CATALYSING CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE

CREATIVE REBOOT

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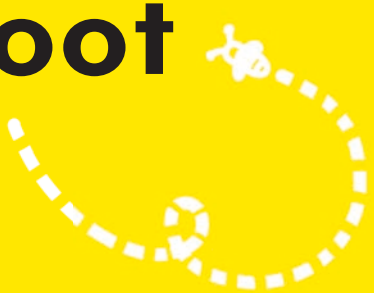
Creative Reboot



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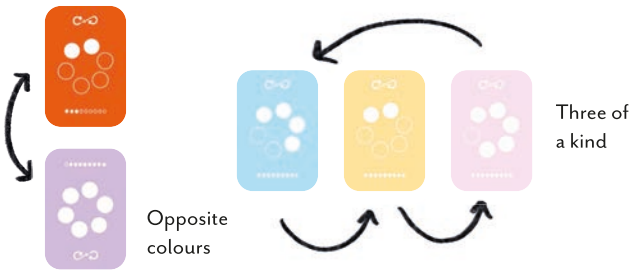
Using this book: introduction

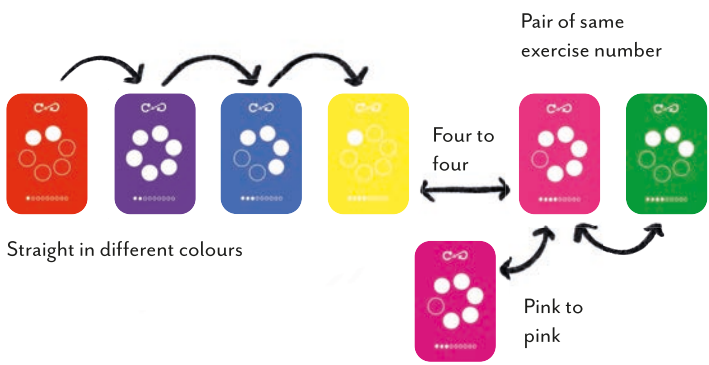
Creative Reboot comes as a kit. The book has been designed to carry around so you can practice creativity easily and in different settings. It also comes with exercise cards that can be quick, shareable and gamified. Together the cards and kit work in two ways – to build creative skills and to stimulate ongoing creative deftness. The book provides a sequential path that helps imaginative diverging (expanding) and converging (bringing together) through guided creative exercises that can be done individually and collaboratively. Once you become familiar with the cycle, you can take the process of creativity further by choosing different combinations or by gamifying the cards to cross-pollinate and push the boundaries of possibility.

There are six chapters in this book each working into a frame that is supported by primer and extender exercises, and illustrated in seven case studies profiling pioneers of this emergent practice. Grounded in a cross-section of scholarly and applied understanding, each exercise is supported by a deeper seedbed of underpinning influences and pointers to more granular and embodied ways of noticing. The first chapter, 'Creativity, play and flow' explores foundational qualities linked to creativity along with useful approaches that help sustain a creative mindset. The following five chapters take you through a journey that helps free up allegiances to habitual ways of thinking that are inhibiting. The exercises in 'Probing and Blitzing' and 'Visualising' widen ways of perceiving while 'Scaling' invites relationships between bigger vision perspectives and action on the ground.



With new quests of the possible on the table, 'Conversations' opens up what it means to connect and 'Stories' harnesses the rich palette we use in mobilising practical action and meaning. Cumulatively, the exercises illuminate new through lines beyond the frameworks that we might be blinded by or bound to even though they no longer serve us. Whether you are an analytical thinker or an accomplished creative professional, perceptual shape shifting transforms as we travel deeper and wider.

To extend this kit you can combine and recombine the exercises looking for adjacent possibilities, serendipitous associations and unseen connections. Use the card numbering and colour systems like dominoes and playing cards. Play with pairs, three of a kind or a run in numbers. Match cards by colour- e.g. similar tones of dark and light or opposing colours such as yellow and purple. Make your own rules and bend them. Playing in this way generates creative fitness, helps ideas cross pollinate and reveals paths for changing our minds. Each section of the book is supported by case studies that have done exactly this – created new ways into the world.



Framing and pragmatic creativity

If what you have been doing isn't working, try something else.

Issues are framed in certain ways. The framing is either deliberate or emerges over time. Either way, the framing is true and not true. We'll use the framing a real case study, framed as a *health* issue as an example.

Framing something as a *health* issue can send us down a very different path to if we frame the same thing as a *wellbeing* issue.

Tony fell from a ladder in his bicycle shop and sustained a spinal injury. Tony received expert medical treatment and over three months made a full physical recovery. The time away from work was very hard. The day-to-day connections that Tony had with his colleagues and customers were lost in this time, and he really missed them. Tony became depressed and anxious about leaving his home.

The frames we create become part of our societal narrative, we become expert in navigating them. Whole disciplines emerge within these frames.

