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Lifewide Learning Research & Development Group

**Towards a Better Understanding
of Our Own Learning Lives**

**152 Vignettes of Experiences
Involving Emergent Learning**

Introduction

1 The Learning Lives collaborative inquiry aimed to explore the nature of lifewide learning – how, why, when, what and where learning emerges in the everyday lives and practices of participants. The outcomes will inform Lifewide Education’s strategy for encouraging and supporting adult lifelong-lifewide learning. Over six weeks we invited participants to pay more attention to their learning in the different domains of their life, and to describe their experiences and insights in a series of learning vignettes. The collection of over 140 vignettes and reflections on learning in this compilation provide a valuable database through which to develop better understandings of adult lifewide learning.

2 This document is for the exclusive use of participants. Please do not share it with anyone else.

3 During the inquiry we hoped that participants would be conscious of the situations in which they were learning as it emerged in whatever you were doing. We hoped that once a week, when something noteworthy emerged, they would create a short vignette describing what happened and its significance to them. We were not expecting stories of major transformative experiences. Rather, we are hoping for stories about everyday situations and happenings that we don’t often pay attention to. Over the six weeks we anticipated that we might collect around 100 vignettes.

3 We offered the following guidance for the production of a vignette. “A vignette will comprise a text-based narrative typically 400-500 words (no more than 1 A4 page is expected but you can write more if you want to). It can include photos or other images.

It would be helpful to include the following information:

- 1 Title : The substantive theme
- 2 Domain: Identifies the part of your life in which the experience occurred
- 3 Narrative: describing an experience that was meaningful/significant to you from any part /domain of your life including information on such things as context, situations, the environment and how, why and what learning emerged
- 4 Reflections on what was learnt & why it was meaningful/significant together with any insights, wisdom and principles relating to everyday learning

4 We wanted participants to share their vignettes and encourage ongoing conversation and interactions so we set up a private (unlisted) group space on Linked In and said to participants. *“Please use this ‘safe’ space to share your experiences and the insights you gain from them and if possible your vignettes of learning. We encourage you to value other contributions and offer your own constructive commentary and questions aimed at promoting deeper reflection and understanding.”*

5 At the end of the whole process we provided an opportunity for participants to come together in a final meeting to share what had been learnt about the way learning that we have not planned for, emerges in our life.

6 We have tried to ensure that the vignettes in this collection are anonymous.

7 We appreciate greatly the enormous commitment of time and effort made by participants and for the generous way they shared their lives and their understandings in order that we all might learn.

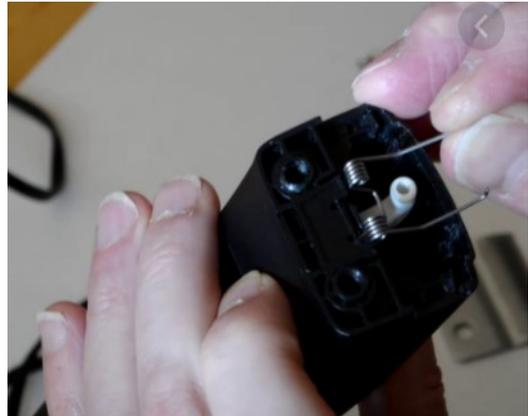
Norman, Rob & Jenny (Facilitators)

Vignette #1: Needing to Fix Something

Domain: Home/garden

Narrative: 'It's stopped working', my wife reported holding out the cordless branch cutter.... I recognise this as both a piece of information and a request... But these things are often designed to be unfixable, I think to myself, 'no user serviceable parts' and all that. Plus my experience of school (a very long time ago, but still somewhere buried within me and capable of being re-awakened by almost any encounter like this) was that me and practical stuff were not very compatible. In fact I'm tempted to say that my early formal education taught me a lot about what I could not do. However... I got the screwdrivers out and took the dead garden tool to bits, marvelling as I did so about how many, and how many different size screws were holding it together.

With a bit of wiggling it came apart, and I found myself looking at a collection of mostly unrecognisable and mostly inaccessible bits. Will I ever get it back together again? So, with nothing to lose, I lifted the switches out, cleaned these and put them back together and – it worked. Hoorah, and the opportunity to re-remind myself of two lessons 'my skills and competencies might not be strong in this area, but 'it's always worth having a go.' It does not always go this way, but when it does it's another small step in correcting some faulty learning from way back!



Reflections: Thinking about this experience a little more, I suspect it's partly about the challenge of 'having a go', partly about needing to try to mend stuff (itself down to a mix of a childhood where not everything was plentiful and a newer desire to avoid continuously buying new stuff as the answer when things go wrong). Plus I'm reminded that I'm not sure that I do know quite what to do when I start something like this, it's more about being willing to have a go and at the end, having done it, knowing that I could do it and having a better idea of what to do next time.

Keeping track of 'stuff' is important from bitter experience - so I did keep all the screws in relation to the holes they came out of. So some transfer of learning definitely went on. And a bit of reinforcement provided by a successful outcome, which helps me to remind myself that my earlier view - that practical stuff is something I can't do - is replaced by a more nuanced perspective, namely that - with some thinking, planning and perhaps a bit more time than others - I can actually succeed at practical stuff!

Vignette #2 Be prepared for something going wrong

Scenario:

I was pleased to be among a handful of people invited to deliver a series of online facilitation sessions for people working towards the National Professional Qualification for Headship. There was a fast-paced orientation session for us, as the platform, Blackboard, was an unfamiliar one to many of us still grappling with Zoom, TEAMS etc.

I knew how important it was to learn by experience and to be explorative and so I put my virtual hand up to try to do some of the tricks that BB offers. I had some success, but remained largely confused and tense on account of what seemed to be to be a plethora of tabs, buttons, links, functions and tricks, many of which led down routes involving several alternative branch-lines and which proved difficult to retrace. Furthermore, a few technical glitches occurred with the system, which seemed a cruel extra intervention of fate.

When the session ended, I wondered if I'd made a mistake, and if I was now merely an old dog, incapable of learning new tricks.

Reflection:

I was diligent in applying some strategies and insights born of many years in teaching and learning. These reminded me that it was important to keep trying, and to habituate the things that worked, while noting the problem areas. It was also important to collaborate with others, including several people with whom I'd be co-facilitating.

Actions and outcomes (so far):

I arranged a one-to-one practice with a colleague who loves to help people with IT, and who would be co-facilitating with me. We then arranged to turn up early for my first live session, by which time I'd done some more practice, written notes to self, and got hyped up for the challenge. On the day, I "arrived" very early and set up. However, my colleague didn't, which left no time for final tinkering. I found that I couldn't access the same (correct) system as him, and our technical support said I needed to log in from a different platform. As the first attendees arrived, I was struggling to remember my password for that other platform. There were seconds to spare by the time I got in. By the end of the day, I was sweating, exhausted and wiser.

What I (re-)learned:

Something will always go wrong, so expect it. There will often be someone around to help. There aren't many effective short-cuts to learning. Learning is hard. Learning, especially with others, is satisfying. Mutually supportive communication is hugely important. I can still do new tricks, and will be performing these over the next few weeks.

Vignette #3 Learning by Observing Others

Narrative: After years of anticipation, in November 2020, work at last began on a large extension project to our house. All rooms affected, which is the majority, have had to be 'cleared' – more like, contents packed up into boxes which are moved out of the way of potential work. We are living on site, it is lockdown, hence I am able to observe all that happens. This has been an interesting learning experience, one that will continue for many months to come.

I have watched as a team of Albanian labourers set about hacking shrubs, demolishing a crumbling garage, drilling up concrete then preparing the clay soil for foundations. The conditions remind me of the Somme and WW1, a period I have researched extensively, and I find myself revisiting events in my mind. As the men work, I listen to their chatter and try to identify words: I hear traces of Russian and Italian, and want to know more about this fascinating tongue.

I get an insight into their culture, too. Everything appears to be shared, and they extend this lack of boundaries to our possessions: if they see a brush lying around, they feel free to use it, when they accidentally destroy a fence panel, they feel entitled to use our exposed neighbour's property as a thoroughway. At one o'clock, they congregate in one area of the garden to share a meal, and for a solid hour, their laughter and chatter replace the sound of machinery.



The organisation of this project has been another source of learning. Months of to-ing and fro-ing with the council planning office, negotiations over what, to a lay person, seem minor changes, but to them require yet another payment before a decision can be taken ... I learn that we have to move the main drainage pipes, as we can no longer have access to these from a building, albeit an out-house. I researched and prepared a contract with our neighbours, who were also affected, then liaised with Thames Water as the requisite work was carried out and inspected.

The project has been impressively plotted by the builder, with a spreadsheet that is updated weekly: I did not appreciate this side of their work before. In order to settle their weekly bills, and pushed into it by the limited hours of banking during lockdown, I had to relent and start internet banking. This entailed learning how to operate the system, but also taught me how unreasonable my prejudice was: I am greatly impressed with the security and ease of this on-line service.

Sadly, I have also had some negative learning experiences as a result of our extension. The worst is how intolerant and malicious some people can be. We have lived in this house for twenty years, over which time one or another neighbour has always been causing noise, congestion and disturbance due to building work, all of which I have accepted without complaint. Not so one of our close neighbours who

have engaged in public dispute over the delivery of building materials (!) and complained to the council and builder countless times since the work began.

Reflection: Why have I written this as an example of everyday learning? Partly because it is just that, an ordinary event in our lives which millions of people will be experiencing. I chose it to demonstrate that learning can and does occur in such mundane circumstances, sometimes despite ourselves, sometimes by design. I learnt, for instance, simply by observing the labourers, much as children learn by example. But further learning was also prompted out of interest: I want to know more about the Albanian language and culture. This is all informal, self-directed learning, but I was also forced to engage in other forms as a matter of necessity. I had to learn how to use on-line banking and how to write a contractual undertaking for my neighbour. Learning has been cognitive and emotional, intended and unanticipated – indeed, it has included all dimensions proposed in Norman’s model.

When I sat down to write a vignette, I didn’t know where to start. I hope this narrative will encourage others who may be in the same position. You will be surprised how much learning is there once you start to probe things!

Vignette #4: Learning to achieve something at work

Experience: I'm on the mail list for the Qatar Foundation's (QF) global education think tank WISE events and publications. In early December I was informed of a new initiative called the Learning Ecosystems Living Lab (LELL). I decided to participate in the launch event, an online panel discussion Dec 10th. Each member of the panel was given 10mins to speak and what David Atchoarena, Director UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), had to say resonated with my own ideas and beliefs. I made a few supportive comments and posed some questions in the chat box but at some point, while he was speaking, I decided to contact him.

After the session I googled UIL and found his address and emailed him explaining the work that I had been doing with Lifewide Education. He responded positively within an hour and put me in touch with Deputy Director who is also Director of Lifelong Learning policy at UIL.

A few days later on Dec 16th I had an hour long discussion with him and a researcher involved in UNESCO's Learning City project. I could tell by their reactions to what I was saying that they were interested in the ideas and practices I was sharing and it was clear that they wanted to continue the conversation beyond the meeting. So I offered to produce a White Paper showing how the ideas and practices of lifewide learning and learning ecologies might be used to enrich the concept of lifelong learning and support the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The positive feedback I had been given motivated me to spend some of my Christmas preparing a White Paper on the theme of "Enriching and Vivifying the Concept of Lifelong Learning through lifewide learning and ecologies for learning & practice". It took over a week of fairly intensive work. I had to familiarise myself with UNESCO's policy positions and their 'Future's of Education initiative'. I downloaded and read UIL's reports citing passages that I thought were particularly relevant and then tried to show the relevance of the ideas of lifewide learning and education and learning ecologies. My aim was to develop a compelling narrative that would make sense to the UIL team. Through the process of reading and writing I gained new understandings about Lifewide's strategic position and value and how lifewide learning and education could be related to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals especially SD#4 'lifelong learning opportunities for all'. My new understandings are expressed in the White Paper and these were incorporated into Lifewide Educations Vision & Strategy statement. I

invited a few people to read and comment on it and received a little positive feedback but I was confident that the ideas were useful to UIL. I emailed the paper to the Deputy Director on Jan 1st.

In making this effort I realise that what I was doing was more than learning about something. In addition to learning about UIL's work and UNESCO's policy positions, I was developing a new position for Lifewide

Education's advocacy role and also, most importantly, trying to develop a collaborative working relationship with Dr Raul Cotera and UIL. That I was successful in this endeavour is shown in the email he sent me on Jan 11th.

From: "Valdes Cotera, Raul"
To: "norman.jackson"
Cc: "UIL-DirectorOffice"
Sent: Monday, 11 Jan, 21 At 18:52
Subject: FW: Lifewide learning

Dear Norman,

Thank you for taking the time to draft this white paper providing such an interesting perspective on the concept of lifelong and lifewide learning!

We were discussing how these ideas could be brought to the attention of a large interested audience and thought that it would be great to have a contribution to the UIL blog from you on the topic. The blog is available here: <https://thelifelonglearningblog.uil.unesco.org/> and includes contributions from UIL staff as well as international experts in the field of education. You can find the specifications for articles here: <https://thelifelonglearningblog.uil.unesco.org/about-this-blog/> If you are interested, we would be very pleased to receive and circulate your contribution in this way.

Also, UIL has established a series of webinars during the last year, which has been very well received. We plan to continue these webinars on a regular basis and I think it would be enriching to have you a speaker in a webinar. The themes and schedule are yet to be determined, but if it sounds good to you, we will get back to you with a concrete proposal.

As mentioned during our call, we are currently conducting a comprehensive research on higher education and lifelong learning. I believe that your holistic understanding of learning processes and environments will bring a very interesting new angle to the project. We will still need to discuss in the team how this could possibly be integrated within our current research framework, which may be clearer once we have completed the analysis of our global survey and can see the gaps that need to be filled. This process may still take up to two months.

Thank you again for sharing this interesting work!

Best wishes,

Raúl

Reflection/interpretation: My learning was driven by an attempt *to achieve several things*. There was no planning, just an intuitive response to try to keep moving in a particular direction. Firstly, I wanted to develop the strategic position of Lifewide Education in order to show that the ideas we had developed had value in the context of evolving thinking about the role of lifewide learning in the dominant policy idea of lifelong learning. This new thinking fed into our new vision and strategy statement. Secondly, I wanted to show that we were delivering on the role we had set ourselves to be an advocate for lifewide learning and to influence the thinking of decision/policy makers. I needed to learn in order to achieve these things, I also needed to act in ways that were informed by how I have acted in the past in order to achieve similar objectives. I am clearly in an unfolding situation but in achieving this short-term goal I have created new opportunities to keep working towards these goals over a longer time-scale.

Continuity of learning: I had been invited to write a blog for the UNESCO website which I submitted on 18/01/21. But now that I have learnt and achieved these things I can make a rough plan for future learning. Firstly, I can share the White Paper with a range of individuals I know and invite their comments. In this way I can gain perspectives other than my own and refine my ideas and propositions in the light of these. Secondly, we (Lifewide Education) can provide an opportunity for the discussion of the ideas in the paper through an online seminar. Thirdly, we could form an issue of Lifewide Magazine (our most important vehicle for sharing ideas) around the White Paper and invite other people to write articles to offer their own perspectives. Fourthly, I have already approached the editor of the Springer International Handbook of Lifelong Learning to see if the chapter I have been invited to write could be formed around the ideas in the White Paper. All of these ideas will extend the value of my effort to learn and all will develop my understandings further.

Ecologies for learning and practice at work (a theoretical perspective)

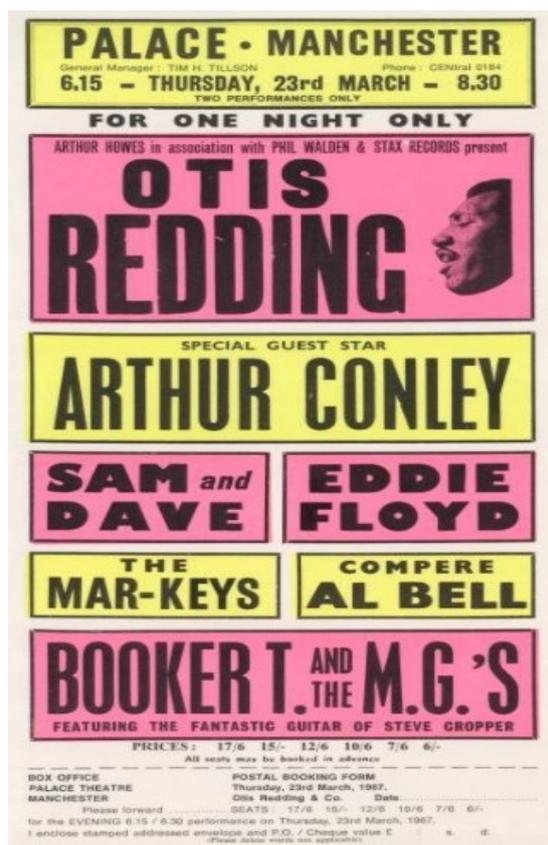
I am interested in the idea of ecologies for learning and practice and I can view my experience from an ecological perspective. What I constructed was an ecology of practice for the purpose of learning. It involved a lot of actions that were undertaken in order to learn but it also included actions that were trying to achieve other things – like forming relationships for particular purposes.

The initial ecology I created was to learn about the Learning Ecosystems Living Lab (LELL). Through the experience of participating in an online panel discussion I spotted an affordance (the possibility of engaging UIL Director David Atchoarena). I tried to make the connection and from this effort a number of events unfolded the most important of which was an interaction, via Teams, with the UIL Deputy Director. The feedback I received from this interaction gave me the confidence to create the White Paper – this contained my main effort to learn and to relate my ideas to the thinking of UNESCO policies. The discussion with the D.D. was key to building a relationship and my effort to produce the white paper revealed to UIL that I wanted this relationship to continue. His response indicates to me that UIL also see value in extending this relationship. Through these interactions that were facilitated by technology, learning and relationship development emerged for both participants.

Vignette #5 Identity Work

Experience: I have an ongoing email conversation with one of my school mates and a lot of the chat is in the forms of youtube links to music we listened to in the mid 1960's. As 15/16 year old we loved listening to soul music played by artists on the Atlantic STAX record label. We bought and shared albums by artists such as Otis Redding, Sam Cooke, Sam and Dave and many more... These chats evoked many pleasurable memories of growing up. My friend asked me a question about when we had gone to see Otis Redding live and it got me searching for information on the gig we had seen. I found a poster but no recording of the event but I did find a recording of the show at another venue filmed 3 weeks after we had seen him.

Once I got started on this nostalgic trip I couldn't stop and I have just been listening to some wonderful stories told by Steve Cropper who was the guitarist in the STAX band. Youtube is a fantastic resource for not only music but for discovering stories behind the music.



Joe Chambers interviewing Steve Cropper for Musicians Hall of Fame

Listening to the music and watching the performers was a fantastic experience and its burned into my memory but learning about how the musicians felt about each other, how they came to be in the band and how they felt about the experience on their European tour took me to another level of understanding. I also discovered a fantastic article in the independent which fills in some of the

details. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/stax-the-heart-of-soul-434649.html>

Reflection: I've been distracted for about 20mins while I put this vignette together but I think its typical of the way in which my knowledge and understanding gets extended in the course of a typical day along-side other things I'm doing. Perhaps this falls into the category of biographical learning. Part of this story it is about revisiting my past – who I once was which is somewhere inside me. Its "identity work" and this type of knowledge is an important part of my emotional wellbeing. While I have been writing I had lots of memories about that gig in Manchester and the (few) times when I skipped school to listen to soul music with my friends which I guess is related to becoming who I am.

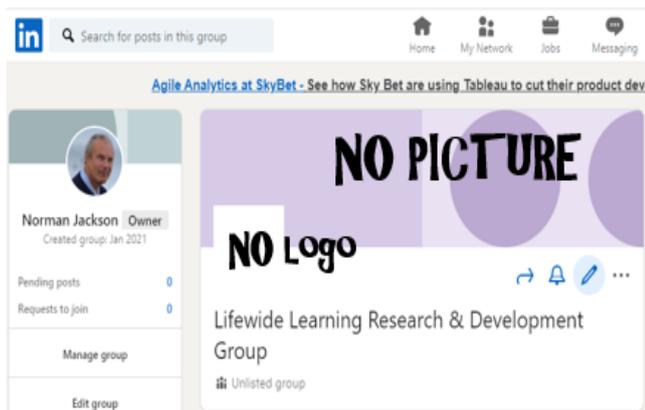
Vignette #6 Getting Stuck

Sometimes after trying everything we can think of to learn we are still stuck. I find this particularly so with technology. I learnt long time ago from my son that when you get stuck with technology 'ask google' and for the most part it works as long as you ask the right question... and that often involves a lot of trial and error until you find the right words.

I consider myself reasonably proficient with using a computer and social media but this last two days I've had a couple of problems that I have yet to learn how to solve. It reminds me that sometimes (quite often actually) we may not know how to learn something.

1 My wife has just bought a new laptop.. actually one I advised her to buy which means I feel responsible for its working! She needs to use it for work conversations and yesterday she came to use the ear buds for the first time. There was no sound only loud static. She was not amused and soon proved to me that it wasn't the headset by plugging in mine. As far as she was concerned the laptop was broken. Mistakenly, I glibly said 'no problem', went to settings and discovered that everything that should be enabled was enabled. There followed the best part of a couple of hours asking google and dell what I had to do.. I followed up quite a few things but nothing has worked yet. I will keep trying and my secret weapon (my son) will be home tomorrow so if all else fails he's my next port of call.

2 As if this was not enough, I have spent another couple of hours this morning messing around trying to upload a header image and logo to the new linked in group I've set up. I have done it several times before and it is quite straightforward. There are plenty of instructions but these all relate to something that is working and not something that refuses to work. I have cleared my browsing history and used a search engine other than google all to no avail.



Reflection: I'm familiar with this type of struggle when it comes to technology. Something doesn't work and we have to work out (learn) how to fix it. Learning to use technology often involves just trying to use it...it's a trial and error process that is speeded up if someone shows us what to do. But when things go wrong, and the information I have accessed doesn't help me solve the problem – I feel incompetent, angry with myself (and the service provider) and frustrated. The feeling of being stuck brings out a lot of negative emotions and is bad for my wellbeing! Worse still there is an opportunity cost. I am way behind doing the things I intended and my emotional state is not conducive to work. I suppose this is also where resilience and persistence kick in. If these things haven't worked where can I find out or get help from? Perhaps that's tomorrow's lesson. I'm going to go for a walk to try get rid of some of my angst.

Postscript #1 15/01/20

I went back to my problem several times during the next 24 hours. Although my problem was fairly trivial I was annoyed with myself for not being able to solve it. I like my websites and pages to have an identity and this was irritating me. I was also annoyed with the fact that the information provided

by Linked In did not help me and there was a complete lack of any other support on Linked In. I am not sure how long I would have gone on googling for solutions but I eventually came across a post <https://www.linkedin-makeover.com/2015/02/26/linkedin-qa-how-to-add-a-logo-to-your-linkedin-profile-page/> and I knew when I read it, that it provided the answer. The reason I couldn't upload my company logo and create a header was because my company name was not in the title of the page. So I changed the name of the page to include the company name and low and behold my logo and header uploaded. Then I changed the title back to my original title without the company name.



Postscript #2 #19/01

A few days later I had another go at fixing the audio on my wife's computer. After spending a bit of time searching youtube I found a clip 'How to Fix Sound or Audio Problems on Windows 10' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncO8vekrfao> I noticed it had over 6 million views so reckoned it must be providing good advice. I dutifully followed the instructions and 4 mins into the video, having updated the driver I had sound working in the headphones. I realise that all I learnt was how to fix a particular problem by simply following a set of instructions.

Vignette #7 What Counts as Learning?

I know that most if not all of my learning is building on stuff I already know and can do so there is a question of what actually counts as new learning. I pondered this question as I prepared the evening meal for the family. I had decided on Fish Pie. I have made Fish Pie before with fish and a topping of mash potato as the main ingredients but usually used a pre-prepared white sauce. I couldn't find a white sauce in the supermarket so I had to make one from scratch. I find it hard to believe myself that I hadn't made one before, so I decided to look up, 'how to make a fish pie sauce' on YouTube. I found a video clip and followed the instructions and the result was delicious.



Reflection: They say necessity is the mother of invention but its also the mother of learning. I make a lot of family meals so I know the basics for cooking a meal, so I was adding to what I already knew and could do. I didn't see the situation as an opportunity for learning rather, it was doing what I had to do. I had watched my wife and daughters make sources so I had a rough idea and I could probably have had a go at making a sauce, but I found it really helpful to watch someone making the sauce that I wanted to make at the point I wanted to make it. I guess you might call it 'just in time' learning. I recognise that I used the resources on YouTube to help me make something in the kitchen and I had all the tools and ingredients necessary so my environment was set up to help me do the job. Through the process of making I know I have committed the simple procedure to memory and so I guess I can claim I have learnt something - even though it's quite trivial. More importantly perhaps, I'm confident to try making other sources.

Vignette #8 We learn the same things over and over again

I was invited to write a post for a high profile blog so I put quite a lot of effort in to constructing and polishing it. I was pleased with the result. But guided by past experiences I decided to ask someone else who didn't know what I was writing about to read it, to check that it made sense to people who were not familiar with what I was writing about.

As I was thinking this, who should walk past me but my 22 year old daughter. I told her I would make her a cup of tea if she would read it and give me some feedback. After she had read it, I asked her if she understood it. She said, "it's okay but who is it written for?" Of course this is the crunch question, so I launched into an explanation which also took in why I thought that what I had written was relevant to everyone. She stopped me and said, "well say what you have just told me." I recognised that what she said was true. What I had just said in two sentences captured the essence of the 700 word post – so I thanked her and amended and improved my post.



Reflection: Of course I know that we should always try and gain feedback on our work to check that others can see the meaning that we see in it - but I have to admit that I don't always do this even when its easy to do so. This incident showed me the value of designing feed back into what we do. I can think of many instances like this where we learn the same thing over and over again and it is a necessary part of learning and acting. I guess through such acts involving members of the family we can act as a role model. The incident also shows how life in the home environment (because we are all working at home) can feed into our working life.

Vignette #9: Learning in planning/facilitating social learning

The context is this research project for which these vignettes are being produced. It begins with a vision – an imagined idea and a rough idea how it might work. It continues with presenting the idea to others and persuading others to be involved (since this is intended as a social learning process) and it continues with designing the process in detail and developing the tools (eg guidance and exemplars) and the technological infrastructure to support the social learning process. Then you have to find and persuade people who have not been part of the design process to participate. And once the process has started you have to facilitate – encourage, provoke, support, guide – do whatever is necessary to try to make it work. Then, stuff emerges from the process, you have to help synthesise and curate it, for only then will you know what you have explored. And all this has to be done within the time frames you have set for the project. The net effect is to provide many affordances or opportunities for learning. Every stage of the process, every communication and other form of interaction and every artefact that is produced contains within it the potential to use existing learning and to extend or adapt that learning in the current situation and circumstances. The whole process and practice might be conceived as ‘learning to do it all over again for the particular situation and set of circumstances.’ Although we might pull out examples of new learning in any part of this process, for me the most important learning is the metalearning, ‘the execution of the whole and what emerged from the whole.’ In an ecological sense this is the way that everything has been woven together to achieve the result. It’s the metalearning that provides the platform for the overall advancement of understanding and achievement.



Reflection: Looking back on the work I have done I can see that I have designed a process and I’m confident, through the example vignettes that have been produced that, it will provide insights into lifewide learning if participants engage in the way it is intended. This is however my biggest doubt and concern and I know we will have to work hard to get a critical level of engagement. I am confident that the new resources that have been produced – the guidance and conversational space will support the process. I’m also confident that my co-facilitator is in tune with my thinking. Learning is embedded in the whole design – it is the first time we have tried to create a research process like this, although elements of it have been used in other processes before. Time will tell whether it achieves what I hope it will achieve.

Vignette #10 Learning that insidiously contributes to our evolving identity

Narrative

In the current lockdown, we have little opportunity to experience out of the ordinary events so I hope readers will not be put off if I write about what I hope is, for most, a rare event: a funeral celebration I attended today for a cousin of my husband.



I say out of the ordinary, but tragically, the man lying in the coffin today was in the self-same parlour four weeks ago, performing the Hindu rituals for his aged mother. Who could have predicted that we would all be back to say farewell to him just weeks later? Now, rather than sporting a white dhoti, here he lay fully dressed.

I had expected to learn more about his early days growing up in Sri Lanka before coming to study chemical engineering in the UK, and so I did. His surviving siblings had lovingly recorded videos from their respective homes in Canada and Australia; childhood friends and those from his student days in England recalled highlights from their shared times; a series of photos accompanied by music significant to his wife and children needed no words to tell the story of this generous man, who had devoted his life not to engineering but to caring for the elderly. These were all relayed via Zoom across the continents. (I had learnt, just a month ago, how effective this platform is in uniting family when the pandemic keeps them cruelly apart.)

Yes, I learnt these things, but the greatest lesson I took from today's events was human resilience in the face of disaster. The deceased's two sons, aged 7 and 14, innocently played paper, stone, scissors as we waited for the ceremony to begin. Later, the younger boy could be heard laughing beside his father's open coffin, ignorant of the pain around him. How we might wish to return to such days of insouciance! Only last month, I had been reminded of the difference between how I, a westerner, had been cushioned from death and never seen a body before the age of 53, and the ease felt by this Hindu community in the presence of the death of a loved one. There was no fear, only love as each stage of the rituals required cleansing, touching and kissing the body before the coffin was closed.

The greatest examples of fortitude were shown today by the elder son and his mother. I need to explain that this was a mixed marriage, and to an outsider, the boys appear as white as their mother. They have not been brought up to speak Tamil and although they are used to attending Hindu events, the meaning behind rituals would be foreign to them. According to tradition, the eldest son, just as his father had done last month, led the rituals. This he did with immense dignity and humility, carefully following the instructions of the iyer (priest), who gently explained the meaning of each action: placing the butter around the body was because death causes rigidity, making cremation difficult; the chanting was to release his father's spirit... the words enlightened us all, this being an Indian variant on the Sri Lankan ceremonies we are used to.

Later, his mother spoke to the viewers on Zoom, holding her sons close and standing beside the open coffin for one last time. Not once did she falter throughout the long hours. She was demonstrating humankind's amazing ability to cling to life and live each day to the full, however bitter our loss – and allowing the memory of the lost one to live on through their own deeds.

Comment:

I wanted to write this as an example of the sort of learning that can often go unacknowledged. It was informal and very personal, yet surely it is just such experiences that make life so meaningful for us? Is this not the form of learning that insidiously contributes to our evolving identity?

Vignette #11 Learning from reminiscence

This second lockdown is hitting many of us harder than the first one did. Sometimes it's the small things. During the first lockdown the golf courses in our town were closed and therefore open to public. I have never before been on a golf course, so at the age of 42 this was the first time I explored this type of space. They are huge! At least the one outside of town closest to our home. But I had a problem, during my initial walk there were welcoming signs to the public that also provided some rules. Rule one stated: please stay off the greens. I looked around helplessly. Are you joking? Everything here is green! How do I know what a greens green is? So like the small child in the video clip—shared earlier in our group—I engaged in learning by imitation. Watching other walkers. The places they went to and didn't.

Well versed in reflexive practice and observation, I began to notice that there are differences in the grass. One very obvious, the grass significantly longer, but I also noticed that the short grass had two different lengths. There were also funny patches on the grass, and little flags, I am still not sure what they are about as they were irrelevant to walking and cycling beyond: 'stay off them' and cognitive load was a major issue during the first lockdown. I have learned to consciously decide against more input when I am close to overload. The ADHD brain can be a bit volatile when it comes to this. There was so much to explore on that walk. I noticed big patches of native bluebells slowly pressing through the ground and took note to visit them again. The variety and old age of many of the deciduous trees (If you can't remember the word, there is a mnemonic. It sounds a bit like decision, and these trees decide when to have leaves and when not. Other than pine trees.) was a surprise and delight, a small creek meandered through the vast space and I meandered with it, finding delight in small bridges dotted across. I liked to wander and watch in the early morning without people about, or take my Mountainbike along the 'rough'. This one I learned from my partner who was enlisted as a teacher to check that my learning by observation and imitation led to the right conclusion. It was in fact permissible to use the bike on the rough. The golf course confirmed on their Facebook page.

Reflection

This vignette is about learning from reminiscence. During the lockdown I have begun to send my gran and my partner's mum photos and photo-stories of all our adventures to ward off their loneliness. Inevitably this activity made me reminisce about the experiences and learning that was part of the last years, which somehow snuggled in unnoticed. Some research indicates the positive effects of reminiscence on mental health. Shellman (2020) suggests that reminiscence will have a significant role to play in coping with the experiences post-pandemic. Additionally the first task about creating the map made me think about the process of reminiscence as I had to recall the domains of significance and contemplate why these are significant at the moment.

Vignette # 12 Learning from reflections on my current lifestyle

Scenario:

My work is very irregular in that there are some heavy, boring days and some very light days, as well as the occasional stressful days requiring significant preparation followed by live online interactions using unfamiliar media and content (see my previous reflection). These require an assertive, explorative approach.

Noticing chance opportunities:

Today, there was the serendipitous coincidence of a stressful – well, challenging, at least – all-day session and some highly relevant content, part of which concerned stress management.

I've always tended to avoid fads and fashions, including publications by people who become famous for offering amazing solutions – but I'm not cynical about this. So, when we came to the section on building resilience and reducing stress, I gave Covey my full attention, as did all those participating.

Using the chance:

Having decided consciously to be explorative in my collaboration with my co-facilitator, I'd already established the scope to offer personal perspectives on the content, and to try different ways of engaging the participants – whole-group, chat box, breakout groups, listening to exposition, plus elaboration and exemplification by the facilitator.

When we came to Covey I realised I could make an inventory of opportunities that I could take, or that I do take or don't/can't take to manage the stresses of just getting on with life as positively as possible despite the pandemic, as well as dealing with new challenges.

The five areas of activities from Covey were:

Physical – Mental – Social/Emotional – Spiritual – Creative

Examples of using these included: Exercise and sleep – Set time for reflective learning and strategic work – Family or other social activities – Uplifting experiences – Hobbies, such as playing an instrument. What was hinted at was "being explorative".

I realised that I had many items in place, and indeed was very fortunate, but there was still the chance to take a more explorative approach to some of them. For example, exercise has been good, and sleep getting better. But my guitar has been standing around, unstrummed and unpicked, for weeks. I haven't been enjoying much art. My work timings have been wrong. Then, on cue, a local magazine arrived, asking for volunteer readers for the vision impaired!

Intentions:

So, starting soon: performing, recording, learning, empowering... I feel more upbeat already!

Vignette #13 Back to University

Domain: further learning

Narrative: After obtaining a BA(Hons) in Fine Art a couple of years ago I had decided that learning never stops. Whether we choose to continue in a formal way or not we are embedded in a learning narrative that wraps our lives. If we choose to learn we unfold our learning bit by bit layer by layer like in the old-fashioned game of pass the parcel where at the end you were confronted with the present. This was either a pleasant surprise or a big disappointment. In my case it was the best present ever. As I studied and learnt and got frustrated and rejoiced or was heavily let down, a new world of wonder opened its gates. I was 52 when this happened and had waited more than 20 years to get back to uni. Life with all its turns and bends had invited me to wait till then and now I have found my next learning opportunity in an iPGCE.

Thrilled as I may be, I am starting all over again with a new university, a new online platform with new navigation tools, new peers and a new tutor and hopefully a renewed mind, open to this next challenge. Not new as just out the box but new as in ready, somewhat fearless and determined.

The reason I signed up was that I am ready for it and wish to learn more, inspired and induced to move along, in search of new and refreshed knowledge that will hopefully set my career in a new direction.

Reflection: At the moment I am in the phase of thrilled chaos. What do I have to do? Where do I post? How do I organize my time? How much of this is enjoyment and how much is sense of duty? How can I use what I am learning readily so I can experiment with it? How does it fit in with work and where is it going to take me? Basically... just a few questions. I know that some questions will go unanswered and I will stumble in more questions. May choice and sagacity guide my path and may I once again connect with the universal wisdom I have found when reaching out.

References: The Spirit of My Past, The Spirit of My Present and the Spirit of My Future. Quote:

Sometimes you will
never know the
value of a moment,
until it becomes a
memory.



Vignette #0: A pre-vignette vignette

Domain/s: Social Media, Professional Learning & Work

Narrative: Its Saturday morning (29th Jan) and I log in to this LinkedIn group to see if there had been any posts on the group pages (there were none the last time I looked). However, this time I see *many* posts and, in particular, ones that include 'Vignette #3' in their title ... Vignette #3? (*SHIT! ... I am already behind in this process*). I go back to the documents that were emailed and, with some relief, realise that I am not as behind as I thought. Apparently, my first task is to prepare a 'Domains of life' map. (*PHEW! ... I can do that*). So, I spend the next few hours creating such a map. I feel better that I am prepared with a comprehensive map for our first synchronous hook up. (*YES! ... I am on track*). Now I am feeling a little too morally superior (joke) as I drink my 3rd coffee and do a final edit. But as I do this edit, I get to wondering if my map does what it is meant to do? Have I done it 'right'? (*HANG ON A 'SEC'! ... I know about this*).

Reflection: I recognise that the feelings I experienced this morning are akin to the feelings that I work hard to avoid my students from experiencing. That is, them knowing that I know they have lives beyond their studies and that sometimes life gets in the way of the timely delivery of formal assessment tasks. I pride myself on being as generous as institutionally possible in this regard.

But even more than this, it is the 'getting it right' part that concerns me. I like to think I design learning activities where there is more than one 'right' way to complete them. And yet here I am worrying about my own 'rightness'. Even while the instructions given are more like 'helpful suggestions', I *still* wanted to 'get it right'! (*OUCH!*).

Learning: While I *know* this is not meant to be a formal scholarly piece of writing, but I can't help remembering an account of Stephen Brookfield learning to swim that I read many years ago (*there was something in it about a pasty white Englishman that still makes me smile*). The main point I took from it though, and that resonates today, is that 'if you wanted to improve your own teaching practice then try putting yourself in your learners' shoes'. I think/hope that I just did! So now I am even more grateful to have an opportunity to learn about learning. I also wonder if sometimes we also have to relearn something have forgotten. (*hmmmm...?*).

Vignette#15:

Title. Attempting 'Virtual Grandparenting'

Domain. Family, a new role

Narrative. In my head there are lots of beliefs about being a grandparent, idealised visions about lots of face-to-face contact, doing stuff together, support and encouragement. Plus, not taking on a role as an alternative parent, of course! But, in a pandemic, with two grandchildren living on another continent, who we have not seen face-to-face for eighteen months.... And last saw the younger one when she was weeks old. Birthdays and Christmas's have come - and gone – and I've become both more proficient in Skype and increasingly conscious of the limitations of the technology. Ever necessary but ever insufficient – for me at least.

Reflection. For me this encapsulates the reduction of contact and loss of 'self in close community' that the pandemic has brought into my life, and the associated sense of loss in terms of my – and others - ability to implement carefully crafted plans. My sense of personal agency has been challenged as never before. Yet at the same time I'm ever seeking to rise to the challenge, in this case of making sense and developing relationships and sharing meaning(s) with a four and a one-year-old with whom I can't have the kinds of contact I cherish. For me that means finding imaginative ways to enter their thinking with a much-reduced range of 'clues' as to the richness of their developing lives, of finding contexts where we can meet, interact, share and grow together. It's helped me appreciate that there is more to Lego than I ever imagined, that children's songs - and associated actions – do seem to work on the small screen, and that recording Mr Men stories for sharing (the books are so small you can see me and the pages of the book on the screen) were both popular – for a while – and worryingly stereotypic. Perhaps most of all though, is the sense of striving for meaningful contact in a new context where – for the first time in my life – I have attracted the label 'elderly'. That's a much wider challenge to my self-belief, but this experience has brought it into sharp relief.

Vignette # 1 - What happens when we are no longer able to learn?

Domain: Work

Narrative: So over the last year I have been working on and off as a Health Care Assistant in a hospital, for those who are unsure what an HCA does, it largely consists of wiping bums, despite this it is generally a fun job! One of the most enjoyable bits is chatting to the patients, wiping someone else's bum in silence is fairly awkward otherwise, each of them has a story, and there is nothing more interesting than getting different insights into people's lives. There are many stories I could share, and many things I have learned, but my most recent shift threw up some interesting questions about what happens when we can no longer learn?

Learning at its most basic it seems to me, is taking the information you are told, retaining it, and applying it to the world around. But patients with dementia are unable to do this middle step, there is no information retention so they can't use the information they have just been given. My patient on this particular shift, was profoundly demented, and had no capacity to retain information from one minute to the next, I was asked which day of the week it was, and where we were, around 30 times in the first hour! Our patient had stopped learning because she was unable to retain and process the information flowing in from the world around her. But she still retained some excellent (hilarious) memories of her childhood, and was undoubtedly entertaining, but there was no ability to retain what her senses were telling her in her present.

Reflections: Many here will be familiar with dementia, and its effects, and I suppose I am still grappling with what it tells us about learning, and how we can take this forward as individuals, and what it has taught me. The aspect of my story that I find most interesting and the learning that emerged from my work situation, is how, despite being unable to retain the information, the questions kept flowing. It made me think that there is deep intrinsic human need to learn, in order to understand the information that is flowing in from the world, from a basic to a complex level. In medicine, patients are sometimes described as 'confused' or 'anxious' when they are suffering from dementia, it is clear that this is in direct relation to them being unable to understand the world they live in and what is happening to them.

We are fortunate to be able to learn, and each day we do so in many tiny intangible ways, and this learning it seems to me is as intrinsic to being human as breathing is. While we are conscious and able to speak, we continue to ask questions to try to understand the world around even if we cannot process and remember the information in we are given to the questions we ask.

Vignette 17 : Another messy struggle with technology that remains a work in progress!

Domain: Hobby/Musical interest

Narrative: My most significant learning experience this week involved another tussle with technology (I seem to have lots of these in my life). For an hour or two over four afternoons, my friend and I tried in vain to find a way of playing our guitars together via the internet. Given that that most people use zoom and skype it sounds like a simple problem but it was anything but simple.

Context: I've been making music with my friend for over 20 years. We've played in the same bands and for the last couple of years we have been working on a musical. He wrote the songs and I wrote the narrative and some of the lyrics. But in the last 12 months, thanks to covid, we have



hardly played together. We have both reached the point where we would like to find a way of using technology to help us play at a distance. We started with Zoom and Facetime but the sound quality was poor. We knew that the problem would be latency (delays between the time we played and the time we heard each others sounds), and it was.

After checking YouTube we found Jam Kazam – free software that is designed to enable musicians to play together. I downloaded the ap and set up an account and my friend did the same. Then we both set about trying to get it work. I attached the audio interface which we had previously used to record music, using branded software and tried to get my computer to recognise it. One piece of audio software did but the other didn't and I could not hear myself through my headphones. Ideas about what to try next only came into my head as I fiddled with settings in the software.

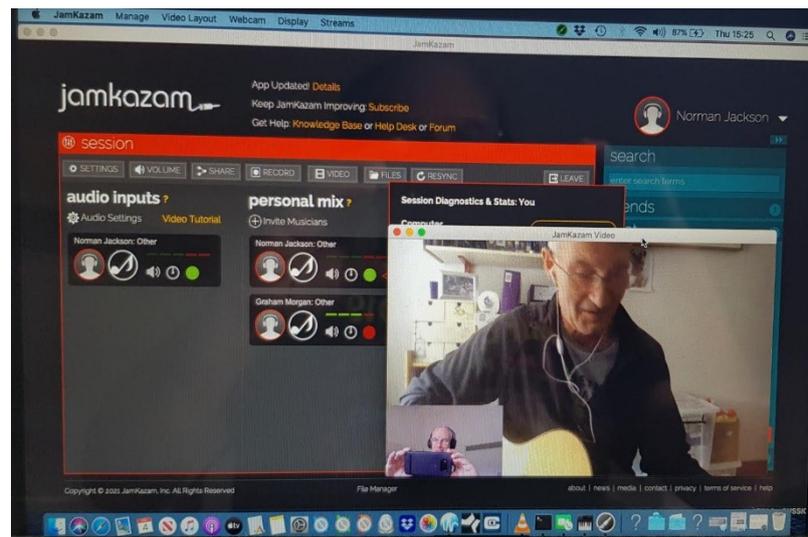
I got fed up and wanted to give up, but my friend wanted to carry on. While we made progress with understanding the new software I could not resolve my problem of not getting a audio signal through my interface. I ran out of ideas and called another friend who is a trained sound engineer and a member of the band. He patiently talked me through all the things I needed to check but after half an hour he concluded that my interface was probably no longer compatible with my computer's operating system. Sadly, I concluded I couldn't solve my problem using the kit I had.



But my techy friend did not give up. The problem was obviously bothering him so he downloaded the manual for the interface and called me the next morning with several suggestions- try this that and the other. Which I did but it still didn't work. I carried on messing around. I watched several videos on YouTube explaining how to use Studio One the recording software for my audio interface, and after more fiddling with settings I eventually managed to see an audio signal but realised it was

coming through my headset mic not the mic bypassing the interface. I was just about give up again when my guitar playing friend phoned me and suggested we go back to square 1 and try using the Jam Kazam software with the built in mics on the lap top so that's what we did. Much to our surprise it we managed to connect through the platform and hear each other through our headphones. But we could from the software monitor that the signal latency was very variable. So we agreed to try linking our computers directly to the router with an ethernet cable. Neither of us had these, my friend had to buy one and I had to scour drawers filled with wires until I found one. Today we tried again but unfortunately my friends modern computer didnt have an ethernet port and he couldn't work out how to connect the ethernetport on his router to his thunderbolt port on his computer. So after four attempts its still a work in progress.

Reflections : Learning can be a messy and frustrating business and there are several lessons in this tussle with technology. Clearly this was a part social, part personal venture driven by the desire to play music with my friend. Fumbling, learning, and partially achieving were distributed between three people and their physical and virtual environments.



While my friend and I were willing to have a go and had a vague idea about what to do, we both lacked the technical knowledge to resolve the problems we encountered. We didn't know what we needed to know and this only became apparent as our tussle unfolded. It's an 'enactivist' view of cognition – how do we know what we need to know until we have tried to do something with the materials in our environment and discovering it didn't work! There is also a story of persistence here – I would have given up but my friend persisted and that carried me a long until I felt I couldn't give up either, "if at first you don't succeed try and try again" until we either succeed or run out of ideas and or steam.

While we did learn some things that were new to us in the hours we spent trying to solve the problem eg how to use the Jam Kazam software and how to reduce the latency between our computers, (in fact I know a lot more about latency speeds now than I did before). At the end of the day we were only partially satisfied with our low cost solution.

I had to involve someone far more knowledgeable and skilful than me in order to diagnose the problem of my audio interface and discover that we could not solve the problem with the kit I had. In spite of his diagnosis he came back this morning with yet another idea relating to a setting in the software from the manual which I just couldn't fathom out. I'd hoped this story would have a happy ending but it doesn't and I guess that is the core lesson – so much of our learning is not neat and tidy with a clear finishing point its often a work in progress, with some partially resolved matters and an indeterminant end point.

Vignette #18: Making and editing a video

Domain: Hobbies, interests

Context: Over the last 16 or 17 years, I have conducted extensive research into my family history. This began after my mother's death, and has given me endless hours of conversation with my father, to provide essential data, but also as a means of validating the lives of our living and dead relatives. To date, I have written up, illustrated and had bound four volumes on different strands of the family. Such research has tapped into my academic skills and stimulated my creativity, but hitherto, I have steered clear of video.

I recently received an email asking for stories of people who had succeeded against the odds, with an invitation to submit a short video. It was too tempting, and my thoughts immediately turned to my paternal grandfather, who after being wounded 4 times in the trenches, including a period of 2 days buried alive, became a regular soldier and was posted to India. By the time he left the army, he had become Regimental Sergeant

Major then joined the police and rose to Chief Superintendent.

This Grand Master of a Masonic Lodge looked very bit the part of middle-class comfort. But, and it was a very big but, as I delved into the archives, I uncovered a totally unexpected and very well concealed skeleton: grandad was illegitimate (a source of stigma in his day). Worse still, he had been born in the

workhouse! How he had managed to emerge from such dire beginnings to achieve what he had was to be my story.



The email asked for a brief video of around 2 minutes. In my eagerness I got straight to work without reading the rules more closely. I wrote a script, selected photos which I made into a PowerPoint show to accompany my narrative, then tried to record things. This was my first stumbling block: if I used the laptop, I couldn't see the slides; if I used my phone, it was almost impossible to synch my words and the video recording. I tried numerous ways, and eventually managed a good-enough video on my phone, which I transferred to my laptop. When I played it, it was over 4 minutes in length. Belatedly, I looked at the on-line rules and to my horror found that no props or images were to be used, just a story spoken to camera. After all my efforts! Still, I had learnt things in the production of this now-aborted video, so I started again.

This time, I realised that reading a script wasn't satisfactory, so I wrote prompts. I rehearsed but kept making errors or pausing too long. After many discarded attempts, I had a video of 'about 2 minutes'. I



went to the submission site and tried repeatedly to upload my masterpiece, to no avail! 'About' 2 minutes was much more precise than it sounded. The maximum size of the video was 125MB – mine was 135. Now came the need for some real learning: how was I going to edit a video? I googled for free software, and found that it committed me to more than I wanted. Then I tried

editing videos on Windows 10. Eureka! We already have the technology in Photos!

So it was that I learnt how to edit a video. My first attempts weren't very good, and I discovered that I had to be careful not to include the audio twice. Nevertheless, I persevered and got the video down to 125 MBs. Back to the submission site. Still it would not upload! After an hour of failures, I had a break then went back – still the site wouldn't accept my file. The deadline for submissions was looming, and I decided that this failure must be a sign – I gave up trying to share the story, but was happy that the process had added to my technical knowledge.

Reflection: this is another story about the frustrations of dealing with technology. My lifewide domains map places technology at the heart of my everyday life. It brings me great joy but also immense frustration when I can't do something that seems so simple and that others can do without turning a hair. In this instance, the learning came about through necessity, it was in order to solve a problem. I also learnt something about myself: sharing the story was less important than that process of learning. There is, of course, a paradox here in that I am now sharing some of my grandfather's story and illustrating it with some of the slide show!

Musings from the balcony – Vignette 2

Domain/s: Home

Narrative: Its Saturday morning (6th Feb) and I am my new office (my balcony). The cats are supervising me (see pic). The balcony overlooks a laneway that runs behind the apartment block and is where an entrance to our underground carpark is. As I work, I hear a raucous coming from the laneway. A large 4WD towing an oversized U-Haul trailer is trying to enter the carpark. Apparently, it is being driven by new neighbours who are moving in today.



If they are successful in entering the underground carpark, then they will need to unpack the trailer and navigate their furniture around a series of corridors in order to get to the lift. But the first issue is getting into the carpark in the first place - the entry involves a tight turn, and it is unlikely that the vehicle will be able to navigate it without causing damage.

So, I do what I actually hate other people doing. I yell over the balcony (in the friendliest voice I could muster). *"Good morning! ...you movin' in?"*

My reason for doing this was to get their attention and suggest that perhaps they should park out the front of the building: where they could access the lift without navigating any corners at all. My good morning is met with a grumble and a dismissive wave and they continue driving down the ramp (with no recourse for turning round). Sigh! I roll my eyes and think of where my car is. But most of all I say to myself, *"some people never learn!"*

Reflection: I'm a little angry that the driver doesn't listen to me. I wonder if he (a) misheard or even didn't hear me at all and simply just waved me off; (b) didn't like taking advice from a woman; (c) was stressed by 'moving day' or (d) had already judged the potential manoeuvres involved and believed he could manage them. Perhaps even (e) a combination of all of the above.

