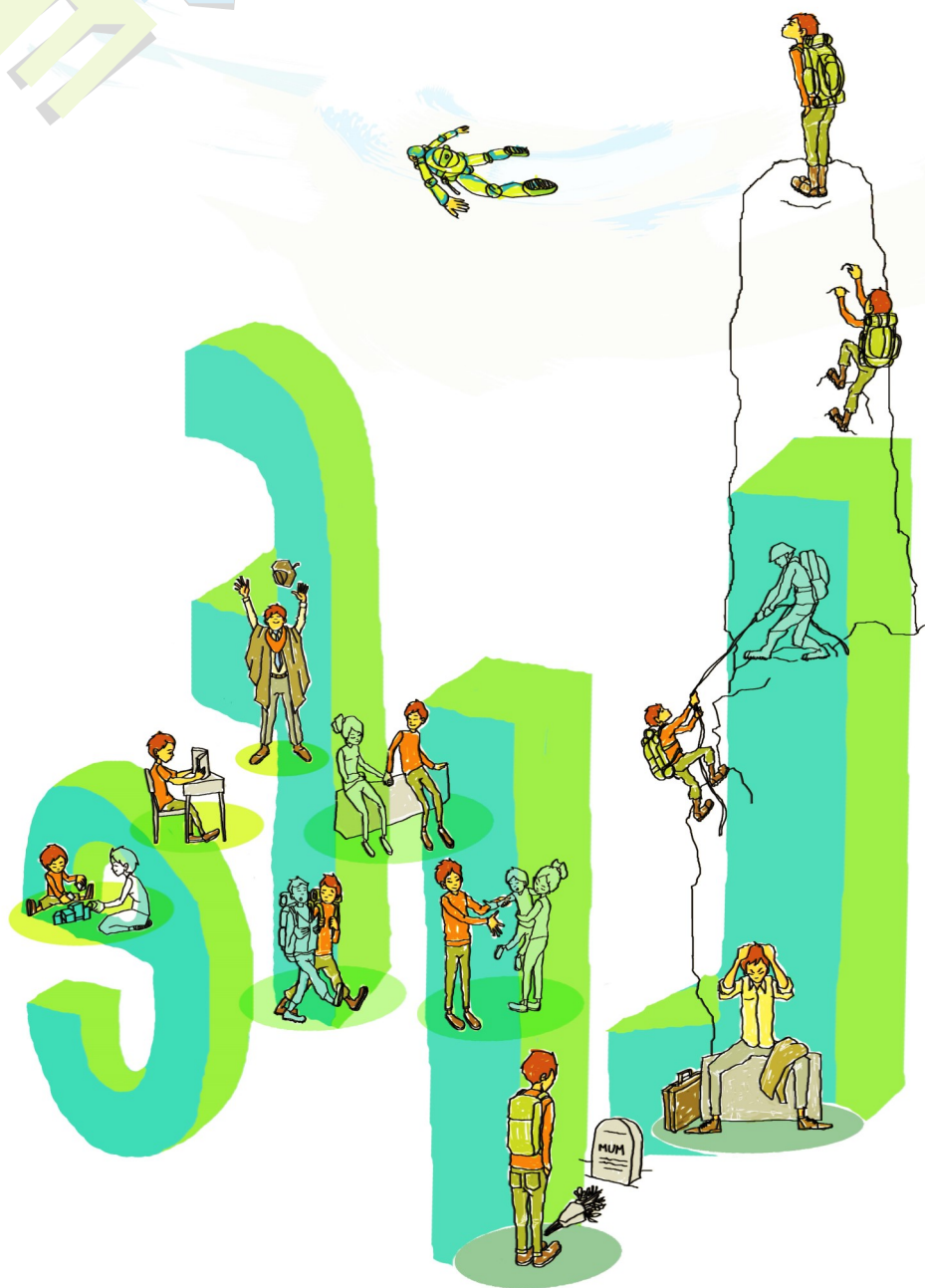




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*Travelling through Time:
Using our Present
to Explore our Past*

Commissioning Editor's Introduction

Travelling through Time: Using our Present to Explore our Past

Norman Jackson

We began our exploration of the idea of exploration in issue 18, believing that exploration is of fundamental significance to people in all the different contexts they inhabit, for without exploration we cannot embrace and understand the new and unfamiliar. In this issue of the magazine we are trying to develop new perspectives on by considering the wonderful capability we have for mentally exploring our past from our present.

The trigger for this learning project began when I met one of our contributors, Sandeep Raina. My wife knew his wife and we were invited to dinner and we spent a very enjoyable evening swapping life stories and family histories. During the evening Sandeep mentioned that he had written several articles, including some that had been published in the Hindu Times, a prestigious Indian newspaper. He spoke at length about one of these articles, which was concerned with a trip he had made with his family to the place of his birth - Kashmir. His family home had been burnt down in the conflict that emerged in the 1990's and they had fled the country. Even though Kashmir is still quite dangerous he made the journey with his children to show them his country and to see for himself what it was like.

'an explorer can never know what he is exploring until it has been explored' (Gregory Bateson¹)

I was moved by his story and the effect his visit had upon him and how he felt the need to write about it and share his thoughts and feelings. I kept reflecting on what he had said until I realised that he had created an ecology in his present life to revisit and explore his past so that he might know himself better. So that was the thought that gave birth to this particular exploration. How do we create ecologies in the present for exploring our past and learning from the experience?

We explore to experience the world and to learn and understand it, and often ourselves, better. The number of contexts for exploration is only limited by our imagination and that is pretty limitless. Exploration can be a psychological process of examining ourselves, our own thinking, reflecting and connecting with our emotions, purposes and actions, and or a cognitive process of inquiry involving the investigation of ideas or problems in any subject or any context or

circumstance. It can also involve the use of our body to assist these explorations as we immerse ourselves in new physical, intellectual and emotional experiences. It can involve travelling through physical spaces and landscapes that are new to us, for example when we explore a new place or we revisit places we have been to before with the

**WARNING:
THIS MAGAZINE IS AN
EXPLORATION SITE**

aim to revisit these spaces with fresh eyes and different understandings than we had previously. It can involve contexts and phenomena in our unfolding present, reconstructions of the past and/or imaginings of the future. In this issue of the magazine we are particularly interested in how we create ecologies for learning and personal development in the present that enable us to explore our past. How we create new meaningful senses of where we came from and connect these to our perceptions of ourselves in our here and now.

Exploring is an attitude or orientation requiring the willingness to engage with things that are not known, are poorly understood or cause us to be perplexed or uncomfortable in some way. Exploring may involve overcoming fear and anxiety; tolerating and dealing with uncertainty. Exploration involves a physical and mental *journey* as we venture into the unknown or unfamiliar and it requires courage, confidence and self-belief that we will be able to cope with whatever emerges, or the development of such qualities as we grapple with what emerges. Being willing to explore, to put ourselves into unfamiliar contexts to deal with unfamiliar situations and problems is an important orientation that we need in life - especially when life is disrupted or when we need to break away from existing routines in order to develop; to push ourselves outside of our comfort zones; to risk to explore and explore the effects of our taking such risks in ourselves.

But what if aspects of our past have caused us suffering and pain, if we have encountered traumas, tragedies and disrupted lives that we have tried to forget or deny. These are worlds that are troublesome and require great courage to allow memories to be surfaced and replayed.

In this issue of Lifewide Magazine we share a number of stories of how people have connected to and revisited their own past either through opportunistic circumstances that provided affordance or through intentional acts that created affordance. Revisiting the past can simply be to remind ourselves of who or what we once were, but it can also be to try to regain something important that we feel we have lost in the process of becoming who we are, or it can be to help us understand better why we are the person we are and perhaps repair some of the damage of a troubled life.

Some professional fields like counselling and psychotherapy have developed ways to help people reflect deeply on their past and present. It is through these explorations in a safe supportive space that people often shift their relationship with their self in the present and reach a deeper understanding of their experiences with increased kindness and acceptance. Some of these experiences feature in this issue.

But we are also interested in the circumstances, strategies and tools people have developed for themselves to explore their own past lives and rediscover or develop themselves in the process. In other issues of the magazine we have explored the idea that we create *ecologies* for learning and personal development and we might try to apply this holistic way of connecting, relating and the ways and means we use to explore our past.

All too often our stories of self-exploration remain hidden or invisible, they are taken for granted. We are interested in why people explore their past, and the means by which they connect to and experience their past. We advocate the importance of stepping back and reflecting, crystallising our meanings over our life. Through this process we come to terms with who we have been and who we now are, and such fundamental conundrums as our own existence, our mortality and place in the universe.

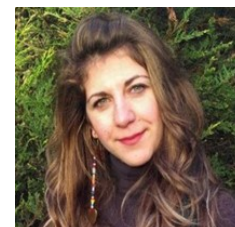
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Executive Editor Jenny Willis



Welcome from Guest Editor, Maria Kefalogianni

We hold the key to thousands of doors and windows to new learning, as we bear witness to our life's unfolding. Our world affords us with opportunities to connect and reach richer and deeper meanings, which help us understand our world and ourselves a little better, recognise new possibilities and motivate and inspire us to find and fulfil our purposes. Learning to use the right key at the right door at the right time, is a skill which often requires willingness and openness to learn, conscious effort, rational and intuitive knowing, a reflective ability and a childlike curiosity courage and willingness to play, take risks and discover.

This issue of Lifewide Magazine is focusing on the concept of mental time travel. The very idea of time is a question that scientists and philosophers have struggled to understand and once we start talking about physically travelling through time we enter the realms of science fiction and quantum physics. But we all have the capacity to think our way back to moments in time that we have experienced as we access our memories, both clear and not so clear, of past events in our lives. Being able to look back and recreate mental images of those moments and imagine the future is something that is fundamental to who we are and when we lose this capacity for mental time travel we lose ourself.

In this month's magazine we invite you to consider the possibility that in life we indeed make use of the skill of mental time travel from a very young age. Psychologists and neuroscientists tell us that we start this process from the age of 3 when we begin to develop, along with language, the capacity to create and imagine worlds, full of fantasy and adventure. And we continue to enjoy this amazing capacity to access memory and create mental imagery throughout our life span. One could argue that it aids our innate compass which is directing our attention to what we need to understand and feel, in order to become the best version of ourselves, drawing on past versions of ourselves and imagining what might be in the future.

But life is not always full of happiness and joy: it may also contain moments and events that are extremely challenging, difficult, stressful, sad or emotionally complex and traumatic. In such circumstances we might avoid or deeply bury our memories and creatively use our imaginative abilities in our present to escape from our painful past. In such circumstances we may seek help from trained professionals in the fields of psychotherapy, trauma therapy or hypnotherapy (1

Rogers, 1959; 2 Van der Kolk 2014) to help us live with our past and motivate us to live our lives, with the least risk and damage possible, always growing into better versions of ourselves?

Human beings are meaning making creatures. We enjoy creating meaning that resonates with our authentic selves. Meaning helps us feel we have a purpose and through our relationships and what we do, that we are fulfilling these purposes. We know when this meaning is resonant. It feels right.

All the authors in this issue of the magazine have embarked on rich and thought-provoking journeys. They share with us their learning (their making of meaning) and experiences in travelling mentally through time. This has required re-connecting and engaging mentally, cognitively, physically, emotionally and spiritually with themselves and creating their own ecologies in the present to assist themselves in their journey to their past.

They have shared their vulnerabilities and their willingness to connect with sometimes painful memories and experiences and in this process revealed things which are deeply personal, in order to help us, the reader, develop deeper understandings about the strategies and tools we use to help us connect to the past from our present.

Radio presenter Claudia Hammond looks at how we use different systems of memory to help us navigate our life. She is interested in our ability to form memories and use these as a tool/medium for our mental time travel. While we can use our imaginative capability to bring us joy or help us make a decision, she also points out that our ability to travel from our present to our past holds the potential to bring us distress as it can be a form of escapism of our present and finding solutions to life's problems. I argue that the surfacing of painful events is as an opportunity for healing and renewal. Although immersing oneself into painful memories and experiences of the past can be distressing, from a therapeutic standpoint it is necessary in order for the person to reach a deeper subjective for them meaning and healing.

Loss and grief are powerful enduring emotions that leave their indelible mark on the memories we store in our mind. Journeys through life are complex. Some of us leave the country of our birth, our family and our culture in order to

seek another life. I share my own reflections on how leaving my country and culture of birth to come and live in the UK has changed me. By engaging myself in deep self-exploration through my therapy and by making conscious use of the many opportunities in my life, I am getting closer to the person I aspire to become. In writing my article I visited some of the places where I grew up in Crete and had discussions with my parents which triggered more memories of my growing up. Place and people combine to make a powerful force to enable us to connect with our past and ultimately create new meanings and a deeper understanding on how I live my life and relate to the world around me.

Often self-exploration requires a willingness to tolerate uncertainty. Jenny's article is a great illustration of Bateson's phrase : "an explorer can never know what he is exploring until it has been explored". It demonstrates how when we deliberately and courageously take the time to create an ecology in order to explore an aspect of ourselves, it can leave us open to new possibilities, and discoveries leaving the exploratory experience richer since we reach meanings that we did not intend to start with. In Jenny's article a lot of the discoveries she reached were not intended. Her own will for self exploration landed her on a landscape with more questions. She developed an interest in the relationship between our memories and our senses.

For some of us there is a fixity about the past we carry which contrasts sharply with the fluidity and mouldability of the present and future where we can make choices and influence actions. In Alan's story he shows how past present and future are all aspects of one continuum. He shows how he made use of his present experiences as child with a sense of unconscious directionality (unconscious as a child) in order to escape a painful present. The experiences he lived as a child formed an important foundation on which he built and expanded his learning ecology and deepened his creativity; which ultimately led him to build a more compassionate relationship with himself, a gift for life. Humans indeed hold the capacity to creatively navigate life's challenges and survive and self actualise (Rogers, 1959).

It's a sad but inevitable fact that as we reach the end of our journey through life many of us will suffer memory loss and our ability to travel back through the memories of our life will be impaired. For those of us who have the misfortune to lose our memory through dementia Yalda Tomlinson describes several techniques that can help us retain our sense of our own past.

Purposely connecting with our memories by physically

bringing ourselves in spaces we once inhabited can have a profound effect. Sandeep's story reminds us how in order to survive adversity we "store" feelings and associated beliefs about ourselves and the world around us . Sandeep demonstrates how through tolerating the discomfort of his feelings and allowing them the voice they deserve by physically bringing himself in old territory (physical and emotional) brought along a profound sense of connection, inner resolution of inner conflict, and peace within himself. This once again reminds us Roger's profound saying that : "the curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change" and how we can continue to validate the usefulness of our emotions functioning as our compass in life.

We cannot talk about time without referring to space. One of the recurrent themes in this issue is how encountering certain spaces in the present can bring back memories of the past. Yalda reminds us of the potential and power that physical spaces hold in order to help transform people suffering from memory loss and enable them to hold a little longer their sense of who they are and contribute to their wellbeing. Norman describes how he encountered a space while on holiday in Tenerife that triggered memories, feelings and thoughts he once had in his role as a geologist: feelings that were positive and enjoyable. In interpreting the landscape like a geologist, he also connected within himself knowledge that he had forgotten he had. His story also illustrates the significance and joy of pausing and creating time for us to create and reach the meanings we innately, perhaps, hold.

Kerry takes us into her art studio. She immerses us in her process of mixing colours and communicates how this enables her to connect deeply with her emotions while trusting in the power of her medium to bring her resolution of inner conflict through a magnificent process of letting go, merging and messing ... she represents beautifully how colours are reminders of particular phases and stages in her lived life. Her article reminds me that knowledge and wisdom is not just limited in one way of articulating this knowing.

Tracey used her creativity which led to a shift in her spiritual practice; she models how we can reach deep and transformative meanings if we choose to be active agents of learning in the experiences that life brings to us. By taking a deliberate action to look closely at her life threatening experience , she opened the doors to new ways of perception and continued her healing.

If human beings have such capacity for creative living, how much do we do to cultivate this? Ken Robinson argues "Imagination is the source of every form of human

achievement.” And it's one thing that I too agree with Ken Robinson. We are systematically jeopardizing in the way we educate our children and ourselves. It reminds me that universities and schools, perhaps our whole society, value and create hierarchies of knowledge, much of it abstract and irrelevant to the everyday lives of ordinary people.

John Cowan role models a creative dance between his past and present reflections in his career as an academic. His story shows the value of being willing and prepared to learn from our practice. In combination with his use of reflection he reveals how knowledge can never be fixed in our life time. The knowledge we hold is like a treasure in the attic of our memories. To keep it glowing and precious to the “explorer” we need to continuously re-appraise and re-visit it. If we carry an open mind to the endless possibilities, every time we arrive to what we think we know we can be led to new territories of knowledge, new treasures. Perhaps higher education has a role to play in developing learners who can reflect on and learn from their past so that they can sustain themselves through complex and often messy and disrupted future lives. In this way we can contribute to a more sustainable and resilient society.

Through the articles in this issue I am reminded once more that human beings have indeed a much more diverse pallet of knowing and wisdom. What is echoed on all the contributions to this issue is the sense of “becoming” somebody more enriched as a result of self-exploration. No matter what the journey, in order to reach to our own unique treasures, we are required to demonstrate an ability to be willing and playful learner, curious and open to reflect, courageous to connect, process and tolerate uncertainty in order to formulate new meanings. All skills and attributes shown by our authors. What is an over arching theme, albeit not explicitly pointed out, is the creativity which is underlying the way they lived and worked through their experiences. This manifested in the stories through an inextricable link between their memories, spaces and places and the imaginative use of those memories to alter the feelings and perceptions they held for themselves and their lives; Perhaps we could argue that creativity and use of imagination is an inherent life force, an essential ingredient in forming and fulfilling our purpose.

We have valued and enjoyed each contribution in this edition; we hope you will too.

With gratitude and thanks to all our contributors and to all of you for your commitment to Lifewide Magazine.

Maria Kefalogianni

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The Callback by Tracey Walshaw

Artist Tracey explains: a piece that helped me understand being and returning from the threshold of death

The Pro's and Con's of the Time Travelling Mind

Claudia Hammond



Claudia is an award-winning broadcaster, writer and psychology lecturer. She is the presenter of All in the Mind & Mind Changers on BBC Radio 4 and Health Check on BBC World Service Radio and BBC World News TV. She is the author of Time Warped: Unlocking The Mysteries Of Time Perception, published by Harper Collins.

Mental time-travel sets us apart from other animals and brings us many advantages, but can new technology save us from its downsides?

Humans have a cognitive ability that no other animal seems to have. We can mentally time-travel. At will, we can think back to the past, reimagining our first day at college or eating a meal last week. Then, just as rapidly, we can switch to picturing the future, imagining our next holiday or drinking a cup of tea in an hour's time.

This isn't about knowing something has happened, or will happen, but experiencing it in our minds. It's the difference between knowing that when summer comes, the weather will be warmer, and imagining yourself sitting in the sunshine next summer, feeling the heat on your skin.

The experimental psychologist Endel Tulving described *mental time-travel as part of autonoetic consciousness* – the sense we have of ourselves as persisting across time. We can both re-experience and pre-experience events.

If you are meeting some friends for lunch, your prospective memory reminds you to turn up on the right day, but you can also picture yourself finding a table, reading the menu and ordering your food. This is different from actively planning. This is one of the skills unique to humans, according to the Thomas Suddendorf, author of *The Gap: The Science Of What Separates Us From Other Animals*, who is based at the University of Queensland.

The ability to time-travel mentally has allowed us to imagine different futures and to produce the complex world we live in today. By recombining old memories, we are able to project ourselves forward in time, giving us endless combinations from which to select the most plausible possibilities.

Like a remix, utilising these memories allows us to preview future events in a window in the mind. This is key to the extraordinary ability of humans to adapt to their environments. Suddendorf says this is one of the factors that makes us unique. "We can do nested scenario building, that is we have an open-ended capacity to imagine alternative situations, to reflect upon them and to embed them into larger narratives. It's a tremendously powerful skill. We can imagine situations like what we're going to do tomorrow, next week, where we're going to have a holiday, what career path to pursue, and we can imagine alternative versions of those. And we can evaluate each of them in terms of their likelihood and desirability."



Endel Tulving first made the distinction between episodic and semantic memory in a 1972 book chapter.^[5] Episodic memory is the ability to consciously recollect previous experiences from memory (e.g., recalling a recent family trip to Disney World), whereas semantic memory is the ability to store more general knowledge in memory (e.g., the fact that Disney World is in Florida). This distinction was based on theoretical grounds and experimental psychology findings, and subsequently was linked to different neural systems in the brain by studies of brain damage and neuro imaging techniques.



This allows us to shape the future to our own design and to seek opportunities and avoid threats before they emerge. Other animals can't do this in the same way. Suddendorf says psychologists believe that your dog doesn't lie by the fire reminiscing about its favourite walks and hoping to return to that special field where they once found a dead rabbit.

Babies are also forced to live in the here and now, unable to escape mentally into the future. It is not until the age of three or four that they begin to be able to imagine a future where they might feel differently, where they can anticipate or fear events. In one experiment only a third of three-year-olds could give a plausible answer as to what they might do the next day, but within a year or two their sense of the future has developed to the extent that two-thirds of them can do it.

Sometimes our ability to time travel in our minds brings us distress

This suggests that small children have an extreme form of the empathy gap we can all experience on occasion which leaves us unable to imagine that we might feel differently in the future. When I packed my suitcase on a dreary November day in London to go to Sydney where I knew temperatures were high, I still couldn't resist packing a jumper and puffer jacket. It was impossible to imagine that I wouldn't need them. Of course, neither garment left my suitcase.

But sometimes our ability to time-travel in our minds brings us distress. Helen Christensen, chief scientist at the Black Dog Institute in Sydney, told the audience at the World-Changing Ideas Summit "the capacity of imagination means that sometimes people do ruminate about the future and also looking backwards people can be traumatised, reliving their experiences, which can be incredibly upsetting and can interfere with happy functioning".



But she hopes that technology can come to the rescue. Her team have been experimenting with using techniques from cognitive behavioural therapy online and via apps. Fifteen years ago they developed Mood Gym, an online course of cognitive behavioural therapy that has since been used in more than 200 countries around the world. They found the anonymity of this approach means they can reach people who don't want to come forward and talk to a real life therapist.

Now they're looking to social media to try to identify people who might benefit from such a course. Using machine learning and artificial intelligence they're hoping to pick up the signals young people are giving out when they post on social media.

"We're doing a large number of experiments where we're trying to look at the content and structure of language to see whether that will give us clues as to a particular problem. For example, we're finding that bipolar communities often talk about the medication they're taking. Groups that hang together online because of self-harm are often angry. We find that depressed people use more personal pronouns."

The skill of mental time travel has on the whole served us well, but in the future might we evolve to avoid these mental health difficulties

If they can identify people at risk, then the question is what to do with that information and how to intervene. They might be able to place adverts for online CBT to appear in social media if particular keywords or search items are used, in a similar way to marketing companies who already personalise adverts.

"It sounds Big Brotherish, but on the other hand we have already developed a large number of apps and online programmes that are effective in reducing suicide risk, anxiety and depression. So we have the digital tools. It's a question of how can we do the research involving young people and others to identify the best way in which to deliver this information and help to them."

The skill of mental time travel has on the whole served us well, but in the future might we evolve to avoid these mental health difficulties? Will depression always be with us? Suddendorf says he almost hopes so.

"At least in their mild forms, depression and anxiety are part of our mental repertoire for how we deal with the world we've developed. We get depressed when we pursue options that are not successful. That motivates us to withdraw from that situation or it signals to others that we might need help.

“Anxiety is useful in that when we simulate future events we have an emotional reaction that makes us feel anxious. That motivates us in the here and now to do something about that event – to run away or to prepare. That makes us better able to cope with a future event. So these mild versions might be functional. Of course I hope that more serious clinical disorders can be dealt with.”

Acknowledgement: This article was posted on 23 November 2016

<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20161122-the-pros-and-cons-of-the-time-travelling-mind>

Mental time-travel and its downsides was a topic discussed at BBC Future's World-Changing Ideas Summit in Sydney earlier this month. To hear the conversation, recorded live, download the BBC Radio 4 podcast All In The Mind. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b082hq9v>

Commissioning Editor: in researching for this issue I came across the excellent podcasts produced and curated by the BBC through its All in the Mind Programme presented by Claudia Hammond.

How Are Memories Formed?

BBC All in the Mind

The brain has billions of neurons interconnected by trillions of synapses. It is at these synapses where memories are made. Ground-breaking research by Timothy Bliss, Graham Collingridge and Richard Morris has transformed our understanding of memory, and offered new insights into devastating effects of failing memory. This year they won the Brain Prize, the world's most valuable award in brain research. Claudia Hammond meets them in front of an audience at London's Royal Institution to discuss how memories are made.



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxx9>

Understanding experience backwards: how matters of interest and concern today help me mine my past

John Cowan

John is Lifewide Education's first Honorary Fellow and has been a champion and supporter of lifewide learning for the last 10 years, and a champion and advocate for student directed learning for over half a century. During this time he has placed an ever increasing emphasis on preparing and helping students exercise stewardship over their lifewide development while at University, and in lifelong learning thereafter. His collegial spirit is well known, in describing himself he once said, "It's best just to think of me as an active part-time teacher nowadays, with personal history to draw on and a willingness to share with some colleagues, if they want to innovate in areas where I have some experience."



I am currently marginally involved with a colleague in grappling with the forthcoming potential of three different academic concepts. Each in turn immediately poses a *question* for me to think about.

- The current emphasis on the importance for learners of having a sense of belonging. This encourages me to enquire, and try to work out, what features of a learning experience engender a sense of belonging.
- Discussions highlighting the difference between North American and North European concepts of student-directed learning. These have pushed me to define the basic features of student-directed learning, and what they may entail for learners and facilitative tutors.
- Involvement in designing a MOOC for educationists minded to nurture creative questioning on the part of their students. This has, of course, compelled me to try to identify what facilitative teachers can do to foster deep questioning.