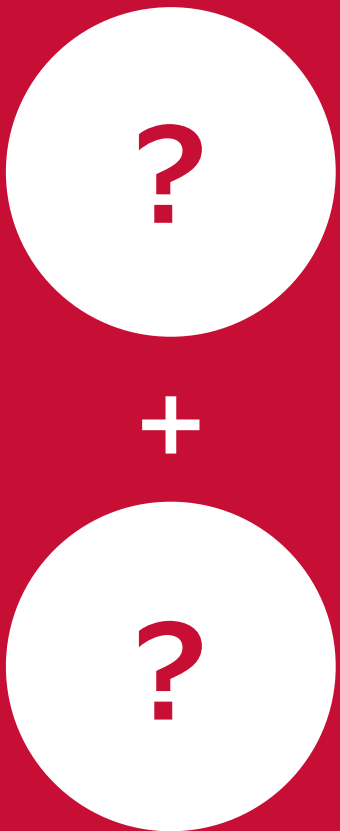
From a *health* frame, we see *Medicine* as the dominant discipline area which encompasses Medical Physicians, Nurses, Radiography, Chemists, etc. All of these practitioners are highly educated in the ***rules*** of their frame. In practice they draw on these ***rules*** and their professional experience to determine the 'correct' action to take. All of these actions then contribute to achieving the *health* ***outcome.***

Drawing on the American Pragmatist Philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce we can unpack this through logic;

The pre-determined **outcome,** "health" is reached through the pre-determined **rules** "medicine" which through drawing on experience we determine what **actions** or "treatment" is appropriate.

Peirce rereferred to this way of thinking as *explanatory abduction*. This is a useful, valuable, and productive way of thinking. But it isn't all that is possible when using abductive thinking.

The American philosopher of science, Thomas S. Kuhn, in his 1962 book 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions' spoke of paradigms. Within a paradigm the vast majority of thinking happens within the conceptual boundaries of 'known' *outcome*, 'pre-determined' *rule* and inferred action. Through this logic an *evidence base* is established by testing and evaluating the efficacy of the treatments. But what if we need a different way of looking at things? What if the *health, medicine, treatment* formula isn't getting us the results we truly desire? Peirce would put forward a different type of logic; *innovative abduction*.


?
+
?
leads to
outcome

Innovative abduction could be a heavy term if we dwelled on it, but dwelling is never the way of the Pragmatist. In our practice, *innovative abduction* is a playful space. We draw on both Kuhn and Peirce through the work of Kees Dorst and his 2015 book 'Frame Innovation: Create new thinking by design'. The practice we developed, 'Designing for the common good' makes space for playful, creative exploration. We playfully frame, de-frame, and re-frame. We suspend the *Rule* and *Outcome* variables and draw on playful and creative ways of exploring the deeper questions of meaning.

It is just here, in this conceptual space that we create some time and space to escape analysis paralysis.

Tony received an unusual prescription from his regular Doctor. Instead of the pain killers that had usually been part of the routine Doctor visits, Tony was given a 12-week prescription to join a local Life Drawing class.

By *re-framing* the situation from an **outcome** of *health* to an **outcome** of *wellbeing* the underlying issue of isolation is broached. This real-world case study is an example of *innovative abduction*. It is also an example of how *innovative abduction* can then fit neatly back into the paradigm. Not so radical that it will disrupt a whole way of working, but radical enough to have created a new addition to the accepted *rules*.

The thinking required is not rocket science. It requires disciplined thought to suspend what we already know, or assume, in order to allow for the emergence of new frames that can then be tested.

creativity, play

and

How often do you play? Do you notice how people have different ways of playing?

When you give yourself space to be creative you build fitness, and with that comes confidence. Like most skills in life, creativity responds to practice and in doing so, we become more aware of our unique strengths, the weaknesses we can improve upon and those that benefit most from collaborating with others.

In honing our personal and collective creativity, we open up the landscape of imagination and innovation.

Everyone has a different creative journey. Before we dig into how we can be more creative, we first need to examine some of our current assumptions about creativity.

flow

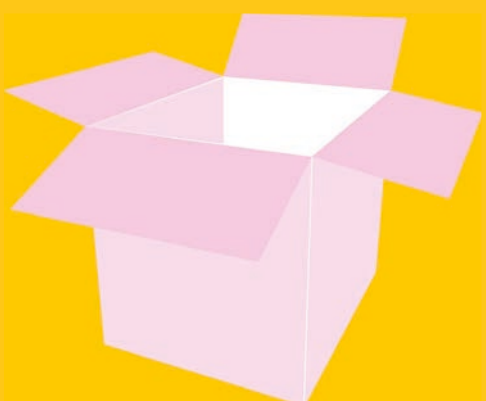
What if I'm not creative?

Maybe you don't see the work you currently do as creative, or feel you don't have that 'creative' spark in you. If this is you, know this – you are in fact capable of creativity! Though the myth that some people are creative and others are analytical is still pervasive in society, the truth is that creativity is not simply a matter of inherent ability. For artists, engineers, philosophers, scientists, and all other types of creatives, their skill is developed through sustained practice.

Throughout this kit you will be introduced to strategies for building creative habits and getting that practice in.