Learning: But this got me thinking about how sometimes we don't listen or perhaps more correctly how we might 'hear', but we don't learn. Why is it that sometimes we don't learn despite others' attempts to 'teach' us? I don't know the answer, but I thought I would pose the question all the same.

Post-script: The 4WD and an empty trailer just left the carpark. I'm interested to see if my car is undamaged. Must go now! ;-)

creative writing for a cross-generational readership and audience as picture books are often for those who can not read yet. The story which is actually about the values of open education and not open education itself is now being illustrated, again in a very collaborative way. I am mentored by Bryan Mathers, a professional artist, and work very closely with a young designer and illustrator, Ody, my youngest son to co-create the illustrations for the book. It has been a steep learning curve but an exciting project so far with loads of opportunities to learn about working in teams, co-creating a picture book, but also about ourselves and others and how we can work harmoniously together.

Reflections: My doctoral study revealed the power of diversity for collaborative learning and development. This project confirmed this in another setting. The team, all open practitioners and researchers, has shared values and brought together a range of experiences and backgrounds. This enriched our thinking and took it into new directions thanks to our flexibility and openness of mind but also as Norman said recently in the recording I watched for this project... we are appreciative, trusting and respectful and this has been key to work effectively together and achieve our collective goal. Having the opportunity also to work with a professional artist and closer with my son Ody has been a privilege and enlightening too. The project is not finished yet but we have already achieved a lot together and I am grateful for everybody's contribution.

To find out more about the project, visit

Nerantzi, C. (2020) GOGN Fellowship project: Co-creating an open picture book about open education, 22 October. GO-GN blog, <http://go-gn.net/research/fellowship-open-picture-book/>

Nerantzi, C. & Mathers, B. (2021) To illustrate or not to illustrate?
Bryan mentoring Chrissi for the open picture book, a GOGN Fellowship project #gognpb, 21 January 2021. GO-GN blog, <http://go-gn.net/research/to-illustrate-or-not-to/>

Pulker, H., Bentley, P., Corti, P., Fransman, G. Roberts, V. and Nerantzi, C. (2020) Why on earth did I join this project? 18 November 2020, GO-GN blog, <http://go-gn.net/research/why-on-earth/>

Roberts, V. Nerantzi, C., Corti, P., Pulker, H., Bentley, P. and Fransman, G. (2020) The seeds in our data basket, reporting findings, no penguins found..., 10 December 2020, GO-GN blog, <http://go-gn.net/research/the-seeds-in-our-data-basket/>

Vignette 21 Lifewide Domain

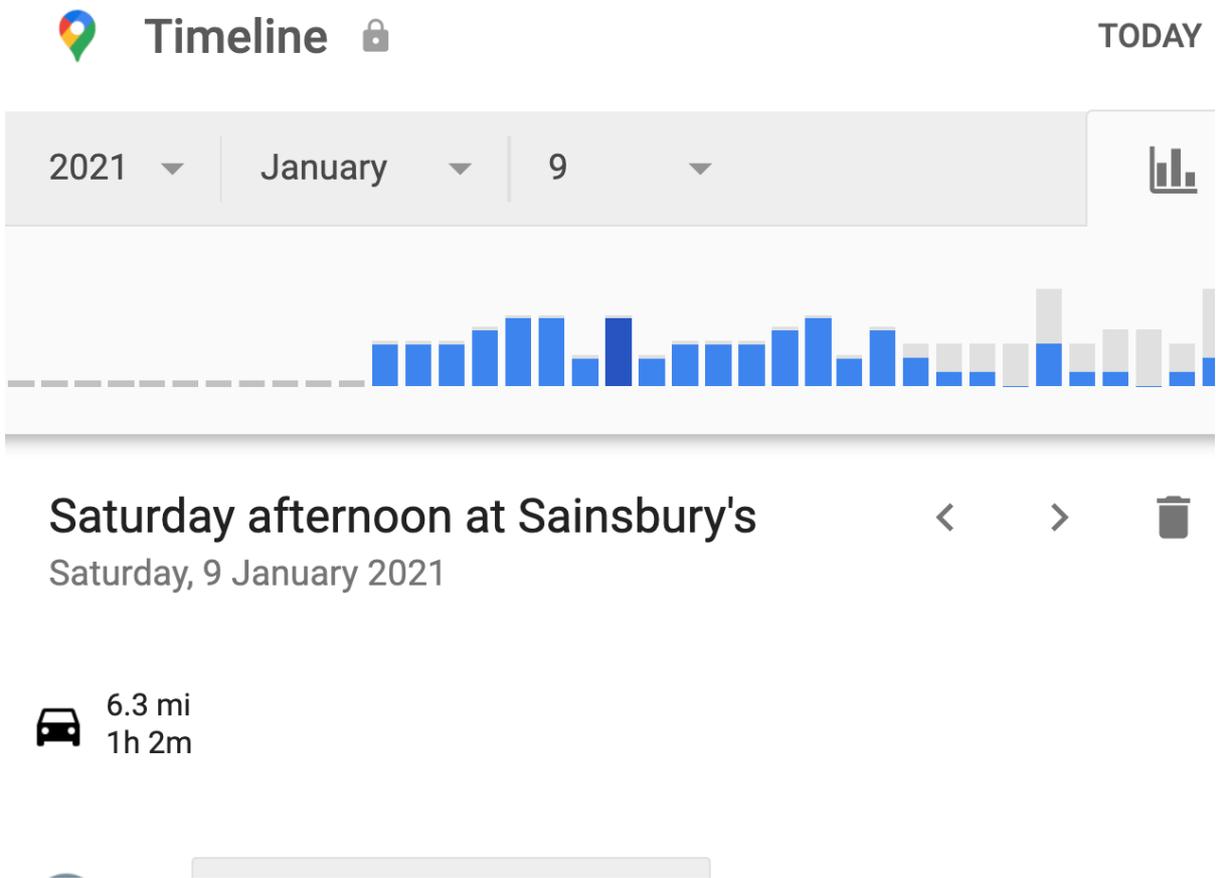
Google Maps Timeline

Figure 1



Your January visits
2 cities 22 places

Figure 2



Currently throughout the UK we are in lockdown. In Scotland we are not allowed to travel more than five miles from our house and unless it is necessary not travel outside our local authority boundaries.

Yesterday, on the 5th February 2021, I received an email from Google Maps Timeline informing me about the places I have been to over the month of January. The email included the number of miles I had walked (6 miles) I had taken and the number of miles in the car (88 miles).

My first thoughts were ... I have certainly walked more than that! I know at times the step counter is not live on my mobile. My second reaction was if I had strayed more than five miles from my boundary, would 'big brother' have arrived at my door? And I have not travelled to 2 cities! I certainly have not travelled to two cities rather I live near the border of two local authorities (figure 1). The places I visited were noted excitingly as various parks, supermarkets ranging from the cheaper ones as in Lidl to the more expensive Waitrose (which is part of the John Lewis group). Sadly I seem to have spent the most time in one afternoon at another supermarket (figure 2).

I had signed up unintentionally, for Google maps timeline. To be honest, I thought I was just signing up for an app that showed my location; so I could look for restaurants that deliver; or special offers, such as buying air fryers than can be delivered. I certainly never expected to receive an email that informed me that *'This Timeline email is an automated summary of places you've been, which may be fewer this month due to the [COVID-19](#) response in your area.'* I began to wonder what else is being recorded on my phone. I have downloaded a test and trace app to inform me if I have been near anyone with Covid -19 but I chose to download that app.

How many of us really read the notes explaining the applications on our phones or on our computers; I certainly do not. So, my intention for next week is to read articles on digital tracing. Of course an intention is different from an action, but at least I have downloaded a couple of articles, so that is a start.

TITLE: Vignette #22 'From Lockdown to Lockin'

Domain: Family, religious faith

Narrative:

I am one of seven children while my husband is the only child but we have one common trait: we love our shared space. Since Lockdown began almost a year ago, my siblings and I have observed social distancing rules strictly (literally, we are an international bunch!). Thanks to Zoom, Viber, Facebook, we have never been closer; I feel I am joining them at breakfast, lunch and dinner very Saturday when we keep the family ritual of praying together. Led by our eldest sibling, we are reminded of Dad and Mum's words, "*The family that prays together, stays together*" based on Matthew 18:20 "*For where two or three come together, in Jesus's name, there He is among them*". Each of us including our partners join in the ritual that is topped and tailed with social chit chats.

However, today is the first Saturday since 17 March 2020 when I felt an emptiness at prayer time. There was a space on the Zoom screen that I knew would not be filled today both facially and vocally; my other siblings shared the same sentiment. Two of my siblings will not be able to join us physically but we prayed that they would join us in spirit. From being locked down due to COVID-19, my two siblings are now locked in their own homes and in their own country with no way of communicating with the outside world not just because of COVID-19 but also due to man made forces which are as lethal as COVID-19. This doesn't mean our relationship has broken down.

Reflection:

As I reflect on the theme of relationships, I realise that as human beings we are wired to connect to one another since birth and as a family my siblings and I have been connected thanks to technology. The Saturday prayer sessions remind me of my identity and the values my parents instilled in us: respect, acceptance, consideration, appreciation, listening, openness, affection, empathy and love towards one another. I realise how these values also strengthen not only my significant relationships (my husband and friends) but also the professional relationships specifically with my colleagues at work, my neighbours and acquaintances including likeminded travellers on the Lifewide Learning Research & Development journey.

These values are so important nowadays when I am remote working and I am aware of how easily I get annoyed when others go off track and start talking about how many loo rolls they bought over the weekend. Perhaps, I need to apply these values to myself first. There's one person who I am closer to than anyone else, a human being who I spend every moment of my life with: myself. I am reminded by Matthew 7:12 "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*", which means I practice those values on myself and strengthen the relationship with myself before I can strengthen other relationships. Being connected also means being wired spiritually and as in the case of my two siblings, I have a strong sense that faith in God our Creator's greatness and hope that His interventions will open the channels of communication will lead us to the freedom to pray and reflect as a family as we used to with our parents.

I have discovered that I don't value myself enough to have strong relationships with others. The Bible is my source of solace and the Saturday prayer times strengthen my relationship with my siblings as we discuss the readings and reflect on how we practice the Lord's words.



V1 23 Identity and Work

Domain – Work, Family, Friends, Virtual World

Monday, February 1: Feeling lots of work pressure like I'm behind and can't get caught up, and I dreamed when I entered a room with a screaming child and looked inside her mouth, I saw a snarling wolf. I awoke with a clear understanding that I needed to move my inside rambling thoughts into a more conscious process. Noticing an internal dialog not related to the present, I stopped and let myself follow my breath in and out until my head space was back in tune with my present moment. This rumble in the jungle inside my head often repeats "lack of" stories and whining about "I can't do this."

Tuesday, February 2: During my annual review, I realized that my chair's decision to not write a letter of support for a university service award I had applied for, was his decision – his statement "I thought it was a conflict of interest to support two faculty from the same department" simmered inside my body for 24 hours only to explode on Wednesday morning as chaotic confusion, hurt feelings (remembering the baby crying dream), and anger.

Wednesday, February 3: Realized I needed to contact a "circle of friends" colleague for support and guidance. After listening to the tale, she asked me pointed questions which surfaced a greater understanding, but she also encouraged me to not reject any emotions, just watch when the moment or feeling changed. Then, crying as I told this tale to my partner, he responded "same thing happened to me" last year, which I did not even know. His calm reflection on the moment released me from the pain and anger. I realized it was time to step back and let go. We went for a drive, bought groceries, I made dinner, during which time I noticed calmness had returned. After dinner, sent a two-sentence email to the chair of the awards committee (copying my chair) acknowledging their support and notified them I would try again next year. No head screaming just noticing how my feelings moved throughout the day with gratefulness to family, friends, and colleagues.

Thursday, February 4: I woke with energy, ready to tackle the day. While I was checking things off the to-do list without hesitation or voices in my head, the phone rings, and it was my mandala mentor Susanne Fincher <http://www.creatingmandalas.com/index.html> calling to ask me to do a workshop in March (which will be a Zoom event). Spirits and energy moving, more work is accomplished, connected with a junior faculty wanting to involve me in another arts and healing project which now seems like a possibility not a burden.

Reflection: Context for learning – paying attention to dreams is an important aspect of my artist self. I try to journal these thoughts collecting images/connections/the flow of the moment, as I go. I pay attention to where the dream may emerge and what connection might be happening in the present moment. I want to honor the many sources of understanding and creativity that occur in my dreams. My motivation for this type of learning emerged during graduate school. I found I had persistence to tackle hard tasks if I allowed myself the 'benefit of the doubt' and adopted a 'I think I can' attitude while telling the nagging whining child in my head to stand down. Not learning to read till later in grade school, having to take exams with extended time, finding math not to be my language, all this puts doubts and thoughts of failure in my mind, but persistence furthers, a can-do attitude helps, and a belief in creative living fostered by a love of the language of art and design keeps me in the moment – still learning, still trying, honoring each emotion (with gentle reminders from supportive friends), being braver about sharing how I feel with my partner, and remembering to breath.

Vignette 24

Domain: Friendship

Title: The Comedy that Connects Us

Narrative

This morning I had my weekly 'yarn' with my wonderful New Zealand friend: Gill. A 'yarn', so I am informed by Kiwi folk, is a chat or catch-up between friends about nothing in particular – importantly, you can only 'yarn' with friends! I usually phone around 8:00 am UK time, which means that Gill, being nine hours ahead, has to endure my voice for pretty much an hour before going to bed. I describe Gill as my NZ Mum! She is a remarkable woman of eighty-nine years, with a wicked sense of humour, so much of our yarning involves lots of laughter, sometimes resulting in fits of giggles. Sadly, Gill has recently had to cope with several small strokes, which has drained her both physically and mentally, but I am delighted to say that her sharp wit has not been dampened.



Today's yarn turned to the topic of her speech therapy. I did say that Gill was remarkable; her stoicism means that she has reduced her weekly half-an-hour speech therapy sessions down from four to one. Now, how does this rather sombre and sobering situation relate to anything funny you may ask? Well, let me recount...

Gill explained that her sessions require 'fierce concentration'. Different images flash on screen, and Gill is required to say out loud what she sees, in a sentence. This exercise is to help her to recall words, so that to be frank, they don't become lost to her. This does sound serious – not funny at all! Well, a picture of a blackbird appeared prompting Gill to describe this feathery creature:

"If I could see, (Gill's eye-sight isn't what it used to be) AND I had a gun – I would shoot it!"

This really made me laugh, picturing the speech therapist shocked that such harsh, indeed violent words, could be uttered by a lovely old lady! Gill felt obliged to explain to her therapist that the far from melodic CAW of crows tormented her morning till dusk in her apartment. I imagine that Sir Paul McCartney has never met, or more importantly heard, a New Zealand Blackbird!

A Summary Reflection:

For me, in simple terms, learning is about making links; the more links we can make – the deeper the learning. Deep, conceptual understanding requires a myriad of connections. If we agree with the seminal thinking of Lev Vygotsky, that learning is a social process, then may I suggest that a shared sense of humour might make the learning experience more social! If comedy has the power to connect us, then perhaps a good laugh may facilitate learning. Gill has almost nine decades of life experiences to share – our yarns are always informative; I am constantly learning from her often funny anecdotes: her words of wisdom; we always laugh and learn together.

When listening to this, I'll always chuckle and think of Gill with her imaginary gun! 'Sorry Paul!'

Paul McCartney & Wings - Blackbird (Acoustic Live) - Rock Show Live Wings Over America Tour 1976

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mJYYVM-nj4>

Vignette #25 Its what it is

Hi all, I'm a mum to a 4 month baby and 5.5 boy... I will most likely going to be drawing learning from my home experiences and parenting interactions -these will soon involve home schooling; couldn't locate a dreaded emoji 😬-

My choice is not only because this is the most intimate of my here and now experiences but I also feel that it is a very hot topic that a lot of parents hold shame for – it is my passion to share my vulnerability and reflect on what learning i am deriving from it-

This vignette is about some reflections inspired by a phrase I have recently come across “ **how is the problem perfect for you**” ; What a radically powerful phrase that has been! It led to tangible changes and deeper learning in my here and now daily experience-ing.

Let me give some context/background. I have been experiencing a great difficulty in aspects of my/our parenting. There were lots of moments of inner friction and struggle since the first lockdown which were becoming the dominant narrative in our household. This came to its head when even the daily routine tasks were becoming a huge mountain for my son, and- admittedly – myself. I was becoming a company I wasn't enjoying.

My energy to engage in creative play and imaginary role play – in my attempts to try and find ways to be collaborative and spark his curiosity/motivation – were coming to a standstill. I heard this phrase at time of a great personal struggle combined with endured deprivation of sleep. This was it.

The push I needed . Leonard Cohen describes it beautifully in his song “Anthem” when he says “ there is the crack in everything; that s how the light gets in”.

I needed to take radical responsibility, withstand the humility in facing my parenting style and re-consider, re-view, re-evaluate it. Something clearly was not working. Our interactions involved -if not often relied- upon a need to perform a command- follow approach and with very strict -perhaps at times rigid- boundaries. I had many a time become the commander -rather than an ally, a fellow traveller, a respectful listener. What a twist for a trained psychotherapist who has been trained in the person centred approach.

I begun the search and came across the PET training. I enrolled in a course group without further hesitation. We have been meeting for the past three weeks. The transformation in our family household has been phenomenal in a space of these three weeks.

There are other environmental factors influencing this change eg my son's school teacher changed, his support through play therapy as well as the prospect he might be needing extra support for his learning needs. Isn't it interesting I sought the solution outside of me, to start with ? I feel a slight embarrassment that my first go to solution was a play therapist. As if the problem was solely located within my child. What changed ? Me.

The moment I heard this phrase, I was reminded that I have a choice at ALL times ;

That I am not defined by my experiences. In any given moment I can choose to shape my reality. It felt very powerful in the moment and it blasted me open to the prospect of possibilities and hope. I found myself asking questions like “ could I fully

embody this principle in my daily life at the moment ? What would I need to equip myself with in order to do this whilst i am continuously sleep deprived ? A theme I notice that existed in all those daily moments was this: Firstly ,yes I can. The theme was that of letting go and dropping into a deep compassion for myself. Letting go of the need to control. Surrender control and Choose peace over struggle . This short statement gave me profound permission (which is all at times we need) to adjust my circumstances and request from people around me what I need and not need to feel helped sometimes. This learning experience became yet another tangible proof that every moment Of every problem IS indeed a portal. Learning and realisations were accelerated thanks to connections with other parents who struggled similarly, a group of listening ears, reading and enhancing my own understanding about the options i have in responding to his needs differently. Given that there is an awful lot of pressure on me and my youngest at the minute, i have found solace in “the little moments” in my life.... From a mindfulness perspective these are the moments that i re-connect with “presence” rather than a narrative in my own mind.

For eg... his little hands on mine.... His gaze as he s looking at me
The feel of my eldest boy’s curly hair among my fingerprints as im settling him to bed
The smell of a self care nourishing hand-crème as a daily ritual
The sound of baby lullaby in the living room
The rays of sunshine on my face when I am having my morning coffee...and so many more

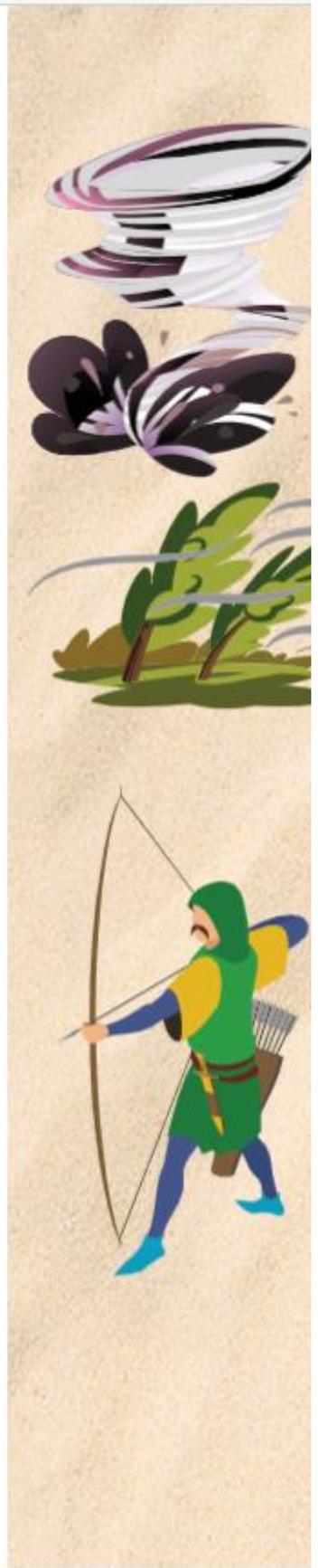
Below i offer some pictures which are capturing some of the feelings experienced through this process.

Ps I am very aware that this vignette is far from compete, tidy or neat... whilst being in physical pain, with a crying baby in the background and preparing for another settling day - it is the most i can do given my circumstances- and it is precisely why i am posting it ,as it is. Another yet surrendering to imperfection. What liberation!

[Free Online Sand Tray by Dr Karen Fried](#)

Click on image to add

1 2 3 4 5 6 7



Vignette 26: Not Quite Learning Yet



Forth and Clyde Canal: A space to walk and participate in an international learning community

Vignette 01

This week was full of interconnected learning incentives (Lernanlässen). The discussion around life domains, and the struggle to create clear margins but also the phrase 'thrilled chaos' that came up in Holly's domain map inspired me to write the following poem:

<https://acdevadventures.blog/2021/02/03/life-domains/>. Incidentally this week also featured the monthly [#SoTLwalk](#) and Natasha Taylor (whose brainchild this walk is) posted the challenge to think about higher education as forced march versus playful adventure which again linked to domains and the changed spaces during the pandemic. And just to top all of this up Time Higher Education features an article that calls for a rethink of physical versus digital campus. So all in all this week continued with the topic of domains and spaces.

Needless to say the continued lockdown kept connectedness and our interactions within and with spaces in my mind, and the image of our physical campus as an anchor, a core to which we all tethered emerged. I feel like a satellite connected by invisible but powerful forces, yet moving within my own space, and so are my colleagues. The invisible threads keep us connect across the globe, in a community bound by our interests, research, activities, professions.

Reflection

When digging deeper I think at the core of this week's learning is the negotiation of identities and professional identities. The spaces we inhabit, and how we move between them. It is also influenced by the dissolving of boundaries in these spaces and people struggling to reinforce boundaries. It makes me wonder how necessary these boundaries are. Do we truly need to disconnect from thinking about work to relax for instance? Do we leave our digital devices offline or even behind on a break or during the weekend, because all the other spaces are now within these devices. From students texting via MS Teams, to colleagues of Twitter reminding us not to forget a deadline. At the moment my thinking and learning from this week is still too disjointed to make heads or tails off.



Home office: A space to participate in an international learning community, work, meet friends, sewing room, craft and art studio

Vignette 27 Learning Anecdotes. Paul Thomas. February 6th 2021

Title: Re-learning the value of my own ideas about integration.

Domain: Work. With overspill into the other three domains – Home, Friends and Children.

Narrative: I have been working for decades on the theory and practice of community-oriented integrated care – integrated working for health and care that comes together in local geographic areas. It is a form of local participatory democracy where collaboration is more dominant than competition. Whenever I led initiatives, they had good results, but the underpinning principles/theory seemed very difficult for others to understand and work with. I had thought that this was simply because they were too unfamiliar and I continued to advocate for the ideas, hoping that they would in time become understood. A series of recent personal stresses plus the state of international politics had led me to consider that the ideas and my pursuing them may be unrealistic even though they seem to me to be exactly what is needed in a post-COVID world. This self-doubt was worsened when a paper I authored describing the approach was rejected by a journal dedicated to exactly these issues – integrated care. So I was thinking seriously about abandoning my efforts. I had come to believe that although they made sense to me they did not make sense to others and I was wasting my time and energy by attempting to disseminate the ideas.

For another reason, I rang a friend who has been a senior policy-maker in areas that touch on integrated working. He mentioned that he had shown my rejected paper to someone from a think-tank who had liked it a lot and wanted to refer to it. This caused a quick change in my understanding of my own situation. I replaced my belief that the ideas are too difficult for others to use with the belief that my own energies are too low to personally pursue an attempt to disseminate them. So I learned a new way to interpret my feelings that is now leading to a different strategy for action – more supporting others to work with the ideas and less moving them forwards myself.

Reflections: I doubt I would have re-learned the potential acceptability of the ideas I stand for to others if the person I was speaking to had not been so experienced as a policy-maker and if he had not had positive feedback from someone from a think-tank dedicated to pursuing these kind of ideas. Even if I had retained a belief in the practicality of the ideas it is likely that I would have considered them to be coming at the wrong time in history or there was no practical way for me to move them forwards. Refocusing attention on my low energy as the obstacle to progress has allowed me to consider a new strategy where I support others to work with the ideas. It has also had a knock-on learning in other parts of my life, recognising that low energy is also reducing my performance in other domains.



Vignette 28 : Learning a new piano piece: Chopin: Etude in E minor

Primary Domains: Homelife, Creative Life (also Mindlife and Connected Life!)

Narrative: I have written previously about how I play the piano that sits in our front room on most days. In these somewhat dark, depressing, dangerous times I find myself drawn increasingly to it during these isolated, lockdown days.

I've always played the piano, but in a busy life and work schedule it hasn't been a priority. I usually play it when I'm tussling with a particularly knotty work-based problem. When I'm stuck, simply fed-up, or just need a break, I'll cross the hallway from my office to the room with the piano and play for 10, 20, maybe 30 minutes. I might choose to run through one or two of the classical pieces I've learned to play reasonably well over the years. Or I might choose a jazz or popular standard that I've picked up by ear, which involves a bit of improvisation in that sense of working relatively loosely within a recognised framework. I never play the same tune in exactly same way: but then, who does?

But now, it's different. Playing the piano is now a solace, a comfort, a means to lose myself deeply in something for a while. So, usually, I just sit on the piano stool, breathe and sit quite still for a few moments, then place my hands over the keys. And I wait to see what happens. I have no idea of what is going to happen before it takes place. Something stirs. Something starts. A note or a chord is played. And off I go. Or off 'it' goes, because I feel I'm not in conscious control of my fingers. I am, of course, but it doesn't feel that way. Sometimes I close my eyes and let my hands wander where they will. Playing the piano has been a constant in my life for over sixty years, and as the notes flow – or not – my mind either focuses, zen-like, on the present moment or connects me to my past, present and future.

But, much as I enjoy playing the piano, I had to admit I was getting a bit bored playing the same old pieces. So I set out to learn some new pieces.

I've always loved Chopin, and the sad Etude in E minor suited my general mood around lockdown, the disaster of Covid and the general feeling of frustration and sadness at what was happening in the world around me. Now, while my piano technique is pretty good, my sight-reading is appalling! A consequence of having a very good ear and memory. Ever since I started learning the piano at a young age, all I had to do was hear the piece that my piano teacher had chosen for me to play and I sort of got it. As a result I've always read music much like a young child learns to read and say words by identifying the phonics. It's rather slow and laborious. But once I can sort of see where it's going, my fingers tend to follow. I've always been supremely jealous of those pianists who could pick up a piece of complicated music for the first time and play it as if they had been playing it for years.

The Chopin looks and sounds simple – as well as being a lovely piece of music. So I thought it ought to be pretty straightforward to learn. The melody is a flowing line of single notes in the right hand, and the accompaniment is a soft, flowing, rhythmical eighth chords to the bar, mainly in groups of four, that modulates gradually up and down.

I already had the melody in my head from hearing it played before, so I thought it would be relatively straightforward. But I struggled, and – at first - couldn't work out why I was having such trouble 'getting it'.

Then I realized what it was.

The gradual shifts in the left hand are incredibly subtle and, in many cases, not obvious. What my musical memory and fingers were 'thinking' ought to be played, often turned out to be wrong, and I had to look very carefully at what was written on the page. But my sight-reading is appalling! So I found myself continually stumbling and stuttering through what I knew should be a perfectly formed, ineffably sad and moving piece of music.

I remembered what my childhood piano teacher told me. When you've made a particular mistake you have a choice: either stop there and then, and go over it again and again until you've 'got it', or continue through to the end so you don't lose the 'shape' of the piece and then return to the mistakes. I did a bit of both.

I also began to really focus in on the tiny, subtle shifts inside the left-hand chords, and began to really appreciate how those subtle shifts affected the shape and sound of the piece.

After hours of focusing in on those shifts (and really concentrating) I finally was able to play the piece right through from start to finish...and with feeling. Aha, I thought, I've got it! But when I tried to play it again, the odd mistake crept in. I still couldn't trust my fingers, in the way I normally do, to effortlessly lead the way.

Reflection

While I identified the primary domains for this vignette as Homelife and Creativity, I also added Mindlife and Connectedlife. As my illustration of the learning domains in my life demonstrated, there is – particularly currently – great overlap between those domains.

Learning the Etude in E minor was an immensely frustrating but, in the end, also a hugely satisfying endeavour. Yes, I can now play it right through and play it well, but it's still touch and go whether a tiny mistake will creep in. I recall Phil Race's comments about competence being a rather grey area. The idea that one is either competent or not is muddled by whether the display of competence is a one-off (example: a bad driver passing the driving test on the day) or whether one is consistently competent (example: a surgeon).

I would love to be consistently competent, but I've spent too long improvising and playing 'at the edge of chaos' to be able to do that. Not helped by the fact that I often use that ability to just sit down at the piano and let my fingers do the playing to let my mind wander over a particular problem or just wander.

Why also the 'Connectedlife' domain?

- Sitting at the piano connects me to my life for the past 60+ years. The piano has been a constant 'companion' throughout that time.

- I've had the music book in which I found the Etude in E minor since I was about 13 years old. It has a number of pieces that I learnt to play. My piano teacher, Mr. Heron, was a German Jewish musician who had survived the concentration camps. I once caught the glimpse of the tattoo on his arm. When it was time to learn a new piece, he would play two or three pieces to me and let me choose which one I liked. He would then write my name and the date in pencil at the top of the page. Whenever I open that book and that it is a bit like the Proustian 'Madeleine biscuit' moment. I am deeply connected to my past/
- Playing Chopin or any of the great 'masters' connects me to a long and wonderful musical history. Realising that the piece I'm playing has been learned and played by countless people over the centuries...and will continue to be.

What have I learnt about learning?

That while I am, by nature, a 'butterfly' learner, easily diverted. There can be huge benefit and satisfaction in going in deep, really focusing at the micro-level. Discovering the beauty and meaning those tiny, subtle shifts within the overall structure and how they work together to produce a wonderful and moving whole.

Vignette 29: I hated school.

I wasn't able to get to the first Zoom meeting (sorry) so I have been catching up. This first vignette was partly inspired by many of your stories. Thank you.

Domain: Work

My work context

I am now in my 3rd career (lecturer rising to Head of Department level; educational developer ending up as head of a university educational development unit; and freelance consultant working part-time on a range of projects, most recently mentoring candidates for national awards in teaching excellence and supporting moves to online learning and programme assessment). One of my motivations towards this project was the realisation that I had better work out what career 4 will be - my academic career may be approaching its sell-by date. But I have been saying that regularly for the last ten years so who knows ...

My driver – back to school

Starting to think about learning and about my work history as one of my important domains, I realized that my main 'driver', both as tutor and as a developer, was to create experiences for students which were as far away as possible from my own experiences of school (virtually all of them) and university (some of them).

In particular, I hated school. I found strategies to get by – luckily I was bright enough to do all the work pretty well and that, plus a combination of determined compliance and willingness to do tasks/jobs when asked, gave me credibility with the teachers. My sense of humour and willingness to help other pupils (without having to be asked!) earned acceptance in my peer group. So I did learn the importance of communication, audience and context.

But my dominant learning was how learning is depleted and diminished by a context of:

- control by punishment. (I only 'got the belt' once – corporal punishment still ruled).
- learning as memorization.
- assessment as regurgitation.
- curiosity as discouraged.

I could go on!

I am really struggling to surface any memory of class sessions which provided really positive learning with lasting impact. Most memories represent different degrees of boredom and/or anxiety: the science teacher entering the class on the first day and blowing the dust off his folder of notes; the gym teacher with an approach spookily close to the one in the film of 'Kes', based on the wonderful book by Barry Hines; and the head teacher who tried to persuade me to study a 'real subject' instead of my chosen course – Psychology.

My undergraduate experience was much happier but still added more bullet points:

- Rigid compartmentalization of knowledge
- Ignoring students' previous (or even current) experience
- Relevance and application of theory neglected.

My career has been a series of attempts to create the opposites to all these bullet points and I started by finding a more sympathetic institutional context: an interdisciplinary department in a Polytechnic. My previous poor experience gave me the incentive to look for new 'better' ways of organizing teaching. And I am still looking.

Vignette #30 Patched

At dinner on Thursday my daughter claimed her mother had "patched her", I am sure that didn't happen, but I let it run. My wife "what are you talking about".

My Daughter "Dad, you know what I am talking about."

Me "I know what patch means if that is what you are asking. "I know because my daughter told me a few months ago that it is to ignore someone, so when you see someone has read the message, they don't reply. It was useful because I read a book called "The Young Team" about Greater Glasgow gangs. The Scottish poet Jackie Kay had recommended Shuggie Bain by Douglas Stuart some time over the summer and decided I wanted to read a few new Scottish voices, so I bought "The Young Team" by Graeme Armstrong, "Mayflies" by the ever-reliable Andrew O'Hagan to go with it.

"The Young Team" is written phonetically in Scots, as someone from the West Highlands it is not easy for me to read. I identified more with O'Hagan and his 1980's coming of age and going to Manchester to see bands as a teenager because I am that age I liked those bands and I did hitch from the West Highlands to Manchester to see bands. It was also written in English, so much easier to read. However, when I tuned into "The Young Team", I started to hear the voice and then someone "got patched". Somehow it helped me enjoy the book.

After I left home and went to work, I lived in a social housing estate described in the book and desperately avoided the gangs of lads that hung out on corners. Not always, I had some trouble, at the time I was living with a "local lassie" (a different life before I met my wife), and so people knew about me. I hadn't thought about it much till I read "The Young Team", actually, I hadn't thought about it till I wrote this vignette. There is something about working-class literature, three white male voices (albeit one queer literary voice, but still), all coming of age. We demand the voices are authentic, they need to establish their legitimacy as people who can speak for and from the people they write about. However, I cannot help feel that it is not the writers I worry about- it is the readers. These books are not being consumed by the people who they are about - nothing like it.

I tune back into the dinner table, my daughter explains to my wife (again and wondering why she didn't listen last time) what it means to patch, and I realise I missed something.

I ask "can you patch someone in person",

I cannot remember who says but the the kids look at me, and one says "of course, it's when a grown-up ignores what have said". "It's a Scottish expression, dad," says my son. "So just what happened here then," I ask, "tha sin ceart," says my daughter, and I reply "Ceart gu leor, sin agad e". My wife gives me a look that says stop showing off. Then my daughter asks if I was really wearing an old Run DMC T-shirt under my shirt at work today. It was cold in my office, and I kept it buttoned up so none of my clients would see it anyway.

Vignette #31 Survival of the friendliest

This week has seen a flurry of communications in a variety of contexts where I have been challenged in a range of areas, but particularly in my professional domain where there is a merge of my doctorate studies and my consultancy role. As a freelance consultant, building a network, sustaining, and developing relationships is key, and I have learned that these communities relating to my work have a significant influence on my motivation and subsequent productivity. Investing in developing relationships therefore is an increasing priority for me, one which I greatly enjoy and appreciate.

Meetings this week have taken me across the globe as well as across Yorkshire. I have talked with people with whom I have never met before as well as those with whom I work alongside regularly. Most of the conversations this week have been encouraging, organic and are likely to lead to professional adventures that excite me but one of them will probably result in no further engagements. Some of the conversations this week have meant juggling the joys of group zoom collaborations whilst others have been a duet on the phone – can you imagine!!! – with no face or shared screens. Some conversations were necessarily solution focused on a tight deadline while others were more explorative and reflective, looking for links, uncovering opportunities and identifying shared values. Language, culture and time zones have varied across the calls as have expectations and experiences. Communications this week have left me filled with energy whilst at the same time a sense of exhaustion from the agility required to communicate effectively across such a broad range of contexts with different ‘levels’ of relationships.

On my domains map, I have tracked ‘expected and unexpected’ as a theme of my world. On Sunday evening last week, my diary for the coming week was relatively clear and I had planned to complete a task that has been on the ‘to do’ list for quiet some time! As the week progressed however, new opportunities arose and invitations to collaborate evolved. This was both unexpected (relating to individual events) and expected (my diary has its own theme tune of unpredictability).

My focused reflection on a webinar I attended on Tuesday brings together my consciousness of the extent of my conversations during the week and the value I place on my ongoing collaborative efforts. As part of an ongoing project ‘United by Compassion’, during ‘[Dirt is Good](#)’ on Tuesday we were introduced to the notion of ‘[Survival of the Friendliest](#)’. This is proposed by Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods in their book with the same title. They suggest that Darwin is often misinterpreted and that ‘fittest’ is more about pro-social and collaborative endeavours. They quote Darwin, ‘...for those communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best, and bear the greatest number of offspring.’ Hare and Woods explain that winning strategies in nature are to increase friendliness, forming new co-operations that boost the sense of being part of a community. This attention to collaboration was further fuelled by a provocative article in the Harvard Business Review ‘[Collaborative Overload](#)’ which discusses the need to distribute work more evenly (difficult in my case as a sole trader!) whilst incentivising people to collaborate more efficiently. To add further provocation, I also uncovered this morning a [report from the University of Cambridge](#) that promoted the need to teach children empathy as it ‘measurably improves their creative abilities’. Of course, to be able to develop empathy, one needs to be in a range of relationships and environments with differing levels of complexity.

So my learning this week is a confirmation that efforts to consciously value opportunities to collaborate are essential. But there is an additional need to think increasingly critically about interactions, behaviours and outcomes during collaborative activities, reflecting on the effects of my communications and learning from the communication strategies of others. In an increasingly complex world, there is therefore a greater chance that my ‘friendliness’ will bring success – in all its forms. ‘Survive’ feels about right at the moment, but in time, I’d like to think ‘thrive’!



VIGNETTE 32 “The cloud”

DOMAIN: EDUCATION/LEADING CHILDREN; LEADING TEACHERS

NARRATIVE

In my role as head of an early years centre, I always get involved in classroom activity; I also help with children that need some timeout and one to one reflection. A 4-year-old child that has a poor routine at home, and less rules than needed, tends to have problems with self-regulation. In this case, the teacher took him out, after he had destroyed other children’s work, scream, and jump over a table; So I started a conversation with him, very calmly and holding his hands, and reflecting with empathy, with comments such as “ I know sometimes its difficult to keep up with things that you sometimes don’t want to do, “ or “ sometimes you feel tired but you may also feel the need of moving or running, when we are all sitting”, etc. I came up with the idea of telling him to watch the sky, and see the clouds that were moving slowly and peacefully. I said “you can imagine that you are a cloud, and you can move very lightly and peacefully, so we can join your friends in the classroom again, when you are ready. Maybe that can help you!; let’s try it!”. He engaged easily with the game and started to move almost like floating, as the clouds; and seemed to enjoy being able to control himself. He went back to his class, walking as a cloud, and could manage to play and engage with the rest of the activities of the day, clearly in control of himself. So, helping him visualize himself as something that would help him manage and enhance his self control, actually gave him a positive vision of himself and his ability to share with others positively. The image helped him organise the idea and words around it, not only as a powerful reminder, but as a powerful way of canalizing his activity.

REFLECTION

The effect (education is science and art, and sometimes you may come up with successful ideas to help children grow, that combine intuition, knowledge, theories, love...), was something that reminded me of Kieran Egan, imaginative education and the power of images and metaphors. Something that I normally use in my lectures with student teachers, and with children in planned activities. This made me think and connect with other areas of my life wide learning and noticed that an image was such an inspiration for a child, that made him see himself differently, and regulate himself, in order to enjoy and make the best of his day, that I wanted to use this to inspire the beginning of the year for my teachers. I normally start the year (in Chile the school year begins in march), with an inspiring team building and personal development activity; specially this year after the covid restrictions we had. So due to the “cloud” experience with my tiny student, I am designing a starting activity with the teachers, and inviting them to think of an image with which they want to relate, regarding their teaching in this coming year. It would be inviting them to think: “what image do you think could represent who you are to your children? To your team? As an example I will retell the story of the “cloud”, and suggest images of animals (the lion), artifacts (an arrow, a vas,) or others. It would be nice to have that image during the year, reminding me who I am for my students.

I may also use it with my first-year student teachers in the eerily years teaching programme, to find an image of what a teacher is...of what they want to become for their students...



And again an image or metaphor proves to be powerful and meaningful. In my case connecting areas is one of my goals, so using this experience as a team leader and as a lecturer, makes me love reflecting and noticing what is happening in the different contexts I sail upon.

DOMAIN: HOME AND GARDEN
NARRATIVE 33

TITLE: Learning through Gardening during a Global Pandemic



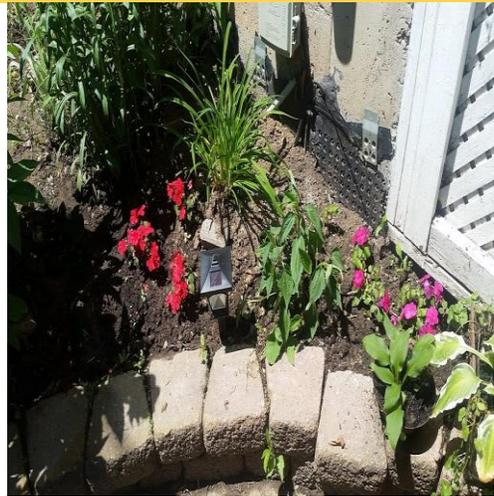
I chided myself for my behaviour and thoughts during the very first few weeks of the pandemic and lockdown here in Ontario. The television is not something that is turned on a lot in my home. I was wondering why they (the leaders), were making such a big "fuss" about a flu. I spent the first week glued to the TV and sponging all the bits of news coming through. However, once Spring rolled around I got lost in preparing flowers beds in the gardens around the house and planning little cozy corners in the backyard. I continued to be optimistic that 'this too shall pass' and we would have a great summer. My son from Vancouver decided to come and stay with me to see me through "the Covid", as the kids were referring to it. He ended up staying six months and assisting with many household chores and cooking gourmet meals. I did not think of all the restrictions too much once I was absorbed with the fancy meals, the clean ups, my gardening and my frequent drives through wine country with my partner.

Learning came in many different ways. We experimented with organically grown vegetables, lettuce and peppers. It took a lot of planning, nurturing, ruminating overnight about watering and daily attention. These activities aligned quite nicely to curriculum planning I thought. Using the garden metaphor, when planning new courses in a program, there is so much ruminating that happens. Then the right soil must be determined for growth – paralleling to the right Course Learning Outcomes, the framework for the course before attending to the sub sections and lesson planning. I determined where the garden boxes should be located, taking into consideration the sunlight, the special layout, what type of soil was needed for the best yield, and the esthetics. This parallels to where content pieces should be placed in the sessions during a semester to promote learning sequentially, or maybe juxtaposed for awakenings, or thrown into the deep end and gradually brought back to safety (depending on the audience analysis). Seamlessly, gardening and curriculum occupied most of my thoughts. But then there are the flowers and cozy corners for respite during a hot summer's day. Without regular family and friends visits I got to enjoy many moments of solitude pondering life's many joys, pathways, circumstances, anomalies, and beauty. I became a good cloud jumper by days and a star gazer at nights. There was beauty everywhere, if only we can find them. And then, my grand daughters came to visit and lighted up my life with waves of joy. It is funny how a simple smile and a gentle touch or a clunky bear hug can do wonders for the soul.

Towards the end of the summer, as friends seem to start moving about I had a few porch visits. I got a lovely rug, some potted plants, a few vases, Italian Glass Demijohn in baskets and created an oasis for drop in visitors. This area accommodated social distancing and well-deserved laughter and occasionally some food. There are many lessons learned during this time. Family and close friends have bonds that transcend time and place; having a choice of who you invite into your inner circle has its privileges; not seeing my children and grandchildren causes me a lot of grief; working for sweat can be pleasurable; and having an abundance of alone time is a treasured pastime.



Stems of tomatoes in different shapes that I can use to explain types of "sequencing" in curriculum design.



Vignette 34 Paradise lost

Domain: Travel

Narrative: My wife and I have worked in the Middle East for many years and on retirement we decided to come to Zanzibar to start of an extended 8 month holiday. After three months, due to Covid, we are still here and really not all that keen to depart. Please don't feel sorry for us. This is the view from our balcony. To spend any time on Zanzibar is special. It is a beautiful tropical island, relatively untouched. However, as with most exotic places, it is becoming increasingly popular with tourists. This is a double edged sword for the locals.



Living in our resort for an extended period has given us a totally different perspective to life in a tourist haven. Zanzibar is almost 100% Muslim among the locals and accordingly there are signs at the departure gates for most resorts alerting tourists to dress appropriately. However, if you go down to the beach, there are young tourists in minimal pieces of clothing. What effect is this having on the thoughts of the young local boys playing soccer in the same area.

Most of the holiday makers at our resort come for about a week and are on all-inclusive packages. That is fine but I am disappointed in the half empty plates of food left for the catering staff to throw out when the locals spend most of their day doing basic work for very low income. There are also too many

of the post-Christian Europeans who drink more than they should and again this is all observed by the locals.

Where is this taking the next generation of Zanzibaris? They have one foot in their past and the other in suspension as they decide whether to remain faithful to their roots or taste the western honey.

When I look at the local ladies spending most of the day bending over while they tend their seaweed farms, I am thankful for the relatively easy jobs that I had during my career. Is it fair to expect future Zanzibaris to live the same tough life? What is the alternative? Are they better or worse off to improve their standard of living through tourism, knowing that it will expose their children to lifestyles that are not in keeping with local values?

We now live in a global community but what is the associated global culture? Are we collectively being lifted upwards or sliding backwards.

I know we have to move forwards but in doing so, lets make sure we are laying the foundations for the next generation to experience deep joy and not just indulgent pleasure. Let me give you an example. Yesterday, I saw a young couple and their little toddler walking along on the beach in front of our resort. The husband was busy taking countless photos of his wife posing in every different position. The little girl appeared in none of the shots.



Reflection

So, what have I learnt from my extended time here in Zanzibar? In the end, I am only a visitor here. For the locals, it is their home. Most of us are so much more mobile these days, certainly in comparison to earlier generations. As we move around, it is fantastic to take photos and circulate them, but let us respect, not diminish the richness of the local cultures.

Vignette 35

Title: **Coffee**

2 Domain: **Hobbies and Interests**

3 Narrative: My Secret Santa gift this year (from my immediate family) was a Nespresso coffee making machine.

My interest in coffee dates back to when I lived in Chicago in 1979-80. At that time coffee shops, as we are used to them now, were just starting up in the US, as the fashion for these outlets spread from the West Coast. I worked for an independent coffee shop, located in an old, converted 1920s theatre building on the north side of Chicago, known as [The Century Shopping Centre](#). The owners of the shop were pioneers, bringing the idea of up-market coffee shops from their home state of California to the mid-west city. The shop sold coffee, roasted on the premises, varieties of loose tea and all kinds of tea and coffee related merchandise and paraphernalia. The interior of the shop was colourful, shiny and brightly lit and smelt of roasting coffee and scented teas. We served “beverages” from a small counter in front of the gorgeous, [ornate copper and brass Gaggia](#) machine. I became speedy and proficient in making and serving espressos, cappuccinos, lattes, mochas, café au lait etc. We also sold take-out pastries, bought in from the Chinese bakery on a lower floor in the mall.

I believe that my accent was the main reason I was hired as a barista. My English accent appeared instantly to convey to customers that I knew everything there was to know about tea. In reality, when I started to work, I knew very little, other than how to make a pot of “ordinary” i.e. English Breakfast tea.

On my first day of work, I was given 2 books, one about tea, and one about coffee. I read the books from cover to cover. I clearly remember being amazed that I seemed to be able to learn an extensive amount of detail about types and blends of tea, and the characteristics and origins of a range of types and roasts of coffee, in a very short space of time. I haven’t experienced such successful and rapid learning again. I am not good at learning detail. I have to work hard to retain what seems isolated or unrelated information. My knowledge, dating from this time, informs my current choices of ground coffee, or when ordering in a Starbucks, Costa etc. I still have those books as souvenirs. They have moved with me wherever I live, and I will pass them on to my children, if they will have them.

4: Reflections

As a new Nespresso machine owner, I have been sampling and choosing from the range of coffees the company sells. I recognise that descriptors of scents and tastes (of wine, perfume, coffee etc.) are merely labels and abstractions that need to be translated into meaningful understanding. By trying different coffees, I am learning what Nespresso’s terminology means for me by terms such as “velvety”, “intense” or “delicate”. I am integrating these meanings with my own coffee taste concepts, initially developed years ago in Chicago. The various blends of different coffees the company offers, different from and in addition to coffees categorised by their origin alone, provide new taste experiences and descriptions, extending my coffee concepts and vocabulary.

When I received my coffee machine on Christmas Day, I realised that coffee must be one of my enduring hobbies, and that others in my family have noticed this about me. My new acquisition prompted me to both gain new learning new, and to reclaim my earlier learning. The learning process also triggered my recall and revisiting, with pleasure, of memories of becoming a barista. Such a gift!

N.B. Apologies for mentioning so many company names, there are many more coffee machines and coffee shops available on the market.

?

Domain: Self

Narrative:

In reading the materials for this project, I came across this question, along with the guidance that it is a question that every participant should answer for themselves. It prompted me to wonder why it is that I have chosen to get involved, at a time when it sometimes it feels like I am already juggling about as much as I can manage... and “overwhelm” is always a very real possibility.

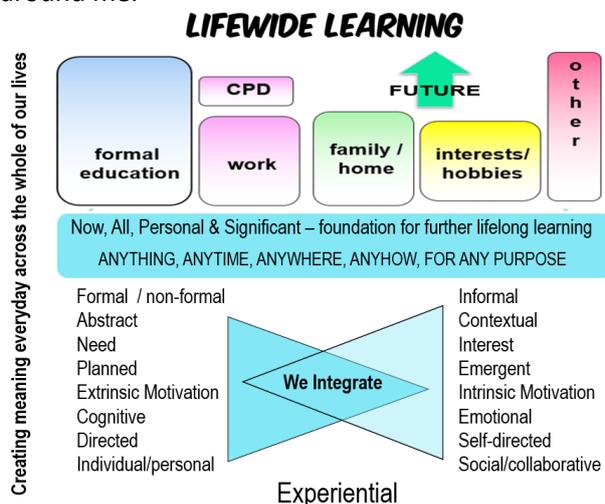
Reflections:

Firstly, I think there is something for me around the fact that current (Covid-19) circumstances have meant that learning & adapting (in almost all of my domains) suddenly feels urgent – it feels (to me) like we really are at a potential turning point, and a lot is at stake (both individually and collectively) in terms of coming through this period and ensuring that we move towards a more positive future... to salvage something good from all of the grief, anger, and anxiety.

But perhaps already I can see some positives... because I also think that the last 11 months has already shown me how much we are capable of enduring – and how much we are capable of learning/adapting, and how quickly.

