

# wellbeing by DESIGN

Creativity and Collaboration  
in Practice-based Inquiry

~

7th, 8th and 9th September 2015

Report



# Overview

In September 2015, The Institute of Design Innovation (InDI), The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) held the inaugural Wellbeing by Design conference in Horizon Scotland, Forres. This booklet provides an overview of the conference format, activities, and common themes and insights emerging from the presentations and discussions.

Wellbeing by Design brought together 21 practitioners and researchers from Masters, Doctoral and Post-doctoral communities who are united by their interest in using design approaches to support communities to live well. The conference encouraged delegates to collaboratively explore and expand evolving definitions of wellbeing and to consider their individual and collective experiences of how reflective practice and reflexivity can support creativity, enhance collective knowledge, and be harnessed when exploring complex social challenges. Areas of wellbeing central to the conference included:

- the democratization of care
- asset-based approaches and social prescribing
- social isolation and loneliness
- health inequalities
- marginalized, fragile, or rural communities
- identity: culture, gender, race, sexuality, age

The conference programme consisted of two keynote presentations from Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam, Head of the School of Design at GSA and Director of the Creative Futures Partnership, and Professor Ken Neil, Head of Research at GSA, seven lightning talks from InDI researchers, 21 presentations from delegates, and an exhibition of delegates creative practice, as well as a reflective group workshop, a film screening, a drinks reception, and a conference dinner. The conference team sought to create an intimate, supportive and informal space for delegates to discuss their struggles, as well as their successes.





Alison Mayne  
Art and Design Research Centre  
Sheffield Hallam University  
England, UK

Tara Baath Mooney  
University of the West of England  
Bristol, UK

Marilda Moreira  
University of the West of England  
Bristol, UK

We received national and international applications from all over the world including Egypt, Istanbul, Italy, Singapore and Australia. For many of the delegates, Wellbeing by Design marked their first visit to Scotland. As part of the application process, we asked delegates to provide a synopsis of their research and practice and a list of keywords. We then stratified the delegate cohort into three groups for presentations. The three sessions aimed to reflect distinct elements and phases of practice-based research in the broad field of design:

- Exploration, Fieldwork and methods in practice
- Designing with People; Communication, Engagement and Co-creation
- The Role of Design and the Artefact in Analysis and Dissemination

During the sessions delegates presented ten minute overviews of their research. As session chairs and critical listeners, two members of the InDI team then identified reflections, commonalities, distinctions, questions, or concerns across each of the presentations before opening up to further discussion from the audience.

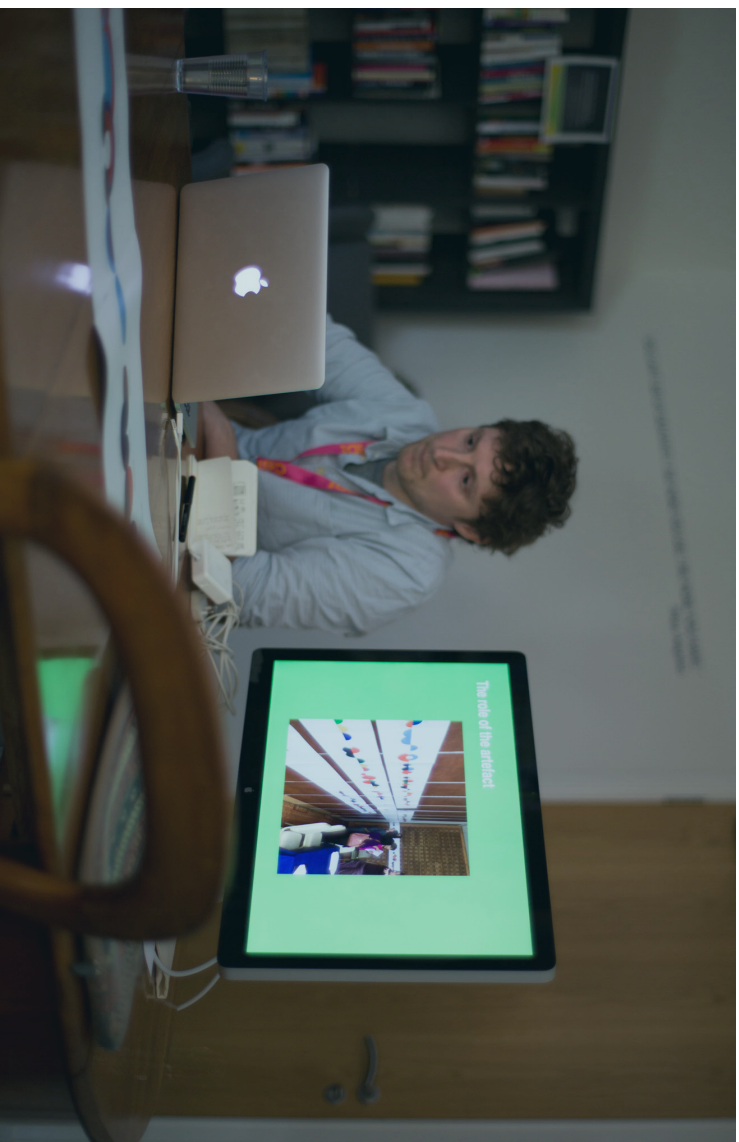
Examples of the work presented included: investigating the impacts of personal light exposure on human health; gender inequity and identity construction through materiality; mental health and wellbeing of women engaged in knit and crochet in online groups and physical spaces; tourist development in rural Egypt; the role of digital jewellery in exploring identity and adjustability of the Self during a period of transition; textile artefacts as multi sensory triggers for people with early stage Dementia; exploring eco-communities in Taiwan through dialogical film artworks; the role of indoor and outdoor environmental factors in older adults' physical and sedentary behaviours; early year classroom environments in rural Scotland and the Curriculum for Excellence.

