

The [Social] Edge:  
Regenerative Design Practices in Higher Education

Master of Research 2017/2018  
The Glasgow School of Art  
Lorianna Paradise

Supervisory Team:  
Dr. Lynn-Sayers McHattie  
Dr. Cara Broadley  
Dr. Brian Dixon

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research project was to examine how socially regenerative practices promoted in eco/intentional communities can be applied in a mainstream higher education setting. The global environmental crisis is addressed here through social means. Based in the Highlands of Scotland, the design research was undertaken using a practice-led method. The practice was performed through the researcher/designer/artist's process of "living as form" (social and cultural) embedment method. Living as form, is the term applied to socially engaged artworks that take the form of what they engage with rather, than an abstract representation of them. Along with embedment and community engagement, other methods used were "go-along" walking interviews, long form interviews, course enrolment, and participatory performance workshops. This project takes a meta delineation of the design research study, process, and outcomes (including this text), as the form of practice and an art piece. Socially regenerative design methods were applied to test their effectiveness and examine their prevalence within local eco/intentional communities and were subsequently introduced into the mainstream higher education setting at Glasgow School of Art's (GSA) Highlands Campus. It was concluded that the Highlands Campus could benefit from further investigation of socially regenerative skills, especially those related to communication, mindfulness, and group work.

### **Keywords:**

social permaculture, regenerative design, sustainability, higher education, living as form, socially engaged arts, deep listening, communication, community, group dynamics, cohorts, celebration, ritual, performance, nature connection, mindfulness, meditation



## Preface

For nearly twenty years, I have been pursuing systems and network themes in my work as an artist. My art has taken many forms, from more traditional mixed media sculpture and painting, to performative and interactive installation, living as form, and land-based projects, to a combination of all these. There have been two consistent threads throughout my work, ecological sustainability, and making social connections to better understand the human condition. In 2007, following an exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, including my mixed media interactive installation, *So, How's Life?*, I decided to pursue my work in a less abstract manner (Paradise, 2017). I began this process in Costa Rica, where I became a certified permaculture designer and built up a land-based, living lab (permacultural) art piece, *Wonderfarm BL42* (ibid.). Through this piece and my following work, it became important to contextualise my lifestyle as the form of my work, or living as form, because it was indivisible from the meaning I hoped to convey. Making socially engaged artworks became my focus, to make the reach and purpose of my work more concrete and intentional. Through my lifestyle circles and studies, I encountered many alternative ecologically-minded holistic practices and wondered about their validity in wider applications. Specifically, I began to examine how social permaculture might be a useful tool of regenerative design, while using the skills in my life/art. This research project is situated in a continuum of related work in my career and represents an opportunity to approach social and environmental themes in a rigorous academic fashion, while simultaneously offering active solutions to wicked problems.

The self in social permacultural terms is called zone 00, the position of the first observational point within and outwardly. This research project/ art practice piece, was created from this zone 00 perspective, which is aligned with living as form principles as well. Additionally, methodological frameworks inspired by grounded theory, while applying the topical (social permaculture) design methods, support the perspective of the researcher/designer/ artist having an inextricable influence on the context and participants that are engaged. These paradigms acknowledge that as the researcher/designer/ artist, my viewpoint influences the entire process, the understanding of the data collection, and the final outcomes. Therefore, because my perspective is a known part of the research, usage of the first person in this text was a conscious choice.

## Gratitude

A key socially regenerative skill I encountered repeatedly in eco/intentional communities was the expression of gratitude. In keeping with this practice, I would like to thank the vast network of people that helped and supported my research. Most emphatically, I would like to thank my team of supervisors, Dr. Lynn-Sayers McHattie, Dr. Cara Broadley, and Dr. Brian Dixon. I would also like to express my gratitude to the imitable (soon to be Dr.) Rui Santos for his eleventh hour shared knowledge.

## Table of Contents

### Chapter One: Introduction pp. 10-14

- 1.1 Setting pp.11-12
- 1.2 Edges and The Sociotone. pp.12-13
- 1.3 How Can Socially Regenerative Practices from Eco/Intentional Communities be Applied in Mainstream Higher Education? pp. 13-14

### Chapter Two: Literature Review pp. 15-25

- 2.1 Introduction to the Literature p. 15
- 2.2 Design for Socially Regenerative Innovation pp. 15-16
- 2.3 Overview of Systems Thinking pp. 16-17
- 2.5 Contextual Development of Social (Permaculture) Systems Thinking Design pp. 17-24
- 2.6 Summary of Literature Review p. 25

### Chapter Three: Methodology pp. 26-41

- 3.1 Introduction to Literature Review pp. 26-27
- 3.2 Methodological Framework p. 27
  - 3.2.1 Epistemological/ Ontological Position pp. 28-29
- 3.3 Rationale of Methods Chosen pp. 29-30
  - 3.3.1 Practice-Led Research pp. 30-31
  - 3.3.2 Design Research (with an Artistic Framing) pp. 31-33
  - 3.3.3 Outline of Living as Form pp. 33-34
  - 3.3.4 Permacultural Living as Form as Design Practice pp. 34-36
- 3.4 Methods pp. 36-37
  - 3.4.1 Process in Overview pp. 37-41
- 3.5 Summary of Methodology p. 41

### Chapter Four: Findings pp. 42-61

- 4.1 Introduction to Findings p. 42
- 4.2 A Simple Overview of Findings per Phase pp. 42-43
- 4.3 Review of Methods pp. 43-45
  - 4.3.1 "Go-Along" Walk Interviews pp. 45-48
  - 4.3.2 Embedment Living as Form pp. 48-50
  - 4.3.3 Workshop One: "Social Permaculture" p. 50

4.3.4	Long Term Informal Interviews and Observation	pp. 50-53
4.3.5	Long Format Interviews	pp. 53-55
4.3.6	Workshop Two: "Regenerative Communication and Group Dynamics"	p. 56
4.4	Themes	p. 57
4.4.1	Group Dynamics/ Community	p. 57
4.4.2	Communication/ Connection	p. 58
4.4.3	Mindfulness/ Nature	pp. 59-60
4.5	Summary of Findings	pp. 60-61

Chapter Five: Conclusion pp. 62-64

Statement of Limitations p. 65

Bibliography pp. 66-71

Appendix:

- A. pp. 72-73
- B. pp. 73-75
- C. pp. 75-108
- D. pp. 109-114

## Image list

### Chapter 1: Introduction

Image 1.1 Sociotone.	p.13
Image 1.2 Mind Map Edges	p.14

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

Image 2.1 Permaculture	p.19
Image 2.2 Zone Map Tool	p.21

### Chapter 3: Methodology

Image 3.1 Methods and Rationale Chart	p.30
Image 3.2 Design Practice with an Artistic Framing	p.33
Image 3.3 Workshop One: Social Permaculture	p.36
Image 3.4 Chronological Process Chart: Phases of Research	p.37
Image 3.5 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool Overview	p.40

### Chapter 4: Findings

Image 4.1 Overview of Findings Chart	p.43
Image 4.2 Critical Reflective Journal	p.44
Image 4.3 Permeable Edges	p.46
Image 4.4 Mindfulness Hikes	p.49
Image 4.5 Collaborative Cohort	p.52

### Appendix:

Image C.1 Map of Go- Along Interview with James from Altyre to Forres High Street	p.76
Image C.2 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool	
“Identity as an Outsider and Transience”	p.78
Image C.3 Map of Go-Along Interview with Allison in Grant Park, Forres	p.79
Image C.4 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool “Neutrality as a Communal Stance”	p.81

Image C.5 Map of Go-Along Interview with Sandra on Findhorn Beach	p.82
Image C.6 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Discipline and Commitment"	p.84
Image C.7 Map of Go-Along Interview with Louisa on Findhorn Beach	p.85
Image C.8 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Realising Dreams of Living in Community"	p.87
Image C.9 Map of Go-Along Interview with Greta in Grant Park, Forres	p.88
Image C.10 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "A Family Tradition of Communal Living"	p.90
Image C.11 Map of Go-Along Interview with Polly around Findhorn Dunes	p.91
Image C.12 Image Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Who is the Leader?"	p.93
Image C.13 Map of Go-Along Interview with Alex in Grant Park, Forres	p.94
Image C.14 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Adaptable Communication Styles"	p.96
Image C.15 Map of Go-Along Interview with Tree from Newbold House to Findhorn	p.97
Image C.16 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Self-Enquiry as a Regenerative Practice"	p.99
Image C.17 Map of Go-Along Interview with Kate along Findhorn Beach	p.100
Image C.18 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Becoming Aware of Patterns and Needs in Relationships"	p.102
Image C.19 Map of Go-Along Interview with Amelia in the Findhorn Dunes	p.103
Image C.20 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Right Livelihood and Speaking a New Way"	p.105
Image C.21 Map of Go- Along Interview with Milla in the Findhorn Dunes	p.106
Image C.22 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Nature as Sanctuary, Teaching While Learning"	p.108
Image D.1 Collage of Go-Along Walks	p.110
Image D.2 Collage of Embedment and Living as Form	p.111
Image D.3 Collage of Eco/Intentional Pedagogical Platforms	p.112
Image D.4 Collage of Performative Workshops	p.113
Image D.5 Collage of Maps and Charts	p.114

## Research Question:

This research asked: “How can socially regenerative skills from eco/intentional communities be applied in mainstream higher education?”. The exemplars of the eco/intentional communities were primarily drawn from the communities based in the Findhorn, Forres, Scotland region. Located in the same region, the Glasgow School of Art’s Highland Campus was the mainstream higher education setting where the application of the socially regenerative skills were tested.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Motivated by an increasing array of global challenges, influenced by ecological crisis, I have structured my research around a growing zeitgeist that looks for creative solutions in the analysis and design of social relationships. There are, of course, many scientific and technological solutions being developed for environmental problems, these however, are not the focus of my enquiry. Rather, I look to the basic human needs that may fundamentally hinder the successful promotion of more planet-friendly design innovation. My research is concerned with the locus of interpersonal and social dynamics as a primary gateway for other regenerative efforts such as those with ecological or economic dimensions. The focus on social dynamics was identified through related literature, preliminary field work, and subsequent data analysis.

The word sustainability has for some decades now been connected to environmental activism, however, there is an increasing awareness that the actions needed to create preferable futures require steps beyond merely *sustaining* the current status quo, but that rather both advancement and *regeneration* of current methods is imperative (Wahl, 2016: 43).

In keeping with transformative approaches, I have focused on social-ecological systems and explored emerging pathways to facilitate desirable transformation (Wittmayer et al., 2018: 11) (see Chapter 3, Methodology). My research examines socially regenerative design practices with the aim to respond to the mounting needs of the planet; recognising that intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics are both potentially propagative catalysts and impediments behind our collective efforts to maintain our earthly survival. I hope to demonstrate that by understanding our (social) systems, and our individual and communal needs, we may have a key to more effective existence. The main idea is that by designing our lives to foster and feed our (social) needs, we may eliminate many (destructive) behaviours that lead to undesirable (environmental) outcomes.

Regenerative design is grounded in an understanding of the intentionality of systems, and pattern analysis, and emphasises that humans must work in harmony with these systems to abate profound (global) consequences (Mang, 2001). My objective was to observe and learn the socially regenerative design practices promoted in eco/ intentional communities and test their effectiveness in a mainstream higher educational environment. (Eco/intentional is used here to describe various social enterprises, networks, and physical communal living centres,



as well as both residential and online educational platforms with a shared vision to promote sustainable and regenerative living).

With my aim in mind, I discovered many eco/intentional communities setting their collective values and missions through regenerative social design practices, and institutionally spreading these ideas through their own educational platforms. I questioned if these ideas were being applied successfully, and if they also served a more mainstream majority. Recognising eco/intentional educational platforms are inherently connected to the eco/intentional marginal paradigm; my findings showed this influential factor predisposed the selection of people already willing to adopt parts of the lifestyle. Through my research process I discovered that I had an opportunity to test these regenerative practices in the mainstream educational arena, where participants may not already be “eco/intentionally” inclined.

### 1.1 The Setting

The pioneering mission of the Glasgow School of Arts' (GSA), Highlands Campus, includes newly adapted modes of learning and delivery, that are related to those that have developed within eco/intentional communities.

Located in the Highlands of Scotland, the new campus (2016) is a research and post graduate study centre. The wooded campus is situated near to several eco/intentional communities with longstanding worldwide regard. The missions and culture of the GSA's Highland Campus and eco/intentional organisations share numerous practices, and philosophies regarding sustainability that situate a potential crossover between the communities.

The newly established campus has a portfolio of research and teaching programmes that examine how to design for preferable, rather than inevitable futures. In her role as Deputy Director of Innovation at the GSA, Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam, championed research that creates sustainable communities focused for the common good (McAra-McWilliam, 2016). This sustainable focus has the potential to be examined in pedagogical practices that are offered at the campus, as well as the arenas that are researched there, which include the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Innovation Centre in Digital Health and Social Care (DHI) and the Creative Futures Partnership (CFP) a partnership between GSA and Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE).

My research enquires how to reinforce the mission at the GSA Highlands Campus, by introducing a social culture of applying the eco/intentional regenerative social principles into the pedagogical practices. The community and social

environments of the Highlands Campus have been a point of interface to develop, iterate, and test these concepts. In the following sections and chapters I will breakdown more precisely the socially regenerative systems thinking underpinning the position, content, and methods of my research.

## 1.2 Edges and The Sociotone

Systems thinking is a major thread throughout the enquiry, and I examine and use the language of specific systems thinking models like (social) permaculture as it is understood in eco/intentional communities. (A detailed examination of systems thinking, and (social) permaculture is found in the Literature Review Chapter 2).

I situate this research at the margins of pedagogy, community, and social practices. I hope to acknowledge these margins, while bringing to the forefront, through my contextual examples, the potential that exists at the intersectional points of the where they meet up, or their *edges*. In keeping with the original permacultural (ecological) term *ecotone*, *sciotone*, has been adapted to highlight the rich meeting place of social spheres (East, 2017). This meeting place is understood to have greater richness and (bio)diversity, and it is where cooperative and competitive relationships between systems and whole systems play out (Holmgren, 2002: 226, Macnamara, 2012: 129-130).

The pedagogical, communal, and social edges between the eco/intentional communities in the Findhorn, Forres region, and the GSA Highlands Campus are the primary sociotone, from which I have derived my findings (see image 1.1)

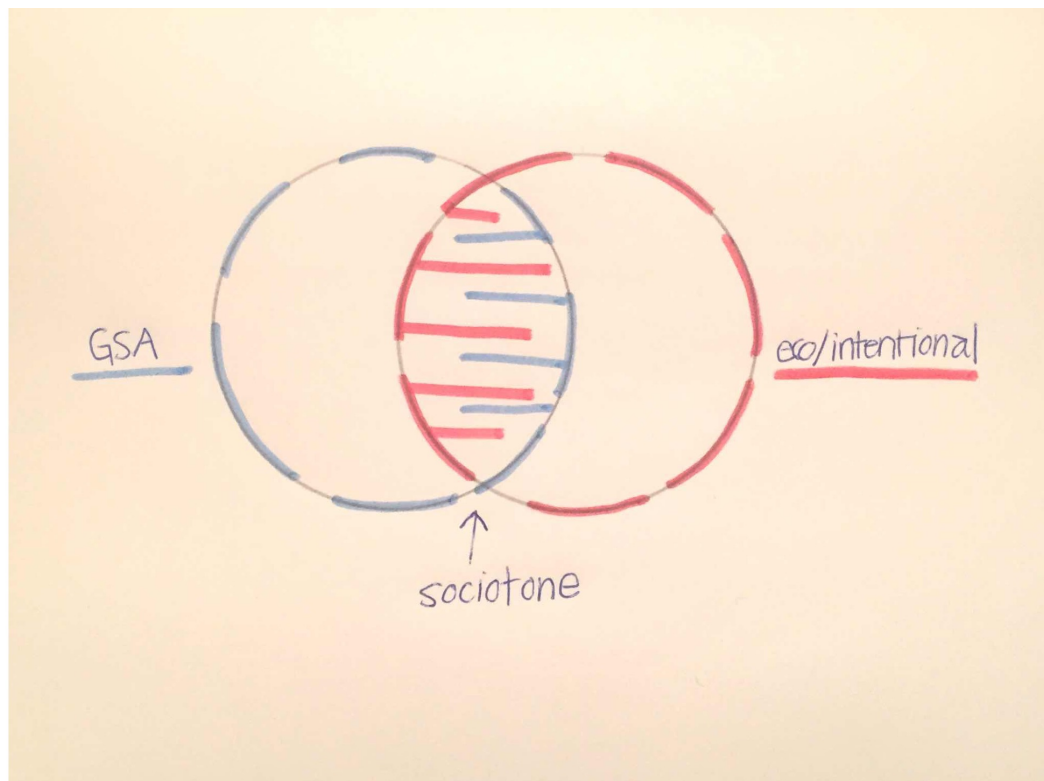


Image 1.1 Sociotone

This image illustrates the sociotone between local eco/intentional communities and the GSA's Highland Campus community.

The concept of the edge is a fundamental lens that existed in various conceptual and physical levels throughout my research. The edge is where my practice, and methods, and shared (eco/intentional) worldview are most activated, to potentially contribute to knowledge.

### 1.3 How Can Socially Regenerative Practices from Eco/Intentional Communities Be Applied in Mainstream Higher Education?

In trying to address the question, "How can socially regenerative skills from eco/intentional communities be applied in mainstream higher education", I found several different methods useful; holding them within the context of the enactment of my living as form practice. With a transformative pragmatic approach I harvested data with grounded theory (GT) inspired methods, that matched and enhanced the pre-existing philosophical worldview of myself in the role of researcher/ designer/ artist, and the stance held by the eco/intentional socially regenerative paradigm as well. All of these perspectives offer certain methods based upon the tenet that the observer, and the totality of their lived experience, influences how something is observed (see image 1.2). I composed my research in a manner that sought to

select the appropriate methods based upon the given contexts and the values held there.

I will describe my methods of answering this question in the methodological chapter (see Chapter 3), preceded by the supporting literature in a review (see Chapter 2), and after presenting my findings (see Chapter 4), will draw specific conclusions in the final chapter (see Chapter 5).

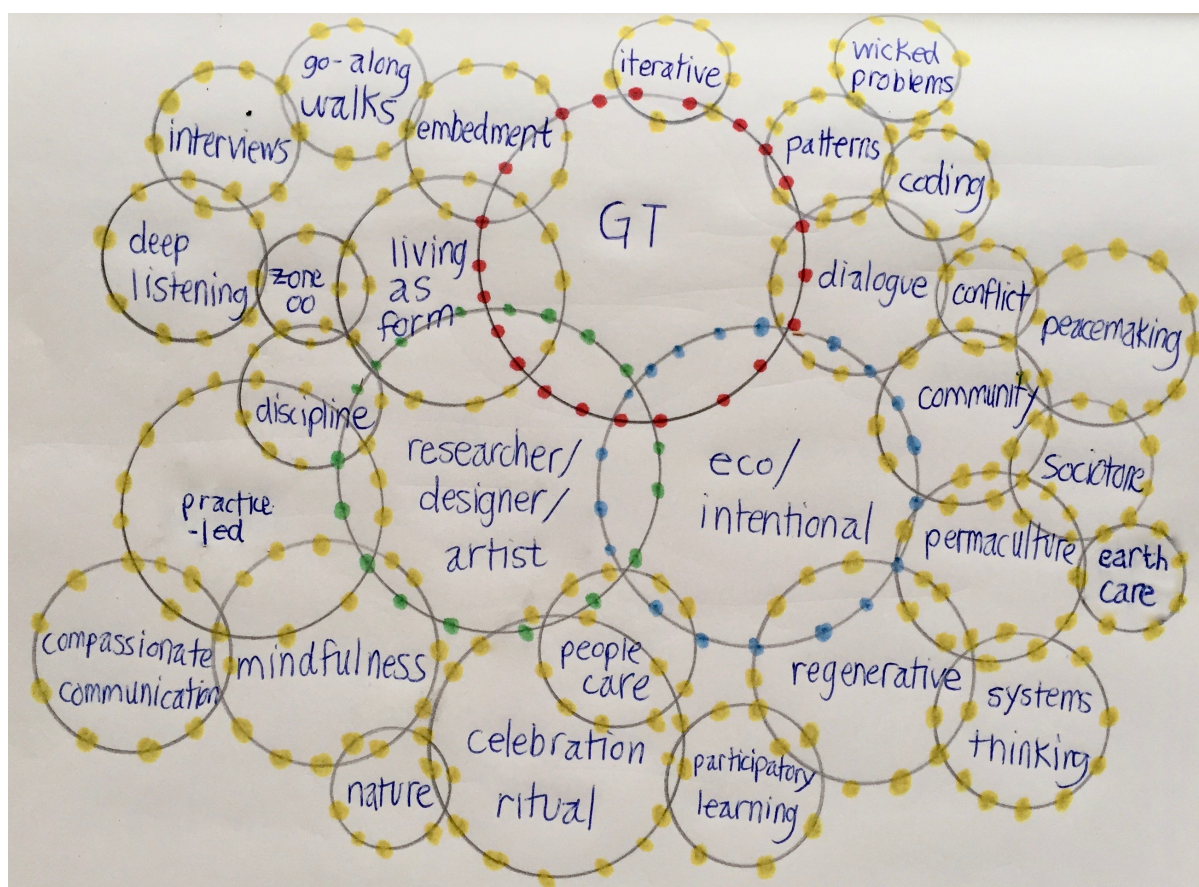


Image 1.2 Mind Map Edges

This diagram shows how the philosophical perspectives from qualitative design research methods, my own as researcher/designer/artist, and those from eco/intentional paradigms overlap. Also mapped are themes, methods, and techniques, pertinent and used in my research; there are numerous possible overlapping positions and edges between all of these themes.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction to the Literature

This literature review has been compiled to contextualise my research investigating how socially regenerative practices are being advanced, applied and perpetuated in eco/intentional communities. Many eco/ intentional communities are laboratories testing new systemic thinking and socially regenerative practices, to bring about the necessary changes in local and global economic, social and ecological environments (Joubert et al., 2009: 6). This research project is concerned with understanding the social practices, culture, and systems that are proliferated in eco/intentional communities. A worldview founded on systems thinking approaches, unifies the material and explains the specific thinking behind socially regenerative practices in eco/intentional communities. It also acknowledges a trend to incorporate these concepts into innovative new design programmes in various institutions globally (see Appendix B). Within this review is the overarching question of my research, which is how these socially regenerative views and practices might be applied more universally in mainstream higher education (and specifically at the GSA's Highlands Campus). I will discuss both the philosophical underpinnings of the eco/intentional approach to the socially regenerative dimension and the specific practices and skills promoted there in.

### 2.2 Design for Socially Regenerative Innovation

I classify my project as design research into regenerative social innovation. Social innovation can be situated as new creative combinations of ideas that work to meet social goals. As is the case with regenerative design in eco/ intentional communities, these progressive ideas often are seeded from the margins and take time to become mainstream and require new mental models to create paradigm shifts (Mulgan, et. al, 2006: 8,9,17,19, 22). Social design in general confronts endless arrays of "wicked problems", so called because they do not have easily definable parameters containing assessable causal lines; all elements are unknowable, there is no ultimate testable solution, and there is always the quest for a better way (Rittel, 1972: 392-394). Societal change and transformation toward a "more sustainable human civilization requires an inclusive and participatory dialogue", which is central to regenerative social design (Baxter, et. al., 2008: 74). Existing social innovation design paradigms assert that "designing for sustainability not only requires redesign of our habits, lifestyles, and practices, but also how we think about design", and that expertise and skills come from many different fields

with diverse values (Baxter, et. al, 2008: 72, Rittel, 1972: 394). Additionally, empathy and ethnography are seen as relevant social innovation tools because they recognise people are competent interpreters of their own issues and want to be involved in the designing of their own worlds (Mulgan, et. al, 2006: 21,22, Rittel, 1972 :394). These considerations are all supported by the methods and worldviews held by eco/intentional communities applying regenerative design, because they attempt to design (ecologically motivated) solutions for the wicked problems behind social innovation needs.

Within the design community, social innovation with a foundational impetus in ecology and sustainability is thematically explored by many projects. An exemplar, Ezio Manzini and the Design of Social Innovation and Sustainability (DESI) organisation, promote changing design praxis to make amends for past negative and unsustainable historical ways within design, to respond to urgent planetary needs (Manzini, 2007: 233). Manzini calls for designers to look to “special”, “creative” communities of people that have already reduced their ecological footprint, subverted the dominant negative behaviour patterns, and improved the quality of the social fabric, as models for mainstream possibilities (ibid., 233, 235, 236, 239). Using grassroots social innovation examples, DESI and Manzini, are designing for the mainstream sustainable systems that provide “cognitive, technical and organisational instruments to enable individuals and/or communities to achieve a result, using their skills and abilities while regenerating the quality of the living contexts in which they happen to live” (ibid., 239). In the following sections I will examine the particular way that regenerative social skills are encouraged in eco/intentional communities to further question, as Manzini suggests how marginal grassroots examples can be applied to mainstream environments.

### **2.3 Overview of Systems Thinking**

Throughout this review, I will primarily discuss systems thinking in social terms. However, I will first provide a brief overview of systems thinking to clarify this manner of viewing information.

Firstly, it is important to define what is meant by a system. A system is a set of tangible or intangible elements that are interconnected and produce a pattern of behaviour (Meadows, 2008: 2,11,13). More than the sum of its parts, because it is contextually adaptive, a system happens all at once with simultaneous and multidirectional connections (ibid., 5, 12). Systems thinking is seeing all the parts of the system, and the relationships that hold those parts together (ibid., 13). Historically, the mainstream (western) paradigm has valued reductionist, scientific thought over holistic, intuitive perspectives; though both ways add to knowledge

collection (ibid., 4,6). Systems thinking looks more broadly to catch internal and external problems that other methods overlook, and in doing so potentially avoid solutions that cause bigger problems (ibid., 4). When encountering complex systems of all kinds there are different tactical approaches. In a holistic worldview, systems thinking is often adapted to find the broadest picture of casual relationships and potential solutions to drive towards preferable futures, rather than unforeseen and undesired outcomes from simplistic views. Looking at systems requires an awareness of the borders we (artificially) construct around them to be able view them. In reality, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and the synergy between those parts holds great potential for better design of living within such systems (Geyer, 2016: 71).

As a framework, worldview, and philosophy, systems thinking underpins my own research approach. In the following sections I will demonstrate how they relate to social permaculture as a regenerative method. Additionally, systems thinking plays a role in my methodological orientation, and I support my rationale in the Methodological Chapter 3.

#### **2.4 Contextual Development of Social (Permaculture) Systems Thinking Design**

The mechanistic (material) side of systems thinking is possibly easier to visualise, but when applied to human social (immaterial) behaviour it is trickier to predict and conceptualise. Though a logical natural code is behind human behaviour, uncertainty is unavoidable when trying to predict social systems because the potential outcomes for all possible processes and actions are ultimately inscrutable (Lloyd, 2007). Therefore, it may be useful to view a social system as a storyline of what humans assume to be true and attempt to influence this system through bringing about self-awareness of how they perpetuate the system (Stroh, 2015: 68).

Within eco/ intentional communities, systems thinking is handled as both a way of looking at the systems of the communities and is also used as a concept underpinning the worldview within these communities. Systems thinking is used in eco/intentional communities as a pedagogical tool for regenerative (social) design. The adaptation of worldviews, values, and lifestyles which eco/intentional communities seek are considered fundamental to shifting towards a sustainable future, along with technological and ecological advances (Wahl, 2006). In the following sections, I will demonstrate how eco/intentional social systems thinking worldview has been constructed and practiced.

The eco/intentional vernacular often refers to the social systems thinking under the term *social permaculture*. I will first examine the original broader system of permaculture, and then discuss the evolution of its social applications. Permaculture, a portmanteau of the words permanent and culture, is a design system originated by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren to be applied in land based, agricultural applications. As a holistic practice, permaculture is broadly definable and applicable as the “use of systems thinking and design principles that provide the organising framework for implementing the vision of permanent sustainable culture” (Holmgren, 2002: xix). The core structure of permaculture has twelve principles that are open to interpretation throughout the design process and draw heavily upon awareness of both invisible and visible elements and their relationships to one another and the system as the whole (see image 2.1). Because of limitations, and their overall importance as applied through social permacultural practice, this research has focused on principle 1, “observe and interact”, and principle 11, “use edges and value the marginal”.





Image 2.1 Permaculture

The Twelve Principles of Permaculture (Holmgren, 2017)

In general, permaculture is particularly concerned with patterns and relationships of all kinds (human, immaterial, physical). With a focus on function to explain relationships, permaculture aims to best exploit the way these relationships exist by “*stacking the functions*” (Hemenway, 2015: 22). By stacking there are more meeting points created because a given part in the design serves to do more than one thing. More than just efficient, the place where two zones (both physically and conceptually) meet is called the “*edge*” in permaculture or the “*ecotone*”, when related to ecological systems.

