



CASE STUDY 1

PRACTICE INFORMS METHODOLOGY

Project conducted over six months in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland with people drawn from different social enterprises and public service providers devoted to tackling loneliness and isolation.

GRAPHIC NOVEL: VOLUME II

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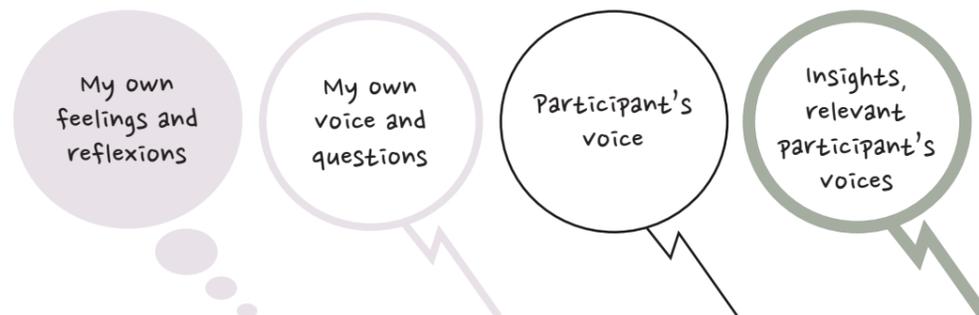
Illustrations: Mirian Calvo

Design & Layout: Mirian Calvo

Volume II discloses the practical element of this doctoral study, complementing chapter 5. With focus on the socio-emotional interactions among the participants and their interaction with the social environment supporting the research situations. The reflective drawings are displayed entangled with my own reflections and the participants' reflections and insights.

Legend for the different type of bubbles used in this document:

General explanation, fact narration and contextual reflexions from my point of view.



Find the full transcripts from where the quotes in this document have been extracted in Appendix 5.3

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Case Study 1. Practice informs methodology

This graphic novel illustrates the practice element of the study:

Getting Together: A Context-based Study on Informal-Mutual Learning and Community Co-design with Cultural-Historical Activity Theory.

Mirian Rodriguez Calvo

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of The Glasgow School of Art for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



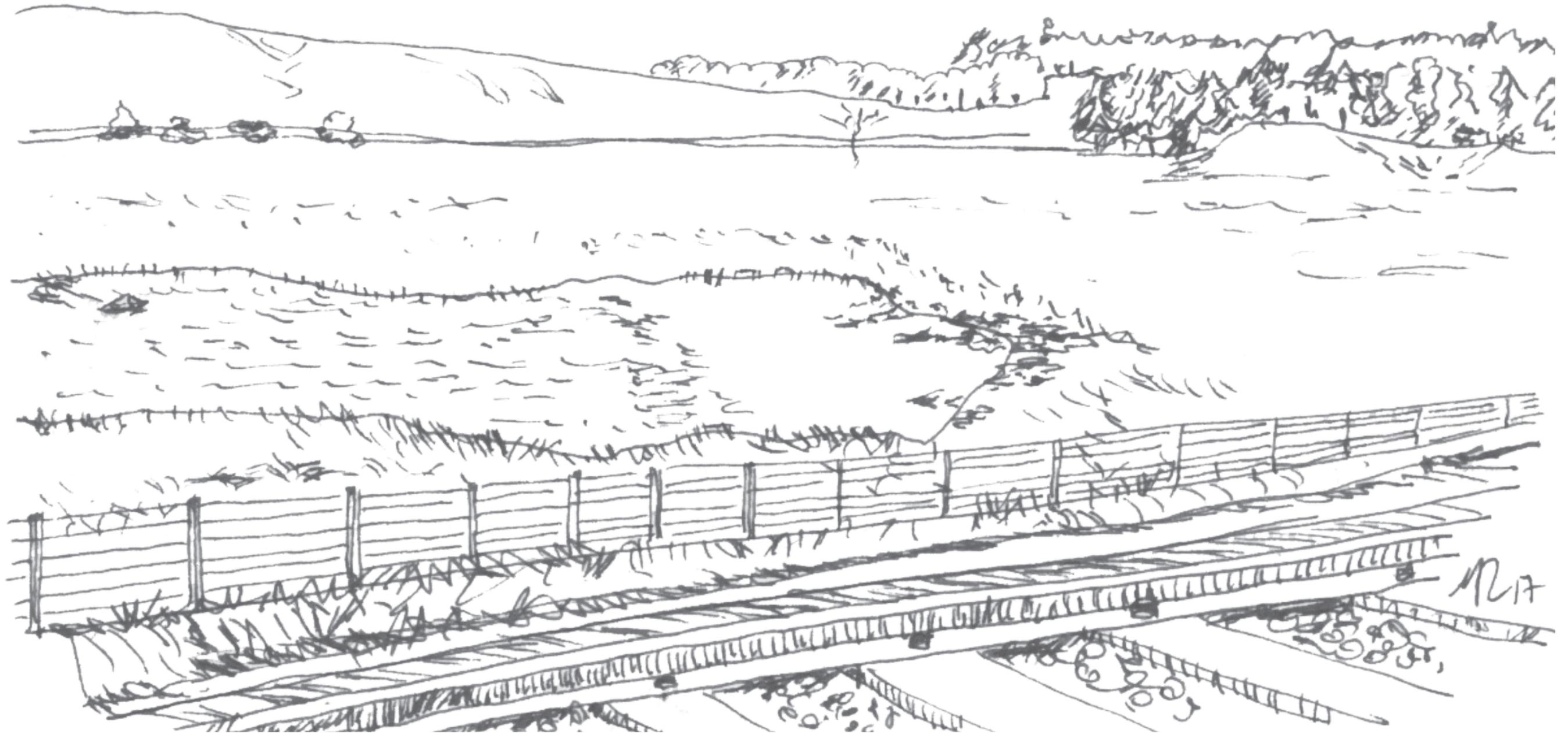
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The project was conducted over six months with participants drawn from different social enterprises and public service providers devoted to tackling loneliness and isolation in the Moray area and surroundings.

With the participants, it explored current issues they experience in sharing their practice (the ways in which each organisation approaches the subject of concern), aiming to spark ideas that could contribute to their social engagement.

It focused on sharing tacit and experiential knowledge produced by the participants and co-developing shared meanings. As a result of this informal-mutual learning synergy, the participants were ready to co-design tools capable of accumulating a multiplicity of perspectives and experiential learning.