Alongside the delegate presentations, members from The Institute of Design Innovation and The Digital Health and Care Institute were invited to give lightning talks. Covering a rich range of themes and projects, these seven talks provided the delegates with a comprehensive overview of the work currently being carried out here, including: positioning practice-based research; knowledge exchange; digital cultures; pragmatism and practice; designing with government; design research education; designing with third sector organisations; and designing experiences in health care.

Professor Irene McAra McWilliam and Professor Ken Niall were invited to give keynote presentations, sharing their insights in design research, the role of theory, design values, and the aesthetic and ethical implication of designing with people.

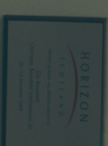


# Delegate Presentations





Those with normal cognition  
Sleep longer at night  
Fewer awakenings at night  
Took longer to fall asleep  
Higher activity





# DISTINCT APPROACHES TO DESIGN EDUCATION.

Applied  
practice of  
Design



# LIFEWIDE LEARNING

World and human  
centred

↓  
Social skills

↓  
Visualisation

↓  
Integrative  
behaviours,

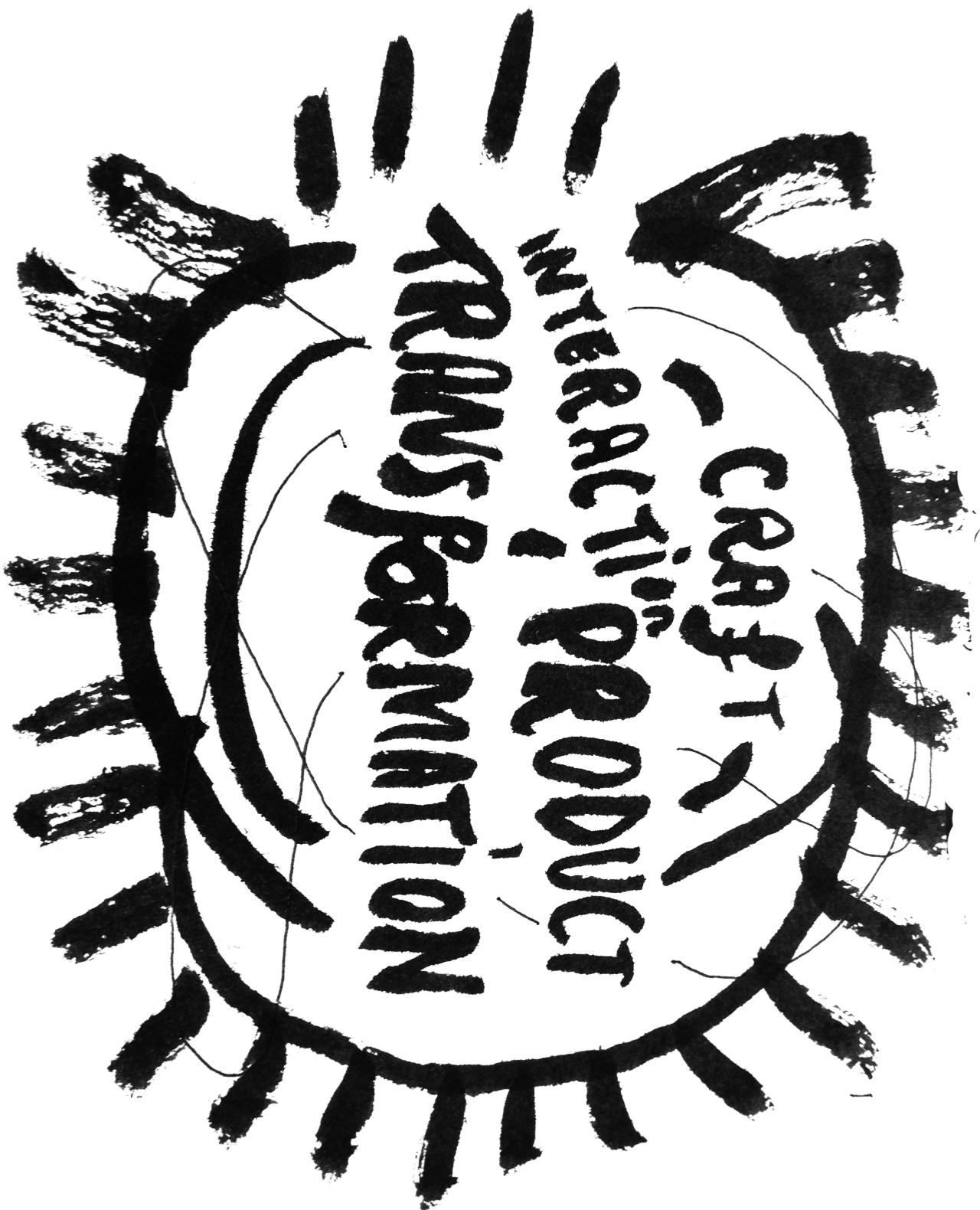
62







CRAFT  
INTERACTIVE  
PRODUCT  
FORMATION









## Village on the River Nile

- Nature reserve
- tourism development
- Innovation of guest house  
people
- Cultural landscape - human heritage  
tourism development.

# THE SELF IN TRANSITION

The role of digital jewellery in our lives

**CRAFT**

JEWELLERY + Technology  
**JOURNEY** = new way of

Personal expression

INTERACTION DESIGN

+ CRAFT



TRANSITIONAL SPACE  
FLUID EMOTIONS PIECE

SELF REFLECTION?

