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Where are we? We are here. Designing digital reflections of place and public plurality.

Keywords: Intercultural Relations, Non-Indigenous, Design, Pluralism, Virtual Place.

1 Ways of Being and Doing

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

Yesterday, as the author made her way along the streets of Naarm, she could hear the jitter of people, going to class, working, walking. She tuned in to the banter of a student near her who tried to explain the meaning of their upcoming tutorial on Integrated Studies and the author noticed how this activity, on this Country, in this moment, offered her a way to reflect on her relational methodology.

The author now writes and edits this acknowledgement at home, on Wurundjeri Country, in a place known in Woi wurrung as nylimbik, which means stupid dirt / stupid / red dirt. She thinks about the stupid dirt she trod on in the grass this morning, covered in frost, and the blue sky above that signaled a warm day to come. She noticed she wore blue, green and flecks of white, like accidental camouflage, and this led her to think about her relational ways of being.

Tynan describes being relational as 'being with Country' (Tynan, 2021). But unlike Tynan, who travels home to sit in the sand with the wind and the flies, the author 'responds' (West, 2020a) to Naarm and nylimbik as she writes this paper, living as a guest on the unceded lands of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups, with the morning bustle of Swanston Street and on the stupid dirt of nylimbik. She pays her respect to Ancestors and Elders, past and present, grateful for their humour, patience and welcome, always.

1.2 Methodology

The author approaches this paper as an attempt at decolonised expression within The Academy, recognising the power dynamics and historical legacies that shape academic discourse. This methodology prioritises critical engagement with colonial structures as well as a commitment to grounding Indigenous perspectives, which are

essential for challenging settler colonialism and creating more pluralistic societies (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

The author acknowledges their own political identity as a woman who identifies as non-Indigenous with Irish citizenship, while also seeking to express her familial connection to the unceded lands of Tyerrernotepanner and Paredareme in Trouwanna (lutruwita/Tasmania). Acknowledging the complexities of this identity, in a settler colonial context, involves contending with the legacies of colonisation, cultural assimilation, and erasure that have silenced the political identity of the author's maternal ancestry, through limited settler recognition of their ways of being since colonisation.

For these reasons, the author chooses to write this paper in a way that purposefully places the reader in the author's work experience, with less focus on the extractive nature of findings (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) and more focus on the nuanced perspective of the author's design decision-making process.

As Creative Director of Public Journal, a non-Indigenous communication design practice, the author draws from frameworks of co-design, participatory design, and user experience to create a novel design methodology. This design methodology is situated in feminist, anti-positivist logics of grounded and engaged theory (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2000) in the interest of reflecting plural modalities or worlds through design. This approach supports the author's relational way of being (Moreton-Robinson 2000; Langton 2018; Tynan 2021) and is inspired by the writing of Escobar (2018) and her own lived experience.

The author acknowledges her design lead experiences, working in Reconciliation for Wiradjuri man Professor Mark McMillan and Doctor Peter West on their Bundyi Girri for Business project, traversing the space of Indigenous and non-Indigenous polities within university and business settings, co-designing ways to identify and change colonial deflections on unceded lands.

As a designer and RMIT Industry Fellow, through the work of the *wearehere.place* project, the author seeks to challenge binary and essentialised notions of cultural identity, recognising the diversity and complexity of peoples' experiences and perspectives. The author contends that this involves engaging with the intricacies of

language, living history, and place, and centring plural knowledges and standpoints in ways that prioritise 'self-determination and sovereignty' (Behrendt, 2003).

2 Background

2.1 Precinct Recovery

In a time and place when citizens were constrained to a five-kilometre radius and the temporal, digital landscape was relied upon to replace physical experiences and connections, City of Yarra (Council) was considering the 'impact' on their local economies and how to facilitate precinct recovery (City of Yarra, 2020).

The City of Yarra Precinct Recovery Grant program aimed to support a collective of businesses and/or community members to activate, promote, or enhance retail and services precincts within the municipality. The initiative was part of the Business Recovery Grants Program, a \$7.4 million package to support businesses and the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program offered \$20,000 in funding for eight grant applications and was the second round of quick response grants released by Council. The funds could be used for activations, destination marketing, beautification, training programs, and partnerships between businesses or business and community and was open to business applicants who operated in the City of Yarra, as detailed in Figure 1.

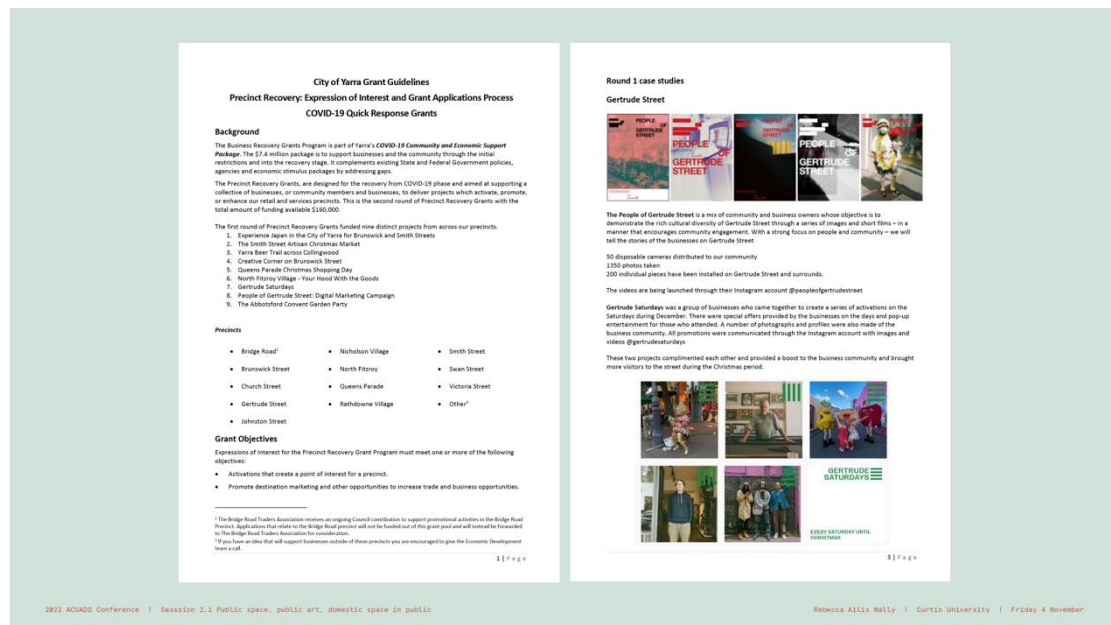


Figure 1: Precinct Recovery Grant Round 2 Guidelines by City of Yarra, 2020.