Divergent thinking

Let's try flexing our creative muscles! In one minute, how many uses can you think of for this cardboard box? Time yourself and start writing!



Where to from here?

As you navigate this kit you will trial a range of creative exercises drawn from a cross section of disciplines. Some exercises will feel easier to connect with than others, this is part of the creative journey. Ideally, you will find creative companions to discuss your experiences and make plans to keep exploring.

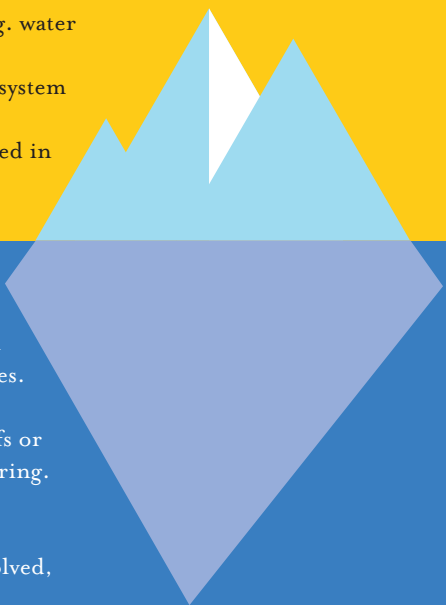
There is one thing that numerous studies on creativity have found and that is creativity does best when we are in an open, relaxed state. It's a state where we ask our critical judge to hold off, where we suspend our utility focus. It's a state that involves asking ourselves 'what's the purpose of this' commentator, so we let ourselves into a curious and playful place where new ways of seeing, noticing and doing can arise. It's also where we can revisit assumptions about our aptitudes and look at the way we work with others. Stepping into an open mode of inquiry is the starting point. Just like all habits, practice and repetition transfers short term pulses into long term patterns.

Creativity involves making new kinds of connections. It isn't exclusive to a medium, practice or discipline. It can happen anywhere, anytime and often brings together unlikely or unseen relationships. This is why an open minded space is foundational. We won't find new ways of seeing without releasing the hold of fixed patterns of perception. The arts are often linked to creativity and while they are not the exclusive domain there are tips and practices that can help foster creative fitness.

Try it yourself

For this task select or create a metaphorical form that has seen and unseen structures. Suggested forms:

- An iceberg (small tip visible but significant ballast below and unseen, ecosystem conditions e.g. water temp, climate, currents)
- A tree (roots, branches, leaves, soil and ecosystem qualities e.g. soil, water, light, air)
- Radiating star (drawn from star bursting used in business and management)



Pick a problem you are interested in. To help you gain a range of perspective take a gardener, an archeologist and astronomer with you. Each will help you probe the problem from different angles.

This phase searches for values, underlying beliefs or conditions that underlie the space you are exploring.

1. Time frame: continuous
What is immediately visible - events; who is involved, what evidence is being used to tell the story?

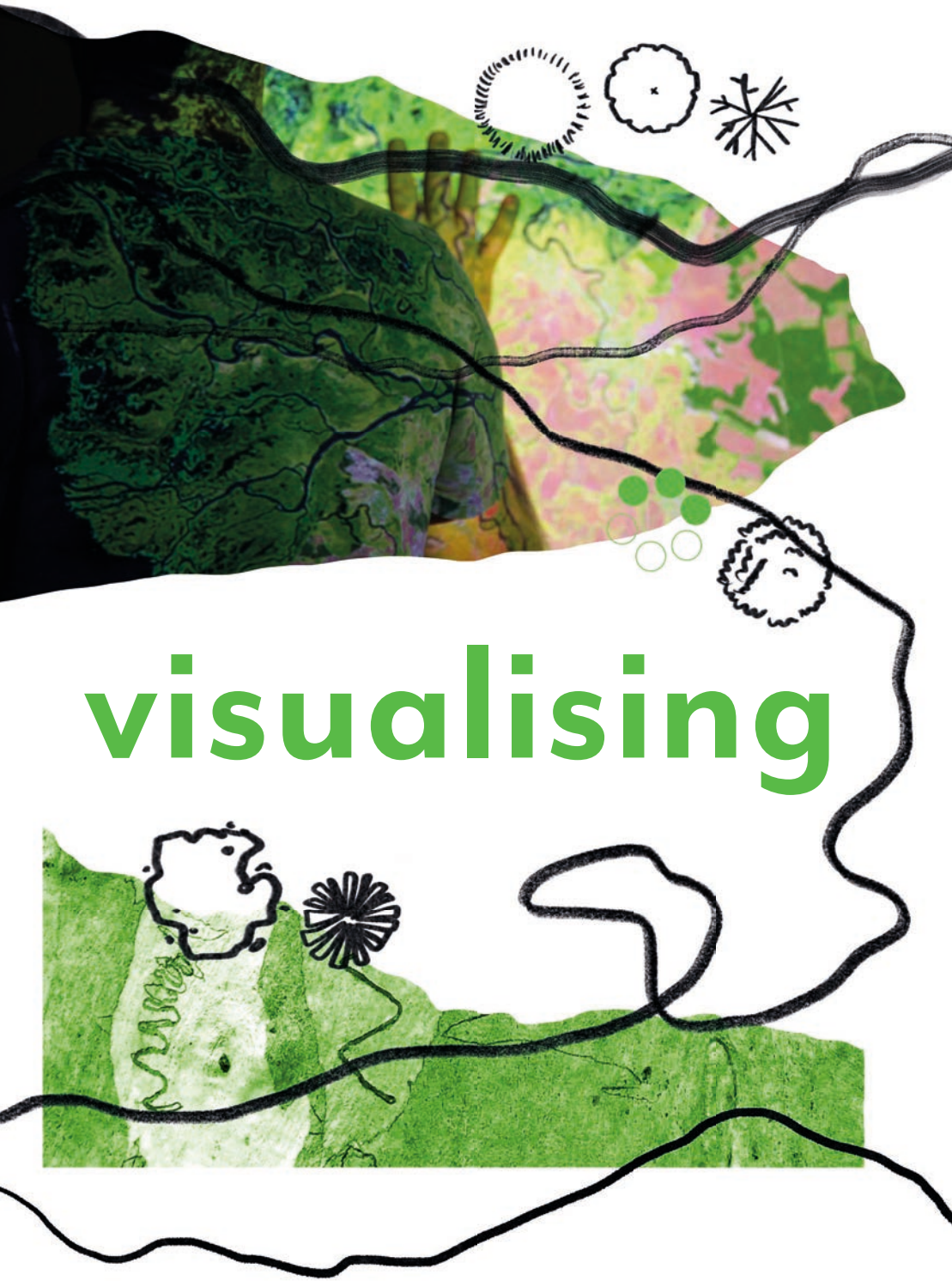
2. Time frame: years
What are the causes e.g. short term social, economic, cultural -shorter term histories and explanations.