Secondly, I have realised that writing (for me) is key to understanding things, on a deeper level.... But I struggle to motivate myself to write if it is not for any particular purpose, or it won't be read/shared – I need an extrinsic motivation in order to “do the work” that I know is required, despite having a deeper intrinsic motivation (comparisons with exercise could be drawn here – and why we often need gym classes or personal trainer to keep on track!). So I realise that I am already learning in a way that feels faster and more urgent than ever before... but I need to “write it up” to deepen the learning and help it stick. I also need to use the writing as a reminder (at some point in the future) of what has been learnt, so it doesn't get lost/forgotten as circumstances and situations change.

There is also something about the shared – but vastly different – lived experiences of the pandemic that feels quite unique, and is acting a driver to connect with others? I certainly feel that the majority of my learning at the moment is arising from (or consolidated by) conversations with those around me.



In reading up about the project and coming to write this, I was really struck by this diagram and the idea that experiential learning is about integrating these binaries (formal/informal, planned/emergent etc.)... as I still find myself trying to categorise my learning!

VIGNETTE # 37

WORK

Today I will be using Live Chat with our university students for the first time demonstrating new online ways of connecting an engaging with students. I have learnt how to do this and work with this new piece of technology. I observed my MA Careers Education and Coaching student this week doing her first careers guidance interview and this helps me to refresh my guidance skills but help future career professionals embark on this fascinating career. This is my third student that I have supervised from the MA and this year, I have an international student who is bringing new ideas and a more global perspective. This has helped me to learn about my own guidance skills and the practice of others.

I work with a range of clients from a range of backgrounds as I am also the Careers Consultant for the college that is part of the University so my skills need to adapt constantly, at lunchtime I am doing a mock interview with a students on a traineeships. I have learnt how to build their confidence but I am always pleased about how positive they are and how much they appreciate my help.

The university is considering how we are all going to return to campus post pandemic and I have learnt throughout this time to learn new skills especially technical ones and show I am competent even know it is nerve wracking sometimes and help others who are struggling and learn from others who are not. Just as our students and graduates are having to adapt to a new working world so am I but I am excited by it.

HOME – There is a family moving today from our street. We moved to the North West for my job as I wanted to work in a university which I have not regretted. We have been considering moving back to the North East but I am very undecided and torn about this monumental decision.

FAMILY – I have a husband who I met at university and we do a similar job and try and help each other develop our careers and learn from each other. I have two adult children and a grandchild who is 3. I have learnt how resilient my daughter is as she works in the NHS, but how COVID19 has changed the way she views work as she has had a number of negative experiences and is now looking for jobs elsewhere. I have learnt that my son who lives in the North East two and half hours is an excellent dad but still needs lots of support as he is a single dad. My parents are in their seventies and eighties and my dad cycles over 1000 miles a year and volunteers with the countryside rangers in the New Forest. I am inspired by him and his zest for life. I have witnessed many of my friends take on more caring responsibilities recently and I am going to support my mum after her hip operation at the end of the month. I have learnt a great deal from her as she trained as a Social Worker when I was young and has had a rich and varied life with lots of very interesting friends but I can see her world getting smaller and smaller the older she gets.

HOBBIES – Yoga helps me to relax and unwind literally and learn how to quieten my thoughts walking helps me to learn from my environment and COVID19 has made me appreciate much more my surrounding area and the canals and beautiful countryside that are on my doorstep. COVID 19 has also helped me to appreciate how much I miss going out to restaurants and cafes for a meal, enjoying the atmosphere and the company of others, learning about their lives and experiencing food from all over the world especially in Manchester. I have learnt not to take things for granted anymore.

Vignette 38

Background: For over 10 years the yum cha'ers, a small group of friends, have regularly met for yum cha lunch on Sundays. In addition to our regular lunches we have a tradition to yum cha before and after travel. After travel yum cha includes the giving and receiving of small gifts from the traveller. Birthday dinners at a location decided by the birthday person is another tradition.

Vignette: I ride share with two friends to J's birthday lunch. We're the first at the restaurant, a small Ethiopian eatery with lovely bold colours and artefacts. Directed to our table the three of us sit on one side of the table and remark how we probably look like an interview panel. As the remaining members of yum cha'ers arrive and sit down we swap greetings and study the menu.

The yum cha'ers span four decades. We've shared travelling stories, work angsts, experiences of house buying, house renovations, and the deaths of parents.

We order our food to share.

Today, two less frequent, but loved, members of the yum cha'ers are present. One is a partner, the other a brother (B). It's nice to have them there and hear their views on recent happenings.

I ask the B how his week has been. He's tired from running his brother around for appointments. I notice his brother's jaw clench, he's annoyed by this comment but bites his tongue. I make a mental note to try and influence the seating arrangements next time we meet; space from each other might be welcomed. We carry on talking and the conversation amongst the yum cha'ers swaps back and forth as we celebrate J's birthday.

Reflection: I love the yum cha'ers and our rituals. We are an odd bunch and we work well together.



Lifewide Learning Research & Development Group

**Towards a Better Understanding
of Our Own Learning Lives**

WEEK 2 #39 to #68

Vignettes of Experiences

Involving Emergent Learning

Vignette 39

Vignette 2

So last time I referred to creative writing (in domain and in Vignette 1). I was thinking about the blank page and the ideas I was mulling over from a free start to write fiction course. I 'get home' in the metaphorical sense of putting my work laptop away and remaining in the same location (home). And now I'm switching to my Apple Mac. I've been dipping in to the fiction course answering prompts in order to build up a character. My character is called Henrietta (which happens to be the name of my first cat), she's 42 and lives in a flat. She's a teacher (we have something in common). She's blonde, plump and tall (no, nothing in common). What does she wear? She wears long dresses over wide legged trousers. The dresses have big pouches at the front. She likes big necklaces and she wears coloured glasses. Her strengths are humour and intelligence. Her weaknesses are that she is impatient and clumsy. Her obsessions? massaging her temples when she has a headache, buying pretty soaps, perfume, necklaces, jigsaw puzzles, boxing and reading self-help books. Her ambition? To retire early and write a novel. Her work habits? She likes staplers, she's particularly keen on those perforations that posh photocopiers make, and she loves highlighters. They make her feel efficient – as if a yellow slash across a line of text means she's not just read it but she's understood it. It's a self-congratulatory flourish. By highlighting she has reached out to the author to say yes me too, I see that too. She likes dragging a suitcase (on wheels) with all of her teaching resources in though she doesn't like lugging its weight back in to her car at the end of the day. She teaches A-Level English and likes to say 'Tell me why you think that.'

Reflection: I do (and think I have to do) 'serious' writing at work. I chose Henrietta thinking of our first childhood pet and her lovely but dangerous habit of sitting in the middle of the road when myself and my sisters played outside. It is so important to write for fun and to have fun while writing. I've been bringing some of my creative writing in to my 'academic' writing ('academic' being a word I'm holding lightly and only as a way of saying ultimately that I don't really want to classify my writing at all). Arts-based is how I refer to it- for a particular audience and purpose. For me, the most rewarding aspects of my writing are those moments when I write differently and when I'm not trying to write like someone else. It's those autobiographical moments that are synthesized/ re-remembered/ reframed to communicate the emotional context of an experience or to talk back to/ around something. The experiential moments give the writing its heart. I'm back to my published submission for Lifewide magazine where I included a poem I'd put in to my doctorate thesis about Writing big words. I'm also back to my teaching when I talk about autoethnography and a quotation about being playful but not playing (referencing D.Soyini Madison).

Vignette 40

Vignette#2

Narrative: Hues of Grey



Black is a colour I hardly ever use. It doesn't figure in my personal emotional palette. It once appeared in my colour scheme during my adolescent "dark ages" as a fleeting moment soon after my hormones found their way to better life of colour.

Recently I was given a gift of brush markers in 6 different shades of grey. Initially perplexed at the colour choice I decided to walk through this new adventure and considering that black wasn't included I felt much better.

While rummaging in my thoughts over what I was going to draw, write, or paint with them I decided that Mind Wandering was going to give me answers. I had to learn to draw in shades of grey, miserable, plain, and rainy colours. A good soundtrack, a comfortable position and a quiet place would be my luggage in this endeavour.

Off went the mind and the strokes followed waving their way on the supposedly blank slate of my mind and more practically the white sheet of paper. The brush nib helped as it slid gracefully creating imaginative convolutions with no apparent meaning possibly better known as doodles. I gracefully tried to work my way through the greys starting with the shyest grey and ending with the boldest layering and scaffolding my learning or rather should I say accepting this apparently insignificant activity.

Once the convolutions had no more living space, I needed a breather and so did the piece of paper. I saw areas that need a window, a lookout point, and a possible new point of view. I cut out small sections as I would draw them with a hobby knife. I had found respite and solace from the rainy colours.



Reflection: I had to look into these pieces just like I would do in a mirror to find a way of untangling my considerations on this simple but important learning experience. What if I lost the possibility to see in colour? What if the light spectrum no longer worked in colour waves? What if I had no idea of colour? How could I compensate/accept/acknowledge the absence of colour.....I would see many

rainy days and I would wait for colour to resume its brilliance and force and while waiting I would continue juggling greys and spaces leaving gaps of hope and resilience.

"Colours affect emotions, emotions affect decisions." (The importance of colour. A brief look into the colour psychology of everyday life., 2021)

My world is a world of colour as my emotions are the ingredients of my life that is made of decisions. I few learning experiences need time, my time to become embedded and positioned in order to make the unusual usual and ready for more.

Here are my colours. There was no space for greys until now.



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Vignette 41

Technology is the link

Domain: technology, hobbies, relationships

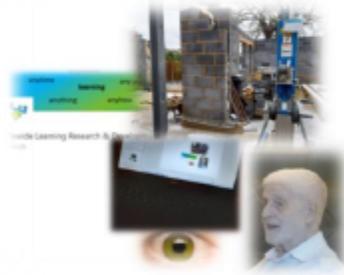
Narrative: I placed technology as my link with all the other domains of my life, so I thought I should examine it on a random day. Now, here we are, not only locked down by the Covid pandemic, but London's weather has for 24 hours conspired to make things worse. Our building work has ground to a halt as the snow gradually accumulates over the dismal scene of abandoned machinery and half-constructed walls; my car has not moved for weeks ... thank goodness I have technology to fall back on!

A typical day, today: my encounter with technology begins before I am even out of bed, as I turn on Sky news. The first item happens to be about the 'grey zone' and how security services have been penetrating and monitoring terrorist organisations. My day's informal learning has begun.

Next, I settle in front of my laptop and catch up on emails and posts in this LinkedIn discussion. I read all the overnight arrivals and reflect on the stories they convey. To most, I post a response and let my associations with each story flow. As part of the research, I am collating the dimensions maps, and look again at the new technologies to which several participants have introduced me.

Lunch is light and consumed as I watch a favourite television show. Although it is a competition involving the purchase of antiques, it is the purchases, not the competition, that keep me watching, for again it is an opportunity to learn.

An essential element of each day is my 1-hour telephone call with my 94-year-old father. He lives alone, in his own home, over 100 miles from me, and this daily ritual is both to give him an opportunity for social contact and for me to check that he is alright. I am sensitive to any changes in his voice or lucidity (which is, fortunately, excellent). I never know where our conversation will take me: I can be learning about life in his childhood, something he watched on TV, a story from the newspaper ... Today, we took an unexpected turn when he told me that he had been looking up on his Tablet where he might get his cataract dealt with. I am delighted by this initiative, and when he tells me he had to stop his enquiry because the on-line pro forma required an email contact (although we set him up with one long ago, he is hesitant to use it), I suggest I go on-line immediately and talk him through things on the phone, using me as the contact. We duly do this, I complete the enquiry form to his requirements, and we now await a response.



Reflections: life under lockdown is constrained for us all, and it is hard to find any significant events in a period where one day merges blandly into the next. It is obvious, though, that without today's technologies my life would be considerably more boring. There seem to be two strands to its importance for me: one, the facility it offers for learning; the other, its connectivity socially. Although I am naturally a very self-sufficient person, I am perhaps surprised how valuable it is for me to be able to interact with others, such as through this research project.

Vignette 42

Background: For over 10 years the yum cha'ers, a small group of friends, have regularly met for yum cha lunch on Sundays. In addition to our regular lunches we have a tradition to yum cha before and after travel. After travel yum cha includes the giving and receiving of small gifts from the traveller. Birthday dinners at a location decided by the birthday person is another tradition.

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The yum cha'ers span four decades. We've shared travelling stories, work angsts, experiences of house buying, house renovations, and the deaths of parents.

We order our food to share.

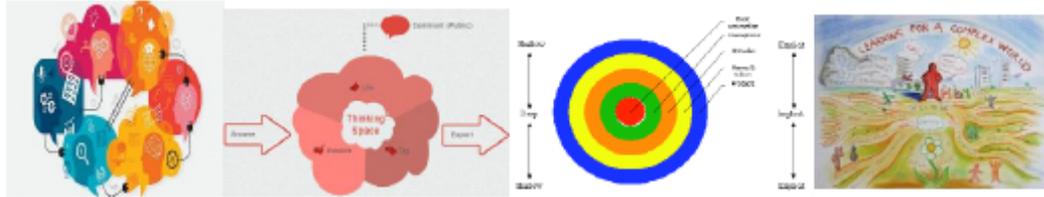
Today, two less frequent, but loved, members of the yum cha'ers are present. One is a partner, the other a brother (B). It's nice to have them there and hear their views on recent happenings.

I ask the B how his week has been. He's tired from running his brother around for appointments. I notice his brother's jaw clench, he's annoyed by this comment but bites his tongue. I make a mental note to try and influence the seating arrangements next time we meet; space from each other might be welcomed. We carry on talking and the conversation amongst the yum cha'ers swaps back and forth as we celebrate J's birthday.

Reflection: I love the yum cha'ers and our rituals. We are an odd bunch and we work well together.

Vignette 43

Vignette #2 Domain: Work Feb. 8th, 2021



Narrative: What does the word “work” mean for me. There is always this sense of formal work, volunteer work, informal work, and just work that I at times, have difficulty in articulating. I am wondering if like organizations, people might have personal frames of reference for work. Being schooled in the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2017) of work, I have always worked and reworked my way into reframing my work space and circumstances to suit my preference. The main focus of the structural is on strategy; setting measurable goals, clarifying tasks, responsibilities and reporting lines; agreeing metrics and deadlines; and creating systems and procedures. This was my 9 to 5 experience for about 15 years, until I decided I wanted to reshape the way in which I engage in work. I much rather embrace a frame that addresses people’s needs for a sense of purpose and meaning in their work. I went from working for 1 organization to working for myself through many organizations. Today, I observed the need for my revised meaning of work and the spaces we play out those meanings in the online environment. These spaces of learning may not be easily restructured by us as individuals. For example, my first meeting this morning was a 3-hour session in “Design Thinking” a combination of theory and practice. Here I was the learner. I started the course at the last minute. The theory was partly information presentation with PPT slides and graphical representations of concepts. The practical was done using the app “mural”. I had never heard of it before. To complicate my participation, I did not have the required code to enter the activity on mural. I felt uncomfortable, lost, and although I had some good ideas, we not able to communicate them in the collaborative workspace. I became an observer for this part of the morning.

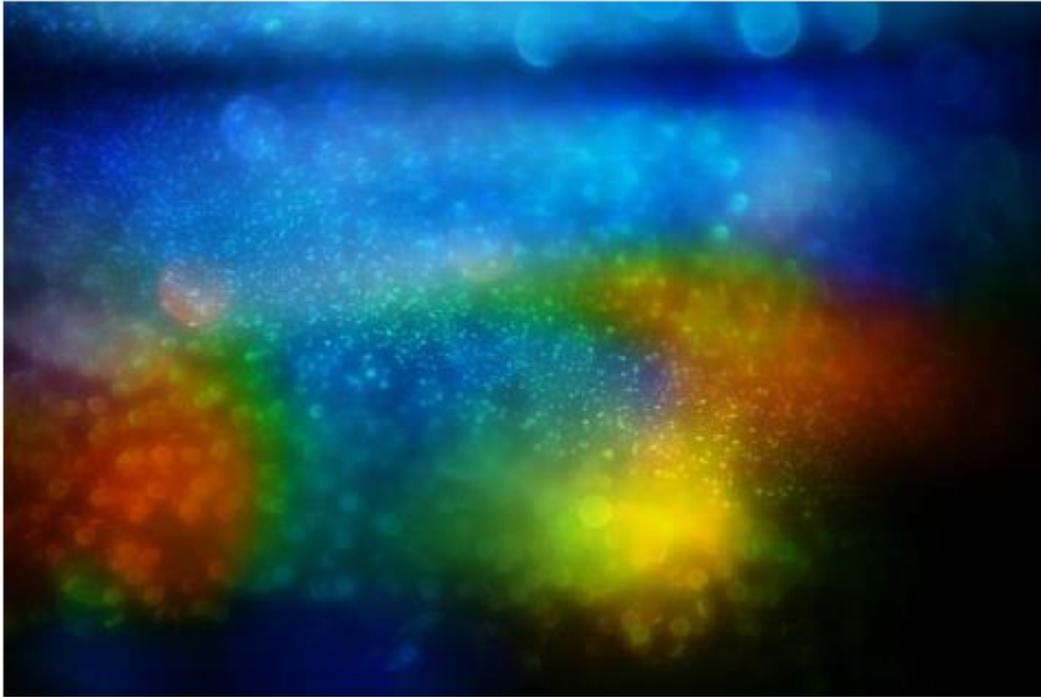
Reflection: In my work as a teacher educator, this experience has underscored the need for empathy for new faculty learning the pedagogy of teaching and learning. Reflecting on the activities we have in an education course, I realized we touch on “Frames of Reference”. However, it is only at the surface level. During this time working at home and being alone most of the time, I have been able to engage in deep ponderings on these and similar topics and issues. Changes to be made, resources to add, and spaces for new learning to create is becoming familiar territory.

Learning: My musings, coupled with some concepts from “Design Thinking” have provided fodder for much thoughts on the fragility of new learning for adult professionals. This realization has sent me back to researching, making notes, augmenting curricula, questioning and revising accordingly. The context, and spaces we as educators create for those wearing the learners’ hat may yet see many new and exciting pathways to learning.

Bolman L.G., Deal T.E., (2017). *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. John Wiley & Sons.

Tversky, A. and Kahneman, D. (1981). The framing of decisions and psychology of choice. *Science*, 211, 453-458.

Vignette 44



Vignette 3: Layers of my day as I play in the office



1 - Let me show you around my office/home. If you look closely you can see my ever-present 'supervisors'.

Subtext: Here is where I have spent most of my time since March 2020. Notice how it looks like a 'home' but the laptop on the table suggests connections to other possible life domains. Technology permeates everything - everywhere!

Postscript: I feel some affinity with many people around the world. I also feel sadness for many people around the world who are not afforded the luxury of having a home to work from.

Let me introduce you to my team ...



2 - First there's the 'coffee fairy' ... that is, my partner.

- *Subtext: Working from home means that others are present. This is both wonderful (especially when coffee, snacks etc magically appear) but also difficult. But it is also hard to be 'present' in the home space and at the same time be 'unavailable' to chat.*
- *Postscript: I can only imagine what this means for many women who are/were home schooling.*



3 - Next, there's my Research Assistant (Oreo McFluffy) - sleeping on the job yet again.

- *Subtext: Work permeates all my living spaces (literal and metaphorical) ... as ever-present as learning. The articles on the coffee table are ones I've been trawling through for a new subject that is under design. FYI ... once upon a time, the coffee table had books and the occasional magazine on it.*
- *Postscript: I am actually surprised how much paper I DIDN'T use in 2019 - or is that shocked at how much I DID use in the years prior.*



4 - And then there is the Teaching Assistant - (Jatz Cracker) - who is always ready to help.

- Subtext: My 'real' home office is inside with a stand-up desk and loads of papers/books etc. It is there where I generally 'teach' from because it is quieter (and away from the coffee fairy). But I prefer to sit outside most of the time because it makes me feel less like I am 'locked down'.

- Subtext: ...



<https://sway.office.com/rD5Mm1RwweLuxCv#content=8aaadDuF6LN1M>

5 - But if I need 'editorial assistance', I can call in a colleague who is always ready to help (press play icon to see how helpful this 'help' actually is).

- Subtext: I generally connect with others using technology but this isn't as satisfactory as it sounds.



<https://sway.office.com/rD5MmiRwvsluxCva#content=TEvM3khYHKAYV>

6 - *The day is not simply about work, there's also corridor conversations with other close colleagues (i.e. Oreo and the neighbour's cats Jules. & Dot)*

- *Subtext: I miss those corridor conversations and social interactions with my colleagues. These were critical in workplace learning.*



<https://youtu.be/6a4nH29a5B>

7 - *And then, and only then, there is some time left for play.*

- *Subtext: Now I'm just just dreaming. Or am I?*

Domains: Home/Technology/Work/Learning

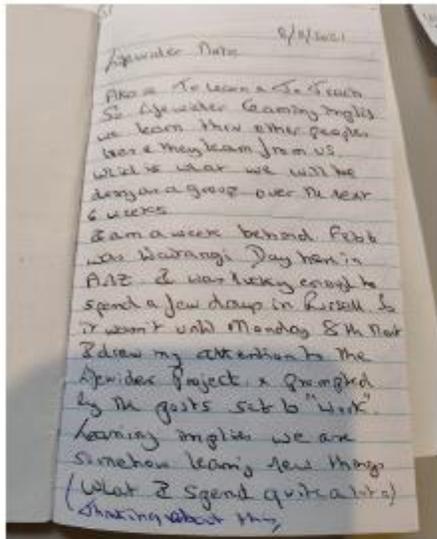
Vignette 3: I'm always on the look-out for new technologies to use in my remote teaching spaces. Just this morning a colleague recommended 'Sway'. So I thought I would give it a go. So I've spent about an hour or so 'playing' as I created this vignette with the intention of learning what the program offered

(and *if*, and is so then *how*, I might use it in the future). As I pulled the various items together it occurred to me that I tend to play a lot when I want /need to learn new technologies.

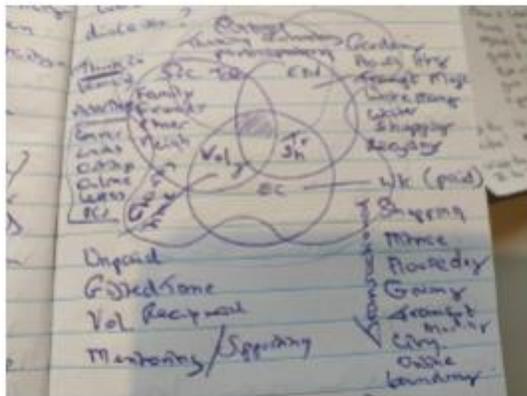
Learning: How much play is involved in learning? I would say a lot. It is not only Sway I learned today and Sway is not my only instance of playing: e.g. the final video you just saw was me (a few years ago) learning how to use iMovie and upload to YouTube. But I still remember how much fun it was at the time to play with the silly noises and other features that the program made available. I didn't read the manual. I saw a button and I pressed it. I was in control, and I explored. I learned - and it was fun! And today has brought me pleasure too - as I pulled these silly pictures and videos together to share story with you (meanwhile with the purpose of learning how to use a new program). So when it comes to learning, today I want to say ... don't dismiss the value of 'serious play'. The teacher in me adds 'when do I provide opportunities for students to engage in serious play'? Or do I even need to 'provide them' - surely I leave some room for student agency!

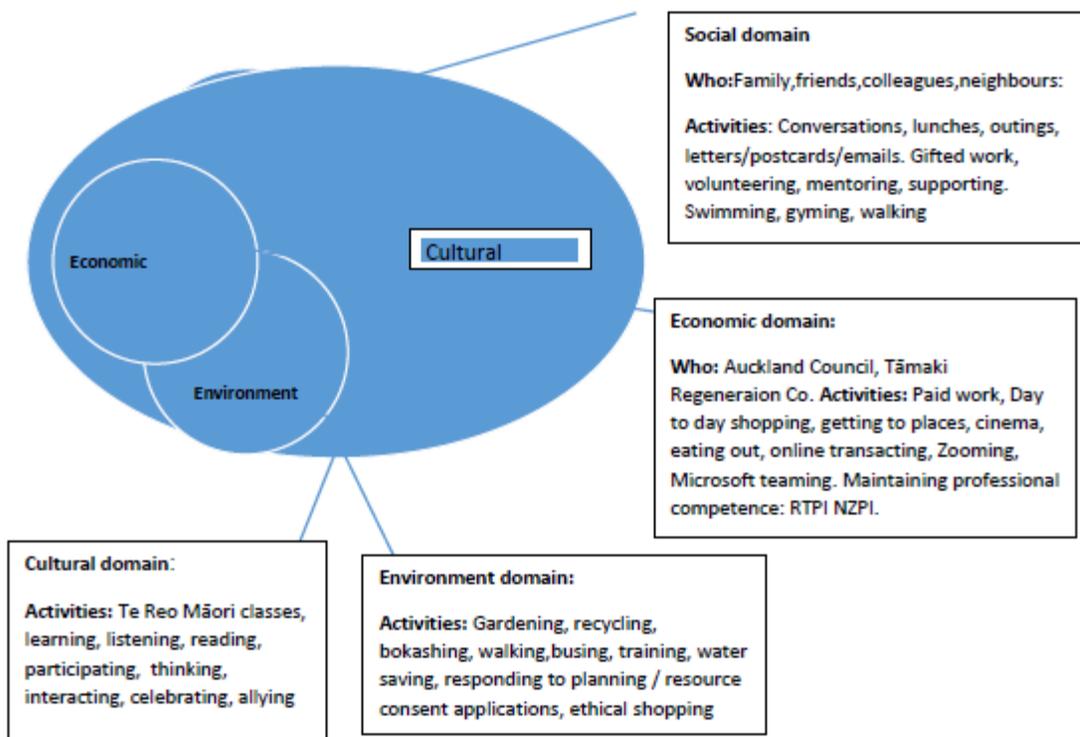
Postscript: On a different note, I am also aware how much of myself I am willing to share here. This leads the teacher in me to also ask how much we ask our students to share - and how much might be too much?

So it wasn't until Monday 8th that I drew my attention to the lifewider project and, prompted by the posts, I set to work. As I was away from my desk for a few days it was very enjoyable to get my little notebook out and just scribble:



I suspect the 'domains' of my life have similarities to others. What is different is how we express them and how we feel about them, how they balance and the emphasis one domain has over the other at any particular time. And how we see our life in context. I started thinking about the pyramid as I grazed through the Smart Art features and was reminded of Maslow through 1 of the posts. Then I shifted to thinking about the domains as an aspect of life. Then it shifted again to thinking about how I fit in the wider world and how to depict this. So what if we took the SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) framework and mapped my life's activities/domains onto each of the social, economic, environmental, cultural? What would that show me?





So what if we look at our lives through these domains and through the 17 SDGs and ask how we can contribute. Thinking about the sustainable development framework, 3 common features seem to emerge when looking at activities and domains of Lifewide learning. And they are transactions, balance and change. There is an apparent contradiction between the latter 2 and then think of sailing and steering a course, navigating a course, changing course, it makes sense.

When I think of learning, I think of learning new things. And yet a lot of my time is spent relearning. I has learnt a waiata or song about Matariki which is the group of stars called the Pleiades in the northern hemisphere. Mātariki marks the Māori new year in the 3rd quarter of June. I hadn't song the waiata for a while so when I started to thik about it I honed in on the tune and gradually by repeating the first line, the rest started to form again.

Reflections:

In Te Reo Māori, learn and teach translate as ako. Lifewider learning implies we learn through other peoples lives and they learn from us. And I guess this is what we will be doing in the coming few weeks.

It was if the words were being drawn like a fish from the water one by one. I eventually went to utube and plays the tune with the lyrics and it came back. Now I repeat it to myself every now and then to reassure myself. So what does this tell me about y learning? That learning is about reptition, about practice, about rehearing, relistening and rediscovery. There a lot os 're's

How we think we see ourselves? How we want to see ourselves? How we would like to see ourselves? How we change the way we see ourselves. From a practical point of view it did show me that I may be a little bit 'busy' at the moment and need to ensure I retain that balance. What's new.

Vignette 46

Vignette 1: Reflection

DOMAIN: Hobbies

NARRATIVE:

The experience of sharing and communicating with the Lifewide Learning Research & Development Group helped me to look deeper into the connection between different



parts of my life in the first week. All this week I have been thinking about learning that I have never paid attention to and that have inspired me. As one of the hobbies and interests, I pursue learning a traditional Iranian instrument. When I attended a music class a few days ago, the teacher taught me the technique of vibrating on a piece of music (This technique creates beautiful nuances in the produced sound and helps to make the piece of music Listenable).

I asked my teacher: When do we use this technique? He paused and said: “It is sensory and you should feel when you need to use this technique; It is not written in this piece, I only used it to decorate the piece”.

I asked again: “I mean on which notes can I use this technique?”

he paused again and said: “You are a Beginner; it is a little difficult for you to sense where to use the vibration technique. Let me play once and see in which notes I use it”. He performed once more and found that he was using it on the “B”. He smiled and said: “I had never thought that I would play it on a certain note; I learned something new and it is interesting for me to learn this with your view”. (Some Iranian instruments have elements that allow the musician to create a technique in a particular piece that may not have been considered for that piece. In this case, the vibration technique may not work in the other piece on B).

REFLECTION:

For me, in simple terms, learning is about seeing things through the perspectives of the people we teach them. After that a started asking myself am I learn anything from my first-grade students? As a novice teacher, I realized that I had learned a lot from my students. By questioning very small issues that I may not have thought about before, they cause me to reconsider the issue and see why I have not thought

about it before. Thinking about these little questions (perhaps for us as adults) helps me to see the world as a child, and to use child-friendly methods to improve my teaching, and to help my students understand the subject. This week, with the help of this experience, I asked my students to teach one of the letters of the alphabet virtually. This allowed me to find their views and opinions in teaching and to adopt the simplest and at the same time the most efficient way of teaching. I know I have a long way to go, but I started by **Reflecting**

Vignette 47

Russ Law Vignette No 3

Self-imposed stress, motivation, timetabling and blood pressure

I've been thinking about the things I've learnt over the last couple of weeks. In particular, I've been focusing on what the components of this learning have been, from the initiators to the inner motivation, then organisation and the physical as well as intellectual and psychological processes.

It's been quite revealing.

Initiators, Motivations, Actions and Impact

I've mainly been doing online assessments, remote or Zoom coaching and preparing for my first formal readings from the local paper for the sight impaired. These have all involved learning.

Assessments are constantly quality-checked by faceless bureaucrats, and there's nearly always something to learn about how to improve, regardless of my resentment of the faceless, automated process. It's with a heavy heart that I read the reports and feedback. However, the last example of this was quite affirming of my methods. After fifteen years of this, I'm getting there, and feeling competent!

Coaching is my true love, professionally. This has been rewarding too, since the people I'm coaching are all good people, doing their best in challenging circumstances and welcoming someone impartial to talk to. The stress from this work is from scheduling it, recording bookings and completions on dodgy automated systems that often do the opposite of what you want, and shutting out other things that are on one's mind. It is very rewarding in an interpersonal way.

Preparing for my first reading for the paper has been organisationally and technically difficult. The microphone I bought hasn't arrived from China, so I've had to get a different one, after losing preparation time. The instructions I had from the people running the readings were about pre-lockdown systems, and the app for editing was virtually incomprehensible. However, I've worked hard to get the initial things in place, and have been practising setting-up, recording and saving. But where to save, what format to save recordings in, and what was the reference to a group meeting? I contacted the organiser and sorted out most of these.

Stress and blood pressure

By chance, I've been monitoring my blood pressure, on the doctor's advice. I've also been checking on why I'm more stressed at some times than others. The answer is that it's hard to fit in all the messy components of the day neatly, so that, for example, I'm rushing to send an essential email seconds before it's time to host a prearranged Zoom meeting. The BP monitor shows that there's a marked difference in readings first thing in the morning and in the early evening/late afternoon, the latter being higher.

What I think I'm learning

I need to be more realistic in my timetabling, allow for delays and hitches, and look at the diary carefully. Do things bit by bit – I don't have to be an expert immediately. Build in time to ask for help! It saves time.

So nothing deeply academic here, but these are my authentic reflections for the week.

Russ

Vignette 48

VIGNETTE 2: "Cooking life"

DOMAIN: family/personal life



NARRATIVE:

It is a common situation during this past year that many have devoted their time and creativity in cooking; it has not been different at home where , as you know , we are all working from home using different spaces. We are: my husband, my daughter and son , and time to time, their partners that have join us in lock down periods.

They are all keen and good at cooking and frequently it is them who cook. Past week I said to everyone that it would be "eat ups" day because "there was nothing in the fridge ", and everyone could help themselves to the left overs. After 40 minutes my daughter and partner called us all to the table and produced an incredible gourmet lunch/ appetizers ! I thought they had gone out to buy things or even that they had order some things in...

But.... it actually was produced with the "things" I didn't have in the fridge !



REFLECTION:

I think we tend to see things in very fixed ways; and regarding ingredients , we look for what we know and predict certain combinations we are used to use; it also happens with dressing: we tend to say "I have Nothing to wear " (I feel my husband and many of you would feel they have heard that so many times , as they look into a closet full of things to wear) .

This made me think on how you must look at things in different ways and seek new "combinations" to make better use of our "ingredients".

Just like I thought there was nothing usable in my pantry and fridge, the eyes of "other" made it possible to use what we had within reach, and really make the best out of it. Meaning the "best": beautiful, presented food as well as balanced and nutritious.

Regarding teaching, or even interactions with students, you (I) may be overlooking the "ingredients", and probably losing the possibility to produce a really "gourmet " teaching moment ! Also extensive to family life and habits, we may be used to see our surroundings and use them in very molded ways, instead of looking with fresh eyes and create/risk, new combinations and habits, that may be simple but "nutritive".

I am Looking forward to cook life with the same ingredients but with more creative results. 😊

Josefina Ramirez

Vignette 49

Vignette: How Do You...

Domains: Family/relationships

Narrative: A very elderly relative (first centenarian we know about in our family, and the last of her generation) having had a fall and broken her knee (the one replaced by the NHS a few years back). Made good by the doctors and now in isolation in a care setting (the second) a little way from her home, though she has tested negative for Covid (three times, thank goodness). Hopefully she'll be able to leave her room to mix and mingle from Friday.

But this is all temporary; she'd love to go home, she says, when we ask on a videocall. Most folk would probably say the same, we surmise, but her increasing dementia, blindness and loss of mobility....

So here we are, wrestling with uncertainties about the best option(s) for someone we love dearly but without being able to meet them or visit any future potential options. The internet is great of course, virtual tours offered of all sorts of places. But I can't touch, or smell, or taste, or really see these options through a screen. Nor can you hug someone through Microsoft Teams. So many shortcomings to information gathering and decision taking. And time ticks along.

Reflection: This is a real mix; at one level it's a problem to solve (I've done loads of Project Management. Take advice on mobility and any prognosis here, organise more physio, look up the options for residential care, do the sums...) At another we feel massively constrained by current circumstances; technology may be necessary but it's somehow not sufficient. But at heart it's a process with these cognitive aspects – and frustrations - massively infused with emotional dimensions and commitments. And there are lots of others involved (so many voices, some louder and more central than others, including those holding Power of Attorney). Speaking only for myself, this is an unfolding emotional dilemma and challenge as much as a practical one... if not more. Making decisions on the basis of incomplete information happens all the time of course, but this feels like a very special case...

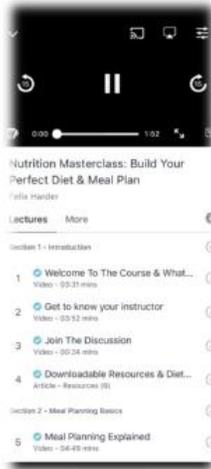
Vignette 50

Vignette: #1
Domain: Hobbies
Date: 11 Feb 2021

Your body is your temple

Narrative:

- After sulking and feeling like time stood still and all that once sparkled was now in limbo (I'm including here no travel, no family around and wedding plans falling to pieces), I dusted myself down and picked myself up and started thinking about how I could turn a global pandemic into a learning experience (a bit like the Japanese martial art of [Aikido](#) where you use your opponent's weight against them). One of the first things I decided to do is something I've always wanted to try – sign up for a nutrition course. Said and done!
- I have always believed in the importance of healthy living and good nutrition and with a few dear family members and friends having gone through some serious health issues, I have become very interested in learning about it – I just never had the time.
- Having gone through the training on a brilliant e-learning platform called [Udemy](#), I started to religiously record my food and drink intake, opened some old cooking books that were gathering dust and allowed the healthy magic to happen! Two months later, I feel better and healthier (as does my fiancée) and I have managed to create a habit; you know how they say it takes c.21 days to create a new habit, well, here is one of mine and I love it!



Reflections:

- It felt great to do something for myself and for my other half, whilst acquiring a new skill around meal planning. Learning about nutrition and meal planning only made me want to learn more and interestingly, also made me want to share. With this in mind, I started drafting bite-sized chunks of learning notes to share with my team at work, in an attempt to get them interested and sharing knowledge about healthy living. The feedback has been great and got me to go deeper into my research. I am also seriously considering it for a second career ☺



Vignette 51

VIGNETTE 1:

Title: Learning about myself

Domain: Balancing the Domains in My Life

Narrative: To do justice to my participation in this project and I drew my life domains. As I gave myself over to the task, I realised how important and dominant my inner life is. It seemed to me that as I grow older I seem to be living more in-side my head, my mind. Probably because I have so much writing to do at the moment, focusing on wise practice in an ageing society. We are all ageing from the moment we are born, but I am in that category that is considered "the third age", post retirement, whatever that is. Many think it is the time of well-earned relaxation and travel but, as yet that has not been a feature of my life. The leisure domain is a thing of possibilities that I put on my weekly 'to do' list, because the thought of it gives me joy, but I rarely turn it into reality. What I had illustrated in my domains sketch and learned from this experience is that I am fortunate enough to have amazing friends and work colleagues, and I my conversations and encounters with them enliven my life, but it doesn't feature in much of my time despite being the domains where of my life where experience joy. In reflection it does seem that colleagues and friends are my leisure and give me joy. Some time ago I watched a series on Netflix by Marie Condo who helped people organise their homes and get rid of clutter, keeping only those things that give them joy. What took from the show the idea to consider doing those things that gave me joy.

My reflection: This may seem rather insignificant to those who know me, but choosing to take the time to reflect on the domains in my life, how they intersect and their relative significance to me, and doing it in such a concrete way, spending time on it when I should be writing a chapter on wise practice in an ageing society has given me a chance to learn about myself. What will I do with this learning? Long ago I learnt that learning is a change in behaviour. I think in this recent reflection I learnt that I need to do a bit of decluttering of tasks, recognising that we all need to do some things and keep some objects that don't give us joy, but at least I need to weight up essential roles, responsibilities and tasks against the optional ones and have the courage to let some options go and replace them with those that give me joy. Hmmm!

Vignette 52

Vignette Week 2

Domain: Our Social Learning Ecology & Home

I've been inspired by the narratives and discussions and there have been many prompts for my emergent learning in the last week.

Have I/we created a transient domain?

As I saw the domain maps that were shared, it got me wondering as to whether we have co-created a new domain, albeit virtual and transient. Each of us have our own reasons for being here, but we have come together for a purpose and day by day we are fulfilling that purpose. Being present in this space has, for me, become an important daily activity full of purpose and with feelings of belonging. I checked my perception against the working definition I gave for my domain map and it seemed to be consistent. Within this space I meet people that I wouldn't meet in other parts of my life and have conversations and read life stories that I wouldn't have in any other part of my life and through these interactions I am developing new understandings. It feels organic with a strong sense of emergence. When someone shares their life story we react emotionally and intellectually, and we might be motivated to do something that we would not otherwise have done. For me this space is fulfilling both relatedness and growth needs using Alderfer's model of motivational needs. Perhaps it's a sub domain within my work domain which may or may not have a life beyond this 6 week process – who knows?

The descriptive definition I used in my domain map 'a recognisable part of my life in which I spend time doing particular things, with particular people, often in particular places, using particular tools and other objects. Through these experiences I learn, develop and achieve in ways that are consistent with who I am and my past history of experiences...my domains reflect key identities I hold e.g. scholar/educator/writer/ [in this case perhaps its facilitator?]

Cold start to the day

I woke up this morning knowing something wasn't right. As I cleaned my teeth it dawned on me – the radiator hadn't come on. It had been a cold night around -4C and the house was chilly. I let out a groan knowing that my plans for the day were going to have to change. As I made a cup of tea I thought about past experiences of boiler failure – including the last one when we had to have a new boiler! These thoughts were not very pleasant so I quickly turned my pragmatic hat on.

The first job was to get some heating into the house so I went into the shed and dug out the old calor gas heater, dusted off the cobwebs and took it in the house noting how fortunate we were to have a full cylinder. Next I changed the batteries on the thermostat but that didn't make a difference. By now my wife and daughter were up and complaining about the cold. I told my wife I had a plan which at that stage was to call the boiler man knowing full well it might be 3 or 4 days before he could come and knowing I would face some family criticism for not organising a service for the boiler which I had forgotten to do!



But it is what it is. Then I remembered a couple of years ago my wife and I had been away in early March and the boiler had stopped working so my daughter had called the boiler man and the problem had been caused by a frozen condensate pipe. Given it had been a cold night I thought that might be the problem again, so I went outside to check. Sure enough there was a large icicle protruding from the bottom of the condensate pipe. So then I fell back on my tried and tested way of finding out what to do – I asked YouTube and watched a couple of short videos that explained the best ways of de-icing a condensate pipe. After half an hour of pouring warm water over cloths wrapped around different parts of the pipe I reset the boiler and it worked. I'm now sitting in relative warmth with a smile on my face as I write these words.

Reflection

The need to learn emerged in my home life when I had a problem with my boiler. We always have two choices - get someone else to fix the problem or try and fix it ourself. When we choose that later it is always going to involve learning through the experience of trying to solve the problem – even if we are not successful. When we have no previous experience or relevant knowledge of a problem its difficult to know where to start. We don't even know what questions to ask? But in the case of my malfunctioning boiler I had enough past experience to at least have a go and because I had an idea of what the problem might be I could ask YouTube and within a few minutes draw on the expertise of knowledgeable and skilful people. Learning to solve these sorts of problems is a lot easier today compared to 20 years ago and the nice thing about sorting out this sort of problem is that my household is so grateful!

Vignette 53

Vignette #2 – “I’m sad because I can’t swim”

Domain: Parenting, Self

Narrative:

Sitting on the sofa with my two young daughters in their default position (as physically close to me as possible), and watching a troublingly gender stereotypical children’s programme (Topsy and Tim), my oldest daughter (4) suddenly burst into hysterical tears. When she had calmed down enough to share the cause of her upset, she simply said “I’m sad because I can’t swim”. There was nothing in the TV show related to swimming, and we clearly haven’t been swimming (or mentioned swimming) for some time. My partner indicated that this was the second time today that she’d had the same outburst – the first was when I was working in the nursery-cum-office upstairs, unaware. In response, I talked to my daughter about how she will be absolutely be able to learn to swim (prefixing the discussion with a commonly used phrase “when the coronavirus is gone....”), and how we are all learning to do different things as we grow up – learning is the fun part, and something we can look forward to, rather than being upset by what we can’t yet do. I reminded her of the last time we went swimming, and how fearless she was jumping into the water and into my arms – and told her that this is a big part of the learning process that she has already mastered; being confident in the water and brave enough to try.

Reflections:

This experience brought up so many thoughts and emotions for me. I was in awe (as a I regularly am) at the inner workings of her cognitive and emotional life – where had this thought even come from, and what were the reasons that an awareness of not yet being able to swim were having such a profound emotional effect on her?

I was proud of how I responded as a parent, and how our conversation evolved and she calmed down – but I was also conscious of times when I have not been so patient or empathetic to my kids’ emotional distress, and had dismissed their tears as silly (for example, when tantrums arise from something like wanting yet another sweetie).

I felt a niggling sense of guilt too, that although there are lots of negatives about our current circumstances, one personal “silver lining” has been a freedom from the burden to making decisions about what skills/interests/classes we should be taking our girls to. Should we start them off in a sport, or encourage them to learn an instrument, take them to dance classes? We are the pandemic parents who can blame any perceived parental inadequacies on Covid-19... we didn’t because we couldn’t! Not because parenting is a continued tension between juggling your kid’s needs (present or future) with your own. I remember swimming being a particular source of comparison from the very first days of parenthood (some mothers who were proud and vocal about taking their “water-babies” to £15 an hour swimming classes at 3 months old – and others who did not have the resource (emotional, physical, financial) to invest, but now felt they were failing) – so something about this felt particularly poignant.

And linked to that, there is a recognition of privilege in there too. I will teach her to swim one day, or pay for classes - because I can afford to, and I have access to facilities, or can book holidays where a pool might feature. How many are not so fortunate? How many people might feel that same emotional intensity as she does, about not being able to swim (or >insert anything else in here<)... albeit perhaps with a different manifestation (and perhaps less immediacy) as an adult?

Vignette 54

Title: Environments

Domain: Interests/Hobbies; Family & Friends; Travel

Narrative: Water and a sense of place



The hill country surrounding Austin, Texas was my mother's home (Dad's from Philadelphia, PA – that's another story). Stories of my grandmother growing up on property that joined to Jacob's Well, a natural spring in Wimberley, TX were part of my connection to natural springs and swimming. In high school I spent considerable time at Barton Springs in Austin. The pool is 68 degrees year-round with deep diving areas and shallow areas for relaxing surrounded by grassy sloping hills for "people watching" (went topless optional in the 70's). Its pristine beauty was destroyed when 3M and other corporations moved to Austin (population 150,000 1967, now just Travis County 1M, including Metro Area 4.5M). Barton's is often closed due to pollution from ground water contamination.



Using water for gardening/growing came naturally. My grandmother grew tomatoes, beans, flowers even in her tiny suburban backyard. I never thought about waste or how much I was using. Then for 2004 KSU Faculty Show, I took a deep web dive searching for information about water. I found intelligence reports from West Point describing the decline in ground water and the potential impact this could have on society, including possible military action (I'm an Air Force brat, born at West Point). I learned that the Inuit's are consultants to NASA on ice

melting – they record when there is a new bird species for which they have no name as evidence of climate change, and in general a new interest emerged. What is happening to water on a global scale?

See the GRACE project:

<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/92183/twin-satellites-map-14-years-of-freshwater-changes>

After a 5-year drought here in Georgia, I suspended my watering habit and now let the earth and plants take care of each other. My interests include desalination efforts across the globe, ground water deletion in California, Texas, Africa; wetlands/saltwater contamination; changes in weather patterns; impact of climate change on animal species; global policy regarding water; bottled water; sustainable agriculture; global hunger; farm to table; etc. Water is after all one of the four elements along with fire, earth, and air.

Reflection: One little step – convinced my partner to use Brita water filter instead of bottled water; working on bare awareness when running water; miss swimming so MUCH 'cause of covid; have a trip planned to visit Miami Beach in the spring (hopefully); try to buy local not global produce. I'm happy as a duck when it rains/snows. No complaints about grey weather as long as rain is on the way. I can share my belief that water is vital and deserves our attention and respect. And most importantly, I can change my habits and learn to be water conscious.

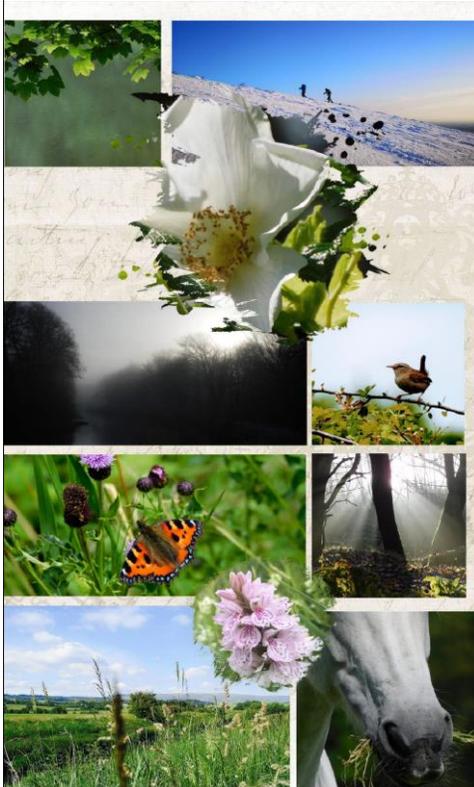
Vignette 55



Vignette 2: Micro-Adventures (the Not Temporarily Closed Domain)

So this week I had problems coming up with a vignette or even finding the time to read all the amazing contributions. But yesterday, with the now, and winter weather, having started work at 5 am I decided to call it a day at three and we went to the one hill which is within the 5 mile radius from home.

But let's go back first:
this is how adventures normally look like for us: kayaking, mountain biking, hill walking, wild camping or campground. We have also slept in the back of the car watching the sun set over the ocean on the driver's side while the moon rose over the mountains on the other side.



Then lockdown happened—again—and I began more and more to feel like a caged bear. I need to roam, explore, connect. But was now reduced to always walk the same paths. Always the same. But then also never the same either:

and while looking closely, watching nature ebb and flow with the season, noticing more song birds than ever brought joy, it did not stop that longing for adventure. Well, then yesterday happened and despite lockdown and staying within the 5 mile radius, I managed to go for one of the things I always wanted to do. A new experience. A sunset hill walk in the snow. A proper micro adventure.

Reflection

during lockdown we have gone onto micro adventures exploring locals paths we have either never been to or in case of my partner he hasn't been to in decades. And while these micro adventures were joyful and fun they never managed to stop my fernweh (wanderlust). Until yesterday weather, season, and the local hill conspired to make for that sense of being away and being connected to the elements. That makes me wonder: what lies within an adventure to make it an adventure? Physical exertion? Being away from build environments? Being connected to the environment? Meeting other hill walkers, wild campers, mountain bikers, kayakers? There is always a sense of community in it. What makes an adventure? How can I translate adventure into other domains?

Vignette 56

V3 Yes, to crafting

by Chrissi Nerantzi

Domain: Life

Narrative: Before the pandemic hit and when I was in prolonged physical and emotional pain for about 2 years, I reached out to making, mainly crafting, as a painkiller as nothing else seemed to work. I felt the need to focus my mind on something positive that would bring me happiness in the moment, despite the pain.

I started to crochet... I am still an absolutely beginner who feels joy by making simple stitches and creating little colourful miracles. I found multiple ways to use the same stitches. I also went on YouTube to learn a few more. It didn't always work but I am making tiny progress.

The same with knitting. I wish I could learn how to knit a proper hat... one day. I have struggled to watch videos to learn and feel that if somebody would show me and I could follow the instructions at the same time, that would make a real difference.

My crafting intensified during the pandemic. Maybe bloomed is a better way of framing it. And it all happened despite the fact that we are busier than ever before at work. But maybe it all happened because of it? I suspect my creations act as happiness bites. They make me smile and it is a medicine that seems to make other people smile too. So that is good. Crafting acted as a connector. I started using Meine Wunderkammer in the garden. This also became my workspace.

There are other things I haven't yet managed on my own... Such as silver clay, which was a disaster. And I wish I had a kiln to make some pottery. One day, maybe.

What I did master really well, I think, is making animals out of toilet and kitchen role tubes. A boring



toilet paper role was transform into animals of my imagination with the help of Google for inspiration. Some of them were even hanging on our Christmas tree. Now, I have a whole production line.... Also sewing masks. The sewing class I attended came in really handy. Missing all the ladies and hope we will be able to get back to it one day... I have no idea how many masks I made. Definitely many!