Recent explorations of permaculture have developed the system's usage in social terms, both because the relational ideas translate well to social realms, and because the implementation of permaculture in real world settings was often halted by an under developed understanding of the human relationships acting within the system(s) (Winton). Social permaculture modifies certain ways of applying the design methods and principles from permaculture, as with the example of defining social edges or the sociotone (see Introduction Chapter 1). Edges are also discussed as a place within the self, where the edges are formed by transition into new patterns from old patterns (of behaviour) (Macnamara 2012: 67). In both geographic and social terms, the edge between two places or people can also be places of invisible tension, whether cultural, legal, linguistic, or economic (Hemenway, 2016: 62). Permaculture, even when landscape based, is still inherently about social relationships, as it observes the interconnected nature of all things within the spheres and stages where social worlds are played out. This concept is illustrated in permacultural design with numbered concentric circles used as zonal maps, divided into relevant sectors (with the centre point being either home base in landscape planning, or the self, zone 00, in social mapping). These zonal maps are tools that help visualise relationships between elements, people, structures or groups (Hemenway 2016: 39) (see image 2.2).

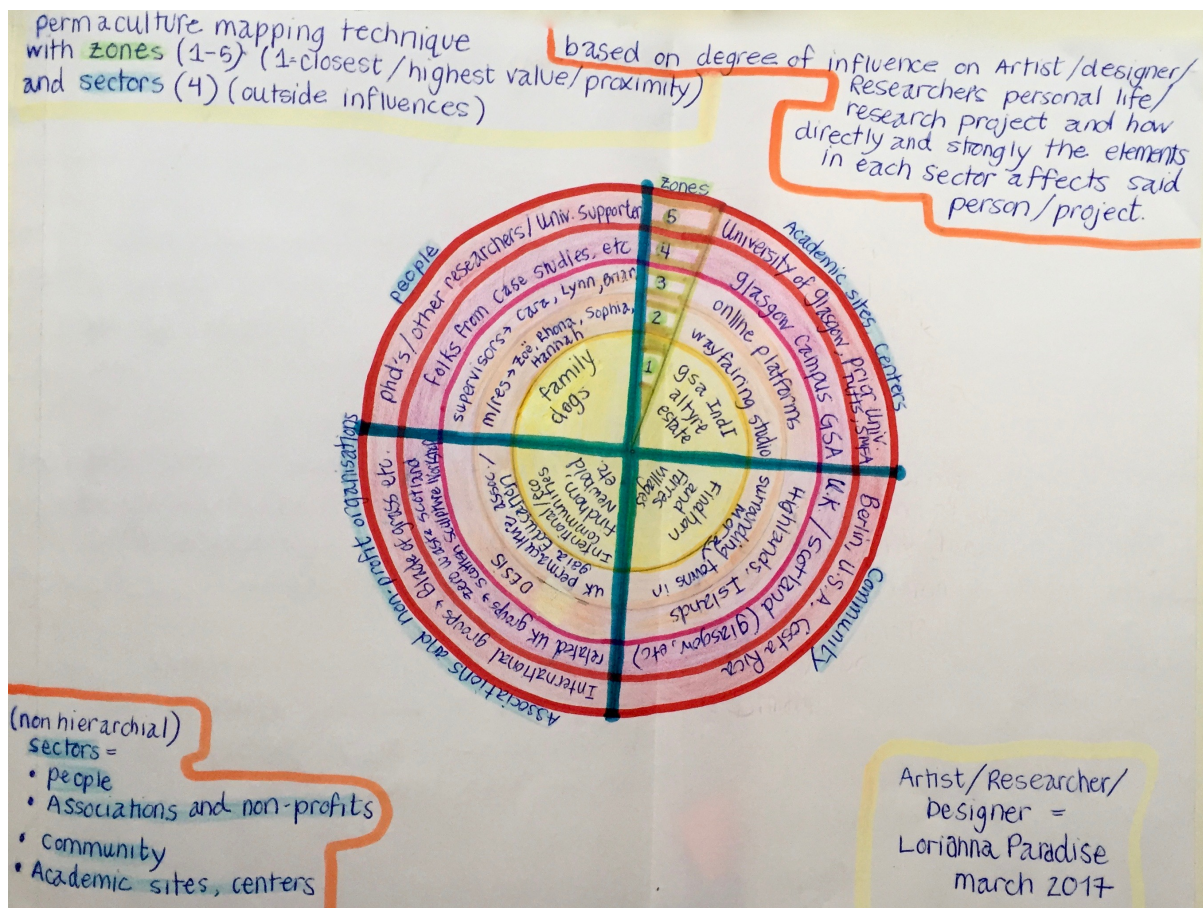


Image 2.2 Zone Map Tool

Using the zone mapping tool, I mapped my own relationships as a researcher/ designer/ artist by dividing into zones or categories (numbered 1-5, with 1 being the highest degree of influence on myself) and sectors (people, associations, communities, and academic centres).

Uncovering causal roots of problematic issues via identifying patterns of behaviour, thinking, and communication is a primary directive in social permaculture (Macnamara, 2012: 285). The contextual settings of social systems are where the loop between social member's actions and the continual formation of the systems transpire (Scharmer, 2009: 233). In cultural biological systems thinking, the closed network of a human being is viewed in relation to the biological roots of how they come into being in adaptive relation to their constantly shifting realities or 'mediums' in which they live (Maturana, et.al, 2008:27). The awareness of the interplay of system and participant, or "the capacity of the system to see itself", is created through (generative) dialogue (Scharmer, 2009: 310). All permaculture design focuses on observation and interaction to uncover inherent structure, pattern, and detail as a foundation for all understanding (Holmgren, 2002:13). Social permaculture practice notes observational dialogue allows for feedback and

prevents further problems, and inherent limitations to communication (Macnamara, 2012: 19,32,107). Literature from general social engagement analysis, supports the idea that dialogue and conversation are separate concepts and functions, by defining dialogue is a specific form of communication that serves to reshape thinking, perspectives, and worldview (Escobar, 2011:16). Multi-layered dialogical analysis and practice is therefore key to the undertaking of social permaculture in a socially regenerative eco/intentional context.

From its earliest iterations, permaculture has built within its framework a very clear code to focus ethical concerns and effect positive social and environmental change, which is highlighted in social permaculture. The ethical condensation has a popular mantra: “earth care, people care, and fair share”. Embedded in the base of social permaculture is a desire for equity and equality (fair share), where “people care” includes both local and global communities to maintain our home planet (earth care) (Harland, 2007).

The practice and philosophy of social permaculture is evolving to recognise further the importance of human relationship dynamics, especially in participatory group work. It has been recognised that identifying power structures plays a large part in designing effectively and ethically. The broad topic of power dynamics is a massive field of enquiry in and of itself, and a deeper enquiry here is beyond the scope of this review. Instead I will highlight some terms and themes as they are generally discussed in social permaculture, though this too could be its own research project as a subsystem of social design thought.

In social permaculture one way that power is approached in relation to governance is by differentiating between “power over” (purely hierarchical) and “power with” (holarchical, horizontally interconnected); this distinction has been called upon to help generate new behaviour patterns (Hemenway, 2015: 222-224). Governance within social permaculture is focused on facilitating cultural shifts through new communication environments via “awareness” initiatives that challenge rote power dynamics to align cultural values and bring about preferred patterns of interaction (Macnamara: 2012: 200-203). Social permaculture, shares a common goal with other social engagement practices, as it looks at the usual communication patterns that are averse to change, in terms of interpersonal relationships, to develop new ways of collaboration and more elaborate collective intelligence (Escobar, 2011: 7,10-11). Social permaculture is used to design group dynamics systems with governance, power distribution, and communication methods at the base of their invisible infrastructures.

There are numerous and highly evolved iterations and tangential systems linked to and applied within social permacultural thinking. It is beyond the scope of this review to analyse at length each offshoot or internal praxis, however I will note some key regenerative skill sets and methods being applied within social permaculture. Examples of different socially regenerative approaches perpetuated within eco/intentional communities include creating a participatory learning environment that includes deep listening and expression, and engages the emotional, intellectual, biological, primal, and creative needs of participants (Young, 2017). There are different techniques within the social permaculture framework, but there are hundreds of tools which should be applied to be culturally, group, or time appropriate (Benham, 2017). I have provided links to a sampling of specific examples of methods and systems commonly used in social permaculture in the Appendix Section A.

Some of these examples are very elaborate methodologies, and/ or philosophical lifestyles, others are resources for engagement tools and group building exercises. Though these practices have differences, many are hybridisations of each other and share themes directly. Most consider dialogue, decision making, mindfulness, and communication in general, as imperatives to their core guiding principles (Brock: 2017, 229-233, Wahl, 2016: 255-258, Gibsone 2015: 99-110). Much attention is placed on how a social group functions, creating structures for the group to rely on for daily interaction and in times of conflict (Macnamara, 2012: 125-130, Brock, 2017: 198, Starhawk, 2011: 153-196). A common principle held by these examples, is the idea of self-awareness, and self-development as a continual discipline, and starting point in any social system interaction (in social permaculture terms this would entail starting with zone 00, the self, and working outward to zones of external relationships) (Brock, 2017: 313-315, Hemenway, 2016: 39-41, Macnamara, 2012: 41,51). Many eco/intentional communities explicitly seek to connect people through creative, participatory processes, which require careful knowledge of group dynamic governance and personal responsibility (Joubert, et al., 2009: 25). Ritual and ceremony are acknowledged as fundamentally important regenerative practices for making social bonds (Brock, 2017: 93-103, 149). Understanding the many facets of why humans need connection, and how they connect with one another, is at the heart of these regenerative design practices. One of the main unifying ideas behind these initiatives is that social connection gives meaning and purpose to our lives (Brown, 2010). These regenerative systems examine and teach how to create an environment where people feel both empowered and vulnerable, so that every type of (social) work can follow (ibid.).

Social permaculture is a relatively new and evolving framing of permaculture design, with much of its application and development originating from within eco/intentional communities. Both general permaculture and its social design systems draw upon lived and observed experience, which many eco/intentional communities were founded to reinvent and create a more effective and harmonious existence. The methods are being researched and enacted within these grassroots settings, but there are also academic investigations taking up the regenerative design mantle.

## **2.5 Socially Regenerative Practices in Institutions**

Regenerative design practices including social permaculture and social systems thinking belong to a rapidly growing zeitgeist, and movement looking to offer solutions and design tools for preferable futures. Regenerative educational programmes highlight the need to address the fertile and challenging realm of social dynamics as a pivotal factor that focalises all desired efforts towards building preferable futures (Chelleri, Del Rio, 2017: 43). Numerous residential eco/intentional communities throughout the world are focused on enacting socially regenerative practices, and disseminating the skills to wider groups (Liftin, 2016 ) (see Appendix B for links). It is common that these communities offer courses in socially regenerative work, some even have large scale university branches that offer (online) courses and degrees.

Based in Findhorn, Scotland, the location of this research project, the Findhorn Foundation is an eco/intentional community that has a well-established regenerative educational division. Founded in connection with the Findhorn ecovillage, and a key player in the UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, Gaia Education (GAIA) is a growing university and educational platform that is dedicated to teaching regenerative design in social, economic, ecological, and world view dimensions (GaiaEducation.org, 2017). GAIA courses are for people who are “interested in taking an active role in the sustainability transition”, because they offer “education for sustainable development rather than education about sustainable development” (ibid.). GAIA and the Findhorn ecovillage were primary exemplars and sources of information for my research.

There are many regenerative design focused programmes being developed in both mainstream and non-traditional higher education institutions, some of which have elements that focus on the social dimensions of such design practice. I will not review each in detail, as I intend to demonstrate the growing trend to move

regenerative design from the margins, rather than understand the specifics of each programme. I have included in the Appendix a brief list with links to significant programmes, as the scope of my study does not allow for deeper discussion of these programmes (see Appendix B).

## **2.6 Summary of the Literature Review**

This review has surveyed the existing body of knowledge about the emerging practices and concepts surrounding socially regenerative systems thinking. The view of how socially regenerative practices are developed and enacted in eco/ intentional communities generally, was juxtaposed with mainstream higher education initiatives that are investigating similar themes, because my research questions methods of employing such practices at the GSA's Highlands Campus. I demonstrated the depth and potential of existing common design methods and exercises used by eco/ intentional groups and organisations to promote social regeneration in a new context. The evolving understanding and of how to apply permacultural and systems thinking to social dimensions is a field that is currently experiencing an exciting time of innovation.

Throughout this literature review I have provided details supporting the ideas of socially regenerative action, but there is also a significant value-based initiative driving the (mainstream) dissemination and enactment of them. There are those from the design research community that share these values, including Ezio Manzini and those working with DESIS. However, the literature related to social permaculture and socially regenerative design, though diverse, hold a more marginal position in research design settings. This review shows the evolution of these eco/intentional concepts, and the trend to further them, by "working outward" to include them in a mainstream (educational) environments.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction to Methodology

I designed a project specific methodology to examine the question, “how can socially regenerative practices from eco/intentional communities be applied in (mainstream) higher education? “. Based on the literature review and field work, I developed an idea about how socially regenerative skills are taught and enacted in eco/intentional communities, which led to further questioning about the broader effectiveness of these skills and investigation of potential (new) needs and testing grounds for these skills.

The activities and methods I used are central to the production of knowledge, with my own worldview and the values and beliefs of the design research community being the interpretive framework for understanding the significance of my research (Biggs, 2014: 2). In brief my methods included:

- Living as form/ embedment
- Enrolment in eco/intentional courses
- “Go-Along” walking interviews
- Long form interviews
- Participatory performance workshops
- Analytic processes: memos, codes, maps, journal

Throughout this chapter, I will demonstrate my worldview through my examination of how my living as form practice, and adaptation of (social) permaculture are rational choices that match both the research question and my methodology.

My methodological framework explores and navigates fundamental structural change with an explicit orientation towards contributing to environmentally regenerative actions, which aligns it with the emerging field of transformation research and pragmatic worldviews (Wittmayer, et al., 2018:4, Creswell, 2017: 10). I integrated various methods to accommodate the context and goals, pragmatically finding “what worked”. I have further explained my worldview in the epistemological/ ontological section below. My research was practice-led and was epistemologically informed by and enacted with several influences including constructivist grounded theory (GT), Design for Social Innovation (see Literature Review Chapter 2), and participatory approaches. The concepts behind these approaches, rather than a specific set of methods, are the noteworthy points I drew upon to support my unique methodological stance. For example, the constructivist



perspective looks at the emerging phenomena, with both data and analysis formed through the research process (Charmaz, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2006; Charmaz & Mitchell, 1996). The ideas acknowledging the of a construction of a contingent reality, and therefore the benefits of contextual and participatory engagement are presented throughout my research (Creswell, 2014: 9,10). Supporting views are found not only in GT, participatory action research, and the transformative approach, but also in (social) permaculture and living as form art work principles. Building from my review of related literature in Chapter 2, in the following sections I will detail both the meanings and my own applications of the practice-led research, and generally design research with an artistic framing. I will explain my position as a practitioner of living as form, and social permaculture locating these fields in relation to design practice and delve deeper into my epistemological stance. In order to provide context and substantiate my emergent research route, it is necessary to first define terms and lay out the framework behind the specific process and methods. Throughout, I have interspersed details of my rationale and methods linking them to this framework, with the most in-depth sections titled “Methods” and “Process in Overview” addressing these elements at length.

### **3.2 Methodological Framework**

The framework which guided the structure and shape of this research project followed an emergent and analytic process. The study incorporated narrative, case studies, and performative engagement. An analytical and qualitative pattern study of a concept (socially regenerative design practices) was used to generate evidence-based data so that the findings could be widely applicable. The concept is therefore embedded in the research and teased out from the qualitative process (Glaser, 2010).

It should be noted that in the development of (sociological) research methodologies there have been various approaches to substantiate qualitative, speculative, human-scaled, social assessments with more empirical and hard data. The pendulum has swayed from positivist denial of the non-empirical, and focus on all which is solidly verifiable, to anti-positivism and social constructivism, which collects information from the individual’s social experiential perspective. These diametrically opposed poles of thought have been similarly critiqued as reducing reality to human knowledge, though from different directions; one purely ontologically and the other epistemologically (Fletcher, 2016: 4). My research acknowledges complexity and relies upon a hybrid form that allows multiple paradigms to be compatible (Howes, 1988, 2009).

### 3.2.1 Epistemological / Ontological Position

Commencing a time period influenced by postmodernist thinking, my practice as an artist and an environmental activist evolved to use both living as form, and permacultural methods. The way I know what I know, or my formative epistemological stance was heavily informed by the zeitgeist and discourse around postmodernity, my work as an artist and activist, and the philosophies underpinning permaculture, and adaptive systems thinking. The notions of uncertainty and complexity are paramount to this worldview. Ontologically speaking, my concerns about the nature of reality and being are not rigidly decided but allow for both fact and construct and multiple natures. My research supposes a pluralistic reality or ontological pluralism or multinaturalism that is not fully knowable as an ultimate state but rather interpretable through the relationship of parts and wholes as one perceives them (Viveiros de Castro, 2014). By creating artificial boundaries (of time, situational occurrence) one may examine and analyse these systems and relationships but their absolute true state remains unknowable.

As abovementioned, there are parallels found in qualitative research methods that match my cultivated position points. Much of my methodological rationale is founded on the enactment of their intertwined principles and tenets, upon which I will elucidate in following sections below. I contend that all of these factors create a philosophical looped network, brought into the (material) reality through my research process. My position is concerned not merely with relativity but situationally and contextually bound relationality. Therefore, my epistemological position supported an approach that diverged as needed where borders brought new elements recognising that my own understanding and those of participants are inseparable to the new understanding generated (Stenger, 2005: 106,184). Social constructivist views that accept that individuals construct their own experiential meaning via social and contextual mediums, are acceptable notions to my research. However, I additionally seek actionable and workable outcomes, that both pragmatic and transformative paradigms include (Creswell, 2014).

The development of my theoretical propositions, and usage of numerous qualitative methods informed by different methodologies, were bound by my main transformative pragmatic hybrid approach. The pragmatic view allows both (socially) constructed and physically found and bound knowledge creation and seeks workable solutions to research problems. Because pragmatist views arise from actions and situations and the focus is on the problem at hand first, they use multiple methods, worldviews, and forms of data collection (Creswell, 2014: 10-11). The field of participatory advocacy based transformative research is still evolving

and open to different methods but is always founded on a theory of beliefs about how to meet the needs of a (marginalised) group or propose agenda for reform (Creswell, 2014: 9, Wittmayer, et al., 2018: 19). It should be noted that transformative research approaches are categorised as types of transformation research that actively support and offer sustainable transformations, rather than only describing, or analysing them (historically or currently) (ibid., 2018: 7). My research both analysed and described the usage of regenerative skills in eco/ intentional communities and offered and employed actionable transformative methods for their application (in mainstream higher education) as a facilitator of (environmental/ social) change. My research designates as marginalised both the nonmainstream eco/intentional communities and what their work (regenerative practices) focuses upon uplifting, namely oppressed human and nonhuman (planetary) entities.

### **3.3 Rationale of Methods Chosen**

I have included a simple visual overview of my methods and the rationales as they related to my epistemological position and practice (see image 3.1). First however, I will elaborate upon the relevant principles and tenets within these thought paradigms. I will show how they are intertwined and feedback into each other forming my epistemological stance, and how that informed my methodological choices. Later in this chapter in section 3.4.1, "Process in Overview", I explain further the chronology and rationale for my methods.

My own (permacultural) worldview informed my rationale for choosing an emergent, analytic qualitative research process. Permacultural (regenerative design systems thinking) is keenly aware of the (postmodern) doctrines that have elevated uncertainty from simply a result of inadequate information to something which is inherent in everything. The permaculture concept and movement are a part of this global cultural reality where all meaning is relative and contingent (Holmgren, 2002: xv). Both permaculture and qualitative methodologies (like grounded theory), begin collecting data through though largely individualistic interaction, and use non-interpretive tactics at first (Charmaz, 2006: 3, Mollison, 1998: 43-44). Both permaculture design and such qualitative research approaches seek to be mindful of contextual contingencies existing in real-world scenarios. One real-world scenario is demonstrated by quantum physics' Heisenberg principle, which claims it is impossible to determine the position and momentum of a subatomic particle and that observation alters it. This principle has been used as an example to also refute the validity of positivistic certitude (Crotty, 1998: 29). "As scientific research attitudes become less reductionist and Humanities more empirical", the possibility

exists for the elusive truth to be temporarily parsed and distilled into desirable results, if not certainties (B.Archer, 1995: 9). Therefore, synthesizing their tactics through more concrete pattern analysis, speaks to ever present concerns of fallacious reasoning without deferring entirely to contrived, constricted, and potentially erroneous solely quantitative research methods that would harken back to certain blinded and oversimplified aspects of twentieth century, modernist thinking. I chose my methods in an emergent process, that responded to my observational role, as a way to address the concerns of relativity, causality, and oppose absolutism, while embracing uncertainty, and embodying the (socially regenerative) themes I researched.

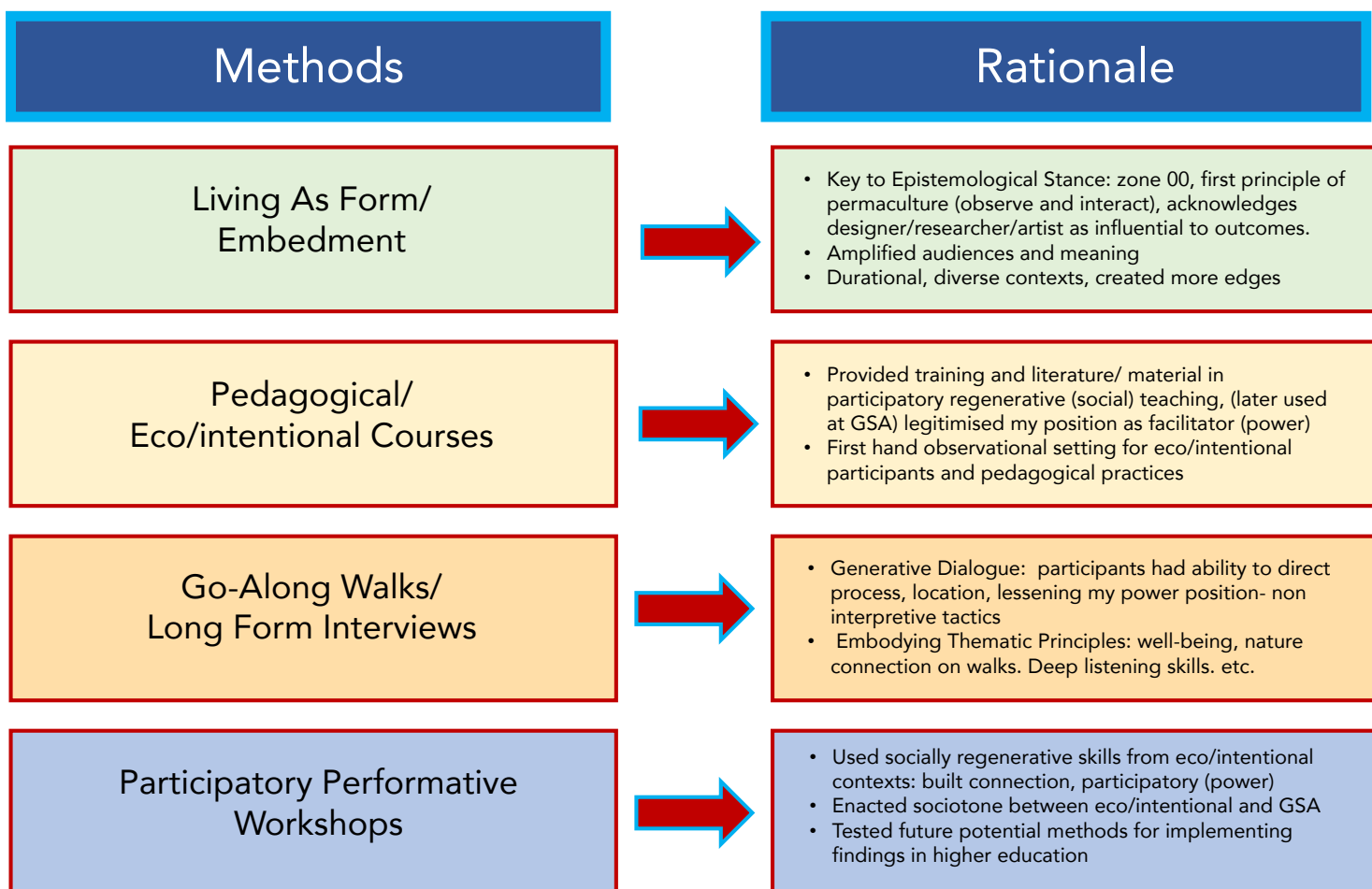


Image 3.1

### Methods and Rationale Chart

This chart illustrates my four main methods and gives a brief rationale showing how relate to my methodological framework and epistemological viewpoint.

### 3.3.1 Practice-Led Research

Married to my epistemological stance, was my choice to conduct my research in a practice-led fashion. From an historical understanding, there are two types of practice related research, practice-based and practice-led; with practice-based research the artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, and in contrast, practice-led research is “concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice” (Candy, 2006:1). Practice-based research is often found in visual arts settings and practice-led research is often conducted within design research (ibid., 3). However, it should be noted these definitions are evolving with contemporary applications.

Practice-led research acknowledges that certain kinds of knowledge can only be created through practice, justifying projects constructed with both text and (art) practice (Green, 2006: 176). Shifting notions about art and design practice have precipitated a theory driven entanglement where the production of knowledge (as compliment or equal to quantitative scientific research) is the goal rather than solely an artwork or artefact (Busch, 2009). Critical debate about practice-led research questions whether the resulting artefact is able to convey knowledge directly as required by research, or if it only offers abstract interpretation, as with art for art’s sake (Schrivener, 2002). However, the counter argument states that by differentiating between art as a cultural or individual practice, from art as research with a controlled interpretation for specific audiences and contexts, there is the possibility for unambiguous knowledge, when accompanied by an exegesis (Biggs, 2003). The view that practice-led research qualifies as sound academic research is supported by the parameters of the given paradigm, in this case design research, which has different criteria than traditional scientific research (Rocco, et. al, 2009). In design based research, practice is connected to research through documentation, which serves to transform an interactive process into evidence (Nimkulral, 2007). There is a continuum of interrelations between the presentation of practice and text; some examples position the two elements as parallel, yet separate to one another, or in varying levels of influence or interconnectedness (Ravelli et al., 2013: 396, 402-415). The documentation of my practice is presented here in an *incorporated relation*, meaning the dialogue between practice and textual exists in a back and forth between the components (ibid., 408).

### **3.3.2 Design Research (with an Artistic Framing)**

A fundamental feature of how my (living as form) practice is situated in the design research context is its additional categorisation as an art piece. Therefore, I will provide here an examination of design research that either is inspired by, is a derivative of, or holds a co-classification as art. Design Research may draw upon the resources of contemporary art, by using artistic references, methods, and contexts (Koskinen et.al, 2011: 90). There has been critique of artists operating in multiple

fields as designers and/or researchers. Critique comes from both the art world and the design research world. Some art critics claim that a trend where artists must justify their outcomes as researchers, comes from an industrial model which expects creativity to be fully articulable, and misrepresents the nature of artistic practice. (Szoke, 2015). In contrast, in an examination of “Artists and Designers as Agents of Change”, a Dutch team of researchers writing a paper for Participatory Innovation Conference in The Netherlands, started off their exploration, by stating that the divide between artists and designers in contemporary practices no longer exists (Barnard et al, 2015).

There has been critical analysis of art as design research practice, coming from the design research paradigm as well. The authors of Design Research Through Practice, expound the best ways to use artistic methods in design, while emphatically suggesting that designers avoid being labelled as artists (Koskinen, et al, 2011). The same book cites designers Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, who make the claim that “art is too far removed from mass consumption” to make an impact or stimulate discussion with the public (Dunne, Raby, cited in Koskinen et.al, 2011: 46). Dunne and Raby also claim to borrow a lot from art but want their work to be relevant to and contextualised as *critical design* set to challenge and critique the status quo (Uhlirva, 2005, Dunne, 1999). However, in their work, the line between “pure art” and their version of critical design is blurred (Ranogajec, 2015). I hold the view that Dunne and Raby’s perspective on the difference between design and art, is founded on a false and antiquated supposition about what art and design can be. This view of the design paradigm seems to suppose there to be a one-way exchange, with design practice borrowing from art, and not conceptually allowing art within the context of design (see image 3.2). Especially when considering art contextualised as living as form, which is specifically created to engage with the public, in much the same way that (critical) design aims to do. Art historian, Grant Kester, states that living as form art stands in opposition to historical modernists view, which looked upon the artist as a superior creator that the masses could not comprehend without further education (Kester, 2004: 85). In forthcoming sections, I will clarify the role and definition of living as form generally, and as it pertains to my own practice in relation to a design research context.