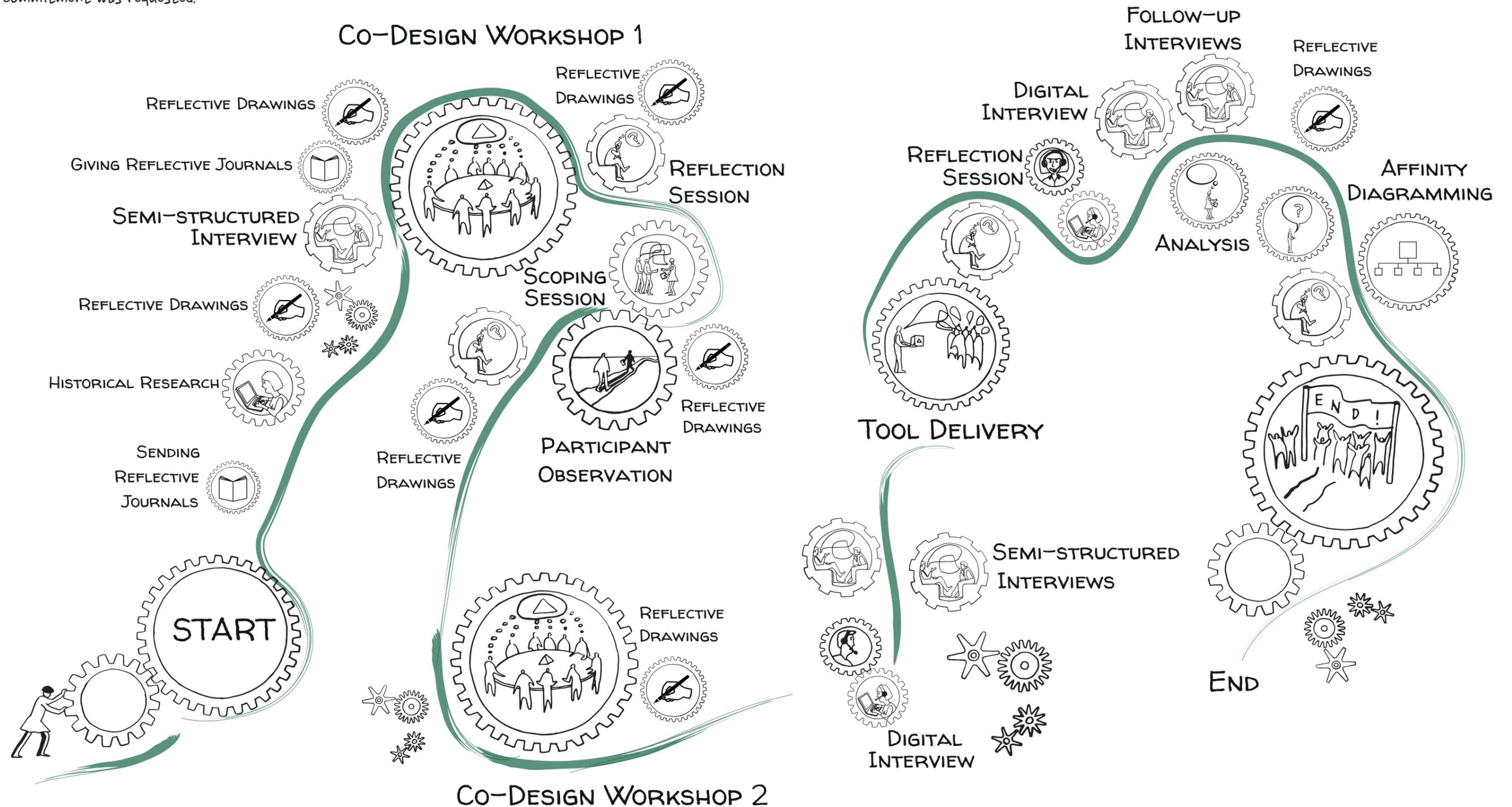
Their engagement and contributions were crucial to the creation of meaningful tools for them and the research purpose, and especially relevant for generating social situations of development (SSDs).



To scope the project, the research team began conversations in early 2017 with seven social enterprises operating in the Highlands, with the intentions of framing the proposal, narrowing the issues and identifying the aims.

First, we developed the time plan, which included the co-design events and the methodology in a visual language that enabled people to easily understand how much commitment was requested.

Apparently, many people were interested in the subject and in the potential results to emerge from it. However, the people consulted did not seem to have enough time to commit to collaborate. Only a flexible framework could absorb the constraints that shape the assembly of realities and perceptions: budget, time frame, space, recruitment, building trust and empathic connections, group dynamics, quantity and quality of participation, etc.