I started making many from multiple craft items I was creating. The same happened with wire dolls. I find it relaxing to do these little repetitive tasks, get better at making them and progressively add a little bit more complexity. But most of them are really really simple.

Before Christmas we organised a #creativeHE makealong (see <https://creativehecommunity.wordpress.com/2020/11/27/christmas-makealong/>) and it was fascinating to see how everybody joined in and created multiple ornaments out of toilet paper role tubes. Many of mine went on the tree and have been shared with colleagues and friends. They seem

to have brought a little bit of joy which is wonderful. Ody, my youngest used to collect toilet paper rolls and I remember going into his room and asking him to recycle them. Now, I am collecting them... how things change. In January I joined The January Challenge organised by 64 Million Artists <https://64millionartists.com/our-work/the-january-challenge/>. I managed to keep up with the daily tasks for the first 15 days. It was wonderful to see the many diverse creations individuals from different parts of the world shared on a daily basis and how these had the potential to be combined and become new ideas.

Reflections: Crafting definitely helps me feel better. It is a medicine and a companion. I normally make stuff on my own and can focus in my thoughts and forget at least for a moment, all the darkness and the clouds. It also helps to de-glove myself from the flat screen and make something with my hands that I can touch. When I am immersed in crafting, it is sunny, a sunny escape? Is this a good thing? I don't know. But it is true that crafting takes me to a place of calm where I can be resourceful and express creatively. For me, the process is important but the final output as well and the purpose too. Crafting brings me joy and lets me explore and play with ideas, material and possibilities.



Vignette 57

Vignette 2: Domain : The trinity: mind/body/spirit domain.

It is too much and far too complex to put words to the experience i have had this week, but I will give it a go.

Over last weekend I begun feeling pain in my pelvis and hips/legs and I was limping. By start of the week it had worsened and a very sharp pain in my pelvis and groin appeared. I put down to my overall weakness and fatigue- exhaustion following a laborious birth and the trauma of it. The pain became so acute by the day; it appeared that it had compressed some nerves in my body and made walking extraordinarily hard. I was on all fours, and I could not lift my legs. This in combination with other symptoms at the time was enough for 111 to suggest to me to visit A & E urgently for elimination of a rare condition that can lead to paralysis. Though extremely rare ,they said, ..."with what you present with you need to be seen asap in the next two hours".

Well, that wasn't very pleasant to hear! I tried to remain calm. We had to find emergency childcare provision for my eldest. I had to surmount the courage to walk in , on my own, whilst managing to feed baby until i get seen. As i was lying in the bed, i did the mistake to google that condition and I experienced what felt like a small death, which also means an opening of the heart. My life was flashing before my eyes and pictures of my own family , the playlist of the favourite list of my eldest son's was humbling to listen to. I realised ,yet again, the temporariness of our lives and how quickly things can shift and change. In all the process my faith, in spirit, and the intuitive wisdom that all was fine was present.

On my way into the hospital I had alerted a few friends and asked for prayers and healing intentions to be sent my way. We co-created a strong loving network.....it was extraordinarily magnificent to notice that my walking eased by the time i arrived at the A & E department. (oh, yes! i am a believer in the power of intention).

I never thought of my spirituality as a domain in my life-wide learning but oh my goodness it so is! Someone in the group mentioned the inner self domain and i really resonate with this idea.

This is not the end of this story. On a spiritual level- and im unsure how much of this to share in this group- there was LOTS happening Without going into too much detail , - or maybe I should?!- the night that my pain had peaked I ended up on my living room floor in a yoga posture with my forehead to the ground .I was called to surrender the wisdom of this pain, which I did. Visions and images and messages were appearing in my consciousness-(not those the mind is chasing for but the ones that effortlessly appear) about this pain calling for release not just for me but for the women before me.

A couple of events happened the next day which i found interest in the timing of them : my own mother told me she loves me- for the first time in her life. My sister shared that her womb was in pain for the duration of this time- I had no clue about this. My auntie reached out asking me to mediate in family conflicts. Although the wisdom in this lifewide learning is still unfolding. There is a saying in Yungian psychology /transpersonal point of view that I resonate deeply and I have seen evidence of this in my own life. For the trauma to resolve somebody needs to be ready to feel it. Could it be ,that I was in that moment a carrier of old transgenerational trauma and the conduit of it' s release ?

This might read as mind - blowing or airy fairy to some readers. I have seen felt and experienced evidence of this in this lifetime, that is strikingly evident. Though i keep doubting it myself, my trust is deepening more and more. That was another learning from this experience, to say the least.

Fun times!

Vignette 58

Jack and Black Spartacus

I got "Jack" the last of Marilynne Robinsons for Christmas from my wife. I had recommended Robinson's "Gilead" to her for her book group, the general consensus from the group was "nothing happens, it is worse than WG Sebald". It is the last of four linked novels about the linked lives of the Ames and the Boughton's in Gilead Iowa. The first of the four "Gilead" (2004) is one of my favourite books, the story of an ageing minister writing a letter to a young son and Jack's arrival, the prodigal son of his friend named only as Boughton in the book. Not least because it was the last book my grandmother read before a stroke robbed her of the ability to read. As the only two readers in the family books were out currency, as soon as I read Gilead I knew she would like it. Jack is the story of what the prodigal son does before his return, we already know about his abandonment of a young girl he got pregnant, his drink problem and his jail time from earlier novels. We don't know much about Jack's relationship with Della, a young black school teacher in segregated southern US. Watching Jack slowly unwillingly and knowingly destroy her life was painful, too painful for lockdown.

Even before I finished it, I was looking for the next book. Beside my bed was Black Spartacus by Sudhir Hazareesingh. It is about the life of Toussaint Louverture a prominent figure in the slave revolt in Haiti in the late 1700s. I knew a little about him, simply that it had happened, that the British were worried, and that CLR James had written about him. After I got about a third of the way through I started to think about how Toussaint created a public, through his oratory style, partly inspired by Catholic sermons, part French Republicanism, part local culture. How he also dominated the public sphere through his writing. I thought, where is this book going, is it doing a similar thing to Negt and Kluge in their Proletarian public sphere as a repost to Habermas Bourgeois one, or something else. It has endnotes for references, and I find it very frustrating going to the back to check them. Even worse on a kindle, when I read Foster-Wallace "Infinite Jest" on a kindle during a train ride through Russia, I had to get my son to keep showing me how to get back to the text. **Basically, I am none the wiser.**

Even though flicking to the end disturbed my bedtime routine, the lack of certainty over the political and philosophical basis was even more disturbing. The references were mainly primary sources in French (no good to me), I saw Hybridity and Gilroy. I thought, okay, it is Southern Theory. The author does not mention Habermas or Negt and Kluge because they want to avoid falling into the trap of analysing Toussaint's actions using Eurocentric models. Bang. That is it. I am so wrapped up in European notions of political philosophy that I am in danger of becoming a universalist, looking at the absence of my favourite Marxist writers rather than being open to new ways of knowing. I decided the only thing to do was look Hazareesingh up, I went to his Oxford page and then looked for journal articles he had written. Most of his work is about the French Republic, I read a couple of articles, which seem deeply embedded in the European tradition. **Basically, I am none the wiser.** Perhaps what Hazareesingh is doing is digging deep into previously unseen resources to create a more definitive account of a historical figure people don't know much about. Perhaps looking for him to articulate an alternative model of the public sphere is more to do with me. **Basically, I am none the wiser**

Vignette 59

Vignette 2 : Significant relationships

Keeping in contact with my mum has been challenging, to say the least. My mother is 92 has dementia and moved to a nursing home last January. As throughout the United Kingdom, I am unable to visit her indoors. Indeed, I have not properly seen my mother since March 2020. It is frustrating and to make matters worse she is living in the next street. I have twice seen her through glass, but both of us found the meeting challenging. One of the reasons being is that mum is deaf and unfortunately lost one of her very expensive hearing aids shortly after moving into the home; the other being her eyesight has deteriorated because of macular eye degeneration.

The first meeting outside was last summer and my lovely husband 'lost the plot' when mum said innocently "... and are you going on any nice holidays dear?'. That was just after I had explained that we could not go on holiday. The next meeting was in December before the present lockdown and it was freezing or as we say in Glasgow "baltic".

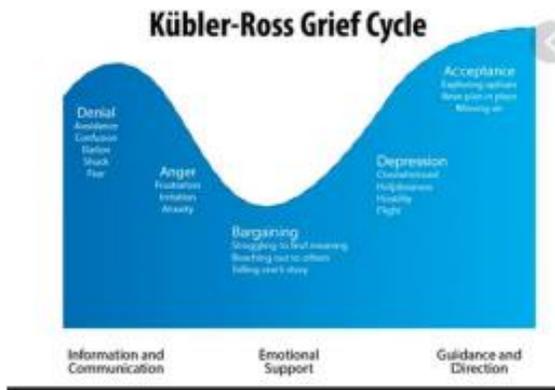
So, we keep in contact by mobile phone. Ahhh the wonders of mobiles you all say...but remember mum has dementia so the mobile phone has become so famous in the home, I think it may soon have its own blog. Sometimes mum has managed to turn down the sound so she cannot hear the phone when it rings. She usually rings me by accident when turning off the phone, which means I am yelling down the phone " hello mum, mum, mum can you close the phone ?" . She often phones my sons repeatedly in the same day as she sees their name showing up in call log and thinks; " Oh I missed a call". The boys are very good at explaining to their colleagues while on conference calls, "Sorry, that is my grandma on the mobile, I need to get this". Of course, by the time they answer, mum has given up and closed the call down.

Most days she fiddles with the phone which means she tries to add her old telephone number; or adds her name – last week 80 times; or tries to add letters or numbers.

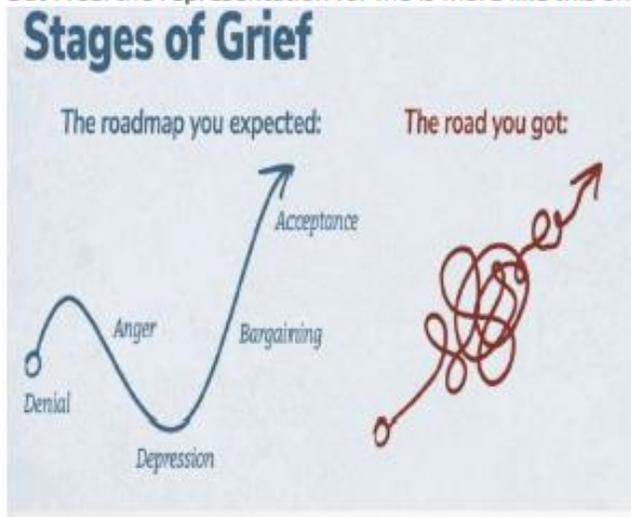
So, my solution is to collect the mobile once a week, wave to mum through the window and sit outside the home and delete all the strange things mum has added to the mobile. I have also realised that she has forgotten how to make a call so she can only speak to me by looking at the call log and pressing my name.

Reflection

Why am I writing this? Well, there has been frequent mention asking callers to be patient and ignore barking dogs or children or crying babies, but never about coping with elderly relatives. And although this approach in this vignette I hope people have found light-hearted; my relationship has been affected by guilt and loss. I feel as if I am going through the stages of grief described by Elizabeth Kubler Ross with many considering the stages as a road map with a beginning and an end.



But I feel the representation for me is more like this one.



My grief regarding the loss of my mother commenced over eight years ago, and I have not reached acceptance, sometimes my depression overwhelms me, other times I am in a stage of acceptance. Most of the time I feel anger and resentment that my mother only really wants to communicate with me and not my living brother. I include the term living as she never talks about my other sibling now who sadly took his own life. In fact, the statement I feel best expresses how I feel is Ted Rynearson's statement "There are really only two stages of grief, ... who you were before and who you are after."

Vignette 60

Honoring the spiritual and the unconscious

Post chemo enlightenment drawing started off 2019 bringing healthy boundaries and deeper understanding regarding unconditional love. I

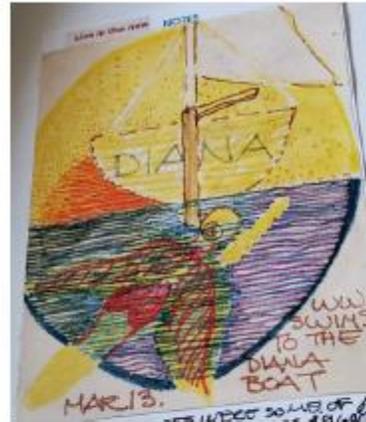


had to go back and re-read the many books I had on chakras when this appeared – the entire image emerged in a dream.

The other piece was in process as my father was near the end – he passed just after his 97th birthday. The chaotic nature of this work was not my usual – I let it come and didn't try to push it. You mentioned



shamanism and other eastern meditative experiences. I learned about mandalas in 1998 and began making a mandala a day for about 5-years.



Read Carl Rogers and CG Jung, used JC Cooper's "An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols" to track my images and learn about cultural meanings. A month before I found out I had melanoma I saw the image in my mandalas. I stay open to knowledge from the spiritual realm. I think the unconscious is powerful.

Vignette 61

Vignette #3 Domain: WorkLife Feb. 13th, 2021



Narrative: Life can be very interesting when circumstances start aligning. This past week has brought a new zest for the paid employment facet of my life. Around November every year I start aligning my contracts for the next year and making plans to arrange work around my gardening and summer activities with the family. November of 2020 was like no other November I can recall. The pandemic had an effect on work and family. There was no contract to arrange, negotiate around, have place holders for, or look forward to with enthusiasm. It was time to create some new strategies. This situation led to sending out some feelers to connections, looking out for short or 1-year contract postings. I applied for several positions thinking I might get a couple bites. To my dismay I had 4 very promising responses and am now at the crossroads.



Reflection: Being in the workforce for over 3 decades has not made it any easier for interviews. It's a word that brings butterflies to my stomach and prevents clarity of thought. However, during this time of decision making of which contracts to consider (I am holding on to two of them) you might say that I made some discoveries. Discovery #1 – having an eclectic accumulation of skills set can be confusing for those tracking work and educational experience in a sequential manner. You see, I did not follow the path of a traditional student. I went back to university at 40. When someone from

an HR department is tracking education, they make assumptions that a person started university at the certain time in life and without much work experiences. When they see work experience and education reflected in the same time period it gets confusing. I had loads of work experience while going back to University to get the accreditation that aligns with the skills. Discovery #2 – I have accumulated over the years a multitude of skills that I now have to rethink how to align them to current realities in the workplace. Discovery #3 – Writing short narratives for each category of my WorkLife experiences would allow for ease of understanding the context and conditions of work in the past decades. Discovery #4 – I enjoy working in a variety of workplaces and these experiences contribute to a unique approach to the traditional perceptions of “work”.



Learning: From Fessler, Huberman to Steffy, theorists have tried to put teachers' life cycle in neat timeframes based on a life cycle - progression. However, there are some of us who do not fit nicely into those molds. Factor in new technologies, a pandemic, and many of us wanting to work way beyond what is considered the retirement age, teachers life cycle and professional development of those who choose to remain in the workforce is going to prove quite interesting in the future.



Vignette 62

Domain: Language and Identity

Learning Māori In Lockdown



I had always toyed with the idea of learning Māori, but in reality, it took a virus to spur me into learning this new language. ‘Why Māori?’ people have asked: *whakatoll* (cheeky!) Living at the foot of the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire (UK) does not provide any opportunities to converse in Māori and, with no obvious benefits, many might state that learning Māori was a pretty pointless pursuit.

Well, to be fair, I have recently completed a masters study at the University of Oxford focusing on vocabulary development for young *tamariki* (children) with English as an additional language (EAL), so I am certainly interested in the theme of second language learning. Also, as a *Kalako* (teacher), I have spent many British summers in New Zealand primary schools, fascinated by the way Māori language is woven into a bi-cultural curriculum. Clearly, my intrinsic motivation was high, but would this be enough to literally stay the course?

My search for an on-line programme directed me to a language learning show called *Tōku Reo – My Language*. The half hour show had previously been broadcast on Māori Television in blocks of five episodes, based on the Te Whanake language course created by Professor John Moorfield; there were one hundred lessons in total. Each show developed vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Throughout the series, language patterns were rehearsed in a range of familiar contexts: the park, shops, café, bus stop etc; gentle humour was often used to make the constructions memorable.

Reflection

One of my favourite elements of the language programme was the focus on dialect. A *kaumātua* (respected elder) explained the meaning of a colloquial expression peculiar to a certain *iwi* (tribe) or *rohe* (region). For me, this truly exemplified the connection between language and culture. I don't believe that I had really appreciated the concept of dialect prior to these discussions. The meaning of the series title: *Tōku Reo – My Language*, became crystal clear – the significance of language being personal and owned was apparent. Expressions, idioms and terms of endearment felt grounded in people's identity. These words and phrases had historical and geographical importance; they were *papa pounamu* (treasures). The expression *ka mau te wehi* (awesome), common to Eastern Dialect, really struck a chord with me.

You may notice that I have included the expression in my learning domain map. Learning how to combine *ka mau te wehi* with another Eastern Dialect expression, *e hika* (special friend), made me feel that I was beginning to build my repertoire of social language, at least within the Eastern *rohe* (region).

I would say that learning *Te Reo Māori* on-line – in lockdown – in Malvern, has been both fascinating and fulfilling. Through a love of language, I feel connected to a *whānau* (family) of Māori speakers. In order to develop my fluency I speak *Te Reo Māori* every day, whilst walking on the hills.

I have only just begun my *Te Reo Māori* journey, and am mindful of the wise words of Professor John Moorfield:

‘...to become fluent in a language and to communicate effectively requires much more than an understanding of its sounds, grammar and vocabulary.’



Vignette 63



A collaborative open picture book project, GO-GN Fellowship



Detail of the following exhibits from the Rijksmuseum made available under a Creative Commons Zero (CC0) license: Tile Tableau from the Orphanage in Sommeldijk, anonymous, c. 1725

Vignette 64

Vignette 3 Jenny Willis

Title: Beyond comprehension

Domains: family and spirituality

Narrative: Maria and others have spoken about spirituality and experiences which are inexplicable, challenging our fundamental beliefs. This is another of those events.



My husband's cousin, G, emigrated to Canada when she was married 22 years ago, leaving behind in Colombo her discriminated-against Tamil community and mother tongue, in search of a more settled life in the West. Her parents remained in Sri Lanka, and sadly her mother died there suddenly at the age of 60, when G was pregnant. Her mother had lost her own mother at an early age, so had had an ayah to help bring her up. This lady, Lily, had been a loyal companion throughout G's mother's life, and the family invited her frequently to their home.

G did not return to Sri Lanka until nearly two years after the birth of the child she had been carrying at the time of her mother's death. Naturally, she wanted to introduce her daughter to her family, and this included Lily. They met in the room that had once been G's mother's bedroom. Just before Lily was ready to leave, spontaneously and for no apparent reason, the 2-year-old walked up to the dressing table, selected an ornate comb and offered it to Lily as a gift.

What's so strange about that, you may ask. Well, it transpires that this was a favourite possession of G's mother, one which Lily had regularly used to comb her hair.

Reflection: What made the child give Lily this gift? How/ did she know that the comb had a special significance? There is an old saying, 'one out, one in', meaning that as someone in the family dies, another is born, perhaps suggesting some kind of reincarnation. Was this an example of something beyond our ability to comprehend, or was it just coincidence?

Vignette 65

Learning Anecdotes. Paul Thomas. February 14th 2021

Title: Cooking paella.

Domain: Home.

Narrative: I have cooked paella many times before, from a recipe given to me by a friend. I get the recipe out and follow it using ingredients from the freezer – fish, squid, prawns, mussels, rice, flavourings. It became a special favourite of the Carer who helped me to look after my wife. The children also liked it so we would often have it to mark a day as a special occasion. My wife died in April 2020 and the Carer left. We have not had paella since. Just before Christmas my mother, aged 95, came to live with us because she was too frail to live alone. The Carer came back to help look after her; one or the other of us would cook supper Wednesday-Friday.

Last Friday I chatted with the Carer. ‘What shall we eat for supper?’ I asked. “Let’s have paella” she said. We laughed almost secretly, acknowledging that this was special, almost a naughty treat.

Without planning it or even discussing it we naturally fell into cooking it together – unusual since usually one or the other cooks. We didn’t open the recipe-book – unusual since we usually follow the guidance. We used ingredients like chicken and peppers that we don’t ordinarily use. It was as though we both wanted to make it our way, spontaneously and without guidance. A symbol of our friendship perhaps. This is ‘our thing’.

Reflections: Had I not been doing this project about life-wide learning I doubt I would have paid attention to what was going on and simply cooked and eaten. But something important was going on - something about learning, about development, about meaning. Why did I not feel the need to check the recipe? Why did we cook it together and deliberately ‘make it ours’? We were learning things from each other and with each other – about new ways to cook this dish, about confidence in cooking this dish without guidance, and also about our comfort with each other.

The meal was more than a nice thing to eat. It was a symbol of our friendship. A marker of our shared story, as co-Carers, reminding us of the good work we had done together. It is through such co-creative activities that people build trust and care for each other as we help to build each other’s life stories, develop our sense of identity and culture. Yet such meaningful everyday interactions are often not noticed.

Vignette 66

Vignette 1

Title: Slowing Down and Insights

Domain: Family and Home

Like many people, I have found myself in a new working environment since the start of the pandemic. Since September 2020 I am working from a small garden office rather than the sitting room in my house which I am so grateful for. My new work space allows me to demarcate work and home. There is something satisfying about having a distinct marker between these spaces, both physically and mentally, and not having a commute to work.

Roll back a few months ago and the idea of separating work and home would be inconceivable to me. My pre-coronavirus life was dominated by work, and in a sense work was my life. I recall numerous occasions promising family that things would change, that I would break the habit. But it was disruption on a global change that proved to be the catalyst for personal change for me, like many others. Whilst our worlds have shrunk beyond measure, and with that unprecedented challenges, interestingly this reduction has allowed me to enjoy a more intimate connection with the place where I live. Regular walks along country roads and woodland areas have resulted in more conversations with my neighbours, albeit from afar and greater perspective on my life.

Initially, I found long periods in the one place tiring and frustrating. Too much time in one space was a problem for me, and still is on occasion. However, my thinking has shifted considerably on how I view time at home - from one of problem to an opportunity! Time spent with family has helped me to realise that these relationships needed nurturing and to invest more time in the people who truly care about me rather than other relationships where perhaps the interest is self-serving. I value this time to meaningfully connect with the people who are most important in my life, those who energise me, and to strengthen those relationships. In doing so it supports my wellbeing, elevating my mood and happiness. I am savouring these experiences and grateful for what they offer me, and also what I can bring in a sense to other people's wellbeing.

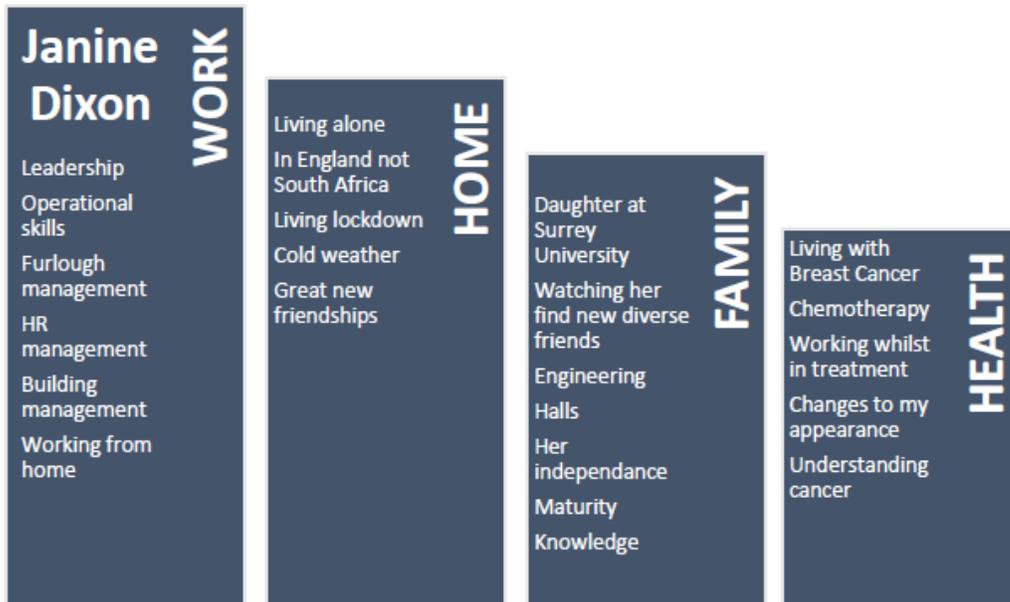
I attribute this shift in perspective or new awareness largely to time spent outdoors, going for walks and slowing down in every sense of the word. Scientific evidence shows that time spent slowing down the mind (cognitive slowdown) or cutting off the distractions of the outside world temporarily can contribute to more creative insights - the 'Eureka moment' (see BBC Documentary - Horizon: The Creative Brain How Insight Works, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1gn21d>). While I recognise that working online has considerably increased my workload, strangely I now find myself being more flexible, intuitive and spontaneous than how I was pre-pandemic.

I will finish by saying that I realise my thoughts might not chime well with others where significant stress and burden is their new reality. The thought of slowing things down is not an option for others as they juggle emergency teaching, family and work life, stressful situations which negatively impact wellbeing.

Vignette 67

Week 1 Vignette1

Today marks my 1st year of living in England after 40 years in South Africa. I am learning daily about life in so many areas as seen below.



Vignette 68

Vignette 3

Domain: Hobbies and Interests

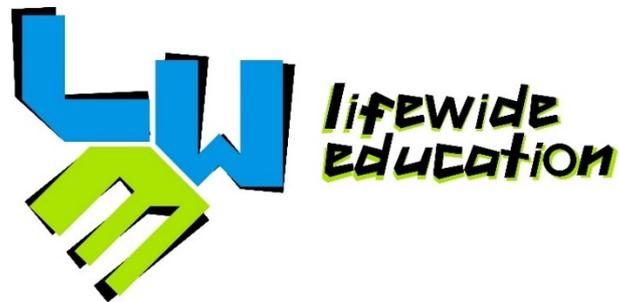
Writing has been my focus so far and is highly likely to make a return at some point but just at the moment I'm trying to find different 'space' that is not at all associated with work. I've been returning to my beads and to playing about making ear-rings for myself. I used to do that when I was about 16/17. There was a magazine I used to get and I'd order beads from them and then make up whatever I felt like. The result being that I used to wear incredibly long and heavy earrings and feel very arty doing so! I made bracelets and necklaces at times too but long earrings were definitely the things that kept me returning to my bead store. Over the last few years I've been dabbling and now in various lockdown and stillness modes, I've been returning to it. I did actually do some beadwork for my sister's wedding about twelve years ago. In a box of all sorts of things, I put some napkin rings that I'd crocheted with wire and beads. They still get a reveal at Christmas but seem to have headed on to the Christmas tree which does make me chuckle.

This vignette is just a share about trying to teach myself crochet with wire again. I've bought a book and I am playing by doing chain stitch - I'm including a few images this time so that you can see that yes I did chain stitch but really need to improve and that I got a bit sidetracked and headed towards making three new pairs of ear-rings. I have also been doing a bit of research. I've found a really good short youtube clip on crocheting (rather than just chain stitching) with wire. I did have a few attempts. You will see one sample in a picture but I also chain stitched with beads. Next step is to follow the youtube clip and crochet and then crochet a sample with beads. I also found myself looking at crochet wire art and the work is just incredible. So now I'm looking at Ruth Awasa's crochet wire sculpture and thinking I really need to learn how to crochet so that I can be much more imaginative and try something more visionary like that. In the meantime I'm trying to learn to crochet because I have some twisted willow in a pot inside that I decorate at Easter and at Christmas. Being someone who loves being outside and in the light, I really want to move it from 'winter theme' and in to spring. I was thinking, perhaps very ambitiously, that I could start to flowers/ abstract designs in greens and yellows and hang them from the branches. We shall see. At the moment there's some spring coloured baubles hanging there optimistically waiting for arty companions.



Reflection.

I am reminded how many things start in childhood or early adulthood. I've headed to beads at various times over the years having first taught myself a little (a very little) when I was in my teens. I like the fact you can make and then wear them/ it. And you can take them apart and make them up differently. I don't actually wear jewellery really other than earrings so I've been thinking about purpose. For me I do want to know I can use it/ wear it/ it has some place somewhere. So I'm looking at my twisted willow and imagining spring colours and shapes in there. All for myself and all to make me smile and to bring the sunshine in.



Lifewide Learning Research & Development Group

**Towards a Better Understanding
of Our Own Learning Lives**

WEEK 3 #69 to #101

**Vignettes of Experiences
Involving Emergent Learning**

Vignette#69

Vignette 1: "Getting into the Zone"

Domain: Work & Formal Education

Narrative: Third level education was wonderful. I still wonder about it today. You see, others are fortunate enough to have known better schooling experiences. While I sometimes wonder how aspects of my education might have been different, I maintain what would approach a kind of cognitive dissonance in identifying how this education could have been more fruitful and yet I recognise that each of my experiences have made me the person I have become.

Again, *third level* was wonderful in that it opened so many doors, and all in the context of a framework that had yet to be defined and asserted. By bursting into the social arena with some inelegance and excitement, my studies took a right hiding! This inevitably led to panicked exam cramming on repeated occasions which in and of itself correctly suggests that I was no great learner and lacked vision. Mingling with better students and meeting with inspiring lecturers inevitably lifted my expectations of myself. Despite a relentless struggle, I somehow (mostly due a lot of help from others) managed in going the whole way.

Working through one particular cramming session for a subject (analogue electronics) and in performing exercises from previous exam papers, I got to a stage of 'sudden explosive understanding'. Like as though all the little parts just clicked into place and that I could take on any problem. I had to wait until the age of nineteen before experiencing this neuron firing chain reaction that I have seldom met since. I remember all my house mates had gone to bed and that there would be no interruptions, that time seemed inexistant, and yet in what must have been every single minute, I had revelations that got me stuck into the process of continuing with utmost excitement. Having aced the exam in a nonetheless least advised fashion, I knew I had inadvertently discovered something new and important.

Reflections: Only years later did I hear of Mihaly Csikszentmihaly and the notion of flow and, by way of popular culture, it was in a documentary about high functioning professional sports people. Flow would seem to be a succession of sparks : Each spark being what teachers (and parents) speak of when a child successfully learns and suddenly integrates a new concept. I try to convert any reminiscing about my education into tools and tips towards my children's education. My hope would be to maximise opportunities for them to live that 'glint in the eye' for which teachers strive. It is in having children that I appreciate all the better how teaching professions lift individuals, society and civilization, why not, towards new heights. It is this lift that has led me from electronic engineering towards 'pedagogical engineering'.

A memorable time, in recent years, that I managed to enter into "the zone" again was when something inspired me to sit down before a stretch of old wall paper, a French dictionary and some coloured pens. Again, I remember that I was not about to be interrupted and that I could let my mind go where it needed. I mention the French dictionary because I find that even simply the nouns of this language carry enormous insight to their very rhetoric and assists even in the process of thinking. In this session of experiencing the zone, I managed to describe aspects of consciousness and creativity to myself.

This process had no real objective other than to satisfy my curiosity, and to explore. Unsure of how I eventually ended the process, I know that I had opened many paths that would allow me to start up many more exploratory paths given a permitting context. This process brought me to discover aspects of divergent (creative) thinking and helped me realise that many, let's say, business brainstorming sessions fall well short of their holy grail of innovation because as I would believe, they often introduce convergent thinking far too early, thereby interrupting the process of priming divergent thinking and just as it gets started.

Upon reading a document on a subject published by Norman and his team, I was drawn in by what I perceive to be an exceptionally thorough understanding of creativity. A closer involvement with this group only seemed natural to me and I am encouraged all the more to read and to learn of such refreshingly interesting thoughts and perspectives.

Vignette#70

Vignette 2: Was that tree a wish tree?

Domain: work

Narrative:

Since my classes continue virtually, I decided to use my time to gain tutoring experience and also put money aside. So I started teaching to a first-grader (Maeda) who is also studying virtually at home. Before going to her today, I had made a video to teach an alphabet sign that I had to present in my classroom today. In this video, I taught a lesson with a story. What occupied my mind about this story was what homework or questions should I ask my students to get them to look deeper into the story. (The story was about three animals who each achieved what they wanted with the help of a tree, and in the end, we realize that whose wish was fulfilled in the story depends on how we interpret the events in the story).

In the middle of the class, Maeda asked me: How do you teach your students? I said: Like your teacher, with video and stories. she asked again, "Do you have a story now?" I said yes. I made one today. she asked me to play it for her. I remembered that in the morning I wished that a child was by my side and I would play the video for her and she would critique it. After watching the video, without asking her a question, she said: "I think it was a wish tree because everyone's wish was fulfilled. So all three achieved their wishes". When I got home, I edited the video and put this question in it: Was that tree a wish tree?

Reflection: This experience reminded me how much ideas come to my mind as I experience and increase communication. I realized that communication is an important part of my life, and since I live alone, I have to try to raise the level of my conversations and connections. I also realized that when a subject keeps my mind busy, it is enough to look for the signs and symptoms of those around me. With the help of this tree, I achieved my three wishes today. I reached out to a small consultant, wrote the appropriate story question, and the idea of writing this vignette crossed my mind. Was that tree a wish tree?..

Vignette#71

Imposter Expert

(Work and personal domain...as always...)

Having exclaimed in my vignette that the 'unexpected' is reliable and predictable, I have once again this week been engaged in an activity that was not in my diary...

Story Summary:

Bid 1. Over Christmas, I was engaged in a tender for a significant (size, effort and 'importance') piece of work. The tender was led by a huge consultancy with whom I met regularly to compose the bid. Although I remain confident that the part of the overall assignment that we could be involved in is well within the capabilities and competencies of my team, the process to apply/bid was incredibly complex and entailed some very late nights of 'panic produced policies', other complex operational documents and endless 'proof of the pudding' descriptions. The process left me excited and exhausted in equal measure due to a persist feeling of being the novice whist trying to present the expert.

Bed 2. The same consultancy contacted me last week to highlight a similar opportunity. They explained that they did not have capacity to bid but wanted to share it with me in case I wanted to pursue it. Despite my 'still in recovery' state from the previous tender, I decided to explore. I contacted one organisation in the field who I thought might be interested in partnering with me only to discover that they had already begun the process with another organisation. We talked a bit and decided that our three organisations would form a consortium to bid together. I was excited as I had all the operational documents and Perfect Policies to hand now so the process would be smoother. What I did not anticipate was having to lead the process upon very quickly discovering that neither of the two other organisations had ever bid for a project of this nature. We had 5 days to put the bid together once again against a backdrop of 'we might not get it' and the need to gather CVs in a particular format, budget proposals and a posh Gantt chart for page 27 etc. I had to decide very quickly whether or not to continue. I was so enthused by the other two organisations (their passion and innovation in particular) that I decided to 'just do it'. We submitted on time (87 pages), but the week featured a feeling of being an 'imposter expert' needing to encourage and support the team to believe in the value of our combined efforts whilst knowing that my best hat is 'curriculum designer' not 'Senior Bid Manager' as described in the email signatures of colleagues in Bid 1.

Reflections I have learnt such a lot during these two bids. Some of the technical aspects of bidding and tendering are added to my pile of related business development tickets – a steep learning curve that I know will never end. But the most interesting aspect of learning was how to position myself within these teams of people that I did not know (very well). In Bid 1 I had to quickly give up any pretence of being a 'Senior Bid Manager' as there was not time to pretend and then investigate. I had to confess. Upon doing so of course I was reassured that I was not expected to know very much about leading a bid, they just wanted the nuts and bolts of curriculum design. In Bid 2, I had to lead the process using what I had learnt in Bid 1 (along with smaller tickets from previous experiences). Importantly, this meant I had to earn the trust and respect of the team. To gain that trust, amongst other things, I had to demonstrate a clear understanding of the process and expectations which I found really challenging! But my motivation was solid because the greatest joy this week has been the rapid 'get to know you' path with these two organisations whom I have come to greatly admire – I even managed a call in my PJs on Thursday morning such was the depth of our relationship towards the end of the week!

I have always maintained the view that a dose of Imposter Syndrome if administered carefully is a healthy ingredient of my personal and professional growth. It's important to respect knowledge boundaries whilst remaining optimistic about being able to cross them. All I can do now is wait to hear about the outcomes of these projects. I don't think I will ever enjoy having to tender/bid for work but increasingly the field is competitive and procurement practices become tighter, so it is just something that I need to get on with – hopefully with less 'panic' and more PJ moments.

Vignette#72

Vignette 2 WALKING

Domains: Homelife, Creativelife, Connectedlife

Narrative: As we have a small dog, taking him out for a walk is a daily obligation that I am happy to undertake. But these walks are purely functional, with my focus very much on the dog. So, once a day, I go for a long, brisk walk by myself. I've been doing this virtually every day since the Covid crisis began almost a year ago (as I write this). We live in an urban area which I know, or think I know, very well. As well as the typical streets and houses of late Victorian and 20th century town planning, there is - a mile or so away - a large area of parkland and woodland that runs for miles either side of the river that runs through this part of the city. So, having done this every day for nearly a year, when I set off I always wonder what new, unfamiliar sights and places I might find among these now familiar places.

It is on these long walks that my mind literally wanders. One minute I might be looking closely at someone's interesting front garden. The next minute I am thinking about some work or research I am currently engaged in. Snatches of thoughts, ideas, a song that matches the rhythm of my walk flit in and out. Sometimes I find that I've been humming the same tune for ages.

I enjoy not only the sights but also the sounds that surround me. I really don't understand those people who walk with earbuds or headphones on, listening to whatever they have playing on their phone. Actually, I do understand it, but why cut yourself off from your aural environment? Today I actually stopped at the sound of the tiny wren hopping about the branches just above my head in a tree in a front garden. A few days ago it was the sound of one of Bach's Cello Suites being played expertly in someone's front room. When I got home, I have now read all about wrens (and some other birds) and listened to all the Suites for Cello.

My latest walk 'quest' is to seek out some of the numerous paths and alleyways that connect various streets. It happened by chance walking along a short stretch of a busy road (that I usually avoid when walking) I've driven down hundreds of times over the years. A small gap between two houses revealed an old, long, rather overgrown path that connected several early Victorian streets. I've started to discover various similar paths, many still paved with the original cobbles. One appeared at the very end of a very unpromising looking cul-de-sac, with some cobbled steps leading to it.

REFLECTION

This is probably an obvious one: that even in the most familiar, possibly mundane situations there is often something new, unexpected, which then sparks a new path of exploration and knowledge. Perhaps, more importantly, my walks are a meditative activity, relaxing and freeing my mind as well as keeping my body reasonably active and healthy. It is on these walks that that often elusive 'creative spark' ignites, something stirs, an idea forms, a solution to a particular problem appears. There's something about the repetitive rhythm of my steps and the rhythm of my breathing that creates the space in which all this occurs.

Vignette#73

Vignette - The glasses again!

Domain – Personal Maintenance

Last year I got a new set of glasses, big lens, very comfy and functional. Yesterday I was out for a walk and in preparation, into my shoebag went the usual items, phone, camera, face mask, purse, small cloth bag, sun glasses (it's summer here in NZ) and regular glasses - in their case. During the day, as I was taking things in and out, not so carefully, I damaged 1 arm of the glasses badly out of shape. I only found out when I went to look for said glasses in the afternoon. One arm was badly askew. I put on another old pair to have a look and thought whoops maybe I should get the optician's technician to have a look so that I don't damage them even more. So I put them on the table with a note to self to ring the optician on Monday morning. On Sunday afternoon we heard we were going into a mini lockdown (until Wed midnight at the earliest) as we have 3 community cases of COVID-19.

Monday morning when I got up I looked at the glasses again and very gingerly decided to see if I could tease the arm into its correct position. Sure enough it started to move, I carefully eased it back into shape see below.

What did I learn? That learning seems to take time with me. I knew the risks of having the glasses in the case since this is not the first time this has happened. And I often put a pen in the glasses case as well which adds to the risk of something happening. And yet I did it again. So lesson hopefully learnt - I will get a larger case, I will not put a pen in the case with the glasses. Notice the use of the emphatic word 'will' instead of the wishy washy should or could or hope to.

Reflection In the context of this lifewider workshop, I guess this occurrence falls into personal maintenance domain, which isn't one of the categories or activities so far listed. And yet when you think about it it is the source of much potential ongoing learning, certainly in my case.

Vignette#74

Vignette #3 Ways of seeing.

It often happens to me that I see things differently. I concentrate hard, I screen unwanted sounds and noises, I focus and keep my mind alert and receptive, but I don't often see what others see. Unfortunately, I see beyond or maybe it is better described as sideways or I see things upside down. It has also happened that I don't see at all. This can be inauspicious.

An activity was proposed at the school where I work and the idea at it's foundation was to my eyes and mind completely off target. When I asked how the idea came about, the answer was, "It has been designed by a group of psychologists." Here there was a massive full stop. Was this enough to close the doors of perception and cognition? Why was I the only one asking questions? My questions blossomed pretty quickly creating a colourful flowerbed. The other gardens seemed to be still in winter. Or maybe my flowerbed was a tangle of tropical trees, exotic birds, and unusual creatures while the other gardens were perfectly trimmed with neat rows of seasonal flowers leprechauns on the sides and a table with chairs and possibly steaming hot tea and digestives waiting to be consumed.

I tried climbing my trees, swinging from one to the other and stood upside down and I even closed my eyes but....while I was still looking for perspectives the others had packed their gardens and made their way intotick the box, get it done.

It goes without saying that I declined the offer to join in the activity. I was gravely concerned about the principles at the base of the activity and the values implicated. I packed by garden too and mind wandered finding solace in solitude.

"The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled." (Berger, 1972)

Reflection. Maybe being creative, as this is what is said of me, can be a blessing and a curse. Being imaginative can be worse. Perspectives are in the eyes of the beholders. No matter how similar we are physically: two arms, two legs and a body we have one unique brain. It works in very different ways. It makes unique connections and pathways that to some degree will deviate and be itself.

This is the beauty of being human, choice. Sometimes it's conscious and at other times its unconscious. How far does one want to move and travel? How much luggage does one want to take and for how long? We can stand in one place and travel to outer galaxies or move from place to place carrying our shell with us.

My eyes see, my mind travels, by body is very often in motion and I feel that once you have seen, it is very difficult to close you eyes because imagination travels with you.

Vignette#75

Title: Learning to become an activist

2 Domain: Deliberate learning, study, CPD

3 Narrative: During the first Lockdown I noticed a post on LinkedIn calling for participants (much like the one for this project) to engage in a 30 day challenge/programme, learning to become a 'Sustainable Stylist'. The call was from someone I had worked with some years ago (much like this project). I responded to the call, expressing my interest in joining in, what I anticipated might be some gentle distraction from lockdown.

I joined a small virtual group exploring issues of sustainability, ethical practice and transparency in fashion, and clothing more generally; the skills and habits of informed choosing, buying, caring for, maintaining and customising clothing; and related issues. We were led by an experienced academic, maker and stylist. Participants were the "advance guard" for the programme, collaborating in and informing its development, adjusting and extending its focus as we went along. Participants were from a variety of backgrounds and of different ages: all women.

The programme was, in part, hosted on a Facebook private group. Facebook is not a platform I enjoy using, and my heart sank when I realised this, however I decided that this might be a good way to experiment with participating in such a group, since I had not tackled this before. There were some early false starts and technical hitches with the programme, but these seemed to underline its developmental nature and reinforce the pioneering aspect of participating. Occasionally, I blamed myself for a hitch, only to find out that it wasn't me after all. I resolved that I needed to be unabashed, patient and determined in my participation. I was quite surprised with what I gained in return.

4 Reflections: Just before last Christmas, the participants in the programme gathered for a Zoom meeting, facilitated by the course leader, to share reflections on their learning and experience. On reviewing my learning, I was gratified to realise the impact on me of the programme. I noted that I had learned new things (about e.g. sustainable textiles, and the enormous lifespan of waste fabrics that go to landfill; the prevalence of unethical clothing production practice in the UK and beyond; the scale of problems inherent in the current 'fast fashion' industry; ways to repair, recycle and reuse clothing; the need for transparency by retailers about their whole supply chains; the concept of greenwashing). In addition, I had become familiar with being a Facebook group member.

As well as gaining knowledge and some skills, I have become enthused to take action, rooted in this learning. At my suggestion, I collaborated with the course leader to respond, on behalf of the group, to a House of Lords call for written evidence on "Fixing Fashion", focused on the environmental and social impact of the fashion industry. Building on this, making use of the App 'Good On You' to inform my approach (see watermark for logo, to help you find it), I have targeted a favourite retail chain. I have sent in my feedback on their current sustainability campaign and urged them to do more to improve their practice and to convince customers of their green and ethical credentials. I wonder what further activism I might venture into.

Through being involved in the programme, I have reaffirmed earlier understandings and habits, some of which I had forgotten or had decided were outdated and no longer relevant, and refreshed my knowledge for the post-Covid world. I have also realised that I can take actions to effect change. I can even play an informal leadership role in my wider family, mentioning the course, what I am learning, and actions I am taking in everyday conversations, especially when I detect a glimmer of interest in the issues the course has raised for me.

Vignette#76

Learning vignette 2: What will make learning 'work' for me?

Domain These observations cut across several domains. I have tried to stitch them together into something remotely coherent

Narrative This has been another week of lockdown for us. That plus the 20-30 centimetres of snow has meant plenty of time to reflect on the experience of this project so far and the way it has forced me to think about my approach to my own learning. And, more importantly, to realise that my approach needs to change and that this is probably the best opportunity I have to make some significant change. I'll reflect more on this below. A few actual events over the last few weeks (all related to learning but of very different scale and significance) have contributed to this rather messy ensemble of thoughts, including:

- The communal/neighbour-initiated snow-shovelling in our cul-de-sac.
This cleared the lane outside our house and meant that we could all get out for Covid jobs, emphasizing how lucky we are to live in a community where such collaboration can be anticipated and we can live safely. And the experience of the job gave us some feelings of hope and reassurance for the future.
- Some very positive comments on some of my recent coaching efforts.
This emphasised the power of feedback and caused me to reflect on what the recipients valued in my efforts.
- Negative feedback on Powerpoint slides.
I did a session to help colleagues who are short-staffed because of the virus. The session went well but some of my slides were rejected as 'inaccessible' by their VLE. I need to sort this (and quickly) for all future events. This has triggered more general thoughts about my presentation style – what could/should it be, given that any face-to-face presentation is at least in the distant future and may be never again?
- Venturing further into an online card magic course
The course leader also works as an organisational coach which explains the first segment of the course on approach and attitudes – got me thinking about practice routines. He supports the course with open discussion sessions through Zoom and online comments through Slack. I can learn from his style and approach
- Observing the cat.
Our rescue cat has further refined her skills in human manipulation. She has increased her repertoire of attention-getting manoeuvres, and become more explicit in her nonverbal demands ('I want to play with the laser pointer now to get reward treats.'). She seems to have shifted up a gear in her relationship with us. Learning is not a tidy sequence of uniform steps.

Reflections The most fundamental thing that came out of all this was surfacing the realization that my approach to learning has always been: too last-minute; more reactive than proactive; too tentative and 'safe'; too ruled by the fear of failure rather than a need for growth; and I could go on. I seem to have been much better at supporting others than I have been at sorting myself out. I do not intend to change the former and have volunteered for a couple of initiatives this last week to keep that going. But I need to take a few more steps on my own account. That sounds like my agenda for Vignette 3. Perhaps the cat can help.

Vignette#77

Vignette 4: Bodily performances of knowing/learning.

Domain: Home (kitchen)

Narrative: Prompted by a commitment to produce a vignette, I laid in bed last night thinking what did I learn this week. My week, as usual, consisted of working on the balcony and work-related learning. I was keen to avoid yet another pity party of how hard I am working (insert yawn here). But then I remembered my hands!



The other day I was in the kitchen making dinner when a neighbour knocked. She needed to speak to me about an urgent Strata issue. I was elbow deep in mess as I prepared the evening meal and was at a stage where I needed to continue. I'll spare you the details, but it was truly messy. But I add that I've made this meal many, many times.

The partner let the neighbour into the apartment, and she came to the kitchen bench. She began talking about the urgent strata issue while I continued with my messy preparation. For about 10 minutes we spoke in depth about a complex issue which needed my complete attention. Meanwhile my hands continued doing their job.

Reflection: What is interesting is that my attention was on the strata issue and I barely paid attention to my hands. These hands knew what they were doing, and they did it (without me thinking about it). It certainly wasn't the case the first few times I made this meal, but now my hands had learned how – they knew what to do.

Learning: This bodily performance of knowing is replicated in other interactions I have with the world; my hands can burp a baby, fold a fitted sheet (quite an accomplishment for those 'in the know'), and can collaborate with my feet to change gears when I drive - among other things. So, this week I'm fascinated by bodies learning. *When was the last time you actually thought about walking?*

Vignette#78

A homemade eureka moment Vignette: #2

Domain: Home life / Hobbies / Cross-domains

Date: 13 Feb 2021

Narrative:

- I have been living in the same flat for 7 years now and never before have I had the chance to properly enjoy one of its rooms (amongst other things!). I am talking about a cosy, tiny room that welcomes you with a big hanging map of the world showcasing my travels (colour-coded by year, naturally ☺) and a vinyl player that has been long-forgotten in a corner.
- Last weekend, I decided it was time to dust off some of the good old records and make myself comfortable on the fold-out sofa whilst sipping a cup of my favourite Roibos tea (if you haven't tried this decaffeinated goodness yet, now's the time!)...And then I was transported – transported to a world where everything was easy, where travel was a thing and going to concerts and theatre plays was an actual monthly occurrence. What changed you ask? The music started.
- I was listening to Scorpions, my favourite band of all times and one that I have been bringing into my home and sharing with my other half. It was wonderful to talk it through and see how he sees and understands it, compared to me, for whom it is a personal band with a strong emotional connection taking me back straight to my childhood, my parents and the good times.

Reflections:

- My first thoughts were quite how pleasant it is to let go and just let the music transport you to a time and place that bring you joy. After all, they don't say it's the little things in life for no reason! It made me appreciate the times when going to a gig in a foreign country with not many speaking a language I would understand whilst shouting from the top of their lungs and jumping with exaltation and think – how universal is music and how potent its ability to break barriers and bring us together!?
- My second thought was even closer to home; I have been able to share some of the music I like with my partner and he could do the same; enter Counting Crows. And then we started talking about the history of the bands, the meanings and then it got late and we realised almost three hours had passed and we regretted nothing.
- It was wonderfully simple experience and my takeaway is that there are certain things in life that no matter where you're from, where you went to school, what you think or how you look, they are so universal that they can be translated through feelings and emotions. What will you be listening to tonight?

Vignette#79

TITLE Savoring the bud at the expense of the blossom

DOMAIN: Travel/culture

I mentioned in my first vignette that due to the pandemic, my wife and I have been 'stranded' at a resort in Zanzibar for the past four months. I actually spend part of each day on my research into lifewide learning, and as I sit at my small table I can see Christine on a sun lounge knitting jumpers for our grandchildren. From the photo below, you can see there is a very thick green leaved tree to the right but to the left is a tree that looks like it is waiting for spring growth. It will never happen. Why? Keep reading.