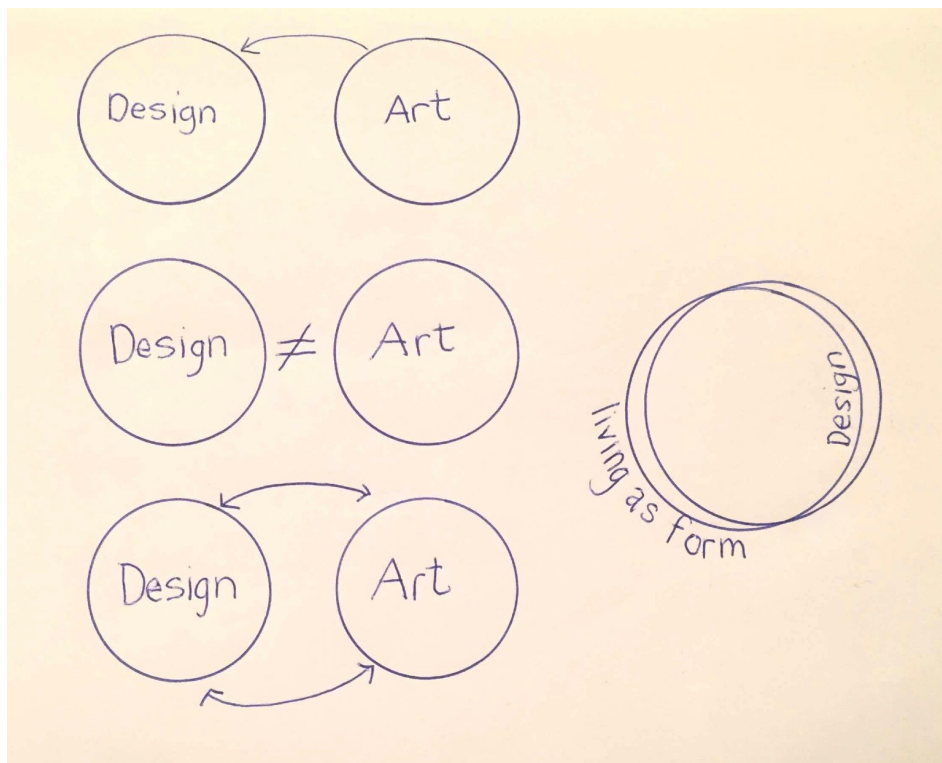


Image 3.2 Design Practice with an Artistic Framing

This diagram illustrates four different relationships between design and art in a research context. Design borrowing from art practices, design not being equal to art, a fluid exchange between design and art practices, and the example from my research of art practice *being* the design research process (as well as a method).

### 3.3.3 Outline of Living as Form

A defining principle of my research is its contextualisation and existence as a living as form, socially engaged artwork, which reflects the principles of ethical research and adds layers of meaning and amplifies the contextual reach (Helguera, 2011:12). Living as form is a term that attempts to contain a genre that is neither artefact or conceptually based. It is work that is substantively embodied in real action. Living as form is differentiated from avant-garde art predecessors in that it is not seen to be a movement per se, but rather cultural practice that indicates a new social order concerned primarily with participation, ethics of power, and is widely interdisciplinary as the context requires (Thompson, 2012:19-22).

Living as form art shares many parallel concerns with (qualitative/participatory/transformational) design research. A living as form artist dissolves the spectator role into the co-creative process, and rejects the passive bystander, and

instead focuses on the creation of social bonds, while embracing the collective (Bishop, 2012b:33-35). Critical review of living as form acknowledges the ethical requirement of the artist as a conduit for community consciousness, rather than a dictator imposing creative will, which is also a tenet of (GT) qualitative constructivist research (Kester, 2004: 137; Helguera, 2011: 53-57). The method must be truly social, through artist-initiated dialogue with the community (participants); where the particular nature of the work emerges from this situated dialogue (Kester, 2004:18-24). A goal of living as form, shared with permaculture, and much (transformative) design in general, is to become a critically self-reflexive, inclusive platform for the participation of an engaged community (beyond the usual art world) so that the work outlasts the ephemeral presentation (Helguera, 2011:12).

Living as form engages or forms communities for actual change and is a process of cooperative social action with strains that are activism based (Finkelpearl, 2013: 50). Living as form artists are mediating new forms of acting and living to help reorganise (political and economic) conditions (Cruz, 2012:58-61). Rather than mere commentary on social or cultural woes, living as form pieces are action based, and awareness of power and context figure prominently in the critique of these works.

### **3.3.4 Permacultural Living as Form as Design Practice**

In this project, the principles of whole systems theory based in permacultural practices, underpinned the methods of enquiry and practice. My practice embodies the idea of viewing the whole system, by using my own (performative) lived experience in relation to the research as the form or practice. This (living as) form existed in a framework where measured, inclusive approaches from different disciplines converged to make more realistic and holistic opportunities to analyse applied regenerative social paradigms. Art that serves a reminder that living is form can be “a tool that invites discussion of what living could mean- for future occupants of a world full of potential and in need of repair” (Jackson, 2012: 93).

As the living as form practitioner, I contextualise and label the practice of this research under the intersectional label of researcher/ designer/ artist. This distinction will be subsequently justified through the examination of my chosen methods and positions my research through a lens that is aware of the role of the researcher’s influence on the research. This delineation is aligned with many qualitative research methodologies, which acknowledge both the observer and the observed are not neutral parties, bringing with them personal perspective and values (Charmaz, 2006: 15).



In my research, data collection methods were borrowed from the nexus of permacultural observation practice and ethos. For example, permaculture uses a zonal mapping system which locates the proximal significance of variables, starting with the most relevant components positioned at the central point of outwardly radiating concentric circles. In social permaculture, the inner most point is number zone 00, or *the self* (see Chapter 2, image 2.2). The zonal maps offer metaphorical and artefactual viewpoints of the research process and content. The researcher/ designer/ artist can be seen in one overall framing of the research as the zone 00 observer cum influencing agent of the project. This positional point has an (auto)ethnographic sensibility, but from an epistemological or philosophical stance, that is recursive, iterative, and abductive, rather than following a specific set of methods (Harrison, 225).

I have chosen to make my practice a living as form, performative action, which responds to critiques of practice-led work, because this type of practice does not sit in the abstraction that an artefact does. It is the thing that it represents. Rather than being an inert object, that references something else or is open to interpretation. The form *is* the design practice and the practice *is* living as form.

As I presented in the section on practice-led research, the critique that an artefact is not possessive of knowledge is still potentially an issue, but the process is different because it is a span of time containing iterative actions in the pursuit of knowledge. It is still not a container of knowledge, but rather it is a conduit for knowledge collection existing ephemerally. This understanding does not hinge upon the performative aspect, which might still be open to abstraction. Instead it is the living as form that makes the work the same as the action(s); given an additional context as art practice, in the pursuit of knowledge held in the design research framework. I qualify my practice as something more than just a cultural practice because it is not only not a static artefact, it is the (things) phenomenon that it both investigates, the action of investigation, and the outcomes. This inherently mirrors the goals of research which investigates questions in a specific context. Epistemologically, the idea that there could be a way for an artwork to convey knowledge, would require certainty in the idea of knowledge itself, and I have already introduced the idea of uncertainty as relevant to my topic and method, and methodology.

In terminology from permaculture, one edge where *functions are stacked*, is the place where the living as form art world and other social (transformative and/or pragmatic design) work meet; because both offer a social service to a community and propose actions as a (symbolic) statement in the context of cultural (art) history adding to larger debate in different ways (see Appendix D for related map)

(Helguera, 2011:36). The relationships created by the numerous examples of disciplines crossed in living as form also the embodies the edge concept, calling attention to the interstices of disciplines and institutions (Kester, 2004:167).

The performative and interactive nature of living as form practice is a thread throughout the research and serves as a meta delineation, in that the research (processes and outcomes, including this text) is defined as an art piece. There were some elements of my practice that took a more obvious performative role, but in these instances the role of the participants continued to be equally important as my own (see image 3.3).



Image 3.3 Workshop One: Social Permaculture

This image is of my performative workshop, which was part of the exhibition, *Between Practice, Place and People*, at the GSA's Highlands campus. I facilitated and performed an interactive participatory learning engagement that discussed and applied the research themes (social permaculture and regenerative social skills) and was a source for data collection.

### 3.4 Methods

My research process was structured into a timeline with four phases. These phases developed through the emergent process, and certain pivotal moments led to the next steps in the process. I have charted these phases below (see image 3.4) to give an overview of the methods and will detail the exact process in the following

sections. An overview chart of the findings per stage and what emerged from the depicted chronology is found in Chapter Four (see image 4.1).

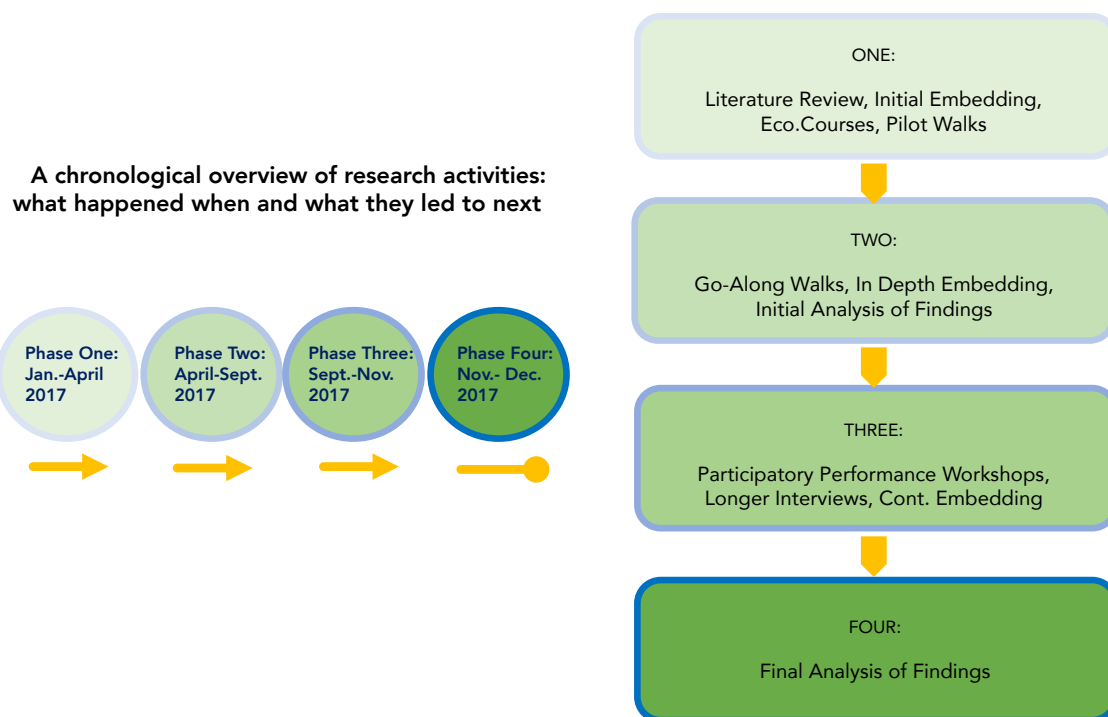


Image 3.4

#### Chronological Process Chart: Phases of Research

This image depicts the four chronological phases of my research, with each step progressively leading to the next in an emergent fashion.

##### 3.4.1 Process in Overview

My methods included embedding in the local (eco/intentional and GSA) communities, “go-along” walking interviews, participation in relevant courses, long form interviews, and facilitating workshops. The workshops were a direct response to the research question and tested socially regenerative skills from eco/intentional communities in a mainstream higher education setting and served as methods of further data collection.

I began my study with an iterative process of getting to know the communities/ participants (both of those connected to the GSA’s Highlands Campus and eco/intentional communities). I followed an inductive process where I

went into the field with some knowledge of my theme (social permaculture and eco/intentional communities) and allowed the participant engagement to lead me to my next steps and to supporting literature, following this back and forth cumulative tactic throughout the project. I had a procedure of making mind maps, vignette accounts of interviews, and memos of the field work and the journey in general, which directed the coding and analysis of the information I processed. Additionally, I maintained a critical reflective journal, assessing my journey. (see Appendix D5 for examples of my visual mapping techniques).

Subsequent to an initial literature review I began with interview walks with pilot and sampling of the local population of Forres and Findhorn. (see Appendix C and Appendix D1 for textual and visual representations of these walks). I conducted this sampling by interviewing (on “go- along” walks) locals with a predefined grouping (local residents not from the region originally). I used a “go along” interview and embedding techniques, which have been explicitly examined by sociological researchers as informal methods of allowing free flowing observation of the participant in their natural environment (Carpiano, 2009). The “go along” method, specifically allowed participants to navigate their chosen route for a walk in their local area and allows for the researcher to become better acquainted with the locale and in doing so, interview the participant in a relaxed manner (ibid.). Similarly, *solvitur ambulando*, solving by walking, is a technique used in diplomatic circles where dialogue happens while walking side by side. This technique has been proven to lower the intensity of discussion and enhance co-creative dialogue because of the non-confrontational body position and lack of direct eye contact, additionally the brain is better oxygenated enabling clearer and quicker thinking (Kean, 2017: 64). Similarly, empathy walks, a technique used in the Theory U process (see Appendix B) where interview walks are conducted while practicing deep listening skills, also support and inform the method (Scharmer, 2017). After each interview, I wrote up my insights and looked for patterns and similarities, or codes. I analysed these notations and began to make categorisations on themes, which led me to refine both the types or groups of participants I interviewed, and also iterate the questions I asked.

In a connected but separate method, I became integrated into the social fabric by partaking in community events and courses. My practice of living as form was the lens through which I interpreted these quotidian interactions. I kept to a regular schedule of attending for example, a pottery course, sauna, and free form dance events. I was able to observe people living in eco/intentional communities and note how they applied their values into their daily lives. (see Appendix D2 for embedment images).

Additionally, I took part in five courses related to regenerative design practices. These courses were four days to eleven weeks in length and involved many repeat participants that I became well acquainted with over the year. I maintained a running dialogue with the participants about their application of such skills during and after the course. This provided in-depth data and case studies targeting the research questions as to whether these (learned socially regenerative) techniques have farther reaching effectiveness. I had the opportunity to maintain yearlong relationships with several participants, and facilitators allowing me to interview them several times, some of which were formal and at length. (see Appendix D3 for images of these course).

After I had conducted eleven walks, I felt I had reached a saturation point with this population. A saturation point is a point where the researcher finds that the data being collected no longer leads to new theories (Charmaz, 2006: 113). However, I returned back to my pilot interviews and recoded, seeing some significant patterns that led me to begin engagement with a new group of participants, the students at the GSA's Highlands Campus. I saw from earlier interviews how the edge between the eco/ intentional and GSA community communities offered a great opportunity to test the findings from the first community in the latter, the mainstream environment I had been homing in on. After this point, I had the opportunity to exhibit my progress. As a part of the exhibition, I borrowed the concept of coding from GT, but used it in a prompt format to engage participants with a visual reference (see Appendix C and image 3.5) Additionally, I maintained my living as form practice while working with my cohort to present the exhibition, which also offered important supporting data for my findings.

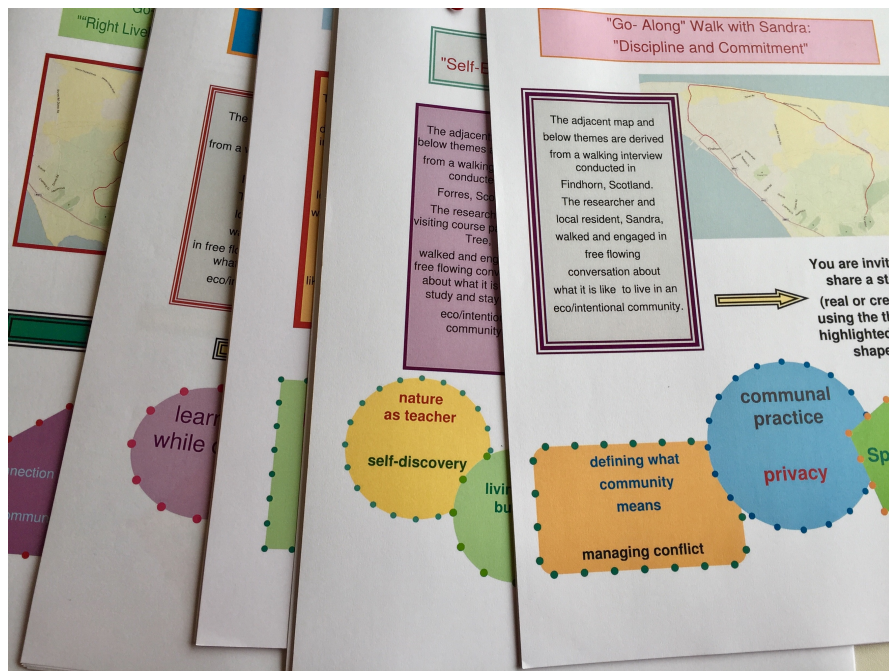


Image 3.5 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool Overview

During the Progression Exhibition at the GSA's Highland Campus, I experimented with using my coding from previous interviews as prompts for new participants visiting the event. I provided a device for people to record their responses to the themes I highlighted (see Appendix C).

In the final segment of my research I focused in earnest on the GSA's Highland campus, by particularly engaging the newest group of students from the Master of Design (MDES) 2018 programme. In my living as form researcher/designer/artist role, I performed two participatory learning workshops with the MDES students (see Appendix D4 for images of these workshops). I employed, and we discussed socially regenerative skills, such as gratitude, emergent and participatory design of dialogue, mindfulness, deep listening and compassionate communication. They also served as bonding exercise to further develop the sense of celebratory community. I used these workshops and following informal feedback interviews, to gauge the receptiveness of the students to the concepts and processes. Concurrently, I interviewed their supervisor, to find another perspective from the campus on the needs for socially regenerative skills, and also to assess the feasibility of their applications.

On the day that this text was initially submitted, I performed a participatory ritual/ socially regenerative celebration. Eco/intentional communities support the socially regenerative method of celebration at the end of a project, both to share with other people happiness for what has been done, and to draw a time boundary to facilitate readiness to start a new (project) (Fritz, 1989). The performative engagement attempted to bring together members from the researched

eco/intentional communities and the GSA Highlands campus student body in a party setting. This method intended to enact the meeting of the social edges or “sociotone” between groups in free form celebration and collaborative communication (East, 2017).

### **3.5 Summary of Methodology:**

Several elements bound the methodological approach of my research project. A qualitative framework for the practice- led process, was supported by the (epistemological) philosophical underpinnings found throughout my research. I selected my methods because of their contextual appropriateness and the way they reflected ideas from socially regenerative practices.

The emergent process allowed for the research question to become apparent from the collection of data. My initial enquiries directed me towards the eco/intentional population as an exemplar, and then I connected the data points to formulate my question. By embedding in the community and analysing the data from my interviews, I concluded that I could use the eco/intentional exemplar to engage with the GSA Highlands Campus. This connection of communities, represents an edge, where both groups can gain knowledge through the research perspective. In asking, “How can socially regenerative skills from eco/intentional communities be applied in mainstream higher education?”, I have opened a multi-directional viewpoint. My methods allowed me to reflect upon both an examination of the socially regenerative skills and the way they are enacted in the communities, while also testing them in an external sphere. The GSA Highlands Campus was the external grounds for applying and examining the socially regenerative skills that are being promoted, and as such represented a mainstream exemplar.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction to Findings**

The emergent purpose of this study was to examine the question, “how socially regenerative practices from eco/intentional communities can be applied in a mainstream higher education?”. Engaging communities in both the Findhorn, Forres eco/intentional and the GSA Highlands Campus communities, I collected my data through a living as form practice, observational embedment, (throughout the year of research), “go- along” walking interviews, workshops, and longer form interviews. Each stage in my process brought about new insights that led to my next steps. Sometimes this was a clearly linear progression and at other times in my analysis I benefited from revisiting prior findings and phases. Building from the chronological overview chart found in Chapter Three (see image 3.4), I have charted a simple overview of findings per phase, and what emerged (see Image 4.1).

### **4.2 Simple Overview of Findings per Phase**

- In the first phase, I familiarised myself with the region, while reviewing the literature. I enhanced my understanding of both the literature and the local community by taking ecological and social design courses (see sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.4). My pilot walks helped me both find my way around the area and helped me to determine upon which social group to focus. I eventually chose to focus on the eco/intentional community because of their prevalence in the region and their pre-existing knowledge of the themes (i.e., social permaculture) upon which I had centred my literature review.
- In the second phase, I enquired deeper into the lifestyles of eco/ intentional folks, through the “go-along” walks, and became more involved in Findhorn Foundation activities (see section 4.3.1). This stage highlighted the special skills and common challenges of this particular community. I focused then on familiarising myself with their eco/intentional vernacular and recognised the potential to test their methods elsewhere.
- In the third phase, I became more aware of my living as form role as it extended into the GSA environment. Additionally, revisiting my walks (James and Kate particularly, see details below in section 4.3.1) led me again to the new campus. At the GSA Highlands campus, I found the external (non eco/intentional) testing ground I had sought. Knitting together my findings from lifestyle observation and courses, I used the participatory performative



workshops to engage the GSA students, embodying the socially regenerative practices I had studied.

- The fourth phase was about examining and justifying my approaches into a functional conclusion. My analysis was intended to be a useful submission of assessment of the GSA Highlands Campus climate and student body. I concluded that at the campus, similar challenges are present as in eco/intentional communities, and that there is the potential to further employ socially regenerative skills and tactics to address these issues.

**A chronological overview of research activities:  
what happened when and what they led to next**

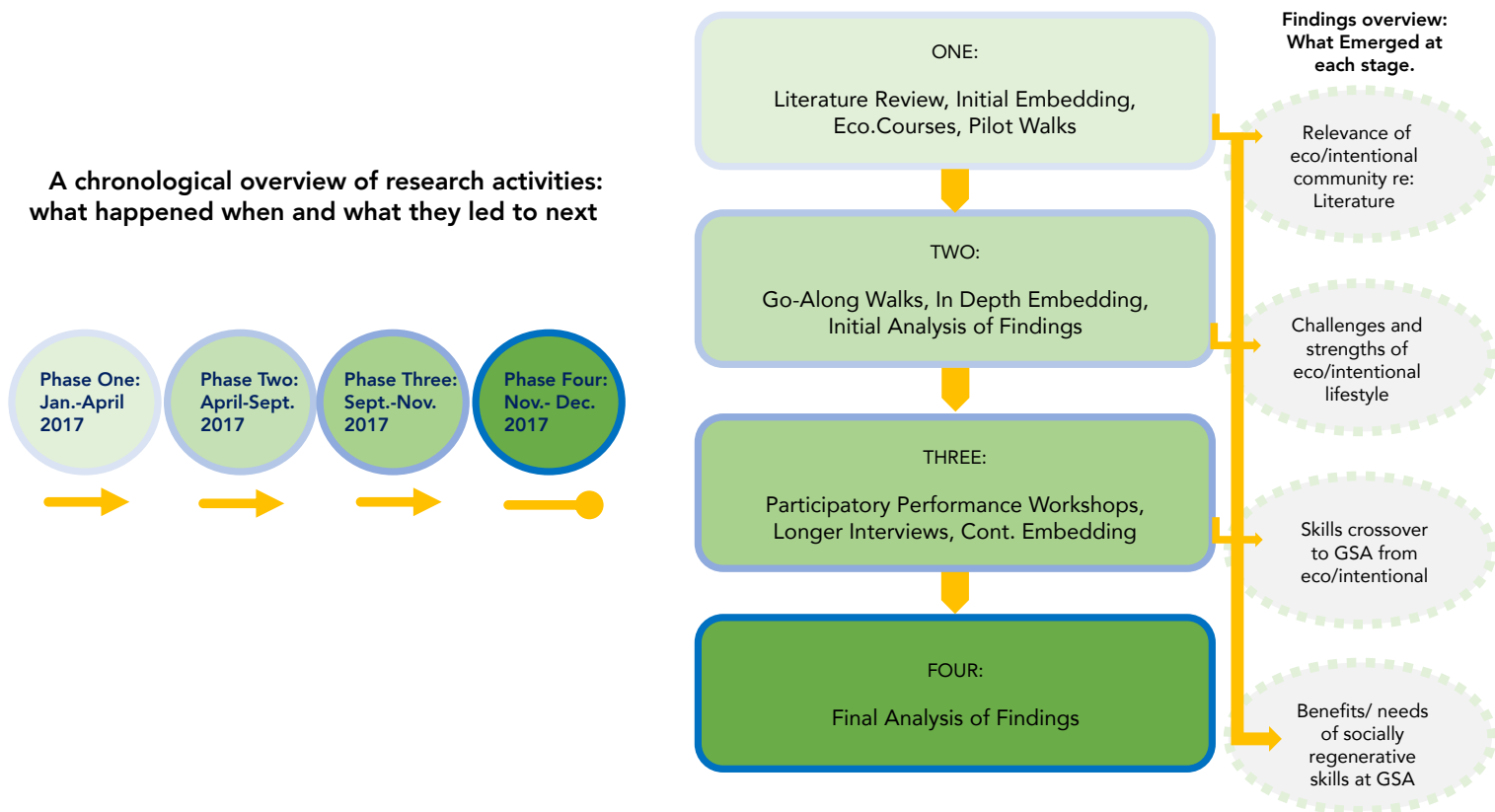


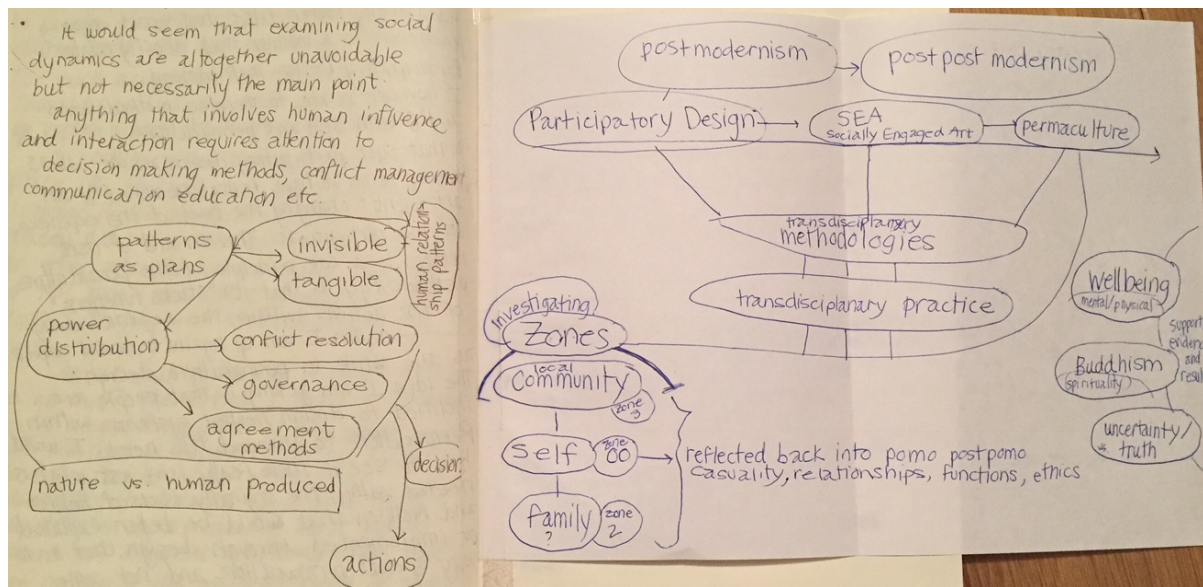
Image 4.1 Overview of Findings Chart

This chart depicts the chronological timeline and shows in brief the what findings emerged at each stage.

#### 4.3 Review of Methods

My analysis was based on both a personal intuitive interpretation and formal procedures. I used codes, and journaling to create a picture of reoccurring themes,

that I found from my various methods (see image 4.2). The measures taken to ensure the validity of the findings, included doing an iterative interview process, and looking for commonalities amongst the responses. Additionally, I revisited the codes and memos, including sharing them directly with new participants (see Chapter 3 and Appendix C) throughout the process to deepen and check my analysis.



**Image 4.2 Critical Reflective Journal**

This image is from an early entry in my reflective journal, where I mapped some codes and ideas from the literature and engagements.

To start, I conducted eleven "go-along" interview walks with the following participants: James, Allison, Louisa, Alex, Polly, Kate, Greta, Milla, Sandra, Tree, and Amelia. At the Findhorn ecovillage, I was regularly in attendance at a pottery class with an instructor named Melissa, and a member at a sauna. Because we took a series of socially regenerative courses together over the year, I was able to engage at length with some of the participants; Ivy, Louisa, and Tree, were a part of this group. The workshops I facilitated at the GSA Highlands Campus, involved the MDES 2018 students. Also, relevant were my interactions with my own GSA research cohort, consisting of four Master of Research (MRES) students, and three PHD students. I also conducted two longer form interviews with individuals from a facilitation and supervisory pedagogical perspective from both the eco/intentional and GSA Highlands Campus. James, a supervisor of the GSA's MDES programme (James was by chance also one of two pilot walk interviews I did), and Elaine, a facilitator connected with the Schumacher College, Gaia Education, 8 Shields, and the Forres, Scotland based eco/ intentional community, Newbold House. Please

note the names within this report have been changed to protect participants' anonymity.

After coding the data from these engagements, I then categorised the wider pool of codes into reoccurring and overarching themes. The following themes emerged as relevant to the research question: Communication/Connection, Mindfulness/ Nature, Group Dynamics/ Community. I will return to these themes at length, but first will present the progression of my process and the key interactions leading to insights as these themes emerged. In the next sections, I will feature the findings following a linear timeline divided by the method used. Then I will give an overview of the data presented according to the overall themes.