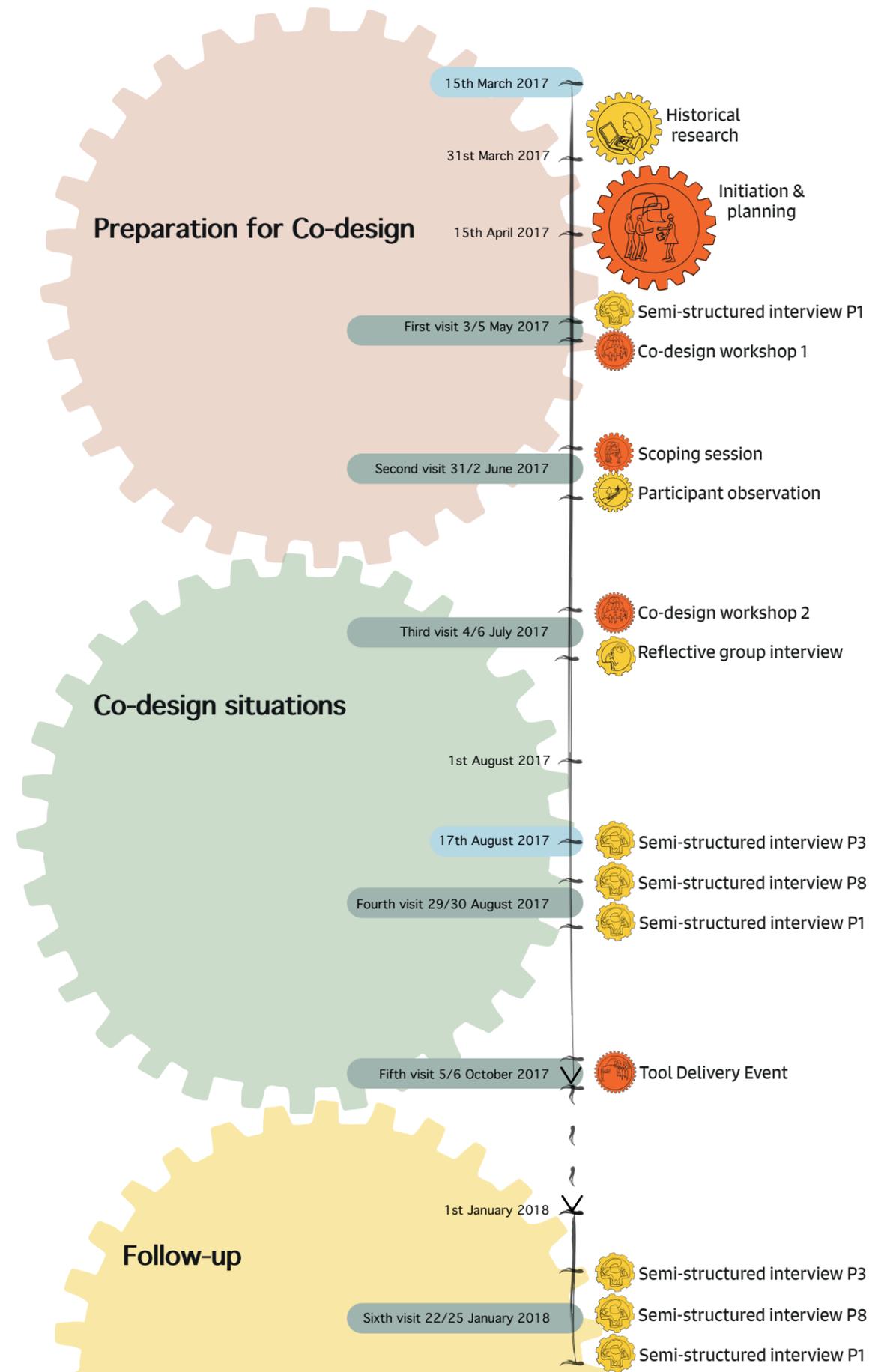
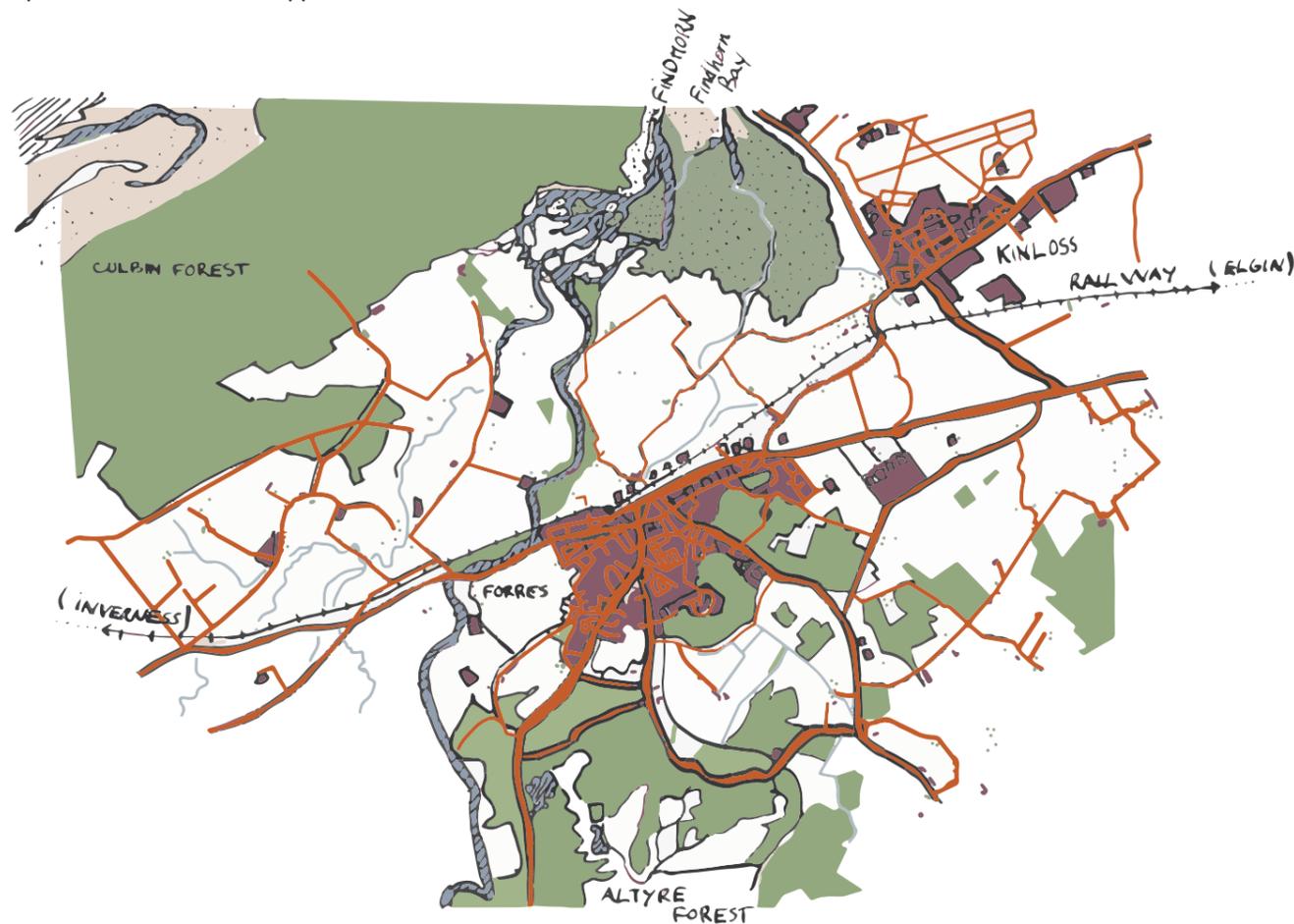
Preparation for Co-design



Initiation and Planning

The project was delayed due to the lack of participants. Therefore, the focus shifted, seeking to expand the scoping to different interest groups. The delay also caused changes in the time plan. Before the co-design workshop, the activities planned were reduced and the digital talks cancelled. For further explanation on the figure of the following page see the first paragraph of section 5.2.1.

Initially, the project was developed in a triangle of action: Aviemore, Inverness and Forres. Later, it focused on the Moray area and Forres became the epicenter, the GSA creative campus offering appropriate logistics and spatial resources to support creative activities.





Semi-structured interview with PI

We met in the morning at the Forres community cafe. I arrived early to familiarise myself to the location. The cafe was quiet.



My preparation consisted of researching the PI professional profile through the Internet. From that, I noticed that PI had long experience of working in different non-profit organisations focused on a variety of problematiques. Her interests were related to children, economic empowerment and education.

The interview was conversational. I outlined the research context and purposes of my PhD. She asked many questions, trying to understand. I talked about the PS and informal learning and how such a process can pass unnoticed. She seemed enthusiastic and willing to get involved. I was honest with her and asked for her help in recruitment, acknowledging our lack of participants.

We agreed to collaborate and organise another workshop. She would spread the word through her local network and we would arrange a second meeting with more people to crystallise matters.

Why the workshop is hosted in Inverness? I know people in Forres that would be interested in participating if the workshop happened here.



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We also talked about the reflective journal, its purpose and how it was meant to be used. She had her doubts, but after clarification she became more confident about its use and offered to hand some to her colleagues. So I gave her four more journals at the end.



co-design workshop 1

The workshop was held at the Spectrum centre, a community centre close to the train and bus stations in Inverness. This time, researcher 1 (R1) and myself formed the research team. Read the implications of my role here on section 5.2.1, co-design workshop 1.

The room we rented had lots of tables and chairs stacked against the walls and nine chairs forming a circle in the centre. No windows. There was a square-shaped skylight which threw natural light into the room. We put three tables in the centre and the nine chairs around them. The wall opposite the door was the only one without any impediments, so we designated it for collective activities. I put up the Ao 'stick your stories' map activity. We set up the coffee area on another table by the door. Once everything was ready, we had coffee and went through the programme of activities.



At 10.00am P5 arrived, the only participant who attended. She was the founder and project development manager of Badenoch & Strathspey community Transport company (BScTC), a social enterprise transport company based in Aviemore. She has been working for 20 years on tackling loneliness in the Aviemore area. She started a car scheme for transporting elderly people to their medical appointments.

This first activity consisted of a lanyard with three questions. Questions would be answered by drawing, I wanted to encourage the use of drawing, exploring visual language as a mediator of communication.