In each case, I have had recourse to think about my past experience, dated though it undoubtedly is, in order to gain new perspectives and insights. For example, I have been recalling occasions and activities which I felt at the time had promoted a constructive and motivating sense of belonging on the part of certain groups of learners. Further, I have reminded myself of my various attempts to offer and support genuinely student-directed learning, and have tried to pinpoint the salient features of these innovations (as they were in their time). Finally, I have re-visited efforts on my part to promote and develop creative questioning, and reflected ruefully on the decline of that habit even after the period in which I felt that my restructuring had had the impact that I sought.

REFLECTIVE LEARNING



In each case, my mental rummaging in the attic of my academic memories has had much in common with the activity that I and a colleague recently described as the composting of reflections¹ Between my almost disconnected little anecdotes, linking what Norman Jackson calls my “wee stories”, there has emerged almost for the first time a keen awareness on my part of the progression which they represent. I have become aware of the developing logic in my hiccupping development of supportive tutoring, in which concentration on the learners’ sense of belonging has undoubtedly grown and grown. Equally, review of my commitment to genuinely student-directed learning has unfolded a succession of elements of the tutorial and institutional support which can bring about that outcome – and I see more clearly the logic on which that progression is founded. Even my recall of my attempts to develop the ability and habit of questioning creatively have revealed development of a kind through the succession of failures to make an enduring impact on the behaviour of learners as at least I steadily perceived how to bring about at least some improvement in my next attempt.

Throughout this reflective review activity, I have in effect been responding to the demands of my present involvement, and used questions arising from my current interests and concerns to re-examine and re-experience my past and through this process gained fresh insights which I can now usefully draw on. This has comprised long-term reflections-on-learning experiences² combined to yield worthwhile composted understanding on my part. It has been a fruitful experience for me, especially since it began with keen apprehension lest what I was drafting might once again merely generate pointed criticisms of the ramblings of one of yesterday's men, recalling events of yesterday's yesterday, which are judged of little relevance to the much-changed pattern of 21C educational activity. That is as may be. One of my reflective reviews has led to a publication already used in educational development activities. One is well on the way to a joint publication in a well-regarded journal. The last promises to deliver a persuasive plan for a very innovative MOOC. So I am providing confirmation of the firm statement by Diana Laurillard³ when she wisely reminded her readers that our understanding of basic learning as an iterative and interactive process 'still references the work of Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky, nearly a century later' – *and remains unchanged!*^{3:1} (my italics)

The process I describe has been attractively simple, even if often disregarded. I have:

- Identified an issue of current educational interest and concern to myself and immediate colleagues and framed a question to guide exploration of my memory for relevant experiences.
- Assembled, at first as isolated incidents, my various attempts (successful *and otherwise*) to engage with that question, or part of it, in my past.
- Traced and analysed the linkages between these incidents.
- Identified salient lessons for myself, and for my activity today and tomorrow, in the aggregated story line of my learning experiences.

I invert and paraphrase the wise words of Søren Kierkegaard. I suggest here that, while life must be lived forwards, it can only be understood backwards. Furthermore, this wee story has demonstrated once again the relevance of our past experiences to the ecologies we create in the present to engage more productively and effectively with the situations and circumstances of our life. The past most definitely holds keys to the present.

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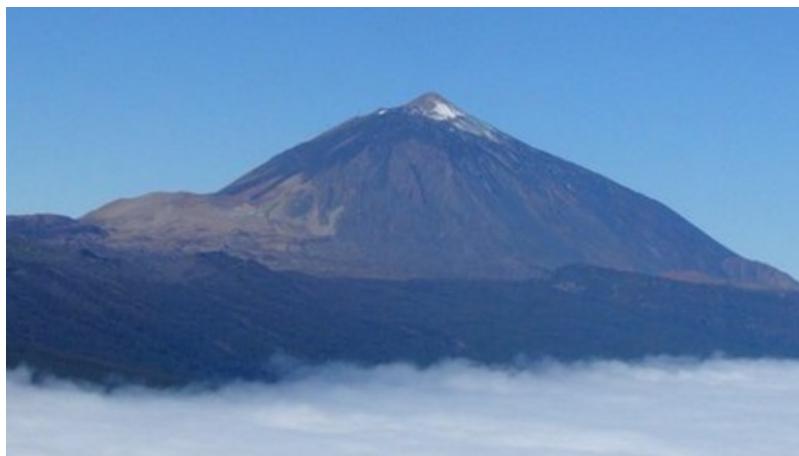


IN LIFE WE DO THINGS. SOME WE WISH WE HAD NEVER DONE. SOME WE WISH WE COULD REPLAY A MILLION TIMES IN OUR HEADS. BUT THEY ALL MAKE US WHO WE ARE, AND IN THE END THEY SHAPE EVERY DETAIL ABOUT US. IF WE WERE TO REVERSE ANY OF THEM WE WOULDN'T BE THE PERSON WE ARE. SO JUST LIVE, MAKE MISTAKES, HAVE WONDERFUL MEMORIES, BUT NEVER EVER SECOND GUESS WHO YOU ARE, WHERE YOU HAVE BEEN, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY WHERE IT IS YOU'RE GOING.

How a holiday in Tenerife enabled me to feel like a geologist again

Norman Jackson

I wrote this short article about an experience I had while on holiday in Tenerife for my blog. In fact it was the first holiday my wife and I had taken without our children so it was a novelty in itself. I found the cheapest deal on-line and it happened to be in Tenerife. I wrote this reflection after we had just returned from a day trip to Mt Tedei the dormant volcano which dominates the south centre of the island. We took a taxi from outside our hotel and drove an hour into the mountains, through the steep pine clad slopes and clouds and then out into the stunning brightness and our first site of the majestic towering volcano with its classic pyramid shape reaching 3700m into a blue sky. How can you not be uplifted by such a sight?



We spent over four hours being driven around the volcano by our cheerful taxi driver and I was happy as Larry. Why? because just for that few hours I reached back in time to a life I once had and I became a geologist again. By that I mean my interest was engaged like a geologist, I thought like a geologist, I wondered and puzzled like a geologist, I poked around in the rocks and picked rocks up to examine them like a geologist, I saw and observed like a geologist, I speculated on the structures I was seeing, I drew on my knowledge of volcanic geology and my past experiences of seeing volcanic geology to interpret what I was seeing, I tried to make sense of what I saw and tried to explain what I was seeing to my wife (who didn't know me when I was a geologist and had never seen me as a geologist). She was interested and that encouraged me to say more.

I felt like a geologist (well as much as one could be without actually being systematic, taking samples and making a map). I certainly gained a sense of satisfaction when I came across a public notice that explained the geology and it more or less confirmed what I had been seeing and saying. Not only that, I wanted to talk about some of my experiences as a geologist and the people I had worked with as a geologist which took me into my past when I worked as a geologist in Saudi Arabia.



Me (left) as a young geologist working in Saudi Arabia in 1978

My experience amongst the landscapes and rocks of Mt Tedei triggered something quite deep that was cognitively, emotionally and physically a part of me. A way of being that although I did not practise it, was something I had not forgotten: a bit like when you ride a bike for the first time in many years. The experience was overwhelmingly positive, I felt pleasure, excitement and joy at being in the landscape and engaged in solving the puzzle of the geology in that landscape and remembering knowledge I had not used for many years. Somehow the knowledge that had been hard won through study and experience was still available to me at this moment. It reminded me that even though I can't call myself a geologist, being a geologist is part of my identity and I will carry it to my grave (or at least as long as I am conscious of my past).

I thought this incident in my current life, brought about by the circumstances of our holiday provided a good example of how when we encounter a particular space or context, like the one I had experienced, the things we are doing in our present can be used to trigger memories, knowledge and feelings that momentarily connect us to our past and remind us of who we once were, what we have done, who we shared our life with and how we felt, far more than an act of remembering without the aid of a particular place, artefact or circumstance could ever do.

From this experience I conclude that our ecologies for doing things in our unfolding present sometimes enable us to re-experience something of our past. In this case mentally travelling back in time was aided by an experience I had on holiday. I was not anticipating it to happen but I recognised and used the affordance in the experience. While this experience was accidental, I can see how we might purposefully construct an experience to put ourselves into a context or place that was more likely to trigger the sorts of remembering process I describe above.

I last practised as a geology teacher 27 years ago and as field geologist involved in mineral exploration more that 32 years ago (almost half a lifetime ago) so I have temporarily become quite detached from what was at that time in my life - my passion. As I look back on my Tenerife experience now eight months ago, I can see that it rekindled my interest in geology. I began by watching YouTube videos of the geology of Tenerife and the Canary islands. I then started searching for articles on topics that I used to be interested in, some of which I had researched. I even contacted a geologist I had worked with many years ago – something I had talked of doing for several years. And I checked out my geological publications on researchgate to see if anyone was reading them.

One of the fundamental principles I learnt as a geology undergraduate, made famous by geologist James Hutton, is the 'present is the key to [understanding] the past'. The incident I describe above enabled me to see that what we do in our present can help us connect cognitively and emotionally in a meaningful way with our past.

James Hutton

- Father of modern Geology, 1785
- Doctrine of uniformitarianism
 - The present is the key to the past
 - Geologic forces and processes - both gradual and catastrophic

Image source: <http://slideplayer.com/slide/8817915/26/images/7/James+Hutton+Father+of+modern+Geology,+1785.jpg>

Carving a meaningful future from our past

Sandeep Raina



Sandeep Raina grew up in Kashmir and writes about it. His stories have been published in a few magazines and papers in India and the UK. He lives in UK.

Since childhood we are taught to look ahead, never look back. To succeed in life, we must just keep going forward; only your today will propel you into the future.

However, the truth is that many of our actions of today are a residue of our past. And since our present will be our past soon, it bears a high relevance to the success of our future. But, how often do we consciously use our past experiences to shape our future? An observation (which might just be mine and/or the views of someone who is generally optimistic) is that more often we recall our past as a mesh of pleasant memories. We tend to avoid the conflicts and the bitter experiences, thinking that they cannot contribute to the success of our future. And that is where our mistake lies.

Learning from our past mistakes, misgivings and bad experiences is as important as remembering the good experiences. To carve out a fulfilling future, past wins and losses, joys and sorrows, successes and failures are all equally important. While the good experiences of our past will propel us forward, the bad experiences will make us pause and reflect, and teach us valuable lessons.

To illustrate this wisdom I draw upon a trip to Kashmir I made a few years ago, which unleashed in me a series of memories, that had been pushed into a dark corner of my mind. They needed to be teased out to reveal their valuable teachings. To access these memories I felt the need to revisit the spaces in which they had formed and without my physical presence in the location of those memories, this might not have been possible. The experience taught me that revisiting your past, mentally and physically, is important for recollection of events, reflecting on our perceptions, sifting fact from fiction, and carving a way forward.

Here, I am sharing with you some of the experiences that were eye-opening, cathartic, and life-transforming at the same time. This is a shorter version of my story that was published in The Hindu, after the trip I made to Kashmir in 2014¹.

For 24 years, I fed on memories of a place and a people gone bad. A valley that had turned ugly, where blood was shed at the slightest excuse and where humanity had lost its way. I kept away from it. I was afraid, for myself and for my own.

This summer, when we told our three children, who have been raised in London that we were going to Kashmir for a holiday, they were mentally geared up for the images on TV and the stories that had gone around in the families. I was prepared for worse. I had actually seen it crumble in 1989. I had first-hand experience of the violence.

We went anyway. And we took with us my parents, who have been living only 200 km away from Kashmir, in Jammu, for the last 24 years, not wanting to visit Kashmir.

When our van slipped into Srinagar and hit the boulevard, Kashmir's beauty struck us. Tourists that we were, our cameras went click-click as we approached the bank to get to our houseboat. When I was growing up, it was fashionable to speak in Hindi/Urdu/English. Kashmiri was for the uneducated. I suddenly found my Kashmiri tongue unfurling when I spoke to the shikarawala (boatman). My children stared at me in wonder; they had never heard me speak Kashmiri at home in London. I

EDITOR

Exodus from Kashmir (1985–1995)

Kashmiri Pandits are the original inhabitants of Kashmir Valley and only remaining Hindu community native to the valley. In the 1990's, following persecution and threats by radical Islamists and militants approximately 100,000 of the total Kashmiri Pandit population of 140,000 left the valley. The events of 19 January 1990 were particularly vicious. On that day, mosques issued declarations that the Kashmiri Pandits were Kafirs and that the males had to leave Kashmir, convert to Islam or be killed. Those who chose the first of these were told to leave their women behind. The Kashmiri Muslims were instructed to identify Pandit homes so they could be systematically targeted for conversion or killing²

The Dal Lake was clean, not red and dirty as I had been told. The shikaras that floated next to our houseboat sold Himalayan stones, papier-mâché and walnut wood carvings. The young vendors displayed the most graceful etiquette and manners. I looked hard at them thinking how little they seemed impacted by the 24 years of militancy in Kashmir. Something was not fitting well with my images of Kashmir. This must all be pretence.



In the evening, our houseboat owner Abdul Ahad, a man in his seventies, asked me where we lived in Kashmir before we fled, and then popped up the most popular question in the valley “Will you not return?”

I answered mechanically. “I live in London and who would want to live with neighbours who couldn’t step out of their houses and let militants burn our house down.” Abdul Ahad looked at me with a smile. He said, “Come sit here, let me tell you my story.”

The servant boy whom Abdul Ahad had raised turned up one day in 1990 with 10 militants, and demanded Rs.50 lakhs from him, saying azadi was not just his responsibility, the rich had to contribute too. If Ahad did not have the money, he had to hand over his four young sons to be trained for azadi. He would return the next day for the boys or the money. Abdul Ahad, the well-off houseboat owner, locked his houseboats and packed his bags and escaped to Delhi that night, with his wife and sons. To a life of homelessness and poverty. He had unlocked the houseboats after 15 years.

When they saw mountain bikes in Dachigam, which is the forest reserve recently opened for tourists, the faces of my teenage twin sons lit up. “I will show you a part of Dachigam which very few have seen, trust me,” said Yusuf, the guide. “I am too old for this,” I said to Yusuf. “No, you think you are old,” he said laughing. “Look at me, I am 40 but I think I am young, so I feel fit. Come on, you won’t regret this,” he laughed.

There was something sinister about the way he said this. The presence of CRPF and other armed forces on the way up calmed me a bit. The excited flushed faces of my sons following Yusuf took my fear away and I cycled on. Right at the end of the climb was the most beautiful sight I had seen in my life.

“That treeless peak over there.” Yusuf pointed to a mountain. “Do you know what that is? It’s called Mahadev; it has a temple of Shiva at the top. And do you see that large boulder in the stream over there? It is called Shiv Pall — Shiva’s boulder. It hides a cave under the water. Nehru and Indira Gandhi used to come here often.”

I wondered why the Muslim guide wanted to show me Mahadev and talk about Shiva temples. As we went downhill, an official photographer joined us on his bicycle. He was the third person to ask, “Will you not return to the valley?”

“No,” I said. “Our house was burnt down.” I was surprised at my own directness. “Our neighbours burnt it down. I don’t trust them anymore.” I was ruthless.



"You know your half of the story," he said. "It is hard to save someone else's life when a gun is pointed at your own head. Your loss is immense, I understand, but think of the mother whose daughter was raped in front of her. This is what happened in Kashmir in the nineties. Every day."

He continued, "You don't have to answer this, because I don't know you. I live in Dachigam, you live in London, our paths will never cross again, but I want to ask you something." He put his hand on mine and said, "I want you to come home with me and eat a meal with my family. Like old days. Will you?"

Something melted inside me.

Kheer Bhawani, the Hindu temple in Tullamulla was heavily guarded by the Army. My parents were astounded to see a Muslim man rush out to them with a pooja thali in his hands for them to offer at the temple. An unheard of thing before, when things were normal. I liked this abnormality.

My wife and I untied a thread that I had tied here 25 years ago, feeling a big sense of relief. I wondered if the temple would have still been around, if the army was not guarding the gates? If the Muslim man was not handing over pooja thalis to her devotees?

I had to untie two more threads. At the Dargah at Hazratbal on the banks of Dal Lake and at the shrine of Baba Shukurddin near Wular Lake. We went to Hazratbal. My wife and I together untied the thread that I had tied here 25 years ago. My 20-year-old Britain-raised daughter was not too happy that she could not walk through the dargah, and that she had to stand with her mother and grandmother and only peer through a latticed wall.

"This is how some worlds are," I tried explaining to her.

"But should not be," she said.

When I saw the snow covered Al Pathri peak in Gulmarg, I told my sons about the frozen lake at the top. "We want to see it," they said. And I wanted them to. Asif Khan, the guide, climbed with us over the rocky mountain right to the top. He pointed to a Pakistani bunker in the distance. 'That is the Pakistani side over there, and this is our Indian side.'

I looked at him, wondering which side he was on. I kept the question to myself, ashamed at my own cynicism. I asked Asif

Khan to take us back. He was 24-years-old. He had never seen a Kashmiri Pandit in Kashmir. But he spoke to us as if he knew us. He lived in the hills of Baramulla, the town where I grew up. I wanted to hold his hand, I wanted to embrace him. I wanted to tell him that I was like him. That I was the Kashmiri Pandit that he had never seen. At the base of Al Pathri, my daughter showed us a bunch of mountain flowers that she had collected.



I was already feeling at home when we drove to Baramulla, down the street where we once lived. We met the neighbours who had built a new house where our house used to be. We embraced. We cried. I showed my wife the house and the garden which she had never had a chance to live in. I showed my daughter the river she is named after; it still runs at the end of the street. I showed my sons the river bank where we played in the sand all day long. My father and mother took a photograph in the garden that was laid out by them. Standing in front of a house, which is not their home anymore. New lives breathe in that house and new plants grow in that garden.

The Muslim neighbours and friends that we met were emotional and happy to see us. They talked of old times; they remembered small details of our home, our garden. One remembered that I had gifted him a book: *Gone with the Wind*. I couldn't recall this at all. It seemed they had talked a lot about us for the last 24 years.

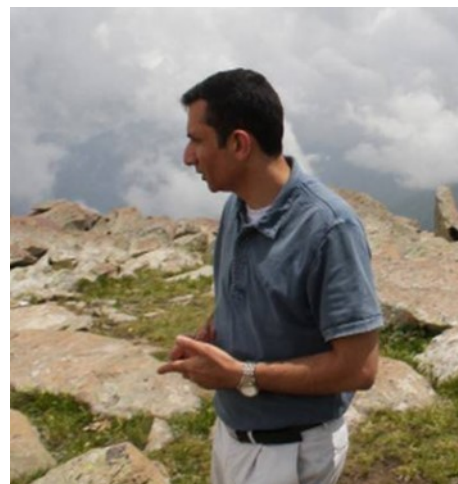
Naseem Auntie said to my mother: "I built my house next to yours because of you. But you left me." She burst into tears. Her daughter Nasreen tied a rakhi on me every year, and I used to savour firni at their home, every Eid. Ironical that we were visiting them right between Eid and Raksha Bandhan. We had missed 24 Eids and 24 Raksha Bandhans.

My college friend, Basheer, took us to his home and his wife laid out a wazwan fit for kings. Their entire family turned up to meet us.

My wife was amused that while the neighbours had so much to say, my parents and I were mostly quiet. We seemed to have forgotten the good times.

Our daughter has brought the 20 Himalayan rock flowers back to England, pressed neatly between pages of a thick book. Now she wants to match them to the Alpines that we grow in the rock garden in our home in London.

I have one more thread to untie; at Baba Shukurddin's shrine near Wular Lake. Someday, I will return to that lake and untie that thread too. Until then, I will live with the beautiful memories of this trip. Reminding me of a Kashmir that I had forgotten. I pray that I am given a chance to thank the gods of that land again, and untie the thread. And be forgiven for forgetting.



Making a different sense from my past – creating opportunities for a new future

In the 10-day period of my holiday, I re-discovered a part of my being, which perhaps I had kept hidden from myself. A part where emotions had been repressed because emotions could lead to discomfort and reckless, foolish and irrational acts. Such feelings were hindrances in the scientifically-oriented world that I grew up in, because they had no order, rationale or basis. Emotions are subjective and cannot be applied to resolve collective problems, that is what I had believed.

However, allowing myself to emote freely, especially in matters connected to Kashmir, and the people of that place, I have realized that it has opened my mind to empathize, to relate and to connect better, not just to the Kashmiris but to all other people. Emotional connections with the past can unleash very powerful insights, along with a deeper understanding of the human psyche and behaviour.

Having been a student of engineering and been in the engineering industry for over twenty-five years, I was expected to be rational, scientific and logical in my approach to resolving matters of the world. However, when I gave my scientific mind the challenge of understanding and possibly resolving in my mind a conflict which was religious, political, social and ethnic in nature, the scientific, rational and logical reasoning I relied on so much was not able to contribute much. Its logical, analytical steps led nowhere, its scientific approach fell short of the understanding I sought.

An emotional tsunami, brought about by a trip to the past has, on the other hand, broken down several mental barriers that I had been carefully building through my engineering education and practice. Once free from those shackles, I was able to perceive, absorb and reflect upon the complex issue of Kashmir in a broader and deeper sense and develop new perspectives that have enabled me to see it in a new light.

Our understanding of the world cannot be solely based on what we see and observe; a lot of it can be based on what we feel and derive from our experiences as we look back on them. These provide us with another source of knowing that is different to the logic of our scientific knowing. Our emotional response to situations can, in fact, enhance our scientific understanding of a problem.

We can apply this way of thinking to the business world I work in. Recent successes of engineering companies that are more tuned to their customers' emotional needs have been phenomenal. Apple is a great example. Facebook is another. In the omnipresent, omniscient world of social media, where technology, science and emotional content are hopelessly interlinked, opportunities to create, develop and resolve human issues have increased manifold.



My experiences through mentally travelling into my past, aided by being in the same spaces I inhabited in my past, has revealed that our understanding of the past can expose the many layers that we contain within us. It is up to us, how we uncover ourselves and let the process of exposure and reflection help us achieve our full potential. Triggers might be needed to uncover these layers, since many of them lie buried within the folds of hazy or even suppressed memories. But if we cast our minds back in an open and purposeful way, what will be revealed is not just relevant experiences, but also possible solutions to problems.

These learnings might not present themselves in a scientifically coherent manner, however they will come through in abstract forms. Also, the solutions may not be suitable to all around us, but they will be solutions that are personal and suitable to us. This learning phenomenon might ultimately present itself as an intuition, foresight, vision, revelation, epiphany etc. However, it will be a relevant distillation of our own past experiences and lessons learnt as we process our thinking, emotions and experiences in the present.

In conclusion, I would say that reflecting upon and considering our past experiences, and the emotions attached to those memories, can help us achieve the required key to our successful future. A full cognizance of our past experiences can provide the holistic outlook that is required to resolve or mitigate complex issues in the present. The process of reliving the past, and then expressing the learnings as they emerge orally or in writing and documenting the impact of those experiences on your thinking is an important step in the learning process. Finally, applying our emotional intelligence to understanding human conflicts might help advance our understanding and resolving such issues more meaningfully.

Note: The names of people mentioned have been changed for privacy.

Source

1 'Back to the Valley' Hindu Times Magazine' <http://www.thehindu.com/features/magazine/back-to-the-valley-back-to-jammu-and-kashmir/article6386499.ece>

2 Kashmiri Pandit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashmiri_Pandit

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Houseboats on Lake Dal <https://www.tourmyindia.com/states/jammu-kashmir/houseboats-in-kashmir.html>

Al Pathia Lake <https://www.tourmyindia.com/blog/things-do-and-see-in-gulmarg-kashmir/>

Further articles by Sandeep

<https://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/author/sandeepraina/>

Writing: My vehicle for transporting me mentally across time from no man's land to my inner habitat

Maria Kefalogianni



Maria is a Lecturer in Counselling & Psychotherapy at the University of Salford. She teaches across MSc and BSc programmes and is a module leader of Bereavement & Loss ; her current research interests are on phenomenological methods of research enquiry, lifewide education & creativity in HE. Maria also holds a small private practice where she offers therapy and supervision for counsellors but also other professionals (i.e. social work, mental health etc). Amidst all this she is also a mother to a toddler, a wife, dog owner and a curious not grown up child! As if this is not enough she is a member of the Lifewide Education & Creative Academic Team – and what a pleasure that is to be so! 😊

Introduction

Every day of our lives has an inherent story to be told ... We live in an era where we simultaneously inhabit so many different spaces¹: we are being bombarded with information from all sides and all at once. All of these spaces contribute to who we are today and enable us to become a different version of ourselves. Each experience we live holds the potential to influence us and to teach us something new about ourselves, and the world around us. But how often do we take the time to look deeper and reflect upon our experiences and into how we arrive at the beliefs, meanings and sense of ourselves we have come to hold?

In this article, I address the core theme of this issue of Lifewide Magazine in two different ways. Firstly, I show how the act of writing in a reflective way can stimulate our memories that enable us to reach into and reconnect with our own past. Then using deliberative and rational ways of thinking, and armed with the wisdom of a life that has been lived, we can recognise deeper significance and meanings in experiences and relationships we have encountered in our life. The act of writing this essay provided me with the opportunity and motivation to enable me to travel back in time through my life revisit past versions of myself. My urge to reflect in this way was not a spontaneous act, I have been wanting to do so for some time: I just seized the opportunity when it came. Timing is very important when we want to engage in mental time travel and crystallize our meanings deeper. Others call it serendipity, I call it choice.

The second way in which the article illustrates the core theme of this issue is in the way psychotherapy has afforded me with deeper self-awareness. It has taught me the value of self-reflection and this has helped me to engage in a systematic way with past experiences enabling me this way to understand myself and my unfolding journey to who I am forever becoming. Therapy was an important space and tool in enabling myself to travel back in time by accessing and processing memories from past experiences to understand myself better and change aspects of myself in order to become a different and better version of themselves.

In conducting this article I happened to be in Crete. Being physically in the place I grew up helped me to connect with more memories and emotions of an “older time” in my life, enabling me to bridge any gaps and reach richer meanings

My origins - my cultural identity

Some argue that *Identity lies deep in the Soul of Culture ...* I agree a lot with this saying.