#### **4.3.1 "Go- Along" Walk Interviews**

As noted, I began my research process with a pre-existing interest and knowledge of the emerging concept of social permaculture. Keeping my research open to the specific needs of the region, my initial two pilot walks did not engage a narrowed population beyond the delineation that they were from the large local but non-native population. These walks helped me to get a better picture of how the wider community could be divided into subgroups. Especially on the pilot walks, but also throughout, I repeatedly heard from participants about the different groups within the wider community (see image 4.3).

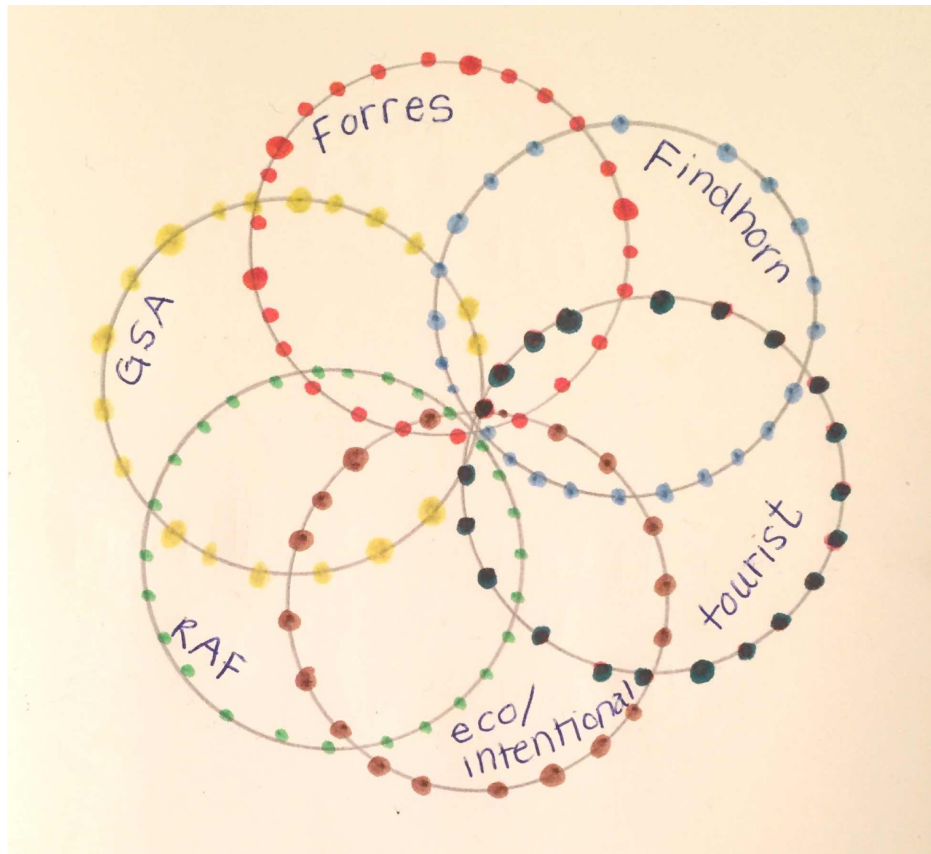


Image 4.3 Permeable Edges

This diagram depicts the permeable edges between various groups identified by interviewees, as important factors in dynamic relationships in the region. The groups were: The GSA Highlands campus (GSA), the broader (Forres) community, the broader (Findhorn) village community, the Royal Air Force base (RAF), local (eco/intentional) communities such as the Findhorn Foundation, visiting, and temporary or (tourist) populations.

On my walk with Allison, she explained at length about her observations of different (mainstream) community groups and the conflict between them. She spoke of her tactic to try and remain a neutral party and not "take sides". She noted that the different lifestyles and values kept the groups from having understanding, which she said, "was unfortunate that the groups were not invested in making better connections", and that it was "regrettable because they all had the common goal of bettering the community". The beginnings of my thematic classification Group Dynamics/ Community began to emerge from Allison's understanding of the region. Alex echoed the understanding of the wider community edges but was emphatic when I asked him about the role of his eco/intentional enterprise, saying that "there was no division between their group and the larger community". He made clear his desire to use their centre as place to connect the groups. When I asked him how it

was to live in a residential eco/ intentional social enterprise, he spoke of the group dynamics, saying they used systems of governance, like sociocracy, but that there were still challenges in people's interpretations of these systems.

Through these important dialogues about the edges within the community, I decided to take advantage of the fact that my research was located in an epicentre of eco/intentional communities. (Located in Forres, Scotland, The Findhorn Foundation is a world famous vast network with a fifty-five-year history). My following nine "go-along" walk interviews were with a narrower group of people that were somehow connected to a (local) eco/intentional community. At first, I asked general questions about why they had chosen their eco/intentional lifestyle and what their expectations for the community were. As I progressed I realised there were reoccurring codes about the lifestyles, values, and practices of the eco/intentional participants. I initiated questioning that tried to draw out what kinds of special practices, and skill sets the participants had because of their lifestyle. Communication styles and group dynamics came to the forefront of my research based on the "go- along" interview data.

On my interview walk with Alex, I asked about the challenges of living in a close-quartered eco/intentional community. I noted a key example (code) about the complexities and prevalence of communication, when he spoke about people's expectations, and how "differing communication styles can make things challenging", and, "some people want to stick to a strict set of rules" and miss the finesse of applying a system. He said he valued, "flexibility" and understanding the "true spirit" of conversation. Expressing a similar conscientiousness about the challenges of communication, Kate, my fellow MRES colleague, told me about a satisfying experience she had where she was able to recognise a negative pattern of communication and mutually agree upon a way to avert such issues in the future.

Interestingly, Kate represents an edge between the GSA and eco/intentional communities because she was connected to both groups. Realising this edge was a pivotal moment in my research trajectory, I asked how she felt about the MRES cohort at the GSA Highlands Campus, as a concept in practice. When she said she wished we could develop a support system for sharing questions, concerns, and general information (connection), I saw a possible opportunity for applying socially regenerative design at the campus. When I asked her what kind of support she needed specifically, she noted that intensive study requires a good deal of self-care, both emotionally and physically, which I connected to mindfulness practices I had learned about from eco/intentional sources. We also discussed a need to better design the interpersonal academic culture, rather than leave it to chance (group dynamics). Through this interview the possibility to test the edges of eco/

intentional communities at the GSA Highlands Campus emerged. I had previously imagined a mainstream testing site, and the campus naturally surfaced because of the existing communal edges. The topics of our dialogue also refined my understanding about the themes of community, group dynamics, communication, connection, as they were discussed on a personal, and community, and institutional level.

I learned from these interview walks about the physical landscape of the bioregion and the social landscape of the eco/intentional paradigm. Concurrent to these walks, I was also embedded in various parts of the wider, eco/intentional, and GSA communities, which served as a feedback loop into the interview questions and the general direction of my research.

#### **4.3.2 Embedment Living as Form**

Straddling the entire research timeline, I maintained a researcher's eye throughout my daily interactions, engaging socially through my living as form practice. Every quotidian interaction had value, from pottery classes, sauna visits, regenerative design courses, to my role as a student at the GSA Highlands Campus. Particularly illuminating were the moments when I observed how people in eco/intentional communities interacted and communicated with each other in their normal lives. Through the social dimensions of the regenerative courses I participated in, I both developed an understanding of how eco/ intentional educational platforms teach these skills (which I applied in later workshops), and how to recognise better when I was observing the skills being exercised in the eco/intentional communities. This understanding led me to reframe my interview questions to ask how effective the eco/intentional participants found their socially regenerative skills to be useful (in and out of the mainstream).

In these engagements, I observed the way the eco/intentional community members integrated mindfulness into their lives, and I noted it as a significant theme. Different activities were motivated by a mindfulness or a nature connection value system and practice. For example, I went on several group hiking excursions, and some that were organised explicitly for mindfulness practice (see image 4.4). I also found the theme present in my weekly pottery class, where the teacher, Melissa encouraged the students not to be attached to outcomes, but mindfully (with our eyes closed) feel the clay. I listened on more than one occasion to Melissa talk about the "soul" of the clay being important and the designs she etched into her own pieces had come from profound nature experiences, while at the river Findhorn. Keeping socially regenerative mindfulness and nature connection in



mind, while presenting my research to a progression panel at the GSA Highlands Campus, I maintained my living as form performative role, by taking the panel on a walk through the wooded estate grounds. I tested their responsiveness to my engagement with nature by offering them wild berries and drawing their attention to the natural sounds and sights. I experienced the walk, as a defusing gesture, that allowed me to be more relaxed and mindful in my presentation. (It is inconclusive as to how the panel received the experience, though the feedback of the performative aspect was positive).



**Image 4.4 Mindfulness Hikes**

As a part of my living as form practice, I routinely joined group (from the broader Findhorn ecovillage community) hiking excursions. Mindfulness and meditation was an explicit shared exercise on some of these hikes.

Though I had already begun connecting the concept of the mainstream with the higher education setting at the GSA Highlands Campus, it was my living as form role in that setting that brought my work into another dimension of complexity. My own interpersonal edges as a student became relevant to my data collection. Using a socially regenerative lens I observed both my supervisors, examiners and colleagues. I found a receptiveness and some parallels to the eco/intentional ideas, but a lack of design praxis to structure social systems and dynamics.

#### 4.3.3 Workshop One: "Social Permaculture"

For my contribution to the exhibition, *Between Practice, Place and People*, at the GSA's Highlands campus, I facilitated and performed an interactive participatory learning workshop with the incoming MDES 2018 students. Having completed the "go-along" interviews, I used the initial workshop to test the socially regenerative skills I had seen modelled in the embedding process and designed the engagement based on what the walking interviewees had shared. In the workshop, we discussed conceptually and applied in an emergent form, social permaculture and regenerative social skills. I found the group of participants open and willing to adapt to both the philosophy and practice behind socially regenerative skills. We began with a gratitude and mindfulness practices, and then together worked to define social permaculture, and social systems thinking. The group then was prompted to use worksheet (engagement tools) that had codes drawn from the "go-along" interviews, (see Chapter 3 and Appendix C) to test the whether the ideas had still had significance once they crossed the edge into a different community. The participants were invited to tell short narratives that were inspired by the codes. The group seemed to deepen their relationships through the process, including while working through difficulties in language. There was encouraging emergent design and interaction that followed with the participatory learning model. I was aware however, that I needed to allow for the students to integrate into the community for a longer time period before assessing their specific needs as representative students in a mainstream higher education setting.

#### 4.3.4 Long Term Informal Interviews and Observation

There were two groups that I engaged in informal interviews with over a several months to one-year period. The first group had some crossover with the "go-along" interviews and included Louisa, Tree, and Ivy, with whom I had taken three long-term socially regenerative courses. This group provided me with a lens into how those individuals learning socially regenerative skills in an eco/intentional educational platform, interpreted their experience into their daily lives. I found it easy to seek information from this group without the risk of fatiguing them, because there was the common interest in applying socially regenerative design.

The framework of the eco/intentional educational platforms emphasise teaching new communication and connection techniques. I was interested to understand how students applied these skills after the courses. When I asked Ivy about this, she told me she was able to get a teaching job based on her socially regenerative training, but that she was having trouble integrating (communicating) the ideas into an already established system. She said however she felt able to



understand and communicate better with the (especially the behaviourally challenging) children more compassionately. In a follow up conversation, Ivy talked again about the use of her socially regenerative skills now that she was back home (in a mainstream environment). She said she felt she was “pushing or leading mainstream people towards this type of inter/personal development” and had difficulty getting others to adopt the skills. Tree mirrored this aspect of the theme of communication, when I asked him about his experiences communicating and connecting to the mainstream after having learned new skills in the eco/intentional realm. He told me that when he interacted with government and council officials he did not feel comfortable being very open about his values, but rather modelled them through his actions, “maintaining a calm and peaceful way”. On another occasion, I asked him about his thoughts about communication generally, and he shared his philosophical thinking, saying, “empathic listening goes beyond good or bad physicality” to bring deeper connection and “appreciation of everyone’s contribution to the conversation”.

The second group that I engaged with on regular basis was the students at the GSA Highlands Campus. This group included my own MRES cohort, and the MDES 2018 students, and to a lesser extent the MDES 2017 students. My main goal in observation was not apparent until the coded “go-along” interviews reached a saturation point, but once I had a better idea of the themes, I was able to frame my GSA interactions more precisely. Two pivotal moments occurred that made clearer the potential needs and methods that would make bringing socially regenerative practices to the campus.

The first pivotal moment happened, while working on an exhibition where our GSA cohort collectively presented our individual research, and I continued to wear my performative lens to further my research. I noticed the communication style that the group fostered without prior discussion or planning. In a high stress environment, there was a lot accomplished and few feelings hurt, (see Image 4.5). Some weeks after, I discussed the group dynamics with some of the cohort, and we agreed we were “lucky” to have such intuitive collaboration. However, I wanted to further examine how, (particularly in mainstream academic groups), such interactions are navigated and intentionally designed.



**Image 4.5 Collaborative Cohort**

While working collaboratively with my cohort on an exhibition of our work, I continued with my research observing and participating in the group dynamics.

The second pivotal moment happened with the MDES 2018 Students, in a somewhat chaotic group interview, when I followed up with the group some weeks after the first workshop. I was directed by the solidifying research themes to observe and question them about their group dynamics. I asked them what skills they felt they needed to work together in groups (something they are asked to do throughout the programme). They expressed confusion and told me about one student's recent angry outburst from frustrating group work. I engaged two very quiet women in the group and asked if they felt their voices were being heard. They gave an unconvincing reply that yes, mostly, but that some people dominate the group. Then a male student interjected that "they try not to neglect anyone" and "look after one another". It was also expressed that because it was only a yearlong

programme, it wasn't so important to "try to figure it out". I asked how they made decisions in groups, and one man said there wasn't much of a system, but "maybe it was democratic". After this engagement, I interviewed their supervisor, which I will detail in the following section on long format interviews. However, I already was shaping my understanding of how the themes I had found from my embedment and "go- along" interviews, aligned with the needs of the GSA students. Group dynamics and communication came to the forefront of skills needed, and I began to understand how the other themes of mindfulness (through nature) and building community and connection could be the socially regenerative skill sets I could test to address these needs.

#### 4.3.5 Long Format Interviews

In the latter segment of my research I addressed the research question directly asking two educators, *"how socially regenerative skills from eco/intentional communities could be applied in a mainstream higher education setting?"*. The interviewees served as representatives from their eco/intentional and mainstream educational institutions. These interviews bound together the many threads of the research and reaffirmed the themes I had already established without my specifically directing the dialogue towards them. This affirmation of the themes allowed me to further justify my focus on them and legitimise my directed selection of the themes as the concentration of the final workshop that followed these interviews. The long format interviews with educators James and Elaine, will address the themes in a bound manner giving a bird's eye perspective on their presences or absences in both the eco/intentional community and the GSA Highlands Campus. I found that in unison, they offered insight into which elements of socially regenerative practices are relevant to the mainstream higher education setting.

In an interview with Elaine, I asked, in her role as a facilitator/educator in various eco/intentional communities, how she thought *socially regenerative skills could be applied in mainstream (educational) settings?* Elaine's response expressed concepts I had coded from other engagements, and the themes, Communication/Connection, Mindfulness/ Nature, Group Dynamics/ Community, were directly spoken to without any prompting about them. I feel the findings from her response are clearest in her own words:

"Some elements we find particularly powerful: gratitude, is a really basic regular practice, every meeting, course, day, phone call starts with gratitude, it is central... Another keystone principle is what we call 'the quiet mind', so recognising that if we are in a place of peace, and we have strategies to returning to a place of peace...that we will bring our best selves into our

interpersonal and community relationships. The 'quiet mind' is a combination of mindfulness and (sensory) nature connection. Other key social technologies emphasise consciously welcoming people well, and including all voices, the first moments create or break safety and inclusion. There can be lots of different techniques...we have a framework that says these things need to be done, but there are hundreds of tools out there and you can apply the culturally, group, or time appropriate ones... We also have "nurture values" of the land, self, each other; there is a big community and celebration aspect, and clean transparent authentic communication."

Elaine's response echoed much of what I saw being practiced and lived in the eco/ intentional communities in which I was embedded. Elaine's comments about gratitude related to all of the themes. Within the nexus of Communication/Connection and Group Dynamics/ Community, gratitude was understood as a way to create deeper bonds by communicating positive emotion. Gratitude also addressed the Mindfulness/Nature theme, as it required practitioners to create a mindful practice to include gratitude in a formal manner. Elaine's comment about the "quiet mind", directly represents the mindfulness phenomenon. Her definition of the quiet mind, demonstrates a system of thinking that intentionally brings together mindfulness practice with nature connection. I coded her words on welcoming practices, under the themes of Communication/Connection but like gratitude, also under Mindfulness/ Nature, because it was a very intentional practice to uphold. The "nurture values" she spoke of had a clear connection to the Mindfulness/ Nature theme, as care for the self and nature both require (self)-reflection, but these values also had elements of Group Dynamics/ Community, in that one is directed to "care for others". The Group Dynamics/ Community, theme was again represented in her comments about the importance about communal celebration. And of course, her mention of "clear... communication" relates to the theme Communication/Connection.

At the end of our interview, when I asked Elaine what she felt was the single most important idea or skill that could be translated into mainstream environments she said "peacemaking", and the concept of designing for peace and social sustainability. She clarified, "we model the importance of accountability and responsibility of 'walking the talk'...peacemaking isn't conflict resolution, peacemaking is developing good foundations so we are resilient... because of how we have designed the culture to be stronger and more connected". I understand peacemaking as a form of governance practice and thematically placed in Group Dynamics/ Community, but with any form of conflict and harmony, there is also a crossover into the theme, Communication/Connection.

In an interview with James, in his role as a GSA Highlands Campus supervisor of the MDES programme, we spoke directly to the themes that I had observed as relevant to the student's situation. I will present James' interview much the same way as I handled Elaine's, but rather note the overarching thematic representations throughout. Both the themes, Communication/Connection, and Group Dynamics/Community are at the centre of this entire excerpt. I was careful not to lead his replies and I found they were unprompted thematic connections, that aligned with my previous findings.

After speaking to the MDES students, some weeks after the first workshop, I had second interview with James. I based my questions on what I had heard from the students, who had expressed confusion and chaos around group dynamics. I asked him if he thought there were certain skill sets needed for working in a group. He replied, "Communication. To me working in a cohort is being open to sharing... and to comments and critiques...being respectful of comments and providing comments". I asked him about the challenges of making this happen, especially considering more introverted participants. James suggested using technology, or giving different roles, and discussed how in cohorts try to create a "non-hierarchy or a flat ontology of space" and said it was "difficult". I asked him if it was a commonly held understanding that an academic cohort should be non- hierarchical. Using the example of his international academic cohort at a conference, he talked about how this group had shared responsibility and divided up tasks somewhat equally. I asked how they decided who did what and what was the culture of such academic research groups. He said "some people put on leadership hats", and then "things shift into a hierarchy", but the key was to recognise these roles, but he said he didn't know when the system was agreed upon, it just emerged. I shifted the conversation back to the learning environment, asking if there was a structure put in place to ensure the students practiced leadership skills, and distributing power. He said that in a supervisory role he can "pass the baton" to certain people to "communicate a power shift". I then asked, because in academic research culture there continues to be a need to work in groups, if there was a system (at the GSA Highlands campus) to teach students the skills needed to work in a group. He replied flatly, "No...the thing is you can't teach everything, we can only assume people will come open to working in groups". He went on to tell me anecdotally about the previous year's MDES cohort, where there was an immense amount of interpersonal conflict, "but they actually got it done, even though they struggled and hated each other". He finished by saying it was about "enabling communication", and he noted the challenges of doing so with so many languages and cultures coming together.

#### 4.3.6 Workshop Two: "Regenerative Communication and Group Dynamics"

The final performative participatory workshop presented the skills that applied the predetermined themes to address the found need for designing better group dynamics and communication structures. The workshop began with a gratitude and mindfulness practice, using breath work and yoga to align and prepare the group. Then there was a short TED talk shown, about (mis)communication. I chose the (subtitled) video format to ensure everyone, including those with language challenges, had a common understanding of our workshop focus. This set up the following deep listening exercise, where I found the students very invested in trying to understand and communicate on a deeper level. In many cases the stories they shared had a personal component that reflected the values to care for and connect with other people. In the final feedback, a student indicated his level of empathy by saying, he was "not prepared for that level of emotion". Several students were greatly challenged in expressing themselves as non-native English speakers. One such student, after the deep listening exercise said she felt, "happy that the others had understood her", because she recognised, "that listening you spend more energy to understand", than when you are speaking. After the same listening exercise, a student said that he found it challenging to "not be allowed to interject...or add into" what someone else was saying, and that he really felt he had to "drink in" what the other person was saying, to "give it justice". There was also anxiety expressed, as one student said she was often, "frightened with words", but when someone else summarised what she had said, "it made me more happy, than me talking", and there was agreement to her next statement, that, "when someone understands what you are talking about it gives you happiness". On the other side, another non-native English speaker said that her language skills were a challenge because, "other people might understand it differently".

The students were very engaged in the skills, both the mindfulness, and communication/ group dynamic exercises. The conversation continued well after the end of the workshop, and I had a sense that the shared intentions had helped to build community and connection, which was the binding theme underpinning the workshop. The full group of students were not present, so there was not the opportunity to test if students less inclined to voluntarily participate would benefit in the same way from the regenerative social skills. Still, I found this workshop format that introduced and applied socially regenerative (communication and group dynamic) skills from eco/ intentional communities, confirmed the effectiveness, and potential for promoting designed social interactions in mainstream educational environments.

#### 4.4 Themes

Throughout all of the engagement methods there were three reoccurring themes generated, and the final sections illustrate their prevalence and reinforce the decision to highlight them in the application of socially regenerative skills in the (mainstream) GSA Highlands Campus setting.

##### 4.4.1 Group Dynamics/ Community

The theme of Group Dynamics/ Community was multifaceted. In one sense, I found people longing for and/ or intentionally designing better community and group dynamics. In another sense, there was tension created at the edges where individual people and/ or groups met; and the expressed idea of “needing more personal space” and separation. Within this theme is the prominent code, governance, which described how the people I interacted with organised themselves, or in some cases did not and faced consequences. Community had both a practical and an almost romantic notion for the people I observed. When community was “strong” or bonded, the feelings of “happiness” and belonging were expressed. When group dynamics were not properly attended or designed there was conflict, (which was another reoccurring code).

Notable moments related to conceptual appreciation of group dynamics and community happened in two of the “go-along” walks. Sandra, in response to my enquiry about her lifestyle choices to live in an eco/intentional community and what that entailed, told me that she had found that “everyone has a different idea about what community should be” and that she had not yet found her ideal place to “live in community”. Sandra also expressed frustration that others in her communal living place were not disciplined and she wished to live in community as “the Benedictine monks live”. I learned more about a historical tendency from Greta’s unique personal history. Now, in her mid-forties, she had been raised by her mother and grandmother in various eco/intentional communities. I heard from her again the term “living in community” when she said she had always desired to continue with the lifestyle she had grown up with.

In both the eco/ intentional and GSA Highlands Campus communities, I observed the themes of group dynamics and community, as structural systems that had lots of emotions driving them, but when planned design was supporting the infrastructure, there was a greater potential for more positive and preferable interactions.

#### 4.4.2 Communication/Connection

Running parallel to ideas about group dynamics and community was the prevalence of the theme Communication/Connection, which brought together several similar codes. The analysis of this theme contains information I gained from participants directly about communication and connection skills and their experiences within this realm, and from my observation of how they connected and communicated. It should be noted that both communication and connection are skill sets at the centre of (educational platforms) in socially regenerative practices eco/intentional communities.

The participants from the eco/intentional communities expressed often that they felt they modelled a “new” manner of communicating. On our “go-along” walk, Amelia told me that when she visits with her family she keeps in mind, “that had she learned a foreign language, like Spanish, she couldn’t return home expecting her family to understand” and that her learned (regenerative) communication skills had to be modified so that her family could understand her, and that she had a better sense of “awareness of *their* way of being”, and could accept it more. The expectation of a “new” form of communication also brought with it disappointment when it was not met. Louisa told me that “if it were a mainstream environment, I would expect such nastiness and fighting” and that she was somewhat saddened that after decades of living together there was still so much ineffective communication happening (in the eco/intentional community). And again, on another occasion, Louisa, at that time she was just settling into living in an ecovillage, remarked that she couldn’t tell if people there were “friendly but not welcoming, or welcoming but not friendly”. She mentioned that she initially had trouble “connecting with people”, perhaps because they “were bored with so many new faces” and did not have the “energy” to keep engaging everyone if they were not permanent residents.

It was clear through all of my engagements, that effective communication led to positive connections. I noted that though eco/intentional communities are aware of designing for better communication and connection but are up against complicated human realities and require a dynamic network of socially regenerative practices to flow successfully.

#### 4.4.3 Mindfulness/ Nature

The theme of Mindfulness/Nature addresses a reoccurring lifestyle focus on various types of mindfulness, meditation, or spiritual practice that appeared to be



interwoven in a value expression with nature. Nature, was also seen as a “place” for mindfulness practices, and an inspiration point for lifestyle choices. The eco/intentional communities, had practices connecting both mindfulness and nature, and these practices play a significant role topically in the subject matter of their educational platforms. The following instances highlight the participant’s relationships with mindfulness practice and nature connection and support thematic significance as a useful socially regenerative practice to model in mainstream higher education context.

Interestingly, the route all of my “go-along” walks were chosen by the participants, with the prompt that it could be wherever they chose, and every one took place in a nature rich setting. I was made aware, by most of the walking interview participants, (particularly the nine that were connected to eco/intentional communities), that they had both developed strong connections with their understanding of nature, and that in some way they also had a mindfulness, meditative, or spiritual practice that ran parallel or were interwoven with these nature connections.

The theme of nature connection was particularly notable when, on our pilot “go-along” James and I walked along the portions of the Dava Way hiking trail. When I asked about his connection to the region, he told me felt “he better appreciated the natural environment than the local population did”. This connection to nature was expressed as a significant part of his identity. I also found it meaningful that on our “go-along” walk Greta, brought us to a place she called, “Swan Lake”. She told me that the forested brook was a place that she and her fellow volunteers from a Forres, eco/intentional community, frequented to escape from being around lots of people, and meditate. This highlighted the existence of deliberate lifestyle practices connecting nature and mindfulness within the eco/intentional communities. I noticed generally that connecting mindfulness and nature were commonly held beliefs in the wider eco/intentional communities. For example, the weekly calendar at the Findhorn Foundation (including two regional locations) includes at least six daily group meditations. Two daily bee and nature meditations take place in a special round Hobbit-house-like building, called the Nature Sanctuary.

While walking with both Milla and Tree, I asked how they had come to their eco/intentional lifestyles, and they both recounted stories about how nature inspired them as children. Tree told me, “nature is my teacher” and that “nature is a tool to develop the mind”. He recounted a childhood memory in a sun dappled meadow, where he felt a still point of the mind, and how that experience was a foundational moment that he has built his values upon. Tree, also expressed in

numerous chats (one of which occurred literally in a tree) his desire to maintain a regular, meditation and yoga practice, this was a goal he felt would help him better live his values. Similarly, Milla told me she believed she had become an environmental activist, because at a young age, whenever she had problems with her family, she would runaway to the forest, to be alone, explore, and find peace. She told me, she “had found strength and a deep sense of herself through nature”.

I was surprised by two very different expressions of relationships with nature, as expressed by Alex and Louisa on separate occasions. On Cluny Hill in Forres, Alex responded to a question about how he felt being an outsider to the region by saying that where he is from it is a “naturally abundant, and sunny climate” and he equated the climate with the nature of the people, telling me they were more easy going, than the Scottish who, “had struggled to find food, through cold grey winters”, his conclusion was that the natural environment affected the disposition of the local people making them stalwart, and burdened. Differently, Louisa demonstrated an approach to understanding how nature related to the self. During an exercise in a course about regenerative practices at Findhorn (the ecovillage), Louisa and I stood in a garden. She told me at length about an experience she had had where she perceived she was having a conversation with a tree, and the tree helped her answer a trouble. It was particularly surprising to me because her outward appearance made her seem rather ordinary, and not inclined to such “alternative” understanding of nature connection.

I found generally that within mindfulness and nature there were important factors and practices, with which individuals had their own interpretations and personal relationships. These examples showed the important potential for incorporating these themes into the application of socially regenerative skills, especially when creating the space and mood of a mainstream engagement.

#### **4.5 Summary of Findings**

The findings section represents a brief overview of a year’s worth of enquiry, that developed and asked how socially regenerative skills from eco/intentional communities can be applied in mainstream high education. My analytical examination drew upon the GT method of analysing the data with coding. I later grouped these codes into wider reoccurring themes, as a technique to group together the socially regenerative skill sets I observed being applied and promoted in eco/ intentional communities. I also included in these thematic interpretations, examples of how the same themes already existed and were approached in the GSA Highlands Campus community. This comparative inclusion of the higher

education community, sets the stage for the following chapter where I discuss my findings, making a commentary that links back to the literature and concludes my analysis.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

In this final chapter I will discuss my findings, and offer ending remarks to the research question, “how can socially regenerative practices from eco/intentional communities be applied in mainstream higher education?”. I will refer back my methods, interpreting my observations from my living as form practice, community embedment, “go-along” interviews, long form interviews, and participatory performance workshops. In doing so I will make connections back to the literature referring to the social permaculture, social systems thinking, and living as form practice in an art historical context.