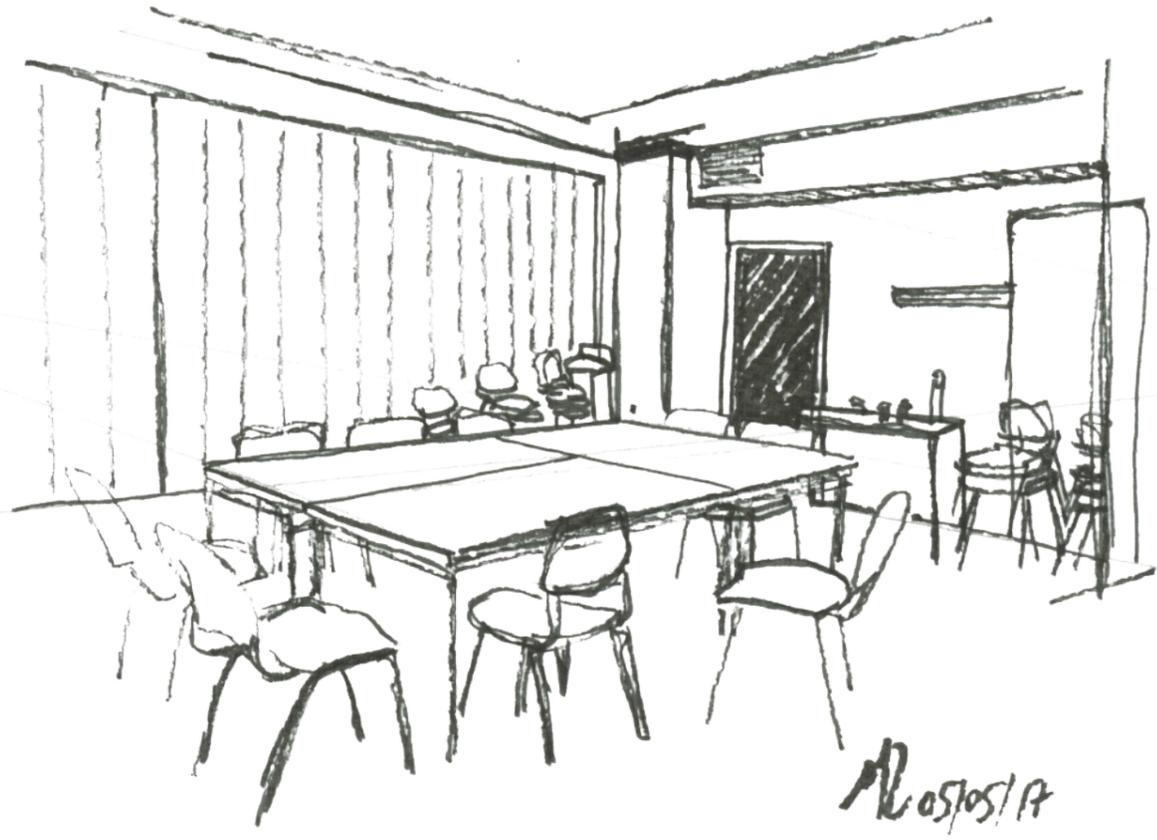
I was nervous about leading a co-design workshop within this research for the first time. This experience gave confidence for the next case study 2 which I led

- What is the most important thing you have learnt about tackling loneliness?
- What do you feel are the most valuable resources in your network?
- What do you feel is the most effective way you communicate with colleagues/networks?

We sat at the table. I made it clear that P5 was the expert and her contribution would be very valuable for us.

The most valuable are the people, our volunteers and our clients and also the groups that we network with to get information from, mainly third sector groups that we work with, resources. But the people are the valuable resource.

I felt insecure/unconfident, lacking experience of loneliness and isolation, so I used stories borrowed from the experiences of relatives and friends. This helped me empathise with the shared stories and able to interconnect in bidirectional interactions.



Activity 2

Activity 2 consisted of ten minutes' individual reflection on our experience of tackling loneliness. We had round stickers to write our impressions on and we stuck them on the big map on the wall, sharing thoughts and making connections on the themes emerging, since each sticker had a prompt word: activity, approach, values, motivations, challenges.

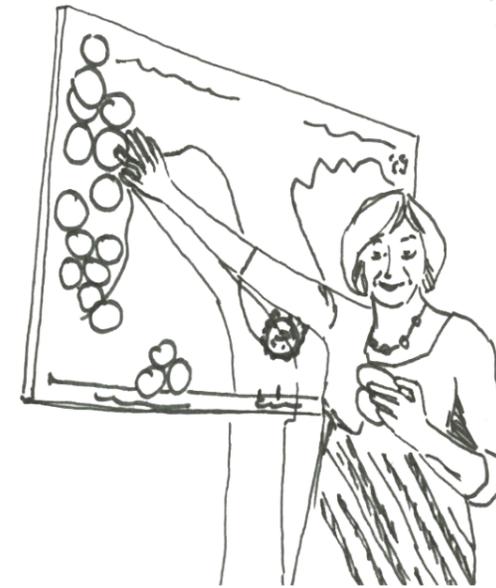


In our coffee meetings we identified the needs for elderly people to move around, like shopping. So we decided to set up a supporting-shopping service with the taxi operators, a door-to-door service with assistance at the shop. I think seeing people together made a difference. They see each other once a week and this makes them feel good.

ML 05/05/2017

Her voice is engaging and I can imagine myself being somehow part of the story.

We allowed people to have their own choice, you know, it gives them a choice and they can choose their own shopping.



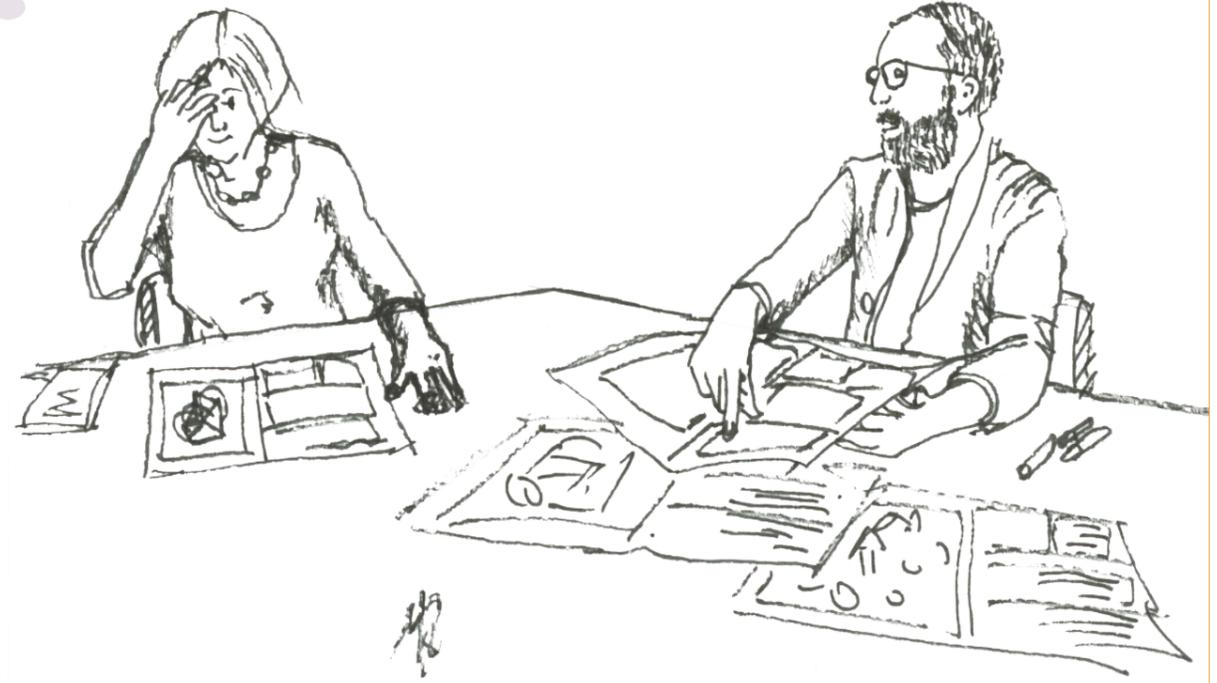
If somebody stops coming to shopping, we know that they stop going out, the care service needs to come for them. When they decide to stop coming shopping, we know they are giving up and it is a critical point.