3. Time frame: decades
Cultural values, language, organising institutions and government instruments, prevailing discourse.

4. Time frame: societal/civilisation
Myths and metaphors (archetypes, ancient stories, gut/ emotional responses).

Asking what, when, where and why can help probe.

- What has been tried, worked, not worked.
- How long, leading influences
- Where - context, proxy, adjacent situation
- Why - root causes, preconditions

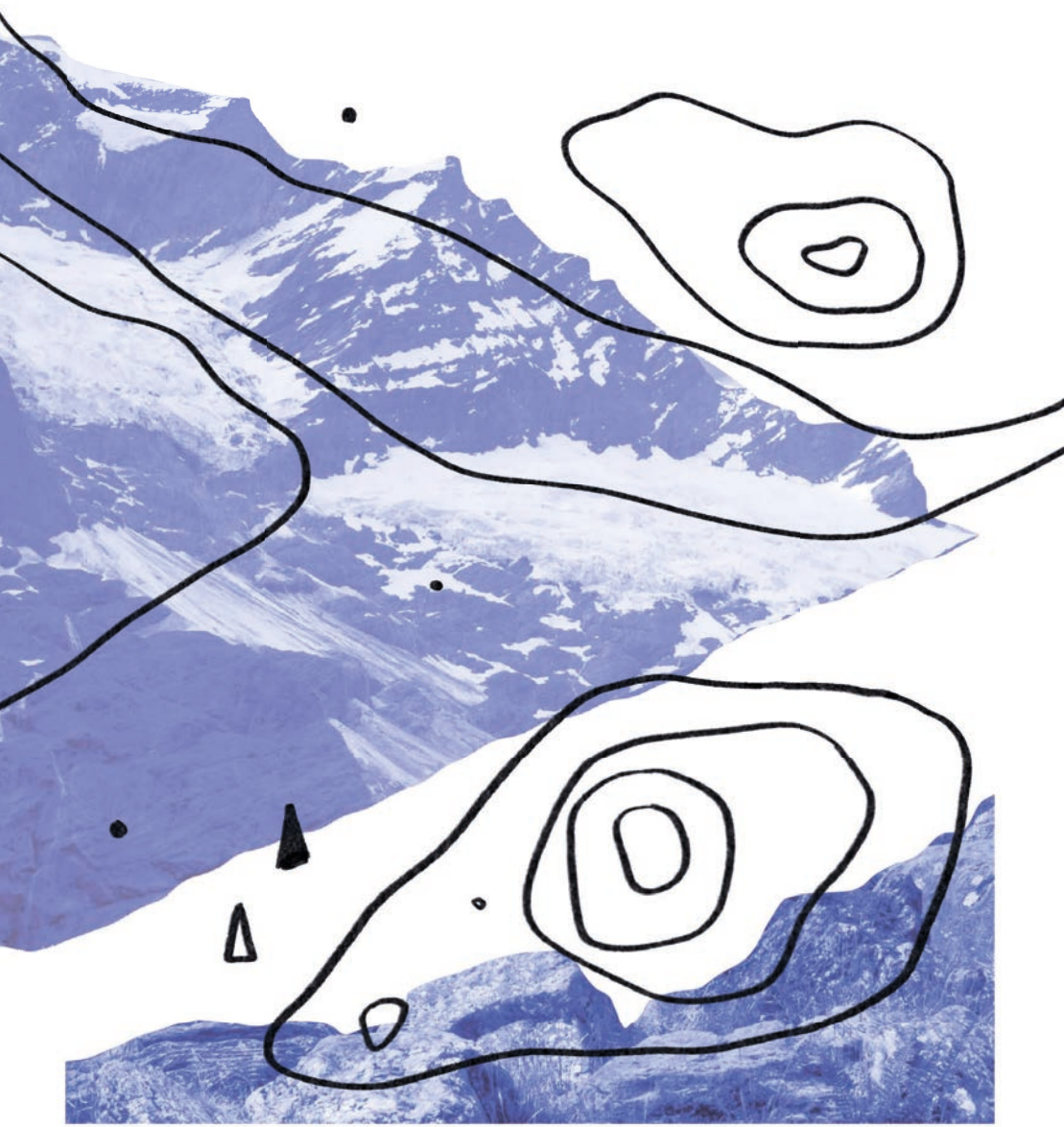


visualising

Visualising is much more than seeing – it invites us to tap into immense complexity that marries the anatomical potential of seeing to the rich intersections between our memories, our senses and perceiving anew. Transduction, the biophysical process of turning sensory stimulation into patterns and pathways for responding to life, is an amazing kind of alchemy and visualization helps us consciously tap into the information of texture, light and shadow contrasts, colour, form and space. As the adage 'seeing is believing' implies, we tend to give precedence to vision and in doing so we can short circuit the vast networks of sensory pathways that shape what we see. Our visual cortex alone overlays complex mappings of texture, contrasts, movement and geographic orientation and that's all without the wonder of being able to sense the world in commutations of colour.

It can come as a surprise to realise that what we say we see is often an abstracted composite. We constantly make sense by drawing on shorthand symbols that simultaneously are convenient communicators while also acting as blinkers that shield us from engaging with what is really present. There are times and places for both. By tapping into what we see and how we see with some time worn methods used by visual communicators, we can hone how we make use of this powerful mode of communication.