So much of who we are originates in our past but our unfolding present enables us to continually interact with and change the identities we hold. I have never seen identity as something fixed and formed. Yet I always recall myself seeking a true answer to the question “who am I”. A fixed identity holds the notion “includes” and in doing so it simultaneously “excludes”. How could I argue that it is ME the author of this article and not the combination of influences so far, beginning that of my culture, my family ? How could I possibly rule out any contextual cultural input on my “formed” identity. It is all relevant ... I am originally from a village called Anogia in Crete. My dad's family led a nomadic life until present, and grew up in a village of no more than 2400 people.



I grew up in a society which was very male oriented . The role of the woman was predicted to be that of child rearing and being a good housewife. Family means a lot in Crete which I believe is deeply rooted in the social/cultural history of this place. Crete faced poverty and war and occupation by the Turkish, Germans for over 400 years. My grandparents grew up in environments in which poverty and deprivation were the norm and they had to work extremely hard to make ends meet. The men were fighting and women holding the house together. This scheme is still very dominant in Cretan culture, albeit a lot is changing. Culture and over culture has strong influence in the shaping of people's personality.



My early life: my developing sense of self

What follows is my own personal perception and experience of my upbringing.

I was blessed to be brought up by parents who wanted me to be happy and respected my birthright; they let me free to make my own choices. But in the society I grew up in there was still a sense of male domination and restrictive cultural rules about how girls should behave. As a result of this, I grew up to absorb plenty of unhealthy *conditions of worth* (Rogers, 1959) . it was not ok for a young girl to be angry or behave out of what was culturally acceptable. “ *What will the neighbours/society say?*” was a phrase I heard many a time and one which became a second voice in my head. I was disapproved for wanting to wear short skirts and express my healthy teenage experimentation with my sexual identity, for talking to other boys/friends, for wanting to have a second piercing in my ear, for disobeying the “cultural rules” and more importantly for being defiant!. That fear and intimidation of disapproval from my society , was lingering and reinforcing a sense of self which was relying externally on the *continual approval of others*, whilst building deep resentment and rage, hurt for the perceived lack of freedom, emotional connection and autonomy and lack of acceptance on my own expression of myself .

In family therapy there is the concept of homeostasis. Essentially it means that each system/family seeks to maintain its functionality by resisting change. I was the one who was being resistant to the accepted norms familiarity and I was the “angry” voice who could bring change in my wider family. If change is threatening for a system they will look to do everything to maintain their homeostasis (ref 2 on family therapy). In my case it was very simple. I had to be the “difficult “ child who is being “too much” to handle. Possibly also voicing the deep desire of many...

This came at a cost; I always felt different and difficult to be understood and accepted, an outsider who didn't really belong “just right” ... the yearning was building inside... I didn't have the awareness back then, but everything about me, did. I was lucky enough that my family did not suppress my defiance. My consistent and only way to protect my autonomy, to find my voice and place! The sacrifice was that I learnt from a young age to rely on myself for my emotional needs. There was no space for me to talk about how these things were affecting me. Yet our feelings do stay with us. I channelled all this energy and loss of emotional connection creatively through extended hours of play.

All this brought layers and layers of conditioning which caused me to see my rich complexity in negative terms (what an interesting and difficult child I must have been!)... my curious mind was not embraced or stimulated...I was left to roam free in my childhood discoveries....a gift in retrospect.

I turned to journal writing from a young age: My journals would have entries / notes to myself in the future... my teenage self would want to remind my adult self not to disapprove or laugh about my stories, but give the message that the rawness of those stories was real and held a deep meaning for me. In a sense I was trying to draw the attention of my future self to how I felt and how I should act. In this way I was perhaps laying the foundations for future mental time travel... sending an invite to my future self to return to this place, to continue the healing once started. (In Rogerian terms it was my actualising tendency, the tendency we all hold towards fulfilling our potential and discovering who we truly are).



I discovered new ways to creatively respond to my inner conflicts. I would turn my thoughts into poetry and stories about death and loss and belonging. I would invent heroes who would go on a journey to discover themselves. I used to love listening to a cassette at 8/9 years of age with songs in which parents mourned the loss of a child / or family member. These



mourning poems were added melody from a local folk musician who had turned those into songs. He often gathered the women in the village to sing those mourning songs². It was, my way to grieve my own losses and channel my family's grief, outwardly. Something in me was able to *stay put* in that process of crying and enjoying the expression of my feelings, I recall a re-assuring soft voice *its ok, you need this right now...*

I believe we carry feelings of grief for generations on. ³

As a practising therapist, I know well that a core aspect of my work is to empower my clients to sit with their feelings, despite it being emotional, uncomfortable and overwhelming at times.

How on earth was I able to understand the significance of being able to do this as a child without any training or knowledge? Only in reflecting as I write this article am I able to reach another explanation. Perhaps I was rebelling to the knowing and experience of the women I had met. Perhaps it was my way to make space for me to discover the woman I needed to be. My role models around me were following all the cultural norms imposed for generations. I had dreams and desires and an insatiable thirst to discover the world...This thirst was ignited at a young age thanks to little windows that life and my parents afforded me through their own choices.

Its only due to the writing of this article that I found out that as a child I was told stories and songs from the war and ones which were heart sinking about death, oppression, grief and loss. These stories/songs were told directly to my parents; then to me. This may explain a lot about my sensitivity around death and grief; till present. In listening to these songs during the writing of my store; it's as if I return to that moment in front of that radio..as if past and present merge..

Epiphany - starting point for a new self... My mum used to work in the local American Base. She once invited a couple of black American colleagues home for dinner who



arrived with their child. Back in those days I was exposed to NO cultural diversity and my social interactions were only with people from my own culture. MY perception of diversity very limited. Talk about white privilege!! I recall vividly my amusement and excitement at the differences I felt and experienced with the curiosity of a 6 year old child that I was. I recall holding the girl's hand in my own hand, staring at it(she must have been 2 or 3). For years I carried this image around me with no resonant explanation. Much later, as I journeyed through my life, I came to understand that this experience given my context and upbringing, was an influential factor in me choosing to travel abroad. In that moment it was

clear that the white Cretan world I was exposed to was not the only world, and that my new awareness of other possible worlds excited my interest and curiosity. There was a whole different world out there. On further reflection, as I look back and try to make sense again, perhaps that was a moment when the identity of a white Cretan girl I was forging, collapsed.

An early beginning of a long de-cluttering process..

My turning point

"I need to go and meet myself". (I had told my ex partner)

20 years after these formative experiences and after many years of thinking about the alternative worlds and alternative possible life; I made my decision to leave my home in Crete to study for masters in the UK. It all happened quickly. I left in 3 days from my receiving my letter of acceptance from Keele University. It was an opportunity I grabbed without much thinking which filled me with equal amounts of excitement and dread. I remained perplexed for a while about *what* in me felt this compelling urge to leave my hometown. Looking back, it was as if there was a "me" waiting to be discovered...a "me" that somehow, I had lost touch with or that I had never discovered because it had yet to emerge. I held an unspoken and intangible knowing that pushing myself outside of my comfort zone into an exploratory journey was what I *truly* needed. And I was right. In Roger's (1959) terms, it was my actualising tendency knocking on my door, inviting me towards a direction of growth. What follows is a reflective commentary as I used my present to journey into my past to gain deeper understandings of my becoming the person I am.



September 2007: arrival in Stoke on Trent to study Msc in counselling psychology This is Stoke on Trent train station.. My first street view of the UK..I recall standing outside, holding my luggage I finished packing that same day... as I came out of the station I paused, looked around the distinctly red bricked buildings, took a deep breath: I recall an immense sense of freedom and internal power... alien and overwhelming all at once. An internal visceral knowing, it "felt right".

Disintegration of my early identity.the start of my rebirth...

My MSc and my training into the Rogerian theory used by psychotherapists served as a beautiful space for me to examine myself, like a "secure base" (Bowlby, 2012,). For the first time in my life I experienced deeply the power of acceptance. This acceptance and unconditional positive regard broke through the layers of conditioned self I had built to survive throughout my years...I began a process of therapeutic de-cluttering to discover who I was through a process of discovering who I wasn't. It was a very painful process which demanded re visiting of old experiences and wounds as perceived as a child...I was peeling off layers of myself like rather like an onion...I still do...

Through my therapy I was bringing conscious awareness to parts of myself that I kept hidden, had denied to myself growing up: my own vulnerability and emotional side. It is hard to define what being in therapy means as it needs to *be experienced*. It's an art of true listening. A philosophy of a new way of being and existing in the world.



In therapy it's like a contagious ripple effect takes place. Through therapist's genuine accepting presence and fearless compassion and respect; the client feels empowered to develop a new script and narrative about themselves and their lives. In accepting themselves fully, without conditions, with compassion, they change. In my personal story and In Jung's terms (Jung, 1991)) my *anima* emotional side was allowed to be expressed and accepted. This resulted in beginning to allow myself to feel compassion at a level deeper than I ever had before. In discovering and accepting who I am I learnt to begin to respect myself more and make choices that were for my own benefit. I made changes in my relationship to myself, in my choices in life and in my relationships. Roger's talked of the necessary conditions to create change (Rogers, 1959)). Once these are present the person can grow closer to who they aspire to become.

The first couple of years during my studies in the UK felt great. There was an initial process of cultural adjustment through my interactions with people of all cultural backgrounds.It was an exciting journey. I was allowing myself to absorb and be influenced /changed from all this newly faced diversity! An inevitable outcome of this was the sense of disorientation and loss of my own culture ,food, language, systems and meanings. I felt like a tree on the mountains in windy storm, yet hanging off the cliff that was securely holding me, allowing my branches to bend as much as this was needed, until spring would return to allow the -rebirth of my leaves to emerge, new and fresh.

What was helping my stay "put" in that wind was the fact that I was surrounded by influences of my culture: I would be around Greek friends, hold Greek parties. I kept the Greek-connection closely whilst I was also exposed to cultural difference. I lived in halls of residence with a lot of people from different cultural backgrounds. And my "difference" was allowed and accepted. We would do cuisine nights; I was "part" of something. I wouldn't say I belonged but there was a *shared* sense that we are all travellers sharing, celebrating and holding our differences.



Besides this familiarity I was afforded *other spaces which helped me to feel this nurturing and harbouring of my new sense of self, new sense of resilience and trust in my abilities to survive as a woman in a different culture (my first therapist Mo, supportive close friends, partners, tutors, my journals, Greek music, alongside the learning of the culture which I now inhabited).*

My internal changes were impacting on my outward behaviour, I was becoming a softer version of myself, I connected with spaces within myself which felt peaceful, I was “worthy of love” and more over , capable of feeling and nurturing love for other people. I felt alive and content. For the first time in my life I felt at “home” in the sense of *a liminal space within ourselves that is capable of holding all aspects of ourselves...a space without gender, cultural, rules...that connects and interconnects us with others through the language of “love”.*

Home is
not a place..
it's a
feeling.



“No man’s land”...

Life is full of transitions.. rapid changes which never wait. It’s like the sea, full of power and depth, do we sink or swim ? This is how I saw my identity developing over the next few years.. Here I was, once again, battling with my sense of identity abroad...a second stage of my acculturation in the UK. Most of my Greek friends left. I stayed to look for a job. I was bullied as a “foreigner” in my first job, I experienced sexism in a team with men

and a form of discrimination on the basis of being Greek. I was often mocked “jokingly” for my accent, and felt trapped into a job role that I took until I discovered what I was passionate about. An unfortunate phase yet full of learning.

I began to reconsider who I should be in order to adjust to my new circumstances. Who should I be ? My Greek full on me or a softer, more English version of myself ? I recall talking to my supervisor worrying I am perhaps being “too Greek” for the English. At times it felt I was swimming in a sea without a life jacket.

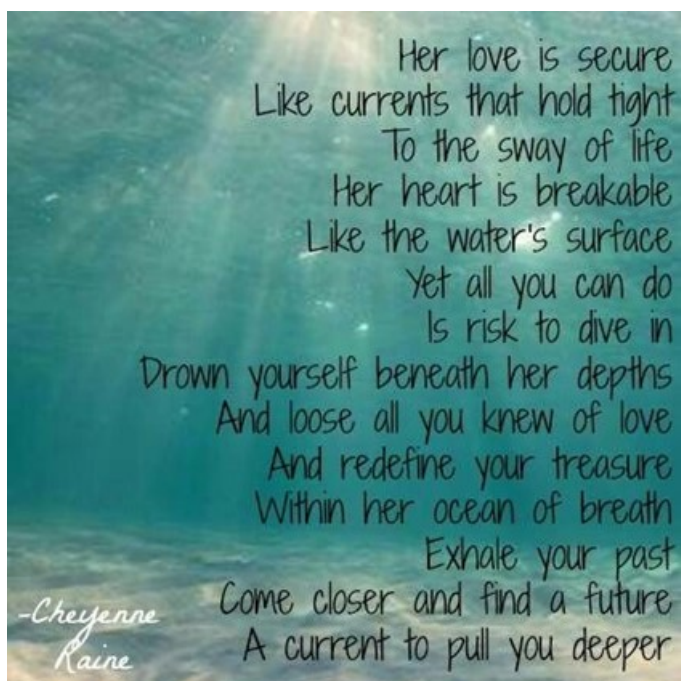
Like a wave in the sea which comes and goes, I’m left to be led by your current’s power

I risk to dive into your depths with little oxygen,

Take me in with your rhythm, lead me to the shore, I have lost all that I knew, yet your wave’s rhythmic movement calls me to trust your current , your waves, calls me to let go and learn to swim ... calls me to enjoy the mystery and the unknown you bring,

When I let go, I hear your melody, I see the sun’s light reflected on your face, I hear the birds above in the sky, I enjoy the sound of the whales beside me...when I surrender to your beauty , I remember how to swim.

This is another poem that resonated with me...



I recall moments in the UK after a visit to Crete, when I was making a conscious thought to “try and feel” as I do when I am in Crete...and vice versa. That thinking was bringing a sense of visceral gap which I increasingly felt the need to bridge... *how do I integrate those two radically different visceral spaces within myself...* I recall often asking...knowing deep down this is normal part of my assimilation in this culture. In these moments of despair, our bodies and hearts want to feel comforted, at ease again. Usually home is the first place that is cherished during those moments.

People who immigrate feel the need to look back on their cultural past in a way that people who never leave their own culture cannot understand. With immigration it’s as if we as a physical body immigrate, but this does not mean that we lose the person that grew up in the place we left behind.

Immigration brings dissolution, disorientation, paralysis on many levels... you die and are reborn ...but it takes time, physical and emotional effort and conscious meaning making.

During a recent visit to Crete I was sharpened my observing reflecting self. It was fascinating to see that despite those changes, I was observing how different I was in the UK and how I was in Greece.

I buried aspects of my personality so that I could adapt to my new circumstances and survive the changes I faced. To manage the loss that emigrating brings with it, I noticed that I became extremely more contemplative and wise, not the “clown” version of me I always was. Back home friends were “missing “ the old me. It is like I learned for a while to live in the *no man’s land*.. that liminal space which doesn’t feel familiar, neither strange... a space of awkward yet familiar meaninglessness.. a space where identity melts...a space where the only constant companion was my ongoing changes. But now no man's land feels more like my land. That feeling is present both in Crete and in the UK at times. I am growing to accept that this is the price I pay for building a new life in another cultural domain. Perhaps I need to go through this many times, for every big change in my life and myself.

“IT’S A FUNNY THING
COMING HOME. NOTHING
CHANGES. EVERYTHING
LOOKS THE SAME, FEELS
THE SAME, EVEN SMELLS
THE SAME. YOU REALIZE
WHAT’S CHANGED IS YOU.”
— F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Language?

Attempting to read in English converse in English, dialogue in English at times has worked at the sacrifice of literally losing my Greek voice. I’d often spend weeks not conversing in Greek at all. I have totally underestimated how this in itself can contribute to my sense of distance with “my Greek self”. Not only that, learning to discover myself through such an experiential course, I felt it has affected the way I view reality. Not only have I learnt to converse in a different language but I have embodied a sub-language, separate and unfamiliar to many people.

Two recent life events have contributed to me feeling “at home” in the UK.

My son’s birth.

It’s as if birthing my own son has given me permission to re-birth my own sense of self. I felt a “habitant” ; a citizen of the world...It’s only through writing this article that I make the link that my birth was a tangible moment in my life to enter my womanhood *on my own terms. To become the woman I always aspired to be.* I became part of spiritual women’s groups and parenthood afforded me to link with other women and share experiences knowledge and wisdom. These spaces have nurtured and supported my search for an authentic way of being.

My breathwork practice has served as a space which encouraged me to find my own feminine voice. A bit like my immigration experience; this space afforded me with many opportunities: to risk to explore in a way that is unfamiliar, uncertain, deeply intense and healing, a space where there is a need for less demand on the cognitive side but allowing and trusting my body to do its own healing.

In Jung’s (1991) terms I brought some more balance between my *animus* and *anima* sides to myself. I have developed important friendships, I have invested in settling down. I have a family. I have let go and embraced the change and new possibilities that immigration brings.

Life’s unpredictable events and the meaning they hold for us.



I live in Manchester and the recent terrorist bombing really brought home to me how the city does, on many levels, feel like home. I was devastated by this event , and I felt that my sense of self was threatened. For the first time as I was walking in Piccadilly Gardens towards St Peter’s Square...I felt part of something bigger, a deeper sense of belonging in the UK. That was my visceral confirmation that Manchester had already begun to feel like “proper home”. *Was it Manchester per se or that space inside us that seeks that deeply meaningful sense of belonging as the social, connected and compassionate human beings that we strive to be? Perhaps a combination of both?*

Of course I oscillate between the different phases, at different times. Not without the knowledge and wisdom that I now hold as my tools to help me adjust to future changes.

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- ## Notes

- ## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Is Virtual Reality for Our Own Memories Really Such a Great Idea?

G Clay Whittaker



G. Clay Whittaker is a journalist. He covers topics related to culture, science and technology.

Virtual reality has been the talk of the entertainment industry for the last couple of years, as the TV, film, gaming, and social media worlds all look to immersive experiences as the next advancement in digital experiences.

But while big budget productions will rake in millions in the coming years, the on-the-ground presence of virtual reality will be about more than studios—it will be about sharing individual experiences and recording personal moments. And that’s maybe not a good thing.

In the coming years, virtual reality will be about recording personal moments. But what’s to stop people from living fully inside those memories?

At a recent Cannes Lions Festival appearance, Google VR vice president Clay Bavor said some interesting things about the future of VR, as a way for users to start reliving their own life experiences. It starts with the close connection between memory and experience. “When you look at your brain under an fMRI,” he said, “remembering and experiencing look very similar.”



Bavor talked about how, if your home was on fire, you’d be saving photo albums and hard drives with photos because of their value: the experience. “You can remember someone you love” is how he phrased it, someone “who might be far away or who you’ve lost.”

And for him and the many others writing and developing the VR world, that’s the primary goal: to step back into that memory years later.

Bavor went on to discuss his own experiences with a new prototype camera for recording VR. “I’ve recorded similar things too, little fleeting moments,” he said. “Sitting with my grandmother in her home. Having breakfast with my son. Here’s the thing: A few years from now, when my grandmother is gone, I’ll be able to sit with her. Twenty years from now, when my son is an adult, I’ll be able to put on some goggles and sit across the breakfast table from him as a little boy.”

Recreating the past is what we do. It’s how we remember what we lost, what we had. It’s how we find inspiration to get through bad times. But being able to call up an experience with the push of a button carries some dangers that memories don’t. We could get lost in the experiences, in an addictive way.

I know that sounds like science fiction but it’s not so far fetched. The question of taking the false for the real got more serious this week, with the announcement that scientists are trying to implant memories in human subjects. There’s your inception moment.

But back to VR. It could be a good thing. There are benefits to stepping back in time: One can think of many ways this sort of research can help Alzheimer’s patients or those with some form of brain damage to regain their possession of their own mind. It’s not a big leap to think that creating a virtual space to experience the past would help jar someone to access those moments. Plenty of anecdotal cases have shown music and pictures to help. But at least it will make all those vacation photo albums more interesting.



But what about the recreational side? What happens when flipping through a photo album becomes a multi-hour lounge on the couch? It's even easier to picture a grieving parent plugging in a headset on the nightstand and never leaving bed—we've all known someone who probably wouldn't have gotten out of a bout of depression had they had access to this kind of technology. Addiction, dependence: The past could easily become the new drug of choice for self-medication.

And say what you will about how technology has affected interpersonal communications—how youth and adolescence have been harmed by an unforgiving internet that remembers everything you do—but imagine how much more embarrassing and difficult life could become to navigate when your peers can literally step into that moment you were embarrassed and relive it over and over for amusement.

As with every technology (and I have found myself saying this near-daily over the last few years) there's going to be a social cost-benefit problem to work out. Livestreaming became a great justice tool, but it has also played host to horrifying things. The internet gives people a voice, but some hateful voices don't need to be heard.

As for immersive virtual reality recording, it too will capture our best moments and our worst, depending on who wields the camera.

But at least it will make all those vacation photo albums more interesting.

Acknowledgement

Article published in the Daily Beast. 07/05/16

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/is-virtual-reality-for-our-own-memories-really-such-a-great-idea>

<http://www.ultravr.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/virtual-reality.jpg>



Technology Assisting Memory

The Kickstarter-funded The Wayback Project has reached its £35,000 target to produce a series of short films using virtual reality (VR) that could help Alzheimer's patients remember events from their past. The videos strive to take the viewer back to a familiar time and immerse them fully for a few minutes using VR. The first video is set to transport people back to the Queen's Coronation in 1953, a moment in history that will be prominent for many of that generation. The creators behind the project will recreate scenes from the day in exact detail, including the location, the costumes, the props and the atmosphere. The viewer will be able to fully explore the scene, overhearing conversations and music from the time.

The films will be 3-4 minutes long, free to view through any smartphone and publicly available through Youtube's VR platform. Users will need a pair of VR Goggles, which are widely available to purchase online. The project's ultimate aim is to create a series of VR memory films from each decade, freely available to people and families living and dealing with dementia. More investment from external partners are needed to take the project forward, who are likely to be sought after once the pilot of the film is produced.

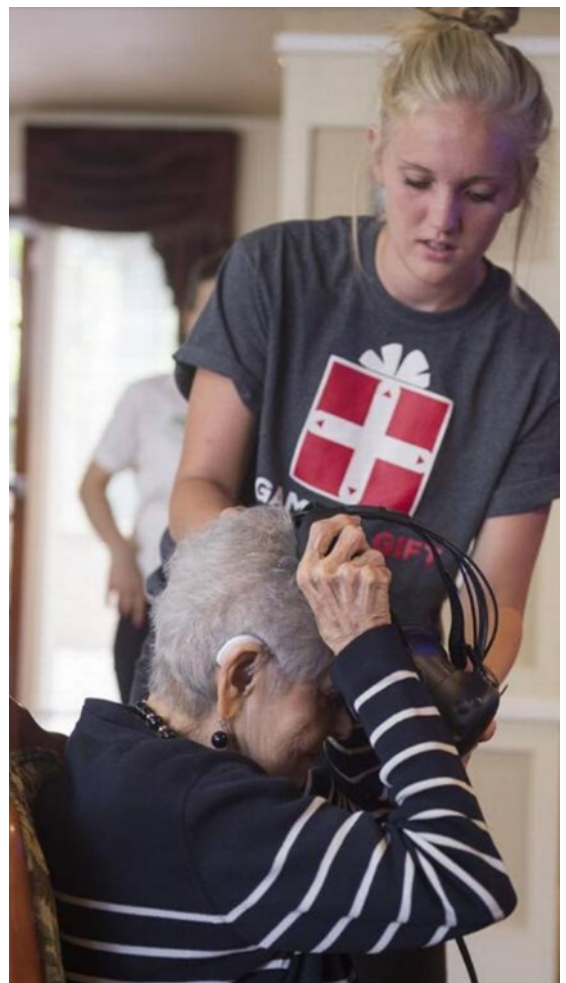
Helping people access their memories of where they lived

A group of school students have been taking virtual reality technology into retirement homes to let the residents revisit their childhood homes. The teenagers, who run non-profit Gamers Gift charity in Sacramento, California, have been running the project for several months, but only recently were able to combine the VR with Google Maps. Pairing Google Street View and Maps technology with the virtual reality goggles, the team helped a dozen residents at the Atria Carmichael Oaks assisted-living facility, go back to their home town. We've been doing this for quite a while, but just recently we've started to use Google Maps/Street View to allow them to revisit memories they haven't experienced in many years! We are a small group of college and high school students who have a passion for technology! Check us out on <https://www.facebook.com/gamersgiftsac/>

Acknowledgements

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https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jul/09/manchester-care-home-offers-residents-chance-to-relive-the-past?CMP=share_btn_tw
<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1494792746/the-wayback-virtual-reality-helping-people-with-al>



Building an ecology to reconnect me with a very painful past in order to deal with my phobia

Jenny Willis



Jenny Willis' career has involved many dimensions of teaching, educational management and research. She first worked with Norman on aspects of professional and personal development, creativity and lifewide learning as a Fellow at the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. She is a founder member of Lifewide Learning, conducts research and writes for its publications. She edits Lifewide's quarterly magazine and is also executive editor for Creative Academic Magazine. Jenny has a PhD in socio-linguistics and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. For more information about her go to <http://no2stigma.weebly.com>.

In this article, I begin by describing the ecology I deliberately created in order to help me understand what had made me the phobic person I am and hopefully learn how to overcome the phobia. This required me to work out how to re-connect with and re-experience my past - to build an ecology in my present to revisit my past. I reflect on how the ecology I established for this specific purpose led me into some very personal, and deeply disturbing, discoveries. The experience has also raised for me the relationship between physical and affective unconscious memory. From this experience I draw some conclusions for those seeking to understand themselves through exploring their past.

Accompanying my account, readers can follow Guest Editor Maria Kefalogiani's professional response to the issues I recount.

Affordance, Context and Resources

At the age of 45, I was forced into taking early retirement from my beloved career as a teacher. I was left bereft at this loss of my staff and pupils, but was fortunate in that I had a pension and lump sum in settlement. No amount of money could compensate me for the devastation I felt in no longer having the career to which I had devoted twenty years. But this enforced disruption to my life did give me the time and space to enable me tackle something I had never before had time or inclination to deal with : a phobia that has been with me for as long as I can remember, and which affects me in everyday life and whenever I travel. Like most phobias, it is irrational and had defied my personal efforts to eradicate it. If I could turn the tragedy of career loss into something positive for my future, the pain might be transformed into empowerment.