In the second photo, you can see a cute monkey in the tree that no longer has leaves but did have some when we arrived. What has happened during the past four months is that the monkeys pulled off all the remaining leaves and as soon as new buds start to show, they eat them as they obviously enjoy the taste of this particular tree. The monkeys have apparently now set up camp at the resort and we have been told by the caretakers that the tree will probably die as the monkeys are not giving it any chance to regenerate. I am not a botanist or a zoologist but I can see each day as the monkeys pass through in front of our bungalow, they stop to pick any new buds. What has this got to do with my lifewide learning? When I was young, I was impatient to try everything. A pear that is not quite ripe may look delicious and actually taste very crisp; however, your stomach will soon pay for it. Getting back to my leafless and dying tree, it is not much use to anyone now. It does not provide shade to us and apparently, if the monkeys don't leave it alone to regrow, it will die. They are enjoying the tiny buds but what are they missing out on? When I was a youngster in the 1950's and 1960's, I was like most young boys and shared an inquisitiveness and imagination about lots of things that were not discussed. In fact, I am still waiting for 'the' talk about the birds and the bees. Anyway, my 7 year old grandson wont have to imagine anything. It is all there on a smart device if only he has a friend with access. I am so glad I am not a young parent now.

Reflections: What is the impact of savoring buds, or fruit, or temptations too early? I don't know but I want to give you two real life examples. When I was teaching hospitality students in Australia around 2002, as we were leaving class, I asked one of the very polite young male students (about 18-19), what he was going to do for the rest of the day. I have absolutely no reason to doubt his immediate and perhaps too explicit response that he was going to watch porn with some mates at a friend's flat. Around 2004, when I was teaching accounting in Kuwait, a young male student (again about 18-19) was looking at his phone instead of paying attention to my class. So, I confiscated his phone and told him to collect it after class from Student Administration. After class, he came up to me and was most distressed. He called me aside and explained that he had been looking at porn photos and would be in great trouble with his father if it became known. Terrible sex offences are happening in Kuwait and elsewhere, and these are only the ones we hear about. What happens to young girls or boys who find themselves in situations where their curiosity and perhaps naivety expose them to predicaments they are not ready for? In the internet age, how do parents and communities protect their young children from growing up too quick? If we savor the bud, what are we missing out on if only we wait until the time is right? Governments have a real responsibility here. Let me close with one simple example. Again, here at the resort, many of the young women wear bikinis and one piece swimsuits that fully expose their cheeks. What impact is this having on the young boys, both local and tourists? We as a community have to decide what are the boundaries. If there are no boundaries, then anything can, and does, happen. We can talk about individual rights, but if it is negatively impacting others, then what about their rights? Whose rights prevail: the individual or the community?

Vignette#80

Vignette 3 A brush, with silence and solitude

Narrative: I really enjoy painting. Not the sort of thing one might frame and hang on a wall, but the actual walls one might hang them on. The larger the better. And I'm trying to work out why I like it so much.

We decided ages ago i.e. BC (Before Covid) that various areas of our house needed re-decorating, and we went out and bought several large cans of white paint. This time the normally angstridden process of choosing a colour was reduced to a simple choice: brilliant white. None of that, "oh, but should it be a 'cool white' or a 'warm white' or an 'antique white' or one with a 'hint' of blue/green/yellow/pink?".

Needless to say, as soon as the Covid crisis commenced, plans were put on the backburner, even though we were now staying at home during lockdown. Seems odd, looking back, why I didn't do it then. Too much going on. Too much to worry about. Too much to get angry about.

Preparation consisted of looking at the walls and deciding that the paint could go straight on, requiring at least two coats. So, with paint, brushes and roller, at the ready, I changed in to my painting clothes (old T-shirt and jeans) and started on the downstairs hallway.

* * * * *

The house is very quiet. My partner is working during the day in her office at the top of the house, so it's just me, Bertie the Lakeland Terrier, who sleeps most of the day on the small bench next to radiator by the front door except when he is barking and trying to get at Archie the Cat, who comes and goes as he pleases. I'm tempted to put on some music, but can't decide what I want to listen to, so I don't bother. I turn on the radio instead. Again it doesn't feel right, so I turn it off.

I am left with silence, except, of course, there's no such thing. The distant sound of traffic, the occasional louder sound of a delivery van going down our narrow street, the odd creaks of an old house, the excited chatter of the kids next door as they arrive home. But gradually, as I start to paint, my face no more than a couple of feet from the wall, I sense everything focusing down to exclude everything except me, the paint tin, the brush and the wall.

One of things I remember particularly from my theatre education and teaching was Stanislavski's 'Circle of Concentration'. As an actor (or teacher) you can choose where to draw the circle. You can draw it so closely around yourself that you are aware of nothing except your own mind and body (not that useful for an actor or teacher). You can choose to widen it to include the actors on the stage but not the audience. You can choose to include just the (expensive) front rows of the audience or the front row of students, or you can choose to include the whole audience.

In the case of my painting, the circle is drawn tightly around me, and I immerse myself in the rhythms of the job at hand. Being so close to the wall I notice the small differences in the surface: a hairline crack here, a slight pitting there, a small bubble in the lining paper. The paint is quite thick, and I watch as the rather obvious brushmarks disappear as gravity (I'm supposing) allows the paint to settle in the micro-troughs and render the surface smooth. I have a steady hand and can hold a line, so I don't use masking tape but I use a narrow brush that I've had for many years.

I know precisely how this brush works, how much paint to use, how much pressure, in order to achieve a solid, accurate straight line. I've tried using another, similar brush, but it's not the same. I have a relationship with this brush.

And so the hours pass, and the white colour field extends before my eyes.

Eventually I stop. I have no idea whether it's been one hour or five until I look at my watch, which has been on my wrist the whole time, but I haven't looked at it since I started painting. I'm aware that my body feels tired, and a few muscles are complaining that they haven't been used in a while. But my mind feels particularly clear and not filled with the usual fog of too many things to do.

There is one of those zen things about the benefits of 'sitting quietly, doing nothing'. I'd certainly recommend 'standing quietly, doing painting'.

REFLECTION As I write more of these vignettes, notions of 'space' and 'slowing down' seem to be emerging as central themes for me. There is also a question that has emerged on reading the fantastic vignettes that have produced. That question is 'Is there such a thing as a non-learning situation? The answer seems to be the obvious 'No, there isn't'. Everything we do and everything we encounter has a potential for some sort of learning, even at a very simple level. So, the question really is what are the conditions required to enable us to engage with the affordances of the situation; do we have the capacity, resources, motivation etc. to learn from that situation?

Which brings me to idea of space and slowing down.

I attended a webinar earlier today on how teaching has changed due to Covid. The presenter was adamant that the pressures on teachers in the current, long-lasting situation are such that any idea of creativity or being creative has gone out the window as colleagues struggle to just get through the day. There is no time or space to be creative.

While the act of painting the walls in my house are not a creative act (though I suspect some might argue that it is), what it does - by creating space and forcing me to slow down and to focus in – is create the conditions where I can be creative.

"It is really a matter of ending this silence and solitude, of breathing and stretching one's arms again." — Mark Rothko

Vignette#81

Title: Life routines

Domains: All of them but perhaps Relationships is the strongest fit

Background: Last week I taught online to students in China and found my usual, well hoped for, weekday routine impossible to maintain.

Narrative: I've been trying to get an encompassing routine for my life together. I've had one in the past, and to a certain extent I still do – every morning I have the same breakfast – home made muesli made in bulk every 2 weeks; 95% of the time my weekday lunch is a salad with some protein - I prepare two-three days of lunches at a time; dinners are easy affairs determined the day beforehand – often something from the freezer reheated because I cook in bulk on the weekends to save meal preparation time during the week – fish is on Wednesday because the rubbish gets taken on Thursday mornings; and the list of my routines continues to include washing, cleaning, etc. My preference for routines, that are patterns transposed from one day to the next, has been evidenced. Routines enable me to 'do' without thinking.

Problematically, the life encompassing routine that I wish to once again live has been elusive for the best part of 12 months. Yes, COVID has played some part in this but other factors have also had influence. Completing my PhD enabled me to take on more casual work and I'm looking for permanent positions as well.

Casual work, I've found, is challenging to juggle and requires time for my thoughts to switch from one job to the next. My motivation ebbs and flows as I respond to demands from several different supervisors. Please don't mistake me, I like my various roles and respective supervisors but it is challenging.

With the PhD completed I'm more social. Perhaps COVID has influenced this increased socialising but I recognise also that I'm no longer conscious of a need to be home for study. Subsequently lunches, gatherings, etc. are longer. I have more interest in gardening as well. Presently, the most pressing and absent part from my desired life encompassing routine is exercise.

For the best part of 25 years I've exercised. Certainly the discipline and physical benefits accompanying exercise form my persona. On Saturday, with every intention of going to the gym in the afternoon I worked in the garden instead. A decision internally debated at the time.

Immediately, I find my need to work and want to create space for other things has pulled me from a significant element of my personal identity. I'm not quite ready to say previous personal identity though because I still want exercise to feature. Consequently, in the past few days I have moved my gym membership so that it is more convenient to access.

Reflection: Routines are an important part of my life and enable me to 'do' with little thought. I'm surprised by how much thought I have given, am giving, to my lack of regular exercise. Although prioritising my work is necessary at present I don't want to consistently work long hours that impact my ability to get to the gym and exercise. I recognise there are different forms of exercise, such as gardening, but I want to maintain my gym exercise.

I am pleasantly surprised by my comfort with transitioning lifestyles and personas but that hasn't stopped me wanting to settle into a 'new' encompassing life routine soon.

Vignette#82

Vignette #10: Belonging to a Place

Domain: Home environs

A lot of learning must take place close to our home but what is the nature and purpose of this learning? After reading Paul Kleiman's vignette I felt inspired to go for walk across the fields to Betchworth, my local village about a mile from my home. Unlike Paul, I don't have Bertie to keep me company and my wife is at work so I can get lost in my own thoughts. The sun was shining and it was the first mild day for a week so I was feeling the pull of, 'the exercise will do me good'. But I also had a reason – someone on the WhatsApp village forum was inviting people to take photos for the village online photo gallery and I had been intending to take some photos for a few days so I thought I would use the opportunity to take my barely worn hiking boots for a walk to take some photos.

Following Russ Law's lead, I adopted an 'explorative' approach, forcing myself to find a footpath I hadn't trodden before. The fact that it turned out to be a foot deep in mud didn't matter in my now muddy boots, and neither did the muscle I pulled in my thigh as I climbed over a fence to escape the mud, because, looking back I saw views of the hills behind my house that I had not seen before. Much to the annoyance of my unimaginative older children I call this hill Chalk Mountain because of the chalk quarry in its south facing face. When my first grandson was around 5 years old we used to walk on the hill and we used to make stories up as we walked. Because of this the hill became a magical place for me and I eventually turned it into a story https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZ-SN5fWg_s&t=101s The steep white face is the most striking feature for miles around. I have lived here for nearly 16 years and I always look for this feature as I get close to home because it triggers in me a sense of 'I belong here and not somewhere else'. As I walked along the muddy track across the fields, I began to reminisce (Nathalie Sheridan) I have always found any sort of movement a great stimulus for imagining and as I thought about belonging, into my mind came images of some of the places I had grown up and lived in – some more vivid than others but all had been part of who I am. This sort of knowing stays deeply embedded in who we are.

As I walked, I listened to the sounds around me – the heavy earth moving equipment in the sand quarry I couldn't see, dogs barking, rooks squawking, two women chatting and more. I took photos of things that meant something to me. I took in the panoramic view of Wyke Hill to the west where the sun goes down, noting the spire of the church poking up through the tress in the next village called Brokham. I passed 'Acorns' the village school where my youngest daughter went when we first moved here. I remembered waiting for her in the school yard with the mums and occasional dad. I was always in a rush so I drove rather than walked, I regret it now.

I looked back along the track to the hills one of my favourite views and one I have tried to paint. This path takes me to the graveyard where my wife's first husband was buried 21 years ago. There is a path behind the graveyard called 'coffin road' along which the dead were carried from Brokham to the church and graveyard in Betchworth before that village had a church. I walked through the grounds of St Michael's church with its ancient yew trees. This small but ancient village has been here for over a thousand years. It was mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086) and a church has stood on this spot since Saxon times. St Michael's church was built in the 13th century and I am conscious from the eroded tombstones that I am sharing this space with people who lived centuries ago. I stood for a moment working out how many generations had used this space since the church was built. I estimated at least 37.

I cross the road and pass by our local pub where, before the pandemic, we would sit and chat next to the open fire in the winter and in the garden in the summer. This has also been a public meeting place for centuries.

I walked down to the river Mole whose banks were covered in snowdrops. I noticed a World War II pillbox overgrown with ivy and being reclaimed by the landscape. I wondered, as I always do, why would anyone build one here? Was it a psychological fortification? I decided to use my phone to ask google and discovered they are part of a massive chain of defence structures south of London built in 1940 when we feared invasion. This one was defending the river crossing.

I heard running water and was curious to know what lay behind a high wooden fence. I found a hole conveniently at eye level and saw that a large lake had been constructed with a weir. I had never seen it before in all the time I had lived here. I am sure if I had been a boy here I would have known every inch of this place. I sat for a while by the river but it began to cloud over and then started to rain so I retraced my steps along the muddy path. How different it had been an hour ago.

When I got home I assembled the photos and video I had taken into a short movie and found some music to accompany me on my virtual walk. Watching my movie made me feel happy. I sent the clip to some school friends and asked them if they fancied a walk.

Reflections: In a Field Guide to Getting Lost (2005), Rebecca Solnit wrote of the places in which one's life is lived: *'They become the tangible landscape of memory, the places that made you, and in some way you too become them. They are what you can possess and in the end what possesses you.'*

I am a Mancunian by birth but the twists and turns of my life brought me, through my history of events and travels to this place in the Surrey Hills.

I know, at least for now, I belong here, sandwiched between Chalk Mountain and the River Mole. But we have talked about 'down-sizing' and eventually the time will come when the reasons for moving will outweigh those for staying. I know from past experience that giving up a place where you feel you belong is not an easy thing to do. It is associated with a sense of loss and sometimes identity if a role has been lost too.

Learning about a place and developing a sense of belonging is a complex thing. It takes time and it involves lots of experiences, and the development of a history of being in a place which is entangled with the history of the people we know and care about in that place. It is a mix of knowings and feelings that is not something that can be learned easily or quickly. It is something that has to be lived and experienced through the ups and downs of life and through particular people and events that make up our life in the landscape of a particular place.

A strategy for belonging? Call me sentimental but I reinforce my attachment to this place and my sense of belonging to my home by making short movies about my garden and its environs. I know that one day I will not live here but I will still be able to enjoy the feeling I once had of being here. You are very welcome to join me on my walk to Betchworth village.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6iktBkqWuA>

Vignette#83

DIARY OF AN AGED LIFEWIDE LEARNER: What was I learning in the first seven weeks of 2021? I'm not very good nowadays at keeping a daily or weekly diary in which the tale of my bits of learning is told in readable and reflective form. Instead I have assembled a handful of wee stories which, for me at least, tell the tale more effectively.

1. Unexpected learning

Domain: Personal interests

For Christmas, my son gave me a book entitled *Map of a Nation*, written from work begun by the author as part of her PhD. This proved interesting for me, for as a young civil engineer, I had early been inducted into the mysteries of land surveying. I had enjoyed many days in the field with ranging poles, chain and theodolite, engaged in triangulation and levelling.. The book's account of the development of the Ordnance Survey also had strong historical content. I had not known that military surveys in the Highlands were hastily arranged because they were deemed necessary after the Jacobite Rebellion. For the English soldiers charged to trace and execute those rebels who had fled from the Battle of Culloden had been unable to find their way around the Highlands because they had no maps. The researcher expanded on the sequence of historical events following the Rebellion, in detail that was new to me, and of interest. She also recounted how Lowland Scots contributed to the compiling of the first surveys originated by that military purpose.

I became immersed in the intriguing story that then unfolded, including the setting out and meticulous and precise measuring of the baseline on Hounslow Heath, the development and use of the Great Theodolite, and the Paris/Greenwich triangulation to link England and France – all before the Napoleonic Wars. I now know much more detail about the history of an important period for my country; and about the way early land surveys coped with massive triangulation, before the days of trig points and today's satellites.

2. Infectious enthusiasm

Domain: Extraneous and almost irrelevant learning

Without much interest or knowledge of the subject matter, I've noticed that my son has mentioned to me from time to time how much he was looking forward to a forthcoming America's Cup. Neither he nor I would call ourselves sailors, although we have both sailed; in his case, by manning a week-long cruise on the West coast; in mine, crewing a catamaran owned by my best friend who was a keen competitor. Certainly I knew of the history of this event, the oldest sporting challenge in the modern world. It began with a challenge in which the Cup was lost by Britain to America and has never been won back in return, despite repeated challenges in the ensuing 170 years. Recently other challengers, even from landlocked Switzerland, have been successful – notably and in the last event, New Zealand.

Short on conversation topics in the weekly lockdown phone call (usually mainly with his mother) when he breaks into his parents' isolation, my son talked to me one week about the ongoing preliminaries in Auckland. I expressed polite interest. He sent me a URL on YouTube, and I felt I should at least give it some mild attention.

Immediately, I became completely hooked on this America's Cup business. I was soon enthralled by these so-called boats which spend most of their time up in the air, balanced on apparently slender hydrofoils, by their crews of frantically winding men some of whom rush from one side to the other every time the boat tacks. I struggled to master the speedy commentary, addressed to enthusiasts familiar, as I am not, with rather specialised vocabulary and concepts. I thrilled as the

boats jostled for position at the start, avoiding as best possible a punishable early crossing of the line. I was baffled by the penalties frequently awarded thereafter, and didn't unravel how they featured in the scoring system, as the winner of each heat seemed to be the first one to cross the finishing line, regardless of their history of being penalised. I had questions for my son during his next phone calls, we messaged. I found and read up articles on the internet.

Then, at the end of a round-robin process which I believe I actually did understand in principle but will not try to summarise here, the American challenger capsized, punctured and spectacularly began to sink. The salvaged hull was taken away, and was a non-starter in its next scheduled races, while it was gutted and refitted. The sparse press accounts provided some detail of the damage and of the repairs, to which I gave the keen attention of a recent enthusiast.

As I write this, the drama continues. I missed out on my usual Sunday morning crossword to catch up with the post-mortem, and analysis of what Ineos Team UK needs to do to be successful in the next few days, as I write. I shall then be logging on for the report of every race; but, in the present context, I hope that my point is adequately made. This was a short period of fairly intense and admittedly somewhat superficial learning about something I would previously have dismissed as irrelevant to me.

I'm learning about the race rules, how hydrofoils work on sailing boats and dinghies and spectacularly on surfboards, and what designers and crews and tacticians do to enhance performance and win races. As I make that summary, I can reflect on the fact that my enjoyment in watching the next stages in this event has been and will be directly enhanced by my understanding of how the equipment, designs, tactics and skippers function. This knowledge makes me more aware and appreciative of the intriguing subtleties of what's going on. I find this valuable – however short-term my enjoyment of watching this unique series of events may be.

3. Lockdown frustration

Domain: Thinking about my thinking

Living virtually in lockdown for 12 months has left my wife and I to our own devices. We soon found the attraction of multi-tasking, between my wife's gardening (in the summer) and my tutoring (online), household tasks, TV, reading until our stock on the bookshelves and kindle began to run out – and of course the ubiquitous jigsaws.

For the last of these, we engulf the dining room table (unlikely to be used imminently for guests). We spread out the pieces, first finding the edges, of course – and the corners (though for our one circular jigsaw the absence of corners was more troublesome than we had anticipated). We have found a split in interests and abilities similar to the eating habits of Jack Sprat and his wife. Once we have the framework established, my wife hunts through the assembled residue for pieces that share a common and interesting feature – contributing to the bonnet of a racing car or a large garden bush. Meantime I assemble the pieces likely to belong in an expanse of sea or sky. I don't have an eye suited to picking out intriguing features; my wife finds no delight in assembling masses of sea or sky. Happily we thus avoid treading on each other's territory. She strives to match distinctive patterns; I battle to match shapes of undistinguished colour.

Until recently, my strategy centred very simply on matching shapes. I would identify the shape to search for, in order to match up with just one already established portion of sky. I also rely on subtle differences in tone and colour, to whittle down my selection of pieces to try out. Interestingly, my brain knows the pattern I am seeking amongst pieces of a certain shade, and I 'describe' this shape to myself rather than picture it. But that description of a sought shape is not something I can put into words, even to myself.

I am taken back to memories of a visit to a conference in Vienna for which only the main sessions offered simultaneous translation from German. I did a lot of walking there, and had the intense and curious experience of doing some profitable creative thinking about the potential of reflection-for-action – without putting it into words until very much later. I didn't talk to myself; my "language" was thoughts and thinking. It was a strange experience for one who often talks quietly to himself while walking, or even showering.

So what have I been learning from this rambling? Have I been learning anything? I've re-awakened my awareness of thinking without words or images. I must try to find a way into internet items on this subject, if I can work out what it will be called. So I've opened up and activated my curiosity about what this reflection says of the way my brain works, and why or when it eschews words.

4. Serendipitous enrichment of learning

Domain: Scientific understanding

Twenty five years ago, when I was the Scottish Director of the Open University, I encountered a remarkable character, who was then one of our part-time tutors. Born in central Scotland, Frank Rennie had studied geology at Glasgow University and developed an interest in Hebridean geology, and Hebridean culture - and an incidental commitment to learning to speak Gaelic. He settled as a Gaelic speaking crofter in the village of Gabhsann (pronounced "Gow-sun"), became an influential chair of the Crofting Commission, and bobbed up occasionally in my encounters with the nascent University of the Highlands and Islands, in whose Lews Castle College he appeared as a lecturer, then professor. I recall that, on a QAA visit to Lews Castle, I chatted with him about the Gaelic language. He told me that one of his daughters had been quizzed by a researcher asking her about the language of her home. Almost shyly for such a strong character, this immigrant islander recounted proudly that her response had been "My mother is an island woman; and my father has a little English."

A few weeks ago, I encountered an interesting educational paper, and noted that Frank Rennie was one of the co-authors. Doubly interested, I looked it up, and serendipitously encountered mention of a book he had written and recently published: *The Changing Outer Hebrides*. My lockdown reading being restricted, I ordered a copy from Amazon, expecting an interesting autobiographical tale. My prediction was offtarget; it was a fascinating text, but hardly autobiographical.

I find it a very difficult text to describe. It concentrates on the tiny township of Gabhsann in the Western Isles. Frank studies it rather as if examining a very small part of this world under a microscope. He studies change in this location, change beginning when the world began, change as tectonic plates moved and split, change as the terrain eventually attained relative stability and was inhabited. He explains the evidence of change and development which he finds and observes in his role as a resident of this small crofting township. He moves forward in time, to the advent of animals, birds and human beings, in ever-changing populations. He notes and overviews for his readers the evidence of changing occupation by all of these, over a period of more than five millennia. Unconsciously I had been recalling and building upon my undergraduate study of geology all those years ago. I went on to share the book with my wife, who is a keen observer of birds, the chapter on the changes in bird life that Frank has observed; and so we shared in new learning for each of us, at different levels. In all of this, I noted how the author was making constant reference to the great depth of meaning contained for him in Gaelic names and words. He tellingly conveyed to this reader his enthusiasm for the richness of his second language.

What did I learn? Perhaps first of all, the joy of meeting a wonderful person, in the pages of his moving book. It would be simpler to claim that I extended my undergraduate geology, and learned a little about the development of bird and animal life in more than Gabhsann, in more than the Western Isles, even in more than Scotland. It would be naïve to state that I renewed and somewhat deepened my acquaintance with Frank Rennie. But has it been meaningful for me? It has opened my eyes and my mind to think again and more of geological, biological and social history in terms of a process of explicable change that not only explains the world I live in, but which is continuing as change today, tomorrow and in my future.

What have I learned by thinking about this learning? I suppose I have questioned my researching preference for general findings and transferable principles which takes me away from considering particular and distinct examples, in which I can find much learning that I value. I have found food for thought in the deep, scholarly understanding of this changing world which Frank Rennie has accumulated and is still accumulating from his highly detailed scrutiny of the small rural township, to which he is utterly committed, and belongs.

5. On the horns of a (reviewing) dilemma

Domain: Interpersonal skills and integrity therein

There are perhaps five or six educational journals that fairly regularly approach me with requests to review. My style in so doing, which some editors have volunteered that they appreciate, is to frame my comments as far as possible around what needs to be done and can be done, to make the submission which I am reviewing acceptable for publication. I leave it to the editor to decide on a judgement.

Recently, I was asked to review for a somewhat unusual journal. It is published bilingually in Kazan. When I was invited to review, I was told that the Board had it as a firm priority to enhance the quality of educational research papers published in Russia, and in their journal. The English editor explained to me that he was also anxious that reviews should be supportive and facilitative.

Drafts are sent to me in English, with no indication of whether they have been translated from Russian by the services of the journal, or have been submitted in English by authors who may be writing in a second language. When the submitted research is of reasonable merit, I have no problem in following my usual style and assembling a list of suggestions, preceded by any major issues I identify as requiring attention. These could be the absence of detailed information likely to be of interest or use to readers, disregard of the Hawthorne effect in an account of innovation, or the all too common confusion of causation with correlation. My style in these circumstances is much the same as usual. I supportively identify an issue, explain briefly why it needs to be addressed, suggest how I believe the writer might do this in a revision, and avoid using judgemental and critical adjectives and adverbs; I leave the blunt description of weaknesses to speak for itself.

With drafts of highly questionable quality that I find myself in a Catch-22 situation. I am charged to address two different purposes; to both maintain standards and to facilitatively encourage. I notice thankfully that I concentrate more on the former without quite neglecting the latter. The result is that instead of simply outlining objectively the aspects of the submission that are deficient, I simply state the striking weaknesses and word my advice for repair as if I believe the writer capable of making them good – although I hold no such belief. Is that hypocrisy?

What have I learned from these reflections? To deliberately distinguish, reconcile and honour my two uncomfortable remits with as much integrity as possible.

6. Frustrated navigation

Domain: Basic IT skills

Apple regularly update my Mac; I have no option. Nowadays, each time they remove my printer driver. This was restored last time during a digital trip to Computer Solutions for a different purpose. Next time, I tried for myself. I meticulously followed the driver manufacturer's instructions, step-by-step and precisely as listed. Each time this led me to a screen calling for entries that I could not provide. After over half-an-hour of frustration, I phoned Computer Solutions who solved my problem in two minutes. I learned that you cannot load a Kyocera printer driver to a Mac unless the printer is plugged in to the Mac. I wish the instructions had told me that.

Why was this frustrating experience meaningful? It reminded me of my conviction formed when interviewing students about their sense of belonging, when I concluded for the umpteenth time that designers of software give insufficient attention to students' navigation problems. This neglect had even led on interviewed subject to contemplate "withdrawing" from the course hon which she was seeking to enrol.

In a subsequent and first online conversation with a new colleague, we considered floating this as a possible area for funded action-researching by colleagues, perhaps using talk-aloud student protocols. Although he had responded positively to much of what I said in our exchanges wherein we were finding much common ground, he let this one slide gently past. I always encounter disinterest in the possibility of constructively promoting action researching of students; navigation problems. I am, learning that I need to find another and an effective way to get the problem onto the agenda for action.

7. Serendipity

Domain: Metacognition and possibly impending dementia

The past few weeks have been very busy with many tasks that are not connected to each other. I need to prioritise. And then I need to get going! I find it enormously helpful in this multi-tasking, especially on a busy day, to make a daily note of what I have in hand on a rectangular postit, set higher than broader to take a long list. This system has for a long time seemed to take me from a rambling wander around agenda items in my head, to following a firm written agenda, item by item. I try to note what's to be done in preferred order. Then when the list is complete, I number them in order, usually almost as listed. I block them out when I have attended to them. I find the listing keeps me focussed, even if I deliberately switch between items when Pomodoroing. But I've noticed recently that, although my list is clearly printed, and the blocking out is solid, a blocked out list suddenly stops being useful and motivating; I need to rewrite the outstanding items in a new list, which then becomes functional for me. I didn't have this bother five years ago. Why does a partly blocked out list stop being motivating and then become distracting, and encouraging my mind to ramble over what's to be done rather than doing it? I don't know yet, and should try to find out. I'm not sure I want to explore it; perhaps what I learn will be unwelcome news.

Like many old people, I have difficulty remembering names. Sometimes it's only the first or the family name that eludes me; sometimes both. Often delayed action memory, unprompted, can suddenly present me, even days later, with the missing name. It then seems to stay for days or weeks in accessible, refreshed (?) memory.

Recently I chanced on a quirk in this process. We discovered that my journalistic grand-daughter uses her first name and then "Riley" as surname on Facebook, of which my wife is a member. She wondered why. I asked my grand-daughter, who explained it was for security. By chance, social media security arose in conversation with a colleague as we prepared for a Fellowship Dialogue in

whose notes this issue featured. My colleague told me that she has two Facebook accounts, one in her married name which few contacts would know, and one in her poetry writing name.

In a few conversation like this, I kept forgetting "Riley". I asked my wife to remind me. She was not amused to be asked yet again. I explained why, then realised I had already forgotten the surname in the course of this brief conversation. Reminding me yet again, she said firmly "Write it down" – presumably meaning that I should refer to this note next time instead of bothering her. I did so. Now comes the point of this rambling story. Since then, I have had no difficulty whatsoever in remembering "Riley". But I have never once referred to my written note.

I need to explore the link between writing notes and my memory's use of that thinking without referring to the written notes.

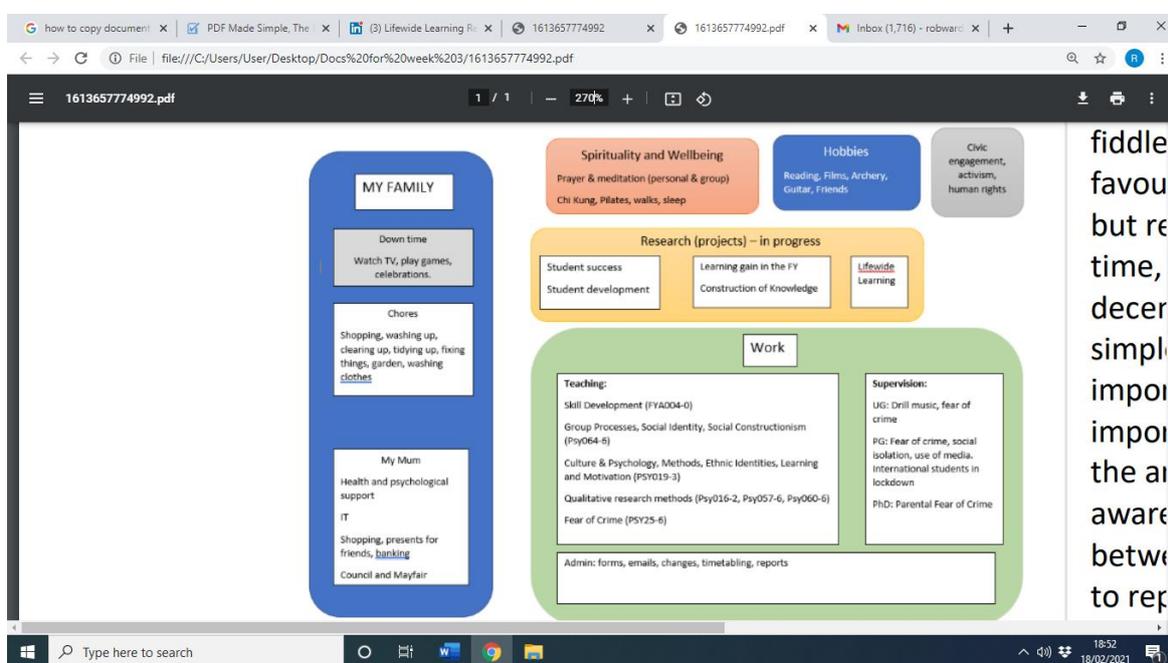
Vignette#84 *nb this feels like a mix of vignette and domain map, so I've pasted in the graphic*

Title: Sketching the domains in my life

Domain: All

Narrative

I wanted to write the first vignette about the experience of drawing the map because I learnt and continue to learn a great deal from drawing it. I had been meaning to do something like this for some time to help me (re)gain a sense of perspective of what my life is about at the moment, using some of the domains suggested. I first fiddled with different templates in my favourite mindmapping programme, but realised I was wasting precious time, as I could use WORD to achieve a decent product. The task seemed simple enough, but I realised it was important to represent the relative importance of each domain as well as the amount of time because I am aware of a painful incongruence between the two things. So, I used size to represent amount of time invested in a domain and location to indicate how important. I joined the project late and two very busy weeks meant this very useful task got postponed several times.



Reflection

Drawing the map was very satisfying for several reasons. First, I was able to complete a task that I had been wanting to do for a long time. In fact, since I returned from sick leave in March 2019 when I decided to go part-time after 23 years of service and experiencing burnout. It has taken me almost two years to find the time to try to bring some order and a sense of perspective into my life. I think the reason I kept postponing it was out of a sense of guilt associated with taking time from work. However, since it is requirement of the project, I feel it is OK to do it. It is as if work was more important than me! This can be seen clearly in my map: Work takes up a huge chunk of my life, pushing other areas that I would like to develop to one side. The second reason is that it is now out there for me to see and I can keep coming back to it. I have revised it a few times because it is dynamic. From the learning point of view, I had been thinking for some time about recording and reflecting more on the learning which happens in different areas of my life. Finally, the map could lead to action, although this is not clear at this stage.

Vignette#85

Connection, catalyst... or... (External landscapes as a context for exploring internal ones)

Narrative: So, having read and marvelled at the richness of experience reflected in 'Norman's muddy walk' we set out on one of our own. The timing was apparently accidental, to avoid the impending rain, and the walk much less impressive in terms of vista (largely flat landscape, agricultural and residential, a well-trodden route for exercise). But today that did not matter at all, as the time and energy was taken up almost entirely with an internal dialogue. About connections, and movement, but behind the wheel.

As we walked, I thought about my current car.

(Full disclosure alert) When it was built – 17 or so years ago, in a factory very soon to close forever – it was probably less in the collective consciousness but now I'm deeply aware that it's actually terrible. It absolutely guzzles petrol; it is in a tax bracket that suggests it's highly polluting and it's hard to get bits for it. But I love it - I love the colour, the noise it makes, the challenge of keeping it together. (Please don't judge me too harshly, I only take it out on special occasions these days).

Moving on with the walk, I realised that my life has many points along the road of coming to love this machine; of sitting (age 5) with my Grandad as he recovered from a stroke in the front room of his terraced house and naming the cars as they went by; of attending a 'technical' school where the machinery was stuff the local car factory had finished with; of being aware when an industrial dispute at said factory was anticipated (workers getting on the bus that went past our school and the factory carrying their fishing rods); for being advised in my 'careers interview' to 'go for a job down the Rover' (everyone that day got the same advice, apparently); of many cars, all made by the same company, before this one, of still being somehow emotionally connected to that part of the world – or my recollection of it; of the world of my Grandad - and many generations before him – toiling in the iron and steel industry that degraded and yet sustained their lives....

Reflection: Bit of a ramble, this. What I think I take from it is the walk – on this occasion – as a reflective space – seeded with thinking from my previous reading that I took with me. A space which allowed me to making some connections I've not made quite so clearly to myself before, and which sprung from insights from my immediate reading of Norman's vignette. So - thinking catalyses other thinking, and disclosure begets more disclosure – but then you all knew that. Just still not sure why I love that car so much though - perhaps it's just the latest link in that series of personal connections to my history...

Vignette#86

Title: A glimpse into other people's lives

Domains: technology, identity

Narrative:

Lockdown and communication via Zoom and Teams have brought new self-awareness: I am most definitely not a voyeur and have been forced to appreciate how I tend to pigeon-hole people (contrary to my own assumed open-mindedness), according to their job. As a child, we would drive for many long hours from wherever we were living at the time to my maternal grandparents on the Scottish border. My father, at the wheel, was so tense that you could literally cut the atmosphere of fear. This was accentuated by my own as we drove over Shap, then a precipitous route with narrow, winding tracks and sharp drops that terrified me. Perhaps it was because of this anxiety that my relief on seeing houses focused on their cosy, illuminated windows (it was always night by the time we neared our destination). I would look in through their undrawn curtains and be comforted by the normality of the occupants' lives. I like these brief glimpses into them and the welcome they promised.

Ever since those distant days, I have assumed I was slightly voyeuristic. However, the last year has disabused me of the notion for, every time I see an interviewee or reporter speaking to camera from the intimacy of their home – worse still, their bedroom – I feel distinctly uncomfortable. Why is this, I asked myself as I became aware of my reaction? I realised I was judging people by the nature of their décor, their pictures, the red despatch box carefully positioned for the camera, so that we could be in no doubt as to the speaker's status... The more I reflected, the more contradictory I found my unwanted responses. I had always thought that I saw people in the round, was free of prejudice, yet here I was having to acknowledge that I had expectations of them based on knowing just one dimension of their life.

Reflection:

It has been a sobering experience. I have been forced to confront a prejudice I did not know I harboured. Lockdown has helped me learn a bit more about myself. I am still trying hard not to pass judgement and be distracted by the speaker's surroundings.

Vignette#87

Vignette #3 - How do you recruit a VC?

Domain: Work, Activism

The starting point for this vignette is that the Vice Chancellor of my institution has recently announced his retirement, and the search for a new VC has launched. As part of this, a short questionnaire has been circulated inviting all staff and students to share their views on the following three questions: What background and experience should the next VC have?; What skills?; What personal qualities?

This led me to a number of (internal) questions - and I realised that this is a very common learning pattern for me, particularly recently. I wonder whether the pandemic (but more specifically the government mishandling of it) made me more critical in my consumption of information – or whether this is something that we develop in tertiary education and simply continue to develop over time?

My questions were firstly - how “genuine” is this? How do I really think my responses will be used? It reveals to me an insight into my own cynicism, but I feel I encounter this problem regularly in the workplace – some information is given, and some good intention present – but we often need more to connect the dots and see the bigger picture – to have truly informed consultation and input.

Then I pondered: how do you go about the process of recruiting a VC? I work in Careers (albeit the graduate end of the spectrum), but the actual process of this kind of senior level recruiting remains a mystery to me. I’m fairly sure “headhunting” will feature... so I wonder where would recruiters be looking for suitable candidates (other HEIs and sector bodies, or the corporate world)? A bit of Googling provided a few interesting insights - but here I realised the importance of experiential learning- that unless you have been involved in this kind of process, you won’t really know how it happens in practice.

And finally - what would my response be to the questions asked? What would I value in a new VC? The first thing that came to mind, given so much focus on systemic racism in the sector, is how powerful the appointment of Kamala Harris in the US was, as a woman of colour in leadership. But how realistic was this? Another flurry of google activity began - how many women of colour are there in Senior leadership positions in the UK universities? Or in our sector bodies? Is there an adequate “talent pipeline” - would there be any potential candidates if this was part of the criteria?

Reflection:

Critical Pedagogy and links to teaching practice (Work domain): Alongside all of this pondering, I am also currently teaching a careers module on commercial awareness, and I was very aware of how – in being asked these questions, I was taking the opportunity to develop my own commercial awareness. I was also simultaneously thinking about how I could use what I was learning (the information itself but also the process – a form of critical pedagogy) in the next iteration of the module.

Social learning (relationship domain): Although part of this learning process was independent, there was also a social element. During the pandemic, a dear friend of mine (initially a work colleague, and co-founder of the women’s network) has been off ill – her mental health badly affected by the events of the past year. We have fallen into a truly joyful habit of sending each

other articles we have read, with a small bit of commentary - many of those articles about UK universities (for which there is no shortage of current news stories), and linked to our shared social justice values. We exchanged several messages about this consultation process and what we might want the future worth sector (and our institution) to hold – and I realised how much my thinking was developed and shaped by the act of discussion (albeit over text).

Emotional learning (self domain): Through this process I realised how frustrated I was by the current culture and leadership in my workplace - and disheartened by problems in the sector as a whole. This has an emotional toll, as the disappointment weighs heavy. I try to balance it by taking small positive actions where I can (running events and art projects through the women's network to develop connection and community; and engaging with consultations, focus groups, and meetings with senior leadership to try and advocate for change).

Another reflection in the self domain is one on time-management – how we manage and invest our time as a personal resource. This task felt important - but I was consciously aware of how much time it was taking - and how little time I currently have to focus on something like this, that might be perceived as “extra” - The marking is piling up and the deadlines are approaching. And if I had more time, what would I do with this learning? Write an article? Conduct in-depth research into BAME stats in Senior Leadership across the sector as a whole? Alas, although it feels “timely” now, by the time I get round to it, the conversation will already have moved on!

Vignette#88

Vignette: #3

Domain: Virtual Life / Travel / Family & Friends – Cross domain

Date: 19 Feb 2021

To travel is to live and to document it is...therapeutic!

Narrative:

- A while back I had what some might call a 30% life crisis and asked myself “what will I leave behind?” And even more back to basics, what have I produced that can benefit my family and friends, if not society (separate story!)? So on the principle of if you want to change the world you should start with your room, I started contemplating what I could do. As I explained in my Domains Map, travel has been the centre of my life for the past decade – my fountain of youth, my purest, most inexplicable source of happiness (perhaps because my father was a naval engineer always sharing stories of far away lands??), so I knew it had to do with globetrotting.
- As I have been travelling extensively each year (c. 14 trips for leisure per year), my friends and family started asking me for tips on places and some suggested I start writing about it. Start writing about? What a crazy idea. But then I thought, why not? Why not relive my travels by writing about them and sharing with those dear to me; enter The Awayfarer.
- The problem is since lockdown, firstly, I haven’t been traveling very much, nor have I had the impetus to actually document my last few trips before the world got taken by storm. Having joined the Lifewide Project however and seeing some of the inspiring stories out there (Chrissi’s sea bonanza and Nathalie’s micro-adventures to name a few), last weekend, I did it! I wrote a new post on my trip to Provence and this time it felt different! I wonder why...

Reflections:

- I have never taken more enjoyment from writing a piece as I have from writing about Arles and the Camargue ((for those of you who wish to read it – www.theawayfarer.com). I think that for the first time, I truly thought about it – how the place looked, how it felt, the food I ate, the galleries I’ve seen, the people I met, how it got engrained in my memory and how liberating it was letting it all out in writing (plus, I suspect the forbidden fruit element also contributed!). It’s almost like having the best meal you’ve ever had and being able to close your eyes and taste it again! Harnessing the power of your mind to its fullest.
- I think that writing about experiences can be somewhat therapeutic whilst reinforcing experiences. It has challenged me to think deeper about what the experience meant for me, what I had learned from it and how it changed me. I look forward to writing a few more and mind-travelling to sunnier places with hospitable hosts and culinary delights.

Post scriptum:

- I also realised that part of my blog I had included a “Did you know section” where one of my facts is linked to my work and relates to the longevity of Japanese family businesses. Another cross-domain spillage that made me realise how interconnected the areas of our lives are.

Vignette#89

Title: Learning to hold back and let go in supervision

Domain: Work

Narrative: Supervision is one of the most complex, demanding and, at the same time, satisfying aspects of my work. Due to the large number of tasks that I have to try to fit into my three-days-a-week work pattern, I would like the students whose dissertations I supervise to work hard and engage in the process. I would like them to contact me early, come up with ideas that relate to my interests, complete the tasks we agree and to reply to my emails promptly. In return, I try to understand their topics and guide them in their exploration of the literature and help them produce the best design that will allow them to answer their research questions. I also guide them with the analysis of data. Although my personal preferences lie with a qualitative approach, I can also supervise quantitative projects.

This year I have had some very good undergraduates, masters and one PhD student; a few aren't as motivated or don't engage as much as I would like. I have always thought that supervision is a partnership where I should try to match the students' involvement with my involvement. If they work very hard, I ought to input a lot, because they deserve it. That way, the final product will be of a very high quality. On the other hand, if students drag their feet and do not work much, I tend to input less. I call this my 'reciprocity model'. I must be clear: I do not abandon the students that struggle. I would try to support them as much as I can. I care a lot and want each one to succeed.

Because I regard their projects as learning experiences, I tend to 'teach' them quite a bit. I give them a lot of feedback on their writing style, so I annotate early drafts extensively. In order for this to work smoothly, I ask each of my students to save all their documents in a Dropbox folder they share with me. They save all their sources, notes of meetings, data and analyses in that folder. I also show them how to perform specific types of analysis, for instance using Grounded Theory or a complex statistical analysis. We may use software such as NVIVO or SPSS. Sharing screens in Skype or Teams is ideal in the current pandemic situation because I can demonstrate how to do something and they can also show me what they are doing.

Reflection: As I said at the beginning, supervision can be very satisfying when things run smoothly, but it can also be challenging. I have recently began to recognise a new element of frustration and I sometimes feel I am wasting my time when students fail to complete tasks or don't reply to my emails promptly, don't show up for meetings, or simply disappear for a while. These feelings seem to have several sources. First, a sense of inequity or unfairness related to the 'reciprocity model'. Maybe it is time to review this model and replace it with one of generosity, where I let go of the expectation of equity, perhaps something like sowing seeds and hoping for the best. I know on a conscious level that there are multiple factors that can prevent a student from engaging: poor knowledge and skills, weak IT skills and resources, or even mental health issues. I should not take their lack of engagement personally, but it is easier said than done. The other possible source is a more recent sense of urgency to achieve my goals because time is running out with retirement looming on the horizon.

At this point in time, I have become acutely aware of the importance of practicing the art of holding back and resisting the temptation to tell the students what to do because it is their research project, not mine. It is their process of discovery and of learning-by-doing. So, I have to work harder at not giving the answers to all their questions and instead encourage them to search for them themselves.

In the end, supervision is a fine balancing act where one has to tip-toe between, and skilfully combine, collaboration and autonomy, knowing when to give and when to hold back (your knowledge and ideas) to let the student do their own thing and let go of expectations or ideas of what things should be like.

An earlier piece on supervision: <http://murmurations.cloud/ojs/index.php/murmurations/article/view/9>

Vignette#90

Vignette – Fact Check Dory Reeves Feb 20 2021

We have a programme here in NZ called Seven Sharp on TVNZ1 that follow the 6pm news. It's a light sofa/magazine type show. Hilary Barry is one of the hosts and at the end of one of the shows this week said she had something to share that she had just learnt that day about the Covid Tracer App we are encouraged to use where ever we go. She said that Nigel Latta a trusted and respected TV colleague and qualified psychologist had showed her that when you have 'scanned in', and gone around the store to get what you need and then leave that if you click finish it will then provide a record of how long you have been in said store.

I did wonder at the time how we had been using the app for months and this had not come up before but hey – life is too short. The following evening we happened to have the show on after the news and low and behold Hilary Barry had a confession to make. She said she had misled her audience that the finish button did no such thing and simply closed the screen. She had not done her usual check before going on air.

Reflection I am not too sure how to describe the learning here other than to say we have become so familiar with the phrase fake news and the exaggerated and hyperbolic aspects to fake news that this is a reminder of the need to fact check info and tips provided by trusted friends and colleagues no matter what the context.

Vignette#91

V3 Green pets by Chrissi Nerantzi

Domain: Life

When I was a teenager we had a cat, called Susie. I developed an allergy that never left me. A dog chased me when I was even younger and I fell, this was a traumatic experience for me; my schoolmates brought their hamsters to school. I found them very smelly and they reminded me of mice. Not something I would like to have in my room. Some of classmates had guinea pigs and they smelled even worse and when I visited their houses they were running freely around. I was scared of them. I know they are just little but so hairy...

The plan was of course to write about plants... but maybe the title I picked surfaced pet memories from many years ago. I know that pets are really good for our well-being, health and are valuable companions. I just didn't have any luck with them yet. But then, when I think about it a bit more, my own recent drawings surface in my mind and I hear them saying "what about me?" Very true. I have been writing many stories for my picture book stories with animals and one of the most recent ones is also with animals. The open picture book project I mentioned in a previous vignette. So yes, I have found a way, it seems, to bring animals into my life to some extent. There is even a green one

Back to plants. My dad used to have a garden where he grew vegetables and fruit and I enjoyed helping him. As a precision engineer his tomatoes had to be lined up and the pepper and aubergine plants too. My mum looked after the flowers. She loves roses especially. Gardening today always reminds me of my parents. I have even written a picture book story which reminds me of my dad especially. Hopefully it will be published one day. A few years now I grow chilly plants to remember them and we have a small greenhouse for our tomato plants. On one of our walks when we arrived in Glossop we adopted some forget-me-nots. Since then our borders become a blue carpet every May and June. They don't seem to be demanding as plants and grow back from seed every year. Last year I started drying some and using them to make brooches and pendants.

In the house we only ever had a few plants, as we love travelling and didn't want them to suffer. Since the pandemic I have been potting and repotting, considered a plant swap in our street (the sign is ready but didn't dare to do this last year) and we have now plants on almost every window ceil. A small spider plant has now children and grandchildren. I had one in my Wunderkammer, our little garden house but noticed that it didn't like it there in the freezing cold so I took it in the house and it has now fully discovered. That was a relief.

I soon ran out of nice containers from my new plans... and had to be resourceful. Oat milk cartons became pots and the wrappers are now knitted or sewn. I like them. They add a bit of different texture and make my plants feel more cosy too? See the link to crafting? Previous vignette? I am still not much further with my knitting. Still just able to knit lines. I guess I have been inventive in using my pieces in multiple ways at least. I even made an advent calendar and preparing now two more for my boys to remember mummy when they move out. Have I started creating more memories now since the lockdown? It seems that way.

We just started growing flowers, tomatoes and cucumbers from seed for this year. I enjoy looking after them with Adam. The tomatoes are still sleepy but the flowers are keen as you see in the picture. It is just wonderful to be able to see and experience the cycle of life. Renewal is on its way now.

When Nassi started university in October last year and he was away, I looked after his plants and added a few more pots. I went in his room every day and I think my excuse were the plants. I missed Nassi so much. I know he is 19 but he will always be my little boy and Ody too. I think Greek mum's must find it harder to let go... Nassi is of course now with us due to the pandemic after we picked him up before Christmas. At least he is able to study remotely and the university seems to be really well organised also in supporting practical, hands-on learning opportunities at a distance. I am truly impressed also by all lecturers and the whole support network that is in place to look after the students under very challenging circumstances for all.

Mico reflection: Looking after a plant is caring for somebody. This is how I see it. Seeing the plant grow gives me great satisfaction. I am useful for nurturing life. This is perhaps not very much different from caring for people. Plants are of course not people, but they have life and they give life. Living in harmony together with plants, like we actually want to do with human beings and animals.

Nature or nurture? Perhaps both are equally important? Or nurture more important than nature? I suspect Norman would perhaps talk about an ecosystem? Maybe I will put my plant swap sign outside this spring together with the pots with forget-me-not I had prepared. Maybe, I will be braver this year...

Vignette#92

Title: Vignette 2 'New Direction - Back in Op's'

Domain: 'Education standards within Global Corporate Life'

It is almost six months since I started my new job, in Facilities Management. A huge change after 16 years of working in Higher Education. Due to lockdown, very few clients are travelling to work in the building, leaving our daily duties very different so we have focused in other areas of importance. This month my team and I are focusing on QHSE compliance - starting the year as we aim to continue. Two on my team have recently contracted the COVID-19 virus. Both are well again, but it was alarming to witness their struggles during their illness first-hand.