So how might a precinct recover? In this moment of reckoning, what changes could be suggested? How could people re-know a public place? How could a municipality find value in decentring colonial constructs and diversifying how citizens might be able to respond to eastern Kulin?

2.2 Community and Business Participation

Public Journal sought to address plural modalities without problematising minority issues, recognising the importance of involving minority communities in response and recovery efforts, as highlighted by Yin C. Paradies (2021), Amanuel Elias (2020), Naomi Priest (2020), and others.

As the precinct worked to recover from the pandemic and rebuild its economic and social fabric, Public Journal aimed to develop their application in recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, an approach many First Nations scholars have argued should be central to the pandemic recovery efforts (Matthews, Haines, Bond, et al, 2021). As part of their decolonising activities, Public Journal had previously researched the Fitzroy Aboriginal Heritage Trail, connecting community stories to significant moments of colonisation, resistance, civil rights, and community since 1835 (Wurundjeri Council, nd).



Figure 2: *The Koori Club/Tamura Sake Bar* by Hilary Walker, from the Fitzroy Aboriginal Heritage Trail documentary series, commissioned by Public Journal.

In Figure 2, the living history of The Koori Club is evident, via the featured plaque, at the currently trading Tamura Sake Bar. This is one of many stills from the commissioned documentary series by Hilary Walker, along the Fitzroy Aboriginal Heritage Trail. While Tamura Sake were open to sharing this story, they were also a small business trying to recover from a significant upheaval. Public Journal recognised the acute operational needs of local retail and considered how to support diverse community engagement, during a time of economic uncertainty.

Public Journal proposed a project that would develop through carefully supported participation and engagement with business and community groups. When the grant application was successful, the work developed through an iterative project structure, as lived experiences became known.

3 Project Groundwork

3.1 Transitioning to Public Pedagogy

Public Journal saw participation as the redistribution of power that enables citizens presently excluded from political and economic processes to be deliberately included in the future (Arnstein, 1969). The author draws careful attention to the word 'included' here, seeking to challenge the settler colonial context that might be perceived as being the state of inclusion. Public Journal considered how a digital platform might 'recover' power and to whom. How could people re-know a 'public place'? How could a municipality find value in decentring colonial constructs and diversifying how citizens might *be able* to respond to eastern Kulin?

After working with RMIT University Communication Design students to 'decolonise digital dreams', the author recognised student capabilities to respond to eastern Kulin through pedagogy and 'become aware of their potential power/authority as designers' (Nally, 2022).

In the early weeks of this undergraduate studio, the author shared a case study of Public Journal's commissioned documentary photo sequence of the Fitzroy Aboriginal Heritage Trail by photographer Hilary Walker. This documentary sequence inspired some students to find out more about a place they frequented and prompted the students to consider why they had not known these stories. Many did not know about the Aboriginal civil rights and sovereignty that lived within the buildings and streets of Fitzroy. One student, Enya Weber demonstrated sensitivity through their subsequent research of the trail and referenced the Woi wurrung word for Fitzroy as

'Ngár-go', which had only recently been introduced into the public space as part of a multi-institutional project with Wurundjeri Council (Gardner, Gibson & Morey, 2018).

As part of Public Journal's industry partnership, a graduate placement was offered to Weber, who received the Response to Country Award in their final year. Not long after accepting this offer, the Precinct Recovery Grant Round 2 was released and Public Journal proposed working with Weber to transition their work from a student project to a small business proposal.



Figure 3: RMIT University Communication Design illustration of Ngár-go (Weber, 2020).

As a part of the working team, Weber collaborated with the author as Creative Director of Public Journal and with Designer Jason Rohmursanto to imagine a digital world that might more intentionally respond to Indigenous sovereignty.

Public Journal sponsored Weber to develop their understanding of deeper Reconciliation concepts and non-Indigenous ways of designing in relation to Indigenous sovereignty (Mcmillan, 2020; West 2020b). The collaboration between the author, Enya Weber, and Jason Rohmursanto facilitated the transition of the work from student pedagogy to public pedagogy.

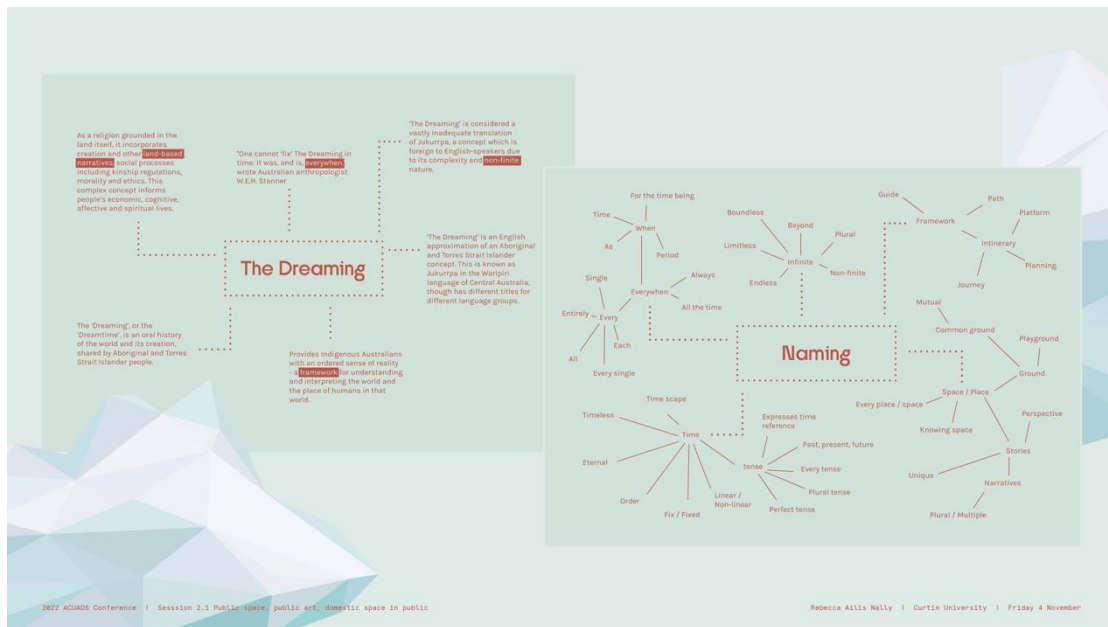


Figure 4: Weber was briefed to research First Nations ontologies of time and place, as a starting place for conceptual development and naming of the wearehere.place platform (Public Journal, 2020a).