A precedent has been set by initiatives in social innovation that look to “creative” and “special” grassroots communities as exemplars for designing for mainstream social problems (Manzini, 2007: 233, 235, 236, 239). Eco/intentional communities are examples of such grassroots communities that are testing socially regenerative practices, in their lifestyles and connected educational platforms. The edges, or sociotone, between the Findhorn, Forres eco/intentional communities and the GSA Highlands Campus, are diverse zones where the (stacked) functionalities of their missions and goals can be improved through mutual feedback (East, 2017, Hemenway 2015: 22, Macnamara, 2012: 19,23,107).

The mission of the GSA Highlands Campus supports innovative and sustainable design initiatives which address the array of global challenges, influenced by ecological crisis, like those that motivated my own research (McAra-McWilliam, 2016). If the researchers and design students aim to design preferable futures, then perhaps a systems thinking approach might be the most effective way (ibid.). Although my research supports the general idea that designers that consider whole systems in their designs can avoid solutions that cause bigger problems, my research question begins with the (student) designers themselves, before their creative design process begins or as it unfolds (Meadows, 2008: 4,6). My whole systems thinking research method demonstrated a need at the Highlands Campus to implement socially regenerative practices to help develop the student relationships and educational environment to be a more effective centre for innovative design and foster the advancement of regenerative design through the student’s own (social) regenerative development.

The literature and my research show socially regenerative practices from eco/intentional communities suggest creating a participatory learning environment that includes deep listening and expression, and engages the emotional, intellectual, biological, primal, and creative needs of participants (Young, 2017).

I uncovered issues that the students at the Highlands Campus exhibited via a social permacultural observational approach by looking at patterns in thinking and communication (Macnamara, 2012: 285, Holmgren, 2002:13). My living as form, zone 00, perspective enabled me to examine my own experience as student. My living as form practice amplified the context and dissolved the spectator role into the co-creative process, helping to create social bonds (with GSA and eco/intentional communities) while being a part of the collective (Bishop, 2012:33-35, Helguera, 2011:12).

My analysis of the data collection directed me to trial the performative participatory workshop format that contained many socially regenerative facilitation techniques and invited the participants to explore socially regenerative skills in an emergent co-creative fashion. I found the MDES students responded very positively to the style and topics of the workshops. They often remained afterwards to continue discussing the themes and left in high spirits. Through these workshops and interviews with the students and their supervisor, I recognised a clear need to address a gap in communication and group dynamics skills. I recommend applying socially regenerative skills from the eco/intentional communities to address the needs of the students and promote an educational environment that meets the holistic needs of the students in order to potentially facilitate better design outcomes.

The participatory learning workshop format is an already formulated method being taught in eco/ intentional communities concerned with socially regenerative practices. There is a vast collection of methods and skills being developed in the eco/intentional paradigm, which can be applied to match the always changing specific cultural, group, and time needs of the higher education settings (Benham, 2017). In the Literature Review Chapter, the Findings Chapter, and the Appendix A/B, I offer more specific examples of socially regenerative themes and methods addressed by eco/ intentional paradigms. As I detailed in the Findings Chapter, I found those regenerative skills concerned with the themes, Communication/Connection, Mindfulness/ Nature, Group Dynamics/ Community, to be the most relevant to both the GSA Highlands Campus and eco/intentional communities. I have already tested some skills and discussed some topics related to these themes in my workshops. I recommend an approach that follows this lead.

My results point to an opportunity for further study of this research question. The development of a more evolved practice and data base would potentially enable the creation of new knowledge. Further study that caters even more precisely to the specific parameters that both eco/intentional and higher education paradigms entail, may address any gaps that are left open by this bound research

project, or exist in the knowledge base. Following the completion of this research project, I will continue investigating how socially regenerative skills from eco/intentional communities can be applied in mainstream environments. Starting in early 2018, my partners and I will found a consulting firm in Switzerland offering participatory workshops (highlighting my research themes from this project) for (mainstream) corporate and special interest groups.

## **Statement of Limitations**

It should be noted that this research project is presented with an acknowledgement of various limitations.

The length of time of one year, created boundaries around what was possible in this amount of time. Further limitations of time existed because this project was started with the possibility to proceed into a second year of a PhD programme, instead of the completion of a one-year MRES. This decision to present the work in the context of the MRES, was not determined until two months prior to the required completion of the MRES. Binding the project into the MRES in a short period was an additional limiting factor, that forced some threads open to longer study, to be trimmed.

Many possible avenues of enquiry were also limited because only one researcher was responsible for the entirety of the research. Certain relevant themes and tributary topics, including additional case studies, were not possible to explore at greater depth given these all of these factors. For example, there was not the possibility to research in depth how and why the (eco/intentional) designers of socially regenerative courses constructed their educational platforms as I observed and participated in them. There were also contextual limitations, as the research observed primarily eco/intentional communities in the Findhorn, Forres region and the higher education setting at the GSA Highlands Campus. There is therefore the opportunity to make a comparative study with additional mainstream higher education and eco/intentional contexts.

## **Bibliography**

Archer, B., 1995. *The Nature of Research*, Co-Design, Interdisciplinary Journal of Design, January, 1995, pp 6-13.

Barnard, B. Van Dartel, M., Beekamn, N., Lindeman, K.P., Nigten, A., 2015. *Artists and Designers as Agents of Change*. Participatory Innovation Conference. The Hague, Netherlands.

Baxter, S. & Wahl, D.C., 2008. *The Designer's Role in Facilitating Sustainable Solutions*. Design Issues: Volume 24, Number 2. pp.72-83.

Benham, D. 2017. Interview November, 2017. (unpublished)

Bishop, C., 2012. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London, New York: Verso.

Bishop, C. 2012b. *Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now?*. In: Thompson, N, ed., *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* 1st ed., New York; Cambridge: Creative Time Books, and The MIT Press. pp. 35-45

Biggs, M., 2014: *An Activity Theory of Research Methods in Architecture and Urbanism*. City, Territory and Architecture.

Brock, A., 2017: *Change Here Now: Permaculture Solutions for Personal and Community Transformation*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books

Brown, B., 2010. *The Power of Vulnerability*. Tedx Houston. available at: [https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability)

Busch, K., 2009. 'Artistic Research and the Poetics of Knowledge', *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, 2(2), Available at: <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/busch.html>

Candy, L., 2006. *Practice Based Research: A Guide*. Creativity & Cognition Studios. available at: <http://www.creativityandcognition.com> University of Technology, Sydney

Carpiano, R., 2009. *Come take a Walk with Me: The "Go-Along" Interview as a Novel Method For Studying the Implications of Place for Health and Well- Being*. *Health and Place*, 15 (1), 263-272. available at: <http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1016/healthplace.2008.05.003>

Charmaz, K., 1990. *Discovering Chronic Illness: Using Grounded Theory*. *Social Science and Medicine*, 30, 1161-1172.

Charmaz, K., 1995. *Grounded Theory*. In J.A. Smith, R.Harré, & L.Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking Methods IN Psychology* 27-49. London: Sage Publishers.

Charmaz, K., 2000. *Constructivist and Objectivist Grounded Theory*. In N.K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln



(Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 509-535. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers.

Charmaz, K., 2001. *Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis*. IN J.F. Gubrium & J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research*. 675-694. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers.

Charmaz, K., 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Charmaz, K., Mitchell, R.G., 1996. *The Myth of Silent Authorship: Self, Substance, and Style in Ethnographic Writing*. *Symbolic Interaction*. 285-302.

Chelleri, L., Del Rio, J., 2017. *Transitions in Spain: A First Assessment of Dimensions, Challenges, and Opportunities for Transition Towns Initiatives*. In: Henfrey, T., Maschkowski, G., Penha-Lopes, G, eds. 2017. *Resilience, Community Action, and Societal Transformation*. Hampshire, England: Permanent Publications. pp 31-46.

Crotty, M., 1998. *The Foundations of Social Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Cruz, T., 2012. *Democratizing Urbanization and the Search for a New Civic Imagination*. In: *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* 1st ed., Thompson. New York; Cambridge: creative Time Books, and The MIT Press.

Creswell, J., 2014. Fourth Ed. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.

Creswell, J., Creswell, J.D., 2017. Fifth Ed. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.

Dunne, A., 1999. *Hertzian Tales : Electronic Products, Aesthetic Experience and Critical Design*. London: Royal College of Art Research Publications.

East, M., 2017. *Training for Multipliers*. Lecture. Gaia Education. Newbold House, June, 2017. (unpublished).

Escobar, O., 2011. *Public Dialogue and Deliberation: A communication perspective for public engagement practitioners*, Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh Beltane – UK Beacons for Public Engagement.

Finkelpearl, T., 2013. *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social cooperation*, Durham; London: Duke University Press.

Fletcher, A.J., 2017. Applying critical realism in qualitative research: methodology meets method. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 20(2), pp.181–194. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2016.1144401>.

Fritz, R., 1989. *Path of Least Resistance: Learning to Become the Creative Force in Your Own Life*. Ballantine Books; Revised, Expanded edition.

GaiaEducation.org. (2017). *History: The creation of Gaia Education* / GaiaEducation.org. [online] Available at: <https://gaiaeducation.org/about/history/> [Accessed 5 Dec. 2017].

Geyer, S. & Deakin, F., 2016. *Zen in the Art of Permaculture Design* 1st ed., Hampshire, England: Permanent Publications.

Gibson, C. & Bang, J.M., 2015. *Permaculture: A Spiritual Approach* 1st ed. M. Hawkins, ed., Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press.

Glaser, B. 2010. *The Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal*. J. Holton, ed. Mill Valley, USA: Sociology Press. Vol.9 No.2.

Green, L. R., 2006. *Creative Writing as Practice-Led Research*. Australian Journal of Communication, 33(2,3), 175-188. available at: <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworks/2236>

Harland, M., 2007. *The Ethical Heart of Permaculture*. New Internationalist: People, Ideas and Action for Global Justice. 1 July 2007. available online at: <https://newint.org/features/2007/07/01/ethics>

Harrison, A.K., 2014. *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Ed. Patricia Leavy. Oxford University Press. p. 223-253.

Helguera, P., 2011. *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook*, New York: Jorge Pinto Books.

Hemenway, T., 2015. *The Permaculture City: Regenerative Design for Urban, Suburban, and Town Resilience* 1st ed. A. Colwell, ed., White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Henfrey, T. & Penha-Lopes, G., 2015. *Permaculture and Climate Change Adaptation: Inspiring Ecological, Social, Economic and Cultural Responses for Resilience and Transformation* 2nd ed., Hampshire

Holmgren, D., 2002. *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability* J. Mackenzie & I. Lillington, eds., Victoria, Australia: Permanent Publications.

Holmgren, D., 2017. [www.permacultureprinciples.com](http://www.permacultureprinciples.com)

Hopkins, R., 2008. *The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience*, Cambridge, UK: Green Books.

Howe, K., 1988. Against the Quantitative-Qualitative Incompatibility Thesis: Or Dogmas Die Hard. Educational researcher. Vol. 17, No. 8. Available online at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X017008010>

Howe, K., 2009. *Positivist Dogmas, Rhetoric, and the Education Science Question*. Educational Researcher. Vol.6, No.6, available online at:

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X09342003>

Jackson, S., 2012. *Living Takes Many Forms*. In: *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* 1st ed., Thompson. New York; Cambridge: creative Time Books, and The MIT Press.

Joubert, K & Alfred, R., 2009. Gaia Education, editors, Online Design for Sustainability course.

Karmel, P., 2001. *Marcel Duchamp: The Not So Innocent Eye*. Modern Art and America. S. Greenough (ed.), Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art.

Kean, D., 2017. *Making a Break*. *Business Life*. September 2017. p.64

Kester, G.H., 2004. *Conversation pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* 2nd ed., Berkley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press.

Kester, G.H., 2011. *The One and The Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, Durham; London: Duke University Press.

Kester, G., 2015. On the Relationship between Theory and Practice in Socially Engaged Art. *Blade of Grass*, July 29. [online] Available at: <http://www.abladeofgrass.org/fertile-ground/on-the-relationship-between-theory-and-practice-in-socially-engaged-art/>

Koskinen, I. Zimmerman, J., Binder, T., Redstöm, J., Wensveen, S., 2011. *Design Research Through practice: From the Lab, Field, and Showroom*. Morgan Kaufmann. Elsevier

Litfin, K.T., 2014. *Ecovillages: Lessons for Sustainable Community* 2nd ed., Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lloyd, S. 2007. *Life: What a Concept!* In: J. Brockman ed. 2016. *Life: The Leading Edge Of Evolutionary Biology*. Edge Special Event. Eastover Farm. 27 August 2007. Ch.8

Macnamara, L., 2012. *People and Permaculture: Carin and Designing for Ourselves, Each Other and the Planet*. 3rd ed., Hampshire, England: Permanent Publications.

Macy, J. & Brown, M. 2014. *Coming Back to Life*. New Society Publishing.

Mang, P., *Regenerative Design and the Evolution of the Sustainable Design Field*. Design Intelligence, Vol.7, No.7, July 2001.

Manzini, E., 2007. *Design Research for Sustainable Social innovation*. In R. Michel, ed. *Design Research Now*. Boston; Basel; Berlin: Birkhauser, pp. 233–250. Available at: <http://campus.burg-halle.de/id-neuwerk/24-short-films-about-design/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/05/design-research-now.pdf>

Maturana, H. & Verden- Zöller, G., 2008. *The Origins of Humanness in the Biology of Love*, Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic.

McAra-McWilliam, I., 2016. Glasgow School of Art website (online) available at: <http://gsadesigninnovation.com/research/research-themes/designing-preferable-futures/>

Meadows, D., 2008. *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, White River Junction, USA: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Mollison, B.C., 1988. *Permaculture: a designer's manual* 9th ed., Tasmania: Tagari Publications.

Mulgan, G. & Ali, R. & Sanders, B & Tucker, S., 2006. *Social Innovation: What it is and How it Can Be Accelerated*. The Young Foundation. London: The Basingstoke Press.

Neiger, J. & Hemenway, T., 2016. *The Permaculture Promise: What Permaculture Is and How It Can Help Us Reverse Climate Change, Build a More Resilient Future on Earth, and Revitalize Our Communities*. North Adams: Storey Publishing.

Nimkulrat, N., 2007. *The Role of Documentation in Practice-Led Research*. *Journal of Research Practice*, 3(1), Article M6. available at: <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/58/83>

Paradise, L., 2017. [www.oriannaparadise.com](http://www.oriannaparadise.com). Website.

Ranogajec, P., 2015. *A Review of Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Rabby* MIT Press 2013. Designers Review of Books. available at: [designersreviewofbooks.com](http://designersreviewofbooks.com)

Ravelli, L., Paltridge, B., Starfield, S., Tuckwell, K., 2013. *Extending the Notion of "Text": the Visual and Performing Arts Doctoral Thesis*. Sage Publications.

Rittel, H., 1972. *On the Planning Crisis: Systems Analysis of the 'First and Second Generations'*, *Bedriftskonomen*, vol. 8.

Rocco, R. & Biggs, M. & Büchler, D. 2009. *Design, Practice, and Research: Interconnections and the Criterion- Based Approach*. 8th European Academy of Design Conference, April 2009, The Rob Gordon University, Aberdeen Scotland.

Roland, E. Interview by Scott Mann. "Eight Forms of Capital and Regenerative Enterprise with Ethan Roland". The Permaculture Podcast, October 2014. [podcast] Available at: <http://www.thepermaculturepodcast.com/2014/8forms/>.

Scharmer, C.O., 2009. *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*, San Francisco, USA: Berret-Koehler Publishers.

Scrivener, S. (2002). *The Art Object Does Not Embody a Form of Knowledge*. *Working Papers in Art and Design* 2. available at: [http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes\\_research/](http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/)

Starhawk. 2011. *The Empowerment Manual: A Guide for Collaborative Groups*, Canada: New Society Publishers.

Stenger, I., 2005. *Ecology of Practice as a Tool for Thinking*. Cultural Studies Review. Vol.11, No.1. March 2005.

Stroh, D.P., 2015. *Systems Thinking for Social Change*, White River Junction, USA: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Szoke, D. 2015. *Researchify: Artists' Research as Disruption*. 21<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Electronic Art. available at:  
[https://www.academia.edu/18164216/Researchify\\_Artists\\_Research\\_as\\_Disruption](https://www.academia.edu/18164216/Researchify_Artists_Research_as_Disruption)

Thompson, N., 2012. *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* 1st ed., New York; Cambridge: creative Time Books, and The MIT Press.

Uhlirova, M., 2005. *Sceptical Fascination: An Interview with Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby*. available at:  
[https://www.academia.edu/7358430/Interview\\_with\\_designers\\_Anthony\\_Dunne\\_and\\_Fiona\\_Raby](https://www.academia.edu/7358430/Interview_with_designers_Anthony_Dunne_and_Fiona_Raby)

Viveiros de Castro, E., 2014. *Who is Afraid of the Ontological Wolf? Some Comments on an Ongoing Anthropological Debate*. CUSAS Annual Marilyn Strathern Lecture, 30 May 2014. available at: [https://sisu.ut.ee/sites/default/files/biosemio/files/cusas\\_strathern\\_lecture\\_2014.pdf](https://sisu.ut.ee/sites/default/files/biosemio/files/cusas_strathern_lecture_2014.pdf)

Wahl, D.C., 2006. *Design for Human and Planetary Health: A Transdisciplinary Approach to Sustainability*

WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment, Vol 99, WIT Press, ISSN 1743–3541.

Wahl, D.C., 2016. *Designing Regenerative Cultures*. Axminster, England: Triarchy Press.

Wilber, K., 2001. *Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality*. Boston: Shambala Publications.

Wittmayer, J., Hoelscher, K., Wunder, S., Veenhooff, 2018. *Transformation Research: Exploring Methods for an Emerging Research Field*. Dutch Research Institute for Transitions (DRIFT), Dessau-Rosslau: Umweltbundesamt.

Young, J., 2017. *8 Shields: Greening the Desert: Hope amid Hopelessness*. Webinar. July, 2017 (unpublished).

## Appendix

### Section A

In the Literature Review Chapter under the section, Contextual Development of Social (Permaculture) Systems Thinking Design, I wrote about different methods used within the social permaculture paradigm. These examples are found both in the literature and used in eco/intentional educational platforms (Brock, 2017: 172-175, Litfin, 2015: 120, Macnamara, 2012, Macy: 2014, Scharmer: 2016, Wilber: 2001). All websites originally accessed on 9 December 2017.

Examples of socially regenerative practices being used and promoted within the platform of social permaculture are:

Non-Violent Communication (NVC) designed by Marshall Rosenberg:  
<http://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/index.htm>,

Compassionate Communication:  
<http://www.compassionatecommunication.co.uk>

Whole Person Learning designed by Bryce Taylor:  
<http://www.oasishumanrelations.org.uk/innovations/whole-person-learning/>

Theory U developed by Otto Scharmer and colleagues:  
<https://www.presencing.org/#/>

Sociocracy (a decentralised form of governance based on complexity theory):  
<http://www.sociocracy.info>

Joanna Macy's collection of methods called "The Work that Reconnects":  
<https://workthatreconnects.org>

8 Shields (a nature based techniques founded by Jon Young):  
<http://8shields.org>

Nurtured Networks (methods involving facilitation skills for horizontal group work):  
<https://joiningvisionandaction.com/consensual-hierarchies-nurtured-networks-understanding-watersheds-mushrooms-can-improve-organization/>

Ken Wilber's Integral Theory:

<https://integrallife.com/glossary/integral-theory/>

## Section B

As I referred to in the literature review chapter, in the section, Socially Regenerative Practices in Institutions, I am including a list demonstrating an emerging trend in higher education to develop programmes focussed on (socially) regenerative design. This list was compiled in part using Daniel Christian Wahl's book *Designing Regenerative Cultures*, as his exploration into this trend is more developed than the limiting factors of my researched allowed (Wahl, 2016: 127,128). Please note all links originally accessed on 9 December 2017.

Numerous residential eco/intentional communities throughout the world are focused on enacting socially regenerative practices, and disseminating the skills to wider groups. Included in this list are The Findhorn Foundation and Ecovillage in Scotland, <https://www.findhorn.org>, the Transition Towns movement started in Totnes England, <https://transitionnetwork.org>, Damanhur in Italy, <https://welcome.damanhur.org/0/en/study-with-us/?ref=dhtopmenu>, Auroville in India, <https://www.auroville.org/categories/24>, and Earthaven in the USA, <http://www.earthaven.org/classes-and-events/>.

These groups and many more are connected by the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), which also offers socially regenerative courses: <https://gen-europe.org/home/index.htm>

Carnegie Mellon University's transition design doctorate programme: <https://design.cmu.edu/content/phd>

Prescott College's Regenerative Ecological Design degree: <http://www.prescott.edu/lifelong-learning/courses/certificate-in-regenerative-ecological-design.php>

Oberlin College's Environmental Studies programme: <https://www.oberlin.edu/environmental-studies>

Philadelphia University' Sustainable Design degree: <http://www.philau.edu/green/curriculumoptions.html>

Cornell University's programme in Sustainable and Regenerative Design:

<http://dea.human.cornell.edu/areas-of-focus>

<https://gradschool.cornell.edu/academics/fields-of-study/field/conservation-and-sustainable-development-minor>

Two examples of universities that have been founded in part upon regenerative principles are Schumacher College, and Gaia University, which have an institution wide ethos that promotes many facets of whole systems thinking and regenerative design.

Schumacher College's postgraduate programme, "Ecological Design Thinking":

<https://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/courses/postgraduate-courses/ecological-design-thinking>

Gaia University's programme, "Integrative Eco-Social Design":

<http://main.gaiauniversity.org/integrative-ecosocial-design>

There are numerous other institutions offering courses and degrees through non-mainstream infrastructures (online and in person) that embody and teach socially regenerative design. I have compiled this list through my own experiences in the research process, which include taking courses through some of these institutions as a part of my research.

Gaia Education has many courses including, Design for Sustainability, and is connected with the Findhorn Foundation, Scotland:

<https://gaiaeducation.org>

Massachusetts Institute of Technology originated, Presencing Institute with it's Theory U and ULAB courses offered online:

<https://www.presencing.org/#/>

Also from MIT, social systems thinking designer, Peter Senge, offers courses through SOL the Society for Organizational Learning:

<https://www.solonline.org>

Quantum physicist Arthur Zajonc started the Mind Life institute to effect positive social change driven by whole systems awareness:

<https://www.mindandlife.org>



University of Underground, with its punk ethics and the likes of Noam Chomsky on the board, has a mission to give change agents the regenerative tools to truly democratise institutional systems:

<http://universityoftheunderground.org>

Design and science based initiatives like 'Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability' (DESI) from Enzo Manzini, and physicist, and systems theorist Fritjof Capra's 'Center for Eco-Literacy' (CEL) use social change innovation initiatives to drive sustainable ecological advancements:

<http://www.desisnetwork.org>

<https://www.ecoliteracy.org>

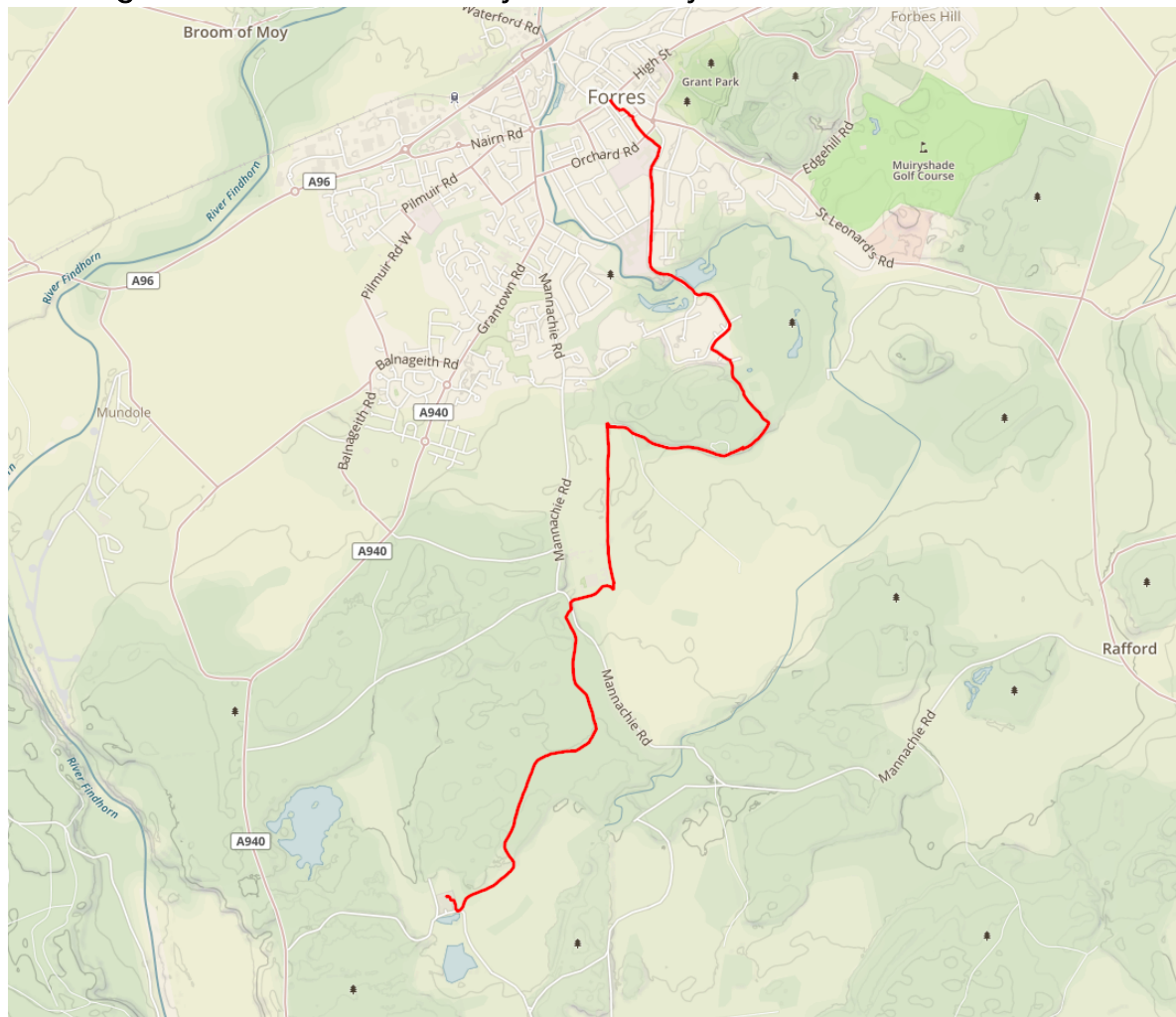
### Section C

The following maps, vignettes and informational sheets are drawn from my interviews conducted with a "go-along" walking method. They are presented as evidence of my living as form practice and my methods.

I conducted two pilot interviews with the participants selected from a semi-general population (non-native locals). Subsequently, based on my findings of social groups in the region, I narrowed the participants to individuals living in or connected to local eco/intentional communities. Each walk has a GPS generated map of the path taken, a vignette narrative of the walk, and a coded information sheet used to prompt future participants affiliated the GSA's Highlands Campus, where I asked for feedback through personal narrative related to the codes as they interpreted them.

*Please note: All participants have been anonymised with details and names changed for ethical considerations.*

**Go Along Walk Number One 16 May 201 "Identity as Outsider and Transience"**



**Image C.1 Map of Go- Along Interview with James from Altyre to Forres High Street**

The mid-May day had been typically maniac in the weather department. At the end of the work day we lucked out and the torrential Scottish rains subsided and the sky opened to reveal a steady blue. The two-hour wooded walk with James, was an excellent way to make the commute from the Glasgow School of Art, Creative Campus back into the village of Forres, Scotland.

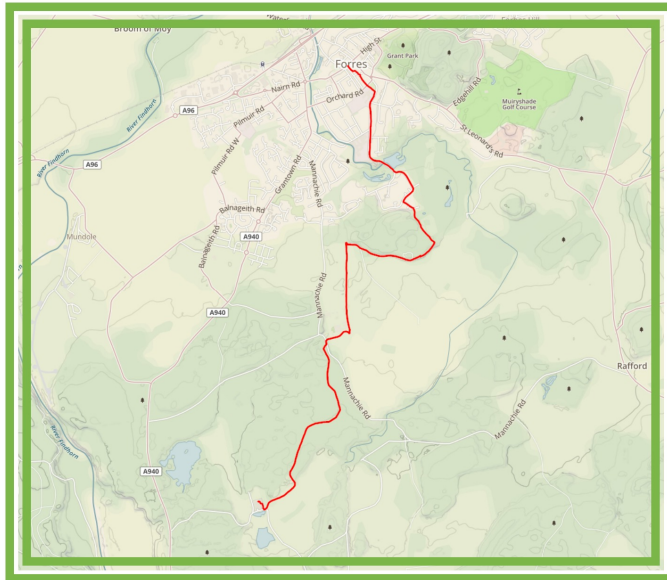
This initial "go-along" interview walk took place in the orientation and immersion phase of my research process. I chose to engage James because he was relatively new to the area (a local for 3 years) and not a UK citizen. These two factors I hoped would give a fresh perspective on the surrounding area and its dynamics. We walked and talked through

varied terrain, overgrown timber production paths, the well-travelled Dava Way, and a bland suburban housing development, making our way eventually to the High Street. The scenery inevitably became a topic of conversation, as James told his personal story of how he came to live and work in the area. He told me about how much he felt he valued the

natural environment of the area, perhaps more so than native folk do, and certainly in great contrast to the sleek and artificial urban setting where he grew up. The suburban sprawling development part of the walk, with its mind-numbing sameness and seemingly unending networks of cul-de-sacs, caused us both to feel disappointed at the artlessness of the communal design plan, hoping there was not more of the same coming in the town's future.