We ensure 2021 is a year where we are as QHSE compliant as possible we are completing formal training through our training portal, Talent Coach, safety audits, we have created a more userfriendly hazard tracker, and are working on individual case-studies. What surprises me when completing the formal training modules is that they are similar those I developed in my previous role as curriculum developer for a Hospitality and Retail training company in South Africa.

Reflection:

Obviously QHSE is a universal language, I should have realized that! (Prohibited signs for example are the same colour world-wide) It feels satisfying to know that the material I developed in my previous role in SA is not too different to the material given by my company (a global giant in the property management industry). This gives me a sense of confidence and pride. It has also been great to focus on QHSE this month, the importance of health and safety at work and home, something I have become acutely conscious of recently for personal reasons, heightened by our COVID-19 world.

Vignette#93

Vignette 3 Learning Anecdotes. Paul Thomas. February 21 st 2021

Title: Learning as co-creativity to build healthy communities

Domain: Children.

Narrative: I was struck by Holly's vignette about seeing things that others don't see and I thought "I can often see things that others can't too; maybe everyone can, but not the same things?" Then I was struck by Donna's vignette about her hands cooking without consciously thinking about it, and I thought "I can do some things without thinking about them too; maybe everyone can, but not the same things?" Then I was struck by Norman's comment that such actions may result from deliberate practice rather than emergent learning and I thought "that must be true, but are learning from repeated practice and emergent learning less distinct than they might seem? Might we need to re-learn and re-learn the same things in an emergent way for them to become and remain instinctive?" Might Donna have to re-learn how to cook the supper if she hadn't done it for a year, or hadn't slept for a week, or if her confidence had been knocked by stressful experiences? And might a desire to learn idiosyncratic things start in childhood, but our expectation of what specific things children should learn cause us to not notice that it is going on?

This week I tried to order photographs to make an album of our family story. I was unable to place a photo that showed my son as a young child. I had a confronting thought – "I used to work with children and could tell the age of a child instinctively, without consciously thinking about it; why can't I place my own son's age in this photo?" I asked him, now aged 19, to help me. He took one cursory glance and pointed at a fountain in the background that I had completely missed that allowed us to place the date and location exactly. He saw it; I didn't. Maybe this is the kind of experience that helps us to realise what we want to re-learn to fit into a community?

Reflections: It may be that everyone can see and do things that are peculiar to them and that peculiarity combines some innate skill, some emergent learning and some purposeful practice. And when it becomes instinctive, we think of this peculiarity as in some way usefully defining us, so we don't use the language of learning. If we lose that peculiarity, we think of it as illness and again don't use the language of learning.

The dominant understanding of learning in our society is as a compartmentalised commodity – Google says: "the accumulation of new understanding, knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, attitudes and preferences through study, experience, or being taught". Some of our vignettes describe sets of interlinked learning outcomes or re-learning things that we know very well, so they don't fit easily into the learning as commodity idea - and even we are struggling to describe them in the language of learning! Our discussions suggest that learning should be used in a broader way to shape meaning, identify individual peculiarities and build relationships. If the world is to move into a new stage of history that values diversity, complexity and emergence, the commodity definition of learning won't be enough. We may need to emphasise learning as a co-creative activity that builds communities and achieves desirable things – making a meal or sort photos for example. Parents may need to use this kind of action learning to help our children to find useful places in society.

Vignette#94

Vignette 3: Garden Domain

I planted a living wall, three years ago. It underwent a couple of iterations and I am still to find the best plants for it. In the meantime more and more wildlife has begun using it. Initially, I noticed the vast amount of insects and spiders who would scuttle when I watered the wall, and the wrens took to feeding from the open buffet as if they had been waiting for it to be built. But as time passes on we notice more and more garden inhabitants making use of the opportunities the living wall offers. This week a couple of robins has been busy collecting pieces of moss and dead leaves off the wall, probably to build their nest. They diligently collect plant parts, some of which do not pass muster according to the female robin and are discarded for better choices. Each of us empathises for their own reason when watching them during breakfast.

Reflection

When planting the living wall through observation and trial and error I learned about plants becoming pot-bound, the micro-climate that establishes itself—for instances in the lower shadier corner of the wall I have now planted small ferns, while strawberries grow well in the upper sunnier spots, but the plants become pot-bound easily and stop to thrive. Felt pockets dry out too quickly even in Scotland, and the selfwatering system which is really expensive becomes waterlogged and I had to drill in holes. The cheapest and easiest way to create the living wall was to place a piece of old thick towel in the bottom of the brown pots, drill hole in the pot and washers on the inside and outside of the screw and fix the pots directly onto the wood frames. This effort created more biodiversity than I ever thought possible and it brightens up a dark, shadowy and damp corner in the courtyard.

Vignette#95

Title: Never too old to play and learn

Domain: Technology, relationships, play

Narrative: Many of our recent conversations have been deep, probing fundamental questions. To lighten the tone this Sunday morning, I am sharing the conversation we had before I got up this morning.

I jokingly call my husband 'Gadget Boy' because he loves anything mechanical, technological, novel. He can spend hours hovering over a single counter in one shop; he is in his element when we are in one of those multi-storey markets you find in the Far East.

Me: What time did you come to bed?

GB: Not long after you, but I was watching Shankar on U-tube for a while.

Cue demonstration. He reaches out and displays his latest gadget, some posh Sony ear buds. I am subjected to a demonstration of how the right and left pods are charged in their neat pouch, learn that they are labelled right or left, then he puts them in his ears. I can't hear a thing: thankfully, these are much more efficient than previous versions he has had which emit whooshing noises, disrupting my sleep.

GB: Try them.

He removes the right pod and inserts it in my right ear. Yes, it works! We have learnt that the technology can be shared by two people.

GB: I wonder if it works in either ear?

He places the left pod in his right ear. We discover that we can both still hear the music. My imagination is getting naughty:

Me: Will it work in other parts of the body?

I giggle and place my ear pod in his nostril. 'Can you hear it?'

Yes, he can! Where else might I place it? Resisting the obvious, I modestly try an arm pit – it still works! So, we have learnt that the technology has nothing specifically to do with ears, but is, rather, sensitive to the human body.

Reflection: even as these events were unfolding, I was already thinking how well this exchange illustrates the process of learning. We were playing – never too old for that! And out of our play came discoveries. Not earth-shattering, not likely to have any major application, but learning that demonstrate our human drive to be curious. We turned the process of inquiry into a game which in turn bound us closer in our relationship, as we shared these new discoveries.

Vignette#96

Vignette 2

Title: Solving a Problem by Insight or Analytically

Domain: Work, Family and Problem Solving

Finally, I managed to purchase a bookshelf online for my new workspace. This shelving was long overdue and badly needed as my growing collection of books lay divided in two spaces. I came across a wooden bookshelf on a website that appeared to tick all the boxes in terms of measurements, design, price and ease of assembly. And adding a touch of rustic charm to this space with this 5 tier bookshelf was the way to go for me.

The shelving arrived promptly and I was eager to begin to assemble it. Upon removing the side panels, individual shelves and other materials necessary for its assembly I realised this job was for another day. I did not have time available to do this task and so the materials lay on the floor of my office until the next available slot in my diary. It was on a Sunday that I found time to begin work on the shelf. Thinking it would be intact before lunch, I was soon to realise that this would not be the case. Having had assembled one side of the bookcase and slotted in the shelving, the other side would not fit into the frame to complete the assembly. I tried numerous times to tease the panel into position with a mallet but it was not working for me.

I had a rant about the shortcomings of pictorial instructions alone for this kind of task and lamented the need to design better instructions for self-assembly builds. The charm of my new bookshelf, rustic or otherwise and its exquisite craftsmanship was soon lost on me.

Following lunch, I went for a socially distant walk across fields and through a woods with my sisters and their children (we live beside each other). There is something so energising about being outdoors amongst young children and watching how they naturally flow with life. Children are great adventurers and know how to take things and themselves lightly, and most importantly have fun. The outdoors is one giant playground to them, and that afternoon helped to remind us adults of that too. Time spent outdoors in nature helped me and my sisters to relax, let go and explore the surrounding landscape.

So, it was not surprising that when I came back to the job of assembling my bookshelf that it came together easily for me. I took the mallet into my hand and with a few light strokes evenly dispersed over the length of wood I soon realised that was what was needed to press the side panel to the rest of the shelf.

For me, this experience has highlighted the use of insight to resolve the problem. This involved me taking time away from the problem, slowing down and allowing my mind to wander. When I think about how I find solutions to problems broadly speaking, interestingly I tend to solve problems by insight, not analytically. I am intrigued if there is any research that supports the idea of bias in how humans solve problems (by insight or analytically). This also gets me thinking about the process of solving a problem analytically. I am interested in knowing more about this way of solving problems as it is not the usual way I tend to find solutions to problems.

Vignette#97

Vignette 2 : “Vegetable Gardening”

Domains : Family & Home – Significant Relationships

Narrative : Having received a present of some gardening tools and seed, three years ago I decided I would have a go at growing some fail-safe plants so we could experiment and, if lucky, could put something homegrown on the dinner plate. Reading packet instructions, I decided the fifty centimeter spacing needed testing so in some areas I respected it and in some, I spaced the cherry tomato seeds apart by only thirty centimeters. There must have been only about ten plants and despite our exceptionally long holiday absence that year, they bared some fruit despite the searing heat that summer.

Following this first experiment I made an earlier start, just as Covid-19 provoked us to be imaginative at home. I worked the earth, added plant nutrition and discussed gardening by videoconferencing software with my father who had earned some experience since entering retirement. This was another way for us to connect despite our geographical spacing to which we were already accustomed and before Covid-19 ever arrived.

This time I cleared some grass so as to improve produce yield and soon discovered that I would have to delay for another year my plans of planting carrots and potatoes (I am Irish after all :-)) since root vegetable-eating click-worms would appear to dwell even after clearing grass. So it would be tomatoes again! Lots of them! (You may wonder if onions came to mind ... I tried it and realised later the seeds were not close enough to the ground surface – I might try sets this year).

One of numerous tips my father made about growing tomatoes was that it is important to detach the ‘suckers’ from the plant as a stilt is provided to support vertical growth. The idea being to provide a maximum of nutrition to the fruit of the plant as opposed to ‘extra’ and ‘useless’ side growths. So I was happy to remove the suckers I noticed and for any suckers that managed to evade my attention for too long, I let them grow.

Oriented North to South and spaced by about thirty to forty centimeters between each plant, and despite a very slow start (the earlier months were too cold even after seedlings had grown nicely), the plants eventually took off. So much so that they grew far beyond the width of their originally designated lengthwise limits but since their onion neighbours didn’t work, I just let the tomatoes take over. Most stems had to be tied to a vertical support in such a way as to harness all available volume and sunlight. Because the plants were far too close by normal standards, I had to repeatedly untangle tomato plants from choking one and other which would have been their means to leverage further reaching growth. Since this was still a kind of experimentation, I chose not to attach the lowest offshoots and simply to let them grow freely.

With hundreds of tomatoes being eaten at this stage and still more ripening (4 varieties), I noticed how the ‘forgotten’ lowest offshoots were crawling. It was then that I was reminded that I had still not asked my father what function the suckers would serve to the plant had we not removed them. And indeed how would tomato plants fare in absence of their human caretakers? It’s not as if they are like bananas, doomed to fail without human assistance. What I noticed (at least for the tomato variety in question), was how the sucker leaves were wide and shaped like duck feet. They pushed down on the neighbouring grass they had eventually reached, elevated the horizontal stem further from the ground and served to raise the ‘fruit-branch’ above the rest of the plant.

Reflections : By observing what happens at the edge of orderly tomato growing and yet in helping each plant to seek a better place, I managed to imagine better how the plants would fare without my pruning... Quite well in fact! Indeed if yield is the objective and at no other cost (time, orderly and aesthetic gardening, etc.) this could be the way to go.

How many many of us don’t test the limits? How many of us have learning opportunities at our fingers tips but have failed to recognise them? How many of us are painfully close to life-changing experiences that we don’t know how to recognise? How many learning experiences are all about without us seeing them? How can we more easily access these experiences when our close ones can see them before we do?

Vignette#98

Title: Pancake Day: the wheel of life turns

Domain: Family

Narrative:

For many years, as in most families, Pancake Day used to be marked by Dad (me) making a large number of pancakes. The children would get very excited and boast about how many they were able to eat. They would sit down at the table when they were almost ready and plan what each would have with each pancake. 'I'll have banana and Nutella with my first pancake' one of them would say. The other would respond with 'I'll have sugar and lemon with mine', and so it went. The conversation would include references to yogurt, honey, strawberries among other things. As they grew older, they contributed more and more, laying the table, getting things ready, and eventually offering to make the last batches of the pancakes, so Dad could sit down and eat his. These gestures were their way of showing their gratitude and kindness. Generally, the meal ended with a wonderful feeling that everyone had enjoyed another Pancake Day, confirmed by sweetness in the mouth and warmth in our bellies.

However, this year things went very differently. It was my turn to cook dinner. I had planned to make hamburgers, but had not made a start by the time my two sons, now 23 and 26, arrived from work. I had just arrived from the shops with the ingredients. Now, I probably do not need to tell the reader that most young men tend to have large appetites, but in the case of my sons, that is an understatement. They verbalise it from the moment they set foot in the house. Cries like 'Feed me, Dad!' and 'What's for dinner?' are the common greetings. I admit this tends to put some pressure, if you are the one meant to make dinner. But this time, they started making dinner, without even complaining! I just went along and sliced tomatoes and cheese. Dinner was made very quickly. When we had finished, one of them said we would now have pancakes and asked everyone how many they would like. By the time we finished clearing up the remains of the first course, freshly made, steaming hot pancakes were placed on the table. Delicious!

Reflection

As I ate my pancakes, I couldn't help feeling this was a wholly new experience. I had a strong sense that roles had been reversed. I was now taking the back seat. Instead of being made guilty at not having prepared dinner early, my sons had taken over and got on with it. So, what happened? Perhaps, they took into account that I had been shopping, so I couldn't have cooked. However, such displays of logical thinking just don't happen when they are hungry. Another possibility is that they have accepted that Dad is now getting a little slower. In any case, the focus of this reflection should be on me and my learning, not theirs. I realised that the wheel of life had been turning all this time and I hadn't noticed. I had continued to perform my role in the same way, or so I thought. This small episode was teaching me that I have to update aspects of my self-concept, to use a psychologists' notion. Many readers may share the idea that nothing has changed as they grow older, except the exterior, that they feel the same as when they were younger. However, reflecting on how my sons treated me on Pancake Tuesday suggests otherwise. So, what are the main changes in me? Indeed, this is too big a question to answer in a vignette, but at least writing has allowed it to come to the surface.

Vignette#99

Domain: Language and Communication

Title: Choosing Words Carefully

Narrative

Several years ago I participated in a national writing programme called 'Writing is Primary'. This action research project was funded by The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to support the teaching of writing in primary schools. The study provided opportunity for teachers to work alongside authors to develop an understanding of the art and craft of the writing process. For me, the experience was life-changing; the insights that I gained were revolutionary. The author Nikki Siegen-Smith supported my school; her pearls of wisdom still chime true with me today, even as I write this vignette. Nikki explained the importance of choosing words carefully – "Jasen, are your words pulling the reader towards your writing, or pushing them away?" This powerful question prompts the writer (author) to focus on the reader. The writer needs to anticipate the thoughts and feelings of their audience; the writer must select words for effect, or they are in danger of pushing the reader away. We rarely write solely for ourselves, so to attract the full attention of the reader is important, essential really.

This week I have been supporting trainee teachers with their academic writing skills. I have also helped students to compose their personal statements, in preparation for applying for teaching posts. From the outset, I explained that 'they held the pen!' Again, this is one of Nikki's gems. I was not about to mark their words, nor tell them what to write. They were the author, and I was their editor; we would be learning partners for writing. The students were in charge of the words they chose, but my role was to challenge them to choose carefully. I would offer them alternative phrases, but these were only suggestions – they could ignore anything that I said, with no judgement. The trainees were not used to working this way. Many felt uncomfortable at first, expecting me to instruct them, but as the sessions progressed the students were quick to revise their own words, often stating: "That's much clearer now – that's the way I want it to be read."

Reflection and Learning

How often do we consider the effect of our word choice in our daily lives? I like to consider that my language is typically measured, but in these emotionally draining times, my words might be released too quickly, and push the listener away. I pride myself on choosing words carefully for EduTwitter, but perhaps I need to be as self-critical in everyday contexts. In the author and editor writing partnership, the author is supported to reflect and revise. Importantly, the editor poses questions regarding purpose, clarity and intent. I like to view the relationship as: Pose - Ponder – Polish. Working this week with trainee teachers has confirmed my belief in choosing words carefully, but not just for writing. I could have easily pushed the students away from me with ill-chosen words. I am happy to say that I didn't. Thank you Nikki – always!

Vignette#100

A Virtual World Experience:

Domain Work

I presented with a former colleague last week to an international audience comprised of academics who work in subjects related to the Holocaust and museum staff about gamebased activities related to the Holocaust and World War II. My area of expertise is teaching and learning in adult education and of course being a member of the charity: The Gathering the Voices Association. Gathering the Voices. There is only six of us in the group. Fortunately, however, my colleague is an expert on the subject of developing serious computer games.

My colleague and I carefully timed our presentation. He ensured all the slides looked professional. He even very kindly offered to run the slide show. All I had to do was to talk to my slides. However, when it was my turn to speak I found the act of speaking to the screen, knowing that there were over 100 people from all over the world listening, was quite terrifying.

I think part of this fear emanated from the fact I am a baby boomer (generation X) and knew that most of the population were from the millennials (generation Y) or even generation Z (those born post 1995). In reality although my voice seemed to me to be quite shaky, the audience did not ask me any difficult questions. Most of the questions were extremely detailed serious computer game questions. Who would have thought the various IT programmes that people use when designing a game could attract so much interest? Although, I realise I am being slightly facetious, there was a lot of discussion around using serious computer games as a teaching tool with regards to Holocaust education.

Reflection

I realise that part of the reason I volunteered to present is that I recognise that it is an important aspect of my engagement with lifelong learning. However, I cannot believe the length of time I have taken in preparing a fifteen - minute session. I have tried to rationalise why I am worried about this teaching experience. After all I have over thirty years' experience of teaching in adult education; a PhD on the subject of 'Engaging adult learners with independent learning and critical thinking to enhance citizenship and employability'. I have concluded that since I have retired I have very quickly lost confidence in my own ability. In the past, I would have 'knocked up' a presentation in twenty minutes; now I agonise over every word, phrase and slide. And sadly, I am now totally addicted to the designer tool on Powerpoint. So, I am now trying to view this as a positive experience; I have contacted academics whom I last saw over four years ago. Even though I may not have seen them on line, as there were too many to see on the screen, I have made contact again. And I have heard back from people across the world which is a good thing in this time of isolation and we have chatted about the important things in our lives – family health and how well our coping strategies are working.

Vignette#101

Vikki Pendry Vignette 3

Promoting Independence

I have had various conversations this week in professional circles where the theme has been to find ways of helping teachers to help learners become increasingly independent. Independence is rightly regarded in my view as an important characteristic entwined with resilience, efficacy and attitudes towards citizenship and identity. In many textbooks in Pakistan I heard this week, learning activities focus on repeating what has been presented for example to check what has been learnt rather than creating an opportunity for reflecting on meaning and analysing information. Some online training materials for teachers in Ghana reportedly place too much emphasis on letting teachers 'get on with it'. So, the challenge is to give teachers just the right amount of support (how do we find out how much support they need?) in order for them to be able to give learners just the right of support to become increasing independent. Sometimes this is referred to as scaffolding. Get the structure right but allow for flourishing and context specific colours around and within it.

Reflection

I have spent much of motherhood preparing my son for independence. I zip up his coat...then don't mention a coat at all when we go out to encourage him to make the coat/no coat decision on his own. I place food in a funny face shape on his plate...then leave the recipe book open ready to be interpreted, implemented and evaluated. I buy his clothes...then give him an allowance to navigate Sports Direct specials.

My son is now 16. He is funny and handsome and bright and bold. ***He is increasingly independent.*** He makes his own plans, cleans his room (mostly), set his alarm(s) to get himself ready for 'school' and suffers the consequences of his 'independent mistakes' with reasonable humility. I should be pleased shouldn't I with his development? Of course I am. But there is also a sense of loss, a persistent nagging anxiety of 'what if he....?' and some rejection. Planning for independence in the classroom feels very different from the reality of seeing your child grow, stumble, stagger and regain his stride. I find the whole teenage journey fascinating, wonderful and terrifying in equal measure. He needs his wings...but I'm not I'm quite ready for the flight



Lifeworld Learning Research & Development Group

**Towards a Better Understanding
of Our Own Learning Lives**

WEEK 4 #102 to #139

**Vignettes of Experiences
Involving Emergent Learning**

Vignette #102

DOMAINS

FAMILY AND WORK

A significant decision on the house-moving front as we decided to have our house valued on Friday and will then make a decision on the next steps. I use this technique in careers guidance with my students, small steps to reach your goal. My own self-awareness is important to me as again I see the significance of it when making decisions. It is interesting to see how my training and profession seeps into family life and how I have to use this technique on myself as I am anxious about the prospect of moving as I don't particularly like uncertainty. My daughter is applying for jobs and had an interview for a job last week that went really well and she was told in the feedback that she had come second, which she was initially devastated by this news but she has picked herself up and applied for two more jobs and already has another interview. I love learning from her tenacity and her determination to make her own path in the world of work and her goal of owning her own home in the future.

CAREER

I have a reputation as the research investigator in my team as I am always seeking out new information and am keen to learn from others to advance my knowledge and expertise. I also like to share this with others and enjoy coaching and nurturing others. Lockdown has given me the opportunity to do this so much more. This week I went to a workshop that was the culmination of a careers coaching project at a university, which is near to where I live. It was significant to me, as I had applied for one of the jobs supporting this project but was not successful after the interview stage and it made me reflect on how my life and career would have taken a different direction. These moments cause you to reflect and learn from them. One of the positive outcomes was I received the most in depth and positive feedback that I have ever received from the Manager of the team. He was at the workshop I attended this week and responded to my questions. I have learnt from this that it is important to ask for feedback, learn from it, and realise that rejection is part of life and I can be more authentic with my students when they face rejection.

HOBBIES

I have learnt a great deal from my love of yoga, which I have taken part in since my early twenties. It is a brilliant way to learn about the limits of your body. I feel it is important it is to build strength and flexibility. I have met many fabulous yoga teachers who take their teaching and the philosophy behind it so seriously and each one has brought a different perspective to their teaching. Yoga is both physical and mental exercise as the relaxation and meditation is a fundamental part of it. Learning how to quieten your mind and the thoughts in your head are sometimes hard to do and yoga has taught me the importance of this to me my own mental health.

REFLECTION

This process of writing has helped me to reflect on planned and unplanned events. What would have happened if I had been successful in securing the job working with students on the project above which direction would this have taken me? In careers guidance theory, this is based on Krumboltz's theory of planned happenstance which makes it OK not to always plan and be open to taking opportunities as they arise which may open doors and lead to career paths you may never have considered. This is why I am a Careers Consultant after a brief conversation at university with a friend of a friend who had recently graduated and was training to be a careers professional and

completing the postgraduate diploma in careers guidance. I knew I wanted to work with young people on a one to one basis and this chance meeting led me to a profession that I have thoroughly enjoyed for the last 30 years.

Vignette #103

THE VORTEX



A week off my 9 to 5 work commitment and I have let myself dance in a vortex of activities that have put me on a spinning top learning curve. University calling with a draft for an essay, units to respond to through research, yoga lessons and mantra evenings, family commitments and reading time. I waltzed around with the above and actually did a fair amount of sitting which is quite unusual for a teacher in early years.

But how can I waltz, prance, and skip along my week when I am so engaged, and I am not working my 9 to 5 job? Good question. Mmmmmm. I am not completely sure. On my calendar I write a few important items that keep me on my toes, I number the weeks for each activity and colour code them with an overview of a month. I then give myself some mental gym as to when in the week I am going to work on what and then off I go experimenting with time, interest, duty, passion, and a natural curiosity that keeps me happy for small and precious amounts of time. These are like sparks of mental energy that travel through my body as I think and delve in what I do. They arrive with polite announcement while I am thinking and urge me to stand up and do menial physical things such as dusting the parquet floor which comes in gentile and agile sweeps or I might decide to hang up the washing taking in the scent of fabric soften and detergent. When the thought is thought and happiness fills, I know it is time to get back and spill onto paper or the computer.

On Friday evening I decided that a bit of mind wandering was going to be a perfect way to close the day and look into the weekend which in some cases could be the weekstart. I painted thinking of the vortex week I was experiencing and as I let the paint brush move on paper, I noticed that there were no twists and

knots no bridges over gaps or ravines. Colours blended and moved in a very tidy fashion, some tried to squeeze past, but all found their place. This is how the painting you see at the top of the page came into the world.

Reflection. Time is what you make of it. We are the ones that move it and use it. We create it and waste it. We reflect on it and put it aside. Time and how we use it is part of who and what we are. Sure, we have hands and numbers to help us keep track of the conventional concept of time. The circadian rhythm with its sun and stars gives a helping hand but we are the masters of our time.

This week has given me solace in following my natural time warp/waltz/vortex. Thank you, school calendar, for allowing time to close one door and open another although these doors are rarely closed. When there is a gust of wind or a slight breeze, they open and close at different times a bit like adance.

Vignette #104

Title: **The view from Mars**

2 Domain: **Travel**

3 Narrative:

I was a teenager at the time of the first Moon Landings. It was thrilling to look up at the familiar moon, knowing that, at that moment, humans were there. The success of the enormous endeavour that had made that possible seemed to indicate that great things are achievable, given the focus and resources. However, the striking image from that time is the beautiful photograph, [Earthrise](#), taken from Apollo 8 in December 1968, showing a beautiful and fragile planet.

Before COVID, I went to the Design Museum in London to see an exhibition on [Moving to Mars](#). The exhibition offered fascinating things to see and do relating to missions to and living on the planet. The overriding message I came away with was that, beyond the thrill of travelling to explore a new planet, was that the solutions to the challenges that must be tackled to survive on Mars, could also offer strategies to protect Earth from environmental disaster. Problems such as how to live with zero waste; to cope with limited supplies of water; to generate power without pollution, mirror the pressing issues we must address on this planet.

As I write this, the first images of Mars, from Perseverance rover, are circulating via global media. We have overcome the challenge of the long journey to get there. How long might it be before we are able to send astronauts to land on Mars? Is it ironic that we have sent a mission to another planet at the time when we are suffering a pandemic on our home planet? Does it take a mission to Mars or the Moon for us to see ourselves and our own home?

4 Reflections:

During successive Lockdowns I found myself regularly recalling past holidays, while confined to my lawn or living room. I have mentally revisited beaches, canals, forests, cathedrals, cities, galleries, hotels, pools, tents, villas, cafes etc. from previous holidays, and remembered my children as babies, happy young girls, grumpy teenagers, or good companion adults travelling with us. It felt good to be free to go far and wide, in my mind, without actually breaking Lockdown rules. I realise that I have gained greater value from those trips than I had supposed. However, one key thing I have missed about being unable to travel is the view of home and how I am living, which being somewhere else offers me.

It seems that travelling and seeing others living differently inspires me to recognise that there are a greater range of options than I imagine. I have reflected that the sci-fi I used to read also gave me this kind of inspiration, combined with some of that thrill of exploring somewhere new. I know that much of my reading, watching and listening during this past almost a year has been in search of emotional comfort, as an antidote to reality. I think I deliberately sought this. I wonder if now I am ready for some new worlds to fuel my thinking about a "new normal". I have started to experiment with a post plague, novel by Margaret Atwood. Wish me luck?

Vignette #105

Vignette 3: Smell and Learning ...

I am a bit late with vignette 3 as I crushed my fingers and took some time of tying, more of which later. Anyway, an article in the science periodical *Nautilus* on humans sense of smell got me thinking. It looked at the way the brain interprets smell. It drew on recent research into the brain areas triggered by a smell. It suggested that despite the simple and direct route between the organ and the brain, the dynamic nature of smells and the structurally diverse nature of the brain's receptors make it very complex. Thirty years after discovering the route and the receptor, people are no closer to understanding smell. The author suggests that this relates to thinking of smell as a map in the same way vision has been mapped when scent is a mosaic that fire off neurons all over the brain. The most straightforward thoughts on smell seemed to be to do with memory.

The smell of camomile reminds me of blisters on the hands from raking hay. The smell of the hay makes me think of the cows in the byre and scraps of wool stuffed into the wall to stop the wind. Then back along by the sea to the house, out to the shed, to the left the goat smell, to the right the dry dusty smell of grain for the hens and from under the next door smell of the toilet bucket. It makes me think of grandmothers house, about peat smoke, and the smell of the Tilly lamp. I wonder did my parents caravan smell different, damp and plastic mixed with cigarettes, I think. It was a sort of scent map of the past.

I try to pull myself out of childhood, I think about the smell of a crowd in the Barrowlands in Glasgow, of the second-hand books in the shops of the Grassmarket, of a dram in the Malt Whisky Society in Edinburgh, of the slaughterhouse when I take livestock to be killed, of blood. Then I think of the smell of fire, of the sweet smell of burning the hill when I was a kid, the smell of sweat and heat when I was a firefighter damping down hill fires, and the smell of a house when the people didn't make it. Suddenly I am at a birthday party, and a kilted uncle who was in the army has an arm around me and is telling me that you never forget the smell of burning after a car bomb. But the truth is I can remember taking my breathing apparatus, but I cannot remember the smell, so I just nod, and we get another drink.

Having let thoughts about smell roll, I realise I have been almost doing a Margaret Mead, the raw and the cooked, setting up binary, good smells and bad smells. I decided it was not a productive route. What I like most is the smell of the sea, but having been in lockdown and hardly across the ferry for months. I cannot smell the sea because I have not been away from it. Then last week, a trip across the ferry for a family funeral. The graveyard was a few hours away, so I googled it and found it was a place sea kayakers set out. Make a note, perhaps we could take the kayaks out from their sometime. It was good to see everyone, no hugs. On the way home, I wonder if others' smell is part of the sensory deprivation we experience under lockdown.

It was a wild day, and I came back wet. When I am in the shower, warming up, my wife came in to ask how it went. I notice the water from the shower smells very earthy. When I get out, I fiddle with the taps, it is very brown. That night I change the filter, but it does not seem to make a difference. When I was younger, if the water from the pipe was brown first, you undid the elastic band and took the pair of tights of the tap to clean. If it still smelled, you needed to go up the hill. By this point it was dark, so I didn't go up the hill to check the water supply till the next morning. It was clogged. A bit of the bank had come away and was over the inlet. While fixing it, I crushed my fingers. Once, I fiddled around with various pipes to animal troughs and the polytunnel. I went in to get changed and realised I had learnt something using my nose. An earthy peat smell tells me it is time to check the water. I won't share what I learnt when the water had a fishy smell or the time it had an odd meaty taste. But I did eventually come back to the squashed fingers.

Vignette #106

Domain: Hobbies and Interests (connected to Home and Work)

Walking with one of my sisters we were going through a field and we saw a flock of birds flying, landing, gathering. My sister was in an RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) club when she was a child and she pointed them out and said they were fieldfares. They looked like thrushes to us both. She thought she'd seen some red on them. She wasn't sure and I said well I just believed her anyway (a running joke between us around her degree being an 'ology' unlike my own). She wanted me to google it to check. I googled at the weekend and when I shared the images with her, she tried 'redstart' instead and then 'redwing' and decided it must have been those. Then she wanted me to google what religion Constantinople had before Christianity. Answer: pagan or so I thought at quick glance. Then she queried her understanding of the acronym LGBTQIA + and I googled that too as we seemed to be jumbling our answers to A. We then saw a much longer acronym and were having a look at those and sharing our understanding together. All of this revisiting old learning and gaining new learning in the space of probably about fifteen minutes on a mobile phone and having met up for a walk!

A turn towards 'academic' writing: I got a paper rejected last week and I can see now very clearly that I totally lost track of it in the middle section. I was kind of appalled by that but I realise that sometimes you can look without seeing and I was also in the throes of all sorts of stresses so it would have been quite something to have seen it clearly at all. One of the comments, absolutely rightly, was about the limited attention to research on professionalisation. I didn't google but the search was a similar process i.e. what works, what doesn't, what connects, what new. I went to my university e-library content and put in terms such as professionalisation, professionalism, professionalisation of further education teachers and I put in names of people I've read before and who I knew would have something to say. I scanned abstracts and papers and chapters of books. When I landed on something I thought was very helpful, I added them to my electronic store and sometimes I also looked at the authors they were citing.

Reflection

The process of searching is much quicker in its results and for me probably more systematic as well as exploratory than when I was at university myself. We did have computers in the library but I don't remember using them much. I had a little word processor I used to type my assignments on! I have habits of searching (like we all do) – if I've read a good book I will have a look to see what else the author wrote and think about whether I'd like to read that too. I will also look at who recommended them on and within the cover and look for some of their names at some point as well. I see searching variously as strategic, exploratory and interconnected. During lockdown one I put an app on my phone for the Woodland Trust so as to look up tree types by inputting about their leaves (shape etc.). I put it on my phone because I'd come across some cut logs in a field near me. I could see that they were going free and I have a cat who had been scratching my new railway sleeper which I hadn't predicted when I had my patio done! I went past a few times thinking mm I wonder if she might like to scratch one of those instead. I then decided, seeing the pile depleting, that I'd try and roll one away. Bit of a crazy tale but yes it did start off being rolled away but then it had to get picked up and put in the car boot! Anyway having then rolled it on to the patio I realised I didn't know what tree it was. The next time I walked I collected a leaf from its matching neighbour tree. I checked on Woodland Trust – answer: sycamore. (And no the cat hasn't started scratching the log but she does like to sit on it as if it's a lookout!)

Vignette #107

Vignette #3 Pandora's box

Domain – The virtual world we inhabit

As an Australian, we have been in the news this week for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the Australian Open but also the standoff between Facebook and the Australian government. Australian media organisations are unhappy that Facebook has been able to benefit from use of its platform to freely gain from circulation of news that was originally paid for by media agencies. I am sure it is much more complex than that but the bottom line is that the internet enables people, rightly or wrongly, to copy and forward just about any information. The up side of this of course is that we all now have quick access to current news. The downside is that people and organisations who have incurred time and costs, to research and prepare the stories, are missing out on deserved income.

When I reflect back on my younger days, everything was hardcopy. I can still remember sitting on a train in Melbourne in the afternoon and just about everyone was reading their copy of the evening paper. Now, they are all staring at their smart devices. From a control perspective, in the 'good' old days, governments were able to legislate the requirements with regard to boundaries of appropriate media content. Now, governments have to somehow control the flow of digital information from anywhere.

After it was told by the Australian government that it would have to pay for having Australian news on its platform, Facebook took the initial heavy handed approach of blocking wide access by Australian users but this attracted immediate criticism because in the process it also cut off access to essential information sources. So, now I believe there will be some sort of negotiation process.

Other countries will be keenly interested in the outcome from the Australian government stand because they each face their own similar issues with the tech giant. This begs the question: who is really in control? Is it good or bad that governments are now trying to play catch up with local and international laws regarding the exchange of information, goods and money? I have no idea what happens on the dark web but its very name suggests that it is hiding something from the light.

Again, as I reflect on advancements in technology, I am left wondering how it has happened that governments have, at least for the moment, lost some significant control.

Getting back to far more interesting reflections, during the Australian Open, a spectator attracted international attention by disrupting Nadal during one of his matches and calling him an "OCD fxxx". Of course, this was totally out of order and she was swiftly removed from the stand. Perhaps it was just a bad day for her but for the rest of her life, she will be associated with that momentary incident. The internet is able to destroy someone's reputation not just locally but worldwide. We hear of young children committing suicide because of negative posts and pictures about them.



(Image from the Daily Mail Online, 12 February 2021 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9252129/Heckler-centre-Australian-Open-row-doubles-wild-exchange-Rafael-Nadal.html>)

Why do I mention this lady? Because, as I reflected on her actions, I thought this could have been someone I know. We all have our faults. Just because someone can take a photo and post it on the internet, does that make it right? Even if it is subsequently taken down, it is normally too late because at least some people would have saved a digital copy.

The internet is a wonderful innovation, if used for the right purposes. The real issue for me is that just because we can now share something with the world does not mean we should.

So, my reflection for this week is on the whole issue of control. If there are no boundaries, then people will keep pushing as far as they can because that seems part of our human nature. I am not advocating suppression but rather protection. The internet has opened so many wonderful doors, but is it also the ultimate pandora's box?

Vignette #108

Vignette #4 Domain: The Unanticipated Emergence of paid Work. Feb. 22, 2021

Definitely, our lives are an emergent phenomenon in many areas. Like the phantom of the Opera, we wear a variety of masks based on our functions in the different facets of our lives. I have never been one to follow a daily routine. In fact, I do just the opposite. Each day is a new discovery in the pursuit of value, importance and relativity of daily actions. Close to 15 yrs. ago I decided that the nine to five lifestyles were not for me. I packed up a good position at a University as a Curriculum Design Specialist and opened my educational consulting business. Life and work have been incrementally interesting, rewarding, and exciting. Today I found myself back in a nine to five consulting 1-year



contract position, at the first institution I worked at for 25 years. It is with great trepidation one steps back in life to where it all started. Only this time it was virtually. Onboarding virtually is quite interesting instead of walking from one office to the next, one can feel bombarded by jumping from one meeting to the next, having everyone "in your face" literally. However, it was interesting how you can tell a lot by the

enthusiasm displayed by individuals, the willingness to genuinely assist, and the dedication to what they do. I sense this is going to be a critical time for me to learn from those taking the reins of an organization with unbounded zest and vitality. I feel fortunate to have this window of opportunity to catch their vision of creating a better society, ensuring and upholding quality and currency in educating young minds for a future that is yet to be determined.

Reflection

I had a rough plan for how I wanted to spend my twilight years. It consisted of easy-going workshops, retreats, and creating a more relaxed atmosphere for learning for myself and others in academe. This plan has now taken a back seat, but just for a while, as I pour myself into this unplanned opportunity, that was never envisaged as part of the neat little life map that my colleague created during our divergent brainstorming session. I am filled with the renewed spirit of the youth in the indomitable task of painting on a new palette.



Learning



I see this position as a wonderful opportunity to share ideas, discuss possibilities and caution about the pitfalls, that might not be initially visible. Walking the same path for over a few decades, one gets to know all the cracks and crevices in the roadway. Although the circumstances may be different, being able to identify, point out and walk around them can be useful while navigating new pathways that may seem like short cuts but are intentional, expeditious, and together carving out emergent learning that is new and unbounded. It is an opportunity to invent new metaphors and narratives as compasses for new ways of being.

Vignette #109

Title: Writing community

Domain: Environment, Employment, Relationships

Background: I developed a publication plan to disseminate my research findings following the completion of my phd. My plan was not progressing and I realised a need for support. Through speaking with a senior colleague I heard of a discipline writing group which I asked to join, but probably due to COVID nothing eventuated. This year realising my motivation was inconsistent I recruited a writing coach and further conversations at work led to another email inquiry about participating in a writing group if one was available.

Last week I joined the College writing group. It's online, cross-disciplinary, for early career researchers (ECR) and has a membership of about 20 people. Meetings run for two-hours on Thursdays and Fridays but there is no obligation to attend or stay for the full two-hours.

Narrative: Thursday morning I join the online ECR writing group meeting and note that as I started the meeting an announcement would have been sent to all members. My 'new' presence is stated. I'm the only one here in the online group space. The facilitator for this group had advised me that they might be late but suggested someone else was reliably present.

I set myself up and ponder whether I got the details wrong. No, a quick check of email correspondence confirms date, time, and location as correct. Left waiting in a virtual space I wonder whether anyone will show. Thank fully a few minutes later I am joined. We introduce ourselves and discuss a little of our research and approaches. We come from different disciplines, I'm a qualitative researcher with interest in developing quantitative skills. They're a quantitative researcher. They make a statement that resonates. A statement something along the lines of 'we should collaborate together on a research project'.

Three days a week I'm employed as a research assistant. It's an interesting study and the data collected to date is both quantitative and qualitative. A colleague from another institution has been brought onto the project for the sole purpose of quantitative analysis.

As my new ECR writing group 'friend' made their statement I wonder why collaborations like this haven't happened. Perhaps somewhere they are, but I'm not so sure. Possibilities. We are joined by the facilitator and our writing session begins.

Reflection: In my previous employment I advocated for cross-disciplinary networks. In recent years this writing group is my first experience of such an activity; although there were only two disciplines present and I was the sole representative of one. I appreciated being included, found the time productive, and am hopeful that this new community might lead to future collaborations. I should try and remember people's names though - I can't recall any at present!

Vignette # 110

VIGNETTE 3 "THE TRIBE"

DOMAIN: FAMILY/WORK LIFE ("worksonal"= work and personal areas)

NARRATIVE

We have had the opportunity to be all together as a family in the past year. We have a son and a daughter who are adults and have been working for a while already. The covid circumstances, made as all be back at home together for several hours, combining spaces and time for home-office, sports, (limited exercise indoor), enjoying our family time (barbecues, board games, long conversations, watching movies, walking the dogs, redecorating,).

We have developed teamwork for redecorating, or cooking, researching and searching for the right material, paint or ingredient; becoming apprentices in similar areas. But it also has made us more aware of what the other does work wise.

As time passed, each one of us took "possession" of a space, and due to the situation, each one also "personalised" that space during working time (which of course was not as clearly limited, and it got blurred with the rest of the time). It meant also that we would take special care of not invading and respecting all spaces, because one of us was "in a meeting". I have to say that without having talked about all this, our "new rules" or invisible boundaries, emerged naturally, and made it really cosy to work from home for each one of us. Each one created their own "working corner". We have shared our thoughts and we feel happy to keep the "work from home" scheme, which in fact means we have felt happy with the conviviality that emerged.

It also brought a lot of respect and knowledge regarding "the other". I now know lots of artificial intelligence and the food industry, as well as the real estate business, and much more! In return they now know more about education, which is my field. We have all learnt more from a direct source, about new subjects and areas. About the other role that we have in society. My son and daughter, and my husband, have also become professionals to my eyes. I believe I understand much more of their challenges, passions, and difficulties, making me even prouder of them.

What we have lived has open new conversations and roles, which merge and mix. Learning has become a part of every conversation, that today goes way beyond the old: "so how was work today?"-.....

REFLECTION

Being together sharing different roles, has made me learn from each member of the family, and it is noticeable that in different moments each one has taken a variety of roles. My vision of what has happened is that we have become "a tribe", in which each one of us have rotating roles that have enriched our life as a family, and our knowledge and like for a different area than our own field. I am aware that this has not been the case for many, that living the same experience, have felt overwhelmed and invaded. I am aware that we are lucky to live in a place where we can all keep a certain privacy, but that also gives us the chance to "see" more about the other... and learn more about areas which before may have been seen only as "headlines", which would not show the real value of what they mean.

We have learnt about the jobs of each other, and we have shared new learning as a “tribe” redecorating, cooking and sharing together, in areas that we were all exploring, as beginners. We have become “students” in shared areas.



Vignette # 111

Vignette: Making art locally in public park spaces helps to be part of things again

Domain: Park/public space, self as artist

My own art practice is deeply concerned with landscape and the human body's relation to it, the phenomenological issues implied by this, and the forms in which such relations may be represented, in photography, drawing, video and other media.

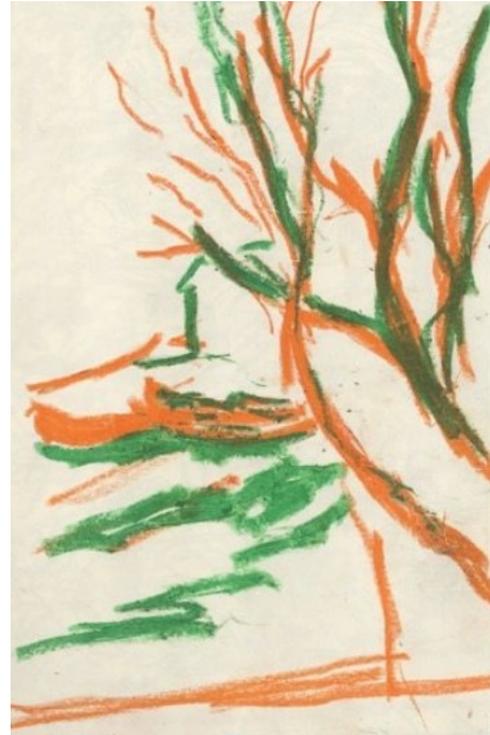
It is about walking, a feeling of the movement of walking, the elements, watching the landscape in front of me, discovering and exploring. It's about losing oneself and finding it again.

I haven't been able to get out of the city into a wild landscape, so I've used the parks instead. It's an environment outside the house to think about 'senses of self': drift of identity and selfhood; and with the body's relationship to nature/park spaces.

Reflection:

I've reflected and during these lockdowns realised how peripatetic I am. Something that I have returned to in a more conscious way is my walking. Drawings while walking in the park, this means that during walks of one or two hours of duration I am constantly making marks whilst moving along. Using oil pastels or other mediums I record, physically and literally the movement of my body through space this record is obviously effected and is a direct product of many contingent features: my own body's internal and external movements, my shifting perception as I move through space, the awkward fluidity of the medium being used and various other features such as temperature and terrain, atmosphere and the general ambience of the place that I'm in. In the two weeks it has snowed and we have had warm sunny days.

For the current project I'm particularly interested in working with a writer, with a view to exploring the relationship between the physical mark making I have referred to above and language in the conventional sense of the word. I aim to produce two screen prints for this project.



Vignette # 112

Vignette 3: Learning through curiosity and observing the other's behavior

Domain: Technology and communication

Narrative:

Since this group discussion space was my first experience on LinkedIn, and I used other social media to connect and chat with friends, using this network was a bit new to me. At the time you were commenting on each other, I was very curious about how you reply to each other in the comments and that person's name also has a link in the replay, and if you click on that name, it will take you to that person's page (a great way to find people page on comments). Early in the comments, I tried different methods to find this affordance and use it, but I did not understand how?

A few days ago, when I was commenting in this space, instead of clicking on the replay box, I clicked on the replay option under the name of the person and realized that I had discovered the Affordance.

Reflection:

This experience reminded me of research from several years ago that was about e-learning ecosystems, and I became somewhat familiar with the affordances by reading Norman Jackson's (2016) book on exploring learning ecosystems. I discovered a new affordance that was previously unknown to me, and the discussion environment of this group and observing the comments of others created a learning situation for me so that I could become aware of the existence of this affordance, discover it, and learn it.



Vignette # 113

Vignette: Using our senses and other things to create self

Domain: Home/garden, self

One of my most important sources of learning at the moment is from the contributions that are being made in this space. I am continually being provoked to think about either something I haven't thought about before or have not thought enough about it. This week it was Ranold's post on smell that grabbed my attention. It forced me to confront the fact that I take my senses for granted. By this I mean that generally I value my experiences as an integrated whole rather than the individual sensory inputs that make up the experience.

I decided to conduct a little experiment. I took myself into the garden and shut my eyes. For 5 mins I gingerly walked around asking myself what are my other senses telling me about my environment? Quite honestly, without the visual cues I could have been anywhere outside on a coolish day. I could deduce that it was day because I could hear birds singing, but I could not have told you what time it was. I might have guessed that I was in England because of the bird sounds (rather than Australia if you know what I mean). I could have guessed it was cloudy because I could not feel sun on my skin. It felt as if I was walking on grass and I confirmed it by touching it, but it was spongy with more moss than grass. It was cool so it was probably winterish assuming I was in England but it could have been spring or autumn. I could hear road traffic some distance away so I knew I wasn't deep in the countryside. Taste and smell didn't help me beyond knowing I was in fresh air which was moving because I could feel it on my face. Without my sight I had to infer so much and use my reasoning and imagination to construct a picture of the world around me.

If I had stumbled around I would have eventually bumped into a fence, encountered some trees and fallen into the pond and these experiences would all have helped me build a more detailed mental picture of my environment. If I had been with someone I could have asked them to describe for me what they could see and this additional information would have helped me mentally visualise the world around me.

All in all, the absence of sight left me feeling pretty disconnected from the world. What this told me is so obvious yet so important to our understandings of lifewide learning. If we inhibit in some way the flow of information from our external world we can change our perception of it in quite a radical way. Our senses work together with our perception, reasoning, imagination and emotion to make sense of our situation and to create the whole experience of living in the world and interacting with it.



Research on perception tells us that our sense of an experience is in fact not just based on our perceptions of information flowing into us at a particular moment, it also involves memories of similar experiences which help us interpret and make sense of the current information especially if the information is incomplete.

Reflection: I looked again at my previous vignette 'Belonging to a Place' which described the experience of taking a walk near my home during which I gathered information through all my

senses and combined my perceptions with past experiences, family stories and other sources of information, including taking photographs. The act of taking photos, or adding any other activity to a walk for that matter, changes the nature of the experience. Some thought is being given to what to photograph and why. And having taken the photos and video new possibilities (affordances) are available to extend the experience – eg by making a movie and using it to reflect on the experience. After the walk I reflected upon my experience, I wrote about it and made a short movie about it. This extended experience elevated into something with far more meaning and significance. Such is the way we extend the meanings, impacts and significance of our experiences as we engage and re-constitute our inner self.

In replying to my post Rebecca Thomas used this quote which I thought extended a little more my understanding of the nature of experience

'Thus, we could say that representation of the particular is a matter for us to be aware of when we live in the world, with our senses, and representation of the general is a matter for us when we withdraw, when we enter into the quietude of thinking.' Maxine Greene

Vignette # 114

Title: Learning from observation

Domains: Environment, Technology

Narrative: We have spoken about affordances and seeing the opportunity to learn, even from mundane events. Here is a typical example.

This week, I took my car to have one of its tyres inspected for a slow leak. I've been through this process before, so didn't bother to watch the mechanic as he went about the task. Instead, my attention turned to a new building project that has been under construction for a while on the opposite side of the road. First, I was taken by the structure of the building: huge concrete blocks reinforced with steel rods stand upright every few yards. By now, the builders are up to level six. I watched as one removed the supporting prop to a stretch that had a ceiling of metal beams in place. Some of the rods in the concrete



columns were vertical, the others had all been bent over. How did they do that, I wondered? And why? I was beginning to gain a deeper respect for the skill involved in such work, and the danger.

A towering crane began to swing round through nearly 360': I saw that the driver was communicating with a man standing on the back of a lorry, just across the road from me. The latter had his arm in the air, apparently guiding the pulley towards his load of steel rods. When the pulley reached him, he studiously secured bundles of rods ready for lifting. How many were safe to lift in one go? How did he make the judgement? Now, two colleagues appeared and stopped the traffic in both directions before an arm signal told the crane driver it was safe to raise the load. Carefully ensuring that no pedestrian or motorist was put at risk, the foursome worked in unison until the rods were safely on the building site.

Reflection: this was an everyday scene, the sort of thing we take for granted, probably don't even bother thinking about. But when we do think about it and can see events through the eyes of a child, how much we can learn! I took a naïve delight in inspecting the builders' work, asking myself questions and learning how they went about their jobs. I saw their skills in a new light, appreciated their communication and work as a team. Not important on a grand scale, but important to me in that I have come away from the experience with a much greater understanding and respect for a profession so different from my own.

Vignette # 115

PAUL KLEIMAN - Vignette 4

A Tale of Two Online Communities

My wife Jo and I are Jewish. Though not particularly religious, we are very much attached to some of the rituals and practices.