Co-incidental to this situation, two life-long smoking friends had recently been able to give up cigarettes, thanks to a hypnotherapist. As far as I was concerned they were living proof of this man's professional skills, so I made contact with him. His fees were enormous and would soon erode my lump-sum, but I felt this was a worthwhile investment in my future.

So it was that I embarked on a series of visits to his private practice. He was in fact my main external resource in my ecology for trying to engage with my past in order to discover the origins of my phobia . But I was petrified that I would be made to handle the object of my phobia; these fears were soon allayed as I settled down into a comfortable chair and the hypnotherapist explained that I would be conscious throughout the process and we could stop whenever I wished. Between sessions, I listened to his voice on a relaxation tape, which perhaps sensitised me to his soporific voice preparing me for hypnotism.

What you write here Jenny reminds me the saying of Kubler Rhoss in her book Life's Lessons : "life is loss and loss is life" ...if only we could embrace all our losses that way, how much growth we would undergo...What I am hearing here is that you were ready...and so more open to see the hypnotherapist as an affordance for you, which you make informed decision to visit.

Regression to infancy

After a few sessions, the day came when I was regressed to an age that had sprung spontaneously to mind. I could see nothing other than the room around me, but was oblivious of this as my mind concentrated on the feelings of my toddler self. Suddenly the therapist asked me what I was doing. Initially, I didn't know what he meant, but he guided my attention to my left hand. Without my being aware of it, it had lifted into the air and was making some movements over which I had no control. My mouth was gesticulating, too. There could be little doubt as to what these combined gestures were reflecting.

The therapist brought me out of my hypnotic state. I was embarrassed and thought I must have invented these 'memories'. Relentlessly, though, he asked me what the actions were telling me, and made me articulate what I thought had been happening to my infant self. Strangely, this all confirmed a suspicion I had long harboured that I had been abused. It explained so many of the problems I had experienced over the years.

The therapist focused on what had happened, not on who had been responsible or why or what should happen to that person. I shared the apparent findings with my husband and a close friend, but never disclosed them to my parents, for fear of distressing them.

I had uncovered what seemed to be the cause of my phobia, but sadly this did little to cure me of the fear itself, and I continue still to question whether the abuse really did happen. Nevertheless, my sessions came to an end, and the ecology I had created would become one of many micro-ecologies that would lead to my seeking an alternative form of therapy, many years later.

What, then, was this first micro-ecology?

This was a painful part of your story.. I notice your care to share as much as you want. It's your story, your pace, your narrative and for that is to be respected. If you were to say more, I wonder, whether you would expand on what you made out of your experience at the time...or in the moment of your writing..I notice again your wording " he made me articulate "... and the tension of this reality and your organic process of " I must have invented these memories"... The part of you that wanted to maintain the preservation of your self-concept

*It sounds that although you felt exposed at accepting your "felt sense" and re-surfaced memories, you did in the end allow some of that pain into your awareness. When we accept our selves and experiences just as we are, we can change. Rogers.
Where do you attribute the fact that phobia didn't lessen ?*

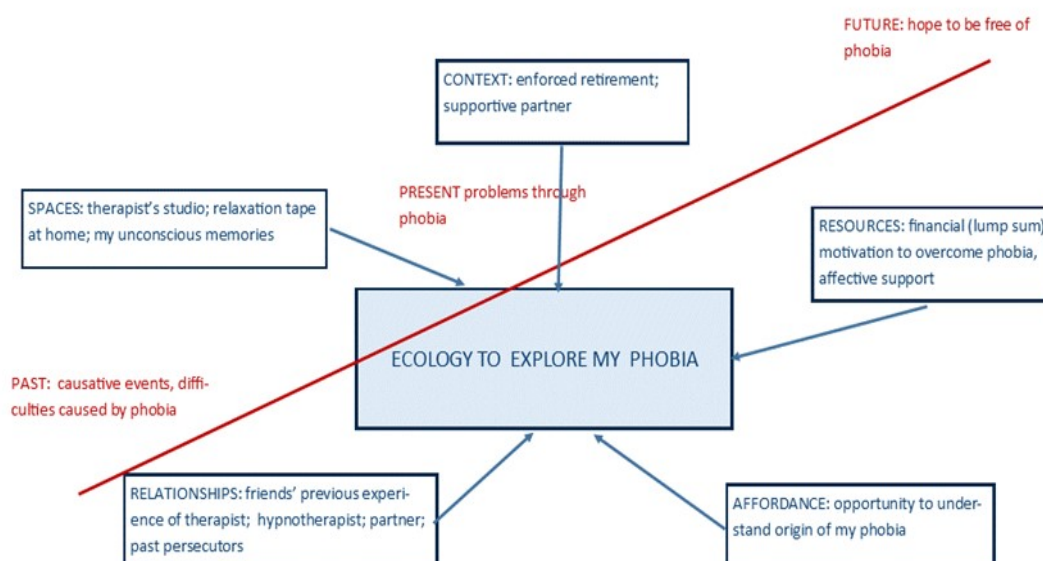


Figure 1: My ecology for exploring the past based on model by Jackson

The above image attempts to summarise the opportunity that was brought about by my enforced retirement. Resources in the form of money to pay for hypnotherapy, and supportive relationships with people I could talk to about the process were essential to my being ready to confront the issues. The time and circumstances were 'right'. There was also a strong motivational element: not only did I want to address the phobia at last, but I was also determined not to be crushed by the cruel loss of my career.

The persecution I had suffered as a child when others tormented me with the object of my phobia was as instrumental in my wishing to deal with it as my intellectual curiosity to know why I had this irrational fear. This linked to my ongoing problems when travelling or even in ordinary, mundane situations, and to my aspiration to be free of the crippling effects it has on me. Perhaps I was sublimating the sense of career loss by assuming control over an alternative aspect of my life.

The spaces in which this ecology existed were both physical – the hypnotherapist's studio and my own home, and psychological – the unconscious memories and emotions that were brought out through hypnotism.

Unfortunately, the ecology was only partly successful: I found a potential solution to why I am phobic, but no remedy for the phobia itself. That would come partially some years later, when this ecology would merge with another opportunity and form a new ecology around an Eastern therapy based on chakras. Thanks to this, I would make more incremental progress.

The relationship between memory and the senses

The ecology I had established was designed for a personal, functional objective. However, an unexpected benefit of this journey from the present into my past was the intellectual question it raised regarding memory and the senses. How could my hand and mouth possibly be reproducing what they had done so long ago, and what unconscious memory was triggering their response? This was leading me into more ontological territory, one which today's neuroscientists¹ are exploring, and which goes beyond individual experience.

As a devotee of Marcel Proust², I should not have been surprised by the unconscious associations we create between events and the sensations they trigger. In Proust's case, it was taste: the unexpected reminder of his childhood when he dunked a Madeleine cake into his tisane and was instantly transported back to his young self that sparked a conscious recollection of something buried deep in his past. For me, it has always been the sense of smell that evokes unconscious memories: the smell of thick hessian rope sends me back to the veranda in Iraq where my father had erected a swing for me when I was a 5 year-old; pungent roses of the sort we rarely find today remind me of the fragrant hedgerows of the Middle East, drenched overnight by the opening of irrigation sluices ...

Why, then, should it be any different for the sense of touch and motion to have associations with past experiences? Were they not just another sensual response to events? To answer this question, we perhaps need to think about why unconscious memories are unconscious: in psychological terms, they reflect the work of a defence mechanism³ which protects us from something harmful or upsetting. And here I return to my ecology for exploring the past: I did not create until I knew, intuitively, that I was ready to deal with whatever may emerge. The sources of potential support had to be present before this could happen. Without these, the ecology could be lethal and, at worst, bring about my destruction .

Here you remind me of the importance of a facilitative and SAFE environment in which we can learn, through exploration (albeit painful)...

How do we know circumstances are "right" ? Here you tap into intuition ,and our inner wisdom, our knowing that is beyond "cognition".a space which we often also tap into/access whilst learning and teaching too (in an environment which allows us to connect with that part of ourselves..).

I guess am responding to your " intellectual curiosity" it it as simple as curiosity? where did that need to know come from?

Concluding observations on an ecology for examining the past

If we look back at my image of an ecology for self-discovery, we find that the words 'supportive' and 'partner' appear in more than one contributor to the ecology. I have also referred to my psychological readiness: I was motivated to tackle a lifelong issue and to take control of my future through understanding the past. I could not have done it without the (unconscious) belief that there were sources of affective support should daemons emerge through the process of hypnosis. This leads me to conclude that for an ecology that draws on present circumstances in order to examine one's past to be effective, there are two primary requirements:

- Personal resilience
- Effective and affective support (friends/family)

For me, these elements are more important than the therapist, who was instrumental but not irreplaceable.

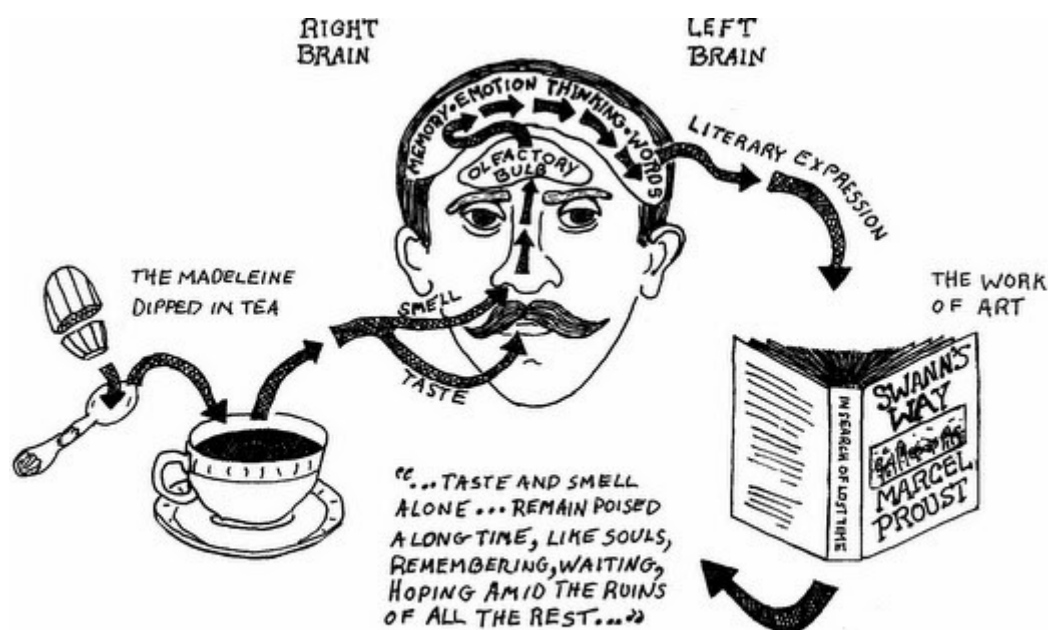
I have written elsewhere⁴ about the way in which I have explored the past to understand more about my family and to recognise the importance of individuals' place in our story. That experience was different in that it was outward focused, hence less disruptive of who I am today as we uncovered secrets from our predecessors' lives. If, though, anyone is planning an inward journey such as the one I describe above, I urge caution. Are you sure that you are ready to confront the hidden past? A past that may well have been hidden on purpose. Do you have the personal strength and social support that may be required to deal with what you uncover?

You may not discover what you anticipated, and this may be just one in a series of ecologies that you will need to create before you come to resolution. Whatever happens, though, your journey into the past will change the you of today. Good luck!

When clients enter my office, I take this for granted...even if they walk in in the most desperate hopeless state of mind, I aspire to trust that part of themselves which brought them in my office, the part of them that wants to heal...that ancient wise part that resides in each one of us.

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- 1 See e.g. Ramachandran, V.S. (2012) *The Tell-tale Brain: Unlocking the mystery of human nature*. Windmill Books. London.
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- 3 See e.g. Freud, A. (1936) *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*
- 4 Willis, J. 'Travel: a catalyst for Exploration and Learning' in *Lifewide Magazine* #18, January 2017



*Proust's way
Feb 4/11*

http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-xl2eCbrgXGk/UwzHw9rz9NI/AAAAAAAAABec/vxKNsT2r-_M/s1600/harris-proustfull.jpg

Thrice upon a time: The Journey to Me

Alan Priest

Alan Priest is a UKCP registered psychotherapist with over 20 years' experience as a practitioner within the NHS and latterly in private practice. He has consulted for organisations including Ernst and Young, BMW UK, British Aerospace and many public sector organisations on the management of change and internal employee communications. He currently works part-time as a lecturer on the under and postgraduate counselling & psychotherapy training programmes at the University of Salford in Manchester, where he continues his research into the use of language in therapy and the facilitation of reflective practice in trainees. He lives in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, where he has a small private psychotherapy practice in a characterful office which once formed part of a Victorian textile mill. He can be contacted by email at: alan@couldcounsellinghelp.co.uk



The cosmologist and broadcaster Carl Sagan once said “we travel into the future, albeit slowly, all the time. But how about the past? Could we venture into yesteryear?”



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Avid readers of science fiction like me will be familiar with plotlines based on the dangers of such time travel. For example, what if you go back in time and change some minor and seemingly insignificant event which then has ramifications down the centuries and radically alters the future? Travel back far enough and you might create an alternative timeline where apes dominate the Earth, humans are mute and Charlton Heston kicks off a successful movie franchise! Closer to home, there is the so-called “grandfather paradox” where the Time Traveller inadvertently does something which leads to the demise of an ancestor. Does that mean then that the Time Traveller can never be born? And if this is the case, how then can the Traveller have travelled back in time to create this situation in the first place? At this point, I can relate to the oft heard words of counselling trainees in a philosophy lecture: “it does your head in!”

In this article, I argue that past, present and future are more fluid and connected than we might imagine, at least on a personal level. I argue that we can and indeed should explore our past in order to help us be better adapted to our present and more prepared for our future. I hope to explain why this has particular ramifications in education and learning, where young people may have introjected unhelpful messages about themselves and their capacities.

past, present and future are more fluid and connected than we might imagine

Our Life Narratives

It is often said that we view the present through the lens of the past. In other words, our interpretation of our experience is based not only on our perceptions in the here and now but also on the extent to which we are able to access new material, filtered through those experiences in our past which have made us who we are today.

“New experiences are interpreted in terms of old stories and generalized story scripts”¹

It is self-evident that who we were in the past determines who we are today, just as the rings in an oak tree can be traced back to the sapling. Yet our past and the messages about ourselves that we take forward with us as we live our lives, are not necessarily a useful or even accurate guide as to how we can live the best lives we can.



Image 2 As it grows, a tree will adapt and its mature shape will reflect the direction of the prevailing wind. However, the environment is changing constantly and the tree may find itself less well adapted to the current ecology

CC0 Public Domain <https://pixabay.com/en/trees-hill-green-blue-nature-park-790220/>)

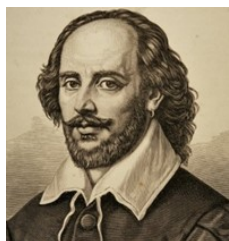
One way to think about this is as a “life narrative”; in other words, our Self – how we think about ourselves, describe ourselves, what we believe about ourselves

“The life story is a selective autobiography including important and personality-shaping episodes and events—the story of ‘how I came to be me’.”^{3:267}

and what we want others to know about us – is essentially a précis of our “life story”² We are of course the main character or protagonist in this narrative. As in any story, the main character in this unfolding story plays a role. He/she behaves (usually) in fairly predictable ways. Most people are fairly consistent in how they approach life and how they get along in social situations. Indeed, you will often hear exceptions to this described as being “quite out of character.” In one sense then, we are the main actor in the drama of our unfolding lives; we play a role. Some of us have a wide range as this actor and we can tackle a number of different genres with ease. Others tend to be rigidly “typecast”. Arguably, the roles we play and the extent to which they are suited to the actor can have a significant impact on each person’s life satisfaction.

“...people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public and cultural narratives.”^{4:614}

The process of being cast into our life role begins before we are old enough to remember for ourselves. The beginnings of our existence in the world are defined by the stories told by others and are incorporated into our identity. Inevitably, the nature of the stories (whether positive or negative) and whether they accord with our own autobiographical memories (to the extent that they are available to us) impact on the nature of the relationship we have with ourselves⁵



**All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.**
Jaques to Duke Senior, As You Like It, Act II, Scene VII William Shakespeare

As a child and throughout my life, I was told by my mother that she had suffered massively whilst being pregnant with me. She told me she experienced incapacitating morning sickness at the beginning. She would tell me frequently of how she was offered thalidomide by her GP and how grateful I should be to her for her not having taken it. It was as if she wanted me to understand that I owed the existence of my in-tact limbs to her. She described being confined to hospital for many uncomfortable weeks during the apparently long hot summer prior to my birth in October. I gained the impression therefore that, from the start, I was a burden and not a gift and my relationship with her continued in this vein to the end of her life.

Only much later did I realise that this led to a sense of me feeling that I needed to justify or even apologise for, my existence. Because I have only my own life experience against which to compare I cannot know the extent to which this impacted upon the development of my sense of Self. However, what I *do* know is that as a child I felt different to other children. I always felt they were somehow more important or distinctive than me. Way before I could have understood the concept, I was almost possessed by the question “*who am I?*”

Hayden, Singer and Chrisler⁵ studied the sharing of birth stories between mothers and daughters and the relationship of this sharing to the daughters’ self-esteem and attachment to their mothers.

Daughters whose stories were judged most similar to their mothers’ stories of the same event and daughters who had heard their birth stories more times demonstrated higher self-esteem and indicated closer relationships with their mothers.

Furthermore, a high level of positive affect and detail in the mothers’ and the daughters’ stories was also linked to high self-esteem in daughters and to strong mother-daughter attachment.

My earliest recollection of this was at primary school, perhaps aged no more than seven or eight, when we were asked to paint a picture of ourselves. Everyone took their paintings away, excitedly presenting them to whoever was collecting them at the school gates. When I showed my mum however I cried. She asked me what was wrong and I explained that “I don’t look like anybody”.

This was not a critique of my artistic abilities; the painting was a reminder to me that I did not feel the same way that I imagined other children felt. I tearfully explained that “John looks like John and Robyn looks like Robyn but I don’t look like anybody”.

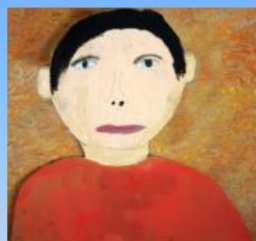
“That’s because you are you,” explained mum but that didn’t address my concerns. It was easy for me to recognise Robyn as Robyn but I could not recognise me as being a “me”.

As I went through school it quickly became clear that I was quite a “wordy” kid, a capacity encouraged perhaps by the end-less hours I would spend with my granny who would read to me and encourage me to read to her. I would write my own stories as a way of escaping from the utter chaos that was my family life at home, creating elaborate fantasy worlds. At night I would go to sleep imagining myself as a character in these worlds: perhaps a hero in Greek legend, commander of a great and powerful army or someone possessed of superpowers which I could use to exact revenge on those who tormented me. How I loved to imagine myself as the owner of a phaser from Star Trek; on days where I felt benevolent I would merely stun my attacker. On other days I would dial up the power to maximum and they would disintegrate into non-existence as punishment for having bullied me.

The Journey to “Me”



It starts with me as a young boy, a skinny little thing with sticky out ears



“Me” aged about 7



I would look in the mirror and feel uncomfortable. There was someone there yet somehow it did not feel like *me*.

As I approached adolescence I discovered music. My first album purchase was *Tubular Bells* by Mike Oldfield. My existence now had a soundtrack. As I cowered miserably following each episode of physical abuse, I would imagine myself in a future autobiographical film of myself, the sad refrain rising majestically as the film portrayed me overcoming tragedy and rising above and beyond my childhood.

Reflecting on this now, it is almost as if I took this idea of narrative identity to a whole new level. I of course knew my story and what I was doing was developing a relationship with the character – me – and projecting this into a more positive and optimistic future self. This was a visual future world projected onto the screen in rich colours and having a vibrant soundtrack. Like perhaps many people, I was convinced that it was important to capture the events of my adolescent “here and now” in a journal which I was sure would have significance to the future adult me. Hence I began writing, at great length and in great depth (discussed in more detail later). These were more than mere diaries of current events: they were messages from me to my future self. I wrote them for many years and there are volumes and volumes of them spanning many hundreds of pages.

Of course, in actual life I have not become a mythological hero nor a spacefaring traveller with a powerful futuristic weapon. However, I have always retained that sense of childhood optimism, a confidence in my ability to triumph over adversity, a belief that “it will all be all right in the end” – something I said to myself so often in my youngest years.

As an adult I largely “parked” these experiences and as it were, “got on with my life”. However, my life’s path took me into training as a psychotherapist, a profession in which reflectivity is practically an occupational necessity. What stayed with me from my childhood was an absolute fascination with the concept of “identity” and the nature of “Self”.



Linguistic Self

I quickly realised that I could not get very far with these musings without paying attention to the *linguistic* nature of Self. As mentioned earlier, this area involves a narrative and a dialogue between self and other and of course the relationship between “me” and “I”. This simply isn’t possible without language. And how peculiar language can be! Take for example the phrase “I was beside myself!” or “I gave myself a good talking to”. We use such phrases all the time, often without thinking about them but as I progressed in my studies of and training in, so-called “talking therapy” I became ever more determined to try and understand more about what exactly is going on in these self-dialogues.

In my doctoral research⁶ I set out to understand how the personal pronouns used by clients in psychotherapy – how clients *refer to themselves* in their narrative – impacted upon their experience of that therapy and also its outcome. I discovered that clients can narrate their stories from several different pronoun positions, often talking about themselves as if they are a separate person; they may comment upon their experience in the third person, as would a football pundit analysing the game at halftime (“so far, things are not going very well”). They may invoke a sense of self in which they tend to lose themselves in another (“we decided that I needed to stop smoking cannabis”). When I invited a client to rephrase a statement so that they made themselves a narrator of their own life, substituting “you”, “there is”, “we” or even “one has” with “I,” it was as if the speaker really *connected* with their experience in a vivid way. Significantly, they learned as I did, that “owning” our experiences by using the pronoun “I” brings us into often-uncomfortable contact with our responsibility for our lives. Yet, without facing this discomfort, those we help – whether they are clients in psychotherapy or students – and we ourselves – cannot acquire agency, the capacity for change and attain conscious ownership of life decisions. Without this ownership, our life is somewhere “out there”. It is quite literally as if it is happening to someone else, rather than to “me”. We can, I argue, quite literally become Self-less.

Moreover, our relationship with our Self is of fundamental importance. I often ask people, “When you are on your own who is with you?” They may reply with a quizzical look, say “no one” or ask me what I mean. The answer, I assert, is that when you are on your own *you are with you*. “I” the capacity for objective self-regard, meets “me” the subjective self. It is as if we are able to see ourselves from “out there”, rather than from “in here”⁷. This relationship, your knowledge of yourself, your compassion for the person in that relationship and your understanding, are all important factors, I believe, as to whether or not you feel “comfortable in your own skin”, content to be the person you are.

In this sense then, I argue that this relationship is one of the most important, if not *the* most important relationships in our lives. Many people are fascinated by their ancestry and invest vast amounts of time in tracing their “family tree”. Of course there’s nothing wrong with this but looking backwards to a time before we were born should perhaps not be at the expense of looking back over our own lives, retracing our steps and embarking on a journey of self-understanding.

Thinking & Feeling Backwards in Time

Ordinarily when we think about going backwards in time, perhaps to some place where we lived, went on holiday or were educated, the result may be that we revisit those memories and bring to bear the wisdom of a lifetime on our perception of that experience. In some senses, this can change our recollection of the past: perhaps that stream we were scared to jump across as a child no longer seems so wide. Or maybe we re-encounter that intimidating school bully; he or she may seem

We can travel backwards in time physically by visiting the places in our past; or spiritually, perhaps using meditation or some mind-altering substance. Or we can time travel psychologically, via therapy, or by accessing old diaries, journals and photographs. And having achieved metaphorically what Einstein said was impossible, we can benefit by writing reflectively in the here-and-now about our present feelings as we contemplate the past.

weak to our mature mind, challenging us to wonder why we were once so afraid of them. We may even feel compassion for them as we witness their insecurities with our adult understanding.

What is more important perhaps is that I believe we can by visiting our past from our present, also revise our narrative of who we are. In so doing, we can change how we think of ourselves *today*. We can rewrite aspects of our life story. We can change our relationship with our Self, our very sense of who we are, what we can expect, what we can achieve and thereby redirect the future path of our life story. We can

make slightly different decisions which can have significant impacts on our happiness and our success. If I am the character which has been created by my own life story, then taking different perspectives on that life story can change the nature of that character. I may no longer be controlled by old scripts, typecast into familiar roles. I may, as they say, extend my range. If possibility is limited only by imagination then I can extend the boundaries of my imagination.

In my childhood past I envisaged a fantasy future with stirring music, in which everything was okay and the people who hurt me back then were no longer able to do so. I often wonder about the extent to which this helped me to not only survive but also to begin to move towards that reality with confidence, rather than forever remaining a victim. In an imaginary sense I travelled forward into my own future, from child to adult. Having explored my past as an adult, re-reading old journals, reflecting heuristically and expressing my here-and-now emotions in reflective writing, I feel that I have now somehow “squared the circle”.

I travelled backwards from this time now to a past in which I had imagined an alternative future, one which had filled me with courage and hope in some of the darkest parts of young life. I was also able to explore the reality of those events in past times. In so doing, I discovered a new level of self-compassion that enabled me to realise that I was no longer in crisis; that perhaps I no longer needed to try quite so hard all the time, that perhaps there was no catastrophe around every corner and that not everyone I encountered must surely have some malevolent agenda in regard of me. I realised I had been living my adult life running “out of date software”. I was on *Windows 3.11* in a *Windows 10* world! I was unaware of new features and capacities, or at least to the extent that I was aware of them, I was afraid to try them out. When feeling threatened, I looked at every situation through the spectacles of a 10-year-old boy in fear, hardly an appropriate response for a capable adult male.