Activity 3

Activity 3 consisted of an A0 map with three concentric ellipses. Each ellipse focused on different aspects: people, resources and places. We all mapped out our networks in relation with the activities we had just shared. We discussed aspects such as sharing knowledge, connections with another organisations, and the scale of the service. She explained that once a service starts, it can lead to another service or change direction.

I learnt that going shopping could be seen as an indicator of the state of wellbeing of an individual.



Next, we went down to the cafeteria for lunch. When we came back I noticed I felt tired. In the programme I had planned two activities for the afternoon, yet we spent more time in the morning activities. Maybe because there were so few of us, we had quality conversations and we could ask many questions to P5.

Activity 4

To gather ideas we used the concept sheets, A3-sized sheets divided into 5 blank squares, each one containing prompt words for the participants to think about when generating ideas. This activity should be conducted in small groups but in this case we began individually. We were working in silence, so I thought it might be good idea to put on some music. I asked the others and they agreed. I offered to work with P5 in her idea called social connector.



The music was playing in the background. She took the pen and depicted a spider web. She was thinking and drawing, going back to her knowledge and at times explaining her thinking.

We concluded that such an idea could work to map out the organisation story and narrate it in a visual way, but we reached a point where we got stuck.

I am feeling exhausted, unable to assist her train of thought, so I am moving back to work on my ideas.



When we finished, we shared our ideas and concluded that there were two or three good ideas that we could try to materialise. We thanked P5 for coming and for her valuable contribution. She invited me to visit her organisation and conduct a participant observation, as a volunteer. We said goodbye and kept in touch to arrange such a visit.

Back from the trip, we exchanged emails and set an informal meeting with P1 and two potential participants. I also scheduled a visit to BScTC for the same dates to conduct participant-observation in their natural setting. (Find my reflections in section 5.2.1 co-design workshop 1 - Reflection session).



Scoping session

We reached an agreement quickly. They seemed interested in collaborating. We went through the requirements for hosting the workshop, for instance, the number of participants, one day or two days length, etc. We all thought about how to involve more people. We divided tasks. We would reframe the proposal in conversation with them, enabling their participation from that moment, and they would help us reach an adequate number of people.



Then the new partners and I went for a walk around the campus. It was sunny and the sky was blue, so the walk seemed irresistible. Here we talked about what we understand by loneliness. They seemed enthusiastic. They imagined how this tool could work for them and what it could be used for.

I felt happy, the project was on track and it seemed that we had found an interest group with enough time to commit, and with local contacts which allowed us to predict a greater participation in the co-design events phase.

What are your needs and what you want to get from your participation?

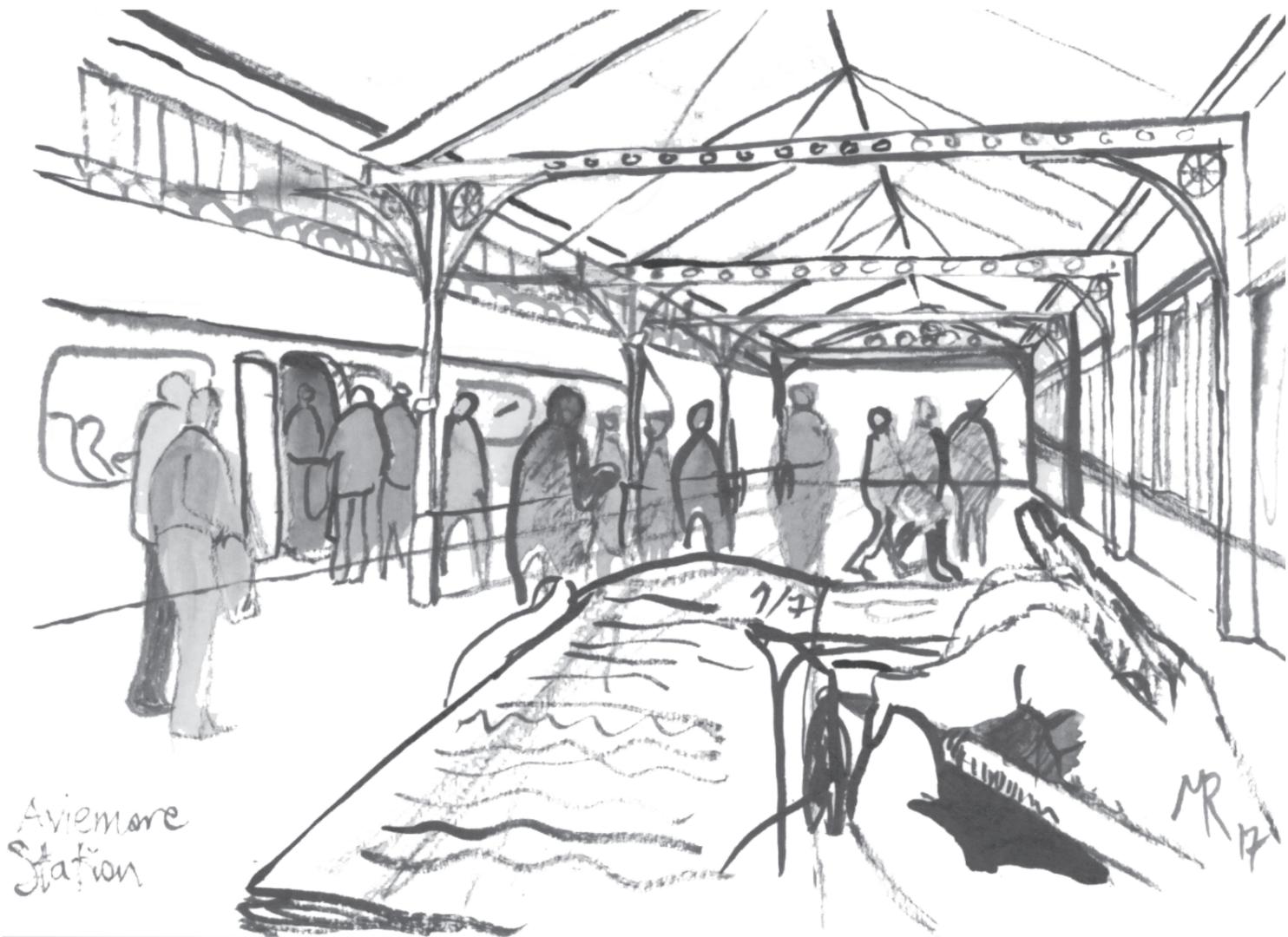
co-developing a set of cards that would help them engage with the lonely and isolated, and inspire them in building conversation.