Last April Jo's father died, and it customary for the children to attend synagogue and say the Kaddish (the memorial prayer) at least once a day for a year. Only very religious Jews do that every day, but even non-religious Jews will say the Kaddish when the opportunity arises as a mark of respect. Jo wanted to say the Kaddish at least once a week on the Shabbat/Sabbath.

Judaism, like most religions, is very much based around the idea of a community, particularly worshipping together, usually in synagogue. The Kaddish, particularly, is only to be said in the company of others so that they can respond. Of course, with the Covid emergency in full swing, synagogues were shut along with almost everything else. A friend mentioned that a group of people from a synagogue in London had started a Shabbat service on Saturday mornings on Zoom. So we asked to join and received the link to the service.

Zoom Shabbat was started by a small group from within that community as soon as the first lockdown started back in March 2020. One of the key features is that there is no rabbi in charge. No spiritual leader. It is run by the community, for the community and, crucially, with the people from the community contributing. Different individuals lead different parts of the service every week including the traditional 'sermon' which is usually a fascinating, erudite, insightful, thought-provoking address often given by a leading member of a particular profession: lawyers, medical professionals, scientists, artists, writers, etc. One week we even had a Nobel Prize winner!

Crucially, as well as serving the important function of creating a community, Zoom Shabbat allows those in mourning or commemorating the Yahrzeit (remembrance) of a loved one to say the Kaddish amongst other people. What started as a service for about 30 members of a single synagogue in London has now grown to over 300 people attending every week not only from all over the UK but also the world. Many have joined in order to say the Kaddish, and it is always a very moving (and also chaotic!) moment when everyone unmutes and recites the familiar words.

At the end of the service those attending are randomly allocated to a breakout room to meet up and chat with three or four other people for a few minutes. Sabbath greetings are exchanged, connections made, and it is all very pleasant and a virtual simulation of what usually happens after the 'normal' service in a synagogue.

Jo and I are also members of another Jewish community that has gone online. This one is a much smaller one and based in Cornwall, where our daughter lives. That community meets on a Friday night, when Shabbat actually starts, and there are usually about 20 people attending.

Most weeks, just like the Zoom Shabbat service, the service is led by members of the community, and there a great and similar sense of a coming together, of belonging, of supporting each other, especially the 'chat' before and afterwards. But this last Friday night was very different, as the service was led by a well-known guest rabbi. The rabbi led the service in its entirety. There was no involvement in or participation by other members of the community. It was almost as if he was going through the religious motions, resulting in a peculiarly impersonal, unspiritual, uninspiring service...so unlike the usual service.

REFLECTION

Reflecting on these two experiences in regard to education, it occurred to me that there are parallels with what we might call, on the one hand, the traditional 'transmission' mode of teaching what is, essentially, a teacher-centred/ content-oriented curriculum and, on the other hand, student-centred/learning oriented curriculum where the teacher has moved from being the 'Sage on the Stage' to the 'Guide on the Side'.

What those two very different experiences also demonstrated was just how powerful and empowering a genuinely open, shared experience can be. How it can engender a real sense of belonging, of contributing, of supporting and being supported. All of which are so important if we want to engage in deep, rich, meaningful learning experiences.

Note:

If you're interested, an article about the phenomenon of Zoom Shabbat in North America appeared in The Guardian last May. There are some similarities but also significant differences between the one described in the article and the ones I describe above:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/may/28/zoom-shabbat-unexpected-joy>

Vignette # 116

Vignette 4

Domain: Emergence/Context for Learning

Narrative: In 2002 I completed my dissertation which included a creativity model with person, process, and product (figure on right). Then from 2008-2010, I lead a creativity faculty learning community and the group developed a “postmodern creativity model” in which place was the new emergent component (see Figure 1). I have included this model in several presentation and tried to get articles published with the model included but get push back about “postmodern creativity” – what does that mean?

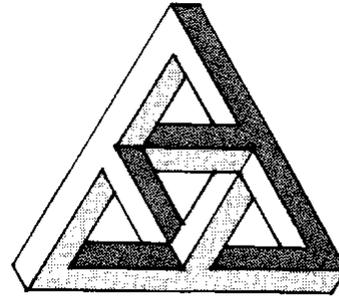
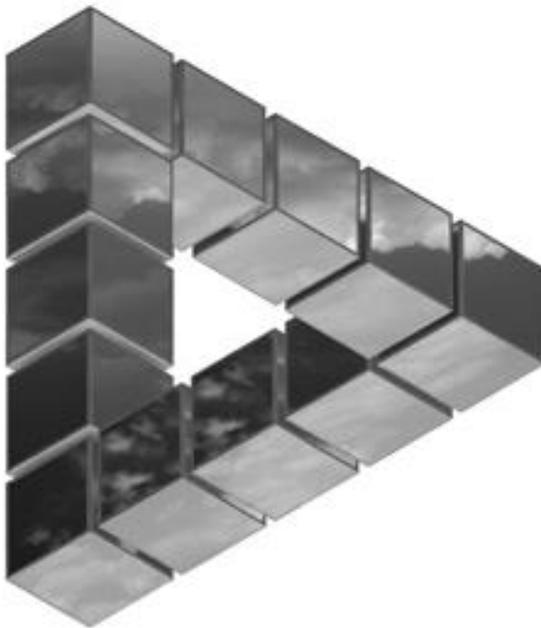


Figure 1. Model of creativity as seen in a postmodern context.



Place

- Time
- Freedom
- Access to resources

Person

- Cognitive style & abilities
- Behavior
- Emotion

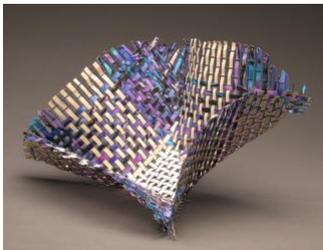
Process

- Motivation
- Initiative
- Formation & exploration

Product

- Attention & concentration
- Reflection
- Integration

Reflection:



And guess what: I’m just going to keep trying. The more I learn about how I learn, the emergent nature of my own understanding of emotions, my behavior, and belief in my abilities, my self-motivation and my ability to reflect and integrate as I go along – the more I believe in the value of the model and the work done by the group. Additionally, I keep staying the course with making. The work on the left is hardware cloth woven with strips cut from a print I

deconstructed with the belief that something better will come out of taking what I know, pursuing with curiosity what I want to learning, and incorporating that through reflection, and attention.

Vignette: #4**Domain: Family & friends) and new domain - (traditions & roots)****Date: 21 Feb 2021**

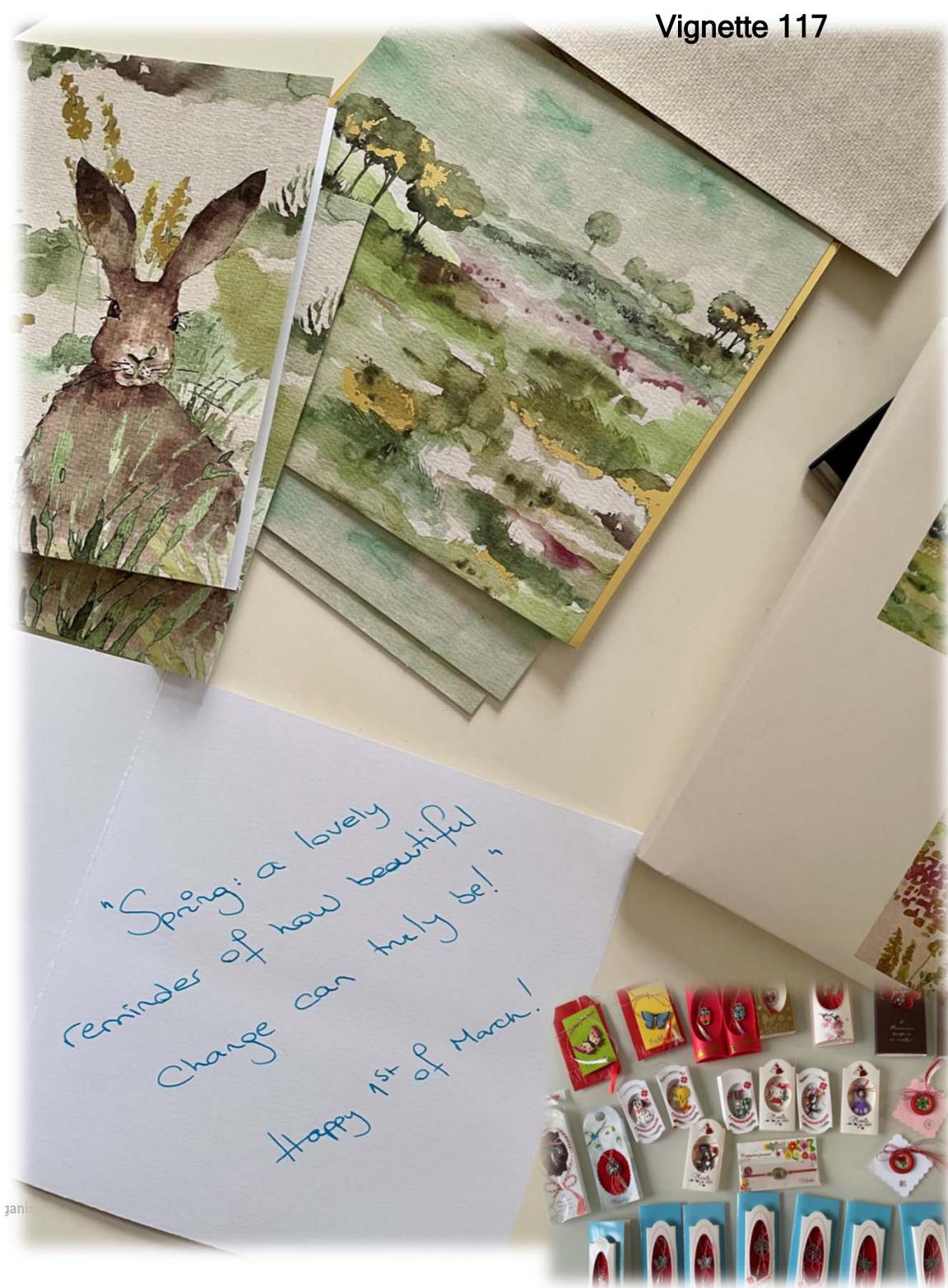
Keeping traditions alive

Narrative:

- Over the last few days I have diligently (and carefully!) been preparing a bunch of envelopes filled with lots of tiny and jolly spring symbols to send to my friends and family across the world.
- This is part of a Romanian custom where on the 1st of March we celebrate “Martisor” (literal translation – little March). What is it you ask? Well, it is a beautiful and ancient tradition related to the arrival of Spring and warm weather, also symbolizing love, respect, appreciation and friendship. On this day, women and girls typically receive a small trinket with a red and white string to be pinned to their jacket and worn for the first 8 days of March. You can read more about it [here](#).
- There are many legends and explanations for the symbolism and it precedes a few other March-related customs, all around the defeat of Winter by Spring. I have also recently learned that other cultures across Eastern Europe celebrate it too (or a similar version of it), which made me feel part of something broader, but also awoke by curiosity to learn more about differences and similarities.
- I cannot explain the joy and happiness it brings me to carefully assemble my envelopes, write a nice message and share my long-rooted traditions with those I hold dear. I specifically like receiving photos from my friends whose children love wearing the pins and sharing them at their schools!

Reflections:

- Every time I write a vignette, it makes me think more thoroughly about what it is that I’m sharing and why. On this occasion, I wanted to share the tradition with everyone in this group, as well as highlight one of my learnings which is around the nature vs nurture piece and how much of who I am today is due to customs and traditions and how much stronger they are when you live in a different country. And yet how nice to be able to share...



Vignette 119

Every week in this project I have written a vignette which then I have not shared that week. This may be in response to reading someone else's vignette or it could be because of something that has happened to me during the week.

So, I had written about the joy of zooming with grandson as part of the 'training' Molly to be a help to children reading. And I am including this subject principally so I can show the 'cute'



photos of grandson showing Molly his book and of course of Molly herself the furloughed unpaid therapy pet (needing a haircut). She is a small Australian labradoodle

But really, I want to talk about the emergence of forming new bonds of friendship and support through a yoga class. We are a group of women aged 50's up to until last year one woman in her 90's. (She is still driving but has stopped her yoga, even though she was the best in the class called Bendy Betty). Before Covid, we met once a week in a barn, carried out the yoga class and raced to coffee and scones in the local National Trust coffee shop. In fact, I would have happily missed out the yoga and gone straight to the coffee and scones.

Now we meet four times a week on zoom with our wonderful teacher who prepares her sessions with forensic detail (she used to be a lawyer). She manages to adapt each lesson to try and meet our individual physical and emotional requirements. Some of these women I have only met at the yoga classes but through the chat at the beginning of each class and at the end we have tried to support each other. And after nearly a year I realise that we have as a small group have tried to support each other through bereavement, loss of job, serious illness, puppy training, house moving, issues around wills, worry about family members, retirement, relationships, missing family who live in other continents, what we are 'allowed to do because of Covid and ' what we actually do' and of course the yoga.

So, my emergent thoughts are although the yoga is our common denominator; I wonder whether talking through a screen has freed us up to be honest with each other. Or is it that we trust each other because we see each other virtually at least three times a week. Or is that our yoga teacher stops the conversation from going on too long knowing that we can always chat on whats app after the class.

And I contrast this group with 'the housewives of any area' This is a group where some members have felt alienated and have left; where some hold dominance over others and others make pathetic excuses why they can't attend but never get round to actually dropping out (that is me). I found my answer this afternoon, the second group is Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austin in the modern age and the first group? I think it is because our teacher constantly reminds us of 'do no harm' to ourselves and each other.

Vignette 120

V4 A salad like no other

by Chrissi Nerantzi

Domain: Life

Instructions seem to get in the way, also extensive lists of ingredients. In cooking, I mean. Only in cooking? A complex meal, reminds me of a complex teaching session, in which things have been over engineered and a jungle has been created in which light struggles to get through. There is something beautiful about simplicity and I think it is harder to achieve than we think. Maybe easier in cooking than in teaching?



As I experiment in my work as an academic developer, I do it also naturally in every aspect of my life. That includes cooking. I regularly come up with dishes that are a fusion of ideas. Usually they are simple, such as holiday pasta... Spaghetti with feta, mint and butter. I find it disappointing when looking into a cookbook I realise that I don't have half of the ingredients... this is another reason why I often/most of the time start from what we have. It just seems to be a more satisfying tactic. I also love shopping and discovering new ingredients, markets especially but during the pandemic shopping is no longer something I enjoy. At the beginning of the pandemic I was scared to go into a shop and

avoided them altogether. I still rarely go to the supermarket.

Travelling back in time, hurtful memories surface... about how my cooking was perceived from a very young age when I trying to learn. Stories about my cooking skills or the lack of them, made others laugh, while I wanted to run away. However, I didn't stop experimenting and continued cooking. My holiday pasta has become an institution with my boys and created unique family memories as I first made it when we were on holiday on Lesbos, when

they were little.



The pandemic led to more collaborative cooking with my boys. Adam is our baker. He likes to be on his own in the kitchen. He gets all the ingredients out, measures them carefully and prepares the exact amount in bowls, all lined up in front of him, ready to be used. He also follows recipes by the book. I find this hard.

With the boys we have used some new recipes we found on the web, Simply Nigella for example became a Christmas success. We got for the first time ever strong flour for bread in 16 and 20 kilo bags as there was none to be found in the

supermarket for months. Nassi is now also a student and has been developing his own culinary skills further.

The boys have got used to and accept mummy's style of cooking and baking, even if it is not the best one around. I want them to learn to use their imagination, to improvise, to be resourceful and find ways forward when obstacles are in the way. Cooking is a valuable vehicle to achieve this...

Nothing gets wasted	Adam's lemon meringue	The famous Greek salad
		
Holiday pasta	Stuffed peppers	Ody's brownies
		

Vignette 121

My Learners Learning

One of the courses I am leading is a postgraduate course about Creative Pedagogies. The assessment moves away from our traditional forms of assessment and we are asking the learners (who are predominantly lecturers but also other educators in our institution) to submit one or two artefacts (as in the OED something produced by a human) they are using in their own teaching practice. The only really formal element is that we ask for a 500 word contextualising statement for the artefact which included literature and some reflection on learning from the course. Every year this is causing issues. The assessment is so wide and the control over the experience entirely in the hand of our learners that they really struggle to know where to start. I add more and more explanation to the assessment but still the struggle is real.

My Learning

Besides showing the learners examples from previous years' assessment, how else could I make the learners trust that they are not punished for something that is entirely their own? Do you think trust is an issue? Is it because we—particularly academics who went through the whole process including PhD—are so trained to stay within our lane, to follow detailed performative instructions that once these structures are taken away, dissolved, and the assessment literally states: Create something that is meaningful to you and your practice (you learners) the cognitive dissonance is so big that learners struggle to trust the process. I want my learners to trust the process rather than being goal oriented. Mind you during the course there are several points to obtain peer feedback on the artefacts, to discuss with us and with one another. Still the new equilibrium seems to only establish once the learners have their summative assessment back. I think today I would like to ask you to help me learn. How can I support my learners to reach this equilibrium before the summative assessment so this is not too stressful? (Comment: there is formative which becomes part of the summative, and there is a three hour long showcase session in which the learners show either their artefacts or pose a teaching challenge and obtain in situ peer feedback and feedback from us)



Vignette 122

Vignette 3

Catching up

Last-minute efforts have worked well for me in the past so my 'good resolutions' of a week or so ago have been over-written by old habits ...

Reading all the other accounts today (now caught up on them all) has been inspiring with so many resonances from my own past experience, such as:

- concerns about the often unpleasant 'politics' of higher education. In retrospect there were a couple of unsuccessful job applications which were extremely good news as success would have put me into political arenas. I may have had to prove the Peter Principle (people rise to a position where they are basically incompetent)
- appreciating skills in a new light when you can observe them first hand. My examples would include the guys (all male workers at that time) inserting windscreens in new cars with a bit of string in about 30 seconds. They had found a quicker and better way of doing it than the 'official' manual.
- understanding our animals, ranging from the way they go their own way to the relationships we develop with them
- counting blessings!

This got me speculating about commonalities and differences.

Reflection

In terms of commonalities, it looks like most of us share to some degree my experience of what I have now discovered as a result of this project – planned happenstance (thank you, Cathy). This is the notion that, rather than have a rigid plan, you can make progress by 'being active and doing the right kinds of things'. It seems to have some similarities to ideas which I have read - Richard Wiseman's research in 'The Luck Factor' where he found that people who were lucky tended to behave differently from people who were unlucky in life – they were much more proactive and positive and made the most of any opportunities they were offered. One illustration from my distant past – I was doing a Masters degree and was offered a tutor's job (serendipity works – personal contact by one of the tutors on the Masters). I took the role - teaching the same general topic area to HND students. I discovered that I really enjoyed teaching and that it was the best way to learn! We had some written exams on the Masters and I realised that I did not have to revise for them. Having to teach and be challenged on the material for a year (albeit at a slightly - often only very slightly - lower level) meant I knew the basics and could focus on finding the new research which the staff probably had not caught up with. In subsequent years, I regularly volunteered to teach areas/modules which were beyond my capability level when I started.

But the more profound realization from my catchup reading is how different we are. And that raises questions for me about my aspirations and ambitions re learning. Two alternatives:

- a) Should I try to look for something very new and challenging? Or ...
- b) Should I try to further develop areas where I have some basis as a starting point?

As an example, I would love to create some drawing or graphics which had some artistic merit. 'No chance' I hear my subconscious say. And all evidence so far supports this conclusion! I admire with some degree of envy the work that many of you do/have done. As far as creative visual art is concerned, I've decided that (a) would not be worth it. So I am working in other areas on (b).

And that started my reflection on education more generally. In an ideal world, we should be introducing everyone to new areas (a), discovering what they are good at, and then helping develop those areas (b). My own experience – school, university - *never* lived up to that. Has modern education changed to represent that ideal? (now worrying on behalf of grandchildren) I suspect not.

When I hear colleges and universities talk about 'student-centred education', I am often suspicious and disappointed. I have only really seen this once – in a special school for children and young adults with disabilities – where *everything* focuses on what the child can do and builds from that. My step-grandson is in that school and is making amazing progress.

My argument is that the regimentation and systems of further and higher education do not allow that sort of development for the most part. We are too keen to stuff people in wee boxes (modules)!

Rant (and wordcount) over.
Vignette 4 awaits.

Vignette 123

Cutting the grass: a fresh perspective!

Domain: Home

Narrative: Cutting the lawn around our house has never been my favourite activity, and as the years go by it does not seem to get any more attractive. In fact, the folk we bought the house of said something along the lines of 'we need to move, this garden has simply become too much for us'. Way back then I thought 'we'll be fine with that' but recently – and time has passed - their words have come back to me.

But today, the weather is warm, and sunny, and – here I am, lawnmower ahead of me, strimmer at the ready, feeling quite different. Actually enthused by the prospect. And here I go...

Reflection: So, what am I finding different? The task is the same, the tools/technology unchanged; my level of competence (or lack thereof) unaltered. The answer lies in me, and my reaction to the context. As I write this, I realise it's almost a relief, or perhaps a release. It's about emergence- not to a growing lawn but to a new year with a sense of warmth in it. This is not necessarily anything about vaccines, or timetables, it's more down to how I feel, not about grass-cutting, but about me and the world I live in. For, as Norman said in a previous post, Learning is about perception and relationships. Plus, as Andra, reflected, writing vignettes of itself brings the 'what' and 'why' into a stronger light and sharper focus. So, another bit of my learning here is that the sharing of the vignettes by others enriches my appreciation of my own experience. As a group of students at the end of the first week of a postgraduate professional programme I taught many years ago wrote '*we all arrived on different ships, but we're all in the same boat now*'. And there is more than a bit of that in the experience of this process for me.

Vignette 124

Vignette #5 Domain: Leisure. Feb. 28, 2021

I live near Lake Ontario. From my home I can see the water from several rooms. Within walking distance there are numerous parks and beaches and within driving distances there are more open access to lovely sightseeing vistas that spread as far as the eye can see. On Friday, around mid afternoon I drove by one of my favourite parks and was welcomed to the most iconic city of Toronto skyline from my neck of the woods. It was shrouded by several shades of poignant blues that I do not recall observing before. I stood there just clicking away on my camera trying to capture this massive scenery in a tiny image that certainly does not do justice to the magnificence of the moment.



Reflection

Currere, which involves examination of a person's accumulated body of knowledge, both academic and lived, allows for critical reflection of memories and in our case, moving from restorative to reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2001). I quickly went through my recollections of approximately 10 years being in this neighbourhood to determine whether I had been an audience to this particular colour schematic before and could not find a match. I cannot do justice to describing

the feelings I was experiencing throughout this episode of picture taking and standing under what looked like a massive blue umbrella being a spectator but yet being part of.

Learning

I took several pictures that day that will serve as a framework and anchor for my arts-based representations. These will be used in workshops and presentations involving the use of story-writing, through the medium of photography, metaphor and poetic expressions. It brings to mind the use of Crystallization, which combines symmetry and substance



with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionality, and angles of approach to arts-informed teaching and learning. I love the interplay in those transmutations, so going around to the various local parks I tried to capture this wonderful scenery from many angles, some more flattering than others.



Boym, S. (2001). The future of nostalgia. New York: Basic Books.

Vignette 125

Learned behavior

Domain Travel/another culture

We noticed on the first morning of our prolonged stay here in Zanzibar that some cute little sparrows would peck around on the sand in front of our lounges. So, we kept some bread from dinner and scattered it the following morning.

It was nice to see the sparrows enjoying the treat. However, the message must have got out because we soon found that larger crows started to appear and of course they scared off the tiny sparrows. Nonetheless, we noticed the sparrows were still able to find some crumbs after the crows had disappeared.

It was not long before the situation got out of hand. The crows invited all their relatives and friends and yesterday there were well over twenty of them actually waiting for us to come out in the morning as they knew our ritual. Learned behavior. In the process, we created a monster for ourselves and now have to scale back the practice.

What does this have to do with lifewide learning? Be patient. It gets worse. When we first started walking along the beach near the resort, young children would come up and say 'Jambo' or 'hello'. We thought this was nice and smiled as we keep walking. However, obviously we had not understood their real motive in greeting us and so the next time as we passed, they came up and asked straight out for a dollar. It appears that some tourists must have given them money in

the past and so their learned behavior is that a percentage of visitors will hand out money for nothing. Learned behavior. For better or worse, what impact is this having on their lifestyles now and into their future?



There's still more. For sixteen years, I worked for a Christian community organization in Australia. We were involved in many different welfare and support programs including food hampers for needy families. Of course, nobody ever wants a family to go hungry. However, we kept records of our distribution and it was obvious that certain households were in the habit of contacting us every fortnight and this same pattern was passed down to the next generation. We had the grandparents and the parents separately on our books. Learned behavior.

So, what have I learned from all this. Pure charity is not always the best way to help people. You all know the saying "Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach them to fish and you feed them for a lifetime". Well, its true.

I want to finish by referring to a comment in a previous vignette. Christine and I have now been 'stranded' here at our resort in Zanzibar for four months. Every evening we sit in the restaurant and each week we see new faces who have come for the usual duration of around 7 nights at the resort. Therefore, we have seen and casually observed lots of family groups. Far too often, while they are eating, we see the parents on their smart devices and the kids, of all ages, on theirs. Even toddlers sit there glued to cartoons on mum or dad's mobile. What message is this sending the next generation? What is their learned behavior?

Covid has pushed us into online lifestyles for the moment. However, educators and society leaders must strive to ensure that in the 'new normal', we nurture environments where our children grow up in real not virtual communities.

Vignette 126

Vignette 5: Virtually Human

Domain: Professional Practice

Today my new online subject, for a new online degree, goes live. There are 40 students, and I am super excited to watch them engage with the online pages that I've spent over 600 hours (I checked the LMS analytics) creating. The subject is called 'Learning and its Trajectories' and the students are professionals who have some remit for (adult) learning in their professional fields (e.g. nurse educators, senior teachers, L&D professionals, community educators etc).

This is my first time designing an online subject and so there was a lot to learn. Today seems like a good day to reflect on this (not to mention fulfilling a commitment to this group to produce a vignette). So, I thought I would make a list and see what happens. But before I do, I wanted to share a related story.

The subject is a rewrite of an existing subject that was offered face-to-face (with a similar cohort). It's a (sort of) foundational subject that aims to help the diverse cohort to get off to a good start in their post-graduate studies. Because of the cohort diversity, there is a range of starting points when it comes to understandings about learning and learning theory.

The subject traces 3 trajectories. First, it starts with the notion of 'learning pathways', then to 'lifelong and life-wide learning', then to 'learning ecologies. Next, it traces learning theory from 'traditional thinkers and their ideas' through to 'contemporary learning theories' then to 'learning futures'. A third trajectory is that of the students themselves who develop skills and capacity to succeed in their chosen program.

Vignette 127

Domain: Creative Thinking/Collaboration/Connection

Title: "Let's be creative - together!"

Narrative

I have just presented my first ever virtual workshop at an NQT (Newly Qualified Teachers) conference, focusing on innovation in education. Typically, my face to face sessions are practical and hands-on, so the prospect of presenting on-line caused me a few sleepless nights. How would I engage the audience on a digital platform? How would I facilitate a workshop, as opposed to deliver a lecture? I needed to think creatively, and most importantly collaborate with others.



Over the past year several friendships have emerged through connecting on Twitter. I have become good friends with an artist called Darrell Wakelam, whose 'paper plate dove' is shown here. Darrell describes himself as the 'King of Cardboard'; his ingenuity is incredible. He has acquired many followers globally during lockdown, as his artwork uses everyday objects, and is therefore extremely accessible. I knew that showcasing Darrell's ideas would inspire beginning teachers, and I was not wrong! The teachers loved the simplicity of his art work; arguably the best ideas for teachers are those that are easy to implement!

I was fortunate to have the support of a wonderful moderator during the virtual workshop. Catherine - my on-line collaborator - monitored the participant chat and deftly posed questions during the workshop. She read comments from the audience and also offered her own reflections. I have known Catherine for many years, so I had trust in her ability to keep the creative flow moving forward at the right pace. I know that I struggle to keep to time in face-to-face workshops; my enthusiasm literally bubbles over! But today with Catherine's help, the session literally flowed to the perfect finish.

Reflection and Learning

So what learning emerged from today's creative workshop? Importantly, I learned that the success of the session was not down to my presentation; the partnership in the delivery was the key element. It was definitely not about me – it was absolutely about us!

Paraphrasing the thinking of the developmental psychologist Howard Gardener: Creativity is not always about having an original, one-of-a-kind idea. When I explained to teachers today that many professionals working in the creative industries 'build-upon' the ideas of others, there seemed to be a huge sense of relief. To be frank, I don't think I've ever had an original idea in my life!

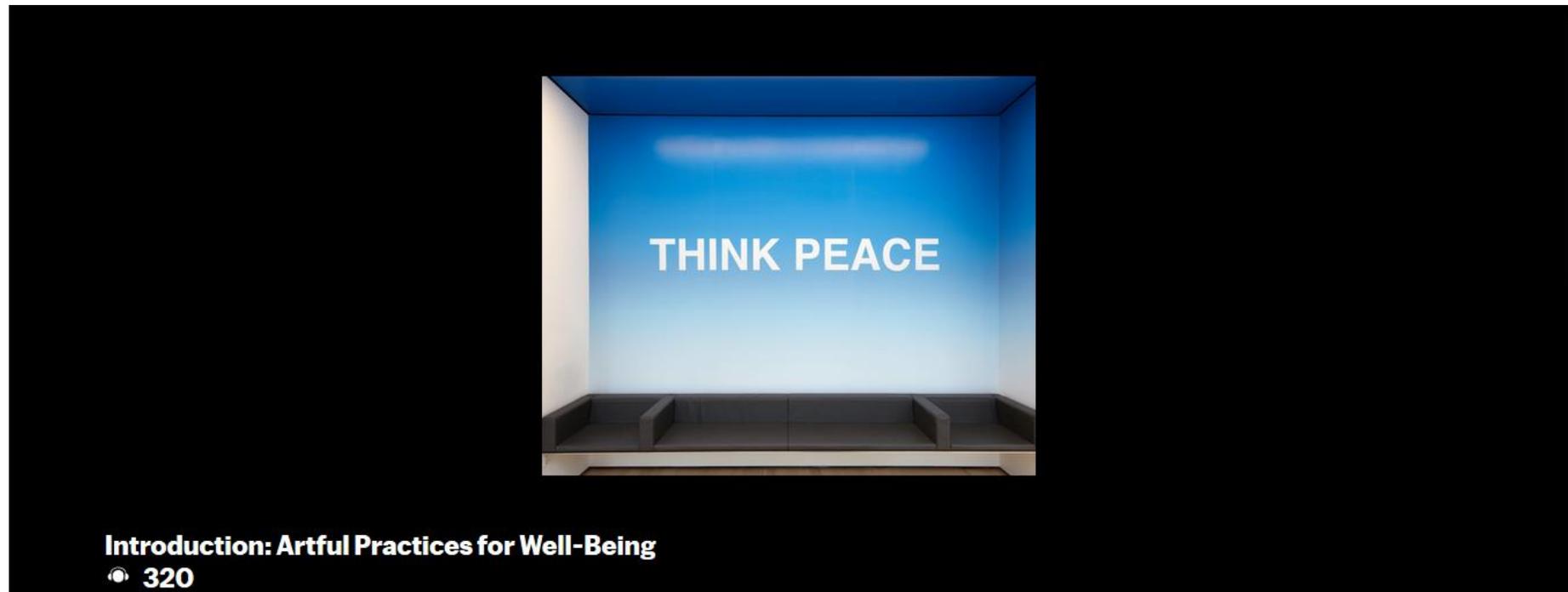
In my domain map, I refer to 'standing on the shoulders of giants'. Today, I felt much more confident presenting to an unknown audience by sharing creative insights from colleagues. I felt more comfortable promoting other people's work; I could really give their ideas a 'shout out'! I was not being the show-off; I was showing off their talents and expertise. This was so much easier. Thank you Darrell and Catherine for helping me to be creative in a brave new virtual world. Together, I know that we have helped other teachers to think creatively too.

Vignete 128

Vignette 3

Title: Emotional Well-being through Art and Meditation

Domain: Life and Spirituality



<https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/309/3984>

In my previous vignettes I mention that I am spending considerably more time outdoors these days like many other people. Being outdoors energises me and it helps me ‘notice’ things that I would have quickly passed over in the busyness of life pre-pandemic. Feeling more connected with nature and learning to slow down elevates my mood and thinking. Interestingly, the act of slow looking reportedly helps people to be more present in the moment and aids wellbeing. A chance discovery of a series of podcasts titled ‘Artful Practices for Well-Being’ (see <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/322>) introduced me to the idea of slow looking using artwork and guided meditations.

For me, the strength of this initiative lies in the multi-sensory aspect of these resources and the way in which they invite you in to the experience from your own position and guide you along to more expansive ways of viewing all the while enabling you to bring your own interpretations to the artwork on display. And as MoMA's Department of Education (2020) adds:

The skills used to engage with art have practical use in our daily lives. The curiosity to question an artwork and reflect on one's response to it connects to an ability to self-reflect and consider what emotions one is experiencing. Spending time with an artwork that you don't understand—or that you even dislike—relates to the ways all of us can build capacity within ourselves to see things from multiple perspectives and expand our window of tolerance. The ability to be in front of an artwork and notice the details allows one to be in the moment, and aligns with the same mindfulness skills that can help manage stress. The desire to express oneself creatively relates to a need to feel seen, heard, and understood. All of these things together can build up resilience, support, and emotional well-being, and help people feel more in control even during times of chaos and uncertainty.

The works convey to me in a meaningful way the opportunity to see things from multiple perspectives from a place of careful looking, and the importance of groundedness. I think these podcasts resonate with me because the messaging within is so relevant to where I am in my life right now. I am attending to my emotional life to an extent that I previously did not, prioritising it high on my agenda in life.

Right time, right place to awaken to this new learning!

Vignette 129

Title: **What makes me want to work?**

2 Domain: **Work**

3 Narrative:

I am currently furloughed from my part time job as a premises administrator. My job is concerned with the administration for premises related and compliance tasks: disposing of general commercial, office and building waste as well as hazardous waste; routine building maintenance; regular testing for Legionella; annual asbestos monitoring etc. Knowledge gleaned through my lifetime of home DIY, general house maintenance and disposing of and recycling household waste items, helped me get to grips with the job. Before starting, I was vaguely aware of the legislation, environmental standards and accreditations that govern and regulate businesses. It has been interesting to discover these as the context for my work, and to see how such regulation is designed to protect employees and volunteers, the public, wildlife and the environment.

My experience of using office systems and software, team working, liaison with colleagues with specialist expertise, and of initiating and promoting organisational and culture change also assists me in my current job. I am particularly interested in the way the organisation relies on the work of both paid staff and volunteers. Most teams include staff and volunteers, with the latter being in the majority, and it is fascinating to be part of this collaboration.

4 Reflections:

My current line manager has told me that she sees that my motivation is linked to how the work I do connects to "the bigger picture". This rings true for me. Throughout my career, my work has been involved with initiatives, projects, policy, institutional strategies etc. to achieve longer term goals. I suppose, I could take for granted that my day to day work in these roles was key to incremental steps to achieve a vision for the future.

I have paid work and also volunteering within my present portfolio, and I have been thinking about what motivates me in these different contexts. I realise that being thanked for my volunteering hours is extraordinarily rewarding. I suppose that thanks have been a rarity in my experience of paid employment. I make a point of thanking the volunteers I work alongside for the gift of their time.

I have learned that my tolerance of work pressure is linked, in part, to financial reward. I had not noticed that money was a key motivator for me (I have been lucky to be paid enough to live well). I now recognise that the being offered a bigger salary, enabling me to be in a better position to pay bills, buy a family holiday etc. affected the level of stress I have been willing to manage. Having recently experienced a stressful predicament, I found that I was prepared to see the difficulties through (I am practiced in doing this), but I do not wish to continue to bear such a level of stress as a volunteer.

I have been furloughed from my paid work since last April. The whole organisation has been restructured and downsized since I last worked, in response to the impact of the pandemic. I anticipate that much will have changed by the time I return to my job. I have regular contact with my line manager to keep in touch, and receive updates and newsletters, which help me to feel connected to my workplace and the organisation as a whole. This bigger picture feeds my purpose at this stage of my life, and this might explain the startling level of relief I felt that the restructure did not make my job redundant.

Vignette 130

Vignette 3 : “Stepping outside”

Domains : Travel – Home – Work

Narrative :

9/11 happened and not so long after, my American employer along with other electronics companies, went bust. The Celtic Tiger would never last forever

although it would persist well into the 2000s. It was time to re-evaluate things and having spent two years with my French girlfriend, the idea of living for a while in France was a no-brainer. France was not a huge unknown to me since as a boy my parents brought me and siblings to places like Normandie, Paris, La Baule, Cognac and various locations slightly north of the Garonne. Despite leaving family and friends, somehow I knew that this would be a very long trip abroad and I was sure to let people know it so they would come to visit us. I also somehow knew that this would be a learning opportunity more valuable than any foreign holiday could offer.

The move was admittedly thrilling for some time and it was amazing to have our family and friends all together to celebrate our wedding. My work occasionally brought me to various countries around the world and I incessantly found it fascinating to observe the underlying typologies during flights.

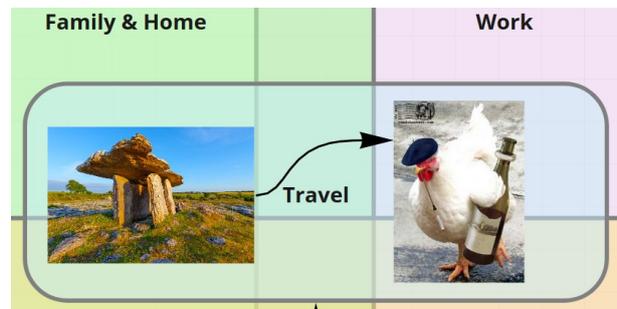
I was discovering the world for myself and while it opened my eyes, I was all the while realising that the Ireland I had left behind was not so much a state but an ever evolving organism that I would have to get to know again should ever we decide to move back. With careers, children, a school calendar, activities and routines in place it seemed clear that a move back at this stage would ignore the investments that had been made.

What I was not expecting was to be taken back at the aesthetic beauty that Ireland always had but that I had barely seen before. I didn't expect to see such profound and progressive social evolution in such a short time either. The Irish state standing up to the Vatican against abuse was amazing, the adoption of same sex marriages was a surprise and the seemingly day-over-night success of the ban on smoking in pubs had me in shock. The lengths to which the Irish go to assert identity all while passionately integrating British premiership football into their lives is not without irony and it's interesting albeit self explanatory to see how close the Irish and British cultures are when compared to France, Spain or Germany.

In reading the vignettes, noting references and exploring the resources that are being shared within this group, I often feel like I am traveling and visiting the world around me once more. All the while, I keep in mind that the beautiful images, stories and gastronomic savors that you share are only part of the story and that there's plenty more to discover.

Reflections :

Having fulfilled my objective to step outside the front door, I managed to go so much further than I had anticipated and although I'm happy to say that I can now spend more time with my immediate family, travel did help me acquire an array of new perspectives that helped me look at my own home country with a more critical view. I wonder how often I should remind myself that every concept, construction or process harbored within the mind should be reviewed, tested and improved so as to better reflect reality. To do this though we often need to look from afar.



Vignette 131

Vignette 4

A custom of use path below the house provides muddy access through the trees to the shore. It is rocky, large black stones that you can jump between to avoid slipping on the seaweed. I go down every day walking and rock hopping along to a small river and then onto a stretch of gravel sand and then across more rocks to a tidal island that I can see from my office window. The dog does not like it if I use a different route. On Wednesday, when the tide was in and the river in spate when I raised my head into the rain, Sorley (a border collie) stopped at the side of the river and looked back at me. If he is having second thoughts, I will not make it. With my waterproofs and care, I can cross when the water is up to my knees, and the spray goes right over me. There is a thrill to it. That day, no chance, I cannot make it, and Sorley will not cross, but he is also very reluctant to go around, to trace through the woods to a bridge upstream. But he does.

The next day the wind and the river are down, and the tide is out. I can see the sand that is revealed at low tide. It is still windy, an easterly blowing into my face as I walk towards the island. The dog is ahead of me. When I get to him, he is looking intently at me and then out to the waves. His right paw is raised, following his gaze, I see two young otters in the water. It is almost as if they are surfing. Sorley looks at me, he stares into me, and I nod, low and slow. He moves towards the edge of the water.

Years ago, when I first saw him one paw up in the seaweed slow and low through the rocks, I wondered what he is was doing. Then suddenly, he had an object in his mouth, which he shook vigorously. Panic, shit, he has caught an otter, "Sorley, Sorley, that'll do". He dropped it then, and he has dropped the others he has caught. He has not caught one for a long time because now I am far more vigilant. I watch for the telltale signs, I watch what he is doing, watch for the paw up, the stare back to me, the slow low steps.

Now when he looks back, I nod he can go on or shake my head for him to stop. It is not just that I look for. I check the wind. If it is in my face, it's a good sign day for seeing an otter. The tide needs to be half out as this creates a current on the island's far side, and the otters seem to feed there. These other signs are part of it, but I wouldn't see them as frequently as I do if it was not for Sorley. There is an idea that our sense of self extends into the tools we use, that when we use a tool, it becomes an extension of ourselves. Our relationship is not instrumental, Sorley is not a tool, but it is an interesting train of thought.

Sometimes when he looks it as if he is saying, "can I go, please please", sometimes it is, "look here, you idiot with your dull senses, there is a fucking otter right here". It is my senses extend through him, I cannot hear the sounds or pick up the scent, but I can learn to read the dog's body language and couple that with signs from around me. I found an old book written by a gamekeeper that said they used collies for hunting otters. I check with my father. "Yes, that is right", he remembers his father skinning otters and selling the pelts.

Friday is my wife's day off, and we walk together down to the island. Rather than walk to the isthmus, I take us up a rocky rounded cliff to get to the high ground. Sorley has a stick. He always has a stick when my wife comes. She is better at throwing things for him than I am. I see the otters first and point them out to my wife, "look", I say. Sorley drops the stick, and the paw comes up. We watch it fish for a while, we are close enough to hear it crunch, then my wife and I lose sight of it in the brown seaweed, but the dog stares at a place on a rocky outcrop, and even I can hear the throaty bark of an otter telling us to piss off.

Vignette 132

Mixed Methods

Work domain

This week I have had four independent instances where I have been able to participate in discussions in some depth that explore the benefits and problems of Mixed Methods research. The first of which was during the first of four formal study sessions from UCL as part of my doctoral studies. We discussed the 'Quant Qual' balance and the related ontological and epistemological stance. Our task was to prepare an answer to the question in 'How can we use mixed methods if quantitative and qualitative approaches are underpinned by such different paradigms/philosophical positions that contradict each other?' Fast track one hour, and the team discussion to prepare for a Teacher Effectiveness study in a LMIC centred around the challenges of only using an online survey to explore teacher effectiveness. So, we created a mixed method study, but my colleague commented 'Oh here we go again. Mixed Method because we don't know how to do any one study well enough'.

'MM' discussion number three came about as I worked with a colleague to prepare an abstract for an upcoming conference. 'I really can't see why you would ever do a single study', he said, 'the triangulation you get from a Mixed Method approach is much closer to real life. It's intuitive.' Discussion four arose during the final preparations for my own research into CPD in another LMIC. My supervisor suggested that my interviews, literature review and content analysis were going to produce a lot of data. Was I sure that could manage it all within a 20,000-word assignment?

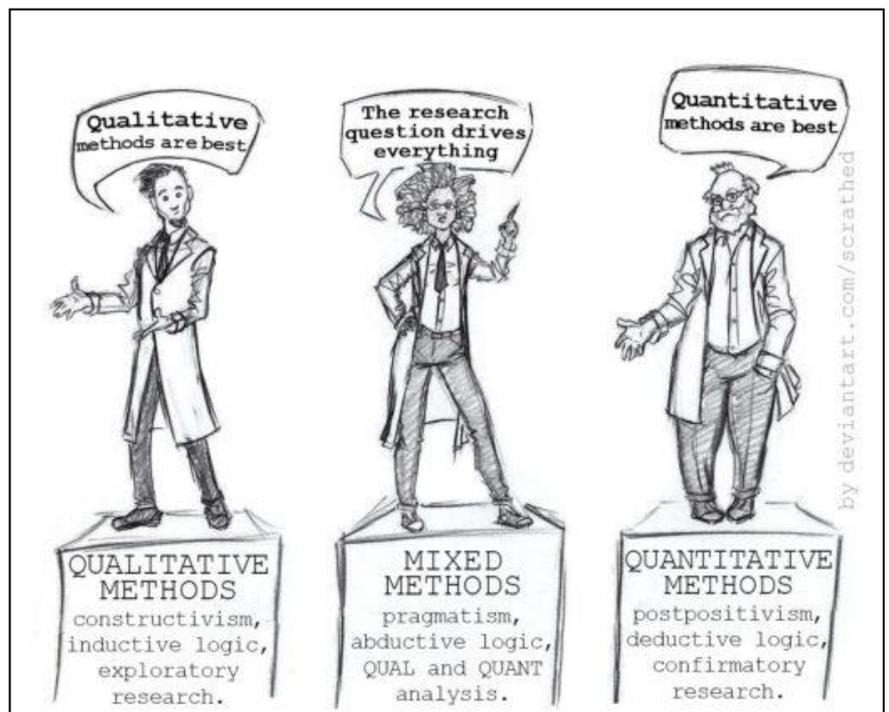
Reflection

Just tell me the answer!

All of the curriculum materials I create (pretty much) clearly emphasise the benefits of constructivism, finding things out for ourselves building on prior knowledge. Exploring, pausing, stumbling, falling and getting back up....hopefully ending up with a higher vantage point than when we started ([James Nottingham 'The Pit'](#) – if you haven't seen that already, is an image I like). But when the stakes are high (in this case satisfying a client, moving up through doctorate studies and the moral imperative to the best I can for LMIC learning communities) it is frustrating not to be able to easily settle on an answer. Although intellectually I agree with the swampy lowlands that Schoën encourages us to wallow within, it is hard to persist in such an environment when the pressure to 'solve' is pushing you out in search of a quick fix or final score. Is Mixed Methods research more likely to help me answer the research question or not??

I can see why teachers when faced with bewildered students 'just tell them the answer' (**just add a zero**) because the pull of a quick solution and a satisfied learner is hard to resist. But I don't believe this mindset will help ultimately as the dynamic world within which we live reveals increasingly complex problems that can not be solved with a unitary solution.

So I will persist with my investigations into the effectiveness of Mixed Method research and through experience/reflection, some expert support and a few muddy boot walks in the swampy pit, I expect to reach the useful conclusion that context is king once again...but also that sometimes, just being given the answer enables you to move forward when external pressure is such that if you don't you will sacrifice the opportunity to participate at all. There is something here about risk which I will come back to another time also.



Vignette 133

Vignette: Sometimes there are no explanations for what learning means Domain Family / selves

Today is the 22nd anniversary of the death of my wife's first husband. It's a beautiful spring day which fills us with joy but we are sad, such is the way that happiness and sadness intermingle in life. We talk about him and there is a ritual, my wife and her two daughters who live with us buy pots of plants and visit his grave. I buy an orchid for them to show them that I care about their loss and how they feel. In a few weeks it will be my turn, my first wife also died 22 years ago, and my three children and I will pass through this same sad reflective space. My point is – what does learning mean when confronted with such loss? What does learning to live with loss that extends across a lifetime mean? Sometimes there are no adequate explanations for what learning means, but we still have to do it.



Vignette 134

Title: Thinking finances and values

Domain: Environment

Background: Since leaving home I've been financially independent. Often savings were modest and at times credit cards were accruing interest. Thank fully, those days of scraping from pay to pay have been behind me for quite sometime. Budgeting is not rigorous, but I have an overall understanding of what my quarterly bills are and price points for certain grocery items. A few of my friends think I'm frugal, but I disagree; we just have different priorities.

Narrative: I woke up this morning thinking I should sit down and draw up a budget. This concern has arisen from recent conversations with people financially supporting others. Plus, with Christmas and the lack of income over this period, deciding to increase mortgage repayments, wanting to contribute to superannuation, etc. etc it's a good time to take stock of where I am, what's coming in, and where I want to be in 6 months, 12 months, and so on.

Sitting down for breakfast, the news in the background, and flipping through a catalogue received in the mail this week I wonder how people can justify spending AU\$175 for salad servers or AU\$4990 for a gold phantom premier speaker. I find myself wondering why I even look in this catalogue. Yes, I really liked the Royal Dulton jug for a modest AU\$99.95 but I've successfully managed entertaining for 30 plus years without a jug and won't be getting one.

As I flick through this increasingly 'absurd' catalogue, in the background, the news has played, and a panel is speaking of the Government's decision to increase the unemployment JobSeeker rate to \$40 a day. COVID has brought this change. Everyone, at least on the panel, realises the unemployment payment remains insufficient for living costs and employment seeking. An acknowledgement is made by a panel member that this is the first 'significant' rise in unemployment benefits in decades. During the same time the aged pension has increased numerous times.

Many years ago, I was unemployed, and I recall paying just over half my benefit in rent. A casual cleaning job once a week paid for my utilities. I managed to get by, and in fact credit being unemployed with my decision to stop smoking. The times were challenging but I was independent and starting to breathe, pun somewhat intended, far easier.

Thinking of my current situation I wonder what I can do to help people when the COVID unemployment payments reverts to the new general rate. How can people justify spending \$175 on salad servers? Thinking of the dichotomies I consider the irony - I'm reclined on one of three pieces making up my AU\$3000 leather lounge seats (bought with a significant cash gift from a family member).

Reflection: It's very easy not to think about people without work and how they 'manage' to get by on unemployment benefits. I know I'd struggle if my circumstances changed. My savings and mortgage overdraft would deplete fairly quickly. I'm sure I'd manage but the morale would be damaged and where I would end up geographically or vocationally is unknown.

A divide between people is present, and large, and increasing. Poverty is present but seemingly unthought and unseen by many. The Government has reluctantly increased unemployment benefits because of COVID. More needs to be done.

At the end of the day my budget remains a thought not actioned. I'll keep a track of things as I have in the past. I'll not end up where I was 30+ years ago – I think. I continue to think about a concern that is so large, closer, yet still remote.

Vignette 135

#Vignette 5



A few days ago, I was wonderfully pleased by my encounter with a person I had met many, many years ago. It started with a casual meeting and then there was a phase of keeping in touch while we both maintained a curious watch on each other. With the promise of setting up a zoom meeting we left time and circumstances to guide our way. The day and time arrived for us to zoom meet and what an incredible meeting it was. It started with the usual conventional pleasantries and then moved into a deeper conversation on education and how cognitive capitalism is taking stance in different countries with new or not so new provisions. We talked about each other's parcours from different points of view and age as I have still a bit to cover before retirement and he is now retired but full of energy and passion for his profession.

The beauty of polite and erudite conversation where each listen to the other with grace and involvement. Praising without exaggeration, asking without prying and investigating without assuming.

I found that the conversation was like a walk in the woods when I feel tuned with nature, in this case human nature. The flow of conversation moved and swayed, jumped, and sat still as we listened, talked, asked and answered. Visions were swapped illustrating differences and many similarities and then the evening grew into night and ops... it's dinner time. Keep in touch, keep in tune let's do it again.