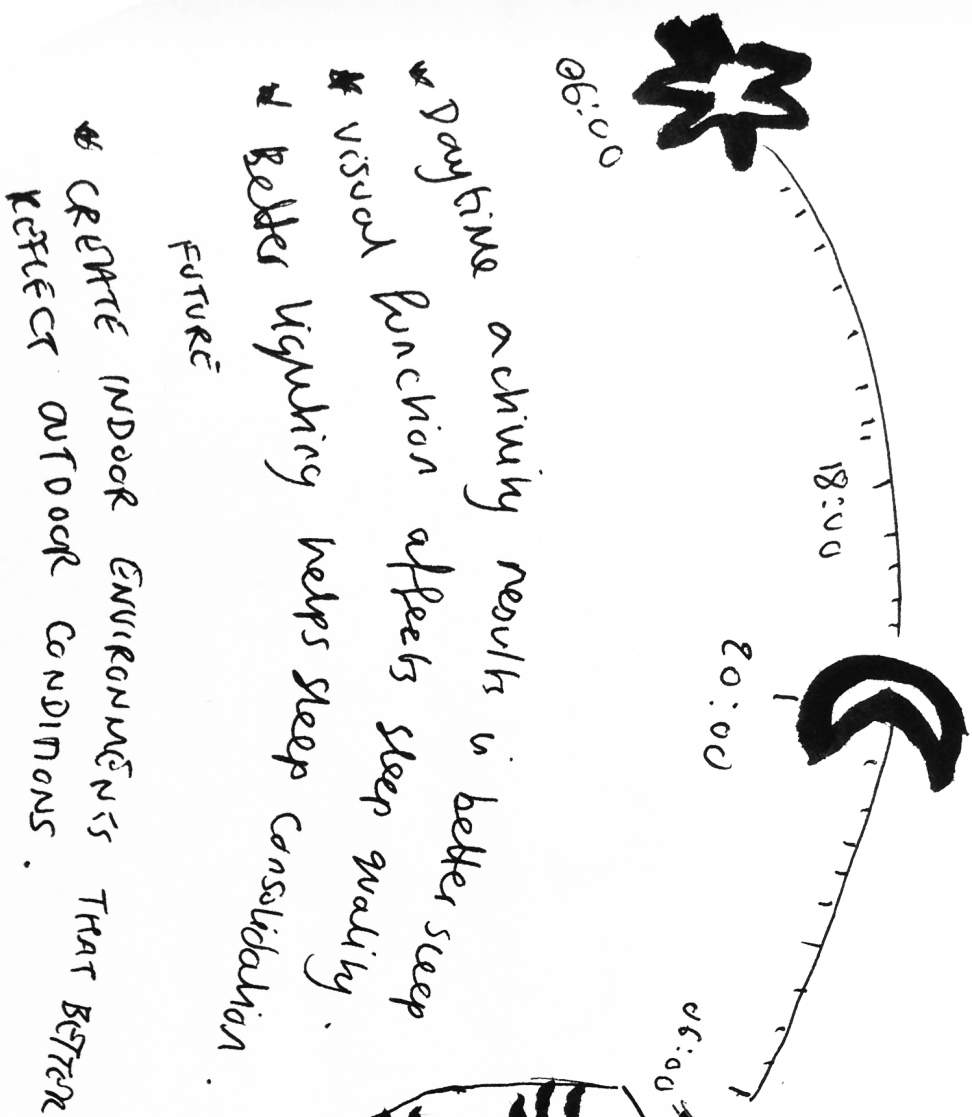
Records but  
does not play

THINKING

back.

THROUGH MAKING





- Sleep wake Pattern
- Personal input
- exposure
- cognitive function

# Key Note Presentations





# livelihoods



# RESEARCH: SEEING IN DESIGNING

novation





- Poetic Makings.

Are Makings in the  
world.

- Anxiety that emerges  
from creative practice  
we should worry about this too.