For me then, my journey across time enabled me to connect fully with the “me” I am today and to inform my relationship with myself, so that when I am on my own I feel I’m in good company and when I’m with others I feel freer to be the whole of who I am.

How can we travel from our present to our past in order to inform our here-and-now experience of Self and our relationship with that Self?

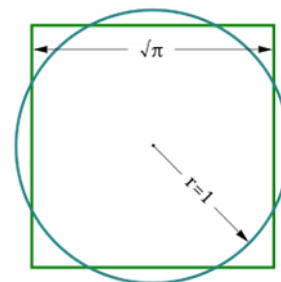


Image 3 ‘Squaring the circle’ is the challenge of constructing a square with the same area as a given circle by using only a finite number of steps with compass and straightedge. In 1882, the task was proven to be impossible when Pi was proved to be a transcendental number. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Squaring_the_circle#/media/File:Squaring_the_circle.svg



Image 4 by the author (includes clocks image from Pixabay.com)

Expressive Writing

I was able to visit my experience of the past in a very vivid and direct way by simply rereading my journals, something I had avoided doing for 25 years. Back when they were written, I was reflecting upon my here and now experience. When I re-read those words I had a powerful and frequently unpleasant emotional reaction. I knew from my experience, research and training however that a good way to deal with difficult or traumatic past experiences is to write in the here and now, expressing how I feel as I describe those experiences, emphasising this at the expense of narrative content or detail.

There is a huge body of research literature now which attests to the health benefits of what is usually called “Expressive Writing”. In 2016 the American Psychological Association (APA) conferred upon James W. Pennebaker the Award for Distinguished Scientific Applications of Psychology, for his work on emotional inhibition and the therapeutic benefits of writing about difficult emotional experiences and trauma.



Prof James W Pennebaker
of the University of Texas
at Austin

Starting in the 1980s, James Pennebaker and his team discovered that writing for as few as 15 minutes per day for 3 to 5 days produced a plethora of physiological and psychological benefits, such as fewer visits to the doctor, improved mood, better grades, reduced absenteeism, reduction of the experience of pain in medical conditions and improved recovery following traumatic events such as job loss or the breakup of a relationship⁸.

Several explanations have been put forward to explain the power of this apparently simple activity. Of particular relevance here is that writing leads to cognitive restructuring of the life narrative; jumbled thoughts are assembled so as to convey meaning, perhaps reducing confusion. So-called “unfinished business” from the past is revisited with the benefit of context and experience. It is also thought that re-experiencing traumatic memories in a safe environment may render them less threatening, extinguishing unhelpful psychological and physical responses by repeated exposure. It may also be the case that writers experience a sense of catharsis or completion. After all, the telling of stories, often around campfires, has its origins in the distant past of human history. Re-experiencing in a safe environment is also a facet of exposure therapy for trauma. Foa and Kozak¹⁰ suggested that exposure to a feared aspect of personal narrative during expressive writing can lead to corrective processing of unprocessed emotional material.

The Pennebaker Writing Protocol is simple to implement and requires no supervision. The instructions emphasise the free expression of feelings (see box below) or go to https://psychologytools.com/assets/files/Pennebaker_writing_paradigm.doc and download the file for more detailed instructions. See also Kathleen Adams’⁹ book on expressive writing practices for practitioners and educators.

Typical writing instructions

For the next 4 days, I would like you to write your very deepest thoughts and feelings about the most traumatic experience of your entire life or an extremely important emotional issue that has affected you and your life. In your writing, I’d like you to really let go and explore your deepest emotions and thoughts. You might tie your topic to your relationships with others, including parents, lovers, friends or relatives; to your past, your present or your future; or to who you have been, who you would like to be or who you are now. You may write about the same general issues or experiences on all days of writing or about different topics each day. All of your writing will be completely confidential.

Don’t worry about spelling, grammar or sentence structure. The only rule is that once you begin writing, you continue until the time is up.

Music

Many of us will have had the experience of being instantly transported back in time upon hearing a particular piece of music. It can reconnect us to distant memories and experiences. Music is a language all of its own and one which is thought to precede the acquisition of spoken language, with babies able to appreciate rhythms from as early as the first day of life (this probably explains the use of slow lullaby rhythms to sooth infants to sleep).

Listening to certain types of music can reconnect us with our emotions. Imagining a scene from the past whilst listening to a particular piece of music can enhance that experience or even change our recollection of it. Think about the way I used music in my head to accompany an imaginary narrative of me surviving heroically, as a way of dealing in the moment with difficult times during my childhood. I was effectively using my own “soundtrack” to protect myself and lift my mood.



To hear a few bars of the optimistic theme that I would use to give myself comfort in the knowledge of my eventual triumph over adversity, listen to the music between 9:00 and 9:48 on track 1 of Mike Oldfield’s third album, *Ommadawn*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9TVYEamGcs>

Listening to a piece of music of a particular type can help us to evoke different perspectives and emotions on past events, a principle employed when music is utilised for therapeutic purposes¹¹.

Music connects us to our emotional selves, meaning that we may be more open and receptive to experiencing more fully, rather than blocking some of our responses. My own experience is that groups of students who are invited to say what images come to mind having listened to an evocative piece of music with their eyes closed, are afterwards more creative when completing tasks and more open and less guarded when they talk in a group about their experiences. Therapists who work with persons having dementia often tell me how music facilitates their clients to reminisce about significant and memorable moments in their life.

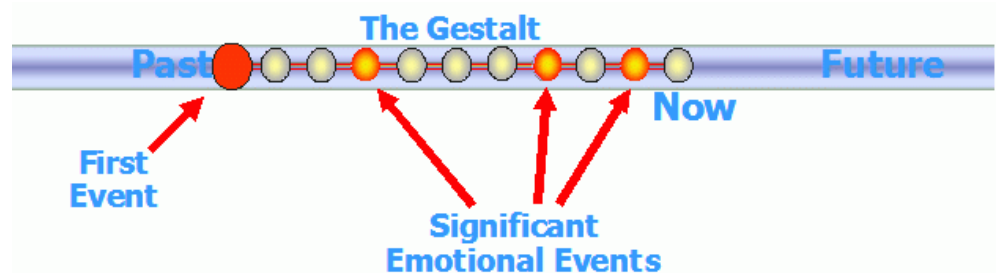
Finally, particular types of sound in music have been shown to influence brain wave patterns, as measured by electroencephalograph (EEG). It's been known since the 1920s (maybe even the late 1800s) that so-called "binaural tones" increase relaxation, facilitate meditation, promote pain management, improve sleep and reduce stress. "Binaural" literally means "to hear twice"; in this case, slightly different frequencies (separated by a few Hertz) are presented in each ear, leading to the brain perceiving a third pitch equivalent to the difference between the left and right channels¹². A difference in pitch of between 4 and 7 Hz (cycles per second) has been shown to induce slow theta wave activity in the brain. Associated with relaxed and meditative states, theta waves are considered to help extend the limits of perceived possibility at the boundary between conscious and unconscious states. They are also produced by the brain during REM sleep associated with dreaming¹³.

I have been researching the effects of binaural tones incorporated into relaxing music played at bedtime using headphones with clients who are experiencing anxiety, depression and associated insomnia, inspired by the work of Le Scouranec *et al*¹⁴. Early findings, whilst not conclusive, suggest that clients experience improvements in onset, duration and quality of sleep compared to listening to similar music which does not incorporate binaural tones. Moreover, my own experience attests to the ability of such music to engender a relaxed semiconscious state akin to lucid dreaming in which it is possible for me to make hitherto unimagined connections between life events or aspects of my current experience. Interested readers are invited to contact me if they wish to obtain sample recordings in return for providing feedback for my research.

Guided visualisation

In a guided visualisation, a facilitator guides an individual or a group on an imaginary journey. Whilst providing enough of a framework for the journey, the script for the visualisation is left sufficiently open, so the participants are free to imagine the journey exactly as they wish. So for example, the facilitator might say "you cross over a boundary" rather than "you go through a door".

Woodsmall and James¹⁵, echoing the narrative approach, proposed that our Self exists as past, present and future on a "timeline", a kind of continuous encoding of our memories and experiences. They developed an approach known as Timeline Therapy which employs



<http://static.happycells.com.au/uploads/2017/02/nlp-timeline-therapy-gestalt.png>

visualisation techniques to move the participant along their timeline, rendering experiences malleable and subject to reinterpretation, enabling different choices and behavioural change to be made in the present and future.

In the 1990s I developed my own time travel visualisation in which I take clients on a temporal journey, inviting them to tell me what they see, hear, feel and even smell or taste. Their experiences on this journey, whether into the past or the future, are then processed in normal conversation during the rest of the session. I discovered that clients were able to gain new information and insights by using this method to explore the past. Furthermore, they were often able to become clearer about their needs in the present and their preferred future, simply by allowing themselves to visualise or otherwise *encounter*, this experience. For example, a woman who was struggling to come to terms with her life following an acrimonious divorce and who could not imagine life without her former partner, was able to find peace in a visualised future where she was living alone, save for a cat and the dog which were a prominent part of her visualisation. In processing this experience, she was able to acknowledge how the rigid expectations of her past were preventing her from imagining a future happiness and essentially "stopping her from moving on" in processing her loss.

Conclusions

Whilst we often imagine ourselves as being the product of our past, relatively few people realise our power in the present to change how we feel about ourselves or how we relate to ourselves in the here-and-now by revisiting, re-experiencing and reflecting upon our past. In this article I have presented a case for how we can use a variety of ways to help our Self to revisit and re-experience our past and in so doing, enhance our capacity to engage fully with life, envisioning new potentials and possibilities. Time and again, I meet people (both clients and students) who feel trapped in a rigid life narrative, possibly one which has been given to them in the past, under less than ideal circumstances and which contains unhelpful messages. The simple fact of the matter is this: if you tell a child something negative often enough or if you behave towards a child in a way which makes him or her internalise an unhelpful perception of themselves, that child will incorporate these messages *as if they are real*. Because we want to feel, experience and behave in ways which are consistent with these introjected messages, the child as an adult will deny and distort direct experience in order to maintain this unhelpful self-concept and avoid a crisis of meaning and understanding¹⁶.

In psychotherapy, we often speak of the necessity of the client experiencing certain conditions in the therapeutic relationship: unconditional acceptance of the whole of that person and their experience, empathic understanding of what it is like to have experienced what they describe and genuine intent to help on the part of the therapist. I assert that it is important for each of us to provide these conditions to the greatest extent possible in our relationship with *ourselves*. If we can travel through time and revisit our experiences with a compassionate mind, acceptance, understanding and empathy we can, in a very real sense, facilitate a more helpful relationship with our Self in the present, open ourselves up fully to the possibilities of our existence and maximise our potential to be all that we can be in the future.

Acknowledgement

I'm grateful for and wish to acknowledge, the fictional work of British sci-fi writer James P. Hogan, "*Thrice upon a time*"¹⁷, as inspiration for the title of this piece. Unlike many novels of this genre, the work considers the ramifications of sending messages into the past or receiving messages from the future, rather than physically transporting a person through time. It seemed appropriate to borrow this title, given my *account* of writing messages in the past to a future me, now present.

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Blending Past, Creating New

Kerry Bertram



Kerry Bertram is the founder of Time to Release, which aims to empower people to overcome the emotional effects of trauma, through creative sensory experiences. Kerry offers workshops, talks and mentoring and writes about releasing through art making. Kerry has coordinated 'Art for Wellbeing' for the charity Cartwheel Arts, since 2012. Art for Wellbeing provides creative and development projects for people with mental health experiences, large scale events, Best Practice training and creative consultation. www.timetorelease.org.uk | www.cartwheelarts.org.uk

I make art

I am an artist, in the most diverse application of this label. Or more accurately, I am a person with an artmaking practice. I enjoy painting and making and capturing moments, yet I am not an artist in the 'mastery' sense. Instead, I relish and tap into creativity as a method, a creative approach, a practice of making stuff. The practice begins with an understanding and agreement with myself that I am capable of doing, thinking and feeling simultaneously. Trusting that the unison of these 3 elements will allow me to enrich my life experience. My practice is not complicated and it is not for anyone else but me, I don't make to sell, I rarely paint gifts, my usual offering of what I have created is made to my home, my walls - the spaces I inhabit. I do teach others how to find their own artmaking practice and write about sensory and creative experiences that I have found helpful. In my practice I use whatever comes to hand, I have built a beautiful toolkit of materials but it often gets messy, or put away for too long. If I'm at the beach I use stones and grass, I've been known to use my practice in tidying and arranging my desk. My artmaking practice does not call for any special tools or 'things'. My practice may include curating a space but its more akin to a yoga practice or spiritual commitment than to a gallery or art fair.



My artmaking helps me visit the past

In creativity I have allowed myself a new way of revisiting the past. With my creative practice I can slow down and open up my memory. I make choices on materials, gather papers and brushes, indulge in the process of making. At the same time I can return to memories through thought and feeling and make new connections cerebrally while creating new outcomes physically through the art I make.

An artmaking practice is much like playing, experimenting and wondering. Our rich and complicated minds can play and make whilst also thinking through issues or tricky memories. I find that in going deep into an art making practice, each choice, mark and brushstroke becomes infused with personal meaning. Through the process of artmaking I can re-make meanings, re-process wounds, form new connections and memories and revisit thoughts that might seem overwhelming outside of a practice.



Another wondrous experience also can take place, sometimes there are those moments of flow that sweep me away, time stills and the space is filled with the pleasure of the making. At these times I'm often not consciously thinking or remembering yet afterwards I am able to look

at a problem with a different slant or see a lesson through the art I have made. Sometimes this is in the really simple things, the contrast of light and dark on a page, the feel of the clay drying on my hands or the blending of two colours.

Here I will open up a space for artmaking and describe how, through a basic technique of mixing two colours, we can glean lessons. In participating in this practice I recognise and relax into change, process and reshape unhelpful memories and evolve my past to serve me in the present.

Opening the space for artmaking

Blue, mixed with yellow, is no longer either original colour, the mixture becomes instead, shades and tones of its origins, a simple concept we are all taught at a young age. Blue and yellow mixed, becomes green. I want to jump into the process of mixing, combining and creating a new colour.

The 'green', of the blue and yellow may attach to one origin, depending on the amount of that origin it is transfused with. However the green becomes a brand new colour, which cannot be taken back, in its exact previous form, to blue, or to yellow.

With this understanding I've found three interesting words, that describe the 'in between' and tonal range of transformation and which convey deep meanings that I can relate to my experience of making art.

Instar *A phase between two periods of change in development*

Instar describes the change or 'moulting' periods occurring between a larva and insect, caterpillar to butterfly. The change periods are often violent and include decay but offer complete metamorphosis. The caterpillar cocoons then rots, its transformation consists completely of decay. The decay of ending always happens before the next butterfly form emerges.

Metanoia *Change in ones way of life or being resulting from a spiritual conversation*

Metanoia describes a complete change of heart. It can also describe a breakdown, and subsequent rebuilding or healing. Elements of regret, reflection and transformation are embedded in the meaning. It is a word of process rather than outcome.

Apoptosis *The death of cells, which occurs as a normal part of an organisms growth or development*

Apoptosis describes the 'falling off' of cells that are no longer needed. Making way for a new period of growth, or evolution. Though apoptosis sometimes precedes imminent death, apoptosis is also responsible for the fact that human fingers are no longer webbed and snakes have no need for legs.

I find these words and meanings both comforting and stark in their description of process and change. They feel like unemotional explanatory words, yet describe change; physical or emotional, which seems abrupt and harsh. Yet in their dispassionate accounts, each also describes a more palatable, hopeful outcome – the emergence, the healing and transformation, the evolution.

As I mix the blue and yellow, my thoughts settle on a memory and belief that had come up for me recently. One that I think I had been holding for a long time. "If I am not needed, I am not loved and I am alone, being alone is unsafe." I add a little more yellow and stir again, allowing my emotions to come up and a tear to drop into the palette. I smooth a streak of colour onto the page and see the threads of blue and yellow paint, not yet combined.

A new thought moves in, something to do with the blue needing to let go of its blueness, to allow the green to emerge. I let this thought settle and embed by sweeping the blue yellow and green mixture in a wide arc across the page. The open physical movement seemed to symbolize my readiness to accept and welcome in this new thought.



Relaxing into the process

Returning to colour-mixing, as I play with my paints, adding new daubs of colour, adding water, swirling my paintbrush, I see that the process can offer a metaphor for an emotional or physical change or experience. The merging of old and new realities, the letting go of history and accepting of unknown futures, the inability to 'un-know' what you have learnt or to halt or undo a process.

As the yellow and blue spiral together there is a confusing beauty, moments where the two colours resist, their identities are still separate yet vulnerable and weaker. The viscous pigment is changed into threads and strands of colour.

I think about acceptance and my discomfort with the word. My past self felt acceptance was passive, letting go was painful or weak. I watched the paint I was working with and remembered, left alone at this point, eventually the colours will relax into each other, merge together and become green, slowly the particles of colour will blend and emerge as a new colour. I stopped mixing and watched a while.

I valued the calm and relaxing and simultaneously the opportunity of the alternative, the effort of mingling continuing, the intended outcome of green being achieved sooner. The application of the desired green paint could coat the paper sooner following the agitation of purposeful mixing.

The blue and yellow will intersperse and blend to green with time, or can be helped by the application of effort through mixing. If the vat of paint is vast, either way will offer its own discomfort, waiting or committing effort, yet each way will eventually produce the new colour, though maybe in a different form.

Knowing the green will emerge anyway, beautifully, in time or can be encouraged through knowing of, and commitment to my personal process of Instar, Metanoia or Apoptosis is a comforting thought. It takes the pressure off. I find that knowing the intended outcome will happen somehow, either through natural process or an intentional effort, valuable. It means I can pour my energy into my development when I have the resources, and I can slow down and let the process take its eventual path when I am less well equipped.

Letting go

Interestingly, there are two other helpful lessons that emerge as I continue playing, mixing and testing the colour adding a little blue a dab of yellow. I paint my rainbow of greens, from a 'grass in the sunlight' to hints of an underwater world. I take my time, pausing the mixing process to observe, I am offered the insight of those beautiful swirls and blending moments. As mentioned pausing the mixing also offers a moment for the colours to relax into each other.

Observing the swirl and relaxation in those moments of pause can showed beauty, enrich my process and allowed me to reflect on the previous colours, the present mixture and reaffirm my trust in my creative practice.

I realized that when I mix blue and yellow, I'm not sure of the exact shade of green that will emerge.

Of course I could scientifically measure the amounts of each colour we blend together, we would then be reasonably sure of the outcome? We repeatedly try to do this with change in our lives; we draw on past experiences and their outcomes to 'know' what will happen. We try to control the blending, the amounts of what we choose to mix. We trust in our memory. Yet often our memory is coloured in itself, we selectively remember to protect our future. For example, if I was hurt by being vulnerable before, I might select the amount of vulnerability I am willing to put into the mix. However, if my intended outcome is green, and I only offer a tiny dab of blue, my green will be weak, remain more yellow than the deep rich green I desire.



Blue, is never the blue of a remembered blue. Yellow can shift and change and is volatile to its surroundings. Green will never be the exact same green, even if we I return to my strong belief, "If I am not needed, I am not loved and I am alone, being alone is unsafe." And notice the stark judgment in it, the conclusions that the belief assumes are correct. As I fill my page with colour I ask myself, what are the differences between need and love? Can you be safe and alone? I let my paintbrush dance and intuitively move, I hold the brush lightly allowing it to roll across the page without much control, I drop it on the page and see how many marks I can make. I understand that there are many multiple results on the page and answers to my questions.

In colour mixing, even if you are strict and measured with the amounts of each colour you put in, there are other factors that affect the colour. The humidity, the exact ingredients and components of the original blue and yellow, any residues in the mixing bowl.

There are always factors outside our control, all change involves another, environmental, another person, a different situation. Even in ourselves we cannot control what we are putting in. Yes a past situation may offer an insight but we are different people in each moment, each instant, with each tiny new experience.

attempt to control!

I smile, isn't part of the pleasure of mixing two colours together, the pleasure of change, found in the unknown, the unexpected, the surprise? Would I ever want to control this?



Completion

As I wash the paint from my brushes, clean my pallet I notice new watery shades run into the sink, ones I couldn't capture on paper but can enjoy in my memory. I reflected on the hour I had just spent mixing and applying paint. I knew I had made a powerful link between an old belief and a new experience, forever this old belief will be stored in my mind with the mixing of blue and green. Green paint being mixed will remind me of my questions and answers that emerged, and of a new understanding that the blue needs to let go of its blue-ness, to allow the green to emerge.

Revisiting my past beliefs that had still been hurting me, this artmaking practice had reminded me of the blending process. Whatever 'past me' had made that limiting belief full of judgment, had forgotten how to blend.

My completed artwork was a *symbol* of this re-making of a memory, evolution of a belief and release of control. There was the blue and yellow paint, but also the green, teal, turquoise flecks, forest and murky khaki, bright lime glittering in splashy marks, a stain of mysterious jade, purposeful olive blots decorated with smudges of emerald.

I ripped the page from my book and blue-tacked it up on the wall, without ceremony or reverence. Quietly content, not with the outcome of the past hour but with the commitment to my artmaking practice, my trust in it deepened once more. The painting will stay up a while as a reminder, to allow all those new thoughts and helpful changes become everyday

and a new history and belief. When I have embedded the learning from this particular practice, the painting will probably fall down, or else be replaced with a new visual reminder, and that's okay. But while its here, I'll allow its hues to enrich and comfort me.

Creativity as an Agent of Change : Five Years On

Tracey Walshaw



I am a woman crossing the threshold of my Crone, wise woman Hag years. I have spent the last thirty years developing my craft as a person centred therapist, supervisor and trainer. In running an independent professionally accredited therapy training organizations, PCCS Training Manchester, for a fifteen year period I feel I have been constantly developing and honing my skill as an authentic and creative educator. The ending of this business through a life threatening event provided a creative opportunity to access the unbeknown dreams and aspirations which had laid dormant until the gift of time awakened them. Exploring from this place in the present the sense I now feel about some of the trauma in my life has proved both enlightening and healing. The creative process and focus for this article has strongly brought into my awareness that it is now time to step fully into exploring my spiritual authenticity, authority and craft.

THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

*When despair for the world grows in me
And I wake in the night at the least sound
In fear of what my life and my children's life may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the green heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things.
Who do not tax their lives with forethought.
Of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars.
Waiting with their light. For a time.
I rest in the race of the world and am free.
Wendell Berry*

Sunday 27th June 2017, as I enter my 59th year, five years since my kidney transplant how synchronistic to be asked to write something about how my present has influenced my understanding of my past. Travelling back to such an excruciating mental space and connecting with those memories fully grounded in my present life has facilitated exorcising the last piece of negative power the experience has held for me. This process has allowed me to look back on my experience as the spiritual and necessary transformation it was helping me develop compassion towards myself.

A little history

Five years ago my husband gifted me one of his kidneys and saved my life. Three months later I contracted Lymph TB which once again threatened my life. The transplant was plumbing, the TB turned out to be a near death experience.

At twenty seven years of age I was diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease, with the prediction I would be in end stage renal failure at fifty. I reached fifty two! Most of my life I chose to believe my degenerative condition would not make a difference. I was oblivious to the difference that it made being I worked even harder running away from the inevitable. For many years the changes in my health were small but then increased with somewhat alarming momentum the eighteen months prior to transplant. It brought up personal, professional and spiritual experiences for which I had no script.

In retrospect it instigated a revolution for my own self concept and my personal and professional conditions of worth. There is a saying "if you want something done ask a busy woman." I was that woman! In the previous years I had managed to be co director of PCCS Training in Manchester delivering Diploma, Certificate and Supervision training, creating and delivering a Person centred Diploma in Play Therapy and a wide range of personal and professional weekends. I also managed to have a thriving client and supervision caseload, be a mum, wife, daughter and friend. At the height of this madness I managed all of these things in one year and quite well I'm told. I was driven to prove to myself and the world that I was ok. I was steeped and drowning in introjected values about being responsible and not letting people down. Previous in the years leading up to end term renal failure I also managed to accrue a Diploma in Expressive Therapy, a MA in Creative Writing, Certificate in Psychodrama, start training as a Sociodramatist, write, edit and publish and above all engage with my creativity, the fuel that carried me through. I was indeed bonkers, a work horse galloping towards a barbed wire fence!

Give me a challenge and I will gladly engage with it fuelled by my most crippling introjected value of 'you should not let this effect you in your work and personal life at all' crippling my ability to make discerning choices. Up until this time it was quite a slow insidious process with this disease gathering speed towards the last six months pre transplant. No matter how I ran from this inevitable process it was looming in front of me. I was in decline. Still I carried on ignoring the information my body gave me. Did I listen, of course not, I worked until the week-end before my transplant, fuelled by the hard wired values of my workhorse mentality.



The challenges continued when was the moment to flag up 'hey I'm in renal failure and I need a kidney.' How this disease manifested in me was it seemed to happen all of a sudden, one renal check up on the brink of acute kidney failure the next it was time to go and ask family members if they'd give me a kidney. The grown up part of me said ask if they say no it'll be fine, the desperate, terrified part of me said I just could not cope with the disappointment and sense of rejection I would feel if they said no. Fortunately I was saved from these difficult conversations as my husband volunteered to be tested for compatibility. Martyn's kidney was a match, which was remarkable as I have one of the more challenging blood types...pew. Talk about crisis management. I never had these conversations prior to being at the wire with transplant. Head in the sand process! As a formidable optimist I chose to believe the transplant would be a success and I would be back at work after three months, not an unrealistic expectation if all went well. I made plans to restart work in four months then I developed lymph TB. My husband later told me he used to sit in the hospital car park after visiting wondering if I would be alive the next day.