To sum up the conversation this was a sort of job interview but there was no job there yet just an idea and how we could meet, if we could meet.

Reflection

This was the best potential job interview I have ever experienced because it was all hypothetical and in the making. No strings tied. It was getting to know each other with reflections on where we are and what could be. I was so grateful for the words spoken as I found a mentor in the person I was talking to while he found inspiration in my experience and educational vision.

Now, how often does this happen? When have you last met someone whose conversation was so pleasant and deep that you almost felt that it was a case of serendipity?

Some say that nothing happens by chance. Chance is what we can't explain. It happens when we least expect it and takes us where we can't imagine.

It might help thinking that if we don't have expectations, we are more open to what comes and experience it with bigger, brighter eyes and an open mind.

Where at work I had to make a strong stand to underline my position and expertise here I found a place in the sun, a lush garden of common thoughts that opened my weekend with a wonderful view on encounters.

No matter how brief an encounter you have with anybody, you both change.

Carolyn Kizer

I have now grown into the habit of painting my learning experience. Sometimes colour, form and line can speak the invisible words that are hidden in between the lines.

Vignette 136

Vignette 4: Connecting the threads

My ambition for this vignette was to produce a beautiful and elegantly crafted narrative which seamlessly integrated all the diverse thoughts that have emerged from both my own musings and reading all the truly fascinating accounts that this project has generated.

You may have already guessed that my ambition outstripped reality ... not for the first time.

But I have been thinking a lot about learning ... and that has been a very welcome outcome of this project. Not just my own learning – also becoming more observant of the ways that you can see learning happen in the people we know and love. And also of course the animals ...

Given that learning is often a rather messy and jumbled progression rather than the linear process which some study skills texts imply, I hope that this uncertainty is a step towards my realization which will be fully expressed in Vignette 5 – we shall see.

So – a few rather random events/reflections from the week:

1. Learning from the cat

Ronald's observations reminded me of previous dog encounters but it is our rescue cat who is surprising us at the moment in two ways: her recent increase in self-confidence has made her both more relaxed/affectionate and more proactive in getting our attention and making specific requests. She may have been watching too much 'Simon's Cat' while we have been out on the daily exercise: <https://simonscat.com/films/simons-cat-polished-paws/>

This does illustrate the importance of confidence and maybe that will be one thing that I can make some progress on over the next week in terms of focusing on how I develop confidence in areas that are personally challenging.

2. Ventures into new communities

Part-inspired by this project experience, I have developed a more profound appreciation of the importance of the 'learning community' although I have not lost a more cynical view that this has become a bit of a 'magic buzzword' when used in promotional materials from universities and colleges.

So the 4-week cookery community starts today. We all cook live over Zoom to a pre-circulated recipe under the watchful webcam of someone who I have never met and who knows what we should be doing.

About to join another community of people interested in magic (the conjurer variety as opposed to anything mystical). This is sponsored by a magic shop based near London so it will be interesting to see how they 'use it' as they are obviously hoping to increase custom. So will the community become a 'genuine' learning community or will it be subverted by the commercial pressures? Companies and corporations may start from what seem to be altruistic motives

I have a very peripheral role in one of the local community groups so maybe it is time to think about anything else I can contribute ...

3. Learning style?

In the broader world of education, this concept has been remarkably resilient. The significant pile of research which argues against it seems to have had limited impact. This last week I came across several examples which used the concept as 'established fact.'

My scepticism resurfaced as I reflected on my own preferred approach to acquiring new skills. Trying to work out a particular technique, I realized that I did not fully understand any of the explanations in the books. Youtube videos and demos came to the rescue. But this does not make me a visual learner as defined in the learning style literature. Another theme to review for that 5th vignette where all will be revealed?

Vignette 137

Vignette 4 Inter-generational learning

Domain Family

My grandson has been to stay for a couple of nights and this is allowed as he is on our bubble during lockdown. He provides a new and exciting outlook on life and in particular joy and laughter. He is 3 and we have been enjoying the sunshine and been on some lovely walks around country parks and the canal near the where we live. He loves discovering new things and finding things and exploring and feeding the ducks and geese.



I often sing him nursery rhymes so when we found a worm on the artificial grass at the park, it was a good time to start singing 'There is a worm at the bottom of the garden and his name is wriggly worms. He knows all of the words but I can only remember a couple of lines but join in with him and he does not mind that I am singing badly or out of tune. We both enjoy the connection and familiar sounds. It made me think of how we learn these rhymes as children ourselves. The rhyme and the rhythm help children hear the repetitive sounds and syllables in words, which in turn help with their language



development and learning to read. According to Mem Fox from Reading Magic "Experts in literacy and numeracy have discovered that if children know eight nursery rhymes by heart by the time they are four year's old , they're usually amongst the best readers by the time they are eight "

This is why they are passed on through the generations and become familiar tunes lodged in our brains and how comforting they are to us. Another one of our favourites is two little Dickie birds which my Great Uncle Harry used to sing to me.

CAREER

As well as the familiar, I also like to learn new skills and so I volunteered to record a video for instagram for National Careers Week representing my colleagues and explaining how Careers Consultants can help students and our role at the university as I always put myself forward even with things that are unfamiliar to me that will put me in the spotlight and look a bit of a fool . I find myself saying yes a great deal !

Reflection

Having a grandchild has helped me to have a different outlook on life and learning. I love how fascinating he finds the world and the people in it. He has a happy demeanor and likes making people laugh and having fun. He has a thirst for knowledge and always want to find out more and learn new facts and skills. I am keen to pass on my love of learning and encourage him and see the world through his new eyes.

Vignette 138

Vignette 2... Encounters of wonder with fellow humans.

At school drop off today there is a car in front of me parked. It is a much smaller car to mine. She must have dropped somebody at the forest school and it looks she is attempting to park. The space is limited yet there is abundant space for the car to manoeuvre and turn. I feel the driver's tension from where I am sat as I see the car is trying to manoeuvre a couple of times but seems to struggle.

I turn my whole body back to my baby, as he is in the back seat of my car – in my mind's attempt to not make this person feel even more self-conscious with me staring at her.

She stops. She steps off the car and comes towards me... She is a middle-aged lady. I roll down my window down "are you ok?" I ask.

She says to me " *I'm useless at driving, worthless; do you think I have space to turn around here?*" . I notice her voice sounds a little shaky and I am now aware of a sinking feeling in my heart hearing those words. I too recognise them. I have uttered them to myself in the past many a time.

I empathised with her words and I shared " *That is such a harsh feeling to carry for yourself. I too feel the way you do about my driving sometimes*" ; I then humourously but honestly said " *in fact, I was waiting for you to leave first so that I feel that I have more space to manoeuvre too with ease*". We both share a moment of laughter. Her eyes lit and looked a bit surprised! I continue, " *so if I manage to manoeuvre this car that's bigger than yours so can you*"... It appeared she felt moved by this? She went on to say how she has often been told by her husband for her driving. I felt sad on her behalf... I listened intently and I offered some reassurance and then I left first to allow her the space to leave without any extra-pressure...

As she stood a few meters away witnessing me slowly doing my manoeuvring; I was left hoping that maybe she was managing to connect with that part of her that is trustworthy and valuable.

Reflection: This incident took me on different reflecting paths... where do I start... My story goes back to a bully driving instructor I had when I got my driving licence in my late teens. How a traumatised driving instructor (I do believe aggression and bullying is the result of trauma, though I can stand firm against any of that behaviour I can hold compassion for the person) has influenced me for many years. In actual fact how much "harmful teaching" goes a long way and what impact it can cause to the "learner". How much power plays a role in our efforts to "teach" and how much attention do we pay on this matter in our academic roles? I then thought of her husband. What might be happening behind closed doors for any person in any given moment. What do you say to someone, a stranger, who so openly shares their struggles... did I honour her opening? Should I have stayed longer to chat? I felt anger and rage, on her behalf, - potentially carrying her own suppressed anger? - that she allows her husband to treat her disrespectfully.

Before I know it, here I was again recognising that I was connecting with women in my lineage who in different but similar ways have allowed disrespect in their lives by male figures. It led me to reflect on my life and my relationship with the masculine in my own life. Then I thought of the men in my family and that for some of them this is all they have known, perhaps also seen or heard.

Back on the here and now...then this took me to my role as a parent – *I know, its quite mad and busy in this brain of mine, stay tuned-*. How can I bring up my boys in such a way so that they appreciate honour and respect the women in their lives?. How do I contribute to society in such a way so that they become the chain-breakers of past trauma/ stereotypes/ and stop perpetuating gender inequality ? Do I invite the respect towards my own self from him? Do I even offer him the respect he truly deserves at all times so that he will have an embodied way of being respected, loved and nurtured by a woman ?

These are not new reflection areas for me, however i find it fascinating that life throws at us various experiences so that we can appear to continue this ongoing learning that is forever unfolding.

I wish I could see this woman again to tell her what a gift her sharing has been for me today.

Vignette 139

Vignette #4 – Storing and Retrieving

Domain: Work

With my partner taking his turn to put our children to bed, I took the opportunity to try and get a few additional work(ish) tasks done. I had no specific tasks in mind, but always have work ongoing with the Staff Network that I chair, and now too with this Research Project. I found my way to the job of creating a '[Resource List](#)' for the Staff Networks, with books and website links to interesting reading materials for our members.

I hadn't used the Resource List tool (which is the University's Reading List system) for probably 18 months or more, as a result of maternity leave and then other projects/priorities. So it was definitely going to be a case of "re-learning" what I had once known... and I immediately found myself getting slightly frustrated at the fact it wasn't just magically coming back to me. I was impressed with the slightly more user-friendly interface to when I had last used the system, and pondered how 2 years in tech is actually a significant amount of time... but also how slow Universities usually are to update systems and software.

Initially I thought that I might just read up on some of the training materials for the Resource List tool... but I quickly realised that I wouldn't be able to get my head round it all unless I was actually putting the learning into practice as I went along – so the best thing was just to start creating the actual list. Unfortunately my next realisation was that you need to request to have new lists set up – so I did this, and then wondered if I could go back to my previous lists (now out of date) and use those to practice. I then spent 40 minutes or so clicking back and forth from the instructions tab (on an online course, on our VLE), to the library search tool, to the actual Resource Lists tool – 3 different tech platforms/systems, but at least they were single sign-on! I also found a fourth system along the way that requested a new account set-up with new username and password - BrowZine, a tool for following and reading academic journals online (in a more accessible way?!).

Reflection:

Amongst other things, this process made me think about the aspects of learning which is finding the appropriate way to store information, so that we can easily retrieve it when we need to. This is clearly a challenge at an organisational level – as the amount of different (and only partially integrated) tools/systems at my institution demonstrates. It's not just storing/retrieval of academic materials or scholarship either – for me to be effective in my job role, I also need to be able to store (somewhere) the information on how to use the various systems. So the technology has been useful in one sense – but it has created another challenge too. In writing this, I am reminded of one of the other vignettes, which mentioned how much scholarship has changed with the advent of computing.

Bringing this to the life-wide perspective, I can see that it is easier to create systems for storing our learning in a work context (I have folders on my computer and in my inbox, we have search tools, and I keep notes on my phone) – but how do we do this for information/learning which is more amorphous or emotional? I feel that I am constantly in a process of re-learning things in my relationship, parenting, and self domains – or another perspective might be re-making the same mistakes! Is there a way that tech could help us store and retrieve life-wide learning when we need it?

Vignette 140

V5 On the way to Ithaka

Domain: life

My life so far has been a journey through three countries. I was born in Germany which I left when I was 12 to go and live in Greece. For the last 21 years I have been living in the UK. Always on the move, always a person from elsewhere. I have often felt the outsider to frame it mildly, the girl with the dark eyes, a strange accent, and crazy ideas...

My parents' journey is no different. But much more dramatic and traumatic. They had to flee their homeland Greece during the civil war when they were children. I haven't experienced war. Just the pandemic.

Our journeys remind me of Odysseys, the king of Ithaca and how every Greek carries an Odysseys within them. We want to go back to Ithaka, my parents did. I don't know where my Ithaka is. Maybe it is mobile as my non-domain map 2020 reveals. Norman asked me how my map would like before the pandemic... This made me think. I suspect the focus would be different. The world would perhaps be more central on the map. Now it just sits there at the edge.

Beyond big country moves, and often feeling nostalgia for the place I lived before the move and then feeling disappointed when going back as it was never the same... I have always enjoyed visiting places for a short while. For pleasure and work. As my fear of plane travel has increased over the years we have been mainly travelling within Europe. I am not good in planes and even 3.30 hours to Greece feel like eternity when we are up there. When I travelled to South Africa I was terrified!

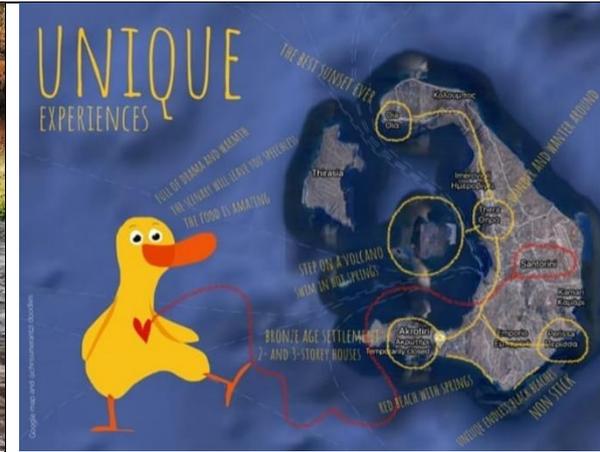
Many of us here in this space have mentioned how much we miss travelling. I definitely miss it. I miss visiting new places. The excitement of being lost and discover new surroundings and cultures. Speaking with the locals even if you don't speak the language, tasting food, looking at the buildings, art and craft. But also the supermarkets and markets. We can and do this locally as well and start seeing things that we didn't notice before. Many have talked about such moment during this inquiry.

During the pandemic I have explored such places nearby and even discovered a really lovely place for a warm summer day where I went with a colleague in Glossop. It wasn't the Med but we dipped our feet into the ice cold water and it was so refreshing and fun. I have to admit that most days, I do stay in the house and walk to my Wunderkammer, just a few steps from the house over the lawn, a place where among others I do work... A very short commute. I used to walk over 6 km a day, every day... now just a few steps. This is not good! And I need to find the determination and the will to do something about it. A colleague encouraged me recently to start running together. We will see.

Our last pre-Christmas surprise trip (a family tradition introduced by Adam probably over 10 years ago and we love it as we have no idea where we will be travelling until we get to the airport!) was to Switzerland and that summer I went with the boys to Corfu and then we all went to Hertfordshire and Pembrokeshire. I have documented these journeys and many others via Instagram for some years now and often look back and remember some of our very special moments through our shared lives.



Walking meetings in Glossop



My favourite place on Earth



Proud Mummy, there will be many more visits to Cambridge... Taking Nassi back after Easter



Summer time, girls having fun in the water



Exploring the Dark Peak



Corfu, the view from the university building where I did my undergraduate degree, I took the boys there in 2019



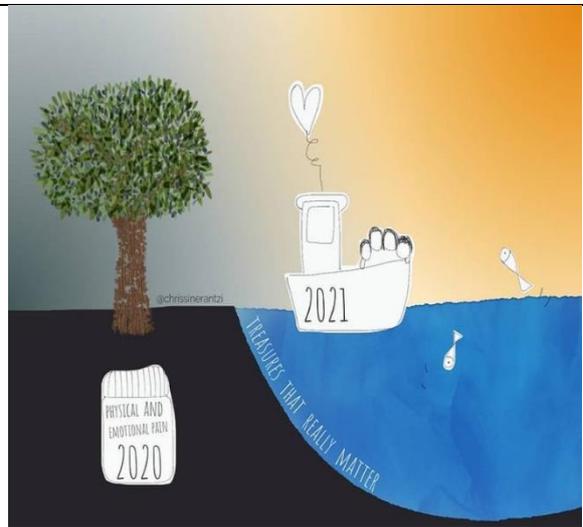
So much fun in Milan, and Delft earlier



Corfu town market, hope we can go back soon



Mesmerising



Our journeys continue

From the above photos it becomes evident that water is important to me and this is what I miss the most...

Vignette 141

Vignette 4 Learning Anecdotes. Paul Thomas. March 6th 2021

Title: Learning Like a Child

Domain: Friends.

Narrative: I sometimes wonder why children so often smile in awe of the world and so many adults often seem unamused. The former seems to me to be more desirable – it makes me feel good. I have a collage of photos on my bedroom wall of my sons as young children doing just that – learning about the world with awe and smiles. I look at it every day, This led me to think about how I choose my friends – do I knock around with the smily or grumpy kind? And what does this say about me?

I had an experience this week that might shed some light on this question of the balance between positive and negative ways of responding to learning. I sleep very badly, waking up several times and unable to get back to sleep easily. Over the last months I have tried a lot of techniques to improve this. This week a friend suggested that I try a relaxation tape. Then I remembered that have had a sleep problem in the past and long ago I had found a relaxation tape useful. I had forgotten this and had not tried it this time. I remember as a young adult taping the sea on a tape recorder and playing this at night to good effect; until the tape ended, then CLICK – I was wide awake again!.

Of course, these days a laptop can play a relaxation tape all night long without any wakeup clicks. So I tried it. It seemed to help. It pushed my waking up time to later in the night - an improvement. So I had re-learned something I once knew that I could (and should?) have tried months ago.

How do I respond to this re-learning? Pleased that had re-found something that was useful? Or irritated that I had forgotten it to begin with? It dawned on me that I can choose which response to make – positive delight at finding something useful, or negative anger with myself for being so stupid as to have not thought about it earlier. Resisting the desire to respond in the negative way I decided to smile. After all, nobody can remember everything, and it is wonderful to find valuable things.

Reflections: Is it possible that children so often delight in learning because they are coming across things for the first time? It is all new and delight-full. We adults are often re-learning things, or aware of things that could go wrong, and this encourages us to be defensive and miss a sense of fun. Is it possible that that ancient wisdom – 'Become like little children', may simply be an exhortation to be positive about the wonders in the world and be gentle with ourselves when we fail to be perfect?

It seems to me that it is desirable to learn like children, yet also be aware of dangers and have techniques to remember things we might forget. That's perfectly possible, especially if I am surrounded by positive-thinking friends. But difficult if my environment (including, but not only, friends) emphasises the negative. Reflecting on this reminds me to look not just in the mirror but at my friends. Do I value enough those who help me to be positive? Do I take big-hearted, generous friends for granted? Do I remember to give back – to help my friends to be positive when they are having difficult times? Hmmm. Uncomfortable questions.

Vignette 142

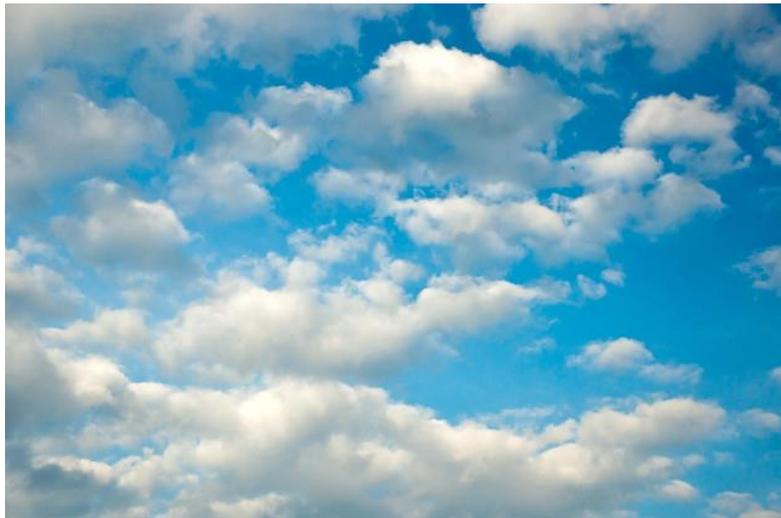
Vignette 4

Title: Playful Living

Domain: Life and Spirituality

I must admit that I found it difficult to identify a learning experience worth reflecting on this week. I think I have spent too much time in left brain mode, allowing logical reasoning to dominate my thinking. Spending too much time with my thoughts has been exhausting. It took a conversation with my sisters to make me realise I was ruminating for too long in the past whilst reminding me to savour the present moment.

Leaving behind my frustration I ventured to my calm space enjoying the sense of peace and tranquillity that this environment engenders in me. Thumbing through the first few pages of a book I have been longing to read, my attention fixed on 'Welcome to Play!'. As I lay stretched out on the floor revelling in the freedom of this space and taking in the dreamy vista of the sky beyond, it occurred to me that this view was new to me. I lay there a while longer appreciating this new perspective and the awareness that I need to play more. I recalled an invitation to enjoy a meeting from the cosy comfort of a carpeted floor many years before, one which I did not accept for reasons of conformity – adults do not partake in meetings in this way – how wrong was I!



Twenty years and one, I now realise how playful this educator was – her love of enquiry and exuberance for her work were hallmarks of her teaching. And while I did not recognise the value of this state of being at the time, I and many other students were positively affected by her enthusiasm for the subject, and most importantly her joy and passion for learning. A heartfelt thank you Nicola for the memories. Your power as an educator was infectious, and I will always remember you with fondness.

It's strange how this memory association occurred from engaging with a text on the subject of play, but I take it as a sign of where I need to orient my learning. I look forward to reading **The Power of Play in Higher Education** in its entirety and thank Chrissi Nerantzi, Alison James and other contributors for bringing attention to the necessity of play in our working lives and beyond to lift us out of the mundane and into more playful states of being.

Namaste!

Vignette 143

Vignette 5 – Cathy Hodgson – Self Identity

CAREER

I enjoy learning from other careers professionals such as Dr Fiona Christie- who is an Educator and Researcher in careers and employability at Manchester Metropolitan University. Liane Hambly - Director at Liane Hambly Associates who has written the book - Creative Career Coaching and of course Dr Doug Cole who first introduced me to Norman Jackson and Lifewide learning and education at a Higher Education Academy training day on the employability framework at my university a few years ago.

Today Liane has posted on LinkedIn this interesting piece of research –

Grimell, J. (2018) 'Advancing an understanding of selves in transition: I-positions as an analytical tool', *Culture & Psychology*, 24(2), pp. 190–211. doi: [10.1177/1354067X17707451](https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X17707451).

Liane also references Hubert Hermans dialogical approach which recognises how our self-identity is not fixed and we have different I – positions that can be out of kilter and when we adapt to new roles we need to learn to grow into them so moving from being a undergraduate or from a child to a carer for our parents. From being employed to being retired. Liane uses the chair technique, which I have seen demonstrated on one of her excellent training days at the Open University. She uses this to help people discover new I- positions and strengthen helpful aspects and see the impact of removing less helpful aspects such as being self-critical.

FAMILY - Transitions in self-identity

This week I am going to be looking after my mum as she has had a hip replacement and lives on her own. My dad has also been in hospital this week and I can see the transition from child, wife, parent and now carer although my mum and dad would hate that term. I am the oldest child in the family so do my best to keep everyone updated and happy. I have even been in contact with cousins who we have not heard from for quite some time and it is interesting to reflect on how people quickly reconnect if they think there is any danger of losing a loved one.

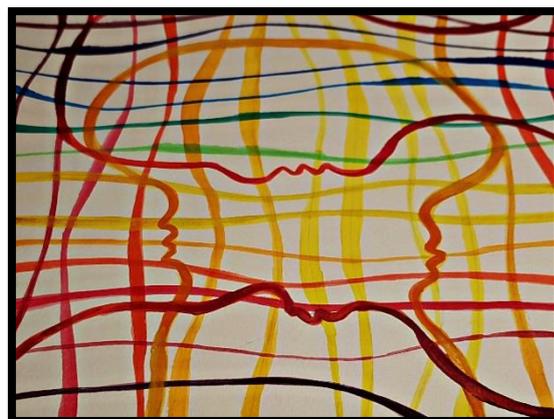
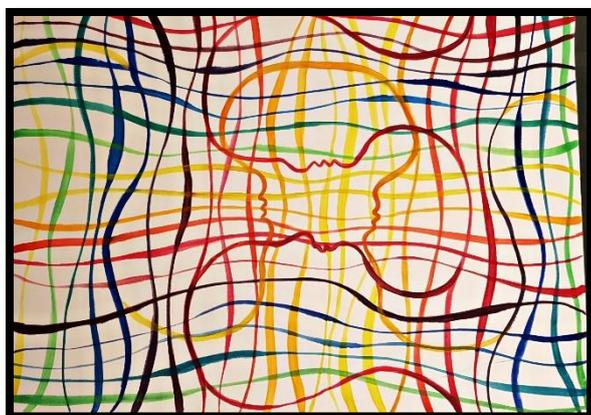
REFLECTION

This has made me reflect on making transition from child to carer and how you learn and adapt to these new I – positions. Family is a very important aspect of my life and although my parents and siblings live in almost opposite ends of the country we make great efforts to meet up and stay in contact. Every year we go on holiday together and have kept in contact through family WhatsApp groups. My sister has said that I am the glue that keeps everyone together and connected. I have realised how important this is to me and how my own family and my extended family is one of my anchors throughout my life that gives me my self-identity

Vignette 144

Vignette #5

Reflection.



Reflection has two moments for me; one when I withdraw and travel through my thoughts. I walk through my connections, memories and learning sorting them out. Some go on the shelf, others are put on plinths, some are looked at through different lens, some disappear in the meanders of my brain some are catalogued, but they have all left a footprint or rather a mindprint.

During these past weeks this wonderful community has shared learning journeys across areas of life exposing their thoughts and themselves. As a misfit, I work with very young and young children, I felt I was embraced by the community I learnt that no matter what you do and where you are in life there is a small place where you will fit.

When I look at the learning tree that appears every wee kand I reflect on the how many blossoms there are. I can see how they will polliate thoughts, ideas and considerations.

Learning never stops and it flows as we flow at our pace and at the rhym we give it. It listens to melodies, it shuts up noises, it indulges in scents, it dances, travels and paints. It walks through woods and forests it goes on holiday or sits on the balcony watching people as they busy around around their business. It gets stuch in a computer, it runs away and sometimes sits on our lap warming our cold nights.

Leaning keeps us alive, kicking, creative and possibly happy.

They may forget what you said – but they will never forget how you made them feel.

Carl W. Buehner



Vignette: #5

Domain: Work / Lifewide / Cross-domain

Date: 5 March 2021

Vignette 145

Learning and developing - similar but different



Narrative:

- Over the last weeks, prompted by our project amongst others (!), I have been reflecting much more on my work, what I take out of it, what I give and what it teaches me about the field of family business consulting and myself.
- I love the area that I'm in, which is to do with advising families on complex dynamics in an attempt to help them move forward and hopefully keep the business in the family and pass it over to their next generations.
- Last week I had a family (virtual) meeting to discuss a particular family's attitude towards their shared purpose, to help us all understand whether there is enough "glue" to keep the family in business for the future or whether they should consider their options and maybe even part ways (selling, bringing in external management, etc.) – I know it's sad but it sometimes happens.
- These are usually quite tricky conversations because there are always divergent opinions but not always open communication until an external adviser comes in to help the family articulate their thoughts and feelings in a safe space.
- During the virtual meeting (which by the way, most family members strongly dislike as they prefer human contact), I noticed for the first time one of the daughters (and CFO in the business) turning her camera off and being much more vocal about her views than in the past.
- Eureka! I said to myself. Could this be the one good thing coming out of the tech avalanche that has claimed global lives? (of course, except the efficiencies and many others). Could this be a way in which an introvert feels more comfortable as they would otherwise in a meeting with all their overpowering siblings around? And is this something she decided on the spot or developed recently?



Reflections:

- I thought about how every day I learn new things at work, I discover new methods and means for engaging with my clients and how me and work is like a ++symbiosis. And then I started to wonder about the boundaries between learning and developing in the context of work, but also outside – what have we learned through each domain of our life and what have we developed?
- I appreciate that learning is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and likely attitudes, whereas developing is the broadening of all of these. But where is the limit? When does one stop and another start? If I am empathetic with my client's daughter, how do I become better at it? Have I always been like this? Did I learn it? And if I do, how do I know that I am better? Bottom line, can you develop empathy?
- And then there's the resilience over the last year or so. This very particular skill - have we learned it since we didn't have it before (possibly) or have we developed it? Was it latent in some corner of our beings only to be awakened by multiple lockdowns and an acute lack of human contact, or is it nothing but a flower growing out of a stone?
- Whichever it is, I have most certainly learned over the course of this project to challenge myself, whilst developing my patience, sense of curiosity and domestic adventure. I have also learned that many other participants in different corners of the world have experienced similar situations to mine and reacted similarly, or was it responded? Interesting one. A debate for another time...



Vignette 146

MY REFLECTIVE VIGNETTE by Arcie Mallari

This pandemic changed a lot of things inside and outside our home. For more than a decade, our home was resting place, but in just a snap, our home became a home-office and home-learning center. It transformed from a place of peace to a place of chaos. It was a struggle for all of us at the onset. But I realized that we couldn't just be an effect of the matter but rather be the cause of the effect.



First thing that we did was to create a learning space and a working space. Redesigning the interior of the house to yield our expected outcome – productive and learning environment. We engaged our kids to be part of the planning. They drew their own learning space design. They were very excited listing the things they want in the space. We asked them to measure the area of the room so that the furniture and other things would fit. After measuring, they realized that more than half of the things they wrote wouldn't fit to the room. Our Kids' Lesson learned: "to check first what we really have."

That same lesson I learned when we were preparing the platform to be used for our students in the organization. Everyone was so excited and started to prepare their online platform. But when we went to the community and did our survey with the learners, we found out that only 65% of our learners have Internet connection. 55% of the population had no gadget or means for online education. For those who have phones, 17% of them are still using the old mobile phone (not the smart phone). This set of information we gathered changed our approach to this "New Normal." We have to design a learning approach on how to reach them using the resources that they have.



After almost a year, my kids already adapted the learning environment we created. In the same way I observed how our learners synched in with the ecosystem we created based from their needs. What we discovered is the truest sense of being a Co-Learner with our students. Not just giving them what is easy for us but to create that learning ecosystem that will create a type of human being we want in the future.



The DOWIT (Do Whatever It Takes) Story

This time of pandemic, we have heard a lot of complaints and reasons of not doing what we have promised. But let me introduce to you one of our learners, Frytz. A grade 8 student, who despite of slow internet connection and heavy rains, chose to call me and continue our learning session. And who am I to say NO to a boy with a commitment bigger than his dream?

Vignette 147

My Need for Adventure Drive Work, Self and all other domains

This week I wrote an article for the next issue of Creative Academic Magazine which is on the theme of Creative Edventures in Online Teaching and Learning. I began by reflecting on my experiance of adventures. I wrote.

As a boy growing up in Manchester in the 1950's adventures were an important part of my life. They turned the routines of everyday existence into extraordinary and memorable events. More than anything else they introduced me to the idea of exploration which has stayed with me ever since.

The best places for an adventure were of course 'dangerous' in that they involved a degree of risk taking and therefore required a little bit of courage that was well oiled with the excitement of doing something I shouldn't be doing. They always involved in some way moving from a place I knew to explore in some way a place I didn't know.

My adventures involved such things as playing on abandoned wagons on a disused railway line, or in one daring escapade venturing onto the railway tracks at the big engine cleaning depot a few miles from where lived. On other occasions I played in the canal making a raft out of old oil drums. I also went on a trek roped up with two other mini explorers, across some frozen ponds in fields that had been flooded. You can imagine the headlines – three school friends disappear on polar trek in Monton!! Climbing trees and making rope swings over rivers and brooks were favourite pastimes as was playing on building sites, all of which carried risk for life and limb.

My need for adventures continued into my teens and on one memorable occasion when I was 16 I hitch hiked with my friend Harry to Cornwall with 10 shillings in my pocket (50p) and stayed in a tent for a week with a friend and then hitched hiked back to Manchester. What all adventures do is broaden our horizons, afford new opportunities and give us the confidence to try again and go further. My Cornish adventure started a passion for surfing and a relationship with Cornwall that eventually led to a PhD on a tin mine!

What all my adventures had in common was excitement and risk because of the uncertainty and the newness of what I was doing. I was venturing into uncharted territory and learning about that

territory from participating in it. It was all part of growing up but the feelings and sense of achievement I gained from an adventure stayed with me and it was one of the reasons that I chose to become a geologist



where I could go to places that most people do not go and venture into uncharted territory where the geology was not understood. The rewards from such professional adventures were the same as I gained from my childhood experiences of adventuring – it was the reward of exploring something I did not know and of discovering new knowledge - of place and of things and, in the case of geology, of rocks, minerals and structures and the story of that particular piece of the earth.

I stopped practising as a geologist in the early 1990's but I believe that same spirit of adventure has kept me interested and engaged throughout many different roles in higher education. Over the last 30 years I have continually looked for new adventures and sought new and uncharted territories to explore and engage in experiences that I had not engaged in before. This is why in 2011, soon after leaving the University of Surrey, I set up, with the help of some friends and former colleagues, Lifewide Education.

Now retired my physical adventures are more limited, this has been particularly noticeable during the pandemic, but I still take whatever opportunity presents for one. I am however able to adventure in my mind. All this history brings me to the conclusion that the thing I call my *self* needs adventure – it is important to my sense of who I am and therefore the maintenance of my identity. It is important to keeping me interested and engaged in the world around me, to giving me a purpose for my existence and to enable me to give something back to the world.

I think that most of us would agree that as we write, new perspectives emerge and this was definitely the case with this article. As I wrote I began to see more clearly the patterns of adventuring in my life and how my desire for fresh and unknown territory to explore was a major motivational force for my learning and my becoming a different person. It was the force that took me everywhere and even changed my career.

Which brings me to my latest educational adventure and the reason I am writing this vignette, our **Learning Lives Inquiry**. I liken the space we have co-created to explore our lifewide learning to the slightly risky but exciting spaces I ventured into as a boy. We are inhabiting uncharted territory a liminal space betwixt and between that we have to traverse together. To inhabit this space requires courage to share experiences, intimate thoughts and feelings. Some vignettes describe difficult challenges or painful experiences requiring the writers to reveal their vulnerabilities. Fellow explorers realise that the purpose of our adventure is to share ourselves and what we understand about the ways in which learning emerges from our everyday lives and unlike academic learning, learning in this way is full of emotion. We are on a mission to turn our embodied experiences into meaningful stories that we can share with our fellow explorers.

This is the small insight I gained this week but it is a powerful idea for what drives my learning.

Vignette 148

Vignette 5 My personal feelings towards lifewide learning

Once again, my original vignette has changed at the last moment. I had prepared a thoughtful piece reflecting on the learning across the domains, but instead I have reversed back to the subject related to the first vignette that of technology. Access to technology has been wonderful in many respects. It has helped me communicate with family across the world; has given me the opportunity to present to academics and museums across the globe and of course has helped me keep up a pretence of keeping fit by enabling me to join yoga classes four times week.

However, my delight with the technology ended abruptly today. I am due to give another presentation next Sunday. My input is for ten minutes but the organisation has decided that the presentation will be streamed live across Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Today I was asked to join a rehearsal. No problem I thought; after all my input in previous presentations has been fine. Indeed, I have received great feedback.

However three technical personnel decided sadly, my microphone (purchased last week) was poor quality; my internet was unreliable; the videos and audio I was using, hmm, they would need to see it in advance to check the quality. And as for me following the instructions re changing levels of sound, vision etc on my lap top deplorable. And 'who keeps phoning you? I hope that will not occur on Sunday! And finally have you read the five pages re technical instructions we sent you?' – No of course I hadn't.

The result was I wanted to shout at them, instead my husband and I shouted at each other, he was wandering around with a cable trying to connect it to the internet and my laptop. Of course, that was impossible as there is no appropriate connection on my mac.

At one point I said that the audio on the video at the beginning was poorer quality because the interview was taped over thirty years ago. Rather than them commenting on the actual interview, the reply was 'great that makes it sound so authentic'.

The only reason I did not give up is that another speaker who has been asked to present at the last minute contacted me afterwards to ask about my presentation, so she could ensure she focussed on a different aspect.

And that was the turning point; my learning is more about the topic than making sure the visuals are very pretty. I am concerned that learning can get lost in the technology and have so enjoyed reading other people's vignettes where the learning is regarded as important, and the technical parts are merely the vehicle. I was so cheered by reading Jasen Booten's contribution yesterday where he acknowledged the importance of the 'community of learners' and the 'human connection'

My learning is strongly associated with these spheres and joining others on this journey of lifewide learning has been most helpful. We need human connections to make learning meaningful and the technical components are merely there to help not act as a barrier.

So I will try to represent 'the voices' to the best of my ability this Sunday and pay my respects to the refugees from the Holocaust who came to settle in Scotland; and if the

Vignette 149

Redemption

Domain Travel / another culture

Norman has prompted me to bring my reflections together this week and to revisit, if needed, my domains. I will come to that later but first, an update to my last vignette. You may recall I wrote about a flock (actually believe it or not it is technically called a 'murder') of crows that started to assemble in front of our sun lounges each morning, waiting for bread scraps. Well, I made a serious omission and failed to tell you the whole story.

In addition to having sun lounges in front of our bungalow, on our balcony we also have twin chairs that are joined by a mid-section table. When we walk on the beach, we pick up nice shells and leave them on the table to dry out. So far, we have about a dozen.

Apparently, the shells have not gone unnoticed by the crows. While I sit inside working on my research, Christine is down on the banana lounge knitting jumpers and other items for our grandchildren. She regularly finds 'gifts' on her lounge or the adjacent one. These 'gifts' include sticks, wrappings, dried fruit skins and, yes, shells. You see, in my ignorance, I thought crows are just annoying birds but, quite the contrary, it seems they are renowned for bringing gifts to people who feed or pay attention to them. I am not a bird lover as such but the ornithophiles among you will, I am sure, be able to enlighten me more about their relative intelligence.

What is my point and my reflection? Well, the day after I sent my last vignette announcing that Christine and I were going to cut back on our distributions to the birds, guess what I found at the back of my sun lounge when I went down to have a rest with Christine. Sure enough, a shell was awaiting me.

Norman, are there by chance any members of our LinkedIn group with the last name of 'Crow' or 'Crowe'. Just maybe they forwarded my post to



their relatives and in a bid to secure continuation of their food supply, they hit me where it hurts most; in my conscience.

Anyway, I am now left with the monumentous (even though apparently it is not an official word) decision of whether to keep feeding the crows or not. Is the gift of a shell sufficient for their redemption? All the ornithologists out there, I need your advice.

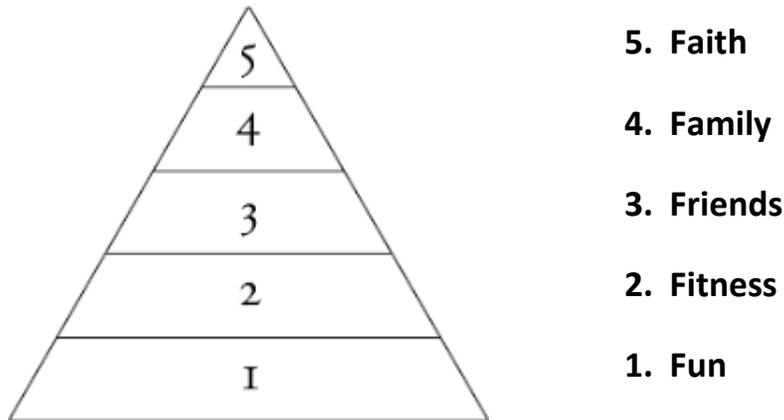


From a lifewide learning perspective, what have these crows taught me? How often, have I underestimated other people? How often have I formed an opinion based on my ignorance and not bothered to do my research more thoroughly? Inside everyone there is a gem that is waiting to be

uncovered. How many times have I focused on the blackness of the coal and missed the beauty of the diamond.

This reflective note about redemption is timely in sharing my domains with anyone who may be interested. Straight up, my lack of IT skills is immediately evident. I wanted to use a Maslow shape diagram to reflect the tiered, incremental nature of my domains. But I could not create one and so you will have to imagine the content. The domains are presented in the following order of importance from top down:

Chris Picone: Life Domains



5. Faith: Everyone is entitled to their own opinion and I respect that. However, for me, I sense that this life is not the beginning and end of me. I can't define or prove what is beyond the grave but just as a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly, I sense there is something in store for me beyond my earthly cocoon. This belief gives purpose and direction to every lower level domain in my life.

4. Family: The reward for all the sleepless nights being a parent is the blessing later when you become a grandparent. Now, Christine and I are able to enjoy being able to watch our daughters as they raise their own children. We get to have fun with our grandkids and once they start to tire, we hand them back and go home to a restful sleep. Heaven on earth.

3. Friends: There must be a radar inside us that attracts us to particular people. Our dearest friends back in Australia are Christine and Ian. When we moved to Kuwait, we became close friends with another workmate, Leigh, in Kuwait who by chance was from our home State in Australia but from a different city. I don't remember how but one day we happened to mention Ian's name to Leigh. It turns out that in his younger years, Leigh moved to our home city and used to catch a bus each day to work. Over a period of time, he became friends with a fellow passenger. Yes, it was Ian. Also in Kuwait, Christine became very close to a lady, Jan from her home State of Queensland. One day, Christine was scanning through some holiday photos taken in Australia when Jan happened to notice a grave headstone with the family name 'Hegerty'. By amazing chance, in that split second, Jan was able to focus on the name and it turns out she and Christine are distant cousins. Just maybe our friends come into our lives more than just by chance.

2. Fitness: I have never been good at any sport but I have always felt the need to keep fit. For better or worse, Christine now has a Fitbit watch and so we have found ourselves monitoring our walks. Our

proud record was a 9 day visit to Luxembourg last year when we averaged over 20kms each day. If ever you have the chance to do some walking near Echternach, you will not be disappointed.



1. Fun: The final report from the UNESCO International Commission on Education for the 21st Century was aptly titled “Learning: the Treasure Within”. The commission highlighted that for this new millennium, education should cover four pillars: Learning to Know, Do, Live Together and Be. What brings me truly alive? What is my treasure within? It is all the above but most especially my continuing journey to fully explore my inner treasure. As weird as it might sound, the greatest fun for me these days is writing. In my last year of undergraduate studies, my professor told me I should be an economics journalist as he liked my style. I never listened; however, the inner passion to write never waned. I started to pen my first book in 1977. I finished my first book almost 40 years later. No, it is not about economics.

technical part breaks down, so be it. Yesterday I spoke to one of the survivors who was so thrilled that people wanted to listen to her story and learn about the dangers of intolerance and that is what is important.



Vignette 150

Paul Kleiman – Vignette 5

The Gardener's Tale

Our house has a small front garden and a rather larger garden at the back. Now I would describe myself not so much as a keen gardener (though I do spend a lot of time in the garden) rather as a garden manager. When we first bought the house, over 30 years ago, the garden was a wild, unmanaged mess. Gradually I 'tamed' it, creating flower beds, a rockery, a small pond, a couple of paved areas, a deck etc. At the centre of it all was the lawn: a rectangle of grass (supposedly) bisected by a paved path.

My attitude to most of the garden is one of just letting things grow and seeing what turns out. If I like it, it stays. If I don't, it comes out. I bear in mind the dictum that what we call 'weeds' are just indigenous plants in their natural habitat. I am an 'accidental' organic gardener as I avoid unnatural and potentially harmful chemicals, fertilisers, slug pellets, etc. The result is that from April through to October the garden looks great.

I, however, really like a good lawn. So I spend an inordinate amount of time attempting to ensure that I have a pleasant green sward which is 100% grass while avoiding the usual panoply of 'enhancement treatments'. The problem is that we live in an area known for rain and general dampness – so the rapid replacement of grass with moss is virtually unavoidable, especially over the winter. This last weekend, taking advantage of the recent dry spell, I spent a couple of days raking out and removing all the moss that had grown due to the particularly mild and wet winter. That was hard work, which was followed by the even harder work of aerating the lawn with a fork. Now, as I write, I stare out at a lawn with covered in large and ugly bare patches which I have just reseeded and which, in all probability, will not provide me with that 'holy grail' of the beautiful, even expanse of green grass that exists in my imagination.

REFLECTION

My relationship with my garden is rather like my relationship with education.

As a teacher, there is a part of me that is instinctively and strongly attached to the gentle management approach: having a general, relatively 'soft' idea of what I want to achieve. Seeing what develops naturally and organically. Then guiding, nurturing, occasionally suggesting re-arranging or even a gentle pruning. Importantly it involves a certain flexibility and adaptability and being prepared to 'expect (and accept) the unexpected'. But I'm also aware that we work within an education system that is very much based on my 'lawn management' approach: where there are clear goals, with definite objectives, with definite ways to achieve them, and which sometimes requires hard and drastic measures to achieve that goal.

As I watch two large wood pigeons greedily eyeing the recently seeded patches I wonder, as winter turns into spring and we begin to see the faint glimmer of 'normality' after this year of Covid, whether our education system has learnt any lessons from it. If I listen to Gavin Williamson and the government the answer would seem to be no. They are obsessed with the 'lawn management' approach to education. But if I look around the sector, from primary right through to higher education, I see an extraordinary creativity and a willingness to embrace the more 'laid back', organic, holistic approaches.

I need to let my lawn grow naturally.

Vignette 151

Vignette 4

Student Domain

Mixed Methods again...

Having settled myself a little on what research methods I would like to use for my next project (Multi-methods, not Mixed-methods at all...face-palm emoji...) I attended the last of 3 study sessions online. There is nobody from my EdD cohort within this group and despite 2 previous sessions together, the group remained a little 'cold'. The course leader posed a question to the group...silence. The course leader asked for feedback...silence. Breakout rooms...silence. At every point I had heaps of questions, tones of ideas and plenty of comments on the wonderful projects that were being presented. But I held back from jumping in. I spoke up once or twice and put a few messages in the chat, but that was it.

Reflection

I found these silences within the group session incredibly awkward. I felt embarrassed for the session leader. I was desperate for somebody to ask a question. I was trying so hard not to dominate the discussion fearing that my contributions would suffocate the discussion. I wanted to encourage others to ask questions, so I made some comments to get the ball rolling, but really didn't feel comfortable taking on that role...I'm the student. How would the course leader feel? It was a bit easier in the breakout rooms as there were only 3 of us but there I still had to prompt for ideas and direct questions at individuals in order to get them involved.

I am still perplexed as to how I should/could handle situations like this. I am a fee-paying student so I should make the most of what is on offer to me! Ask the questions! Comment and critique! Engage and explore! But I can't settle with the argument that I should 'get my money's worth.' In my work life I am so used to being the leader/enabler, that it is hard to take on the student role sometimes. I think many of the students in these study session groups are considerably younger than me and less experienced so I can see that they lack the confidence to join in. But what method should I use to learn here then?

I have written before about my fascination with Role Theory and how we adapt to contexts. I have never quite squared up to suggestions to 'just be yourself' as I think there are several versions of myself. I have core values but even these look different in various contexts. Honesty with my 16yr old son is different to the honesty I share with my mum.

I happened to speak with some peers this week who asked me what personality type I was according to Myres-Briggs in response to my descriptions of these study sessions. I did a free online test thing and I'm 'ENFJ Protagonist' apparently. The description helped a little as I continued to ponder the student/teacher/enabler dilemma particularly around notions of altruism and a tendency to be too sensitive.

In a second exploration of my reflections around this issue, I stumbled across this description of Cohort Based Courses. ([The Future of Education is Community: The Rise of Cohort-Based Courses - Forte Labs](#)). This confirmed my view that in order to get the most out of group sessions, there needs to be attention paid to enabling the group to 'gel' particularly with respect to being willing reveal vulnerabilities. I think this is what is missing from the study sessions that my Uni has created in response to stopping face-to-face teaching. My EdD cohort is a beautiful space now. We cry, laugh, scream, reveal and uncover together - hugely fuelled by 3 double days of face-to-face learning together BC.

Things brings me to the LWL group we have before us here.... sharing insights and reflections together in a safe space so ably facilitated through a compassionate and professional culture has been a joy to me over the last few weeks. Thank you all for sharing.



Vignette 152

V6 Being Social

I didn't notice anything when I logged into the meeting. Perhaps it was because I knew I was going to be late. There had been an issue with time zones, and somehow, the outlook calendar of the person in the US sent the wrong time. John could reschedule, but I had another appointment and couldn't. "What did I miss" "not much" was the reply from Luca. I asked a couple of questions about contracts, then suddenly, Giuseppe logged out. "Okay, he has gone, you missed it, Ronald, Giuseppe is pissed off". It turned out that Mike, a colleague of John's and an ex-military man who normally says nothing at the meetings, had said something that Giuseppe thought was anti-Italian. Luca, a Scots Italian, disagreed with the Italian American Giuseppe's understanding of the situation.

Mike logged off, and John and I spoke to Luca about Giuseppe. He was having a hard time. His boyfriend was stuck in the UK, Giuseppe was in New York recovering from COVID-19, and a work trip to the Middle East was looming. We ended up talking about Wellbeing, Luca who lives in mainland Europe was looking forward to getting back to India, where he had spent the first half of lockdown with his wife's family. John and his husband were finding it hard not seeing their nieces and nephews. I was feeling a bit crazy, having not been travelling for so long. After some to and fro on WhatsApp between Luca and Giuseppe, Giuseppe rejoined the call. He was all "fuck you". He was not hurt by the anti-Italian sentiment but by Luca's inability to take it seriously. "I don't fucking know you, let's face it, the only person I have actually met is John," said Giuseppe.

Suddenly, I realised Luca, and I knew each other and had met face to face, and John and Giuseppe knew each other, but the rest of the connections were all made post lockdown. Perhaps because I was not implicated in the incident, I found myself a peacemaker. I did not want to make peace. I wanted to tease out precisely what went on and what we do about it now and what we do about it if something similar happens again. I will not go into the details here, save to say we are setting out a formal process for dealing with these things. That night I couldn't sleep. It was the most emotionally intense workplace thing that had happened since the start of lockdown. Here was the Giuseppe who said in September 2020 that he was making himself "emotionally unavailable" to deal with missing his family, and his partner had shown emotion. He had shouted and sworn, and I could see his eyes red and wet on the screen of the iPad. The intensity of it lasted for days.

Apart from family and some friends outdoors in the Highlands, being social has been online: a Zoom beer tasting with the boys from Football, a monthly cinema club. Family Facebook groups, online board games and quiz nights. Video calls to friends, a WhatsApp group with ex-work friends to replace our annual trip somewhere in the world together, which generally involves drinking and art. Or, a Fantasy Football league with some cousins, people I play Football with and others who work in the same hotel as they do and the associated text banter. In addition, since the start of lockdown, I have been helping organisations move online, all sorts of organisations at all sorts of scales. It has not been the technical stuff. It is mainly about socio-technical interactions and helping people put robust systems in place that meet people's needs.

I have been developing a toolkit and a growing report covering different aspects of being online. These range from information architecture to how to help staff adjust to remote work. From how to avoid the extensification and intensification of work to what to do if there is clearly someone else in the room listening in on a confidential work meeting. The toolkit and the examples are getting longer, but I had not yet dealt with upset and anger, not dealt with the fallout of someone making a casual through a medium where we only see (and come to know) small parts of each other. Despite the way these technologies transduce the spaces we occupy, the way they allow us to reach out and others to reach into our homes and our lives, we don't know much about them. We are still trying to figure out how to get to know each other and how to behave. It is clear enough that the easy prejudices that infect our society and are expressed anonymously on social media can make their way into online business meetings, just as they can a face-to-face meeting. I suppose my question is do we say these spaces are the same as physical ones, or is there something extra that needs to be done in an online meeting to express zero tolerance.