3.2 Designing Public Pedagogy with Play and Ceremony

Bardzell and Bardzell (2013) argue that play is a vital aspect of human experience and that it is often overlooked or dismissed as frivolous in the design of digital technologies. Light et al (2016) argue that the focus on utility can result in a narrow understanding of users' needs and desires, leading to a lack of consideration for important social and emotional aspects of user experience. They suggest that designers can incorporate play into their designs as means to increase engagement.

The intention of play – which was used in the project copywriting to explicitly prompt participants away from a utility focus – can be problematic as an activity. This is because it can be used to distract or pacify users, rather than promoting critical thinking or social change and has the potential to diminish the significance of cultural activities and markers. Without the structural work of decolonising public pedagogy through ceremony, the prompt to play could reinforce existing power structures and perpetuate the erasure of diverse ways of knowing. Public Journal anticipated that incorporating ceremony as an implicit aspect of the platform could help to disrupt these power structures and create space for diverse voices and ways of being.

Aunty Marlene Gilson, Distinguished Professor Maggie Walter, and Distinguished Professor Marcia Langton have emphasised the importance of ceremony for healing and community engagement in times of crisis. As Gilson has stated:

Ceremony is a way of connecting with each other and our Country... [it] can help us to remember who we are and our obligations to each other and to the environment. (Gilson, 2019)

Similarly, Walter and Langton have written about the importance of Indigenous ceremonies as a means of facilitating social cohesion and strengthening community resilience (Langton, 2018; Walter, 2019). In conversation, Langton shared:

We have hoped to go to Queensland to visit a sacred stone – *The Star of Taroom* – which was returned to the country. These gatherings are tremendously important as modern-day ceremonies and markers that bring people together again. (Langton, 2021)

These insights are particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, where social distancing measures and restrictions on public gatherings limited habitual forms of community and place-based engagement.

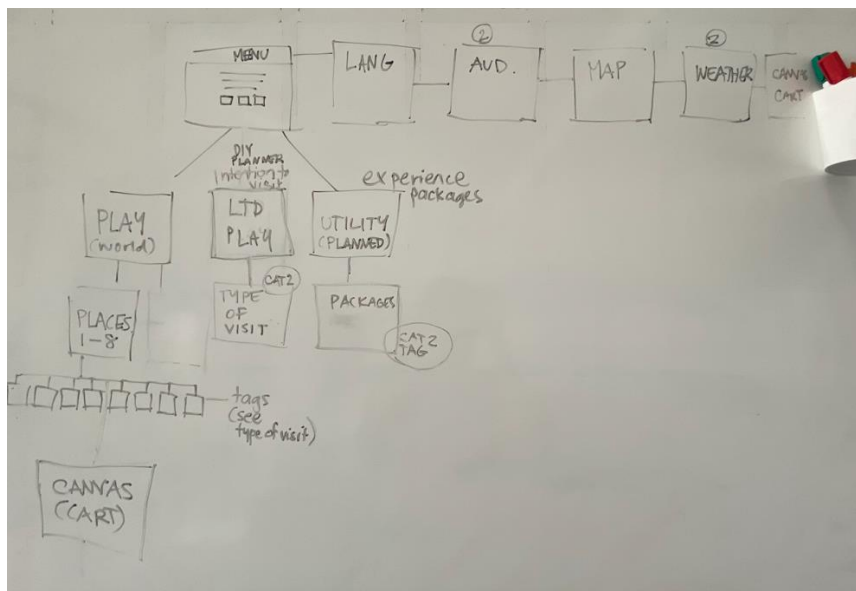


Figure 5: Early site interaction map for the wearehere.place platform (Public Journal, 2020b).

Figure 5 is from an early wireframing session where Public Journal centred conceptual development around these questions:

How could the platform structure play? How might the platform invite the user in to respond to cultural markers of significance? How might these markers facilitate the expression of plural modalities?

In these working sessions, Public Journal iterated a range of ways to navigate the platform, while considering potential utilities that might act as ceremonial frames. The author recognises her own tensions in these sessions, refining carefully with the working team to ensure the dominant utility bias was recognised, and when used, was intentionally directed towards the amplification of diverse community narratives. For example, here in Figure 6, a draft illustration drawn up with existing assets indicates a grid-like pathway for citizens. Upon draft review, the utility bias was obvious – citizens are constrained to walk a controlled path with little signalling of diverse ways of being and doing. There were many times in the studio where initial iterations required reworking to open up ontological and axiological possibilities.



Figure 6: Early collaboration between Rohmursanto and Nally, resulting in linear and restrictive visualisation of Weber's illustration assets (Public Journal, 2020c).

In Figure 7 following, the utility focus is marked through the back-end planning. This planning could be seen as a crude example of how utility can act as a power broker. However, in this case, the utility of each plugin is chosen to enable diversity actions.