Participant observation 1

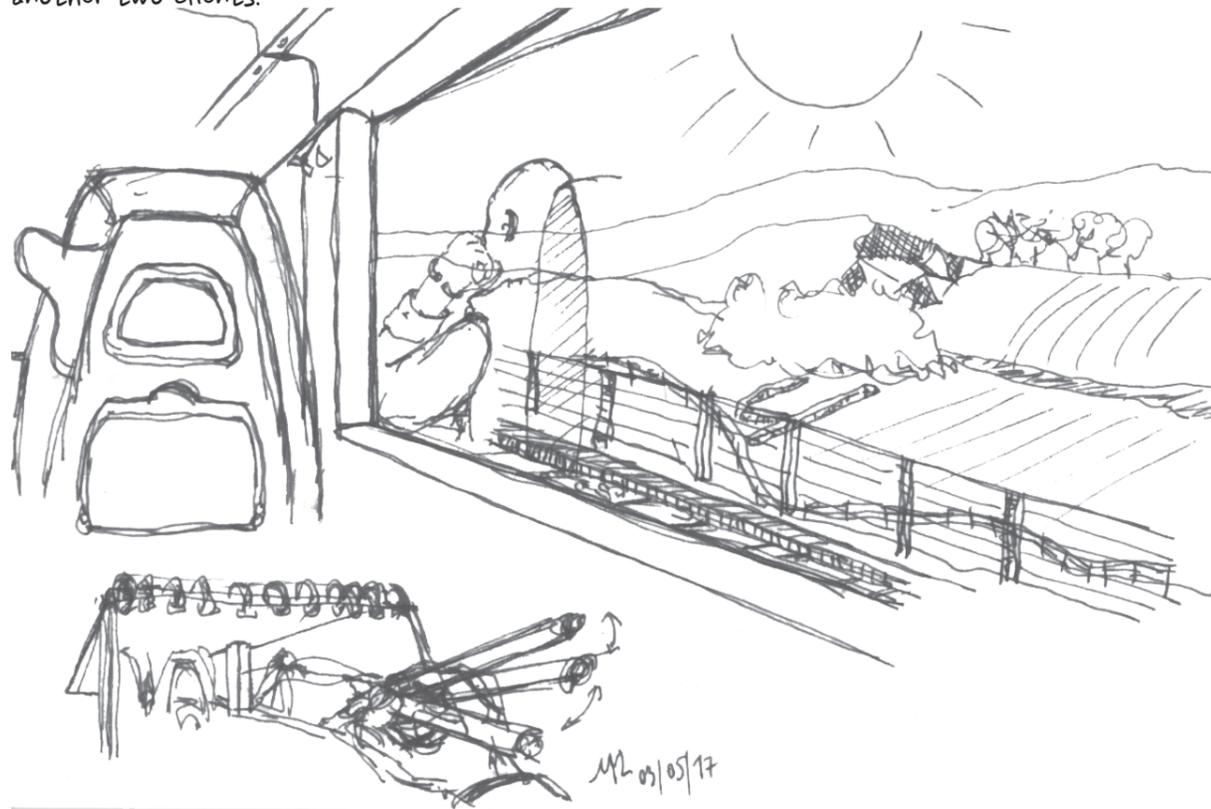


The following day I travelled to Aviemore, where I introduced myself as a volunteer for the assisted shopping service for BScTc. I adopted a participant-observer role in their natural setting. The session objectives were to find out what the volunteers' motivations were, immersing myself in order to understand the reasons why they do what they do and to experience first-hand what it might be like to be a volunteer.

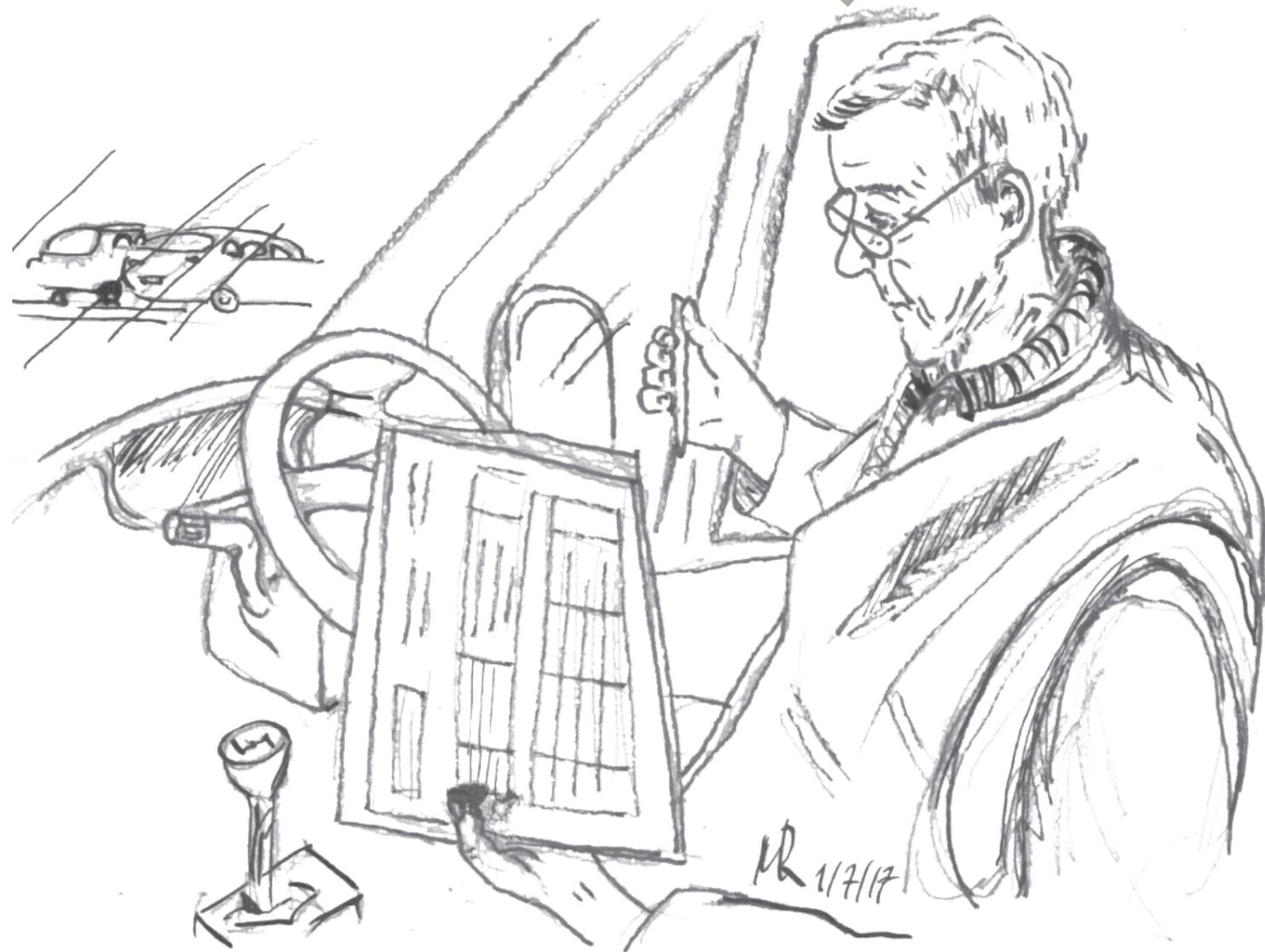




On our first trip, we picked up three clients. During the trip, I was able to ask P9 about his motivations and I also sat at the back with the clients who happily spoke to me about their everyday life. The first client was blind and had a beautiful guide dog. The second one was deaf and the third one was an elderly but lively woman. We left them at the supermarket and drove to pick up another two clients.