- Doing Seeing



ETHICAL IMAGINATION



# Lightning Talks







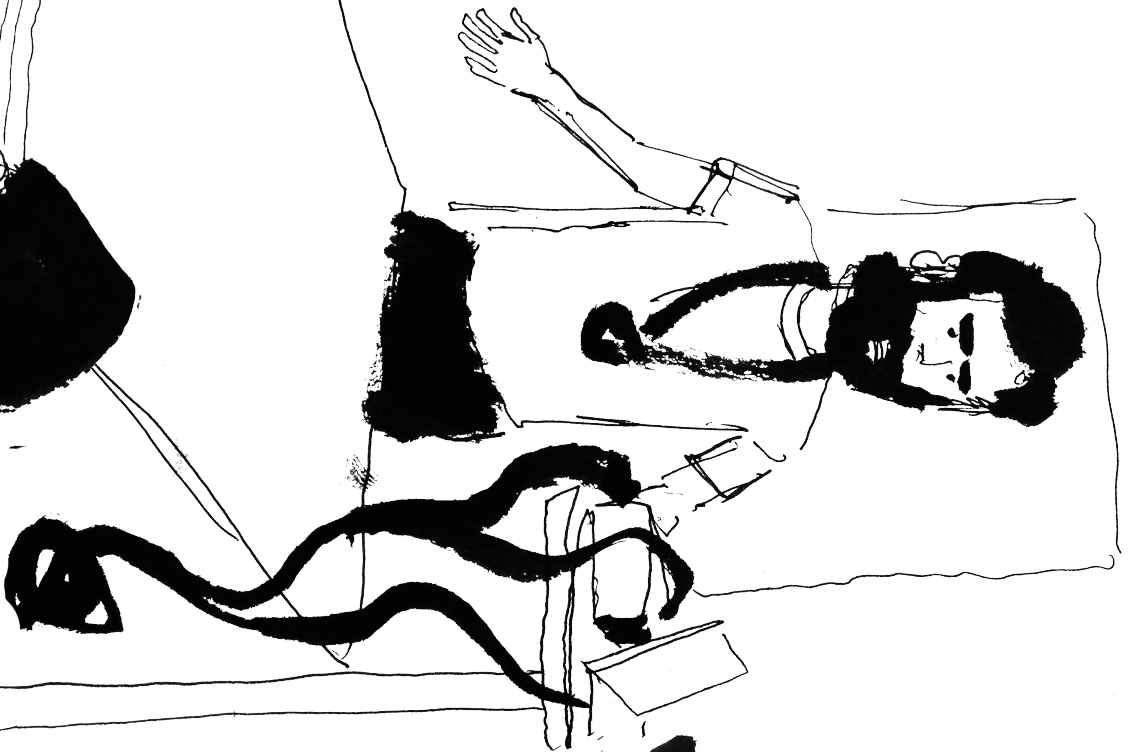
# DESIGN ATTITUDES

MINDFUL APPROACHES  
TO DESIGN

# DESIGNING EDUCATION FOR DESIGN RESEARCH



# DHI EXPERIENCE CAPS



MAKING THE  
COMPLEX  
VISIBLE

VOLUNTEERING





# Emerging themes

'aim to raise community's awareness of self'

complexities of experiences understood

prescribed environments

constraints in structured research

differences in self-interests in communities

how do we talk to people about co-creation

design things not just to be used and forgotten about but something beautiful and poetic