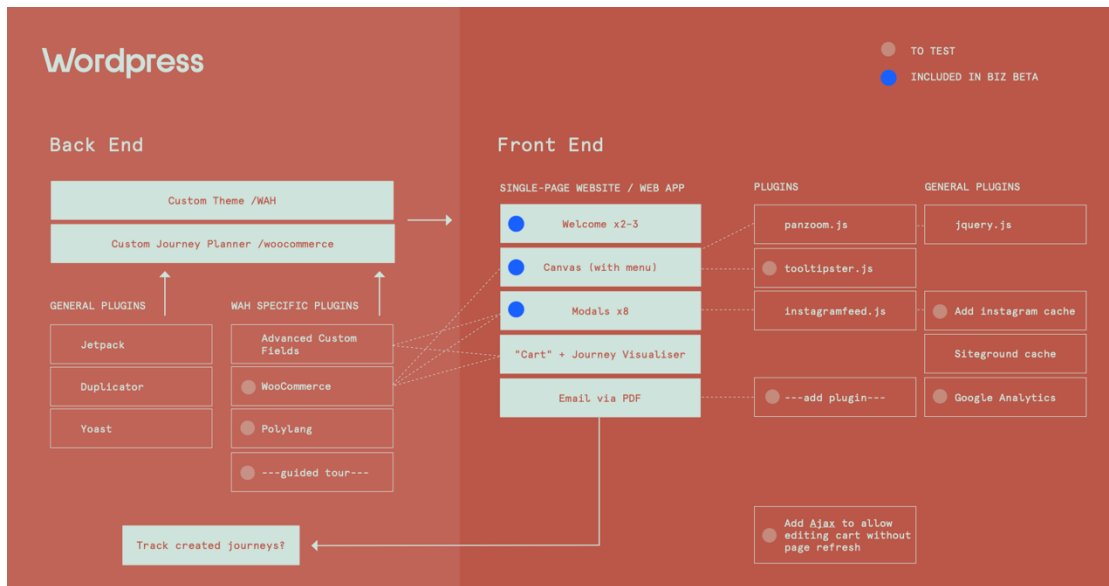


Figure 7: Development wireframe (Public Journal, 2020d).

The 'custom journey planner', as indicated in the back-end column of Figure 7, is built with, and connected to, more than 10 plugins to achieve a less linear way of engaging with cultural markers and plural worlds. In the website copywriting, Public Journal name this area 'Ngár-go – Fitzroy' and from here participants are prompted, through plural modalities, to make their own dreams. The dreams can then be shared with friends and family, or publicly if the participant chooses. Once the dream is shared, the recipients of the dream can add to and change what they have received and redistribute their unique dream to their chosen social group. None of the dreams are collected in the back end. This was an early consideration, as indicated in the bottom left of Figure 7; however, after contemplation regarding the potential use of this data and the extractive nature of collecting these stories, the decision was made not to capture any dreams centrally.

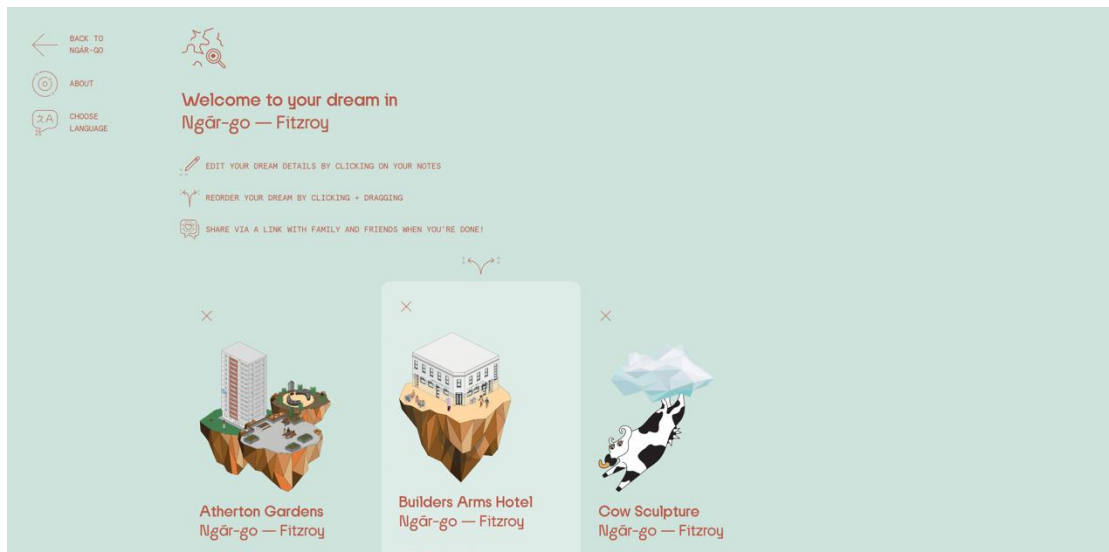


Figure 8: Participant dream space at wearehere.place, which can be edited and shared. All dreams that are made have a unique link and are only accessible when invited by the unique participant (accessed 2023).

3.3 Cultural Markers and Plural Worlds

As a non-Indigenous project, the work stood to challenge normative colonial activity where complexity and diversity of Indigenous ways of knowing are often overlooked and flattened, resulting in ontological and epistemological erasure (Lewis et al, 2020). The author noted that this concern was applicable, considering the potential implications of acknowledging ‘Ngār-go – Fitzroy’ as the site of dreams through a digital narrative.

Engaging with Wurundjeri Council was an important step to ensure consent to non-Indigenous representation of place; however, the author was mindful of potential costs, resource implications, and the risk of becoming excessively bureaucratic and demanding of reciprocal capacities and resources. The settler burden or colonial load (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Watson, 2016) was an important consideration as Aboriginal Partnerships was embedded in City of Yarra, with Wurundjeri Council Elders performing dual duties as sovereign peoples of Country (with cultural and community responsibilities) and also as Council employees through the department of Aboriginal Partnerships. Public Journal were mindful of engaging with Aboriginal Partnerships carefully, in the interest of First Nations people not ‘being caught or claimed within [another] colonial construct’ (Behrendt, 2003).



Figure 9: Vietnamese and Greek promotional street posters, prompting local citizens to dream up being in Ngàr-go / Fitzroy (Public Journal, 2020e).

Public Journal gathered research of language, cultural markers and stories that were owned and publicly shared by Wurundjeri Council, with scope for broader community reach. For these cultural markers and stories, the author was careful to articulate ownership and point to original sources, indicating the platform would act to decolonise Fitzroy and amplify sovereign storytelling that already existed. Aboriginal Partnerships approved this promotion of Wurundjeri Council's existing activities, agreeing to the translation of cultural stories along the Fitzroy Heritage Trail into community languages, as realised above in Figure 9. Wurundjeri Council also gave permission for the use of the Woi wurrung words for 'Fitzroy', 'thank you' and 'welcome', based on their presence in the public domain.

4 Learning Moments

4.1 Encountering Binary Recognition of Political Identities

When the grant application was successful and precinct partnerships started to form, the intention of communicating through plurality was often challenged. The colonial desire for certainty, clear boundaries and state sanctions cut into nuance.

Public Journal's first experience of this was through the spelling of Wominjeka / Womin Djeka, a sign of difference between Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups. It was during the first meeting with potential project partners, who were also

working with City of Yarra and with Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Colin on the Yalinguth app, that the author was made aware of the distinction.