When I asked him how integrated into the community he felt, he described several factors that both challenged his sense of belonging and conversely eased things socially. James humorously spoke of his cultural and racial upbringing and identity, in relation to the contrasting homogenous Scottish makeup. Despite his potentially standing out, he noted that instead his positionality was valued. He also mentioned that the long established Royal Airforce and Army bases had potentially conditioned the local population to a large number of transient people. Though based in Forres for three years, he noted that initially he had spent most of his time travelling, so socially he relied on pre-existing mutual friends as connections to the region. He spoke of how his work figures prominently in his social network. He mentioned he has a keen interest to further develop the "social contracts" between colleagues to establish better guidelines for interaction. Non-specific issues that related to his social, familial, and work dynamics apparently informed his understanding of this perceived need for social agreements.

## "Go-Along" Walk with James : "Identity as an Outsider and Transience"



The adjacent map and below themes are derived from a walking interview conducted in Forres, Scotland. The researcher and local resident, James, walked and engaged in free flowing conversation about what it is like to live in the region as a non-native.

**You are invited to share a story (real or created) using the themes highlighted in the circles.**

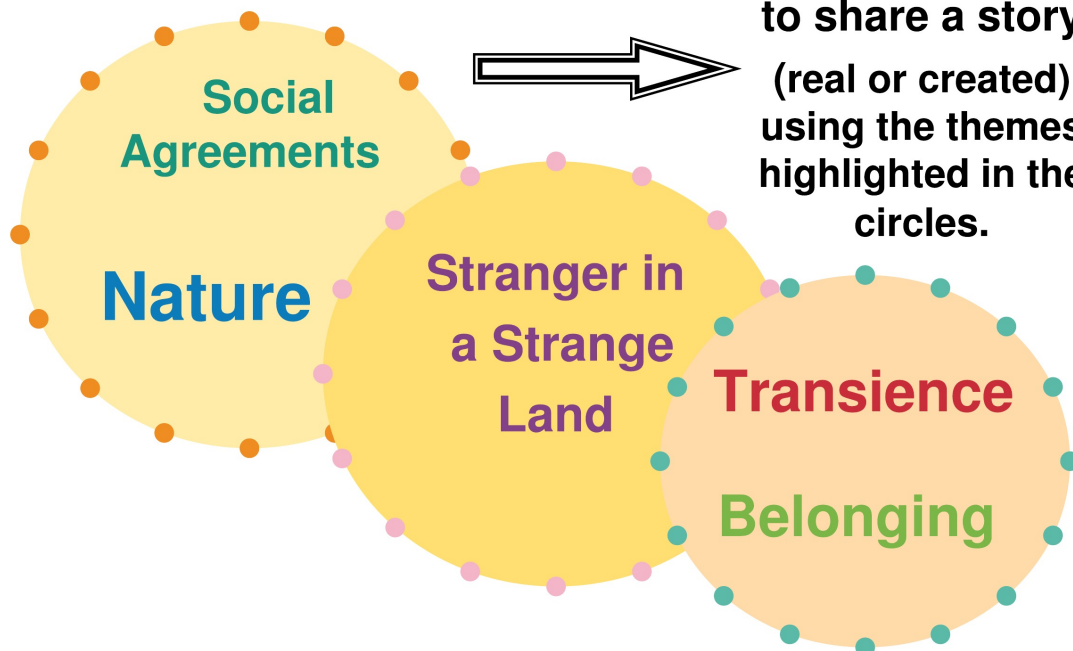


Image C.2 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Identity as an Outsider and Transience".

## Go Along Walk Number Two 23 May 2017

## "Neutrality as a Communal Stance"



Image C.3 Map of Go-Along Interview with Allison in Grant Park, Forres

When I asked Allison to choose our walking route, I knew as a business owner, and mother of two teenage girls, it would be important to suggest it have a multifunctional role in her busy schedule. Allison's energetic beagle Max, was extremely eager to have his walk in the park under any guise. Originally from England, Allison and her husband still run their business out of London, occasionally making the flight south from Inverness. They decided five years ago to make a shift to a more rural setting and have fully embraced the new lifestyle.

We traversed the hilly Grant Park, in Forres for an hour and half, spending most of the 4.68 kilometres trying to corral Max and various other free range hounds. I asked Allison how it felt to be an outsider to the area. She spoke about how having her daughters in public school gave the family instant community connections. They are also very active in various sport clubs and she said that overall, they have definitely felt very welcomed. She did judiciously note however that she was aware that there were some more (older) conservative folks in the area that were not so open to "incomers." Still she mentioned that the influence of the Royal Airforce based led many outsiders to decide to permanently relocate to region, making locals accustomed to newcomers.

Our conversation shifted to talking about polarised organisations in the town that are working on building up the cultural events in the area. Allison comes across as very determined, and task oriented, just the sort that would be a boon to a community group,

but she expressed her concerted effort to remain neutral and support all sides equally. It seems there is one group tactically using grant funding schemes to support various initiatives, which causes friction with another faction that is solely driven by volunteer efforts. She described to me the further social division of the groups, between the alternative lifestyle (*hippie*) grant funded group, and the more conservative volunteer group. Allison viewed the tensions as regrettable because of the common goal of bettering the community.

I then asked Allison about her awareness of the Findhorn Foundation, a half century old spiritually minded ecovillage in Forres, and how she felt it was situated in the community. She again stated that it was unfortunate that the community groups were not invested enough in making better connections. She shared (factually incorrect) historical information about the Findhorn Foundation that only served to reinforce her perception that the ecovillage was disconnected from the broader community.

Meandering onward we encountered two different dog walkers, that Allison was friendly with and continued our walk and talk on en masse. They all agreed that having a dog to walk was a great way to meet your neighbours. Jean, one of the dog owners that joined our walk, was an older native to the region. When I asked about communal projects, she spoke enthusiastically about an Iron Age archaeological find nearby, that she hoped would boost tourism. Our third companion, Gwen, is originally from Dundee/ Edinburgh and has lived in Forres with her family for ten years. I asked Gwen if she felt like an outsider being from somewhere else in Scotland. She said it had been a shift, but a positive one, even though her husband's work meant commuting to London or Edinburgh. I noted the pattern forming that the quality of life in the area and not the economic opportunities were a big factor in outsiders settling here. Because of their economic ties outside of Scotland, both Gwen and Allison, expressed some trepidation when I asked their concerns about a possible second referendum to have Scotland leave the UK post Brexit. Both agreed that socially people in the town kept politics aside, but they both were conflicted about how they could financially support their families in such a reality.

## "Go- Along" Walk with Allison: "Neutrality as a Communal Stance"

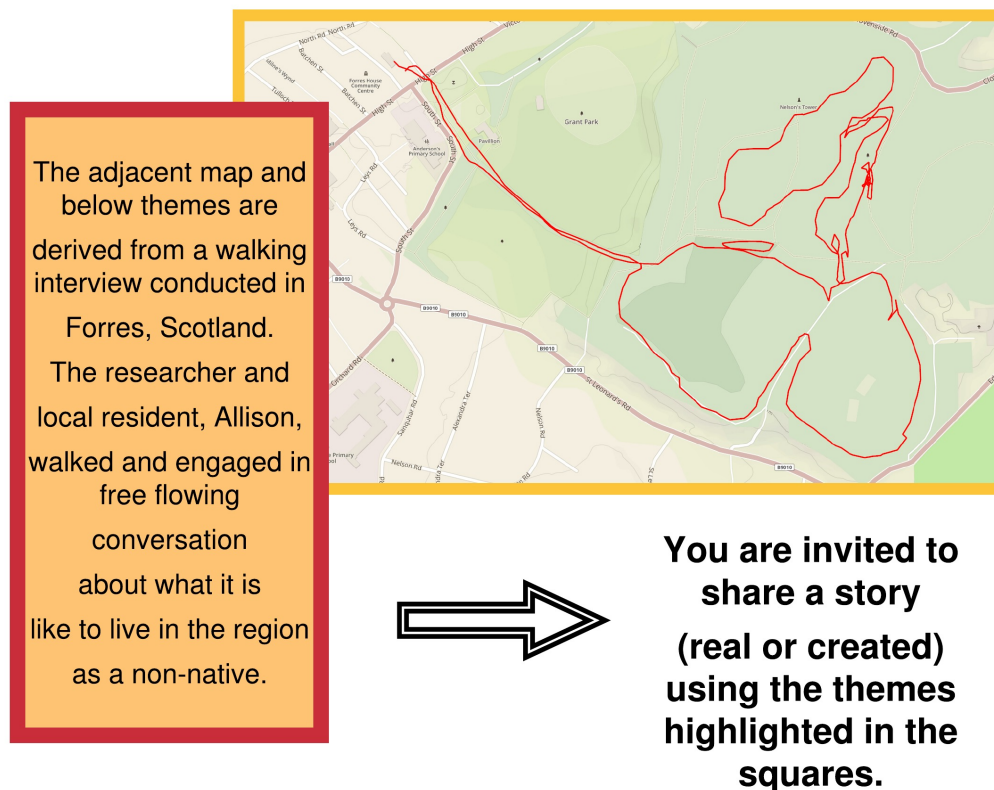


Image C.4 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Neutrality as a Communal Stance"



### Go Along Walk Number Three 25 May 2017

#### "Discipline and Commitment"

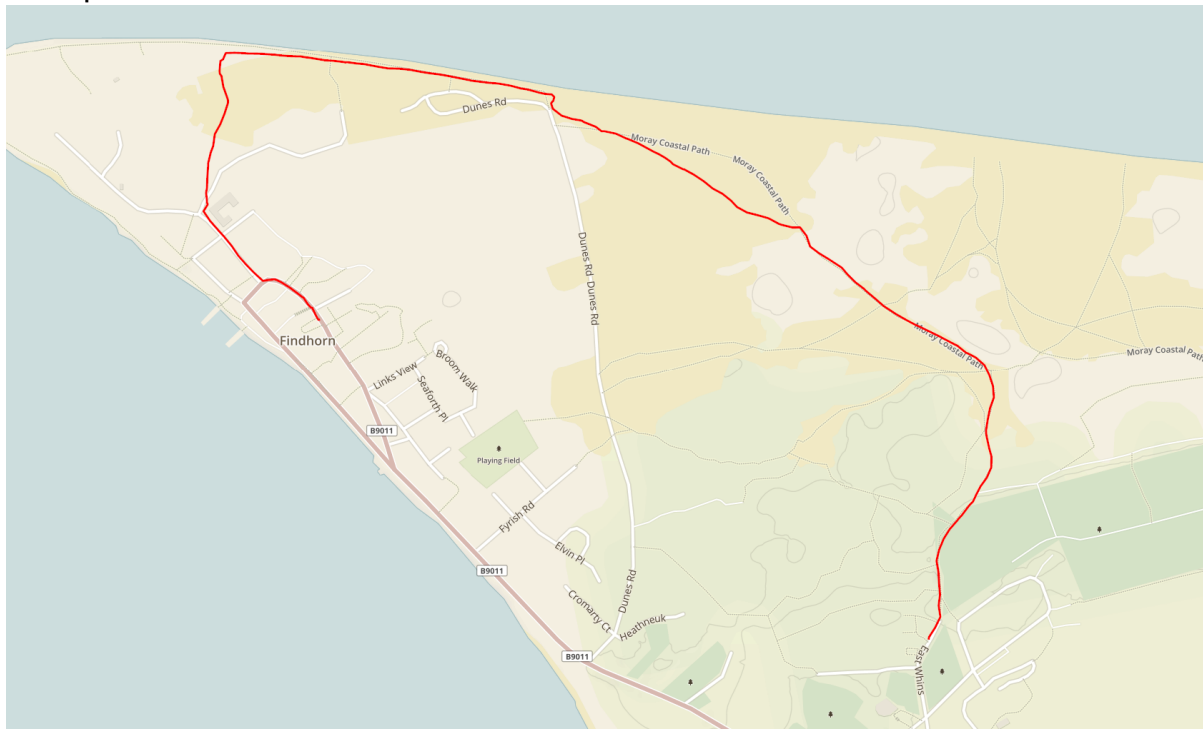


Image C.5 Map of Go-Along Interview with Sandra on Findhorn Beach

After lunchtime, I met up with Sandra, a Dutch citizen, by the local bakery on a gorgeous day. The weather gave us both big hopes for what the summer might hold, but we knew not to tempt the grey back our way by being overly certain of the sun. I had met Sandra the previous autumn on a walking tour of Forres, during an arts festival. She has stayed in the Forres area for around two years, volunteering, working, and living in various forms in social enterprises connected to the Findhorn Foundation. The Findhorn Foundation started as a spiritually minded enclave and has over fifty plus years bloomed into a vast network of organisations with environmental and social causes.

Sandra has a measured disposition, still it was clear she was upset about her current living partnership. The theme of conflict management and keeping social agreements was an underlying thread throughout everything she shared on our walk, which I sensed was coloured by her current experiences.

As we headed towards the Findhorn beach, I asked Sandra about her experiences living in eco/intentional communities and why she has chosen to live a more alternative lifestyle. Remarking about her other experiences "living in community" (her term), Sandra told me whether it was in Spain or Scotland or elsewhere, the thing she was most aware of was that everyone seemed to have a different idea of what community is.



We decided to sit as it was hot and, I asked how she defined community. Sandra then quoted the Bible saying, "for where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I

among them". She explained that she has a spiritual understanding of her desire to live in community. She spoke about her experiences staying with a group of Benedictine monks, and how she appreciated their devotion and commitment to a regular predictable, communal practice. Sandra passionately expressed her belief that commitment to communal living required this structure, rather than everyone being led by individual whim. I asked if she had had experiences that had not met this expectation. She was clear that indeed she had been very dissatisfied with living in unstable communal settings that did not allow for privacy, quiet reflection, and regular communal gathering. She also talked about the challenges of such communities that survive financially by offering up the facilities for educational courses. This meant always having new people passing through, which she found inharmonious.

After resuming our walk through to the maze-like dunes, we ended up making our journey have multiple purposes, one intended and the other fortuitous. We stopped in at a ceramics studio, where Sandra had left an item the previous day. Sandra collected her things, while we both engaged the ceramist in conversation. It was eventually decided that Sandra and I would join a weekly ceramics course, in the name of forging more communal commitment, and maybe even make a bowl to boot.

"Go- Along" Walk with Sandra:  
"Discipline and Commitment"

The adjacent map and below themes are derived from a walking interview conducted in Findhorn, Scotland. The researcher and local resident, Sandra, walked and engaged in free flowing conversation about what it is like to live in an eco/intentional community.



You are invited to share a story (real or created) using the themes highlighted in the shapes.

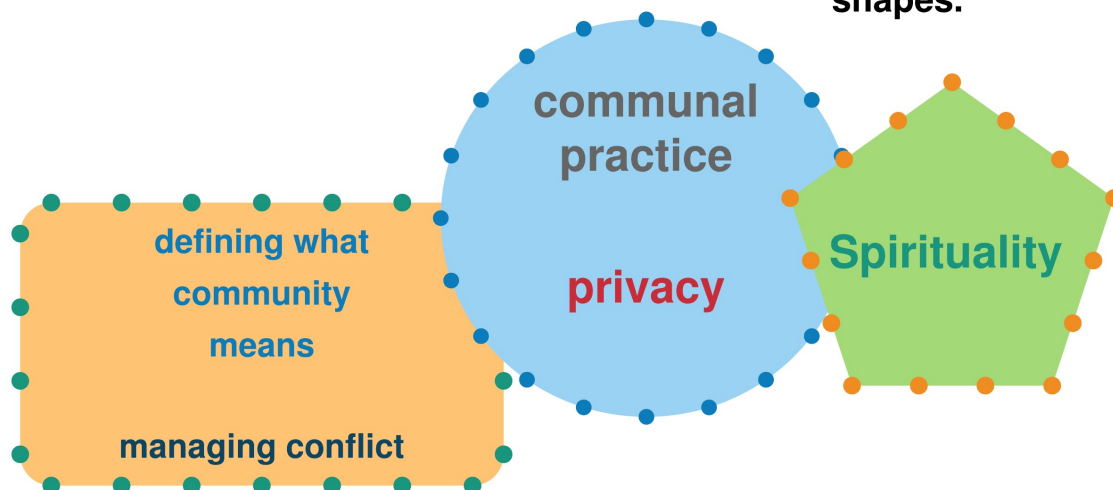


Image C.6 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Discipline and Commitment"

Go Along Walk Number Four 25 May 2017  
 “Realising Dreams of Living in Community”

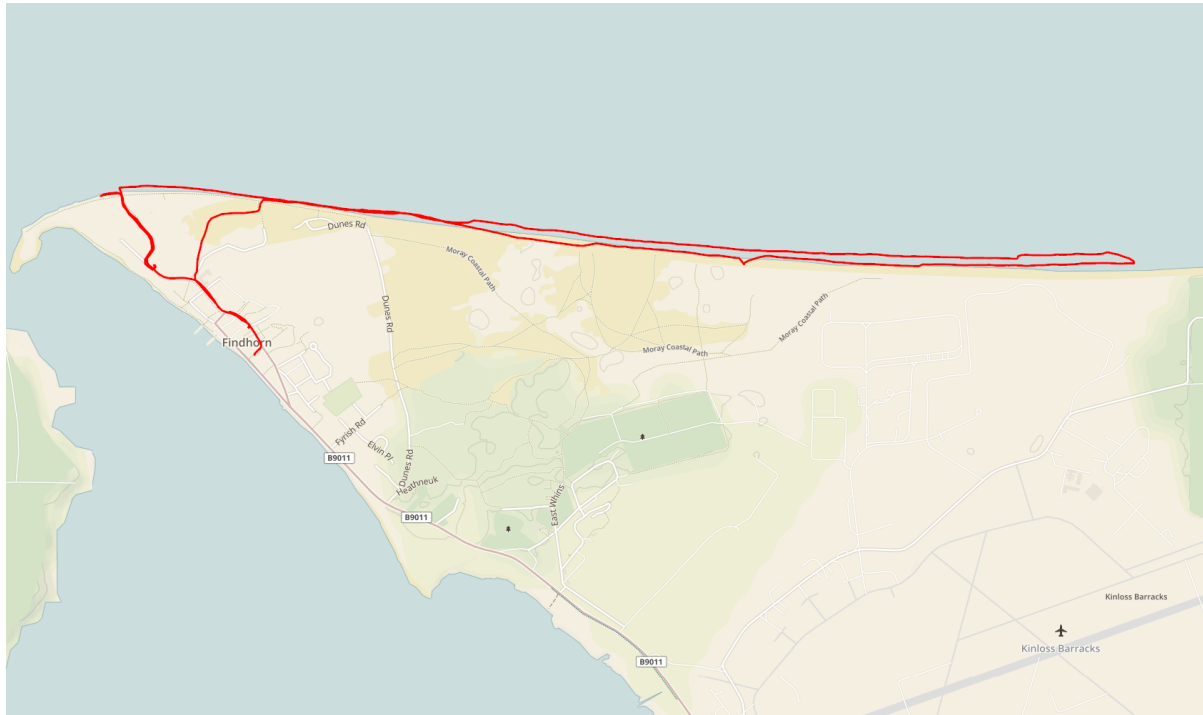


Image C.7 Map of Go-Along Interview with Louisa on Findhorn Beach

Only a few months into finally realising her long-held desire to live in an intentional ecovillage, Louisa, is a very enthusiastic resident at The Park, the ecovillage, which is a part of the greater Findhorn Foundation Network. Louisa and I set out on an amicable and very long evening walk on the beach in Findhorn village.

Originally from North America, Louisa has lived for twenty years in Europe. I met Louisa while we both were enrolled in a Gaia Education course at the Findhorn Foundation in 2016. I asked about her experiences living in communal settings. She told me about her stints in ashrams and communes around the world, but her life partner was not as committed as she was to the more permanent lifestyle choice of moving to an ecovillage. It was only recently that Louisa, decided her desire to live in a communal setting in an ecovillage trumped her commitment to her partnership. Scotland and Findhorn “ticked all the right boxes”, so she made the liberating move solo.

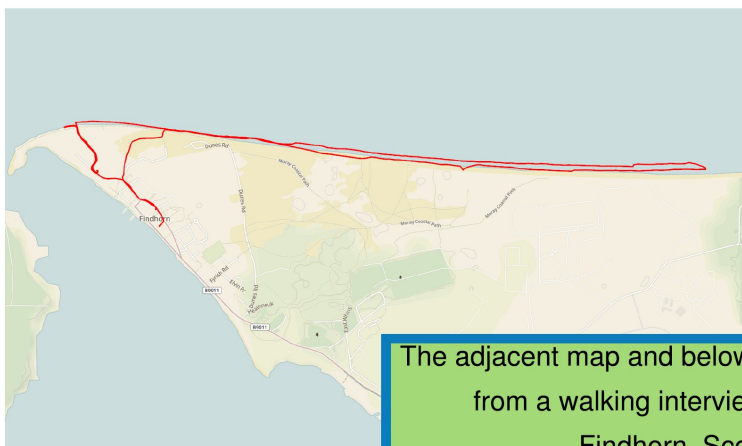
I asked Louisa whether she felt connected to the community, she replied good naturedly, “I am not sure if people here are friendly but not welcoming, or welcoming but not friendly”. When I enquired why she felt that way, she posited that perhaps people around the area have a certain fatigue for new faces. She elaborated that because of the platform of volunteers and numerous courses, and the world famous draw of the historic ecovillage, that there are so many people coming and going that perhaps long-time residents are reluctant to connect with everyone.

Because it was low tide and the beach was easily walkable, we kept on, enjoying the longer lasting sun. I asked Louisa how she framed herself as a newcomer. She told me about having made the faux pas of explaining something about the community to someone that has lived there a long time. She said it seems like there is a window of time one must have lived in the community to gain credibility as a member.

I asked Louisa to tell me about her current living situation and how she hopes to integrate and make the most of her new lifestyle. Currently, she is a volunteer and living in changeable shared accommodations. She told me she is eager for the privacy and agency her next step into a paid position will allow her to rent a small studio.

Louisa comes across as a practical dreamer, and I sense that the Findhorn Foundation, with its lofty spirit located directly next to an active army base, attracts this sort of person. We decided we might as well wait out for the sun to set, and rest our tired legs while sitting in the sand. As we watched the day disappear, I questioned Louisa about her goals with regards to communal living. She told me that she is ready to assist those that are ready themselves. In clarification she said, she does not see the value in "engaging those with lower vibrations". I have noted Louisa seems to be working on making her own dreams come true in a no-nonsense fashion.

### Go-Along Walk with Louisa : "Realising Dreams of Living in Community"



The adjacent map and below themes are derived from a walking interview conducted in Findhorn, Scotland.

The researcher and local resident, Louisa, walked and engaged in free flowing conversation about what it is like to live in an eco/intentional community.

**You are invited to share a story (real or created) using the themes highlighted in the shapes.**

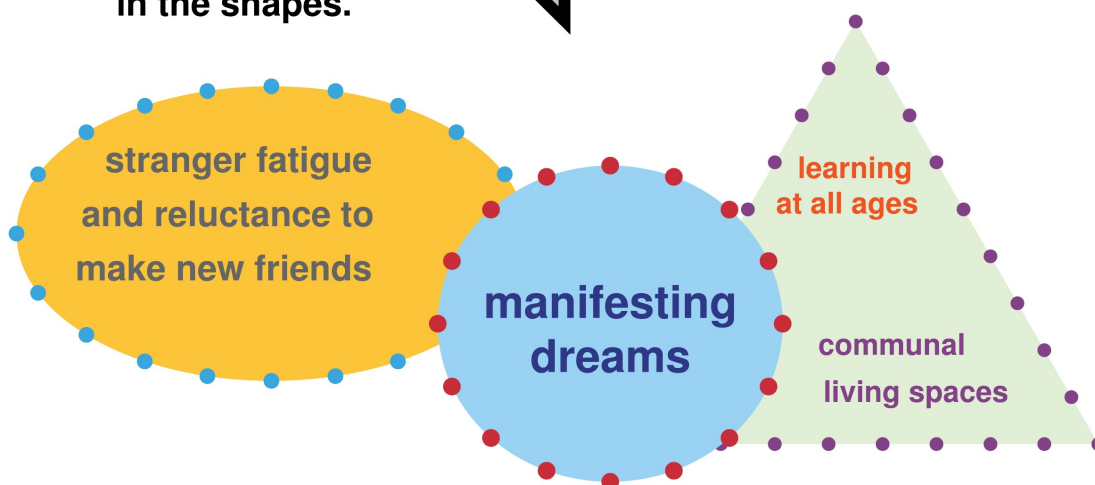
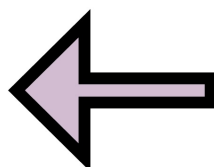


Image C.8 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Realising Dreams of Living in Community"

Go Along Walk Number Five 26 May 2017  
 “Family Tradition of Communal Living”

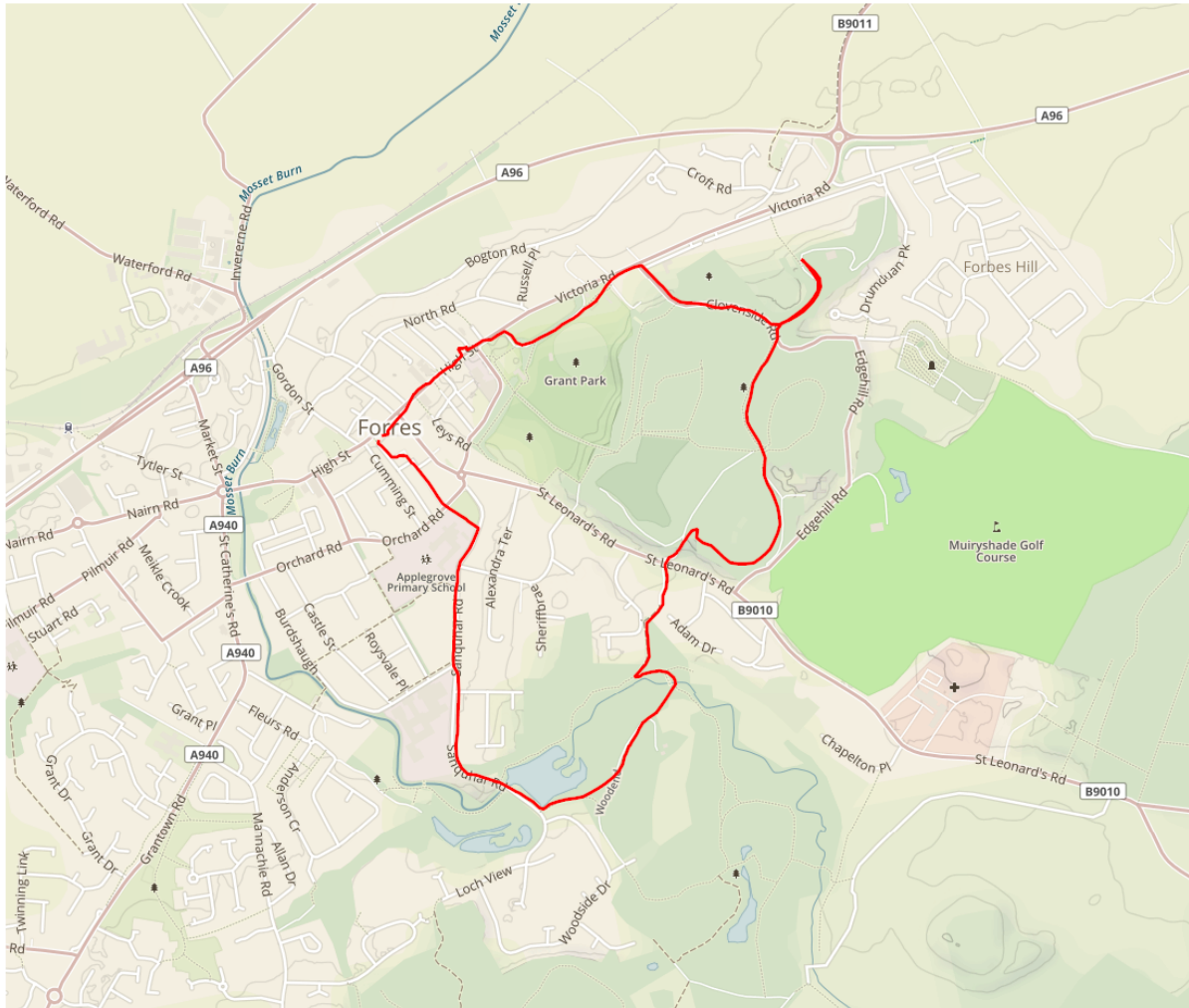


Image C.9 Map of Go-Along Interview with Greta in Grant Park, Forres

Greta is a wisp of a woman who took my suggestion to stack the functionality of our walk to heart. I met the forty-year-old Australian, on the High Street in Forres. I was pleased to learn our first stop in the walk she had planned was to return a book at the Library. It turned out Greta was an excellent tour guide for a newcomer like myself. The library smelled dank and vaguely of children that smelled of apple juice, so I was also pleased we did not linger.