scaling



Scale is a powerful way to stretch our imaginations, assumptions and find ourselves in an ever expanding, ever moving cosmos of possibilities. As the industrial age has shown us, being able to scale up has tapped into the dynamics of creation, destruction and a deeper understanding of living processes. Our experiments and manipulations of scale have lent towards extractive growth but equally so a wider range of lenses can help us make new links between living systems and macro and micro interactions. This series of experiments can help reveal limitations, boundary shifts and unseen patterns of connection.

Scale and simple rules

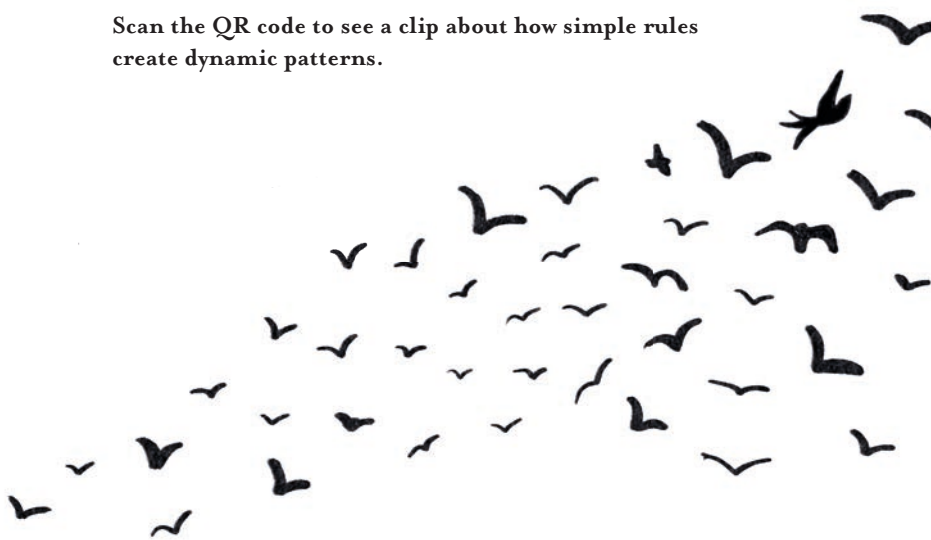
Background

Scale is a dynamic that intersects across multiple domains and in different ways. We often hear scale referred to in organising practices particularly as notions of growth and retraction - scaling up, scale down.

Playing with scale can reveal the simple rules that shape assumptions, values and potential ramifications or unintended consequences. Looking for simple rules can reveal patterns that we carry through from the past and be useful in testing how things fit together in localised contexts as we imagine possible futures.

In 1986 computer graphics artist Craig Reynolds developed a program to animate a collection of shapes on screen. By combining three simple rules, the emergent behaviour of the shapes remarkably mimics the real life flocking behaviour of birds.

Scan the QR code to see a clip about how simple rules create dynamic patterns.