I feel I am revisiting now in my present with the eyes of the Crone I am becoming. When immersed in the experience I failed to grasp the spiritual experience that it was despite being a Shamanic practitioner for many years. I can see with clarity this experience as a systemic explosion that moved and twisted the tectonic plates of my being. The person I was then was a mere ghost of the woman I am becoming today. I can see from my present and in writing this article that then most things motivating me were externally located, driven by my need for approval, acknowledgement and plain inability to locate the power-house within me. I was a nuclear perpendicular explosion waiting to happen with my spirituality being the detonator. I used to say that the only thing that had been able stop the runaway train I had become was my health. This proved to be incorrect as my soul did what my health, sense and reason could not. It had a constant voice in the back ground of my emotional landscape murmuring and warning like a nurturing parent giving advice and encouragement. I chose to ignore it with devastating



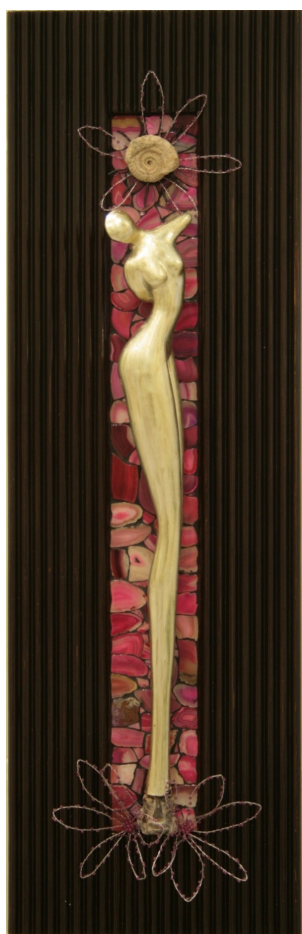
consequences. I was in a health and spiritual crisis, I had become lost to the values of the over culture and not available to the deep rootedness in my spiritual being. Then TB was a terrifying experience of the physical disintegration of my body. Now I have come to respect it as the demonic healing process it was. It froze and suspended me in a physical state where all I could be is present, no work, no thought just the basic functions of existing. It was not an act of will it was something more fundamental and primal. When I look back I can feel its purpose was to deliver me to the destination of being at the polar opposite of

everything I thought I was. TB was the cathartic spear of my spiritual core piercing me with an arrow that immobilized me in my vulnerability, limitations and above all else fear of being powerless beyond all my experiences. It was the most humbling reality check I ever had.

Why TB I remember asking myself, it's such an old disease, a disease that killed my father over forty years ago. Now I can see the perfection in it. TB makes you sweat like nothing I can truly describe here, it robs you of your sleep, appetite, will and the lethargy that accompanies it makes resting death seem an attractive alternative. The drugs are horrendous, the treatment long, the outcome unknown. The drugs are limited and if you do not respond to them death is inevitable, with the added complication of I was a newly transplanted patient on a complex regime of anti rejection drugs. Experiencing such vulnerability in my health took away all my energy into trying to remain this coping inexhaustible workhorse. It was beyond my control, and probably one of the few times in my life I was unable to talk, will or motivate myself out of it, All the resources I had developed to keep continuing working and in its midst my most basic bodily abilities were alienated. I sweated out in bucket loads those inauthentic conditions of worth I had absorbed, just like my sheets, towels and clothes absorbed my sweat. I smelt differently, and nobody else could smell it. Now I understand that is because no one else could see the vast internal and emotional responses I was experiencing. As terrible as it was it washed away and expelled the emotional toxic poison in my system.

I can see glances of my responses now with compassion and tenderness, and even respect. I feel you can only respond with the information you have at the time and I had limited accessibility to spiritual information. Now I see this as a parallel teacher, just as I fought for my life my soul, the powerhouse of my spirituality was dying and it too was fighting soul death.

What facilitated my experience at arriving at a compassionate understanding of my past was my creativity. Interesting in my professional life I gave a keynote speech four months before my transplant called the 'How Creativity is An Agent of Change'. I did not fully appreciate the importance this would play until it indeed became my companion in my healing process. I discovered myself to be a Shamanic artist, my medium is mixed media, fossil, wood, metal, minerals and glass. I created an exhibition called 'Transploration', exploring my transplant experience, I wanted to honour my husband and indeed all the live donors. Recognizing what a gift they gave and also what a challenging gift for me and other recipients to receive. I can look back through this work and see how excruciating it has been throughout my life to be the receiver and how comfortable it had been to be the giver. This experience allowed me to travel back in time in order to give it the meaning it held for me. I was trained for this throughout my childhood, giving up and sitting on my power. This creative process brought me to recognizing and holding that I am no more important or less important than anyone else. I know this will be a lifetime of work to undo what had become hardwired within my emotional landscape. The universe dished up a huge gift that was life saving and yet even then I was thinking about the effect on others. My disease was a Shamanic catalyst with my body needing to disintegrate in order for me to reset my learning patterns.



When recovering from the trauma of the TB the world became a frightening place, and leaving the safe nest of home was difficult. I enrolled on a baking and pottery course. These were facilitative in their own way, baking helped me see the competitiveness of women in groups and also facilitated my understanding that my biggest competitor had indeed been myself! Pottery has and still remains a teacher for me, the most important being I thrive around human contact and isolation debilitates me. A parallel to my body and spirituality, isolation and compartmentalizing them does not enhance my personhood. I realize the day I am truly still is the day I will be truly dead. It just doesn't work for me and I often internalised the criticism of others about needing quiet still time. I have that but my meditative time is walking on the hills, creating things, be they relationships, mosaics, jumpers, cakes and even housework at times. My church is the landscape, it is where my spiritual teacher dwells and helps me translate this learning into my language, relationships, craft and art. My spiritual church also includes my urban landscape and some of the less aesthetically pleasing views of both this physical landscape and the ugly, non-compassion at the least and damn well cruel at parts of our human responses to each other and the earth. Looking back through some of the work I have created about refugees I can see how my tenacity allows me to stand in the ugliness of some human responses and still be hopeful. In looking back through this work it connects me to the ugliness and discomfort I experienced in my illness, and this historically would debilitate me by thrashing me into the ground with shame. Today I recognize that ugliness exists in me and when I connect with it with an integration of body, spirit and mind I can choose to act differently. Not out of shame but out of the power of my formidable will.

Five years later I would consider myself of a member of what Clarissa Pinkola Estes refers to as Scar Clan. Instead of loathing my imperfections, being driven to expel them and being self-punishing towards them I now find myself tender and curious towards them. I am able to live

amongst my humanly flawed imperfections allowing them to inform me, not diminish me. They are the place my compassion, creativity and my spirituality dwell. Again in writing this article it allowed me to understand why I have never fitted in totally with a lot of groups I am a part of. Often these groups strive for perfection and I had uncomfortableness with it. I found it irritating and confusing, always noticing my imperfections and comparing myself. I think the shadows in my life bring the light if I embrace them with equal respect. I feel they have influenced the shape of my congruence and being in the world with parity with my more acceptable societal values. Today I feel more able to offer acceptance not only towards myself but to all my fellow coinhabitants of our battle-scarred earth. My acceptance is not passive, it is something I arrive at through a self-dialogue fuelled by the whole range of my emotional repertoire. I have learnt to accept that some things are indeed unacceptable and need tackling, whilst others are unforgivable. I am learning to be discerning with time and energy about how best to use my resources to make changes in the world. I am learning to respond and not react to my own internal judgements.

We are all members of Scar Clan all having scars, be they physical, emotionally or spiritually. Scar Clan as a metaphor was a powerful medium for insight for me. It has allowed me to go back in time mentally and reconnect with an extremely unpowerful desperate and vulnerable part of myself holding it tenderly, brushing the dust and pain off like an archaeologist with a fine brush tenderly holding and caressing an ancient artefact. I can acknowledge it as both the truly terrible and truly facilitative part of my life. I am an incomplete, damaged yet truly rare and wondrous pot, the fact I exist through all of my experiences is a miracle, Don't misunderstand me I am no Pollyanna, if this experience had come with a receipt from M&S then I would have returned with a big NO THANKYOU attached! In holding and processing it now in the present I feel I am engaging with the experience with a real and clear acknowledgement of the horrific and fundamentally life changing process it has been.



Only now visiting it from a place of feeling more fully grounded, centred and integrated not only in my being but in my spiritual power can I hold my experience with a little tenderness. Travelling back in time into old wounded territory sometimes requires us to have a sense of robustness and an emotional resilience. My job as a therapist has also allowed me that space to nurture and look after myself. My life's journey with it as my companion will be the testimony of what learning it has facilitated. I am a pot which houses a soul with my spirituality repairing my physical manifestation in the world from the inside. I notice as I wrote the last sentence the excitement and anticipation rising in me. Its good be alive and fully present in both my body and spirit. It's as if in moments like this past present merge, they become one space, time has no place. I am indeed aware and awaiting the day- blind stars to emerge into their light and guide me to my own place of wild things. Bring it on!

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 Transploration; blog about the process of my transplant written pre transplant and some months after.
 Transploration. Exhibition at Manchester museum, Oxford road, Manchester. On going.
www.traceywalshawmosaics.com

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Use of reminiscence therapies & spaces to promote a positive state of wellbeing for individuals with dementia

Yalda Tomlinson



Yalda is a Politics and Psychology graduate with a passion for improving the lives of individuals who are struggling with their mental health. Yalda has recently started training in Positive Behavioural Support and is currently drawing on this training to support individuals who have dementia. In the future Yalda hopes to continue to apply the principles of Positive Behavioural Support to improve the lives of other disadvantaged individuals. She is also a member of the Lifewide Education team and an RSA Fellow.

The intrinsic and therapeutic value in reminiscing

All human beings have a tendency to look back on their life through their own experiential and sense making narratives. It's an important part of what makes us human. However, as an Assistant Psychologist within an older adult mental health team, I tend to work with older people whose ability to recall their life narratives is often impaired and this can leave them feeling confused, agitated or depressed. There are many reasons for memory loss, for the individuals I work with it tends to be due to the onset of dementia, a neurodegenerative disease that leads to the loss of memories and functional skills. *Reminiscence therapy* is used to improve psychological wellbeing in dementia sufferers, but is increasingly thought to improve memory too. A study of dementia sufferers at Exeter University in 2009 found that reminiscing boosted memories by an average of 12%.

My use of reminiscence therapy not only enables me to build a relationship with these individuals. It also enables the individual to recognise their achievements and the significant relationships in their life with provide them with a sense of worth. A lack of worth can be one of the most common reasons for depression/challenging behaviour. Therefore, through promoting an individual's sense of worth we are also promoting their sense of wellbeing. In this article I will explore three types of reminiscence therapy that are currently used by the staff supporting these individuals and how the use of these approaches can benefit the individuals we have a duty to support.

'Life Story' book

Life story books are created by those supporting a person with impaired memory like family member to provide the person with prompts, usually in the form of pictures, that relate to the narrative of the individual's life. Using a life story book offers the chance for meaningful conversations that enable the individual to recall and re-experience memories that were inaccessible. Through the conversation and visual aids the individual is able to connect with their past and regain a sense of who they are and the life they have lived.



As dementia progresses and a patient's memory deteriorates it is important for those facilitating the conversation to understand the contexts e.g. who else is in the picture/why was it taken, in this way support staff can fill in any gaps in the patient's knowledge. Having used a life story book I have seen how it can boost the patients self-esteem, furthermore, for me one of the greatest advantages is that it avoids a diagnosis.

The process of creating a life story book can also be empowering for the individual. If the book is completed in the early stages of dementia then the patient is able to relive the happiest experiences of their lives, this enables them to recognise what they have valued in their life and their own purposes and achievements which can be highly reassuring for someone who is facing the daunting prospect of a life with dementia. When used correctly a life story book can empower the patient, engender a great sense of wellbeing and promote strong and positive relationships with care staff.

Reminiscence as a group activity

Within the United Kingdom, almost half of the care homes use *Group Reminiscence*. Within a reminiscence group a carer will introduce a number of “Memory triggers” e.g, photographs, recordings or smells used to promote personal and shared memories.

One of the best things about group reminiscence is that it provides an opportunity for both family and paid carers to work alongside each other to support individuals with dementia. According to Tom Kitwood who talks about the “Malignant social psychology” one of the best ways to promote the wellbeing of individuals with dementia is to offer support for their family (in other words, avoid carer fatigue). In line with this belief, the emphasis in recent research has shifted from “Person-Centred Care” to “Relationship-Centred Care”. In many areas of the UK, Alzheimer café (image below) <http://www.alzheimercafe.co.uk/> have been established with an agenda of education for carers and social contact for both patients and carers. Outside of the family network, Group reminiscence places the focus on shared experiences and helps individuals to maintain a social network that tends to be diminished following the onset of dementia.



It is possible that group reminiscence could reduce the number of people being placed in care homes. Research has shown that the breakdown of relationship between patient and family carer is one of the reasons why the former is placed in care. Therefore, by introducing group reminiscence prior to this breakdown there could have very positive implications for families, society and public spending.

Reminiscence rooms & other spaces

Particular spaces often trigger memories. Reminiscence rooms are spaces that have been designed to capture the essence of rooms that were typical of a particular period of time like the 1940's, 1950's or 1960's. They are decorated in the wallpapers of that time and contain artefacts that might have been found in a room at this time. This example was created at the Fiona Gardens care facility in Sale¹ A respite facility I know in Surrey has also embraced reminiscence rooms. This facility has rooms styled like a traditional pub, rooms designed as a pet shop and a whole corridor filled with old-fashioned toys e.g. prams.



Reminiscence Room to help boost memory of those with dementia.

Some research has shown that reminiscence rooms can make individuals feel more comfortable, for example, a memory café styled as a 1940s tea room noticed that patients ate on average, more food than when they ate in a basic room. However, there are some challenges, the first is that for some individuals these era's were not a pleasant experience. The other challenge is that it can be very disorientating for these patients, who then experience time shifting (they believe they are in another time). This then raises an ethical issue for the carers as to whether they should orientate them to the environment.

In 2012 a Gloucestershire care home opened a 1950s "memory" street. With its Oxo adverts, ration books and traditional pub it was carefully constructed to make dementia and Alzheimer's sufferers at the Blossom Fields care home in Winterbourne feel more comfortable. It was hoped that eventually it could even improve their ability to recollect past events. Architects were brought in and they carefully studied photographs of 1950s streets to properly capture the era in the design of the shops and pub. Staff then combed scrap yards, charity shops and auction websites to unearth authentic objects to fill the buildings. Residents were able to read newspapers and magazines from the period, detailing the Queen's Coronation and in the White Hart pub, they were welcomed with tobacco tins and vintage beer mats.¹ Similarly the Baylham Care Centre in Ipswich, Suffolk has created a 'village' (shown below) with butcher's, bakery, greengrocer's, sweet shop, haberdashery and post office, all designed to look like shops from the 1950s - when many of the residents were young adults² It also has a railway and bus station - complete with a waiting room and suitcases - all built around a village green.



Conclusion

Clearly helping people who are suffering from memory loss use their present to reconnect with their past through reminiscence therapy has a valuable role to play in promoting their wellbeing. These techniques not only help individuals with dementia they also facilitate the development of positive interactive relationships between individuals and their carers and the environments in which they all live and work. Having said this, there is also a risk in focusing too much on an individual's past. As a mental health practitioner, I believe it is our responsibility to use reminiscence therapy and other tools as a means of improving an individual's present while preserving a little longer their past.

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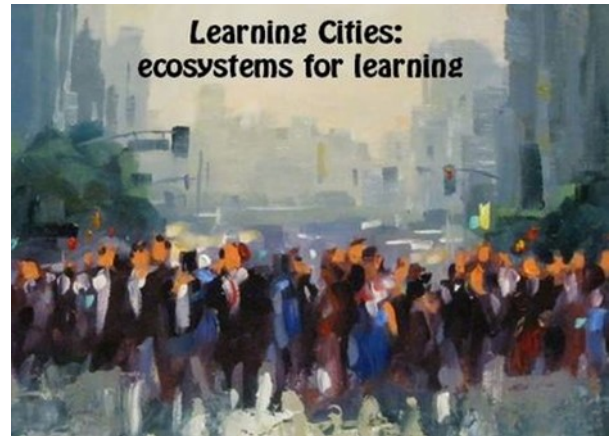
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Learning Cities - urban ecosystems for lifewide-lifelong learning

Norman Jackson

I recently participated in a panel discussion at Solent University's 'Solent Exchange' conference on the theme of learning cities and learning quarters. I have to admit that although I was familiar with the idea, until a few weeks ago I knew next to nothing about them. But fear of showing such ignorance is a major incentive to learn so I set about accumulating some resources which I curated on the Lifewide Education site (1).

As I discovered more I began to see how the idea of a learning city could help our education institutions address the wicked problem/ challenge facing all universities and colleges today namely, 'how can we help learners develop themselves in ways that will enable them to sustain themselves through whatever the world throws at them in their complex, fast changing and sometimes disrupted working and personal lives over the next 40 or 50 years or more. This is quite a different problem to helping learners prepare to enter the workforce with which all tertiary institutions are familiar.



We cannot sustain ourselves without learning and the will and attitudes and many other intangible qualities that enable us to keep going and keep trying and the idea of a learning city perhaps is one development in the evolution of mankind that might help more people achieve this goal and engage our educational institutions and their learners more directly and comprehensively in the learning lives of their city's inhabitants. Perhaps then higher education institutions will be able to claim that they are a public and social as well as a private benefit.

It's a fact that a majority of the world's population lives in cities. By 2030, the proportion is likely to exceed sixty per cent and for some countries like the UK the proportion is much higher (over 90% by 2030). (2). As cities expand, municipal governments face challenges associated with social inclusion, new technologies, the knowledge economy, cultural diversity and environmental sustainability. In response, a growing number of cities are developing innovative strategies and cultures that allow, encourage and enable citizens of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances to learn throughout their life and in all aspects of their life, thereby helping to transform their city into a city that values and respects all forms of learning (formal, non-formal and informal).

How do Learning Quarters and Cities differ?

Southampton Solent University and Southampton City College are merging and, with the backing of the city council, their ambition is to collaborate to form what they are calling a 'Learning Quarter'. A number of towns and cities in the UK have established learning quarters, although often this means 'educational quarter' as the main resources for learning are established educational institutions. The term 'learning quarter' describes a specific geographic place or space within which there is a concentration of resources and opportunities for learning and support for people wanting to learn.

The idea underlying a city learning quarter is that people come (physically or virtually) to the place to seek and find opportunities that meet their needs and interests. While a learning quarter can result in new partnerships, attract new investment and be an asset to a city, it can also simply be a way of branding part of a city that has a concentration of educational providers: a way of making the city seem more interesting without materially affecting the life of the inhabitants of the city. It can also propagate the idea that learning and education are the same.



The idea of a learning city or city of learning is a more powerful and transformative idea. It requires a richer and more inclusive concept of learning and engagement with what learning means to all inhabitants of the city in their everyday lives. The *learning city* is not a designated space within the landscape but a rich, complex, dynamic city-wide ecosystem that is



open to the world and containing vast opportunities, resources and potential for enabling people, groups of people and communities, to learn and develop themselves in ways that meet their needs, interests and ambitions. In this way people can participate more fully in their own lives and in the life of the city which they inhabit and become the person they want to be and help sustain their families, communities and the city in the process.

Learning city ecosystems are sites for the emergence of new culture. They are collaborative rather than competitive - they involve building partnerships and projects within which organisations, communities, networks, clubs, societies, charities and individuals can participate, learn from each other and share

what they have learnt. Through new relationships, social interactions, participation and practices, over time a different culture emerges.

So how does a city become a learning city?

This is the wrong question of course. A city owes its existence and prosperity to the collective learning and enterprise of all of its inhabitants, and not just those who live there now but all the people who have ever lived in the city. Cities exist from the time that people came together to live in them because people chose to live cooperatively and to live, work and learn together in the same space. So the idea of a learning city is a narrative of becoming, a narrative that connects all the people of the city who are learning how to become a better version of themselves so that over time the city becomes a better version of itself.

So a better question to ask is ***how can any city become a better version of itself as a city that supports, encourages and where appropriate enables recognition of learning and achievement?*** From the articles I read (2) I tried to identify some of the practices and behaviours that cities who are striving to become better versions of themselves use.

- **LEADERSHIP** that is committed to achieving change over a substantial period of time. This is not a time limited project but a sustained commitment: it may take a decade to achieve a starting vision by which time the vision will have changed. Neither can leadership only be by the people who manage and control the system and its enterprises. In a city-wide ecosystem leadership needs to be distributed with activity led at all levels by all sorts of people through their own self-directed initiatives.
- **VISION** - that is inclusive and grown from many points of view and that evolves over time - vision is always a work in progress and ordinary people have to see their own lives in this vision. This means that the vision must embrace an inclusive concept of learning that makes sense to everyone it is designed to serve. For me this means a lifewide and lifelong view of learning that embraces individuals' formal, non-formal and informal learning.
- **STRATEGY** - that comprehensively engages with the vision, enables resources to be distributed and targeted and has space within it to enable unexpected things to emerge, for sure when these sorts of conditions are created in a city ecosystem lots of new and exciting possibilities will emerge
- **NEW PARTNERSHIPS** - city council, educational and training providers, businesses, museums, community groups, charities, clubs, anyone with an interest in helping enabling people to learn
- **ACTIVE FORUM** for communication and interaction for everyone who is interested
- **PUBLIC RECOGNITION** and celebration of what exists – making visible and connecting all the formal and non-formal opportunities that already exist and encouraging people and organisations to contribute

- PLATFORM portal/website which enables people to find opportunities for learning and grow new opportunities and participation

New capacities and agency

- BROKERS – who help connect people, communities and organisations, events, technologies and much more. They act as catalysts for new ideas & approaches and help make new things happen.
- AMBASSADORS - who promote and encourage more and more people in the communities that make up the city to involve themselves in activities through which they can learn and develop themselves
- MENTORS - who support and guide individuals as they develop and experience their own plans for learning and personal development
- AGENTS - who can recognise, validate and when appropriate provide recognition for learning and achievement (some cities have developed digital badge systems e.g. Chicago)
- RESEARCH – enabling the city to understand itself, capturing narratives of what it means to learn for individuals and groups (Bristol City example of ethnological research accompanying the development of the learning city)
- SHARING KNOWLEDGE through exhibitions, road shows, festivals, websites

Celebration & renewal

- ANNUAL LEARNING FESTIVALS & EXHIBITIONS– promotion and encouragement, opportunities for tasters to involve more people in the collective project: a tangible manifestation of the culture and ways of publicly demonstrating enduring commitment

So the idea of a learning city is a never ending story of becoming. and over time the sorts of activities and behaviours outlined above gradually influence culture so that there is a noticeable difference in the way people think and talk about their city. The old Nigerian proverb tells us that it 'takes a village to raise a child' but as the world becomes ever more urbanised perhaps we need to adapt the wisdom in this proverb to the new reality - perhaps it takes a city and more to sustain people through the complexity, disruptions and unanticipated unfoldings of their lives in the urban world of the 21st century.

As I read more about the idea of learning cities I began to see that lifewide education and lifewide learning have an important role to play in their practical development. In turn, a city that is committed to encouraging learning in all its forms (i.e. formal, non-formal and informal, directed and self-directed), provides the most favourable environment within which the practice of lifewide education and individuals' lifewide learning enterprises can flourish.

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Tail piece: ecology of connecting to our past

Norman Jackson

We are who we are because of our past and our present is shaped by all the things we have learnt and experienced and draw from in our present. Our experiences and associated memories are distributed across all the different parts of our lives – the lifewide dimension, and they accumulate throughout our life – the lifelong dimension. And assuming that our memory is not impaired, we can access our past anytime and anywhere. Our ability to connect to our past and the events and people in it, is one of the things that makes us human and the particular events and people we connect to in the different parts of our lives is what makes us the particular person we are.

What triggers a memory?

Memories can enter our consciousness in a spontaneous way but they are often triggered or stimulated by another thought. A conversation with friend might touch on something that we can relate to and lead us to share a memory of our own experience, or we might be out walking or jogging, or driving a car and our stream of thoughts might alight on a particular memory. A piece of music might remind us of something, or an item of clothing, a child's toy or a photograph. Particular physical spaces can also stimulate memories particularly when we enter the same environment where an experience we had formed a memory.

Memory is the reactivation of a specific group of neurons, formed from persistent changes in the strength of connections between neurons¹



It's easy to appreciate the significance of this as I sit writing this short article on my mother's veranda in Australia. The fact I am here reflects the fact that over 40 years ago my parents and siblings migrated to Australia and my life took a very differed direction to theirs. But I have visited them many times since then. The few weeks I spend here on the south coast of New South Wales is like a retreat and I find it an easy place to think about my past: particularly past events that happened in this space. For example, I have very vivid memories of sitting on the prickly couch grass with my wife in 1993. The adjacent photo shows the exact spot where this memory was formed. I remember we kept shifting our position to catch the late after-

noon winter sun and avoid the shadows creeping towards us. I don't remember what we talked about, probably it was about our holiday experiences and our kids, but I do remember feeling happy that I was with the person I loved. I know I paid attention to the moment as it happened because I took a photo of her which preserves an image but not the feelings. My photo is locked away in an album in my home thousands of miles away but my memory is here with me now to be reexperienced and enjoyed separately from all the other moments of my life.

How do the memories of our life connect to form us?

A few years ago I read a wonderful essay by Jay Lemke in which he posed the question *How do actions or events on one time scale come to add up to more than a series of isolated happenings?*^{2:273} I am illustrating one of the answers to this question. If we have a memory of a moment and we are able retrieve it, recognize its significance and meaning, and integrate it into our present thinking in a reflective way we are bringing that transient moment into the scale of a lifetime.