As we crossed over into the large Grant Park, I asked Greta how she came to live in Forres. She told me how she was inspired by a book she had read, some twenty years prior, written by one of the founding members of the Findhorn Foundation. Over the last five years she had been off and on again as a volunteer in different aspects of the Findhorn Foundation. I asked if it had met her long-held expectations, and she said she had hoped that she would have been better able to financially support herself while contributing to the community. She told me initially she had to pay for introductory courses before she could

be considered for a contracted paid position. We coiled our way around the park and decided to head to see the Waldorf school campus, when I enquired if she had had other experiences living in communal environments, and how they compared. Greta recounted having grown up in numerous countries and spoke of how both her mother and grandmother were devotees of a religious sect that had inspired them to bring the family to try living in several communal environments. Greta told me that some of these experiences had been very short lived, only two months, but it seemed to match her adult reality because she has continued to seek out such environments.

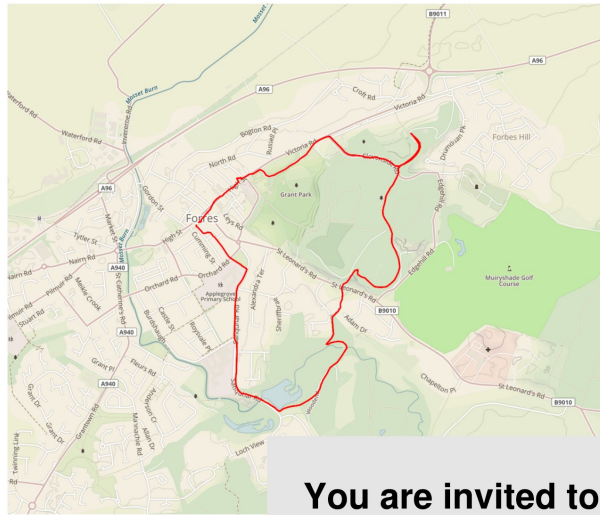
Our next stop on the guided tour was to a hidden brook Greta called, "Swan Lake". She told me that many of the volunteers took their free time to have some peaceful private moments there. I asked her if she felt there were challenges while in communal living spaces. She told me that a need for privacy is why, after four months of living in tight quarters, she was currently taking a break and renting out a small room in the centre of Forres. I asked her to elaborate on why she needed privacy. Greta explained that because it is a spiritual centre everyone that lives there or comes there is going through a spiritual awakening process and it can be very intense to try and constantly support one another.

As we rounded back into town, Greta told me she had noticed another added functional benefit to our interview walk, it was a good way for adults to get to know each other in a friendly setting.



Go-Along Walk with Greta:  
"Family Tradition of Communal Living"

The adjacent map and below themes are derived from a walking interview conducted in Forres, Scotland. The researcher and local resident, Greta, walked and engaged in free flowing conversation about what it is like to live in an eco/intentional community.



You are invited to share a story (real or created) using the themes highlighted in the shapes.

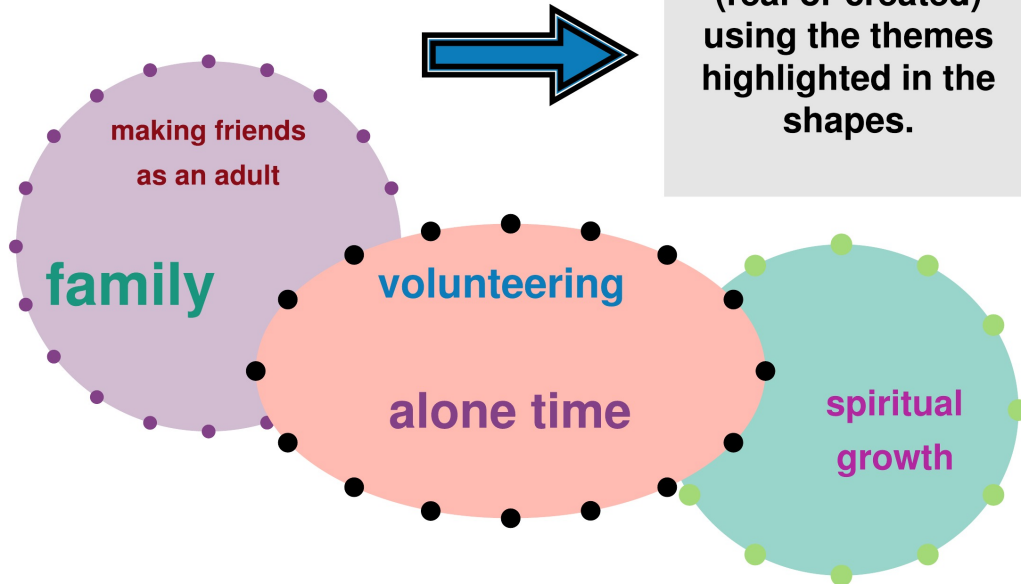


Image C.10 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "A Family Tradition of Communal Living"



Go Along Walk Number Six 30 May 2017

"Who is the Leader?"



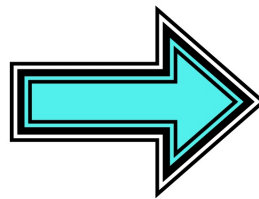
Image C.11 Map of Go-Along Interview with Polly around Findhorn Dunes

The evening rain held out just long enough for Polly and I to meet up for a jaunt about the dunes in Findhorn. Polly was nearing the end of a two month course related to alternative education. She had been drawn to the region because of her knowledge of the Findhorn Foundation, but her course was only indirectly connected to the foundation. I asked Polly to tell me how the Forres area compared to where she had spent her formative years. She told me that she had grown up in various industrial and declining towns in England, and the natural environment of the Highlands has a great attraction for her because of the contrast. We bobbled a bit in deciding which way to walk because I was more familiar with the area than Polly, whom I had asked to lead the way. Indeed, as I worked to establish a directed dialogue I notice a general unease in my companion. She seemed at odds with her choice to be on the walk. I proceeded forward and gathered some interesting insights into her philosophy of community in educational environments. Polly told me she had a great interest in learning ways to cultivate personality types within the classroom, to aid the cohesiveness of the group. However interested in her work she may have been, it seemed that Polly was keen to comply with an etiquette of reciprocal questioning. She asked me numerous questions about my personal life and I noted the pattern of seeming evasion. It seemed interesting to me to have the ideas about challenges of communication be a theme from prior interview walks, being played out in the form of another go- along interview. I also noted that sometimes it is difficult to lead in a nondeterministic manner that allows for emergent practice to unfold.

Unsurprisingly, our awkward walk petered out and we rounded back to the bakery. As we hurriedly parting looking at the foreboding dark clouds, I realised that the value in the walk was perhaps not in its content, but in the social process it enacted.

## "Go-Along Walk with Polly: "Who is the Leader?"

The adjacent map and below themes are derived from a walking interview conducted in Findhorn, Scotland. The researcher and temporary resident, Polly, walked and engaged in free flowing conversation about what it is like to study and stay in an eco/intentional community.



**You are invited to share a story (real or created) using the themes highlighted in the shapes.**

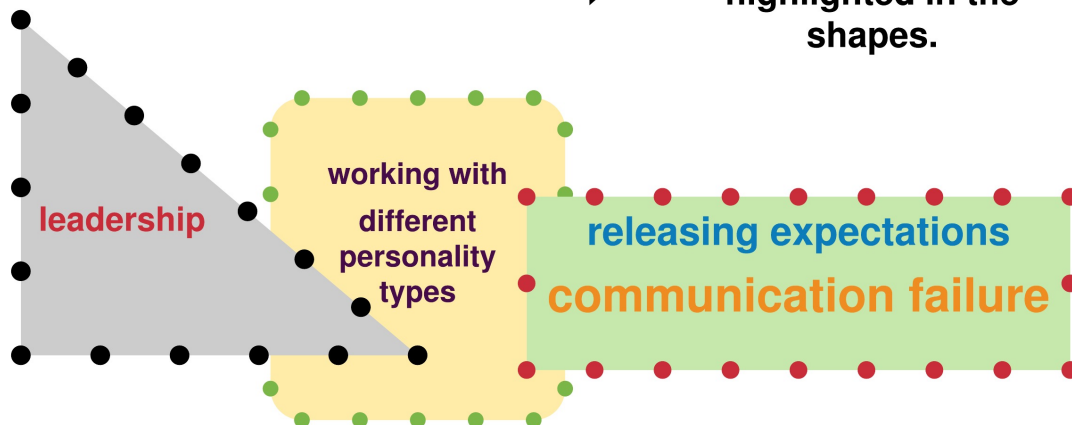


Image C.12 Image Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Who is the Leader?"

Go Along Walk Number Seven 31 May 2017  
 "Adaptable Communication Styles"

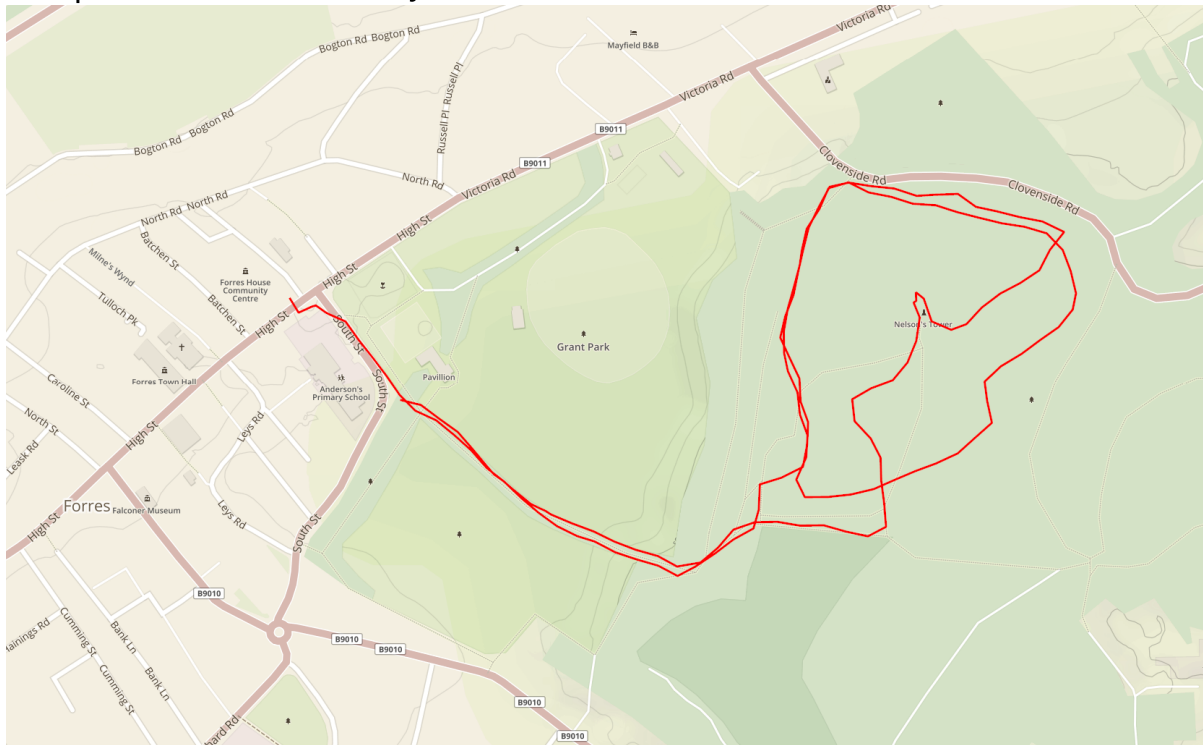


Image C.13 Map of Go-Along Interview with Alex in Grant Park, Forres

Around five in the evening I met Alex in Forres, and we both parked our bicycles in front of the library. I allowed him to direct our walk to the hills of Grant Park, which was clearly proving to be a popular recreational spot in town.

Though originally from Spain, Alex has been living in Forres as a member of a residential social enterprise for some years now. I enquired about his experiences living in a small community with such a shared social purpose. Alex spoke at length about how interpersonal exchanges can be challenging when differing communication styles are at play. He said he found some people are keen to stick to a set of strict rules to advance the communication skills but miss out on the subtle application or finesse required for real exchange. He found that this well intended communal desire tended to end with a dictatorial tone that was more counterproductive than following no set structure. His expressed philosophy would hold paramount the ability to embrace flexibility to enable understanding the "true spirit" of a conversation.

We paused reaching the top of the hill where Nelson's Tower sits overlooking a vista of Findhorn Bay in the distance. I took a moment to circle back into the theme of communal living, asking what challenges did Alex find living in such close quarters. Being a former businessman, he focused on the funding issues that impede the expansion possibilities that would provide more housing options. Additionally, he remarked that lack of privacy, personal space, and boundaries were constant issues due to tight quarters.

The path downhill had a shock absorbing springiness to it, thick with a heavy layer of previous seasons' foliage. Here I asked Alex what it was like for him to be an outsider to the area. He had fully developed theories about cultural and geographic mentalities that positioned his experience. He said that being from a naturally abundant, sunny climate, made him keenly aware of people that had struggled to make the land produce sustenance through endless strings of cold grey months. His notion was that such relation to the land is expressed itself through people's values. Such that a cold grey climate, produced a certain kind of stalwart, hardworking mentality that burdened the quality of life with a cloud of duty, rather than gratitude and ease. He found this cultural air was challenging, where he wished things would be lighter. I pressed him further to speak about his specific relationship to the community at large, situated as a representative from a communal enterprise. He had some chagrin that there were certain populations, especially the military, that he was loath to engage. However, he emphatically rebutted himself insisting that there was no division between the social enterprise and the larger community. In fact, he felt there was a strong bridge between the groups.

Go-along Walk with Alex:  
"Adaptable Communication Styles"



The adjacent map and below themes are derived from a walking interview conducted in Forres, Scotland. The researcher and local resident, Alex, walked and engaged in free flowing conversation about what it is like to live in an eco/intentional community.

**You are invited to  
share a story  
(real or created)  
using the themes  
highlighted in the  
shapes.**

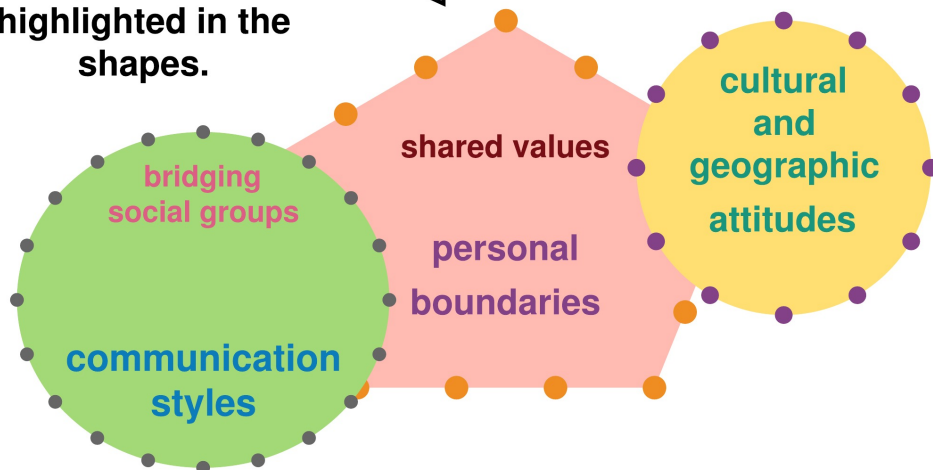
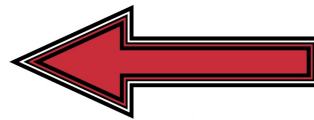


Image C.14 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Adaptable Communication Styles"

Go Along Walk Number Eight 19 June and 6 August 2017  
"Self-Enquiry as a Regenerative Practice"

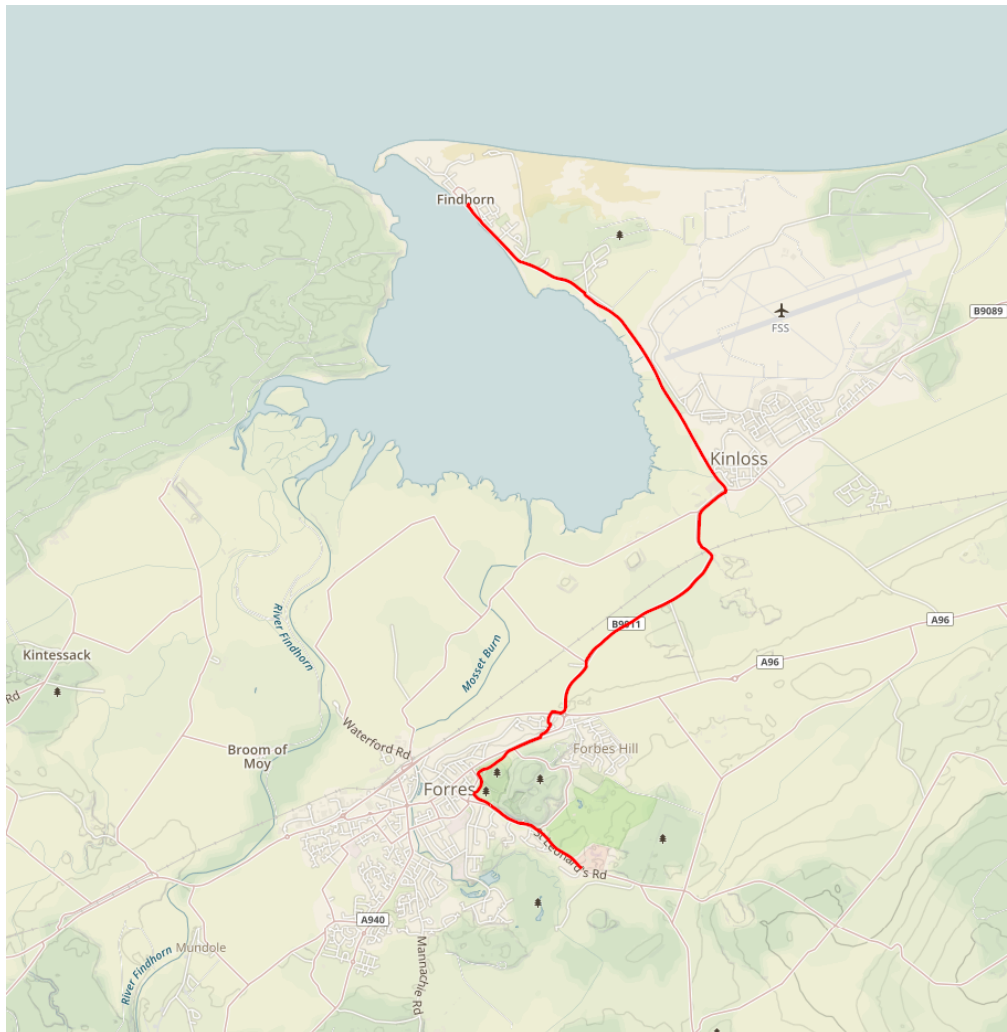


Image C.15 Map of Go-Along Interview with Tree from Newbold House to Findhorn

The above map (figure 2.8) is a depiction of an initial walk and interview that took place on a midsummer evening in Forres, Scotland. The secondary interview took place over the phone, as the interviewee was currently in Austria. The following text is a blended vignette of the two conversations.

With "devil may care" capriciousness, my companion and I set out one hour before the calendar day ticked over, championed by the inexhaustible midsummer light. As the walk unfolded, it took on a good-natured quality that betrayed the actual expedition like distance we covered. I met Tree, his chosen moniker suits his arboreal stature, during a course on regenerative design. On our go- along interview we discussed his positioning in regards to eco/intentional lifestyles. I asked about his background and how he became interested in sustainable living and regenerative design. He talked about his formative years where we had a deep nature connection reinforced by the lifestyles of family and friends.

We forged onward pausing intermittently to break out in fits of giggling laughter, while recalling humorous moments from the intensive course we were enrolled in. Recollecting ourselves, he told me he had recently finished a degree in environmental engineering, where he had worked to educate himself with a very specific goal in mind. In fact, he shared that much of his life planning and actions are targeted towards creating a manner and place of living sustainably and holistically via the creation of a new ecovillage. He also expressed his desire to deeply engage in self-discovery opportunities, by attending eco/intentional festivals, courses, and maintaining personal spiritual practices. When I questioned the motivation for his intense and wide reaching drive to obtain knowledge and experience, he spoke of his admiration for a Renaissance style, classical scholarship that probed all facets of development. In his holistic vision, mastery of physical, spiritual, and intellectual pursuits hold equal value. He spoke sincerely about nature itself as the most important teacher. Upon finally collapsing into our destination some hours and many kilometres later, we agreed to pick up our conversation in some weeks to see where his efforts had evolved.

Over a cup of tea, we chatted again over the telephone. In the few weeks, since the course in Scotland, Tree had already attended two eco/intentional festivals, all while continuing to study regenerative design in an online platform, and work as an organic gardener. Additionally, he had travelled to northern Europe to spend a week investigating the needs of a municipality, meeting with the local mayor and police. I asked if he felt he was able to translate the social practices from the eco/intentional communities into his external interactions. He talked about being conscious of the "bubble" that the eco/intentional communities inhabit, and felt frustration that there were so many people in mainstream culture that he sensed were "unreachable" because of their disconnected lifestyles driven by addiction and consumption. He expanded by talking about the richness and intensity of "conscious" exchange he had experienced at the festivals, as it stood in contrast to the severe social problems that the departments of the municipality faced. I asked if when talking to the people in the municipal departments he could share his worldview and manner of social interaction he had developed in eco/intentional experiences. He felt that only some of the people were receptive, but that he was able to maintain his inner sensibilities as he navigated their world. I asked how he hoped to achieve greater finesse between these perceived separate worlds. He confidently asserted that his continued self-development and living with the integrity of his values, were his pathway to helping the world achieve a more harmonious and sustainable future.



## Go-Along Walk with Tree: "Self-Enquiry as a Regenerative Practice"

The adjacent map and below themes are derived from a walking interview conducted in Forres, Scotland.

The researcher and visiting course participant, Tree, walked and engaged in free flowing conversation about what it is like to study and stay in an eco/intentional community.



**You are invited  
to share a story  
(real or created)  
using the  
themes  
highlighted in  
the shapes.**

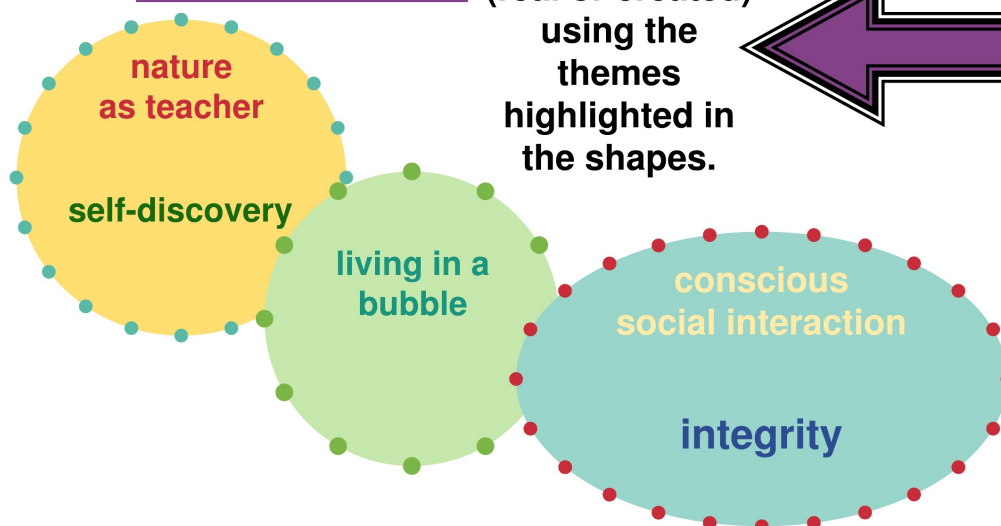
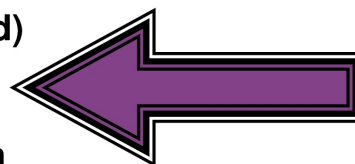


Image C.16 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool "Self-Enquiry as a Regenerative Practice"

Go Along Walk Number Nine 4 August 2017

“Becoming Aware of Patterns and Needs in Relationships”

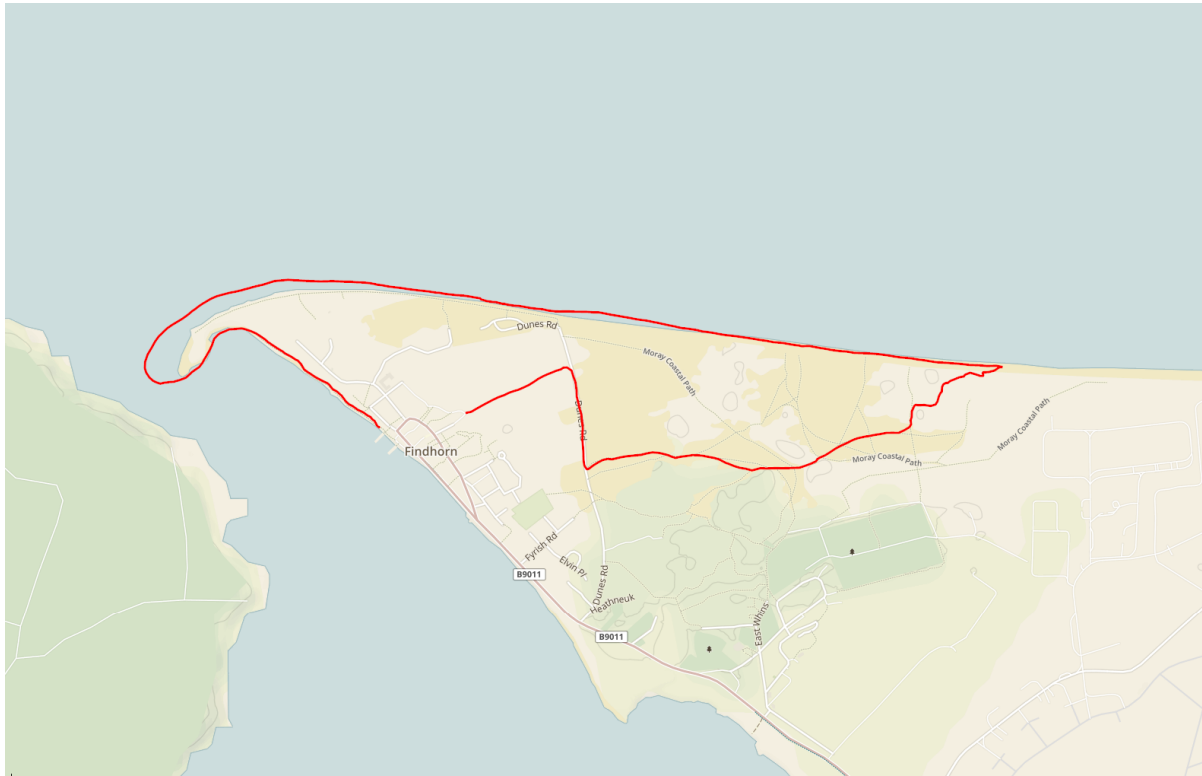


Image C.17 Map of Go-Along Interview with Kate along Findhorn Beach

It was one of those afternoons when you cannot be certain what to wear given the fickleness of the weather. Kate and I have become acquainted while both studying at the Glasgow School of Arts, Highlands Creative Campus in the charming town of Forres. Kate has had a connection to the region for some time, though she is not a native to the area. She has a familiarity with both the University, the wider community, and some links to the eco/intentional communities, including the Findhorn Foundation. We met up in front of the much loved Bakehouse, in Findhorn, and started off on what would be a six kilometre wander along the beach and dunes.

I started off checking in with Kate about her current feelings regarding her degree program and the climate of the campus in general. She expressed she had recently resettled into the flow of things after a brief hiatus, but still held a good deal of confusion about expectations and possibilities in relation to the programme. We ambled along the narrow bay side walkway, and she discussed a desire to create greater cohesion within her cohort. Kate expressed the need to develop this support system as a base for sharing questions, concerns, and general information. We agreed that this would take initiative and intentionality on the part of the involved student body, as much of the programme is self-directed. Our conversation turned to the topic of managing and developing relationship skills in a broader sense. Kate shared a revelatory moment in her personal life where she had recognised a negative pattern and had managed to frame it. She said she come into

agreement with another person that they would be aware of this pattern and attempted to understand the reasoning behind why it occurred. She expressed satisfaction that they had mutually acknowledged the issue and made a plan to behave differently in the future. We diverted our path from the beach into the dunes to shelter from the wind and rain that had started up. We chastised ourselves for not dressing for the Scottish weather, and picked our way through the heather spotted mounds. Kate and I talked again about her recent experiences and challenges with her studies. We both agreed that a part of intensive study involves a good deal of self-care, both emotionally and physically. In our commitment to talking and walking, we had created the potential for a new pattern of building the academic peer relationship and all the while addressing the research I was undertaking. It seemed that comradeship could be both a catalyst and a sustaining force in the communal culture of study, as well as in the practice of research itself. As we both dashed off to our homes at a quickening pace, we agreed to make a habit of meeting in the future.