Yalinguth, at this time, was a five-year project with deeply embedded engagement frameworks. The app captured stories, poems and songs by a broad spectrum of Aboriginal peoples, many of whom were living in Ngár-go off-Country and found a sense of belonging and community in Fitzroy during the early years of civil rights activism (Yalinguth, 2021). The stories were in the process of being geo-tagged in the app named Yalinguth, a Woi wurrung word for yesterday, so that citizens and visitors could experience this history as a storyscape, connected to place.

The author was made aware of her personal and professional attachment to the capital D and the space before it – the meaning it held for her, attached to her understandings of the Welcome as two words and their significance when paired together: ‘Womin, come or ask to come. Djeka, what is your purpose or intention?’ (Briggs, 2018).

The author had been granted permission to use the Woi wurrung words for ‘Fitzroy’, ‘thank-you’ and ‘welcome’ and had assumed the spelling was the same as her usage at RMIT University, less than 1km down the hill.



Figure 10: Wominjeka and Womin Djeka. Variations of the Kulin Welcome spelled by Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung.

The author felt the irony of the word's meaning as she was challenged about the variation in spelling, as indicated in Figure 10. The project was built to respond to the welcome and yet here the author was, up the hill from RMIT University, where she had first been offered meaning by the University's Elders in Residence, trying to understand what the welcome meant in this different place.

The project started prior to the registered boundary of this contested area and the author's own bias was shaped by her relationships formed through Reconciliation projects at RMIT University. The author was unaware of how this nuance would be perceived by Wurundjeri in what Aboriginal Heritage Council called an 'overlapping area of interest' (Aboriginal Heritage Council, 2021).



Figure 11: 'Our Home' from 'Fitzroy Aboriginal Heritage Trail' photography sequence by Hilary Walker, commissioned by Public Journal. Registered Aboriginal Party boundaries of Fitzroy, varied 1 July 2021 (Aboriginal Heritage Council, 2022).

A few months later, the project was taking shape and Public Journal met with Storyscape to trial the Yalinguth app at Atherton Gardens. The author was informed that only the day before, Fitzroy had become a part of the registered boundary of Wurundjeri Council (Figure 11). Storyscape, who had worked closely with Wurundjeri Council for over five years, revealed this as positive news. For the author, she felt the undercurrent of this decision through her relations with Boon wurrung; she thought of their creator Lohan who carved out their territory as he moved from Yarra Flats down to his final resting place at Wa-mung (Barwick, 1984)

and the author recalled a conversation between Stan Grant and Marcia Langton where Grant stated 'we need to talk about the cunning of recognition since Mabo' (Grant, 2020). The author wondered – how might recognition exist outside of land rights? How does Native Title flatten the ways the settler state acknowledges sovereignty?

From her personal standpoint, the author understood the binary nature of recognition. Here the author was, in her white middle class 'subject position' (Morten-Robinson, 2000), navigating a polity that had shaped the social identity of her maternal ancestors from the unceded lands of Tyreenottepanner and Paradarme. The author listened to the stories offered through the Beta Yalinguth app and realised the significance of this political moment. The author was on unceded lands, listening to how the dry soil beneath her feet used to be a wetlands. How Uncle Archie had to leave here for a spell and travel to South Australia to find a girlfriend who wasn't his cousin. How Uncle Jack first found his family here as a young man after being taken from his mother's arms as a baby. How Aboriginal owned and led organisations were established here on these streets. And now, over 50 years since the civil rights movement was housed on Gertrude Street, the unceded land was recognised as Wurundjeri.

This sovereign polity was revealed through the newly recognised, yet oldest living welcome, not spelled until first contact, and this learning moment became a steppingstone for Public Journal's ongoing work. The author started to think about how plural worlds might exist outside the bounds of the English language. Who might the 'we' be here without so much attention on the coloniser?

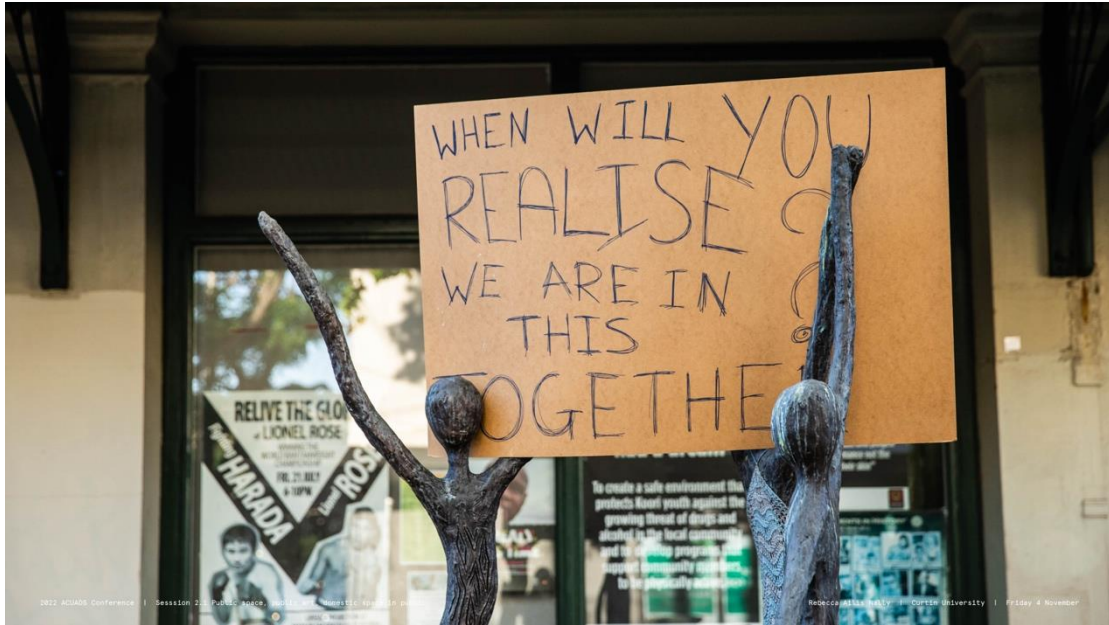


Figure 12: Image from 'Fitzroy Aboriginal Heritage Trail' photography sequence by Hilary Walker, commissioned by Public Journal.

4.2 Moving from CALD to Plural Participation

The grant gave Public Journal the capacity to design the platform in what the author purposefully avoided calling culturally and linguistically diverse or CALD, which 'unduly collapses nuance into one blunt category' (Balachandran, 2020).