All my life I have been working, like in the offshore oil and gas industry. I have been all around the world and you see different things in different countries. Lately we stayed in Aberdeen and when we decided to retire, we came up here to retire because we always came to this area for holidays. So it was my wife who got me involved. They were struggling for drivers so she came down and spoke to them and then she put my name down for it. Once they found out what my history was, they wanted me there because of my knowledge of seating and negotiating and that. I actually negotiated to get this bus, you know, we got the government to pay for that.



On our way, P9 warned me about the changing moods of our next client, so I tried to keep some distance in the way I approached her. I thought she was in a vulnerable emotional state. Our conversation changed subject abruptly and followed a nonsensical thread of connections. At times I was unsure if she was saying what she really thought.



Sometimes I feel I am getting closer to her, but they do not. They do not like anything to do with disability. They cannot understand. They will not take me out because they are embarrassed.



Our next client (P11) was younger than the rest of the clients. She needed a wheel chair. I helped P9 to lift her into the bus. She seemed to be in a very vulnerable emotional state and lacking affection.



We take people in a bad way, not being out for a long time, lonely and without self-esteem; and just taken out shopping, it expands their whole life. Suddenly their life opens up again rather than being in this wee dark room.

It means a lot to me to be able to help people, I like to think that when I get there, there will be people to help me because I do not have children.



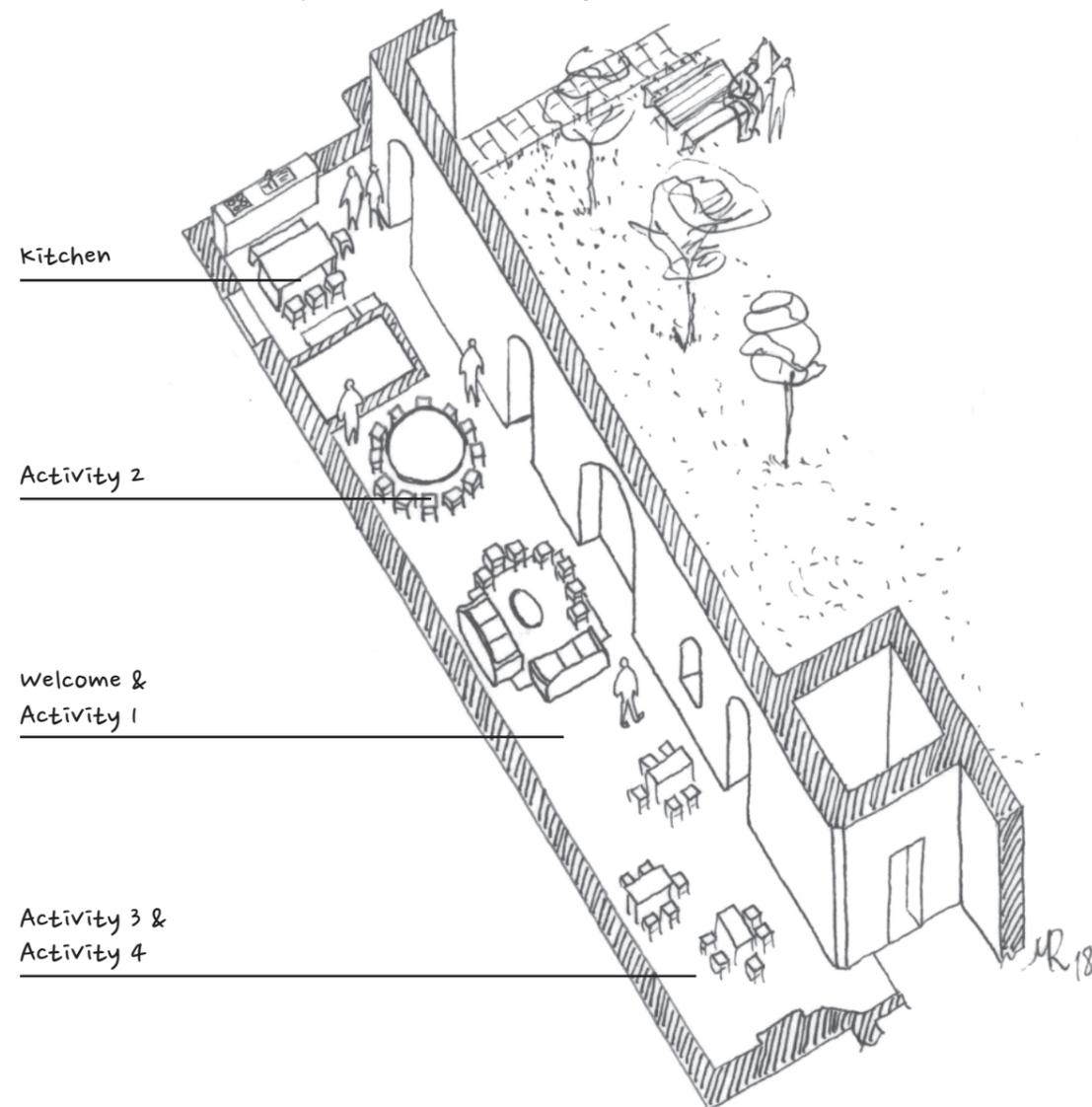
after participant observation in the shopping date (BSCC) we had lunch together.

Co-design situations



co-design workshop 2

The workshop was held at exhibition space, an open-plan with big windows and doors, which let the surrounding nature into the interior of the room. Its windows created a changing light throughout the day, drawing an enveloping atmosphere of light and shadows. We divided the space into three areas. In the central area we placed two sofas and chairs around a coffee table. The participants would enter and we would direct them to this area, where we would invite them to read the information and sign the ICF. The kitchen is on the north side of the building. In that wing we placed on a large round table the casino mat and the category chips for activity 2. In the south wing we placed three small tables, for 4-5 people, leaving space between them so that people could move freely. In this area we arranged activities 3 and 4.



When PI arrived, she came up to me and we hugged. She asked me how many participants had come. When I told her we had a large number of participants, she smiled and said:



Afterwards, we gave them a pack of 5 cards each and invited them to write their five top pieces of advice drawn from their experience. This was an individual task where participants reflected alone or in pairs.



Activity 2

We went back into the room and sat at the big round table. The casino mat and the category chips were ready to use. Everyone looked relaxed, enjoying themselves.



Here I adopted a passive observational role. I remained standing, writing and making quick sketches because the activity was frenetic and difficult to capture. R2 acted as the croupier. She took numbers at random, one at a time, from a box. The cards provided in activity 1 had a number on the back, so the participants with a matching number were invited to share their advice. We continued doing this until everyone shared their 5 top advices, equalising the interventions and creating power-balance relations. It seemed a good group of people and I felt that the group dynamic emerged naturally.

one of the men participated a lot less than the rest, although he was always following the conversation. His eyes moved around, trying to absorb as much as possible, but when he talked everybody nodded their heads in agreement. He made valuable contributions from a peripheral position. Each participant knew they could renegotiate their interactions as they felt necessary.



Activity 3

The participants sit at the three small tables placed in the south wing of the room. They were divided spontaneously into groups of four. On each table there was a card mat and three different card games. There were also A3-sized sheets to document the reflections of our analysis.



we (researchers) thanked everyone for their valuable contributions and agreed to keep in touch for another workshop which would aim to test the prototypes the research team would work on.





Reflective group interview

The next day I met P1 and P2 at Mosset Tavern for a reflective interview. It was a long session in which we talked about their motivations, their impressions of the workshop and about learning. It turned out to be a coffee conversation between three friends who felt relaxed and safe.