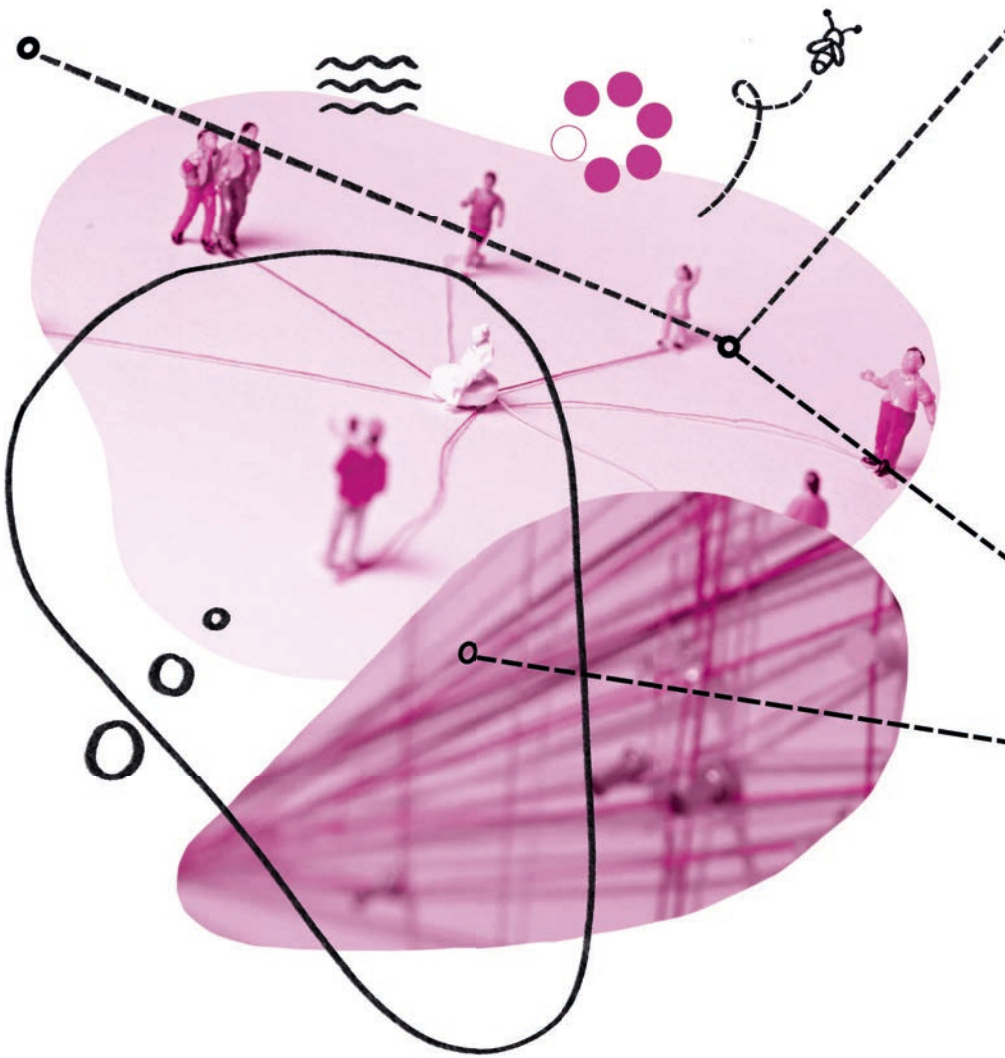


Try it yourself

Use one or more of the prompts below to kick off your thinking around scale and rules. Jot down your thoughts and look to use a range of media to record your experiments e.g. sketches, images, collages, formulas.

- Take something that is a small, recurring part of your life and increase its use significantly. For example, take a morning cup or coffee – what if everyone drank coffee like water 2-3 litres per day?
- Play the magician: magnify, shrink or eliminate a structure, system, organising behaviour or thing. E.g. car parks, an agricultural system, an insect, a house, a planet.
- Create giants and microbes: imagine if dinosaurs still walked the planet. How would that impact things? Take something very small and make it huge – what happens?
- Take a part or unit or system, repeat it while keeping it uniform or predictable as possible – e.g. create a new kind of Big Mac burger, medical panacea like Panadol, a flavour like vanilla essence.
- Take a pattern or dynamic that seems naturally occurring, rhythmic and sequential and disturb it with a random intervention or with a new recurring intervention. Think seasons, the 60 minute hour, aging.
- Take something that seems like a cornerstone of daily activity and make it extinct or a relic of the past.
- Create an intervention from the solar system/out of space.