Working closely with Public Journal's translation partners GAO, the group discussed how language should be sovereign wherever possible and be written to speak place through culture rather than translate English. The participatory nature of sovereign storytelling was unable to be power-brokered when the author's capacity to identify nuance in language was limited to Google Translate and, unlike many projects that employ the term co-design and fail to acknowledge the power dynamics of the designer, the author identified how language sovereignty assigned power and actualised co-design intentions – language drew itself as epistemological and ontological boundaries in response to the welcome from Wurundjeri.

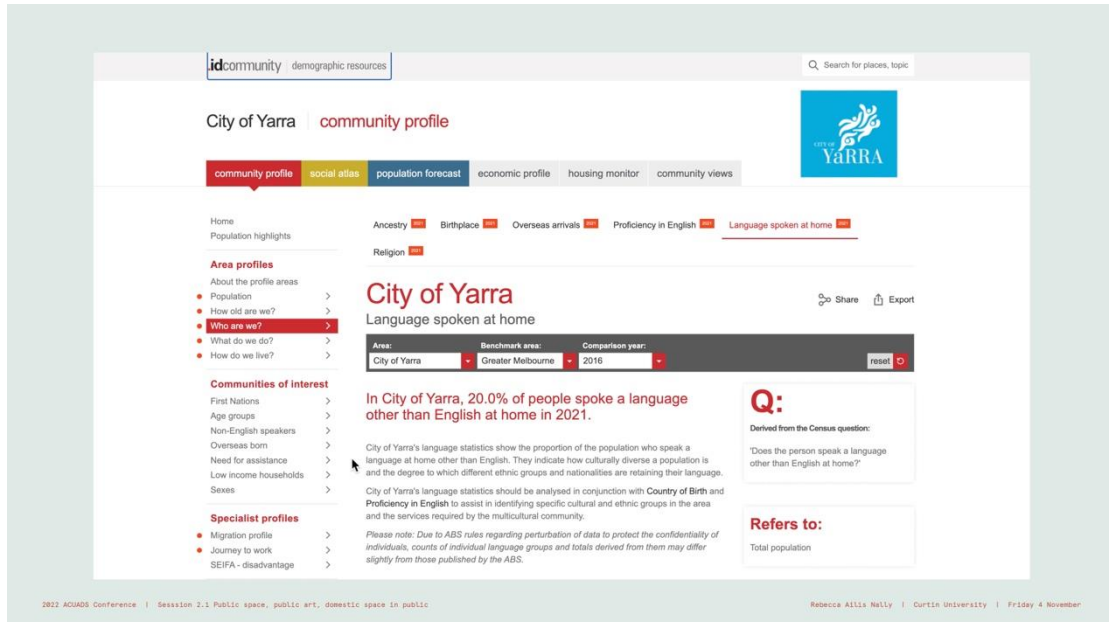


Figure 13: Languages spoken at home in City of Yarra (City of Yarra, 2021).

Although 20% of languages spoken at home in the City of Yarra were not English (as detailed in Figure 13), sharing the beauty of citizen power and language sovereignty was not always possible when building potential partnerships. In a virtual meeting with a potential tourism partner, the author was asked, 'Why Greek? Aren't all people who only speak Greek old in that area?' In this moment, the notion of domesticity in public – supporting young people to speak their family languages outside of the home – seemed too removed from the extractive nature of the tourism industry and their more normative, immediate conversion axiology.



Figure 14: Business partners confirming lack of multilingual access (Public Journal, 2020f).

Public Journal identified opportunities for integration of languages, with most platform partners only offering English in their venues, as indicated in Figure 14. Limitations in translation budget made only the four most spoken languages possible; Cantonese was sixth on the list after Mandarin and Italian. The author was advised by GAO that although simple Chinese seeks to homogenise Cantonese literacy in places like Hong Kong and Southern China (Jin, 1999), the flip side is the characters can generally be spoken in both languages, with young people developing their own nuances through participation in the digital environment (Tsu, 2022).



Figure 15: Instructions in simplified Chinese, prompting digital citizens to dream in Ngár-go (wearehere.place, 2023).

In Figure 15, participants are prompted in simplified Chinese to build their dreams in Ngár-go. The Woi wurrung word at the time of development was rarely used in non-Indigenous references to Fitzroy. When paired here with simplified Chinese, a new dissonance presents itself. The constraints of budget and intent for minority participation yield an imperfect virtue, with meaning lost and gained.

4.3 Building Narratives to Resist Reductive Accessibility Categorisations

As Public Journal continued to build content with their business partners, the dichotomy of accessibility and homogeneity reared its head yet again. As a designer who had spent years working for councils, the author had witnessed the broad brushstrokes of accessibility measures collapse nuance in a similar way to the application of CALD categorisations.

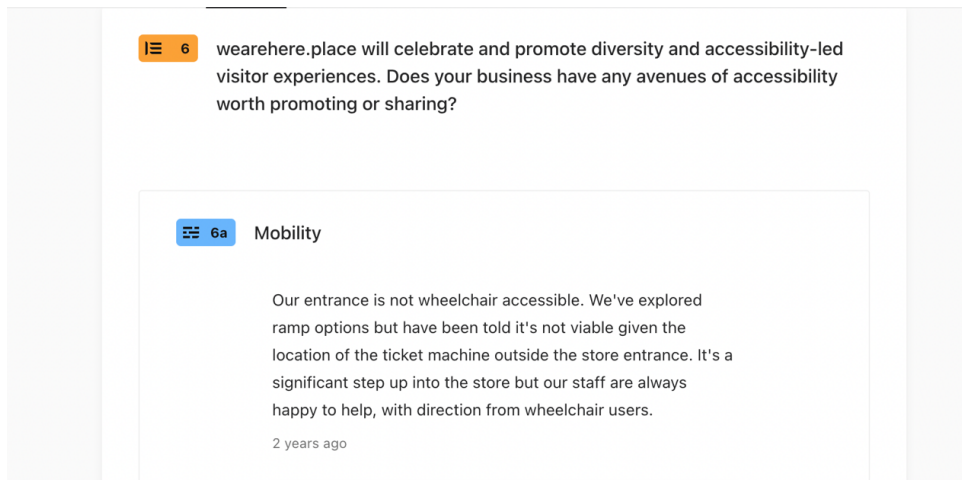


Figure 16: Business participants describing mobility of venue (Public Journal, 2020f).

