause after DATA had spoken. With tears running down his cheeks PAL moved to sit next to DATA and while gently grasping both of DATA’s hands and softly said, “I am sorry my sibling; there is great pain here.” DATA’s head bowed and began to weep at first softly and then more loudly while rocking back and forth in very apparent agony. After some time, DATA was able to lift their head and after looking at each other member of the group in turn, whispered: “we’ve lost so much – you can’t know how much!”

WIM looked around the room; and after gathering thoughts – and – trying to force back their own threatening tears, said in a quavering voice: “Let’s take a break for a while”.

Deeply shaken after the meeting, WIM reflected that bringing these protagonists together was not just an intellectual exercise on subjectivity, but also involved engaging with the terrible learnings and subjectivating experiences of humans being forced to face environmental predicaments with no solution other than to endure them. He wondered if Guattari, writing in the late 1980s not the early twenties of the 21st century, had imagined that new subjectivities may indeed emerge in relation to the social and mental but perhaps necessarily forged in future agonies of awful environmental histories.

More On Place

WIM started the next meeting by thanking everyone for their courage in attending and particularly thanked DATA for being so honest about the painful cost of what DATA’s people had learned.

“I would love to hear what others have to say about place!” Said WIM. “And I think we all realise now that the topics we’re talking of are not always easy and we need to treat each other with kindness.” WIM went on to add, “Thank you PAL for being so assiduous in comforting DATA. I think the rest of us were a little dumbfounded and did not know what to do; you’re obviously a caring and decent person. I know your peoples place great value on looking after each other.” PAL shrugged and looking a little uneasy mumbled: “It’s just ordinary. What anyone would do. Don’t make a big deal out of it.” WIM remembered that hunter-gatherer peoples typically thought it immoral (or socially gauche) to boast or blow their own trumpets and wondered to himself if they had put a foot in it by praising PAL so directly?

NEO burst out: “Well I want to say a few things. Firstly: PAL I thought you were damn fantastic in being so quick off the mark to comfort DATA. You showed us up buddy! You should be proud of yourself!” Shrinking down in their seat, DATA gave NEO a somewhat resentful look and quietly muttered. “Please don’t go on about it!”

“OK” beamed NEO. “But I still think you should be proud of yourself PAL! Don’t be ashamed of what you are good at!” At these words, PAL shrunk even further into his seat and stared at the floor.

“Now, about ‘place’” continued NEO. “Firstly, I just wanted to say DATA how sorry I am to hear that your place in the future is so messed up! That is a real shame, I wish I could help, but I’m pretty busy taking care of my own business; and as I have said before; me taking care of my business well, is the best way for everybody’s business to thrive!” Nobody seemed particularly pleased by NEO’s words, but a polite silence was maintained.

“Please do go on,” murmured WIM.

“Well,” NEO exclaimed, “much as I love a good sunset, or a nice beach resort; place isn’t much use in my opinion unless you can do something with it. And, doing something with it means that somebody needs to have the legal right and title to own it, possess it and work it. Place, and land are only as valuable as much as they contribute to growth and development. If place is just sitting, there and doing nothing; then basically it’s worthless.”

Ah yes – John Locke (1689) – mused WIM. Mr Locke certainly did get a powerful grip on how so much of the Western world has engaged with the non-human world he thought.

PAL looked puzzled and, leaning over, he whispered to CED, “I am not sure I understand? What does NEO mean about own? What does develop mean? Do you think NEO means someone thinking they can do things to a place that the place doesn’t want done? Do you think NEO means cutting down trees or killing animals when NEO doesn’t need firewood and isn’t hungry for meat that day? That sounds very wrong!” whispered PAL looking rather pale and shocked. “Is NEO sick do you think?” Whispered PAL even more quietly.

DATA cleared their throat. And with a dignified look said: “NEO almost everything you have just said explains why my peoples have had to endure such terrible histories. I understand that you think you can be responsible for your own life and what happens to it, but it is like a piece of your brain or heart missing that you do not understand that your focus on ownership and your own life might harm us all.”

Looking puzzled and hurt, NEO said “But DATA, I donate to Greenpeace, it’s tax-deductible and I do care about animals! And I am expanding my investment portfolio into the

green market! It's very clear that the next big opportunities will be in the green dollar. We must move forward in growing our economies into the rich new territories of sustainability!"

WIM quietly noted that recent shifts towards green capitalism in no way seemed to influence the underlying epistemological assumptions about the right to own and use, and the notion that growth is the only vehicle for creating well-being (Aschoff, 2015).

CED gently interrupted NEO in a soothing voice. "I think what the others are saying, NEO, is the problem is not about who you donate to, or whether, or not, your investment portfolio gets the green tick; it's a more fundamental question of is it right to believe that a legal title means you can then do what you want with a place – and that things will always endlessly keep growing with no limit."

PAL, also speaking in a gentle voice (as if towards a small and confused child) said "NEO, I think the problem might be that you have this funny idea that places, aren't people like you."

DATA nodded in agreement.

WIM speculated to himself that both the very old ways of PAL, and the future ways of DATA seemed to be in remarkable consensus that place had something to say for itself quite irrespective of human intentions.

NEO looked utterly bewildered by the others' comments.

“Thank you everybody!” exclaimed WIM brightly. “What should we talk about next time?”

FINI

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