conversations

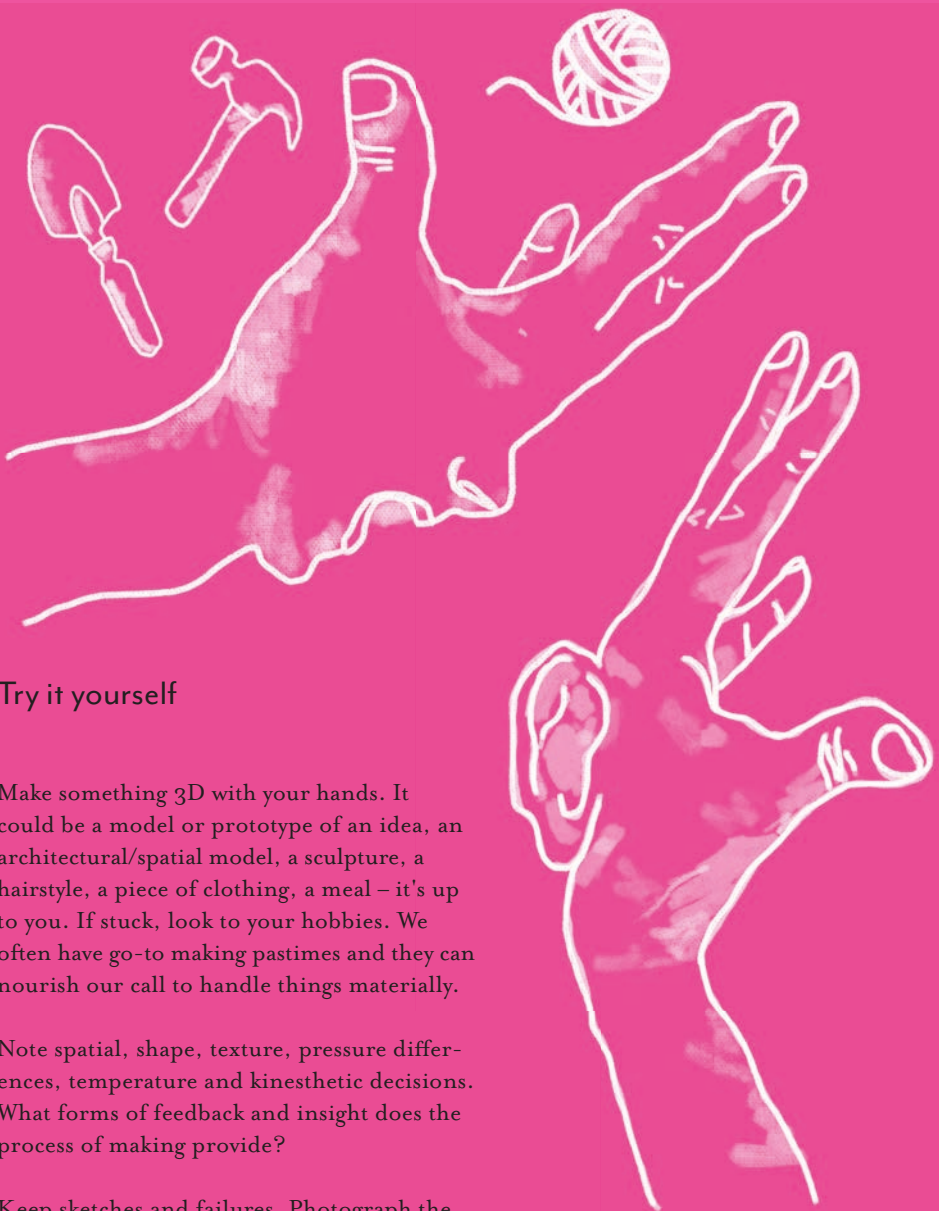


Background

Denotation and connotation are terms that are most commonly associated with linguistics. However over time the notion of what constitutes text has shifted towards a model of multimodality. In other words, the world around us is imbued with messages and assemblages that speak, guide and are reshaped in nonverbal language that is both physical, personal and interpersonal.

Multimodal communication interests designers of space, systems, services and experiences and increasingly disciplines that explore sense making such as linguistics, philosophy and social sciences. Our living environments are shaped by material decisions that have been explicitly conceived by designers and implicitly by decisions that appear less conscious. Either way they shape, often invisibly, the atmospheres of our habitats, our thoughts and imaginations.

A interesting example of the power of connotation is the design of car horns to appeal to buyers. Car companies are careful to match the sound of car horns to the 'personality' of the car, with BMW even hiring Hollywood composer Hans Zimmer to advise on the horn sounds of their electric vehicles.

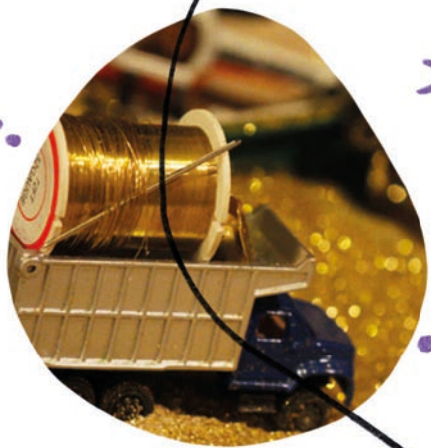


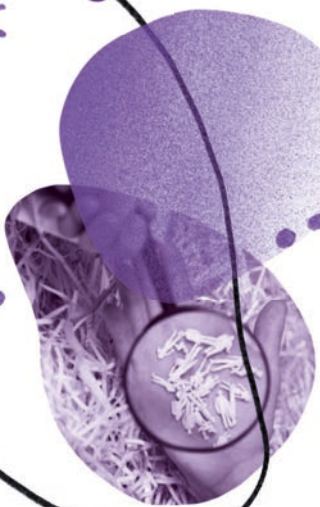
Try it yourself

Make something 3D with your hands. It could be a model or prototype of an idea, an architectural/spatial model, a sculpture, a hairstyle, a piece of clothing, a meal – it's up to you. If stuck, look to your hobbies. We often have go-to making pastimes and they can nourish our call to handle things materially.