In Figure 16, Public Journal referred to the response as a ‘thick description’ (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). The binary or closed question answer to ‘are you wheelchair accessible?’ would be ‘no’, but what this response, to a more carefully constructed question, tells us is that the reality is different.

During the early phase of development, Public Journal pre-empted the potential responses of our business partner participants and considered how these questions could be written in partnership with Council, which had risk mandates. Public Journal considered the conflict of business interest and Council risk and wrote prompts to guide more nuanced responses, as illustrated in Figure 17.

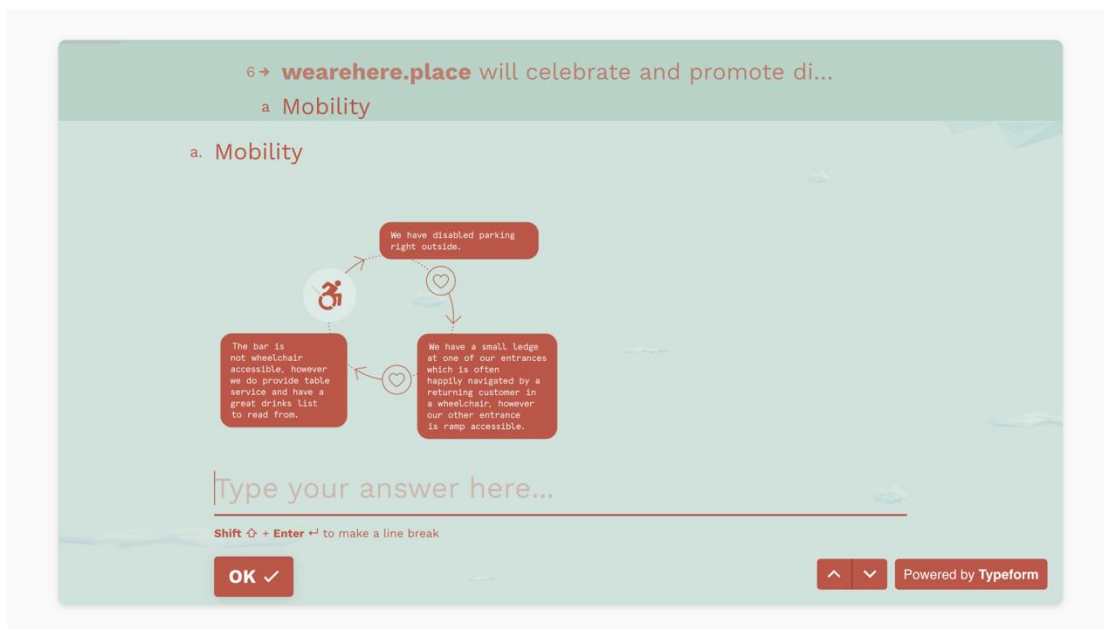


Figure 17: Mobility prompts for business partner narratives (Public Journal, 2020f).

Public Journal recognised that a binary, check box approach to accessibility would not support their approach to precinct recovery and flipped the categories to act as access points, offering plural ontologies through the lens of all-abilities. The work in this phase had attributes of public pedagogy – using prompts to guide the business participants, not dissimilar to prompts the author would use in an undergraduate studio setting to guide student-centred learning.

6 -> **wearehere.place** will celebrate and promote di...

b. Hearing access

We worked with a local designer on customised signage to make ordering easy for people to point to during peak hour.

A QR code is provided to our customers for ease of ordering online.

We have this lovely quiet nook great for people sensitive to noise or quiet meetings.

Type your answer here...

Shift ⌘ + Enter ↵ to make a line break

OK ✓

Powered by Typeform

Figure 18: Hearing access prompts for business partner narratives (Public Journal, 2020f).

In Figure 18, prompts are acting as examples for business innovation, while also building confidence in the consideration of a more nuanced accessibility narrative. There is value offered to the business owner beyond the retrieval or extraction of information for promotion online. They are prompted to think about the design of their business, offering ideas for possibilities for future innovation and engagement. Conversely, it also asks more of the business participant in a time when they have been impacted significantly by lockdowns and government restrictions – many of the business operators were not available to sit at their desks for more than a few minutes, as they worked relentlessly in an operational capacity. Consequently, the responses were not always ‘thick’ and the delivery of the questions required Public Journal to follow up with face-to-face engagement, which was often squeezed between customer and staff needs.

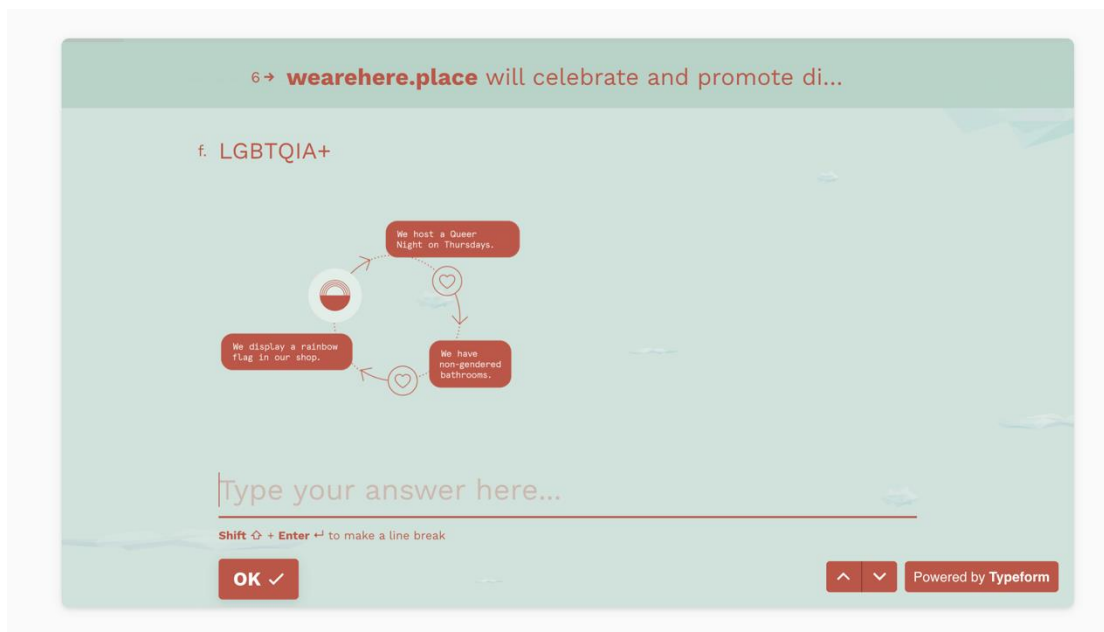


Figure 19: LGBTQIA+ access prompts for business partner narratives (Public Journal, 2020f).