She also mentioned that she came with low levels of energy (she was at that time having personal problems which would keep her away from participating since then) but she felt lifted and inspired at the end.



It is embodying it. It is the next thing. You know something with your head; engage with it on an emotional level and then physically, expressing it, doing it.



I sat eyes closed, a bit of silence, and I felt that was openness in the room. I was surprised how open and how quickly there was a connection. So that is the connection of all the people.

MR 6/7/17
Mosset Tavern

Semi-structured interview with P8



I met P8 at the Mosset Tavern for lunch.

I thought that game (activity 2, co-design 2) was really good: making the physical space, so this diagrammatical, visual representation of people's contribution, and the element of getting agreement. It matched people's thinking. Without the game, we'd just be talking.

Semi-structured interview with P1



The following day I met P1 at the community caf. I asked her how she felt that learning emerged. She replied:

When we were sitting round the table, that was a learning, and re-affirming learning when so many people realised that listening was an important skill.

She also felt more confident as a result of her experiential learning. She added:

I have confirmed my belief that part of the work is not straightforward, working with others, not thinking that one group has the answers and they can do stuff on their own. That day, there was a lot of information that I would never have come across. I feel more confident.

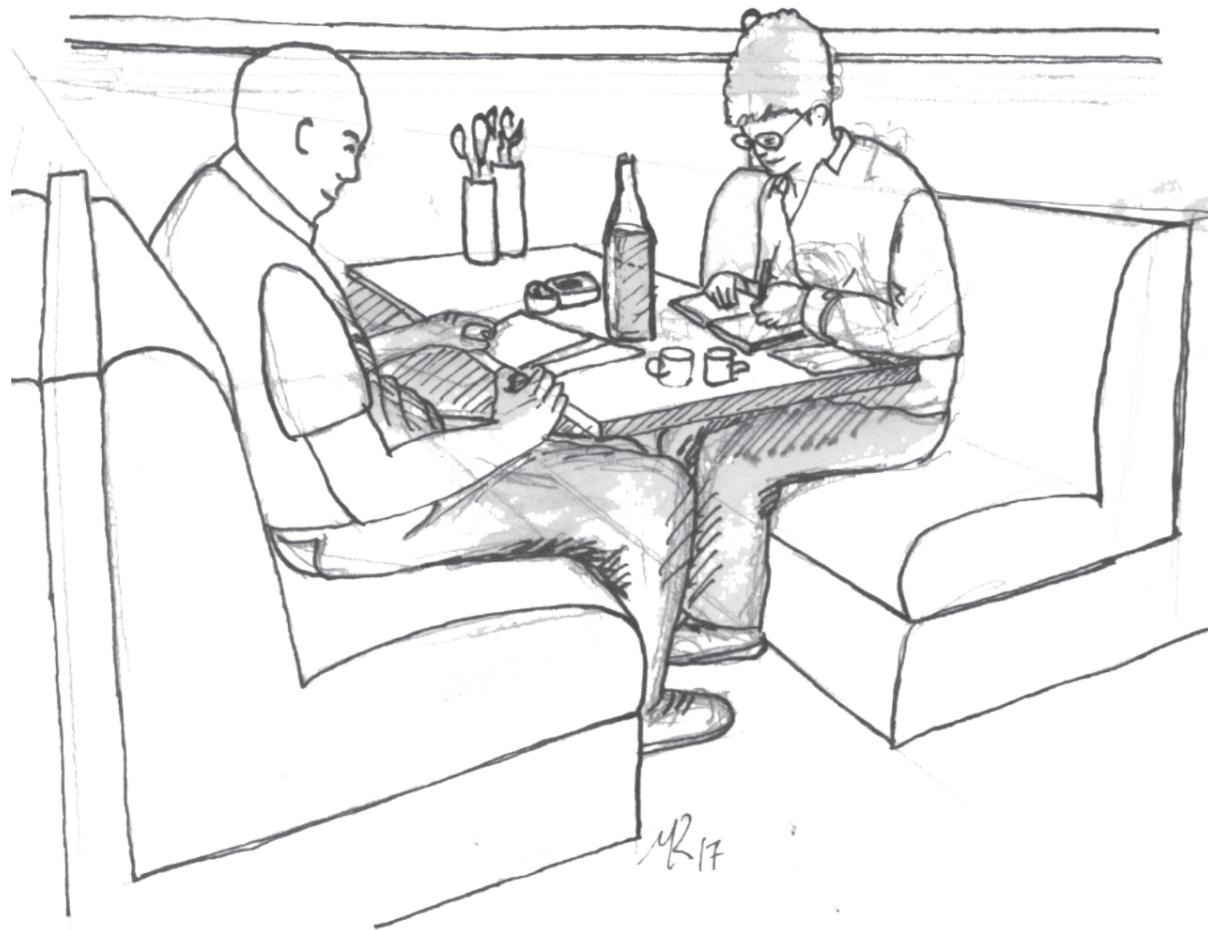
The way you devised the games and the sequence of those games allowed somebody like him also bringing his valuable contribution, which, you know, another way he might not have done it if evolving just chat, chat, chat, chatting. He might not be able to engage without that at all but through the thing of writing down the things in the cards and then share it. You know, that was fun. It was just fun.



Semi-structured interview with P3

We met in the morning at the Forres community cafe. I arrived early to familiarise myself to the location. The cafe was quiet.

Trust is very important, commitment, the balance between control and letting go control. Those central principles that your work raises, the co in co-design and collaboration is a reminder that the best work emerges out of community.



Tool Delivery Event



R2 brought the tools called common cards - a deck of photographic views of well-known landmarks in Morayshire - alongside the guidelines including examples of how to play. People seemed excited to get their hands on the finished design tool. They looked at the cards, passing them round one by one, contemplating them as meaningful and valuable artefacts. Then we had lunch together and we thanked all the participants for committing to this endeavour.



My learning was based on the exchange with other people and throughout the co-design process, observing how people interact. Although I was skeptical about the collaboration and I doubted the usefulness of the cards, I changed my perceptions and now I am delighted to have been part of it.



Follow-up



Interview with P2

concerning learning, P2 said

This 'Aha!' moment came when we were playing the card and chip game. Everyone contributed in a very equal way.

There are fun, accessible ways to get groups to participate in creating something relevant

concerning learning, P2 said we met as usual at the community caf at 10.00 am. When I arrived she was already there. We saw each other and smiled. Suddenly I felt I was with someone I could trust.

Interview with P1



It helped in having more confidence and just go and try things (...) and also in reframing failure. It helped me in not seeing things that do not work but things that have information to inform me how to do it next.



Interview with P8

Their motivations were around learning how design and collaboration could be applied in community engagement.

It reinforces the emphasis on people and connections and collaboration. collaboration is one of those words that, it is easy to use, it is not so easy to demonstrate, and it is in fact quite hard to picture.

In terms of how the learning happened, well, most was interactive and fun. For me that is the peak experience of learning, you know, that is learning at its very best.

Trust is very important, commitment, the balance between control and letting go control. Those central principles that your work raises, the co in co-design and collaboration is a reminder that the best work emerges out of community.



Thanks to all the people involved in the project!

To delve deeper into the items and patterns discovered after the exploratory and experimental analysis see Section two: systematising learning, chapter 5.3 complemented by the visualization of the Audio-visual Narrative: The Space Between II.



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