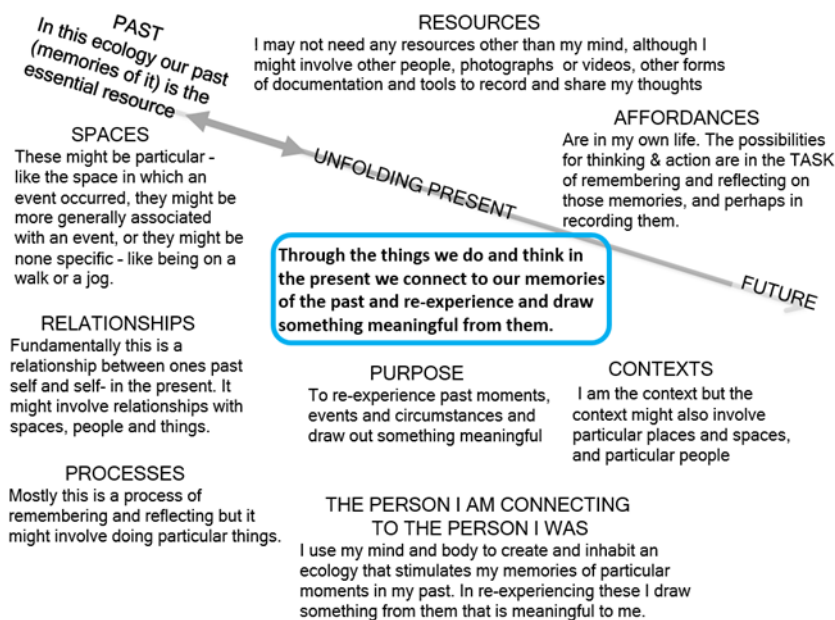
The very fact I can recall the moments I describe above enables me to connect me in my present to a life that was very different to the one I now live. As I look back I can give meanings to these moments that I could not give when they happened: six years after these particular moments my wife died of breast cancer. So memories like these have a special poignancy and are to be cherished. It is undoubtedly a coincidence that I am now in this space once again and I can connect so vividly to this moment of my life 24 years ago to illustrate the point I'm making that we can use our present to connect to the moments of our life that we remember. My sense of uniqueness is reinforced by the fact that I'm pretty sure that I am the only person who has ever lived to have had this experience and my memory of it. But perhaps we should also acknowledge that many experiences are co-created, as this one was, and each of the co-creators will have a different memory of the event. When one of them dies the other loses access to all their memories and this is one of the things we miss.

Ecology of connecting to the past

We can use the learning ecology framework we are developing and testing to explain the most important features of an ecology that purposely sets out to connect us to our past and to learn from it. Figure 1 provides a generalized interpretation and the following narrative illustrates how it might be customized.

Five years ago, I reached a point in my life where I wanted to record the history of my family for myself, my children and, when they are old enough, my grandchildren. My ecology for learning emerged over a couple of years. It began with conversations with my mother and father on a visit to Australia. I recorded these and later transcribed them. I could then see that their stories of their lives could form the chapter for a book. So the idea of a book was born and it provided a context and purpose for me to think about my own story and the story of my first wife and also to find out about our ancestors. Affordance for learning was in my own life. I created a process in which I used my relationships with family members to gather their stories, photos and documents – the artefacts of our lives. I also used ancestry.com to search databases like census, and births, marriage and death certificates. These were my main resources together with my own memories. I created a space to think and write, and the act of writing was a very important part of the process for organizing and connecting my thoughts and reflecting on the life I had lived. The book was the artefact of my process.

Figure 1 An ecology for connecting us to our past life based on the learning ecology model I am developing³



There are perhaps times in our life where it is important for us to think about our past to understand ourselves better, to resolve an issue that is bothering us that originated in our past or perhaps to pass on our knowledge of our life to our children. Maria, Sandeep and Jenny all showed this in their articles. This intrinsic and deeply personal need provides the motivational force for us to create an ecology to explore our own past.

Three of the contributors to this issue provided stories of ecologies they created to fulfil a need in order to re-experience parts of their own lives. Through the process of remembering, reflecting on and making sense of past events, with the knowledge and wisdom they now have, they developed new insights into themselves and the circumstances of their past life. I draw on three examples.

Maria Kefalogianni used the opportunity afforded by the magazine to reflect on and write about her life. By coincidence, when she wrote it, she happened to be in Crete where she spent the first 20 years of her life so this provided a physical, emotional and spiritual context which encouraged the reflective process. "While writing this article I happened to be in Crete. Being physically in the place I grew up helped me to connect with more memories and emotions of an "older time" in my life, enabling me to bridge any gaps and reach richer meanings". Her relationship with her physical environment and being able to interact with her family and other people she knew were important elements of her ecology for learning about her past. The reflections which she reveals in her writing connect her thinking now as an experienced psychotherapist with the memories of incidents and feelings she had as she was growing up and gave her new insights into her own development as a person, as a

Jenny Willis describes the circumstances and effects of creating an ecology “in order to help me understand what had made me the phobic person I am and hopefully learn how to overcome the phobia.” The ecology she created involved a therapeutic process with an experienced hypnotherapist. Here is an example of involving agents with particular expertise to facilitate the reflective process. Her narrative reveals how deeply buried, disturbing, early childhood memories can be surfaced to enable better understandings of the possible cause of the phobia. “I had uncovered what seemed to be the cause of my phobia, but sadly this did little to cure me of the fear itself”.

Connecting to our past by accessing the memories that are chemically stored in our brains is an episodic yet continuous process throughout our life. The process allows us to examine the relationship between past and current versions of ourselves and the memorable moments, events and people in our life. This process sits at the heart of our continuous search for identity and the meaning that is our life. “Like most everything else [personal identity] requires integration across timescales: across who we are in this event and that, at this moment or the other, with this person or another, in one role and situation or another.”^{2:283} What we have begun to explore here is the ecological nature of this phenomenon.

The most obvious connection of using our present to explore the past is with the way we use reflection to examine our

practice in order to learn how we might improve it. Many practice fields encourage or demand self-critical reflection whereby individuals are expected to reflect on a particular situation or critical incident that did not go well, to identify the reasons for what happened, and then identify lessons to inform future practice. Clearly there are parallels with the accounts in this issue but generally individuals do not create their own ecologies for deep reflection on their past: usually they engage in a formal procedure that is often linked to appraisal. Locating the process of connecting our current self to a past experience in order to demonstrate that we have learnt something useful within an accountability framework, provides a very different context for learning and personal development to what we are discussing here.

Perhaps a more useful and relevant connection is with higher education's responsibility to develop learners who can sustain themselves throughout long complex learning lives. This is the lifelong/lifewide learning context of an institution's educational mission and it is the context in which the personal narratives in this magazine were created.

Higher education seems only to be mostly concerned with short time spans like the length of a module. Personal Development Planning (PDP) has encouraged longer time spans for reflection on the past and also a wider focus on experiences from different aspects of life. This is perhaps the most relevant educational context for the sorts of things we are concerned with in this issue. When I look back at my own experience as a student, of course my academic studies were important – they provided the knowledge I needed to become a geologist. But the experiences that enabled me to become the sort of geologist I wanted to be were the ones I created for myself – independent fieldwork, independent project and working in a tin mine. These were the experiences that carried most meaning and value and these were the ones that I could draw lessons from in my future working life.

Encouraging learners to reflect on their life experiences (both academic and non-academic) and how they influence their beliefs, values and evolving identity, and facilitating and valuing this process, is an important way in which higher education can contribute to the development of learners who are resilient in the face of disruptions and setbacks, who can sustain themselves throughout the whole of their life.

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Image credit

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Executive Editor: I cannot resist sharing a quotation from my lifelong passion, Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, and our unconscious memory. Here, he captures the experience that led to the magic moment when a humdrum event (dunking his cake in tea) suddenly transports him back in time to his early childhood, and the warmth and security he felt as a young boy:

*It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it [the past]: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not before we ourselves must die.*¹

Surely, Proust had found a key to creating his own ecology for exploring his past!



1 Proust, M. Swann's Way. Trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff. In *Remembrance of Things Past* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1922)

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Making the Co-operative University: new places, spaces and models of higher education- November 9th Manchester

<http://www.co-op.ac.uk/2017/07/making-co-operative-university-new-places-spaces-models-higher-education-one-day-conference/>

The Higher Education Research Act (2017) encourages the formation of 'challenger' institutions complementary to the existing University system and encourages visionary thinking on governance, pedagogy, curriculum, fees, federated approaches and social purpose. The Cooperative College Charity has formed a Co-operative University Working Group (CUWG) consisting of educators and practitioners, academics, students, adult and community educators, and others interested in alternative educational approaches. The aim of the conference is to share ideas and network with like-minded and interested individuals and organisations through active learning and discussion.

This one day conference will take place at Federation House in Manchester on 9th November 2017 with standard tickets priced at £95 (inc VAT) College members tickets priced at £85 (inc VAT) and concessions £45 (inc VAT).



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2018 Year of Lifelong Learning

A lifelong learning policy for Australia

Adult Learning Australia believes that lifelong learning must be the centrepiece of all education policies in order to promote a system that provides opportunities for Australians to adapt to the ever-changing economic and social landscape, and to continue to learn throughout their lives.

Technological advancement and globalisation have decreased the availability of low skilled jobs and increased the number of jobs that require higher levels of literacy. But a policy approach that is solely focussed on the skills required by industry fails to recognise the importance of learning in helping adults to adapt to and manage changing roles at work, in families and in communities.

Why a lifelong learning policy?

Australia does not have a formal lifelong learning policy. A lifelong learning policy would acknowledge learning beyond employment and re-skilling, and highlight its role in social mobility, community building and wellbeing.

2018 is the National Year of Lifelong Learning. To coincide with this, we are calling on the Australian government to adopt a formal policy on lifelong learning as an essential feature of a healthy, active democracy.



APRIL 13th 2017

'Worldwide Lifewide Learning & Education Day'

Norman Jackson

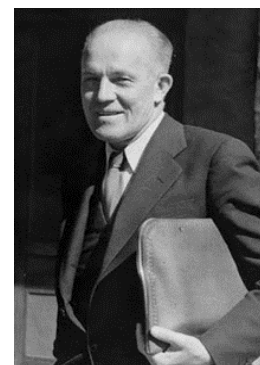
In collaboration with the International Association for Lifewide Learning, Lifewide Education organised a 'Worldwide Lifewide Learning & Education Day' to draw attention to, and raise awareness of, the meaning, relevance and significance of the idea and practices of lifewide learning and education.

We chose April 13th for our awareness raising day to honour Eduard Lindeman, a visionary pioneering adult educator who died on April 13th 1953. Lindeman believed that education is not bound by classrooms and formal curricula. Rather it involves a concern for the educational possibilities of everyday life; non-vocational ideals; situations not subjects; and people's experience. He viewed education as life. *The whole of life is learning, therefore education can have no ending.* Lindeman felt our academic system to be in reverse order with subjects and teachers constituting the starting point and students secondary. In conventional education the student is required to adjust to an established curriculum; in adult education the curriculum is built around the students' needs and interests. He believed:

- Education should be coterminous with life
- It should revolve around non-academic and non-vocational ideas
- It should start with the lives of the learners

Facilitating a global conversation

This was our first attempt to facilitate an event of this type and our ambitions were modest. We simply wanted to provide opportunities for people to share their perspectives and experiences of lifewide learning and education. We used our Google+ platforms (with limited success), held a number of skype conversations with learners and teachers in several parts of the world (Australia, Philippines. Nepal, Kuwait, Greece, Bulgaria and the UK). One member of the lifewide team (Maria Kefalogianni) ran an open event in her university for her colleagues and another gifted a film she had made of a dance she had created and performed. These were all simple acts of personal commitment and they constitute the seeds for new beginnings.



TIME ZONE CHALLENGE

As a symbol of worldwide engagement, we are facilitating a conversation on the value of a lifewide approach to learning and education. Please share your thoughts and values by contributing a post on the International Association for Lifewide Learning Google+ Forum <https://plus.google.com/communities/101200912040191944552>

- Q1 Why is lifewide learning important to you what does it mean in your everyday life?
 Q2 Why is lifewide approach to learning and education important in the modern world?
 Q3 How are you involved in encouraging and supporting the lifewide learning of others? *It could be your own family or friends, your students or colleagues or the wider world*
 Q4 What are the particular challenges in encouraging a lifewide approach to learning and achievement in your country?



It was a real privilege to talk to so many people on the day and I offer a few snippets from my play list below to give you a sense of the scope of our conversations below.



We began our conversation in Australia. Maryam Omar kindly agreed to share some of her perspectives and experiences. Maryam, who was born and raised in Kuwait, studied at the Australian College of Kuwait which has adopted a lifewide education approach in its curriculum. She is now studying for her Master's in Australia. Given her college experiences of being encouraged to see the whole of her life as a resource for learning I asked her:

What does being a lifewide learner mean to you?

Maryam To me, being a lifewide learner means living life in a complete way. Lifewide learning is something that basically prepares you or teaches you about life as a whole. It's not really specific for a certain job or task, it's how to work and live life

with people and to interact with people and different situations or conditions. It's just like an ecosystem where everyone lives together, interacts together how what you do can make you a better human being because you learn to accept new things which aren't in your own cultural background. [Being a lifewide learner] helps you to look and think, view things from different perspectives and that's how we all live together, because you look beyond whatever is there, you look beyond what is actually already known.

As our conversation unfolded I learnt that Maryam's great passion is 'cricket' and she talked about how she came to be involved in cricket and used it to illustrate how this became enfolded into her lifewide learning and her own development as a person.

When I was at school I had never heard about that sport before. Never seen it on TV. It was something new, something foreign to me. Just one day, my PE teacher asked me to try out for a Talent Hunt which was organized by Kuwait Cricket. Which is the board of cricket in Kuwait. I used to be a really good basketball player. I've done martial arts, swimming as well. At that point of time I was like, "Why would I try something new, something foreign? Why would I give up all my sports just to try something new?"

To be honest, I ignored her. I was like, "Maybe not. Thank you." But thankfully my PE teacher didn't give up. She went to my mom and told her to convince me to attend that Talent Hunt. My mom being an athlete herself, told me, "Why not? Just try. Go for a day or two. If you like it, go ahead. If not, then just leave it. At least you've tried something new." I was like, "Okay mom. I'll just do it. I'll just see how it goes."

I was the only Arab girl from my school to attend that Talent Hunt. We came three buses full around 70 girls. I wasn't very optimistic about it. I thought maybe with that percentage, just one versus 69 I can say, I thought that I wouldn't have that focus from the coaches because 60 people knew how to play the sport. They knew about the sport and just one person didn't know about that sport. I wasn't very optimistic that they would teach me the sport properly, but I was wrong.

They saw me as a chance to teach or spread the game to someone new, someone who didn't know the game before. They focused on me. They taught me the game, and I loved it. I gave up my basketball for that, gave up my martial arts for that. My father thought that it was just something I could do as part time as a hobby. But then, as I got more involved he noticed that I was drifting towards sports more than education, and he wasn't very happy about that. He told me, "Listen, there's no scope of cricket in Kuwait. Being an Arab country, there's no scope and you can only do that as a hobby. No one's going to stop you. But if you want to become a cricketer, that's not going to work here." I was like, "Dad, but I love the game." He was like, "Listen, I'm not paying a lot of money for you to go to college and then you just throw it all away for a sport." I sat down and I was like, "Listen, let's have a deal. I'll focus on my studies if you give me cricket." He was like, "That's not a deal, you have to focus on your studies." I said, "Fine. I'm going to make sure I get really good grades, and that way my studies are not interrupted by cricket. Finally he agreed and fortunately I was able to get really good grades. I came top in my college, and he couldn't be any prouder. Then cricket happened. I became so obsessed with the game. I wanted to come to Australia just before the Masters, before everything. I wanted to come to Australia to develop my game.

I never thought that maybe through cricket I could do things here as well. Just like how destiny and life came together and decided to merge my engineering and cricket together. My college recognized my sport, my hobbies like being an athlete. They encouraged that, and they thought that my story would be a really good story to tell and encourage other students. That she's done her education and she's done her sports as well. She's got other things to do, not just studies.

Then I was happy to tell dad, "Look, it's because of cricket as well as my studies that I got the opportunity to the Masters scholarship". I think to me personally, cricket helps me develop certain parts of my mind. It makes me think in a different way. I always tell my dad that it's not just a sport. But because he doesn't know cricket, it's hard for a non-cricketing person to understand that. It taught me patience, temperament basically because I used to be a very short tempered person, not very patient. But then with cricket, it makes you just cool down. That's why they call it a gentleman's game. In basketball you always yell at the coaches but in cricket, you can't yell at the umpire. I learned that the hard way actually with cricket. Now here in Australia, I've joined a couple of clubs. I play for men and women separate clubs. We recently won the Victorian Premiership. That's the highest level of cricket here in Australia. For me, just to be among that team to play next to top

players, national stars who represent Australia. I think to me, that's success. I'm working super hard at my studies, but I'd love to have cricket as my main career. Engineering would always be something that I could also do because it's something that you have as a skill. You develop that as a skill. You don't forget it. You already have that. It's great to combine those two things together.

I was enthralled by Maryam's story and when she had finished I said, "That's a wonderful story and I hope to see you one day playing for the Kuwait national team". Maryam smiled and replied "I already play for the national team, I am the captain. But the standard of the national side is not up to mark because Kuwait is still learning and developing the game unlike test countries like England, Australia, India, Pakistan and all the other countries. Kuwait is actually on the right



A taste of lifewide in the Philippines

What a way to start my Time Zone Challenge. My next stop was the Philippines where I chatted to Arcie Mallari who is a champion for social change and a visionary for beyond classroom approaches to learning personal development and



scholastic transformation. As a student Arcie went to live amongst the poor who lived on the rubbish tips in Payatas. He met a girl whose dream was to become a housemaid - she had no education and this was all she felt she could achieve - after all it offered security with a roof over her head. Through this and many similar stories Arcie was inspired to develop a vision for a unique educational programme to help such disadvantaged young people to discover a world far bigger than what they knew, to grow new ambitions and to help them on their way to achieving these ambitions. With his team of volunteers he created Silid Aralan Incorporated (SAI), a non-government organization for community-based projects that are focused on learner empowerment. SAI's mission is to "be co-learners of children by facilitating the discovery of their life's purpose and love for learning that

will inspire and empower them in creating socially responsible innovations." Through SAI, Mallari and his team of volunteers were able to inspire change to thousands of underprivileged and academically-challenged students who are now academic achievers and leaders in their community by reinforcing the students' confidence in their own capabilities. SAI is expanding across the Philippines training around 5,000 students and mobilizing more than 1,000 parent-volunteers who share Arcie's vision for personal development, creativity and achievement.

I invited Arcie to share his thoughts on what lifewide learning meant to him and what were the challenges to lifewide learning in the Philippines

Arcie: In the Philippines we view success in terms of the achievement of grades. Our approach begins with helping our students discover what they are good at and what they can contribute to their community. It's about helping them discover skills that are relevant to the needs of their community and helping them discover what they care about, their passions. This unlocks their deep intrinsic motivations and these become the drivers for learning. We use mentors to help them dig deeper into their passions.

The main challenge is an education system that only values grades. We only see the purpose of education in terms of achieving grades and not about making learning relevant and useful to the everyday lives and circumstances of people. Education wants to see impacts and test can show what has been memorised but learning through life takes more time and it cannot easily be measured but the impacts on individuals and their communities can be significant if you allow enough time. Lifewide learning is the future for education.

Lifewide education taking root in Nepal

Next on my global tour was a conversation with a group of teachers in Nepal. In 2016 Lifewide Education formed an alliance with the International Association for Lifewide Learning and Education led by Chris Picone (right) who is the driving force behind the Australian College of Kuwait's ACK award that recognises lifewide learning through the co and extra-curricular

activities students undertake. On April 13th Chris was in Kathmandu facilitating a training workshop on the ACK award with about 50 school Principals for the Goals Action Programme that is led by Deepak Bastola (left). During our Lifewide Learning and Education Day I was able to join, Chris, Deepak and key people from Deepak's network to find out about the workshops that Chris has been facilitating that day to introduce the idea of lifewide learning to the principals of schools. Deepak's commitment and enthusiasm was infectious and Chris's workshops



had clearly been successful and at least 10 school principals had agreed to implement a scheme in the coming academic year. It's quite remarkable how individuals and small teams can have such an impact on an educational system. Deepak expressed his appreciation for the work of Lifewide Education in raising awareness of its significance.

During our conversation I spoke to six members of the 'I for Change' social movement founded by Deepak Bastola. The group was established three years ago to try and eradicate social problems and evil social practices and to enhance educational opportunities. All the members of the group were involved in academic study but were actively participating in the social enterprise - as one of them said, *'Lifewide learning is an education system for the entire development of the person so that he can be a better person.'* They wished us all 'HAPPY LIFEWIDE LEARNING DAY'.



Next stop Kuwait

My next port of call was to chat to staff and students at the Australian College of Kuwait. ACK has embraced the idea of lifewide learning through an award (ACK Award) that recognises learning and development gained through co- and extra-curricular activities. A few years ago Chris Picone, who developed and manages the award had got in touch and told me that he had drawn on the work of Lifewide Education and put the idea of lifewide learning at the heart of the award so I was particularly keen to find out more. As Chris was in Nepal he arranged for me to speak to Dr. Dania El-Achmar a mentor on the programme and two students - Lojien Serhan and Saad Ali. I began by asking Dania to talk about her role as a mentor.

Dania: The role of mentor is very important. Whenever the students need me I am there. I talk to them and listen to them and I encourage and try to motivate them and they have to show me what they have learned through the things they have been doing. Because I see them all the time I see them developing as young people, growing in confidence and developing new skills. I learn so much from them its a two way process. We develop a strong and trusting relationship and we depend on each other. Its not just that I am guiding them, they are guiding me. Honestly they are like my kids and I talk to them like my kids.

Lojein: when I first entered college I was really very shy actually she [Dania] was the first person who take my hand and said you can do this, you are capable, you have the potential to do many things just go for it and do what you can do..... So actually motivating helped me a lot in the first few steps that are the hardest after that it was easy.

....The most important thing I learned was to get involved in things outside of my course and the more I got involved I grew in confidence.



I asked the students 'what does it mean to be a lifewide learner'?

Lojien: Its very important to me. It helps me see myself in relation to others and to other cultures, how can we develop ourselves in the future how can I see myself in five year. It helps me learn from others and the world. It helps me to think about and see my future in five years time and helps me set my goals, maybe my goals are too small, I am thinking its a good thing but when I compare myself to others, then you find that you are more confident in yourself, you see yourself as more special because you are achieving things beyond the course. It expands my mind and my world.

Saad: It gives you a vision for 5 or 10 years, what you want to achieve. Mostly I found it helped me to become passionate. I want to study many things. I love learning so much... it gives you the feeling that you are special. Some students they don't have a goal but ACK encourages us to set our goals it helps us to have a purpose and it gives you new connections through the things you do.

I asked Dania to say something about the challenges for learners to participate in lifewide learning.

Dania: Not all families in Kuwait support the ACK award. For example I had students who started the award but had to drop out because they told me that there parents, or their dads especially because they are girls, will not allow them to participate in activities involving males. We cannot talk to the parents because they will just say its our culture... we are in the middle east and our culture is that our girls cannot mix with males. Its not just girls males also cannot mix with girls. Its not about religion its about culture and its the same all over the middle east. So lifewide learning does not just involve the students it involves their families as well. I am telling them they have to talk to their parents they have to persuade them that there is value in doing these things outside the curriculum.

I automatically think about lifewide learning from my own culture in which the constraints on how to think and what I can do are limited. But this conversation really brought home to me the challenges facing educators and students in cultures that are different to my own.

Message from Iran

During the day I was truly delighted that Zahra Bahrami a Master of Education Technology student at the University of Bu - Ali Sina in Iran joined the conversation by posting this message in the IAFL Google+ Forum



What does lifewide learning mean in your everyday life? - Happy Lifewide Learning to all.

Formal education is only one type of learning. There are many other opportunities that we can learn from and develop ourselves. We can acquire knowledge and learn anywhere. For me lifewide learning contains all the learning opportunities in formal and informal learning environments and it takes place across a range of social settings and activities e.g university, classrooms, home, dormitory, social networks, learning through internet (for example I use online resources to learning a software, or learning language). I think learning in lifewide learning is voluntary. I'm motivated to learn and develop because it is a voluntary act.

Next stop Europe

Michael Tomlinson, who is a member of Lifewide Education's team, kindly agreed to share some of his thoughts on lifewide learning. Michael joined the team six years ago when he was an archaeology student at the University of York. After working for a few years he decided to return to study and is now a third year medical student in Sofia, Bulgaria.



What does being a lifewide learner mean to you?

Michael: I think it's the idea that you learn through all aspects of your life. Lifewide Learning happens anyway whether we want it to or not. The only way to avoid it is to stay in bed. But I think the important thing that I've learnt is that we reflect on our experiences in order to fully understand and to get the most out of them, to fully appreciate the life wideness of our learning so to speak and what that means for us in the present and future. I am currently working in a camp for Syrian refugees helping them learn English. So it's an entirely new experience for me and I'm learning. If I hadn't learnt about the concept of lifewide learning I would have still learnt what I'm learning but because I understand the idea I think I think a lot more about what is happening, I have more thoughts that I can learn from, if that makes sense. I think it allows me to get more out of my experiences. It's almost a bit like, you study for a course, you study your Biochemistry course, for example, you study it once, that's fine. But actually, it doesn't have any meaning unless you go back over and revise it. You don't remember the concepts, you don't remember what you've learned the first time out especially if you haven't applied this learning. So when I'm working with the refugees, I can think about what happened, have new ideas and then next time try these ideas out. That is how it works for me.



Coming closer to home I spoke to Phillip Frances a senior lecturer at Schumacher College in Devon, England. This institution began 25 years ago with the aim of bringing together life and learning. It's very connected to lifewide learning. The ethos is that participants don't go to the college just to learn but to live together as a community ie they wash up together, clean, cook together, garden together, prepare the food together eat and socialise together, "you cannot learn in separation from living..... the conversations you have while you're peeling potatoes are often more important than the lecture you've just sat through for the last three hours".



Satish Kumar started Shumacher College 25 years ago and 19 years ago we started holistic science which is looking specifically at science and what are the kinds of causes of how learning got separated from life. How do we come to see that knowledge was simply an abstract occupation, that you could do as far away from possible as any emotional or any life type activity. We're trying to look into what are the reasons for that divide, and is it possible to have a science that integrates knowledge with life.

I invited Phillip to share what he considered to be the essence of an adult lifewide learner? what does that mean to you, and why do you think the idea of lifewide learning is an important concept for education more generally?

Philip: The conclusions I've come to, which were also in my book, *Time, Light And The Dice of Creation* is that we tend to approach the world as something that in order to inform a subject, or a decision, or a project we have to understand it completely, we want to have a complete picture as possible of what is there. That is knowledge which is very valuable on its own. But the undertaking of life is different. The undertaking of life requires that we do not think we know everything before we undertake that journey. Living means we have to be open that there is a mystery we do not yet fully understand. Whatever we do with passion in life, whether it's gardening or travelling, or reading then we do it with the feeling that our

life is there to explore something. It's to find out something that we didn't know before. It's there to search for and discover something new. It's the way we come to know.