future casting for desirable worlds

authorship and ownership

linear and nonlinear documentation

the hidden communities in research

tools for taboo conversations

making intangible tangible – but not too precious

conflicts existing of desired ambition with behavior

mangaing stakeholder expectations

how do people perceive their own wellbeing

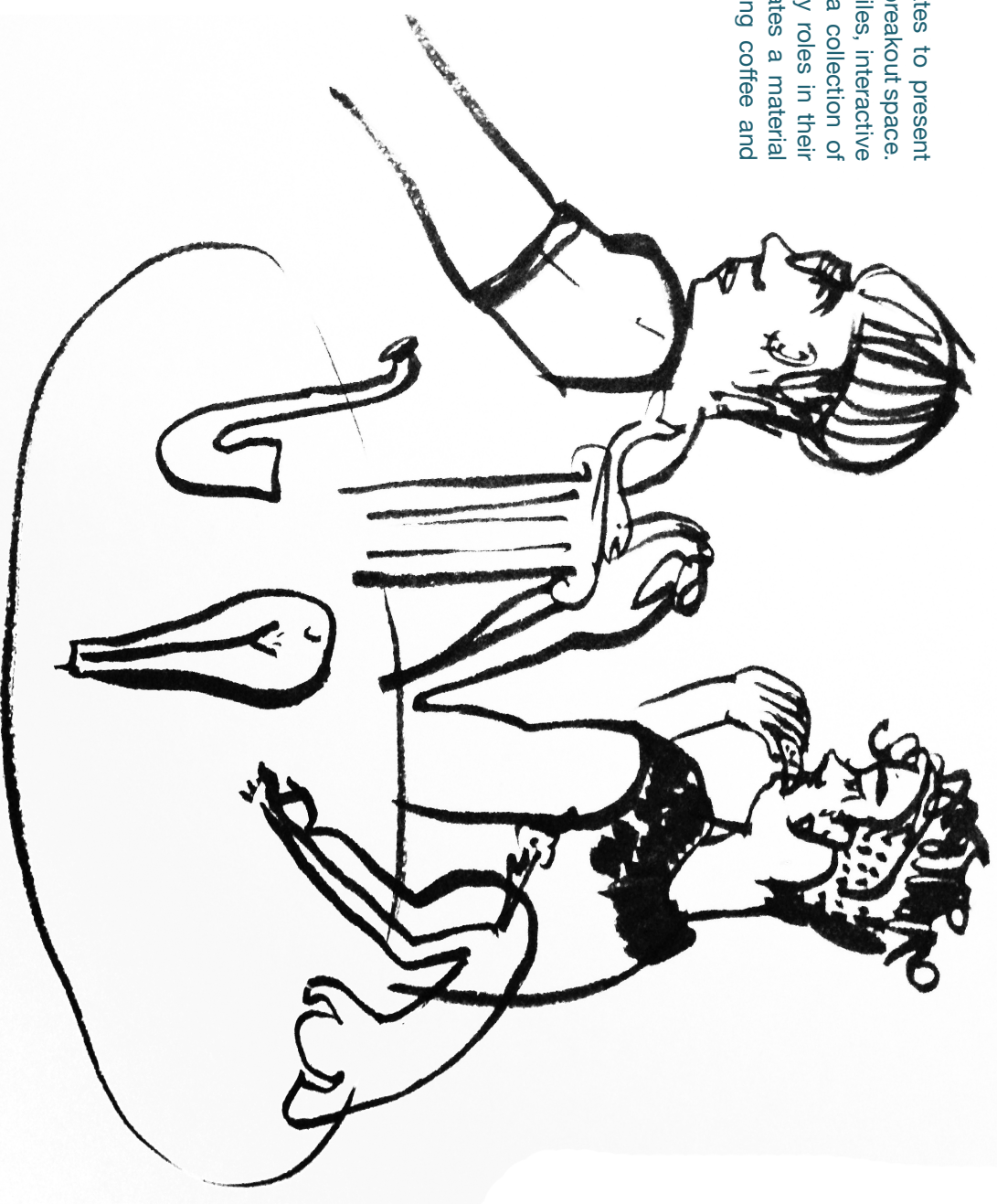
visualising empathy

tensions between preserve vs. develop

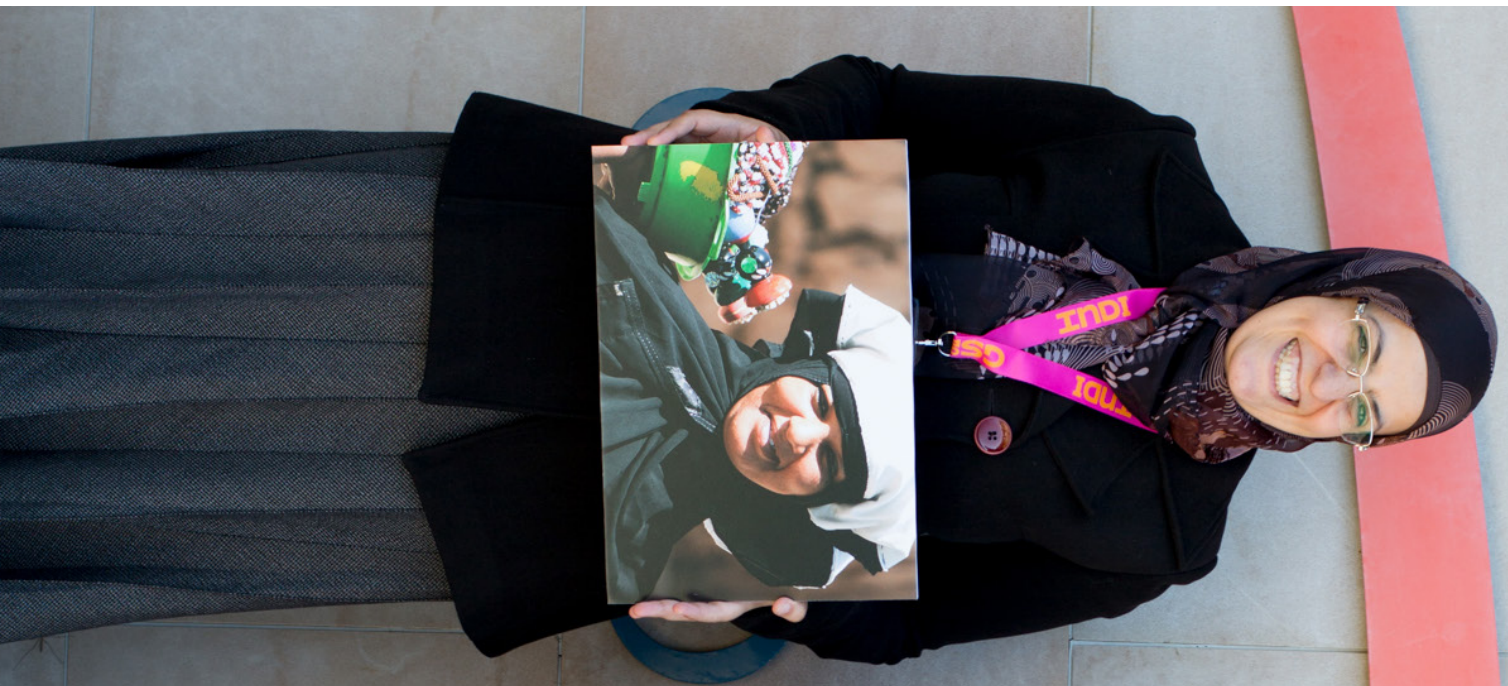
how design can be misunderstood

# Exhibition

Throughout the application process we invited delegates to present examples of their practice in an informal exhibition in the breakout space. An eclectic mixture of photography, digitally printed textiles, interactive 3d models, maps, illustrations, film installations, and a collection of PhD research posters were displayed. Often having key roles in their presentations, these designed artefacts offered delegates a material point of reference to ground their discussions in during coffee and networking breaks.













# Workshop

For the final session of the conference, Gemma Teal, Research Fellow at InDI, facilitated a workshop, Drawing on Our Reflections, as an opportunity for delegates to share their thoughts the presentations and in turn, to receive feedback on their own. Delegates formed small groups and took turns to discuss their key insights from each presentation before collectively completing a paper template to capture their reflections, connections to other practice and research, and suggestions for potential areas of interest to follow up. The workshop stimulated productive conversation as delegates shared and compared their individual learnings gleaned from the presentations, whilst updating each other on presentations that they may have not attended. The session culminated in each delegate receiving their own paper template completed by the cohort with feedback and advice to inform future research and development.