In Figure 19 above, the prompts for considering LGBTQIA+ were written as three layers – signalling access (flag prompt), ensuring access (bathrooms prompt), and creating access (special event prompt). However, for this accessibility category, this layered style of prompting initially yielded ‘thin’ responses:

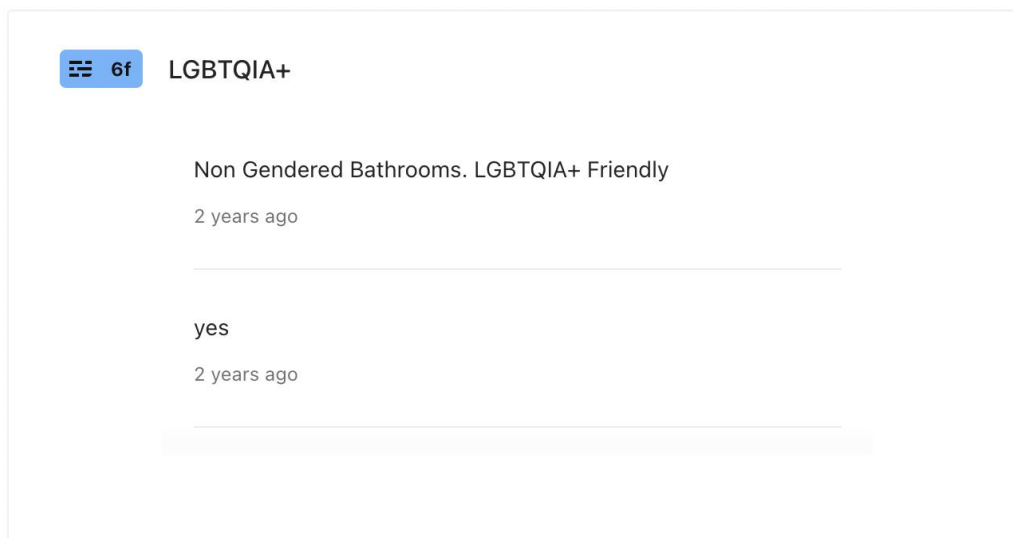


Figure 20: Business participants responding to LGBTQIA+ access prompt (Public Journal, 2020f).

The prompts in this category were designed by Public Journal to support detailed responses yet they seemed to limit answers to whether the venue had non-gendered bathrooms. During face-to-face consultation, Public Journal was able to work with

business participants to identify diversity actions that businesses were demonstrating. This follow-up activity revealed the normality of LGBTQIA+ in certain environments; in some situations, a lack of awareness of both inclusive and exclusionary actions; and also the limited capabilities of the survey tool.

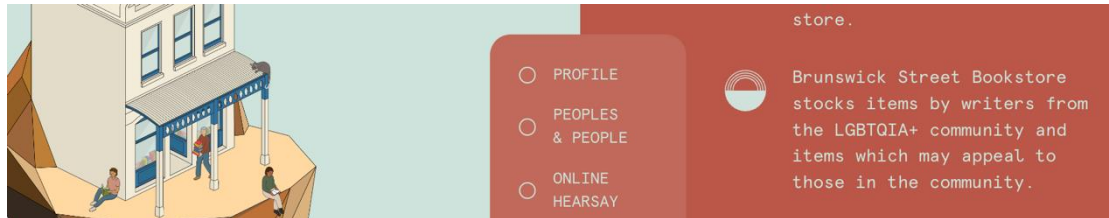


Figure 21: LGBTQIA+ narrative developed through face-to-face consultation with Brunswick Bookstore (wearehere.place, 2023).



Figure 22: Atherton Garden’s accessibility stories in simplified Chinese (wearehere.place, 2023).

These accessibility notes became key characteristics of the featured businesses, opening up the possibilities for new ways of being in these places, pluralised further through cultural expression in Vietnamese, Greek and simplified Chinese (Figure 22).

5 Reflection

5.1 Public Pedagogy and Pluralism

The platform continues to share dreams, inviting new guests to re-know Ngár-go. For some, they learn Aboriginal stories connected to their favourite venues, perhaps now made accessible through language or, simply in English, presented to them as an

important part of this place. For few, the usual bias towards majority need is met reflexively with narratives that aim to articulate the beauty of character, culture and connection – a breath is offered in a designed world where the desire to ‘return to normal disingenuously extricates those who exist in peripheries’ (hooks, 1994).

And for projects that have long existed in the space of Aboriginal rights, Indigenous Nation Building and Reconciliation, the platform offers ways to share some of this existing work, interculturally.

Design as a commercial practice is often limited to soft edges and modular categories. The work in this project, the real work, was to challenge axiology that failed to value minority and to demonstrate the worth and viability of making space for plurality.

As the author built a pedagogical pathway for a project to move out of the undergraduate setting into a studio environment, this novel project became a testing ground for making things public in response to Indigenous sovereignty. Throughout the development of this platform, the moments with most plurality were often the most conflicted. Upon reflection, the author’s experience leads her to posit that to actualise pluralism in the public space is to employ design as a methodological means of participatory dissonance.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, thanks Nan. Last time I came home you told me to look up at the clouded, dusk sky. I asked you what you saw and you said 'a Platypus'. And then we both giggled. Thanks Mum, for modelling the most open, relational ontology and taking us to the Shack every summer to just be.

Noon gudgin – thank you to Jason Rohmursanto and Enya Weber from my Public Journal team, Uncle Colin at Wurundjeri Council and his team at Aboriginal Partnerships, Joy Saunders from City of Yarra, our translation partners GAO, our business partners, my colleagues at RMIT University and my wonderful students who I feel grateful to learn with.

To my partner Angus and our sons Lindsay and Julian, thank you for caring about what I do at work.

And to Dad and the rest of my crazy family who have always called me back from my dream world – love you all, as Nan would say when she returns from hers.

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