Norman: What you have described is very much about self-awareness, individual self-awareness of their place in the world. You haven't used the term but I get a sense that you believe in ecology. That a person is part of an ecology which is that connection to the world, the people around them and the resources in it and so on. That's about a self-awareness and then I guess a disposition, an attitude, an orientation towards certain sorts of behaviors and ways of being in the world. Is that a fair way of expressing what you've just said?

Philip: Yes, that's a very clear way of saying it, or a very clear way of getting to the root. That our attitude to the world changes the world we live in. If our attitude is closed and that we have a fixed idea of what the world is and how we want to use it then that is the world we need. If our attitude is one of awareness, as you said is one of appreciation of other potential in nature or in other human beings or spiritually then the world we meet is full of promise and potential. Often arguments do not get to the root of this. One person is arguing about a world that they have constructed from a particular attitude in themselves, and another person who's arguing about a world from another attitude ends in a complete disagreement, because there is no universally accepted world only attitudes in a way that create a perceived world.

I think today, the Lifewide Education project is really valuable because I know that there are many, many, many places where this type of learning is happening. I think the college has been busy with this question for 25 years, but it's in a really different phase at the moment because the world is so polarised between the old view of knowledge as a kind of right to do anything and this new kind of awareness that we have to bring in the human, the values, and individuals' efforts to return to something that's founded in something more than just capital or consumerism or abstracted knowledge on its own. It feels like this question is something out in the world now which we're all kind of grappling with in our own ways and there's no hiding from it. It's something that the world as a whole needs to find a path towards a different future. It's like everybody is in that journey now, it's no longer a sort of academic debate from outside. There's no longer that luxury of being able to foresee what can happen and try and make up. It's like this is now the real thing that we have to live. I think that what you're doing is really valuable in trying to draw attention to and make these issues visible, and make the connections between all these places and the people that are trying to make their contributions to this movement.

Changing a higher education system



My final conversation on April 13th was with Rob Ward. For many years Rob and I have been allies in promoting the idea and practice of personal development planning (PDP). Rob had recently stepped down from his position as Director of the Centre for Recording Achievement, the organisation he started in 1991. Rob has seen and been involved in many changes in UK higher education and the global movement towards recognising all forms of learning, not just academic. Rob has been around the lifewide learning agenda for over a quarter of a century and has engaged with the chalk face practitioner community and the institutional and system politics. So my questions for Rob related to where we have come from? and where are we heading?

Norman: How do you think the climate, for the types of education and learning reforms we both advocate, has changed since you started your work in 1991? Is it more valuing, is there now more recognition of students' lifewide learning and experiences?

Rob: [laughs] I think the answer to your question about recognition is yes there is more going on: but it's a yes and a but from my point of view. There have been a whole series of initiatives to encourage new practice, which means that we've got a lot more practice going on in universities and colleges. Partly because institutions are competing with each other. In the current and recent climate, partly because some of the policy drivers, particularly around employability are providing the stimulus for recognition of wider achievements.

It's been important to ride on the back of those. I think there are some issues. Some of them are endemic but we've still got to pay attention to them. I think there are issues in terms of the recognition of wider learning and achievement, around who's getting involved in that, in an institutional context? Is it still the case that it's a relatively small group of students, particularly for award schemes, or is it permeating much more across the whole student body? It varies from institution to institution and in some it's still rather limited. Some students are excluded by virtue of the other things that they've got to do. There's still an issue I think about should this provision which recognizes wider learning and achievement, be related to credit

or not? There are arguments on both sides around that, and in some ways, if you relate it to academic credit, it becomes potentially more inclusive. But does that then straitjacket the things we can do? And we've still got the challenge is resourcing, and we've got to find ways of enabling, perhaps, forcing students to stop and think about their experience. [Editor: The benefits of this are shown in Michaels conversation above].

Unless we do that and it's at the heart of PDP of course, unless we do that, the risk is students won't get the opportunity to think about themselves in the context of their experiences. They may think about the experience of it, they may simply just digest through experience, and I think that is the core issue. One of the things this raises is the question of achievement and how we define achievement. I think it's a really interesting debate to have because achievement can be, arguably should be, personally referenced as opposed to institutionally referenced.

Norman: I think Rob it's also fair to say that an awful lot of lifewide learning and achievement goes on unrecognized because students themselves don't choose to have it recognized. I think that balances out to some extent the fact that only a minority perhaps engage in schemes that recognise it - in spite of decades of work, and policies to encourage it.

Rob: I think that's true. My anxiety about that is the issue that students might, themselves, not be able to harness that recognition either in terms of appreciating their own development or in terms of presenting themselves to other people or when it would be advantageous to do that. I think that you're right, there are some people, some individuals who process their experience in a very organic way, and I'm not sure that isn't a learned capability. So, there is a question about how we can help more students to do that because we're not trying to create a massive system of surveillance or ask students to reflect on something which they don't find terribly exciting. Sometimes, experiences are just to be experienced. What we don't want is students, I think, who have no opportunity and no capability to undertake that process in the way we'd want to encourage them to do, because at the end of the day, the process of being a student, seems to me, is a process of becoming through which they discover more about themselves, who they are and who they want to be. So reflection on experience is an integral part of their becoming a different and better version of themselves.

Norman: Turning into the future, put your glasses or binoculars on, where do you think we're heading, if you look say 10 years down the line, are you more optimistic in terms of where you think we're heading in the UK or less optimistic?

Rob: That's a good question and I don't have a clear answer. I have some anxieties. In 2017 we have reached the position where all these institutions have ways of doing things around PDP and most have some engagement with lifewide learning, which enables them to tick various boxes, saying, "We've done that, we're there," but it's still very much a Cinderella-cottage industry. Maybe that's where it lives best, lives most appropriately with the practitioners and students who care.

I think the policy agenda that is currently unfolding [like the Teaching Excellence Framework] doesn't necessarily chime well with the conversations we're having about recognising lifewide learning. If we are going to enable lifewide learning to flourish in an ecological sense we need to recognize the personal benefits and not just the strategic employability benefits.

We need to harness the technology and we need to understand the technology. Micro-credentialing in the form of digital badges is something that's been around for a bit. What we mustn't do is get hooked on the notion that the badges is all we need to do to satisfy employers because we've had a whole range of things, we've had records of achievements, we've had portfolios, and people keep falling into a trap of saying, "Well, it's all in there, send it off to an employer. Send it off to a selector and they'll read it and make use of it and they'll understand your badge and know all about you."

You've got to stick with a person-centered approach in which the technology helps to inform and recognize that it won't do that job of communicating how a person's experiences and capabilities can be related to what an employer is looking for. No credentialing system will achieve this.

I also think we've got to engage more students if they want to be engaged. There's at least one university now that is thinking about enrolling every student on their lifewide learning scheme, so you have to opt out of being involved with lifewide learning in that institution. Is that a good thing? It says something about what the institution values and wants to do, but is it at the risk of students saying, "Well, why are they interested in these other bits of my life? What's going on here?" I think there's a question to be asked there. There's another question to be asked about, "What about the students who aren't enthused about this at all? How do we appreciate where they are and what they are thinking?"

Last, but not least, I think, it would be really good to have a piece of follow-up work which asks students, three or four years down the line looking back, what other university experience has really made a difference, because we've got lots of anecdotal

evidence about that and the anecdotal evidence broadly suggests it's people doing things other than the content or curriculum, it's the experience of being a university student. That is much more than a curriculum and that may not be easy for institutions to buy into totally when they are charging £9000 for the privilege of learning lots of content, but we've got to, I think, develop an evidence base that confirms the anecdotal.

I'd like some of that to be in my vision for the next 10 years. I think 10 years is a long time ahead and I think our job at the minute is to make haste slowly in terms of learning from our current experience, but also celebrating the opportunities that are coming up in terms of the whole range of change that's going on and in terms of the technology that might help us to maximize engagement with learners in a range of contexts.

Afterthoughts

At the end of my conversations I felt a mixture of emotions. I felt uplifted and rejuvenated by the interest, commitment and enthusiasm of the people I had spoken to. While many of them lived in very different cultural contexts and circumstances we were all united by the values and beliefs about learning and the development of people through all aspects of their life. I found it very interesting that many had shared their insight that it was not enough to do something or have an experience, the real added value came through thinking about the experience and what had happened and drawing from it important points of learning. I also had new appreciation for the challenges faced by educators and students in some cultures which inhibited social interactions involving males and females and how, in such circumstances learners themselves must act as advocates for the values that these forms of education encourage. I was also humbled by the efforts of the champions of lifewide learning - like Chris Picone and Deepack Bastola in Nepal, and Arcie Mallari in the Philippines who are trying to bring about significant changes to their educational system and fight social injustice to create a different and better version of the world for others. But I also feel privileged to know such people and I know I am a better person for it.

My final thought was that we had try to do something to connect people who cared about lifewide learning and who were trying to act on their beliefs. I was greatly heartened by what Phillip Frances had said, "I think that what you're doing is really valuable in trying to draw attention to and make these issues visible, and make the connections between all these places and the people that are trying to make their contributions to this movement." These conversations illustrate Lifewide Education's commitment to this goal.

Sources Eduard Lindeman

- 1) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard_C._Lindeman
- 2) <http://infed.org/mobi/eduard-c-lindeman-and-the-meaning-of-adult-education/>
- 3) Photo of Lindeman
<http://uncghistory.blogspot.co.uk/2015/09/eduard-lindeman-julius-foust-and-ku.html>



ANNUAL REPORT AUGUST 2017

Mission & Activities

'**Lifewide Education**' was launched in August 2011 and registered in the UK as a Community Interest Company - a not for profit, community-based, social-educational enterprise whose purpose is to champion and support a lifewide and ecological approaches to learning, personal development and education. Our goal is to become a global HUB for the production and curation of resources that are of value and relevance to educational practitioners and institutions. Our focus is primarily higher education but we are interested in learning from people in all educational contexts.

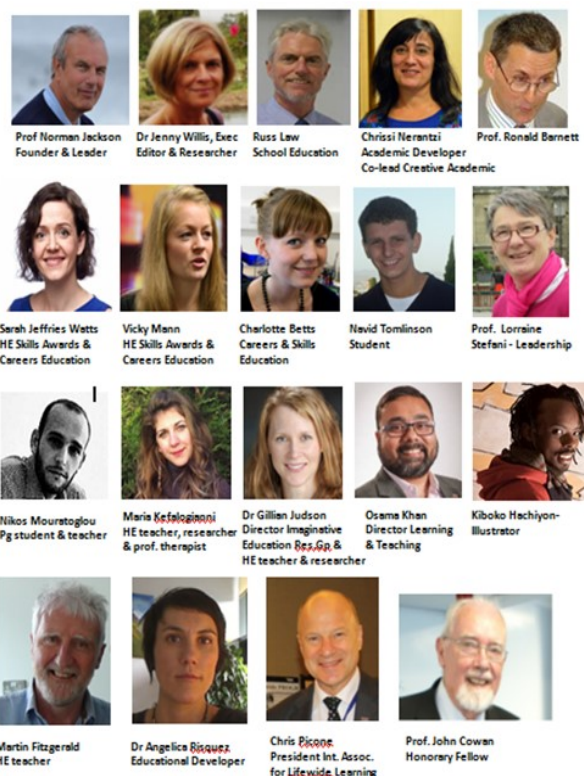
We value 'openness' and most of our resources are shared under a Creative Commons licence. Membership is free and open to anyone who shares our interests and values. Activities include:

- 1 Publication and dissemination of information relevant to lifewide learning, education and personal development
- 2 Research and scholarship related to these ideas
- 3 Support for professional development eg by contributing to the CPD programmes and events of education professionals
- 4 Organising and contributing to events relevant to our mission
- 5 Advocacy - championing and encouraging a lifewide view of learning, personal development and education.
- 6 Forming alliances with institutions and organisations that share our interests and values.

In January 2015 **Creative Academic** was co-founded by two members of the Lifewide Education team to focus more specifically on the creativity dimension of lifewide learning. It has its own team and work programme but is funded via Lifewide Education.

Lifewide Education Team

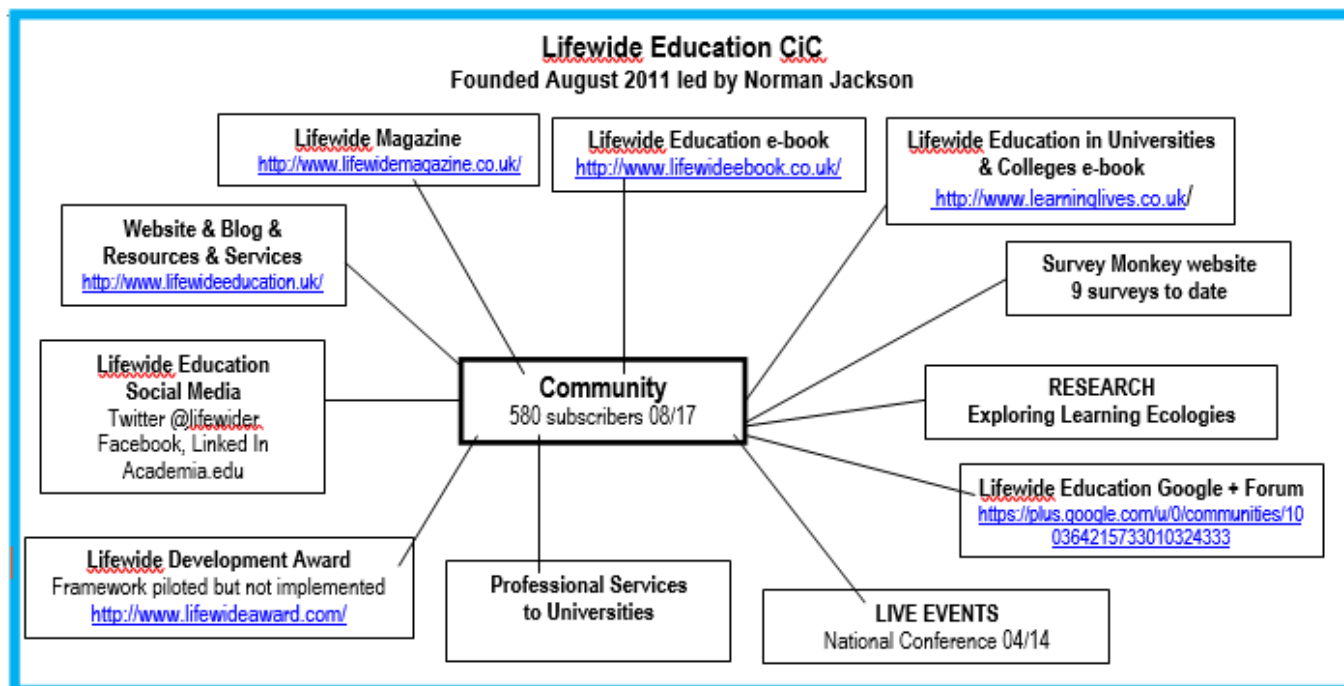
Lifewide Education is led by the Founder, Professor Norman Jackson and supported by a fantastic group of volunteers who all care about helping learners develop themselves as whole people using all the opportunities they have in their lives. The 2017 team includes several new members - Maria Kefalogianni (who is guest editing issue#19 of the magazine), Gillian Judson (with interests in the ecology of education), Martin Fitzgerald and Angelica Riskey (who are leading our exploration of lifewide learning and sustainable education issue 20 of the magazine) and Chris Picone who is President of the International Association for Lifewide Learning. His role in the team is to help us connect our project to the work of IAFL. The Director would like to sincerely thank all the members of the team who have generously given their time, creativity and expertise to support our work.



Resourcing

The enterprise is resourced through the expertise and time donated by everyone who contributes to the work and financial donations from public speaking and consultancy activities undertaken by the Director. Neither the Director or members of the team receive any salary, dividends or other remuneration for the time and contributions they make. Expenses incurred through services to the organisation and community are reimbursed against receipts and invoices. A single set of accounts combining the work of Lifewide Education & Creative Academic are audited by an independent accountant each year and an annual return for taxation purposed is made to Companies House.

Figure 1 Organisation & infrastructure Lifewide Education



Activities August 2016 - 2017

- 1 **Ongoing support (see below) for our community of interest.** There are 580 registered members (August 2017) and increase of 70 in the last year. We use the Mail Chimp mail list management tool which makes administration of the membership mail lists much easier. People can join and leave the mail list at any time. There are almost equal numbers of people joining and leaving our community.
- 2 **Maintaining an on-line presence through a community website** <http://www.lifewideeducation.uk/> and blog
- 3 **Maintaining a presence on the twitter @lifewider** We have 293 followers and have produced 568 tweets. We have not been very active this year. Twitter has proved useful in finding people to contribute to our magazine and also in promotional activities relating to our magazine, blogs and surveys.
- 4 **Maintaining a presence on facebook social networking platform** <https://www.facebook.com/LifewideEducation/>
This is another area where we have not been very active in the past year.
- 5 **Supporting a Google+ Lifewide Education community forum.** We established the forum in July 2016 to encourage sharing of ideas and practices by members of the community <https://plus.google.com/communities/100364215733010324333> It has 22 members but has yet to establish itself as a forum for discussion. We also established a Google+ Forum for the International Association for Lifewide Learning It has 23 members but has yet to establish itself as a place for conversation. <https://plus.google.com/communities/101200912040191944552> All our forums require effort and commitment to make them work. We have learnt from #creativeHE that periodic conversations and courses are important to the productive use of such forums if they are to become a valuable tool for community conversation and learning.
- 6 **Lifewide Magazine.** <http://www.lifewidemagazine.co.uk/>. Each issue explores a theme that is relevant to Lifewide Education and three issues are published this year. A total of 18 Issues have been published to date. In January 2017 we took the strategic decision to produce only two issues per year as we are also producing 2 or 3 issues of Creative Academic Magazine. In January 2017 we published an issue devoted to 'Exploring the Idea of Exploration' and we will produce the second issue of the year in September on the theme of 'mental time travel'. Our magazine page has been loaded 11,200 times (3000 times in the last 12 months) so we can be confident that our resources are of interest and are being used.

- 7 **Research and scholarship** - research is mainly through interview studies and surveys much of it is in collaboration with Creative Academic. Much of our research is geared to the production of our magazines. The main effort has been to continue to develop the idea of learning ecologies and to link this to higher education teaching. During the year we also began to develop the idea of personal pedagogies as a means of connecting our ecological ideas to higher education teaching practices. We have an open on-line survey with 85 respondents to date and an initial report prepared by Dr Jenny Willis. We also explored the idea of universities as specialised ecosystems for learning and applied the idea to a professional development module at the University of Limerick.
 - 8 **Lifewide Learning, Education and Personal Development e-book** <http://www.lifewideebook.co.uk/> (2100 page loads to date).
 - 9 **'Lifewide Learning and Education in Universities and Colleges', e-book** published in March 2014 has received nearly 1945 page loads to date. The conference website we created to host the resources has received over 3630 page loads <http://www.learninglives.co.uk/>
 - 10 **Guidance and infrastructure to support the Lifewide Development Award.** <http://www.lifewideaward.com/> 1070 page loads to date. This framework demonstrates how lifewide learning and achievement might be supported and recognised
 - 11 **Participating in a number of events in the UK and overseas** to promote lifewide learning and education - during the year members of the team contributed to or facilitated events in Singapore, Ireland and the UK. The Director gave two Keynote talks at the 4th International Conference On Learning And Community Enrichment (ICOLACE) in Singapore in October 2016. The theme for the conference was "Frameworks to encourage, support and recognise the lifewide formation of students."
 - 12 **Contribute to promoting lifewide learning and education internationally.** At the the Annual General Meeting of the International Association For Lifewide Learning (IAFL www.iafl.org) Chris Picone was re-elected as President and Dr Paramita Atmodiwirjo as Secretary. Professor Norman Jackson was elected to the position of Deputy President. Lifewide Education has now included Chris Picone as a member of the core group of activists, in this way IAFL and Lifewide Education can better coordinate and connect their activities.
 - 13 **Worldwide Lifewide Learning & Education Day** In 2017 we established and promoted the first **International Day on April 13th to raise awareness of the significance of the values of lifewide learning and education in a modern world.** This date was chosen to commemorate Eduard Lindeman, a visionary adult educator who died on April 13th 1953. Lindeman believed that education is not bound by classrooms and formal curricula. Rather it involves a concern for the educational possibilities of everyday life; non-vocational ideals; situations not subjects; and people's experience. He viewed education as life. *The whole of life is learning, therefore education can have no ending.* Lindeman felt our academic system to be in reverse order with subjects and teachers constituting the starting point and students secondary. In conventional education the student is required to adjust to an established curriculum; in adult education the curriculum is built around the students' needs and interests. He believed:
Education should be coterminous with life
It should revolve around non-academic and non-vocational ideas
It should start with the lives of the learners
It should look to the learner's own experience as its most valuable resource
- In partnership with Chris Picone IAFL we created our 'Time Zone Challenge' and facilitated an on-line conversations with people who are interested in lifewide learning and education from across the world.**

Goals August 2017-18

Community & infrastructure

- Continue to grow our membership
- Maintain the Lifewide Education website
- Develop and animate the Lifewide Education Google+ Forum
- Maintain and develop our presence through social media (Google+, Facebook, Linked in, Twitter, Academia.edu other)

Magazines

Publish at least 2 issues of Lifewide Magazine each exploring a new theme. The themes for the next two issues are:

#19 Travelling through Time: Using our present to explore our past

Guest Editor Maria Kefalogianni

#20 Exploring the idea of 'sustainability' in learning, teaching & education

Guest Editors Martin Fitzgerald & Angelica Risquez

Book projects

- Begin the production and editing a new book on Learning Ecologies with Professor Ron Barnett
- Produce/publish Pedagogical Journeys book

Research - strands of inquiry undertaken in collaboration with Creative Academic & others

- Continue to explore the dimensions of lifewide learning, learning ecologies and universities as specialised ecosystems for learning.
- *Personal Pedagogies* We have been exploring the idea of personal pedagogies -the beliefs, values, knowledge and experiences that shape the practices of teachers (a lifelong and lifewide phenomenon). We will extend this inquiry through a *Pedagogical Journeys Project*: in collaboration with Creative Academic and the Imaginative Education Research Group. It will enable us to better understand the lifelong/lifewide journeys that teachers make in their own pedagogical formation.
- *Signature pedagogies* of disciplines are an important element of a teachers personal pedagogy - we are discussing a collaborative project with Southampton Solent University that will enable us to begin exploring how this dimension of personal pedagogy
- *Teaching ecologies* : We are interested in the ecologies for learning that teachers create and how certain ecologies enable students to create their own ecologies for learning.

Contributions to HE teachers Professional Development

- We will continue to promote LWE through conferences in the UK and overseas
- We will continue to contribute to the CPD activities of teachers in universities and colleges - eg we are facilitating a week long CPD programme at the University of Limerick in which the idea of ecosystems underpins the issue-led curriculum.
- We will organise at least one event in the coming year.

Relationships & Alliances

- We will continue to develop relationships and alliances with organisations and institutions that share our interests and values. This year we will be collaborating with the International Association for Lifewide Learning and with Gillian Judson who leads the Ecological Education enterprise in Canada

We hope you value the work we do to promote lifewide and ecological approaches to learning educational community. If you have other ideas or you would like to contribute to any of these projects please get in touch.

Norman Jackson

Founder Lifewide Education

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Lifewide Magazine #20 June 2018

Exploring 'sustainability' in learning & education

Martin Fitzgerald and Angelica Risquez



We live in a complex but fragile world that is increasingly stressed through the many demands a rapidly increasing population make on it. Many of the resources we depend on are finite - when they are gone they will not be replenished. Natural and man-made disasters drive population movements on scales that destabilise societies. Human activity is changing the physical environment beyond all recognition and altering the climate in ways that will cause even more instability. The only thing that is certain is that we have created a future that is even less certain for our children and grandchildren. This state of being at the edge of chaos provides the context for our exploration of how we might use education as the means to educate a world into a more sustainable and more stable future.

One thing has become clear, sustaining mankind and our planet cannot be achieved by technological solutions, political regulation or financial instruments alone. We need to change the way people think and act but changing the way a global society thinks and acts is a huge challenge and moral purpose for the world's education systems.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is about enabling us to constructively and creatively address present and future global challenges and create more sustainable and resilient societies (UNESCO). This requires quality education and learning for sustainable development at all levels and in all social contexts including Higher Education.

ESD means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning, such as poverty alleviation, citizenship, peace, ethics, responsibility in local and global contexts, democracy and governance, justice, security, human rights, health, gender equity, cultural diversity, rural and urban development, economy, production and consumption patterns, corporate responsibility, environmental protection, natural resource management and biological and landscape diversity.

ESD means viewing our institutions as living dynamic eco-social systems dedicated to the formation and development of knowledge and the encouragement and support of people's learning so that both individuals and the societal ecosystem as a whole can flourish.

ESD requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action for sustainable development.

- Human sustainability in teaching: includes elements such as resilience, wellbeing, emotional intelligence and the role of personality and gender as a teacher
- Educational sustainability: comprehends open pedagogies, our legacy as a teacher, engagement with communities and society, and lifelong and lifewide learning (including digital capacity)
- Social and environmental education: gathers these issues within each ecological environment and with reference to our contribution to society as educators

ESD encourages a more ecological approach to learning with the goal of enabling learners to develop themselves through all their experiences while at university so that they can sustain themselves through a lifetime of dealing with challenges and disruptions that they cannot begin to imagine. Ultimately, universities have a moral responsibility to not just prepare learners for entry to the job market, they must enable learners to prepare themselves for the rest of their lives.

The issue is scheduled for publication in June 2018. We welcome contributions from our readers. **If you would like to share your perspectives, ideas and practices on the theme of sustainable education please contact the Commissioning Editor Professor Norman Jackson (normanjjackson@btinternet.com).**



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LIFEWIDE MAGAZINE #20

June 2018

Exploring Exploration

HAPPY 20TH BIRTHDAY!

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See previous page for details and contacts
for those wishing to contribute to this
birthday edition

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