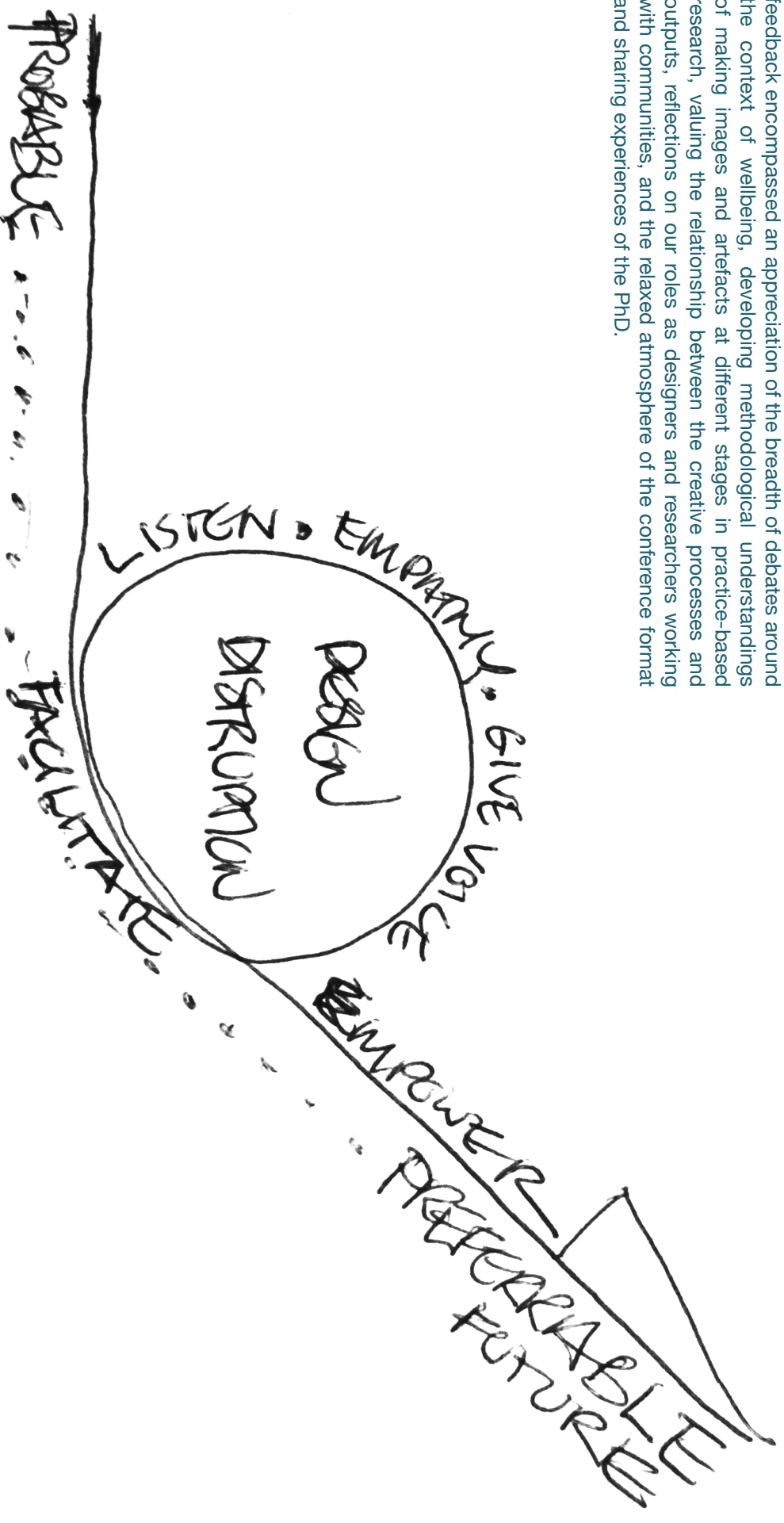


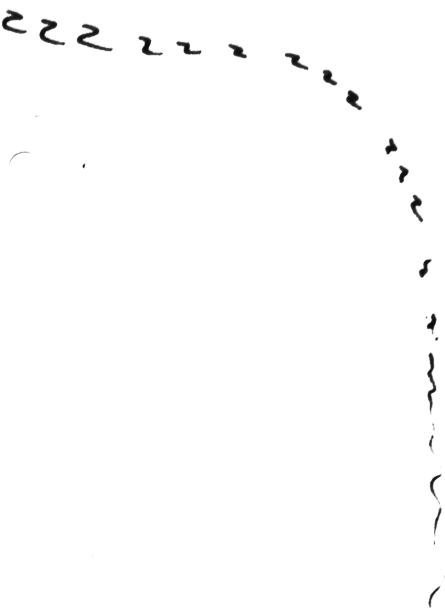




# Feedback

To capture feedback we gave delegates small cards and asked them to tell us about their key moments from the conference through writing and drawing. As can be seen in the following quotes and photographs, delegates' feedback encompassed an appreciation of the breadth of debates around the context of wellbeing, developing methodological understandings of making images and artefacts at different stages in practice-based research, valuing the relationship between the creative processes and outputs, reflections on our roles as designers and researchers working with communities, and the relaxed atmosphere of the conference format and sharing experiences of the PhD.





BEAUTY is abundant in nature

'beautiful'

Beauty should be everywhere, not just in objects.....

.....in our cars, our fridges, our beds, our ears, our noses, our fingers, our roads in our surroundings.....

Both Irene & Lynne spoke of beauty as a elevating thing





Reflecting upon the entire conference and particularly the feedback we received from the delegates, it was clear that, as one delegate described, this newly created forum had 'soul'. Its intimate scale allowed for rich and comfortable conversation, where meaningful connections were fostered between the delegates through sharing, learning, and inspiring one another. A breath of experience and insight into the many different facets and contexts of wellbeing were shared, as well as innovative design approaches. Beauty was a recurring theme in many of the presentations and conversations, mirroring, as several of the delegates suggested, the location of conference in the Highlands of Scotland. The rural setting greatly enhanced the essence of community, fulfilling our aspiration of attracting national and international attention to Forres.

Building links between Postgraduate taught degrees, Doctoral degrees and beyond, our aim for this creative research and knowledge exchange conference was to establish a blueprint that could be iterative and scalable, leaving a legacy for future students at The Institute of Design Innovation to develop and expand upon. Wellbeing by Design established new national and international institutional partnerships and interdisciplinary links, demonstrating global connectivity as well as catalysing a new design research collective. It is our hope that from this foundation will grow a community of design research practitioners whose interest and commitment to enhancing wellbeing through design will contribute to individuals, groups, and societies flourishing across the world.

The Wellbeing by Design team would like to specially thank Marianne McInnes, Angela Oxley, Paula Nichols, Carolyn Wylie, Michaela Glead and Karen Hubbard for their invaluable guidance, generosity of time, and kindness throughout the complex process of planning and managing the conference. As well as this, a very special thank you to Professor Irene McAra MacWilliam, Dr Lynn-Sayers McHattie and Joe Lockwood, who enabled and supported the entire Wellbeing by Design project to be realised and implemented.