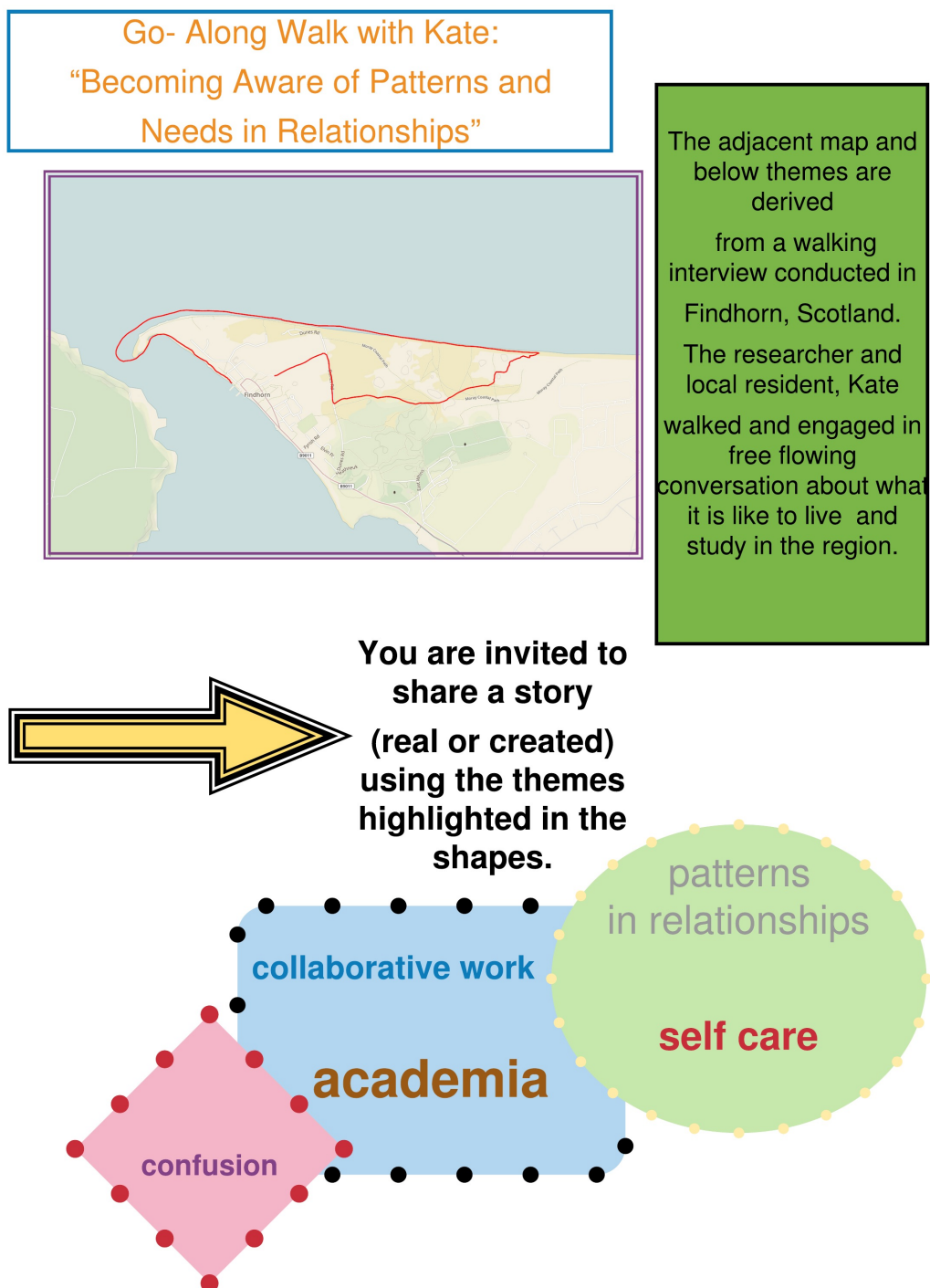


Image C.18 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool “Becoming Aware of Patterns and Needs in Relationships”

Go Along Walk Number Ten 5 August 2017  
 “Right Livelihood and Speaking a New Way”

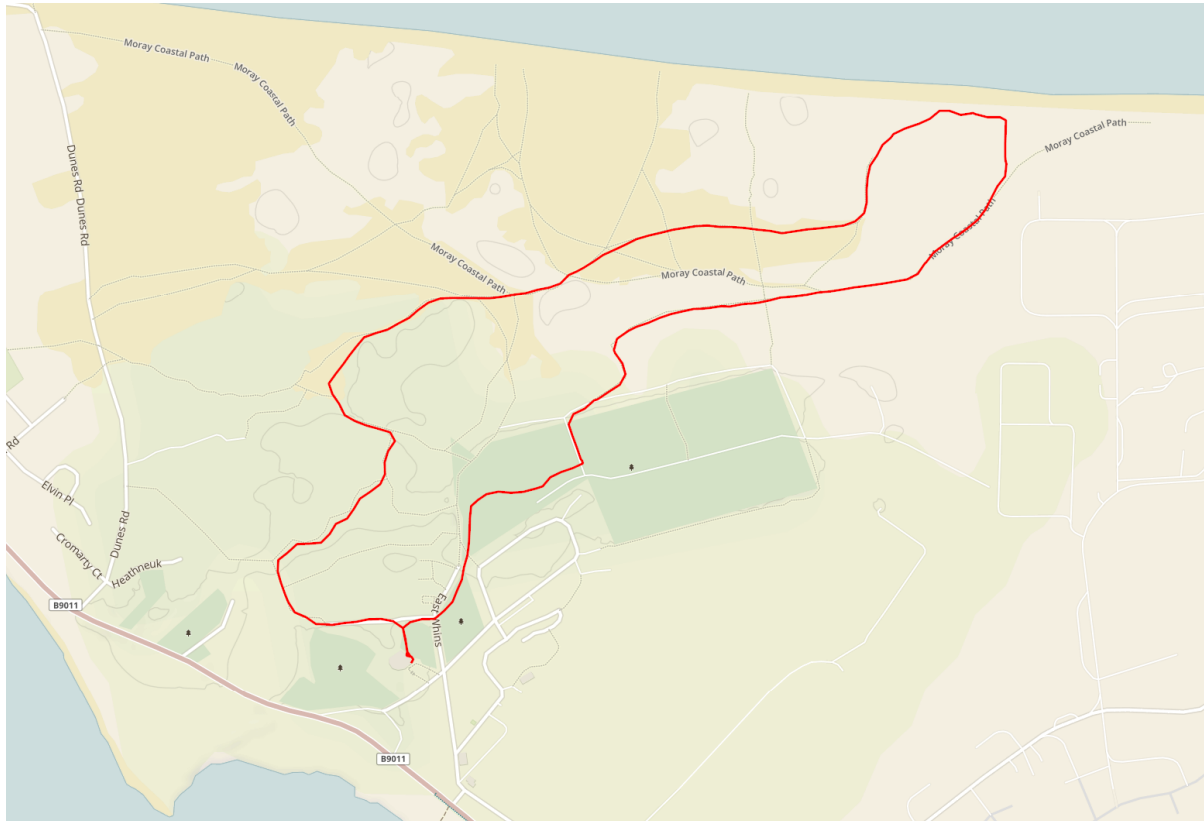



Image C.19 Map of Go-Along Interview with Amelia in the Findhorn Dunes

Amelia and I met on the grounds of the Findhorn ecovillage, where she has been living for several years. I was pleased that her confidence in the terrain meant she could easily navigate her way through a circuitous and unplanned route. We looped through the Park (as the ecovillage is called), the forest, and the wildflower bedecked dunes. I asked Amelia to tell me about her background and how she came to be living in the eco/intentional community. She told me about her previous life path as an environmental engineer and water treatment specialist. She spoke of the financial stability that this profession provided, but how she had felt a longing for something more. I asked her how she made the shift to a different lifestyle. She told me that over some years she had taken several opportunities and courses at the Findhorn Foundation, gradually becoming familiar with the community, while continuing her life in southern England. After taking a course in Permaculture, she saw an opportunity to live a life that matched her values, using a Buddhist term “right livelihood” to encapsulate the sentiment. She talked about the decision and realisation of her dreams when she made the move to Findhorn and started an organic gardening business.

I asked her how she incorporated those (permacultural) values into her life and business. Because Amelia is well versed in the language tied to systems thinking and permaculture, she readily spoke to me about “Zone 00” (the self), or the positioning of

oneself in relation to the world around them. She told me that nurturing her connection to nature, helped her connect to her community and provide them with a much needed service, which then feed back into her need to support herself financially. Amelia talked also about how she uses the design techniques in permaculture to help her make difficult choices, and to plan her life intentionally.

As we wound our way under a grove of gnarled pines, I asked her about how she relates and applies her new way of being in interactions with people, and communities that may be unfamiliar to this mind-set. Immediately Amelia, began to share her keen awareness of how she had evolved her ways of communicating over time, especially with her family. She told me about growing up in the British culture which she defined as being detached and unskilled with the expression of emotions. She spoke of moments in the past when visiting her family, and she felt frustration that they could not access her new way of expression. It was not until a friend pointed out to her that had she returned home speaking Spanish to her family that had never been to Spain and had no knowledge of the culture or language, she would have a similar reception. Amelia told me how she had come to understand that she could bring her own sensibilities in all types of interactions, but that she would need to adapt her expression of them to meet the audience and company she kept. Walking along the boundary to the active military base, I could see how important it was to be mindful of edges between communities and people. We finished up our walk warmed up by the surprising heat, and agreed we were energised by the talk and moments in nature together.

[illegible]

connection to community

Aligning values with one's source of income  
providing a needed service

thinking speaking so people listen

105



Go Along Walk Number Eleven 7 August 2017  
 "Nature as Sanctuary, Teaching While Learning"

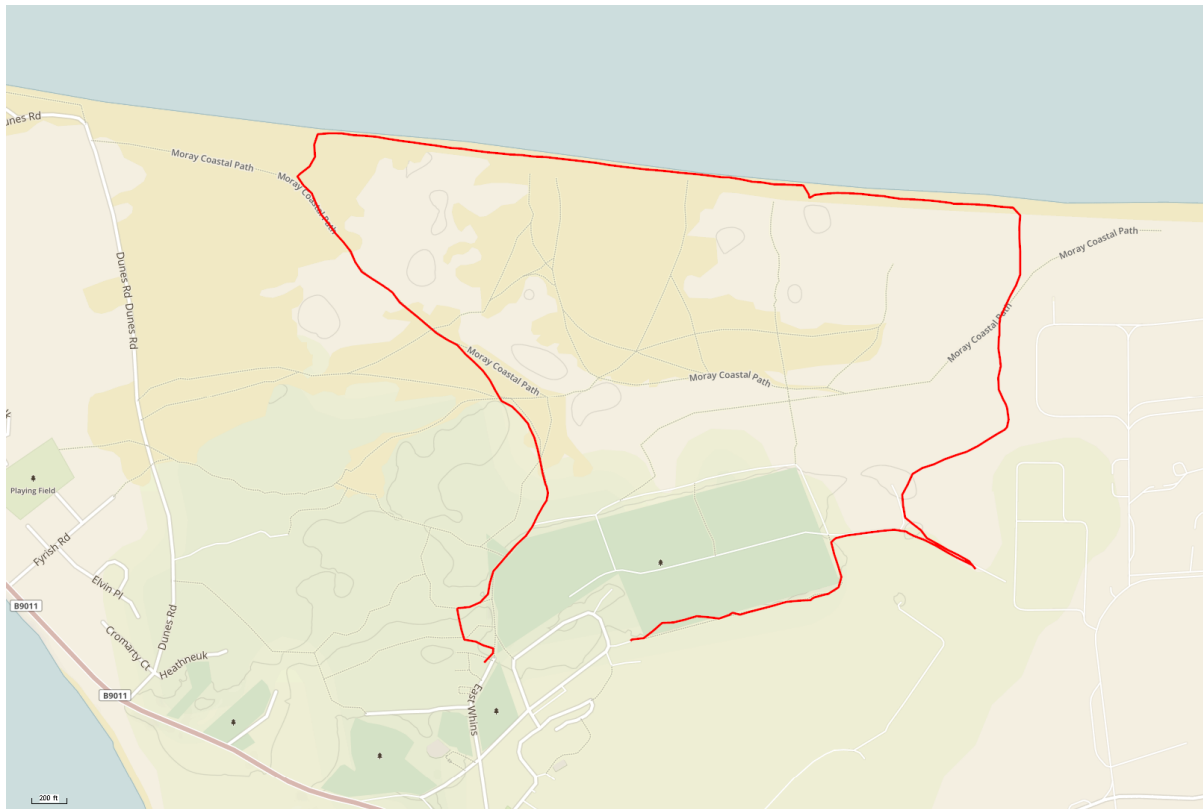


Image C.21 Map of Go- Along Interview with Milla in the Findhorn Dunes

Milla and I met at the top of the runway, (called so because it was once an actual military landing strip), in the Findhorn Foundation ecovillage. Milla has lived and worked in the community for just over a year, having easily impressed her mentors who recognised her enthusiasm for sustainable, regenerative living and activism. We started off our walk and talk with what turned out to be a fascinating background story. I asked Milla how she had developed such passion for sustainable living and activism. Milla echoed a common theme I have been finding, saying that as a child whenever she had troubles with her family life she would take refuge in the forest. She had found strength and a deep sense of herself through nature. Something about the day and the energy of our conversation, made familiar scenes seem fresh. I could tell that Milla, knew the dunes of Findhorn well as she navigated our walk.

While encouraging her to continue speak about her background, I quickly learned how she had cultivated her confidence. Milla told me that growing up in Scandinavia, sailing had been an important part of her life. In her early teen years, she found herself living and studying on sailboats. The unique immersive curriculum put her into challenging situations where she was at the helm of a massive ship, with the lives of many people in her hands. At this young age, she began mentoring even younger students. Intuiting my next question, she said that those mentoring skills resonate with her current role. I asked her to

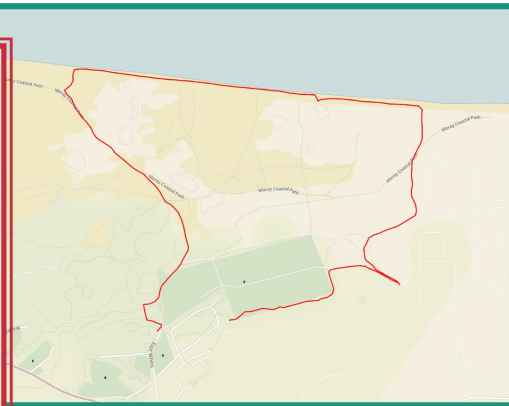


explain how she sees herself as a mentor for sustainable and regenerative culture. She told me that as in her youth, she still feels like she is a novice herself that has been thrust into a leadership role. She credited her trial by fire sailing days, with her ability to show up in the role of mentor, even when she felt somewhat still unsure about her own ability and knowledge.

I certainly felt comfortable having Milla as my guide, and was pleasantly surprised when she brought us into an area where I had never explored before. Walking underneath the thwamp, thwamp sound of the rotating wind turbines, I asked Milla how she brings her lifestyle and values and manner of being to the world outside of the eco/intentional communities. She told me that she feels that in situations like visiting her hometown and her family, it is not so much what she says, but the examples she provides just by living in a different way. She spoke with satisfaction about how her otherwise uninclined mother had started composting in the manner she had advise, and that her uncle sought her out to speak about environmental policy matters. Recognising just how fully Milla embraces her values and “walks the talk”, I asked her if there were any challenges she faced with maintaining her level of commitment and integrity. She told me how she had once for a year and half decided not to use air travel because of the environmental impact, and had found that it had negative consequences. She had not been able to visit with family and missed many opportunities for exploratory travel. Now she takes a more measured approach. She is keenly aware that she as an individual, has great power through her actions, but to also remembers the world is filled with complexity and harsh realities, that also can inform her choices. She said that she tries to keep in mind the bigger picture, when weighing her life decisions. We finished up our walk checking on the patches of wild berries and talked about bringing fun to her role as a catalyst for change. I am excited to see how that unfolds! We parted both feeling extremely inspired.

Go- along Walk with Milla:  
“Nature as Sanctuary, Teaching While Learning”

The adjacent map and below themes are derived from a walking interview conducted in Findhorn, Scotland. The researcher and local resident, Milla, walked and engaged in free flowing conversation about what it is like to live in an eco/intentional community.



**You are invited to share a story (real or created) using the themes highlighted in the shapes.**



Image C.22 Secondary Coded Engagement Tool “ Nature as Sanctuary, Teaching While Learning”

### Section D

The images in this section were included in the final presentation of this research project. They are visual collage summaries of my methods. Depicted are the go-along interview walks, the embedment, living as form method, the eco/intentional courses I participated in, and the performative workshops at the GSA. Additionally in this section is a visual collage of different mapping and charting methods I used throughout the project.

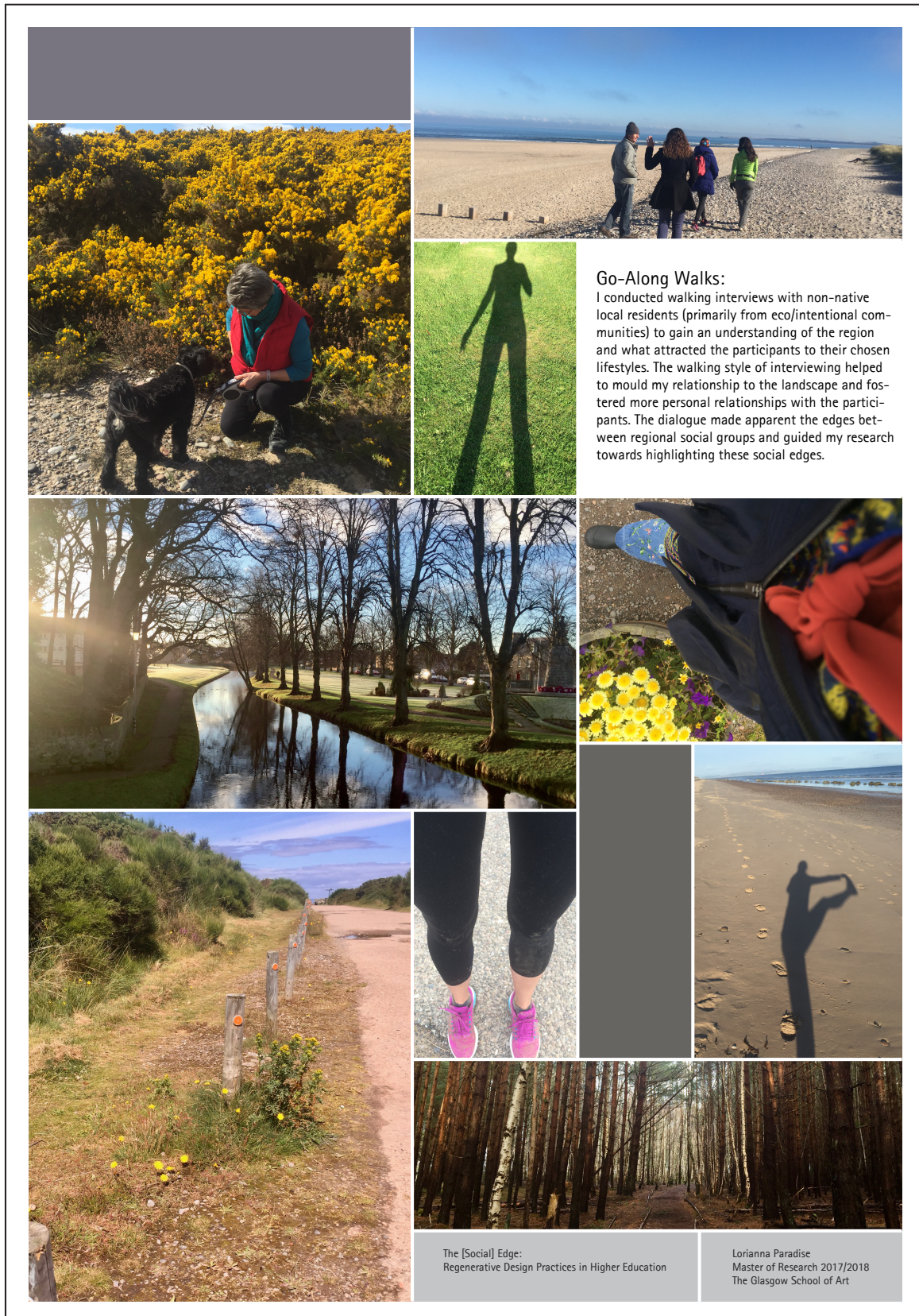


Image D.1 Collage of Go-Along Walks



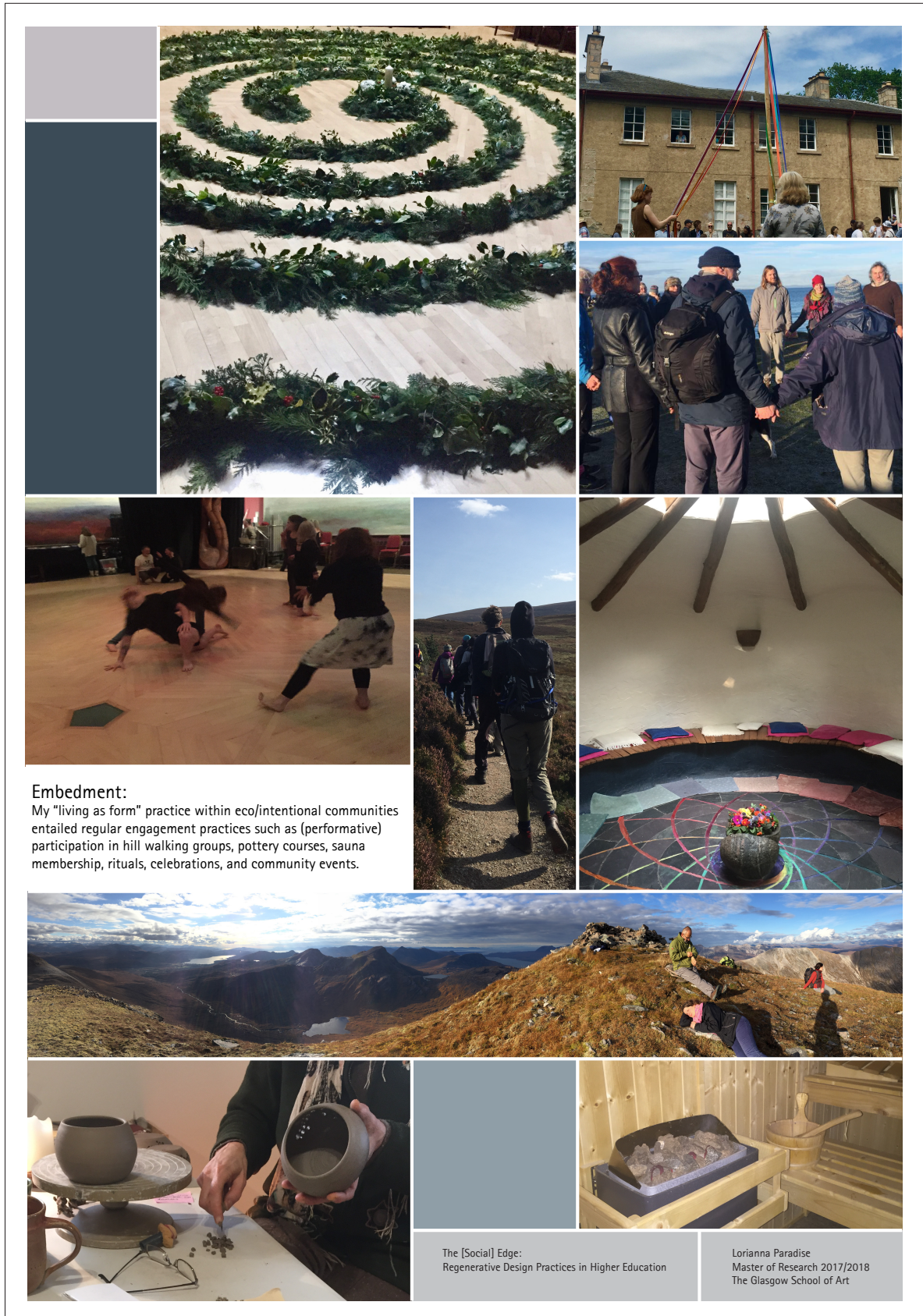


Image D.2 Collage of Embedment and Living as Form



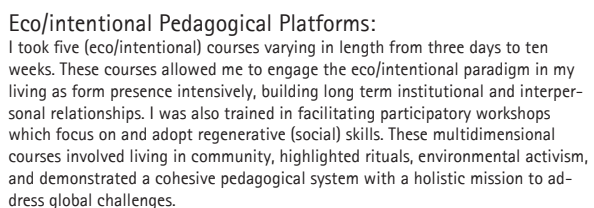


Image D.3 Collage of Eco/Intentional Pedagogical Platforms





Image D.4 Collage of Performative Workshops



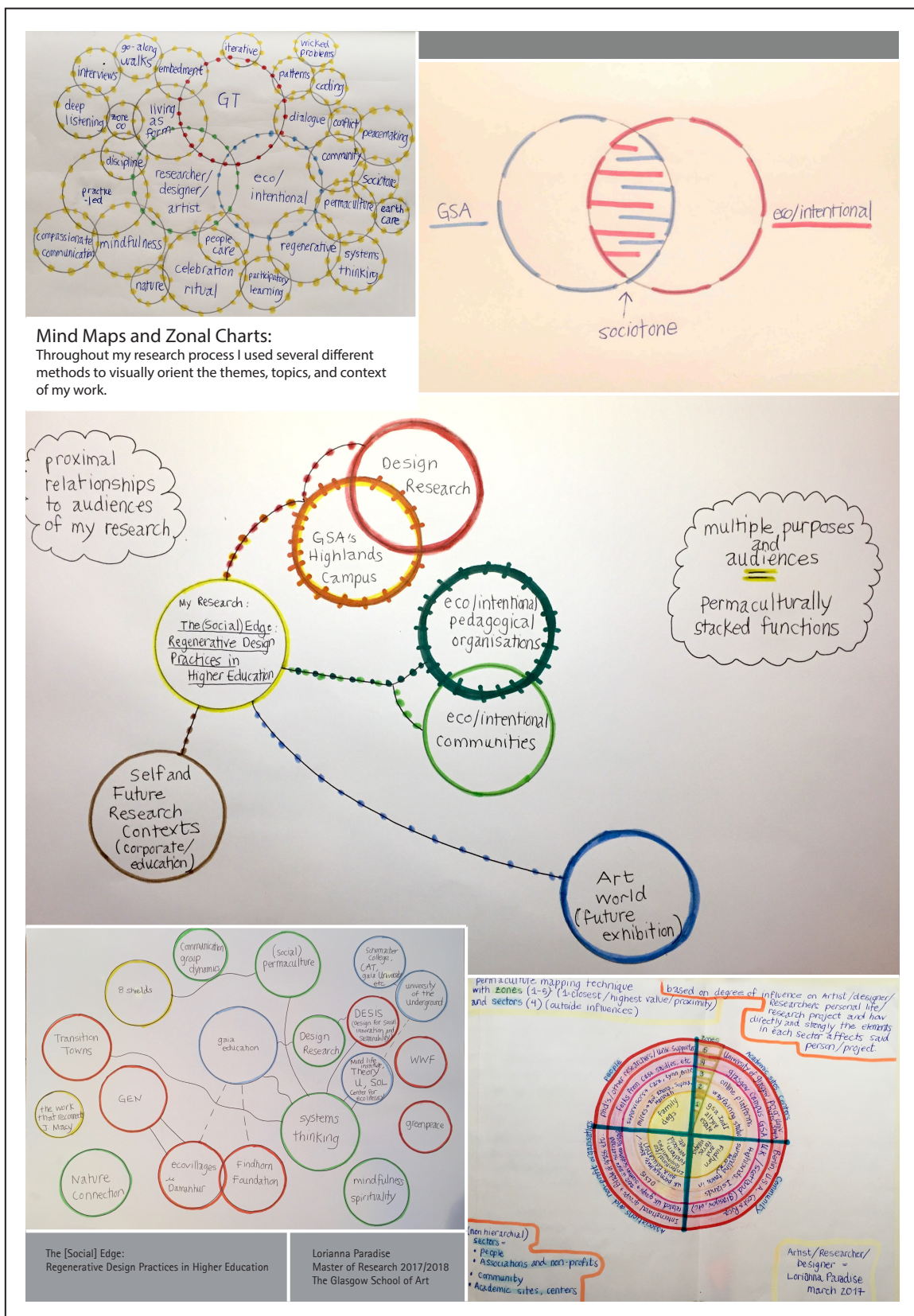


Image D.5 Collage of Maps and Charts



Heartfelt thanks for your interest and attentive reading.