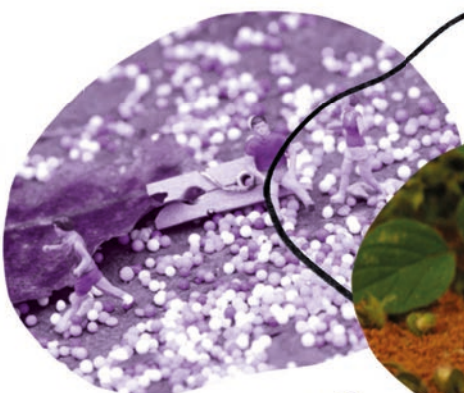
Note spatial, shape, texture, pressure differences, temperature and kinesthetic decisions. What forms of feedback and insight does the process of making provide?

Keep sketches and failures. Photograph the process and final model.





stories



Try it yourself

Create a set of rituals for a character or persona. This can be the first that comes to mind, it doesn't need much detail or thought for this part. Then step into their world and embellish it with rituals.

Create three rituals to get them through the day. Note any symbols or signs that are involved. These rituals could be:

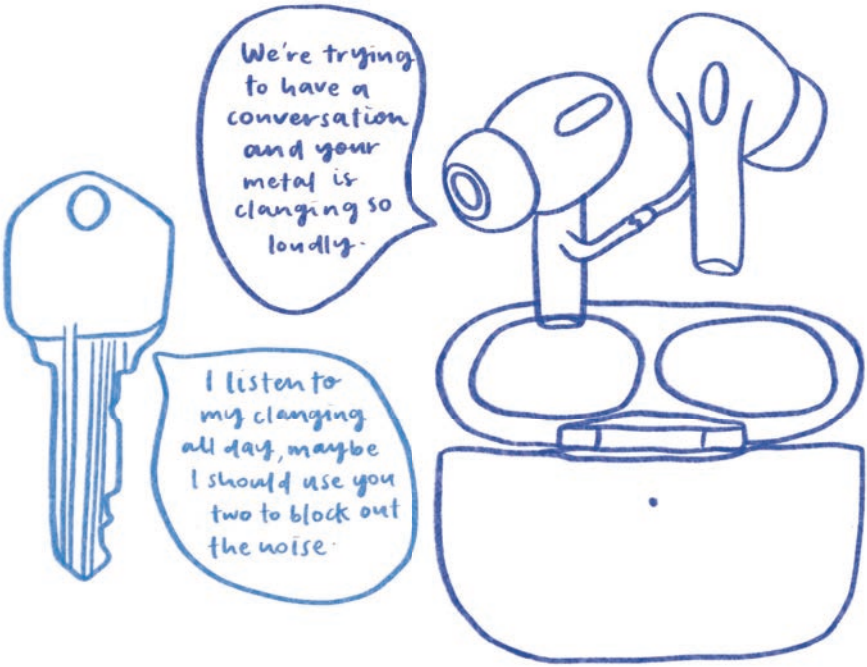
- A seasonal ritual
- An annual ritual
- A ritual for the morning, daytime and the night
- A ritual that maintains tradition
- An esoteric ritual
- A ritual for crises
- A ritual for an unknown future
- A ritual of your own distinct creation

Background

Most of us will have encountered stories where the characters are non-human or have been given anthropomorphic qualities. When we animate, we take qualities that are frozen in time and through motion imbue a range of living traits. By breathing life into the equation we introduce purpose and social or nonsocial responses that shape seen and unforeseen changes. We can play with collaboration, interactive impacts, memory and lines of reasoning. Patterns and interactions can reveal organising principles such as scale and language (including made up intonation and gestures).

Animating can also expose subtle preferences in attention such as picking up looped sequences in microseconds, evaluative scans for living vs mechanical reproduction. An organic or mild asymmetry seems more organic and living than perfect symmetry. Keep an eye out for animated depictions of living and non living/machine systems – what do you notice?

Pioneer animator Jan Svankmajer says "For me, animated film is about magic. This is how magic becomes part of daily life, invading daily life.... Magic enters into a quite ordinary contact with mundane things".



Try it yourself

Turn two objects you use frequently into characters and create a conversation between them. They might tell each other what their day to day lives are like, or you could include a challenge or gripe.

There are a range of ways to animate:

- A voice or video recording
- A comic strip
- Stop motion
- Dramatized dialogue
- Photo burst, slow motion or time-lapse on your phone camera

To extend this, you could give your characters two occupations, or distinct animal or plant personas. Cause them to meet en route somewhere – what advice can they offer each other based on their unique experience of life?